

BLUNSDON

VILLAGE MAGAZINE

May 2026



Photo by Debra Richardson



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Blunsdon Community Shop & Cafe

We Won! We are so proud to have been awarded “Community Team of the Year 2025/26” at the BIG Highworth Awards on 28th March.



This is amazing recognition of the hard work from all our staff, volunteers and committee members. Whether we are supporting DofE Students, Uplands Students, Golden Gatherings or simply providing a “comfortable safe space” for our community to pop in for everyday essentials or a social catch up over a cup of coffee in our café, we are happy to be there for you all. Being there for our community is part of our ethos and we promise to continue to be there for everyone!

Volunteering at our shop and café is rewarding. We have provided a safe environment for adults seeking support in getting back into the working environment or just wanting to feel part of a thriving team post-retirement. Why not join our team? Contact Angela

today for more details via volunteering@blunsdoncommunityshop.co.uk

Have your say – Watch out for our customer survey in the shop/café and on social media. Your feedback will help us provide the right products and attract more visitors, whilst meeting the needs of all our customers.

Save the date – We are organising a **Summer Fete Event on Saturday 11th July** with our Summer Raffle returning from the middle of May. Please support our fundraising by purchasing raffle tickets and coming along to our fete in July. Our fundraising this year is going towards our much needed air conditioning units in the Café.

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

Thurs 28th May

Wine Tasting at 7 pm with tickets on sale for £20 per person

Tues 23rd June

War Graves – Gardening the Globe
Tea and Talk with Larry Banda.
Tickets are £6.00 and include a hot drink and cake.

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.



Parish Council Update – May 2026

As May arrives, the parish is beginning to show the full confidence of late spring. The hedgerows are greener; the days feel noticeably longer, and there's a real sense of the village opening after the cooler months. It's a time when outdoor projects gather momentum, and community activity naturally increases.

This edition brings updates on the work taking place across the parish, progress on ongoing initiatives, and the priorities guiding us as we move towards the summer period. Even if you're not able to attend meetings, we want everyone to feel informed and connected to the decisions shaping our shared spaces.

With the growing season now well underway, you'll start to see more visible maintenance around the village—from grass cutting and path clearance to early preparations for summer works. May is always a busy month, but it's also one of the most rewarding as the parish begins to look its best.

During April & May, parish councils enter their annual governance and accountability cycle. During this period, councils approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), confirm the findings of the internal audit, and publish key financial information for residents in line with national transparency requirements. It is also the point in the year when councils re-adopt their core financial policies and review the financial controls that will guide their work for the year ahead.

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 on the Swindon Borough Council website.

Applications Received

Application Ref: S/HOU/26/0409 Description: Erection of single storey side extension. Site Address: 2 Kingsdown Lane, Blunsdon, Swindon SN25 5DL BPC decision: Approved

Decisions Made by SBC

Application Ref: TPO-26-0122, Re: Works to Tree T002 under ref BOSTPO-26-2009. At: The Cold Harbour, Ermin Street, Blunsdon, Swindon, **Decision from SBC: Granted consent**

Application Number: S/26/0028/ADHI, Re: Internal and external alterations to fire damaged warehouse. At: Unit 1, Crompton Road Groundwell Industrial Estate Swindon SN25 5AW **Decision from SBC: Granted consent**

Over the past few months, the Parish Council has been seeking professional legal advice regarding the possibility of pursuing a Judicial Review in relation to the Rivan application for the erection of a temporary synthetic fuel facility, solar array and associated infrastructure. During this period, we raised a number of concerns about elements of the decision-making process that we believed had not been fully reported. The volume of documentation has been substantial, and the timeframe for consideration has been tight, as strict deadlines apply to all Judicial Review proceedings. Following a detailed legal assessment, we have been advised that the likelihood of achieving a positive outcome would be in the region of 10%, and that significant costs, funded from public money, would need to be committed to supporting any action.

All councillors have been fully involved at each stage of this process. While the Parish Council is disappointed that the prospects of success are not stronger, we must ensure that public funds are used responsibly and cannot proceed where the risk of financial loss outweighs the potential benefit to the community.

Annual Parish Meeting

May is an important month in the parish council calendar, as it marks the start of the new civic year. Across England, most parish councils hold their **Annual Parish Council Meeting** in May. This is a formal meeting where the council elects its Chair and Vice-Chair for the year ahead, reviews its committees, confirms memberships, and adopts key governance documents such as standing orders, financial regulations, and policies.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on **21st May**, providing an important opportunity for residents to come together and engage directly with the work of the parish over the past year. Unlike a standard council meeting, the Annual Parish Meeting is a gathering of the electorate. It is designed to give parishioners a clear overview of the activities, achievements, and challenges that have shaped the past year, as well as the priorities that will guide the months ahead.

Representatives from local groups and organisations are also invited to share updates, helping to build a fuller picture of community life across Blunsdon. We encourage all residents to attend, whether to listen, contribute, or simply gain a better understanding of how parish matters are managed. Your participation helps ensure that the decisions and direction of the parish continue to reflect the needs and aspirations of the community we serve.

Borough Ward Changes for Blunsdon

From May 2026, the way Blunsdon is represented at Swindon Borough Council will change. As part of a borough-wide boundary review, Blunsdon will become its own **single-member ward**, meaning residents will elect **one dedicated borough councillor** instead of sharing three councillors across the larger Blunsdon & Highworth ward. This change has been made to ensure fair and balanced representation across Swindon, with each ward having a similar number of voters.

For residents, this means your borough councillor will focus solely on Blunsdon, giving the village more direct and dedicated representation at the borough level. These changes will come into effect for the **May 2026 local elections**, when all borough councillors across Swindon will stand for election under the new ward boundaries.

Don't forget – you'll need Photo ID to vote

A reminder to all residents that you must show an accepted form of Photo ID when voting at a polling station in the upcoming local elections. This is a national requirement under the UK Government's voter ID rules. Accepted forms include a passport, driving licence, Blue Badge, OAP bus pass.

Speed watch Update – April 2026

Date	Location	Vehicles Counted	Exceeding Limit	Maximum Speed mph	Speed Limit	Start	Finish	Area
3/10/2026	High St	180	18	32	20	15:55	16:55	Heart in Hand
3/11/2026	Ermin St	136	6	40	30	15:30	16:00	Minerva Heights
3/13/2026	Sams Lane	67	22	33	20	15:00	16:00	Junction with High St
3/16/2026	Ermin St	140	4	46	30	9:55	10:55	Minerva Heights
3/17/2026	High St	239	22	31	20	16:00	17:00	Heart in Hand
3/18/2026	High St	142	13	30	20	8:00	9:00	Heart in Hand
3/19/2026	Broadbush	90	4	38	30	9:45	10:12	The Shrubbery
3/23/2026	Ermin St	524	2	39	30	8:00	9:00	Minerva Heights
3/26/2026	Lady Lane	119	11	43	30	9:45	10:30	Cycle Track
4/7/2026	High St	93	9	32	20	16:00	17:00	Heart in Hand
4/8/2026	High St	156	14	33	20	16:00	17:00	Heart in Hand
4/9/2026	Broadbush	248	4	40	30	8:20	9:20	The Shrubbery
4/10/2026	Lady Lane	616	4	42	30	16:00	17:00	Cycle Track

Grounds maintenance: April brought a mix of sunshine and rain, and the changing weather has encouraged fast growth across the village. With the growing season now underway, our grounds maintenance programme began in April, including regular grass cutting, strimming and general upkeep in play areas, open spaces and verges, all delivered in line with our maintenance contract. Throughout the winter months, the emptying of all parish-maintained bins continued as usual, helping to keep our shared spaces tidy and welcoming. As the weather warms, this routine work supports a clean, safe and well-kept environment for everyone to enjoy.

Resident Reminder: Please Maintain Vegetation Overhanging Public Footpaths: Residents are kindly reminded that it is your responsibility to maintain any hedges, trees, shrubs, or other vegetation that grows from your property onto a public footpath, road, or highway. To help keep our community safe and accessible, please ensure that:

- Hedges and shrubs are cut back to your boundary
- Footpaths remain clear and fully passable
- Any low-hanging branches are trimmed to a safe height

Thank you for helping to keep our village tidy, safe, and welcoming for everyone.

Staff Update – Welcoming Kate

We are pleased to welcome Kate, who joined us in April as our new Responsible Finance Officer (RFO). The RFO plays a vital role in the parish council's operations, overseeing the council's financial management, ensuring compliance with statutory requirements, preparing financial reports, supporting budget setting, and maintaining the transparency and accuracy of our accounts throughout the year.

Kate has joined us at an excellent time, right at the start of the new financial year, allowing her to become fully involved in planning, monitoring, and shaping the council's financial processes from the outset. Over the coming months, she will be working closely with councillors and staff as she settles into the role. We will share a fuller introduction to Kate later in the year, but in the meantime, we are delighted to have her on board and look forward to the expertise and energy she brings to the team.

Meet Your Councillor / Staff Member

Each month, we'll be introducing you to the people working behind the scenes at Blunsdon Parish Council.

Meet Claire – Assistant Clerk

Claire joined the Parish Council in December 2024 as our part-time Assistant Clerk. It's a role with plenty of variety, and no two days are ever quite the same. As someone who is new to parish councils and their structures, Claire has quickly come to appreciate the time and commitment that councillors volunteer for the benefit of the community.

Her connection to Blunsdon: Although she isn't a village resident, Claire takes great pride in helping keep the community informed. She particularly enjoys the strong sense of togetherness in Blunsdon — from local groups and events to the fundraising and neighbourly support that residents offer one another.

What Claire supports: With a strong background in administration, Claire enjoys being the first point of contact for many of the enquiries that come into the Parish Council. Her work covers a wide range of areas, including:

- Managing bookings for parish facilities
- Preparing minutes of meetings
- Assisting with burial enquiries
- Helping residents with issues around the parish
- Supporting communication between the Parish Council and the community

A few words about Claire: Outside of work, Claire loves gardening and spending time with her family. She brings that same calm, steady enthusiasm into her role with the Parish Council.

Parish Council Elections –

On **7 May 2026**, residents will take part in the next scheduled **Parish Council elections**, held as part of the national local government election cycle. On this date, all seats on Blunsdon Parish Council will be open for election, giving parishioners the opportunity to choose their representatives for the next four-year term. Polling stations will be open throughout the day, and those registered to vote will be able to cast their ballot for the candidates standing in their ward. This election marks an important moment in the parish calendar, ensuring that the council continues to reflect the priorities, voices, and aspirations of the community it serves.

Dates for Your Diary

As we move further into spring, May brings a number of key meetings and events across the parish. The following dates provide a quick overview of what's scheduled for the month ahead.

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

Blunsdon's Annual Parish Council Meeting will be on 11th May at 7.30 pm

Blunsdon's Annual Parish Meeting will be on Thursday 21st May 7.30 pm

As we move further into spring, May brings a number of key meetings:

4 May : Early May Bank Holiday

9 May : Ward Surgery – 11:30am, *Village Shop*

25 May : Spring Bank Holiday

Did You Know?

In May 2011, Blunsdon officially became a separate civil parish, following the community governance review that divided the former parish of “Blunsdon St Andrew” into two:

- St Andrews Parish (the urban area)
- Blunsdon Parish (the village and rural area)

This change strengthened local representation and gave Blunsdon its own dedicated parish council, shaping the governance structure the village still uses today.

. FOOD FOR THOUGHT.
Outside Catering



**Mobile fish & chip van will be at Blunston,
Blunt Rise from 5pm
Thursday 7th May and Thursday 21st May 2026
If you would like a copy of our menu
please email grahamrowcliffe58@outlook.com
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NOTE WE WILL JUST MEET ON THE FIRST WEDNESDAY DURING THE WINTER MONTHS

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 AT 10:00AM - 11:30AM

Blunsdon Community Shop and Cafe
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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!

JOIN US!

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*******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.

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!



BLUNSDON WI

A National campaign of the WI is “clean rivers for people and animals”. Watching ‘Dirty Business’ on Channel 4 really brings it home just how local an issue this is. Sewage dumping has been happening in Blunston at the works on Back Lane.

The link below takes you to a website where you can click to see the programme and monitor local sewage dumps in both 2025 and so far in 2026.

<https://top-of-the-poops.org/constituency/swindon-north>

There is also a link to an official petition to the government to sign there.

Blunston WI meet in the large hall of Blunston Village Hall on the third Wednesday of the month.

Last month we had another riveting talk by Ali Warren this time on Alexis Soyer Head Chef at the Reform Club in the 1800s and inventor and entrepreneur.

Our extra activities have been very busy with a litter pick around the village and a really fascinating visit to the Uxbridge Battle of Britain Bunker with an excellent tour, thanks to Jo organising both. Also, fingers crossed there may have been bluebells still around for our stroll at the end of April around Nightingale Woods.

There are also a very active book club (next book “There are rivers in the sky” by Elif Shafak) and film club (next film “I swear” on Netflix).



Some of us have been busy making bees for the open gardens in June. Please feel free to join in and decorate your gardens with bees. Whilst we are on the subject, WI will be doing teas and wonderful cakes each afternoon of the open gardens event 27/28 June from 1.30 pm in the village hall. All welcome with or without garden/scarecrow visits.

Our AGM meeting is on May 20th with an American Supper.

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

Social Walking from Blunston Community Shop



**2nd and 4th Thursday of every month
starting at 10:00am at the Community Shop**

We always start and finish at the shop... coffee and cake afterwards isn't mandatory, but it is highly recommended!

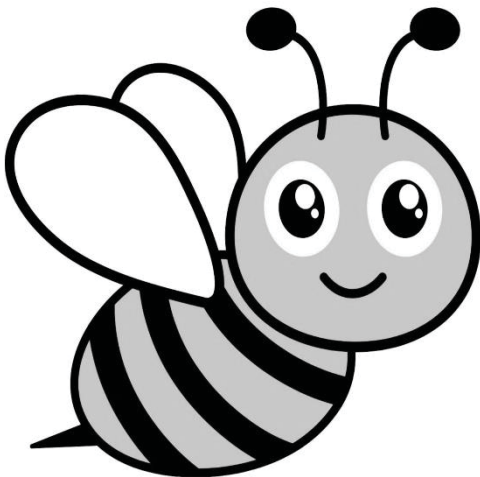
Any queries, please message Alex on 07554 811779

New walkers are always welcome, and welcomed

**Blunsdon Open Gardens Weekend
Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th June**

The year is quickly flying by and we are finally getting some sunshine, the spring daffodils are making way for tulips and bluebells, and soon it will be time for Open Gardens 2026.

We really hope to make this biennial tradition a whole village event and in addition to those kind enough to open their gardens to public viewing there will be lots of other opportunities for villagers and visitors to contribute and to enjoy. There will be a fantastic scarecrow trail, and in the village hall we will have cooked breakfasts, afternoon teas and cakes, a children's craft activity, and a sale of gardening books and plants. Meantime, in the church there will be bell-ringing, music and an art exhibition and sale.



This year, we would also like to decorate the village with bees in celebration of their role in providing food for us all: no bees, no food. We want as many households as possible to decorate their windows or garden borders with bees- these can be drawn, knitted, sewn, cut out of felt - whatever and however you wish. Suitable for all ages from 1 to 101. How amazing it would be(e) if every household displayed a bee, our own Blunsdon hive!

**So please Bee-Involved and join in with this fun challenge.
We are still accepting entries for scarecrows and gardens to open.**

For gardens: contact Judy on 07962318087 or via email to drjudy_robbins_62@hotmail.com

For scarecrows: contact Lucy sturgess@btinternet.com

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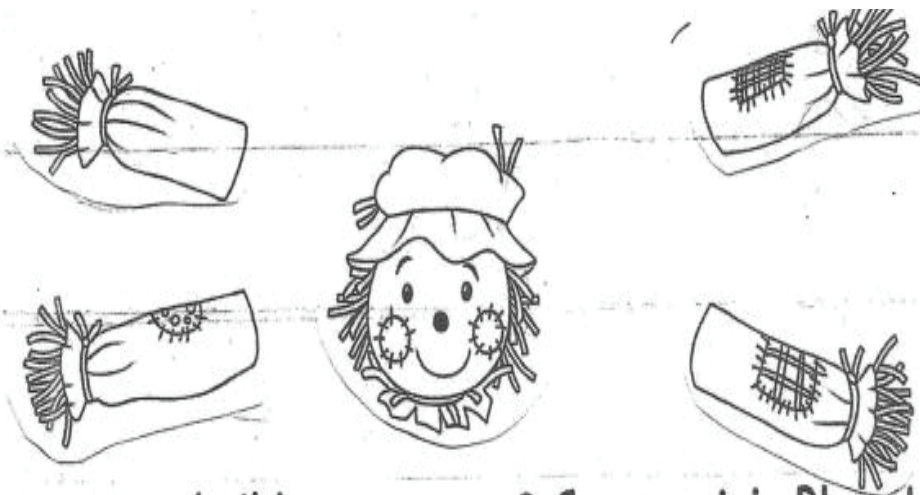
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for Chelworth Industrial Estate to the left, take the 1st turning right
for the Nursery into Blakehill Business Park



Do you wanna build a scarecrow? Come on join Blunsdon's trail

The theme is anything beginning with the letter T

(Either the scarecrow itself or an object held by scarecrow)

Trail date is the weekend of 27-28th June

We are looking for your help by making a scarecrow to show outside your house to make this an enjoyable and successful event.

Closing date for scarecrow entry : Monday 15th June

For more information contact Lucy on 01793 705040 or csturgess@btinternet.com

Proceeds from the scarecrow trail will go to St Leonard's church and Prospect Hospice



If you'd like to Bee involved in the weekend, are unable to open your garden or make a scarecrow then please decorate your gardens with Bees

(bees of any description : knitted, crocheted, sewn, drawn)

All the more fun and joyful to see as you walk round the village

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: Spring in Sutton Park

Your June Magazine will be delivered from: 29th May

Magazine issue	Deadline for items for inclusion
June	20th May

*****Thankyou to Peter Maggs who has written the Dark Secrets of Blunsdon Part 1 for this Magazine, he came across the extraordinary case of Henry John Hatch while researching his family history. The final part of the story will be published next month

Community Messages

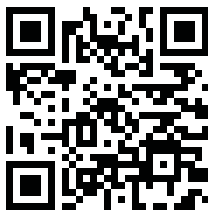
Are you interested in joining a group class in Blunsdon offering a Bowen Therapy 'Rest and Repair Class'.

This class will be a 60 min session aimed at deep relaxation, but with the additional benefit of targeting areas that are either out of alignment or causing pain. It would be a session carried out through 'loose' clothing (leggings, shorts, t-shirts), using yoga mats and blankets. (Alternatively, it can be seated if you prefer). Initially, it would be for 16yrs+. (However, if there was an interest I could offer sessions for the under 16yrs too). Your feedback would be appreciated to ascertain if there is an interest in starting this class. The first session would be just £5.00, thereafter £10. Max class size would be 10, although I could offer several sessions if there was a demand etc. Please use the link below or the QR code to complete the short survey.

Thank you for you feedback

Best wishes Claire.

https://forms.cloud.microsoft/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=-2INkqI2qEeR_SIMRyqODRobKlyz0GJDieJ8o6EH9rtUREdOM0VYU1kzR1pMQ045VVdKNkxHQUNNOC4u



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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

A firm fixture in our calendar of events is a Quiz and Ploughman's Supper with scrumptious homemade desserts. Held two months ago it raised £1,557, funds which will be donated equally to the Roxi Foundation and CALM Children with Leukaemia.

Another annual event is our Swimathon. In it entrants can raise funds for a charity of their own choosing. It's free to enter and we give Amazon vouchers to the 3 swimmers who collect the most sponsorship. This year, the main beneficiary is the Swindon based charity, Phoenix Enterprises. Our Swimathon is at Highworth Recreation Centre on Sunday 17th May.

A first-time event this year will be a Cyclothon in aid of Limitless Swindon. Limitless Swindon is an inclusive cycling project which supports hundreds of disabled people in accessing cycling. The Cyclothon is on Sunday 26th July at the Moredon Sporting Hub which is Swindon's brand-new, state-of-the-art sports facility located off Akers Way. It will be open to all cycling enthusiasts of any age and any ability to enter and cycle for a great cause on the Hub's 1.2km traffic free cycling track.

For more details of all the above events, visit rotaryswindonnorth.org.uk

Rotary is one of the largest and most successful global membership and humanitarian service organisations in the world. It has 1.4 million members in over 200 countries. The Rotary Club of Swindon North & Thamesdown meets at the Blunsdon House Hotel at 6.30pm on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Mondays in the month. To find out more visit rotaryswindonnorth.org.uk or phone Rotarians Chris (07712 078942) or Ken (07710 228697).



A Recipe from CookFoodFan

Fakeaway

I have never been one to have takeaways as I like to cook myself, I know what goes into my meals and also takeaways are pricey. But I really like the thought of them. So, this is my Chinese 'fakeaway' to save money and probably calories. This Sweet and Sour Chicken delivers on flavour and great taste, serve with boiled rice.

Sweet and Sour Chicken (serves 4)

2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts 2 tbsp sunflower oil
1 onion, cut into 12 wedges 2 peppers (any colour), cut into 2cms chunks
225g tin water chestnuts, drained and cut in half horizontally
2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed 25g piece fresh ginger, grated
Black pepper

For the sauce:

425g tin pineapple chunks in natural juice
2 tbsp cornflour
150ml water
2 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp white wine vinegar
2 tbsp brown sugar
2 tbsp tomato ketchup
½ tsp chilli flakes

1. Make the sauce: drain the pineapple over a bowl to keep the juice (about 150ml). Put the cornflour in a bowl and stir in 3 tbsp pineapple juice to make a smooth paste. Add the remaining juice and the water, then stir in the soy sauce, vinegar, sugar, ketchup and chilli flakes until thoroughly combines. Set aside.
2. Cut each chicken breast into 8 even sized pieces. Heat 1 tbsp oil in a large frying pan or wok and stir fry the onions and peppers, on a high heat, for 2 mins.
3. Add the remaining oil and the chicken to the pan and stir fry for 2 mins until coloured on all sides. Add the garlic, ginger, pineapple chunks and water chestnuts, stir fry for 1 min.
4. Give the sauce mixture a good stir and add it to the pan with the chicken and vegetables. Stir well, season with some black pepper and bring to a simmer. Cook for 4-6 mins (turning the mixture a few times) until the sauce is thickened and glossy and the chicken is tender and cooked through.
5. Serve with rice.

ENJOY



BLUNSDON CRICKET CLUB

The winter is over, long live the summer. 2026 Season is here!!!

This winter has seen disappointment in Australia in the Ashes and then in India at the T20 World Cup, but the excitement of an English summer of cricket is now here.

Blunsdon Foxes will compete in Wiltshire League Division Six (again) and would love to see any new, young or not so young players that are in or around the village who fancy playing regularly or just the odd game (most of the current regular players play a very odd game). If you fancy playing for your village team, the club welcomes everyone. Just contact Guy on 07753 446614, or come along and say hello at one of our games.

Upcoming fixtures – Saturday. Play begins at 1 p.m.

2nd May – home to Keevil

9th May – away to Chippenham at the Chips and Ham Arena

16th May – home to Blue Brigade

23rd May – away to Bathford at The Sunshine Mountain Ground

30th May – home to Nationwide



BLUNSDON FOOTBALL CLUB

Blunsdon are 5th out of 10 in the Swindon & District Premier League

Recent Results

Chiseldon	Won 2 – 1	Cup Semi Final	Attendance: 87
Old Town Athletic	Lost 0 – 7		
Cricklade Town	Won 4 – 1		
Poulton	Won 6 - 1		

Chizzy downed as Blunny reach Cup Final again - At a gorgeously sunny Sutton Park, in front a decent crowd, Blunsdon saw off Chiseldon to reach the League Cup Final for a second successive season, thanks to goals from young **Dominic Richards** and the experienced **Zachary Ockwell**.

The final is due to take place at Swindon Supermarine FC on Saturday 9th May, *kick off time to be confirmed*, where Blunsdon will take on local rivals Cricklade Town. Please come along and support **Franklin Murray's** Amber and Black team and see if we can lift the Cup this year.

Check the league website @ swindondistrictfootballleague.co.uk for details.

There has been plenty of goals in the final league games of the season, each played in very windy conditions, including a hammering at League Champions Old Town, followed by dominant wins at fellow finalists Cricklade and basement side Poulton. This has ensured Blunny maintain a respectable mid-table finish in the league.

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

MUSIC@STLEONARD'SMUSIC@STLEONARD'SMUSIC@STLEONARD'S



ST LEONARD'S CHURCH, BLUNSDON CONCERT SERIES 2026

Saturday July 25th -

Quattro Saxes and The Vintage Roses

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The Vintage Roses are an entertaining all-female singing group bringing timeless glamour and golden-era harmonies to life.

TICKET DETAILS IN THE NEXT MAGAZINE!

Saturday October 17th -

**The Sarsen Songmen and the Wiltshire
Saxophone Choir**

Saturday December 5th -

**Swing into Christmas with North Swindon Big
Band**

MUSIC@STLEONARD'SMUSIC@STLEONARD'SMUSIC@STLEONARD'S



The month of May is all about renewal and nurturing of relationships as well as personal growth as we fully embrace the season of Spring and so my theme for this month was found!

Starting with *The Life She Could Have Lived* by Laura Pearson; if you knew one decision was going to change the course of your whole life, would you want to know both outcomes? It got me thinking about the way the decisions we make every day affect our lives. I really enjoyed the premise and the swapping between the two lives, simply titled Yes and No, but I won't give away what the decisions were. I thought the end brought both lives together nicely whilst still being different in their own ways. I thought Anna as a character was spot on and relatable in so many ways and I loved her friendship with Nia; showing that in both lifetimes they were just excellent friends. There were a couple of characters (David!) that I did not like but I think that is a sign of the quality writing from Laura as you definitely are not supposed to like him! I have paired this one with a newly discovered Soave; if you're going to is a Pinot Grigio try making a different choice and picking this one up instead. It's a mineral based white wine from the Garganega grape, that is underrated for a complex Italian wine. I loved the smooth flavours of peach and pear, with a zesty citrus nod. Perfect to match a book where one path is smooth and sweet but another path leads to life with a different kick.

My next recommendation is the new one from Alexandra Potter, *So I Met this Guy*. If you like a story that crosses generations, such as *The Switch* or *How to Age Gracefully*, this one is for you. We follow Maggie and Flick as they embark on what can only be described as a quest! They are driving the route of a holiday cruise liner to try and capture a man who has done them wrong. It is a great storyline and you visit some fantastic places, we see Maggie go from living in her caravan to rolling at the tables in Monaco. Having visited the Amalfi Coast a couple of years ago, those sections were my favourite. I never like to ruin the end of books as you won't need to read it but I also love a book where a baddie gets his karma! Alexandra's writing is brilliant and I haven't yet read a book of hers that I haven't enjoyed but this might just be my favourite! There are so many good wines that I could have gone with travelling from Yorkshire to Portugal to name but a few but I have chosen a stunningly named bottle FYI, for your information, or flavourful, yummy and interesting; both fit the book and the wine. As the whole story is based on seeking answers, there is an element of naughtiness, lots of flavour and a whole lot of interesting! A Felix Solis Merlot brings with it all the flavours that you might expect, a Spanish red made from Tempranillo and Syrah grapes; a blend of dark fruits, vanilla with a taste of cocoa; perfect for them to share whilst discussing the next stage of their plan.

As always, go forth and explore all the books you like but please drink responsibly.

Reading with Wine

The Chatterbox – Forget Me Not

I remember going to my first boyfriend's house to meet his parents – it was a REALLY big deal and I was desperate for them to like me and hoped they would be the kind of people who would also make me feel welcome and at ease. It was all going fine until his mother called me by his last girlfriend's name. I was taken aback; she was embarrassed and boyfriend looked like he wanted the ground to swallow him up. It wasn't the only time it happened, however. Over the months we went out together, I was frequently called 'Gillian'. I felt quite hurt and wondered why she couldn't make the effort to get my name right and it also crossed my mind that it was perhaps intentional? For a teenaged girl, it was mystifying.

Many, many years on from that first boyfriend, I am the one who regularly calls people by the wrong name and I've noticed that others do it too. My husband gets called our son's name, or sometimes the cat's name. Our son looks at me as if I'm crazy but I just think, "you wait until it happens to you!" It's not that I'm forgetting who they are, it's just getting their name wrong as my brain scrolls through the options.

I think I now understand why my father-in-law has referred to me since the day he met me as, "young lady". It doesn't cause offense, and he can't remember what I'm called so pretty much all the females he encounters are given the same greeting. Considering he's also had three wives it's probably a very sensible strategy!

One of the most awkward situations, I find, is when I meet someone and can't for the life of me remember what their name is. I was out with my daughter-in-law not so long ago and bumped into an acquaintance I don't see very often. I was making polite conversation but my brain was rattling away at the speed of light, going through past workplaces, groups, old neighbours and so on – a bit like a swan gliding gracefully on the surface of the water but below it, every nerve-ending was firing. I even tried visualising my Facebook friends list. Finally, I remembered her name and tried to bluff my way out saying something like, "How rude, I almost forgot to introduce the two of you." Hopefully they didn't notice but I'll probably never forget that feeling of scrabbling around in my brain for a name!

Apparently, forgetting names as we get older is as common as can be. Our brain's search mechanism gets less efficient, our attention to detail when being first introduced declines and names are random tags, unlike like professions or hobbies which hold context. So, you may remember their face, their job and where you met but their name? It's somewhere caught up in the cobwebs in our heads. Of course, as we age, we also have more and more information to deal with as well – more history, more names, etc. It's always good to keep learning, thinking, creating and interacting to keep our brains as sharp as can be. This is particularly important when you're about to meet your son or daughter's partner and can't seem to call them the right name. Ah well, at least I wasn't referred to by the dog's name - I don't think I look like a Basil. Take care and enjoy your month of May!

Golden Gatherings - The Community Café - Every first and third Wednesday in the month @ 3pm.

Again, twice in April, the Dial-a-Ride mini-bus collected local residents from their homes to take them to the Community Cafe, to enjoy conversation and much laughter, before returning them home. The first session included an Easter lucky dip with three participants going home with an Easter gift, whilst everyone enjoyed a complimentary little chocolate egg. During the 2nd session there was a game of identifying each other from photos from the past, with the top pair achieving 19 out of 25!

Thanks again must go to the stalwart Golden Gatherings' volunteers, the Community Cafe staff & volunteers and to Clive, the Dial-A-Ride volunteer. Without all these people creating the opportunity, Blunsdon Golden Gatherings would not exist.

Since there are some free of charge places still available on the mini-bus, if you are someone who may like to join us for a trial session, or you know someone who might like to know more about Blunsdon Golden Gatherings, you are encouraged to make contact with Hazel Wakefield on 07974 150250 or via email goldengatheringsblunsdon@gmail.com.

Golden Gatherings

Fancy a cuppa and chat?



Dates for May: Wednesday 6th & 20th 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



Policing works best when it is rooted in the communities it serves. That is why I welcome the Chief Constable's announcement of Wiltshire Police's new priorities for the year ahead, which focus clearly on the things local people tell us matter most.

From April, Wiltshire Police will concentrate on three main areas: Safer Public Spaces, Reducing and Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls, and Improving Outcomes for Victims. These priorities will guide how officers and staff work day to day across our towns, villages and rural communities.

Keeping public spaces safe remains fundamental. This priority is about making sure people feel confident when they go about their daily lives—whether that's walking to the shops, attending local events or spending time in their neighbourhood. It includes tackling antisocial behaviour, knife crime and youth offending, and continuing to strengthen neighbourhood policing. Many residents tell me how important it is to see officers out and about locally, and that visible presence will remain a key focus.

The second priority, reducing and preventing violence against women and girls, reflects concerns raised by people across Wiltshire. Crimes such as domestic abuse, rape, stalking and harassment cause deep and lasting harm. Making this a core priority means working closely with partners to protect those at risk, support victims and take firm action against those responsible.

Improving outcomes for victims underpins everything the police do. Reporting a crime can be worrying, and people deserve to be treated with care, respect and professionalism. This focus is about improving investigations, keeping victims informed and making sure they feel supported throughout the process.

As Police and Crime Commissioner, I set the Police and Crime Plan, which sets out what residents should expect from their police service. These new operational priorities align closely with that plan and reflect our shared commitment to protecting the vulnerable, reducing harm and improving confidence in policing.

Policing faces real challenges, but clear priorities help ensure time and resources are directed where they matter most. I am confident that this approach will help Wiltshire Police continue to build trust, strengthen community links and keep our county a safe place to live, work and visit.

Dark Secrets at Broad Blunsdon – Part I

In *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*, Sherlock Holmes observed: 'The lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful countryside.' The visitor to the picturesque village of Broad Blunsdon would certainly be surprised to know that anything worse than rabbit poaching or apple scrumping had taken place there. There is a substantial memorial in the village churchyard to various members of the Plummer family who lived at Holdcroft House in the village. Thomas Plummer came from a wealthy landowning family and had a fortune of £15,000. Underneath the names of Thomas and Caroline Plummer is written:

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MARY EUGENIE WASBROUGH, DAUGHTER OF THE ABOVE,
WHO DIED 21ST JANUARY 1937, MAY SHE REST IN PEACE

No one now remembers the case of Mary Eugenia Plummer, but for a while in the mid-nineteenth century, she was national news. In May 1860, when she was just twelve years old, Eugenia stood trial at the Old Bailey on a charge of Wilful and Corrupt Perjury.

The Reverend Henry John Hatch had been chaplain at the new Wandsworth Prison since its opening in 1851. In 1859, short of money following some actions in Chancery, he advertised in *The Times* for paying pupils to be educated along with his adopted daughter, Lucy. Thomas and Caroline Plummer brought their daughters, Mary Eugenia, aged eleven, and her seven-year-old sister Stephana Augusta, to Wandsworth to receive live-in tuition. Mrs Plummer's behaviour was eccentric. She was 'overcome' with heat while inspecting the bedrooms and needed reviving with brandy and water; she asked the Hatches to have the girls in their bed with them in the mornings, as children will do with their parents, and which Eugenia was in the habit of doing at a previous school. However, the girls' stay did not last long. Two weeks later, fearing that a violent thunderstorm was an act of God against her for 'abandoning her children with strangers', Caroline Plummer returned and removed Eugenia and Augusta.

Two months after the children had left, Henry received a letter from his bishop saying that the Plummers were accusing him of indecently assaulting both of their daughters while they were in his care. After an interview with the prison governor, Henry resigned his post, and on the same day received a demand for money from one of the Chancery actions. Having no money and facing imprisonment for debt, he fled to secret lodgings. It was to appear as though he was running away. He gave himself up after his wife wrote to him, and on 1 December 1859 he was tried at the Old Bailey, convicted, and sent to Newgate for four years with hard labour. Prosecution witnesses were Eugenia, Stephana and their mother, Caroline Plummer.

There was disquiet in the press regarding the justice of the conviction given the nature of the accusations, 'too disgusting to print', significant discrepancies in the prosecution testimony, and other irregularities. The law allowed neither Henry nor his wife to give evidence, and his counsel, Serjeant Ballantine, for some reason did not call any material witnesses. There was no

Court of Criminal Appeal at the time, so Henry's only hope of liberty was to apply for The Royal Pardon.

Henry John Hatch's petition to The Queen contained his own evidence and that of members of his household, none of which had been heard in court. But his friends pulled off a most brilliant coup: they contacted the twelve members of the jury that had convicted Henry and showed them the petition. Eleven of the twelve then signed a declaration to the effect that had they seen Henry's evidence during the trial, they would never have convicted him. The Home Secretary, Sir George Cornwall Lewis, remained unconvinced. He did say that if Eugenia could be convicted of perjury—of lying about what she claimed Henry had done to her—the petition would be reconsidered.

A campaigning journal, *The Detective*, advertised for anyone with knowledge of the case to contact them; several people did, and it printed the following information: Caroline Plummer had a conviction for assaulting one of her servants, and she once threatened the children with her husband's razor while drunk; Eugenia had been asked to leave at least one school because of her behaviour, and two other schools reported that she was untrustworthy. Henry's friends advertised in the newspapers for funds to bring an action against Eugenia, and around £700 was raised. Finally, on 15 May 1860, Mary Eugenia Plummer, now aged twelve, was put on trial at the Old Bailey for Wilful and Corrupt Perjury.

The five-day trial was a sensation. Caroline Plummer was intoxicated in the witness box; she offered the chief prosecuting barrister, Edwin James QC, alcoholic refreshment if he should need it. Her husband, Thomas Plummer, admitted that his wife had beaten one of their servants with a candlestick. The Plummers' doctor, John Gay, was called. Eugenia had told the Hatches that she intended to marry Mr Gay when she was seventeen and he called her his 'Little Wife.' In his evidence, John Gay said that he had observed 'slight marks of violence' when he examined Eugenia following the alleged incidents, and he claimed that he had reported this at the previous trial. However, there was no record in the court transcript or the press reports of Gay ever having given evidence previously. When he was being pressed on this point he fainted and had to be carried from the court ... Eugenia's sister Stephana, now aged eight, who had only spent one night at the Hatches', was called and astounded the court when she claimed that Henry had assaulted her while his wife looked on.

After the Judge's summing up, which took nearly eight hours, the jury retired in the early evening. Returning two hours later they found Eugenia guilty, while recommending her to the extreme mercy of the law. There was great applause in the court, and everyone outside who had been unable to get in were heard to be cheering.

To be continued ...

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