



NEWSLETTER

March, Issue 100

100th Edition

Introduction

The Newsletter has reached a major milestone – this month is the 100th edition. The Newsletter was first issued in March 2017, some 9 years ago.

The Beginning

At that time Sue Briscoe was the Parish Council Chairman. Some of the items covered in the first edition were:

- Funding for public libraries passed to Parish Councils
- Update on what was happening with the Bungalow at Goosecroft.
- Meeting about Springs Farm's plans.
- The 2018 Village Plan
- SID (Speed Indicator Device) Training



We have moved on a great deal since then.

- The Parish Council now help fund the library in Pangbourne.
- Since the Bungalow was refurbished, we have rented it out to twice to different tenants and it has been the source of a useful income to the Parish Council.
- The Village Plan was issued in 2018

Now

Initially we sent the Newsletter out to 33 people, and currently we now distribute to 157 people.

Since the first edition the Newsletter has evolved from just containing Parish Council information to including many more articles from local groups and information on events that people may be interested in. We also have added some colour by including picture and posters when we can.

We would welcome articles, with pictures, if possible, from any local club so we can make people aware of their what they can offer or any events they plan to hold.

Graham Rolfe, Chairman

District Council Reorganisation

The Government launched its formal public consultation (survey) on the 5 February on options for the shape of councils across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. The last time a change of this scale happened was over 50 years ago so this decision will have a significant impact to everyone in the district for many years. The survey closes on 26 March 2026.



What is changing?

The Government is scrapping the current district and county councils and replacing them with new 'unitary' councils. Unitary councils deliver all council services under one roof.

What are the proposals?

The Government asked the existing councils to develop proposals for them to consider. There were three proposals submitted to government:

- A single county unitary that covers all of Oxfordshire.
- Two unitary councils that cover Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. One covering the existing council areas of Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire. One covering the existing council areas of South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire.
- Three unitary councils that cover Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. One covering the existing Oxford City council area but with expanded boundaries. One covering the remaining existing council areas of Cherwell and West Oxfordshire. One covering the remaining existing council areas of South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire.

You can access the Government Survey through the Parish Council website (<https://purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk>) and click on District Reorganisation on the home page or directly at <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/oxfordshire/>.

Grants

At the Parish Council meeting on the 10 February the Parish Council awarded grants to the following charities and local organisations:

Assisting Berkshire Children to Read	Berkshire MS Therapy Centre
Berkshire Vision	Mapledurham Lock CIC
Purley Jubilee Football Club	Purley on Thames Tennis Club
Purley on Thames Cricket Club	Purley Sustainability Group
Purley Memorial Hall (Coffee morning)	Sue Ryder (Duchess of Kent Hospice)

Local News

Pangbourne Hardware Store /Post Office

Many of you will have become aware that Stephen, the owner of Collins Hardware, has been talking about stepping away from the business when his lease expires in March this year. Stephen has been associated with the business for much of his working life and, with his softly spoken, calm way of dealing with customers, is one of Pangbourne Village's unsung heroes. Whilst the shop and its yard have changed over the years, Stephen has been its constant factor, and his presence in the village will be much missed.

When Pangbourne Post Office was looking for a new home, it moved to Collins Hardware and in due course Stephen took on the role of sub-postmaster. The Post Office section offers a wide range of banking services which have become all the more important over the years as one after other banks have disappeared from Pangbourne High Street. As well as serving Pangbourne, it serves as a hub for outreach services to Upper Basildon, Upper Bucklebury, Benson, Aston Tirrold and Purley.

Despite trying to find buyers for the business no-one provided a viable offer and so there seemed no other option but just to shut the doors at the end of March and with that the end of local Post Office facilities and all the day to day hardware goods provided by Collins Hardware.

Many of you know Ali & Jen already as they own the cheese shop just over the road from Collins Hardware. When they heard that no buyer had been found for Collins, they decided to step in. They both hold a strong belief that a village needs a Post Office at its heart and so, for the past 5 months have been working behind the scenes to obtain a new lease for the premises and secure a contract with Post Office Ltd to run its Pangbourne Branch. They are pleased to say that, as of mid-February, this is now going ahead.

Jen & Ali will continue to run the cheese shop with the support of their specialist cheese team. Then, from the beginning of April they will also start running Collins and Pangbourne

Post Office, joining in with the existing team there who will continue to remain familiar faces over the road. Stephen has advised he will be on hand to make the transition as seamless as possible before he takes a step back and embarks on ventures new.

I think we'd all agree that we are hugely grateful to Stephen for all he has done for Pangbourne. We hope everyone in the village will continue to support Collins and the Post Office, and be tolerant of Ali & Jen as they learn the ropes!

Reporting problems

West Berkshire Council deal with the resolution of all sorts of problems from potholes, dog fouling, streetlights, graffiti, etc. You can report any issues that you have online via the WBC website. Just follow this link: [Problem Reporting](#).

Planning Applications

West Berkshire Council invites Purley on Thames Parish Council to comment on planning applications within the parish. The Parish Council's input is not binding upon West Berkshire Council, but comments may be considered in reaching a decision.

You can also see the details of any planning application via the [Planning Portal](#) on the WBC website. If you scroll down to the bottom of the Planning Portal webpage you will find a map showing recent planning applications in WBC. You can zoom in on the map to just see Purley on Thames. Also, an orange notice should be displayed at the boundary of any property/location subject to a planning application.

Any individual can comment on a planning application, both for and against, direct to WBC by [email](#).

The Parish Planning Committee meets about every two weeks. The meeting is open to the public and there is opportunity for you to comment on any particular application. To see the agenda for the next meeting, which details the planning applications to be considered, see [Planning Committee meeting](#).

West Berkshire Council has introduced a free online service to allow residents to check to see if planning permission is required for any possible building alterations. This service will make it easier for residents to understand if they need to submit a planning application for items such as solar panels, loft conversions, adding an outbuilding or adding a dropped kerb. You can access this new service on the West Berkshire Council ["Do I need Planning Permission?"](#) webpage.

West Berkshire Council also offer planning pre-application advice service for which a fee is chargeable. More information about this can be found on the West Berkshire Council's [pre-application advice service](#) webpage.

More Than a Hall: The Beating Heart of Purley on Thames



If walls could talk, the Purley on Thames Memorial Hall would have a lot to say.

Set in the leafy surroundings of Glebe Road, within a short walk of the River Thames and sweeping views across the Thames Valley towards South Oxfordshire and Mapledurham—an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It's hard to imagine a more picturesque backdrop for village life.

But this building is more than just good looks. It was built by the villagers themselves as a memorial to those who gave their lives in the First and Second World Wars. Funded through weekly local collections, it stands as both a tribute and a testament to community spirit. From the very beginning, it was designed to belong to everyone.

And it still does.

Today, the hall buzzes with activity. One day it's filled with the sound of laughter at a wedding reception; the next, it's a birthday party or it's hosting Pilates stretches, karate kicks, WI meetings, or the harmonious voices of local singers. Art exhibitions, craft fairs, birthday parties, community meetings—you name it, it's probably happened here. With a large enough space for big celebrations it still feels warm and welcoming.

Parking? Plenty of it. There's space outside the hall, plus overflow parking on the grass when needed. Recent improvements mean smooth, level access straight from Glebe Road—making it easy for everyone to come along and join in.

And then there's Tuesday.

From 10.30am to 12.30pm, the hall transforms into the village's favourite coffee spot. The Tuesday Coffee Morning is a relaxed, friendly drop-in where conversations flow as easily as the coffee. It's a chance to catch up, meet new faces, enjoy a biscuit (or two),

and occasionally support a local charity event. Best of all, it's free—thanks to generous community grants.

In short, this isn't just a hall. It's where memories are made, friendships are formed, and the village comes together.

For bookings and more information, visit: www.purleyonthames.org.uk/MemHall/

Written by the Memorial Hall Trustees



From Your Parish Office

Don't forget the team in the Office are happy to help where we can. Office opening hours are now:

Monday 9.30 am – 2.00 pm

Thursday 2.00 pm – 5.00 pm

(except for Bank Holidays)

However, it is a good idea to phone ahead if you want to see someone to avoid a wasted visit in the event of the team having other commitments.

Alternatively, you can telephone on 0118 984 4507 or email the Clerk at clerk@purleyonthames-pc.gov.uk

Local Club Events

Project Purley



Image: Windsor Castle by Gilbert Munger, public domain, from Wikimedia Commons

Windsor Castle 1100 – 1700 – a talk by Dr David Lewis

Friday 20th March

7.30pm

The Large Barn, Goosecroft, Purley on Thames

Members free, non-members £5

Our evening begins with the Society's AGM, after which we break for drinks and nibbles before our talk begins. Windsor Castle, the oldest and largest occupied castle in the world, has been home to 40 reigning monarchs. Founded by William the Conqueror, it has been extensively rebuilt and restored over time. It has survived a siege and the English Civil War. Find out more in this fascinating talk.

Guests and visitors very welcome. Membership of the Society costs just £26 for two people at the same address or £18 for one person and lasts until the end of December 2026.

PHS Gardening Club



The Trading Store is now open on Saturday mornings between 10.00 and 11.00 am each week. It sells a range of gardening supplies, including composts, growbags, fertilisers, pesticides and grass seed. As PHS is a member of the Suttons group scheme, our members are able to get a 50% discount on packet seed and 20% discount on other non-seed live products such as onions and bulbs.

As an RHS affiliated society we hold a card that provides a 50% reduction on the normal adult admission charge to any of the RHS gardens for one paid-up member of the PHS

Gardening Club and one guest. If you require any further details or would like to borrow the card, please contact Tom Gallagher on 07806 507576.

If you would like to join us, just come to the Trading Store, in Purley Memorial Hall carpark on a Saturday – membership costs just £4.00 a year. Visit www.purleyonthames.org.uk/PHS for more information

Dates for your diary:

18 March at 7.30 for 8.00 pm : our guest speaker will be Dr Richard Marks, with a talk titled “A germination of an idea: The Suttons Seed Company”.

11 April, 2.30 - 4.00 pm: The Spring Flower Show. This is your chance to see the entries and prize winners, and enjoy tea and cake. No entry fee.

All our events are held at the Memorial Hall, Glebe Road, RG8 8DP. Guests are very welcome and will be asked for a £2.00 contribution towards the cost of speakers.

Berkshire Family History Society

As usual, events are open to members and non-members alike. Full details of all can be found at <https://berksfhs.org/> and you can also book tickets here.

Berkshire Family History Society CIO is a registered charity, number 1204390



Image courtesy of Malcolm Summers (cropped)

Thursday 19th March 2.30 – 3.45pm – Talk – “Signs of the Times: Reading’s Memorials” by Malcolm Summers £5 – pre-book or pay at the door, Abbey Baptist Church, Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BE

This talk will describe aspects of the town’s history by considering some of its, often not well known, plaques, statues, and monuments. Even the better- known memorials have secrets to yield in the tales of their origins.



Image: High Street in Twyford by Steve Daniels, CC BY SA 2.0 (cropped)

Friday 20th March 2-3pm – Walk – Discover Historic Twyford with James Fort - £5 – pre-booking required

Join James Fort, Chair of Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society, as he leads us around Twyford. We’ll explore the interesting and historical buildings of the village and discover more about its long legacy.



Image: Martin Ridley, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Thursday 26th March 2 - 3.15pm – Online Talk “The History of Victorian Medicine” by Dr Richard Marks - £5 – pre-booking required

Explore the evolution of healthcare during the Victorian era as science began to challenge centuries-old beliefs. Discover how hospital care was reshaped, the underworld of anatomical theft, and the rise of professional doctors and nurses.

**Thames Vale Singers
Concert**

Saturday, 28 March 2026
3.00pm St Mary's Church, Purley
Doors open 2.30pm

**SPRING
REFLECTIONS**

Musical Director - Katherine Walkem
Accompanist - Peter Bernard

Tickets: £10.00, under 16s: £6.00 (includes refreshments)
On sale: Tuesday 3 March 2026
From: 0118 942 4372 or
email: tickets@thamesvalesingers.org.uk
or Online:
www.ticketsource.co.uk/thames-vale-singers
(booking fee £0.50)

Profits will be donated to Purley Park Trust

www.thamesvalesingers.org.uk

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Other Events

VILLAGE



SINCE 2015

CONCERTS

St Mary's, Purley on Thames RG8 8BJ
7pm Doors & Bar, 8pm Music



Annie Dressner (with Steady Habits - Solo) **Saturday 14th March 2026**

Songwriting stalwart Annie Dressner has been releasing music since 2011 and this show is part of Annie's 'I Thought It Would Be Easier' album tour. Singles from the upcoming record (5 April) have already had spins on BBC 6 Music! Demonstrating a knack for rich storytelling, mesmerizing melodies, and lyrics that cut straight to the heart, Annie's music resonates with an NYC flair to tell these stories. Following her move from NYC to Cambridge, Annie has become a regular name on the UK touring and festival circuit.

'Dressner is able to paint visceral images and transport the listener to the world of the song' - American Songwriter

Danni Nicholls **Saturday 25th April 2026**



Singer-songwriter Danni Nicholls' style has been described as "smoky soul, folk-pop and heart-wrenching alt-country, all in a rich voice" & she has recently received three consecutive America Music Association UK award nominations. Over the past few years, Danni has played shows with the likes of Shakin' Stevens, Lucinda Williams, Sturgill Simpson, The Secret Sisters and notables. and been invited to perform at festivals around the world including Cambridge Folk, Folk Alliance International and AmericanaFest, Nashville.

"One in a Million" - Maverick Music Magazine

Tickets: Earlybird Adult £12, Youth £8; Full-price Adult £15, Youth £10
www.villageconcerts.co.uk



EASTER FAYRE



**Purley Memorial
Hall**

Saturday 11.00am-2:00pm



**Tea, Coffee, Biscuits,
Cakes & Savouries**



28th March



CASH ONLY

**End of Line Clothing all Donated by Tesco Extra,
Portman Road**

**Jigsaw puzzles, greeting cards, toys, ceramic pots,
children's books, cookery books, gardening books,
bric-a-brac, Mum's gifts.**

All proceeds to Duchess of Kent Hospice

**Purley Memorial Hall is located in Glebe Road,
RG8 8DP**

We would like to provide information of any activities that local clubs or societies are undertaking within the village or that might be of interest to residents of Purley on Thames. These can be

regular or one-off events. If you would like us to include a bit about your event, please email [Cathy our Administrative Clerk](#) with the details.

Purley Sustainability Group - The New Orchard Takes Root with Song and Celebration

As you may already be aware, just before Christmas PSG — alongside many members of the Purley community — planted the first fruit trees in Bucknell's Meadow. On 26 January 2026, this new community orchard was welcomed and blessed in the most joyful way possible: with a traditional wassailing event led by some of our youngest residents.

On a dark (but thankfully dry) winter evening, members of the Squirrels 1st Purley and Pangbourne Scout Group, their families, and other local residents gathered among the newly planted trees to take part in a celebration that blends ancient custom with fresh beginnings. Wassailing — a centuries-old tradition intended to bless orchard trees and encourage a good harvest — was brought to life by children and adults who sang, clapped, and enthusiastically bashed musical instruments for the trees, their voices echoing across nearby Blount's Meadow and the Lock.

Wrapped in wellies, winter coats, scarves and head torches, participants formed a cheerful procession through the orchard, stopping to sing, clap, and offer well-wishes for healthy growth. Their songs, full of laughter and excitement, captured the spirit of the evening — hopeful, communal, and rooted in care for the land.

The orchard itself represents a long-term investment in Purley's green spaces and future food resilience. Once established, it will hopefully provide fruit within the community, support local wildlife, and offer a shared space for reflection, wellbeing, learning, and connection.

This initial planting phase of the Orchard serves as a "trial", testing how the trees flourish and we can keep an eye on them before planning future purchases of more. PSG have been incredibly fortunate to have received sponsorship for the initial trees, which are now labelled with the variety and the sponsor.

PSG were keen to involve children from the very beginning of the orchard's journey, helping them build a sense of ownership and an understanding of where food comes from. Parents and residents looked on as the children took centre stage, some commenting on how special it felt to see old traditions passed on in such a natural and inclusive way. For some, it was their first experience of wassailing; for others, a welcome revival of a custom not seen in locally for many years.

As the final song was sung and apple juice was shared, the orchard already felt like an established part of community life — not just a collection of young trees, but a place shaped by shared voices and shared commitment.

With time, care, and perhaps a few more songs in the years ahead, the orchard is set to grow into a lasting symbol of community spirit, rooted firmly in the hands — and voices — of the next generation in Purley on Thames.

If you are wanting some fresh air, do try and pop by the Orchard — and if you see anything that looks untoward, please do let PSG know using the contacts below.

Dates for the diary:

Repair Café — Saturday 14th March 3pm to 5pm at The Mad Duck, Wintringham Way.

Recycling/ Terracycle — Sunday 15th March at 7 Beech Road.

Litter Picking — Sunday 29th March 10am - Meet at The Barn, Goosecroft wearing suitable clothing.

Annual General Meeting — Wednesday 15th April 7pm at the Memorial Hall, Glebe Road.

Purley Sustainability Group (PSG) is a community sustainability group for Purley on Thames. We are passionate about enhancing community wellbeing through projects that bring people together to improve our local environment and encourage sustainable living.

For more information:

www.purleysustainability.co.uk

info@purleysustainability.co.uk

Facebook — Purley Sustainability Group & Purley on Thames Repair Café

Please do get in touch if you want to learn more or become a volunteer at the allotments, or at the repair café or want to subscribe our newsletters and keep abreast of events.

Repair Café



You can find further information regarding dates and times for the [Repair Café/Other Events](#) and [Recycling](#) on the PSG website.

If you have feedback to give Your Parish Council or wish to provide an article on what interests you: an item or person of interest, a plea for a Charity or not-for-profit business but not a commercial business, your input would be most welcome, subject to editorial rights. It would be very helpful, if possible, if you could supply any copy in Word (12 pt Calibri) and/or picture format. Submissions as pdfs may be rejected. Please email your copy to [Cathy](#) by close of play on the 20th of the month.

Many thanks - Editor

Purley on Thames Parish Council does not take responsibility for articles provided by non-Council Members and would encourage you to go to the website for the article provider and check dates, times and details.

Purley on Thames Parish Council is not responsible for the content of third-party websites.

The Editor is Cathy Gainsford – Administrative Clerk, Purley on Thames Parish Council