PARISH MAGAZINE



St. Mary's, Herriard



All Saints', Turworth



St. Mary's, Upton Grey



St Lawrence, Weston Patrick

February 2026

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BENEFICE MAGAZINE – February 2026
Edition for the Parishes of Herriard with Winslade, Tunworth, Upton Grey and Weston Patrick

Letter from the Benefice Ministry Team



I'm not sure what the weather will be like by the time that you get to read this, but as I write I've woken up to a light dusting of snow and I find myself thinking about the days when we had 'proper' winters and I could, living in the countryside, reckon on at least two days off work in February because we'd be snowed in.

In the middle of this month, on the 18th, we shall be keeping Ash Wednesday and I find myself remembering another Ash Wednesday a good while ago when I lived in the Candovers. Remembering how on that Ash Wednesday evening, coming out of Church to find a fresh fall of snow accompanied by an icy blast, Canon Bryan our Vicar kindly put my bicycle in the back of his estate car and took me the two miles back home. So Lent begins in winter.

'Proper' winters are about letting the penetrating frost get into the ground, which has been ploughed in the autumn, and breaking it down. 'Proper' winters are also about that same penetrating frost acting as nature's control on the bugs and pests which otherwise cause havoc with the crops which will be showing their heads in the springtime. Springtime is not very far away, and before Lent is over and we get to Easter it will be spring, the time of new growth and freshness. So during Lent we shall pass from winter to spring.

Climate change has messed things up somewhat, and the seasons now tend to blur into one another. Ideally though, winter and springtime, like love and marriage in the song, should go together like a horse and carriage. So too in Lent we need the marriage of the elements of a 'proper' winter and spring. Lent is an opportunity to let God penetrate our lives to break down the things which prevent us being receptive and to 'debug' us so to speak. At the same time we need the springtime bit as well providing opportunities to grow and to be renewed.

When we wake up to an even slightly snowy morning it can be a bit like waking up to a whole new world. May this coming Lent give us the opportunity to see things in a different way as well.

Alan Hoar (Licensed Lay Minister)

FROM THE REGISTERS

Memorial Service:
Bruce Fitzgerald at All Saints Tunworth on 17th December
Baptism:
Aris and Ava Simmons at All Saints Tunworth on 10th January
Baptism:
Reuben Bartlett at St Lawrence Weston Patrick on 11th January

CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 1st February
9.00am Tunworth – BCP Holy Communion
10.00am Herriard – BCP Holy Communion (said)
10.30am Upton Grey – CW Holy Communion
Sunday 8th February
9.00am Tunworth – 1662 Morning Prayer
10.00am Weston Patrick – CW Holy Communion
10.30am Upton Grey – Morning Worship
5.00pm Herriard – Evensong
Thursday 12th February
10.00am Upton Grey – BCP Holy Communion (said)
Sunday 15th February
10.00am Herriard – Morning Worship
10.30am Upton Grey – CW Holy Communion
5.00pm Tunworth – Evensong
Wednesday 18th February
7.30pm Odiham – Ash Wednesday Benefice Holy Communion
Thursday 19th February
10.00am Herriard – BCP Holy Communion (said)
Sunday 22nd February
9.00am Tunworth – Family Service
10.00am Herriard – Family Service
10.30am Upton Grey – Informal Service
5.00pm Weston Patrick – Evensong

CHURCH NEWS

Lent in the North Hampshire Downs

Even though it feels like we've only just had Christmas, Lent is fast approaching. Please can you note the following events that will be happening through Lent in our Benefice.

Lent Course

For our Lent Course this year, we will be bringing together all our twelve churches to do the renowned Bible Course. This will start on **Tuesday 10th February**, as the course takes eight weeks, so we're having to start a bit before Lent begins. We shall be meeting each Tuesday evening at 7.30pm in All Saints Church, Odiham, and will have some tables for each church, with refreshments included. This course is a hugely successful and very enjoyable way of grasping God's big story of the Bible in just eight weeks, and it's fun and very informative. Please do consider coming along to this – more information in due course, or contact admin@moretolife.church to register.

Shrove Tuesday Pancakes

As usual, we'll have our benefice Pancake Party in All Saints, Odiham, on **Tuesday 17th February** at 3.00–6.00pm. All are welcome – unlimited pancakes (and amazing toppings!), games for all the family, and lots of tea for adults.

Ash Wednesday Service

We shall have our benefice Ash Wednesday communion service in All Saints Odiham at 7.30pm on **Wednesday 18th February**. This service will include the ancient tradition of 'ashing'.

The Revd Chris Dudgeon (Benefice Rector)

Coffee & Cake

All Saints Tunworth, St Mary's Upton Grey and St Lawrence Weston Patrick are continuing with their regular coffee/cake sessions. The February events are:

- Coffee and cake in the church porch, **All Saints Tunworth**, at 10.30am on **Thursday 5th February.**
- Coffee and cake drop-in at **Upton Grey Village Hall**, 11.00am–1.00pm on **Monday 9th and 23rd February.**
- Coffee morning at **Weston Patrick Village Hall**, 11.00am–12.30pm on **Wednesday 25th February.**

Tea or coffee, slice of cake, chat. Open to all, very informal, no need to book, just turn up. All ages welcome!

KidsZone

KidsZone - Ukrainian trip edition!
Hi Everyone!



This month, KidsZone is going to be a little different, and more *about* kids than *for* kids! I want to tell you about a long journey I took last year. Unusually, I'm going to start at almost the end, when, on the morning of 24th October, Diana and I set off, along with a convoy of nearly 40 other vehicles, to cross the border between Poland and Ukraine. It had already been a long trip of over three days and across five countries. We'd already visited new places, met up with friends, experienced different foods and cultures – but, in so many ways, this was where our journey really began…

We set off bright and early, full of excitement and just a little trepidation – our dear Vera (Ukrainian for faith, for those who missed my editorial in October) was showing her age, and not quite running as smoothly as we'd have liked! Our fears were soon realised, as we chugged along, puffing out thick black smoke. We pulled into some services to check her out, clinging onto the faith that everything would work out. She wasn't going any further… But, she lived up to her name and our faith, and just behind us pulled in another vehicle from our convoy, on the search for decent coffee.

Now, sad to say, this is where we had to part company with our vehicle, but never fear, within days she had caught up with the rest of the convoy and she and her precious load made it to the people in Ukraine who needed it most. Diana and I, on the other hand, squeezed into the space made for one with our knights in shining armour, and returned to the road. After a little rejig, I became the co-driver in a different vehicle and headed off to the border.



As you might be able to tell from the picture, the weather wasn't all we had hoped – in fact it was cold and wet as we waited at the crossing. Pickups 4 Peace

had done a great job organising everything with border control, however, and we were soon in Ukraine itself.

As the night drew in, and the rain got worse, we thundered towards Lviv in a convoy headed up by the Ukrainian military police. We sped through traffic lights, over stopped roundabouts and past vehicles politely stopped on either side of the road waiting to let us pass. Our final destination was a dark car park, with military personnel waiting to empty the vehicles and allocate the much needed equipment.



It had been a long, tiring day, but I was desperate to use every moment I had to experience Ukraine, so I was overjoyed when the grandparents of one of the families who moved into our area in 2022 travelled to meet me and show me round the city at night. Despite it being after ten o'clock, we visited cafés and gift shops and, through the soft sparkling lights glinting off of the shiny pavement, I was able to see the beauty of Ukraine first-hand. My tour, however, began and ended with a reminder that this is a country at war. Our first stop was



The Garrison Church of St Peter and Paul, where we lit candles for my host's fallen friends, and ended with a rush to the hotel, to get back in time for curfew. Our night was disturbed by the eerie sound of the air raid siren – although I have to admit that I've imagined worse air raid shelters than the restaurant of a gorgeous hotel! But that didn't stop us getting up bright and early, ready for a full day of experiences.

It would be impossible for me to do justice to our day, laying wreaths at the field of Mars, being presented with a plaque and thanked by dignitaries, visiting an orphanage for children who have lost parents during the war and the celebratory feast at the end of the day.

If you want to watch my video logs of the whole trip, please scan this QR code or come and hear all about it at our next concert.



What is my main take away from this trip? That, despite the many stereotypes and misconceptions I might have had about Ukraine, from growing up during the Cold War, I was able to fully appreciate that this is a developed European country, through and through. Yes, it's recovering from generations of neglect by an occupying state, but the architecture resembles many Austrian cities I've wandered around, the people are kind and generous, the food is delicious. This is a country on our continent which is under attack and under siege. These are children, parents and grandparents, just like ours, who are fighting to survive every single day. This is a culture straining every sinew not to be destroyed…





So, what has this to do with children and young people, I hear you ask? Well, none of this would have been possible without their hard work and determination. They've already raised more than £19,000 to send these vehicles out to Ukraine, and during the week of 24th February, as we remember the four years since the start of the invasion of Ukraine, they will attempt to raise the £4,000 more that is needed to send out their fourth.

Please watch this space for more information about activities, and keep **Saturday 28th February** free to warm yourselves in the glow of our next concert.

Helen Chatfield, Children & Youth Outreach Pastor
youth@moretolife.church 075540 140228

NEWS FROM THE VILLAGES

Farming News

I hope everyone has recovered from their festivities and are back into some sort of a routine as we head into 2026. If I was to try and sum up 2025 in one word, it would be 'average'. Yes, there were some extreme dry conditions throughout the Spring that did cause some issues. But, on the whole, yields were average and we got back to our average annual rainfall. We totalled 740mm of rain, only just under the 800mm, which we would expect as an average in our part of the country. After the two years prior to this of extreme wet weather, both totalling over a meter of rainfall (2023 saw 1,150mm and 2024, 1,070mm), it was nice to see the sun in 2025, for sure. Everyone is happier with some extra vitamin D.

Although looking further outside of our small bubble of the parish, nationally and globally, there is still a bleak outlook for farming and land-management. As Joe reported in his last article, milk price is dropping to below cost of production. Grain prices aren't much better either due to large surplus of grain globally. Also the future of the environmental schemes that most farmers are a part of is looking shaky. The information coming from our government is sporadic and, with 'U-turns' happening frequently, we are finding it extremely hard to plan ahead. When your business relies on a whole year of weather, farmers cannot react this quickly. Having said this, looking forward into 2026 there is some hope that there will be a return of an environmental scheme, albeit heavily reduced – which is a shame, as this is the difference of covering your costs and losing money. It is bonkers that growing and producing food cannot stand up on its own and has to be subsidised by environmental schemes or other non-farming diversifications.

I am pleased to say that we have joined a local farms cluster group: a group of farmers and land owners all working together to share ideas and to line up with environmental values on how we manage our landscape whilst producing great food. Our farm is in the most northerly part of the cluster that stretches down through the Candover valley and meets up with Winchester. One interest of mine will be the wild bird survey. We will carry out one in February to assess overwintering bird numbers and then again between April and June to record breeding birds and summer migrants. I will be sure to let you know what we find.

The chickens are still under 'flock-down' with avian flu levels still forcing us to keep them inside. But we have made it as comfortable as possible and provided plenty of enrichment toys to keep them occupied,

such as hanging lettuce and small straw bales for them to peck and scratch at. Although, with temperatures at minus eight recently, I'm sure they were happier in their insulated house. The eggs are still coming out just as nice, which is always a good sign of bird health and welfare.

We have been working our way through the hedge trimming on the roadsides and we will hopefully have that wrapped up in the next month. We have also been busy in the workshop, servicing each machine and replacing any worn parts to make sure they are all mechanically sound, ready for the spring planting. This will likely be in early March, weather dependant, with the planting of spring barley. There is a nice space heater in the workshop, so on a cold wet day this is the best place to be usually.

As always we are looking forward for what 2026 brings.

Will Cheyney

UPTON GREY NEWS
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Lent Lunches 2026

Ash Wednesday is on February 18th this year and, as in previous years, lunches will be held in the village during Lent. Everyone is invited. Starting time is 12.30. to finish no later than 2.00pm. The menu is simple but delicious – home-made soup and cheese and very good company. The first lunch is on **26th February** at Barn Cottage, Weston Road (01256 862131), the hosts are Jill and Terry Lestrille. Please telephone to let them know you are coming and also if you need a lift. The house is up a right hand turning about 50 yards from the pond. There is plenty of off-road parking.

The only other date so far is **9th March** when lunch will be in the Village Hall immediately following on from the coffee morning. Offers of help to cater for the lunch will be greatly welcomed. Could you please contact either Jill Lestrille or Rosie Reid. There is no charge for any of the lunches but you are invited to donate to the charity chosen by the hosts. Everyone is invited but please no dogs. Any queries or offers to host please ring me, Jill Lestrille, so that dates etc can be coordinated.

Details of more lunches will be included in the March parish magazine. **Jill Lestrille (01256 862131)**



Safari Supper Saturday 14th March 2026

Last year was our most successful Safari Supper, since we took over from Jo Adair back in 2019. We have very much enjoyed organising and running the evening, despite some difficulties in the planning of the courses from time to time.

Last year, we welcomed many new faces to Upton Grey's Safari Supper, and we hope this year we shall see even more of you. The Safari Supper is a hilarious opportunity to travel the village in aid of St Mary's Church and end up being very well entertained, fed and watered. It is a fun evening, not to be missed, where you provide one of three courses and move around the village for the other two. At the end of the evening of laughter and surprises everybody congregates in the village hall for coffee, after dinner drinks and tales to tell.

If you have a young family, you could request a starter course to give time for children to settle before going out. Just book a babysitter. If you are alone, why not team up with a friend and join the fun.

It's a fantastic way to meet new villagers and experience another flavour of Upton Grey. Put 14th March firmly in your diary. Please fill in the online form and make your payment via BACS by 28th February. We will send the link via the village email.

Safari Supper 2026: Saturday 14th March 7.15–10.15pm

Vivian Raven 862278

Upton Grey Village Hall

Congratulations to the first winners of 2026 in the Upton Grey Village Hall 100 Club.

First Prize (£100) Nick Wilmer

Second Prize (£40) Lisa Morgan

NOW is the time to renew or enrol for the 2026/27 draws. Please do support our wonderful village hall. Any enquiries please email UGVH100@gmail.com

Bell-ringing in Upton Grey

Bell-ringing practice takes place at St. Mary's, Upton Grey, weekly on Thursday evenings from 7.45–9.00pm. Please call either Michael Church (mob: 07802383759) or Rachel Dulai (mob: 07725 811422)) if interested in coming along – anyone welcome.

More4Kids Upton Grey

A reminder that the monthly Wednesday afternoon event in the Village Hall, previously 'Messy Church', is now More4Kids Upton Grey: 3.30-5.00pm, February 25th (a week later than usual because of half term) and March 18th; School Years R to 6; crafts, songs, tea, games.



Help please!

Over the years we have had a willing band of volunteers who have regularly cleaned the church. Several of our members have retired recently and we are in desperate need of extra help.

The job involves hoovering and dusting mainly and I will explain where everything is kept etc. If there were just three people willing to help it would only need two or three times a year for each person.

I know we all value the place our church takes in the village for the special occasions in our lives, so I am hoping that there will be someone out there who would like to offer a few hours a year to keep it looking cared for and loved.

If you feel able to help please contact me by email or phone: Email vivanscombe@gmail .com, phone 01256862455 **Viv Anscombe**

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Save the Dates!

- Upton Grey Reels Night Saturday 28th February at 7.00pm
- Saturday 14th March: Upton Grey Safari Supper at 7.15pm.
- St Mary's Church Fete, Upton Grey, Sat 6th June 2.00–5.00pm

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Christmas and beyond



Christmas already seems ages ago, but with all the hard work and support St Mary's had from the village and beyond (including four ponies and numerous sheep!) the Christmas Services were wonderful, and all very memorable and uplifting.

As we set our sights on the next few months up to Easter, just a few notes:

- we will be having one Lent Lunch this year and we will get the details to you as soon as possible;
- we have our Mothering Sunday Service at 11.00am on 15th March (with posies of flowers to be given out);
- we have our Good Friday Service at 10.00am on 3rd April, and then on Easter Sunday we have Family Communion at 10.00am followed by an Egg Hunt!

We very much look forward to welcoming you to St Mary's - one and all!

Adrian and Fiona
Churchwardens - St Mary's Herriard with Winslade

WEEKLY COFFEE MORNING IN HERRIARD

Every Thursday at the Village Hub

Open any time between 10.00 and 12.00

Good coffee and fresh baked cakes

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Do come and join us – everyone welcome

North Hampshire Downs Churches – Herriard Youth Hub
The Youth Hub meets from 6.00–8.00pm on the 1st & 3rd Sundays at The Herriard Hub. For more information, contact Helen Chatfield, youth@moretolife.church

Herriard Prayer Group
If you or anyone you know would like to be included in our prayers, please contact suzanne@moretolife.church or fiona@ashmeadow.co.uk.

Foodbank at St Mary's Herriard with Winslade
We have a box in the Church for food donations. If you can't make our Sunday service, you can leave donations on a Saturday/Sunday at the vestry door at the back of the Church. If you would like to sign up for the Camrose Centre's newsletter, to keep up to date with the work the centre is doing and get an updated list of the many items they so desperately need, please visit www.thecamrosecentre.org. They also have an Amazon Wishlist – the list is regularly updated:

The Camrose Centre is a drop-in centre for anyone who is sleeping

Herriard Parish Council
The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Monday 16th February 7.30pm at Herriard Village Hub.

Herriard Folk Nights



Please join us!
Herriard Folk returns to the Herriard Village Hub for another night of live folk and roots music from 7.00–10.00pm on Saturday, 28th February. £4.00 entry, children and students free with student id.

There will be some warm-up performances followed by a headline act. After the main show, the real fun begins in the bar with an open session until 11.00pm. We welcome all musicians – young & old, beginners & honed performers, and those that just like to listen.

Located halfway down the A339 between Alton and Basingstoke. Find out more at www.HerriardFolk.co.uk

TUNWORTH NEWS

Prayer Hour: Thursday 5th February 9.30am
At the monthly Prayer Hour, on the first Thursday, we meet and pray in the church for everyone in the parish.

Coffee & Cake: Thursday 5th February 10.30am
On the first Thursday of the month we meet for coffee and cake in the church porch. Please do join us if you are at home and fancy taking a break from online work.

Tunworth Home Group
The Tunworth Home Group usually meets once or twice a month on Wednesdays from 7.00 to 8.00pm at The Orangery, Hackwood Park, to study Bible passages and Biblical themes. The February dates are **11th and 25th.** If you would like to know more, please contact Gabrielle.

WESTON PATRICK & WESTON CORBETT NEWS

Gifts at Christmas for the Basingstoke Women's Refuge

Reverend Linda Scard and Sue Murphy, Diocesan President of the Mothers' Union and Branch Leader for our Benefice, would like to thank everyone for the gifts given at the Carol Service and on Christmas Day, for the women and children at the Women's Refuge in Basingstoke. Your generosity was overwhelming. Thank you very much indeed.

Looking ahead

Our services in February will be Holy Communion on **Sunday 8th February** at 10.00am and Evensong on **Sunday 22nd February** at 5.00pm.

Reverend Linda Scard and Suzanne Newcombe will be praying for our community in our church at **9.00am** on the first Friday of every month and will be there on **Friday 6th February**. All are very welcome to join them but if you are unable to attend personally and would like them to pray for someone specific please contact Linda (details below).

The Village Coffee Morning in February will be on **Wednesday 25th** at 11.00 in the Village Hall. Everybody (and your dog) is welcome to pop in.

We have a Mothering Sunday service on **Sunday 15th March** at 10.00am, and our annual Quiz Night on **Thursday 19th March** - please contact Lesley Don 07939 201573 for tickets.

In February, Weston Patrick and Weston Corbett's Women's Home Group will be joining the Bible Course by the Bible Society running in Odiham. This is an eight-week journey, starting on **Tuesday 10th February** at 7.30pm at All Saints' Church Odiham. The course covers the whole biblical story, Old and New Testaments, and is great for anyone at any stage of faith. For a preview of the course, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lh795sgYfxc

Please contact Linda Scard, if you are interested:
01256 703294 / 07801 039717 or linda@moretolife.church

OTHER NEWS AND EVENTS

Cross Barn, Odiham – Film / Theatre 2026

20th Feb: Film – The Ballad of Wallis Island

Starring Carey Mulligan. An eccentric lottery winner (Tim Key) who lives alone on remote Wallis Island, dreams of getting his favourite musical duo, Mortimer-McGwyer (Carey Mulligan and Tom Basden) back together by inviting them to play a private show at his home. 'This film is a British comedy low budget and high in whimsy… And yet the movie is a delight – just the right side of zany, perfectly askew.' (Financial Times).

27th Feb: NT Live – The Audience

Starring Helen Mirren. To mark the centenary of the birth of Queen Elizabeth II, the Olivier and Tony Award winning production recorded live in London's West End in 2013, returns to the cinema. 'Affectionately warm and devilishly witty, *The Audience* provides a fly on the wall insight into 60 years of private meetings between monarch and PM.'

Tickets: Film £7.50; NT Live £16.00. Doors open at 7.00pm. Film starts at 7.45pm; NT Live starts at 7.30pm. Coffee/tea, wine, beer, soft drinks and ice cream available. Purchase tickets online at http://www.thecrossbarn.org.uk

North Warnborough & District Garden Club.

We look forward to seeing everyone at our meeting on Thursday 26th February in the Village Hall from 2.10pm. We are a friendly club and always look forward to welcoming new members. We have a speaker and a plant stall each month. Visitors are always welcome for a fee of £3.00

For further information about February's meeting please look at our website. https://www.nwdgc.org.uk

Landlines

As we know, landlines are changing, and the UK's telephone network is going digital by January 2027. If you have loved ones with additional needs such as elderly relatives or someone who uses a telecare device or pendant alarm, BT's Connected Together initiative encourages you to take a few simple steps to support them through the switch. BT's Connected Together website is where customers, can access all the guidance and support they need.

Start the conversation today. https://www.bt.com/about/all-ip/connected-together



National Garden Scheme – Hampshire

Yet again, the National Garden Scheme has beaten the 2024 total of £3.5 million by an additional £300,000, making a grand total of donations for 2025 of £3.85 million, to be distributed to nursing, caring and health charities. This is all down to the generosity of our garden owners, our army of volunteers, and the general public for visiting our fabulous open gardens.

Do you feel that your garden is worthy of opening for the National Garden Scheme? Or maybe you have a friend or neighbour? We look at many varied gardens – from vast country estates to small cottage gardens and everything in-between, from wildflower gardens to manicured lawns. We would love to hear from you to arrange a visit. In 2027 we celebrate our centenary. This will be a very special year to be involved with the National Garden Scheme. The NGS takes care of all the advertising, and whilst a garden is open, you have fully comprehensive insurance – there is no age limit for cover for volunteers.

And so to kick off our Open Gardens for 2026 – these SNOWDROP GARDENS open in February:

Bramdean House*,* Bramdean, Alresford SO24 0J

Beautiful 5-acre garden best known for its mirror-image herbaceous borders, with a fine collection of snowdrops and spring bulbs. Opening: Sunday 8th February, 1.30pm–3.30pm

Admission: £7.00, children free. Cashless payments available.

Refreshments: Tea, coffee and cake. Donations to Bramley Church

Little Court, Crawley, Winchester SO21 2PU

A sheltered, naturalistic garden with year-round interest, especially memorable in spring. Mature and exuberant, with a large plant collection and a traditional walled kitchen garden. Rustic seats throughout, good views, and described as 'an oasis of peace and tranquillity.' Sorry, no dogs. Opening: Sundays & Mondays 15th, 16th, 22nd & 23rd February, 2.00pm–4.30pm. Pre-booking available

Admission: £6.00, children free. Cashless Payments available.

Refreshments: Home-made teas in the village hall in aid of the Village Hall Trust.

(Also open by arrangement for groups and societies from 14th February–5th July. Contact owner for details and to arrange date and time. 01962 776365 or elksic@btinternet.com.)

The Down House, Itchen Abbas, SO21 1AX
A 2-acre garden laid out in rooms overlooking the Itchen Valley, adjoining the Pilgrim's Way. In winter come and see garden structure, snowdrops, aconites and crocus, plus borders of dogwoods, willow stems and white birches. There is a new wildlife pond and sustainable garden, yew-lined avenue and walks in adjoining meadows.
Opening: Wednesday & Thursday 18th & 19th February. 1.00pm–4.30pm
Admission: £12.00 (Includes home-made teas), children free.
Refreshments: included in February
Pre-booking essential. Book online on the garden link below
https://findagarden.ngs.org.uk/garden/21395/the-down-house
(Also open by arrangement for groups or societies of 10+ from 16th–27th February. Contact owners on or markstephenporter@gmail.com 07814 958810.)

I wish everyone a happy and healthy 2026.

Pat Beagley (Head of Publicity), pat.beagley@ngs.org.uk
National Garden Scheme – Hampshire

North Hampshire Downs Mothers' Union

For the past few years, Mothers' Union has supported prisoners in Winchester Prison by buying gifts for their children at Christmas time. This Christmas we provided selection boxes to be handed out to each of the children that attend the Families Day organised by Spurgeons during December. The prisoners and their families were very grateful for these gifts, which help to bring a bit of normality to the lives of these children. We are also supporting families at the Women's Refuge in Basingstoke by providing knitted items and Christmas gifts.

In January we met for our usual Wave of Prayer service, and on Monday 2nd February we will meet for our AGM and to start our knitting project for this year. If you want to find out more about Mothers' Union or our branch, please contact Sue Murphy on suemurphymubranch@outlook.com. or 845011.

Volunteer Fair – March 2026

Thinking of volunteering this year? Then why not consider popping along to the Volunteer Fair on 7th March, 9.30am–3.00pm at the Hart Shopping Centre, Fleet.

For further information contact hartvc@hartvolaction.org.uk or call 01252 627070. We'd love to see you there!

u3a learn, laugh, live Odiham District

What's happening at the u3a these winter months?

With over 80 groups getting going, January got off to a busy start. We also have several events open to all members being planned for the next few months.



Snowdrops are the first sign that Spring is just around the corner. This month we have two coaches visiting Hever Castle to see the 160,000 snowdrops they have spread over their extensive grounds – just one of the events we put on for our members. And don't forget our monthly speaker: March has been designed to banish those winter blues with a splash of summer sunshine.

4th March 2026: The Art of the early Picture Postcard by Dr James Taylor. Dr James Taylor, former curator of the Maritime Museum in Greenwich, brings us Brilliant British Humour in the Forgotten Art of the Picture Postcard: 1840–1950s. Artist-drawn postcards were the most popular art-form from the Edwardian era to WW2 and lifted spirits during some dire times.


Wish You Were Here...
So I Could Push You Back In!

If you are not already a member, joining is only £20 for u3a membership for the year.

To see the full programme of our Monthly Meetings and group activities, please visit our website www.odihamu3a.org.uk, Odiham District. Learn. Laugh, live

OpenSight Community Connections project

OpenSight, Hampshire's leading sight loss charity, is delighted to announce our Community Connections project pilot in Basingstoke.

We will be based at The Orchard, home of Basingstoke Voluntary Action, opening in early January and running until April. Vision-impaired residents of Basingstoke and Deane will be able to access friendly, free, specialist support from the Orchard every Wednesday and Thursday, with bookable appointments available in person or on the phone.

Alongside weekly in-person access, the pilot will focus on building referral confidence with local health partners, engaging communities, spotlighting local groups, and testing new ways of working that may inform a future regional model for wider Hampshire.

Key events include:
1. A community launch event at the Apollo Hotel in early January
2. Monthly Tech Club sessions for hands-on support with accessible technology and digital confidence
3. Insights Basingstoke at the end of February to feature local lived experience voices
4. A KS1 half-term family activity session during February half term
5. Continued community and partner engagement as the pilot evolves

Ian T. Morris, Head of Services at OpenSight, said: 'Being based directly in Basingstoke means we can listen better, connect better, and support more local people. This pilot is about amplifying access and enabling people with sight loss to live their best lives.'

OpenSight welcomes referrals, partnership conversations, and suggestions for evolving the pilot during delivery.

For more information, please contact 02380 641244 or visit https://opensight.org.uk/community-connections-basingstoke/

Winter on the riverbank

Even in the heart of winter, rivers, streams, and ponds are teeming with life – including with one of our most endearing and much-loved mammals, the water vole.

Known affectionately to generations as 'Ratty' from The Wind in the Willows, water voles are Britain's largest vole, roughly the size of a guinea pig, with a rounded body, blunt nose, small ears, and a furry tail.



Copyright: Terry Whittaker 2020VISION

Their thick, chocolate-brown fur often appears almost black when wet, and their whiskered faces give them a gentle, inquisitive expression. Unlike rats, which they are often mistaken for, water voles have shorter tails, smaller ears, and a much more compact shape. They are excellent swimmers and can often be seen paddling confidently through the water or perched on the bank nibbling vegetation.

Water voles were once a common sight along riverbanks and wetlands. Sadly, habitat loss and predation by invasive mink caused numbers to plummet. However, thanks to dedicated conservation work, these charismatic creatures are slowly returning to our waterways.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust is helping water voles through the Watercress & Winterbournes scheme. This partnership, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, focuses on restoring chalk streams, improving water quality, and managing riverbank vegetation to create safe habitats for water voles and other wildlife. Volunteers play a vital role in maintaining these habitats, monitoring populations, and controlling non-native predators like mink. The scheme doesn't just benefit water voles – it supports a wide range of species, including fish, invertebrates, amphibians, and birds that rely on healthy, well-managed rivers.

Winter can be a surprisingly good season to spot them – if you know where and how to look. Even though they are less active than in spring or summer, their presence is betrayed by clear signs along the banks. Keep an eye out for neat, nibbled patches of grass with characteristic 45° angled cuts, small burrows tucked into riverbanks, and tiny droppings along the water's edge. It's essential to keep dogs away from the water so these sensitive mammals aren't disturbed.

With leafless trees and shorter vegetation, riverbanks and wetland edges are more visible in winter, making it easier to spot burrows, tracks, and signs of feeding. Quiet walks along streams, ponds, and winterbournes – particularly in early morning or late afternoon – offer the best chance of glimpsing these secretive mammals.

For more information, visit the Trust website: hiwwt.org.uk/watercress-and-winterbournesabout

Helen Skelton-Smith, Communications Officer – PR & Media
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

SMALL ADS

WANTED – Storage Space for 1937 valuable and rare vintage car for up to nine months while a buyer is being sought. The seller is in the Netherlands and wishes to sell it in the U.K. Secure and dry conditions are required with regular access available for viewing and road testing. If you do have space, please contact Athlone53@outlook.com or 07834 762330.

HALLS FOR HIRE

Upton Grey Village Hall can be hired at a basic rate of £14 per hour. Tables and chairs are also available to hire. There are kitchen facilities, including china, cutlery & glasses, central heating, sound system, stage and disabled access. If you don't know the hall, we would be happy to show you round. To book, or if you have any questions, please contact Jane Hanbury on 01256 862681
or email bookings@uptongreyvillagehall.co.uk
or visit our new website www.uptongreyvillagehall.co.uk.

The Herriard Village Hub, Herriard, available for hire: wedding receptions, functions, parties, meetings, and events. Fully licensed bar, full kitchen facilities, garden, tables, chairs, sound system, disabled access, central heating, pool table and darts. To reserve, please see booking form found at www.herriardvillagehub.co.uk or email bookings@herriardvillagehub.co.uk.

Disclaimer: Please note that the views expressed in this magazine are the contributors' personal opinions and do not necessarily represent the views of the editors.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY – FEBRUARY 2026

NB: All Church Services are listed under CHURCH NEWS near the front of the magazine

FEBRUARY DATES

10th Feb	Tues	Lent course begins, All Saints' Church, Odiham	7.30pm
16th Feb	Mon	Herriard Parish Council Meeting, Herriard Hub	7.30pm
17th Feb	Tues	Shrove Tuesday Pancakes, All Saints', Odiham	3.00pm
20th Feb	Fri	Film: *The Ballad of Wallis Island,* Cross Barn, Odiham	7.00pm
25th Feb	Wed	More4Kids, Upton Grey Village Hall	3.30-5.00pm
26th Feb	Thur	Lent Lunch, Barn Cottage, Weston Road, UG	12.30pm
26th Feb	Thur	North Warnborough Garden Club, NW Village Hall	2.10pm
27th Feb	Fri	NT Live: *The Audience,* Cross Barn, Odiham	7.00pm
28th Feb	Sat	Herriard Folk Night, Herriard Hub	7.00pm
28th Feb	Sat	Upton Grey Reels Night. Upon Grey Village Hall	7.00pm

ADVANCE DATES

9th Mar	Mon	Lent Lunch, Upton Grey Village Hall	12.30pm
14th Mar	Sat	Safari Supper, Upton Grey	7.15pm
18th Mar	Wed	More4Kids, Upton Grey Village Hall	3.30-5.00pm
21st Mar	Sun	Powertool Class, Upton Grey Village Hall	12.30pm
6th June	Sat	St Mary's Church, UG Fete	2.00pm

REGULAR EVENTS

Each Mon/Thur	Odiham book exchange, Bridewell, Odiham	2.00pm
Each Sat	Odiham book exchange, Bridewell, Odiham	10.00am
Each Mon	Prayer group, 4 Little Hoddington	9.30–10.15am
Each Thur	Prayer group, 4 Little Hoddington	5.00–5.45pm
Each Thur	Coffee, Tea & Cake Morning, Hub, Herriard	10.00am
Each Thur	Upton Grey bell-ringing practice, St Mary's, UG	7.45pm
Every 1st Thur	Prayer Hour, All Saints Tunworth	9.30am
Every 1st Thur	Coffee & Cake, Tunworth church porch	10.30am
2nd & 4th Mon	Coffee Morning, Upton Grey Village Hall	11.00am
2nd & 4th Tues	Upton Grey 'Get OWT', UG Churchyard	10.00am
Every 4th Wed	Coffee Morning, Weston Patrick Village Hall	11.00am

PARISH MAGAZINE COPY DEADLINE

The copy deadline for the March issue is 15th February 2026.

Please send news and contributions to uptongreymagazine@gmail.com. Your editors for the February issue were Tess Chevallier and Nick Willmer. The editor for the March issue will be Nick Willmer.

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