

Village news

June 2026

Puttenham
Astrope
Long Marston
Gubblecote
Wilstone
Little Tring



Your independent village magazine - produced and delivered free to every home in Tring Rural villages entirely by local volunteers.

It's all square as Baggies face Wasters.

Friday, August 7th

The Wilstone Wasters are set to face the Buckland Baggies at Long Marston cricket ground on Friday, August 7, in another predicted tense encounter.

The fifth match has the sides competing to go in the lead with two wins apiece on the record books.

This is 'coarse cricket' at its best, with lots of tumbles in the field, some exotic bowling and frenetic batting. All great entertainment.

There'll be a bar open in the clubhouse and a barbecue. The entry fee is £5 for all non-members of Long Marston Cricket Club over 16, with all funds going to a local charity.

Bring a chair and small table for your beer and burgers and be ready for the action to start at 6pm.



Wilstone Wasters putting a brave face on defeat.

For the residents of Puttenham, Astrope, Long Marston, Gubblecote, Wilstone & Little Tring.



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Village News is written, edited, produced and distributed entirely by local volunteers. We aim to be local, interesting, informative, fun and a good read. Please let us know if we are not!

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The editor for the July edition is Colin Moore and the deadline for items is Wed 17 June 2026. Note: the following edition will be for September

It's June, so the fete season is just around the corner. The various events are bound to appeal, one way or another, to everyone. I am sure they will be well attended– so enjoy!

A word of thanks must go to the hard core of willing volunteers without whom the events would not happen. So a big thank you. to you all.

This issue contains many of the regular features including news from the council, the Vicarage (invaluable wedding advice) and the welcome news of the completion of the strengthening works at the Wilstone Reservoir. Invigorating walks for all.

Finally thanks to all for your contributions to this edition. We couldn't make this edition without you. If anyone has a news item or an interesting story please do get in touch. All it takes is a few lines and ideally a photo and we will do the rest.

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What's on in and around our villages

Diary Dates

Saturday 13 June and 18 July "Sessions on the Farm" See Mead's advert for details.

Sunday 14 June Wilstone Fete

Saturday 27 June Music Under the Stars, see page 5

Saturday 13 and 27 June Farmers Market. Saturdays 9.00-2.00. Church Sq Tring

Sunday 28 June 'Gardens galore' See pages 5 & 9.

Friday 10 July Long Marston Tennis Club Summer Ball.

Saturday 1 August

The Long Marston 'Make, Bake and Grow Show' see pages 12-13 for Schedule.

Show Time

Check out pages 12/13 for the The Long Marston 'Make, Bake and Grow Show' Schedule

Final chance to experience popular summer walking event

The clock is ticking to secure your places for the DENS Castle Walk – taking place on Sunday 14th June at Berkhamsted Castle.

Kick off your summer plans at this family-friendly day out, with a choice of 10- or 5-mile routes through stunning countryside and peaceful woodland.

Run by Hertfordshire homelessness charity, DENS, the event promises fantastic community vibes and a finisher's token to remember the day.

Entry fees start from just £10, with a discounted family ticket available. Sign up today at www.dens.org.uk/castlewalk.

Tring Rural Parish Council Wed 8 July at Victory Hall Long Marston

Council Meeting starts at 7.30pm
the public are welcome to attend.

You can always find a copy of **Village News** wherever you are: www.wilstone.me.uk or just scan me



Church Services for June

Below is a list of the Services for the Village churches for June–
These could change so please check online at

<https://www.tringteamparish.org.uk/news-events> or phone the Rectory on 01442 822170. We also will have live streamed services online so please take a [look](#)

2nd Jun (Tues)

10am Morning Prayer – St Cross Wilstone

7th Jun –Trinity 1

6pm – Celtic Prayer, All Saints Long Marston

9th Jun (Tues)

10am Holy Communion – St Cross Wilstone

14th Jun – John the Baptist – Trinity 2

8am Holy Communion cw and 10am Worship for All service at Tring and 11am Holy Communion cwPatronal service in Aldbury followed by lunch in the vicarage garden

16th Jun (Tues)

10am – Morning Prayer cw, St Cross Wilstone

21st Jun – Trinity 3 – Fathers Day

10am – Holy Communion cw service at All Saints, Long Marston

23rd Jun (Tues)

10am – Holy Communion– St Cross, Wilstone

28th Jun – St Peter & St Paul – Trinity 4

3.30pm– Evensong service at St Mary's, Puttenham

30th Jun (Tues)

10am – Morning Prayer cw– St Cross, Wilstone



St Mary's, Puttenham

Join the successful team at Wilstone Village Hall.

Wilstone Village Hall is in great shape, thanks to the team of people who give their time and skills in keeping it that way.

We want someone who can help us at committee meetings with taking minutes, issuing agendas, and attending meetings every two months. This is an official role on the committee, helping it run efficiently and especially supporting the chairman. If you are a working person your company may support this role in giving something back to the community.

If you would like to join the team, just call Peter Walker on 07768 605 684

Midsummer music for charity

Saturday, June 27

Music Under the Stars returns for its 19th year on Saturday, June 27, with some new sounds and the return of Old Country Union favourite Frank Walsh.

The annual event, held at Lower Farm, Buckland, from 4.15pm last year, raised £4,500 for local charities, with Hector's House – the chosen main charity again this year – receiving £3,000.

As well as the traditional mid-evening family Ceilidh, there'll be contributions in the late afternoon from local musicians including Nick Atkinson, father and son duo Norman and Scott Mandry, and newcomer Carmen Schafer.

Making their Music Under the Stars debut at 6.30 p.m. will be The Kings of Harmony from Chesham, who specialise in a cappella, and the Blue Moons, who should have the crowd rocking.



In full swing at the Ceilidh last year.

The Haydays return with a laidback set and some late-night dance music, while the Valentown band, with Frank Walsh, will entertain with their special brand of Americana.

We're privileged that Robin Boulton, who tours with Howard Jones, will join the band on lead guitar for the session.

There'll be beer, Pimm's, and rosé champagne on sale and some grand prizes in the raffle and through the silent auction.

Tickets are £10 on the door. If you'd like wristbands in advance, then please contact Richard at rppr@hotmail.co.uk. It'll stop congestion on the gate!

Wilstone villagers are always very welcome.

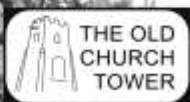
As ever, we are asking people to bring toiletries for the Women's Refuge in Aylesbury. Bring a chair and a picnic too!

GARDENS GALORE

And More!

A first for Long Marston & Puttenham
Raising funds for the Tower restoration
Open gardens, with a difference

28th June 2026
Scan the QR Code for more info



BEACON VILLAGES COMMUNITY LIBRARY

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Old Town Hall, High Street, Ivinghoe LU7 9EP

Opening hours: Tuesday to Friday 2pm-5pm, Saturday 10am-1pm (Returns box available in the Hall foyer at other times)

The Library is situated next to the Post Office, opposite Iving

hoe Old School Community Hub and Daisychain café. With the support of Buckinghamshire Libraries, we have a special relationship with Tring Library, allowing their members to borrow and return books in Ivinghoe (all other normal terms apply). Computers, photocopying and printing are also available on site, where our volunteers will be happy to welcome you.

Facebook: Beacon Villages Community Library

General enquiries: info@bvcl.org.uk or Tel. 01296 387890;
Committee enquiries: secretary@bvcl.org.uk

Website: www.bvcl.org.uk

Allotment News

by *Ashley Firmin*

The winter has continued to plague the allotment with the usual hubris of the various extremes, mainly the cold, windy and wet ones to which we in this corner of the world have become resigned, if never entirely accustomed. More recently, however, we permitted ourselves a degree of optimism. Perhaps, with the benefit of hindsight, our optimism was a shade too optimistic even for optimists.

My office in the garden, from where I am currently writing, takes on all these extremes stoically. The desk fan that worked a treat a couple of weeks ago, when things became suddenly rather warm, has now been replaced by a jolly efficient heater, currently allowing my fingers to type this. I'm lucky, of course. The residents of the allotment, human, vegetable and fruity alike, are similarly bewildered by proceedings but have no access to such luxuries.

Peas and beans that had been flourishing only a fortnight ago are now, in some parts of the allotment, alas, no more, thanks to an unexpected and entirely uncalled-for frost last week which arrived in the night with little charm or consideration. The pattern continues elsewhere. Potatoes have been, and continue to be, industriously earthed up and swaddled in fleece, though we are not yet entirely certain of

the casualties. Early planted tomatoes have been hit particularly hard, and a couple of my fellow allotmenters are very much in mourning, moving about the place with hollow-eyed expressions.

Other areas, however, have been flourishing magnificently. Onion and garlic are cracking on marvellously, with certain specimens displaying such promise that one suspects they may soon be sought out by some prestigious national onion and garlic-growing body. The rhubarb is looking splendidly self-satisfied, while some of the lettuces, rocket and other delicate annuals that ventured in early appear to have survived the recent meteorological shocks upon their systems rather better than their owners.

We have also had an influx of six feathered friends joining us: three different breeds of chickens housed in a new pair of beyond-luxury coops, bringing our total chicken population to eight alongside a couple of long-term residents. They provide character, humour and a surprising degree of moral support without much noise, unless, of course, one unexpectedly turns out to be a rooster, in which case the atmosphere may yet become rather more operatic. For the moment, however, the adjoining Grange Road need not fear dawn awakenings, as the chickens' keepers are themselves residents of Grange Road and are therefore unlikely to sabotage their own lie-ins.

In the meantime, we continue to prepare, in some cases replant, and for many of us cultivate fresh seedlings in the faint but persistent hope that the weather may eventually decide which season it intends to impersonate.

Cleaning staff position at Long Marston School

We are looking to recruit a reliable cleaner who would be part of our friendly, dedicated staff team.

Candidates would need to have excellent attention to detail and be able to use their own initiative to problem solve.

The hours would be 2 1/2 hours a day, Monday to Friday, term time only. We offer employee assistance including counselling, out of hours GP services and wellbeing services.

Additionally we pay above the minimum wage

If you are interested please contact the school office on 01296 668386 or email

admin@longmarston.herts.sch.uk for a job description and further information on how to apply.

The role would be subject to rigorous safeguarding checks

Wilstone Great British Fete & Dog Show

Sunday, 14th June Tombola Stall

Looking for your help

A traditional part of any great British fete is a tombola stall and ours always proves very popular.

Can you help us by donating suitable items such as in date cans, bottles or household items?

If you can please come into Wilstone Community Shop and pop them into the donation box in front of the deli.

Thank you for your generous support and see you on the 14th June.

Victory Hall Long Marston village hall for hire

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Wednesday 9.00am and 9.30am
Thursday 9.30am and 6.00pm
Friday 9.30am
Saturday 9.00am

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Wednesday 11.30am



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From our Reporter at the council meeting

Annual Meeting

Chair Cllr Fox started us off with the Annual Meeting, which is a roundup of the Parish Council's activities over the last year.

Here's a summary of what has been achieved:

Long Marston - The opening of Home Ground Cafe and its car park at the recreation ground last August; extensive tree planting; and planning for the café's terrace. Early signs are that the café is helping to boost social cohesion within the Parish and as visitor numbers continue to rise there is every reason to expect community wellbeing to be further enhanced over the next few years.

This work has involved some Councillors and a significant number of volunteers. In particular, thanks to Malcolm Morgan, Mark Smith and Sue Foster for their contributions. Thanks also to clerk Chloe: the project involved working at a much faster pace than is usual and Chloe was often on the receiving end of unreasonable demands on her time.

Wilstone - plans to address the parking issue at the Village Hall, by introducing charges for residents' parking in the Hall car park. The Parish Council has not acted previously to prevent local residents using some of the existing spaces, because they are aware of the acute shortage of parking in the Village. Details of the proposed scheme will be put before councillors in the next few months for their consideration. Wilstone Village Hall have made a planning application to have additional car parking spaces and the Parish Council have promised £10k towards the cost.

Parish Warden - Mark Smith became our new Warden earlier this year after Colin Reedman's 38 years of sterling service. Already Mark has carried out improvements to the café and car park but in particular he and Chloe have set about the task of restoring the cemetery just outside Wilstone to its former glory. Mark will, over time, with the support of Chloe and the Parish Council funding, materially improve the appearance of the Parish.

Planning applications - We have not adopted a NIMBY stance in respect of any house building in the Parish. Applications are assessed against various criteria but when we feel schemes may change the character of villages or exacerbate flooding or traffic concerns we will register our opposition. As a Council we are indebted to Richard Foster and Vivian Wood for coordinating our response.

Traffic - Traffic volumes in the Parish continue to increase. Our safety concerns, not least for those attending Long Marston School, have risen correspondingly. We worked hard to convince Borough Councillors and senior staff in the County Highways team that a pedestrian crossing was needed, although this was rejected on cost grounds. More recently, however, we have been informed that we are one of the 100 villages that will have 20mph limits introduced in certain locations, one of which will be outside the school, and this will be of benefit in terms of

pedestrian safety.

Cafe culture Cllr Fox started the regular meeting with thanks to Village Warden Mark and his pair of 'little helpers' for installing Long Marston's new notice board, with its rather handsome hand-carved logo at the top.

Work on Home Ground Café's terrace should start at the end of May and is expected to take two weeks. The project has been funded by the sale of 50 engraved paving bricks, £5k from Laxton Properties (following the building of Glebe Meadow), and a 'green grant' from Dacorum.

If only BT and Openreach would work that fast! Cllr Fox's frustration was apparent when he explained that there is STILL no permanent wi-fi at the Cafe, 11 months since the order was first placed. The only remaining work to be completed is the cable from the road to the cafe, but getting over this hurdle is proving very trying. Bring back Busby, I say! *(Note for younger readers: ask your grandparents!)* It might be installed at the end of May, but don't hold your breath!

The popularity of Home Ground Café means the kitchen is proving too small! Planning permission for a small extension will be sought in due course.

Guest appearance We are fortunate that our Dacorum and County Councillor, Sally Symington, makes an effort to attend TRPC meetings, as it gives her the opportunity to update us face-to-face on the work being undertaken on our behalf, and us the chance to ask questions of her, too.

Cllr Symington attended this meeting with quite a comprehensive update! Here are the main points:

Long Marston is on the list of 100 villages to receive 20mph signs. She emphasised that this list is only for communities that WANT the slower limit; it is NOT being imposed on communities. Villages with schools are being prioritised.

There will be a public engagement exercise.

A number of emails have been received from Wilstone residents regarding the speed limit. Interestingly, the speed of vehicles passing through Wilstone has been monitored using mobile phone signals! It indicates that there is not much evidence for speeding, but there is certainly a high volume of traffic. Cllr Adams pointed out that there is a problem at school drop-off times, regarding where students alight from the school buses and the fact there are no pavements, which is a significant safety issue.

Little Tring and Lukes Lane, Gubblecote have also requested 20mph zones.

Wingrave Road needs improved speed signs near Dixon's Wharf.

The sign identifying Astrope is still awaiting funding.

The issue of the "orphan asset" in Chapel Lane may have been resolved! The "orphan asset" is a buried pipeline under the Lane; nobody knew who owned it. Herts County Council cleared it, which has improved the flood risk in that area, and Thames Water may be about to "adopt" it. So glad there's a happy ending!

The Canal and Rivers Trust are still not being helpful in notifying when they will discharge water into the Tring Bourne.

There had been a request to move a *Warning of Pedestrians* road sign in Puttenham, because of its proximity to the Puttenham decorative sign. Apart from the cost of £750 to do this, this prompted a discussion about the safety reasons for the positioning of road signs in the first place.

There was also the revelation that speed humps and chicanes, for traffic calming, cannot be sited where there is insufficient street lighting. Which rather limits the options for slowing traffic in rural areas such as ours!

Conditional discharge? The developer of the 9-house development planned for Astrope Lane, adjacent to Marston Court, has been clearing out ditches.

When planning permission was granted, Dacorum Borough Planning set a condition that water could flow into the Gudgeon Stream; however, the developer now wants this condition discharged! Cllrs Macdonald and Foster are fighting against this and want to meet with David Uncle, the Senior Flood Risk Officer at Herts County Council. So far Mr Uncle has only met the developer, and TRPC understandably want to express the villagers' views. Cllr Symington stated she would also make some enquiries.

Other news Warden Mark has arranged for replacement of the parish's bins.

Cllr Adams reported that the Dung Beetles will be performing at Wilstone Village Hall soon! So, it's just as well that a full planning application for the car park extension has been submitted.

Date of next meeting: 27th May 2026, 7.30pm, Cecilia Hall, Puttenham.[]

Gardens Galore and More!

The Old Church Tower and Churchyard group are coordinating a new event in Long Marston and Puttenham ... Gardens Galore and More!

It will a chance to view and admire some private gardens in the villages as well find out and support local and national charities. There are 12 gardens opening offering a wide variety of attractions to include a plant stall, Pimm's, Prosecco, ice lollies and homemade lemonade, a chance to learn about Hearing dogs for the Deaf, exhibitions of lawnmowers and radios and of course tea and cakes supplied and served by the WI. Children and dogs are welcome with games and areas just for them.

Please come along and join us on Sunday 28th June from 2pm until 4.30pm. Entry is by way of a donation to The Old Church Tower at the Victory Hall or any of the participating gardens if you have cash. Car parking will be signposted to Victory Hall and Oakley House.

We look forward to welcoming you! The Old Church Tower Group.

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Go Fly a Kite

A story of Longub Puttastone

by Martin Winship

A few years ago, this poem won the prize at the Long Marston Village Show for a sonnet on the theme of "Doomed Love".

*When Cupid stretches taut his bow with dart
And careless flings his fletch to transfix heart
He gives no thought to consequence or right
And speeds away to give more arrows flight.
Thus when, with Mistress, fair Conchita saw
- Brando - her spirit sang as ne'er before.
He was likewise struck and playfully began
To chase Conchita - she leapt; quickly ran.
Their innocent young friendship pleased their guides
Who stood together watching. Nothing hides
The change that takes a male, who goes too far.
So Brando was dragged off - to Master's Car.
His passion for Conchita was in vain -
She, small Chihuahua - He, giant Great Dane.*

Now read on.

A really first-class day in June, with warm sunshine and not the least wisp of a cloud in the perfect lapis lazuli sky, had had some interesting results. For one thing, many residents of Longub Puttastone had simultaneously come to the conclusion that their lawns were desperately in need of a good sharp haircut and had pulled their various mowers out of sheds and garages and started the traditional sounds that herald the beginning of summer.

The fine weather had also persuaded Old Siegfried to take a day off from his habitual labours on his allotment (such labours, in any case, seemed to consist almost exclusively of a small amount of desultory digging and the consumption of a great deal of tea). He had found out a very disreputable deckchair from the overgrown back of his cottage and set it up, after the customary struggle, centred in a patch of drowsing sunshine.

The drone of happy bees made a pleasant counter-tone to the lawnmower chorus from up and down the village. He had lowered himself with great caution onto the chair; the striped but faded canvas was old and tatty and had actually developed an untrustworthy appearance. But it took the strain, and Siegfried sat back and crossed one wellie over the other and gave vent to a quintessentially contented sigh.

Soon, he was joined by Mentless Belle, his pig, on one side, and then Alice (his turkey, not his neighbour) on the other. The pig made himself comfortable as only experienced pigs can do and also produced a contented sound, but of quite a different type and origin. It made even Old Siegfried's eyes water slightly, and Alice ruffled her feathers.

The turkey was not the only bird in evidence. As Siegfried rested his tousled head on the bar of the deck chair, he squinted up into the wide blue yonder and watched a handful of red kites glide quite majestically on outstretched

wings, using only minimal movements of their forked tails to maintain their lazy-looking drifting. Even a no-nonsense old cynic like Siegfried could not help but be impressed and frankly fascinated by such a marvellous display of natural aerial skill.

He knew a fair bit about the birds. He remembered quite clearly a time - not so very long ago, it seemed to him - when the glimpse of a red kite was a rarity and restricted, at that, to a diminishing population in the heart of Wales. He had lived through many attempts (all successful) to re-introduce the grievously misunderstood and persecuted creatures into different parts of England, Scotland and Wales. He recalled that birds had been brought to the UK from locations where numbers were still healthy: Spain, Sweden and Germany. He had often heard the birds call; it was, surprisingly, an extraordinary thin piping sound - but he had failed on all occasions to detect any hint of a foreign accent.

The background hum of the lawnmowers, the accompanying buzz of insects, and the cat-like mewing of the kites, combined with the warm touch of the sunshine, were rapidly sending Siegfried off into the welcoming arms of Morpheus when an additional noise cut in and shattered the peace.

A high-pitched and almost hysterical-sounding yapping, the sort that can really only be produced by a certain kind of small, regrettable dog, suddenly exploded from a nearby garden. Siegfried sat up sharply, startled back to full wakefulness. His rapid movement proved instantly too much for the decrepit old deckchair; the canvas gave way and a significant part of Siegfried's anatomy fell through. He struggled briefly but found the effort too challenging under the circumstances, and in any case he realised that although his altered posture might not be terribly elegant, he was still comfortable.

Unfortunately, the cause of the disturbance did not go away. The ghastly yapping went on relentlessly. Siegfried was well aware of its source. A lady two doors away was the doting owner of a small and rather hideous Chihuahua called Conchita. There was an instinctive mutual loathing between the dog and Siegfried; it would often growl menacingly at him as he passed on his way to his allotment, which infuriated Siegfried, even though he found the situation ridiculous. It was like being growled at by a bristling rat.

As he sat on, or rather in, his deck chair, Siegfried recalled the fiasco when the revolting Conchita had met Brando, a Great Dane of independent attitude. There had been more than a suggestion of "boy meets girl" interest, and the unlikely pair had been separated only after a huge effort and at some serious physical risk to their owners. The incident had caused something of a stir in the normally quiet village, and when Siegfried had met up with Jake and Thomas in the Half Head, their conversation had been much to do with the two dogs. Thomas had imbibed a good deal of Old Nosey cider and astonished Jake and Siegfried when he recounted how he had once known a Chihuahua to kill a Great Dane. "Yes," he had giggled. "It got stuck in its throat."

Now, as Siegfried sat trapped in his deck chair, listening in less than his best humour to the yappings of the minute dog, a red kite, hanging far above on its outstretched wings, was eyeing Conchita with keen interest. Although the birds were mostly carrion-eaters and were actually fed by some residents of Longub Puttastone (much to the dismay of Prunella, who considered their large hooked beaks to be completely beyond the pale), they

(Continued on the next page)

would occasionally take live prey: mice, voles, even stoats and rabbits. And in the small red-hot brain of this particular Kite, currently observing Conchita, an atavistic instinct had awoken. With no pause for thought (which the bird's brain was not capable of anyway), it folded back its wings, and with a nuanced twitch of its tail, it plunged in an awe-inspiring power dive directly at the tiny yapping thing.

Siegfried listened with mounting ire to the sounds the dog was making and had just decided that enough was enough and was preparing to have another attempt to free himself from the deck chair when the dog's noise changed. Its yapping became more fearful than aggressive, and as Siegfried listened, the sounds seemed to rise up and then fade away. He frowned in bewilderment. Then a light of understanding dawned on his face and rapidly turned into a leering grin. He actually chuckled and slapped his thighs, upon which the deckchair completely collapsed and sent him rolling, but still laughing, across the grass.

THE END

Alternative ending for big softies: Conchita had, fortunately for her, spotted the ill-intentioned red kite as it began its high-level plummet, and she yelped and took cover under a convenient thick bush. The red kite, thwarted, had flown off, squeaking in its disappointment. Conchita's owner had witnessed the near-thing and, rushing out, had snatched her precious girl up and carried her, still giving tongue, up the back garden stairs and into the safety of the house.

THE OTHER ENDING

And finally for those sentimentalists who should be ashamed of themselves: Soon after this, Conchita met up with Brando again, and despite the efforts of their owners, the romance was rekindled. They lived happily ever after, albeit in the company of a litter of very peculiar-looking puppies.

ABSOLUTELY, DEFINITELY THE REAL END.

Chatty Cafe Scheme



**At a loose end?
Fancy a cuppa?**

The 'Chatter & Natter table' is a wonderful way of encouraging people of all ages to talk to others. During the day and time below, the table will be hosted by a friendly volunteer. Do come along and sit for a chat.

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Sudoku Corner by Colin Moore

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Solution on page 20

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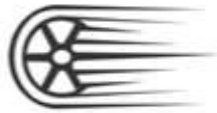
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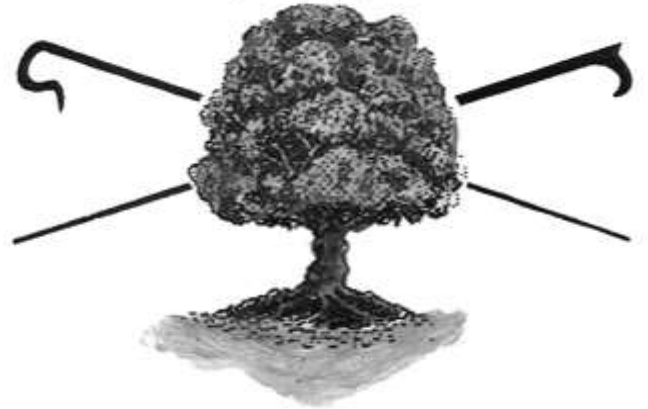
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Long Marston School

by Laura Whateley



This week, our Year 6 children thoroughly enjoyed taking part in our Maypole dancing celebrations. Maypole has been part of British village traditions for hundreds of years and is believed to date back to *medieval* times, when communities gathered to celebrate spring, new life and the changing seasons.

The maypole became a symbol of community spirit, joy and togetherness, and it continues to be a cherished part of our school celebrations today.

Traditionally, dancers weave colourful ribbons around a central pole, and as you can see, it creates intricate patterns as they move together to the music. The children danced two dances to traditional music and then choreographed their own to K-pop Demon Hunters for a modern twist!

The children showed fantastic teamwork, concentration and enthusiasm as they learnt and performed the dances, a highlight of Year 6, and it was wonderful to see this tradition at Long Marston brought to life once again.

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Wedding Season From the Vicarage by the reverend Jane Banister

Thank you to those people who got in touch after my article last month about funerals – there have been some

good conversations. One useful point I should have put in is that if you are planning a funeral, then it is always good to get in touch with us as soon as possible. You do not need to have everything planned or sorted at the beginning of the process.

So having written about the end of life, it seemed good to discuss a celebratory point: "weddings". There have been many changes in how weddings work over the years, and while those that are held in church are often seen as more traditional, that is not always the case. Anyone can get married in their parish church (the Church of England church where they live), and it is also possible to be married in a church where you do not live, with the following provisos.

You can marry in a Church of England church if you can show that one of you has at any time lived in the parish for a period of at least 6 months, or was baptised (christened) in the parish concerned, or confirmed there. Also, if you have at any time regularly gone to normal church services in the parish church for a period of at least 6 months.

You are also eligible if one of your parents, at any time after you were born, has lived in the parish for a period of at least 6 months or has regularly gone to normal church services in the parish church for a period of at least 6 months. And the final category is if one of your parents or grandparents was married in the parish. This opens up quite a lot of options.

Many people plan at least a year in advance, but we only need a month's notice. A licence is not generally required as we do this ancient ritual of calling the banns, which is announcing on three Sundays that the couple are intending to marry and asking for any objections to be made known (and in nearly 30 years of ministry, I have never had an objection!) Weddings can be huge events, or they can be just the couple and two witnesses. Sadly we cannot marry same-sex couples, and it is a great sorrow to us that the Church has not moved forward on this. We are part of the Inclusive Church network, which recognises that everyone is made in God's image and loved by God, and we are very willing to have marriage blessings for any couple who has had a secular wedding ceremony.

Weddings have a reputation for being expensive, but the church element of that is the least pricey – this year it is £635. This does not include the bells or the organist, and if you are marrying in a place where you do not live, there will also be an extra cost for calling the banns in each parish.

The most recent change has been that we no longer issue the certificate at the wedding: instead of signing two registers, it is now a piece of paper which is sent away, and the couple apply online for the certificate.

One discussion that comes up is whether couples who live together should have legal rights. My opinion is that those rights already exist in the form of marriage or a civil partnership. So often we see marriage as being about

romance and love, which it is, but it is also about practicalities, particularly economic ones such as inheritance tax and pensions. It can be much cheaper to get married than to sort out possessions and inheritance later.

As always, if you want to know more, do get in touch.

June is a busy month – open gardens, charity walks, fundraisers, fetes, Big Green Week, and Pride month – organised by lots of different people for lots of different reasons. Many are about fundraising for charities – schools, hospices – and many are also about creating community spirit or raising awareness of issues. All require a great deal of organisation, which usually is done by volunteers.

I have been involved in many of these over the years, and there is always much to consider: has the right time of year and the right location been chosen, or are we clashing with many other events? How do we advertise to reach the people who would support us? For fundraisers, what is the weighing up between the work involved and the potential profit?

There are a few things that I have learnt: one is that, if I am being honest, there are occasions when I would rather just give a lump sum than spend many weeks organising or a long day running stalls. The second is that it is always the same people who volunteer. The third is that one of the most difficult decisions can be to not hold an event – "But we have always done that" is not a reason to continue.

We all have our own particular charities and organisations that we like to support, and if money is tight, then we have to make decisions about which ones we do not support. But we can always help in other ways – by telling other people about events, by promoting them, and by acknowledging that even if we can only give a small amount, it is better than nothing. May all your events go well, and may we all support each other.

The 31st of May this year is Trinity Sunday, when we try to understand the complex nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit – how do they relate to each other and how do we relate to them? We then enter into what is called 'Ordinary Time', when there are no major festivals such as Easter or Pentecost. Once again, it can feel like the rhythm of the church's year is not always in sync with the secular world, but it is also a good reminder that our faith is the basis for all that we do, and church can also be the place that we go for rejuvenation when the rest of life is so busy.

May all your events go well, and may we all support each other.

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Flaming June, fetes and Father's Day

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served by our wonderful shop volunteers when the village hall is converted into a super-sized tearoom from midday onwards. The shop will be open as normal in the morning from 9am to 12pm.

A week later and it's Father's Day (Sunday 21 June). We have a wide range of unusual but functional items for dads for sale including bamboo socks.



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Puttenham Pet Tea Party

By Susan Hughes

On a beautiful, sunny 2nd of May, the very first Pet Tea Party was held in Puttenham, at Cecilia Hall and St Mary's Church.

For the humans there was a fantastic range of cakes and refreshments, homemade by the WI, and doggy ice cream and dog biscuits available for us. There were fun and interesting stalls to shop at and, of course, the grand raffle. Little ones could have their faces painted and try out some old-school games such as "hook a duck".

But the real fun was there for us, the animals. Our PPTP roving reporter was present and stopped a few of our canine friends in their tracks to ask for their thoughts on the party...

First off, Margot, "What was your highlight of the tea party, Margot?" "Well, my highlight was the pet blessing at St Mary's. I had never been to such a thing before, and I thought it was really special. All my dog friends were really well behaved, and the church was so packed, people had to stand. Our humans sang the hymn All Things Bright and Beautiful – nobody barked – and we all listened intently to what was being said to us. There were also some funny poems about a dog and a cat, but the best thing was how special the blessing felt...we all trotted out with our wagging tails held high."

Next up, Clover. "What did you like best?" "I loved the talent show because the categories were different and funny. I also won the category "kindest eyes", so that made Mum and Dad proud, and I received a gorgeous rosette that was nearly as big as me! I got to wear one of the many outfits my mum likes to make me, so I liked strutting my stuff and showing off too."

"What are your thoughts, Kafka?" "Well, I just loved being outside with lots of other dogs and just chilling. I am a big dog, and I like having all that space to safely roam around and roll on the grass. I have to admit, I was a little bit

star struck first when I met the dogs that had acted in the films Star Wars and Cruella, but, actually, they were quite normal, just like one of us really."

Over to Grace and Nina... "What did you two like best?" "Well, as we are active dogs with lots of energy, we liked the agility demo and having a go on that. Also, the scent demo was exciting for us, and the working dogs gave us some good tips to try out later. We also loved the doggy catwalk and were happy that another working dog duo, the bearded col-lies, took first place."

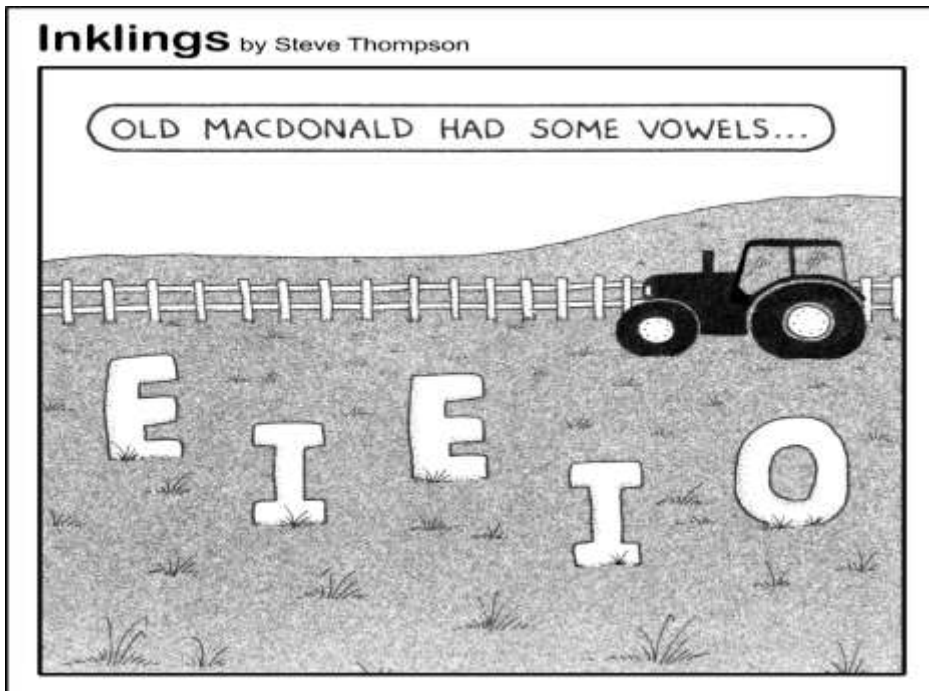
Some extra comments before we wrap up? Just to say that a percentage of the profits will be given to the WI's regular charity and the Aylesbury Women's Refuge. We were pleased that the Appledown Animal Rescue charity collected money for its cause too. Not all animals are lucky to have humans like we do. So, paws up to our less fortunate furry friends... We hope you find loving homes soon."

On a human note...a huge thank you to everyone outside of the WI who helped make the day so special. Special thanks to Grahame Senior from the Tring Team Parish for taking the pet blessing service; Chris Hodges for jumping into the breach and kindly loaning his PA system; and the Horti for the bunting and gazebos. Thank you also to all the car park attendants and to Simon, Dan, Jane and Francois (all the way from Canada to attend the event!) for all your hard work and support throughout the day. Also, Rosie Hill and Emma Brough for the fantastic face painting, which was such a hit during the day.

A huge thank you also goes to Jade Cooper-Hall for helping bring the dog show and the other dog activities to life, alongside her wonderful friends Catherine, Amelia, Annie, Hannah and Ruth. Your time, energy and enthusiasm were truly appreciated.

Further thanks go to Christine Rutter and The Puttenham Trust for their generous contribution, which enabled us to use St Mary's Church and grounds, as well as Cecilia Hall. We are so grateful to everyone who helped make the event such a success and such an enjoyable day for the whole "paw" community.

Pictures are on page 24



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The Puttenham Page

by Christine Rutter

Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, Sheila, and his three sons and their families.

John was churchwarden at St Mary's for many years and was also the brains behind so many of the events held in Puttenham to raise money for St Mary's and the Friends of Puttenham Church. We called him "our ideas man"! He got a thrill out of devising and making so many games, especially when we ran the "Family Games" event for several years. Most of the games were his invention. I especially remember The Pig, one of John's early creations and it is still in existence, although in storage. In fact, there is a photograph of me balancing on the pig, which could roll over at any moment!

We must also never forget Father Christmas's Grotto at the Children's Christmas parties. The walls of the grotto were designed and painted by John. That grotto did many years of good service. In later years, John also joined the congregation at St Cross, Wilstone, and so our two villages will greatly miss his passing.

Thank you, John, for many years of loyal service to the church.

"May he rest in peace."

Our regular Puttenham events have been delayed this spring/summer due to outside circumstances. However, we shall be resuming with another 'Tea Rooms' and a jumble sale as soon as possible.

Watch out for notices in "The Puttenham Page".



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Changes or additions? Contact the Editor.

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Vivian Wood

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Good Job, Well Done

Reservoir embankment works completed

The Canal & River Trust charity celebrates the completion of the project to strengthen the 200-year-old embankments at Wilstone Reservoir, with a topping-out gathering on May 12th of contractors Kier, Canal Trust personnel, press and dignitaries.

The Canal & River Trust has completed a £7 million, 14-month programme of statutory safety works at Wilstone Reservoir near Tring in Hertfordshire. The mandatory works, which were required under the Reservoir Act, included driving 1,400 11-metre steel piles into the reservoir's mile-long embankments to strengthen them and future-proof them. In addition, new paths, seating areas and visitor access steps have been added.

Built in 1802 to supply water to the Grand Union Canal, today Wilstone Reservoir is part of the Tring Reservoirs Nature Reserve Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is a popular place for walking, fishing and bird watching. At 119 acres, Wilstone Reservoir is the largest of the four Tring reservoirs. It is up to 5.5 metres deep and has the capacity to hold over 1,000 megalitres of water, the equivalent of around 450 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Ros Daniels, the Canal & River Trust's London & Southeast director, explains: "Wilstone Reservoir provides an important place for water storage for the Grand Union Canal and has also become a popular site for angling, walking and birdwatching. These works, carried out by our contractor Kier, will secure it for future generations. As well as strengthening the embankment, we've repaired the reservoir's culvert, used to draw off water in emergencies. We've also improved public access to the site by levelling and resurfacing the reservoir crest footpath and a 200-metre section of the wooded area on the north side of the reservoir. We've resurfaced the car park, installed new steps and created nine new seating areas along the south-west embankment. To minimise disruption, the works were carried out using land-based equipment. This meant we didn't need to drain the reservoir, although the levels were substantially reduced, so it was able to continue to supply the Grand Union Canal last year. The reservoir, which is groundwater-fed, has been refilling as usual over the early months of this year."

Eddie Quinn, managing director for environment at Kier Infrastructure, comments: "Improving the resilience of our UK reservoirs, like Wilstone Reservoir, is important for our water security, creates vital habitats where wildlife can thrive, and places that people can enjoy."

Later this year, the Trust is planning some biodiversity improvements, including reed bed enhancements within the Wilstone Reservoir nature reserve area and gap planting in the reservoir's hedgerows.

Now the project is finished, this is the last report by me, Peter Walker. I hope you have found them informative and interesting.

Peter is a resident of Wilstone and is a CRT volunteer.

You can find out more about visiting Wilstone Reservoir and other places on the charity's canal network at

www.canalrivertrust.org.uk



Councillor Sally Symington congratulating the contractors

Ros Daniels, the Canal & River Trust's London & Southeast director,



An unusual view of the completed reservoir works

Puttenham Pet Tea Party in Pictures

Full story on page 21



Claire and Clover



We are the "best in show"



Cakes galore



Everyone likes a raffle



Nina and Grace



Rosie Face Painter