

THE Rabbiter



Issue 324
December 2025
/January 2026

The Community Magazine for Kempshott Rise, Hatch Warren, Beggarwood and Kempshott Park



All the regular features plus

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- **READ EASY**
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EDITORIAL

At the time of writing we have just had our first snow shower of the winter. I used to welcome the snow as a child - something to break up the monotony of dark, damp and dismal days. With climate change, it is less frequent now.

The greatest event to take our minds off the winter is, of course, the festive season and the joy that it brings. The happy atmosphere is helped by the homes in our area that are decorated and made to look so cheerful and welcoming. The residents of some roads hold competitions, and others invite all their neighbours to join in so that the whole street looks bright and happy.

On our cover this month is a lovely photograph from David Levy of a robin - the nation's favourite bird - singing its heart out. Inside is a fascinating article about Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol' and the background that scarred the author as a boy, making him such a fierce advocate of helping the needy in our society. It is an uplifting tale, and I am sure that many readers will find some way at this time of year to support the charities that do so much good work.

Also in this issue, on page 10, we welcome a report from Luke Murphy MP. I hope that this will become a regular feature.

This is the last Rabbiter for two months. The next will come out in February, when we can confidently expect to see the snowdrops and crocuses that herald the coming of Spring. In the meantime I thank everyone associated with the production of this magazine through the past year, not least the deliverers who ensure that you receive your copies.

Everyone here wishes you a wonderful time over Christmas, and a happy and rewarding 2026.

Editor



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SEA CADET VOLUNTEERS

Do you have enthusiasm and a passion for working with young people? Would you like the opportunity to help launch young people for life, whilst enhancing your skills and meeting new people? Basingstoke Sea Cadets would love to hear from you.

We provide a head start in life for young people through nautical adventure and fun. Our volunteers work directly with young people and behind the scenes, to help make a positive difference. We are based in Winklebury and are currently looking for enthusiastic adult volunteers to join us.

We are looking for **Unit Instructors**, who will be hands on, teaching cadets. You will run lessons and activities that help cadets progress through the Sea Cadets Experience, gaining qualifications and confidence as they go. This role is ideal if you can support young people on a regular basis, are happy to throw yourself into teaching activities and seek a rewarding role where you will be the key to helping them flourish into confident, capable young adults.

We would also love to expand our **Unit Management Team (UMT)**. If you aren't able to commit to a regular volunteering role, there are still plenty of ways you can get involved. No commitment is too small. You could volunteer in roles such as Secretary or Fundraising, which are perfect if you are not able to be at the unit every week, or if you have a specialist skill you would like to share.

There are no specific requirements for these roles. Having the right attitude and a passion for improving the lives of young people are the most important things. If you are reliable, keen to learn new things and enjoy working as part of a team, please do contact us at tsmaryrose.communications@outlook.com. We look forward to hearing from you!



HATCH WARREN WI

We had a fun packed November meeting learning about the origins of belly dancing. Julie Brown taught us a little about its history and that there are different types of dance according to location and culture. Her colourful costumes were enchanting and several of us took the chance to don a jangly coin belt to join her in one of the dance routines. We all agreed that it was a terrific way to get into shape.

Our December meeting will be held at Beggarwood's Café in the Park over coffee and mince pies and later in the month we will have our Christmas Lunch at BCoT.



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COUNCILLOR UPDATES

Stephen Reid

County Councillor: Basingstoke
South West 07976 310206
stephen.reid@hants.gov.uk

DOWN GRANGE: With an increase in housing on this side of town being proposed by the Borough Council, I believe it is even more important to protect our existing open spaces. One of these is Down Grange Park, which I believe the majority of residents want to see preserved and not used for a golfing facility. I was therefore disappointed that an attempt to get the Borough Council to reconsider its plans was defeated last month. I believe this was a serious mistake: the site is much loved by walkers and sports players, and many of you reading this will be users.

GREAT WOLF EXHIBITION: On the same subject, I attended a 'drop-in' event organised by Great Wolf who want to build a water-themed resort hotel on the current Par 3 golf course at the Leisure Park. As well as offering a few specific comments about their scheme, I asked whether there was a causal link between the new golf facility at Down Grange and their hotel investment going ahead. They said 'no'. In other words, if the Council decided not to use Down Grange Park, Great Wolf would still go ahead with their hotel.

ANAEROBIC DIGESTER: I attended the Digester's liaison panel, held in November. At the previous meeting we had expressed concerns to Biogen, the operators, about odour pollution reported by local residents. This time, Biogen reported that they had found a small leak in one of the digestion tanks and had corrected it. Time will tell whether this has improved or even eliminated the problem. Biogen have also invested in a new compressor for use on the gas flare, which will be more efficient.

FOOD WASTE COLLECTION: The Garlic Lane digester did not win the contract for Basingstoke's food waste collection service. I asked Biogen whether this would have any impact on their current operations, and they said 'no'. They are operating at full capacity, so the number of lorries passing through Hatch Warren should not change.

PACK LANE (1): There was a great deal of concern about the resurfacing work in Pack Lane, and the impact it might have on local businesses and the users of Kempshott Village Hall. I therefore had detailed discussions with the Council officers to try to keep inconveniences to a minimum. I monitored the work and was pleased to see that the contractors did, as promised, allow access during the road closure although there were delays to allow the heavy machinery to get out of the way. I was also assured that Homesteads Road would not be closed at the same time as Pack Lane. When the work was finished I drove down the road and noted the vast improvement.

PACK LANE (2): I was therefore bitterly disappointed to be told that a section of the new surface was not up to standard and had to be removed and relaid. The remedial work was done at the contractor's expense, not the Council Taxpayers'. The re-work delayed the white-lining and the re-installation of the speed pads (which this time will be made of rubber).

PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP: I have attended meetings of the PPG at a time of significant change. Members heard that the new 'Total Triage' system is succeeding in cutting call wait times and it is improving patients' access to appointments. We asked that the very long pre-recorded message on the phone system be reduced. We are into the vaccination season and I do recommend, if you haven't already done so, that you get your 'flu jab. The peak in influenza cases is coming early this winter.

SCHOOL RUN PARKING: Over the years I have noted that 'school run' problems tend to peak at the start of each new school year. This year there seem to be a higher-than-usual number of complaints. St Mark's School has reported that some local residents have been verbally abused by members of the school community. The school is asking that drivers park considerately and not in a way that prevents local residents from accessing their homes. I remind parents that the school has an arrangement with the Community Association to use their car park and then to cross Woodbury Road, where there is a School Crossing Patrol.

WATLING END: I have received notification from the Borough Council that it is refurbishing the play area in Watling End, and have been to the site to inspect it. The current equipment is tired and out of date. By the time you read this, work should have started and is likely to complete by the end of December. During construction, the contractor is using the green next to the play area for its compound. The new equipment will include swings, somersault bars, a multi-unit for toddlers and younger users, and a carousel.

MEALS ON WHEELS: My new portfolio in the Cabinet at Hampshire takes in the public health discipline, which is a very large one. As part of my 'reading in', I joined one of the Meals on Wheels delivery rounds in this area. The drivers do more than deliver a good, hot meal. They also give the recipients the chance to speak to someone. At same time, the drivers check on the wellbeing of the recipients. On the day that I went out, one of the elderly residents seemed below par, and the driver said he would call in his concern so that carers and relatives could be made aware.

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT: I also attended a briefing on the technology that can be made available to support people to live longer in their own homes. This can include medicine dispensers, GPS watches to help people take exercise without getting lost, and enhanced Amazon Alexa devices to remind residents to take their medication or even to brush their teeth!

SCHOOL APPLICATIONS: Now is the time of year for parents and carers to apply for school places for their children. If you have a child due to start school in September, or moving from Infants to Junior schools, you have until January 15th 2026 to apply. My recommendation is to do it now - it will be too easy to forget with everything else going on over Christmas and the New Year. You have the opportunity to state three preferences and, again, I recommend that you do that. Some people give only one preference and then end up receiving an offer from a school that they really don't want.

FIREWORKS SPECTACULAR: My family and I were delighted, once again, to attend the Hatch Warren fireworks display, and the Community Association did us proud with a show of the highest order. The rain held off, so the conditions were perfect. At the end, it was announced that the event was a sell-out - easy to believe from the large groups of people who walked there and back.

LITTER PICK: Following the fireworks, the Community Association supported two litter picks on the Hatch Warren Field and Beggarwood Park. They reported that the volunteers collected an incredible amount of litter across the two sites. Volunteers included members from the Beggarwood Wildlife Group, Hatch Warren Nature Group, and Natural Basingstoke.

BLOG: I put more details about these, and other issues in my blog at reidaboutbasingstoke.co.uk.



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR:

This will be the last Rabbit this year, so I take this opportunity to wish you the very best for the festive season and the new year.

Best wishes - Stephen



Stacy Hart

Borough Councillor:

Email casework: cllr.stacy.hart@basingstoke.gov.uk

Facebook, BlueSky & Insta: @allinpartyUK, TikTok: @all_in_party

Monthly resident e-newsletter: www.allinparty.org.uk

Dear residents of Hatch Warren and Beggarwood – I hope this finds you all well and healthy.

I can't believe we're on our Christmas Rabbit edition again already, but I've had another chockful month of activities and that does have a way of seeing the time fly by!

BLACK HISTORY MONTH: I was thrilled to attend Basingstoke's Black History Month Community Achiever Awards ceremony. It was not only an evening to recognise the excellent contribution made by Basingstoke people of colour, but a great way of learning more about some truly brilliant local work and initiatives. I always come away from such events with another list of people to work and share ideas with and groups to visit!

MARSHAL VOLUNTEERING: I was pleased to help out for a morning of vaccine marshalling for Camrose, Gillies, Hackwood and Beggarwood surgery patients. Although none of us likes to remember that Covid remains at large, it's still vital for vulnerable patients to be protected and I was glad to assist the staff who work through steady streams of patients every Saturday to do so. Similarly, I was happy once again to volunteer with my colleagues at the Hatch Warren Fireworks Spectacular, which could not take place without safety for hundreds of attendees being ensured. As usual, the HWBCA pulled off a blinding event and it was a joy to see so many families and captivated faces – well done to the team!

ARMISTICE DAY: Attending the Council's Armistice Day service to remember those who gave their lives for our country was, of course, very solemn and moving. I was honoured to meet someone afterwards who fought in the same conflict as my father, get the chance to talk with him about it and thank him for his service. The minister conducting the service reminded us that those who sacrificed their lives did so for our freedom and our democracy; that we must remember them *always*, but also honour that sacrifice by treating our democracy and our fellow humans with respect and dignity. It's a vital message for our times and one I will always try to live by both in and outside of this work.

EVENTS + PATROLS: Community Lunch at Beggarwood Café was bustling again and was joined by local Police Community Support Officers, who made themselves available all lunchtime to chat to ward residents, hear local issues and answer questions. Liaising with the community is a really important part of their role and they will be along to the next two Community Lunch events, so do come along to meet them while grabbing a tasty lunch. The next one, on Wednesday 3rd December, will be a special one as we also enjoy a fun Christmas singalong with our meal – what with the Officers in attendance, carols to warm the voice and delicious quiche from Dashwood Manor to fill the belly it's likely to be busy, so come early and prepared to share a table for some cheer!

I was delighted to go on this month's random school run parking patrol with our new Community Safety Patrol Officer for HWB and Brighton Hill, Erand James-Bailey. I try to spot-check different areas each time and we toured Danebury Road, Centurion Way and Petworth Close, Inglewood Drive, and The Cornfields to monitor parking and road safety while we caught up on local matters. As the weather get nastier, I'd like to remind all residents to be exceptionally cautious on the roads especially around school areas at drop off and pick up time, and to be as considerate as possible when choosing where and how to park.

FOOD WASTE BINS: We're now about a month into weekly food waste collections and, so far, the feedback has been very positive. I have noted that not everyone is in the habit of using theirs yet, although I'm sure that will pick up as the scheme goes on. My own experience has been that – despite already being quite a finicky menu-writer, list-maker and grocery shopper who assumed there wasn't much left to minimise – I have still managed to reduce our own food waste further by using our new caddy. All very good for the environment and the wallet! But if you do have any questions or issues as the scheme beds in, I'm happy to hear from you and help out where possible.

HELP AVAILABLE: Dashwood Manor Care Home are offering a six-week accessible guided Physiotherapy Class – for free! There are places available for any local to attend alongside Dashwood residents and be led through a range of seated strengthening and standing balance routines designed to help keep attendees mobile, confident, and active. Everyone is welcome, and sessions are tailored to all abilities. They run on Tuesdays from 2pm to 3pm in a rolling programme, so new attendees can join at any time to access their six consecutive weeks subject to place availability. Waiting lists for physio are extremely long and we know that the longer we don't move our bodies, the harder it becomes and the more unwell we get, so this is a great opportunity. If you're interested, contact leahanne.wilkinson@careuk.com for more details!

If you are part of a local charity or community organisation, remember that Borough Councillors are given £2,000 each year in grant funding to allocate to new equipment and such for groups that benefit the area: I have about a third of my pot left to give for this year. Please note that all applications, relevant supporting documents and approvals must be received by the grants team by 2nd March 2026 so don't delay! You can find eligibility and application details on the Council website but do reach out to me with any questions.

REPAIR CAFÉ: After our break for fireworks, the Hatch Warren Repair Café is back on Saturday 6th December from 10am to 1pm at the Community Centre. As Christmas approaches, I'd encourage all of us to try to avoid overspending on new things and give gifts of time and thoughtfulness instead – if your loved one has an already-beloved item that needs a fix, it could be the perfect present!

COUNCILLOR SURGERY: I'll be at The Portsmouth Arms on Monday 15th December from 6pm to 8pm to chat about your local questions, issues and ideas for my final 'Ask Me Anything' Councillor Surgery of 2025. Do drop by if you have anything to quiz me on or get in touch with any casework on the details below if you can't make it.

I'll finish by wishing you and your loved ones the very merriest of Christmas and holiday seasons, and all the health, happiness and prosperity you hope for in 2026.

Best wishes – Stacy.



Surgery Update

Phone waiting times average 11.5 minutes over the last 30 days. Many patients mistakenly believe appointments are only released on Mondays, leading to longer waits. However, appointments are now released throughout the week so we are encouraging patients to avoid the Monday rush and ring on other days too.

About 40% of patients have digital access to the practice via the Dr IQ powered by Evergreen app. The practice has clarified that you don't need a mobile device or phone and you can access the system using a computer.

To access using a computer, log in at **www.evergreen-life.co.uk/health-wellbeing-library/three-steps-to-connecting-to-your-gp-online-services-and-gp-records/**

You'll reach the Evergreen-Life website, but Operose still uses Dr IQ powered by Evergreen as their system name, which can't be changed at the practice level.

Routine online consultations are available between 8.00am and 6.30pm on weekdays. Online consultations offer patients an alternative way to access appropriate care. They are not a replacement for face-to-face appointments but can benefit everyone. More people using online access where appropriate can free up time and improve access for more vulnerable or digitally excluded patients.

A routine problem is something that does not need urgent attention today such as queries about medication, repeat prescriptions, sick notes, or ongoing health issues that can safely wait for a response. If you have a routine (non-urgent) request, you can submit your request online using the DrIQ app, powered by Evergreen. Simply select the option: "I need help, but it's not urgent."

Improving strength & balance

Thirty percent of people aged 65 and over will fall at least once a year. For those aged 80 and over it is 50%.

Falls and fractures are a common and serious health issue faced by older people in England. Falling is a cause of distress, pain, injury, loss of confidence, loss of independence and mortality.

- 1** Falls are the number one reason older people are taken to the emergency department in a hospital
- 2** In around **5%** of cases a fall leads to a fracture and hospitalisation
- 3** Unaddressed fall hazards in the home are estimated to cost the NHS in England **£435 million**

In the past month the PPG marshals at Vaccination clinics have handed out over 700 Falls Prevention checklists and Ageing Well information leaflets. These are also available on wall dispensers at all of the surgeries.

If you are getting a vaccination please feel free to pick up a leaflet. We also offer information leaflets about Dementia Support and support for Unpaid Carers.

More information about falls and a falls checklist is available on our Live Longer Better webpage **<https://cghppg.weebly.com/live-longer-better.html>** and there are also details of ways you can improve stability and strength at home and the local classes available.

The in depth version of this news is online at www.cghppg.weebly.com and also a 'Self Help A-Z' of Health and Wellbeing information, fast track treatment options, support groups and local contacts. Citizens Advice 0808 278 7829 can access the A-Z if you cannot use the internet.

PPG email: cghb.surgeryppg@btinternet.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CGHB.PPG

Membership of the Patient Participation Group is open to all patients of the practice. If you are interested in joining find out more or apply www.cghppg.weebly.com/join-the-ppg

The Practice complaints process is on the practice website or write to The Manager at Gillies Health Centre or email: hiowicb-hsi.cghpartnership.complaints@nhs.net

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LUKE MURPHY MP

Over the past few months, many residents have been raising concerns with me about anti-social vehicle use across Basingstoke. People have described late-night racing on the ring road, dirt bikes cutting through parks, e-scooters and e-bikes ridden on pavements, and cars speeding past schools at busy times. These issues aren't minor; they affect daily life and make too many people feel unsafe.

After hearing the same stories from so many different parts of the town, I knew we needed to bring everyone with responsibility for roads, enforcement and public spaces into one place. That has never happened before in Basingstoke.

So for the first time, I brought together Hampshire Constabulary (including roads policing), Hampshire County Council, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, National Highways, major retailers and car-park operators, housing providers, Neighbourhood Watch, and Speedwatch volunteers. The aim was simple: stop working in silos and start building a shared plan.

That meeting produced real commitments from partners.

Firstly, agencies agreed to create a proper, borough-wide strategy on anti-social vehicle use. This is something Basingstoke has never had. They will now map key hotspots across the town so enforcement, design changes and community action can be targeted in the right places.

Secondly, partners recognised that residents need clearer information. Work is underway to create simple guidance on who to contact about speeding, car meets, dirt bikes, e-scooters and parking issues and how those reports are acted on.

Thirdly, retailers, car-park operators and the police agreed to strengthen cooperation around disruptive car meets. This includes exploring practical steps like gates, bollards and technology, as well as the possibility of properly supervised car-meet locations away from homes.

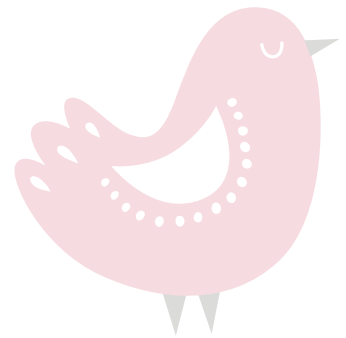
Hampshire County Council and National Highways will also examine engineering and technology options in hotspots, including average-speed cameras and noise-monitoring tools. And schools will

be supported to strengthen road-safety education and community engagement.

Some of this also needs national action, especially around e-scooters, vehicle noise and modified cars and I will continue raising those issues directly with Government.

None of this will change overnight. But by getting every key organisation around the table for the first time, we now have a shared plan, clear commitments and a collective responsibility to deliver.

Residents' voices drove this work and I will keep making sure they stay at the heart of the solutions.



Here we are into December with Christmas nearly upon us and then the end of the year 2025. Happy Christmas and New Year to you all.

Last month's report was rather too hopeful in that the Group expected progress on the Council's proposal to add 'landscaping' items to Old Down Wildlife Park. Unfortunately, nothing has happened and we still wait to hear about the second public consultation on the proposal.

Autumn has been very mild this year and has probably had an effect on nature – bees and wasps around well into November, some wildflowers still blooming, winter migrants arriving much later. During November on Old Down, wildflowers have been spotted, such as field scabious, oxeye daisy, clustered bell flower and even the odd cowslip. The autumn colours have been absolutely beautiful and the mild nights have meant that good numbers of many types of fungi have emerged (but so difficult to spot because of cover from fallen leaves). Not seen on Old Down but this autumn the number of Fly Agaric was quite astounding (try Morgaston Wood).

HAVE A VERY GOOD CHRISTMAS – and see you next year. Perhaps a new year resolution – support nature and join nature groups including local ones such as Old Down Wildlife Group, Kempshott Conservation Group, Beggarwood Wildlife Group.

Work Parties: We meet outside Old Down Hall every Thursday 10-12noon (but not in the rain!). Please come along and join us – doesn't have to be every week. Check our website and Facebook for further information and/or contact us by email.

Email: old.down.wildlife@gmail.com

Website: Old Down Wildlife Group

Facebook: Old Down Wildlife Group



Fly Agaric in Morgaston Wood



FOUR LOCAL CHARITIES RECEIVE ADDITIONAL MASONIC DONATIONS

Four charities in and around Basingstoke have benefitted from a funding source that was able to provide finance in addition to what they had received during the summer.

The 105-year-old Elvetham Masonic Lodge, that operates out of the Basingstoke Masonic Centre in Victoria Street at the Top of Town, had made donations to these charities from their own resources.

During the autumn they were able to apply to the Tom Langton fund which was established by a previous Grand Master of the Masonic Province of Hampshire and Isle of Wight, the interest from which is donated to suitable applicants proposed by individual lodges.

This successful application has meant that Elvetham Lodge was able to provide an additional £2,000 to be split equally between the four charities they had assisted just a few months previously.

The lodge's Charity Steward, Richard Pflieger, presented a cheque for £500 each to Tim Knight of Mencap's Green Fingers gardening project in South Ham, Basingstoke, Natalie Walker of the Mustard Seed Autism Trust a child support group in Odiham, Steve Dignum of the Hook Shed project where, assisted by the Hook parish council, a shed is currently under construction, and Chris Cornwell of Hartley Wintney Voluntary Care Group that has 120 members supporting the local community in various ways.

The presentation was made in the Lodge room of the Basingstoke Masonic Centre which proved of real interest to the recipients.

Behind the group can be seen the banner of Elvetham Lodge and two boards listing the names of all the Lodge's Worshipful Masters since their founding in 1920.



Left to right: Steve Dignum, Vice Chair of Hook Shed, Natalie Walker Treasurer Mustard Seed Autism Trust, Richard Pflieger charity steward Elvetham Lodge, Chris Cornwell Chairman of Hartley Wintney Voluntary Care Group and Tim Knight CEO Mencap Green Fingers Project.

Paul Flint
Elvetham Masonic Lodge



We are open from
Wednesday to Sunday
10am-2pm

Café in the Park

We look forward to
seeing you!



Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Quiche Wednesday Community Meal Deal 12-2pm	Beggarwood Bumps to Babies group 11.30-12.30 Plus	Friendship Friday Chatty cafe 10.30-11.30

- **Wednesday 3rd December**- BVA Wellbeing walk
- **Christmas Community Lunch 12.15** - Join us for a festive community lunch featuring mince pies, a quiz, and plenty of Christmas cheer. Don't miss the prize for the best Christmas jumper!
- **Cops N Coffee - 12-2** - Meet the local policing team
- **Friday 5th December**- Chatty Cafe Christmas gathering
- **Hatch Warren and Beggarwood Community Association Fundraising Quiz 7.30pm** Join in and the Trustees for an evening of fun quizzing while raising vital funds for our community.
- **Friday 12th December**- Card & Cuppa craft group
- **Friday 19th December 11.30** Beggarwood Bookworms Daytime

We would like to thank our customers for the loyal support this year and wish you a Happy Christmas. See you in the New Year!
Please note that we will be closed from
December 22nd and will reopen on January 7th.



LOOKING FOR THAT PERFECT PARTY VENUE?
LOOK NO FURTHER, AS
HATCH WARREN
OR
BEGGARWOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE
ARE HERE TO HELP!

Our halls are suitable for children's parties
and we offer morning and afternoon slots on
Saturday and Sundays.

Use of our kitchen facilities and
hire of tables and chairs are included.

We accept bouncy castles/soft plays
and discos in our halls.

To discuss your party further, please email
office@hatchwarren.org

Café in the Park
Beggarwood Community Centre
Broadnere Road, Basingstoke,
RG22 4AQ

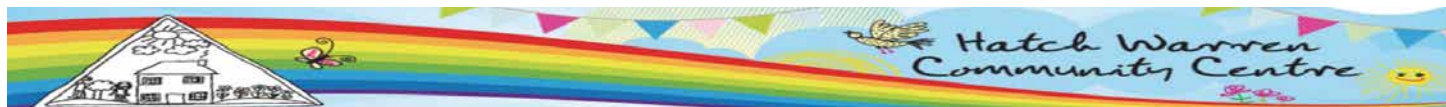


Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Quiche Wednesday Community Meal Deal 12-2pm	Beggarwood Babies group 11.30-12.30 Monday 5th Jan	Friendship Friday Chatty cafe 10.30-11.30

- **Five to Thrive new baby course** run by Hampshire Healthy Families this four week course discovers the five building blocks for your babies optimal brain development. email hhf@barnardos.org.uk
- **Wednesday 7th January**
Cafe in the Park Reopens
Cops N Coffee - 12-2
Meet the local policing team
- **Beggarwood Bookworms Evening group-7pm**
Friday 9th January
Basingstoke Voluntary Action Roadshow
New years resolution to donate some time in 2026?
Come and meet The BVA to discuss
volunteering opportunities across Basingstoke and beyond
Card and a Cuppa -10-1pm
Join Pauline from I create Craft to design and make a card.
- **Friday 30th January**
Beggarwood Bookworms Daytime group

email
community@beggarwood.org





We are a registered charity run by volunteers - working to make Hatch Warren and Beggarwood a great place to live!

**HATCH WARREN COMMUNITY CENTRE
COACH TRIP TO
THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA**



**Thursday 26th February at 7.30PM
DOMINION THEATRE, LONDON
Stall Seats**

Tickets cost £75 per person
(INCLUDES RETURN COACH)

Coach will depart at 4pm from our car park

**This trip is open to all members of the public
Tickets are non refundable**

**To book your place email OFFICE@HATCHWARREN.ORG
or call 01256 811262**

40 seats must be sold for trip to go ahead
This event is being held as a fundraising event for Hatch Warren & Beggarwood Community Association

**HATCH WARREN COMMUNITY CENTRE
COACH TRIP TO
KINKY BOOTS with JOHANNES RADEBE**



**Thursday 21st May at 7.30PM
LONDON COLISEUM, LONDON
Dress Circle Seats**

Tickets cost £85 per person
(INCLUDES RETURN COACH)

Coach will depart at 4pm from our car park

**This trip is open to all members of the public
Tickets are non refundable**

**To book your place email OFFICE@HATCHWARREN.ORG
or call 01256 811262**

40 seats must be sold for trip to go ahead
This event is being held as a fundraising event for Hatch Warren & Beggarwood Community Association

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

STAND UP

COMES TO

HATCH WARREN

**ON 7 FEB 2026 AT 7PM
ADULTS ONLY**

LICENSED BAR

**TICKETS ARE £15 AND ADVANCE BOOKING IS
ESSENTIAL.**

**TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE VIA TICKETSOURCE -
WWW.TICKETSOURCE.CO.UK/HMCA/T-LDKXQAR**



**HATCH WARREN
COMEDY CLUB**



**LOOKING FOR THAT PERFECT PARTY VENUE?
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**Our halls are suitable for children's parties
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Saturday and Sundays.**

**Use of our kitchen facilities and
hire of tables and chairs are included.**

**We accept bouncy castles/soft plays
and discos in our halls.**

**To discuss your party further, please email
office@hatchwarren.org**



Café in the Park

**Beggarwood Community Centre
Broadmere Road, Basingstoke,
RG22 4AQ**

Registered Charity Number 1161117

find us on | facebook

Hatch Warren Community Centre

**Tel: 01256 811262
Email: office@hatchwarren.org
Web: www.hatchwarren.org
Following us on Twitter @hatchwarren**



Children & Young People's support lines

Childline - 0800 1111 - Samaritans - 116 123

Young Minds text service – 85258

The only Youth Club with Open Access and a Health Hub serving Hatch Warren and Beggarwood

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FREE ENTRY

10-13 year olds

THE WARREN

EVERY FRIDAY

6-7:45 PM

We are proud to be the only youth facility in the area offering a wide range of activities every week. Young people can enjoy socialising with their friends, tuck shop, games, sports and crafts.

Find us on Facebook to book a space!

HATCH WARREN COMMUNITY CENTRE
LONG CROSS LN, BASINGSTOKE RG22 4XF
CHARITY NUMBER: 1161117
email: Warren@hatchwarren.org



THE WARREN

Late mates

Free entry

Pool - Music - Xbox - Table Tennis

Hot Food

Fridays
Year groups 8-11
8-9:30pm

Email: Warren@hatchwarren.org Hatch Warren Community Centre
Charity number: 1161117 Long Cross Ln, Basingstoke RG22 4XF

Monday night is Link2 Club Night

6pm-8.15pm



WE HAVE SUCH FUN!

Manager - Dilys Buchan 07939532667

LINK2, supported by Hatch Warren & Beggarwood Community Association, is a family orientated group for young adults (16-30) who may need a little support. LINK2 is run by experienced staff who aim to develop a relationship with all members with learning disabilities and their families to get the best outcomes for their future. We support them on a path to growing independence, as they move into adult life.

Improve general Life skills and finding their full potential through sports opportunities

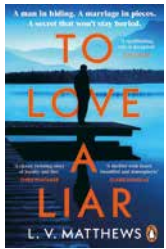
Boost confidence and support for independent travel

Provide experiences to promote Resilience and self esteem

Maintain and develop our access to work programme



Supported by
 Hampshire County Council



This month the delightful LV Matthews visited our evening group again to discuss her latest novel 'To Love a Liar'. This is the story of an undercover police officer who has lived a secret life but now all is falling apart. Members had plenty of opportunities to chat and ask questions about the writing and research process. We would like to thank Liv for being so generous with her time.

Our Daytime group are currently reading a twisty thriller 'Beautiful Ugly' by Alice Feeney which we will be discussing at our next meeting.

We round off this year with our Christmas social evening to say a big thank you to all our keen and supportive members and we look forward to lots of great reads in 2026.



*Wyh rae Citsmhars teers os dab ta swenig?
Therye ayawls dinppory tieht neldees!*

Reading can feel like this for some adults.

It's a startling fact that more than 2.4 million adults in England can barely read or cannot read at all.

Read Easy UK was set up in 2011 to tackle this problem and now has over 80 volunteer-led groups across the country. Since our Basingstoke group formed in 2019, we have enrolled 75 readers onto our free, one-to-one coaching programme, of which 43% successfully graduated or made significant progress.

Our reader ambassador has been busy promoting our work through interviews with the BBC and local radio and has also met our local MP. Thanks to her nomination, Basingstoke Read Easy won the Community Project Award at the 'A Place To Be Proud Of' event in June 2025.

Feedback shows that improved reading can transform lives:

"I am now helping my young granddaughter with her reading."

"Couldn't have got into college without Read Easy."

We have a small, enthusiastic team working to support our coaches and reach out to potential readers who could use our help. We would love to get more people on board to add their ideas and talents to our group. Could you offer your skills as our Publicity Organiser, liaising with local and social media? If networking is your thing, we are also looking for a Referrals Networker to seek reader referrals from local agencies and organisations.

So, if you're keen for a new challenge in the New Year, please contact us at basingstokerecruiter@readeasy.org.uk for details of how you can help change lives for the better or find out more at <https://readeasy.org/groups/basingstoke/>



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BEGGARWOOD Wildlife Group

Maintaining Beggarwood Park for the Benefit of
Wildlife and the Community

Community Litter Pick event Sunday 2nd November

A warm and sunny morning greeted volunteers and families for the third litter pick of the year. A fair amount of litter was collected around the two areas of focus around Beggarwood and Hatch Warren. The next litter pick event is in the plan for next February half term, date to be confirmed.

Work Party Tuesday 4th November

Again the weather gods provided a relatively warm day for the work party and again we were joined by some very welcome extra help. This time four people from Newbury Building society joined in to provide extra support.

The western part of the park was the area of concentration with more dogwood removal, again to try and keep spread across the meadow in check.

Also, further vegetation clearing took place in the ditch area to provide bare earth to give areas for burrowing solo bees and butterflies to nest.

Our next work parties will be:-

Tue 2nd December, Tue 6th January

We typically meet on the first Tuesday of the month at 9am at the Cafe in the Park (Community Centre)

For more information or to let us know you plan to join us on a work party, please email us at contactus@beggarwoodwildlife.uk



Welcome to King's Church Basingstoke

You are invited to join us at
10:15 when we start with Tea
and Coffee and the warmest
of welcomes.

A church that is:

- Faithful to God
- Caring for each other
- Committed to those around us

Every Sunday Morning
(except the first Sunday of the month)

10:15am in the main hall at
Manor Field Junior School
Haydn Road, Brighton Hill

www.kingschurchbasingstoke.com Tel: 07741 856437

KEMPSHOTT CONSERVATION GROUP

A Geo.....what?

At our October work party in the Old Orchard by Kendal Gardens, we experimented by hosting a "Cache In Trash Out" (CITO) event – a type of GeoCaching event based around volunteer action. We had no idea what kind of turnout to expect, but a fabulous 19 people turned up! In our CITO these willing participants were put to work with the great Orchard Bramble Bash.

We managed to uncover parts of the Orchard that have been lost to brambles for the past five years, which is an amazing testament to the hard work that was put in. We really can't say "thank you" enough. Having all this work done clearing back the brambles means we can focus our efforts elsewhere for the rest of the work parties and Orchard users can enjoy the wider paths without tripping over the bramble leaders.

We plan to add a GeoCache to our Orchard and elsewhere in the wider Kempshott Conservation Group areas such as Down Grange Meadow, so keep your eyes peeled for updates.

What is GeoCaching? In a nutshell, it's the world's largest treasure hunt. Users can create a hidden cache, publish the GPS coordinates, and other users can come and attempt to find it (and log that they have done so). A cache can be any size, even as small as a 5p piece. A great way to gamify a nice walk and fresh air. To find out more, visit www.geocaching.com

For more information about our activities, please call Marion Wolstencroft on (01256) 470171. Alternatively, send an email to kempshott-serve@tiscali.co.uk or visit us at www.kempshottconservationgroup.org.uk

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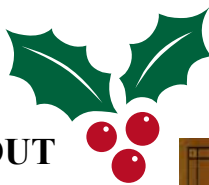
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4 Elmwood Parade, Basingstoke RG23 8LL Tel 01256 476 366

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PROBUS LEARN ABOUT LOCAL HERO

Sherfield-on-Loddon resident Natalie Lamer gave an outline to the Probud Club of Basingstoke of Captain John Aidan Liddell VC MC whose 1915 burial in South View cemetery, Basingstoke was attended by many dignitaries and public crowds.

Although he was born near Newcastle in 1888, during the early 1900s and after the First World War, the Liddell family lived at Sherfield Manor which today is Sherfield School. As a lasting connection one of the buildings at Sherfield Village Hall bears the family name and on 11 November each year a special service is held to commemorate his memory.

Following Balliol College, Oxford, where he had obtained a first-class degree in Zoology, at the age of 24 and not wanting to be a 'slacker' John Aidan Liddell joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders following his maternal grandfather into a Scottish regiment.

When the first World War started, with the rank of Lieutenant, he commanded a Maxim machine gun section on the Western Front that remained unsupported for 43 days. For this action and for saving the Company Sergeant Major he received the MC.

This long time at the front, spent either in action or the suboptimal conditions of front-line trenches, where he changed his socks only once in that time, took a toll on his health and he was given leave.

Before the outbreak of the war, he had trained as a pilot, flying a Boxkite at the Vickers school at Brooklands and following recuperation from his battlefield experiences he joined the Royal Flying Corps being promoted to Captain and was stationed at Saint-Omer in northern France.

On 31 July 1915 he, together with an observer/gunner, was flying a two-seater RE 5 biplane at 5,000 feet near Bruges when they were fired on by enemy aircraft. Badly wounded with a shattered right thigh he lost consciousness and the plane nose-dived. Regaining consciousness, he was able to regain control at only 3,000 feet above enemy lines.

The plane was badly damaged and with the crew member, 2nd Lieutenant Roland Peck, also wounded, he managed to fly back to base saving not only the plane but also the life of his observer. Captain Liddell had his right leg amputated but died due to septicaemia a month later. He was 27 years old.

There had been much publicity in the British newspapers of this event so that when his body was brought back to England and following a Catholic mass held in London, the coffin travelled to Basingstoke by train where it was met with pipers from his regiment. The cortege passed through the town where crowds lined the streets and flags were flown at half mast. His observer was amongst many who attended the funeral.

The posthumous VC was presented to his father by King George V at Buckingham Palace on 17 November 1915. Only four such medals were awarded to members of the Royal Flying Corps.

Several commemorative plaques of Captain John Aidan Liddell VC MC are found around Britain, but Sherfield-on-Loddon has its own memorials. His name can be seen topping the list of other local men who lost their lives during this conflict on the village war memorial. And in 2015, the century after his death, a commemorative engraved paving stone, atop a brick plinth, was positioned near the crossroad in the village. Sherfield-on-Loddon residents are justly proud of their local man who became a war hero.



See www.probusbasingstoke.club for more information about this social club for retired professional and business managers.





Take part in our Reindeer Run

Sunday 14 December
Time: Arrival at 9AM, start at 10AM
Location: The Market Square, Alton, GU34 1HD

Put on your antlers and walk, dash, dance and prance along the 3K Reindeer Run route to support your local Hospice and Alton Town Mayor's charity.

For further information visit stmichaelsospice.org.uk



Charity Reg No (England and Wales): 1002856 | Tel: 01256 848848
 St. Michael's Hospice, Basil de Ferranti House, Aldermaston Road, Basingstoke, RG24 9NB



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Comfort & JOY
this Christmas



Find a warm welcome at any of our services & events...

Sat 22nd Nov - Christmas Craft morning, 10am to midday, Hounsme Fields Primary School

Sun 14th Dec - Parish Carol Service, 7pm, St Mark's Church

Sun 21st Dec - Blue Christmas service- 5-6pm, Immanuel Church

Wed 24th Dec - Christingle service, 4-5pm, St Mark's Christmas Midnight Communion, 11.30pm, Immanuel

Thurs 25th Dec - Christmas day celebration, 10am St Mark's Church


www.parishofbasingstokedown.org.uk
Charity number- 1202279

A Christmas Celebration
With The
Basingstoke Male Voice Choir

We invite you to join us for a concert of Christmas Favourites and Carols, spiced with numbers from our 2025 concert programme.



7:30 pm on Saturday 6th December 2025
At Church Cottage, Church Square, Basingstoke, RG21 7QW

Free entry with a retiring collection
Concert profit to the Ark cancer charity

 <https://www.basingstokemvc.org.uk> 

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DAVE'S NATURE SPOT

Ruddock is an old Anglo-Saxon name for the Robin - it means little red one.

We all associate the Robin with Christmas; this has been since Victorian times when part of a postman's job was to deliver Christmas cards. Postmen were known as 'redbreasts' because they wore long red jackets.

The Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) has been voted UK's favourite bird. This brave and cheeky little bird often turns up when we are gardening and will make a welcome meal of any of the worms or invertebrates that are disturbed by the gardener. Robins also eat snails and in winter will readily take seeds and berries.

In the UK the Robin is mainly found in suburban or town areas but on the continent it is a shy bird of woods and open countryside. Both sexes of the Robin are very similar in plumage and are very difficult to tell apart; the male however is slightly larger and a little brighter in colour in comparison to the female.

Robins are very territorial and their cute appearance belies their aggressive nature. They will boldly defend their territory especially in the breeding season when rival males have been known on occasions to fight to the death.

The female will choose to nest in many types of location, from a hole in a tree or crevice in a wall to something as strange as a flowerpot or discarded kettle; in fact anything that may provide a bit of shelter. Their breeding season is from March to early-summer and they sometimes will have 2 or 3 broods of 4 - 6 eggs.

Sadly the mortality rate of the young is very high mainly due to territorial disputes and cold winters. Recently fledged young do not have the distinctive redbreast but have a brown speckled breast which changes to the familiar red after 2 to 3 months.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish a "Merry Christmas" to one and all.



Adult robin in full plumage



Young robin just developing familiar red breast

Notes from the kitchen

The Rabbit cook is busy in the kitchen making mince pies, Christmas pudding and lots of lists for shopping and cooking. We wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. And we will be back in February with some thoughts on cooking for winter meals.

ROTARY ROUNDUP

We're incredibly grateful to everyone who packed a shoebox for our annual appeal — your kindness and generosity make a world of difference! Nearly 900 shoeboxes from our club, filled with cozy hats, gloves, toys, and other goodies, are now on their way to children in Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, and hopefully to Ukraine via contacts in Poland.

BASINGSTOKE SAMARITANS CAROL CONCERT

Wednesday 17th December 2025 at 19.30
United Reformed Church, London Street,
Basingstoke, RG21 7NU

£10.00, with mince pie and mulled wine

www.rcbd.org.uk

Facebook: @RotaryBasingstokeDeane

RESTAURANT REVIEW

SPICES & SPIRITS

3 Kings Furlong Centre, Wessex Close, Winchester Road, Basingstoke RG21 8YT 01256 636575

It was reading in the Basingstoke Gazette that this restaurant had recently been crowned the best curry house in England that brought Madam and myself here but seeing two Indian families choosing to dine at Spices & Spirits gives it real credibility. So, who are we to make any derogatory comments about this Indian restaurant.

Unless you have children attending Cranborne School it is unlikely that our readers have much need to venture behind the King of Wessex pub on Winchester Road, but that's how to find this first-class restaurant. They have become so busy that an upstairs dining room has been built.

It was Sunday, the only day they are open at lunchtime, which meant that it was a buffet rather than making a choice from a menu. Nevertheless, there was a good selection on offer and thanks to the helpful staff we enjoyed a starter and main course.

The main constituents were chicken and fish, cooked in various ways with salads, small poppadoms, naan bread and rice. A good vegetarian selection was available. Being replete, I only sampled two types of dessert. The usual slim line tonic with ice and a slice and a bottle of Kingfisher zero alcohol lager completed our selection with the bill coming to a very reasonable £39.29.

It would be interesting to return in the evening to sample their full offering, but the Sunday buffet could be of interest to families with children with no charge for those under four and only £8.50 for those up to 12 while for adults it is a very reasonable £16.50.



SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING

I write this having not long returned from a three-month sabbatical, some of which I spent in a beautiful corner of North Wales where I made a 30-day retreat in silence. Perhaps silence seems like a terrible idea to you, and I'll admit that it wasn't always easy. But there is something very invigorating about it, and I know I'll be seeking it out as we approach the festive season, where space for peace and quiet will be in short supply...

I wonder how you feel about Christmas. Perhaps it's a time of rushing around to events and activities, or maybe life feels a bit empty and Christmas with all its cosy adverts and expectations just makes it seem harder. There are all sorts of reasons why this season can be a real challenge. Whether we're too busy or not busy enough, whether it's frantic or sad- whether it's too much or we've had enough, perhaps the one thing we might do is make or use a bit of space to discover that none of us is alone. God wants to know us! One of the things I discovered about silence is that if it is filled with the presence of love and compassion- the companionship of God- it is a very different experience to being alone.

The festival of Christmas is all about the fact that God has come to be with us. Jesus was born as 'God with us.' We see through his life that he celebrated and sorrowed, he was hopeful and disappointed, he was popular and lonely... Jesus took time to get to know people, to see them for themselves and then he took our humanity into the very heart of God, making it possible for each of us to know God in the way that he did. Perhaps we'll find him for ourselves- in the Christmas carols, in the company of others, in a quiet moment between things, or perhaps, like me, you'll find God in the sheer silence.

You are warmly welcome to any of our services over the festive season. Why not join us for Carols on 14th Dec or, for a bit of space and honesty about the challenges, join us for our Blue Christmas service on 21st Dec. Check our website www.parishofbasingstokedown.org.uk for details.

Revd Nicola Such, Vicar, Parish of Basingstoke Down



IT WAS 30 YEARS AGO TODAY

The Rabbiter in February 1995 reported that that snow and ice had hit in January, and Hatch Warren had turned white. The children had great fun and snowmen popped up all over the estate. Sledges magically appeared.

It was not so much fun, though, for drivers who lived on a hill. I remember a long line of cars being parked in Woodbury Road as their drivers trudged home up Alderney Avenue. Wallop Drive became too icy for the buses to get through. These were the days before grit bins were installed for local use.

The Community Association reported that the Senior Youth Club had closed following complaints from residents and episodes of vandalism in roads close to the Community Centre. Police had to be called when a large group of youths caused a public nuisance.

The irony was that many of the trouble-makers came from outside Hatch Warren. This was a problem on which the Police had to work for some time.

A new community worker had been appointed and the situation gradually improved. Today we have The Warren as an important part of our youth offer. The proportion of teenagers living here, which was once the highest in the town, has declined over the years.

The Confederation of Hatch Warren Residents' Associations had started its campaign for traffic calming in the estate and at that time reported that they were not making progress. Eventually, when the Beggarwood development was being planned, their campaign did come to fruition, resulting in the build-outs that now regulate traffic in Woodbury Road and Long Cross Lane.

In February 1995 I was a Borough Councillor and the Rabbiter reported some good news from me: Hatch Warren was to get three new bus shelters soon. The positioning of bus shelters is an issue to this day. Changes to bus routes have resulted in some not being used, while stops across the road have no shelter at all.

The Rabbiter also carried a report that local Councillors had helped the residents of Beechwood Close and Sherwood Close who had been plagued by ball games being played on the green between the two roads, sometime late into the night. They had asked for a 'No Ball Games' sign. In my experience this would not have worked, and it might well have been used as a goalpost! Instead, I had suggested an alternative – planting trees. The residents collected most of the money to buy them (through the Council) and they also provided most of the muscle-power to plant them. I have a photograph somewhere of the day when we carried out the work, which I remember with affection. The trees flourished and the area looks greener to this day because of the initiative.

Stephen Reid



Find a warm welcome at your
local parish church...

Immanuel Church

St Mark's School,
Danebury Road, Hatch Warren, RG22 4US

part of the Parish of Basingstoke Down

for info on services and events...

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Let's communicate

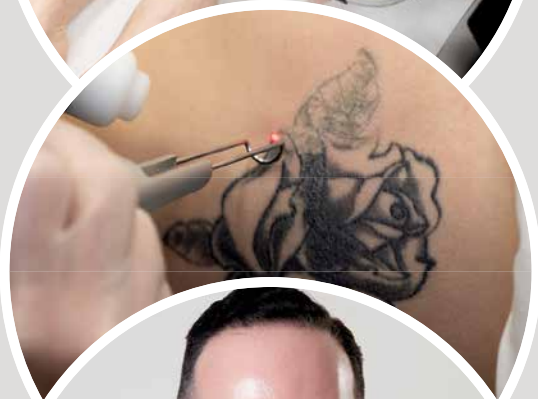
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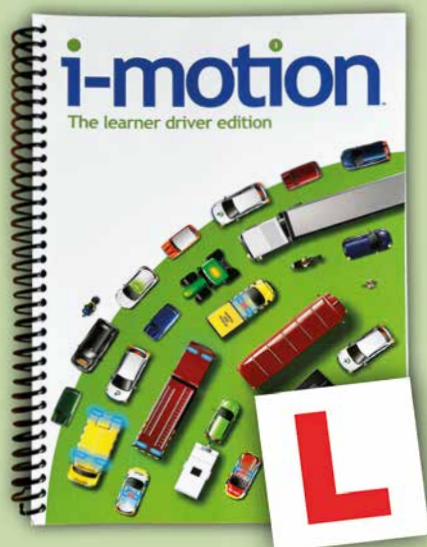
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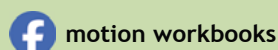
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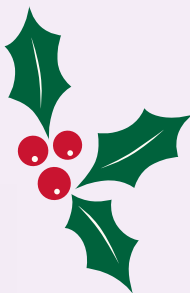
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HATCH WARREN UNDER FIVES

The countdown to Christmas is now on at Hatch Warren Under Fives. Preschool is full of glitter, sparkles and Christmas songs and we are busy planning our Christmas party where we will have fun and games before we join a sing along with Santa.

It's been a busy time at preschool and we have been celebrating some special occasions including fireworks, Diwali and Remembrance Day. The children all made wonderful firework pictures using lots of colour and textures and we made lovely poppy craft for Remembrance Day and our older children did so well with a 2 minute silence. The younger children have been practising listening skills by listening to audio books. They are sitting perfectly and listening really well to the stories. Our older children have been practising their early reading skills with their friends by telling stories to each other through pictures in magazines.

We joined in with Children in Need in November; we did some Pudsey inspired activities through the week and invited the children to dress up their favourite fun clothes and the staff came to preschool dressed up too.

We are continuing with our small group work each week including Write Dance, a super fun session and a fantastic way to build motor skills and introduce writing skills, science experiments and makaton signing. We have also been making and decorating yummy Christmas goodies to eat!

Don't forget - applications are now open for Year R spaces for September 2026. You must apply to Hampshire County Council and the deadline for all applications is 15th January 2026.

Wishing you all a happy and fun festive season!

To enquire about a preschool place at please contact us on 01256 322788, or email preschoolmail@aol.com.

We also manage another lovely preschool, Kempshott Under Fives, located a short distance away at St. Mark's Church in Kempshott.

Read more on our preschools at www.hatchwarrenunderfives.co.uk

CUCKOO MEADOW PRE-SCHOOL

We've seen Autumn out by learning all about different animals, apples and leaves. We also created some very cool rockets and firework pictures.

We are now getting very excited for the festive season, which will include our nativity and a visit from Father Christmas with his ponies after our Christmas party – it's going to be a spectacular sight!



Merry Christmas to everyone and we look forward to updating you again in the New Year.

Georgia Hawken

Cuckoo Meadow Pre-School Secretary

CANDOVER VALLEY PRE-SCHOOL

Hello from CVP!

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

At Candover Valley Preschool learning doesn't just happen at tables or during circle times – it unfolds in the bustling play corners and in the tree tops.

This may look like a simple train ride, but when children slip into pretend roles they're doing far more than acting out stories. They're developing language skills as they negotiate roles, narrate scenarios and experiment with vocabulary. They're building social and emotional understanding as they practice empathy, cooperation and conflict resolution. When we nurture imaginative play, we nurture confidence, curiosity and creativity.



Tree climbing invites young children to test their strength, co-ordination and balance. Each branch becomes a puzzle: Can I reach the next limb? Where should my foot go? These decisions nurture special reasoning and problem solving skills long before they encounter formal maths lessons. The physical benefits are obvious – stronger muscles, better grip, improved flexibility but equally powerful is the sense of confidence that grows when children pull themselves a little higher than before.

Candover Valley Preschool is a vibrant and nurturing learning environment. Please contact us if you would like to enquire about a place for your child.

01256 389008 cvpadmin@btconnect.com

DANDELIONS PRE-SCHOOL

At this time of year there are so many special events to celebrate.

We started off the term with Bonfire night where we created our very own sparklers using breadsticks with icing and sprinkles. These were lots of fun to make and were delicious! The children created fireworks using liquid paints and pipettes. This was a great way to use our fine motor skills and support muscle strengthening.

We took part in Nursery Rhyme week and each day we built an activity for the children around this and sang the rhyme of the day.

Nursery rhymes play such an important role in early childhood development and are great tools to help enhance children's vocabulary, number skills, social skills and help to build their emotional and physical behaviours.





A CHRISTMAS CAROL

For many of us, Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'. But the story of how, and why, he wrote it is not so widely known.

Charles Dickens was born locally in Portsmouth in 1812. Throughout his childhood he suffered insecurity and poverty, with his father being sent to Marshalsea debtors' prison. At twelve years old Charles was sent to work six days a week in a blacking factory, and he had to live alone in lodgings, fending for himself, as the rest of the family were sharing the rooms in the Marshalsea. The memory of this poverty and shame stayed with him all his life, and certainly added to his keen sense of social justice and urge to reform the lot of the poor.

In 1843, the year in which we see the appearance of A Christmas Carol, we find Dickens at 31 years old, already a highly celebrated and popular writer. He had already published Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, The Old Curiosity Shop and Barnaby Rudge. He was busy writing Martin Chuzzlewit, which was being serialised in monthly episodes. In 1836 he had married Catherine Hogarth, and by this time they already had four children, with another on the way. They went on to have ten, with nine surviving. The marriage ended miserably and somewhat scandalously in 1858.

At this time also he was actively involved in campaigning for reform. He visited prisons, ragged schools and mines. And he burned up some of his phenomenal nervous energy walking around London, familiarising himself with the living conditions of the poor.

He made furious speeches castigating the rich for turning a blind eye to the suffering in their midst. But he decided that the best way to catch attention was to write, so he set about 'A Christmas Carol' in October of that year. He finished the book in six weeks, and it was published on 19th December 1843. He was still only 31 years old.

He wanted the book to "strike a hammer blow for the poor man's child". He also wanted it to be cheap and therefore widely available, but also to be of good print quality. His publishers were not keen to plough too much into 'A Christmas Carol' as neither of his two latest books; Barnaby Rudge and Martin Chuzzlewit, were proving as popular as the previous. He therefore put his own money into the publication.



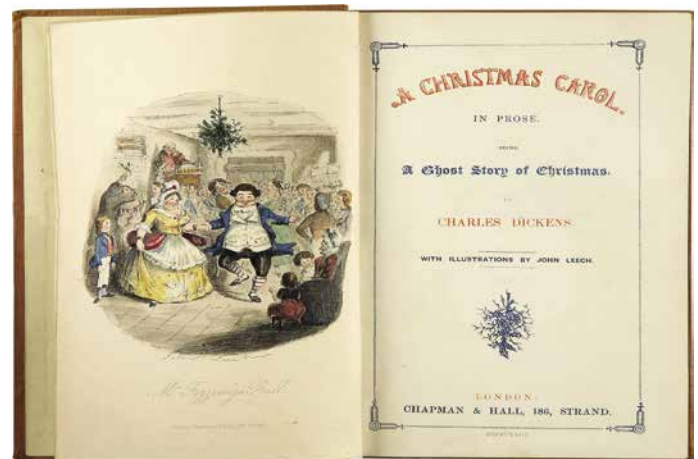
'A Christmas Carol' was a huge success. By Christmas Day it had sold six thousand copies, and by May it was in its seventh edition. But Dickens never made much money from it. With little in the way of copyright laws, pirated copies of the books and unauthorised dramatisations appeared everywhere. Dickens took legal action which he won, but he had to pay costs of what in today's money would have been £75,000.

Dickens' story of how one man is redeemed by the spirit of Christmas, and how we should all look to our neighbours' wellbeing, has never been bettered. It would be hard to think of Christmas now without 'A Christmas Carol'. The book and all its many adaptations; films, plays, animations, even the Muppets is embedded in our psyches and is, for many of us, a vital component of the season.

People who have never read it, indeed some who have never seen an adaptation, will still somehow have imbibed the name and character of Scrooge, the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future, Tiny Tim and the Cratchits. Many will recognise a quote from the book or indeed be able to quote from it themselves, without ever realising quite how we know it so well. The genius of Dickens is that his stories and creations seem to take on a life of their own, and live amongst us, and none more so than 'A Christmas Carol'.

So Merry Christmas all and, in the words of Tiny Tim "God bless us, everyone".

Terri Reid MA



continued from page 24

For Remembrance day we watched an animated short film following a rabbit through the poppy fields. The children watched it with such intent and continued with a 2 minute silence. We are so proud of how the children sat so splendidly.

For Children in Need we asked the children to come in dressed in something spotty or their pyjamas!! We had our very own activate session in line with Joe Wicks.

Our AGM was a huge success this year and we are so grateful for the commitment shown from some of our parents. We look forward to welcoming our new Committee and seeing what opportunities evolve over the academic year.

Last month we mentioned that we had supported the Basingstoke Food Bank and gave a donation for harvest. We were delighted to hear that our donation weighed 19kg and contributed towards 45 meals. Once again thank you for all of your donations

With our successful start to the term we are already full for this academic year. If you are considering Dandelions for your child's early years, please do contact us as soon as possible. Waiting lists are open for 2026/2027 (Please note our waiting list for 2026 will close soon due to demand)

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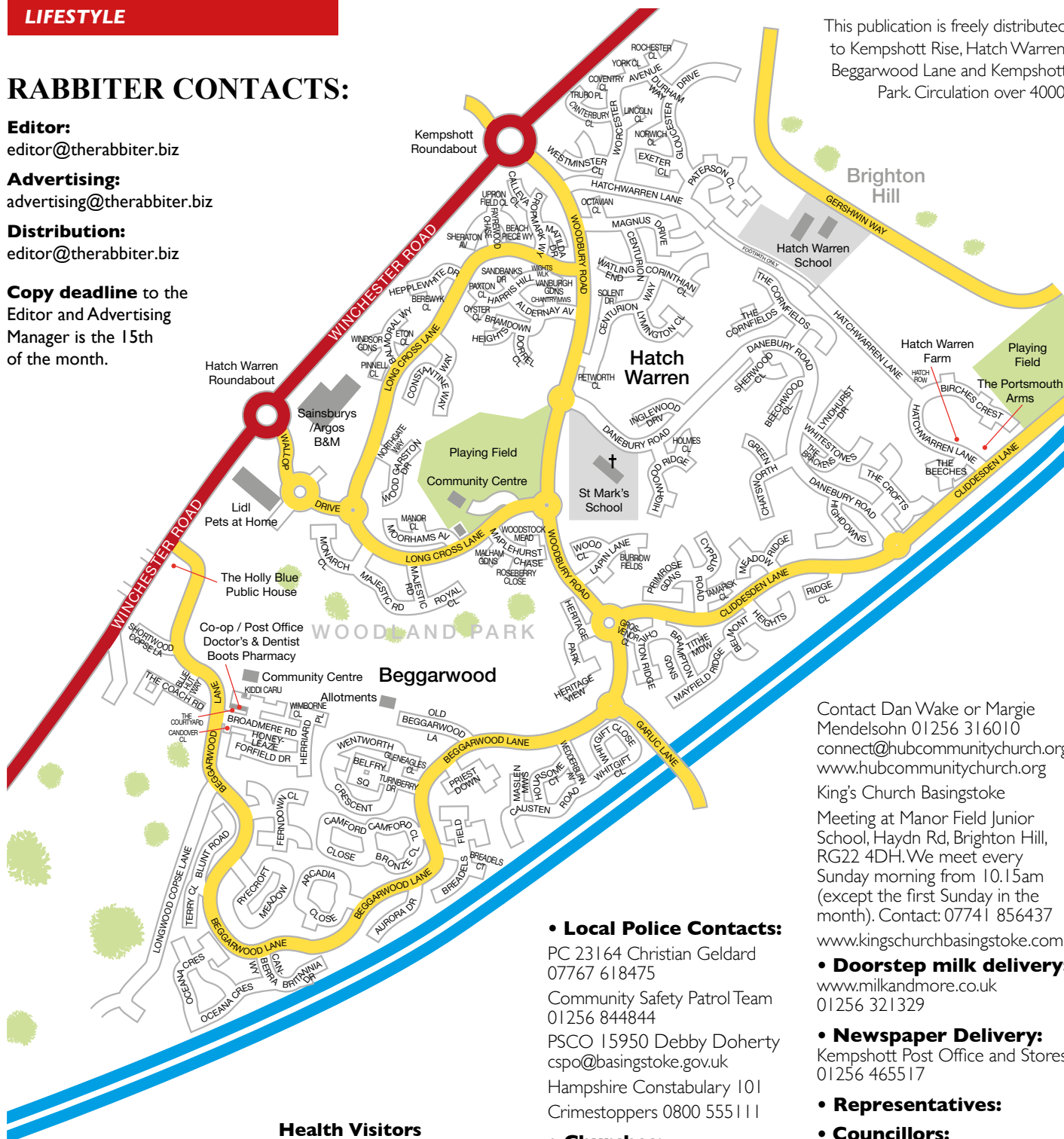
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• Churches:

Immanuel Church - Holy Communion - 9am every Sunday at St Mark's School, Danebury Road.

St Mark's Church - Sunday Service with children's groups - 10.30am every Sunday at St Mark's, Homesteads Road, Kempshott. For more details contact - The Parish of Basingstoke Down (01256) 840502 or office@parishofbasingstokedown.org.uk

The United Reformed Church, London Street, Basingstoke, RG21 7NU Sunday Service at 10.30am
Hub Community Church Every Sunday at The United Reformed Church, London Street, Basingstoke, RG21 7NU at 4pm

Contact Dan Wake or Margie Mendelsohn 01256 316010
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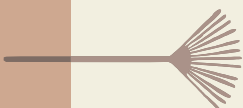
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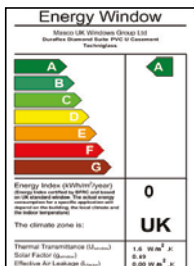
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