

downendvoice

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FREE EVERY MONTH IN DOWNEND, MANGOTSFIELD, STAPLE HILL, BROMLEY HEATH & FRENCHAY

End of an era



Staple Hill's jewellers shop is closing as its owner retires, more than 75 years after it opened with his father as the manager. Full story: Page 3



Oldest fan

A 96-year-old Mangotsfield United fan has got an award to recognise his decades of support.

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No to housing

More than 75 people have objected to plans to build 280 homes near Mangotsfield.

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Scooter crash

Two teenagers were hurt after crashing a stolen motor scooter while being pursued by police.

PAGE 9

Rethink limit

Plans for a reduced 40mph speed limit on the Avon Ring Road have met opposition.

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Speed cameras for main road

A MAIN road through Downend could get a 20mph limit – enforced with average speed cameras.

The cameras are proposed for the A432 Badminton Road between the Avon Ring Road and Cleeve Hill traffic lights: around a mile and a quarter of road that currently has a 30mph limit.

A new 20mph limit would also cover the high street area, extending along Downend Road to the Bristol boundary, and along North Street to join up with the existing 20mph zone.

People are being asked to have their say on the proposals, which also include extending the

20mph limit to 50 nearby side roads that are currently 30mph.

Five new zebra crossings are also proposed on Badminton Road as part of the project, which is aimed at reducing road accident casualties.

Turn to Pages 4 & 5

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Posture, performance & breaking records at 85 years young



Matt Sutton

OVER the weekend, we travelled up to Kings Cliffe, near Peterborough, with my rather well-travelled portable chiropractic bench in tow. The reason? To spend some time working with Mike Herring — a long-standing Sutton Chiropractic patient and, quite remarkably, a **British Athletics champion at the age of 85**.

Mike is well known in athletics circles for winning multiple **gold and silver medals at national and European championships**, particularly in the **pole vault**, where he continues to set championship bests.

What many people don't know — apart from the fact that Mike has been a Sutton Chiropractic patient since 2011 (and was even kind enough to appear in our brand video filmed last year) www.suttonchiro.co.uk/endorsements/ is that **he didn't take up athletics until after he retired**, at the young age of **78!**

That part always makes me smile.

Mike has worked with us over the years for athletics-related issues, as well as the more familiar aches and pains of ageing and daily life. This visit, though, had a slightly different focus. We spent time looking closely at his posture.

Posture can have surprisingly wide-ranging effects — on mobility, strength, injury patterns and performance. That's true for elite athletes like Mike, but it's just as true in everyday life, particularly when niggling pains keep returning or the same area seems to flare up again and again.



You'll see from the photos (one with Mike and his medals and the other, a postural analysis report) **a before and after posture comparison**.

What we observed was: **structural distortions** in the **before** image, followed by a **balanced symmetrical** pattern of posture after the session.

And what that means in practical terms is: **his body is now able to perform better without sustaining injury** and his posture, balance and sense of ease have been thoroughly upgraded.

What stays with me most, though, is not the medals — impressive as they are — but Mike's outlook. His determination to **keep moving, keep improving, and keep setting goals** is genuinely inspiring.

He's a good reminder that posture, movement and care aren't about age — they're about **giving yourself the best chance to do the things you enjoy, for as long as possible**.

I came home from the weekend quietly



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motivated — with a few renewed goals of my own for the gym and my own athletic pursuits.

I hope this little story brings a smile to your day.

*Warm regards,
Dr Matt Sutton*

PS to inquire about a posture screening for yourself or someone you know, please call us at 01172141636 or inquire during your next session with me.

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High street gem closes after 75 years

ONE of the area's best-known shops is closing after more than 75 years as the owners retire.

Spencers Jewellers in Broad Street is believed to be the oldest family-owned and run business in Staple Hill.

It opened as Modern Jewels in 1950, and its first manager, Louis Spencer, bought the shop from original owner Stanley Bennett ten years later.

It was renamed Spencers Jewellers in the 1990s when Louis' son Jon, who had joined the business in 1976 straight from school, became a partner.

Now Jon, who runs the business with wife Teresa, is approaching retirement age and will close the shop by the end of February.

Spencers has served generations of customers, not just selling watches, clocks and jewellery but providing a valued repair service.

Louis moved to Bristol from Herefordshire to manage Modern Jewels after serving an apprenticeship as a watchmaker and completing his National Service.

Jon said: "His local Baptist minister, who was relocating to Bristol, asked my dad why he wasn't getting married and he



Jon and Teresa Spencer outside their shop

said 'I haven't got a job and I've got nowhere to live'.

"The minister, Rev Robert Rowland, said 'don't worry, I'll sort that' and soon afterwards told him 'I've found you a job, and luckily the flat above the shop comes with it'."

Jon's parents lived above the shop for 27 years before moving to a house near Page Park, and Jon attended Staple Hill County Primary School and Rodway School.

He and Teresa lived in Mangotsfield for many years but have now moved to the countryside.

Through the decades the shop has seen many changes, one of the biggest being the introduction of quartz watches.

Jon said: "My dad used to work at the bench until midnight repairing mechanical watches.

"He recognised that wasn't going to continue and persuaded me to learn to repair jewellery instead."

In recent years mechanical watches have made a comeback as high-end items, and Jon says another trend is more people, particularly men, collecting multiple watches rather than keeping the same one for years.

The future of the building is not yet decided - Jon and Teresa own it, and it is possible another jeweller might want to take it over.

The couple are hoping to travel, and see more of their two children and two grandchildren, who live nearby.

Jon also plans to brush up on his piano playing - he was taught as a boy by local teacher Ivy Wilcox - and says he has also been approached by men's shed groups keen to use his skills.

The couple's West Highland terrier Angus has been a familiar sight to shoppers as he sits in the window, and Jon says they will miss talking to their customers, who have kept the shop busier than ever, from the end of the pandemic through to its final weeks.

He said: "Staple Hill has been good to us.

"We get people coming in saying their dad used to bring them in as kids, and now they're 70."

Mel and Pete say goodbye to Kitchen

A DELICATESSEN that has been a fixture on Downend's high street has closed after 18 years.

Mel and Pete Scragg opened Melanie's Kitchen in 2007, to provide a permanent outlet for Mel's cakes, which were popular at WI and farmers' markets across the Bristol area.

The shop in Downend Road, between the post office and Hazel Holly florist, also boasted what at the time was Downend's only cafe, and a range of unusual food and drink not available in supermarkets, much of it sourced from small producers in the West Country.

Pete said: "We thought it would be a good idea to transfer our love of food into a delicatessen."

Mel, who had previously run a chain of women's clothing shops, and Pete, a former sales rep, say they were ahead of the curve with many products that later became trends, including matcha



Mel and Pete Scragg

powdered tea.

Pete said: "You almost couldn't give it away when we started selling it, then suddenly it appears everywhere!"

Although they closed the cafe part of the shop after the lockdown, Mel and Pete continued to sell daily fresh bread and cheese, along with an

ever-changing selection of deli products, as they found many of the lines they sold being picked up by supermarkets.

Pete said: "We've sold things from small producers who then start selling everything to supermarkets, so we stop selling them and look for something else - we're always looking to try to

sell the next interesting thing."

With Pete reaching retirement age, and some family illnesses and bereavements, the couple decided to sell the business as a going concern when they were approached by a potential successor.

However the shop's London-based landlord decided not to accept a new tenant and instead decided to sell the building, leaving them with "no option but to close".

Mel and Pete, who live in Downend, will most miss talking to their customers, some of whom have been with them since their farmers' market days.

Mel has started a new venture as a well-being advisor and naturopathic nutritionist, while Pete is planning to spend more time birdwatching and tackling the household repairs he has been putting off for the last 18 years.

downendvoice

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DEADLINE

Our March edition deadline is February 11.

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COMPLAINTS

Despite our best efforts, we sometimes get things wrong. We always try to resolve issues informally at first but we also have a formal complaints procedure. If you have a complaint about anything in the Downend Voice, contact the publisher using the details below. We aspire to follow the Code of Conduct of the NUJ (National Union of Journalists), which holds journalists to a high standard of behaviour. Further details of the complaints process can be found on the Voice website here, or can be obtained by contacting the Publisher.



New 20mph limits

From Page 1

South Gloucestershire Council is working with neighbouring Bristol City Council on the plans, which would see the 20mph limit on the A432 extended to cover the entire five-and-a-half mile stretch from the ring road to the city centre end of Stapleton Road.

The two councils were awarded £2.275 million from the previous government's Safer Roads Fund for schemes that could bring about "significant reductions in fatal and serious injuries".

The Road Safety Foundation estimates the proposed improvements would reduce fatal and serious injury accidents on the road by more than 30% over the next 20 years.

Bristol City Council is leading the project, as more of the affected stretch of the A432 is inside its boundaries than in South Gloucestershire.

The proposals also include reducing the speed limit on the last stretch of Fishponds Road that currently has a 30mph limit, between Muller Road and Lodge Causeway.

But the only length of road where speed cameras are being proposed is the Badminton Road section in Downend.

An average speed camera system records traffic passing between two cameras a set distance apart.

A photo is taken and the exact time a vehicle passes each camera is recorded, so a computer can work out how long it took to travel between them, and how fast the vehicle was going.

The proposal for average speed cameras is not mentioned on either of the councils' press releases announcing the consultation but is included on page 3 of the online survey.

New pedestrian crossings

The project also includes plans for five new zebra crossings on Badminton Road at the following locations:

- Either just north or south of the Westons Brake junction, where there are currently two pedestrian refuges in the middle of the road

- Near the Britannia Close junction between The Paddocks and Church Lane
- At the Blackhorse Lane junction, next to the Trident pub
- *At the Leap Valley footpath crossing
- At the Cleeve Park Road junction, near Oakdale Road

Proposals for the Blackhorse Lane junction also include a new crossing on Blackhorse Lane itself.

New 20mph zone

As part of the proposals all the minor roads either side of Badminton Road would have 20mph limits.

The new limits would cover around 50 roads including Aintree Drive, Fontwell Drive, Church Lane, Blackhorse Lane, Westbourne Road, Beaufort Road, Sutherland Avenue and all of their side roads.

Roads in Bromley Heath that link to Badminton Road, including Oakdale Road and Four Acre Road, already have a 20mph limit, although the area's Neighbourhood Watch group has repeatedly reported that this is "widely ignored".

Road safety aim

The city council says that between August 2020 and August 2023 there were 140 collisions on the A432, including one fatal and 11 serious crashes, along with 128 "slight collisions", resulting in 149 casualties.

The two councils made a joint bid to the Department for Transport's Safer Roads Fund, which was approved by the last government in early 2024, after the Road Safety Foundation said the A432 between the A4174 and the city centre posed "a significant risk of fatal and serious injuries".

The RSF's Crash Risk Mapping project uses traffic flow data and figures on reported road casualties to assess risks.

It has taken until now for the two councils to draw up plans, which they say will make the road "safer and more accessible for all road users", and open them to public consultation.

The city council will spend £1.19m on its stretch of the road and South Gloucestershire will spend around £1.09m.

would be monitored by cameras



The Blackhorse Lane junction would have zebra crossings on Badminton Road and Blackhorse Lane, either side of the Trident pub in the picture



The pedestrian refuge next to the Cleeve Park Road junction would be replaced by a zebra crossing

South Gloucestershire cabinet member for transport Chris Willmore said: "This is one of the busiest routes in our area, and we know that safety is a real concern for residents and businesses. "These proposals are designed to make the road safer for everyone and provide improvements to encourage more people to walk, wheel, cycle or use public transport.

"Please let us know your thoughts - your feedback is vital to help us get this right."

City council transport and connectivity committee chair Ed Plowden said: "The A432 has a poor safety record, and we want to make it safer and to feel more welcoming for everyone – whether you're walking, wheeling, cycling or driving.

"The proposed road safety measures also support our climate goals .

"I encourage people across both areas to take part in the consultation."

How to have your say

The A432 Safer Roads survey is being run by the city council, and is open for comments until midnight on February 13.

It can be found at bristol.gov.uk/a432-safer-road-survey.

Anyone who is not online can take part by calling 0117 922 2848 and asking for the survey in a different format.

The survey includes questions on whether people agree or disagree with the new 20mph limits, speed cameras and crossing points, and asks them to suggest other points on the A432 where they regularly need to cross the road.

The consultation has been advertised on the councils' websites, as well as with posters attached to lampposts.

Downend resident Graham Ball believes the proposals have been "poorly communicated" and has been urging people who live near the road to have their say.



A zebra crossing is proposed for the Westons Brake junction, to replace one of the two pedestrian refuges currently on either side



A zebra crossing is proposed to link the Leap Valley path either side of Badminton Road, which would involve building out the pavement where the eastern part of the path meets the road



The pedestrian refuge near the Britannia Close junction could be replaced by a zebra crossing

He has written to Cllr Willmore, saying: "The proposals are draconian, binary and not persuasive. Most residents see Badminton Road currently as safe and wide. Residents will regard cameras as council cash cow."

Graham told the Voice he

is concerned that if a 20mph limit was enforced it could push traffic on to other roads, such as Westerleigh Road, Bromley Heath Road and Cleeve Hill.

He said: "Enforcing the 30mph limit on Badminton Road would be a better option."

Villagers oppose plans for 280 homes

MORE than 75 people have objected to plans to build 280 homes on farmland near Mangotsfield.

Land promoter Lightwood Strategic Ltd and local landowners want permission to build homes at Rock House Farm in Shortwood.

The site is on the opposite side of the Avon Ring Road to Pomphrey Hill North playing fields, between Main Road in Shortwood, Cattybrook Road and the B4465 road between the ring road and Pucklechurch.

It is one of several sites east of the A4174 that could be taken out of the Green Belt and developed if South Gloucestershire Council's draft Local Plan is approved by the government.

The land is currently divided into several green fields. Farm buildings and one home on the site would be demolished, with the original farmhouse kept and converted into two homes.

In a planning statement to the council, consultants Origin3 said the housing "will comprise a mix of sizes, types and tenures, including 40% affordable housing and 5% self and custom build".

The plans also include space for a commercial building, "active travel" routes for pedestrians and cyclists, electric vehicle charging points, allotments, play areas and green spaces.

The only vehicle access planned is via Cattybrook Road, which is currently a narrow country lane, close to its junction with Main Road.

An entrance on the opposite side of the site, beside the B4465, would be accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and



Dozens of people demonstrated against the plans in January on part of the proposed development site

emergency vehicles only.

The consultants said: "There is a national housing crisis and a pressing need for affordable housing in South Gloucestershire due to the backlog of unmet needs and worsening affordability.

"This is a matter for the planning balance to which great weight should be afforded."

They say the development would contain "high quality, energy efficient homes set within generous green space and links out to open countryside with benefits for healthy living".

But residents say the new houses would overwhelm the existing village, which has around 90 homes, threaten wildlife and go against the council's environmental policy.

The proposals are being opposed by residents' group What's Up Shortwood and Save Our Green Spaces South Gloucestershire (SOGS-SG).

As the *Voice* went to print, 78 people had written to the council

to object to the plans, with no-one writing in favour.

Shortwood resident David Heape, who has been helping to rally opposition, said: "The Rock House Farm development is attempting to expand Shortwood by more than 300%. It is situated too close to the existing village and is in danger of swallowing it.

"The planned access onto Main Road is on a known dangerous bend, plus the significant rise in traffic will undoubtedly increase emissions and lead to large-scale congestion."

Mr Heape said the developers have described the plans as "founded on sound urban design principles".

In his objection to the council, he said: "Surely this is the wrong area for an urban design. Has a fundamental design error been made here or is the scheme trying to change the characterisation of Shortwood itself?"

Gloria Hale told the council:

"I have been a resident of Shortwood for the last 50 years and it has always been a peaceful village where I can look out onto open farmland and wildlife.

"On a personal level, I regularly see wild deer, foxes and birds in my garden and the surrounding area and enjoy the tranquillity of village life.

"I strongly believe that a development of this type would be doing a massive disservice to our children and grandchildren.

"Once Green Belt land such as this is eroded it cannot easily be recovered."

She said the development contradicts South Glos's climate and nature emergency strategy, which aims to protect nature and increase biodiversity.

In her objection, Lusja Przytocki said: "The proposal for this site would significantly change the character of Shortwood and Mangotsfield.

"There is also no clear evidence at this stage that local infrastructure - particularly highways, public transport, schools, health services and sports/community facilities - could cope with the additional demand. Shortwood and the surrounding area already experience congestion at peak times, and further residential traffic without a robust transport plan could make this worse."

Government advisory body Natural England has raised no objections to the plans, saying it "will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation sites or landscapes".

The application can be viewed and commented on by searching for application P25/02966/O on the council's planning website.



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Teenagers injured in stolen scooter crash

TWO teenage boys were taken to hospital after the stolen motor scooter they were riding crashed in Downend while being pursued by police.

The Honda X-ADV 750cc maxi-scooter collided with a Toyota car at the double mini-roundabout junction of Overndale Road, Croomes Hill and Frenchay Road, at 12.43pm on New Year's Day.

The scooter, which had been stolen from Whitehall in Bristol three weeks previously, was spotted five minutes before the crash by a police officer in a marked car, who followed them after they failed to stop.

Police are still investigating the incident and no charges had been brought as the Voice went to print.

A professional standards probe into the actions of the police officer involved in the pursuit has already been carried out, with no further action being taken.

An Avon & Somerset police spokesperson said: "An officer in a marked police vehicle began a pursuit after sighting a suspected stolen Honda 750 maxi scooter at approximately 12.38pm on New Year's Day.

"The maxi scooter, which had two people onboard, failed to stop and was subsequently involved in a collision with a Toyota travelling in the opposite direction at the junction of Overdale Road and Frenchay Road.

"The two people onboard the maxi scooter were identified at the scene as boys aged 16 and 17.

"They were taken to hospital for treatment, and both were discharged within 24 hours.

"Our Professional Standards



Police at the scene of the collision, seen from Croomes Hill

Department was notified of the incident on New Year's Day.

"A mandatory referral to the Independent Office for Police Conduct was subsequently made, due to the nature of the injury sustained by one of the teenagers.

"The IOPC returned this to Avon and Somerset Police to deal with, as the force deemed appropriate.

"The incident has been reviewed by our PSD, who identified no issues with how or why the pursuit had taken place. Therefore, no further action will be taken.

"The officer and the boys' families have been updated.

"Enquiries into the theft and the manner in which the maxi scooter was being ridden prior to the collision are ongoing."

Overndale Road was shut for several hours after the collision, as an examination of the scene took place, and Croomes Hill and Frenchay Road were also closed to cars and pedestrians at the

approach to the junction.

A Mangotsfield resident who was undertaken by the bike on the Bromley Heath roundabout shortly before the crash told the Voice of her experience.

She said: "A moped squashed in between my vehicle and the kerb.

"How they didn't hit me or fall off, I have no idea.

"A police car followed in close pursuit with its blue lights on. The moped weaved across the road near the lights by Quakers Road, as if they were pretending to turn right, then carried on towards Downend.

"They certainly were acting like they were determined not to be caught."

The scooter's owner, who asked not to be named, said the £14,000 scooter was his livelihood as a specialist courier, and was written off in the crash.

It was stolen outside his home in broad daylight and later offered for sale on Instagram.

He said that between the theft of the scooter and the collision there had been several sightings, including in Broomhill and Kingswood, and he had been sent a notice of intended prosecution after it triggered a speed camera in Pensford.

Police have called on anyone who saw the pursuit or has any other information about the incident to call 101 and quote the incident reference number 5226 000 448.



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Calls for rethink on new 40mph limit

CALLS are being made for South Gloucestershire Council to rethink a reduced speed limit introduced on the Avon Ring Road.

The 40mph limit has been introduced between the Bromley Heath roundabout and Coldharbour Lane, near UWE's Frenchay campus, as part of a scheme to build segregated cycle lanes and footpaths, which was finished in December.

The council first announced plans to cut the speed limit to 40mph in 2023. It said this would apply only to the westbound carriageway, heading towards Filton, on the same side as the upgraded path.

However last year, while works were under way, a statutory notice was published proposing that the road should have a 40mph limit in both directions.

The new limit came into force on December 19.

The council says the reduction is "essential" to ensure the Department for Transport-funded scheme complies with national guidance.

It says the gap between the new cycle lanes and the road carriageway is too narrow for a 50mph road in places, and vehicle lanes themselves are now too narrow to meet safety standards for a 50mph limit.

Opposition Conservatives insist the change is unnecessary and have called for a rethink.

Tory group leader and Frenchay & Downend ward councillor Liz Brennan said the reduction was "frankly ridiculous", adding: "Introducing a uniform 40 mph limit on this stretch of road feels out of step with what drivers expect,



Signs advising drivers of the new limit near the Bromley Heath roundabout

potentially lowering compliance, increasing frustration and making the road less safe, which is counter-productive."

The Conservatives highlighted a police comment during the consultation that a speed limit should "look and feel like the limit".

Cllr Brennan said the ring road "looks and feels like a 50mph road" and said the council's Lib Dem/Labour administration "needs to stop, listen and rethink" the change, which was opposed by most people who responded to consultations.

In the public questions session at December's council meeting, resident Joe Payne asked: "If a council consultation has an overwhelming objection to the proposal, why is the proposal then given the green light?"

"The A4174 speed reduction had a 90% objection response, yet continues.

"What is then the point of

us responding to a consultation if the response is just ignored when the proposal has been overwhelmingly objected to by the public?"

Downend resident Tom Williams made a series of Freedom of Information requests asking for figures to explain how the council's aims to improve air quality, address climate change and road safety would be achieved by the scheme.

He said the responses did not address the issues, because no air quality assessment had been carried out in advance, and the figures for collisions on the affected stretch of road did not compare them to the number of journeys successfully taken.

Tom said: "How can they possibly know what effect these works will have on air quality if they do not have a baseline measurement to work from?"

Responding to the calls to rethink the new limit, a council spokesperson said: "The A4174 improvement scheme is a

significant investment in our transport infrastructure, which is delivering key upgrades including new and widened cycle lanes, improved pedestrian crossings, and additional bus infrastructure to make public transport more reliable and attractive.

"In 2023 we consulted on the proposals, with most respondents supporting new or wider cycleways.

"To meet national standards, the scheme must include minimum buffer widths and speed limits.

"Lower speeds will help protect vulnerable road users, particularly at new crossings and shared-use paths.

"With limited space, only a 0.5m buffer is possible in some areas, making a 40mph speed limit essential for safety."

- South Gloucestershire Council is proposing to ban pedestrians from walking on verges on parts of the ring road.

An order would prohibit people from walking on the verges on the north side of the road between the metrobus stop near the Hambrook traffic lights and the lay-by east of the Church Lane overpass, on the other side of the Bromley Heath roundabout.

Pedestrians would also be banned from using the verge on the south side of the A4174 where the foot and cycle path moves on to the top of the embankment next to Bromley Heath, and at the top of Bromley Heath Road where the footpath is not at the roadside.

Comments can be made at consultations.southglos.gov.uk until January 31.

Cyclists report slips on new surface

SOUTH Gloucestershire council says it has "no concerns" about the safety of the surface of the new shared-use cycle path alongside the A4174, after cyclists reported slipping on it.

The BBC reported concerns from one cyclist that the surface was "very slippery" due to wet leaves on the path.

He also highlighted a concrete ledge which divides the green cycle path from the footpath alongside it, which could be easily missed in the dark or by people who hadn't used the path before.

A spokesperson from the University of the West of England confirmed that staff had emailed the council to highlight comments on internal message boards about the new surfaces "becoming slippery, resulting in accidents and near misses".

A council spokesperson said: "We have no concerns about the surface of the new shared-use cycle path along the A4174 and we routinely inspect this area of the network both proactively and where any concerns have been raised.



A section of the shared use path near Frenchay

"We remind all users of the public highway, including those who walk, cycle and wheel, to take extra care at this time of year as surfaces can be slippery during wet or freezing conditions—even after gritting."

Friends' mountain mission for Cameron

TWO friends are preparing to climb Africa's tallest mountain in memory of a Downend teenager.

Jo Robb and Kim Dixon will head to Tanzania on February 7 to start a six-day journey up Kilimanjaro, which at 5,895m (19,341ft) is the highest free-standing peak in the world.

They are making the journey to raise money for the Cameron Williams Foundation, which aims to help men talk about their mental health, and charity Suicide Prevention UK.

Cameron, who was 19, took his life in 2024 after being left devastated by the death of a friend in a road crash.

Jo's daughter Millie was Cameron's girlfriend and he worked at their family business, the Window Hub in Staple Hill.

Jo, who lives in Mangotsfield, said: "The tragedy hit Millie hard - we were all devastated.

"Cam was the most beautiful soul, he had the kindest heart and his laughter was infectious.

"He had recently started as an apprentice glazier at our family window business, and was really good at it - he was eager to learn and had an amazing work ethic.

"His mischievous banter had all the team in stitches most days.

"We miss him and I hope we do him proud."

The foundation was set up last year by Cameron's mum Melissa Care, his aunt Amelia Care and their mum, Karen Parker, to keep his memory alive by helping other men find help with their mental health when they need it.

Speaking to the Voice at the time, Amelia said the foundation was set up with the aim of ending the stigma around discussing men's mental health, to fund charities providing practical support and to direct men to help when they need it.

Former Stanbridge Primary and Downend School Cameron and his friend Tyler Carley were passengers in a scaffolding lorry which overturned on the Avon Ring Road near Mangotsfield in December 2023.

Tyler died in the crash, and while Cameron was not physically injured, Amelia said he had survivor's guilt and post-traumatic stress disorder, which he hid from his family and friends.



Jo Robb (left) and Kim Dixon training for their climb up Kilimanjaro

Jo, an advanced nurse practitioner based at Kingswood Health Centre, said: "I see how our mental health crisis is affecting men and boys, in practice at work and at home.

"I want to do something to raise awareness of the struggles that men and boys face when it comes to mental health and not opening up and talking to people.

"If I can help others seek help and support, I would be very happy."

Jo and Kim, who lives in Warmley and manages a Kingswood estate agency, have been training hard by walking, hiking and weight training four times a week.

They have been helped by Downend personal trainer Dan Turner, who runs Forever Strong coaching and works at Impact Gym in Staple Hill.

Jo said: "I have always loved hiking - Kim and I regularly go to the Brecon Beacons for hiking days.

"Seven years ago we did the Three Peak Challenge, where we climbed Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon in 24 hours. It was epic but the hardest thing I've done.

"I've always wanted to climb Kili. We will take the six-day Machame Route, reaching the summit at night on day six, when the temperature could be as low as minus 20!

"I just hope the altitude is good to us.

"Hiking is a mental challenge, just like mental health, and it's a good way to show people help

is on hand if you need it and are struggling."

Jo and Kim are climbing with Action Challenge, run by Chris Littlehales, who recently took boxer Tommy Fury on the Three Peaks Challenge for a BBC



Cameron Williams

documentary.

The Cameron Williams foundation is encouraging people to sponsor Jo and Kim on their trek, via a Gofundme page at tinyurl.com/3s7ra7ch.

The foundation said: "We are immensely proud of Jo for turning grief into purpose and using this challenge to help others.

"We wish her all the luck in the world for this huge climb — we will be cheering her on, every step of the way."

A poster for FaithHouse. At the top is the FaithHouse logo with the tagline 'EMPOWERED. INTERNATIONAL'. Below it, the text 'GROW YOUR FAITH' is written in large, bold letters, with 'GROW' in black and 'YOUR FAITH' in red. To the left of the text is a photograph of a small green plant in a pot. To the right of the text, it says '@FaithHouse Family Church' and 'EVERY SUNDAY 10:30AM'. Below that, it lists the venue: 'Page Community Hall, Page RD, Bristol BS16 4NE'. It also provides a contact number '07709062657' and an email 'dfaiethouse@gmail.com'. At the bottom, it says 'For we walk by Faith not by sight... (2 Cor. 5:7)'.

Police driver who injured pedestrian is banned

A POLICE officer who seriously injured a woman when he drove through a red light on a pedestrian crossing while on an emergency call has been given a four-month driving ban.

PC Dan Parsons, aged 32, was driving an unmarked police car and responding to a suspected firearms incident when he collided with 19-year-old Saara Akatwijuka at the Wick Wick roundabout in November 2024.

The collision left Ms Akatwijuka with "significant injuries": she was in hospital for several weeks afterwards and police said she is still recovering from them.

Following an investigation by the force's Serious Collision Investigations Team, which referred the case to the Crown Prosecution Service, PC Parsons was charged last year with causing serious injury by dangerous driving in connection with the incident.

He pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of causing serious injury



Wick Wick roundabout

by careless or inconsiderate driving, and at Gloucester Crown Court in January he was given a four-month driving ban, a fine of £2,800 and an order to pay costs of £1,000.

He is also facing a misconduct hearing after the Independent Office for Police Conduct referred the case to Avon & Somerset police's Professional Standards Department.

A police spokesperson said: "The officer had been responding to a suspected firearms incident in Longwell Green when he drove through a red light and was

in collision with a 19-year-old woman on a pedestrian crossing, leaving her with serious injuries.

"Officers provided first aid alongside paramedics before the woman was taken to hospital."

The roundabout is the junction of the A4174 Avon Ring Road and Badminton Road, between the Willy Wicket pub and the Badminton Road bridge over the M4, which is currently being rebuilt.

The collision happened before the old traffic lights were removed and replaced by temporary lights as part of a road

works programme.

The head of the police's Professional Standards Department, Detective Superintendent Larisa Hunt, said: "PC Parsons has pleaded guilty to a serious driving offence for which he's now been sentenced.

"As a result of the collision, a young woman was left with significant injuries, from which she is still recovering.

"Our thoughts remain with her, as well as her family.

"Police officers are always expected to follow national and local guidance, and their training, when responding to emergency incidents.

"Following the incident, a mandatory referral was made to the Independent Office for Police Conduct who assessed the incident as suitable for local investigation by our Professional Standards Department.

"Now the criminal case has concluded, we'll be progressing with the misconduct process."

THE number of drivers arrested by police on suspicion of drink or drug driving in December was more than 25% higher than the same month the previous year.

Avon & Somerset police arrested a total of 262 drivers over the course of the month as part of an annual festive road safety campaign.

The number was up by 55, or 26.6%, on the 207 arrests made in December 2024, and was also higher than the 258 arrests in the same month in 2023 and 247 in December 2022.

The force had not produced a full breakdown of the areas where drivers were arrested, or the full age range, as the Voice went to print.

Drink-drive arrests up 25%

But a spokesperson said 30.2% of all drivers arrested (79 out of 262) were men aged between 35 and 44.

Men made up 84.7% of all arrests (222 out of 262).

Police said drink or drugs had been a factor in a quarter of the 32 fatal road collisions across the Avon and Somerset force area in 2025.

Police have urged people to call 999 when they know someone is currently out on the road, driving under the influence of drink or drugs.

They have also set up a web page at tinyurl.com/ycsuku57 where people can report drink-drivers online at any time of the year.

Inspector Matt Boiles said: "There is no safe way to drink and drive – not at Christmas, not on New Year's Eve, not any day of the year.

"Even small amounts of alcohol or drugs can seriously impair your judgement, reaction times, and coordination, putting lives at risk.

"Don't be tempted to take chances."

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HOUSES and flats could be built on a landmark former petrol station site in Downend that is currently used as a car wash and garage.

Downend Car Wash in Westerleigh Road would be demolished to make way for a residential development of either eight houses or three houses and six flats, under plans submitted to South Gloucestershire Council.

The potential end of the car wash has been welcomed by neighbours who have written to comment on the plans.

Both the car wash and a car sales and repairs business next door are on the land covered by the planning application.

The site shares access from Westerleigh Road with one of the two car parks for the Huntsman pub, which is not included in the redevelopment plans.

On the other side it backs on to several homes on Elmtree Avenue.

The application for "permission in principle" to build up to nine homes on the site has been submitted by agents LPC on behalf of a developer, whose name has been redacted from planning documents.

The agents said the garage part of the site is facing potential planning enforcement action or investigation, after a retrospective planning application for a change of use from car sales only to a mixed MOT station/workshop and car sales business was refused last year.

Simon Chambers, of LPC, said: "The site is a previously developed one and, given the scale and proximity of surrounding residential properties, is a non-conforming use."

He said the site is currently protected by a policy that resists

Housing plan for car wash site

changing the use of employment sites unless it can be shown that "all reasonable attempts" have failed to find a suitable reuse.

Mr Chambers added: "In this case, the lawful use is not deemed appropriate for the site in view of its sensitive location surrounded by residential dwellings and the shared vehicular access with the pub.

"This is not an obvious employment site in view of the physical constraints and its use is not a high employment opportunity, and the planning history confirms the local conflict and limited options for expansion."

He said the site was a sustainable brownfield location in an established residential area, with vehicle access that would have fewer "potential comings and goings" than the car wash business and has a bus stop in front of it.

Five residents who commented on the plans all supported the idea of houses, rather than a combination of flats and houses, on the site.

But they raised concerns over parking provision, with one plan proposing 14 spaces for eight houses and the other 15 spaces for nine houses and flats.

Michelle Rogers said: "No more car wash! Great! I will agree to almost anything to replace the noise that we have had to endure from the car wash, seven days a week, for years.

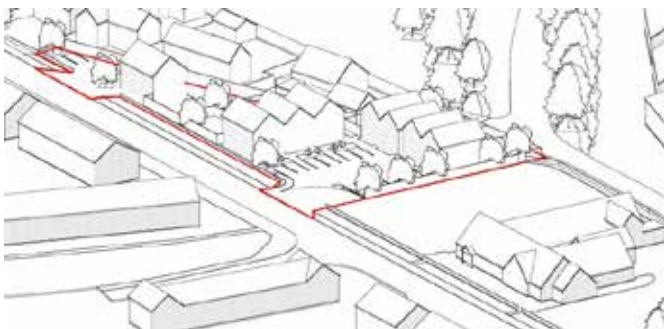
"The obvious problem with building houses is going to be the parking.

"Dibden Road opposite the proposed site has cars now parked all over the grass space.

"Over occupancy in the



The site as it is today



How developers say the site could look with houses. Picture: Oxford Architects

proposed site is a huge concern, and I cannot stress this enough.

"My hope is the newbuilds and residents have a positive effect and enhance the area."

Natalie Lodge also supported the plan for housing but said: "There is inadequate parking provision on both plans.

"The shared access with the Huntsman is on a main road, we already have issues with inadequate street parking for the terraced properties opposite, especially those that have more than one vehicle per household. Where are their visitors going to park?"

The council's trading standards department said that as the land was previously the site of a petrol station, last used in 1996, it is aware of underground fuel storage tanks on the site.

An officer said: "We could only support this development once there is evidence provided that the required procedures will be followed in order to ensure the safe removal of these tanks."

The plans can be viewed by searching for application P25/02691/PIP on the council's planning website.



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TURNER'S VISION

Love your look this February: Why eye exams matter more than you think



Peter Turner
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FEBRUARY is often associated with hearts, love, and wellbeing, making it the perfect time to show a little extra care to your eyes. While most people think of an eye test as simply a way to update their glasses, an advanced eye examination can reveal far more than just how clearly you see.

Your eyes are unique in that they allow us to look directly at blood vessels, nerves, and structures connected to the rest of the body. This means an eye exam can sometimes detect early signs of wider health conditions, often before other symptoms appear.

More than just vision

During an advanced eye examination, we don't just check whether you need glasses. We carefully assess the health of your eyes and how well they are functioning as part of your overall visual system. Subtle changes in the eyes can be linked to conditions such as: High blood pressure, Diabetes, Raised cholesterol and Autoimmune conditions.

Many of these issues can be developing silently, without obvious warning signs. Regular eye examinations can therefore play an important role in protecting not only your sight, but your general health too.

The eye-brain connection

Seeing clearly isn't just about the eyes, it's about how the eyes and brain work together. Visual discomfort, eye strain, headaches, or difficulty concentrating can all be signs that the visual system is under stress, even if eyesight appears "normal".

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Prevention is the ultimate self-care

Looking after your eyes is one of the simplest forms of preventative healthcare. Regular eye examinations allow us to: Detect problems early, when they are easier to manage, Monitor changes over time, Provide reassurance when everything is healthy, Tailor solutions to your lifestyle and visual demands.

Many people are surprised by how much peace of mind a thorough eye examination can bring.

Book with Confidence

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Because loving your eyes today helps protect your vision for the future.

Peter

Peter Turner is an Independent Prescribing Senior Optometrist at Turners Opticians in Bristol. He also works as a Senior Medical Optometrist at Bristol Eye Hospital and has a specialist interest in visual development and performance.

OFSTED has carried out a snap inspection of a secondary school after a row over the cancellation of a visit by Bristol North East's MP.

Damien Egan, whose constituency includes Staple Hill and Mangotsfield, had been due to visit Bristol Brunel Academy, in Speedwell, in September.

The visit was called off after members of the National Education Union learned of the invitation and started planning a protest.

In a social media statement, Bristol NEU said union members had planned a protest because of Mr Egan's position as vice-chair of the Labour Friends of Israel group.

The incident was thrust into the national spotlight when Communities Secretary Steve Reed, speaking at the Jewish Labour Movement conference on January 11, said a Jewish MP colleague had been "banned" from visiting a school "in case his presence inflames the teachers", and described the situation as "an absolute outrage".

Cabot Learning Federation, which runs Bristol Brunel Academy along with 35 other schools across the region, insists that Mr Egan has not been banned from the school. It says his visit was postponed to prevent disruption from the protest and has already been rearranged.

However, after the incident was recounted by Mr Reed, the row escalated.

At Prime Minister's Questions on January 14, Conservative MP Lincoln Jopp said Mr Egan had been "prevented from visiting a school in his constituency because he is Jewish", and asked the Prime Minister "what he is going to do about it".

In reply Sir Keir Starmer said the case was "very serious and very concerning", adding: "All Members of Parliament should be able to visit anywhere in their constituency, schools or other places, without any fear of antisemitism."

"We are providing more funding for security and support that we are putting in across the country, and we will be holding to account those who prevented that visit to the school."

The next day Ofsted announced it was inspecting the school.

HM Chief Inspector of

Ofsted makes snap school visit after MP's visit cancelled

Schools Sir Martyn Oliver said: "I was concerned to learn that a school may have been intimidated into cancelling a visit from their local MP."

"I am troubled by the message this sends to children - especially children from the Jewish community."

"Those of us privileged enough to be working in education have a professional and moral duty to stand against discrimination."

Sir Martyn said Ofsted inspectors had concluded "the threshold for an inspection was met".

It took place on January 15-16, and Sir Martyn said the school had been open in engaging with the inspectors.

A spokesperson for Cabot Learning Federation said: "Damien Egan MP - as a high-achieving alumnus of the CLF, and in common with other local MPs from across the political spectrum - was invited in September to visit Bristol Brunel Academy."

"Mr Egan was due to discuss democracy and the role of an MP, while helping to raise aspirations among students who may have an interest in pursuing similar career paths."

"On the evening before Mr Egan's scheduled visit, we were made aware of plans for a public protest outside the school."

"As this protest was scheduled to coincide with the end in the school day, we opted to postpone Mr Egan's visit to ensure everyone would continue to feel safe when entering and exiting school and to prevent any disruption to our students' learning."

"We have remained in contact with Mr Egan throughout, and he agreed a new date for the visit some time ago. We have also been in contact with the police and followed their advice."

In a post on the Bristol NEU Facebook page at the time of the cancellation, the school's decision was described as a "Victory for Education Workers, Parents and the Community".

The post said: "Egan is

Vice Chair of Labour Friends of Israel and has visited Israel since the current onslaught on Gaza began, demonstrating his support."

"We celebrate this cancellation as a win for safeguarding, solidarity, and for the power of the NEU trade union staff group, parents, and campaigners standing together."

Mr Egan, whose husband is an Israeli national and who is a former pupil of Hanham High School, now the CLF-run Hanham Woods academy, has not commented publicly on the issue.

Labour Friends of Israel states on its website that it "supports a negotiated two-state solution for two peoples; with a safe and secure Israel, alongside a viable and independent Palestinian state".

The group says it works with



Damien Egan

Labour parliamentarians to "strengthen relations between Britain and Israel and to promote a vision of coexistence founded on peace and liberal democracy".



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106 happy returns for Joyce

ONE of the country's oldest residents is preparing to celebrate her 106th birthday.

Joyce Moulton was born in London on January 27, 1920.

Now living in Downend with her 80-year-old son Ron, Joyce is set to mark her latest milestone at home with a glass of Bailey's Irish Cream, her favourite tipple.

Joyce's earliest memories are of sitting in her high chair as a baby, with her step-brother kicking the chair leg, and writing a letter to a classmate she was "keen on" when she had just started school.

Joyce still remembers his name, Albert Green, and joked: "I was chasing the boys at four!"

Another vivid memory from her youth is seeing disabled veterans from the First World War having to beg on the streets of London during the 1920s and 30s.

Joyce worked in a factory welding doors for Lancaster bombers during the Second World War.



Joyce Moulton with her son Ron at home in Downend

She married husband Ronald in 1942. After the war the family emigrated to South Africa, living near Johannesburg and then in Durban.

Joyce worked for travel agents Thomas Cook, while Ronald worked for a caravan

manufacturer and Ron became a photo lithographer, a type of specialist printer.

Ronald died in the 1980s and 14 years ago, after Ron retired, he returned to the UK and then brought Joyce over to live with him. They have lived in Downend

for 12 years.

When she is not reading, Joyce likes to have a walk alongside the WG Grace Memorial Ground, the home of Downend Cricket Club, which is close to her home.

Ron said: "She still does everything herself."

Joyce, who has one grandchild and one great-grandchild, likes a few squares of chocolate and ginger biscuits or cake as a treat.

She is one of around 600 people in the UK aged 105 or over, according to the most recent figures from the Office for National Statistics.

Joyce is more than ten years younger than the country's oldest resident, Ethel Caterham, who turned 116 in August last year and is currently both the world's oldest living person and oldest Briton in recorded history.

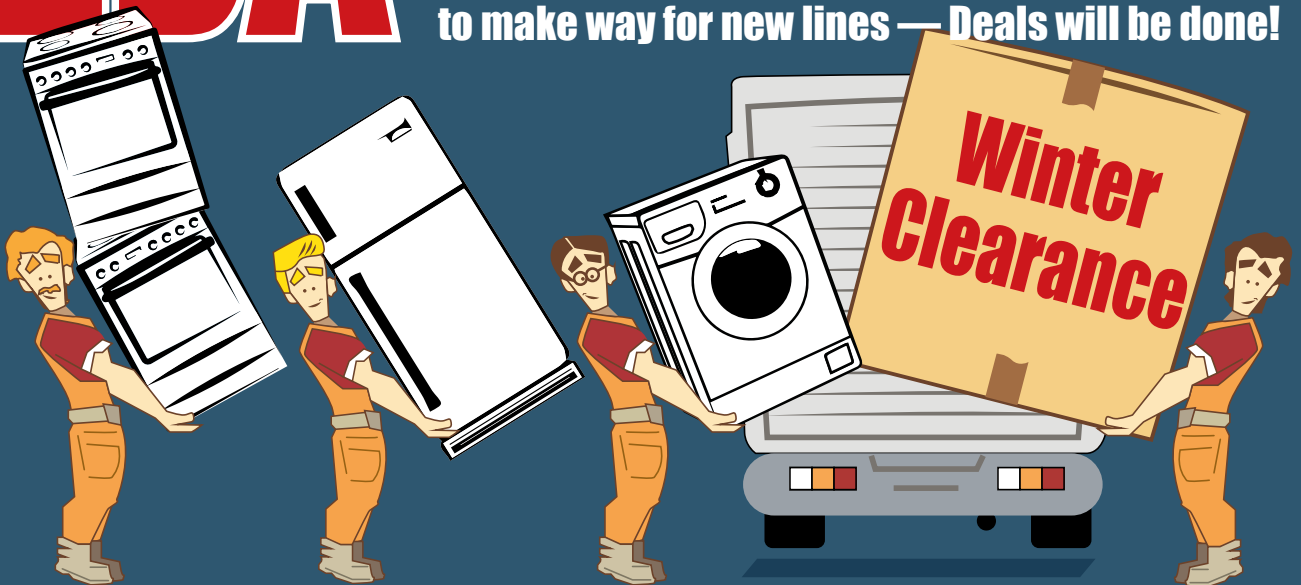
• Do you know anyone older than Joyce living in the Downend area? Contact us at news@downendvoice.co.uk.

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Ceremony will mark 30 years since Fleur's death

A COMMEMORATION is being held to mark 30 years since the death of a firefighter who lost her life tackling a blaze at a Staple Hill supermarket.

Fleur Lombard was 21 when she died on February 4 1996, as she and her colleagues fought to contain a fire started by an arsonist in the Leo's supermarket in Broad Street.

Each year, on the anniversary of the tragedy, Avon Fire & Rescue Service personnel, retired firefighters, representatives of Fleur's family, union and residents meet opposite the site to honour her memory.

Fleur was one of only eight women employed by the then Avon Fire Brigade. She had joined in 1994, earning the Silver Axe Award for the most outstanding recruit in training.

Fleur and her colleagues from Speedwell Fire Station, along with crews from Kingswood, were called out to tackle the blaze, which had been started deliberately by store security guard Martin Cody.

She and fellow firefighter Robert Seaman, who had gone into the burning supermarket together, were caught in a flashover, where all the exposed flammable material suddenly ignited inside the building.

Fleur died as a result of the intense heat, while Firefighter Seaman lost consciousness

and was helped from the building before returning immediately with another firefighter, Pat Foley, to search for her.

Fleur was the first female firefighter to die on active service in peacetime Britain. She was posthumously awarded the Queen's Gallantry Medal and Chief Fire Officer's Commendation in recognition of her bravery.

Firefighter Seaman was awarded the George Medal and Firefighter Foley was awarded the Queen's Commendation for Bravery.

Cody, who was on his first shift at the supermarket and had told a colleague he was bored before starting the fire, was later jailed for seven-and-a-half years, after being found guilty of manslaughter and arson.

In 2024 Fleur was one of the first public servants who lost their lives while on duty to be commemorated with a new honour, the Elizabeth Emblem, which was presented to her family by the King.

In 2019 a Great Western Railway train was named after her, and she is also remembered with a bursary fund set up to encourage fire service staff to travel the world to learn about the work of other fire services.

Staple Hill remembers Fleur at a wreath-laying ceremony each year at her permanent memorial outside Staple Hill Library,



Fleur Lombard

opposite the supermarket where she lost her life, which was rebuilt and is now run by Tesco.

Those attending this year are being asked to arrive from 12.30-12.45pm on February 4, before wreaths are laid and a minute's silence is held at the ceremony, which starts at 1pm.

Avon Fire & Rescue, which organises the event, is asking people who attend to be respectful of the pavement and access around the memorial.

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Council's pothole-filling performance given amber rating

SOUTH Gloucestershire Council has been given an amber rating by the government in a new national breakdown of which authorities are fixing potholes effectively.

The Department for Transport has produced a map and a breakdown, showing which councils are doing the best job and which need to make improvements, with the top performers given green ratings and the worst red.

South Gloucestershire has been given an amber rating for the condition of its roads, best practice in tackling potholes and overall, with a green rating for how much it is spending on maintenance.

Neighbouring Bristol and B&NES also have amber ratings, although Gloucestershire has a green rating overall.

The government says it has given

£1.5 billion to councils in the South West form its Pothole Fund to be used on fixing roads and invest in long-term maintenance measures.

It says the best green-rated councils were able to demonstrate they are investing in long-term preventative measures rather than just patching up potholes, while also maintaining good road conditions and "investing significantly" into road improvements.

Amber-rated showed some room for improvement, while those rated 'red' are not meeting the expected standards.

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said: "For too long drivers in the South West have paid the price because our roads were left to deteriorate. We've put our money where our mouth is, increasing the funding in the South West with £1.5 billion to fix roads, and giving local highway authorities the long-term certainty they have been asking for.

"Now it's over to them to spend the money wisely, and for the first time we are making sure the public can see how well local highway authorities are doing in delivering the improvements they want to see in their local area."

South Gloucestershire Council says it has seen a 38% reduction in pothole reports year-on-year and has taken on extra road maintenance crews with its Pothole Fund money.

A spokesperson said: "We undertake a



Potholes on Northcote Road near the junction with Windsor Place, in Mangotsfield

significant programme of work to maintain and improve our local roads, and we are pleased the rating reflects the positive steps we have taken to prioritise safety and deliver value for money for our residents.

"Over the last five years we have more than doubled the number of potholes being filled, but we recognise there is always room for improvement.

"We are currently working through our £2.4 million pothole fund programme, which consists of patching and resurfacing works and will improve the condition of sections of the network that are most in need of attention."

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Age is no barrier for football fan Keith

HE may be 96 but Keith Budd is still a familiar sight to fellow football supporters whenever Mangotsfield United play at home.

Keith has been watching the team since he moved to Mangotsfield 40 years ago, and until last year he was still driving to some of their away games.

Now his long-standing support has been recognised with a presentation from the club.

Keith, a retired Lloyds Bank clerk, first remembers visiting Mangotsfield as a boy 90 years ago, long before the club was founded, when he would take a tram to Staple Hill and then walk the rest of the way to see his aunt.

After moving to the area in the 1980s, he soon started following the club home and away.

He said: "I've hardly missed a game in all those years.

"My favourite memories are of the cup games, to places like Bromley in Kent, Yeovil and Merthyr Tydfil.

"I've seen a lot of very fine players over the years but my favourite was Andy Perrett - he could always score you a goal."



Keith beside the pitch at Cossham Street

Keith's favourite manger in his time watching the club was Andy Black, who was in charge for more than four seasons between 1999 and 2003, and also made 450 appearances as a player.

He has also enjoyed visiting other local teams, including Roman Glass St George and AEK Boco, and only stopped attending away games to clubs a short journey away when he gave up driving last year.

Keith remains a regular at Cossham Street for home games in all but the coldest weather.

He said: "I like everything about Mangotsfield - it's a go-ahead club, it's got nice facilities and with the new pitch it's one of the best places you can go to watch football."

Keith is also a former rugby referee, and when he isn't watching the Mangos on a weekend he often watches Cleve RFC at the Hayfields next door.

He has three sons, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, and one of his granddaughters plays cricket for Gloucestershire.

Mangotsfield United chairman Steve Brown presented Keith with an engraved whisky glass in recognition of his decades of support at half-time during the side's 2-0 win over Fairford Town on January 17.

Steve said: "I'd just like to say thank you to Keith for his dedication and commitment to supporting Mangotsfield United over the years.

"It's Keith and supporters like him who have been, and always will be, the life-blood of this club.

"It was an absolute pleasure to present Keith with a small



Keith Budd is presented with an engraved glass by club chairman Steve Brown

token of thanks for the many years spent supporting Mangotsfield United, home and away.

"Chairmen, committees and players come and go, but the steadfastness and loyalty shown

by supporters like Keith, through good times and the bad, are the foundations that everything here is built on.

"Thank you Keith for your continued support!"

Sport: Page 49

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AI friends will help tackle loneliness

A CHARITY and a non-profit company have teamed up to use artificial intelligence to provide companionship for older people living on their own.

Age UK South Gloucestershire and Comfort Companions CIC are offering "friendly digital companions", accessible via a smartphone app, to people on the charity's befriending waiting list.

People in Frenchay and Soundwell are among the first ten participants who will be given one of the AI companions to talk to over the next month.

Age UK South Gloucestershire currently has around 200 people waiting for support from its volunteer befriending service, and in 2024 seven people on the list died before they could be offered help.

Age UK volunteer Grant Mackenzie, who co-founded Comfort Companions CIC with his dad Tom, said: "When I heard that seven people had died on the waiting list without



Founders Tom and Grant Mackenzie and AI 'friend' Dorothy

anyone ever getting to them, I couldn't get it out of my head.

"No one in our community should die without having someone to speak to. A simulated person is not the same as a real one, but it is far better than silence.

"Comfort Companions are friendly digital companions that hold natural, human-like conversations and are designed specifically for older British people.

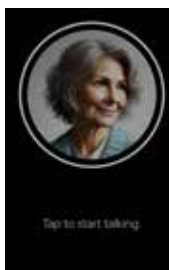
"Each person is matched with one or more of five companions using a short personality quiz, so

the experience feels warm and familiar, rather than clinical."

Grant said older people and Age UK South Gloucestershire staff had helped design the service, with volunteers helping each person who uses it to set up the companion and learn how to use it.

People who use the service tap on the companion's face to start and stop talking to it.

This means that, unlike Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri, the app is not constantly listening via the phone's microphone.



Age UK South Gloucestershire chief executive Mark Flower said the scheme solves a "real problem".

He said: "Demand for befriending far outstrips supply, and too many older people die waiting for support.

"We have a befriending service, which at the moment has 200 people waiting on it, waiting for somebody to be their friend.

"This project can be a lifeline for those who would otherwise go unheard."

The scheme is currently being funded from the charity's reserves but to support it past the pilot phase, Age UK and Comfort Companions are looking for supporters to come forward to donate £12 per month towards the running costs per person.

They hope to also raise funding from the community towards the cost of loan devices, internet access and support for volunteers.

To donate or find details visit www.comfortcompanions.co.uk.

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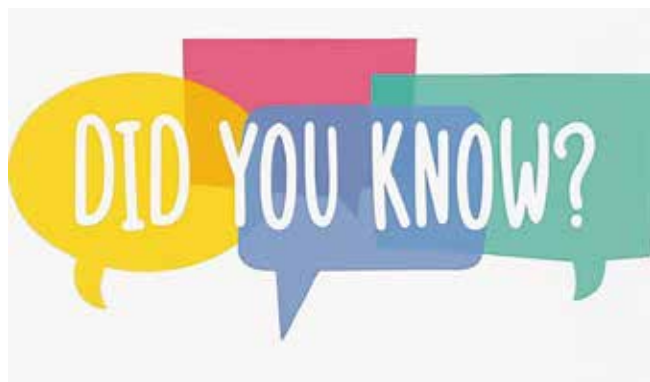


YOUR Community NEWS

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Every year we allocate a certain amount of money in our budget to cover grant applications. Each application is considered on its own merits, initially by the Finance & General Purposes Committee, which makes recommendations to the Full Council. Grants awarded do not necessarily cover the full amounts requested and the final decision of the amounts granted is made at Full Council.

If your organisation would like to apply for a grant, please visit our website at

www.dbhparishcouncil.uk

click on 'Your Council', 'About' then 'Financial Matters', you will then be directed to the grant application page.

The application form is very user friendly and can be completed online.

The Parish Council's website provides a host of information about the local area, the history of Downend and many other items of interest. Enjoy browsing at your leisure!



Keep yourself updated on what is happening within our Parish by joining our Facebook page with already over 1200 followers or via Instagram. Just search 'Downend & Bromley Heath Parish Council'.

We look forward to seeing you there.

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Downend & Bromley Heath Parish Council

Bridge is on track



The new bridge deck

NATIONAL Highways says the new bridge to carry the A432 over the M4 is on course to open in the "late spring".

A series of six overnight closures of the motorway took place in the first week of January, to remove casings for some of the concrete parts of the bridge structure.

A National Highways spokesperson said: "We have made positive progress on the new bridge, with all the concrete formwork and temporary edge protection removed during the recent overnight closures."

"Moving forward, there will be some overnight closures towards the end March to change the traffic management and allow for the central concrete barrier on the M4 to be reinstated."

"We will also be undertaking earthworks and other work on the abutments to move the bridge towards completion, before reconnecting it to the existing A432."

"All work is weather dependent, but we are on course to reopen the bridge in the late spring."

The old bridge next to the Wick Wick roundabout closed in July 2023 when an inspection discovered "accelerated deterioration and cracking" in the concrete.

Burglary arrests

POLICE have appeared in court charged in connection with two burglaries and five attempted break-ins at homes while householders were asleep.

Officers say they linked seven offences that took place in August and September last year in Downend, Mangotsfield, Staple Hill, Hanham and Longwell Green.

Declan David Byrne, aged 27, Nathan Peter Gallichan, 25, and Jordan Douglas Mills, 24, all from Weston-super-Mare, have been charged with burgling a house in Downend in the early hours of September 2 and stealing two BMW cars after taking the keys. Both cars were later recovered.

They are also charged with burgling a house in Longwell Green and stealing a games console, cash, a laptop and golf clubs, along with five attempted burglaries at five other homes.

The trio appeared before Bristol magistrates in December before a hearing in the Crown court in January.

They have been released on conditional bail, including an overnight curfew monitored by an electronic tag.

Councillor steps down

A DOWNEND & Bromley Heath parish councillor has stepped down.

James Griffiths, who joined the council in 2019, represented the council's Downend ward.

He was also a South Gloucestershire councillor for the Frenchay & Downend ward between 2019 and 2023, when he lost his seat to Liberal Democrat Raj Sood.

A vacancy was posted by the parish council in December and officials are now liaising with South Gloucestershire Council over whether the vacancy will be contested.

A South Gloucestershire Council spokesperson said: "If we are advised that this vacancy is contested, then a by-election will be held."

Love Clear Hearing This February




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TURNERS HEARING CARE BLOG

You might not love ear wax... but you can love clear hearing



February is the month of love. We're encouraged to show appreciation for partners, family, and friends, but what about looking after yourself? Clear hearing may not sound romantic, but it plays a huge role in feeling connected, confident, and present with the people you care about.

Ear wax is completely natural and actually protects your ears. The problem arises when it builds up or hardens, which is more common during the winter months. Cold air, indoor heating, hats, earphones, and reduced hydration can all contribute to wax becoming dry and impacted. The result? Muffled hearing, blocked ears, ringing, discomfort, or even dizziness.

These changes often creep up gradually. You may notice yourself asking loved ones to repeat themselves, turning up the television, or feeling disconnected during conversations. In busy cafés, family gatherings, or social events, this can be frustrating, and sometimes embarrassing.

February is an ideal time to act. After the noise and busyness of Christmas and New Year, routines are calmer and it's easier to focus on your own wellbeing. A professional ear check can quickly identify whether ear wax is affecting your hearing.

Microsuction is a safe, gentle, and precise method of ear wax removal. Unlike cotton buds or home remedies, it doesn't push wax deeper or introduce water into the ear canal. Many people are surprised by how quick and comfortable the procedure is, and how immediate the improvement can feel.

Clear hearing isn't just about sound; it's about connection. Hearing a grandchild's voice clearly, enjoying conversations with friends, or simply relaxing without that blocked sensation makes everyday life more enjoyable.

If your ears feel blocked, sounds seem dull, or ringing has crept in, book an appointment with our friendly audiologist. We'll check your ears, show you what we see, and, if needed, remove any troublesome wax safely and comfortably.

You might not love ear wax... but you'll absolutely love hearing clearly again.

Deb Campbell

Debbie Campbell is a qualified and experienced Audiologist, who has joined the clinical team at Turners Opticians in Fishponds having worked for many years in NHS Audiology clinics.

DOWNEND FOLK & ROOTS PREVIEW

THE OFTEN HERD + GREEN TREE

FRIDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2026

IT'S bluegrass night in South Gloucestershire this month as a highly-rated four-piece headline the Downend Folk & Roots concert.

The Often Herd transcend the traditional boundaries of bluegrass music. Although they might resemble an American string band, complete with driving energy, tight vocal harmonies and dazzling instrumental interplay, their vibrant, transatlantic sound is deeply coloured by their surroundings; the striking natural and industrial landscapes of Northern England. This unique approach won them the title of "Best European Bluegrass Band 2018" at the prestigious La Roche Bluegrass Festival in France.

Rupert Hughes (guitar) and Evan Davies (mandolin), write songs steeped in personal experience whilst drawing from a wide pool of influences ranging from old-time to psychedelia. American-born fiddler Niles Krieger and jazz bassist Sam Quintana add fiery instrumental skills to the mix,

launching the band's arrangements into the stratosphere. Together, their sound is both boldly contemporary and soothingly familiar, taking time-honoured traditions to new places with a fresh perspective. Flock to the herd, you won't be disappointed.

Opening the evening's music will be Green Tree. Vibrant improvisation, impressive musicianship, dynamic stage-work: Abbey and Rory bring energy to the stage like no other duo. With both members hailing from prominent UK bluegrass band Old Baby Mackerel, it's no surprise the confidence and virtuosic music these two share with an audience. Abbey's award-winning mandolin playing (Blue Lass) is punchy with tasteful melodic lines, moving between strong traditional licks and sparkly backing parts. Rory shreds through burning-hot licks on his guitar, adding tasteful backing alongside well-crafted and technically-challenging solos.

Green Tree sets encompass traditional and more contemporary bluegrass songs, including the duo's original material, featuring the members' strong voices and



love of tight harmonies, alongside varied stand-out instrumentals, giving a chance for each musician's playing to shine. The end result is a performance built on two passionate musicians whose styles and playing work in harmony.

Tickets for the concert, which takes place at Christ Church Downend on Friday 20th February 2026, are available online via downendfolkandroots.com or from Downend Cards & Gifts (cash only). They are priced at £14 each in advance or £16 on the door. Doors open at 7.00pm and the music starts around 7.45pm.

There will be a bar, stocking

cider, soft drinks, wine, hot drinks and real ale from Bristol's Hop Union Brewery. Audience members are encouraged to bring their own glass/mug/tankard, as well as reusable bottles for water; there is a 50p discount for those that do. Sweet treats at the bar are courtesy of Radstock-based The Great Cake Company. The whole concert will be live-streamed in partnership with Live to your Living Room, so if you miss out on in-person tickets, you have the option of watching from your sofa!

For further information, please email info@downendfolkandroots.com or find them on social media.

DOWNEND FOLK & ROOTS REVIEW

BRYONY GRIFFITH & ALICE JONES + HEARTWOOD CHORUS

FRIDAY 19 DECEMBER 2025

WILL you look at this place? Gorgeous lighting throwing a regal glow up the walls, two hundred friends chatting in the pews, sparkles and smiles all around, mulled wine scents tugging at noses. The Downend Folk & Roots Christmas is, simply, one of the best nights of the year (and not just because it always marks the end of the school term). It has, for lots of us, replaced Noddy's yell of "It's Christmas!!!!" as the festive starting gun.

Entirely fitting, then, that Bryony Griffith & Alice Jones are our guests this year. They are as Yorkshire as a good strong cup of tea and are brimming with feelings of fireside and friendship, of harmony and happiness. Griffith plays fiddle, Jones tenor guitar and when they sing together you can feel the crackling warmth of a really good pub hearth.

They are wonderful company, filling the space with stories, poking gentle fun at one another and spreading a festive radiance to all corners. The 'ollins and the Ivin is a northern take on an old song.

It is as honest as the day is long, Griffith's voice strong and rooted in place. Equally, Hark, How all the Welkin Rings takes the familiar and sprinkles it with Parkin crumbs. Jones' voice is high, reaching heavenwards, until joined by Griffith when they glide together.

With her tongue, more-or-less, in her cheek, Griffith describes much of their festive album, Wesselbobs, as "full of Yorkshire misery, of children and begging". The Yorkshire Wassailing Song falls, nicely, into all three categories. It might be sombre but it has a strange, kaleidoscopic refraction that those weird, wintery 80s TV dramas had as their soundtrack. Think Box of Delights with added piano-y drones. Time to Remember the Poor also keeps those most in need firmly in mind, although it is accompanied by Jones' rubber trousered body percussion (she spent the evening dressed as a most spectacular Christmas pudding, complete with remarkable holly head-dress).

There's cheekiness, too, in The Tailor's Britches and Change for a Guinea. Both are wonderfully sprightly, light-hearted and have exuberance spilling out of them, like an over-stuffed pie as the foolishness of men is held up for amused ridicule.



The Downend faithful sing buzz-ily on Hagman-Heigh, piling up festive treats into a great throne of goodies, while a gentle guitar ushers in the fuzziness of Christmas. Griffith's fiddle sounding as though it were being beamed in from a Yorkshire ale-house, from centuries ago.

This is the very essence of a Downend Christmas. There are nods toward the Solstice, to remembering others, to friends and to the spirit of Christmas itself. It is all utterly magical.

The only thing that could possibly make it better is the traditional Downend appearance of Bristol's greatest folk choir, Heartwood Chorus.

Almost thirty-strong and just as glorious as ever, they sing beautifully. Layers of twinkles dusted across songs that are

winter-y rather than simply Christmas-y. They breathe as one for I'd Rather Be Tending My Sheep, three female soloists exquisite but the whole choir purring like a drowsing cat. There just aren't enough superlatives for John Tams' Snow Falls but it is a beacon of Solstice hope, a heart-bursting glory, while Hail Smiling Morn is just heavenly and comes with the promise of brighter days once the year has turned. No one does Christmas quite as well as Heartwood do, God bless them.

In these days when it feels like almost anything could be called a tradition, the Downend Folk & Roots Christmas show is, truly, the most wonderful time of the year. Merry Christmas everyone.

Words: Gavin McNamara
Photos: Barry Savell

Blow for boxing club as rebuild plan dropped

A BOXING club based at an ageing youth centre has been left reeling after major renovation plans were suddenly dropped.

Downend Boxing Club has been based at the Harry Crook Centre in Moorlands Road, Fishponds, since 2017, when it moved from its previous home at Pophrey Hill pavilion in Mangotsfield.

Bristol City Council announced two years ago it would demolish and rebuild part of the building, which is 50 years old, and carry out "extensive refurbishment" of the rest.

The plan involved North Star Academy Trust moving in to run the centre as a dedicated learning and teaching 'resource base' for up to 18 children with behavioural issues, with the boxing club continuing it at evenings and weekends.

A planning application was approved and the club had made arrangements with nearby

Chester Park school to move there temporarily.

Boxing club coach Craig Turner said: "We were just waiting for the go-ahead."

However, towards the end of last year the club and school trusts were told that the rebuilding project was cancelled, because the scheme would not meet the requirements of a new special educational needs and disabilities strategy, which favours larger school settings.

Craig said: "We were completely and utterly gobsmacked."

The council had already sent surveyors into the building who drilled holes through several walls, took down part of the ceiling and dug trenches in the car park and grounds.

The decision means the club, which provides training and helps give a purpose to more than 100 children and young people from across the region,



Members of the boxing club at the Harry Crook Centre

has been left in a building the council admits is in poor condition and requires "extensive structural improvements".

Craig says the way the volunteer-run club and schools have been treated is "appalling".

Members and coaches say the council must act to help the club survive.

Tom Shinner, 15, from Staple Hill, has been with the club a year, boxing three or four times a week. He said: "This gym to me is a family - it keeps me busy and

keeps me occupied outside of school. It's not just boxing - it's a sense of belonging."

The future of the building will now be considered by the council's property team, but the authority says there is "no suggestion" the club's tenancy will be cancelled.

Council children and young people committee chair Councillor Christine Townsend said: "The council is arranging repair works and will contact the club to confirm details."

CHURCH NEWS

World Day of Prayer

"I WILL give you rest, come."

All are warmly welcome to this year's World Day of Prayer Service at Frenchay Parish Church, on Friday March 6 at 10am.

The service has been written by an ecumenical group of Christian women in Nigeria.

As we take part in this service we join a great wave of prayer which encircles the globe, beginning in Samoa and ending after 146 countries in American Samoa, all praying with and for the country and people of Nigeria.

We would love you to join us this year: you will be very welcome and refreshments will follow the service.

All enquiries should be made to trjplee@btinternet.com.

Rev Judith Lee

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH WITH MATTHEW CHAMPION OF DOWNEND BAPTIST CHURCH

Don't wish February away

February is a strange month. At this time of year, with Christmas an increasingly distant memory and the weather still as cold and dark as ever, it can feel as if winter has very much outstayed its welcome. It can seem as if there is nothing much to look forward to, at least until Spring comes again. If you're a particularly romantic sort you might be enthusiastic about Valentine's Day, but for many of us it's hard to get too excited about that. Pancake Day, on the other hand, is a festival I can get behind. This year it falls on the 17th February, and as I'm lucky enough not to work Tuesdays, I'm tempted to make it a whole-day affair! You may or may not know that Pancake Day is actually the start of the Christian festival of Lent- the forty days leading up to Easter. That's right, the day of stuffing yourself full of batter, sugar and other sweet toppings was originally a 'religious thing'. The whole idea was to use up all those rich and enjoyable foods in one big feast before the start of Lent. People would then fast and avoid those things for forty days, in order to remember Jesus' temptations in the wilderness and the way he fasted during that time.

All this is to say that life has a natural rhythm to it. Feasting is followed by fasting, and times of hardship are followed by celebration, just as day follows night. As the Bible puts us, 'there is a time for everything'- a time to work and a time to rest,



a time to be happy and a time to be sad, a time to be silent and a time to speak. If you're like me, you might still be feeling the effects of those 'January blues' and wishing that you could either turn the clock back to Christmas, or forward a few months until Spring. But wait- because I believe God uses the natural rhythms of life and the particular seasons we all go through to teach us. And maybe if we skip over this next month or so and wish it away, we'll miss something truly important. Jesus' time in the wilderness wasn't easy, but by embracing that time of reflection and self-denial he emerged ready to die for the sins of the world. So I challenge you to embrace the natural ups and downs of this month- both the feasting of Pancake Day and the fasting of Lent- whatever that looks like for you. And I pray that you too might emerge with a clearer sense of God's purposes for your life.

The pros and cons of getting old

I WAS thinking about what it's like to grow older, so I asked some of our church family what it was like for them.

Growing older is something that happens to most of us - if we are lucky - and is usually undervalued or feared.

But like all things that aren't much talked about, there is so much to learn from one another by being honest and opening up, and by listening.

Firstly, it's something you have to approach tactfully: "old" is surely a word to describe people who are in the next bracket above me, not myself!

So I sent out a general request rather than offending anyone by approaching them directly!

What did they find to be the main challenges, and the opportunities? What were their hopes? What keeps them going?

Here are some responses.

Margaret: "It's hard work growing older, and not complaining about health problems and changes in society. We have to learn to keep our own counsel and not keep giving unasked-for advice."

Pauline: "Getting old is the worst part of anyone's life - physically and emotionally challenging." Maybe there are some advantages in growing older as well. There are so many things that no longer seem as important as they once did, such as keeping up appearances or worrying what other people think of us.

What keeps you going? I asked them.

Margaret said: "I want to grow old gracefully and still have some friends."

Pauline said: "Prayer is obviously key to listening and

understanding what God requires of us, not making assumptions."

I leave the last words to Steve, who said: "Am I even old, I ask myself."

"Then comes the realisation: I have lived in nine decades, two centuries and two millenniums! No wonder I feel tired. I am 78."

"I have lived an active life; working with young people as a youth worker, trainer and counsellor has kept me young at heart."

"Playing rugby and football for local teams, walking and cycling and more recently using my local gym regularly has kept me fit, until the last few years or so, when chronic illnesses have kept me more or less housebound."

"I live with Pauline, who also suffers from chronic illness and is housebound. We married 55 years ago and are still very much in love."

"Old age can be lonely, frustrating and frightening, however I am privileged to be a member of my local church and belong to a lovely small group and although we are frustrated at not being able to attend as we would like, they make sure that we are not forgotten but very much included."

"Most of all, though, I am eternally grateful that I do not face old age alone but that the Lord to whom I committed my life 60 years ago is a present comforting friend, who will, as he promised never forsake me, being with me to the end, taking away all fear."

If you are feeling anxious or frustrated at getting old, do reach out to someone in the local community and in the local churches who can help you open up new doors of possibilities this season.

Anita Dobson

LET US KNOW YOUR VIEWS - EMAIL US AT: NEWS@DOWNENDVOICE.CO.UK

CHURCH NEWS

Thank you, Staple Hill!



Gifts for children collected at the Salvation Army building

STAPLE Hill Salvation Army once again helped a record number of people over the Christmas period.

Majors Colin and Nicola Hylton-Jones, the joint leaders of the church, want to thank the many people who helped by donating food, toys and money in the lead up to Christmas.

Working in conjunction with South Gloucestershire social services, local schools and other agencies, Staple Hill Salvation Army was able to provide 778 children with a Christmas parcel, as well as handing out food parcels and other essentials to those people in need at this time of year. In addition, 96 people spent Christmas Day at the Staple Hill church in Broad Street, and were entertained to a full day of Christmas food and celebration including a food parcel and gifts to take home.

Major Colin commented that the numbers helped this year surpassed previous records, but this demand was matched by the generosity of the community and the volunteers who offer their assistance.

The Salvation Army continues with its warm welcome drop-in centre on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, where refreshments are available free of charge.

Hilton Baker

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10 year milestone for Kip McGrath

AS a familiar name on Downend High Street, Kip McGrath Bristol North is celebrating a significant milestone this year: 10 years of supporting local children with English and maths. The anniversary coincides with a wider celebration for the Kip McGrath Education Centres network, which marks 50 years of helping students around the world to succeed.

Since opening its doors in 2015, Kip McGrath Bristol North has become a trusted part of the local community. Each week, around 300 children attend lessons at the centre, and over the past decade nearly 2,000 students have been supported on their learning journey. Three years ago, the centre moved from its original home on Downend Road onto Downend High Street, making it even more accessible for local families and firmly placing it at the heart of the community.

Many families return year after year, recommending the centre to friends and neighbours, and often enrolling siblings once they see the impact on confidence



and progress. While improved grades matter, parents frequently highlight something just as important: their children feeling happier, more confident and more positive about learning.

What sets the centre apart is its focus on personalised learning, delivered by fully qualified teachers with extensive experience in local schools. Every child begins with a free initial assessment, which helps identify strengths, gaps and

next steps. From there, teachers create an individual learning plan designed to help children catch up, keep up, or move ahead of the curriculum.

Lessons blend traditional paper-based work with online activities, building strong foundations while keeping learning engaging and motivating. Progress is carefully monitored using bespoke software, allowing teaching to be adapted as soon as a child's needs change.

Sessions can be taken in-centre or online, offering flexibility for busy families and helping learning fit around school and home life.

The centre is led by Jay, a qualified teacher with over 20 years' experience in education and nearly a decade at the helm in Downend. Known for his calm, supportive approach, Jay is passionate about helping children believe in themselves and enjoy learning again. Under his leadership, the centre was named Kip McGrath Franchisee of the Year in 2022, recognising both strong educational outcomes and its positive role within the local community.

Reflecting on the milestone, Jay says the real success lies in seeing children grow in confidence and independence. "Helping a child realise they can do it is what drives us," he says. As Kip McGrath Bristol North looks ahead to the next 10 years, families who would like to find out more, or arrange a free assessment, are warmly invited to get in touch or pop in for a chat.



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EDUCATIONCENTRES

Campaigning on your top priorities

I HOPE you're keeping well this winter.

Last month, my team and I worked on 495 new cases for residents, and I held my regular advice surgery, this time in Patchway.

As part of this, I supported a resident facing Home Office delays preventing them from starting their vital NHS role, helped a local business with HMRC delays which were causing financial strain, and resolved DWP issues for a resident, leading to a significant backdated payment.

I've also spoken up for our community on a range of issues, including raising issues with government ministers about support for bereaved Armed Forces families, treatment for rare cancers, adoption support, access to nature and more.

I've asked ministers and South Gloucestershire Council about clear next steps on Hambrook Junction, ahead of the report being published on local air quality, and asked questions and shared concerns about the potential development on Hicks Common in Winterbourne.

Since being elected, I've hosted regular 'Coffee with Claire' events across our large constituency, including in Downend.

I believe in doing politics differently and these informal events have been invaluable

for hearing directly from you as – together – we make ours an even better place to live.

Last month, I launched a new report at a special event, where I summarised local people's top priorities from these events and, together, we shaped local campaign plans on these. This report and ways to get involved can be found at clairehazeltgrove.co.uk/local-campaigns.

Locally, I met with our Chief Fire Officer and the team at Patchway Fire Station to discuss their vital work. I'm very pleased that our Labour Government's Fair Funding Review included an additional £15.6 million for Avon Fire and Rescue Service in their core spending power over the next three years. Having previously met with local firefighters, I raised local funding issues with our new government and am proud that we now have a better, longer-term deal for our community.

I visited Rolls-Royce following our government's £8 billion deal providing Türkiye with 20 new Typhoon fighter jets, which will see the local team providing vital engine components and maintenance. I also visited GKN Aerospace to hear more about the West of England Institute of Technology's work.



I was glad to meet with and thank Citizens Advice South Gloucestershire for their support for local people, and enjoyed visiting Little Stoke Primary and judging a debating competition at Mangotsfield School. In Parliament, I also spoke at an event about empowering girls in politics and hosted an event with 'GoHenry' on financial education.

I'm passionate about supporting young people to develop foundational skills to set them up well for adult life.

I was also proud to vote for the 'Hillsborough Law', making it an offence for public officials to mislead, and supporting victims and families in inquiries.

This is just the start of what I am determined will be another successful year for our community. Please get in touch anytime at claire.hazeltgrove.mp@parliament.uk.

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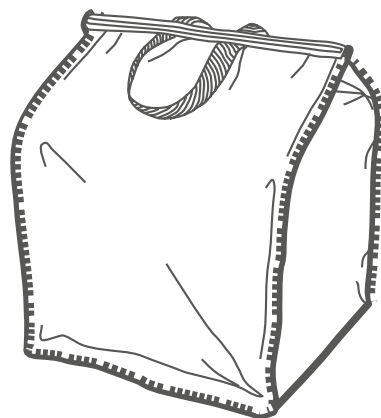
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Jake's lights beat £3,000 target

A DOWNEND teenager whose Christmas lights display raises money in memory of his sister has beaten his latest fundraising target.

Jake Skinner, aged 18, aimed to raise £3,000 over Christmas for Macmillan Cancer Support, to take the total he has raised in eight years past £25,000.

However the total he has raised this year is £3,525, which included £500 in cash from a mystery donor.

Jake started the display in 2018 in memory of his sister Stacie, who died suddenly on Christmas Day 2015 after suffering an anaphylactic shock.

Stacie used to decorate her work desk with Christmas lights and when her colleagues gave them back to the family, Jake was inspired to start a display of his own for charity.

He chose Macmillan Cancer Support in recognition of the



Jake Skinner's display

help it gave his nan when she had cancer, before she passed away in 2021.

Jake said: "Thank you to everyone who donated, and to everyone who came and visited us.

"The target was £3,000, so to get that and more this year was great.

"We had a slow start because of the weather but the week leading up to Christmas was very busy and we had a lot of

donations."

Most donations were made online via JustGiving but visitors also donated cash, including one anonymous supporter who handed over an envelope containing £500.

Jake said: "It's the biggest single donation we've ever had.

"He didn't leave a name, so it was quite strange but brilliant."

Many families visit the display in Sutherland Avenue every year, and Jake recognised

some familiar faces over the four weeks the lights were on.

It was taken down over three days at the end of December and Jake, who is an apprentice for local electrician Mark Evans, already has some ideas for later this year.

Macmillan Cancer Support relationship fundraising manager Nyree Ashby said: "What makes Jake's Christmas display so special is the incredible sense of community around it.

"Year after year, family, friends and neighbours all come together to support him, creating something that's about far more than festive lights – it's about people rallying around a cause that matters.

"It's such a rare and inspiring thing to see someone so young show this level of dedication and commitment, and the impact of Jake's fundraising over the years has been truly remarkable.

"We're deeply grateful to Jake, his family and everyone who gets involved or donates.

"Thanks to their generosity, we can continue providing vital support to people living with cancer across the UK through our Support Line, website, Online Community and Macmillan Centres."

A SONG written by a Downend man has raised £2,000 to support a community project running free accessible concerts.

Dominic Carey wrote the Christmas song, called 'Time To Celebrate (We've Made It Through Another Year)', after learning that the Music Train needed money to support its work.

Dom, who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, regularly takes part in Music Train sessions.

He wrote the lyrics and worked with Benny Hayes, a professional musician who plays at Music Train sessions and grew up in Downend, to record the song.

An online fundraising page for the song raised £2,040, including an anonymous £1,000 donation.

Dom wrote the song after the group's grant from South Gloucestershire Council's Learning Difficulties Development Fund ended.

The grant was originally supposed to be a one-off to set up the project in 2013, but the council was able to keep up its support for 12 years.

Dom's song raises £2,000



Dom Carey (right) with Music Train performers

Founder Liz Gray started the Music Train at Avon Valley Railway in Bitton. After three years it started holding events across South Gloucestershire, Bristol and Bath, with help from Staple Hill-based charity Milestones Trust and individual donations.

In January the project was adopted by Paul's Place, a Yate-based charity which supports people with physical disabilities from a newly-refurbished centre in Yate.

The money Dom has raised

and funds from the Milestones Trust will secure Music Train events for the next six months, after which time Paul's Place will be able to apply for new funding.

Dom said: "I'm absolutely over the moon with how big and successful my Christmas song has become.

"The song raised over £2,000 towards Music Train events, and we've managed to link up with Paul's Place to give Music Train a safe and secure future.

"Huge thanks to Paul's Place and Milestones Trust for making

this happen."

Liz said: "As the Music Train moves into a new era with Paul's Place, I would like to thank Avon Valley Railway, Milestones Trust, the Learning Difficulties Development Fund at South Gloucestershire, Quartet and other funders and private funders who have supported us since 2013, making it possible to hold over 700 events.

"Also I would like to thank Kingswood and Emersons Green town councils, Downend & Bromley Heath and Staple Hill & Mangotsfield parish councils for their support."

Paul's Place has set up a new fundraising page for Music Train at tinyurl.com/42be2wat.

Chief executive Lynda Williams said: "We are honoured to be adopting The Music Train and look forward to working closely with Liz to ensure this much-loved and essential service not only continues but grows."

In February Music Train will be at Staple Hill Methodist Church on the 2nd from 1.15-2.45pm, Christ Church on the 12th and 26th from 11.30am-1pm and Resound in Blackhorse Road on the 5th from 1.30-3pm.

German trip widens horizons

DOWNEND School students visited a historic cathedral, a chocolate factory and a Christmas market during a trip to Germany.

The Year 9 pupils visited Aachen in December for a visit that combined historical, linguistic, and cultural learning.

It was organised by languages teacher and head of Brunel House Tony Rolle.

Head teacher Rachael Corns said: "While a huge amount of learning happens in the classroom, some of the most powerful lessons emerge when students step outside it and experience the world for themselves.

"One of the highlights was the breathtaking Aachen Cathedral, its stone glowing warmly in the winter light.

"Aachen's Christmas markets were alive with festive lights, wooden stalls, and the unmistakable scent of gingerbread drifting through the air.

"Students sampled German treats, browsed for gifts, and proudly practised their language skills with local stallholders. It was a joyful opportunity to connect classroom learning with real-world experiences.



Inside Aachen Cathedral

"Two further stops made the trip even more memorable: the Lindt chocolate factory and the Bahlsen biscuit factory.

"At Lindt, students watched chocolate being made from start to finish, captivated by the process and delighted by the warm, sweet aroma that filled the air.

"At Bahlsen, they saw how biscuits are produced on a huge scale, observing the



A German market

blend of modern machinery and traditional recipes.

"These visits offered a brilliant insight into food technology, engineering, and manufacturing in action.

"Judging by the number of chocolate and biscuit boxes loaded onto the coach, families at home were certainly treated to some delicious souvenirs!

"The winter sunshine, historic surroundings, and fascinating factory tours combined to create an experience they'll remember for years to come.

"The Aachen trip is a powerful reminder that school isn't just about lessons and exams, it's about broadening horizons, sparking curiosity, and helping young people grow into confident, thoughtful individuals."

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Children at the resource base with their houseplants



Making play dough

Awards for young achievers

PUPILS at a primary school's specialist setting for children with physical disabilities are among the first in the country to take part in a new awards scheme.

The Young Achievers Award is a national project designed to help children aged from ten to 13 build independence, confidence and a sense of community responsibility.

Children at the resource base at Emersons Green Primary School have been taking part, led by teacher Charlotte Hawker.

The resource base is one of only six settings in the UK which supports children with physical disabilities or visual impairment to study within a mainstream school.



Making a presentation at the pre-school

Charlotte has adapted activities so that every child can take part and succeed in the awards, working with Victa, a national charity supporting children and young adults who are blind or partially sighted, and their families.

Their first award focussed on the community.

Pupils took part in hands-on projects focused on kindness, teamwork and giving back, including potting houseplants to donate to people who use the

nearby Resound Foodbank.

Pupils also made their own play dough, measuring and mixing the ingredients themselves before giving it to Mangotsfield Pre-School, which is based on the school grounds.

The children from the resource base then visited the pre-school to explain how they made the dough and answer questions, which also helped to build their confidence and communication skills.

Children worked together to

make peppermint creams and tactile thank-you cards for family members or friends as part of a section acts of gratitude, and discussed how people can show appreciation in everyday life.

The theme continued with a 'kindness bingo' challenge, where pupils chose and recorded acts of kindness such as holding doors open, writing kind notes or helping others.

Executive head teacher Simon Botten said: "Through completing these activities, the four pupils earned their Young Achievers community badges, marking a proud moment for both the children and staff.

"The initiative reflects Emersons Green Primary School Resource Base's commitment to supporting pupils' personal development alongside academic learning, ensuring they are prepared for life beyond the classroom.

"In 2026 the Young Achievers hope to gain their next three awards - the science, nature and create badges, to become full Young Achievers and inspire the next group!"

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Hub launches new women's well-being programme

STAPLE Hill Community Hub is launching a new programme offering women the chance to explore self-care and well-being through socio-aesthetics workshops.

Socio-aesthetics is a therapeutic approach that uses beauty and self-care techniques to help people build confidence and look after their well-being.

The six-week workshop series will teach participants how to make their own hand scrubs, practice facial massage for stress relief, and create simple skincare routines using affordable products.

The workshops will be led by Natacha Sullivan, a qualified socio-aesthetics who specialises in working with women to build their confidence through self-care practices.

She said: "My goal is to bring women together.

"I want to help them to create and share something beautiful, and bring light and self-confidence to themselves."

The sessions will run on Wednesday mornings from 11.30am to 12.30pm, starting on February 4.

Staple Hill Community Hub manager Julie Snelling said the programme recognises that self-care is essential for mental health.

She said: "We know local women face real challenges.

"This programme shows that taking time for



Natacha Sullivan

yourself is essential for mental health.

"It's about learning that you matter, too."

Many women struggle to find time for self-care.

Between juggling work, looking after children and managing the household, their own needs often come last. This can lead to higher levels of anxiety, stress and feeling overwhelmed.

The workshops will teach women how to create small moments of care at home, using affordable products.

They also provide an important opportunity



Hand care

to meet others from the community, make new friends and share experiences in a supportive environment.

All the workshops are free to attend.

Contact Staple Hill Community Hub for more information or to book, as places are limited. you can get in touch by email at hello@staplehillcommunityhub.org.uk or call 01454 868374.

The programme is supported by Health Data Research UK's Take the Lead community grants.

Katie Cooper

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What did we do with the drunken snowmen?

GOSH, did anyone see our drunken snowmen? I think they must have had a few drinks in the Horseshoe!

We had to arrest them and return them to their container, where they will now be kept locked away until their release next December!

January is usually quite a quiet month for In Bloom, so the guys have started to make items for the December 2026 Christmas Market, would you believe?!

This year I told Dave we would never make our very popular trees, which have baubles in the centre, again as they were very difficult to make.

However, as usual I have relented and he is now making a proforma, which means they will be easier to make (we shall see!).

We did enjoy, however, looking at all of the reduced baubles to buy after Christmas, which will go into the middle of the trees.

The Christmas market in the High Street was thankfully dry, as the day before was dreadful!

The market was very well attended, and I think most of the stalls did very well, especially the doughnut stall.

It seemed that everyone who came along to our stall had a box of doughnuts in their hands.

Thank you to everyone that purchased Christmas trees, logs, wreaths and snowmen from our stall.



Three of In Bloom's snowmen ended up squiffy after the railing they were mounted on was hit during the Christmas period

It was also good to talk to people about our In Bloom work.

In the bee garden at the moment we have a few snowdrops appearing, and are now hoping that the crocuses we planted in the autumn will soon be in flower.

I actually saw my first daffodil on January 14, so that was very early, but it really cheered me up!

I love the spring almost more than the summer, as most people seem to have some sort of bulb display in their garden, whereas people don't always plant up their gardens in the summer. Hopefully by the time I speak to you next I will have some daffodil plants to show you.

To contact Downend & Bromley Heath in Bloom, email dbhinbloom@gmail.com.

Window firm liquidated

A MANGOTSFIELD-based window and door supplier has gone into liquidation.

The Voice reported in December that Panoramic's showroom in Richmond Road had shut after the company ceased trading on November 11, after 47 years in business.

Its nine employees were made redundant.

Accountants PKF Francis Clark have now confirmed that partners Nicholas Harris and Lucinda Coleman have been appointed joint liquidators, following the company's decision to enter creditors' voluntary liquidation.

A spokesperson for the accountants said: "Incorporated in 1981, Panoramic Limited built a strong reputation as a manufacturer and later as a specialist supplier of high-quality windows, doors, conservatories and roof installations.

"In 2020, the business underwent a management buy-out, with ambitions to expand its product range and grow its position in the local market. For several years after this, the company continued to trade successfully. However, by late 2024, competitive pricing pressures and rising costs significantly impacted profitability.

"Despite promotional campaigns and efforts to secure additional funding, sales declined and cashflow forecasts indicated the company could not meet its financial obligations.

"The company's intellectual property and order book were sold prior to the liquidators' appointment.

"Following their appointment in December, the liquidators are working with Gavel Auctioneers & Valuers to sell its remaining assets – including showroom fittings, vehicles, plant and machinery – to realise value for creditors."

Mr Harris said: "Our immediate priority is to ensure an orderly winding down of Panoramic Limited's affairs and to communicate with all creditors, including customers who have paid deposits. We will also review the company's financial position and transactions leading up to the liquidation as part of our statutory duties."

Creditors can contact PKF Francis Clark at business.recovery@pkf-francisclark.co.uk.



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History captured on a postcard

WE communicate constantly nowadays, but before we had access to phones, instant messaging, texting and emails, people relied on letters, telegrams and postcards to stay in touch.

Letters, sealed in envelopes, were the main form of communication for centuries.

They were often written in formal language, with correct ways to address and sign off, and they took care and effort to write. The time they took to arrive varied, as they were delivered by person, horse or carriage – from hours in big cities with frequent mail services, to weeks or months internationally.

Telegrams were introduced in the 1830s, providing a novel and rapid way to communicate. This didn't entail carrying a physical object like a letter, but sending the message electronically via an operator based in a telegraph office, usually in Morse code.

These were transmitted within an hour or a day but they were expensive, charged by the word, so senders kept them short and terse.

They were often used to convey urgent bad news, like war casualties, or good news like birth announcements.

In 1870 the first British postcards were made (based on an Austro-Hungarian idea which had proved extremely popular a year before).

Costing half as much as a letter to post and arriving quickly – with



The old Mangotsfield Post Office on Cossham Street in the early 2000s, with a phone box outside

several collections and deliveries a day – they caught on fast.

People could dash off a cheery message or share news quickly without having to spend time drafting a full letter and finding an envelope and stamp before posting it.

The first postcards had an imprinted, pre-paid stamp and space for the address on one side, with the other side left blank for messages.

Postcards were used for frequent, informal chat, for sweethearts to send romantic messages to one another, to arrange get-togethers, send short pieces of news, or Christmas, Easter and other greetings.

During the two World Wars soldiers and prisoners of war were given free postage, so they could reassure their families that they were safe.

By the end of King Edward VII's

reign in 1910, an incredible 800 million postcards were being sent every year.

Over time postcards changed: by 1902 most had a printed picture on one side, with both the address and message squeezed onto the reverse.

This was a boon to photographers, who could produce

local cards, although most were printed. Before D-Day, a request for photos of the French coast swamped the military planners with over 10 million cards.

It became customary to send postcards from your holiday to friends and family, showing them scenes of what they were missing.

In 1968 first and second class postage rates were introduced, and it cost the same to send a letter or a postcard, so their popularity declined.

They are still sold as souvenirs today, and are fascinating collectibles that reveal how places have changed over time, like the views of Mangotsfield pictured on the examples here.

Downend Community History and Art Project (CHAP) is a not-for-profit voluntary organisation that aims to produce a community history resource and create a coherent identity for Downend and Emersons Green, built around interesting or significant places, people and events from the past.

To get in touch visit www.downendchap.org, email big.gin@yahoo.com or write to CHAP, 49 Overhill Road, Downend, Bristol, BS16 5DS.

Helen Rana



Mangotsfield depicted in a Christmas postcard from the late 19th or early 20th century.



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February 4

■ **MANGOTSFIELD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION** monthly coffee morning at the Red Lion, 10am. All welcome.

February 4

■ **MOTHERS UNION** at Christ Church Parish Hall, North Street, Downend, 2.15pm. Talks, fundraising, worship, friendship and refreshments. Guest speaker Katie Cooper: 'My year as chair of South Glos Council. Non-members welcome.

February 4

■ **COMMEMORATION** of 30th anniversary of the death of firefighter Fleur Lombard at her memorial outside Staple Hill Library, Broad Street. Arrive by 12.45pm, ceremony from 1pm.

February 8

■ **BUBBLE CHURCH** at Church Centre, Quakers Road, 4pm. Interactive short service for families with young children, followed by children's tea.

February 10

■ **BEREAVEMENT GROUP** at Christ Church Downend, 2pm. Friendship, refreshments and a chance to reflect together with others who have lost a loved one.

February 12

■ **'THURSDAY CHURCH' A MIDWEEK CHRISTIAN SERVICE** open to anyone, 11.15am at Staple Hill, Salvation Army, Broad Street, Bristol BS16 5LN. Tel 0117 9569733 for more information

February 13

■ **LUNCHTIME CONCERT** at the Dawn James Room, Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Oldbury Court, 12.30-2pm. Mike Nash: Music from the 50s, 60s and 70s. Tea and coffee served from 12.30pm, concert

from 1-2pm. Retiring collection (suggested donation £2).

February 13

■ **CHARITY CONCERT** for the Alfie Nick Foundation at Paintworks, Bath Road, Bristol, from 6.30pm. James Kirby plays a special charity show to raise money for disadvantaged children in the South West, in memory of Downend teenager Alfie Richley. Tickets £20 at jameskirbymusic.com.

February 14

■ **'COFFEE MORNING'** 10am – 12 noon @ Staple Hill Salvation Army, Broad Street, Bristol BS16 5LN. Tel 0117 9569733 for more information

February 15

■ **LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION**, Page Park, 1pm-3pm. Crafts at the Nest from 1pm. Performance by Bristol University Lion Dance Troupe, 2pm.

February 16

■ **DOWNEND SENIOR FILM CLUB** at 2pm Conclave (12) Conclave follows one of the world's most secretive and ancient events – selecting a new pope. The Church's most powerful leaders have gathered from around the world, locked together in the Vatican halls. Tasked with running this covert process, Cardinal Lawrence (Ralph Fiennes) finds himself at the centre of a conspiracy and discovers a secret that could shake the very foundation of The Church. Carers welcome, easy access Refreshments £4 Christ Church Hall, 57 North Street, Downend BS16 5SG For more information, please call 0117 435 0063.

February 19

■ **DEMENTIA CAFE** at Warm Space, Christ Church Downend, 11am-1.30pm. Full hot meal. Also hot meal on February 5. Live music from Music Train and soup & roll lunch on 12th and 26th. Free event.

February 23

■ **FRIENDS OF KING GEORGE V PARK GROUP MEETING**, King George V Pavilion, Sutherland Avenue, 7pm. Option to join remotely via Teams - email kgvdownend@gmail.com to receive the link.

February 23

■ **CAMEO** – 8pm a practical craft evening for anyone creative or interested in learning creative skills. Held at Staple Hill Salvation Army, Broad Street, Bristol BS16 5LN. Tel 0117 9569733 for more information

February 24

■ **VINTAGE ADVENTURE** at Church Centre, Quakers Road, 2-3.30pm. Activities, refreshments, friendship and a Christian message for the season, for seniors. All welcome.

REGULAR EVENTS

■ **BRISTOL U3A:** Have you reached a point in your life where you have fewer responsibilities and more time for yourself? Would you like to take part in activities where you can share skills, abilities or hobbies whilst having fun and making new friends? Go to www.bristolu3a.org.uk for details.

Monday

■ **SINGALONG 4 ALL** - Mondays 10.30/11.30, Grace court, Dial Lane, Downend BS16 5UP. £4 ...£1 tea n bikkies Tel: Barbara 07816839141.

■ **PUCKLECHURCH SHORT MAT BOWLS CLUB** are looking for new players. We meet every Monday evening (7.15-9.30) and Sunday & Wednesday afternoons 3.15pm-6pm at Pucklechurch Community Centre. Refreshments available. For more information contact John 07926541933.

■ **SILK PAINTING** at Downend Baptist Church. Come along to an enjoyable afternoon, every alternate Monday 2pm-4pm. Make cards, tuition given, tea and biscuits provided, cost includes all materials. One large card £2 or 3 for £5, small cards £1 each. Please contact 0117 9608935 for more details.

■ **LUNCH CLUB AT STAPLE HILL COMMUNITY HUB**, Berkeley House, Berkeley Road, every Monday, 12.15pm. More details from the hub on 01454 868374.

■ **KINGSWOOD LACE MAKERS** - meet at Lincombe Barn, Overdale Road on Monday afternoons from 2-4pm, evenings 7.15-9.15pm every third Monday. New members

OVER 30s DANCE PARTY at the superb BAWA Club, Filton

... on the FIRST Friday of every MONTH (NO dance in August or January) It's the ideal night out for the 30-60 age range. Come dance and socialise amongst a friendly, lively crowd. Dancing Thru' the Decades includes Motown, Soul, Club Classics... Music you can relate to. Club times are 9 'til 1. Last entry 11pm – very smart casual. No t-shirts or trainers and gents required to wear collared shirts. Entry: £8. www.mingles.co.uk. Facebook: @Luv2mingle

welcome, first meeting free. For more information contact Beverly on walkingwithlace@yahoo.co.uk.

■ **JOB SEARCHERS SUPPORT** Staple Hill Community Hub, 2-4pm. Benefits advisor available second Monday of each month.

■ **FRENCHAY CHAPEL** 'Wild, Wise Curious' Discussion Group with coffee and cake 12.30 weekly For more info or to go on weekly email contact petera.bruce@gmail.com 07527-118586

■ **FRENCHAY CHAPEL** Mindful Pilates weekly – Contact Debbie 07771 544549

■ **ADULT TAP DANCING CLASSES**, Frenchay Village Hall, Monday mornings, 10.30-11.30am. Term ends July 21. New term starts September 15. Fun class with lots of laughs. £8 a session. Call Suzanne on 07787 396718

Tuesday

■ **DOWNEND GARDENING IN RETIREMENT CLUB** Third Tuesday of every month at 10.15am Varied Topics Non Members welcome at £3 including Tea / Coffee. Assembly Hall, Salisbury Road. Easily reached by any bus into Downend

■ **BOARD GAMES NIGHT** every Tuesday from 7pm. All Welcome The Wooden Walls Micropub, 30 Broad Street, Staple Hill, BS16 5NU

■ **LINCOMBE BARN CAMERA CLUB** meets every second, fourth and fifth Tuesday of the month at Lincombe Barn, Overdale Road. New members always welcome. For information see website at www.lincombebarncameraclub.co.uk or email lincombe.barn@gmail.com.

■ **BROMLEY HEATH GARDENING CLUB** Meets at Christ Church Centre, Quakers Road, every third Tuesday of the month at 2.30pm. Talks, day trips and short holidays - everyone welcome. Call May on 0117 957 3695 for details.

■ **PUCKLECHURCH FOLK DANCING CLUB** Pucklechurch Community Hall, Abson Road every other Tuesday from 7.30 to 10.15pm All welcome either with a partner or solo. Enjoy an evening with us. Call Sue on 07742114566 or Linda on 07843240414.

Whats On at Downend Library

Adult Activities

Mondays 10 - 12 Knitter Natter – come along and join this friendly group for a cuppa, a natter and some knitting!
Fridays 10.30 – 11.30 Coffee Morning – come along to the library for a chat and a cuppa!

Children's Activities

Mondays – Term Time Only - 15.30 – 16.30 Crafters for primary school age children
Pop along after school for a free, fun crafting session!
Wednesdays 10.30 – 11.00 Rhymetime for pre school children
Come along for a free, fun filled session with lots of singing and bubbles!
Wednesdays 11.00 – 11.30 Mini Builders for pre school children
Stay after Rhyme Time for a free play session with Duplo, train sets and much more!
Lego Club – for children 4+
Once a month on a Saturday, 10.30 – 11.30 Free
Join us for a story and Lego building session and see your Lego creation displayed in the library!

Please contact the library for dates
Downend.library@southglos.gov.uk

■ **MESSY SPACE**, Badminton Road Methodist Church Downend. Term-time group for toddlers and their carers, 10-11.45am. Toys, books, play dough, paint & craft, singing and refreshments. First visit free, then £3 per child or £5 per family. More information at www.badmintonroadmethodist.org.uk or 0117 956 1106.

■ **DOWNEND BAPTIST CHURCH:** Coffee time 10.30-12.30 the first Tuesday of the month.

■ **FRIENDSHIP & EXERCISE GROUP**, Salvation Army, Broad Street, Staple Hill, every Tuesday 10-11.30am.

■ **POWER PILATES** 09:20 – 10:20 at Christ Church Parish Hall, North Street, Downend. First class half price. For further info and full class timetable contact Kerry 07919 051019 or email kerry@yogaandpilatesforlife.com

■ **MOVE-IT CLUB** for children aged 7-11, Staple Hill Community Hub, Berkeley House, Berkeley Road, every Tuesday 3.30pm. More details from hub on 01454 868374.

■ **TEA AND TOAST** after school drop-in for primary aged children and families, Christ Church Parish Hall, North Street, Downend, term-time Tuesdays, 3.15-4.30pm. All welcome for tea, squash, toast, board games, colouring and play in a friendly atmosphere.

■ **DOWNEND WI** meets at Christ Church Hall, North Street, Downend on the last Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm. For details email downendwi@yahoo.co.uk.

■ **RIDGEWAY BADMINTON CLUB** meets every Tuesday evening from 8-10pm at Downend Sports Centre for informal badminton doubles/singles matches between adults of all ages. First visit free. For more information contact Graham on 07968 050 320

■ **SINGING FOR THE BRAIN**, free music club for people living with dementia and Alzheimer's, Staple Hill Hub, every Tuesday 2-3pm. Call 01454 868374 for more information.

■ **COFFEE AFTERNOON** with free coffee & cake, friendly conversation and a 'thought for the day'. First Tuesday of the month, 2pm at the Pendennis Good News Centre, Pendennis Road, Staple Hill. All welcome.

■ **KARATE FOR MUMS AND DADS**, 7pm, Page Community Association Staple Hill. More info from www.zenkarate.club.

■ **MEDITATION** at Frenchay Chapel, 7pm. Kundalini Osho movement meditation on 1st Tuesday, person-centred

meditation on 3rd Tuesday.

■ **DOWNEND BAPTIST CHURCH COFFEE TIME**, first Tuesday of the month, 10.30am-12.30pm. Join us for tea, coffee, cakes. Relax together. Quiet area. All ages welcome. Starts July 1. www.downendbaptist.co.uk

■ **WALKING NETBALL** every Tuesday at Mangotsfield Secondary School 7pm-8pm, £5 per session, ex players or new to netball welcome, for more info please email lindab2023@gmail.com

■ **GREENBANK BOWLS CLUB** Gordon Road, Whitehall, BS5 7DP (What three words: same. zone.frozen) Every Tuesday 5pm until dusk. All equipment provided Please wear flat soled shoes, eg. trainers. No need to book Car Parking Licensed Bar greenbankbowls@gmail.com

Wednesday

■ **DOWNEND BRIDGE CLUB - NEW MEMBERS ARE WANTED**

Come and join us and play duplicate Bridge at Lincombe Barn Downend on Wednesday afternoons 2pm. All levels welcome. Please contact evforbes77@gmail.com or 0117 9836886 or Yvonne Scoulding rscoulding@googlemail.com or 0117 9568944

■ **CLEEVE SINGERS OF DOWNEND** This four part choir meet at Lincombe Barn, 7.30 p.m. from September until July. For more information contact the Secretary on 0117 9561881.

■ **DOWNEND SENIOR CITIZENS CLUB** Musical entertainment from 2-4pm every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at North Street Church Hall. All are welcome.

■ **ROYAL BRITISH LEGION WOMEN'S SECTION** meets on the first Wednesday of the month, 1-3pm at the YOU Foundation, Page Road, Staple Hill (by the long-stay car park). New members welcome. More details from Diane Roberts on 0117 956 3407.

■ **DOWNEND TANG SOO DO** meets at Christchurch Parish Hall, North Street on Wednesday evenings from 7.30-9pm. Suitable for beginners and ages 10+. First class free. More details from Ian on 07817 744689 or at the Downend Tang Soo Do Facebook page.

■ **FRENCHAY PROBUS CLUB** We meet at Frenchay Village Hall on the first Wednesday of each month between 10.00 and 12.00 hrs. For further details contact: davidhjrjan@gmail.com.

■ **WARMLEY JAZZ CLUB**, Every Wednesday except first one of the month, 7.30pm, Cadbury Heath Social Club, £7 on the door. More

details at warmleyjazz.co.uk.

■ **BRISTOL SCRABBLE CLUB** meets every Wednesday evening at 7pm until 10pm at Filton Community Centre, Elm Park, Filton BS34 7PS. New members welcome-first visit free so come along and give us a try. Information: Jo Hunter by email atpurplewellies@live.co.uk

■ **CROSS STITCH** Like to learn this absorbing relaxing hobby and have fun at the same time? Why not join the Club at Lincombe Barn. Beginners and those with all abilities welcome. New term commences beginning of September on Wednesday mornings 10.00 am until noon. Contact Lincombe Barn 9562367.

■ **THE FRENCHAY FOLK DANCE CLUB** meet fortnightly at Frenchay Village Hall from 7.45 until 10.15pm. All standards of dancer are welcome to enjoy live Bands and experienced Callers. Visit frenchayfdc.co.uk or call 0117 3021543 for more information.

■ **FRIENDLY VOICES** dementia-friendly singing group, Mangotsfield & Castle Green URC, Cossham Street, second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, 10.30am to noon. No charge, carers welcome. Sessions led by music therapist. More details from June Watts on 0117 956 6625.

■ **WEDNESDAY CAFE FOR SENIORS**, at Badminton Road Methodist Church (BS16 6NU) every Wednesday 10am to 12 noon. All Welcome – just come along – make new friends over a cuppa and cake. Information: 0117 239 5984

■ **DOWNEND FLOWER ARRANGING CLUB** We are a friendly group, we meet at 7.30pm on 1st & 3rd Wednesday each month from September to June at Emersons Green Village Hall, Emersons Way, Emersons Green, BS16 7AP Ring Genise on 0777 2451217 for more information.

■ **LADIES ENTERPRISE CLUB** every 1st and 3rd Wednesday afternoon at the Assembly Hall, Salisbury Road, Downend, 2.30pm-4pm. If you would like to belong to a warm, friendly group we would love to see you. Contact Ruth on 07733413823 for more details

■ **MOTHERS UNION** - worship, friendship, supporting charities, refreshments: First Wednesday of the month, 2.15pm at Christ Church Parish Hall, North Street. Non-members welcome. More details from 0117 908 9867.

■ **FRENCHAY & HAMBROOK HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY** meets at Friends Meeting House, Frenchay, 7.30pm first Wednesday of the month from September to

March. Talks on garden-related topics, meet other gardeners, trips in April & May. Phone 0117 967 2390 for more information.

■ **COFFEE MORNING**, Staple Hill Community Hub, Berkeley House, Berkeley Road, every Wednesday 9.30-10.30am. More details from the hub on 01454 868374.

■ **KEEP FIT**, God's House International Centre, The Sanctuary, 55 High Street, Staple Hill, every Wednesday 10-11am, followed by cup of tea and a chat. For adults 50+. More information from Lin on 0770 707 6281 or email Lincolnish@hotmail.co.uk.

■ **SPROUTS**, free gardening and nature club for children aged 7-11, Staple Hill Hub every Wednesday, 4-6pm. Call 01454 868374 for further information. Thursday

■ **HOLY COMMUNION** at St James Church, Mangotsfield, from noon.

■ **QUIZ NIGHT** at St James Church, Mangotsfield, 8pm.

■ **BEECHWOOD READING GROUP** Meets at the Beechwood Club, Fishponds. Third Wed of the month 1.45pm to 3.15pm. New members welcome. Contact Carolyn at 07527 841443

■ **LADIES-ONLY KARATE GROUP**, 7pm Page Community Association Staple Hill. More information from www.zenkarate.club.

■ **YOGA** 10:00 – 11:00 and **NEW PILATES CLASS** at 11:10 – 12:10 both at Christ Church Parish Hall, North Street, Downend. First class half price. For further info and full class timetable contact Kerry 07919 051019 or email kerry@yogaandpilatesforlife.com

■ **HANHAM BRIDGE CLUB** Every Weds 7-10pm at Hanham Community Centre, new members welcome. See www.hanhambridgeclub.co.uk or call Graham 07790 491564

Thursday

■ **BARN BELLS** handbell ringers meet at Lincombe Barn, Downend, from 2-4pm weekly. Anyone who can read music is welcome to join.

■ **DEWDROP INN CAFE**, Resound church, Blackhorse Road, Mangotsfield. Every fourth Thursday of the month, 2-4pm. A place for the community to relax and unwind with old & new friends. Tea, coffee, cakes and biscuits £2.

■ **ROOTED YOUTH GROUP** at Christ Church Downend - age 11-18 7pm-8.30pm Every Thursday in term time. Games, crafts, reflections Contact Paul on 07939 125375 for more details.

Continued on next page

WHAT'S ON LOCALLY

■ MANGOTSFIELD AND CASTLE GREEN UNITED REFORMED

CHURCH regular coffee mornings, held on the first Thursday of the month, 10.30am-noon

■ **SCRABBLE** Downend Folk House Thursdays 10-12noon Info: 07789772538 Jonathan Seegrove.

■ **WARM SPACE CAFE** at Christ Church, Downend, free every Thursday 11-2pm. Soup and roll lunch from noon. Live music, including Music Train on 2nd and 4th Thursdays. Dementia-friendly cafe on 3rd Thursday of the month, 11am-1.30pm.

■ **HAMBROOK MEN'S PROBUS CLUB** meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month, 10am-noon at Whiteshill Chapel, Hambrook, with a speaker at each meeting. Friendly group, new members welcome. For details call the secretary on 07788 882386.

■ **BROMLEY HEATH PROBUS CLUB**, holds fortnightly meetings with Speakers for ladies and gentlemen on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month from 10:00 am till 12:00. We also enjoy lunches/outings together. Please join us at the Assembly Hall, Downend. More details on 0117 9574583 or see our website.

■ **FRIENDSHIP AND EXERCISE GROUP**, Staple Hill Methodist Church, High Street, Staple Hill, every Thursday - first session 9.30am, second session 11am.

■ **BROMLEY HEATH WI** meets at Bromley Heath Junior School Hall on the second Thursday of each month (except August) at 7.30pm. Email bromleyheathwi@gmail.com for more information.

■ **FAMILY DROP-IN** with free after-school refreshments and activities for families. Every Thursday, 3.15-4.45pm during term time, at Pendennis Good News Centre, Parklands Road, Staple Hill.

■ **DOWNEND HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY** meets every second Thursday of the month at Downend Assembly Hall, Salisbury Road, at 7.30pm. New members welcome. More details from downendhortsoc@gmail.com.

■ **COFFEE, CAKE, AND COMMUNITY MORNING** at Emersons Green Village Hall. Free Tea, Coffee, and Cake served 10am to 12pm, with extra time to relax and finish your drinks until 1pm. Everyone is welcome! Donations to Emersons Green Village Hall welcome. Supported by Emersons Green Town Council.

Friday

■ **TAI CHI FOR PARKINSON'S**. Weekly beginners Tai Chi & Qi Gong class for people with Parkinson's disease, their families and carers.

Lincombe Barn. (term times) 10.15 – 12.15 including tea / coffee break. Contact: Claire - Claire@Taichibodyandmind.co.uk (07769 857672) or Sarah - buqiworks@gmail.com (07815 662844)

■ **PAGE PARK UKULELE CLUB**, Bean Tree café, Fridays at 1pm.

All abilities welcomed. Places £4 each. For further details call or text 'Ukulele' to Ben on 07910 668258.

■ **JIGSAW TODDLER GROUP**, Fridays in term time at Christ Church Parish Hall, North Street, from 9.45-11.15am.

■ **LATER LIVE MUSIC**, Resound church, Blackhorse Road, Mangotsfield. Every second Friday monthly, except August & December, 8-10pm, £2.50. facebook.com/lateratresound.

■ **ARTWINGS**, Resound church, Blackhorse Road, Mangotsfield. Every fourth Friday, except August & December, 7.30pm. Explore new ways of creating and making, natter over refreshments. £5, includes materials.

■ **RAINBOW TOTS PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP** meets at Emersons Green Village Hall every Friday morning in term time, from 10-11.30am. For more info email church.egbc@outlook.com

■ **IN-THE-PINK** Exercise to music 9-10am followed by chat & coffee time. Pay session-by-session basis. Get yourself fit & make new friends at Hillfields Park Baptist Church, Thicket Avenue. For details call Julie 07903123793.

■ **TUTTIFLUTTI**, an inclusive ensemble welcoming flautists of all ages from Grade 3 up, rehearses at Lincombe Barn in term time, from 6.30-7.30pm. New members always welcome. Details from Fiona on 07817 629 691.

■ **LUNCH CLUB**, Staple Hill Community Hub, Berkeley House, Berkeley Road, every Friday from 12.15pm. For details 01454 868374.

■ **AFTER SCHOOL DROP-OFF KARATE GROUP** for mums and dads, 9am, Page Community Association Staple Hill. www.zenkarate.club.

Saturday

■ **BRISTOL SUGARCRAFT GUILD** We are a small friendly group who meet every third Saturday of the month 2pm to 4pm at St Andrews Hall, Elm Park, Filton. If you would like to make sugar flowers and models we hold workshops with instruction. Beginners very welcome. call Jean Kington on 01454 314178.

■ **STAPLE HILL METHODIST CHURCH** Coffee mornings in our beautiful building every Saturday 10.00-12.00 in aid of church funds

or charities. Enjoy Fairtrade coffee, tea and cake, and stalls.

■ **REPAIR CAFE AT STAPLE HILL METHODIST CHURCH**, 3rd Saturday of the month, 10am until 12pm. Free repairs – owner pays for spare parts. Donation to church appreciated. Drop in for a chat and advice.

■ YOGA & PILATES FUSION

09:20 – 10:20 at Christ Church Parish Hall, North Street, Downend. First class half price. For further info and full class timetable contact Kerry 07919 051019 or email kerry@yogaandpilatesforlife.com

■ **BALLET CLASSES** at Assembly Hall, Salisbury Road, Downend. Baby ballet (aged 2 1/2 to 4) at 3pm; Royal Academy of Dance pre-primary ballet (4-6 year-olds) 3.45-4.25pm followed by introduction to tap, 4.25-4.45pm. Contact Rosie on 07534 119467. Starting April 26.

Sunday

■ **EMERSONS GREEN BAPTIST CHURCH** services are held every Sunday morning from 10.30am-11.30am at Emersons Green Village Hall, Emersons Way. Contact Simon on 07765 201435, e-mail church.egbc@outlook.com or visit www.emersonsgreenchurch.org

■ **BADMINTON ROAD METHODIST CHURCH BS16 6NU**. Sunday worship 10.30am. Service of Holy Communion usually fourth Sunday of the month. More information from www.badmintonroadmethodist.org.uk

■ **MANGOTSFIELD AND CASTLE GREEN UNITED REFORMED CHURCH** hold regular weekly Sunday morning worship at Coss-ham Street. Services start at 10.30 a.m. with different speakers each week. New members welcome. For details contact Peter Redding (Ch. Sec.) on 0117 9657075.

■ **COMMUNITY GARDEN WORKING PARTY**, Percy Walker Court, Lincombe Road, Downend, every Sunday 10am-noon.

■ **RESTORATIVE SEASONAL YOGA** 1st Sunday each month 18:00-19:30 Frenchay Village Hall (Jubilee Room) Only 8 spaces - booking necessary: www.SarahBtheOT.com

■ **KARATE FOR MUMS AND DADS**, 7pm, Page Community Association, Staple Hill. More information www.zenkarate.club.
■ **FRENCHAY CHAPEL** Beckspool Road. Sunday services, weekly at 10.30am. All welcome. More details from peter.a.bruce@gmail.com.
■ **STAPLE HILL METHODIST**

CHURCH, High Street BS16 5HQ Sunday services 10.30am + Sunday Club for ages 5-17. Holy Communion 2nd Sunday of the month – all invited. Taizé worship 6.00pm 3rd Sunday of the month. Contact Rev Dr Aboseh Ngwana 07482 550888, Philippa Church Liaison at staplehillmethodist@hotmail.co.uk or www.staplehillmethodist.com

■ **FRIENDS OF LINCOMBE BARN AND WOODS** litter picking and woodland management, first Sunday of month, 10-11am (weather permitting).

■ **SERVICES AT ST JAMES CHURCH**, Mangotsfield. Holy Communion at 8am every Sunday. 10:30am services: 1st Sunday Holy Communion, 2nd all-age service, 3rd Holy Communion, 4th morning worship, 5th morning worship with healing.

■ **FRENCHAY CHAPEL** Beckspool Road. Community Arts for all, Frenchay Chapel, Beckspool Road. 1st Sunday of the month, 12.30pm.

■ **GREENBANK BOWLS CLUB** Gordon Road, Whitehall, BS5 7DP (What three words: same. zone.frozen) Every Sunday 10am to Noon All equipment provided Please wear flat soled shoes, eg. trainers No need to book Car Parking Licensed Bar greenbankbowls@gmail.com

■ **ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS**, Frenchay Chapel, Beckspool Road, 6pm weekly.

■ **CHRIST CHURCH DOWNEND**: 9.15 am Traditional morning worship (Holy Communion on 2nd & 4th Sundays) at Church Centre, Quakers Road BS16 6NH. 10.30 Morning worship with youth and children's groups at Christ Church Downend, Downend Rd BS16 5UF

We would love to publicise your event

Send details of your events and activities in the following format:

WHAT IT IS WHERE IT IS WHEN IT IS

in no more than 40 words:
email us at:
news@downendvoice.co.uk
or call us on
07770 700579 / 07880 731148

Close encounters

MACRO photography is the craft of capturing close-up images of small objects, or capturing small areas of a subject.

In a professional capacity, macro photography is used to highlight detail in a wide variety of settings: for products such as jewellery and textiles, for small plants and microorganisms in sciences such as biology or for rock and crystal formation study in geology.

For the amateur photographer, macro photography is nicely suited to natural subjects, such as insects or plants and flowers, where nature's patterns and designs become more vivid.

However, macro photography can be a challenge.

Close-up shots require the camera to be close to the subject. This closeness reduces the area in which the camera can focus, known as the depth of field. A narrow depth of field can result in parts of the subject being out of focus.

In the photo of the bee, the front of the body is in focus, showing the detail in the hair and pollen on the legs. However, the focus is softening in the foreground of the echinacea and rear of the bee. This softening can add to the artistic appeal of an image.

The photographer may have a few techniques to capture a greater area of focus.

Increasing the f-stop (reducing the aperture of the lens) will allow for a longer exposure, which deepens the depth of field. And if necessary, the photographer adjusts the ISO (light sensitivity of the camera sensor), to compensate for reduced light.

Alternatively, the photographer can capture a series of photos at slightly different focal points and blend these in software, to form one image.

This is known as focus stacking. Using a tripod mounted camera, 15 individual photos were taken of the orchid. These photos were then "focus stacked" to form this image.

However, you don't necessarily need expensive equipment and software to get some enjoyable close-up shots. Many modern smartphone cameras have a macro mode.

The Lego image was taken on a mid-range android phone camera.

In macro mode, the image of the mini figure is double the size of the image captured in



■ Bee on echinacea. Picture: Chris Boys



■ Lego photographer and dog. Picture: Chris Boys

standard mode. Look for the macro mode on your phone and have fun taking some close-ups!

Why not come and join us at Downend Camera Club and dive deeper into photography?



■ Stacked orchid. Picture: Chris Boys

For more information about our club, visit www.downendcameraclub.org.uk or come along on a Tuesday evening 7.45pm at the Assembly Hall, Salisbury Road.

Chris Boys

CHRISTINE'S COLUMN WITH CHRISTINE BROADWAY

My constant companion

SUKI is my fourth rescue dog.

She is a five-year-old Jack Russell cross, tan and white, with a bit of black on her as well.

She has only three legs, as she ran out in front of a car before I had her.

I have had her almost two years now. She is a delight to look after, and a constant companion to me.

Suki loves her walks, despite only having three legs.

People often stop me and make a fuss of her, which she loves.

Some say: "What a cutie!"

She enjoys this recent frosty weather we've had, wearing her lovely warm coat, which she lets me put on her.

Suki does not mind the frost on the grass, and skips around through it.

When it comes to rain, she just will not go out in it, not even with her waterproof coat on. She does not even go out in the back garden when she needs to!

Suki keeps me company at night by sleeping on the bed, and sometimes she likes to get under the quilt especially these very cold nights.

Suki enjoys playing with her couple of toys. One is an octopus and the other is a circle of knotted rope material.

She loves to play tug of war with these, and tries to pull the legs off the octopus.

Another game she enjoys is running up the hallway when they are thrown for her. She runs back delighted after having retrieved them, for you to throw for her again!



■ Suki



■ Frozen Webs By Owen Richards

Winter images

WINTER: Short days, cold and dark. Perhaps not the most obvious time of year for creative photography.

That said, at the start of the year, along with some biting cold temperatures, there was a run of those glorious sunny days with blue skies, enough to encourage outdoor image-taking.

Early January had the spectacular 'Wolf Supermoon' visible in the pale blue winter sky.

The winter light has a particular quality, and there is always the prospect of having mist and smoke in the picture, so useful in providing atmosphere in a scene.

The three images shown here did not need bright winter light, but each clearly depicts the season we are in, and shows that there are always opportunities for picture-taking.

'Frozen Webs' is something of

a classic image: frost on a spider's web creating a pattern that seems to be made up of tiny jewels.

The web fills the picture, there are few distractions, and the dark and diffused background highlights the display.

'Man on Ice' is the kind of picture where the interest is less in creative photography and more in observation of human behaviour.

Taken in Eastville Park in early January, on a day when it was well above freezing, there were birds in clear water just out of shot. Both man and dog made it off the ice safely.

'Snowdrops' is an indication that winter is on the wane. These small white flowers are a cheerful reminder that the dark days are coming to an end, and soon it will be the time for nature's rebirth. What sets them off is the dead leaves surrounding them, the flowering of spring against the dead of winter.

Lincombe Barn Camera Club offers a programme of activities through the year, starting from early September: competitions,



■ Man on Ice by Ed Shorney



■ Snowdrops by Bruce Gibb

presentations from guest speakers, outings and learning events. Prospective new members are welcome at any meeting during the year, as are visitors and guests. We meet on the second, fourth and fifth Tuesdays of the month, in the Concorde Room at the Barn: you're welcome to come along one evening, at 7.30pm.

If you're interested in

developing and presenting your photography, joining our group dedicated to the art of photography is a great way of doing it.

You can find our website at www.lincombebarncameraclub.co.uk and our email is lincombe.barn@gmail.com.

Ed Shorney

BRISTOL u3a

We have something for everyone

BRISTOL u3a is for anyone with some free time for themselves.

There's no lower age limit but most of our members are retired or semi-retired. Literally everything we do is offered voluntarily by fellow members (we have no staff), so everybody is encouraged to

chip in.

If you decide to join u3a (you in your Third Age), you'll be spoiled for choice by the number of things you can get involved with.

Excluding local social activities, there are now over 200 interest groups across Bristol, and around 35 locally in our East & North-East Bristol group.

These are semi-formal gatherings of u3a members who share a common interest, eg walking, dancing, cinema, reading, arts and crafts, discussion groups, playing games, practising or learning a foreign language – in

fact, anything that comes to mind.

Most start as a result of a chance conversation; some begin as informal social activities.

You can see the full range of existing interest groups and a link to some proposed new groups by keying "Bristol u3a groups" into your favourite search engine.

You can even try a group before you join u3a by contacting its group leader – simply choose a group and then click on the leader's name.

Confused? Why not come along to an informal social and enjoy a cuppa and a chat with some

existing members?

This month you'll find us at: the Orchard Coffee & Bakery in St George (flat access) on February 6; the Market Café and Lounge in Kingswood (stairs) on February 10; the Crafty Egg in Fishponds (ramp) on February 18 and Mokka Downend (flat access) on February 23.

All socials run from 2pm to 4pm – everyone is welcome.

If you don't have time to attend a social, you can always contact me at learnlaughlive@bristolu3a.org.uk.

Lindsay Gough

Friends of Page Park



The last Lion Dance in 2024 was a big hit

LUNAR New Year celebrations will return to Page Park in February.

The cultural event was a big hit in 2024 and, after not going ahead last year, returns on Sunday February 15, from 1-3pm.

It will include a performance from the Bristol University Lion Dance Troupe, whose spectacular show two years ago drew a big crowd.

This year the troupe are expected to bring two lions.

There will also be crafts at the Nest, next to the Bean Tree cafe, from 1pm, and more music and dance performances.

The event is being jointly organised by the Friends of Page Park and Melody Beard, of the Bean tree cafe.

Friends vice-chair Steph Purser has appealed for volunteer marshals to help with crowd control between 12.25pm and 3pm and helpers to set out the barriers from 10.30am.

A new picnic table is being installed near the tennis courts in the park, and could be followed by others.

The Friends launch this year's photo competition on January 31, with the best 12 entries set to appear in the 2027 Friends of Page Park calendar.

This year's calendar sold 1,041 copies, raising around £5,500 towards the Friends' next project to improve the park.

Steph said: "It was our best year ever for calendar sales.

"The money will go towards new equipment for the children's play area - we have a big challenge ahead, to raise between £150,000 and £200,000."

The Friends are looking for new volunteers to help with maintenance in the park's sensory garden.

Anyone who would like to help should email friendsofpageparkbs16@gmail.com.

Friends of King George V Park

OUR park thrives because of people like you.

Come along to a meeting to explore our exciting plans for 2026-2027 and see how you

can play a part in making them a reality.

The Friends group meeting will take place on Monday February 23 at 7pm, at King George V Pavilion, Sutherland Avenue.

There will be an option to join remotely via Teams - please email kgvdownend@gmail.com to receive the link.

We were delighted to chat to so many people at the recent Christmas events in Downend, and were given some great suggestions for what people wanted in the way of groups, events or developments of the play park areas.

We look forward to working with the community to bring some of these to fruition as soon as possible.

Fiona Konteh

Ham Farm Festival



Last year's young performers with professional group Iyatra Quartet

HAM Farm Festival is looking for musicians to take part in our Young Performer Spotlight concert, which takes place on Saturday March 21 at Resound, from 6.30-8.30pm.

This year is the fourth in a row that the concert has been held.

The idea is that local children perform for 30 minutes then, after an interval, a professional group performs.

This gives a great public performance opportunity to children, and also inspires them and their families by encouraging them to watch the professionals straight after.

So many children study an instrument but have never seen a live professional classical concert before.

We also benefit from crossover audiences - people who come for the pros enjoy hearing the short concert by kids first, and people coming for the kids they know also enjoy the pro concert.

We'd like to encourage as many local children as possible to apply.

They can be of Grade 1 level or above, but do need to have a piece "performance ready", as certified by their teacher.

The sign up link for performers can be found at tinyurl.com/9sfw4eem.

The headline artists this year are CarmenCotrio, featuring voice, flute and guitars.

For more information on the group visit

www.carmencotrio.com

Tickets will be £12 for adults and free for children.

Emily Andrews

Mangotsfield Festival

PEOPLE are invited to come and discuss the future of this year's festival at a public meeting.

The meeting is being held at Emersons Green Village Hall, in the Willow room upstairs, on Wednesday January 28 at 7.45pm for 8pm.

Tea and coffee provided.

This year's festival will once again take place on Saturday June 13 at the Johnson Road playing fields opposite Pomphrey Hill.

The meeting will be to tell people thinking of volunteering what help we need, and the times they can help.

Help is needed especially on the Friday before the festival, June 12, to set out the field.

We need someone to paint the grass with the stalls plan, where the entertainment is to be and set out the space for the dog show.

We also have seats that need to be put up in position for the indoor events, café and stage entertainments, set out tables and chairs, and put up bunting.

On the Saturday volunteers are needed to see stall holders and fairground vehicles to their allotted spaces and be there to help anyone who needs it.

We will also need volunteers on the Sunday to take things down, including the tents, and leave the field free of rubbish and as we found it.

The festival has always been popular, with over 3,000 people attending this free community event. Come and give us a hand for a few hours!

To offer help, call or text 07955 184003.

Madeleine Bills

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Adrian Robson

**Send us a report
from your group**

news@downendvoice.co.uk

BROMLEY HEATH WI

JANUARY'S meeting should have been a line dancing evening of fun, but unfortunately a weather warning made us consider our members' safety, so the evening was sadly cancelled.

We hope to be able to rearrange for later in the year, so keep those hats and boots at the ready.

The February meeting promises to be an interesting evening, hearing about the Shirley Banks murder investigation from former police officer Rob Jones.

If you are interested in joining us, please get in touch to visit and find out all about Bromley Heath WI.

We also have a variety of subgroups such as craft club, book club, lunch and supper clubs and a glug club (for wine).

We are planning visits to the theatre and Highgrove gardens in this next year.

BHWI meets in Bromley Heath Junior school hall, usually on the second Thursday of the month, but there will be a couple of alternative dates this year, so please collect a programme on entry to the hall.

We look forward to welcoming you on Thursday February 5.

For more information please see our Facebook page or email Bromleyheathwi@gmail.com.

Jane Hickey

DOWNEND WI

WE'RE looking forward to an exciting year ahead, filled with inspiring speakers, creative activities, and plenty of opportunities to connect.

Our first meeting is on January 27, when our speaker is Ali Ball, an Egyptologist.

On February 24, Ian Caskie from the SS Great Britain will talk to us.

Our other meetings planned are:

March 31 – Jenny Benson from Bristol Abused Women Charity

April 28 – Dawn Taylor talks about wills, power of attorney and estate management

May 26 – Neil from Blood Bikes Charity

June 30 – Alan Toyne, author of Gorillas in our Midst

July 28 – Alison Bacon on old photographs

August 25 – Annual Quiz & Fizz

September 30 – decorating

mygus

October 28 – AGM

November 25 – Christmas crafts

If you'd like to come along and see what we're all about, you'd be very welcome.

We meet at Christ Church Hall, North Street, Downend, on the last

Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm.

As a member, you're free to take part in as much or as little as you like—our programme is wonderfully varied, and there's something for everyone.

It's a great way to meet new people and try new experiences.

If you'd like to know more about joining us, please get in touch at downendwi@yahoo.co.uk. Guests are welcome for a small charge of £3, which includes refreshments.

We look forward to welcoming you!

**Linda Russ
President**

FRENCHAY WI

I'M pleased to say that our year got off to a good start.

Our first meeting of the year was our Quiz & Fizz night, where members have to dig deep into our memory banks to answer the questions posed by Matt Stringer.

We hope the evening sets the tone for the coming year.

Our speaker in February is Dr Mark Neath on the 'Wonders of Sleep', which I am sure will be of interest to all our members.

We have lots of interesting speakers lined up, so do come along and join us this year.

We meet on the third Monday of every month at Frenchay Village Hall at 7.30pm.

There is always a friendly reception awaiting new members.

If you are interested in joining our WI or would like more information please email FrenchayWI@gmail.com.

There is also a WI lottery raising money for the organisation nationally. You don't have to be a member to take part, as it is open to anyone. Search online for more details.

Linda O'Carroll

STAPLE HILL WI

IT'S lovely to see the signs of spring around us, with carpets of snowdrops in unexpected places and daffodils beginning to show here and there.

The daylight lasts a bit longer too, which also lifts everyone's spirits.

As you read this we will have had our first meeting of the New Year, which is a special year for us as we celebrate our 30th anniversary.

We will also be about to tuck into our delayed Christmas meal together!

We are back to our first walk of the year in February, and we have had our first two coffee mornings.

We look forward to our usual programme of walks, coffee mornings and occasional luncheon club meetings to carry

on throughout 2026, together with our regular monthly meetings. These are held on the third Tuesday evening of the month at 7.30pm, at Christchurch Parish Hall, North Street, Downend.

This month we look forward to hearing about the work of Children's Hospice South West.

Last year we were pleased to welcome several new members and look forward to welcoming others this year.

There is something to interest everyone, and you can participate in as much or as little as suits you. We always have time for coffee, cake and a chat.

If you would like to know more about us please visit our website at staplehillwi.weebly.com.

Maureen Wood

BEECHMERE BELLES WI

HAPPY New Year from Beechmere Belles WI – we wish you a year filled with health, happiness and friendship.

Our 2026 programme started in January with a talk from author Jane Duffus, about the 'Women who Built Bristol' - her series of books that now runs to three volumes.

If you'd like to know what else we have planned for the rest of the year, why not come along?

We have another talk in February, this time about guide dogs. After that there are activities, crafts and some other events.

We welcome guests to any of our meetings: it's free for your first, unless it's a craft evening, when we charge £5 to cover materials used.

We promise you a warm welcome, as well as tea or coffee - and cake!

We meet in Emersons Green Village Hall at 7.30pm on the fourth Thursday of the month.

If you would like to know more about our WI please contact us via email at beechmerebelles@gmail.com or follow our Facebook page, which is Emersons Green & Lyde Green WI Beechmere Belles.

Wendy

SHORTWOOD VILLAGE WI

AS we start 2026 we have a full diary of speakers for the year, including an art for beginners session.

We also have a few trips being organised.

We rounded off 2025 when we welcomed Margo Cevik to tell us about Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad.

Her work to take hundreds of slaves to freedom in the 1800's was relentless.

We also had our usual Christmas party, with games, a secret Santa and an American supper.

A ukulele group also entertained us with songs from musicals and a sing-along of Christmas carols. It was a great end to a very successful 2025.

We are a small friendly bunch, so if you would like to see what we are about we will welcome you to our next meeting on February 12 at 7.30pm, in the vestry at Shortwood Village Chapel, Main Road, Shortwood.

For any further information, questions or just a chat please contact us by email at millhousejoinery@aol.com, with the heading Shortwood Village WI.

Lynne Miller

MANGOTSFIELD DOLLY MIXTURES

WE would like to wish you all a very happy and healthy New Year.

We have just had our January meeting in the hall. Anyone who had a 'Santa's mistake' brought them along, and those left over will be put into our monthly raffles.

We were low on numbers this time, as quite a few Dollies had gone away for New Year celebrations, so we put all the chairs into a circle and over tea, coffee and cake discussed the things we would like to do in 2026.

Amongst the many suggestions were 'quiz & fizz', an Easter craft evening, a Harvest supper, skittles evening and a gin experience.

The evening proved so successful that the thinking is to keep this informal style for future Januaries, when numbers are low.

Just a little recap on December: we all thought that our Christmas pub lunch at the Lamb was excellent value. The Christmas pudding with brandy custard was exceptional.

Seven Dollies booked for the Strictly Come Dancing live tour with Bakers Dolph in on January 24, and planned to meet up for a breakfast, before picking up the coach.

To follow that, in February we have a lady coming to show some dance moves - plus our usual monthly pub lunch at the Lamb in Mangotsfield, where we always have a warm welcome from Kate and her team.

For more details about our group email carol@applause.co.uk.

Carol Coombes

We need your ideas and help this year

AS we move into 2026 we are thinking about what we need or want to do in the year ahead.

There is quite a bit of general maintenance to keep us busy but we could really do with a new project, for the whole community, that can involve the whole community.

So if you have any bright ideas, please let us know.

There was a great turnout for our Dame School Carol Service at the end of last year: approximately 80 people came along to join us.

Many thanks to all who came along, to the Phoenix Wind Band, who braved the elements to accompany our singing, and the excellent Ukraine Choir.

However this year's Nativity and Christmas lights at the church were a bit challenging. The unfortunate demise of Panoramic Windows meant we lost our mains power to the Dame School for the Nativity.

We overcame that thanks to the generosity of Paul and Mark, two local people who lent us leisure batteries, but it did mean we were unable to light it up as we have in the past, and it meant a lot of toing and froing for some of our volunteers, to change and charge the batteries.

Hopefully it didn't spoil the effect.

Of more concern to us is that the lights on



Carols and lights at the Dame School

the church tree weren't working properly.

Thanks to the efforts of a member of the church and South Glos Council Streetcare, we managed to get some going and they looked good, but we discovered that there are a significant number of breaks in the lights, such that they will need to be taken down, inspected and either repaired or replaced.

This is going to cost us at least £1000 to do, money we don't have and will have to raise.

And we need to be clear. If the local community want us to continue to provide the Dame School Nativity Scene, Carol Service and Christmas lights then more people are going to have to help out. We'll provide more information on how later in the year.

Finally, like any community there will be

differences of opinion and different views on a wide range of topics and, like it or not, we all have our prejudices - that's normal.

However, when those spill over into anti-social behaviour and intimidation, as has happened recently to one of our volunteers, then a line is crossed. Surely we are better than that?

Our next monthly Red Lion coffee morning will be on Wednesday February 4 at 10 am: all are welcome.

If you want to get in touch, please email MangotsfieldRA@gmail.com, visit the Mangotsfield Matters Facebook page or telephone our chair, Clive Heath, on 07507 168700 or me on 07918 701881.

Chris Amos

BROMLEY HEATH NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Time for some fresh faces

If you want to support your community and put in a little volunteer time to help keep it safe and crime-free, now's the time to get in touch.

We have a couple of committee roles - they aren't onerous, honestly - to be filled.

Rose, our splendid secretary, has stood down and I will do the same as chair by this time next year.

We have both put in many years of service, and I am looking forward to supporting the next volunteer incumbent to settle in.

We are one of the many contributor organisations to the lovely place that is Bromley Heath, and fresh faces and renewed vigour from people in the community, with the ongoing passion to help keep it a low-crime and safe place, won't do any harm at all!

For an informal chat call 0117 956 3325 or email contactus@bhnw.org.uk.

We are pleased to report engagement with project officers of South Glos Council and MP Claire Hazelgrove after our lobbying on scooter and e-bike parking. Sadly, nothing yet from the

WECA Mayor or her team.

A site meeting was held recently with the council officers and there are encouraging signs that marked bays may appear soon - more details in our newsletter, which you can receive by emailing the address above.

We receive intel from the police on crimes in our area. Two recent ones illustrate the need for vigilance, action to maintain security and to keep keys well away from potential entrance points, with electronic car keys in a Faraday pouch, or similar.

Overnight on December 2, someone entered the rear porch of a property on Cleeve Wood Road.

A hole was punched through the door frame and two sets of keys were stolen. The offenders opened kitchen windows but failed to gain entry to the main property. It is believed this was an attempt to steal vehicle keys, and a car.

On the same day, at 4.20am, residents of a property on Cleeve Lawns were awoken by two loud thuds.

They looked out of the bedroom window and saw their BMW M340i being stolen from the driveway.

The advice from police on actions to minimise the chance of your home being targeted includes:

• Make the home look as if it's occupied, with

lights on timer switches, a radio tuned to a talk station and fake TV lights, which work really well in an upstairs bedroom.

- Ensure all doors and windows are closed and properly locked, with the key out of sight and reach.
- Register belongings on the Immobilise property register.
- Lock side gates to restrict access to the rear of your property. Think about growing some thorny bushes along the garden fencing.
- Lock away ladders and tools and secure garden furniture or wheelie bins that could be moved to help gain access to an extension or first floor window.
- Ask a neighbour to use your driveway if you are away with your car.
- Keep the garden tidy. Long grass suggests that the house is empty or the occupant is unable to look after the garden.
- Consider installing an approved burglar alarm.
- Cancel regular deliveries and postpone ordering anything that may arrive while you're away.



Bill Crocker

Sean thanks team who showed him life beyond the chair

A DOWNEND man has thanked the care team who have helped him transform his life.

Sean Wicks, aged 63, is a home care client of Brunelcare South Gloucestershire Reablement Team.

Before the team gave him support, Sean would spend more than 100 hours at a time sitting in front of the TV, using litter pickers to reach snacks and drinks so he wouldn't need to move from his chair.

After a few months of support he now gets up regularly, showers daily, has one or two hot meals a day, stays hydrated, and walks to his local shops.

A spokesperson for the charity said: "When the team first began supporting him, Sean was reluctant to leave his home and struggled with day-to-day tasks.

"For over 14 weeks he was unable to engage in meaningful activities, often feeling low and withdrawn.

"At first, he didn't even want to open the door to the Brunelcare Reablement Team, but with time, trust, and compassionate persistence, he developed a strong bond with Reablement Worker Gemma House and now looks forward to her three daily visits.

"With Gemma's consistent encouragement and two and a half years of frontline experience, Sean's life began to change dramatically."

Sean is visited three times a day for 30 to 45 minutes, given support in preparing meals, showering, walking and meaningful social interaction.

Brunelcare South Gloucestershire operations manager Clare Harmer said:

"Over the past year, Sean hasn't just settled, he's really started enjoying life again!

"At first, we were only visiting once a day in the evenings, but it quickly became clear he needed a bit more support. As soon as we increased the number of visits and added regular check-in calls, we started to see real change.

"With lots of encouragement and patience, Sean went from staying in the same spot for hours to walking around, stepping out into the corridor, and slowly getting back into the rhythm of everyday life."

Sean said: "The team at Brunelcare have truly changed my life.

"I used to spend well over 100 hours in my old chair watching TV and didn't move a muscle, and I would snack on junk food, but



Sean Wicks and Gemma House

now I'm eating better, drinking more, and moving more.

"I wasn't able to do anything before. Now I can, and I'm so excited for my visits every day with Gemma.

"She's a star and we have formed such a great relationship. I don't know how I would have coped without the team."

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A positive start to the year

THE year is off to a positive start already in the West of England, with good news for families and young people from the festive period.

Our Kids Go Free scheme returned over Christmas, giving under-16s free travel on buses across Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Despite bank holidays and reduced services, children took 182,351 free journeys – a huge 50% increase on the number paying to travel during the same period the previous year.

This is even better than the 32% increase we saw during last summer's school holidays, compared to the same time in 2024.

Families have already saved around £1.1 million through Kids Go Free, and for some children, this scheme has opened the door to our region's attractions for the very first time.

It's fantastic to see how free travel can make a real difference – helping young people get to sports clubs, libraries, cultural events, or just explore their local area.

It also supports local businesses and visitor attractions, boosting our economy and giving more people a chance to experience what the West has to offer.

With child fares already among the cheapest in the country, we are making bus travel as easy and accessible as possible for families.

In the past few weeks, the West has celebrated another milestone: the UK's first Citizens' Assembly dedicated to culture publishing its report, setting out a vision for "a West of England where culture is for everyone as part of everyday life."

The assembly recommended opening up parks, libraries, schools, and heritage sites; embedding creative learning in schools; developing creative and accessible solutions to transport and creating opportunities for people to shape cultural priorities at a local level.

I'm delighted that the Citizens' Assembly will continue its work as the Citizens for Culture panel, with £100,000 from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to try out their ideas.

On top of this, the West of England has been chosen as one of just six regions to receive £25 million from the Creative Places Growth Fund – a huge vote of confidence in our creative sector.

Together, these investments will help our cultural scene and put people back at the



Metro Mayor Helen Godwin
writes for the Voice

heart of things. Working together with our local councils, creative organisations, and residents, we can make culture accessible for all – and build a West of England we can all be proud of.

Both Kids Go Free and Citizens for Culture show what's possible when we remove barriers.

From giving children the freedom to travel and explore, to empowering communities with a role in shaping cultural priorities, together we are opening doors and creating opportunities for everyone in our region – and helping more people shape the West of England's future.



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Neighbourhood policing gets results

As we begin a new year, there have been changes to the Police and Crime Commissioner role nationally, but my commitments remain the same: keeping people safe and ensuring policing is rooted in the communities it serves.

Neighbourhood policing continues to be at the heart of that approach, because visible, local policing builds trust and tackles the issues that matter most to you.

That's why I have supported the national Winter of Action campaign, a programme running through December and January to keep communities safe during the festive season and darker evenings.

This initiative builds on the success of the Safer Streets Summer, with local policing teams increasing high-visibility patrols, working closely with businesses, and continuing important efforts to tackle violence against women and girls.

This includes campaigns such as StreetSafe, a national app that lets people anonymously report places where they feel

unsafe, and Walk and Talk, where women join officers on patrol to share concerns and help shape safety measures.

The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee has already delivered 70 additional officers, PCSOs, and special constables into local teams, strengthening visible policing where it counts.

Here are some examples of how it is making an impact:

In Bristol, specially trained officers have been carrying out deployments in the city centre. These unpredictable patrols combine uniformed and plain-clothes officers to deter crime and keep people safe.

Recent activity led to several arrests, including a woman wanted on a warrant, a man recalled to prison, and another arrested for drugs and weapons offences.

Officers also acted swiftly to stop a prolific shoplifter, recovering nearly £400 worth of stolen goods.

In South Gloucestershire, mounted units joined neighbourhood teams for patrols



Clare Moody A&SPCC
writes for the Voice

around Bradley Stoke following reports of antisocial behaviour.

And when residents raised concerns about speeding at a local 'Talk to Us' event, the Speed Enforcement Team investigated.

Their checks revealed that over 84% of vehicles were exceeding the limit - a worrying figure that led to the road being added to the mobile enforcement schedule.

This shows how speaking to your local team can make a real difference.

This is what neighbourhood policing is all about: listening to communities, acting on concerns, and being there when it matters most.

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Club achieves National League dream

BRISTOL & West Hockey Club players achieved a long-held dream by qualifying for the National League Super 6s Championships.

The club competed in the regional indoor qualifiers at Clifton College in December and won the tournament for the first time.

The round-robin format saw B&W take on ISCA, Cheltenham and Lansdown in shortened games of two 12-minute halves.

The opening game with ISCA was a cagey affair overall, with B&W looking for counter-attacking opportunities.

A super effort from youngster George Ashley was helped over the line by thieving team mate, Dave 'Disco' Cadman and we found ourselves 2-1 up at half-time but ISCA hit back with a minute or so left in the game with a penalty corner, for a final score of 2-2.

Next up were Cheltenham, who had just finished playing their previous game.

We had a great chance to get the win against tired legs, and so we did. Some silky play saw Luke Berry slot in a brace, before Harry Bryant added a third late into the game.

The 3-0 final score left B&W needing just a single point against leaders Lansdown to make it into the final alongside them.

It turned out that Lansdown had been training all year in preparation for the tournament and looked good for the effort they'd put in. We'd already witnessed their tightly packed formation, devastating counter attacks and individual brilliance on the ball, not to mention the fact that they had enough



The B&W team with their trophy after winning the regional qualifiers

substitutions to swap out nearly their entire outfield team in short, sharp bursts.

Playing defensively and striking on the counter, Phil 'The Assassin' Brown snuck onto the back post to calmly sweep the ball past the keeper to make it 1-0.

Lansdown grew frustrated and couldn't find a way through our defence. A quick break-away saw Harry Bryant win a penalty flick, which was slotted away nicely by his big brother and captain, Tom.

The 2-0 win put both teams into the final.

There were a few opportunities at either end, with Darren Ashley doing a mighty job between the sticks to keep the scoreline level.

With about five minutes on the clock, B&W were awarded a penalty corner, which Tom put through the keeper's legs before it slammed against the backboard.

There followed some clever tactical time-wasting before the

clock ran out and the buzzer sounded, with B&W indoor champions of the West for the first time in our history.

In January the team took on Clifton, Epsom, St Albans, Teddington and Ipswich in what proved to be an absolute thrashing of a weekend in the Indoor National League Men's Division Two South.

Games were played over four 10-minute quarters.

Although B&W were well aware of the daunting task that awaited, we showed up with pride knowing that we had earned the right to be there.

The squad was made up of Over-40s to Under-18s, players

from the 1st to 3rd team and two external players brought due to unavailability and injuries, with a complete mix of indoor experience - Nathan Patten had never played Indoor before but stepped up and jumped straight into the deep end.

It's safe to say that B&W were no match for the well-drilled, heavily experienced and much fitter outfits that we faced over the course of that gruelling weekend.

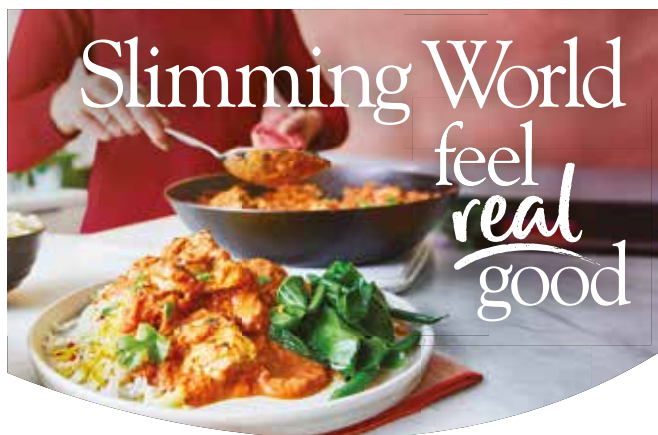
Nonetheless, despite losing all five games, some heavily, we relished the opportunity to compete at the highest level in the club's history and definitely walked away from the experience having learned a few things.

Highlights included Dave Cadman, Matt Perriera and Harry Bryant all scoring National League goals, Wayne Manton saving a penalty flick, Nathan saving a rocket of a penalty corner off the line and, finally, Dave's mum Fiona filling in as team manager on day one.

She definitely played the part well: I don't think the officials suspected a thing!

Back outdoors, the Men's 1st team will follow our first game of the year against Westbury with a double-header weekend away in Exeter later in the month.

Harry Bryant



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Flyers make good start to year

DOWNEND Flyers have made an excellent start to the new year, with the Women's A team securing an impressive 2-1 home victory against Winchcombe Town in the Sue Hensen-Green Cup.

Winchcombe Town, who currently compete in the league above, are a strong and experienced side, making this result even more noteworthy.

The win sends the Flyers through to the next round and marks a fantastic achievement for the squad.

Cup success has also been enjoyed at youth level. The Under 14 Ospreys delivered a convincing performance at home, recording a dominant 4-0 win against Churchdown Panthers.

It was a confident display that reflects the hard work and commitment of both players and coaches, and a great start to the year for the team.

Meanwhile, the Under-14 Eagles finished 2025 on a high, and remain unbeaten so far this season. Their consistent performances

have seen them dominate Division C as the club enters 2026.

The Eagles' results are a testament to their teamwork, determination, and growing confidence on the pitch.

Club spirit across Downend Flyers FC is currently at an all-time high.

With so many teams celebrating success, the club continues to pride itself on supporting player development and recognising individual achievements alongside team accomplishments.

One such achievement the club is especially proud to announce is the selection of Amelia Moschakis from the Under-15 Harriers, who has been named in the South West England Under 15 Schoolgirls squad.

Amelia has worked incredibly hard throughout her football journey, and her dedication has been rewarded with this fantastic honour.

This achievement also reflects the dedication of the Harriers coaches and teammates, who have supported, encouraged and challenged Amelia throughout her journey.

Everyone at Downend Flyers FC is delighted to support Amelia and wishes her the very best of luck in her continued success.

Downend Flyers wrapped up 2025 in unforgettable style off the pitch with a whole-club celebration at AirHop.

More than 400 players and siblings descended on the trampoline park, turning the Flyers purple as they bounced their way



Aimee Moschakis has been called up to the England regional squad.

into 2026 together.

It was a brilliant way to celebrate another successful year and a perfect reminder that Downend Flyers is as much about community and fun as it is about football.

If you would like to be part of this amazing club, whether as a player, coach, referee, volunteer or sponsor, we would love to hear from you at info@downendflyers.com.

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New manager for Mangotsfield

MANGOTSFIELD United have started the year with a new manager, after Glyn Ashton stood down from the role following three years in charge.

Ashton, who had managed the first team twice before, including through the Pandemic in 2020-21, remains with the club in a coaching and business role.

The club is grateful for all he did for the Mangos, taking over in 2022 after the club had dropped into the Hellenic League - something that had previously been "unknown territory".

He oversaw triumphs in the Wiseman Lighting Floodlit Cup, the club's first silverware in a decade, and GFA Challenge Trophy, as well as a promotion push last season that ended in the play-offs.

Within a couple of hours of Ashton's resignation on December 31 it was announced that former player and manager Ollie Price was returning to Cossham Street to take over as manager.

He has outlined plans for the future, which centre on returning to the Southern League as soon as possible.

On the pitch, the last game before Christmas saw bogey side and play-off hopefuls Cirencester Town visit Cossham Street, and take all three points in a 3-1 victory.

Cirencester's Harlie Price bagged a hat-trick on 9, 22 and 58 minutes. The Mangos did at least equalise his first goal, through Spike Weaver, on 17 minutes, but once the Romans regained their lead, they proved to be a much tougher nut to crack.

The Mangos, who also saw the return of Kyle Tooze to the club after a number of years away, battled hard all through the game, but the Romans stood firm.

Mangotsfield then drew 1-1 away over Christmas against struggling near-neighbours Hallen.

A good holiday crowd of 227 saw Aaron Parsons give the Mangos the lead on 25 minutes, but Hallen levelled on 69 minutes to share the points.

Price's first game as manager saw the Mangos make the perfect start to 2026, with a 3-0 away win at Pershore Town.

All three goals came in the



Mangotsfield celebrate Spike Weaver's goal against Cirencester Town.
Picture: Euan McCormick

final half-hour. Kyrese Morrison bagged the first one on 64 minutes, with a strike across goal through a crowded penalty area.

Two minutes later, it was 2-0. More good work from Morrison down the left side saw the ball go to James White, who slotted it home.

That sprung Pershore into action, but the Mangos kept them out before adding a third goal in the 90th minute, Spike Weaver netting after good work from Mike Barry.

One week later, amid freezing weather around the country, the Mangos' all-weather pitch allowed the home game with promotion hopefuls and first-time visitors Droitwich Spa to go ahead.

Droitwich scored the only goal on 32 minutes, but it was still a strong performance by the Mangos, who did everything they could in front of an excellent crowd of 355.

A 2-0 home win over Fairford Town on January 17 saw the Mangos climb three places into 8th, three places but 14 points behind the final play-off place occupied by Cirencester Town.

Archie Morris scored Mangotsfield's first goal on the hour, heading in a James White free kick.

Then in the 90th minute Lewis Powell, playing his first match since returning to the Mangos for a third time, scored from a free kick on the edge of the D.

Powell, who scored 100 goals in the Southern League during his first spell at the club and added another 13 in the 2024/25 season, has rejoined from Cinderford Town.

The team now has 13 league matches left to play, nine of them at home, with three of the leading teams - Roman Glass, Slimbridge and Corsham - all yet to visit Cossham Street.

The club are also still in two cup competitions.

Although even reaching the play-offs looks a very tall order right now, Price will want the team to keep going and string as many wins as possible together to see where it all takes them, especially if some of the top teams start dropping points.

David Smale

Forthcoming fixtures:

January 24: Roman Glass St George (home)

January 31: Cinderford Town (H)

February 7: Longlevens (away)

February 14: Worcester Raiders (H - League Challenge Cup)

February 21: Cribbs (A)
February 24: Bitton (H - GFA Challenge Trophy)

Ashton explains decision



Glyn Ashton

AS he stepped down as first team manager, Glyn Ashton released a statement on Mangotsfield United's website.

He said: "Those who know me well will know that whilst I saw this role as an absolute privilege, it was never on my radar to manage a team at this level...I came in more to steady the ship rather than being the long term manager, and whilst I have enjoyed elements of it, I have to say that it is a full-time job on top of my proper full-time job, which is running a growing business I set up in 2020."

Ashton said he had considered stepping down at the end of last season, but felt that maintaining a consistent management, coaching team and squad, with some extra signings, would "get us over the line" to promotion this season.

However a huge number of unexpected injuries this season, many of them long-term, to key players, had left the team without up to 13 first team players at a time.

Ashton said: "Taking into consideration that I would be finishing at the end of this season I made it clear to the club recently that if the right manager became available we should make the change now rather than waiting until the end of the season, as a change now might just give us the extra impetus we need and maybe we could still force our way into play-off contention and win some silverware, too."

"I believe there is still a lot to play for this season and I believe we have made the right choice in manager for the benefit of both the short-term and long-term ambitions of the team."

Chiro ski

WORK, rest and play – it's often held up as a formula for personal success, helping to achieve a balance that's crucial to a healthy modern lifestyle.

I've recently taken a group of 30 brilliant chiropractors to Wengen, high in the Swiss Alps, for one of my favourite weeks of the year, where we ski all day, have chiropractic lectures in the early evening, then enjoy great food, conversation and networking long into the night – that's the Chiro Ski rhythm and I love it.

The format works beautifully: learn together, move together, eat together, laugh together.

The journey itself helps you immediately begin to switch off. We fly into Geneva Airport, then take the ski train that steadily lifts you from city level up into the mountains. With every climb, the pace of life slows and the headspace opens up. Wengen also happens to sit close to the famous "James Bond restaurant", Piz Gloria – proof that skiing has always blended adventure with a sprinkling of glamour.

With more and more people discovering the magic of the mountains each winter, I thought I'd share a few reflections and practical tips as someone who's been skiing since the 1980s.

I learnt on school trips organised by my parents (both teachers), back when kit was basic, skis were long and helmets were considered optional. In fact, my parents wouldn't let me have one because they were too expensive. Nowadays, you look more like the odd one out if you're not wearing a helmet for protection on

the slopes. Times have changed – and mostly for the better.

Why skiing is so good for you

Skiing is a full-body workout disguised as fun. Legs, core, balance and coordination all work together, often for hours at a time. Add crisp mountain air, incredible scenery and time away from everyday noise and the mental health benefits are just as powerful as the physical ones.

Warm up properly

Cold muscles and sudden effort don't mix well. Before you head off:

- Spend 5–10 minutes mobilising your hips, knees, ankles and spine
- Add a few gentle squats, lunges and rotations
- Start the day with a couple of easier runs – your body will thank you later in the week

Clothing: think layers

Bulky jumpers are a thing of the past. Aim for:

- A breathable base layer
- An insulating mid layer
- A waterproof outer shell

Warm hands, good socks and decent eye protection make a huge difference to comfort and endurance.

Helmets: just wear one

Modern helmets are light, warm and comfortable and dramatically reduce the risk of serious head injury. The 80s were fun – but not always smart.

Ski or board within your limits

Choose runs appropriate to your ability, control your speed and respect fatigue. Tired legs lead to poor decisions and there's no medal for the last run of the day.

Stay aware

Music can wait. Being able to hear what's happening around you – other skiers, changing conditions, piste machinery – is a big part of staying safe.

Phones: useful, not distracting

Carry your phone for emergencies, maps and meeting points, but keep it in a warm pocket. Cold conditions drain batteries quickly and skiing while scrolling is never a good idea.

Off-piste deserves respect

Off-piste skiing can be incredible, but it's serious terrain so:

- Go with a qualified guide
 - Check conditions and avalanche forecasts
 - Have the right kit and knowledge
- Confidence is not a substitute for preparation.

Timing matters

Early season can be magical but variable, while mid-season usually brings the most reliable snow. Late season offers sunshine, softer snow and a more relaxed pace – a personal favourite.

Chiro Ski is about far more than skiing.

It's learning, movement, connection and perspective – all wrapped up in a week that's as good for the mind as it is for the body.

If you're heading for the slopes this winter, ski smart, respect the mountains and enjoy every turn.

— Tim

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Cleve lose out to league leaders

CLEVE welcomed league leaders Trowbridge to the Hayfields for a top-of-the-table clash in January.

They had a new player, Ben Robinson on the roster and were playing in front of a record crowd.

Cleve started the game well. For the first 15 minutes they dominated possession and pinned Trowbridge in their half.

Trowbridge are a strong team and went into the match unbeaten. Their strength is in their defence, and their forwards toughed it out with Cleve.

Cleve's continual pressure led to a penalty on 30 minutes.

Matt Jarvis slotted it over, but Trowbridge then went into Cleve's 22 and scored a converted try.

Cleve continued to pound Trowbridge and gained a penalty on half-time, but a wild mistake led to the Trowbridge Number 8 picking up the ball and scoring, to make it 14-3 to Trowbridge.

After the break Cleve carried on as they had before. Good movement of the ball wide saw Ben Robinson pick up and go over, to make the score 10-14.

The game was going Cleve's way and a Trowbridge player got a yellow card, with Cleve in their 22, pressuring the line.

Trowbridge continued to show tremendous resolve in defence but eventually gave away a penalty that Jarvis slotted over, to make it 13 to 14.

The visitors responded by going forward to score again. Cleve were desperate to get back into the game and from a planned move went into the attack, with Liam McGrath going over.

The game was in the balance at 20 to 21 but in the dying minutes, Trowbridge again went from defence to attack and scored another converted try, to make the final score Cleve 20, Trowbridge 28.

Cleve's last game of 2025 was a crushing 70-7 win over Old Centralians.

Starting with total resolve, a penalty allowed Jarvis to kick to the corner and the resulting lineout used Cleve's catch and drive, with Marshall Stevens taking advantage and going over. Moments later, after superb interplay between forwards and backs, Harry O'Donnell crashed over to make it 14-0.

The intensity of Cleve's forward play was outstanding, and wing Archie Staples made a great dummy before scoring out wide.

A blip saw OCs intercept a pass in the centre and score to make it 21-7 but Cleve became ruthless in their execution, and added two more tries to make it 35-7 at the end of the half.

After the break some aggressive rucking saw Will Warman break a big toe, so he had



Cleve's new signing Ben Robinson

to go off.

But the tide was relentless, with Matt Lane, Liam McGrath, Ben Robinson and Archie Staples all scoring, Staples' try ending the game after a well-timed pass by Jarvis.

Steve Bateman

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