Phonebox

MAGAZINE

February 2026



30 YEARS

Latest Local News Events & Business

Stephen Oakley & Co

ESTATE AGENTS • VALUERS • CONSULTANTS











01234 711800

Email: sales@stephenoakley.co.uk
Visit: www.stephenoakley.co.uk
35 High Street, Olney MK46 4EB

naea | propertymark PROTECTED

The Property Ombudsman

MAYFAIR office.co.uk

@stephenoakleyco

Stephen Oakley & Co

Whether you're thinking of selling, searching for your next home, or simply curious about your property's value, our team is here to guide you every step of the way.

An all-through school that makes a difference

WHOLE SCHOOL OPEN DAY

Saturday 7th March 2026 | From 9am

Book your place today to visit our Prep and Senior School.

Prep - Arrival 9am
Senior wave 1 - Arrival 9am
Senior wave 2 - Arrival 10:15am



wellingboroughschool.org | 01933 222427 | admissions@wellingboroughschool.org



HETAS

- ✔ Chimney Sweeps
- ✔ Chimney Repairs & Rebuilds
- ✔ Supply & Install Pots, Guards
- ✔ Supply & Install Flues, Liners
- ✔ Stove Installation & Supply
- ✔ Stove Repairs & Refurbishments
- ✔ Fault Find & Problem Solve
- ✔ Thatched, Heritage Properties
- ✔ Based in Olney

Ashwood

Ashwood Chimneys 01234 710936

W: www.ashwoodchimneys.co.uk • E: info@ashwoodchimneys.co.uk

Has Your Double Glazing Steamed Up?

As the foremost domestic glass replacement company in the UK for more than 18 years, Cloudy2Clear Windows are the leading name in the industry. There is now no need for you to risk your windows by using the dreaded double glazing cowboy down the street. You can join over 340,000 happy customers and replace your glass ethically and affordably. If you have a failed glass unit it may not provide you with the protection you need, or be as energy-efficient as it once was. Why not take a minute to check your home to see if any double glazing has failed? Taking action now can prevent future financial problems.

When talking to the Manager of Cloudy2Clear Stephen Moon it became evident that the value of saving their customers money has been held dear for a number of years. In addition since starting the business in 2005, Cloudy2Clear have committed to supporting the local community by providing a service that saves the public both time and money.

The Cloudy2Clear service only requires the glass to be replaced and not the whole window once the unit has failed. Stephen commented "By doing this we make the customer considerable savings and there is much less upheaval in the family home. Also, whether communities find themselves in a financial crisis or not, saving money when you don't need to waste it is always the sensible option, and our service does just that".

For a free quotation please call 0800 61 21 118 or visit www.cloudy2clear.co.uk.

"Ask me about our fantastic Energy Saving Glass."



Have Your Windows Steamed Up?

Replace the pane, not the frame!

All glazing backed by our **25 YEAR GUARANTEE**

"I really liked the fact that they were a local community run business" Janet Beard

We are a Checkatrade Member

Get a FREE Quote

Your trusted local expert

Faulty locks, handles or hinges?

cloudy 2 CLEAR WINDOWS

Priority freephone **0800 61 21 118**

www.cloudy2clear.co.uk

Glass,** it's better when it's **clear!

Supplying the industry's
leading products for over 20 years

3SG THREE SHIRES GLAZING

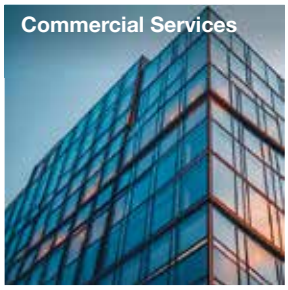


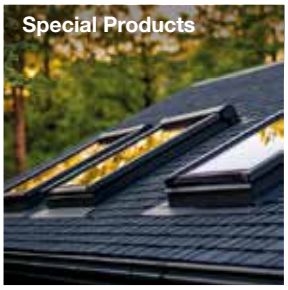




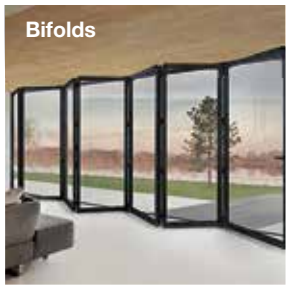












We are an independent company based in Olney, Buckinghamshire and have been established for over 20 years.

Have a project in mind? Call us today on: **01234 712242 | 01908 980068**
Alternatively contact us at: **3shiresglazing.co.uk | info@3shiresgroup.co.uk**

The Residence Collection · Guardian Warm Roof · VELUX · SCHÜCO · FENSA · VELFAC · CHAS · SafeContractor

COUNTERACT SYSTEMS

PC SALES & REPAIRS FOR HOME & BUSINESS




25 YEARS ESTABLISHED

- ✓ Desktop & laptop PC Sales
- ✓ Repairs & Maintenance
- ✓ Networking
- ✓ Servers & Backup
- ✓ CCTV Installations

TRADING STANDARDS APPROVED
buywithconfidence.gov.uk

HOW WE HELP

We offer a friendly repair and maintenance service for everyone. Whether it's a laptop, desktop or tablet for personal or business use, we can help. We deal with upgrades, improving speed, removing viruses, recovering data and home Wi-Fi or connectivity issues. We even sell new and used devices.

CONTACT US

01234 240680
sales@counter-act.co.uk
www.counter-act.co.uk
Unit 1, Lower Farm, Warrington, Olney, MK46 4HN

Phonebox
MAGAZINE



Christmas is a dim and distant memory, people have stopped saying 'Happy New Year' to me, and we are already looking ahead to fun and exciting things in the 12 months to come.

We could do with some slightly warmer weather to help us with that though. Olney's historic Pancake Race, for example, is coming up this month and nobody wants to see the competitors – especially the schoolchildren – lining up in the freezing cold before their dash down the road.

We have, of course, provided a full run down of what's going on and when, during the brilliant traditional event along the High Street, and you'll find everything you need to know, starting on page 31.

But a cold snap is still on the cards for February and it might get Arctic again this month. So if you're a regular driver, or are planning to travel somewhere in the next few weeks, have a quick look at our advice in our Motoring section. It's describes preparing your car for winter weather and shows how to drive safely, especially when it's snowy and icy.

Did you make a New Year's resolution this year? Lots of people do so every turn of the year but many struggle with theirs, and the good intentions fall by the wayside.

But if that has happened to you, it's probably not your fault. There are many reasons why yearly resolutions fail, and we describe several on page 6. It's about deciding what is right for you and doing it at your own pace. It's your life – so live it.

Which brings me to the announcement, on page 10, by Olney Ward Councillor Debbie Whitworth. Debbie, a great friend and supporter of Phonebox Magazine, has decided to step down from the political side of her councillor work and won't be standing for re-election in the forthcoming local elections. I'm delighted that she will be staying on as a town councillor – and indeed Olney's Mayor – and I wish her well for the future.

Ron Hall, Editor








To advertise telephone (01234) 713298
or email sales@phoneboxmagazine.com

Email articles and news to editorial@phoneboxmagazine.com

www.phoneboxmagazine.com

Twitter: @Phonebox_mag
Facebook.com/Phoneboxmag

Deadline for March 2026 edition – 14th February

Phonebox Magazine is owned and published by Phonebox Magazine Ltd, Unit 2, Stanley Court, Olney, Bucks MK46 5NH

Advertisers: We gratefully acknowledge the support of firms whose advertisements appear in this publication and, whilst every care is taken to ensure accuracy, the publishers regret they cannot accept responsibility for loss, damage or omission caused by error in the printing of an advertisement. Advertisements are accepted on the understanding that descriptions of goods and services are fair and accurate. All artwork is accepted on strict condition that permission has been given for use in this publication. Any reproduction of material, either advertising or editorial, is forbidden without written consent of the publishers. The publishers cannot accept responsibility for views expressed by contributors, or for the accuracy of claims made by advertisements appearing in this publication. Distribution may vary at the discretion of Phonebox Magazine Ltd.

Contents

06 **A New Year** – Will we remember the resolutions
08 **Olney Camera Club** – Taking pot shots
12 **Entertainment 1** – The Red Shoes
14 **Entertainment 2** – Blood Brothers
16 **Obituary** – A few words
17 **Historic Church** – Harrold closure
18 **Entertainment 3** – Now you're talking
21 **Charitable events** – More valuable volunteering
22 **Newport Pagnell Councillor Corner** – More from the town councillors
26 **The Diary** – What's on, when and where?
28 **Olney Ward Councillor Corner** – The update from our local representatives
31 **Olney Pancake Race** – More pancake fun from here
34 **Bell & Bear celebrates Burns** – Scottish food fun
35 **Phonebox Foodie** – A lover's recipe
36 **Chris Curtis MP** – Member's busy month
38 **Book review** – A Map of Bones
38 **Club of the Month** – Newport Pagnell WI
41 **Phonebox Gardening** – Water way to go
42 **Schools News** – Newton Blossomville celebrates
43 **Wassail time** – Cider in the jar
44 **Churches Together** – Local clergy thoughts and reflections
48 **Phonebox Motoring** – Slip sliding away
51 **Pibworth column** – Not only funny
52 **Olney Ukraine Aid** – Charitable work continues
53 **Newport Pagnell and Olney Lions** – Donations and other work
54 **Sports roundup** – News from clubs across the region
55 **CRMK** – A tribute one year on
55 **Election looming** – It's voting time again
56 **News Round Up** – More from our towns and villages
57 **Newport Pagnell Council** – Annual Town meeting
62 **Quiz Corner** – Have a Heart ...



Are your New Year health kicks set to fail?

Don't make these 2026 resolution mistakes, say experts.

We're now well into the New Year and Olney and Newport Pagnell's gym floors have been packed out, local supermarket shelves are still being stripped of 'healthy' foods and social media continues to be full of promises of big changes.

Every year, thousands of local people in our towns and villages vow that this will be the year they finally get fit, lose weight and feel better. But as the weeks drift along and January becomes February, many health kicks start to fall by the wayside.

But nutrition experts say the problem isn't motivation. Instead, it is the unrealistic and punishing way people approach change after the festive decorations have long since been packed away and Christmas and New Year celebrations have become a distant memory.

The biggest mistakes come every January, driven by pressure to 'reset' fast rather than build habits that last, says Jason Layton, founder of online wellness company Nature's Zest Nutrition.

"A successful New Year health kick is not about extremes or perfection," he told Phonebox Magazine. "It is about building routines that feel realistic, enjoyable and sustainable well beyond January. The best plan is one you can still live with in spring, not just one that survives the first few weeks of the year."

Five ways your 2026 health kick could be doing more harm than good – don't make these mistakes as you strive to find the new you.

Trying to change everything at once

Cutting out sugar, alcohol, carbohydrates and comfort foods overnight might feel disciplined, but it is one of the quickest routes to burnout. Extreme restriction can disrupt energy levels, mood and concentration, often leading to cravings and eventual rebound eating.



Letting the scales dictate success



After the festive period, weight can fluctuate significantly. Yet many people judge the success of their health kick purely by what the scales say each morning. Improvements in digestion, energy, sleep and immunity are often the first signs that the body is getting healthier, before a dramatic change in body weight.

Training too hard, too fast



Determined to undo Christmas indulgence, some people throw themselves into daily high-intensity workouts with little rest. While enthusiasm is admirable, overtraining can quickly lead to exhaustion, injury and a weakened immune system. Jason warns that exercise should enhance health, not punish the body.



Overlooking sleep and stress

In the rush to eat better and exercise more, sleep is often sacrificed. Late nights, early alarms and constant phone use can quietly undermine even the best nutrition plans. Poor sleep disrupts hunger hormones, increases cravings and reduces motivation, making healthy choices far harder to maintain.

Falling for quick-fix detox promises

From juice cleanses to detox teas, January is peak season for products claiming to flush out festive excess. But experts warn that these quick fixes rarely deliver lasting benefits. Supporting the liver and gut through proper nutrition, hydration and regular meals is far more beneficial than chasing dramatic short-term cleanses.



NEW PATIENT EXAM AND HYGIENE OFFER

Only £85

40% discount

(Regular value £144)

Includes:
A regular hygiene visit
Full exam and x-rays

*Offer subject to change and for a limited time only

Get that clean teeth feeling

Hear from one of our many happy customers:

'Excellent dental practice. Vegan fitted an implant for me and what a great job.
I'm really not a fan of needles or dental work and needles with dental work is a particular dislike but Vegan was patient and very professional. Didn't feel a thing and the implant has been first class. The practice is also excellent with the kids who have never feared the dentist from day one.'

Neil Mercer



Moodley Dental & Aesthetics

Call 01234 711410

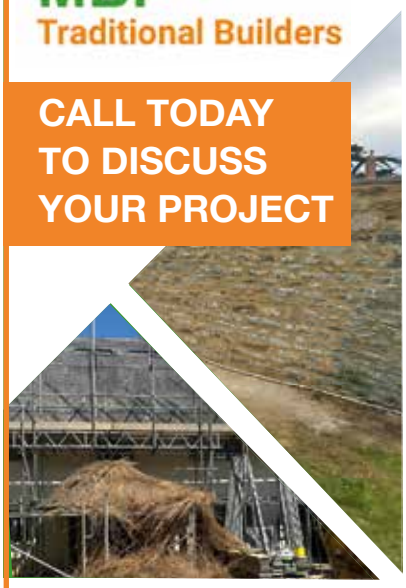
9 High Street, Olney, Bucks MK46 4EB
email: moodleydentalpractice@gmail.com www.moodleydentalpractice.co.uk

Dr VEGAN K MOODLEY BDS(SA) IQE(UK) Dip Implant Dent RCS(Eng)
GDC Reg No: 101543 · Implant and cosmetic dentist

Denplan Part of Simplyhealth · invisalign PROVIDER · Enlighten Centre of Excellence · iTero

MBP CONSTRUCTION LTD
Traditional Builders

CALL TODAY TO DISCUSS YOUR PROJECT





WHAT WE DO

- Building Services
- Garden Services
- Stone Walling
- Roofing
- Bathrooms
- Maintenance & Repair

From small repair works to new build extensions, MBP CONSTRUCTION LTD can advise you when it comes to the best solution to suit your individual project needs.

TRUST MARK · MASTER BUILDERS

EXPERIENCED AND RELIABLE TRADESMEN, GUARANTEED.

read what our customers say at www.mbpconstruction.co.uk

OVER 20 YEARS' EXPERIENCE

01908 395004 info@mbpconstruction.co.uk

Olney Camera Club: Street Photography

Recently, Steve Williams gave the club a talk entitled 'Street Talk' – of course, he means Street Photography. We were guests of the Kempson Camera Club at their unusual meeting rooms: the main room doubling as a lighting studio with multiple permanent sets.

With the 2026 Olney Pancake Race event running on the 17th of February, we expect to see a few of you taking pictures. You might be interested in a little 'Street' advice. Steve illustrated his talk with many projected images and gave us a few hints:

- For photography equipment: Travel light. He uses an Olympus 4/3rds camera with small, wide-angle lenses and no tripod; an unobtrusive setup which adds to spontaneity. Leave your long telephoto zoom lens at home; in street photography that is then considered to be 'environmental portrait photography'.
- A phone camera might give acceptable image quality, but it is not quick to catch that decisive moment. A DSLR camera is bulky and will get you noticed when you don't want to be.
- Street Photography images do not require extensive Photoshop treatment. If something is in the frame, it should remain there – warts and all.
- Go with the flow. With Street the world goes beyond the perfect rectangle and can include untidy edge features.
- Look for colour harmony or maybe convert to a black and white image for impact.
- There should be some sort of narrative in the picture.

He listed the following image categories:

Borrowed Art: Find an interesting backdrop and wait for an unchoreographed person to enter the scene. A 35mm or 23mm lens is a favourite for this.

The Moment: Shoot on impulse, hoping for a good composition at the decisive moment.

Street Details: Look for street signs with folks showing obvious contravention.

Public events: Make a point of being there before or after the main event to catch people in unusual situations as they arrive and leave.

Steve Williams' web page: www.stevewilliamsphotography.co.uk

Photographs: Balancing Riders, Pancake Runners and, Scots Piper; by Andy Gailer.







Next Meetings:

Wednesday 25th February: Talk: Through My Viewfinder, by Warren Alani. Starts 8pm at Olney Centre.

Wednesday 25th March: Competition: 2026 Round 1.
Starts 8pm at The Olney Centre.

For further information, check on meeting dates or to see our 'gallery', our website address is below, or you can email info@olneycameraclub.co.uk or call Andy on 01234 714570.

www.olneycameraclub.co.uk

Advertising Feature

Stefanie Price

WEALTH PLANNING

WWW.STEFANIEPRICEWEALTH.CO.UK

Five things to do before the 5th April

As the end of the financial year approaches, this is the time to make sure you have done everything you can to mitigate tax; small steps perhaps, but ones that can make a real difference to the financial security for you and your family.

1 Maximise annual ISA allowances

The annual ISA allowance of £20,000 is a valuable opportunity to shelter money from any further liability to Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax.

Don't forget the children!

You can also save up to £9,000 each year in a Junior ISA for your children or grandchildren, up to the age of 18. This is an ideal opportunity for anyone wishing to pass on wealth intact to the next generation while minimising the potential impact of Inheritance Tax.

2 Review existing ISA portfolios

Stocks & shares or cash are the main options for your ISA allowance. Four out of five ISA subscriptions since 1999 have been in cash ISAs. Unfortunately, this may be something of a missed opportunity; while cash is essential for day-to-day expenses and emergencies, in the climate of lowering interest rates and persistent inflation, returns are likely to be at best marginal, and at worst negative.

Cash isn't always king!

If you already have cash or investments in an ISA portfolio, this is also an ideal time to review whether it meets your present and future needs.

3 Make pension top ups

Most people get tax relief on pension contributions up to 100% of their annual earnings or a maximum of £60,000 each tax year. Make sure you use as much of this allowance as you can; you can also use up any unused allowance dating back as far as the 2022/23 tax year.

If you are a higher earner, earning in excess of £100,000 per annum, a pension contribution could bring your taxable income back down below £100,000 and you could regain all of your personal allowance. Pension contributions can also help bring your income below the additional rate tax band, which starts at £150,000 of taxable income.

4 Maximise Capital Gains Tax allowances

Crystallising gains up to the Capital Gains Tax allowance of £3,000, will help you reduce potentially higher future tax bills. Consider whether it is worthwhile disposing of loss-making capital assets as well. If you are liable to higher taxation, it may make sense to take gains over two years or transfer assets to a spouse or partner.

5 Maximise Inheritance Tax gifting allowances

Thinking about this now can make a significant difference to those you might like to help in future. You can gift up to £3,000 a year and make an unlimited number of small gifts each year of £250 along with other beneficial allowances such as making gifts out of surplus income. All these allowances are immediatey free from Inheritance Tax.

SJP APPROVED 26/01/2026



Stefanie Price Wealth Planning is based locally in Olney and is inviting readers to discover the simple yet highly effective steps you can take to protect your wealth and stay in control of your financial future.

We would like to thank all our clients for continuing to work with us. Here's to a healthy and prosperous 2026.

Senior Partner Practice

St James's Place

01234 241 441
info.spwealth@sjpp.co.uk
www.stefaniepricewealth.co.uk

Stefanie Price Wealth Planning is an Appointed Representative of and represents only St. James's Place Wealth Management plc (which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority) for the purpose of advising solely on the Group's wealth management products and services, more details of which are set out on the Group's website www.sjp.co.uk/products. The title 'Partner Practice' is a marketing term used to describe St. James's Place representatives.

Letters

Olney Ward Councillor stepping down

Dear residents of Olney and the villages,

After much consideration over recent weeks, I wanted to let you all know that it is with a heavy heart that I have decided not to stand for re-election as Labour Ward Councillor for Olney and the Villages in the May local elections.

It has been the honour of my life to represent Olney and the Villages. As many of you know, I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis about 15 years ago. Back then, receiving the diagnosis felt like a death sentence to me. I felt alone and trapped in my home, but I've always been a fighter, as those of you who know me, I've always spoken up on local issues long before my disability – a doer with a can-do attitude. My disability will not define me.

My life today couldn't be more different, in no small part thanks to the people and residents of Olney who accepted me for who I am and looked beyond my disability.

It started by whizzing up and down the High Street, chatting to people outside Sandwich Land, trying to solve the world's problems. Before long, I became a town councillor, and over the years, one thing led to another, and I became the Mayor of Olney, a position I hold most dear, and I am truly humbled to be your Mayor.

My passion to help, assist and serve you all will never wane. You have shown me such kindness, and I will always be grateful.

In May 2023, that kindness extended to the ballot box. To the shock of us all (not least the local Conservatives!), the people of Olney and the Villages elected me as their Ward Councillor, to represent them in Milton Keynes. As far as I am aware, Olney had never had a Labour Councillor. I very much hope I won't be the last. It's no surprise that I have personally struggled a great deal with the Government's positions on Welfare, cuts to disability benefits (which many of you know I protested about), and the Winter Fuel and business rates, to name but a few of the issues I could not agree with. I have to be principled and go with my gut and my beliefs, and so as a Labour Councillor, this has undoubtedly been very difficult for me.

That being said, locally, it is a different kettle of fish, and as a passionate champion of Olney, I have confidence in my Labour colleagues in Milton Keynes and our MP, Chris Curtis, and I thank them for everything they have done to support me and my journey as your ward Councillor.

Whilst I knew it was never going to be easy, the impacts of this role as a person with disabilities have begun to get too much. For example, simply attending Council meetings in Milton Keynes and the rest of the ward means forgoing my evening care call. Despite the best efforts of officers and my lovely Council colleagues, due to some archaic law, it is not possible to join these meetings online. Therefore the time has now come for me to put my health first and dial back; something has to give.

I feel extremely fortunate to live in such a beautiful place surrounded by generous, kind and thoughtful people.

Please be assured I intend to continue as Mayor of Olney and do what I love and do best – working with you all and the residents of Olney on continuing to make this the very best place to live and work.

You know where to find me, and as always please do reach out if there is anything I can do to help. I will always be here to help and assist you all.

Cllr Debbie Whitworth

Christmas Competition Winners

Phonebox Magazine's annual Christmas Competition brought, as always, a huge response from readers both in our email inbox and via hand-written paper entries.

This year's broad selection of prizes – from theatre tickets to carpet cleaning – proved irresistible to hundreds of readers and we had a bumper postbag of entries for the 2025 competition.

Our appreciation and gratitude go to the local supplier friends who offered such excellent prizes to choose from and thanks to everyone who took the trouble to enter the draw.

Sadly, there can only be eight winners and, this year, they are:

Prize One:
Concert Tickets, Arches Theatre
Janet Butler, Sherington

Prize Two:
Theatre Tickets, Royal & Derngate
Linda Morris, Newport Pagnell

Prize Three:
Dining Voucher, Two Brewers
Karen Phillips, Bolbeck Park

Prize Four:
Family Ticket,
Gulliver's Theme Park Resorts
Linda Donaldson, Sherington

Prize Five:
Brunch or Lunch, Locanda Gabriella
Kirsty Sharp, Newport Pagnell

Prize Six:
Carpet Clean Voucher, Prime Clean
Graham Rymer, Olney

Prize Seven:
Classic Oils Gift Bag, The Fruity Farmer
Deborah Coddington, Olney

Prize Eight:
Annual Pass Voucher,
Cowper & Newton Museum
Alan Allman, Newport Pagnell



HEARING HEALTH HUB

LIFE IS WORTH LISTENING TO

EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF PHONAK VIRTO INFINIO AT HEARING HEALTH HUB

Discover **Phonak Virto Infinio**, the next generation of custom-made hearing aids created to deliver natural, effortless hearing in every situation. At **Hearing Health Hub**, we combine expert audiology care with Phonak's latest technology to help you hear with clarity and confidence. Each Virto Infinio device is individually crafted to fit your ear, providing exceptional comfort and a discreet appearance.



Powered by Phonak's advanced AI and AutoSense OS 5.0, Virto Infinio automatically adjusts to your surroundings, focusing on the sounds that matter and reducing background noise. The result is clear, balanced hearing that helps you stay connected wherever life takes you.

With **universal Bluetooth connectivity**, Virto Infinio can pair with up to eight devices and stay connected to two at once — ideal for effortlessly switching between phone calls, TV, or music. The **rechargeable models** provide all-day power and easy charging, giving you freedom from disposable batteries and greater reliability.

Our experienced audiologist provides professional fitting and ongoing support so your hearing solution performs at its best, every day.



£50 MICROSUCTION BOTH EARS

WITH 2,400+ GOOGLE AND 1,800+ TRUSTPILOT REVIEWS.

It's clear people trust us with their hearing, and love the care they receive.

★★★★★

"I had recently not been able to hear properly, and was worried that my hearing was deteriorating rapidly. I had heard great things about Rahim and decided to have my ears cleaned out. It was easy to book an appointment and Rahim was very welcoming and explained the procedure before showing me the inside of my ears on a screen. He removed the wax and I am now a new woman who can hear very clearly (husband beware)."

"Having been suffering from vertigo for a while I went to see my doctor and he suggested I needed my ears de-waxed. I booked an appointment at the hearing health hub and the whole experience was very professional and took no time at all. Rahim was very professional, the surroundings very nice and the whole experience enjoyable! My ears are now clear and I can hear so much more. My advice – go and get your ears checked!"

AWARDED THE AUDIOLOGY CLINIC OF THE YEAR AWARD

- Comprehensive Hearing Tests
- Ear Wax Removal (Microsuction)
- Hearing Aids and Fittings
- Tinnitus Advice and Support
- Aftercare and Follow-Ups
- Same Day Appointments

SME news | UK Enterprise Awards 2025

Book now with our registered hearing aid audiologist with over 18 years experience in hearing care.

Marsh Farm House, Wolverton Road, Blakelands, Milton Keynes MK14 5AE

www.hearinghealthhub.co.uk | 0800 001 6768

Shoes march into Milton Keynes



The double Olivier Award-winning production comes to the city's theatre this month as part of a new UK tour, Phonebox Magazine discovered.

Eleven cast members, who starred in the original production of Matthew Bourne's The Red Shoes are back in a new tour which is coming to Milton Keynes as part of the programme.

A timeless fairytale and Academy Award-winning movie, The Red Shoes has captivated audiences and inspired generations of dancers with its powerful tale of obsession, possession and one girl's dream to be the greatest dancer in the world.

Producers New Adventures is now bringing the show to theatres across the UK. The Red Shoes was the culmination of a 20-year ambition to bring Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's 1948 dance drama film to the stage.

A sell-out before its world première season opened in 2016, Matthew Bourne's triumphant adaptation of the legendary film went on to win Best Entertainment at the 2017 Olivier Awards, with Matthew Bourne winning the award for Best Theatre Choreographer. The show then returned for a national tour in 2019.

"I'm thrilled to announce that 11 of the original cast of The Red Shoes, which premièred in 2016, are returning for this 10th anniversary production, performing the roles they created, possibly for the last time," said Matthew Bourne.

"This production was certainly a landmark event for New Adventures, becoming an instant classic and a beloved addition to our repertoire. I'm so happy to see it return this year, especially as our last tour in 2020 was sadly cut short by the pandemic and left many of our loyal audiences throughout the UK disappointed.

"So, welcome back to the Ballet Lermontov and to paraphrase the great impresario himself… 'It's time to put on the red shoes, Vicky, and dance for us again….'"

There's a big cast: playing Victoria Page are Ashley Shaw, Cordelia Braithwaite, Hannah Kremer and Holly Saw, alongside Andy Monaghan and Reece Causton as Boris Lermontov.

Dominic North and Leonardo McCorkindale play Julian Kraster, Michela Meazza, Cordelia Braithwaite and Katrina Lyndon are Irina Boronskaya, Liam Mower, Will Bozier and Jackson Fisch play Ivan Boleslawsky and Glenn Graham, Liam Mower and Reece Causton are Grischa Ljubov.

Victoria Page lives to dance, but her ambitions become a fierce struggle between the two men who inspire her passion. It's an intoxicating drama where life imitates art with fateful consequences; The Red Shoes will dazzle your senses and break your heart.

Matthew Bourne's magical production is set to a score orchestrated by Terry Davies, featuring the mesmerising music of golden-age Hollywood composer Bernard Herrmann, with designs by Lez Brotherston (set and costumes), Paule Constable (lighting) and Paul Groothuis (sound).

The Red Shoes is at Milton Keynes Theatre, 10th-14th February.





WHAT'S COMING UP IN: *February*

Sun 1st
A Winter's Tail
The Place Theatre, Bedford

Tue 3rd
Anthony Gomes
Craufurd Arms, Wolverton

Tue 3rd-Sat 7th
Christmas Carol Goes Wrong
Aylesbury Waterside Theatre

Wed 4th-Sat 7th
Yes, Prime Minister
The Place Theatre, Bedford

Wed 4th
Ben Waters and Tom Waters
The Stables, Wavendon

Thu 5th
Barry Steele's Roy Orbison Story
Castle Theatre, Wellingborough

Fri 6th-Sun 8th
The Gruffalo's Child
Royal & Derngate, Northampton

Sat 7th
Purple Zeppelin
Castle Theatre, Wellingborough

Sat 7th
The Boo Radleys
Bedford Esquires

Sat 7th
The Rock Anthems Show
The Old Savoy, Northampton

Sat 7th
Killer Queen – Tribute to Queen
Royal & Derngate, Northampton

Sun 8th
Chris McCausland: Yonks
Aylesbury Waterside Theatre

Tue 10th-Sat 14th
The Red Shoes
Milton Keynes Theatre

Tue 10th
Harry Redknapp
Aylesbury Waterside Theatre

Thu 12th
Pete Firman: Tricks & Giggles
The Stables, Wavendon

Thu 12th-Sat 14th
The Addams Family young@part
Stantonbury Theatre, Milton Keynes

Thu 12th
Song Sung Blue
Castle Theatre, Wellingborough

Fri 13th
Suzi Ruffell: The Juggle
Royal & Derngate, Northampton

Fri 13th
Andy Parsons: Tour Warm Up
Norman Bragg Studio, Aylesbury

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Fri 13th
My Life With Kenneth Williams
The Quarry Theatre, Bedford

Fri 13th
Guns 2 Roses
Bedford Esquires

Sat 14th
The Sound of Magic
Castle Theatre, Wellingborough

Sat 14th
Emmanuel Sonubi – Life After Near Death
Norman Bragg Studio, Aylesbury

Sat 14th
Biff To The Future
The Quarry Theatre, Bedford

Sun 15th
96 Bitter Beings
Craufurd Arms, Wolverton

Sun 15th
Ania Magliano: Peach Fuzz
Royal & Derngate, Northampton

Sun 15th
Think Floyd
The Stables, Wavendon

Tue 17th-Sat 21st
An Evening of Tom Stoppard
The Place Theatre, Bedford

Tue 17th-Sat 21st
Diversity – Soul 2026
Milton Keynes Theatre

Wed 18th
Solstice
Craufurd Arms, Wolverton

Thu 19th
Chris Ingham Quintet: Steely Jazz
The Stables, Wavendon

Fri 20th
The All Seasons
Stantonbury Theatre, Milton Keynes

Fri 20th
A Foreigners Journey
Roadmender, Northampton

Fri 20th
Anti-Nowhere League
Bedford Esquires

Sat 21st
Geoff Norcott: Basic Bloke 2
Castle Theatre, Wellingborough

Sat 21st
China Crisis
Bedford Esquires

Sat 21st
80s Live
The Old Savoy, Northampton

Sat 21st
Crazy Diamond – Pink Floyd Tribute
Norman Bragg Studio, Aylesbury

Sat 21st
One Night In Nashville
Roadmender, Northampton

Sat 21st
Echos of the Bunnymen
Craufurd Arms, Wolverton

Sun 22nd
Legend: The Music of Bob Marley
Milton Keynes Theatre

Tue 24th-Sat 28th
Top Girls
The Place Theatre, Bedford

Tue 24th
Ellen Kent: Madama Butterfly
Aylesbury Waterside Theatre

Wed 25th
Sara Pascoe: I Am A Strange Gloop
Milton Keynes Theatre

Thu 26th
A Country Night in Nashville
Aylesbury Waterside Theatre

Thu 26th-Sat 28th
The Rise & Fall of Little Vice
Royal & Derngate, Northampton

Thu 26th
DS:UK – Dire Straits Tribute
Castle Theatre, Wellingborough

Thu 26th
The Howlers
Bedford Esquires

Fri 27th
David Rodigan
Roadmender, Northampton

Fri 27th-Sat 28th
Horrible Histories – The Concert
Milton Keynes Theatre

Fri 27th
Something Sleeps @ The Song Loft
York House, Stony Stratford

Fri 27th
Oasiz – 2026
The Old Savoy, Northampton

Sat 28th
Del Bromham's Stray
The Stables, Wavendon

Sat 28th
Taylormania 2026
The Old Savoy, Northampton

Sat 28th
Paul Sinha: 2 Sinha Lifetime
The Quarry Theatre, Bedford

Sat 28th
Letz-Zep
Roadmender, Northampton

Dates might change: check with venue

the stables

world class music & entertainment

February highlights

Andy Fairweather Low



Friday 13 & Saturday 14 February, 8pm

Now touring with his band The Low Riders, Andy continues to thrill audiences with his solo work, including last year's chart-topping *The Invisible Bluesman*.

Matt Forde



Friday 20 February, 8pm

Leading political comedian Matt Forde finds positivity in life despite all the evidence to the contrary in politics and his own health. (16+)

Swinging at the Cotton Club



Sunday 22 February, 8pm

Step back into 1920s New York and enter Harlem's legendary Cotton Club! Swinging at the Cotton Club celebrates the music and dance that made the nightclub famous.

Snow White Rose Red Bear Brown



Saturday 28 February, 2pm

Snow White and Rose Red have lived in the forest since they were Babes in the Wood. When their quiet life is interrupted by a friendly bear, a new chapter begins. A new show with puppets, storytelling and original music. (4+)

The Stables
Wavendon
Milton Keynes
MK17 8LU

Box office:
01908 280800
stables.org



BLOOD BROTHERS COMING TO CASTLE

Impresario Bill Kenwright's legendary, award-winning production of the international hit musical continues to tour across the UK – and Wellingborough is on the list of stops this spring.





Blood Brothers, award-winning playwright Willy Russell's epic tale of Liverpool life, started as a play and was performed at a Liverpool comprehensive school in 1981, before opening at the Liverpool Playhouse in 1983.

The musical has since triumphed across the world, completing sell-out seasons in the US, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Japan. Few musicals have been received with such acclaim as this award-winning production.

It scooped four awards for Best Musical in London and seven Tony Award nominations on Broadway. It is considered 'one of the best musicals ever written' by the Sunday Times.

Bill Kenwright's production surpassed 10,000 performances in London's West End, one of only three musicals ever to achieve that milestone. The superb musical score includes A Bright New Day, Marilyn Monroe and the emotionally charged hit Tell Me It's Not True.

Wellingborough's Castle Theatre is set to host the production next month, as part of a big tour which started in Bromley in mid-January and continues right through to the end of May on this leg. Autumn and spring 2027 tours are planned, which include a stop at Northampton's Royal & Derngate.

Blood Brothers tells the captivating and moving tale of twins separated at birth, who grow up on opposite sides of the tracks, only to meet again with tragic consequences.

When Mrs Johnstone, a young mother, is deserted by her husband and left to her own devices to provide for seven hungry children, she takes a job as a housekeeper in order to make ends meet.

It is not long before her brittle world crashes around her when she discovers she is pregnant yet again – this time with twins! In a moment of weakness and desperation, she enters a secret pact with her employer, which leads inexorably to the show's shattering climax.

Vivienne Carlyle will continue in the iconic role of Mrs Johnstone, having received nightly standing ovations for her powerful and poignant performance in the West End production and across other sections of the UK tour.

Sean Jones and Joe Sleight continue in the roles of twins Mickey and Eddie, with Gemma Brodrick as Linda. Laura Harrison plays Mrs Lyons, Tim Churchill is Mr Lyons, Michael Gillette is Sammy, Alex Harland plays the Policeman, with Graeme Kinniburgh as Postman/ Bus Conductor and Dominic Gore playing the Neighbour.

Willy Russell is one of this country's leading contemporary dramatists. His countless credits include Educating Rita and Shirley Valentine. Educating Rita, originally commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company, enjoyed a two-year run in the West End and was made into a movie starring Michael Caine and Julie Walters. Shirley Valentine also made the move from stage to screen in an enormously popular film starring Pauline Collins and Tom Conti. It was also revived, completing a sell-out West End run starring Sheridan Smith.

Blood Brothers is at the Castle Theatre, Wellingborough, 24th-28th March.

Out with the cold and in with the new!



Energy efficient windows and doors from Custom Glaze

Visit our indoor showroom for the largest selection of **door styles**, **door glass options**, **windows**, **conservatories** and **extensions** in the Milton Keynes area

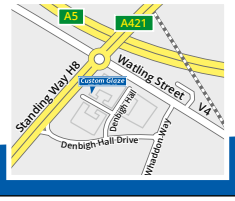
- ☑ Value for money and quality products, with a guarantee to give our best price first time every time!
- ☑ Honest sound advice from our team of advisors
- ☑ Managed in-house installation teams
- ☑ Exceptional aftercare service from our dedicated service engineers
- ☑ Now in our 45th year of trading

Now in our 45th Year of Improving your homes 45

Call 01908 650140 or visit customglaze.co.uk

Over 6000 positive reviews online

Custom Glaze
Windows • Doors • Conservatories • Est 1981



FENSA · HomePro · FairTrades · Which? Trusted Trader · TRUSTMARK · TRADING STANDARDS APPROVED



Showroom Open 6 Days a Week

Open 6 days (Mon-Sat) at Unit 8, Denbigh Hall Ind. Estate, Milton Keynes, MK3 7QT

Marcus Jordan & Co

@MJLettings

MJLettings

Olney's independent Lettings & Property Management experts

We're more than just letting agents; we're your partners in property management.

Our extensive reach across **Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire** ensures your property is seen and leased by the right tenants.











"We have valued the service with Marcus Jordan for many years now, as landlords they have always been on hand for any queries we have had and act quickly when required. It is always a smooth and hassle free experience when a tenant leaves and new one moves in. We would highly recommend."

Join the many landlords who trust Marcus Jordan & Co

01234 714348

www.marcusjordan.co.uk • enquiries@marcusjordan.co.uk

1 Market Place, Olney, MK46 4EA

safeagent · TDS Tenancy Deposit Scheme · The Property Ombudsman LETTINGS

Betty Pibworth

Betty Pibworth, a long-standing and well-known member of the Olney community, passed away on 31st December 2025 at the age of 92.



She was born Betty MacMillan in London to two Salvation Army ministers, and moved around many times in her youth, settling in Olney after marrying local farmer, Ivor Pibworth, in 1956.

She lived in Town Farm, High Street, for all of her married life. They had two sons, Garry and David, the Phonebox columnist, both of whom are still local.

Betty was involved in many aspects of Olney, including St Peter and Paul Church, the Cowper and Newton Society and local drama groups, and taught English and Drama at Dame Alice School and St Andrews, both in Bedford.

She also taught elocution and drama locally, having studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Betty was a well-loved member of the community with a fine sense of humour and a willingness to help as many people as she could in any way she could.

Her funeral service was held in the church in Olney on 15th January, and a huge number of people attended to pay their last respects. Olney will miss her.





bathrooms by harpers

BESPOKE, QUALITY BATHROOMS

- Showroom visits by appointment
- Supply & installation
- FREE consultations
- Access to brands at different price points
- Mobility bathrooms tailored to your needs







At **Bathrooms by Harpers**, we supply and fit your **dream bathroom** – and manage the whole process from start to finish.

- No chasing trades
- No stress

Just **expert guidance** on the **best products** for your space and your needs – we even take the rubbish away when we're done!

ESTABLISHED IN 2000

GET IN TOUCH FOR A FREE QUOTE

WWW.BATHROOMSBYHARPERS.CO.UK
01908 618591
INFO@BATHROOMSBYHARPERS.CO.UK
07748 595356

SHOWROOM
(BY APPOINTMENT ONLY)
7 PARK FARM | TYRINGHAM | MK16 9ED

Historic Church closes its doors for the final time

The historic Harrold United Reformed Church held its farewell service on the 10th January, 2026, marking the end of its time as a place of worship in the village.

Memories of the church were shared by elders and members during the ceremony, with the chapel filled to capacity with friends and former members, together with local United Reformed Church and Anglican members. The Revd Jacqueline Curtis and the Revd Peter Turnbull, Team Ministers of the Chellington Team (of which Harrold & Carlton Local Ecumenical Partnership is a member church), also took part in the service.

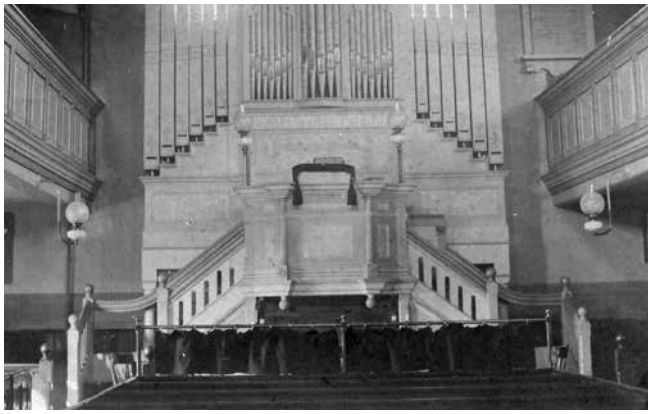
The Revd Nigel Adkinson, Convenor of Synod Ordained Ministry and Churches Group, was also in attendance, together with Mrs Sue Scott, Elder at Wellingborough, who received the East Area candle from Harrold with the prayer that the flame of faith continue to burn in sister churches.

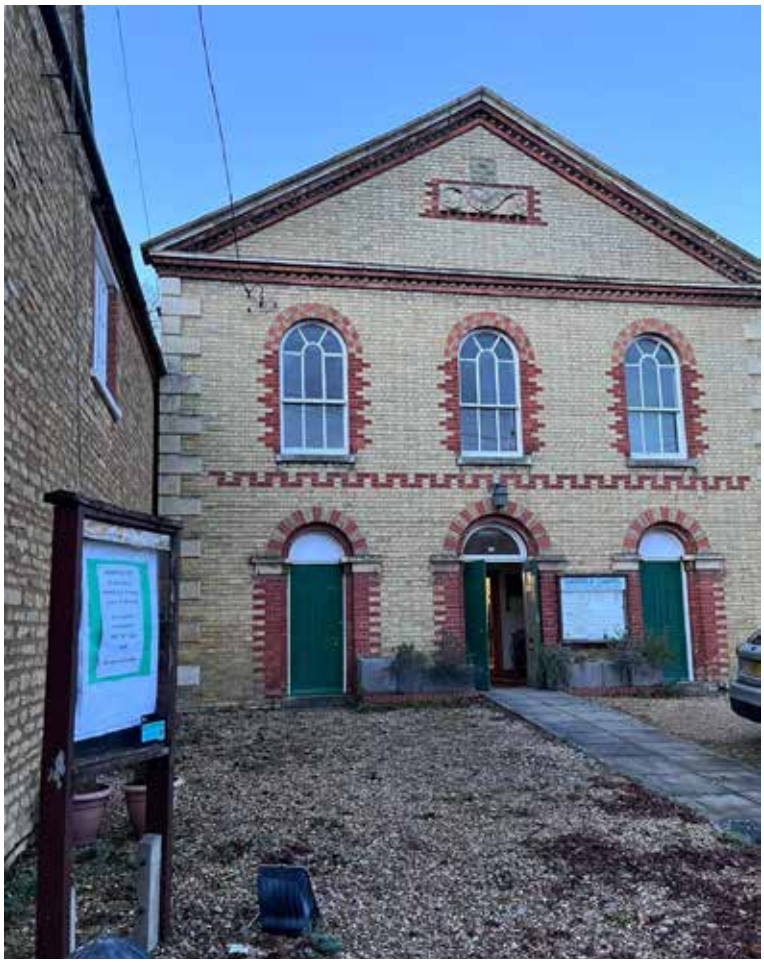
The service concluded with the singing of the hymn, "This is the truth we hold", written by former Minister, the Revd Basil Bridge, and sung to his tune, Harrold. Anglican partner church members provided and served the refreshments after the service. The church building itself is two hundred years old, its first chapel having opened in 1808.















NOW YOU'RE TALKING...

Veteran actor, entertainer and all-round charmer Nigel Havers has announced his first-ever UK tour dates. The tour, which comes to Milton Keynes on 15th March, will be great fun, as he tells Phonebox Magazine's Tom Johnston.



What do you get when you have enjoyed 50 years in the entertainment business? Lots of experience and even more gossip. And TV veteran Nigel Havers is ready to spill the beans in a new hilarious one-man tour. Called 'Talking B*ll*cks' the show takes audiences on an entertaining trot through Havers' five decades in showbusiness. From his early days as a fresh-faced drama school hopeful, to the highs and lows of a career that's seen him in everything from Chariots of Fire and Empire of the Sun to Don't Wait Up to 'I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here! It's all in there, along with tales of his various West End plays, and more than his fair share of London Palladium pantomimes.



"Well, here it is – my first ever solo show," says Nigel. "Just me, a stage, and a lifetime of gloriously ridiculous stories to share. You'll get the full Havers experience: charm, wit, and absolutely no running in slow motion.

"From behind-the-scenes gossip, tales of triumph and disaster, moments of sheer madness, and a fair bit of talking b*ll*cks. And just when you think you've got it all figured out, I might just surprise you." That last part is a reference to Nigel's very first acting role and a little showcase of one of his off-stage talents.

Nigel Havers trained at the Arts Educational Trust in London and early-stage work included Richard II and Edward II for Prospect Theatre Productions. National Theatre work includes 'The Importance of Being Earnest' and Harold Pinter's 'Family Voices', both directed by Sir Peter Hall. His numerous West End theatre credits include 'Conduct Unbecoming', Richard II and Man and Superman for the Royal Shakespeare Company and playing Serge in 'Art' at Wyndham's Theatre. He has appeared in successful touring productions of 'Rebecca', Alan Bennett's 'Single Spies', Nick Fisher's comedy 'Basket Case', and a national tour of Noël Coward's 'Private Lives'.



As one of Britain's leading television actors, Nigel has starred in many outstanding productions including Upstairs Downstairs, Pennies from Heaven, A Horseman Riding By, Nancy Astor and Churchill the Wilderness Years.

He was in two seasons of the hit US series Brothers and Sisters, played Lewis Archer in Coronation Street, Lord Hepworth in Downton Abbey, and General Ransom in All Creatures Great & Small.

Nigel's film credits are equally as impressive and include blockbusters including Chariots of Fire, A Passage to India, Empire of the Sun and Farewell to the King.

Nigel Havers – Talking B*ll*cks is at Milton Keynes Theatre, Sunday 15th March.



TIMBER WINDOWS
OLNEY

BESPOKE BEAUTIFUL, HANDMADE TIMBER WINDOWS & DOORS

IT'S THE DETAIL
THAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

OLNEY

11 Market Place, Olney, Buckinghamshire, MK46 4EA

01234 930080

ALSO VISIT US AT OUR SHOWROOMS IN

AMERSHAM	ENFIELD	RUISLIP	ST. ALBANS
HP6 5EJ	N14 4XA	MK46 4EA	AL3 5AS
01494 899333	02033 76557	02033 376558	01727 809944

timberwindowsgroup.co.uk

enquiries@twsagroup.co.uk

Thinking about an extension?

Faster to build. Smarter to live in. Ready for 2026.

Quote 'HUP26' with this ad and get 10% off

valid for the first five customers



5x Faster to build

5x more energy efficient than the average UK home

60% more carbon efficient than traditional methods

hup!®

The better way to build

- Prices from £1600m2 + VAT
- Approved by Building Control
- No Architect or Structural Engineer fees needed

PROGROUP MK LTD

PROFESSIONAL PROPERTY SERVICES

call 01908 965040
visit www.progroupmk.co.uk/hup
email info@progroupmk.co.uk

Brothers' joy as charity target reached

Mayor's boys in Marathon run



Two brothers, who launched a charity appeal for the Multiple Sclerosis Society, received such a good response through donations in one week that they have been able to increase their target.

Ryan and Jamie Smith, from Olney, launched a 'JustGiving' page to raise money for the autoimmune disease charity on Monday, with a target of £3,000 if they ran this year's London Marathon. Neither has ever been a runner before. But five days later they had already reached £2,900. So the pair have increased their target as they 'still have ages to go'.

The brothers, whose mum Debbie Whitworth, the Mayor of Olney, was diagnosed with MS 15 years ago, say they are grateful for the donations they have received so far, which have spurred them on as they approach April's big London race.

"In less than a week we raised £2,900 and we're so close to our initial target of £3,000," said Ryan on the JustGiving website. "We thought it would take months and we've still got ages until the marathon, so we've decided to up the target.

"We are so grateful to everyone that has donated so far, thank you.

"Many of you will know our amazing mum, Debbie. She was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis about 15 years ago and can be seen whizzing up and down the High Street in her wheelchair.

"Much like our mum, MS doesn't switch off. Despite her illness, Mum does so much to help others in our community. We honestly couldn't be prouder of all she has achieved since her diagnosis. MS has changed her life, but it hasn't taken her determination to help others."

See more here: www.justgiving.com/page/ryanandjamie-smith-marathon



Air Ambulance fundraising success

Reaching a medical emergency in rapid time can be the difference between life and death. There are no boundaries in the sky when it comes to an emergency for the Air Ambulance crew, which is why the eleventh annual Chilly Willy bikers ride out raises money for this crucial service.

The charity fundraising event took place in January, where the bikers set off on their route in a loop from Northampton Active, up Bedford Road to Olney and back again.

Despite the awful weather, the local community turned out for this worthy cause. Debbie Whitworth grabbed a bucket and helped the fundraising team. She said: 'To each and every biker, their families, their supporters, to each and every single person who gives their time in the organisation of this Fantastic charity event, you are all heroes.

Thank you to Olney residents and surrounding villages who came out to support and cheer on the bikers, and thank you to the lovely volunteers in Olney who helped me, Melvyn Bayliss, and members of the Rotary Club (we raised £300 on the day) to add to the total.'







Newport Pagnell Mayor's Update

Growth or Change

Some people say Milton Keynes is growing, but actually the boundary of the city (formerly the borough) is the same as in 1974. What is really increasing is the size of the population, the value of the economy and the proportion of that land which is being developed from open space.

About a third of the borough was once a designated area for a "new town" and a development corporation replaced locally elected councillors in deciding how it evolved. However, investment and provision of public services were always needed across the whole of the borough, both in new town areas and not.

The brand identity of the new town was very well promoted with grid roads, cable TV, those iconic MKDC benches, red balloons, etc. So it meant some folks believed the designated area was all that matters.

What worries me is that years later some could still think like that, and behave as if MK is simply growing onto land that didn't matter before, when in fact we've always mattered.

Today, other than the opportunity to add building height, the former new town is almost full, and so lots of open space around Newport Pagnell is being developed, starting with MK East and with further areas under discussion. This should be recognised as something happening to those communities that are already here, as happened with the villages within the former new town.

Local views need to be shaping what is developed and how. Will we see quality, genuinely affordable homes, good local jobs and premises for small businesses to grow? Are enough public services and facilities included? Do we elect the decision makers onto the City Council, or are they appointed by government (as yet another development corporation)?

Not everyone wants to, or is able to, complete a lengthy consultation document, so decision makers need to find other ways to make that happen, too.



Councillor Paul Day

What do you think?

Phonebox readers with any comments about Newport Pagnell, can contact me at pauldayMK@outlook.com
I am also @pauldayMK on Facebook.

Newport Pagnell Councillor Corner

Newport Pagnell South FOCUS Team, Cllrs Jane & Andy Carr, Tony Oyakhire





ELECTION 2026

Milton Keynes City Council Elections will go ahead as planned on 7th May 2026. These elections will be different to the usual city council elections as every seat within Milton Keynes city boundary will be up for election, including Newport Pagnell.

Following the boundary review last year, Newport Pagnell is now a single city council ward, with three representatives. This means that everyone in Newport Pagnell will have three votes, rather than the usual one in each ward.

Please register to vote if you are not already registered. Postal votes are available as usually, so if you will be away or want to just vote by post, please check out the council's website for more details.

The Newport Pagnell Focus (bin) calendar is now out.

If you haven't got one and need to know which bin week it is, drop us a line and we will let you have a copy. It is free and provided by your Lib Dem team.

It was great to join our local policing team recently to hear about local issues. Coffee with a Cop is operating throughout the town, with dates and times reported on Chit Chat. Just come along and share your story.

Councillor Surgery:

Our next councillor's surgeries will be on Saturday 28th February from 10 to 11.30am, at the Mead Centre, Newport Pagnell, to coincide with the Repair Shop.

Follow us on Facebook – Newport Pagnell South Ward. You can also contact the Focus team by emailing newportsouthlibdems@gmail.com or phoning 01908 216366.

200 Club Winners – December 1st Mr Willows, 2nd Mr Oyakhire. January 2006, 1st Ms Greenwood, 2nd Ms Maric.



The Olney Treatment Rooms

Footwell Podiatry

Berrells Court, East Street, Olney MK46 4AR
t: 01234 240444
www.footwellpodiatry.co.uk

I will be closing my practice
on Monday, February 23rd 2026.
It has been a pleasure to work with
the community of Olney
and surrounding villages.
I wish to sincerely thank
all patients.

Hilary Rimmer
BSc (Hons) MRCPod BA (Hons)
hcpc registered Podiatrist / Chiropodist

put your best foot forward

Newport Pagnell Town Council
Annual Town Meeting

Thursday 19th March 2026 at 6.45pm for 7pm

URC Church, High Street, Newport Pagnell

Residents will be able to voice their views and will get the opportunity to speak to the mayor about any issue that is close to their heart or about issues on which they would like more information.

One of our speakers will talk about the new Churchill Development and you will get the opportunity to meet the architect working on the Old Police Station site. **Everyone is invited**. Do join us for a glass of wine or orange juice.

Do you know of anyone living within the town who deserves to be recognised for their outstanding voluntary contributions to Newport Pagnell for the last year or over many years? Or alternatively someone who has achieved something through a remarkable effort in relation to the environment, community relationships, the safety of local residents, or anything of great benefit to our town.

If you do and would like to nominate them for the Town Award, then please write to the Town Clerk, Shar Roselman, Newport Pagnell Town Council, 80 High Street, MK16 8AQ, or e-mail: townclerk@newport-pagnell.org.uk **by 2nd March 2026**. We will need their contact details, and a brief paragraph of about 100 words explaining why this person deserves the award.

The Town Council is delighted to receive nominations from people in all walks of life, including young people doing something within their community and those providing a voluntary service to the aged, the community in general, or a particular group. **The award will be presented at the Annual Town Meeting on Thursday 19th March 2026.**

www.newport-pagnell.org.uk
01908 618756

A friendly local face to help with day to day tasks.....or just to be a friend

We aren't carers but we do care!



Some of the services we offer:

- General household duties
- Chaperoning
- Cleaning
- Meal Preparation
- Prescription Collection
- Shopping
- Companionship
- Escort daily exercise
- General well-being checks

We are a domestic assistance & visiting service working in Olney and surrounding areas. We aim to provide a local friendly face as often as needed to any adult who feels they need a little extra help in their own home.

"Wish we'd found Silver Smiles sooner. We felt safer in the knowledge of their professionalism and care of our loved one." - Jane Bland

Tel: 07891 599 593
Email: enquiries@silver-smiles.co.uk
www.silver-smiles.co.uk
@silversmiles_ Silver Smiles

SilverSmiles

CRUSHEDICE

Your local provider of reliable IT Services

Business Phone Systems
Perfect for businesses of any size
Free installation with no upfront costs
Feature-rich and highly customisable
No long term contracts, just **30 days' notice**

Managed IT Support
24/7 proactive monitoring
Remote & on-site support
No ticketing system, just email or call us!

Bespoke Software Solutions
Custom-built & tailored to your business
Manageable monthly fee with **no upfront costs**

We also specialise in:
CRM Systems • Mobile Apps • Ecommerce
Websites • AI Solutions • OCR & Data Extraction

Trusted for over 20 years!

01234 672 612 **www.crushedice.uk**

Get your Mojo back

How a new women's health clinic in Olney is offering personalised support for menopause

Menopause rarely arrives with a warning. One day you feel like yourself; the next you're feeling exhausted, foggy-headed, irritable or struggling to sleep – and you are not really sure why. But for many women, it is not just dealing with the symptoms that is challenging, it's the sense of having to navigate them alone.

Too often, women describe feeling dismissed, unheard or "palmed off" when they seek help, particularly outside major cities. That is the gap a new clinic opening in Olney, North Buckinghamshire, hopes to address.

The newly opened, and aptly named, Mojo Clinic has been created in response to years of lived experience, clinical insight and a growing recognition that women deserve better, more personalised healthcare – particularly during midlife.

"Menopause affects 50% of the global population, and women are still feeling isolated and unsupported", says clinic founder Sarah Townsend.

From beauty and aesthetics to women's health advocacy

While the clinic may be just opening its doors, Sarah's journey to creating it started more than 20 years ago. Over her time working in the beauty and aesthetics industries, she noticed a recurring theme during treatment appointments: conversations inevitably turned to hormones, energy levels, sleep, mood changes and the often bewildering experience of perimenopause and menopause.

"Clients would spend two or three hours in the treatment room, and menopause would always come up", she explains."There was so much confusion, frustration and a sense that women didn't know where to turn."

Like many women, Sarah experienced menopause herself and found that bioidentical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT) was life-changing. She frequently referred clients to specialist clinics in London – particularly those pioneering a more individualised approach to hormonal care like Marion Gluck – but saw first-hand how inaccessible this was for women living outside the capital.

"That's when it became obvious there was a huge gap locally," she says. "Why should women have to travel to big cities like London or Manchester to feel listened to?"

Clients would spend two or three hours in the treatment room, and menopause would always come up



Sarah Townsend, *Mojo Clinic founder.*

Why menopause still leaves women feeling isolated

Although menopause has moved higher up the public health agenda in recent years, the reality for many women remains stark. Research consistently shows that most women feel poorly informed before symptoms begin, while education around perimenopause – the transitional phase that can start up to a decade earlier – is especially limited.

Symptoms such as brain fog, anxiety, disrupted sleep, joint pain, low libido and overwhelming fatigue often collide with other major life pressures: caring for ageing parents, navigating career peaks, or adjusting to children leaving home. It's little wonder menopause has been described as "the thief of joy".

At the same time, NHS waiting lists for services such as coil fitting and cervical screening continue to lengthen, leaving women frustrated and anxious about delays in essential care.

A personalised, holistic model of care

What sets the Mojo Clinic apart is its commitment to highly personalised, medically supervised care. Central to this is bioidentical hormone replacement therapy, which uses plant-derived hormones that are structurally identical to those produced naturally by the body

Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, treatment plans are tailored using detailed consultations, lifestyle assessments and comprehensive laboratory testing. This allows clinicians to adjust type, dose and delivery method – whether gels, creams, patches or capsules – based on individual needs and preferences.

CareQuality Commission



Women want to understand what's happening in their bodies, they want to feel listened to, not dismissed. Women deserve to be heard, e want to help them get their mojo back – not just survive midlife, but thrive.

Before treatment, patients undergo a thorough assessment that may include:

- A detailed medical and family history
- Review of symptoms and their impact on daily life
- Lifestyle factors such as sleep, stress, nutrition and exercise
- Blood tests to assess hormone levels and wider health markers

Sarah has a team of highly qualified nurses to support with prescribing, screening and other medical services.

Beyond menopause: filling critical gaps in women's healthcare

While menopause care is a cornerstone of the clinic, its remit is deliberately broader. Services include perimenopause support, private coil fitting and removal, cervical screening, pelvic floor strengthening for urinary incontinence, and phlebotomy for comprehensive blood screening. Pelvic floor weakness, for example, affects millions of women worldwide, particularly during and after menopause. Using High-Intensity Focused Electromagnetic (HIFEM) technology, the clinic offers non-invasive treatments that strengthen pelvic muscles in short, 30-minute sessions – an option many women are unaware exists.

Private cervical screening also provides reassurance at a time when NHS intervals have extended, with many women expressing concern about longer gaps between smear tests.

"Screening can save your life," Sarah says. "We want to remove barriers – whether that's long waits, embarrassment or anxiety.

Menopause and the workplace: an urgent issue

The impact of menopause extends far beyond health clinics and into the workplace. Emerging research suggests that around one in three women consider reducing hours, turning down promotions or leaving their jobs altogether due to unmanaged menopausal symptoms. While figures show 1 in 10 do actually leave work due to menopause.

For employers, this represents not just a wellbeing issue but a loss of experience, leadership and talent. The Mojo Clinic plans to work with local businesses and corporates to offer education, remote consultations and blood testing – making support accessible without employees needing to take time off or travel and allowing businesses to increase their support to their female workforce.

By partnering with remote phlebotomy providers, the clinic can arrange blood tests at home or in the workplace, followed by virtual consultations. "It removes friction," Sarah explains. "We're trying to make this as easy as possible for women – whether that's at home, at work or fitting around busy lives."

Looking ahead: inclusive care for men too

Later this year, the clinic will expand its services with the launch of "Mojo Man", addressing andropause – often referred to as male menopause. Declining testosterone levels can lead to fatigue, low mood, reduced libido and loss of muscle mass, yet many men are turned away for not meeting rigid diagnostic thresholds.

By combining symptom assessment, blood testing and lifestyle support, the clinic aims to offer men the same personalised, evidence-based approach.

Creating a space where women are heard

Ultimately, the Mojo Clinic's goal is to create a space where women feel believed, supported and empowered to take control of their health.

"Women deserve to be heard," Sarah says. "We want to help them get their mojo back – not just survive midlife, but thrive."

We want to remove barriers – whether that's long waits, embarrassment or anxiety.

Want to find out more?
Why not book your free discovery call?

Are you an employer
looking to support your employees?

01234 639493 | 07392 072617
www.themojo.clinic | info@themojo.clinic

MOJO
CLINIC



Hear Clear At Home
EARWAX REMOVAL SPECIALIST
Offering Both Microsuction and Water Irrigation Consultation £10
(including referral if needed)
One Ear Wax Removal £30
(plus £10 for second ear)
Office: 01604 357291 or Mobile: 07909 291993
Email: polly@hearclearathome.com
WWW.HEARCLEARATHOME.COM

spick n span
CLEANING SERVICES LTD
- Weekly / Fortnightly Domestic Cleaning
- Deep Cleans: Whole Home or Single Rooms
- Carpet Cleaning and Oven Cleans
- 12-Month Fixed Price Guarantee
- Trusted, Detail-Focused Teams

5 stars Google reviews
Reliable cleaning with care. Always.
Call: 07376 865343
www.spicknspan.uk
Email: spicknspancleaningservicesltd@gmail.com

The Diary: February

FOLIO Talk
Mon 2nd, Olney Centre, 7pm
Guest speaker Tom Johnston, journalist and columnist at Phonebox Magazine with 'Cars, Stars & Minibars: My Life as a Motoring Writer'. Tickets: £6 in advance, includes refreshments: www.ticketsource.co.uk/folio, or 0333 666 3366.

Sherington Belles WI
Tue 3rd, Sherington Village Hall, 7pm
Monthly meeting with group The Brave Marauders, Shanties. Visitors/potential members are welcome to this large and vibrant group. Entry: £5 cash includes refreshments. There is a charity raffle. Let them know if you would like to go, email: thesheringtonbelleswi@gmail.com or message: 07901 648124.

Newport Pagnell Historical Society
Tue 3rd, United Reformed Church, Newport Pagnell 7.30pm
'Edwin Lutyens. Architect, Potterspury, Passenham, and beyond', a talk by Tim Skelton. Admission: £4 non-members, £2 members.

Olney Jazz Club
Tue 3rd, Carlton House Club, 8-10.30pm
The Fenny Stompers, Tickets £15 from Carlton House Club or sponsors, Phonebox Magazine, Stanley Court, Olney.

Olney Archaeological Society
Tue 3rd, Olney Centre and Zoom, 10am-12pm
'The Yorkist Surgeon: The Life of William Holles' – a talk by Stuart Orme, Historian, Curator at The Cromwell Museum, Huntingdon. Remote lecturer. Visitors welcome, £4. Tea, coffee, biscuits included. More details: www.mkheritage.org.uk/oas.

MK16 Badminton Club
Wed 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th, Lovat Hall, Newport Pagnell, 8-9.30pm
Fancy giving badminton a try? Thinking of playing again after a break? Want a new club to play at? Join our small, sociable, non-competitive club for beginners and intermediate players. All welcome. If going for the first time, call David, 07941 922538.

First Steps
Wed 4th, Olney Baptist Church, 10-11.15am
Playgroup for accompanied 0-4 year olds. Join in for free play time, crafts, baby area, snack, Bible story and songs. Use the side entrance from High Street. More details: firststeps@olneybaptist.org.uk.

Open Film Society
Open University Berrill Theatre, Milton Keynes, 6.30pm
Latest films for February's screenings: Wed 4th, Radical; Wed 11th, Girls Will Be Girls; Wed 18th, The Last Dance; Wed 25th, Four Mothers. More details: openfilmsociety.co.uk, for full programme, times, and cost.

Chatty Cafe
Thu 5th, 12th, 19th, 26h, Mead Centre, Newport Pagnell 11am-1pm
This friendly drop-in session is held every Thursday. Come alone or with a friend; a warm welcome awaits you. Just off the High Street, through the archway opposite Superdrug. Refreshments available. More details: 01098 739716

Children's Drama Classes
Thu 5th and 12th, East Street Community Centre, 3.55-4.40pm
Come and get creative for ages 4-6. Self-confidence, play, fun, imagination. More details: Leyla.everystory@outlook .com.

Church Mice
Catholic Church,Olney / St Peter & St Paul Church, Olney
Church Mice is moving to the Catholic Church in Olney while St Peter & St Paul Church is closed for redecoration. Dates are as follows: 5th, no meeting; 12th, Catholic Church; 19th, return to St Peter & St Paul; 26th, St Peter & St Paul.

Olney Senior Citizens Club
Fri 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th, Olney Centre, 2-4pm
Popular social club's regular meetings in February include: Whist/Chat (6th); Bingo (13th); Slides & Talk (20th); Quiz (27th).

Two Brewers
High Street, Olney, 6.30-8.30pm
Popular pub now has a resident solo singer every Friday. His appearances in February will be on 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th.

Georgian Dancers
Fri 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th, Olney Centre, 7-8.30pm
18th Century Dancing Fridays, in the Olney Centre. Find out more about how to join a friendly troupe. Gentle, fun exercise learning 18th-century assembly rooms dance:. Entry: £3. More details: contact.jones4647@gmail.com or 07967 117019.

Yardley Arts
The Old School, Yardley Hastings
Fri 6th, 10am-4pm, Art Studio session - students, NHS, carers and unemployed free; Fri 13th, 10am-2pm, Saturday Art Club for Children; Mon 23rd, 1-5pm, Watercolour Painting workshop; Wed 25th, 2.15-4.15pm, Relief Painting and Sculpting five-week course. www.yardleyarts.org.

Bedford Arts Society
Fri 6th, Putnoe Heights Church, Bedford MK41 8EB, 7.15pm
Cordell Garfield will be demonstrating how to paint a landscape in oils. More details: Jean Paterson, 01234 307210 or www.bedsartsociety.co.uk.

Memory Club
Fri 6th, Baptist Church Hall, 1.30-3pm
Group meets after the Christmas break. For this month only we will be meeting in the Baptist Church Hall, side entrance, accessed from the passage to the right of the crossing. In addition to tea and chat will be dominoes. We look forward to seeing you - and bring a friend!

Newport Pagnell Historical Society
Sun 8th and Sun 22nd, Newport Pagnell Museum, Chandos Hall, Silver St, 2-4pm
Museum open. Admission free.

Tea & Chat
Mon 9th, Olney Centre, 2-3pm
Regular meeting of this friendly chat group, where the tea is good and the

friendship is even better. More details: Debbie Whitworth, 07494 681907.

Denton & District Gardening Club
Mon 9th, Denton Village Hall, Denton NN7 1DT, 7.30pm
Speaker is Susie Lickman, who will be talking about 'How to enjoy your Houseplants'. There will be a raffle, homemade refreshments, and the speaker will bring plants for sale. Admission: free to members, £5 for visitors. More details: Margaret, 01604 890875, m.pateman@yahoo.co.uk.

Newport Pagnell Women's Institute
Tue 10th, Brooklands, Newport Pagnell, 7.15pm
Monthly meeting of the Newport Pagnell WI. The speaker will be talking about the Emmaus Village Carlton homelessness charity. Visitors and potential members all welcome. Entry £5 cash. Tea and cakes plus a raffle. More details: 07851 704551 or newportpagnellwi@gmail.com.

Olney Classic Car Club
Tue 10th, Carlton House Club, 7pm
February Talk Night has an interesting talk from Bee Keenan, representing the Medical Detection Dogs charity, Milton Keynes. Bee will explain the work of the charity, and how their Bio Detection Dogs and Medical Alert Assistance Dogs are at the forefront of research. Talk will start at 7.30pm. Entry: £5.

CAMEO
Wed 11th, Olney Baptist Church, 2-4pm
Join us for a special birthday celebration! CAMEO have been going for 10 years in February, so come and help us celebrate. You will be very welcome for a special afternoon tea and fun. More details: Chris, 07970 973226, Anne 07375 42532 or Margot 07769 585403.

TASNB
Thu 12th, Lovat Hall, Newport Pagnell, 10.15am
Talk on 'The Jurassic world of Mary Anning' by Aaron Hunter. The Lecture will begin at 10.50am with coffee from 10.15am. Guests welcome for a small charge. More details: membershipnorthbucks@theartssociety.org.

Cowper & Newton Museum
Tue 17th-Sat 28th, Market Place, Olney,10.30 am-1.30 pm
Historic house, two tranquil gardens, art gallery and shop open for half days. For all details: www.cowperandnewtonmuseum.co.uk. Use your annual pass or purchase one for the new season for £12. Children under 16 (accompanied by an adult) and students under 25 with a valid ID card go free.

Inner Wheel Newport Pagnell
Tue 17th, Olney Centre, 2-4pm
This month our speaker is a representative from the Assoc. of Blood Bikes, whose volunteers provide a professional rapid response service transporting blood and other clinical supplies across the country. Visitors always welcome to join for the afternoon, entry £5 including refreshments. More details: Jackie, innerwheelnewportpagnell@gmail.com.

Bedford NT Association
Tue 17th, Addison Centre, Kempston, 2,15pm
Speaker Nick Spinks introduction to Richard Shuttleworth, his home and The Shuttleworth Collection – a treasure trove of airworthy vintage aircraft from 1909-1950, agricultural and steam exhibits, veteran cars, classic motorcycles, bicycles and vintage buses. Plenty of parking. Small charge for admission. Tea and coffee served from 2pm. More details: Betty Thomas, 01480 860421.

Newport Pagnell Historical Society
Tue 17th, United Reformed Church, Newport Pagnell 7.30pm
'Songs from the Trenches' a talk by Andy Smith. Admission: £4 non-members, £2 members.

Olney Archaeological Society
Tue 17th, Olney Centre, 10am-12pm
'Living the Roman Countryside' – a talk by Michael Curtis, School of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Leicester. Visitors welcome at The Olney Centre. Visitors welcome, £4. Tea, coffee, biscuits included. More details: www.mkheritage.org.uk/oas.

Children's Craft Club
Sat 21st, Olney Library, 10.30am-11.30am
Book your child a place in person at the Library desk or phone (01234) 711474. Maximum of 12 places available. Parents and carers must remain with their children throughout. Free session suitable for children ages 3-9, but donations are welcome to cover the cost of materials.

Olney and District Gardening Club
Tue 24th, Olney Centre, 7pm
Speaker Timothy Walker from Somerville College will pose the question: 'What have plants done for us?' More details: Chris Richbell, 01234 241700.

Newport Pagnell Historical Society
Tue 24th, Ousebank House, Newport Pagnell 2pm.
An informal gathering with tea and cake. Admission: £4 for non-members, £3 for members, includes tea and cake.

CAMEO
Wed 25th, Olney Baptist Church, 2-4pm
A warm welcome awaits – whether you've been before or are new - come along for tea and companionship! More details: Chris, 07970 973226, Anne 07375 42532 or Margot 07769 585403.

Saturday Story Time
Sat 28th, Olney Library, 11-11.30am
Popular drop-in session at Olney Library of stories, songs and rhymes for children aged 3-7, but all welcome, with parent or carer.

Got an event coming up in March?
Let us know at:
diary@phoneboxmagazine.com



A RARE OPPORTUNITY

Lamorna, Olney

Nine Bedrooms | Eight Bathrooms | Approx. 3,100 sq ft

An impressive period home in the heart of Olney, currently operating as a profitable Guest House with scope to become a substantial private residence.

Sympathetically extended and upgraded, the property offers versatile accommodation, including a self-contained two-bedroom annexe and two detached lodge's, both with independent access.

Ample driveway parking with landscaped gardens, millboard decking.
Walk to town amenities.

Offers Over £850,000
Contact Alistair on 07836 271 667

GENTLE YOGA FOR ALL
Do you think you're too old for yoga?



Too inflexible?
Can't get up and down off the floor?
If so, my **Gentle Yoga Class For All** is just what you've been waiting for!



YOUR FIRST CLASS IS FREE!
Chairs, Props, and Gentle Yoga make this class accessible for everyone.

MONDAYS: 9:30 AM – 10:15 AM
Lavendon Village Hall
BOOKING ESSENTIAL
Contact Sarah: 07702 898773



Olney Ward **Councillor Corner**



Cllr Debbie Whitworth

CONTACT DEBBIE:
Tel: 07494 681907 / debbie.whitworth@milton-keynes.gov.uk

My Ward surgeries are every Tuesday, 10am-12pm at the Olney Centre. No need to book, just pop along.

Ward Budget 25/26

I can confirm that all of my ward allowance has been used and divided equally between the parishes who reached out for support in their varying projects which will benefit communities as a whole.

- Lavendon for help with flood equipment
- Emberton towards the Bell & Tower village magazine
- Weston Underwood for Phase II of restoring wooden posts and chain fence (Olney Road)
- Olney towards the benches and wooden planters around the town
- Sherington for the purchase of a community fridge

Lavendon Flood Allocation update

Securing the funding for the Lavendon flood mitigation work has taken time due to the number of organisations involved and the need for full alignment across agencies.

Progress has required sustained work and collaboration between the Environment Agency, central government, the regional Flood Board, and partners across Milton Keynes.

Because the Flood Board's remit stretches across the wider region, rather than being MK specific, we have needed input and agreement from multiple posts and authorities. This has made coordination essential and so with the combined efforts of Chris Curtis MP whom I reached out to, the Council Leader and the Cabinet Member for the Public Realm and myself as Ward Cllr we have collectively now been able to create the opportunity needed to unlock this funding.

Chris Curtis MP has written to all three Olney ward councillors (myself, Keith and Peter) explaining that this funding will form part of the council's budget, and that the budget will need to be passed for it to be approved.

A local Flood Resilience Group will also need to be in place, which myself, the cabinet member and MP will support. MKCC is proposing to provide £907,000 in capital funding to fill the partnership funding gap and unlock the associated government funding for this project. Combined with Environment Agency investment, this represents a package of around £2 million to help protect homes in Lavendon.

Number 41

MKCC had approval to go out to tender with neighbouring authorities on the 41. Subsequently Grant Palmer submitted a registration for a commercial route and MKCC will not be proceeding with the procurement. Stagecoach will be withdrawing their service in line with the new service starting.

I reached out to the Director himself at Grant Palmer to ask if he would kindly get back to me with an update ASAP on the route so that I may give reassurance to our residents / users what the route would basically be and timetables ahead of the take over set for 1st March. Dave Shelby the Director at GP responded immediately and has kindly given me the following I can share with you all:

"The revised service will run every two hours, providing reliable connections between Northampton and Bedford, and will be operated using modern, high-specification buses to enhance passenger comfort and accessibility. Additional journeys will operate between Bedford and Bromham every hour. All fares on route 41 will be a simple flat £3 single, with concessionary bus passes welcome. Customers can pay with cash or using tap on tap off contactless payment, with London Oyster-style fare capping ensuring passengers never pay more than £20 in a week or £80 in a month across Grant Palmer services. Passengers can track their bus in real time using the free Grant Palmer smartphone app, which includes live bus tracking and push notifications to keep customers informed on the go. Thomas Manship, Commercial Manager at Grant Palmer informed me that full comms will be on their website within the next couple of weeks. He said: "We have a strong record of delivering rural services across Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire and look forward to welcoming customers on board our new 41 service."

Grant Palmer is a UK Bus Award-winning operator, proudly family owned and based in Bedfordshire, with a strong reputation for delivering high-quality rural and inter-urban bus services. **Customers can access help through a local call centre on 01525 719 719, with full service details available online at www.grantpalmer.com.**

Olney Ward **Councillor Corner**



Cllr Keith McLean



Cllr Peter Geary

CONTACT US: Keith: 07983 456081 keith.mclean@milton-keynes.gov.uk :: Peter: 07774 939404 peter.geary@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Lavendon Flooding Mitigation Scheme Finally Agreed

Flooding has been a significant issue in Lavendon for over a decade but has taken extra precedence since the village suffered substantial flooding in September 2024. Since then, Peter and Keith have tried numerous times to get funding approved for the schemes to help prevent the village flooding. We encountered significant hurdles from Milton Keynes City Council but with successive motions to Council and with significant talking and persuasion we managed to get to the position where the Council has finally agreed to put £900K of funding to match over £1.1m from the Environment Agency's regional flood defence budget. This will see several schemes built around the village with work starting, hopefully, this summer and being completed by 2028. This has been a long process but finally it looks like it is coming to an end. This could have been started a year ago when we sought to put money into the capital budget to fund it, but at least it is now happening. Thank you to all the residents for their passionate and co-ordinated support.

Sherington – Travellers' Site Appeal

Readers will recall that a group of travellers moved onto an unauthorised site off Gun Lane in mid-2025. MKCC Planning Enforcement served a notice for the travellers to vacate the site and the travellers have lodged an appeal against the Enforcement Notice. The appeal will be held on 24th February in Central Milton Keynes. It is unlikely that the Planning Inspector's decision will be issued in time for us to report it in the March edition of the Phonebox, but we will publish the outcome on various social media platforms when it is known. The Parish Council will also be informed.

N.B. The Environment Agency is still pursuing the alleged illegal dumping of waste on the land off Gun Lane. Whilst there are links between this and the unauthorised travellers' site the second matter does not form part of the appeal

Milton Keynes City Council – Budget 2026-27

This is the time of year where all local authorities set their budgets. This includes the pressures councils come under to fund statutory services and includes a list of savings that councils have to make to provide a balanced budget. Councils' funding comes from numerous sources; the majority comes from Council Tax and government grants, but some comes from fees and charges which the Council levies for some services. This year's budget has been tough but was helped by more money than expected from central government. Council Tax for most residents will be raised by 4.99%, the maximum allowed by law before a referendum must be undertaken, Council Tax has now risen by the maximum it could over the last 12 years. Despite this over £9m of savings are having to be made, this includes a significant number of redundancies from the Council's staff. One of the pressures we thought was avoidable was the increase in the allowances paid to councillors. Councillors' allowances rise at the same rate as the staff wages every year but are also assessed every 4 years as detailed below. At a time when Council staff who deliver services are being made redundant Peter and Keith thought it was wrong to vote for councillors to be paid more. Regrettably the Labour Group and the Lib Dem group voted to support the pay increases.

Councillors' Allowances 2026-27

Every four years an Independent Remuneration Panel is formed to review the allowances paid to Councillors. Allowances are compared to councils in England like MKCC and considers the number of hours Councillors spend, on average, on Council matters. The Panel recommended that Councillors' basic allowance be increased by 15.2%, along with rises to Special Responsibility Allowances paid, for example, to Chairs of Committees as well as Cabinet members and the Leader of the Council.

Advice Surgeries

A reminder that our monthly advice surgeries are run in the Olney Centre on the first Friday of each month between 7pm and 8pm, appointments are not necessary. Alternatively, we can be contacted at other times by 'phone or email, our details are as follows:

Keith McLean - 07983 456081 - keith.mclean@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Peter Geary – 07774 939404 – peter.geary@milton-keynes.gov.uk

CASINO ROYALE

Olney May Ball

SATURDAY 6TH JUNE 2026

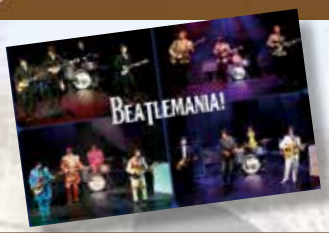
£75 per person
Black Tie Gala Dinner
Live Band & Disco

Scan QR code to reserve a table of 10

The Arches Theatre

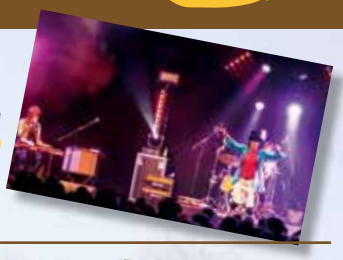
Buckinghamshire's quirkiest outdoor theatre

Tickets available NOW



Beatlemania!
Friday 28th August, 8pm

Not The Rolling Stones!
Saturday 29th August, 8pm



Prince Kaspar
with Tethered Wits
Saturday 1st August, 3.30pm

Charles Dickens Telling Tales
with Don't Go Into The Cellar
Friday 7th August, 7pm

Wizard Of Oz
with DOT Productions
Sunday 9th August, 1pm

A Midsummer Night's Dream
The Shakespeare Circus
Saturday 15th August, 2pm

Around The World In 80 Days
with Tethered Wits
Saturday 1st August, 7pm

Romeo & Juliet
with British Touring Shakespeare
Saturday 8th August, 2pm

Lady Windermere's Fan
with DOT Productions
Sunday 9th August, 5pm

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
with LOL Theatre
Sunday 16th August, 1pm

Twelfth Night
with Unbound Theatre
Sunday 2nd August, 2pm

Dracula
with British Touring Shakespeare
Saturday 8th August, 7pm

Whose Turn?
Milton Keynes Theatre of Comedy
Friday 14th August, 7pm

Hounds of the Baskerville
with LOL Theatre
Sunday 16th August, 5pm

Jeeves & Wooster in Perfect Nonsense with Underneath The Arches Theatre Company Friday 21st, Sat 22nd, Sun 23rd August, 7pm

www.thearchestheatre.co.uk Email: david@thearchestheatre.co.uk Call: 07879 414110

The Arches Theatre, Church Farm, Clifton Reynes, Olney MK46 5DT

OLNEY MEADOWS
· CARE HOME ·
A Kingsley Healthcare Home

We are not just a care home
We're a thriving community

SOUP AND SIP WEDNESDAYS
Every Wednesday in February 2.30pm – 4.00pm
Join us in our warm Community Café for Soup and a Roll.

BLUE LIGHT MEMBERS' CLUB
First Friday of every month. 6 February, 3.00pm – 4.30pm
Community Nurses, Social Workers, Ambulance Service, Carers
Welcoming ALL Blue Light Members
Refreshments, Sandwiches and Freshly Baked Homemade Cake.

FAMILY OPEN DAY WITH ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN
CLOSE-UP ANIMAL EXPERIENCE 10.30am - 12.30pm
Saturday 7 February
OPEN DAY 10.00am - 4.00pm

MARDI GRAS – POST PANCAKE RACE FUN
Tuesday 17 February, 12.30pm - 3.00pm
New Orleans' Themed Buffet. Live Jazz!

2 Worcester Way, Olney. MK46 5GP
Take the road towards Aldi (Worcester Way) and follow the road around to the end.
Tel: 01234 232551 kingsleyhealthcare.co.uk/olneymeadows



Regulated by CareQuality Commission

DD Dusk till Dawn
SPECIAL OCCASION WEAR

Largest stockists of all styles of **prom dresses** for 2026 in the three counties!
• No two dresses sold to the same school •



• FREE alterations on all dresses •
01234 712200 • www.dusktdawn.co.uk
1st Floor, Dagnall House, Stanley Court, Olney, MK46 5NH
dusktilldawn007 dusk.till.dawn.occasion

Browns of Stagsden Farm Shop

Shop local for quality home-reared meat and poultry this winter.

• FRESH FRUIT & VEGETABLES • LOCAL BEERS, CIDER & WINE •
HOMEMADE PIES • WIDE SELECTION OF ARTISAN CHEESE

TREAT YOUR VALENTINE



COME AND ENJOY OUR LICENSED TEAROOM:
LIGHT LUNCHES, DELICIOUS HOMEMADE CAKES
PLUS HOT AND COLD DRINKS

01234 822330
www.brownsofstagsden.co.uk
Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for updates
Manor Farm, Stagsden, Beds, MK43 8SH
Tue - Thurs 10am - 4pm, Fri 10am - 5pm, Sat 9am - 3pm

Bonne Maman®

Pleased to support

THE OLNEY PANCAKE DAY RACE

Tuesday 17th February



For Pancake Day recipes and inspiration see
bonnemaman.co.uk/stacksoflove

Dash in the Pan!

Olney's historic and much-loved Pancake Race is with us again. And this year it's better than ever.

A new sponsor, a special pancake breakfast, cookery demonstrations, a Shriving Service and lots of fun and games – this year's highly anticipated Pancake Race has it all.

The historic event, which links up with the USA's Kansas to give it an international flavour, takes place in Olney on Shrove Tuesday, 17th February this year, and follows a great tradition. It's said to have taken place since 1445 and has certainly run every year since 1948, except for Covid-hit 2021. The event is open to women over 18 who work or live in Olney.

The race is made possible through the generous sponsorship of its Bonne Maman, George Davies Turf & Stone, Kingsley Healthcare, Whitworth Bros. Ltd, and Blackstone, together with the support of many local businesses.

George Davies Turf & Stone joined as a sponsor last year, as reported in December's Phonebox Magazine.

"Over the last 25 years we have made so many friends and supported many local events, and to be asked to help with the Pancake Race was truly an honour," said George Davies.

"I have watched and supported for many years, as well as cheered on friends taking part, and I love the buzz it brings to the town. I want to help the race continue."

On the day, the focus will be on Olney's Market Place, with a special ticketed pancake breakfast, prepared by Ben Francis, Head Chef of the Cherry Tree Pub & Restaurant.

This will be followed by a cookery demonstration and, as the race takes place in school half-term, there are lots of extra activities planned. Meet Fred, Homepride's bowler-hat-wearing Chief Flour Grader, listen to the Scottish pipers and the fairground organ, watch the Great Gappo in action on his monocycle, and meet the local Fire Station crew.

"And why not join us in the Marquee after the start of the race at 12pm for some half-term fun?" said a race spokesperson. "You can 'Splat the Rat', decorate a pancake, and do some colouring.

"If you're feeling hungry, then get yourself a pancake in the Market Place or the Church Hall. There are also lots of stalls for some retail therapy in the town centre and the Marquee."

The race gets its international element courtesy of Liberal, Kansas. In 1950 the US town issued a challenge to Olney over race timings for their similar event. In the spirit of international goodwill and friendship, the two communities now compete annually, and prizes are exchanged.

Children's races start at 10am. These fun support events are well-supported and build the excitement for the main race, which starts at 11.55am. All the runners join visitors in a Shriving Service which is held in the Church of St Peter and St Paul immediately after the big event.

The service will include some of the famous Olney Hymns, written by Rev. John Newton and the poet William Cowper, in particular, the hymn 'Amazing Grace'.

There's also a raffle, supported by local businesses – first prize is a Relaxing Two Night Break with Treatment and Dining for Two at the 4-Star Crowne Plaza, Marlow. Tickets will be on sale in the Marquee.



How it all panned out…

No one is quite certain how the world-famous Pancake Race in Olney originated. One story tells of a harassed housewife, hearing the shriving bell, dashing to the church still clutching her frying pan containing a pancake.

Another tells that the gift of pancakes may have been a bribe to the Ringer, or Sexton, that he might ring the bell sooner; ringing the bell signalled the beginning of the day's holiday.

History shows that the Pancake Race was first run in the year 1445, on Shrove Tuesday, and the entire day was given over to a festival of celebration, pranks and pastimes.

While the race itself may have lapsed many times over the centuries, it was never entirely forgotten by the womenfolk of Olney. It was revived again in 1948 by the then vicar of Olney, the Reverend Canon Ronald Collins and has been run every year since then, except 2021.

For more details of what's happening when, and all the amazing raffle prizes, go to www.olneypancakerace.org.

See also:
Facebook @olneypancakerace, or Instagram @theolneypancakerace.









Olney Pancake Race 2026 TUESDAY 17 FEBRUARY

Join us for our special Breakfast and Cookery Demonstration with Ben Francis, Head Chef of The Cherry Tree in the George Davies Turf & Stone Marquee with sponsorship from Kingsley Health Care, Whitworth Bros Ltd and Blackstone®. We are delighted to welcome these companies alongside our main supporter, Bonne Maman®.

TICKETS

Tickets for the Pancake Breakfast are just £13.00 and are available from tickets@olneypancakerace.org or phone 07771 540310 between 4.00pm and 7.00pm.
Breakfast will be served from 8.00am onwards, with last serving at 9.30am. Don't delay and get your tickets today! More details can be found at **olneypancakerace.org.**
Like us on Facebook @olneypancakerace or Instagram @theolneypancakerace.



TIMETABLE OF EVENTS

8.00am onwards (last serving 9.30am)	Pancake Breakfast in the George Davies Turf & Stone Marquee on the Market Place, with local chef, Ben Francis
9.00am – 1.00pm	Hot Pancakes, tea & coffee, and stalls in the Market Place and Marquee. Come and see the town Fire Engine and look out for Homepride Fred
10.00am – 1.00pm	Hot Pancakes, tea & coffee plus stalls in the Church Hall
10.00am – 1.00pm	Children's Entertainment in the Market Place and Organ outside the Church Hall
From 10.00am	Children's Races on north side of the Market Place, sponsored by Bonne Maman
10.45am – 11.30am	Cookery demonstration in the Marquee on the Market Place
11.00am – 11.45am	Runners for the Olney Pancake Race assemble and register in the Marquee
11.55am	Olney Pancake Race, sponsored by Bonne Maman, starts near the pedestrian crossing
12 noon	Finish of the Race in Church Street
12.00 noon – 1.30pm	Activities in the Marquee for all including pancake decorating and Splat the Rat
12.15pm	Shriving Service in St Peter & St Paul's Church

At 10.45am Ben will be doing a cookery demonstration showing you how to prepare a **Salmon Royale** pancake



PANCAKE RACE GRAND RAFFLE

Raffle tickets are available from Olney Pancake Parlour and The Cowper's Oak, Weston Underwood, or by calling David on 07912 059491. They will also be on sale at the Farmers' Market on Sunday 1 February and in the Marquee on the Race Day.

1st prize
Two-night relaxing break at the 4 Silver Star Crowne Plaza, Marlow for two
donated by Margaret James Estate Agents

2nd prize
£250 John Lewis Voucher
donated by George Davies Turf & Stone

3rd prize
Pancake Themed Afternoon Tea for four people
donated by the Olney Pancake Parlour

4th Prize: £150 meal voucher donated by The Cowpers Oak, Weston Underwood

5th Prize: Italian Food Hamper donated by Stefanie Price Wealth Planning

6th Prize: Black SMEG kettle donated by J.S. Designs

And many more – huge thanks to all the local businesses supporting the Olney Pancake Race!

A full list of prizes is available on our website – olneypancakerace.org

We look forward to seeing you!

Bells, Bears and Burns Night

For the second year running, The Bell & Bear, Emberton has hosted a Burns Night Supper – with all the bells, whistles and tradition such an event requires.

The pub looked beautiful, draped in the Saltire and The Lion Rampant. There was a piper, resplendent in kilt and bearskin. And lovely Caryn Cooper, Scottish through and through, gave the traditional 'Address to a Haggis'.

The event was catered for by The Village Kitchen, a new partnership between the pub and the team behind We Will Wok You food van. The Village Kitchen now has a residency in the pub, and as well as one-off events such as this, serves up breakfasts, Sunday lunches, basket meals, British classics and themed evenings. You can find out when they are serving by following socials or visiting the pub's website. Tonight's dinner: peppery Scotch Broth; haggis, neeps and tatties; and raspberry trifle cheesecake, were all delicious and a great advert as to what The Village Kitchen can deliver.

The Bell and Bear is a community pub, owned by around 85 residents from Emberton and beyond. As well as the Village Kitchen, they also have a regular programme of visiting food trucks. With four real ales on rotation and a great selection of wines, gins, zero alcohol options and of course, whisky, I can't think of a better place to spend Burns Night. Looking forward to next year.

www.thebellandbear.co.uk

















Dinner for two?



With February being the month of Valentine's Day there will be lots of readers thinking about sharing an intimate meal with a friend, partner or lover.

The origins of Valentine's Day date back to ancient Rome with the festival of Lupercalia, celebrated from 13th to 15th February. Later, as Christianity spread through the Roman Empire, the festival was replaced by St. Valentine's feast day.

By the end of the 5th century, Pope Gelasius declared 14th February St. Valentine's Day, and it wasn't until the Middle Ages that the day became definitively associated with love. The oldest known Valentine's message still in existence is a poem written in 1415 by Charles, Duke of Orleans, to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London.

On this landmark lovers' day, some foods spring to mind due to their links with lovers or their actual claimed or reputed aphrodisiac properties. Well-known among these are oysters, with their high zinc level triggering thoughts of love, honey from which the word 'honeymoon' comes and, of course chocolate, which as well as tasting great and looking good, can also encourage love.

Strawberries, with their red colouring and heart shape, have also long been associated with Valentine's Day. They're known as the 'Berry of Venus'.

Food is a big part of Valentine's Day, from restaurants offering special menus to superstores producing 'one night only' combinations, along with plenty of recipe ideas for couples to share a quiet breakfast, lunch or dinner for two at home.

Pancakes in the morning, hearty food at lunchtime or culinary specialities in the evening can all help to find the way 'to someone's heart through their stomach'.



SPEEDY MEAT LOAF

Ingredients

1 large egg, lightly beaten
5 tablespoons ketchup, divided
2 tablespoons mustard
4 oz dry bread crumbs
2 tablespoons onion soup mix
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1 pound ground beef
2 oz sugar
2 tablespoons brown sugar
2 tablespoons cider vinegar

Method

Combine the egg, 2 tablespoons ketchup, mustard, bread crumbs, soup mix, salt and pepper in a bowl. Crumble beef over the mixture and mix gently. Shape into an oval loaf.

Place the loaf in a shallow microwave-safe dish. Cover and microwave on high for 10-12 minutes or until no longer pink and a thermometer reads 160°; drain.

In a small bowl, combine the sugars, vinegar and remaining ketchup; drizzle over the meat loaf. Cover and microwave on high for 2-3 minutes longer or until heated through.

Let it stand for 10 minutes before slicing.



PEAR CRUMBLE

Ingredients

3 medium pears, peeled and sliced
2 teaspoons lemon juice
3 tablespoons sugar
3 tablespoons old-fashioned oats
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon ground ginger
Pinch of ground nutmeg
1 tablespoon cold butter
2 tablespoons chopped nuts

Method

Place pear slices in a greased baking dish. Sprinkle with lemon juice.

Mix the sugar, oats, flour, cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg together in a bowl.

Cut in butter until crumbly. Add nuts. Sprinkle over the pears. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until bubbling.

Chris Curtis

MP for Milton Keynes North



With the new year well underway, I've been continuing to work on the issues which matter most to people across our constituency. This month, I want to highlight three priorities that come up time and again in my inbox and on the doorstep, and where we are now starting to see real progress: flood prevention, animal welfare and road safety.



Lavendon Flood Alleviation

I wanted to begin with an important update for Lavendon. While we thankfully haven't seen serious flooding this season, I know the worry never really goes away for many families. Too many homes in the village have been affected in the past, and the anxiety returns every time heavy rain is forecast.

I am delighted to confirm that, working closely with the Environment Agency, funding of over £900,000 has now been approved by Milton Keynes City Council for flood alleviation measures in Lavendon. I would like to thank the staff in my team, local councillor Debbie Whitworth, and all relevant agencies for working together to unlock this crucial funding.

This follows detailed studies to understand what will make the most difference locally, with a focus on managing surface water, improving drainage and putting practical measures in place to better protect homes.

While we will never be able to alleviate all flood risk, this is a significant step forward, putting Lavendon on a clear path towards long-term protection and greater peace of mind. I will continue to stay closely involved as the project moves forward.

Boosting Animal Welfare Standards

It is clear from the conversations I have that Milton Keynes is a place that cares deeply about how animals are treated. We are a nation of animal lovers, and that compassion runs right through our communities.

That is why it is encouraging to see long-standing issues finally being addressed through the new Animal Welfare Strategy.

This includes closing loopholes in the breeding of dogs and cats, banning the use of snare traps, introducing a close season for hares, and consulting on phasing out cages. Plans are also in place to decrease the use of animal testing, instead looking at how we can use emerging scientific tools.

For many families, pets are part of the family. With over half of households owning a pet, it is no surprise that I regularly hear concerns about illegal breeding. This strategy includes a ban on the import of dogs and cats under six months old and heavily pregnant animals, as well as measures to tackle the use of electric shock collars.

This builds on changes made through the Renters' Rights Act, making it easier for tenants to keep pets in rented homes, ensuring people do not have to choose between a roof over their head and the animal they love.

There is more to do, but this is a clear step in the right direction: higher standards, tougher enforcement, and a country that matches its love of animals with real action to protect them.

Improving Road Safety

This is another issue I hear about frequently across our towns and villages. That is why I am pleased to see the publication of the first Road Safety Strategy in over a decade, an ambitious aim to reduce deaths and serious injuries by 65% by 2035.

This means tougher action on drink driving, safer vehicle standards, and infrastructure investment. Learner drivers will have more time to build experience before their practical test, and motorcycle training and licensing will be reformed to reduce risk for riders, who are among the most vulnerable on our roads.

The strategy cracks down on those failing to comply with road safety laws, with tougher enforcement of seat belt offences and stronger penalties for uninsured drivers, and tackles pavement parking. Too many people have told me about the dangers of blocked access for pushchairs, wheelchairs and pedestrians- these changes will make it easier for councils to act where parking is unsafe.

When I recently attended a North-East Rural Community Forum, I heard firsthand about the concerns people have around road safety, particularly in rural areas where high speeds, narrow roads and limited infrastructure can create real risks. Speeding is one of the biggest contributors to deaths and serious injuries, especially where country lanes meet villages, crossroads or schools, which is why putting targeted action on speeding at the heart of this strategy, alongside updated guidance on speed limits and the new Manual for Streets, really matters.

If you ever need my assistance, or would like to attend one of my constituency surgeries, please don't hesitate to get in touch with my office via chris.curtis.mp@parliament.uk

As always, please follow my Facebook page (@ChrisCurtisLabour) for frequent news and updates from both Westminster and our constituency.

Enjoying Retirement

Carry on living life to the full knowing you have enough income to see you through.



It's almost impossible to keep up with your finances when you lead a busy retirement lifestyle. Each day is taken up by enjoying your hobbies or spending time with family, and that's exactly how you like it.

We won't ask you to give up your precious time to focus on your finances. Instead, we'll do the hard work for you so you can carry on enjoying life knowing you have enough income to see you through any ups and downs and that your investments are working how they should.

How we help...

- Retirement Income
- Tax planning
- Tailored Strategy
- Ongoing advice

Financial Planners Chartered

CISI ACCREDITED FINANCIAL PLANNING FIRM

For more than ten years, every visit to us was another year ticked off towards Steve and Amanda's much-anticipated retirement. Together, they've been able to revel in their love of travel and indulge in, as Amanda puts it, some very nice holidays. For them, the most important part of their relationship with us is the fact that we really, truly listen.

Steve and Amanda Atkinson

01234 713131

info@janesmithfinancial.com | www.janesmithfinancial.com

Jane Smith Financial Planning Ltd is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Trusts and Tax Planning are not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Registered in England and Wales. Registration Number 4371002. Registered Office: 7 Osier Way, Olney Office Park, Olney, Buckinghamshire. MK46 5FP

Find out more

Jane Smith JS
FINANCIAL PLANNING

YOUR FUTURE IN FOCUS

Dominic Mills & Co Solicitors

Specialists in:

Wills
Powers of Attorney
Deputyship applications
Probate and administration of estates
Inheritance tax planning
Care fees advice



Please contact Steven Higham

Brewery House,
84 High Street
Newport Pagnell,
Buckinghamshire
MK16 8AQ

Tel: 01908 618708
email: sh@dmillsandco.com
Website: www.dmillsandco.com

THE ASSOCIATION OF LIFETIME LAWYERS

STEP Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners



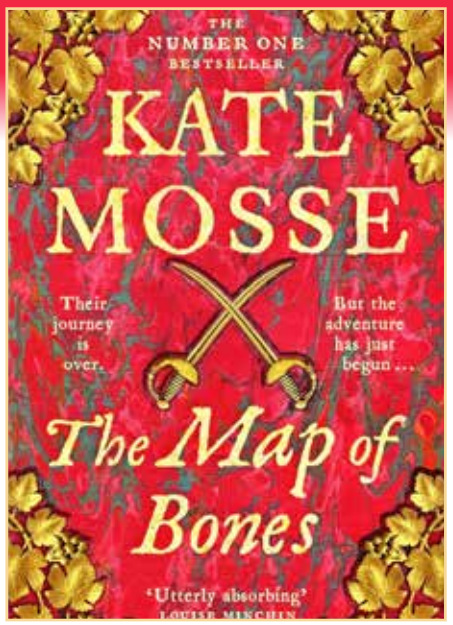
- Company Accounts
- Corporation Tax Returns
- Sole Trader and Partnership Accounts
- Self-Assessment
- Payroll
- VAT & Book-Keeping
- Tax Advice and Business Start Up

www.aj-accountancy.co.uk

ICAEW CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Email: andrew@aj-accountancy.co.uk
Tel: 07799 398555 or 01234 713151
17 High Street, Olney House, Olney, Bucks, MK46 4EB

BOOK REVIEW



The Map of Bones by Kate Mosse

Reviewed by Thelma Shacklady

Suzanne Joubert was a Huguenot in Catholic France, forced to suffer harassment and assault by the dragonnades – Catholic soldiers billeted upon Protestant households.

When this became unbearable, she and her grandmother fled, first to Holland and then, following their ancestors, to South Africa, landing at the Cape. Among the passengers were a party of Dutch orphan girls, sent to be married to settlers whom they had never met, and young Frenchmen hoping to find tolerance and kindness in this distant corner of the world.

Suzanne had brought with her a diary written by her cousin Louise, who had lived and died many years before she was born. Louise had learned to live on her own terms in a man's world, becoming captain of a pirate ship hunting down slaver ships on the high seas before disappearing somewhere in South Africa, never to be seen again. Suzanne hoped to discover more about her – one reason for her great adventure.

The events of her first weeks in the Cape, her knowledge of Dutch making her useful as a translator and new friendships helping her and her grandmother to settle, are described in detail – plus an unwelcome intrusion which threatened the peace they were seeking.

Suzanne's sense of adventure leads her to travel inland, following the trail of her ancestor, seeking to learn more about her and to solve the mystery of her disappearance. Throughout her journeying she continues to be followed and threatened; someone is determined that she will not solve the mystery. As the novel continues, it becomes clear why she is seen as a threat and who wishes to be rid of her.

This book is the final one in a series – the Joubert Family Chronicles – but it is not necessary to know what has gone before; this tale of adventure and female courage in the face of male hostility contains everything the reader needs to know. It recounts the history of forced emigration and the difficulties and challenges facing those who have chosen to leave the past behind and start a new life in a new world. Interlaced with those facts is the search for the truth behind family history, a family created by the author. It is a good read for a cold February!

Oxfam Bookshop

Tel: 01234 714592 | Stanley Court, Olney

Club of the Month: Newport Pagnell Women's Institute

Looking to meet new people, try something different and have a great time while doing it? This group could be for you.



Newport Pagnell Women's Institute is a friendly, welcoming group of women of all ages who come together to socialise, learn new things and have fun.

Whether you've recently moved to the area, want to expand your social circle, or simply fancy a regular night out that isn't the same old routine, you'll find the WI relaxed, supportive and full of laughter.

Founded in 1959, the monthly meetings feature engaging guest speakers or hands-on activities covering a huge variety of topics – from fascinating talks to creative experiences. And there's always tea and cake.

'We love to celebrate together, and our summer and Christmas parties are firm favourites,' says group president Christine Flitt. 'There's usually a monthly raffle and a fun themed competition, with points collected across the year and a gift voucher awarded to the winner. Friendly competition is guaranteed.'

Giving back matters to the institute, too. They actively support local and national charities, including community favourites such as Willen Hospice, MK Food Bank and engagement with various recycling projects.

For members who enjoy getting together more often, there are two lively sub-groups that meet outside of regular meetings: the Knit and Natter Group and the Book Club.

At its core, the Women's Institute is about friendship, inclusivity, confidence and having a voice – it's not just all about knitting and jam. The WI was founded in Canada in 1887 and has always been about empowering women, building skills and supporting causes that matter.

Since arriving in the UK in 1915, the WI has evolved with the times, and today it offers modern women a chance to connect, grow and make a difference, locally and nationally.

Newport Pagnell WI meet on the second Tuesday of each month, from 7.15pm to 9.30pm at The Brooklands Centre, Ousebank Street, Newport Pagnell. Guests are always welcome for £5. If you decide to join, the annual subscription from April 2026 will be £54, which works out at less than £5 per month for a full year of social evenings, activities and events.

Members also receive a monthly newsletter, WI Life magazine, and access to an online hub with courses, resources and opportunities. More information: newportpagnellwi@gmail.com.

Orchard Wills Ltd

Member of the Society of Will Writers

What will you leave behind?

Single Will from £130 • Mirror Wills from £190

A friendly service, office or home visits available

Lasting Power of Attorney

Property & Financial Affairs or Health & Welfare

We make the process quick and easy with a fixed cost of £360 each or £580 for both (including fees)

Why is a lasting Power of Attorney important?

You can only set up a Lasting Power of Attorney when you have mental capacity. Once you've lost capacity, it's too late.

Remember even with an LPA you have not lost control of your finances while you are still able to look after them.



Ron Hall being congratulated on being the longest-serving member of the Society of Will Writers

For more information please call us or visit our website

01234 713 938

www.orchardwills.co.uk

Orchard Wills, Unit 2 Stanley Court, Bucks, MK46 5NH

THIS IS HOSPICE CARE

Willen Hospice

We care because you do

THIS SMILE

MADE POSSIBLE BY A GIFT IN YOUR WILL.

Help us to care for more patients like Robin.

Request your free Gifts in Wills guide:

- Search: willen-hospice.org.uk/legacies
- Call: 01908 303068 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)
- Email: legacies@willen-hospice.org.uk



OLNEY
DENTAL PRACTICE

Accepting New Patients

Scan the QR Code to book your Appointment or Call Us Today



01234 711 489

E | olney@theprivatedentalgroup.co.uk
W | www.theolneydentalpractice.co.uk

Phonebox
MAGAZINE



For events pics, news and more
Follow us on Facebook /Phoneboxmag

orchard press
YOUR LOCAL PRINTER

Large Format & Plan Printing Available

Email your files and printing requirements to Sarah:
info@orchard.press

Find out more: 01234 713 298
Unit 2, Stanley Court,
Olney, Bucks, MK46 5NH

Linden
FINANCIAL SERVICES

Local, Independent Mortgage and Personal Insurance Specialists

Please contact for friendly, professional advice.
01234 712109
07940 801423
nigel@linden-fs.co.uk
www.linden-fs.co.uk
72 High Street, Olney,
Bucks. MK46 4BE

Orchard Wills Ltd
Member of the Society of Will Writers

Lasting Power of Attorney

Property & Financial Affairs
or Health & Welfare

We make the process quick and easy with a fixed cost of £360 each or £580 for both (including fees)

Remember even with an LPA you have not lost control of your finances while you are still able to look after them

For more information please call us or visit our website

01234 713 938
www.orchardwills.co.uk

Orchard Wills, Unit 2 Stanley Court, Bucks, MK46 5NH



No ifs, no butts

As weather conditions change in the UK, now is the time to think more about collecting water for future garden irrigation.

There were several periods of dry weather across our region over the summer, just like most of the country, and gardens were looking a bit parched. July had lower than average rainfall, according to official sources, and August and early September went in a similar direction. Hard to believe when it feels like it's rained every day since the start of Autumn...

And while we all love a bit of sunshine and warm weather during the summer months, the arid conditions can have a serious effect on our gardens. Grass turns brown and wiry, potted plants start to curl up, leaves go brown, and the earth turns hard and crusty.

But with precious supplies growing scarcer and water meters demanding that every drop is paid for, how do you manage consumption in the garden to make your outside space as sustainable as possible?

Experts believe that, as weather conditions become more extreme in the UK, the distribution of rainfall will be more unstable and less predictable. Forecasters say that winter will bring wetter conditions while the summer months will be hotter and drier.

That adds an extra level of strain for your lawns and plants while giving you something to think about in terms of water use and storage.

Plant life needs more water when it's hot and dry, so it makes sense to collect and store water when you don't need it. Thousands of gallons of water come off housing estates' or streets of homes' rooftops every year and doesn't get collected.

But that water can easily be gathered during the rainy season and brought out to be used when it turns warmer. Plants don't need clean water to drink, as humans do – in fact, stored rainwater is often better for flowers as it is lower in pH (potential of Hydrogen).

A water butt is the easiest and cleanest way to collect water, but you don't have to use one: buckets, recycled wooden water barrels or plastic drums can do a similar job – it all helps. If you are tight for space, look for slimline butts or smaller designs that might fit in your garden. Some decorative water butts come with a planter built in on top in which to grow flowers such as pansies or grasses.

You will need some sort of guttering or downpipe, but if you're doing this at your home, it's almost certainly set up for the job. Rain diverter kits, which cost around £10-£15, channel water from your home's downpipe into a water butt or storage tank, but then carry extra water into the drainage system when it's full.

The most convenient water butt is one with a tap near the bottom. Stand the butt on bricks or a base to ensure the tap is slightly higher than your watering can, and dispensing then becomes simple. Give the butt a good clean out once a year, and you won't get stale smelling-water.

No butt? Aside from collected rainwater, you can use 'grey' water, such as that from the kitchen, washing machine or bath. Household soaps are harmless to plants, but avoid bleach, disinfectants and stronger cleaning solutions. Never use 'black' water from a toilet or septic tank system.

Careful planning and sensible water storage and use can keep your garden looking fresh and well-irrigated all year round while saving a valuable and vital resource for everyone.

WATER SAVING TIPS

- Use a water tank or butt. Collect as much 'free' water as you can
- Use leak-free hoses. Water-tight connections and pipes are important
- Use mulch covering. Wood chips and bark help prevent evaporation
- Check the sprinkler. Direct your spray into your garden, not over the fence
- Only water when it needs it. Don't bother if it has rained recently
- Water longer but less often. Roots grow longer in softer ground

Small School, Strong Community: Celebrating togetherness at Newton Blossomville CE School

Every so often, a moment arrives that reminds a village just how powerful a united community can be. For Newton Blossomville CE School, that moment came during its annual Christmas Light Switch On — an evening that illuminated far more than the school grounds.



Emma Wallace, Executive Headteacher at the Village Schools Federation, wrote to Phonebox about the success of the event, where in just a few hours, this small but spirited school raised an astonishing £3,019, a testament to generosity, shared purpose, and the unmistakable warmth of a close-knit community.

What truly made the achievement remarkable were the people behind it. The Friends of Newton Blossomville CE School, together with the dedicated staff team, poured enthusiasm, creativity, and sheer determination into bringing the event to life. Their commitment transformed a winter evening into something magical. Local businesses also played a vital role, offering support that underscored what becomes possible when a community stands firmly behind its school and its children. The result was not just a fundraiser, but a celebration of collective belief and shared pride.

Every pound raised will directly enrich the lives of pupils — funding trips to London by train to visit St Paul's Cathedral and learn about the Great Fire of London, experiences such as tobogganing, and resources that spark curiosity and broaden horizons. These opportunities are part of what makes Newton Blossomville CE School such a special place for children to learn, grow, and discover their potential. For a small school, the impact of this fundraising is profound.

This success is a powerful reminder that being a village school is not a limitation; it is a strength. Smaller numbers allow for deeper relationships, a nurturing environment, and a community that rallies together when it matters most. The Christmas Light Switch On proved that when this community comes together, extraordinary things happen.

To everyone who contributed — in time, energy, donations, or encouragement — thank you. You are the heartbeat of this outstanding school, and your support ensures that its children continue to thrive.

And for families considering where to begin their child's educational journey, Newton Blossomville CE School offers something truly special: a nurturing village environment with opportunities that might just surprise you. Get in touch to discover more by calling the office on 01234 881294, email office@newtonblossomvilleschool.co.uk or visit the website at www.newtonblossomvilleschool.co.uk

---

Yardley Arts: Partnering for Creativity, Community and Culture

Yardley Arts CIC has become a vibrant cultural hub in Yardley Hastings. Now in its ninth year, they are inviting artists from across the UK to submit work to be selected for their Summer Open 2026 – a new exhibition celebrating the best of contemporary visual art.



Visitors enjoying a previous exhibition



The old School Hall, home to Yardley Arts

Taking place from 25th June to 19th July 2026, this open-call exhibition invites artists from across the UK to submit 2D and 3D works for selection by a panel of respected art professionals.

From their converted Victorian building in Northamptonshire, Yardley Arts nurtures local talent, hosts inspiring exhibitions, and welcomes thousands of visitors who share a passion for art in all its forms.

The Summer Open 2026 marks an exciting new chapter. Selected artworks will be displayed in the bright, contemporary gallery space and in a newly developed sculpture garden, offering artists an inspiring setting and broad public exposure. The exhibition will open with a special Awards Reception, shining a spotlight on creativity and innovation in the region.

As part of the exhibition, Yardley Arts will also take part in the Yardley Hastings Open Gardens event on Sunday 28th June 2026, featuring artists working live in participating gardens — a perfect blend of art, nature, and community spirit.

Key Exhibition Details

- Title: Yardley Arts Summer Open 2026
- Open for entry: 12th February – 12 May 2026
- Dates: 25th June – 19th July 2026
- Times: Thursday to Sunday, 11am–5pm
- Venue: Yardley Arts Gallery, Yardley Hastings, Northamptonshire
- Expected Visitors: Around 2,500 in person and over 10,000 online

Why submit your work?

- **Be part of one of the region's most exciting art showcases**
- **Exhibit in a professionally curated space with strong visitor engagement**
- **Online gallery showing all artworks to maximise sales and visibility**
- **Exposure to a high-profile panel of judges**
- **Gain access to buyers, collectors, and the media**
- **Compete for prizes and awards recognising outstanding work**

How to enter:

Online submissions for the Yardley Arts Summer Open 2026 will open online on 12th February 2026.

Visit https://www.yardleyarts.org/artists-call to find out more.



Orchard celebrates with a Wassail

Community space gets harvest health cheer.

Olney's popular community orchard was given it annual 'Wassail' last month to prepare it for the months ahead.
The Wassail is an ancient custom of 'bringing in the green' to cider orchards to ensure a good harvest the following summer.
The word 'Wassail' goes back to Old Norse and it means 'good health'. You can wassail people and buildings too by taking a bowl of hot mulled ale from door to door.
To take part in the Wassail, it's traditional to wear a motley coat and a hat decorated with holly, ivy, and other greenery. Rapskallian Morris Dancers were on hand to help with this and, at the recent Wassail, organisers Rohan Wedge and Catherine Rose had materials available so other people could take part.

The Wassail consisted of several traditional actions:

1. **The Summoning** – the people are summoned, in this case by the blowing of a horn, to take part in the Wassail.
2. **Toast** – pieces of toast, usually dipped in cider, are hung in the trees as an offering to the robin, the spirit of the orchard. While this is happening, a Wassail song is sung.
3. **The Invocation** – the Wassail leader shouts out various phrases which are repeated by the people, ending with a cry of 'WASSAIL!'
4. **The Wassail** – after this, cider is thrown over the trees while the people make as much noise as possible with instruments, bells, pots and pans, and cries.
5. **The Dance** – people gather in a circle and perform a traditional Circle Dance.

"We had a good turnout for our third Wassail, and despite the cold, everybody had a good time," said Catherine. "I think it really lifts people's spirits and gives people a chance to connect with nature. And we're already making plans for next year!

The Summoning Poem

Gentlefolk of Olney, old and young,
Our Wassail must be danced and sung!
I call you now, both young and old
To drive away the winter's cold!
Folk of Olney, without fail,
Come to make our true Wassail!



with thanks to S Bailes for the below images











Churches Together





NEWPORT PAGNELL

The Beauty of Lunar New Year and the Hope of Renewal

For those of us who have moved from Hong Kong to Milton Keynes in recent years, the arrival of the Lunar New Year on 17th February is a season of both celebration and reflection. While we now call Milton Keynes home, this time of year gently reconnects us with our cultural roots and the values we treasure.

The Lunar New Year is rich with symbols of renewal. Homes are cleaned to make space for new blessings, and families gather around the table to celebrate unity, reconciliation, and peace. Red envelopes are exchanged as gestures of goodwill and encouragement for the year ahead. Beneath these familiar customs lies a shared human longing – the hope for a fresh start, restored relationships, and renewed strength.

As Christians, this longing for renewal resonates deeply with our faith. The Bible often speaks of God's desire to renew and restore His people. Renewal is not only a cultural practice but also a spiritual invitation. Each new season reminds us that we are given a chance to let go of burdens, rediscover peace, and step forward with hope and trust.

The Bible teaches us that true renewal does not come from luck, favourable signs, or outward rituals, but from God's steadfast love. As many of us adjust to life in a new country or face personal challenges and uncertainty, we hold on to the assurance that God walks with us. He offers peace in times of change, strength in moments of weakness, and hope for the journey ahead.

In this way, the Lunar New Year and the Christian faith meet beautifully in this shared longing: the renewal of hearts, relationships, and communities. What the festival expresses through tradition, the Christian faith anchors in trust in a God who restores and makes all things new.

As we mark the Lunar New Year together in Newport Pagnell and Olney, our prayer is simple – that this season may be a time of renewed peace, renewed relationships, and renewed hope for all who call these towns home.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." – Romans 15:13

Warm wishes for a peaceful and hope-filled Year of the Horse.

The Deacons of Calvary Chinese Christian Church

OLNEY

Shrove Tuesday and the Pancake Race

I'm really looking forward to welcoming visitors to the 2026 Pancake Race from wherever in the country or indeed the world they have come. It will be my first Shrove Tuesday/Pancake Day as Priest in charge of St Peter and St Paul's Anglican church, Olney, where the race originated. My own Grandmother spoke affectionately of the Olney Pancake Race as we grew up just over the border in Bedfordshire. Her name was Grace and her favourite hymn 'Amazing Grace,' so I feel very much that her spirit is with me as the excitement around the 2026 race builds towards that moment when we will give thanks together in the Parish Church which is also the home of Newton's 'Amazing Grace.' She always insisted we would have Pancakes for our tea on this day and they always tasted so good; I'm looking forward to sampling a few on the day.

Fasting during Lent and using up such ingredients as batter on Shrove Tuesday was a Christian observance for many centuries. In today's culture the discipline of denying ourselves is a rare thing. We live in an age of instant gratification, 24-hour shopping, online shopping with next-day delivery, and an abundance of food in our western shops. Of course it was not always so. Centuries ago, in the midst of scarcity, people would still fast, denying themselves in the hope of drawing closer to God. There is a lot to be said for it if that is our intention.

The Shriving of Shrove Tuesday was that the Priest heard your confession as you got your sins off your chest prior to entering the season of Lent. British Telecom once ran an advertisement campaign called 'it's good to talk.' Well, they would say that wouldn't they, but of course it's true, and talking to God sometimes with the aid of a priest can be useful. Recently someone in the Swan exclaimed to me that it'd take several hours to hear his confession! If he bought the beers, I was prepared to give him the time, I replied. On a serious note, getting something off your chest is a real human need. The gospels tell us that people often went to Jesus for counsel, and they inevitably left better for the chat and some sage advice. (Jn 4:7)

If you long to be absolved of your failures and shortcomings, and yearn for forgiveness, I'm always happy to be a listening ear and, as a representative of Christ, to help rid you of anything that weighs you down and holds you back; for life is a pancake race which we run together, alongside each other as community. At the end of a confession the Priest always says: 'Go. Your sins are forgiven, and pray for me, a sinner too.' It's a reminder that we all participate in the race of life, we all need encouragement, we all need a prayer from time to time, we all need cheering on to reach the finish line! That is my role here in Olney, and I look forward to cheering you on in the years to come.

With my blessings,

Fr Ben Lewis, Priest in Charge, St Peter and St Paul Olney



Why is your house full... but your loft is empty?

Local homeowners are discovering storage space they already own

With growing families, home working, and ever-increasing storage demands, many homeowners are finding their houses feel cluttered, even though there's often a large, unused space directly above them.

Home Counties Loft Ladders is a local company that helps homeowners safely and correctly use their loft space. By improving access, lighting and boarded storage areas, most installations are completed in less than a day, with minimal disruption to the home.

Jamie Oakley, Manager at Home Counties Loft Ladders, explains: "*Most people know their loft is there, they just don't use it because access is awkward or unsafe. Our job is to make that space easy, safe and practical to use.*"

"*We work to three simple principles: Quality in our materials and workmanship, Integrity in how we treat people's homes, and Value in offering a fair price for a job done properly.*"

That approach has led to much of the company's work coming from recommendations by previous customers, homeowners who wanted the job done correctly, without mess or hassle.

To find out how you could make better use of your loft, call Jamie on **0808 301 9552** or visit **homecountiesloftladders.co.uk** to book a free, no-obligation quotation. You may be surprised how much space you already have.





Browns Tree Solutions Ltd

Buckinghamshire Tree Surgeons | Family Run Since 1997

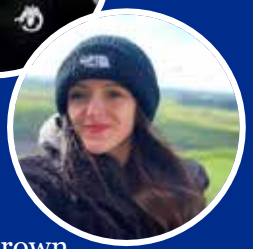
- Domestic & Commercial Contractors
- Free Quotations & Advice
- Tree Works: Pruning, Reductions & Removals
- Tree Surveys & Reports
- Hedge Works: Trimming, Reductions & Removals
- Stump Treatment & Removals
- Site Clearances
- CSCS Qualified Staff

Ray Brown





Dylan Brown



Jaz Brown

01908 773 777 | 07525 134200

INFO@BROWNSTREESOLUTIONS.CO.UK

WWW.BROWNSTREESOLUTIONS.CO.UK

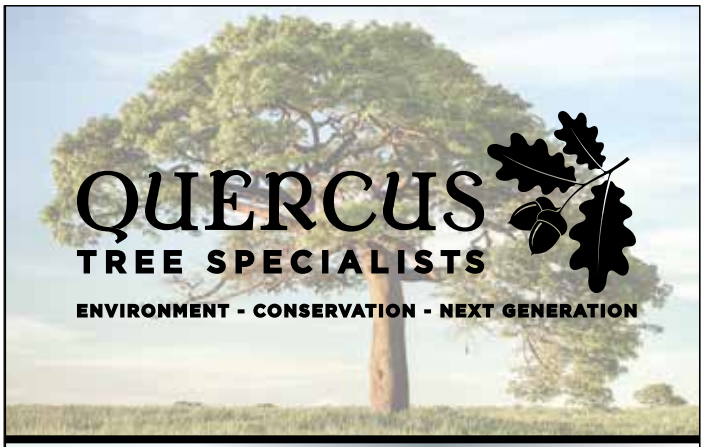
GCK
TREEWORKS
TREE SURGERY SPECIALISTS
www.gcktreeworks.co.uk

- Tree Felling
- Pollarding
- Dead Wooding
- Stump Grinding
- Crown Reductions
- Crown Thinning
- Crown Lifting
- Tree Surveys
- Site Clearance
- Hedge Cutting
- Hedge Reductions
- Hedge Removals



CONTACT US NOW FOR YOUR FREE NO OBLIGATION QUOTE
t: 01933 667575 | e: enquiries@gcktreeworks.co.uk

Checkatrade.com · Alcumus · ConstructionLine



QUERCUS
TREE SPECIALISTS
ENVIRONMENT - CONSERVATION - NEXT GENERATION

ALL ASPECTS OF TREE WORK CARRIED OUT

REMOVALS | CROWN REDUCTIONS / THINNING | FRUIT TREES
HEDGE WORK | PLANTING | PLANNING APPLICATIONS

FREE QUOTATIONS AVAILABLE
CALL LUKE

07972 183185 INFO@QUERCUSTREES.COM
@QUERCUSTREESPECIALISTS

FULLY INSURED & NPTC QUALIFIED
ALL WORK CARRIED OUT TO BRITISH STANDARDS

Arborisk
Arboricultural insurance expertise
City & Guilds NPTC Qualified

GCK
FIREWOOD

KILN DRIED FIREWOOD

LOW MOISTURE · BRITISH · FREE DELIVERY WITHIN 15 MILES · READY TO BURN · WS6074

- Quality Hardwood
- Quality Softwood
- Kindling Nets
- Firelighters
- Locally Sourced
- Sustainable

ORDER ONLINE NOW
www.gckfirewood.co.uk
CALL 01933 667575

MILTON KEYNES FENCING LIMITED

For All Your Fencing, Decking and Sheds in Olney, Milton Keynes & Surrounding Areas

A small family run business with over 25 years experience

CALL US FOR A FREE QUOTATION
01908 616 112 or 01234 713 843
www.mk-fencing.co.uk • mk1fencing@aol.com
Osbournes Farm, Newport Road, Emberton, MK46 5JD

Taylor Landscapes

- Pruning, Hedgecutting, Leylandii reduction
- Turfing & Planting
- Patio Cleaning & Restoration
- Fencing, Trellising & Fence repair
- Bespoke log stores

Please call Justin for a quote
07816 097 797
01234 714 634

RICHARDSON
LANDSCAPES

Offering all aspects of landscaping from maintenance to complete re-landscaping

Office: 01234 240430
Mobile: 07515 632666
sjr@richardsonlandscapes.com

CAMLOWE LTD

Property Maintenance & Landscaping

We are a family-run business based in Newport Pagnell, providing a wide range of services in and outside your home or office. No job too big or too small!






- Patios
- Driveways
- Decking
- Fencing
- Gazebos
- Brickwork
- Decorating
- Bathrooms
- Tiling

WWW.CAMLOWE.CO.UK
07894 478163 info@camlowe.co.uk

P.HOOK LANDSCAPES

LANDSCAPING AND GARDEN DESIGN

With over 20 years' experience, we truly care about creating outstanding outside spaces & garden design that you can enjoy for years to come.

- GARDEN DESIGN
- PATIOS & DRIVEWAYS
- FENCING & DECKING
- NATURAL & ARTIFICAL TURF
- GARDEN BUILDINGS & SHEDS
- COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPING

Free, no-obligation quote to discuss your needs.





MOB: 07931662355 | WEB: phooklandscapes.co.uk
EMAIL: info@phooklandscapes.co.uk

ADRIAN WORLEY LANDSCAPING

See me on Trust a Trader website

Fencing, Paving & Driveways

35 Years Experience
Based Locally
15 Northampton Rd, Lavendon

01234 714 887
07500 042 686
E: worley60@btinternet.com

Sue Gilbert

Gardens by Design

M : 07870 481963
T : 0800 228 9131

- Individual designs & personalised service
- Complimentary initial consultation & quotation within a 20 mile radius of Milton Keynes
- Gardens large & small from concepts to final plans
- Full construction & planting
- Designer of 2008 RHS Medal Winning Garden

www.suegilbert.co.uk

TREE SURGERY

Monet Tree Care Ltd

STUMP GRINDING & HEDGE MAINTENANCE

- Tree Removals
- Crown Reductions
- Removing Deadwood
- Pollarding
- Hedge Maintenance
- Fruit Tree Pruning
- Stump Removals
- Cable Bracing
- Dealing with dangerous trees or storm damage

01908 049955 • 07731 467078
www.monettreecare.co.uk • info@monettreecare.co.uk

B Gibbs Garden Maintenance

Fencing, Fence repairs and painting, Hedging, Turfing
Fully Insured

01933 412 621
07707 687 095
bgibbs981@gmail.com

PEST CONTROL

"Ants to Elephants"

RENTAKEEPER
01908 510189
www.killem.co.uk
Local, Reliable
Fully Insured

THE COLD LIGHT OF DAY

February is on average the second coldest month of the year, beaten only by wintry January. But we all still need to get around, even if it's wet, snowy and icy on the roads. So how should you plan for motoring in the cold snap?



Phonebox Motoring
with **Tom Johnston**

We have already had snow, fog and ice this year, and we are only a few weeks into 2026. Forecasters say there's more to come and we are currently in the middle of the coldest parts of the year in Britain.
But that won't stop drivers taking to the roads and trying to continue going about their business. It can't – life has to go on and a bit of arctic weather should not be allowed to get in the way of that. However, it's more important than ever to ensure your car or van is in the right condition for the winter season.
A frosty and frozen morning or a freezing, snowbound evening presents a completely different proposition when it comes to driving than if you were planning a warm, dry spring or summer trip. So it makes sense to be prepared for winter.
To help you plan ahead, we've put together these top tips for winter driving. They could well save your car from extra wear or damage, but they might also save your life.

1. CHECK

Check the weather forecast before you set off on any trip. Knowing what you are likely to find will reduce the chances of you coming up against conditions that could impact your journey. Rain at any time of year can be dangerous – nine out of 10 weather-related serious road accidents happen in the rain. With today's technology, most weather warnings are communicated ahead of time, allowing you to be ready.

2. ROUTE

Know your route, research where you are going, including rest stops, and anticipate delays to leave yourself plenty of time for your journey. With unpredictable or changing weather, and severe drops in temperature, being prepared should include avoiding getting lost. Most cars have satellite navigation built in and there are stand-alone satnav units or a mobile phone App too.

3. DISTANCE

When you're driving in wintery conditions, it's important to increase the stopping distance between you and the vehicle ahead and keep your speed down to a manageable level too. Approach every junction as if you were thinking of stopping well before the 'give way' line or traffic lights. It can take up to 10 times longer to stop in icy conditions than when it's a fine day, according to the Highway Code.

4. GEARS

Driving your car in a higher gear will help you avoid unwanted wheelspin. If it's icy and you're struggling to get started, try pulling away in second gear. This should make it easier to get you going, as pulling away in first gear on ice offers less grip. Most modern automatic cars will have the ability to pull away in a higher gear or may even have a separate system for winter driving and an easier pull away.

5. LIGHTS

The winter doesn't only see us hit with cold weather; we also see the days getting shorter, which means you'll be using lights much more. Before setting off on every journey, check all your lights are clean and working correctly. With an increase in local councils introducing strategies to tackle climate change involving dimming or reducing street lighting, your headlights are even more crucial.

6. PRESSURE

Your grip will be seriously reduced in the winter, so ensure your tyres are in good condition and correctly inflated. While the law requires you to have your tread depth at a minimum of 1.6mm, grip starts to reduce on anything under 3mm, so make sure you keep an eye on your tyres and replace them if needed. If you are likely to encounter extreme snow conditions, consider snow chains.

7. GRITTERS

When driving on a busy road, avoid overtaking a gritting lorry because the road ahead might not be treated and could be affected by snow and ice. If you have any doubt, don't risk it. Drop back so your car doesn't get pelted by grit from the spreader, and follow at a comfortable distance. For the same reason, never overtake a snow plough in heavy conditions.

8. CLEAN

Keep your car clean throughout the winter as the salt content in road grit can cause corrosion to any exposed parts. Wash and rinse alloy wheels too; the smallest scratch can quickly become corroded or damaged. A clean windscreen is easier to see out of than a dirty one, so keep it washed and ensure there is plenty of fluid in the washer bottle. The police take a dim view of dirty screens.







PREPARE A WINTER KIT FOR YOUR CAR

It's worth packing a few essential items in your car's boot to make sure you're ready in case you get stuck in cold and wintry weather. If you were to break down, then it's best to be prepared. Carry with you:

- Ice scraper
- De-icer
- Torch
- Extra clothes
- Blankets
- High visibility jacket
- First aid kit
- Jump leads
- Reflective warning triangle
- In-car phone charger
- Food and drink





DON'T RISK A BREAKDOWN IN THE COLD SNAP

Freezing weather slows everything down, including the chemical reactions that power your car's battery. In freezing conditions a battery can lose around 35% of its performance, but today's modern cars rely heavily on electrical systems. Headlights, heaters, wipers, and in-car technology all add to the demands placed on the battery.

Electric vehicles (EVs) are not immune to the effects of cold weather. Low temperatures slow battery chemistry in electric cars, reducing the range available from a full charge. Using the heater and defrosters adds to the drain, according to experts at GEM Motoring Assist.

"Cold weather puts a real strain on a car's 12-volt battery, and its ability to hold charge drops significantly as temperatures fall," says GEM's James Luckhurst.

"Batteries rarely last beyond five years, so if yours is getting old, don't wait until it fails."

The tell-tale signs of a potential failure are usually easy to spot. Often the engine struggles to turn over, or you might hear a low whirring sound when starting. If there's no sound at all, there could be a complete loss of charge or a poor connection. And even before you get in the car, if your remote central locking or key fob doesn't work, that could indicate a flat battery.

If you have access to a second vehicle and a set of good-quality jump leads, you may be able to jump-start your car. Check the owner's manual for both vehicles to ensure how this can be done without causing damage. Once the engine is running, keep both vehicles idling for a few minutes before disconnecting the jump leads.

If you have an EV, ensure it is fully charged before long trips. Make use of pre-conditioning features that warm the cabin and battery while the car is still plugged in. And allow extra time and charge for journeys during sub-zero conditions.

QUICK BURSTS:

Car market on up

The UK new car market grew for the third year in a row in 2025, breaching the two million mark for the first time since the Covid pandemic, say experts.

There were 2,020,520 new car registrations, according to the figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT). Uptake in December rose by 3.9% to 146,249 units, with a final flourish in the private buyer market, up by 16%. Repeating a pattern seen in previous years, battery electric vehicle (BEV) registrations took a high market share in the final month of the year, accounting for 32.2% of the market.

As a result, last year's market rose by 3.5%, with growth across all buyer types. Demand from private buyers recovered slightly from 2024 – when uptake fell below levels last seen during 2020 – with a 4.5% increase to 779,587 units, but still only comprising 38.6% of registrations.

Hybrid electric vehicle (HEV) volumes rose by 7.2% to achieve a 13.9% market share, while plug-in hybrids were the fastest growing powertrain, with volumes increasing 34.7% to take 11.1% of registrations.

Mazda goes blue

The all-new Mazda CX-5 will see the debut of a new colour in the Mazda palette – Navy Blue. Offering a refined, timeless shade developed through Mazda's global design co-creation process, the new shade will expand the colour line-up available on Mazda's best-selling SUV from launch.

Showcasing an evolved Kodo Design approach, the all-new Mazda CX-5 will be enhanced by the subtle yet confident Navy Blue colour that reinforces the CX-5's refined character as a versatile SUV, crafted with a Japanese soul and designed to resonate emotionally with modern lifestyles.

When it arrives in the UK this spring, the all-new Mazda CX-5 will be offered with eight exterior colours, including Navy Blue. While Mazda is often associated with red, blue has played a defining role in the brand's history for decades: from the R360 Coupe to iconic models like the Familia and MX-5.

With more than 150 blue shades in Mazda's heritage, the new Navy Blue builds on Mazda's legacy as a colour designed to feel timeless, emotional and globally appealing. Prices for the CX-5 start at £31,600.



YARDLEY HASTINGS GARAGE

Specialists in Accident Repairs

- Servicing (all makes and models)
- Insurance work – Free Estimates & Advice
- Tyres & Exhausts
- Wheel Alignment
- Diagnostics
- Collection & Delivery – Loan cars available
- Used Cars for Sale

Are you looking to sell?

We are looking to buy late, low mileage cars for stock.

Opening Times | 8am to 5.30 pm Monday to Friday
8 am to 12.30 pm Saturday

Tel 01604 696 225 Fax 01604 696 551



Bedford Rd West, Yardley Hastings, Northampton, NN7 1HB

SOUL GARAGES

Your local, independent Service, MOT & repair centre

FALL INTO WINTER WITH **SOUL GARAGES**
Our thorough winter check costs just **£79.99**
giving you peace of mind, and includes:

- **Wheel alignment** – Checked and adjusted to manufacturer specifications (toe in/out)
- **Wipers & washers** – Operation and condition checked; screen wash topped up
- **Antifreeze** – Strength, level, and condition checked; topped up*
- **Battery & charging system** – Tested to help prevent breakdowns
- **Tyres** – Wear and pressures checked for safety and legality
- **Lights** – All lights checked for correct operation and visibility
- **Fluids** – Oil, brake fluid, and water levels checked and topped up*
- **Drive belts** – Condition of auxiliary belts checked (excl. cambelt)
- **Free ice scraper** – So you don't have to use your credit card!

* fluid topped up to a max of 1 litre



www.soulgarages.co.uk service@soulgarages.co.uk

Electric Vehicle Servicing

M.O.T. TESTING STATION

Call 01234 712592

Lime Street, Olney, Buckinghamshire, MK46 5BA

ALAN'S *Elite Travel*

OF OLNEY

Your local based taxi service for Olney & surrounding villages

Airport, Seaport Transfers & Special Occasions

A friendly service at competitive rates



Tel: 07966 134 933

Call now for your free, no obligation quote

07551 461 733



AJ paving contractors





AJ Block Paving prides itself on paving the way in quality drives, paths and patios at competitive prices.

We offer a full service, from design, through to installation.



Block Paving • Driveways • Patios •
Fencing • Sleepers • Artificial Grass • Landscaping

info@ajblockpaving.com

Gardner & White

Reliable Service from a Traditional Garage Est 1972

MOTs ON CARS, MOTORCYCLES & VANS,
CAR SERVICING & REPAIRS, TYRES, BRAKES,
EXHAUSTS & CLUTCHES, DIAGNOSTICS

01908 551387

www.gardnerandwhiteltd.co.uk

39 High Street, Stoke Goldington, Bucks, MK16 8NP

OPEN Mon-Fri 8am to 5pm Sat 8am to 1pm

Don’t make me laugh...



Someone said to The Phonebox that they thought my articles weren’t as ‘funny’ as they used to be.

Which amused me, because I’ve never sat down and thought, Right then, time to be funny. I’ve never written them specifically to make people laugh. Light-hearted, yes. Observational, hopefully. But funny? Only by accident. And truth be told, you have to be careful what counts as funny in this day and age.

As I might have mentioned before, I’ve been pulled in by the police once or twice over things I’ve written. Not for anything genuinely sinister, you understand – only for something that made most people laugh. But all it takes is one person with a delicate constitution and a talent for offence, and suddenly you’re explaining humour to an officer with a clipboard. I had to explain once that my ‘amusing’ quip had been nicked directly from a ‘Steptoe and Son’ script (which I adapted to the stage, so I’m well versed on), but I don’t think they’d heard of that show.

The police don’t worry me. I’m always polite when questioned, and I know my way around the law on these matters. I just tell them to either charge me or sod off – I phrase it a tad more respectfully, but we all know what I’m saying. So far, they’ve sodded off.

As an insurance policy against such silliness, I’m a member of the Free Speech Union, who help their members when nonsense strikes. I’ve never had to use their services, but best to be ready, and if, one day, the Crown Prosecution Service decided I’d written enough mildly critical observations to warrant court – well, it’s a bit of publicity, isn’t it? Sell a few more tickets at The Arches and enjoy the sheer absurdity of it all. Or the worse comes to the worse and I write my article from Wormwood Scrubs, which interestingly is on the Du Cane Road in West London, where ‘Steptoe and Son’ was set, and outside location filming was done. So, I could gaze out of my cell window on the very area for more inspiration.

But it does mean I have to think about what I write.

I keep a list of jokes on my phone – anything I’ve heard, anything I’ve thought of or anything that strikes me as worth filing away. I categorise them too. Categories like:

- Could be used in panto
- Don’t tell this one at church
- Absolutely not unless it’s a rugby dinner

Because when you’re chatting to people, it’s easy enough to judge what you can get away with. Even with an audience, when I do after-dinner speaking, you instinctively know the boundaries if you’ve done the research. If you’re speaking at an Army reunion or a rugby club, you don’t use the same material as you would at some corporate dinner full of people who are filled with guilt about anything that isn’t worthy.

But when you’re writing, it’s totally different – because you don’t know who will read it.



It could be someone who shares your sense of humour, or it could be someone who hasn’t smiled since 2004.

So, I’ve been looking through the jokes I could safely tell in print. Some are too long. Some only work in the telling. Some are funny, but only if you know your audience and they know you.
Still, here are a few that should be safe enough.

I woke up this morning and realised I’d turned into a cat.
Don’t ask meow.

I did my first nude painting yesterday.
The garden fence looks great, but the neighbours aren’t happy.

I bought the wife one of those pug dogs.
Despite the squashed nose, bulging eyes, and rolls of fat, the dog seems to like her.

And I’ll tell you two interesting facts:
Firstly, my willy is the size of two IKEA pencils.
Secondly, I’ve been banned from IKEA.

And occasionally I don’t even need to try – I’ll just hear someone say something unintentionally brilliant, and I’ll quietly note it down. I was once in a café in London when I heard an old lady say one of the funniest things I’ve ever heard. She was talking to a friend, and I heard her say, “Did I ever tell you about when Neil Diamond helped me lay a carpet?” Not that I could ever use it, but it was certainly worth noting down, and I was laughing so much that I missed the rest of her intriguing conversation.

I do get a bit of backlash when I write about politics, but mostly from all parties, so that’s fine, and I’m no fan of any of them, but then again, I’m not intending to change the world and the one great thing is that you can’t lose your reputation if you don’t have one.

I am a bit irritated at present about the current crop of loonies running the show, as I don’t like elections being cancelled, and obviously, I don’t much care for jury trials being scrapped. Who knows when you might need a bit of common sense to acquit you.

I’m also irritated that we have Zack Polanski, Jeremy Corbyn and Nigel Farage all wanting to take charge. My party, The Official Monster Raving Loony Party, for whom I have written policies, were once the UK leaders in Loonies, but I fear we are being overtaken to some degree.

Oh well, ‘Interesting times’ as they say in China, which translated means “Aaaaah, what the hell is going on!”

I certainly don’t know, but hey ho!

If you see me in the pub or at Sandwichland, do ask me for a joke from my phone, and I’ll see if I can judge what you may find funny.

I’ll try and cheer you up during these ‘Interesting Times’.

See you next month!
Dave...

OLNEY UKRAINE AID NEWS

Children's bags full of joy

Regular campaigner Lynne King has had great success with her children's Christmas bags, which have been sent to war-torn areas of Ukraine. Here is her update:

Thank you to Olney residents and friends from the surrounding villages. I sent out 95 children's Christmas bags to Ukraine in mid-December, and these bags have all been delivered, along with bags from Emberton and Astwood, to children in war-torn Ukraine.

Some of the funding for the Olney bags came from the Christmas Crafts afternoon I organised at the end of November, where the magnificent sum of £850 was raised.

This enabled me to buy a selection of items for the bags to supplement the donations I had already received. If you visited the Christmas Tree Festival in December, you might have seen the tree representing the locally based group HelpUkraineBAMK.

My pictures show 'children supporting children' by raising funds through the Christmas Crafts afternoon.

I continue to fill drawstring bags with much-needed items for hospital patients and soldiers on the front line. Any donations are most welcome. For suggested lists, please get in touch with me: 07766 425 523. Donations of toiletries, warm socks, underwear, foot powder, antiseptic cream, paracetamol, and sweets are most welcome. These can be dropped off at the Phonebox office or to me. Thank you for your continued support.







Julian spoons out the donations

OLNEY-UKRAINE AID

Popular local busker Julian found a dry spot to play his spoons during last December's Dickens of a Christmas event. He raised a very useful £110 for Ukraine Aid in his efforts.



Yardley 2 Ukraine is a community effort from the Yardley area that organizes trips to deliver donated vehicles (like cars and ambulances) and essential supplies directly to people in Ukraine, with fund-raisers often run via GoFundMe and Facebook to cover costs for vehicle prep, fuel, and aid. Details below:



Newport Pagnell & Olney Lions (CIO)

(Registered Charity Number 1184025)

NO REST FOR THE WICKED!

Well, we've had a bit of a rest after working hard over the festive period, and things are still a little quiet, but we are now ready to spring into action and start our programme of activity for 2026. At our first business meeting of the year, we started by brainstorming fundraising ideas for the coming year – including the return of some old favourites. We also moved ahead with sorting out details of our next 'signature' event – our latest 'Lions Toast'. (see below). At our meeting, we also looked at some of our 'Key Performance Indicators' (KPI's) to see how we were doing against last year, and which made for interesting reading (see photo). We've done / are doing really well – (considering our fairly modest numbers of active members).

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Lions Toast: The 6 Nations Tournament comes to Olney (not rugby – but whisky tasting). So, how do we link the 6 Nations into the Lions Toast as a Whisky Tasting Subject? Quite easily, really. On 27th March, at the Carlton House Club, we will be blind tasting whisky from each of the 6 Nations and awarding points for each one. After our food course, we'll find out which nation's whisky was the favourite amongst those attending – in effect our SIX NATIONS CHAMPION WHISKY. Our event is still developing with more rugby-related elements to be confirmed, but more about these and ticket details in next month's Phonebox Magazine. Meanwhile, if you would like to join our mailing list, please send your email address to us at: TheLionsToast@gmail.com.

Town Calendars: We've started to collect up the monies from our retail outlets in Olney and Newport Pagnell. Full details next month.

DONATIONS

Children of Chernobyl: We recently affirmed our decision to donate to the Chernobyl Relief Fund. This will help to purchase essential medication for around a hundred children. The children are mainly based in Kyiv and are without light, heat, and have very limited access to pharmacies because of constant bombing. They are registered at Zemlyaki, a non-profit making Chernobyl organisation. It's the third generation of Chernobyl children with extremely damaged immune systems. The money will be transferred to Kyiv Lions Club, a reliable partner of CRF, who will also monitor the distribution of medical aid.

SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Distribution of Christmas Parcels: We again distributed over 300 Christmas parcels to local residents in Olney, Newport Pagnell and surrounding villages - and we've now started to receive some lovely THANK YOU cards.
We are pleased to announce a new Trustee for the Club – Lion Angela. Angela is a very active member of the Club with some terrific skills and competencies. She's going to be a great 'gatekeeper' for us.

We are planning to meet with a local residential home to arrange a mini-Motorama event. More details soon.

MEETINGS and SOCIAL EVENTS

- This week we are hoping to meet with the coaching staff of the Newport Pagnell Town Football Club Under 15's team that we are sponsoring at their first match of the season.
- We're going to have a meeting with the Project Leader of the Olney Men's Sheds project.
- We're planning our Christmas Dinner.
- We started planning our 50th Charter Anniversary celebrations (which arrive in February 2027).

That's all folks!











6 Nations Lions Toat, new Lion Angela, gratefully received Christmas thank you cards and some lovely drawings too

OLNEY & CLIFTON FISHING CLUB





A belated Happy New Year to everyone. Hopefully you have been out on the bank despite the weather.

The last month was a busy one, match-wise. First up was the Brimley Cup, which saw a good turnout rewarded with some top-quality fishing. Five anglers had double-figure nets, and it was Paul Caton (pictured) who led the way with over 15 lbs.

The club's postponed Christmas match was held, and this turned out to be a very peggy affair. The top three weights were all in a row, and Neale Shearn (pictured) managed to finish top with over 11 lbs from Chub Alley.

The third silvers match was fished in freezing conditions and, unsurprisingly, only eleven competitors braved the elements, with only five weighing in. Kevin (Legend) Osbourne managed to hold on to win by just one ounce.

In between the last two silvers matches was the second of the pike and perch series. Again, poor conditions meant that the fishing was more difficult than the first match in the series. Only four anglers caught, and two medium-sized pike gave Barney the victory. With just the final round to go, the series is very tight with 3 lbs covering the top three.

On the subject of predator fishing, the club's popular roving lure pairs match is being fished on Sunday, 1st February. Any late entrants can give me a call to enter. The winners will receive a specialist Wychwood rod each, which has been kindly donated to us.

It saddens me to have to do this, but I must end this month with some gripes. On more than one occasion, anglers have left gates to fields wide open instead of locking them as they have left. Where there are gates, it means the fields are private, and we are lucky as a club to have the landowner's permission to fish in them, so please take a minute to lock up after yourselves. Similarly, please take all rubbish with you when you leave. When I fished in Chub Alley recently, the first thing I found was an empty bottle. Now that may have been left there by a member of the public, but I also found empty items that clearly came from an angler.

Until next month, tight lines.

Damon

MK DONS JOIN FORCES WITH WILLEN HOSPICE

Willen Hospice and MK Dons have come together to create the perfect match this Valentine's Day. Fans are being offered free tickets to the Dons' home game, with the chance to donate to Willen Hospice.





A special matchday takes place on Saturday 14th February, when the Dons take on Newport County.

Complimentary seats in Community Corner are available now through the Hospice website for supporters and up to three loved ones. While booking tickets, fans will have the opportunity to make a voluntary donation to support the Hospice's care for local people affected by life-limiting illness.

The vast majority of the Hospice's services are funded by the community. As a registered charity, it needs to raise £9.6 million every year to continue providing its care and support free of charge.

Nigel Birch, the Hospice's Commercial Manager, said, "We're incredibly grateful to MK Dons for choosing Willen Hospice as one of their charity partners for the 2025/26 season. Partnerships like this are crucial in helping us raise funds and raise awareness of our care and the difference it makes to our patients and their families. This matchday is a fantastic opportunity for the community to come together for a fun day out, cheer on the Dons and make a real difference to local hospice care."

Just before Christmas, Dons players and coaching staff visited Willen Hospice to understand more about how its expert teams support local people. Head Coach Paul Warne and players, including Aaron Collins and Kane Wilson, met several of those receiving round-the-clock care in the In-Patient Unit. During the visit, the Dons also joined Hospice staff for an interactive ball game in the state-of-the-art Immersive room.

Tickets are available now at willen-hospice.org.uk/the-perfect-match. Supporters are encouraged to book early to avoid disappointment. Information on how to donate to the Hospice is provided at the point of booking.

CRMK RADIO

Paul's Legacy – One Year On



Personally, and professionally, good and bad things happen. For CRMK, last February saw both – a visit from ITV News Anglia and the sad loss of our own Paul Alexander.

Many people take no part or show any interest in their local community, but that did not apply to Paul. He served as a town councillor, and his dedication to the community knew no bounds, including that of his involvement with CRMK.

Aside from his campaigning for better overall conditions for people with mobility issues and for making Milton Keynes more accessible for wheelchair and mobility scooter users, Paul had taught at MK College and had given BS7671 update Regulation courses for electricians. He also taught English and maths at other learning establishments, supported charities through fundraising quiz nights and on a more personal note, he organised rambling holidays, London theatre trips and volunteered with CRMK.

CRMK are a Community Interest Company, and Paul was passionate about the radio station being available for use by the community. Paul was instrumental in CRMK's continuance when all seemed lost in 2015, when we were without a home and hope. Paul gave back that hope when he 'discovered' the disused public convenience that would become CRMK's studio home.

Paul carried out the vital and important early work for our studio during its embryonic stages. He was the man behind the planning application and submitted his own drawings for the proposed change of use as he fought to secure the building for CRMK. When successful, he managed to secure a long-term lease, helped source funding and was often the man behind the broom when it came to tidying up as the Saturday morning volunteer workers knocked off for the day.

Paul will be badly missed at CRMK in many ways. He had been chairman, was treasurer, led our support of the Newport Pagnell Christmas Lights event and selflessly did a lot of the administrative donkey work that is so important to such organisations. He was also a presenter who provided an eclectic mix of music for listeners of his Ground Control show, where the emphasis was on his beloved jazz and blues, whilst doing it in his own inimitable style.

Paul wanted people to use this facility, and its continuation would be a fitting tribute to the man whose vision and efforts eleven years ago will never be forgotten.

However, it is common knowledge that CRMK has struggled financially in recent times. A heartfelt thanks, therefore, must go to Paul's widow, who made the generous gesture of asking that any funeral donations go to CRMK as part of her husband's legacy towards this community facility that he cared so much about.

Paul will be forever known as the man who brought CRMK back from the dead and gave it a chance to survive, and he would, without doubt, be pleased to know that we have survived into 2026. Paul's CRMK legacy continues, one year on.

Paul Alexander RIP

www.crmk.co.uk

Election news from MK Council

Milton Keynes City Council's local elections will take place on Thursday, 7th May, and every single council seat will be contested under brand-new ward boundaries.

While some councils across the country have asked to delay their elections because they're becoming unitary authorities, this is not the case in Milton Keynes. Milton Keynes City Council is already a unitary authority, and elections will take place as planned.

The changes follow an independent review and two public consultations by the Local Government Boundary Commission, the national body that draws boundaries for English elections. As the population changes over time, the Commission routinely reviews an area's boundaries to ensure councillors represent about the same number of electors. Milton Keynes' boundaries were last reviewed and redrawn in 2014. Last year, the Commission confirmed its final recommendations:

- The number of councillors will increase from 57 to 60
- Wards will increase from 19 to 21
- There will be 19 three-councillor wards, one two-councillor ward (New Bradwell), and one single-councillor ward (Hanslope)

The new boundaries can be viewed on the Commission's website. Your polling card, which you will receive in early April, will confirm which ward you live in.

Registering to vote is quick and easy. It takes just five minutes. You will need your National Insurance number. You can register online today. To vote in the May local elections in Milton Keynes you will need to register before 20th April.

Further information about the May 2026 election can be found on www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/elections-2026.

Other important deadlines:

If you are applying for a postal vote, you should do this before 5pm on Tuesday, 21st April.

If you want someone else to vote on your behalf (called a proxy vote) you should apply before 5pm on Tuesday, 28th April.

In accordance with national rules, you will need to bring accepted photographic identification to the polling station to vote in person.

You can also apply for a free Voter ID known as a Voter Authority Certificate before 5pm on Tuesday, 28th April.



News Round Up

Birthday countdown begins

The countdown towards a major milestone for Milton Keynes has begun: it's less than one year until the city is 60 years old. Having been officially designated as a New Town on 23rd January 1967, MK plans to mark six decades of community spirit, growth, and creativity next year.

Home to major national and international companies, world leading innovation, and one of the most diverse and welcoming populations in the country, Milton Keynes has made its mark.

Now the City Council, working closely with partners, has begun exploring ideas for an exciting cultural programme for 2027 to celebrate the city's achievements and shine a light on everything that makes Milton Keynes a special place to live, work and visit.

"We want 2027 to be a truly outstanding celebration of culture, one where everyone can take part, share their stories and come together," said Cllr Shanika Mahendran, Cabinet Member for Planning and Placemaking.

"It's a chance for people across Milton Keynes to showcase their heritage, their ambitions and the ideas that continue to build our reputation as a city of innovation and imagination."

For more information about the 60th anniversary plans, and how to get involved, visit: www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/culture.



Busy Belles go punting

The Sherington Belles have had another busy month following a fabulous Christmas Party dancing with a Blondie Tribute Band.

They enjoyed a trip to the Cambridge Christmas Market when they had fun curling, Christmas shopping, having supper in Bridge Street and even enjoying a punt along the River Cam past Magdalene College, King's College Chapel, the Backs and the Bridge of Sighs.

The Garden Club created Christmas Table Decorations with expert guidance at a workshop, while members of the Theatre Club attended Candlelight: Christmas Movie Soundtracks at the Church of Christ The Cornerstone, Milton Keynes.

T**he group meets at Sherington Village Hall at 7pm on the first Tuesday of each month. More details: thesheringtonbelleswi@gmail.com.**



Air Ambulance support

Olney mayor Debbie Whitworth has thanked volunteers who have helped to raise money for the Air Ambulance charity at a recent motorbike cavalcade.

"Despite the awful weather, bikers and communities turned out for this worthy cause," said Debbie. "Thank you to Olney residents and surrounding villages who came out on 11th January to support and cheer on the bikers.

"To every biker, their families, their supporters, to every person who gives their time in the organisation of this fantastic charity event, I say you are heroes.

"Thank you to the lovely volunteers in Olney who helped me – we raised £300 on the day to add to the total."

Oh yes it is…

Pantomime is returning to Milton Keynes for the 2026/27 season with the magical fairy tale Sleeping Beauty, the city's main theatre has announced.

Tickets are on sale now for the spellbinding production, which will run from Saturday 5th December 2026 until Sunday 10th January 2027.

Sleeping Beauty is staged by Crossroads Pantomimes, the world's biggest pantomime producer, led by Michael Harrison and the team behind recent Milton Keynes Theatre Christmas successes, including last season's production of Goldilocks and the Three Bears.

"As another fantastic pantomime season comes to an end, the team here at Milton Keynes Theatre are already looking forward to this year's production of Sleeping Beauty," said Emma Sullivan, Theatre Director.

Last chance for cancer screening

The Sherington clinic that is hosting a prostate cancer blood testing event on 1st March says some places are still available and is reminding potential visitors of how to register. It's for men aged over 40.

Although the event, which takes place at the Hair and Skin Clinic, Mercer's Manor Barns, is being delivered by a national charity, you must book directly online through the charity in order to secure a place. **For more information visit: www.mkpcs.mypsatests.org.uk and search for the event.**



Tina costumes display

A showcase of costumes from Tina – The Tina Turner Musical will continue to be shown until Saturday 7th February. The production is playing at Milton Keynes Theatre until the same day.

Stunning pieces on display at the John Lewis department store in Milton Keynes, include replicas of the iconic gold fringe dress worn by Tina Turner for her landmark performance of Proud Mary on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1970, and the unforgettable red leather outfit from Tina's 1988 Rio de Janeiro concert. This unique opportunity gives Milton Keynes shoppers the chance to see the costumes up close.



Charity shop opening success

With everything priced at just £1, £3 or £5, shoppers were queuing around the block last month to be the first to support Willen Hospice's new outlet launch. MK Mayor, Councillor James Lancaster, and Hospice Chief Executive, Kate Broadhurst, were present to cut the ribbon at the January opening.

More than 2,600 items were sold on opening day alone, half of which were women's clothing. This raised vital funds that will help the Hospice continue providing life-changing care for the community.

As well as a selection of clothing and homewares, the shop also features a concession from Off The Record – the Hospice's hugely popular independent music store based in central Milton Keynes. This was a big draw for some shoppers, with more than 500 vinyls and CDs being sold.

"The opening of our clearance outlet has exceeded all our expectations," said Ian Palmer, of Willen Hospice. "Seeing the community come together like this reinforces why this shop matters and the positive impact it will have."

Newport Pagnell: Annual Town Meeting and your chance to nominate a star

The annual meeting will be held on Thursday 19th March at 7pm at the United Reform Church in the High Street. Everyone is welcome.



Residents will be able to voice their views and will get the opportunity to speak to the mayor about any issue that is close to their heart or about issues on which they would like more information.
One of the speakers will talk about the new Churchill Development and there's an opportunity to meet the architect working on the Old Police Station site.

Do you know of anyone living within the town who deserves to be recognised for their outstanding voluntary contributions to Newport Pagnell for the last year or over many years? Or alternatively someone who has achieved something through a remarkable effort in relation to the environment, community relationships, the safety of local residents, or anything of great benefit to our town.

If you do and would like to nominate them for the Town Award, then please write to the Town Clerk, Shar Roselman, Newport Pagnell Town Council, 80 High Street, MK16 8AQ, or e-mail townclerk@newport-pagnell.org.uk by 2nd March 2026.

They will need their contact details, and a brief paragraph of about 100 words explaining why this person deserves the award.

The Town Council is delighted to receive nominations from people in all walks of life, including young people doing something within their community and those providing a voluntary service to the aged, the community in general, or a particular group.

The award will be presented at the Annual Town Meeting on Thursday 19th March 2026.

Thank you lunch for community champions



Traditionally, at Dickens of a Christmas, the local Mayor extends an invitation to some very important people (VIPs) for a lunch to help promote the event.

This year, Debbie Whitworth decided to change the invitation to include volunteers in Olney, who work tirelessly for our community.

These kind, caring individuals are Olney's VIPs, and they are greatly appreciated by the many, including the mayor, Olney Town Council, and local residents who benefit from their services.

The community was asked to send the name of the person they wished to nominate for a VIP luncheon at this year's Dickens of a Christmas.

Pictured from the left are Susie Humphrey, Chris James, Jenny Luckin, Mark Luckin, Pat Coley, Mayor Debbie Whitworth, and Ann Minney.



QUALITY CONSTRUCTION

YOUR TRUSTED LOCAL CONSTRUCTION TEAM
QUALITY YOU CAN COUNT ON

CONSTRUCTION

GARAGE CONVERSIONS
LOFT CONVERSIONS
EXTENSIONS
DRIVEWAYS & PATIOS
DECKING & FENCING
TURFING & ARTIFICIAL GRASS

ROOFING

NEW ROOF
REROOFING
FLAT ROOFING
FASCIA SOFFIT & GUTTERS
EMERGENCY REPAIRS
CHIMNEY REPAIRS
LEADWORK
FIBRE CEMENT CLADDING
VELUX

COVERING: MILTON KEYNES | BEDFORD | NORTHAMPTON
LUTON | SURROUNDING TOWNS

FAST FREE QUOTE



T: 01908 051 687
W: QUALITY-CONSTRUCTION.UK
E: ENQUIRIES@QUALITY-CONSTRUCTION.UK

- Roof slating and tiling
- Flat Roofs
- Fascia, soffits and guttering
- Chimney work
- Lead work
- Roof windows supplied and fitted

DW ROOFING SERVICES

07810 781708
dave@dwroofing.uk
DW Roofing Services ltd

Over 20 years' experience

Greg Hardie Roofing

For all your roofing needs, from a broken tile to a complete re-roof.

- Tiling
- Slating
- Lead work
- Flat roofing
- Chimneys
- Guttering
- Fascias
- Soffits

Email: greg@greghardieroofing.co.uk
www.greghardieroofing.co.uk
Tel: **01234 241512** or **07810 370195**

LOCK FIT
24 HOUR LOCKSMITH SERVICES
BEDFORD



Alastair Bates
Your local trusted Locksmith

✓ No callout charge
✓ Fixed pricing guaranteed
✓ Fast 24/7 response

T: **01234 924 997** | M: **07874 285661**
E: **alastair.bates@lockfit.co.uk**

Checkatrade Google

LEO KNIGHT

ROOFING, GUTTERING & LEADWORK

All Roofing Work undertaken

Tel: 07799 552323
(based in Bozeat)

Your Reliable Local Roofer

LOCKSMITH

EMERGENCY LOCK IN/OUT
BROKEN KEY EXTRACTION
MINOR ADJUSTMENTS
SECURITY UPGRADES
NEW HOME NEW LOCKS
ADDITIONAL SECURITY
NEW INSTALLS
SINGLE KEY HOME LIFE

PROFESSIONAL, DOMESTIC AND SMALL COMMERCIAL LOCKSMITH BASED IN OLNEY

07354 017 222
www.jirlocksmith.co.uk
help@jirlocksmith.co.uk

Guttering Problems?

- Gutters Cleaned
- Leaking Gutters Repaired
- New Gutters Fitted

All by a friendly, local and established company
(Newport Pagnell)



Call Rob on 07977 206403 or 01908 216151 / 01234 480244

Universal Blinds

Your Local Blind Specialist



Roller, Vertical, Venetian, Wooden, Pleated, Roman, Perfect Fit, Shutters, Curtains, Velux

- 3 day service on Roller & Vertical Blinds
- Quality Blinds made more affordable
- Free Measuring and Fitting

Buy one Roller or Vertical Blind get one half price

01908 510333 • 07980 979420

email: sales@universal-blinds.co.uk

www.universal-blinds.co.uk

Dave's BLINDS

Showroom NOW OPEN by appointment

- Wood Venetian
- Shutters
- Perfect Fits
- Rollers
- Day/Night
- Verticals
- Romans
- Pleated
- Skylights
- Venetian

We offer a **FREE**, no obligation, quotation and measuring service.

01908 502141

info@davesblinds.co.uk

www.davesblinds.co.uk

DavesBlinds

davesblinds

K.D. ROOFING & BUILDING

OVER 40 YEARS EXPERIENCE

For all your roofing and building requirements

• Roofing services • Extensions • Renovations
• Landscaping • Fencing • Fully insured
• Based in Stoke Goldington • Family friendly business

Call Keith: 07875 642911

Email: kdroofingandbuilding@hotmail.com

YBR CONSTRUCTION

Start your journey down the Yellow Brick Road



Home Extensions & Renovations
Groundworks & Landscaping
Clear quotes, tidy work and honest advice

Serving Olney, Newport Pagnell & nearby villages

5 star reviews

Call us: 07521 285910
Email: info@ybr.construction
See our work: www.ybr.construction
or find us on facebook: @YBR-Construction

OLNEY BUILDING & RENOVATIONS LTD

OLNEY-BASED BUILDING SERVICES

EXPERIENCED IN:

- EXTENSIONS
- RENOVATIONS
- GARAGE CONVERSIONS
- GENERAL BUILDING

CONTACT: 07958 781550

E: INFO@OLNEYBUILDINGANDRENOVATIONS.CO.UK

GET IN TOUCH FOR **A FREE QUOTE**

FIND US ON FACEBOOK

LOCAL, INDEPENDENT, AND COMMITTED TO QUALITY WORKMANSHIP

WS Building Services

SPECIALISING IN

New Build • Extensions • Renovations
Brickwork • Stonework

Good quality workmanship with a reliable service

CONTACT WILL ON

01234 720628 OR **07787 180172**

EMAIL: williamcsconstruction@gmail.com

Locally based, 74 High Street, Harrold, Beds MK43 7BH

Lewis T. Redpath Bricklayer



City & Guilds

Specialising in Small Works

Also skilled in
Stonework,
Block Driveways & Patios

Tel 07833 991784
lewistredpath@gmail.com
www.lewistredpath.co.uk

COX'S AERIALS

- TV & FM Aerials
- Established 1964
- A professional & high quality service
- A quick response to your individual needs
- Satellite dish moving & repairs
- Supply & installation of freeview digital boxes
- Multi Points

Call us on T: 01234 822 006
M: 07775 985 662
E: coxaerials@gmail.com
28 Oakley Rd, Bromham, MK43 8HY

K.W. SMITH & SONS

- Carpentry
- General Maintenance
- Painting & Decorating
- Tiling
- Miscellaneous Repairs
- Free Estimates
- No Job Too Small
- Local & Reliable

T: 01234 959162
M: 07513 129124
kwsmith57@hotmail.com

"A MAN ABOUT THE PLACE"

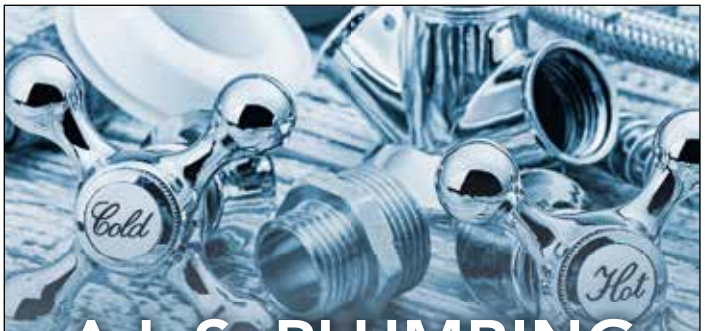
LOCAL, RELIABLE, AND COMPETITIVELY PRICED HELP

Internal: painting and decorating, tiling and general repairs

External: general maintenance, hedge trimming, turfing, fencing, sheds and paving

Domestic and commercial, fully insured, free estimates and advice.

call Geoff on:
07770 781627



A.L.S. PLUMBING SERVICES

- Toilets
- Showers
- Macerators
- Ballvalves
- Blockages
- Cylinders
- Pumps
- Basins
- Tanks
- Taps

OAP Discounts available

Call Alan
07884 230232

Which? Trusted trader

Checka trade

KRH
PLUMBING AND HEATING

PLUMBING AND HEATING. DONE RIGHT.

Call 01933 322 283

- Emergency Callouts
- Bathroom Repairs
- Leak Detection
- Fault Diagnostics

info@krhplumbingandheating.co.uk
www.krhplumbingandheating.co.uk

Checkatrade.com
MyBuilder.com

★★★★★
RATED EXCELLENT on Google

PLUMBER DAVE & DAUGHTER

Heating and Plumbing

- ★ Local Friendly Service
- ★ A traditional, reasonable, quality service you can trust
- ★ 25 + years of experience

iphe City & Guilds safe

Vulcanhall ltd

Call: 07961 441871

Darren Osborne
Decorators Ltd

Free Estimates
No Job Too Small
Local & Reliable

For a quick and friendly service, call

Daytime 07971 937 539
Evening 01234 241 461

Email:
olneydecorator@gmail.com

Your local Painter & Decorator

Hollis Decorators

INTERIOR & EXTERIOR

FULLY INSURED · PROFESSIONAL FRIENDLY SERVICE
SATISFACTION GUARANTEED · NO HIDDEN COSTS

City & Guilds qualified

Please call Ben Hollis for a 'no obligation' quote

07852 903 265

STORAGE

at Mill Farm, Gayhurst

Contact
Arthur Adams

01908 611489
07713 740746
adamsmillfarm@aol.com

Luke's Plumbing and Heating

- Specialist in Bathroom & Wetroom refurbishments
- Local and Reliable
- Free Quotation for all jobs

Call 07595 475565
lukesplumbingmk@gmail.com
www.lukesplumbing.co.uk

Blue Flame
BLUE FLAME MK LTD

Tel: 01908 216769
Mob: 07860 332287
info@blueflamemk.co.uk
www.blueflamemk.co.uk

PLUMBING AND HEATING ENGINEERS
BREAKDOWNS AND INSTALLATIONS

safe 33089

CONTACT US NOW FOR A QUOTE

OFTEC

CLIMAheat
Central Heating Services

KEITH PRYCE
M: 07764 577 292
T: 01234 241 172
E: kpryce@climaheat.co.uk

Installation, maintenance & repairs on all Gas appliances

safe 192093

Plumber – local & fast!

RGJ PLUMBING AND HEATING

Plumbing

- Full bathroom installation *(inc. carpentry and tiling)*
- Burst pipes & leaks
- Toilet repair / replace
- Taps, sinks repair / replace
- Showers repair / replace & pumps

Heating

- Full central heating installation
- Boiler servicing / breakdowns
- Landlord safety certificates
- Power flushing
- Radiators & valves
- Pumps & cylinders

Gas Safe Register 564016

No call-out charge!
City & Guilds Qualified
All work guaranteed

maestro VISA

rgjplumbing@outlook.com
01234 676 315 or 07921 469471

MANLEY ELECTRICAL

Friendly, reliable, local electrician available for all your domestic electrical needs

- Lighting installation
- Adding/moving sockets
- Consumer unit replacement
- Ring doorbells
- Security cameras
- EICR
- Power to outbuildings
- Solar Panels/Battery storage
- Extension/conservatory wiring
- Fault finding

All work fully certified, insured and completed to the highest standard

Call now for a FREE quotation!

TEL: 07538098199

Email: john@manleyelectrical.co.uk

www.manleyelectrical.co.uk

NICEIC Domestic Installer · City & Guilds Qualified · Rated People · Registered Competent Person Electrical · MCS Certified

---

CMW HEATING AND COOLING

Installation, Service, and Repair on:

- Gas, LPG, and Oil
- Boilers
- Heat Pumps
- Central Heating Systems
- Hot Water Cylinders
- Smart Controls
- Air Conditioning

Gas Safe · Refcom · OFTEC · Google Reviews · Which? Trusted Trader

Family Run Business Based in Olney

Contact Chris: 07706 077132 / 01234 958862
or visit WWW.CMWGAS.COM

D SANDS ELECTRICAL

All electrical work undertaken

- Inspection + testing
- Pat testing
- TV points
- Car charging points
- Fault finding
- EICRS

Mobile: 07773 930011

Email: duncan.sands@hotmail.com

NICEIC Domestic Installer

AQUATHERM SOLUTIONS LTD

HEATING & PLUMBING ENGINEERS

Local area engineer covering MK, Northampton, Bedford areas.

Installation, Maintenance and Repair on NATURAL GAS and LPG appliances
Landlord Certificates, LPG Certificates,
All Plumbing services

LPG

M: 07776 922517

E: contact@aqua-therm.co.uk

Gas Safe Register Registered no: 927666

D.V. Boddy

Electrical Contractors

Domestic • Commercial • Industrial

All work part P approved

01234 711116 or 07841 196227

dvboddyelectricalcontractors@hotmail.com

TrustMark Government Endorsed Quality · NICEIC Domestic Installer · NICEIC Approved Contractor



It's Valentine's Day!

Card or email? Wine or flowers? What will you send to your loved one on 14th February? There are lots of things to choose from.

The growing popularity of email, text, and social media has reduced the number of Valentine's Day cards making their way through the Royal Mail postal system, but even so, some lovestruck individuals still prefer to use the traditional method to send their messages of adoration to others.

The tradition of posting a love message to a lucky recipient really took off with the introduction of the Penny Post in 1840. A one-cost, go-anywhere mail service made sending a Valentine's card possible to millions of people, not just across the UK, but throughout the world.

The fact that senders could remain anonymous – signing their cards simply with a 'loving kiss' – proved popular and led to some daring greetings and messages, especially throughout the rather moderate and staid Victorian era.

Will you send a card this year? And will you back it up with flowers, chocolates or other gifts that legions of online companies promise to deliver on time for you? It's said that around half of the British public takes part.

What do people give on the big day?:

- One billion cards are sold worldwide on Valentine's Day
- The card-sending occasion is beaten only by Christmas Day
- Men mostly send flowers on Valentine's Day
- Women mostly send cards
- Men send 29% of cards, whereas women send 71%
- Women send 19% of flowers, whereas men send 81%
- Men send 26% of alcoholic gifts and women 74%
- Eight billion sweets are produced annually for Valentine's Day
- Women give handmade chocolate gifts on Valentine's Day in Japan
- UK pet owners spend £200 million on Valentine's gifts for their animal

While you're deciding what to send and who to, have a go at our Valentine's puzzle.

Y	B	M	G	R	E	J	M	D	Q	O	I	A	S	F	J	H	H	N
Y	I	S	C	E	Q	F	T	E	C	I	L	M	M	R	E	D	N	O
S	F	M	Y	D	K	Y	E	C	A	J	O	C	P	O	I	Y	O	I
J	S	I	V	N	Z	O	Z	B	S	U	O	T	E	Z	N	M	I	T
H	K	E	B	E	B	E	N	D	E	A	R	M	E	N	T	E	S	A
C	Y	M	N	T	K	X	Z	Z	A	K	T	R	X	H	M	N	S	U
N	D	L	H	D	E	V	O	T	I	O	N	I	O	N	Y	C	A	T
O	E	X	R	D	N	R	B	R	D	S	B	N	H	M	Q	H	P	A
I	S	J	T	R	L	O	Y	A	L	T	Y	T	S	P	A	A	M	F
T	I	V	L	N	R	S	F	Q	I	U	G	I	I	I	R	N	O	N
C	R	H	K	C	V	K	N	U	X	Y	V	M	R	P	K	T	C	I
E	E	W	T	L	E	F	T	R	A	E	H	A	E	I	W	T	P	E
F	R	D	P	M	E	N	S	J	M	S	T	C	H	H	E	Z	J	S
F	Z	O	W	A	R	P	Q	J	I	S	U	Y	C	S	W	W	J	F
A	L	E	D	G	S	A	F	P	T	E	J	F	T	R	H	I	U	H
L	D	D	Q	A	T	S	W	Z	Y	P	V	E	C	O	T	Z	E	X
S	B	D	G	T	H	G	I	L	E	D	E	A	F	W	R	Q	I	O
A	F	F	I	N	I	T	Y	O	P	M	R	X	Y	Z	O	V	M	O
I	D	G	K	K	Y	M	E	T	N	E	M	H	C	A	T	T	A	Q

Here's what you are looking for:

♡ ADORE
♡ AFFECTION
♡ AFFINITY
♡ AMITY
♡ ATTACHMENT
♡ CARE
♡ CHERISH
♡ COMPASSION
♡ DELIGHT
♡ DESIRE
♡ DEVOTION
♡ ENCHANT
♡ ENDEARMENT
♡ ESTEEM
♡ FONDNESS
♡ HEARTFELT
♡ INFATUATION
♡ INTIMACY
♡ LOYALTY
♡ PASSION
♡ ROMANCE
♡ TENDER
♡ WARMTH
♡ WORSHIP

HINSON

Custom Made Timber Products

Bespoke windows and doors for listed buildings and conservation areas



Manufacturer of Wooden Windows & Doors

As seen at GRAND DESIGNS LIVE HOME AND GARDEN

PAS 24 compliant – security without compromising heritage design

Book a showroom visit – by appointment
01908 516333 | info@hinsoncustommade.co.uk

Workshop 2, Spinney Lodge Farm, Hanslope, MK19 7DE
WWW.HINSONCUSTOMMADE.CO.UK

Captain Carpet

Your friendly face in flooring since 1989

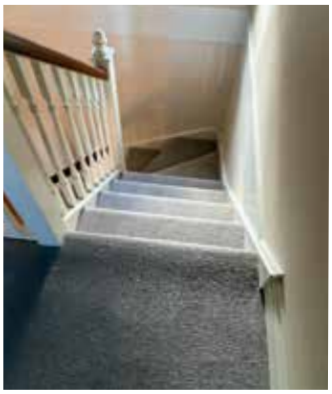
We've gone mobile!

Across Bucks, Beds and Northants

Great reasons to choose your flooring at Captain Carpet...

- The widest collection of carpets & hard flooring
- Commercial services for landlords and businesses

We're now exclusively based out of our workshop at Wharley Farm, MK43 0AH



Still flooring Olney and surrounding areas after 36 years

Call Alistair on 07836 271667

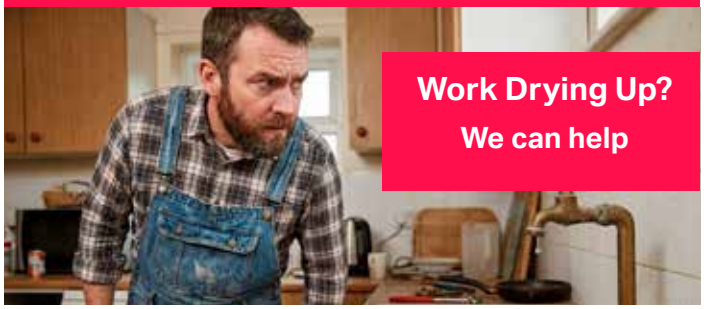
Contact us today and we will bring our showroom to your door

al.captaincarpet@gmail.com

APPROVED CODE TRADINGSTANDARDS.GOV.UK

Phonebox

MAGAZINE



Work Drying Up? We can help

"I just wanted to say thank you to yourself and the Phonebox team. We always record where our new enquiries come from, though sometimes it can be hard to keep track, I have noticed a lot of enquiries over the past few months in particular say that they saw our adverts in the Phonebox magazine. We have advertised both our businesses with Phonebox Magazine for a number of years now. I won't hesitate to recommend Phonebox to other local businesses." **Browns Tree Services Feb 2024**

Contact our team to find out more

01234 713 298

sales@phoneboxmagazine.com

AW Home Improvements

KITCHEN AND BATHROOM SPECIALIST





Milton Keynes-based family business, established for **over 20 years**

- Kitchen Supply & Installation
- Bathroom Refurbishments
- Bathroom Repair
- Full House Refurbishments
- Plumbing
- Tiling
- Plastering
- Flooring

All work guaranteed

Call 07773 793272 for a free quotation
or visit www.awhi.co.uk


pure
GROUP
01908 221223
www.pure-group.co.uk
look after your boiler
and your boiler will look after you