

West Ilsley News

FEBRUARY 2024

www.westilsley.org

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Deadline for the next publication is:
5 pm on Sunday 25th February

EDITORIAL POLICY

We are editors (though we don't edit unless we have to) – we are not reporters, so we only write something if we want to. We rely on villagers to contribute news and information and welcome updates from groups, committees and businesses to let the village know what is going on in their area of interest. We are always happy to receive feedback about WIN so please get in touch if you have anything to say.

DISTRIBUTION

If you have received a paper copy of this newsletter but have access to email, please join the email distribution list by contacting westilsleynews@westilsley.org – help to save paper and shoe leather!

What's on in West Ilsley

FEBRUARY

8th First aid training in hall (see WIN 12/23)
9th Village hall talk
20th Parish Council Meeting

MARCH

3rd Charity Clay Shoot in aid of All Saints Church
22nd Bingo in the village hall

FULL COUNCIL MEETING DATES 7.30 in the VILLAGE HALL

Tuesday 20th February 2024

Tuesday 14th May 2024, 7:00pm - Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

Tuesday 14th May 2024, 8:15pm - Annual Parish Meeting

COUNTRY NOTES

A bitterly cold morning, the temperature dropped to minus five during the night. The cold hasn't deterred a mistle thrush who is currently proclaiming the ownership of his territory behind The Harrow, hoping to attract a mate. These birds are early starters, nest built, and a clutch of eggs laid as early as February. His song is loud, similar to that of a blackbird but delivered

in shorter bursts. He often sings from the top of a tree in a gale of wind, which accounts for the local name of stormcock, the name my father used.

Two robins are locked in mortal combat on the lawn, they lay on the grass, wings fluttering, one has the other by the throat. One of these birds is the one that trusts me, watching while I turn the soil in the herb garden, waiting for me to unearth slugs and wireworms; now it is putting its life on the line to defend its territory from a newcomer, if this continues one is going to die. I intervene, they fly off in different directions, a minute later a bird returns, is this my bird or the newcomer, I will never know. The herbaceous border below the bedroom balcony has for months appeared lifeless, a carpet of spent brown leaves raked through by blackbirds in their never-ending search for food. Dead stems of dormant perennials, alchemilla, penstemmon and verbenas whose old seedheads have occasionally illuminated dark winter days when clothed in white frost. Today a pair of goldfinches choose to harvest the verbenas seeds in preference to the niger seeds in the birdfeeders situated only four feet away.

Geoff Wond

NEWS FROM THE VILLAGE HALL

Thank you to all of you who came along to the Village Hall to enjoy an informative and engaging talk from Amanda Slater on her wonderful school in Uganda which educates children with special educational needs and who live in extreme poverty. We're very grateful that Amanda gave up her time to come along and give us all an insight into the incredible work that she does. It was

so amazing to see pictures of the children and the range of amazing activities they are able to do because of the support received. Especially, how much joy something so familiar to us such as a music speaker can bring to the children, and it was humbling to see how when doing water play not a single drop was spilt.



The evening raised much needed funds for the charity and if you can, please support Amanda by sponsoring a child or donating money or supplies. For more information

please visit the Family of Hope website (familyofhope.co.uk).

We are excited for our next talk by Geoff on 9th of February on owls: "Facts, fiction, myths and legends", doors open from 7pm. We won't be charging entry but will be giving half the profits from the bar to the Bucks, Berks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (<https://www.bbwt.org.uk/>). We look forward to seeing you there.

Thank you, the Village Hall Management Committee (Amanda, Jo, Louise, Matt, Pete and Tegan)

TEN YEARS ON

It was ten years ago this month that West Ilsley was flooded. Like me, you may be heaving a sigh of relief, that *perhaps* we have avoided a repeat of 2014's flood. However, I'm told by those who watch the wells, boreholes and weather, not to speak too soon, as we are still in a vulnerable position due to the rise in groundwater during the winter months – the alert a couple of weeks ago was a month earlier than the 2014 problem, so weather and rising groundwater and the Pang could still conspire against us. One hundred year old documents I've seen recently refer to the village wells which dried up "years ago", and I might one day get round to updating the history books with an account of 2014.

Whilst I remembered a lot of what happened in 2014 I was unsure about timescales and some of the details (I think I'd blotted it out!) but I thought if I could piece together the timeline there might be some points which might help us to prepare for another event. Unfortunately we have since changed email system for WIN so all the emails I forwarded then were lost to me – we did think it was a one off event, so never thought we might need them. With many thanks to a village pal who has managed to find the key emails from 2014 I've been able to extract a few key points. **Please note, that whatever nature throws at us in future, I'm not suggesting it would be the same situation as I'm describing below, or that it would be handled in the same manner, so this certainly can't be used as a draft plan – it's just a reminder for those who experienced it, and to let newcomers know what happened then.**

In February 2014 there were reports of sewer problems and we were asked to put as little waste water as possible into the system. That was because there was already water coming in from:

- excessive rain,
- the river Pang rising and running through the village water system,
- the high groundwater seeping into the sewers and filling them.

It was a very dynamic situation over this time, and far too technical for me, but in summary - over the next few days pumps and Portaloos were brought in. By

25th February Portaloos numbers had risen from the initial 3 to 22, strategically placed around the village. By 18th February the increasingly firm request from the various agencies who were tackling the problem was to use the Portaloos and *not* our own toilets and not to put *any* waste water into the system – only shower/bath if you could redirect your waste water into the garden and put washing up water into the garden too – no use of washing and dishwashing machines. Some residents bought camping loos to save visits to the Portaloos - we were permitted to empty the camping loos into them, people also used their gym memberships for showers and other essentials!

It's hard to recall how long it all went on for – from the email records I can tell you:

- Due to the success of the pumping, the shower/washing water restrictions were lifted on 22nd February – after 3-4 days
- The requirement to use the Portaloos continued until 15th March, - almost three weeks after they started to arrive, but they stayed longer just in case we had to go back to them
- The large pump sited just along from our house was finally turned off around 23rd March – about a month after it arrived.

Throughout this time, the residents of West Ilsley demonstrated how good they are in a crisis. Initially we were fortunate that more people than usual were around to help, because when it all kicked off it was half term, but the support continued after schools returned – here are some examples – by no means a comprehensive list:

- An emailed request for urgent help saw volunteers heading down the street towards the affected location – maybe to move furniture out of the way of the flood or to help divert water from a well or spring which had unexpectedly overflowed, or with a jubilee clip to fix a faulty pump
- The "loo angels" who took responsibility for the 22 Portaloos, keeping them clean and stocked with loo paper, air freshener and even lights!
- The "pump team" who worked shifts to keep an eye on the big pump which took water away from the village, and turned up for an early meeting at the pump each Saturday to volunteer for shifts for the next week
- An ad hoc group who helped when pipes had to be rolled out from Main Street, around Church Way and along to Hodcott
- A clear up group who went round after it was all over, collecting sand bags and making good areas which had been dug to allow water to be released from troublesome areas.

And when it was all over, we celebrated with a village pantomime on the theme of the floods “Once Upon a Portaloo” – there may still be video evidence somewhere!

Andrea Cook

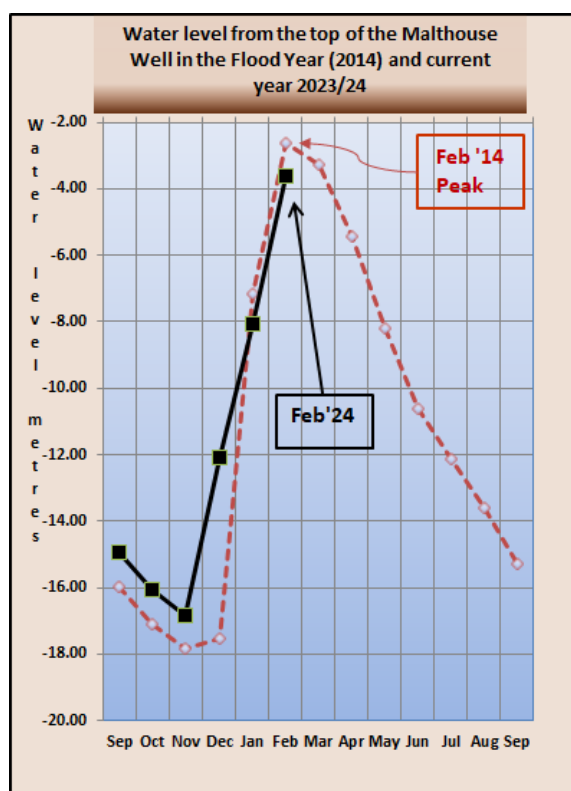
MALTHOUSE WELL

More drama at the Malthouse well in January when the measuring gauge became faulty again and required a return visit from the Environmental Agency to fix it. The well reading rose dramatically during January and it currently stands at around 3.60 metres (approx. 11.8 ft) below ground level.

This is the highest level we have recorded since the 2014 flood and the groundwater level is sufficiently high enough for water ingress into some village cellars and which their owners are still pumping out. Thankfully, so far, the sewers and surface water drainage systems seem to be coping.

This year we may have been saved from major flooding issues by the long break in the rain from the 4th to the 17th January which gave the aquifers a breathing space to cope with all the rain. However, we are not out of the woods yet and with the ground water being so high another prolonged period of rain could cause us some problems.

The graph below shows the difference between now and the 2014 flood. The groundwater level is currently about 1 metre (3.1ft approx) lower now than the same time point back in 2014. Hopefully the rain will be kind to us.



FEBRUARY AT ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

Sunday 4th Family Service at 11am
 Sunday 11th Holy Communion at 8.30am
 Sunday 18th Communion at 9.30am
 Sunday 25th *No service in All Saints'*

Please look on the notice board in the lychgate or on the East Downland website:

<https://www.eastdownland.org.uk/news-and-noticees/this-week>

for other services in the benefice during February.

Café in All Saints' Church

Our monthly church cafe continues on Sunday 11th February between 10.00am and 11.00am. Donations go to a different charity each month. Everyone is welcome to join us for coffee, cake and a chat!

Village Spring Charity Walk

Bring your family and friends for a circular route up and along the Ridgeway, starting at 10am on Sunday 17th March at Downs View. Hot drinks and bacon butties are also involved! Further details coming soon.

Private Prayer

All Saints' will continue to open on Saturdays and Sundays for private prayer between 9.30am and sunset.

Pastoral

If you would like prayer (or other support) for you or someone else, please get in touch. We are happy to be contacted by phone or email using the details of contacts shown below.

If anyone needs help or would just like to chat, do contact the wardens or clergy who will do their best to help.

Contacts:

Churchwardens: Ian – 01635 281625; Alexandra – 01635 281306

Rector: Revd John Toogood – 01635 247566 or 07748 822336 - edownlandrector@gmail.com

Associate Priest: Revd Douglas Dales – 01635 247404 – revdjdales@gmail.com

East Downland Benefice Office: 07957 458107 - eastdownland@btinternet.com – Usually manned on Thursday & Friday mornings between 9am and 1pm.

Kay and Ian Fewtrell-Smith

ILSLEYS NEWSLETTER

It is a new term and a new year at The Ilsleys Primary School and the children have started a variety of new activities and topics.

Each class gets a new interesting topic to learn about in the upcoming term. Arctic Class's topic is Space where they will learn about all the planets in our solar system. Pacific Class's topic is Romans where they will learn about how people lived in roughly 75BC. Atlantic's topic is Our Changing World where they will explore Earth and changes in the planet in recent years.

In PE, Arctic, Atlantic and Pacific have been doing uni-hoc (which is a mix between hockey and ice hockey). It was really fun to learn this new sport with our PE teacher, Danny. As well as doing uni-hoc, each class has been taking gymnastics lessons with our gymnastics teacher, Chris, on Thursdays.

On Monday 8th January, we had our first Stay and Play of this term. It happens every fortnight at 10.00am-11.30am. This is where you and your child come in to look around Arctic class and your child can play with Arctic's amazing variety of toys (and it's free). The next session will be on Monday 5th February. It would be lovely if you could join us!

Pacific Class went to Hampstead Norreys for a Roman Day with an Ufton Court Workshop. In the morning, Pacific Class planned out their mosaics by putting letters on a grid. Then, they stuck pieces of coloured card on the grid to create a picture or word. After lunch, a man from Ufton Court showed them different Roman formations with shields. Later, they played roman games with dice and were put into pairs. Whoever rolled a higher score got to say a dare or challenge to the loser. They all thoroughly enjoyed this day, and have learnt lots about the Roman Empire.

We are really enjoying this new term and cannot wait to see what the future holds at The Ilsleys Primary School.

Written by 2 Year 6 and a Year 5

THE DOWNLAND HandeBus - it's Electric

The Downland Volunteer Group (DVG) is pleased to announce the launch of our new 100% electric fully accessible HandeBus.

To celebrate this significant achievement in being one of the first electric minibus for community transport in



West Berkshire, and one of a handful across the UK, we have renamed our Handybus to HandeBus – highlighting it's electric whilst remaining 'handy' for those that use it.

The HandeBus offers a bespoke service to residents in the Downland villages, through the help of volunteer drivers. Passengers contact us and are collected from their homes and driven to the shops, appointments, or other venues. Our friendly drivers will help load shopping on and off the vehicle and, if required, carry shopping to your front door.

The HandeBus is ideal for passengers with mobility issues as it is equipped with easy access side steps, comfortable seats, air conditioning in the summer,

and heating in the winter. In addition, the HandeBus can safely carry up to two wheelchair users with their carers as it is fitted with a hydraulic tail lift.

Regular users of the service can get to know each other as it's an opportunity to meet and chat with friends and neighbours. Many friendships have been formed helping to reduce isolation and loneliness.

The HandeBus would not have been possible without funding from West Berkshire Council who awarded us £50,000 through the Community Transport Capital Grant Fund, which we applied for back in mid-2023. We have also received other donations from The Greenham Trust, The Englefield Trust, Miss Lawrence Trust in Kintbury, and other private donations.

Laura Farris, Member of Parliament for Newbury said This is an excellent community initiative and I was delighted to meet

with members of the Downland Volunteer Group ahead of the HandeBus launch. The HandeBus will provide essential support to



residents in the Downland villages, fostering community cohesion whilst promoting greener transport options and I am very proud of all the local volunteers who have made this possible.

Denise Gaines, Executive Member for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel at West Berkshire Council, said: "It is heartening to see that a local community group is taking such bold steps to improve accessibility for those with mobility difficulties who may struggle to get out and about to appointments or the shops. This HandeBus will help support our vulnerable residents to maintain their independence, whilst also using a vehicle that helps the Council to tackle the climate and ecological emergency."

Our original Handybus did not offer wheelchair access. We worked with GM Coachworks, a specialist company that builds bespoke minibuses for local authorities, schools and other organisations to create a 12-seater minibus plus driver. In addition, they fitted a hydraulic tail lift enabling us to carry two wheelchair users plus their carers. This ensures that travel in this purpose-built vehicle is safe and comfortable for all users.



ILSLEY EVERGREENS

The group members enjoyed an excellent Christmas lunch at The Harrow in West Ilsley on the 13th of December and are now looking forward to a variety of Coach outings and other events in 2024.

The first is the Ilsley Evergreens Annual General Meeting which is taking place at the Wilkins Centre in Compton on Wednesday the 21st of February starting at 2pm. The committee request that all members and prospective members attend this very important meeting. A new Chairman will be elected as well as a new management committee. The outings for 2024 will also be decided. Please come and have your say on the group and its various activities.

We will be holding our first Coffee Morning on Saturday the 24th of February at the Wilkins Centre, Compton starting at 10am. All are welcome to come and have a natter with tea / coffee and homemade refreshments for only £1.50. A Family Bingo Evening is booked for Friday the 8th of March in Compton Village Hall starting at 7:30pm, so why not come along and enjoy the Best of Bingo with Great Prizes and a Super Raffle. Please look out for the Ilsley Evergreens Posters in Compton Village Shop, Compton Village Hall, Wilkins Centre and on Notice Boards in your area.

Hoping to see you soon!!

Tony Elliott ~ Secretary



FAMILY PRIZE BINGO

COMPTON VILLAGE HALL

FRIDAY 8TH MARCH

Doors open: **7:00PM** Starts at: **7:30PM**

**GENEROUS PRIZES
SUPERB RAFFLE**

COME AND ENJOY THE BEST OF BINGO!

Refreshments available



EASTER FAMILY PRIZE BINGO

WEST ILSLEY VILLAGE HALL

FRIDAY 22ND MARCH

DOORS OPEN 7:00
EYES DOWN 7:30

**GREAT PRIZES
AND A
SUPER RAFFLE**

**COME ALONG AND ENJOY
THE BEST OF BINGO**

WHO TO CONTACT

DEFIBRILLATOR is outside the village hall - code: C159

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR – Carolyn Culver 07976 374146
Carolyn.Culver1@westberks.gov.uk

PARISH COUNCIL

Council members are:

Alan Bloor alan.bloor@westilsley.org

Clive Hooker clive.hooker@westilsley.org

Katy Morris katy.morris@westilsley.org

Alan Muir alan.muir@westilsley.org

Tim Pearey timothy.pearey@westilsley.org

Graham Woods graham.woods@westilsley.org

07905 558884

Sarah Marshman – Clerk clerk@westilsley.org

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT – Laura Farris

laura.farris.mp@parliament.uk 01635-551070

PATIENT REPRESENTATION GROUP rep is Joe Clerkin

(01635) 281150 or joeclerkin@georgeweb.co.uk

PRESCRIPTIONS are delivered from Compton on Tuesday mornings at 8.30. Please collect yours from Ann Barnes, 3 Morland Close on **Tuesdays only between 2 pm and 4.30 pm**. Repeat forms can be posted through the letter box at any time before Monday evening for the following week's delivery.

TENNIS COURT membership and enquiries email -

tennis.bookings@westilsley.org

Book and play without joining via

westilsleytennis.jezzam.com

VILLAGE HALL

Bookings & enquiries:

Any new bookings should now be done via the village

Website: <https://www.westilsley.org/>

Or by email to: village.hall@westilsley.org

Anyone without access to the internet can leave a message on: 01635 281762

Rates: £10.00/hour for villagers and £12/hour non villagers.

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL – REPORT A PROBLEM:

<https://westberks.gov.uk/reportaproblem>

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL – REPORT SPEEDING:

<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/speedingtraffic>

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL – REPORT DOG FOULING:

<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/36781/Report-Dog-Fouling>