

# FULMER NEWSLETTER



December 2025 - Issue 77

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We are very grateful to our advertisers and their contribution helps to fund this newsletter twice a year - Editors

From the Editors

We hope all our readers enjoy the usual reports on Fulmer's activities in the last 6 months and huge thanks as always go to Linda Mckenzie and her team for another fantastic Fireworks evening. We are so grateful to all who help to make it such a lovely event and it is a huge amount of work. Thanks to the advertisers, readers and those who help deliver this newsletter. Wishing everyone a happy Christmas and New Year.

Susie & Ronnie Simkins – Editors

Fulmer Village Hall

Fulmer Village Hall is situated at the heart of Fulmer Village, opposite the 17th Century redbrick church, only a stone's throw from the equally historic Black Horse public house and surrounded by picturesque cottages.

A frequent winner of Buckinghamshire's Best Kept Village competition, the setting of the Village Hall offers a charming backdrop for any function or celebration. Fully licensed for the sale of alcohol, facilities include a modern kitchen, numerous tables and chairs, disabled access to the main hall, a stage, one smaller meeting room and, of course, parking and loos, including a disabled lavatory. The Hall can comfortably accommodate up to 120 people standing or 80 seated. It is a venue for wedding receptions, anniversary and birthday parties, both children's and adults', as well as seated dinners, catered from the kitchen. It is also available for regular weekly or monthly evening activities.

The Hall is one of the best available locally, in the prettiest of settings, and offers excellent value for money. Please call Karen Nemes (Lettings Secretary) on 07498 041253 for more details and to discuss your specific requirements.

We look forward to welcoming you to Fulmer Village Hall!



Fulmer Parish Council & Duties 2025/26

David Brackin:

Chairman ([chair@fulmervillage.uk](mailto:chair@fulmervillage.uk); 07970 793058) – Finance Group  
Representing Fulmer in Bucks (Community Board, Police etc)

Ian Bocock: Councillor (thebococks@hotmail.com); Transport and Highways  
Fulmer Conservation Volunteers

Francesca Hall-Drinkwater: Councillor (francescaatrushworths@gmail.com) St James' Church  
Liaison, Churchwarden; Parish Website Manager

Parm Khanghura: Councillor; (parm@connectglobalconsulting.com); Planning including  
Neighbourhood Plan

Susie Simkins: Deputy Chairman (susiemsimkins@gmail.com) Finance Group;  
Pinewood Studios Liaison; Community Institutions Liaison (inc. Teikyo,  
and RDA); Fulmer School Liaison; Fulmer Newsletter Editor & Publisher

Lorette Du Toit: Councillor (lorettedutoit@hotmail.com); Allotments Liaison; Chair &  
FPC member, Fulmer Sports & Community Assoc (FSCA)

Pauline Vahey: Clerk (clerk@fulmervillage.uk); Proper Officer – Council  
administration & governance; Responsible Finance Officer – Finance  
Group; FPC member & Secretary, FSCA Liaison with Bucks Unitary  
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David.Moore@buckinghamshire.gov.uk  
Thomas.Hogg@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Others

Barbara Zoltowska: Fulmer Village Hall Chairman  
(bzoltowska@hotmail.co.uk)

Karen Nelmes: Village Hall Lettings Secretary 07498 041253



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## Deaths

We send sincere condolences to the families of

Barbara Bloomfield who died on 18 June. A service of thanksgiving was held on 24 July. A committed member for many years across the wider St James, Barbara spent her final years worshipping in Fulmer.

Diana Mann who died on 22 August. A service of thanksgiving was held in Fulmer Church on 12 September.

Please see Diana's obituary.

## Engagement –

Congratulations to Charli Roth and Matt Walters. Charli is the daughter of Jill & Pete Roth



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Church Lane, Stoke Poges, SL2 4NZ | 01753 523 744 | [memorial.gardens@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:memorial.gardens@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

The advertisement features a large, ornate stone urn on a pedestal to the right of the text. The urn is weathered and has a small plaque on its side. The background shows a green lawn and trees.

In Loving Memory of Diana Mann (1937–2025)

How do you capture a life as full, rich, and varied as that of Diana Mary Mann? Over 88 years she achieved more, gave more, and lived more than most—qualifying in two professions, raising a family, running a business, and later dedicating decades to voluntary work. To her children, she was conscientious, driven, fair-minded, fun-loving, and always young at heart. To friends and community, she was energetic, capable, and endlessly kind. And above all, she was someone who delighted in helping others.

Diana was born in Colwyn Bay, North Wales, on 29 June 1937. An only child to older parents, she grew up happily despite the hardships of war, recalling bombs jettisoned nearby and collecting ha'pennies at school for the war effort. She made lifelong friends early on, including her dear friend Kath, and later thrived at Howell's School, Denbigh, where she embraced studies, sport, and school life with typical wholehearted enthusiasm.

In 1955 she arrived at University College London to read Law - one of only ten women in a cohort of one hundred, and made history as the university's first female president of the Law Society. Her striking appearance at just over six feet tall, her sense of humour, and remarkable ability to win student beer races certainly didn't harm her campaign! At college she worked hard, played hard - memorably joining student demos against the crushing of the Hungarian Uprising and meeting astronaut Yuri Gagarin - all the while revelling in forging friendships that lasted a lifetime.

After graduating, Diana served as an articled clerk in Gray's Inn, proudly becoming one of the first women solicitors in the country. It was during this period while living in a very lively flat in London, that she met her future husband, Walter, at the Globe Tennis Club. Their first meeting was unpromising, but like any good Jane Austen novel, first impressions gave way to love. They married, and Diana's legal career eventually took a pause when they moved out of London to raise their children, William and Susanna. The family settled in Moreland Drive, Gerrards Cross, where Diana would live for the next 55 years.

Once her children were at school, Diana retrained as a teacher—her creativity, patience, and sense of fun making her a natural. However, producing the annual school play was her piece de resistance: she poured herself into writing witty scripts and designing costumes. Her enthusiasm for dressing up extended beyond school: at the street party for the 1977 Queen's Silver Jubilee, while neighbours' children arrived as Elizabeth I or Henry VIII, Diana gleefully sent her own out dressed as a Queen Bee and King Kong!

Retirement—premature at fifty—never slowed her down. Diana returned to her legal skills at the Citizens Advice Bureau, helping countless people over a ten year stint in the 1990s and repaying, in her own way, the generosity that had once given her father his start in life.

She then became Chair of the Chiltern Cheshire Home for several years, helped expand its facilities, and even welcomed Prime Minister Tony Blair during a visit.

Her Christian faith was a cornerstone of her life. Diana first worshipped at St James Gerrards

Cross but became more involved later at St James Fulmer where she served as Churchwarden for 11 years, when Paul Williams was Rector. She would have been so delighted that Paul, now Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham, was kind enough to travel back to Fulmer to officiate so perfectly at her cremation and Service of Thanksgiving.

Sport was one of Diana's great joys. She played lacrosse, tennis, badminton in her youth, and even took up jogging in the 1980s. She loved watching almost any sport—football, rugby, cricket, the Olympics, even snooker—and her competitive streak never left her. Her Welsh roots shone brightest during the Six Nations, when she loudly cheered for Wales, sometimes to the surprise of neighbours. Later in life she was thrilled to watch her grandchildren's hockey matches, cheering them on with the same gusto.

Travel, too, was a lifelong love. With Walter she journeyed across the world well into his eighties, and after his passing in 2006 she continued exploring—visiting Russia, Ukraine, Cuba, and Canada, the latter a poignant visit tracing Walter's wartime internment. She embraced adventures great and small and - when insurance premiums curtailed foreign trips after 85- she cruised the British Isles and drove Scotland's North Coast 500 in a campervan. Even this spring she enjoyed a glorious day touring the Yorkshire Dales in a vintage RollsRoyce, waving regally at passers-by pretending she was in an episode of Downton Abbey! She was equally devoted to the quieter joys of life: reading, baking (her pavlovas and chestnut-raspberry cakes were legendary, if sometimes whisked away to church fairs before her children could claim a slice), and lively card games of Newmarket with her grandchildren. She loved being around younger people—their energy fuelled her—and she never lost her ability to dance late into the night.

Diana faced adversity, including multiple joint replacements, regular eye injections, and later cancer, with extraordinary resilience. She disliked self-pity and refused to let illness define her. Her dignity, optimism, and humour never dimmed.

Diana lived with exuberance, humour, fairness, and heart right until the end. She showed her children how to be brave, kind, open to adventure, and generous to others. In a letter found after her death, she asked her family simply: *"Help others less fortunate than yourselves."* They will honour that wish.

Susanna & William Mann

*Diana is much missed by those in Fulmer who knew her for so many years through St James and village events – Editors*

David Brackin, Chairman Fulmer Parish Council

As the golden leaves have - after an extremely long Summer - finally given way to the bare bones of winter, it feels like a natural moment to pause and reflect. It's been a year of real community spirit in Fulmer, from the sparkle of Fireworks Night to the laughter at the Family Fun Day, and, not forgetting



the quieter triumphs like community screenings at Pinewood and the regular litter picks that keep our lanes looking loved.

It's lovely to see community initiatives flourishing. The lunches at King George's Field have proven extremely popular. Fish Fridays and Soup Tuesdays are drawing a great turnout each week, offering not just a hearty meal but a warm and welcoming space for people to meet, chat, and stay connected. If you haven't been yet, do pop in and give it a try.

But while we celebrate these moments, we must also be clear-eyed about the challenges ahead. Since the elections and changes in planning laws, we've entered a tougher chapter. The government has introduced the somewhat vaguely defined "grey belt," which appears to ease development constraints within the green belt. In particular, villages like ours are no longer automatically protected from being gradually swallowed up by neighbouring towns, a direct threat to our rural character that we should be especially wary of.

Buckinghamshire still has no Local Plan in place, leaving Fulmer exposed to speculative or "wildcat" development. In response, your Parish Council has had to bring in professional help to write planning submissions, an unexpected cost. We're now actively exploring a Neighbourhood Plan as a more robust long-term defence. It's a big project and will require both funding and community input, but it may be the best way to keep Fulmer from becoming a suburb of somewhere else.

We're not alone in this. I've been working closely with our new ward neighbours Farnham and Stoke Poges, as well as maintaining our good relationships with Denham, Iver, and Gerrards Cross. Across Bucks, through my role on the BMKALC executive board, I'm hearing the same concerns echoed from parish to parish. Fulmer may be small, but we are not isolated.

Locally, some good news: thanks to collaboration with Fulmer Wood Farm, the ditching along Fulmer Common Road has been improved. We hope we've seen the end of the flooding there. That said, potholes and winter wear are likely to be back. Please continue to report these on Fix My Street and let us know if no action is taken so we can escalate.

We're also continuing the long struggle to address the number of HGVs thundering through our village centre. Bucks are short of funds so will take some persuading, but I believe this is a fight worth having. We all see the damage to our roads and know how frightening it is to walk on narrow lanes with no pavements as lorries roar past.

Meanwhile, our MVAS speed signs have been gathering data, including some astonishing results (85mph down from Gerrards Cross!). That data helps our case for enforcement, and we've successfully secured funding for a second unit to extend our coverage.

So yes, the road ahead may be a little bumpy, literally and figuratively, but Fulmer is as resilient as it is beautiful. We will all need to contribute, and I'm afraid that I shall be asking the council to approve

an increase in our portion of the council tax to meet these rising challenges, but at its heart, our village thrives on the strength of our community to step up when needed.

If you have the time, skills or just the energy to help Keep Fulmer Special then do please get in touch.

[Chair@fulmervillage.uk](mailto:Chair@fulmervillage.uk)

### Fulmer Family Fireworks Night: A Dazzling Success!

This year's much loved community fireworks display, held at King George's Field in Fulmer, was an absolute triumph! Early-bird tickets sold in record time. In a heart-warming display of eagerness, a driver stopped to scan the QR code and purchase tickets on the spot as our banner was being installed on the corner of Fulmer Common Road and Framewood Road!

A Community United The event attracted over 750 enthusiastic visitors from Fulmer, Stoke Poges, Iver Heath, Gerrards Cross, Farnham Common, Wexham, and beyond. We were particularly thrilled by our record-breaking volunteer turnout! For the first time, our popular cake stall moved outdoors, where five incredible volunteers masterfully crafted luxury hot chocolates with marshmallows and sold delicious, specially made fireworks night cupcakes, running the operation like clockwork.



Enchanting Entertainment Our guests were joyfully welcomed by very tall, talented stiltwalking performers at the entrance, adding a touch of magic to the evening. We extend our gratitude to Buckinghamshire Council for once again supporting our road closure application for Fulmer Common Road, ensuring a safe and smooth experience for both  
Generous Support & Exciting Raffles Our heartfelt thanks go to the incredible sponsors whose generous contributions helped fund our live band, spectacular fireworks, and provided outstanding prizes for our grand raffle draw. We were especially delighted when Tesco in Gerrards Cross, at the last minute, generously donated a super luxury hamper for our raffle table. *Though we didn't have a chance to add their logo to our "thank you" board this year, their support was very much appreciated!*



The night truly sparkled with live music from local band "Stealworks," who kept the crowds entertained throughout the evening. Danny the Fire Performer captivated spectators with his brand-new, ultimate fire performance – a truly breath-taking spectacle!



Gratitude to Our Organisers & Volunteers The Grand Raffle was expertly drawn by Lorette Du Toit, Chair of Fulmer Sports and Community Association, with the raffle numbers called by KGFF General Manager and MC of the event, Ian Finan. Fulmer Family Fireworks Night was organised by Ian Finan and myself, with invaluable support from the Fulmer Sports and Community Association and Fulmer Parish Council. This event wouldn't have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our many amazing volunteers, whose commitment made the night so special and so much fun for everyone.

Investing in Our Community The funds raised from this successful event will be dedicated to maintaining and improving the facilities at King George's Field, Fulmer Charity. These enhancements will directly benefit residents of Fulmer village and the surrounding areas, ensuring KGFF remains a vibrant hub for our community. Linda McKenzie, KGFF Trustee

St James Fulmer

A winter chill has settled as I write this, following the wonderful Summer we have had. We continued through the Summer with our usual services and activities at St. James. A high point in the Church calendar was our "Weekend In" held in June at St James Oxford Road, with several activities the Centre and the Church. There were lectures, break-out sessions, lunches, a Hog Roast, a Quiz, the Fulmer and Oxford Road choirs sang together at the morning service, with a finale of Songs & Stories on the

Sunday evening. All 3 congregations were well represented, and many said they had found the weekend both instructive and fun.

In August we held an Afternoon Tea for the congregation here in Fulmer in the Church grounds under a Marquee, many attended. All enjoyed sandwiches and cakes, cakes baked by our excellent bakers. Mustn't forget the Cheese scones!

The Reverend Peter Ackroyd and JoJo, his wife, joined the staff team in September. JoJo has come to Coffee & Chat on several Thursdays. Coffee & Chat began again Thursday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 8.45 – 10.00am. Usually for Fulmer Infant School Mums, Dads and carers and those from the Fulmer Nursery, this is open to all, should you wish to come. Our key event this term will be our wreath making on December 4<sup>th</sup>. This will be a fun gathering, as in previous years. Some of the wreaths have achieved a high standard!

The Vision Dinner for all the St James congregations were held at the Centre on September 26<sup>th</sup> & Vision Lunch on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Matt spoke on our theme for the year, "Growing Disciples". We had several Fulmer tables, particularly for the Lunch, which was encouraging. The evening and lunch were a great success; the food and companionship very enjoyable.

We held Diana Mann's Thanksgiving Service in September. Previously a Warden and long time member of our Congregation, Diana was very well known by many across the whole Church. Bishop Paul returned to take the service. It was a wonderful farewell.

Our special Autumn services included our Harvest Festival service on October 5<sup>th</sup>. An allage service in a specially decorated Church. We marked Remembrance Sunday, November 10<sup>th</sup> for the fallen in all wars. We welcomed many, Liz Basden reading the names with a bell tolled for each person Fulmer lost. David Brackin, Chairman of the Parish Council laid a wreath. We were able to return to holding a Bereavement Service this year, inviting anyone and families we have had the privilege of helping through such a time in the past 2 years. We served afternoon tea after a poignant service. Congratulations to Liz Basden who turned 100 early in November!

So, we move into Advent and our Christmas services. You'll be receiving a Christmas at St. James brochure with this magazine, outlining services across both Churches so I will just outline our St James Fulmer services here. Remember our Services begin at 10.00am now.

Sun 14<sup>th</sup> December, Advent Carols 10.00am a traditional service with carols and a reading.

Sun 21<sup>st</sup> December, Advent Carols 10.00am a traditional service with carols and a reading.

Sun 21<sup>st</sup> December, Carols by Candlelight at 6.00pm. A beautifully candlelit evening service with carols, readings and a Christmas message.

Wed 24<sup>th</sup> December, Christingle Carols at 4pm. A Christmas Eve service for all ages with carols to sing, a Christingle to make and a short talk. Many families love this service. Several say it starts the 3 days of Christmas for them.

Wed 25<sup>th</sup> Dec Christmas Day Celebration 10.00am. A Christmas Day celebration for the whole family with Communion.

Please join us for some of the above and indeed for our usual services into the New Year. A heartfelt Happy Advent and Christmas to everyone!

Francesca Hall–Drinkwater, Church Warden

### Help needed for Fulmer's Church Bells

Church bells have been rung since medieval times, to call people to church, to and from the fields and to mark the hours. Now bells are rung not only to call to church but also for celebrations such as weddings, Christmas and the New Year and for funerals and times of national mourning such as Remembrance Sunday and the death of the sovereign. It probably started in 1542 in Fulmer when the oldest bell was cast and hung in the old church on the marsh. It was moved to the new church in 1615 and is still in service today and five more bells have been added over the years.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in England, but not the rest of Europe, in order to achieve maximum volume and control and after some experimentation each bell was mounted on a complete wheel with the rope passing round the circumference before dropping to the ringer below. The ringer then swings the bell gently to and fro but with increasing effort until it reaches a vertical position with the mouth of the bell uppermost where it balances. The ringer then swings the bell through 360 degrees again until it sits mouth uppermost on the balance and then again anti-clockwise. Full-circle ringing accomplished the twin aims of maximum volume and control.

The number of bells in a tower varies from parish to parish. The bigger and more influential parishes tending to have more bells. Fulmer has 6 bells but Beaconsfield has 12. The lightest weighs about 180kilos and is the oldest. It sounds the highest note and is therefore called the treble. It is the first to be rung when ringing 'in rounds. The no2 and no3 weigh 190 and 216kg respectively and were hung in the tower in 1741 and 1884. The 4<sup>th</sup> (228kg) and 5<sup>th</sup> bells (267kg) were hung in 1617 shortly after the new church was built. The heaviest bell at about 382kg, also hung in 1884, strikes the lowest note and is thus called the tenor.

The art of change-ringing began when ringers first mastered complete control of the bells and got bored with simply ringing them in order 123456 etc and started to change the order in which they

were rung, hence 'ringing the changes'. In 1668 Fabian Stedman published a treatise 'Tintinalogia'. In it he explained that the different orders in which bells could be ring was based on the factorial system. On 3 bells the maximum number of permutations is only 6, whereas on 12 bells it is 479,001, 600 which would take about 40 years to ring! In practice patterns have been composed to suit different numbers of bell and are regularly learnt and rung by bands.

However, the bells in Fulmer are in danger of falling silent. We have only 2 tower members in Fulmer and only manage to ring on the first Sunday in the month and for other occasions with the help of ringers from other churches so we are looking for new people to join us to keep this ancient art alive. Change ringing was originally said to be a 'gentleman's recreation'. But we know from the existence of external doors to many church towers that ringers were often kept to the 'tradesman's entrance because their rowdy behaviour was felt to be inappropriate in church.

Nowadays ringers come in all shapes and sizes, men and women, young and old, boys and girls and there is no need to be a regular churchgoer. You don't need to be particularly strong, fit or musical. Some people take it up as a retirement hobby. You do need to be able to commit to at least one evening a week for an hour and a half of ringing practice. It will cost you nothing but patience and you will enjoy the company of a very diverse group of friendly people and the knowledge that you are keeping an ancient art alive while keeping physically fit and mentally young. So why not come and try. Practice night is Thursday from 7.30 to 8.30pm or phone Celia Thomas on 01494 775503 or 07939 627992 or email [celiandafydd@btinternet.com](mailto:celiandafydd@btinternet.com)

*Thank you Celia for a very informative article and we hope you recruit some more bellringers -  
Editors*

From our County Councillor

#### A Christmas Conversation in Conservation

As we move into a Fulmer Christmas, looking back with mulled wine in hand, it was an exceptionally busy and productive autumn. Along with my ward Councillors Dev Dhillon and Thomas Hogg, important progress is being made on environmental protection, enforcement, and care of the beautiful parish of Fulmer as your Buckinghamshire Councillors.

Talking of conservation, after much call to action, I joined volunteers from the Colne Valley Regional Park in November, with Fulmer Parish Council, the South Bucks Wombles and Fulmer residents to carry out a major clearance of the Alderbourne. What we found was astonishing - car parts, metal, plastics and dangerous debris dumped directly into our precious chalk stream. We cleared out a

significant amount. My sincere thanks to Fulmer Parish Chairman Councillor David Brackin for the Parish's support in the clearing and coordination.

The Alderbourne is one of Buckinghamshire's rare chalk streams - globally scarce and environmentally priceless. Yet it faces real threats, including invasive Himalayan balsam, which the Colne Valley Regional Park are planning to clear using nature friendly methods. I am also delighted to report that a new footbridge will be installed over the Alderbourne ford to improve accessibility.

Protecting this stream is now a priority of ours at county level. I have drafted a motion to Full Council to be debated next week in Aylesbury - calling for stronger protections for all our chalk streams including the local plan's support for chalk stream buffer zones against inappropriate development, including for the Alderbourne.

I am also pushing for the expansion of the Colne Valley Regional Park boundary so that the entire length of the Alderbourne running through Fulmer is properly safeguarded, rather than only the stretch ending at Hawkwood Lane. This will improve protections for Fulmer as an integral part of the Greenbelt.

On fly tipping enforcement, the Council continues to deliver results. A particularly shocking case saw tonnes of waste dumped on Hawkwood Lane, Fulmer, and again in Wexham. The offender, Aurelian Stoev of West Drayton, has now been fined almost £6,000 after attempting to lie to investigators. This kind of behaviour is a disgrace. Fulmer's lanes are not dumping grounds but happy green highways. I am calling on Westminster to go further - including vehicle confiscation for repeat offenders and uncapped fines to make fly-tipping genuinely unprofitable. Deterrence is key.

I am also concerned about Royal Mail/addresses wrongly marking Fulmer as "Slough." Meanwhile over the border in Gerrards Cross this is not the case. I have formally written to Royal Mail demanding correction of this irrational discrepancy. Fulmer is proudly in Buckinghamshire, and its village identity should be respected.

As ever, Dev, Thomas and I are here to support residents and protect Fulmer at Buckinghamshire Council at all costs. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

Cllr David Moore

David.moore@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

07496 025599

Facebook: [facebook.com/davidmoore4farnhamsandstokepages](https://www.facebook.com/davidmoore4farnhamsandstokepages)

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Thomas.Hogg@buckinghamshire.gov.uk



### Planning in the parish

In the past 12 months, the Parish Council received and reviewed 56 planning applications for Fulmer – an average of 4.7 applications per month and an increase from the previous 12-month period (an average of 4 per month). Nearby councils received the following number of applications during the same period:

- Gerrards Cross Town Council: 299 applications (down from 300)
- Iver Parish Council: 222 applications (down from 272)
- Hedgerley Parish: 18 applications (up from 12)

Parish	21st October 2023 to 21st October 2024	21st October 2024 to 21st October 2025	% Change on previous 12 months
<i>Burnham</i>	176	169	-4%
<i>Chalfont St Peter</i>	282	209	-26%
<i>Denham</i>	186	167	-10%
<i>Farnham Royal</i>	133	137	3%
<i>Fulmer</i>	48	56	17%

<i>Gerrards Cross</i>	299	300	0%
<i>Hedgerley</i>	18	12	-33%
<i>Iver</i>	222	272	23%
<i>Stoke Poges</i>	147	130	-12%
<i>Wexham</i>	67	40	-40%

- Fulmer: +17%
- Iver: +23%
- Farnham Royal: +3%
- Gerrards Cross: static (no significant change)
- Chalfont St Peter: -26%
- Hedgerley: -33%
- Wexham: -40%

The types of planning applications submitted varied widely – from Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) and requests to fell or reduce hedges, to new standalone buildings, single- and double-storey extensions, conversions, and change-of-use applications. While some proposals generate little controversy, others are more contentious. The Parish Council remains committed to engaging with residents and working closely with Chiltern & South Bucks Council to address concerns, particularly those relating to enforcement issues. Each planning application is reviewed by the Parish Council, which has a limited period to submit comments before planning officers at South Bucks and Chiltern District (now under the unitary authority) make final decisions. We're pleased to report improved communication and responsiveness from planning teams this year. Several long-standing cases – some pending for over 20 months – have finally moved forward.

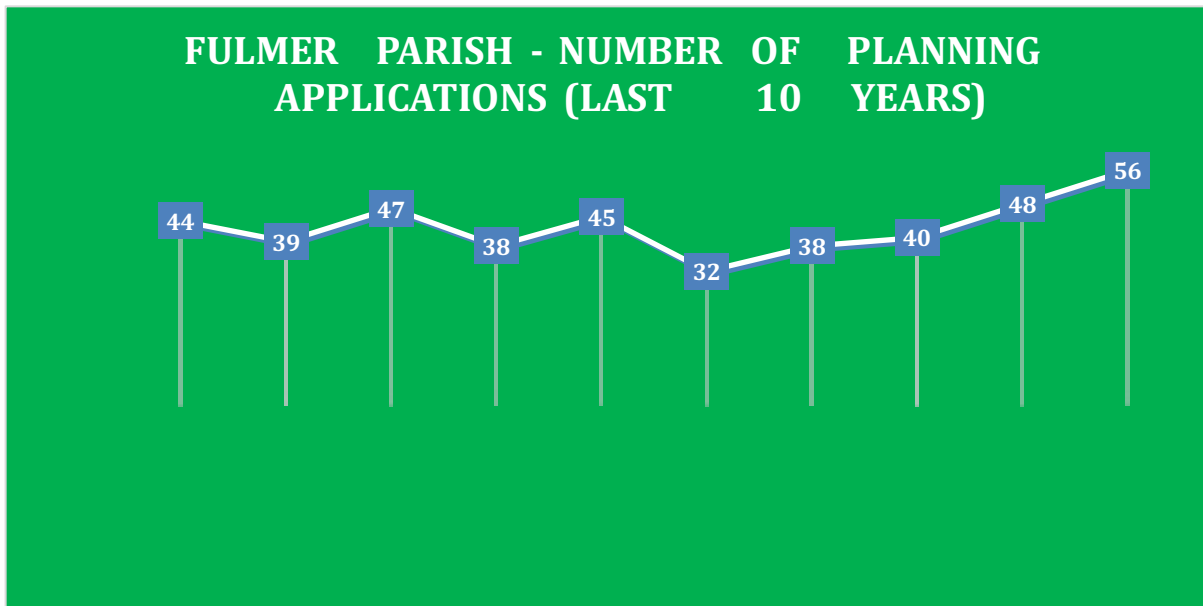
We encourage residents to attend monthly Parish Council meetings to express views, share insights, or seek support regarding planning matters. Your input is vital: we may not always share the same proximity or perspective on proposed developments as you do. The Council acts as a conduit for your concerns and strives to ensure your voices are heard during the planning process.

#### Our Commitment

A key responsibility of Fulmer Parish Council is to represent the interests of residents in planning matters. We remain committed to:

- Protecting village character
- Preventing overdevelopment
- Encouraging developments that benefit permanent residents and support a vibrant, participative community
- Creating a Neighbourhood Plan in order to plan for the future

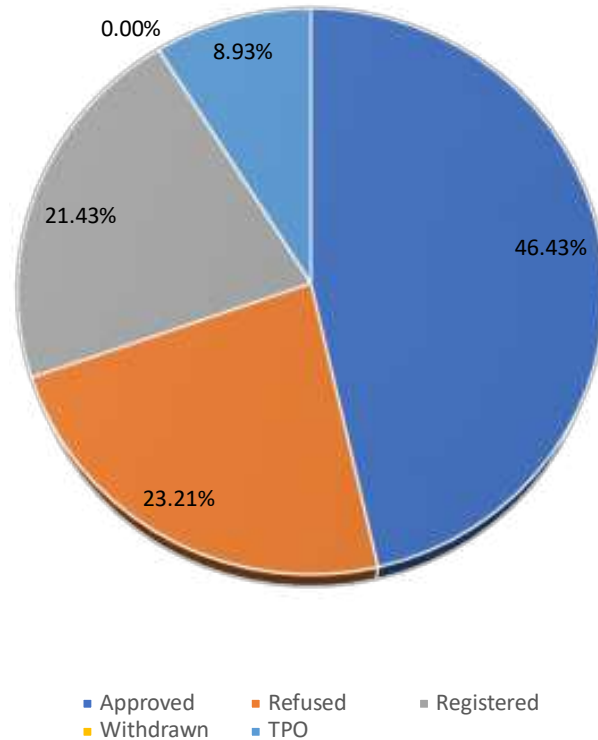
In the 12 months to October 21st, 2025, 56 planning decisions were published by Chiltern & South Bucks Council relating to Fulmer.



Trends over the last 10 years (see graphic above) indicate a steady rise in planning applications since the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020–2021, with the past two years marking the highest volume of applications in a decade.

A breakdown of application outcomes for the last 12 months:

## Fulmer Parish Applications by Status Oct 21st 2024 - Oct 21st 2025



- Approved: 46.43%
- Refused: 23.21%
- Tree Protection Orders (TPOs): 8.93%
- Awaiting Decision: 21.43%
- Withdrawn: 0%

### Looking Ahead

The Parish Council remains actively involved in ongoing enforcement cases and continues to collaborate with planning officers to protect the integrity of Fulmer. Given the high number of applications relative to our small community, your input is more valuable than ever. We invite all residents to share feedback on how we can improve communication, support your planning concerns, and better represent the community in planning matters. Thank you for your continued engagement and support.

Parm Khanghura – Parish Councillor

Fulmer Volunteer Groups

### Speed Watch

We took part in the first National Speed Watch Day on Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> July. The published results revealed that, within the Thames Valley Police area, 336.5 roadside hours were recorded, the second highest for Speed Watch. In terms of the highest number of sessions undertaken, Thames Valley achieved first place. Some 15,500 passing vehicles were observed on the day, which led to 1673 drivers being reminded of the speed limits within their community.

Sadly, the Fulmer Group has not been very active recently. We lost one of our volunteers when they moved away from the Village. Without volunteers, Speed Watch cannot function! A Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign (MVAS) unit has been positioned in Fulmer Common Road for some time. Recently, this has now been re-activated through the help of a Village volunteer who possesses the necessary technical knowledge. The data recorded includes the number and speed of vehicles travelling in one direction over 24 hours. Some of the highest speeds are alarming as well as the percentage of motorists who exceed the speed limit. After two months, the unit was moved, in September, to Fulmer Road. Certainly, the highest speed recorded here was 60mph and over 45% of all vehicles were speeding. The data for October has yet to be downloaded. The unit will then be moved to another location in the Village to continue collecting data to establish the pattern of peak flows through the Village over 24 hours and in any given week. This will help determine the optimum solution to introduce traffic calming measures. Funding is now being sought to acquire another MVAS. There was a near head-on crash outside Fulmer Place in the Summer. Fortunately, no one was injured. We have requested that the white line is remarked to avoid motorists cutting the corner.

### Litter Pick Group

The Group tries to meet every month, and I am most grateful to the "Faithful" who manage to attend most sessions. Whilst the centre of the Village appears to be litter free, we inevitably manage to fill several bags. Unfortunately, the greatest amount of rubbish is thrown out of the windows of passing vehicles which ends up in the verges of the roads surrounding the Village. Small groups of people working together can effectively clear one of these roads in a single session. When there are six roads, this means that the outlying roads only get to be cleared, at best, twice a year. Unfortunately, rubbish can accumulate quicker than we can clear it!

### Best Kept Village

Fulmer was entered into the competition again this year. Without the considerable contributions made by the Church, Church Hall, The Black Horse and King George's Playing Fields in maintaining their grounds and floral displays, we would have struggled to achieve the 177 out of 200 points awarded. The remaining amenities in the Village still need to be clean and well presented, and there are too few volunteers coming forward to lend a hand. Without them, there is little prospect of ever

winning this competition again. To be awarded a certificate of Merit, in the circumstances, is an achievement.

Proposal for an HGV limit.

The process for submitting this proposal had to be “parked” whilst the Local Elections took place earlier in the year. In the meantime, it has given us time to fine-tune our submission by obtaining some professional input and, more importantly, obtain the views of Residents whose lives are directly impacted by the noise, vibration and fumes. Not forgetting, their levels of speed through Fulmer. A ‘tick-box’ survey is currently being circulated around the Village so please make your views known. The results together with photos, videos and Residents statements will form part of our submission.

Hopefully, with the political support obtained for the proposal, our application will be approved. As to future enforcement, this lies with Thames Valley Police.

Ian Boccock – Parish Councillor

*Thank you Ian and your small team for the work you continue to do to improve and look after our lovely village – Editors*

#### Update on Fulmer Recreational Ground at King George’s Fields

It’s been a very busy period for us at the recreational facility with the football season restarting and a great many classes at The Studio.

Our annual Fireworks event was a complete success this year and the preparation of local school lunches has returned for the autumn term. These lunches have also given us the opportunity to produce some lunches for the community which I wanted to mention in more detail:

Our Clubhouse offers a simple but much-loved weekly lunch schedule that brings regular visitors together and adds to the friendly character of the venue. Two meals have become part of the clubhouse routine: soup on Tuesdays and fish and chips on Fridays.

Tuesdays are centred around a freshly prepared soup, which often changes from week to week. Whether it's a classic vegetable, a hearty lentil, or a seasonal special, the soup is served hot and accompanied by bread, making it a comforting and affordable option of £5 per bowl. Many visitors enjoy the relaxed pace of Tuesday lunchtimes, where the warm meal sets a welcoming tone and encourages people to stay for a chat.

By contrast, Fridays are the busiest lunchtime of the week, thanks to the ever-popular fish and chips for £7.50. The meal is served with generous portions of crisp battered fish and golden chips, with mushy peas or other traditional sides. It has already become something of a tradition, drawing regulars who look forward to ending the week with a classic British favourite.

Together, these two lunches help define the atmosphere of the clubhouse. They give members and visitors something dependable to look forward to, fostering a sense of community while offering good, straightforward food. Whether someone comes for a light mid-week soup or for the Friday fish-and-chips ritual, the lunches at King George's Fields Club House remain a valued part of local life.

I hope to see more of you down at the facility in the run up to Christmas for either some fresh air, food or one of our many classes on offer.

Ian Finan

General Manager – Kind George's Field, Fulmer

## THE STUDIO AT KING GEORGE'S FIELD FULMER

DAY	TIME	CLASS	DURATION	INSTRUCTOR
MONDAY	9:20	STREET DANCE & TONE	60 minutes	Neon Fuel Dance
	10:30	HATHA YOGA	60 minutes	Patricia
	19:00	HEALING MEDITATION	60 minutes	Pavitter
TUESDAY	09:30	PILATES	60 minutes	Fatima
	10:45	MEDITATION SOUND BOWLS	60 minutes	Claudia
	17:30	LEANER & STRONGER FITNESS	60 minutes	Gosia
	19:00	WING CHUN KUNG FU	60 minutes	Matt
WEDNESDAY	08:00	BARRE FITNESS	45 minutes	Sarah-Louise
	09:00	STRETCH & MOBILITY	45 minutes	Sarah-Louise
	17:00	ITF TAEKWON-DO [8-16]	60 minutes	Harpreet
	19:00	MEDITATION SOUND BOWLS	60 minutes	Claudia
THURSDAY	09:30	PILATES	60 minutes	Fatima
	11:00	POWER FLOW YOGA	60 minutes	Patricia
	12:15	STRETCH & MOBILITY	45 minutes	Sarah-Louise
	18:00	LEANER STRONGER FITNESS	60 minutes	Gosia
	19:15	YIN YOGA	60 minutes	Patricia
FRIDAY	08:00	BARRE FITNESS	45 minutes	Sarah-Louise
	9:10	KETTLE BELLS	45 minutes	Ophelia
	10:00	STREET DANCE & STRETCH	60 minutes	Neon Fuel Dance
	11:30	PRIVATE HIRE	7 hours	Priscilla
SATURDAY	10:30	ITF TAEKWON-DO (8-16)	45 minutes	Harpreet
	11:30	ITF TAEKWON-DO (4-7)	45 minutes	Harpreet
	13:00	PRIVATE HIRE	7 hours	Priscilla
SUNDAY				



## Black Park News

It has been a very busy and sunny summer in Black Park with high visitor numbers throughout the school holidays which have continued through September and October. The new Four Seasons Café is becoming increasingly popular and if you have not visited yet it is worth a visit for handmade pizza alone! In spring we completed work on restoring the western bank of Black Park Lake using coir rolls, a natural, sustainable bio-engineering product. Coir rolls are an organic, living revetment that provide erosion control and rapid vegetation establishment, these are pre-planted with native plants that will then grow and develop naturally along the lake edge, stabilising the bank and protecting against further erosion. They also provide fantastic habitat for wildlife. As part of this project a section of the lakeside path was also replaced and improved, this included work to protect exposed tree roots where we have raised the path and installed a root protection system to reduce the impact of trampling from footfall and our own utility vehicles.

Without stating the obvious Black Park has a lot of trees! Our conservative estimate is in the region of 450,000 but it is likely to be more. Every year we conduct safety inspections of our trees in core visitor areas, with the main paths throughout the park being inspected every three years. The inspections are focused on keeping our visitors safe and making sure that trees in our more public areas are effectively managed and monitored. In some cases, we also need to factor in the conservation value of the trees, things like retaining deadwood in the crown or leaving a tree with large cavities in the trunk are fantastic for wildlife but not so good for visitor safety. In these situations, we may decide that the conservation value is so high that we will use other techniques other than intrusive tree surgery, this usually involves reducing the risk by doing things like moving paths slightly, so they no longer go close to trees or encouraging vegetation to grow under the tree to prevent public access. Where we have done this, we ask visitors to respect any signage and fencing that is put in place.

Finally, in October this year Andrew Fowler who has worked at Black Park since 1996 retired, Andrew originally joined the country parks as a senior ranger but for the last 20 years has been the country parks manager. Andrew's work on the country parks operating successfully on a self-financed basis is one of the main reasons that Black Park is still a very well managed country park with its own dedicated ranger team and able to reinvest in site improvements. The country parks team wish all the residents of Fulmer a Merry Christmas and hope to see you all in Black Park in the new year.

Tim Williams

Country Parks Operations Manager, Communities Directorate, Buckinghamshire Council

Tel: 01753 511060

Mobile: 07734 734335

E-mail: [tim.williams@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:tim.williams@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

1<sup>st</sup> Gerrards Cross & Fulmer Scout Group

Over the last year we have had large Beaver and Cub sections with a low number of children in the Scout section (10.5 - 14.5 years old) due to children in this age group moving up to new schools with increased activities and scouting sometimes taking a back seat.

We currently have about 40 children, but the Beaver section has temporarily closed due to lack of volunteers, the Cub section is full and is running all the usual activities at HQ and outside venues. The Scout section only has 8 children so until more Cubs move up next term they are running a limited programme. At the moment we have no children attending from Fulmer and it would be great to hear from you or even some adults who could help with some admin??

The children are enjoying the traditional activities of Hikes, cooking in HQ and in our fire circle behind our HQ. In addition, we use the PACCAR activities centre near Chalfont St Peter for wall climbing, camping, high ropes, archery, air rifle shooting, caving, zip wiring and junior tomahawks!

Last year we visited local Nursing Homes to chat and/or sing to the residents, collected food for the homeless and then distributed in Slough, visited a Sikh temple, toured the Fire station at Tatling End and other community events.

Our Fund Raising was selling Krispy Kreme doughnuts from a stand at the GX Christmas Lights Festival last year.

This year as usual we celebrated Remembrance Day at the GX Memorial Centre Sunday Service with mainly our Cubs.

I am very proud of the time and effort that my small band of dedicated Leaders take to ensure our Group provides an alternative lifestyle despite our small size compared to other local Scout Groups.

Please don't forget we still need adult help from anyone in Fulmer from 18 - 80 years old and you don't need any scouting experience just some enthusiasm, so get out of your chair and join us as we are only 'up the hill' from the centre of the village!

Or, if you prefer, we need help with admin jobs (no uniform) for a few hours a week so please contact me!

Mark Shaw – Group Scout Leader  
07788 891232 / scoutermark@hotmail.co.uk / www.gxscouts.co.uk

There's a mouse in the house

Royal Albert Hall  
The Management  
Kensington Gore  
Greater London  
SW7 2AP



Dear Sirs,

Thank you so much for the marvellous 'Classic F.M. Live Concert' we attended on 19th April. The whole performance was splendid. Our enjoyment was only marred by the presence of a large rodent running around our feet during Tchaikovsky's piano concerto no. 1.

Although I found this quite entertaining, (the rodent, that is), one of my guests did not. Indeed, she found it rather alarming, and it did somewhat spoil our evening. We obviously couldn't move without making a fuss which would have alerted other members of the audience to the incident, and the "mouse" or "rat" (not sure which) could have made its way into the orchestra! (There were about 80 of them...I counted. Musicians I mean, not rats). However, we did report it to two very helpful ushers (Keith and Rob) who made a note of it. I enclose our ticket stubs to confirm where we were seated. There were 5 in our party and we discussed changing seats at the interval, but we did not wish to make an issue about it during the concert, thus spoiling the evening further.

I wanted to alert you to the rodent issue as it was rather unexpected and since my guest was especially alarmed by the unwelcome visitor, it would be lovely if you would consider refunding us for our tickets.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Susie Matthews

*Their reply was unfavourable and referred to the age of the Victorian building. The inference was that we should have paid extra for the 'guest performance'!*

#### News from South Bucks Riding for the Disabled Group

It has been a busy time at South Bucks Riding for the Disabled – here we share a few highlights of the last few months! The Summer saw amazing success for many of our riders and some special events alongside our regular weekly rides and Tea with a Pony sessions, where we continue to welcome

residents from Signature Care Home, - these sessions are a great socialising opportunity for the residents.

In July Harry, Mya, Elish, Ben, Alana, Carmen and Teagan competed at the National RDA Championships, which are an annual event that celebrates the achievements of RDA participants across the UK, providing a supportive environment to compete. Our riders and horses were amazing, coming away with lots of Rosettes, making everyone so very proud. Our wonderful pony Chequers was also awarded RDA's Harvey Best All-Rounder Cup – an annual award that is presented to a horse or pony that demonstrates excellence and enables participants to compete at the RDA National Championships.

It wouldn't be possible without our fabulous team of staff and volunteers giving up their time – a huge thank you to everyone involved!

In August Elish and Harper were also placed 2nd at the British Dressage Para Dressage Summer Championships at Hartpury University & College. A fantastic ride. We are so proud of you. We also welcomed the Charity Rays of Sunshine to South Bucks RDA for a fun filled day of riding, grooming, arts and crafts and picnicking. Lots of happy faces made the day a joy for everyone involved. Again, a huge thank you to the army of volunteers who made the day possible, and so special.

Into September, we had our first 'Have a Go' Show to offer a social environment that brought volunteers, parents, carers and riders together. This show was a huge experiment which would not have succeeded without all those that aided in its running... 'having a go'. Mari had a go at dressage judging, Dani had a go at calling tests, Alison had a go at officially judging countryside challenge, Fern ran two warm up arenas solo, and Lucinda supported us all from the yard armed with one walkie talkie and a determined brow. It was a heartwarming and impactful day.

During September Mari Durward-Akhurst and Athene represented Great Britain at the Para Dressage European Championships Ermelo 2025 and won an amazing two Bronze medals! Athene has also been shortlisted for Horse and Hound Awards - Dressage Horse of the Year. We are all so proud of Mari and Athene – Mari said; "Athene enjoyed every minute and thought the prize giving ceremonies were fantastic. She loved the big crowds and thought they had all come to cheer her on. We produced some of our best work together and just being there at our second championship together was amazing but winning two bronze medals was the icing on the cake. Now for a well-deserved rest for everyone before we turn our attention to next year!!"

As we head towards winter, we are looking into preparation for our Christmas event with the date being confirmed as Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December from 4:30pm. This year, in memory of Francis who was a longstanding rider and volunteer, we will be giving out our Francis Gahan cup to a member of our community (rider or volunteer). This cup will be given out as an annual award to someone that consistently embodies the values of SBRDA and we can promise a great deal of festive fun too.

Please follow us on Facebook @southbucksRDA to see pictures from this event.

Thank you to our local community who support us so loyally – we are so grateful!

To find out more about the work we do, sessions we run and volunteering opportunities please visit our website [www.southbucksrda.org](http://www.southbucksrda.org) or email [enquiries@southbucksrda.org](mailto:enquiries@southbucksrda.org)

We are in particular need of volunteers on Tuesday mornings and afternoons and Saturday afternoons so if you are able to help we'd love to hear from you – please email [enquiries@southbucksrda.org](mailto:enquiries@southbucksrda.org)

Claire Fryer – Trustee & Volunteer

### Stoke Common – Autumn Update

During autumn and winter, as the wildlife slows down or hibernates, management work on Stoke Common picks up pace. During the first 10 or so years of the City of London's ownership of the nature reserve, the restoration work was at times intense, with heavy machinery felling or mulching large areas of young scrubby birch and pine woodland. Within a short space of time the impact was clear, with heather and other heathland species starting to flourish and vistas being reopened that hadn't been seen for decades. A great example of the success of the restoration was revealed in a recent report from the Bucks Fungus Group (BFG) who regularly survey the common on behalf of the City's team. The locally unique acidic soil and habitat, combined with the management and retention of decaying wood, create a perfect environment for fungi. During 2025, 122 species of fungi were recorded on the Common, which is a very high count, and the combined findings for Stoke Common

and Burnham Beeches included 20 new species that were added to the site list, two of which are new species for the county. Additionally, many of the species are linked with pine, oak and birch which are of course all found on the nature reserve. (This is perhaps an opportune moment to remind everyone that picking fungi is not permitted on the Common, partially because some of the species themselves are rare and/or they have rare species that rely on them, but also because removing a 'toadstool' removes its ability to produce spores which will develop into the next generation of fungi and also means that they will not be there for any subsequent visitors to enjoy).



Photograph Jordan Payne

Current management (in addition to grazing) involves annually mowing 'random' strips through areas of the gorse and heather to create a mosaic of age ranges and thus structure and diversity, but occasionally a 'heavier hand' is required. Therefore, in autumn 2025, a mulching machine returned to Stoke Common to tackle a 0.5 hectare area of European gorse that had become too dominant. In addition to clearance, mulching helps to create bare ground, providing opportunities for ground nesting birds and for seeds from heathland plants to germinate.

Mulching and grazing are just two methods from the management plan (the Exmoor ponies will continue grazing the west side of the Common over the winter period); manual cutting of scrub by staff and volunteers is still key and we aim to cut 1-1.5Ha over the winter of 2025/26. There is always plenty of work for the volunteers over the winter period, so if it is something that you have been considering, contact the City's team on 01753 647358 to find out how you can get involved. You don't need experience, just lots of enthusiasm and all tools are provided along with the essential tea, coffee and biscuits!

## Fulmer Infant School



We have had a wonderful start to the Autumn Term! We have welcomed our new children into our Reception Class and they have settled in brilliantly. We have also welcomed some new families to our school community, our existing families back for another academic year and families who have returned to us where older siblings were past pupils. At this time of year, we always find ourselves thinking about the children who left us in the summer and wondering how they are getting on in their new schools. We hope they have all settled in well, are making good progress and new friends.

We have had a busy Autumn Term already. Here are some of the highlights:

**Fulmer Guinea Pigs** – The Fulmer guinea pigs joined our school at the beginning of the Autumn Term. They have quickly settled into their new environment and the children are enjoying helping to look after them. The guinea pigs were named Ginger and Biscuit as the result of a whole school vote organised by our School Council.

**Meet the Teacher** – Once the children had settled into their new classes, we had ‘Meet the Teacher’ sessions after school. The children were able to show their parents where they sat and explain the classroom routines.

Harvest Assembly – We were joined by parents and Francesca, from St James Gerrards Cross and Fulmer Church, for our Harvest Assembly. The children sang the songs they had been practising and recited their poems beautifully. It was a lovely start to the day for everyone. Lots of food was donated and Francesca kindly collected this and delivered it to the Trussell Trust.

Chalfont St Peter CE Academy – Mrs Alburg the Headteacher at Chalfont St Peter CE Academy visited our school to speak to the parents of the children in Year 2. Fulmer Infant School has preferential admissions into Year 3 and our parents appreciate the opportunity to hear about the school from Mrs Alburg.

Pumpkin Party – This was organised by the Friends of Fulmer Parent Association. The children had a lovely time completing autumn themed craft activities.

Remembrance Assembly – On November 11<sup>th</sup> we held a Remembrance Assembly led by our School Council. The children read poems and Reception Class recited a short poem they had learnt by heart.

Year 1 Trip to Iver Environment Centre – Year 1 had a great time visiting Iver Environment Centre. They searched for bugs in the woodland and went pond dipping. Even though it rained, it did not spoil their day.

Kurling at Burnham Grammar School – Our Year 1 and Year 2 classes visited Burnham Grammar School to take part in an event run by the Sports Leaders at the school. The children enjoyed learning the skills of Kurling and the Sports Leaders did an excellent job of explaining the activities and supporting the children.

We are now entering a very exciting time of year as we begin our preparations for Christmas. The school play has been selected, the children have their parts and rehearsals are underway. We are looking forward to Christmas Jumper Day and our whole school Christmas lunch. Friends of Fulmer have also arranged a Christmas Disco for the children.

We remain very grateful for all the support we receive from the local community. Our reading volunteers are a huge support in developing our children's reading skills. The children also enjoy their special reading time. We also appreciate all the work Mrs Matthews does in our school garden to keep it looking bright and colourful. We continue to be grateful to the Black Horse who support us by allowing our parents to park in some of the spaces in their car park at drop off time in the morning.

Mrs Julie Matton  
Headteacher





# FRIENDS OF FULMER FUNDRAISING FOCUS

14TH NOVEMBER 2025

## 2025 DIARY DATES

- Thurs 11<sup>th</sup> Dec (After school - Time TBC) - Christmas Disco and Reunion Disco.
- Festive Mufti day (date TBC)

Help us to raise free funds as you shop this Christmas



Scan the QR code to receive a different code for you - shop online  
Visit [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk)



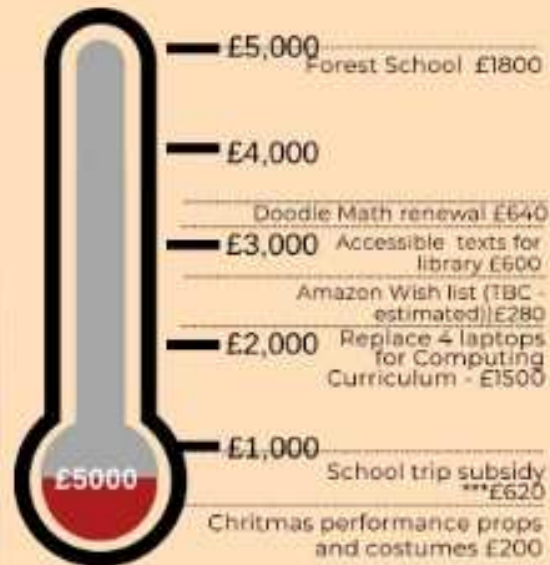
- 1 Visit [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk)
- 2 Sign up and search for us  
**'Fulmer Infant school'**
- 3 Your favourite retailers donate to us whenever you shop with them

Get free donations from thousands of retailers including:



## What are we fundraising for?

25/26 TARGET: £5000<sup>00</sup>



\*FoF financial year and this tracker both run from Oct to Oct.  
\*\* Additional items may be requested by school through year, if need arises  
\*\*\* (£5 per child per trip, 2 trips per year group)



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## Nicholas Barber writes of his Gap Year – Part I

MADRID

I left school in December 1958. University beckoned the following October. How to make the most of the intervening months? Many of my contemporaries had left the previous summer and gone straight on to university. Most of the December leavers had got jobs teaching in prep schools, earning useful pocket money ready for university. My father strongly favoured this, not least because my

earnings would reduce the pressure on his own stretched finances. I couldn't think of anything worse. I had spent the last ten years in boarding schools. And somewhere out there was the big wide world waiting to be explored. I had only twice travelled out of Britain, to France in summer 1954 and Switzerland in winter 1958. My feet itched.

An old friend of my father's knew of a Liverpool shipping company, Elder Dempster Lines, which might take me on a round voyage to West Africa. I was accepted for a voyage the following May. For the period January-May I had another idea. Sometime previously I had heard that in Madrid there was an appetite for learning English and I might be able to get work there as a teacher. So during my last year at school I had added lessons in Spanish and got an extra O Level. My father was dismayed at the idea. I tried to assure him that it was less risky than he feared and I would somehow earn my keep there. But how could I be sure? In the end we did a deal. He would pay my fare to Madrid, one way only, and I would earn enough for the return fare three months later. Of course, he said, if you find you can't, just send a telegram. I knew he didn't mean 'if', he meant 'when', but as ever he was far too kind to say so. I was all too clear about the challenge.

The journey to Madrid was an adventure in itself. Today it's a three-hour flight. In 1959 it took two days. Starting with a train from Sheffield to St Pancras, then across London to Victoria for the boat train to Dover and ferry to Calais, then train to Gare du Nord, across Paris to Gare d'Austerlitz for the train to the Spanish frontier, walk across the border to a Spanish train. It was much older and slower. It meandered its way through the night across northern Spain and I woke up to a very foreign view. Instead of the green of France the huge landscape was yellow and brown, more prairie than farmers' fields, stretching away to far distant horizons. This was Castile. And I was in a totalitarian state ruled by a fascist dictator, Generalissimo Franco. The prevailing poverty was stark, perhaps less extreme than in Russia but still more third world than first with its peasants working near subsistence levels. At least the cities looked relatively prosperous.

The train trundled into Madrid late morning. My father had given me an introduction to his firm's Spanish agent with a request to help me as best he could. A nice man, he kindly gave me lunch, pointed me to an area where I might hope to find an inexpensive room, and wished me lots of luck. He clearly did not need to see me again.

The Pension Vizcaina was on Plaza de Santa Barbara. The owner's Basque accent was hard to understand but yes, someone had left that morning and she had a room. I signed on for dinner, bed and breakfast. That first evening I had a table to myself. And although the other tables were full there was a distinct dearth of friendly faces. The reason her rooms were cheap was the location overlooking an uphill bus stop just before some traffic lights. Vehicles stopped and started all through the night; after a sleepless first night I wondered how long I could last but it's surprising how quickly one gets used to noise. The owner had cut her cloth accordingly. The food was thin, the beds basic, and the loo paper took the form of old copies of the ABC newspaper, a publication whose black print readily removed itself onto one's backside. And outside in the streets Madrid's January weather was wet and bitterly cold; the city's altitude is 2000 ft. I felt very lonely. What on earth had I done? My one hope was Sr. Mangold. An uncle had given me an introduction to the owner of the Mangold Institute, Madrid's leading language school. I called on him the next morning. He listened courteously while I

said my piece. His reply, in perfect English, was chilling. 'Let me be sure I understand what you are saying. You, aged 18, with little Spanish and no experience of teaching, are asking me to employ you to teach my customers English. Well, I have a high regard for your uncle, so here's what I will do, I will offer you a place to learn Spanish, at no charge'.

Luckily, I knew of another language school, the Berlitz. Their philosophy was to ban any language except the one being taught; English was to be taught in English. How convenient! I asked to see the director, was quickly interviewed and as quickly hired to teach five mornings a week plus some evenings. He had one proviso, that I commit to stay at least six months. Yes, I said blithely, somehow overlooking my voyage to West Africa in May. The Berlitz was way down market compared with the Mangold and they paid accordingly. I needed to find additional work. I had heard that a small ad in the ABC newspaper might generate interest, offering private lessons as a *profesor de ingles* and quoting the pension's phone number. The phone duly rang the next evening. I quickly realised my schoolboy Spanish was way off the pace. The voice on the line got irritable and I understood less and less. I rang off, in despair. At which point I had an astonishing stroke of luck. 'Can I help?' asked a man at another table in a very English voice. The next time the phone rang Ed fielded the call and booked an afternoon class for me, at an hourly rate twice that paid by the Berlitz.

The man was Eldridge Smith and a story came with him. It emerged slowly over the coming weeks. Ed had been living in Spain for many years, teaching English to private individuals at an altogether more sophisticated level than mine. So why was he living in this scruffy pension? It turned out he had landed there in rather a hurry only a few weeks earlier. He had been happily ensconced with a rich and rather beautiful pupil whose husband was behind bars. Unfortunately, the Pope had died and, to mark the moment, Franco had followed a tradition of amnesties for some of his political prisoners. As the husband returned home through the front door, Ed had had to beat a fast retreat via the fire escape.

My afternoon classes were slow to build. I was earning barely enough to pay the landlady, let alone lead a life. Yet I was determined to avoid having to ask my father for the return fare. To save every penny, I went without lunch. After a while I felt seriously hungry. My daily nadir was my lunchtime walk back from the Berlitz. My route passed a *pasteleria* exuding tantalising aromas and I always crossed the street to reduce the pain of happiness foregone. And I still remember the sense of triumph several weeks later by when I had earned enough to go in and buy one of their fabulous *milhojas* (millefeuilles). Never has something tasted so delicious.

Teaching can be fun when you are feeling fresh. It can also be extremely tiring, especially when teaching the Berlitz method with all explanations having to be in the very language the pupil is struggling to understand. My private classes were even harder. The Spanish day turned on the siesta when everyone went home for an afternoon snooze. Offices and shops and language schools then reopened from five till eight. The timing for dinner was nine at the earliest. After a morning of the Berlitz method and having to miss lunch, I too felt sleepy during the siesta period, yet that was when my clients wanted their English lessons. And all they wanted was conversation, so I had no textbook to provide a framework. Eventually I hit on the idea of teaching the metaphors borrowed from cricket (stumped, bowled, fielded, caught, hit for six, straight bat), followed by the rules of the game and the

names of the fielding positions. They found this wonderfully exotic. After a time, they progressed to the infinitely more arcane topic of what the English mean by 'but it's not cricket'.

Most of the Berlitz classes took place in its building near the Plaza Mayor but the director sometimes took on external assignments. I was allocated to one of these, to teach a group of novices in a nunnery. It was in Madrid's suburbs behind a high wall with a very solid door. I rang the bell and a grill opened to reveal an unblinking eye. Slowly, with sinister creaking, the door opened onto a courtyard and I was led to a bare room with a long oak table down the middle. Along the sides sat my new students in the black and white habits of novice nuns. Only the ovals of their faces were visible, all of them beautiful and with lovely smiles, seemingly about my age, teenagers. One in particular caught my eye and I was instantly smitten. Seated at the far end was an older nun, clearly in charge. No more catching of younger eyes once I had caught hers. I duly sat down at my end of the table expecting the nun to get things going. Nobody moved. Time to take a lead, said I to myself, and stood up. As I started to introduce myself, the nun stood up, motioned me to resume my seat, and then asked the girls to join her in a prayer for the teacher. I had been put very firmly in my place. Only then was I to begin my lesson, as the Lord's servant. In the event the girls were lively and fun to teach. I increasingly looked forward to my weekly bus trip to the suburbs and those lovely oval faces, and I was sorry when the assignment came to a sudden stop. The stop was because I got the sack. I had been worrying about my promise to stay at the Berlitz for six months. A month before returning home, to give them time to find a replacement, I alerted the director to my 'unavoidable' change of plan. He exploded: 'You promised six months. Now you tell me you will leave after three. You will do no such thing, you will leave this minute!' I could hardly complain. But it meant I had suddenly lost my core income. Fortunately, by then I had built up my private classes and a few phone calls later I had more than replaced my lost earnings from the Berlitz. I did not miss the Berlitz method either. But I did miss those novices.

Madrid life had its ups and downs. Among the ups was the occasional Sunday lunch with de Hervas family. A friend of my parents had grown up in Tangiers and her sister, Queenie, had married a Spaniard. They lived in Madrid with their son and three beautiful daughters, all in their early twenties. At their Sunday lunches the girls teased me mercilessly. When I told them of some of my racier adventures, they accused me of *cara dura* (literally, 'hard cheek', meaning 'what a nerve!'). The eldest, Nena, insisted I would never speak Spanish properly until I could pronounce the word for a guffaw, *carcajada*, where the r must be rolled and the j come from the back of the throat like a Scottish loch. Will you give me a kiss if I succeed? Yes, but you won't. She conceded defeat the last time I called round just before I returned home.

I tried to draw the family out about Franco and his fascist regime. They were disappointingly guarded. The father, Jose, had fought for the losing side, the Republicans, during Spain's murderous civil war in the late 1930s. Franco was a brute and the Republicans suffered terribly. Many had been left in mass graves. Perhaps he found it too painful to discuss. More likely he knew we were in a police state where walls have ears.

I learned much more from Ed Smith, about how Franco's sinister control was exercised via an unholy alliance between the military, the Catholic church and his Falange Party. Political debate was stifled and the Party controlled the courts. That said, Madrid's atmosphere did not feel threatening. The bars were busy and people smiled. No sign of Russia's dour queues to buy a loaf of bread. As in Mussolini's Italy, the trains ran on time, albeit slowly. But it was only after Franco's death in 1975 and the restoration of democracy that Spain's budding entrepreneurs burst their chains and economic growth took off. In 1959 I could never have imagined that fifty years later Spanish companies like Telefonica, Zara, Ferrovial (owner of Heathrow), and Banco Santander would become such a feature of Britain's economy.

Ed had numerous Franco jokes. For instance, his motorcades comprised motorbike outriders, then three Cadillacs behind and three in front, and in the middle two Rolls-Royces, one for Franco and the one *behind* for the Holy Ghost. Years later I heard about Franco's remark on his deathbed. Once the end was nigh, the doctors were to summon the Cabinet. His ministers arrived. Franco perked up at once: 'why are you here?' 'We've come to say goodbye.' 'Good heavens, where are you going?'

It was thanks to Ed that I began to get the hang of bull-fighting. He was an *aficionado* and went to a *corrida* most Sundays. I sometimes went too. I had the usual preconceptions, that the slow taunting and cold-blooded killing of an animal was worse than cruel, and could hardly be called a sport\*. Over time I came to grasp Spain's love of the contest between Man and Beast. And what could be a finer life for a bull than being singled out for the bull ring? Specially fed and cosseted in the best fields until it was six, it lived the life of Riley compared with its bullock contemporaries sent to the abattoir aged one. And the rare bull which defeated its opponent became a hero, returning to its farm and dying of old age. So ran the apologia. But I had to sit through some gruesome bloodletting before half appreciating the Spanish point of view. Bullfights are also held in Provence but there they conclude with tired bulls rather than dead ones. The fun comes from bull-baiting and the gymnastic athleticism of the human baiters, not from 'death in the afternoon'.

\* a *corrida* comprises six fights, each following the same three-part ritual. First the *matador* (or properly the *torero*), clothed lavishly, and sexily, in a red and gold 'suit of lights', manoeuvres the bull round the ring with a large brightly coloured cloak, the *veronica* – beautiful to watch, like a ballet. He is accompanied by the *picadors* riding heavily padded horses and armed with long spears which they thrust into the bull's shoulders – horrible to watch. Once the bull is getting dizzy, the *banderillistas* emerge for the second stage, thrusting their dart-like *banderillas* into the bull's neck muscles. By now the bull is maddened with pain, enraged but much weakened. Time for the finale. For this stage the torero has exchanged the veronica for the smaller *muleta* and wields a short sword. He aims to mesmerise the bull to a standstill, have it drop its head, and then, standing daringly close to the horns, thrust the sword into the back of the neck to sever the main artery. If this is done cleanly and elegantly, the crowd cheers, waving white handkerchiefs to signal their approval, and the judges award the heroic torero with first prize, the bull's ears. Less elegant and he gets one ear. Botch the kill, sometimes taking several attempts, and he gets roundly booed. Horses drag the carcass away. Now for the next fight. Ugh! Still, no wonder the best toreros were idolised. Manolete and Dominguin were the glamour boys of the era, sex symbols in their tight breeches, a cross between sporting hero

and Hollywood film star. Sadly I never saw them as the main season did not begin until May and the fights Ed took me to were warm-ups with lesser bulls and lesser toreros.

An age divide separated the *corrida aficionados* from those supporting Spain's new enthusiasm for *futbol*. Real Madrid had recently opened its exciting new Estadio Bernabeu. Its capacity of 100,000 outdid Wembley, and most British grounds were half the size and less. I only went once and my cheap seats far from the action highlighted the relative intimacy of the bullring with its crowd of about 25,000. As with the bullfight, we waved our white handkerchiefs when Real scored a goal.

Madrid had other highlights. At the Prado I was already aware of El Greco and Velazquez but the likes of Murillo and Ribera and Zurbaran were new. When I visited the Prado more recently the Velazquez room stole the show but in 1959 my teenage eye was much more taken with Goya, whether his subtle portraits or his often savage genre scenes or, almost best, his joyous cartoons for royal tapestries. Many other superb paintings were by an artist I had never heard of, Ticiano. Who he? It was some time before I realised this was perhaps the greatest of them all, an Italian in the pay of Spain's Philip II, Titian. The highlight of old Madrid is the Plaza Mayor and the narrow streets fanning out behind, full of bodegas and tapas bars. One evening I watched someone perform the old trick of holding up a leather bag and pouring its wine onto his forehead so as to make it run down his face to his mouth. My attempt to follow suit wrecked my shirt.

I can't remember how I met two fellow Brits but some weekends we combined forces to take a train to some of the famous old cities of Castile. Toledo was outstanding, Avila as well, and Segovia with its Roman viaduct. One Sunday we went to the great renaissance palace of El Escorial. As we emerged from its famous church the porch was heaving with peasants peddling their wares, a juxtaposition which felt very foreign to our British eyes. Even more foreign, but in a chillingly different way, was the Valley of the Fallen (*Valle de los Caidos*), where in a remote valley Franco had recently opened a gargantuan war memorial. A vast cavern had been tunnelled into the hillside and above it stood a granite cross some 400 feet high. Although purporting to be a monument to those who had died in the civil war, it was much more a monument to Franco's Nationalists and his fascist Falange Party. It had been built by the slave labour of Republican prisoners. At Easter I caught a train south to Andalucia to stay in Jerez with the Sheffield man who had first alerted me to the idea of teaching English in Madrid. John Lockwood was a director of the old Anglo-Spanish sherry firm, Gonzalez Byass. I owed him a lot. He showed me how sherry was made and I tasted varieties I had hardly heard of, manzanilla, oloroso, cortado. We also watched an Easter procession with worshippers carrying religious tableaux, dressed in face-covering masks and pointy hats, looking like members of the Klu Klux Klan. It felt more pagan than Christian. At least the Andaluz pronunciation of Spanish was easier than Castile's, with soft c's pronounced as s's rather than lispng th's.

The overnight train journeys to and from Madrid were interminable, far too little leg room between the seats, packed with Easter travellers, and the speed seeming never to exceed 30 mph. The train's mournful hooter sounded eerily through the night, reverberating across the vast plains and usually timed for when I was just dozing off. They were long nights. But there was one happy moment. As

we approached Seville, a squat shunting engine in a siding declared its provenance as 'Doncaster 1862'.

After Easter it was time to get the train home. By then I had earned more than enough for my ticket, so decided to visit Barcelona on the way. My main target was Gaudi's astonishing cathedral, La Sagrada Familia, started in 1882 (and still unfinished in 2025). By 1959 the spires were largely complete, looking like nothing I had seen before, more art nouveau than gothic or baroque. I also drooled over some of Gaudi's extraordinary houses, fashioned like waves and clouds. Then there was the famous pedestrian street, Las Ramblas, the perfect place for a lazy stroll and coffee under the trees which were by now in leaf. My other memory was of taking a train to Monserrat, a limestone mountain shaped like an upturned jelly mould, as if from a Chinese painting. It was a place of pilgrimage to the monastery perched high up the mountain between soaring clefts of rock, home to the Black Virgin and the setting for Wagner's Parsifal.

And so, finally, back to Derbyshire. Homecomings can be tinged with bathos. Bursting to share my adventures with my parents, I had hardly come through the front door when my mother told me it was high time I had a haircut.

*Thank you Nicholas for sharing this fascinating account of your time in Spain – we very much look forward to Part 2 – Editors*



## News from Pinewood Studios

Pinewood now has a dedicated Community section on the main website where you can find updates on latest projects and news from the Studio. If you haven't done so already, please do sign up to our Community News section to get the latest information and updates. You can sign up for news alerts here:

<https://pinewoodgroup.com/pinewood-studios/community/>

We also have Community Engagement meetings every 4-6 weeks. The dates for these meetings are published on the 'Events' section of the Community Tab. They take place from 17:00 to 18:30 in the meeting room above the main reception and run as a 'drop-in' to enable the community to ask questions and discuss how we can support projects locally. You will also find a Projects tab under the Community Section of the website. We have recently updated the Five Points Roundabout Projects Page, adding a PDF letter regarding the changed start date for the works. You can find that information here:

<https://pinewoodgroup.com/community/five-points-roundabout/>

We are looking forward to the next Pinewood Futures Festival that will be held on Friday 30 and Saturday 31 January 2026. Over 4,500 tickets were released for those looking to start a career in the Film & TV industry. Now Europe's biggest free careers' event for aspiring film and television professionals, Futures Festival will return in 2026 with an immersive industry showcase that invites students, educators, and career-seekers to explore behind-the-scenes roles through dynamic workshops, speaker panels, tours, and hands-on tech demonstrations. Building on the impressive success of the 2025 Festival, which drew 4,500 attendees to the studio lot, the 2026 festival promises even more opportunities for those eager to enter the screen industries.



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