

The Kingsclere Tower



What's On & Local News
February 2026

The Kingsclere Tower

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Happy New Year from everyone at The Kingsclere Tower.

According to YouGov about a fifth of us make New Year's resolutions, but historically only half of us who make resolutions keep them by May. Although this may sound disappointing, the upside is that many people actually achieve their goals, and since many resolutions focus on health or wellbeing this can only be a good thing. So if you are working on one or more resolutions, keep the faith and keep going; you never know, you may well succeed!

The fees from all our advertisers pay for the production of the magazine, and each year any surplus funds are available to support local clubs and organizations. At the end of last year, we had sufficient funds to award grants to Kingsclere Community Library, The Twinning Association, St Mary's Church, Friends of St Marys Kingsclere and Wolverton Village Hall.

Enjoy the first edition of The Kingsclere Tower of 2026.

The Editor

Neither the Editor, nor the Management Committee accept responsibility for the opinions expressed or the goods and services advertised in the Kingsclere Tower. The Editors reserve the right to omit, amend, or condense any item submitted for publication.

To all "Tower" Contributors

Copy for **March** to the Editor at **kingscleretower@gmail.com**.

NOT LATER THAN 12th February 2026

If possible please submit articles as a MS Word document, A5 page size, font Times

New Roman 11, single spacing. If email not possible post to

23 Swan Street, Kingsclere, Newbury RG20 5PP.

Will ALL contributors please include full name

& home phone number/e-mail address.

Kingsclere Parish Council (KPC)

Email: clerk@kingsclere-pc.gov.uk
Telephone: 01635 298634
Office: 37 George Street, Kingsclere RG20 5NH
www.kingsclere-pc.org.uk



THANK YOU, RAY PEACH – After more than 25 years of dedicated service, Ray has very sadly submitted his resignation to the Parish Council Chairman. The Parish Council wishes to extend its sincere thanks to Ray for his outstanding commitment and service to the village.

Throughout his time on the Council, Ray generously gave his time, skills, and practical expertise, and was always the Councillor people turned to when something needed to be done. His many contributions included village repairs, the installation of new benches and notice boards, and ongoing maintenance at the Cemetery, Recreation Ground, and Holding Field.

Ray also played a key role in managing the allotments, from repairing broken fencing and resolving water leaks to maintaining plots and ensuring the allotment toilet block was kept clean and in good order. In addition, he could always be relied upon to erect gazebos and support events such as the Spring Clean and the Village Fête. He organised road closures for the annual Remembrance Parade and major village events, including the Jubilee.

Alongside this hands-on work, Ray provided valuable input as a member of the Finance Committee and also served as Vice Chairman for a period of time. Ray's many years of dedication are deeply appreciated, and his contribution to both the Parish Council and the wider village will be long remembered. We know he continues to be involved with other local groups and we wish him well. Thank you, Ray.

CHRISTMAS – Although the Christmas lights will be a distant memory by the time this issue is published, we would like to express thanks to Andy Bates and the whole team for the lovely traditional display of lights in the trees. It was also lovely to see the wonderful Bethlehem scene in the Churchyard; thank you to all involved in creating this too.

GREEN WHEELY BINS & GLASS RECYCLING – The collections dates are **Wednesday 4th and 18th February and 4th March.**

MAKING A DIFFERENCE AWARDS 2025/26 – Thank you for your nominations, we are in touch with a judging panel and successful nominees will be notified soon and invited to an awards evening in March.

LOCUM FINANCIAL OFFICER – We welcome Miri who is with us temporarily until a Responsible Financial Officer can be recruited.

GROUNDWATER MONITORING BOREHOLES — Observation boreholes to monitor groundwater levels are being installed between February 2026 and April 2026 in the Malthouse Open Space area adjacent to St Mary's Churchyard. This area has been identified as suitable from a geological perspective, is in reasonably close proximity to the brook, and away from residential property.

COUNCILLOR VACANCIES – We are looking for 3 more Councillors to join the team. A little more about the role and what KPC does -

- Represent the views of all residents within the parish
- Understand the views and needs of different groups in the community
- Be well-informed, especially about diverse local views
- Delivering services to meet local needs
- Strive to improve quality of life in the parish
- Attend meetings of the council
- Review, monitor and maintain the village financial matters - always striving for best value for money versus the budget
- Represent the local community externally
- Review planning applications and respond from a community perspective

NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – The next Full Council Meeting is scheduled for **7:30pm on Monday 23rd February**. We welcome the attendance of all parishioners at our meetings and anyone who wishes to raise any matter will be given the opportunity to do so during Public Questions.

KINGSLERE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Our next meeting is on **Thursday 19th February 2026** when historian **Colin Oakes** will return to give us a talk on:



‘CALENDARS: THE MANY WAYS OF COUNTING OUR DAYS’

Calendars are at the core of history. Colin will look at Republican Rome's calendars of the time of the childhood of Julius Caesar and then on to the Julian Calendar, the reforms of 1582 and the Gregorian Calendar. Further important changes were made in 1751/1752 leading to the modern calendar with its 'leaps'.

We meet in the main hall at **Kingsclere Village Club, 37 George Street, Kingsclere, RG20 5NH**, doors open **7pm** to start at **7.30pm**. Book sales and raffle. Visitors are very welcome @ £3 pp.

Gareth Martin, Hon. Secretary **01635 299227 / 07796 217840**
kingsclerelocalhistory@gmail.com

Kingsclere Royal British Legion

2025 Poppy Appeal

As we reflect on the generosity shown during last year's Poppy Appeal and Remembrance activities,

we want to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated.

Although the final total raised for 2025 is still being tallied, we estimate it will be close to £10,000, a remarkable achievement that speaks volumes about the spirit of our village.



Volunteers Needed

However, as we look to the future, the Kingsclere Royal British Legion faces a significant challenge. During our Annual General Meeting (AGM) in December, it became clear that several members of our committee have had to step down over the past six months. This leaves the Branch at serious risk of closure unless we can find new members to step forward and help us continue the work that we do.

For over 100 years, the Kingsclere Branch of the RBL has been at the heart of our community, supporting local veterans, organising memorial services, and overseeing the village Remembrance Parade and Poppy Appeal activities. Without the commitment of volunteers, we will no longer be able to carry out these services or preserve the legacy of Remembrance for future generations.

We urgently need more people to help keep this proud tradition alive. If you are able to give just a few hours of your time each month, whether to join our committee or assist with specific events, your contribution could make all the difference.

Our Branch meets on the **first Tuesday of every month at 7pm** in the **Kingsmill Room at St Mary's Church**. Whether you're interested in learning more about what we do, or would like to get directly involved, we warmly welcome new members and visitors. No prior experience is necessary just a willingness to help and a passion for supporting our veterans and the local community.

If you're interested in volunteering or would like further information, please contact us at **Kingsclere.Chairman@rbl.community**. Together, we can ensure that the Kingsclere Royal British Legion continues to thrive, honouring the service and sacrifice of our veterans for years to come.

Thank you.

Chairman, Kingsclere Royal British Legion



The Fieldgate Centre is run by the Kingsclere Community Association as a charity (No. 1168366). The association is made up of volunteers who rely on the support and participation of the community.

The New Year and festive period are a dim and distant memory! 2026 has got off to the usual busy and bustling start at the Fieldgate Centre with its full diary of classes, clubs and activities. Check our website for full details and come and join us for Pilates, Clubbercise, Ceroc, Slimming World, Kingsclere Singers, Badminton, Darts, and Monthly Meet Up.

In February it's time for the annual **FOSM Quiz Night**, taking place on **Friday 6th**. The evening is usually great fun, tickets are on sale via FOSM (see Page 14) or the Fieldgate Centre at fieldgatecentre@outlook.com.

Looking further into the month, **Monthly Meet Up** will take place on **Tuesday 17th February at 2.30 - 4.30pm**. The Citizens Advice will be joining us for a short presentation, and there will be a Quiz and the usual cakes and cuppas to enjoy. If you haven't been able to make it before, come along! It's a lovely afternoon and everyone is welcome.

With the numerous private bookings for weddings, children's parties, rugby matches, NHS clinics and blood donor sessions, to name but a few things, the centre really is a busy and active place. If you haven't been for a while, look at our website and social media for events taking place, so you can save dates for events such as the Music Festival on 20th June, the Summer of Fun, the Repair Cafes throughout the year, and even plan ahead for the Race Night which is already in the diary for 3rd October! Planning starts early at the centre!

Please contact the office if you need more information on any events, or would like to make a booking.

www.thefieldgatecentre.co.uk 01635 298497
fieldgatecentre@outlook.com

Join Our Vocal Singing Workshop! **Kingsclere Singers**
Monday 9th February 2026
7.30pm to 9.15pm, Fieldgate Centre

Unlock the power of your voice and discover techniques
 to sing with confidence and joy.
 Choir Members Free, Non-Members £10

Watership Down Health

Flu & Covid Update

As flu viruses continue to circulate, please consider a vaccine if you have not already had one. You are still eligible for a vaccine if you are either over 65, or under 65 with an underlying health condition. You can also call 119 who can provide you with details of vaccine availability at your community pharmacy.



New Self-Check-In Screens

New check-in screens are currently being installed in Kingsclere, Oakley and Overton which should be operational by mid-February 2026. There will be times when the screens may not yet be fully set up, so please check in with the reception team and accept our apologies for any inconvenience whilst we get our systems functioning.

It is really important that the practice has your updated contact details to keep you informed about anything affecting your health and well-being, so any necessary changes to your information can be made through the practice website using the form available at:

<https://watershipdownhealth.com/services/changing-your-contact-details/>

Walk-In Help for Appointments

We continue to upgrade our online triage system for all incoming requests but are very aware that it doesn't suit those who have no access to our online services. If that is the case for you, you are welcome to visit the reception at your surgery and a triage submission will be made for you by one of the reception team - they are happy to help!

Notifications via the NHS App

As more services are being made available to patients via the NHS App, it is important that patients switch on the notifications setting so you can be kept up to date with managing your health and well-being.

In the NHS App (iOS & Android):

- Open the NHS App.
- Tap the Account icon (person icon) in the top right hand corner or 'More' and then 'Account and Settings'.
- Select Notifications (or 'Manage notifications').
- Tap "Go to Device" settings.

In your Phone settings:

- For iPhone: Go to Settings > Notifications > NHS App and ensure 'Allow Notifications' is switched on.
- For Android: Go to Settings > Notifications > App settings (or similar) > NHS App and ensure notifications are allowed.

Should you need any further assistance please contact the reception team.

WOLVERTON MARKET

The next Market is on **Saturday 7th February**; doors open from **9.30am until 11am**. All the usual Stall Holders will be there and I am sure will be anxious to get rid of some leftover Christmas clutter and unwanted/unloved gifts (anyone interested in a fluorescent lime green hat with black plastic bobble and matching chin strap? Apparently they are all the rage in Outer Mongolia!).

Tea and Coffee are available to purchase and will help to warm you up while you browse. If you have not visited the Market before, do come along and support the lovely Village Hall. We look forward to seeing you.

Wendy Morgan 01635 297538

Kingsclere and Headley Woodlands WI

A very Happy New Year from the ladies of Kingsclere WI. Our meeting in January was a departure from our usual meeting, we had a games afternoon with a cream tea, a lovely afternoon. We may well do that again as it was so enjoyable.



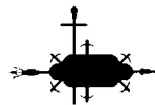
The topic for our next meeting on **Wednesday February 11th** is **Cadbury's World**. Almost everyone loves chocolate and I'm sure that some members will have visited Cadbury's World at some time. This promises to be a very interesting talk given by David Wickens, whom we have heard speak in the past. As usual, we meet at the **Village Club** in **George Street** at **1.45pm**, do come along and listen and watch and see what you think. You will receive a very warm welcome with tea and biscuits and lots of chat!

Thank you to everyone who donated for our BWA appeal. Such generosity from the community enabled us to deliver six boxes of toiletries, warm socks, nightwear, toilet bags and surprise gifts to the BWA office in Reading. These items will be sent to various Women's Refuge houses and add a little comfort to those seeking a safe place. Many thanks also to the Kingsclere Library for being a drop-off point.

The competition letter for February will be A.

Margaret Geary, President 01635 297197

KINGSLERE RUGBY CLUB



| | | |
|----------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Training | Wednesdays | 7 – 9 pm |
| Walking Rugby | Wednesdays | Mixed 7 – 8 pm |
| | Thursdays | Ladies 7 – 8 pm |

Fixtures and Results

| | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 13 th December | Farnborough | Loss 26 - 34. Players of the Match Harry Keatley and Stuart Burns |
| 7 th February | Farnborough - Cup | Home 2 pm |
| 14 th February | Bognor 2 ^{nds} - League | Home 2 pm |
| 21 st February | TBC - Cup | TBC 2 pm |
| 28 th February | Sandown & Shanklin – League | Away 2 pm |

For more information, please contact:

Joanna Reed – Moreton **Secretary-Kingsclererfc@outlook.com** or

Geoff Curtis **Youth-coach-Kingsclererfc@outlook.com**

To find out more information about the club please visit our Facebook and Instagram pages.

KINGSLERE CRICKET CLUB

PROMOTION TO COUNTY DIVISION 3 CONFIRMED



Five months on from the end of the season and KCC is still celebrating its awesome performances in 2025 which resulted in promotion to County Division 3!

We now know who we will be playing in 2026. There are plenty of local derbies to look forward to including; Hartley Witney, Hungerford, Overton, Odiham and Basingstoke IIIs and IVs. With home and away fixtures against all teams we won't have too far to travel on Saturdays. Add to that our continuing involvement in the Basingstoke Evening League on Tuesdays and there are plenty of opportunities for some great games.

We're keen to add extra players to our squad so why not come along to our pre-season practice sessions in the excellent Cheam School Sports Hall. We'll be combining batting and bowling in the nets with some catching / fielding practice and some "informal strength and conditioning". Sessions are from **7pm to 9pm every Sunday from 22nd March to 26th April.**

Mark Hirst Kingsclere Cricket Club Chairman
c.mark.hirst@btinternet.com 07901 118818



KINGSCLERE VILLAGE CLUB

Est. 1921 CHARITY 1189234

Website <http://www.kingsclerevillageclub.co.uk>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/kingsclerevillageclub>

Instagram [@kingsclere_village_club](https://www.instagram.com/kingsclere_village_club)

The Trustees send you their best wishes for 2026

Gentle Pilates

Do you have standing or mobility problems or haven't exercised for some time? This gentle but effective class will help build strength, endurance, balance and stability. Experienced teacher Paula Chandler will guide you through a series of exercises, which can be adapted to your needs. Thursdays 1.30 - 2.30 pm. Contact Emma on

bookings@kingsclerevillageclub.co.uk for more information.

Community Cafe

The January Community Cafe is on **Saturday 31st 10 am to 12.30 pm.**

Come along for a cuppa, homemade cake and a friendly chat. With a free, fun quiz at 11 o'clock. No need to worry about coming on your own - there is sure to be a group that will welcome your help!

Future Café dates:

Unfortunately, we are not able to hold a café in February.

March: Saturday 28th, featuring a fun bingo session. Cash prizes!

April: Saturday 25th, free quiz

May: May 30th, including a table-top sale.

More details in next month's Tower.

Chris Boulton

We were very sorry to hear of the death of Chris Boulton, chief executive of the Greenham Trust. Like many local organisations, we have benefitted from the Trust's funding, including for our energy efficiency project. Chris took the time to visit us to find out about our community and to understand how his organisation could be of help. He will be sorely missed.

Helen 01635 297390 or events@kingsclerevillageclub.co.uk

WANTED

Storage/lockup garage in/near Kingsclere centre

Contact Adrian on **07778 354063** or at

adrianbirts@icloud.com

Kingsclere Community Library

Jane Austen

Although we celebrated Jane Austen's 250th birthday anniversary in December - the books that we bought to mark this event will continue to be on display in the Library for those of you who are enjoying reading this wonderful author's work. And don't forget that we have a new batch of visiting books for you to enjoy!



Storytime

New dates for Storytime will be confirmed soon – please see Facebook and the Library website (link below) for details.

Tubs for Macmillan Cancer Support

We are collecting tubs up until Thursday 12th February – please bring your confectionary tubs or biscuit tubs to the Library during opening hours before that date so that we can support this great charity. Alternatively, you can take them to a Greene King pub if that is more convenient <https://www.tub2pub.co.uk/tub2pub/>

www.tub2pub.co.uk/tub2pub/

| | | |
|-------|----------------------|------------------|
| HOURS | Tuesday and Thursday | 1.00pm – 5.30pm |
| | Saturday | 10.00am - 1.00pm |

Nicki Lee Library Phone 01635 297464

kingsclerelibrary@gmail.com www.kingsclerelibrary.co.uk

Valentines Night Dance at The Village Club

Saturday 14th February 2026

Show starts 7:45pm and ends at 10:15 pm approx.

Pete Murray (aka Paul Martin), will be known to many as a talented local singer specialising in music from the Swing, Rat Pack and the 50s/60s Rock 'n' Roll eras. This local dance promises to be quite an event on the most romantic night of the year.



Tickets are priced at £12.50, with 50% of the proceeds going to St. Michael's Hospice.

There will also be a raffle on the night.

Please bring your own tippie nibbles will be provided.

Tickets can be reserved by calling 07739 433442

Tickets should be paid for on the night by cash

(sorry we will not have the facility to accept cards).

Sponsored by L Titcombe & Family, Independent Funeral Directors

The Church Pages

Hi, Happy New Year!

The new year is often a time for new beginnings. A new exercise program or a new diet often makes this sentiment of “newness” real in our lives. There’s something about a new calendar stretching before us, a never-before-lived-in year ahead of us that gets us dreaming and planning in a way that we just aren’t in, say, June. I bless whatever you’ve set your heart & mind on for 2026. May this year be fruitful, and may it be marked by peace & joy.

There are new things happening in the churches around us too, with changes afoot in our benefice, and I’d like to explain what these changes are. Rev. Jonathan Hillman was licensed on the 6th of January as Priest-in-Charge of the benefice of Baughurst and Ramsdell and Wolverton with Ewhurst and Hannington. This is fantastic news as they’ve been without an incumbent for more than five years, and although they’ve been ably supported by many visiting clergy over that time, they will be excited to finally have some stability and to be able to plan their future vision together. Jonathan was at the same time licensed as Associate Minister of the benefice of Kingsclere and Ashford Hill with Headley. This will allow him to take full responsibility for the parish of Ashford Hill with Headley from me, leaving St. Mary’s Kingsclere as my sole focus. It is proposed that a Pastoral Scheme will then be entered into, whereby the parish of Ashford Hill with Headley will formally become part of the newly renamed “North Wessex Churches Benefice”, along with Baughurst, Ramsdell, Wolverton with Ewhurst, & Hannington. This will take some time to work through, with these schemes often taking up to two years to complete. Jonathan’s double licensing allows the ministry “on the ground” to get going for the new benefice, while the paperwork is done behind the scenes.

There are no plans to change service times or schedules in Kingsclere, but I would suspect that once Jonathan has settled in, he may feel the need to tweak things in the other churches. Please do pray for Jonathan, his wife, Kate and son, Joe, who have moved into the Vicarage in Ashford Hill. There will be so many new things to adjust to as they settle into the area, and he begins this new phase of his ministry.

By a crazy coincidence, the new Rector of Burghclere with Newtown and Ecchinswell with Sydmonton is Father John Hillman! Please also pray that we don’t all get too confused!

As we clergy step through the gate of this new year, we will, no doubt, like the man in Minnie Louise Haskin’s poem, be putting our hands into the hand of God, to steer us the way He would have us go.

Bless you,

Rev. Pete Williams

Worship in our Churches

February 2025



| | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Sunday 1 st | 9:00 am Traditional Morning Worship 9:30 am Holy Communion 10:30 am Contemporary Morning Worship | St Mary's, Kingsclere St. Peter's, Headley St Mary's, Kingsclere |
| Thursday 5 th | 10:30 am Morning Worship | St Mary's, Kingsclere |
| Sunday 8 th | 9:00 am Traditional Morning Worship 9:30 am Morning Worship 10:30 am Contemporary Morning Worship | St Mary's, Kingsclere St. Peter's, Headley St Mary's, Kingsclere |
| Thursday 12 th | 10:30 am Holy Communion | St Mary's, Kingsclere |
| Sunday 15 th | 9:00 am Traditional Holy Communion 9:30 am Morning Worship 10:30 am Contemporary Holy Communion | St Mary's, Kingsclere St. Peter's, Headley St Mary's, Kingsclere |
| Thursday 19 th | 10:30 am Morning Worship | St Mary's, Kingsclere |
| Sunday 22 nd | 9:00 am Traditional Morning Worship 10:30 am Holy Communion 10:30 am Contemporary Morning Worship | St Mary's, Kingsclere St. Peter's, Headley St Mary's, Kingsclere |
| Thursday 26 th | 10:30 am Morning Worship | St Mary's, Kingsclere |

Saturday Coffee in the Kingsmill Room, St Mary's Church.

Fresh brewed coffee, tea and delicious homemade cakes.

February 7th, 14th and 21st 10.00 — 12.00

If you're looking for great company,
we'd love you to join us for a cuppa and a natter!

For more info, please contact the church office on **01635 299528**.

Lighting Up St Mary's

The sight of St Mary's Church when it is floodlit is truly beautiful. Many people sponsor these lights (£15 per evening) to mark an occasion, such as a birthday, wedding, anniversary, christening, or some other special day in their lives.



To book, please email administrator@stmaryskingsclere.co.uk or call **01635 299528**. To include your tribute in the Tower, please let us have your words before the 12th of the preceding month.

February

9th In memory of Anthea Ryan, who passed away peacefully on December 9th, 2025.



FOSM 200 Club

The winners of the December and January Draws were, respectively, Margaret Peach – Number 14, and Nick Selsey – Number 21

Congratulations, Margaret and Nick.

Next month's Draw will take place at Bel and the Dragon at about 7 pm on **Tuesday 3rd February**.

Kingsclere Methodist Church

Services for February

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Sunday 1 st | Rev Lesley Martin |
| Sunday 8 th | Rev Rachel Borgars |
| Sunday 15 th | Mrs Alyson Read |
| Sunday 22 nd | Mrs Christine Thomas |

All services begin at **10 am** unless stated.

Coffee morning every Thursday 10.30 until 12. All are very welcome.

Hall available for hire (see directory on page 24).

Christine Westcombe c_westcombe@hotmail.com

Friends of St Marys Kingsclere (FOSM)

A Happy New Year to all our readers and supporters! We start this year in customary fashion with the **Quiz Night and Ploughman's Supper** at the **Fieldgate Centre** on **Friday 6th February**. Tickets, at £18 per head, will include two bottles of wine per table of eight. At the time of writing (in mid-January) tickets for this popular evening are selling fast, but some may still be available either from Raj and Monika, or by contacting **Jane Royle** on **01635 297430** or at **jane.b.royle@gmail.com**. Either muster a table of eight or book in smaller numbers and we will bring teams together, if possible, on the night.

The similarly popular annual **Plant Sale** in **St Mary's Churchyard** will be on the morning of **Saturday 30th May**. Despite anything the weather can surprise us with, we hope to have a good selection of flowering perennials, annuals and young vegetable plants. As always, we should welcome plant donations from any of you who are splitting plants or sowing seeds early in Spring. Please email **Jane Royle**, as above, or **Sarah Mussett** at **sarah.mussett@hotmail.co.uk**.

Peter Turner, Chairman

Website: **friendsofstmaryskingsclere.org**.

For membership & FOSM enquiries contact **fosmkingsclere@gmail.com**

Borough Councillor Surgery

Your local Borough Councillors are hosting regular surgeries throughout the year. We're looking forward to meeting residents and hearing what you have to say.



**Basingstoke
and Deane**

The next surgery will be in February and of course anyone from the wider local area is welcome to come and raise any issues they have.

Saturday 14th February, 10am - noon

Kingsclere Village Club

35 George Street, Kingsclere RG20 5NH

Councillor surgeries are open to the public for local residents to come and talk about any concerns, suggestions or complaints they have about services from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, such as housing, recycling, planning, the environment, etc. Anything residents need to tell us will be kept private.

Come and meet your Borough Councillors for Kingsclere, Tadley and everywhere in between: Cllr David Conquest, Cllr Kerry Morrow, and Cllr Mike Bound.

1st Kingsclere Squirrels: Big Adventures for Little Explorers

Kingsclere Scout Group is delighted to have launched a brand-new Squirrels section, introducing the world of Scouting to children aged 4 – 6. After a successful trial the section officially opened in autumn 2025 with ten children attending weekly meetings.

The Kingsclere Squirrels meet every Thursday during school term time, offering a fun, safe and supportive environment where young children can explore friendship, adventure and the core values of Scouting. Early sessions focused on helping the Squirrels get to know one another, build confidence and develop teamwork through stories, games and activities. A major highlight of the first term was the Squirrels' investiture into the Scout Movement. This special event began with an exciting treasure hunt, searching for their neckers, woggles and membership badges. Once all items were found, a short but meaningful ceremony followed, where each Squirrel made their promise and was officially welcomed into Scouting. It was a proud and memorable moment for both the children and their families. During the term, the Squirrels gradually worked towards their first badges, including Be Active, Let's Celebrate, Explore Outdoors, Get Creative and All Together. Activities are carefully planned to support these badges. Recent highlights include a woodland scavenger hunt collecting natural materials to create a huge squirrel collage, making clay diyas to celebrate Diwali, and lantern-making for the Newbury Festival of Light. Adventure is at the heart of Scouting, even for the youngest members. One particularly exciting session focused on planning for a night hike. The Squirrels learned what equipment to bring, how to stay safe and why preparation is important. They then practiced this on an evening walk around the village, finishing with hot chocolate and biscuits back at the Scout Hut.

As the New Year begins, Kingsclere's bright-eyed and bushy-tailed Squirrels are eager to explore, learn and work towards new badges. None of this would be possible without our dedicated leaders and volunteers, who create a great environment where every child can thrive. Contact us if you are interested in your child joining the Squirrels or if you would like to help as a volunteer. We are looking for an additional leader to support our leader Piers Cunliffe.

Other Sections : We also have a small number of spaces available in our Beavers section (ages 6–8) and are seeking one additional leader in each of our established sections: Beavers, Cubs (8–10½) and Scouts (10½–14½). Volunteering requires only a few hours a month and makes a huge difference. Contact Piers Cunliffe, Kingscleresquirrels@gmail.com or Martin Beaver, Kingsclere@bwds.org.uk.

Kingsclere Gardening Association

There have been two meetings of the association since the last report.



Kingsclere
Gardening
Association

Our November speaker gave an excellent talk on Autumn colour, reminding us that it can be a stunning time of the year.

The January meeting was the association's AGM; although the weather was inclement several of the members attended. The evening was constructive with good reports from the committee members. The RHS Award was presented to the show secretary for her outstanding service to the association. A very small increase on membership fees was decided upon; as with most clubs and associations the costs are increasing. The evening was concluded with refreshments of cheese and wine.

The next meeting for the association will be at the **Village Club** on **February 12th** commencing at **7:30 pm**. The speaker will be Sharon Chapman, her title will be Growing Together. There will be as usual a table top competition, classes will be on the membership cards.

We look forward to welcoming members and guest to our next meeting

Denise Allen (Chairman) 01635 297966 denise.allen47@icloud.com

Kingsclere Preschool

Happy New Year! The children have been learning all about a change in seasons, including Winter. The snow came at a fantastic time at the start of the year, as we were able to catch snowflakes and make a miniature snowman. Later this term, we will be investigating ice, experimenting with climate, making nature collages and exploring what the weather is like in different countries.

We have childcare spaces available! If you are looking for a childcare space, or ways you can support the Preschool, please contact **admin@kingsclerepreschool.co.uk** or visit our website **www.kingsclerepreschool.co.uk**.

We are also looking for a Pre-School Deputy Manager and a SENCO. If you are interested in this position, please contact the email address above and we will provide you with more information.

Make an Impact: Volunteer at Sandham Memorial Chapel

Sandham Memorial Chapel is always delighted to welcome new volunteers. Whether you have a hidden talent to share, want to learn something new, or simply feel ready for a fresh challenge, there's a place for you here.

Visitor Welcome Team

Be the first friendly face our visitors meet. Introduce them to the Chapel, assist with admissions, and help ensure everyone has a memorable visit.

Chapel Stewards

Help bring the story of Sir Stanley Spencer to life. You'll welcome visitors and help them discover the history and significance of the Chapel.

Garden Volunteers

Join our dedicated gardening team. Tasks include planting, pruning, mowing, maintaining paths, and general horticulture. No experience needed - just enthusiasm and a love of the outdoors.

- Travel expenses to and from the property are covered (up to 30 miles)
- Regular volunteers enjoy free entry to National Trust properties and discounts in our shops and tea rooms.

If you'd like to join us, or simply want to find out more, email sandham@nationaltrust.org.uk or call **01635 278394**.



Journeys in Biology III: DNA and Who You Are **Wednesday 18th February at 10 am** **St Mary's Hall, Overton**

Free to members - Non-members £3 on the door



While DNA and the Genome Revolution is a very complex subject, Darren's explanations are clear and succinct and we are delighted to welcome him back to present Part III.

Darren Gowers is Senior Lecturer in the School of Biology at Portsmouth University.

Nature Notes

...Then, as he looked, it winked at him, and so declared itself to be an eye; and a small face began gradually to grow up round it, like a frame round a picture. A brown little face, with whiskers. A grave round face, with the same twinkle in its eye that had first attracted his notice. Small neat ears and thick silky hair. It was the Water Rat! Then the two animals stood and regarded each other cautiously. 'Hullo, Mole!' said the Water Rat. 'Hullo, Rat!' said the Mole.

Just before Christmas, as I was walking along beside the brook, I caught sight of a small brown ratty-looking creature running along the bank. As I stopped to watch, it came to an obstacle, changed course, ran directly into the water where its run morphed seamlessly into a swim, paddled for a few feet, then jumped out to continue its trot along the bank. I am still not convinced whether it was a brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) or a water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*); these two little brown mammals are often confused with each other. One way to tell them apart is comparing their noses – rat's noses are longer and more slender than a water vole's, which is rather stubbier. Rat's tails are longer, and a water vole's ears are smaller and tuck closer in to their heads. Further confusion may come from people's memories of river resident and expert boater 'Ratty' from *The Wind in the Willows*, who was in fact a water vole – the book written in a time when water voles were often commonly referred to as 'water rats'. Were he alive today, *Willows* author Kenneth Grahame, who died in the 1930s, would perhaps be horrified to learn how the population of water voles has declined in the UK, due to habitat loss and an increase in non-native predators. I hope, optimistically, it was a 'Ratty' that I saw.

January brought some grey, freezing weather. However, even on the most dismal days it is possible for nature to delight: forcing the dog out on a very cold day I spotted a group of sparrows huddled in the wheel well of a car; they took turns to hop down on to the driveway and then swapped back to the top of the tyre. Perhaps the body of the car was warm after a recent drive, or the well sheltered the sparrow group from the biting wind as they scavenged. I have heard stories about small birds – particularly robins – building nests in wheel wells as quickly as overnight – another reason to check your tyres before you travel.

Lydia Harley-Tomlinson lydia.harleytomlinson@gmail.com

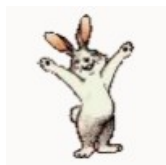
Kingsclere Charities

The Robert Higham Apprenticing Charity: This Charity promotes the education and training of young people aged 16 – 25 resident in The Parish of Kingsclere and Ashford Hill with Headley. Grants are awarded to assist with the cost of such things as: equipment, books and specialist clothing required for learning or training in a stated subject. Also expenses incurred in travelling to and from home to a place of learning. The Charity also provides benefits not normally provided by the Local Education Authority to schools in the above mentioned Parishes.

Welfare Charity: This Charity helps anyone resident in the Parish of Kingsclere and Ashford Hill with Headley regardless of age or means. Grants have been given towards mobility aids, medical equipment such as nebulisers, aids to make life easier for the sick and less mobile, and travel costs to and from hospital.

Kingsclere Charities forthcoming Meeting Dates for 2026: 19th February, 16th April, 18th June, 17th September and 19th November. Please contact Gill Hern at Kingsclerecharities4@mail.com for an application form.

Kingsclere Village Bunnies Baby and Toddler Group



Where: The Village Club

When: Tuesdays 9.00am-11.00am

Cost: £2.50 for 1st Child (including snack for child and hot drink and biscuit for adult), 50p per extra child, £1 per extra adult

We are a friendly group of parents, grandparents and childminders with children from tiny babies to energetic toddlers! We love welcoming new visitors to our play sessions. We enjoy outdoor and indoor play, craft, toys and singing together.

The library will be opening especially for Bunnies on **10th February**.

Swap Table is on **24th February**. Bring any unwanted baby or toddler items in good condition to find a new home. Help yourself to anything on the table for free, but please take home any items you bring that don't get re-homed.

Thank you as always to Swan Street Stores for their continued support of a weekly donation of fresh fruit snacks for the Bunnies.

For information visit our Facebook page, or regular visitors can join our WhatsApp group for weekly updates.

Lydia Harley-Tomlinson

lydia.harleytomlinson@gmail.com

Kingsclere CE Primary School

The new Spring Term!

Happy New Year from everyone at Kingsclere CE Primary School!



We ended the Autumn Term with a wonderful series of Christmas celebrations. Our whole-school Christmas Cantata, *'O Holy Night'*, brought the Christmas story to life through words and music, opened brilliantly by our samba band performing *'Red Nose Samba'*. We are very grateful to the St Mary's team for helping us host such a special service, and to Mrs Bowden our Music Lead for directing the events.

Our infant children also delighted families with their traditional nativity performances, sharing songs, dance and spoken lines with great confidence. Staff surprised pupils with a lively end of term pantomime, filling the hall with laughter and enthusiastic cries of *"Oh yes it is!"*

Our PTA were, as ever, fantastic - organising the Christmas Fair, a sponsored Santa Fun Run, a secret gifts sale and a Christmas Film Night, all helping to raise funds towards a new Trim Trail for the children.

This term we continue to focus on safeguarding themes supporting children's personal development. Our Junior Road Safety Officers led a successful whole-school *'Be Bright, Be Seen'* day, encouraging children to wear reflective or bright clothing and learn more about staying safe near roads.

Despite the cold start to January, the school is full of energy. Our recent INSET day included science training, support from the School Library Service for the national Year of Reading, and First Aid training for all Learning Support Staff.

We are looking forward to a busy and enriching Spring Term, with highlights including our choir's Young Voices performance, mathematics Greater Depth competitions and a range of sporting events, including the West Berkshire Cross Country competition.

From all of us at Kingsclere CE Primary School, we wish you a very Happy 2026!

Jo Messenger Headteacher

FEBRUARY IN THE GARDEN

As February descends upon us the garden is coming to life and the days are getting longer which is always welcome after the dark days of December. How lovely to see the flowers of the hellebores; if you have not already done so cut back the old leaves that have been damaged through the winter as they distract from the beauty of the flowers. Let us hope that we are able to start gardening this month; last year was delayed with the constant rain, making it difficult to catch up the rest of the year. The perennials will need tidying up, cutting back the old stems that were left over winter. These can be cut up and added to the compost heap. Perennials can be lifted and divided if weather conditions allow, giving you new plants for areas which have lost plants through winter conditions.

It is probably too early to mow the lawns as the grass will still be wet. Even if the lawns are too wet to cut, they can be made to look smarter if edged. If this has to be done by treading on the grass use a plank of wood to stand on, this will also give you a straight edge to work with.

Some pruning can be done now, e.g. bush, shrub, and climbing roses, buddleias, deciduous hedges, cornus, late flowering clematis and old overgrown shrubs. Sow sweet peas; these can be planted in a pot to grow indoors or outdoors. Plant up lilies in a large planter, these always make an impact on a patio. Prune the shrubs that have flowered during the winter to keep them at a manageable size. Winter flowering heathers will need to be cut back after the flowers have faded to maintain neat and bushy plants. Early rhubarb can be achieved by providing a dark environment; cover the plant with a terracotta pot or a black plastic pot weighed down.

Broad beans, carrots, and salad onions can be sown outside this month. Chillies, leeks, and tomatoes should be sown indoors. Jerusalem artichokes, rhubarb, shallots can be planted in the vegetable garden now. Harvest brussels sprouts, cabbages, forced rhubarb, kale, parsnips, purple sprouting, and Swiss chard. Chit seed potatoes, they need to be kept indoors in old egg trays, remembering only three or four shoots are needed. Mint can be divided and a clump put in a pot to grow in the greenhouse to give early pickings. Check trees for mummified fruits as these need to be removed. Cheer up permanent containers; add pansies and polyanthus or cyclamens. Dahlia tubers can be potted up and kept in a frost, free environment.

Plants to enjoy this month: early crocus, camellia, hellebores, heather, early clematis, japonica, hardy cyclamen, dwarf irises, and early narcissus.

Denise Allen

Kingsclere Photo Club

Friendly club covering digital and film photography.



Forthcoming meetings in the main hall at the **Village Club**,
George Street (doors open 7.15pm):-

Weds 4th February 7.45pm- Talk by Bob Holman on iPhoneography

Bob Holman from Marlborough talks about iPhoneography, and realising the full potential of our smartphones (Apple or Android).

Weds 4th March 7.45pm – Talk by Ian Wallace on ‘Zines’

Member Ian Wallace talks about producing a zine (a self-published, non-commercial magazine) of our work.

Visitors welcome, entry £5, refundable on joining. New members always welcome, if interested do please come along!

For more information, see our website: www.kingsclerephoto.org or email kingsclerephotoclub@gmail.com

Gareth Martin (Treasurer/Membership Secretary) 01635 299227

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Complex Care Nursing support for complex needs and rare conditions

Rehabilitation Short term care plans (4 weeks or more)

hamiltongorgecare.com

advice@hamiltongorgecare.com

0330 470 2866

Whitchurch Silk Mill

Building on last year's success, the Mill offers an expanded programme of creative workshops for adults and young people:

Weave a Wall Hanging 12th February, 10 am or 2 pm

A creative workshop where you'll learn traditional weaving techniques and craft your very own wall hanging. Led by an experienced weaver, this workshop is perfect for curious beginners and seasoned crafters alike. All yarns and materials provided. Tickets £60 per person.

Knitting Workshop 14th February, 11am to 2pm

Join our beginner-friendly knitting workshop and learn the basic stitches and techniques. Heather, our expert tutor, will guide you step-by-step, and all materials are provided. Tickets £45 per person.

Portraits that POP! 17th February, 10.30am to midday

This special workshop has been inspired by the bold, colourful world of Pop Art and also our 'Visible Threads' exhibition. You'll design and take away your own vibrant portrait of whoever you want, in whatever Pop Art style you prefer. Suitable for children aged 5–10 years accompanied by an adult. Tickets £6 per child; accompanying adults join the adventure FREE.

Young Makers Weaving 18th February, 10.30am -1.30pm

This workshop is for 11–16 year-olds and suitable for beginners. Spaces are limited, so book early. The morning will be spent learning techniques from our weaving team, and then using provided yarns and threads you'll be able to experiment to create your own wall hanging. Tickets £60 per child.

Beginners' Braiding Workshop 27th February, 11am to 1pm

Discover the art of braiding in this hands-on session. Learn traditional techniques and create decorative cords and trims. All materials provided and you'll take home your own braided samples along with detailed instructions to help you carry on braiding at home. Tickets £35 per person.

Warping Workshop 6th March, 10am to 1pm

Guided by our experienced weaving team you'll make your own three-metre warp. Suitable for beginners. All equipment and materials provided, and you are welcome to bring along your own yarn if you'd like to try out the effect it will create. Tickets £60 per person.

Embroidery Workshop 7th March 10.30am to 1pm

Explore the art of embroidery with Abigail of Abigail Rose Creative. Suitable for beginners and experienced stitchers alike. All materials plus tea and coffee provided. Pre-booking essential. Tickets £65 per person.

Beginners' Crochet Workshop 14th March, 11am to 2pm

Learn essential stitches and techniques to create beautiful granny squares. All materials and tools provided. Tickets £45 per person.

info@whitchurchsilkmill.org.uk 01256 892065 www.whitchurchsilkmill.org.uk

THE KINGSCLERE TOWER DIRECTORY

POLICE, FIRE or AMBULANCE

Police Enquiries/Information

Emergency 999

non Emergency 101

Kingsclere Health Centre:

0333 034 1033

North Hampshire Hospital, Basingstoke

01256 473202

Parish Council: 37 George Street (see page 2)

01635 298634

Kingsclere Charities Clerk: Gillian Hern

07884 182696

kingsclerecharities4@mail.com

Dial-a-Ride

01256 462101

St. MARY'S CHURCH:

Vicar

Peter Williams vicar@stmaryskingsclere.co.uk

Church Warden:

John Price johnsaprice@hotmail.com

01635 297780

Administrator:

Natalie Follett

01635 299528

administrator@stmaryskingsclere.co.uk

07422 687125

METHODIST CHURCH:

Minister: Rev Rachel Borgars

07889 905753

Rachel.Borgars@methodist.org.uk

01256 895878

Secretary & Hire of Hall Jeanette Billington

01635 297585

ROMAN CATHOLIC: Rev Patrick Tansey

0118 9814572

tadley@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

Bas & Deane

01256 844844

Kingsclere Library

01635 297464

Buses

0345 8101000

Swan Street P O

01635 291923

Trains

0845 7484950

Kingsclere Vet

01635 896330

Gas Emerg.

0800 111999

Berkshire Vet

01635 896333

Chemist

01635 298419

Dentist

01635 299981

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tom.thacker@hants.gov.uk

MP for N.W. Hampshire:

Kit Malthouse 01264 401401

kit.malthouse.mp@parliament.uk

2, Church Close, Andover, SP10 1DP

There is a more comprehensive list of local contact numbers on the Parish Council website. Go to www.kingsclere-pc.org.uk/directory