

The **Wootton** P A R I S H N E W S

SPRING EDITION

MARCH 2025



**LOCAL COUNCIL
AWARD SCHEME
GOLD**

**The only parish council in Bedfordshire
currently, with this award.**

*See
Page 7*

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Complex (Multi Use Games Area) bookings Church Road

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Schools

Wootton Upper: 767 123

Holywell Middle: 750 381

Marston Vale Middle: 768 224

Wootton Lower: 768 239

Wootton Lower PTFA Contact: 768 239

Police

HQ: 841 212 Beat Manager: 842 433

Non Emergency: 101 Anti-Social Behaviour: 276 037

Good Neighbour Scheme: 07717 770 247

Playgroups

Sweet Peas: 767 185

St Mary's: 767 158

Wootton Community Nursery- Kayleigh: 07534 308 632

Speed Watch Co-ordinator

Juliet Wright: 07590 449815

St Mary's Church

Canon Peter Ackroyd: 768 391

Church Hall: 767 158

Wootton New Life Methodist Church

Rev Michael Giles: 930 882

Baptist Church

Tom Roberts: 07860 347 534

Roman Catholic Church

Father Seamus Keenan: 352 569

Doctor's Surgeries

Wootton Vale: 762 500

Cranfield, High St: 750 234

Kempston, Cater St: 849 090

Kempston, King St: 852 222

Kempston, St John St: 851 323

NHS111: Online www.111.nhs.uk or Freephone 111

Wootton Facilities

Pharmacy: 765 166 Post Office: 768 368

Library: 766 061

Village Club & Organisations

Alive and Singing Choir - Barbara: 07710 007 572

1st Wootton Rainbows - Naomi: 07722 876 252

1st Wootton Boys Brigade - Allan: 07866 924 934

1st Wootton Girls Brigade - Nicola: 07480 746 101

Acorn Quilters - Dorothy: 409 566

Badminton Monday - Chris: 07740 939 109

Badminton Juniors - Colin: 270 283

Beavers Leader required call Mark: 07772 330 169

Bowls Monday - Viv: 855 383

Bowls Thursday - Rena: 768 012

Brennan School of Dance: 822 831

Brownies Tuesday - Denise: 314 030

Brownies Wednesday - Becky: 07876 766 050

Cubs Leader required call Mark: 07772 330 169

Country Players - Tina Kirkup -

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Group Scout Leader - Mark: 07772 330 169

Guides - Gill: 856 566

Marston Vale Forest School: 07811 087 322

Royal British Legion Wootton Poppy Appeal

Organiser - Chris: 07865 051 453

Scouts - Jake: 07808 077 027

Stewartby Operatic Society: 01908 616213

Tang Soo Do - Pat: 07917 805 863

Wootton Golf Society - Pete: 07975 596 164

Women's Institute - Kath: 765 333

Wootton Memory Gym: Kath Pearce - 07757 911556

Wootton Neighbourhood Chat Group -

Kath Pearce - 07757 911 556

Wootton Rangers FC - Jeremy: 07446 770193

Wootton Blue Cross: 767 662

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Editorial Notes:

Wootton News is overseen by an editorial sub group of the parish council. While every effort has been made to ensure that information in this newsletter is accurate, the parish council accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions. It should be noted that articles written by individuals do not necessarily represent the views of the council. Please send all articles to the Wootton News editor Gareth Lloyd at wootton_news@wootton-pc.gov.uk (please also send a copy to clerk@wootton-pc.gov.uk) by the copydate. Advertisements are usually half page (£30 for black and white, or colour). If you wish to advertise then please send your details to the editor. The advertisements are taken in good faith and we cannot accept any responsibility for bad service or workmanship received.

Next Issue: June 2025

Copy Date: 1st May 2025

The Wootton News can be read online at:
www.wootton-pc.gov.uk

If you have any comments or opinions on how to improve the Wootton News, please send them to Sue Edgar Playford (Clerk to the Council):

clerk@wootton-pc.gov.uk
or call on **07531 930 788**

Chairman's Report *Gareth Lloyd*



Gareth Lloyd



Welcome to the spring edition of the Wootton Newsletter and I hope the temperatures are improving outside, and that residents are able to get out and enjoy themselves.

We are almost half way through our 4-year business plan (2023-2027), details of which can be found on our website (<https://wootton-pc.gov.uk/publications-3/>). It is scheduled to be updated in June and to date, the following have been completed:

- **Average Speed Cameras** - The need for average speed cameras was recognised during early Neighbourhood Development Plan consultations. The wish is not for drivers to be fined (all revenue goes to Central Government) – but for drivers to take responsibility for their speed and ensure Wootton is a safe space for all.
- **20mph on all minor roads in Wootton** - Wootton Parish Council paid for the Borough Council to implement a reduced the speed limit (to 20MPH) along all roads, save for the main routes (Bedford/Church/Cranfield/Fields/Hall End Roads and Keeley Lane) and private roads. This would mirror the speed limits now in situ within both the Berryfields and Berry Wood/The Kilns Estates.
- **New Brick Sign at Keeley End** - The Parish Council has mirrored the brick-built sign on Bedford Road as you enter/exit the village from/to Kempston Rural.
- **Replacement of 4 Bus shelters (including sedum roofing)** - The replacement of four bus shelters in the village that were and remain, Parish Council assets. The Parish Council was keen to do its part for the environment and the roofs of all four units contain sedum, which will play a positive role for pollinators and carbon reduction.
- **Real Time Passenger Information** on our four bus shelters – As well as installing four real time passenger information units on Parish Council-owned bus shelters, we have created a web page (<https://wootton-pc.gov.uk/bus-timetable/>) to enable bus users to check the status of buses from the comfort of their home, before setting out to catch a bus.
- **Planted new Hedgerow at Lorraine Road Cemetery** - The Parish Council (with the help of The Forest of Marston Vale) planted an area of hedgerow to replace scrub that was removed in 2023 at the cemetery. It is hoped when established, this will provide a haven for wildlife and flora/fauna as well as offer some screening to properties in Canons Close.
- **Floodlit Synthetic Pitch** - The Parish Council worked with Wootton Upper School to deliver a synthetic pitch on school land. It was not possible to deliver this facility elsewhere in the village. A Community Use Agreement will ensure the facility can be used by clubs, organisations and residents outside of school core hours. This will no doubt prove itself as a much-needed facility.

The next 12 months will see the Parish Council working towards:-

- **Remodelling the Changing Rooms** - The current changing rooms have not been fit for purpose for years now and tend to be used more for storage. The toilet block is very dated and is earmarked for demolition. The Parish Council intends to incorporate modern

toilets within the remodelled changing rooms, alongside a 'tuck shop' style kitchen at the front of the building (car park end) which will sell teas, coffees, sweets and crisps, during football games. The kitchen will have a sink, fridge, microwave, wall mounted hot water urn and a serving hatch to the customers who will queue outside. There will be a dedicated storage area for each of the current users of the changing rooms. The layout has been designed to ensure good access to a large open space, to give users plenty of options. The Parish Council is keen to reduce its carbon footprint so will ensure the remodelling works provide insulation where appropriate and use low energy lights with movement sensors. We also plan to install solar panels on the roof to increase our use of green energy .

- **Crown Estate Land** - Wootton Parish Council is excited to be working in partnership with The Crown Estate and Forest of Marston

Vale, to achieve the best possible outcome when it acquires nearly 16ha of Crown Estate Land. The land sits at the heart of the village and will remain as open green space in perpetuity. Works are already underway to deliver a green and blue infrastructure plan and there will be opportunity for the wider community to have its say too. We will also be looking for volunteers to help all parties turn the land and plan(s) into the final product.

- **Defibrillator** – We are still waiting for the bus shelter to be installed on Burgoyne Avenue by Bedford Borough Council which will then able a unit to be mounted on said shelter.

As you can see, the Parish Council is working to improve the facilities in Wootton and make the roads safer. We have several vacancies on the council, so if you would like to know more about becoming a councillor, please contact the Clerk on Clerk@Wootton-pc.gov.uk



FitTish

Personal Training

FitTish Training is all about getting moving and learning how to love exercise while having fun together, so we can laugh, lunge and leap towards your fitness goals

Other large group sessions:

Monday

Wednesday

Friday

15:30 - Chair Flex and Stretch
18:00 - Legs, Bums & Tums

09:30 - Balance and Stability
18:00 - Circuits

07:30 - Circuits
09:00 - Flex and Stretch
10:30 - Chair exercises

More sessions being added in April

1 to 1's, 1 to 2's and small groups sessions available on request



FitTish

Personal Training

Circuit Training



Wootton Methodist Church
MK43 9DE

Booking Required

Wednesday 18:00

FitTishTraining@gmail.com 07739723782 www.fittishtraining.co.uk

 @FitTishTraining 

Clerk to the Council's Report *Sue Edgar Playford*



clerk@wootton-pc.gov.uk
07531 930 788

I hope everyone had an enjoyable and restful Christmas and New Year, as we now look towards spring and some warmer weather hopefully. I am delighted so many took the time to thank the Parish Council for the renewed Christmas Street Lighting (and replacement lighting for the tree). It already seems such a long time ago and they were clearly appreciated. We hope to return to our switch on event for the tree this year, so watch this space.

On the theme of events, I am also delighted to announce the return of our Fun Fest for 2025. Saturday 19th July to be precise. Save the dates in your diaries. The format will be the same as previous years – live music, BBQ food, beer garden, magician, face painting, circus act, fun fair and stalls selling various goods and wares. This is a free event designed to bring the community together and enjoy the (hopefully!) good weather. If you are part of a local community organisation and would like a stall (or know someone who would), please let me know. We don't charge stall holders to attend either.

The Parish Council has recently said goodbye to Cllrs John Kay and Tristan Tyerman who

have both resigned. I would like to thank them both for their contributions during their time as members of the Parish council. This means the Parish Council currently has four vacancies which we would love to see filled. If this is something that interests you and you would like to learn more about what becoming a councillor entails, do please visit our website <https://wootton-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/people-behind-the-council/> or contact me for more information.

I have recently received correspondence from a resident of the village who was very shocked to have been overtaken whilst adhering to the 20MPH within the Berryfields Estate. They were saddened that it was likely a resident who did it. Please stick to the limits – they are there to keep everyone safe. I have asked Borough Councillor John Wheeler to establish when the area will be officially adopted (plus Burgoyne Avenue and associated roads). Once adopted the village speed watch team will, I am sure, patrol both areas.

Blake Stephenson

MP for Mid Bedfordshire.

Get in touch

✉ blake.stephenson.mp@parliament.uk
☎ 020 7219 7477
📍 House of Commons, London, SW1 0AA

Keep updated

✉ [Blake_MidBeds](https://twitter.com/Blake_MidBeds)
📘 facebook.com/BlakeMidBeds
📷 instagram.com/Blake_MidBeds

Scan the QR code to sign up for Blake's e-newsletter
www.blakestephenson.uk

Regular surgery appointments are available



WOOTTON PARISH COUNCIL GETS GOLD!

The local council award scheme exists to celebrate the successes of the very best local councils, and to provide a framework to support all local councils to meet their full potential

All local councils want to serve their local communities and make a real difference to the lives of the people that live there. This scheme offers councils the opportunity to show that they meet the standards set by the sector, assessed by their peers, and to put in place the conditions for continued improvement.

The Local Council Award Scheme has been designed to both provide the tools and encouragement to those councils at the beginning of their improvement journeys, as well as promoting and recognising councils that are at the cutting edge of the sector. It is only through the sector working together to share best practice, drive up standards and supporting those who are committed to improving their offer to their communities that individual councils and the sector as a whole will reach its full potential.

The scheme was created in 2014 and is managed on behalf of local councils by the Improvement and Development Board (IDB). Councils can apply for an award at one of three levels:

- The Silver Award demonstrates that a council achieves good practice in governance, community engagement and council improvement.
 - The Gold Award demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice and achieves excellence in governance, community leadership and council development.
- The scheme sets out criteria to meet at each level covering selected aspects of the council's work. Councils can seek to progress through the tiers over time thereby raising standards. Councils of any size can aspire to an award appropriate for their budget and level of activity.
- To support transparency, every award level has a requirement for certain information to be published online (plus some information that does not need to be published). In all instances the council confirms that the required documents, information and conditions are in place (whether published or not) by resolution in public at a full council meeting. For Gold, councils also provide statements for submission to the panel demonstrating excellence in their activities.
- The Bronze Award demonstrates that a council meets the requirements for operating lawfully and according to standard practice.

Outstanding Parish Council Issues & Projects

Item	Location	Deadline	Any other information
Average Speed Cameras	All major routes within the village	Ongoing	BBC has now completed all installations. Move to close
Beacon	Land near Harris Way sports pitches	2025	WPC is in talks with Greenbelt Holdings Ltd to secure permission to site the beacon on land adjacent to the Harris Way sports pitches. The beacon (used at the Recreation Ground, Church Road in celebration of the late Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee in 2022) will then be in situ permanently and will continue to be used at significant ceremonial events and occasions
Changing Rooms renovations	Church Road	2025	WPC intends to demolish the old toilet block and renovate the changing rooms, providing toilets and a small kitchen. A dedicated storage area will provide space for the football teams, WPC and Wootton Country Players. Coloini & Lane Architecture Ltd have been appointed to assist with project management. Planning permission has been granted by BBC and WPC has finalised specifications with Coloini & Lane Architecture Ltd. The tender process is now live
Covanta (now Encyclis) Incinerator	Stewartby parish	Ongoing	Visit the following links for fuller information: BACI's website: https://bedsagainstinclinerator.wordpress.com/ ; BACI's Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/residentsagainstcovanta/?ref=bookmarks ; WPC's website: https://wootton-pc.gov.uk/
Lecterns	Various sites within the village	Ongoing	To date, lecterns detailing historic information have been sited at: • Keeley End Pond (Bedford Road/Hollies Walk); • Lorraine Road Cemetery (in recognition of The Queen's Green Canopy Tree Planting Event which took place in January 2022); • Memorial Hall (Bedford Road); • The Pound (Bedford Road – opposite The Cock Inn PH). WPC had hoped to site a lectern in the general vicinity of The Gaol, adjacent to St. Mary's Churchyard on Church Road, but a licence from BBC proved too problematical and the hope is now to site the lectern within the Churchyard. This will require the permission of St. Mary's and the Diocese of St. Albans by way of a faculty
Local Plan 2040	Throughout the village	Ongoing	Public Hearings in relation to the examination of BBC's Local Plan 2040 have recently concluded and the Planning Inspectorate has raised concerns that it cannot be currently found to be sound.
Lorraine Road Cemetery extension	Lorraine Road cemetery	Ongoing	WPC is ringfencing money annually and will approach the Crown Estate (adjoining landowners) to request it be permitted to purchase an area of land adjacent to the existing cemetery in order to extend it

Neighbourhood Development Plan	The whole civil parish of Wootton	Ongoing	The referendum saw a majority vote in favour of Bedford Borough Council using the Neighbourhood Plan for Wootton to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area. The plan will next be reviewed after the adoption of BBC's Local Plan 2040 – to ensure policies are up to date
Real Time Passenger Information (bus stops)	Four bus stop sites within the village	2024	The four new units have now been installed. Move to close
Roads and Pavements	Throughout the village	Ongoing	The Roads and Pavements Safety Steering Group meets every other month and residents are welcome to attend these meetings. Minutes can be viewed via this link: https://wootton-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/minutes/ (A hard copy can be requested from the Clerk to the Council)
Village Entrance Sign	Keeley Lane	2024	Works to install the brick-built sign at the entrance to Wootton along Keeley Lane are now complete. Move to close

Please note this is a brief overview of ongoing/proposed projects and the list is not exhaustive as changes can occur before the next newsletter edition goes to print. For fuller information on these or other projects, please contact the Clerk to the Council.

1. Wootton Parish Council 2. Bedfordshire Against Covanta Incinerator

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For a free estimate contact Kevin White

Tel: 01234 340335

Mobile: 07939 395423



Email: sue.abood@outlook.com

Phone: 07968 792862

I'm writing this article as January is coming to an end. The ten darkest weeks of the year have passed, and the days are getting noticeably longer. The weather over the winter has been incredibly wet and it hasn't taken much rain to cause the river Great Ouse to flood, something it has been doing with some regularity over the winter months. There are however signs of spring appearing – I've seen snowdrops and primroses in the cemetery in Green End. I hope that by the time you receive this magazine in March, spring will have well and truly sprung!



I am keeping my fingers crossed that by the time this magazine is delivered a decision will have been made by the government about the Universal theme park proposal, one way or the other. If the proposal is given the go ahead, which I hope it is, it will be good to start more in-depth local conversations with Universal.

While on the subject of large projects, you may have seen on social media that East West Rail has been the subject of discussion at full council meetings in January. Full council responded to the non-statutory consultation from East West Rail, providing answers to specific questions that they had posed regarding issues like siting

of stations in Stewartby, level crossing/bridges over rail lines etc, and the responses to the consultation were voted on. I'd just like to make the point that no-one in the council chamber was voting for which route option the railway should take, despite what has been said on social media.

Despite the confusion in the New Year around sudden charges for parking in Bedford being implemented, it has been confirmed that Sunday and overnight parking remains free, with the 2 hours free parking on Saturdays also continuing in Council owned car parks. Four hours of free parking continues in Lurke Street (which no longer accepts cash), and All Hallows car parks.

We've been asked by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to continue to promote Pharmacy First to residents, a service which I know some of you have used. You can see the pharmacist about the following conditions, and they can prescribe various medications for you:

- Sinusitis
- Sore throat
- Earache
- Infected insect bite
- Impetigo (a bacterial skin infection)
- Shingles
- Uncomplicated urinary tract infections in women.

On the subject of health, I know that a new GP surgery is an important issue for many of the residents I speak to. Back in October I was disappointed to hear from the Portfolio Holder for Health that "spades in the ground are a long way off" when talking about the building of new GP surgeries. I continue to speak to the ICB and we have written to the government asking that funding is provided to our area to ensure that new GP surgeries can be built.

Just as last year, the Full Council meeting in February will see the administration's budget

come to council for approval alongside the proposed council tax rates for the year ahead. Just as last year there are concerns about increased borrowing and this year there are proposed unspecified cuts to libraries, street cleaning and street lighting, and additional charges for Telecare and other proposals. We are scrutinising the proposed cuts and will be making our case in the upcoming council meetings.

The increase in borrowing from £60 million to £100 million in less than two years with more borrowing proposed (up to around £150 million in 2027/28) is a cause for concern, as repayment costs have to be found from the council's budget and ultimately will have a knock-on effect on the budget available for services. At a time when pressures on services are increasing, making prudent financial decisions is just as important as ever.

You may wonder why I am mentioning the issue of the budget. I believe it's important for all residents to be aware of what is going on with the public's money. The Council's own finance officers warn in papers coming to full council in February that "In the event that budget pressures cannot be contained in 2024/2025 and 2025/26 it is likely that the financial position [of the council] would be unsustainable." And this is despite the maximum council tax rise being proposed. Council officers also urge a 'Resilience Review' be carried out by external experts because of the dwindling amount of reserves available to the Council – down from £57 million two years ago to £31million now. This is a serious situation.

If you would ever like to listen to a council meeting, they are all streamed live on the council website and the recordings are available after the meetings for you to watch at your leisure. The Full Council meeting in January was 5 hours and 15 minutes long – apparently the longest council meeting in 22 years. I suggest if you watch that recording you may want to break it up into manageable chunks of time!

This year Bedford Credit Union are hosting a Cost of Living Fair, a new free event for the

residents of Bedfordshire to attend and find out about organisations who may be able to help or support them to save money in the face of rising costs. Each event will be attended by local and national organisations such as Citizens Advice, Money and Pensions Service, community ladders and the local Library of Things and also host a Repair Cafe where residents can bring broken items to be looked over by a volunteer Fixer. There are two dates available:

- 29 March, 10am-3pm Harpur Suite, Bedford
- 12 April, 10am-3pm Parkside Community Hub, Ampthill

More details can be found on their website <https://bedfordcreditunion.org.uk/costoflivingfair/>

This magazine may not arrive to you in time, but Sunday 9th March 2025 has been designated by the government as a Day of Reflection across the UK for the COVID-19 pandemic. It hopes to offer communities across the country the opportunity to join together in commemoration of those who lost their lives. We lost family members to Covid and its effects are still felt by us. My heart goes out to all those who were and are still affected by Covid and the pandemic, and my heartfelt thanks go to all those working in the NHS and emergency and essential services throughout that time and beyond.

By the time you receive this magazine the top of Lorraine Road should have been resurfaced. I'm always on the look out for potholes and road issues and have already requested that Manor Road in Wootton and Ridge Road in Kempston Rural among others are added to the council's list of roads that are in need of attention. Please do report any issues that you see on the council website, or let me know where they are so we can ensure that issues are repaired promptly.

Looking ahead to later on this year, Wootton Upper School celebrates its 50th anniversary in September this year and also transitions to a secondary school, while Wootton Lower School will transition into a primary school. The transition is the culmination of many, many years of work and discussion both within the council

and with our neighbour, Central Bedfordshire Council. It will be good for the situation to be finalised, ending years of uncertainty for parents. I wish both schools a smooth transition into this new phase.

I continue to work for residents on individual casework that they contact me with. Please do get in touch if I can be of assistance. My councillor sessions are detailed below as well as my email address and phone number that you can call or text.

Councillor Surgeries and getting in touch

I continue to hold two Wootton Councillor Surgeries and two Kempston Rural Surgeries each month, in all weathers. All residents are welcome to any of the sessions.

- The sessions in Wootton are on the 1st Saturday of the month, 9.30 – 10.30am on the green by the library on Lorraine Road, and 10.45 – 11.45am on the seating area between Ashpole Avenue and Folkes Road, opposite the lower school.
- Kempston Rural surgeries are on the 3rd Saturday of the month, 10 – 11am opposite the Cross Keys pub in Wood End and 11.15am – 12pm at Gibraltar Corner.

Updates will be shown on my Facebook page www.facebook.com/WoottonLibDems.

As always, if you can't attend a surgery or wish to contact me for any other reason, please feel free to get in touch by phone (07968 792862) or email – sue.abood@outlook.com.



Gardening Service



78–82 Bromham Road, Bedford MK40 2QH

Tel: 01234 360510

www.ageukbedfordshire.org.uk

Dates for your Diary 2024/25

MARCH

12th Mar 2025	Planning & Environment Committee	7.00pm
12th Mar 2025	Full Council	7.15pm
19th Mar 2025	Roads & Pavements Safety Steering Group	7.00pm
26th Mar 2025	Planning & Environment Committee	7.00pm
26th Mar 2025	Finance & General Purposes Committee	7.15pm
26th Mar 2025	Leisure & Amenities Committee	7.30pm

APRIL

9th Apr 2025	Planning & Environment Committee	7.00pm
9th Apr 2025	Full Council	7.15pm
16th Apr 2025	Annual Parish Meeting	7.00pm
30th Apr 2025	Planning & Environment Committee	7.00pm
30th Apr 2025	Finance & General Purposes Committee	7.15pm
30th Apr 2025	Leisure & Amenities Committee	7.30pm

MAY

14th May 2025	Planning & Environment Committee	7.00pm
14th May 2025	Annual Council Meeting	7.15pm
14th May 2025	Full Council	to follow ACM

Please contact the Clerk to the Council if you would like to attend any meeting, to ensure the meeting room is configured to accommodate the numbers required.

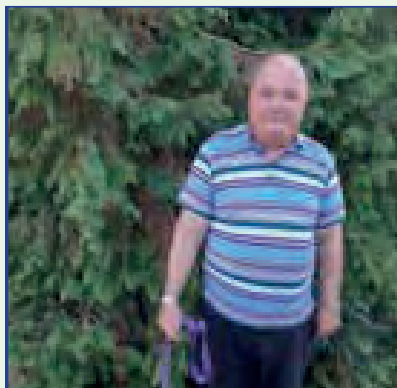
Noticeboards are located at the following locations:

Outside Wootton Lower School	Bedford Road
Outside the Manor Road flats	Bedford Road
Outside the Memorial Hall	Bedford Road
Adjacent to the post box	Hall End Road

(The noticeboard opposite the Cock Inn PH carries a list of upcoming meetings but not agendas as its size is restrictive).

DISCLAIMER: Please check with the Clerk to the Council, noticeboards or the parish council website as meetings may be subject to cancellations or changes to timings and/or venue:

<https://wootton-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/meeting-dates/>



Email: john.wheeler@bedford.gov.uk

Phone: 07913 409 433

Facebook: search Cllr john wheeler

Gosh here we are heading towards spring 2025 – Christmas seems just a memory now, but it was a nice Christmas in the village. Thank you to Wootton Parish Council for arranging a lovely display of Christmas lights in the village plus a Christmas tree full of lights. I am not being biased here but they were some of the best I have seen around the Borough this year! There were plenty of events going on at the churches, clubs and schools around the village which were well attended.

I am pleased to report the weekly neighbourhood chat events every Wednesday from 11 am to 1pm at the Hub (Wootton New Life Methodist Church) are going from strength to strength. I pooped in a few weeks back and there were over 50 Wootton residents there. This is where you can pop down for a coffee and a nice piece of cake and have a chat with other residents. There is also now a Memory gym on Monday afternoons for Wootton residents, and I was pleased to support this with some of my ward funds to provide special chairs.

Bedford Borough Council should have completed the re-surfacing of Lorraine

Road (junction of Cause End Road nearest St. Mary's to Canons Close) by the time this goes to print. They are behind schedule thanks to inclement weather but other works should also be completed soon – including the pavement on Cause End Road from Tesco to Bedford Road, a number of dropped kerbs, implementation of the 20MPH limits to many side roads and re-surfacing of the pavement along Bedford Road (Cock Inn PH to the Post Office – both sides). I am pleased to announce that dropped kerbs have been added near the junction of Fields Road and Summerfield Drive – thank you to the parish council and residents for bring this to my attention. A further request has been made for an additional pedestrian crossing at this point and I have requested Bedford Borough Council undertake a feasibility study.

Parking around the schools is still a major issue and the Borough Council are liaising with Persimmon Homes to see what can be done to stop vehicles parking on the grass verges in the vicinity of Harris Way and Ashpole Avenue. The verges are sadly being destroyed. We are still awaiting the installation of two new bus shelters and Real Time Passenger Information units for Burgoyne Avenue.

Wootton Lower school has now been re-branded Wootton Primary School and their conversion to a two-tier school remains on target for September this year. Wootton Upper School remains on target for September 2026.

With my speakers hat on, December was a very busy month during which I attended several events including my Carol Service at St. Mary's Church, Wootton. This was well attended by dignitaries, M.P's, Bedford Borough Mayors and Mayoress, Borough Councillors, Parish Councillors, schools and residents. Readings and carols were performed by residents and schools as well

as civic representatives. I decided this year that the collection would go to St. Mary's Church and I would like to thank Canon Peter Ackroyd and my civic team for the hard work in putting this event together. A reception was then held at Wootton Blue Cross – a further thank you goes to them in putting that together. On the 27th January I was honoured to be a part of the Holocaust Remembrance Service at the Ann Frank tree in Bedford. My term ends in mid-May but my civic team are keeping me busy and I seem to have a full diary for most weekends till then.

Borough bits :

There are many positive things happening in the Borough Council and recently the Mayor officially approved its budget for the 2025/2026 financial year with cross-party backing. This forward-thinking budget strikes a balance between strategic investment in essential services and financial responsibility.

The key highlights include:

- Increased Funding for Adult Social Care – Recognising the rising demand, the Borough Council is allocating an additional £2.364 million from the Adult Social Care precept and £1.656 million from the Social Care Grant.
- 10-Year Capital Programme – A long-term investment plan has been introduced to focus on growth and sustainability, supporting town centre revitalisation, new GP surgeries, the Wixams Train Station, and improved leisure facilities.
- Council Tax Increase – A modest 4.99% rise (2.99% core tax and 2.00% for Adult Social Care) will ensure the continued delivery of vital community services.

In the long term these investments mean freeing up more money for public services, more money to help maintain our roads and paths, more money for our parks and open spaces.

In other good news the Council's Children's Services team have made significant

updates and improvements following the MacAlister Review and the revised Working Together 2023 guidance.

These included:

- Creation of the Conect Team – A new multi-disciplinary unit combining social workers, mental health practitioners, and family support workers to provide early and tailored intervention for families in need.
- Stronger family networks – A significant increase in Special Guardianship Orders, ensuring children remain within extended family settings whenever possible.
- Better support for care leavers – Expansion of the Staying Put initiative, allowing young people to stay in stable homes beyond 18, improving life outcomes.
- Enhanced safeguarding structures – Establishment of Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) across agencies to improve decision-making and accountability.
- Greater collaboration – Introduction of multi-agency child protection units to streamline support and prevent crises.

Fantastic news for kids and families all round.

Lastly, on another positive the Council has ended its unequal treatment of residents of Kempston West and Great Denham by no longer double taxing them for the maintenance of Borough owned land – something no other residents in Bedford Borough have had to pay. In total, these communities have paid £2.2 million due to this double tax.

So we have a win for fairness.

Take care



CLlr. John Wheeler

Wootton Baptist Church - *Bedford Road*

A New Chapter for Wootton Baptist Church **By Tom Roberts**



For the first time in over 100 years, Wootton Baptist Church has a pastor, and I'm delighted to step into this role. I moved into the village, along with my wife and our two children at the end of December. We've started to settle in – boxes are unpacked and the kids have started at Wootton Primary School – and we are looking forward to getting to know and serve the community.

Wootton Baptist Church has been part of the village for many years. As we begin this new chapter, we want to continue being a welcoming place for people of all ages and backgrounds. Whether you're exploring the Christian faith, growing in your understanding of God, or simply looking for community connection, you'll find a warm welcome here. We're especially keen to support local families. We already run free and fun after-

school clubs, and we're hoping to start a parent and baby group soon – watch this space!

Over the coming weeks and months, I hope to meet many people across the village, whether at community events, in the playground at school pick-up, or simply out and about. If you see me, do say hello! You are also very welcome to join us at 10.30am on a Sunday or at one of our midweek activities.

Sunday Services:

10:30am & 6pm

Coffee Morning:

Tuesday, 10.00am-12.00pm. Drop in for tea, coffee, cake and a chat.

Children's activities:

Join us for fun, games and Bible stories. Free of charge.

- **Adventurers (school years 2-4):**

Thursday, 3.30 - 4.45pm

- **Ignite (school years 5-8): Tuesday,**

4.30 - 5.45pm

Bible Study Groups:

Wednesday/Thursday, 7.30pm at a leader's home.

For more information

Contact Tom Roberts 07860 347534, or visit woottonbaptistchurch.org.uk

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HOLE IN THE ROAD - *By Colin Zardin*

The air of excitement had been palpable.

This was, after all, the culmination of the biggest, most ambitious, (and most expensive), exploration project in the history of mankind.

There had of course, been many missions to explore other planets since the first flights into space centuries ago. But this one was different, for two principle reasons.

Firstly, Man had never attempted to visit a planet in another GALAXY before. The time necessary to travel hundreds, or thousands, of light years, had rendered such distances impossible. But massive investment in the study of suspending life, and applying it to astronauts had overcome that factor.

Secondly, this was the first time that Man had targeted another planet where it had been established that another form of life actually existed.

Men had speculated that, with the existence of billions of other worlds, in countless numbers of other galaxies, there must be other life. But now, with this current mission, they would be able to establish what form that life took. And what reaction there would be when humans, and these other beings, met – face to face. Assuming they HAD faces, that is!

And so, the mother ship, after the longest voyage ever travelled by Man, had entered the atmosphere of the planet Juperitus.

The crew, under the command of Space Director David Hughes, had been brought out of their state of suspended animation. Those of them selected to man the landing craft had manoeuvred their vessel to the chosen area. This was very close to the location where the signs of alien life had registered most strongly.

The landing had been successfully achieved, and the landing party had set foot on the surface of the planet some sixty hours previously.

The atmosphere had showed that it could support life there, but could not be breathed by humans. The astronauts had to remain in their space suits, and breathe from the in-built oxygen cylinders.

As the hours passed, and their search area expanded, they became increasingly bewildered.

There was no apparent trace of life at all!

No sign of any activity, or construction, nothing to confirm all the signs that this planet did indeed have any life form at all. David Hughes had continually been reporting back to the mother ship to this effect.

"What on Earth is going on?" David said to his second in command, Wing Commander Peter Donaldson. "Surely this won't turn out to be the biggest, most costly white elephant of an exploration of all time?"

"But the signs of life registering on our instruments are stronger than ever", Peter replied. "Something **MUST** be here, and very close to our current position".

They continued searching diligently, but still found nothing.

After a while, David Hughes made a decision.

"We'll return to the landing craft, lift off a few hundred metres, and conduct an aerial survey of the land a few kilometres away".

They carried out this action, and a short while afterwards, the Wing Commander suddenly shouted "look! There's something different in the terrain over there!" He pointed to a darker coloured area of the ground below. They landed their craft as close as they could get to the spot, and once again, descended to the surface of Juperitus.

They cautiously approached the darker feature, and it became apparent that it was, in fact, a depression in the ground. The closer they got, the deeper the depression became, until they realised that they were standing at the edge of huge tunnel, which dropped almost vertically into the depths. At the same time, their measuring instruments began to swing wildly from side to side.

They could hear a noise now, even through their space helmets. This, too, was reported back to the mothership.

"Right. I'm going down there, the Space Director said. "We're not coming all this way to learn about an alien life form, and turn back now!".

"Negative!" came the response from the mother ship. "NASA has refused to authorise that action".

David Hughes' response was to turn off his radio receiver.

"I didn't hear that message" he said to his Wing Commander.

So, he took the final few steps until he stood at the very edge of the tunnel, which disappeared into the ground below his feet.

"I still can't see anything... No. Wait. I think I detected a movement down there. It's green, and definitely not humanoid in shape. It's getting larger. Oh! There's more than one of...whatever it is! They're coming towards me now. I can't make out their shape – it seems to be changing as I watch".

He was getting a very bad feeling now, and started to retrace his steps back from the very rim of the tunnel.

But he couldn't move!

His feet didn't respond!

He was transfixed to the spot, as the green matter came closer and closer to the surface, where he stood.

He became aware of an evil smell – like toast burning, but much stronger. But that was impossible! He was breathing oxygen from a cylinder, and had no connection to the atmosphere outside.

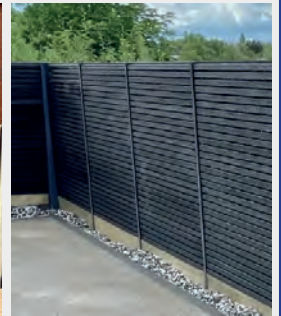
As the largest element of the green "thing" emerged, and loomed over him, he became aware of another sensation. A sound, like a bell, ringing in his ears.

"Come on David", called his mother. "The alarm's gone, and your toast is on the table. You'll be late for school if you don't get up right now".

"Oh God!" said David Hughes, as he emerged from his nightmare. "I really must stop reading my science fiction books last thing at night!".

After finishing his shower, putting on his school uniform, and retrieving his bicycle from the shed, he set off for school.

!! must make sure that I don't ride over any holes in the road this morning!" he thought wryly to himself.



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Forest of Marston Vale

Forest of Marston Vale Trust are creating a sensory haven at the Millennium Country Park



The Millennium Country Park, Marston Moretaine, is an award-winning green space featuring diverse wildlife habitats - including woodlands, meadows, hedgerows and wetlands – and is enjoyed by thousands of visitors each year exploring the 225-hectare space. However, the Park is not the ideal space for everyone.

For some, accessing the Park has challenges – for example, people with reduced mobility or neurodivergent individuals, for whom the busyness and scale of the Park can be overwhelming. So, we've designed a 'pocket-sized' version of the Park, with features designed to appeal to people with a physical disability or mental health conditions.

We want to create a peaceful idyll, where people of all abilities can immerse themselves in nature and enjoy a rich sensory experience to help calm and comfort their mental health and support their general well-being.

We've raised the majority of the funds needed to make this project happen but we require another £12,000 to complete this dream space.

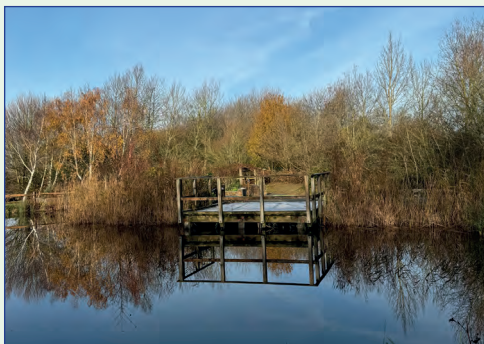
There's a number of phases to the project, which have been managed around our existing resident wildlife. Habitat creation is at the forefront of

what we do as a Charity, and the Sensory Wildlife Garden has a key role to play here too. Our plans for this area will improve existing habitats and create new ones for insects, aquatic life, birds and small mammals.

Phase One started in November 2023 and involved clearing and deepening the pond to prevent reeds from overtaking and endangering species like Great Crested Newts. This crucial work was timed to avoid disrupting the pond's ecosystem during active periods. In Phase Two (September 2024), we resurfaced uneven, flood-prone paths and replaced crumbling raised flower beds. Although unexpected newt sightings in spring delayed progress, Senior Ranger Nicola Ceconi equipped herself with the proper licensing and safely relocated them to continue the work needed.

The first two phases were the foundations of the project – the essential groundwork to make everything else possible. Phase three is where all the exciting elements will happen – making the Sensory Wildlife Garden the perfect haven both for people with physical disabilities and/or mental health conditions and for our much-loved wildlife.





come in! Together, we can bring this vision to life and create a space that inspires and delights.

The Sensory Wildlife Garden project is being led by our Senior Ranger, Nicola Ceconi, with input and support from our amazing volunteers. All the individuals involved are invested in making the project a success and delivering an area of rich sensory experiences and a haven for wildlife.



We will be planting a native hedgerow to border the Garden. Hedgerows are amazing! Not only do they provide homes for so much wildlife, but they're also nature's transport system – connecting habitats and giving wildlife safe passage between areas.

Then we're hoping for a willow tunnel, bog garden and bug wall – interactive areas for visitors young and old to be immersed in nature. 3D sculptures will stimulate sight and touch, gentle wind chimes will calm and comfort, and a wooden hand-crafted celebration wall will provide an area to commemorate special moments and remember loved ones, with a seating area for quiet contemplation. These sensory elements are the final, transformative pieces of the puzzle – and this is where you

Join us in bringing the Sensory Wildlife Garden to life! Together, we can bring this vision to life and create a space that inspires and delights – donate today and make a lasting impact!

<https://www.marstonvale.org/appeal/sensory-wildlife-garden-renovation>





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Wootton Neighbourhood Chat Group celebrated its first anniversary in December by people bringing food to share and a secret Santa present. Santa even made a surprise appearance. We followed this event the following week with a "Carols with Coffee morning", hosted by Wootton New Life Methodist Church. It was wonderful to see members of our new monthly memory gym enjoying the relaxed style adopted by the Church to ensure that all the events held at the Hub are inclusive and welcoming.

Our chat group is now regularly attended by up to 50 people each week. We ensure anyone walking in is made welcome. Jan and Jean regularly supply us with top-quality home-made cakes. In April, our member of parliament is coming to meet everyone so they can tell him first hand of issues affecting Wootton.

In July, we were asked by a Wootton resident, who had cared for her partner, having dementia, if we would consider working with Tibbs Dementia Trust Foundation. As a result we can now offer a monthly Memory Gym, a social event, for people with memory issues not just from dementia but also from the effect of strokes and brain injury.

With training and support from Tibbs and The Methodist Church we have now have a wonderful team of volunteers that produce

fun activities, including quizzes, singing, and dancing. If you or a family member have memory issues either contact me or just come to one of our sessions.

These are some comments from attendees

'Always doing something different and always very welcoming. Thank you.'

'We enjoy the games we play and the puzzles, and the music, singing and dancing. We also come to the weekly Wootton Neighbourhood Chat Group. With Tibbs they started the memory gym. We meet and talk to old friends and new. Both events are very friendly, and we enjoy them a lot. Thank you very much.'

We are always looking for musical groups or choirs to come to one of our sessions. Please contact me if you can help.

Kath Pearce 07757 911556

Future dates for the Memory Gym:

Monday 3rd February

Monday 3rd March

Monday April 7th





Happy new year to all our readers! Recently county-wide many people have been sent letters for speeding as recorded by Speedwatch volunteers. In January 288 letters were sent out as well as motorists being visited by police as they had offended more than once. Your dedicated Speedwatch Team - Keith Randell, Les Dick, Graham Ward, Anil Mistry and myself – are waiting to carry out patrols down Wootton Road from Gibraltar Corner towards Irongate, but the police have to give us the go-ahead as this road is part of Kempston Rural (who don't have a Speedwatch team). We are still looking forward to the average speed cameras being switched on throughout the village but this will not happen until all the roadworks have been completed.

If you feel that you could help us out please get in touch with Juliet Wright - juliet.wright@beds.police.uk. We should love to have your help. We are aware that there are a small number of motorists who continue to speed through the village – mostly at anti-social hours. We cannot patrol at these hours, so if you see people speeding try to get their registration number and let the police know!

Drive carefully especially during this inclement weather.

Malcolm Chalmers

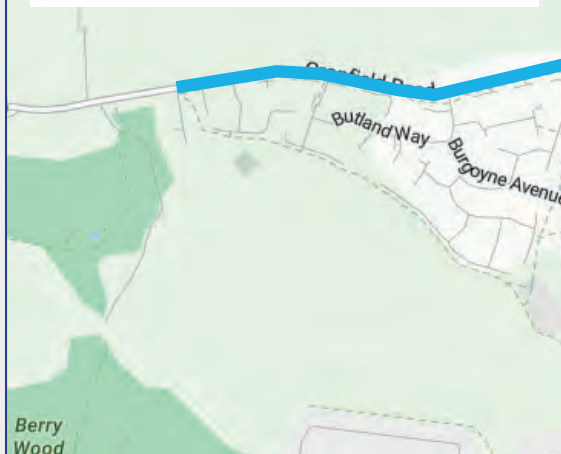
Community Speedwatch Co-ordinator

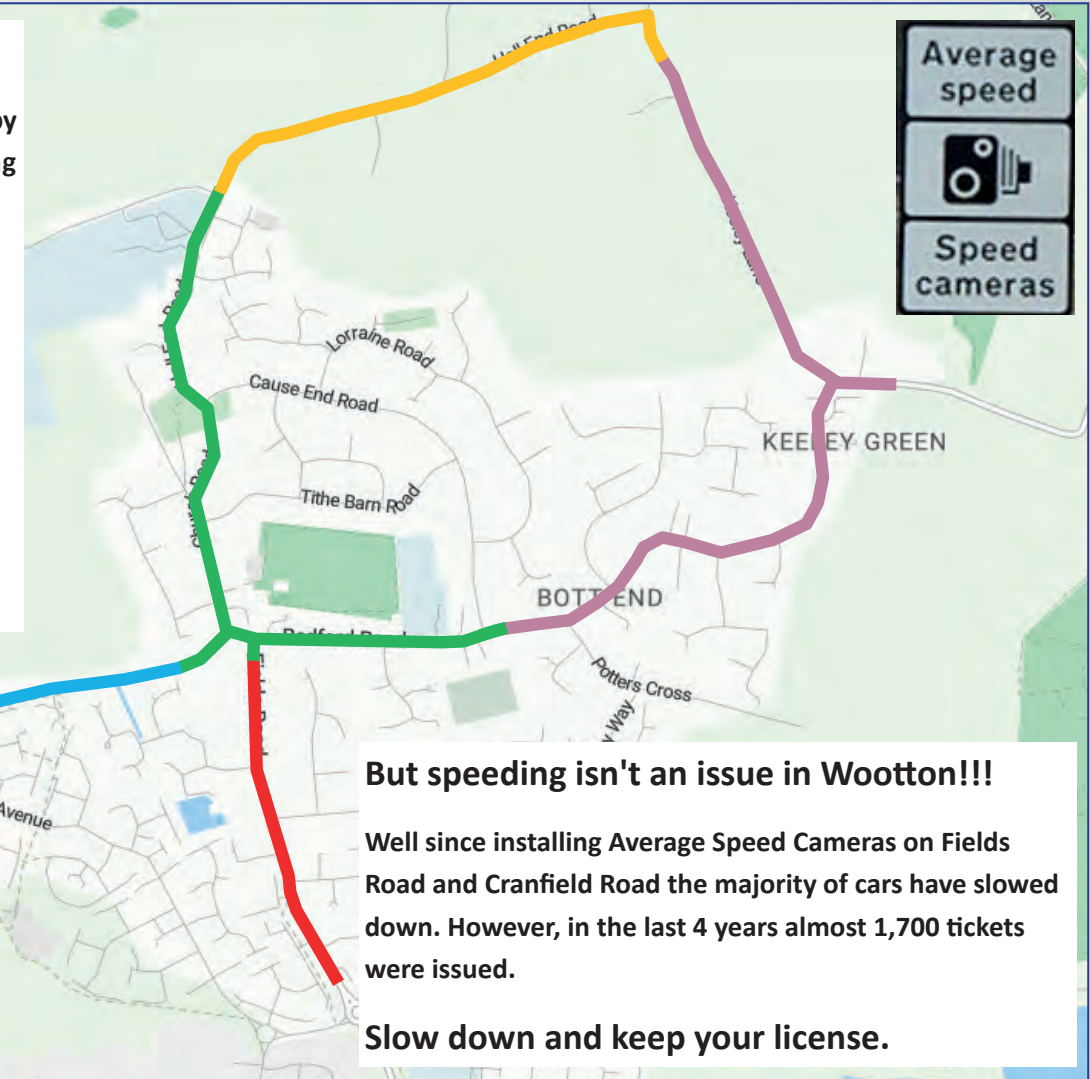
Average Speed Cameras

Each colour represents a zone covered by two or more cameras. Vehicles travelling through each section will have their speed monitored and fines will be generated where necessary. All revenue goes to Central Government.

We hope that all vehicles travel within the speed limit so no fines are issued.

Getting fined is your choice!!!





But speeding isn't an issue in Wootton!!!

Well since installing Average Speed Cameras on Fields Road and Cranfield Road the majority of cars have slowed down. However, in the last 4 years almost 1,700 tickets were issued.

Slow down and keep your license.

The Royal British Legion 2024 'Poppy Appeal' collection



The Royal British Legion 2024 'Poppy Appeal' collection here in Wootton has once again proven to be an outstanding success. The 'Pop Up Gazebo' in Fields Road, which was initially trialled due to a 'No Cold Calling' policy in door to door areas has gone from strength to strength, supported by many walks of life coming from all surrounding areas and creating a great Annual community spot whilst raising a very welcome revenue for the RBL.

Therefore, many thanks should go to all who continue to 'Poppy' along to support the 'Pop Up Gazebo' which includes well mannered children and dogs, and those who kindly donate knitted and crocheted poppies, as well as a vast selection of garden plants.

A very kind gesture should also be extended to Ian McArthur who lives at Charity Farm, Marston. Ian brought along his Ford Jeep each day for viewing.

This certainly created a lot of interest to many people. Colin Campbell from Wootton, the Irish bagpipe player also put in a very colourful display of his skills on playing the bagpipes.

With business collections listed below, plus wreaths purchased for local organisations the final outstanding total for 2024 amounted to £12,964.60.

The newly introduced 'Contactless Terminal Machines' raised £2,432.00 which was added to the final total. Gift Aid which is 25p in the pound was an option on these terminals and will be added to the final total at a later date when the RBL have completed their accounts.

Most grateful thanks and appreciation should be extended to the following helpers, who sat out in all weathers to raise this fantastic amount for the RBL.

Mesdames: C.J.Ashpole, S.Barraclough, J.Billington, K.Brady, S.Chapillon, L.Cochrane, M.Gough, A.Hudson, L.Hutchings, E.Keegan, I.Lowings, C.Mason, S.Mahood, J.Mead, V.Minney, J.Newbury, K.Pearce, G.Robinson, C.Schiena, A.Stapleton, D.Sullivan, E.Sullivan, K.Tallentire, S.Wells.

Messrs: M.R.Ashpole, H.Bajwa, T.Billington, P.Birkett, J.Rowlett, D.Whitbread and B.Henley.

Business': Bedford Bowls Club, Bedford Golf Club (Stagsden c/o Ding's Disco), Blue Cross F.C, Camestone School, Chemist, Cranfield University, Corner 5 Restaurant, Fox & Duck, Grace Community Church c/o Carole White, Legstraps, Ladies Golf Club c/o Dora Loft, Londis, Kempston & Luton Police Headquarters, Mile Road Allotment Society, Stewartby Church, Stewartby Club, Stewartby Common Room, Stewartby Co-op, Tesco Xpress, Vision Blinds, Wootton & Bedford Vale Retirement Community Housing Care, Wootton Healthy Living (Dr's), Wootton Parish Council, Wootton Upper/Kimberley and Lower Schools (Bedford Road & Harris Way).



Many thanks once again to all concerned for their valued voluntary time, kindness, effort and generosity.

Christine J Ashpole

07865 051453

Poppy Appeal Organiser for Wootton, Bedford.



As 2024 drew to a close, I looked back on the last few meetings we had at Wootton W1. We'd had a marvellous lady in Kaliko K, talk about the messages found in Patchwork Quilt patterns. Many, many years ago slaves had been able to interpret the patterns to follow routes to safe havens and freedom. We also heard about the work of the ARP in World War 2 and the many different things they did to keep the public safe during air raids. We finished the year off with a party and dancing to the music of Jon and Susie Scott. In between, we attended the Remembrance Parade, supplied refreshments at the Community Centre Christmas Craft Fair and held another very successful Christmas wreath workshop.

2025 and Canine Partners came along with Pyke, the black labrador, who was their ambassador. Pyke was a typical labrador and would only perform when he felt it was worth it. He was still able to show us how valuable these dogs are in providing help towards their partner's independence. We've also heard about the volunteer group, Bedford Street Angels, who support youngsters who attend nightclubs, making sure they get home safely.

Future meetings are:

March 19th The Committee Cooks for the Members.

April 16th Annual Meeting

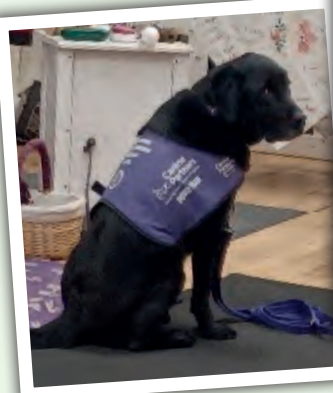
May 21st Social Evening - Will it be games? Or a quiz? Or more food (what we do best!)? Come and find out.

June 18th A Musical Extravaganza with Lisa Garrity

We meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at the Memorial Hall, Bedford Rd at 7-30.

We love meeting visitors, who can attend for a fee of £5, tea coffee and biscuits provided.

Check out our Facebook page too, Wootton W1 Bedfordshire.



<https://wootton-pc.gov.uk>

The Parish Council's website contains a lot of information relating to the village. Yes, we publish agendas, draft minutes and minutes of the meetings, however there is a lot more information besides including:



Wootton

Average Speed Camera

- Roll out plan
- Number of tickets issued
- How average speed cameras work

Real Time Passenger Information.

From our website you can select a bus stop, and it will show the times of the next few bus arrivals. This should allow you to plan your trip from the comfort of your home and get to the bus stop without having to wait too long for a bus.



Wootton

Average Speed Camera

- Roll out plan
- Number of tickets issued
- How average speed cameras work

Average Speed Cameras

This will show you where they are around Wootton. It explains how they work. You can also see the number of tickets being issued each month.



Defibrillators in Wootton

Defibrillators

This shows a map of where they are in the village and also a video on how to use them. Please see where your closest one is, it could save a loved one's life. Note not all defibrillators can be accessed 24 hours a day.

Click for collection times



Post Boxes

This details information on where are the post boxes are and last collection times.

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Mondays 6.15 - 7.15 p.m. Wootton Village Hall

Fridays 10 – 11 a.m. Allsaints Hall, Church End, Kempston

New Wednesday morning class coming soon

Taught by BWY teacher with over 20 years experience.

More information or Book with Gen: 07849 158 850



Stewartby Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society

SAOD's most recent production 'Princess Ida,' was received with great appreciation by enthusiastic audiences. Under the experienced hands of the seasoned creative team, the work was original and accomplished. Director, Gordon Hodges and

Musical Director, Alana Thackray worked together to produce a piece of musical theatre which was exciting to take part in as well as to observe. Our chief rehearsal pianists were Pam Rogers and Brian Caves who have faithfully supported us for many years. Sadly, Brian recently passed away. Brian lived in Wootton for many years and was a well loved member of the village. He will be greatly missed by the whole company. Pam and Brian were ably assisted by Bill Fudge, Ed Jones and Chris Topley. Stage Management was smoothly coordinated by David Simpson who was an enthusiastic new recruit. Our Lighting





Our next show will be the Spring Concert. This will be performed at Stewartby Village Hall on 9th and 10th May 2025 at 7.30. The concert will contain a kaleidoscope of songs and light entertainment.

Our next major production will be 'The Merry Widow,' by Franz Lehár, to be performed in November 2025 at Stewartby Village Hall. Rehearsals will take place on Thursdays with Principals on Mondays.



If you are at all interested in joining our society as performers, back stage, front of house, serving refreshments or in any other way, please do get in touch. You will be assured of a warm welcome.

As well as 2 major performances per year we enjoy various social events and hold a fundraising jumble sale. Our next AGM will be 15th May 2025 at Stewartby United Church at 7.30.

If you would like to become a Friend of Stewartby Operatic Society for £30 per year, or for further information about the society please contact us;

information@saods.org.uk

All photographs were taken during the rehearsal stage of *Ida* and demonstrate the pleasure of working together to create a show.

Carol Wallman

Manager was Ben Whittle and the splendid costumes were provided by Harlequin Costume Hire, coordinated by Juliet Jones. The elaborate set was designed and built by Tim Snell, Mike Cocke, Jessica Hallett and Gordon Hodges.



The lead members of the cast were comprised of experienced performers as well as some younger students who brought a fresh vivacity to the production. Lead parts were taken by; Carol Urwin, Claire Moore, Peter Davis, Tim Sell, Colin Jones, Jessica Hallett, Michael Webster, Mike Cocke, Steve Bartlett, Linda Bowen, Chris Hodges and newcomers, Sam Hillyard and Olivia Laurie. Male and female chorus members did a grand job in supporting the action and propelling the show with verve.

Welcome to Wootton Upper School



It's been a tremendously busy first half to the 2024-2025 academic year at Wootton Upper. As well as all the usual things that schools do day-to-day, we've had to contend with the travel chaos caused by the A421 flooding and a visit from Ofsted!

It has been a time of real progress though, with lots of good things happening for both the school and wider community.

We were delighted to have Ofsted visit us during the first week of November. Wootton Upper has come a long way in a short period of time. It was wonderful to be able to show inspectors what a lovely set of students and staff we have, and how well things are going. And it was even more wonderful that they agreed with us, judging us to be "Good" across in every category. (You can read our report at <https://www.woottonupper.co.uk/ofsted>)

There is still plenty we can and must do to make our school the best it can be, but the positive change is undeniable. As we've raised our expectations, our students have risen to the challenge brilliantly.

We're working hard to make sure families and others can see the changes too. We have welcomed dozens of prospective families for tours during the day, so they can see for

themselves the school in action. Our goal is simple: to be one of the top secondary schools in the country in a few years' time, and we're only too happy to talk people through our plans as we walk the corridors and drop into lessons.

If you'd like to come for a visit, for whatever reason, please do get in touch with us via HelloWootton@wootton.beds.sch.uk and we can arrange a time to show you around.

Of course, school life is about so much more than the core academic curriculum. The range of clubs and other enrichment opportunities for students is growing, and we've got a record number taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's awards scheme this year.

We've long had a strong reputation as a centre of excellence for the performing arts, and this year we've add to the legacy. Last term, our talented students took part and showcased their skills at the civic carol service and the Bob Lunniss lunch, along with a host of other incredible performances. The stage is set for even more exciting moments ahead!

There was also the annual musical – which this time was "We Will Rock You". It was a stunning production, with the quality of acting, singing and dancing second-to-none, and music and set of the highest standards. The theatre hall buzzed

every night, filled with a fantastic audience, including familiar faces from our community – former staff, students and supporters. It was truly special to see so many people coming together to celebrate the incredible talent on stage!

On the sporting front our students have been out and about taking part in fixtures far-and-wide, with some impressive successes too.

None of this happens by chance, but because of the expertise and dedication of a core group of colleagues, and thanks is due to the staff and others for pulling all these things together.



In addition, our new 4G pitch has been fully up-and-running for several months now. It's delightful to see it so busy, during the school day as well as evenings and weekends. Many community groups are already using it, and we feel very privileged to provide for the benefit of the village. If you'd like to book it for an event or activity, drop us a line on lettings@wootton.beds.sch.uk

This autumn, Wootton Upper is celebrating its 50th anniversary. We are going to mark this in a whole variety of ways, including Open Days, concerts and performances, a commemorative book, and probably a big old-fashioned disco in the sports hall!



In anticipation of this, we have started making contact with as many former students and staff as possible.

For those of you on Facebook, we have a group where people are already sharing memories and photos of their time here – search Facebook for "Wootton alumni" if you wish to join. At the time of writing, we already have over 1,500 people on there, and the number continues to grow.

We've also set up a way for alumni to register their contact details with us so that we can stay in touch with them directly. If you were a student or teacher here back in the day, visit // woottonupper.co.uk/alumni and we'll keep you updated as plans take shape.

We're not just looking back though – we're also well into planning for our transition to a fully-fledged Year 7 to 11 secondary school in September 2026. We will grow from 900 students today to 1350 students by 2028, and this requires careful planning on how we expand and make best use of our site and facilities. We're working our way through everything: from what we teach, to where we'll base subjects, and how students will move around the school, plus of course how everyone can get to-and-from the site safely and sustainably.

All-in-all then, it's been a busy year so far, and it's going to continue like this into the future. We can only achieve great things with the support of families and the wider village, so please keep the feedback coming. And don't be strangers – we'd love you to visit and see what we're up to.

Sundays

10am Morning Service

Join us on Sunday mornings!
You'll be sure of a warm welcome.

In person Children's groups available for ages 0-14. Tea and coffee served afterwards.

Online Services are live-streamed and available on our YouTube channel.



Easter

Good Friday (18 April)

10am Family Service
2pm An Hour at the Cross

Easter Day (20 April)

10am Easter Communion
(with Easter Egg hunt)



Lunch Club

1:15pm Second Monday of the month

Come to the Church Hall and meet new friends over a home-cooked meal. For everyone aged 50 and over. **Upcoming dates** 10 Mar, 14 Apr, 12 May. To book your place contact Peter Stephens on 01234 765403.



stmaryswootton.org.uk



StMarysWootton



St-Marys-Wootton

st mary's
wootton

A Warm Welcome
Awaits you at
WOOTTON NEW LIFE
Methodist Church



Sunday Mornings



Service starts at 10:30am
Rev Michael Giles



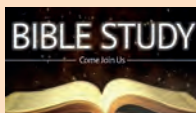
Join us for Breakfast
from 10:00am



Treasure Seekers
10:30am - 11:45am
FREE ~ For Kids aged 4-11
Come &
'Seek the Treasure'

We have a number of groups that
meet during the week
& you'd be most welcome to come along

Mondays: Knit n Natter
Tuesdays: Bible Study & Prayer Group
Wednesday: Neighbourhood Chat
Thursday / Fridays: Girls' & Boys' Brigades



**Newly Started
Memory Gym:**
First Monday of the Month



Worship Group
Practice once a week
Seeking musicians to join

With lots going on at our church, We'd love to see you

Wootton New Life Methodist Church, Cause End Road, Wootton, MK43 9DE

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

Website: <https://www.woottonnewlife.com/>

'For Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals', please contact the Minister



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A photograph showing a hand typing on a laptop keyboard. A small, light-colored model of a house with a chimney and blue-tinted windows sits on the keyboard. The background is blurred, showing more of the laptop and some papers.

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SKOOL DAYS



4th-5th April
The bell rings at 8pm!

Licenced bar until 11:00pm

Wootton Village Hall

MK43 9EU

Adults: £10 Concessions: £8

A Nativity play at Easter! What could possibly go wrong?

At St. Arbutnot's Academy there's a 'legless' head, unruly kids and someone has laced the cupcakes! The only thing that could make things worse is an OFSTED inspection.....oh dear!



Scan the QR code to book tickets or go to:
www.countryplayers.org.uk/buy-tickets

or call:

Louise - 07557 376729

Caroline - 07714 750822





Welcome to our Spring 2025 Newsletter!

We are very pleased to announce that as of 1st January 2025, Bizzy Bees has been renamed **Sweet Peas Pre-School CIO**. We have changed our name for the simple reason, there are many other childcare settings with a similar name and we wanted to be different! The management team, staff, committee, address, charity number and Ofsted number all remain the same. We pride ourselves on being a free flow, child led, inclusive setting, as we continue to support all the wonderful families in the local community.

We have been busy this term, continuing with our **weekly cookery** clubs, making neeps and tatties in honour of 'Burns Night' to delicious fruit flapjacks. We celebrated 'Children's Mental Health Week' at the start of February and made some wonderful lanterns for Chinese New Year. The children also took part in the 'RSPB Big Bird Watch', making some lovely bird feeders for their gardens.

Sweet Peas is currently full, but we do have some availability on our September 2025 waiting list. If you would like to join our waiting list, **please get in touch**. We welcome families to come and visit the setting and meet our wonderful practitioners, who are happy to answer any questions.

We operate term time only Monday to Friday 8:15am - 3:45pm.

Sessions are:

Breakfast Club: 8:15-9am (Breakfast provided)

AM session: 9-12pm (Snack provided)

Lunch Club: 12-12:45pm (Packed lunch or order a hot meal)

PM session: 12:45-3:45pm (Snack provided)

We accept all funded hours:

2 year funding (working family & low income)

15 hours funding—term after child turns 3 years old

30 hours funding—working families

We also accept cross funding if your child attends/would like to attend more than one childcare setting.

Tel: 01234 767785

E: hello@sweetpeascio.org W: www.sweetpeaspreschool.org

Sweet Peas Pre-School CIO, Memorial Hall, Bedford Road,
Wootton, MK43 9JB

Charity: 1172751



WOOTTON NEIGHBOURHOOD CHAT GROUP'S MONTHLY MEMORY GYM IS OPEN

Helping people to live better with memory loss

Wootton Neighbourhood Chat Group has weekly coffee mornings so people can meet their neighbours and friends whilst enjoying coffee and homemade cakes.

Our memory gym, on the first Monday in the month, 2.30-4.00pm to support people in our community that have memory loss through age, stroke or dementia.

Sessions will be fun activities including quizzes, singing and dancing and chatting. There is time for carers to come and share their experiences and enjoy tea and cake.

Wootton Neighbourhood Chat Group

The first Monday in
the month our
Memory Gym is open

For people living
with memory loss

At The Hub, Wootton
Methodist Church,
Cause End Road

1st Monday of month
from 2.30-4.00

WOOTTON NEIGHBOURHOOD CHAT GROUP

Wootton New Life
Methodist Church
Cause End Road
Wootton
MK43 9DE
Tel 07757911556



Established 1967

St. Mary's Church Hall, St. Mary's Road, Wootton, Beds MK43 9HB

Tel: 01234 767158 Email: stmaryspreschoolwootton@outlook.com



The children and staff at St Mary's preschool have been very busy since returning from our Christmas break. We have welcomed lots of new children as they begin their learning journey with us. We embraced the cold weather spells by playing with dinosaurs encased in ice, making snowy pictures and looking closely at snowflakes.

We have listened to the bible story of 'Noah's Ark' and decorated an array of Noah led them into the ark, two by two.



animals as

Our spring term is always busy as we learn about and celebrate many events on our calendar: Chinese New Year, Valentines Day, Shrove Tuesday, Mother's Day and our visit to the church for Easter.



We are currently celebrating Chinese New Year and the year of the snake. We have made red and gold lanterns, colourful snakes, learnt how to say hello and goodbye and count to 5 in Mandarin. We have talked about the Chinese flag and some of China's traditions and customs, and we learnt why oranges and the colour red are considered lucky at this time of year.

The children have loved our 'Birds' project, they have the birds that frequent the preschool garden through binoculars, whilst camouflaged in our forest school bird hide. It was surprising how many of bird our garden attracts.



been observing
being
different species

On a sadder note, Tracey, our Pre School manager of 37 years, is retiring at the end of our spring term. Tracey has seen hundreds of children begin their learning journey and then successfully transition to 'big school'. Tracey leaves a legacy that is going to be an extremely hard act to follow. Tracey has always gone above and beyond in her role, making sure children get the best from their time at preschool. She has built up excellent rapport with parents and other organisations and carefully plans the curriculum, making St Mary's one of the most sought after pre schools in this area. We are certain that all parents, children and colleagues, past and present, will join us in wishing Tracey every happiness as she begins her retirement and is able to spend more time with her husband Phil and their children and grandchildren. She will be sorely missed by us all and hope she will visit us occasionally still!

General Information

St Mary's Preschool opened in 1967 and operates from the main room within the Church Hall. Children have access to a fully enclosed, secure grassed outdoor play area. The Preschool is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and is registered by Ofsted. St Mary's Preschool receives funding for early years education. It is open each weekday during term-time only. If you would like to put your child's name down for a preschool place or require any further information please phone us on 01234 767158 or email stmaryspreschoolwootton@outlook.com.

Children not eligible for funding – Fees £5.50 an hour from April 2025

Term time opening hours: Mon 9.00 - 12.00 Tues, Wed and Fri 9.00 - 16.00 Thurs 9.00 - 15.00

St Mary's Preschool is now full for September 2025 however, we are accepting applications for September 2026

Introducing : Good Life Sorted

Supporting the Wootton Community



GoodLifeSorted

Helpers for a Happy Home

At Good Life Sorted, we are delighted to bring our award-winning home help and companionship service to the Wootton community. We are here to offer support to local residents in maintaining their confidence and independence, all from the comfort of their own home. Our service offers practical assistance with everyday tasks such as shopping, transport, meal preparation, light housekeeping, and companionship.

As we become older, we understand that many of us face challenges that make it more difficult to manage everyday tasks - that's where we step in. By offering tailored support to meet each person's unique needs, we help individuals remain confident and independent in their own homes, as well as giving family members peace of mind by providing essential support when you can't be there in person.

Our team of Helpers provide flexible, reliable and compassionate assistance with every visit, ensuring that support is available whenever it's needed. All Helpers have been fully vetted through references and enhanced DBS checks, are fully insured and have completed all relevant training.

Since arriving in Bedford and surrounding villages in November 2024 we've been warmly welcomed by local parish councils, charities, and community groups, who all recognise the value our services bring to our community. We are thrilled to be expanding into Wootton, where we look forward to enhancing the lives of residents, as well as creating flexible, meaningful job opportunities to those interested in joining us as Helpers. Whether you're looking for part-time work or a way to give back to the community, becoming a Good Life Helper is a fulfilling opportunity to make a real difference.

If you or someone you know could benefit from our services, or if you're interested in joining us as a Helper, we'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch with us at 01234 386807 or visit www.goodlifesorted.com to learn more.

Together, we can make Wootton a more connected, supportive, and vibrant community for all.





General Property Maintenance & Home Improvements

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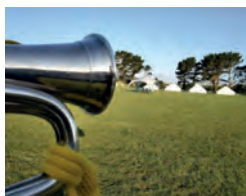
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1ST WOOTTON BRIGADES

THE ADVENTURE STARTS HERE



We've just celebrated our 9th Birthday at 1st Wootton and we're delighted to welcome more new members and leaders to our groups. It's been a busy time with Christmas Parties, Panto, Sleepovers, Disco, Glow in the Dark Party, Superhero Themed Night and so much more. We've got a Summer Camp planned for North Wales and a Bonus Narrowboat Camp to look forward to.

We are hoping to get our Bugle & Drums Band restarted in the Spring and two of our leaders will be joining a Massed Band in May for Guernseys' 80th Anniversary Liberation Parade. And We were very pleased to receive a Ward Funding grant to support our music and sporting elements of the program, allowing us to add Boomwhackers, as well as a Unihoc set and Table Tennis Table to our kit - Thank you.



**Girls: Thursdays
Boys: Fridays**

**Time:
6:00 - 7:30pm**

1ST WOOTTON BRIGADES

JOIN THE ADVENTURE

**PLACES AVAILABLE NOW
FOR SCHOOL YRS R-6**

Wootton New Life Methodist Church
Cause End Road - Wootton

For more info please contact us on
bbgb1stwootton@gmail.com

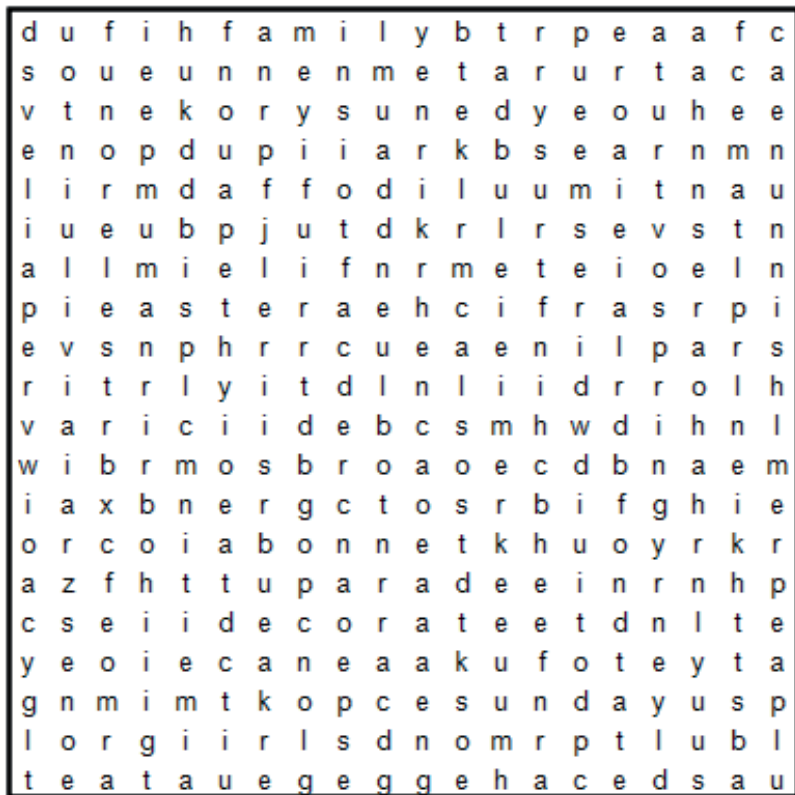
**Girls from 4th Birthday, Boys from 5th Birthday*

We have age groups up to 18 years of age and some of our age groups are almost full, so if you wish to beat the Waiting List, do please contact us for a place ASAP if you'd like your son/daughter to be part of 'The Adventure' too.

	bbgb1stwootton@gmail.com
We are based at Wootton New Life Methodist Church, Cause End Road Girls meet Thursdays, Boys meet Fridays, Band on Mondays	

Easter Word Search

Easter is an important Christian holiday celebrating the resurrection of Jesus. Traditionally eggs are given at Easter which represents the empty tomb of Jesus. In modern times people like to have a family Easter egg hunt to find eggs hidden by the Easter bunny.



Word List

See if you can find the Easter related words in our word search.

Basket

Celebration

Daffodil

Egg

Hide

Resurrection

Tomb

Bonnet

Chick

Decorate

Family

Parade

Spring

Treats

Bunny

Christian

Easter

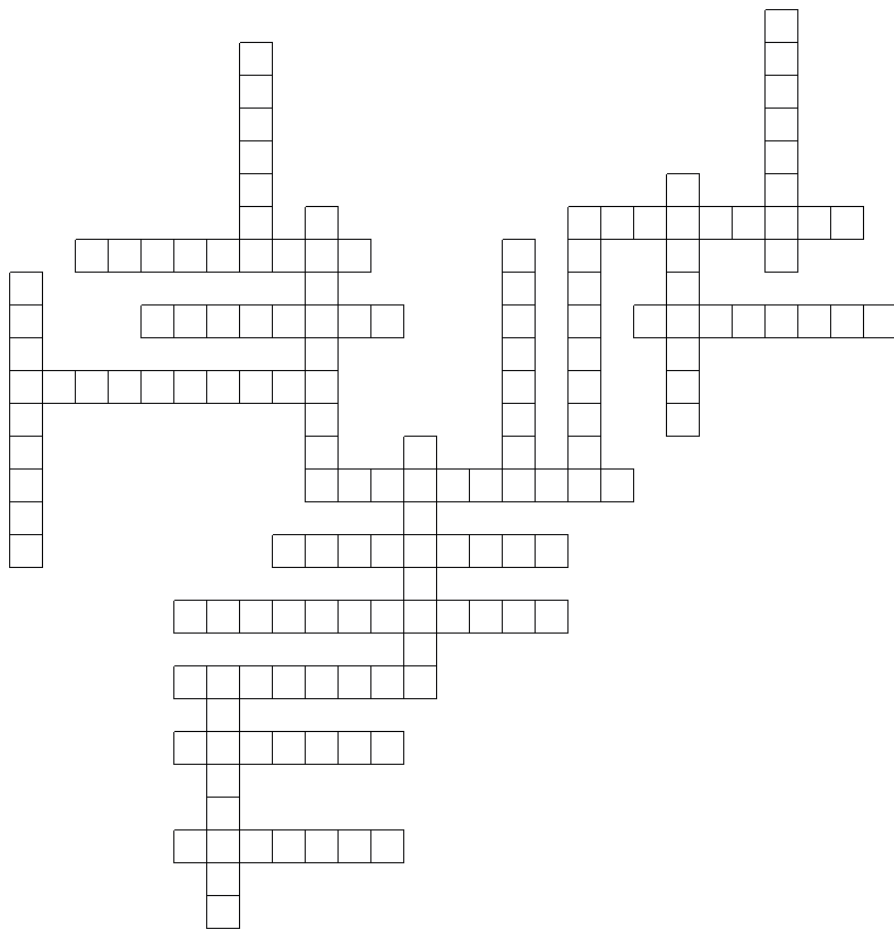
Fun

Rabbit

Sunday

Animals Word Fit

There are many animals in the world. Animals can live in even the harshest environments such as the hot deserts and the cold Antarctic.



Words to fit

aardvark
anteater
chameleon
crocodile
kangaroo
raccoon
sealion

albatross
antelope
chinchilla
elephant
leopard
reindeer
tortoise

alligator
armadillo
cockatoo
hippopotamus
porcupine
rhinoceros

Defibrillators around Wootton

