

# Carols in the Park

Friday 12th December

7pm at the Junipers, Elizabeth Park
Everyone welcome

Mulled wine or soft drinks and mince pies

Voluntary collection for the band

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The BVRA will hold its AGM at 7:30pm on Thursday 15th January in Barkham Village Hall

All residents of Barkham are welcome to attend. We are always looking for new members to join our team. Please send your nominations for any post to reach the secretary secretary@barkham.org.uk by 2<sup>nd</sup> January.

Barkham

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## **Editorial**



The long hot summer seems like a long time ago. Now we are looking forward to the *Carols in the Park*.

The big news is planning, as is often the case. Plans for the Loddon Valley Garden Village development on Hall Farm in Arborfield has been unveiled. See our DevWatch report opposite and the Parish Council report on Page 4 for more information and for links to Council websites.

The Parish Council has a new chairman and the style of their report has been refreshed. There you will find news of local improvements.

On Page 7 there is a reminder with wise advice about powers of attorney which we should all think about from time to time.

I'm still keen to hear from anyone who knows anything about the old village hall which was demolished in the early 1980's following the building of the current hall, see Page 7.

In Wild about the Coombes on Page 10 we take an aerial look at the woodland and find out more about the plant life. In October we held our annual Quiz Night and it remains very popular, see Page 12.

The Girl Guide community is active in our area, read all about it on Page 14.

I urge you to take the time to read Mark Quirk's digestible piece on Page 15. It provides relevant advice for use all year round.

In my patch, on Page 16, I write about my rogue butternut squash!

The local community supports the Link Visiting Scheme. On Page 17 you can read about their Christmas lunch for those who would otherwise be eating alone.

I have run out of ideas for the Quiz this time, so I am re-running the very first quiz published in this magazine!

If you would like to help by compiling a quiz then please contact me. Perhaps someone from the winning Quiz Night team would like to step forward!

By way of compensation, below is an extra puzzle. I hope you enjoy it.

#### **Alan Edwards**

BVRA Newsletter Editor newsletter@barkham.org.uk

I find leaves rather beautiful with fascinating patterns. What do you think? So, from what plant did this leaf come?

Answer on Page 19



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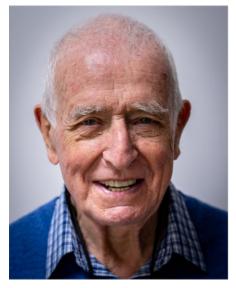
## HELP NEEDED! Membership Admin

We are looking for someone to help with the administration of BVRA membership.

Key points are:

- Maintain the contact database
- Manage the payment of subscriptions mainly through the Direct Debit scheme
- Provide distribution lists for each quarterly magazine distribution
- Attend committee meetings If you feel you could help then please contact chairman@barkham.org.uk

## **DevWatch Update**



The big news is that the first, and probably major, planning application 252498 has now been put in by Reading University for the Hall Farm development off Church Lane, Arborfield.



The application, in part a full application, and in part an outline application envisages 2800 residential units, two new primary schools, one secondary school and a new bridge over the M4. Comments can be made to the Borough up to the 16th January 2026.

Development of Hall Farm was envisaged, of course, in the draft Local Plan which is being considered by the Government inspectors in November.

Since the Autumn newsletter yet another residential application was made on the land to the west of Edneys Hill adjoining Barkham Road – this time for 16 dwellings (including some flats!) - and was very speedily refused by the Borough.

Otherwise it is a question of waiting to see when formal planning applications are made on:

- Land between School Road and Langley Common Road: a preapplication consultation was made indicating an intent to build 32 dwellings on the land. This was not envisaged in the draft Local Plan.
- The land behind Barkham Square: This development was included in the draft Local Plan: preliminary ground work has been going on there, and
- The land to the north of Edneys Hill and behind Barkham Road: the previous application made in 2022 was refused and not appealed: but Bewley have undertaken a pre-application consultation for the construction of 49 dwellings (rather more than their previous application). Access would be from 368 Barkham Road which would be demolished. Again this was not included in the draft Local Plan.

As mentioned above by the time this newsletter goes out the hearings on the draft Local Plan will have been held by the Government appointed inspectors: a lot will hang on the outcome of that enquiry. As and when the draft Local Plan is approved then that should help the Borough in refusing opportunistic development applications.

No more news on the date when the start of construction of the solar farm will begin - probably in 2026. And there is no further information on the route that will be taken for the cable connecting the solar farm to the electricity sub-station on Barkham Road (close to the Leathern Bottel - and on the other side of Barkham Road). This had been planned to run up the end of Edneys Hill and then along Barkham Road, but the Borough were investigating an alternative route that might cause less traffic disruption.

You may recall that back in April we reported that the application 232621 for 60 dwellings at the back of the Leathern Bottel (which was refused by the Borough) was going to appeal



by written representations. It has now been decided that the appeal will be by public inquiry. The proposed development envisages a shared access with the pub's car park - and close to access to the new Blagrove/Evendons development which was granted on appeal.

## **Email Updates**

As well as our newsletter we are increasingly using email to keep in touch with members. It is important we are kept up to date with your details. If your details have changed or you aren't getting emails from us, use our member details form on the website

https://barkham.org.uk/member\_details to advise us.



We will confirm any request you send to us. Also to ensure you receive our emails please add <u>barkham.org.uk</u> to your safe senders list. If you are unsure how to do this, please email <u>webmaster@barkham.org.uk</u> for advice.



## News from Barkham Parish Council

## Message from the Chairman

## **Change in Chair Person**

A few months ago, Pam Stubbs and I switched roles within the Parish Council. I am honoured to now serve as Chairman, and I'd like to take a moment to thank Pam for her incredible dedication with over 25 years of service to the Parish of Barkham. Her commitment and care have made a lasting difference in our community.

Being a Parish Councillor is entirely voluntary. Since joining the Council myself, I've been amazed at just how much happens within our Parish. So many projects and activities only exist thanks to the generosity of local residents who freely share their time, energy, and expertise. You know who you are; on behalf of us all, I give my sincere thanks for their help.

Like every community, Barkham continues to evolve. One important change is the Community Governance Review (CGR) being carried out by Wokingham Borough Council. This statutory review looks at things like council boundaries, names, and representation. The current public consultation ran until 13th November, with results expected early in the new year. This review will mainly focus on tidying up the boundaries around Arborfield Green. To view the parish councils response, please visit our website.

I am also thrilled to see renewed momentum at The Coombes Woodland, which now has over 20 active volunteers! Regular monthly working parties are restarting, helping to keep this beautiful natural space thriving. A special thank-you to Paul Steel for his leadership and dedication in coordinating these efforts to keep the woodlands in a natural state enabling enjoyment of this great local public amenity.

If you'd like to join the volunteer team, or even step into a volunteer leadership role then please get in touch via email <a href="mailto:info@thecoombeswoodlands.com">info@thecoombeswoodlands.com</a>

Planning is always a key topic for our Parish. Without an approved Local Plan yet in place from Wokingham Borough Council, we face the ongoing risk of speculative development. To help guide our future growth, we're working closely with Arborfield and Newland Parish Council to create a new Neighbourhood Plan; this work is supported by a professional planning consultancy.

Neighbourhood Plans give local communities a real voice; once approved by referendum they carry legal weight in planning decisions. In short:

- · They have statutory authority
- Developers and planning officers must take them into account

Once approved by referendum, Neighbourhood Plans carry legal weight in planning decisions. This means developers and planning officers must take them into account. This plan will help us shape sustainable, well-balanced development across our Parish for years to come.

As part of the Arborfield Green development, which sits within Barkham Parish, we're also involved in the provision of a brand-new community centre, which forms part of the District Centre complete with a pavilion, retail outlets, and a pub! Many of you will already have seen the new Sainsbury's that opened recently, a great sign of things to come.

Finally, I'm delighted to share that the Parish Council has a full complement of 10 councillors. This gives us an exciting opportunity to expand our community initiatives and continue making Barkham an even better place to live.

Cllr Mike Barker, Chairman

## **Planning**

The parish council is pleased to report that the application for Land to the East of Coppid Hill House which was for the proposed erection of 16 no. dwellings with new access off Edney's Hill, plus footpaths, car ports, parking, landscaping and associated works, has been refused by WBC. We now wait to see if it will go to appeal

The outline application for Hall Farm has now been submitted and is open for consultation. The application is for up to 2,800 residential units, 2 primary schools, 1 secondary school, a district centre, a sports hub, healthcare facilities, open space and play areas. The consultation is open until the 16th January 2026, so there is plenty of time to submit any

comments you may have. The planning application documents can be access via the WBC website:



## CIL Expenditure

The parish council receives a portion of The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), a charge collected from developers to help fund infrastructure that supports new development. These funds can be used for improvements to roads, schools, parks, community centres, public transport, and local amenities such as village halls, play areas, and libraries.

We're committed to using CIL funds to support meaningful improvements across the parish. Recent projects include:

#### **Farley Hill School Crossing**

The Council has agreed to fund 50% of the cost, as requested by WBC to install a safe crossing point outside Farley Hill School. The Crossing will be installed in 2026.

#### **Bulb planting in Arborfield Green**

Barkham Parish Council funded a bulb planting project on the green space by the horses in Arborfield Green, to make the area brighter in the spring.

## **Hazebroucke Meadows Zebra Crossing**

The Council has agreed to fund a zebra crossing at Hazebroucke Meadows. We are hoping that Finchampstead Parish Council will join us in funding the crossing. This crossing will provide a safer route to school for students attending Bohunt and offer residents a safer point to cross when walking between the meadows. The crossing is expected to be installed in the 2026-2027 financial year.

If you have any suggestions for CIL expenditure, please get in touch.

## Supporting Our Community, Together

We're proud to be actively engaging with and supporting a range of local organisations across Barkham, Arborfield, and Finchampstead. Our aim is to help build stronger connections and improve the lives of people of all ages in our community

We're always open to fresh ideas - if you have a

# BVRA Membership Update for 2026

As we approach the end of the year we are pleased to be able to tell you that membership fees for 2026 will be kept the same as the last two years at £3. The fee includes the local delivery of our quarterly Newsletter to your property by our distributors. We would like to remind all members that, as with this year, our distributors no longer collect membership fees at the door.

Fees can be paid by direct debit (our preferred method), bank transfer or cash / cheque delivered to one of our committee in Barkham. More details on how to set up a direct debit and the other payment methods can be found on our website at <a href="https://barkham.org.uk/byra/byra-membership">https://byra/byra-membership</a>.

To aid you in paying, we will be emailing members in early January.

- Direct debit payers will be advised when the payment will be collected.
- Those who paid in 2025 by another method will be provided with details on options to pay including the unique property reference to be quoted on any payment.

Please ensure that <u>membership@barkham.org.uk</u> is on your safe senders list.

Please pay promptly as it saves us the time and expense of sending payment reminders

Unfortunately we still have approximately 40 members where we don't hold an email address. If you don't receive an email by mid-January about renewal please check your junk folder and then contact us on the above email address. Similarly, please remember to notify us if you change your email address.

Finally, we are still seeking a membership secretary. If you are interested in helping in any way please contact us on the email address above.

## **Dave Clements**

Acting Membership Secretary

suggestion that could benefit the local area, we'd love to hear from you!

Your voice and input can make a real difference. Whether you're new to Barkham or have lived here for decades, your ideas and involvement help shape our future. Join us at a Parish Council meeting, share your suggestions, or simply say hello, we're here for you.

## **Update from our Borough Councillor**



## Planning for the Future

As I write this, Wokingham
Borough is preparing for the
public examination of the new
Local Plan. Having an approved
plan is the best way to manage the
level of housebuilding required of
us. It allows new homes to be
delivered as part of properly
designed communities, with the
schools, transport links and local
facilities they need. Without a
plan, similar levels of
development would still occur, but
in a far less coordinated way.

Alongside planning, the council is also preparing for changes to

government funding from 2026 onwards. We are expecting significant reductions which will require us to find further efficiencies and savings. We will know the full details later this year, but we are committed to keeping the Borough on a stable financial footing and avoiding the financial difficulties seen elsewhere.

In my role as lead councillor for Highways and Transport, I see daily the pressure our roads are under. Even a small reduction in traffic - as we all notice during school holidays - makes them flow much more freely. That is why we have developed a more balanced strategy for local travel, giving people realistic options beyond the car for short journeys.

Here in Barkham, several improvements are already under way or planned. We are investing in better bus services, including improvements to the Leopard 3 route. Planning is underway for new, safer cycling links to connect

Barkham with neighbouring communities, including to Wokingham Town. New pedestrian crossings are coming to our parish, and early next year we will be discussing proposals with the Parish Council for appropriate speed limits in residential areas to make our streets safer and encourage more people to walk or cycling local trips.

Investing in alternatives to driving is not about being "anti-car". It's about keeping the roads moving for everyone and making our villages safer, healthier and more connected.

There is always plenty happening across the borough, and we continue to work hard to plan sensibly, support our communities and prepare for the future.

## Cllr Adrian Betteridge

Wokingham Borough Councillor for Barkham and Arborfield Ward Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways



Contact: <a href="mailto:info@me2club.org.uk">info@me2club.org.uk</a> 0118 969 6369 <a href="www.me2club.org.uk">www.me2club.org.uk</a> Me2 Club, Unit 9, Indigo House, Fishponds Road, Wokingham, RG41 2GY

## The Importance of Lasting Powers of Attorney

Most of us like to think we'll always be able to make our own decisions - about our finances, health, and day-to-day life. But illness, accident, or simply the effects of getting older can sometimes mean we need help managing our affairs. When that happens, having the right legal documents in place can make all the difference for you and your family.

A Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) is a legal document that allows you to choose one or more people you trust - known as your "attorneys" - to make decisions on your behalf if you're no longer able to. It's a form of forward planning that ensures your wishes are respected and your loved ones are supported, whatever the future brings.

There are two main types of LPA:

- 1. Property and Financial Affairs LPA This allows your chosen attorney(s) to handle financial matters such as managing bank accounts, paying bills, collecting income or benefits, and even selling property if needed. You can choose whether it takes effect immediately or only if you lose mental capacity.
- 2. Health and Welfare LPA This covers decisions about your medical treatment, daily care, and where you live. It can only be used if you are unable to make these decisions yourself. Your attorney can speak with doctors, consent to or refuse treatment, and ensure your care reflects your personal values and beliefs.

Without an LPA, if you lose mental capacity, your loved ones cannot automatically make these decisions for you - not even a spouse or close family member. Instead, they may have to apply to the Court of Protection for permission to act on your behalf. This process can be time-consuming, stressful, and expensive.

Setting up an LPA is straightforward and can be done at any age, as long as you have mental capacity. It's not just for older people - life can change unexpectedly, and an LPA provides reassurance that someone you trust will be able to step in if needed.

Many people also take the opportunity to discuss their wishes and priorities with their chosen attorneys while completing the forms. These conversations help ensure that if the LPA ever needs to be used, your attorney will understand exactly how you would want decisions to be made.

In short, a Lasting Power of Attorney gives you control, protection, and peace of mind. It's one of the most important documents you can put in place to safeguard your future - and to make things easier for the people who care about you most.

For friendly, professional advice on setting up your own Lasting Power of Attorney, please contact:

Leah Rickwood, Everwood Wills Ltd 07735587456 leah@everwoodwills.co.uk www.everwoodwills.co.uk

## **Old Village Hall**

How many of you remember the old village hall? It was located in Barkham Street opposite the houses and was demolished in the early 1980's following the construction of our current village hall near the Church.

My recollection is very vague but I think it had wooden walls and a corrugated tin roof with next to no parking on site. Very primitive, and we all were very glad when the new hall was built.

We have the wonderful book Barkham - A History, but although that was written after the new village hall was built there is no mention of the old hall that I can see. Understandably, I suppose it wasn't seen as history at that time!

So, I would like to publish an article about it in a forthcoming issue and am looking for anyone who remembers the old hall and perhaps the construction of the new and has reminisces that they would like to share.

Please contact me if you have anything you could contribute stories, anecdotes, knowledge of timescales, history and best of all photographs or sketches.

newsletter@barkham.org.uk

## **History Books**

The "Barkham A History" book can be obtained from the BPC Clerk at £8.50 each or from Henry Street Garden Centre. These will make ideal presents for anyone who is new to the area and does not already own one.





Be bright - don't make it easy for burglars this winter and holiday season.

As the winter nights close in, leave a light on... and burglars in the dark!

• Try to make your home look

occupied by using timer switches on lights and radios.

- Illuminate your front door with dusk to dawn lighting that comes on automatically.
- Consider purchasing and installing a video doorbell, house alarm or CCTV system.
- Close and double lock all doors and windows when going out, even if you're only away from home for a short period of time.
- Join a local Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. For more information, visit www.ourwatch.org.uk

• Register for Thames Valley Alert at:

www.thamesvalleyalert.co.uk to receive free crime and information updates from Thames Valley Police

You can find further crime prevention advice at www. thamesvalley.police.uk

Please contact us if you have any information relating to burglary in your neighbourhood. Report online at www.thamesvalley. police.uk call us on 101 or in an emergency dial 999.

Alternatively, you can call Crimestoppers anonymously on free phone 0800 555 111.







## St James' Barkham

#### Discover more this Christmas

Let's be honest - Christmas can be wonderful... and somewhat exhausting. Between the shopping lists and secret Santas, the dodgy jumpers and the endless stream of Christmas Specials, it's not hard to feel like something's missing. We decorate, celebrate, and eat our weight in Quality Street - but still, deep down, there's that quiet question: is this really all there is?

At Barkham Church, we believe the answer is a resounding no! Christmas is about so much more than mince pies and matching pyjamas. It's about a God who loved the world enough to step right into the mess and magic of real life - to bring light into darkness, and hope to weary hearts. Take a moment to consider something Jesus once said, "I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full." Not half a life; not a life that looks good on Instagram, but 'life to the full'.

Maybe you're not sure what you believe. Maybe you've never set foot in a church (or haven't since you were wearing a tea-towel on your head and calling yourself a shepherd). That's fine - you're still very welcome.

Come and join us at Barkham
Church this Christmas as we sing
the great carols, hear about the
events that changed the world, and
take a moment to reflect on the
meaning of it all. We'll definitely
add to the Christmas spirit and
who knows, you might just
discover the missing 'something'
that you have been looking for.
We'd love to welcome you to any
of our services - come as you are,

**Julian Bidgood**Minister of Barkham

and celebrate with us.



## Christmas services at St James' Barkham

Christingle Service - 10am Sunday 14 Dec

Come and make your own Christingle as we learn about the Light of the World. Suitable for all the family. All materials are provided!

Carols by Candlelight - 7pm Sunday 21 Dec

A more traditional service of readings and carols with a talk on the meaning of Christmas. The service is followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

Family Carols - 4pm Christmas Eve

A service that is designed with children especially in mind (though all are welcome). Look for the characters from the nativity and hear about the greatest gift of all!

Midnight Carols - 11.30pm Christmas Eve

A quieter service that includes readings, carols and a short talk to help us prepare for the big day. The service ends just after midnight.

Christmas Day Service - 10am Thursday 25 Dec

Join us to celebrate the joy of Christmas Day at a service suitable for all ages.

## The Quiz

I am fresh out of ideas for the quiz this time, so I have reused the very first quiz in this magazine hoping that you don't remember the answers! It was first published in Issue 83 in Spring 2008. It was compiled by the late Stewart Richardson and is based on Barkham. Some of the questions would have been easier to answer back in 2008, Good luck!

All the questions are linked in some way to Barkham (some more obvious than others)

- 1. What connects Rick, Harry and Cheers?
- 3. What is made from the bark of the *Quercus suber* tree?
- 4. In which film did Indiana Jones first appear?
- 5. Which famous boat found its resting place on Mount Ararat?
- 6. What connects York, Black Forest and Parma?
- 7. Which philosopher postulated 'I think therefore I am'?
- 8. In which century was there the first written mention of Barkham?
- 9. How much was Barkham stated as being worth in its entry in the Domesday Book?
- 10. Which building is older StJames Church or the Bull Inn?Note that the last three questions

Barkham: A History, see Page 7

Answers on Page 19

are taken from the book,

## Neighbours

When I was a kid it was known as Abyssinia, now it is Ethiopia. But which countries border it?

Answers on Page 19

## Wild About the Coombes

I was approached in September by the author of an article being written for the BARG Newsletter (that's The Berkshire Archaeology Research Group). He was covering a new technique for the aerial identification of trees. It was born out of a Forestry Commission study of surface reflection data collected by Sentinel-2 satellites. The data profiles for different tree species appeared to be distinctive enough to distinguish between them.

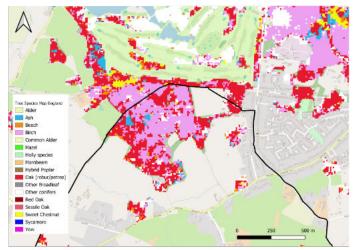
A tool was created that divides the landscape into 10 metre squares and determines whether each one is tree covered, and if so, what the predominant species within it is. An image is built up with a pixel representing each 10 metre square, coloured according to the main species judged to be there. These pixels are overlaid on a standard map, left exposed where tree cover is lacking. A secondary image is produced showing a confidence level in the species predictions, using shades of grey through to black for greatest certainty.

I was provided with a pair of such images covering the Coombes, and its surroundings, and asked to comment on how well it matches my knowledge of the trees that are actually there. An aerial photograph has been added here, covering the same area.

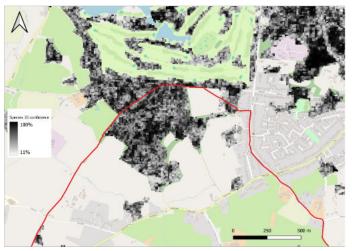
The area that I know as the Coombes is broadly the large colourful block slightly left of centre, with Coombes Lane running east-west to its north, and Gravelpithill Lane running from that towards the top left-hand corner. The block of woodland in the top right-hand corner is part of Fox Hill.

Recognition of the general presence of woodland is remarkably good to my mind. The colouring suggests that the Coombes comprises mainly Birch and Oak with small areas of Ash, Beech, Hazel and Sweet Chestnut. While these are some of the major species, the balance between them is not well represented. For example, one of my seasonal joys is to forage for sweet chestnuts in the autumn. My appetite is more than satisfied by a significant presence of Sweet Chestnut trees throughout the Coombes, but there are only a few yellow pixels to represent them on the map.

There are some spectacular clusters of very mature Yews that have become difficult to reach following the spread of invasive rhododendron. What a shame the technique behind the map did not result in any purple pixels, even where I know Yews exist. Perhaps this is a timing issue. Unlike the recognised species of tree, Yews are evergreen and reach well above the rhododendron. Had the data been collected in the



**Species Predictions** 



**Prediction Confidence** 

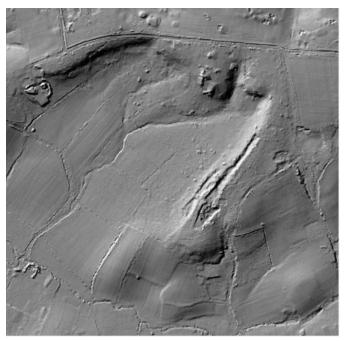


Google Earth view

winter, perhaps they would have been detected.

I would imagine that the tool could be improved with a bit of refinement. If the data were collected at a few different times of year, the overall species identification might improve. And what about applying some artificial intelligence to the task?

As it stands, the tool would already have a place in many situations. It would present a reasonably good idea of what types of tree are in a woodland without



LIDAR Image

of the centre is, I think, the result of historical removal of clay for brick-making. I wonder how many other features you can recognise.

The tree species data presented here is © Forestry Commission copyright and/or database right 2024, with all rights reserved and distributed under an Open Government Licence. The Aerial photograph was taken from Google Earth, dated 2025.

leading down to the bottom left-hand corner is a spring-fed watercourse. The dark 'scar' to the right

Joe Wild

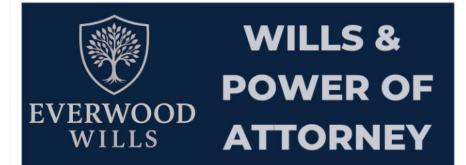
having to trudge round it for hours on end, especially if it is hard to reach from a road in the first place.

While on the subject of technology for visualising landscapes, it's worth mentioning LIDAR, short for Light Detection and Ranging. This is a technology that uses laser light to measure distances to create 3D models of the earth's surface or other objects. It is used in some cars, for instance, to detect how quickly they are approaching the vehicle in front, and warn the driver if gaining on it a little too quickly, or even brake automatically.

I came across a LIDAR image of the Coombes that has been tuned to ignore the trees and concentrate on the ground beneath them.

Across the top can be seen Coombes Lane, with Gravelpithill Lane above it towards the left, which have been worn down and resurfaced from time to time. The dark shadow opposite Gravelpithill Lane is the steep hill down from Coombes Lane.

The 'Y' shaped pair of lines above the centre of the image and



## YOUR FAMILY, YOUR WISHES, OUR EXPERTISE.

Wills: Make sure your loved ones are protected and your wishes are clear.

A professionally drafted Will ensures your estate is managed exactly as you want, saving your family stress, time, and unnecessary costs later.

- ✓ Personal, compassionate advice
- ✓ Inheritance tax planning advice
- ✓ Secure storage options available

Power of Attorney: A Power of Attorney lets someone you trust make decisions on your behalf if you can't, whether due to illness, accident, or age.

Setting one up now means peace of mind for you and your family.

- ✓ Choose who manages your affairs
- ✓ Covers health, care, and finances
- ✓ Simple, affordable process

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www.everwoodwills.co.uk

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## **BVRA Social**



It's Newsletter time again and we have well and truly said goodbye to the hot, dry Summer. Autumn has arrived and the trees are putting on a fantastic show of golden, orange and red colours before finally dropping their leaves.

Shorter days and darker nights are now upon us, but we have the Christmas season to look forward to and cheer us up!

Since the Autumn Newsletter we have had one social event - the Annual Quiz on October 18th. This was attended by 70 people, with Steve Richardson, assisted by wife Jan, again providing the tricky questions. The usual fish and chip supper went down very well, and a great time was had by all.

The winning team was the same team who won last year but under a different name - *School's Out*. Simon and Louise, Mike and Ruth, and Steve and Kay really are the team to beat, if that's possible!!

And the difference between the 2nd and 3rd places was only 2 points, that's one question, so it was a highly contested Quiz indeed!

Instead of a fee for the evening Steve and Jan had asked for a



donation for their chosen charity - *The Reading Lions Prostate* Cancer Testing Charity', a truly worthy cause.

And last, but not least, many thanks to Peter and Lesley for running the very busy bar!

The next and final event for this year will be the very popular *Carols in the Park* on Friday 12th December. The Breakaway Brass Band will be leading us for the carol singing again, and Carol sheets will be provided.

We meet at the junction of the Woodlands and the Junipers at 7pm, and gradually make our way to the edge of the Junipers park and then more singing.

Mulled wine and soft drinks, and mince pies will then be available. This is a 'free' event and a lovely way to start the Festive Season for families, adults and children alike. We will have a bucket collection for the Band who very kindly give up their free time to play for us.

The usual Social Events are planned for 2026, and further details will appear in future Newsletters, on posters around the village, on the BVRA website, and on Facebook.

I hope to see as many of you as possible at the *Carols*, and now, I send my very best wishes to you all and your families for a Very Happy Christmas, and a Healthy and Peaceful 2026.

**Shirley Warner** 



















## Girl Guiding In our Community

Girl Guiding was first founded in the UK in 1908 and now more than 100 years later in 2025, Guiding is still supporting girls and young women to be the best they can be. Girlguiding is the UK's largest youth organisation dedicated completely to girls. The Guiding mission is:

"Through fun, friendship, challenge and adventure we empower girls to find their voice, inspiring them to discover the best in themselves and to make a positive difference in their community".

Girl Guiding is doing well in the Wokingham Division, we have just under 600 members spread across 24 units covering central Wokingham, Winnersh, Woosehill, Finchampstead, Arborfield and Barkham. Girls can join the Rainbows if they are aged 4-7, Brownies aged 7-10, Guides aged 10-14 and Rangers aged 14-18.

Girlguiding reports a 20% increase in young membership since 2021 and are seeking new adult volunteers to allow us to continue to offer spaces to as many girls as possible. Sadly, we do have some waiting lists for units in our area and would love to talk to you if you could spare a few hours a week and join one of our unit teams.

Volunteering for Girlguiding has many benefits, with opportunities to meet new friends, share and gain transferable skills and take a break from everyday routines to spend time having fun and be inspired by incredible girls and young women - making a difference to the lives of girls in their local communities.

2nd Barkham Brownies meet in the Barkham Village Hall, they are a friendly unit of 30 Brownies aged 7-10 - they like to have adventures, play games and enjoy working towards badges - we have recently taken advantage of the great weather and have enjoyed a trip to Grays Farm -strawberry picking and had fun dragon boating at the Wokingham Waterside Centre. We also enjoy making the most of what is on our doorstep and have enjoyed fun sessions in the woods and at Dinton Pastures.

We also love taking part in events with other Brownie groups enjoying a trip to Longleat to celebrate World Thinking Day and then a few weeks later been involved in taking over the whole of Legoland, Windsor - some Brownies challenging themselves to try out the rollercoaster for the first time - some very happy and tired girls at the end of the day but such a great time had by all.

The brownies have also had the opportunity to go on a 2 night residential to PGL, Marchants Hill - a fab activity centre - a 100 brownies in total trying out zip wiring, big swing, raft building, survival skills to name a few activities - for a few it's the first time they have been away from home - it's great to see the girls immerse themselves in the full experience.

At Brownies girls have the opportunity to try out new challenges, experiences in a safe and fun environment - Brownies offer something for everyone.

We continue to work towards badges - and this summer Girlguiding have added 72 new interest badges to our programme - which include 18 new ones for Brownies - animal helper, mechanic, bird watching, book reviewer, celebrations and passions - to name a few.

Also in the local area, there are Rainbow, Guide and Ranger units. Do you like the sound of these sorts of activities? Could you join our team? Do you have a skill or hobby that you would like to share with the girls one evening - we would love to hear from you, please email girlguides.wokingham@gmail.com

and one of the division leadership team will contact you for a chat.

## Barkham Little Library



Sandy Lane Little Library is a free book sharing box with a simple premise; take a book, leave a book. It's always open and has something for everyone from gripping mysteries and literary fiction to classics and children's stories. Just pop by, choose a book you like the look of, and donate one in its place if/when you can. Be sure to grab a bookmark and leave a message in the guestbook when you visit! It is located at 8 Sandy Lane. https://www.instagram.com/

sandylanelittlelibrary



## **Enjoying Seasonal Treats (as Healthily as Possible)**

The festive season can be a great time for food, family, and celebration – and for many of us, that also means mince pies, crisps, cheese boards, chocolates, and maybe a few extra drinks. We all know these foods aren't "health foods," but there are simple ways to enjoy them without feeling like we've undone months of good habits.

Before we get to the practical tips, here's a quick bit of biology to explain why festive overeating feels so different in midlife than it did in our 20s.

A snack-sized science recap.

Everything we eat eventually gets broken down into nutrients the body needs, including the two main energy sources: sugar (from carbohydrates) and fat. These circulate in the bloodstream and are either used for energy or stored for later use in muscle (short-term) or body fat (long-term).

Most festive "treat foods" - sweet and savoury - are high in carbohydrates, which the body converts into glucose (blood sugar). Even a handful of crisps, slice of bread or mince pie gives us a pretty quick sugar rise, followed by a rise in insulin - the hormone that helps clear sugar out of the blood and moves it into storage. That's normal biology.

What changes as we get older is efficiency: our muscles store less, our metabolism slows a little, and our blood sugar regulation isn't quite as smooth as it used to be. That's why the same snacks that once gave us a quick energy boost can now lead to tiredness, cravings, or the "up... then crash" feeling. In some people, this gradually leads to insulin resistance and even type 2 diabetes.

The good news: we don't need to avoid festive foods altogether; we can enjoy them with a bit of strategy.

Five ways to enjoy treats and reduce the impact

#### 1. Avoid portion creep

Instead of putting out the full family-size bag of crisps, decant half. Buy fewer cheeses. Put out one mince pie per person. The less visible, the less mindless eating.

## 2. Keep appetisers light, but flavourful

Swap rich sauces for herbs, spices, seeds, olives, smoked paprika, lemon zest, chilli oil, etc. Search "healthy festive appetisers" at BBC GoodFood and you'll find great ideas that don't feel like "diet food."

## 3. Pair treats with protein or fibre

Eating sugary or starchy food on its own leads to a fast blood sugar rise. But if you eat the same food after protein (e.g., Greek yoghurt, cheese, nuts, meat, hummus) or fibre (veg, berries, crudities), the rise is slower and smaller.

#### 4. Eat treats after a meal, not before

Snacking on an empty stomach - bigger spikes, bigger crashes, and often bigger cravings. If you want the chocolate or pie, have it as dessert rather than "just a little something before dinner."

## 5. Give your evening digestion a cut-off point

Try to finish eating 2–3 hours before bed. We're less efficient at processing energy at night, and reflux, poor sleep and next-day hunger are all more likely when we go to bed full.

## Two bonus tips: don't buy food out of Christmas habit; do walk after dinner

For example, if nobody in your house likes mince pies except you (like in my house)... buy one pack, not three. Future-you will be grateful. And an after-dinner walk is brilliant support for your body to process all those goodies well.

## A helpful mindset

Festive eating doesn't need to be "all or nothing." A little strategy goes a long way. You're not trying to burn off the treats - you're trying to balance them so your body doesn't get overwhelmed by sugar, fat, alcohol, or late-night calories all at once.

Enjoy!

## Mark Quirk MSc CertLM

Healthspan coach www.PrimaryPrevention.co.uk

## Where in Barkham?

Where is this sign? Now it's Winter this one is on a road, so you don't have to walk in the woods or across fields. *Answer on Page 19* 



## Alan's Patch

A long, hot, dry summer has made it a highly successful growing season. But remember that the Spring and early Summer were dry but cold, with northerly or easterly breezes, keeping it frost-free but chilly. This meant the germination of small seeds outside was patchy, while the larger ones, like potatoes contained enough moisture to get started. Some of the summer crops sown and started in the greenhouse - squashes, courgettes, French beans, sweet corn etc - really struggled outside initially despite my leaving it later than normal - early to mid June. By July we were getting some rain and this helped the crops grow later in the season. The only watering outside was of the germinating seed beds.

Pretty much all the fruit was successful. And most vegetables also did well despite it being dry. Whilst I had a decent crop of sweet corn the plants were shorter than normal. As I mentioned last time, the main disaster was a total loss of the broad beans owing to an infestation of black fly.

The most remarkable thing to have happened on my patch this year was the butternut squash. Not just the size and quality of the produce, but one rogue squash. Now, squash are natural climbers. With the long hot dry summer, the conditions have been ideal for them. They sent out runners spreading far and wide across the patch and to the retaining wall. One runner decided to climb the fan-trained peach tree, and all the way up to the full seven feet of the tree and fence. It then flowered and germinated, and a squash grew in the Y-shape between two branches. So, I let it grow, occasionally adjusting and easing it so it wouldn't damage the peach tree. It eventually grew to full size, and the photo shows it still there in late October shortly after the leaves dropped from the peach tree. Unfortunately, it was too late in the season for it to ripen so I recently removed it and discarded but it has certainly been fun to watch.

Finally, I can't resist showing one last passion flower. Such intricate flowers.







# C Link the Link visiting scheme

Are you (or someone you know) an older person who will be on their own this Christmas Day? We warmly invite you to join us for a delicious Christmas Lunch in Wokingham, hosted by The Link Visiting Scheme.

This festive event is completely free and promises good food prepared by professional chefs, happy company, and a welcoming atmosphere in a lovely venue. It's a wonderful way to spend Christmas Day, surrounded by company and warmth.

If you'd like to come along, please call our office on 0118 979 8019 to book your place. We may also be able to arrange transport if needed, thanks to volunteer drivers. And for those unable to leave their homes,

# Christmas Day Lunch for Older People in Wokingham

we may be able to deliver a festive meal directly to your door.



The Link Visiting Scheme is an award-winning local charity dedicated to reducing loneliness and social isolation among older people. We offer regular friendship visits, social groups, and seasonal events like this Christmas Lunch to help people feel connected and valued.

And for the whole community, we are hosting a very special Christmas Carol Service at All Saints Church, Wiltshire Rd, Wokingham where we will light candles, sing carols and remember those we might miss over the festive period. We'll have St Sebastians Brass Band and singing led by Soph from Sing for Yourself. All are welcome! Thursday December 18th 11am to 1pm. Refreshments provided.

Christmas can be a difficult time for those on their own, but it doesn't have to be. Please help us spread the word - whether you're referring someone or joining us yourself, we'd love to hear from you.

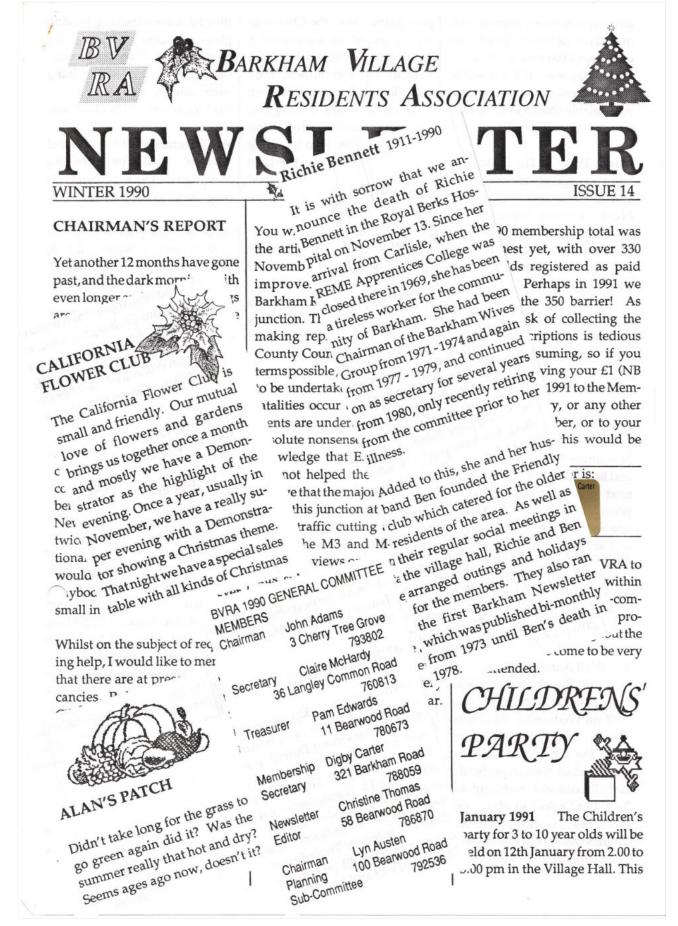
Let's make this Christmas a joyful one!

www.linkvisiting.org/christmas



## 35 Years Ago

In Issue 14 we can see a report on the life of Richie Bennett, whom some of you might remember. Also we have the first contribution by California Flower Club and the second of Alan's Patch. In the latter it opens with a comment that would be very appropriate in this issue, another hot, dry summer! There is also a list of the committee at that time, with more names you might recall. Finally there is mention of the Children's Party.





Autumn has arrived and Summer BBQs are now a distant memory.

We Ladies have continued to meet each month with Speakers in September, October and November, and enjoyed various Topics - Birds of the Ascension Islands, Rescue dogs and Children's books, and the First Female Police Detective.

We invited the husbands and friends as guests to the 'Birds' talk and we all found it very interesting and informative.

The next and last meeting of the year will be our Christmas Party on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, when our Ladies all bring some food to share. A wonderful buffet always appears and we enjoy a banquet!

The Hall is decorated, and with a tree too, and we enjoy Christmas music and mulled wine for a lovely festive atmosphere.

The Secret Santa adds to the enjoyment, and we will be signing a large Christmas Card in lieu of giving cards to each other. The donations for doing this will again be going to the *Link Visiting*Scheme - a local charity which supports and befriends lonely people in our area, and especially at Christmas by providing a Christmas Day Lunch for those living alone. [Ed: See Page 17]

In January we start the New Year by having a lunch at our local Golf Club again, and in February we will hold our AGM.

We meet at the Barkham Village Hall from 7:30 for a 7:45pm start on the first Wednesday of the month. We enjoy friendship and a varied programme of speakers and events, including monthly walks from April to October, weather permitting.

We warmly welcome new members, so for more information about us and joining the Ladies Group please contact:

#### **Shirley Warner**

Chairperson 0118 9789124 or 07949234085 or shirleyannwarner@gmail.com

## Where in Barkham?

at the corner.

Walking down Sandy Lane from Bearwood Road, down the slope, it is on the right by the wooded area, shortly before you turn right

## **Quiz Answers**

1859-1887.

9. £3 (down from £4 in Edward the Confessor's reign!)
10. The Bull is older. The earliest documented reference to the Bull is 1727 although the building is no doubt older than that.
Although there has been a place of worship on the present site the of worship on the present site the current church was built from current church was built from

(Beorchamme was mentioned in the Saxon Charter of 952)

3. Probably 10th century

Rene Descartes

6. They are all types of ham

5. Noah's Ark

4. Raiders of the Lost Ark

3. Cork (in the cork oak)

2. It was an iron bar!

Casablanca, Harry's Bar in Venice & Cheers Bar in the TV series.

.. Bars - Rick's Bar in

## Neighbours

6. South Sudan

5. Sudan

4. Somalia

3. Kenya

2. Eritrea

nuodila ..

Ethiopia has six neighbours:

**Leaf**: It's a plain old Raspberry Variety: Autumn Bliss



#### **N BRACKNELL FOREST & WOKINGHAM BOROUGH**

Charities, community groups: do you need extra help now we're coming out of the pandemic? Your group has done so much to support your local community and maybe now you need some assistance. If you're part of a local group in Wokingham Borough or Bracknell Forest, you can get free help with funding, recruiting volunteers, growth of your group and recruiting new Committee Members or trustees. We also run a wide range of training in both areas, suitable for your volunteers and employees.

inVOLve Community Services are there for any not-for-personal-profit organisation that needs those sorts of support. Contact us without obligation via 01344 304 404, reception@involve.community or look at https://involve.community/

# Symphony ORCHESTRA

I'm writing this only a few days after the excitement of Halloween and Guy Fawkes night, but we are already looking forward to Christmas! Every year in December the orchestra presents a Family Christmas Concert in the late afternoon at St John's Church in Crowthorne, and it is always a really popular event. We love to see lots of children there and the programme always includes some pieces that will appeal to the younger generation, such as 'Christmas at the Movies' and music from 'Frozen' and lots more. There will be an opportunity for budding young conductors to try their hand at conducting the orchestra, too. The older generation is not forgotten, and we have plenty of seasonal music to appeal to all ages, so it is definitely a family event. Of course, there will be carols for everyone to join in and sing or just sit back and enjoy. Refreshments will be served in the interval and there will be a raffle too!

The Family Christmas Concert is on Saturday 13th December at 4.30pm and tickets are on sale via our website, £10 for adults and free for children and young people under 19. Our concerts usually sell out quickly so don't miss out!

The orchestra has more than 60 regular members and we are a friendly bunch of all ages and backgrounds, rehearsing weekly on Mondays in term time from 7.45-10pm at St Crispin's School, Wokingham. If you

are a competent player (even if you haven't played for a while and would like to get back to it) and would like to join us, do get in touch. Competent string players are always welcome and other players depending on vacancies.



Our website has information about concerts, past and future, so do sign up for the orchestra's e-Newsletter if you don't already receive it, as you will find more about us, our concert programmes and workshops, as well as special offers on tickets. The link to buy concert tickets is also on the main page:

www.crowthorneorchestra.com

**Chris Gadsby** 



## **Barkham Hookers**

Our team of crochet workers decorated some of the local public spaces for Remembrance. For more information contact <a href="mailto:familywhite25@gmail.com">familywhite25@gmail.com</a>











## **BVRA COMMITTEE**



Vacant, currently rotating Chair chairman@barkham.org.uk



Cathy Whittington Treasurer treasurer@barkham.org.uk





Dennis Eyriey DevWatch Coordinator development@barkham.org.uk





Vacant Secretary secretary@barkham.org.uk



Gill Powell Chair of Social Team social@barkham.org.uk



Shirley Warner Social Team Liaises with Barkham Village Hall



Vacant Membership Admin membership@barkham.org.uk



Louise Goldring Distribution Admin membership@barkham.org.uk

## **Newsletter Contributions**

We welcome contributions to this newsletter either on a one-off basis, occasional or regular. We are keen to publicise any charity or events that may be of interest to Barkham residents. Please send them to the Newsletter Editor at <a href="mailto:newsletter@barkham.org.uk">newsletter@barkham.org.uk</a> by the deadlines shown below.

Issue	Deadline	<b>Distribution</b>
Spring	13 <sup>th</sup> February	early March
Summer	8 <sup>th</sup> May	early June
Autumn	14 <sup>th</sup> August	early September
Winter	13 <sup>th</sup> November	early December

These are the second Fridays in February, May, August and November

## **Advertising**

The newsletter is produced quarterly. The Spring issue is sent to 800+households in Barkham, and the other three to the households who are paid-up BVRA members, which is currently 500+.

We offer four sizes of adverts which are shown in mm. The prices below are cover a whole year's advertising in our four issues.

<b>Format</b>	Advert size	<b>Internal Pages</b>	<b>Back Page</b>
Credit Card	60 x 50	£20.00	£30.00
Quarter Page	124 x 104	£50.00	£75.00
Half Page	190 x 130	£100.00	£150.00
Full Page	190 x 270	£200.00	£300.00

Please contact the Newsletter Editor to discuss your needs and supply your copy to <a href="mailto:newsletter@barkham.org.uk">newsletter@barkham.org.uk</a> by the deadlines above.

## Membership

Membership of the BVRA costs £3 per year and entitles you to receive four issues of this magazine.

To join please make your payment using one of the following ways:

1. By Direct Debit: set up using the link below <a href="https://barkham.org.uk/bvra/bvra-membership">https://barkham.org.uk/bvra/bvra-membership</a>



All direct debits are fully covered under the UK Direct Debit scheme.

- By Bank Transfer: email us at membership@barkham.org.uk for details.
- 3. By cash, drop off your payment at one of our collection points around the village. Contact us at <a href="mailto:membership@barkham.org.uk">membership@barkham.org.uk</a> for details.

### Website





## **BVRA EVENTS**

Carols in the Park - 12th December @19:00 Junipers

#### USEFUL CONTACTS

#### **Barkham Parish Council**

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday @ 19:30, no meeting in August Held at Arborfield Green Community Centre clerk@barkhamparish.gov.uk

#### St James Church, Barkham

https://www.abch.org.uk

## **Arborfield Gardening Association**

Jan Heard

janaheard@btinternet.com

#### **Bearwood Primary School**

https://www.bearwood-pri.wokingham.sch.uk/web/

#### The Bull at Barkham

bull@thebullbarkham.co.uk 0118 304 9428

#### The Coombes CE Primary School

https://www.thecoombes.com

#### **Crowthorne Orchestra**

https://www.crowthorneorchestra.com/secretary@crowthorneorchestra.com

#### Finchampstead Flower Club

Fourth Monday @ 20:00

Held at California Ratepayers Hall

https://bbandoflowers.org.uk/clubs/finchampstead/

#### **Loddon Valley Ramblers**

Walks on Sundays, Tuesdays & Thursdays <a href="https://www.lvra.org.uk/">https://www.lvra.org.uk/</a>

#### Sing for your Self (term time)

Tuesdays @ 12:30 Arborfield Village Hall www.singforyourself.co.uk

#### **Trinity Concert Band**

https://www.trinityband.co.uk

Please contact the editor to add or change the information on this page <a href="newsletter@barkham.org.uk">newsletter@barkham.org.uk</a>

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The views expressed in this Newsletter, unless signed by a BVRA committee member, are not necessarily those of the Barkham Village Residents' Association.

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## BARKHAM VILLAGE HALL

Bookings https://hallbookingonline.com/barkham

#### **Art Class**

Wednesdays @ 19:30

Kay Young - kaycatlady65@gmail.com

Jean Kidwell - jean.kidwell@outlook.com

0118 9629076, 07952 416383

#### **Barkham Ladies Social Club**

1st Wednesday @ 19:30 Shirley Warner 0118 978 9124 shirleyannwarner@gmail.com

#### Barkham Pre-School

Tues-Fri @ 08:30

https://www.barkhampreschool.net/preschoolbarkham@gmail.com

#### **Bonsai Club**

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday @ 19:30 www.berkshirebonsai.co.uk

#### **Brownies**

Wednesdays @ 17:00 (term time)

#### **CWC - Coombes Woodland Committee**

clerk@barkhamparish.gov.uk

#### **Dinton Walking Group Social**

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday @ 19:30 (not June or December) dintonwalkinggrp@yahoo.co.uk

#### Dog Training

Mondays @18:30

Lesley Slade 07885 899073

#### **Home Educational Teens**

Tuesday @14:00 - 16:00

Paul Bagley

Paulbagley@rocketmail.com

### **Martial Arts Class**

Thursdays @ 19:00

Combat Academy UK

Andy Holmes 07783 206737

https://facebook.com/CombatAcademyUKBarkham

#### **Pilates Class**

Mondays @ 10:00 and

Thursdays @ 18:00

Vicky's Pilates 07729 783240

#### Rainbows

Tuesdays @ 16:30 (term time)

#### Simply Fit

Saturdays @08:30

Melissa Buckle

melissa@simplyfitberkshire.co.uk

#### The Sun Room Band

1st, 3rd & 4th Tuesdays @20:00

Keith 07771 974796

keith.havden.uk@ntlworld.com

www.lemonrock.com/thesunroomband

#### Sunday Club

Sundays @ 09:00

Julian Bidgood

office@abch.org.uk

### U3A Music Groups

Group 1: 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays @ 14:30 Group 2: 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays @ 13:30

## Youth Club

Fridays @ 19:00

Rev lain Lingwood

iain.lingwood@abch.org.uk

## **Arborfield Tree Care**

The Tree Company Others Look  $^{\mbox{Up}}$  To



office@arborfieldtreecare.org 0118 976 1000

## **Arborfield Log Supplies**

The Household Name For Firewood





info@arborfieldlogsupplies.co.uk 0118 976 1156

## French Polishing

Furniture restoration of antique or modern pieces

Dining and coffee tables given the original finish

All removal damage and insurance work

Phone Mike on 07973 759091 woodchiptwo@gmail.com

## Vicky's PILATES Body Control

'Pilates is the body conditioning class suitable for all abilities and ages'

By improving posture, reshape your body relieve tension and create a general feeling of well-being. Pilates is medically recommended to help relieve back pain and stress

Call Vicky on 0118 989 2571 or 07729 783240

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