

SHALFORD

Village Magazine October 2026

showcasing our community
Produced by the People for the People



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Whatever life stage you are in, knowing how much money you need to maintain your lifestyle is crucial to you feeling comfortable and in control. By prioritising you and your objectives, we take the guesswork out of what tomorrow looks like – so you can go forward with confidence, knowing your financial strategy is there to support you.



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Shalford Village Magazine can be downloaded or viewed from www.bendlowe.co.uk

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FRONT PAGE

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REMEMBRANCE

November's issue of
Shalford Village Magazine
will contain a

Remembrance Section

Should you wish to remember
a loved-one
treasured friend
or pet
please let me have your wording
by 12th October 2026

Email: shalford_village_magazine@btinternet.com





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WHAT'S ON

TABLE TENNIS IN FINCHINGFIELD



The group comes to the village hall on Monday evenings to play table tennis 7.30 pm for 2 hours. If you would like to have a chat beforehand, please call me on 07775 531781 – Brian Patient

COFFEE MORNING – ST ANDREW'S CHURCH

**EVERY 2nd & 4th
THURSDAY OF
THE MONTH
10.00 a.m. to 12.00
p.m.**



SINGING 4 ALL – LORRAINE PATIENT

This singing group, which is held every Tuesday at Cornish Hall End Village Hall at 7.30 p.m. has become very popular. If you would like to try out this special group or join, please call 07775 531 781

SHALFORD ROADSIDE & CHURCH FISHING LAKES



are affiliated to Billericay & District Angling Club
The river Pant in Shalford is also covered by the Club
For further details contact:-
Fishery Officer: Derrick Marriott, or www.bdac.co.uk

SHALFORD CRAFT GROUP

Meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday of the month.

At 2pm onwards.

Please bring along any craft projects you are working on.

Share ideas and learn new crafts.

Chat and craft over tea/ coffee and cake.

For dates of when and where please contact.

**Caroline Ottley
07734140478**

**Marianna Marriott
07450251525**

JOIN OUR FRIENDLY GROUP OF BELL RINGERS

**WE MEET EVERY
MONDAY at
Wethersfield Church,
7 p.m. &
FRIDAY at
Shalford Church, 7 p.m.**

**FOR MORE DETAILS
CONTACT:**

**ROY THREADGOLD
Tel: 01371 850481**

RE-ENGAGE (Formerly Contact the Elderly)

Arranging monthly get
togethers over a cup of tea for
the elderly



For more details:
Contact:

**Sarah Cunningham
Sarah8750@hotmail.co.uk**

Or

The Charity Website:
www.reengage.org.uk
Freephone: 0800 716543

WHAT'S ON



FOSTAC

Friends of St Andrew's Church

President

Sir Roger Singleton OBE

REMINISCENCES OF A JUDGE



**Fascinating and interesting
anecdotes about the work of
a District Judge and
Magistrate
by John Woollard**

**St Andrew's Church, Shalford
10th October 2026—7.00pm**

**Tickets £10
Available from Shalford Village Store
or on the night**

www.fostac.co.uk

Affiliated to Charity No 249505

WHAT'S ON

CHRISTMAS

FAIR

SHALFORD VILLAGE HALL

LOCAL HANDMADE GIFTS

ON

SATURDAY 21st NOVEMBER

11 - 3pm

REFRESHMENTS
MULLED WINE
CAKE & MINCE PIES

entry Adults £1.00 Children Free
Organised by the Shalford Craft Group

WHAT'S ON

SHALFORD

Christmas Tree Lights

A festive evening for all the family!

Friday 5th December

★ **5pm** ★

(Time to be confirmed
nearer the time)

- ★ Shalford School Choir
- ★ Coney's Fish & Chips
- ★ Ruth's Honey
- ★ Shalford Craft Stall
- ★ Horticulture Raffle
- ★ Ginny Carter, Animal Artist
- ★ English Gin
- ★ Courtyard Brewery
- ★ U Sweetie
- ★ L & V Bake (dog treats)
- ★ Sweet Carolines Bakery
- ★ Fostac Tea and Coffee
- ★ Vics Music
- ★ and more!

HOT DRINKS
& FESTIVE TREATS

SHALFORD
VILLAGE HALL



*Come together and light up Shalford
for Christmas!*

— **EVERYONE WELCOME!** —

COMMUNITY ★ FRIENDSHIP ★ FESTIVE SPIRIT

WHAT'S ON

Bar open from 6pm

Concert from 7.30pm



SAT 10TH OCTOBER 2026

**FEATURING 'SINGING 4 ALL'
AND LOCAL DUO 'G & T'**

WETHERSFIELD VILLAGE HALL

TICKETS AND RAFFLE IN AID OF

Your community charity supporting local healthcare
Creamer
Fund 

TICKETS £10 (ADVANCE PURCHASE ONLY)
VISIT WWW.WETHERSFIELDVILLAGEHALL.CO.UK/WHAT-S-ON
OR CALL 07304 360410

WHAT'S ON - WETHERSFIELD

Events coming up at Wethersfield Club

Saturday 3 October	Live Music with Ian Lane, performer from Great Bardfield (a regular on our Open Mic Nights)
Thursday 22 October	Karaoke with Bob and Austin
Thursday 19 November	Open Mic Night, all welcome to play or sing
Saturday 28 November	Wethersfield Christmas Switch On, Village Hall, the Green and Club, 4 - 7pm Followed by Take Cover from 7pm at the Club
Saturday 5 December	Christmas Bingo night with John Barker, 8.00 pm
Saturday 12 December	Christmas karaoke night with Bob and Austin, Christmas songs at the ready
NYE 2026	Local DJ Richard Lewsey, entertaining us throughout the night into 2027

WETHERSFIELD VILLAGE COMMUNITY SHOP OPENING HOURS

MONDAY	10.00 AM – 4.00 PM
TUESDAY	10.00 AM – 4.00 PM 6.00 PM – 8.00 PM
WEDNESDAY	CLOSED
THURSDAY	10.00 AM – 4.00 PM Post Office 2.00 PM – 4.00PM
FRIDAY	10.00 AM – 4.00 PM
SATURDAY	10.00 AM – 1.00 PM
SUNDAY	10.00 AM – 11.00 AM

Deliveries every Thursday of fresh bread, rolls and pies from Mersea Bakery, together with fresh meat, sausages, bacon and ham every week from Priors Hall. Sliced Hovis is continually stocked and fresh Milk is delivered 3 times a week, plus fresh eggs. Fresh fruit and vegetables available and full range of frozen foods, including meals. New volunteers are always welcome, pop into the shop with your contact details to join the team

WETHERSFIELD

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

<https://wethersfield-history.org.uk/>

By: Sue MacKenzie

The next meeting of the
Wethersfield History Group
will take place on

Thursday October 8th at the Pavilion

There will be a talk by Ann Kemp entitled

‘Wethersfield to Kamchatka’

This is the story of a lad from land-locked Wethersfield who captained the escort ship HMS Discovery for Captain Cook's famous voyage of exploration on his ship HMS Resolution.

Please join us as usual at 8pm

£3 on the door and all are welcome

We look forward to seeing you

WHAT'S ON - WETHERSFIELD

★ WETHERSFIELD CLUB ★

DATE *for your* DIARY!

≡ *The awesome vocals of* ≡

IAN LANEY LANE



ALL GENRES
≡ OF MUSIC COVERS ≡



SATURDAY
3RD
OCTOBER



7.30PM
til late

Come and grab a table and a drink!



WETHERSFIELD CLUB

SATURDAY 24 OCTOBER 2026

**AN EVENING WITH OUR
GOOD FRIENDS**

**BEER VALLEY
DRIFTERS**

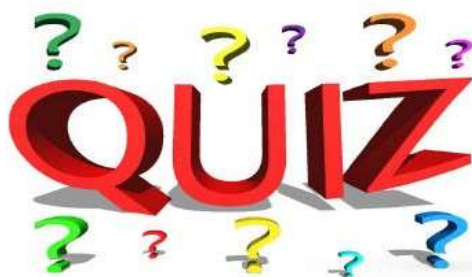
PLAYING LIVE FOR US AGAIN FROM 8.00 PM

JOIN US FOR A GREAT MUSIC NIGHT!

THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER

7.30 FOR 8.00 PM

**WETHERSFIELD CLUB
HOSTS RSPCA DANAHER
FOR THEIR REGULAR**



**TABLES OF 6,
£5 PER PERSON**

**Raffle on the night, all
proceeds to Danaher**

Talk by Terry Nunn on Air Ambulance.

In July we had a very informative talk by Terry, who is a volunteer with the Essex and Herts Air Ambulance. We learned that it operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Each month the expenses amount to £1,000,000 and each mission costs on average £2,800. Last year their critical teams treated 1,904 patients. Mac Beanland, who has organised the Tractor Run each year reported that they had raised over £100,000 over nine years for the Air Ambulance. Mac is now retiring and is looking for someone to take over this organisation. We are hoping to make a trip to the Air Ambulance HQ at North Weald to see them in action.

Upcoming Events

18 November 7.30pm. Annual General Meeting at Finchingfield Guildhall. All welcome.

Saturday 5 December 3pm. We are again hosting our “C” Group Carol Service. Further details later.

Looking ahead.

November 9 2028 will be our Branch’s Centenary. We’d love you to help us celebrate this momentous occasion. Let us know if you have any ideas about events you would like to see.

Memories Are Made of This

We are hoping to compile a record of people’s memories, from the Second World War onwards. Have a think and let us know if there is anything you would like to tell us.

Our Branch would always welcome new members. Membership is £24 per year and anyone can join. RBL Membership Line is 0800-307-7773.

The Crafty Community Group meets every Tuesday from 2 to 4 in Finchingfield Guildhall. We are now well on the way to completing our knitted or crochet poppies to decorate our War Memorials in Finchingfield and Cornish Hall End.

Contacts:

Ivan Fleming (Chairman): 07525 751179 isskhs@googlemail.com

Janet Ridgewell (Secretary): 01371 810051 janet.ridgewell510@btinternet.com



Finchingfield Guildhall
presents
a performance by SW'ukes
on Friday 2nd October at 7pm.
Tickets £5.00

Go to: finchingfieldguildhall.org.uk
"what's on" page for payment



Another welcome visit from the fabulous SW'ukes from Saffron Walden.

They play big songs on little instruments, and no good song is spared from their attempts to play it! Although most of the repertoire is 60's and 70's popular songs, they strum out a mean Depeche Mode, Miley Cyrus, and David Bowie.

Feel free to bring your Ukulele along and join in.

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WHAT'S ON - WETHERSFIELD

SAVE

the date!

★ WETHERSFIELD VILLAGE ★

Christmas Lights

SWITCH ON!

★ SATURDAY ★

28TH NOVEMBER

Followed by
LIVE MUSIC

AT

WETHERSFIELD CLUB

★ FROM 8PM ★

*Come along and
kick off the festive
season together!*



FAMILY FUN ★ FESTIVE SPIRIT ★ COMMUNITY TOGETHER



A Celebration of Music on Our Doorsteps

The Roman River Festival returns this October, bringing its

familiar blend of world-class music and historic architecture to our local parishes. For those who have followed the festival over the years, the 2026 line-up offers an exceptional breadth of repertoire, performed by musicians who regularly grace international stages but are equally at home in local settings.

The festival opens on **Tuesday 20th October** at St Mary the Virgin, Wivenhoe, with a performance of Benjamin Britten's complete *Canticles*. Led by locally-based acclaimed choir master and tenor Ben Vonberg-Clark, this exquisite cycle marks the 50th anniversary of the composer's death. **On Wednesday 21st October**, the action moves to All Saints, Fordham, where the Silvanus Quartet will perform pieces by Beethoven and Britten alongside Nordic dance tunes. Midweek highlights include a lunchtime concert on **Thursday 22nd October** at Colchester's Old Library featuring Mozart and Ravel, followed by an evening of 17th-century British folk and elite music played on period instruments by the Nocturnalia Ensemble at St Andrew's, Fingringhoe. On **Friday 23rd October**, a lunchtime Young Artist Spotlight at Wivenhoe House Hotel showcases violinist Cyrus Yuen and young pianist Bethany Reynolds, leading into an evening of monumental piano trios by Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev, and Beethoven at St Mary's, Dedham. The festival reaches its symphonic peak on **Saturday 24th October** at St Peter Ad Vincula, Coggeshall, with chamber orchestrations of Elgar's Cello Concerto and Mahler's Fourth Symphony. It concludes on **Sunday 25th October** at St Michael and All Angels, Copford, where the Bruegel Consort will perform late-medieval Marian polyphony – from the breathtaking moment in musical history when English composers wove independent, overlapping vocal lines into massive, interlocking walls of sound designed to echo through stone churches – under some of the finest surviving early church frescoes in Britain. While the musicianship is of an international standard, the true hallmark of the Roman River Festival remains its absolute lack of formality. Audiences can expect the same warm, down-to-earth atmosphere that has defined the event for years. This welcoming environment is maintained by a dedicated team of front-of-house volunteers—many of whom are familiar faces who have been greeting concertgoers at the door for several seasons. Tickets are available now, with general admission at £30 and standard tickets for young people under 30 priced from £15 across the entire programme: <https://romanrivermusic.co.uk/whats-on>

HARVEST FESTIVAL FLOWERS at St. ANDREW'S CHURCH

Saturday 3rd – Monday 12th October

Harvest festival flowers will be available to view at
St. Andrew's Church
starting on Saturday 3rd October for 10 days.
The Harvest service will be held on Sunday 4th October.

All are welcome to enjoy our displays in celebration
of bringing in the Harvest

Entry is free

At present, St. Andrew's Church is open every day from 9-4.

SHALFORD HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY – SAVE THE DATE

Tuesday 19th January 2027 - 7pm - AGM
Saturday 30th January 2027 - Annual Quiz



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Membership is still only £15 and free for under 16yrs. Save £5 on every ride entry by being a member.

Our policy regarding the requirement for flu vaccinations for 2026 is that all horses attending our rides must be up-to-date with their annual flu injections (ie. the last booster is no more than a year old). On top of this we will implement any extra stipulations that our host may request (i.e. passport check, 6-month booster etc.). We will not know what these extra requirements are (if any) until we open each ride for entries.

We will also be following the new rules which are now in place for horses having new or restarted vaccines from 01.01.24 and any equine must not attend our events within 7 days of receiving any vaccination including boosters. Please speak to your vet if you require any further information or clarification.

RIDE - 11TH OCTOBER 2026

Highwood Howlets, Writtle Park Estate, Highwood. CM1 3QF. A ride of 9.5 miles through ancient woodlands where Deer roam, field edges and the grassy tracks of Howlets Hall. Some minor road work. There is a shorter option of 5.5 miles.

Please do not use sat nav or google maps. Approach from the A414 from Ongar direction or from Chelmsford at the Widford Church Roundabout. **DO NOT** approach from Ivy Barns Lane.

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HALL**

FROM 7.30 p.m. to 9.15 p.m.



All ages are welcome to our friendly club. Come along and enjoy a game of bowls, a chat, plus tea, coffee and biscuits

Contact: Vic 07773 707404

SHALFORD LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION



Meetings take place monthly
For date and more information
contact: Sally
07785 235000
or visit
<https://shalford-essex-pc.gov.uk/history-society/>

SHALFORD HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY



For more information

<https://www.facebook.com/SHSEssex>

<https://shalford-essex-pc.gov.uk/horticultural-society/>

MEET & GREET 1ST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH

**SHALFORD
VILLAGE HALL**

11 am to 2 pm



*William Bendlowe Charity
People Working For People
It's good to talk!*

FOSTAC

**Friends of St Andrew's
Church**



**Contact: www.fostac.co.uk
or
<https://shalford-essex-pc.gov.uk>**



BENDLOWE'S

NOW ENJOYS

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BENDLOWE'S COACH TRIP TO THE HUT, FELIXSTOWE



On Wednesday 19th August Bendlowe's organised their annual trip to Felixstowe. Fifty three adults and children attended another successful day. It was a perfect day weather wise after the scorching heatwaves we had been having this summer. Pleasant enough to sit outside all day.

After arriving at The Hut we enjoyed a tea/coffee with some homemade cakes. Thank you to all who donated the cakes. The children were soon on the beach paddling and building sandcastles. Thank you Del for being on lifeguard/ childcare duties. You did such a sterling job, you can come again next year!!



Some people wandered off for a stroll, others were happy to stay and chat or play games. Fish and chips arrived at 12.30 and delicious they were.

The afternoon saw many walk up to the ice cream kiosk a few meters away. Lots of delicious flavours to choose from. Again some decided to explore. Tea/coffee and more cake were on offer all afternoon. No one was leaving hungry – that's for sure!

Soon it was time to leave. We wished we could have stayed longer but the coach was waiting to bring us back to Shalford.



Thank you to all who helped set up and pack up so efficiently. To the washer uppers a massive thanks. There were certainly lots of cups and plates to get through. But as they say 'many hands make light work'.

Most of all thanks to all of you who came - we had some laughs and a lot of chat.

We will be running the trip again in 2027 so look out for the date in the new year.



Marianna



Thank You

Marianna

For Arranging
This Coach Trip
For Many Years
We Really Do
Appreciate Your
Time And Effort



ALICE

SHALFORD HISTORY ASSOCIATION'S VISIT TO EARLS COLNE HERITAGE MUSEUM

By: Vic Goodey



Thanks to my fellow local history enthusiasts who ventured into Earls Colne for a visit to the museum. We started by meeting for a lovely lunch at Mrs Salisbury's, a Tea Rooms in the grounds of Marks Hall Estate.

Onward to the museum located in the old Water Tower of the Atlas Works built following an earthquake that destroyed the village's spring-fed water supply.

We met up with John Stedman who started his guided tour of the Atlas Works by showing some of the patented cast Iron and Steel machinery designed by John and Reuben Hunt which bears their name. Used on farms both domestic and international for Threshing; Cutting; Crushing and Grinding. The Works covered some five acres with furnaces for producing castings and chimneys reaching to the sky. "Turning Sheds" later called the "Workshops" for housing lathes, drills and milling machines etc driven by a central shaft fitted with power take off pulleys for the belt driven equipment. The surviving workshop buildings have been converted for residential use although they have been obliged to retain much of the heavy beams that supported the central shafts and bearings.

John guided us through a memorial garden that was once the site of a massive furnace chimney and now a statue depicting Atlas holding up the World. Then on to the commercial area of the works where many buildings remain including the, then, Tied Cottages built for Atlas Works' employees. Beautiful terrace houses that still reflect the style of the time in which they were newly built. Albeit modernised for today.

On our return to the museum we were met by Mark Claydon.



Mark's knowledge of Earls Colne history is extensive and coupled to national and international events. Mark maintains that there was little human activity in and around the Colne Valley until the Norman Conquest (1066 and all that) when Aubrey De Vere (Tennant in Chief) was given Colne land for his service to King William 1st. This land was a rich



hunting ground later to become popular with the nobles of the Norman aristocracy.

Aubrey De Vere's allegiance to Queen Matilda in her battles for succession (circa 1139 - 1153) against her cousin King Steven, resulted in her bestowing the title of the Earl of Oxford on Aubrey De Vere. Hence his renaming of the area to Earls Colne. The museum spans several centuries with many characters and events beautifully depicted and presented.

Sadly the museum will be closing for refurbishment in the near future but a visit to the area of the garden and walk around the workshop buildings is well worth the effort.

We wish the Earls Colne History Association all the best in their future endeavours and thank them all for their time and courtesy during our visit.

As a family-run funeral directors, we believe in a dignified and caring approach for every family we support.

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clerk@shalford-essex-pc.gov.uk

Dates for your Diaries:

** Christmas Lights Switch-On: Saturday 5th December, 5pm-8pm**

Annual Parish Meeting 2027: Thursday 20th May 2027

New Village Projects for 2026-27:

As the Neighbourhood Plan is almost complete and all the major expenses have been covered, we are now looking for new projects to undertake within the village. If you have any suggestions that you would like the Parish Council to consider then please email to the Clerk for consideration at our October meeting.

North Zone Bus User Group Survey:

Passenger Feedback Survey: <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/zhiftfZrrb>



Please email the Clerk if you require a paper copy of this survey:
clerk@shalford-essex-pc.gov.uk

Fix IT:



Please email any issues or problems you see around the parish for our ranger to fix. Email: fix.it@shalford-essex-pc.gov.uk

Our next Parish Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 21st October at 7:30pm in the Village Hall. We look forward to seeing you there.

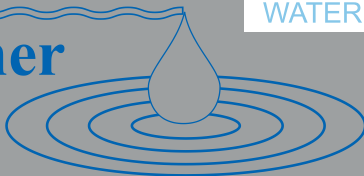


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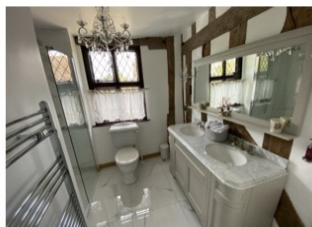
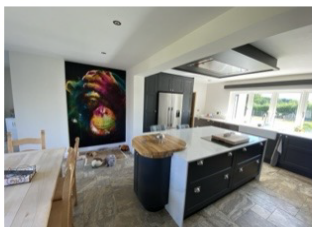
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St Andrew's**



**Wethersfield
St Mary
Magdalene**



**Finchingfield
St John the
Baptist**



**Gt Bardfield
St Mary The
Virgin**



**Little
Bardfield
St Katharine**



**Cornish Hall
End
St John the
Evangelist**

From the Vicarage...

Around our villages, October marks the coming to an end of another cycle of the agricultural year, with the final harvests coming in, and preparations for next year's growing season getting well under way. As we prepare to celebrate this with traditional harvest hymns and displays, the gulf between this slowly changing world and the fast-paced technological change dominating our news seems ever wider and deeper. I offered a few thoughts on the significance of the emerging capabilities of Artificial Intelligence, or AI, in my magazine piece just over three years ago, but what has become clearer since then is that the warnings surrounding the development of AI are getting much more refined and specific. Instead of the general 'nightmare scenario' which almost always greets the emergence of a new technology, we have experts beginning to spell out the particular ways in which significant harm could result from allowing AI to be developed in an unrestricted way. And in my day-to-day conversations, anxiety about AI features largely in the lists of modern anxieties which people share with me.

All this places on the computer scientists, entrepreneurs and politicians who work at the forefront of AI and its regulation a huge responsibility; but we might be wondering how the rest of us should react. In answer to this challenge, I think there is one attitude of mind which we can learn from our farmers, whose harvest we are celebrating in this season: they appreciate most powerfully what difference it makes when they get to *know* the land they work. The connection which is forged by the time spent on and around the land, getting to know its rhythms and patterns, is something for which there are no short cuts or substitutes.

Our use of AI on the other hand, has the opposite effect: it separates us from the act of acquiring knowledge and wisdom; it keeps us apart, as we no longer feel the need to consult and discuss when such seemingly comprehensive answers are served up to us at the click of a button; and it removes our sense of dependence, as it exaggerates our view of our own capabilities. Indeed, one of the themes of our harvest prayers and hymns is how that most essential part of our lives – our supply of food – is ultimately dependent on many factors which are beyond our direct control (though often influenced by our actions). Renewing our commitment to remain connected to each other and to our world, and resisting the temptation to let technology do that for us, is a powerful way in which we can keep hold of what it means to be human – even what it means to be children of God.

Rev'd/Fr Alex

SERVICES FOR OCTOBER IN THE PANT VALLEY CHURCHES

Sunday 4 October – Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

9am Holy Communion (traditional language) – Cornish Hall End

9.30am Harvest Festival Service – Shalford

10.30am Family Eucharist Harvest Festival – Great Bardfield

11am Prayer & Pilgrimage (Celtic Morning Prayer) – Wethersfield

Sunday 11 October – Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity

8am Holy Communion (traditional language) – Shalford

10am Harvest Festival Service –
Finchingfield

10.30am Morning Prayer – Great
Bardfield

11am Family Eucharist – Wethersfield

5pm Sung Evensong – Shalford

Sunday 18 October – St Luke the Evangelist

9am Holy Communion (traditional language) – Finchingfield

9.30am Morning Prayer – Shalford

10.30am Sung Eucharist – Great
Bardfield

11am Harvest Festival Service –
Wethersfield

Sunday 25 October – Last Sunday after Trinity

9.30am Parish Communion – Shalford

10.30am Morning Prayer – Great
Bardfield

11am Holy Communion (traditional language) – Wethersfield

4pm Sung Compline – Little Bardfield

*Also, there will be a time of prayer in
Finchingfield Church 7-8pm on Thursday 15
October as part of the 'Wave of Light'
initiative to mark Baby Loss Awareness
Week, the last 15 minutes of which will be a
short service.*

Regular Services and Events during the week

Monday

8.45am Morning Prayer – Finchingfield

1.30pm 'Faithful Fiction' book club –
Between the Lines, Great Bardfield

Tuesday

8.45am Morning Prayer – Great Bardfield

10am Baby & Toddler Group – Great
Bardfield 'St Mary's Munchkins' story &
song time with refreshments

Thursday

8.45am Morning Prayer – Wethersfield

10am Coffee Morning (2nd & 4th weeks) – Shalford

Coffee Morning (3rd week) – Cornish Hall
End

10.30am Eucharist – Little Bardfield

Friday

8.45am Morning Prayer – Shalford

Saturday

10.30am (3rd weeks) Coffee Morning –
Wethersfield

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SHALFORD CHURCH OF ST ANDREW'S PANT VALLEY CHURCHES CHURCH WARDEN'S REPORT



**Shalford
St Andrew's**



**Wethersfield
St Mary
Magdalene**



**Finchingfield
St John the
Baptist**



**Gt Bardfield
St Mary The
Virgin**



**Little
Bardfield
St Katharine**



**Cornish Hall
End
St John the
Evangelist**

So many good things have been planned for September that, as you read this in October, I'm *seriously* hoping that:

- St Andrew's bells will be back in action again
- The church will have benefitted from a thorough deep clean
- The Horticultural Society will have had a lovely dry day to show off the talents of all you brilliant gardeners out there – in spite of a fairly disastrous summer for growing anything
- The Bendlowe's open meeting will have borne good fruit and spread its presence over the wider community
- And finally, that you will all turn up to St Andrew's on Sunday the 4th October at 9.30am to enjoy and take part in our Harvest Festival "Songs of Praise" and admire the work of our great band of flower arrangers!

That's not too much of a wish list, is it?

But I must also turn my attention to the next few months regarding the church itself. This autumn we are due to have our Quinquennial Inspection by our Inspecting Architect and that involves a very deep survey indeed of the state of the church's fabric and general wellbeing. As the name suggests, this must take place every 5 years, a good idea as it concentrates the minds of churchwardens everywhere!

Now that, hopefully, the bells project is complete I'll be concentrating on the repairs to the south porch and that will probably stretch out until well into next year or even further. We start at the top of the porch by fixing the drainage issues that are affecting the east wall of the porch, then we must repair the damage to the east wall itself and finally, after all that has been done (and dried out), we can tackle the internal re-decoration of the porch itself.

This external work can only be carried out by a conservation-grade mason and, as you may imagine, his diary is exceedingly full. However, it seems that one small obstacle to his workers may have been removed in that the resident bee population on the porch roof may have moved on. Whether this is a temporary move as a result of the hot summer I do not know, but maybe any beekeepers could enlighten me?

We share our church with the bats and the bees and the occasional small birds that find their way in and we do that willingly (but with occasional gritted teeth, on my part anyway) in the recognition that we are all God's creatures. My final hope is that the Inspecting Architect and the Diocesan Advisory Committee, that sanctions all work to a Grade I listed church, will take the same view!

Hilary Penney

SHALFORD CHURCH OF ST ANDREW'S CONTACTS

Vicar, Revd Dr Alex Shannon, The Vicarage, Finchingfield, Tel: 01371 810309
Email: rev.alex.shannon@gmail.com

Associate Minister, Revd Canon Janet Nicholls, Park House, Braintree Road, Shalford, CM7 5HQ, Tel: 01371 851317, Email: jnicholls@chelmsford.anglican.org

Treasurer, Peter Havelock, Tel: 07721 371017,
Email: peter_havelock@hotmail.com

Churchwarden, Hilary Penney, Orchard View, The Chase, Shalford, CM7 5HH
Tel: 01371 851762, Email: spsware@copper12.co.uk

Safeguarding Representative, Sarah Pilgrim, Fieldside, Lombard Street Finchingfield, Tel: 01371 850781 Email: pilgrim511@btinternet.com

Ringing Master, Roy Threadgold, Plumley, Braintree Road, Wethersfield
Tel: 01371 850481 Email: roy@boydellsdairy.co.uk

Captain of the Bell Tower, Michael Mason, 6 Clifffield, Shalford, CM7 5HP
Tel: 01371 850125

Friends of St Andrew's Church (FOSTAC), Chairman Sue Morton 42 Hereward Way, Wethersfield CM7 4EG Tel: 01371 850626 Email: suebeazleyend@gmail.com



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Nature Notes

Something Different

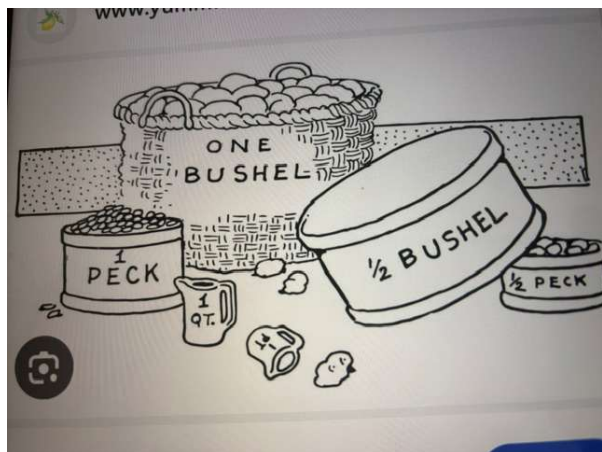
By: Mac Beanland

In my nature notes subject on Barn Owls, I mentioned that my son found the Barn Owl when he was topping a field. One reader asked me what I meant by the term “topping a field” and someone else asked why do we

“top” fields. I have been asked these questions in the past.

First of all, the term “topping” means to go into a field of rough straggly grass which has started to go to seed which may have been partly selectively grazed by horses with a type of mower which reduces the height of the grass destroying what it cuts off. Why do we top grass? Every living thing whether it be animal or vegetable is programmed to do one thing, that is to reproduce itself, in the case of grass by going to seed. Once it has produced seed it then dies back sending its energy back down to the roots and going into dormancy, but if we top it and stop it seeding, it will send up new green leaves and start growing all over again so that it can produce more seed, so we get a nice green heathy field. I can sympathise with any one struggling with some of the odd names and terms used in farming and rural life. As most of my readers know, I was a city boy with no farming background, so getting to grips with some of these terms and names was a very steep learning curve for me.

One of the first jobs my new boss asked me to do was to fetch a skip from the cow shed, a skip to me was something in your step on the way home from school because you were happy that was the end of yet another day of purgatory, not a round galvanised bin with a handle at each side which will hold a bushel of animal food. There I go again, what is a bushel ? In today’s money 36-5 dry litres we also had a cylindrical container called a peck and 4 pecks equal one bushel so all the dry animal rations were measured in bushels and pecks, no need to use scales weighing stuff, before we had grain stores and combine harvesters grain was stored in stacks still attached to the straw in sheaths, and was thrashed when required for sale or animal feed. When it was thrashed it was put into large thick hessian sacks which were hired from the railway or a hire company. A standard sack held 4 bushels and because



the different grain has different volume weight the total weight was always different. A sack of oats weighed 10 stone, barley 12 stone, wheat 16 stone, and beans 18 stone and we used to carry them on our backs (I wonder why I had to have a hernia operation when I was 18). Another heavy lifting job was the milk churns; they held 12 gallons and had

to be lifted onto the milk stand which was the same height as the milk lorry which collected the milk. The driver would not lift them off the floor so we had to. The second farm I went to work on, the churn stand was in the village a mile away from the farm, and it was my job to take the churns in a box on the back of a little grey Ferguson tractor. That did at least lift them half way up for me, but I have drifted away from farming terms; one that is very regional is the name for the raised rows we grow potatoes in, to me they are ridges but in this part of the world they are baulks a name which is also given to a large beam or lump of wood. If I am dagging (not my favourite job) I am removing all the soiled wool from round a sheep's bottom. If I am drenching sheep I am administering drugs, not wetting them through as one may assume.

If I am rogueing a field I am removing plants which shouldn't be there like wild oats in a field of wheat. Lots of farms have raves! not gatherings of people playing loud music but racks at the front and rear of trailers to stop bales or other material falling off sometimes known as ladders.





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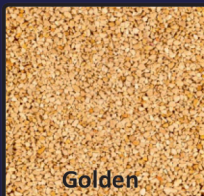
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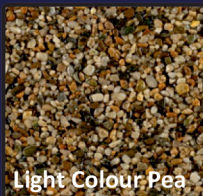
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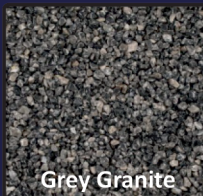
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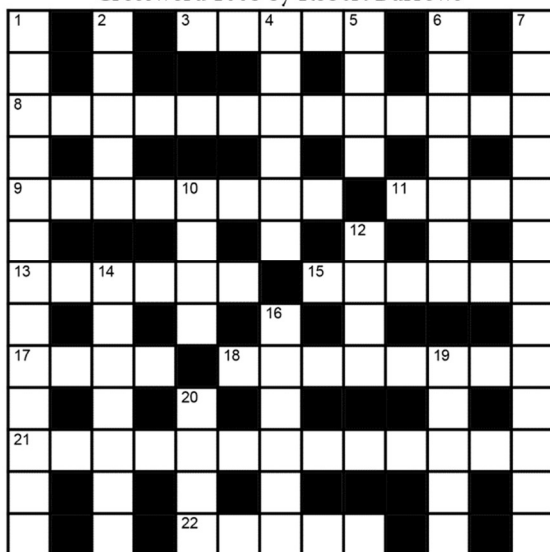
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Crossword 100S by Robert Burrows



Across

3 Underground explorer (5) 5 Highway (4)

6 Tangerine (7)

8 Outside the galaxy (13) 7 Semiformal attire

(8-5)

9 Goodbye (8) 10 Hospital section (4)

11 Eject (4)

13 Crossword creator (6) 12 Prison (4)

15 Cruciferous plant (6) 14 Poor golf play (7)

17 Something that cuts (4) 16 A quantum of light (6)

18 Home village (8)

20 Computer system (4) 19 Pray (5)

21 Unacceptable behaviour (6-3-4)

22 Chemical element (5)

Down

1 Claim that cannot be enforced (13)

2 Indian instrument (5)

4 Able to exist (6)

Cryptic Across

3 Monica Verdi, in part goes underground (5)

8 Alien a long way from home (13)

9 Adieu, travel safely (8)

11 Throw out to us, maybe (4)

12 The Great puzzlemaker (6)

15 Western Australia bias produces spicy plant (6)

17 Limit in Ted Germein (4)

18 Very local village holds RAF activity (8)

21 Far from good behaviour (6,3,4)

22 No ex in this element (4)

Cryptic Down

1 A law that can't work (13)

2 Instrument to fix broken stair (5)

4 Some trivia blessing can live (4)

5 It can be less travelled (4)

6 Plum can be orange coloured fruit (6)

7 Drinks party outfit (8,5)

10 Draw back this council division (4)

12 A log needed for jail (4)

14 Made poor golf shot, but obey Ged strangely (7)

16 Not hop, sadly, but a unit of light (6)

19 Speak out, Victor, at expo (5)

20 Program for uni? Wrong! (4)



WELL, WHAT A SUMMER!

*This has been a summer
to remember*

- or to forget -

*depending on your
point of view*

Wonderful, if you were not relying on your vegetable plot and had no cherished plants to protect. Dreadful, if you were hoping to feed the family from your garden or were waiting for the long-planned floral display that never quite materialised.

Thankfully, the rain has returned and the garden is beginning to recover. Even the lawn is turning greener by the minute. But with predictions of an even hotter summer next year, how should we prepare?

Taking Stock

Walk around your garden and make a note of what died, what survived and what positively thrived. Annuals were almost impossible to keep alive and may be best avoided next year - not least because they are likely to be expensive. More robust plants, particularly perennials, coped far better, especially with occasional watering using grey water.

Consider whether these resilient plants can be divided or propagated now to increase your stock. A little preparation this autumn could give you a far more floriferous garden next year.

Cuttings to Take Now

With the soil still warm, this is an ideal time to take cuttings of Salvias and Penstemons.

- Select a non-flowering stem and cut just above a node.
- Remove the lower leaves and pinch out the tip to encourage root formation.
- Cut below a node near the base of the stem.
- Insert the cutting around the edge of a small pot filled with compost, label it, and water gently.
- Place the pot in a shady spot until roots appear through the drainage holes.

Four or five cuttings can be placed around the edge of each pot.

Roses: A Pleasant Surprise

Roses coped remarkably well with the heat and rewarded us with excellent flowering, helped along by occasional grey-water irrigation. As soon as a bloom begins to fade, cut the stem back to the next flowering point to encourage further growth.

Helping Plants Conserve Energy

Plants expend enormous energy producing flowers, followed by seeds, pods or fruit. If a plant is visibly struggling, remove flowers as soon as they form and reduce some of the foliage. This helps the plant conserve moisture and energy.

Other perennials, such as Achillea, proved to be impressively heat tolerant. Our native achillea thrived in the hedgerows, and its garden-worthy cousins performed just as well.

Vegetables: Mixed Fortunes

My runner beans produced flowers but failed to set fruit. They love plentiful water, and in the end were not worth the effort - I cut them down. However, dwarf French beans, chard and spinach struggled but continued to provide enough pickings to keep me satisfied throughout the season.

Looking Ahead

We cannot predict what next year's weather will bring, but we can make gentle adjustments to our gardening practices. Choosing more resilient plants, modifying planting techniques and applying generous mulching once the soil is moist may help us prepare for an increasingly uncertain gardening future.

Happy Gardening

The Theoretical Gardener



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Buzzing News from the Hives of Gill Powell



What a Summer to Be a Bee!



As we head into autumn and reach for our jumpers once again, it seems almost unbelievable to think back to some of the temperatures we experienced this summer. It was certainly a hot one and while we could escape indoors, find some shade or reach for an ice-cold drink, spare a thought for the thousands of bees packed inside a wooden box!

Honeybees are rather clever when it comes to keeping their home at the right temperature.

During the particularly hot spells this summer, the bees had to work incredibly hard to prevent their hives from overheating. Worker bees collect water and bring it back to the colony, where tiny droplets are deposited around the hive. Other bees position themselves at the entrance and fan

their wings furiously, creating airflow through the hive.

Basically, the bees create their very own air-conditioning system!

For me, one of the loveliest parts of this hot summer came in the evenings. Visiting the apiary as the temperature finally began to drop, you could hear the most wonderful sound — the steady humming of thousands of bees fanning their wings to cool their hives.

Sometimes beekeeping isn't about opening a hive or collecting honey. It's simply standing quietly beside the colonies as the sun goes down and listening.

We often associate sunshine with flowers and plenty of food for our bees, but extremely hot and dry weather can make life more difficult.

Plants need water to produce nectar. During prolonged periods of heat and little rainfall, flowers can dry up more quickly, and some plants may produce much less nectar. So even though we might look around and see flowers, that doesn't necessarily mean the bees are finding an endless supply of food.



Water also becomes incredibly important. If you have a bird bath, pond or shallow water source in your garden, you may have noticed bees stopping for a drink during the hottest days.



If you'd like to provide water for bees, a shallow dish filled with pebbles and water works brilliantly. The stones give the bees somewhere safe to land while they drink — no tiny bee swimming lessons required!

The bees have also been helping us get out and about in our local community this summer.

We have been visiting local schools to introduce younger members of our community to the fascinating world of honeybees and pollination.

With the help of beekeeping equipment, hive parts and other props, the children were able to discover what goes on inside a beehive, learn about the different jobs bees perform and understand why pollinators are so important to the world around us.

And children certainly know how to ask questions!

Talking about bees with younger generations is particularly rewarding. If we can encourage children to notice the bees visiting a lavender plant, understand why flowers matter or think twice before being frightened of a buzzing visitor, that's a wonderful place to start.



Back at the apiary, things are beginning to change.

Those long, noisy summer evenings are gradually disappearing, and the colonies are preparing themselves for the colder months ahead. For the beekeeper, autumn means checking that colonies are healthy, have sufficient stores and are in the best possible condition to face winter.

After a summer of heatwaves, honey, school visits and countless hours spent watching our bees come and go, the apiary is beginning to feel a little quieter. But perhaps that's one of the wonderful things about keeping bees — every season brings something different. And after listening to thousands of tiny wings providing the soundtrack to our summer evenings, we're rather going to miss that hum.

🐝 DID YOU KNOW?

Honeybees don't just use their wings for flying. By working together and fanning their wings, they can create airflow through the hive to help control its temperature.



Lettuce Alone PART 2

Life in Sunny Patch Garden had returned to normal after the disappearance of the prize-winning strawberry. However, Iceberg Lettuce had not forgotten her mistake. She had wrongly accused Sly the Slug, and she now understood that good detectives should always examine the evidence before making a judgement.

One sunny morning, Nedley Carrot spotted some tiny footprints beside the old wooden gate.

"Look at these!" exclaimed Nedley, pointing excitedly towards the soft earth.

Anne Avocado examined them carefully and agreed that they were fresh, while Martin Mushroom noticed that they were far too small to belong to any of the vegetables.

"An unexplored part of the garden?" wondered Nedley. "Brilliant!"

Iceberg sighed before warning him, "Nedley, unexplored usually means dangerous."

"Or exciting!" Nedley replied cheerfully.

Following the footprints, the Garden Detectives entered the Forgotten Corner, where weeds covered an ancient path.

Eventually, they discovered a tiny wooden door hidden beneath a clump of leaves.

"Who are you?" asked a nervous voice from behind it.

Anne stepped forward and replied, "We're the Garden Detectives. We're investigating the missing strawberry."

The door opened, revealing a small mouse wearing a blue waistcoat, spectacles and a red hat.



"I'm Professor Pip," announced the mouse.

Gareth Green-Pepper looked at him curiously.

"Professor of what?" Gareth asked.

"Everything," replied Professor Pip proudly.

After listening to their story, Professor Pip led them to a hidden tunnel beneath a large stone. Inside, they discovered pieces of strawberry scattered across the ground.

Suddenly, several tiny mice rushed past, carrying fruit and leaves.

"I don't think they're stealing for themselves," Anne explained calmly. "I think they're taking the food somewhere."

"Should we follow them?" Nedley asked.

"Yes, but carefully," Anne replied.

The trail led beneath an enormous oak tree, where the Garden Detectives discovered a nest containing several hungry baby mice.

"The strawberry wasn't stolen because the mice were greedy," Iceberg realised. "They were trying to find food for their babies."



Feeling relieved, Iceberg turned towards Sly.

"I'm sorry about what happened before," she apologised.

Sly smiled before replying, "That's all right. At least this time, I wasn't even accused!"

The vegetables shared the remaining fruit with the mice, and soon the babies were happily eating.

Before leaving, Martin added a new rule to his notebook.

"Always examine the evidence," Martin announced.

Nedley suggested that they should also have a rule about investigating secret tunnels, while Gareth insisted that every investigation needed snacks

Later that afternoon, as the sun began to set, Martin noticed another trail of footprints beside the garden fence.

These footprints were tiny. Even stranger, they appeared to have been made by something wearing a little boot.

"Where do they lead?" asked Nedley.

"Towards the fence," Martin replied.

Iceberg looked towards the darkening sky before suggesting, "We should investigate tomorrow."

She paused, then smiled.

"All right. We can investigate now."

As they stepped through the gate, a strange sound came from the darkness.

"Quack," called a mysterious voice.

Gareth looked nervously towards the trees.

"Did anyone else hear that?" he asked.

"Quack," came the reply.

Sly stared into the darkness and observed, "I thought this was a vegetable garden."

Nedley grinned. "Maybe it isn't anymore," he suggested.

With the mystery deepening, the Garden Detectives disappeared beyond the fence, unaware that their strangest adventure was only just beginning.



TO BE CONTINUED...

By Graham Silvester, from an original idea by Martin Hinsley

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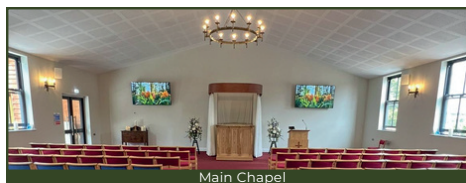
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THE HUNDRED PARISHES SOCIETY

www.hundredparishes.org.uk

By: Ken McDonald, Secretary

At the beginning of September, The Hundred Parishes Society held its twelfth Annual General Meeting. Each year we have chosen a different venue so that we can introduce members to another location they may not have visited before. Last year, for example, we went to the museum in Saffron Walden where we were given an informative guided tour.

In 2026, it was the turn of Great Waltham, one of our largest parishes and in the far south-east corner of The Hundred Parishes. Before the meeting, I took some of our members on a short walk around the centre of Great Waltham village, pointing out a few of its many ancient buildings.

We passed the fascinating 16th-century private house called Badynghams, with four spectacular original chimney stacks, and then the war memorial where the 36 men from the parish, who died in the first world war and nine in WWII, are remembered.

We moved on for a brief excursion into the Langleys estate, enjoying a view from the footpath of its magnificent Grade I listed Georgian mansion, built in 1719 by the Tufnell family who still own it today.

We then made our way to the parish's Norman church, dedicated to St. Mary and St. Lawrence. Church warden David Williams introduced the group to some fascinating features, especially the

splendid Everard memorial which is 400 years old. Church historian Peter Wells was unable to join us but several members purchased copies of his excellent book about Great Waltham and its church, published within the last year.

Just a short walk took us back to the village hall for refreshments and the formal part of the AGM where I and our chairman Douglas Kent were re-appointed.

Where do you think we should go next year?

Photos: 1: Badynghams 2: Langleys Gatehouse 3: Langleys 4: Great Waltham church 5: Chancel 6: Reredos 7: Everard memorial 8: Dragon on church lychgate.



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Crossword 100 Solution – Robert Burrows

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MY FRENCH BREAK

THEN HOME TO A BRITISH WET AUTUMN THANK GOODNESS

By: Peter Jones

Six days was a short holiday but I wanted home before the end in spite of enjoying myself immensely. Probably an impalpable health anxiety is a factor. The area immediately south of Biarritz is strongly Basque. People show it by painting part of their property a terracotta shade. In many places - every house. They fix an Elizabethan-like wooden frame around the exterior. The language is on the street and compulsory in early schooling. The beaches along here are huge, neatly filling the indented coast into a series of bays. Last week our $\frac{3}{4}$ mile beach was packed. At 7pm everybody and everything had gone, not a trace of paper or can – unbelievable!

Another transformation an hour later, the well-preserved old town area became almost overrun by avenues of tables chairs tall umbrellas. The 186 restaurants had come to life. The ingenuity of French chefs with their permutations of delicious food being made more delectable was a nightly science to be explored. Hotels have a merit table of the best places consulted nightly by their pre-prandial guests. Running restaurants in France is a young fit person's game. They all had their team ready for each evening's fray. Detailed knowledge of every item and speciality has always been mandatory but now, to get a waiting job, English proficiency of translating abstruse Gallic food words is equally required. I chatted to several people - everybody had 2, often 3 part-time jobs. A coffee waitress where we stayed had impeccable English. She admitted she had been on an English course in Malta.

One day we explored the inland countryside. The remote lanes as we travelled near the Spanish border crossed the foothills of the Pyrenees. We heard they were escape routes in WW2 from Nazi-held France across to neutral Spain. At a country inn in an artisan type village with local hams, cheeses, fruit liqueurs, the young manager told me "I am a diving instructor."

Another day we spent at San Sebastian, only 20 minutes to the border. It is a magnificent city. Everything is so efficient and orderly and clean. The necessary complex modern wide approach road system was so impressive. I vaguely remember bringing the family car this way a very long time ago. Then there was just a coastal road going through. Why are all these places so advanced?

One day a very elderly gentleman was alone in the hotel hall and we, both ancient, felt a bond as our respective families were not present just then. He looked a bit shaky, that's all - 92 excellent English. He was Claude, had a 200-year old vineyard and a chateau in Bordeaux, described his red, rose and white wines, gave me his visiting card and asked me to write! I said "Peut-etre l'annee prochaine." (perhaps next year).

An interesting week.

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*Braintree District Council Leader Cllr Tom Cunningham's open letter to
Essex County Council Leader Cllr Peter Harris on Operation Vanguard
and Wethersfield Asylum Accommodation Centre*

The leader of Braintree District Council has written to the leader of Essex County Council regarding his plan for a private security firm to patrol Braintree town centre. The letter is published in full below:-

Dear Peter,

RE: Visit To Wethersfield Asylum Accommodation Centre, 'Operation Vanguard'

I am writing to you following your visit to the Wethersfield asylum accommodation centre on 21 August and your intention to fund a private security firm to patrol Braintree.

I would like to make it clear from the outset that our position remains that we want Wethersfield to close at the earliest opportunity.

The UK's largest asylum accommodation centre has been imposed on our district in a very rural location with limited infrastructure, at the behest of central government, which bypassed our powers as the Local Planning Authority.

We have been firm in our objections since we first learned of the Home Office's plans for the former airfield in March 2023 and spent more than a year challenging them through the courts.

While the site remains in operation, we continue to take action to ensure our communities feel safe and welcome any further opportunities to support that objective.

We always welcome investment in our district and initiatives designed to promote a safer Braintree.

Braintree is a safe place to work, live and play, and we, alongside our partner agencies, take our responsibility for maintaining that safety incredibly seriously.

However, from the limited information available about Operation Vanguard, we have a number of concerns that we would like addressing urgently.

Divisive comments about Braintree and inaccurate statements

Before I detail those concerns, I would like to raise some outstanding issues.

Originally, representatives from both Braintree District Council and Essex County Council were due to visit on 16 June prior to the meeting being cancelled. In my letter to you last

month I stated our commitment to rescheduling a joint tour of the site. Unfortunately, no response was received.

I am also awaiting clarification regarding comments you made about Braintree town centre being a 'no-go zone' on Thursdays and my request for BDC officers and members to join a task and finish group that you have proposed for Wethersfield.

Now, following your visit to Wethersfield, I would also welcome an explanation as to why your deputy Cllr Russell Quirk has chosen to use social media to repeat claims about Braintree District Council that are not supported by the facts.

In April 2024, with full knowledge of your council, we used funds from a Home Office grant for a pilot discretionary activity scheme after identifying an acute need on site.

Simply put, there was nothing to do for the hundreds of men housed in a remote part of rural Essex and we realised immediately that this could add to the pressure on other local services and communities.

Despite our consistent opposition to the site and being halfway through legal proceedings to try to get the site closed down, we chose to intervene in the interests of all members of our community.

This urgent stopgap lasted a matter of months while we directed the Home Office to provide their own arrangements, which have now been in place for more than two years.

The grant that paid for this is primarily used for the provision of statutory services provided by Braintree District Council as well as Essex County Council; the grant continues to fund your council's statutory safeguarding obligations on site.

Any non-statutory spend must be ratified by the Home Office, as was the case in this instance.

Operation Vanguard

Since establishing and chairing the Wethersfield Multi Agency Forum (MAF) in Spring 2023 and more recently as co-chairs with Essex County Council, we have made every effort to ensure our organisations have worked in close collaboration. I was therefore surprised to learn about a proposal with such significant implications for Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester just before the start of the Bank Holiday weekend.

Having reviewed the publicity for the scheme, and your letter outlining your intentions, I have several questions about this proposal:

Evidence base

The evidence currently available does not appear to support the scale of the proposed response, as your own report states. While there have been crimes committed by individuals residing at the site and whilst one crime is clearly one too many, there are numerous other crime categories in Braintree and across Essex that have experienced greater increases and are not attracting additional funding or dedicated resources.

Historically, Braintree has often experienced a disparity between the perception of crime and actual crime levels (for all crimes). In fact, Braintree town centre is experiencing less crime than three years ago.

The introduction of a private security company conducting additional patrols risks reinforcing that perception rather than responding to an evidenced problem.

Equally, if you do intend to push forward with this proposal, we would like to understand what indicators you will use to determine its success. In the three years since the site became operational, we have supported several evidence-led initiatives that experts in their respective fields identified as having the greatest potential to promote a safer town centre. Here are a few:

Operation Guardian – Our Community Safety Team worked closely with the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) and Essex Police to tackle antisocial behaviour and serious violence through hotspot policing.

Operation Dial – Dedicated patrols, community engagement and outreach initiatives funded by the PFCC had a significant impact on reducing antisocial behaviour.

Operation Minerva – Braintree District Community Safety Partnership launched a women's safety campaign following a grant from the PFCC to tackle hotspots of violence against women and girls.

Safer Streets Braintree – PFCC funding for Braintree, designed to improve people's perception of safety, is currently being delivered. The programme aims to reduce antisocial behaviour, neighbourhood crime, and violence against women and girls. The project includes a new Street Warden for Braintree District Council, new town centre CCTV, educational workshops in schools, detached youth work, a community safety day, and the expansion of Neighbourhood Watch coverage.

Operation Henderson – The Community Safety Partnership has supported Essex's child exploitation awareness campaign by working with partners to raise awareness of child criminal and sexual exploitation among residents, businesses, and professionals in Braintree.

Operation Make Safe – The Community Safety Partnership has also supported a multi-agency safeguarding initiative aimed at increasing awareness of child exploitation within the business community.

Town Centre PSPO – Recently updated following public consultation, the PSPO now includes additional powers to address antisocial drinking and prevent people from sleeping in public places within the town centre in a manner that has a detrimental impact on the quality of life of others.

Braintree Behave or Be Banned (BOBB) Pubwatch group – This partnership between Essex Police, pubs and other licensed premises in Braintree helps make the nighttime economy a safer place. We have put funding towards a communications system to enable members to send information on incidents and potential trouble.

As the above demonstrates, alongside the day-to-day work undertaken by our Street Scene and Community Safety teams, we are continually working to promote a safer town centre

for everyone.

Working with Essex Police

I have been informed by the District Commander that Essex Police do not wish officers to undertake joint patrols with the successful security provider.

The concern is that this could inadvertently provide legitimacy and validation to the initiative.

The Police position will remain business as usual through their visible patrols (jointly with Braintree District Council), engagement activity, and support for local communities.

We will likewise continue to work through established partnership arrangements alongside all statutory Community Safety partners.

Impartiality

It is a cornerstone of our democracy that the police uphold the law without fear of favour.

Throughout the site's duration, we have worked closely with Essex Police to support them in this task as we, with other partners, work to promote community cohesion in a sensitive situation that has been imposed on the county.

To then introduce a private security firm on the streets of Essex with the specific task of protecting one section of society risks undermining these efforts.

Your own Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment report on this proposal highlights the risk to racial discrimination.

Please confirm whether those undertaking reassurance patrols would be equally prepared to identify and report the behaviour of some of the so-called "auditors", who document and engage with migrants to produce online content.

The Police have advised us in Braintree that the conduct of certain individuals within this group has become increasingly concerning in recent weeks, to the extent that enforcement options are now being considered.

Across the county, there have been crimes against service users based at Wethersfield by members of the public, but you fail to mention this.

Any initiative must be collaboratively planned, demonstrably balanced and focused on behaviour, regardless of who is responsible.

Tasking contractors with no more powers than members of the public to patrol the streets targeting a particular demographic simply serves to stoke division and heighten concerns, rather than allay them.

Co-operation

I note it is proposed to fund a £150,000 three-month pilot in Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester through the Community Innovation and Improvement Fund. Before anything further is done, we would expect genuine consultation with the relevant agencies to avoid creating unnecessary alarm across the communities we serve.

Elected representatives in Colchester and Chelmsford have also publicly questioned the need for this measure.

Here in Braintree, since the inception of the site we have worked closely with the dedicated officers for Wethersfield and our local district neighbourhood policing team to constantly monitor the situation. We also continue to robustly challenge the Home Office and hold it to account for the operation of the site and its impact on our communities.

Following the appalling sexual assaults by an asylum seeker in Epping in July last year, there was a significant increase in tensions across the country towards asylum seekers. Braintree was not spared from this and both the town and the site started to attract protests.

While perceptions of crime and safety were not reflected in reported crime levels, we chose to act and we allocated funds from the Home Office to finance high visibility reassurance patrols by Essex Police and our Street Scene operatives.

These patrols have helped to increase community cohesion and have had the added impact of generally boosting policing resources across the town centre.

That's not to say Braintree town centre, like anywhere else, doesn't have its problems and we are continuing to bounce back from the pandemic.

Retailers have told me directly that they are concerned about that the impact of the perception of the town, and we as the District Council are working with them to reassure and look at initiatives to further increase footfall and boost trade.

These are the issues that I thought we would be able to work together on, following our meeting earlier in the summer.

Sadly, that has proven not to be the case.

It is therefore deeply unhelpful to residents, businesses and community organisations when public statements risk undermining confidence in Braintree without clear evidential support.

If you are serious about supporting our community, I would ask that you work collaboratively with us rather than adopt a confrontational approach.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Tom Cunningham
Leader of Braintree District Council

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