



The Chronicle

✠ Serving Cricklade & Latton

No. 606



February 2026

St Sampson's in Winter
photo © Kerry Blanchard

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From the Editor

The February issue is always a mop-up after the excitement of Christmas and New Year ... and most

articles are written in the dying days of December. Instead of every contributor presenting wishes, here is our combined wish to everyone for a **Happy New Year!**

But the days are actually getting longer. The bulbs I planted late summer are sprouting; I just wonder when they will flower so that I can remember what the bulbs were ...

I'm hoping to see the world better this year! I had a cataract op on my right eye just before Christmas. The left is suggested for late January, but we will wait and see.

Chris Pocock took my photo (*above*) while at the November Cricklade Artists Exhibition. Maybe I will need another photo once the left eye is done and I don't need glasses at all!

Chris is organising a front covers photo competition within the Cricklade Camera Club to suit the season of the issue. We will continue to welcome photos from everyone, but we can always hold suitable pictures over to an appropriate month!

Just remember, the cover is tall, not wide (portrait not landscape).

Cricklade Cinema starts its spring season with some cracking stuff ... a murder plotted at Niagara Falls (page 40).

If that's not your scene, or if you want to be involved in both, there is a Quiz Night on 7 February at St Sampson's school (page 25). Note that this is the correct date, not that which you may have seen in the last issue!

Or you could attend the Rugby Club's Race Night on 28 February – page 41.

'Odds on' there are exciting things this year!

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The deadline for the March 2026 issue is Sunday 1 February 2026

Community contacts all 01793 unless stated or emergency

This section is intended to give quick access to emergency and community help phone numbers. If you spot something missing, please let us know: RickDixonChronicle@gmail.com or 01793 759123.

Churches	see centre pages	Boots Chemist (100 High St)	750226
Cricklade Town Council	751394	Dentist (104 High St)	750388
Latton P/Council ...	clerk@latton-pc.gov.uk	Gas leak reporting	0800 111 999
MP (South Cotswolds)	01285 300555	Library (113 High St)	750694
	roz.savage.mp@parliament.uk	Link Scheme transport	07421 018 499
Wiltshire Councillor	752501	Open Door	07599 987 851
Wiltshire Council hub	0300 456 0100	Optician (82 High St)	750415
Emergency Services	999	Purton Vets (Bath Rd)	751698
Non-Emergency: Police	101	Household Recycling Centre	778205
Non-Emergency: NHS	111	Samaritans	FREE: 116 123
Doctors: Purton Surgery	770207	Schools: St Sampson's Primary ...	750452
Green Gables Surgery ...	752633	Cricklade Manor Prep ...	750275
Cricklade (De Silva)	750645	Bradon Forest	770570

Cricklade Jenner Hall ...

... **At The Heart of Cricklade for over 350 years.**

The Jenner Hall is a lovely 17th century Cotswold stone building, which continues to be a popular place for family events and smaller wedding receptions, and is only a 'stone's throw' away from St Sampson's Church, with the bonus of a courtyard at the front of the Hall.



Maybe you would like to hold your craft session or fair, table top sale, quiz night or even dance/exercise class with us. In addition, our smaller annexe hall may be suitable for your talk or club meetings etc. Our Trustees aim to make the Hall attractive to all age groups, and any suggestions would be welcomed.

For more information about the Hall or to check booking availability, visit our website - crickladejennerhall.com

To book the Hall, please contact our booking email address at: jennerhall.bookings@gmail.com or call on: 07823 324 821.

Richard Hickman, Chairman, Cricklade Jenner Hall Community Trust

Distributors

The Chronicle has two requests for distributors for your favourite local magazine:

- A small round of 7 houses at Calcutt.
- 65 copies in High Street (south of the clock roundabout) plus Portwell.

Please let Pam and Miles know if you could help. 07724 759151, 07595 617071 or email p.mking@yahoo.com

Thank you from The Chronicle team!

Cricklade Town Council

Town Council Meetings

Monday 9 February Planning, Conservation and Transport Committee

Monday 23 February Premises and Finance Committee

All meetings, commence at 7pm, and are held in the Council Chamber, 113 High Street. Members of the public are welcome and have an opportunity to ask questions at the beginning of each meeting.



Forthcoming Dates for your Diary

Annual Town Meeting Tuesday 14 April 2026: The winners of the Community awards will receive their prizes amongst other items on the agenda.

Annual Town Litter Pick Saturday 28 March 2026 is where the community comes together to give the town a spring clean and doesn't it sparkle after!

Christmas Lights Competition

Many thanks to the Christmas Lights Committee for organising a great evening on 29 November 2025. The Council would also like to thank residents who lit up Cricklade over the festive period, and congratulate the winners of the Christmas Lights competition.

Best lights winner: 124 Lady Mead
Highly commended: The Oaks Thames Lane, 128 Lady Mead, 67 Pittsfield and 11 Reeds

Best decorated winner: 40 Cherry Tree Road
Highly commended: Rozemarie Chelworth Road, 6 Thames Close, 10 Thames Close

Best residential property on the High Street:

Winner: 53 High Street
Highly commended: 93 High Street

Best commercial winner: Scissors
Highly commended: Animal Fayre

Event Calendar 2026

For those who use the Town Council Website to check events please be aware we can only publish items we have been informed of. For those of you planning an event, please email us your event or meeting details and/or poster to admin@crickladetowncouncil.gov.uk and the website will be updated with your information. For those running clubs, societies, welfare groups etc, let us know of any personnel changes to keep the website up to date.

Fairview Fields & Car Park

Now the works are completed on the river bank and car park facilities, we hope we can appreciate the improvements to the environment for all our residents and visitors. Please can we reiterate that barbecues are not allowed on any Council land, this should help prevent the damage caused to Council property and the cost it involves for our residents.

Vandalism

Sadly thoughtless behaviour has again occurred in Cricklade. Recent examples include the men's public toilets being vandalised, a youth building window smashed and a burnt bench in Fairview Fields. Let's hope that this year we can all respect our Town and keep it at its best for its residents and visitors.

Cricklade Community Resilience Plan

This Plan relies on Community Resilience Volunteers to work within the team to help enhance community preparedness and response to emergencies. The plan is can be found online and in the Town Council front office. The link is www.crickladetowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/115/2025/12/Cricklade-Community-Resilience-Plan-Public-Version.pdf

[You may find this QR Code easier!]



We have a dozen existing volunteers and are looking for up to 8 more to help support this initiative. Input by individuals will amount to a few hours each month (outside the meetings) in order to familiarise themselves with their area of responsibility within Cricklade. No prior experience necessary, just an interest in your town and a willingness to contribute to its ongoing resilience to emergencies. Contact the Town Council for more information if you are interested in joining.

The Town Council and Tourist Information Point is open, except Bank Holidays:

Monday to Friday 10.00 - 16.00 hrs (Closed 12.30 - 13.30 hrs)

Tel: 01793 751394 E-mail: admin@crickladetowncouncil.gov.uk

Website: www.crickladetowncouncil.gov.uk



Follow the Council @ www.facebook.com/CrickladeTownCouncil

Roz Savage MP

Roz Savage, MP for the South Cotswolds, is holding regular constituency surgeries to support residents with their concerns. Following parliamentary advice, these surgeries are now by appointment only.

Where possible, appointments will be held virtually. However, Roz is also hosting less frequent in-person surgeries at various locations across the constituency to ensure accessibility for all residents.

To book an appointment, please email roz.savage.mp@parliament.uk or call her office on 01285 300555. If you have specific accessibility needs, please let the team know when booking.





Wiltshire Perspective

Nick Dye, Councillor for Cricklade, Latton and Marston Meysey

At the time of writing I'm aware that much will have happened by the time of publication. There are two really big issues:

- The decision to close Purton's household recycling centre (HRC) and another site
- The Council's budget

A number of figures and timeframes have wafted around, as have emotions and accusations. The two issues are interrelated. The budget is requiring some really tough decisions and the closing of the HRC is more than penny-pinching, it's about saving a seven-figure sum every year, about the same cost as all the council's leisure centres (of which Cricklade is not one).

Waste falls into a number of contracts: the kerbside rubbish collection; kerbside recycling; HRCs; bulking up centres and various disposal and reuse pathways for the different materials. Apparently most of the contracts were with a single supplier; although they were making money, their accounts indicate that they were not making much.

The HRC decision was made in a cabinet meeting, which in Wiltshire delegates significant authority to the Cabinet and not the Full Council. I asked to see and review the evidence for some of the claims and I've been lobbying heavily for either Purton's HRC's retention or for an alternative to be in place before its closure. That remains my position. The costs per ton of recycling will probably remain largely the same as currently, regardless of which HRC the materials get transported to.

The overall budget has a number of legal requirements, it has to balance and it has to be in place in order for people to be notified far enough in advance. Failure in the first item will trigger the resignation of the officer responsible for the budget (called the Section 151 Officer or Chief Finance Officer, a bit harsh as it wasn't their choice), that would probably trigger a vote of no confidence. If the no confidence vote passes then everything is back to the drawing board and it's anyone's guess as to what would happen or when things will get resolved.

By the time it does get resolved, the issue of the HRC may very well not be reversed anyway, but significant time may well have lapsed by then and the new Council Tax notices might also be delayed. Again, much remains up in the air.

There will be an extraordinary Area Board meeting later on in January, as part of the promised consultation following the decision. Talk of a poorly attended Area Board, which there was at the last one, will probably evaporate.

During a significant learning curve for me and many of my colleagues, my priorities are clear, to represent you the residents. Sometimes that's really easy, but at other times it takes a lot of work, not all of it is front of house, but meeting people face to face and lobbying for our corner of Wiltshire. Then there's social media to watch out for, because if you don't correct people's assumptions, a wrong message often grows legs and runs away from you and the true facts.

Having said that there have been a number of items of casework where I have been able to help people and that brings balance to things, for which I am grateful. If you think I might be able to help you, please contact me on 752501 or at nick.dye@wiltshire.gov.uk.

Allan & Nicky Webster

The Chronicle has been produced by Webster Printing since issue no.240 in December 1994 – with their final publication being no.604, that makes 365 issues over 31 years, and so 60% of the entire publishing history of *The Chronicle*. Allan and Nicky also took on the roles of Advertising Manager and Distribution Coordinator again some years back. These roles have involved a lot of commitment over that time.

We therefore thank them immensely for their input to the community during all these years and for their help in easing the transition to new distribution and advertising teams.

The Chronicle Team

Purton & Green Gable Surgery PPG

Serving patients in Purton, Cricklade & surrounding communities



Many of you will have heard about Sheila Fowler's sad passing at the end of November. Sheila was a Founder member of Purton Surgery PPG, holding the Secretary position for many years, and will be sadly missed by everyone who knew her. Our thoughts are with her family.

Another long-standing committee member, Patricia Baker, has also decided to step down from the committee after many years. She was responsible for running the 200 Club for quite a few years, once it had been set up by Marietta and Graham Crockford during the Covid Lockdowns.

Autumn Talk – 2 October 2025

Our autumn talk on Sepsis was held at the Purton surgery. It was extremely well attended and everyone agreed it was an informative and very interesting evening. We are hoping that the speakers will return in the spring next year to talk on the topic of "Looking After Your Kidneys". Look out for more information nearer the time!

200 Club

The most recent 200 Club draw was done at the beginning of December by Steve Tanner, the Surgery's Advanced Care Practitioner. The first prize winner was Peter Berry and the second prize was won by Janet Stares who very kindly decided to donate her winnings of £15 back to the PPG.

All members of the 200 Club are allocated a number to be used in the draw. If you are a member and wish to know your number then please email our Treasurer: treasurer.psppg@gmail.com to request it.

A form for joining the 200 Club via standing order of £15 per year taken on 1 September each year, is available from both Purton and Green Gable surgeries. Please hand in any completed forms to the receptionists at either surgery.

Table Top in Purton Surgery

Thank you to all who support the Tabletop in Purton waiting room and sale of second hand books in both Purton and Green Gables surgery waiting rooms - to those who contribute items and those who buy.

We do need more donations, so if you have anything to donate, please hand your books/items to the Reception Staff in either Purton or Green Gable Surgery. For any items you wish to take away, please give your donation to the Receptionists at either surgery.

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Therefore I will no longer be available for plumbing and heating enquiries from the end of February 2026.

Lyn and I would like to thank our customers in Cricklade and the surrounding areas for your support and custom over the years. It has been very much appreciated.

We are now looking forward to this next chapter in our lives.



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Parent feedback May 2024

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Cricklade Development Foundation (CDF)

Investing in Our High Street



Thanks to the extraordinary support of the Cricklade community, the transformation of the Old Police Station is now complete. What was once an under-used building is today a vibrant community asset – bringing new life, jobs and footfall to the High Street.

What's been achieved together:

- Commercial space for two thriving local businesses
- New homes for local people
- Over 35 jobs created
- The Queen Elizabeth Walkway, linking the High Street with Horse Fair Lane
- Heritage displays celebrating Cricklade's High Street and the life of Queen Elizabeth II
- Garden@91, a new landscaped garden at the rear of the building for community use

These improvements are already strengthening the vitality of the town centre and helping to ensure that Cricklade's High Street remains active, attractive and resilient.

Garden@91 – Open to All, Available to Hire is now nearing completion and is open for everyone to enjoy—a calm, green space right in the heart of the High Street.

The garden is also available for hire by community groups or private individuals for small events. If you would like to use the space, we'd love to hear from you.

Looking Ahead: Protecting What Matters

While the Old Police Station project is finished, CDF's role is ongoing. Our purpose has always been to support the long-term health of Cricklade's High Street, particularly its commercial and retail spaces. This means:

- Caring for the Old Police Station as a long-term community asset
- Building reserves to ensure its continued security and maintenance
- Remaining ready to act if future threats to High Street commercial/retail space arise.

At times, this may involve engaging in planning discussions or working with partners. In certain circumstances – subject to financial capacity and ongoing member support – it may mean stepping in more directly to safeguard ground-floor commercial use for the benefit of the town. By continuing to invest in CDF, a strong membership helps provide the sound financial footing needed for the Society to act thoughtfully and effectively – if and when it's needed.

Membership – A Stake in Cricklade's Future

It's never too late to become a member of CDF. Membership starts from £50, giving you:

- A tangible stake in your town
- A vote at the AGM
- The opportunity to support the long-term health of the High Street

For members investing £2,500 or more, shareholdings are eligible for 3% interest. Completing a nomination form may also allow the first £5,000 of your shareholding to fall outside your estate for inheritance tax purposes. Membership also makes a thoughtful gift for family or friends who care about Cricklade.

For further information about any of the above, please contact Terri on 07902 421 756 or email: contact@crickladefoundation.org.uk. Stay up-to-date via Facebook or www.crickladefoundation.org.uk.

Your Society – Supporting Your High Street

Cricklade Garden Club

Our first meeting in 2026 will be on **Tuesday, 10 March** which is also our AGM.



A review of the second half of our year:

In September Philip Aubury gave us a demonstration of the why, when and how to shape and prune shrubs. Despite his very helpful advice, I'm still Confused of Cricklade by Clematis.

Nicola Hope gave us a delightful talk in October entitled "Tales from the Potting Shed: Tips and Tales from a Professional Gardener." As a school student needing to do the mandatory work experience week, she reluctantly followed her father's suggestion that she "asks the gentleman in the big house up the road if she could help in his garden." Highgrove was the start of a remarkable gardening career.

In November Harriet Rycroft gave us an excellent talk on planting up pots for winter and spring interest. We came away with the advice of massing bulbs in our pots, the gardening equivalent of "Pile 'em high"!

Finally, in December we had a very successful Christmas Social with lovely food and wine and a fiendish quiz devised by our committee members.

To remind you: our meetings are on the second Tuesday of the month in the Town Hall Annexe. Tea and cakes are served at 7pm and the speaker starts at 7.30pm.

For information about the club, upcoming events and trips, please visit our excellent website www.crickladegardenclub.org.uk

Membership is £25.00p.a. We are affiliated to the Gloucestershire Federation of Gardening Societies (www.gfgs.org.uk). Visitors welcome at £5 a session – come and give us a try!

Queries to Bizzie on 07876 347 973 and Janet on 07765 276 534.

Cricklade Town Hall

Book your event at Cricklade Town Hall. Birthdays, anniversaries, wedding celebrations, children's parties, quiz nights, club meetings, etc. The Town Hall offers flexible space with tables, padded chairs, excellent kitchen facilities and free WiFi. There is a choice of the Main Hall, Annexe and Committee Room.



Please contact our Bookings Secretary, Mrs Nicola Fry on 07977 758 389 (before 9pm please) or via email at crickladetownhall@hotmail.com for further details, or Facebook for photos and other information: www.facebook.com/crickladetownhall

Cricklade Library is above the Town Council Office at 113 High Street. The entrance is through the gateway and there is a lift as well as stairs to the library level. Current opening hours are: *(Closed Bank Holidays)*

Mon:	2–4pm	Wed:	2–4pm	Fri:	2–5pm	Sun:	Closed
Tues:	10am–1pm	Thurs:	2–7pm	Sat:	10am–1pm		

Cricklade W.I.

It only seems 5 minutes since we were toasting the new Millennium in 2000 and a quarter of this millennium is now behind us!

Cricklade WI enjoyed a delicious Christmas lunch at The White Hart in December and a very jolly party in January with musical accompaniment. Our members also performed an amusing playlet written and produced by our own Bizzie White, which was great fun but probably not worthy of an Oscar! Emma Thompson need not fear the competition!

2026 is shaping up to having a very exciting programme, to include:- Guards Behind the Scenes, A Day in The Life of the Victorian Divorce Court, Saxon Riding for the Disabled with many other events and outings in the offing. We also invite everyone to join us for Coffee and Chat at 11am on the first Tuesday of every month at the White Hart – we would love to meet some more of you ladies in the coming months.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday 3 February: Coffee & Chat 11am at the White Hart

Thursday 19 February: Iris Folding Workshop (Karin Meek) at 7.30pm in the Cricklade Town Hall Annexe

If you are interested in finding out more about our activities, please contact our Secretary Viv Tomkins on 01793 752459. Why not consider giving the WI a try in 2026. We will make you very welcome.

In Memoriam

■ SYLVIA ELAINE BLACKWELL

Brian, Karen, Alison along with all the family members would like to thank everyone who came to Sylvia's funeral service on 27 November at St Sampson's Church, and kindly gave donations to Prospect Hospice. Their home care was excellent

Also thanks go to Revd Shirley Danby for the Church Service and to Hilliers Funeral Directors who provided an excellent service.

Donations in memory of Sylvia for Prospect Hospice came to £1,150.30

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Cricklade Open Door

We reopened after the Christmas break on Monday 5 January and were very happy to get going again with all our regular activities, lunches, special events and, most importantly, to once again spend time with friends and fellow members and new members in 2026.



We were very fortunate again, last year, to have had the support of so many Cricklade residents, businesses and organisations.

Thank you to McFarlane's Estate Agents, Cricklade Manor Prep School, St Sampson's C of E Primary School, Thames and Cricklade Pre Schools, The White Hart Hotel, JicSaw Thai Restaurant and Friends of Cricklade Elderly for your continued support and generosity, in many ways. We have also received several, generous financial gifts to Open Door both from members and from other supporters. Several members gave money to Open Door in lieu of giving and sending Christmas cards – something very worthwhile when you consider the cost of postage and the environment!

Our raffles raised a considerable sum for Open Door, so lots of thanks too, to members, friends and supporters who donated raffle prizes.

The weeks and months roll on: do keep an eye out for our posters around the town, which advertise our weekly and special events. All our usual activities - Knitting and Natter, Seated Exercises and Bingo, will continue as will our Tuesday afternoon programme of board games, Beetle, Quizzes etc. Or if you just fancy a coffee and a chat, or want to check us out, call in in the mornings and you will find a warm welcome, in a lovely warm hall. Give us a ring beforehand to discuss your queries or even arrange for one of our volunteers to meet you at the gate, if you're a little shy about walking into the hall on your own.

*Cricklade Open Door: Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays
10.00 - 3.30 at The Jenner Hall, Bath Road
Telephone: 07599 987 851*

Thank You

■ RAY COOLE

Ray Coole would like to thank all his friends, relatives, neighbours, The Royal Navy and members of The Cotswold Sailing Club for all their good wishes and attending his 100th birthday celebrations on 19 October 2025.

Ray has lived in Cricklade for all his 100 years except for serving in the 2nd World War which was recognised by the Royal Navy's visit and presentation. Thanks also to The Cotswold Sailing Club for presenting him with a long service award.

Marguerite

■ GROTTO

Sue and Alan Lane would like to thank everyone who came to visit our grotto at 40 Cherry Tree. We have raised £110 which has been donated to Cricklade Memory Café. Thank you for your generosity.

Cricklade Walking Group: part of Get Wiltshire Walking

Come and join weekly walks in Cricklade, led by fully qualified walk leaders. Friendly and fun, it's a great opportunity to get fit, meet new people and get to know your local area. Everyone's welcome provided you are independently mobile, able to meet the physical demands of your chosen walk and can maintain responsibility for your own safety and wellbeing. We are sorry but no dogs, other than sensory dogs, are allowed.

Walk leaders manage and tailor the following walks to meet the needs of walkers:

- Fridays 9.30am meeting at Waylands (by flag poles): Starter, Stroller & Strider walks;
- Tuesdays 6.30pm meeting at Cricklade Leisure Centre: Strider walk only

On your first visit, please allow a few minutes to complete a short registration form.

For further information contact local walk leader Viv Tomkins on 01793 752459 or email vivienne.tomkins@btinternet.com.

Wayland Estates Charity

The next meeting of the Wayland Estates Charity will take place on Wednesday 4 February 2026 in the Town Hall committee room commencing at 7pm



This meeting is an 'open' meeting and the residents of Cricklade and the Parish thereof are all welcome to join the proceedings.

The agenda will have been published in advance on Facebook and on noticeboards in the town.



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

CRICKLADE LEISURE CENTRE Registered Office:Stones Lane, Cricklade Wiltshire SN6 6JW. Reg Charity No:1125605

Churches Together

Services for the Upper Thames Churches

1 February **Septuagesima: Epiphany 4**

- 8am Holy Communion at *St Sampson's church*
- 10am Holy Communion at *Holy Cross*
- 10am Morning Worship at *St Sampson's school*
with music group and children's activities
- 10am Morning Worship at *St John the Baptist, Latton*
- 6.30pm Evensong at *St Sampson's*

8 February **Sexagesima: 2nd Sunday before Lent**

- 10am Upper Thames Together Communion at *St Sampson's school*
- 3.30pm AK Messy Church at *Holy Cross*

15 February **Sunday before Lent**

- 8am Holy Communion followed by breakfast at *St Sampson's*
- 10am Holy Communion at *St John the Baptist, Latton*
- 10am Morning Worship at *St Sampson's school*
- 10am Morning Worship at *Holy Cross*
- 6.30pm Evensong at *St Sampson's church*

18 February **Ash Wednesday**

- 7.30pm Ash Wednesday Communion and Ashing service at *St Sampson's church*

22 February **1st Sunday of Lent**

- 8.30am Holy Communion BCP at *Holy Cross*
- 10am Holy Communion at *St Sampson's school*
- 10am Morning Worship at *St John the Baptist, Latton*

Thursday morning prayers in St Sampson's:

8.30am for coffee & catch up, prayers from 8.45 and finish by 9.30am.

Everyone is welcome.

Zoom Monday morning prayers – contact David Tarr

Cricklade United Church

Calcutt Street, Cricklade

Minister: Revd Sarah Simpson, tel. 01666 826866, Email: sarahsimpson14@btinternet.com

As a United Reformed / Methodist Church, we are part of the URC North West Wiltshire Pastorate and the Upper Thames Methodist Circuit. Please have a look at our website for all the current information regarding our services, dates, times and other events.

crickladeunitedchurch.co.uk

Sunday morning services during February - all at 10.30am

- | | | | |
|-------|---|--------|-------------------|
| 1 Feb | Joseph Musungu | 15 Feb | Rev Sarah Simpson |
| 8 Feb | Rev Sarah Simpson - service includes Holy Communion | 22 Feb | Trevor Stinton |

in Cricklade & Latton

St. Mary's Catholic Church

Weekly Mass times 9.30am on Sundays
 10.00am on Fridays

For notices please see the noticeboard on the railings of St Mary's.

Parish website *www.stthomasparishfairford.org.uk*.

Father Michael Robertson can be contacted on 01285 712586 or by email *michael.Robertson@cliftondiocese.com*

The Friends of St Mary's website with more details of the history of the church is at *www.crickladedestmary.org.uk*

The Upper Thames Benefice

Cricklade St Sampson's, Latton St John the Baptist, Ashton Keynes Holy Cross and the Leigh All Saints

Contact details:

Vicar: Revd Canon Debbie Dewes - email: *vicar@upperthames.org.uk* tel: 01793 752718

Associate Vicar: Revd Shirley Danby - email: *revdshirleyd@gmail.com* tel. 07980 548844

Curate: Revd Sharon Glead - email: *curate@upperthames.org.uk* tel: 07305 006693

Parishes Administrator: Jane Eyles - email: *admin@upperthames.org.uk* tel: 01793 979304

From the Registers of the Upper Thames Group of Churches

Baptism

23 November Molly Belle Todd at St Sampson's

Confirmation

26 November Kingsley Spencer Kent at *All Saints Church, Crudwell* (by Rt Revd Neil Warwick, Bishop of Swindon and Acting Bishop of Bristol)

Funerals

8 November Maureen Fretwell at *North Wilts Crematorium*

11 November Robert Walker at *St Sampson's & Kingsdown Crematorium*

27 November Sylvia Elaine Blackwell at *St Sampson's & Cricklade Cemetery*

5 December May New at *North Wilts Crematorium*

5 December Beryl McKie at *North Wilts Crematorium*

12 December Esme Jean Peer at *Cricklade Cemetery*

16 December Delilah Collett at *St Sampson's & Cricklade Cemetery*

St Sampson's Bell Ringers

From the new year, St Sampson's bell ringers practice night has moved from Wednesday to Monday evening 7.45 to 9pm.

Also we welcome new recruits. If you are interested, please contact Brian Danby: *bdanby21@gmail.com*

St Sampson's Church Refurbishment Appeal

Creating a Community Space for the Future

St Sampson's Church appeal heating update

A huge thank you to everyone who has supported our fundraising events or donated towards St Sampson's Church's new heating system. We want our church to be usable as soon as possible and we appreciate your patience over this past year when the church has been even colder than usual!



Progress so far:

- Removed the old asbestos boiler to make room for the boilers and future heat pump equipment in the boiler room.
- Completing the installation of three phase electricity (hopefully this will have been completed by the end of January!) This will mean we can use more electricity at any given time, so it is very important for our future heating system.
- Installing an electric water boiler to heat the current radiators so we can have heating as soon as possible. The temperature will be similar to previously before the old boiler was condemned.

We are now working on our long-term vision for the refurbishment. Air source heat pumps are still part of those plans, and they will work together with the electric boiler as part of a hybrid system in the future, making the temperature much more comfortable. We also plan to install PV panels and batteries soon to help offset some of the costs of electric heating and as part of our commitment to sustainability.

The estimated costs of this current phase (excluding VAT) are:

Removal of asbestos boiler:	£10,100
Installation of electric boiler:	£38,000
Additional electrical work:	up to £6,000
PV panels and batteries:	£18,000

We have almost enough in grants (huge thanks to the Boiler Hardship Fund, Community First and Wayland Estates Charity) and funds raised to meet the costs of this phase. As ever, we are so grateful for your support which will help with the heating system and our planning for the wider refurbishment.

Thank you so much for all of your support.

St Sampson's Church 100 Club

The lucky winners of the November 2025 draw was Chris Archer who won £33.00.
and the December 2025 draw was Nigel Massey who also won £33.00.

St Sampson's Church benefited by £33.00 from both draws, a total of £66.00.

To join the 100 Club, contact Sharon Smith: tel. 751375 or email sharonjsmith54@hotmail.com

Donations to the Refurbishment Appeal

How to give: Cash or cheques (made payable to St Sampson's PCC No. 2 Account) in the donations box in church or send to Adina Grace (Church Warden and Treasurer), 24 North Wall, Cricklade, SN6 6DU. For further details please contact Adina on 01793 380583 or email janda.grace447@outlook.com

Online donations can be made by scanning the QR code (*right*) or visiting donate.giveasyoulive.com.





Quiz Night 7 February 2026

(Not the date given in the last issue!!)

7pm for 7.30pm start

at **St Sampson's School Hall**

£12 per person / Max 6 per team

Hot supper included.

Drinks/Wine available for a donation.

Tickets from Sharon Smith

01793 751375

Wine Tasting

20 March 2026

Look out for posters!

Bounce and Rhyme

Bounce and Rhyme - a group for Babies and Toddlers plus their parents, grandparents and carers restarted for the New Year in January. We meet at the United Church Hall in Calcutt Street from 1.45pm to 3pm on the first and third Tuesday of the month.

The dates this month are **3 February and 17 February**. Do come along for nursery rhymes, story time, refreshments and a chat. There is no charge we are delighted to welcome you,

Cricklade Breastfeeding Friends

We run at the same time as Bounce & Rhyme alongside the free music group, to offer friendly supportive infant feeding and parenting advice. We're non judgemental and offer a safe space to talk about anything on your mind and signpost to other services and resources to help. A private space is also available to talk in confidence.

Annabel

Coffee Café

All are welcome to attend the weekly Coffee Café each Friday at Cricklade United Church Hall, Calcutt Street from 10am to 11.30am. Come along for a coffee and a chat

Bingo4U

Come along on Wednesday afternoons at the Jenner Hall – anyone welcome.
£2 entry. Eyes down at 2pm.

Contacts: Chris 07500 871 680 or Liz 07780 473 024

Cricklade Foodbank

Open every Friday 10am to 11.30am in the Jenner Hall, Bath Road



During 2025 the foodbanks operating in Cricklade and Malmesbury helped support 824 families in our local community. Thank you to everyone who has volunteered or donated to support the foodbank – the help is greatly appreciated. If you're good with people and like being part of a team you may be a great volunteer – we're always looking for more people to help with a range of activities from packing, collecting, or meeting clients. If you'd like to know more, we'd love to hear from you.

Email: crickladecm@malmesburydistrict.foodbank.org.uk

If you, or someone you know is struggling we're here. Please get in touch by calling 01666 826982.

Rock2Recovery Curry Quiz Fundraising Evening: Monday 9 March @ 7pm

At Kavali Indian Restaurant, High Street, Cricklade

£25 per person including Quiz and Raffle. Drinks extra.

Purchase tickets via: race-nation.co.uk/register/rock2recovery/fundraisingcurry-evening

Enquiries contact Nick on: 07920 018 747

Please do not book directly with Kavali. Numbers are limited.

Rock2Recovery was set up and incorporated as a not for profit, Community Interest Company (CIC) in February 2015. Founded by former Royal Marines Jamie Sanderson and Jason 'Foxy' Fox to provide rapid mental health support to veterans and some emergency services personnel and their families facing issues like PTSD, helping them find their "rock" to refocus and save lives with critical intervention.

Its uniqueness is its rapid response.

Rock2Recovery aims to provide life changing coaching and support within two weeks of a referral helping people regain control, find purpose, and build a more positive future. One-to-one coaching sessions are designed to create meaningful change, using a tailored approach that empowers individuals to reshape their mindset and emotional well-being. The first six sessions are free and clients are coached to independence.

They believe no one should struggle alone, and are committed to reaching out and offering the guidance needed to move forward. They are reliant on fund raising to continue this much needed work.

IN SUPPORT OF
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Kavali
RESTAURANT

CURRY QUIZ NIGHT
Rock2Recovery Fundraising Evening
Monday 9th March @ 7pm
£25 per person
Includes Quiz and Raffle. Drinks extra.

Please book using this link:
race-nation.co.uk/register/rock2recovery/fundraising-curry-evening

Please do not book directly with Kavali. Numbers are limited.
If you have any questions please contact Nick on 07920 018747.

Parkinson's UK Cricklade Café

PARKINSON'S^{UK}
CHANGE ATTITUDES.
FIND A CURE.
JOIN US.

Hello to all of our friends and visitors to the Parkinson's UK Cricklade Café. In 2025 we had lots wonderful things happen.

Our lovely venue at The Cricklade and Spa kindly upgraded us to The Ballroom for our monthly gatherings and the management and staff do a brilliant job of hosting us.

We have been gifted funds from Cricklade Pétanque Club, Mark Ingle and Westmill Park Residents Association for which we are excited to make our visitors' days more fun and happier.

We have regular speakers and Parkinson's nurses and Parkinson's UK staff in attendance to help make each café a success. If your life is affected by Parkinson's or a friend or family member has been diagnosed, you are welcome to join us.

We meet on the third Wednesday of each month 10.30 - 12.00 at The Cricklade and Spa SN6 6HA

Contact: parkinsonscafecricklade@gmail.com or call 07951 944 760

Sailability

In December Ant and Toby competed in world championships in Oman and, although not placed, had an amazing time

They are hoping to compete in European and World Championships next year and planning a meal at Kavali to raise funds, your support would be appreciated

Cricklade Camera Club

Are you interested in photography, or do you just want to take better photographs?



If so, why not come along to Cricklade Camera Club. Visitors and new members will receive a warm welcome – you don't even need a camera. Everyone is welcome. Come and try us out – your first evening is FREE. We meet in person on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in the Cricklade Town Hall Annexe and there is a range of talks, workshops and Zoom presentations throughout the year. To see all our activities take a look at the programme page of our website crickladecameraclub.org/program

On Tuesday 3 February, 7.30pm in the Town Hall Annexe, is our PDI and Print league round 2. Members have submitted printed and digital images, and they will be judged during the evening by an independent, visiting judge. Even if you haven't submitted images, come along as it's a great way to learn what makes a good photograph.

On Wednesday 17 February at 7.30pm we are hosting a Zoom meeting presentation by Peter Benson entitled 'Photography on the Darkside, London Nights'. Here you can join Peter in exploring the magical beauty of the night, one frame at a time immersing yourself in the mesmerising urban nightscapes captured through his lens. During this journey he'll be giving some hints and tips along the way sprinkled with a bit of history about some of the places, so there is something for everyone.

For more information contact: clubsecretary@crickladecameraclub.org

Cricklade Memory Café

Our Christmas party was a great success and it was lovely to welcome so many of our friends as well as our members. There is a lovely Facebook post with pictures and video. A special thank-you to our volunteers, who worked particularly hard to make the party go with a swing. Our Christmas raffle was drawn, and made a grand total of £791.00. Another big thank-you to everyone who bought tickets and especially to all who donated prizes.



Once again local businesses and individuals have stepped up by not only by sponsoring cafés but by providing fantastic prizes for the Christmas Raffle:

White Hart Cricklade	White Lodge Care Home (Barchester Healthcare)	
The Wild Fig	Russell Osman of Blackwells Independent Funeral Directors	
Jigsaw Thai Restaurant	Cricklade Leisure Centre	Askwith Electrical Ltd
Hannah Puffett of Josie Ann Hairdressing		Jane Harris at Pure
Hayley at Scissors	Paul from Cricklade Hardware	
Cricklade Tesco	and Culverhay Stores.	

Wednesday 4 February is our second birthday party and marks the start of our third year. We will be entertained by Glyn and Steve, so party hats and dancing shoes at the ready. In March we will hold our second AGM; the date is still to be confirmed, and will be advertised later.

We are always happy to welcome new members and as ever for more information, please contact Vona 07896 723 794 or Margaret 07976 620 089.



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SJP APPROVED 08/03/2024

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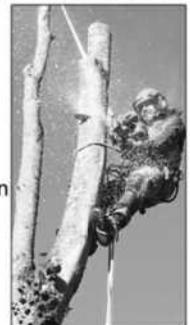
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Cricklade Bloomers

Whispers from the Walled Garden

Cricklade Bloomers have once again completed a busy green-fingered year of planting and fundraising. We would like to thank residents and businesses alike who have supported us over 2025. We are now ready for the coming year that commences with our annual general meeting on the 26 February.



Special thanks must go to two of our members who have gone above and beyond during 2025. Firstly Gill Hiscox for her marmalade making throughout the year and her numerous Christmas table decorations sold on the cart. Secondly Karen Hankins, who worked tirelessly collecting and sorting, over several weeks, mountains of greenery for the Christmas wreath making.

Cricklade Jenner Hall (Parish Hall) "Save It Club"

In the recent Monthly Draws, the lucky winners were:-

	27 Nov 2025	18 Dec 2025	
1st Prize	Jan Aylward £33.90	Madeleine Richards	£34.20
2nd Prize	Sally Dye £22.60	John Hickman	£22.80
Jenner Hall Funds:	£56.50		£57.00



The Save It Club raised £711.00 in 2025 - these funds will go towards the up-keep of the Jenner Hall. Thank you for your continued support.

To Join the Jenner Hall "Save It Club", please contact Paul Marley Tel: 752851.

The Subscription for the "Save It Club" is only £12 per year.

Subscribers are encouraged to pay a year's subscription of £12 by Standing Order.



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- **Earache (Children & young Adults aged 1 year to 17 years)**
- **Infected Insect Bites (Adults & Children aged 1 and over)**
- **Impetigo (Adults & Children aged 1 year and over)**
- **Shingles (Adults 18 years and over)**
- **Urinary Tract Infections (Women aged 16 to 64 years)**

So, if you or a family member have any of the above symptoms. Please come in a speak to our Pharmacist, who will be there to offer help, advice and possible treatment. There is no need to make an appointment.

Our Pharmacy team can also offer NHS services for the following:



NHS Blood Pressure Check : For anyone over the age of 40 years, and with no previous high blood pressure history or diagnosis.



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The Cricklade Band

...’twas the season... hope we made it jolly!



Thank you to everyone who welcomed us over 18 events the band attended from the very end of November right up to Christmas Morning.

People in our Cricklade community are coming out to join us as we make our way round all the paths, lanes, streets and roads of the town on the lead-up to Christmas Morning – it’s lovely to have an audience that changes, and grows, as we visit each neighbourhood. We try to give as accurate a route we can, here’s an idea we’re working on though – having a tracker with us so that you can see where we are in real time – let us know if you’d like that!

Many people help us on our way. Some we’d like to specially thank for their help and support are Eric and Chris, Cricklade’s town criers who were out and about with us – some of our band Vice Presidents accompanied us too.

Apparently, one of the town’s festive traditions is ‘Christmas Present’ the Christmas show! This was once again a Cricklade Town Hall sell-out, leaving the lovely staff at the Council Office dispensing tickets in record time! Everyone took up the invitation to ‘turn it into a party’ – okay, we know that we still have to remove some confetti from the Town Hall ceiling, whoops!

The 2025 big ‘Festive Raffle’ increased its ticket sales yet again! There was a magnificent list of 32 raffle prizes all sourced in Cricklade. Thank you to all Cricklade’s shops and businesses – please support them like they support us - and thanks to every one of our ticket buyers!

Here’s a good time to gratefully remind you of the people who have their own panel on our trailer – our ‘corporate supporters’ – Baz the Farmer, Chelworth Garage, GWP Group, The Flexstorage and The Painted Furniture Company – they support us financially and in other ways too. If you’d like to have your name in front of our audiences just let us know!

A special note – at Christmastime there are always people talking to our musicians and to our Crew members who are actively thinking about learning to play, or returning to play. If that included you, or someone you know, then just contact us through the Facebook page or drop into the Town Hall on a Thursday evening.

We welcome everyone, regardless of anything, we don’t worry about ‘Grades’, we’re certainly not ‘contesty’ – and everything in the band ‘family’ is free of charge!

As always, keep an eye on the band on Facebook as we go through the 2026 events list and once again thank you to everyone who played their own part, helping us make music a part of our Cricklade community.

Paul, and everyone in the band





Cricklade Pétanque Club

Our pistes are at Cricklade Hotel and Spa, SN6 6HA

The final month of 2025 saw us enjoy our Christmas meal and disco at the hotel.

Our AGM was well attended and successful. Players received their medals for their prowess in the club competitions. A token of thanks was given to one of the committee who always goes above and beyond in ensuring that the club pistes are in such good condition.

If you would like to come along and have a go you would always be welcome on any of our playing days as below. There will be someone around to show you the ropes and there are Pétanque England qualified coaches at our coaching sessions. These sessions are a combination of training and then playing a couple of games. Nothing too serious.

Our playing days are: Mon 2 - 4.30pm Wed 2 - 4.30pm Sat 10am - 12.30pm

Coaching Sessions are: Wed 10 - 11.30am (ladies) Fri 10 - 11.30am (mixed)

Please arrive 10 minutes before start to avoid delays in play!

www.crickladepetanqueclub.co.uk Facebook Cricklade Pétanque Club

email: info@crickladepetanqueclub.co.uk

Sing Four Four Community Choir

The choir ended the year on a high note with our Christmas Concert at St Mary's Church, Purton. We have many events planned for 2026 which will be announced in these pages in due course!



We are actively recruiting, especially men! Soprano, alto, tenor, bass or unsure of your range, if you are interested in joining this friendly choir, please go to our website: singfourfour.org.uk. Alternatively, you can contact our musical director, Jen Bamford, on jenloubamford@googlemail.com

Cricklade & District Probus Club

We are looking forward to our forthcoming group meetings when the following talks will take place.

5 Feb *Nicholas Henderson*: The Giant of Cerne Abbas, King Arthur etc

19 Feb *Mike Bottomley*: Jack in the Green

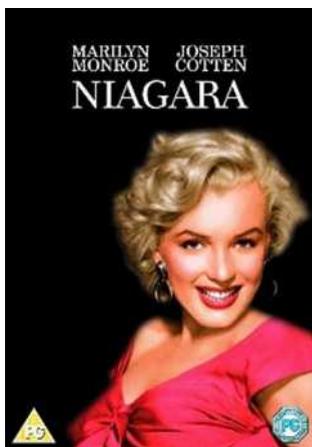


Meetings normally take place fortnightly on a Thursday meeting at 10am for a 10.20 start at the White Hart Hotel in Cricklade. Ours is a friendly group who enjoy keeping our minds active and socialising over a drink in the bar after the meetings. We are actively seeking to expand our numbers and look forward to welcoming new members to the Club.

For further information about our local club please contact the Honorary Secretary, Martin Chambers on 01793 751223. If you contact Martin and advise you would like to attend, which is free for the first few visits, you will be allocated a dedicated host who will introduce you to our members. Alternatively, just turn up on the day and you will be made welcome. For further details about Cricklade & District Probus Club and our scheduled talks for the year, visit our new website at probus.org.uk/cricklade

CRICKLADE CINEMA!

Our Spring season continues Tuesday February 24th at 8:00 pm in the Town Hall.



Niagara (PG, 98mins)

Marilyn Monroe was born 100 years ago in 2026 and this generally well-received 1953 thriller sees the actress playing a woman plotting to murder her husband while on vacation at Niagara Falls.

And still to come.....

24 March: I Swear (15, 120mins)

28 April: The Choral (15, 113mins) ** to be confirmed
**

Tickets can be purchased in advance from The Town Council Offices at 113 High Street or on the door (subject to availability). Price £5.

More details about all the films being shown and information on Cricklade Cinema can be found on our website (www.cricklادecinema.org.uk) so why not take a look?

Email us at: cricklادecinema@gmail.com

Check us out at Facebook Cricklade Cinema

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Saxons Pétanque Club, Cricklade Leisure Centre

New year, new start? Why not try pétanque? It's the same as French boules and is really easy to pick up.

Saxons Pétanque Club play all year round on the gravel pistes just in front of Cricklade Leisure Centre at 2pm on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and at 10am on Saturday mornings. And in the summer months, we also play on Wednesday evenings. Many members are happy to stick to these regular club sessions whilst some enjoy playing in the Cotswold league and in other competitions.

You're very welcome to come and have a go at pétanque, with no obligation to join the club, and we can lend you some boules if necessary. Please just turn up 10 minutes before the start of any of our regular sessions so that we can get you set up. If you find you enjoy it and would like to become a member of Saxons Pétanque Club, our annual subscription is currently a very reasonable £25. If you'd like to improve your game, we have four qualified coaches who will resume training sessions when the weather improves.

If you'd like to find out more about Saxons Pétanque Club, we're a friendly bunch so please come and say hello, take a look at our notice board inside the Leisure Centre, or visit our website at saxonspetanque.co.uk.



Come and join us and have some fun while getting back into fitness for 2026; Adults, Juniors and Minis. RUGBY – the sport that builds strength, teamwork and resilience. Senior men's training is on Thursdays 7 to 8.30pm at Fairview Fields, no experience necessary; contact Captain, Nick 07542 021 692, or Coach, Pixie 07728 399 759, all are welcome.

We are a friendly club and welcome new players and supporters. We are short of Senior men players, so we look forward to hearing from all you rugby supporters! On 22 November we won against Chippenham III 51-0, but in December lost to Colerne 8-59 and Swindon College Old Boys 7-49. On 31 January we are Away to Swindon II. And on 14 February Away to Chippenham III and then Home to Swindon II on 28 February.

Are you a grandparent? Would you like to support your grandchildren's generation at your local rugby club? Then get in touch; we are looking for volunteers to help with our Minis, Juniors and Committee. We are a friendly crowd and welcome new volunteers who want to join in at our local club. We have a pressing need for new blood to serve on our Committee. Coincidentally a few Officers are retiring at the same time, after many years of hard work supporting Cricklade's Rugby Club to thrive and grow. If you are at all interested and would like come along and support your local club, please do contact Danny Lloyd, our Chairman, on 07979 864 279, or any other members of the Committee.

Our Minis section is open to boys and girls of all abilities. We aim to provide a safe environment where every player can enjoy rugby and develop their personal and social skills as well as a wide array of transferable multi-sports skills. Training is held at our Fairview Fields ground and new players from age 6 are always welcome (no experience necessary and the first 4 sessions are free). Please contact Chris Lennon on 07595 764 878, email chris.lennon@hotmail.co.uk. We would also welcome any parents or grandparents who want to get involved and support the Juniors and Minis, so if you are interested please contact Chris.

Last but not least, we are holding our biannual Race Night on 28 February at Cricklade Leisure Centre, so please come along and support us as well as having a great night out. For more details contact Nicky Lloyd, nicolamcknight@hotmail.com

Cricklade Historical Society

2026 Calendar

A big thank-you to all who bought our 2026 Calendar this year and by doing so raised just over £600 for the Museum. We were greatly aided in selling the calendars by the team at the Town Council offices, Hayley at Scissors and Eric Cripps the Town Crier who stood with us on the High Street – thank you all for supporting us.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

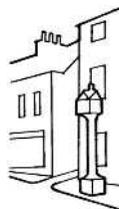
We will be holding our AGM at the Town Hall Annexe on Wednesday 18 February. Doors open at 7pm with a 7.30pm start. Refreshments will be served from 7.15pm. All are welcome.

The Chronicle Diary – February 2026

- 1 Su **end of day** Chronicle copy deadline, please
- 2 M 10am to 12 noon: Computer Club at Leisure Centre
- 3 Tu 1.45pm to 2.45pm: Bounce & Rhyme, United Church, Calcutt Street
7.30pm Camera Club at Town Hall Annexe
- 4 W 10.30am to 12.30pm: Memory Café at Town Hall Annexe
7pm Wayland Estates Charity AGM, Town Hall Committee Room, all welcome
- 5 Th 10.20am Probus Club at the White Hart Hotel
- 7 Sa 7pm 7.30 start: St Sampson's Quiz Night at St Sampson's School
- 9 M 7pm Town Council PC&T Committee, Council Chamber
- 14 Sa Valentine's Day
- 16 M Wiltshire Schools mid term break (others may differ)
- 17 Tu Shrove Tuesday: Pancake Day
1.45pm to 2.45pm: Bounce & Rhyme, United Church, Calcutt Street
7.30pm Art Group at Town Hall Annexe
7.30pm Camera Club Zoom meeting
- 18 W 10.30am to 12 noon: Parkinson's Café at Cricklade Hotel & Spa
7.15pm for 7.30pm start: Historical Society AGM at Town Hall Annexe
- 19 Th 7.30pm Cricklade W.I. at Town Hall Annexe
- 23 M Wiltshire Schools resume (others may differ)
7pm Town Council Premises & Finance Committee, Council Chamber
- 28 Sa Rugby Club Race Night at Leisure Centre – see page 41

Every Week

- Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 10am-3.30pm: Open Door at Jenner Hall
- Wednesday (2-4pm), Saturday (10am-noon) Cricklade Museum open, Calcutt Street
- M 7.45-9pm St Sampson's Bellringers
- Tu 6.30pm Cricklade Walking Group - from Cricklade Leisure Centre
7-8pm Rugby Mixed Tag at Fairview Fields
- W 1.45 for 2pm Bingo4U at Jenner Hall
- Th 10-11.30am Acorn Community Bank: in Tourist Information Office
1.30-4.30pm The Paint Palette: Ladies' Art Group at Town Hall Annexe
7-8.30pm Senior men's rugby training at Fairview Fields
7-10pm The Cricklade Band rehearsal night, at Town Hall, visitors welcome
7.30-9.30pm Sing Four Four choir rehearsal at United Church, Calcutt Street
- F 9.30am Cricklade Walking Group - from Waylands/Saxons Rest
10-11.30am Cricklade Foodbank at Jenner Hall
10-11.30am Coffee Cafe at Cricklade United Church Hall
7pm St Sampson's church choir rehearsal



Moon Phases

February 2026

5th ☾

12th ●

20th ☽

28th ○

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The Final Word ...

A Message of Hope: Finding Green Shoots in February

As I write this, tiny green shoots are emerging in my garden. Each time this happens, I'm filled with delight to see new life pushing through the soil. During these winter months, when daylight is short and the weather is cold, the natural darkness often feels weighed down by global concerns: the economy, environmental crises and conflict.

However, the emergence of these shoots feels like an act of resilience against the grey skies. They caught me by surprise because, on the surface, it seemed nothing was happening. It reminds me that even when we feel we have reached a hiatus and stopped hoping, "green shoots" can appear, bringing the promise of new beginnings.

I am also struck by the legacy of care left in my garden. Someone I never met took the time to plant some of these bulbs so future residents could enjoy them. This spirit of preparation mirrors the season of Lent, which begins later this month. For Christians, these forty days are a period of reflection and self-examination. Whether through fasting or taking on new acts of service, it is a journey rooted in the hope of Easter and the promise of eternal life.

These buds are signs of encouragement, having stored the nutrients necessary to survive their dormant phase. They are now ready to become all they were created to be. As you journey through February, I hope you see signs of hope in nature and in the people around you – your family, friends, and colleagues. May you find you have stored up enough "good things" to weather any current difficulties.

Where will you invest your energy this year to bring joy to others?

Every blessing,

Revd Sharon (Assistant Curate in the Upper Thames Benefice)

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