

ALVESTON MAGAZINE

February/March 2026

No 558

Newsletter for Alveston Parish, produced
by the Churches since 1970



*There's a challenge inside
to get walking. Here we
can see views in
Thornbury, along the path
to Tockington, a couple
taken in Tytherington,
and you can go further
afield to stand on the
bridge between England
and Wales in Chepstow.*



HELMET needs your articles and adverts by the 1st of the month preceding publication.

Send to alvestonmag@gmail.com
Or post to 'Alveston Magazine',
1 Beech Close, Alveston, BS35 3NH.

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Helmet editors or committee.

Your Helmet editor is Diane Barnard (01454 885793) .
Contact David Moss if you are interested in advertising (revsrural@gmail.com).

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Helmet dates 2026		
We plan to deliver on or soon after the LAST Tuesdays prior to the months of news. The deadline is the 1 st of the previous month.		
<u>Edition</u>	<u>Deadline</u>	<u>Delivery</u>
April/May	March 1st	Mar 31st
June/Juy/ Aug	May 1st	May 26th
Sept/Oct	Aug 1st	Aug 25th
Nov/Dec/Jan	Oct 1st	Oct 27th

Payment by cheque or bank transfer must be received in advance.

ALL Contributors - Please send in original art-work and good quality photos and not what has gone via social media or some online storage which compresses the size and will result in poorer quality reproduction. We need it to be at 300dpi. A half page advert needs to be landscape format and full page 'portrait'.

Nota Bene

A MESSAGE FROM THE METHODIST MINISTER

Dear friends,

When I was much younger all I wanted for Christmas, and then for birthdays when it failed to arrive at Christmas, was *Manta Force*. It was an enormous spaceship, which opened up to reveal a whole array of little people and machines inside it. For several years I longed for such a wonderful toy. Eventually my twin brother Graham opened a present and there it was, for him. I received Manta Force's adversary, *Red Venom*. Together, we spent many hours locked in battles in outer space, which I with my *Red Venom* inevitably lost. As much as I enjoyed what I had, I couldn't help but wonder what it would be like if *Manta Force* had been mine.

How would I react if I was given a package tomorrow which contained a brand new, untouched *Manta Force* spaceship of my very own? Well I might initially be overjoyed, I would take it all out and I would examine each part. Then after a few days, perhaps I would pack it all away and find a place for it. And there it would stay. I have changed, it's pushing thirty five years since I wanted *Manta Force*, I was a child, but now I am an adult. It would not be the same, would it?

Change is something that we are continually experiencing. The seasons and weather change, building development changes the places where we live or have lived, and we change and are transformed as we grow and experience life.

At the heart of faith is transformation. We believe in God who can transform lives and communities through the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe that God can transform each of us, indeed we are called to become more like Jesus. We believe in God who came as a child, shared his message, died on a cross and was raised to life. That on the first Easter day, death was transformed into life, life in all its fullness.

Transformation is at the very centre of the gospel message, the belief that God can bring about new and wonderful life to each of us. So, look for the transformation which He can bring to you and all around you.

With every blessing,
Simon

Methodist Church Worship – February & March

10.30	1 st February	Rev Hilary Cooke – Holy Communion
10.30	8 th February	Christine Jones
10.30	15 th February	Pete Jones – Café Church
10.30	22 nd February	Jenny Clark
10.30	1 st March	TBA
10.30	8 th March	TBA
10.30	15 th March	Pete Jones Café Church/Mothering Sunday
10.30	22 nd March	TBA
10.30	29 th March	TBA

Methodist Church News and Events

Lasting Joy

Has the joy of Christmas stayed with you, or did it disappear by Boxing Day?

You might think that is a surprising question to ask in a magazine delivered in February. However, to meet the deadline for publication, I'm writing this with echoes of Christmas carols still in the air!

Joy is something that we would all like to know in our lives every day, whatever life throws at us. So, the question of how to find it and hold on to it is timeless.

Joy can be superficial, flimsy and fleeting, like the paper wrapping on a Christmas present. Searching for that kind of joy can be as frustrating and futile as chasing shadows.

But joy can also be deep, satisfying and enduring. To find that kind of joy, we need to search for the source of all joy, and that is Jesus. He can be born in our lives any day of the year, not just Christmas. We simply need to invite him.

To add to the surprising nature of my question, I'm writing about joy just a week after my Mam passed away, and my son-in-law had a major operation for cancer. Deep, lasting joy is not just laughter and frivolity. It is knowing the living, comforting and rock-solid presence of God in whatever we are going through.

That is true joy. Joy despite our tears. Joy despite our grief, anxieties and fears. Joy that no-one and nothing can take away from us. Joy that brings hope and peace beyond human understanding. Joy born of the love that God has for us. All of us, without exception.

If you would like to know Jesus and the joy only he can bring, we will be delighted to help you find him.

Pete Jones
01454 412912

However cold it is outside, you are sure of a warm welcome at **Community Cuppa** on Saturday 21st February and Saturday 21st March from 10.30 to 12.00 in the church hall. It's a wonderful way to make friends while enjoying excellent refreshments. *'Ian's Intriguing Quiz'* is guaranteed to test your grey matter, but it doesn't matter if you can't answer a single question! It's just good fun.

Craft and Chat is brilliant whether you want to explore crafting for the first time, or love to share your skills with others. We will meet on Thursday 19th February and Thursday 19th March from 2 to 4pm in the hall. Bring whatever craft you enjoy, or just pop in for a coffee and chat. Contact Elaine on 415374 for more details.

Valentine's Day in the UK occurs on February 14th each year. It is the day of romantic love where people send cards, love letters, chocolates, confectionary or small romantic presents to their (secret or not so secret) loves. February 14th was originally a religious day in honour of Saint Valentine, a Christian martyr in the Roman era, imprisoned for marrying Roman soldiers. The Christian religion was outlawed in that time and he was executed because he refused to give up his faith. For that reason, during a long period, Saint Valentine was associated with sacrifice. The first connection with romantic love is considered to be a poem from Geoffrey Chaucer written in 1382. The romantic tradition flourished in European courts in the late middle ages and found its way to the masses in the 18th Century in England. Nowadays it is a holiday observed in many countries around the world and is considered to be the day of romantic love and friendship.

St Helen's Church contacts

www.sthelensalvs.co.uk

Rev David Moss 01454 415190

Licensed Lay Ministers-

Tracey Black (And for children's activities) 01454 417660

Tracey.lynne.black@hotmail.co.uk

Judith Heybyrne 01454 616725

Church Warden -

Gail Lowe 07949 920851

Alveston Methodist Church contacts

Rev Dr Simon Edwards 01454 418176

Stewards -

Peter Jones 01454 412912

Pam Jones 01454 412912

Doreen Stears 01454 850453 (Contact steward)

Hall Hire - Peter Jones 01454 412912

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Chris, Bristol

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ST HELEN'S CHURCH NEWS

February Services

- 1st Feb 8am Holy Communion
 9am Breakfast following 8am communion service
 10.30am All Age Service with Communion
- 4th Feb (Wed) 12noon Informal Service of Holy Communion followed by
a Soup Lunch
- 8th Feb 8am Holy Communion
 9am **MESSY CHURCH with breakfast**
 10.30am All Age Service
- 15th Feb 8am Holy Communion
 9am **Alpha Course with Breakfast**
 10.30am All Age Service with Communion
- 18th Feb Ash Wednesday (please see website for service details)
- 22nd Feb 8am Holy Communion
 9am **Café Church with Breakfast**
 10.30am All Age Service

March Services

- 1st March 8am Holy Communion
 9am **Breakfast following 8am communion service**
 10.30am All Age Service with Communion
- 4th March 12noon Informal Service of Holy Communion followed by
a Soup Lunch
- 8th March 8am Holy Communion
 9am **MESSY CHURCH with Breakfast**
 10.30am All Age Service
- 15th March 8am Holy Communion
 9am **Alpha Course with Breakfast**
 10.30am All Age Service with Communion (Mothering
Sunday)
- 22nd March 8am Holy Communion
 9am **Café Church with Breakfast**
 10.30am All Age Service



Charity Fund Raising

This year we will continue to raise funds for a selection of charities each month: February – St Helen's Church Kitchen Project – a copy of the proposed plans can be found in the Church. Take a look and give us your thoughts.

March – Sarcoma (sarcoma.org.uk)

All the charities are close to the hearts of someone in our extended church community.

Coffee Cake and Chat – continues on a Tuesday morning 10.30 to 12.30 with the first Tuesday of the month supporting the nominated charity. We look forward to welcoming you and if you would like to volunteer to help or to bake then please contact Tracey Black (details inside the front cover)

17th February is PANCAKE DAY – we will be celebrating this as we do every year at Coffee Cake and Chat with pancakes.

Knitting Group continue to meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month between 2 and 4pm and during the year they support a number of charities through their various projects.

Art Group meet on Fridays between 10 and 12 noon weekly.

All abilities are welcomed by both groups. So why not come along and meet some new people and start a new hobby in 2026.

4@4 – led by Chris Hill is a continuing with a variety of concerts at 4pm on the 4th Sunday. Entrance is always free (with a retiring collection in aid of church charities) with refreshments served after the performance. February welcomes Bristol Fashion a Ladies Barbershop ensemble providing a lively, entertaining mix of musical styles from traditional Barbershop to arrangements of pop classics. For details of the February concern please visit our website.

Food Bank Donations – as a Church we are very aware of how the increased cost of living and cold weather affects those most vulnerable in our communities. At St Helen's, we have supported the work of the Loaves and Fishes Food Bank in Easton run by the Sisters of the Church, for many years. The Sisters do an incredible job in a community that is much in need and they are always very grateful for our donations. If you would like to make a donation then please bring it along to the Church on a Tuesday, Friday or Sunday morning or leave at the Vicarage.

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MOTHER'S DAY, also known as **Mothering Sunday**, is celebrated on the on the middle (4th) Sunday of Lent, exactly three weeks before Easter Sunday. This year it is on March 15th. Lent is the period that starts on Ash Wednesday (the day after Shrove Tuesday, Pancake Day) and lasts to the day before Easter Sunday. This means that in the UK Mothering Sunday is observed on different dates each year, and sometimes even occurs in different months, normally in March or April, Lent dates being based on the cycles of the moon.

The exact origin of Mothering Sunday is unknown. Some historians relate the tradition to a Roman Spring Festival that was celebrated annually to honour Cybele, the Mother goddess (or Magna Mater) of the Romans. The traditions of this festival have some similarities with carnival and Easter as the themes of the celebrations were about death/mourning (trista) and joy/resurrection (hilaria). The spring festival was celebrated till the end of the Roman era. Christianity spread across Europe bringing new traditions to Britain. In the 17th century people visited their "Mother church" on this date - the nearest big church in the area or church where one was baptised.

Traditionally English children who had gone to work as apprentices and domestic servants were given a day off to visit their mothers and families. Often they were allowed by the cook or housekeeper to make a cake or take flowers from the mansion's garden for their mothers. Nowadays Mothering Sunday in Britain has taken on the name and character of Mother's Day as it is celebrated in most other countries in the world (second Sunday in May). There are family reunions to honour mothers and celebrate motherhood and traditional gifts of cake, flowers and hand made cards are still part of our Mother's Day traditions.

Daffodils are often given to mothers on Mothering Sunday. Other mothers who are no longer with us are still remembered with love. This photo was taken one March at the peaceful Memorial Woodlands nearby.



(see page 7)

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NEWS FROM the ALVESTON Women's Institute (WI)

In **November** the Alveston WI collected some items for the Samaritan's Purse shoebox appeal. We were also able to lay our own wreath at the Remembrance Sunday service at the war memorial. The monthly meeting was the Annual Meeting at which we were presented with a summary of the year and then had the usual Christmas Sale

In **December** the Red Herrings Murder Mystery group came to test our little grey cells once more. There had been a murder, and we were tasked with acting as detectives in order to catch the killer! The scene was set with a group of amateur players in costume. They were in the midst of rehearsals for a production of Alice in Wonderland when their director was found brutally murdered in his office. However, all of the players were together on stage when the murder occurred so we had to work out who, why, and - importantly - how the killer managed to carry out the dastardly deed.

The players consisted of the characters of Fiona as Alice, Peter The White Rabbit, Chris played the Caterpillar, Matt as the Mad Hatter, Scarlett was the Red Queen and Lionel the White Knight. Each player told us a bit about themselves and gave an account of where they were and what they were doing, in order to persuade us to rule them out of suspicion.

Our very own Janet Murphy played Scarlett the Red Queen but she was no help to us and gave nothing away! There were lots of twists and turns and red herrings. We were rubbish detectives but one of our number did actually get it right and won a box of chocolates. The performance was a great success and provided us with an entertaining and most amusing evening



The information on the next meeting is in the Events listed in the notices pages in the middle of this magazine.

ECO TIPS FOR FEBRUARY

Go Green(er) for Lent. The weeks leading up to Easter are a great time to start or give something up that benefits nature and helps address climate change. Is there a change you can make to better care for creation and improve our lives and the lives of others through healthy, eco-friendly and sustainable living?

ECO TIPS FOR MARCH

Celebrate Spring! Make sure you're giving yourself quality time enjoying creation: smelling the blossom, tapping catkins, copying bird song, finding a footprint or identifying spring flowers with the Pl@ntNet app. Nature can boost our happiness so take time to observe nature in your gardens, on your balconies, and in your local green spaces.

[FROM arochoa.org.uk/wild-christian](http://FROM.arochoa.org.uk/wild-christian)

THE CLIMATE COALITION

'We believe people are powerful, especially when we come together'.

The Climate Coalition is the UK's largest group of people and organisations dedicated to tackling climate change and restoring nature. They channel collective action, and create space for meaningful change.

The Climate Coalition, along with sister organisations Climate Cymru and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, bring together over 130 organisations - including the National Trust, Women's Institute, Oxfam, and RSPB (with a combined supporter base of 20 million across the UK) to mobilise collective action, and secure a healthier, fairer future for all.

They are running the annual 'Show the Love' campaign this February in which we are encouraged to encourage our politicians to get involved in issues relating to climate and nature. www.theclimatecoalition.org/show-the-love

'Eastwood Gardeners' Club

Our first meeting in 2026 is on Tuesday 17th March at which we will hear about the restoration of Painswick Rococo Garden. This garden is unique in that it is the only remaining complete Rococo garden of the 18th century. We meet in Turnberrie's, Thornbury. Doors open at 7pm and the meetings start at 7.30pm.

Visitors are welcome, £5 (cash please) and for further details, please contact secretary.egc95@gmail.com.

St Mary's Music The next 3rd Sunday concert at St. Mary's Church, Thornbury (BS35 1HQ) will take place on **February 15th at 4.00pm** as usual. We are delighted to welcome the highly accomplished Welsh Harpist Glenda Clwyd to perform for us. Glenda studied harp, piano and singing from an early age and went on to study at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. As well as being a distinguished performer, she is also a highly sought after teacher. As usual the concert will be followed by refreshments. Admission is free and donations go to St Mary's Music.

Sunday February 22nd St Helen's Alveston

The St Helen's 4@4 (4th Sunday at 4 o'clock) continues in February with Bristol Fashion, the Ladies Barbershop ensemble. Expect a lively, entertaining mix of musical styles from traditional Barbershop to arrangements of pop classics. Free entry, refreshments and a retiring collection in aid of church charities.

Thornbury Choral Society

On **Saturday, February 28th**, our annual "Come and Sing" workshop will take place at Alveston Methodist Church (BS35 3RA) when we shall be studying Verdi's Requiem

Further information can be found on our website
thornburychoralsociety.org.uk

Friday March 13th 10:30 Alveston Methodist Church The U3A music group welcomes Thornbury Chamber Players at its morning concert with a varied programme - baroque to Jazz, Anderson to Vaughan Williams via Tchaikovsky, Elgar and Ireland. Guests welcome (£5, includes coffee and biscuits).

Sunday March 15th 4pm St Marys Church, Thornbury The Celli Peppers perform the world premiere of Paul Carr's Air for Cellos. There will be tangos, waltzes, steam trains and pigs all represented in musical styles from classical to contemporary. Free entry, refreshments and a retiring collection in aid of church charities.

Friday March 20th 11am and 2pm Alveston Methodist Church

The annual Red Nose Day concerts. Who nose what might be in the programme! Two performances: 11.00 – 1.00 and 2.00 – 4.00, each with a long cake break. Free entry with collection to go to Red Nose Day

Sunday March 22nd 4pm St Helen's Alveston Concert in the 4@4 series. Details to follow

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THORNBURY *Art Club*



February Monthly Diary: -

Tues 3rd and every Tues. Thornbury Art Club, Tuesday Painting Studio Group, SMCH, 1.30-4.30 pm. Tel. 01454 414433

Thurs 5th and every Thurs. Thornbury Art Club, Thursday Painting Studio Group, SMCH, 1.30-4.30pm. Tel. 07776271010

(SMCH – St Mary's Church Hall, Eastbury Rd, Thornbury, BS35 1DR)

Tuesday 24th February 2026

Club Night.

7.15pm until 9.30pm. SMCH

This Club Night, you're invited to watch Jonathan Newey paint a tiger portrait with acrylic paint. Jonathan will guide you through the step-by-step process of creating a striking tiger portrait whilst also sharing his techniques for capturing the majestic animal's expressive eyes and vibrant fur using acrylic paints. Suitable for all skill levels, the session will cover colour mixing, brushwork, glazing and layering, allowing participants to develop confidence and achieve realistic effects in their own pet and wildlife artwork.



We'll have a short break during the evening for free tea, coffee, and biscuits. This will give us an opportunity to chat with members, visitors and the artist. Don't miss this fantastic chance to learn, socialise, and enjoy an evening of art, whether you're just starting out or looking to refine your skills. If you're interested in joining the Club, our membership secretary, Pat will be on the door to give you more information, or else contact us below.

Members free, non-members very welcome - £6 on the door, cash or card.

For more information contact:-

www.thornburyartclub.co.uk

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Alveston History Group - Christmas Traditions

At our last event before Christmas we received an entertaining talk by Clive Burlton, author, social historian and co-founder of Bristol Books, the not-for-profit local publisher (www.bristolbooks.org).

Adapting and updating John Penny's work, Clive's talk on the Traditions of Christmas started with the story behind the first Christmas card in 1843. Too busy to write letters during the festive season, a civil servant called Henry Cole, decided to send his friends a single-sided card on which only the names of the sender and the recipient needed to be written. Cole asked the artist John Horsley to come up with a suitable design and Cole printed 1000 copies of the 5"x 3" card. Those not needed for his own use were sold; thus giving birth to the world's first commercial Christmas card.

In 1957 Australia was the first country in the world to issue special Christmas postage stamps and we all recalled seeing – and some of us still owning – the special British stamps of the 1960s created following a children's competition on 'Blue Peter', the BBC TV programme.

Clive played the oldest known recording of the Edison Male Quartet, singing 'Sleigh Ride Party' in 1897 and Bing Crosby singing 'Silent Night' in 1942. We also heard the first Royal Christmas message delivered by King George V on Christmas Day in 1932. If you ever wondered why our monarch's Christmas message is always at 3pm, well, in 1932, the BBC's engineers considered that atmospheric conditions mid-afternoon would be ideal time for radio transmissions across Britain and the rest of the world. The 3pm tradition has stayed ever since and we were delighted to see the first televised Christmas message delivered by a very fresh-faced Queen Elizabeth II from Sandringham in 1957.

We went farther back in time as Clive traced the origins of the character of Father Christmas to the Middle Ages, which was also the time of excess, dominated by great feasts and general indulgence in drinking, dancing and singing. Father Christmas was often depicted surrounded by large amounts of food and drink and leading the revelry. Not much has changed has it!

We heard how the American publication, 'The Children's Friend', carried an illustrated poem called 'Old Santeclaus' which, for the first time, showed an old man on a reindeer sleigh bringing presents to children.

We saw a film clip of the Marshfield Mummers in action and we were encouraged to sing-along on a few occasions with the 'Holly & the Ivy', 'The Boars Head' and 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing', all sung with varying degrees of gusto!

A thoroughly enjoyable evening was rounded off with a Christmas Buffet of homemade savouries, mince pies, cakes and gingerbread men.

NOTICE BOARD

The following groups and organisations meet regularly

St Helen's Pre-school Little Stars at St Helen's School: Mon-Fri 8:50-15:30
Pilates, Zumba and other fitness classes - contact Sam on 07977632003
Amateur Radio Club, Chantry: Wed 7:30pm (secretary 07765892447)
Thornbury Chamber Players: Methodist Church: fortnightly Thurs 7:45-9:45
Sharon Phillips School of Dancing, contact 07989652780
Climate Action Thornbury & Surroundings see www.sustainablethornbury.org
Coffee, Cake and Chat 10.30am to 12.30pm every Tuesday. St Helen's Church.
Knitting Group – 2nd Wednesday of each month, 2pm- 4pm at St Helen's Church. For further information please contact 01454 616725
Art Group – Fridays 10am-12 noon, St Helen's Church, with all abilities welcome. Further information please contact Anne Harrison on 01454 885532.
Thornbury Orchestra Wednesdays 7:45 – 9:45, St Helen's Church.
www.thornburyorchestra.org.uk
Scouting:- Beavers Thursdays from 5.30pm - 6.30pm
Cubs Tuesdays from 6pm - 7.30pm
Scouts Fridays from 6:30pm to 8pm

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

- Meets for Coffee and Chat on the 2nd Wednesday of the month 10 am at the Swan Pub in Thornbury. Monthly meeting is on the last Sunday of the month 12.30 pm at the Wheatsheaf Pub in Thornbury.

FUN QUIZ

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ALVESTON COMMUNITY EVENTS

Please like and follow us on
Facebook
www.alvestoncommunityevents.co.uk

Please continue to pass on your annual programmes and details of future events (deadline 1st of the month) to Tony Houghton, 2 Beanhill Crescent, BS35 3JG. They can be accepted by email to Diaryhelmet@btinternet.com

SOME EVENTS HAPPENING IN FEBRUARY

Mon 2nd 7:30 Alveston Gardens Association - A Perennial Year - Julie Richie - JH

Tue 3rd 2pm Northavon Dolls House Club - 01454 501901 - AMH

Mon 9th 7:30 Alveston WI - Fires and Explosions - Carolyn Morton - JH

Thursday 19th 2pm Craft n Chat - See below

Wed 25th 7:30 Alveston Local History Society - The Quakers in Our Area - Liz Eddington - AMC

SOME EVENTS HAPPENING IN MARCH

Mon 2nd 7:30 French Gardens and Chateaux - Pam Forest - JH

Tue 3rd 2pm Northavon Dolls House Club - 501 901 for details - AMH

Mon 9th 7:30 Alveston WI - Living with Thalidomide - Amanda de la Mare - JH

Thursday 19th 2-4pm Craft n Chat - Elaine, 01454 415374 - AMH

Wed 25th 7:30 Alveston Local History Society - The Forest of Dean - Dr Ray Wilson - AMC

AMC = Alveston Methodist Church; AMH = Alveston Methodist Hall; JH = Jubilee Hall;
SMCH = St Mary's Church Hall, Thornbury.

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Or Vicky 07837 875126

No need to book

Alveston Local History **Society**



Wed 25th
February
7:30

The Quakers
in Our Area

- Liz Eddington -
Alveston Methodist
Church

Wed 25th March 7:30
The Forest of Dean -
Dr Ray Wilson - AMC

Fancy lending a hand...?



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Our website

<https://2ndalvestonscouts.org.uk>



Our Facebook page

#SkillsForLife

We've got a range of volunteering vacancies, for those with 2 hours or those with 2 weeks...

At 2nd Alveston Scout Group we're looking for **YOU** to lend us a hand – we need new volunteers to help lead our youth sections:

- Beavers (6 – 8 year olds)
- Scouts (10 – 14 year olds)

We also need new volunteers across a range of support tasks: tea makers, activity planners, tidy-uppers and helpers – for a few hours a month, or for as much time as you can spare!

We're Scouts and everyone's welcome here. Every week we give young people the skills they need for school, college, the job interview, the important speech, the tricky challenge and the big dreams: the skills you need for life.

Join us and start your adventure today.

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Alveston Gardens Association Meeting 3rd November 2025

This month was the combined AGM and monthly meeting. The AGM was smoothly dealt with, and we soon moved on to our speaker, Pam Forrest, who nobly stood in at extremely short notice when the booked speaker had to cry off because of illness. Pam showed slides of a visit to southern Italy and Sicily, an area many of us have visited, so they brought back memories for us.



We began with a picture of the amphitheatre at Taormina, then photos of a garden nearby created by Florence Trevelyan, an English woman who moved to Sicily in 1884 after falling in love with the place while on tour. The photos were taken in May when the *Erythrina caffra* trees were in full scarlet flower and the roses were making a magnificent display. There were also lots of yucca and cacti. Next stop was to view the citrus trees and date palms in a quarry near Syracuse Theatre. A magnificent church in Ragusa came next along with kapok and jacaranda trees.

Near Agrigento is the Giardino di Villa Aurea, the garden of archaeologist Alexander Hardcastle who settled there in the 1920's. Today his garden contains cypress trees, figs, ancient olive trees, citrus trees, agaves, wild antirrhinums and leucanthemums. The ancient irrigation channels of Sicily, first made by Arab invaders around 800AD, are still in use. At Selinunte, a city that seems to have been abandoned in ancient times, there were lots of wildflowers. Pam had photos of kidney vetch, silene, tolpis and scolynus.

On the Amalfi coast on the mainland there were lots of lemon groves. Some of us remembered eating lunch sitting under lemon trees. They have been grown in the area since Roman times. A fresco in Pompeii shows a lemon tree. In Ravello there is a 13th century fortress with a very formal terrace garden containing lots of begonias and *Spiraea alpina* creating mats of pink flowers.

On Capri at Tiberius's House there were jacaranda trees, a Judas tree, strelitzia, wild cerinthe, *euphorbia palustris*, datura and bougainvillea. There was a herb bed at Capri market, and the abundance of wild flowers on the island had led to the production of artisan perfumes which permeate the air.

In the southeast of Italy there were orange groves and many, many olive trees. They are now threatened by Xylella, a fungal infection which blocks the water transportation within the trees. Matera, known for its' cave houses, had few plants. Lecce had lots of bottle-brush trees and Ostuni's residents favoured lots of plants in containers of all sorts. Pam ended with a few pictures of the round, conically-roofed "Trulli" houses in Alberobello, not noted for its' gardens.



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A note from the Severn Vale Village Agent

Volunteer Drivers Needed in Our Villages: Help Neighbours Get to Vital Medical Appointments

In rural communities, getting to a GP or hospital appointment can be a real challenge. Limited public transport, long distances, and lack of taxis often mean people miss essential care. You can change that.

We're looking for **volunteer drivers** from our villages to help neighbours reach their medical appointments safely and on time. It's a simple act of kindness that can have a huge impact on someone's health and wellbeing.

Why you might love it:

- Retired? You've got the time and local know-how.
- Working from home? A trip between Zoom calls could brighten someone's day.
- Love meeting people? This is a great way to connect with your community.

Why It Matters

- You'll be supporting vulnerable people who otherwise might miss vital treatment.
- It's a great way to strengthen community ties and meet new people.
- You'll be part of a network of caring locals making life easier for others.

What's Involved

- Use your own car to drive someone from your village to their appointment.
- Mileage expenses reimbursed.
- No medical knowledge needed, just a friendly attitude and a valid driving license, and DBS check (we'll sort that out for you)

Join Us

If you can spare a little time and want to make a big difference in your village, we'd love to hear from you. Contact **Elizabeth** on elizabeth@wern.org.uk or leave a message on 07880 344460 today and become part of something truly local and life changing.

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My Fair Lady in Tockington

The Parish Players' 2026 production of 'My Fair Lady' is taking place at Olveston and Tockington Parish Hall (Upper Tockington Road BS32 4LQ) at 7.30pm every evening from Wednesday 18th to Saturday 21st February 2026 (in February half term) – with an extra matinee performance at 2.00pm on Saturday 21st!

This well-known and lively show is packed with some of the most famous songs from the world of musicals: 'Wouldn't It Be Lovely?', 'With a Little Bit of Luck', 'The Rain in Spain', 'I Could Have Danced All Night', 'On the Street Where You Live' and 'Get Me to the Church on Time' – to name a few. It's great entertainment for all the family and certain to brighten everybody's winter evenings.

Based on George Bernard Shaw's play 'Pygmalion', My Fair Lady was written by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. It was first performed on Broadway in 1956, starring Rex Harrison and Julie Andrews, and won six Tony Awards, including Best Musical. The 1964 film version starred Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison, and won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

Tickets went on sale from Saturday 10th January, after which you can order online at <https://bit.ly/PPorders> or call 01454-202011. Prices are £12 Adults, £8 Children and £14 Premium seats. Parish Players tickets always sell quickly, and My Fair Lady will be popular – so don't delay. Find out more at www.facebook.com/OlvestonParishPlayers (not for ticket sales).

THORNBURY MUSICAL THEATRE GROUP – 'SNOW WHITE' PANTOMIME

Tickets are now on sale for a February half term treat. TMTG will perform 'Snow White' at Winterbourne & District Community Association 18-21 Feb.

Beautiful Princess Snow White's evil, vain stepmother, the Wicked Queen, is obsessed with being the "fairest in the land". She gets Snow White to clean up the castle ready for a visit from Prince Rupert. Things don't go to plan when the Prince sets his eyes upon Snow White and asks the Queen for Snow White's hand in marriage. The Queen asks her Henchman to take Snow White deep into the forest from where she wouldn't return. Taking pity on the Princess he leaves her with the woodland creatures, where she also meets the Mini Miners who want to be the big new boy band on the scene! Learning that Snow White is still living in the forest, the Queen sets out to finish the job herself! Snow White's friends set out to rescue the Princess, falling over themselves to look after their friend! With music and merriment to help things along it's a party not to be missed!

Performances 18th and 19th at 7.30pm, 20th at 2.30pm and 7.30pm, 21st at 10.30am and 2.30pm. Standard tickets £12.00 bookable at www.tmtg.org.uk/tickets or 07516 270140. Accessible tickets bookable by phone or emailing tickets@tmtg.org.uk

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Ponies Bring Festive Cheer to Residents at Bristol Care Homes

Bristol Care Homes are spreading joy in the most unique way possible - with ponies!

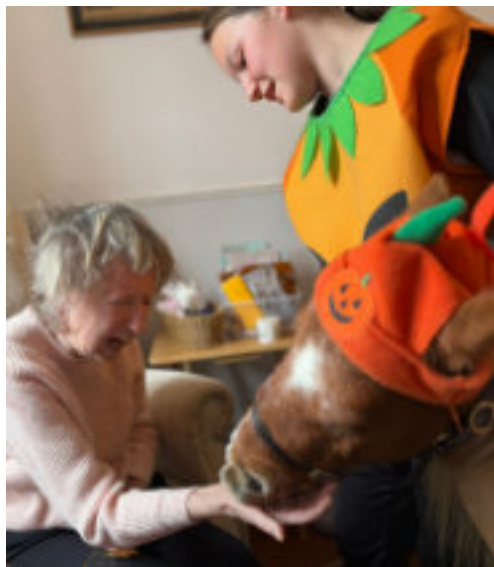
This spring in more of our homes we hope to welcome the Theraponies, a wonderful initiative that brings calm, gentle ponies into care homes for residents to enjoy. This heartwarming visit is part of our ongoing commitment to creating meaningful experiences for those in our care.

Over the past few months our homes have hosted several pony visits, and the impact has been extraordinary. Residents, including those living with dementia, have experienced moments of pure joy and connection. We've seen smiles light up faces, laughter fill the rooms, and even tears of happiness as Jammy and Daisy - two adorable ponies - gently interact with residents right at their bedsides.

Why is this so special?

It's not every day you can say a pony visited you in a care home! These visits go beyond novelty – they provide emotional comfort, reduce stress, and spark conversations and memories. For residents who struggle to communicate, the presence of these animals often brings a sense of calm and companionship that words cannot express.

These visits showcase what life in our care homes is truly like: vibrant, engaging, and full of heart. We believe in creating moments that matter, and this event is a perfect example of how we bring joy and connection to our Bristol Care Homes residents.





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Article from The Armstrong

After the announcement at the switching on of the Christmas lights that the doors will be opening in April this year, it is all systems go for The Armstrong team. The new bar, foyer and 120 seater refurbished Cossham Hall will be open for business in the Spring and until then, behind the barriers, the exciting transformation continues.

In the meantime, the planning and preparations are in a very intense phase and all members of the team are working hard to make sure everything will go to plan when the venue is once more a centre of community life in Thornbury. Work on the bar is well under way and some of the team were lucky enough to enjoy a wine tasting with the chosen drinks supplier, St Austell Brewery.

Fundraising will be vital for the next phase of the project and the Armstrong Team has been delighted that community groups and individuals are coming forward to raise money to add to the pot. In December, Bristol Concert Wind Band held a wonderful sell out concert at the United Reformed Church in aid of The Armstrong charity. It was a delightful event which put everyone in the mood for Christmas and raised a considerable sum for the cause. If you belong to a group or organisation which is willing to run a fundraising event, please get in touch via hello@thearmstrong.co.uk and of course individual donations can be made by donating on the website www.thearmstrong.co.uk

During February and March this year a lot more of the community will be able to find out about how the complex will be operating from April onwards. People with an active interest in its future will be invited to come through the doors and spend an hour or two learning more, along with all of us who have been heavily involved over the past few years. There will be a lot of celebrating to be done! If you would like to find out more, go to

www.thearmstrong.co.uk/whats-on.

Alternatively email jill@thearmstrong.co.uk.

The Armstrong Diary is now open from April 2026 so if you are considering booking an event or community activity, please get in touch by emailing hello@thearmstrong.co.uk.



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an evening or weekend appointment and we always make ourselves available by telephone and email for any small query you have. What stands us apart from many law firms is that we undertake on a fixed fee basis, agreed in advance, to ensure you are comfortable with the fees which will be levied once all the work has been undertaken.

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Hawkins Hide Allotments - Pruning

Pruning is a huge topic and I can't cover it all in one small article. The RHS website has over 50 articles on pruning. The first piece of advice though is to check online for WHEN to prune a particular plant. Right now is a good time to prune blackcurrant and gooseberry bushes.

1. Remove dead/diseased/dying branches.
2. Remove crossing branches, remove the older or weaker branch. You're aiming to "open" the bush.
3. Remove branches as low as possible. You are thinning it rather than giving it a haircut.

Ok those are the first steps. At this point STOP and look at the bush. What shape are you aiming for?

You can grow gooseberries as fan-trained, cordons or open-centred bushes. For open-centred bushes you are aiming for a goblet shape. Take out any centre branches to get that shape. Keep stepping back and looking at what you have. Gooseberries fruit on both last years growth and older growth.

Blackcurrants are usually grown as multi-stemmed bushes. They fruit on young growth. Older growth has darker bark. Have you got younger branches growing to replace older ones? Plan ahead. Cut out the oldest stems close to the base.

Just keep stopping and looking at the overall shape of the bush. Stop, go away and come back to finish another day if you're not sure. Its not the end of the world if you prune too hard, that can re-invigorate a bush. My grandfather pruned my mother's blackcurrants right down one year, she was furious, but they did fruit better the following year.

A picture paints a thousand words, they say, so I've got some before and after photos of one of my blackcurrant bushes here. I'd also recommend looking at YouTube videos. Although, go for reputable sources rather than some ordinary joe who may or may not know what he's talking about - bit like me really, which is why I am trying to point you to reputable sources. :)

Happy Growing, Alison.

If you are interested in taking on an allotment please apply by contacting the Alveston Parish Clerk, Graham Smith using clerk@alvestonpc.co.uk If you would like more information about the allotments before applying please contact alveston.allotments@gmail.com



February's event is another chance to see pianist

Khrystyna Mykailichenko performing in concert with the
NOSTOS TRIO

Formed in 2025, The Nostos Trio unites three young dynamic musicians, **Monty Guo**, violin, **Khrystyna Mikhaailichenko**, piano and **Jae Min Kim Kang**, cello. They represent Australia, Ukraine and Spain/South Korea respectively.

Though newly established, the trio combines a wealth of international experience, with its members having performed widely across Europe, Asia and Australia as soloists, chamber musicians and orchestral leaders. Together they bring a distinctive energy and sensitivity to the piano trio repertoire, creating performances marked by depth, clarity and communicative power.

Their programme consists of Piano Trio no.1 op. 70 "Ghost" by Ludwig Van Beethoven, Piano Trio no.3 op. 101 by Johannes Brahms, Piano Trio (1952) by Aram Babadjanian.

The concert takes place at The United Reformed Church, Chapel Street, Thornbury, BS35 2BA on Saturday, February 28th at 7.30 pm. Tickets £25 students £10 under 10s free from AAGThornbury@gmail.com. Interval drinks. Profits will be donated to [Bristol Aid to Ukraine](#).



“THE RAGGED TROUSERED PHILANTHROPISTS”



In March Neil Gore presents a one-person magic lantern show, a version of the classic novel by Robert Tressell featuring projection, political conjuring tricks, live music and song. Meet the famous characters and enjoy the scenes, speeches and songs, including the Great Money Trick as its centrepiece.

Following a year in the life of a group of Edwardian painters, it traces their hardships and struggles for survival in a complacent and stagnating Edwardian England. These workers are the philanthropists who throw themselves into back-breaking work for poverty wages to generate profit for their masters.

The performance takes place at The Methodist Church Hall, High Street, Thornbury on **Saturday 21st March at 7.30pm**. Interval tea and coffee. Tickets £15 from AAGThornbury@gmail.com or 01454 850933.



WEST OF ENGLAND RURAL NETWORK

A note from the Severn Vale Village Agent



Lions Clubs Message in a Bottle is a simple but effective way for people to keep their basic personal and medical details where they can be found in an emergency on a standard form and in a common location – the fridge.

Message in a Bottle helps emergency services personnel to save valuable time in identifying an individual very quickly and knowing if they have any allergies or take special medication.

Paramedics, police, fire-fighters and social services support this Lions life-saving initiative and know to look in the fridge when they see the Message in a Bottle stickers, supplied. The initiative provides peace of mind that prompt and appropriate medical assistance can be provided, and next of kin/emergency contacts can be notified. You can pick one up locally in Thornbury at the Lions Bookshop or Age UK

If I can help you in anyway please contact me on:

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E: elizabeth@wern.org.uk

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Alveston Magazine dates 2026

The printers will now deliver all magazines to St Helen's church a few days before the last Tuesday of the month.

If those who usually receive a box or bag are able, please collect your batch from the church from Sunday services - or from 10.30 - 12.30 on the last Tuesday. Coffee and cake will be available. (Brian and Elaine Lee are now retiring, having undertaken most of this process since the start of the pandemic restrictions.)

The deadline for contributions is the 1st of the previous month. We are planning to keep going but with **5 rather than the previous 10 editions per year.**

Edition	Deadline	Collection/ Delivery
Apr/May	MARCH 1	MAR 31
June/July/Aug		
	MAY 1	MAY 26
Sept/Oct	AUG 1	AUG 25
Nov/Dec/Jan		
	OCT 1	OCT 27



THORNBURY WAYFINDERS WILL HELP YOU GET FIT FOR SPRING.

Was this one of your New Year resolutions? Well, come and take part in our brand new Walking Festival – “Step into Spring” which will take place from **Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd February**

You can choose from 3 different walks each day – easy, moderate or strenuous. There will be something to interest everyone – two history walks, a tree walk, a foraging walk led by environmentalist Steve England, a walk to visit the Alpacas and a walk over the Tytherington Ridge. On the strenuous side, two linear walks will involve taking a bus to the start and a longer walk will explore the boundaries of the parish of Thornbury.

We launched the event on 2nd January. You can sign up for the walks by scanning the Ticketsource QR code on our leaflets in Thornbury Library, the Museum, shops, pubs and cafes or on our posters displayed around Thornbury and surrounding towns and villages. Or..... you can visit our website www.thornburywayfinders.uk There is a maximum of 20 tickets per walk so by the time you read this you need to check quickly
Let's get walking into 2026!

The Alveston Helmet Magazine team are grateful to the Parish Council for their generous grant to help keep us able to continue to deliver printed copies.

Also, we would like to thank those of the contributors who have been able to help financially.

THORNBURY CARNIVAL COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES NO EVENT PLANNED FOR 2026

Speaking recently on behalf of the Committee, Liam Williams, Chair, said: "I've been involved with the Carnival since 2018 and have been Chair since 2019. It's a community event that I've been proud to be a part of and in particular I'm proud to have led such an incredible group of volunteers that make Carnival happen. However, the last two or three years have demonstrated that there doesn't appear to be an appetite for this kind of event any longer and certainly, not one that requires an entry fee to be paid.

"'Love Thornbury' have demonstrated that many aspects of the Carnival can be offered to the community for free through use of the revamped High Street – live music, market stalls, vintage car displays, children's entertainment and fairground rides, great food and bars are now available most months on the High Street and we recognise this as an important development, not just for businesses, but also for the changing nature of our community.

"Following the two-year break for the Covid Pandemic, we took the opportunity to refresh the event and really hoped that this would offer the chance to secure the event's sustainability. Regrettably, this has not proven to be the case, with attendance declining year on year, so the event is no longer affordable in its current form. Further to the significant loss made in 2024, we were fortunate to secure some critical financial support from Thornbury Town Council which meant we could run the event in 2025. We also received support from Friends of Thornbury Carnival who have stepped in several times over the years to support the event. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to offer our sincere thanks to Councillors, their Officers, and the Friends of Thornbury Carnival for their support over the years. Unfortunately, the challenges faced by South Gloucestershire Council meant that they have been unable to offer any support and this just added to the challenge of making an event such as ours work.

"Running the event in 2025 saw us work hard to reduce costs further and secure additional funding. We had the highest level of engagement with local businesses since the Carnival was first reinstated, and we are very grateful to them for their commitment. Regrettably, while the Carnival made a nominal surplus this year, it was highly dependent on Thornbury Town Council and a couple of key individuals who helped secure some sponsorship. Our long-term partnerships with Easter Compton Farm Shop and KJE Technical have also been essential to maintaining the event.

"The continued reductions in the level of attendance and the challenging financial outlook have caused the current committee to evaluate our role – we feel we have offered everything we can to run a successful event and we've taken time every year to evaluate what we are doing based on community feedback, experience and learning from other events. We have therefore collectively decided to step down from running the event and offer someone, or a group of people, the opportunity to come forward and consider how it might be brought back in the future. I am committed to sharing all of the information we have and giving anyone interested a full briefing in order that they can make informed judgements.

"I would like to finish by sharing my wholehearted gratitude to everyone who volunteered to make Thornbury Carnival happen in recent years. The dedication and commitment shown has been incredible and I only wish we had been able to achieve our shared ambition to create something for the community that was desired and supported to be sustainable.

"If anyone would like to register an interest in taking the Carnival on, please email me at chairthornburycarnival@gmail.com."

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*Except Bank Holidays

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Helmet Contents February - March

2026

Updates from Alveston churches	p3-9
Mothering Sunday	p11
Alveston WI meetings news	p13
Eco ideas	p14
Eastwood Garden Club meeting	p14
Musical events	p15
Thornbury Art Club	p17
Alveston Local History Society	p19
Notices	p20
Diary dates & some events	p21
Alveston Scouts	p22
Alveston Gardening Association	p23
WERN - village agent	p25
Musical Theatre treats	p27
Bristol Care Homes and ponies	p29
The Armstrong update	p31
Hawkins Hide Allotments	p33
Action Arts Group events	p34-5
Magazine updates	p36
Thornbury Wayfinders Walks	p36
Thornbury Carnival - sad news	p37
Thornbury Library events	p39

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