THURSLEY PARISH MAGAZINE

St Michael & All Angels

OCTOBER 2026

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EDITORIAL

By Tricia Horwood

***After** a long hot summer, the first proper autumnal rains have brought cooler mornings, damp hedgerows and that unmistakable seasonal freshness. For our local farmers, the rain has been particularly welcome, bringing much-needed relief to fields and crops.*

***Autumn** also gives us plenty of reasons to come together. Our village Harvest Supper is always a special occasion: a chance to enjoy good food and good company, and give thanks for the produce and people that make our community so special. In addition to the supper, we also look forward to a Horts Society talk on "Super Seasonal Ideas" – offering plenty of inspiration for making the most of the months ahead.*

***We** sadly say farewell to one of our long-standing contributors. For the past six years, Debbie Spencer's "Give it a Grow" articles have brought us practical gardening advice, encouragement and plenty of inspiration, whether we were experienced gardeners or simply trying to keep a few plants alive! Her enthusiasm, knowledge and creative writing have become a much-loved part of our magazine, and we are extremely grateful for all the time and care she has given.*

***This** month why not think about starting a new hobby, or rekindling a dormant one, such as bell-ringing or choir singing in the church (see p13). Or take the opportunity to participate more in village life by volunteering at one of the many events organised by our local clubs and societies.*

***And** finally, as we turn towards shorter days and colder evenings, let us enjoy the rain, celebrate the harvest, embrace new ideas, and, above all, continue to participate and enjoy village life to the full.*

PLEASE NOTE DEADLINE OF 14TH OCTOBER 2026 FOR SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES TO THE NOVEMBER 2026 ISSUE OF THURSLEY PARISH MAGAZINE.
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SERVICES FOR THE PARISH OF ELSTEAD, THURSLEY SHACKLEFORD & PEPER HAROW

OCTOBER

SUNDAY 4th	9.15am	Communion at St James', Elstead
Harvest	**9.45am**	**Communion at St Michael's, Thursley**
	10.30am	Modern Service with Communion at St James' Church, Elstead
SUNDAY 11th	9.15am	Communion at St James' Church, Elstead
Trinity 19		
SUNDAY 18th	**9.45am**	**Communion at St Michael's, Thursley**
Trinity 20	10.30am	Modern Service at St James', Elstead
SUNDAY 25th	10.00am	Communion at St Nicholas Church, Peper Harow
Last after Trinity		

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OCTOBER

CHURCH CLEANING

(Please contact Sallie Roles if you can help)

Claire DAILLY Chris McClements

CHURCH COFFEE ROTA

(Please contact Caroline Mendelssohn if you can help)

4th Pam CLARKSON 18th Sabrina DRAGONI-LONG

LOCAL & VILLAGE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

OCTOBER

Friday 2nd	6-10.00pm	**Friday Night at the Shoes.** Village Hall. All welcome. See p24.
Tuesday 6th	7.00pm	**Parish Council Meeting.** Village Hall. All welcome
Wednesday 7th	7.30pm	**Horts Society Talk " Super Seasonal Ideas"** by Mark Saunders. Village Hall. Doors open at 7pm. See p30.
Friday 9th	6-10.00pm	**Friday Night at the Shoes.** Village Hall. All welcome.
Saturday 10th	7.00pm	**Harvest Supper**. Village Hall. Booking essential. See p25.
Friday 16th	6-10.00pm	**Friday Night at the Shoes** Village Hall. All welcome.
Saturday 17th	10.00am	**Churchyard Working Party.** St Michael & All Angels Church. All help welcome.
Friday 23rd	6-10.00pm	**Friday Night at the Shoes** Village Hall. All welcome.
Friday 30th	6-10.00pm	**Friday Night at the Shoes** Village Hall. All welcome.

Village Table Tennis (open to everyone) is held every Tuesday evening from 6-7pm in the pavilion. If you'd like to come along please email Andy Hanbury in advance on **ahanbury@btinternet.com**

VOLUNTEER COOKS NEEDED FOR HARVEST SUPPER

There would be no Harvest Supper without our team of volunteer cooks. If you would be happy to cook a main or pudding for eight people please contact me, Sally Scheffers, **scheffers@btinternet.com**. I very much look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

AUTUMN

By Wendy Edwards — Licensed Lay Minister for parishes of ETSP

It is my favourite time of year. It is also a strange word to spell. It comes from the Latin 'autumnus' and in Middle English was spelled 'autumpne'. Before the 16th Century the word wasn't in as common use as the season was just called Harvest. In the USA the season is called 'Fall' for obvious reasons as beautiful coloured leaves fall from trees and cause our trains to travel more slowly on leaf strewn tracks.

A gay Trinidadian friend of ours, Kenny, very sadly died of AIDS in December 1989 and his sister Anne came to England for the first time to stay with us for Kenny's funeral. Anne thought our trees were all dead because she had never experienced Autumnal leaf fall as she had never lived in a temperate climate as we do. It must have felt extra sad for Anne that her dear brother had died and that all the trees looked dead too. Anne had also never been as cold in all her life when she went outdoors in England in December though we tried to give her lots of warm clothes.

As many of you know, I have an active funeral ministry which I felt God call me to in 2008 when I watched my Anglican vicar, Charlotte (one of the first group of women to be ordained in 1994) conduct the church funeral of our local Worcester Park Scout Master, Derek. I hasten to add that the coffin was closed but at some point during the service Charlotte pointed to Derek's coffin and said *'Derek is in his coffin in his Scout shorts!'* There was something so wonderful for me about that statement and, at that very moment, I felt God's call to become a Licensed Lay Minister so I could conduct Christian funerals.

Charlotte's comment added humour which we need so badly when someone dies. Remembering someone's funny ways and phrases gives us a painful comfort, but it is comfort with pain rather than just

pain. It seemed so fitting for Derek to be in his Scout shorts for his last bit of orienteering.

Death had come to Derek as it will to all of us. Why do some of us live as if we will never die? I have had times in my own life when my addictive behaviour was extremely dangerous, harmful and insane. I bear the scars internally (in my pancreas, splenic vein and stomach) from my alcoholism.

I have been blessed for the last 23 years with recovery from alcoholism, one day at a time, which brought me to my faith in God and in His Son Jesus Christ. I am so grateful to have been given another chance at life, abundant life, (John 10.10) life in all its fullness and I seize every day with both hands to try (and of course, fail) to give back what God has so freely and graciously given to me. Jesus said in Matthew 10.8 "*freely ye have received, freely give.'*

How about giving one of our services a try this Autumn? We would be delighted to welcome you.

SINGING AT THURSLEY CHURCH

Did you know that singing can boost your mood? Singing is known to have some wonderful benefits. It can

- Increase levels of dopamine and serotonin.
- Reduce stress.
- Encourage social connection and bonding..

So why not come along and enjoy singing with others? Our informal choir/singing group meets at Thursley Church on the first and third Sunday of each month at 9.45am, with a relaxed rehearsal from 9.15am. We sing well-known hymns with cheerful guidance from our organist, Rob Goldfinch. There's nothing complicated about it! You don't need to read music, and all voices and abilities are very welcome.

Come along, have a sing, meet some friendly people and start your Sunday with a smile!

For more information please contact:
Wendy Edwards, Licensed Lay Minister
Tel: 07740 082460 / pastoral@parishesofetsph.org

Or contact our churchwardens:
Susanna Hunter: 07833 574152
Simon Treadwell: 07799 600470

THURSLEY PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE

By Chairman James Mendelssohn

One of the great strengths of Thursley is the sense that we are part of a genuine community. We live in a beautiful village, in wonderful surroundings, but what really makes Thursley special is not the place itself, but the people who live here and the contribution they make to village life.

As the Parish Council, we are constantly reminded about just how much goes on in our village, much of it quietly and unobtrusively, because individuals are prepared to give up their time to make things happen.

We have some particularly exciting opportunities ahead of us: the proposed redevelopment of the cricket pavilion should provide the village with a much better facility for the future. Although cricket will remain an important part of its purpose, the ambition is to create something which can be enjoyed and used by the wider community as well.

Similarly, the future of our pub is equally important. Village pubs have disappeared at an alarming rate across the country and, once lost, they are very difficult to replace. A successful pub is not simply somewhere to eat and drink. It is a place where people meet, friendships develop, newcomers get to know their neighbours and that rather indefinable thing called "community" actually happens.

But the pavilion and the pub are only two parts of village life. We are fortunate to have many active clubs and societies; a Village Hall and the many activities that take place there; our church, clubs and many one-off events organised throughout the year. As Christmas approaches, there will again be opportunities for us to come together and enjoy village events during the festive season.

All these activities have one thing in common: they depend upon people being prepared to get involved. It is too easy to enjoy the benefits of living in a thriving community without thinking too much about how those benefits are created. Behind almost every village event, club, society or project there are people giving their time voluntarily — organising, attending meetings, raising money, putting out chairs, serving refreshments, sending emails or doing any of the dozens of small jobs that need to be done.

I know that everyone leads busy lives, and getting involved does not mean having to join a committee or make a major commitment. It might mean helping for

an hour at an event, supporting the pub, attending something at the Village Hall, joining one of our societies or simply offering to help when help is needed.

Over the next few years, I believe Thursley has a real opportunity to strengthen what we already have and to make our village an even better place in which to live. The Parish Council can play its part. We can support projects, help secure funding and try to protect and improve the village. But no Parish Council can create a community. Only the people who live in it can do that.

So our message is a very simple one. Whatever your age, whatever your situation, whether you have lived here for decades or arrived only recently, there is real value in participation. Community is what makes Thursley special and despite the increasing diversions in all of our lives, the value of participation should never be underestimated.

The next Parish Council meeting will take place in the Village Hall on Tuesday 6 October at 7.00 pm.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATIONS OF VILLAGE/CHURCH NEWS?

The PCC are considering setting up a parish WhatsApp group to keep villagers informed when someone in our community has died and to share details of funeral arrangements, where the family is happy for this information to be made public.

The aim is to help neighbours and friends stay informed, offer their support, and have the opportunity to attend funerals or remember those who have passed away.

If you would like to be included in this WhatsApp group, please contact Susanna Hunter with your mobile number on:

Tel: 07833 574152/ email: susanna@parishesofetsph.org

Please note that this group would be for announcements only and not for general discussion, helping to ensure that important information is shared clearly and respectfully.

VILLAGE HALL UPDATE

By Lynne Stewart-Brindle

As trustees of Thursley Village Hall, we honestly thought the hardest part of sprucing up the main hall – new curtains, fresh paint and a beautifully polished wood floor – would be raising the money. Thanks to your generous support of Friday Night Shoes, it turns out the real Everest is persuading six ladies to agree on a colour scheme.

As the writer, I am shamelessly using this platform to make my case and reveal my vision, illustrated here with AI – because apparently even village-hall curtains now require a media campaign. I have, however, been met with fierce and formidable opposition to GREEN, so watch this space as each trustee launches her own bid for decorative supremacy.

We've talked a lot about our pop-up pub, so I thought I'd have a look back at all the other things that have happened in the Village Hall before I returned to the village. It turns out the hall has hosted just about everything short of a televised dance-off and a minor royal visit (although our Hall Manager Alison quickly proved me wrong when she 'met' the Queen). Here are some of the most memorable events:

Landmark events — like the Millennium and Jubilee celebrations and VE day.

Sleepovers for Brownies, Cubs, Beavers and Scouts – with enough biscuit crumbs and sleeping bags to qualify as a small indoor campsite.

Macmillan Coffee Mornings - proof that cake, coffee and community spirit remain one of life's finest combinations for a great cause.

Parish Council Meetings & Voting — democracy in action.

Flower Show – a tremendous display this year, and a reminder that some people can make a dahlia behave far

better than I can make a curtain committee behave.

Harvest Supper – a welcome feast when the weather turns, the flowers have gone, and everyone suddenly remembers how comforting hot shepherds pie can be.

Children's Birthday Parties – the hall is a brilliant space for celebrations, especially when entertainers are involved and the adults can pretend they are not secretly enjoying it too. I'll be hiring it myself next month for my nine-year-old great-nephew's Pokémon party, so wish me luck and possibly send earplugs.

Horts and History Society Talks

Weddings – we all love a good bash after the ceremony, and the Hall can be made to look genuinely beautiful.

Wakes – because you can't have four weddings without a funeral, and the hall is there for celebrating lives too.

Christenings – completing the full village-hall hat-trick of births, deaths and marriages.

Tunnel Training Exercises – still slightly mysterious – plus ultramarathon and cycle race administration centres, all of which sound admirable and exhausting, and none of which you will find me doing voluntarily.

Christmas Fair – it can't be that time of year already?

Occasional Talks – including the eagerly anticipated "Blur on Mars", which is either a fascinating event or the most intriguing sentence ever written on a village noticeboard.

On that note, I regret that Dave Rowntree's talk on Blur on Mars has been deferred to a better date in the future, so we'll let you know when the new date "lands". Tickets are likely to sell out fast, so keep an eye out – ideally before they disappear into orbit.

Next year the Village Hall will be 175 years old, so we plan to celebrate with new décor and a thoroughly good party in the main hall – with green curtains, I hope. Come on: who here does not like green? Apart from, apparently, several people with strong opinions and access to curtain samples.

UPDATE ON CHURCHYARD GRAVES

By Jackie Rickenberg (taken from the archives of the History Society)

Following our much-hailed churchyard walk in June, there were queries raised regarding two similar graves that were significantly unique in appearance and different to the majority. Sally Scheffers, Chair of the History Society and Amanda Flint, village historian and member of the Churchyard Working Party, both curators of the Churchyard Walk, decided to investigate further. Here is the website article with the outcome and details of a further visit to St John the Evangelist Church in Churt, by Amanda.

"Visit to St. Michael and All Angels churchyard, 2nd July 2026: Compton Potters' Arts Guild

The purpose of the visit was to assess whether two early 20th century terracotta memorials in the churchyard may have been made at the Compton Potters' Arts Guild at the Watts Gallery, Compton. The assessment was made by Penny Hines, Collections Curator, Watts Gallery, Compton, with Sally Scheffers, Chair, Thursley History Society, Amanda Flint, Churchyard Working Party and Penny Streeter in attendance.

The Tozer Memorial

Marjorie Anne Tozer (1902-1911) and Francis Spernon Tozer (1903-1920)
51.14682° N, 0.71326° W.

On entering the churchyard along the path in front of Church Cottages, the memorial is approximately 9m to the right, beside the wall.

The Curator confirmed the memorial as Compton style. The colour of the pottery matches the date of the second recorded Tozer burial (1920): a red terracotta local to Compton was used around this time, changing to a greyish material as the seam dried up. The Celtic cross form bears a similarity to the memorial made as a tribute to George Watts (died 1904) which is in the gardens of Limnerlease, the historic home and studios of the Watts Gallery founders George and Mary Watts, in Compton, Surrey.

The Thursley memorial is plainer, not especially ornate. The Tozer memorial is thus an example of Arts and Crafts style.

The Compton grave memorials were custom made, but as far as the Gallery is aware the order books, which might have confirmed the memorials' manufacture, did not survive the 1956 closure of the Pottery as a commercial business.

The body of the memorial would have been press moulded. This is a rapid and cost-efficient process and thus a cheaper option than an engraved headstone. Fabrication would have been in sections and the sections built up to form the finished piece. The kerbs, each with rivets, are very typical of Compton style graves and they too would have been press moulded. Lichen on the memorials is not an issue.

The Curator reassured us that despite cracks, the memorial is in really good condition. She rubbed a finger over the memorial and confirmed it was not 'sugary'. The biggest threat is water and frost. It was suggested that when frosts are severe (e.g. below -5°) the memorial could be covered over. We could also photograph the cracks four times a year over a two-year period to monitor the condition.

The inscription is also typical. The headstones were moulded and the letters were carved afterwards by removing the clay so the letters were prominent. The inscription 'Resurgam': "I will rise again", has no known artistic connotations at this point and is likely to be a matter of family choice; however, from at least the 17th century, it was frequently used on graves and war memorials to indicate triumph of death or extreme adversity.

The Eva Florence Wonham (d.1929) Memorial
51.14664° N, 0.71444° W

This small red memorial stone lies between the Garden of Remembrance and the Smallbrook path. Until this year it was largely concealed by growth from the so-called Sarcophagus Box.

The Curator confirmed this memorial too is of Compton style; the colour is consistent with the Compton clay. It is a lower cost memorial than the Tozer cross. It might even have been intended as a temporary grave marker. Manufacture would have been the same as for the Tozer memorial.

The damage across the top may have been caused by a fault in the actual terracotta body during manufacture. It is also worth noting that the grave markers have metal rods in the middle around which the "parts" are built. If these start to rust, they can start cracking the terracotta. This reinforces the importance of monitoring the effects of moisture on these memorials. Alternatively, the damage may have been caused by accident.

The Curator's visit and expertise were sincerely appreciated. She kindly donated a copy of Mary Seton Watts and the Compton Pottery by Hilary Calvert and Louise Boreham. We gave her a copy

of Tales from a Country Churchyard by Guy J. Singer. The Pottery book will eventually be housed in the History Society Archive. She also suggested visiting the parish church of St John the Evangelist in Churt where there is a First World War memorial, also the work of Mary Watts and executed by the Compton Potters' Arts Guild.

Visit to the parish church of St John the Evangelist, Churt, 13 July 2026 by Amanda Flint and Penny Streeter.

There are two memorial tablets in the church of similar manufacture and lettering to the Thursley churchyard memorials. A large tablet commemorates those who fought in the First World War including, sympathetically, those who survived and came home.

Apart from the Watts link, there were two other areas of interest connected to Thursley. In both parishes the Canadians were a significant presence during WWI. Secondly, certain family names recur in both parishes: for example, Boxall, Chandler, Daubeney, Larby, Voller and others".

A huge thanks to Sally and Amanda for their time and effort in following up this

The second tablet, in the same style, is dedicated to Canadian infantry soldiers whose colours were deposited in the church for safe keeping.

matter. It is only through the efforts of interested parties that we can discover and archive such important details of our village. The website is constantly being updated by our website guru, David Young. So don't forget to keep checking for updates and additional material on

www.thursleyhistorysovciety.org

Parishes of Elstead, Thursley, Shackleford & Peper Harow

Church in the community, community in the church

Harvest FESTIVAL

09:45 / 4 OCTOBER

St Michael & All Angels Church, Thursley

WHAT IS HAPPENING ON THE FARM THIS MONTH?

By Jo Ranson

It's rained—don't need to say anymore…… the end. I will however bore you with more goings on. The major news though is that it has finally rained. It doesn't mean we have gone back to normal as we haven't had enough for that, but we are much more comfortable.

We got the maize harvested and although we grew an extra 20 acres this year the yield was fairly similar to last years, but it is better than others have had so we are grateful for that. The harvesting itself was fairly eventful, the fire brigade came out three times due to reports of smoke across the A3 which was in fact dust; we did speak to them and say we would be carrying on for another day so if they got any more calls to make a note that this is what would be happening. The only worry to that was what if we did actually have a fire!! And then on the last field one of the trailer drivers was following the forager but not close enough and came too close to a sandy bank which leads to the next field and the sand gave way and off went the trailer and tipped sideways nearly taking the tractor with it—he was very lucky. So, we foraged round it, scooped out the trailer with a JCB and reloaded it, then using all machines tethering and pulling the tractor and trailer pulled it up and out. The tractor bent hitch, the trailer broken draw bar, the driver shaken up and dented pride but he came back the next day to start again. Once it was all in the clamp, we put our chopped hay on the top before sheeting it up. It was however a bit windy that day and so some of the chopped hay landed on the clamp and some even made it to our house and through the windows - putting a layer on our bed!! It is always windy when we want to put sheets on so it's a real matter of timing to get the clingfilm on, then the black sheet, then the heavy nets as quickly as possible without losing any tyres that are weighting it down underneath any of said layers.

We found some grass silage to buy, so a week after sheeting up our spare maize clamp we unsheeted it all to put the grass on. It did all

arrive in one day and we got it all sheeted up again that night. A job I still think I should sell as a farming boot camp for anyone who wants to get fit; along with sorting cows and calves we are up to walking 10miles a day or more, but it's just not the cleanest of jobs.

We have calved 200 in four weeks, and it has gone fairly well; having had no twins we then had four sets in a week, with the second one always coming backwards, but all ok. Another caesarean too - not having done one for years we had two in one season. This one was different to the last, this was a very twisted uterus which you can untwist if it's not too twisted but this one was very twisted. We liken it to a shopping bag, and you twist the end of it round to keep your shopping in, but the calf is trying to come out of that twist. If it has one twist (and trying to feel which way the twist is is quite tricky as you don't want to twist the wrong way and make it worse) you can feel over the uterus hold the calf and twist it back (sounds simple but you have to be strong). This one, though, was very twisted and so had to come out the side door. The calf was dead though - the vet said it had been twisted for some time which we wouldn't have known until she started calving. The cow though is doing well and back in the herd.

All the weather apps said rain was coming, so exciting. So, Nick and Toby went at a rate of knots to get the ground prepared for drilling. First to go in were the brassicas, after that the maize, and all 100 acres were done in two days, along with another fire brigade visit for the dust across the A3 but they sat and watched Toby drilling for a

while. Next was our new herbal ley project we are trialling for Arla. Twenty acres of new cow grazing paddocks sown with grass and herbal ley. We use herbal leys anyway, but they were looking for farms to solely graze or eat silage from herbal leys for a period of about 10 days at a time, to see what it does to milk quality Currently there is some research that shows that cows that graze produce a better quality of milk than those housed all year round, but what will it do if those housed all year round can have a herbal ley

silage to a conventional one - so we will see. It was so dusty when they started the field work Toby nearly hit the fence at the bottom of the field and Nick couldn't see where Toby was. On the last round of the field the heavens opened that's what you call timing. Next was the grass seeding for the arable farm, - next year is the swap year so we now get to seed it a season early. Again with a team effort Toby got it drilled in two days. Some nice steady rain has been coming on and off over the last few days and it all appears to be coming up, fingers crossed for no slugs, wire worm and good establishment.

The cubicles finally arrived and into the mix of all the other jobs we got the first two sheds done; the salesman agreed to come and help for the day too, as the delivery was so late. Because Nick and I hate a project half done we motored on to get one side of the next shed done last week and again it is annoying us that the last side isn't done. We are making a big effort next week to get that done.

Another job last week was freeze branding the heifers but whilst we did this we have also DNA sampled them, not because we don't know their parentage but because we want to know how they will perform in the future (genomic testing). By using their info and their parents info the can now fairly accurately predict how they are going to perform which will enable us to pick out better cows to breed with sexed semen, creating a better herd faster. We currently go on just the milk recording data which is ok but obviously the heifers haven't calved yet to know which are the better ones, so effectively we are getting to breed from them earlier creating a better producing younger herd. This in tern will lead to them being a more efficient herd, that then leads on to a more environmentally friendly herd which all scores well for Arla and us.

We are also trialling a genetic testing of some of our cows as to how the environment affects our cows, because not all of it can be down to how they are bred, it is also down to how we look after them. We will have so much information about our cows we will struggle to know what to do with it!

Over the next month we will be finishing the cubicles, coming close to finishing calving, watching the grass grow and choosing bulls to use for the next breeding season.

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FIRST PRIZE

THE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY UPDATE

By Pat Clake

Thank you to everyone who entered the Autumn Show at the beginning of September. It was a great success, exceeding our expectations. We just about survived the heat and drought—some of us better than others. Special thanks go to those who entered for the first time, dared to try their hand, enjoyed themselves, and even won classes. Kerry Porter brought along the largest pumpkin, which was enormous and very heavy. Katy's sunflowers were awarded Best Flowers in Show and Adam Gardner grew remarkably large onions that everyone noticed. The judge said the floral art entries were beautiful and of a consistently high standard.

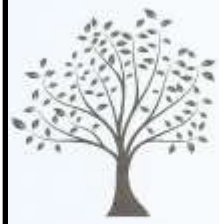
The new 'Give it a Show' competition meant that we had four very impressive displays on large trays creatively filled with flowers, fruit and vegetables by teams from different parts of the village. Congratulations to the winners- the Bowlhead Green Team- Alison Johnston, Fiona Secrett, Alena Ling, Gillie Ure and Anne Treadwell. They had a lot of fun producing the entry.

Our Show Cake was Strawberry inspired. Suitably decorated with strawberries they all looked delicious. Sally Scheffers was the winner with her imaginative creation which had lots of intricate little strawberry details. Sally also made a beautiful necklace with each part hand crafted and an unusual pottery Autumn wreath.

The Tallest Sunflower competition was a great success for children. Thanks to Amanda Flint for growing from seed the little sunflower plants which we distributed. The winner was Tom (sunflower height 3.5 m), 2nd was Lilly (height 3.4m), 3rd Fazain Hussain (height 3.1m) and 4th Oscar, Ali Hanbury's grandson, (height 2.95m) There were 16 entries in all. We were all very impressed with the spectacular height to which these sunflowers grew! Each child who entered was given a certificate and a little Christmas Cactus to nurture, propagated by Amanda.

Going back to June, the tubs and hanging basket class was judged in gardens. Jackie McKenna from Wild Goose came first with a beautiful display. Pat Clake was second and Tina Chant third.

Our next event is a Talk from Mark Saunders, Head Gardener at Fittleworth House. Entitled **'Super Seasonal Ideas'** it should inspire us for next year! Mark has been the head Gardener at Fittleworth for 28 years and is a very experienced lecturer, and photographer. He works in the 3-acre garden with biodiversity and sustainability in mind, and looks out for wildlife, especially birds. Do come to the Village Hall on Wednesday 7th October to hear him speak and see his lovely photographs. The talk begins at 7.30 – doors open at 7pm. All welcome, members and no-members so bring your friends. Entry is free. Raffle, and refreshments (wine and soft drinks)



Thursley Horticultural Society

"SUPER SEASONAL DISPLAY IDEAS"

a talk by

Mark Saunders

Head Gardener at Fittleworth House

7.30pm on Wednesday 7th October

Thursley Village Hall

Raffle and refreshments

Free admission. All Welcome.

SUGAR & BAKES
By Camilla Daubeney

ALMOND AND BLACKBERRY TART

Ingredients
For the pastry

150g Plain flour
75g Cold Butter
60g Caster sugar
1 Egg yolk
2 tbsp Cold water

For the filling

225g Flaked almonds
120g Butter
120g Caster sugar
4 tbsp Milk
Handful of fresh Blackberries

Method

Preheat your oven to 190C/170C Fan/ Gas 5.

Pastry

1. For the pastry, put your flour, butter and sugar together in a food processor and blitz until they form breadcrumbs.

2. Add the egg yolk and 2 tsp cold water and mix until the dough comes together.

3. Roll out on a floured surface to a thickness of 5mm, a little bit bigger than the base of a 9 inch tart tin. Drape your pastry over your tin and use your fingers to press the pastry into the corners of the tin and up the sides.

4. Pop your pastry into the fridge for at least 30 mins. Remove your pastry from the fridge and prick the base all over lightly with a fork.

5. Line the base of your tart with baking paper and tip in baking beans. Bake for 15 minutes. Remove the baking beans and paper and return to the oven for 4 minutes to dry out the base.

Filling

1. To make the filling, toast the almonds in a dry frying pan over medium-high heat for 3 or 4 minutes, until golden-brown.

2. Tip them into a bowl. Put the butter, sugar and milk in the frying pan over medium heat, and once the sugar has dissolved and the butter melted, bring to the boil for 1 minute.

3. Add the almonds and mix well before turning into the pastry case. Then poke your blackberries into the mixture.

4. Bake for 20 minutes, until rich golden-brown. Remove from the oven and leave to cool. Serve warm or cold.

PREPARATIONS

By Lizzie Young

October. Cripes. Already. Depending on when you're reading this...don't forget to grab your tickets to Harvest Supper...or...wasn't it grand?! Be there, or be...somewhere else missing all the fun.

We're in the sharp end of 'wedmin' here at the cottage. My sitting room looks like a candle/printing/ribbon shop. Our outfits are carefully hung. David is spit polishing his black Oxfords, and if you spot me wearing heels with shower caps on top of them with my pilates kit, it's because I'm wearing in my girl shoes. It's almost time! We've been collecting family wedding photographs across the last few weeks – fifteen of them from our two merging families will be displayed on a table at our daughter's wedding reception in a couple of weeks. I appreciate the sentiment and the intent, I really do. But those of you who have been involved in planning a modern wedding for a beloved child know the drill – hours to produce, entire moments to be appreciated by perhaps a small number of the guests as they head for the espresso martini bar.... They're a nice touch, though, the generational wedding pictures - the oldest is Tallulah's maternal great grandparents, who married in the 1930s, the most recent Max's brother, from 2023, almost 100 years later. They're all delightful – beaming couples, resplendent in the fashions of the day (leg of mutton sleeve, anyone?), striding confidently together into their futures, or in the case of the older photographs, sitting stiffly as though the camera might actually be a machine gun. Collecting them from family members has inevitably sent each contributor down memory lane (and up into the attic, in many cases), and spawned a conversation about that particular day, those times, that couple's life since.

David's desk is covered, on any given day, with his work for Thursley History Society – dozens of photographs of our lovely village and the villagers. Many have real age to them, and we are lucky to have so many of them. In the digital age, where most of our phones have thousands of pictures, it is odd to remember waiting for a film of 24 or 36 exposures to come back from Boots. No retakes and better angles for us. Even I have learnt to take 25 shots of my kids when asked to take one, in full expectation of most of them not

passing muster. Like most people our age, our earlier lives are recorded in photo albums. Large, unwieldy, and filled with memories. And pictures I'm not sure why we kept for so long. Quite a few mystery guests we can no longer name. Our albums came with loose leaf pages, and the very width of them tells its own story… the year a grateful author gifted David a small Leica camera, the album is stuffed with landscapes and arty shots: the year we had a toddler and a small baby, we were far too exhausted to take photographs, and there aren't nearly as many as I would like.

I have a famously bad memory. (Recollections may vary, and emotion can cloud recall, as we are hearing this week – as can, dare I say, alimony demands and long cherished spite.). Photos fill in the gaps. Remember that outfit, that meal, that view from a hotel window, that school friend you lost touch with, that haircut, those teeth!

Anyway, we're over them now, the albums too big for our new life: they quite literally do not fit on the bookshelves. The project du jour (on wedmin breaks) is to painstakingly remove all said photographs, scan the best of them to the cloud, and then throw the albums and contents away. Thus freeing up valuable storage real estate (an entire ottoman bed). And allowing an edit, so that what you really want to remember is distilled and accessible. Sounds good, huh?!

Should Russia declare cyber war and destroy the cloud, however, poof, they'll be gone. Along with most of the other things we cherish and take for granted. Haven't decided what to put in the liberated space under the guest bed yet. Listening to the most alarming reports on the radio lately, it should be fresh water, batteries, tinned goods and a quantity of cash. It may even be time to reexamine the 1981 Thursley Nuclear Survival Plan (full details on **thursleyhistorysociety.org**: Preparing for Nuclear War in the 1980s).

This, however, is not the kind of prepping we are into at the moment – ours is more…bridal. More fun. Less Armageddoney. I want to do whatever the adult equivalent of sticking my fingers in my ears and intoning 'la la la, can't hear you' whenever the conversation turns to these darker, more existential matters. Some of my favourite podcasts, the ones I queue up and sometimes play all night, like interesting white noise, have become instead white-knuckle panic inducers. No more about AI either please.

A timely reminder, perhaps, then, last night, at the wonderful Living Room cinema in Liphook, of a moment in history when things must have seemed very dark indeed…. We saw Pressure, the film of the play about the part played by meteorologists in the timing of the D-Day landings. And life went on. People fell in love, babies were born. Daughters got married (albeit in parachute silk dresses, with hoarded food coupon breakfasts and considerably less ado.). They never lost hope and nor must we…

THE STORY OF WHITE CAT (AKA SAWDUST — PART 2)

By Michelle de Vries

In or around mid-June 2020, David rang me saying he was at the top of our driveway and had seen our white and calico cat, Meadow, up there. This was strange, as she never ventured far from our home. He had stopped the car, hoping to get her in, but when he called her name, she had run off.

"Well, that's odd," I said, "as she's sitting right here with me!"

Over the next month or two, various members of the family would occasionally see a streak of white darting across the fields, and Jo Kelly mentioned that a white cat seemed to be living in their hedge.

My heart sank a little, as I was hoping it wouldn't turn out to be another stray cat. We had only recently homed a short-haired black cat who had shown up in our garden the summer before, and I was beginning to wonder if cats were being abandoned on the A3.

After sending a WhatsApp message to other neighbours in Bedford Lane and Bowlhead Green, it became clear that there was no local cat who looked like Meadow that had gone missing. A call to Nick Ransom also confirmed that it didn't sound like one of their farm cats either.

There were various sightings of "the white cat" over the summer, but always in someone else's field or garden, and never for long enough to get a proper look at him. At dusk, we would sometimes catch sight of a mysterious white shape moving across Mount Pleasant. In the fading light he looked almost ghost-like , there one moment and gone the next, and he could move astonishingly fast. He became a rather mysterious presence that summer, glimpsed from a distance but always disappearing before anyone could get near him.

Then, on 20th August, the mystery came a little closer. I went outside to put something in our recycling bin and, quite unexpectedly, saw the white face of a cat peering at me over the wall.

He was a magnificent creature, obviously male: long-haired, big-boned, imposing and strangely statesmanlike. There was something wonderfully mysterious about him. He had the look of an old soul, he was wise and watchful, almost like an elderly grandfather who had seen far more of the world than the rest of us and, as he stared at me over the wall, I could have sworn he gave me a slow, knowing nod.

For a moment, we simply looked at one another. Then I made the slightest move towards him to take a photo with my camera and the spell was broken. He vanished as quickly as he had appeared.

But over the next few weeks he kept returning. We would catch glimpses of him around the house and garden, until eventually we discovered his secret: this strange, ghostly visitor had made himself a home in the old hayloft above our garage. I started leaving a blue bowl of biscuits and milk out for him, and I would always find it empty the following day.

Realising that we had a stray cat living in our hayloft who was probably lost or abandoned, we decided to try to catch him. We bought a large cat trap from Amazon placed some fresh salmon, water and milk inside it, left it outside, and went back into our living room wondering whether he would actually venture inside.

Less than 30 minutes later, we heard an almighty, blood-curdling yowl, followed by an enormous crash and the sound of metal clattering. The cat had gone into the trap, but he was so strong that he had fought his way out, broken the cat trap and run off again, leaving only a broken cage and smashed bowls on the floor.

Then, to my dismay, he was gone.

We didn't see him again. We were devastated and felt so guilty. We were also terribly concerned about the poor cat himself, what of he was no longer eating ? we worried that he might starve.

Our lives carried on, but then one day towards the end of October, a familiar face appeared, peering over the wall.

He was back! And he was still as majestic, strong and big as ever. This time, we went to Cats protection and asked for their biggest strongest Cat trap , but after a while it was clear he wouldn't go near it, so instead we left food out moving it nearer and nearer to our front door.

It took around six weeks, but then one day he finally came inside. I slammed the door behind him and he immediately ran under the sofa!

We felt bad, but we also felt that we were doing the right thing for him. I scoured all the online lost-cat sites and put his photograph up on local FaceBook groups too, hoping that someone might recognise him.

Each day we fed him and left a litter tray out for him. At night, our dog, Izzy Stardust, stayed in the room with him, and the two of them spent each night together. Then one morning we came downstairs to find him happily curled up asleep on the sofa next to her.

The next step was to take him to the vet. We asked them to check whether he had a microchip, but the vet couldn't find one. After a full veterinary check-up, we brought him home.

He was ours!.. just in time to appear in our family Christmas card photograph for 2020.

Over the next year, he gradually became less nervous around us. He and our dog became best friends and we started noticing some very funny things.

He seemed to watch everything Izzy did and copy her exactly. If she went on the sofa, so did he. If she ran to David when he came home, so did he. And when she sat for her food, he started sitting on command too! We couldn't believe it and even put a video on YouTube, which went viral!

We tried to think of a name that suited him. We considered Merlin, Mephistopheles, White Lion, Ghost, Mufasa and Simba, but nothing seemed quite magical or majestic enough. As we had always called him "White Cat", we simply continued to do so while we tried to find a suitable name.

Over time, we gained his trust completely, and he became unlike any cat we have ever known. There was something quite extraordinary about him, for a cat who once seemed so wild, mysterious and determined to keep his distance, he became almost dog-like in his devotion to us.

There was only one thing he absolutely refused to do: leave our gate.

He simply would not do it. Even when we used to walk around the pond with our dog and our other cat, he would not budge beyond the gate.

White Cat had become a firm member of our family and that really should be the end of the story ...

Then, one day in early spring 2026, my mother was talking to our neighbour

Sandy. Sandy mentioned that she had been having lunch with Sally Scheffers, who had told her about a much-loved cat of hers who had sadly disappeared several years earlier.

Then Sandy suddenly said, *"I think you have Sally Scheffers' cat!"*

After all those years of wondering where White Cat had come from, could we finally be about to solve the mystery? But our excitement quickly turned to a sinking feeling. He was so much a part of our family that we couldn't imagine life without him ? yet if he really was Sally's long-lost cat, we knew we would have to give him back.

Nervously, I sent Sally a photograph. Her reply came almost immediately: *"Yes… that's him."*

Then came the loveliest surprise. Sally very kindly said that, after five and a half years with us, he was so settled and happy that she felt he should stay. There was an enormous sigh of relief in our house, and we were incredibly grateful for her generosity.

Best of all, we finally learned his story.

Sally was able to know what had become of him and we found out he hadn't been abandoned at all. We now think he came through the Bedford Lane tunnel and simply couldn't find his way back across the A3 . As those reading Sallys story in last months magazine will know, originally part of a feral litter from Wembley, he had been taken in by the RSPCA and adopted by Sally, along with his sister, Spit, as semi-feral farm cats in around 2016 but had tended to wander quite a bit.

Whitecat had actually been microchipped by the RSPCA when Sally first got him. When we had him checked again recently with a second vets practice, there was still no detectable chip, which is very strange. We will never know what happened to it, but we were told that sometimes a cat's microchip can move deeper into the body and occasionally, become impossible to detect. So it is definitely worth asking your vet to check that your animal's chip can still be read when you next take them in.

So Whitecat now lives happily as a house cat in Cosford farm , and we hope he will stay with us forever.

I still feel that 'White Cat" deserves a better name, and now we know that his original name was actually "Sawdust" we did think about changing it back.

But after all these years, he answers to White Cat, so changing it back now seems a little pointless.
Admittedly, as he's actually black and white, it was never the most accurate name in the first place!

But after six years, one broken cat trap, several disappearing acts, a YouTube hit and an entire secret identity later, it's probably too late to argue with him.

He is, and always will be known to us as , White Cat… (aka Sawdust)!

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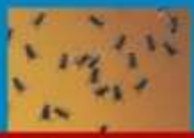

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