

**MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting of Melksham Without
Parish Council held on Monday 3rd March 2025 at 7.00pm
At Shaw CofE Primary School, Corsham Rd, Shaw, Melksham SN12 8EH**

Present: John Glover (Chair), David Pafford (Vice Chair), Alan Baines, John Doel, Martin Franks, Mark Harris, Shona Holt, Nathan Keates, Anne Sullivan, Peter Richardson, Robert Shea-Simonds and Richard Wood.

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk) and Marianne Rossi (Finance & Amenities Officer)

In attendance: Wiltshire Councillors Nick Holder (Bowerhill) and Jonathon Seed (Melksham Without West & Rural). Wiltshire Councillor Phil Alford (Melksham Without North & Shurnhold) was due to provide his report; however, he had to leave prior to the start of the meeting to attend a Melksham Town Council meeting as a Town Councillor. A written version of Councillor Alford's report is included in the Annual Parish booklet.

Kate Brooks from Age UK Wiltshire was also in attendance to give a short presentation on the joint Melksham Community Support project. It was noted that Sarah Thomson (Melksham Community Support project worker) was due to give the presentation; however, she was unwell and left shortly before the meeting started.

41 Members of public

1. Welcome, Housekeeping and Apologies

Councillor Glover warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the fire evacuation procedures in the event of a fire.

2. Chair's report on the work of the Council during the year.

Councillor Glover gave his report of the work of the parish council during 2024/25 (**Appendix 1**) and thanked all the volunteers who kept the notice boards up to date and checked the community access defibrillators in the parish. The detailed work undertaken by CAWS (Community Action Whitley and Shaw) on the Lime Down Solar Park proposals in Whitley was commended and congratulated.

3. Reports from the Wiltshire Councillors for the Parish

- i. **Wiltshire Councillor Jonathon Seed (Melksham Without West & Rural)- Appendix 2:** Councillor Seed provided a verbal overview of his report.
- ii. **Wiltshire Councillor Seed as Chair of Melksham Area Board- Appendix 3:** A brief report was provided on what the Melksham Area Board does and the work that has been undertaken during the year. Councillor Seed explained that the Melksham Area Board is the local arm of Wiltshire Council so that local issues could be raised by the local

community and fed directly into Wiltshire Council. Area Boards have funding available to be distributed within the local community to help local people. Over the last four years the Area Board has distributed over £200,000 into the local community, which included significant investment into the parish area. Councillor Seed introduced the Melksham Area Board Strategic Engagement and Partnership Manager, Richard Rogers, who briefly explained his role and provided his contact details for any organisations who wished to get in contact with him to discuss any projects.

- iii. **Wiltshire Councillor Nick Holder (Bowerhill)- Appendix 4:** Councillor Holder provided highlights from his report. In particular, he highlighted that there had been significant investment in the Bowerhill area from the Area Board, including funding towards Bowerhill Village Hall to ensure that it remains a fit for purpose community asset. Councillor Holder advised that the site for the proposed new primary school at Pathfinder Place was progressing slowly in terms of the security of the site. There is a final stretch of fencing left to be installed, and it will then be fully secured. The hope is once this is done that the public open space around the site will be open and fully available for all members of the public by the end of April, weather permitting. Councillor Holder explained that he was a cabinet member for Highways, Streetscene and flooding and commended the approach taken by the parish council with regard to flooding and the work that the council has undertaken in the community around this issue. It is considered by Wiltshire Council as an exemplar in terms of how the council engages with the Flood Wardens.
- iv. **Wiltshire Councillor Phil Alford (Melksham Without North & Shurnhold)-** As detailed above, Councillor Alford had sent his apologies for this evening's meeting. His report has been provided under **Appendix 5** in the Annual Parish Booklet.

4. Written reports from Organisations and Groups in the parish

The following reports were noted:

Action Groups

BRAG (Bowerhill Residents Action Group)- **Appendix 6**

CAWS (Community Action: Whitley & Shaw)- **Appendix 7**

BASRAG (Berryfield and Semington Road Action Group)- **Appendix 8**

Village Halls

Bowerhill Village Hall- **Appendix 9**

Berryfield Village Hall- **Appendix 10**

Groups and Organisations

Melksham Food and River Festival- **Appendix 11**

Shaw and Whitley Garden Club- **Appendix 12**

Melksham Gardeners' Society- **Appendix 12**

Age UK Wiltshire- Melksham Fitness & Friendship Club- **Appendix 13**

Age UK Wiltshire- Melksham Community Support (MCS) service- **Appendix 14**
 Alzheimer's Support- **Appendix 15**
 Melksham WI- **Appendix 16**
 Group Five- **Appendix 16**
 Read Easy- **Appendix 16**
 Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance Charity- **Appendix 17**
 The South Western Ambulance Charity- **Appendix 18**
 AFC Melksham Disabled Football- **Appendix 19**
 Bowerhill Baby and Toddler Group- **Appendix 20**
 Friends of Giffords Surgery- **Appendix 21**
 Shaw & Whitley Community Emergency Group- **Appendix 22**
 FearFree Charity- **Appendix 23**
 Shaw and Whitley Community Hub- **Appendix 24**
 that meeting space- **Appendix 25**
 Shaw and Whitley Art Group- **Appendix 25**
 Melksham Remembers- **Appendix 26**
 Melksham & District Historical Association- **Appendix 26**
 Melksham and Corsham Gateway Club- **Appendix 26**
 Avon Bowls Club- **Appendix 27**
 Melksham Carnival- **Appendix 28**

5. Presentation from Age UK Wiltshire on Melksham Community Support:

Kate Brooks from Age UK Wiltshire gave a short presentation on the Melksham Community Support project. She explained that the service was created following the Melksham Emergency Support Scheme, which was a joint initiative by the parish and town councils during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kate shared statistics from the scheme, including 445 volunteers who came forward to help, 1,919 phone calls received on the emergency support phone line, and 919 prescriptions delivered. Volunteers also provided services such as shopping, dog walking, and friendly phone. Kate highlighted that the scheme revealed the ongoing struggles some members of the community were facing even before the pandemic, and this led to both the parish and town councils looking at how these members could still be supported. As a result, the Melksham Community Support service was developed in partnership with Age UK Wiltshire, which follows on from the emergency support service. She outlined the aims of the service and described the role of the project worker, who has been in place since July 2023. Kate also shared notable achievements from 2024, including support provided to over 100 individuals, addressing 694 issues, and completing 160 home visits. Information about how to contact the service was also provided, with leaflets available at the meeting for people to collect.

6. Update on the Neighbourhood Plan Review

Councillor Pafford, as Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, provided an update on the neighbourhood plan review, which is now at the examination stage after several public consultations. The Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has been as thorough as possible with regard to consulting on the plan. The examiner has visited all parts of the plan's community area, and following this has sent across some questions that the Melksham Neighbourhood

Plan qualifying bodies will need to respond to. A response to the questions is due to be approved over the next week or so. Once the examination has been completed, the plan will go to referendum, currently planned for 1st May for residents to vote on.

7. Comment and question time

No questions were received from the members of the public.

8. To present Grant Aid cheques to local organisations and groups.

The Chair and Vice Chair presented Grant Aid cheques to those groups and organisations who had been awarded a grant, having provided a service which benefitted the residents of the parish. The 2385 (Melksham) Squadron ATC were presented with a repurposed defibrillator, which was what they were asking for funding towards in their grant application. The parish council had replaced all out-of-date pads and the rescue-ready kit prior to the handover at this evening's meeting.

The Chairman invited groups and organisations to say a few words whilst receiving their grant cheques, with representatives from all the groups thanking the parish council for their support and providing an explanation of the services they provided and what they would be spending their grant funding on.

Meeting finished at 8.30pm

Signed
Full Council Meeting, 14th April 2025

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING March 2025

Councillor John Glover

In my fourth, and probably last, annual report for the Annual Parish Meeting, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent staff of the Council for the sterling work that they undertake on our behalf for the residents of the Parish. Of note are the Clerk, Teresa Strange, and the Finance & Amenities Officer, Marianne Rossi, without whom our organisation would fall. Also, I must mention our Caretaker and our Allotment Warden, who between them ensure that the allotments, play areas and other public facilities are maintained to a proper standard.

Since the last Annual Parish Meeting, we have had to say goodbye to former Councillor Terry Chivers and Councillor Andy Russell and welcomed Councillor Anne Sullivan, who was co-opted to the Council. As Councillor Chivers resigned recently, no election will be held due to it being close to the main elections and the council decided not to seek co-option for effectively just 2 months of meetings. Elections for both Wiltshire Council and Parishes will be held on 1 May 2025.

PRECEPT

The Precept set for 2025/26 is £285,135, an increase of 9% on last year's precept. An average Band D household will contribute £95.65; a rise of just £5.71 for the year. The precept has again risen because of the effects of general inflation across all aspects of the Council's business. As a Parish Council we have resisted the take on of services from Wiltshire Council where no benefit is seen for the residents. However, we continue to take on Play facilities from Developers to ensure that there is a uniform standard of facility across the Parish. We continue to maintain, and improve, facilities such as village halls, play areas, and playing fields. Applying for grants, (over £57,000 spread out over the next six years for the Queen Elizabeth Jubilee Playing Fields at Bowerhill), wherever we can to alleviate costs whilst improving services. The parish council continues to strive to maintain services against the backdrop of the current cost of living crisis.

PLANNING

Reviewing and commenting on plans submitted to Wiltshire Council are an important part of MWPC's responsibilities, one we take very seriously. However, whatever our individual views on any application, your councillors can only respond to the subject in front of them and not hypothetical alternatives, (however much your councillors might agree), that have not been formally submitted. This year we received 63 planning applications, including 6 large developments. Many being potentially controversial. But, whilst we agree with proposals that are in line with the WC Core Strategy, (and emerging Local Plan), and the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan where Material Considerations are met, we object to others where appropriate Material Considerations allow us to, but also seek as much in mitigation as we can, given the assumption of approval imposed by the current Government's changes to the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) and the 80% increase in housing

requirements for Wiltshire as a whole. Consequently, the availability of a 5 Year Land Supply, which would normally prevent speculative development, has been undermined and effectively halved by the current Governments actions.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Your Council, working with Melksham Town Council, supported by Place Consultants with some Government funding, submitted its revised plan (for the period up to 2038), for examination by a Planning Examiner in November 2024 and should be out to you as the public to vote on at a Referendum on 1 May 2025 with the local elections.

The parish council also submitted detailed and robust responses to several Wiltshire Council consultations including the draft Local Plan, the draft School Places Strategy, the draft Design Guide, the Local Walking & Cycling Improvement Plan and the Local Transport Plan; as well as some central government consultations on changes to the Planning process.

EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Community Emergency Group in Shaw and Whitley continues their excellent work monitoring the flood risks in their area. They have regular work parties and are always on hand in times of heavy rain. They always work with enthusiasm and great community spirit and are held as exemplars of what a local emergency group can do. We continue to try and engage with Melksham Town Council on a joint Emergency Plan for the area.

GRANT FUNDING

The parish council are always astounded at the amount of great work undertaken by volunteers in the community, many of you are represented here tonight through a variety of wide-ranging organisations, groups and venues. We are pleased to support you in the work you do and tonight will be giving out grants totalling £35,677, plus awarding one organisation with a repurposed defibrillator.

SHURNHOLD FIELDS

This is a joint project with Melksham Town Council. One of the remaining major tasks still to complete is the construction of a small car park and improvements to the entrance. Unfortunately, there have been some holdups with this project while discussions were taking place between the Environment Agency and the Land Drainage team at Wiltshire Council in respect of flood prevention. Wiltshire Council has been successful in obtaining grant funding from the Environment Agency for a flood alleviation scheme in the area, which includes bunds being created to help protect the properties in Dunch Lane, which will need to be completed before the car park and entrance improvement project can commence. All the work should start this year.

ASSET MANAGEMENT

The parish council maintain assets ranging from play areas and sports fields to bus shelters, noticeboards, and bins as well as new Real Time Information boards on a few bus stops. These all need regular maintenance and a programme of replacement on a rolling basis. These things are often unseen; the grass cutting, cleaning, weed spraying and bin emptying, but would be very noticeable if not done. A big thank you to the volunteers who check the defibrillators and keep the noticeboards up to date every week, whatever the weather.

The parish continues its successful partnership with the Town to fund the Market Place toilets and continues with the deployment of its own Speed Indicator Devices (SID) to deter speeding on our roads.

SUPPORT FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The parish council have funded an Age UK project worker specifically for the Melksham Without area for the last year, with some great results in helping members of the community to live a good life in later years. It has also taken on the MWPC legacy of Melksham Community Support which was originally started in covid. We are pleased to continue to support this in the coming year providing direct support, and access to information and practical help, primarily for those over 60.

WHAT NEXT?

As elections are due in a few months' time it would not be right to second guess what your new council will do. I am delighted that the first installations of Real Time Information Systems were provided in Mitchell Drive and Kestrel Court in Bowerhill, with 9 others planned across the parish in line with suggestions from residents' groups in our villages.

A PERSONAL NOTE

Finally, once again, I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their support over the last 12 months and for the work they have undertaken as Chairman, Vice Chairman or member of numerous committees. This is a voluntary task which involves some of us in a weekly evening commitment, never mind the ad-hoc meetings on-site, at Wiltshire Council or further afield in the interests of MWPC residents.

Thank you all once again.

REPORT FROM JONATHON SEED, WILTSHIRE COUNCILLOR FOR MELKSHAM WITHOUT WEST AND RURAL, COVERING BERRYFIELD

This has been another busy year for me as your Wiltshire Councillor for Melksham Without West and Rural. This Council Division covers Berryfield, Broughton Gifford, Great Hinton, Keevil, Semington and Steeple Ashton. With over 500 households, Berryfield is the largest part of this division. As well as looking after the interests of residents in Wiltshire Council, I also attend all of the Parish Council meetings that I can manage in all six villages. In addition to sitting on several Wiltshire Council committees, I have once again chaired the Melksham Area Board, which, as well as the chairing of meetings, involves a great deal of background liaison and organisation. I make a particular point of trying to attract as much area board funding as possible into local villages, and Berryfield Village Hall has received significant local grant funding from the board in the past year.

Locally I enjoy working with your extremely well-run Melksham Without Parish Council. We work together both publicly and behind the scenes on many issues. This year we have finally secured a proper enforcement regime for the Semington Bus Gate with the installation of an Automatic Number Plate Recognition Camera. We have also had several large planning applications to deal with, and I have represented local views both in County Hall and at more local meetings. New Government policy is making it almost impossible to successfully object to the principle of new developments, but that does not mean that we cannot object where the plans are so flawed that they would do serious harm to the local environment. Where successful planning approval is inevitable, I have worked closely with the Parish Council on several applications to secure the very best deal possible for the local community in terms of community infrastructure and local access. I hope that the local community will benefit from this joint working for many years to come.

Melksham Without Parish Council - Area Board Report 2024-25

Melksham area board is the local arm of Wiltshire Council and works to support the local communities of Broughton Gifford, Melksham, Melksham Without, Steeple Ashton, Keevil, Great Hinton and Semington to deliver improvements and increase resilience. We bring together a network of key public services, community organisations and Wiltshire Council services.

Over the past 4 years, £200k has been invested locally, supporting 100 different organisations, groups and projects. In turn this has levered in £570k of additional money. The “Local Highways and Footpaths Improvement Group” is a subgroup of the area board and invests £25k of additional funding each year to help tackle local improvements to our highways.

A key focus has been to improve opportunities for all children and young people through continuing to support outreach work both in the town and the villages. Working with our partners, such as 4Youth and Melksham Town Council, we have this year helped establish a youth voice in the town and run a successful skate park event.

We are determined to help tackle deprivation and ensure our communities can have access to the resources needed to meet their basic needs. This has included securing an additional £20k of money for the foodbank, working with The Riverside to provide cookery classes and funding a drop-in service for the vulnerable to receive support and help.

The health and wellbeing group is a subgroup of the area board consisting of many of the varied organisations that work in our area. We meet quarterly, and this year our focus has been on men’s mental health, with several groups being established offering support that previously was unavailable.

We encourage innovation, and in 2024, in response to the ASB complaints regarding the underpass in Melksham, the first legal art wall for Wiltshire and the first in any small town in England began being trialled. The feedback received has been very positive.

The area board will be formed again after the elections on May 1st and will continue to help strengthen our communities. If you think we can help, we welcome a discussion with you.

Councillor Nick Holder Bowerhill Division

As this is my last report before the Wiltshire Council election in May of this year, I wanted to start by saying it has been a great pleasure to serve as your Wiltshire Councillor over the last six years, and I have been honoured to represent you. I am very proud of what we have been able to achieve together for our amazing community.

During my time as your Wiltshire Councillor, I have met with many of you, and whether that has been at Parish Council meetings, at the many and varied community activities or when calling round to see if I can help with an issue, it is obvious the Bowerhill community is vibrant, dynamic and full of people who want to keep this a great place to live, work and bring up a family.

I want to highlight some of the things I have delivered since I was first elected:

- ✓ Sponsored grants for Bowerhill organisations totalling over £20,000.
- ✓ Ensured Bowerhill has had its fair share of investment in improving our roads.
- ✓ Worked collaboratively with Bowerhill Residents Association Action Group to help them with the work on the picnic area and the newly established wildflower area.
- ✓ Helped the residents of Pathfinder Place establish their Residents Association and assist them challenge their management company.
- ✓ Worked with the residents of Magister Road to make their green space safer for the children to play on.
- ✓ Launched my campaign to introduce a 20 MPH speed limit outside Melksham Oak at peak times.
- ✓ Supported the events put on by the brilliant Bowerhill Primary School PTA, and the Bowerhill Baby and Toddlers Group.
- ✓ Challenged the Chief Constable to improve the police presence in Bowerhill and to increase patrols to combat speeding.

Over the last year, I have continued to work very closely with the Parish Council on the major planning applications submitted, all of which sought permission to drastically increase the size of the Bowerhill settlement. Given the increased housing targets set by central government, it has become increasingly difficult to stop these applications, but I will continue to work with the Parish Council to make sure there are very specific conditions to any detailed application and ensure we get the best outcome for our residents.

Staying on the planning theme, we finally seem to be edging towards the completion of the TW obligations at Pathfinder Place, with some help from the LPA enforcement team, and I am hopeful, rather than confident, that these will be completed by the summer and the roads will be adopted. The planning application for the new Primary School at Bowerhill has been fully approved, and the site is now secure and protected. We await confirmation from central government to confirm the building can go ahead.

In addition to my local activities over the last 12 months, I held Cabinet responsibilities for Highways, Streetscene and Flooding and I am pleased to have seen significant investment in the road network across Bowerhill and the continued improvements to the public open spaces and Wildflower Areas in our area.

I know you will continue to be well served by your Parish Councillors supported by the excellent officer team led by the Clerk.

Finally, if any resident needs to contact me, please do so, on 07931 905520 or by email nick.holder@wiltshire.gov.uk

Councillor Nick Holder

Bowerhill Division

Wiltshire Councillor Phil Alford

On the 9th of January Wiltshire Council gave its backing for plans to work alongside Somerset, Dorset and BCP (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole) towards a devolution settlement. A few weeks later the Government announced it didn't want the counties to go ahead with the plan. Frustratingly, Government ministers and civil servants had spent about two months telling Wiltshire it was going to be part of a combined authority and have a mayor. In the end though, Central Government realised that despite all the talk, it didn't have the money to hand over so pulled the plug at the last minute in favour of counties outside the South West.

As it is, I do not believe a mayor is necessary, I think it represents another tax-raising layer of bureaucracy adding to the existing burden on residents. I think that the government should just transfer powers to councils and let them get on with it rather than creating an extra tier of government.

In other news from Wiltshire Council, it has just been awarded a 'Good' rating for its adult care service by the Care Quality Commission. This comes hot on the heels of a 'Good' rating for Special Educational Needs and an 'Outstanding' for children's services, both from OFSTED. Whilst some councils are yet to be fully assessed across these three services areas, Wiltshire is currently a top performing council in the UK. The council was also judged 7th out of a total of 149, in the country for productivity in the MJ awards

In February it is planned that Wiltshire Council will increase its share of council tax by 4.5%. This will be made up of 2% for the adult social care levy and 2.5% for the rest of the council's business. However, unlike many councils it is also running a balanced budget so there is no risk of bankruptcy and no need to ask the government for a bailout or council tax increases above 5% like in Somerset or Swindon. 2.5% represents about £9M extra but due to sound management the council is still investing over £10 million more in highways work as well as looking to build a new £25M leisure centre in Trowbridge amongst other projects.

Away from Wiltshire Council, it is great news to read the recent decision by Island Green Power to deselect Whitley from its Limedown plans for the battery storage site. Clearly, this is terrible for residents in Hullavington but a welcome relief to us. The efforts of the CAWS working group have been relentless and I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to Peter, Dan and the whole team for all the hard work opposing this on behalf of the village.

Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG)

2024/25 Report

The BRAG picnic area working party volunteers continue to meet at the picnic area on Tuesday mornings, during the spring through to autumn (weather permitting), and continue to do an amazing job maintaining and improving both the picnic site and the footpath/bridleway leading to the canal. Maintenance has been performed on the benches, which were vandalised once again, and four of the tables now have new barbecue stands installed. The display lecterns at the picnic area are now showing signs of rot, and there is a plan to restore and replace them with more robust and more maintainable replacements. A new bench was installed in memory of a local resident, providing more seating for quiet reflection.

The Great British (Bowerhill) Spring Clean litter-picking initiative was again successfully held with fine support from the Scouts/Beavers, Cubs and the team at The Pilot, and we have another session planned in March 2025. The group has continued to loan out litter-picking equipment to the local Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, companies and walking groups for use in the village and along the canal.

The re-wilding project at the western end of Brabazon Way, which is intended to create a wildlife friendly area with wild flowers and grasses, is now progressing really well. With the support of local wilding expert Howard Yardy and many supportive residents, the area is starting to show small signs of self wilding activity. Clovers, Oxeye Daisy and other wild plants are starting to take a hold. The team have also planted further Hawthorn and Hazel bushes, spring bulbs, wild plants, wild seeds and seedlings.

We run our “Eyes On The Ground” initiative where we mail local residents to seek reports of issues for the Parish Steward to attend when he/she visits the village. This could be to report issues of damage by weather, vandalism and natural overgrowth of trees and shrubbery, as well as reporting issues with bins and littering. If residents would like to join that initiative please make contact.

The group are still actively participating in the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group as well as providing feedback on planning applications, such as those to the east and south of Melksham.

We have supported a number of local companies this year with their “In the Community” volunteering schemes. This has involved helping to tidy the picnic area, litter picking along the bridleway and planting a huge number of spring bulbs in Brabazon Way. All volunteers seemed to really enjoy the activity.

Of course, the big issue currently on residents’ minds at the moment is the proposed warehouse south of the A365. The group are closely supporting residents who are strongly against this development which is completely out of context with its environment.

Plans for the future

- Working with our local councillors and MWPC to ensure local residents are kept fully appraised of any future housing developments and the impact that any

future Melksham bypass may have on them, the surrounding green areas and wildlife. Where appropriate gain support and campaign for change.

- Continue to work with our local councillors and MWPC to ensure that the new housing developments deliver all that is promised.
- Arrange regular litter picks and continue to involve residents - in particular the younger generation.
- Look to obtain funding to support the addition of further benches and picnic tables around the estate.
- Continue with the work at the Picnic area and the promotion of its use - in particular to local schools and nurseries.
- Continue to develop any green areas or any unused areas within the village with planting of trees, bulbs, and plants.
- Listen to residents' concerns and act appropriately to address issues that arise.
- Find new members, elect a new committee, and appoint new Executive Officers in an effort to inject new life into the group and carry its business forward into the future.

As most voluntary organisation we are always short on people resources. If there are any volunteers that would like to help with initiatives across the village then please get in touch.

Thank you to all the current Committee Members and Executive Officers for their tireless work in making Bowerhill a better place to live and work.

Mark Blackham,
Chair
Bowerhill Residents Action Group

About CAWS

Community Action: Whitley and Shaw (CAWS) is a community group that has been set up to represent local residents and businesses, seeking to achieve changes and improvements to the quality of life and wellbeing of local people. It promotes community cohesion, coordinates community action, increases awareness and consults on future developments, and provides a vital link between residents and businesses and the local authorities. CAWS campaigns and projects are wide ranging from trying to improve road safety for drivers and pedestrians, to providing input to the Neighbourhood and Local Plans. CAWS is run entirely by volunteers with a commitment to recycle any funds raised through local events etc. back into the community and we have a number of active campaigns and projects, some of which are mentioned below, to that end.

Development Consultations

The last year has been dominated by the CAWS Working Group campaign to persuade the Lime Down Solar developer that Whitley is the wrong location for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). That campaign was ultimately successful with the developer formally deselecting the Whitley site in January 2025. Since then, the Working Group has been focused on other parts of the scheme that will have an impact on the local area such as the cable that will link the solar/BESS scheme north of the M4 to the Melksham Substation.

During the year CAWS has also submitted comments on the Wiltshire Council (WC) Local Plan and the Joint Melksham Neighborhood Plan 2, both of which are now at examination stage.

Topography Signs

Two new information signs were installed in summer 2024, one at the top of Littleworth Lane in Whitley and the other near the play area at Shaw Playing Field. Feedback from residents and visitors has been very positive.

Speedwatch and Road Safety

Our Speedwatch team has continued to do sterling work during the last year with regular deployments around the villages. We are pleased to have seen Wiltshire Police speed enforcement in the area in the last year, but road safety remains still a big issue locally and so we will continue to press for ways to reduce risk either through engineering projects or trying to change driver behaviour. We are grateful to MWPC and WC for the "Halo Lights" on the Zebra Crossing by Shaw School, Speed Indicator Device deployments, the new "Pedestrians in Road" sign on Top Lane, and recent attention to potholes and road surfaces around the villages.

Telephone Boxes

Our library on Top Lane is a local asset that continues to be highly valued by many local residents. In 2024 we installed ventilation vents and bookends, and in 2025 we plan to do some minor repairs and give it a coat of paint.

Our 2025 grant from MWPC will go towards converting the Telephone Box by Shaw School into a Community Gallery.

Chatty Benches

New benches at Evergreen Meadow and Whitley Stores were installed in 2024 and, subject to funding, we hope to provide a Picnic Table in Ever Green Meadow soon too.

Litter Picks

We have conducted two organised litter picks in the last year that collected an incredible amount of litter from around the villages. We are also grateful to a number of individual residents who have done their own litter picks during the year.

Summary

We have had a very busy 12 months but we are proud to be pushing forward with initiatives that will benefit our local communities in one way or another and the ongoing support of MWPC is very important to us in delivering on those commitments. Thank you MWPC!

Berryfield and Semington Road Action Group (BASRAG)

BASRAG hosted a litter pick in the Spring, and an Easter Fun Day featuring an Easter egg hunt and crafts which was well attended. Several parents thanked the volunteers for hosting the afternoon as they felt it brought the community together. A Summer Fun Day was added to the annual repertoire of BASRAG activities with David Hickory displaying his talents as a balloon artist and magician and Paige from Charms Facepainting decorating the children's faces. This was a great success, the little children found the magic hilarious and everyone else enjoyed the silliness and the laughter of the children. The face painting was beautiful and Paige was rebooked to come to the Spooky Crafts for Kids event held towards the end of October. A Christmas Carol and Song Sing Along was held in December with live music accompaniment by Brendan Cassidy and mince pies and hot chocolate supplied by BASRAG volunteers

The hall continues to be very well used, not only by the local community, but also by others from neighbouring towns and villages and, on occasion, even further afield than that.

We currently have 21 regular user-groups plus numerous ad-hoc bookings, mainly party bookings at weekends. We now have four baby and toddler groups, three craft groups and several groups dedicated to supporting the more vulnerable members of our community.

The hall is also used by health and well-being groups, including by the NHS for a Diabetes Prevention group. Age UK and the Alzheimer's Support Group also continue to use the hall for their regular meetings, and we now have a mental health support group for men in the form of Man Down (Melksham).

With the aid of grants from Melksham Without Parish Council and the Melksham Area Board the kitchen has recently been completely refurbished, including new flooring. At the same time we took the opportunity to replace the old manual shutters with modern electrically powered items. The management committee would like to express their thanks to the Parish Council and the Area Board for their financial support with this project.

Looking forward to 2025 plans are in place to alleviate the flooding in the car park, which is getting progressively worse and happening more frequently. It is not, as you may think, a problem with a blocked gully or drain, but an issue with the drainage system that was installed when the hall was built 20 years ago. With the more frequent and heavier rainfall we are experiencing we need to take action now. Things have moved on in the world of drainage and a modern solution is required to fix the problem and this we now have.

Other regular maintenance work is ongoing, including replacing various lights with energy-efficient LED items. A defective CCTV camera in Room 2 was also replaced this year.

In 2024 we were able to form a committee with four elected officers, five user-group representatives and one member of the public.

The elected officers are Mark Harris (Chairman), Ann Finch (Vice-Chair), Chris Broom (Secretary) and Lynne Smith (Treasurer). Terry Broom continues to assist us whenever he can with maintenance and repairs.

The committee comprises 10 volunteers (who are also Trustees of the hall) representing various user-groups including 1st Bowerhill Scout Group, Bowerhill Baby & Toddler Group, Melksham PHAB Club, Man Down (Melksham), the three craft groups and Melksham Without Parish Council. The committee have met regularly throughout the past year.

Our website www.bowerhillvillagehall.org.uk and booking system continues to work well and bookings are still increasing year-on-year, so much so that we are struggling to accommodate new regular user requests.

We also have a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/bowerhillvillagehall>

We look forward to seeing the hall go from strength to strength and continue to provide a service to the local community.

Mark Harris, Chairman, Bowerhill Village Hall Trust, 27th February 2025

Berryfield Village Hall Annual Parish Report – March 2025

Berryfield Village Hall continues to be a busy and thriving space for the community as we begin our third year of operation. The hall is in use every day of the week and it is also now listed as the Berryfield polling station.

The hall currently hosts 21 regular groups and a diverse range of activities for all ages. For example, baby/toddler groups, art/crafts, fitness, dance classes and community events for all ages and local families. It is also well used by private hirers for parties, celebrations, meetings and training.

We organised and completed two large projects last summer that were supported by successful funding bids.

- 1) Acoustic ceiling panels to dampen sound resonance in the hall. We received grant funding of £4,800 from Melksham Without Parish Council towards the total cost of £5,100. We have since received positive feedback from people using the hall, including those with hearing impairments. It has improved the acoustics for larger group events and musical activities.
- 2) Installation of air conditioning. With a total project cost of about £14,800, we were successful in securing a grant of £3,725 from Melksham Area Board, and £10,000 from the Suez Community Fund. The air conditioning units have greatly improved usage of the hall in warmer weather.

With increased footfall and the number of events being held, our project this year is to reorganise the two walk-in cupboards that house our folding tables and chairs. Our solution will make better use of the limited space so that our moveable furniture is easier and safer to access when setting up and clearing away for all users.

In the last year we have welcomed Jacqui to the role of Secretary. We also held our AGM in September. As a charitable trust, the village hall cannot run without our volunteers and I thank my fellow trustees and the committee for their time and ongoing commitment to help make the hall a success.

Can you help us?

If you live in Berryfield, we always welcome volunteers to help with opening/closing the hall for one-off bookings and our moveable partition. This is subject to the variable needs of a weekly rota, your availability and there is no regular commitment required. If you are interested then please contact us.

Get in touch:

Website www.hallbookingonline.com/berryfield

Facebook www.facebook.com/BerryfieldVillageHall

Email BerryfieldVillageHall@outlook.com

Phone 07566 746788

Shona Holt, Chair of Berryfield Village Hall Trust

March 2025

MELKSHAM FOOD AND RIVER FESTIVAL

We are very grateful to Melksham Without Council for their grant contribution. This was used to help us to fund the specialist professional electrical, insurance, medical, security, toilets and waste disposal service providers needed to support the event. The 2024 Melksham Food and River Festival took place in the King George V Park and on the River Avon over the weekend of 31st August and 1st September 2024. It was again very well attended. Despite the downpour at 3.00 on Sunday, we estimate that approximately 7 - 9,000 people enjoyed the programme of field / river based activities.

The Festival weekend enables community, educational, fund raising and social opportunities to promote the activities of local Melksham artisans, communities and charities; as well as being a shop window for a range of hot food and other stalls to promote the food and products for many local small suppliers. We have for many years also offered the MP a stall so that they can engage with residents of the area.

Public attendance is hard to be precise as the event is FREE-to-attend two day event, drawn from the entire Melksham areas and increasingly from a wider catchment area.

The 2025 Festival is now the 10th Festival and again the event is planned and delivered by a team of local volunteers.

The Festival weekend enables community, educational, fund raising and social opportunities to promote the activities of local Melksham artisans, communities and charities; as well as being a shop window for a range of hot food and other stalls to promote the food and products for many local small suppliers.

Shaw and Whitley Garden Club:

The Shaw and Whitley Garden Club meet every second Wednesday of the month at the Methodist Chapel, Top Lane, Whitley SN12 8QU from 7pm to 9pm.

We have a range of Speakers on Garden Topics and we also visit Gardens of interest to our members during the year. Including trips to RHS gardens and National Shows.

Everyone is welcome and we have tea, coffee and cake at each meeting enabling people to talk and make friends.

We have also started an Autumn, Winter and Spring Community Coffee Morning which runs on 2nd, 3rd and 4th Saturday 1030am to noon at the same venue during these seasons. The aim of these meeting is to bring the Community together in a warm and very friendly atmosphere.

Pauline Farr
Chairman

MELKSHAM GARDENERS SOCIETY

Melksham Gardeners Society are a group of like-minded gardeners who meet on the last Tuesday of each month. We organise a program of speakers whose presentations inform, educate and entertain our members and guests. The society also organise 2 coach trips per year, in 2024 we visited Forde Abbey Gardens in Dorset and Kew Gardens in London. In June our meeting takes the form of a visit to a local garden open under the National Gardens Scheme. Other activities include a plant swap and quiz night, Christmas wreath making and the annual Flower and Produce show.

The society currently has around 90 members from Melksham and surrounding areas. All events are open to members and guests. We meet on the last Tuesday of each month at the Rachel Fowler Centre at 7:30pm entry for members is £1 and guests £3. Current membership is £15/year.

Details of all Society events and contact details can be found on the web site www.melkshamgardenerssociety.cu.uk

Melksham Fitness & Friendship Club – Bowerhill

Melksham Fitness & Friendship Club



Join us to have fun with others, socialise and do some gentle seated exercises that can help **strengthen** and **support** you with everyday tasks.

Enjoy chats over **tea or coffee**, **games**, and **relaxing Tai Chi**.



Come and give it a go - we'd love to meet you!

**FIRST
SESSION
FREE!**

£5 per session

**Dates for 2025
Alternate Thursdays 2pm - 4pm**

Jan 9 & 23	July 10 & 24
Feb 6 & 20	Aug 7 & 21
Mar 6 & 20	Sep 4 & 18
Apr 3 & 17	Oct 2, 16 & 30
May 1, 15 & 29	Nov 13 & 27
Jun 12 & 26	Dec 11

"Really good & fun as well. I did not think exercise would be fun. I left with a real spring in my step."

Bowerhill Village Hall, Halifax Road, Bowerhill, Melksham, SN12 6YH

"I really enjoy the Club; the balance of exercise and fellowship is just right."

Supported by:
wiltshire and swindon sport

LOTTERY FUNDED 

Contact Tracey: 07754 612569

Email: fitnessandfriendship@ageukwiltshire.org.uk
www.ageukwiltshire.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 800912

Age UK Wiltshire is grateful to Melksham Without Parish Council for its continued support of our Fitness & Friendship Club. In 2024 38 older people have attended the Club, 17 of whom live in Melksham Without Parish.

The Fitness & Friendship Club offers older people the opportunity to socialise and stay active. The Club provides exercise classes that are specifically designed to strengthen the core, improve balance and increase / maintain mobility. In addition to these chair-based routines and Tai Chi, Club members can also take part in games such as Bowling, Skittles and Quoits, enjoy refreshments and meet other people.

"I'm sat at home feeling a bit of a buzz, I really enjoyed the session. Thank you and look forward to seeing you in a fortnight."

We were delighted that Sue Drew, who is the Club Leader for the Melksham Fitness & Friendship Club, was nominated for the Melksham News Person of the Year award (<https://melkshamnews.com/melkshams-people-of-the-year-honoured-with-awards/>). The nomination mentioned the enthusiasm Sue brings to each session.

Melksham Community Support (MCS) service

Melksham Community Support

- Would you like to go out and socialise if you had some information about what's going on, or someone to go along with?
- Do you feel, with a little support, you could be more active?
- Would you like to check you're receiving all the income you're entitled to?
- Do you find it difficult to get the things you need from the shops or chemist?
- Would you like information about aids and adaptations for your home?
- Maybe you just need a few things sorting at home to make it a happier place to be?

If you said YES to any of these, and would like to discuss a home visit, please call 01225 809265.



Melksham Community Support

Age UK Wiltshire is working together with Melksham Town Council, Melksham Without Parish Council and Melksham Area Board to improve the wellbeing of older people living in Melksham, by offering support, access to information and practical help.

Please get in touch, on 01225 809265 or email melksham@ageukwiltshire.org.uk



At Age UK Wiltshire, our mission is to inspire, support and enable older people, helping people to stay safe, make informed choices and be independent yet connected.

Age UK Wiltshire is grateful to Melksham Without Parish Council for its continued support of the Melksham Community Support service. The service aims to improve the wellbeing of older people, by offering support, access to information and practical help, ensuring that support is available to those who need it most, particularly people who don't have a support network.

In 2024 the MCS Senior Project Worker, Sarah, had contact with 106 people, made 160 home visits, and supported people with 694 issues. We are very grateful to our wonderful team of volunteers for their support, which ranges from collecting shopping, helping to sort someone's garden and being alongside people as they become more engaged with the community.

"Thank you for talking me through the form. I found it a bit confusing but now it all makes sense. I appreciate your time and helping me."

"I would like to thank you very much as I have been awarded a Blue Badge. Thank you very, very much for the time you spent filling in the application form with me. Thank you for all your help."

"Yet again I owe you an enormous thank you. I have been paid the Attendance Allowance Thank you so much for all your help."

"Thank you so much for coming out to see me and for giving me all this information. It is quite wonderful. You gave me information I didn't know I needed. I am very excited about the social group; it is just what I need."

"Knowing I can call on you if I get stuck is such a relief to me - thank you so much!"

Alzheimer's Support

Thanks to the generosity of Melksham Without Parish Council and other supporters, Alzheimer's Support's Melksham Movement for the Mind group continues to provide gentle exercise to music for those living with dementia and their family carers in a supportive and friendly group setting. The group meets at Bowerhill Village Hall from 10.30am to 12pm on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month. It was our first group in 2011 and is still going strong with its blend of gentle exercise, music and fun. Sessions start with a gentle warm-up before moving on to the main activity. Everyone is encouraged to do as much or little as they feel able to and you do not have to be 'super-fit' to take part. People with restricted mobility and wheelchair users are welcome. The exercise lasts for about an hour and at the end of the refreshments are served during a social half hour before the group closes. To help towards our costs we charge £4.50 on the door (or you can use our Pay what you Can scheme).

This mix of gentle physical exercise coupled with the opportunity to meet other people improves both physical and mental well-being, helps to reduce loneliness and gives our members a sense of belonging by becoming part of a wider group. Exercise boosts blood flows to the heart and brain, improves balance and co-ordination, maintains muscle strength and balances the body's energy levels – which improves the quality of your sleep. Exercise also helps the mind by reducing anxiety and raising self-confidence. These individual benefits will also strengthen the wider community by actively supporting local people living with dementia and their family carers to achieve their full potential whilst living with dementia and to re-engage with the wider local community. Furthermore, our Movement group is often the entry point for people with dementia and their carers to access further services such as our Home Support Service and allied support.

Our members clearly enjoy their time together, as their comments show:

"Lucky to be here with good people. I feel happy that this group is local"

"I really enjoy coming here to take part in the exercises and meet new people"

We are always keen to welcome new members and new volunteers – if you are interested or know someone who might be, then please contact the group organiser Sarah Tyler on [01380 739055](tel:01380739055) / SarahT@alzheimerswiltshire.org.uk

Alzheimer's Support is Wiltshire's home-grown, award-winning dementia charity. Founded over 30 years ago, we have grown to provide support to people with dementia across Wiltshire. Truly person-centred care is at the heart of everything we do. We support people living with all types of dementia and their family carers, reducing loneliness, creating connections and enabling people to lead active, productive and meaningful lives. Alzheimer's Support runs one on one home support, 4 day clubs, 35+ community activity groups include Music and Movement for the Mind, memory cafes, art groups, discussion groups, nature and gardening groups - all designed to keep minds and bodies active and reduce isolation. We also support carers and run training courses. Please see www.alzheimerswiltshire.org.uk for further details or catch up with us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/AlzheimersSupportWiltshire/

Melksham WI

Melksham WI meet on 3rd Wednesday of the month at That Meeting Space, Market Place, Melksham at 7.30 pm. The first two meetings are free and include refreshments.

We have a good variety of speakers - coming up, in March we have 'The Darker Side of Wiltshire '

April is a craft evening with the Scrapstore, May is our birthday party plus bingo with prizes.

In June we have a talk from Davina Griffin on her time in Africa being a surrogate mother to baby baboons.

July we have a talk on solo travel to Antarctica.

Hoping this whets your appetite, come along and gives us a try, we are a very friendly group.

Group Five

Group Five is a furniture Charity providing free furniture to needy families within West Wiltshire. Last year we assisted 122 families in the Melksham area providing them with furniture they would otherwise not have had. All our staff are unpaid volunteers who give of their free time to help those less fortunate. We are always looking for new volunteers. If you are interested and able to offer a few hours a week please give us a call any weekday morning on 01225 764849 .

Read Easy

Read Easy North and West Wiltshire celebrates its tenth anniversary in 2025, having been set up in Melksham in 2015.

We provide a free, one-to-one, service, helping around 20 adults at any one time to become more confident with their reading and writing skills.

We operate throughout north and west Wiltshire, with all our coaches, support staff and management committee members giving their time as volunteers.

Our aim in 2025 is to increase our reach so that we can help 30 people at a time. We are affiliated to a national charity but have just become a registered charity in our own right to ease the fundraising process.

To find out more, visit our [web page](#) or call 07367 100 936.

Going above and beyond. We provide critical medical care by land and air, across Wiltshire and Bath. Our mission is to give people the best chance of survival. This relies on highly trained critical care paramedics and doctors supported by specialist medical equipment funded by you.

The need for our pre-hospital trauma care continued to grow in 2024. Our pilots, critical care paramedics and doctors provide our essential lifesaving service up to 19 hours a day, every day. In 2024 we saw a 15% increase in demand for our service compared to the previous year, with missions covering Wiltshire, Bath and our surrounding counties. We are now attending, on average, more than three incidents per day and 47 of these incidents in 2024 were in the Melksham area.

We are committed to providing the best possible care. As demand grows, so too does the complexity of the interventions needed. On scene, the critical care paramedics and doctors that form our aircrew – together with the pilots – were called upon to undertake more surgical procedures, sedations, blood transfusions and pre-hospital emergency anaesthesia in 2024 than ever before.

We have changed our name to reflect our true operational area. Since moving to the airbase in Semington in 2018, our charity is the closest resource to the city of Bath. Subsequently, WAA has been called to the majority of missions in the city of Bath since 2018. In the past three years, more than 72.5% of all Bath missions have been attended by us and in that time we have also transported over 200 patients to the Royal United Hospital in the city. Bath is our second most visited area annually (after Swindon), but that was not recognised within our previous name. The name change better represents our true operational area and removes any potential for confusion amongst individuals and businesses about the lifesaving work being carried out by our crew in Bath – which in turn should improve the amount of donations we receive from the city.

We do not receive any government or lottery funding. The communities we serve fund the work that keeps us operational. Given the current situation, when so many people face uncertainty due to the cost-of-living challenges, we are so thankful to have the residents in the Melksham Without Parish Council area on our side. We have 24 local Melksham residents that volunteer with the Charity and we are keen to recruit more to support our varied events programme during 2025.

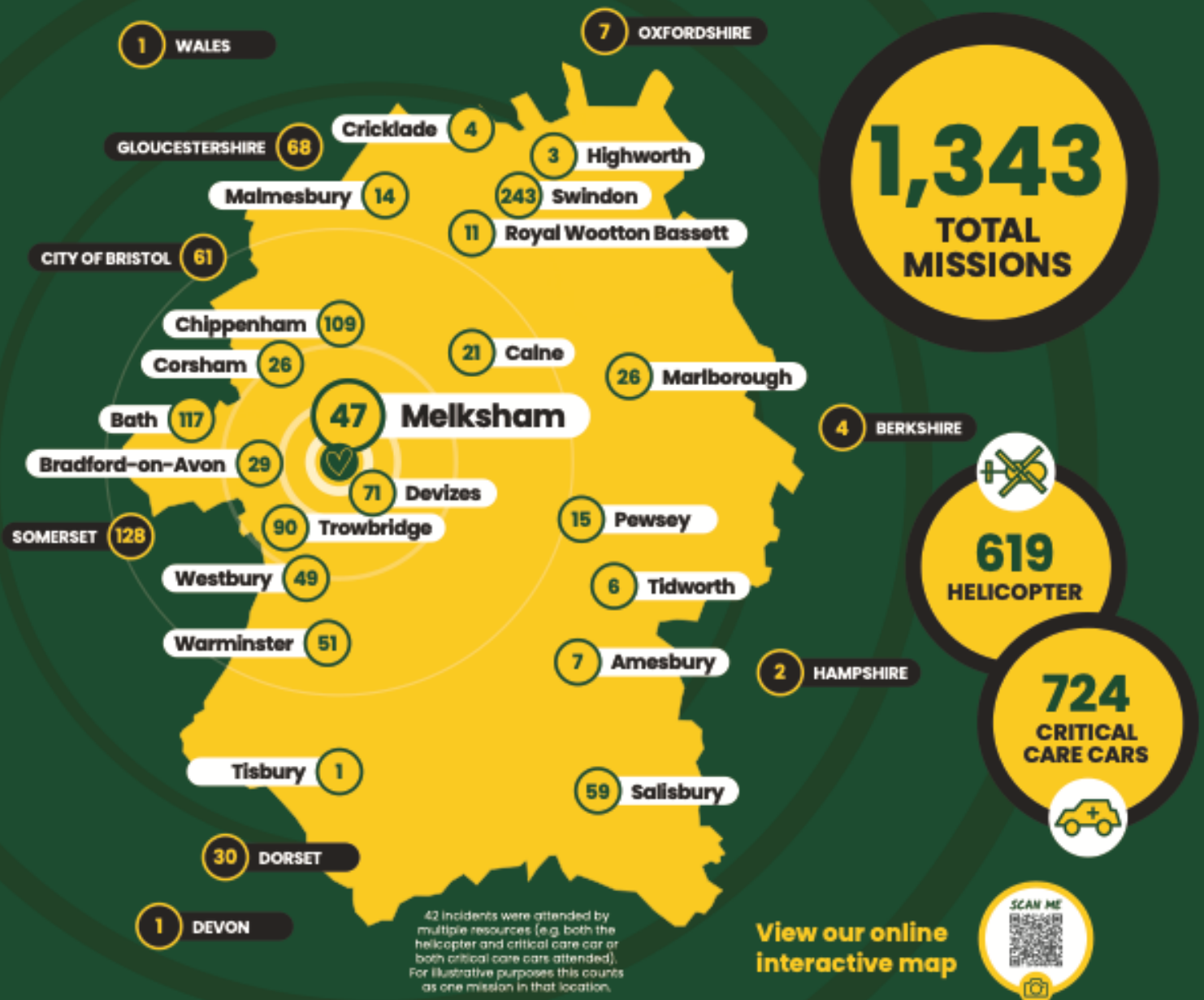
Our school programme has reached more children and schools than ever before. Our Emergency Awareness Training programme gave 11,529 children from 89 schools across Wiltshire and Bath the knowledge, confidence and skills to act in an emergency, even before our speedy team arrive on scene!

Find out more about us. If you would like any further information about the valuable difference we make, you would like to step forward as a volunteer for our amazing charity, or get involved with our lottery, please feel free to contact us on 01225 300536. You can access our website with all of our latest news and upcoming events at wiltshirebathairambulance.org.uk.

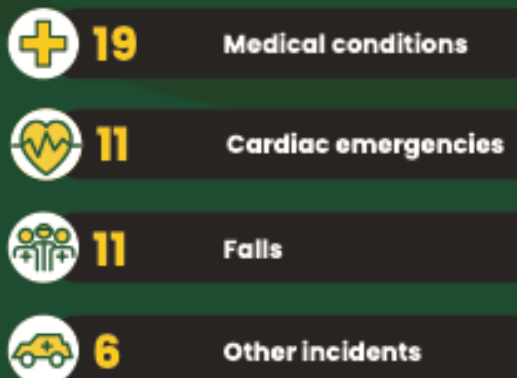
None of this would be possible without the generosity of the communities we serve, and we are truly grateful. On behalf of the charity team, crew and our patients, **thank you for helping us save lives.**

Mission Report

1 JAN — 31 DEC 2024



Melksham missions



**Top hospitals we
airlifted or assisted
patients to...**



The South Western Ambulance Charity:

The South Western Ambulance Charity is very grateful for the support of the dedicated Community First Responders who volunteer in the Melksham area. Community First Responders volunteer in their local areas, bringing lifesaving assistance and reassurance to patients in need, often ahead of ambulance arrival. Donations have enabled us to purchase enhanced patient observation and monitoring equipment to add to their medical kit, enabling them to provide even better support for local patients. Funds will also support our appeal to buy, convert and equip a second Community Response Vehicle for the wider area, that will help bring even more assistance in a health emergency. More information about the charity can be found at www.swambulancecharity.org



Appendix 19

AFC Melksham Disabled football

Afc Melksham Disabled football teams continue to run some 18+ years after MWPC supported this start-up venture and we continue to have a refresher annual turnover as players have moved on to Universities or employment.

AfcM are the recipient of a grants each year and MWPC are strong supporters for this. This group is the only disabled football club in Melksham. Players can join this with no cost to participants weekly sessions.

We offer an open door for new players so if anyone is interested contact :

Mike Rogers 07578335161 email : rogersafc@mail.com





Appendix 20

BOWERHILL

baby & toddlers

Bowerhill Baby & Toddler Group aims to provide a safe space for babies and toddlers to play, learn, grow, interact, snack and make friends. The group is also a place for new parents, carers, guardians to socialise, make friends and memories with their little ones.

Bowerhill Baby & Toddlers runs every Monday 09:30 – 11:00.

We offer a different theme each week such as space, animals, emergency services, construction. We aim to make each session something special. We have had visits from a fire engine, Peppa Pig and recently a visit from Longleat.

We offer a healthy snack at 10:30 during the session. We end our sessions by dancing and singing to music and disco lights.

Bowerhill Baby & Toddler Group is a non-profit organisation and run solely by volunteers. We are a group of mums and grandparents who live within Melksham, volunteering our time to run our Baby & Toddler Group for our local community.

This little group is thriving, we are very excited as to watch as it continues to grow with the little ones who come each week!

Please spread the word with anybody who looks after little ones (0-4 years). New faces are always welcome and we look forward to another exciting year at Bowerhill Baby & Toddlers.

For further information and how to book on please visit our social media pages =

Facebook Page = Bowerhill Baby and Toddlers

Instagram = bowerhill_baby_and_toddlers



@BOWERHILL_BABY_AND_TODDLERS

Friends of Giffords Surgery Charity –Report for Annual Meeting Melksham Without 2024-25

About Us

Friends of Giffords Surgery is a not-for-profit association founded in April 2024, with its full Board of Members established in September 2024 and officially launched in December 2024. The aim is to support patients of Giffords Surgery and the wider Melksham community. Our official launch saw the introduction of key initiatives, including *Community @ Christmas*, which generated strong engagement and support from patients and the surgery. Our mission is to enhance patient health and wellbeing by providing education, practical support, and social initiatives that complement NHS services.

Key Achievements in 2024-25

- Community @ Christmas Initiative

As part of our launch, we ran *Community @ Christmas*, a month-long programme designed to foster connection and support for patients and the local community. We organised 25 days of activities, from festive gatherings to wellbeing events, with overwhelming participation and positive feedback.

A highlight was our Christmas jumper donation drive, where 48 jumpers were collected and gifted to residents in a local nursing home. Additionally, we organised a toy drive to ensure that children from struggling families received Christmas presents, bringing joy to many local families during the festive season.

- Health & Wellbeing Workshops

As part of our *Stay Well! Stay Well Informed!* initiative, we piloted four free workshops in early 2025, covering dementia care, sleep health, healthy eating, and primitive reflexes. These workshops aim to equip patients with knowledge and skills to improve their health, reduce social isolation, and foster self-management. Based on initial success, we plan to run workshops throughout the year, covering key issues such as bereavement support, mental health, and managing long-term conditions.

- Improving Access to Health Resources

To support patients beyond GP consultations, we are developing a *Directory of Services*—a comprehensive guide to local health and wellbeing resources, available both online and in print. This will help ensure that patients can access relevant support in a clear and accessible way.

- Fundraising for Surgery Enhancements & Community Support

A core part of our 2025-26 plan is raising funds for non-NHS-funded equipment and patient support initiatives to improve comfort and care at Giffords Surgery. This includes:

- Specialist medical equipment to improve patient care.
- Enhanced waiting room facilities, including seating and accessibility improvements.
- Additional health and wellbeing resources, such as digital tools and printed materials.

- Support for vulnerable patients, including emergency care packs and assistance for those with limited mobility.

In addition, we are looking to extend our reach by collaborating with local charities and organisations that provide advocacy, social prescribing, and emergency support. Our stakeholder engagement plan includes working with groups such as Dementia Support, Age UK, Shine, and local family support services.

Future Plans

Thanks to the generous support of Melksham Without Parish Council, we will expand our activities in 2025, focusing on:

- Delivering more patient workshops tailored to local health needs.
- Strengthening partnerships to support vulnerable groups, including carers, the elderly, and those experiencing loneliness.
- Expanding our *Directory of Services* to ensure that patients can easily find the support they need.
- Raising funds for surgery improvements and additional patient support services.

We are immensely grateful for the support from the community, Giffords Surgery, our volunteers, and our funding partners. Together, we are making a real difference in improving patient wellbeing.

For more information or to get involved, please email **hello@friendsofgiffords.net**.

Shaw & Whitley Community Emergency Group

We are a group of volunteers who meet and plan together to be available to fellow residents in times of emergency. We have some resources stored centrally in the villages. Up to now our contributions have been mainly when floods threaten, but we are trying to develop assistance resilience for wider emergencies.

The team have been busy with the winter storms. We've loaned pumps to a couple of vulnerable houses as the waters were rising. We've delivered sand bags to households. We've helped a householder setup a nice automatic pump that she had bought, to pump away water that was threatening her house from the patio. We've provided advice on passive flood protection measures.

As always, we've been keeping a close eye on the ditches and drains around the villages - we've had the drain rods out a couple of times, and have brought a number of blocked drains to the attention of Wiltshire Council, who, we find, respond in a timely manner. We're liaising with Teresa at Melksham Without Parish Council (MWPC) about two places where we feel landowners and/or the Council could usefully make improvements.

Grants applications for equipment, equipment maintenance and training have been successful, one from Scottish and Southern Electricity, and one from MWPC

During November's Storm Bert, the measured level of the Southbrook at Shaw School came very close to its maximum ever recorded level. We find pretty much every storm reaches this level - or sets a new maximum – as happened during January's Storm Herminia! And every storm seems to threaten a few more sites in the villages, hence our applications for grants, so as to be better organised and purchase further equipment as we feel our resources getting stretched.

For the future, first thoughts are going into another practice exercise for our group, organised with help from Wiltshire Council. This is where a whole-community emergency is simulated, and our group gathers to help residents (actors) with problems that are arising (they've been primed with). There's a good video of us, taken at the last exercise, on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fj0wDM8Z-S4>

FearFree Charity Report: Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence, and Stalking

For over 30 years, FearFree has been dedicated to supporting individuals affected by domestic abuse, sexual violence, and stalking across the Southwest. Our mission goes beyond crisis intervention. We empower individuals to rebuild their lives, regain independence, and break free from the cycle of abuse.

Domestic Abuse in Wiltshire

Domestic abuse continues to be a critical issue in Wiltshire. In 2023/24, the latest data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) revealed 12,246 domestic abuse-related incidents reported to the police in Wiltshire. Over 4,000 of these cases were referred to FearFree, including 233 referrals from Melksham Without Parish. These statistics underscore the urgent need for accessible and immediate crisis support within our community.

Our Work and Services

FearFree supports over 10,000 adults and children annually, providing comprehensive services that help individuals not only stay safe but also rebuild their lives free from fear and abuse. Our services are tailored to each person's unique needs and experiences, ranging from crisis intervention to recovery programs, including one-on-one sessions, group support, and specialized employment and education initiatives.

We ensure that our services are accessible to everyone, offering free support regardless of gender, sexuality, background, or beliefs.

Addressing the Root Cause of Abuse

At FearFree, we believe that addressing the root cause of abuse is essential to breaking the cycle. Alongside victim support, we run successful perpetrator programs that help individuals recognise and address their abusive behaviour, preventing future incidents. Additionally, we promote awareness by running programs in schools and colleges to educate young people on identifying the signs of abuse.

Our Impact

FearFree's work transforms lives. We offer hope for the future and equip individuals with the skills and knowledge to thrive in healthy relationships. Our support is not just short-term but aims for lasting change, helping individuals break free from the cycle of abuse permanently.

With your support, FearFree can continue to provide vital, life-changing assistance to those in need, especially in areas like Melksham Without Parish, where the demand for support remains high.

FearFree is committed to breaking the cycle of abuse, supporting victims, and preventing future harm. We remain dedicated to empowering individuals, families, and communities, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to live a life free from fear and violence.

Shaw and Whitley Community Hub Ltd (trading as Whitley Stores)

Update for Annual Report of MWPC Parish Meeting

Shaw and Whitley Community Hub Ltd were delighted to reopen Whitley Stores on 25th May 2024 at new premises in a cabin located in the car park of the Pear Tree Inn on Top Lane. The cabin was sited, clad, refitted and made ready for business by a team of local volunteers with the generous support of numerous local businesses and grants from MWPC and the Lottery Fund.

Since opening, trade has been consistently strong and SWCH is hugely grateful to the villagers of Shaw and Whitley for their support. The shop is currently staffed entirely by volunteers and offers valuable volunteering opportunities for more than 70 local people, predominantly from the villages of Shaw and Whitley, but also some from the surrounding area. These volunteers value the opportunity to make a difference, the social interaction they benefit from when on shift, the chance to keep active both in mind and physically by helping in the shop or with the maintenance and ordering, and many firm friendships have been made through Whitley Stores.

We serve an average of around 70 customers a day, helping to minimise car journeys out of the village to Melksham, Atworth, Corsham or beyond and providing access to essential groceries and newspapers to villagers without transport. We support numerous local suppliers, including Padfield Porkies (Seend), Southview Farm (Atworth), Lacock Dairy, Planks Dairy (Poulshot) and multiple craft suppliers from the immediate local area.

The shop is continuing to build on the community spirit fostered by the Warm Space organised by Shaw and Whitley Community Hub in the Reading Rooms whilst Whitley Stores was closed for a year. Reducing social isolation in our villages is one of our key aims, and is supported by having a 'chatty table' with chairs in the shop to encourage customers to stay and chat, as well as benches on the sunny deck outside, where customers gather in fine weather and talk. For many of our customers, a daily trip to the shop may be their only interaction with another person and we are proud to be a growing hub in our community.

After a recent volunteers social event in the village, one volunteer reported: 'I have lived in Whitley for over 50 years and have never sensed such a spirit of community. Huge credit to you and your team for what you have created.'

Whitley Stores is currently recruiting for a part-time paid manager to support the volunteer Steering Group in coordinating the volunteers and stock control and to enable us to increase our offerings and services to the community.

Alison Candlin
Chair, Shaw and Whitley Community Hub Ltd

that meeting space – report February 2025

Over the last few years 'that meeting space' has become a thriving centre for groups and organisations meeting in the area. Drawing people from the SN12 postcode and beyond, with its ease of access and central location, 'that meeting space' is often noted for its friendly, safe and intimate atmosphere. That's something the team of committed volunteers have worked hard to foster. The heartbeat of 'that meeting space' has been a theme of acceptance. It has become a place where many people have found a release from social isolation, whether through the weekly drop in, or the Red Door Singers, the Nature and Art Friends or the Bereavement Journey.

This year new tables purchased with the help of a grant from Melksham Without Parish Council have made the space even more inviting, as well as making it easier to set up. This has contributed to 'that meeting space' being adaptable for new and existing users. This year we have seen the Secret Crocheter's workshops and Paul Martin's events added to 'that meeting space's' community.

'that meeting space' is ideal for many activities, such as a venue for team meetings or children's parties, and we are always open to exploring ways to help new groups find a way to form, and flourish.

thatmeetingspace@gmail.com

SHAW AND WHITLEY ART GROUP

I would like to thank Melksham Without Parish Council for awarding the above Art Group with £200 towards recruiting new members.

We have had 6 new members join our Art Group this year but only 4 have stayed. The ones that didn't stay were because they had many other hobbies that they followed, and our Thursday meeting clashed with them.

With this money I will be able to invite Artists from the local area to come and share their expertise on a monthly basis, as feedback from the community has said that they would join if someone could give lessons.

Melksham Remembers

We were established in 2017 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1, providing a display at the Town Hall which then toured the whole Town and beyond in 2018.

A book of the exhibition was produced as well as an audio version, and last year a World War 2 book highlighting Melksham's efforts on the 'home front.' Both books can be purchased at the TIC.

The group has continued with a small group of volunteers and this year to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of WW2, we aim to produce a free booklet for the Bowerhill estate explaining the reasons behind the street names and their link to the RAF Camp the houses were built on.

Melksham & District Historical Association

We have been in existence since 1962 providing historical information about Melksham (both Without & Town) to its residence. We currently hold monthly talks for our 100 members and regular visitors at Melksham Assembly Hall as well as regular displays throughout the town. Our ultimate aim is to establish a museum in the town with an initial display now in the town hall and funding being sought for 'museum standard' displays in the campus. Storage of the artefacts we hold on behalf of Melksham has become an issue from both a cost effective and security point of view. A short term fix has now been arranged, whilst other arrangements will be sought until ultimately storage in a museum can be achieved!

Melksham and Corsham Gateway Club Annual Parish report

We have met in the hall of Melksham Baptist Church for over fifty years. When we reopened after covid there was a significant drop in our membership, but I am pleased to say that thanks to new members joining and former members returning, numbers have increased. Activities include pool, karaoke, games, arts and crafts and bingo. We also mark special dates such as St. Valentine's Day and Shrove Tuesday with activities including cake decoration. The occasional hot dogs are also popular. About once a month we arrange a special activity for our members. This could be a visit from a DJ with Disco equipment, a visiting choir, the Balloon Man or a company that brings exotic insects and reptiles for us to handle. Usually, the members are braver than the volunteers! In the autumn we hold a Harvest service and supper with the Church congregation collecting donations for the Melksham Foodbank which is based on the Church premises. In December our carol service marks the beginning of Christmas celebrations. As we aim to keep costs low for our members grants and donations from friends of the club are a great help to us.

AVON BOWLS CLUB

BE Affiliation No. 33003

The Avon Bowls Club is situated in the Melksham Community Campus complex next to Melksham House . It was founded in 1922 for the male employees of Avon Rubber Company and such were the times it was 50 years before a Ladies team was formed in 2009 we became a unified club .

The Club has had many successes over the years with players reaching County and National Finals and several members have served as Officers for Bowls Wiltshire . The outdoor season runs from April until September and new members are welcomed from aged 14. If you are new to the game, we have qualified coaches and equipment for you to try it out, flat shoes are required to protect the green.

We play competitive games in County Leagues on weekday evenings as well as Club Competitions, Friendlies in the afternoons and at weekends. Therefore whatever your ability there is a game for you.

During the winter season we have social events to keep in touch, coffee mornings, bingo, quizzes, music evenings, we have 2 darts teams and a singing group. During the playing season we also host a disability group, so as you can see we are a very inclusive club. Of course we rely on members to get involved in the running and maintenance of the club to keep it going, and many friendships await.

For more details contact abc-secretary@hotmail.co.uk.

Melksham Carnival

As a small team with a big heart, we at Melksham Carnival try to do more than just put on a procession which is attended by thousands we try to be involved in every aspect of our community, which involves being part of other events and supporting other volunteers in their endeavours. We are proud to be part of the fabric of this amazing town, and very much hope that Melksham Carnival will continue to bring joy to many generations to come.

As with all volunteer community groups, we can not achieve anything without the support of fundraising and local grants so we feel honoured to be considered worthy of Melksham Without Parish Council's budget, for the second year in a row - next year you guys are entering a float too ... right? 😊