

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING April 2026

### **Councillor John Glover**

This is my unexpected Fifth annual report for the Annual Parish Meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to, once again, thank the permanent staff of the Council for the sterling work that they undertake on our behalf for the residents of the Parish. They are the Clerk, Teresa Strange, the Finance & Amenities Officer, Marianne Rossi, and Fiona Dey, our Parish Officer, without whom our organisation would fail. 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 Councillors Shona Holt, Robert Shea-Simonds and Nathan Keates and welcomed Councillors Martin Haffenden, Tony Hemmings, Mark Blackham and Chris Griffiths, who were all co-opted to the Council following the elections on 1 May 2025

### **PRECEPT**

The Precept set for 2026/27 is £302,429, an increase of 6.1% on last year's precept. An average Band D household will contribute £101.14; a rise of just £5.49 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, as decided by previous councillors 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 pitch improvements at 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 continuing 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 82 new planning applications, including 4 large developments. We also continued to monitor 6-8 other large developments for updates and changes. Many being potentially controversial. But, whilst we agree with proposals that are in line with the WC Core Strategy, (and draft 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. We have continued to object to speculative developer's proposals for housing outside of the Draft Local Plan and not in accordance with Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2. We now have the disappointing outcome on the Woodrow Appeal, and await the decision on the Snarlton Farm Appeal which is now residing with the Secretary of State for a decision. Your council presented opposition to these proposals at the Public Enquiries with councillors cross examined by Kings Council for the developers.

### **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Your Council, working with Melksham Town Council, supported by Place Consultants with some Government funding, had its revised plan (for the period up to 2038), approved following the public referendum. The parish council has again submitted its views on further 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 **£47,000**.

### **SHURNHOLD FIELDS**

This is a joint project with Melksham Town Council. Following a number of years of planning and securing the necessary consents, works to deliver improved access and flood prevention measures at Shurnhold Fields have now been completed. The newly constructed car park is now open for public use. This provides safer, more accessible access to the fields for a wider range of residents and visitors, and addresses the initial plan for improved off-road parking provision.

In addition, the flood prevention bund has now been installed along the boundary of the site. This forms part of a wider scheme led by Wiltshire Council and supported by Environment Agency funding, designed to reduce the risk of surface water flooding to neighbouring properties on Dunch Lane.

As part of the completion of the works, a section of the site remains temporarily cordoned off. This area has been left to allow the land to recover following construction activity and will be re-seeded at an appropriate time later in the year, when ground conditions are more suitable.

Further elements of the project are still to be completed. A water supply connection for the Friends of Shurnhold Fields volunteer group is planned, which will support their ongoing maintenance and stewardship of the site. This connection will require a temporary road closure on Dunch Lane and is scheduled to take place later in the 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. This latter issue is not going well. We have the funds, have ordered new facilities through Wiltshire Council, who appear to have no urgency whatsoever in chasing these requirements. We have 9 further Real Time Information systems on order to be spread around the parish in each of the villages. I have been chasing for these for years and still have no timescale for delivery and operation.

Routine and regular maintenance, and a programme of replacement on a rolling basis continues. 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 continued to fund an Age UK project worker specifically for the Melksham and 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?**

I am ever hopeful that the Real Time Information systems will be delivered by the summer, (of 2026!)

### **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. I should particularly like to thank David Pafford for taking on the role of Chairman during my 3 month absence at the

end of 2025. Thank you, indeed. For councillors 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. The abuse that sometimes emanates on Social Media against elected voluntary councillors is uncalled for. If you feel that concerned, stand for election.

Thank you all once again.

### **Councillor Nick Holder Bowerhill Division**

Since the last annual report, the election for Wiltshire Council for the period up to 2029 was held and I was pleased to be re-elected as the Councillor for Bowerhill. It is a great honour to be trusted to represent the electorate, and I will continue to do so to the best of my ability.

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.

In this report I would like to focus on the issue of new housing, as we have seen and will continue to see planning applications to build more houses in Bowerhill.

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 some of these applications are for sites that have been “allocated” for development, it is very difficult to prevent them from going ahead. However, we are now seeing “speculative” plans being submitted on sites which do not form part of the areas earmarked for growth which, if approved, will create a disjointed approach to how the area grows with no masterplan, no real sense of community cohesion and no coherent approach on what infrastructure we will need to support the new houses.

As others have said, I too am not against the principle of new houses, but we need to ensure any new developments are properly “master planned” to create a sense of place and connection to the area.

I will continue to work with the Parish Council to make sure there are very specific conditions attached to any detailed application and ensure we get the best outcome for our residents. I am not sure it can do any more than it currently does to make sure the local voice is heard on planning matters. However, the input from residents of Bowerhill, and the wider Melksham area, is vital in helping us to achieve that. I would urge all residents to continue to comment on the applications posted on the Wiltshire Council website and to come along to the various planning meetings which take place all of which are open to the public. Local input can and does make a difference as we have seen recently.

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](mailto:nick.holder@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Councillor Nick Holder

Bowerhill Division

**Councillor Phil Alford****Melksham Without North and Shurnhold**

It has been an interesting and, at times, challenging year at Wiltshire Council. The minority administration brought forward its budget for 2026/27 alongside a three-year financial forecast. My colleagues and I had serious concerns about several elements of the proposed budget and its long-term impact on Wiltshire taxpayers. These concerns included plans for three-weekly bin collections, the rebuild of St Stephens Car Park, significant increases in parking charges, and £20 million of new borrowing, contributing to more than £76 million in long-term costs.

At the Full Council Budget Setting meeting, many people spoke to highlight concerns about proposed parking charge increases, including raising Sunday charges to match Monday–Saturday rates and extending charging hours to 7am–7pm. These changes will inevitably affect hospitality businesses, retail workers and people attending places of worship. A technical Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) consultation is now open for comments from residents and businesses until 5 May. It is important to be clear that this is not a full public consultation, as the anticipated increase in income is already built into the budget. More worryingly, the Leader, Cllr Ian Thorn, has publicly stated that there is a strong case for harmonising parking charges across the county — meaning towns such as Melksham could be brought into line with higher-charging areas like Salisbury. I urge residents to take part in the consultation, even though it is not easy to navigate:

<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/18434/Wiltshire-Council-launches-consultation-on-proposed-changes-to-parking-charges>

Changes to waste and recycling services have also been agreed, which I voted against that include moving general household waste (black bin) collections from every two weeks to every three weeks and introducing a slot-booking system at Household Recycling Centres — changes that many residents are understandably concerned about.

Concerns about highways, road conditions and potholes continue to fill my inbox and are raised regularly at Parish Council meetings. As always, please report issues via the MyWilts app. If problems persist, please escalate them through your Parish Clerk and contact me directly — I am always happy to follow up with highways engineers on your behalf. I am particularly concerned that the budget relies on borrowing £15 million to supplement the Department for Transport highways maintenance grant. By contrast, the Conservative alternative budget provided £18.6 million of additional revenue funding over three years without borrowing. The £15 million loan is forecast to cost £58 million in interest and charges over 50 years — meaning, quite starkly, that our great-grandchildren will still be paying for the road repairs carried out over the next few years.

Finally, I am deeply unhappy about the recent planning inspector's decision to override the Neighbourhood Plan and allow the Woodrow Road development. The road and access remain hugely concerning. Furthermore, I am deeply concerned about the rejection of Wiltshire's draft Local Plan by Government inspectors following nationally imposed changes that have increased the county's housing target by 81%. This increases the risk of speculative development in and around the Melksham Area. The council now faces restarting an extremely complex and costly plan-making process that is likely to take several years, made even harder by the withdrawal of funding for neighbourhood plans.

## Wiltshire Councillor Griffin Annual Parish Report

As I write this on 1<sup>st</sup> April, I realise it is exactly 11 months since I was elected on 1<sup>st</sup> May last year as the Wiltshire councillor to represent Melksham Without West & Rural, including the community of Berryfield and five villages to the north-west and south of Melksham. The result was close, with just a 6-vote majority for me, so I fully recognise the importance of continuing to support and advocate for all residents within my division, regardless of whether they voted for me, for someone else, or for nobody at all. It is also appropriate for me to acknowledge the work that my predecessor Jonathon Seed did over the many years of his tenure.

In addition to my Wiltshire responsibilities, I am also a town councillor for Melksham South Ward. However, for many issues, we must ignore boundaries, and I continue to encourage constructive collaboration between all three council authorities wherever possible.

One great example of the benefits of working together is the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan, version two of which was approved by a referendum last July and immediately demonstrated its impact on local planning decisions. Unfortunately, its value has been challenged by appeals but I know that everybody involved in its production believes in its value in influencing the future growth of our community.

Within Berryfield, I have worked with Teresa and MWPC on; the Townsend Farm development access road, Bus stops at the Mobile Home Park, and changes by New Inn, Old Chicken Farm planning enforcement, a new footbridge between Telford Drive and Buckley Gardens, and the proposed development at Berryfield Lane.

That will directly impact the Canal Link, which I fully support, as it would bring transformative change to both Berryfield and Semington, and the rest of Melksham too.

Andrew Griffin  
Wiltshire Councillor; Melksham Without West and Rural  
Andrew.Griffin@Wiltshire.gov.uk  
07775 644748

## Melksham Area Board Report

On 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025, local elections took place to select the 98 Unitary Councillors to represent Wiltshire, resulting in a mix of experienced returning cllrs combined with some new ones. This is reflected in Melksham area board where Cllr Hubbard took over as chair and worked with the other councillors to agree what would be the focus for their work and what actions to take.

Supporting young people has remained one of the priorities with the board working in partnership to help young people have a greater voice, provide positive activities, and support our youth providers. Planned initiatives for the coming year include developing further the street artwork, establishing a local youth network, and jointly providing events such as a Teen Takeover.

The health and wellbeing group has continued to be active and has helped in ensuring that support for men's mental health has resulted in increased local provision. The group has also focussed upon food poverty holding workshops, supporting the foodbank, and providing wrap around support via CAB. This work continues to be a priority with a focus on increasing resilience and proving a stronger support base.

Other actions being worked on by the board include seeing if the housing management can be improved, supporting those adults with special needs to find employment and maximising the use of green open space.

The area board has 4 pots of funding to help support community organisations and initiatives. It invested last year just under £50k helping 22 different local projects with capital purchases, protecting older and vulnerable adults, and helping young people over 13 have the best start in life they can. In addition, the Local Highways and Footpath Group which is a sub-group of the area board has invested a further £25k into local schemes.

The area board model that has been in place since 2009 is continuing to evolve to reflect technological advances and a changing society. One of the more visible changes will be to reduce the number of area board business meetings from 4 to 3 a year. This allows us to put a little more resource into other forms of engagement that may be more suitable to achieving the desired outcomes.

If you would like to discuss anything further or are considering making a grant application, please contact [Richard.Rogers@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.Rogers@wiltshire.gov.uk)

## Melksham Community Support

The Melksham Community support service, overseen by Age UK Wiltshire, started in April 2023. This service is a partnership between Age UK Wiltshire, Melksham Without Parish Council and Melksham Town Council.

The service employs a part-time Senior Project Worker, Sarah Thomson, who lives in Melksham, to specifically support the populations of Melksham Town and Melksham Without.

People can access the Melksham Community Support service by contacting the dedicated phone number or email to refer themselves for support. We also receive referrals from health care professionals, family and friends and other Age UK Wiltshire services. Since the service started 250 people either contacted the service themselves or have been referred. In 2025/26 89 residents have been helped with 26 (29%) living in Melksham Without.

The service promotes holistic support tailored to the individual's need and helps to identify future needs. We aim to improve the wellbeing of older people living in Melksham Town and Melksham Without, by offering support, access to information and practical help, support to take-up relevant welfare benefits and ensure people have access to other sources of financial support. With Sarah's help we support people to get out and socialise by providing information about what's going on, and even a volunteer to go with initially. Practical tasks are looked at and suitable solutions found.

Home Visits are the start of support. During the first home visit Sarah has a Guided Conversation with the older person to help identify any difficulties they may have, the support that is needed and what someone would like to achieve, in a conversational way which helps people to feel at ease. All aspects of someone's daily life are covered, from when they get up in the morning to going to bed at night. We cover domestic issues, personal care and other care needs, health, socialisation, financial needs and their support networks. The Guided Conversation is never hurried and is taken at the person's preferred pace, sometimes over more than one visit. This conversation helps Sarah to identify the areas of support needed and how to help improve someone's general wellbeing.

Sarah says, "I'd really encourage people to get in touch with me to arrange a chat. I can give information, support and help with a wide range of issues, including helping people to get out and about more, helping to put more money into people's pockets, supporting people to take action to reduce their risk of falling and helping people to be more connected with their community. I have lots of information about events and activities in the Melksham area, and transport options, and if people are worried about going somewhere new alone a volunteer can go along with them."

The contact number for this service is 01225 809265 or email [melksham@ageukwiltshire.org.uk](mailto:melksham@ageukwiltshire.org.uk).

**BASRAG (Berryfield and Semington Road Action Group):**

BASRAG hosted a litter pick in the Spring, and an Easter Fun Day featuring an Easter egg hunt and crafts which was well attended by local children and their parents. A Summer Cream Tea with Bingo was added to the BASRAG calendar which went down well as everyone enjoyed the home made scones. A Halloween craft afternoon for children resulted in BASRAG running out of tables and chairs in the Berryfield village hall as so many people took part. A Christmas Mince Pie and Bingo fest was held in December which was a successful addition to the BASRAG repertoire.

BASRAG also produces the "Berryfield Buzz" newsletter, which is hand delivered to households in Berryfield and Semington Road providing a valuable means of communication to residents. People are starting to come to activities from the new housing developments in the area which are aimed at helping them feel part of a community.

## **Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG)**

### **2025/26 Report – March 2026**

The BRAG picnic area volunteer working party continued to meet on Tuesday mornings from spring through to autumn (weather permitting). The team has again done outstanding work maintaining and improving both the picnic site and the footpath/bridleway leading to the canal. Keep an eye out for the picnic area on TV, an episode of *Dogs Behaving Badly* was filmed there last year. Ongoing maintenance and weeding means we are always in need of new volunteers, who sadly remain in short supply.

After several years of lobbying, Wiltshire Council has now agreed to improve road safety at the A365/Hornchurch Road junction. A traffic-island solution will be implemented in the coming weeks. Working alongside Cllr Nick Holder, we also pushed the council to secure progress with Heron Homes regarding the neglected land on Falcon Way. Negotiations are still ongoing, but movement, albeit slow, is finally happening.

Our litter-picking sessions were well attended again this year, with events held in both spring and autumn. We are grateful to the 1st Bowerhill Scouts, Beavers, Cubs, and the team from The Pilot for their continued support.

The rewilding project at the western end of Brabazon Way, led by Sharon Pike, continues to progress very well. The initiative now has many supportive local residents and guidance from local expert Howard Yardey. The area is beginning to show natural rewilding, with Clover, Oxeye Daisy, and other wild plants taking hold. The team has also planted Hawthorn and Hazel saplings, spring bulbs, and a variety of wild seeds and seedlings.

We continue to run our “Eyes On The Ground” initiative, asking residents to report issues to BRAG for the Parish Steward to address during visits to the village. Reports typically cover storm damage, vandalism, tree and shrub overgrowth, littering, and bin issues. Residents wishing to join the mailing group are encouraged to get in touch.

BRAG actively contributed to the Neighbourhood Plan update and has provided feedback on planning applications, including those relating to proposed developments to the east and south of Melksham.

This year we also supported several local companies taking part in their “In the Community” volunteering programmes, helping to tidy the picnic area, litter pick along the bridleway, and plant a large number of spring bulbs on Brabazon Way. Volunteers reported that they thoroughly enjoyed the activities.

The major concern for many residents at present is the proposed warehouse site south of the A365. BRAG is supporting residents who strongly oppose the development, which is widely regarded as out of keeping with its surroundings.

Looking ahead, BRAG will continue to develop the picnic area, support the wilding initiative, and maintain other green spaces around the village. We will also run further litter-picking sessions in spring and autumn. Above all, we remain committed to supporting residents with any concerns affecting the village.

As with most volunteer organisations, we are always in need of more hands. Anyone wishing to volunteer is warmly encouraged to contact us.

Thank you to all Committee Members and Executive Officers for their hard work and dedication in helping to make Bowerhill a better place to live and work.

**Mark Blackham**

Chair

Bowerhill Residents Action Group

## **Community Action: Whitley & Shaw (CAWS)**

Community Action: Whitley & Shaw (CAWS) is a volunteer-led group bringing residents together and working to make our villages safer, stronger and better connected. We support road safety, respond to planning proposals, help protect the local environment, and organise practical community initiatives. We also act as a vital link between residents and local councils, ensuring local voices are heard.

Over the past year, our work has included:

- **Telephone Box Gallery** – Transforming a former phone box into a vibrant community gallery for showcasing local history, artwork and seasonal displays. Our first exhibitor was the local art club.
- **Telephone Box Library** – Repainting and repairing the box to ensure this valued community asset can continue to be enjoyed.
- **Road Safety** – Supporting Community Speedwatch, working with local authorities on road and footpath improvements, and engaging with the school to develop a new Travel Plan.
- **Planning** – Responding to multiple applications and consultations, and highlighting the growing cumulative impact of development across our villages.
- **Roadworks** – Liaising with contractors and authorities to help reduce disruption for residents.
- **Tree Planting** – Replacing damaged trees and contributing to the enhancement of our local environment.
- **Litter Picks** – Organising two well-attended community litter picks.

We are very grateful to Melksham Without Parish Council for their continued support. This year's grant will help relaunch the village magazine *Connect* — a key part of keeping our community informed and connected.

## **Berryfield Village Hall Annual Parish Report – March 2026**

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Berryfield Village Hall continues to be a very busy space for the community in use every day to a wide range of local people.

The hall currently hosts 22 regular groups and a diverse range of activities for all ages. Regular hirers include Arts, Crafts, Yoga, Sound Bath, Tai Chi, Taekwondo, Home Ed Social and Mah Jong. It is also well used by private hirers for parties, celebrations, meetings and training.

This year we have extended our storage facilities to better support our growing number of regular hirers. We have also upgraded the table and chair trollies to make them easier for everyone to move around the hall and secured the services of a contractor for nappy and sanitary bins in the toilets.

We are now in our 4<sup>th</sup> year and are busy maintaining the facilities to their high standard. Additionally, our plans for this year include upgrading the kitchen equipment (crockery, cutlery etc) and making better use of IT to help manage the hall.

As a charitable trust, the village hall cannot run without our small team of 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](http://www.hallbookingonline.com/berryfield)

Facebook [www.facebook.com/BerryfieldVillageHall](http://www.facebook.com/BerryfieldVillageHall)

Email [BerryfieldVillageHall@outlook.com](mailto:BerryfieldVillageHall@outlook.com)

Phone 07566 746788

Lucy Key, Treasurer of Berryfield Village Hall Trust

March 2026

## **Bowerhill Village Hall 2025-26 Annual Parish Report**

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.

We currently have 20 regular user-groups, three irregular regulars (Youth Chess Club, SEN Stay & Play, Bobby Tots) 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.

Age UK, Beyond Dementia (formerly Alzheimer's Support Group) and the West Wiltshire Pulmonary Fibrosis Support Group use the hall for their regular meetings, as well as Man Down (Melksham), the mental health support group for men who have branches throughout Wiltshire.

Our plan to alleviate the flooding in the car park hit a setback when Wiltshire Council decided we needed planning permission. This was applied for in June 2025, and consent was granted in April 2026. However, the conditions attached to the planning consent mean more work is required by our drainage consultant, landscape designer and groundworks contractor. This is in progress, but it means the work is unlikely to be carried out this year. Funds are ring-fenced for this project.

Following the long hot summer of 2025 some of our users requested that we install air-conditioning at the hall. Quotes were obtained and grant funding was secured. The preparatory electrical work has been carried out, and the a/c units are due to be installed at the end of April 2026. Our thanks to Melksham Without Parish Council and the Melksham Area Board for their financial support which has allowed us to carry out this project.

Quotes have also been obtained to replace the two moveable room dividers. These will be financed by grant funding received from the government during the Covid pandemic, some of which we still have, with the remainder coming from our reserves.

In 2025 we were able to form a committee with four elected officers, seven user-group representatives, four members of the public and a representative of the Parish Council.

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. Cllr David Pafford took over as the Melksham Without Parish Council representative after Cllr Robert Shea-Simonds decided not to stand for re-election to the Council.

The committee comprises 12 volunteers (who are also Trustees of the hall) representing various user-groups including the 1<sup>st</sup> Bowerhill Scout Group, the Bowerhill Baby & Toddler Group, the Melksham PHAB Club, the West Wiltshire Pulmonary Fibrosis Support Group and the three craft groups. The committee have met regularly throughout the past year and will continue to do so.

Our website [www.bowerhillvillagehall.org.uk](http://www.bowerhillvillagehall.org.uk) and Hallmaster 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, though we do fit them in if we can.

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, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2026

# Whitley Reading Rooms

Charity NO. 305595

## Annual Report to Melksham Without Parish Council 2026

I am pleased to report that 2025/2026 is much improved. We have have many new groups including fitness and a new messy play toddler group.

Income is increasing the last couple of years we have broken even, we are now starting to see income exceeding expenditure.

I expect this trend to continue in to the future with whoever is running it.

As you will be aware a lot of the long serving committee members are stepping down, but be assured that myself and my wife will not just walk away if suitable replacements are not found.

Lastly, I would like to thank Melksham Without Parish Council for all the support over the years.

Ian Uffindell

Chairman Whitley Reading Rooms

March 2026

### **that meeting space:**

That meeting space(TMS) continues to provide support to the local community through the following groups making use of our space at reasonable rates.

**Weekly Drop-In** - up to 25 people regularly use TMS to meet and socialise. A quote from one of the group is " this group has saved my life." The group helps alleviate loneliness by providing a weekly, friendly group meeting

**Red Door Singers** - 18 people meet weekly to sing together, encouraging well-being.

**Nature and Art Group** - 16 people meet weekly to paint, draw and socialise thus encouraging well-being.

**Thursday Fellowship** - 6 people meet weekly for bible study and prayer from Good News Church

### **Monthly meetings**

**Abney & Baker** put on regular monthly activities to support the local senior community

**WI** - meet monthly

**Book club**

**Prayer4 Melksham** - 12 people who pray regularly for the town

### **Three-Monthly**

**Paul Martin Free Evaluations** held in TMS. A safe small space that gives security to those attending.

### **Courses**

**The Bereavement Journey** - a course for those who have been bereaved to process the loss and come to terms with the changes that occur as a result of bereavement. This will be the 7<sup>th</sup> course run at TMS and has helped over 100 people in total. At the moment 8 people are doing the current bereavement course. GoodNews runs it for the community as it is non-religious.

Apart from meetings, this year we have had the challenge of a leaking roof issue for several months which eventually necessitated the roof being replaced, which took a month. Melksham Town Council ( our landlords ) were pro-active in finding us alternative accommodation at the Melksham Assembly Hall.

## **Bowerhill Preschool Report**

Our small charity run pre-school continues to provide a welcoming and nurturing environment for young children in the local community. Over the past year we have enjoyed supporting children in their early learning and development while building strong links with families in their area.

We are very grateful to the Parish Council for awarding us a grant of £500. This funding will be used to repair the handrails and access ramp outside our pre-school, helping to ensure the entrance remains safe and accessible for the children, families and staff who use the setting.

We sincerely appreciate the Parish Council's support and look forward to continuing to serve the local community in the year ahead.



**Group Five:**

Group Five is a furniture based charity operating out of premises in Trowbridge established 35 years ago. We cover 5 towns being Melksham, Trowbridge, Bradford on Avon, Warminster and Westbury.

We collect unwanted furniture and small electrical goods and soft furnishings from the area and take it back to our warehouse where it is refurbished and PAT tested where necessary.

We then redistribute the goods to those in need free of charge. All our recipients are referred to us by local agencies such as social services, health visitors, housing associations and the like. The goods are delivered in our own van by our team of volunteers entirely free of charge.

Our annual running cost including rent and upkeep of our van comes in at approx £15000 this is nearly entirely funded by grants and donations.

Without the funding of the Councils we could not continue to provide this valuable service.

## **Wiltshire Air Ambulance Annual Parish report:**

In 2025 Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance Charity completed 1,159 missions across Wiltshire and Bath. Both Bath and Chippenham saw 97 missions each, followed by Salisbury and surrounding areas such as Amesbury, Tidworth and Tisbury with 83, and Trowbridge with 82. The critical care team also responded to 56 incidents in Devizes, 49 in Warminster and Mere and 45 in Melksham.

As demand grows, so too does the complexity of the interventions which are required. It is part of our long-term strategy to ensure critical care doctors form part of every air crew. I am pleased to convey that last year, thanks to the support of our donors, 61% of our missions saw us attend with a critical care doctor, up from 51.1% in 2024. This includes 212 cardiac emergencies, 144 falls, 83 self-harm or suicides and 62 road traffic collisions involving cars.

With no direct government funding, the Charity, which is based in Semington, relies on donations from local people and businesses to continue flying and saving lives. There are many ways to support the Charity – from joining the lottery to taking on a fundraising challenge or leaving a gift in your Will.

## Age UK Wiltshire

### Fitness & Friendship Club – Bowerhill

Age UK Wiltshire is grateful to Melksham Without Parish Council for its continued support of our Fitness & Friendship Club, which takes place fortnightly at Bowerhill Village Hall. In the last year 50 people have attended the Club, of whom 26 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.

Older people who attend tell us that the exercises help with mobility, particularly for people with arthritis and stiff joints. Our club leaders and volunteers have received Low Impact Functional Exercises for Older Adults Training as well as First Aid.

Club members report feeling healthier and fitter for attending the Club, and also comment on improved wellbeing having been able to spend social time with other people in a safe and non-judgemental environment, increasing community connectedness and reducing social isolation. A new member to the Club remarked:

“I went to the disco in Melksham & have now started at the Fitness & Friendship Club. What an amazing team of people! Thank you for supporting us old folk.”



### 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!**

#### Dates for 2026

**Alternate Thursdays 2pm - 4pm**

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| Jan 8 & 22     | July 9 & 23    |
| Feb 5 & 19     | Aug 6 & 20     |
| Mar 5 & 19     | Sep 3 & 17     |
| Apr 2, 16 & 30 | Oct 1, 15 & 29 |
| May 14 & 28    | Nov 12 & 26    |
| Jun 11 & 25    | Dec 10         |

**FIRST  
SESSION  
FREE!**

£6 per session

“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.”



**Contact Tracey: 07754 612569**

Email: [fitnessandfriendship@ageukwiltshire.org.uk](mailto:fitnessandfriendship@ageukwiltshire.org.uk)

[www.ageukwiltshire.org.uk](http://www.ageukwiltshire.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 800912



*Making moments matter*

# **BOWERHILL MOVEMENT FOR THE MIND**

## **A FINAL REPORT TO MELKSHAM WITHOUT PARISH COUNCIL**

### Introduction

Following the Parish Council's very generous grant of £450 in February 2025 towards the Bowerhill Movement for the Mind project, run by Beyond Dementia (formerly Alzheimer's Support), we now have pleasure in reporting back on the impact and benefits of this service for the local community.

### Mind and body

As described in our original application, Beyond Dementia runs a fortnightly Movement for the Mind exercise group based at Bowerhill Village Hall, 10.30 am – 12.00. This offers gentle, structured exercise designed to maintain and improve fitness in both mind and body as well as companionship with others living with dementia and respite for carers.

### The impact

We are delighted to report that Melksham Movement for the Mind continues to thrive. Since the Parish Council's grant was received in March of this year, we have run 17 sessions that supported 25 local people living with dementia and their carers per month. These sessions continue to provide both (gentle) physical exercise and equally importantly, a reason to get out of the house and to meet other people who are going through similar experiences. Additionally, the wider families also benefit from the improved mental wellbeing of their loved one as well as from the social connections generated by Melksham Movement.

We continue to achieve our dual aims of (1) providing a regular opportunity to undertake appropriate levels of physical exercise (most of our attendees are aged 60+) that generates increased blood flows which are good for cognitive as well as physical health and (2) encouraging both those living with dementia and their carers to get out of their homes and join a social group made up of people who are facing similar challenges and can relate to the daily challenges they face

### Feedback

"I'm very grateful to the staff that dad has this group to come to."

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

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

### Thank you!

We are so grateful for the Parish Council's generous support of our work over the years that has enabled us to continue and further develop this service which demonstrably improves the wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable people in Melksham, as well as strengthening the wider town by having such a high level of integrated support embedded within the local community. We are delighted to have such good relations with the Parish Council and we very much look forward to continuing that relationship in the years to come. We would of course be delighted if any Councillors would like to visit – please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like me to organise this. In the meantime, please do accept our profound thanks for the Parish Council's support of our work – it really is making a difference.

## **Wiltshire Search and Rescue**

Wiltshire Search and Rescue was incredibly grateful to receive grant funding during 2025. This was utilised to fund courses for our volunteers in Search Management qualifications, including Planning and Operations. As a voluntary organisation working alongside the Police, it is vital that we ensure our members are trained to recognised standards to maintain the high level of professionalism that is expected of us. We receive no statutory funding and are primarily deployed by the Police to search for high risk missing persons. This means that we need to be able to plan, manage and execute our operations quickly and effectively. With all our volunteers being on call 24/7, having more members trained and qualified to act in these key roles increases our availability to respond to requests for assistance more promptly, increasing like likelihood of a positive outcome.



# FRIENDS OF GIFFORDS SURGERY



Supporting Patients. Strengthening Community

## **Friends of Giffords Surgery Charity Report to Melksham Without Parish Council 2025–26**

Friends of Giffords Surgery was set up in 2024 to support the health and wellbeing of patients at Giffords Surgery and the wider Melksham community. Since our last report, we have formally gained charitable status, marking an important step in our development and strengthening our ability to secure funding and deliver longer-term support. Over the past year, we've moved from setting things up to delivering a growing range of activities, building strong local partnerships, and making a real difference for residents, including those in Melksham Without Parish. We really appreciate the Parish Council's support, which has helped us get to this point.

Since our last report, where we shared our early plans and launch activity, we've developed our work significantly. We provided a Christmas lunch for over 90 vulnerable residents, offering not just a hot meal but also company and a welcoming space on a day that can be difficult for many people. We also ran a very popular toy drive in Melksham, which was incredibly well supported by the community. Thousands of donated toys were given out to local families, helping make sure children could enjoy Christmas regardless of their circumstances.

We've continued to be visible in the community by taking part in events such as the River and Food Festival, Seend Fete and a VE Day event attended by around 200 people. At these events, we offered free blood pressure checks to over 300 residents. In some cases, this picked up potential issues and people were advised to follow up with their GP, showing how valuable this kind of outreach can be.

Our Stay Well, Stay Informed workshops have continued to grow. We've delivered sessions on dementia awareness, healthy eating, sleep and life-saving skills, and we're developing further workshops on men's and women's health. These sessions help people feel more confident managing their health and can reduce the need for GP appointments by supporting prevention and early action.

Alongside this, we are launching our new website at the end of March, which will include a Directory of Services bringing together local health and wellbeing support in one place. This will make it much easier for patients and residents to find the right help at the right time.

As part of improving the patient experience at the surgery, we funded wipeable examination bed covers. This improves comfort for patients, maintains high hygiene standards, and provides a more sustainable alternative to disposable paper covers.

Giffords Surgery serves a large number of patients from Melksham Without Parish, and our work directly benefits these residents by improving access to health information, reducing isolation, supporting preventative care and creating opportunities for people to connect with others.

We are very grateful to Melksham Without Parish Council for awarding £700 towards a new community wellbeing garden at the surgery. This will create a welcoming outdoor space where patients can take part in gentle gardening activities, support their mental wellbeing and spend time with others. The funding will be used for raised beds, plants, tools and seating, and the garden will be run by volunteers with support from the surgery so it can continue to benefit patients long term.

Over the coming year, we'll continue to build on this work by expanding our workshops, developing the garden, progressing the website and Directory of Services, and strengthening links with other local organisations. We'll also keep running community events and outreach so we can reach as many people as possible.

It's been a really positive year, and we've made good progress from a new organisation to one that is delivering regular, practical support in the community. The Parish Council's support has played an important part in that, and we look forward to building on this in the year ahead.

31 March 2026

## **St John Ambulance Devizes and Central Wiltshire**

We have been busy over this last year providing awareness of CPR, Choking and Bleeding to the public within Melksham Library and at the Melksham Food and River Festival, Gompels Pharmacy, Giffords Surgery and Asda. We held CPR and AED sessions at Meadowsweet Place, Melksham WI and visited schools in the area to give some first aid awareness to the children at Churchfields in Atworth, Manor School and Forest and Sandridge. We have worked with Melksham PCSO's to assist with their Mini Police initiative within schools as well.

We have provided first aid to both of the Freemason's AGM's which are held annually in Melksham and had a presence at the VE Day Flag raising and Beacon Lighting ceremonies.

Although the Network is based in Devizes, we have many volunteers, both Adult and Youth from Melksham Without area who give their time in making a difference to the community.



## **Families Out Loud**

Families Out Loud is a Wiltshire charity supporting adults, teenagers and families affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use.

We know that addiction doesn't just affect one person — it impacts whole families. Through one-to-one support, peer groups and bereavement services, we help people feel less alone, more understood and better able to cope.

We are proud to support people in Melksham and the surrounding area, both in person and online. Our work is rooted in compassion, lived experience and practical support, helping families rebuild confidence, stability and hope.

Founded in 2018, our charity was created by people with personal experience of addiction within the family, and that understanding continues to shape everything we do.

With the support of local funding and community support, we can continue to be there for families facing some of the most difficult and isolating times in their lives.

Find out more or get in touch:

[www.familiesoutloud.org](http://www.familiesoutloud.org)

[enquiries@familiesoutloud.org](mailto:enquiries@familiesoutloud.org)

## **Melksham Foodbank**

Melksham Food Bank was established in 2007 by local churches to provide emergency food aid to residents facing crisis. Since then, the non-profit organisation has developed into a charity, becoming a registered charity (CIO) in April 2025. The foodbank is run and managed by volunteers. In 2025, the foodbank provided 7,991 parcels to numerous groups of households ranging from single to families.

The majority of food is either physically donated or purchased using donations from our generous donors.

The foodbank believes that it is important to enable our clients to have peer-to-peer support, ensuring that their circumstances do not leave them struggling with isolation. To aid this, the foodbank provides monthly events and in 2025 held 8 monthly breakfasts, afternoon tea, a BBQ, Easter breakfast and Christmas lunch.

The funds donated by Melksham Without will assist in covering the cost of food for our Melksham Without clients.

## **MELKSHAM FOOD AND RIVER FESTIVAL**

We are very grateful to Melksham Without Parish Council for their grant contribution. This was again used to help us to fund the specialist professional electrical, insurance, medical, security, toilets and waste disposal services needed to support the Festival.

The 2025 Melksham Food and River Festival took place in the King George V Park and on the River Avon over the weekend of Saturday 30th and 31st August 2025. The Festival was again planned and delivered by a team of local volunteers as a community event.

The event was very well attended. Attendance at the two-day event is free to attend, and is drawn from the entire Melksham area and increasingly from a wider catchment area. Entrance to the KGV Park remains open to the public, via the Parks' four open entrances, which makes it difficult to estimate Festival attendance. We estimate that approximately 7 - 9,000 people enjoyed the programme of field and river-based activities and the entertainment at the 2025 event.

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 always allocated free stalls for local community or charitable groups, including the local MP, so that they can engage with residents of the area.

Feedback from stall, activity and Festival attendees was again very positive and complimentary. We can therefore report that over ninety applications have already been received for the 2026 event.

## **Shaw and Whitley Community Hub Ltd**

Whitley Stores is approaching our second anniversary of opening in our cabin in the Pear Tree Car Park and we're delighted that our community village shop is going from strength to strength. We have a committed group of volunteers that is growing all the time, filling 2-hour shifts throughout the day, seven days a week to enable us to offer a valuable service to the villagers of Whitley and Shaw as well as visitors from further afield. Opportunities to volunteer both in the shop and behind the scenes bring benefits to our volunteers of helping to reduce social isolation, instilling a sense of purpose and value, and promoting mobility and mental activity – it's about much more than just selling newspapers and milk. Likewise for our customers, the shop offers a place for a chat with a friendly face, a way to keep in touch with local news and events, and of course a place to buy newspapers, milk and much more without the need for a car or journey into Melksham.

Rising costs this year have presented a challenge for us, as our 6-monthly price audits have proved insufficient to keep pace with frequent price changes from our suppliers. As a result, we've noticed our profit margins eroding at a rate that has been impossible for us to keep on top of with just our volunteer management group. We are delighted to have recruited a Community Shop Coordinator – Charli Shiner – to support us in this kind of day-to-day administration, plus management of the volunteer rota, monitoring stock levels of our perishable items, identifying cost-savings and potential new product lines and more. Charli started just before Christmas and has been both an immediate hit with the volunteers and a valuable asset to the management team, with noticeable improvements to our wastage and profitability figures within her first few months. Although we now have a wage to pay, we are already seeing a tangible return on the investment and we are still making a small profit, which is all we require as a bare minimum.

This year our increased turnover figures have meant that we have had to register as a VAT business. Great news, because it is an indication of strong sales, but less good news in increased book-keeping and accounting responsibilities. We're grateful to our Treasurer Dominic Szanto for his unflappable and knowledgeable patient efforts as we transitioned to this new way of working.

As we go into the new financial year, we are planning a 'birthday' celebration for the shop in May, are supporting the Shaw and Whitley Poppy Project as a collection and drop-off point for knitted and crocheted poppies that will create a field of remembrance in Pocock's Paddock later in the year, looking forward to the relaunch of Connect magazine with its village news and always thinking of new ways to bring life and support to our local community.

Thanks must go to our generous landlords at the Pear Tree Inn, Whitley, our Steering Group committee working tirelessly in the background and our fantastic team of volunteers who so brilliantly embody the spirit of Shaw and Whitley Community Hub in all that they do and of course our loyal customers, who make it all worthwhile.

## **Melksham Carnival Annual Parish report**

Melksham Carnival seems to hold such wonderful memories for everyone, who has ever participated in it, watched it or been part of the team who organise it, and we are striving to keep these memories alive, while adding some new ones.

Without the support and generosity of grants, which we receive, it would absolutely not be possible.

From Carnival day itself, to bunny bingo, our Bonnie baby competition and Spot The Oddity, there is a little something for everyone, and we aim to be as inclusive as possible in our planning and execution of these events.

Our amazing Melksham Carnival Royalty, are ready to support lots of events, and showcase our beautiful town. They were chosen for their community involvement and passion for their town, so we look forward to everyone meeting them in their many engagements, throughout the year.

## **Melksham Remembers**

Last year Melksham Remembers successfully applied for a MWPC grant to help with printing costs for our RAF/Bowerhill street names booklet.

It allowed us, with the help of volunteers, including many MWPC Councillors, to deliver a copy for free to every household on the site of the RAF camp.

It was heartening to receive so much positive feedback received in person and in line. You can purchase additional copies at the TIC for £5

This year, led by Rob Cumming, we are producing a more 'in depth' tome on the development, use and demise of the camp and again thank MWPC for contributing towards the print costs.

# **MELKSHAM GARDENERS SOCIETY**

The society meet on the last Tuesday of the month at the Rachel Fowler Centre, meetings commence at 7:30pm.

The society programme of events includes 8 presentations per year given by guest speakers on a range of gardening and environmental related topics. These are open to members and non-members. Other events organised by the Society include a plant swap and quiz evening, an evening visit to a garden open under the national gardens scheme, an evening of Christmas wreath making and the annual Flower and Produce Show. A garden related coach trip is also organised by the society.

The Society is open to all members of the local community, and we welcome members and non-members to our meetings. Details of all events and membership details can be found on our web site [www.melshamgardenersociety.co.uk](http://www.melshamgardenersociety.co.uk)

## **Shaw and Whitley Garden Club Annual Parish report**

Shaw and Whitley Garden Club meet at the Methodist Chapel, Top Lane, Whitley, SN12 8QU every second Wednesday of each month at 7pm. We serve tea, coffee and cake followed by our speaker for the evening.

One of our aims is to bring together all people interested in gardening and also to make friends while learning about all aspects of gardening.

The membership this year has risen to 51 members. People moving into our community have joined us and our long standing members always renew their membership. We also have members from other areas join us and they are most welcome.

We have a full programme every year. 2026 sees us having more speakers and visiting many more gardens of interest as well as a coach trip to RHS Wisley in Surrey. We hold an annual Plant Sale on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in May alongside a raffle outside the Methodist Chapel. Always well supported by the community.

We have kept our membership fee at the same level for a number of years so people can join no matter what their income. Lowden Garden Centre also give our members 10% discount on all their purchases of garden related items.

We are looking forward to all the speakers and trips this coming year and also to keep increasing our membership and making new friends.

**Melksham WI**

Melksham WI meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm at That Meeting Space, Market Place, Melksham.

We have a varied range of speakers over the months - in June we have a talk from a local osteopath, July is a visit from Fear Free. August is our cream tea in aid of breast cancer and in September we have a talk on Rena Stewart who worked at Bletchley Park. In October Bath cats and dogs are coming along to talk about their work, November is a visit from a chocolatier - just in time for Christmas gifts! Finally in December we make a centrepiece for our table.

If you would like to try WI the first two visits are free.

## **Melksham Sixty Plus Club**

Melksham Sixty Plus Club is a social club for the older residents from the Melksham area. We meet every Tuesday at Queensway Chapel where we enjoy a friendly bingo session with raffle and refreshments at half time. Our members vary in agility from the active to members who use walking aids and we also have a wheelchair user. We organise events and coach trips throughout the year. We are completely self funding and non profit-making. Any monies taken are ploughed back into the club for our members!

Please contact Mrs. Rosemary Nash, Chairman on 01225 707712 for details.

## **Corsham Cricket Club Annual Parish Report**

### **Cricket in Beanacre:**

Corsham Cricket Club & St Barnabas Church are really looking forward to the start of the cricket season. The first scheduled match at the ground this summer is Saturday 25th April in a friendly between Corsham 3s & Chippenham 3s with the league games starting at home on 10th May.

St Barnabas Church have themselves arranged 5 or 6 Sunday friendly matches to take place over the summer mainly on Sunday afternoons.

The two clubs are also coming together to introduce 'Walking Cricket' for over 49 year olds with a trial session taking place on **Tuesday 5th May** at 11.30am at the playing field.

Everybody is welcome to attend but for any additional details reach out to John Gale on +44 7713 502735 and he will be happy to help.

Off the pitch there has been lots of planning and fundraising taking place for the installation of the new pavilion building to support the growing cricket activities. Funds are now in place and planning permission has been requested, the hope is that this may be secured by May time with a 3-4 week build process happening almost instantly the moment planning is granted (touch wood)!

Ground preparations are also well underway so now all we need is the dry weather to carry on and hopefully some warm sun to arrive for when the matches do.

Please feel free to come along at any point and watch a match, all support is most welcome

## **Melksham and Corsham Gateway Club**

2026 started with a big change for our Club. Last year we were becoming increasingly aware that our venue was unsuitable for our members needs through a lack of easy access for disabled members which resulted in some being no longer able to attend. Despite contacting many venues we were unable to find one with adequate storage for our belongings. When I gave in our grant application form I discussed this with the Melksham Without Parish Council staff who suggested that we contact the Canberra Centre.

This resulted in us moving to the Canberra Centre on 6th March kindly assisted financially and physically by Melksham Lions Club.

We are now settled into our new meeting place which has resulted in former members being able to return and new members joining us.

The grant will enable us to provide extra visiting entertainers from the local area from singers, DJs magicians and animal encounters.

## **BOWERHILL LADIES GROUP**

The Bowerhill Ladies Group serve the ladies of Bowerhill and surrounding areas with a monthly opportunity to meet up, listen to a speaker and enjoy a bit of a chat afterwards over a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit. It's all very informal.

Friendships are formed and this leads to vital connections for some of our members thus alleviating loneliness and social isolation. We meet monthly at Bowerhill Village Hall. We are always on the lookout for new members.

Our talks are varied and over the last twelve months subjects have included The Pachamama Project, Rehoming Greyhounds, Saving our Butterflies, RAF Mountain Rescue and we made a special Christmas card. Social events were a fabulous Mystery Coach Trip on a beautiful mid summer evening in June followed by supper at a village Inn near Salisbury, our Harvest Supper and a Christmas Meal at a local pub.

We are always very happy to welcome visitors and we meet on the third Tuesday of the month at Bowerhill Village Hall, Halifax Road, Melksham, SN12 6SN at 7:30pm.

Subjects to be covered in the next few months include How to Make a Hand Tied Bouquet, Gardening for Wildlife, Wiltshire Folklore, Caen Hill Countryside Centre and a talk on an Expedition to The South Pole. Our mystery trip will be in July but the venue is, of course, top secret! Come and join us.

## **SHAW AND WHITLEY ART GROUP**

I would like to thank Melksham Without Parish Council for the support they give during each financial year.

Our Art Group has grown over the last year, but we still have places if anyone else needed to join.

This year (2025) I was able to invite Artists from the local area to come and give advice and do demonstrations to help improve our members Art.

We have also displayed our Artwork in the 'Smallest Art Gallery in the World' in a repurposed BT telephone box situated on the main road in Whitley Village.

## Parish Newsletter

Over the past year, the community at Melksham Oak Community School has clearly demonstrated its core values of ambition, pride and respect through a wide range of achievements. These successes reflect not only strong academic outcomes, but also the personal growth of our students as thoughtful, responsible young people. We are very grateful to members of our local community for their continued support, which plays a vital role in helping us provide the very best opportunities for all.

A particular highlight has been the much-anticipated opening of our new outdoor education area. This exciting development reflects our ambition to broaden learning beyond the classroom, while fostering pride in our environment and respect for the natural world. Students not only from Melksham Oak but also our local primary schools now benefit from a dedicated outdoor space where they can take part in team-building challenges, environmental projects, bushcraft and practical life skills. Activities such as shelter building, fire lighting, navigation and conservation work encourage independence, leadership and teamwork, while supporting physical and mental wellbeing. These experiences help students develop both confidence and a respectful understanding of their role within the wider community.

Earlier in the year, students came together to mark Remembrance Day in a moving act of remembrance. Standing in silence on the playground, led with great pride by our cadets and accompanied by the sound of the bugle, the school community showed deep respect as they reflected together. Students also represented the school within the wider community in the Remembrance Day parade.

Sporting success has been another strong feature of the year, with our PE team fostering ambition, teamwork and pride in representing the school. Students have demonstrated resilience and commitment across a variety of fixtures and tournaments. Highlights include impressive football and netball performances, and enthusiastic participation in basketball, cross country and primary partnership events. Across all activities, students have consistently shown respect for one another and for their opponents. Our annual Sports Day was a wonderful celebration of participation, pride and community spirit.

Students' ambition has also been evident in the arts. Our Winter Showcase Concert highlighted the depth of musical talent across the school, with performers taking great pride in their achievements. Performing Arts students further impressed audiences at the West Wilts Dance Festival with a confident and powerful performance.

Reading remains central to our school culture, encouraging both ambition and pride in learning. Our newly refurbished library has become a vibrant and welcoming hub, with increasing enthusiasm for reading across all year groups. Initiatives such as BookBuzz,

World Book Day, author visits and reading challenges have nurtured a love of literature, while promoting respect for ideas, creativity and learning.

Academic achievement continues to reflect students' ambition and determination. In mathematics, students enjoyed considerable success in the UK Mathematics Trust Challenges, earning awards from Bronze through to Gold, alongside several "Best in School" accolades. In English, students have embraced opportunities such as creative writing workshops with visiting authors, showing both imagination and pride in their work. In Design and Technology, students have produced innovative and thoughtful projects, combining practical skill with respect for sustainability and modern design. Beyond the classroom, students have shown ambition in embracing a wide range of enrichment opportunities. Educational visits to the Houses of Parliament and Cadbury World, alongside talks from organisations such as the Bank of England, have helped deepen understanding and broaden horizons. The school continues to promote respect, wellbeing and leadership through initiatives including mental health awareness activities, student council involvement, sports leadership programmes and fundraising events supporting charities such as Young Minds, Children in Need and Comic Relief.

Overall, this has been a year defined by ambition in learning, pride in achievement and respect for one another. We are immensely proud of all that our students have accomplished and look forward to building on this success in the year ahead.

## Grants awarded this evening for 2026/27

| <b>ORGANISATION</b>                                     | <b>Awarding in 2026/27</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Bowerhill Village Hall Trust                            | £5,000                     |
| Shaw Hill Playing Field and Village Hall                | £10,500                    |
| Berryfield Village Hall                                 | £1,590                     |
| The Rachel Fowler Centre                                | £250                       |
| Whitley Reading Rooms                                   | £3,490                     |
| that meeting space administered by GoodNews Church      | £300                       |
| Bowerhill Residents Action Group (BRAG)                 | £600                       |
| Berryfield & Semington Rd Action Group (BASRAG)         | £500                       |
| Community Emergency Group (CEG) - Whitley and Shaw      | £354                       |
| Community Action Whitley Shaw (CAWS)                    | £3,000                     |
| 4Youth (South West) - formerly Young Melksham           | £3,000                     |
| 1st Bowerhill Scout Group                               | £1,500.00                  |
| Bowerhill Pre-School                                    | £500                       |
| Melksham Guide Association                              | £568.95                    |
| Group Five                                              | £600                       |
| Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance Charity                | £1,000                     |
| Age UK Wiltshire                                        | £900                       |
| Beyond Dementia (formerly Alzheimer's Support)          | £450                       |
| Meadowbrook (Wiltshire) CIC                             | £270                       |
| Wiltshire Search and Rescue Team                        | £695                       |
| Friends of Giffords Surgery                             | £700                       |
| St John Ambulance Devizes and Central Wiltshire Network | £250                       |
| Families Out Loud                                       | £750                       |
| Melksham Foodbank and Lifeline CIO                      | £400                       |
| FearFree Charity (Formally Splitz Support Service)      | £750                       |
| Melksham Food & River Festival                          | £600                       |
| Shaw & Whitley Community Hub Ltd                        | £2,000                     |
| Crimestoppers Trust – Wiltshire Volunteer Committee     | £150                       |
| Melksham Carnival                                       | £520                       |
| Melksham Remembers                                      | £175                       |
| Melksham Gardeners' Society                             | £300                       |
| Shaw & Whitley Garden Club                              | £300                       |
| Melksham WI                                             | £150                       |
| Corsham Windband Association                            | £0                         |
| SixtyPlus                                               | £500                       |
| Corsham Cricket Club                                    | £2,000                     |
| Melksham and Corsham Gateway Club                       | £1,000                     |
| Bowerhill Ladies                                        | £500                       |
| Shaw and Whitley Art Group                              | £200                       |
| Melksham Tourist Information Centre                     | £600                       |
| <b>TOTAL GRANTS AWARDED FOR 2026/27</b>                 | <b>£46,912.95</b>          |