

the malmesbury Jackdaw



Malmesbury's Alternative Community Magazine
25th Edition Autumn 2025

Malmesbury Carnival Swinging in the Rain!



Delivered free to homes and businesses in Malmesbury

Welcome...

... to the autumn edition of *The Malmesbury Jackdaw*.

What a summer that was! The national press had a field day telling us that Bognor was hotter than various exotic locations that are normally a lot hotter than Bognor (other UK seaside resorts are available). It was great to see outdoor events in Malmesbury such as the eat:Festival and Petticoat Lane swarming with people under blue skies. What a pity the weather didn't hold for the carnival procession but, in true British spirit, the organisers, participants and spectators made it a great success.

We wanted to be able to tell you in this edition that the model of Malmesbury Station, much heralded in previous editions, would be proudly on display in the Town Hall. Alas, it seems they're still waiting for a cabinet to put it in. Watch this space (or rather the one under the stairs in the Town Hall).

This is our 25th edition. Do we get a silver medal? We only agreed to produce the magazine for a year, but are now in our seventh. So long as businesses continue to support us with advertising, our wonderful volunteer delivery team stays with us and readers still want *The Jackdaw*, we'll carry on. We're sometimes asked how much we make from it. The answer remains 'absolutely nothing'. The operation is run at cost and we take no income from it all – it's just a weird hobby.

We hope that you enjoy what we have for you.

Much of the content has been sent in by readers (thank you, all) so if you'd like to contribute, please get in touch - we're quite tame and approachable. We love reader contributions as they add to the magazine's variety ... and make our lives easier.

Soon be Christmas!

Best wishes.

Richard, Raphe and Andy

The Malmesbury Jackdaw Team

Cost of Living Support

Increasing your MPG

You have probably heard these, or similar, tips before, but it is helpful to be reminded every now and again.

1. Regularly check that your tyres are at the correct pressure.
2. Change to a higher gear when the engine reaches 2000 rpm.
3. Anticipate conditions ahead. Use the engine to slow down when approaching traffic lights etc. If you see a hill ahead, speed up and allow the car to gradually slow down as you climb it.
4. Remove roof racks and heavy items from the boot when not in use.
5. Be frugal with the use of the AC and heaters.
6. Combine short trips into longer ones. Engines are more efficient when warm.
7. Reverse into parking spaces.

If you would like to know more, Google: *RAC how to save fuel – the ultimate guide*.

Contact & Information

We're always looking for stories to include so if you're aware of something interesting or important relating to Malmesbury then please check out the editorial policy on our website (www.themalmesburyjackdaw.com) and submit an article. If you would like to discuss any ideas you might have first then drop our editor an e-mail. To contribute contact Andy at editortmj3@gmail.com. To place an advert contact Raphe at ral43.tmj@gmail.com. For the website or distribution contact Richard at richard.harris61@icloud.com

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Coming To Malmesbury Soon

Planning Update

In the last magazine we reported that Miller homes had appealed the Council's decision to reject their application to build 92 homes on the land between Milbourne and the by-pass. This appeal has been turned down, so the original decision stands (PL/2023/04996).

We also reported that the application to build 55 homes in the field on the righthand side as you leave Malmesbury on the Sherston Road had been rejected (PL/2024/06897). The Developer has since appealed this decision, and we await the outcome.

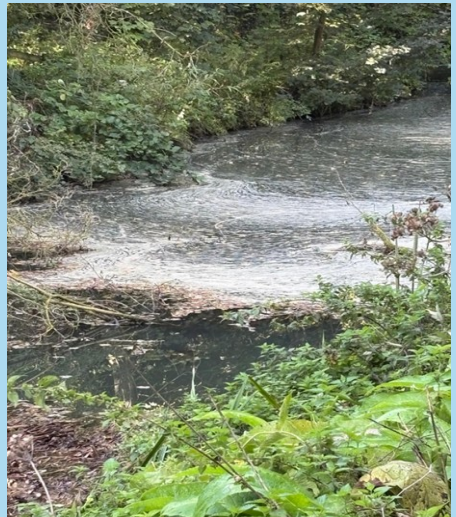
The application in principle to build 4 homes off the B4014 opposite Filands View has been approved (PL/2025/02543).

There are no other updates to report, although we're watching developments in the field behind Waitrose with interest. If you would like to see a full list of major outstanding planning applications in Malmesbury please see our website. Full details of all planning applications in Malmesbury can be found on Wiltshire Council website.

Dirty Water?

Some readers may have been concerned by the state of the river through Conygre Mead during the summer. There has been foam building up there which looks unsightly.

The Malmesbury Jackdaw reported the problem to Wessex Water and attended with them while the water was checked. The outcome was that the river water is in reasonably good condition with tests for ammonia, etc. all producing results within accepted parameters. The foam is naturally occurring and is caused by the weir upstream creating air bubbles in the water as it passes over. These then flow downstream into Conygre Mead where they collect due to submerged branches and excess aquatic vegetation resulting in the foam on the surface. Our investigations continue, but we can all help by not throwing litter into the river as it accumulates in the foam and vegetation making an even bigger mess.



Crime Update

The latest crime figures relate to July.

For Malmesbury Town, reported crimes numbers were Violence and Sexual Offences, 15; Anti-social Behaviour, 7; Criminal Damage and Arson, 4; Other Crime*, 15. For the rural area surrounding Malmesbury, the figures were Violence and Sexual Offences, 7; Anti-social behaviour, 5; Other Theft, 2; Vehicle Crime, 2.

*For Malmesbury Town, 'Other Crime' includes Vehicle Crime, Shoplifting and Drug Offences.

Wiltshire Police's current priorities for our area are:

Speeding concerns

Officers will increase their presence on rural roads, conducting regular high visibility patrols to deter speeding and promote safe driving behaviour. They will carry out focused speed enforcement operations at identified hotspots, using speed detection technology to apprehend offenders and reduce dangerous driving. Collaboration with local councillors will ensure that local concerns are addressed promptly and effectively, helping to shape ongoing policing efforts. They will continue to work closely with Community Speed Watch groups, empowering local residents to assist in monitoring speeds and raising awareness within their communities.

Drug Usage and Anti-Social Behaviour

Officers will conduct high-visibility foot patrols in and around Malmesbury town centre taking robust action against any drug use, anti-social behaviour or other criminal offences that are identified.

Get Involved

To get involved and participate in the exchange of information with Wiltshire Police, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, Get Safe Online and Neighbourhood Watch - sign up to Community Messaging via www.wiltsmessaging.co.uk.



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Snippet

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Looking Ahead Together

By Roz Savage, MP

As the evenings draw in and the countryside takes on its autumn colours, there's a sense of rhythm and renewal across the South Cotswolds. Fields are being turned, wood burners are lit, and communities are coming together for harvest suppers and bonfire nights, and Christmas fairs are on the horizon. It's one of my favourite times of year – a reminder of how deeply connected we are to the changing seasons and to one another.



Roz at North Meadow Photo: Scarlet Page

This first year as your MP has been full of energy and purpose. I've travelled the length and breadth of our constituency, meeting farmers, small business owners, parish councillors, and volunteers – all working hard to keep their communities thriving. Those conversations have been both inspiring and grounding, giving me a clear picture of the hopes, challenges, and priorities that shape everyday life here.

Many of those priorities come back to the same themes: supporting our local food and farming sector, ensuring people can access reliable healthcare close to home, improving flood resilience, and strengthening transport and digital connections so no village feels left behind. These are the issues I'm continuing to champion in Westminster, making sure rural voices are heard where decisions are made.

Through our *Stronger South Cotswolds* initiative, we've also begun celebrating the remarkable individuals and organisations that bring so much life to our area. Our *Local Legends* project highlights people who quietly make a difference – whether that's leading a village hall committee, restoring wildlife habitats, or running community cafés that help tackle loneliness. Their commitment and creativity are what keep our communities strong.

Looking to the months ahead, I'm keen to build on that spirit of collaboration. Across the Cotswolds, there's growing interest in community energy projects – local solutions that can help lower bills and reduce carbon emissions. Likewise, the work being done to restore rivers, hedgerows, and meadows shows what's possible when farmers, landowners, and residents pull together for nature. These practical, place-based efforts give me real hope for the future.

As winter approaches, many of us will be spending more time indoors, catching up with neighbours, and reflecting on the year that's passed. For me, it's also a time to listen – to hear your views on what's working well and where we need to push harder. Whether I'm at a coffee morning, a community meeting, or chatting on a high street, your ideas continue to shape the direction of my work.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and for the warm welcome I've received wherever I go. Together, we're building a stronger, more connected South Cotswolds – one that looks after its people, its countryside, and its future.

Warm wishes,

Roz

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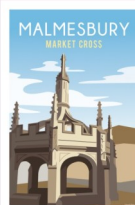
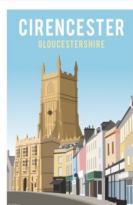
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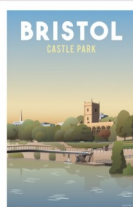
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Climbing for Bampa: Raising Funds and Awareness for Lewy Body Dementia

By Alison Scott

After losing my father-in-law, John "Bampa" Scott, to Lewy Body Dementia, I wanted to take on a challenge that would raise awareness and vital funds for The Lewy Body Society. This November, I'll be trekking to Everest Base Camp – 120km of steep climbs, swaying suspension bridges (not ideal when you're scared of heights!) and the risk of altitude sickness.

Lewy Body Dementia is the second most common type of neurodegenerative dementia, yet it remains widely misunderstood. The Lewy Body Society works tirelessly to change that through research, education and support.

To help fund my charity place, I'll be hosting raffles, cake sales, animal behaviour events and more. Please join an event, host your own, or donate via the QR code. Every penny makes a difference.



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MALMESBURY OPTICIANS

Letter to the Editor

We wondered if it is at all possible that The Malmesbury Jackdaw could remember a young Malmesbury man who achieved a lot in his very short life as it was his birthday on 25th August.

Neil Brown was my brother-in-law and lived at Corn Gastons in Malmesbury. He was an excellent all-round sportsman who sadly passed away from leukaemia in 1986, aged just 19 years. He struggled against the condition for a very tough three years, but it did not hold him back despite all the set backs due to the illness.

Whilst very good at all sports, swimming was the one at which Neil excelled in every way. Being a member of Malmesbury Marlins, the local swimming club, he was also a lifeguard at Malmesbury Open Air Swimming Pool and, whilst he was very ill, he successfully completed a course at college. This helped him to get a job at The Link Centre in Swindon which fulfilled one of Neil's ambitions, but not for long.



Neil on the relay run to RUH in Bath

Besides this, he participated in a relay run to the Royal United Hospital in Bath, where he was being treated and was a regular patient, to raise money for Leukaemia Research. We as a family would support and visit him there all the time.

Always very determined and resilient, he carried on as normally as possible; never complaining of the treatments or trips to Bristol, Bath and London. He just took it in his stride and was an example to us all. If you had met Neil, you would not have realised that he was ill.

Whilst in the Marlins, he was very involved in organising swimming galas and taking part himself. He won a lot of trophies for being first and was also part of the training of other swimmers to whom he passed on his knowledge of the sport.

He was a young man who excelled in everything he did and you couldn't meet a nicer person, but was very cruelly stopped at a young age. However, we and Neil raised funds for Leukaemia Research while he was ill and we continued for a period of time after his death to help others and do our bit on Neil's behalf.

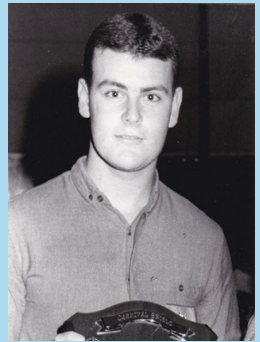
Anyone who met Neil would realise what a kind, polite individual he was and a good example of what young children should aspire to be.

We have a verse for Neil:

*Neil would always achieve his goal
Always giving his heart and soul
Especially in his work and sport
This is a lesson we can all be taught
His kindness and thoughts were always for others
Which to everyone, he was like a brother*

Mr and Mrs G.P. Jobes

Thanks Graham and Penny, we're delighted to be able to help readers remember a very special young man and highlight a very worthy cause. The Malmesbury Jackdaw Team



Neil

Oyez, Oyez

With the appointment of a new Town Crier for Malmesbury, Gordon Williams looks at a role he used to fulfil. Photos are from Gordon's own collection except where shown.

Congratulations to Owain Cole on his appointment to the important post of Malmesbury's Town Crier. It was a previous Town Crier and Mayor, Mr Ken Silveston who thought England's Oldest Borough not having one was a serious gap in the town's standing so, in 1986, he did something about it. After a gap of few years, it's great that the red uniform will be seen again in the town.

Town Clerk, Claire kindly told me about recent town criers. It seems the May family handed down the job from son to son starting in 1859 with Boyce May then finishing with George in 1923. It cannot have been well paid as they held down other jobs such as bill poster, shoe maker and green grocer. In between was Thomas Bray in 1901 it was Ken Silveston who did



Ken Silveston. Photo courtesy of Athelstan Museum

the job in 1986 for five years until it got too much. What with running the health food shop, being a councillor and also losing part of his leg. So, a certain Mathematics teacher of Welsh decent took over until 1997 when Albert Lindsay, Rose Darlington and David Shelley took over the bell. That's called a bellow of town criers evidently.



Yours truly on the pitch at Bath Rugby

Incidentally, town crying goes back to 1066 when information and official announcements had to be passed on to an illiterate population translated from Norman French. When the Bayeaux Tapestry comes over look out for two bellmen in the tapestry. "Oyez" comes

from the French *ouir* (to listen) but “hear ye” is just as acceptable a shout after ringing the bell. Indoors however, to gain attention you tap the floor with a staff and always end (in my case when my voice gave up) with tricorn hat raised and it’s “God Save the King”. With the increased popularity of newspapers, the need for a Town Crier fell away but it is a much appreciated and colourful ceremony still. I always enjoyed having my picture taken at the Market Cross at midday on a Saturday!



Duncan Shearer taking over my job

So, what can the person in red breaches, white gloves and a Malmesbury lace jabot look forward to? Well, there will be the formal occasions such as Mayor Robing and leading the Remembrance Service party in November. As we can see in the snaps, we have Ken helping plant a tree. But where? Do you recognise the Swindon Town striker Duncan Shearer who came to open the Youth Football ground at the Red Bull. That’s me on the mayor’s van leading off the carnival procession. And I actually got onto the pitch at Bath, but not to play alas. It was a fund raiser for Dorothy House and what a thrill to have 14,000 fans joining in when we broke into “Oyez”. It will be fun to be asked to open fetes, wishing a bride and groom a long life together and kicking off late night shopping if so desired. And there’s always standing at the Market Cross at midday on a Saturday offering a warm

welcome to our visitors and informing all of what’s been happening and events coming later in the week.



The author leading town councillors into the Abbey

I deemed it a privilege to give something back to this wonderful community of ours, with many laughs on the way. Good luck to new Town Crier.

God Save the King.

Autumn

From The Rev'd Oliver Ross.

Autumn is a melancholy season. While it is full of all the lovely things left by the summer passed - the fallen leaves, the wood fires, conkers and fireworks, hot chocolate - it is also a time of remembrance for those who have died in life, in our love and in war. Thus, it is also a time of gratitude for all that we have and has been. And ...as the light draws in and the days get colder and the streets become dank, we hunker down and prepare for Christmas (less than a 100 days).



In the Church we celebrate – Harvest, those who fell in war and those gone ahead of us, those who are an example and our heroes of faith then as the prospect of Christ coming again and rejoicing that there is now Light in the darkness. In painting there is a technique ‘chiaroscuro’ which is about the relationship between dark and light – think Rembrandt, think Caravaggio. Darkness is there, but the light breaks through and highlights that which is and is important.

I suspect we are all going to face the difficulties of higher taxation, higher inflation and higher dissatisfaction. Rather than be ground down by the darkness, let us let the light of hope and joy breakthrough?

We face the realities of life but with Hope – this is steadfast and certain, grounded and founded upon the historical life, death and resurrection of Christ. In Him there is writ the paradox of existence - like a baby, who claimed to be God Himself, born in a stable and laid in a manger. It seems to me that the great key of life is being, not only giving in nature, but also ‘otherly’.

Scrooge, in the great Christmas Carol, ended up by keeping Christmas every day – maybe that’s the way to keep our perspective straight – on the Light rather than the darkness. As Jesus once said of Himself, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

May the Light wax strong for you and yours as we travel through the gloaming of Autumn to the starburst of Christmas.

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Snippet

Water, Water, Everywhere ...



In a hot, dry summer when the water companies were imploring us to save water by drinking our used bathwater, only flushing the toilet once a year and letting our plants die, it is disappointing to note how long they are prepared to allow this leak to flow at the top of Mill Lane.

Snippet



Photo taken down Park Road where they're building the slipway for the lifeboat station for the new estate. Diversion instructions lead drivers into a brick wall.

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Stay Safe Online: A New Tool Spots Scams

By Hugo Heriz-Smith.

In my years helping clients with their Apple devices and technology, one question comes up more than almost any other: “Is this a scam?” Whether it’s a suspicious email, an alarming text message, or a worrying phone call, the uncertainty can be stressful.

I’m pleased to share a helpful new resource that can give you peace of mind. I was recently sent a newsletter from The Devon and Cornwall Police promoting a free website called Ask Silver, where you can upload a screenshot of any suspicious message and receive AI-assisted guidance on whether it’s legitimate or a scam. It is simple to use and available to everyone at getsafeonline.org/asksilver.

Even with this tool at your disposal, it is still important to recognize potential scams. The single most important rule I give to clients is this: If any message, text, or phone call makes you feel anxious or pressured to act quickly, it is likely a scam. Legitimate organisations—whether it’s your bank, Apple, Microsoft, or even HMRC—will always give you time to think and verify.

Here are a few other simple rules to follow:

1. **Never click links in unexpected messages.** If you receive an email that appears to be from your bank, don’t click the link. Instead, open your browser and go to the bank’s website directly, or call them using the number on your card.
2. **Legitimate companies won’t ask for passwords or PIN numbers.** Be wary of anyone who asks you to reveal your password or give them remote access to your computer. Unless you are working with a known and trusted tech support provider, it is likely a scam.
3. **When in doubt, hang up or delete.** You’re not being rude by ending a suspicious call or deleting a questionable email.
4. **Take a screenshot before you delete.** This is where Ask Silver comes in handy. Before deleting a suspicious message, take a screenshot and upload it to Ask Silver for analysis.

There’s no shame in being uncertain, as scammers have become increasingly sophisticated. The most important thing is to never let anyone rush you into a decision by creating a sense of urgency or panic. If you are ever unsure about something you’ve received, please feel free to contact me. I’m always happy to take a look.

Hugo Heriz-Smith lives in Malmesbury. He has been providing technical support and personal computing assistance to clients of all ages for more than 35 years. Visit his website at hugocan-help.com.

Malmesbury Voices - 10 Years of Collecting Spoken Memories

Part Three - On the Farm By Bill Reed

The Voices collection gives personal insights into the economic life of the Malmesbury area and its evolution through the 20th century, from largely agricultural to more industrial, commercial and professional employment. Here are some glimpses of life in farming, extracted from the recordings.



King's Heath - The Common Land

This land was reputedly given to the men of Malmesbury by King Athelstan. When John Lewis was Town Clerk in 1976, he interviewed some residents then in their 70's, including the sisters Mabel and Helen Hanks of the Lower High Street, whose father was a Commoner. It's a little peek into Malmesbury life 120 years ago, and also (when you listen to it) a flavour of Malmesbury voices formed at the time.

HH: *He had land up on the Common, and he grew the vegetables, carried them home and we sold them out of the door, used to put some along in the window. Hard work it was too.*

MH: *He used to walk all down the Common, get up early in the morning, like 4 o'clock sometimes. He used to plant his own wheat and have it ground, and the flour was brought back here and Mother used to make the bread, and we used to take it to be baked.*

Oliver Pike, also a Commoner, describes the changes caused by WW2:

OP: *Until 1940, the Heath was broken up into 280 plots, each member having approximately 1.6 acres. But in 1940 the Government had a great need to provide food for the War Effort and they approached the King's Heath Trustees to see if the Common could be cleared and turned into large fields, which would be rented out to local farmers, the crops from which would go to aid the War Effort. The work to clear the Common was done by Jewish refugees from Germany, they did a very good job, and what you have today in the way of large fields is exactly what they created.*

Dairy Farming

John Baldwin of Boakley Farm, Brokenborough and Joyce Smith of Street Farm, Charlton remember what milking was like before mechanisation:

JB: *The electric didn't come to Brokenborough till 1951. [When milking] you had oil lamps and then they had the Primus and Tilley lamps, but other than that it was a pretty dark old job!*

JS: *I was brought up milking two or three cows when I came back from school. You sit on this three-legged stool, not very tall, you can lean forward and put your head into the cow so that if she's going to kick you, you can feel it coming! And you stick your hands between your legs so she can't kick! You don't want to milk it all out and then get the bucket kicked over!*

Sheep Farming

Geoff Scott remembers the winter of 1963:

GS: *Oh, that real deep snow. That time, Len Irvine had some sheep over at Hullavington. Of course, the water all got froze. So, in my old Standard van we used to fill up some milk churns with water. And then*

the only way we could get to them poor old sheep was go along the Chippenham road when they had that opened, and then go down by the side of the railway line at Kingway Bridge, and then one have hold of one handle and one have hold of the other handle, and sort of half-drag 'em down across two fields. That was a bloody winter, that was.

John Edwards had sheep at Stonehill Farm between Charlton and Minety:

JS: A lot of people seem to think that sheep don't need a lot of work. You don't have to milk them and things like that. But in actual fact, they do need an awful lot of work. You have to keep getting them in, they've got to have their feet trimmed, they've got to be wormed, they've got this, they've got that, they've got all sorts of drugs to be kept and dealt with. They were quite a labour-intensive business in actual fact. I always say that sheep have got two intentions in life.

The first is to die. And if you can stop them from dying, the second thing is to get out. And if you can stop them getting out, then you're a lucky man!



*Geoff Scott at Hyam Farm
(Photo courtesy of Geoff Scott)*

The Abattoir

Geoff Scott would take his pigs to be slaughtered at Newman's Abattoir on Park Road:

GS: My uncle said to me once, "These pigs is all right, but he said, I do tell my son, it's a hell of a lot of sawing for a little dust." And I would agree with him. I used to take mine down to Tony Newman's. Course you'd go down there on a Friday and tell him how many you had for the next week. Then you did argue with him about the price. And then one day I was down there arguing with him about the price, he said, "Look, Scotty, he said, why don't you get rid of your pigs and find a woman?" So that's what I done! Best thing I ever done, that was!

The Vet

Caroline Pym came to Malmesbury in 1954 as the first woman vet:

CP: If the cow died, it wasn't because you were a new graduate, or it was going to die anyhow, it was because you were a woman. But once you had done even a very simple successful treatment, if you'd actually stopped a cow dying of milk fever, or pulled out a calf, the farmers were very respectful and exceedingly tolerant, and we got on very well.

Other activities related to farming (the blacksmith, the cattle market, the dairies, the butchers, the extraordinary story of "Cracker" Clark at Abbey Mill Farm ...) are in the collection in the voices of Evelyn Baker, Norman Clark, Ken Trigg, Bernard Tidmarsh, Tristan Forward, Marjorie Dunford, Roy Waine, Harold Thornbury and many others. As I always say: you have to hear the voices for yourself.

Next, I will move on to industry and commerce.

The Malmesbury Voices collection is free to access in Athelstan Museum, Tuesday to Saturday 10:30 to 16:30 and Sunday 11:30 to 15:30. Flying Monk Radio hosts a dedicated web page where you can listen to stories from the collection: <https://flyingmonkcommunityprojects.weebly.com/malmesbury-voices-collection.html>

TETBURY GOODS SHED

A R T S C E N T R E

WINTER HIGHLIGHTS AT TETBURY GOODS SHED



November 1

Fretwork Viol Consort: One of the world's leading viol consorts tonight programme features work by Byrd, Pursell and Orlando Gibbons. Tickets in advance £24. 7.30

November 7

The Guilty Men: The drummer from 10cc and members of Barclay James Harvest join friends for an evening of Americana, country, rock, pop and psychedelia. Tickets in advance £18.7.30

December 6/7

Christmas Craft Fair: stock up with Christmas presents from local artists and craftspeople while enjoying festive music and delicious treats. Entry free. 10-4

December 12

Johnny Coppin – All on a Winter's Night: Johnny returns with his annual feast of traditional carols and new songs together with stories and folklore. Tickets in Advance £22. 7.30

December 20

Abba Fever: Be transported to Abba paradise where you can sing along and dance in aisles with this stunning tribute band. A great night out with family and friends. Tickets in advance £27.50. 7.30

January 10

The Beatles for Sale: This fab four spare no expense in recreating the magic of The Beatles in their 60s heyday. Tickets in advance £25.7.30

For more details of our other events including film, talks, exhibitions, and afternoon tea concerts and to book tickets visit our website:

www.tetburygoodsshed.co.uk

Mayor of Malmesbury Newsletter—Autumn 2025

From Cllr. Stephen James Mayor of Malmesbury

Shortly after I moved to Malmesbury I remember someone telling me that they never went away during the summer as there was so much going on in Malmesbury. The busy programme of events provides compelling reasons to stay here and welcome visitors. The great majority of these events are planned, organised and run by volunteers, and we all owe them our thanks for all they do.

The Mayor is invited to many events, sometimes too many to be able to attend them all. In the last few months I've taken part in Ivana Kupala, the ancient Ukrainian summer festival, and also held a Civic reception to mark the anniversary of Ukrainian independence, both opportunities to show our support for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in our community. Malmesbury Stands with Ukraine continues to remind us all of the need to help Ukraine resist Putin's aggression, and provide what support we can, particularly to the city of Cherkasy as we enter the second year of our partnership with them. I was very sorry not to be able to accept a recent invitation to visit Cherkasy.



Ukraine Independence Evening

This summer Malmesbury Community Fridge celebrated its 3rd anniversary. This organisation has now saved over 10 tons of food from going into landfill by making it available from the fridge and freezer in the Town Hall. The food that is left over is used as animal feed, so nothing is wasted. I have also visited the Malmesbury and District Foodbank, and been able to see how efficiently they provide support for people in crisis. The Foodbank is supported by an experienced caseworker from Citizens Advice, so that timely help to overcome financial and other difficulties is provided along with the food.

Just before the end of the summer term I saw St Joseph's Catholic Primary School performance of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat. To my surprise this included all 17 songs of the original, in full, a remarkable achievement by the children. Debbie Cambray-Smith had done a tremendous job of preparing the children and then played the accompaniment throughout. If the thought of watching a school production without one of your own children in it fills you with dread, you should have seen this. The children's enthusiasm was conspicuous and I'm sure it will have been a boost for their confidence.

The idea of Town Twinning is to promote international friendship, in order to broaden cultural, recreational, educational, religious and commercial links, whilst providing people with new opportunities for learning, friendship and travel. Malmesbury's twin towns are Niebüll and Bad Hersfeld in Germany, and Gien in France. We also have partnerships with Malmesbury in South Africa and Cherkasy in Ukraine. Twin towns usually visit each other in alternate years, and this summer we were visited by a group from Gien, while a group from

Malmesbury visited Niebüll. The visits provide an opportunity to get to know people and understand where they live in a way that holidays or work meetings rarely achieve. Our relationship with Bad Hersfeld is a little different, being based on the story of Lull, a monk that trained in Malmesbury in the eighth century, and then was one of the first Christian missionaries in Germany. He founded the abbey in Bad Hersfeld and is buried there. The town now holds an annual festival in his honour, and a small delegation from Malmesbury take part. This year I was pleased to welcome a group from Bad Hersfeld, and some of them took part in the Carnival Procession.



Bad Hersfeld Twinning

Once again the High Street Plus Art Gallery has provided an opportunity for local artists to show and sell their work through the shop windows of the town. This also brings in visitors, and once again there were several people who were here as it opened, keen to get in first as the event opened. Final figures are not in yet but I congratulate the organisers for another successful year.

I was pleased to open Alltype Builder's Merchant, in half of the shop formerly occupied by Knees. This had been vacant for 2 years, and it's really good that such a prominent space on the High Street is once again open and trading. Jags Bhullar has run a similar business in Uxbridge for several years, and this is his first venture outside that area. Bertie Bs has now moved from the Cross Hayes to the other half of the shop. We also now have a wine merchant, with the Malmesbury Wine Company further down the High Street. I wish all these businesses the best of luck, and encourage you to use them. We will only keep the High

Street shops in business if we buy things from them.



Alltype Builders Merchant Opening

I was surprised to learn that Malmesbury Community Choir has 70 members. Almost all of them were singing at the musical tea that they held for the town in September.

Planning buildings and development is of great interest to many, and frequently raised as a concern. Wiltshire Council's Local Plan is going through the various stages of scrutiny and review that are required before it can be adopted. Our own Malmesbury Area Neighbourhood Plan, covering Brokenborough and St Paul Malmesbury Without as

well as Malmesbury, needs to be updated, but until the Wiltshire Local Plan is finalised we risk trying to shoot a moving target. This problem is further complicated by Government announcements that affect planning policy and targets. In the meantime our Neighbourhood Plan remains valid, and we can rely on the principles it contains even though some of the specifics are out of date.

You may have seen people in the river near the Town Bridge recently. These volunteers,

organised by the Flood Working Group, have been clearing weeds and silt from the banks and riverbed. This work is not simply a case of wading in, as permissions from the Environment Agency and other authorities are required so that the natural environment is protected. This work is necessary to keep the river flowing and healthy, so that it reduces the risk of flooding, and remains an attractive feature of the town.

The Council is continuing to work with Wiltshire Council to ensure that the Riverside Community Centre continues to be available, including the indoor skatepark. The commercial aspects of this work mean that we can't report much more at the moment, but you can be certain that Malmesbury Town Council recognises the vital importance of the Riverside and is determined to preserve this valuable facility.

Malmesbury History Society 10th Anniversary – a group of (mostly) amateur historians that do original research and present it to the group, clearly have done a great deal to increase the sum of knowledge about the past of our town. The work of the members demonstrates that there is something important in every century of Malmesbury's past, it's not all about Athelstan, Anglo-Saxons and monks.

Like me, many of you will have missed WOMAD this summer, as it's moving away from Charlton Park. Some of us were able to ease the disappointment at NoWoMadness, a great evening of live music in the Town Hall. Another event put on by volunteers.

This year is the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, and I was proud to host the event in Cuckingstool Mead to commemorate Victory over Japan Day on 15th August. The campaign fought by British and Commonwealth troops in Burma was described at the time as "a forgotten war, fought by a forgotten army", and it is even less understood today. By 1945 there were 365,000 British and 1.5 million Commonwealth troops in the theatre, drawn from pre-partition India, Burma, Nepal, numerous African countries, Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands, and Canada, in addition to the US forces. Overall there were approximately 220,000 allied casualties. Some made the supreme sacrifice, some endured appalling treatment as prisoners and lasting health problems afterwards, and others simply were thankful to have survived. We remember them all. I am grateful to have met Malmesbury residents with relatives that served in the Far East campaign and heard a little about them. Their stories add colour to the history, and help us understand it as individual experiences.

Walking to Kingston upon Thames to link Malmesbury to the 1100th anniversary of King Athelstan's coronation seemed like a bit of an adventure when it was first mentioned. It turned out to be so much more than just a 130-mile trek. Around 50 people set off from the Cloister Gardens on the first day, and by the end of the week we had reached Wallingford, well over half way. The route visited many early medieval settlements along the River Thames, and we enjoyed seeing many churches and learning about their Saxon connections. I met many mayors and other civic leaders, and we saw and heard a variety of wildlife including kingfishers and, most

improbably, a grey seal! We were generously entertained in many places, and I was able to present our hosts with a copy of David Woodman's new book *The First King of England*.



VJ Anniversary

Kingston's celebrations of the coronation culminated in a moving service of thanksgiving, with the sermon given by the The Very Revd Professor Sarah Foot, a leading expert on ecclesiastical history, who gave a lecture on Athelstan in Malmesbury last year. However what I enjoyed most about the walk was the opportunity to get to know the people that joined in. We had at least one new person join the walk every day, and finished every day with at least 10 people. Long walks provide opportunities for long conversations, isolated from the background noise of daily life. "Normality" did break through occasionally, notably when I was called by the Daily Telegraph and interviewed about flags in potholes as I walked beside the Thames. I was delighted to raise over £2000 for my Mayor's Charities, HEALS and the Malmesbury and District Foodbank, and would like to thank the donors. I must also thank all those that were involved in planning and supporting the walk, another great effort by volunteers. We are planning a celebration of the walk in the Abbey in November, a reunion for those that walked or volunteered but also a chance for those that couldn't take part to see and hear something about it.



Arriving at Kingston

buried there. It's possible Malmesbury will form a partnership with Fitjar, but in any case I'm pleased to have learned of another thread in Athelstan's story.

Carnival this year may well have broken all previous records for fundraising, a magnificent effort by the Carnival Committee and all the other volunteers that helped at events (full disclosure: I'm one of them). 2025 is likely to be remembered as the year of the wet

Procession, but I hope we will also remember the great weather for Open Gardens in Abbey House (thanks to Kim and Whit Hanks), the beautiful variety on display in Open Gardens, an excellent Scarecrow Trail, a thriving Petticoat Lane, the Jazz evening and the Silent Disco, and many other events. Carnival always needs more volunteers to help at events, and it's a great opportunity for busy people to do something for one day of the year, perhaps only for a few hours, and help spread the load more widely.

One unexpected development from the walk was making contact with the Mayor of Fitjar in Norway. King Haakon the Good, a son of the first king of Norway and brother of Eric Bloodaxe, had been fostered as a child in King Athelstan's court. Haakon began the conversion of Norway to Christianity and is remembered for lawmaking and good governance, based on Athelstan's teaching. He was killed in battle at Fitjar when attacked by sons of Eric, and is



Receiving news from Norway

FLU & COVID VACCINATION APPOINTMENTS DON'T MISS YOURS!

We've ordered vaccine stock especially for you – please make sure to attend your booked appointment.

- ✓ Protect yourself and your loved ones
- ✓ Reduce pressure on the NHS this winter
- ✓ Keep our community healthy and safe

If you're unable to attend, please let us know as soon as possible so your appointment can be offered to another patient.

 Check your appointment details

 Malmesbury Medical Practice

 01666 825825

Thank you for helping us keep everyone protected this winter!



Sir George Dowty



For the readers who expressed an interest in our recent article about the statue of Sir George Dowty at Glebe Farm, Lower Stanton St. Quintin, the Sir George Dowty Memorial Committee has now produced a booklet detailing the events that led to this remarkable work - The Story So Far.

Readers can email Martin Robins at martinrobins@btinternet.com for a free copy.

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So Near Yet So Far, Continued

Following the snippet in our last edition about the footpath from the latest building phase on Filands that ends just short of Reeds Farm, a reader kindly contacted us about other footpaths that appear to be unfinished business. The photos are owned by the reader and printed with their permission.

He comments “There is an excellent, wide cycle lane/footpath leading all the way from the new footbridge, up through Backbridge Farm past the ‘side entrance’ to Dyson, but which stops just short of the B4014 at the entrance to the Persimmon office block.

The final 200 yards to the main road is a walk on the grass; or on the road if it’s been raining. And then around the corner, past the Persimmon office block, another 200 yards on the grass. If I was cynical, I would say that it was designed a) for Dyson workers who live on Backbridge Farm to get to and from work; and b) to prevent all and sundry from walking in front of the Persimmon management team working in their offices.

And then finally, there is a footpath out of the Persimmon premises, which joins up with the footpath leading down Tetbury Hill and into town. The Persimmon carpark is out of bounds for pedestrians.

So, there you have it; it is possible to walk/run/cycle a complete loop over 1.25 miles (2.9km) all the way from Backbridge Farm, up to the B4014, down Tetbury Hill, along Park Road and back to Backbridge Farm. All except about 400 yards has an excellent footpath. Why was that



Where's the footpath?

400 yards not paved? Why did the Council not insist that it was paved?”

There are other paths on new developments in Malmesbury which end abruptly and he highlights the one by the children’s play area on Backbridge Farm. He states “The end of the path is a hedge which separates the housing development from a field that is still part of the farm. Walkers and runners have



Footpath to nowhere on Backbridge Farm

created a 'new path' up the slight hill to the right to regain a paved footpath."

His final point relates to a footpath that isn't there at all. "Why is there no footpath along the road from the Whychurch roundabout to Waitrose (the Burton Hill roundabout)? I previously lived/worked in a town where new roads come with a footpath and there is a walking/cycling route that almost completely encircles the town. It would have been nice if this could have been in the minds of the planners when they originally built the Malmesbury by-pass all those years ago. But footpaths are nothing new - you can find a footpath by the road all the way from Malmesbury to Corston, or from Long Newnton to Tetbury. It just needs a Councillor to grab the problem and attach some funds to it. A chap can dream, can't he?"

We're very pleased that the lack of a footpath in front of the Persimmon offices has been raised again. The Malmesbury Jackdaw has featured and enquired about it before, but it appears nothing has happened. With winter looming it will no doubt degenerate into the muddy mess it was last year. We suspect future development may be behind many of the other footpaths that currently seem to go nowhere. As for a footpath along the bypass, it's the first time we've heard it mentioned. Sounds expensive, but what do other readers think?

Issues relating to local roads and footpaths can be raised with the Local Highway and Footway Improvement Group. See www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/6149/Local-Highway-and-Footway-Improvement-Groups

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Calling all Malmesbury Carnival Fans!

Calling all Malmesbury Carnival Fans!

If you love Malmesbury Carnival, and enjoy having fun, join us for a short get together in The Rausing Building on Wednesday 10 December at 7.30pm, and find out more about becoming a Carnival volunteer.

No experience is needed, you can volunteer at any time of the year and how much time you give is entirely up to you. Everyone is welcome, please come and meet the volunteer team, ask questions and find out if helping with this much-loved Malmesbury tradition is for you. There's no obligation to get involved, but if you think you might be interested, we'd love to see you!

So, what do volunteers do – well there's a huge range of activities to get involved with including:

- Booking locations & acts
- Mapping pitches for Petticoat Lane
- Collecting raffle prizes from local businesses
- Promotion on socials, website and in the media
- Stewarding at events and/or procession

And much more!

Malmesbury's enjoyed popular Carnival activities every Summer for over a century, with a mix of events including live music, theatre, Open Gardens, Petticoat Lane, foodie nights, children's activities, quizzes and of course the iconic Carnival Float Procession! In 2025, all this family filled fun raised over £30,000 for local charities and organisations.

Carnival volunteers should be prepared for a real sense of reward and fun. It's mainly fun though! You'll build friendships and create memories to last a lifetime.

Message from our Chairperson Paul Overton *"Carnival is part of Malmesbury's vibrant culture and the highlight of Summer in our community. The team are keen to build on the successful history of holding fun activities to raise money for local causes and we look forward to meeting interested volunteers ready to support this fantastic tradition."*

We hope to see you on 10 December at 7.30pm in The Rausing Building!

If you'd like more information, and can't make the meeting, email us at info@malmesburycarnival.co.uk or register your interest on the Carnival website www.malmesburycarnival.co.uk

Malmesbury Tennis Club Centenary Celebrated in Style

It is every tennis player's dream to play on the manicured lawns of SW19 and for some members of Malmesbury Tennis Club, this dream became a reality on Wednesday 20 August when sixteen delegates from the club were invited to a special event at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club (AELTC) in Wimbledon to celebrate the North Wiltshire club's centenary.

Sixteen clubs celebrating their centenary year from around the UK experienced an exclusive day of celebrations at the world's most famous tennis venue. On arrival, delegates were treated to a Welcome Drinks Reception in the Centenary Garden followed by official team photographs at the entrance to the ivy-clad Centre Court. Behind the scenes tours of both Centre and Number 1 Courts, the Media and Broadcast Centre and The Hill, affectionately known as "Henman Hill" followed a visit to the Wimbledon Museum, where memorabilia and artifacts from the Championship's 148-year old history were exhibited. Delegates also watched a falconry display showcasing Rufus the Harris Hawk with his handler, Donna Davies, who described Rufus' role of "Bird Scarer" in controlling unwanted avian visitors during the Wimbledon Fortnight.

Of course, the absolute highlight of the day was the opportunity for eight lucky members of each club to play tennis on the hallowed grass courts of Wimbledon. With the show courts reserved exclusively for the Grand Slam, the delegated players could use the Player's Practice Courts in the Aorangi area, a place normally reserved for the likes of Alcaraz, Djokovic, Sinner, Swiatek and Radacanu, to name a few. For the Malmesbury tennis players, this was a truly memorable experience to play sets of mixed doubles in the sporting footsteps of the tennis elite. With Number 1 Court creating a unique backdrop, the sheer awe and excitement of being on court at Wimbledon inspired the players to raise their game with many well executed volleys, ground strokes and aces. Players described the experience as "magical", "incredible as the first time I've served an ace at Wimbledon" and a "truly unforgettable experience of a lifetime".

The day ended with an evening Centenary Clubs Cocktail Party held in Centre Court's function suite in the presence of two very famous trophies. Dan Bloxham, Head Coach of the AELTC, congratulated the clubs on their continuing contributions to British tennis and for the incredible achievement of reaching their centenary.

Although the event was to mark its centenary, Malmesbury Club is slightly older, having been officially founded in 1910. The club moved to its current location in Tetbury Hill Gardens in 1938 and has become a cornerstone of the local sporting community with several club teams competing in the Chippenham and District League. In 2024 the club acquired new land to further develop the facilities on offer. It is volunteer run with a small but actively engaged Committee. Chairman Javier Garcia explained: "We are a

membership organisation and always welcome new members, whether you are a beginner or a seasoned player. Grass court experience is optional!" More information can be found on its website <https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/MalmesburyLawnTennisClub>

Article and photo's credited to Elly Tyacke



L-R Mal Johnson, Jo Kitching, Adam Bendall, Jacob Long, Elly Tyacke, K Anderssen-Chivers, Ben Chilman and Peter Knights

Malmesbury & District Garden Club

Following the recent sad passing of Derek Tilney, a stalwart of Malmesbury & District Garden Club for many years, we were contacted by Jamie Johnson, the Chair of the club, for a chat about their plans going forward.

We met Jamie, Claire Matthews (Secretary) and Graham Harris (Chair of Plant Show) and were impressed with their enthusiasm for the club and its future. They're ably assisted by Jim Thomas (Treasurer), Tracy Hobbs (Finance & Membership) and Megan Rexworthy (Advertising & Social Media) and there are currently about 60 members, a number they're keen to increase.

The club started in the 1800s and has featured in the lives of many Malmesbury citizens over the years. Jamie remembers going there with his grandmother when he was young.

So, why not make it part of your life? Gardening is a great hobby providing lots of opportunities to learn, meet new people and get loads of fresh air! All ages and experience levels are welcome, from complete beginners to accomplished gardeners. From our chat with them, they seem a friendly bunch and they stress that the club is very informal with a huge range of knowledge within its ranks that they can't wait to pass on.



The Garden Club Team. Photo: MADGC

They meet on the second Monday of each month at Charlton Village Hall. It's free for members and non-members can also attend for a small charge. There's usually a talk on a subject of interest at the meetings and they're planning a range of other events, too. A trip to Batsford Arboretum is a recent example.

Membership won't break the bank either at just £7 per person per year. A joint membership costs £10 per year. Being a member also gives you discounts at some local retail outlets offering gardening related products and services.

Readers often tell us that there's nothing to do in Malmesbury (which isn't true, you just need to find things and get involved) and here's a great chance to join in with something that's really rewarding. How about giving it a go? We'd love to publish photos of your future horticultural achievements!

Malmesbury & District Garden Club can be contacted as follows:

Phone: 07731826092

Email: MalmesburyGardenClub@outlook.com

Instagram: [@Malmesbury_Garden_Club](https://www.instagram.com/Malmesbury_Garden_Club)

Facebook: [@malmesburyanddistrictgardenclub](https://www.facebook.com/malmesburyanddistrictgardenclub)

Graham can also usually be found at Malmesbury Garden Centre.



Letter to the Editor

I enjoy the Jackdaw. I think a clarification is required, however, regarding the article in the summer edition on river water quality to ensure readers aren't misled.

The implication of the article was that total dissolved solids (TDS) is dissolved poo. That's not what TDS is.

TDS comprise mainly inorganic salts (such as those of calcium, magnesium, potassium, sodium, carbonates, nitrates, bicarbonates, chlorides and sulphates). TDS can arise from both natural and human activities. Springs from rock formations with a dissolvable content (e.g. limestone and chalk) may have elevated TDS. The geology around Malmesbury is limestone.

TDS is influenced by a variety of factors, but particularly the geology and soil composition of an area; whether water is mainly from surface water or groundwater; and the water flow rate (fast-flowing rivers, or periods of fast flow may have elevated levels of TDS due to disturbance of rocks and soils). Together with natural sources, TDS can be influenced by human activities such as agricultural runoff, corroding pipes, alterations by water treatment facilities, and urban surface water runoff.

The Riverhub data (<https://riverhub.co.uk/>) indicates that, in the last 90 days since 21/07/25, TDS levels have been '*Low (less than 365 parts per million)*' in the Malmesbury area except for one level reported near Garsdon which was '*High (over 417ppm)*'. So, what does that mean? There is no standard for TDS in rivers. UK legislation aims to achieve "good ecological and chemical status" for rivers, and whilst the legislation doesn't use TDS as a primary indicator for chemical status assessment, TDS levels are indirectly relevant as they can indicate the presence of other pollutants. To provide some context, the World Health Organization recommends that the TDS level in drinking water (i.e., not river water) should be below 300 mg/L (or ppm) for "excellent palatability".

Hope this helps readers understand what TDS is, i.e. not dissolved number 2s!

Daren Luscombe

Thanks for the clarification, Daren. Editor



Hannah Stanton - Travel Counsellors

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Snippet

Professional Driver? Huh!



We're not doubting the driver's technical competence, just wondering how/ why they're there in the first place. Please don't say 'it's their Sat Nav'. (Photo: D. Harries)

Snippet

How did they get it through the gate?



In The Worthneys opposite the Coop. Would have cost them a pound to do this at Aldi.

Malmesbury Town Council



Vacancy for additional Caretaker

Malmesbury Town Council is looking for an additional member of the Town Hall Caretaking Team for a guaranteed minimum of 21 hours per month.

The role will be paid at SCP 5-7 (£13.26-£13.69 p/h)

The pattern of working will be variable and evening and weekend work will be necessary.

Please contact the Town Clerk with a copy of your CV or for an informal conversation to find out more.

Contact: Claire Mann, Town Clerk email: claire.mann@malmesbury.gov.uk
Or call 01666 822143

Deadline for submission of CV is midday 31st October 2025

Athelstan 1100 Pilgrim Way Walk & Cycle

The Malmesbury Jackdaw was delighted to attend the beginning and end of Mayor Cllr. Stephen James' epic walk from Malmesbury to Kingston upon Thames. We saw him off on 18th August and were there (somehow) to see him arrive at Kingston on 4th September. Please see our photos below.

Our heartfelt congratulations to Stephen and all who organised, participated in and supported the event. It was a fitting tribute to Athelstan and also raised a substantial amount for the mayor's nominated charities. Stephen has referred to the walk and accompanying ceremonies in his autumn newsletter (see centre pages).

From The Jackdaw's point of view, the send-off at Malmesbury seemed to go well, but for us (not the mayor) the final day was, shall we say, not without incident. To explain, whilst protecting those responsible, we'll tell our somewhat embellished story as if it had happened in the time of Athelstan (well, sort of). It unfolds thus:



Malmesbury, Thursday 4th September 6.15 a.m.: *Pouring with rain. The 16-seater cart to take Athelstan and his supporters to his coronation arrives. All pile in, grumbling about the weather. Among the number are two bods from The Malmesbury Jackdaw. Athelstan seems remarkably chipper and up for his big day. He's wearing a see-through plastic rain cape over his king kit.*

6.20 a.m.: *The cart departs Malmesbury and heads down the M4's medieval forerunner. Let's call it the C4. Its destination is the River Thames by Hampton Court Palace (which won't be built for almost another 600 years). From here Athelstan and his supporters will join the mayor and an assembled throng for a triumphant march along what will someday be known as the Thames Path into Kingston for the coronation ceremony.*

A while later: *The cart leaves the C4 and heads into the centre of a settlement called Reading. "Hmmm" say the supporters in the back "we must be picking someone up here for this not on our anticipated route". Concern grows as the cart heads north-east out of Reading into Oxfordshire. But then, glory be, there's the River Thames ... except it's flowing through Henley.*

At a time when tension and curiosity is mounting: *Cart driver scratches his head. Cart driver's mate scratches his head, too. "Somebody's given us the wrong postcode", they claim. "We've got the wrong address in the Satnav." From the back of the cart: "You're joking? What's a postcode and what's a Satnav, anyway?" Even the previously buoyant Athelstan is looking dejected as he sees his big moment slipping away because of things he's never heard of. We're not sure who 'somebody' is, but they're getting all the blame.*

10 minutes later: *After several phone calls to get the correct postcode (yes, we know they didn't have phones or postcodes. Just enter into the spirit of this, please) the cart heads south. Bums are getting numb from all the sitting.*

Another 10 minutes later: *News comes through that the mayor's party has started off without us to be in time for the Kingston extravaganza which could be without a key player.*

Consternation on the cart. "Did we get up at 5 a.m. and go out in the pouring rain only for our boy to miss out on the fun?"

Very late: *The cart arrives in Kingston upon Thames. All stiff, its occupants climb out. The Chief Cart Parking Officer says "You'll have to walk back along the Thames to meet the mayor and his party." Someone else: "Who's got the crown?" The crown is found underneath some sandwiches and a drink in a rucksack. The relief is palpable and Athelstan and his party march off to meet the mayor's entourage.*

A few minutes later: *The two groups meet only a furlong or two from Kingston Bridge and Athelstan swings into action greeting all and sundry like nothing's happened. What a trooper! We just try to look like we've done the whole walk. The sun comes out as we note the dignitaries in the mayor's party. Lady Roz of Savage and Lord Ed of Davey are among them.*

30 minutes later: *The combined parties arrive at All Saints Church to an enormous welcome. Most are unaware of Athelstan's travel problems as all the attention is rightly on Mayor Stephen James; only those who were on the cart and 'somebody' really know ... and we're not going to tell anyone (much).*

At least we got our 'I've Been on the Athelstan 1100 Pilgrim Way' badges. Editor



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Malmesbury and District Natural History Society

The Secret World of Bats

If you are out as the sun is going down you might be lucky enough to see a bat flutter across the darkening sky but do you know your Common pipistrelle from your Noctule or your Serotine from your Lesser horseshoe? Well, most people don't and that's not surprising. They are out when we are sleeping and often specialised equipment is needed to tell one bat from another.



On bat watch

Well, the Malmesbury and District Natural History Society (MDNHS) is keen to find out more about the bats in our area. We would like to know what kinds of bats are present here and where they are living. We have carried out a number of Bat Walks and invested in a variety of bat detection equipment to ensure everyone feels involved in the walk but we want to go one step further and engage in some surveys across the region to gather more detailed information.

So, we were fascinated when we were approached by a Luckington resident who had found an injured bat on her kitchen floor! She had taken the bat to a bat carer for treatment but, unfortunately, the animal died. However, she was told that this bat was a rare Lesser horseshoe bat and a juvenile one at that!

There were no records of Lesser horseshoe bats in the Luckington area and, what is more, this bat was a juvenile. This meant that it had bred somewhere close by, so was there an undiscovered Lesser horseshoe maternity roost in the area? It was worth an investigation.

But what building locally might hold a maternity roost? The bat was found very close to St Mary with St Ethelbert Church and the tower had entry points that would suit Lesser horseshoes so maybe that was a good place to start?

So, on the 16th of May MDNHS took a group to St Mary with St Ethelbert Church to carry out a Bat Emergence Survey. The Bat Conservation Trust provides guidance on how to carry out a number of different types of surveys including an Emergence Survey which makes planning and organisation easier. Plus, all results, can then be sent to the Bat Conservation Trust, thus adding to the general knowledge of bat presence in the area.

On this occasion, we divided ourselves into groups and positioned ourselves at 5 different points around the churchyard, each having a view of the tower. Every group had one or more bat detectors to use in their area. So, with camping chairs and flasks at the ready we waited for the sun to go down...



The church tower where the bats weren't!

We weren't disappointed, a lot of bats were detected on the night. We actually saw Daubenton's bats skimming the surface of Hancock's Well Spring so no proof was required for these but, for the rest, the data collected needed to be double checked over the following few days. After that we

were confident that these bats were detected on the night: Brown long-eared, Barbastelle, Serotine, Noctule, Daubenton's, Lesser horseshoe and Common pipistrelle! A great selection and a great night!

Funnily enough, at no point, did we observe any bats emerging from the church tower! Therefore, where the Lesser horseshoes were roosting remained a mystery!

Months passed by and then suddenly on the 24th of August, the lady who had originally found the wounded bat in her kitchen, found 20 more roosting in the barn in her garden. All fit and healthy! They returned the following night but didn't come back after that. Clearly there are a good number of Lesser horseshoe bats in and around Luckington, but the location of the maternity roost is still unknown.

MDNHS would like to get to the bottom of this enigma and find out more about other bats 'secretly' living in Malmesbury and the surrounding area. The plan is then, to carry out more surveys like the Emergency Survey in Luckington. We will be fundraising to buy a bat detector that is weatherproof and can record over an extended period of time. Then we will be looking for places to carry out surveys in. If you find a bat or know of some living near you, why not contact us like the Luckington resident did? We might end up carrying out a survey where you live.

Website: malmesburynaturalhistory.co.uk

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Dinky Donkeys

Here's Kira and Lily's latest adventure.

Greetings Malmesbury folk. As you may have realised, we have a passion for horses. So, for this article, we put on our wellies and went somewhere close to home – Dinky Donkeys Forest School, in Malmesbury. We had a wonderful day helping out, and asking the owner, Katie Freeman, lots of questions.

Kira: How did Dinky Donkey's start?

I used to work in London, in advertising. Nothing like this. We used to go to work every day, even when my kids were little. We had an au pair, and I'd get on the train from Reading to London every day. Then we moved to Denmark for my husband's job, and it was totally different. There are loads of outdoor things to do and we just spent so much time outdoors. When we came back to England I thought: 'I'd love to do something like that'. So, I did my forest school qualification, and that's how Dinky Donkey's came about.

Lily: What sort of sessions do you run?



I do all sorts of things. I do pre-school, so under fours, home school groups, which are primary school age and I do one on one sessions. I also do birthday parties. I've even got an adult birthday party tomorrow.

Kira: What activities do you do in the sessions?

We do lots of things. We work with tools, like making bow and arrows, whistles or mallets. We also make kindling, do fire lighting with fire steels and then cook on the fire. Last week we lit a fire then melted loads of candles, dug holes in the ground and poured the wax in. Once the wax sets, we dig them out - they're called Earth Candles. We do

lots of arts and crafts, like making dream catchers, wands and fairy wings. We also do lots of den building.

Lily: Who is your favourite animal?

Probably Cinnamon, the pig. Well, no, not including the horses though, or any of my animals in the house. My cat is really my favourite! The dogs are at the bottom.



Interviewing Katie



Kira: What is the funniest thing the donkeys have done?

They once broke into the chicken coop, literally inside it and ate all the chicken food from the feeders. They're always escaping – they were running around the garden yesterday. Another thing they do is if I put a lead rein on Pudding, then Pickles takes the lead rein in his mouth and walks around with it.

Lily: Do you ever ride the horses?

All the horses get ridden. One of them, Wizzy, the littlest one, he's 28 and only has one eye. He still gets ridden but he has a bit of an easier life now. But he's super speedy. We've got Lea, the palomino. We've had her four years so she's probably my favourite. Then we also have Bea, who is nice to ride and Bubba, who is a work in progress.

Kira: What about riding the donkeys?

So, like a horse, when they're about 4 years old, you can try and start to break them in. We have put saddles on them before and the kids have sat on them. The only way the donkeys would actually walk though is if you hold a bowl of food in front of them, otherwise it was really hard to get them to do anything!

Lily: Do you do any special events in the holidays?

I run stay and plays for pre-school and primary school age children. The sessions are 1 ½ hours and they can meet and feed the donkeys, chickens, tortoises and pigs. Then we set up crafting, they can run around in the woods, play with the water table and play with the mud kitchen.

Lily: What's your favourite part about owning and running Dinky Donkeys?



That I get to work at home doing something I love, being with the animals and working for myself. Meeting all the children and seeing how happy they are. Some children come in and say they're terrified of chickens and hide behind their parents. By the end they are feeding and even holding them.

Dinky Donkeys is based in Filands, Malmesbury. All details are on the Dinky Donkeys Facebook page: Dinky-Donkeys-Stay-and-Play.

Quiz (answers at the bottom of the page)

1. How many planets are there between Mars and Venus?
2. Which French landmark was due for demolition in 1909?
3. How many oxygen atoms are there in a carbon dioxide molecule?
4. During who's reign did the population of the UK almost double to 38 million?
5. Which human organ is slowly disappearing?
6. Which bird has the longest known migration?
7. What is a quarter of a billion.
8. What is the year before 99 BC.

Walk to D'Feet MND

Hello! We are a group of 7 children who go to Malmesbury Primary school. We are aged 6 to 10 and wanted to share our story with you. In July, our mums walked a huge 26 miles to raise money for charity. We were really inspired by this and thought if they could do something that tough, then we could do our own challenge too!

We teamed up with our friend Paisley (Year 4). Paisley's granddad sadly died from Motor Neurone Disease (MND) in February, so we wanted to walk together to raise money to help people with this illness.

On October 5th, with our families and friends, we walked 3.75 miles around the Badminton Estate as part of the Walk to D'Feet MND. That might not be as far as a marathon, but for us it was a really big challenge — and we gave it our all! Although it was tiring and the terrain was a bit tricky and bumpy at times, we had a brilliant day. It was lovely to walk as a group in the nice scenery, great weather and all while knowing it was for a great cause.

The money we raise will go to the MND Association - Gloucestershire Branch. They do brilliant work helping people with MND and their families, giving support, advice and funding research to hopefully find a cure one day. MND is a tough illness that makes it harder for people to move, speak and even breathe, and right now there's no cure. That's why we want to do something to help.

You can still sponsor us for our efforts; every penny will make a difference. Our fundraising page is: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/paisleyandpalswalktodfeetmndaglos>



Isobel, Zosia, Zach, Imogen,
Paisley, Chloe, Erin

Answers to Quiz: (1) 1, the Earth. (2) The Eiffel Tower its permit expired after 20 years, and the plan was to sell it for scrap; it was only saved because it had become an essential military radio tower. (3) Two. (4) Queen Victoria, during her reign, 1837-1901, the population increased from 20 to 38 million. (5) The appendix, originally it was essential for cellulose rich diets, which is no longer the case. (6) The Arctic Tern, which migrates from the Arctic to Antarctica, and back, each year. (7) 250 million. (8) 100 BC.



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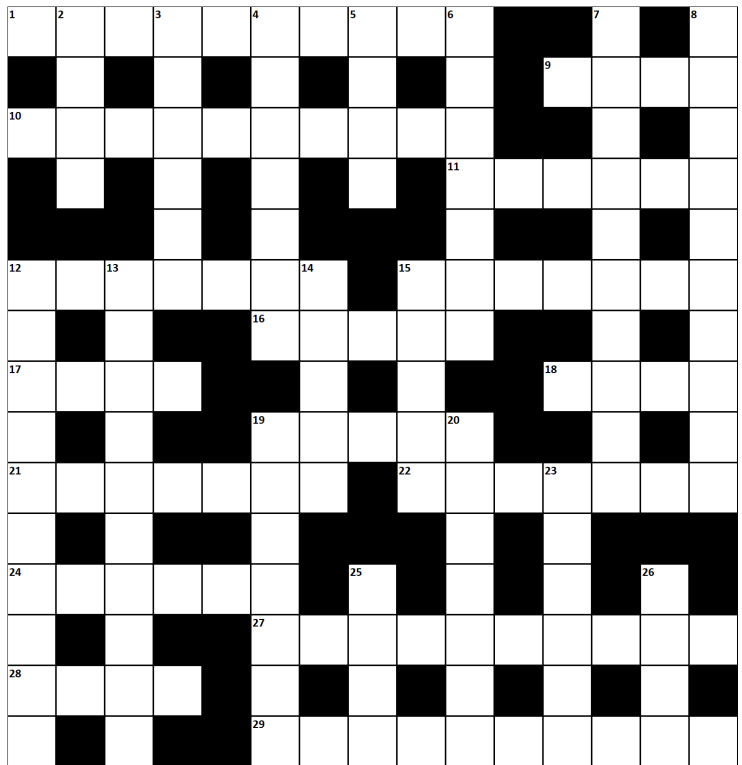
The Crossword

ACROSS

- 1...A group of owls creating a row in Malmesbury? (10)
 9...Act! Act! But it's gone (4)
 10...About purchase ... it's a withdrawal (10)
 11...Crush spirit (6)
 12...Happy with subject matter (7)
 15...Change for nice tree (7)
 16...Strongman sound like a miser (5)
 17...Back ruminant to find grass (4)
 18...Aeneas's lover is now a pop singer (4)
 19...Four small fish (5)
 21...Can nude become subtly complex? (7)
 22...Eight bits in a small meal, we hear (3,4)
 24...In Bath, rust is a driving force (6)
 27...Acts cool in becoming a sceptic (10)
 28...No friend, but a gem (4)
 29...They might get on well with 27 (10)

DOWN

- 2...He might drink beer before ten (4)
 3...Disrupt a trial and it's the rope! (6)
 4...Statement from a n-nobleman? (7)
 5...Way out? (4)
 6...Stress sounds like a military command! (7)
 7...Mythical pillow lifter (5,5)
 8...Annoying, but not for everyone (10)
 12...Soap street? (10)
 13...How tired or off-form snooker players may feel (10)
 14...Exhausted, but bound around king (5)
 15...Is there carbon monoxide around the atmosphere here? (5)
 19...Does Lawrence find rook trying? (7)
 20...Stays in a ranch, or so they say (7)
 23...Cereal? Close in Malmesbury (6)
 25...One swamp up in the desert? (4)
 26...Bully loses head and becomes employer



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