

the malmesbury Jackdaw



Malmesbury's Alternative Community Magazine
26th Edition Winter 2026



Delivered free to homes and businesses in Malmesbury

Welcome...

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

We hope you enjoyed Christmas and haven't succumbed to one of the many illnesses that have been circulating this winter. Everyone we spoke to in December seemed to have a cough.

After such a great summer, 2025 went out on a very damp note (affecting Christmas Late Night Shopping for the second consecutive year) so we wanted to start 2026 on an optimistic note. Well, we'll still try to do that, but it appears that some of our global (so-called) leaders intend to continue making life uncertain for everyone. It's strange how the planet has been here for billions of years and will (hopefully) be here for billions to come, yet they are here for a nanosecond in universal terms and believe they own it. Their disregard for the actual and potential human and environmental costs of their actions is staggering. Rev'd Oliver Ross offers some wise counsel in this edition about dealing with uncertainty.

Thank you to everyone who sent in articles and photos; we've had more than ever. Sorry if you missed out this time, but please keep them coming. We'd also like to take the opportunity to thank the local businesses that support us with advertising; we hope you have a great year.

Some of our deliverers got rather wet bringing you your autumn copy of the Jackdaw and we trust they've dried out by now. We remain eternally grateful to them as they do a

splendid job, but they need some help. If you'd like to join the Jackdaw's team of volunteer deliverers, please see our advert on page 5. We can offer nothing but the satisfaction of knowing that you're delivering the most popular free magazine called The Jackdaw in Malmesbury.

Best wishes.

Richard, Raphe and Andy

The Malmesbury Jackdaw Team

Cost of Living Support

Energy Accounts

Martin Lewis estimates that energy companies are holding on to about £3 billion of our money unnecessarily.

This only applies to you if you pay a fixed amount by direct debit each month and have a smart meter, or you submit regular readings from your dumb meter.

Energy usage rises in the winter months and falls in the summer months. To spread the cost evenly your energy company will estimate your usage for the year and divide this by 12 to give you a monthly charge. This means that at some points in the year you owe them money and at other times they owe you money. If they get the estimate wrong, then they will be taking too much, or too little, money from you. **A good rule of thumb is that your energy account should have a balance of about zero at the end of January.** If it is significantly in credit, you should contact your supplier to discuss a refund. If it is significantly in debit, you need to consider increasing your direct debit to avoid shocks later.

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

Since our last publication there have been no updates to existing planning requests, but two more have been submitted:

- Malmesbury CofE Primary School has submitted a request to build 9 new classrooms and support facilities. If approved, this would increase the number of student places available from 420 to 630 (PL/2025/07919).
- An application has been submitted to build 65 new homes at Lea (PL/2025/07909).

For an update on the activities in the small field next to Waitrose please see the article submitted by Campbell Ritchie.

Details of planning applications in Malmesbury can be found on our and Wiltshire Council's websites.

Lime Down Solar Park

The deadline for registering an interest in the project has now passed. The project is currently going through the pre-examination stage, which can take up to 6 months. After that, the Planning Inspectorate has 3 months to submit a recommendation to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State then has 3 months to accept or reject the recommendation. A final decision will therefore not be made until late 2026 or early 2027.

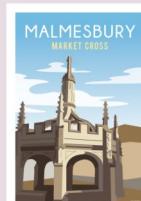
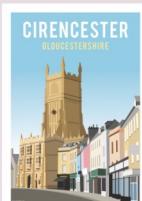
Snippet

New Roundabout Appears at Busy Malmesbury Intersection

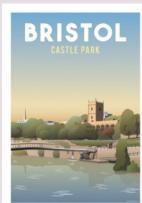


It's all go down in Baskerville.

Photo: Campbell Ritchie



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Crime Update

The latest crime figures relate to October.

For Malmesbury Town, reported crimes numbers were Violence and Sexual Offences, 12; Shoplifting, 5; Public Order, 3; Anti-social behaviour, 2; Other Theft, 2; Criminal Damage and Arson, 1; Drugs, 1. The total number of offences for the quarter to October is the highest since the first quarter of 2023.

For the rural area surrounding Malmesbury, the figures were Violence and Sexual Offences, 8; Anti-social behaviour, 6; Other Theft, 3; Criminal Damage and Arson, 3; Public Order, 2; Vehicle Crime, 1; Drugs, 1; Burglary, 1.

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.

Rural Heritage Crime

Proactively tackle farm thefts, poaching, hare coursing, and heritage crime by increasing high-visibility patrols, engaging with rural communities, and working closely with partner agencies to disrupt and deter criminal activity. Focus on intelligence-led operations and community awareness to protect livelihoods and preserve our local heritage.

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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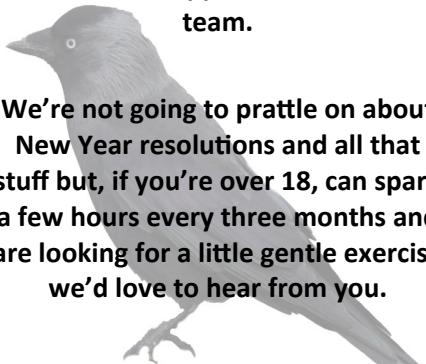
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Your Jackdaw Needs You!

As the demand for The Jackdaw grows we need more volunteer deliverers to support our wonderful team.



We're not going to prattle on about New Year resolutions and all that stuff but, if you're over 18, can spare a few hours every three months and are looking for a little gentle exercise we'd love to hear from you.

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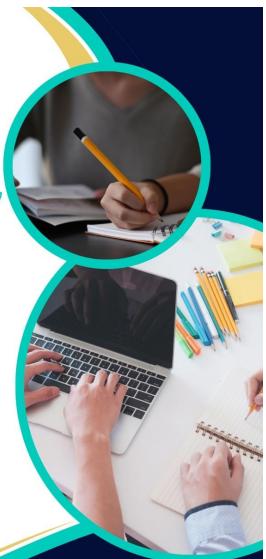
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Snippet

It's Bin and Gone!



Can anyone spot what's missing? The clue's in the title. Does it mean that drivers will now be able to park even closer to the Market Cross?
Photo: Dave Witt

A New Year of Connection and Community Care

By Roz Savage MP, South Cotswolds

January often arrives with a mix of emotions. For many it signals a fresh start, a moment to reset and look ahead. For others, the long nights and return to routine can feel lonely or heavy after the brightness of the festive season. This is exactly when the strength of our local community matters most.



I was delighted recently to become a Patron of The Churn Project in Cirencester, a charity that has been supporting people of all ages for many years. Whether someone is experiencing isolation, financial pressure, or a lack of confidence and wellbeing, The Churn provides practical help and, just as importantly, human connection. Last year, 1,762 people took part in its activities - an extraordinary testament to what community compassion can achieve. Walking into their building, you immediately feel the warmth and dignity that underpin their work.

The Long Table in Stroud and Cirencester is another wonderful example of that same spirit. I visited recently with my team, and it reinforced how powerful a shared meal can be. By offering dishes on a pay-as-you-can basis, The Long Table ensures that everyone - regardless of circumstances - can enjoy good food and conversation.

New ideas continue to emerge. The Barn Theatre is seeking initial funding for a Barn Bus pilot, which would use school-run vehicles during the day to help older residents travel safely to the theatre and enjoy social time in town. It's a simple but creative way to tackle isolation and expand access to the arts across Tetbury, Fairford, Lechlade and nearby villages.

All these initiatives remind us that wellbeing relies not only on services but on belonging and shared experience. As Parliament progresses the Mental Health Bill, I'll keep pressing for investment in community-led support that prevents crisis before it begins.

January may be quiet, but it holds enormous potential when we look out for one another.

Warm wishes,

Roz

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Snippet

Parking in Horsefair



We're surprised we don't get more photos sent in about 'interesting' parking in Horsefair or is it all perfectly co-ordinated following a system only known to residents? Photo: Dave Witt

Trio Paradis at Malmesbury Abbey

Bath-based classical ensemble Trio Paradis performs over 120 daytime concerts each year designed especially for anyone who finds it hard to get to evening events. They began playing daytime concerts at Midsomer Norton Town Hall in 2013 and over the past 12 years have gradually expanded the number and reach of their concerts, responding to people's demands for 'something to go to in the daytime'. Café Concerts are designed for anyone who finds it difficult to get to evening events, for reasons such as being a full-time carer, or lack of transport or finances.



In May 2025 the Trio - Jacquelyn Bevan (piano), Ruth O'Shea (violin) & Linda Stocks (cello) – became a charity, Café Concerts CIO.

Trio Paradis Café Concerts take place in Malmesbury Abbey on the first Tuesday of each month at 2pm (February to December inclusive). The Abbey Cafe is open beforehand and entrance - or rather, exit! - is by donation, with a retiring collection, with the aim of keeping live music accessible and affordable for all.

Spring 2026 dates are: 3rd February, 3rd March, 7th April, 5th May, 2nd June.

For information about programmes visit <http://www.trioparadis.com> or Facebook @trioparadisbath.

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💡 The best way to message us is via PATCHs



✓ We have improved room security & reduced interruptions during appointments



✓ PATCHs now opens earlier & stays open later!

👉 Access PATCHs here:

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✓ We now assess and share all unexpected admissions with our clinical team even if no clinical actions have been requested by the hospital



Malmesbury Voices - 10 Years of Collecting Spoken Memories

Part Four – Commerce by Bill Reed



The Voices collection is full of insights and anecdotes told by people who worked in Malmesbury shops and businesses. Before progressing up the High Street, let's start beside Town Bridge, in Avon Mills (the old Silk Mills), where Maureen Lovett was employed at the Connoisseur Restaurant:

It was very high-class. It was owned by Colonel and Mrs. Dryden, and she had been an actress on the London stage. I was a silver service waitress. For lunch we wore red and white check gingham dresses with a pretty little pinny thing, and at night we had to wear black and white. We used to get all the well-known people of the day. I remember waiting on Glynis Johns, she made a film called "The Mermaid". And David Niven! Bless his heart. What an absolute gentleman. He was the most charming man I think I've ever met.

Although the clientèle was somewhat different, good manners were also observed at the Avon Café in Lower High Street. It was run by Marie Aubrey Wood's parents:

Lots of bikers used to come in, which were very courteous to my Mum, very respectful, enjoyed my company, I was only seven-eight-nine-ish. They used to pick me up and let me put their money in and pick a record on the juke box. They used to say, "What record do you want? I'd say, "Puppet on a String, Puppet on a String!"

That building is now the Greyhound Brasserie.

From 1930 to 1946 Bette Richards worked at Adye's Grocers at no. 52 (now Lockstone's estate agent's):

The butter, lard and margarine was all slabs, you had to cut it up into pounds, half pounds, whatever people wanted. And cheese. It was all loose. Not covered up, only at night. I used to write all the invoices. And customers used to come in, pay for one bill, and then have another one. That was how they managed in those days.

Marlene Aylward was a waitress in Philps' Café at nos. 30-32:

You've got the butcher's on the corner (now the Rendezvous Chinese takeaway), and then next door came a cake shop, and above that used to be a dentist. Philps' Café was next. We sold antiques as well. All these coaches used to come in, a lot of Americans actually, and they would fill up the café straight away, and you really did have to work hard. You used to have to fill up the teapots and do the trays, you were really going, but I did enjoy it. If we really worked hard, Mrs. Boggart would say to us, "You can either have a cup of Ovaltine or a cup of Horlicks!" That was really funny. It was a treat I suppose!

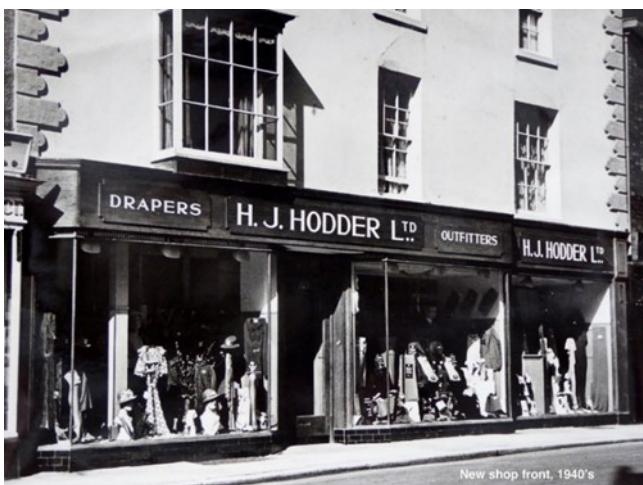
The building Marlene worked in was demolished to make way for Barclays Bank; those premises now house the Mercy in Action charity shop.

Madeleine and Ivor Adye ran the garage at no. 16 (now Persephone Violet florists). Petrol was delivered from pumps via brackets which swung out over the pavement. Madeleine says:

We sold a lot of petrol. More than any other garage in the town. But we were open from seven in the morning until ten o'clock at night. And then Ivor got quite ill and we decided to close at eight. Then if Ivor was ill, I had to do it, and then as the children got older they in turn all had to put petrol.

Maureen Starr worked at Hodder's (17 High Street, now three separate shops):

I started there at fifteen, in 1957, as cashier and bookkeeper. And I worked 20-odd years, for three generations of the Hodder family. It was a large department store, it sold ladieswear upstairs, and those days ladies wore hats so there was a lovely selection of ladies' millinery. Also, babywear, christening robes, ladies' clothes and school uniforms.



Hodder's in 1940s. Photo courtesy of Sue Spencer (Hodder)

Downstairs in the front was haberdashery: wool, fabrics, needlecraft, bedlinen, towels, hosiery, gloves. Boxes of handkerchiefs, headscarves. Aprons, the old-fashioned ladies' crossover overalls.

We can't leave the High Street without mentioning the town's first supermarket: Fine Fare at no. 8, which is now the Co-op. Jim Toogood remembers:

Fine Fare came about 1962 and replaced a rather attractive old butcher's building which had had a slaughterhouse at the

back, giving onto the Cross Hayes. It attracted the attention of John Betjeman, who said he thought it was quite the most hideous thing he'd seen perpetrated in a high street in southern England. So, the Civic Trust, which we formed in 1963, were encouraged to get him to be the first President.

But the High Street was not the only commercial area. If you lived in the old village of Westport up until the 1950's or even 60's, you hardly had to go into the town centre unless you needed a bank or the Rural District Council offices. In the Triangle, the Horsefair or Burnham Road you could satisfy most everyday needs: pubs, grocer, fishmonger, butcher, post office, blacksmith, off-licence, dairy and more.

Elizabeth Outlaw only had to go round the corner to buy sweets:

The best sweet shop in town was Mr. & Mrs. Lee in the Triangle, where the Chinese takeaway is now. And it was magical, because there were shelves of sweets in glass jars,



Hodder's building today. Photo: Bill Reed

from floor to ceiling. And they only had oil lamps then, and as the lamp flickered you'd get these patterns of colour. I thought it was wonderful!

Hilda Martha Boulton (1916-2015) wrote a memoir about her father's bakery in the Horsefair. This has recently been reprinted and a few copies are available from the Museum shop. Her

daughter Christine Jones has recently recorded an account in the Voices collection, telling us amongst other things:

'Boulton's Lardy Cakes' sold at a penny each. A speciality bread was baked in a cabbage leaf. The customer had to supply the leaf, and as well as markings on the bread when it was cooked, it was delicious, I'm told.

Christopher Matthews explains the origin of his family's undertaking business:

My great-grandfather was apprenticed at Burton Hill House, and having served his time there, decided to set up his own business. He had the workshops at Burnham Road, plus a stable at the back, and it was all in an orchard. Burnham Road at that time was just a grass track. He developed the building side but of course they had carpenters to prepare coffins, and labour to carry the coffins, and the funeral side started. First year I gather they only did about six funerals. We're talking right back in 1880. So things developed steadily. The building side was run down and the funeral side increased until it took over completely.

Those are a few glimpses into the many unusual and fascinating stories in the Voices collection. It is free to access in Athelstan Museum, Tuesday to Saturday 10:30 to 16:30 and Sunday 11:30 to 15:30.

Next time I will pick out some insiders' views of industries which developed in Malmesbury from WW2 onwards.

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>

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Review of the Malmesbury Pop & Jazz event, Saturday 15th November 2025

By Erika Tandy

The Wesleyan Room in the Town Hall was set up beautifully in a cabaret style; the ambience and lighting were a perfect precursor to the concert.

The audience was then warmly welcomed by members of the band, including the dynamic musical director, John Holland. To get the audience into the mood, one of the first tunes they played (to perfection) was The Blues March (Benny Golson), which led on to such classics as Take Five by Dave Brubeck. A personal favourite was 'It Don't Mean a Thing' by Duke Ellington and those by Glen Miller.

The audience's interest was kept alight throughout by having a mix of guest conductors, who provided snippets about themselves and interesting anecdotes regarding the songs they would be leading.

The medley of the classic tunes plus the incorporation of modern compositions, such as those by Madonna and Amy Winehouse, equalled an enjoyable evening.

The only thing which could be a suggestion for the future, is to have an event like this in a bigger venue to provide space for those who like to dance, or to have guest singers feature alongside the band.

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Trips Around Malmesbury

We've heard of several people tripping on Malmesbury's pavements in the last few months with probably the most publicised happening outside the Co-op in the High Street last October. In response to that incident, a Wiltshire Councillor stated that, despite the damage to the pavement not meeting the criteria for repair as detailed in the council's Highways Safety Inspection Manual, they would effect repairs as a proactive measure. Somebody had just tripped and injured themselves on the damaged pavement so how can the repairs be called proactive?

If you're interested, try reading the Highways Safety Inspection Manual. It can be found at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-roads-care-cycle-lanes. It contains all the definitions (some more precise than others) and measurements needed to understand how our highways and footways are allegedly maintained.

We went out to photograph likely tripping points on our pavements, but there were so

many we could have filled a whole edition with them. We were also reminded how poor some of the repairs are; removing a damaged stone slab and filling the void with tarmac which has sunk. It gives the town centre a slightly 'tatty' feel and is surely something that those who seek the best for Malmesbury should be challenging more strongly.

In the meantime, please take care on the pavements. If you do trip on a defect, remember that, if it falls even 1mm below Wiltshire Council's criteria for repair, it's your own fault!

Photos: Dave Witt

Footpath defects can be reported to Wiltshire Council via the MyWilts app.



Westonbirt Arboretum

Our young reporters Kira and Lily have been out and about again.

Hello and Happy New Year Malmesbury! We hope you had a good Christmas and are managing to stick to your New Year's resolutions. This time we are writing about Westonbirt Arboretum. We have always loved going there for walks so we went to meet Ellen Whitby (Learning Officer) at Westonbirt, The National Arboretum, to find out all about it.

Lily: How old is the arboretum?

The arboretum was first set up in 1829 by someone called Robert Holford. He was really passionate about plants and got people to travel all over the world to bring back different seeds to be planted here. It was handed over to the Forestry Commission in 1956. I work for Forestry England which is part of the Forestry Commission.

Kira: When did the arboretum start to let the public inside?

The arboretum opened to the general public in 1960. Before that, smaller private groups were invited by the Holford family, who owned the estate.

Lily: What is your favourite tree in the arboretum?

That's a hard question because we have over 2,500 different species of tree. There are a lot of different trees I like, but I really like Ginkgo trees. They are completely different to every other kind of tree and are one of the oldest living tree species in the world; a sole survivor of an ancient group of trees that dates back to before the dinosaurs! They are a living fossil, and their leaves are very uniquely shaped. They look really beautiful in the autumn, when their leaves turn bright yellow.

Kira: How old is the oldest tree?

We have a small-leaved lime tree, which is over the on the Silk Wood side of the arboretum, and it's 2,000 years old. This is because when it was planted, they used a technique called coppicing. This was how they made sure they had a constant supply of wood - rather than taking the whole tree out, you cut it down but leave the stump out of which shoots will grow that can be harvested and will continually grow.

Lily: How many visitors do you get each year?

We now get over half a million visitors a year, I think we passed that number this year for the first time. Our busiest time of year is the autumn, when we get around a quarter of a million people.

Kira: Where is your favourite place here and why?

One place for me that I really like is called Savill Glade. It's in the old arboretum and is an area where I teach my school groups. I really like it because you have a path with trees on either side and then you come out into a middle bit where it opens up and you're



Kira, Ellen, Lily

surrounded by lots and lots of different trees. When I prepare my school visits in the morning, I have to plan the route that I'm going to take and I often go there, when it's really nice and quiet and there aren't lots of visitors around. I can hear all the birds and I often see deer running around. It's just a really peaceful, relaxing place to be.



In Savill Glade

Lily: What wild animals do you get in the Arboretum?

We get loads - we have lots of deer and badgers and 9 of the UK's 18 species of bat. We have a really high number of species of bumblebees, and there is a team of volunteers that specifically surveys them. We've got lots of birds, including birds of prey and owls. Also, although they're not wildlife, Westonbirt is one of the best places in the southwest for fungi. We have over 1,400 different species, so it's one of the best sites in the area which is really important for the trees.

Kira: How do you tackle all the trees dying from diseases?

This is a tough question. We try to stop the disease spreading in the first place. There are various other things that we can do. When we get younger trees, saplings, brought from another site, we have a quarantine house, a specially designed kind of greenhouse, and those plants will go in there, and will stay inside for three months until we know they don't have anything, then we can put them out into the arboretum. Also, we have a tree team here and part of their job is to go around and assess the health of the trees. If they spot a tree with disease they'll keep monitoring it and see how it gets on, but sometimes it might become rotten and there is a risk of branches falling to the ground. Then they'll chop those limbs off, but if the tree is too rotten and has too much disease, they might have to cut the whole tree down. If they do that quickly enough it stops the disease spreading to the other trees.

We have a community project here called our Silkwood Community Planting Project. This is in an area where there was a large number of ash trees, and a big proportion got infected with something called ash dieback a while ago; it makes the trees really dangerous to be around because their limbs just fall off. So, we had to take out all of the trees and then we'll plant new ones there, but a variety of species which will increase the resilience of the site meaning the trees will be better at dealing with disease.

Lily: What sorts of events do you run in the arboretum?

We have lots of different events going on throughout the year. We've got a beautiful Christmas lights trail that we have every year going around the Old Arboretum and featuring lots of our different trees. We have our Forest Live concerts in the summer. They usually happen over a week, where we have lots of different music artists coming. Then, within my learning team, we run events for families which are a little bit smaller - they'll focus on themes such as wildlife or climate change. We'll also do arts and craft activities.



On the treetop walk

Kira: Do famous people come here?

Well, it's kind of a cheating answer, but obviously when we get people coming and doing the concerts, they're famous. So, we've had bands like McFly here. They arrived on site on motorbikes, down one of our tree avenues to the stage, which was very cool. We've also had the King come to plant some trees which was exciting.

Lily: How long does it take to set up the Christmas event?

I don't work within that team, so I don't know the exact answer, but the setup of where the lights go and getting the mat out - which is where the food vendors and the rides go - usually start setting up 3 to 4 weeks before. There's a lot of different things that need to happen, so it does take quite a while.

Kira: How big is the arboretum?

It's around 600 acres, which is about 350 football pitches. Visitors can't explore the whole site in a day. People often come back many times to try and see as much as they can. We get people who come every day, because we get a lot of local dog walkers. On one part of the site you're not allowed to have dogs, but on the other half, you can. We also get people coming from all over the world - places like America and Japan - particularly in autumn, because they love the autumn colours.

Lily: Do a lot of people come in autumn?

We have up to 10,000 people a day visiting, which is really, really busy, which is great, but it can have negative impacts on the trees with lots of people trampling around the bottom of them, so we have to make sure that we look after the trees as well. We want to have as many people here looking at the trees as possible, so it's a balance.

For information on visiting Westonbirt see: <https://www.forestryengland.uk/westonbirt-the-national-arboretum>

To booking a learning visit: <https://www.forestryengland.uk/article/book-learning-visit-westonbirt-arboretum>

Mercy in Action Needs Your Help

Mercy in Action charity shop has been based in the old Barclays bank building in Malmesbury High Street since February 2023 and is run by staff and volunteers.

The charity was founded in 1995 by Allison Todd to help the poor and its work includes:

Petra – a housing project for young mothers and mother-to-be

Action Pantry – providing food, clothing and household items to families in need

Clothesline – providing clothing and shoes for children 5-16 from low-income families

Schooling programme – transforming the lives of children in the Philippines

They are looking for new volunteers to join their friendly, supportive team in Malmesbury. Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting the charity's mission by helping to run the shop. Full ongoing training is provided as well as a chance to make new friends, gain new skills and enjoy being a part of a dedicated team.

If you can spare a regular morning or afternoon and are interested in this opportunity, please pop into the shop to talk to them. Applications via <https://www.mercyinaction.org.uk/volapply>.



The team from Mercy in Action Malmesbury enjoying their Christmas lunch at the Birdcage

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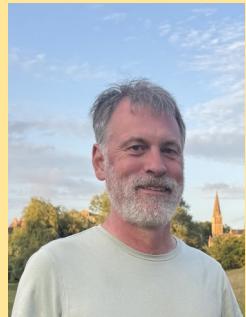
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Understanding Your iPhone Storage

In the old days, and I mean the really old days back in 2016 and earlier, I often received calls from clients who were running out of space on their iPhones (which then had as little 16 GB of storage). Today, with new iPhones offering a minimum of 128 GB, that is much less likely to happen.

Still, storage is still something to be aware of—both to use your phone efficiently and to avoid scams. To check what is taking up the most data on your iPhone, first go to Settings > General > iPhone Storage. Very often the culprit is podcasts, or even audio books. These are both easy enough to delete, as they can be downloaded again if needed.



Next, remove duplicate photos and movies. Just tap on open Photos, tap on Collections and scroll down to Utilities. The Duplicates option will appear if you have any. Tap on that to select and merge them. Apple has implemented this feature very well, and I've never seen it cause any problems.

If you still need to create space on your phone, make sure you have Optimise iPhone Storage turned on in your iCloud settings. Go to Settings. Tap on your name at the top, then tap on iCloud, then Photos. Once there, select Optimise iPhone Storage. This allows you to save full resolution photos in iCloud, whilst keeping a smaller, lower resolution version easily accessible on your phone. Any time the full resolution image is needed—for example, if you are sending a copy to someone or printing it—the phone will automatically download the higher resolution image from your iCloud storage.

People often believe that the way to save space is to delete photos, but I am reluctant to suggest this. It is rarely a good solution, as it requires deleting a large quantity of images to make any difference. I also hate to see people getting rid of memories, as once you delete a picture it's pretty much gone for good.

A better solution, if you are still running out of iCloud storage, is to buy more. Apple provides 5 GB for free, which is admittedly a tiny amount. The first paid tier, 50 GB, is sufficient for most people and costs £.99/month. If that's not enough, the next tier is 200GB at £2.99 a month. If you can, I recommend spending the £36 a year for additional storage rather than spending hours and hours deleting old photos. You almost certainly have better things to do with your time!

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 hugocanhelp.com.

Mayor of Malmesbury's Newsletter January 2026

Nominations for Malmesbury Town Council Civic Awards 2026 open at the beginning of February. The awards are presented at the annual Town Meeting in April, and give formal recognition to people that have made an outstanding contribution to the community. Anyone can nominate individuals or a group for an award, and I strongly encourage everyone to nominate someone they feel deserves to be recognised. The value of the Civic Awards depends upon people taking the time to write nominations, and it's much better if the council considers the ideas of the whole community. There are awards for:

Citizen of the Year (for individuals aged 26 or over)

Young Citizen of the Year (for individuals aged between 16 and 25)

Junior Citizen of the Year (for individuals aged under 16)

Malmesbury Young Sports Person of the Year (for individuals up to 25)

Organisation or Group of the Year

Nominations are considered by Malmesbury Town Councillors, who are looking for those that have made the most significant and sustained contribution to our local community in the past year. The area in which the contribution must have been made is Malmesbury, Milbourne, Cowbridge, Burton Hill, Common Road, Foxley Road and Filands.

There are two other awards that are a little different. The 10 Year Service Volunteer Contribution Certificate is self-explanatory. It can be awarded to anyone that has volunteered with any organisation or group for 10 years, and there is no limit on the number of certificates that can be awarded. Nominations are normally made by the organisation concerned. The Mayor's Lifetime Achievement Award is decided by the Mayor rather than the Council, and I will be pleased to consider any candidates drawn to my attention.

Nomination forms can be downloaded from the Malmesbury Town Council website. Copies also available from the Tourist Information Centre or can be emailed.

Two things that kept me busy in October were Wessex Week and visiting Bad Hersfeld in Germany, one of our twin towns. Wessex Week is now a firmly established fixture in the calendar, and once again provided a programme of fascinating talks about aspects of our region's history, through the perspectives of ancient coins, Roman settlements, medieval stone masonry and Alfred the Great. Every event was sold out and I congratulate the organisers in attracting excellent speakers.

The link between Bad Hersfeld and Malmesbury dates back to Saint Lullus, an 8th century monk. He trained at Malmesbury before making a pilgrimage to Rome and then going to Germany to establish Christianity there. He was the first Archbishop of Mainz and the first Abbot of the



Before the race in Bad Hersfeld

abbey in Bad Hersfeld. Saint Lullus is commemorated in an annual festival, the biggest event in the town with over 100,000 visitors. The Bad Hersfeld Oldtimer Big Band's concert in Malmesbury Abbey provided an excellent overture to visiting the town a week later. This band was formed by a retired music teacher from the high school with former pupils that now live all over Germany, and only come together a few times every year, so it was a clear sign of



Your mayor going well in the Bad Hersfeld race

their high regard for Malmesbury and Saint Lullus that they made the effort to visit. A week after the concert a small group from Malmesbury visited Bad Hersfeld at the invitation of the Burgomeisterin, to take part in the festival of Lullus. Bad Hersfeld is around six times the size of Malmesbury and their festival felt around six times the size of our Carnival, with several ceremonies including church services, a torchlit procession to the ruined abbey, and a procession of floats. There was a huge fire burning for the duration in a specially constructed pit in the main square, and also a large funfair set up there too. The festival started with a

10km race, and since the Deputy Mayor and I are both members of Malmesbury Jackdaws Running Club we couldn't resist taking part. It was quite an experience being cheered on by crowds along the route.

Recently I was invited to attend a meeting of the Town Team, a group of volunteers dedicated to keeping the centre of Malmesbury a lively and successful environment for businesses and visitors. The news that all the shops in the upper High Street are occupied was covered by national media, and I'm pleased that Malmesbury seems to be succeeding while many similar-sized towns in the region are struggling. The Town Team does a lot to promote the town and make it a great place to visit, but as I pointed out in the last Jackdaw it's important that residents make the most of our local shops and hospitality too.

The annual commemoration of the fallen from two world wars and other conflicts on Remembrance Sunday is one of the most significant events in the calendar. I was proud to lead the Council in procession with the Warden and Freemen and a large contingent from 9 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps from the Town Hall to the Abbey for the Remembrance Service. Malmesbury is unusual in that there are in fact three acts of remembrance, with a separate commemoration at the memorial gates near St Aldhelm's Mead, and another outside the Abbey porch at 11am on the 11th of November – the moment the First World War ended on the Western Front. The memorial gates specifically commemorate the dead of the Second World War, and this service has been attended by the families of Malmesbury men lost in that war, a practice that still continues today.



St Aldhelm's Mead Remembrance Service

You may have seen reports in the media about the future of the Riverside community centre, and I can confirm that Malmesbury Town Council is working with Wiltshire Council to secure the future of this important facility. It's not going to be a quick process and will require patience of all concerned, but this is inevitable when we are considering a significant investment and a long-term project. The Council must be confident that it is investing wisely, and can only make a decision when a convincing case has been made, based on sound evidence. Fortunately, both the Riverside centre and the indoor skate park can continue to operate while the work goes on.

Although perhaps in the shadow of King Athelstan in recent years, it is likely that the most famous Malmesbury citizen of all time is Thomas Hobbes, a philosopher who was born in 1588 and brought up in Malmesbury. His work is so significant that every student of philosophy around the world is taught about him, and there is a section in the Athelstan Museum in the Town Hall about him. I enjoyed a fascinating evening at the Hobbes Supper, an annual event of the Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury Society. The speaker was Malmesbury resident Dr. John McCormack, on 'Thomas Hobbes - The Executive in the Boardroom'. The society is organising an international academic conference over 27-28 March which is expected to bring scholars from many countries to Malmesbury.

I enjoyed the task of judging the Christmas window decorations at the start of December, along with last year's winner, Helen from the Fabric Shack. This covers all the shops, including Lumley's on Gloucester Road and the Triangle, as well as the town centre. It's great to see the amount of effort that goes into producing such a variety of beautiful and fun displays. I congratulate this year's winner The Summer Café, along with the runners up Cherry Tree and The Malmesbury Optician.



The Mayor with Father Christmas, the Mace Bearer, the Town Crier and Mayoral Cadet

Late Night Shopping was curtailed by the weather for the second year running. The organisers were frustrated that, unfortunately, there is no way to make the High Street safe when such strong wind gusts are forecast, but some hasty reorganisation allowed the event to go ahead in the Town Hall, with some of the food stalls able to open in the Market Cross. Both the visitors that ventured out in spite of the weather and stallholders enjoyed a great evening, and I hear Father Christmas saw many more children than last year, after he had finished visiting all the stalls himself. Fingers crossed that next December's weather will allow the full event to take place on the High Street again. December must be one of the busiest months in the Mayor's calendar. I've been to lots of events and been delighted to take part in many of them.

Malmesbury Stands with Ukraine organised a Christmas carol service in the Abbey, once again demonstrating our support for the community of Ukrainian refugees and diaspora in Malmesbury. That many of the carols and readings were performed in Ukrainian added greatly to the atmosphere, and I was grateful for the opportunity to speak with a member of Ukraine's

armed forces about his experiences there.

For many years Malmesbury Concert Band has played a concert of carols in the Market Cross on the second Saturday in December, with a collection taken for the mayor's charities. Fortunately, this was one of the first dry days in December, and many people were able to enjoy the concert. Thanks to the Band's excellent playing a collection of £280 was raised, and of course I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those that contributed.

HEALS' annual Christmas lunch provided a festive meal for over 80 members of the community, supported by volunteers that prepared and served the food. Malmesbury Good Afternoon Choir sang a celebration Christmas concert in the Town Hall, together with St Joseph's Catholic Primary School and the audience, while the Malmesbury Choir concert in the Abbey involved much audience participation and was sold out. All of these events and the organisations putting them on rely on the selfless effort of volunteers, and I suspect all of them would be credible candidates for Civic Awards.

Perhaps the most unusual invitation was to a Druid winter solstice ceremony to bless the river. I've been to several solstices at Stonehenge when I lived a short walk from the stones, but this was the first time I've been invited to take part in the ceremony. Coincidentally it was also the first time I've seen an otter near Malmesbury.



The final invitation before Christmas was the service of nine lessons and carols in the Abbey. It was a moving reminder of the real Christmas story and an honour to be invited to read the first lesson. Many people only visit church at Christmas, and we are fortunate to have such an active institution at the centre of our town. On Christmas Day I visited Athelstan House and Stainsbridge House, to wish the residents a happy Christmas and to thank the staff for their work throughout the year, and particularly on Christmas Day.

I am pleased that I am able to end this newsletter with the good news that Malmesbury Town Council, together with St. Paul Malmesbury Without Parish Council, Malmesbury League of Friends, Malmesbury River Valleys Trust, and Malmesbury Civic Trust has agreed the purchase of the land around Daniel's Well, securing this land for the benefit of local people. Plans will be developed to protect the wildlife in this area and make it an attractive and accessible to residents and visitors all year round. This exciting project has only just begun and of course there is a great deal to do, including the legal process, but it's a significant long-term improvement.

Cllr. Stephen James
Mayor of Malmesbury



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Snippet

Is This What 'Flexible Logistics Solutions' Means?



Apparently, this monstrous thing lapped the town centre not once, but twice! We wonder if that 1980 Odyssey song, "If You're Looking for a Way Out" was playing on the driver's radio. Perhaps the name on the cab should read moron rather than Moran?

Flooding in Malmesbury

In November, Malmesbury flooded ... yet again. Many people may say "So, what? We're surrounded by a river which floods in winter. I'm not affected so why make a fuss?" But some residents, clubs and businesses are affected; repeatedly and increasingly. It's hard to imagine how those poor folk who had only just returned to their homes (or, in some cases, not yet returned) after being flooded out last winter must have felt when it happened all over again.



Malmesbury has always flooded, but the floods are becoming more regular and, in many cases, more intense partly due to climate change and partly due to other factors such as inadequate river maintenance. A particular feature of recent flooding has been the rapidity of the rise in water levels.

So, what's being done?

The floods of 2012 and 2013 precipitated the formation of the Malmesbury Flood Working Group (FWG) and the Environment Agency (EA) commissioned a flood modelling survey. After a lengthy period (it was by now 2017), the conclusion from the survey results was that the cost of the required work couldn't be justified in view of the small number of properties

at risk. Some short-term work was carried out in the interim by the FWG, Town Council and Wiltshire Council (WC) and it was decided to develop a community-led Flood Alleviation Scheme relying on volunteers supported by the EA and WC. Progress was hindered by the 'Covid years', but the scheme was granted £50,000 by Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee to carry out additional modelling with potential for significantly more funding upon approval of the outline business case for the



necessary development work. It's hoped that the development work will be signed off in early 2026. Proposed measures currently include:

- Demountable* defences in the Memorial Gardens and raised walls along the leat to stop water getting into St John's Street and Lower High Street properties
- Channel maintenance from the Town Bridge to the bypass bridge to increase flow and restrict flood levels further along St John's Street
- Property resilience measures for all at-risk properties



The work needs to produce defences capable of withstanding a repeat of the 2012 and 2013 floods. Progress may seem very slow, but plans for Malmesbury need to be developed with the whole river in mind. Work carried out here can't merely push the flooding problem on to other communities along the river.

Additionally, a River Management Working Group is now being established. It comprises members of the Town Council and a cross section of the community including those who've been affected by flooding and

those with a particular interest, e.g. ecology. The specific purpose of the group is currently being defined, but is broadly to create a river policy for Malmesbury, liaise with the various bodies and landowners that have responsibility for the river and encourage public understanding of and participation in managing the river.

Of course, not all floods in Malmesbury are caused by the river as those who frequent Malmesbury's own lake district in the vicinity of the fire station will confirm. Residents can report blocked drains and gulleys to Wiltshire Council on the MyWilts app. Leaks should be reported to Wessex Water via www.wessexwater.co.uk/report-a-problem.

We'll report further when we know more.

* *Demountable* means easily dismantled when not required.



Malmesbury and District Natural History Society

*Oft in the silence of the night,
When the lonely moon rides high,
When wintry winds are whistling,
And we hear the owl's shrill cry,
In the quiet, dusky chamber,
By the flickering firelight,
Rising up between two sleepers,
Comes a spirit all in white.*

Poem by Louisa May Alcott



If you take a walk on a night like the one in Alcott's poem you might spy a Little Owl perched on a post; see a Kestrel hovering, a Barn Owl swoop past or hear the 'keewik' and 'huhuhuhoo' of a Tawny Owl. These moments shared with such beautiful birds are so precious and something we should all value. The Malmesbury and District Natural History Society feels very strongly about helping these raptors to flourish and that is why we have just launched our new Raptor Project.



Little Owl box

Alcott was American but British people in Victorian England would have been able to relate to her poem. Unfortunately, today, the chance to hear an "owl's shrill cry" is becoming scarcer. Sadly, the same is true of the Kestrel. The majestic "Windhover" (the traditional name for the Kestrel) of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem is also harder to find.

The British population of Kestrels has fallen by 37% between 1995 and 2023. The Little Owl's numbers have taken a 65% drop over the past 25 years. Organochloride pesticides led to a dramatic fall in numbers for the Barn Owl in the 20th Century and even the Tawny Owl is on the Amber List for birds of conservation concern.

Habitat loss and lack of a plentiful food source is the main cause of this decline. These birds like to nest in holes in large trees and there is less woodland and fewer hedges than there used to be. But we can make artificial holes for them in the form of nesting boxes.

Placed in the right habitat, near

fields with field mice and shrews, we can make the effort of breeding slightly easier for them, increasing the likelihood of raising a successful brood each year.

At the launch of our new Raptor Project on the 27th of November 2025, we outlined the problem and called on the public to help to make boxes and find appropriate locations to put them in. The audience, and others that had heard of the project but couldn't be there on the night, were amazing including some incredible help from the Royal Wootton Bassett Shed. We now have built, or are in the process of building, 14 nest boxes for Little Owls, Tawny Owls, Barn Owls and Kestrels. We also have 10 people so far interested in hosting these boxes on their property. They have offered to pay for the boxes which we have gone to great lengths to keep to a minimum cost. The boxes are £45 for Little Owl and Kestrel boxes and £55 for Tawny and Barn Owl boxes.



Kestrel chick



Barn Owl chick

At the moment we are in the process of matching the habitats of these locations to the needs of the birds and hope to get them erected very soon; birds of prey start looking for nesting sites as early as February!

The plan is then to monitor the boxes over the long term. If the birds have young we will put rings on them with a unique numbering system so that we know over time if they have been successful. The kind people who have paid for the boxes on their property will be invited to come and see this taking place.

It's a very exciting project. Something the community is coming together to join in a variety of ways whether it's making a box, buying one to host on their land, helping to put the box up or ringing the birds

when they are about to fledge, we are all helping to make the lives of our local raptors more successful.

If you would like to keep up with the progress of this new Project, we have a page dedicated to it on our website: <https://malmesburynaturalhistory.co.uk/projects/>

Website: malmesburynaturalhistory.co.uk

Facebook: [Malmesbury and District Natural History Society](#)



Little Owl chick



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Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow

Gordon Williams has been back in the High Street.

You will, no doubt, have spotted that my favourite hairdressers, “9a Barbers” in the High Street is no longer with us. So, before they shut for good last month, I dropped in to see salon owners Jo Fowles and Claire Watson. I wanted to say how I and many others were going to miss the way they went along in such a professional way, making us look so well groomed. We always have a laugh and put the world to rights although, with my thinning mop, that doesn’t take long these days! To find out more (in my usual nosey way) I caught the pair together in a quiet moment to ask how they came to the decision to close the shop.

How long have you been working here in the High Street?

C. We started at Bob’s in 1988 (*do you remember Robert John’s salon by the mirror?*) so that makes it 37 years, I suppose.
J. But 14 years here.



Have you always worked in Malmesbury?

C. Yes but I had a break between 1994 and 95 to tour Australia. I came back to work in the “Crazy Wine Shop” (coincidentally in the same place as the salon) and then part time at Bob’s.
J. Yes! But, when Gary took over his dad’s business, I left after 18 months to work at “The Fringe” and “Clear Cut”.

You must have always got on well together!

C. Yes... we've never fallen out.

J. But not until now! We used to job share at Bob’s and when he finished, and fitting in with having families, we said why not open our own salon?

What's made you decide to close the shop now?

C. My husband is retiring soon and we've always wanted to travel. Let's do it when we can. So, it's off into the sunset in our camper van.

J. It's all her fault! No, after Covid I made a decision not to carry by myself. Time to move on.

What plans do you have for the future?

C. Travel the UK and Europe. Then time to enjoy my hobbies.

J. I don't intend to retire so I see this as an opportunity to try something different. As one door closes another opens. Perhaps I'll open a cafe as I've always enjoyed baking. *I can testify to Jo's baking skills. Many years ago, she kindly made a cake for my mum's 90th birthday. I said it came from Harrods, and she believed me!*

The pair agreed it will be great to have a change before the aches and pains which inevitably come with the job take over and make it difficult to enjoy.

I'm sure you can share some tales about interesting customers.

C. After 2020 we found it amusing to sort out some strange lockdown haircuts. Wives have a lot to answer for.

J. There are always awkward customers we could tell you about ... but we won't! We have to respect customer confidentiality. *Phew, I got off lightly there then.*

We've seen children who sat on the boards come back later with their children for their haircuts. It's a wonderful feeling to think that they're so pleased with the service that they want to do so.

Next year what will you miss the most perhaps?

C. The conversations I suppose. "How are you and the family?". "What have you been up to?". It's strange to think we probably won't meet our regulars again. But we all have to move on.

And, just as Jo was going to make a comment, in came a customer to have his short back and sides. Which sums up what a popular and successful salon Claire and Jo have developed over the years. I'm sure I speak for all their appreciative clients when I wish them all the best for what the future brings. But it does beg the question about which barber to go to next. They will have to put up with me moaning about potholes and remember not to present the mirror, "I don't want to see my increasing bald patch, thank you".



It's time to get creative



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Restoration of Ted Jones' Memorial Stone in Malmesbury Cemetery

Following the Snippet in our summer edition about Ted Jones' headstone we were delighted to hear from Sue Alexander with some background information to the work.

The restoration project highlights a piece of local history and is part of a broader plan to make Malmesbury Cemetery more friendly for people and wildlife. The plan was launched in 2021 with the help of several community groups including the primary school and U3A. We have also planted a wildflower area in the cemetery and are hoping to see it bloom and look beautiful through spring and summer.



Before

During a conversation about the cemetery, I was told about a gravestone belonging to a local engineman, Ted Jones, who had worked for GWR, and his wife, Mary. It was hard to find, but eventually we spotted part of an engine peeping out from a lichen covered stone. See the 'before' restoration photo.

Knowing that local undertaker Chris Brooks had organised the cleaning of Hannah Twynnoy's headstone in the Abbey grounds, I asked him about renovating Ted's. Chris kindly offered to organise its cleaning and pay half the cost, with the Town Council contributing the other half.

My daughter-in-law, Rosie Alexander, who works for GWR in Chippenham, told me that there could be grants available from GWR to fund the work under Railway 200, a campaign to celebrate 200 years of the modern railway. To my delight, GWR were enthusiastic about covering the full cleaning costs. This is what happened, and the work was completed in May 2025. We're very pleased with the result as the gravestone really stands out now, particularly the ornate lead lettering. To see the restored headstone, look in the north-west corner of the old part of Tetbury Hill cemetery behind the chapel. For those of you who use the *what3words* app, the location is approximately *///mixes.headliner.terms*.

Ted was born in Wales (hence the daffodils on either side of his stone) in 1848, and

died in Malmesbury in 1926. He lived with his wife and four children near the Triangle and drove the train on the Malmesbury Branch line for 15 years. I like the following anecdote about Ted in Mike Fenton's book, *The Malmesbury Branch Line*: "It is said that Ted never shaved in his lifetime, his beard reaching his waist. He wore a rubber collar, when coming of duty, he would wash his face, beard and collar in a bucket of hot water from the engine."

I'd like to credit the following for making this project happen.

My committee members Ann Skinner, Melissa Robb and Sandy Sorell; Shaun Bleaken, council worker, who cares for the cemetery; Chris Brooks, Undertaker; Malmesbury Town Council, in particular Ian Wallis; my daughter-in-law, Rosie Alexander; and Gordon Williams, who helped me with the research on Ted Jones.

The Malmesbury Branch by Mike Fenton. ISBN 0 906867 88 6



After



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New Head at St Joseph's

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School has a new head starting after the February break. Nick Morrell will soon be a familiar face in Malmesbury and tells the Jackdaw why he is looking forward to leading the school.

I'm delighted to be taking the helm at St Joseph's.

The school is unique in Malmesbury. Situated on an historic site, it has a brand-new nursery, welcoming children from age two, which shares facilities with the main school, including the playground, mud kitchen and forest school. Unlike children in stand-alone nurseries, those at St Joseph's have the opportunity of staying within their community of friends and staff as they progress through their primary education. The nursery is still growing and I'm really looking forward to welcoming more children through the door in the coming months.

Most of my career in education has been in the independent sector, most recently as Deputy Head of Beaudesert Park School in Minchinhampton. Prior to that I was Deputy Head (Academic) at Westminster Cathedral Choir School for eight years. I oversaw a liberal arts curriculum which helps children discover 'the best that has been known and said'. Instead of topics being presented as competing specialisms, everything is linked so children learn by making connections. A firm grasp of maths and English in the early years underpins a high degree of cultural literacy further up the school. I hope to bring the spirit of this to St Joseph's by building on the school's existing reputation for music and art.

When I first visited St Joseph's, I was struck by the whole-child ethos, purposeful teaching, and strong sense of family. The staff know every single child as individuals - their interests, what they enjoy about school and even what they prefer to eat. I'm passionate about taking a holistic approach which allows children to reach their academic potential whilst also nurturing and developing their creativity and social awareness.

The biggest surprise about St Joseph's Primary School is the secret riverside setting and I fully intend to maximise the benefit of this area. Outdoor learning improves physical health, cognitive development, concentration, creativity and problem-



Nick Morrell

solving skills and helps children build resilience, self-confidence and a deeper connection with nature. It's remarkable to have this space as well as the hidden 'Nun's Walk' along the edge of the historic town walls which physically connects the school with St Aldhelm's Church.

St Joseph's reminds me of the biblical story where heaven is compared to treasure hidden in a field. Someone finds the treasure, then hides it and sells all they have to buy the field. St. Joseph's, set as it is on a hidden piece of land by the ancient town walls, seems to be just like this piece of treasure! I am greatly looking forward to picking up the reins and ushering the school into its next chapter. Do come and see us.

To arrange a visit, call the office direct on: 01666 822 331



Photo: Grace Clift

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School & Nursery **A unique setting in the heart of Malmesbury**

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The Field by Waitrose

Received from Campbell Ritchie

If you are walking or cycling along Baskerville towards Cowbridge, Lea or Milbourne you will know the small field that sits between Waitrose and the Avon next to the Silk Mills. It is an important part of the river valley in the Malmesbury Conservation Area. So, you will have seen the growing mounds of earth, the new track cut into the hillside, the disappearance of the three black poplar trees that made the skyline interesting ... and recently a few sheep grazing. What is going on?

The field has been in new ownership since 2019 and since then the subject of numerous planning applications, including to build a 2-metre-high wall across the field with a levelled area behind, to cut down the Tree Preservation Order protected trees, and to build a 20m long by 10m wide by 5.4m high hanger (barn) to house livestock and farm equipment. Not surprisingly local residents, Malmesbury Town Council and Malmesbury Civic Trust raised concerns and were supported in the planning process; all the more extreme applications were rejected. The plan for the outsized barn was even dismissed by a Planning Inspector, which is about as high as you can go in planning decision making. But! Permission was finally given to fell the trees when the landowner showed evidence they were diseased, provided they were replaced by five good sized oak trees. And, most shockingly, Wiltshire Council then nodded through permission to build the barn in July 2025. This came after a second go at a behind closed doors application using an agricultural loophole*, when planners accepted a claim the field is part of a qualifying 'agricultural unit' because it is 'operationally integrated'



The track (cut into the hillside), felled trees and no room for replanting



The field viewed from Baskerville

with another field over 20 miles away that is prone to flooding. It was the sheep what did it!

So, we are seeing the start of work to build the barn at the highest and most visible position in the field which is also being linked to the field entrance by a substantial track that cuts across the area where the replacement trees are required to be planted. Wiltshire Council's decision to allow the barn can't be appealed

(although the residents of Baskerville are still challenging it). However, Wiltshire Council's planning and enforcement teams have both confirmed the track 'constitutes a breach of planning control'. (It wasn't asked for and in previous applications it has been stated it isn't needed). So now we have a cliffhanger. Will Wiltshire Council at least insist the track is removed so the replacement trees can be planted? Or is the cavalier and illegal degradation of a part of the Malmesbury Conservation Area set to be just another 'one of those things'?

* *It's Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.*

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SPRING HIGHLIGHTS AT THE GOODS SHED



February 5 **Royal Opera screening: Marriage of Figaro.** This sumptuous period staging of Mozart's comedy follows a day in the life of 1830s chateau. Tickets in advance £10. 7pm

February 21 **Family Circus Show: Fail,Fail,Fail,Fail Win.** Meet a caste of characters who don't mind failing! For children aged 3-10. Tickets in advance £12 (family of 4 £40) 2pm

March 7 **Piano Recital: Michael James Bartlett.** Award-winning young pianist whose recent tours have been with the Sinfonia of London and at events in Berlin, Vienna and Hamburg. Tickets in advance £30. 7.30pm.

March 27 **Forever Billy Joel:** Expect an evening of soaring ballards, roof-raising anthems and heartfelt ballards that made Billy Joel a global superstar. Tickets in advance £25. 7.30pm.

April 12 **Ninebarrow:** The Dorset folk duo make a welcome return for a night of music, folklore and storytelling. Tickets in advance £18. 6pm

April 17 **Mitch Benn: The Lehrer Effect.** For anyone who loved Tom Lehrer's comic songs this evening is a must! Mitch looks at Lehrer's elusive legacy and performs some of his own Lehreresque songs. Tickets in advance £20. 8pm

May 1 **Alistair McGowan: 3 in 1.** Expect beautiful words, music and a dose of Alistair's trademark comedy. Book early to avoid disappointment! Tickets £30 in advance. 7.30pm

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

Breathing New Life into Former Doctor's Surgery

Received from Laura Moore

On Malmesbury High Street, a familiar building has quietly stepped into a new era. Gable House, the Grade II listed landmark that has watched over the town since 1671, has been carefully refurbished as a mix of homes, retail, workspace and a bright new Pilates studio that is already drawing people back through its doors.



For generations, Gable House has played many roles in local life, from doctors' surgery to office space. Now, following an extensive programme of works, it has been given fresh purpose while retaining the character that makes it so recognisable. Its striking three-gabled seventeenth-century façade remains a defining feature of the High Street, a reminder of Malmesbury's long history, even as new activity unfolds behind it.

While parts of the interior had previously been rebuilt, the refurbishment has prioritised flexibility and modern use, without compromising the building's heritage or presence within the town.

One of the most visible signs of this renewal is the arrival of Nimble & Wild Pilates, one of Malmesbury's much-loved independent businesses. The studio moved into its new, home at Gable House on 1st December. For founder Jenni and her team, the move marks a significant milestone - not just for the business, but for the High Street itself.

Paul Atwell, CEO of Atwell Martin Property Management, describes the project as a labour of care as much as construction. Seeing Gable House brought back to life, he says, reflects a belief in hands-on property stewardship - treating each building as if it were your own - and ensuring that historic spaces continue to serve modern communities.

Beyond the Pilates studio, the building now includes newly refurbished residential flats, a retail unit and commercial workspace, bringing a new mix of people and activity into the centre of town. It's a model that feels particularly fitting for Malmesbury: independent, community-focused and rooted in history.

The transformation of Gable House is more than a refurbishment. It's a quiet but confident statement about Malmesbury's commitment to preserving its past while making room for growth - and about the enduring value of High Street spaces that evolve with the communities around them.

The New Year

Rev'd Oliver Ross considers the eventful start to 2026

Happy New Year! I write on the last day of Christmas and Epiphany (6th January) when we remember the Magi who journeyed so far. As you read, it's all over - 2026 is well and truly begun. Even now the crisis in Venezuela is in full flow. What will the coming days, weeks and months bring? The truth is we don't know; more importantly, we can guarantee that there will be surprises.

How shall we then live?

Firstly, it is worth remembering that we have been through ups and downs – very extreme ups and downs – since our grandparents were born and we have survived. Do not give up Faith in the triumph of light.

Secondly, as we look around us nature encourages us with the return of spring for our flora, and new life for our fauna. Do not lose hold of Hope in the storms of experience.

Finally, looking forward we know that we invest in the way that we treat each other – it pays an untold return! Do not lose the path of Love in the verges of cynicism.

For those of us who follow Christ we have his word in the midst of whatever comes – “behold I am with you always, even to the very end.”

Saint Augustine - who saw the catastrophe of the fall of Rome in 410 A.D:

“Let us sing Alleluia here below while we are still anxious, so that we may sing it one day there above when we are free from care... Let us sing Alleluia, not in the enjoyment of heavenly rest, but to sweeten our toil. Sing as travellers sing along the road, but keep on walking. Comfort your toil by singing; sing, but keep on walking, press on from good to better. There are some who go from bad to worse, but if you press on, you keep on walking. Go forward then in virtue, true faith, right conduct. Sing up! And keep on walking!”

New Plan to Transform Walking and Cycling in Malmesbury

By Keith Freegard

Malmesbury is changing, and how we travel around the town needs to change, too. A new Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is being developed, aimed at making everyday journeys around the town healthier, safer and more enjoyable for everyone. So, what exactly is an LCWIP, and why does it matter to Malmesbury residents?

Strategic Blueprint to Improve Walking and Cycling

An LCWIP is a long-term plan that sets out where to invest in walking, wheeling, and cycling infrastructure over the next decade. It looks at all active travel options, including footpaths, pavements, cycle routes and how they connect at road-junctions. A key objective of the plan is to encourage more people to choose an active travel option for local journeys, by providing safe, segregated, and accessible pathways available for all users.



Photo: Keith Freegard

Wiltshire Council is currently working with local groups to create LCWIPs for 11 market towns across the county, alongside four larger towns that already have plans in place¹. In Malmesbury, a stakeholder team representing local walking and cycling groups, plus residents from the main housing areas, is working with local town and parish councillors to develop the best possible plan.

In December, Cllr. Martin Smith, Cabinet Member for Transport & Highways, announced that Wiltshire has been awarded £3.2 million over four years to improve active travel routes across the county². So, having a high-quality, approved local plan is essential, because future government funding will be prioritised for projects already identified within an LCWIP.

In short: no plan means no funding.

Why Malmesbury Needs a New Approach

Malmesbury has grown rapidly in recent years. The population has increased from just over 5,000 in 2001 to more than 7,500 today³, with hundreds of new homes built in the past five years and more new developments expected to follow.

Each new home usually brings one or two extra cars, adding pressure to a road network that was never designed for modern vehicles and traffic levels. Anybody travelling through the town during school-run times, will know about the daily traffic jams along our busy, narrow streets. Malmesbury's historical '*infrastructure design system*' was based around the horse and cart, not modern SUVs and buses!

Nationally, the UK government wants half of all short urban journeys to be walked, wheeled or cycled by 2030⁴. Wiltshire Council's own transport plan (LPT4) echoes this ambition, aiming to make walking or cycling the "natural choice" for short trips, using safe, well-connected and easy-to-navigate routes.

What are the Benefits for Residents?

A successful active travel plan could deliver wide-ranging benefits:

- **Better health and wellbeing**, by making everyday movement part of daily life
- **Less traffic and cleaner air**, especially at peak times
- **Safer streets**, designed for people rather than vehicles
- **Improved access** to shops, schools and services for people with limited mobility
- **A stronger local economy**, as visitors find Malmesbury easier and more pleasant to explore

Practical examples of infrastructure improvements could include shared-use road crossing points which give children travelling to school a safe way to cross busy roads with clear priority over motor vehicles or simply replacing old footpath stiles with fully accessible gateways for our less-able residents. A major benefit will be to provide well-designed pathways which allow easy-access to travel around the town, with no restrictions for pushchairs, wheelchairs, mobility scooters or kids roll-along carts. Above all, the aim is simple: to make Malmesbury an even better place to live, work and visit.

What's the Timeline?

Work on the Malmesbury LCWIP began in October 2025 and is due to be completed by the end of March 2026. Initial mapping has already identified potential key walking and cycling routes in and around the town. These are currently being reviewed by local stakeholders and parish councils. A revised set of proposals is expected by the end of January, followed by a full public consultation during February and March. Once approved, the plan will shape transport investment in Malmesbury for the next ten years.

How You Can Have Your Say

The public consultation is the most important stage of the project for residents to get involved. As you walk, wheel or cycle around the town over the coming weeks, take note of what works — and what doesn't. Are crossings awkward? Pavements too narrow? Routes disconnected or unsafe. Your local knowledge can help ensure the final plan reflects your valuable experience and delivers new infrastructure which makes active travel the natural choice for all!

This is a chance to influence how Malmesbury moves in the future. When the consultation opens, make sure your voice is heard.

To find out more see Facebook *keith.freegard* or email *keith@freegard.net*

1. <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/9503/Council-thanks-respondents-to-cycling-and-walking-consultations>
2. <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/15504/Wiltshire-Council-awarded-3-1m-to-invest-in-walking-wheeling-and-cycling-schemes>
3. https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/southwestengland/wiltshire/E63004821__malmesbury
4. Active Travel England: Corporate plan 2023 to 2025 - <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6504468dfc63f6000d957346/active-travel-england-corporate-plan-2023-2025.pdf>

Quiz (answers at the bottom of the page)

1. What originally stood on the site of Malmesbury Abbey: (a) Roman Villa, (b) Iron Age Fort, (c) Norman Keep?
2. How far does the Leaning Tower of Pisa lean: (a) 4 degrees, (b) 9 degrees, (c) 14 degrees?
3. Which of the following has the chemical symbol W: (a) Tin, (b) Titanium, (c) Tungsten?
4. Which is the smallest country in the world by landmass: (a) Monaco, (b) Vatican City, (c) Belgium?
5. Which fruit is dried to make prunes?
6. The Roundheads and Cavaliers fought in which war?
7. Which is the longest river in the world?
8. Which of the following is a prime number: (a) 21, (b) 29, (c) 35?

Snippet

Confusing Diversion?



Photo: Andy Dawson

Driving round Malmesbury can be such fun. We had a number of readers point this one out although we're told it actually made sense to drivers!

Snippet

Yet another One ...



Photo: Callum King

The diversion sign seems to be directing drivers to turn right, but the sign above it says they can't turn right. Perhaps the diversion was through the letterbox of No.3?

Answers to Quiz: (1) b. Iron Age Fort. (2) a. 4 degrees. (3) c. Tungsten. (4) b. Vatican City. (5) Plums. (6) The English Civil War. (7) The Nile. (8) b. 29 (because it has no divisors other than 1 and itself, 21 can be divided by 7, and 35 can be divided by 5).



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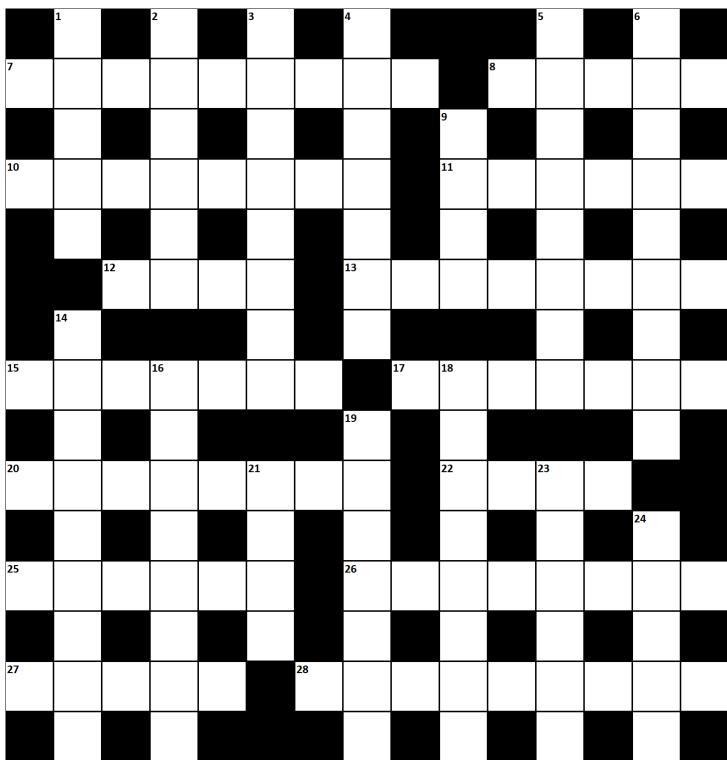
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The Crossword

ACROSS

7...Clarified that the weather had improved (7,2)
8...Sounds as if there's plenty to share out! (5)
10...Ovine karate move? (4,4)
11...Green club? (6)
12...Heads back to amaze (4)
13...Butch's kid? (8)
15...Entrance to a short 60's US sitcom (7)
17...Back about poetry (7)
20...Temporary solution for the junkie in a hurry? (5,3)
22...It's your duty to include an Asian language (4)
25...Devour sailor's ball (6)
26...A baby moving to become obsequious? (8)
27...Is Tessa back in the balance sheet? (5)
28...People carrier? (9)



DOWN

1...Derive from an irregular angle (5)
2...Academic with a casual shirt may talk a lot (6)
3...One of Mike Rutherford's band? (8)
4...Post Office is in the money for a reason (7)
5...Dull event at Ascot? (4,4)
6...Coals were broken with no capital (5,4)
9...Spread poles around dad (4)
14...Concerning a coat on a short cleric. Improve! (9)
16...Zinc lovers have an easy life (2,6)
18...Cadet due to become well informed (8)
19...Executive drops four to finish (7)
21...US law enforcer gets mixed up on a point and lies (4)
23...Café and church make a rich dessert! (6)
24...Rearrange 1. down. There's a dear! (5)

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