



The Swaffham Crier

Volume L Number 2

February 2026



Editorial

If you want to go on the Heating Scheme, get your application in quick — that's the message from the Heating Scheme (see p. 14) because their current round of funding is coming to an end so now is the time. They've also replied to Mark's letter in last month's issue asking why his heating costs had not gone down in line with his Guardian's expectations, and our Other Ed has added further explanations too. Apparently, we are now in the first year of the transition from oil to tracking the price of electricity. That's not to say it will cost as much as electricity! No, what it means is that the percentage change in these prices will determine the change in price — see Letters.

The Advent Windows were absolutely delightful and we're pleased to announce the most favoured, the Nunns' of The Nook (Take a bow, designer-in-chief Zoe Nunn!) And a heartily well-deserved winner too— see it on our back page,

Meanwhile, this month's Our Reporter (you're bound to have seen him whizzing around the village and the Fen in his hand-powered wheel chair) was somewhat bemused to arrive at the Village Hall in the midst of ghastly storm Goretti to find **DOUBLE BOOKED DISABLED PARKING_SPACES!** Slimmer's World, you are under grave suspicion of counting an extra inch or two on your tum as a disability! See page 4.

And do read Dee Noyes on the St Mary's Events for the coming year (see p. 2) — we are so fortunate to have that “small group of people” who manage to organise the lot — *how many??* Fifteen, it seems!

The New Year Quiz was no sooner set than done by enthusiastic quizzers (see Letters), but we still have another month to go. Can you do it? Go on, have a try.

See you at the Pancake Party and of course at our very own *Asset of Community Value* (see Our Reporter) otherwise known as the Red Lion. Happy Valentining!

Caroline Matheson

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For Sale

Cover Picture: *Naked Line of Poplars Reflecting Lode Mill*, oil painting by Mike Barker



Letters to the Editors



Dear Quiz Designer,

New Year Quiz

As a fan of brain teasers, I could not resist your challenging New Year 2026 Quiz with its elegant mix of cryptic clues and enigmatic runes. I have therefore taken the liberty of submitting a solution albeit I am not a resident of Swaffham Prior. In mitigation, I do have a close connection with Swaffham Prior in that my daughter Natalie, and her husband Tom Comins, are residents of Swaffham Prior – they live in the High Street.

I have thoroughly enjoyed unravelling the clues and the hieroglyphs – it's comforting to know that in my 80th year, I still have a few functional neurons left!

John Turner
Leighton Buzzard
Beds



St Mary's, Swaffham Prior

Pancake Party

Tuesday 17 February, 2-4pm
Swaffham Prior Village Hall

Make a Carnival Mask to take home

Pancake Races – for all ages

Refreshments:

Children - decorate a Scotch pancake to eat

Adults - enjoy a pancake with lemon and sugar

Tea, coffee, squash

£3 each or £10 for a family ticket

Booking would be helpful (but not essential):

admin@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk

Please notify us of allergies

This activity is licensed under a Creative Commons License

THIS MONTH'S COVER PICTURE

Mike's work reflects his background as an ecologist and draws on impressionist and modern artistic influences, often taking inspiration from the local landscape and wildlife of the fens and brecks.

Mike regularly takes part in Cambridge Open Studios in the village and for the past few years his work has been on display in the village cage on Cage Hill during July weekends. Original paintings, prints and cards are for sale. Mike's website: www.mikebarkerart.co.uk

Celia Tyler

Dear Editors,

Updated Heat Prices

In last month's Crier, a resident expressed concerns about the updated heat prices. We understand this is important, so we'd like to clarify how the tariff is calculated and the consumer protections in place.

The 2026 tariff update is set in line with Appendix 2 of the Heat Supply Agreement and uses official indices published on the Government website. For 2025, the variable (unit) rate was based on the Heating Oil Index. From 2026 onwards, the tariff calculation moves to a blended index made up of 80% heating liquid fuels and 20% electricity, calculated using a 12-month average (November to October). This approach means the tariff will not always reflect short-term market movements or day-to-day price fluctuations.

Over the period November 2024 to October 2025, liquid fuels decreased by 13.5% and electricity by 0.3%. Using the agreed method, the variable tariff reduced from 8.53p/kWh (incl. VAT) in 2025 to 7.60p/kWh (incl. VAT) from 1 Jan 2026.

The Standing Charge is set to be an equivalent cost to owning, repairing and replacing an oil boiler. The standing charge is linked to Consumer Price Index (CPI) because it covers the fixed costs of running the service (maintenance, repairs, customer support and billing), and those costs generally rise with inflation. Using CPI is a transparent way to update the standing charge each year in line with those underlying costs, while changes in fuel and electricity prices are reflected separately in the variable/unit rate (p/kWh).

We are part of the Heat Trust scheme and follow its consumer protection standards. From 27 January 2026, the regulatory framework begins transitioning to Ofgem, which will become the statutory regulator for heat networks, and we remain committed to meeting these standards to ensure fairness, transparency and good service.

The Heating Scheme

Eds note: A complexity with the tariff update formula is that the starting year was 2021, making 2025 the last with 100% indexation to oil prices. We're now in the first of the years when it tapers towards 100% indexation to electricity prices in 2030, with 80% oil and 20% electricity this year, 60% and 40% next, etc. If electricity prices are currently artificially high, we should benefit in due course from any reduction to these (the indexation is to annual prices changes), albeit with a year's delay since the indexation has to be based on what happened to prices in the previous year.

(See their report on page 13)

From our Reporter at the Parish Council Meeting

Goretti accompanied me down Cage Hill and along High Street to the car park at the Village Hall. Packed. Slimming World. Not one, but two cars parked in the spot designated for the disabled. Maybe obesity is a disability; not one of the invisible kind, presumably.

As a result, your part-time reporter arrived late and wet for the January Parish Council meeting, and business was in full swing; in fact by 7.35pm our doughty councillors seemed to have covered half the agenda. Around the table I counted six people, including the Clerk. Eventually these people will all have names, if ever I arrive in time to introduce myself. The redoubtable Charlotte Cane MP arrived (parking issues...) just in time to deliver the District Council report.



Despite beginning by saying there was nothing much to report, Ms Cane was interesting and humorous – but not before dealing with potential £5k funding for a ‘neighbourhood plan’ (we have none), announcing 2025’s 635 new house completions (zero in Swaffham Prior) and a 6½ year land bank (presumably some in Swaffham Prior) and the location of our nearest battery recycling point (the Co-op in Burwell). Then: report about the Planning Committee where there had been some talk about the (approved) Grenergy battery storage application in Burwell and an associated potential, not yet applied-for, mystery facility. Local landowners have been approached; NDAs were being demanded.

**It was noted that
luckily Donald
Trump’s interest
in Burwell had
been crowded out
by his ambitions
for Greenland...**

This triggered a lively discussion which involved scrutiny of an opensource map (‘very interesting, worth a visit’); Sunnica being due to feed in to the existing substation; resultant speculation that the mystery development might be another substation – possibly huge; Walpole (presumably a similar facility) being 1km long; the need for yet more batteries; Kingsway (the proposed solar farm, bigger than Heathrow airport, at Balsham and West Wrattling) still not approved but needing more

substation capacity; the threat of compulsory purchase. It was noted that luckily Donald Trump’s interest in Burwell had been crowded out by his ambitions for Greenland, where a compulsory purchase seems pending.

In ‘correspondence for consideration’ was the good news that our Red Lion had again been designated an ‘Asset of Community Value’ – which may seem obvious, but required 2 years’ of paperwork from our PC – the councillor involved was duly congratulated. A reminder by email of the deadline for LHI (Local Highways Initiative) applications was met with grumbling reminiscence of an effort 10 years ago, requiring 8 months’ hard graft to achieve a small pull-in, and an overall unspoken consensus that the British state had become generally dysfunctional. OK, that last bit was perhaps more me than the PC.

Kingsway raised its ugly head again as there is a ‘Targeted Consultation’ which has already started and will end on 4 February. Well, they are busy people ... It was noted that although several objections had been raised by ‘big national authorities’ Swaffham Prior was not directly affected as a village. Burwell is where the action is, its apparent fate being force-fed virtue by NDA-enabled compulsory purchase and so to become an electrical battery-storage-substation-distribution ecological MegaCentre sitting in a sea of solar panels on what was prime agricultural land; Reach is more affected and of course the Devil’s Dyke. Apparently, for selfish reasons some in the archaeology community are quite keen on disturbing the Dyke – shame on them! – although I am assured that to do so will unleash an army of disembodied Saxon wraiths seeking just vengeance. Someone should mention this to both the archaeologists and the Targeted Consultation.

As it happens, the pylons’ route on their way past us to the Burwell MegaCentre is not covered by the consultation. Your reporter verified this at the web site (kingswaysolarfarm.co.uk) and checked the suspiciously slick booklet.

On a smaller scale, a planning application to convert a railway carriage and extend it for holiday let use in the village was quickly despatched with a request for the conservation officer to look more closely as it ‘affects the curtilage of a listed building’.

The budget was approved and the requirement for an internal auditor discussed (we have one, highly qualified, prudent and willing to fulfil his function at the modest cost of a pint).

A new bus stop had been requested by the county council, mainly for ‘Reachers swapping buses’; apparently we do not know - and astonishingly cannot know, because: GDPR – how many might use this new facility. As it will be in a conservation zone it is in the PC’s gift to make this uninformed decision, but by now resurgent worries about deep-seated dysfunction obscured the final decision. Our excellent Clerk will have noted it later in this magazine.

The footpaths had been walked to assess any obstructing growth, 17 addresses will hear direct from the PC, and an article has been submitted which might well also be available elsewhere in this Crier.

In AOB one member of the PC raised the issue that the last bus often seems to leave early. Speculation that this was because it was also the driver’s last bus home almost appeared to exculpate this public servant and excuse the diminished service in the PC’s eyes, much to their credit. This isn’t Switzerland, after all.

It was all over in record time, and Storm Goretti was still lurking outside. What underlies the relatively recent decision by the Met Office to name storms before they happen? Sceptics might observe a coincidence with the need to justify ecological MegaCentres, and infer attempts at stoking supportive anxiety. But that can’t be it, not when there are handy tools of repression like compulsory purchases and NDAs.

Keith Carter



Join POP
(Proud of Prior)



COMMUNITY LITTER PICK
FRIDAY TIDY

**Meet at the sheds by the play park
on the High Street**

Friday 13th February
10.00pm

Adult Hi Vis Jackets provided
You participate at your own risk
Your Safety is YOUR responsibility

Please bring your own gloves
All other equipment provided

**Come and join friends and
neighbours on this tidy up**

**Look forward to seeing
the results!**



**UNLOCKING
OPPORTUNITIES
TOGETHER**



**FOR A PROSPEROUS
COMMONWEALTH**

Flag Flying Day this
Month
from the Tower of
St Cyriac – 9th March

Commonwealth
Day

Simnel Cakes for Sale

Traditionally, Simnel Cake has been enjoyed on Easter Sunday. This year you can serve up a delicious homemade offering with no more effort other than parting with some cash and all for the benefit of St. Mary's Church.

Orders can be placed by contacting Janet on 07833 960678 or janetwillmott@icloud.com For just £15.00 your teatime guests will be in for a treat! Cakes to be collected from 23 Tothill Road in time for Easter Sunday on 5th April.



Look forward to taking your orders!

COFFEE and CAKES

Friday, 20th February

10 am - 12 noon

in aid of

Arthur Rank Hospice



Arthur Rank Hospice Charity

making every moment count



at the home of

Margaret Joyce



41 Cage Hill, Swaffham Prior

CAKES, COFFEE, GIFTS, RAFFLE



Lynn and Jim receiving their certificates from Gareth.

amazing progress in their first twelve months due to their dedication and perseverance – well done guys!

We thoroughly enjoyed our Christmas lunch, albeit in January as December was far too busy for us all, at the Red Lion in Soham. An absolutely fabulous get together brilliantly co-ordinated and arranged by Kate, with wonderful food and a real teaser of a fun quiz, much enjoyed by everyone.

A one day training session on Teaching Bell Handling at Great St. Mary's in Cambridge was attended by Kate, Mandy and Janet. A full on day which was extremely informative and interesting, with lots of practical hands on opportunities and problem solving exercises. A huge amount of follow up work to do now!

We are very much looking forward to installing new ropes at the tower, the current ones being mostly over 35 years old and definitely in need of replacement. The colour of the sally has been decided (the fluffy bit J) now just awaiting delivery.

Janet Willmott/Mandy Kingsmill

SWAFFHAM PRIOR BELL RINGERS

It certainly hasn't been a quiet January, with regular practices continuing on a Tuesday evening and ringing for services. The AGM saw Kate Muscroft being elected as the new Secretary, Mandy and Janet continuing in the roles of deputy tower captains, John Chalmers as treasurer and steeple keeper, ably assisted in the latter by Philip Kingsmill and Jim Weaver. Gareth Davies will continue to be our inspirational tower captain.

A year to the day since they started ringing saw Lynne Brand and Jim receive their Level 2 certificates. They have made



Kate receiving a thank you bunch of Flowers from Bryn for organising the lunch.

POEM OF THE MONTH

February

Winter. Time to eat fat
and watch hockey. In the pewter mornings, the cat,
a black fur sausage with yellow
Houdini eyes, jumps up on the bed and tries
to get onto my head. It's his
way of telling whether or not I'm dead.
If I'm not, he wants to be scratched; if I am
He'll think of something. He settles
on my chest, breathing his breath
of burped-up meat and musty sofas,
purring like a washboard. Some other tomcat,
not yet a capon, has been spraying our front door,
declaring war. It's all about sex and territory,
which are what will finish us off
in the long run. Some cat owners around here
should snip a few testicles. If we wise
hominids were sensible, we'd do that too,
or eat our young, like sharks.

But it's love that does us in. Over and over
again, *He shoots, he scores!* and famine
crouches in the bedsheets, ambushing the pulsing
eiderdown, and the windchill factor hits
thirty below, and pollution pours
out of our chimneys to keep us warm.
February, month of despair,
with a skewered heart in the centre.
I think dire thoughts, and lust for French fries
with a splash of vinegar.
Cat, enough of your greedy whining
and your small pink bumhole.
Off my face! You're the life principle,
more or less, so get going
on a little optimism around here.
Get rid of death. Celebrate increase. Make it be spring.

Margaret Atwood

Just about every poem ever written about February – and for good reason there aren't that many – is miserable – for the same good reason. Margaret Atwood at least finds humour in the misery.

For no better reasons than that; the fact that her writing is currently and rightly celebrated and that our household has recently acquired a kitten who's rapidly turning into the kind of creature depicted here and we can therefore empathise, this is February's Poem of the Month.

Andrew Grant

Julie's Valentine Recipes

Beef stroganoff

½ tbsp light olive oil	1 tbsp Dijon mustard
1 large onion, finely sliced	2 rump streaks or lean steak, 175g each
3 garlic cloves, finely chopped	60g small gherkins, sliced
1 beef stock cube	75ml half fat creme fraiche
2 tsp sweet smoked paprika	2 finely chopped flatleaf parsley and chervil
1 tbsp tomato puree	Salt & Pepper to season
400g tin beef consommé or beef stock	
150g chestnut mushrooms, thinly sliced	

1. Heat the olive oil and fry the onion for 10 minutes until softened and starting to caramelise.

2. Stir in the garlic and cook gently for 2 minutes, crumble in the stock cube and stir in the paprika and tomato puree. Cook, stirring for 2 minutes.

3. Add the beef consommé, mushrooms and mustard. Bring to the boil, lower and simmer for 10-15 minutes or until the liquid has reduced by half.

4. Bash the steaks and season well, grease a griddle pan, when it is smoking hot, cook the steaks for 1 minute on each side. Remove and set aside.

5. Once the sauce has reduced, remove from heat. Stir in gherkins, herbs and creme fraiche, (reserve some herbs for garnish). Add any juices from the rested steak. Cut the meat into slices and stir into the sauce. Serve the stroganoff with herbs sprinkled on top with rice of your choice. Serves 2.

Passion fruit tart

<u>For the pastry</u>	<u>For the filling</u>
175g plain flour, plus a bit for dusting	8 passion fruit, halved and pulp removed
100g cold butter, diced	4 large free range eggs
30g icing sugar	1 large orange, juice only
1 orange, finely grated zest	150ml double cream
1 free range egg	75g caster sugar

1. To make the pastry, place the flour, sugar, Orange zest and butter into a food processor. Blend together until it resembles breadcrumbs. Add the egg and whizz again until the dough comes together to form a ball. Sprinkle out some flour and roll the pastry out until it is very thin. Line a 23cm loose bottomed fluted tin and then press pastry on the base and up the sides. Prick the base with a fork and place in fridge to chill for 30 minutes.

2. Preheat the oven to 200c. Once the pastry is chilled enough then blind bake the tart base for 15 minutes until the pastry is crisp and slightly golden.

3. To make the filling, sieve the passion fruit pulp into a large bowl, discarding the seeds. Break the eggs into a bowl, then add the orange juice, cream and sugar and beat

together.

4. Transfer the passion fruit mixture to the tart case and bake for a further 35-40 minutes, until the custard is just set and has a slight wobble.

5. Leave to cool, dust with a little icing sugar and serve with pouring cream.

Serves 6

BOXING DAY HOCKEY 2025

Swaffham Prior v Swaffham Bulbeck

Conditions were good on the Denny. Not too wet, cold but sunny. We had a enthusiastic team put together this year by Dylan Wade-Gledhill. There were many new players, some younger and a good number of girls. The match went well for us until the second half when Bulbeck scored two goals. As we were unable to score, Bulbeck continued their winning streak.



Swaffham Bulbeck 2 : Swaffham Prior 0

Thanks go to Jo Jones for once again being an excellent referee. She coped with the friendly rough and tumble. Good sportsmanship was seen on both sides as spectators and players retired to our respective pubs.

£200 was raised, from the spectators, by David Turner who collected for Magpas.

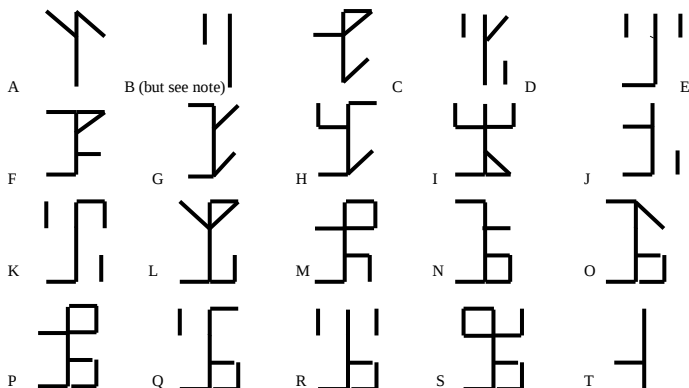
Sue Wade



NEW YEAR QUIZ



This Quiz is all about years gone by. There are 20 clues to events that happened in them, and then 20 symbols from a once widely used number system that is very convenient for recording years and very easy to translate (when you know how!) Match the clues to the symbols and send your answers to the editors (editors@swaffham-crier.co.uk) for the 22nd FEBRUARY.



1. Hercule's sidekick fighting crime?
2. This maiden came to grief after she left Cobh
3. This one did too, when she tried to stop a racehorse
4. But this one took London by storm—see her now on at the Embankment with her  daughters
5. Apparently, there was time to win the bowls match and settle Philip's lot
6. He drew inspiration from a web-designer and won a bread toasting contest
7. A great deal to see at Lincoln Castle
8. The Eagles have landed, and make themselves at home for CCCC years
9. Big holy bigwigs convention —sounds like it must be nice here!
10. And another one, but this time in a desirable Yorkshire seaside location
11. Black THURSDAY? How greatly depressing
12. Which roofer was in charge of this rising section?
13. Around the world in eighty-nine minutes — a first!
14. When Mary and Cyriac finally got it together
15. Agreeably trouble-free Friday? That's good.
16. It did come home, but it was Pickles who found it
17. Derby winner turns tail and legs it back home—what a charlie!
18. The Year of the Bug—although in the end, it didn't show up
19. They sailed the ocean to find plenty of cod, but they had forgotten their fishing rods and half of them died
20. It rocketed along at  mph, but a middling  uphill in the rain

Note: Symbol B might be  instead—this date is uncertain.

Wicken Fen, February 2026

This winter has had its magical moments on Wicken Fen, with a rare cold spell



freezing the lodes solid and dusting the landscape in snow. Swirling murmurations of hundreds of starlings were spotted near Tubney Fen at dusk. The cold days aren't over yet, the calls of ducks, geese and swans carrying across the wintry landscape. On bright days, its worth wrapping up warm for an invigorating fen walk – then warming up in the Docky Hut café with hot drinks, soup, scones and sweet

treats! As ever, we have a range of goodies in the gift shop and our second hand Book Nook in the visitor centre (pre-loved jigsaw puzzles and books gratefully received). A warm welcome awaits all!

Early January saw the start of peatland work on Hurdle Hall Fen. An area of 36 hectares are being restored adjacent to last year's work on Burwell Fen. Once completed (around the end of March), this will provide more habitat for wetland wildlife as well as storing more carbon in the damp ground, mitigating the impacts of climate change. Last spring was incredibly dry, making it challenging for fen wildlife – we hope that 2026 will be kinder to our special species. To stay up to date with the latest reserve news (including peatland restoration progress), visit: nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen

As always, we will have themed activities at the Family Discovery Area in the visitor centre and there will be a special trail around the boardwalk during the February Half Term school holiday period. Our popular owl pellet dissection children's workshop will be running on Monday 16th February (age 5+). Check the events page on our website for event details and booking: nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen-nature-reserve/whats-on

Our daily opening hours are:

Docky Hut Café – February*: 10am-4pm; 2nd March onwards: 10am-5pm

Visitor centre, gift shop, reserve – Feb*: 10am-4.30pm; 2nd Mar onwards: 9.30am-5pm

*Please note that all will be closed on Monday 9th February for urgent tree safety works.

Ajay Tegala

Swaffham Prior Heat Network

February 2026 Update

Construction update

We've connected 105 properties to the heat network, and we have also completed the external works for the remaining properties in the current Mill Hill Road batch. We are now planning the internal works for these properties.

We have also started planning the next batch of connections to run in 2026. **This round of connections is likely to be the last round with our current available funding and so if you would like to connect, now is a great time to come and speak to us.**

Surveys, design, contractor scheduling and materials all need to be planned months in advance, so we won't be able to add new properties at the last minute. The earlier you register your interest, the sooner we can survey your home and plan your connection in an upcoming tranche. If you'd like to connect, please get in touch as soon as possible so we can arrange a survey.

Revised price clarification

(See letter on page 2)

We publish information about our heat tariff and charges on the Cambridgeshire County Council webpage, [Swaffham Prior Heat Network - Heat tariff and heat costs | Cambridgeshire County Council](#).

If you have any concerns regarding your bill, or would like to sign up to pay by direct debit, please feel to reach out to us (see contact details in the January **Crier**, including the online version).

Customer Feedback

"After some initial problems concerning the route into our property, we have been very satisfied with how the whole project team have dealt with these challenges and worked towards a satisfactory solution. The contractors used to complete the external and internal works could not have been more professional and helpful. We are very happy to be connected to the scheme and no longer reliant on oil and the old boiler and tank have gone" – High Street resident

Thank you very much for your feedback and support! We'd love to hear from more customers about their heating and hot water experience (see full contact details in the January **Crier**).

Siddhant Malhotra

Customer Service (General Queries) : **0345 0455210**

24/7 Helpline for connected customers: **01782 390777**



The Reading Group Reviews

The Books We Read in 2025

January is the month when we review the books we read in the previous year, and we spent a very agreeable evening doing just that. They were:

February: *These Precious Things* - Ann Patchett

March: *The Untouchables* - John Banville

April: *Requiem for a Wren* - Neville Shute

May: *Someone Else's Shoes* - JoJo Moyes

June: *Orbital* - Samantha Harvey

July: *Wish you were here* - Jodi Picoult

August: *Wifedom* - Anna Funder

September: *The Various Haunts of Men* - Susan Hill

October: *James* - Percival Everett

November: *Long Island* - Colm Tobin

December: *Days of Wonder* - Keith Stuart



The ever popular JoJo Moyes

JoJo Moyes was again a leading contender for favourite with *Someone-else's Shoes*, although some didn't like it, thinking it was a bit slapstick (we agreed it wasn't as good as last year's *Giver of Stars*), but also that JoJo Moyes was an exceptional writer not to be missed. *Wish You were Here* by Jodi Picoult and *These Precious Days* were also popular, as was *The Various Haunts of Men* by Susan Hill, although readers should be warned: her ending are almost invariably most unhappy! *Days of Wonder* by Keith Stewart was certainly one of my personal favourites, as too *The Untouchables* by John Banville (although others thought it rather cold and austere) not least because in this thinly disguised biography of Anthony Blunt there lies an interesting inference that he may have played the part of an unofficial conduit of information between the UK and the USSR.

Least popular was almost certainly *Orbital*, although *Requiem for a Wren* may have come a close second! These books and our meetings are reviewed month by month in the *Crier*, usually by the person that proposed them, and we all thought Alastair's account of the meeting to discuss *James* by Percival Everett was highly amusing albeit not as we remembered it (recollections may vary!) and Margaret Joyce's account of this book was definitively the most succinct: "But they all kept falling in the Mississippi!" My personal hate was *Wifedom* by Anna Funder, a book about George Orwell's wife, but seemingly a vehicle for rampant feminism and general doing-down of husbands but this was accidentally missed off the list for discussion, and I know others would not have agreed.

Meetings take place on the first Wednesday of the month at 6pm at each other's houses, and we welcome new members — see our entry in the Clubs board on page 28 for contact details.

Forthcoming:

February: *1984* by George Orwell (5, Lower End)

March: *A month in the Country* by J. L Carr

April: *I escaped from Auschwitz* by Rudolf Vrba

Caroline Matheson



The Swaffhams' WI

Do you know your Miche from your Baguette? I can tell you someone who does and that is Master Miller Jonathan Cook from Fosters Mill. Jonathan came to the January meeting of the Swaffham's WI laden with flour, oats, muesli, freshly baked bread and fascinating stories about the history of Fosters Mill, inspiring us also to think about Real Bread Revolution.

Fosters Mill itself dates from 1857, although it is thought that its predecessor was a post mill (so called because the mill was raised up on a single post supported by 4 quarter bars) and that there were previously other mills on the current site possibly dating from the 12th century. It was the Galley family who

originally worked the current mill and in 1896 the Foster family bought the mill and it stayed in the Foster family until 1970. Between 1976 and 1992 the mill was restored until it was finally bought by Jonathan in 1998.

Swaffham Prior is one of the few places left in Britain where two mills exist and it is the only place where you will be able to see the sails of two windmills turning. So next time you are out for a walk, do look to see if you are lucky enough to catch both Fosters Mill and The Smock Tower Mill turning their sails.

Not only is Jonathan the custodian of this historic working mill safeguarding it for future generations, but Fosters Mill also brings employment and visitors to Swaffham Prior. The flour is sold throughout the UK and even abroad. Bread bakers are re-learning an art which started to disappear from the time of the Industrial Revolution. People are experimenting and trying out different things. The Real Bread Revolution is happening!

Jonathan is 'picky' about the grain he uses and this year he sampled grain from 6 different estates and chose his excellent grain from an estate in Derbyshire. The mill stone used to mill the grain, dates from 1846 and stoneground milling produces a healthier flour, preserving the natural nutrition and vitamin content of the grain.





Nothing goes to waste. Fosters Mill is currently producing 17 different types of flour.

So don't be surprised if the delicious aroma of baking bread fills the streets of Swaffham Prior, Swaffham Bulbeck and Reach. We have all been inspired to join the Real Bread Revolution. By the way, have you worked out what Miche is yet? If not, visit Jonathan at Fosters Mill and he will enlighten you.

Our next talk is by bat expert Katie Pollard on Monday 16th February. I know that Katie would love to hear about our local bats and will answer any questions you might have. Do please come along and join our thriving group. We would love to see you there!

Kate Muscroft

katemuscroft@gmail.com



VILLAGE GARDENERS

After the winter break, the next meeting of the Village Gardeners will be held on Tuesday 17th February at 8pm (doors 7:45pm) in Swaffham Prior Village Hall, when Barry Gayton from Brandon will be giving a talk and slide show on 'Weird and Wonderful Plants'.

The Village Gardeners generally meet on the 3rd Tuesday of the month. Each year we host gardening related talks from external speakers, visit local gardens, take a summer coach trip to a national garden, and hold a quiz and AGM. In 2026 we have scheduled 6 indoor talks, local garden visits to Histon Manor Gardens and Selwyn College Gardens, a coach trip to the Savill Garden in Great Windsor and a social quiz night/AGM (for dates please see the January Swaffham Crier, or contact us on the number at the back of the Crier).

The price of membership for 2026 is frozen again at £20 per person and this includes attendance at the 6 talks and the social quiz night. Garden visits and the coach trip are not included in membership and are priced separately, depending on individual entrance fees, suggested donations and/or travel costs. Non-members are very welcome to join us for £4 per talk/ social quiz night, or the cost of a garden visit/coach trip. No gardening experience is required to join us. We are a sociable group and tea and homemade cakes are always for sale after the talks for anyone who would like to stay and chat. We hope to see you soon.

Fiona Geraghty

News from Bottisham Patient Participation Group

Practice Update

Nursing update: a warm welcome to our new practice nurse Rebecca. She takes over from Michelle and comes with some advanced knowledge in wound care having previously been a tissue viability nurse.

“DNA” Did not attend: If you have an appointment booked and you are unable to attend, please let us know as soon as possible so we can reallocate the appointment. Between 1st and 29th December 51 appointments were categorised as Did Not Attend, this equates to just over 12hrs of Doctor and Nursing time lost. Where an appointment has inadvertently been missed, we will endeavour to reschedule as soon as possible but we ask for your consideration of our Reception Team as it is not always possible to reschedule for the same day.

Minor symptoms? Not sure you need a GP? Take a look at <https://111.nhs.uk/> where your symptoms can be reviewed and the website will tell you the best course of action.

Vaccinations: We will be contacting patients who are eligible for shingles, RSV and pneumovax vaccinations. Some of these vaccinations are a once only vaccination but it is important eligible patients receive these to protect them from these illnesses, all of which can affect vulnerable patients badly.

Spring COVID booster vaccinations: We do not know yet if we will be allocated this vaccination programme and will publicise if we are and contact eligible patients.

How can you help us?

An up-to-date mobile phone number is helpful to have on record so we can send messages regarding follow ups and chronic health reviews. This enables us to send you a link where you can book an appointment directly without the need to wait on the phone.

Request an appointment via our website: <https://www.bottishammedicalpractice.nhs.uk/> where you appointment will be triaged, rapidly that day. Ensure you keep your phone with you so you can answer the phone if the GP calls you or reception contact you to book an appointment.

Thank you

As you maybe aware we have had a number of IT issues following upgrades by the Integrated Care Board. These continue to be worked through and we would like to thank you all for your patience, both to date, and whilst we resolve the outstanding issues.

Next Meeting: To be notified. For information contact Chairman Steve Gilson on sgilson@btinternet.com.

Bottisham Medical Practice Patient Group



Anglesey Group Mothers' Union

Meeting on 11th December 2025

Members enjoyed the last meeting of 2025 making tree decorations to take home, together with singing some festive carols in our short service.

Usual refreshments of tea and coffee were joined by homemade seasonally shaped shortbread, and good companionship. We all enjoyed some time together before the busy rush of Christmas!

Our next meeting is on Thursday 19th February at 2.30pm at the Fassage Hall, Lode, where we will be exploring the theme of Lent.

You are warmly welcome to join us.

Alison Martin

Stories and Smiles

**Our Swaffham Prior term-time toddler group
for under 5's and their carers.**

Mrs Rowley, (Nursery Teacher) and Charlotte (local childminder), would love to welcome you and children in your care to be a part of our community group. Pop by for stories, crafts, play and social time at Swaffham Prior school. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, nanny, childminder, foster carer or any one who cares for a child on a Thursday, we would love to see you there!

Session Dates:

5th February, 12th February



BON MOT NUMBER 167

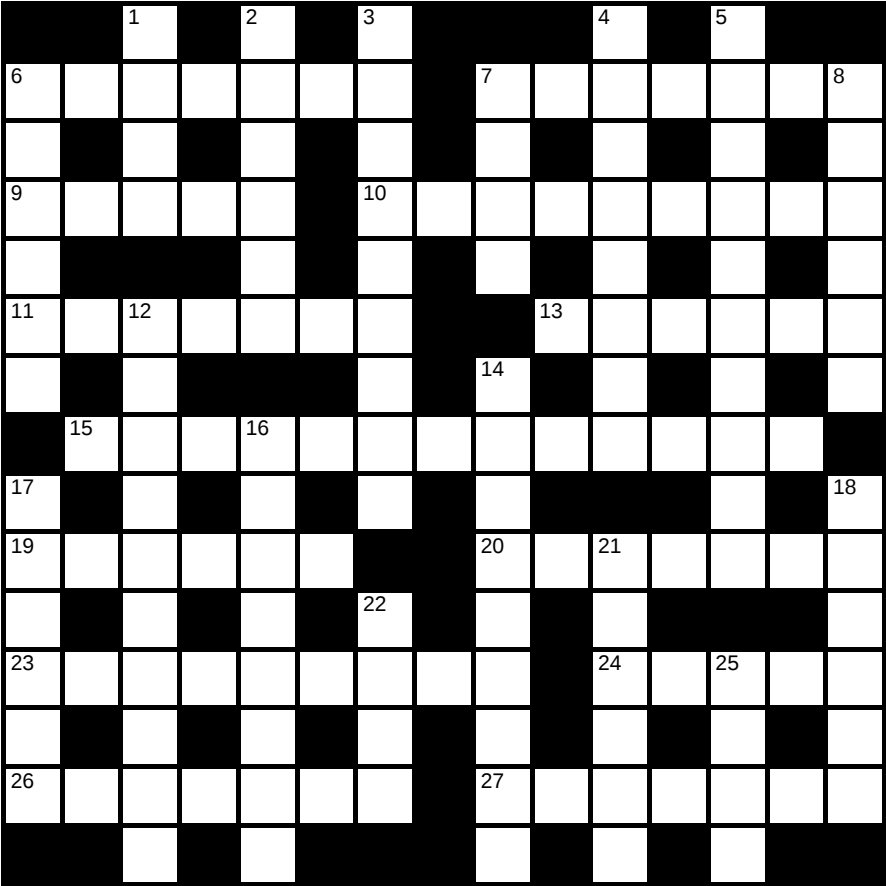
“No one will ever win the battle of the sexes; there’s too much fraternizing with the enemy.”

Henry A. Kissinger, 1923—2023

Crossword Number 235

Compiled by CALVIN

This month’s puzzle is a simple cryptic crossword. Send your answers to the editors by 18th January 2026. The sender of the first correct solution out of the hat will win a free Sunday Lunch at *The Red Lion*—See the pub manager for full details. Emailed solutions are acceptable but please include “CROSSWORD” and the crossword number in the header.



Name:.....

Address:.....

.....Tel:.....

Across

- 6 Take stance that amateur could not put forward? (7)
- 7 Guts of pair approaching lair, with third to spare (7)
- 9 Grabbing tool, tool one needs great skill to get started with (5)
- 10 Locomotive ordered to destination when I move backwards - it's only temporary (9)
- 11 Element of multi-hut arrangement has a small omission (7)
- 13 In favour of established national park (6)
- 15 Enigmatic CIA deftly loan a ruin (4,4,5)
- 19 That man copied me in piles (6)
- 20 Former Greek island to discharge waste (7)
- 23 Spiritual leader to mail a Lada in pieces (5,4)
- 24 Captain in the Antarctic whose cereal needed more energy (5)
- 26 Honest greed, for example on moon, briefly (7)
- 27 Build road - progress! (4,3)
- 7 US policy on card distribution (4)
- 8 Sharp ascent, turning ten pairs at first (6)
- 12 Mashed guava, with result that is goalless, endless, and fruitless (10)
- 14 Parliamentary force has mardy mole in disarray (5,4)
- 16 Wind and waves moving together as one deletes fusion (3,5)
- 17 Shaman heading to underworld, with ghosts! (6)
- 18 Top US state (6)
- 21 Conceals oil cask I'm missing in confusion (6)
- 22 Iowa veterans concealing music genre? (4)
- 25 Drag North, to Welwyn, perhaps (4)

Down

- 1 Lunar phase, a second leg (4)
- 2 Asia's noble heart, ascending with controlled growth? (6)
- 3 Books experiment with a set of chess pieces - at last! (9)
- 4 Heard this number, cursed and renounced (8)
- 5 Regarding green tea, a blend that can heal (10)
- 6 18 possibly has nothing to pat - crazy! (6)

Solution to crossword no. 234

C	U	B	S	C	O	U	T		I	S	O	B	A	R
O		I		A		N		E		A		R		E
I	N	V	I	T	E	D		P	E	N	S	I	O	N
F		O				E		I		D		T		A
F	L	U	S	T	E	R	E	D		C	H	A	R	M
E		A		I		G		E		A		I		E
U	N	C	O	M	P	R	O	M	I	S	I	N	G	
R				E		A		I		T				C
	C	O	C	K	A	D	O	O	D	L	E	D	O	O
S		P		E		U		L		E		E		N
C	O	P	S	E		A		C	O	U	S	T	I	C
R		O		P		T		G				C		O
A	U	S	T	E	R	E		I	R	I	D	I	U	M
P		E		R		S		S		R		N		M
E	L	D	E	S	T			S	T	R	A	G	G	L

We congratulate Jenny Brand, the winner of last month's competition, who will receive a prize certificate from the editors. Honourable mentions go to Colin Dailly, Sue Jackson, Julian Luttrell, Robert Nunn, Dainin O'Dowd and Jo Pumfrey.

Charlotte Cane MP

.In early 2025 I set up a new network bringing together publicans and people working across our local hospitality sector. Ever since, I've been raising concerns about the pressures they face – and listening closely to what's really happening on the ground.



Pubs, cafés, restaurants and small venues aren't just businesses. In villages and market towns, they are community hubs: places where people meet, celebrate, and look out for one another. When a rural pub closes, something far bigger than a balance sheet is lost. Yet many are now operating on wafer-thin margins, hit by rising energy costs, staff shortages, falling footfall and a cost-of-living crisis that has priced too many people out of life's small joys.

That's why I've been calling for urgent action to support hospitality and high streets. Together with colleagues, I've urged the Chancellor to cut VAT for pubs, restaurants, accommodation and attractions from 20% to 15%, helping businesses survive. We're also calling for the main levy on household energy bills to be removed and funded through a windfall tax on big banks. Together, this £12bn package would put around £270 back into families' pockets to spend locally.

While the Chancellor ignored these calls at the Budget, there are signs the Government may be preparing a climbdown on planned business rates rises specifically for pubs. From the unsustainable jobs tax to spiralling energy bills, too many local publicans hold shared their concerns that they could be facing closure if relief does not come soon.

Alongside this national campaigning, I'm proud of the enterprise and community-led initiatives in our constituency. It was a pleasure to attend the grand opening of the Wilburton Community Shop – a brilliant example of residents creating a vital local service. I've also enjoyed visiting Toppings Booksellers in Ely and hosting locally based Xampla in Parliament.



Charlotte Cane (second from left) with publicans from across the constituency at her recent Publicans' Network event, hosted at the Black Horse in Rampton

Do you run a local business – in hospitality or otherwise? I want to hear from you. Email me at

charlotte.cane.mp@parliament.uk

Backing local businesses means tackling the cost of living, supporting innovation, and standing up for the places that hold our communities together.

Warm wishes,

Charlotte

P.S. This is just a snippet – to keep up with everything I'm doing, sign up to my newsletter at

bit.ly/newsfromcharlotte



There was hardly any activity at the Council in December, but January is full of meetings.

SAFE DISPOSAL OF BATTERIES

East Cambridgeshire District Council is launching a campaign to remind the public not to discard batteries in recycling or black bags, after a bin lorry caught fire. While it is not known exactly what caused the blaze the crews suspect a discarded battery is to blame.

Every year over 1,200 fires are caused nationally by hidden and loose batteries being thrown in with general rubbish and recycling. As well as loose batteries, many are hidden inside everyday electricals, like children's toys, alarm clocks, vapes and electric toothbrushes.

If disposed of in this way, batteries can get crushed or punctured in the bin lorries. This releases chemicals which come into contact with the air and can start a serious fire. Battery fires are particularly dangerous as the lithium in them releases its own oxygen. This intensifies the fire and makes it more difficult to extinguish.

Sadly, nearly half of UK adults are unaware this can lead to fires. As well as endangering lives, the fires can cause air pollution spikes, disrupt bin collection rounds and cause damage to lorries which can be expensive to repair.

Anything with a plug, battery or cable can be reused or recycled - including the plugs, batteries and cables themselves. If possible, remove batteries from electricals and recycle them separately. If this is not possible, recycle the whole electrical at your nearest electrical recycling point.

Search Recycle Your Electricals to find all your local electrical and battery drop off points www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk. For us it's the Burwell Coop

Or use their postcode locator to find your local battery and electrical recycling point <https://bit.ly/3JIdTQ4>

Surgeries

Wednesday 25 February 2026 from half past six to half past seven o'clock at Bottisham Sports and Social Club, Downing Court followed by socialising at the Bell in the same village.

**Cllrs Charlotte Cane MP (charlotte.cane@eastcambs.gov.uk) and
John Trapp (john.trapp@eastcambs.gov.uk)**



Notes from the Parish Council January Meeting

The Parish Council meeting of the 8th January was chaired by Cllr Covill and attended by 5 parish councillors and 3 members of the public.

Reports

East Cambs District Council – Cllr Cane attended and gave a verbal report.

ECDC have set aside funding for Neighbourhood Plans – up to £5000 a parish.

ECDC has published its annual Authority Monitoring Report and Housing Land Supply Statement. The Monitoring Report reports 635 net housing completions took place in 2024/25, mostly in Ely, Soham and Littleport and none in Swaffham Prior. The council has a 6.1 year land supply, above the five-year minimum requirement.

ECDC have launched a campaign for the proper disposal of batteries as they can cause fires when thrown away with ordinary rubbish.

The Planning Committee, Audit Committee, Operational Services Committee and Finance and Assets Committee all meet in January 2026.

The Chair invited questions. Cllr Latchford asked if there were long term plans available for Burwell around the electricity substation. Cllr Cane said there are none publicly available.

Parish Councillors' Reports

Cllr Gynn noted that play equipment had been left out overnight in the school playground on further occasions and the shed where equipment is kept was left open.

Cllr Latchford noted that the last bus to Cambridge has been consistently early in leaving and will report this to the A-B1102 group to feed back to the bus company.

Clerk's Report

Bus shelter. The clerk noted that the PC had the power to put in a bus stop, even in a conservation area (permitted development under the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended), Part 12 (Development by local authorities), Class A (The erection or construction by or on behalf of a local authority of (b) passenger shelters)). As yet information about the number of people using that stop hasn't been made available.

The clerk and Cllr Lambert have walked around Swaffham Prior noting where vegetation from gardens is overgrowing paths and have noted 17 properties to write to regarding this. It was agreed to wait until after Cllr Lamberts's letter to the Crier had been published and to give people time to respond.

Matters arising from previous minutes (for information only)

Cllr John Trapp had emailed to clarify his view on the Greenway and Swaffham Prior PCs view of it. Cllr Latchford noted that he had responded fully to the GCP regarding safety concerns on previous occasions.

Cllr Covill noted that 2 of the 11 potholes reported on Station Road had been repaired.

Correspondence

Email from ECDC confirming the pub as an Asset of Community Value. SKP noted that reapplication will start in 3 years.

Email reminder from CCC of 16th January deadline for Local Highways Initiatives applications for 2026/27. Noted.

Email asking for residents' response to survey on police funding – deadline 11th January. Noted.

Letter from Kingsway Solar regarding a targeted consultation. SKP noted that there were no further details of the path taken by the cables across Swaffham Prior parish.

Planning Applications

25/01298/FUL Convert current train carriage into 1 short term holiday let, extend with a single story extension to provide additional floor space. The Smock Mill Tower, Mill Hill, Swaffham Prior, CB25 0JZ.

The PC asked that the ECDC Conservation Officer examine the effects of the single storey extension on the curtilage of the listed building.

Appointment of the Internal Auditor

The PC agreed that Simon Seabrook be appointed Internal Auditor for Swaffham Prior Parish Council for 2025-26.

Produced from unapproved minutes and may contain errors; approved minutes can be found at <http://www.swaffham-prior.co.uk/pc/minutes.html> If anyone would like any further information on any of the above items, please contact the Clerk.

The next monthly Parish Council meeting will be on Thursday, 12th February 2026 starting at 7.30pm at the Village Hall. All are welcome to attend.

FREECYCLE

If you have any offers or wants, please contact me on jun.thompson@tiscali.co.uk, phone on 01223 813362, or drop a note through 23 Longmeadow. Everything is free and nothing is expected in return.



Offered

Transparent plastic storage boxes, 18litre, with lids, in excellent condition. I have 10 of these. Most of a tin (750ml) of paint in Farrow and Ball 251, Churlish Green, water-based eggshell, suitable for indoor woodwork. Contact: Lindsey Shaw-Miller, 07773 027155

2 drawer filing cabinet, to hold 40cm wide hanging files. Lucinda Collison 07531 021733

Two Collectable China Dolls. (Original boxes. One with blonde hair and pinstripe blue and cream dress. one with brunette plaited hair, burgundy satin dress. Fully dressed. Soft bodied. Never been on display or held.) Theresa. 07764928168.

Wanted

Lift wanted/offered from Swaffham Bulbeck to Addenbrookes (usually Tues, Weds, Fri, to arrive at Addenbrookes 7am and leaving 8pm). Please contact Jane 07800 934585 for more information.

News from St Mary's Church

A small group of people put on fundraising and social events during the year in support of the church and other good causes. Coming up in 2026 we have:



Tuesday 17 February **Pancake Party**, Village Hall, 2-4pm; something new for half term! Pancake races, carnival mask decorating, decorating and eating of pancakes! £3 each or £10 for family ticket. Please book if possible – admin@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk. Please notify us of allergies if attending.

3 dates in Lent **Lent Lunches** – for Mara projects; 12 noon, venues to be decided. Soup lunch. 27 February in Lode; 16 March in Swaffham Prior; one further to be confirmed. Please book:

admin@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk

Ready for Easter **Simmel Cakes** – home made in Swaffham Prior.

Early April **Spuds in Buckets** – grow the heaviest yield in your bucket from the one potato provided!

18 April **Quiz Night** – team quiz with jacket potato supper.

16 May **Village Feast** - bric-a-brac stall selling quality pre-loved items.

June **Strawberry Teas** – book a table at this year's elegant event.

5 September **Dog Show** – fun for pooches at the Village Harvest Show; Spuds in Buckets weigh-in

3 October **Harvest Supper** – for Mara and St Mary's – in the Village Hall from 6.30pm – a feast, and entertainment for all the family.

17 October **Quiz Night** – more fiendish questions!

20 November **Christmas Café & Market** – for a local charity and St Mary's – start your Christmas shopping, support local businesses and eat wonderful cake in the Village Hall.

To be confirmed **Year of Quizzing** – twelve quizzes sent by email – watch this space!

In addition, we will support the Royal British Legion at our Remembrance Service on 8 November, and the Children's Society at Christingle on 13 December.

2027

22 October 2027 marks 125 years since St Mary's was re-opened as the parish church and we will hold events to commemorate the anniversary.

Services in February 2026

Sunday 1 February – Presentation of Christ in the Temple

9am Online service on Zoom
10.30am Holy Communion, Bottisham

Wednesday 4 February

8pm CbyC, a contemplative service, online on Zoom

Sunday 8 February – Second Sunday before Lent

9am Online service on Zoom
Holy Communion, Quy
10.30am Holy Communion BCP, Swaffham Prior

Sunday 15 February – Sunday next before Lent

9am Online service on Zoom
Morning Prayer, Quy
10.30am Holy Communion, Swaffham Bulbeck
Morning Prayer, Bottisham

Wednesday 18 February – Ash Wednesday

12 noon Holy Communion, Swaffham Bulbeck

Sunday 22 February – First Sunday of Lent

9am Online service on Zoom
Holy Communion BCP, Swaffham Bulbeck
10.30am Holy Communion, Swaffham Prior

Each Thursday

10.30am Holy Communion, Lode

Rev'd Canon Max Osborne max9@btinternet.com; 01223 481187 (Rest day: Tuesday)

Churchwardens: Bottisham: bottisham@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk; 01223 604019

Lode: lode@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk; 01223 811222

Quy: quy@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk; 01223 812652

Swaffham Bulbeck: bulbeck@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk; 01223 812525; 01223 811501

Swaffham Prior: prior@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk; 01638 743937

For general enquiries: admin@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk;

churchwardens@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/angleseychurches;

A Church Near You: <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/7380/benefice>

Dates for Your Diary February 2026

Wed	4	Bookclub, 6pm, 5, Lower End [15]
Thu	5	Stories & Smiles, 10.40-11.30, SP School [19]
Thu	12	Stories & Smiles, 10.40-11.30, SP School [19] PC Meeting, 7.39pm, VH [25]
Fri	13	Litter Pick, 10pm, Meet at sheds by the Playpark [6]
Mon	16	WI, 7.30pm, VH [16]
Tue	17	Pancake Party, 2-4pm, VH [2] Village Gardeners, 8pm, VH [17]
Thu	19	Mothers' Union, 2.30pm, Fassage Hall, Lode [19]
Fri	20	Coffee & Cakes, 10am - 12 noon, 41 Cage Hill [7]
Sun	22	Crier Copy Deadline and Quiz deadline [12]
Wed	25	Cllrs Surgery , 6.30-7.30pm, Bottisham Sports & Social Club + Social at the Bell [23]

Numbers in square brackets indicate page number of an accompanying article

Club	Contact	Tel/Email	Date	Time	Place
FOSPS	Becky Wilkes	07827 318351	2 nd Mon of Term	8pm	Village School
Beavers, Cubs and Scouts	Tim Doe	gsl@1st swaffhamprior scouts.org.uk	Wed (Term) Mon	5:15-6:30pm 6:30-8.00pm 7.00-8.30pm	Scout Hut
Reading Group	Brenda Wilson	743937	1 st Wed of month	6:00pm	Variable
Village Gardeners	Fiona Geraghty	07785 971853	3 rd Tues of month	8:00pm	Village Hall
WI	Kate Muscroft Kaye Lewsinski	07752011308 kayejanelew@ gmail.com	3 rd Mon of month	7.30 pm	Village Hall
Bell Ringers*	Gareth Davies	07886 323686 swaffhamprior bells@gmail.com	Every Tuesday	7.30-9.00pm	St Cyriac's



Above, the Nunns' Winning Advent Window and below, Swaffham Prior's losing (but ever valiant!) Boxing Day Hockey Team—see inside for the report.