



FRIENDS OF
DUNCHURCH
SOCIETY (FODS)

Dunchurch

VILLAGE MAGAZINE

September 2026

Issue 32



Produced by Friends of Dunchurch Society (FODS)

www.friendsofdunchurchsociety.org

Registered Charity No. 1203193

Welcome

During the summer months, Dunchurch always looks at its very best thanks to the wonderful flora that is on display for Dunchurch in Bloom. Some of this is funded and planted by individual volunteers or other village groups and compliment the hanging baskets and roadside troughs that are financed by FODS. However, keeping the flowers hydrated and looking fresh has been particularly difficult with the extended heat wave that we have experienced but again, thanks to volunteers, some of who have been from Dunchurch Park, they have just about survived. Thank you to everyone who has contributed, especially Sue Turner and Ali who always go above and beyond to keep Dunchurch looking 'tip top'. The efforts of you all are much appreciated and helps to keep the village looking at its best for both residents and visitors.



The flowers are just a small part of what makes Dunchurch such a special place to live. The numerous village groups and the spirit of the people who live here contribute enormously to creating a vibrant, caring and connected community. For those who wish to, Dunchurch is a village that offers countless opportunities for connecting with others and one way this can be done is by volunteering with one of our many groups. Joining and taking part in a shared responsibility or helping to support and organise an event helps to create stronger relationships and a more positive environment for everyone and it offers a great way to combat loneliness.

However, community spirit knows no age limits and nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the article on page 9 written by Jessica. Her achievement is truly inspiring and serves as a wonderful reminder of the difference that thoughtfulness, kindness and dedication can make in improving the lives of others. Congratulations, Jessica. As our village Youth Ambassador, you have made Dunchurch incredibly proud.

FODS Make a Difference Group

By Sue Turner

As I write this, we are in our third heatwave of the year and I want to thank all of the Water Angels who have been quenching the thirst of the plants around the centre of Dunchurch. We would be grateful for more help, even if you can only water one trough, please contact me. In the meantime, I hope we've had some rain to help with hydration!

Also, thank you again to the fabulous FODS who turn up on a Sunday morning and work for an hour to keep Dunchurch tidy. If you would like to join us (we are a very sociable and friendly group) please get in touch. Thank you. Mobile **07983 345381**



Contents

The Dunchurch Oak Line.....	p4
Dunchurch & Thurlaston WI.....	p4
Dunchurch Village Magazine – Meet the Team	p6
Advertising Rates	p6
Supporting Birmingham Children's Hospital	p9
Dunchurch Pantomaniacs	p10
Leamington Hastings C of E Academy & Dunchurch Boughton C of E Infant Academy and Nursery.....	p12
My Journey into Art.....	p15
Art in Dunchurch	p18
Memories of Dunchurch Festival ..	p22
Dunchurch Band.....	p25
Fungi-phile or Fungi-phobe?	p26
The Music Ambassadors of Dunchurch Boughton CE Junior Academy.....	p31
Index of Advertisers	p33
Staddle Stones	p34
Dunchurch Baptist Church	p37
Dunchurch Nature Watch.....	p39
St Peter's Church.....	p43
Wildlife on the Allotments.....	p44
Dunchurch Photographic Society	p46
Dunchurch Festival Group	p49
Before Pugin: Bilton Grange's Forgotten Story.....	p52
Headliners Tap Class.....	p54

The Dunchurch Oak Line

This wonderful legacy of ten oak trees on The Heath (pictured on our front cover), the brain child of the late Mike Judge MBE, has been adopted by the Friends of Dunchurch Society. FODS will fund their ongoing care and work alongside arboriculturist Gavin Callard to help ensure these magnificent trees thrive for generations to come. An eleventh tree, the Queen's Oak, will also be cared for as part of this commitment.

Visit the Friends of Dunchurch Society website to read the full story of the Oak Line.

December Article

Early in September and with the kind permission of the Parish Council, FODS will be unveiling their memorial to Mike on the reverse of the village noticeboard. A full article about this will follow in the next issue.

Dunchurch & Thurlaston WI

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Dunchurch Village Magazine – Meet the Team

Mark Udall, Graphic Designer

Born and raised in West Bromwich, home of the mighty Albion*, I trained as a graphic designer at Coventry University in the 90s which led to a job with an educational publisher in Leamington Spa. One thing led to another and here I am 30 years later having lived all that time in the surrounding area.



Along with my wife and daughter, huge black panther of a pet cat and 5ft long pet snake, we've lived in Dunchurch since 2018. Given that this is the fifth house (so far) across mine and Sharon's relationship, I can honestly say that Dunchurch is easily the most welcoming community in all that time. I love that I can be watering

the plants in front of the house and passers-by will stop for a chat, something increasingly rare these days.

We both work for the University of Warwick and spend our days keeping on top of the house and garden. Additionally, I've been doing weekly pizza nights for over 25 years, I'm obsessed with Japan and

have been learning Japanese for over three years (though I don't think I speak it any more fluently than a native toddler).

**Founder members of the Football League, 5 FA Cups, 1 League Title, 1 League Cup, 2 Charity Shields, and no I don't care that all of this happened before 1970, it all counts.*

Advertising rates

Professionally delivered to homes and businesses in Dunchurch Village including Toft, Lime Tree Village, Dunchurch Hall and also Onley Park. Over 1400 copies distributed each quarter, with an estimated readership of 3000.

Digital advertising included free of charge: advertisers can have, if required, a post on FODS Facebook Group page once a week on 'Thankful Thursday' – a useful update message for you and an effective opportunity to advertise for staff vacancies etc locally at no cost.

Size	Dimensions	Price
Full page	137mm x 197mm	£100
Half page landscape	137mm x 97mm	£50
Half page portrait	66mm x 197mm	£50
Quarter page	66mm x 97mm	£25

Extra copies of the magazine available at:

Anne-Marie's, Baptist Church, Library, Post Office, Rugby Road Newsagents, Village Hall, Wanda's

To place an order email fodsads1@gmail.com

Deadline for September 2026 issue: 31 July



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Supporting Birmingham Children's Hospital

Hi, my name is Jessica, I'm 10 years old, and I'm incredibly proud to be this year's Dunchurch Youth Ambassador.

In June, at the Dunchurch Fete, I organised a fundraising stall to support the Burns Ward at Birmingham Children's Hospital. I'm delighted to say, thanks to the amazing generosity of everyone who came along, we raised a fantastic £514.

The charity is very close to my heart because one of my friends spent time on the Burns Ward last year. He told me that there wasn't always much for the children to do while they were staying in hospital, so I wanted to help raise money so the ward could buy toys, games and other activities to make their stay a little brighter and more enjoyable.

At the fete, together we ran a lucky dip stall, sold 3D-printed toys and also had a collection box for donations. We were overwhelmed by how kind and supportive everyone was. Whether you bought something from our stall, had a go at the lucky dip or made a donation, every contribution helped us reach our total. Thank you so much to everyone who supported our fundraising – We really couldn't have done it without you.

A few weeks later, I had the privilege of visiting Birmingham Children's Hospital with my friend to present the Burns Ward with the £514 we had raised. It was a very special moment, and I felt incredibly proud of what we had achieved together. I hope

the money will help provide fun activities and equipment that will bring smiles to the children staying on the ward and make their time in hospital a little easier.

Being Dunchurch Youth Ambassador is a real honour, and I'm excited about the year ahead. I hope to continue supporting local causes, helping others and making a positive difference in our wonderful village. I'm looking forward to getting involved in community events and encouraging other young people to see how even small acts of kindness can make a big difference.

Thank you once again to everyone who supported me. Your kindness and generosity will help make a real difference to the children on the Burns Ward. Jessica x



Dunchurch Pantomaniacs *Where are they now? – Simon Beck*

By Sue Protheroe

Nothing delights us more than seeing one of our young performers doing well and going on to make a successful career, especially in the arts. When we started in 1990, our first musical accompanist and co musical director was Simon Beck who, after leaving school, left us to forge his own career in the arts industry.

Now an accomplished musical director, conductor pianist and singer, Simon has worked on numerous productions in the West End including *The Rocky Horror Show*, *West Side Story*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Chicago*, *Miss Saigon* and *Les Misérables*.



More recently, Simon has been helping others as a vocal and performance coach where he gives one to one mentoring for those wishing to improve their skills and perhaps, even start their own journey in the entertainment industry. For his pupils, Simon's solo album, *The Courage of a Dreamer* carries a

wonderful message of determination to follow your own dreams, pushing past any uncertainty and fear of failure.

When not coaching or accompanying other artists, Simon continues to tour with his own show and in November of this



year, we are delighted, he will be coming home and performing at Dunchurch Village Hall when you can expect to hear many of your favourite showtunes from hit shows as well as some hilarious behind-the-scenes stories featuring Julie Walters and Victoria Wood.

Please note: Tickets are solely available from Eventbrite. See poster for further details and find out more about Simon and his career by visiting simonbeckmusician.com

Refreshments will also be available from the Pantomaniacs beer and wine bar.

Cheque Donation: - With the exception of a little money held over for our next production, we raise money for local good causes. Recently, Our music director

Barry Nichols (pictured) was delighted to present a cheque for £500 to Rugby New Directions in support of their work with individuals who have learning difficulties.

Auditions: - Sunday 11th October, 10am at Dunchurch Village Hall for principal roles in *Sleeping Beauty*. (There are no auditions necessary for those wanting to join our chorus.)

Whether it be on stage or part of our wonderful backstage crew, we would love to hear from you. If you would like to be a part of our special, 36th anniversary production in January, email sueprotheroe@ymail.com

We are a community group raising money for charity and you are most welcome to join us.



Leamington Hastings C of E Academy Dunchurch Boughton C of E Infant Academy and Nursery

By Suzanne Marson, Headteacher



At the time of writing, another successful academic year has just come to an end and what a wonderful year it has been! Our children have, as always, been a credit to the school, embracing every opportunity with enthusiasm, kindness and a real love of learning. Our Year 2 pupils rounded off their time at the Infant School with a fantastic end-of-year play, delivering a brilliant performance based on the life of a child and teacher in school. They also enjoyed celebrating this special milestone with an end of year disco and barn dance, creating lasting memories before moving on to their next adventure. Our pre-school children also marked an important milestone by 'graduating' from nursery. They delighted their families

with a wonderful performance during the final week of term and are now looking forward to starting school in September.

Although the children and staff are enjoying a well-deserved summer break, there is still plenty happening at school. Throughout the holidays, a number of improvement projects are taking place, including redecorating and refurbishing several classrooms to ensure they are bright and welcoming for the new academic year.

One of the most exciting developments is the creation of a new spiritual and sensory garden within our school grounds. This special outdoor space will provide children with a peaceful area for reflection, wellbeing and sensory exploration including outdoor musical instruments and planting spaces. We are incredibly grateful to the Boughton Trust for their generous support and funding, which has made this wonderful project possible.

Alongside this, work is also underway to install a large new climbing frame, giving the children even more opportunities to enjoy active play, develop their physical skills and have fun outdoors. We look forward to welcoming everyone back in September to enjoy these exciting new additions to our school.

At the end of this academic year, we need to say thank you to many people; to the

children – it is always a privilege to be a part of a child's educational journey; to the staff for everything that they do for the children. They always go above and beyond and are part of what makes Dunchurch Boughton C of E Infant Academy a special place to be. To our parents and amazing PTA and Governor volunteers, thank you for your never-ending support. Last but not least, thank you to everyone within the Dunchurch community who supports the school and enables our children to grow and flourish. We really do appreciate it.



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My Journey into Art

By Julia Sanders

From Pavement Artist to Textile Artist. At the age of five, armed with a handful of coloured chalks, I spent hours drawing on every concrete slab in the backyard of our home in Grantham. From then on, my family affectionately called me “The Pavement Artist”—and that was the beginning of my lifelong artistic journey.

My passion for art continued through school, where I studied GCE Art, mastering the technique of manuscript writing, before taking A-level art with a focus on drawing, imaginative painting and the history of art.

I then trained as a teacher, specialising in dress and design. While living and studying in London during the 1970s, I was fortunate to have easy access to the city’s wonderful museums and galleries. I spent many inspiring hours at the Victoria and Albert Museum studying its remarkable collections of textiles and costumes, which formed the basis of my final-year dissertation.



After teaching for two years in Hertfordshire, I left the UK to work with Voluntary Service Overseas in Kenya, where I again taught what was then known as needlework. My Kenyan students loved the vibrant colours of African fabrics, and their enthusiasm inspired my own appreciation of these beautiful textiles. With no electricity available, we all became highly skilled at using treadle sewing machines powered entirely by foot!

On returning to the UK and gaining my Master’s Degree in Education, my career took me into special education, where my creativity found a different outlet. For more than 30 years, I developed imaginative ways of teaching the newly introduced National Curriculum to

students with a wide range of additional learning needs. When I retired from teaching, I finally had the opportunity to return to my first love: exploring the many possibilities of creative textile art.

Today I work as a mixed-media textile artist, creating pieces that combine free-motion machine stitching with hand embroidery. I often incorporate paint, print and collage into my work, seeing the sewing machine needle and thread as simply another drawing tool. By

combining a wide variety of threads and fibres, I aim to create texture, depth and rich colour. My inspiration comes from the simple beauty of the everyday world around me.

Alongside my artwork, I am a trustee of Friends of Ibba Girls School, supporting girls' education in South Sudan. I also enjoy preparing my garden each year for Art in Dunchurch, the popular summer art event held in the heart of the village.





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Art in Dunchurch

By Julia Sanders

Art in Dunchurch celebrated its eighth year with a wonderful official opening on Saturday 20th June 2026 by the Mayor of Rugby, Councillor Nooria Sayana. In her warm and enthusiastic speech, the Mayor spoke about her three themes for the year—**connection, compassion, and cohesion**—and how Art in Dunchurch reflects each of them so well. After cutting the ribbon to declare the event open, she took time to meet every artist, chatting with them about their work and showing a genuine interest in their creativity.

That was the perfect start to six fantastic days celebrating the talents of artists from Dunchurch, Rugby, and the surrounding area. Set in the beautiful gardens of



Inglenook, in the heart of the village, visitors enjoyed the opportunity to meet the artists, learn about their inspiration, and watch many of them at work.

Among those giving demonstrations were willow artist Deb, wire sculptor Jane—both exhibiting at Art in Dunchurch for the first time—and Japanese Saori weaver Amanda, whose colourful weaving attracted plenty of interest.



Throughout the week, visitors were also treated to a variety of live music. Performances by the Everdon Ukulele Band, the Artichoke Consort Recorder Group, guitarist and singer Gillian, and the ever-popular Paul and John from After Dark Jazz helped create a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, with our jazz and cocktail evening proving to be a particular highlight.

No Art in Dunchurch would be complete without a visit to the Courtyard Café. Decorated with work by Year 4 pupils from Dunchurch Junior School and led by Emma, volunteers served delicious homemade cakes and refreshments throughout the week. Thanks to the



generosity of our visitors, the café raised over £2,000 for our two chosen charities, Hope 4 Rugby and Ibba Girls School in South Sudan.

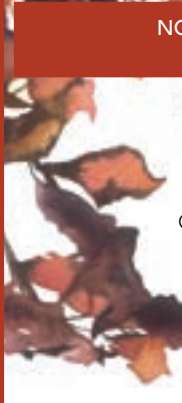
Finally, a heartfelt thank you goes to all our wonderful volunteers, whose enthusiasm and hard work—often in very hot weather—helped make the event such a success. We are also incredibly grateful

to our generous sponsors, whose continued support makes Art in Dunchurch possible: Art Friends Warwickshire, Njoy Art, Kitchens Inc, Dunchurch Festival Group, and Courtyard Dentists.

Thank you to everyone who exhibited, volunteered, performed, sponsored, or simply came along to support us. We look forward to welcoming you back next year!

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Memories of Dunchurch Festival

By Ann Wright

The Dunchurch Festival Group asked Steve Prime and Ann Wright if they had any information on previous festivals. So, on fete day 2026, we had a stall sharing photos, scrapbooks and press cuttings from the first 50 years.

We had a delightful afternoon, with so many people coming along to share their memories. It was wonderful to catch up with friends and neighbours we hadn't seen for years, while also remembering those who are sadly no longer with us.

The afternoon was filled with treasured memories, warm conversations and plenty of laughter. We also invited everyone to write down some recollections so they could be included in the village magazine.

Here is a selection.

- I miss the floats!
- I remember seeing my whole class here and they were eating candy floss and I was too.
- I miss sleeping with Phil in the marquee! (This was from a male committee member who was providing overnight security with Phil!)
- My dad fell asleep when he was supposed to be guarding the supplies.
- Happy memories of driving Terry John around the village on the morning of the fete with the loudspeakers.



- Growing up as a child, I would be given a black bag to collect rubbish at the end of fete day and when it was full, I got some sweets!
- I remember the pram race and winning it with my son. The year of the hurricane when the gazebos all blew away.
- Lovely to see some photos of my sister as Dunchurch princess.
- So lovely to see the photos and the

memories they bring. My Nana, Rae Williams and Auntie Nance used to have a stall every year.

- I remember my daughter who would have been about 2, and I dressed up as char ladies with boobs, rollers in her hair and a scarf, pinny and carrying a bucket and mop.
- When I was on the PTA for Dunchurch School and the float for the parade was parked on our drive. Everyone came on the Friday evening to decorate with many balloons. I woke up Saturday morning and every balloon had popped! I set to blowing up many more!
- Posting jumble sale slips down Daventry Road and collecting the jumble and helping on the day.

As the afternoon was so successful, it has been suggested that we should repeat this next year so we are gathering extra material! If you missed your chance to



share your memories, it's not too late, you can still send them with any photos or memorabilia to **dunchurcheventsarchive@gmail.com**

Steve and I are planning a project to collect and preserve all of these. We've already begun re-searching the archives at Rugby Library and hope to spend more time there uncovering information. While the archives are invaluable, it's the personal stories and memories that often make the history truly come alive.

Eventually we would like to make sure this archive is available to all interested villagers (past and present) and hope to have a book in the library and place it on an easily accessible website. More information to follow.

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Dunchurch Band

By Sue Turner

Dunchurch Band and Dunchurch Training Band Dynamic Brass have had a busy year so far! Sometimes a small group or sometimes the whole band, we have entertained at the following events: Dunchurch Fete Day, St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School (that was a hot afternoon)! Heart of the Shires Shopping Village (twice), Rugby Visually Impaired Persons Club, St. James Church in Southam and Daffodil Sunday in Newnham Paddox.

We have many more events coming up so please follow us on Facebook and Instagram for details and get to know our band members with Who's Who and listen to the band on Tooting Tuesdays!

Have you heard us? Are you interested? If you've never played before or you would like to return to playing, please come along. We have instruments you can borrow or, you can just sit and listen if you're not sure.

See the poster for Training Band details or join us every Tuesday 7.30pm-9.30pm for main band rehearsals in the WI Hall.

If you would like to book either band for your event please contact Liz on **07971 296804**

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Fungi-phile or fungi-phobe?

By *Leanne Warren, Wild Routes, Local Forager*

I have to admit, I am becoming a little bit obsessed with fungi.

At this time of year, I find myself looking down more often. There they are, popping up overnight in woods, verges and under trees. Tiny, enormous, beautiful and downright bizarre.

Most of us probably have a fairly limited relationship with fungi. We know the mushrooms from the supermarket, perhaps a few familiar wild ones, and for many of us, the words “mushroom” and “Beef Wellington” may now bring frightening connotations. It is a sobering reminder that alongside all the fascination and wonder, fungi deserve a healthy respect.

When I take children out on nature walks, I am often asked, “Can I eat it?” My answer is always a very definite absolutely not! There are many toxic fungi out there, and I would never encourage anyone to eat a wild

mushroom unless they are completely certain of its identification and know it to be safe. My fascination with fungi has never been about eating them; it is about noticing them, learning about them and appreciating just how extraordinary they are.

I recently read Merlin Sheldrake’s fascinating book *Entangled Life*, and it reminded me just how little I really know. I can probably identify around 40 species, which sounds quite impressive until you realise there are around 15,000 species recorded in the UK alone. Globally, scientists think there could be millions of fungal species, many still unknown to us. So really, I am only scratching the surface.

Fungi have their own kingdom, separate from plants and animals and are actually

more closely related to us than they are to plants. They play a vital role in our ecosystems, breaking down dead wood and plant material and returning nutrients to the soil. Without fungi, the world would be a very different and considerably messier place.

Mushrooms are just the fruiting body, the visible part of a much larger organism.



Beneath our feet is a hidden network of fine threads called mycelium, spreading through soil and woodland and forming extraordinary relationships with plants and trees. In Oregon, one honey fungus is thought to stretch across around 9.6 square kilometres, making it one of the largest known organisms on Earth. It is also believed to be thousands of years old, giving you a sense of just how much of the fungal world is happening out of sight.



Fungi are woven into our lives in ways we might not even notice. Yeast makes our bread rise and helps produce beer and wine. Fungi have given us medicines such as penicillin and some have healing or psychoactive properties. Others are poisonous, of course, while researchers are exploring how fungi might even help clean up pollution, with some oyster mushrooms showing an ability to break down petrol based pollutants.



The more I learn, the more I realise how much I don't know. And perhaps that's what I love about fungi. They invite us to slow down and look a little closer.

So next time you're out walking, have a peek under a fallen log or around the base of a tree. You don't need to know what you're looking at or even touch it. Just notice it.

Because perhaps the more we look, the more we begin to see the natural world not as separate things, but as an extraordinary, interconnected web of life.

And I, for one, am very happy to be getting lost in it.



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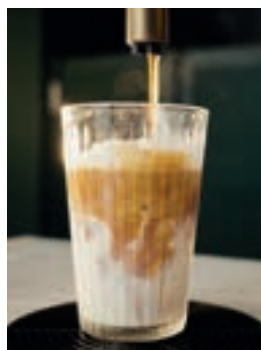
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The Music Ambassadors of Dunchurch Boughton CE Junior Academy

By Louise Fairbrother, Year 6 teacher and Subject Lead for Music

I would like to shine a light on our talented Music Ambassadors at DBJA. Essentially, they are our “school choir” but following the restrictions of lockdown when large group singing was prohibited, we needed to rebuild and rebrand. It was clear, once school life got “back to normal” that we still had a group of loyal musicians who were keen to fly the flag for music, both in school and within the wider community, and so our new name was born!

We aim to give a formal performance once a term and we contribute to our church services at Christmas and Easter. Here, we are usually joined by some of our instrumentalists as well. I find that the singers will learn pretty much anything I throw at them, including gospel, folk, musical theatre, classical, pop and new compositions and arrangements I’ve created. Anything goes really! Rehearsal time is quite short and we meet on a Thursday and Friday lunchtime for around 35 minutes. This year’s cohort are a healthy size of 32 singers, spanning years 3 – 6, some of whom have been a Music Ambassador throughout their entire time at DBJA.

Over the years we have attended a variety of community events, but it was whilst we were performing at St. Andrew’s in Rugby, back in December 2022, that we met organist and conductor Dr Richard Dunster-Sigtermans. This

led to a fortuitous partnership with the Rugby Philharmonic Choir, with whom we have now sung alongside in three collaborative projects at the Temple Speech Room. Our latest concert was on Sunday 28th June, entitled “A Night on Broadway”. We sang a range of songs and the children loved it! Support from the adult choir, conductor (Laurence Panter), parents, DBJA staff and the audience really helped to make it a truly special occasion. The children shone and made memories that will hopefully stay with them for a very long time.



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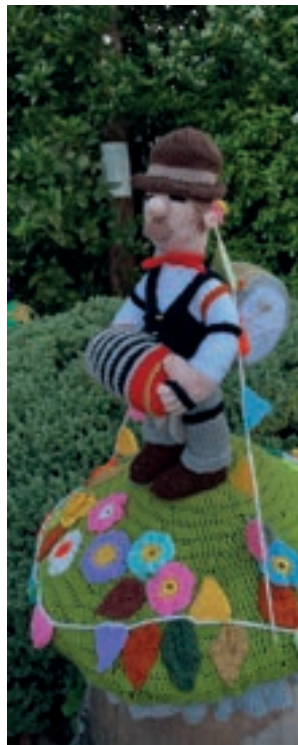
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Anew Aesthetics	page 13
Anne-Marie's Florist	page 36
Contented Soles	page 56
Courtyard Family Dental Practice	page 14
Cube Accounting	page 14
Cuppa	page 30
Dunchurch Club September Events	page 11
Dunchurch Club Coffee & Cake Morning	page 54
Dunchurch Sportsfield & Village Hall	page 32
Hallmark Luxury Care Homes	page 42
Ian Gall Pest Control	page 24
Jaime Hailstone Funeral Care	page 38
Jane Archer	page 19
JKM Swim School	page 55
Marton Museum of Coutry Bygones	page 54
nJoyArt	page 17
Rheams (Plumbing and Heating) Ltd	page 36
Rhythm Time	page 48
Rugby School Group (Bilton Grange Prep School)	page 41
Rugby Talking Newspaper	page 38
Sorted by Wendy	page 13
Steve Roberts Chimney Sweep	page 24
The Green Man	page 48
The Kitchens Inc	page 5
The Rugby Floor Company	page 36
The Rugby Montessori Nursery School	page 7
Thurlaston Meadows	page 28
VASA Volunteer Drivers	page 53
Village Green House Accommodation Solutions	page 20
Village Green Property Solutions	page 30
Wanda Fashions	page 20
WCS Care	page 8
Whoops! There Goes My Wheelie Bin	page 11
Wombles Wheels	page 24

Staddle Stones

By Sue Protheroe

The summer display of toppers paid tribute to the Dunchurch Festival Group in celebration of the 50th anniversary of their village fete. Our thanks to Alice at The Old Halt for giving FODS permission to use the stones. A Christmas display is in the planning!





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Dunchurch Baptist Church

By Rev Alistair Jones

We have come to the end of another summer and the last Bank Holiday until Christmas is now behind us. Some of us have enjoyed the really hot weather while others have found it too much. As I write this, I expect we will be enjoying cooler weather by the time it is read.

As we pass through the seasons, each one has its attributes. The colours of autumn are very special along with the autumn crops that come in. Winter gives the trees and plants a chance to conserve and renew their energy before bursting into life again in the spring. Summer, a time of warmth and growth can also be a time of water shortage which affects that growth.

We go through the various seasons in life too. We enjoy the exuberance of youth, mellowing into a more sedate middle age, before entering our retirement years. These can appear like the winter of life and sometimes be a struggle, yet we can still find pleasure in them. While these pleasures may be enjoyed as an onlooker rather than participant, they can still be fulfilling. Watching grandchildren run around and remembering when we were young. The good times we had and the friendships we made.

There is a book in the Bible called Ecclesiastes. It is believed to be written by King Solomon, King David's son.



In it he reflects upon the meaning of life. In chapter 12 he ponders old age and some of the trials it brings. He uses some colourful language to describe the body.

The keepers of the house tremble, or our knees knock together. The grinders are few, meaning we lose our teeth. Looking through the window grows dim, or our eyes do not see like they used to. The almond tree blossoms, meaning our hair goes white. I will let you work

out what he means when he talks about the grasshopper dragging himself along and desire is lost.

The writer starts the chapter with the advice of remembering our creator in the days of our youth. He ends by summing the meaning of life up in this way. Fear God and keep His commands, for this is the duty of all mankind. The writer is reminding his readers that it is good to remember God in the exuberance of youth, because it will sustain us as we get older. It also gives hope for the future, because as surely as spring follows winter, so all who believe in Jesus Christ will rise to newness of life.

Just a reminder. Our route 41 Café is open on the third Tuesday of the month, so the next café is 15th September from 9.30 – 12.



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Dunchurch Nature Watch

Dunchurch Nature Watch has had another busy few months, and we're delighted to share some of the projects we've been working on to support wildlife and connect our community with nature. We are a small, local group of volunteers who care deeply about the wildlife and green spaces that make our village so special and we are keeping a gentle watch on our local habitats and taking small practical steps to support and better understand the nature right here in Dunchurch.

One of our favourite achievements has been creating the wildlife friendly planters outside the Community Hub and Library. They have brightened the space beautifully and provide valuable food and habitat for pollinators. We'd like to say a special thank you to the residents of Dunchurch Park Hotel, who



generously volunteered their time and muscle to help unload the many bags of topsoil needed for the project. We're also looking forward to adding a sign to the planters, sharing a little information about the wildlife friendly planting, acknowledging the funding that made the project possible, and thanking everyone who helped bring it to life.

Dunchurch Nature Watch has also been collaborating with the Warwickshire branch of the national Butterfly Conservation charity to raise awareness of the threats facing our butterflies, moths, their habitats and our natural environment. During a three week period in July and August we offered butterfly themed art and craft activities for children, screened short information videos in Dunchurch Community Hub and Library and went on an exploratory butterfly spotting walk around the St. Peter's Church burial grounds.

Alongside these projects, we've been listening to what matters most to local people. In May, we held a community gathering to explore ideas for nature and green spaces in Dunchurch, followed by a survey at the Village Fete in June to hear from an even wider range of residents. Both activities highlighted the same priorities. People told us they value local wildlife, wildflowers, pollinators and green spaces, and would like to see more nature walks, wildlife projects and activities for children. There was also strong support for continuing to develop the community orchard as a peaceful space for both people and wildlife.



DUNCHURCH VILLAGE MAGAZINE

These conversations will help shape our future projects. We'd love to do more, but Dunchurch Nature Watch is currently run by just three volunteers, so we'll continue to focus on small, achievable projects that make a real difference.

If you'd like to get involved, whether by volunteering occasionally, sharing ideas or lending a hand at an event, we'd love to hear from you. Every extra pair of hands helps us turn community ideas into action and keep Dunchurch thriving for both wildlife and people.

Follow Dunchurch Nature Watch on Facebook to keep up to date with events and projects, or contact Leanne or Ann if you'd like to join our mailing list.

facebook.com/profile.php?id=61582552310286

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St Peter's Church

Well, it's certainly been a hot and dry summer! I hope you've all managed to keep cool and enjoy some of the sunshine.

I'd firstly like to say thank you to everyone who helped organise this year's Dunchurch Village Fête. It was another wonderful community event and we're so grateful to everyone who gave their time to make it such a success.

As we emerge from summer into the autumn, a couple of things have struck me about St Peter's Church.

Firstly, it's remarkably cool! Our old stone building offers a welcome escape from the heat and the church remains open during the day for anyone who would like a few moments of peace, prayer, reflection, or simply somewhere to cool down. You're always very welcome to pop in.

Secondly, the churchyard really comes to life during the summer months. It's a lovely place to sit for a while, enjoy the surroundings and find a moment of peace. If you happen to visit, you may even spot me trying to keep up with – and contain – our energetic nine-month-old Cocker Spaniel! A special thank you also goes to our gardening volunteers, who work so hard

to keep the churchyard looking so beautiful.

As I write, September is just around the corner and with it the return of schools and many of our regular church activities. I'd also like to mention that we're holding a Church Family Day on Sunday 6th September from 11am on the grass behind St Peter's. It's an opportunity to celebrate the life of St Peter's Church and whether you'd like to celebrate with us or are simply curious to find out more, we'd love to welcome you. There'll be games, a BBQ, stories and plenty of opportunity to enjoy time together as a community.

Wishing you a wonderful autumn and I hope to see you around the village soon.

With every blessing,
Rev Ian Sweeney

The eagle eyed among you might have noticed, the church clock is not working. Just to update you, we have received several quotes and are now looking at the best way to carry out the repairs. We hope to have the clock up and running in the near future.



Some of the wonderful volunteers who help to keep the churchyard looking so beautiful

Wildlife on the Allotments

By Paul Sanders, Secretary

It happened on a Tuesday morning. “Paul! Paul! Moje marchewki!” (“My carrots!”) “Kret! Kret!” (“Mole! Mole!”)

Poor, distraught Helena had discovered that a mole had pushed a molehill up right through the middle of her newly germinated carrots, decimating her pride and joy. Such are the trials of growing fruit and vegetables alongside our native wildlife.

Within weeks, I noticed molehills appearing in several nearby plots and, before long, much further afield across the site. A few months later, Frank appeared carrying a large plant pot. “Come and look at this,” he said. “I caught it by the communal greenhouse.”



There, at the bottom of the pot, was a mole that had apparently decided to see what life was like above ground. Frank took it away from the growing area and released it in one of the wilder corners of the allotment. No doubt it will be back, searching for the tasty worms that live amongst the carrots and brassicas.

Several allotment holders have established wildlife ponds which, each spring, teem with tadpoles. These eventually develop into froglets before dispersing across the allotments, where they help themselves to a plentiful supply of insects. Only this month (June), I came across a toad – something I had not seen on the allotments for many years. Strangely, it was sitting in the doorway of the machine container. It was gently relocated in the hope that it would seek out and consume some of the gardeners’ insect pests.



Rich has set up a wildlife camera and is already capturing great video footage of a brace of foxes sniffing around the plots and a pair of muntjac exploring the area. Its good to see that they are keeping to the paths rather than wandering on plots.

While it is wonderful to be surrounded by such interesting native wildlife, enthusiasm can fade slightly when the animals decide to sample your carefully nurtured crops. My sweetcorn harvest has suffered several attacks over the years. At first, mice were the culprits, taking only a few tentative nibbles. More recently, muntjac deer have taken rather larger



mouthfuls. It was only a few years ago that Seb's strawberry patch was found to be satisfying the appetites of two visiting deer. The most devastating incident I've seen was a row upon row of potatoes lying strewn across multiple beds. On closer inspection you would have concluded with the size of the bites and claw marks on the tubers that a bear was on the loose. We finally realised that badgers were the culprit but failed to determine whether Charlottes or King Edwards were their favourite spud.

Perhaps the most amusing wildlife encounter began with an email from one of our members: "Please be advised that we have seen a snake on one of the plots. Picture attached. Google advises that this is a Diamond Water Snake, which is not common in the UK. Please advise what needs to be done in such a scenario. Do we need to bring this to the RSPCA's attention?"

A few weeks later, I happened to pass the plot where the snake had been spotted. Adrian, the plot holder, was working there, so I mentioned the incident to him. After he had finished laughing, he explained the reason for his amusement. One of his daughters has a passion for snakes and owns quite a collection of realistic plastic toy snakes. It just so happened that she had accidentally left one of them on the allotment. The mystery of the rare Diamond Water Snake was solved, and the allotment's reputation for attracting unusual wildlife remained intact.



Dunchurch Photographic Society

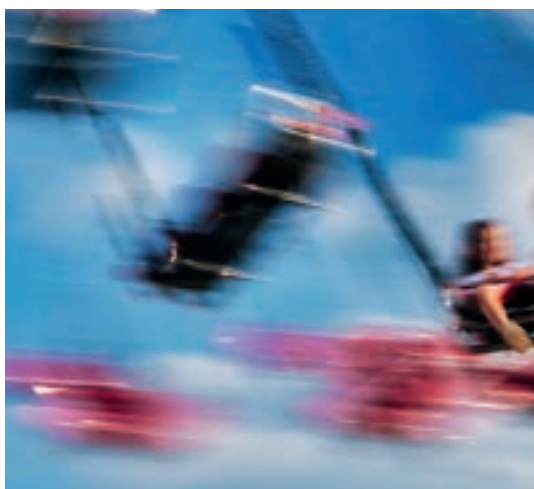
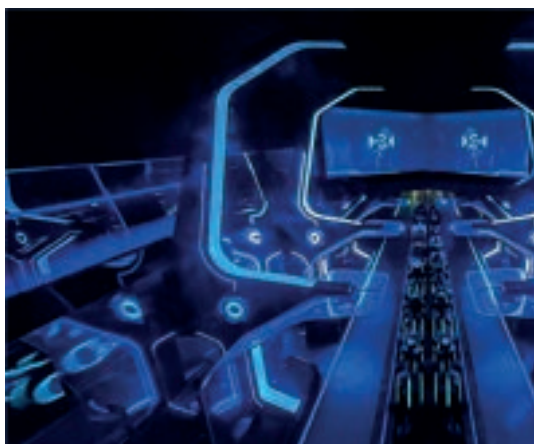
By Warren Strickland

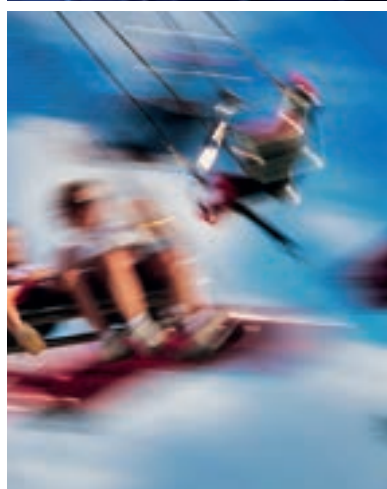
This year marks a very special milestone for Dunchurch Photographic Society as we celebrate our Golden Anniversary. For 50 years, the Society has brought together people with a shared love of photography, creativity and friendship.

The Society was founded in 1976 after local photographer Karl Hughes exhibited his work at the Dunchurch Fête. The exhibition inspired the idea of creating a local camera club, and after an enthusiastic response from residents, the Society was officially launched on 21 October 1976 by the Mayor and Mayoress of Rugby. Karl became our first chairman, and meetings began at the W.I. Hall in Dunchurch – a venue we are proud to still call home today.

Since those early days, the Society has gone from strength to strength, offering weekly meetings from September to April, inspiring guest speakers, practical workshops and friendly competitions. Whether you're a complete beginner or an experienced photographer, you'll always find a warm welcome, plenty of encouragement and the opportunity to develop your skills while making new friends.

As we celebrate our golden anniversary, we look forward to honouring our rich history while welcoming new members to be part of our future. Find out more about our celebrations, meetings and activities at www.dunchurchps.com or follow Dunchurch Photographic Society on social media. Here's to 50 years of photography, creativity and community—and many more to come.







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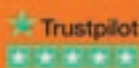
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Dunchurch Festival Group

By Guy Watt, Chairman

As we reflect on what has been another successful fete, it is true to say the weather was perfect and once again the fete was very well attended by the village.

From the vast array of stalls to the vintage cars and military vehicles on display, it was wonderful to see the field full. The entertainment in the arena was excellent and it is always a pleasure to see local talent being given the chance to entertain.

Sadly, this year the Dunchurch Festival committee lost one of its most revered members in Mike Judge. It was one of Mike's wishes that we invited the Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire to open the fete and I know how much Mike would have wanted to have been there himself.

As the fete celebrated its 50th year, the committee had the opportunity to plant an oak tree to commemorate this milestone. The committee also planted

an oak tree to celebrate the life of Mike Judge. During the fete, the committee, family and friends of Mike went to the green area of The Heath, accompanied by the Lord Lieutenant and planted both trees. It will be wonderful to watch them grow over the coming years. Mike will be sorely missed but his memory will always be in the hearts of those people who knew him and we will remember him as we watch the oak trees grow.

All that remains is for myself as chair of the Festival committee to thank everyone involved with the fete for all the hard work you do in helping us make it the success that it continues to be. We now look forward to next year and our 51st Fete!





Before Pugin: Bilton Grange's Forgotten Story

By Jayne Brumpton, Humanities Teacher and Archivist, Bilton Grange Prep School

Today, Bilton Grange is synonymous with the magnificent Gothic Revival mansion designed by Augustus Pugin. Yet the famous house is only the latest chapter in a story stretching back centuries. Long before Washington Hibbert commissioned Pugin's masterpiece, generations of landowners shaped the estate we know today. So who were they?

The story begins around 1150, when King Stephen granted a large portion of his land at Bilton to the Cistercian monks of Pipewell Abbey in Northamptonshire. Although many miles from the monastery itself, Bilton became one of its outlying farms, supplying income and produce to the religious community for nearly four centuries.

The Dissolution of the Monasteries brought dramatic change. In 1539, Edward Boughton of nearby Lawford, whose family had leased the estate since 1483, purchased the land outright when the Crown sold off former monastic property. Bilton Grange remained in the Boughton family for more than 200 years, until 1768, when it became part of the marriage settlement of Anna Boughton and Alexander Hume.

Alexander Hume was no



ordinary country gentleman. A sea captain, merchant and trader with the East India Company, he was the nephew of Sir Abraham Hume, a prominent shipbuilder and Member of Parliament. Alexander's career took him across the globe, serving for many years as Chief of the EIC's English Factory at Canton.

His marriage into the Boughton family connected him to an equally remarkable lineage. When Anna was born in 1746, she unexpectedly became Lady of the Manor of Rugby following the death of her brother Edward. By paying the customary fine on their marriage in 1765, Alexander acquired the right to hold the title himself, until he sold it to his uncle, Abraham Caldecott, in 1801. The old Manor House later became the site of School House at Rugby School.

Anna's family history also contained one of Warwickshire's most infamous murder mysteries.

She was related to Theodosius Boughton of Lawford, whose mysterious death in 1780 led to the sensational trial and execution of his brother-in-law, Captain John Donnellan, in one of the most celebrated criminal cases of the eighteenth century.

By this time, Bilton Grange





consisted of a substantial Georgian farmhouse surrounded by gardens, orchards and agricultural buildings, occupying the site on which the present mansion now stands.

When Alexander died in 1794, the estate passed to his eldest son, Abraham Hume. Abraham enlarged the farmhouse and made one particularly unusual alteration: he removed an entire floor to create an exceptionally high-ceilinged principal bedroom. It was an extravagant statement that reflected the family's willingness to spend freely.

Indeed, the Humes' finances suggest a taste for ambitious living. Abraham raised no fewer than eight mortgages on the estate, with borrowing eventually reaching the remarkable sum of £8,600 by 1826—a considerable fortune in its day.

The growing weight of these debts may explain why Bilton Grange was leased to Captain Washington Hibbert in 1839. Seven years later, in April 1846, Abraham sold the estate to Hibbert outright. Only £8000 of the sale price of £19,000 went to the Hume family; the rest went to pay off the mortgages. Just three months afterwards,

Abraham died. Whether failing health influenced his decision is impossible to know, but the sale marked the end of nearly eighty years of Hume ownership and paved the way for the transformation of Bilton Grange into the magnificent Pugin mansion that remains its defining landmark today.

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Headliners Tap Class

Dance teacher Sophie Mack organised a masterclass lesson with Ollie from The Tap Chaps and despite being one of the hottest days of the year, it was a great experience and enjoyed by all. Although, some of us did have all the right moves but not necessarily in the right order!

Just for fun, we meet on Wednesdays 6.15pm – 7.15pm at Dunchurch Social Club, £5.

For more information, contact Sophie - headlinersdanceacademy@gmail.com

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