

bishopstonvoice

December, 2025 Issue 155

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Sycamore
Wood - saved
for now



The battle for Sycamore Wood

SYCAMORE Wood, an area near Gloucester Road, has been saved from a proposed development through formal recognition of its local name.

To the relief of those opposing the proposals, a planning application to build flats in the wooded area behind Tesco Express in Bishopston, was rejected earlier this year. The applicant described the area as 'waste ground', but the Planning Inspector recognised it by its local name of

'Sycamore Wood'.

Peter Browne, from Friends of Sycamore Wood (FoSW), explains: "We have been encouraged to seek further protection from new development applications by asking Bristol City Council to make a Woodland Tree Protection Order (TPO). Unlike TPOs for existing individual trees, a Woodland TPO would protect all the trees in the Wood, at present

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Toy shop to shut

Playfull Toys, which has been serving families on Gloucester Road for 23 years, is to close its doors at the end of 2025.

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Pond rescue

The pond in St Andrews Park is to be renovated following a successful crowdfunder.

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Poignant note

Mickleburgh's music shop has temporarily moved out of Stokes Croft after 122 years.

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Yes to hall plans

Plans to turn Vining Hal in Etloe Road, into a shared house and community hall have been approved in spite of objections.

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Further details of the complaints process can be found on the Voice website here, or can be obtained by contacting the Publisher.

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NEWS

The game's up as toy shop prepares to close

AFTER more than 20 years delighting children of all ages around Gloucester Road and far beyond, popular toyshop, Playfull Toys, is packing its toys away and closing up its doors for the final time on 31 December.

Located along a stretch of Gloucester Road notable for its range of independent shops, owners Kerstin and Nigel Price opened their store in the summer of 2002, specialising in children's wooden toys, crafts, music, books and so much more, much of which is sourced from Europe.

Commenting on their decision, which took three to four years to make, on social media, the couple wished to thank all their customers for their support over the last 23 years: "It's time to bid a fond farewell from all of us at Playfull Toyshop to all of you, our loyal customers and supporters."

They headlined their announcement by quoting from the Sound of Music: So long, farewell, Auf Wiedersehen, adieu. Adieu, adieu, to you and you and you!

Giving their favourite motto as 'shop like your High Street depends on it – because it really does', they were keen to

encourage shoppers to continue using all the great independent shops in the area. They added: "A massive thanks again for all our great memories created by you, our lovely customers over the last two decades or so. Twenty-three years of crazy Christmases and this is going to be our last, hopefully we'll get to see some familiar faces before we close our doors."

The final day of trading will be New Year's Eve, by which time they expect the shelves to be almost empty following the Christmas period.

Customers were quick to respond to the news with both their best wishes and commiserations, reminiscing on the pleasure the shop had brought to their own families. One commented: "What a wonderful cornucopia of delights your shop has been for so many years", with another saying: "sad to hear this news, but so grateful for the precious part you have played in our daughters' childhoods – our home would be so much the lesser if we hadn't had your adored shop in our lives, introducing us to so many beautiful objects and stories."



Kerstin and Nigel Price have run the shop since 2002

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NEWS

A SMALL group of residents has successfully crowdfunded a campaign to renovate the pond in St Andrews Park, saving its biodiversity at the same time as making it more accessible to all.

The group, which carries out regular volunteer maintenance work of the pond and the surrounding area in St Andrew's Park, with the approval of FoSAP (Friends of St Andrew's Park) and Bristol City Council, sought help to fund the planned improvement works, so that people of all ages could continue to enjoy the pond for years to come.

Many recent visitors to the pond had noticed that the water level was unusually low. Investigations found that pond plant roots had grown through the old pond liner in several places, meaning it was no longer watertight and simply drained away, no matter how much it was topped up.

In addition, many of the

Residents act to save biodiversity in St Andrews Park

plants have thrived so well that they were turning it back into dry land, despite annual clearance sessions by dedicated volunteers in waders and armed with secateurs.

The pond was first designed, dug and planted by FoSAP volunteers over a sunny week back in 1993 and has since flourished, becoming home to all sorts of fascinating creatures including newts, frogs, toads, snails, dragonflies and damselflies. It also provides a source of food and water for hundreds of the park's birds and

squirrels and is even visited by foxes, mice and bats.

Last year's National Gene Pool survey of St Andrew's Park pond identified the DNA of more than 40 species living in or around the pond.

The group arranged a public consultation, both online and in person in the park, to gather suggestions for improvements to the pond. These will be incorporated into the final plans, where possible. Plans for the revitalised pond and surrounding area include: making the gate

and path fully wheelchair and pushchair accessible; carefully decanting the water and wildlife while the pond is de-silted, re-dug and re-lined, then returning them; a proper weatherproof information panel inside the pond area; bird and bat boxes; seating and more wildflowers for pollinators - all reusing materials wherever possible.

Donations to the crowdfunding appeal exceeded the group's expectations, but applications are also being made to grant-making bodies for financial assistance to cover further costs of the project.

Tracie Mitchell, of FoSAP and the Pond Sub-Group, said that "once official papers have been signed, we can 'go public' with details of the funding and plans." The crowdfunding page remains open, if anyone wishes to donate: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/st-andrews-park-pond-renovation>

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NEWS

Make The Ardagh green again

A WELL-LOVED and well-used former bowling green in the heart of Horfield Common has become the victim of its own success, with its green having become, well, distinctly not so green.

As a result, the Ardagh Community Trust (ACT), the popular community charity based on the common, has been crowdfunding to try to repair and rejuvenate the grass, future-proofing the space for a range of inclusive community events and activities.

Chrissie Storry, CEO of the trust, explained of the fundraising initiative: “We are now the proud custodians of the former bowling green. It’s the most wonderful

space, right in the middle of our facilities. It’s the jewel in our crown, with the cafe above, community veg gardens to the right, free-to-use tennis courts all around. We’ve even got a community sauna.

“But bowling green grass doesn’t make a great play area surface, and definitely not after the hottest and driest summer on record. Despite our best efforts to keep it in a decent condition, it needs some serious attention, which is what this fundraiser is all about.”

She added: “We have lots of plans for the future, for which the green (formerly ‘the bowling green’, currently ‘the brown’!) is

central, but we urgently need to raise money for repairs and future-proofing. Think community gatherings, wholesome activities for mind and body, music nights, cinema screenings, and lots and lots and LOTS of opportunities for kids to run wild and play in a safe environment, right next to our gorgeous cafe and busy veg garden.”

As a small charity, run by a tiny team and a dedicated core of volunteers, the ACT hopes to raise as much as possible to improve the green and create the best possible use of its space for the community. If you wish to donate, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/4994dwp>

Luna aims high for foodbank

12-year-old's charity challenge

A YOUNG charity fundraiser from Stoke Bishop is embarking on her seventh challenge to support the work of Bristol North West Foodbank later this month.

On December 15, 12-year-old Luna will be walking the highest peak of each continent on a treadmill to raise as much money as she can for the cause.

Her mum, Patricia, told the Voice: “Luna is a very big supporter of the local Foodbank; she has always questioned poverty, especially children not having the same as her. Her primary school supported the Bristol North West Foodbank during Harvest and that’s how she learned about it. During lockdown she wanted to do more and started arranging food collections amongst neighbours. Next thing, she gave up her presents for her birthday and asked family and friends to give food and homebank donations, which she does every year now.”

In recognition of her efforts, Luna was then invited for a volunteering day at the Foodbank and enjoyed it so much that, for almost five years, has volunteered regularly during school holidays (she even helps at Community supermarket collections). Always thinking of different ways she can help to

raise money, she has also had a stall at school fairs to sell books, toys and handcrafted items.

Asked how she is feeling about the challenge, Luna explained: “I feel very happy about doing this challenge because I know that the money raised from this will go to a really nice cause. I love helping and volunteering as well as spending time with the volunteers during my holidays.”

This will be Luna’s seventh fundraiser challenge for the charity. Previously, she skipped 1,000 skips ever day for a month in a kangaroo outfit, walked between the five Foodbank outlets in a Buzz Lightyear outfit, rowed 2,000 metres every day for a month, turned into a ‘Jumping Bean’ doing 1,000 jumps per day on her pogo stick for 30 days, cycled the distance from Lands End to John O’Groats on her static bike and swam the length of the English Channel in a swimming pool (2,276 laps).

Anyone wishing to support Luna on her seven-peak challenge may do so at the following link and all donations are appreciated. <https://www.gofundme.com/f/lunas-week-7-peak-fundraiser-bristol-north-west-foodbank>



Luna, 12, hard at work at the Bristol North West Foodbank

NEWS

Sycamore Wood

From Page 1

and in the future. Currently, only six of the trees are protected under a TPO."

Historically, what is now Sycamore Wood was the back gardens of the Gloucester Road shops between numbers 163-175. By the 1970s, people had ceased to live above the shops and the gardens had been abandoned and overgrown, their fences disappeared. The only access to the area was (and still is) from the individual shops - and the shopkeepers by and large had no reason to use it. Nowadays, the lack of public access has allowed this small wood to grow naturally, undisturbed at the heart of a larger area of trees growing in neighbouring residential gardens. Within that area, Sycamore Wood has become a wildlife haven and corridor, populated with flora and fauna and creating a natural barrier from the noise and other pollution from Gloucester Road and beyond.

With concerns about further commercial development, encroachment, dumping of waste, and loss or damage to trees, FoSW hopes that a full Woodland TPO would improve the limited protection against development already in place as part of the Bishopston Conservation Area.

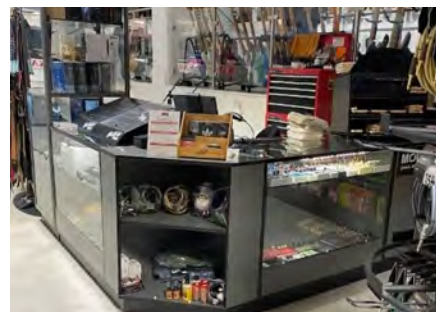
One 'encroachment' undermining tree space is the large concrete yard belonging to the Tesco Express which is used for storing supermarket stock cages. However, the unexpected announcement that the store will be closing at the end of the year should free up some planting space once that lease expires.

Peter adds: "We hope that securing the future of the Wood through the Woodland TPO will also encourage better care of the area, with opportunities for further planting and maintenance, as well as controlled public access for enjoyment and education."

The request for Woodland TPO status was lodged with Bristol City Council at the end of October and is still under consideration.



Packing up the Stokes Croft shop



The new Mickleburgh's in Berkeley Place

Mickleburgh's music shop begins a new chapter

BEGINNING as a family-run piano maintenance business in the 1870s and opening its piano and music shop in 1903, Mickleburgh's has embarked on a new chapter, having shut up shop at its Stokes Croft premises at the end of October and relocated to a new home at Berkeley Place in Clifton, which opened in the middle of November.

Thankfully for its customers and music lovers, this move is only temporary for three years while its Stokes Croft store is demolished from its current 'state of disrepair' to be rebuilt as an entirely new-look shop. These new and improved premises will expand further to create a live events space and basement studios for teaching, practising and recording music.

In the meantime, its spacious home beneath the West End Car Park down towards Jacobs Wells Road is no less enticing, with a sea of instruments displayed on one level and all of the usual services on offer including piano services and, it is hoped, running small

events to encourage even more people to play and learn music.

After 122 years in Stokes Croft, one of the oldest musical instruments shops in the city will return with a new lease of life. Since its original days, it has had several previous new leases of life, having been destroyed in the Blitz of

1942 and rebuilt to accommodate a wider range of instruments and accessories, as well as in more recent times, adapting to survive Covid-19 and cost of living crises.

The staff are, however, keen to ultimately return to the heart of Stokes Croft - regarded as a hub for creativity and community-led initiatives, and creating a unique arts scene which helps such independent businesses to flourish.

The company said before its move: "Stokes Croft has been our home since 1903, and this temporary move to Berkeley Place will enable us to keep our facilities here for what we hope will be another 100 years! We apologise for the inconvenience our closure and move causes, but we think it will be well worth it."



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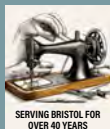
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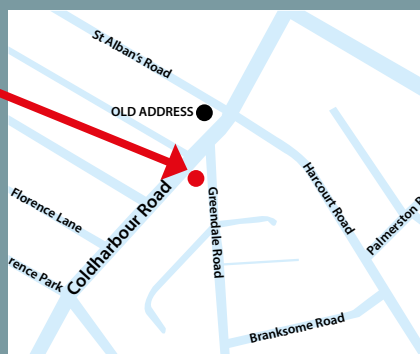
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Mediating in probate disputes

In many contentious probate matters, court proceedings are more likely than not inevitable. Litigation places significant strain on family relationships, often widening existing rifts and creating new animosities that can persist long after the legal issues have been resolved. It is also costly, time-consuming, and frequently unpredictable.

Mediation and other forms of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) offer a constructive alternative that can keep such disputes under control and, in many cases, avoid the need for a full trial.

One of the key benefits of mediation is that it allows the parties to retain control. In proceedings, the decision ultimately rests with the Judge, who must apply legal principles even when they may not align with what the parties consider fair.

By contrast, at mediation, a neutral third party, typically an experienced barrister or accredited mediator, facilitates discussions without

imposing a decision. Parties are usually placed in separate rooms, each supported by their legal representatives. The mediator moves between the rooms to convey proposals, test the strengths and weaknesses of each party's case, and encourage constructive negotiation. This shuttle process helps the parties to focus on realistic outcomes and often diffuses tension, enabling progress that might be impossible in a joint meeting.

Cost savings are another significant advantage. Contentious probate claims can involve extensive correspondence between parties, disclosure exercises, expert evidence, valuations and multiple hearings. Mediation can dramatically reduce these costs by enabling early resolution, sometimes after only limited exchange of documents and correspondence. Even where a case does not settle on the mediation day itself, the process often narrows issues, clarifies misunderstandings, and lays the groundwork for a later settlement.

Speed is also an important consideration. Court proceedings can easily take 12 to 24 months or more to reach trial, with further delays if appeals arise. Mediation can take place at any point and can resolve matters within days or weeks if the parties are willing to engage constructively. This can be particularly valuable where estate assets are deteriorating, where beneficiaries require clarity for financial planning, or where executors are unable to complete their duties until the dispute is resolved.

Finally, mediation helps preserve, or at least prevent further erosion of, family relationships. Even where reconciliation is impossible, a respectful negotiated settlement is far less damaging than adversarial court proceedings. Parties often find that being heard in a facilitated environment reduces hostility, allowing them to move forward more easily after an emotionally charged dispute.

For all these reasons, mediation and other means of ADR should be



Martin Hall Solicitor

viewed as an integral part of the contentious probate process, offering a practical, humane, and efficient means of resolving probate disputes. If you require advice or representation concerning a mediation in a probate dispute, our Contentious Probate team is available to assist.



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NEWS

A PLANNED extension in Redland described by neighbours as a “concrete hell” has been given permission.

Councillors in City Hall approved the plans despite hearing how neighbours feared their “little patch of paradise” would be ruined.

A homeowner on Cranbrook Road is planning to build an extension behind their house for an elderly relative. The houses along that road have very steep back gardens, and a lot of ground has already been excavated with giant retaining walls put up.

Neighbours have reported the works to the council, prompting visits from council enforcement officers. Both sides of the row were heard by councillors on the planning committee B on November 19, who were warned their powers to intervene on issues were limited.

Graham Pears, who lives next door, said: “This is the wrong project for the wrong area. If it were a flat plot, it would be completely different. It’ll transform our little patch of paradise into a concrete hell, because it’s a really green, verdant area, and it’s going to be a concrete pit with concrete walls all round it. It goes entirely against the character of the area in every respect.”

He added that the extension would block

Extension objections overruled

sunlight into his patio and rooms at the back of his house. He also complained that nobody from the council had come to visit the site and see for themselves the difference the extension would make. Giant retaining walls that have been installed are another concern of neighbours.

Dhanesh Singh, the applicant, said: “There’s no overlooking, privacy or sunlight shadowing. The extension is at the rear of the property, so not visible from the street or public realm. We would like to create a garden for not just this generation, but the one after as well. We feel victimised and all we want is a resolution to all of this.

“Financially, it’s been a strain. We’re not asking for the world, we just want somewhere for our kids to play with their grandad. The garden isn’t going to be a concrete jungle. We want to put grass down and keep as much turf in it as possible because it costs money to get rid of that turf. My kids live with a camping stove and an air fryer at the moment.”

Voting in favour were Labour Councillors

Lisa Durston and Don Alexander, Liberal Democrat Cllr Caroline Gooch and Conservative Cllr Bador Uddin. Voting against were Green Cllrs Guy Poultney, Lisa Stone, Mohamed Makawi and Abi Finch. As the vote was tied, Cllr Alexander used his casting vote as chair of the committee to approve the plans.

Cllr Alexander said: “It’s not for us to stop people doing things with their back gardens in my opinion. There’s a liberties issue there. It is about telling people what we require legally in order for that to be done safely and respectfully for the neighbours, and then allowing them the freedom to make that choice.

“We don’t just stop things because it’s not a good idea. As a committee we don’t have the technical ability to design a supporting wall. I don’t have a say in what my neighbour’s garden shed looks like. If he wants to paint his shed pink, he can paint it pink, and that’s his right.”

By Alex Seabrook, Local Democracy Reporting Service

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ADVERTORIAL

Local writer launches *Carrina's Book*, a biography company established in memory of her sister

Rosia Curtis – a local writer based in BS6 – has just launched a biography and memorial book company. The company, 'Carrina's Book', will bring people's stories to life, preserving memories for generations to come.

The company provides a complete ghostwriting service for clients, overseeing the writing process as well as the printing and delivery of beautiful hardback books.

Rosia has worked as a ghostwriter for over a decade, most notably as a Senior Writer for a London-based biography company. She has ghostwritten for a broad array of clients – including a politician, an author, a freedom fighter, a war veteran, a number of high-profile businesspeople, and the general public. She has also written several memorial books, in honour of those who have died.

The memorial book work resonates with Rosia, who lost her big sister Carrina in 2006, aged just 23. Rosia says, 'Over the years, I've thought about ways to commemorate my sister. After working on memorial books, I've realised how natural and important this work feels to me. It is a real honour to work with bereaved families and friends to preserve the memories of their loved ones, and this work also connects me to my sister and to my own experience of loss.' A proportion of each book fee will also go to charities that feel connected to Carrina.

As she embarks on her new venture, Rosia will create 'Carrina's



Rosia and Carrina in 2005, the year before Carrina died

Book' itself, collating stories, memories and photos of Carrina, and helping her children learn more about the aunt that they never got to meet.

Rosia envisages that most books produced by her company will record the lives of living people. She says, 'My typical clients are individuals who want to record their parents' life stories, or people who feel ready to share their own story. Everyone has a story to tell. We all contain a unique and fascinating story; my job is simply to bring these to life.'

Carrina's Book currently offers three book packages, ranging from 15,000 words to 40,000 words, with bespoke options available. The packages include client interviews and the planning/writing of the

draft, as well as the creation of hardback full-colour books. These are professionally proofread, designed and printed, before being sent to the client. Rosia says, 'We work with each client to ensure that we are creating the exact book that they want. This includes honouring their decisions on the outline/style/ tone of the book, plus having regular check-ins to ensure they are happy with everything.'

Rosia believes that there are certain things that set her company apart. She says, 'As some biography companies embrace automation and AI, Carrina's Book is all about humanness. It's about working sensitively and empathically with each client, putting their needs and desires at the heart of all we do, and ensuring that each draft is written by a human!' She also

believes that the memorial book focus sets it apart, 'Biography companies will always write books about people who have died, but I think it's essential that writers can understand and relate to bereavement. When we're working with such sensitive material, that personal experience makes a big difference.'

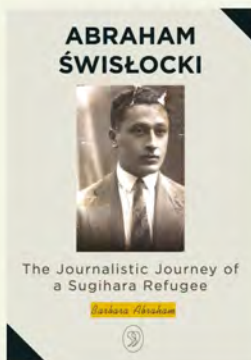
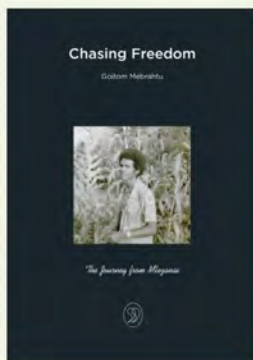
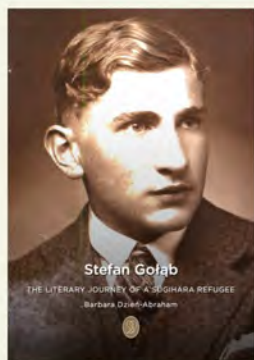
Rosia is excited to be embarking on this new venture. She says, 'It makes such a difference to people's lives when they share their story or the story of a loved one. The process is very reflective, and it can also be healing and cathartic. The books leave a legacy, and that is priceless. They are treasured by individuals, their children/families, and generations to come. I cannot wait to bring more hidden stories to life.'

For more information, please visit: www.carrinasbook.co.uk

Rosia also provides writing services to charities and businesses. See here: www.rosiacurtis.co.uk

What she created from those sessions blew me away. Somehow, Rosia took hours of rambling, half-formed memories and turned them into a story that felt completely me – warm, funny, and full of life. The book was beautifully written, personal and true. It captured who I am, thanks to such incredible skill and care. Carrina's Book doesn't just tell your story, but helps you rediscover it.

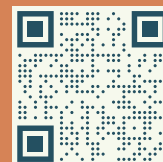
– Shaun



Do you have a story to share?

Contact us to start your memoir, or give the gift of a biography this Christmas.

www.carrinasbook.co.uk



NEWS

Vining Hall redevelopment approved

PLANS to convert a nursery in Westbury Park into a shared house and a community hall have been given the go-ahead in spite of fears of parking pressures.

The Vining Hall, on Etloe Road, was built in 1891 and most recently used as a nursery. An extension will be demolished and replaced with a three-storey house in multiple occupation (HMO) with six bedrooms.

Councillors on Bristol City Council's planning committee B voted to approve the plans on November 19. They were put forward by the owner of the former nursery, Samantha Packer, who faced problems with recruitment, new laws and high building costs.

Colin Pemble, a planning agent representing the applicant, said: "She's found it increasingly difficult to operate there for a number of reasons — difficult to get staff, changing legislation, a very costly building to run. For



her, it's no longer viable and so it closed. She thinks she can put the historic former chapel to good use as a community building."

The businesswoman operates another nursery nearby but finds recruiting staff difficult due to high housing costs. The plans to convert part of the building into an HMO could solve this problem, accommodating staff who would then work in the nursery that's still open. Mr Pemble added that an HMO would create less parking pressures than the former

nursery.

Neighbours opposed the plan.

Professor Robin Hambleton said: "This application is a classic example of what urban planners call 'town cramming', meaning massive overdevelopment of a small site. This is a giant, towering three-storey building which will be overbearing. There's no need for a community hall, we've got plenty of community halls. The road safety conditions in this area are really troubling."

Liberal Democrat Councillor Caroline Gooch added: "There

How the Vining Hall could look after the changes

was an accident not too long ago on the junction right by this, because there are people trying to use it as a cut-through literally all the time. It's an absolute nightmare of a road. There's a lot of Chelsea tractors and cars parked on the pavement. It's the whole congestion part that really worries me."

Rules on the nursery building mean that it must be retained for community use.

The surrounding area could soon become a new resident parking zone, which would reduce parking pressures by issuing permits.

Voting in favour were Labour Cllrs Lisa Durston and Don Alexander; Green Cllrs Abi Finch, Mohamed Makawi and Lisa Stone; and Conservative Cllr Bador Uddin. Voting against were Cllr Gooch and Green Cllr Guy Poultney.

By Alex Seabrook, Local Democracy Reporting Service

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■ PHARMACY COLUMN

Colleagues and customers help us turn challenges into success stories

As we approach the end of 2025, December often feels like a whirlwind of deadlines and tasks to tackle. I hope that as you read this column, you find a moment of calm amidst the chaos.

First and foremost, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our wonderful community for your unwavering support of Kellaway Pharmacy and the NHS over the past year.

It remains an incredible privilege to be part of your healthcare journey, and we take that responsibility to heart. As we reflect on this time of year, we also remember those we have lost. Their memory remains in our hearts.

This year has presented its challenges—medicine

shortages, and seasonal pressures (which felt like a year-long season!) and another every well attended vaccination programme.

As I reflect on the year, for our very diverse Kellaway Pharmacy team has also been impacted this year by local and national campaigns, sparking broader conversations about identity and belonging.

Each hurdle brought its own set of complexities, but what truly made the difference as we navigated these challenges was you. Your patience during our busiest moments, your kindness when things didn't go as planned, and your humour and trust in us to provide care and support mean the world to us.

We also acknowledge

a failure. While colleagues have celebrated milestone achievement's such as Ade's Honorary Doctorate from the University of Portsmouth, we have not been able to improve our pharmacy team's work-life balance as much as hoped. While we faced longer hours and shorter breaks, the fulfilment we find in our work has been immense.

Our affordable weight-loss treatment offer, travel health vaccinations, the ever popular NHS Pharmacy First treatment service all continues to provide accessible and convenient care.

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If there's anything we can improve, please don't hesitate to let us know. If we've fallen short in any way, we want to apologise, make it right for you and improve.

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SCAN ME



■ NEWS

Recycle your tree

St Peter's Hospice has announced that its popular Christmas tree collection service will return for another year this festive season, with even more households now able to benefit.

The hassle-free service offers residents across Bristol and North Somerset a convenient and eco-friendly way to dispose of their real trees, while helping to raise necessary funds for the city's only adult hospice.

From 9-11 January, volunteers will be collecting trees directly from doorsteps across Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Pill, Clevedon, Portishead, Long Ashton, Nailsea, and Backwell. BS6, BS8 and BS11 postcodes have been added this year, while BS3 was a new postcode last year.

In return, residents are asked to make a suggested donation of £20-£25 per tree, with every penny helping St Peter's Hospice continue supporting patients and their families as they deal with serious illness and bereavement.

Caitlin Logan, events fundraising manager at St Peter's Hospice, said: "Last year, our amazing supporters helped us raise £20,000 through the Christmas tree collection and we collected over 1000 trees from doorsteps across the area. This year, we hope to raise even more."

The trees collected will be recycled sustainably, turned into wood chippings to be used as mulch at local allotments, used as enrichment for animals at Noah's Ark Zoo Farm, or converted into energy via a biomass boiler at Blaise Plant Nursery.

Taking part is simple: sign up online using your postcode, leave your tree outside your home on 9 January, and St Peter's Hospice will handle the rest. All trees will be collected by the end of the day on 11 January.

For more information visit St Peter's Hospice - Christmas Tree Collection



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NEWS

Troubled school to close

BRISTOL Waldorf School has announced it will close permanently on December 17.

Trustees of the independent primary school on Redland Hill cited an unsustainable financial position and falling pupil numbers as the main reasons for the decision, despite the school's alternative curriculum being a core strength for many families.

Founded as Bristol Steiner School in the 1970s, the school offers children aged three to 11 a "holistic and children-centred alternative to mainstream education."

Its curriculum combines academic studies with practical and creative learning, including woodwork, handcraft, music, movement, and outdoor learning in forest school.

Ofsted rated the school Inadequate when it visited in June 2025. Inspectors raised concerns about a weak culture of safeguarding, inconsistent curriculum delivery, particularly in early years, gaps in pupils' knowledge, a lack of consistent training and expertise in phonics teaching, and inadequate support for pupils with special educational needs and

disabilities (SEND).

Following the report, the Board of Trustees wrote to parents acknowledging the Inadequate rating while highlighting elements they said inspectors recognised, such as pupils taking "pride in their contributions to charitable projects, growing vegetables and composting" and routines that "support pupils' social and spiritual development ... helping them understand the value of teamwork". Trustees also noted governance challenges, with several members having recently stepped down, limiting the board's capacity.

A formal closure announcement has been published on the school's website, in which the Board of Trustees states: "Despite the dedication of our teachers, staff and families, it has not been possible to secure the financial and enrolment stability needed to continue operating the school into the future."

The school previously avoided closure in late 2023 after raising nearly £1 million through community fundraising and it celebrated its 50th anniversary last year.

Fairfield earns maths accolade

FAIRFIELD High School (FHS) has once again been awarded The Prince's Teaching Institute (PTI) Mark for outstanding teaching in Maths.

Launched over 25 years ago, the PTI Schools Programme recognises excellence in the teaching of a wide range of subjects, regardless of pupils' backgrounds or abilities. The award highlights departments that strengthen subject knowledge, raise challenge within the curriculum and provide meaningful opportunities beyond the classroom.

Pierre Gerrard, director of mathematics at FHS, said: "Our commitment to actively engage learners through the demonstration of coherence in lessons has been a contributory factor to this year's prestigious award. I would like to thank our maths team who work relentlessly to deliver an interesting and varied curriculum, with extra-curricular opportunities."

In recent months, the maths department has demonstrated this commitment through enrichment opportunities, including trips to Oxford and the University of the West of England. These experiences enabled students to engage with mathematics in real-world contexts — from exploring historical scientific ideas to taking part in workshops showcasing the modern applications of maths.

Celebrating art and community

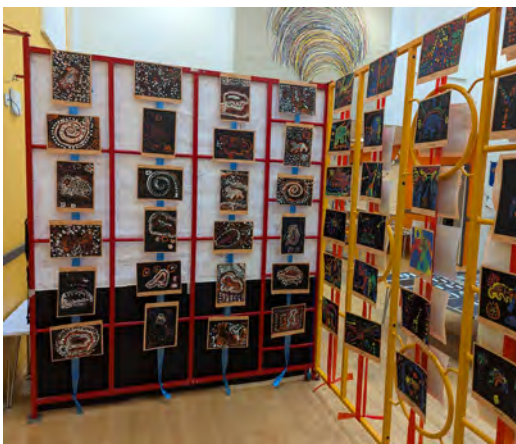
ST John's Primary School in Clifton opened its doors to families and members of the local community for this year's West Bristol Arts Trail, which was a celebration of creativity and imagination. The event transformed the school into a

colourful space, filled with artwork that reflected the skill and individuality of pupils from every year group.

Headteacher Justin Hoye said, "A huge thank you to everyone who joined us. It was such a joy to welcome families and members of the local community into the school to celebrate the children's creativity and hard work."

Pupils explored a variety of artists, techniques and themes, culminating in an impressive display of work.

A highlight of the day was the 'A Room with a View' competition, which drew a fantastic range of creative entries. Winning and highly commended pieces can be viewed on the St John's website, and the Year 5 and 6 entries will soon go on to represent the school in an external competition at Badminton School.





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NEWS

School's on the up

COTHAM Gardens Primary has been praised by Ofsted for the progress it has made after being placed in special measures.

His Majesty's Inspector Dale Burr issued a report to headteacher Emmeline Smith and chief executive Chris Seaton after making a monitoring visit in September.

He highlighted improvements in leadership, teaching and learning, curriculum, expectations of behaviour, and support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The inspector noted:

- "Your action plan focuses on the right steps[and] you and other leaders have maintained a strong focus on raising the quality of teaching and learning." The report states,
- "The approach to teaching reading is much stronger. Careful thought has been given to the reading curriculum."
- "Ongoing staff training has helped sharpen the quality of

support given to pupils with SEND."

- "Classrooms are generally calm and purposeful. Pupils are increasingly showing positive attitudes to learning. Consequently, they can learn with minimal distraction."

The school welcomed the monitoring report and the improvements made in national tests in 2025. The school saw a rise of more than ten percentage points in SATS results in Reading, Writing, and Maths.

Mr Seaton said: "Prior to the 2024 inspection, Cotham Gardens Primary experienced considerable change and turbulence in leadership and governance. Ofsted at that time rightly identified that standards were not as high as they should be. This monitoring visit confirms that the new leadership structure and governing body are both determined and ambitious in their plans for excellence at Cotham Gardens Primary. I am so proud of the whole team."



Emmeline Smith and Chris Seaton with Cotham Gardens pupils

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BOOK REVIEW

Old Soul

by Susan Barker

IF you enjoy a gripping horror story, then *Old Soul* by Susan Barker is the book for you. The novel starts in 2023 at Kansai International Airport in Japan where two strangers meet up having missed their flight to Amsterdam. Mariko is a single Japanese woman, who works as an International Relations Manager for a Tokyo bank. Jake is a English primary school teacher who lives and works in London.

Over a meal, they discover that they each have lost someone dear to them in brutal and unfathomable circumstances. Jake's best friend Lena and Mariko's twin brother Hiroji both died in 2011, shortly after encountering the same mesmerising dark haired woman. On the night that he died, Hiroji calls Mariko, to tell her that he had entered the mind of a higher dimensional God. In the morning, she discovers that Hiroji is dead. His naked body is found in an abandoned shrine in a bamboo forest. The post mortem reveals that his internal organs had been reversed from left to right.

Lena earns money as a life drawing model in Stoke Newington. She is befriended by Marion, a dark haired woman who gives Lena her sketch of her. Lena, moves in with Jake and his partner,

Simon. Lena tells Jake she feels a dark force, reaching inside her, groping in her internal organs. Jake and Lena argue and she moves out. Her body is found a few days later. The post mortem revealing that she also had her internal organs reversed from left to right.

Jake is determined to find out more about this woman who is known as the Old Soul and he travels across the world gathering testimonies from the loved ones left behind by her many victims.

The testimonies are interspersed by a third person account of a woman and a young girl travelling across New Mexico, deftly revealing how it connects to Jake's quest to find and stop the Old Soul before she kills any more victims. This is an utterly addictive and beautifully written horror story which slowly reveals its dark secrets. It is full of engrossing characters including the highly complex, beguiling and gorgeously drawn Old Soul whose journey we follow for over 200 years. For this book, and many more please come and visit us at Bishopston Library at 100 Gloucester Road.

Review by Bob Deacon of Bishopston Library



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■ FROM BRISTOL CENTRAL'S MP

SEND crisis: it's time for action

LAST month, I attended a heartbreaking event. Outside Bristol City Hall, dozens of pairs of little (and big!) children's shoes were carefully placed on the grass, each pair carrying the story of a child with special educational needs and disabilities who has been let down by this country's broken SEND system.

I've heard devastating stories from families who have been stretched to breaking point by the SEND crisis. Parents waiting so long for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) that by the time they're issued it's too late for the child to access support. Some families are spending thousands at SEND tribunals fighting for support – and all the while, the child or young person at the centre of the case is missing out.

After hearing these stories, I wrote to the Education Secretary to get answers on when she will start the process of listening to parent and expert groups across the country to resolve this crisis.

The failures of the SEND

system are a stark consequence of the failure of this government, and governments before it, to fund local authorities properly. This has left councils like Bristol struggling to provide the vital services that communities rely on and I will continue to fight for the government to fund local authorities properly.

This month I've also written to Rachel Reeves to highlight an appalling scandal: that every year, the government is handing £2.7 billion pounds in tax breaks to oil and gas companies like Shell and BP. These are the same companies that make billions in profits every year, all while laying off huge numbers of workers. It's time to end this scandal.

Thank you to the tens of thousands who have signed my petition calling on Rachel Reeves to scrap these tax breaks, and instead fund a Jobs Guarantee for workers currently employed in oil and gas, to support them to retrain and find work in renewable energy. You can find my petition

at www.linktr.ee/carladenyer.

As we take action to secure a safe climate for us and future generations, one thing the government needs to fix is electric vehicle charging – many residents tell me the shortage of charging points and unfair price difference between home and public charging are a barrier to them getting an electric car.

I know that Bristol City Council is working hard to get more public charging points across the city, and make it easier for those without a driveway to charge at home, with a trial scheme opening shortly. To sign up for the trial, visit www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/streets-travel/charge-an-electric-vehicle.

Meanwhile I will take up the pricing issue with the government to ensure everyone is able to charge their EVs at a fair price.

Finally, I was honoured to lay a wreath of red and white poppies at Bristol's Remembrance parade earlier this month, in memory of all those who have lost their



Carla Denyer
writes for
the Voice

lives to war, and in hope of a more peaceful future.

If you live in Bristol Central and need help with a local issue, email me at bristolcentraloffice@parliament.uk or write to Carla Denyer MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA For national issues email me using carla.denyer.mp@parliament.uk

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■ FROM BRISTOL NORTH WEST'S MP

Arts and culture for the many

THANK you to everyone who joined me in early November for my first 'in conversation with...' event, where the need to open up opportunities in the arts and culture for the many, not just the few, was the topic of discussion.

The event was held in the portrait gallery of Kings Weston House, with the exquisite artwork on the walls being very much on-theme for the discussion.

I was pleased to be joined by two prominent figures in Bristol's arts and culture scene to discuss the topic: David Sproston, the Co-Founder of Aardman Animations – the studio behind Wallace & Gromit and Morph – and Simon Wales, the Chief Executive of the Bristol Beacon – a charity that not only hosts big city centre performances, but also leads on music education in the West of England.

The event was a great networking opportunity, with many creatives from across Bristol

North West gathered together in one room. And the attendees continued to connect in a dedicated post-event WhatsApp group that was set up to hear people's thoughts after the event, once they'd had time to mull over what was discussed. This is something new for my events, with the link to the groups only emailed to attendees. So, please keep a lookout for this if you come to one of my forthcoming events. (Subscribe to my monthly newsletter to hear when the next 'In conversation with...' is announced at darren-jones.co.uk/contact.)

I like that the WhatsApp groups will give attendees a chance to chat with each other. As a society, we're living increasingly individualistic lives. But it is important that we continue to get to know our neighbours and build strong community bonds.

With this in mind, my next constituency event is an informal

Winter Social on Saturday, 13th December at 3pm. It will be held in the BS6 area, but it is open to everyone in the Bristol North West community.

There's no agenda or Q&A at this event, just some mince pies, hot drinks (or something stronger if you want to buy a drink at the bar) and the opportunity to chat with me and meet other people in our local community. I'll need to be a good host and try to chat with everyone, so please don't keep me talking too long! To book a ticket, visit darren-jones.co.uk/events or call 0117 959 6545 if you're not online.

Finally, on the topic of community spirit, thank you to everyone who helped with the Remembrance display at Southmead Hospital that marked 80 years since the end of World War II. I hear this became a Bristol North West-wide effort to finish knitting and crocheting the 1,945 small poppies and 80



Darren Jones
writes for
the Voice

large poppies needed for the installation!

• As always, if you need my help or have a question, you can get in touch with me on e-mail at darren.jones.mp@parliament.uk, by calling my office on 0117 959 6545 or by writing to me at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

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FROM YOUR COUNCILLORS

Redland: Martin Fodor and Fi Hance (Green Party)

Street Improvement ideas still welcome

The deadline for suggestions to the council's street improvement ideas tool has been extended to 14th December for you to submit ideas to the Street Improvements Tool. We know there are lots of ideas about ways to make our streets safer and calmer so do feed them in! See: bristol.gov.uk/residents/streets-travel/tell-us-about-a-road-safety-concern These will then be analysed by the Local Transport Team to summarise issues and ideas logged by residents. A process then refines possible projects to submit into local Area Committees in spring. This will be the first time for many years that there's a central council budget allocated to local street improvement projects

Schools outperform the national average for the first time

Bristol's secondary schools have achieved promising results in this year's Key Stage 4 (KS4) GCSE results, according to provisional data released last week (16 October) by the Department for Education (DfE). Bristol's score has risen from 45.2 to 46.3, meaning the city has moved above the national average for the first time. While the national average remained steady at 45.9 between 2024 and 2025, Bristol's improvement marks a new high. We know there's more to do but we're delighted that improvements are being recognised.

Safety in parks

In November the city council unanimously passed a motion to

support better facilities or safety features to support women and girls using parks and green spaces. We know resources for managing parks have been cut in recent years and the service has to raise funds from events but we ensured that the motion makes sure the committee managing them will put this priority into their work programme and ensure future decisions always have genuine care for issues that affect women and girls.

Parking news

A report was passed in November approving a new series of parking management schemes [permit parking and pay and display spaces, also called RPS] in response to long requested action to deal with unmanaged streets and rogue parking affecting road safety and access by services around this city. This would apply to some parts of our ward. Areas just outside zones where parking is controlled by permits tend to suffer the most from other vehicles being stored in their street including blocked corners without double yellow lines. The areas of Redland ward which got a scheme in 2014 rarely have any problems with parking safety but it can be chaotic elsewhere with vehicles being left and competition for spaces. The consideration of future schemes in our ward that would be consulted on includes parts of Bishopston south of the prison and streets in Westbury Park within our ward too. This process is not immediate and there will be time to make your views known when anything

concrete emerges over the next couple of years. We know there can be strong views either way and we shall of course be making sure any details are looked at very carefully and residents and businesses get their say if this goes forward in future.

Supporting for cleaner vehicles goes citywide

The Clean Air Zone in place since late 2022 has helped reduce toxic pollution from Nitrogen oxides both inside and outside the zone. The figures from 2024 have been agreed with government and now published. But six monitoring sites still have illegal levels of pollution in the city centre, around Rupert Street, Bond Street and Colston Avenue/Zed Alley. In fact two sites saw raised levels of pollution. No safe level of air pollution is recognised and legal compliance is the basic step to reducing illnesses and early death from respiratory causes.

The council is required by government to get these legal as soon as possible. It's therefore been agreed that the support scheme for replacing non compliant vehicles with newer ones has been extended citywide and the income threshold for grants or loans is raised from £30,000 to £35,000. There will also be extra support for fleet vehicles used by public bodies to be updated, and the scheme to trial buses, cycling and e-mobility has been extended. The council is not raising the charge for non compliant vehicles to enter the zone at this stage. The income can only be used to pay for running the zone and any surplus is used for

transport projects.

Drop in to ask about water

Wessex Water and Bristol Water, the water and sewerage providers, will be holding community drop-in sessions for customers to meet face to face and ask about anything related to bills, water supply and waste water and if anyone is struggling with payments, they can offer advice and talk to them about the support that is available. A session in our ward will be held at Bishopston Library on 17th December at 10-12 & 1-2.

Postal vote changes

New rules from the Elections Act 2022 mean that if electors applied for a postal vote on or before 30 January 2024, they need to re-apply by 31 January 2026. Otherwise, their postal vote will expire. This is because the law now requires voters to prove their identity when applying for a postal vote. Most new applicants are using the government's online portal, which checks their national insurance number, date of birth, and signature. Paper applications are still allowed but take much longer to process. In Bristol, around 28,000 postal voters need to re-apply and we know use of postal votes is high in this ward.

Contact us

Fi: Cllr.fi.hance@bristol.gov.uk.
Martin: Cllr.martin.fodor@bristol.gov.uk Fi: 0117 3534720. Martin 0788 4736101 [Facebook.com/cllrmartin.fodor](https://www.facebook.com/cllrmartin.fodor) or cllrfi.hance

NEWS

MORE details have emerged over the planned introduction of resident parking zones in Bristol.

The city council is planning to introduce more permit areas to clamp down on commuters parking on residential streets. These could also discourage households from owning multiple cars. An update was given to councillors on October 23.

New zones will start to be rolled out in next year and early 2027, with Ashton Gate, Westbury, Luckwell Road, Parson Street, Totterdown and Windmill Hill first in line. Then later on in 2027 and in early 2028, new zones will include Ashley Down, Ashton Vale, Bishopston, Henleaze, Malago

Permits on way

Vale, Perrett's Park, St Andrews, upper Easton, and east Totterdown.

There is also potential for new zones to be developed, depending on demand. St Werburghs could be developed from 2028 too. Creating the new zones will cost £7.5 million, with two thirds of this coming from the Clean Air Zone charges income.

[Labour suggested that the £5 million of Clean Air Zone funding would be better spent on improving the buses.

Resident parking zones were introduced

in Bristol more than a decade ago. Then in 2016, the newly elected Labour mayor Marvin Rees paused their roll-out and none have come in since.

But Greens said the permits are popular. Green Cllr Emma Edwards added: "Eight years of Labour and they didn't put a single one in, even though so many people have said that they want this. them,

The cost of a permit varies in different parts of Bristol, with the majority costing £124 a year for a first car. A permit for a second vehicle costs £224 a year, while a permit for a third vehicle costs £560 a year.

By Alex Seabrook, Local Democracy Reporting Service

FROM YOUR COUNCILLORS

Bishopston & Ashley Down: Emma Edwards and James Crawford (Green Party)

Residents Parking Zones update

The recent Transport and Connectivity Committee meeting brought further discussions on Residents Parking Zones (RPZs) for Bishopston and Ashley Down, with money now allocated for extending these zones. It has been proposed to implement RPZs in two phases, with Bishopston being in the second phase, estimated for 2026/27. We know that people have been asking for an RPZ for a while now, and we receive a huge number of requests. By doing it in phases, we aim to ensure that areas are not overly affected by overspill from neighbouring zones. We have emphasised the need to balance the interests of residents, local businesses, and visitors. More information on upcoming consultations and any agreed changes will be shared as soon as it becomes available.

New road safety reporting tool for residents

We have long been aware of issues with speeding, rat-running, traffic and dangerous driving in various streets in the ward, with many requests for road changes and traffic calming measures. We have been working with officers to find a way to identify the worst areas so they can be considered for future transport projects. Officers have now created a new tool, similar to FixMyStreet, which allows you to suggest areas for improvement. The deadline for submitting information to the tool has been extended to the 14th December 2025. You can find it via the Council Website by searching for: 'Tell us about a road safety concern or street improvement'. This is an exciting step forward, giving residents a direct way to share ideas for street improvements. While this won't guarantee immediate changes, it will help officers prioritise when funding becomes available. Please share this tool with your neighbours, WhatsApp

groups or residents' associations to help build a comprehensive picture of problem areas.

Bristol City Council budget consultation – have your say!

The Council is currently consulting on its 2026/27 Budget, and your views matter. This is your chance to influence how resources are allocated across the city. Please take a few minutes to complete the consultation online at: <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/budget2026> Your feedback will help shape decisions that affect services, investment, and priorities for our community. Don't miss this opportunity – the consultation closes soon!

Funds approved for bat boxes on Common

We're delighted to announce that the Area 2 committee has approved £1,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for the installation of new bat boxes on Horfield Common. This initiative aims to support local bat populations, enhance biodiversity, and offer residents the chance to spot these fascinating nocturnal creatures. The bat boxes will be installed in consultation with local wildlife groups to ensure best practice standards. Keep an eye out for upcoming community events where you can learn more about our local bats and ways to get involved in caring for Bishopston's green spaces.

Update on 248 Gloucester Road

There's been significant interest in the future of 248 Gloucester Road. Emma and James have contacted council officers to check the site for safety and assess its condition. While the site has been deemed safe, they are keen to speak to the owners about future plans. No formal planning applications have been submitted yet, but any

proposals will be subject to public consultation. We'll continue to keep you posted as new information emerges, ensuring you have the chance to share your views on the next steps for this important location. Officers will continue to monitor the site for safety.

Wildlife Champions for Ashley Down

Emma and James recently met with residents living between Ashley Down Road and Muller Road, who are looking to set up a Wildlife Group to create spaces for hedgehogs and other wildlife. While the future goal is to secure funding for improving the green space at the bottom of Springfield Avenue, the group also aims to create wildlife-friendly areas in alleyways behind Ralph Road and other suitable spots. If you live in the area, care about wildlife and would like to volunteer, please get in touch and we can connect you with the organisers.

Get Involved

Bishopston thrives when residents get involved. Whether you're submitting feedback on local projects, attending committee meetings, or joining community events, your voice matters. If you have questions or want to share your thoughts, feel free to contact Emma and James via email. We look forward to hearing from you and working together to make our area even better!

We wish all residents a very happy Yuletide season and look forward to seeing and hearing from you in the New Year.

Contact us

Cllr.james.crawford@bristol.gov.uk
Cllr.Emma.edwards@bristol.gov.uk

NEWS

Councillors clash over libraries' future

CITY councillors clashed over a 4,600-name petition to "save Bristol's libraries".

The Green-led administration, backed by Lib Dems and Conservatives, accused the opposition group of "scaremongering" and "propaganda" and insisted the service was not under threat after announcing previously that the budget would not be cut next year.

Labour said that despite this, no one in charge had met its challenge of promising that no branches would be shut as part of a major ongoing review into the future of the city's libraries.

Presenting the petition at a full meeting of Bristol City Council on November 4, Labour group leader Cllr Tom Renhard

said the ruling groups had initially proposed to cut funding by more than half – £2.4million from the £4.7million pot – for the service but had backtracked after it mounted a campaign.

He said: "At the point we left office in May 2024, we had delivered eight balanced budgets, and we still had 27 libraries in the city – having kept them all open.

"There were no easy decisions – the trade-off for keeping them all open was reducing some libraries' operating hours. We knew that once the building's gone, it's gone for good."

Cllr Renhard said the administration had failed to take many opportunities to rule out branch closures.

Cllr Ed Fraser (Green,

Eastville), who is autistic, said he knew the importance of libraries because he spent the first few years of his life non-verbal and that reading with his mum and older brother at his local branch was crucial in his speech development.

Public health and communities chairman Cllr Stephen Williams (Lib Dem, Westbury-on-Trym & Henleaze) said: "The petition is full of falsehoods and scaremongering."

He said former Labour mayor Marvin Rees proposed to close 17 libraries, which was only dropped after a public outcry.

Cllr Williams said: "Instead of which there was a 25 per cent cut to the libraries budget. They worsened this by putting in place a recruitment freeze.

"Last year the Greens and Liberal Democrats decided we would not cut the libraries budget. This year we have made an announcement – probably unprecedented so far out – that next year's 2026/27 libraries budget is also safeguarded.

"Under Labour, libraries were under threat, un-loved and under-appreciated.

"Under the Lib Dem and Green administration they are appreciated, they are valued and they have a safe and secure future."

Tory group leader Cllr Mark Weston said: "The bit that I'm getting annoyed about is that I wasn't aware there was actually a threat to close libraries.

By Alex Seabrook, Local Democracy Reporting Service

WHAT'S ON IN OUR AREA

■ BLAISE COMMUNITY

GARDEN behind behind Blaise Museum BS10 7QS open Wednesday and Saturday 10 to 2, interesting walled kitchen garden, free to enter, new volunteers needed & welcomed, plants always available.

■ LA SCALA DELI HENLEAZE

The Italian Hub of Henleaze.

Join us for our **3 YEAR ANNIVERSARY EXTRAVAGANZA ON DECEMBER 10TH**: Starting with a welcome Spritz or Prosecco, come and sample 10 Italian liqueurs/wines while we graze on Aperitivo style spreads of Mediterranean nibbles (from cheeses to imported meats, and extra surprises from our kitchen). Unlike our wine tasting events, this is a standing evening with limited seating. So there'll be plenty of opportunity to work your way around the room, sampling nibbles and wines from some of our favourite regions & having a chatty evening. Each ticket comes with x5 raffle entries for the La Scala Anniversary draw, we will be calling out winners on the night.

La Scala Anniversary Prize Draw:

- x2 Wine & Dine La Scala tasting menu vouchers (£190)
- The Big Christmas Hamper (VA£150)
- x2 Wine Tasting La Scala vouchers (£80)
- Jeroboam Dogajolo, Tuscan red wine 3L (£70)

Our 2026 Wine Tasting events dates Jan - April are now live on our website

SPECIAL EVENTS - Wine & Dine

Tasting Menu Dinner Parties - 5 courses - 6 wines
Dec 13 - Umbria
Jan 17 & Feb 28 - Lombardia
Mar 14 & Apr 4 - Lazio

Tickets at www.lascaladeli.com/ tickets or book in store. Private enquiries welcome

December 12

■ CAROLS IN THE COURTYARD

5.30 to 6.30 pm on Friday 12th December 2025 (Umbrellas may be necessary!) At Horfield Baptist Church 160A Gloucester Road BS7 8NT. Come and sing some seasonal songs. Hot drinks, squash and Mince

pies will be available after we have sung

Friday 12 December

■ **THE FILTONES CHRISTMAS CRACKERS CONCERT**, at St Andrew's Methodist Church, Elm Park, Filton, BS34 7PS 7.30 p.m. Tickets £10 from choir members or by cash or cheques at the door please. Doors open 7.00 p.m. Raffle and retiring collection in aid of the charity "inHope".

December 13

■ **REDLAND WIND BAND** Christmas Concert at Trinity Henleaze URC, 7.30pm. Tickets £10 on the door or book ahead on Eventbrite. Raffle in aid of Bristol Drugs Project.

December 15th

■ **FILM CLUB CHRISTMAS PARTY**, 2.00pm. Live musical entertainment from a member of the Mini-Concerts team, performing a range of well-known and loved Christmas songs. With festive refreshments and plenty of opportunities to sing along! Booking required. Carers welcome, easy access Refreshments £4. St. Peter's Church Hall, The Drive, Henleaze BS9 4LD. For more information, please call 0117 435 0063.

December 17-20

■ **BRISTOL IMPROV THEATRE PANTO**. £12/15, Something to tickle your festive funny bone! A unique improvised panto every night 8pm. Family friendly matinee 2pm Saturday 20th December. To book www.improvtheatre.co.uk

December 21

■ **CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE** at 5.00pm on Sunday 21st December 2025. At Horfield Baptist Church 160A Gloucester Road, BS7 8NT. An all age event that will be based on the Christmas story as we read it in our Bibles. Hot drinks, squash and Mince pies will again be available. Contact the Church office on office@horfieldbaptist.net for further details

REGULAR EVENTS

Various days

■ **PILATES** classes, Northcote Scout Hall, BS9 3TY. Mondays 9.30am (Improvers), 10.30am (Mixed Ability inc. Beginners); Tuesdays 9.30am (Improvers), 10.30am (Gentle); Thursdays 9.30am (Improvers),

10.45am (Mixed Ability - inc Beginners). Small, friendly classes. Please register interest before attending. Full details at www.mindbodypilates.org. Contact: Leanne 07817189474 or leanne@mindbodypilates.org

INSTRUMENT AMNESTY:

If you have an unused keyboard, guitar, violin or ukulele gathering dust Folkstars would love to hear from you! We will come and collect from you. Any condition, we will fix and use to give more kids in Bristol the chance to play an instrument. Smaller sizes a bonus but all sizes useful. Please email info@folkstars.co.uk to arrange a collection. Folkstars is a non-profit setup to give more children in Bristol the chance to learn an instrument. We provide affordable instrumental tuition during school time that's free for pupil premium, inclusive and fun. If you would like your school to be considered please email info@folkstars.co.uk

■ GENTLE PILATES SMALL AND FRIENDLY GROUP

classes with a mindful approach. Beginners welcome. Tuesdays 7.15-8.15pm and Thursdays 11.30-12.30am at Bristol Yoga Space, Princes' Place, BS7 8NP. For further information visit pilates.ittahowie.co.uk or email Itta@mail@ittahowie.co.uk

■ BRISTOL HOME LIBRARY

SERVICE. A free home delivery service for Bristolians provided by local volunteers. For anyone affected by age, disability or caring responsibilities. 07714898558

Monday

■ SHARED READING AT ST PAUL'S

LIBRARY. Meet and connect with others Mondays 2pm - 3.30pm. St Paul's Learning Centre, 94 Grosvenor Road, Bristol BS2 8XJ. Email: support@thereader.org.uk

■ **REDLAND WIND BAND** has vacancies for some woodwind, brass and percussion players. This friendly group meets 7.30-9.30pm at Redland Church Hall, Redland Green. Contact via email on redlandwindband@gmail.com

■ **DICKENS SOCIETY**. 7pm, at Leonard Hall, Henleaze URC, Waterford Rd, Bristol BS9 4BT. Talks, costumed readings, book club and social events. See www.dickens-society.org.uk or phone Roma on 0117 9279875.

■ **PLAY BOWLS** at Canford Park in a friendly, social atmosphere. Qualified

coaches and equipment provided. Contact: Les on 07305695579

■ BRISTOL COMMUNITY GAMELAN

play the music of Java at Cotham School from 6.30-8.30. We play by numbers - only 1-6, without the 4! So no auditions, no need to read music. If you fancy a different musical experience, contact us via email on keithripley27@gmail.com

■ **WESTBURY ON TRYM WOMEN'S INSTITUTE** meets on the third Monday of the month in the Westbury Village Hall, Eastfield Road, BS9 4AG, from 2.00 - 4.00 pm. We have interesting speakers, and extra activities of crafts, lunch club, skittles and outings. For more information call Sascha on 07961619806 or Traci on 07766073917

Tuesday

■ **WESTBURY PARK WOMEN'S INSTITUTE** meets on the first Tuesday of every month in the Girl Guide Hut on Westmorland Road from 7.00 - 9.30pm. We are an active and friendly group with a varied programme plus extra sessions for craft, coffee, book clubs, walks etc. Visitors are always welcome and for more information do call Sue on 07813795936 or email westburyparkwi@gmail.com

■ THE ARTS SOCIETY BRISTOL

welcomes new members. Our lectures, given by specialists in their own field, take place on the second Tuesday of the month from September to May at 7.30pm at Redmaids' High BS9 3AW and by internet. For more information visit our website www.theartssociety-bristol.org.uk

■ **GENTLE PILATES** Small and friendly group class with a mindful approach. Beginners welcome. Tuesdays 7.15-8.15pm at Bristol Yoga Space, Princes' Place, BS7 8NP. For further information email Itta@mail@ittahowie.co.uk

■ BRISTOL HARMONY WEST

GALLERY CHOIR and band sing and play lively church and village music from the 18th century. St Edyth's Church Hall, St Edyth's Road, Sea Mills, 7.30 pm on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday each month. All voices (SATB), string, wind and reed instruments welcome. No auditions but ability to read music helpful. www.bristolharmony.wordpress.com or call Fritjof 0117 924 3440. Contact before attending.

■ **POETRY UNLIMITED** - poetry circle meet on the First Tuesday of every month 11am - 12 midday. Basement Room, Café Kino, 108 Stokes Croft, Bristol, BS1 3RU. £2.50 - £3.00 donation towards the cost of the room. Bring a couple of poems to

share, other poets or your own. Contact Dee: wetwo@gentlyblown.co.uk Web: www.poetryunlimitedbristol.weebly.com

■ **COMPANION VOICES BRISTOL** We are a 'threshold choir' looking for new people to join us. We meet in Easton on the 3rd Tuesday of the month from 7 to 9 pm to learn songs by ear and build skills in sensitivity/compassion/loving presence to sing at the bedsides of people nearing the end of life. To join/support us in this work, contact Valerie on bristol@companionvoices.org. Visit www.facebook.com/CompanionVoicesBristol and www.companionvoices.org

■ **BRISTOL A CAPPELLA:** Tuesdays 7.30pm, Victoria Methodist Church. Bristol A Cappella is an award-winning mixed barbershop chorus of around 30 members who love to sing close harmony a cappella. Our songs are mainly from pop music, with a bit of rock and some musicals. www.bristolacappella.co.uk/ Contact: membership@bristolacappella.co.uk

■ **BRISTOL GOOD AFTERNOON CHOIR** rehearses at Westbury-on-Trym Methodist Church (BS9 3AA) 2-4pm (term time only). We are a fun and friendly, non-audition, community choir for both male and female voices - one of 32 Good Afternoon Choirs who 'sing in the afternoon' around the South West and further afield. New members are always welcome and, whether you come alone or with a friend, we will be very pleased to meet you! For further details please visit our website - www.goodafternoonchoir.org - or contact us on 01761 472468 or via e-mail at gac@grenvilllemusic.co.uk

Tuesday and Saturday

■ **BRISTOL HF RAMBLING CLUB** We are a friendly sociable club with a variety of walks. We have 2 Tuesday walks of either 8-9 miles or 5-6 miles. On Saturdays we have varying length walks including a hill walk eg Brecon Beacons once a month. If you would like more information please visit our website.

Wednesday

■ **OPEN DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE** For those interested in developing their spiritual awareness and mediumistic ability. 7.15 for 7.30 start at Westbury Park Spiritualist Church, Cairns Road BS6 7TH. Just turn up or visit www.westburyparksc.org

■ **HEALING SESSIONS** Spiritual Healing is available from 2pm to 3.30pm by the accredited healing team at Westbury Park Spiritualist Church, Cairns Road BS6 7TH. Just turn up or visit www.westburyparksc.org

■ **GOLDEN HILL WI** Meets the first Wednesday of every month. 1-3pm. Golden Hill Sports Ground, Wimbeldon Rd, BS6 7YA. A vibrant, lively new afternoon WI in BS6. Contact Pam Scull at goldenhillwi@gmail.com.

■ **BRISTOL VOICES COMMUNITY CHOIR** welcomes new members at any time. We meet at 7.30pm in St Werburghs Primary School during term time. See www.bristolvoices.org.uk for details.

■ **BRISTOL SCRABBLE CLUB** meets every Wednesday evening at 7pm until 10pm at Filton Community Centre, Elm Park, Filton BS34 7PS. New members welcome - first visit free so come along and give us a try. For further information contact Tania by email at tania lake@yahoo.co.uk

WELCOME WEDNESDAY

Friendly and free coffee afternoon on the last Wednesday of the month, 2-3.30pm at The Beehive Pub, Wellington Hill West, BS9 4QY. Meet new people, have fun, and find out what's happening in your local area. Call 0117 435 0063 for more information.

■ **CLIFTON CRAFTERS** We all have craft items we started and are now lurking in a drawer unloved - dig them out and come and share a morning of knitting, crochet, tapestry, rag rugs or whatever you would love to resurrect or mend! Every Wednesday in October at Clifton Library 10.30-12.30pm.

Thursday

■ **HIGHBURY BADMINTON CLUB:** Pete Stables 0117 950 1524 or www.pete4458.wixsite.com/highburybadminton Thurs 7:30pm mid September to End April, Westbury-on-Trym Village Hall

■ **THE STEPFORD SINGERS WOMEN'S COMMUNITY CHOIR** meets at Horfield Baptist Church, Bishopston on Thursday afternoons, 1pm to 3pm. No auditions and no need to read music! Come for a free taster session with our friendly, supportive group and learn to sing in harmony. For info, contact Fran franbolton66@gmail.com

■ **MINDFULNESS YOGA.** Thursdays 5.30 - 6.30pm. Deepen your yoga practice & awareness, through a meditative & loving-kindness approach. Classes adaptable for beginners and intermediates. By donation. See www.bristol-buddhist-centre.org/yoga/ for more details. Or email info@bristol-buddhist-centre.org

■ **GENTLE PILATES** Small and friendly group class with a mindful approach. Beginners welcome. Thursdays 11.30-12.30am at Bristol Yoga Space, Princes' Place, BS7 8NP. For further information email Itta at mail@ittahowie.co.uk

■ **THE READER :** We meet to share experiences using stories and poems that we read aloud; no pressure to read or talk. 11.30am to 1.00pm at Bishopston Library. Dee Derbyshire 07980364909 & Juliet Harvey

■ **BRISTOL BACH CHOIR** are now recruiting new members. We are a

friendly auditioned choir of between 30 and 40 singers. All voice parts are welcome. We rehearse on a Thursday evening at Bristol Grammar School from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. If interested please contact Julie at membership@bristolbach.org.uk

■ **SWIFTS INCLUSIVE SPORTS** swimming sessions are for adults 18+ with any disability (hoist available) on Wednesday evenings from 7-8pm. £5 per session at Henbury Leisure Centre. Contact Karen Lloyd at 07734 335 878.

FRIENDS TOGETHER DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CAFÉ

A Dementia accessible café for all on the first Thursday of every month, 10am-12pm; The Randall Room at All Saints Church, Pembroke Rd, Clifton. Support, guidance, information and friendship with complimentary tea, coffee and homemade cake. No need to book - just come along and be a part of our community! For more information contact All Saints Parish Office: 0117 974 1355

ENJOY SCOTTISH DANCING]

Looking for a new hobby? Join us for fun, fitness and friendship (singles welcome). First evening free! Thursdays: New/Inexperienced dancers 7-8.30pm (£4). Intermediate/Advanced dancers 7.30-10pm (£6). St Monica Trust, Oatley House Main Hall, BS9 3TN. www.rscdsbristol.info. Contact Ruth 01179683057.

■ **HENBURY SINGERS WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS** Do you have a yearning to join a choir? Whether you are new to choirs, or returning after a short or long break, a warm welcome awaits you at Henbury Singers. We meet each Thursday 7.30 - 9.15 at Stoke Bishop Primary School, Cedar Park BS9 1BW during school term times. We perform a wide range of sacred and secular music under our conductor Barbara Rusbridge. No auditions. See our website www.henburysingers.org. Contact the secretary at secretary@henburysingers.org

■ **HENLEAZE LADIES' CHOIR** Join us as we fill St Peter's Church Hall in Henleaze with a diverse selection of music. We are a friendly choir and meet on Thursday afternoons in term time from 1.45 to 3.45. There are no auditions, and the ability to read music is not necessary. Contact Jeanette on 9685409 or Jane on 07752 332278

■ **HEALING FOR WELLBEING** - New time, 5pm to 6.15 pm. Drop in sessions with trained practitioners. Redland Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road, BS6 6JE. All welcome - donation basis. For information, visit <http://www.>

facebook.com/BristolHealingGroup or <https://www.thehealingtrust.org.uk/healing/healing-centre> or phone Selina 0117 9466434.

■ **BISHOPSTON COMMUNITY CHOIR** Meet on Thursday evenings, 7.30pm to 9.00pm at Horfield Baptist Church, 160a Gloucester Road, Bishopston BS7 8NT. Everyone welcome, no audition necessary. Contact us on bishoproadchoir@gmail.com

■ **LOCAL CHOIR ACTIVELY RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS.** We meet at Stoke Bishop CE Primary School, BS9 1BW on Thursday, 7.45 - 9.15pm. We are a well-established mixed choir performing both sacred and secular music. See website www.henburysingers.org contact secretary at secretary@henburysingers.org.

Friday

■ **BRISTOL SPANISH CIRCLE** Come and meet a group of friendly people and enjoy talks in Spanish, musical events and social evenings. We meet every month from September to June, usually on the last Friday of the month, at St Peter's Church Hall in Henleaze. For more info, see <https://www.spanishcirclebristol.com/>

■ **COFFEE AND CRAFT** at Horfield Baptist Church, 160A Gloucester Road BS7 8NT Fridays 10.30 to 12.15. Dates in November 14th 28th and December 12th. Come and meet with this Community group, bring what you are making enjoy lively conversation. Coffee and Tea will be available. Please contact the Church office on office@horfieldbaptist.net for further details.

■ **HENLEAZE BOWLING CLUB.** Come along at 5.45pm on Fridays to see if bowling could be the sport for you. Coaching available. Experienced bowlers welcome. Grange Court Road, by Newman Hall. This is a friendly Club with good bowling facilities and social events throughout the year. Phone, Tom Logan, on 0117 962 1669 or email hbcsec@henleazebowlingclub.org.uk for further details.

■ **FOLK NIGHT** every third Wednesday of the month at the Victoria inn, Chock lane, Westbury on Trym. 7.30-10.30pm. All musicians and singers welcome or just pop in. Call 0117 959 0834

Saturday

■ **SEA MILLS REPAIR CAFE** offers sewing, woodwork, general, electrical and cycle repairs at the Methodist Church, Sea Mills Square, from 10am-12pm, every second Saturday of the month (except August). This is a voluntary service run by experienced repairers. Donations welcome. FFI see Facebook @seamillsrepaircafe

NEWS

Charity cycle ride ends with a proposal

INSPIRED by a woman who spent her summers in Carcassonne picking grapes, her son and a group of friends and family have completed a 1400-kilometre charity cycle ride from Oxfordshire to the south of France in her memory.

Ben Last took on the challenge in recognition of the care his mum Sue and the family received from St Peter's Hospice in Bristol in the final stages of her life before she died in 2020.

"The care they provided for my mum, and the support they offered to us, her family, was incredible. It made a huge difference, and I wanted to do something to give back and honour her memory," said Ben, a financial analyst who lives in Redland.

"Mum spent several summers in her twenties in Carcassonne, where she would pick grapes in the vineyards and sell fruit in the local market in exchange for bed and board (and a two-litre-per-day wine allowance!).



The cyclists arrive in Carcassonne

"Carcassonne remained very special to her, and she often shared stories about the summers she spent there. Shortly before she passed away, Mum took us back and showed us the fields and streets that had brought her so much joy."

The cycling group, which

included Ben's father, Stephen, and brother, Tom, camped along the way and faced a couple of days nearly washed out by rain.

"We ate an incredible amount of baguettes, croissants and Haribo. And at the very end of the trip, I proposed to my girlfriend, Daisy, using one of

my mum's rings that my dad had kept in his bag for the entire journey – and she said yes!

"It was the perfect way to end the trip, and something I know my mum would have been so pleased about."

For Ben, the route held deep personal meaning, linking two places that had always been special to his mother.

"She went to live in Great Tew – an idyllic Oxfordshire village at the age of four; it left a huge impression on her, and she went back many times to visit. Her ashes rest by the cricket pitch and under the cedar tree at the top of 'Cow Hill'."

Along with his father and brother Tom, 31, the group included Archie Morfoot, 28, Max Heiberg-Gibbons, 28, Sam Milliner, 28, Dom Griffiths, 28, all from Bristol; Daisy Handford, 27, from Leicestershire and Ben O'Connor, 27, from Yorkshire.

St Peter's Hospice relies on donations and fundraising to deliver its services.

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■ VINEYARD NEWS with INGRID BATES

Stripping the willow for the sake of our vines

WHILE we're waiting for the vines to go dormant, we've started pollarding the willow that grow around the vineyard. We try and keep on top of this every year to make sure that the growth never gets too thick. If we leave it for longer than a year, the willow stems become much thicker and pollarding becomes a much bigger task. We chop the main growth back because we don't want the trees to grow full size and shade the vines. Willow grow at an amazing rate of several metres per year and do a great job of protecting the vineyard from wind and maintaining a warmer, more stable environment which the vines love.

In other news, some of you may remember that we ran a crowdfunding campaign back in 2021 to raise funds to buy some land to complement our existing rented field in North Somerset. We're delighted to announce that we recently completed on the purchase of two acres of land near the villages of Bitton and Kelston between Bristol and Bath. The new vineyard sits on south facing, sandy slopes with incredible



views over the river Avon and surrounding countryside.

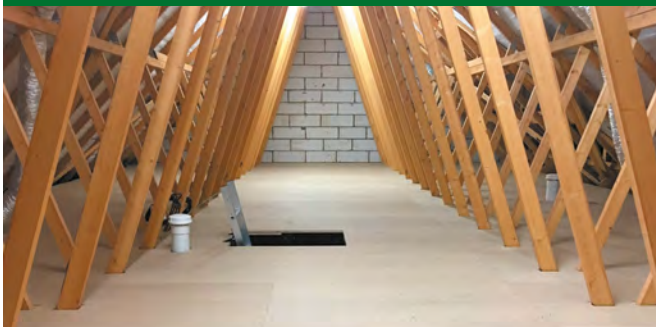
For those of you who supported our crowdfunding campaign with the 'adopt a vine' option, you should have received an e-mail but do get in touch if you missed it.

On the wine front we have sparkling white,

rosé, red available as well as still rosé so do get in touch if you are interested in free local delivery.

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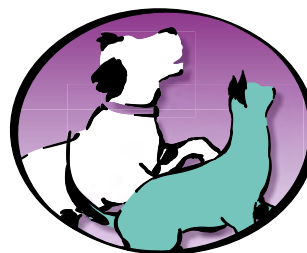
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NATURE WATCH with Dawn Lawrence

Log on for the ultimate slow entertainment

OUR Mesolithic ancestors must have felt great relief on reaching the Winter Solstice, an event they tracked by inventing stone circles and surely marked with a bonfire. The Yule log tradition continues to this day: a chocolate one will probably find its way, briefly, onto our Christmas table and a genuine one into the hearth (necessitating the gathering up of woodlice and the tracking down of that slightly creepy ginger-coloured woodlouse spider that ran behind the fire tongs).

But a log can make an ideal Christmas present – for our garden wildlife. If you are looking to add a certain bijou glamour to a garden already full of natural features then it may be just the ticket. For a log is far from being a simple lump of dead wood. It is a tempting buffet table for birds; a spring nursery for the larvae of beetles and hoverflies; a winter shelter for ladybirds; a permanent home for woodlice; and a hunting ground for centipedes and spiders. In amongst the tapestry detail of the lichens and mosses are yet more invertebrates such as springtails and tardigrades (eight-legged “water bears” under 1mm in size) though you will need a microscope to spot these. Most importantly



Our front garden log, which is about three years old, with an attractive constellation of oysterling fungi bursting out of every surface

Photo Dawn Lawrence

the log is food and home at once for wood-rotting fungi and, ultimately, a soil enhancer for your garden. It will eventually return its nutrients to the soil thanks to the actions of wild species that decompose the log in long, ancient silence.

A log also gives you the chance to watch one of nature's most essential processes – the successive stages of natural decomposition (the ultimate in slow entertainment!) When a

tree falls a new habitat is created – a vertical living trunk becomes a horizontal dead log. Almost immediately fungi move in, invisibly at first, attacking the softer cells under the bark and then the tough fibres of the wood itself. The stages of fungal decay are varied and can be dry or wet, firm, soft or even gelatinous. During one stage it is possible to pull out a handful of “wood” and squeeze the water out of it – it has become soft and spongy due to the breakdown of lignin in the cell walls. The log becomes a palimpsest of overlain fungal colonies. And look out for slime moulds – as their delightful name suggests they spend part of their lives looking more or less like the result of a productive cough (sorry!) but at a mysterious signal the colonial creature organises itself into bead-like rounded structures, sometimes in a matter of hours, in order to reproduce by spores.

So celebrate Christmas by leaving that fallen apple tree that went over in Storm Amy! We grabbed a couple of sections of lime trunk when our nearest street tree was felled about three years ago; the photo shows how one is doing. Pop your log into a sheltered part of the garden, sit back and enjoy...

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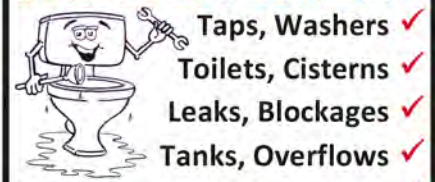
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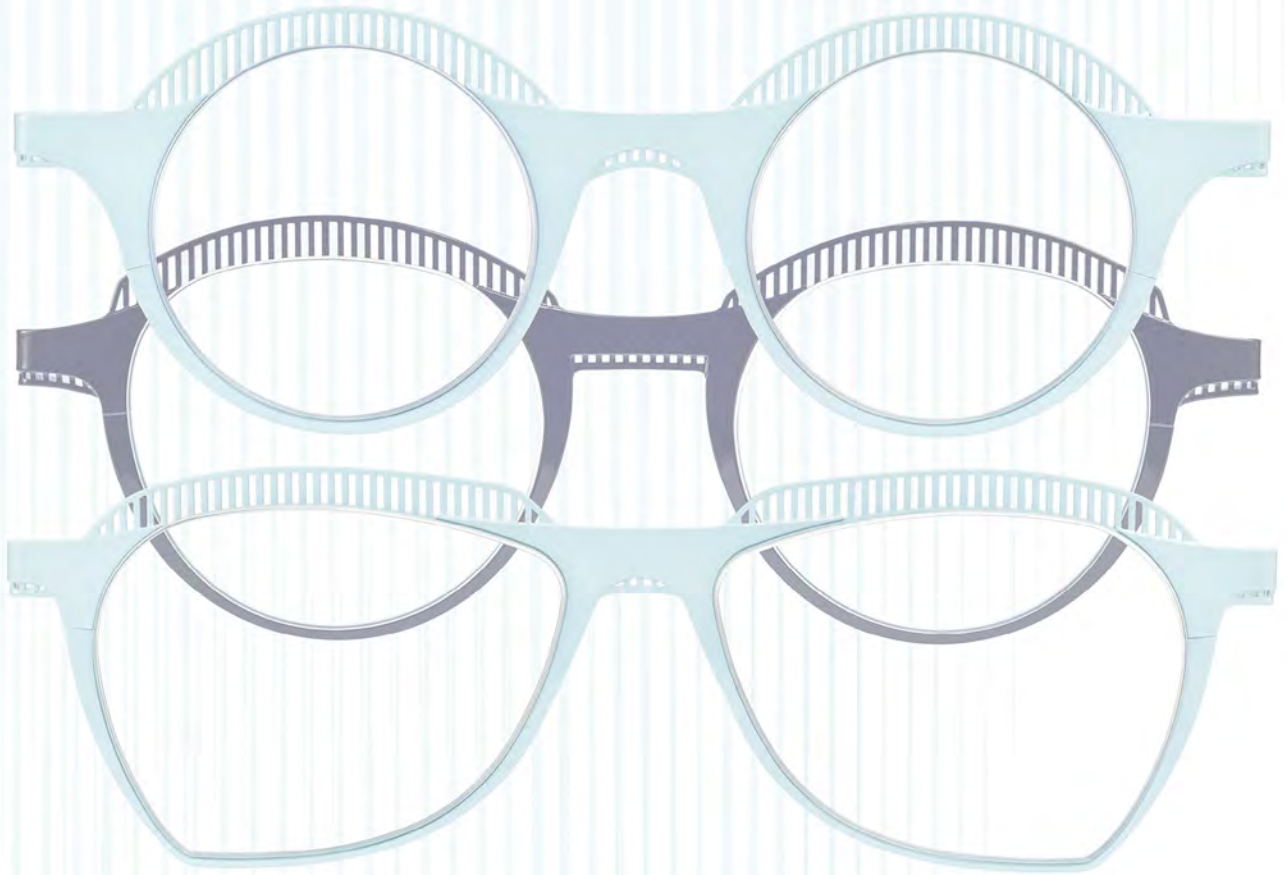
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