



# The Mottisfont & Dunbridge ACORN



Parish Newsletter

February / March 2026

## Dear Neighbours

There has been much to be appreciate over the winter, from the grateful birds at the garden feeder, to the deer gliding through bare trees, frosted mornings, and hellebores flowering against all the odds. Looking back, the festive season felt truly magical this year. I so enjoyed seeing Mottisfont Abbey transformed with its stunning Cinderella theme, and the village hall was full of life for our panto, Pinocchio.



But now, as midwinter begins to lift, there is a distinct change in the air. The mornings are growing a little lighter, and the first snowdrops are bravely making their appearance, a gentle reminder that spring is on its way.

The urge to hibernate in January can often make it feel like an incredibly long month. While there's nothing wrong with giving in to the cosy temptations of home, February and March bring a fresh sense of energy. I, for one, am ready to leave my nest and 'spring clean' my home, garden, and outlook alike.

I'm already enjoying this sense of renewal as I begin prepping my flower beds. There is something so hopeful about clearing away the damp leaves to find those lovely green 'noses' of daffodils and tulips poking through the soil. It's a messy, muddy job this time of year, but the smell of the damp earth always feels like an invitation. I'm already dreaming of the colours that will soon fill the village, from the bright yellows of the gorse to the delicate cherry blossoms. I'm also taking some lovely local walks that (between the showers) capture the best of the late-winter sunshine and I've been keeping busy with my dogs at the weekly K9 enrichment training sessions - it's been such a joy to see the dogs learning and having so much fun.



With February bringing us Valentine's Day, it's a lovely excuse to celebrate not just romance, but the kindness of friends and neighbours. Let's continue to look out for one another, whether it's sharing a pot of tea on a rainy afternoon or a quick chat over the garden fence.

These small moments of connection are what make our village such a special place to live.

Warm wishes,  
*Allis X*

**A huge thank you to the generous anonymous supporter for sponsoring this edition. We are grateful for their support, which ensures The Acorn remains a free, consistent resource for everyone in our community.**

### MEET THE NEIGHBOURS

*Meet the Neighbours* is an opportunity to get to know the people who live nearby over a drink at the Mill Arms.

Come and join us for the next two Meet the Neighbours events from 7.30pm on:



**Tuesday 24th February**  
**Thursday 26th March**

**Put these dates in your diary now!**

**The deadline for inclusion of any articles / information in the April / May edition of the Acorn is the 20th March 2026.**

Please email any items to [acornparishnews@outlook.com](mailto:acornparishnews@outlook.com)

## Help with Your Water Bill: Southern Water Hardship Fund

To help our community manage rising costs, we're highlighting the Southern Water Hardship Fund. It offers tailored support for those facing financial hardship, illness, or unexpected job loss.

What support is available? Depending on your circumstances, the fund can provide:

Debt Clearance: One-off grants to write off up to £3,000 of water debt.

Bill Reductions: A 50% discount on your water bill for one year.

Household Grants: Up to £1,000 to replace essential appliances (like a broken washing machine) or for emergency home repairs.

Emergency Vouchers: Access to supermarket vouchers for those in immediate crisis.

How to find out more: Applications are treated confidentially and assessed on a case-by-case basis. You can apply if your household income is low or if you have experienced a significant change in your finances.

Call: 0800 027 0800 (Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm)

Online: Search 'Southern Water Hardship Fund' or visit [southernwater.co.uk/hardship-fund](http://southernwater.co.uk/hardship-fund)

Email: [HereToHelp@southernwater.co.uk](mailto:HereToHelp@southernwater.co.uk)

## Mottisfont Cricket Club Hampshire Cricket League 4B

### 2026 Fixtures

- 2 May - Over Wallop (A)
- 9 May - Longparish 2S (H)
- 16 May - Andover 2S (A)
- 23 May - Michelmersh & Timsbury (H)
- 30 May - South Wilts 3S (H)
- 6 June - Penton (A)
- 13 June Great Durnford (H)
- 20 June - Breamore Dravidian (A)
- 27 June - Amesbury (H)
- 4 July - Over Wallop (H)
- 11 July - Longparish 2S (A)
- 18 July - Andover 2S (H)
- 25 July - Michelmersh & Timsbury (A)
- 1 Aug - South Wilts 3S (A)
- 8 Aug - Penton (H)
- 15 Aug - Great Durnford (A)
- 22 Aug - Breamore Dravidian (H)
- 29 Aug - Amesbury (A)

Mottisfont CC Home Ground :  
Bengers Lane  
First ball @ 1300,  
45 overs per side  
follow us @MOTTISFONTCC



## Emergency Tree Works

During our routine tree safety management surveys, the National Trust ranger team identified several mature willow trees running along Dunbridge Railway that required immediate works.

This particular species (*Salix alba caerulea*) is prone to a number of biomechanical problems, increasing the risk of branch and stem failure. Due to the proximity of the trees to critical infrastructure, such as the railway and power lines, we have had to have them felled.

The National Trust highly value trees for a wide range of factors including their natural beauty, the wildlife they support, carbon sequestration, water management and their value to human health and wellbeing. Before undertaking any tree work we must look to balance these aspects against any risk posed to people and property.

We have been monitoring these trees for some time, and this year identified several new hazards. After seeking expert advice, we concluded that they required felling. Working alongside a specialist contractor, Network Rail and SSE, a plan was established to remove the trees safely whilst causing minimal disruption. With all licences and consents in place, works began on the 19th of January.

These works were at scale and considerable cost. Using a combination of felling and pollarding our aim is to manage the regrowth from the trees on a 10–15-year rotation. This allows for a continuation of habitat and a significant cost saving when the trees require future management. It will also reduce the risk to people and infrastructure as well as removing the need for future specialist contractors.

Where possible some of the larger woody material has been set aside ready for use in future wetland restoration projects.

## Love in the Digital Age: Protecting Your Heart (and Your Data)

Valentine's Day is just around the corner. Whether your resolution was to find love in 2026 or you've recently found yourself swept up in a new online connection, we want you to stay safe.

While estimates suggest 80% of couples now meet online, there is a sobering flip side: 82% of all fraud originates online. Before you dive into what could become a 'bad romance,' we highly recommend watching the new three-part BBC documentary, *The Beauty Queen and the Catfish*. It's a powerful look at how flirtatious chats can escalate into campaigns of manipulation and deceit.

Don't let a 'perfect' profile blindside you. You can catch the series on any smart device by searching 'BBC iPlayer Beauty Queen and the Catfish'.



With January behind us, Mottisfont's gardens are beginning to stir, emerging from their winter sleep, and the house is having its annual conservation deep clean in readiness for an exciting new season of engaging exhibitions and family activities. Below are some of February and March's highlights.

#### **'Snowdrop Season' - until 22 February**

Celebrate snowdrop season as thousands of these hardy spring heralds bloom across Mottisfont. The snowdrop map by Visitor Reception helps you find the best displays, and you can follow a self-led walk along the Font Stream. Look out for seasonal poetry around the garden and the striking giant snowdrop sculpture by artist, Eddie Glew.

#### **Spring bulbs and beautiful blossom**

As the snowdrops fade, the daffodils take centre stage. In February and early March, they brighten the ground beneath the twisting branches of giant plane trees and across the grass by the house. You'll find deliciously-scented narcissus in the parterre too.

Later in March jewel-coloured tulips add vibrant pops of colour – look out for rich purple 'Negrita' and 'Fringed Elegance' in the parterre, under-planted with pretty clusters of blue forget-me-nots, or wander up to the kitchen garden to enjoy 'Pretty Woman', 'White Dreams' and 'Ballerina'. Mottisfont's beautiful white magnolia by the stableyard with its magnificent umbrella of blooms is definitely worth a photo - take a selfie from one of the benches on the other side of the flint wall, with the flowers as a snowy backdrop behind you.

'Mount Fuji' cherry trees in the orchard burst with honey-scented blossom towards the end of March, and amongst the tussocky grass you might spot naturalised narcissi, species tulips and snakeshead fritillaries. In the walled garden gnarly fruit trees display candy-pink apple buds and white pear blossom.

#### **The Very Hungry Caterpillar™ Trail at Mottisfont – until 15 March**

Join us for this charming activity trail that brings to life Eric Carle's best-selling book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*™. Become the tiny caterpillar who hatches from an egg and is so hungry he eats through a variety of fruits and snacks each day until something magical happens. Perfect for children aged 3 to 6 years. Trail is included with standard admission.

#### **Conservation deep clean in the House – until 15 March**

Spring sees our House team step into full conservation

mode as they take on the annual deep clean. Scaling ladders and scaffolding towers with backpack vacuums and specialist brushes, it's a rare opportunity to witness this behind-the-scenes work up close. Watch as they gently dust and vacuum hundreds of treasures, from delicate cornicing and glittering chandeliers to gilded mirrors and the vast, theatrical mock-ermine curtains of the Whistler Room. During this period, for safety reasons, the rooms being cleaned are viewable from the doorway only and some rooms may be briefly closed.

#### **'Town & Country: A Journey Through the Seasons' exhibition – until 12 April**

Bringing together over 60 works by acclaimed contemporary artists, Lesley Fotherby, Jack Russell and Melissa Scott-Miller, the show captures the distinctive beauty and character of each season. From the delicate blossoms of spring and the vivid greens of summer to the rich hues of autumn and the frosty panoramas of winter, visitors will encounter scenes ranging from snow-laden hedgerows and village cricket matches to London's bright squares, back gardens and waterways.

#### **Easter Adventures at Mottisfont: 21 March–12 April**

Pop on your bunny ears and hop into Easter at Mottisfont for a tea-party-themed adventure. Follow the trail through the grounds to discover 10 activity stations and claim your dairy or vegan/'Free From' Easter egg at the end. Take on the scone-and-spoon race, play giant sandwich jenga, give it your best whirl at plate spinning, teabag tossing and biscuit rolling and spin the sandwich wheel to create quirky fillings - slug and cress, anyone? The full trail, including Bunny Ears and Easter Egg, is £3.50 - or just enjoy the standalone activities with normal admission.

#### **Mottisfont guided garden walks – Daily**

Spring is a lovely time to take a deeper dive into Mottisfont. From its medieval past to magnificent trees, join one of our free, daily guided walks and learn about the gardens and history of Mottisfont, Included with admission.

#### **Looking further ahead**

#### **'The Art & Craft of Print' exhibition: Opens 9 May**

This major summer exhibition at Mottisfont brings together many of the country's leading printmakers, including Angie Lewin, Mark Heard, Emily Sutton and Jonny Hannah, to celebrate the richness of contemporary British printmaking. Curated in partnership with St Jude's Prints, the exhibition showcases the extraordinary breadth of printmaking today. From screen print and linocut to wood engraving, letterpress and lithography, visitors can enjoy insights into the intricate, often complex, processes that shape this vibrant art form.

#### **Mottisfont's cafés, gift shop and second-hand bookshop are open daily.**

**Check the website for the latest exhibitions, displays, activities and guided walks: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/mottisfont](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/mottisfont)**

## MOTTISFONT SOCIAL CLUB

EVERY THURSDAY: BINGO - includes Mystery Envelope Draw and Snooker Ball Game

EVERY SATURDAY: National Lottery Bonus Ball (tickets can be purchased throughout the week)

ROULETTE WHEEL AND MEAT DRAW commencing Saturday, 7/02/2026



*Membership Draw is held every evening that the Club is open (50p per person)*

### FEBRUARY & MARCH 2026 EVENTS

FRIDAY, 6 February 8pm	QUIZ (Mike Hughes)
SATURDAY, 7 February 8pm	SKITTLES - MEN'S SINGLES (Ralph Collins Shield)
MONDAY, 9 February	WI DUNBRIDGE - Meeting
WEDNESDAY, 11 February 8pm	MSC Committee Meeting
FRIDAY, 20 February 8pm	QUIZ (Mike Hughes)
SATURDAY, 21 February 8pm	SKITTLES - LADIES' SINGLES (Beryl Whitfield Shield)
FRIDAY, 27 February 8pm	DARTS (Men's League)
SATURDAY, 28 February 8pm	SKITTLES - MIXED PAIRS (The Blake Trophy)
FRIDAY, 6 March 8pm	QUIZ (Mike Hughes)
FRIDAY, 20 March 8pm	QUIZ (Mike Hughes)
SATURDAY 21 March 8pm	QUIZ & DRAW to raise money for electric fund at the club
WEDNESDAY 25 March 8.15pm	MOTTISFONT CLUB AGM
SATURDAY 28 March 8pm	CLUB SKITTLES

#### **Caterpillars Playgroup**

Every Tuesday during term-time 10:00 – 11am  
£2.00 'play as you go'  
Lockerley Primary School

We invite you to come along to our new playgroup, from birth to 5year olds.  
There will be songs, stories craft and toys.  
Run by a qualified Early Years Practitioner  
We have baby-weighing scales  
Tea and coffee available. Drink and snack for children



No need to sign up, just come along and join the fun.

#### **Lockerley Primary School**

The children at Lockerley Primary School continue to thrive. Our dedicated team of staff work tirelessly to ensure their needs are met academically and socially. At the end of last term, we had the pleasure of watching our EYFS and KS1 nativity performance. It was delightful and wonderful to see such young children perform with confidence and pride. We also continue to take our role in the community seriously, with our singing club performing at both the Lockerley Village Lunch Club and Dunwood Manor Care home and the whole school enjoyed a trip to Mottisfont.

Be sure to visit our Facebook page and school website to see all of the enrichment opportunities the children are taking part in this term.

#### **Lockerley Walking Group**

Lockerley Walking Group extends a warm welcome to potential new members from Mottisfont & Dunbridge. For more information, contact Kirsteen at [kirsteen@jadeconsultants.co.uk](mailto:kirsteen@jadeconsultants.co.uk), or just join us on any of our walks.

#### **LWG Christchurch walk Saturday 31 January**

Please join Lockerley Walking group for a circular 5 mile walk around the nature reserve on Christchurch harbour and Hengistbury Head. No stiles. There are wonderful views of the harbour, coast and sea and we will have some time in the Visitor Centre. The Hiker Cafe does good soup and snacks and welcomes dogs, and there are picnic tables outside if the sun shines (or even if it doesn't!) New walkers to the group are always welcome.



Meet at 9.30 outside Cyclops Cottage, Lockerley Green and please let us know in advance if you are coming, or if you would be willing to drive, and offer a lift.

Andy and Liz Holton [liz.holton23@yahoo.com](mailto:liz.holton23@yahoo.com) or 01794 340993

## MOTTISFONT VILLAGE HALL NEWS



### A Fairytale Success

Our recent production of Pinocchio was a fantastic success - thank you to everyone who helped us reach another 'Full House!' Looking ahead, we are thrilled to announce that Forest Forge's next Christmas show will be Peter Pan. We expect tickets to fly out fast, so watch this space for booking news to ensure you don't miss another excellent evening of local theatre.

### Your Community Space

The Hall remains a bustling hub, currently hosting the K9 Dog Club, WI, Whist, and Art Groups. If you are looking for the perfect venue for a party or meeting, remember that we offer reduced rates for all parish residents.

Check Availability: View our live calendar at [mottisfontvillagehall.co.uk](http://mottisfontvillagehall.co.uk)

Get in Touch: Email [Andy-MVH@outlook.com](mailto:Andy-MVH@outlook.com) or call or WhatsApp 01794 755315 to be connected with a member of our team.

### Join us for the AGM

Tuesday 17th March, 7:30 p.m.

We invite you to attend our Annual General Meeting to learn more about how your hall is run. It's a great chance to catch up with neighbours over drinks and nibbles.

We are delighted to have recently welcomed two new volunteers to the committee, but we are still looking for more hands on deck - particularly from those who use the hall regularly.

We would love to see you there.

### The Thomas Dowse Trust: Educational Grants

Are you - or is someone you know - under the age of 25 and living in Broughton, Bossington, Mottisfont, or Dunbridge?

The Thomas Dowse Trust offers financial grants to support local young people with their education. We provide funding for a wide range of costs, including:

Essentials: School uniforms, laptops, and textbooks.

Experiences: School trips and overseas educational travel.

Skills: Music tuition and swimming lessons.

Access: Transport to school, college, or university.

How to Apply Applications are treated in strict confidence. While we do not use 'means testing,' applicants are asked to briefly demonstrate their need for the grant.

Request by Email: Contact Tina Stuart at [tinastuart1@gmail.com](mailto:tinastuart1@gmail.com)

Collect in Person: Forms are available at Broughton Primary School, St Mary's Church (Broughton), or St Andrew's Church (Mottisfont).

Applications received will be considered at the next meeting of the Trustees. The closing date for applications in time for the next meeting is Sunday, 22nd February.

### Whist Drive at the Village Hall

Friday 20th February  
Friday 20th March

(7pm start)



### Unlock Your Dog's Potential at The K9 Club

Looking to strengthen the bond with your four-legged friend?

Join our weekly sessions at the Village Hall. We bring together interactive enrichment, cognitive games, and fun trick training designed to engage your dog's mind. Our activities help build focus and nurture calm, confident behaviour in every dog.

Visit [www.k9club.uk](http://www.k9club.uk) to see our full schedule.



## BROUGHTON COMMUNITY SHOP

Village Hall, High Street, Broughton SO20 8AX. Tel.: 01794 502495

**Broughton Community Shop:** Weekdays: 9.00am - 5.00pm  
Saturdays: 9.00am - 12.30pm Sundays: 9.30am - 12.30pm

**Broughton Post Office:** Weekdays: 9.00am - 5.00pm  
Saturdays: 9.00am - 12.00pm Sundays: Closed



**Coffee Shop:** Indoor and outdoor seating, and takeaway drinks. Dogs are welcome outside and on a lead. Closes 30 minutes before shop closure.

Follow us on FB or Instagram at [broughtoncommunityshop](https://www.facebook.com/broughtoncommunityshop) and check on our website [www.broughton.shop](http://www.broughton.shop).  
Or email [news@broughton.shop](mailto:news@broughton.shop) to be included in the shop's mailing list for updates, promos and more.

*Local produce, essentials and treats, fresh and frozen goods, wine and spirits, newspapers, magazines, fresh flowers and beautiful greeting cards, and of course parking is FREE!*

Broughton Community Shop (Hampshire) Limited is a Community Benefit Society registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefits Societies Act 2014  
Registration no: RS007762. VAT Reg no: 302 2080 69. Registered Office: Ford Springs, The Hollow, Broughton, Stockbridge SO20 8BB

## NEWS FROM THE WI



Christmas seems a long time ago now, but our December meeting had a distinctly festive feel, when we welcomed Richard Light of Nightingale Distilleries to speak to us. The firm, which produces gin and rum was incorporated in 2021, and is situated in Embley Lane. Richard first told us of the intricacies and expenses involved in setting up the business. He then explained about the different botanicals and spices used to create the drinks and, naturally, we were all offered 'tasters' in the Christmas spirit. We also had the opportunity to purchase the spirits in their attractive bottles with the Florence Nightingale logo, at specially reduced prices. This was followed by coffee and Christmas nibbles, kindly provided by the Committee.

Groups of members also enjoyed a Christmas meal at the Wheatsheaf Inn, and a moving performance of 'It's a Wonderful Life' at the Plaza theatre.

In the New Year we enjoyed a visit from Wayne Newport who gave us a comprehensive history of 'Pantomime'. This was started by the Greeks, and progressed via the Romans, whose satirical plots often involved adultery and even the murder of prisoners at the time - not exactly suitable entertainment for children! Touring companies also provided 'Comedies of the Artists' throughout Italy and France in the 16th century. By the beginning of the 20th century, pantomime had become more like the entertainment we expect today, often with huge casts - one at the Drury Lane theatre in 1900 had a cast of over 200. The role of the 'Dame' being played by a man was introduced in the 17th century, and the idea of an attractive young lady playing the Principal Boy (and often slapping her thigh) came about a little later. Wayne illustrated his talk with posters of various productions, often featuring names of well known entertainers of the past, right up to the present day, when productions often feature well known TV personalities or pop stars. Altogether a very informative and entertaining evening.

Next month, we have a Craft Evening, led by Sarah from the Stampshack. No experience necessary, so you are welcome to come and join us, for what promises to be a fun evening. We will be at the Village Hall from 7.30pm on Tuesday 10th February.

## SOMBORNE COMMUNITY CINEMA

### Thursday 12th February 2026 *Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale* [PG]

When Mary finds herself in a public scandal and the family faces financial trouble, the household grapples with the threat of social disgrace. The Crawleys must embrace change with the next generation leading Downton Abbey into the future.

### Thursday 12th March 2026 *The Choral* [12A]

As war rages on the Western Front in 1916, the Choral Society in Ramsden, Yorkshire has lost most of its men to the army. The ambitious committee, determined to press ahead, decides to recruit local young men to swell their ranks. They must also engage a new chorus master, and despite their suspicions that he has something to hide, their best bet seems to be Dr. Henry Guthrie – driven, uncompromising, and recently returned from a career in Germany. As conscription papers start to arrive, the whole community discovers that the best response to the chaos that is laying waste to their lives is to make music. Written by Alan Bennett.

**Information common to both films: Tickets £6 online at [www.sombornecommunitycinema.co.uk](http://www.sombornecommunitycinema.co.uk) or at the door on the night.**

**King's Somborne Village Hall**

**Doors open: 7.15pm. Films start: 8pm - leaving time to get your drinks/snacks from the well-stocked bar**

**The Somborne Community Cinema has signed up to “National Theatre Live” and will be screening events throughout 2026.**

Tickets £10 online at [www.sombornecommunitycinema.co.uk](http://www.sombornecommunitycinema.co.uk) or at the door on the day. Refreshments will be available.

Friday 24th April ***All My Sons*** Doors Open 6:45pm Curtain Up 7:30pm

Saturday 25th July ***The Playboy of the Western World*** Doors Open 6:45pm Curtain Up 7:30pm

Sunday 13th September ***Les Liaisons Dangereuses*** Doors Open 6:45pm Curtain Up 7:30pm

**Raphael Wallfisch, Cello and Simon Callaghan, Piano - 13 March 2026 7.30pm**

*St Peter's Church Stockbridge - Tickets are available at [www.stockbridgemusic.uk](http://www.stockbridgemusic.uk)*

In their first concert of their 2026 season, Stockbridge Music will welcome cellist Raphael Wallfisch and pianist Simon Callaghan for a programme which includes several famous cello pieces as well as showcasing less well known works.

The concert includes music by Bach, Beethoven, Bloch and Rachmaninoff.

There is a very moving story behind one of the works being played, Ernest Bloch's *Baal Shem*. This piece will be played in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. Bloch composed *Baal Shem* in memory of his mother, and Raphael Wallfisch has chosen this piece because his own mother Anita Wallfisch Lasker is a survivor of the Holocaust, having been a prisoner at Auschwitz. She was spared the gas chamber only because she was considered to be of value playing the cello in the Auschwitz Camp Orchestra. Still alive today, her remarkable story was told in the 2024 documentary film *The Commandant's Shadow*.

Raphael Wallfisch is one of the most prolific recorded performers of cello music with over 70 discs to his credit. A BBC survey named Wallfisch's recording of the Dvorak Cello Concerto the best recording of the work in the past 25 years.

He regularly tours internationally and plays with many major orchestras including the London Symphony, London Philharmonic, BBC Symphony and the Hallé.

Simon Callaghan performs internationally as a solo pianist, chamber musician and recording artist. Recital partners have included Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Adrian Brendel, and Raphael Wallfisch. He is Professor of Piano at the Royal Northern College of Music. His playing has been widely acclaimed with BBC Radio 3's Andrew McGregor saying: "I have nothing but praise for the performances... impressive pianism".

**STOCKBRIDGE COMMUNITY CINEMA**

**Friday 13 February 7.30pm *Parthenope* (15)**

From Academy Award-winning filmmaker Paolo Sorrentino (*The Great Beauty*, *The Hand of God*) comes a monumental and deeply romantic story of a lifetime. Born in the Bay of Naples in 1950, *Parthenope* (Celeste Dalla Porta) searches for happiness over the long summers of her youth, falling in love with her home city and its many memorable characters. But when tragedy strikes, and carefree romances lose their thrill, she decides to seek a deeper sense of purpose. Featuring a captivating performance from Dalla Porta and an outstanding cast that includes Gary Oldman, *Parthenope* is another tale of great beauty from a master of modern cinema.

**Wednesday 18 February 4.45pm and 7.30pm *Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale* (PG)**

The cinematic return of the global phenomenon follows the Crawley family and their staff as they enter the 1930s. When Mary finds herself at the centre of a public scandal and the family faces financial trouble, the entire household grapples with the threat of social disgrace. The Crawleys must embrace change as the staff prepares for a new chapter with the next generation leading *Downton Abbey* into the future.

**Friday 20 March 7.30pm *The Ballad of Wallis Island* (12A)**

Charles (Tim Key), an eccentric lottery winner who lives alone on a remote island, dreams of getting his favourite musical duo, Mortimer-McGwyer (Carey Mulligan and Tom Basden), back together. His fantasy quickly turns into reality when the bandmates and former lovers accept his invitation to play a private show at his home on Wallis Island. Old tensions resurface as Charles tries desperately to salvage his dream gig. "The Ballad of Wallis Island is the best kind of crowd-pleaser: disarming, joyful and full of compassion for its oddball characters. This Sundance charmer doesn't hit a false note." *Variety*

**Wednesday 25 March 4.45pm and 7.30pm *The Friend* (15)**

Writer and teacher Iris (Naomi Watts) finds her comfortable, solitary New York life thrown into disarray after her closest friend and mentor (Bill Murray) dies suddenly and bequeaths her his beloved 150 lb. Great Dane. The regal yet intractable beast, named Apollo, immediately creates practical problems for Iris, from furniture destruction to eviction notices, as well as more existential ones, his looming presence constantly reminding her of her friend's problematic choices in both life and death. Yet as Iris finds herself unexpectedly bonding with the animal, she begins to come to terms with her past, her lost friend, and her own creative inner life.

*Information common to all films: Showing at Stockbridge Town Hall SO20 6HE. Tickets £6.00 via [www.stockbridgecinema.org.uk](http://www.stockbridgecinema.org.uk) or free telephone call to TicketSource 0333 666 3366.*

# Church News

## From the Rector - February Reflections

Dear friends,

By the time you are reading this, Christmas will be well and truly packed away. The decorations are back in the loft, the last mince pie has (hopefully) been eaten, and we've all agreed that this really is the year we'll be sensible about leftovers. Yet somehow, before we have stopped picking the pine needles out of the carpet, we find ourselves hurtling into a brand new year at considerable speed.

January barely has time to clear its throat before February arrives, bringing with it grey skies, cold fingers, and the faint but unmistakable smell of chocolate. Because, of course, Easter is apparently just around the corner. I say "apparently" because if you have visited a shop recently, you will already have been confronted by shelves groaning under the weight of chocolate eggs. It seems extraordinary that while we are still deciding whether our New Year's resolutions are officially abandoned or merely "on pause", Easter has been confidently unpacked and put on display.

There is something slightly comical about this seasonal leapfrogging. We move from "Have a very merry Christmas" straight to "Have you considered giving up chocolate for Lent?" without much breathing space in between. The Church calendar, however, gently reminds us that there is value in not rushing. Before we reach Easter joy, there is Lent - a quieter season. After the enjoyment of pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, Lent provides us with an invitation to slow down, reflect, and perhaps notice God in the ordinary rhythms of daily life.

February, short as it is, offers us a pause. The days are slowly lengthening, snowdrops push their way through stubborn soil, and there is a sense that something new is stirring, even if it's still wearing a scarf. This is not a month for grand gestures, but for small faithfulness: a prayer said on the bus, a kind word offered, a cup of tea shared.

So, while the shops may be racing ahead, the Church invites us to walk rather than sprint. But if you do happen to buy a chocolate egg, I promise not to tell anyone. After all, we are a forgiving community - especially in February!

**With every blessing,  
Revd Joe**



**MOTHERING SUNDAY 2026**



St Andrew's Church, 15th March at 11am  
 This will be an extra outreach service to celebrate and give thanks for mothers. There will be card and posy making, songs and prayers, with refreshments after.  
 Everyone, especially newcomers, families and children will be welcomed



PLEASE JOIN US.

## February & March 2026 Church Services

	Mottisfont	Broughton	Houghton	Bossington
<b>1 February Candlemas Presentation of Christ in Temple</b>		9.30am Parish Eucharist		
<b>8 February 2nd before Lent</b>	11am Morning Worship	11am Parish Eucharist	6pm Evensong 2.30pm Baptism	
<b>15 February Next before Lent</b>				9.30 BCP Parish Eucharist
<b>18 February Ash Wednesday</b>				
<b>22 February Lent 1</b>	11am Parish Eucharist	8 Holy Communion (CW or BCP) 11am Family Service	9.30am Parish Eucharist	
<b>1 March Lent 2</b>		9.30am Parish Eucharist		
<b>8 March Lent 3</b>	11am Morning Worship	11am Parish Communion	6pm Evensong with Baptism	
<b>15 March Lent 4 Mothering Sunday</b>	11am Extra Outreach Service for Mothering Sunday	9:30am Mothering Sunday		9.30 BCP Parish Eucharist
<b>22 March Lent 5 Passiontide begins</b>	11am Parish Eucharist	8 Holy Communion (CW or BCP) 11am Family Service	9.30am Parish Eucharist	6pm Meditation

### 29 March Palm Sunday

10am Shared Benefice Palm Sunday service St Mary, Broughton