



WIXAMS NEWSLETTER

An Independent Newsletter covering all parishes across Wixams • newsletter@wixams.org

Surgery Action Group Meets with MP and BLMK ICB

On Friday 23rd February members of the Wixams Surgery Action Group met with Alistair Strathern MP, along with Felicity Cox the Chief Executive of the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB). There were also representatives from Wixams and Houghton Conquest parish councils, and from Bedford Borough Council (BBC) and Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), including councillors and both Chief Executive Officers.

The BLMK ICB are the only organisation who can make the decision to commission a surgery in Wixams, so the aim of the meeting was to identify any outstanding issues being looked at by the ICB and to find a way forward. It was organised and led by our new MP Alistair Strathern, he explained that this was **the very first time the key stakeholders had all met to talk about this issue**. Each organisation gave an update on their latest work to get the surgery delivered and it was very encouraging to see everyone around the table wanting to work to find a solution for Wixams.



Left to right: Alistair Strathern MP, Cllr Martin Towler, Sarah Sharpe, Joanne Magill, Saqhib Ali, Felicity Cox, Cllr Graeme Coombes, Alex Wrack, Cllr Rebecca Hares, Marcel Coiffait, Laura Church, Leon Staszak (not shown), Barbara Matthews.

Over 2000 residents of Wixams and neighbouring villages signed the petition demanding that the ICB, councils and developers work to find a solution and ensure we get the primary healthcare provisions promised to us when we moved to Wixams. The petition was submitted to the BLMK ICB directly in December, it was then also submitted to both CBC and BBC on 25th January and 7th February respectively. **Both local authorities have shown their strong support for Wixams' residents in response to the petition**. In December Bedford Borough Council voted to approve a capital expenditure program which included £9 million for healthcare facilities across the borough. In February Central Beds Council approved a capital program including £10 million for healthcare provisions in their area. However, it hasn't yet been agreed how much of each budget will be for the Wixams surgery. For example the £9 million agreed by BBC is not just for Wixams, but also for healthcare facilities in Great Barford, Sharnbrook, Wootton and a healthcare hub in Kempston. **All four of those communities already have at least one GP surgery**, and whilst assurances

have been made that there's enough to fully fund the building of a GP facility in Wixams, many residents here bought their homes based on the promise that there would be at least the basic amenities such as a surgery, so Wixams should be at the very top of the list when the budgets are allocated.

The main outstanding issue is the funding required to run the GP facility itself, which needs to be resolved by the ICB. Whilst they do have some money allocated for this already, part of the costs would be covered from the release of around £4.5 million in S106 funds when two developments in Central Beds are built and the homes occupied. This could be a few years away so work is being done to find alternative solutions. Borrowing money is not ideal as the tax payer then has to pay back the interest, and interest rates are not so favourable at the moment compared to a few years ago.

Whilst it looks like the surgery will almost certainly go ahead, at the moment it's unclear how long things will take. **Even if everything was already approved it could take at least 2 years until the surgery would be operational**. Alternatives such as temporary solutions are being looked at, but this could cause further issues. A temporary facility would be placed on the land allocated for the surgery so that could cause delays and would mean losing that facility whilst the proper surgery is being built. Also there are concerns that a temporary solution might result in Wixams being *then* set at a lower priority than other communities, further delaying Wixams getting what was originally promised.

The town centre is being built by LSP Developments and they have not yet submitted a planning application. It was highlighted that timelines will be much clearer once this has been put forward, so representatives of the Surgery Action Group asked for a plan to be shared which includes timelines, milestones and responsibilities. This will be published in the *Wixams Newsletter* once made available and then everyone will have a better understanding of what still needs to be done. Alistair's team have already scheduled the next meeting for Friday 26th April which should help keep the momentum going.

For now, it's clear that as a community we need to keep the pressure on in order to get the surgery commissioned urgently. **The Wixams Masterplan was signed off 25 years ago** and there was a funding shortfall for the surgery for most of that time. Good progress has now finally being made to resolve these issues because residents stood together and took action, so make sure you share **your** views and help ensure Wixams is the priority in any discussions about healthcare provisions in Bedfordshire.

Keep the Pressure On!

Make sure your voice is heard and write to the BLMK ICB today. Let them know how the lack of surgery in Wixams is impacting you:

blmkicb.contactus@nhs.net

USEFUL NUMBERS

999 - Emergency

Where there is a risk of:

- Personal injury
- Loss of life
- Crime in action

101 - Non emergency

- Reporting a crime that is no longer in progress
- Giving information about a crime
- Contacting local police officer
- Getting update reported crime
- Suspicious incidents

• Wixams Parish Council	07554 443800
• Lakeview Village Hall.....	07544 853633
• Lakeview School	01234 741653
• Wixams Tree.....	01234 608960
• Wixams Academy.....	01234 608950
• Houghton Conquest Lower School	01234 740202
• Welcome (Wixams Co-Op).....	01234 740404
• Portu Gallo's.....	01234 741116
• Lakeside Fish & Chips.....	01234 743942
• Wilstead Tandoori	01234 740904
• Wilstead 9th Kitchen.....	01234 740413
• The Red Lion	01234 402446
• The Woolpack.....	01234 742318
• NHS Direct	111
• Wilstead Pharmacy.....	01234 740609
• Bedford Hospital.....	01234 355122
• Doctors - London Road.....	01234 266866
• Doctors - Houghton Close	01525 300898
• Doctors - Greensand	01525 631390
• Doctors - Oliver St.....	01525 631395
• Doctors - Wootton.....	01234 762500
• Dentist - Cranfield.....	01234 752515
• Scotts Vets.....	01234 742423
• BPHA Customer Service.....	0330 100 0272
• Bedford Borough Council	01234 267422
• L&Q Estates.....	01926 339339
• Wilstead & Wixams Good Neighbours Scheme	07807 408928
• Wilstead Post Office	01234 740210
• Seasons Garden Centre	01234 741909
• Houghton Conquest Parish Council	01234 270016
• Houghton Conquest Post Office	01234 740208
• Stewartby Parish Council.....	01908 397959

Wixams Parish Council



At the January Parish Council Meeting held on 16 January and 20 February 2024 the following items were discussed:

Public Open Session:

A resident outlined the positive response received regarding the road safety issues in Wixams and confirmed that a new Zebra Crossing will be put in place outside the new Willow Grove School in Village 3 and that the pedestrian route should be in use by July 2024.

Co-Option

The Council voted to co-op Sheila Menzies onto the Parish Council.

Clerk's Report on Actions

Clerks requested further quotes for extending CCTV coverage to Meadow Road. Quotes are still outstanding from two CCTV companies

Finance

The Council agreed the proposed 2024/2025 budget and precept from Finance Committee. It was noted that WPC was rated 13th best in Bedford Borough's precept list last year.

The Council agreed to approve the 0% increase in precept and to approve the proposed budget.

Update from GP Action Group

Cllr Matthews reported that the petition of over 2000 signatures had been presented to the ICB in December, the Central Beds Council in January and Bedford Borough Council in February. A meeting organised by the Mid-Beds MP will take place on Friday 23 February.

Grant Applications

The Council considered and approved a grant application for £500 from Wixam's Academy PTA to help fund the replacement of equipment for the Home Economics Department.

The Council also approved a grant from Lakeview School PTA of £612 for 3 friendship benches to be placed in the sensory garden.

Clerk to the Wixams Parish Council

The Wixams Parish Council is currently without a permanent Clerk and this is being covered by an interim Clerk. Interviews for a new Clerk will be held on Thursday 29 February 2024.

Updates from Delegated Committee Meetings

Infrastructure (covering Planning, Highways and Footpaths, Licensing and CCTV)

Chair: Cllr David Whiteley

Committee Members: Cllrs Whiteley, Casey, Dunn, Taylor, Matthews, Bowman, Menzies and Ali

The Infrastructure meetings will be held on the fourth Monday of the Month. Members of the Public are welcome to attend.

Meeting held on 22 January 2023 – Planning Applications Discussed

PC01:01/24 23/02671/FUL – Installation of 8 Floodlights to Football Pitch at Wixams Academy – It was agreed that Council would like to request consideration be given to the angle that these lights are placed to not disturb residents in the new Taylor Wimpey Development and that the sports don't run into anti-social hours.

PC02:01/24 23/MDC3 Construction of two Railway Platforms – No objections

PC03:01/24 23/02750/MAF 175 Bedford Road construction of 39 houses – including 12 affordable homes on land adjacent

to Seasons Garden Centre. The Council had concerns with the density of the dwellings and the impact to traffic flow on Bedford Road which at times is already problematic with parked cars. The Council agreed to object to this planning application. Cllr Whiteley to ask the Clerk to apply for an extension to the deadline.

PC04:01/24 23/02015/MAF Construction of Phase 2 of the Retirement Village – Request from Parish Council that the Borough Council consider suspending the bus gate on Bedford Road for the duration of the works to minimise disruption to residents at Wixams Retirement Village, and Elstow Manor as well as minimising traffic flow over the Causeway.

PC04:01/24 23/02566/MAR – Construction of Aldi Distribution Centre. Cllr Whiteley has a meeting scheduled with Gemma Davies on Friday 26 January to discuss concerns with regards to the Aldi Distribution Centre as such this will take us over the deadline. Cllr Spice has said this will typically not be an issue. Once Cllr Whiteley can understand the options regarding the objections the meeting with Cavendish can be re-arranged.

The next meeting will be held on Monday 26 February – members of the public welcome

Community (covering Public Consultation, Public Relations, Open Spaces, Groups, Grants, Seasonal, Community Support)

Chair: Zoe Gammie

Committee Members – Cllrs Gammie, Day, Whiteley, Matthews, Dunn and Bowman

The next meeting will be held on 29 February 2024 at 7 pm. The Public are welcome to attend.

HR Committee (covering HR matters)

Chair: Deb Bowman

Committee Members – Cllrs Bowman, Day, Mardell, Whiteley, Taylor, Dunn and Matthews

First meeting was held on Thursday 25 January 2024 at 19.00 to 20.30 in the Craft Room, Wixams Retirement Village. Feedback from this meeting will follow once the Draft Minutes have been approved.

Hot desking at Lakeview Village Hall

Do you work from home?

Do you feel you would benefit from accessing hot desking facilities within Wixams?

Would you consider working a day or two from Lakeview Village Hall, so you can network and collaborate?

Lakeview Village Hall Committee is carrying out a survey on whether residents who work from home would benefit from accessing hot desking facilities in Wixams.

We would be grateful if you would spare a couple of minutes to complete the survey.

Please complete the survey by scanning the QR code to the right.



Update from your local Bedford Borough Councillors

Whilst there has been progress towards a Wixams GP with the allocation of funding by Bedford Council, and a lot of excitement about the arrival of Universal Studios locally, we are getting a number of people asking, "So what's happening with Wixams Station?" which for many years was the most repeated question asked by residents.

The good news is that whilst station news may have been fairly quiet lately, a lot has been happening in the background.

Two significant areas of design work have been progressing:

1. "Approval in Principle" has been granted by Network Rail. This covers 10 specific areas, including: Architecture, civil engineering, drainage, mechanical and electrical engineering, platforms, footbridges, signalling, station buildings, and telecoms. All have now been signed off by Network Rail engineers.
2. Network Change – this is where all stakeholders agree that the proposals can be implemented. This has been approved by all except Govia Thameslink, who have an issue with length of platforms. Network Rail has noted the Govia issue and believes it can be resolved and that the sign off can now be approved.

So good progress has been made in both of these areas.

Bedford Council is now awaiting from Network Rail the costs of line closures necessary to build the station and once these are agreed, this should give an idea of when the station will be open. This, along with other delays from the DfT have pushed back the station opening date which was previously scheduled for December 2024.

Two planning applications for the station have now been submitted to the Planning Department. No objections have been received and these should be determined by early March.

The next steps are for Bedford Council to work with Network Rail to agree a delivery plan and contract, to be signed by end of June and meet the deadline for the release of additional funds from the Wixams developer.

This is all positive and Wixams Station continues to move steadily forward, albeit at a slower pace than many of us would like. We remain confident that we will see dates and deadlines starting to solidify in the near future.

One question on many people's minds is whether Wixams Station will be big enough to accommodate the likely number of passengers for the proposed Universal Studios project. It may well be that the Universal project requires greater capacity, resulting in a 4 platform option, rather than the 2 platform option currently being worked on. Whilst this might be a complicating factor, we believe it only lends more certainty to the station project being realised – at long last.



Andrea Spice

andrea.spice@bedford.gov.uk



Graeme Coombes

wilshamstead.ward@yahoo.co.uk



Marc Frost

marc.frost@bedford.gov.uk

GOT AN IDEA FOR A NEW GROUP?



There are a lot of great groups in Wixams but if you have an idea for something new, maybe we can help!

We have helped set up the Wixams Yarn Bombers and the Lego Club, and we're currently working with some parents to set up a new Pokémon club. For new groups there's a bit of effort needed to get things started and that's where we can help. We have good links in the wider community, can offer advice on how to get started and suggest where to apply for funding. We also offer support throughout, including help with advertising for volunteers via social media and the Wixams Newsletter.

Just drop us an email:
community@wixams.org

Or message us via our facebook page:
www.facebook.com/WixamsCommunityGroup



Notice of Annual General Meeting

21st March 2024 - 7:00 pm
Wilstead Village Hall

The Wilstead & Wixams Good Neighbours Scheme AGM will be held on Thursday 21st March 2024 at 7:00pm. All are welcome to attend, refreshments will be provided.

Can't make the meeting but would like to join the group or find out more, please contact us:

Wilstead.Wixams.GNS@gmail.com



NEW PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS URGENTLY NEEDED FOR OUR SCHOOL CHILDREN

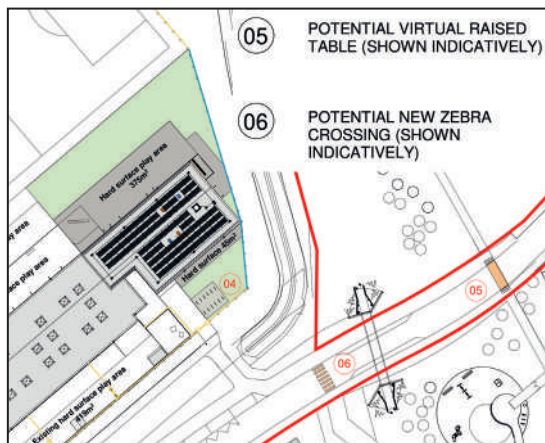
We live in a country that normally prioritises health and safety, so it's pretty remarkable that our town planners failed to put a single pedestrian crossing into the original plans for Wixams. With so many young children here, it was only a matter of time before there would be an incident, and unfortunately back in January 2022 a young girl was hit by a car on Brooklands Avenue. This led to her mum and other parents submitting a petition to Bedford Borough Council demanding they take responsibility for pedestrian safety and get more crossings installed. **Two years later** and the only two crossings we have are still those first requested by former councillor Tim Hill, funded by Bedford Borough Council with the former Mayor's approval. We have now over 1500 students attending schools in Wixams each day with no provisions to ensure they can safely cross our busy roads. Sadly in January this year another young girl was hit by a car on Brooklands Avenue, suffering an ankle injury. It's clear that action is needed and Wixams needs more crossings before an even more serious accident happens.

As we reported in the February newsletter, after the petition was submitted, the council, led by the Lib Dems at the time, introduced 20mph speed limits and assured us that a crossing would be installed on Green Lane as part of the extension to Wixams Tree Primary school. We also highlighted last month that over the last 2 years the Wixams Parish Council funded feasibility studies and submitted requests for crossings at Green Lane, Brooklands Avenue outside Lakeview Primary School, Bedford Road adjacent to Green Lane, and Southern Cross near the junction with Bedford Road. However, those requests have simply gone into the queue with the requests for crossings all across the Borough and there's no assurance that they will be approved or when they might be installed.

In January members of our committee met with the new Mayor Tom Wootton at Bedford Borough Council, along with Cllr Graeme Coombes and Cllr Andrea Spice, two of the ward councillors for Wixams. We highlighted that this issue has gone on too long and **Wixams deserves to be prioritised**. At the time of writing there's still no news on these crossings, so we ask that you continue to apply pressure at the council by writing to the Mayor and councillors, their details are in the box at the bottom of the page.

What Happened to the Promised Green Lane Crossing?

In March 2022 the former deputy Mayor, Cllr Charles Royden, responded to the pedestrian crossing petition with the good news that they were working with the developers of the school extension program to get a crossing installed. This was included in the planning application as pictured below (ref: 22/00766/DC3 V02), but now the work on the school is complete you will notice no new crossings have materialised, just a raised platform further down the road. Some parents have complained that raised platforms can be even more dangerous than nothing at all because children can find it more difficult to understand where the boundary is between the pathway and the road.



Ref: 22/00766/DC3 V02

According to the application's report submitted by the planning officer at Bedford Borough Council, the council's Highways (Development Control) Officer recommended that a pedestrian crossing be made a condition of planning approval, it was also noted that "the issues of concern are likely to be exacerbated by the proposed increase in the number of pupils". That part of Green Lane is still under the ownership of the developers so the highways team have stated that the crossing would have to be installed in line with the council's requirements ready for when the road is "adopted". However, the planning officer argued that the road would need to be adopted *first* and adding a planning condition would cause a delay to the completion of the school extension. It's unclear why this has happened since there are new crossings planned for the town centre, which will be installed by the developers on non-adopted roads, and which have to meet the council's standards.

We have enquired about this with our councillors and asked for confirmation about the road needing to be adopted first. It seems to us that, due to the actions of the planning officer, **the tax payer might now have to foot the £70,000 bill** for the crossing. The council would also have to wait until the road is put forward for adoption before the work can even start!

Have you been involved in a road accident or near miss in Wixams in the last 6 months?

We would like to capture data about these incidents so we can put them forward to the council and highlight the areas of concern here. Please visit the page below or scan the QR code to report what happened:
www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/oct7xn



LOBBY, LOBBY, LOBBY!

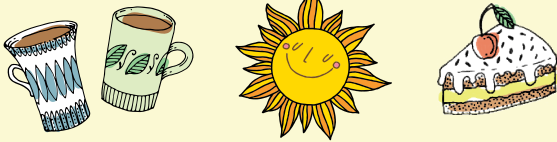
Please write to our local politicians to let them know your views and **demand** that crossings are installed as a matter of urgency. We have put the contact details for the right people in our two local authorities, check your council tax bill to confirm which is right for you. If you're a Central Beds resident and wish to ask for the above crossings in Bedford Borough, you should write to the borough councillors and/or the Mayor and CC your own councillor. Please feel free to CC our committee too: residents@wixams.town

BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

- Mayor Tom Wootton - Tom.Wootton@bedford.gov.uk
- Borough Councillors for Wixams & Wilstead Ward**
- Cllr Graeme Coombes - wilshamstead.ward@yahoo.co.uk
- Cllr Andrea Spice - Andrea.Spice@bedford.gov.uk
- Cllr Marc Frost - Marc.Frost@bedford.gov.uk
- Portfolio Holder for Environment, Highways and Transport
- Cllr Jim Weir - Jim.Weir@bedford.gov.uk

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

- Leader of Central Beds Council
- Cllr Adam Zerny - Adam.Zerny@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
- Ward Councillor
- Cllr Rebecca Hares - Rebecca.Hares@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
- Portfolio Holder for Highways
- Cllr Simon Ford - Simon.Ford@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



Wixams Community Café

The Wixams Community Café is open weekly and for just **£2 each** (kids under 5 go free) you get unlimited tea, coffee, squash, biscuits and cakes.

Everyone is welcome so why not pop in for cuppa and a natter?

Tuesday mornings

10:30 am to 12:00 pm

Swan Room, Lakeview Village Hall



ROYAL AIR FORCES Association
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01234 350107

@RAFABEDFORD RAFA.bedford@gmail.com

afvbc | ARMED FORCES & VETERANS BREAKFAST CLUBS

2nd Sunday of the month

Doors open 10.45am

Breakfast served at 11am

£5 per person

To include:

**Full English Breakfast, Toast,
Tea/Coffee and Juice.**

All Welcome

Booking required by the Thursday before please

Please advise of any dietary requirements in advance

Note: November will be after the Remembrance Service in town

WIXAMS ACADEMY PTA

SPRING FAYRE

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday 11th May

MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW

Wixams Academy, Green Lane, Wixams, MK42 6BA

Social Prescribing Day

14th March 2024

Social Prescribing Day is an annual celebration of the people, organisations and communities who make social prescribing happen. Since 2019, thousands of local and national organisations, link workers, medical professionals, academics and students have taken part across the country. Every year, they have joined together to hold events, share ideas and highlight the positive impact that social prescribing has on people's health and wellbeing as well as communities



Social prescribing is a way for health professionals to connect people to community activities, groups and services. It is designed to support people with a wide range of social, emotional or practical needs, and many schemes are focused on improving mental health and physical wellbeing. It also aims to support individuals to take greater control of their own health.

Many things that affect our health can't be treated by doctors or medicine alone – like loneliness, isolation, or stress due to financial pressures or poor housing.

Schemes delivering social prescribing can involve a range of activities that are typically provided by voluntary and community sector organisations. Examples include volunteering, arts activities, group learning, gardening, befriending, cookery, healthy eating advice and a range of sports.

There are different models of social prescribing being employed across England. Most involve a link worker (other terms such as community connector, navigator and health adviser are also used) who works with people to access local sources of support

There are local services in Bedfordshire that offer access to Social Prescribing. For Bedfordshire, Bedfordshire Rural Charities Commission have a team of wellbeing champions that can help people to connect with their community by listening to your story and supporting you to join local groups. Beds RCC also offer wellbeing the following:

- Wellbeing spaces for people to offer a hot drink, some company and support (if needed)
- Support with IT and digital needs through the 'You Can Do IT' project. Participants will be shown how to safely book GP appointments online, order prescriptions, join online activity groups, shop, and/or make video calls to friends and family.
- Green Wellbeing - offers information and guidance on places you can go and things you can do to enjoy some green wellbeing.
- Wellbeing walks - With Wellbeing Walks you can take part in a free short walk nearby at pace that works for you.
- One to one support

For more information visit:

<https://yourwellbeingbedfordshire.org.uk/improve-your-quality-of-life/support-and-advice/>

References:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/>

<https://socialprescribingacademy.org.uk/>

AMPTHILL
— & DISTRICT —
CHORAL SOCIETY

Fauré - Requiem
Rutter - The Sprig of Thyme

Director of Music Alan Childs
Heather Fuller Soprano
Julian Debreuil Bass
Organist Jan Runnells



Saturday 23rd March 2024
7.30pm, Ampthill Methodist Church

Tickets £12 in advance from
www.ticketsource.co.uk/ampthill-district-choral-society
or available on the door
www.ampthillchoral.wordpress.com

RAFA BEDFORD BRANCH WOULD LIKE TO INVITE YOU TO AN EVENING OF

BINGO

*** Wednesday 28th February ***

Doors open 7pm
Eyes down 7.30pm

£10 a book for the night

cash prizes
full house - corner - line
flyer bonus game

No need to book - just
turn up

Raising funds for the Royal Air Forces Association Bedford Branch




Bedford Branch
93 Ashburnham Road
MK40 1EA



 www.wixamslife.co.uk

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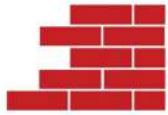
An independent blog based resource for the people of Wixams.

Discover information about the community & wider Bedfordshire area.

Covering essential services to local events and attractions.

Our aim is to visit and review areas of interest focusing on Outdoor Life, Things to do, Health & Wellbeing, Food & Drink along with other useful information.

OUTDOOR LIFE ✓ THINGS TO DO ✓
HEALTH & WELLBEING ✓
FOOD & DRINK ✓ USEFUL INFO ✓



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Limited places available

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Silverstream, Wixams, MK42 6ES

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Fieldfare
CAKES



Wixams based cake maker



Contact: 07791 282769
email: fieldfarecakes@hotmail.co.uk
www.fieldfarecake.co.uk
www.facebook.com/fieldfarecake

Volunteer and Employment Opportunities



Do you have a position to fill whether it be a paid or volunteer role?

Would you like to widen your advertising to the local community of Wixams, delivering to approx. 2500 houses.

The team at Wixams Newsletter are keen to support local employment .

Get in contact to find out how we can support your Recruitment campaign.

Email: advertising@wixams.org

SEASONS SEASONS GARDEN CENTRE

WE ARE HIRING

Don't miss this opportunity!

- **COOK, PART TIME**
3 days, including 1 weekend day
The main duties include: cooking meals to order, managing the day to day running of the kitchen and baking
- **RESTAURANT ASSISTANT**
3 days, including 1 weekend day
The main duties include: serving customers, clearing tables and general kitchen duties
- **SHOP ASSISTANT - PLANT AREA**
3 days initially
The main duties include: looking after plants and improving the general appearance of the plant area along with helping customer enquiries.

A good horticultural understanding is key for this role along with enthusiasm for this busy, physically active role.

These positions are available with immediate effect.
Please send CV's to James either to store or email to: seasonsgardencentre@yahoo.co.uk

WIXAMS NEWSLETTER

Volunteer Roles

Treasurer

Do you have an hour or two to spare on a monthly basis.
We are looking for a volunteer Treasurer to join our newsletter Team.

The role will include:

- Keeping an ongoing record of all group income/ expenditure
- Administering the group's bank account
- Invoicing Advertisers
- Providing a financial update to the Newsletter Committee on a monthly basis

If you are interested or have any queries email:
advertising@wixams.org

Advertiser

The Wixams Newsletter Team are also looking for a Volunteer Advertising Administrator. The key aim of this role is to act as point of contact between local advertisers and the newsletter team.

This role will include:

- Liaising with local advertisers regarding the advertising schedule
- Providing a monthly update on advertisers to the Publisher and at monthly newsletter meetings
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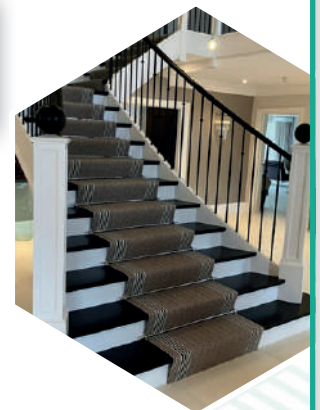


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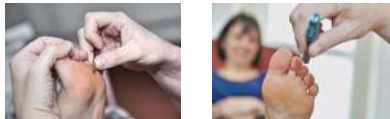
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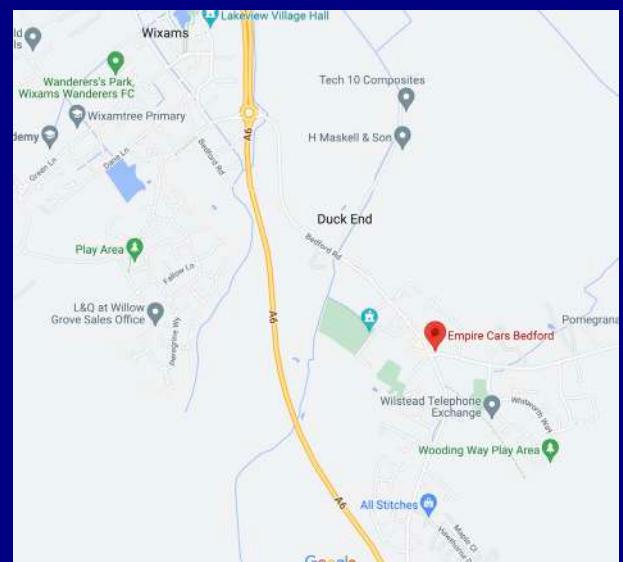
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Simnel Cake

Prep time: 30 minutes
 Cooking time: 2 hours
 Difficulty: Easy
 Serves: 12

Ingredients

- 250g mixed dried fruit (a mixture of sultanas, currants, raisins and candied mixed peel)
- 1 orange, zested and juiced
- 500g pack marzipan
- 250g pack butter, softened
- 200g light brown soft sugar
- 4 eggs, plus 1 beaten to glaze
- 175g plain flour
- 100g ground almonds
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 lemon, zested
- 2 tsp mixed spice
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 100g glacé cherries, halved
- 3 tbsp apricot jam

Bake this classic Easter simnel cake. Top with 11 balls of marzipan – said to represent 11 of Jesus’s disciples, leaving off Judas – or with spring flowers.

STEP 1

Put the mixed dried fruit in a bowl with the orange juice and zest and 2 tbsp water. Cover and microwave for 2 mins, then leave to cool completely. Alternatively, heat gently in a pan, stirring now and then until the liquid has been absorbed and leave to cool.

STEP 2

Heat oven to 150C/130C fan/gas 2. Roll out a third of the marzipan and use the base of a deep 20cm cake tin as a template to cut out a circle. Wrap any offcuts and the remaining two-thirds of marzipan and set aside for later. Butter and line the cake tin with a double layer of parchment. Beat the butter and sugar together until creamy. Add the eggs, flour, almonds, baking powder, lemon zest, mixed spice and vanilla (all in one go) and mix until well combined. Mix in the cooled soaked dried fruit and fold in the cherries.

STEP 3

Scrape half the cake mixture into the tin. Top with the disc of marzipan, then the remaining cake mixture, and level the top with a spatula. Bake for 2 hrs. Check it’s cooked by inserting a skewer to the centre of the cake, if any wet mixture clings to the skewer, return to the oven for another 10 mins, then check again. Cool in the tin for 15 mins, then turn out onto a wire rack and leave to cool completely.

STEP 4

Brush the top of the cake with apricot jam. Roll out half of the remaining marzipan and use the base of the cake as a template to cut out another disc. Place it on top of the cake and crimp the edges, if you like. Roll the remaining marzipan into 11 equal-sized balls for the apostles. Brush the marzipan with beaten egg and arrange the apostles in a circle on top around the outside, and brush them with a little egg too. Put under a hot grill for a minute or two until just starting to caramelize – be very careful as the marzipan will burn easily. Leave to cool and wrap a ribbon around the cake, if you like. Will keep for up to a week in a sealed tin.



YOUTH CORNER *by Ellie*



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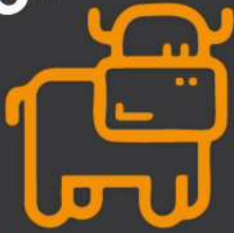
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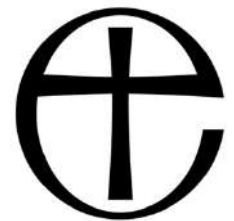
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Gardening Tips for March

by Marion Colledge



Marion, a dogged gardener in all weathers, is a member of RHS, and Biddenham Gardeners Association.

The light is really beginning to increase and there are signs of buds and spring flowers such as rosemary and primroses. Apart from snowdrops and crocuses which we'd expect, my bright yellow wych hazel and the two year old scented winter honeysuckle are also in full flower. It's not for nothing that the Chinese have the New Year about now (10/11 February).

On the allotment there are the first buds on the red and blackcurrants. Though we are recommended to prune red fruit bushes in February, the mild winter meant I had to quickly prune them before January was out! My son bought Japanese anvil secateurs as an early birthday present; and a holster, so I won't accidentally abandon them somewhere. My rechargeable ones were blunt, and not long or clever enough to make clean cuts near the roots. And yesterday I killed ten small black slimy slugs nibbling the house leeks near my herb patch (method: squashing with pointed twig). They have spared me the parsley for picking. It has too strong a flavour for them.

The chimonanthus praecox that I persuaded my daughter to buy me as an early Christmas present for its yellow bell-like flowers is showing no signs of stirring; looks most uninteresting, which I think means it's still putting down roots and I have to wait for next winter for the blossoms.

Winter planting in your trugs/ window boxes

Now's a good time to plant winter lettuce such as claytonia, carrots, early peas and parsley seeds as we have enough moisture. You could mix with permanent ornamentals such as heather (may need watering in summer) and lavender.

You can begin indoors in a warm room with pepper, tomato and aubergine seeds, but you'll have to keep transferring them into larger pots until towards the end of May when they can go on a balcony.

Early weeding in the larger garden

It's very wet and not suitable for treading on soil or lawns, unless you spread your weight on something quite wide like an old professional baker's bread cooling tray. I've just been weeding edges of beds from my paths. Do you get on top of the weeds when they're

tiny? Its best to, if you can. The dreaded blue-green couch grass has invaded from the lawn and threaded its sharp roots horizontally all under the half circle of soil around my Stella cherry tree. Took thirty patient minutes to dig them out as they were nestling under blue-green bulb shoots of the same colour. They are known as a good de-wormer, but I don't have a dog! Some small ivy shoots may need removing before they develop deep roots. Then there are tiny gallium aparine – cleavers, Jack-run-the hedge or bobby button. (Take a look at Wikipedia which supplies twenty different local names). We need to get rid of those or else they climb up over herbaceous plants and through shrubs in April and May and in next to no time we'll have the sticky little seeds trailing all over our clothes. But my cleavers are still small, innocent-looking and unreachable without harmful treading.

Seed potatoes

I've just bought Rocket (First Earlies) seed potatoes from the allotment shop in Newnham Avenue, Bedford. I am chitting them (letting them sprout) in a cool spare bedroom. I won't take too much notice of the old adage about planting them on Good Friday as Easter is very early this year.

Gardens to Visit

For those of you with transport, Beth Chatto's sustainable dry gardens in Essex are superb or you can see them at <https://www.bethchatto.co.uk>

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Marion



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Deadline for submissions for next issue:
15th March 2024

If there is anything specific you would like to see in the Newsletter or if you would like to write an article of interest to others please get in touch with us at newsletter@wixams.org

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