

HOUGHTON CONQUEST Village Newsletter

February 2025



Winter Skies and Frosty Mornings

Your Newsletter, for Your Village

HOUGHTON CONQUEST PARISH COUNCIL

Members

PCllr Saqhib Ali

PCllr Jean Ashcroft

PCllr Peter Bullock

PCllr Sian Davies

PCllr Liz Lovell (Chair)

PCllr Frank Odogu

PCllr Alan Ross

PCllr Sarah Sharpe (Vice Chair)

PCllr Clinton Taylor

PCllr Bryn Whittaker

Committees, Working Parties and Representatives

Police Liaison/Community Safety PCllr Ashcroft

Highways PCllr Ross

Planning Sub-Committee PCllrs Bullock, Whittaker & TBA

Village Hall PCllr Ashcroft

Play Area	PCllr Odogu
Sports Field	PCllr Lovell
Allotments/Orchard/SIDs	PCllr Lovell
Tree Warden	PCllr Lovell
Newsletter/Community Facebook Website	PCllrs Bullock and Sharpe
United Charities	Parish Clerk
Noticeboards/Litter Picking	PCllr Bullock
Defibrillator	George Maxsted
School Liason	PCllr Lovell and Parish Clerk
East/West Rail and Wixams Station	PCllr Sharpe
Universal	PCllr Taylor
Wixams and GP Surgery	PCllr Taylor
	PCllrs Ali, Taylor and Sharpe

Parish Council Clerk:

Jo Graves T: 07563 527415

E: clerk@houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk

The Parish Council usually meets on the second Thursday of the month except August & December, in the Village Hall committee room at 7.30pm. Parishioners are invited to attend the meetings and time is allocated for them to address the council. If you have any matter you wish to draw to the attention of the Parish Council, you can contact any Councillor, the Parish Clerk, or

attend a meeting. If you wish to attend a meeting, please notify the clerk or the chairman before the meeting, so that you can speak during the time allotted.

Central Bedfordshire Councillor:

Bec Hares T: 0300 300 8505

E: rebecca.hares@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Parish Council website

You can register for email news updates from Houghton Conquest Parish Council by going to houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk & click on the "subscribe" button on the home page. We promise we won't inundate you. We only post news items that we believe are important to Houghton Conquest residents. **Subscription is completely free of charge.**

Please note that the closing date for insertion of copy into the April 2025 issue of The Houghton Conquest Village Newsletter is 21st March 2025

You may send copy c/o the Editor, Village Newsletter, 38 Victoria Drive, Houghton Conquest MK45 9LY or send it by email to hcvillagenews@gmail.com
All contributions are welcome but are subject to the editor's discretion as to size and content

Parish Council Updates

Chair's Report



Hello and welcome to the first newsletter of 2025. I hope it will prove to be a happy and prosperous new year for everybody.

With no meeting in December there is not really much to report. The festive season is usually fairly quiet from a Parish Council point of view.

We have held the Youth engagement event at the Wixams Academy and it was very successful. Many of the local youth groups took the opportunity to showcase what they can offer in terms of activities for our young people. Over 150 young people attended and gave their views on future youth provision in the area. The results of their input are being collated by CBC and will be presented in the next newsletter. Let's hope this leads to some sort of positive action by the planning committee. We would like to thank PCllr Sarah Sharpe and our Clerk Jo Graves

along with Sam Mardel and Zoe Gammie for all their hard work in putting together this event. Also thanks to the Wixams Academy for agreeing to host the event.

As a follow up to the event a representative from Urban and Civic will be attending the next Parish Council meeting, on February 13th, to provide an update on sports and leisure facilities on Village 4 of the Wixams. Everyone is welcome to come along and hear about the plans.

The results from the event will also be used to populate the community assets map being developed by PCllr Sian Davies.

The railings around Daysfield play area have been repaired and new gates installed. These works were commissioned as a result of the ROSPA report which recommended that new gates be fitted and gaps beneath the railings be filled in places.

Our local MP Blake Stephenson is being invited to attend the Annual Parish Meeting which takes place in March. Everyone is invited to attend and all of our local Clubs are welcome to report on their activities over the year. It is a chance for all residents to come together and find out what's going on in their community.

We currently have some spare plots at the allotments. If you would like to be considered for a plot please send your details to the Clerk clerk@houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk. Now is a good time to take on a plot as there is plenty of time to get things in order before Spring planting begins.

As ever if you have any concerns please let us know via the Clerk.

Warm regards

Liz

PCllr Liz Lovell

*The Chair's report is intended to provide a general update.
Agendas and approved minutes can be viewed on the Parish
Council website www.houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk*

CENTRAL BEDS INDEPENDENT COUNCILLOR – Rebecca Hares



Please contact me at bex.hares@gmail.com or on 0300 300 8505 if you have any issues that I may be able to help with.

UCIlr Bec Hares



POLICE & HIGHWAYS MATTERS

At the most recent Police Priority Meeting, various things were discussed and apart from the usual concerns that affect all villages, namely speeding and ASB, the subject of hare coursing was brought up by the Rural Communities Team.

These events are illegal under the Hunting Act (2004). The Police are always keen on information from anyone witnessing one of these events and ask that the following details are supplied:

- Description of people involved
- Description of dogs involved
- Vehicle makes, models and registration numbers if possible
- Actions observed – eg money changing hands, use of quick release dog leads etc

ALWAYS observe from a distance and do not expose yourself to risk and stay out of sight whilst observing or taking photographs.

Call 999 if still in progress or 101 after the event or use the online reporting centre.

POLICE RESPONSE

Recently a resident noticed some odd behaviour at the bottom of the Village Hall car park and called the Police. Some officers duly arrived and spoke with the people involved, whilst they were still there and resolved the issue (which in this case was entirely innocent). This does go to show that the local officers will indeed respond quickly as long as they are notified.

For anyone wishing to report any crime that does not merit a 999 emergency call, please either ring 101 or report a crime on-line by visiting www.bedfordshire.police.uk, where you will be offered a variety of options for reporting.

CRIMESTOPPERS

If you notice anything strange, anything that doesn't look quite right, the Police ask that you ring with your suspicions. Please ring: **CRIMESTOPPERS 0800 555 111**. It is quick to do this, and you can be anonymous.

PCllr Jean Ashcroft

Houghton Conquest Crime Figures November 2024

Offence	Number	Date	Place
Theft from a vehicle	3	03/11/24 05/11/24 08/11/24	Stanbridge Way Cedarwood Circle Thickthorn Lane
Other theft	2	11/11/24 20/11/24	How End Road Oatlands Drive
Assault without injury	2	16/11/24 17/11/24	Meadow Road How End Road
Stalking	2	08/11/24 12/11/24	Undisclosed
Blackmail	1	04/11/24	Undisclosed
Sexual	1	17/11/24	Undisclosed
Race or religiously agg harassment	1	03/11/24	Undisclosed
Assault with intent to cause serious harm	1	10/11/24	Rowan Close
Harassment	1	22/11/24	Undisclosed
Burglary – business and community	1	04/11/24	How End Road
Arson endangering life	1	29/11/24	Cedarwood Circle
Criminal damage to a vehicle	1	21/11/24	Bedford Road
Grand Total	17		

Previous months

January 24	8
February 24	17
March 24	7
April 24	4
May 24	8
June 24	16
July 24	20
August 24	15
September 24	15
October 24	16

Houghton Conquest Crime Figures December 2024

Offence	Number	Date	Place
State or Public Order	2	10/12/24 24/12/24	Four Acre Drive How End Road
Stalking	2	04/12/24 17/12/24	Undisclosed
Sexual	1	09/12/24	Undisclosed
Assault with Injury	1	15/12/24	Barrow Lane
Malicious Communications	1	11/12/24	Undisclosed
Other Theft	1	03/12/24	Oatlands Drive
Theft or Unauthorised Taking of a Motor Vehicle	1	02/12/24	Bedford Road
Perverting the Course of Justice	1	11/12/24	Windmill view
Public Fear, Alarm or Distress	1	19/12/24	Stableford Road
Grand Total	11		

SIDs

Data from SIDs (Bracketed figures from previous report)

14/11/24 -09/01/25

0046 (The Grove) 20mph zone

Arriving – from The Grove towards the High street

Violations **48.08%** (53.06%) **DOWN**

Of which 74.07% (73.01%) = **21-25 mph UP (which is a good thing)**

25.92% (26.89%) = **26+**

Average speed **20mph** (21mph)

V85 **25mph** (25mph)

Average Vehicles per day **283** (362)

Total in period **15892** (10159)

Highest recorded **45mph(52)** **Saturday 29th November**
02:00 – 03:00

Departing – from The High Street towards The Grove

Violations **62.75%** (67.19%) **DOWN**

Of which **69.29%** (67.99%) = **21-25 mph**

30.70% (32.00%) = **26+**

Average speed **22mph** (22mph)

V85 **26mph** (27mph)

Average Vehicles per day **255** (337)

Total in period **14349** (9474)

Highest recorded **51mph(55)** **Monday 6th January 12:00 –**
13:00

28/11/24 – 09/01/25

0156 (Bedford Road) 30mph zone

Victoria Drive and Mill Lane

Arriving from The Oak

Violations **5.61 %** (7.18%) **Down**

Of which **84.47%** (83.87%) = **31-35**

15.52% (16.12%) = **35+**

Average speed **24mph** (24mph)

V85 **28mph** (29mph)

Average vehicles per day	772	(726)
Total in period	32307	(20417)
Highest recorded	67mph	(67mph) Monday 9 th December 01:00 – 02:00

Departing to the Oak

Violations	9.08%	(10.86%) DOWN
Of which	83.86%	(83.73%) =31-35
	16.13%	(16.26%) =35+
Average speed	24mph	(25mph)
V85	29 mph	(30mph)

Average vehicles per day	867	(890)
Total in period	36256	(25037)
Highest recorded	72mph	(68 mph) Monday 3 rd December 00:00 – 01:00

14/11/24 – 09/01/25

0047 (Meadow Road) 30mph zone

Arriving – From A530 towards Pitchfork Way

Violations	3.89%	(4.11%) Down
Of which	84.04%	(84.25%) = 31-35 mph
	15.95%	(15.74%) = 36+
Average speed	21mph	(22mph)
V85	27mph	(27mph)

Average Vehicles per day	534	(574)
Total in period	29978	(16133)
Highest recorded	56mph	(68) Tuesday 24 th December 17:00 – 18:00

Departing – Pitchfork Way towards A530

Violations	5.08%	(5.31%) DOWN
Of which	82.98%	(83.88%) = 31-35 mph
	17.01%	(16.11%) = 36+

Average speed	22mph	(22mph)
---------------	-------	---------

V85	27mph	(28mph)
-----	-------	---------

Average Vehicles per day	358	(317)
--------------------------	-----	-------

Total in period	20116	(8912)
-----------------	-------	--------

Highest recorded	63mph(65)	Sunday 15 th December 03:00 – 04:00
------------------	-----------	---

POTHOLES

Whilst we continually report the multitude of potholes in and around the village via the CBC FixMyStreet app, it is always helpful for others to post these too, as multiple postings will draw more attention to them and potentially get them fixed more quickly.

You can access this by either going to:

<https://fixmystreet.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk> or by downloading the **FixMyStreet** app on your phone available from Apple's App Store and Google Play



All Saints Church



Church Issues

All Saints Houghton and All Saints, Wilstead are now part of a team ministry of 5 churches with Elstow Abbey, St Michael & All Angels, Bedford and St Mary's, Cardington.

Any contact for the 5 churches re. services, Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals etc. should be made to

Fr. Paul Messam on our central office number (with answer phone) or email –

Team Rector: Rev'd Fr Paul Messam SCP, Tel: (01234) 261477. email: vicar@elstow-abbey.org.uk

Team Vicar: Rev'd Mike Stuart. email: vicar2@elstow-abbey.org.uk

Team Curate: Rev'd Steve Marsh. email: curate@elstow-abbey.org.uk

Team Ministry Website: www.elstowteamministry.org.uk

Services for February/March are as follows:

2nd Feb. – 9.30am – Morning Praise – Robert Heley
9th Feb. – 9.30am – Holy Communion – Fr Steve Marsh
16th Feb. – 9.30am - Holy Communion – Rev'd Mike Stuart
16th Feb. – 3.00pm - Family & Children's Service – Fr Steve Marsh
23rd Feb. – 9.30am - Holy Communion – Fr Paul Messam
2nd Mar. – 9.30am – Morning Praise – Robert Heley
9th Mar. – 9.30am – Holy Communion – Fr Steve Marsh
16th Mar. – 9.30am - Holy Communion – Rev'd Mike Stuart
16th Mar. – 3.00pm - Family & Children's Service – Fr Steve Marsh
23rd Mar. – 9.30am - Holy Communion – Fr Paul Messam
30th Mar. – 9.30am – Morning Praise – John Hinson

- **Do note our new Family Service.** Fr Steve is running this service once a month on Sunday afternoons. (We know early mornings on Sundays are difficult with young children!)

Church Wardens: Gary Mudd (01234 741871) and Chris Robertson (01234 741964). Let us know of any concerns. We'd love to hear from local Christians who'd like to be involved in taking our church forward with ideas for worship and events.

We always need more volunteers/helpers to run events, sort recycling etc. If you can give some time to help at Teas, Lunches, Jumble Sales, Concerts etc. Please let **Sarah Hannant** know on **07900 927050** with your details. It would be good to increase data base of those we can call on. (Your data will not be passed on or used for any other purpose.) Sarah now has a WhatsApp group set up for this (**HC Church Volunteers & Bakers**) if you can participate there!

Fundraising & Events:

Looking at Fundraising: We now have postcards in church which have a QR/ telephone link for the Church Giving scheme. This is also posted on the church FaceBook group. This gives your donation (one off or regular) back to the church and can be Gift-Aided, increasing its value by 25%. If you would like to support the work of the church/upkeep of this 'at risk', Grade 1 listed building do let me know and I can pop one through your door. This doesn't mean that you have to attend church services, though we'd love to see you there.

Christmas Tree Festival/ Services: Thanks to all who worked so hard to bring the festival about again, helped with refreshments and took part in all services over Christmas. We had good congregations for Nine Lessons and Midnight services which means we can continue with these next Christmas.

Please check posters and Facebook page for further information and events.

100 Club December: £50 Winner: Celia Lia; £20: Richard Jones; £10: K.Holland

In January we revise the list of members of the Hundred Club so, if you would like to join, please contact Carol Juffs (01234 381393) or Jackie Davis (01234 740635)

Best Wishes, Gary Mudd

HOUGHTON CONQUEST CHARITIES

Small grants are available to Village Organisations as well as individuals for educational purposes, and the good news is that

there is no age limit, but applicants must be resident in the parish.

It is not possible to list all the areas where a grant might be given, but if funds cannot be realised anywhere else, you might well be able to obtain some help towards expenses from this organisation.

Of late we have assisted people with university books, computer and riding equipment required for study, some college expenses, and coaching fees.

If you need help and think we might be able to assist please complete the application form which is on the **Parish Council Website via this link:** [Houghton Conquest Charities – Houghton Conquest Parish Council \(houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk\)](http://HoughtonConquestCharities-HoughtonConquestParishCouncil.houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk) and return the completed forms via email to helenmudd@tiscali.co.uk or deliver to

23 Victoria Drive, MK45 3LZ

Houghton Conquest Charities Incorporating The Clerke & Wilde Educational Foundation Charity No. 307480

Village Clubs, Organisations & Events

Houghton Conquest Garden Club

SPRING SHOW

Saturday 5th April

In the Village Hall at 2pm

Raffle

Refreshments



Village Hall Regular Events

Contact group contacts for details.

Weekly

Monday	Indoor Bowls	2pm to 4pm
	Whist	7:45pm
	Qi Kwan Do Martial Arts	6:30pm to 7:30pm
Tuesday	Line Dancers	10am to 12:30pm
Wednesday	Line Dancers	10am to 12:30pm
Thursday	Line Dancers	10am to 12:30pm
Friday (school term only)	Toddlers Group	9:30am to 11:30am

Monthly

1 st Wednesday	Art Society	7:30pm to 9:30pm
1 st Thursday	WI	7:30pm to 10pm
2 nd Tuesday	Garden Club	7:30pm to 9:30pm
2 nd Thursday	Parish Council (Committee Room)	7:30pm
3 rd Wednesday	Art Society	7:30pm to 9:30pm

3 rd Thursday	Village Hall Management Committee	7:30pm
--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------

To Book Contact: Mrs Christine Dean 01234 741182 Cjdean5@aol.com	IF YOU ARE PLANNING A ONE-OFF EVENT OR REGULAR MEETING. DON'T DELAY AND BOOK TODAY.
---	--

- Licensed bar with air conditioning at £35 hire charge
- Large hall including stage area with curtains
- Small committee room and lounge area
- Large car park

Village Notice Boards

If you would like to put notices in our boards:

1. For the main village and the Robinson Avenue development notice boards, please hand them in to Houghton Conquest village shop.
 - We have 6 noticeboards in these areas, so please provide 6 x A5 copies to ensure a copy goes in each board. Regrettably, we cannot accept larger than A5 due to limited space.
 - If you provide only one copy it will only go in one board. The choice of board will be at the discretion of the Parish Councils representative.
 - If you are advertising an event, please allow plenty of time, as our noticeboards are only updated once a week.
 - We do not accept commercial advertising, unless it is for community activities, such as local classes.

- Space is limited, so priority will be given to local community events, & is at the discretion of the Parish Council's representative, who kindly keeps all the noticeboards up to date.
2. For Wixams Village 4 noticeboard please email the clerk with notices and mark for attention of Cllr Sharpe

Any queries please contact the Clerk to the Parish Council at clerk@houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk

Houghton Conquest Lower School

Respect Honesty Resilience Pride Teamwork



Welcome to our **spring term!** It is great to see all the children and staff fully immersed into their topics. Last half term was very rewarding here at school and it was wonderful to see how much progress each child made. We are very much looking forward to seeing this continue.

The children have had some very exciting starts to their class topics and are thoroughly enjoying them, which has inspired some fantastic artwork across the school. Take a look...



Sustainability; The children on the school council wrote to the Friends of Houghton Conquest Lower School in the summer term last year asking for some money for their food recycling bin project. We are delighted that the recycling bins have finally been installed, supporting our pledge to be net zero by 2030. Thank you to the Friends and thank you to the children on the school Council; brilliant 😊

We also have an exciting children's author visit planned this term, from **Lou Treleaven**, to celebrate world book day with our children and conduct an exciting workshop to inspire their love of reading and writing.



Community: As an integral part of our lovely village the school are keen to become more involved with other village groups and as such, we would be very happy to receive information/invitations/competitions from other groups in the village to see if we can get involved somehow. If you have any information, you can email Mrs Allen at hconquest@hcschool.org.uk.

Finally, if your child is starting school in September '25 please get in touch with us as we would love to show you round our amazing school. Our school office number is 01234 740202. We look forward to welcoming you soon.

Take Care.

The Team at HCLS

Respect Honesty Resilience Pride Teamwork

Houghton Conquest Garden Club



The speaker at our January meeting was Peta Frost, who runs a flower farm in Biggleswade. She started growing flowers on an allotment but decided that she would like to grow on a bigger scale and acquired a plot of land. Although this was covered in brambles and many weeds within a few months she was growing many flowers. She now sells to small retailers and privately, as well as doing bouquets and bridal flowers.

On 11th February we have a talk by Nic Wilson called 'on the wild side', and then on 11th March there is a talk about winter interest plants by Kerry Austin.

The spring show is on Saturday 5th April, and the schedule for this will be ready shortly, and if you would like a copy, please let me know.

Now is a good time to sort out house plants, picking off dead leaves, and if you have a plant with thick foliage these could be wiped with a damp cloth as they can get dusty.

Spring is round the corner so let's hope for a good growing season.

Margaret Whalley

01234 740892

Houghton Conquest Art Society



At the end of the year we held a Saturday workshop, in the village hall, with local artist Fiona Wilson. Fiona has visited us several times, her work is very exciting, colourful and different from the norm.

We created collages from scraps of paper quite abstract and very individual, it was an enjoyable and fun day, above are some results, the third collage is one of Fiona's own.

Our final meeting of 2024 as usual was a social. Very well attended and as you can see below, huge amounts of tasty buffet food all supplied by our members, along with a tipple.



We had a couple of funny quizzes and a Van Gogh jigsaw game which got everybody going!

To do this at home you need a large sheet of card or thick paper and several picture postcards. You place the postcards on the large sheet and draw round them, so you end up with small rectangle shapes. Then you cut each postcard into around 5 pieces with wavy or jagged lines. You may wish to photocopy the postcards and cut those up, saving the original postcards. You need at least 8 postcards, they can be any theme or all different types. We had paintings by Van Gogh which was very appropriate for the members. If you have a children's party you could use their favourite characters. You tape the large sheet flat to a worktop or table. So you end up with 8 or more blank rectangles draw onto the sheet. You then jumble up the cut pieces of postcard and place them individually face up, near the large sheet. We all popped back and forwards to the table throughout the evening matching and placing the cut pieces in the blank rectangles until we completed each whole picture postcard. So, it's a game lots can play at once and those taking part can be any age group.





We have an exciting programme for 2025 which will shortly be available on the club's website. Do look for us on Facebook too, just search for Houghton Conquest Art Society online and you will find lots of details and information about our friendly club.

Barbara Boxshall

Publicity Manager

houghton-conquest-art-society.co.uk



Wixams Lego Club

Held every Saturday (term time) at Lakeview Village Hall
open only to children who reside or attend a school in Wixams

Session 1 : 9am to 10am : Ages 3 to 7

Session 2 : 10.15am to 11:45am : Ages 7 to 18

Annual Membership £5

Weekly attendance fee - £2 for members, £2.50 for non-members

For further information please email – legoatwixams@gmail.com

Cracking the Code: The Joy and Confusion of Cryptic Crosswords

In the quiet corners of our village, where the hum of daily life can appear to slow down to the gentlest of rhythms, there might well be some brains buzzing around a puzzle that has captivated minds for generations: the cryptic crossword. It's a pastime that may seem perplexing at first glance but, with a little patience and practice, reveals itself as quite a rewarding mental exercise. This author started learning how to solve cryptic puzzles a few weeks ago with the help of a tutorial app. This may or may not have been in reaction to some disheartening news from across the pond.

Did you know?

Nearby cypher cracking war heroes of Bletchley Park were found through a cryptic crossword! The Telegraph set a timed cryptic challenge in 1942 – and the war office quickly jumped on the opportunity to recruit the fastest solvers.

What is a Cryptic Crossword?

Unlike traditional crosswords, where clues tend to be direct and straightforward, cryptic crosswords have a surface meaning plus the cryptic reading, which will be some kind of word play, like a hidden word, anagram, abbreviation, charade and what seems like familiar

phrases are layered with hidden meanings. Each clue is essentially a mini puzzle in itself!

For example:

“Mad hero’s mustang?” (5)

At first glance it may seem like nonsense, but with a bit of creative thinking and armed with cryptic crossword’s structure basic rules, and you will see how the clue leads you to the solution : hero’s is an anagram, which has been maddened (jumbled up) to create something that a mustang is a type of – answer: HORSE.

Here’s another, following the same pattern:

“The world needs a change of heart” (5)

If we change heart around we can find our way to EARTH, another way of saying the world.

Did you know?

Crossword solvers maintain a table of difficulty level of cryptics by publication. The easiest is said to be the puzzle that appears in the Daily Mail. The New York Times varies the difficulty of their cryptics by day of the week – weekends are set to be harder than mid-week puzzles.

How To Solve Cryptic Clues

The key to cracking cryptic crosswords is ignoring the surface meaning and recognising the structure of the clues. Normally the clue will consist of two parts:

1. **The definition**: This is usually at the start or end of the clue and is the straight meaning of the word.
2. **The wordplay**: The rest of the clue offers a cryptic way to construct the answer. It helps to look out for indicators in the word play– that's the role played by 'change of' and 'mad' in the anagram clues above. Hidden word indicators include 'partly', 'inside', 'revealing'. Sandwich clues often have the indicator 'in' or 'about' and reversal clues will state something like 'back' or 'returning'.

Unfortunately, I have discovered that once you get to grips with the more obvious clue patterns, solving the more complex clues does not necessarily feel easier– but it is at least straightforward to establish that the clue is not a charade, anagram, hidden word, sandwich or reversal.

In addition to learning the structure, it is also necessary to build up some general knowledge – the NATO alphabet (whisky tango foxtrot), common (apparently?) nautical abbreviations, musical terms (PP for very quietly, FF for very loudly) and abbreviations like T for time. So if you already have those down – you are halfway there!

Did you know?

*It might sound like a serious business,
but anyone can come up with cryptic
crossword clues and submit them to a
cluing competition (Sunday Times,
the Observer, and lit.org.uk) and broad
participation as we know typically
leads to both fun and naughtiness
(remember Boaty McBoatface?).
Here's a genius cluing competition
entry from 1973 : 'Bust down
reason?(9)' Answer: BRA-IN-WASH –
take a little thinking about but you'll get
there.*

So why not give it a go?

Cryptic crosswords may seem intimidating at first, but once you start solving them, they become addictive. They engage both your vocabulary and your logical thinking skills. Each solved clue provides a small victory and a sense of accomplishment that is hard to beat. Moreover, they can be a wonderful distraction from the hectic pace of village life (or a busy Christmas calendar, perhaps?), providing a moment of peace and focus.

Tips for Beginners

1. Start with simpler puzzles. Many newspapers offer cryptic crosswords with varying difficulty levels, so don't be afraid to start with the easier ones.

2. Use a pencil. This way, you can change your answers as you go along.
3. Work with a partner. Solving cryptic crosswords can be a lot more fun if you tackle them as a team, bouncing ideas off each other.
4. Don't be afraid to look up unfamiliar abbreviations or words. I am reassured that eventually we will start remembering them!

Here are a few short clues to try out – answers will be printed in the next issue along with details on how to submit clues for the Houghton clue comp:

- Belt parts sent back (5)
- China lacking a feature (4)
- Honourable fight of the French and the Spanish (4)
- Position inside Midlands pottery (4)
- Croat becomes thespian (5)

Happy solving!

Sian Davies



Bowls Club

We are pleased to report that the Village Bowls Club (over 30 years old) has been saved. We have had quite a few people from the village and from nearby who have come along to try our very easy to play game. We still have our hardcore of Members who are very loyal and they are so pleased to have new company to try the game. Some of these have quickly become regular bowlers while others join us from time to time to swell our competitors.

We meet in the village hall every Monday afternoon from two o'clock until four o'clock with a break for tea and biscuits and a good old natter to catch up on everyone's news. Please come along in the New Year and give it a try. Your first 'try it session' is free and then we pay £2.00 per week.

As previously advised we would particularly welcome some fit people who are able to assist in setting up and then rolling up the mats at the end of the afternoon. It's not particularly hard work but a good back and bend helps. Yes MATS !!!!! As we now have enough bowlers join us to set up TWO MATS.

Look forward to seeing you. A warm welcome awaits you. If you would like more details please contact our leader,

Monica (01234 743345)

Houghton Conquest Care



The Committee and volunteers of the Care Group wish you all a happy and healthy 2025.

Along with other village organisations we decorated a tree for the Church Christmas Tree Festival. The Church looked beautiful with all the lights and decorations.

We had another successful quiz in the autumn in association with the Jigsaw Club. We rely on fund raising and donations to keep the Group running.

During 2024 our volunteers carried out 397 journeys, mainly to hospital and doctors' appointments. Most trips are to Ampthill and Bedford but the longest journeys were to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital at Welwyn Garden City and the Luton & Dunstable Hospital. We helped many "regular" villagers and a number of new people contacted us. There was only one occasion when we were unable to find a driver.

At the moment we have 17 volunteers who drive and 6 who deal with phone requests. We are very grateful to all our volunteers many of whom have volunteered for several years and some who have joined more recently. New volunteers are always welcome. Most requests are to take people from the village to doctors' surgeries and hospital appointments. It is not a big commitment – just the offer to help occasionally would be

fine. You can claim 45p per mile for fuel and any other expenses (such as parking) can be reimbursed. We do have a parking permit for particular parking areas at both Bedford Hospitals which a driver may borrow. If you would like to find out more please contact either Sue or Kate (numbers below).

If you need help, please phone 07969 982 970 and leave a message. One of our volunteers will return your call. If you need transport please try to give us at least 24 hours' notice although we will always try to help at short notice. We ask for a donation of £4.00 per round trip for journeys under 10 miles as a contribution to the driver's fuel costs. A return journey to Luton & Dunstable Hospital is about 30 miles so drivers are entitled to ask for £14.00.

Kate Smith (Honorary Secretary) 01234 740522

Sue Derrick (Chairperson) 07886459225

OUR PHONE NUMBER is 07969 982 970



Our December meeting was a social evening when members read poems and Christmas stories, and we sang some carols. The committee made fools of themselves performing the alternative Cinderella. We ended with stollen, mince pies and mulled wine.

We had our new year party in January when 47 members, friends and family enjoyed a three course meal, followed by entertainment by Lisa who is a very talented musician. She mainly played the alto sax, but also many other instruments playing anything from jazz to Mozart.

On 6th February Adam Smith will be talking about Wrest Park and the women who owned it. Then on 6th March there will be the AGM, and hopefully the new programme will be ready by then.

Visitors are always welcome at any of the meetings, but if you would like further information about the WI please give me a call.

Shirley Johnson

01234 740265



If the Library of Things concept is new to you then you'll find it's just like a regular library but with all sorts of 'things' rather than books. Items include sewing machine, electric drill, party crockery, garden equipment and much, much more.

Do have a little browse on our website:
www.shareflitwickandampthill.org/browse-items/ where you can see all of the items that we currently stock (with more being added all the time). On our website you can sign up to be a member for just £5 for the year and then you can reserve items for when you need them.

We're open every Saturday from 10-12 at The Rufus Centre, just around the left of the building.

If Saturday from 10-12 really doesn't work for you then do get in touch at info@shareflitwickandampthill.org as one of our volunteers can often arrange to meet you at a mutually convenient time. As always, if the cost of the

membership or loans would cause you hardship then please get in touch in confidence and we will be happy to help.

RECYCLING USED STAMPS FOR CHARITY

Many thanks to everyone who has been passing used stamps to me throughout the year. I am happy to continue to act as a collection point (please pop through my letterbox at 29 Rectory Lane). I take the stamps to the Oxfam Shop in Bedford which is happy to receive everyday stamps, as well as more valuable ones, to sell to collectors worldwide and raise funds for the charity.

Rosalind Blevins

ros.blevins@btinternet.com

THE GREEN PIECE

Good for the Planet, Good for Everyone



Welcome to “The Green Piece” – a place where we can share ideas on how to live a ‘greener’ life. Please send in suggestions.

GREEN CLEANING

This past year or so I’ve been trying out ‘greener’ ways of cleaning – using products that do not harm our waterways or wildlife as they break down rapidly to innocuous chemicals like water and oxygen. In many cases they can be purchased in cardboard or as refills, saving plastic. Not only are the following kinder to the environment, but they are very effective and often kinder to one’s purse. These Green products are available from various supermarkets, online and from refill shops (the latter is often the cheapest option)

1tsp = 1 teaspoon (5ml) 1tbsp = 1 tablespoon (15ml)

Stains on fabric or crockery

Sodium percarbonate “green bleach” is just magic. It will lift stains on most fabrics including coloureds (without bleaching) even wool – just dissolve 1tsp in a small 1l bowl of warm water and soak for a couple of hours. (If you forget, as I have done, and leave the item a couple of days, there’s no harm done. The colour of the fabric was still strong and the fabric intact.) Great for

dishcloths and kids muddy white socks which come out like new.

For tea and coffee-stained mugs, put the tiniest bit of percarb in the mug and add boiling water. The stains are gone within minutes. Discard, rinse and use. Far quicker than traditional bleach and no smell. Obviously use more for a teapot.

Descaling kettles, showerhead etc

Use *citric acid*. Half fill kettle and boil. Add 2-4 tbsp citric acid, depending on how badly furred up. Wait 15 minutes. Tip the kettle onto one side to get at the spout. Discard the solution (possibly using it to wipe around taps or stainless steel sink). Rinse. No smells, no nasties.

Cost per clean: 22p vs 65p-£1 for a well-known sachet of nasty chemicals

Citric acid is derived from citrus fruit. If you have a leftover piece of lemon from baking, you can pop it in the kettle overnight and the kettle will be bright and shiny next morning.

You can use acetic acid (vinegar) but obviously it's smellier!

Lemons leftover from cooking are great for bringing a shine to chrome taps and stainless steel sinks. A half-lemon can be rubbed over like a sponge.

Toilet bowl – tackling limescale

Sprinkle *citric acid* around the bowl and leave for a few hours. (It can help to force some of the water around the u-bend by pumping action with a brush, but not essential).

Btw, many commercial toilet cleaners are alkaline and just bleach the limescale without actually removing it. (Limescale is alkaline and needs acid to remove it.)

Fabric conditioner in washing machine

Use *white vinegar* - put a good squirt ie several tbsp in the conditioner drawer. I promise there is no smell of vinegar on your towels or jumpers and they come out really soft. Commercial fabric softeners actually clog up the fibres and don't do your clothes and linens any good in the long run. Cost per wash: vinegar 4p vs 11p for popular branded fabric softener

Kitchen sink, basins, bath

Make a small amount of bicarbonate of soda into a paste with water and use as you would a commercial cream cleaner

Stained, glass vase eg with narrow neck – 2 tbsp bicarb, 6 tbsp warm water, 2tbsp uncooked rice. Swirl around and leave 15 mins. Discard but catch the rice in a strainer so it doesn't block the sink.

Slow-flow sink

150g washing soda + 150ml boiling water. Stir to dissolve. (Optional: add few drops of tea tree oil). Pour down the plughole and leave 8hrs. No smell unlike other drain cleaners.

The next morning pour a kettle of boiling water straight down. Result: free-flowing sink.

Recipes for cleaning showers, fridges, burned-on food on saucepans ... another time.

Notes on green products

Although these products are kinder to the environment, still avoid contact with eyes and prolonged contact with skin. Everyone knows how much lemon juice stings in a cut.

White cleaning vinegar – stronger than culinary white vinegar but the latter can also be used. 80p - £1.40/l (plain or lemon scented)

Citric acid crystals: £4.90/kg

The sodium ^carbonates – not to be confused

Sodium bicarbonate “bicarb” – also known as “baking soda” and found in baking powder (edible) and used for a variety of cleaning purposes £3.28/kg

Sodium carbonate “washing soda” – not edible. Used as a water softener, sink and drain cleaner £2/kg

Sodium percarbonate, also called “green bleach” – decomposes to oxygen, water and natural soda ash. In many eco-friendly detergents, bleaches and cleaning agents. £3.50/kg

Recommended book: “Clean & Green 101 Hints and Tips for a More Eco-friendly Home” by Nancy Birtwhistle

Rosalind Blevins
ros.blevins@btinternet.com



We opened this season with Top Gun – Maverick, which came over really well on the big screen, and with big sound! We have a change of pace for February, with Anatomy of a Fall, a French psychological drama. A woman is suspected of murder after her husband's death in the French Alps; their half-blind son faces a moral dilemma as the main witness.

In March, we are showing Emily, a period drama which imagines Emily Brontë's own Gothic story that inspired her seminal novel, "Wuthering Heights."

As ever our bar and kiosk will be open before the film and during the interval. Doors open at Parkside Hall in Ampthill at 6.45pm with the film commencing at 7.30pm. Tickets are **£5** for adults, and **free** for children.

By the time you are reading this, we will have shown our second film in Silsoe Village Hall using Zonita Mobile. This is becoming a regular monthly event, on the second Tuesday of the month at 2pm, showing some lovely old films with tea and cake. The January film was Brief Encounter, a great classic. Contact me for details of upcoming films.

Trevor Blevins & the ZONITA Team.

Saturday 8th February

7:30pm Anatomy of a Fall

Saturday 8th March

7:30pm Emily

Saturday 12th April

7:30pm The Miracle Club

Tables can be reserved free of charge via email or Facebook. Licensed bar, ice creams and a selection of refreshments. Tickets available on the door.

<http://zonita.org.uk>

email: zonitacinema@gmail.com

[@ZonitaAmpthill](https://www.facebook.com/zonita.cinema)

Ramblings



There was Christmas, then there wasn't.



We all responsibly recycled our empty bottles of olive oil and balsamic vinegar (!?)



Then went for a walk across frosty fields.

Over the holiday period there were a plethora of events including:

- HC Lower School Christmas Fayre
- Friends of HC Lower School Christmas Raffle
- New Years Eve Party in Village Hall

....and many more personal get-togethers of friends and family.

Moving on into January, there was a Youth Engagement and Activities Fayre at Wixams Academy on January 14th. This was a joint Wixams and Houghton Conquest Parish Councils event, our own PCllr Sarah Sharpe playing a lead role and we thank her for the massive effort put in by her and other members of the team.



Around 200 children and youths came to the event and chatted to representatives from many youth centred groups including Army, Navy and Air Force cadets, Scouts, Guides, Wixams Wanderers Football Club, Wixams Lego Club, skate park and parkour designers and representatives from the developers of the next phases of the greater Wixams developments, who were getting feedback from the young people on what sport and leisure facilities are being made available and what they might like to see.



That's all for now, see you in April!

Pete

PCllr Pete Bullock

Commercial Advertising Rates:

Annual Rates = 6 Issues

£10 per half page = £60 pa. £20 per page = £120 pa

Published every 2 months, April to February

Copy may be changed subject to receipt before published cut-off dates by prior arrangement with the editor

Payments to: Houghton Conquest Parish Council



Professional ROOF CLEANING

Revitalise your roof tile colour
Biocide treatment ensures lasting results

With Every Roof Clean We
Offer a Free Home Valet

Which Includes:

- ✓ Gutter Clean & Clear
- ✓ Window Cleaning
- ✓ Fascia & Soffit Clean
- ✓ Exterior Walls Clean



01234 949100

central-beds@mypropertypros.co.uk

ARE YOUR LOCKS BEHAVING BADLY?

A Local Trusted Family Business Since 1989
We Value Old Fashioned Customer Service

Christopher
THE LOCKSMITH



Specialist in UPVC & Wooden Doors



No Call Out Charge



All Work Fully Guaranteed



No Fix No Fee



10% Senior Citizen Discount



For More Advice & Help
Call Christopher:

07772 111 222

www.christopherthelocksmith.co.uk



A Family Vet for Family Pets

We are a family-owned veterinary practice in the centre of Ampt Hill. We believe in providing fantastic stress-free care tailored to individual pets and owners.

We have now launched our Pet Health Plan, to help make preventative health care for your pet as easy as possible.

For more information:

Visit our website at
www.ampthillvets.co.uk

or

Phone us on 01525 582002

or

Pop in for a chat and to meet the team



Pilates classes based in **Houghton Conquest village**. Small group classes (max 5) to ensure correct posture and alignment in a friendly **studio**.

All abilities and ages welcome with equipment provided. Classes are 45 mins in length, including a warm-up, main session and closing stretch.

Pilates is a low impact form of exercise which is kind on the joints. Focusing on strengthening the **deepest core muscles** which support and wrap around the spine. Benefits include the easing of lower back pain, increasing core strength and reducing stress and anxiety.

GROUP MAT TIMETABLE:

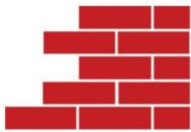
- **Group Mat Classes** Monday 9.30am, 6.30pm & 7.30pm
 Wednesday 9.30am, 10.30am
 Thursday 6.30pm & 7.30pm
 Friday 9.30am
- **Gentle Pilates** Monday 10.30am
 Thursday 9.30am
- **Power Pilates** Friday 6.30am

121 SESSIONS (TERM TIME):

- **121 Mat Pilates/Semiprivate Sessions** -Want to move on the mat with your friend, mum, sister, other half? Get in touch.
- **121 Reformer sessions** – Body Control trained and qualified here we review your alignment as you take load through the body and build strength. These sessions are an hour and 121. Please enquire for times.

Follow us on Facebook & Instagram

Email – info@thepilatesbox.co.uk



Dixon & Sons

CONSTRUCTION LIMITED



Call for a free estimate:

• 01234 840879

• 07712 121 493



enquiries@dixonandsons.co.uk



www.dixonandsons.co.uk

- New Builds
- Extensions
- Landscaping
- Driveways
- Groundwork and Brickwork Contracts
- Garage Conversions and Alterations
- Chimney Repointing and Repairs



We take great pride in maintaining a reliable and friendly service.



Call today for a non-obligatory estimate.

References are available on request.

Company Registration Number: 09025667



Dixon & Sons

PLUMBING & HEATING



Call for a free estimate:

• 01234 840879



plumbingandheating@dixonandsons.co.uk

www.dixonandsons.co.uk

- Boiler Installation
- Bathroom Design and Installation
- Break downs, Repairs and Maintenance
- Underfloor Heating
- Standard Boiler Services £66 inc VAT



We take great pride in maintaining a reliable and friendly service.

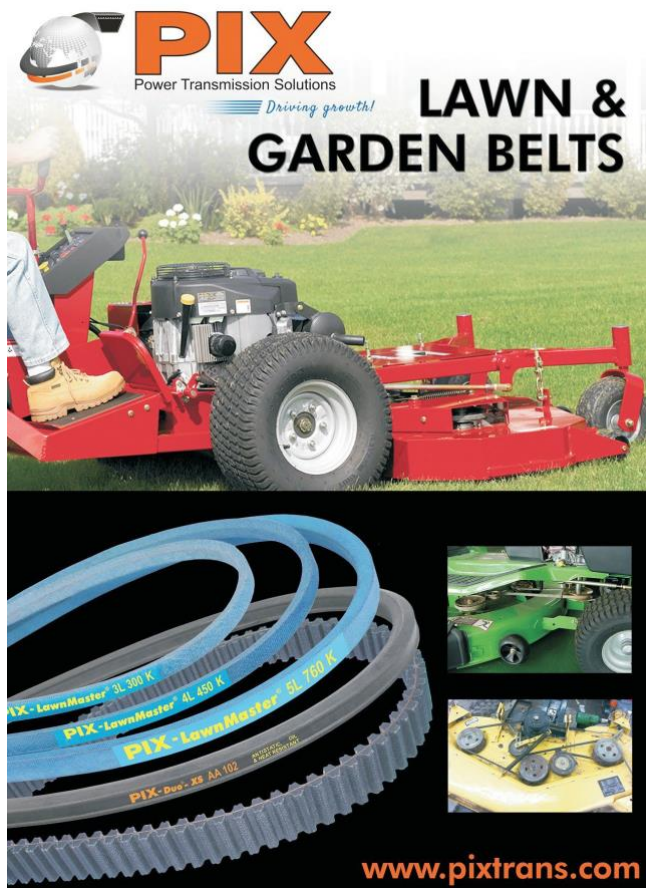


Call today for a non-obligatory estimate.

References are available on request.

Company Registration Number: 09025667

Distributors of PIX Lawn, Garden, Agricultural & Industrial Belts



The advertisement features the PIX logo with a gear icon and the tagline "Driving growth!". Below the logo is a photograph of a red lawnmower being operated on a green lawn. To the right of the mower, the text "LAWN & GARDEN BELTS" is displayed in large, bold, black letters. At the bottom of the advertisement, there is a close-up image of several PIX belts: a blue "PIX-LawnMaster 3L 300 K", a blue "PIX-LawnMaster 4L 450 K", and a grey "PIX-Duo XS AA 102". To the right of these belts are two smaller inset images: one showing a green lawnmower and another showing a yellow lawnmower. The website address "www.pixtrans.com" is printed in orange at the bottom right.

PIX
Power Transmission Solutions
Driving growth!

LAWN & GARDEN BELTS

PIX-LawnMaster 3L 300 K
PIX-LawnMaster 4L 450 K
PIX-Duo XS AA 102

www.pixtrans.com

Cbb Supplies Ltd, Unit 23, Glenmore Business Park, Stanley Rd, Bedford, MK42 0XY



Coming soon to Wixams

(Houghton Conquest)

From September 2024

Home based salon

15+ years experience

In all aspects of women's,

men's & children's hairdressing

From cutting, styling, colouring,

perming, extensions,

weddings & hair-up

*Relocating from Hertfordshire to
Bedfordshire*

Contact information:

M:07742109395

E:stephaniemuncey36@gmail.com

Facebook: /astonhairdresser

Instagram: hairathomebystephmuncey

Salon address: 17 homestead way, MK453GN



A note from your Editor...

We are always happy to receive your articles/comments/concerns/reports and hopefully I have included as many of these as I can.

Contact details are as follows:

Email: hcvillagenews@gmail.com

A note through my letterbox at 38 Victoria Drive or call or text me on 07748 187069 – Pete Bullock, Editor

The Newsletter is also posted to the 4 Village Facebook pages and can be found on the Parish Council website under News:

<https://houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk/category/news/>

Please note:

Editorial comments are completely independent of and not a reflection of the views of the Parish Council. Letters and articles for inclusion are welcomed, subject to the standard appropriate editorial control. Any questions for the Parish Council should be directed at the Clerk to the Parish Council.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Around the Village

ART SOCIETY	Karen Moynihan	Email: houghtonconquestartsociety@outlook.com
CARE GROUP	Sue Derrick	07886 459225
FRIENDS OF ALL SAINTS CHURCH	Carol Juffs	381393
GARDEN CLUB	Margaret Whalley	740892
INDOOR BOWLS	Monica Mannings	743345
JIGSAW CLUB	Sue Derrick	07886 459225
VILLAGE HALL BOOKINGS	Christine Dean	741182
WOMENS' INSTITUTE	Shirley Johnson	740265

Help Lines

SAMARITANS	Call 116 123 Email: jo@samaritans.org
CRISIS TEXT LINE	Text "SHOUT" to 85258

Contacts outside the Village

AIRPORT (London Luton)	01582 405100
BEDFORD HOSPITAL	01234 355122
BUSES (Grant Palmer)	01525 719719
CHURCHES	
C of E Team Rector - Rev'd Fr Paul Messam SCP	01234 261477
Methodist - Rev. Silas Wood	01525 571392
D.H.S.S. - (Bedford)	01234 365155
SCHOOLS	
Lower School - Houghton Conquest	01234 740202
Middle - Stewartby	01234 768224
Senior - Wootton	01234 767123
Holywell School - Cranfield	01234 750381

LIBRARIES Bedford	01234 718178
Ampthill	0300 300 8053
Flitwick	0300 300 8057
ELECTRICITY (UK Power Networks) General Enquiries	0800 029 4285
ELECTRICITY (UK Power Networks) Power Cuts	0800 316 3105 or just 105
ANGLIAN WATER	0800 145145 08457 145145
HIGHWAYS Dept. (Helpline)	0300 300 8049
Forest of Marston Vale	01234 767037
Central Beds Council	0300 300 8000
POLICE (Emergency only!)	999
County H.Q.	01234 841212
Incidents needing non-urgent response	101
Reporting Anti-Social behaviour	101
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111

RAILWAY - Travel Enquiries	0345 748 4950
Silverline	01923 207258

Bedford station	0345 748 4950
Flitwick station	0345 748 4950
DOCTORS	
Ampthill - Houghton Close Surgery	01525 300898
- Oliver St Surgery	01525 631395
- Greensands Surgery	01525 631390
Kempston	01234 852222
REGISTRATION	
Marriage & archives	01525 403430
Births & Deaths	0300 300 8089.