

HOUGHTON CONQUEST Village Newsletter

April 2026



***Blossom, Buds and Blue Skies
Your Newsletter, for Your Village***

HOUGHTON CONQUEST PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council Members	Accountabilities
PCllr Liz Lovell (Chair)	Sports Field; Allotments; Orchard; Tree Warden; SIDs
PCllr Bryn Whittaker (Vice Chair)	Planning Sub-Committee:
Jo Graves (Parish Clerk)	Website; Defibrillator
PCllr Jean Ashcroft	Police Liaison/Community Safety / Village Hall
PCllr Alan Ross	Highways
PCllr Sarah Sharpe	School Liaison; Wixams and GP Surgery Newsletter (Newsletter Editor Lucy Spencer)
PCllr Clinton Taylor	East/West Rail and Wixams Station; Universal; Wixams and GP Surgery
PCllr Saqhib Ali	Wixams and GP Surgery
PCllr Malcolm Gosling	
PCllr James Sebborn	

Committee	Owner
Noticeboards/Litter Picking	George Maxsted

Parish Council Clerk: Jo Graves

T: 07563 527415

E: clerk@houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk

The Parish Council meet on the second Thursday of the month in the Village Hall committee room at 7.30pm (except August and December). 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: houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk

You can register for email updates from the Houghton Conquest Parish Council by clicking on the "subscribe" button on the home page. We pride ourselves in only posting items that we believe are important to Houghton Conquest/Wixam residents.

Next Newsletter:

The closing date for any articles for the June 2026 issue of The Houghton Conquest Village Newsletter is 22 May 2026.

You can send any articles to hcvillagenews@gmail.com or via the Parish Clerk (clerk@houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk).

All contributions are welcome but are subject to the editor's discretion as to size and content.

Parish Council Updates

Chair's Report: Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting was held on 12 March 2026. The objective of this meeting is to summarise what has gone on during the year and to give representatives from our village clubs and organisations an opportunity to provide an insight into their activities. The following representatives were welcomed to the meeting:

Bedfordshire Police, HC Village Hall Committee, HC Gardening Club, HC WI, HC Care Group, Representative from Wixams Parish Council.

Currently the Parish Council is two members short of the ideal number. If you feel that you could spare some time to join us, we would be very grateful. If you would like to find out more then please contact The Clerk.

One of the on-going issues in the village is the skatepark. This has been rumbling on for many years, but we were hopeful of a resolution when we appointed a contractor, Maverick, to design and eventually install a brand-new concrete skatepark. Maverick initiated a public consultation which everyone was invited to contribute to. The result of this was that 26 people responded – only 8 of whom actually live in the Parish. This disappointing response rate means that the whole project is in jeopardy. This is mainly because we need to convince the grant awards people that we have public support for the project within our community. This may not be the case. In view of this it may become necessary to simply dismantle the existing facility, we cannot justify spending



money to continue to maintain it. The area has become a dumping ground for rubbish, and we can't keep paying out to maintain a defunct facility.

In better news the football pitches are in regular use from Wixams Wanderers who hold the long-term lease for their use. In September 2025 we were awarded a grant for the maintenance of the pitches, and we are currently looking to appoint a ground care contractor to assist with pitch improvements.

The play equipment in the children's play area in Daysfield has received regular maintenance throughout the year however certain pieces of equipment have reached the end of their natural life span. In view of this we are looking to replace the 'trim trail' with some accessible pieces which will hopefully enhance the play opportunities for those children who may be less mobile.

During the February half term PClrs Sarah Sharpe and Jean Ashcroft were instrumental in laying on two events for the young people of the village. The Parkour event for the older children was well attended with over twenty participants. The village trail was also completed by several families. The feedback for both events has been overwhelmingly positive so we will be looking to put on other events in the future. If you have any ideas please let us know.

Another capital project that has been given the go ahead is the replacement of the track alongside the allotments. The existing track has deteriorated to the point of being virtually unusable and needs to be rebuilt. In addition, we are putting in some drainage which should stop the overflow of water and mud across the entrance.

Another area of concern has been speeding through the village. CBC Highways carried out a traffic survey on the High Street and

concluded that speeding was not a significant issue. This result is generally borne out by our own speed indicator devices. However, we will continue to monitor the situation and refer our concerns back to CBC when required.

In other highways news the proposed traffic calming measures on Bedford Road are due to start on 6 April and continue through to 26 June. The works include chicanes and a footpath from the site to Sollars Way. There will be a total closure for the period of the works.

Our continued thanks go to all the volunteers who work so tirelessly to ensure that the Village is a great place to live. This includes the people at the Houghton Care Group, the Village Hall committee, the Church volunteers and of course George Maxted who has just decided to retire from the task of collecting litter and ensuring that our public spaces are kept clean and tidy. George has worked tirelessly over the years, and we would like to express our grateful thanks for all his hard work. We will shortly be advertising for a replacement, but he will be a tough act to follow. Thanks also to Valerie Trojanowska who keeps our village noticeboards up to date.

If you have any issues you would like to raise then contact the Clerk on Jo Graves clerk@houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk or pop along to a meeting. We would love to see you.

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



Should you have any issues that I may be able to help with please contact me:

E: bex.hares@gmail.com

Tel: 0300 300 8505.

UCIlr Bec Hares

POLICE & HIGHWAYS MATTERS

In an emergency, always call 999, however 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.



You can also phone **CRIMESTOPPERS** on 0800 555 111, this is quick and easy to do, and you can be anonymous.

Local Community Police Team

The local community police team are now based in a new Hub in Ampthill, which will enable them to respond more quickly when they are needed.

The Chief Inspector on our community police team, C.I. Goldsmith, always urges the public to report problems, as they cannot do anything unless members of the public report their

concerns! Please also note we also have a new appointment to the team, Inspector Janine Graham.

PCllr Jean Ashcroft

POTHLES

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

Houghton Conquest Crime Figures

February: Total 16

Offence	Number	Date	Place
Assault with injury	4	03/02 05/02 13/02 15/02	Wheatfield Road Rosemary Lane Banks Croft Summerhill Place
Assault without injury	4	07/02 09/02 12/02 23/02	Huckle Close Huckle Close Sheepcote Edge Meadow Road
State or public order	2	03/02 09/02	Wooding Close Wooding Close
Residential burglary	1	26/02	High Street
Sexual	1	04/02	Undisclosed
Kidnapping	1	08/02	Undisclosed
Theft /unauthorized taking of vehicle	1	25/02	Pembroke Road
Malicious communications	1	10/02	Undisclosed
Other criminal damage	1	23/02	Meadow Road

January: Total 7

Offence	Number	Date	Place
Threats to kill	2	22/01 28/01	Wheatfield Road Stanbridge Way
Sexual	2	22/01 28/01	Undisclosed
Other criminal damage	1	18/01	Amphill Road
Going equipped for stealing	1	18/01	Amphill Road
Residential burglary	1	21/01	Four Acre Drive

Previous 12 months

Previous months

January 2025	13
February 2025	7
March 2025	5
April 2025	14
May 2025	12
June 2025	18
July 2025	4
August 2025	8
September 2025	17
October 2025	16
November 2025	14
December 2025	10
January 2026	7

SIDs – (Bracketed figures from previous report)

31 Jan 26 – 12 March 26

0046 (The Grove) 20mph zone

SID was moved on 2 March, data covers 10-day period only.

<i>Arriving from The Grove towards High Street:</i>		
Violations:	26.42%	(43.96) Down
Of which:	90.01% between 21-25 9.86% above 26+	(75.07%) (24.92%)
Average speed:	18mph	(20mph)
V85	22mph	(25mph)
Average vehicles p/day	327	(623)
Total in period:	3,213 (10-day period)	(19,198)
Highest recorded	37mph	(55mph)

<i>Departing from High Street towards The Grove:</i>		
Violations:	39.17%	(67.32%) Up
Of which:	80.78% between 21-25 19.21% above 25+	(69.49%) (30.50%)
Average speed:	19 mph	(22mph)
V85	24mph	(26mph)
Average vehicles p/day	216	(568)
Total in period:	2,123	(17,496)
Highest recorded	43mph	(60mph)

0156 (Bedford Road) 30mph zone

Victoria Drive and Mill Lane

<i>Arriving from The Royal Oak:</i>		
Violations:	5.20%	(4.68%) Up
Of which:	85.28% between 31-35 14.71% above 35+	(83.52%) (16.47%)
Average speed:	23mph	(23mph)
V85	28mph	(27mph)
Average vehicles p/day	806	(759)
Total in period:	32,398	(32,151)
Highest recorded	60mph	(59mph)

<i>Departing to the Royal Oak:</i>		
Violations:	10.01%	(8.59%) Up
Of which:	84.69% between 31-35 15.30% above 35+	(85.09%) (14.90%)
Average speed:	22mph	(24mph)
V85	29mph	(29mph)
Average vehicles p/day	908	(839)
Total in period:	36,525	(35,522)
Highest speed:	61mph	(65mph)

0047 (Meadow Road) 30mph zone

<i>Arriving from A530 towards Pitchfork Way</i>		
Violations:	3.70%	(3.19%) Up
Of which:	83.39% between 31-35 16.60% above 35+	(80.72%) (19.27%)
Average speed:	22mph	(21mph)
V85	27mph	(26mph)
Average vehicles p/day	518	(496)
Total in period:	30,021	(30,894)
Highest recorded	62mph	(71mph)

<i>Departing – Pitchfork Way towards A530</i>		
Violations:	4.96%	(4.59%) Up
Of which:	84.17% between 31-35 15.82% above 35+	(82.30%) (17.69%)
Average speed:	22mph	(21mph)
V85	27mph	(27mph)
Average vehicles p/day	358	(294)
Total in period:	20,715	(18,331)
Highest recorded	57mph	(62mph)

V85 = The 85th percentile. This is the average speed of the 15th fastest vehicle per hundred vehicles in the period being assessed. This figure is one used by the police and they will not consider action unless it exceeds the level at which they would issue a ticket i.e.: 35 in a 30-mph zone.

All Saints Church



All Saints, Houghton and All Saints, Wilstead are now part of the 5 Church, Elstow Team ministry under Fr Paul Messam. After Easter Rev'd Mike Stewart will be taking up the post of Vicar of Ampthill, Millbrook and Steppingly. We wish him well in his new ministry.

Contact for the 5 churches re. Services, Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals etc. should be made to:

- **Team Rector:** Rev'd Fr Paul Messam SCP
Tel: (01234) 261477 / Email: vicar@elstow-abbey.org.uk
- **Team Ministry Website:** www.elstowteamministry.org.uk

Services for April are as follows:

3 April Good Friday	11.00: Village service with soup lunch; Rev'd Mike Stewart (in Village Hall)
5 April Easter Monday	09.30: Holy Communion, Rev'd Linda Washington
12 April	09.30: Morning Praise, Cathy Sanderson
19 April	09.30: Holy Communion, Rev'd Linda Washington
26 April	09.30: Morning Praise, Robert Heley

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 contact **Sarah Hannant** 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 must attend church services, though we'd love to see you there.

Dates for your diary (in church):

- 1 / 8 April: Easter Lego Club 10:00 – 12 noon
- 13 June: Rose & Clobber Clothing Sale
- 27 June Cream Teas
- 28 July: Quantum Theatre – Peter Rabbit
- 11 – 13 September: 3rd Annual Beer Festival

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

100 Club:

January: £10: Maria Weatherhead; Phil Argent; Alex Juffs.

February: £10: John Souster; Mrs M. Bright; Margaret Whalley.

March: £10: L. Slade; Ann Fuller; Tina Owen.

If you would like to join, please contact: Carol Juffs (01234 381393) or Jackie Davis (01234 740635)

Best Wishes, Gary Mudd

Christian Aid Week 2026



As a reminder Christian Aid Week is from 10 – 16 May, for 2026 we have a digital envelope where donations can be made - access via this QR Code:



A supply of paper envelopes will also be available in the Church and can be returned to me or handed in at the Plant Sale which takes place on 16 May, note this the last day of the collecting week. As a reminder the Church is open 10:00 – 16:00 on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 1 May.

If anyone would like to organise any mini fundraisers such as neighbourhood coffee mornings or cake sales for the week, or do a sponsored event please let me know. I can provide supporting materials including sponsor forms.

Helen Mudd

07718 084363 / helenmudd@tiscali.co.uk

Helen Mudd (local Christian Aid Group organiser)

HOUGHTON CONQUEST CHARITIES

Incorporating

The Clerke & Wilde Educational Foundation

££££

Does this concern ME???

££££

- **Yes**, if you live within the Parish and would like help with the cost of anything “educational” 😊
- Age is no barrier
- “Educational” is interpreted broadly, and can include school, College, University, Apprenticeships and so much more!!

We are only a small charity, but can help with grants towards the cost of: Books, equipment, field study trips, Duke of Edinburgh Award expeditions, Outward Bound activities, Coaching Fees, etc, etc...

SO, why not head to the Parish Council website for more info on our history and aims using the following link:

[houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk/the-parish/Houghton conquest charities](http://houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk/the-parish/Houghton-conquest-charities)

where there is also a link to a PDF of our application form and instructions on where to send it?

If other charities cannot help, we might just be able to make the difference for you or a member of your family living here. Our next formal meeting of the Trustees is in November, but any applications needing more urgent consideration can be shared and discussed earlier.

Helen Mudd (Hon secretary to the Trustees)

Village Clubs, Organisations & Events

**The Jigsaw Club invite you to a
Coffee Morning on**

Saturday 9 May 2026



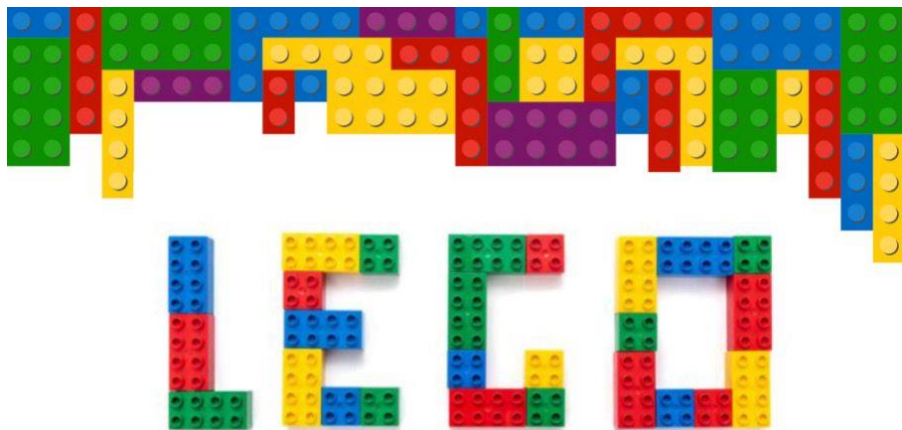
**This will raise funds for continuing to
provide social and recreational
activities and refreshments for
disabled and elderly people.**

**Tea, coffee and cakes and raffle galore
19 Crancott Close, Houghton Conquest**

£5 entry 10:00 to 12.30

Phone Sue on 07886 459225

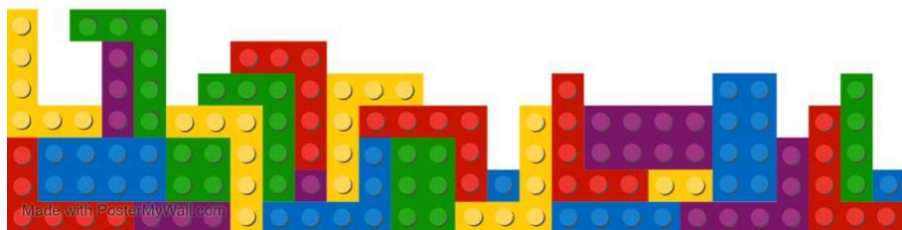
A Great Event for a Great Cause



Easter Lego Building Club
Wednesday
1st & 8th April
10am-12noon

Houghton Conquest Church
MK45 3JU

Free entry & refreshments



Village Hall Regular Events

To Book Contact: Mrs Christine Dean

Tel: 01234 741182

Email: Cjdean5@aol.com

IF YOU ARE PLANNING A ONE-OFF EVENT OR REGULAR MEETING. DON'T DELAY AND BOOK TODAY.

- Run by volunteers for the benefit of the villagers. Hire charges are very reasonable with varying rates for day, evening and weekend, with residents getting preferential rates.
- Fully equipped kitchen
- 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

<u>WEEKLY</u>		
Day	Activity	Time
Monday	Indoor Bowls	14:00 – 16:00
	Qi Kwan Do Martial Arts	18:30 – 19:30
	Whist	19:45
Tuesday	Line Dancers	10:00 – 12:30
Wednesday	Line Dancers	10:00 – 12:30
Thursday	Line Dancers	10:00 – 12:30
Friday (term only)	Toddlers Group	09:30 – 11:30

<u>MONTHLY</u>		
Day	Activity	Time
1 st Wednesday	Art Society	19:30 – 21:30
1 st Thursday	WI	19:30 – 22:00
2 nd Tuesday	Garden Club	19:30 – 21:30
2 nd Thursday	Parish Council	19:30
3 rd Wednesday	Art Society	19:30 – 21:30
3 rd Thursday	Village Hall Management Committee	19:30

Village Notice Boards

If you would like to put notices in our boards:

For the **main village and the Robinson Avenue** development: 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.

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



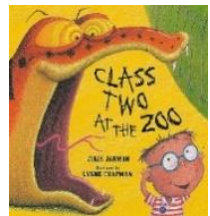
Dear Villagers,

We hope you are all well. The school has been busy planning for our summer term events including sports day, class trips, leaver's assembly and of course our transitions.

The **Annual World Book Day celebration** took place, and it was



amazing to see so much creativity in the children's costumes – well done children, parents/carers and staff. Julia Jarman, a local author came into school to conduct a workshop with our children and support inspirational writing.



Swimming Enrichment - Making a big splash! We were thrilled to host a pop-up swimming pool at the school recently, offering intensive swimming lessons to our Year 2, 3, and 4 pupils. Having the facility on-site meant more time in the water and less time traveling, allowing our young swimmers to make incredible progress in their technique and water confidence



Our pupils have been deeply immersed in their latest creative projects, producing a stunning range of artwork that reflects their current studies. From the bold, textured brushwork inspired by famous masters to intricate 3D puppets, the children have used art to explore their curriculum in vivid detail. It is a joy to see such pride on their faces as they see their hard work showcased for all to see.



Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel are the UK's largest inter-school cycling, walking, wheeling and scooting challenge. The challenge ran from 16 – 27 March 2026. The annual scheme to encourage physical activity in children's daily routine which is important for their physical health and mental wellbeing. Active school runs also help to reduce traffic and air pollution outside of the school gates and in our wider community.

Sustainability is a hot topic in school especially since the school committed to Let's Go Zero 2030. We calculated our carbon footprint in 2024 and we are making great progress to reduce it. We are starting to think about ways in which we can take even more action to further reduce our impact. Some amazing ideas came from the children in our recent Climate Action day! We will keep you posted on how we get on!

Take care, ***The Team at HCLS***

Houghton Conquest Garden Club



We have had two very good talks recently. In February beekeeper Phill Howes and has hives in various places locally, came and talked to us about the jobs that different bees in a hive do. It seems they are extremely intelligent with the way they communicate with each other. He brought along some honey which we were able to taste and buy.

Then last month Guy Lambourne spoke about the small farm he and his wife have in Gravenhurst. Not the usual sort of farm, although they have some cows, but they grow hazel and willow as a crop. He brought along several items made from willow, and said they are making a hide from willow at the Clophill Lakes.

On 14 April Mike Abel will be talking about growing vegetables, and then in May we will be visiting a local garden. We will be having our annual plant sale at the village hall on Saturday 30 May from 10:00. A reminder that the spring show is on Saturday 4 April, and we do hope to see you there.

Finally, if your snowdrops have finished flowering it's time to split up large clumps and replant them. Tomato seeds can also be sown now and kept in the greenhouse or on a windowsill and dahlias and lilies can be potted up now preparing them for frost free days.

Margaret Whalley 07419 736604



In February we had an interesting talk by Nicola Avery, who is a volunteer at the Elizabeth Curtis riding for the disabled school in Bromham. She told us of a Danish lady who, despite having a serious accident and damaging her leg, still managed to compete in the Olympic Games. She has now started a riding school to help disabled children and adults.

On 2 April there will be a talk by Julie Hayes from a hedgehog rescue charity, and then on 7 May the speaker is Jo Discombe whose talk is 'potatoes to afternoon teas'.

If you would like more information about these talks or about the WI in general please give me a call on 07951024876. We are always pleased to welcome visitors to any of our meetings which start at 7.30 in the village hall.

We would like to thank everyone who came along to the coffee morning in February and making it such a successful morning.

Shirley Johnson 07951 024876

Houghton Conquest Art Society



We welcomed Fiona Wilson, a local professional artist back again at our recent evening meeting. Fiona works in various mediums but this session she was demonstrating both charcoal and pastel painting.

The first part of Fiona's session was entirely created using different types of charcoal, it was a study of the surface of the ocean looking from above. Willow charcoal is particularly soft and hence a little messy on the fingers, but that's part of the fun. See below how interesting shapes can form from just plain grey charcoal on white paper.



Fiona is a very down-to-earth demonstrator whom we all look forward to hosting. Our next meeting will see us trying to replicate the coloured waves painting below. We will do our best but they maybe will not look quite as polished but we will have fun trying!

The second painting of the evening “Rolling Waves” was created firstly using charcoal, then in pastels, various blues for the sky and sea, finally a touch out white acrylic for the surf.



This painting was started using masking tape on the paper to ascertain the horizon line between the sky and the sea and another strip to show the bottom of the wave. In between the two strips of masking tape, where the wave was going, Fiona drew an elongated figure of eight, laying on its side, you can see this drawn in charcoal below.

She explained waves curl over and under and pop up again, resembling a horizontal eight shape. The sky was painted in pastels. Pastels resemble a colour stick of chalk but are much softer. They can be used on their side for sweeps or colour and can be rubbed with a finger or special rubber colour shaper.



There were true blues as in the sky, but in the ocean more greeny blues. To show the surf brightly against the darks, Fiona added just a touch of undiluted white acrylic paint straight from the tube, using her finger to dab paint on lightly for a random splashing surf effect. Fiona donated her finished painting to our club for us to use as a raffle prize, to help generate funds, which pay for more demos.

Our annual art exhibition will be returning to the village hall later this year, more on that later! We are carefully planning our input to the decoration of the village hall as we were delighted to be asked to decorate both below and above the bar. The theme will be a tree with branches depicting the groups who use the hall as well as some lovely local landmarks, within the pretty village of Houghton Conquest.

We have booked our summer outdoor painting sessions and are looking forward to returning to Newberry Farm Plant nursery not least because of the lovely cafe refreshments. We have managed to secure, what will be a lovely evening painting scenes within Millbrook Golf Club.

We have David Leary returning soon to further demonstrate coloured pencils. David teaches this pleasant form of art on cruise ships

There are lots of interesting evenings planned, you might like to come along to the village hall and join us to watch or even take part. You are most welcome and all the details are on our Facebook page or website. If you search for Houghton Conquest Art Society you can find out all about our friendly club. We are not professional artists, just a cheerful bunch who all enjoy all things arty.

Happy painting!

Barbara Boxshall / Publicity Manager and Vice Chair
houghton-conquest-art-society.co.uk



Bowls Club

We meet in the village hall every Monday afternoon from 14:00 – 16:00 with a break for tea and biscuits and a good old natter to catch up on everyone's news.

Please come along and try it. Your first 'try it' session is free and then we pay £2 per week.

We still welcome new members, even if you don't want to commit to every week just pop along and we look forward to seeing you in the Village Hall soon.

If you would like further information, please contact Jean or David:
Email: d.ashcroft22@btinternet.com or **07969 513951**

David and Jean Ashcroft



Houghton Conquest Care

As all of you who regularly read the village newsletter know, Houghton Conquest Care Group is run by volunteers to provide support to any members of the village who, for example, need transport to medical appointments or need a prescription picking up or some shopping done, or even help with small tasks around the house.

What you might not know is that the Houghton Conquest Care Group is the longest running care group in Bedfordshire. Most of the requests that we receive for help are for transport to local doctors, hospitals or dentists.

Since the beginning of this year, we have signed up five new volunteers, and we are very grateful for this as the Care Group has never been busier. Last year we carried out 594 journeys, an increase of nearly 200 on the previous year. If the first three months of this year are anything to go by, we are going to have an even busier 2026.

We now have 17 drivers and 6 phone holders, some of whom are also drivers. As the saying goes “Many hands make light work”.

For local return journeys of under 10 miles, we do ask for a small donation from passengers, which from 1 January 2026 is £5. This covers the cost of petrol for our volunteer drivers. For longer journeys over 10 miles a contribution of 45p per mile is requested; for example, a return journey of 30 miles to the Luton and Dunstable Hospital would be £14. Other out of pocket expenses, for example parking costs, are reimbursed by the Care Group.

Dates for your diary

- Saturday 3 October: we will be holding our Annual Quiz
- Saturday 31 October is our Annual General Meeting

The more volunteers we have, the easier it is for phone holders to find drivers. So, if you can spare even just one or two hours a month to provide transport for members of the village who would otherwise find it difficult to attend local health related appointments, get in touch with Sue or Kate. If you would like to volunteer or have any other enquiries, please contact:

Sue Derrick (Chair) 07886 459225

Kate Smith (Honorary Secretary) 01234 740522

If you yourself need help please phone **07969 982970** and leave a message and one of our volunteers will return your call.

If a “Library of Things” is a new concept to you then you’ll find it’s just like a regular library but with all sorts of ‘things’ rather than books that you can borrow, such as DIY and garden tools, sewing machines, party items, camping equipment and much more.



Do have a little browse on our website:

www.shareflitwickandampthill.org/browse-items/. Here 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 this time 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.

We also hold regular Repair Cafés in various locations eg Flitwick Village Hall. Details, including a list of repairs that can be undertaken, will be posted on our website.

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

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 comments and suggestions.



Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink

From The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Samuel Taylor Coleridge
1798

I imagine, like me, many of you will have been horrified to learn of the sewage that is polluting our rivers and beaches as shown on “Dirty Business” on Channel 4. The actions of the water companies and Environment Agency are shocking. If you missed it, the 3-part docudrama, I would urge you to watch it on catch up for awareness. It is very watchable being presented as a docudrama, with everything based on facts and actual conversations, with harrowing scenes of 8-year-old Heather dying after walking through sewage on the beach and Reuben’s life changing illness after surfing.

Surfers Against Sewage have a lot of information on their website www.sas.org.uk. If you are planning to swim in the sea or rivers, check their Safer Seas & Rivers Service <https://datahq.sas.org.uk> for up-to-date information on water safety. The Rivers Trust (<https://theriverstrust.org/sewage-map>) shows real time sewage discharge but not actually if a place is safe to swim. The “Blue Flag” award to beaches is meaningless when water companies are randomly discharging sewage onto them.

There are currently two petitions running: Surfers Against Sewage:

- <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/end-the-profit-driven-sewage-pollution-scandal>
- Nationalise water companies to make water a non-profit publicly owned asset: petition.parliament.uk/petitions/757426; which runs to 25 August.

Unblocktober

Did you know that clearing blocked drains cost £90 million each year? This cost gets passed onto us, the water bill payers. We may gasp at our water bills and get extremely annoyed at the huge salaries the Fat Cat CEOs get, especially in view of the dreadful state of all our rivers and waterways. Besides signing petitions, lobbying MPs or appearing at a shareholder's meeting, if you're eligible, we can individually do something about the drains.

I attended a webinar "*Don't Block Our Future – what's stopping us from doing the right thing?*" staged by Lanes, the company who are called in nationally to unblock drains – think of the huge fatberg under the Thames. It's often a case of "out of sight, out of mind", here are some of the statistics from their talk for UK each year:

- 3,000 homes are flooded due to FOG (fat, oil, grease) blockages.
- Wet wipes cause 300,000 blockages
- Around 180 million cotton buds are flushed down toilets

Doing the right thing – what you can do??

Fat: Collect liquid fat left over from cooking in an old pot or jar. If it was originally solid fat, the jar can be left to cool or even put in the fridge to return to solid state and then it can be scraped out and put in your food waste bin. Fat that stays liquid can be taken to the tidy tip which has a dedicated fat recycling point, or it can be put in a lidded jar or sealed bag in your black bin.

Wet wipes: There is no such thing as a completely flushable wet wipe. “Flushable” just means it’ll get around the U-bend; however, they include synthetic materials which means they won’t biodegrade either – they’ll be around in hundreds of years. Efforts are being made to produce truly biodegradable wipes, but they aren’t here yet. SO please don’t flush them, put them in your black bin instead. This also applies to period products, condoms, contact lenses, dental floss and face masks.

Food waste: is biodegradable but it’s important to avoid washing it down the drain. Even breadcrumbs and tealeaves can mass together to make a fat berg before they break down. So put a little strainer in your sink plughole to catch the bits when emptying your washing up bowl or teapot, and scrape plates before putting in the dishwasher.

Toys: are frequently picked up by the sewage processing plants. Toddlers are fascinated by wee and poo disappearing down the toilet so it’s not surprising they sometimes want to send their toys on an adventure. Please explain it’s not a good idea! Toilets are for the 3Ps only: pee, poo and (toilet) paper.

See Unblocktober; www.unblocktober.org for further information.

Dog Walkers and Livestock!

New laws were passed on 18 March 2026 regarding walking dogs in the countryside.

Owners whose pets worry livestock can now face unlimited fines and potential legal action. Under the reforms, the maximum penalty for livestock worrying has increased from £1,000 to an unlimited fine, and police now have powers to detain dogs they suspect may attack or worry livestock.



Livestock worrying happens when a dog you own, or oversee, chases, attacks, or causes distress to livestock on agricultural land. In fact, 87% of sheep farmers experienced a dog attack on their flock in 2024, according to a survey from the National Sheep Association, with

many reporting multiple incidents. Research by the National Farmers' Union found that the cost of livestock worrying has risen to almost £2 million per year.

Dog owners are reminded to keep their hound on a short lead (up to two metres) from 1 March - 31 July in many outdoor locations in Britain or face with a fine up to £1000, under the Countryside Access Laws.

The rules are set out in the Government-backed Countryside Code and supported by access laws to protect vulnerable wildlife in spring and early summer.



Ground-nesting birds such as lapwings, skylarks and curlews lay their eggs directly on the ground and often in spots that look like empty fields, and under long grass, hidden nests and newborn mammals are often fighting for survival. Dogs don't need to make contact to cause harm. A dog running through long grass can destroy nests, separate mothers from young, or cause birds to abandon eggs entirely.

All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, meaning disturbance or destruction can result in hefty fines and even criminal prosecution.

How to tell if land is open access?

Open access land is marked on Ordnance Survey maps as a yellow wash, and coastal margin is marked as a magenta wash. Once you are out walking, open access land is often identified with a brown 'access' symbol. If you want to check in a certain area, see:

- The Ramblers: <https://www.ramblers.org.uk>

From a local perspective, Ampthill Park is technically private land that the council allow the public to access. Coopers Hill and Maulden Wood are both open access, so the law applies to those places.

Of course, Kings Wood and Glebe Meadows Houghton Conquest have Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status, so are protected areas too.

If you use the services of a “professional” dog walker, please make sure they are aware of the laws.

Rosalind Blevins
ros.blevins@btinternet.com



Our screening in March was the Oscar winning film *Phantom Thread*. It got very mixed reactions, some loved it and thought it the best film we've shown, others really did not. One lady said that seeing the lead character made her really appreciate her husband!

18 April: *The Roses*, a dark comedy starring Olivia Coleman and Benedict Cumberbatch. Life seems easy for picture-perfect couple Theo and Ivy: successful careers, a loving marriage, great kids. However, a tinderbox of fierce competition and hidden resentments soon emerge when Theo's career nosedives and Ivy's own ambitions take off.

16 May: *The Choral*, written by Alan Bennett and starring Ralph Fiennes and Simon Russell Beale. As World War I rages on, Dr. Henry Guthrie takes over a British choral society that's lost most of its men to the army. The community soon discovers that the best response to the chaos of war is to make beautiful music together.

Doors open at Parkside Hall in Ampthill at 18:45 with the film commencing at 19:30. Our bar and kiosk are open before the films and during the interval. Tickets (£5 for adults, under-18s free), tables can be reserved in advance with all payments taken at the door on the night (card and cash). Trailers for all this season's films can be viewed on our website (<http://zonita.org.uk>).

We are always looking for new volunteers, please get in touch if you can help in any way. Finally, don't forget that we also have **Zonita Mobile**, which can screen films for local community groups with younger, older and all members of our local communities. We have already provided screenings to local school PTAs, carer groups and scout groups.

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

Trevor Blevins & Team ZONITA!

Half Term fun: PARKOUR & THE TRAIL

The **Parkour** saw the hall laid out with mats, springboards, soft landing cushions and wooden gymnastics horses. The instructors took charge, dividing the youngsters into two age groups, swapping the groups and equipment between two long mats. Starting with warm up exercises, ending with a warm down and in between, amazing leaping, rolling, running, jumping. Back flips were “deconstructed” into easy stages, culminating in assisted flips from the top of the horse. The youngsters were excited and somewhat hyper but were kept under calm by the friendly controlled instructors – they listened, they did as they were told, they had a great time.

By the end of the session, we had a group of tired, sweaty, happy kids. We were so happy too that a lot, if not all, of the parents stayed to watch – free tea and coffee, free drinks and biscuits etc for everyone as well. A very successful afternoon.

The **TRAIL** was aimed at the younger children, for a parent to walk their children around the village with a question sheet, easy questions requiring observation and some little general knowledge. We believe those who took part enjoyed it and came back to the hall for drinks and a treat! The questions ranged from “bungalows do not usually have – kitchens, doorbells or upstairs rooms” to “outside of the Knife and Cleaver there is a statue of a”. Another question asked for the number of wheels on the “tractor” in the playground – 5 because there is a steering wheel – a young friend insisted that it was 4 because wheels need to be on the ground, however, a wheel is a wheel – its 5.

We are convinced that old butterfingers was carrying and dropping a tin of blue paint – not everyone agreed. As to what you would normally find in an orchard – we were hoping for fruit trees but got a lot of “apples”! Everyone seemed happy and enjoyed their drinks and treats.

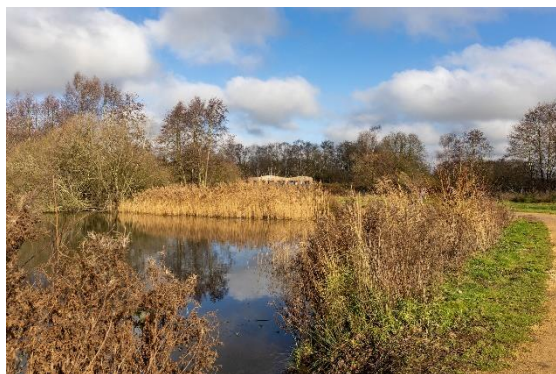
All this fun and it was free, thanks due to the Parish Council.

Clophill Lakes Nature Reserve marks its first year open to the public!

Local environmental charity The Greensand Trust invites everyone to visit Clophill Lakes this April as it celebrates its first year as an accessible Nature Reserve.



The Trust wishes to express its sincere thanks to local people for the support, care and consideration shown by visitors to the site over the past year, since it opened on 5th April 2025. Their respect for the site has helped wildlife continue to flourish within the reserve, while enabling visitors to access and enjoy this beautiful location.



The reserve's first year was not without its challenges as, just six months after opening in August, an arson attack destroyed a 70m boardwalk and damaged the surrounding habitat.

The impact on the Trust's staff, volunteers and visitors was profound and the loss of the boardwalk reduced accessibility and affected the long-term sustainability of the site.

However, the response from the local community has been extraordinary. Chief Executive Gill Welham commented: "Thanks to the generosity and encouragement of so many, we're pleased

to announce that a new boardwalk is now under construction and will once again be accessible from April.

“In addition, contributions from our supporters have enabled us not only to rebuild the boardwalk, but also to create a fully surfaced path linking to it, completing an accessible circular route around Castle Lake. The newly laid path

needs time to settle, so while most sections will open in April, a 175-metre grass path around Castle Meadow will remain in place temporarily to allow the final section to firm up. The rest of the route—including the boardwalk—will be open from April.”



Summer Opening times commence from the end of March with the arrival of British Summer Time. The reserve will be open 09:00 – 18:00 with the Riverside Café operating from 09:30 – 16:00, enabling visitors to enjoy the reserve for longer.

The Greensand Trust would like to thank everyone for helping us conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and heritage of Clophill Lakes through sensitive, sustainable access. Your continued support is essential: all funds raised through parking, catering and donations go directly toward maintaining the reserve and ensuring its long-term sustainability.

The Greensand Trust:

Kayte Judge, Communications Manager:

Email: kayte.judge@greensandtrust.org

Tel: 01234 743666 / 07740 576956



/greensandtrust



/greensandtrust



JOIN YOUR LOCAL STATION CALL

ABI'S READY

- Florist
- Trains at the gym
- ON-CALL FIREFIGHTER

Live or work within 6 minutes of a fire station?
You could be an on-call firefighter like Abi

Find your calling...
bedsfire.gov.uk/careers



COULD THIS BE YOUR CALLING?

Do you live or work in Bedfordshire?
Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is recruiting on-call firefighters near you.

Being an on-call firefighter provides a rewarding and flexible way for you to serve your community while balancing everyday life.

On-call firefighters are everyday people — parents, shift workers, freelancers, tradespeople and professionals — who respond to emergencies when needed. Whether attending a fire, a road traffic collision or carrying out a home fire safety visit, this is your chance to make a real difference without changing your whole life.

“You can be more than one thing,” says Stuart Auger, Head of Response. “We’re looking for committed, enthusiastic individuals from all walks of life. This role fits around your job, family and lifestyle — and delivers extraordinary impact.”

Abi, who serves as an on-call firefighter at Amphill alongside her job in a local florist, said:

“Being an on-call firefighter is a juggling act — managing work, training and personal life — but it’s worth it. Being part of a great team and helping the community we love makes it the best thing I’ve ever done.”

On-call firefighters go about their everyday lives while staying within a short distance of their local fire station, ready to respond to emergencies when needed.

You’ll need to:

- ✓ To live or work close to an on-call fire station
- ✓ To be 18+, physically fit, and hold a full
- ✓ UK driving licence

Learn more:
www.bedsfire.gov.uk/careers/oncall

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Bedfordshire**



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the Crisis and Resilience Fund.

www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/crisis-payments



Funded by
UK Government

Wixams Development: Urban&Civic



Come and see the proposals for Wixams Town Centre and new open spaces

Urban&Civic are bringing forward proposals for a new town centre, including:



Supermarket



GP surgery



Shopping and retail spaces



Nursery



Community building



Public square

Alongside the town centre, proposals for new open spaces and sports facilities are also being shared, including:



Football pitches



Cricket pitch



Basketball courts



Multi-use games areas (MUGAs)



Tennis courts



Allotments



Skatepark and play parks

In-person events

Tuesday 14 April, 11:00 - 14:00
Wixams Retirement Village,
Bedford Rd, Bedford MK42 6EA

Tuesday 14 April - 18:45 - 20:45
Lakeview Village Hall, Brooklands
Avenue, Wixams MK42 6AB

Online exhibition

A digital exhibition will also be available, with the same information boards and an online feedback form.
Visit wixams.co.uk or scan the QR code.



If you would like to view the proposals in an alternative format, including large print or Braille, or if you need any support to take part in the engagement, please get in touch with us using the contact details at the foot of the flyer and we will do our best to help.

Contact us:  wixamsinfo@urbanandcivic.com  [@Wixams](https://www.facebook.com/Wixams)

Jordan Payne – Communications and Partnerships Manager

Welcome to Willow Grove Primary School



World Book Day was a huge success at Willow Grove Primary School! The children loved attending the pop up Book Shop to choose a brand new book to take home! We enjoyed a day of celebrating books by decorating classroom doors, taking part in fun activities and of course lots of READING!

We have a few spaces left in our Year 2 and 3 classes! Please do book a tour to view our wonderful school in action and see our children thriving in an environment where they can be creative as well as achieving the highest of academic standards.



Join us for an evening of art for the adults to create this colourful highland cow! Tickets are just £30 which includes hot drinks and biscuits! Open to the community! Tuesday 5th May - 7pm - 10pm <https://www.trybooking.com/uk/GDTL>



Contact 01234 581150 admin@willowgrove.school www.willowgrove.school

Be Creative - Be Authentic - Be Your Best



Wixams Lego Club



**Held every Saturday (term time) at
Lakeview Village Hall.**

Session 1: 9:30am – 10am (Ages 3 – 7)

Session 2: 10:15am – 11:45 (Ages 7-18)

Annual Membership £5.

Weekly attendance fee £2 for members; £2.50 for non-members.

For more information please email: legoatwixams@gmail.com

Ramblings

We are starting to see the joys of Spring finally showing it's face and the sunny days are certainly making me happier!

Who is doing anything exciting this year? Let us see if we can fill this year with charitable and fun activities....

Do we have anyone that would like to shout out about an event that is happening soon. If you would like to contribute to the newsletter please email: hcvillagenews@gmail.com.

Thanks

Lucy Spencer, Editor

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We've Updated
Our Website!



www.houghtonclosesurgery.co.uk

The team at Houghton Close Surgery have been working hard to create a new website for our patients and are pleased to announce it has now been launched.

The new design makes information simpler to find and clearer to understand. There are also many links detailing external services and advice services available.

One of the main features we've added is the **"Who Do I See?"** section.

This handy tool helps you work out the best person or service to contact for your needs. Checking here first could save you time, as you may be directed to the right service more quickly than waiting for an appointment at the practice.

Another highly successful feature is the online triage service enabling you to send non urgent medical and admin requests to us via the website (between 8am – 6.30pm Monday – Friday) rather than having to phone the surgery.

Our new website also meets the latest **NHS ENGLAND STANDARDS**, ensuring it's not only user friendly but also fully up to date.

We would love for you to take a look and explore our new features!

Call us today on

020 4572 3116 / 07368625128

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For more information:

Visit our website at

www.amphillvets.co.uk

or

Phone us on 01525 582002

or

Pop in for a chat and to meet the team



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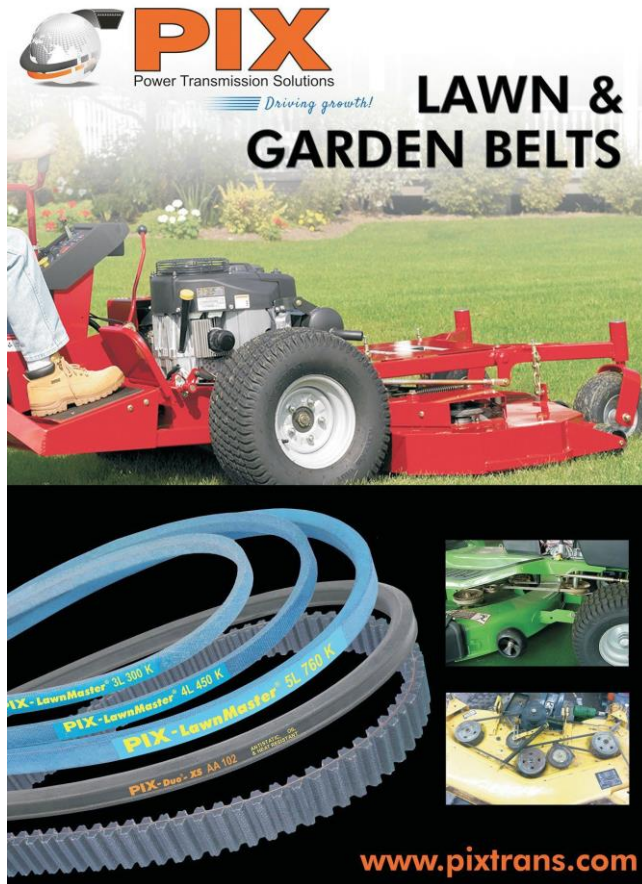


Call today for a non-obligatory estimate.

References are available on request.

Company Registration Number: 09025667

Distributors of PIX Lawn, Garden, Agricultural & Industrial Belts



The advertisement features the PIX logo with the tagline "Power Transmission Solutions" and "Driving growth!". Below the logo is a photograph of a red riding lawn mower on a green lawn. To the right of the mower, the text "LAWN & GARDEN BELTS" is displayed in large, bold, black letters. Below the main image, there are three smaller images: a close-up of three stacked belts (blue, grey, and black) with labels "PIX-LawnMaster 3L 300 K", "PIX-LawnMaster 4L 450 K", and "PIX-Duo-XS AA 102"; a green riding mower; and a yellow riding mower. The website address "www.pixtrans.com" is printed in orange at the bottom right of the advertisement.

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



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

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:

Inside the Village

ART SOCIETY	Karen Moynihan	Email: houghtonconqueststartsociety@outlook.com
CARE GROUP	Sue Derrick	07886 459225
FRIENDS OF ALL SAINTS CHURCH	Carol Juffs	01234 381393
GARDEN CLUB	Margaret Whalley	07419 736604
INDOOR BOWLS	David and Jean Ashcroft	07969 513951
JIGSAW CLUB	Sue Derrick	07886 459225
VILLAGE HALL	Christine Dean	01234 741182
WOMENS' INSTITUTE	Shirley Johnson	07951 024876

Help Lines

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

Contacts outside the Village

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
Amphill	0300 300 8053
Flitwick	0300 300 8057
UTILITY SERVICES	
ELECTRICITY (UK Power Networks) General Enquiries	0800 029 4285

ELECTRICITY (UK Power Networks)	0800 316 3105 or just 105
ANGLIAN WATER	0845 714 5145
HIGHWAYS Dept. (Helpline)	0300 300 8049
Forest of Marston Vale	01234 767037
Central Beds Council	0300 300 8000
POLICE County H.Q.	01234 841212
Non-urgent / Anti-Social behaviour	101
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111

RAILWAY - Travel Enquiries	0345 748 4950
Silverline	01923 207258
Bedford / Flitwick station	0345 748 4950
DOCTORS	
Ampthill: Houghton Close Surgery Oliver Street Surgery Greensands Surgery	01525 300898 01525 631395 01525 631390
Kempston	01234 852222