

HOUGHTON CONQUEST

Village Newsletter

February 2026



Pretty Skies; Perfect February

Your Newsletter, for Your Village

HOUGHTON CONQUEST PARISH COUNCIL

Members:

PCllr Liz Lovell (Chair)

PCllr Bryn Whittaker (Vice Chair)

PCllr Saqhib Ali

PCllr Jean Ashcroft

PCllr Alan Ross

PCllr Clinton Taylor

PCllr Sarah Sharpe

PCllr Malcolm Gosling

PCllr James Sebborn

Committees, Working Parties and Representatives

Police Liaison/Community Safety	PCllr Ashcroft
Highways	PCllr Ross
Planning Sub-Committee:	PCllr Whittaker & TBA
Village Hall	PCllr Ashcroft
Play Area	TBA
Sports Field	PCllr Lovell
Allotments/Orchard/Tree Warden/SIDs	PCllr Lovell
Newsletter	PCllr Sharpe, Lucy Spencer
Website	Parish Clerk
United Charities	TBA
Noticeboards/Litter Picking	George Maxsted
Defibrillator	PCllr Lovell and Parish Clerk
School liaison	PCllr Sharpe
East/West Rail and Wixams Station	PCllr Taylor
Universal	PCllr Taylor
Wixams and GP Surgery	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 2026 issue of The Houghton Conquest Village Newsletter is 20 March 2026.

You may send copy by email to the editor on hcvillagenews@gmail.com or via the Parish Clerk
All contributions are welcome but are subject to the editor's discretion as to size and content.

Parish Council Updates

Chair's Report

Hi Everyone and welcome to the first newsletter of 2026.



The festive period is generally a quiet one for the Parish Council as we do not usually have a meeting in December.

We hope that you enjoyed the Christmas decorations including the new motifs. We have made provision for additional lights in this year's budget.

The mystery of the additional poppies has been solved with grateful thanks to Cherryfield Ecology for donating them.

The allotments are currently full, and we have re-started our waiting list. We are currently looking to reinstate the track that runs alongside the allotments and are hoping to use S106 funding to pay for it. (*S106 is the money we get from new development to enhance our communities – all suggestions gratefully received*) The wet weather has made the ground very soggy and vehicles using the track run the risk of getting stuck which in turns makes the track worse.

One of the most discussed issues at meetings is the speed of traffic through the village. We have yet again approached Central Beds with our concerns, but their response was as follows:

Unfortunately, as the report from the traffic survey had shown there is very good compliance with the 20mph speed limit. Neither the speed nor accident data would support additional traffic calming features in Houghton Conquest.

Regarding Meadow Road, similarly, there have been no recorded injury accidents along this road which would support the need for traffic calming. As a newly built residential road, it is unlikely that the pedestrian and vehicle count would justify the need for a zebra crossing.

CBC is prioritising locations with a demonstrable history of injury accidents and does not have the resources to respond to all perceived issues with the highway.

Since highways are their responsibility there is little the Parish Council can do other than continue to raise our concerns. In addition, concerns have been raised regarding Bedford Road. The traffic calming measures are due to be installed once the Mill View development reaches 50 homes inhabited. These measures include a reversal of the wrong way round chicane at Sollars Way and two extras further down the road, a 30mph speed limit along the length of Bedford Road and a 2m wide footpath from the development into the village. The plans are available on the CBC planning portal: *"18185-5-WIX-501 Illustrative S278 Works Bedford Road Footway Link and Traffic Calming"*.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicise the forthcoming Parkour session in the Village Hall. This will take place on 19 February. It will be run by Spiral Freerun, a local company who specialise in these events. There will also be a Village Trail event to entertain the younger children whilst older siblings are taking part in the Parkour session.

That's about it for now but as ever 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



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.

UCllr 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 Amptill, 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.

PCIr Jean Ashcroft

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

Houghton Conquest Crime Figures December 2025

Offence	Number	Date	Place
Other theft	2	09/12/25 18/12/25	Juniper Drive Bedford Road
Assault without injury	2	04/12/25 22/12/25	Sheepcote Edge Four Acre Drive
Harassment	1	30/12/25	Undisclosed
Malicious communications	1	18/12/25	Undisclosed
Other criminal damage	1	01/12/25	Millbrook Road
Criminal damage – residential	1	15/12/25	London Lane
Assault with injury	1	30/12/25	Rosemary Lane
Criminal damage to a building – business	1	12/12/25	Amphill Road
Grand Total	10		

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
November 24	17
December 24	11
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

SIDs – (Bracketed figures from previous report)

2 December 25 – 13 January 26

0156 (Bedford Road) 30mph zone

Victoria Drive and Mill Lane

Arriving from The Oak

Violations: 4.68 % (5.92%) Down

Of which: 83.52% (83.82%) =31-35

16.47% (16.17%) =35+

Average speed: 23mph (24mph)

V85 27mph (28mph)

Average vehicles p/day: 759 (830)

Total in period: 32,151 (24,133)

Highest recorded: 59 (62mph) 12 Dec; 12:00 – 13:00

Departing to the Oak

Violations: 8.59% (9.52%) DOWN

Of which: 85.09% (85.00%) =31-35

14.90% (14.99%) = 35+

Average speed: 24mph (25mph)

V85 29 mph (29mph)

Average vehicles per day 839 (930)

Total in period: 35,522 (27,046)

Highest recorded 65 (74mph) 2 Dec; 20:00 – 21:00

12 November 25 – 13 January 26

0047 (Meadow Road) 30mph zone

Arriving – From A530 towards Pitchfork Way

Violations: 3.19% (3.72%) DOWN

Of which: 80.72% (82.15%) = 31-35 mph

19.27% (17.84%) = 36+

Average speed: 21mph (21 mph)

V85 26mph (27mph)

Average Vehicles per day: 496 (511)

Total in period: 30,894 (14,881)

Highest recorded: 71mph (63)

Departing – Pitchfork Way towards A530

Violations: 4.59% (4.83%) DOWN

Of which : 82.30% (82.49%) = 31-35 mph

17.69% (17.50%) = 36+

Average speed: 21 mph (22mph)

V85 27mph (27mph)

Average Vehicles per day: 294 (343)

Total in period: 18,331 (9,991)

Highest recorded: 62mph (57) 19 Nov 04:00 – 05:00

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 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:

- 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 Ministry Website: www.elstowteamministry.org.uk

Services for February / March are as follows:

1 February	09.30: Morning Praise, Robert Heley
8 February	09.30: Morning Praise, Robert Heley
15 February	09.30: Holy Communion, Fr Paul Messam
18 February	18.30: Holy Communion, Fr Paul Messam (Ash Wed. Elstow Abbey)
22 February	09.30: Holy Communion, Fr Paul Messam

1 March	09.30: Morning Praise, John Hinson
8 March	09.30: Holy Communion, Fr Paul Messam
15 March	09.30: Morning Praise, John Henry
22 March	09.30: Holy Communion, Rev'd Mike Stewart
29 March	PALM SUNDAY (Elstow Abbey) 10.00: Holy Communion. 12 noon: Bring and Share Lunch 14:00: Team APCMs 18:30: Taizé Worship. **
30 March	HOLY WEEK 18:30: Holy Communion – Fr Paul Messam

Family Service will be relaunched after Easter.

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.

A big thank you to all who attended our Christmas services and events. Our Christmas Hamper Raffle raised £489

Prize winners were:

Prize	Winner
Luxury Christmas Hamper	00513; Jackie Davies
£50 Cash	00317; Mike Bacon
Bath Fizz + Fizz & Glasses	00418; Charles Goldthorpe
Prosecco + Pamper Treats	00085; C Dean
Christmas Hamper	00504; Shirley Johnson
Wine & Cheese Mini Hamper	00370; Alan Higgs
Sweets for All the Family	00293; Tom Baldwin
Mini Proseccos + "Smellies"	00344; Dave Dupont
Mini Food & Drink Hamper	00394; Lisa Edwards
Red Wine, Treats & Hand Spa Set	00519; Bobby Pettifar
Wine by Candlelight	00095; Lynne Slade
Knife & Cleaver Voucher	00458; Vic Exworth

Items in these hampers were generously donated by various individual parishioners and local businesses, including Nisa Local (Houghton Conquest); The Knife & Cleaver; Jojo's Childminding.

(Apologies if anyone is omitted from this list)

Dates for your diary:

- **14 Feb:** 10:00 Churchyard Tidy (if weather is too bad we'll tidy in church!)

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

100 Club:

November: £10: Shirley Redman; Jonathan Mudd, Alex Juffs

December: £50: John Souster; £20: Pidge Stanbridge; £10: Val Roberts

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

Anyone who has lived in the main part of the village will know that I have collected for Christian Aid as part of the team of door-to-door collectors here during their annual appeal week every year since 1986 and organised the collection for the past 16 years.

Gathering a team of volunteers has become more difficult each year and, although the door to door method has consistently raised a good sum during Christian Aid Week (around £1,000 for the past 3/4 years), with a very heavy heart, I have decided that the stress of trying to keep it going has become too much and I will not be forcing people to knock on doors this year (or running round like a lunatic trying to cover extra areas and making Gary do the same).

Christian Aid Week runs from 10 – 16 May this year, and we are encouraging other forms of fundraising:

- Delivering envelopes which must be returned to a central collection point, this has been trialled in the past on selected roads, however the return rate has been very poor. Should anyone have any ideas and thoughts on this, please let me know.
- Our church Plant Sale is planned for **16 May** and I could, as before, have that as a collection point with a donations bucket (but, as with delivery-only envelopes, I suspect that this would not raise very much and might limit the chance for people to Gift Aid their donations).
- Last year a quiz night was suggested, however I would need help organising this, so any offers or suggestions of ways to raise an equivalent sum would be greatly appreciated.

Another possibility is that individuals could do sponsored activities to suit them, I have Sponsorship forms and could get more if this idea grabs interest.

Thoughts and offers, please, whether you are a past volunteer or

just keen to help and with a little fundraising experience - it would be a shame for their fundraising to be £1,000 lower this year because of local apathy here!

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



Houghton Conquest Village Hall

Adults Only

BINGO NIGHT

Date: Friday 20th March

£15.00 for 10 Games

**Cash Prizes
Novelty Prizes
Raffle**

Adults Only

Doors Open 6.30pm
Game Start 7.30pm

Please feel free to bring
Your own food snacks

The poster features a vibrant teal background with various gaming icons including bingo balls (7, 19, 35), a bingo card, a spinning wheel, and a gift box with a question mark. Confetti and streamers are scattered throughout the design.

Village Hall Regular Events

Contact group contacts for details.

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.

Weekly

Monday	Indoor Bowls	2pm to 4pm
	Qi Kwan Do Martial Arts	6:30pm to 7:30pm
	Whist	7:45pm
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

- 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

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



Welcome to our Spring Term! It is great to see all the children and staff fully immersed into their topics. Last 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.



Climate Action: The children at Houghton Conquest will be taking part in a climate action morning in a few weeks, getting hands-on, our pupils will be working together to plant seeds and design a greener school. We can't wait to see the creative solutions our young environmentalists come up with as they lead the way towards a cleaner, happier planet.



Reading: We also have an exciting children's author visit planned this term for our world book day, local author Julia Jarman, to celebrate world book day. Our children will 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.

Looking Forward: There is a wonderful sense of growth at our school right now. In partnership with Central Bedfordshire, we are busy transitioning to a primary model, and we couldn't be more excited to expand our school family as we welcome our Year 5 cohort in September 2026.

Finally, if your child is starting school in September 2026, 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***

Houghton Conquest Garden Club



Our first meeting of the year was another talk by Mike Stewart, the gardening vicar. He told us about all the large gardens he had worked in before being called to the priesthood. He is still able to put his gardening skills to use in the polytunnel at Elstow Abbey, when he helps youngsters with special needs growing flowers, but mainly vegetables.

On 10 February Phill Howes, who is a beekeeper, will be giving a talk, and on 10 March there is a talk by Guy Lambourne called '*making a living from sticks*', which is all about Willow.

The Spring Show is on 4 April, and the schedule will be ready shortly, so if you would like one please give me a call on 07419 736604.

The snowdrops are just starting to show their beautiful heads and aren't they amazing plants with their sword like leaves breaking the frozen soil. It's possible to sow sweet pea seeds in tall pots or cardboard tubes to get them started early. Once they have germinated they can be kept in a greenhouse or cold frame.

If it's too cold and wet to get in the garden, time to sit and plan what to do when the weather is better.

Margaret Whalley 07419 736604



After all the worrying that we might have to cancel because of snow being forecast, our January party was a great success. We had a three-course meal, following by entertainment from Donna Samuels, who sang songs from the 50s, 60s and 70s, and she got most of us up to dance and sing along with her.

On 5 February Nicola Avery will be giving a talk on riding for the disabled. Then 5 March brings us round to our AGM, when after the official business we will have an auction of items that members bring along.

On Saturday 21 February we will be holding a coffee morning in the village hall from 10.30am. There will be homemade cakes, a tombola and books for sale. Everyone is welcome so please come and join us.

We should have the new programme for the year arranged by then, and we will certainly try to get speakers on a range of different subjects to interest everyone. If you would like any more information please give me a call on 07951 024876.

Shirley Johnson 07951 024876

Houghton Conquest Art Society



It seems a distant memory now, but we had a fantastic Christmas Social, at the art club, before the Christmas break. It was a very well attended fun evening with quizzes, activities and lots of food!



We presented Dave Williams, our retiring President with a certificate for his wonderful input over many years. Dave was pleased to receive a gift from the club of a set of professional-coloured pencils, which were recommended by professional demonstrator David Lewry. As an honorary member, Dave now enjoys free lifetime membership.

The first get together in January began with our Annual General Meeting. This involved the election of members of the committee including their respective tasks plus a look at the previous year's activities and finances.

After the business side was concluded we enjoyed a 'paint along' session with Linda Peacock who is a professional Bob Ross demonstrator. The paintings are very soft, loose and blended with especially beautiful skies, as in this example.



The Ross method involves wet in wet butter texture oil paints. Linda is a very patient teacher who ensures complete beginners achieve a painting to be proud of. Bob Ross made literally hundreds of tv programmes entitled the Joy of Painting. His method is suitable for all levels of experience and is based around landscapes, often with mountains, valleys and water.



Always very colourful Bob made painting fun, he coined the phrase 'happy accidents' never mistakes. The brush cleaning method, after painting, is also great fun, he called it 'beat the devil out of it' in other words bashing the brush back and forth on a

length of wood. Luckily to preserve the home furnishing from the flying paint, you can buy a special cleaning kit. All the special equipment used for this different style of oil painting can be purchased online. Bob Ross style doesn't use a huge number of different brushes or tubes of paint colours so overall it's not too expensive to obtain a basic set up.

Here we are in the village hall on a wet windy January evening in the warm, having fun in good company.





We have a great programme planned for 2026. Linda Peacock will be back in June with a full evening's paint along in expressive Bob Ross style. Linda incidentally provides most of what you need to complete a large painting. We also have some excellent outdoor painting sessions planned for the summer.

The club is always happy to welcome new members of whatever ability; all the details can be found on our website or Facebook page.

Happy painting

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

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



Bowls Club

We meet in the village hall every Monday afternoon from 2pm – to 4pm 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

The Committee and volunteers of the Care Group wish you all a happy and healthy 2026.

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

The group has now been running since 1994 and during 2025 our volunteers carried out 594 journeys. Most trips are to the Ampthill surgeries and the Bedford Hospitals. We helped many “regular” villagers and several new people as well.

We are very grateful to the Parish Council for a grant of £60 which has enabled us to buy a new mobile phone. While the new phone is working well, the signal from EE varies depending on which of our six phone holders has the phone.

We have also recently signed up three new volunteers with another one completing their DBS check now. Unfortunately, one of our long-standing drivers has had to resign. We are very grateful to all our volunteers, many of whom have been with us for several years but are always pleased to sign up new people. The more volunteers we have, the easier it is for the phone holders to find drivers.

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 some 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. Since January 1st we have been asking for a donation of £5.00 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.

Dates for your diary

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

Sue Derrick (Chair) 07886 459225

Kate Smith (Honorary Secretary) 01234 740522

OUR PHONE NUMBER is 07969 982 970

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. Please do get in touch at: info@shareflitwickandampthill.org and 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 e.g. 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



We have had a good season so far, with a good turnout to see Bridget Jones in January.

We continue in February with a 2025 British comedy-drama “***The Ballad of Walis Island***”. An eccentric lottery winner who lives alone on a remote island tries to make his fantasies come true by getting his favourite musicians to perform at his home.

Our screening in March is the Oscar winning film **Phantom Thread**. Set in 1950s London, Reynolds Woodcock is a renowned dressmaker whose fastidious life is disrupted by a young, strong-willed woman, Alma, who becomes his muse and lover.

In April we are showing the dark comedy ***The Roses***, 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.

As ever, our bar and kiosk will be open before the films and during the interval. Doors open at Parkside Hall in Amphil at 6.45pm with the film commencing at 7.30pm. Tickets (£5 for adults, Under-18s free) and tables can be reserved in advance, 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.

We are always looking for new volunteers, and all help with tidying away glasses and rubbish and stacking chairs at the end of the evening is appreciated. 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. Do get in touch if you are involved with a group who might like to book Zonita Mobile or would like to organise a private screening.

We look forward to welcoming you to Zonita this winter.

- Saturday 7 February; 19:30: The Ballad of Wallis Island
- Saturday 7 March; 19:30: Phantom Thread
- Saturday 11 April; 19:30: The Roses

Tables can be reserved free of charge via email or Facebook.

WWW: <http://zonita.org.uk>

Email: zonitacinema@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/zonita.cinema

Trevor Blevins & the ZONITA Team



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Wixams Development: Urban&Civic

Ready, Set... Junior parkrun!

Urban&Civic are supporting plans to bring a junior parkrun to Wixams, a fun, free weekly event where local children can get active, build confidence, and make new friends. Parkrun volunteer, Beverley Gous, who is leading the efforts met with a small group of volunteers, and things are already moving forward behind the scenes. To make sure the event can run every week and thrive in the long term, we now need more volunteers to get involved. You do not need to be a runner, just a bit of time and enthusiasm. If you would like to help make Junior Parkrun at Wixams a reality, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Beverley.gous@parkrun.com



Play Time Returns to Harrowden Green

Back in September, Urban&Civic took the decision to temporarily close Harrowden Green Play Park for health and safety reasons. Following repair work by our team, the play park reopened in December, allowing families to enjoy it once more. New play equipment has now been installed and open for children and families to enjoy. Once the remaining processes are complete, the play park is expected to be adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council, who will then take on responsibility for its ongoing maintenance and care, helping to secure its long-term future for the community.

Jordan Payne – Communications and Partnerships Manager
wixamsinfo@urbanandcivic.com

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

Happy New Year and welcome to 2026!

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

Commercial Advertising Rates:

Annual Rates = 6 Issues

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

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

Payments to: Houghton Conquest Parish Council

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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!

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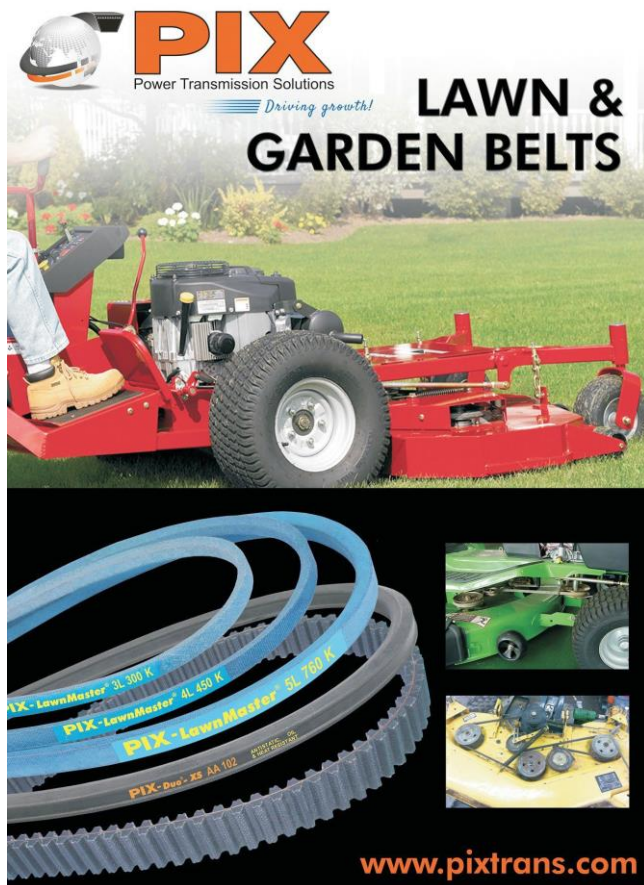


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Distributors of PIX Lawn, Garden, Agricultural & Industrial Belts



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

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	07419 736604
INDOOR BOWLS	David and Jean Ashcroft	07969 513951
JIGSAW CLUB	Sue Derrick	07886 459225
VILLAGE HALL BOOKINGS	Christine Dean	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

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
UTILITY SERVICES	
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	
Amphill: Houghton Close Surgery Oliver St. Surgery Greensands Surgery	 01525 300898 01525 631395 01525 631390
Kempston	01234 852222
REGISTRATION	
Marriage & archives	01525 403430
Births & Deaths	0300 300 8089.