

BLUNSDON

VILLAGE MAGAZINE

April 2025

Photo by Debra Richardson



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The clocks have gone forward, we've had some consistent sunny weather, and it's safe to say spring has sprung. We've certainly got a spring in our step with lots going on around the shop and café...

Price increases

Like all other businesses, we're being impacted by inflationary retail pressures, particularly minimum wage and National Insurance increases. Therefore, we'll be making some price increases from Tuesday 1 April. We remain incredibly competitively priced and endeavour to be cheaper than most similar high-street chains.

Blunsdon branded products

Back by popular demand... our tea towels are back in stock, along with a new red version! Grab yours, while stocks last, for just £7. We're planning to add cloth bags and china mugs to the range later in the near future too.

Dates for your diary

- Tuesday 1st April: Tea and talk with Cher Smith from the Food Collective
- Tuesday 22nd April: Tea and Talk on Swim Safety with our shop manager, Laura Chatwin
- Thursday 8th May: Special VE Day Tea and talk with Larry Banda
- Wednesday 4th June: Gin Tasting with Grape & Grain – Tickets are £20 each

Easter plans

We're excited to announce we're running an Easter card competition for two age categories – under 5 and under 10 years old. Designs should be A5 size and along the theme of "Happy Easter from Blunsdon". We hope to use the winning design next year in the shop as our local Easter cards, available to purchase by the community.

The winners of both categories will be invited to our Easter Sundae event and awarded with an Easter egg and sundae. Entries must be submitted to the shop/café by Thursday 17th April for judging.

We're also offering Easter egg sundaes on Easter Sunday whilst stocks last.

Reminder for shareholders

We still have shareholder cards available for pick up in the shop. You need this card to prove you are a shareholder and obtain your loyalty card, so please ensure you pick your card up if you haven't already.

If you're not yet a shareholder, but are interested in becoming one, shares are £10 each and you can buy as many as you'd like – please pick up a form from the shop. As a shareholder, you'll not only be included in our shareholder loyalty scheme but you are also invited to our annual AGM and receive regular newsletters containing important updates about the shop/ how it's running/ any changes we're planning to make.

And finally...

As the evenings are getting lighter and (hopefully) the weather is getting warmer, we look forward to seeing you in and around the shop and café. Don't forget both shop and café are open until 7pm on a Thursday and Friday if you're out strolling around the village.

Our current opening times are: Mon, Tues, Weds, Sat: 8am – 5pm Thurs -Frid: 8am -7pm Sunday: 8am – 4pm Café shuts at 4pm Mon - Sat, 3pm on Sundays

Blunsdon Village Garden Club



Now that we are well and truly in Spring, our gardens are showing more colour day by day, with daffodils, primroses and polyanthus amongst pink and white blossoms. The bright yellow forsythia will soon be out fully with the cherry blossom not far behind.

We have a varied programme of talks and activities throughout the year. If you are interested in finding out more about us, why not come along and join us at our next meeting at 7.30pm on Thursday 10th April 2025 in the small Village Hall.

Our speaker this month will be Dr Francis Burroughes, a lecturer and after dinner speaker whose talk is entitled The Victorian Head Gardener. Francis' father started his career in horticulture as a gardener's boy on a large estate just before the first world war. Hear about the fascinating life of the Victorian country estate, which has now entirely vanished.

To find out what else we have coming up in 2025, please visit our website at bvgc.freehostia.com where the full programme for this year can be found.

Visitors are very welcome for a small cost of £3, refundable if you later decide to become a member for the very reasonable cost of £15 per year. At each meeting there will be an interesting sociable evening with refreshments and an optional raffle.
Jenny 07949087317



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BLUNSDON WI

Many thanks to the speaker for our March meeting who was our very own talented Hazel Smith who gave a fascinating talk about the skills of lace making. We are continuing our trend of local speakers with Natasha Thurgood in April on working in the nuclear industry. At Book club's next meeting the book under discussion will be 'And So I Roar' by Abi Dare the sequel to 'The louding voice'. Film club will be discussing 'The Way'. Our community focused events in March include a village litter pick finished off with tea and cake in the village shop as part in the Great British Spring Clean and we will take a turn at hosting the popular lent lunches in St Leonard's church. We hope to find a bluebell walk in April. Whilst in May we have a guided walk of Cricklade organised and a visit to the flower festival at Salisbury cathedral.

Our programme for the rest of the year is as follows but may be subject to change.

DATE	SPEAKER	TALK TITLE
April 16th	Natasha Thurgood	Working in the Nuclear Industry
May 21st	No Speaker	ANNUAL MEETING + RESOLUTIONS + American Supper
June 18th	Hayley Scott	Forensic Experience
July 15th	SOCIAL	Outing to Devizes
August 20th	SOCIAL	TBC
September 17th	Ruth Baker	Extraordinary Wiltshire Women
October 15th	SOCIAL	TBC
November 19th	Amanda Butler	More than Elephants: Volunteering in a Gambia Nature Reserve
December 10th	SOCIAL	Christmas Meal

WI meet on the third Wednesday of the month in Blunsdon Village Hall. To find out more by call Anna on 01793 706392 or visit our Blunsdon WI website (jackie707.wixsite.com)




**Social Walking from
Blunsdon Community Shop**




**Every 2nd and 4th Thursday
of the month at 10:00am**

We start and finish at the shop.

**Any queries, please message
Alex on 07554 811779**

*New walkers
always
welcome*



Community Shop & Cafe
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Parish Council News –April 2025

Easter will be with us soon and school holidays. We hope that you have a good Easter and a good break if you are taking one. We have our fingers crossed that work will have started on the refurbishment of the old tennis courts in Linley Road. It's exciting but also will be disruptive and cause inconvenience and for that we are sorry but the end result will be an asset to the Village and Parish.

Pavilion and Recreation Ground The PC has agreed to some improvements to be made to the Pavilion, pending the search for funding to completely refurbish the building. We have upgraded the mats at the accesses of the building to try and prevent the ingress of excessive mud and are replacing the refrigerator in the kitchen. We are gathering quotes to upgrade the ventilation system and repair and increase the area of paving around the building.

Dog Bins and Litter Bins This is a reminder that litter and dog poo can be placed in either our dog bins or litter bins, if one is overflowing then please use the other – thank you. However, if you can, please use the dog bin at the end of the car park of the Village Shop rather than the litter bin in the children's play area, it is a busy walk and fills quickly. The Parish do not empty this litter bin, it is done by the groundworks team for Hayfield who do not collect as often as our team.

Planning Applications

S/HOU/25/0283 | Erection of a single storey side wraparound extension along the length of the current property with a hipped roof. | 1 Ermin Street Blunsdon SN26 8E

S/25/0302 Erection of 3no self build homes following the demolition of existing dwelling and garage. Dinton Broad Bush Blunsdon SN26 7DH

S/HOU/25/0350 Erection of single storey side extension | 29 Ceres Road Blunsdon

Planning Decisions

S/24/1256 Demolition of garage, erection of 1 no. dwelling (Class C3) and associated works. Land Adjacent To 16 Turnpike Road Blunsdon – Application granted

S/HOU/25/0077 Erection of a single storey and first floor rear extension to existing garage and conversion of garage into living accommodation. 17 Turnpike Road Application refused

S/AMEND/25/0224 Non-Material Amendment to previous application S/HOU/24/0152 relating to size of the extension, roof style and material from a flat roof to a hipped roof with roof tiles and render to external walls. 1 Ermin Street Blunsdon Minor Amendment Refused

S/HOU/25/0095 Erection of single storey rear extension, loft conversion with rear dormer and Juliette balcony. Claymore Broad Bush Blunsdon Application Granted

S/HOU/24/1477 Erection of first floor rear gable projection. 64 High Street Blunsdon. Application Refused

S/TWC/25/0138 Works to tree within Conservation area. Rosewood Front Lane Blunsdon. Application Granted.

S/TPO/25/0040 Works to tree within BOSTPO-01-2010. 6 Beech Lea Blunsdon Application Refused



Your Speedwatch Needs You!

Our hardy volunteers are out regularly helping with road safety in the Parish. This has led to many prosecutions by local Police for those abusing the law. They always need volunteers and provide training.

Please contact me if you are interested in helping and I will arrange for someone to contact you.

Date	Location	Vehicles	Speeding	%	Maximum	Speed Limit	Start	Finish	
29/01/2025	Ermin St	304	5	2%	42	30	14:30	15:30	Minerva Heiaghts
03/02/2025	Ermin St	167	9	5%	46	30	10:00	11:00	Minerva Heiaghts
05/02/2025	Turnpike	37	5	14%	49	30	10:00	11:00	Tarmac Layby
17/02/2024	Lady Lane	324	8	2%	47	30	15:30	16:30	Cycle Track
18/02/2025	Turnpike	43	1	2%	40	30	15:30	16:30	Tarmac Layby
20/02/2025	Broadbush	279	0	0%		30	15:30	16:30	Junction with Sams Lane
25/02/2025	High St	116	12	10%	28	20	15:30	16:30	Heart in Hand
27/02/2025	Ermin St	95	19	20%	47	30	09:55	10:55	Minerva Heiaghts
28/02/2025	Lady Lane	446	5	1%	48	30	15:30	16:30	Cycle Track
03/03/2025	Lady Lane	474	8	2%	42	30	20:00	17:00	Cycle Track
06/03/2025	Ermin St	83	16	19%	45	30	10:00	11:00	Minerva Heiaghts
07/03/2025	Ermin St	218	8	4%	40	30	15:30	16:30	Minerva Heiaghts
10/03/2025	High St	72	13	18%	32	20	16:00	16:30	Heart in Hand
11/03/2025	Ermin St	244	10	4%	41	30	07:55	08:55	Minerva Heiaghts
13/03/2025	Sams Lane	117	14	12%	29	20	08:35	09:35	Junction with High St
14/03/2025	Broadbush	265	6	2%	42	30	15:40	16:40	Junction with Sams Lane
15/03/2025	Tadpole Lane	251	3	1%	39	30	09:30	10:30	Telephone Box

The Police use the data collected by our Speedwatch Team to plan where they will carry out their own Road Safety checks. The results below relate to Blunsdon roads...

Hello Brian and Team Blunsdon!

SNOW? IT DID! I carried out a session on 12/03/2025 on Sams Lane at the 20MPH Area and 6 vehicles have been issued with notices of intended prosecution for excessive speeding. The roads monitored are 20 MPH and the fastest vehicle was captured at 28 MPH during the school run. Depending on previous convictions and history all 6 drivers will be offered a speed awareness course or face £100 fine and 3 penalty points.

More SNOW! I carried out a further session on 12/03/2025 on Sams Lane at the 30MPH Area and 2 vehicles have been issued with notices of intended prosecution for excessive speeding. The roads monitored are 30 MPH and the fastest vehicle was captured at 42 MPH during the school run. Depending on previous convictions and history all 2 drivers will be offered a speed awareness course or face £100 fine and 3 penalty points. Proceedings will now be undertaken to ensure the most appropriate outcome for the offenders takes place, which includes checking for MOT, Insurance & Point Totters. Captured footage will be analysed for other offences like seat belts and mobile phone use.

Scott Garcia 9990 - Speed Enforcement Officer Road Safety

******8 speeding drivers during the school run period!**

A reminder that there will be the regular **Borough Ward Councillors' surgery** at the Village Shop and Café on the first Saturday of the month which is Saturday April 5th, at 11:30 a.m. You can go along and ask them for help or advice, or take up issue. All of which they will welcome.

Parish Council Meetings –

The next months' Parish Council meetings will be on Monday 7th and (because of Easter Monday) TUESDAY 22nd April 2025, at 19:30 in the Village Hall. If you want to come along, please let us know, details are on the Parish Council, notice boards, Website in the Blog section and on our Facebook page.

Ian Jankinson – ianjankinson@blunsdon-pc.gov.uk – 07702 684281

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*****Did you know the café is open until 7pm on Thursday and you
can take your fish & chips into the café and enjoy a nice tea or
coffee with your meal.**



St Leonard's Church
Blunsdon

Connecting with God, each other
and our community

From the Rector's Pen

The meaning of Easter

As a person who struggles with words and remembering names, I am also fascinated by them.

The word Easter, is derived from two sources, a Proto-European Anglo Saxon Goddess Eostre. She was a goddess of spring and fertility whose symbol was a rabbit who laid eggs (that's where our Easter eggs come from) and a Latin word for Dawn (Resurrection or New Life). But also, the name behind the name of our month of "April"; the month that Easter normally falls in.

I much prefer the French word 'Pesach' which is derived from the Hebrew word for Passover, celebrating the release of the Israelite slaves in Egypt as they remember the Holy Spirit passing over their homes before their escape from captivity. It was also at the Jewish festival of Passover that Jesus was arrested, tortured, and slain on a Cross. Taking upon himself the sins of the whole world and setting us free from sin, by paying the price for our wrongdoings. Then on the third day, being raised by God from the tomb, demonstrating God's power over sin and death.

However, you choose to celebrate Easter this year, (20th April 2025) take a moment to reflect on both the good and bad things you might have done, and where you might ask for and receive forgiveness.

Joyeuses Pâques or as the Greeks say "Καλό Πάσχα"

God Bless

Rev Phil Goodey

News from St Leonard's Church

Unlike some of the news we listen to daily, our news is good news!

We just thought we would update you with some of the things that have been happening in our church recently.

Firstly, we now have a broadband connection and always-on WiFi, which has been of great benefit to everyone. Thank you to Mike Gibbin and Nigel Beasant who worked for months to persuade BT to come and put in a line so that we could achieve this. Not an easy task at all! Thank you to Paul Morris, our lay reader and churchwarden, who has installed a payment point just inside the door so that visitors, and the congregation, can pay/donate electronically should they wish to. It doesn't mean that you have to pay to come in!! This is a church for the whole village whenever you wish to make use of it. Cash is still accepted of course and monthly giving through standing order.

We have now recovered Gift Aid from the last few years, thanks to Alex Kaspercak who has helped us sort this out. This is very much appreciated.

We welcomed some Year 6 Pupils to our first Lent Lunch, along with their acting headteacher, Andrew Beadnell. Lovely to have you and we look forward to seeing you each week. Thank you to Jane Ockwell for continuing to oversee this fundraising for Christian Aid. We are planning to make our church fit for the 21st century and meet our Eco Church and community space goals. Hence the changes outlined above, along with our continuing Reordering Project. This includes a new heating system using an air-source heat pump, underfloor heating, a new kitchen, outside and internal storage, a new glazed entrance door to compliment the original door.

The PCC, Churchwardens and the Rector, Phil, value the help that the village gives us and the positive way we are supported by you.

If you have any comments or queries, please contact the churchwardens.

griff9999@binternet.com or paulwmorris777@gmail.com



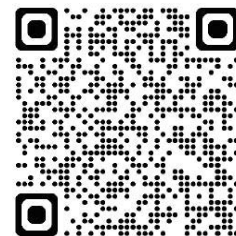
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Notes from the Editor

The magazine is run by volunteers from the village. All your ideas, comments and contributions will always be welcome.

Blunsdon Village Magazine is available to read online at Blunsdon Parish Council website: blunsdonparishcouncil.co.uk

EDITOR: Please email all items for the magazine to blunsdonmagazine@gmail.com

Arlene tel. 01793 727306

ADVERTS: For advert enquiries please contact Penny on 01793 722073

Front Cover: Corner of High Street and Ermin Street

Your April Magazine will be delivered from: 25th April 2025

Magazine issue	Deadline for items for inclusion
May	16th April 2025
June	21st May 2025

BLUNSDON SURGERY Tel 01793 721254

Phone lines are open to book appointments from 8am Tues, Thurs and Frid and from 3pm on Mon and Weds. EMERGENCIES - Call NHS 111 (outside surgery hours)

OPENING HOURS

Day	Doctor Times	Reception
Mon	3.10pm - 4.40pm	3pm-6.15pm
Tues	8.30am - 10.40am	8.45am - 12.15pm
Weds	4pm - 7.10pm	3pm - 7.15pm
Thurs	8.30am - 10.40am	8.45am - 12.15pm
Frid	8.30am - 10.40am	8.45am - 12.15pm



CREATE and CONNECT

**This month we will only meet on
Wednesday 2nd April 10:00-11:30am
due to our Friday session
being on Good Friday**

**Blunsdon Community Shop and Cafe
Unit 1 Blunt Rise, Broad Blunsdon
SN26 7DA**

An opportunity to meet with others over a cuppa and cake to create. Whether you draw, paint, knit, crochet or simply colour, you can bring your own project, or you can use our materials. Or you can just come along for a chat!



CREATE • CONNECT

The Challenge

Rhae Honey, a 42-year-old Firefighter from Blunsdon, married with two young children, Alba and Lachlan, will be taking on two epic challenges in two weeks for Compton Care and she needs your support!!

Compton Care provided Rhae's dear friend Paula and her family help and support in their greatest time of need. Their staff were so caring, attentive and compassionate and she wants to help to ensure that other families can continue to count upon Compton's services and staff in their toughest times.

At Compton Care they believe life with a complex and incurable illness doesn't have to be limiting. They work with patients to inspire, support and encourage them to take charge of their lives - because being alive isn't the same as feeling alive.

On the 12th July, Rhae and her friend Andy will take on Race to the Stones, a 62-mile run along the stunning Ridgeway, starting in Lewknor (Oxfordshire) and finishing in Avebury (Wiltshire) within 24hrs.

11 days later she will then take on the Lord Bilston Big Challenge, embracing the National 3 Peaks Challenge whilst cycling between each mountain. A gruelling 28 miles of hiking and 560 miles of cycling over 4 days.

Rhae has competed in many difficult challenges but this is definitely her toughest, some close friends have said "her craziest yet." She would be forever grateful for your support to reach her £1500 target. If you would like to donate, please visit her Just Giving Page (Rhae's fundraiser for Compton Care Group).

https://www.justgiving.com/page/rhae-honey-2?utm_medium=FR&utm_source=CL

Rhae would like to thank you from the bottom of her heart, as all your support will help so many families during their toughest times and continue to receive all the support and care they deserve.

Photos below show Paula and Rhae, and then Alba, Lachlan and Rhae at the start of the Ridgeway challenge in 2023.





A Recipe from CookFoodFan

Using Up!

A great way to use up bits of vegetables in the fridge is to make a stir fry. A lot of vegetables cut into thin strips can be used even broccoli stems. It can be a vegetable stir fry or include strips of chicken or prawns. As long as everything is prepped it cooks quickly. Served with just a zingy sauce or rice or noodles it is a perfect meal. This is a new recipe that I have been trying out and it is scrummy!

Sticky Peanut Stir Fry (serves 2)

2 tsp oil	300g chicken, cut into thin strips
1 tbsp light soy sauce	3 spring onions, cut into chunks
½ red chilli, deseeded and finely diced	
1 garlic clove, minced	1 carrot, cut into matchsticks
1 red pepper, deseeded and cut into thin strips	
150g tenderstem broccoli, each stem cut into 3	
2 tbsp roasted salted peanuts	

For the stir-fry sauce:

1 tbsp peanut butter	2 tbsp light soy sauce
1 tsp rice wine vinegar	Zest and juice ½ lime
1 garlic clove, minced	1 heaped tsp honey

1. Make the stir-fry sauce by mixing the peanut butter, soy sauce, rice wine, lime juice and zest, garlic and honey together in a small bowl until smooth. Set aside.
2. Heat a large pan or wok over a high heat, add 1 tsp oil, then add the chicken strips and soy sauce. Stir-fry for 3-4 mins until browned, then remove to a plate.
3. Add another teaspoon of oil to the same pan, then stir-fry the spring onions, chilli and garlic, moving them around so they don't burn. Add the carrot, red pepper and broccoli and stir-fry for 3 mins, then add the chicken strips back in with the peanuts and the sauce.
4. Cook until sticky, caramelised and bubbling.
5. Serve with cooked rice or noodles.

OR try this different stir-fry sauce (for 4 servings) made using:

75ml soy sauce; 1 tbsp sesame oil; 1 tsp rice wine vinegar; 3 tsp runny honey, 2 garlic cloves, minced; 2 tsp grated ginger and a pinch of chilli flakes.

Mix all the ingredients together and use after stir-frying the other ingredients.

Enjoy



BLUNSDON CRICKET CLUB

Only a couple of months until the start of the new Wiltshire Saturday League Cricket season, where Blunsdon will again compete in Division Six.

Anyone interested in playing cricket either regularly, or on odd occasions, would be more than welcome to come along to indoor net practice, which takes place every Tues from 7:30 to 8:30 throughout March at Cricklade Manor Sports Hall. Just contact cricket, rugby, speedway and modern pentathlon loving Guy on 07753 446614 for more information.



BLUNSDON FOOTBALL CLUB

Reserves – 4th out of 10, Swindon & District Premier League - Recent Results

Chiseldon– won 6– 3 Moredon– won 5–0 Shield & Dagger, Cup Semi-Final – won 2 – 1
The battle for the Premier League title is hotting up as we near the season end, with five teams in with a chance of taking the prize, including **Franklin Murray's** Blunsdon Reserves. The free scoring Ressies overcame a dogged basement Moredon side, with **Jack Duckers** firing a hat-trick. We have also booked a place in the Challenge Cup Final thanks to a fine 2 - 1 win against an undercooked but talented Shield & Dagger side. The date and venue to be confirmed for where we will meet fellow Premier League team Bassett Bulldogs.

Upcoming fixtures, Kick Off 2.30 p.m. Saturday, unless stated

Date	Reserves	Venue
March 29th	Marlborough Town	Sutton Park
April 5th	Shield & Dagger	Southbrook Rec
15 th , Tuesday, 6.15 p.m.	Coleview	Sutton Park
May 3rd	Shield & Dagger	Sutton Park

Come and support the Amber & Black at The Theatre of Trees, Sutton Park and beyond.

Blunsdon Baby and Toddler Group

We meet every Wednesday morning in St Leonards church from 10 to 11.30am, term time and holidays.

The group includes foster carers, parents and grandparents, so a good mixture and plenty of experience if you wish to pick people's brains!

We ask £1 per session to cover costs; this includes hot drinks and biscuits.

There might be singing and craft sessions as well so come along and see who we are.



Blunsdon Youth Football Club

Your local club needs you - Voluntary Role vacancies

Blunsdon Youth Football Club is seeking passionate, dedicated, and dynamic individuals to join our team in key voluntary positions. As part of a growing community club, we invite applicants to apply for the following roles starting Summer 2025.

1. Chairman

As Chairman, you will lead Blunsdon Youth FC, ensuring the club's vision, goals, and values are upheld. You will play a pivotal role in decision-making, overseeing day-to-day operations, and representing the club at external events and meetings.

2. Treasurer

This role is crucial in ensuring the financial health and sustainability of our club, which provides a fun and supportive environment for young players to develop their football skills.

3. Secretary

The Secretary is a vital role within Blunsdon Youth FC, ensuring smooth administration and effective communication across the club. You will manage club records, meetings, and correspondence, providing essential support to the committee and members.

How to Apply: If you are passionate about youth football and want to help us continue providing a fun, safe, and developmental environment for our young players, we would love to hear from you!

Please send your expression of interest to blunsdonfc-secretary@outlook.com

Join us in shaping the future of Blunsdon Youth Football Club!

BLUNSDON YOUTH FC SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

With costs ever increasing we are dedicated to offering football to all which means keeping subs affordable. The only way we can do this is with our generous sponsors. We are looking for more local companies to sponsor teams or the club. We offer shirt front and sleeve logos and social media coverage.

If you would like more information about the opportunity to help your local grassroots football club, please get in touch blunsdonfc-secretary@outlook.com

The Chatterbox – Live and Loud

Roughly this time last year we went to The Highlands of Scotland for a holiday and visited some beautiful castles, quaint towns and villages, lochs, mountains and historical sites. Some of the most memorable experiences on the trip, however, weren't necessarily the things that we saw, but in what we heard. On a few evenings, we went to local pubs that had live music playing and we all had the most uplifting, fantastic evenings. The music was planned in most cases but in another it was totally unexpected and seemed to materialise from nowhere when a visitor to the pub picked up his guitar and started to play. We stayed much longer than we'd planned and the atmosphere there was so warm and welcoming.

Playing simple, traditional instruments, sometimes it was just two musicians playing perhaps a fiddle and guitar, or a much bigger ensemble consisting of fiddles, bodhráns (a type of drum) and whistles and guitars. The music guided us listeners through an array of emotions. It could make you feel exuberant and tempt you to get up and dance or sometimes a singer's soaring vocals in an unfamiliar language would bring moments of reflection, melancholy and a haunting beauty. Each musician and piece of music took the audience on an auditory journey, veering between a full-throated joyride in a beat-up old banger to the other end of extremes - a felucca gliding peacefully along a still river on a windless day. It was impossible not to be caught up by the scene – it was earthy, elemental, timeless and completely mesmerising. I wondered how many musicians had played over the years in some of these fairly ancient pubs and I thought of the celebrations and parties that must have gone on in the past.

Last month I attended a concert given by a male voice choir. Again, it was live entertainment that brought so many people together – a sell-out performance! We navigated through a myriad of emotions led by the choir's songs and harmonies that varied between gentle, feather-soft notes almost whispered to deep, swelling crescendos like crashing waves. I was amazed that a relatively small amount of people could make such a big sound! I confess I shed a few tears when I connected with a song I'd not heard before but spoke of the longing for home, family and friends. It was heartfelt, heartbreaking and so moving and this is the beautiful thing about music – it can stir your soul, and move you so that one moment you're tapping your foot and laughing like a fool and then, suddenly, a line may resonate, or a memory could be recalled and the words lodge deep in your heart and stun you with their strength.

Whether it's listening to an orchestra, a folk group, a violinist playing a soft lullaby, a booming brass band in a bandstand at the park on a summer's day or a busker singing with his guitar in a subway, music is a universal language which lifts us, moves us and brings us together. It breathes life into us and bonds us, creating memories and special times.

Scotland was such a beautiful place to visit and I'm not saying that the folk music we heard in those pubs was more important than the holiday itself, but it certainly made those evenings very special and more memorable than if we'd simply sat there while piped music played in the background! If you get the chance to listen to some live music or singing wherever you are, do take it – you could be in for a very special time. Until next time.



Reading with Wine Hello and welcome to Spring!

In Dani Atkins, *A Million Dreams*, it has always been Beth's dream to run a florist with her husband before raising their family together. They buy and make a success of Crazy Daisy before life breaks their hearts in the most awful way. The story follows Beth in her life of grief and confusion- a major error during an IVF procedure means that eight years later some big decisions have to be made about a little boy, his family and his future. There are times where this could be a tough read, but it is also a story of female strength and how our instincts should often be listened to. It really is incredible how the flowers she works with throughout the book give you clues as to how she is feeling and where she will head next, it's a subtle but important inclusion. I loved the interactions between Beth, her family and friends, you are left with lots to think about, even once you've finished. Dani has a way of writing emotive reads that will live in your mind for a long time.

I'm giving you a full author series with my next recommendation, Lucy Score always has flowers on the cover of her books, my favourite being the pale blue with daises- see it on my Instagram page @reading-with_wine. The Knockamout series starts with, **Things We Never Got Over** and Naomi Witt running away from her picture perfect wedding in Virginia (spring florals and weddings- I'm running with the cliches this month!) She attempts to start a life over with her nine year old niece in tow after her estranged identical twin sets her up to pay off her debts; fortunately she has the backing of her new community including the local barber who claims not to do relationships...far fetched escapism. If you are looking for some comedy, try **The Worst Best Man**- same author and similar vibes but you will definitely want to be friends with chief bridesmaid Frankie, as she takes on the wedding party to give her best friend the wedding she deserves. It's a comedy of errors with friendship at the root and a beautiful destination wedding in Barbados to dream of.

My first wine choice is a spring pink...rosé season is loading. This Languedoc from the South of France has floral notes, the main flavours are light red fruits that are perfect for a spring evening. A beautiful bottle from Lidl decorated in flowers it will also make a perfect gift to share with friends. It's a balanced rosé that incorporates wild aromas and refreshing mineral notes...a good pairing for any of the books above.

If you are looking for a luxurious choice, then treat yourself to a bottle of Perrier Jouet Belle Epoque; a gloriously decorated bottle of delicate painted flowers and you can buy matching glasses too. A fizz that is designed to find the special in every moment; and makes a lovely connection to the floral theme, particularly post heartbreak like Beth. It's pale with flavours of Peach, Honey and Citrus and perfect bubbles that have been produced since 1964. It's fresh tasting but will leave you with lingering memories like all the books mentioned this month. Enjoy the lighter evenings with as many books as you like, but please drink responsibly.

Rapid Relief Team serves 40 meals to celebrate key workers at care home in Blunsdon

The Rapid Relief Team (RRT) has come out to celebrate the important work of social workers at Ridgeway Rise care home in Blunsdon, Swindon, by serving 40 hot meals to staff.



Ridgeway Rise is a vital part of the Swindon community with a dedicated team that provides high-quality nursing, residential, dementia, and respite care to residents. In a show of appreciation for the continued hard work of the team at the care home who go above and beyond every single day, local RRT volunteers set up their red tents in front on Richardson Road and

cooked and served 40 meals, alongside drinks and refreshments. The RRT, which is made up of volunteers from the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church, puts compassion into action by offering practical support to charities, emergency services and other organisations on the frontline. As a token of appreciation for the support delivered by the RRT, the team were subsequently recognised with the care home's Kindness Honours Award 2025.



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Over the past few years, the issues surrounding shoplifting have become more prevalent in the news as shoplifting has become more organised and more brazen, with offenders often working in groups, seemingly not worried about being seen.

I've been told by shop managers that their staff have been assaulted when they've tried to intervene, and they are writing off thousands of pounds in stock.

My new Police and Crime Plan focuses on retail crime, and how we tackle the underlying causes and associated anti-social behaviour. This can make our main shopping centres, which should feel relaxed and inviting, less attractive and for some people, intimidating.

We also have to look at the financial costs to retail owners. For small and medium businesses, the disruption caused by shoplifting can be crippling. Whilst I know there are some people who'll say that the larger stores can afford to absorb the loss, but according to the Centre for Retail Research, shoplifting adds £133 to the cost of the average UK shopping bill each year.

In Salisbury, we have piloted a Business and Retail Crime Reduction Partnership, which links businesses with the police and local authorities, so we can build on the existing relationships we have, and foster new, stronger ties with the businesses and retailers in the city. We're now in the process of expanding the partnerships to other towns in the county.

We are also looking at ways to make it easier for businesses to report crimes to Wiltshire Police, so that a more intelligence rich picture can be built of where the shoplifting gangs are operating and the tactics they are using.

We have also funded anti-social behaviour (ASB) wardens to be a visible presence in our largest town and city centres, and ASB hotspot funding will continue for a further year, which means there will be extra police officer and PCSO patrols in the areas deemed to be most affected by anti-social behaviour.

By taking these measures and tackling the root causes of the anti-social behaviour which blights our commercial centres, I believe we are taking positive steps to making Wiltshire and Swindon a safer place to live and work

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