

Hambleden VALLEY

Group Magazine



Annual Subscription **£18**

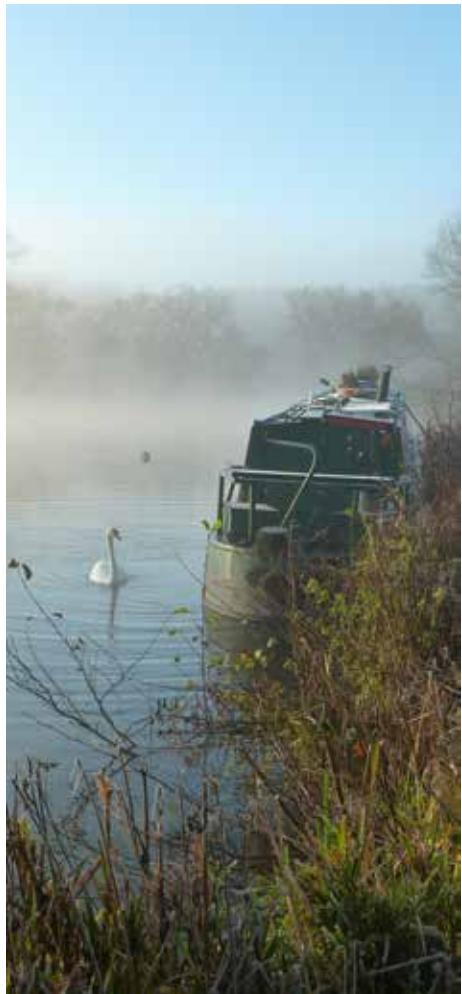
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with Frieth
& Skirnett
Fawley
Findest
Medmenham
Turville

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Jan 2026



The Hambleden Valley Group of Churches
"To see our lives and communities transformed by the love of God"



Cover: St Bartholomew's, Fingest in the snow. This page: Mist over the Thames.

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Weekday Services

Wednesday - 9.30am, Zoom

Daily Prayer - 10.15am, Holy Communion, Turville

Emergencies:

If you are unable to contact the Group Priests, please get in touch with your churchwarden. (see pages 26 and 27)

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All contributions are welcome, to the Editor, Penny McLeish

hambledenvalleyeditor@gmail.com

3 Abbey Cottages, Ferry Lane,
Medmenham SL7 2HB
Telephone 01491 571288

Please keep articles within 350 words. Copy deadline is 15th of the month.

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Henley-on-Thames.

Group Letter

Do you ever go into a room and forget why you went in there? Apparently, this is a very common human phenomenon and something to do with the way in which the brain resets when you enter a new room – immediately trying to assess the new environment for danger. We have to go back to where we came from to remember the reason we entered the room.

As we leave the room of 2025 and enter 2026, have we forgotten what we are doing here?

As I write this article in mid-December, I am in a different room. We are in full Advent flow, having just enjoyed the unique Railway Nativity, we now have six Carol Services (some traditional and some certainly not!). Immediately beyond those is Christmas Day itself, this one-day climax to the annual crescendo that begins in September. And, in the last embers of the year to New Year's Eve, more socialising is possible. Turkey sandwiches are inevitable.

So how does 2026 look to you? Do you welcome it with open arms? Or does it contain fears and worries? We have a world where there is a real mix of the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, the highs and lows of life; and our seasons reflect this.

We are urged to take each new day as it comes. I know I need to start my day with some quiet time with God, thanking Him for this new day and asking Him for His help as I journey through it. It's so important to take note of the magic moments of joy – often in surprising places – but also to mark and reflect upon the quieter moments of loss and pain.



As we connect with God on a daily or weekly basis, we need also of course to connect with one another. Churches are and always have been the people not the building. We should continue to welcome newcomers as they arrive, and the WhatsApp village groups really add to that valuable sense of community.

If we are closely connected to God, our loved ones and our community, we can look forward to 2026 knowing we will have support for the harder times as well as companions to share the celebrations.

Andy

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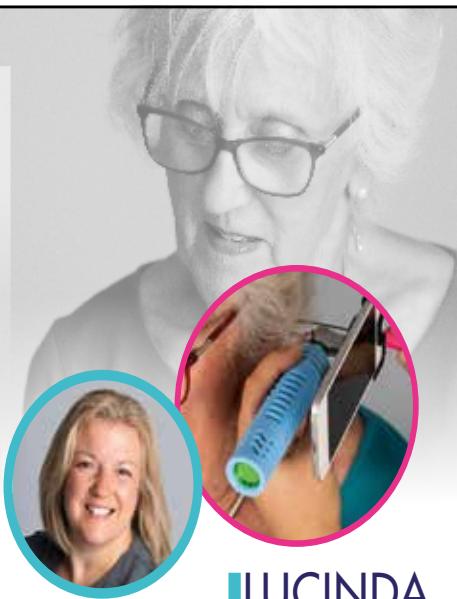
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GROUP NOTES



Wild Church!

If anyone has ever thought that the Christmas story has been romanticised, not so at the Wild Church Nativity on Northend Common! On a windswept afternoon nearly 100 of us relived the greatest story ever told.

The actors: Tattie Kertesz carrying the Star with sister Clem as the Angel Gabriel; readers: Lottie, on horseback, and Oliver Sturt, plus the Wild Choir gave nitty gritty performances worthy of Hollywood! We had real live cows with real live cow poo, real live sheep with real live sheep poo and a real live pony with real live horse poo and a newborn baby, Florence, playing Jesus. How did Mary manage to cope with those strips of cloth to swaddle her own baby Jesus?

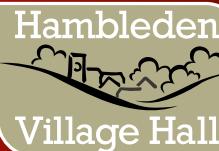
A very big thank you to everyone who made it happen!

With the age range of new born to very senior, I am reminded of the Psalmist who said *“Tell of the Lord to your children and your children’s children.”*

Gid Lacey

Written from the cow shed at milking time





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Rackleys had a rather busy 2025, hosting over 75 events last year! This included weddings, corporate Christmas Parties, National Garden Open day for Charity and our second Christmas Market!



Keep an eye out for plenty more events upcoming in 2026
. We can't wait to welcome you through our beautiful Barn doors!

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Contact the team today on 01494 412 515 or hello@rackleys.co.uk
for more information about hosting your event with us.

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Wild Church!

Wild Plough Sunday 11th January 2026

3pm



Do come and support our local farmers, farming communities and all who work on the land

and join us for the ancient tradition of plough blessing
Parmoor Park Farm, Frieth, RG9 6NL
(Look out for the Wild Church banners!)

Please bring some soil from your land/garden/window box to be blessed. Children are invited to bring tractor/plough toys large or small!

- Please bring a fold up chair to sit on and a flask of tea - there will be cake!!
- Do dress for the weather - we will be in a farmyard - we'll be in the grain store if wet.

Wild Church Team:

Rev Sue Morton 07808 517347 or suemorton131@gmail.com
Mary Campbell grandma.marycampbell@googlemail.com
Magdalena Dabrowska smd10206@gmail.com

hospital awaiting this transplant. To lift his spirits, we have bought him a Christmas tree and he has been decorating it with photos of the nurses who care for him.



Community Matters

At this time of the year, it is so heartening to experience first-hand the generosity of people and organisations who want to contribute to the families we support. I collected 28 Christmas stockings full to the brim of wonderful presents and goodies from Elga water treatment in Lane End which has become their annual donation for the children. Also, many kind gifts of Christmas food have appeared in the church or in our collection boxes from people we do not know but would love to thank.

Your prayers would be so much appreciated for a young man who we have been supporting for some time. His name is Callum and he has severe leukemia and has been in and out of hospital for treatment many times. Finally, a bone marrow transplant has been found and is coming from Germany, so he is back in

We do have to say an enormous thank you to all of you in the Hambleden Valley for your wonderful donations, not just the lovely Christmas food but also the thoughtful donations, too - 30 boxes of the cereal so popular with the children and dog and cat food, again so welcome as it enables our families to keep their pets. Also, we have received many boxes of laundry capsules, apple juice from a local distillery and many toys in perfect condition.

We have been able to give all of our families ASDA vouchers because of the ongoing financial support from individuals and organisations. They can spend these on food for Christmas, so again a huge thank you to everyone, it really will make Christmas a joyful occasion.

GROUP NOTES

On behalf of Community Matters I would like to wish you all a happy, blessed Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Judy Taylor

Major George Howson MC



Major George Howson MC was remembered on 28th November with a blessing, prayers and wreath laying on his grave in Pheasants Hill for the anniversary of his passing.

The wreath was presented and laid by Mr Christian Ellard from the Poppy Factory in Richmond. Rev Sue Morton led the service, blessing and prayers, accompanied by Rev Andy Storch. Major George Howson's grandson, Stephen Coleridge, read Psalm 121 for prayers.

A service of remembrance for a gentleman who asked for £2,000 from the Royal British Legion to start a poppy factory to honour his fellow soldiers. Major Howson's humble, inspirational and heartfelt thought has become an immense recognition for all men and women fallen in conflict.

Sammy Webb

It's the time for giving... have you considered leaving a gift to charity in your Will?

Many of us have particular causes we choose to support, be that by volunteering in and around the Hambleden Valley, or by fundraising or direct donations. The Gift Aid scheme allows charities (which includes all our churches) to reclaim tax at basic rate on our donations, and you may gain a tax benefit if you choose to set up a charitable foundation in your lifetime.

Many people want to continue to benefit their chosen charity after they die, by allowing for a charitable legacy in their Will. Not only will you be continuing to support your chosen cause after you die, but the tax relief your estate can claim may mean that there is more available for your family.

Inheritance Tax (IHT) is charged on the total value of your assets at the date of death. This is reduced by any legacies you leave to charity, with no limit. And, if you leave at least 10% of your estate to charity, the applicable rate of IHT will be reduced from 40% to 36%.

The usual rules on applying IHT to any gifts you make in the last 7 years of your life do not apply to charitable giving, so any donations you make in this period will reduce your estate's value for IHT purposes.

Finally, your estate will likely face a higher IHT bill if you don't leave a Will – there are steps you can take now to make sure that your family and your chosen charities benefit, rather than the taxman.

If you would like to explore your estate planning options, and benefit charities both before and after your death, contact Bethan Chant at The Burnside Partnership at bethan.chant@theburnsidepartnership.com

Bethan Chant



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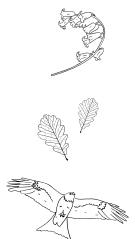
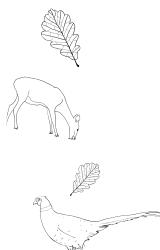


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Visit us and savour the taste of English excellence.

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Henley Talking Newspaper: Bringing Local News to Every Listener



A typical wireless free recording set-up!

For more than forty years, the Henley Talking Newspaper has been quietly transforming the way people in our community stay connected. Established in 1982 and run entirely by volunteers, this independent charity provides weekly audio recordings of local news for anyone who finds reading difficult—whether due to sight loss, health issues, or being housebound.

Each week, the Maurice Tate Room at Townlands Hospital becomes a makeshift recording studio. A controller and four volunteer readers come together to record news from Henley Standard. The finished edition is then copied onto a memory stick and posted out completely free of charge in a returnable wallet. For those who need one, the charity also provides an easy-to-use audio player—again, at no cost.

The aim is simple: to ensure that everyone, regardless of circumstance, can stay informed and feel part of the community.

The service is available on both a short- and long-term basis, and new listeners are always welcome. If you know someone

who struggles to read a newspaper but would enjoy keeping up with local life, Henley Talking Newspaper may be just what they need.

The charity is also keen to welcome new volunteer readers. The commitment is light—typically just a couple of hours every six weeks—and full guidance is provided. Volunteers often say how enjoyable and rewarding the experience is.

For more information about becoming a listener or a reader, please contact: jane.case@talktalk.net

Jane Case

WILDLIFE

Frieth Natural History Society

We would like to wish everyone a Wildlife-filled new Year!

Please save the date for our first event of 2026 - Frieth Village Hall at 7.30pm on Thursday 26th February. Jon Mason will give a talk entitled '*Wild London*'. Refreshments will be provided.

Anyone is welcome to join our events, but for non-members we make a small charge. For further details, please contact; Mary 01494 881501, Andy 01494 881586 or FNHS2023@gmail.com.

Mary Webb

Not Bourne Yesterday: Chalk Stream Communities of the Chilterns

This programme celebrates the unique chalk streams of the Chilterns — rare and beautiful natural habitats that are under threat — and aims to ensure that their future is shaped by the communities of the people who live around them. Water is a fundamental element of human life — physically, emotionally, or spiritually. We

WILDLIFE AND HAMBLEDEN

are committed to working collaboratively with a wide range of local communities to explore the heritage, stories, and significance of these rivers, and to co-create events, activities, guided walks, and opportunities that are meaningful, inclusive, and give voice to everyone's story.

Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the programme is currently in an 18-month Development Phase until September 2026. If the second-round bid is successful, the programme will be delivered over five years, with an anticipated completion in 2031.

If you wish, please fill in the survey below to add your voice to the story.



Martha Glennon
www.chilterns.org.uk/NBY

HAMBLEDEN

**Advent Candlelit Service at
St Mary the Virgin, Hambleden,
6pm, 30th November 2025**

Advent in the Christian church is the anticipation of the coming of the Lord. So it was appropriate that all our churches

came together to celebrate in the early evening of the first Sunday in Advent, in the darkened church of St. Mary's Hambleden, and welcome the Light of the Lord's coming.

The choir processed from the rear of the church and, as the congregation's candles were lit, we joined in the first of our hymns, *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*. This was just the beginning of a magnificent service of lessons, anthems and hymns, coming to the high point with the Gospel of Advent from Mark 1, preparing us, the people, for the coming of Jesus, to which we responded with a rousing rendition of *On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's cry, announces that the Lord is nigh*.

At a time when world events – and the weather – can sometimes conspire to make us feel low, the service left me feeling I was at the start of a wonderful period of time. I have come back to the final prayer regularly over the days since the service and repeat it here.

'O Lord you have set before us the great hope that your kingdom shall come on earth, and have taught us to pray for its coming; give us grace to discern the signs of its dawning, and to work for the perfect day when your will shall be done on earth, as it is in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'

Gareth Morris

Hambleden Cinema

Brighten up a January evening by joining us on Saturday 17th January for *The Ballad of Wallis Island*, rated 12. Eccentric lottery winner Charles, played by Tim Key, dreams of getting his favourite musicians, McGwyer, played Tom Basden, and Mortimer, played by Carey Mulligan, back together. The fantasy becomes real when the bandmates and former lovers

Continued on page 17



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Church Services and Events

From The Registers

Holy Matrimony

Dec 6 Andrew Thomas and Elisha McAuliffe Murphy

Turville

Rest in Peace

Nov 28	Angela Detsiny	Cremation
Dec 1	Angela Detsiny	Thanksgiving Service, Hambleden
Dec 9	Kenneth Williams	Burial of Ashes, Hambleden



Hambleden Valley Prayer Group

We have formed a contemplative listening and confidential prayer group, forming a circle round the valley with God at the centre. If you would like prayer please send a request to the email below:

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CALENDAR FOR JANUARY 2026

Pattern of Worship January 2026

Please see below for Sunday services. There will also be Zoom services at 9.30am on Wednesdays with Churchyard Prayers at Fawley at 12noon on Fridays. The 10.15am midweek Holy Communion on Wednesdays is at Turville. Please check our website www.hambleden-valley-churches.org.uk for latest updates or contact our administrator Jenny Neagle on 07769 599616 – hambledenvalleyoffice@gmail.com with any query.

Sunday Services

	Fawley	Fingest	Frieth	Hambleden	Medmenham	Turville
4th January 2026					10am Group Service	
11th January	11am Holy Communion	9am Holy Communion		3pm Wild Church Parnoor Park Farm	11am Holy Communion	
18th January			9am Holy Communion		8am BCP Holy Communion 10am Lay-led Morning Prayer	11am Village Service
25th January	11am Holy Communion	6pm Candlemas Evensong	9am Holy Communion		11am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion
1st February					10am Group Service with Farewell to Rev Sue Morton	

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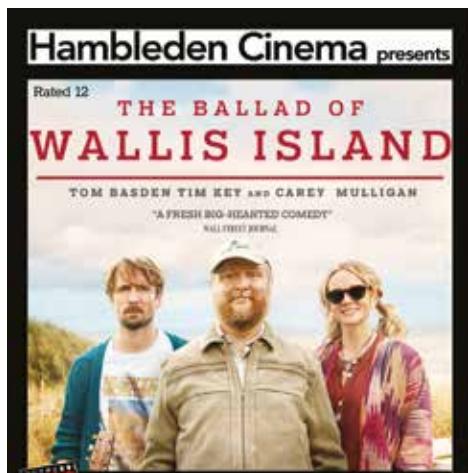
agree to play a private show at his home on Wallis Island. Old tensions resurface as Charles tries desperately to salvage his dream gig.

The trailer

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt27674982/>

Doors open 7pm, programme begins 8pm. Tickets £8 each can be bought from <https://www.hambledencinema.co.uk> and from Hambleden Village Stores. There will be a bar selling soft drinks, wine, beer and tempting delicious cinema snacks! In aid of raising funds for Hambleden Village Hall Registered Charity 30027.

Hambleden Cinema Team



Hambleden Cinema presents

Rated 12

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WALLSTREET JOURNAL

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Bibles etc. seeking a good home

These bibles and prayer books etc., ten in total and all with inscriptions to my late parents who were both from Hambleden,

are surplus to my requirements and seeking a good home. It would be preferable to take all ten together.



My mother was Ethel Plumridge (later Cook) from the hand laundry in Pheasant's Hill, seen in the old photograph with her sister Winifred and her parents Frederick and Elisha (always known as 'Nellie') on the horse and cart used for collections and deliveries of laundry.



My father was Alfred Charles Cook who was the son of the verger, grave-digger, Parish Rooms' caretaker and sometimes stand-in 'priest', Alfred George (and Caroline) Cook. His sister Edith was also a Hambleden resident and for many years worked in the butcher's shop which bore her husband's name, Arthur Wheeler.

I can be contacted by email on
hiddenhenley@gmail.com

Martin Cook

FAWLEY AND FRIETH



FAWLEY Railway Nativity



Last week I received an email from an old friend living in Wellington, New Zealand telling me of his midsummer Christmas with a tree dressed with lit candles and a magnificent Pohutukawa tree in full flower. I replied with details of a most significant event in the Fawley calendar which was about to take place, the Railway Nativity. I felt he should hear of what must be a unique English event.

The Rev Andy Storch, as 'the not so fat controller' in the uniform of station master, took the service and his comfortable smile reminded me of Raeburn's portrayal of the Rev Walker confidently enjoying his skating as much as Andy was enjoying his Controller duties.

With the arrival of the train, the 'Mince Pie Special' carrying the Archangel Gabriel, the service started and between carols the nativity story unfolded. The

pony, Poppy, playing a donkey carried Mary accompanied by Joseph to the inn to negotiate a room. The tunnel at the end of station, dressed as a stable, was all that was available. Shepherds with dogs and wise men with gifts paid homage to the newborn among much rejoicing. The service ended, to the children's delight, with Father Christmas alighting from the train in a storm of snow accompanied by our generous hostess for the evening, Lady McAlpine. Both were magnificently attired as they distributed presents to all the children. The collection taken was in aid of Fawley Church and our African Charity, Kasisi Orphanage, Zambia, which was started by our parishioner, the late Trevor Cooper.

My New Zealand friend was indeed astonished and, were it not for the photographs, would have put my description of this extraordinary local event down to exaggeration.

Jonathan Hunt

FRIETH

Frieth School

Key Stage 1 Nativity

Well done to Reception and KS1 for their amazing performances for the school and family members in their 2025 Nativity, '*Knock, Knock Nativity!*'. The children worked incredibly hard learning their lines and delivered truly

Continued on page 21



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brilliant performances. It is safe to say their rendition of Sheepy Sheep was the loudest the school has ever heard!



Christmas Fair

A heartfelt thank you to our amazing PTA for pouring so much time and energy into creating such a fantastic Christmas Fair. We are so lucky to have such supportive parents and a wonderful community so thank you to everyone who helped, attended, donated, or simply showed up to share in the Christmas joy!



Year 6 Victorian Day

Our Year 6 children stepped back in time for a full Victorian Day experience! Dressed for the era and armed with slate boards and strict classroom rules, they took part in traditional arithmetic, reading and writing and even sewing using Victorian-style equipment. The children threw themselves into the activities and

loved discovering what school life was like over 100 years ago - very different from today! A brilliant day of learning, fun, and history brought to life.



Tag Rugby

We took two teams to compete in the Berks & Bucks Cup: Frieth Falcons and the Frieth Harriers. Out of the six teams there, we finished 1st and 3rd! Huge well done to all the children who took part; you were all absolutely fantastic! An extra congratulations to the Frieth Harriers, who pulled off an incredible comeback in the final game, coming from 3 behind and scoring in the final play of the game to secure the cup! An amazing testament to their resilience, determination, and teamwork. We couldn't be prouder!



**Martin Gosling
Headteacher**

FINGEST



FINGEST

Fingest Litter Pick: A Community Effort

On Saturday 15th November, members of the local community gathered for the Fingest litter pick. The event organised by Caroline Harper and Gabby McMahon, saw an excellent turnout, with many residents coming together to help clean up the area.

A significant amount of litter was collected throughout Fingest, demonstrating the dedication and hard work of all participants. In addition to the litter removed, instances of fly tipping

were identified and duly reported to the Council.

Looking ahead, preparations are already in motion for another community litter pick, scheduled to take place in the spring. This forthcoming event will once again provide residents with the chance to unite and contribute positively to the local environment. Beyond the important task of tidying the area, the gathering will also offer an opportunity for neighbours to enjoy each other's company over tea and cake, reinforcing the strong sense of community spirit that defines Fingest.

Gabriella McMahon



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CHURCH AND VILLAGE ACTIVITIES AND CONTACTS

HAMBLEDEN VALLEY GROUP OF CHURCHES

Rector: The Revd. Andy Storch,
07811 430898, Revandystorch@gmail.com

Associate Priest: The Revd. Sue Morton,
01491 639286, suemorton131@gmail.com

Director of Music: Jo Hutchins
07909 608654 johutchins27@gmail.com

Organist Emeritus: Christine Wells BEM,
c@wells.vnworks.net

Group Treasurer: Stephen Sidders,
01491 639271 stephensidders@sky.com

Group Administrator: Jenny Neagle, 07769
599616, hambledenvalleyoffice@gmail.com

Weddings and Blessings: Jenny Neagle,
07769 599616,
hambledenvalleyoffice@gmail.com

Tea Club: St. Katharine's, Parmoor,
Tuesdays, 3 - 4.30pm
Wendy Duerden, 01491 638297,
wendy.duerden@techademic.net

Barney's Toddler Group: Frieth Village Hall,
Currently suspended

Hambleden Valley Garden Club:
Meetings October-March on the first Tuesday
of the month, Frieth Village Hall.
Clair Honnor 07773 387195

Website:
www.hambleden-valley-churches.org.uk

FAWLEY (ST MARY THE VIRGIN)

Churchwarden:

Vacant

Village Hall booking:
David Burton - davidburtn83@hotmail.co.uk

FINGEST (ST BARTHOLOMEW)

Churchwardens:

Brian Barnes, 01494 882613,
brianbarnes346@gmail.com
Jill Dean, 01491 638678,
jill@sundawn.uk.com

FRIETH (ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST)

Verger: Judy Hunt, 01494 882227,
ajh.claypit1@btinternet.com

Village Hall Bookings:
website www.friethvillagehall.org
email friethvillagehall@gmail.com
Tel 01494 880737

Frieth Natural History Society:
Mary 01494 881501, Andy 01494 881586,
FNHS2023@gmail.com

Frieth Village Society: Caroline Walker
01494 882333

Frieth Cricket Club: Ben Smiley
friethcricket@btinternet.com

Frieth Lunch Club: meets on last
Friday of the month at the Yew Tree Pub.
Judy Hunt, 01494 882227
ajh.claypit1@btinternet.com

HAMBLEDEN (ST MARY THE VIRGIN)

Churchwarden:

Vacant

Bell Ringing: Fri 6.45pm practice, Helen or
Karen, hambledenbells@mycomputer.email

Village Hall Bookings: Jamie Baker,
01491 410669, www.hambledenvillagehall.org

Pilates: Mondays 11 – 12 Fran Presho,
07951 019594

Bridge Club: Fridays 1.30 – 4.30
Frances Cugnoni, 01491 576409

Hambleden Social and Sports Club:
Open daily from 8pm Pat Eldridge,
01491 576067

Tennis Club: Heather Symons, 01491
577344, heathersymons16@hotmail.com

Tennis Coaching: Chris Marshall,
07801 999230, chrismarshall20@hotmail.com

MEDMENHAM (ST PETER AND ST PAUL)

Churchwarden:

Vacant.

Village Hall Bookings: Emma Tentori, 07759 014396

Uniformed organisations:

1st Danesfield Scouts, Cubs and

Beavers: leader Nick Currie, enquiries@danesfieldscouts.org.uk

Medmenham News:

medmenhamnews@icloud.com

SKIRMETT

Village Hall Bookings:

Bookings via the website:

skirmettvillagehall.org

Other enquiries:

skirmettvillagehall@gmail.com

TURVILLE (ST MARY THE VIRGIN)

Churchwarden:

Vacant

Bell Ringing: Wed practice, Rachel Wallace, 01494 883025 rachel@markjwallace.com

Artists' studios: Turville Studios open the first Sunday of every month 11am-4pm. Angela Fois turvillestudios@aol.com www.turvillestudios.co.uk

TURVILLE NORTHEND

Village Hall Bookings:

David & Susan Faragher 01491 638960 or 07563 903678, davidfaragher@fastmail.fm smfaragher@fastmail.fm

Yoga: Tuesdays 7pm, Andrea 07496 281341

Parish Council Contacts

Hambleden: Parish Clerk Lorna Coldwell 01494 881483, clerk@hambleden.org.uk, www.hambleden.org.uk

Medmenham: Parish Clerk Carole Burslem 01494 449215, mpc.clerk@gmail.com

Turville: Parish Clerk Lorna Coldwell, 01494 881483, turvilleparishcouncil@gmail.com, www.turvilleparishcouncil.org.uk

Fawley: Clerk to Fawley Parish Meeting Ross McDonald, 07769 971252 r.mcdonald2007@yahoo.co.uk

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