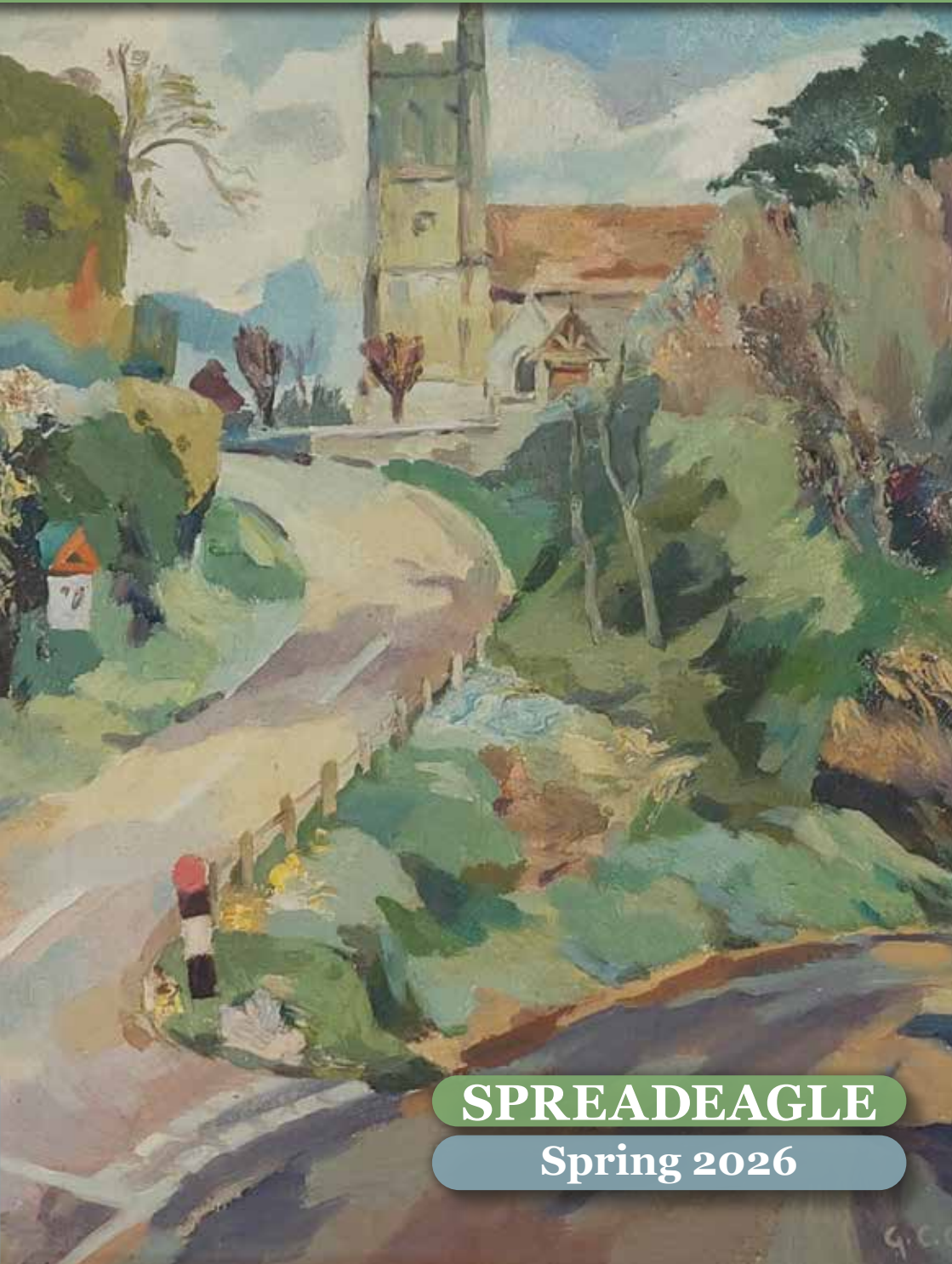


MELBURY ABBAS + CANN + WEST MELBURY



SPREADEAGLE

Spring 2026

Melbury and Cann Village Contacts

.....
Friends of Guys Marsh Prison www.friendsofguysmarsh.co.uk/contact

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Village Hall (Alan Kemp 07572 142854

VPA (Village Produce Association – Jane Shepherd) shepherd_jane@hotmail.com



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Front Cover: St Thomas's, Melbury Abbas

Back Cover: 'Spring in the Lane' by Gary Cook

FROM THE EDITOR

My first editorial is an easy one to write because its main purpose is to thank Rodney Atwood for all his efforts over many years as editor of this magazine. The quality of the Spreadeagle is a tribute to his hard work, determination and good humour. I had not realized, until recently, that seven hundred copies of the Spreadeagle are produced and distributed. Rodney has been a dedicated editor and coordinator and built up a group which supported him loyally and with great pleasure; these include proofreaders, advertising coordinators, contributors and distributors. He has also been much supported by his wife Harriet. Our local community has good reason to offer our thanks to them both. I am sure Rodney will continue to give me advice, for which I will be very grateful, and I look forward to getting the occasional article from him! We should also not forget the contribution that Juliet Bichard makes to the magazine in running the finances and organizing the advertising – another thank you is in order.

I hope you will find the articles in this edition interesting. Geoff Bichard writes another guide for a local walk, which is the second in his most welcome series,

particularly as many of the routes in the outer reaches of our own Parish resemble an obstacle course rather than a right of way. There is an article on Thomas Hardy and Shaftesbury, and one on a meeting that took place in the Village Hall nearly a hundred years ago. We have also decided to start a series of short articles on the history of Melbury Abbas. This will be drawn from two books. Many readers will remember Bob Breach, who wrote "Melbury Abbas, A Narrative History of a Dorset Parish". The second book is the WI sponsored "History of Melbury Abbas" compiled by Vera Barret, Eileen Tucker, Sylvia Dudman, Sheelah Turner, Hazel Giles, Marilyn Webb and Cindy Jefferson. I hope these will be of interest; please tell me if they are not! Sadly there are the obituaries of Olive Henstridge and David Wright. Jane Shepherd has made her usual valuable contribution and Lavinia Phillips has given us a charming poem. Also sadly we publish the last article on Woodfrys Farm as Liam and Hannah Jefferson have too much on their plate at the moment. But Hannah will now provide the Village Diary and Alan Kemp will report on the Village Hall. Thank you to them.

The front cover picture is a rather lovely depiction of St Thomas's and has an interesting twist. I came across the picture in the ARTCENTRIC framers



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in Shaftesbury recently. It was put in for framing some years ago but was never picked up. The business has recently changed hands and the current owners do not have any details other than they think it belonged to someone named Tapper. If anyone knows anything about it perhaps they would let me know or phone Glen McFarlane Innes at the framers on 01747 858357. Could it be connected with the Dr Tapper whose name is shown on the list of GPs in the Shaftesbury Medical Centre?

St Thomas's Church

We continue to enjoy two services each month, Morning Prayer (Matins) at 11:15 on the 2nd Sunday of each month and Holy Communion at 11:15 on the 4th Sunday. This pattern changed at Christmas with a candle-lit Carol Service on Sunday 14th December and a Christmas Communion on Christmas Day. The Carol Service attracted a congregation of over 90 people – the highest number in recent memory.

St Thomas's belongs to the Shaftesbury Team of churches led by Rector Revd Donna Gibbs and Team Vicar Revd Dr Helen Williams. Sadly for the team, Rev Helen has announced she will be leaving us for the position of Archdeacon Designate in the Cornwall Diocese. She has been a valuable minister, demonstrating spirituality, energy, hard work and a lovely sense of humour. Her physical stamina and determination were put to good use in Dorset Historic Churches Ride and Stride

Finally, this magazine can be only of a limited size, but if you feel you can make a contribution, please do send it to me and the earlier the better. The deadline is 20 July. We aim to keep the magazine relevant to local interest but we do not wish to be too inflexible in this. My contact details are within these pages.

Colin Sandbach 



fund-raising. She will be greatly missed and we wish her well in her new ministry. To offset our loss somewhat, we expect to welcome a new curate (trainee vicar) in June.

Our Quinquennial Inspection late last year reported the church fabric in good condition, a tribute to the hard work of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) and especially Robert Crichton's fundraising

for the re-roofing of the northern half of the church roof. Financing such work is difficult if it depends only on the regular church attendees. Many perceive the church as a permanent feature of the village, always there for baptisms, weddings and funerals as well as special services - Easter, Christmas, Remembrance, Harvest, Mothering Sunday and Pet Service. May we ask that everyone who values the church's presence considers ways to assist in ensuring its survival.

Susie Arthurs' memorable funeral service, reported on in this magazine, was unusual in that the wake was held in the church by husband Lawrence's request and was greatly valued by those present.

By the time you read this, a special service on 15th March will have celebrated Mothering Sunday and Communion on 22nd March will have been followed by the Annual Parish Church Meetings (APCM) at which Parochial Church Council (PCC)

members are elected. Reports from the past year are presented. Our annual Pet Service accompanied by (mainly) four-legged friends will be on 14th June when we hope for the usual good weather enabling the service to take place out of doors. Church breakfast on the first Friday of each month brings together churchgoers and non-churchgoers for a friendly social occasion.

We currently have no churchwarden and would welcome additional PCC members. Volunteers for other essential tasks to supplement our current volunteers are always welcome. No particular experience or knowledge are needed – just willingness!

The church's most important festival, remembering Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, will be celebrated by a Meditation at noon on Good Friday 3rd April followed by Holy Communion at 11:15 on Easter Sunday, 5th April.

John Porter 850670 

If you would like to contribute to the Spring 2026 issue, content or advertising or photography, we'd love to hear from you...

**Email: sandbach147@btinternet.com
Copy Deadline: Monday, 20th July 2026**



Melbury Abbas & Cann Parish Council Report

.....

Following the referendum in December 2025 Parish residents overwhelmingly agreed the village Neighbourhood Plan and this will now go forward to be incorporated into the Dorset Council's Local Plan when agreed. It does mean that future planning decisions will need to relate to the village NP and may give some protection against inappropriate large developments. This has been over 7 years in the making and has largely been due to the dogged determination of the previous PC chairman William Kenealy who saw it through to conclusion, even after moving away. The PC showed its appreciation by sending William a book token plus a signed copy of Bob Breach's book on the history of the village.

Work started in January 2026 on the controversial stabilisation scheme to change the once protected densely wooded slopes of the Cranborne Chase Natural Landscape area known as Dinahs Hollow with its richly diverse eco system leading into Melbury Abbas. This followed a public Enquiry in July 2025 and the Secretary of State for Transport's decision to approve the scheme and Natural England's decision to issue various licences to disturb the habitat of protected bird

and animal species. Dorset Council, as the regulatory authority, had previously given Dorset Council Highways permission to lift the Woodland Tree Protection Order protecting all the trees and flora in the ancient holloway. At the beginning of February work started on a new carrier drain from Cann Common through Dinah's Hollow to the River Sturkle. This was initially delayed due to weather conditions and the unusually high level of the River Sturkle, but appears now to be back on track. The first stage of the tree removal was carried out in late February on an industrial scale. An enormous machine literally lifted whole mature trees off of the slopes and dropped them into a huge chipping machine. Nothing was left but trailers full of wood chips, which presumably went off to a power station or other industrial process. Under the terms of the dormouse licence, tree stumps of 300mm high have been left until April, to allow the hibernating dormice to come out of their state of "torpor" and move to other hazel woodland. Drilling and insertion of the soil nails can then commence.

In order to minimise the disruption to Melbury Abbas residents and commuters,



as well as residents on both the C13 and A350, a number of diversions, one way systems, reduced speed restrictions and traffic lights on the A350 have been introduced. These will remain during the Dinahs Hollow road closure. Details are on the PC and Dorset Council websites. Although there were a lot of issues with speeding and vehicles travelling in the wrong direction initially, this has now largely settled down. The odd vehicle does still try to traverse the lanes in the wrong direction. Dorset Police will be monitoring this so please keep to the reduced speed limits and one way system.

There are currently 2 vacancies on the Parish Council. Please do give some consideration to becoming a member, as decisions made by the PC affect us all. Bi-monthly PC meetings are held in the Village Hall and are open to the public.

If you are concerned about speeding vehicles in your part of the village, please let us know or join your local CSW group. Residents living at Cann Common or on the A350 are needed to help protect their areas.

Roy Phillips MBE

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Thomas Hardy and Shaston

If any author is synonymous with a county then surely it must be Thomas Hardy and Dorset. He wrote in the second half of the 19th century; probably his most famous works are *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Some find his books depressing as he tends to stress the unsuccessful struggles of mankind against nature and destiny. There can be little doubt, however, that he was a very great writer.

Born near Dorchester, Hardy used his intimate knowledge of Dorset to great effect. One feature was that the fictional place names of his novels were aligned with real place names. We probably all know that *Casterbridge* was Dorchester and that *Shaftesbury* was Shaston; when Hardy wrote about them we can be sure that his prose reflected a certain reality. Shaston, however, is not mentioned widely by Hardy. It features briefly in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* but is more prominent in *Jude the Obscure*. Published in 1894, the book concerns a failed marriage and a failed career. It was hammered by the critics as being immoral, and Hardy never wrote another novel; he concentrated on his poetry and many people consider him a better poet than writer.

Whilst *Jude the Obscure* is possibly his most depressing book, it makes some interesting comments about Shaston. Jude arrived in the town to take up a teaching position. He had a "toilsome climb" up Gold Hill to a school in Bimport. The

headmaster lived in Old Grove Place which is modelled on the present Ox House. Jude wanders past the Dukes (Grosvenor) Arms, through "the venerable graveyard of Trinity Church and its avenues of limes" and into Park Walk. In this abridged version Hardy writes thus of the town:

"It is a city of a dream. Vague imaginings of its castle, the Abbey, its twelve churches, its shrines, mints, chantries and hospitals, all ruthlessly swept away, throw the visitor into a pensive melancholy which the stimulating atmosphere and limitless landscape around him cannot dispel. It was a burial place of a king and queen. The bones of Edward the Martyr brought Shaston a renown which made it the resort of pilgrims from every part of Europe, maintaining its reputation far beyond the shores of England...but the Dissolution was the death-knell... and now the natural singularity of the town remains, and one of the quaintest spots in England, stands virtually unvisited today ... despite its medicinal air."

It has a unique position on the summit of a steep and imposing scarp, rising from the deep alluvial Vale of Blackmore and with views over Melberrie Beacon and three counties. It is best reached on foot or by light vehicle; it is hardly accessible to these but by a sort of isthmus on the north east that connects it with the high chalk tableland on that side. Its situation rendered water the great want of the town and in living memory horses, donkeys and men have been seen toiling up the winding ways laden with tubs and barrels filled with water from the wells beneath the mountain. The difficulty of the water supply and the fact that in former times the town passed through a curious period of corruption

led Shaston to have three remarkable consolations to man such as not afforded elsewhere. It was a place where the churchyard lives nearer heaven than the church steeple, where beer was more plentiful than water and where there were more wanton women than honest wives and maids. It was also said that in the middle ages the inhabitants were too poor to pay their priests.

There is another peculiarity - a modern one - in that it is the resting place and headquarters of the proprietors of wandering vans, shows, shooting-galleries and other itinerant concerns whose business lay largely at fairs and markets. Here in this cliff town they stood in stultified silence, bearing foreign names and here they remained all winter until the following spring."

The reference to the churchyard and steeple is interesting. The steeple must be that of St James. The graveyard is probably Bury Litton, which is at the southwest end of Bimport and overlooks St James. It was originally the site of a Saxon church. This was displaced by the Norman Church of St John the Baptist which has disappeared with but little trace apart from the yew trees. Its graveyard, though, was used by St James from 1662 to 1897 and today remains a peaceful, if well hidden, place to visit.



Melbury Abbas & Cann Village Hall

Bookings & Enquiries

Email: melburyvillagehall@gmail.com

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Walk No.2 - Stubhampton

This walk is along lesser known bridleways between Stubhampton and Ashmore. Stubhampton valley is the source of the little river Tarrant, which gives its name to Gunville, Hinton, Launceston, Monkton, Rawston, Rushton, Keyneston and Crawford, as it flows south down the valley to join the Stour at Spetisbury.

Drive south on the C13, past the turnings to Compton Abbas airfield and then Ashmore, on for a mile or more to take the next turn left signposted Stubhampton and Tarrant Gunville. After two miles the first houses of Stubhampton appear on the left. As the road swings right, there is a triangular parking space on the left in front of a large metal gate.

Go through the side-gate and along the track between fences, heading north. After half a mile the fields on the left are replaced by woodland, but the grassy hillside to the right is still visible through light scrub. After 200 yds woodland appears ahead also. Where the right hand fence ends, turn right to climb the hill on a path along the edge of the wood. Not unduly steep, it becomes less severe quite quickly. Below to the left is a gully with a track.

At the top of the rise, the path opens up views over the fields to the right and on towards Blandford. In spring and early summer the woods are carpeted with bluebells, and you may spot the parasitic, gummy, pink toothwort growing on the roots of the hazels along the path. After



a while ignore a turning to the left with a wooden signpost to Ashmore. Continue on further, still with fields on the right, until the track goes more steeply downhill to the bottom of the little valley.

Go through the bridleway gate on the right and stride down the lovely grassy combe, through a gate into a smaller field and then through a further gate to pick up the surfaced lane. And so onward, passing a redbrick house on the left and later a smallholding on the right with noisy dogs in kennels. Continue on to reach the Stubhampton road. Turn right for 100 yds to your car.

About three miles, easily completed in an hour and a half and not very strenuous. A bit of mud in places is easily bypassed. Not spectacular, but very pleasant exercise.

Geoff Richard ↻

Melbury Centenarian Vera Barrett

Vera Barrett, former Melbury resident at Old Horders Farmhouse on French Mill Lane, celebrated her 100th birthday on 10th February. Vera and her late husband George farmed for many years at Old Horders and previously ran 'The World's End' public house near Bere Regis. The story of Vera's war-time experiences was published in the Christmas 2020 *Spreadeagle* under the title 'From Regent Street to Bere Regis'. Vera's family were in London and she was fourteen, when the German bombing of the capital started. She, her brother and her mother were evacuated to Bere Regis, where they stayed with the redoubtable Mrs Brown. There they found Spartan conditions, followed her strict house rules, and when her well went dry, carried water up from the village pump. Their London home was hit by bombs four days after they left, but her father was unhurt. They moved to another family, the kinder Mr and Mrs Cheeseman, and thence to a cottage of their own, rented for five shillings (25p) a week. Father joined them as did three evacuee brothers from Southampton. Vera worked at potato picking and sugar beet hoeing. Father had a vegetable garden and they kept rabbits, but had not the heart to eat them, as intended. After the war they never returned to London, but continued life in Dorset. Vera married George Barrett and they had children, Ken and Wendy. Grandchildren followed, Luke, Megan and Joe, and great grandson Ned. Settled in Melbury, they



were stalwart supporters of the Village Hall, the VPA, often winning prizes at the summer show, and Shaftesbury Bowls Club. Vera's 100th birthday was celebrated by a tea party with Melbury friends, all former Women's Institute members, and a lunch at the Bowls Club. The chairman's speech and presentation of flowers were tributes to Vera's long association with the club. Family and numerous friends applauded enthusiastically.

Rodney Attwood ↻



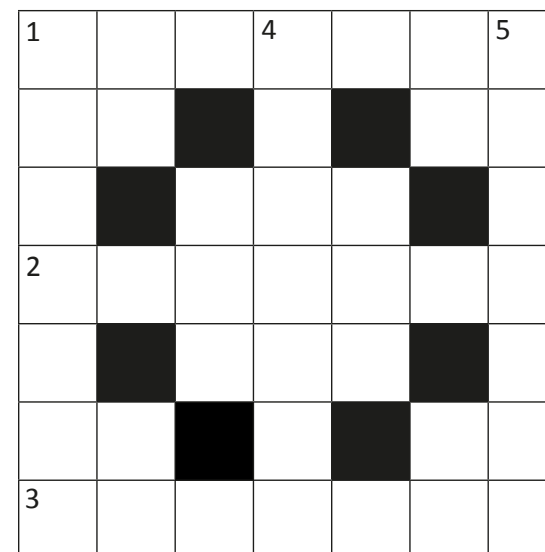
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1. Much Loved
2. Most Close
3. Motives

Clues Down

1. Cad
4. Egg Producing Organs
5. Cleaning Cloths

Clues Diagonal

1. Divulges To An Enemy
5. Start A Letter

Answers on Page 24

Crossword by:
Lawrence Arthurs



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The History of Melbury Abbas - Part 1

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Melbury was known by many names in its early history - Meleburge, Meleberie, Melebur and Melebyr to name but four. The Abbas was only conjoined with it in the 12th century. The first known accurate historical record that exists for Melbury is the Domesday Book compiled in 1086 AD for William the Conqueror. But, despite this lack of evidence in our early history, we have clues that can help us understand how people lived in the valley of the Sturkel, long before the Normans came to our shores.

In the Stone Age Mesolithic Period (around 4000 BC) it is known that humans lived here because, in the 1980s, a small flint axe and arrowheads were found in East Melbury and at Manor Farm. Similar objects have been found at Springhead and Berwick St John. Later, in the Bronze Age (2500 – 600 BC), seven burial barrows were constructed on the south west side of Breeze Hill, although these have been badly damaged by modern agricultural practices. In the Iron Age farming became more important and the idea of structured fields was developed. Again on Breeze Hill there is a hundred acre site of old agricultural land now covered by Melbury Wood, and only really visible from the air. It is known from evidence found on Hadrian's Wall that the people of this area developed into a tribe called the Durotriges. They lived in small round timber houses, with thatched roofs, surrounded by rectangular fields.

They made distinctive dark brown pottery and developed a silver coinage. They spoke a language which was akin to Welsh. They must have been warlike because their territory was (and still is) littered with hill forts, though not at Melbury. On the wider scale, things were not as backward as we may think; trade was conducted with Europe and exquisite jewellery was made. The construction of Stonehenge, not so far from Melbury, is a reminder of their sophistication.

This is what the Romans found when they invaded for the second time in 43 AD. Dorset fell to the invaders after bitter fighting which lasted twenty years. The Roman forces in the south west were commanded by Vespasian, later a Roman Emperor. He captured Hod Hill in 43 AD and we can be almost certain that his forces passed through Melbury to take advantage of the commanding views that it offered. A road was built from Badbury Rings, heading north which passes Melbury at Win Green; traces of it can still be seen. Eventually Melbury became part of a large Roman community or civitas. In our case it was that of Dorchester or Durnovaria. In 2023 the remains of a Roman building was found in the parish, with signs of a blacksmith's hearth in it. There were discoveries of everyday objects and also a Roman coin with an engraving of Salus, the Goddess of Welfare. According to Bob Breach "it is not sensible to imagine

Roman citizens gossiping in Latin in Melbury, though this would have happened in Durnovaria which resembled a small provincial town in Italy". Things probably went on much as before; farming methods slowly improved, the pagan gods were worshipped, and society benefited from the Pax Britannica, which lasted for four hundred years.

But empires do not last forever. By 410 AD the Roman legions had withdrawn from England to protect Italy. In their

wake came the Picts and Scots and then Saxons from Germany. These were the Dark Ages and we can be certain of very little. It was an invasion like that which we witness today in Europe – the gradual but sometimes violent movement, of people over time. The Durotriges held out for a hundred years, but we know that by the end of the 7th century the Saxons had conquered the West Country. They became a great people, and their language is the root of modern English.

Quercus Robor

So beloved, majestic form whose beating heart
For centuries has formed a part
Of our history, timber for homes and ships,
Your four square face a life support
For hosts of birds and plants and lichens.

One hundred years of growth is but a blink
A nod to future strength with clear survival rings,
While tiny egg cup acorns spread the reach
Of your moss covered branches, hideout of a King,
Adored by adventurous children.

Grey furrowed bark with skeletal form under winter skies,
Yields roost crevices for bats, chiselled woodpecker holes.
As Spring arrives, so too the migrant birds,
With whispers of wood sorrel and bluebell chimes.
You carry the weight of history with dignity, and
So inspire brave hearts with fortitude.

Lavinia Phillips



VILLAGE DIARY SPRING/SUMMER 2026

March 2026

Sun 22nd	11.15am	Communion	Parish Church
Wed 25th	9.15am	Pilates	Village Hall
Sat 28th	10am	Visiting ringers ringing a Quarter Peal	Parish Church
Sun 29th	9.30am	Palm Sunday. Team Service	St Peter's Church
	11.15am	Team Service	Parish Church
	2pm	Music at Melbury	Village Hall
Tue 31st	10am-12	Community Coffee Morning	Village Hall

April 2026

Wed 1st	9.15am	Pilates	Village Hall
	7.30pm	Parish Council Meeting	Village Hall
Fri 3rd	12 Noon	Good Friday. Reflections on the Cross	Parish Church
Sat 4th	5pm onwards	Village Social	Village Hall
Sun 5th	11.15am	Easter Sunday. Family service and Easter Egg Hunt	Parish Church
Wed 8th	9.15am	Pilates	Village Hall
Sun 12th	11.15am	Matins	Parish Church
Wed 15th	9.15am	Pilates	Village Hall
Sun 19th	1pm	Baptism	Parish Church
Wed 22nd	9.15am	Pilates	Village Hall
Sun 26th	10am	Communion	Parish Church
	2pm	Music at Melbury	Village Hall
Tue 28th	10am-12	Community Coffee Morning	Village Hall
Wed 29th	9.15am	Pilates	Village Hall

May 2026

Fri 1st	8.30am	Church Breakfast	Parish Church
Sat 2nd	5pm onwards	Village Social	Village Hall
Wed 6th	7.30pm	Parish Council Meeting	Village Hall
Sun 10th	11.15am	Matins	Parish Church
Sun 24th	11.15am	Communion	Parish Church
Tue 26th	10am-12	Community Coffee Morning	Village Hall
Sun 31st	2pm	Music at Melbury	Village Hall

VILLAGE DIARY SPRING/SUMMER 2026

June 2026

Wed 3rd	7.30pm	Parish Council Meeting	Village Hall
Fri 5th	8.30am	Church Breakfast	Parish Church
Sat 6th	1pm	Wedding	Parish Church
	5pm onwards	Village Social	Village Hall
Sun 14th	11.15am	Pet Service	Parish Church
Sun 28th	2pm	Music at Melbury	Village Hall
Tue 30th	10am-12	Community Coffee Morning	Village Hall

July 2026

Thu 2nd	7pm	PCC Meeting	
Fri 3rd	8.30am	Church Breakfast	Parish Church
Sat 4th	5pm onwards	Village Social	Village Hall
Sun 26th	2pm	Music at Melbury	Village Hall
Tue 28th	10am-12	Community Coffee Morning	Village Hall

Church services are normally at 11:15 a.m. on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, unless otherwise noted.

Church breakfasts are at 8.30am the first Friday of each month at the parish church, but please advise Christine Potter christine.15@btinternet.com that you would like to come.



Community Coffee Morning

The monthly coffee morning is held in the village hall from 10am to 12am on the last Tuesday of every month. Although we have regular locals we would love to see some new faces. We are a friendly bunch so come for a chat with a mug of fresh coffee from our local roastery in Semley or a cup of tea with a choice of biscuits. We welcome dog walkers who stop off for a drink and locals who just come for a chat. It would love to see you there one Tuesday.

Dates for the next few months are:

31st March, 28th April, 26th May 30th June 28th July and 25th August.



Telephone Box Library



Driving or walking around the village you will pass the old phone box near the end of Hillside and the junction with the A350. This houses our village library. It is full of books in many different genres so please look as you go by. If you see something interesting, take it away to read. When you have finished it either bring it back or pass it on to someone else. If you have books to spare it would be very kind drop them off at the phone box. If you feel so inclined write a short review of the book on a piece of paper and tuck it inside the front cover - it might encourage others to give it a try. If you really enjoy something contact the Editor and ask for it to be reviewed in this magazine.

Jane Shepherd 🐣



Melbury Abbas and Cann VILLAGE PRODUCE ASSOCIATION

After a wetter than usual winter, we are all looking forward to spring and summer this year. Our Spring meeting will be in the Village Hall on Wednesday April 22nd at 7pm when the bar will be open. We will then have a talk by Dave Allen on Dorset smugglers. As this is of general interest and promises to be entertaining it is open to everyone at a cost of £5 a ticket for non-members. There will also be refreshments from the kitchen in the break after the talk. There is a raffle and our usual flower from your garden for members. Show schedules will be available at this meeting.

The Annual Show will be in the Village Hall on Saturday August 8th 2.45pm. The hall will be open from 10 to 12 am for members to bring in their entries. We had a lovely show last year with plenty of entries but would love to see even more this year, especially from new members. There are a wide

range of classes to enter in flowers, vegetables, handicrafts including art and photos, and home baking, preserves and drinks. You can decide on your entries on the day, depending on what you have available; we hope this will encourage more people to enter.

The AGM is in the Hall on Wednesday September 8th. The doors open at 7 pm and the meeting starts at 7.30 pm. The speakers will be from the Blooming Wild Nursery at Horsington in Somerset. They are specialists in native plants and pollinators. From experience I can say they have a great range of plants both common and unusual and are very knowledgeable and interesting speakers. They usually bring plants for sale and I am sure some of you will be tempted to buy something to take home for your garden. We would love to welcome new members. The annual fee is only £5.

Jane Shepherd 🐣



Shaftesbury Refugee Group

There are some 200 families in this area who make contact with the Shaftesbury Refugee Group. It is done through our Ukrainian WhatsApp page which gives them information about our work, possibilities of getting together and excursions. We also offer help with English conversation and driving skills and activities for children and young people.

In the next months those who wish will come together in May to celebrate their glorious vyshyvankas (embroidered over blouses with regional motifs), to spend time in the countryside for Ivan Kupula Day in June and to acknowledge Ukrainian Independence Day in August.

Once a month there are informal gatherings in both Shaftesbury and Gillingham for families to chat and spend gentle time together. Although arranged by trustees of the SRG, they are very much a time for Ukrainians to get together..



This month we are planting a tree in memory of Jenny Willoughby who was so helpful when we started the Refugee Group. Please do look at our website and perhaps join in one of our Quiz Nights which always have Syrian food cooked and served by one of the two Syrian families who were our first refugees and who now have British citizenship; www.shaftesburyrefugeegroup.org.

Sara Jacson 🐸

If you would like to contribute to the Spring 2026 issue, content or advertising or photography, we'd love to hear from you...

Email: sandbach147@btinternet.com

Copy Deadline: Monday, 20th July 2026



Melbury Abbas & Cann Village Hall News

A huge thank you to everyone who attended the quiz night in the hall at the start of March, raising much needed funds to support the hall. The hall was fully booked with close to 80 people onsite. Special thanks to Ping Bowman and her helpers for the fantastic curry. Thanks also to the bar team and committee for running the event.

As we move into April, we are saying a sad goodbye and thank you to James Richards who has been our treasurer and lead the committee for the transition in the last two years. James has been a fantastic support and advocate for the village hall and we thank him for all of his hard work at getting to this stage.

We are looking for a treasurer, and a new committee member to join our existing committee. We are a friendly committee of 8, with everyone playing a role in different elements of running the hall.

We've also got room for one or two more bar volunteers – this is mostly in the winter on Monday or Thursday evenings, and then the village socials on the 1st of the month.

Additionally, thanks to the support of the Parish Council, we also have a paid



opportunity for someone who is self-employed. It will be 1-2 hrs a week as clerk, supporting the administration and compliance for the hall, and also helping to revamp our website.. It will involve a monthly visit to the Hall, but the rest can be done from the comfort of your own home.

If any of those sound interesting and you would like to find out more, please call Hannah on 07376498672.

Hannah Jefferson 🐸

A 1930 Report from the Melbury Abbas Village Hall - Persian Pictures and Missionary Effort

This article is an abridged version of one from the Western Gazette of 6 June 1930

An evening of musical interest was enjoyed by a numerous gathering in the village hall when the Rector and Mrs Boyland showed "Scenes of Persian Life" having spent many years in that country as missionaries. The first scene was introduced by the Rev A K Boyland and the curtain rose on a typical consulting room in Persia, the doctor being impersonated by Mr Wm Parsons, whose ample robe and flowing beard imparted an air of mystery. The patients suffered much pain while "undergoing" treatment. The "patients" were played by the Misses Wake, Edmonds, Grace, Miles, Irene, Joyce Garrat and Joan Dibben. The presiding genius of the dispensary waiting room was played by Mrs Taylor of Wimborne. She had also lived in Persia for some years and might therefore claim to understand the whims and fancies of the invalids.

The differences between the past and present in Persia were exemplified by the scene "an English

doctor sees his patients". Mrs Boyland played the doctor and then the Rector gave a very lucid and informing address on Persia which was listened to with much interest. After an interval for refreshments Mrs Burt sang "The Better Land" which was much enjoyed. The proceeds of the evening are to be divided between a school in Karmon, Persia and the local company of Boy Scouts.

The Village Hall was originally a rifle club but it evolved into the Village Club in the 1920s. The first chairs were purchased in 1923 and the kitchen and cloakroom added in 1946 with the bar opening in 1947. In the 1960s the Hall fell into disrepair. In 1973 a group of local residents, working with the Trustees, raised sufficient money from the Parish Council, the Dorset District Council, voluntary donations and loans to reopen it in 1975 for the cost of £9,000. All the building and decorating was done by volunteers.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

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Down	1. Bounder	4. Ovaries	5. Dusters
Diagonal	1. Betrays	5. Dear Sir	

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Woodfrys Farm Update

What a winter! Not too cold but the major event was all of that rain culminating with Storm Chandra. For us, we saw the stream at the highest it has ever been, with our pond and the stream joined together, like a huge wetland. The entry into the Water Meadow itself was underwater above the top of our wellies which stopped the humans in their tracks. The dogs carried on regardless!

Thankfully it is all back to normal now, and we've started to enjoy some warmer days. We have been able to get on with some hedge laying at the entrance to the farm, including taking out a number of trees that had been badly damaged by squirrels in the past. We are replanting with hazel and other varieties in this area to make a small area of coppice and hopefully keep growing our wild garlic which is a welcome fresh green at this time of year. We have planted two varieties of mulberry and two quince trees to add to our orchard fruits and hope the deer stay well away.

We have recently bought a few in-lamb Wiltshire Horn sheep and have had some lovely lambs arrive. Wiltshire Horns are a self-shedding breed which

we have kept before, so there is no need for shearing and they leave their wool at their scratching points for the birds to use. They've settled in well and it's great to watch the lambs skipping and playing in the sun.

We are waiting to hear when our hens can get the all-clear to return outdoors thanks to the 'flockdown' for avian flu. Last year it was May, but we are hoping it will be earlier this year as they would love to be out and about now the sun has started to shine a bit more.

Wishing you all a happy Spring. Not long until the bluebells arrive, and we will hopefully have lots of flowers this year thanks to all that rain!

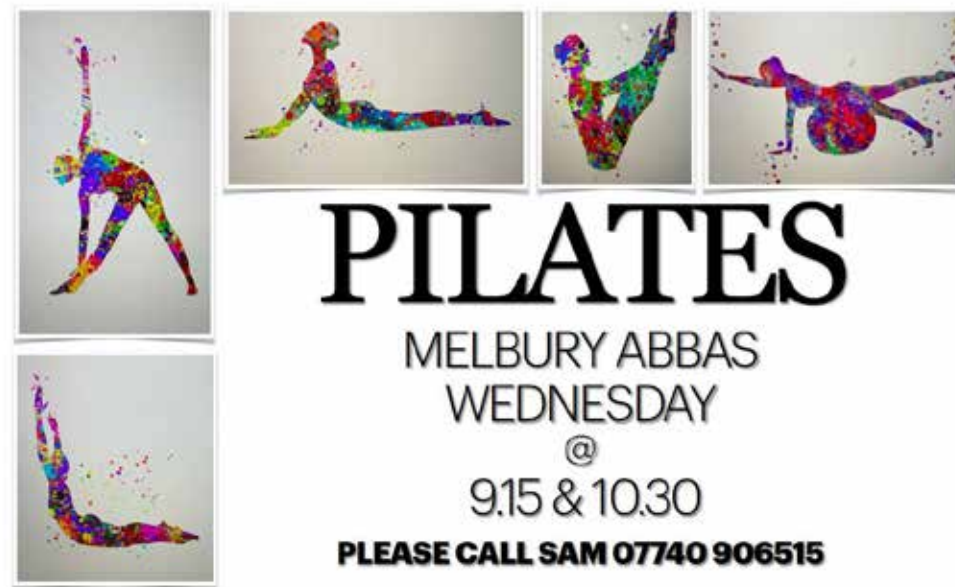
Hannah & Liam Jefferson 🌸



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David John Wright

26th January 1941 – 5th November 2025

The gathering of family and friends on 11th December at Salisbury Crematorium was a moving occasion to celebrate the life of David Wright. The tribute combined music, poetry, reminiscences and humour. The coffin, carried by members of his family, was draped in the Union Jack, and was brought in to Mascagni's intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

David grew up in Hertford. Having been a CCF cadet at Grammar School, he set his heart on the Army. He went to Sandhurst and was commissioned into the Royal Anglian Regiment. David's varied and satisfying service of duty took him to far-flung posts at home and abroad. After retirement, he took a Retired Officer's post at the Royal School of Signals in Blandford.

David and Pam Wright had been childhood friends. They met up again in Berlin and were married in April 1966. They had two sons, John and Bill; grandchildren followed - George, Tom, Rose, Henry and Florence. Speakers remarked on David's qualities as a loyal husband, devoted to his wife Pam and to his family. He loved talking to them about his enjoyment of history, the outdoors and his garden. He had strong views, a spontaneous sense of humour and intense loyalty to his Regiment. Royal Anglian ties were much in evidence among the congregation as old comrades gathered to say farewell.

Bill communicated his Dad's amusing eccentricities. Life-long friend Tony Allan celebrated annual meetings and army postings, and read Henry Holland's poem, 'Death is Nothing at All'. Keith and Margaret Cakebread, also old friends, shared their memories and, in 'Words of Comfort', read that the congregation need 'feel no guilty laughter, he would know how much you care'.

The service closed with William Boyce's First Symphony. Those who attended left knowing we had learnt about 'a life well lived', for which we could give thanks. The reception afterwards in the Pembroke Arms was enjoyed by everyone.

Olive Elizabeth May Henstridge

21st May 1934 – 21st November 2025

A service of commemoration was held on 12th December at Salisbury Crematorium to celebrate the life of Olive Henstridge. Olive was well known in Melbury Abbas and Cann, enjoying a wide circle of friends. The service began with 'Amazing Grace' and the congregation later sang 'The King of Love my Shepherd is' and 'O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder'.

Olive's son David gave the eulogy. Olive was born in the family home at Fontmell Magna, the second of four children. She attended the local Primary School and then Shaftesbury School. She was a Brownie and a Girl Guide and on leaving school she worked as a nanny. She met her future husband Reg at a concert in Fontmell Magna village hall. In 1954 they were married at St Andrew's Church, Fontmell. She gave up work to raise a family in Cann Common; her daughter Diane was born in 1956 followed by Dave in 1958.

In the early seventies Olive worked in Shaftesbury. She then took an active part in the funeral business that Reg and his partner Don Merefield established in 1979. The couple moved to Shaftesbury in 1993.

Olive and Reg enjoyed a variety of activities: gardening, bingo, coffee mornings at the British Legion, the Shaftesbury Hospital League of Friends and listening to the Town Band. She attended Melbury Abbas church and delivered the monthly church magazine. Her kindness showed in visiting people who were unwell. Olive was always pleased to see her grandchildren Mark, Steven, Kevin, Claire and Scott, of whom she was very proud. She was great grandmother to Jack, Amber, Mollie, Oscar, Daisy, Fern, Zoe and George, whom she loved equally dearly.

In his eulogy, Dave referred to his Mother as a strong and independent personality, caring and compassionate and a listener and advisor. As a schoolgirl she got up to pranks - her sense of humour was a strong facet of her character. Her strong faith led her to believe she would be reunited with friends and her husband. The service finished with Judy Garland's moving rendition of 'Somewhere over the Rainbow'.

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Paradise for Sale

This poem was written by Ogden Nash, the American poet and wordsmith who was something of an Anglophile. He was in a doctor's waiting room in London, picked up a copy of Country Life, and saw the advertisement below.

For Sale. Dorset. In the Valley of River Piddle, Kiddles Farm, Piddletrenthide, with Period Farmhouse. Mixed Farm with Ninety acres.

He immediately wrote this poem. It could apply to our own valley of the River Sturkel.

Had I the shillings, pounds and pence, I'd pull up stakes and hie me hence;
I'd buy that small mixed farm in Dorset, which has an inglenook and faucet –
Kiddles Farm, Piddletrenthide, in the valley of the River Piddle.

I'd quit these vehement environs, of diesel fumes and horns and sirens,
This manic fulminating ruction of demolition and construction,
For Kiddles Farm.

Yes, quit for quietude seraphic, con Edison's embrangled traffic,
To sit reflecting that the skylark, which once was Shelley's, is now my lark,
At Kiddles Farm.

I am sure the gods could not but bless the man who lives at that address,
And revenue agents would wash their hands and cease to forward their demands,
To Kiddles Farm

Oh the fiddles I'd fiddle, the riddles I'd riddle, the skittles I would scatter, the winks
I would tiddle, then hey diddle diddle, I'd jump from the griddle, and live out my
life to the end from the middle - at Kiddles Farm, Piddletrenthide, in the valley of
the River Piddle.



PUBLIC CONSULTATION TO FIRE STATION CLOSURES

.....

There is an ongoing public consultation into the potential closure of eight fire stations by Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. The on-call fire stations are Bradford on Avon, Charmouth, Cranborne, Hamworthy, Maiden Newton, Mere, Ramsbury and Wilton.

The Chief Fire Officer said: “Nobody wants to close fire stations but, despite saving over £15 million in the last ten years, our financial position remains very challenging due to a 19.5% cut in funding. We still need to make sure our operational staff have the equipment and training they need to stay safe, and we’ve pared back our numbers as much as possible. He added: “The elected Members of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority are responsible for keeping the Service

sustainable, and they recognise that tough decisions need to be considered”.

“This consultation is therefore essential. We understand that people care about what this means for their community. That is why we want them to tell us what they think, and if there’s anything important that we might have missed. The final decision will be made by the Fire & Rescue Authority at their meeting on 30 June. We would urge our residents to have their say via our survey or the upcoming online meetings.”

Full details of these, FAQs, station-specific data, the consultation leaflet and the survey can be found at www.dwfire.org.uk/proposed-station-closures



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Important contacts:

Scan the QR code:



 www.dwfire.org.uk/proposed-station-closures



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Fire Station Closure Consultation

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Email: spreadeaglemagazine@gmail.com or sandbach147@btinternet.com
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