

January 2026

60p
FREE Digitally!

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FACEBOOK

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Eastcombe, Bussage & Brownshill Newsletter

BUSSAGE TESCO CLOSURE

Tesco Express, in Bussage, will be closed for refurbishment from 12th January for 4 weeks.

During the closure, you will be able to buy essentials (such as bread and milk) from other local shops and businesses, including Pudney Pie Café (see right), Eastcombe Stores, Fourways Garage, Stancombe Farm Shop, Holbrook Garage/The Green Shop, Chalford Stores and Brimscombe Stores.

Thank you for visiting
Please drive carefully



We are lucky to have fabulous local businesses, but please bear in mind that many are situated on narrow lanes, with limited parking.

Please drive and park considerately and help to keep both customers and local residents safe.

Please do not park on white lines or near corners, and do not block driveways.

THANK YOU.



WELCOME to 2026!

It's a brand new year, so why not try something new?

SEE PAGES 7 & 8 FOR SOME IDEAS...



PROVISIONS @ PUDNEY PIE PANTRY!

Pudney Pie Café turns a year old in January 2026 – and it's expanding!



On Monday 12th January, the Chalford Hill Café will launch Pudney Pie Pantry.

Stocking all the daily essentials, including newspapers, and licensed to sell alcohol, the Pantry will open until 8pm while Tesco is closed, with hot drinks available to evening shoppers!

Opening hours after Tesco re-opens will depend on demand.

Christmas Tree Recycling

In Partnership with Just Helping

Collections 10th -13th January
Registration Closes 6th January



Take the hassle out of disposing of your Christmas tree and have Longfield collect it for a voluntary donation.*

You will not only be helping reduce your carbon footprint but also supporting your community hospice providing Hospice at Home care and Wellbeing, Counselling and Bereavement Support for individuals facing a life-limiting condition.



just-helping.org.uk/register-tree

Registered Charity Number 298627

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

Goldilocks

By Susan Vesey
Bisley Amateur Theatrical Society 2026



Half term in Bisley Village WI Hall
Quite Possibly
The best panto in Gloucestershire!

Tickets - cash or card

Saturdays 10th 17th 24th 31st January Sundays 11th 18th 25th Jan & 1st Feb

at Bisley Farm Shop

10.30-11.30

at The Bear

11.30 to 12.30

or reserve via

panto2026-bisley@yahoo.com

Rotary Club of Stroud



STROUD ROTARY COMMUNITY AWARDS

A programme to support organisations within the Stroud area with a grant of up to £500.

If a small grant would make a real difference to your community project, apply for a Stroud Rotary Community Award. Nothing is too small to be considered.

For more details go to : www.stroudrotary.org.uk
or email : community.awards.stroud.rotary@gmail.com

Closing Date for Applications is 6:00 p.m. 31st January 2026



Email Address



Application Form

GENERAL GIVING AWARENESS SERVICES ASSISTANCE
CHARITY ALTRUISTIC LIFE VOLUNTEER TIME
ADULT CONTRIBUTION RESPECT TOGETHERNESS
ASSISTED RESCUE HOPE TEAMWORK PERSON
SUPPORT

Charity Number 1049604

To receive a FREE digital copy of the newsletter every month, please contact eastcombebandnews@gmail.com. Printed copies, 60p each, are available from Eastcombe Stores, Frith Community Café & Chalford Parish Centre.

Please send items for the February newsletter to eastcombenewsletter@btinternet.com by NOON on 17th January.

BISLEY-WITH-LYPIATT PARISH COUNCIL NEWS www.bisley-with-lypiatt.gov.uk/

Contact the Clerk: admin@bisley-with-lypiatt.gov.uk

Lack of mobile signal: Following the meeting reported last month, Atlas Towers (AT) provided data and a questionnaire to issue to all villages in the parish. The Parish Council believe that the substance of the questionnaire does not address the concerns of the parishioners. We are revising the questionnaire. A working group is targeting a response for February this year. We encourage ALL parishioners who would have input about a tower/s in the Parish to attend the next Parish Meeting.

Blanket reduction of speed limit to 20mph lies with GCC to advise action and timing.

Concern over the condition of road network: repainting white lines at junctions and safety signs on the road has been concluded. If you feel there is a significant issue with the road surface anywhere in the Parish – please go to '[Fix My Street](#)' and raise the concern - details are on the website.

Installation of patrol/warning light outside Eastcombe Primary School raised with Highways. A copy of the report undertaken and issued by Highways some 18 months ago has been requested.

The **drop kerb to the green** has been costed against recommended design. Partial funding has been indicated from GCC Councillor Gary Luff. We are seeking additional matched funding locally and from disability/mobility institutions to fully support the installation works.

There **are two vacancies on the Parish Council.** If you would like to become a Parish Councillor to support our community, please contact Heather - our Clerk - or any of the Parish Councillors to find out more.

PC meetings take place 7.30pm on the first Wednesday of each month at Bisley Village Hall. All welcome.

Colin Clifton, Chair, Eastcombe Ward: colin.clifton@bisley-with-lypiatt.gov.uk



Have you ever considered becoming a school governor?

The Governing Body of Eastcombe Primary School needs additional governors and would love to attract the skills and experience of people from our local community.

School governors are volunteers who work together with the Headteacher to help deliver the best education possible for the pupils at the school. You do not need to be a specialist in education. Much of the role is about exercising common sense, whilst working together with a small team in the best interests of the children. The role covers a diverse range, from helping identify the school's key priorities and how to deliver them, helping to set and maintain school policies and ensuring money is wisely and appropriately spent.

Most importantly, the governors are there to question and challenge the school leaders on the standard of education provided, working with the team to ensure all pupils have the best opportunity to learn in a safe, happy environment.

If you are interested in becoming a governor or would like to find out more, please contact Giles Webber at chair@eastcombe.glos.sch.uk



A MESSAGE from EASTCOMBE BUS SHELTER BOOK SWAP

Please don't donate gardening, cooking or travel books at the Eastcombe Bus Shelter Book Swap.

These types of books are generally not taken and end up being removed to the bin or the Brimscombe Canals Trust Bookshop, who also have to put a huge number of cooking and gardening books into recycling.

The other problematic category is celebrity autobiographies, which also tend to end up in the recycling.

MANY THANKS.

EASTCOMBE PRIMARY SCHOOL



A group of staff, governors, family and friends of the school created the most beautiful Christmas wreaths and table centre decorations at a brilliant craft workshop run by Steph and ably assisted by Fi. During the afternoon of festive fun, which is fast becoming our annual start to Christmas festivities, we enjoyed mulled wine and mince pies. An amazing £500 was raised - thank you everyone for supporting Eastcombe Primary School.

On the evening of the 1st December, the school opened proceedings for the annual community lighting of the village Christmas tree! The evening began with the oldest and the youngest pupils switching on the school's Christmas tree lights and revealing the beautifully stained glass windows. Lighting the



stained glass windows is a lovely school tradition. Pete Westley creates the designs each year and makes templates from black cards. The children in Owl Class then use the templates to make the design which we glue to the inside of the windows. This gets removed at the start of the January term and then we wait to see what design Pete will make for the coming Christmas. The windows are lit each night from the start of December through to January.

After revealing our windows, we walked in a torch lit procession to the village green to light up the village Christmas tree and meet Father Christmas! Further



Christmas singing was led by the Hilltop Band and the Eastcombe shanty singers, which continued in The Lamb Inn, with the chance to warm up with mulled wine and mince pies!

CHALFORD PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Chalford Parish Centre, 50 Geralds Way, Chalford, GL6 8FJ; 01453 887204

info@chalford-glos.gov.uk www.chalford-glos.gov.uk [Facebook](#).



We hope you had a wonderful Christmas, and we would like to wish you all a very Happy New Year!

Father Christmas Event: Following another very successful Christmas event at the Parish Centre, we would like to thank our Father Christmas for being so fantastic! Sadly, our festive donkeys were unable to attend this year, as Rudolph was laid low with a poorly leg. A huge thank you to everyone who came along on the day and helped make it such a lovely community occasion.

We're Looking for an Assistant Clerk!: Chalford Parish Council is excited to announce a vacancy for an **Assistant Clerk** to join our small, friendly team at the Parish Centre in Bussage.

Why You'll Love This Role:

- Every day is different—there's always something new happening!
- You'll be part of a supportive, welcoming team.
- It's rewarding work that helps keep our lovely Parish running smoothly.

The Details:

- **Part-time:** 3 hours per day, Monday to Thursday
- **Hours:** To be worked between 10am and 2pm (with some flexibility)
- **Pay:** £14.59 per hour
- **Benefits:** Generous holiday allowance and an excellent pension scheme
- **Location:** Parish Centre, Bussage

If you're organised, friendly, a natural multi-tasker, and enjoy a role with plenty of variety, we'd love to hear from you! For more information or to express an interest, please contact the Clerk.

Community Speedwatch Group: A huge thank you to the leader of our Community Speedwatch Group for all his sterling work. We are sorry to hear that he has decided to hang up his fluorescent jacket. We are therefore looking for a new volunteer to help coordinate the group (see also Page 6). The Speedwatch team has a positive impact on reducing speeding within the Parish; members are trained in the use of speed guns, and when they are out in the community, drivers do slow down. If you are interested in joining or coordinating the group, please contact us to find out more about what the role involves.

World Jungle Event: The holiday play sessions are always extremely popular, providing engaging activities for local families. We are planning another session for **February half term**, currently pencilled in for **Friday 20th February**. Please keep an eye on our social media for confirmation of date and times.

DISTRICT COUNCIL NEWS

Local Government Reorganisation: At an extraordinary meeting in November, SDC voted for a single unitary council to replace the county and six district/borough councils. Many councillors preferred to keep the present system, but since government has ordered the re-organisation, felt a responsibility to choose from the replacement options. The two-council plan was rejected because of concerns about inequality between the proposed new districts - Stroud, Gloucester and the Forest of Dean in the West; Cotswolds, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury in the East - and the problems of dividing services currently run county-wide, including health, social care, and education. The other councils in Gloucestershire have also voted – four councils choosing one new council, two choosing two, and one choosing 'none of the above'. Government will now consider our preferences, hold a public consultation in early 2026, and decide which plan to implement. Elections to the new council(s) will happen in 2027, with the change of authority in 2028.

Brimscombe Port: Strategy and Resources Committee has resolved to proceed to find a new developer partner, and to allow appropriate 'meanwhile uses' on the site until vacant possession is required.

Local Plan: The Inspectors are still calling for SDC to withdraw the draft Plan. The council will not do so, because it wants the inspectors' full report to explain what they find 'sound' and what 'unsound', to inform the next iteration. The 2015 Plan remains in force, but the lack of a 'five year land supply' means officers and inspectors now apply the 'tilted balance' – meaning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would 'significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits'.

Lottery Funding for Canal: The Stroudwater Canal restoration project led by SDC and Cotswolds Canals Trust has been awarded £6.46 million by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This will enable work to complete the 'Missing Mile' and re-connect Stroud to the national network.

Please contact me about any council-related issues: Martin Brown 01452 770878 cllr.martin.brown@stroud.gov.uk



This January, why not start the year with an empty jar and fill it with notes about good things that happen. Then, on New Years Eve, empty it and see what awesome stuff happened that year.



THANK YOU FOR SAVING YOUR CHRISTMAS STAMPS!

Saving your used stamps can help the charity Sjögrens UK.

Sjögren's Disease is an autoimmune rheumatic disease that can occur on its own or in association with other rheumatic disease, most commonly rheumatoid arthritis. It mainly affects women over 40 (one in 2000 women in the UK), although up to 10% of cases occur in men and it is also seen in young people.

Thank you to those who have been collecting used stamps to support this charity. **From Boxing Day, a box will be placed at the bottom of the driveway to Studdridge, Fidges Lane, Eastcombe**, for any stamps you have collected.

For more information about Sjögren's Disease, visit www.sjogrensuk.org

Pam Perry, Studdridge, Fidges Lane. Eastcombe



HILLTOP FILM CLUB

The 2nd year of the Hilltop Film Club gets underway on **Saturday 17th January with the showing of the romantic comedy classic, Breakfast at Tiffany's**, a film that has stood the test of time and established the little black dress across the decades.

This film, to be followed by Conclave, Money Monster and Emma, has been chosen by members to start what we hope will be an entertaining and varied programme in 2026. Members will choose what is to follow later in the year.

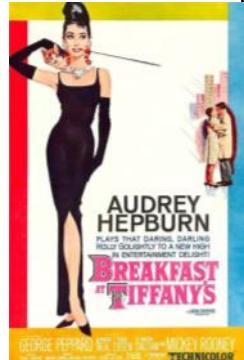
Many thanks for your continued support for our club and Eastcombe Village Hall.

**Saturday 17th January
7.30pm
at Eastcombe Village Hall**

GUESTS: £5

MEMBERS: COMPLIMENTARY

ICES: £3



2025 & ALL THAT...

It was another packed year on the hill!

From local history afternoons to the relaunch of the Eastcombe Toddler Group (as the Hilltop Baby and Toddler Group), tasty recipes (a huge THANK YOU to Carol and all our guest cooks in 2025!), gardening thoughts from The Eastcombe Gardener, footpath, Frithwood Surgery, school and council updates, Village Histories, Name That Views, April's 'launch' of the new hilltop company selling tech for your pet (sadly you can't yet walk your dog by drone!), swift boxes, tips on helping hedgehogs, opportunities to volunteer, and many, many events - including the Hilltop Autumn Show, VE Day commemorations, Eastcombe Village Group events, markets, quizzes, Twinning Association events, Open Gardens and Café Churches.

2025 saw the launch of Pudney Pie Cafe (nearly a year old already!) and the Hilltop Film Club, which shows monthly films at Eastcombe Village Hall. August's Wine Walk found hilltop dwellers enjoying a glass (or several) in sunny gardens, while the Eastcombe Gnome Hunt, and the Bussage Bear Hunt were again a great success.

2026 will see a new look Thomas Keble School as the old site is cleared (hopefully alleviating some of the village parking issues on school event days) - and a new look Bussage Tesco.

Happy New Year & here's to 2026!



"The new year stands before us, like a chapter in a book, waiting to be written."

— Melody Beattie

HILLTOP GARDENING CLUB

www.hilltopgardeningclub.org.uk



On December 2nd, Charlotte Popescu spoke *'In Praise of Apples'*.

In a bumper year for local fruit, it was timely to have Charlotte Popescu share her considerable knowledge and expertise gleaned from an idyllic country childhood and latterly publishing (Cavalier Books) and lecturing on horses and ponies, foraging, keeping hens, bees, gardening and imaginative cooking. Covering, at speed, fascinating myths, folk-lore and customs related to apples, Charlotte also detailed their historic advance via the pip-planting Roman Army, Kazakhstan and the Silk Road and our globe-trotting 17th century John Tradescant (elder and younger): plant-hunters, gardeners and botanists. Charlotte provided a comprehensive list of varieties and explained hybridisation and growing practicalities of an extraordinary range of apples.

In a lively Q and A members advised on how to deal naturally with codling moths and on where to buy local fruit from numerous, regional growers at Farmers Markets. Sent down a rabbit-hole of 'apple identification' by our speaker and club members, a search is on for Charlotte's personal favourite 'Sunset' and for me at least, Gloucester's famous russet 'Ashmead's Kernel' (1700s). Although supermarket apples have been limited, latterly as members pointed out, supermarkets are selling new tasty varieties of English apples (some developed in partnership between supermarket and English orchards): perhaps try an English variety of New Zealand's 'Smitten' developed in 2012.

We ended with seasonal mince-pies and mulled-wine and plenty of conversations concerning apples for baking, eating and drinking: Charlotte's modestly priced books were available for any member at a loss about what to do with this year's over-abundant fruit.

In these short, bleak winter days the possibility of a club-trip to the orchards and wild-daffodil walks at Newent and Dymock is quietly sustaining. Or closer to home, suggests a member, a visit to the Bisley Community Orchard.

Pam Meecham

Eastcombe Baptist Chapel

A service is held on Sunday mornings, at 10:30am at the chapel in Dr Crouch's Road, Eastcombe.

EASTCOMBE VILLAGE GROUP (EVG)

A big thank you to all those who helped to make this year's **Eastcombe Christmas lights** a success, including all who came and joined in the fun. Amongst those we should thank are Gardiners, who supplied the tree, and will be removing it in the next few days, Tony Morrison Smith and Will Hardie for sorting the lights and Mike at Eastcombe Stores for allowing us to plug in to his electricity supply, Eastcombe School, who started our celebrations - unveiling their windows, lighting the school tree and singing some Christmas songs, those who helped with the road closure, the Hilltop Band and Third Cousin shanty singers who added some festive cheer both on the Green and in the Lamb afterwards, and Father Christmas who lit the tree.

At the **Newcomers Coffee Morning** on Saturday 6 December we had around 30 people, included 6 new newcomers. It was good to meet you all and we look forward to seeing you at future meetings and events. Thanks to Rob at the Lamb Inn for his hospitality, and to all who provided such excellent cakes.

The annual **Eastcombe Village Quiz** will be held on Saturday 28 February, starting at 7pm, with Scott Sissons as the quizmaster. A ploughman's supper will be served. Tickets, priced £7.50, will be on sale in February.

The **Eastcombe Photographic Competition** is for the best photograph showing the uniqueness and beauty of our Cotswold village. The winning entry will be made into a limited-edition wooden jig-saw puzzle, Entries should be submitted by mid-September 2026.

Entry forms, with the terms and conditions, will be available shortly at the Lamb Inn and at Eastcombe Stores. For further details contact Colin Clifton on 07958 761597.

Our next meeting will be on **Monday 12 January 2026, at 7.30pm at Eastcombe Village Hall Annex**, where we will discuss plans for events in 2026 and ideas for supporting local initiatives – we have funds of around £500 which we can distribute. Please come along to the meeting and share your suggestions or let me have any details before the meeting.

Peter Scott: peterhscott@btinternet.com

Contact csissons52@gmail.com to join the mailing list.

Follow [Eastcombe Village Group on Facebook](#).

KEEP PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA SAFE & FOUND

Do you care for someone with Dementia and worry they may go missing?



FIND OUT MORE AT:
GLOSPOLICE.COM/DEMENTIA

THE HERBERT PROTOCOL
HERBERTPROTOCOL.COM



St Michael's & All Angels, Bussage

Services this month are:

- **Sunday 11th Jan: Holy Communion, 9.30am**
- **Sunday 18th Jan: Morning Prayer, 9.30am**
- **Sunday 18th Jan: Cafe Church at Eastcombe Village Hall, 2.30pm (see poster)**

On other Sundays are services in different parts of the Benefice. For full details please visit facebook.com/BisleyBeneficeandFriends/ or join our mailing list by contacting pewslipsbisley@hotmail.com.

For weddings, funerals & baptisms, contact
Revd. Sue Murray:
vicar@bisleybenefice.org.uk

COOKERY CORNER

This month, **Wendy Sadlier shares her recipe for:**

IRISH TEA BRACK

Happy New Year! If your Christmas cake has all disappeared but you still fancy a slice of delicious fruit cake, here is an easy recipe to try. Perfect after an afternoon walk with a cup of tea... or for breakfast if you are in a rush.

The recipe is adaptable—I use a bag of mixed fruit with chopped apricots and cranberries. The choice is yours. Makes 1 loaf.

INGREDIENTS:

- 140g raisins
- 140g sultanas
- 55g currants
- 30g mixed peel
- 330ml hot black tea
- 30ml whiskey (optional. If not, just add a bit more tea)
- 170g soft dark brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 250g self-raising flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons mixed spice



METHOD:

1. Place the fruit and mixed peel in a large bowl and cover with the tea (and whiskey if using). Stir and leave to soak overnight.
2. Next day, pre-heat the oven to 180C/160 C fan/gas mark 3.
3. Butter and line a 2lb loaf tin with baking parchment.
4. Add the brown sugar to the soaked fruit, stir, then beat in the egg.
5. Sieve the flour and mixed spice over the fruit mixture and stir.
6. Pour into the lined tin and bake in the centre of the oven for about an hour, until a skewer comes out clean.
7. Leave to cool in the tin for 20 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.
8. Slice and spread with butter. Relax!




Chalford Academy Band are recruiting!

Are you an ex-brass player looking to get back into the brass band scene? A student recently moved into the area looking for a band or simply a local player interested in joining us?



Chalford Academy band are a 4th section band and a valued part of the Chalford organisation

We rehearse Thursdays 6:30-7:30 in our village band room and have an easygoing mix of contests and concerts throughout the year.

Interested? Drop us an email at vacancies@chalfordband.co.uk



VOLUNTEER WITH US IN YOUTH SESSIONS!

PLEASE ENQUIRE FOR MORE INFO:
WWW.FRITHYOUTHCENTRE.ORG.UK
ADMIN@FRITHYOUTHCENTRE.ORG.UK

1 SPORTY TYPES!
 Sometimes we need someone to grab a ball and hoof it around with the kids. If you can instigate and facilitate sports and games then 'come on down'!

2 LIVELY & LOVELY TYPES!
 We need 2 or 3 friendly faces to be present in youth sessions. You would help to make young people feel welcome, included and valued. Good times guaranteed!

volunteer for however much (or little) time you have. You can make the biggest difference!

EASTCOMBE FOOTPATH GROUP

Do you enjoy walking? Could you spare the occasional morning to help maintain our local paths?

The Eastcombe Footpath Group meet roughly once a month—and new helpers are welcome!

For more details, contact Sue: 07821 806724

We also need help to identify which footpaths are not signed very well. Some are not marked at all, while others have fallen into disrepair.

If you know of paths that need better signage, please contact Sue: 07821 806724

CHALFORD BAND ARE RECRUITING!

Are you an ex-brass player looking to get back into banding? Recently moved to the area and looking for a band? Or are you simply a local musician looking for a welcoming and inclusive environment to play in?

The Chalford Academy Band are looking for players, particularly cornets and basses, but all are welcome to enquire! A 4th section contesting band who take part in an easygoing mix of contests and concerts throughout the year. Our Academy Band are a vital part of our organisation. Many players develop into the senior ranks and we love to see new and enthusiastic faces in the band room.

We rehearse on Thursdays from 6:30-7:30pm at our village band room in Chalford, Gloucestershire.

If this sounds like something you're interested in, drop us a DM via our [Facebook](#) page or email vacancies@chalfordband.co.uk

TRY SOMETHING NEW in 2026!



5 reasons to volunteer



1. Gain new skills
2. Meet new people
3. Make a difference
4. Give back to the community
5. Feel valued and be part of a team

MEN! YOUR CHOIR NEEDS YOU



It's not just about the bass...
 - we need tenors, too!

THE STUART SINGERS
 is a 45 strong mixed choir based in Minchinhampton.
 The choir is recruiting more male singers for both the tenor & bass sections.

FANCY FINDING OUT MORE?
 Visit www.stuartsingers.com, find us on Facebook or contact Vic for an informal chat at stuartsingers@hotmail.com.



DO YOU LIKE SINGING?

The Stuart Singers are looking for singers to join their friendly, inclusive (& inexpensive) choir—especially men! The choir rehearse on Thursday evenings at Minchinhampton Primary Academy and you'll be sure of a warm welcome.

For more information, visit www.stuartsingers.com, find us on [Facebook](#) or contact Vic for an informal chat: stuartsingers@hotmail.com

IS SPEEDING AN ISSUE IN YOUR LOCAL AREA?

Chalford and Bussage

Chalford Parish Council **Gloucestershire Constabulary** **Community Speedwatch Group**

The Chalford and Bussage Community Speedwatch Group are looking for new volunteers!

With having volunteers, speeding audits can be taken more frequently, therefore deterring drivers from speeding regularly in your local community

Sparing a couple of hours a month can make a big impact!

What's involved?

- Create safer roads for all the community
- Training on the speed devices
- Deter speeders
- Hi-Visibility attire provided for safety
- Support from your Local Policing Team

HELP KEEP YOUR COMMUNITY SAFE

To get involved contact lucy@chalford-glos.gov.uk or call the Chalford Parish Council on [01453 887294](tel:01453 887294)

Start the new year creatively at THE LITTLE FREE ART GALLERY, BUSSAGE!

Looking to try something new in 2026 — a creative hobby, a fresh walk, or simply discovering a hidden corner of the village? Pop by the Little Free Art Gallery this January and enjoy a winter display of miniature artworks to spark your imagination.

Everyone is welcome to:

**Take a piece of art
Leave a piece of art
Or just take a look around!**



Find the #littlefreeartgallerybussage on The Avenue, Bussage, off Cowswell Lane GL6 8AT. What3words:///dates.barn.hawks

Start the year with creativity & joy!

**A NEW YEAR ... A FRESH, CLEAN START.
IT'S LIKE HAVING A BIG
WHITE SHEET OF PAPER
TO DRAW ON...**

BILL WATTERSON



NEW YEAR DECLUTTERING!

Christmas is often a busy time, with extra items (and people) in the house, so the new year can see a bit of a muddle at home. Luckily, it's an excellent time for a clear out! Decluttering is the process of removing unwanted items to make a more organized, functional and pleasant space.



A cunning decluttering plan:

- **Start small:** Don't try to declutter your entire home at once. Pick a small, manageable area to tackle - a single drawer or shelf.
- **Set a time limit:** Work in short, focused chunks, like 15 minutes a day, to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- **Sort items into categories:** Before you start, gather containers and label them: 'keep', 'donate', 'recycle' and 'bin' (if you must). Then sort every item in the space into one of those categories. Some items may go into a "Fix/Mend" pile if they are usable with a small repair.
- **Deal with it promptly!** As quickly as possible, put away the items you are keeping and remove those that are going. This can be challenging, but persevere!

How to make decisions:

- **Touch it once:** Pick up an item and make a decision, moving it to a pile.

• For each item, ask yourself:

⇒ Do I need it?

⇒ Will I actually miss it if it's not there (or even notice)?

⇒ Do I use it/am I likely to use it? Use the '90/90 rule' - if you haven't used an item in 90 days, and won't in the next 90, it might be time to let it go.



Maintaining a clutter-free space:

- **Establish routines:** Make decluttering a regular habit, even if it's just a few minutes each day. That will keep clutter from building up.
- **Use the 'one-in, one-out' rule:** When you buy a new item, get rid of a similar older item to maintain balance. Make sure items leave the house promptly – or they'll just be more clutter!
- **Put things away:** make a point of putting things back in their designated place after using them.

Happy new year – and happy decluttering!



WALK INTO THE BEST YEAR OF YOUR LIFE with Evie from Walk Nordic



Hello! I'm Evie, based in Abnash, and I teach Nordic Walking — a fun, full-body activity for all ages and fitness levels. I run regular group sessions throughout the week, designed to support a wide range of physical needs.

Why walk with poles? Nordic Walking gives you an incredible whole-body workout. It improves cardio fitness, posture, core strength, and balance — and it's much more than just walking! The poles help you move further, faster, and with better form, while the rhythm supports relaxation and boosts mental wellbeing.

As part of our Nordic Walking community, you'll feel more connected, confident, and strong — and we always have plenty of fun along the way!

New training courses start in January & February!

Once training is completed, you can join our regular weekly walks or set off on your own independent adventures.

If you can walk, you can Nordic Walk.

Contact me, Evie Coombs, to book your place:
07546 110771 & evecoombs@outlook.com



THE HILLTOP GARDENING CLUB

Looking for something new in the coming year? Try the Hilltop Gardening Club: an inclusive, friendly community of diverse gardeners and plant enthusiasts.

We have a wide-range of speakers, academic and practical, garden-visits, annual holiday, social events and an autumn show. All welcome.

VILLAGE HISTORIES... LIFE AS A STONE CRAFTSMAN: PART 2.



In this instalment, Paul Beer tells us about roofs & rough weather!

In spring 1981, the company that I worked for, Orchard & Peer, were working on a complicated stone roof at Forwood House, Minchinhampton, owned by Sir Robert Ricketts. Sir Robert's wife, Theresa, was the daughter of wartime Chancellor Sir Stafford Cripps. She once said to me, 'Paul, I have lived under a stone roof all my life and I will end under one.' During April there was a late blizzard, the weight of snow bringing down not only electricity cables but some trees, heavy with new leaves. One enormous branch fell on the war memorial at the bottom of Old Neighbourhood, Chalford, badly damaging it and making it difficult to get to work.

Late in November 1981, we started on the stone roof at the disused chapel in the old cemetery at the top of Stroud. The Clerk of Works for Stroud Council, Ken Worsley, came to look at the job and set up a temperature gauge. As the month ended, the weather grew colder. Significant amounts of snow fell three times in December and most days the temperature was below zero. Orchard & Peer laid off a third of the workforce. It was the coldest winter for decades and a week before Christmas even the Queen got stranded on her way back to Windsor, and had to take refuge in the Cross Hands at Old Sodbury!

After a brief improvement, two days into 1982 it turned colder than before Christmas, -14 degrees. On 5 January, Don Butt warned that more snow was forecast and we should cover whatever needed protecting. Using a bottle gas heater to warm ourselves every couple of hours, Trevor Gardiner, Dave Crachley and I pulled a tarpaulin onto the inside elevation - in those days covers were made of heavy canvas. Ice was already a problem and frozen stone would be impossible to work, so between us we moved 15 tons of stone into the chapel. A day and a half later, on 7 January 1982, blizzards hit, lasting for 35 hours. Most places in the Cotswolds were cut off, and the roads were impassable. I did not see my car in Eastcombe for a week. I tried to walk to work in Stroud but the drifts were too high and the snow too soft. Then it froze solid – so I could walk to Stroud. There we cleared the entrance of the chapel and dressed, holed and graded the stone tiles into different sizes. We found later that most men had been laid off by the company, but we tried to carry on as normal. Freezing fog continued for another two weeks, the snow didn't melt, and although we tried to get onto the roof, the tarpaulin was like a slab of slippery concrete, the temperature -18 degrees. Eventually we removed the tarpaulin and worked on the slope, but I slipped on the ice and slid down, hurting my back. Had the kick boards not been in place, I would have fallen right to the ground.

After the snow and ice came floods – we got the job done, but a lot of tradesmen did not get back to work with the company.

For more local history, visit www.eastcombearchive.org.uk or join the [Eastcombe & Bismore Local History Group](#) on Facebook.

HILLTOP CAFE CHURCH
Christian Worship for those of all faiths and none.
Sunday 18th Jan
2.30pm
EASTCOMBE VILLAGE HALL
BROUGHT TO YOU FROM
THE PARISH OF BUSSAGE & EASTCOMBE

I SAID TO THE MAN
who stood at the gate of the year, 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.' So I went forth and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

INTERESTED IN LOCAL HISTORY?
Join the **Eastcombe & Bismore Local History Group** on Facebook.

Eastcombe Post Office c.1910-18, Eastcombe Green



NAME THAT VIEW! How well do you know our area?

December's very snowy photo, from 1982, was taken from Middle Hill, looking back at the Eastcombe crossroads.

This month's shot was also taken locally—can you identify the location?

The answer will be revealed in the February issue.

WHAT'S ON in JANUARY & FEBRUARY?

12 Jan: Eastcombe Village Group meeting, 7.30pm, Eastcombe Village Hall Annex

17 Jan: Hilltop Film Club, Eastcombe Village Hall, 7.30pm

18 Jan: Hilltop Café Church, Eastcombe Village Hall, 2.30pm

17th JANUARY: NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

28 Feb: Eastcombe Village Quiz, Eastcombe Village Hall, 7pm