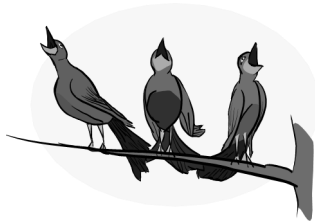


BIRDSONG

February
and
March 2025



BIRDINGBURY
NEWS
NO 126



Matt on the Move
Braking news inside

Birdingbury Parish Council Report

The Parish Council doesn't meet in December, so our January meeting was busy and covered a couple of issues that have developed over the Christmas / New Year period.

The first of these was the flooding and development work that is happening on the corner of the Stockton and Leamington Hastings Roads. Heavy rains in December caused the road to flood and the cold weather caused ice in the area. Over Christmas, a vehicle overshot the junction damaging the hedge on the opposite side of the road, and the floods and ice clearly make the junction more dangerous. We have chased WCC Highways for a date for the proposed work to clear the ditch and the culvert under the road, and we have now escalated this issue to our WCC Councillor, Dale Keeling.

Several residents have also raised concerns about the impact of the development on that corner, citing run-off, inconsiderate parking and damage to verges. The Parish Council has escalated these to the Enforcement team at Rugby DC as we believe that some of these may be in contravention of planning conditions.

The other evolving issue has been the play equipment on the Recreation Field. We have been talking to suppliers about repairing or replacing some of the older equipment that is showing signs of wear (the nursery swing, the log cabin, the large play frame and the slide). We have now had initial quotes and will start to consider options. However, in December, one of the bolts holding the nursery swing crossbar has failed causing the bar to fall – this has now been removed. The Parish Council is concerned that other bolts may be close to failure, and this is a particular risk with the play frame as it has several heavy crossbars. As a result, we have decided to have that piece of equipment taken down while we consider what should replace it. We will put up signs and tape until it is removed, but **please don't allow your children to play on it in the meantime**. We hope to share more detail about our play equipment plans at the Annual Village Meeting in April.

A bit further on from the Recreation Field, no-one has come forward to claim any of the contents of the Hovel. Parish Council will therefore have it cleared so that we can assess the repair work that is needed.

We also discussed our budget for 2025-26 and have agreed to raise the precept by about £600 (7.5%). This is partly to cover continued increases in our costs, but also to build up the reserves that we expect to spend on the Hovel and Recreation Field equipment. The additional cost will be split across the hundred or so residences and businesses in the village.

And finally, a few spring dates for your diary:

Litter Pick – 10:30am, Saturday 22 March

Annual Village Meeting – 7:30pm, Tuesday 29 April

Please keep an eye on the Village WhatsApp for more details about these events and for progress on other Parish Council matters.

Guy French, Chair, Birdingbury Parish Council

BIRDSONGBIRDSONGBIRDSONG

Club Update

If it's not too late to say it, Happy New Year: we've a brief but really positive update this month!

Many of you have pitched in and volunteered for various jobs at the Club since the start of last year, and our draft accounts for 2024 show that this effort has made a massive improvement in our financial health. Thank you to everyone who made that possible.

At the AGM last June, we agreed that as the volunteer model was a new thing, we'd call an interim meeting around now to update everyone on how things were going. We'll hold this on Saturday February 22 February, where we'll also be saying a big thank you to our volunteers that night by buying them a drink or two! By the time you read this we will (hopefully!) have already sent out more details, and we'd love to see you all there.

Tony Flint, Club President

BIRDSONGBIRDSONGBIRDSONG

LH Academy Update

We have had a great first term at Leamington Hastings C of E Academy. The children have enjoyed taking part in outdoor learning, exploring the curriculum in practical contexts, and taking part in school trips. To date, we have visited Warwick Arts Centre to see the 'Smeds and the Smoos', have performed in a carol concert at Coventry Cathedral, and have taken part in some local visits such as visiting the church. The children enjoyed performing a nativity show for family members, which was enjoyed by all in attendance.

The school continues to have a buzz of happy children engaged in their learning, supported by our excellent team of staff. We are looking forward to attending a Birmingham Symphony Orchestra concert for children and the Oxford Science Museum in March. The children will also be learning through the topic of 'Our Bodies' in Key Stage One and 'Transport' in Early Years.

We are now taking bookings for children to attend nursery from September 2025. If this is something that you are interested in and you would like to look around the school, please contact the school office on 01926 632359.

Suzanne Marson, Head of School, Leamington Hastings Church of England Academy

No Stopping Matt Stopping

I wrote a piece for Birdsong last year about embarking on a personal challenge to become a train driver (after 31 years in the police). After 16 months of training, I finally passed out and was issued with my UK train driver license in December. Given the interest in the previous post, I thought I'd share some of my reflections on the last few months. It is fair to say it has been both challenging and rewarding. From getting to grips with the mechanics of trains to navigating the complexities of the railway network, the journey was anything but straightforward. That said, the importance of this intense and detailed training was made clear to me during the freezing fog at the beginning of January as I was driving from Birmingham to Northampton, at up to 110mph. With eight carriages (a combined weight of around 350 tons) carrying several hundred passengers on a slippery railhead, all my training and knowledge were put to the test. The visibility was less than 200 meters and, contrary to popular belief, I have nothing on the train to tell me where I am, what the line speed is, where the next speed reduction is, or where I have to start braking for a station.

The railways have a zero tolerance of speeding. Permitted speeds are there to prevent derailments or damage to the track. Notwithstanding that, you cannot drive slower either if you are to be on time; if safety is the number one priority, comfort and timeliness are a close second. I now drive routes to and from Northampton, Rugby, Coventry, Birmingham, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Redditch, Bromsgrove and Lichfield, and have had to pass exams to show I know (amongst other things) every speed, every junction, signal locations, and braking areas for stations in both directions. Driving a car, you can generally brake on sight; on a train however, this is impossible. I have come up with my own braking areas for the 50 stations I stop at and the many speed reductions along the way. Because a lot of the routes look very similar (two tracks with trees on either side), these can be anything from a bridge plate, a particular signal, or, in one case, the conifers in someone's back garden, for example. Some of these braking areas are a mile or more from the intended stopping point because it can take that long to stop a train safely.



Train timetables are set on the presumption that trains will always drive at the maximum permitted speed, regardless of weather-related visibility. Returning to my drive to Northampton in January, the fog was thick, it was dark, and the various landmarks I rely upon for braking only came into view when I was on top of them. Driving at over 100mph, they could be easily missed, so concentration was high. I got the green signal to leave New Street two minutes late, and was up to 100mph before reaching Stechford. No sooner had I left the city lights behind, I hit the wall of fog; it was a complete whiteout ahead of me (there is no dipped beam, and the headlight aims directly ahead into the fog). The light from the brightest LED signals only became visible when I was within about 200 meters. Focusing on the front nearside of the train, I was able to spot my braking areas and put in the required percentage of braking. Approaching Canley at about 75mph, I applied the brake about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the station. The train slowed, but I simply could not see any indication that I was approaching the station. Holding my nerve, I kept the brake on, trusting my knowledge, when suddenly, the first sight of the platform broke through the fog as the front of the train passed it. I was doing exactly 25mph, which was perfect for stopping at the correct point, ensuring the whole train was accommodated. The driving conditions remained like this throughout the rest of the journey, with me arriving at Northampton just under 2 minutes late, having made up a few seconds en route.

The training also prepared me for other incidents which I've already experienced, such as having to make an emergency stop and an emergency broadcast to stop all trains in the area when someone was walking towards me on the opposite line between Rugby and Coventry whilst I was driving at 110mph. I had to do the same on the way to Barnt Green when someone pulled the emergency egress handle and, as I stopped the train, he jumped out and ran off along the tracks.

Another key element of the training, some of which was done on the incredibly realistic simulator, was driving in leaf fall. Train drivers get a lot of criticism when it comes to leaves on the line. Prior to my training, I couldn't understand why it caused such an issue. The problem is that as leaves repeatedly get squashed under the wheels of a train, a film builds up on the track which reduces the adhesion between wheel and track. The result is, you can brake as normal, in the usual place, but simply be unable to stop. At high speed, trains can slide for hundreds of meters. During leaf fall season the railway operates a red, yellow and green system. On a red or yellow leaf fall day, I would drive a little slower, and definitely brake sooner than I would otherwise do. Outside of leaf fall season, light drizzle after a dry spell has the same effect, making it harder to take power and get up to speed, but more critically, harder to reduce speed. The trains can put sand down on to the track to help, but maintaining control is almost entirely down to the driver. I have to admit, my heart rate does still rise when I start to slide, but my training enables me to bring it safely under control. A secondary problem caused by this leaf fall film is that because contact between the wheels and the track is lost, it can make you invisible to the signaller, whose job it is to ensure there are no conflicting train movements.

Now I am driving on my own, the training doesn't stop. Every six months, I have to undergo a safety briefing. Every Friday I have to sign for documents which list temporary speed restrictions, new signaling and altered routes, along with other safety of the line issues. I also have to resit my 'rules exam' every 12 months. Like driving a car, the real learning takes place after you have passed your test and it's all down to you to make sure you carry the hundreds of passengers safely, comfortably, and on time to their destination. They should remain blissfully unaware of the challenges the driver is dealing with.

Whilst it's a challenge, it is enjoyable and satisfying. It is also very beautiful driving through the frost covered fields during sunrise, particularly around Althorp Park, Bromsgrove and Lichfield. So far, I have no regrets and would recommend it to anyone who likes working on their own, being out and about, and is willing to put in some hard work to begin with.

Matt Markham

The cover photo was taken as I was about to start my first solo drive to Lichfield and then back to Bromsgrove via Birmingham New Street on one of the brand new trains.

BIRDSONGBIRDSONGBIRDSONG

Karen Takes to the Skies

On Saturday 22nd March 2025 I will be undertaking a Tandem Skydive at RAF Langar Airfield, Nottinghamshire in Memory of my Mum, Christine Wells.



At the end of last year my Mum was discharged from hospital under palliative care. This was a huge shock to us all and led to an upsetting and challenging time. I can only thank friends and family for pointing us in the direction of Myton at Home Service. They took over the main provision of care for my Mum, providing compassion, kindness and dignity during her last weeks of life.

During this time, I felt I wanted to give something back to them and looking at the fund-raising opportunities for Myton Hospice came across the Skydive. The date of the event would have been my Mum's 81st Birthday this year - so it was meant to be!

The Myton Hospices are a charity with only 20% funding from the NHS. This year they need to raise £11 million through donations and support so that they can continue their vital work in the hospices and the local community. If anyone would like to help support Myton by sponsoring my Skydive please visit my Just Giving page: www.justgiving.co/page/karen-thomas-1731955375558

Thank you

Karen Thomas

Community Cafe



We celebrated Jackie's 89th birthday at the community café at the beginning of December. We are all waiting for the big celebration next year!

Following a break for the Christmas period the cafe re-opened on 14 January with three new helpers and our usual fab array of excellent bakes from our committed volunteer cooks.

We were delighted to welcome over 30 visitors, which kept us busy and created a lovely buzz of chatting and laughter.

After a fantastic year when we raised over £2000, again we are ready to continue providing a warm safe space for our community, offering drinks, bakes and chat alongside raising plenty of funds for a variety of local, national and international charities.

We are open Tuesday mornings from 10.30 to 12 noon and everyone is welcome.

Karen Armbrister

BIRDSONGBIRDSONGBIRDSONG

With Apologies to Lewis Carroll

How does our little Tuesday caff

Meet a pressing need

Not just a noisy cosy laff

Or crummy flakey feed

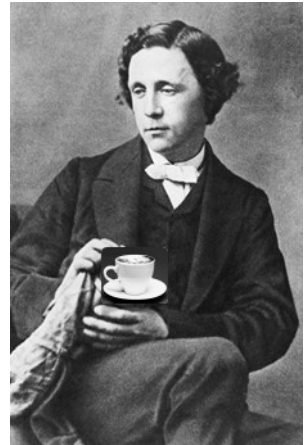
How cheerfully we're welcomed in

And plied with frothy drink

And crinkly notes go in the tin

As we of others think

Thin Jethro Laskey



BIRDSONGBIRDSONGBIRDSONG

Fun Facts

- 1 You can't see your ears without a mirror
- 2 You can't count your hair
- 3 You can't breathe through your nose with your tongue out
- 4 You just tried number three
- 6 When you tried number three, you realised that it is possible, but you look like a dog
- 7 You are smiling right now because you were fooled
- 8 You skipped number 5
- 9 You just checked to see if there is a number 5
- 10 Share this with your friends so they can have some fun too

Thanks to Rosy Wallace!

BIRDSONGBIRDSONGBIRDSONG

Birdingbury knows

That we do not need to read

Nonsense Haiku rhyme

Thin Jethro Laskey



BIRDSONGBIRDSONGBIRDSONG

Mobile Library

7 February 2025

7 March 2025

4 April 2025

3.40 to 14.00

Outside Birdingbury Club

BIRDSONGBIRDSONGBIRDSONG

LHCC Relief in Need Fund



The Leamington Hastings Consolidated Charity (LHCC) not only manages the Almshouses in LH but also administers a 'Relief in Need' fund.

The fund is available to local residents who could benefit from a grant to help towards the cost of items, services or facilities to support them during a time of need.

We welcome applications from individuals but equally please do let us know of other residents who may not be in a position to apply for themselves – we may be able to help.

The application process is easy and informal. If you'd like to express interest and/ or have any questions, please contact me on 07962 169199 or at alexrigler@aol.com

Alex Rigler, Clerk to Trustees

BIRDSONGBIRDSONGBIRDSONG

Update from St Leonard's

Christmas seems a long time ago now, but we were delighted to welcome lots of you to both the outdoor carols and our joyful service for Christmas Day. Carol singing around the village raised £150 for Hope 4, Rugby, towards their winter protocol activity.

What shall we do this year for Christmas? We are wondering about a candlelit Family Carol service in church this year, followed by a gathering with some food in the Club. Let me know what you think; and any other ideas.

Regarding the churchyard, thanks to an anonymous donor, plus some PCC funds, we were able to employ a labourer and the volunteering Markham Family to clear up the wall debris. They did a really excellent job, so we are very grateful to Mikey, Jess and Matt for their hard work. Plans are progressing for additional work required to support the wall in the affected area. Taking this on in no way assumes our ownership of the wall, which remains undetermined.

We are still completing repairs at roof level; replacing missing stones, and some lead work. Significant costs like this have depleted our fabric funds. The PCC meets on 4 February and fund raising for 2025 is on the agenda.

Worship continues on the 1st and 3rd Sundays at 11.00am when we are well supported by attendees from other parishes as well as our own small, but committed, worshipping community.

Karen Armbrister, Acting Church Warden

Five Months Around the Globe... part 1

On 31 July Rob and I packed our bags and left Birdingbury to go globe-trotting. After consoling Guy and Lisa, who weren't at all delighted to get the house to themselves again, we took a flight to Osh, Kyrgyzstan via Istanbul.

Our three-week journey through Kyrgyzstan was an unforgettable adventure filled with awe-inspiring landscapes, challenging treks and the warmth of the local people. From the capital Bishkek, to sleeping in a yurt in the remote wilderness of Son-Kul, we loved every moment of Kyrgyzstan.

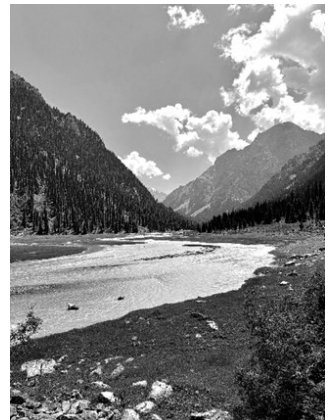
Our adventure reached its peak on the three-day Ala-Kul trek, a challenging yet incredibly rewarding experience. Starting from Karakol, the trek took us through dense forests, steep ascents, gorgeous valleys and rugged landscapes. Reaching the top of the Ala Kul pass at 3800m, looking down at the glacier, pristine lake and surrounding snow-capped peaks was one of the highlights of the entire trip. Our trip to Kyrgyzstan has left us wanting to see more of central-Asia, one of the few places left in the world still relatively untouched by tourism.



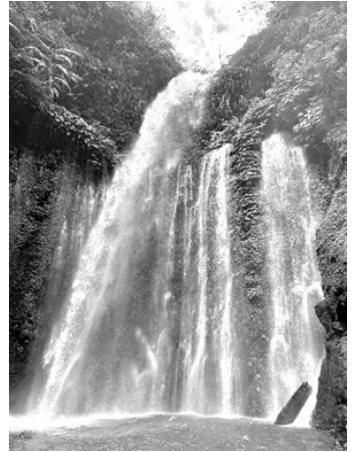
The next stop on our journey was Delhi, India. Safe to say this was a little different from the remoteness of the Kyrgyz mountains! Delhi attacks the senses in every way – honking horns, bustling crowds, and the rich aroma of street food mingling with the city's heat and dust. A week in Rajasthan was spent in Agra, Jaipur and Pushkar. The Taj Mahal was one of the highlights along with the holy lake in the city of Pushkar.

After a week of the exhausting Rajasthan we flew to the north of India to a region called Ladakh. It was as if we had arrived in a new country – it felt more like Tibet than India. Our driver took us over the highest motorable pass in the world, Khardung La, rising to an incredible 5395m.

India does this really weird thing to you – there are times when you absolutely hate it but for some reason it draws you back. A land of contrasts where beauty and chaos co-exist. For every moment of awe and wonder there quickly follows a moment of bewilderment and exasperation. India, we will be back!



Moving on from India, we took a flight to Lombok, Indonesia. We stayed in a beautiful homestay, where we ended up staying a little longer than we intended! We visited some beautiful waterfalls and did a 2-day trek to the crater rim of Mount Rinjani, an extinct volcano that dominates the landscape of Lombok. A short flight then took us to the Komodo region – we expected the highlight to be seeing the Komodo dragons (which were impressive) but we were completely taken aback by the underwater wildlife – stunning, colourful coral, reef sharks, turtles and rays were in abundance. Pop your head out of the water and there was incredible scenery with the highlights being Padar Island and Pink beach (the sand was actually pink!).



Next up was Australia. Here we embarked on a 1700km road trip along the scenic Queensland coast from Cairns to Brisbane. This drive offered us lush rainforests, stunning beaches and the tallest waterfall in Australia. We particularly loved Wallaman Falls, Whitsunday Islands, whale watching in Hervey Bay and staying for a few nights with Lizzie Morton!



After the slight stress of Air Vanuatu going into liquidation, we managed to get ourselves to Port Vila, Vanuatu. Vanuatu regularly wins ‘happiest country in the world’, and you feel it within hours of landing. Everyone is wearing a smile on their face and offers you a warm greeting when walking past you. It was in Vanuatu where we learnt to dive and completed our open water PADI certificate (more on diving in part 2).

We travelled to the island of Santo, which was one of the highlights of the trip (have we said that already?!). Santo offered one of the best beaches of the trip – Champagne Beach. We had the entire beach to ourselves – white sands and crystal-clear turquoise waters, a tropical bliss. Santo also offered the beach of Port Orly, amazing blue holes and a really cool cave-trek, however, swimming through bat-poo was less of a highlight!

The next part of our adventure takes us to Fiji, French Polynesia and New Zealand before a surprise trip home on Christmas Day. Join us for that next time in part 2!

Anna French

Jenny Takes a Bow

After a 30 year career with West Midlands Police, Jenny Tooth completed her last working day on the 21 January.

Jenny joined the police at Stoney Stanton Road, Coventry in 1995, working as a response officer across the north of Coventry; a time when the world and policing were very different to how they are now.

It was a time before mobile phones, when police didn't have to wear stab proof vests and had only a small wooden truncheon as personal protective equipment. The north of the city at that time was, however, a challenging place to work and gave new officers a really good grounding, preparing them for almost anything (as I am sure Ian Tipton can attest).

A few years later, she moved to what was then known as Fletchamstead Highway police station, covering the south of Coventry. It was here she met her new Sergeant and future husband, Matt.

Jenny was later successful in selection and training to become a surveillance officer.

This was a role she loved. The job involved sitting in the back of covert vans and watching, amongst an array of other things, drug traffickers and armed criminals, and helping to direct the activities of firearms officers and investigators so they could be apprehended and brought to justice. There was also the technical side of the job which she mastered well; being able to build covert cameras and tracking devices into everyday objects, such as sat navs, clocks and pedal cycles, so they would not arouse suspicion. This led to some very high-profile arrests, but her work and contribution, because of the covert nature of it, was never really spoken of.

Some years later, she returned to response work, at the same time juggling the raising of three daughters which, as challenging as it was, she did well.

For the last few years, she has been working as part of a small team, rehabilitating offenders with a history of drug abuse and house burglaries. It was a fairly new team when she joined it, and she was instrumental in the selection of suitable candidates and encouraging them to be open about their previous offending. After selection, Jenny would ensure the candidates were properly supervised, tagged and monitored 24 hours a day for a period of time. She would ensure that they kept their doctors' appointments and stayed on top of their medication as well as guiding and supporting them in their everyday life problems to keep them from returning to taking drugs and burgling peoples' houses.



Working closely with the South Warwickshire Plato Trust (and Birdingbury's own Peter Law), she ensured that those with underlying mental health issues were appropriately housed. It has been quite a change from the days of pursuing and prosecuting offenders, to rehabilitating and preventing one of the most intrusive crimes victims can experience. The success of the program and Jenny's contribution was recognised when she won an 'Excellence in Policing' award last year, citing examples where her candidates had turned away from drugs and crime, got employment and encouraged their peers to do the same.

It's impossible to say just how many lives have been touched over the years by Jenny's work, as so much of it went on in the background, outside of the usual spotlight on policing. It would however, certainly amount to thousands: offenders arrested, drugs and guns taken off the street, people protected and safeguarded, and those who perhaps made poor life decisions were given a second chance to turn their lives around, get off drugs, stop breaking into people's homes and build better lives for them and their families.

These few words don't really touch the surface of what 30 years in policing entails, especially when successfully raising a family at the same time. Not only can she now take a well-earned break and be rightfully proud of her contribution, but she can also continue to watch from the sidelines, as her daughter, Anna, continues in the family footsteps, starting, as Jenny did, responding to incidents across Coventry.

Congratulations on an amazing career, and love and best wishes for a happy retirement.

Matt Markham

BIRDSONGBIRDSONGBIRDSONG

Adam Elliot Smith



The village was saddened to hear of the death, just before Christmas, of Adam Elliot-Smith of Back Lane.

The funeral will be held at Rainsbrook Cemetery and Crematorium Monday, 10 February at 2pm.

Our sympathies are extended to his family and friends.

BIRDSONGBIRDSONGBIRDSONG

Bowling Rolling Along

Happy New Year!

Leamington Hastings Bowls Club are back playing indoor short mat bowls after the seasonal break.

Please come and have a go on a Wednesday at 2pm in the Leamington Hastings Parish Hall. You can try three times, for free, before you decide if you would like to join us. The benefits include gentle exercise, coaching tips, good company, laughter, a cup of tea and free parking. Whether you're returning to bowls or a complete novice, everyone is welcome - we play indoors from September to April and outdoors from April to September.

February 14 sees the return of our popular skittles evening to raise funds for ongoing improvements to the bowls green. It has to be experienced to be believed. If you would like to come along, enjoy a few rounds of skittles and a lovely home cooked meal please call 01788 336913 for ticket information.



I have enjoyed my year as president of the club and I would like to thank the committee and members for their support, and I wish Jim a great 2025 as the next President.

It's forty years this year since work started to create the bowls green by a few club members under the supervision of Fred Cox, Leonard Ellward and Manton Dimbleby (the club's first president) and our own Pat Toole. Other members that worked hard creating the bowls green carrying out such jobs as digging out, levelling, measuring, fencing, making gates, laying turf, and watering, (the list is endless), include Neville Cowley, Cyril Gregory, John Lines, Allen Neal, Gordon Royans and Ron Adams.

Club members continue to help with the maintenance of the green and our grateful thanks go to anyone who has played their part in sustaining Leamington Hastings Bowls Club. What a fantastic facility and a great legacy to have in the community and may the club continue to go from strength to strength. We also have a Facebook page for anyone interested.

To those members suffering from ailments and ill health, take care, rest, feel better and we'll meet up again soon.

Sue Turner

BIRDSONGBIRDSONGBIRDSONG

Wine and Cheese Evening

Come along to Birdingbury Club on

Saturday 8 March at 7pm

for a fabulous evening of wine and cheese tasting.

Six fine wines and carefully selected cheeses from Cheese on the Green for you to sample, assess and enjoy!

£30 per person

To register interest email

johnabarr@btinternet.com

By 15 February



Club Opening Hours

Monday – Wednesday	Closed
Thursday	6pm – 9pm
Friday	5pm – 11pm
Saturday	2pm – 11pm
Sunday	12noon – 7pm

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Regular Events

There's always lots more going on and details can change at short notice.
Keep your eye on Village Chat WhatsApp group and Birdingbury Club Facebook page.

When to eat	What to eat
Saturday 1 February from 5.30pm	Pizza Van Wood fired pizzas made to order
Friday 7 February from 5.30pm	Tapas Zampa Authentic Spanish Tapas made to order
Thursday 13 February from 4.30pm	Chippy Van Club open from 4.30pm
Friday 21 February from 5.30pm	Village Kitchen Curry Freshly made in our Birdingbury kitchen
Saturday 1 March from 5.30pm	Pizza Van Wood fired pizzas made to order
Friday 7 March from 5.30pm	Delights Indian Café Indian street food made in the Birbury
Thursday 13 March from 4.30pm	Chippy Van Club open from 4.30pm
Friday 14 March from 5.30pm	Village Kitchen Curry Freshly made in our Birdingbury kitchen
Saturday 22 March from 5.30pm	Pizza Van Wood fired pizzas made to order
Friday 28 March from 5.30pm	That's Nugs Chicken nuggets street food style



Birdsong Editor:

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Copy date for next issue – 18 March 2025