



Fête Accompli! - Hugo Bailey and Dave Judge

What a weekend! By every measure, this year's fête was one of the best attended we've seen for several years and despite a fairly rainy set of forecasts, the weather behaved itself. In total we raised over £7k for the Village Hall which will contribute to some pending projects such as a new roof for the shed and replacing the ageing boiler.



The dog show was a particular highlight, with classes covering all the usual suspects - "Distraction Alley" was the standout; sausages, tennis balls and squeakers scattered down the run with the dogs having to ignore the lot of them and trot calmly to the other end. Some did, most did not - but it provided much amusement to watch. The tractor rides to see the bluebells were as popular as ever while the tug-of-war saw out the day in the traditional way: high stakes, much confusion and minimal cheating!

The Drapers ran their welly wanging and egg throwing stall, both of which produced the usual confusion and entertainment. Kim, Darlene, Andrew, Jane, Emma and the other games stall organisers kept the children happy and the parents lightly fleeced for the duration of the afternoon. We also had stands from the Young Farmers, the Wildlife Trust, the HandeBus, RAF Welford and a good number of other local organisations - thank you to all of them for coming along.



The Wantage Silver Band provided the quintessential soundtrack, the maypole dancers were a delight as ever, and Relevé Dance Club laid on some wonderful performances. The barbecue, run as always with military precision, served up some of the best food we've had in years - the meat came from the butcher on the bridge in Newbury, and Shaun's team did a fantastic job. Judith and her team laid on copious amounts of tea and cakes generously donated by the village bakers amongst us.

A huge part of this year's atmosphere - and a fair chunk of the turn out - came down to Sam, who brought the football tournament back after a long hiatus. He put an enormous amount of work into both the competition itself and getting the pitch into shape, and it really paid off - thank you Sam!

There were lots of other local stallholders too, including Marsdon's Fudge, Flo's Scrunchies, Hillside Honey, Ultimutt dog treats, Cavalier Paperbacks, Brickleton Beads, Helen's Art and Crafts, plants, sweets and many others.

None of this happens without the volunteers though - whether you baked a cake, put up a poster, wrangled a gazebo, supplied bits of kit, ran a stall, master-minded the car parking, sold tickets or helped in any of the dozens of other ways the fête needs, thank you. It's the highlight of our village calendar for a reason.

Photos - Jeremy Snow and Gill Judge



Farm News – Evelyn Bracey

What a very odd spring we have had, well if you could call it that. A few hot days and then I felt I would need to put my thermals back on!! On the farm things are busy, but more rain would help. I know you had a very wet February, however Robert and I were in Australia visiting family so missed it. Unfortunately with the heat and high winds all that moisture has gone, the ground has large cracks and crops are beginning to get quite stressed. It also means that the grass is not growing quite as well as it should. This could mean farmers are short of silage and hay for a second year running. Talking silage we have the contractors in to pick up our silage but the forage harvester took some metal up into the main body of the machine so therefore they have had to stop, a lot of unhappy faces. The lack of moisture could also mean that straw is short as the crops will not grow as much as they could. Perhaps we could all go out and do a rain dance!

Of course there are the other little things which are affecting our industry, such as the price of fuel and fertilizer. We purchase our fertilizer once a year in the autumn. That should be sufficient to last us through the following growing season. However, at the moment merchants aren't even sure if they will have any to sell. Many farmers are already talking of not planting for next year as it will be too expensive to buy seed and plant if they are unable to put any fertilizer on it and therefore potentially would have very little crop to sell.

Talking of crops we have to work out how much we will have to combine and therefore how much we might have to sell. Robert sells into a pool with a company he deals with. It means we have to accept the price they get. The other way of selling your crop is to ring different merchants and ask what they will give you. Sometimes you get a better price, other times you may not - it can be a bit of a gamble.

On a happier note we turned the cattle out the other week, they were so happy to be out. They race across the field kicking up their heels and forgetting that they have a calf to look after! Let's hope the forage harvester is repaired!

Update from the West Downland Benefice – The Benefice Team

We were delighted to be back in Brightwalton Church as the Benefice on Sunday the 10th May. The work to create the new self-contained area is complete and what a triumph it is. The space has its own entrance, heating and kitchenette, perfect for meetings and for school use. Do pop in and have a look and get in touch if you would like to make use of it. 'Thank you' to the PCC for arranging this and to all those involved in the mass cleaning effort ahead of the service on the Sunday!



That Sunday also saw our Annual Parochial Church meetings held in Brightwalton Village Hall. We were treated to coffee and pastries alongside the 2025 Parish Report. Do take the time to read our 2025 Church Life report, you will find it on the 'Join In' page of the website westdownland.co.uk/join-in - plus there are some hard copies in the churches too. You can even view the recording of the Rector's message through the YouTube link! Within the report we celebrate all the good achieved across the West Downland Benefice last year, we hear from our Parish Schools, each PCC, all our wonderful Benefice groups and share our aspirations for 2026.

Our message of 2025 was 'Join In'; this year we build on that with 'We Are Together'. We worship together as a Benefice wherever we find ourselves, we work more effectively together and we are together in all that we do across the Benefice. Our Sunday service schedule can be found on the website.

Old Churchyard tidy up – JUNE 14th - all welcome!

The Parish Council invite everyone to join a working group to tidy the Old Churchyard, on Sunday 14th June, 10am-12pm. The more the merrier, and the quicker the area can be cleaned!

West Downland Benefice Choir – Judith Orpen

We are lucky to have a lot of talent in the area, and at Christmas about twenty people filled the choir stalls at All Saints' Church Brightwalton for the service of nine Lessons and Carols. Given that most cannot read music, the standard achieved was incredibly high - from soaring descants, rousing harmonies to classic carols and the modern "Saviour's Day".

We are now trying to have a regular choir who meet up once a month with a small repertoire of pieces that can be used either as part of the usual Sunday service, or for special services such as weddings and funerals. But we need more singers, particularly altos and sopranos.

If anyone is interested, please contact Judith at Judith.orpen@westdownland.co.uk



Brightwalton Village Hall

**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS SINCE
THE GRAND OPENING OF THE EAST HALL!**

SATURDAY 5TH DECEMBER



Mark your calendar
Afternoon tea & Evening party

we're replicating the original
Grand Opening celebration

Volunteers needed to help - all welcome!
Email: brightwaltonvillagehall@gmail.com

Brightwalton Youth Club Summer Term

Monday 5.30pm to 6.30pm

Brightwalton Village Hall

Starts 8th June

Youth Club – Katherine Moore

Brightwalton Youth Club meets on Monday evenings during term time at Brightwalton Village Hall, 5.30pm to 6.30pm. We are open to Primary School aged children from Reception to Year 6 from all schools in our local area. We offer a range of activities each session from cricket, football and badminton to colouring, baking and science experiments!

The cost is £3 per child for a session.

Please email Brightwaltoncommunity@gmail.com to register your child or for further information.

Brightwalton School Update - Katherine Moore

We have enjoyed a packed and purposeful Summer 1 term, with a wide range of opportunities that have supported both academic progress and wider personal development.

A particular highlight was our Geography Curriculum Day, where pupils engaged in rich, hands-on learning. Thanks to all the staff and helpers who enabled such a successful day. In particular, we are grateful to Mr Whidborne and the farm staff for providing meaningful, real-world learning opportunities within our local environment. We also thank Mr Porter for developing pupils' orienteering skills and Mrs Herrington for her valued support. Please look at the film the Year 6 podcast and film crew helped to make, on our school Facebook page.

Our School Council, alongside Mrs Moore, organised a fantastic Fun Friday, offering a wide range of experiences including the Daily Mile, gymnastics, art activities and a visit from Berkshire Reptile Company. Pupils enjoyed the opportunity to handle a range of animals. The outdoor popcorn making session with Rev. Mike was another highlight, combining real-life science learning with an enjoyable treat.

Our Year 6 pupils have now completed our Key Stage 2 SATs assessments. We were extremely proud of the children for approaching these with maturity and determination, demonstrating their learning with confidence.

This year, pupils were supported with a breakfast each morning to ensure they were well prepared for the day ahead. Thank you to Mrs Goatley for organising this so effectively – children particularly enjoyed the range of healthy options provided including low sugar cereal, porridge, yoghurt, fresh fruit, scrambled egg and toast.



Brightwalton Parish Council - Chairman's Annual Report 2025/26

It has been another steady year for Brightwalton Parish Council, during which we have continued to focus on maintaining and improving our village environment, supporting community activities and managing increasing financial pressures.

Key Highlights and Challenges

This year has not been without its challenges. We experienced more instances of vandalism within the village. Most prominent being one of the memorial benches outside the village hall being damaged beyond repair. There was also damage to the hedge in the playpark. On a brighter note the efforts of villagers to keep the village looking tidy has not gone unnoticed. It is heartening to see the results of people quietly going about maintenance work voluntarily.

Investment in the Village

Despite these challenges, there have been several positive developments. Notably, funding secured through a West Berkshire Council Members' Bid enabled the refurbishment of the village phone box, which has now been restored to an excellent standard and is a feature the community can be proud of. Significant attention has also been given to the upkeep of the recreation ground and play area. A programme of repairs has been carried out, including fencing, equipment maintenance and safety improvements, alongside the adoption of a longer-term maintenance plan to ensure these facilities remain safe and enjoyable for all. Tree safety has also been addressed through necessary works, including the removal of unsafe trees in the Old Churchyard and arrangements are in hand to carry out a wider tree survey.

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...Chairman's Annual Report 2025/26 (Continued)

Community and Events

The Parish Council continues to support a range of community initiatives. The Youth Club has remained incredibly popular, with regular attendance and a variety of activities and events throughout the year, including a trip to the climbing wall. Community events such as Open Gardens, seasonal celebrations and social gatherings have been well supported and contribute greatly to village life. We are also grateful for the success of the village fete and other fundraising activities, which play an important role in supporting the Village Hall. The Council has also continued to work with partners on wider matters, including local housing, ensuring that homes intended for those with local connections are allocated appropriately, and engaging with West Berkshire Council on planning and policy matters.

Finance and Precept

Like many councils, we are facing increasing financial pressures due to rising costs beyond our control. Historically, Brightwalton's precept has been relatively low compared to similar parishes, however, to maintain the standard of services and assets within the village, it has been necessary to increase the precept and carefully manage reserves. The Council has continued to monitor budgets closely, approve necessary expenditure and plan for future commitments, including maintenance contracts and asset replacement.

Governance and Administration

This year has seen continued improvements in governance, including the transition towards a '.gov.uk' email domain in line with audit requirements, and review and adoption of key policies to ensure that appropriate systems are in place for financial management, compliance and risk assessment.

Looking Ahead: Looking forward, the Council will continue to prioritise:

- Maintenance of village assets and infrastructure
- Responsible financial planning and rebuilding reserves
- Supporting community initiatives and engagement
- Addressing local housing concerns

Thanks

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all Parish Councillors for their commitment and hard work throughout the year. Their role is entirely voluntary and often goes unseen yet is vital to the smooth running of the Parish Council. In particular I would like to thank Councillor Goatley for his hard work and persistence with West Berkshire Council on ensuring our social housing is used for the benefit of people with close ties to the village, as per its original planning consent. My thanks also go to our former Parish Clerk, Faye, who left us in August, and to our current Parish Clerk, Mel, for their professionalism and support, and to our Community Coordinator, Katherine, for her continued efforts in delivering valuable activities for residents. Finally, I would like to thank the many volunteers within the village. Whether helping at events, maintaining local areas, or contributing quietly behind the scenes, your efforts make a significant difference and are greatly appreciated.

Cllr Tim Wyatt - Chairman, Brightwalton Parish Council

Brightwalton Parish Council – Meeting Highlights – 11th May 2026

The Parish Council met on 11th May at the Village Hall, where Cllr Tim Wyatt and Cllr Annie Agnew were re-elected as Chairman and Vice Chairman for 2026/27. The Chairman also presented his Annual Report for 2025/26 [see elsewhere in this issue], reflecting on a year of steady progress, community effort and ongoing financial pressures.

Updates from partners:

- District Councillor Clive Hooker shared news from West Berkshire Council, including upcoming Chairmanship changes & discussions on Newbury's pedestrianisation.
- Community Coordinator Katherine Moore reported on Youth Club activities, summer plans and potential community events.
- All Saints PCC confirmed vestry works are nearing completion and thanked volunteers for recent churchyard maintenance.
- Village Hall Committee celebrated a thriving programme of bookings and a successful village fete raising over £8,000.

Planning: Councillors raised no objection to one new planning application, and several recent planning decisions were noted.

Section 106 Housing: Concerns were raised about a local affordable home potentially being allocated to a noncompliant applicant. The Council will work with Housing Officers and neighbouring parishes to ensure local connection rules are upheld.

Highways: Visibility issues at the Common Road / B4494 junction will be reported to West Berkshire Council for verge maintenance.

Finance: The Council approved the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26, renewed BALC/NALC membership, and agreed to seek competitive insurance quotes for 2026/27.

Play Area: The annual ROSPA inspection highlighted two items requiring attention. Quotes will be obtained for surfacing improvements and hedge repairs and follow-ups arranged for outstanding maintenance tasks.

Projects & Governance: A programme of activities for 2026/27 was approved, and updated Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, the Risk Assessment and Asset Register were adopted.

Village Matters: A working group will meet on Sunday 14th June (10am–12pm) to tidy the Old Churchyard. Residents are asked to support and lend a hand, if they are able.

Next Meeting: **Monday 13th July 2026** at 7.30pm, with further dates scheduled through to May 2027. Residents are welcome to attend all Parish Council meetings. The full minutes of this meeting can be viewed at: www.brightwalton.org.uk



Well done for reading this far – seriously, good commitment. Now just the small(er) print to go...