

Shire

Your local community newspaper
with news and views from the
Shirehampton area

*Celebrating the
650th Edition of Shire*

No. 650 - March 2026 www.shire.org.uk 5,000 copies monthly

Have you got a job that needs doing? Go to YOUR LOCAL TRADESPEOPLE section on pages 17-18 to find a local business who can help.

NEW Date for the Sea Mills
Flower and Craft Show
- See page 7.

NEW Home for the High
Street Markets
- See page 9.

Are We Ready?

Rolling Up Our Sleeves to Respond to Extreme Weather!

Soon after I moved to Shirehampton with my partner, a storm hit overnight. Our fences were no match for it, and assessing the damage took less than a second – they were flattened to the ground. Some new energy came over me, as I donned my boots and borrowed tools from my neighbours to fix things so our dog could play outside again. It was exhilarating. I rarely feel so immediately useful at my day job.

If you feel the same sort of energy when responding to urgent need; or you're part of a club that can quickly come together to support others; or maybe you are good at coordinating action; or simply want to learn – I'd like to invite you to a meeting on preparing for extreme weather in Shirehampton.

The meeting is open to all, on **Saturday 21st March at 10am until noon, at the Cotswold Community Centre on Dursley Road.** The aim is to think out loud about what's already working, and whether a small, volunteer-led emergency preparedness group could make sense here. We want to explore how such a group could be realistically coordinated and what kind of structure would be useful without becoming burdensome.

The discussion will focus on scenarios such as storms, flooding or heatwaves. Together we will explore realistic, neighbourly responses. It's also a chance to say what wouldn't work, and to share ideas for practical solutions.

Situations like these are easier to manage when we know who might need checking on, where reliable information can be shared, and how neighbours, clubs, businesses and community spaces might support one another.

Anyone interested in how the community functions is welcome, whether you're part of a club, run a business, volunteer locally, or simply want to listen. No expertise is needed.



© Kathryn Courtney

Participants at Shirehampton Climate Emergency Group's Flooding Event.

Curious to explore this together? To find out more, email chair@shirehamptonaction.org.uk or visit our events page shirehamptonaction.org.uk/events.

Ludo Tolu

Pembroke Road Garage

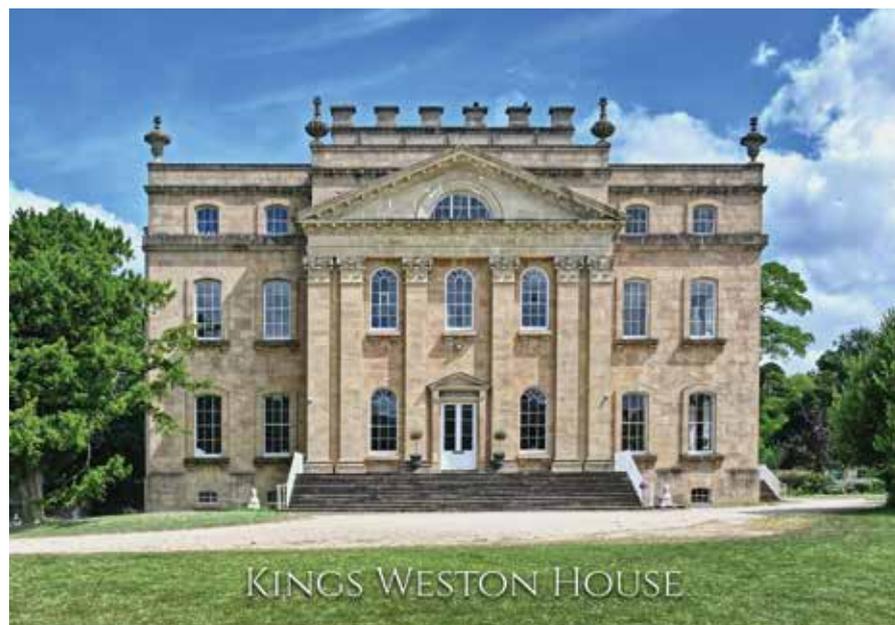
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1st March 2026



WE ARE
EPIO CATERERS

Shire

We hold regular monthly meetings on the first Monday of each month at 6pm in Shirehampton library. All welcome!

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We welcome contributions for publication in 'SHIRE' but reserve the right to edit any copy received. Articles should not exceed 450 words. Any material published is at the editor's discretion and may also be included on our website www.shire.org.uk unless the copy is clearly marked 'not to be included on the world wide web'.

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REGULAR EVENTS IN SHIREHAMPTON

SHIREHAMPTON PUBLIC HALL REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

MONDAY	Twyford Art Club (Except August) Yoga	10am-12noon 6.30-7.30pm	Main Hall Main Hall
TUESDAY	Jolly Melodies (Term Time) Line Dancing Community Living Room Bereavement Support (1st Tues) Puppy Training	10am-12noon 2-3pm 3-5pm 5.30-7pm 6-8pm	Main Hall Main Hall Library Library Main Hall
WEDNESDAY	Healing Rooms (2nd Weds) Over 75s Exercise Extraordinary Links (Term Time) Women's Fellowship (2nd and 4th Weds) Shire Stitches (3rd Weds)	10.30am-1.30pm 2-3pm 3.30-5.30pm 7.30-9.30pm 7.30-9.30pm	Main Hall Main Hall Main Hall Main Hall Main Hall
THURSDAY	Shire Social Group Healing Rooms Tai Chi Pregnancy Pilates Pilates Family History Group (2nd Thurs) Model Railway Club	10am-12noon 10am-1.30pm 2-3pm 6-7pm 7-8pm 6-8pm 7-10pm	Bradley Room Main Hall Main Hall Main Hall Main Hall Library Club Room
FRIDAY	Shire Stitches (1st Friday)	10am-12noon	Bradley Room
SATURDAY	(Private and Public Functions)		
SUNDAY	Church of Grace	11am-4pm	Main Hall & Springfield

The Hall is also home to Shirehampton Action (formerly SCAF) and Tandem Arts CIC

Events in our library



REGULAR EVENTS

Every Tuesday afternoon 3pm – 5pm

Shire's Living Room –

free tea/coffee/biscuits/games and a friendly chat.

1st Tuesday of the month 5:30pm – 7pm

STAR Peer to Peer Bereavement Group –

Contact Ash Bearman (0117 982 9963).

1st Wednesday of the month 7:30pm – 9pm

Record Appreciation Club –

Using analogue equipment, we play a classic vinyl album every month and have a discussion afterwards.

2nd Thursday of the month 6pm – 8pm

Family History Group –

We have a team of experts at hand to help you navigate the Ancestry.com website and other online tools and find out more about your family's history.

Every Sunday evening 6:30pm – 7:30pm

Heartfulness Relaxation and Meditation

Email southwest@heartfulness.uk before your first session. All welcome 18+

If you'd like to attend any of the above sessions, either email friendsofshire@gmail.com or phone/text 07943-401575



Cotswold Community Association
Dursley Road, Shirehampton,
Bristol, BS11 9XH
Registered charity no. 1101427
Website: cotswoldcommunity.org
Email: cotswoldca@gmail.com
Phone: 07943-401575

Regular Events at the Cotswold Community Centre

MONDAY	Pilates 9.30-10.30am Kettlebells 5:15-6:15pm 6:30-7:30pm
TUESDAY	Over 70s Exercise Class 2pm-3pm Film Night 7:30pm (1st & 3rd of month)
WEDNESDAY	Keep Fit 10:30-11:30am Kettlebells 5:15-6:15pm Pilates 6:30-7:30pm
THURSDAY	Welcome Space 10am-Noon Bingo 2pm Kettlebells 5:15-6:15pm 6:30-7:30pm
FRIDAY	Happy Space 2pm-4pm (3rd of month)
SATURDAY	Coffee Morning 10am-11:30am (2nd of month) Bingo 7:30pm
SUNDAY	Cotswold Christian Community Service Songs of Praise Café 4:45-6pm (2nd of month)

Come along and join in the fun

For more details and regular updates, join our mail list by emailing cotswoldca@gmail.com

SHIRE ADVICE SERVICE

Free Advice Sessions

Shirehampton Health Centre, Pembroke Road,

Shirehampton

Tuesdays from 10am

To make an appointment call 0117 9515751

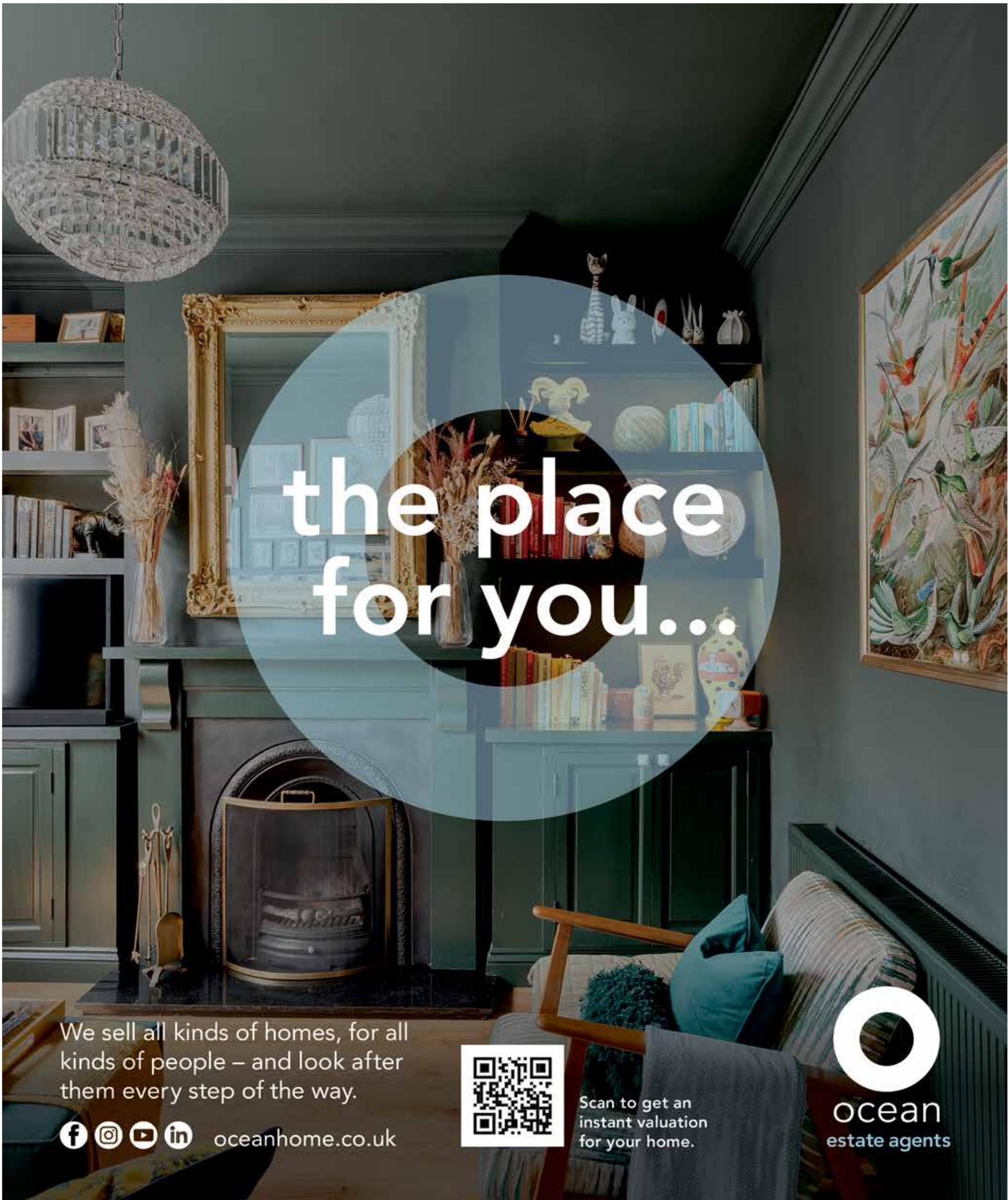
Avonmouth Ladies Club

We meet on the 1st & 3rd Tuesday
at Avonmouth Community Centre
2.30-4.30pm

(But not in January & February)

A warm welcome awaits

For information contact
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The *Shire* Community Pages

Window Wanderland Workshop

An exciting three day event is happening in Shirehampton, and I was able to have a sneak peek of the preparations beforehand. There was a Window Wanderland Workshop held at the *Cotswold Community Centre* and art work was well under way.

I spoke with **John Hastings**, one of the co-ordinators, and asked what Window Wanderland was all about.

“It’s a way of getting people out into the streets during the darker winter evenings, making the streets safer and getting people away from their TVs for an hour or so and enjoying the creative, artistic side of the community throughout Shirehampton. The theme this year is unity, given that these are rather more troubling times and there’s not a huge amount of unity in our society at the moment, with people around who are intent on wrecking and dividing that kind of spirit. A bit more sense of togetherness would be lovely. We’ve got a nice artist community in Shirehampton now and they’re around willing to help give people ideas.”



Nicola, Claire (hidden), Rebecca & Juliet.



Some teaser photos of various designs being made to encourage readers to get out and about to find them! The clues are in the photos.

Window Wanderland takes place on the 27th and 28th February and the 1st March, but will you be able to find the creative artistic designs being created in the photos?

To find out more information check out www.facebook.com/groups/shirehamptonwindowwanderland and www.windowwanderland.com/area/shirehampton/ where you’ll be able to download a map a couple of days before the event.

Kathryn Courtney

Half-Hourly Train Services Extended on Severn Beach Line

Half-hourly rail services on some lines in the West, including the *Severn Beach line*, are set to continue permanently, after agreement with the Department for Transport.

Since the regional authority, in partnership with **Great Western Railway**, introduced more frequent services on lines between Bristol Temple Meads and Westbury; between Bristol Temple Meads and Gloucester, via Yate; and between **Bristol Temple Meads and Severn Beach**, there have been over 3 million more train journeys on those routes. This represents a 28% increase in people benefiting from the services.

The half-hourly trains have boosted rail connections along the Bristol Temple Meads to Severn Beach (the Severn Beach Line), also stopping at Lawrence Hill,

Stapleton Road, Montpelier, Redland, Clifton Down, Sea Mills, Shirehampton, the new Portway Park & Ride, Avonmouth, St Andrews Road (hourly), and Severn Beach (hourly).

The Mayor of the West of England, **Helen Godwin**, has repeatedly spoken of the need to further increase the frequency of train services across the West. A longer-term ambition is there for four trains per hour to serve stations across the network, after the region secured a record £752 million investment for transport infrastructure improvements to enable those increases over the coming years.

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Friday 27th March 7:30pm

Tickets £10
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Tickets also on sale at Ruby Jeans



School Photo, 1961/2

I have had great success with just two names from the photograph remaining from the 42 children.

The first thing is the correction to the date: the photograph is of **Mr Davis's** third year junior class from the **1961/62 school year**. The children would be aged **9-10 in this photograph**. I also had Vernon listed in the incorrect position.

Thanks to **Candice Alder (née Button), Gail Piscopo (née Thomas), Leon Franklin, Paul Wescott** and **Carol Macintosh** who have helped put the names together. The list of names that they have kindly come up with is as follows:

1st (top) row: Andrew Mazur, Derek Lang, Peter Yorke, Vernon Jozefowicz, Michael King,

Peter Howell, Ronald Poole, Unknown, Graham Painter, Stephen Butcher, Allan Lewis

2nd row: Paul Wescott, Martin Raven, Susan Gazzard, Carol Kew, Linda Paviour, Carol Macintosh, Alison Hargraves, Gail Thomas, Margaret Goessens, Veronica Smith, Michael Perks, Christopher Hinds

3rd row: Anne Thomas?, Lynda Price, Dorothy Andrews, Jean Geater, Patricia Laird, Mr Davis, Janet Potter, Margaret Everett, Rosemary Yorke, Lesley Froom, Unknown

4th (bottom) row: Robert Jones, Philip Hawkesby, Leon Franklin, Stephen Jenkins, Michael Hardman, John Northcott, Tony Gates, Alan Derrick, Ken Warrant

Do any other readers know either of the missing names?

Alex Wright



We especially enjoy spreading community news and we love to hear from all our readers.

Please, send in your letters and stories to editor@shire.org.uk or deliver to The Library at The Public Hall.

If requested, we will not print the name of a letter written to the Editor, but we cannot accept an anonymous letter.

Many thanks.

We have also received this lovely letter from a Shire resident about your favourite local paper:

A Special News(paper)

Each month I look forward to receiving my copy of Shire. When read, it is kept until the next issue arrives, as it is not only informative but contains useful **local** information. I also think that it plays a central role in our community, and wish to see it continue.

I am aware how much it depends on goodwill and volunteers for both production and distribution. It would be a great loss were it to fail through apathy and a lack of understanding.

I am not in a position to offer practical help, so I would like to make a reasonably useful donation to its funds.

And if you, dear reader, would also like to do the same, you can do it by bank transfer to:

Lloyds Bank - Account Name: **Shire Publications**; Sort Code: **30-99-38**; Account Number: **01985368**

Or through our JustGiving page: www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/shire-publications2026

Or if you would like to donate with cash or a cheque, please contact the Editor at editor@shire.org.uk OR at Shire Publications, Shirehampton Library, Station Road, Shirehampton, Bristol BS11 9TU.

The Shire Committee would like to say a huge thank you to *Cotswold Community Centre* and to our anonymous reader for their very generous donations. *It's the generosity of our readers that has kept us going for the last 50 years and for 650 monthly papers!* Thank you to all concerned.



Hello there! **Would you like to improve your well-being?**

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Linda x x

Weekly classes - just come along - no need to book:

- **Kettlebells are Monday 5.15 - 6.15pm and 6.30 - 7.30pm, Wednesday from 5.15 - 6.15pm and Thursday from 6.30 - 7.30pm at the Cotswold Community Centre. Message for 1:1 technique session.**
- **Bootcamps: Monday and Wednesday 6.15-7.00am. Please message for details.**



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Any submitted Personal Announcements or other Notices to the paper may incur a charge and must be accompanied with the submitters contact details or their submission will not be able to be published.

THE ARTS IN SHIREHAMPTON

AA Abbott: Local Author Extraordinaire

On 15th October *AA Abbott* did a book launch at *Shirehampton Public Library*. Not only did this highlight the importance of local libraries, but also the need for easy access to books to read and supporting local authors. She was also selling her books at the December High Street Market. *Nicola Smith*, local book blogger, chatted to AA Abbott about her career and her latest book release “*Lies Between Friends*”. I caught up with AA Abbott to find out more.



AA Abbott signing her book.

“Learning to read was a magical experience, and I always looked forward to my family's weekly visit to the local library. Soon, I started making up stories to entertain my younger siblings. However, it was only after decades of avid reading that I had the confidence to write a novel. I have had a lot of support from others in the **Bristol Fiction Writers' Group**, and have learned a lot about my craft from creative writing books and online courses. In my twenties – some while ago! – I also went to regular fiction writing classes. Our teacher made a living from *Mills & Boon* romances, but

she loved reading psychological thrillers best of all. That obviously rubbed off on me.

“So far, I have written 12 novels, all in the crime, thriller and mystery genre. My most recent books are psychological thrillers about women finding strength in the face of danger. The last four are set in Clifton. They've been inspired by a variety of events and circumstances – examples include the treatment of women in the media, the Canynge Square sinkhole, and even a favourite coffee shop. I decided to use a pen name. Having surveyed readers, I discovered that many order their bookshelves alphabetically. Thus, I became AA Abbott.

“It takes me about a year to write and publish a book. That includes several rounds of editing. Some authors are much faster and others are slower. I have to tell myself it's not a race! I play with fragments of ideas for ages, getting to know my characters. Eventually, a story emerges. Then I start writing!

“I love the flexibility of writing life, and the satisfaction of telling a gripping tale! It's also fun meeting readers and talking to book groups, literary festivals and anyone else who loves a good read. What don't I like? Marketing pushes me out of my comfort zone, but really, that is not a bad thing!



AA Abbott with Nicola Smith.

“That leads naturally to a final request: please use your local library! It was a privilege to have a launch party for ‘*Lies Between Friends*’ at Shirehampton Library – a warm, welcoming space, with books, computers and events, all for free. Big thanks to the library, to the Friends group there, and to Shirehampton book blogger Nicola Smith.”

You can buy AA Abbott Books and latest release “*Lies Between Friends*” as an ebook, paperback, in large print and in a dyslexia-friendly font called Lexend, which is really easy to read. You can order from book shops, and Amazon.

You can find out more about AA Abbott at <https://aaabbott.co.uk/> and www.facebook.com/AAAbbottStories/

Kathryn Courtney & Photos © Kathryn Courtney

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Moving to May!

Sea Mills Flower and Craft Show, Saturday 9th May 2026, St Edyth's Church, Sea Mills

The *Sea Mills Flower and Craft Show* has been an established event in the life of our city almost since the first buildings went up here (1922!) It's always been in the autumn, most recently on the first Saturday in September. So why change it now, I hear you cry! There are a number of reasons, and it's not a decision we've taken lightly.

We've been keen to involve more children, and increase the number of entries in their classes – last year we started a very popular free Art and Craft session for children in **Sea Mills Library**, twice a month. But we had to set the Show's closing date just as term started, leaving no time for a last minute reminder through 'satchel post'. And as a mum, the last thing I needed alongside sorting out uniforms and shoes for the new school year was demands for making things!

The other big autumn event in Sea Mills is **Apple Day, on the third Saturday in September**. Of course it's an upstart, only 10 years old, but it's such a fantastic morning, and quite different to the Show. Merging the two events didn't make sense, and we felt October was too late in the year for the 'growing' classes.

It's also been frustrating to clash with the **Westbury on Trym Village Show**. We know entrants have been able to enter and pop in to both shows, but we organisers have no hope – and it sounds like a great day! They might have ideas we can pinch ...

Which led to us looking earlier in the year, but too early is no good for the gardeners! We still wanted to avoid the start of a school term, and with Easter being a moveable feast, we chose May – not the first Bank Holiday weekend, and not half-term at the end. And here we are with the second Saturday in May.

Now, we realise this clashes with the **Sea Mills Repair Café**. But we've talked to each other: there's just a small number of volunteers involved in both, and the timing should work for people to bring entries to the Show, head down to the Repair Café, and then come back to the Show.

We're working on the Show classes – we've obviously had a re-think on all the flowers, fruit and veg, and it will be a different range. And yes, there's a risk that a poor spring will make it difficult, but when has the weather not been 'difficult' in one way or another? There are no guarantees, and if everything in your garden has drowned or frozen, well, everyone else is 'enjoying' the same, aren't they?

Last year we had questions about why we moved from the old Methodist Church to **St Edyth's**, but I think everyone agreed that the extra space there was much needed, and we're really pleased we can hold it there again – thank you St Edyth's!

We've had our first committee meeting of the year, and we've already got a range of stall-holders signed up. The entertainers are booked, and so are most of the judges. It's exciting to see the enthusiasm rising. There's a lot to be done, but it should be better than ever!

We've always welcomed entrants from across Bristol and it would be lovely to see our friends in Shire represented. We know you are a very talented lot!

Get in touch if you want to know more, or think you could help. We'd love to hear from you.

Sue Hazelden

on behalf of the Sea Mills Flower and Craft Show Committee

seamillsflowershow@gmail.com

Facebook: Sea Mills Flower & Craft Show



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Pancake Day in Shirehampton



Pancake Day did not pass by unnoticed. Plenty of people will have consumed a selection of pancakes with various toppings from the traditional lemon and sugar to berries, bananas, chocolate, marshmallows, honey, maple syrup and even bacon.

Ruby Jeans on The Parade had a special offer on pancakes throughout the week. The Methodist Church were not only providing locals with pancakes to eat, but a few had a go at tossing pancakes.

St Mary's Church also held their pancake day event where chocolate and fruit fillings were popular.

Kathryn Courtney & Photos © Kathryn Courtney



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SHIREHAMPTON PUBLIC HALL

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MIXED ABILITY PILATES - 7PM - 8PM

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New Home for the High Street Markets

Things have been a little quiet with Shirehampton Markets since the Tithe Barn has been sold but they have some exciting news.

The High Street Market is moving to the Methodist Church/JTE Hub on the corner of the High Street and Penpole Avenue in Shirehampton. Their first

High Street Market will open on **Thursday 2nd April from 9am until 2pm**, and Shirehampton Markets and their Market Traders are looking forward to this

new adventure with some exciting ideas for 2026. A perfect opening just before Easter. They look forward to seeing many of you then and supporting your local community market for the four villages and beyond.

Kathryn Courtney & Photos © Kathryn Courtney



“I’d rather teach you yoga than hang with David Attenborough”

“Yoga for All” is a Bristol yoga school, set up by me, Lucy Wells – I’m an experienced and qualified instructor, passionate about teaching yoga to everyone, no matter your experience and ability. I teach classes all over Bristol and online, and offer a welcome, inclusive and safe space for people to move, stretch and get stronger, but most importantly; have a bit of fun and leave feeling good!

I know I’m biased, but you can’t argue with the science – yoga is an absolutely incredible practice. The physical benefits are almost endless: it can improve flexibility and build strength, enhance balance and

coordination, support joint health, improve posture and can boost circulation ... to name a few! But for me, the real benefit of yoga is the mental benefits it can bring too. I’ve never seen someone leave a yoga mat sad (however they first turned up to it)! On top of that, it can also help reduce stress and anxiety and often helps with better sleep.

I’ve always had yoga in some form in my life – however, a few years ago, working as a wildlife documentary producer, I suffered severe burnout, something I’m sure many of you can relate to! A break between contracts allowed me space and time to explore my love of yoga and train to be an instructor. I’ve never looked back. And though I miss the exciting travel, and hanging out with **David Attenborough**, teaching people yoga, and seeing others also fall in love with it gives me more joy than my former life ever did.

I’m starting up **two** new classes in Shirehampton, both at the Public Hall and starting on 6th March. The first is a **Chair-Based Mobility and Strength** class. For those of you with less mobility, this class is a relaxed and welcoming environment, and though slow-paced, and seated, it will be no less fun (or beneficial!) than standing classes!

The second class on offer is **Yoga for a Lunchtime Stretch**, a lovely and slow-moving mat-based class,

focusing on stretches and gentle movement and allowing you to finish the morning feeling refreshed and relaxed.

If you’ve never tried yoga before, come give it a go! Experienced yogis are also most welcome!

If you are interested in joining one of my classes or have any questions about what to expect or how yoga can help you, please see my website for more details or send me an email directly.

Lucy Wells

WEBSITE: www.yogaforall.co.uk

EMAIL: lucy@yogaforall.co.uk



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Lucy Wells



COMING TO SHIREHAMPTON IN MARCH!

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www.yogaforall.co.uk

All classes just £5 until 14th March!

Churches in the Shirehampton Area

Hello Once Again from St Mary's Church



Goldies are meeting here on **Wednesday 4th March at 10:30am** for their monthly get-together, enjoying music and company.

Mothing Sunday is on **15th March** and this will be marked in our 10am service that day. This service will take place in a relaxed style environment with breakfast pastries, refreshments and content suitable for all ages,

intended to celebrate all the women who have shaped our lives. As ever, all are welcome to this service. Please note the earlier start time of 10am.

We are holding a **Global Bring & Share Community Feast** on **Saturday 21st March** at 12-2pm. Bring a family favourite go-to dish or try your hand at a recipe from a different country and join us for food, warmth, social time, a global quiz and children's activity area. Please help us spread the invitation far and wide, thank you!

Easter Sunday falls on **5th April** this year and we will hold our Sunrise Service in the churchyard from **6:20am**. The main service will be at **10:30am** which will be followed by an Easter Egg Hunt. There will be an Easter Bonnet decorating competition, so please bring this along to our service for a chance to win a prize! There are competition categories for young children, older children and adults, so we look forward to seeing how creative you all are.

We hope to see you soon!

With best wishes from St Mary's, Shire

Sundays	8:30	Rise & Shine on 2nd and 3rd Sunday of the month
Sundays	10:30	Holy Communion Service Worship for All on 4th Sunday (including baptisms)
Monday	10:00-12:00	Coffee Morning
Tuesday	10:00-12:00	Coffee Morning
Wednesday	10:00-12:00 10:30	Coffee Morning Goldies (1st Wednesday of the month)
Thursday	11:00	Holy Communion
Friday	10:00-14:00	Coffee Morning to midday. Welcoming space with hot food from midday to 14:00
Saturday	10:00-12:00	Coffee Morning

www.stmarysshire.org

Hello from Shire Methodist Church

www.shiremethodist.org • www.facebook.com/shiremethodist

After the greyness of February, we are looking forward to brighter weather as we prepare for Easter.

During **Lent** our minister is leading a discussion group based on the film *Chocolat*. This takes place every **Friday from 6th March to 10th April at 1.45pm** in the Methodist church on the High Street. All welcome. On **Thursday 2nd April** we will be holding our **Maundy Thursday service at 4pm** – at this service we remember how Jesus washed his friends' feet and then had his last meal with them before his arrest and crucifixion. Please know that you will be welcome at this and any of our Sunday

morning services which start at 11am. However on **Easter Sunday, 5th April**, we will be meeting at **3pm for our Easter Day Service** and this will be followed by afternoon tea.

We are an inclusive church welcoming and affirming every person.

May God's peace and love be with you all during March.

From everyone at Shire Methodist

BRISTOL HEALING ROOMS are in Shirehampton every second Wednesday of the month.

Don't miss this opportunity to drop in between **11am and 1pm** at the **Shirehampton Public Hall, Station Road**, to be prayed for in the name of Jesus. AS IT WAS IN THE GOSPELS! We have many stories of healing on a daily basis.

Jesus heals today as He did during His time on earth.



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An Update from Darren Jones MP, Bristol North West

www.darren-jones.co.uk | fb.com/darrenjonesmp | [@darrenpjones](https://twitter.com/darrenpjones)

I am always proud of my home area. But seeing the *community-owned wind turbine in Lawrence Weston* highlighted as one of the pioneering projects that have helped to inspire this government's new £1 billion national Local Power Plan has left me grinning from ear to ear!

Published on 10th February by the government and **Great British Energy** (the new publicly owned energy company launched by the government), the **Local Power Plan** will help support community-owned clean energy generation projects. Imagine community-owned solar panels on Shire Public Hall, Shire Methodist Church, and the social club, for example, with profits flowing back into the village rather than lining the pockets of big energy companies.

Backed by funding of up to £1 billion, this is the biggest public investment in community energy in history, putting wealth and power into the hands of communities – and it's long overdue in this country!

Community-owned energy is the norm in other countries. In Germany, for example, about 40% of installed renewable energy generation capacity is citizen-owned. But, despite its huge potential, for too long community energy in this country has been held back by a lack of funding, central government support, and by planning regulations.

Indeed, the now celebrated wind turbine in Lawrence Weston only came to fruition because of the grit and determination of the residents behind **Ambition Community Energy (ACE)** – an off-shoot of **Ambition Lawrence Weston** – and led by the efforts of **Mark Pepper**. They not only had to secure funding but also negotiate some tricky planning regulations, and I was happy to lend my support to help unblock these problems on a number of occasions.

This government has worked at pace to reform the planning system and remove unnecessary red tape that is stopping this country from building. In December, the government's landmark **Planning and Infrastructure Bill received Royal Assent**, which means it has become law. This new law will support clean power projects to be prioritised for grid connections to bolster Britain's energy security and empower community-owned wind turbines, solar panels and other forms of low-carbon power to get up and running – without the headaches that ACE had to battle!

I hope that after reading this you'll be inspired to apply. If you are thinking about developing a new community-owned clean energy project in Shire, I'd love to hear about it. Many of you will know that achieving a Net Zero future is an area of policy that is very close to my heart. Indeed, it was through working in energy policy that I met my wife, Lucy. It was also a big part of my motivation for becoming an MP. It is now a privilege to be in government and to share with you the action we are taking on clean energy.

If you'd like to find out a bit more information about the Local Power Plan and how to apply, head to gbe.gov.uk/local-power-plan

I'll leave you with a quote from Mark Pepper from the government's press release: "If we can do it, so can other communities."

Helen Godwin, Mayor of the West of England, said:

"Last month, the West hosted the Energy Minister to launch the Warm Homes Plan – a £15 billion investment to help people stay warm without needing to turn the heating on, thanks to insulation and heat pump grants.

"This week, the West can once again be proud of our environmental credentials. A local wind turbine project in Bristol has helped inspire a new £1 billion national programme, giving communities the power to generate their own clean energy and help cut pollution."

You can read about the turbine at www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/case-studies/ambition-community-energy-cic-wind-turbine/

The **regional Mayor** has warmly welcomed the biggest investment in community energy in British history, inspired by the country's biggest on-shore wind turbine – here in the West of England. Today's **Local Power Plan** is set to invest up to £1 billion to help support locally-owned clean energy generation projects.

Announcing the plan, the government has praised "pioneering community energy projects" including



© Darren Jones/Houses of Parliament

As always, if you need my help or have a question, you can get in touch with me on e-mail at darren.jones.mp@parliament.uk, by calling my office on 0117 959 6545 or by writing to me at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

the country's largest on-shore wind turbine in Lawrence Weston, Bristol, for helping inspire the new programme and for "transforming Britain". **Ed Miliband, the Energy Secretary**, has visited the West Country wind-power site and highlighted it in the House of Commons during the passage of the Great British Energy Act; **Jürgen Maier, Chair of Great British Energy**, last year joined the region's trailblazing community energy sector during a visit to the West.

The community-owned wind turbine generates enough clean power to power over 3,000 homes through the grid, cutting pollution each year by the equivalent amount generated by a petrol-powered car driving 8.6 million miles. The 150-metre-tall wind turbine was delivered by **Ambition Community Energy CIC** on Bristol City Council owned land near to Ambition Lawrence Weston, a local charity.

CONTACTING YOUR LOCAL COUNCILLOR
Shirehampton is in the Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston Ward

Your Councillors are:

Donald Alexander – Labour: cllr.donald.alexander@bristol.gov.uk

Zoë Peat - Labour: Cllr.Zoe.Peat@bristol.gov.uk

Tom Blenkinsop - Labour: Cllr.Tom.Blenkinsop@bristol.gov.uk

Labour Members' Services Office: 0117 922 3827

CONTACTING YOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

Shirehampton is in the Bristol North West Constituency

Darren Jones Phone: 0117 959 6545

Email: darren.jones.mp@parliament.uk

Website: www.darren-jones.co.uk



Yet Again...

...we're talking about extreme weather! Yet again the Somerset Levels are under water and Dorset rivers are torrents flooding roads and houses. Indignant people ask the Environment Agency what they are going to do about it. But this is the natural world we all live in responding to the changes in our climate systems which we have brought about with our fossil fuels. We seem to think we are in charge and have power over natural forces. Think again.

In 2014 it took two months for the Levels to fill. This year it took two days! The floods and frequent storms predicted by climate science are arriving twenty years sooner than expected! The Environment Agency

and other flood defenders are woefully underfunded; there's no money for maintenance. Already houses are being abandoned because of repeated flooding. A row of terrace houses in a South Wales village is

being demolished. They can't be protected from river flooding. The A379 at Torcross in Devon washed into the sea on 3rd February and the road cannot be rebuilt. The sea has washed away the land beneath it.

It has rained for 37 days on end as I write – a near Biblical number of days – and counting!

Are we, as a nation, recognising that our weather will be increasingly devastating as time goes on? Are we beginning to think about how we can adapt?

Shire Action is planning a local flood awareness workshop for Saturday 21st March at 10am until noon, at the Cotswold Community Centre on Dursley Road (see the front page). It will be looking at how we, as a community, can respond when extreme weather hits us. Everyone needs to be part of this conversation.

Shirehampton Avocet

During a New Year's Eve walk a passing comment about a distant flock of white birds prompted a closer look and a delightful surprise. David and Kim Minshall had wandered through Lamplighters' Marsh and were stood beneath the M5 motorway, looking towards the Severn. Both keen wildlife watchers, David took a closer look through his camera at the birds Kim pointed out – rather than gulls as anticipated, it turned out to be 53 Avocet!

The Avocet is a long-legged wading bird with striking pied plumage and a long, thin upturned bill. The beautiful birds were on the southern shoreline of the Avon, between Royal Portbury Dock and Avonmouth. The 2024 Avon Bird Report noted that a new Avocet winter roost site had developed at Royal Portbury Dock, with numbers in the forties. Happily, this seems to be increasing.

A New Year's Day visit confirmed that the Avocet were still present and 56 were counted. Several further visits were made through the month with numbers

fluctuating a little, the birds perhaps dispersing a little along the Avon. The peak count made was on 20th January when 60 were sighted, but since that time they appear to have moved on. This may simply be out of sight further along the Avon, although there have been reports of Avocet just down the coast at Uphill and the mouth of the River Banwell, and most recently at Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve.

While the Avocet are an exceptional sighting, Lamplighter's March is a rich habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Deer are reported from time to time,

and the summer months see a variety of butterfly and dragonfly. Birds are though perhaps the easiest to sight; some to look out for on the Avon include Common Sandpiper, Curlew, Cormorant, Grey Heron and Redshank. Other birds seen include Dunnock, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Linnet, Song Thrush, Stonechat, Redwing, Wren and more.

David regularly posts his photographs of local wildlife in the Friends of Lamplighters Marsh Facebook group. This alerted others to the presence of the Avocet, and several have been able to enjoy seeing them.

Of wider interest: Avon Birds (<https://avonbirding.blogspot.com/>) is a daily listing of birds found in Bristol, South Gloucester, North Somerset & BANES, by the Bristol Ornithological Club.

David Minshall

www.facebook.com/natureandtheoutdoors/



© David Minshall



© David Minshall

Bath Spa to Bath Lookout and Alexandra Park

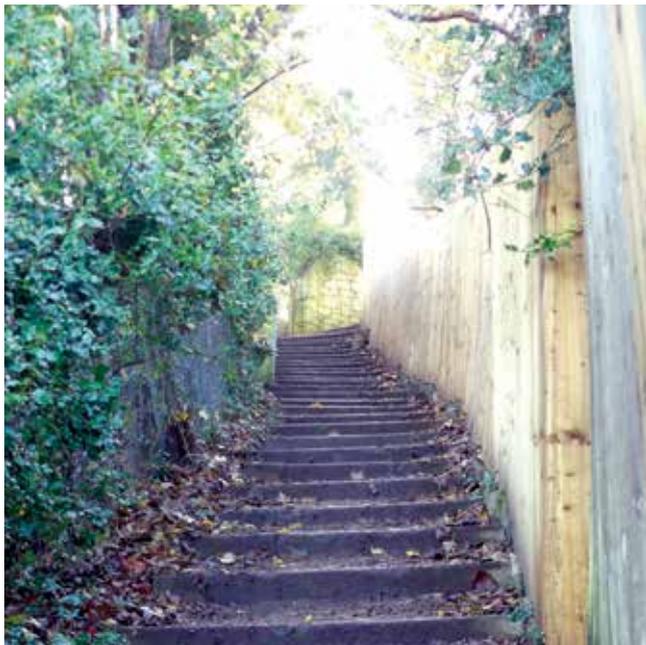
One of our series of walks, easily accessible by public transport from Shirehampton; take a bus or train into Bristol and change for regular bus or train services to Bath.

This is a short walk, starting at Bath Spa station, but with a very steep ascent and descent, so it needs a good pair of legs, healthy heart and lungs, whether young or old, and stout shoes or boots. The views from the summit are truly breathtaking, so well worth the effort.

1. Turn right out of **Bath Spa station**, turn right again to pass under the railway and cross the **Avon** via **Halfpenny footbridge**.
2. Cross the dual carriageway via the pedestrian crossing, turn right then immediately left to climb **Lyncombe Hill**.
3. A short distance up the hill turn right onto **Calton Road**.
4. After a few yards turn left up a steep path between houses. When you reach a road, cross over to continue up the steep steps.



5. Continue up the steps, occasionally a steep path. There's a bench to rest on about halfway up.



6. You will eventually emerge into **Alexandra Park**. "**Bath Lookout**" viewpoint is slightly to your left at the top of the slope, adjacent to the layby.



7. Enjoy the views.



8. There is a playground just across the road from the viewpoint for the kids to enjoy and also toilets. If you want to extend the walk, maybe do a circuit around the park?
9. From Bath Lookout descend again to the path and turn left along the fenceline that borders **Beechen Cliff**. It will begin to descend with houses to your left. At the end of the row of houses as the walled gardens continue, look out for an opening to your right at the top of a very steep flight of steps, descending through Beechen Cliff Woodland. Continue to the bottom.

10. Turn right onto a path between rows of houses.



11. Turn left down a flight of steps, cross the road and follow the path as it descends to the main road, **Claverton Street**. Turn right.



12. Continue along Claverton Street until you reach the crossing which you traversed at the start of your walk.

EITHER:

13. Cross over and continue over Halfpenny Bridge to return to the station.

OR:

14. Continue on Claverton Street until you reach **Claverton Buildings** at the start of **Widcombe Village**. You may wish to visit the fantastic **Ram Inn** with its lovely deli counter serving savouries and cakes to eat in or out and the well-stocked bar.



Paul McMillan & Photos © Paul McMillan

• HISTORY *i n* SHIRE •

The Diamond Jubilee Drinking Fountain

Next time you're waiting for a bus on the Green, spare a glance for the green metal object near the seat. It has a history, and it deserves inspection. It's a Grade II Listed Building, and it must be one of the smallest ones in Britain.



The fountain in 2012.

(credit: John Grayson / Grade II listed Victorian drinking fountain, Shirehampton, Bristol / CC BY-SA 2.0 [cropped])

It was made in **Glasgow in 1897**. Many of them were made, and there is a very similar one in **Suspension Bridge Road**, Clifton, but less complete. The basic form is always the same, but they could be "supplied with Dog Trough at an extra cost".

This one was a drinking fountain because it used to have a mains water supply, long cut off. It had four cups, suspended on chains, also long gone, along with their bacterial health hazard.

The top used to have a golden crown, as in the photo. The crown was once guarded by four griffins, perched on bracket supports on the corners of the canopy. Griffins were creatures with a lion's body, tail and back legs, and an eagle's head and wings, with talons on the front legs. For the Victorians, they symbolized guardianship. In panels below, there are three leaf-

like shields, two of which carry an image of a long-legged crested bird. One commentator, obviously not a birdwatcher, calls it a heron – the neck's wrong for a grey heron like those nesting in the riverside woods at Pill, but at least the heron has a crest, even if not exactly where this bird has it. It might be meant to be a crane; for the Victorians, the crane symbolized vigilance, but common cranes don't have crests either. I think it's meant to be a crane, but we could just settle for "a big heraldic bird".

The panel facing south is blank. In the panel facing onto the main road is a bust of **Queen Victoria**, and on the strip above it appears "*Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee 1897*". The strip is blank on the other three sides, but several of these fountains carried the words "Keep the pavement dry" here. That has led people to think that the Temperance movement had a hand in providing or encouraging them; perhaps this wasn't just warning drinkers not to splash, but to stay off the bottle.

The panels sit on arches featuring a complicated flowering plant design. Under the canopy stands the fountain itself. The water arrived through an urn-like structure with decoration from which sprout four forms resembling courgettes, and out of them emerge curling loops from which used to hang cups on chains.

Above these stands another bird – a pelican, according to the Listed Building statement, though it doesn't have webbed feet. If it is a pelican, it will have symbolised nourishment and self-sacrifice; traditionally it will have been female, her beak shown extracting blood from her breast to feed her young. The similar fountain in **Melbourne** has a kangaroo here instead.

The water supply was activated by buttons, now blanked off. The water fell into a basin with a scalloped edge.



© Richard Coates

That stands on a pedestal containing the water pipe, decorated with ivy-like plants descending between four columns. From the plantlife emerge four salamanders, with their heads pointing downwards, right at the bottom. Salamanders were thought to be fire-resistant – which is fine for decorating a source of water, but it was once thought that they poisoned well-water.

Helen Szafer's "Memorial Drinking Fountains" website quotes a "Verse from an old Shirehampton folk song":

*I met me first love in the village
(name of Mary-Jean)
We shar'd a cup of water from
The fountain on the Green
We first sang carols there together
One cold Christmas Eve
Then went into The George to drink
Before I took me leave.*

Where on earth did she get this from? Does anybody local know it? Or know the tune and still sing it? (I suspect I know the answer to the last question.)

Richard Coates

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All that Flows Comes to Rest: A History of Avonmouth

During September 2025 there was a two-day weekend celebration bringing together photographs, memories, stories and history of Avonmouth docks, the workers, the people and Avonmouth being home for many. There was also a silent movement display by others, which *Pat Maule* was part of, pretending to make shortbread.

On the Saturday three films were screened, incorporating the history and memories through to the outlook today, with local schoolchildren. There was also a community meal that evening.

I went along to the Sunday event that covered the history of Avonmouth and the docks through a series of photos shared by the local community and a slide show. Seeing the photographs and displays was fascinating and each told a story that is now consigned to history. Many of the people in the photos have long since passed but the work, lives, events and fun could never be forgotten. I love history and how a community brought together the times of yesteryear.

I met with old family friend Pat, who had been a resident of Avonmouth for around 70 years. Before this she was born in Sea Mills, moved to Lawrence Weston and

then to Queen Street with her family. When Pat got married, she moved to St Andrew's Road.

"It's been an amazing weekend talking with many people, looking through old photos and watching the different films about the docks, how it worked and reminiscing. It's been a special weekend and it's brought back many memories."

As Pat and I continued to look through the old photos we came across a photo of Pat's Dad. "He was a crane driver on the docks. There was no health and safety then. I can remember him telling me that he would climb up the jib, which is to the top of the crane, with no safety harness at all, and mend what he had to do, and then come back down again. He said he was never frightened, he just did it.



Pat Maule.

"People think Avonmouth is just the docks, they don't think of the people who actually lived in the village. It is a lovely place to live now. Before this you'd have lorries thundering along St Andrew's Road. The old dock gates, you couldn't walk up Gloucester Road when it was home time because of the people coming out of the docks, the trains had great long carriages and people would be getting on the buses. You couldn't move. The street was full of shops. That's all gone now since the new dock gates opened and roads changed for the better. It's been great chatting with many people and sharing memories," said Pat.

The project was brought together by **Alejandro Acin** and **Ben Thomas** of **IEC Visual Lab**. "These projects always take a little bit of time to get off the ground but I think after 18 months working here we feel that somehow we kind of belong to it a little bit. We're incredibly grateful for all the trust and the kind of collaboration with the community, **the community centre** and **the port** but also with **Heritage Lottery Fund**, **Nisbet Trust** and **Quartet Community Foundation** who supported the projects and without whom this wouldn't exist."

Kathryn Courtney & Photos © Kathryn Courtney



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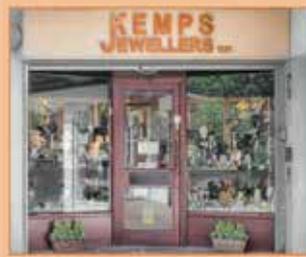
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Cars and Coffee!

The *Port Of Bristol Sports and Community Hub* held a Cars and Coffee Morning on Saturday 7th February and I found some gems on show where owners were happy to talk about their cars. It would have been an event my Dad would have enjoyed as we went to see classic cars when we could. I met with two car owners *Trevor Fitesall* and *Ned Lewis* who certainly have a love for classic cars.

Ned owns a **1967 Sunbeam Alpine Series 5 Sports Tourer** he calls *Annabel*. "I usually attend events during the summer months, less in winter due to salt on the roads. I bought her four years ago, and just over three years ago we found we would need to do some rework. I brought in a shell from America, moved all of the mechanics across to it, re-spraying the body, doing the mechanics, modifying her to my taste, and that took ten months with my friend doing the work. I do love going to car meets and seeing everyone else's cars, but I never really get to know what people think about my car." Ned needn't have worried as plenty of people were viewing Annabel and happily chatting to Ned.



Annabel: the Sunbeam Alpine Series 5 Sports Tourer.

Trevor owns a **1948 Triumph Roadster**. They were made from 1946 to 1949. It's got a 2000 engine in it, the standard Vanguard engine.

"The majority of the car is made in aluminium, and it's put around an ash frame. The reason for that was that after the Second World War, the country as a whole was bankrupt. It needed to make cars for export, and these cars were all made in Coventry in factories that previously produced bombers and airplanes, so that's why it was made out of basically what was left.

"The wings are made of steel, and the car itself was first commissioned on 3rd December 1948. My father bought it 12 years later in 1960, so it's been in our family for about 65 years.

"My father actually proposed to my mother in it, and in 1966 they drove to the Italian island of Elba. In the 1970s, my father had a company car, so he didn't drive it much, and it was in the garage ever since. We talked many times about restoring it but sadly in 2019, he passed away, and I made the decision to get the car restored. I knew somebody within the Triumph Roadster Club, which my father was one of the founding members of, and he was also the chairman.

"After a five-year restoration, what you see is the finished article. It's a beautiful car, and it's a great reminder of my parents. When we finished it, my



The Triumph Roadster.

mother was not well at the time, but I did manage to pick her up from her care home on Easter Sunday and take her for dinner. I managed to drive her twice in the car before she sadly passed away. Two weeks later, we took it to the Triumph Roadster Club annual rally, and it won Best in Show. For that, for me, it was very emotional," said Trevor.

This event was extremely popular with a great range of cars and vans despite the rain at the end of the morning. The Port Of Bristol Sports and Community Hub have plans to run more car events in the future, Check out their Facebook Page for regular event updates: www.facebook.com/PBAhub.

Kathryn Courtney & Photos © Kathryn Courtney

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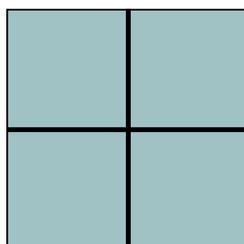
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Sport and Activities IN SHIREHAMPTON

A Month of Medals

It's been a frenetic month of competition for *Bristol White Eagle's* fencers.

Our Oasis Academy Brightstowe venue hosted the Gloucestershire epee and sabre competitions. The Gloucestershire Poule Unique Epee saw twenty fencers have a great afternoon of fencing in the very best spirit. A poule unique means each fencer fences every other in turn; so each fencer had nineteen fights to the best of nine.

The men's podium was: **Seb Lee** (Gold); **Jon Mason** (Silver); **Bennett Dunn** (Bronze).

Women's medallists were: **J.J. Thatcher** (Gold); **Sue Brooks** (Silver); **Casey Browne** (Bronze). The Gloucestershire County Cup winners were **Jon Mason** and **Sue Brooks**.

Well done to all White Eagle fencers **Bennett Dunn**, **Oscar Gillett-Skeath**, **Daniel Miller**, **Gwenc'hlan Tournier**, **Adrian Day**, **Tim Wye**, **Antonino Nava**, **Ching Yu Hui** and **Casey Browne**, who took part and to the visitors who travelled to make the event possible.

A week later, it was the sabreurs' and sabreuses' turn, at **Gloucestershire Poule Unique Sabre**; twenty-two fencers engaged in their own Valhalla of nerve, stamina and skill.

The Men's Senior Gold medal and Gloucestershire title went to **Daniel Wide** with **William Dunstan** taking Silver and **Raul Blasco-Mitchell** Bronze. The Women's podium was **Michele Narey** (Gold), **Matilda Rhodes** (Silver) and **Sophie Emmens** (Bronze).

The junior category medallists were **Raul Blasco-Mitchell**, **Josh Bagatelas**, and **Matilda Rhodes**. Raul, Josh, **Kitty Wilkinson**, **Hubert Zagorzycki**, **Ching Yu Hui**, **Daniel Edwards**, and **Hyeonsoo Lee**, all put in typically stylish and dashing performances,

maintaining the best traditions of White Eagle fencing.

The next day, **Daniel Miller** took Silver in the Devonshire County Epee. Dominating in the poules, an injury picked up at the previous week's competition hampered him in a 13:15 loss in the final.

Our juniors were in action again, when our fencers forayed to **Millfield School**, for the **Southwest Age Group Qualifying competition**. **Kitty Wilkinson** came first in the Girls' U18 Sabre; coming back from 7:13 down to win 15:14 in her final. **Josh Bagatelas** took second in the Boys' U18, with **Raul Blasco-Mitchell** third and **Daniel Edwards** fifth. All qualified for the **National Youth Championships** in Sheffield.

John Rohde & Photos © Bob Pitchford



In the county épée, Adrian Day (right) scores a hit to arm; Bennett Dunn refereeing.



In the sabre, Raul Blasco-Mitchell (right) makes a stop-cut to arm to score.

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Avonmouth Sea Cadets:

“The rock that the waves keep crashing over, standing unmoved as the sea falls still around it.”

Our headline paraphrases a quote from Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius and seemed apt in describing the strength that *Avonmouth Sea Cadets* have shown in the face of recent adversity, including more than one flooding incident. 2025 was marked by a much greater blow, with the sudden death of Commanding Officer, *Lieutenant Commander Alison Fowler, RNR*. Alison was a highly regarded and respected member of the local community, active in many other areas of local life.

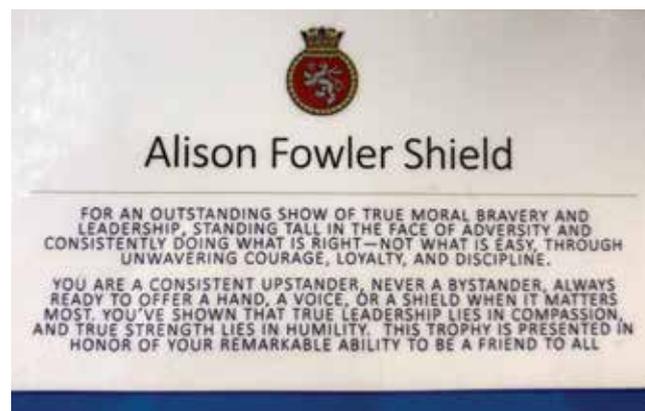
The unit recently held their annual **Awards Ceremony**, welcoming parents, supporters, and members of the local community. The focus of the evening was on celebrating the achievements of the cadets during 2025, whilst looking ahead with excitement to a fun-filled and ambitious 2026.

A spokesperson for Avonmouth Sea Cadets said: *“2025 has been a year that tested us but also reminded us of the strength of our people and our community. We are extremely grateful to the **Avon District Team** for their support during a challenging period. As we move into 2026, we are excited to build on what we have achieved together and provide even more opportunities for our cadets.”*

The evening was marked by the inauguration of a new award for **Moral Bravery and Leadership**, created in memory of **Lt Cdr Fowler**. Alison was a highly respected leader whose lifelong commitment to the Sea Cadets and to youth work left a lasting impact on countless young people and volunteers alike. Her dedication, integrity, and compassion were a testament to her character and continues to inspire those who follow in her footsteps. The new award recognises cadets who demonstrate not only leadership, but true **moral bravery** – the courage to

stand up for others, to act with integrity, and to do what is right even in the face of adversity. These qualities were central to Lt Cdr Fowler’s own leadership style and values.

The citation for the award which was written by the cadets and adult volunteers is shown in this image:



The recipient of this first award was **Leading Cadet Jack**, who expressed his pride at being recognised. Speaking after the presentation, he said: *“It is a privilege to be the first winner of this award.”*

Both staff and cadets described the presentation as a fitting tribute to Lt Cdr Fowler’s legacy, ensuring that her



Leading Cadet Jack receives the inaugural Alison Fowler Shield.

values of service, kindness, and moral courage continue to shape future generations at Avonmouth Sea Cadets.

Your local unit continues to welcome new cadets and adult volunteers, inviting anyone interested in getting involved to discover the benefits of belonging to a dynamic and supportive youth organisation. If you are interested in joining the unit, either as a cadet or adult volunteer, here’s the weblink: sea-cadets.org/avonmouth

*Avonmouth Sea Cadets, edited by Paul McMillan
Photos courtesy of and © Avonmouth Sea Cadets*

News from ShireStrong

I’ve always believed that fitness should be accessible, enjoyable, and something that brings people together – and that’s exactly what we’re building at *ShireStrong Kettlebell Club* here in Shirehampton. The ShireStrong Kettlebell Club, a dedicated community of fitness enthusiasts, gathers three times weekly to build strength and endurance through kettlebell training. We also host popular outdoor Bootcamp sessions on Mondays and Wednesdays at 6:15am at Lamplighters Marsh playing field, which welcome participants of all ages and abilities.

You may wonder what the benefits of strength training are and why you should participate. As we age our muscles weaken and our bone health deteriorates. Strength training is one of the most effective ways for people to stay healthy and strong. Regular resistance exercise helps build and maintain muscle, making everyday activities such as carrying shopping, reaching high shelves, climbing stairs and carrying luggage easier and thus reducing the risk of injury. It also plays a key role in bone health, helping to prevent bone loss and lowering the risk of fractures.

Beyond that, strength training supports heart health, improves metabolism, and can help manage weight and blood sugar levels. The benefits aren’t only physical: many people report better mood, reduced stress, and greater confidence from seeing their strength improve.

If you’re interested in experiencing these benefits in a supportive, social environment, I invite you to join ShireStrong. It’s a great way to stay active, learn proper technique, and build strength together – one workout at a time. See my advert on page 5 for more information.

Linda Thorne - Coach and Founder, ShireStrong Kettlebell Club



“The Optimists” of The Avonmouth Tavern

As a recent incomer to Bristol from “The Smoke”, I knew nothing about *Skittles*, but a little bit of research taught me that it’s a game with a rich history in the West Country, played with 9 pins and a hard ball or “cheese” and originating in the Middle Ages as an outdoor game. Around 300 years ago, it began to move indoors, with purpose-built alleys in pubs. 1948 saw the formation of the Avonmouth Skittles League, currently with 8 teams playing at local pubs and community spaces. “*The Optimists*” team currently play at *The Avonmouth Tavern* on Portview Road and it was there that Shire witnessed a home fixture *vs. Henbury Gents*.

When we spoke to **Julie Looker**, who started playing at the POB Club at the age of 18, she explained that there are two competitions, the Summer League and the Winter League and that the playing rules differ. In the former a point is scored for every skittle felled with the three balls in a player’s turn or “hand”, but in the latter, scoring does not begin until the front pin is knocked over, so you could theoretically knock over 8 pins and score no points. This makes the transition from summer to winter leagues quite challenging.

Rob Davis told us that he started playing 37 years ago at the age of 17 at the now demolished Penpole pub in Lawrence Weston. **Harry Bridgeman** is 26 and started playing at 14, with his grandparents **Janice and Ricky Skelton** at **Avonmouth Working Men’s Club**. When he’s not skittling, you can find Harry playing in goal for Shirehampton F.C. Harry stressed the family element of skittles, the game being passed

down through the generations. **Grandad Ricky** still plays and at 76 is still very much a key volunteer in many aspects of community life. Harry plays in the team with two of his friends, **Michael Laver** and **Ben Davis** so it seems that, despite some talk that “skittles is dying”, there are still young people involved who can take the game forward and pass it on to future generations of Bristolians.

The Optimists had a good summer season, winning the league and cup double. The team also pulled off an impressive 30-point victory tonight, winning 169-139, **Val Bradbeer** top scoring with 26.

Well done to Val and her fellow Optimists; we wish the team the very best of luck for the remainder of the season.

Paul McMillan & Photos © Paul McMillan



The Optimists gather at the Avonmouth Tavern alley.



A pin goes down but no points scored as the front pin remains standing.



Left to right: Michael Laver, Ben Davis and Harry Bridgeman.



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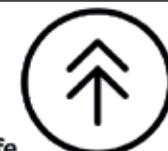
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Darts at Port Of Bristol



POB Darts JDC is quickly becoming one of the most positive and rewarding youth activities in the local community, offering children aged 7 through to under-18 the chance to learn, compete and grow through the sport of darts. As part of the wider framework inspired by the *Junior Darts Corporation* model, the club provides a structured, supportive environment where young players can develop both their playing skills and personal confidence.

What makes POB Darts JDC stand out is its focus on inclusion and development. Children of all ability levels are welcome – from complete beginners picking up their first darts to more experienced players preparing for competitive tournaments. Coaching sessions focus not only on technique and scoring, but also on concentration, discipline and sportsmanship.

Darts is often underestimated as a youth sport, but it offers significant benefits. Players build strong numeracy skills through scoring, improve hand-eye coordination, and learn to manage pressure in competitive settings. Just as importantly, they become part of a supportive peer group where encouragement and respect are central values.

Many of the club's young members go on to enter tournaments, giving them valuable competitive experience and the chance to represent their local area. Tournament play teaches resilience, preparation, and

how to perform under pressure – skills that carry over into school and everyday life.

Parents also praise the club for providing a safe, structured activity that keeps young people engaged and motivated. Regular sessions give kids something to work toward, while qualified organizers and volunteers ensure a positive atmosphere at every event.

With growing participation and increasing tournament involvement, POB Darts JDC is proving that darts is more than just a pub game — it is a pathway for young people to build skills, friendships and confidence. For families looking for an activity that combines fun with personal development, it is fast becoming one of the area's best youth opportunities.

The JDC setup is huge with over 5000 children taking part worldwide.

Dan Clifton. Photos © Bob Pitchford.



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What does Shirehampton Sailing Club get up to when they're not sailing?

Good question. Well, we go rowing – here's a picture of *Bristol Gig Club* with our very own *Nick Coward*, with their ingenious combination of plastic ladder and two pairs of very large tyred wheels and six people to heave-ho.



Then we go partying – apart from the 20 people at the New Year Dinner which we held at **Eastfield Inn, Henleaze**, this year, this is the **Shire Pirate Girls Party with guest pirate** at the **Weston Bay Yacht Club Quiz Night** – we got second place (rude for a guest team to win after all) and secured a skippered yacht for their **Padstow May Day trip**, the next annual regatta and their August trip to the **Watchet Fireworks**. Good work for a single evening!

And every. Single. Saturday morning from 9am – midday we have been taking turns on Slip Crew – that addictive task of seeing the mud off to sea for another week! **John Coxhill**, one-time Commodore, is there every week, with **Ken Darters**, and we have managed to get one or two other club members to help out for almost every week, including bringing cake to go with the coffee. The problem at the moment is algae – horrible slippery green stuff that grows back every week despite all our bright ideas (latest is simple scrubbing 100 times with a stiff brush, to be outstripped by the Saviour of the Day **Brian Adams** with his patio jet-washer!

We have also been doing theory sessions, 12 noon Saturdays at the club-house – the first session being on tides, led by **Ludo Tolu**, a new member fresh from the Day Skipper course.

It's been too cold to mend boats but there is always clearing up to be done in the dinghy compound – emptying the black bin (“There is no such thing as ‘Away’ when chucking stuff!!”), and making sure the boats don't fill with water because the sails are inside blocking the self-bailers. Then there are things to buy and maintain – a new door for the club house as the sill has rotted, the safety boat engine to be serviced, next year's insurance to renegotiate, and this year the club is paying 50% of Royal Yachting Association powerboat training courses for six of our regular members so we can widen the number of people who can take turns at safety boat helm duty.

We are **launching the sailing season on Saturday 14th March** with a safety boat familiarisation session in the morning, and with high tide at 15:46 in the afternoon we are going to capsize a couple of boats (with a brave volunteer in a wetsuit going in the water) and practise rescuing her.



The gig boat **Brigstowe**, owned by **Bristol Gig Club** but shared with us.

We leave you with a picture of our happy place – with our unique selling points, the electric winch in the old turnstile shed, and the Lamplighters Pub. Date for your diaries – **the Pirate Party is on Saturday 5th September**, joint with the Sea Cadets!

Tina Biggs - Vice-Commodore, Shirehampton Sailing Club
Photos © Shirehampton Sailing Club



Members **Tina Biggs**, **Rachel Wooster** and **Rachel Wooley**, with Weston Bay Yacht Club member, **Alison**.

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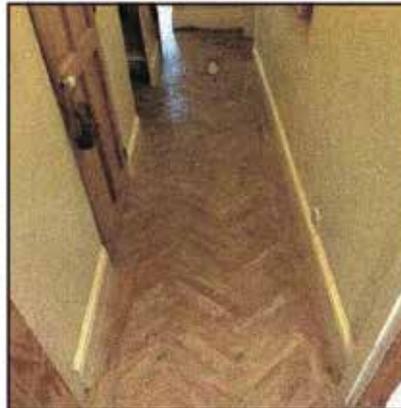
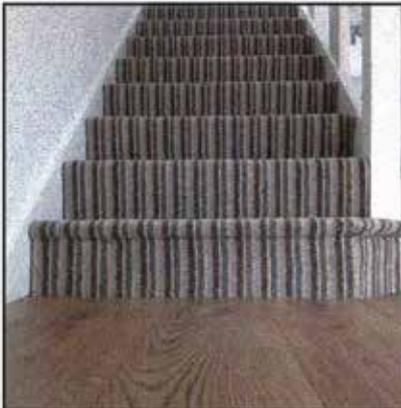
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