



January 2026

Issue 3

Welcome to the third issue of the New Hurst Village Society newsletter. 2025 was a busy year with lots of events happening. Many were covered in the summer issue that most of you should have received through your letter box.

We didn't rest on our laurels and had several events through the autumn and leading up to Christmas – read on to find out more.

And we already have events in the pipeline for 2026 – information about these is at the end of this newsletter.

Don't forget, if you have something you would like to include in future issues, you can contact us by email at contact@nhvs.org.uk.

If you do have something you would like to include in future issues the closing dates for publications are 12th December for the January issue, and 10th June for publication in July.

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Message from NHVS chairman

The village has had a good 2025. The various shows and other activities have again been highly successful; the shop is back; the Green Man is in good new hands – and two planning appeals have recently been satisfactorily settled. What else? Ah yes, the knitters and crocheters have been even more productive than before, decorating Hurst in just the right way at the right times. It is hard to see any negatives, although the duck-house remains at an interesting angle.

It was heartening to see over 70 members and non-members at our AGM in October. This gives us a chance to let you know what we've been up to (plenty) and some of our plans for 2026. It was good to see so many staying on at the end for our informal get-together. Stephen Conway, leader of Wokingham Borough Council, gave an excellent talk, took questions and stayed on to have informal chats. We hope we can tempt him back again. Minutes from our meetings, along with lots of other information, can be found on our web site - <https://www.nhvs.org.uk>

Our community seems to be in good heart - should anyone have any goodwill left after Christmas, could you help the Bowling Club or become a Friend of St Nicholas Church? Both are important, heritage parts of our village and both need help. The launch of the new footpath project to the church will help to integrate these vital parts of the village. Thank you to all members and volunteers for your help and contributions.
A Happy New Year to all our readers!

Ivor Fiennes

Membership

We're delighted to share some very positive news about the New Hurst Village Society and the wonderful momentum we're building together as a community. Over recent months, our membership has continued to grow steadily, rising from 160 members to nearly 180 households — **(179, to be precise!)**. This is a fantastic achievement and a clear sign that more people are seeing the value of being part of the Society and supporting village life. Every new member strengthens our voice, our reach, and our ability to bring people together.

While we're still a short way off our next milestone of 200 members, we're making real and encouraging progress. Reaching 200 is our next target, and it's an important one. Hitting this figure will give us greater confidence and capacity to support local initiatives, events, and activities that benefit everyone in Hurst village.

To get there, we'd love your help. If you're already a member, please consider spreading the word to neighbours, friends, and new residents. A friendly conversation, a quick mention, or a recommendation can make all the difference. Many people simply don't realise how affordable and beneficial membership can be.

At just **£10 per household**, joining the New Hurst Village Society is a small contribution that makes a big impact. Together, we can continue to grow, strengthen our community and reach that 200-member milestone.

PLEASE NOTE: 2026 membership payments are due on the 1st January each year. If you don't already have the Standing Order set up with your bank please do so as soon as you can. If you are having any difficulties or would like to pay with an alternative method, please contact nHVS Membership: contact@nhvs.org.uk

Thank you, as always, for your support — and thank you for listening.
Use this link to join: www.nhvs.org.uk/join

Planning Update

At the beginning of August, members and residents attended the two-day appeal hearing for nine houses on the land north-east of Hogmoor Lane. The eight-day enquiry into the proposed 99 dwellings, on land between Lodge Road and Tape Lane, arrived later that month. You will be aware that both appeals were refused.

When we look at the Planning Inspectorate's reason for upholding WBCs refusal, we see that both sites were treated as individual areas of Hurst, each having their own characteristics and identity, although situated a short distance from one another. The nine dwellings were refused due to the impact on the Village Centre Area of Special Character (AOSC) that contributes to Hurst's overall appeal. Additionally, veteran oak trees constitute part of irreplaceable habitat, together with a major heritage impact in an area that includes Grade II listed buildings.

The 99-home proposal between Lodge Road and Tape Lane was refused largely on the core issue of additional fluvial flood risk – the risk of local river and ditch flooding.

Despite central government pressure to build more houses UK wide, inspectors found that both sites were outside the Development Limit and in conflict with Spatial Strategy (Core and Local Plans). They found limited accessibility to higher-order services such as medical services, secondary schools, and larger shops. Put simply, there are more sustainable places in the borough to build new homes.

This quick summary doesn't do justice to the many hours invested by residents to comment on the proposals. We want to thank those who took time to attend Shute End to participate in the appeals, and those who were able to join remotely.

As to the future, there is some optimism that the main elements of the new Local Plan will be accepted. This continues to afford Hurst a fair level of protection. Hearings on the Plan are due in February 2026.

Farewell to PHAG

This Autumn, the Protect Hurst Action Group (PHAG) disbanded after nearly five years of exceptional service to the village. PHAG was formed in January 2021 to expand, inform and improve the voice of Hurst residents in the UK's complex planning and development rules, laws, and processes, especially when applied to planning applications in Hurst.

We'd like to extend our gratitude to the small group of volunteers, who developed a deep understanding of the planning system, and dedicated their time and efforts to leading the analysis on local planning applications. They brought clarity for residents and enabled us to make informed comments and representations to Wokingham Borough Council and the Planning Inspectorate.

Saying goodbye to Henry Farrar

Long-time Hurst resident Henry Farrar's funeral was held in Escrick, near York on 30 October 2025, surrounded by friends and family. Villagers will know of Henry through his books 'The Book of Hurst' (1984, 2001) and 'Hurst, a new look at an ancient parish' (2021). On leaving school, Henry started work as a projectionist at the local Regal Cinema, where he developed his love of photography and film. He was called up for National Service in 1954, and served with the Royal Signals, before relocating to London in 1957. He worked, again as a projectionist, at the Empire in Leicester Square before taking up a job with the BBC as a trainee camera operator. He transferred to Ealing Studios and was a fully trained assistant cameraman by 1962.

Henry's adventures abroad began in 1963 with a 3-month trip around central America, filming with the team for the Tonight programme with presenter Alan Whicker. He went on to work on Z-Cars, Blue Peter, and with David Attenborough. In 1967 Henry was promoted to Cameraman. He continued to work with Blue Peter on many trips over the next 13 years covering everything from the famine in Ethiopia to the sight-saver appeal in Malawi, war in Malaysia, sailing in Jamaica and tribes in Borneo.

He met Elizabeth at the BBC in 1968, while working together on a production, and they married a year later. They moved to High Chimneys in Hurst and spent the rest of their married lives there. In 2016, after the sad death of Elizabeth, he moved back to Yorkshire to be closer to his family. Henry's passion for local history led to his authoring many other books including those on Windsor Castle and his native Yorkshire. He also wrote 'A Golden Age of Film', reflecting on and inspired by his time at Ealing Studios.

Henry was a remarkable, calm, modest, and unassuming person who followed his interests passionately, both professionally and personally.

Wooded Hill – your guide to what's on in Hurst

Started in 2003, the Wooded Hill free monthly email has been keeping Hurst residents informed about events and activities in and around the village for more than two decades. If you want to receive your list of events, delivered free to your inbox every month, then simply visit our website at <https://woodedhill.uk> and hit the Subscribe link.

Calling all Hurst groups, businesses, clubs and other organisations!

If you are planning any events or activities that you want the village to know about, then drop us a line at events@woodedhill.uk – we'll publish it in our monthly list that gets delivered to around 400 addresses in the village

Hurst Rangers Cricket Club

Have you wondered how the club went from Hurst Cricket Club to Hurst Rangers Cricket Club?

It seems that the original Hurst Cricket Club has been around since 1862 – obviously not with the current players! A few years ago, they played a team called Rangers, made up of players from Reading and Wokingham.

The Rangers team were formed in 2021, but had to rent grounds as they did not have their own. They were very impressed by the Hurst ground and following many conversations the teams merged in 2024 to become Hurst Rangers Cricket Club. 2025 was the first season for this newly formed club.

They currently have over 90 players split across several teams – under 9, under 11, under 13, under 15, and the adult team, but will always welcome new players of all ages to the club.

2025 was a very busy season, with over 100 league and non-league matches played. The 3rd XI (pictured) ended as division 8-B champions, and the 2nd XI were division 7-B runners-up, which meant both teams were promoted.



We should also mention Salar Hashmi (pictured) who is just 15 years old but managed to score an impressive century in an adult match against Farley Hill!

Although the ground is not used during the winter, the teams continue with indoor net practice. The season restarts in late March, when they will also resume their weekly Friday night socials. Junior training takes place on Friday evening and the club welcomes villagers from 5:45 pm until 8:15pm, when very often the barbecue is lit, and the bar is open until 10pm!

If you would like to join the club, there is a 'get in touch' link on their web site
<https://hurstrangers.play-cricket.com/home>.

The club house and grounds are also available for private hire – the contact email address is on their web site home page.

1st Hurst Air Scouts

Our Beavers (6-8 years) have enjoyed an action-packed and varied programme this year. The spring term saw them launching paper planes, celebrating Chinese New Year, and enjoying a cosy board-games night. They also explored money skills, flipped pancakes for Shrove Tuesday, and worked toward their World Challenge Badge by preparing for a special Mother's Day Tea event where they served tea & cakes to all the wonderful women in their lives.

Summer brought outdoor adventures and new challenges such as gardening activities and First Aid skills. Further highlights included a much-loved trip to the assault course at Paddicks Patch, a katakanu (a type of canoe) session on the river, a scenic hike around Dinton, and building bird boxes for Father's Day.



The autumn kicked off making catapults, knot-tying and learning the Green Cross Code. They enjoyed a visit to the local cricket club where they tried their hand at the sport, and an enchanting Halloween "Hogwarts" night. The Beavers will finish the year with a fun evening of bowling & festive Christmas crafts.

Summer term in Cubs (8-10 years) was full of lots of time outside, doing orienteering and cycling at Dinton Pastures as well as campfire cooking and camping skills. Our last week of term was the always popular trip to Wokingham Waterside centre for kayaking.



The Cubs got out & about in Autumn term as well with a night hike and archery trip. We also had some excellent visits from the Wokingham beekeeper association and John who came to talk to us about hot air balloons and most recently we had a visit from the Reading Astronomical Society to hear about the stars.

The Scouts (10 – 14 years) have been busy hiking overnight through Burnham wood, wood whittling and making their own escape rooms. More recently they created their own short film, written, edited by and starring the scouts, complete with their own movie screening.



If you'd like your child to get involved and learn #skillsforlife? Find us at www.hurstscouts.org.uk

Hurst Bowls Club

It was really an emotional experience to say goodbye to our clubhouse, cramped, damp and mouldy though it was. Many positive memories of laughter, friendship, competition and support for our members, our community project, visiting teams and guests remain.

Our fundraising effort over the past 16 years has made this New Clubhouse Project become a reality. This was also necessary to secure the future of our sport, our Community Project and our history.

On reflection our fundraising commitment is now part of our history too. We are sad that some of our members who contributed to this effort are not with us to enjoy the fact that their target is now almost a reality.

The total cost of our clubhouse project is £300K. Our shortfall is £29K. We ask you to contribute to this historic event. Visit our website, there are two ways to donate on our fundraising page.

Current members are proud of what we embody; proud to have financially contributed generously to history and the future; proud that our New Clubhouse will stand for more than 100 years. We have gifted so much to our ancient green and to the fabric of Hurst village.

Our predecessors have asked us to continue our Club's ethos of manners, respect, courtesy, friendliness and fellowship of the sport. Of course we do always play our matches to win, fairly.

New members are welcome. We do ask for some of your time and expertise/experience in the management of our Club.

We are a voluntary organisation and expect all members to contribute. <https://www.hurstbowlingclub.org.uk>



Ronnie Ashley

Hurst Hookers

The Hurst Hookers have had a busy few months. Our summer decorations at the pond were seagull themed; it's amazing how different each of the seagulls turned out, even when two Hookers were following the same pattern, and we learnt that taller isn't always better!

The group's summer months were spent hooking up many Autumn pumpkins. We make good use of all the skills our members offer, and Kerry Woolford's floristry talents produced the beautiful pumpkin garland which adorned the pond in the run up to Halloween. Geraldine Eglington and Heather Howarth worked hard on toppers for the post boxes at the shop and on Lodge Road.



The poppy display looked wonderful again this year, raising funds for the Poppy Appeal. Every year we add more poppies to the swag which is installed at the village sign and the purple poppy horse is very popular. Recently, we have been running sessions at St Nicholas school, teaching some of the year 6 children and staff to crochet, and two of the posts covered in poppies were done by the school group – who knows, in the future some of these students could become members of our group!

Lately, we've been hard at work making goodies that were on sale at the Church Christmas Fayre and also producing the very many penguins to decorate the pond for Christmas.

Our charity fundraising in 2025 supported the Alzheimer's society. We raised over £1,300 for this cause, which is close to many of our members' hearts.



We've also continued to support Buscot Ward, the neonatal unit at the Royal Berkshire Hospital with knitted and crocheted blankets for premature babies.

In September Rachel from the Hurst Gospel Hall came to our meeting to tell us about their work with a school in Tanzania and we will be supporting this project with knitted and crocheted items where we can.

The Hookers meet at 7-30pm, every other Thursday at St Nicholas Primary school hall. For more information, please contact Pip Etheridge on 07825 224614 or email philippaetheridge@btinternet.com. New members are always welcome, no experience necessary - we'd love to have you join us.

Philippa Etheridge

Horticultural Society

A group of visitors from America were amongst the crowd at the 112th Hurst Horticultural Show.

“Traditional English Village life as we imagined it,” they said about the show, *“such a friendly and welcoming atmosphere, there’s nothing like this back home.”*

Frank Whittaker, Secretary of the show, said: “The enthusiasm and popularity for the event seems to grow every year. We had three months of sunny weather and drought, then rain was forecast for the show, yet the turnout was amazing. We are so grateful to the local pubs, restaurants, local businesses and artisan stallholders for supporting our raffle, which enables us to keep our prices low and any surplus we do make is donated to local charities. This year we were able to donate a total of £3,000, which is the same amount as last year.”

Visitors enjoyed a live jazz band, local real ale, home-made cream teas and cakes, hot food, a wide range of local artisan craft stalls and the ever-popular Hurst alpacas.

In addition to awards presented in the vegetable and flower categories, half of the show’s other entries included baking, art and cooking categories like the ‘Ladies Only Fruit Liqueur’ award won by Abbie Bennington.

The highly contested ‘Men Only Apple Flan’ prize was won by David Woolford who wore his crown with pride. The children’s classes also delighted young entrants in the community who received medals and trophies in each category.



Frank added: “We are so grateful to Clive Jones, our local MP, for presenting our trophies and awards this year. He and his wife Nicky were really enthusiastic and spent the whole afternoon chatting amongst the crowd and entered into the spirit of the show. He agreed to enter his own apple flan in next year’s show; I’ll hold him to this and maybe he’ll be wearing the crown as 2026 champion!”

**Next year’s show will be held on Saturday 22nd August.
Photographs and trophy winners from 2025 can be found on
<https://www.hursthorticulturalsociety.org>**

St Nicholas Preschool

Hello and a Very Happy New Year from St Nicholas Preschool Hurst!

At St Nicholas Preschool we provide a relaxed, happy and stimulating environment where children learn through play.

We are an Ofsted Registered Charity Preschool with excellent indoor and outdoor facilities.



One of our aims is to prepare children for their next chapter, particularly their transition to school and this is achieved by developing their independence and self-confidence. We develop these life skills through play, with guidance from our skilled staff. Learning through play gives the children opportunities to independently choose, make decisions, solve problems and develop positive social interactions that prepare them for their next stage.

We had a very exciting autumn term that included celebrating Diwali, Halloween, Bonfire night and learning all about Autumn too. The children then got into the festive spirit – we were very busy making Christmas crafts, and the glitter and sequins were in full flow! We held our annual Christmas Concert just before the end of term and sang lots of songs for our families to enjoy. The children had practiced so hard and loved playing the bells as they sang. We also held a Christmas Party for the children too where Bertie Slippers came to entertain us – along with a visit from Santa



We always enjoy being part of the village and surrounding community and love to take part in local events. You may have seen our decorated board at Dinton Pastures for their Pumpkin Trail over October half term – we also had a very colourful board in their Festive Trail.

We supported the St Nicholas Church Christmas Fayre on 6th December and held our popular 'Water or Wine Stall'. Fundraising is very important for us to help secure the future of the preschool and pays for much needed resources or opportunities for the children. We still have some space for 2, 3 and 4 year olds from September 2026 onwards.

If you would like to find out more or come and visit us, please call us on 01189343677 or visit our website St Nicholas Preschool - Hurst or follow us on Facebook and Instagram.



St Nicholas CE Primary School

As we entered the festive period, we took time to reflect on the many experiences that have helped our children grow in confidence, character and curiosity. Every activity, challenge and achievement has played a part in unlocking their potential, while laying firm foundations built on respect, honesty, courage and kindness.

Break Time Fun



Playtimes are more than a break, they are a chance to build friendships, practice kindness and solve real life problems. This year we are continuing to develop and enhance our outdoor play opportunities for the children. We are always looking for donations to build on what we have already. You might be able to help by donating a mud kitchen, small play, dressing up costumes, floor chalk, even big boxes provide great imaginative play!



Class Trips



This term, our curriculum has already come alive through hands-on trips to Ufton Court to explore Roman and Egyptian life, The Lookout Discovery Centre for science and even Pizza Express. Children also took part in an equine experience at The Lands End Equestrian Centre, learning how to care for horses through grooming, cleaning bridles and feeding them hay. Foundation children enjoyed a visit from ZooLab who taught the children about the range of exotic species that people might keep as pets. We also enjoyed some pets visiting school!

St Nicholas Church

We are thankful for our continued partnership with St Nicholas Church. This term we hosted our Harvest Service, St Nicholas Day and Christmas together later in the term. Donations from our Harvest Collection went to Alana House. The children also enjoy the regular visits from Jenny and Rosemary, whose stories and songs the children so love. We hope you saw the school choir at the St Nicholas Christmas Fayre in December!

Community Connections

As a school at the heart of our village, we are always keen to be involved in community life. The highlight of the year is the Hurst Show, and we were delighted to receive a generous donation from the committee, which, together with support from our PTA, has funded a new set of tablets to enhance children's learning. We also loved joining forces with the Hurst Hookers, who kindly taught children and staff crochet skills resulting in the wonderful display at the village pond! We look forward to more creative collaborations in the future.

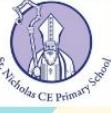


School Fundraising

We are on a mission to raise £20,000 to refurbish and transform our school library into a vibrant, inspiring space that sparks a lifelong love of reading for every child. This exciting project will bring new books, cosy reading corners and a space where children will love to read. If you'd like to support this wonderful cause and help us create a library our children truly deserve, please follow the link below or scan the QR code to donate.

<https://gofund.me/380f5ef43>



 **Help us transform our library**

From this....  ...to this! 

"A well-resourced school library is essential in helping our children grow as readers, thinkers and life-long learners. Fundraising is not just about bookshelves – it's about investing in every child's future at St Nicholas. Please give generously to make our new school library a reality. Thank you for your support."

Sarah Hilling, Head of School,
St Nicholas CE Primary School



The St Nicholas School PTA is fundraising £25,000 to create a new library and sensory space, transforming the existing library in a corridor to an inspiring, welcoming space to discover & develop a joy of reading.

Our fundraising will transform an existing classroom with brand new comfortable reading areas, new accessible shelving and sensory resources for our children at St Nicholas School Hurst to visit and enjoy.

Please help if you can. Scan the QR code and donate. Every penny counts. Thank you for your generosity!



As always, we thank our community for your continued support and collaboration. As a small school, these links are part of keeping our school at the heart of the village.



St Nicholas Church – a message from our vicar

It hardly seems like eight months since I was installed as the new vicar of Hurst - the first vicar of just Hurst for over 60 years when Winnersh parish was “carved out” of a much larger Hurst parish. In fact, Hurst parish used to cover what is now the Twyford and Bearwood parishes and was the largest parish in the Oxford diocese. Bearwood and Twyford churches are very “modern” in relation to Hurst, which was first built in 1084 !

The age and history of St Nicholas Church are remarkable and something for the whole community to be proud of. We have memorials in the Church to a person who oversaw the Court of Star Chamber for King Henry VIII and died in 1625, and a memorial in the oldest part to Lady Saville, who died just before the death of Charles 1. Soon after Lady Saville died, the Puritans of Cromwell’s army visited and they chopped off the heads of some of the small statues in the display, which can still be seen. A very bad example of religious intolerance which, thankfully, is a thing of the past.

A walk around the church is an amazing historical lesson in architectural styles and famous local people. However, the central place of St Nicholas is as a place of regular meeting and worship for 941 years. A church such as St Nicholas should be a community resource for everyone. Many events, concerts and meetings have happened there over the centuries - from debates about the English Reformation, memorials for the fallen of past wars and music concerts and meetings today. Our newly-established “Friends of St Nicholas” group seeks to preserve and enhance the church as a community asset and also to serve the community in practical ways. Do think of becoming a “Friend of St Nicholas”. If you would like to hear more, email fosnhurst@gmail.com. We would love to hear from you.

We were very excited preparing for the recent Christmas season, which included arranging a traditional evening service of Nine Lessons and Carols on 14th December, at which a newly-established choir of local people sang. The night was described as ‘magical’ and we hope those of you who came along enjoyed joining in to sing some well-known carols.

As this was my first year at St Nicholas, and after experiencing the amazing Hurst Show and Horticultural Show, I was really looking forward to the Christmas Fayre on 6th December and wasn’t disappointed in seeing yet another community event in the village.



I look forward to welcoming you all to this amazing church.

Hugh

Revd Hugh Thomas
Email: hughstnicholas@gmail.com

Getting Friendly!

The launch of The Friends of St Nicholas and the first project is announced.

On Thursday 13th November, a new group was launched in the village – The Friends of Saint Nicholas – the Friends' aim to raise money to maintain and improve our church and its assets. All monies raised can only be used for non-religious purposes.



"The evening was an unqualified success as we had over 40 people attend on a dank and dismal night and most of those signed up to join the membership of the group" said Mark Say, Chair of Friends of St Nicholas (FOSN). "Further to that we received some very generous donations that have got our fundraising off to an excellent start. We had a stall at the Christmas Fayre in the Village Hall and had a lot of interesting conversations and signed up even more members".

The first project that FOSN will tackle is one that aims to improve access to the Church, the Bowling Club and The Castle Inn. The project is called **The Church Hill Pathway** and seeks to create a safe, pedestrian route up Church Hill from the Village Hall. The FOSN team have spent six months working on its plan and this is now ready to go to Wokingham Borough Council for the requisite permissions. "Once we have those, then we will start fundraising from various sources and we hope to break ground by this time next year," said Mark.

There are four different landowners along the route of The Pathway and FOSN has been bowled over by their spirit of community-minded generosity.



The Church is audited every five years by the Diocese and the results of this list out the work needed to keep the building in good condition going forward. "Essentially, this is our To Do list," said Mark. "At first glance, there are a number of projects – some big; some small – that need our attention, but our first estimate is that we will need to raise £100k over the next 5 years in addition to the costs of the Pathway. That money will come from several sources including charitable foundations, our own fundraising efforts and some generous sponsors."

"Somebody asked me recently why I was involved with FOSN – the answer is simple really: I love where we live, and I would rather have the church building as an asset for our community than not. Just imagine Hurst without its church – it is 950 years old, and it must remain for future generations for years to come. As they say: 'Not on my watch'!"
If you are interested in finding out more about The Pathway Project or you would like to become a Friend, then please email fosnhurst@gmail.com or contact Mark Say on 07799 065762.

Hurst Gospel Hall

We trust that you had a happy and peaceful Christmas, we were glad once again to share the opportunity to remember the birth of our Saviour.

Hopefully you will have had a calendar for 2026 dropped through your letterbox. We were very pleased to receive these, from the printers, a little earlier this year, so deliveries have been completed well before Christmas

We thought you may like to know how they "come about". Various members of our congregation take photos in the Thames Valley area during the year. In the autumn these are submitted and 14 are chosen. A Bible verse is then selected for each month. This information is sent to our designer in Philadelphia PA. Various drafts are passed backwards and forwards, and a final design is agreed. The approved calendar arrives with the printer in Northern Ireland, and, this year, we received 3,500 copies by courier, for sorting and distribution.

This year you may notice a new feature, each month has a QR code. By using this you can access a short thought on the verse for the month.

We hope you enjoy the photos and verses and find the calendar useful. If you did not receive one, and would like to, or if you would like a few more copies, please get in touch via the website: <https://www.hurstgospelhall.org> Here you will find more details about what we believe, and all our regular meetings,

We have been very pleased to welcome lots of new children to JAM, our children's activity on Mondays at 6.00pm, and many new parents/grandparents/carers and children to Coffee and Tots on Monday mornings at 10.00am, during term time.

Please get in touch if you would like more information, or a free Bible, or to speak to someone. You will always be given a very warm welcome at Hurst Gospel Hall



Village store

Our village store reopened in September and is now managed by Nirveen Singh, ably assisted by Dil Singh. I popped in recently to have a chat with them and find out more about what they stock.



Nirveen (right) and Dil

The whole shop has been brightened up and completely refitted with new shelving, chillers and freezers.

As those who have already visited the shop will know, they have an extensive wine cellar where the post office was located, but they also have a good selection of spirits, soft drinks and mixers in the main shop area.

For villagers who need more traditional shopping, they have a great range of groceries, household cleaning products and toiletries, along with a selection of pet foods all at reasonable prices. There's also a nice selection of fresh fruit and vegetables, along with frozen and chilled produce, including a selection of sandwiches, fresh each day.

Nirveen tells me they have a coffee machine on order and have already applied to the National Lottery to have that facility back in the stores.

It doesn't stop there – you will find a selection of stationery items, greetings cards and daily newspapers.

The shop is open Monday to Saturday from 7am until 9pm, and on Sunday 10am to 7pm.

Let's all support Nirveen and Dil so we keep our village store – it is quite possible the shop is essential for some of our residents who may not be as mobile as they once were. It's also extremely useful on a Sunday afternoon when you discover you're short of milk! We know how inconvenient it was while the shop was closed

Jacqui Watts

Hurst Morris People (HuMP)

We are looking forward to a year of fun, good exercise and travel to great places.

The thriving dance side is busy now with winter practice at Hurst Village Hall, where members keep alive the heritage of their centuries-old pastime.

A look back at 2025 gives an idea of the kind of events 2026 may bring.

Musician Mary enjoyed being part of Hurst's VE Day celebration saying: "The community was out in force and entering the spirit of the occasion. It was a memorable and happy day.

"We often find ourselves in the middle of an unusual and thoroughly enjoyable event. Life is varied and colourful."

HuMP's squire (leader), Christine Taylor, said Hurst Show was always a highlight. "When we started HuMP 36 years ago, we wanted it to be part of the community. The show is an excellent opportunity for that, with the show visitors joining us for a dance."



Dancer Sue said: "We had a great time dancing at the wedding of our member Rich at Stanlake Vineyard. We entertained the guests who then joined in with huge enthusiasm."

At Winchester and Swanage folk festivals large crowds watched HuMP perform. Festivals offer the chance to see many dance traditions. During the week HuMP performs at pubs both in Hurst and further afield.

Last year HuMP raised £300 for Maidenhead's Brett Foundation so they could buy tents and sleeping bags for homeless people sleeping outside in the winter.

In early autumn the group holds taster sessions for men and women to have a go. Christine said: "We welcome new members every year who may never have done Morris but are keen to learn to dance or play the music. Our teaching team is skilled at helping beginner dancers to learn, and more experienced people expand their skills.

"HuMP welcomes folk musicians who play instruments including violin, melodeon, concertina, accordion and whistle. Those who have played Cotswold Morris tunes are particularly welcome. The tunes are usually in the keys of G and D and the band plays from memory by the summer."



Provisional dates for the taster sessions in 2026 are Thursdays September 24 and October 2 at 8pm. Confirmed details will be on the group's website at <http://www.hump.org.uk>

Jack's Bread: A new micro bakery starts up in Hurst

Inspired by a recent trip to France, where even the smallest village seemed to have a wonderful bakery, I contemplated how great it would be to have the same in our little corner of England once again.

Not one to sit around hoping someone else might magically make it happen, I decided to give it a go myself. Hence, Jack's Bread was born.

All businesses need to start small—or, in this case, 'micro'. 'Micro' means baking from a very small production facility at home, with everything made by hand in small batches.

My initial focus is on sourdough, which—despite the name—isn't about sour-tasting bread but about using the traditional natural leavening process that was the way all bread used to be made before industrialisation. Before baking, the dough is long-fermented, usually for at least 24 hours, to develop improved flavour and texture. I would describe my flagship wholemeal loaf as having a subtly sweet, nutty taste, without much sourness at all.

So far, I've given away over 35 samples to local residents and have received a lot of great feedback. Bread went on sale in December through a subscription model. If you live near Hurst and fancy proper bread in your life, give it a try and help a new local business get started.

www.jacksbread.co.uk



Thank you for making Hurst Show 2025 unforgettable!

A huge thank you to everyone who helped make the 2025 Hurst Show such a fantastic success. From volunteers and exhibitors to sponsors and visitors - we couldn't have done it without you.

Thanks to your incredible generosity and support, we were able to donate over £20,000 to local charities and good causes, many of which are Hurst based.

As a small voluntary committee, we were absolutely over the moon to host such a brilliant community event - and to raise over £20K for the third year running makes it even more special. We're truly grateful to everyone who played a part.



And the good news doesn't stop there...

We still have additional grants available to support other local projects. If you're involved in an initiative that could benefit from extra funding, we'd love to hear from you.

Please email hurstshowandcountryfayre@gmail.com with details of your project by 28th February 2026 to be considered.

Don't forget to mark your calendars for Hurst Show 2026, taking place on 27th & 28th June.

Village Cricket Match

The village cricket match between members of the NHVS and the St Nicholas School PTA took place on Sunday 7th September. We were lucky to have a lovely sunny day for the event and lots of villagers turned out to see which team would win.



The cricket club bar was open and there was a barbecue available, along with a delicious selection of cakes and cookies supplied by the ladies from the church.



Rob Savage was selected to provide umpire duties, which he provided in a very fair and equal way. The match was very competitive with both sides putting on some very good play.

The eventual winners were the members of the NHVS team with 92 runs to the PTA 67. We would like to keep this as an annual event, so the PTA team could have their revenge next year!

Hurst Christmas Fayre

The Christmas Fayre took place on Saturday 6th December. Although the forecast had been for rain and wind, we were very fortunate as the day stayed dry and stayed that way until almost the end! Lots of people came to browse the many and varied stalls set up in both the village halls and the scout hut. The scouts ran their popular barbecue in the car park with tasty burgers and hot dogs on offer, and we even had a few stalls set up outside.



As in previous years, Father Christmas was kept very busy in his grotto, ably assisted by one of his elves. Tea and cakes were available in the main village hall where tickets were on sale for the popular Christmas Raffle, with proceeds going to the church. We are fortunate to have such wonderful prizes donated by local businesses, including hampers and vouchers from local pubs.

St Nicholas Night

The annual St Nicholas Night is marked by the lighting up of our village Christmas tree at the corner beside the School Road play park. Lights were installed in the play park along with a marquee where villagers could find free mulled wine and mince pies for the adults or chocolate for the children.



The Waltham St Lawrence Silver Band set up in the bandstand, and entertained us all with a selection of Christmas songs and carols. And Santa took time out from checking his list to put in an appearance, handing out chocolates to the younger villagers.



Despite a slightly damp evening, lots of people turned out to enjoy this event, that culminated in the Revd Hugh Thomas switching on the Christmas tree lights at 5:30pm.

We should mention the various helpers and supporters who worked so hard to make the evening such a success – Chocoholics, Chris James, Fig & Fleur, Hurst Rangers Cricket Club, Waitrose Twyford and of course members of St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council and their families.



St Nicholas PTA/NHVS dinner dance

On Saturday 13th December the annual Christmas Dinner/Dance was held at the Hurst village halls, this year organised by a partnership of the New Hurst Village Society and the St Nicholas School PTA. It was well attended, with over 100 guests.



Many volunteers on both sides worked very hard over the preceding days to turn the main hall into a festive venue, with fairy lights and foliage table decorations all adding to a great atmosphere.

Guests were greeted with a welcome drink, generously donated by Richard of Hurst, and there was a delicious three-course menu that included a traditional Christmas dinner provided by Christie's Catering.

After dinner a selection of great tunes from the late 90's and early 2000s was played by the band !Daft!, so there was lots of dancing to help burn off that lovely dinner.

The whole evening was a great success with everyone who attended thoroughly enjoying themselves. Many thanks to all the volunteers involved in putting this event together. There's a lot of work involved and without them the evening would not be as successful.



Raffle tickets were on sale, with some amazing prizes on offer donated by local companies including – Fable & Fabled Jewellery, Stanlake Park, Grapevine Property, The Castle Inn Hurst, Micklem's Farm, Castle Royle Health Club, Davis Tate Twyford, Ola Coffee and The Little Yoga Studio Twyford. Thank you all for your generosity!

This is an annual event, so if you haven't yet attended put a note in your new 2026 diary to look out for information next year on the Hurst Residents Community Group Facebook page.

Hurst History - Almshouses

Almshouses originated in medieval Europe as religious institutions to provide shelter for the poor and infirm, with the oldest recorded example founded by King Athelstan in 936 AD. Over time, they evolved to be established by merchant guilds, wealthy individuals, and even royalty, often providing housing for a specific group like retired tradespeople or clergy. Supported by endowments, they served as a form of social housing, although many were destroyed or fell into ruin during the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century.

The Industrial Revolution spurred the creation of many more almshouses to address the needs of a growing urban poor population, and were founded by merchants, craft guilds and other wealthy individuals who wanted to leave a charitable legacy.

These institutions were often endowed with money, property or land by their founders, while the focus shifted more towards providing a permanent home for the poor, aged or infirm. Many of the older properties are truly historic buildings, often with inscriptions, coats of arms, clock towers and sundials. Some also have a chapel where regular services may still be held. Often laid out in a traditional three-sided square, they provide a sense of security and community for their residents.

There was a decline in traditional almshouses during the 20th century, but they continue to meet modern needs with new energy-efficient buildings being constructed to high standards. Most current almshouses are supported by a board of trustees and provide social housing for various groups, and not just the elderly.

We have almshouses at two locations in Hurst, that are looked after by the Hurst Consolidated Charity. There is also an additional property in Twyford.

The oldest of these properties is the Harrison Almshouse in Twyford (pictured) which dates from 1640. This was closely followed by the Barker Almshouse opposite St Nicholas Church, Hurst which was built in 1664, with the more modern houses to the rear of this property being built around 1985.



Some of the properties in Lodge Close on Hinton Road are fairly recent. The terrace of four properties were built in the 1960's and were originally intended for retired nurses.

The latest property is the terrace of three very modern properties known as the Richard Bigg Almshouses, completed in 2019.

Richard Bigg was a wealthy landowner who lived at Haines Hill. When he died in 1677, he left property in London and directed that bread should be bought from the income of these properties, and distributed to the poor of the parish. By 1819 the income stood at the princely sum of £87 10s . That would be worth nearly £6700 today – certainly a lot of bread!

Health and Wellbeing



After the indulgence of the holidays, the New Year offers an excellent opportunity to focus on health and well-being. Hurst provides a range of activities - all within easy reach. From yoga and Pilates, to invigorating country runs and karate. There are plenty of opportunities to try something new and challenge yourself as we step into 2026!

PILATES

PILATES THAT MATTERS

Hurst Cricket Club on Wednesday evenings (classes for teenagers, beginners, intermediate & men only)

isobel@pilatesthatmatters.co.uk or call 07958 446165.

<http://www.pilatesthatmatters.co.uk/>

PILATES WITH REBECCA PARISH

Hurst Village Hall

www.rebeccaparish.co.uk

Info@rebeccaparish.co.uk

or call 07919 617232 for more details.

YOGA

YOGA WITH CHERYL

Hurst Village Hall, 10:00am - 11:30am on Friday

For more information contact:

cheryl.youngman@harleyd.co.uk or call 07776 255025

<http://www.yoga-with-cheryl.co.uk/>

YOGA WITH KATIE

At St Nicholas School on Thursday evening

All levels welcome.

For information contact:

katymeadsbeauty@gmail.com or call 07761 591605

RUNNING

HURST & TWYFORD PUB RUNNERS

Location changes; on Tuesday evenings

The Hurst & Twyford Pub Runners run approximately 5k from a different pub in the area.

See Hurst & Twyford Pub Runners on Facebook

KARATE

HURST GOJU-RYU KARATE CLUB

Hurst Village Hall, several evenings from 7:30pm - 9:15pm

Learn to defend yourself and get fit at the same time.

<http://www.hurstkarate.com/>

CRAFT & MINDFULNESS

According to research, crafting can alleviate the symptoms of anxiety, depression, loneliness and even dementia. Crafting is not just creative—it is a powerful tool for well-being.

Craft activities encourage focus and calm, helping reduce stress and anxiety. Completing a project gives a sense of achievement, lifting mood and building self-esteem. Craft groups and workshops foster community, reducing feelings of isolation. Creative tasks improve concentration and memory, offering long-term mental benefits.

[\(https://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/\)](https://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/)

HURST HOOKERS

Engage in a mindful activity & social connection.

The Hurst Hookers meet every fortnight to knit, crochet and natter.

Alternate Thursday evenings at Hurst Cricket Club.

Skills Register – please support our local traders

We're pleased to share a lovely update on the nHVS skills register, created to help residents easily find trusted, good-quality local businesses right here in our community. We've recently welcomed two wonderful additions. The first is **Jack's Bread**, a new micro-bakery - a true village gem. We're also delighted to include **Chris Little's Doctor Car Keys** based out of Nelson's Lane, Hurst. See their entries in the list below for more details.

The Skills Register is all about supporting local talent while making everyday life a little easier for residents. By keeping skills and services local, we strengthen our community and help small businesses thrive.

If you know of any other local businesses or trades that would be a good fit for the Skills Register, or if you run one yourself and would like to be included, we'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch and help us continue to grow this valuable community resource. It's only £35 per year to be on the register, including membership and a listing on webpage, with promotion in this newsletter too www.nhvs.org.uk/skills-register

Accountant - Land & Scales Ltd

Cadomin, Wards Cross

0118 934 1818

maria@landandscales.co.uk

Small Business accountant specialising in helping to run sole trader businesses and small limited companies, statutory accounts, company secretarial accounts, tax returns and pay-rolls. CIMA qualified.

Baker – Jack's Bread

Based in Martineau Lane, Jack bakes delicious local bread with real care and craftsmanship. Check out his website for more information including how to place your orders

www.jacksbread.co.uk

Builders - Colin Sawyer & Son Builders Limited

07768 533774

oakman@me.com, csawyerandsonltd.co.uk

Business has been established for over 39 years. We are now based in Hurst. We have carried out many small and very large building projects with a passion for quality workmanship. We also work on listed buildings.

Car Key Emergencies

Chris Little is Doctor Car Keys. Chris is based in Nelson's Lane and offers reliable help for all your car key needs including replacements, repairs, and emergency help 24/7. Full information is on his web site <https://www.doctorcarkeys.co.uk>. Or call him on 07812 597007.

Chimney Sweep - Thames Chimney Sweep

Neil Scott

01628 828 130

07799 268 123

enquiries@thameschimneysweeps.co.uk

Professional Chimney Sweep. Fully insured. Contact for prompt attention. Member of Guild of Master Chimney Sweeps, European Federation of Chimney Sweeps and Trading Standards Buy with Confidence Scheme. www.thameschimneysweeps.co.uk

Day Nursery - Muddy Ducks Nursery

Dinton Pastures

07935 228600

info@muddyducksnursery.com, www.muddyducksnursery.com

We are passionate about outdoor play and the importance of children learning about nature and the environment. For children aged 2-5 years. Open 8am-6pm Monday to Friday. Both term-time and all year places available. Funded places available.

Marquee Hire - County Marquees

www.county-marquees.co.uk

0118 9341798

sales@county-marquees.co.uk, countymarquee@gmail.com

Our family run marquee & furniture hire business has been established for over 30 years.

Based in Hurst we have established an excellent reputation for reliability and quality which is second to none. Areas include Berkshire, Bucks, Hampshire, Oxfordshire etc.

Plumbing/Heating - Paul Newman Plumbing, Heating & Gas

Paul Newman

07740 236010

paulnewmanphg@yahoo.co.uk

Friendly, local and reliable Gas Safe boiler and heating installer, along with heating system upgrades, landlord safety certificates, bathroom installs, underfloor heating, general plumbing work and offers free quotes.

Skip Hire - John Horwood Skips

John the Skip

Wokingham Road

07710 008 630

01628 788 144

johnhorwood@johntheskip.co.uk

All sizes from 3½ yard upwards always available. grab hire service, top soil and crushed concrete supplied.

Solicitor - Penningtons Manches Cooper LLP

Eugene Wojciechowski

07738 697328

0118 982 2640

eugene.wojciechowski@penningtonslaw.com

Eugene is an employment law specialist and his firm advises both businesses and individuals on a full range of legal issues.

Water Softeners - Thames Valley Water Softeners

Gavin Boakes

0118 934 4485

info@thamesvalleywatersofteners.co.uk, www.thamesvalleywatersofteners.co.uk,

www.blocksaltman.co.uk

Local water softener supplier. Free installation survey and advice. 10-year guarantee. Repair service available. Salt for pick-up or delivery.

Window Cleaning - Richard of Hurst

Richard Boyden

07980 872 034

richard@richardofhurst.com

Local, trusted and reliable. No house or business too small or too big. Free quotation. Fully insured.

Coming up in 2026:

Race Night at the village halls – 7th February

More CPR/Basic life support training – dates to be advised

Village picnic at the village orchard – 10th May

Hurst Show and Country Fayre – 27-28 June

Hurst Horticultural Show – 22nd August

That's all for this issue. As a reminder if you have anything you would like to publish in our newsletters, the closing dates for publication are:

12th December for the January issue, and 10th June for publication in July.

Please send your articles to contact@nhvs.org.uk