

King's Sutton Times

No 235, Spring 2026



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for late July publication
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for late November publication

The King's Sutton Times very much welcomes articles and photographs relating to the village and its residents.

Please submit contributions, by email if possible, to Helen Forde, ksteditor@kingssutton-pc.gov.uk

Contributions should be in Word and photos should be sent separately as jpgs; please remember the **publication dates** are later than the date required for copy, so events between the two dates will not be included.

We reserve the right to edit or refuse any item submitted for publication.



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View from the village

The view is waterlogged! Almost non-stop rain in the first couple of months of the year is not a good way to start 2026 but the snowdrops are out, daffodils are beginning to bloom, and the birds are chirruping, so spring must be on the way. The parish rewilding project on the Rec is progressing and if the weather improves should provide a good show of wildflowers for the delight of the birds, insects and especially bees. King's Sutton honey from the beekeeping society made its appearance at the Annual Flower Show last year, and the beekeeping activities are clearly flourishing. The fruit trees which have been planted this winter should be another village enterprise from which all benefit.

The various clubs and societies in King's Sutton are great at recording their activities and laying out their programmes for the next few months. There is no lack of opportunities to join in and enjoy the company without leaving the village; similarly, there are multiple opportunities for volunteering with all the benefits of meeting other people and undertaking a joint activity, helping others.

The picture by Rowlandson of the well at Astrop (featured in the piece on The Gatehouse) is remarkable for his depiction of a rural spa, even if it is not entirely relatable to the landscape features today. But the figures sketched dancing in the background must be entering one of the assembly rooms and the figures in the foreground seem to be regarding the water from the well as a necessary evil rather than one for enjoyment. How different that corner of Astrop must have looked at the time, and how were the local inhabitants affected by the influx of seekers after good health?

Many thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue and if anyone is interested, we have a vacancy in the team for an additional reporter – do get in touch!

Helen (editor)

The Joy Of Spring

The vernal equinox, just a time to rejoice, as plants lift their heads and the birds find their voice.

The snowdrops are fading, their work here is done, giving way to the daffodils who turn to the sun.

Hear the woodpeckers drum as they seek out a mate, and for first cuckoo calls you won't have to wait.

Hedgehogs are waking, so silent they creep, with a stretch and a yawn from their long winter sleep.

Days match the nights but will soon overtake, the bats stir from torpor as they slowly awake.

Our bees now get busy, such a sight to be seen, spreading the pollen and feeding their queen.

Small buds on the trees and some blossoms so sweet, cute lambs in the fields call their ewes with a bleat.

The earth comes alive in this burgeoning light, this season called spring is such a delight!

Paul Boggeln

Village diary

KING'S SUTTON 50+ CLUB



The club finished 2025 in December with a lovely Christmas Lunch from Good Food Catering and an entertainer with approximately 50 people attending, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all after a busy year with various activities including a variety of fascinating talks and trips out. Our summer seaside trip to Bournemouth was very well attended so where will we go this year.....?

We started 2026 in February with the AGM. The club's long standing Chairman Keith Moses, whom many of you know, decided to stand down after 10 plus years. From all of us in the club we wish to acknowledge and thank Keith for his long dedication to the club and his wife Jackie for her support. We still look forward to seeing Keith and Jackie as 'members' throughout the coming years. We have a new Chairperson and committee for this year to carry on the good work.

For 2026 we have a new programme (subject to change), some of which will have been held before you get this Spring KS Times.

To give an idea of what we are planning for this year:

- 11 March: Andrew Tennet, Ex Detective Chief Inspector will give a themed talk on 'How to Catch a Killer'.

- 8 April: Beetle Drive
- 13 May: John Wood will give a talk on *The Swinging 60s*
- 10 June: Coach trip TBC
- 8 July: Belinda Brown from Stoneyfield Wine will give a talk and conduct a wine tasting
- 12 August: Summer Coach trip TBC
- 9 September: Kamran Irani from SERV (Service by Emergency Rider) will give a talk on 'Blood Bikes' providing an out of hours rapid response delivery of blood and medical supplies
- 14 October: Fun afternoon TBC
- 11 November: Fay Tennet, who had a career in the Police and now Security, will give a themed talk *'Woman in Blue, story of 15 years in the Police'*
- 9 December: Christmas Lunch

The club is open to all over 50 years old, we are a very welcoming group.

Please come along and join us at the King's Sutton Millennium Hall at 2.30pm on meeting days for just £10 for the year's membership plus £1 for refreshments. There is normally a raffle held on meeting days. We look forward to seeing you during 2026.

For further information contact

Janet Markham
kingssutton50plus@fastmail.co.uk

KING'S SUTTON FILM CLUB

Here I am again writing to you with information regarding the Film Society.

Firstly, I would like to say that with your help, last year and the very early part of this year the film society is doing well, this is also partly due to the support of the Parish Council who are continuing to cover the cost of the room rental for another year.

By the time you receive this edition of the King's Sutton Times we will have shown the first two films of the year, **Downton Abbey –**

the finale and **Roofman**, hopefully they have both been well received. We have two films remaining before the summer break

- 1 April The Choral
- 6 May Penguin Lessons

Information regarding showings for the rest of the year will be posted around the village in due course, information is also available on the King's Sutton Film Society Facebook page.

I would also like to report that we are now having **Gelato** (ice cream to most of us) sold at the entrance to the Small Hall from 6.45pm to 7.30pm, this is provided by *the Sundae Girls*, many of you will know they have a shop in Parsons Street and live in the village.

Finally, I would just like to thank you all for braving the elements to come and watch, to all those who volunteer their time to help with setting up, serving drinks and taking the money each month, you are much appreciated.

Jacqui Creed
jacquicreed54@gmail.com

KING'S SUTTON WI

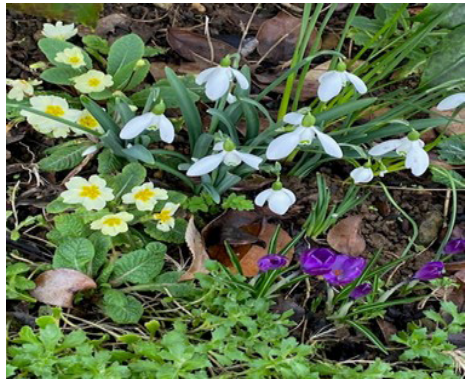
The WI meeting is held every 3rd Wednesday of the month at 19.30 in the Millenium Memorial Hall.

Upcoming events

- 15 April: Games night with fish and chips.
- 20 May: Cyber Crime and Fraud, a talk by the Northants Police.
- 17 June: All about your Ears.
- 15 July: The Oxford Science Museum.

Sue Ashdown
sueashdown63@hotmail.com
or 07817 303625

KING'S SUTTON GARDENING CLUB



Our Village Gardening club are looking forward to another exciting year of talks, events and garden visits.

On Wednesday, 29 April we have the owners of a local Lavender Farm, Ridge and Furrow, coming to explain about their farm. They will bring some of their products for us to buy. Our popular Plant Sale is on Saturday 23 May at the Butchers Arms from 10am to 12noon. As well as that we are organising two visits to local gardens, time and place to be announced at our meetings.

Once again, the Gardening Club is organising the King's Sutton Village show on Saturday, 15 August. This ever-popular event will be held at the Millennium Hall, and we are looking forward to seeing your entries. As usual the entry forms will be available in the show schedule which will be available at the Post Office and the Co-op later in the year.

Putting on our Village Show requires a lot of organisation and hard work. If anyone is available to help on the day or provide cakes etc, even if you are not a member of the Gardening Club, please contact me.

Frances Gurney, Show Secretary
Francesgurney13@gmail.com

KING'S SUTTON, MILLENNIUM MEMORIAL HALL, COFFEE SHOP

Our Coffee Shop is open every Friday, 10.00 - 12.00 noon. We are into our 3rd year, and it continues to be a great success. We provide unlimited tea, coffee and juice for £2 with a nice selection of biscuits. We are a lovely crowd and with all the wet weather we are having, it is good to know there is a place where we can have a friendly chat and laughter.

In 2025, we were in a position to donate to the King's Sutton Community again. Our donations were Baptist defibrillator – £600, Boys and Girls Brigade – £100, Baptist Youth Club – £100, King's Sutton Food Bank – £100, and Pre School – £100. We couldn't do that, without the support of our community and sincerest thanks to all.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to our walkers, who put all the tables out every Friday. It is very much appreciated and thank you.

KING'S SUTTON PLAYING FIELDS ASSOCIATION

As we begin to move through the winter months, we are very much looking forward to some improved weather conditions. The recent spell of poor weather has taken its toll on our playing surfaces, and we are eager for drier days to allow our grounds to recover and for essential repair work to be carried out effectively. Unfortunately, the challenging weather has also caused some damage to sections of our perimeter fencing. We are currently assessing the affected areas and will be arranging repairs and replacements soon to ensure the continued safety and security of our facilities.

Important Notice – New grounds policy

The main purpose of this update is to inform all users and visitors that King's

Sutton Playing Fields are now introducing a complete ban on dogs across all of our grounds. This decision has been made to protect our clubs, members, and visitors, and to maintain a safe, clean, and welcoming environment, particularly for our younger users. As a community facility used by local sports clubs and families, it is essential that we provide the highest possible standards of safety and hygiene. We kindly ask everyone to respect and support this new policy by ensuring that dogs are not brought onto the playing fields or surrounding grounds at any time.

We appreciate the continued support of our community and thank you for helping us maintain and improve our facilities for everyone to enjoy.

Adrian Barry, Chairman KSPFA

TENNIS CLUB

Despite the prolonged spell of wet weather that has welcomed in 2026, the tennis club has been active with both on and off-court activities. All the KSTC teams in both the Oxfordshire and Banbury area winter leagues have, surprisingly, been able to play some of their scheduled matches. Our juniors' regular Thursday evening coaching sessions have inevitably suffered from the weather, but we are back underway with those, and we will also be hosting a junior tennis Easter Camp on Wed 8 and Thurs 9 April. This is open to youngsters aged between 4-14 years old and will be organised into groups by Jenny and Shola, our qualified coaches, based on age and experience.

For adults, we are running regular Cardio sessions (more about fitness and wellbeing than tennis), and our 'Tennis Improvers Group' coaching sessions, for new, novice and returner players. These are open to both club members and non-members. We held a successful, fun Bingo Evening

in early February at the Rose & Crown Charlton, to raise funds towards the planned installation of artificial surfaces on two of our four courts.

Finally, we were recently informed that KSTC has been shortlisted for the prestigious Tennis Oxfordshire '2026 Club of the Year' award. All the various category winners will be announced at an Awards Evening in Abingdon on 18 March. Fingers crossed!

For more information on any of our coaching and fitness sessions for adults and juniors, please email

**Jerry Wright – jerry@cobbarn.com
or message him on 07775 858755.
Jerry Wright**

SHOT ON LOCATION IN KING'S SUTTON

Last autumn curiosity was spiked by the appearance of a film crew on the Square, outside the Courthouse, and the accompanying actors and lighting. This is what it was all about –

FROG is a short film about two sisters navigating fertility, loss, and what they're willing to risk for each other. Shot on location at The Court House, King's Sutton in October 2025, the film explores the

interaction of science, sisterhood, and the biology of reproduction through the story of IVF and the *Xenopus* frog – the treasured species used to create the first human pregnancy tests.

Written and Exec produced by Rebecca Crookshank at Mammal Haus Productions, Paula McGann at FaF Films, Hannah Lee at Rope Ladder Fiction, directed by Sophie King.

FROG is an international UK-MENA collaboration which celebrates global talent, starring Laura Whitmore, Evanna Lynch and David Mumeni. The film is currently in post-production and will birth in the spring.

Quote from Rebecca Crookshank, Writer/
Exec Producer:

"The courthouse gave us the perfect setting for our central family dinner scene and film crew HQ! This unique and whimsical space steeped in homegrown history grounded the emotional core for our international FROG family. A place to call home for all of us. We're grateful to Victoria O'Connor for supporting independent filmmaking, championing women in film, and for opening her door to this important story of science, sisterhood, and family."



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Chipping Norton Choral Society

MAGNIFICAT!

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and other settings
of the Magnificat text

Conductor: Benedict Goodall
Soprano: Margaret Lingas
Piano/Organ: Bernard West
Winchendon Brass

Saturday 11th April 2026
7:30pm
St Mary's Church, Horse Fair, Banbury, OX16 0AA

Tickets £17
Details: www.cncs.org.uk

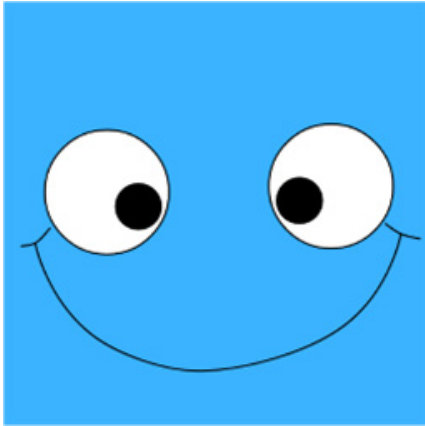
making music



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APRIL FOOL'S DAY – WHAT JOKES ARE YOU GOING TO PLAY?



The origins of the day are unclear but the custom of playing jokes on the 1 April every year is celebrated in many countries. Often the custom ends at midday, and anyone playing tricks thereafter is designated an April fool themselves. In France there is a tradition of calling someone who has been duped a *poisson d'Avril* (April fish) and fish feature in many of their jokes, sometimes as a clue.

The first reference in English appears to be in 1686 when the writer John Aubrey referred to 1 April as '*Fooles holy day*'; 12 years later some gullible people were tricked into going into the Tower of London to see the lions being washed. That was repeated in 1848 when cards were distributed inviting spectators to the washing; apparently the warders were almost mobbed!

Many newspapers publish jokey stories, sometimes hidden within the general text. Modern media lends itself to such deceptions – one of the most successful gags was from the BBC in 1957, which showed a Panorama programme on 1 April, on the alleged Swiss spaghetti tree harvest.



Spaghetti harvest (CC 2.0)

In 1980 the BBC World Service announced that Big Ben was going digital and would be known as Digital Dave thereafter – apparently few people thought it funny. Google promoted a fictitious drink called Google Gulp in 2005 which, it was claimed, would increase intelligence and optimise use of the Google search engine. In 2012 a version of Google Translate was announced which could be used to talk with animals and ten years later the company promoted a Google Nose feature which added scents to items in the Google Knowledge Graph.

Individual jokes include switching sugar and salt in their respective bowls, making beds so that whoever tries to get in can't get their feet down to the bottom, tying shoelaces together or promoting fake currency such as \$3 bills in the USA – no such bills have ever been produced!

Try some of these out on friends and family on 1 April! (answers on page 36).

- Did you hear about the cashew and walnut party?
- Why was the frog late to work on 1 April?
- Which month of the year has 28 days?
- Do you know what 2 and 2 make?
- How do pirates celebrate April Fool's Day?

King's Sutton Preschool

We continue to fundraise for the preschool, and we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who attended our Christmas Pantomime – *'Sinbad the Sailor'*. The event was a wonderful success, and it was gratifying to see so many families enjoying the performance. We especially appreciate Janet Markham, Carina Wyatt, and the entire preschool team for their hard work in organising such an excellent event. We look forward to hosting another pantomime later this year.

WE NEED YOU!

Preschool is a charity run by a volunteer committee, and we always need help from parents, carers, and the community to keep it going.

Early years settings nationwide face financial challenges, as government funding falls short of covering operational costs; we, like other preschools, continue working for fair Early Years funding. If you can spare time to fundraise or join our committee – even in a small way - we welcome your support.

Please ask us for more information if you're interested and get in touch

Emma Watts, Preschool committee chair
chair@kingssuttonpreschool.co.uk
or 01295 816006.

Preschool is in full swing, and the weather is adding to the fun and wonder!

Since the start of the year, we've been getting settled in and connecting with our curriculum. We've been rebuilding relationships, setting up routines and creating a language-rich environment in



which learning depends. We've had lots of different opportunities and activities to help enhance and celebrate each child's unique strengths and interests. This has helped build confidence, self-esteem and provided many talking points about strengths and personal attributes. Our working relationship with our families has been essential in this as well as linking in beautifully with Children's Mental Health Week. We are very excited to have spaces available from September 2026, with many of our children moving up to school. We have already started welcoming many families on visits and are looking forward to welcoming further visits.

Rebecca Herbert Preschool Manager

King's Sutton Primary Academy

We are always busy at King's Sutton Primary Academy! We have recently planted over 100 tree and hedgerow saplings to enhance our outdoor spaces and support our learning within the outdoor environment. The Woodlands Trust supported the school with this wonderful donation that we can continue to enjoy for many years to come.

Our children love to learn across our broad curriculum, and we make learning within a wide range of subjects inspirational and enjoyable. We're proud to offer our pupils an exceptional range of extra-curriculum clubs and enrichment events. We've enjoyed pancake races (and sampling!) this term. Along with events such as our World Book Day author visit (Elizabeth Adonu) and our Science Fair in March.

We're always happy to show new families around our happy and welcoming school, please telephone **01295 811289** if you'd like to arrange a visit.

Mrs. Wade, Headteacher
www.kingssuttonpa.co.uk





ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

THURS. 16TH APRIL, 19:15 FOR 19:30 START

King's Sutton Parish Council invites you to:

- Find out what the parish council has accomplished over the past year and learn about its exciting plans for 2026 – including new playground equipment, more biodiversity measures, and our cemetery companions initiative.
- Hear from our speakers and ask questions!

This is a meeting for residents not a parish council meeting!

Our guests include:

Sam Simons,
Highways
Improvement
Manager

Citizens Advice West
Northants

Chiltern Railways

Unitary Councillors
and the Police

And (hopefully)
YOU!

VENUE

The Large Hall
King's Sutton Millennium
Memorial Hall
Astrop Road
King's Sutton
OX17 3PG

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

New Inclusive Play Area – exciting new developments for our village's youngest residents

King's Sutton Parish Council is absolutely delighted to announce that we have now raised sufficient funds to create a brand-new inclusive play area, which will replace the old metal equipment in the toddler play area. Our thanks go to Banbury Charities (£7,500), Maud Elkington Charitable Trust (£2,000) and the National Lottery Awards for All (£19,990) with the Parish Council's reserves making up the remainder.

Understanding the importance of play for all children, the council has collaborated closely with our chosen supplier (HAGS) to design an area we hope every child and their family will enjoy. Our goal is to ensure that the facilities cater to children of all abilities, fostering fun, friendship, and exploration in a safe and welcoming environment.

The newly selected equipment reflects our commitment to inclusivity. Highlights include:

- **Cosy Cocoon:** Specially designed to support over-stimulated children, featuring interior textures for tactile exploration and calm.
- **Fun Playhouse:** Encouraging imaginative play and social interaction through pretend games and adventures.
- **Inclusive Spring Rocker:** Suitable for children of all abilities, providing movement and laughter.
- **Talk Tubes:** Connecting friends through interactive communication, adding a dash of mystery and excitement.
- **Single Person Trampoline:** Safe bouncing fun for individual play.
- **Communication Panel:** Supporting children's language and social development through interactive features.

- **Sensory Panels:** Designed to stimulate sight, touch, and sound, they invite children to explore and discover.
- **Stepping Stone Mushrooms:** Fun for balance, coordination, and imaginative play.
- **Rocker/Spinner:** Providing thrilling movement and shared laughter.
- **Wheelchair Accessible Roundabout:** Ensuring every child can join in the fun, regardless of mobility needs.

The works are scheduled to be carried out this spring, with the aim of having the new play area ready for all to enjoy as the weather brightens. If you have any questions or suggestions, do not hesitate to contact the Parish Clerk. We look forward to seeing you all at the new play area soon!

Cemetery Companions needed: Join us in caring for King's Sutton cemetery

We are seeking enthusiastic volunteers to join our new initiative Cemetery Companions, dedicated to maintaining and enhancing our cemetery on Mill Lane. With spring around the corner, this is a wonderful opportunity for residents to lend a hand assisting our Cemetery Warden, enjoy the outdoors, and contribute positively to our village community.

Being a **Cemetery Companion** not only makes a tangible difference to our village but also provides a chance to spend time outside which can boost mental health and well-being. There is something deeply satisfying about working together and giving back to the community, especially in such a peaceful and beautiful setting. Tasks include general tidying of fallen leaves and twigs, maintaining benches, planting bulbs, pruning roses, light weeding, and removing flowers and wreaths that are past their best. All help is greatly appreciated, whether you can spare a few hours or help us more regularly.

If you are interested in becoming a Cemetery Companion, please contact the Parish Clerk.



Kings Sutton
Memorial Hall Charity AGM
will be held on
Monday 20 April
in the Astrop Room
at 7.30pm



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Christmas Fayre & Christmas tree switch-on

The village Christmas Fayre will be held on **Saturday, 5 December** at the Millennium Hall. This festive event relies on the support of volunteers to help set up, assist during the day, and manage the all-important clear up afterwards. If you are able to lend a hand on the day, please contact the Parish Clerk, Liz Hart, clerk@kingssutton-pc.gov.uk so we can ensure this wonderful celebration goes ahead for everyone to enjoy.

Happy to Chat?

The Parish Council is delighted to announce the installation of a 'Happy to Chat' bench on Windsor Close, situated next to the newly-planted orchard and wildflower area, offering lovely views towards the parish church. This initiative (suggested by a local resident) aims to encourage friendly conversations and help foster a stronger sense of community among residents. Whether you fancy a natter or simply wish to enjoy the scenery, the bench provides a welcoming spot for everyone.

The 'Happy to Chat' scheme is all about breaking down barriers and inviting people to connect. By sitting at the bench, you're letting others know you're open to a chat – perfect for making new friends or simply brightening someone's day. We hope this new addition will enhance the spirit of our village.

Biodiversity Corner

Have you ever wondered which birds frequent your garden, or what feathered friends might be found in our village cemetery? Birdwatching is a delightful way to connect with nature, and it's fascinating to see the variety of species that call King's Sutton home.

Recently, during an audit in the cemetery, our volunteer recorded a remarkable array of birds identified using the Merlin app. Here's the list of those recorded: Buzzard, Blackbird, Bullfinch, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Dunnock,

Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Green winged teal, Jay, Kestrel, Linnet, Magpie, Pheasant, Pied Wagtail, Redwing, Reed Bunting, Robin, Skylark, Sparrow – House, Starling, Thrush – Song, Tit – Blue, Tit – Great, Tit – Long Tailed Tit, and Wren.

Your bird sightings help us build a picture of local biodiversity and is a lovely way to celebrate the natural beauty of our village. So, grab your binoculars or download the Merlin app and see who's visiting your patch this spring. More information about the installation of birdboxes is in the Rewilding report.

Make Your Garden Greener: Buy a Compost Bin Today

As part of our ongoing efforts to make the village greener, residents are encouraged to consider purchasing a subsidised compost bin for their garden. Not only does composting reduce household waste and enrich your soil, but if you team up with a neighbour, you can take advantage of a fantastic multibuy offer. It's a brilliant way to save money and strengthen community ties while doing your bit for the environment. Visit <https://getcomposting.com/collections/area-offers-wno/>

King's Sutton Rewilding Initiative

No Mow May is a campaign launched by the UK conservation charity Plantlife encouraging people – and councils – to stop mowing lawns during May to support pollinators. By allowing grass to grow for a few weeks in spring, wildflowers such as dandelions, clover and daisies can bloom, providing vital nectar and pollen at a time when food sources are limited.

Our Parish Council has supported No Mow May for several years. In 2024, in my role as Biodiversity Warden, I proposed expanding this approach by rewilding a section of council-owned land on the recreation ground and at the corner of Windsor Close. My aim



was to increase biodiversity - particularly pollinating insects - by sowing a diverse mix of native wildflower seeds.

Early spring is especially important for insects. Species such as the Common Bumblebee emerge from winter and need reliable energy to establish their colonies. Closely cut grass offers very little for them, but even a simple lawn can become a valuable mini meadow if left unmown.

I felt we could create something far more beneficial for residents than a uniform stretch of short grass. Wildflower areas not only support insects but also birds and other wildlife, helping to strengthen our local ecosystem. There is also a practical benefit: wildflowers develop deeper root systems than standard turf, improving soil structure and helping the ground absorb rainwater more effectively. Once established, these areas require cutting only once or twice a year, making them an environmentally responsible management choice.



Perfect for Pollinators

The first year, 2025, was a trial to gauge public response and to see how it would grow and what insects were attracted. Despite an initial period of drought, we watered the seeds as much as practical. For a time, very little appeared to happen – but once the rain arrived, the area burst into life with seedlings and then a beautiful display of wildflowers. The Bee & Butterfly seed mix we planted contains 24 species from the Royal Horticultural Society 'Perfect for Pollinators' list.

In late autumn 2025, the Parish Clerk Liz Hart and I prepared a second area of similar size next to the first and sowed more seeds, which we expect to produce an equally colourful display this year.

This initiative is about more than flowers. It is about community wellbeing, pride in our shared spaces, and managing land thoughtfully. We welcome residents' feedback and suggestions for other suitable sites. It is just one of several biodiversity projects underway, including the installation of 20 bird and bat boxes around the recreation ground in February.

David Bostock
King's Sutton Parish Councillor



FOOTPATH REPORT - BLOCKED CULVERT NEAR KENSINGTON CLOSE

All too many of the footpaths are blocked, like Kensington Close at the moment, following the very wet winter. As drier weather approaches local walkers are welcome to feed back to me where they think the network needs attention.

I recently went for a walk to the far end of the network near Warkworth today; it was wet and muddy but walkable with good boots.

Jeremy Renals, Footpath warden



Blocked culvert



Area seeded with native wildflowers



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KATHARINE HOUSE HOSPICE

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Garden hosts needed for 2026–27

Does your garden fill with snowdrops in late winter, burst into colour with spring daffodils, or shine at another time of year? Katharine House Hospice is looking for garden owners to take part in Open Gardens during 2026–27.

Gardens can open at any time of year, either individually or as part of a village trail, helping to raise vital funds for local patients and their families. The fundraising team will support you every step of the way, with guidance and resources to help make your event a success.

To find out more or register your interest, visit: www.khh.org.uk/gardens

Gardens to visit include

- Saturday 2 May: The Old Vicarage, Adderbury
- Sunday 17 May: From Garden to Vase, Culworth
- Sunday 31 May: Middleton Cheney gardens
- Saturday and Sunday, 13 and 14 June: Hook Norton gardens
- Sunday 14 June: Brackley Care Home garden
- Sunday 5 July: Katharine House Hospice garden
- South Newington private gardens: year round, by request

Volunteering opportunities

If you're looking to do something meaningful in 2026, Katharine House Hospice has a range of rewarding volunteering opportunities.

Living Well is seeking a volunteer complementary therapist on Monday mornings (10am – 12 noon) to offer hand or foot massage, helping patients relax and feel supported.

We also need weekend front reception and weekend ward reception volunteers to welcome visitors, offer a friendly face and help with the small things that make a big difference. This role is flexible and can fit around your life.

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A DIY ADVICE COLUMN

Settlement, subsidence, and cracks in buildings



Most of us would get concerned if a crack suddenly appeared in a property that we own.

Some of the causes of cracking might come as a surprise. In the following article, I define settlement and subsidence and give a few examples of the causes of cracking.

What is settlement?

Settlement is a downward displacement of the ground caused by the weight of the building as it is being constructed. If the building is being constructed on rock or granular material, like sand or gravel, the settlement will be elastic. It will be proportional to the load from the building and will stop when the building works are complete. If the building is on ground with a high clay content, the settlement will be plastic and could continue settling for several years as the moisture is slowly squeezed out from the soil.

What is subsidence?

Subsidence occurs when the ground beneath the foundations of a property sinks without any loads being imposed upon it. Buildings sited on ground that subsides can distort, shift, and crack, and the extent of cracking

and distortion will dictate whether or not a building is structurally safe.

Cracks in buildings

Cracks can be vertical, horizontal, or sloping. They can be very narrow, when less than one millimetre, or very wide, when in excess of 50 millimetres. It takes an experienced engineer to identify where the cause of settlement is occurring and whether the building is safe or not.

The Building Research Establishment published a table for crack classification (opposite).

The causes of cracking

In addition to assessing the severity of cracking, it is important to determine the cause of the cracking and whether it is historic or ongoing. If a building is in a continuing state of movement, it is important to address that cause before making any repairs. This will most likely require the services of a qualified and experienced civil or structural engineer who may also help with a claim against your insurance.

Don't overlook natural causes like corrosion of metal. If you have a relatively modern house that has something as simple as steel wall ties and the walls face the sea, and those metal wall ties start to corrode, the steel will expand to approximately seven times its thickness when it is fully corroded. That 3 mm thick wall tie will expand and cause horizontal cracking to occur, which, if not dealt with, will destroy the outer skin of brick, and cost several thousands of pounds to replace.

If the cause of structural damage is a result of storm damage, then you will need a record of when it occurred and photographs of before and after the storm event. And don't overlook that a series of storms can cause progressive failure, but a claim for storm damage will only be valid for a single

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	CLASSIFICATION
0	Hairline crack less than 0.1 mm. No action required	Negligible
1	Fine cracks, which can be treated easily using normal decoration. Damage is generally restricted to internal wall finishes. Cracks are rarely visible in the external brickwork. Crack width 0.1 mm to 1 mm.	Very Slight
2	Cracks are easily filled. Recurrent cracks can be masked by suitable linings. Cracks not necessarily visible externally, some external pointing may be necessary to ensure weather-tightness. Doors and windows may stick and require easing and adjusting. Crack widths 1 mm to 5 mm.	Slight
3	Cracks that require some opening up and can be patched by a mason. Re-pointing of external brickwork and possibly a small amount of brickwork to be replaced. Doors and windows are sticking. Service pipes may fracture. Weather tightness is often impaired. Typical crack widths are 5mm to 15mm.	Moderate
4	Extensive damage that requires breaking out and replacing sections of walls, especially around doors and windows. Windows and door frames distorted, floor sloping noticeably. Walls leaning or bulging noticeably, some loss of bearing in beams and lintels. Service pipes are disrupted. Crack widths 15mm to 25mm.	Severe
5	Structural damage that requires a major repair job involving partial or complete rebuilding. Beams lose bearing, walls lean badly and require shoring. Windows broken with distortion. Danger of instability. Typical crack widths > 25 mm.	Very severe

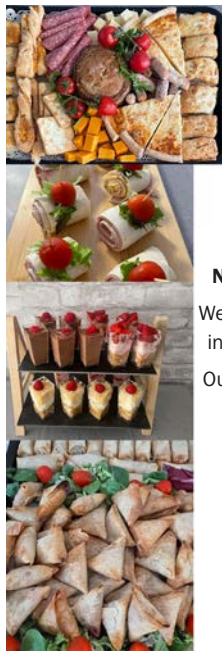
storm. If the cause is that a neighbour has carried out work without taking due care and attention, or a mining operation has caused subsidence, then you will most likely need the services of a solicitor to deal with the legal implications of the problem.

Trees and small plants can also be the culprits for cracking problems, so think for a moment about planting weeping willows (the roots of which can grow out to tens of metres from the tree), ask yourself if that ivy is really doing any good if its roots are fed from your lovely stone walls, and be vigilant for the presence of bamboo and

Japanese knotweed. Over time, any one of these beautiful plants could be the cause of your pride and joy becoming a financial burden, not necessarily covered by the insurance policy you thought was your lifebelt in a storm.

Early action is the key to dealing with cracks in buildings because while minor cracks may be early indications that something is not right with a building, the problem could grow from something that could be sorted out for a small sum of money to a major issue costing hundreds of thousands of pounds.

David Barratt



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Church News

ST PETER AND ST PAUL'S CHURCH

It was good to welcome so many people to our Christmas services, and now Easter has almost arrived.

We have some special services planned for Holy Week, the seven days leading up to Easter Day. They include some valuable time for peaceful reflection in an often-hectic world. In particular we have services at 7pm on Maundy Thursday, 2 April, 3.15pm on Good Friday, 3 April, and 9pm on Holy Saturday, 4 April. On Easter Sunday our service will be at 11am. Do come along, you will be very welcome.

Looking further ahead we will again be hosting the **Oxfordshire Artweek** between 9-17 May. This is one of the highlights of our year. Do call in and see the remarkable jewelry, printmaking, textiles and paintings being

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exhibited. On 20 June we have a further treat in store. At 7pm we will be hosting another Barbershop concert. Perhaps you were at the 'sell-out' concert back in 2023? More details of this event can be found below. Another date for your diary is our annual Summer Fete, which will take place at 2pm on Saturday 27 June. We will have a wonderful variety of stalls, games and refreshments available in and around the church.

I hope to see you at some of these events and do come along to our weekly Sunday service at 11am. On the first Sunday of each month, we have our Children's Church. You can see some of the children's artwork on display in the north aisle of the church, which is open every day in daylight hours.

With all good wishes,

Father Matthew Tel. 811364

Email: fathermatthew.r@icloud.com

Website: kings Sutton church.weebly.com

Facebook: **St Peter & St Paul's Church, King's Sutton**

THEY'RE COMING BACK!! IT'S GOING TO BE FANTASTIC!!

King's Sutton Parish Church has had a request from the Sheffield Barbershop chorus to come and sing for the community following the warm welcome that they received the last time they came in 2023.

We are therefore delighted to announce that the barbershop chorus '**Hallmark of Harmony**' will be making a return visit to the Parish Church on Saturday 20 June at 7pm.

It's going to be an evening of champions – all the groups have won competitions. Joining 'Hallmark' will be '**The Great Western Chorus**' from Bristol. Both these choruses have won national competitions many times.

Also, this time we have two champion quartets joining the concert: '**Lady**

CHAMPIONS of BARBERSHOP!






Lady Barbalade
(IABS National Champions 2023)

The Emerald Guard
(IABS International Champions 2023)



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Barbalade was formed from members of an award-winning chamber choir in Ireland. They got together in 2015 to sing the song 'Lady Marmalade' by Labelle. Their repertoire is witty, and they wear fabulous dresses! The second quartet is '**The Emerald Guard**' who have won many awards including an international gold medal in Ireland in 2023 and appeared on television and in panto! They will represent the UK in competition in America just a week after the concert.

The even better news is that ticket prices have been held at £15 for adults with children under 12 free. They will be available on the door, or from www.ticketsource.co.uk/kings-sutton-church.

Do come – it will be wonderful! Ask anyone who came to their last concert.....

NEWS FROM THE BAPTIST CHURCH

I am writing this with Lent just a few days away, but you will be reading this as it draws to its conclusion and so we'd love to invite you to join us for our very special Holy Week and Easter celebrations.

On Thursday 2 April at 6:30pm, we will be holding our Service of the Shadows. During this service we retell the final week of Jesus' life. It is always a powerful way to prepare for Good Friday the following day when we remember Jesus' death on the cross. On Good Friday, 3 April, the church will be open from 10am until 1pm for anyone to pop in to pray, you can stay for as long or as short a time as you would like to. I will be on hand should you wish to have someone to pray with.

Then on Easter morning Sunday 5 April, we gather to celebrate Jesus' resurrection, with a chocolate filled celebration suitable for all ages. The service will start at 10:30am, and we would really love to see you!

Some other dates to get in your diary from us, with more details to be found on our Facebook page and notice boards!

- Saturday 25 April: Tabletop Sale
- Sunday 10 May: Messy Church meets Lego Club! 3pm
- Saturday 16 May: 'Rev it up' is a sponsored event to raise money for a defibrillator to be put out in the church car park.
- Sunday 24 May: Pentecost BBQ lunch
- Saturday 27 June: Afternoon Tea with entertainment from our Singing Group.

Please do get in touch if there is anything that you would value us holding in prayer for you, or if you need a listening ear over a cuppa, or you want to know more about any of our events and activities.

**Every blessing to you all,
Rev Abby (and all the Baptist Church family)
revabbyl@gmail.com or 01295 812436**

KING'S SUTTON BAPTIST CHURCH YOUTH CLUB

Back in the Autumn of 2025 we were informed by NAYC (Northamptonshire Association of Youth Clubs) that we had been nominated once again for Youth Club of the Year, for their annual awards night to be held on 17th November. And not only were we nominated but Abby was nominated for Group Leader of the Year again! Three of our Young Leaders along with Abby and Ali, went along to King's Park Conference Centre to join with other Youth Clubs and organisations from across the county. It was a great evening hearing inspiring stories of the work that is being done for and by young people all across Northamptonshire.

Whilst we didn't win Youth Club of the Year, that award went to worthy winners in Rushden, Abby did win the **Group Leader of the Year!**

Abby says this about it "Whilst it's my name on the award it's not me that's done anything special, the whole team of adult volunteers give up their Friday evenings to provide a safe space for our Young People to be with their friends, it's not always easy but they are always willing and without them there would be no Youth Club, I really couldn't do it without them. It's not just them that make each week happen though, we've got an AMAZING team of Young Leaders who help, and it's a joy and privilege to encourage them in their leadership skills. And of course there's the Young People that turn up each week, that keep us on our toes and make Youth Club what it is, so thank you to you all too."

It's been great in this last year to welcome the village gardening club to plant bulbs, St John's Ambulance to teach lifesaving skills fueled by pizzas from the village WI, and Laura from Elle Coco to give us all sparkling hair extensions for Christmas! So, if there

are others in the community that might be able to bring something as a one-off session for our Young People to enjoy, please get in touch as it would be great to welcome you!

ksbcyouthclub@gmail.com

KING'S SUTTON COMMUNITY BEEKEEPING GROUP

September: We started to put our bees to bed for the winter by adding a mouse guard to the entrance of the hive, an Eke to the top and chicken wire around the hive. I hear you all ask what does all that mean . . .

- Mouse Guard – stops mice from making the hive their home and stealing the honey stores
- Eke – is a 'spacer' that allows us to administer sugar syrup and fondant stores to allow our bees to feed during the winter
- Chicken Wire – this stops woodpeckers from trying to peck their way into the hive to steal the honey.

As we head into autumn and winter our colony of bees will start to reduce in size and the mortuary bees will be busy emptying the hive of dead bees. These can be seen outside the hive on the floor. The colony will reduce by at least half for the winter period.

October: Our bees decided to 'beard' at the bottom of the hive and had started to produce comb, so we made the decision, as autumn was approaching, to remove the beard and place them all into the top of the hive.

This was a successful decision.

December/January: We have completed two varroa treatments to keep those pesky little bugs away from our bees. The first treatment went in around late December and then early January we completed another treatment.

Richard Atkins



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OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS

ST RUMBOLD'S DRIVE

'According to the old monkish legends, the infant St Rumbold, son of Penda, King of the Mercians, was born at King's Sutton on November 1st 662. Soon after his birth, the child spoke holy words and having professed himself a Christian, was baptised. Rumbold lived on only three days'. (Alfred Storey)

In the early 1500s there was a chapel dedicated to him. This stood near the main farmhouse at Walton Grounds and the foundations of it have been found. St Rumbold's font in the Church was removed in Victorian times and it is claimed that a stone found in the churchyard was incorporated into the present font. There was an original St Rumbold's Well in Astrop Park and a replica of it is still to be seen on the left in Charlton Road, leaving the village.

St Rumbold's Drive stands in a quiet corner of the village – it is a cul-de-sac off Glebe Rise near the Rec. It consists of 14 houses, three of them are bungalows, built of attractive mellow Cotswold stone. It is part of the Glebe Rise estate built by Arnold Mobley in the 1970s. The houses and bungalows are all different with 3-4 bedrooms. Most of the occupants are middle aged to elderly, just one young couple with a baby. The residents tend to stay long term and the is very rarely a house for sale in the Drive.

We spend a quiet life in the Drive, but the neighbours are all very friendly and willing to help if needed. I have had experience of that, living on my own at No. 1 at the age of 87.

In earlier days, Ann and Chris Busby used to have Open House for us all to get together. They organised a street party for us all to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. During the Covid pandemic, the occupants set up small tables in front of their own



St Rumbold's Drive

houses and there was a table for food contributions, and we waved and called out to each other in greeting at a distance.

The occupants of six of the houses attend the King's Sutton Baptist church in the village and the road is often referred to as Baptist Drive. About 20 years ago we had our moment of fame on the Drive; one Saturday morning there was a police raid on No. 2 at the corner; rumour had it that it was a drugs raid – more than that we did not know. My son, Richard, and I watched it all happen from our lounge window.

Many of the houses have had extensions added over the years; we added two to our house – a dining room and a study, and next door, at No. 3 the house has been converted from a bungalow to a house very successfully. We all enjoy living in our friendly Drive in the lovely village of King's Sutton.

(Some of the information above was taken from the King's Sutton Appraisal, 1993).

June Smith



Aystrop Wells, Buckinghamshire (sic) Thomas Rowlandson, 1815 (© Christie's Images 2023)



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THE GATEHOUSE, UPPER ASTROP ROAD

The Gatehouse, situated at the eastern end of the village, is often remarked on for the unusual, rounded shape of the dining room wing of the house, very visible from the road. It sits in the area which must once have been covered in buildings related to the spa at Astrop.

The medicinal properties of the mineral water from St Rumbold's Well were sought after from the latter part of the 17th century and the associated structures apparently included a house with palisades, a gravel walk, a garden house, WC block, tearoom, dancing room, kitchen and shop. An account in 1668 by Richard Lower claimed the waters cured every ailment including 'too much Spitting', fastening 'the Teeth, though ready to drop out' and restoring 'a fresh and lively Colour to the Face'. It also blackened teeth!

No trace of the spa now survives other than the site of the original well and the replica on the side of Charlton Road, but earlier parts of the Gatehouse were probably there at the time, in the form of now converted cottages which were subsequently amalgamated into the main house. The room with the rounded end was built in 1792, allegedly as an assembly room, though that would have been well after the heyday of the spa.

The site also contains a malting house which suggests that it formed part of the amenities of the village and perhaps supplied the brewery for the Three Tuns pub which stood beside the Gatehouse at the end of the 19th century.

The house was known as the Home Farm by 1939 when it was bought by a doctor from London who wanted to be out of London with his family, but also to be able to commute by train. It is still lived in by the same family.

Janet Valentine and Helen Forde



The Gatehouse



Ye old Three Tuns, Astrop Wells, 1880 (artist unknown)



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About me

Hi, I'm Kate, an Advanced Nurse Practitioner and independent prescriber. I have 20 years of nursing experience, most of which has been as a plastic surgery nurse practitioner. I have a passion for supporting positive ageing and enhancing your natural beauty.



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Cuppa and a chat

For this edition I had the privilege of sitting and chatting with King's Sutton's newest 100-year-old!

In November 2025 **John Leafhead** celebrated his 100th Birthday!

The photo of him here is of his birthday celebration with his friends from the village having had a family celebration a week before.

Abby: Where were you born? And what are your favourite childhood memories?

John: I was born in Boston Spa, in Yorkshire, just near Wetherby. I have three brothers. Favourite memories are, growing up in the village of Clifford, which is right next to Boston Spa, and going for walks along the river Beck, to the spot where we swam and sometimes we would fish there too.

At his party John was given a special greeting by his friends from the Catholic Church from Pope Leo XIV.

A: John you looked very surprised when you were given your special greeting from the Pope.

J: Oh I was, it was Carole Girling who organised it, my mum received one as well, so they are hung side by side in my hall now.

A: What would be your advice for reaching 100?

J: Just be thankful and be optimistic. Something good comes out of every day, and if it's been a tough day, well at least when you go to bed it's over.

At his party John shared with his friends that he sees reaching 100 as 'a gift not an achievement'.

A: How long have you lived in the village, and



what would be your top tips for making the most out of living here?

J: I've lived here for 14 years now, and I feel very settled. My tips would be get to know people, especially your neighbours, I've got lovely ones. I used to go up to the coffee morning at the Millennium Hall. Church is a good social thing, and I like it when we gather together across the churches.

A: And then the questions that I ask everyone. If you could have a cup of tea with anyone who would it be?

J: That's a tough one, maybe Pope John Paul II, but I'd like to think of someone a little bit lower and closer.

I think it would be a man called George McKeen, who was a wing commander in the Airforce, he did 84 trips in bomber command which was phenomenal, but then in civvy street he wasn't very successful, but he was a lovely man.



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A: Do you prefer Tea or Coffee?

J: Coffee

A: Do you have a favourite biscuit and do you dunk it?

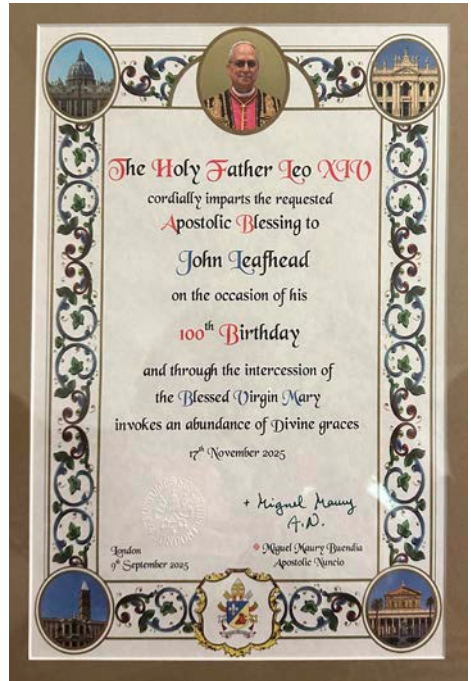
J: Favourite would be shortcake and yes, I like to dunk it sometimes.

There is so much more I could share from our conversation together, like the fact that John was running up to the age of 80, but space doesn't allow!

Thank you so much John for spending time with me and on behalf of the whole KST team we wish you a belated Happy 100th Birthday!

Abby Lintern

John's Apostolic Blessing from the Pope



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Forms are available at King's Sutton Post Office or the Co-op. You can also register online at: <https://abilitycic.org.uk/membership/> or telephone **01327 604123** Monday-Friday 9am - 2pm (voicemail out of hours).

We look forward to welcoming you on board!



APRIL FOOL JOKE ANSWERS

- Did you hear about the cashew and walnut party? [It was nuts]
- Why was the frog late to work on 1 April? [His car got toad]
- Which month of the year has 28 days? [They all do]
- Do you know what 2 and 2 make? [Yes/no]
- How do pirates celebrate April Fool's Day? [They walk the plank]



Clare Mansfield
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