

Wheathampstead Magazine



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December 2025



MERRY CHRISTMAS
— AND —
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Useful Phone Numbers

Doctors Surgery: Marford Road

01582 832258

Dentist: Marford Road 01582 833 408

Gas Emergency: 0800 111 999

Electricity Emergency: 0800 404 090

Power Cuts: 105

Healthline: 111

Police non emergency: 101

Parish Council: 01582 832541

County Council: 0300 123 4040

Local Pharmacy: 01582 832102

Help Lines

Mind: 0845 766 0163

Advice for Mental Health Issues

The Samaritans: Freephone 116123

Confidential non-judgemental emotional support

Alcoholics Anonymous:

0845 769 7555

Stroke helpline: 0845 303 3100

Advice from the Stroke Association

Age Concern: 0800 00 99 66

Frank: 0800 77 66 00

Advice about drugs from professional advisers

Beating Eating Disorders:

0845 634 1414

Cruse Day by Day: 0844 477 9400

Help and support for people who are bereaved

Macmillan CancerLine:

0808 808 2020

Autism Helpline: 0845 070 4004

When it comes to Weather...

The average high between December and February is 48°F (9°C) and the average low is 41°F (5°C). However, freezing temperatures are not uncommon and snow is not unheard of. Although -9°C might seem cold, the record was set back in 1963 as one of the coldest winters on record with temperature lower than -20°C



Major Events

There's no doubt that December has often been a month for notable historical events. Whilst there are many, the three events mentioned below heralded great change and so had particular significance.

Abdication of Edward VIII (1936)

Attack on Pearl Harbor (1941)

First human heart transplant (1967)

Christmas Markets

December is a great time of year for a market : whether it's fruit and veg, bread and cakes, crafts and clothes or even vintage and antiques, there's a market in Hertfordshire that covers most things, so why not make a day of it? - Check out our guide to Christmas markets to decide where you fancy going. See page 11.

Thought for December

December is the time for remembering the past and reaching toward to the future and Christmas is doing a little something extra for others.



WELCOME

Hello December and Welcome! With Christmas just around the corner and 2026 to consider, I certainly hope that the future seems bright for you. With all the preparations to think about, shopping and cooking and what to buy and who to buy for, December can be a stressful month if you let it. I am a great one for making a to-do list, so that I can feel good when I can actually start to tick things off. So, if you are a list maker, or even if you're not, do try to remember to take a breath and approach things calmly, put your feet up and why not get yourself a cuppa, while you read this magazine?

This edition is a bit of Christmas special (what a surprise!). There's an item about Christmas traditions, some rather useful safety tips from 'Santa' as well a few Christmas puzzles to enjoy if that's your sort of thing.

Aside from that, we chatted to the people at Sol Power who told us a little about what's involved in the installation of Solar panels and we heard about the new café, bakery and deli counter at Carpenter's Nursery and Farm Shop.

Health Matters takes a peek at overindulgence and the *What's On* section lists plenty to do and see in our area or within easy reach.

Finally, all at Wheathampstead Magazine send very best wishes for a happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year to all our advertisers and readers.

Looking forward to seeing you all again in 2026!

Eve

eve@minimagazines.co.uk

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8

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- Accounts for Self Employed
- Payroll & VAT Returns
- HMRC investigations

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What's On... regularly

• Foodbank

Confidentiality is assured. We now hold this at the Memorial Hall in Marford Road, still every Thursday but from 11:30am - 1:30pm. Tel: 01727 613019

• Recreation for the Retired

The Chapel Halls Brewhouse Hill All welcome. Various activities available. 2pm-4pm most Fridays

• Bluebell Memory Cafe

Activities for those people living with memory-related conditions and their supporters Meets at the Mead Hall every 1st and 3rd Wednesday (except August). All welcome. Enquiries to: Isobel Poole, 07949 630228.

• W.A.S.P.S. After School Play-Scheme

Fantastic, affordable and experienced child-care before and after school each day, Beech Hyde Primary School, www.wasps-asc.org

• Christmas Quiz

The Swan Wheathampstead. Wednesday 10th December

• Herts Musical Memories

Singing for people with dementia & their carers/loved ones. Monday mornings 10.30am - 12.00 midday. Memorial Hall Call Wendy Hyams 07483 307545 or Kerry Brabant 020 8950 5757

• Silver Moon Café

New Café, for Seniors, free hot/cold drinks, & cakes. Socialise, meet new people & make friends. Last Wednesday of each month (excl December) 11-12.30 pm, Mead Hall, East Lane,

• Community Library

Wheathampstead Community Library Monday - Thursday 2pm - 6pm and Saturday 9am-1pm. Knit Natter & Know Craft group every Wednesday 10am-Noon. Fire Station and Library Marford Road Wheathampstead.

• Roast & Meat Raffle

Weekly Sundays at The Swan, Wheathampstead

• Swan Bingo

It's Eyes down once again for a great night of Bingo Fun at your favourite local pub in Wheathampstead Village 4th 7.30 with pizza and burgers at The Swan, Wheathampstead

• Harpenden Riding for Disabled (RDA)

Lessons to local people (over the age of 5) with physical disabilities or learning difficulties. Wednesdays 4.15-5.00 pm & 5.00 -5.45pm early Spring through Autumn. Sandridgebury equestrian centre, Sandridge. Contact harpendenrda@yahoo.co.uk and via FB

Please contact event organisers for full details, ticket prices and availability.

What's On This Month

• Live Music 6th December

Local Band, Blues on Fire play their brand of Raunchy Blues Rock 9pm Saturday 15th November. Free Entry 9 pm - Saturday 6th December, The Swan, Wheathampstead Village.

• Jack and the Beanstalk Panto 6th December

Get ready to roar with laughter and cheer our hero Jack on his magical journey to Cloudland as he battles to save his best friend Daisy the Cow! As always there'll be spectacular scenery, dazzling costumes, amazing special effects and lots of audience participation. 6th - 30 th December, Eric Morecambe Centre, Rothamsted Park, Harpenden, Box Office Tel: 01582 767525 <https://everyonetheatres.com/>

• Meet Santa 13th December

Come along and meet and chat to our lovely Santa Claus. You can call the Swan to book your place to meet Santa between 3 - 5pm on Saturday 13th December at The Swan, Wheathampstead Village. Tel: 01582 833110

• Dick Whittington Panto 13th December

Join Dick and his cat on their hilarious adventure to Old London Town. Packed solid with comedy, excitement and adventure, the children will love to cheer, shout and dance their way through the show. This pantomime is specifically created for children aged 3 - 10 years. There will be a bar available before and during the performance, selling alcoholic, soft and hot drinks, snacks and ice cream. 2.30 - 4.30 Saturday 13th December, Marford Memorial Hall, Marford Rd, Wheathampstead, Tickets <https://www.wpcevents.co.uk/>

• Wheathampstead u3a 18th December

Local singer Ronan McArdle will entertain us at the December meeting Ronan is a classy and versatile vocalist who will be entertaining us with a selection of Christmas and other classic tunes - guaranteed to get us all into the Christmas spirit! Memorial Hall at 2:00 for 2:30pm on Thursday 18th December

• Baby Broadway Christmas - 20th December

Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas at a festive Baby Broadway concert this December! An interactive Christmas performance suitable for all ages. The whole family can sing and dance along to seasonal showtunes from hit musicals and well-known songs from Christmas films, all performed by talented West End singers. Festive fancy dress is encouraged and - as well as singing, clapping and dancing along for info and tickets www.babybroadway.co.uk 10am & 11.30am Saturday 20 December, Maltings Arts Theatre, Level 2 The Maltings, St Albans, Herts AL1 3HL

• Live Music 20th December

Carnegies play their brand of lively covers 9pm Saturday 20th December, The Swan, Wheathampstead Village.

• "Midnight" Communion with Carols 24th December

Join in at St Helen's Church for a time of peaceful reflection St Helens Church Wheathampstead 11pm - 12 am. St Helens Church, Wheathampstead, Saturday 24th <https://sth-stp.org/>

• St Albans Mummers: St George and the Dragon 26 December

Back again this Boxing Day to present the tale of St George and the Dragon around St Albans City Centre. Joining St George and the Dragon, to help the traditional story along, will be Father Christmas, The Lord of Misrule, A Dodgy Doctor, A Turkish Knight and a Giant with a very big stick. This year's performances will take place at the following times and places. 11.30 Museum / Old Town Hall, 12.20 White Hart Hotel, 13.10 West Door of Abbey, 14:00 Ye Olde Fighting Cocks, 14.50 The Clock Tower. Friday 26 December. Performances are FREE. stalbanmummers.org.uk/

• Carols On Boxing Day 26th December

A belated opportunity to sing more Christmas carols comes this Boxing Day, with a carol service. It is an informal service which encourages people to come along for a final festive celebration. Doors open at 3.20pm starts at 4pm St Albans Cathedral, Sumpter Yard, St Albans, AL1 1BY SNo tickets required. <https://sth-stp.org/>

To add your events please email: eve@minimagazines.co.uk

Please Note: Events, dates and times correct at time of going to press.

Local Update

Local Traditions

Is it the switching on of Christmas lights in the High Street or the Christmassy windows in the local shops that makes it seem like Christmas is just around the corner? For some it's the smell of a spruce green Christmas Tree and for others it's the taste of their first mince pie, but whatever it is, December 1st means that if you haven't already organised Christmas gifts and cards then it really is time to make a plan.

I know it's time to start making my plan when I see Christmas trees on sale which is something that seems to start earlier every year. Each year I wonder if this will be the year when I change from a real fresh tree to a bring it out every year artificial one ... I still haven't decided.

Fortunately, there is plenty of opportunity to source great presents and lovely cards on our doorstep as well as those extra little things that help everything run smoothly in the run up to

the festivities.

Often, we rely on long held habits and traditions to ensure that Christmas is a successful event with our own friends and family. But not everywhere in the world celebrates in exactly the same way and those obligatory Christmas traditions vary from country to country. People in Australia apparently prefer to celebrate Christmas on the Beach, while presents aren't exchanged in Mexico until January 6th, and many Scandinavian countries prefer to celebrate on Christmas Eve instead of Christmas Day. In the UK, families usually try to celebrate Christmas together, often so that they can watch each other open their presents and later, sit down to watch the King's speech.

Most families have a Christmas tree in their homes for Christmas. The decorating of the tree is usually a family occasion, with everyone helping. Most villages, towns and cities are decorated with Christmas lights over Christmas



and Wheathampstead's own Lights Up event usually takes place in late November when the local Santa also makes an appearance. Nativity Plays and Carol Services are also very popular at Christmas time. Local churches usually have carols by candlelight and Christingle Services. St Helens Church hosts various other Christmas Services.

Little children get so excited and believe that Father Christmas or Santa Claus leaves presents in stockings or pillow-cases under the tree or in a stocking. Sometimes mince pies and brandy are left out for Father Christmas to eat and drink when he visits, although now it's often a non-alcoholic drink because Santa has to drive his sleigh and don't forget the carrot for Rudolph! Whatever you are planning this year, we wish you and yours a very happy and healthy Christmas and a marvellous New Year.

Café, Bakery and Deli

Most local people know that If you're stuck for Christmas ideas, or even if you're not, a trip to Carpenters Nursery & Farm Shop really is worthwhile. In fact, you can probably spend the day wandering around any time of year getting everything you need and choosing from their excellent array of gifts and decorations, plants and trees as well as the produce in their farm



shop. You can't (and shouldn't) miss the Potting Shed Café which now has extra space with a new café seating area with counter service alongside. Whilst the style, comfort and the excellent menu at the Potting Shed haven't changed, the new café offers more casual lunchtime choices such as baked potatoes, pizza, soup and other light bites. In addition to the new café there's also a deli and bakery counter where you can purchase ready-made salads, quiches, pizza slices, sausage



rolls, pastries, cakes and other snacks. These are available to takeaway or eat-in. Carpenter's have also recently partnered with Flourish bakery in Watford to supply with their award-winning sourdough breads and pastries.

So, if you are having a break after browsing, meeting friends for breakfast or lunch, or fancy a takeaway for later, there really is so much to choose from.



Try the Winter Stew Special or Lamb flatbread from the Potting Shed or Homemade Soup or Quiche of the day from the new café, or you could go for the Cakes and Pastries from the bakery counter! My mouth is already watering at the thought of it all.

No Happy Ending

We went along to Marford Hall to see The Thrill of Love, a play performed by Wheathampstead Dramatic Society and directed by Malcolm Hobbs about Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be hanged in Britain.

The scene is set in the mid 1950's when Ruth, a divorcee with a young child to care for, works in a nightclub; the kind of place where there's more than just a drink on offer. *Continued on page 11*

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Ruth and the other girls work hard and play hard, having dreams of a movie-star lifestyle.

Whilst the play centres around Ruth, we heard a lot from Jack Gale (Bruce King) who set the scenes, weaving through the sad tale as he interacted with the other characters. It was the women in Ruth's life that were the highlight in this play and it must be said that all the actresses demonstrated their acting ability in portraying each distinct character. Both Doris (Louise Donaghy) and Vickie (Bailey Killner) supported Ruth (Abi Longland) very well as the character moved from calm to emotional and back, showing the audience the whole spectrum of reactions to her situation.

A particular stand out was Jan Westgarth as Sylvia, the cynical club manager, who somehow managed to portray someone who was both tough and jaded, but ultimately sympathetic. In this play there can be no happy ending, no thrill of love, but rather the story of a love that leads to Ruth's demise. This production was well acted and the story well told.

We are already looking forward to the next performance by the talented and versatile

Wheathampstead Dramatic Society.

Christmas Markets

There's just something about Markets at Christmas time that makes shopping that little bit special, especially if the skies are blue and you are wrapped up warm against the inevitable chill in the air.



Is it that people seem happier, is it that holidays are fast approaching, is it that there are so many things to choose from, or could it just be that everywhere smells of *Continued on page 12*



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Christmas? Whatever the reason, if you enjoy Christmas markets, there are plenty in and around Hertfordshire to choose from.

Antique and Vintage Market 7th December

A much loved and celebrated monthly exciting, inspirational and vibrant street market full of some of the very best traders in Antique and Vintage this country has to offer. Join visitors and traders from far and wide and spend the day immersed in all things aged in the amazing ancient city of St Albans. St Peters Street and Market Place, St Albans, Herts AL1 3DH

Harpenden Farmer's Market 21st December

Happening on the 3rd Sunday this month to avoid the Christmas period.

Each Market finds a huge selection of produce available including meats, pies, sausages, game meats, preserves, pickles, jams and honey, cheeses, vegetables dry herbs and spices, flowers and plants, fresh bread, cake, pastries, eggs and organic produce.

Lower High Street, Harpenden, AL5 2RU



Christmas Market at Luton Hoo Estate 7th December

Put a note in your diary – This year hosting their popular Christmas Market at Luton Hoo Estate. All stalls will be inside the stunning conservatory and food and edible treat stalls in the historic Walled Garden – Visits to Father Christmas are already getting booked and the Woodyard Coffee Shop will be open for hot and cold drinks, snacks and seasonal treats. The Woodland walk will be suitably dressed for the season and parking and entry is free! Stock up on your seasonal necessities and Christmas gifts. Luton Hoo LU1 4LF

Shop Small St Albans - Christmas Market 6th December

11am - 4pm

An incredible Christmas Market full of local, small, creative businesses. Shop everything from candles to ceramics, jewellery to clothing and everything in-between. Do all your Christmas shopping under one roof while making Small Businesses smile! St Albans Museum & Gallery, St Peter's St, AL1 3DH



St Albans Market Throughout December

Another highlight of the festive season is the St Albans Market. St Albans Market is open on Wednesdays and Saturdays between 9am and 4.30pm and on the second Sunday of each month between 8am and 2pm. St Peters Street



Hertfordshire Christmas Fair 6th & 7th December

"Christmas Craft Fair" Celebrate all good things for Christmas from Food and Drink to Arts, Crafts and Gifts. You can enjoy browsing, sampling and buying from a mouth-watering array of stallholders 10am-4pm Hertfordshire County Showground

Redbourn Christmas Market Sunday 30th November 11am until 5pm

Delicious food and handmade crafts from local makers. Visit the pretty, historic, village of Redbourn and indulge in a wealth of local crafts,

fabulous food and entertainment, to kick off the festive season in style! Redbourn Christmas Market is a not-for-profit event organised by volunteers for the benefit of the community. All funds raised are used to put into running the event and paying for the Christmas light display. Overflowing with delicious food, beautiful crafts and gift ideas, seasonal music and Yule raffle.

Christmas Market at Standalone Farm December 30th November – 8th December

Join us at Standalone this Christmas for a fun-filled Festive Market complete with music, food and shopping. Our animals will even make an appearance!

Visit Standalone as we transform our farmyard into a magical Festive Market. Visitors can enjoy festive food stalls, mulled cider and live music. Browse the various stalls and shop for the perfect gift from the talented makers selling gifts, art and local produce. Little ones will be able to enjoy festive activities and meet our farm animals. Standalone Farm, Wilbury Road, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 4JN

An Inexhaustible Resource

Solar panels offer significant benefits in the UK, including reduced electricity bills (potentially saving hundreds of pounds annually), earning money by selling excess energy to the grid through the Smart Export Guarantee (SEG), and lowering your carbon footprint.

According to the specialists, solar power is a sustainable, inexhaustible *Continued on page 15*



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resource that helps reduce air pollution. Solar panels increase a home's property value and provide energy independence from rising costs. By generating your own power, you become less reliant on the national grid and have greater control over your energy supply. Also, solar panels are generally low-maintenance once installed and savings can be further boosted when solar panels are combined with other tech like battery storage, heat pumps, or electric vehicles.

We spoke to local specialist Sol Power who specialise in solar panel installation and battery storage.

Ben Hooper, electrician and an important member of the Sol Power team told us: "We are a locally based company and proudly serve Hertfordshire and the surrounding areas, helping homeowners and small businesses make the switch to clean, renewable energy. Because we're local,

we take the time to get to know our customers personally. Every home and roof is different, and so are that home's energy needs. We don't believe in a one-size-fits-all approach - instead, we work closely with each customer to design and install a system that delivers the best performance and the greatest long-term value."

The Sol Power team brings together three local experts with complementary skills to provide a complete solar and battery service - from design and planning to installation and maintenance. System Designer, Alan McKnight is the brains behind every solar system installed.. He will visit the property, discuss energy usage, and create a tailored design that meets household's needs and budget. His goal is to help customers to use

as much of their own solar energy as possible — storing excess electricity for use in the evenings or on cloudy days, and reducing reliance on the grid.



Electrician, Ben Hooper is a fully qualified local electrician who handles the installation of solar panels and battery systems, ensuring everything integrates smoothly with the existing electrical setup. He takes care of all electrical wiring, inverter setup, and system testing, so customers can be confident that the new system will perform efficiently.

Ben's experience with domestic and small commercial electrics means he can also advise on upgrades such as EV chargers, energy monitors, or smart home systems that work alongside your solar and battery installation. His practical approach and clear explanations help customers feel fully informed and comfortable throughout



the process.

Roofing and Builder, Charlie Gibbs brings expert roofing knowledge to every job. He installs the roof rails and mounting systems that secure the solar panels, ensuring everything is watertight, safe, and long-lasting. Because he's an experienced roofer, Charlie can also handle any tricky tiles, uneven roofs, or minor structural work needed to support your panels and will ensure that each solar installation looks great and stands up to years of weather and wear.

To find out more visit www.solpower.co.uk Sol Power is part of the government's MCS scheme. All electrical work will be NICEIC certified and notified to Building Control and UK Power Networks.



Christmas at Carpenter's

Christmas Decorations

Unique Houseplants

With everything to put the finishing touches to your festive celebration our Christmas shop is full of stunning decorations, sparkling lights, beautiful houseplants and a huge range of perfect gifts & homeware.

Christmas Lights

Festive Food

As well as tempting festive food, our Farm Shop is full of own grown vegetables, cakes, wines, beers & spirits and a wide range of locally sourced fresh produce.

"Our fresh cut real Christmas trees are in stock now"

Choose a Nordmann Fir for soft needles and great needle retention. The Fraser Fir is a great choice if you're after great needle retention, fabulous fragrance and a more compact tree. If you're after the classic tree, our local Norway Spruce is definitely the choice for you.

Gifts & Homeware

106 St Albans Road, Sandridge,
St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL4 9LJ
01727 853340 www.carpentersnursery.co.uk

There is just one simple rule in Sudoku. Each row and each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9, and so must each 3 x 3 box. This is a logic puzzle, and you should not have to guess.

					5		3	
	7		3		6	8	4	
5			8	1	2			
9	5			3			7	
		3			7			4
				5			1	9
7			6	8			9	2
	2	9	5		1		8	
			4					6

Each pair of words has a missing word between them that acts as a link to both (e.g. FRONT - DOOR - MAT). The initial letters of the six arrows (reading downwards) will spell out a tree.

STERLING	-----	LINING
SALMON	----	GIN
TRUNK	----	HAGE
TURN	--	START
WEDDING	----	WALK
DEAF	---	TRUMPET

WORD PYRAMID



Spill out a 15-letter word or phrase by moving from one chamber to another within the pyramid. You may only enter each of the chambers once and may only proceed through openings in the walls. The first letter may appear in any of the chambers.

PATHWORDS

Starting from the central shaded letter, move one letter at a time (up, down, right or left, but not diagonally) to find 17 typical Christmas gifts.

C N R O H S R E T A C
A B T R S D P E N S W
D B P E D V H O C O L
O O P A R S C A I T A
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U M E V O L G V A H S

TRAIN OF THOUGHT

What words link the following definitions?

_____T_____

1. a side;
2. a group of people;
3. a social gathering;
4. those involved in something.

PATIMONDS:
culetter; socker; potterdall;
chocotiser; hook; teatant;
attrenaver; popcount;
gloves; dlayr; muled; witer;
soarf; elipser; DVD; perit;
swester; shortread; book.

Santa's Safety Tips

Food safety is very important at any time, but with more to do and less time to do it; cutting corners can be dangerous for your health.



Safety in Preparing and cooking

Eighty per cent of people say they wash their turkeys before cooking them, but this significantly increases the risk of food poisoning by splashing germs around the kitchen. Don't wash your bird, because it will only spread germs. Raw foods can contain harmful bacteria that are spread very easily to anything they touch, including other foods, worktops, chopping boards and knives. Use separate chopping boards and knives for raw food and ready-to-eat food to avoid cross contamination. Thorough cooking will kill any bacteria that might be present so make sure your turkey is

steaming hot all the way through before serving. When you cut into the thickest part of the turkey, none of the meat should be pink. If juices flow out when you pierce the turkey or when you press the thigh, they should be clear.

Most of the bacteria on vegetables will be in the soil attached to the produce. Washing to remove any soil is therefore particularly important. When you wash vegetables, don't just hold them under the running tap. Rub them under water, for example in a bowl of fresh water.

It sounds obvious but remembers to always wash and dry your hands thoroughly before and after handling food, especially when handling and preparing raw meat and poultry. You also need to remember to wash and dry your hands after going to the toilet, touching the bin or touching any pets. Bugs are spread between food, surfaces and utensils most effectively on wet or damp hands.

If there are any leftovers, cool them as quickly as possible, ideally within 90 minutes, then cover and refrigerate. Use leftovers within two days and reheat until they are steaming hot all the way through. Don't reheat leftovers more than once. If you want to keep leftovers longer than two days, you can freeze them instead.

Excitement, stress, tiredness and alcohol can create unexpected *Continued on page 10*

Continued on page 20



Local Services

hazards

More than 80,000 people a year need hospital treatment for injuries such as falls, cuts and burns during the festive period.

During Christmas, your home is likely to be full of people and, in the excitement, accidents can easily happen.

With a little more care and forward planning, most accidents could be avoided.

Hot fat, boiling water and sharp knives make the kitchen one of the most dangerous places during the holiday. Try to keep other people (especially

children) out of the kitchen. Avoid alcohol until you've finished cooking, and wipe up spills as soon as they happen, so that people don't slip. Clutter, alcohol and tiredness make the stairs an accident hotspot during Christmas. Sometimes people are so excited about gifts they receive they rush to open things using knives or scissors, or they may trip over cables and toys that may have suddenly appeared.

So try to take time to enjoy the moment. Have a screwdriver ready for toys that are screwed into packaging. Clear up the packaging and wrapping paper as you go along stuffing discarded paper boxes and card in to a refuse sack and recycle where ever possible.

Beware of your Christmas tree. Every year about 1,000 people are injured by their tree, usually while reaching up too high or trying to balance on wobbly chairs to fix stars or other decorations on high branches, so don't over reach. Use the right equipment like a step ladder to ensure that you are not in danger.

Some people sustain injuries when putting up fairy lights, which could include falling while they're putting them up, children swallowing

the bulbs, and people getting electric shocks and burns from faulty lights.

Test your lights and the wiring before you put them up, as they can deteriorate over the years. If you have old lights, buy new ones that meet higher safety standards and do make sure that you don't overload electrical sockets as that can be a fire risk.

Candles and Fire

Apparently, people are 50% more likely to die in a house fire over Christmas than at any other time of year, which is possibly because more of us use candles at Christmas time and don't attend to them properly? It's best not to put candles on or near a Christmas tree, never leave an open flame unattended and always place tea lights and candles in general inside an appropriate container.

When it comes to Christmas plants it's worth noting that Mistletoe is poisonous. Its berries contain toxic proteins that slow the heart rate and can cause hallucinations. The orange berries of the Christmas cherry can cause stomach pains. The Christmas rose is so effective at causing diarrhoea that it was used as a chemical weapon

by the ancient Greeks. Your garden centre or florists should know which plants are poisonous, but keep them all away from children.

Stress

Christmas is one of the most stressful times of the year. The combination of drink, relatives, lack of sleep and the stress of Christmas shopping can be too much for some of us. It's a good idea to learn to say no and try to have some time for yourself. If you do get too stressed, talk to a friend or the Samaritans are always there to listen and help in difficult times.

Whatever your plans for enjoyment this year, be safe too.

Beat Heart Failure

Detecting the early signs of heart failure can save a life.

Would you know the signs if you, or someone close to you, was suffering from heart failure? Data suggests that there are thousands of people living around the country who are unaware they have heart failure - and a simple check list could help you detect it and get the potentially life-saving treatment you need.



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www.hertssunflower.org

Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse helpline

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www.hcas.org.uk

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www.nationaldebtline.org

Avoiding Scams

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www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/update-me

Volunteering

www.volunteering.org.uk



The local NHS has teamed up with national charity Pumping Marvellous (<https://pumpingmarvellous.org/>) to encourage everyone to use this simple acronym to help spot the signs and take action:

Breathlessness

Exhaustion

Ankle swelling

Time to speak to your GP

If you have diabetes or high blood pressure you are also at a greater risk making it even more important to take a sec to check your blood pressure.



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Health Matters

Dangerous Risks or Simple Pleasures?

Whilst not everyone would agree, the fact is you don't need to get drunk to have fun at Christmas or any other time. In the past, you may well have dismissed that as a boring notion - but increasingly, people of all ages are either quitting or cutting down on the booze. Depending on your reasons for doing it, in principle the same applies to smoking - you don't need it to enjoy your lifestyle. During the pandemic, thousands decided to overhaul their lifestyles and get healthy, which in many cases meant swapping beer, wines and spirits for the low or no-alcohol versions and

cutting back or cutting out cigarettes in some cases in favour of vaping. But many of us like a drink, a glass of wine with a meal or a pint of beer while socialising, but throw cigarettes into the mix and you increase the risk of damage caused to your body's cells. This may seem alarmist, but according to *DrinkAware*, smoking and drinking together increases your risk of developing throat and mouth cancer more than doing either on their own. A recent review of studies looked at how often oral and upper throat cancers happen in those who drink and smoke. It found that those who drank but had never smoked were around a third more likely to develop oral or upper throat

cancer compared with non-drinkers. However, of those people who currently smoke and drink or used to smoke the risk was almost three times higher compared with non-drinkers who have never smoked.

Heavy drinking can also cause: heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, stomach ulcers and pancreatitis.



TV and newspapers often seem to publish contradictory reports fuelling debates about low-levels of certain alcohol being good for us, such as, 'Is red wine good for your heart?' But again according to research

apparently any protective effect of alcohol is ultimately out-weighed by the associated health risk.

The important message is to stay in control and drink alcohol in moderation. Make sure that you know the strength of what you're drinking too; alcoholic drinks labels will have the abbreviation "ABV" which stands for Alcohol By Volume, or sometimes just the word "vol". It shows the percentage of your drink that's pure alcohol. This can vary a lot. For example, some beers are 3.5%, some stronger lagers can be as much as 6% ABV. In England, alcohol dependence is more common in men (6%) than in women (2%). This gender difference is found to be

Continued on page 24

the case all over the world and is one of only a few key gender differences in social behaviour.

Simple tips for cutting down

1. Make a plan. Before you start drinking, set a limit on how much you're going to drink.
2. Set a budget. Only take a fixed amount of money to spend on alcohol.
3. Let them know, tell your friends you plan to cut down
4. Take it a day at a time.
5. Make it a smaller one... have a half instead of a pint
6. Have a lower-strength drink
7. Stay hydrated... drink plenty of water

Smoking

Most smokers start as teenagers: two-thirds before the age of 18. The reasons they start are complex, ranging from peer pressure to behavioural problems. Children are more likely to take up smoking if they live with people who smoke. The best way to reduce smoking among young people is to reduce it in the world around them.

Despite a continuing decline in smoking rates, according to Public Health England (PHE) nearly 1 in 5 adults still smoke. There are around 90,000 regular smokers aged between 11 and 15 and smoking causes 17% of all deaths in people aged 35 and over.

The figures of people dying from mouth cancer are shocking too. More will die of the disease than cervical and testicular cancer combined, and it is set to increase in the next ten years. The British Dental Health Foundation has been lobbying for standard packaging on tobacco, along with minimum alcohol pricing in an effort to minimise the number of people at risk of developing mouth cancer.

Chief Executive of health charity ASH said: "People know about lung cancer but don't necessarily realise that smoking is also by far the biggest single cause of mouth cancer. The majority of smokers become addicted while still underage so it's essential to do everything we can to discourage children from starting to smoke." People who do manage to stop smoking will start to see benefits quickly and these increase dramatically the longer they stay smoke free. After just 48 hours of stopping there's no nicotine in the body and quitters may start noticing that things smell and taste better. Within 1 to 9 months of quitting, coughing and shortness of breath decrease. After 1 year, the added risk of a heart attack falls to about half of that of a smoker's.

Stopping smoking is one of the best things you will ever do for your health. When you stop, you give your lungs the chance to repair and you will be able to breathe easier. There are lots of other benefits too – and they start almost immediately.



Health Matters

Many people try to quit smoking with willpower alone, but it's much easier to go smoke-free with the right help. Apparently, you're roughly twice as likely to quit smoking if you use a vape compared with other nicotine replacement products, like patches and gum.



Vaping to quit smoking

There's some confusion and misleading information about vaping, which can make it difficult to work out what's true or not. Nicotine vaping is substantially less harmful than smoking. It's also one of the most effective tools for quitting smoking.

Vaping is not recommended for non-smokers

and young people because it is not completely harmless.

How vaping can help you quit

Vapes are electronic devices that let you inhale nicotine in a vapour instead of smoke. This is done by heating a solution (e-liquid) that typically contains propylene glycol, vegetable glycerine, flavourings and nicotine.

E-liquids come in different nicotine strengths, so you control how much nicotine you need to help with cravings and other withdrawal symptoms, such as feeling irritable and having low mood. Nicotine itself is not very harmful and has been used safely for many years in medicines to help people stop smoking.

Help break the routines of smoking cigarettes. The routines and rituals of smoking can be hard to stop, so vaping can help you gradually let go of these while immediately reducing the health risks of smoking cigarettes.

Information supplied by Drink Aware, ASH and NHS.

What happens when you quit?

After 20 minutes

Your increased heart rate will start to calm down.

After 8 hours

Your oxygen levels will start to recover.

After 48 hours

Your sense of taste and smell starts to improve.

After 72 hours

You will notice it's easier to breathe.

After 2 weeks

Your circulation will have improved.

After 3 months

Your lung function increases by up to 10%.

After 1 year

Your risk of heart attack will have halved.

After 10 years

Your risk of death from lung cancer will have halved.



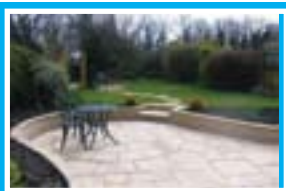
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Local Clubs and Groups



Tennis

Wheathampstead Lawn Tennis Club with 3 all-weather floodlit courts, a short tennis court and a clubhouse located in the heart of Wheathampstead on Marford Playing Fields, just alongside Bocket View. Wednesdays at 6.30pm every week, or Sundays at 10am most weeks. Visit the website for further information www.wlts.org.uk

Thursday Club

The Thursday Club is a friendly, volunteer-run companionship and support Club for Wheathampstead residents who are over 60 and unable to access other activities without support. The Club meets every Thursday from 10am-2pm. Tea/Coffee is provided upon arrival, followed by a home cooked meal and then we finish with some form of entertainment. Transport to and from the Mead Hall can be arranged. To find out more, or if you have any questions, call Val Hughes on 01582 629682 or Michael Corley on 01582 833018.

The Village Surgeries PPG.

The objective of the group is to contribute wherever possible to the health improvements in Wheathampstead and Harpenden. We are now arranging monthly medical talks on-line. There are also newsletters 4 times a year where members can gain information about local initiatives. We are always looking for new members and it is free to join and participate. To be included and receive the newsletter and get details of the talks please send a request to chair@thevillagesurgeriesppg.co.uk

Archery

Wheathampstead Archery club was founded in 1956, and has about 70 members. Always happy to welcome newcomers; beginners or experienced. Beginners will need to complete a beginner course run by our Archery GB qualified club coaches. There is a Junior Section for under-18s, but the minimum age is 10. <http://wheathampsteadarchery.org.uk/>

Forging Friendship Club

Affiliated to the Men's Sheds Association, this new club has recently formed in Wheathampstead. Members meet socially and form friendships while facilitating creativity, passing on skills and learning from each other. Meet weekly on Wednesday at 10am to 12 pm in the Old Forge building near the entrance to the Meads.

To join or find out more email: forgingfriendshipsclub@gmail.com

Wheathampstead Baby & Toddler Group

We are a relaxed and friendly group for 0-4 year-olds and their parents and carers, run by parent-volunteers. We provide toys, craft, music, snacks, hot drinks and the chance to get to know other local people. We meet every Friday during term time, 9:45-11:15am at The Memorial Hall on Marford Road.

Find us on Facebook or contact wheathampsteadtoddlergroup@gmail.com

Wheathampstead Community Group (WCG)

WCG seeks to support anyone in the Parish of Wheathampstead who is looking for assistance. If you or anyone that you know needs help, or you wish to volunteer for WCG, please call 07539 176481.

If you need transport to hospital or the doctor, please call 07918 136870. www.wheathampsteadwgc.org
email: Secretary@wheathampsteadwgc.org

Continued on page 28

Kimpton Bowls Club

Bowling for everyone- Come and try bowls. 'Beginners Welcome' Friendly members to help you play. Woods provided but flat shoes please. Come and have fun on Sunday 23rd April 2023 from 2pm. Kimpton Bowls Club, Recreation Ground, Kimpton.
For further details contact John 07785960353

Business Group

Wheathampstead Businesses (known as WEB) has a mission to Promote, Protect & Support local businesses and the local community. BILLY the Bee is our mascot promoting Buy It Locally. Twice monthly networking meetings provide an opportunity to collaborate, learn from each other and gain customers. For more details contact Ginny Cooper, Chairman: chair@wheathampsteadbusinesses.co.uk

Cricket

Wheathampstead Cricket Club has five adult teams and an expanding colts section. Cricket is played on Nomansland Common on Saturday and Sunday throughout the season, with occasional mid-week



and evening fixtures. WCC really is a club on the up and we now have some of the best cricket facilities in the county. New players and spectators are always welcome. www.wheathampsteadcc.hitscricket.com

Wheathampstead Dramatic Society

The Dramatic Society is always looking for new members who would like to join this friendly group. For information about our next planned production visit our website: www.wheathampsteadramaticsociety.co.uk

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Wheathampstead & District Preservation Society

The aims of the group are to protect what's best about the village, make the best use of its assets, object to inappropriate planning applications and take part in community initiatives. The more members we have, the louder is our voice. To join, please see our website: www.wheathampsteadpreservation.org.uk or call 01582 833789.

Mead Quilters

We are a long established, forward looking and friendly quilting and patchwork group who meet at the Mead Hall in East Lane, Wheathampstead, AL4 8BP.

We meet on the first Tuesday morning of each month 10.00-12.00noon, and the 3rd Tuesday evening 7.30-9.00pm. Visitors are welcome at both sessions. For further information see our website www.meadquilters.org

Wheathampstead W.I.

Lively, interesting and varied meetings. Every 2nd Wednesday 7.30pm at the Mead Hall in East Lane W/stead. Social events and outings throughout the year. See W.I Noticeboard in the High Street for more information or contact our Secretary Gillian Keen: wheathampsteadwicommittee@outlook.com
New members always welcome.

Herts and Middx Badger Group

We look after badgers and their habitat across the two counties. We are involved in badger rescues, surveys, monitoring, education, advice, campaigning and upholding the law relating to badgers. Meet 1st Tuesday of the month from 8pm in the Mead Hall in Wheathampstead. Emergency line. 07860 210414
Enquiries. info@hmbadgergroup.org.uk or visit https://hmbadgergroup.org.uk/

Football

Wheathampstead Wanderers was formed in 1990 by a small group of families from the village to promote and support youth football for the benefit of children and young people in Wheathampstead

and surrounding areas. An FA Charter Standard Club, granted in 2008, with around 300 boys and girls playing football.
www.wheathampsteadwanderersfc.co.uk



Horticultural Society

Meets: St. Helen's School, Wheathampstead AL4 8AN. 7.30pm, first Wednesday of the month. A friendly village gardening club welcoming everyone of all ages and enthusiasm- even armchair gardeners! A wide range of speakers [some selling plants], socials, visits to interesting gardens, a Plant Sale on 3rd Sunday in May - all are on the agenda. Affiliated to the R.H.S. Occasional meeting on Zoom. For more information please e mail whortsoc@gmail.com or phone Jill on 01582 460394

Bluebell Memory Cafe

Friendship coffee activities and outings for those living with memory-related conditions and their supporters. 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month, 10.30 to noon at the Mead Hall, East Lane AL4 8BP. Call Isobel Poole, 07949 630228 All Welcome

Brownies and Rainbows

1st Wheathampstead Brownies meets at St. Peter's in Gustard Wood on a Tuesday.
3rd Wheathampstead brownies meet at the Scout Hut on a Thursday.

1st Wheathampstead Rainbows meets at the Scout Hut on a Monday. There are currently spaces available so, if you would like your daughter to join please visit: go.girlguiding.org.uk to register your interest.
One of the leaders in the village will be in touch when a space becomes

Continued on page 31

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Squirrel Drey Tuesday 5:15 to 6:15
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Mead Cub Pack Tuesday 6:30 to 8:00
Delaport Cub Pack Wednesday 6:30 to 8:00
Lamer Scout Troop Friday 7:30 to 9:00
Explorer Scouts Tuesday 8:15 to 10:00
If your child would like a place, please contact:
wl1stwheathampstead@outlook.com

Music and Singing

Introducing the Clover Singing Club, a new concept in ensemble singing for ladies, with emphasis on laughter and relaxation. Try us out - first session free. No need to read music. Sessions are term time on Mondays 1.15-3.15 p.m., Mead Hall, Wheathampstead.

Contact Charlotte 07791 741233.

new skills or refresh old ones through our wide range of interest groups. Enjoy first-rate speakers at monthly meetings in the Memorial Hall and participate in organised outings to places of interest. Find out more at:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/wheathampstead/home>

Wheathampstead History Society

The society meets at 7.15pm, the third Wednesday of each month, in the Mead Hall, East Lane.

It offers a programme of talks promoting local history & heritage, undertakes research projects and encourages and supports members' research. For further information visit our website www.wheathampsteadheritage.org.uk

Wheathampstead Warriors

Your local running club, all abilities welcome!

The best way to find out more about the Warriors is to come and join one of our club runs on a Tuesday or Thursday evening.

Currently all runs need to be booked in advance but please contact us on wheatywarriorsmembership@gmail.com and we'll be able to arrange for you to join us for a run.

More information can be found on our website - <https://wheathampsteadwarriors.co.uk/>

Positive Movement

On-line classes twice per week (term time) via Zoom, Tuesdays at 2pm and Thursday at 10.30. Classes are for those with reduced mobility. Gentle, chair-based exercises to improve Posture, Balance, Strength and Stability. Call Lynn on 07866 168242 to arrange for a trial class.

Wheathampstead Wine Club

Friendly social group that meets on the last Wednesday of the month at 7:30 at the Mead Hall except for July, August and December. You don't need to know anything about wine. Members can learn about the wines that they are sampling and get wine shopping and price advice too from the various tastings and presentations that take place during meetings. If this sounds like your type of social evening, call Alan 07866 953971 or email wiggintonalan@gmail.com or just come along - you will be very welcome!

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Call Primrose Watts on 01582 460092
www.hardyngeschoir.org

Wheathampstead U3A

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