



Great Bardfield Annual Parish Report

May 2026



Report design, layout and sub-editing: Jenny Rooney
Front cover: Primary school trip to Frinton

With grateful thanks to all who contributed photographs to these pages.



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GREAT BARDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Thursday 14th May 2026 – 7.00pm for 7.30pm

Great Bardfield Town Hall

AGENDA

1. Chair's introduction
2. Apologies
3. Simpler recycling June 2026 – are you ready?
4. Parish Council review 2025–26
5. Parish Council financial review 2025–26
6. Essex County Council report
7. Braintree District Council report
8. Great Bardfield Primary School report
9. Charities report and accounts
10. The *Bardfield Times* report and accounts
11. Town Hall report and accounts
12. Pavilion report
13. Closing remarks

The above reports are printed in full in the Annual Report available on the evening together with the reports of other community groups.



Chair's introduction

The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council is an opportunity for your Parish Council to outline its activities and priorities over the previous 12 months. These will be presented by the Vice Chair, Janet Dyson. My role is to introduce this report and the Annual Meeting both of which are enhanced by the contributions made, in person and in writing, from many of the groups, societies and institutions that provide for the community in many different ways; by offering healthcare, education, financial support, sporting and social opportunities. We are most grateful to all of those who have contributed these reports on behalf of many village groups and to those residents who attend the meeting in person.

This report and your contributions to it have been skilfully brought together by Jenny Rooney and I thank her once again for producing a printed report that we can be proud of and which is a true celebration of life in Great Bardfield over the last 12 months (2025/2026). Thanks to Kate Fox for liaising with the various village groups and reminding contributors to submit their reports, and to all those who have provided such marvellous photos of village people and events that remind us of the breadth of services and social activities available to us all.

I would also like to recognise and thank the members of your Parish Council, all of whom are volunteers, who give time and energy freely to ensure that the activities of the Parish Council are undertaken and completed



Cllr Carolynne Ruffle, Chairperson

in an appropriate, cost-conscious and beneficial manner.

We have had a change in personnel over the last year having lost two valuable members of the Council, due to the resignation of Lynsi Hayward-Smith early in 2025, and, very sadly, the death of Paul Kennedy last May. Both gave their time and expertise most willingly to the community and the Council. We were not required to hold an election but followed the co-option process to advertise and interview for the two vacancies. We were very pleased to have applications from five very worthy candidates, and I am pleased to introduce Mark Wells and Richard Winsborough, both of whom have lived in the village for many years and who are now actively contributing to the Council following their appointment last September.

My thanks go to Mark and Richard, and to our longer-serving councillors,



Janet Dyson, Vice-Chair, Iain Graham, Darren Hockley and Peter Walmsley. We all have our strengths and I appreciate all their support and attention to Parish Council matters.

Our appreciation and gratitude for her knowledgeable and enthusiastic support to the Council, go to Kate Fox, who is the Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. Kate is a fully qualified Clerk and has a wealth of experience. She provides us with advice and information to enable us to make proposals and decisions for the benefit of the village, and she provides administrative support and financial governance for the activities of the Council.

Thanks also go to our now retired village handyman, Ian Ruffle, who spent very many years emptying bins, sweeping and clearing paths, repairing benches and generally keeping our village tidy. We were very grateful to John Dennison who stepped forward at Ian's retirement to offer his services and is now our village caretaker. One of his forthcoming projects will be to refurbish the old telephone boxes

We are also grateful to the many residents who give their time voluntarily. In particular, thank you to Mick Gell for his work in maintaining Memorial Green, to Mr and Mrs Skeet for weeding and tidying the village playground and laying new bark, and to all those who generously give their time for unofficial litter-picking or walking our footpaths and reporting back to us on any issues.

The Parish Council also thank the two District Councillors for the Three Fields ward, Michael Staines and Mark Ault. They attend our monthly meetings

and provide their support particularly around planning, highways and public transport issues. We are pleased to work closely with our District Councillors. Their written report is included in this published document, as is the County Councillor's report provided by Graham Butland for the last time, as he has recently stepped down as our County Councillor. We thank Graham for attending our meetings, providing support to the Parish Council and residents of Great Bardfield for very many years. We wish him a long and enjoyable retirement from the County Council.

Finally, I want to thank all community members who quietly help others, whether by collecting medication, shopping, giving lifts, keeping churchyards tidy, or organizing and attending village events. Many acts of kindness go unseen but are vital; a community thrives through the care of its people.

Carolynne Ruffle Chairperson



*Vice Chair
Janet
Dyson
presenting
Ian Ruffle
with his
award
for services
to the
village*



Neighbourhood Plan update 2026



We are pleased that the Great Bardfield Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is now in the last steps prior to being accepted and lodged with Braintree District Council (BDC) as a legal document which will become a vital part of the planning process when applications for development in the village are considered by the planning authority.

BDC undertook the final consultation process in December 2025 – January 2026 and have now appointed an independent examiner under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. Once the examination is completed, a referendum of the local community

will be arranged by BDC, to ensure agreement with the Plan.

None of this could have been achieved without the Great Bardfield Neighbourhood Plan team which comprises local volunteers, with support and advice from expert consultants. Thanks go particularly to the current team Andrew Collins, Jonathan Davies, Janet Dyson, Kate Fox, Carolynne Ruffle and Richard Winsborough for their continued attention, enthusiasm and support in drawing this extensive process towards its completion.

Carolynne Ruffle
Chair, Neighbourhood Plan Team



Views taken from our beautiful village



Great Bardfield Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Meeting held 15th May 2025

1. Chair's introduction

Cllr Ruffle, Chair of the Parish Council, welcomed members of the public including representatives of many village organisations, whose reports were given during the meeting. She also welcomed our District Councillors, Michael Staines and Mark Ault and guest speaker Roy Evans of the Fire Service.

She presented the 2024-25 Annual Report which gave an overview of the work of the Parish Council and said this was an opportunity to thank her fellow councillors and others who contribute to the life of the village. She particularly emphasised the Parish Council's thanks to those on the Pavilion working party, Cllrs Hockley, Graham, Kennedy and Walmsley plus two residents, John Maidman and Andrew Taylor, whose time, skills and experience were invaluable in bringing the project to completion. Among others the Chair wished to thank was Kate Fox, the Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, for her support and advice, the village handyman, Ian Ruffle, who undertakes many jobs around the village, and Mick Gell for taking such great care of the Memorial Green. She especially wished to thank Jenny Rooney for her design and editing skills to put together the annual report which is a very impressive document reflecting the life of the village

The Parish Council was sad to

receive the resignation of Lynsi Hayward-Smith, a valued councillor who brought much experience to the role and more recently the resignation of Paul Kennedy who will resign on ill health grounds with effect from 9th June. Paul has made an invaluable contribution to the village in the ten years he has been a councillor. The co-option process for two new councillors will commence in June.

On a more positive note, to mark the completion of the pavilion project, there will be a celebration on 1st June, with a village fete on the playingfields.

2. Apologies

These were received from Cllr Butland, Cllr Kennedy, Jackie and Norman Newton, Jenny Rooney, Simon Walsh, and Jane Tillotson. The Chair introduced our guest speaker, Roy Evans, who is the Community Safety Officer for Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. He gave a very interesting and informative talk on fire safety and prevention.

3. Parish Council review 2024-25:

The Vice Chair, Cllr Janet Dyson highlighted a few aspects of the work of the Parish Council over the last year; full details of which could be found in the Annual Report. As a statutory consultee the Council reviewed 30 planning applications referred by the District Council which were mainly for small-scale extensions and works within the historic conservation area. Twenty-one tree work applications were assessed by the tree Warden, Simon Walsh.

Cllr Dyson reported on the collaborative work with neighbouring parishes concerning the running of the Wethersfield Asylum Centre and its long-term future. Similarly, the matter of poor public transport is a shared problem and the Council continues to lobby for an improved provision. It was unfortunate that the proposed improvements to the Quiet Space could not be pursued due to the increased marshiness of the site although some trees that were planted will remain. Pipers Meadow is under careful stewardship guided by Dr Doug Joyce and newly planted trees were kept well watered by Ian Ruffle. In April, 20



volunteers of all ages donned hi-vis jackets and picked up litter, trimmed overhanging bramble and weeded overgrown areas.

Highways and transport, as previously mentioned, continue to pose a challenge, particularly regarding parking congestion and speeding. The deteriorating condition of roads and pavements is a pressing concern and of course the Council lobbies continuously. The No.9 bus service to Braintree was discontinued and the introduction of the DigiGo service has not proved a satisfactory replacement.

In conclusion, as well as thanking the other Council members, ably supported by the Clerk, she wished to record the hard work and leadership of the Chair and, as stated by Cllr Ruffle, acknowledge all those who give their time for the benefit of the parish.

4. Parish Council financial review 2024-25:

The Clerk presented a brief report highlighting key items of income and expenditure for the year (further details of which are contained in the Minutes available on the Parish Council website: www.greatbardfield-pc.gov.uk). The bar charts in the report provided an accessible overview of key areas of expenditure.

Parish income: The annual Precept was the most significant part of the income which for 2024/25 was £51,000. The 106 funds for the pavilion project have been fully utilised but donations continued to be received from residents which were gratefully received and a very successful firework event raised a further £815. Additional income was derived from the ECC verge cutting allowance, the BDC street cleaning grant scheme and the District Councillors' Community Grant of £500 enabled the purchase of bench seating at the new pavilion.

Parish expenditure: The completion of the pavilion building resulted in expenditure of £65,024, from earmarked funds. This sum included completion of the car park, drainage works and internal fixtures. The generous donation of labour and machinery provided by Murphys and BPH Rail enabled the completion of the car park. The Parish Council is responsible for some key services and costs continue to increase in these areas, including salaries, street lighting, ground maintenance and insurance.

Precept: For the 2025-26 year, mindful of the negative impact of the cost-of-living increases, the Council were able to submit a Precept that resulted in a charge in the parish element of the rates of just +3.9% or £2.25 per household per year (£4.99 in 24/25). A balance has to be drawn between keeping the parish rate as low as possible while still being able to undertake key services for which it is responsible.

5. Braintree District Council report:

Cllr Staines presented this – the full report is published in the Annual Report – and a few key points were highlighted, including the local plan, devolution, concerns around highways and rural road safety, lack of transport servicing our villages and the use of DigiGo. Liaison continues with the various agencies and our MP regarding the existing and continued use of Wethersfield Airbase. Both Councillors offered to discuss any particular points at the end of the meeting.

6. Essex County Council report:

Cllr Butland was unable to attend the meeting but his full report is published in the Annual Report.

7. Town Hall report:

This was presented by John Maidman, Chair of the Town Hall Committee who outlined the significance of the building to many community groups and those further afield. The Committee organised many fund-raising events over the year raising £4,117 – the biggest fundraiser being the annual Art Show with other contributions coming from the village Boules Competition.

He acknowledged Katie Parker's retirement from the role of secretary after 25 years of tireless service;



fortunately Amy Wright – a new member of the Committee, along with her husband Chris – will be taking over. Sheila Keynton also stood down during the year but will continue to work alongside her husband Peter who organises with Art Show with Katrina Ralston. He thanked Patricia Walsh for her work as Treasurer – and so much more – who has agreed to stay for another year. In conclusion he said how grateful the Town Hall Committee was to the community of Great Bardfield for their continued support of fund-raising events, and to Sarah Hymas, the caretaker.

8. Great Bardfield Charities report and accounts:

Pat Coles, Chair of the Charities, presented the report and introduced two of the Trustees present, Annie Woodcock and Mick Gell. She highlighted areas in which help had been given – hospital travel, contributions for fuel payments, educational needs and so on. She emphasised the need to spread the word that the Charities consider applications for financial support from across the parish – not just the elderly or sick. She welcomed a new Trustee – Cathy Stuttle – who will formally join the Charity at the June meeting. Another significant matter is the Cottage Museum which is now closed as it is no longer financially viable. A decision as to its future is still to be made.

Financial summary 24/25 financial year: Income £23,027.13, Expenditure £18,498.85. A more detailed report is available in the Annual Report.

9. The Bardfield Times report and accounts:

The editor, Janet Dyson, first thanked

the *BT* Team; Joe Jones whose skills enabled the magazine to be put together for printing; Ray Coles and his team of volunteer distributors who deliver 800 copies in all weathers to Great and Little Bardfield; Kate Fox who looks after the advertising that generates funds and Jackie Newton who manages those funds. Janet said how important the regular contributors are to the life of the *BT* and photographs are always appreciated. Topics covered range from gardening and nature to local history and news from the Parish Council and village organisations such as our excellent primary school.

Finance: Ray Coles spoke of the need for more funds to address the increased cost in publishing which in 2024-25 was £10,175. Income came mainly from advertising revenue and the Cinema Club but one could not simply increase advertising rates as the *BT* needed to be competitive with other local publications.

10 Great Bardfield Primary School report:

This was presented by Cllr Dyson, who is also a School Governor, and she began by highlighting the school's core principles of Courage, Compassion and Community. The Headteacher, Mrs Crow, and her staff have much to be proud of in what they have achieved both educationally and socially with a key priority to encourage children to develop an active lifestyle.

There is a very supportive PTA which achieves so much in regard to the profile of the school and fund-raising. Cllr Dyson encouraged residents to read the full published report, which covers the school year, and illustrates just how active the school is in all aspects of a child's development.

11. Closing remarks

The Chair thanked those attending especially the District Councillors and guest speaker who offered to remain after the meeting to discuss any particular queries.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.25pm.

Kate Fox
Parish Clerk



Parish Council review 2025-2026

The members of our Parish Council are: Carolynne Ruffle, Chair, Janet Dyson, Vice-Chair, Iain Graham, Darren Hockley, Peter Walmsley, Mark Wells and Richard Winsborough. Following the resignation of Lynsi Hayward Smith and the death of Paul Kennedy, Mark Wells and Richard Winsborough were co-opted. Parish Councillors serve in a voluntary capacity. We value the support of our experienced Clerk, Mrs Kate Fox. The Council met monthly throughout the year with the exception of August when the Finance Committee convened to deal with any outstanding financial matters.

As a statutory consultee, the Council has reviewed a range of planning applications referred by Braintree District Council. These were mainly for small-scale extensions and works within the historic Conservation Area. We also received applications for tree work in the Conservation Area mostly for the maintenance or reduction of overgrown and shading trees. These were assessed by village Tree Warden, Simon Walsh.

A highlight of the year was the completion of the new Pavilion at the playing field which was formally opened in June by Mary Slemmings, with a Summer Fun Day celebrated by villagers of all ages. It was very rewarding to see many years of work come to fruition and we thank those who have worked so hard on this project which has resulted in an excellent facility for the community, particularly Paul Kennedy, Iain Graham, Darren Hockley, John Maidman, Andrew Taylor and Kate Fox. We also thank those who have given financial support and provided their labour and resources free of charge.

After several years of work by a small group of volunteers supported by a professional consultant, the Neighbourhood Plan is now in its final stages and will be out for referendum shortly.

We recently carried out a Housing Needs Survey with the support of the Rural Community Council of Essex. The results of this survey will inform the Parish Council of the views of residents on a possible small-scale development of affordable housing for



Cllr Janet Dyson, Vice Chair

those with a local link to the village.

The Parish Council works in cooperation with District and County Councillors on issues such as transport and highways. We have again emphasised the need to improve bus services. Digi Go is not a satisfactory replacement for a regular bus service to Braintree and the chance of a bus service to Dunmow becomes increasingly unlikely. The state of our roads and pavements continues to be an issue although some recent long overdue repairs have been made in the High Street/Dunmow Road. These were done as a result of the Parish Council lobbying the ECC Highways Department and inviting the Cabinet member for Highways to visit and view the dangerous pavements in our village. It is frustrating but we will



Cllr Ruffle speaking at the opening of the new Pavilion on June 1st 2025



continue to push for work to be done in other areas which we consider to be just as bad.

The Parish Council owns the historic Grade II listed fountain in Brook Street. The fountain is fed by a stream which rises in the field behind the churchyard. Recent problems with the water supply were the result of a large and very long tree root which had found its way into the pipework and cracked a short length of pipe. This has been repaired and the water continues to flow. An ongoing programme of maintenance of the pipe and the fountain itself, which is an important heritage feature of our village, has been agreed by the Parish Council. Many people drink the water from the fountain, however, the water is regularly tested and advice is that it should be boiled before drinking.

Exploring our historic fountain

Led by Cllr Walmsley, the Council has carried out an audit of all village assets from the fountain and the street lights to the seats and dog waste bins. All have been photographed

and a digital record has been created providing a valuable record.

The Council continues to liaise with neighbouring parishes and the Home Office concerning the running of the Wethersfield Asylum Centre and its impact locally, and also on the long-term future of the former Wethersfield Airfield.

Parish Council activities are reported monthly in the *Bardfield Times* and shared on the Community Facebook page. All monthly meetings are open to the public and begin with a Public Forum where residents may raise concerns and ask questions. The Community Information Point staffed by Cllr Iain Graham is open on Thursday and Saturday mornings from 10-12 noon for dog waste bags, or simply a friendly chat.

**Janet Dyson
Vice-Chair**





Parish Council financial review

For the year ended 31st March 2026

This brief report highlights key items of income and expenditure for the year, further details of which are contained in the Minutes available to view on the Parish Council website www.greatbardfield-pc.gov.uk. Also available on the website are the Annual Audited Accounts published following approval by the external auditor.

Parish income: The annual Precept is the most significant part of our income which in the 25/26 financial year was £53,500. With all Section 106 monies having been utilised with the completion of the Community Pavilion, which was officially opened in June 2025, there are very few additional sources of funding. We do receive a small grant from Essex County Council towards the cost of verge cutting and from BDC to help with the cost of street cleaning which includes emptying of street bins, litter picks and general maintenance of outside spaces.

Parish expenditure: In contrast to the 24/25 financial year, the pavilion project has wound down with minimal expenditure. However, there are always unexpected challenges and this year there was the additional security for the playingfields and the damage to pipework supplying the fountain that had to be repaired. Street lighting supply and maintenance has increased considerably over the last few years which includes the replacement of older out of date lamps with LED fittings. The Parish Council continues

to support the annual firework event and, once costs are covered, any profit is shared amongst participating groups without whom it just would not happen.

Precept: For the 26/27 year, mindful of the negative impact of the cost-of-living increases on the residents, the Council has endeavoured to keep any increase to a minimum, whilst ensuring it can undertake the key services for which it is responsible and maintain reserves for emergencies and unexpected expenditure. This has resulted in a charge in the parish element of +4.2% or £3.60 per household per year.

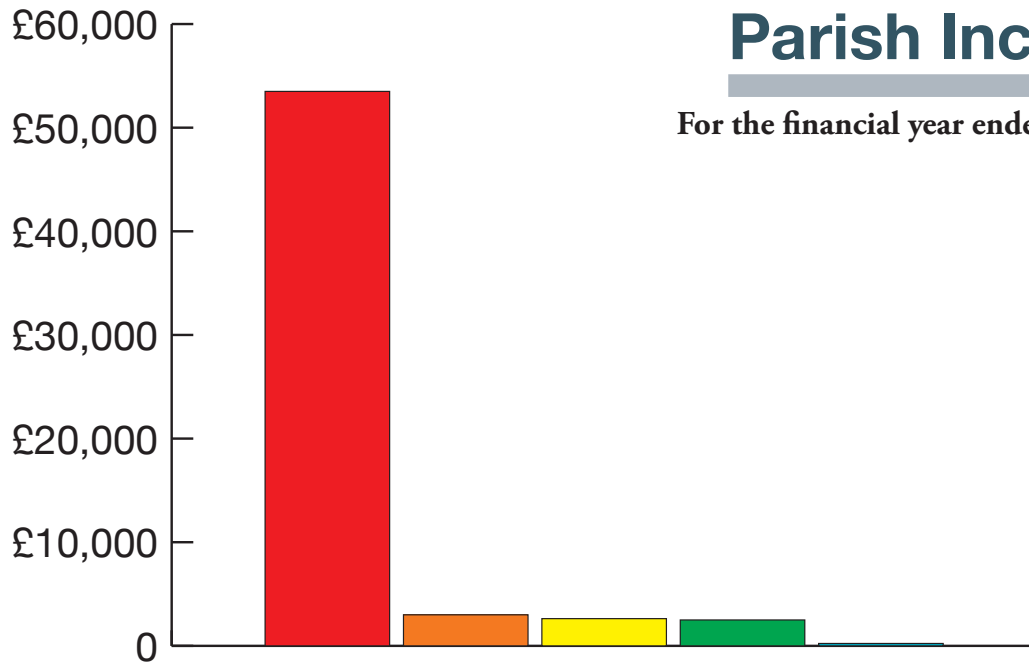
Overview: Annual Accounts – the external auditor was satisfied with the transparency and management of the Council's financial reporting and the reserves held for special projects. The Annual Audited Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025 were approved without reservation by PFK Littlejohn, the appointed auditor and published on the Parish Council's website at www.greatbardfield-pc.gov.uk.

Kate Fox
Responsible Financial Officer



Parish Income

For the financial year ended 31.3.26

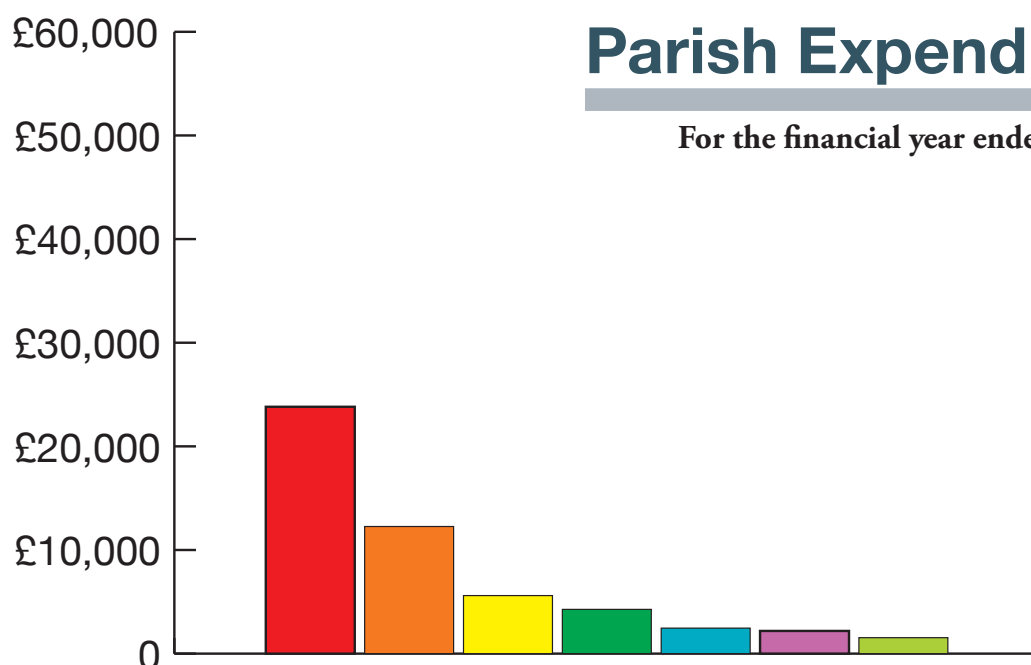


■	Parish precept	£53,500.00
■	VAT refund	£2,995.49
■	Verge cutting/village cleaning grant	£2,626.74
■	Firework event	£2,500.00
■	Sundries/training bursary/substation rental	£230.93
	Total	£61,853.16
Bank account balances as at 31.3.26		
	General reserves	£70,641.29
	Special projects account	£21,892.03
	Current account	£680.83
	Total	£93,214.15



Parish Expenditure

For the financial year ended 31.3.26



Village amenities	
Public lighting – supply and maintenance	£6,205.00
Grass cutting, Memorial green, and other open spaces	£4,290.00
Playground refurbishment, maintenance and utilities	£3,457.00
Pavilion	£3,316.00
Verge cutting/street cleaning (agency arrangements)	£2,917.00
Town Hall grant and substation rental	£2,108.00
CIP: Town Hall rent/BT/copier	£1,525.00
Sub total	£23,818.00
Staff/sundry expenses	
Salary, website, training, defib supplies, dog bags, fountain repairs	£12,267.00
General admin: telephone, audit fee, tax, insurance, stationery, subscriptions, election	£5,601.00
VAT	£4,271.00
Insurance	£2,462.00
Neighbourhood plan	£2,190.00
Fountain	£1,540.00
Sub total	£28,331.00
Total	£52,149.00



Braintree District Council



Cllr Mark Ault
Email: cldr.mault@braintree.gov.uk
Mobile: 07903 744481



Cllr Michael Staines
Email: cldr.mstaines@braintree.gov.uk
Mobile: 07922 487966

Dear Residents
We are very fortunate to work with such a dynamic Parish Council as Great Bardfield and the residents of this parish. We clearly see the benefits and strongly support the independent role of Parish Councils in the makeup of the new Unitary Authority.

In the District remit we have continued to support work on waste collection (bins) and the Local Plan Review including robust scrutiny of the big site approach and what lurks behind the preferred sites (and could form Plan B: West of Braintree).

We have also worked together to inform and direct Essex Highways to improve their scheme for the Deer Park View entrance – resulting in repeated co-ordinated formal objections.

More time than ever has been spent on County matters this year – which will stand us in good stead as

the new Unitary remit that will cover both current District and County responsibilities.

While some progress has been made on improving footways and road lines – more is required – especially in Bridge Street (B1057) – which is a key entry point to Great Bardfield from Finchingfield and has been blighted by bashed cones and a disintegrating road surface for too long.

The £50K Love My Bus grant funding from ECC to fund ECC's own DigiGo service in the North Zone is addressing service availability Monday to Friday 2–7pm. We successfully pushed back on a proposal to cut the North Zone area and lose direct links with Dunmow. Getting the £1m S106 for Public Transport from Panfield's Towerlands to underpin and improve the North Zone services in the medium to long term remains our goal.



Great Bardfield and six other Parish Councils participated in our Vehicle Activated Sign workshop in March looking at how parishes in Three Fields can co-ordinate collecting data to independently monitor traffic volumes and speeds – providing valuable insight to police enforcement and inform and direct Highways re future traffic calming/speed management opportunities.

The UK government has included Braintree with Tendring and Colchester in a new Unitary called North East Essex – but representation and governance details are still very sketchy, and we fear decisions affecting this area will be devolved away from us.

We are opposed to the introduction of a Regional Mayor over all five Unitary Authorities and have suggested that ECC withdraw from this UK Government Priority Programme until infrastructure funding and planning support and a lower housing target is conceded.

The County elections postponed in 2025 will now take place in May 2026 (but thankfully without the Mayoral election). This election will bring a new cohort of County Councillors to County Hall and offer a small time window to course-correct the preceding administration to engage more robustly with UK Government and Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government.

We remain committed to finding, bringing and sharing the best initiatives to rural North Essex to deliver better outcomes for its residents.

Our vision remains clear – and underpins all our efforts.

- We will build good homes for local



people based on real need not an arbitrary Westminster target.

- Communities will be supported to thrive – for all generations – enabled by reliable and affordable Public Transport and services.
- We will utilise our unique strengths and international attractiveness to sustain and grow our local economy with visitors and tourism – especially when global travel is restricted.
- We will make your voices heard in whatever shape local government takes.
- We will always put YOU and Great Bardfield before party politics.

**Councillors Ault and Staines
Braintree District Council**



Essex County Council



County Councillor Graham Butland

I have pleasure in submitting my final Annual Report to the residents of Great Bardfield Parish on the work of Essex County Council (ECC).

I have had the honour to be your elected representative on the County Council since May 2017. I have now decided to stand down and my successor will be elected on Thursday 7th May. This will be the last elections to the current County Council as the Government is reorganising local government in England.

For Essex this will mean that the existing 15 Councils will be replaced by five 'Unitary Authorities'. In future all local services in an area will be provided by one council and not split between councils as they are at present. The proposed new unitary council of North East Essex will cover the existing Braintree District together with that of Colchester City Council and Tendring District Council.

Elections to these new councils will be held in May 2027 and they will formally takeover responsibility from the existing ones on 1st April 2028.

In February 2026, the Council approved its budget for this year. It will spend over £2 billion to support vulnerable residents, improve infrastructure, and boost the local economy.

The key areas of expenditure will be:

- Adult social care and health: supporting vulnerable adults – £896.7 million
- Education and skills: funding education excellence, lifelong learning, and employability initiatives – £853.3 million
- Children's services and early years: providing support services for families – £268.5 million
- Highways and transportation – £172.9 million
- Environment and waste: focussing on waste reduction, recycling, and climate change initiatives – £93 million
- Public health: providing community health services – £75.6 million
- Other services such as libraries, country parks, and registrars – £370.6 million.

Finally, over the last nine years I have worked closely with your Parish Council on a number of issues. I would like to pay tribute to the members of the Parish Council and their clerk, Kate Fox, for their dedicated work for Great Bardfield.

**County Councillor Graham Butland
Member for Three Fields with
Great Notley County Division**



Great Bardfield Pavilion



The new Pavilion opened in June 2025

You will be relieved to know that I am happy to report that for once, I am not writing to you to demand money with menaces on behalf of the Pavilion committee!

It is time to say a very big thank you to everyone who has supported and helped the development of the Pavilion project since it started in earnest about four years ago. We celebrated the completion of the new Pavilion with a formal opening in June by Cllr Ruffle during a Summer Fun Day at the Pavilion celebrated by villagers of all ages. Mary Slemmings, whose late husband Steve conceived the idea of a Sports Pavilion many years ago, cut the ribbon. The pavilion is now up and running and attracting a lot of interest from various groups looking for a suitable venue for their activities with good amenities and plenty of easy parking.

Should anyone have an interest in viewing the Pavilion and its facilities simply ring our caretaker



Families enjoying the Summer Fun Day at the Pavilion

Lily on 07808 079877 and she will be pleased to show you around.

We have two events happening at the Pavilion soon which you might want to come along to – a good way to see exactly what the building can offer. On Saturday May 9th at the Pavilion we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the formation of Bardfield Brass, Bardfield's very own brass band with a free open-air concert of traditional brass band music along with music from West End shows, and other favourites. We will be joined by the Bardfield Community Choir. Just bring along something to sit on and perhaps some refreshments and have a great afternoon.

Also, on June 7th we shall once again be presenting a village fete with all the traditional favourites. There will be a bar, a BBQ, children's games (courtesy of Forbesy Camps), a classic car show and much more.

Look forward to seeing you there.

Iain Graham
On behalf of the
Pavilion Committee



Mary Slemmings cutting the ribbon



Bardfield Cinema Club

We are currently half way through our 17th season of presenting films in the Town Hall, and are pleased to continue welcoming our loyal audience from Bardfield and the surrounding villages who join us to enjoy a varied programme of film entertainment.

Membership remains steady, and it's encouraging to see that many regular attendees come from neighbouring villages too – highlighting a continued need and enthusiasm for local cinema in our rural area.

Our new projector and wall-mounted screen have given our presentations a more professional and enjoyable viewing experience compared to the old setup. However, acoustics in the Town Hall continue to pose a challenge – particularly when films include strong accents, fast dialogue, or for those with lower hearing. In response, we've been trialling subtitles at recent screenings and are monitoring audience feedback closely.

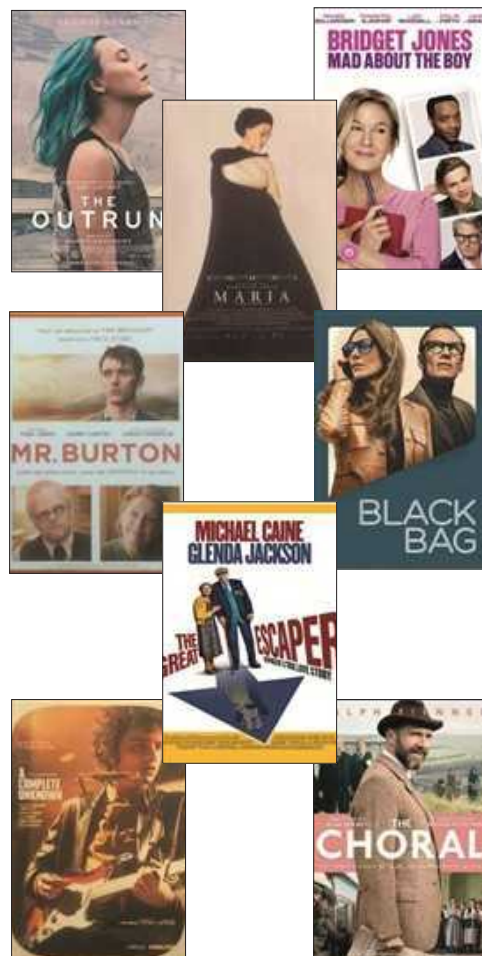
All profits from the Cinema Club go directly to support the *Bardfield Times*. Our largest expense remains the film licence, which allows us to legally screen films to a paying audience. Refreshments and hall hire form a smaller portion of our costs. The net profit contributes to the running of the village magazine and, where possible, supports donation requests from local societies and initiatives.

Thanks are due to our small team of helpers, particularly to Jackie Newton for all she does on the administration side; to Cathy Stuttle who now shares

the general running of the club, including film selection and presenting the evening to our audiences, and to all those who set up the hall and kitchen and clear up afterwards. A great team effort.

We look forward to welcoming you to the remaining film nights of the season. Details of upcoming screenings are published in the *Bardfield Times*, on the Community Facebook Page, and on posters around the village.

Ray Coles



A selection of some of the films shown over the past year



Town Hall report

Great Bardfield has a strong and vibrant community, and the Town Hall is at its heart. Our historic building stands as a symbol of tradition, hosting a variety of events that bring people together and providing a venue for gatherings, performances and celebrations. Regular village clubs using the Hall include the Bardfield Community Choir, the Bardfield Players, the Tuesday Club, the Horticultural Society, Cinema Club, the Historical Society and the Parish Council together with Pilates and Alison Burkert's exercise classes. With its rich heritage, the Town Hall reflects the past while continuing to adapt to the needs of the future.

During the past year, the Town Hall Management Committee organised several fundraising events raising a total of £4,292. These events included the Art Show, the BBQ for the Boules Final, the Craft Fair and most recently the Quiz night in March. The village Boules Competition, organised by Madame Boules, has also contributed further funds. All money raised goes into the upkeep and maintenance of the Town Hall, and this year we have completed the renovation of the back stage toilet, installed electric hand dryers in all the toilets, repainted the chair store area and insulated the roof of the Caretaker's cottage.

The Art Show last May was again a great success and we are extremely grateful to Katrina Ralston and Peter and Sheila Keynton for organising this event. They have been involved with the Art Show for the past nine years, but if anyone else would be interested in helping out with the organisation and running of the Art Show in the future, please email: bardfield.art.show@gmail.com. This year's Art Show will be held on Sunday 24th and Monday 25th May. The committee and volunteers will be serving lunch and afternoon teas, so we look forward to seeing you.

Last summer, we launched our website www.greatbardfieldtownhall.com. It was set up and is maintained by committee member Paul Boon, and we are very grateful to him for his technical expertise. He plans to teach other committee members how

to upload material and to keep the website updated.

Paul has also recently upgraded our audio visual equipment, making it much easier for hirers to use. Full instructions are provided and all leads are labelled. The electric screen and projector, which were installed at the end of 2023, have proved to be a real asset and are in regular use by several village groups. In fact, it is difficult to imagine managing without them!

We have looked into installing a disabled toilet, but unfortunately, we have come to the conclusion that there is simply not sufficient space to comply with the Government's current regulations. However, we are hoping to improve the disabled access to the Town Hall by installing a ramp leading up to the main entrance.

At the time of writing, we are very much looking forward to "An Audience with Henry VIII," a light-hearted review of his life and wives on 25th April. This will be a new venture for us and we are hoping that the evening will be a great success. As Great Bardfield has links to Henry VIII through the Anne of Cleves Barn at Great Lodge, this could be a very interesting evening!

Finally, we would like to thank the many volunteers who help out at our events, members of the Town Hall committee for their continued commitment, and a special thanks to Sarah Hymas, our Bookings Clerk and caretaker for her invaluable service.

Patricia Walsh
Treasurer

John Maidman
Chairman



Great Bardfield Charities

I am pleased to present this report on behalf of The Great Bardfield Charities, covering the twelve months from May 2025 to April 2026.

In June 2025 I took over as Chair of Great Bardfield Charities, having previously served as Secretary. I'm honoured to be stepping into the role of Chair, and I do so with a deep sense of gratitude and responsibility.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our outgoing Chair, Pat Coles, for her remarkable hard work, unwavering dedication, and the passion she has brought to the charity over the years. I'm incredibly grateful that she will continue to share her experience and wisdom, staying as a valued member of our committee.

Over the past year, the Trustees held four scheduled quarterly meetings to review and assess all applications for financial support received from within our community. In addition, we held two extraordinary meetings focused on the future management of the Cottage Museum. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my fellow Trustees for their ongoing commitment to the careful administration of the Charity and its funds.

Raising awareness in the community.

We continue to work to raise awareness of the Charity and its purpose. Information is regularly shared via village noticeboards, the Community Information Point, the *Bardfield Times*, the Parish Council website, and the Great Bardfield Charities Facebook page. However, it is clear that many residents remain unaware that the

Charity exists – or that it can offer financial support in times of need. We therefore encourage everyone in the village to consider whether friends, neighbours, or family members may benefit from support but are unaware of the Charity or are unable to apply themselves. Trustees are happy to offer guidance on how to make an application.

A growing need: This year, we have seen an increase in applications from individuals and families experiencing financial hardship – an unfortunate reflection of the ongoing economic climate. The Trustees remain committed to considering each request with care and fairness, while continuing to manage the Charity's resources responsibly.

Meetings and applications: Our regular quarterly meetings take place in March, June, September, and December. Dates are announced in the *Bardfield Times* and on the Bardfield Online Community Facebook page in the month prior. In urgent cases, applications can be considered between meetings. Trustees will reply to all applicants.

Grant-making and oversight: Great Bardfield Charities operates under a formal Scheme regulated by the Charity Commission, which sets out the terms under which our funds may be allocated. Examples of grants awarded over the past year include:

- Fuel payments for residents in receipt of pensions or disability benefits or those in financial hardship
- Social needs.
- Health-related expenses, including paramedical services.
- Educational assistance, supporting school curricular and extra-curricular activities, student travel and school trips, local school transport, equipment and books for university students and apprentices.
- Village support, groups, clubs, and societies.

Each application is considered individually and confidentially, based on its merits at the time. While



we strive to help as many applicants as possible, our support is necessarily limited by the funds available and the volume of applications received.

The Cottage Museum: In addition to our grant-giving work, Trustees have been engaged in ongoing discussions with the Great Bardfield Historical Society about the future of the Cottage Museum. This historic almshouse is owned by the Charity, and used to be leased to the Historical Society. The Historical Society has decided not to continue with the lease, and so we have been exploring other options for the future of the building. Having had discussions with a local village group we are offering the Cottage on the open market.

Acknowledging our benefactors. As always, we are mindful of the generosity of our benefactors. It is through their legacy that we are able to offer support to residents and organisations within the parish of Great Bardfield today.

Financial Summary: April 2025 – March 2026

- Income including bank interest: £26,212.26
- Total Expenditure: £25,951.78

Note: Figures are unaudited at the time of writing. Any imbalance reflects the quarterly income schedule beginning in May each financial year.

All grant applications are considered carefully and without prejudice. Individuals and organisations are welcome to contact any Trustee for guidance or support in submitting an application.

The charity accounts are audited yearly by Mr Bill Mules and we thank him for his continued professional support.

This report, together with the audited accounts, is lodged with the Clerk to the Parish Council.

Nick Holland
Chair of Great Bardfield Charities

The Charities Committee is accountable to the Great Bardfield Parish Council, and the administering officers are as follows:

Reverend Alex Shannon – Ex-Officio Trustee

Nick Holland – Nominative Trustee and Chair

33, Bendlowes Road, Great Bardfield 01371 810209

Pat Coles – Co-opted Trustee

Linseys, Bridge Street, Gt Bardfield 01371 810995

Mick Gell – Nominative Trustee and Treasurer

3, Mill Close, Gt Bardfield 01371 810113

Annika Woodcock – Co-opted Trustee

Yew Tree Cottage, Dunmow Rd, Gt Bardfield 07900 491636

Cathy Stuttle – Co-opted Trustee and Secretary

Manton Cottage, Bridge End, Great Bardfield 07711 880965



The Bardfield Times

There have been some changes this year. In the summer we were sad to lose Joe Jones, our excellent layout designer of many years. Joe has moved away from the village and we wish her well in her new life. We were very fortunate that an appeal for a successor prompted a swift response from Helen McGlynn who has taken on the role seamlessly – we are delighted to welcome her to the *BT* team.

It's very pleasing to report that, in these days of instant social media messaging, people clearly still value their village magazines and notices of forthcoming events and reports from the many village groups fill the pages very quickly. There is also demand for the paid advertising space which is ably managed by Kate Fox, bringing in the essential income which allows the magazine to function.

We have a loyal group of regular contributors who produce copy every month on a range of interesting topics – I must mention Mac Beanland's Nature Notes, our delightfully eccentric 'Greenfingers', and the recent series of Wartime Memories by Peter Morris. Village Archivist, Jenny Rooney adds interesting historical information and photographs from the archive and, despite her busy life, Headteacher Liz Crow keeps us in touch with the happenings at our wonderful village school.

We have introduced some new features recently including a series on Artists of Great Bardfield past and present, and Helen has revived Village People – it's always good to learn

more about our fellow villagers. All our writers are contributing to the social history of our village.

Finally, a big 'thank you' to the *BT* distribution team led by Ray Coles. We have lost Anna Bass and Paul Eusden as both have moved from the village after many years delivering the *BT* and we've welcomed Mike Brown. Thanks to everyone who works so hard to make the *Bardfield Times* a success.

Janet Dyson
Editor

The Bardfield Times		
Statement of Account for Year Ending 31st March 2026		
	2025–2026	2024–2025
Opening balance	-£2,343.78	-£1,291.74
Income		
Advertising	7,071.00	7,269.00
Subs/Sales	96.75	87.00
Fundraising/Cinema	1,691.45	2,358.35
	£8,859.20	£9,714.35
Expenditure		
Printing	8,405.00	10,175.00
Stationery	18.95	22.25
Postage	205.99	226.20
Cinema	1,560.99	1,499.68
Donations	100	135.00
	£10,290.93	£12,058.13
Closing Balance	-£1,431.73	-£2,343.78
Current A/c:	£ 1,654.32	
Savings A/c:	£ 1,058.87	
Cash in hand:	£ 50.00	

Jackie Newton
Honorary Treasurer



Bardfield Community Choir



The choir singing at Wethersfield charity concert

The choir has had an excellent year. We have 50 members who range from teenage to 90+ and sing a wide repertoire of music from classical to jazz and pop. Something for everyone.

Our concerts this year have included a Summer Concert in St Mary's Church alongside local choir Heartsong, and with solos from young musicians Thomas and Beatrice Shannon on violin and cello respectively. In November we joined with other singers and performers in a concert in Wethersfield which raised over £3,000 for the Creamer Fund.

Christmas is always a busy time for choirs and Bardfield Town Hall was packed for the traditional evening of carols, Christmas music and readings performed by the choir, Bardfield Brass and the Bardfield handbell ringers with some lusty audience participation. We also sang at the joint Anglican and Catholic Service of Lessons and Carols including the beautiful carol 'Bethlehem Down' by Peter Warlock.

A small group from the choir sing an anthem in St Mary's church on the third Sunday each month adding a new dimension to our repertoire. We also provide music for weddings and funerals and were delighted to sing at the marriage of one of our basses, Gary, to Jan in July. We were honoured to sing 'Hallelujah' by Leonard Cohen at the recent funeral of Paul Kennedy.

For the last eight years we have been extremely fortunate to have Avril Nelson as our brilliant accompanist. Sadly, Avril has retired and is greatly

missed. I'm very grateful to Rev Alex Shannon who has temporarily deserted his role as tenor to help with accompanying this term and we are very pleased that Andrew Beaton, local church organist, has now agreed to take on the role. We look forward to working with him.

The choir meets every Tuesday from 8-9.15pm in the Town Hall. New members are welcome – you don't need to be able to read music and there are no auditions.

Contact drjanetdyson@gmail.com for further information.

Janet Dyson
Musical Director



Thomas playing at our summer concert



Beatrice and cello at the summer concert





Great Bardfield in Pictures

Top row: GBHS visit to Ickworth House, Sandi Toksvig and Raksha Dave interviewing Peter Morris, 'Jaws' Scarecrow team. Next row: Landscape Artist of the Year contestants, Bardfield Brass fooling around, Rev Alex at the Benefice retreat, Clare Priory. Next row: KS2 Bikeability challenge at Primary School, the Quaker garden, our litter men, Benefice retreat attendees. Bottom row: 'Gingerbread Man' winner of Scarecrow competition, Annual Art Show, Pre-School Sip and Spud Quiz night.





Bardfield Horticultural Society

Our society got off to a flying start in 2025 with an interesting talk from Rosy Hardy titled *From Back Yard to Chelsea Gold*. A really good speaker who talked about her 35 years in gardening and the complications, hard work and rewards of entering and winning Chelsea gold medals. She also had plants for us to purchase. Another bonus for us all!

March was our Spring Show. Always a fantastic day made possible by our committee and public support. A very special event every year.

In April several of our members went on a visit to the garden and house of Cedric Morris in Benton End.

A garden renovation in the early stages. This was a unique opportunity for us.

May was our Garden Fiesta. Lots of support and masses of plants etc for sale.

Our second garden visit is a particular favourite of mine in Lindsell. Those who came enjoyed wild flower meadows, orchids, pond and lovely borders, plus a vegetable garden to die for! Huge amounts of home-made cakes and tea. A wonderful afternoon as always.

A few of our members went on a visit to the rose fields in Wethersfield and had a great evening. We hope to repeat this visit in 2026 for all who missed it.

Another show in August followed. A superb effort, and results. Thanks to everyone involved. We had the most visitors ever recorded in the afternoon which goes to show how much these events are appreciated.



Benton End visit – a beautiful house



A well-attended garden fiesta



Children's work at the Spring Show



Floral Art day – some lovely winter arrangements



A busy summer show 2025



2nd prize for 'Up' in Scarecrow Festival



A most enjoyable visit to Wayhours – Lindsell. Wonderful garden and plenty of tea and cake!

In September we were pleased to join in the Bardfield Scarecrow festival. Such a huge amount of effort from Lawrence and Helen McGlynn and a well-deserved second prize.

October was our AGM with Suzy Nicholson. A great evening with wine and cheese which was enjoyed by 51 people.

There was no Autumn Social in 2025, but watch out, we have a bumper one coming in 2026.

Floral Art in December is always a lovely, relaxing morning and is well supported. Mandy Boon runs this and we sell out of all the places every year.

I stood down as chairman after many years at our AGM, but sadly no one has come forward to take over yet.

We are still running, but in a slightly different way, and let's see if it works in 2026?

With over 100 members now, we would love our Horticultural Society to continue. Can you help in any way? It's a friendly group of people all with the same desire to share our love of plants and gardens.

Any questions? Please contact any member of our committee.

**Linda Prior
Chair, Great Bardfield
Horticultural Society**



Great Bardfield Historical Society

It has been another exciting and highly active year for the Society, as we continue our mission to preserve, celebrate, and share the rich history of Great Bardfield.

A year of engaging events

Our year began after last year's AGM with a talk by Rebecca Batley, who illuminated the oft-overlooked life of Anne Neville, Queen and wife of Richard III. Over the summer, we enjoyed a wonderful trip to Ickworth House. This followed an earlier talk by Emily Deal on Mary ('Molly') Lepel, Lady Hervey (1700–1768). Ickworth was delightful in the sunshine, and Emily's extensive knowledge of the house and its inhabitants made the trip a real treat.

In the autumn, we hosted a fascinating and highly visual talk on the history of local rights of way by landscape historian Dr Tom Breen

of Essex County Council. He guided us through the development of Essex paths and roads from pre-Roman times to the present day, highlighting important maps and the role large estates have played in shaping the landscape around us.

The Cottage Museum

Our lease of the cottage came to an end this year. The owners, the Great Bardfield Charities, are seeking to relinquish their ownership, and a nascent Charitable Incorporated Organisation hopes to take it on. If successful, I look forward to working with them in the coming years.

The Bawden Room and wider recognition

It has been a landmark year for the Bawden Room. We were thrilled to receive two donated oil paintings from David Burgess: *Beslyn's Pond* by John Aldridge and *Two Women* by Duffy Ayres.

We also purchased several pieces to enrich our collection, including an etching of Clacton Beach by Edward Bawden, a linocut by Nina Hoyle, and – a personal favourite – *Little Owls at Shalford Green*, a print by John Norris-Wood, the wildlife artist and student of Bawden.



Emily explaining Ickworth's history



Lots to explore at Ickworth House



Our village history continues to attract significant outside interest. Janet Dyson welcomed 10 organised groups over the last year, leading them through our village history and featuring the Bawden Room and Brick House. Anyone who caught Sandi Toksvig's *Hidden Wonders* (Channel 4) or Michael Portillo's *Great Railway Journeys* (BBC) will appreciate exactly why our local history proves to be such a national draw.

We were also proud to lend several pieces from our collection – including Fred Mizen corn dollies and two of Edward Bawden's *Life in an English Village* sketches (The Bell and The Saddler's Shop) – to the Fry Art Gallery in Saffron Walden for their 'Fry's Popular Delights' exhibition. It was wonderful to see Laura Freeman, Chief Art Critic of *The Times*, review the exhibition, calling it "a sunny charabanc tour of English popular art [...] delightful from start to finish." (The exhibition runs until 25th October, and I highly recommend a visit).

Publications

Our publications continue to help both residents and visitors discover our past. *Artists of Great Bardfield* sold over 1,000 copies this year, sitting alongside our wide range of local history booklets. *The History of Great Bardfield*, revised by Jenny Rooney and published in 2024, is selling very well. Jenny is now hard at work revising Rhoda Standeven's study of Victorian Bardfield, incorporating fascinating new insights gleaned from the old school logbooks.

Looking ahead

We have a fantastic schedule of upcoming events:

- 18th April (post-AGM): Returning speaker Ashley Cooper will tell us all about the remains of the Gestingthorpe Roman Villa.
- Summer Trip: A guided trip to the Gestingthorpe Roman Villa led by Ashley. (If you are interested in joining, please contact me at tim_regan82@hotmail.com or 07817 063125).
- 27th June: This year, Clare College Cambridge celebrates its 700th anniversary. Because of founder Elizabeth de Burgh's (11th Lady of Clare) close connection to Great Bardfield, the renowned Choir of Clare College will perform a special



New pictures in the stairwell

concert in our church under the baton of musical director Graham Ross. A replica of Lady Elizabeth's seal will also be installed. I hope to see you all there!

- 10th September: For those interested in modern history, we have a talk by Jennifer Antill planned, in which she will explore what Russian history can tell us about Russia today.

Acknowledgments

Finally, a massive thank you to our volunteers who faithfully man the Bawden Room rota every Sunday afternoon from Easter until the end of September. I would also like to personally thank the members of the committee – Janet Dyson, Jenny Rooney, Kate Lloyd, David Slow, George Wilder, and Nigel Hill – for their continued support and the tireless work they put into preserving and evangelising our village history.

**Tim Regan
Chair**



Great Bardfield Poetry Club

When Janet and Jenny at the Between the Lines bookshop noticed how much poetry I was buying, they suggested I set up a club. With that encouragement, Flora Olney and I launched the Great Bardfield Poetry Club, holding our first meeting in September 2024.

I had in mind CB3, a club my wife Kate and I occasionally attended in Cambridge, but with one important addition. While many clubs welcome those who want to listen or share their own writing, I wanted to ensure we also welcomed people who simply want to read their favourite poems by other authors aloud.

We meet on the third Thursday of every month (with a summer break in July and August) at 7.30pm, appropriately hosted right there in the village bookshop. Entrance is £3. The evening falls into two halves, with a lively interval for drinks and chat. Each half begins with attendees reading, followed by our guest poet, if we have one, reading from their latest publication.

Our attendance varies; some months we have a cosy nine people, while our largest turnout saw thirty squeezed in, with standing room only at the back for the young 'uns!

Of our seventeen sessions to date, nine have featured published guest poets. We naturally focus on Essex and East Anglian talent, welcoming local poets like Bethany Callaway, Jane Herd, Dan Pierce, and Jeremy Nicholas, alongside those from slightly further afield like Alison Binney, Jen



Club members enjoying sharing favourite poems

Feroze, and Rebecca Goss. We were even thrilled to help host a book launch for Kevin Crossley-Holland and local artist Rosamond Ulph.

Running this club has been a far more emotional journey than I expected. I have seen people's lives and loves play out in the poetry they read and write. We have laughed, dealt with the occasional troublemaker (poetry can be exciting!), and mourned the passing of a valued member: Robin's unforgettable poem about his neighbour mowing the lawn in the nude, parodying Shakespeare ("Nudie, or not nudie..."), will always be remembered.

To end, I would like to extend a warm welcome to anyone who loves or is simply curious about poetry. Come and read, or just listen. Come and spend time with other locals enjoying the poetry we love.

Tim Regan
(tim_regan82@hotmail.com
07817 063125)



Vine Meadow Allotments

The kiss of the Sun for pardon, the song of the birds for mirth, One is nearer God's heart in a garden (or an allotment!) than anywhere else on earth.

(from Dorothy Frances Gurney 'God's Garden')

We think it's a great place to be. Having continued access to such a setting, away from the hubbub of normal daily life is something none of us at Vine Meadow Allotments take for granted. Thank you Mrs Lowe.

The spring of 2025, the driest for one hundred years, forced early seedlings and the hands of Plotters to water earlier than usual. Thank you to The Vine for the water. Late frost did no harm to early planted beans which went on to flourish. Changing seasons and the cycle of life continues and one has to wonder how plants and shrubs survive frosts and drought yet continue to recover and throw buds, flowers, berries and fruit. 'Blooming marvellous'.

One Plotter made a rare early June evening sighting of Mr Mole emerging from a burrow to forage around some bean plants before shuffling off. The hot, dry weather encouraged Mr Toad to hide away.

We watch and listen from the sanctuary of The Plot as early morning mist dissipates, soaking up the peace, willing the fruits of our labours on, hoping for that bumper crop. The larks ascend. African-fed winds bring visitors. An early morning cuckoo calls and a distant response heralds the start of summer. 'Two swallows a summer does not make' but what

glorious weather we had. We watched the buzzards and kites wheel on the warm currents over Great Bardfield and in the small valley beyond, barn owls daytime hunting to feed their chicks.

Rhubarb grew in abundance, beans sprouted and soft fruits plumped. Lettuce, early spuds and radish shot up for summer teatime salads and some had juicy strawberries. Fresh runners, more jam, delicious chutney (thank you 'Secret Family Recipe' Plotter), pumpkins for the autumn, trugs and baskets filled with parsnips, carrots, leeks, greens and spuds for the roast. Which reminds me... I must seek out some horseradish root for next year.

We toil to tidy up after winter and with a working clutched gearbox on the mower, grass cutting is easier – thank you David Brierly, you are clever. And now we start another spring in anticipation as we dig in and prepare for more home-grown fare. Stay chipper and thank you Great Bardfield!

Adrian Thomson
on behalf of the Parish Plotters





Freshwell Health Centre

Your surgery cares for 8,279 people living in Finchingfield and surrounding villages, that is 187 more than a year ago. Although this is a lower increase than last year, plans are for more houses across the district, so we expect this number to grow. We have 1,358 people in Great Bardfield, which is four fewer than this time last year. We have 49 staff including seven GPs, one registrar doctor and two advanced nurse practitioners. Our clinical team also comprises practice nurses, health care assistants, and radiologists.

Staff news: Our staff levels are similar to last year. New NHS funding has allowed us to recruit a former registrar doctor of ours, Dr Randika Liyanage, who has recently qualified. This has allowed us to increase the number of appointments we offer. We will soon have a new GP registrar, Dr Biswajit Datta, joining us for a year. We continue to train doctors and nurses and thank our patients for their engagement with trainee nurses from ARU and Essex University, Registrar GPs, and Cambridge University Medical Students.

Primary Care Network: The Colne Valley Primary Care Network (PCN) continues to grow and offer more services. Their staff work for our local network under guidance from our GPs. If you hear from the people listed below, please be assured that they are working with the surgery on your care. We have four pharmacists and two pharmacy technicians who are carrying out medication reviews over the phone and may contact you –

they are Danielle Thrower, Lorna Wickes, Anastasia Gulyakova, Natalie Prior, Trina Bowers, Sian Wilson and Rebecca Andrews.

Our Low Carb wellbeing coaches Sharon Withnell and Patricia Daway continue to work with the Low Carb patient group who get stronger all the time. We have three social prescribers – Georgia Lardner, Michelle Vagg and Lindsay Gordon who can come out to visit if you are not able to travel. They can help with advice on benefits, access to services and activities to help reduce social isolation. Kerry Jerram and Lynita Camp provide support to our patients living with cancer. Abishek Tripathi is a musculo-skeletal practitioner who offers physiotherapy advice to patients once a week. Our patients can access services on Saturdays at the PCN Extended Access Hub in Halstead (CO9 1EX) for telephone consultations, wound care, smear tests, medication reviews and GP and nurse appointments. Some patients find Saturday is a more convenient day for them.

Blood pressure: If you have high blood pressure you can help us by submitting an up-to-date blood pressure reading. You can take your readings on a home BP machine, or pop into the surgery to use our machine and leave your reading with reception. The library in Braintree also has machines you can loan for free. We have over 1,645 patients with hypertension and aim to check in with them at least once a year.

Low Carb Project: The Freshwell Low Carb Project is an initiative set up by Dr David Oliver and Dr Kim Andrews to encourage the community to be as healthy as possible. The recipe books continue to sell well. The facebook group (Freshwell Low Carb Support Group) is a patient-led support group that shares recipes, ideas and inspiration. It has 4,200 members. Contact us online: www.lowcarbfreshwell.co.uk and www.freshwell.co.uk . X: @Freshwell_HC. Facebook: Freshwell Health Centre.

David Shedden
Practice Manager



CREAMER Fund

There have been big changes within The CREAMER Fund's Executive Team! At our AGM in March, Dr Andrew Hildrey stood down as Chair having led the charity for over 30 years, to be replaced by Sarah McCarthy. New Trustee, Helen Fisher, has stepped into Sarah's shoes as Secretary. Dr Hildrey will continue to play a key role as he takes on the position of Vice-Chair, and both he and Chris Blewitt will remain valued Trustees. We owe them a HUGE THANK YOU for their years of valued service. They brought enormous experience into their roles and we're very grateful. We now look forward to a new team at the helm, supported by the incredibly experienced Treasurer, Debbie Rogers, who together will guide The CREAMER Fund into an exciting new future

The following report was given by Dr Hildrey at the AGM.

This year The CREAMER Fund is embracing evolving technologies. I must credit Alex Cox and Sarah McCarthy who are dragging me into a new technological era!

CREAMER is now focussing mainly on helping to provide diagnostic services at Freshwell Health Centre. It has already provided funding for 24 defibrillators and seven bleed management kits in the community. The Charity is happy to provide funds for more if needs are identified.

The diagnostic services (X-rays, ultrasound scans, heart echocardiograms, "osteoporosis" bone scans and heart/blood pressure monitoring devices) enable patients within the community to be investigated and managed closer to home and more quickly. The cost is considerable (£50,000) but inestimable.

Income from various fundraising activities are greatly appreciated and I must thank Chris and Jane Blewett, Ines Warner and Debbie Rogers for their help with the books; Rosalie Wyatt, Sylvia Gould and her helpers with raffles and Glenis Ashby, Brian and Lorraine Patient and Anni Woodcock with the collecting tins. These fundraising activities all promote CREAMER throughout the community involving many people.

Several very generous legacies have been received for which we are extremely grateful. These legacies



are enabling CREAMER to continue its activities.

CREAMER continues to evolve and we hope will enable improving health care for this community for years to come.

We must give credit to all the staff at the Health Centre: all the doctors, nurses and other health care professionals as well as David Shedden's ancillary staff backing them up. The practice is consistently voted in the top echelon in the county and country.

I would like to thank all my fellow trustees for all their help – in particular our secretary, Sarah McCarthy, treasurer, Debbie Rogers, and vice chair Chris Blewett.

**Dr Andrew Hildrey
Outgoing Chairman**



Great Bardfield Primary School



COURAGE – COMPASSION – COMMUNITY –

The past year has flown by at Great Bardfield Primary School and writing these reflections has given a welcome opportunity to pause and reflect on everything our school community has achieved over the last twelve months. Leading this school continues to be a privilege and I am constantly inspired by the creativity, dedication and enthusiasm of our staff, pupils, parents, governors and wider community. Together we have continued to provide a rich, engaging and supportive environment where every child can thrive and this year has been full of opportunities that have brought our values of Courage, Compassion and Community to life in exciting ways.

As last year's summer term arrived,

we were fortunate to enjoy plenty of sunny weather, which allowed our children to take full part in outdoor events such as swimming lessons, sports days, proms in the playground, our annual trip to Frinton and the Year 6 residential to Norfolk. Our new reception children joined us for their settling in sessions, which gave them the chance to become familiar with our school community and ensured a smooth transition to big school in September 2025. We were sorry to say goodbye to our wonderful Year 6 pupils, as well as Mr Looker, our brilliant caretaker, and Mrs Hockley and Miss Hooper, who were much valued learning support assistants. There were both tears and laughter in our leavers assembly on the last day as we reflected on memories, celebrated achievements and looked forward to the bright futures ahead for everyone leaving Great Bardfield.



*KS2 visit
the
archae-
ological
dig site*



Proms in the playground



The autumn term began with a sense of excitement as children settled into their new classes and embraced the start of the school year. We welcomed our new reception starters who quickly became part of our school community, benefitting from the support and friendship of our older children through our buddy system. We also welcomed our new caretaker, Mr Major, who has been working tirelessly since his very first day in September to improve, maintain and enhance our school environment. Alongside our current project to replace and repair the school windows, our school premises have never looked better!

In September, our key stage two

children had the incredible opportunity to visit the excavation site of a World War Two plane crash. In January 1944, a P47 Thunderbolt crashed nearby during a training flight, tragically claiming the life of 2nd Lieutenant Lester Lowry. The excavation, led by a team from Cotswold Archaeology, aimed to recover the pilot's remains so that he could finally be returned home and laid to rest with honour. Our children were fascinated to learn about the process of archaeological investigation and even had the chance to sieve the soil like real archaeologists. We feel very fortunate to have such rich and meaningful history on our doorstep. Great Bardfield is always



*Left: KS1 scooter challenge
Right: End of year show*



full of stories from the past but this discovery truly brought history to life in a remarkable way.

At the end of September, we continued one of our much loved school traditions by supporting Macmillan Cancer Support. The children baked an impressive array of cakes for our annual Great Bardfield Bake Off while staff took on the very enjoyable role of judges. Our Year 6 pupils were brilliant hosts during the accompanying Coffee and Chat afternoon, helping to raise funds for this important cause. A huge thank you to everyone who baked, donated and supported the event. It was a wonderful example of our school community coming together.

Our harvest festival followed soon after and was another highlight of the term. The children sang and presented beautifully and it was lovely to see so many families join us to give thanks and support our local community. The occasion perfectly reflected the generosity, kindness and togetherness

that make Great Bardfield such a special place.

As the autumn term drew to a close, we embraced the festive season with our usual variety of traditional Christmas celebrations. Our youngest pupils delighted audiences with their nativity performance while our older children shone during the carol service at St Mary's Church. The pantomime returned to the Town Hall, spreading laughter and joy, and our Mince Pies and Carols afternoon offered a heart-warming opportunity to share songs and festive cheer with the more senior members of our community.

In March, we celebrated World Book Day with a series of literary events. The children and staff wore their pyjamas to school and brought in their favourite bedtime stories to share with each other. A special visit to Between the Lines allowed every child to redeem their World Book Day token for a book of their choice and we are grateful to Janet and her team



The children enjoying Christmas lunch



Mince Pies and Carols afternoon in the school hall



for welcoming us so warmly into our village bookshop. These moments not only encourage a love of reading but also support children’s confidence, curiosity and wellbeing.

Promoting an active lifestyle and providing opportunities for sport has remained a key priority this past year. Over the last year, our pupils have participated in a number of sporting events, festivals and competitions. Key stage one have explored scooter safety and Year 6 have undertaken their bikeability challenge. Some of our Year 1 pupils have taken part in an active maths event and key stage two have enjoyed multisports events, football

tournaments and cross country running. Thanks to the Uttlesford School Sports Partnership and our dedicated staff, these experiences continue to inspire teamwork, resilience, confidence and a sense of personal achievement in our children.

Our PTA continues to be a truly valued part of our school community and we are incredibly grateful for the time, energy and enthusiasm its members bring to everything they do. So far this academic year, they have organised a fantastic range of events including Fireworks, Bongos Bingo, the Halloween Disco, Shop ‘Til You Drop, the Christmas Bonanza and

*Left: Riley, Zoya and Sam being detectives at Kew
Right: Aldridge class trying to solve the case of the missing plant*





Girls' Football Festival. Lionesses of the future?



the ever popular 'Break the Rules' Day. This generous support has made a real difference to the experiences we are able to offer our children. Funds have helped to provide some new Chromebooks, the Christmas pantomime, transport for the Year 5 and 6 residential and new Key Stage 2 nativity costumes. Along with kind donations from the local community, the PTA has also funded a wonderful new play trail for our children. We are very grateful to everyone who has supported these events, whether through organising, volunteering or attending and we are already looking forward to more exciting events in the coming term.



Part of our new play trail

As the spring term drew to a close, we enjoyed our traditional Easter hunt in the sunshine, which combined collecting clues and solving anagrams before children received a chocolate egg from our Easter Bunny. Looking ahead to the summer term, we hope for more sunny weather so that we can enjoy our usual programme of exciting events. Next term, we also look forward to welcoming our group of new reception children for their settling in visits before they join us in September.

Great Bardfield Primary continues to be a place where children grow, learn and flourish in every sense. This year has once again shown the power of community, the joy of learning and the importance of supporting one another. I am immensely proud of all that our school has achieved and look forward to another year of curiosity, creativity and achievement for every child who passes through our doors.

**Liz Crow
Headteacher**



Great Bardfield Pre-School



*Left: The Pre-School building
Right: So many activities for the children both indoor and out*

We have continued with improvements to the building and grounds, having painted the exterior, redecorated the interior, installed a new kitchen and installed a new security fence between us and the road. We have also created a sensory area where children can get away from the hustle and bustle of the main room. These are all part of an ongoing maintenance and improvement plan which is funded predominantly by fund-raising activities throughout the year such as the very successful recent Sip and Spud Quiz in the Town Hall.

We have been able to increase the floor area available by removing the partition wall between us and what was

After-school Club which has allowed us to increase the number of children we can accommodate. In response to feedback from parents we have also extended our opening hours to 07.30 – 17.30, providing wrap-around care for our pre-school children which can include breakfast and a light evening meal.

We have achieved a lot over the last couple of years, but there is still much we would like to do to update the building and improve the facilities that we offer. Onwards and upwards!

**Mark Aston, Chair
Pre-School Management
Committee**



*Left: The bigger room provides lots of space.
Right: Our new kitchen facilities*



Bardfield Boules Competition

*Madame
Boules
with 2025
winners
Ian and
Alex Ruffle
– a family
affair!*

The Bardfield Boules Competition is a long-standing and much appreciated village event, taking place over the summer months. It has now been running for more than 20 years, and several teams have played every year. The competition is also an excellent opportunity for newcomers to the village to meet other residents and is a relaxed and sociable way to spend a sunny afternoon or evening, though many teams also take it very seriously.

In 2025, we had a record number of teams, with 54 pairs playing between four to eight matches over a period from May to September, depending on their progression (or otherwise) through the competition. Entrance fees last year raised £540 for Town Hall funds.

The current champions, and they are very proud to be, are Ian and Alex Ruffle who were thrilled to win the 2025 final against Simon and Lorraine King, having already won their semi-final match, held the same day, against Ian and Anni Woodcock. Finals Day



is a fixture in the village calendar, with both semi-finals and the final played in front of a sturdy crowd of spectators. The Town Hall Committee provide a BBQ and soft drinks and there is always The Bell nearby for something a little stronger.

The 2026 competition will have started by the time this report is published, so we are hoping for another good-natured competition where teams enjoy the space in front of the Town Hall. If you see people playing please come and watch for a while. It is such a pleasant way of spending a little time.

Finals Day 2026 is planned for 26th September. All residents are invited to come and watch the final four teams battle it out to be Great Bardfield Boules Champions 2026 and have the opportunity to display the amazing trophies on their mantelpieces.

Madame Boules

*Lorraine
King
playing in
the finals*





Bardfield Brass

It does not seem possible that Bardfield Brass came into existence 25 years ago almost to the day. It has grown from a small group of disparate musicians and wannabes into the magnificent brass band it is today. We have been entertaining Great Bardfield and surrounding villages since our founding with many different varieties of music, from traditional brass band tunes, songs from the shows and modern pop songs.

The band was incorporated on the 9th of May 2001 by Mrs Barney, the head teacher of Bardfield Primary School, Wendy Brayshaw, also a teacher from the school, and Sylvia Benham a local parent of a couple of sons Stuart and Andrew who expressed an interest in playing a brass instrument, along with myself and my first son Tom.



Above and below right: The band playing at Christmas

There was a brass band in a village north of Saffron Walden which the boys attended, but the decision was made to form our own band in Bardfield. With the help of Mrs Barney who provided the practice facilities and a generous donation from Bardfield Charities, Bardfield Brass was formed. Clare Cornell, a young trombonist, became our conductor and the rest is history!

We have gone from strength to strength and the main senior Band now has over 20 regular members. More importantly we have a junior Band, made up of children aged from six years upwards who are the future of the Band and have been taught and coached by Mrs Metson at the school. We are pleased to say



At the annual village memorial service

that we are becoming well-known in the surrounding area and getting very busy with many gigs, particularly at Christmas and of course our annual Last Night of the Proms concert in October at the Town Hall.

We pride ourselves on being a very friendly group and it is good to see that there are many family connections within the players. We are always on the lookout for new members of any age and experience. Hope to see you at a performance soon!

**Iain Graham
on behalf of Bardfield Brass**





Tuesday Club

The Tuesday Club enjoyed another good year in 2025 thanks to the enthusiasm and hard work of our committee, but most importantly all the members and visitors who join us each month. We had a record number of visitors, with several going on to become full members, who are now part of our group and enjoying the meetings.

We had a variety of speakers starting with Sharon Gould, who gave an entertaining talk on the 21 jobs she had over two decades; from being a rent collector, having a stall in Petticoat Lane, being an Avon Lady to picking potatoes. From leaving school with no qualifications at 16 to getting a degree in education in her 40s, her story was inspiring and sometimes hilarious.

In April Essex Fire & Rescue paid us a visit to talk about safety on the road and around water. There was opportunity for interaction while watching a video from the driver's seat of a car and later checking what we had observed of things happening on the pavement or at junctions. At the end we could also wear a virtual reality headset and experience driving in an emergency situation.

We also welcomed back Brian Carline, who gave us "An Amusing Account of Life in Schools", which he was well equipped to do after 35 years of teaching in Essex schools. Some of the notes excusing a child for an absence were hilarious, as were the names of some of the children. He described going home after a hard day to spend the evening searching text books for lesson material for the next day (no internet back then). But he loved his work and his mantra of 'firm but fair' made him popular. We all went home wishing we'd had a teacher like him.

Another favourite speaker, Bryan Thurlow, returned in June to tell us the story of Borley Rectory, reportedly the most haunted house in England. With his excellent theatrical skills he brought the house and its chilling stories to life. We were left to make up our own minds whether all the stories were true or the work of mischievous tenants of the house.



Brian Carline

In September Amanda Sutherland returned to show us how to Make Do and Mend, turning outdated clothing and charity shop finds into stylish new favourites. Who could imagine that an old pair of stretchy leggings could become a bolero to wear with that little black dress? My favourite was the bunting made from old ties, who doesn't need more bunting?



Bryan Thurlow



October brought a new speaker, Sheila Hasler, who went to Dominica as a young bride when her husband was sent there to oversee 'The Lime Estate'. They had to leave the island when it gained independence from the UK in 1978, but it was clear that Sheila had come to love the island in the years that they lived there. If you have ever bought a jar of Roses Lime Marmalade the fruit may well have been grown there, as the country still has an annual output of over 82,000 metric tonnes!

Our final talk in November was from Will Edwards, who asked the question "What Happened to Harry?"

Harry was Will's great uncle, who died in WW1 and that was all that he knew about him. With research and lots of patience Will was able to complete the story of what had happened to Harry and to visit his grave in France, so that now future generations will know more about Harry.

Being the Tuesday Club, food had to feature in our year, and we enjoyed a summer lunch at The Bell in Panfield, a Summer Afternoon Tea and, of course, the Christmas Lunch, held in the Town Hall where we were able to enjoy all the traditional fare as well as having a quiz and playing some festive games.



Dominica – Sheila Hasler's talk



Amanda Sutherland's Make do and Mend talk

All our talks are advertised in the *Bardfield Times* and on posters around the village. We welcome both men and women, so if you haven't been to one of our meetings why not give us a try if you see a talk which interests you. You will be very welcome.

We meet in the Town Hall on the second Tuesday of each month, doors open at 2.00 and talks start at 2.30. Afterwards there are refreshments and time to socialise. Visitors pay £5 and it costs £30 to join for the whole year. I have added some recent comments below from our new members to whet your appetite! We look forward to meeting you soon.

Cherry Whitby Committee Member

"Tuesday Club is a great place to meet people. It's very friendly and has interesting speakers and outings."

"Tuesday Club has been great for me, newly living alone. Very friendly, interesting speakers, lovely Christmas Lunch and Cream Tea."

"What do I like about Tuesday Club? Everything – making new friends, interesting speakers, excellent value for money."

"It's a lovely sociable event, everyone is friendly and welcoming. The talks are interesting and informative and you learn something new every month."



The Bardfield Players



It's been a funny old year. After the success of the Pantomime *Cinderella and the Green Goblin*, co-written by the late Steve Mann and myself (with others contributing), there was a certain amount of euphoria and keenness to get back on the stage. For myself, I was exhausted, and so stepped away from the next production as much as I could, but was still involved enough to see it through.

Even though it was late January by the time we had found something that we could do, and the only slot available at the Town Hall was in very early May, we carried on regardless!

For the second time we felt that turning the audience away from the stage, with tiered seating, and using the floor as the acting area, would suit the play better, which I still feel was the right decision, even though it did create problems!

The play itself *Hoovering on the Edge*, was a good play and everyone worked very hard (as we always do).

Apart from anything else in the run up to the show, the first two performance nights suffered from three

problems: the weather was very hot, and the temperature in the hall soared to what was probably 40 degrees which made everyone very uncomfortable. The second was that the play was much too long (2¾ hrs – not including the interval). This is something that I did not appreciate until it was too late, and thirdly some of the cast did not know all of their lines, which overworked the prompt and dragged the play down.

The Saturday performance however was quite a different story. The temperature dropped, the whole cast suddenly knew their lines, and the audience loved it, not minding the length of the play at all! The whole evening went very well.

The arrangements for the November production, started off very well. We had found a really good play and were able to cast the actors and we had a director, all by mid-June. So we relaxed to enjoy the summer, agreeing to begin rehearsals at the end of August. Come the day before rehearsals were to begin,

Two scenes from Hoovering on the Edge





*Left to right:
Lottie Thirkell,
Mike Brown
and Sally Beanland
in 'Who Murdered the Farmer?'*

we were told by one of the key members of the cast that they would be unable to take part in the play and that they were very sorry! The Players do suffer from having not many active members, and the withdrawal of one person made the whole play impossible for us to do, despite trying to use imaginative solutions to the problem. All we could

do was find another play which would suit the remaining cast. We read a lot of plays in a short time (I might add that finding a suitable play is always the hardest thing to do), and we found one which was ok. We cast it and we still had a director... or so we thought! Not very long into rehearsals our director found it impossible to continue as family and work commitments were becoming too overwhelming. This is quite understandable – work and family do come first, but it did leave us having to find another actor, so I could step in and direct.

We found someone to take on the part and carried on regardless. Rehearsals restarted and all looked good, until the replacement actor was rushed into hospital and was unable to carry on. We were very concerned, but eventually they recovered, but were unable to continue with the play.

Again we were fortunate and were able to find a replacement actor, and continued for a couple of weeks until they came under a great deal of personal stress, and felt unable to continue.

*Ian Ruffle
as the
murdered
farmer*





Carolynne Ruffle honing her technical skills



The upshot of all this was that we now had a smaller group of actors with no play, an unwilling director and about six weeks to find another actor!

There was no time left for anyone to learn all of their lines, so we looked at putting on a 'Murder Mystery' evening. It would mean that I would have to direct it as well as be in it, but they are designed for the actors to use scripts and notes to help with the words. The cast did however try really hard and were able to learn most of them.

We still needed two more performers and fortunately Lottie Thirkell came on the scene, and saved the day! She had never acted before, but was keen to take part in whatever we decided to do. Carolynne also stepped up to the

plate, and was able to do the sitting down part of the author of the play brilliantly!

Who Murdered the Farmer? turned out to be a great laugh and everyone enjoyed it. I really liked playing the part of the dead farmer, but I was a little surprised that, during the questioning of the characters by the audience, no one asked me who had killed me!

We had a lovely group of actors, and a terrific set. So thank you to all of the brilliant people involved in putting on all of our productions, the bar staff and front of house, costumes, builders stage managers and technicians – you are all marvellous!

We are currently back to square one. We are having a rest in the spring, and looking for a play we can do in November.

All actors and technicians are welcome to apply.

**Ian Ruffle , Chairman,
Bardfield Players**

Set-building in progress ... bring on the tea and biscuits!





St Mary's Bellringers

It's been another enjoyable year for the St Mary's bellringers where we continue to maintain and ring the eight church tower bells and a set of 15 handbells.

Tower bells: Over this year our weekly practices continued on a Wednesday evening (18.00 – 19.30), where we focus on teaching new ringers, and on a Thursday evening (19.30 – 21.00). We continued to ring for services and key dates throughout the year.

In June, Sarah, Nick and Alfie again ran a bellringing morning for the Primary School year 6 children. The class had a talk about bellringing, a trip up the tower to see the bells, an assisted ring on the bells, and did bell-related crafts. Those waiting particularly enjoyed making 'stained glass' bells using tissue paper and the quiz "how many sheep?" where they searched the church windows and counted how many sheep they could see (there're a lot more than they thought!).

In May we took part in the national 'Ring out in Peace' 80th anniversary of VE day. We welcomed our local councillors and other village members to chime a bell or ring a handbell at the nationally agreed commemorative time.

In August we came together again together to commemorate VJ80 with ringing at St Mary's and other towers within our benefice.

In October, the Great Bardfield bellringers joined forces with others in our benefice and went on a bellringing outing. This involved a day trip where



The Pant Valley Benefice bellringers on our ringing outing

we rang at five different towers in Cambridgeshire (fortified halfway by a pub lunch of course!). It was a great day out.

Handbells: The handbell group had a break over the summer and regrouped in September, welcoming new members into the band. We focussed on our Christmas performances: St Mary's carol service, Great Bardfield Town Hall carol concert and a performance for the WI in North End.

We are looking forward to another year of bellringing fun and we hope to recruit more local Bardfield residents to join our friendly group!

**Nick and Sarah Holland
Tower Captains, St. Mary's**



News from St Mary's Parish Church

As the Parish Church of Great Bardfield, St Mary's continues in the role that it has held for centuries, which is to be a place where people from across the parish can come to pray, worship, remember and celebrate, and to stand as a witness to the love of God in our community. It is always a privilege to welcome people to the church for significant moments in their lives, both sorrowful and joyful, as we lead them in christening, wedding and funeral services. This annual report gives me an opportunity each year to remind all those who live in the parish, or who have formal connections to it, that they have a right protected by ancient law and custom to mark these life events in their parish church, so please do contact us for enquiries about those occasions.

The regular worshipping life of the parish is also of great importance, and while we continue to pray for all the people of the parish, we always welcome both new and familiar faces when we worship on Sunday mornings. We have now established a pattern of services in which there is almost always a Sunday service at 10.30am at St Mary's, the only exceptions being on an occasional Sunday when our group of churches worships together for a single service. I am very grateful to those volunteers who have started leading a service on the Sundays when I am at a different church at that time in order to make this possible. The details can always be found in the *Bardfield Times* and on the church notice boards, and we also have a weekly church news email list to



St Mary's Parish Church in the snow of 1940

which anyone is welcome to be added. This pattern is complemented by our regular Thursday morning service at 10.30am at St Katharine's, where there is now also a monthly evening service on a Sunday.

I am delighted that the presence of members of our village's Community Choir is now a regular fixture on the third Sunday of each month at the 10.30am Eucharist. Music is an important part of the life of the Church, and it was lovely to welcome musical groups from across the village for a concert in St Mary's last summer, on what turned out to be one of the hottest days of the year! Our bellringing community also continues to flourish, with many new recruits learning to ring, and the tower of St Mary's being recognised across the county as a hub of teaching for new ringers – further new recruits always welcome. The Bardfield Chimes also provide joyful musical handbell contributions to church and village events alike.

We continue to take activities out into other parts of the parish, with our monthly Book Club, 'Faithful Fiction' meeting on the first Monday of each month at Between the Lines at 1.30pm (although that tends to be moved when a Bank Holiday Monday occurs – you can always check the details, including what we are reading, at the bookshop), and we had a special harvest celebration once again in 2025 at



Bardfield Vineyard. This year's will be on Sunday 20th September, so do save the date!

We welcome other groups into the church as well, with it always being a delight to host Great Bardfield Primary School's Christmas celebrations – both the carol service for the older children and Christingle making for the younger ones. For younger children, our St Mary's Munchkins toddler group takes place on Tuesday mornings between 10 and 11am, and it has been lovely to see a growing community enjoying singing and playing together at that.

We know also that we are indebted to a group of volunteers from across the village who continue to help keep the churchyard in fine shape, and I would like to thank both them, and all those who came and joined in with the spring churchyard tidy-up.

As we look ahead, the most significant plan taking shape is the proposed reordering of the kitchen and vestry area in the church. This has been moving forward, with detailed plans being produced and the proposed work going out to tender with potential contractors. The plans are available to view in the church, but include a new accessible toilet, levelling of access across the building, and a much enlarged kitchen area, which will make the church more

hospitable, and make it easier for all sorts of events to be held there. Once the final few details have been finalised, the business of fundraising will start in earnest, although we have made a good start with a few of the events which have taken place in the last couple of years.

On a final note, I am always happy to hear from people if they have any concerns or pastoral needs – particularly if anyone is in need of a home or hospital visit – or if you have any questions relating to faith or spirituality. The Parish Church and its ministry are here for all parishioners, and information about how to get in touch, as well as details of services and other events, can be found in the *Bardfield Times* or on the church noticeboards.

The Rev'd/Fr Alex Shannon
Vicar





News from the Quaker Meeting House

Great Bardfield Quaker Meeting meets every Sunday morning at our Meeting House in Brook Street. We have a regular core of Quakers from Great Bardfield supplemented by those from the surrounding area including Braintree, Thaxted and Saffron Walden. We appreciate our 45 minute meeting for worship which is mainly silent with occasional ministry from attendees. Following this we have an Afterword during which Friends may share matters that have arisen for them in the silence. We have often been drawn to consider how we as Quakers feel and can respond to the tumult currently experienced in much of the world. We have a number of talks prepared by individual members, often followed by lunch together. Topics have included Gnostic Christianity, inspiration from readings about Quakers, ministry and meeting for worship, simplicity and peaceful protest.

The work to trim back the yew trees that overhung the public foot path and a large tree that blocked light from a neighbour has been undertaken. We are very grateful to the Bardfield Charities who contributed substantially to the cost of this work.

Our garden is the main focus for our meeting in terms of development. We now have a separate webpage specifically for Bardfield meeting and our gardening project at bardfieldquakers.org.uk. We intend to revitalise the garden to provide a tranquil space for the community to use for quiet reflection and enjoyment of the space. Work has already begun



and several of the Bardfield Quakers have been busy clearing scrub and the overgrown areas. The garden has had a detailed and accurate survey and this has been recently shared with a volunteer who is offering advice on a planting scheme in a white and neutral colour palette to include fruit trees and fox gloves.

This is a substantial project for our small group and we have undertaken some fundraising by auctioning a painting kindly donated by Suffolk artist Paul Evans which received a number of donations and is now placed in the Meeting House. We are still looking for additional funding or support in kind – see our 'GoFundMe' link on our webpage if you might be able to support us or find out more about the project.

We have not been neglecting the inside of the building and have been tidying and organising. The kitchen cupboards are now allocated for hirers on the left and for Quakers on the right. Each of the cupboards have all a group could need for simple refreshments and the shelves are labelled for ease of location and return of items. We have also been reorganising and refreshing our small library book case in the Meeting Room. We have pruned elderly and out-of-date publications, added some newer books and grouped books and labelled each section.

We have managed to resolve the issue of the extensive damp on the exterior kitchen wall. The cause of this, apart from heavy rain, was an inadequate gully not only blocked with debris but leaking from a



faulty overlap in the lead lining. The inside wall was allowed to dry out thoroughly, and damaged plaster removed. Work on replacing the gully with guttering required some changes to the top of the outside brick wall. As this is in a conservation area we needed expert architectural advice as well as permission from the District Council. Once this was received we engaged a local builder who completed the work. We are grateful to a handy friend who then made good the plaster on the kitchen wall and put up wooden cladding on the bottom half of the wall to match the rest of the kitchen. The wall was painted and pictures returned and it now looks very neat and presentable.

We are grateful to North West Essex Quaker Area Meeting for funding this work. Our Meeting House continues to be used as a community resource with regular and occasional hirers including a choir, dancers, study groups and radio enthusiasts. We welcome new users of our space and details of how to contact us are on our website and the notice board in front of our Meeting House.

**Jane Herd
Correspondent**

News from the Church of the Holy Spirit

As always we are grateful to those parishioners who continue to support the work of the church and commit so much of their time to maintaining the services and supporting our priest.

Since the last report there have been significant changes and not all for the better. Fr Celestine was moved at very short notice to a new parish in South Woodford, which is a much larger parish with the benefits of amazing public transport which will be of significant help in his work. On a positive note, Bishop Alan arranged for Fr John Britto Michael of Our Lady and St Anne Line, Great Dunmow, to take us under his wing and he has found the time and energy to continue the Saturday evening mass

in Thaxted – hosted by our friends at St John’s – as well the 9.30am in Great Bardfield and then on to the 11.00am mass in Dunmow. It cannot be easy but we are very grateful.

It had been hoped to carry out major repairs on the church and, more importantly, Our Lady’s House with the intention of it being let. Unfortunately, the diocese has blocked any but the most basic expenditure – this was very disappointing as there were great plans ahead.

We continue to hold our coffee morning on the first Sunday of the month – to which all are welcome. Funds raised go to various charities and the most recent beneficiary was the Bardfield Charities.

Roman Catholic Church of the Holy Spirit for Great Bardfield and Thaxted Parishes



**Holy Spirit & the English Martyrs
Catholic Church**

Mass times:
Sat. Vigil Mass - 5 pm, Thaxted Parish Church
Sun. Mass - 9:30 am, Great Bardfield
Weekdays & Holy Days - see notice board or our website

Everyone Welcome! Please Join Us!

Presbytery phone: 01371 810428
<https://bardfieldandthaxted.org.uk>



Great Bardfield Parish Council



Cllr Carolynne Ruffle
Chair
07971 255502



Cllr Janet Dyson
Vice Chair
07957 483207



Cllr Iain Graham
07831 595555



Cllr Richard Winsborough
07917 462320



Cllr Darren Hockley
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Cllr Mark Wells
07788 318118



Cllr Peter Walmsley
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Mrs Kate Fox
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01371 810111
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Community Information Point

Town Hall Cottages
01371 810327
gbcip@btconnect.com

Open Thursday and Saturday 10am – 12 noon for information and advice. Dog-poo bags and clear recycling bags are available to residents of the parish free of charge.

