



# Shipston Forum



February 2026

## End of an era for firefighters

Shipston Fire Station has concluded its on-call operations. On 31<sup>st</sup> December, the station's final four on-call firefighters honourably returned their alerting equipment and kit, marking the end of an era of dedicated service to the community which has run continuously with an on-call retained fire crew since 1948. Chris Townsend, the now former Watch Manager, recalls his time in service.



Chris, accompanied by Hollie, at the fire station

‘Throughout my time in the service, I’ve attended numerous incidents and had the privilege of working alongside many dedicated crew members, each leaving their mark as they came and went. I hold many fond memories of the experiences shared and the camaraderie built over the years. Following a promotion in 2016 to Crew Manager, I was later honoured to take on the role of Watch Manager at Shipston in 2019, a position that brought both pride and challenges, particularly around recruitment. Balancing over 80 hours of weekly cover with a full-time job is demanding, especially during periods of high operational activity. This level of commitment, while a testament to dedication, had understandably impacted overall staffing levels and ultimately contributed to the decision to close on-call operations at Shipston.’

Shipston Fire Station will remain on Telegraph Street and is due to be operated as a Resilience Station. This means it may be crewed during busy periods of high demand but will no longer be responding to primary incidents, such as road traffic collisions or building fires, as the initial attending unit. Going forward, emergency cover for the Shipston area will be provided by Stratford-upon-Avon and Wellesbourne fire stations.

‘I’d like to extend my sincere thanks to the community of Shipston and the surrounding villages for the unwavering support you’ve shown over the years,’ says Chris. ‘Whether engaging with us at community fêtes, or simply offering a warm drink during incidents, your kindness has never gone unnoticed. As this chapter comes to a close, I will truly miss serving our town, a role I’ve been proud to hold for over 17 years.’

## Public interest in planning

It was standing room only at the latest public meeting held by SOS Save our Shipston, a group campaigning against unsustainable development around the town. Full update in the centre pages.



Photo credit: James Kerr

## SAFAG seeking volunteers

Could you spare a little time during the week to help Shipston and Area Flood Action Group? The group has 860 interventions (leaky dams, ponds, bunds, wetlands) installed upstream of Shipston. These work to slow the flow of water, and they need periodic visits to check their condition, and to determine if repairs or upgrades are required.



No specific skills are required, but there will be some field walking, so sturdy footwear and appropriate clothing is recommended. For safety reasons, there is a minimum of two in any inspection team, with at least one being experienced and available to provide guidance.

You’ll get the satisfaction of knowing that your efforts will help mitigate the flooding risks to Shipston and the other downstream communities.

Want to learn more? Go to SAFAG’s website [www.safag.org](http://www.safag.org) or send a message (with your contact details) to [brian.cooper@safag.org](mailto:brian.cooper@safag.org).



## Top shop

Daisy Roberts’ decoration for the Blue Bean coffee shop won it the top spot in the Rotary’s Christmas window competition. The judges said that all the windows looked amazing this year and it was very difficult to choose, but in the end, they went for Richardson-Hill butchers in second place and the Richard Harvey Collection and R Locke & Son Funerals as joint third.



## In this issue

- Proms is on! – page 4
- Breastfeeding support group – page 4
- Helping nature at Cornmill Meadows – page 5
- Help The Cottage Garden Florist to flourish – page 8
- SOS Shipston planning action update – page 8
- Witness of war – page 9
- New heads at the High School – page 11
- Planet-spotting in February – page 13

## Mayor's column

Hello Shipston,

January has been a very wet and quiet affair as far as mayoral duties go, although as I write we have just returned from a very nice thanksgiving service at St Mary's Catholic Church in Warwick with a cohort of mayors from across the region.



So, as we move into February, I will talk about some of the positive things that are going on. First and foremost, I want to congratulate Emily, who has recently passed her FILCA qualification to become the responsible Finance Officer (RFO) for the town council. In addition to this, after months of hard work, she and her colleague Debbie have also been promoted to a joint Town Clerk position, and they will now both study for their CILCA qualifications. They are already a strong team, bringing their knowledge and experience to the council to help support our town and community.

January has seen the introduction of a new Town Council website. It is big, bright and colourful, with plenty of information available to assist the local community with their enquiries. Please take a look. It will continue to evolve as more information is uploaded to it but here you can find calendar event dates, minutes of meetings and so much more.

We are also planning the Annual General Meetings for the Town Council and for our allotment holders. The Town Council AGM will be held at the Townsend Hall at 7pm on 21st April. It's the meeting where we inform the community of what we have been doing for the last year and what to expect for the forthcoming year. We also present the Shipston award to an outstanding member of the community, so if you can think of anyone who you believe deserves to be recognised for their support and dedication to any causes in our town, then please let Emily or Debbie know in our main council office. In addition, I will be introducing and presenting a Mayor's Community award which recognises an individual or a group that has produced a project or initiative for the benefit of our community. If you have any ideas for anyone who may be deserving of this recognition, then we would be happy to hear from you. All councillors will be in attendance, and we always enjoy the opportunity to meet and talk with members of our community and answer any questions that may be raised. Please join us. Your views and input can help the council to shape the way we support you and our town.

In other news, as the weather starts to improve, we look forward to seeing groundworks commence at the Hub for the new youth club so that the younger people in our town have a more permanent venue for the future.

In Shipston and around Warwickshire, Councils and communities continue to fight and resist the onslaught of planning applications across the region. Proposed development sites like Fell Mill Meadow are causing grave concern for the potential impact on infrastructure, flooding, the environment and the character of

our town. Shipston Council will continue to monitor and resist such excessive planning proposals and will keep the community updated as more information becomes available.

Finally, I want to recognise those brave fire and rescue men and women of Shipston fire station who have served the town and surrounding communities from their site in Telegraph Street since it opened in May 1956. The fire station is now rebranded as a surge station, meaning that on-call crews are no longer required to work there. Consequently, our local volunteer crew has been disbanded, and cover is now provided from Stratford, Wellesbourne or Bidford. You may have already read Watch Commander Chris Townsend's reflections on the front page of this issue. Thank you to Chris and all firefighters who have served our community over the years. I know our town and surrounding villages will miss the comforting presence of such a loyal and dedicated team of local heroes.

**TTFN**

**Tony Booth**  
**Mayor of Shipston**

## Notes from Shipston Town Council's January meeting

### Planning

The application for new signage to change the Lazy Pug to the White Horse was considered, with no representation agreed. It was noted that Taylor Wimpey has submitted an application for Hanson Avenue: at the time of the meeting, it was not yet available to view. At Shoulderway Lane, Warwickshire Highways has asked the developer for more information by 26<sup>th</sup> January. The planning application for Fell Mill is yet to be submitted. Stratford District Council has issued comments, which the developer must address, requesting a 'scoping opinion' to determine what information is needed for an environmental statement.

### Finance

Council agreed to the appointment of a new internal auditor, and for the appointment of solicitors to advise on leases. The increase of the community grant award to Stour Valley Lions from £750 to £1,000 for 2026/7 was approved. It was agreed that the precept demand can be increased by 10%.

### Local Nature Action Plan

Council agreed to the statement which binds it to adopt a Local Nature Action Plan. This is a requirement for all councils and is an adjunct to Shipston Town Council's biodiversity policy.

### Parking

Council is to object to a proposal by Warwickshire County Council to implement on-street parking charges. This has not yet been agreed by WCC and will be discussed at its budget meeting in February.

### Grit bins

Residents on the new estates wanting grit bins need to ask the developers to provide them. Cllr Passingham has reminded the developers of their duty of care.

## Business

Cllr Howarth is meeting Shipston businesses and will remind them that they can have a regular slot at Council meetings. In addition, he has suggested that the Rural Economic Hub can use council chambers for communications.

## Assets

The guttering work on the Twin Chapels has been completed satisfactorily. A committee meeting of the Youth Club building will be held. Ground work on the Hub is progressing.

## Events

Cllr M Kelly has investigated the cost of barriers and found that the cost of buying outright is prohibitively expensive, but rental is a possibility. She will look into other options.

## Trees

Cllr Passingham has a list of all the Tree Protection Orders in Shipston and told council that more TPOs could be made. A map of current TPOs will be circulated.

## County Council

Cllr Barker reported that cold weather payments have been made this season. A recruitment drive is under way for childminders and reablement assistants. The Voice of Warwickshire is looking for more people to join the panel. Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Board will respond to the Beds4Badger's request to be added to the agenda.



## Town Clerk double

Shipston Town Council now has two (job-sharing) Town Clerks. Emily Booth and Debbie Hardiman, who have been acting clerks for most of 2025, officially took over the role in January.

## QR codes

You may have noticed an increasing number of QR codes appearing in the Forum lately. These are to help you connect quickly to organisations and events. Simply scan them on your phone and you will be directed to the relevant website or email address. For example, try this one. It will take you to the Shipston Town Council website.



## Vacancy in the Office of Town Councillor

For the Shipston North Ward

of Shipston on Stour

An election has not been called so the Town Council is entitled to fill the vacancy by co-option.

If you would like to be considered for co-option, or would like further information, please email the Deputy Town Clerk at [clerk@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:clerk@shipstontowncouncil.org)

## Proms is ON!

The Shipston Proms would like to wish everyone a very happy and musical 2026, with the massively good news that the Proms 2026 is ON!

The call for volunteers to join the Proms committee was a resounding success, resulting in a full house for the meeting on 17th December, with new faces turning up and a lot of positive discussion taking place. It's early days yet, but the committee is moving apace and is making exciting progress. This is your community event, people of Shipston, and it can't go ahead without your opinions, your support, and of course your attendance at events. There will be a meeting in February where we are asking anyone wanting to volunteer at a Proms event to attend. So, if you feel you can support the Proms in any way, such as selling raffle tickets, working with us on the Last Night, helping set up venues for the bands, working on the door at venues, walking round with a bucket for donations, delivering programmes door to door, etc, then please come along.  Details can be found on the website and our social media  pages.

The dates for 2026 are 19th June to 4th July, with the Last Night once again taking place in the town square. The committee is now working hard to bring back your favourite events such as Ibiza on Stour, the Pubs Trail, Mrs Porter's Chamberpot Pourri, Folk Night, Open Mic Night, the Primary Schools Concert and

some new additions based on your suggestions. So keep a look out for announcements, and get noting your favourite events in your diaries.

You can stay updated on events from our website [shipstonproms.com](http://shipstonproms.com) or by checking our Facebook Page, Shipston Proms, or Instagram [shipstonpromsmusicfestival/](https://www.instagram.com/shipstonpromsmusicfestival/). Also, look out for posters around the town, and the official programme which we will be putting through every door in the town nearer the event.



### MUSIC FOR ALL

Back in December we were invited by St Edmund's Church to submit an entry for the Christmas Tree competition, and out of the 19 entries, we won with our musically themed tree. Committee member Jonathan Breddy then took the tree and mounted it on the back of his Land Rover for the annual Chipping Campden 'Landy Run' through local villages to raise money for charity. Thanks to Simon Healey Paddocks and Grounds for donating the tree.

Look out for more announcements following our public meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> January, when we will have listened to your suggestions and expanded the scope of what's on offer for 2026.

## Primary school governor vacancy

Shipston Primary School is delighted to welcome John Dinnie, the ex-Town Mayor, onto its governing body. John brings a wealth of knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to the role. He has worked closely with the school over the past few years, including handing out its very first Shipston Spirit Awards.

There is one Community Governor vacancy open. If you have experience in finance, education or recruitment, the school would

love to hear from you about joining it in helping to guide its vision. All its Parent Governor positions are full at the moment, so this position cannot be filled by any of our current parents. If you know someone who may be interested, please ask them to get in touch via the head teacher, Glyn Roberts, on [admin5206@we-learn.com](mailto:admin5206@we-learn.com)



## Meditation and mindfulness for health and wellbeing

There is an opportunity to attend a free taster session for a four-week meditation course, run by Emma Bayliss. Accessible, practical, and designed for everyday life, this secular meditation course gives you practical tools to:

- Reduce stress and mental overload
- Sharpen focus and concentration
- Support your body in managing pain
- Navigate emotions with greater ease
- Build deeper self-awareness
- Respond instead of react.

The taster session is on 22<sup>nd</sup> April from 7-8pm in the wellbeing space at the Ellen Badger Hospital. The course will follow every Wednesday 7-9pm at the same place for four weeks. Please feel free to come along to the taster session and find out more. To book your place and for more information, contact [elhughes@outlook.com](mailto:elhughes@outlook.com)



## Breastfeeding support group

The next dates are 15<sup>th</sup> February, 9.30-11.30am and 14<sup>th</sup> March 9.30-11.30am at the Ellen Badger Health & Wellbeing Hub. More information from [HealthWellbeingCentre@swft.nhs.uk](mailto:HealthWellbeingCentre@swft.nhs.uk)



## Local Nature Action Plan

Shipston Town Council has recognised the importance of taking steps to address the ecological crisis affecting our world and



Local  
Nature  
Action

has drawn up a plan to help us take steps to tackle the decline of biodiversity in Shipston. This council-led plan is not a one-off, but

a first step towards a town-wide action plan owned and drafted by the community and involving the residents of our town.

Green areas of Shipston owned or leased by the Town Council are where we have the highest level of influence, followed by areas controlled by Stratford District Council or Warwickshire County Council. Other stakeholders include schools, sports clubs, businesses, churches and residents.

Ideas which could be used to increase biodiversity might include wildflowers in the grass verges, hedgehog corridors on housing estates, nest boxes for birds and bats, cutting back on light pollution, planting pollinator-friendly flowers or litter-picking. If you are interested in finding out more about the Action Plan, please contact Hilary Kelly [hilary.kelly@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:hilary.kelly@shipstontowncouncil.org) or leave a message at the council office 01608 662180. We are hoping to hold a meeting in April.

**Hilary Kelly**



## Helping nature

The circular walk across Shipston Town Council's wildlife site at Cornmill Meadows (opposite the cemetery on the London Road), and then to Willington and Barcheston, is proving popular. This winter we've had the existing hedge laid so that it doesn't develop into a line of trees. This traditional skill has been used to maintain hedges to contain livestock, but it also creates green growth near the ground and that habitat is good for insects and animals. We've had help from Severn Rivers Trust to dig a scrape (a shallow pond) that will increase the wetland, again encouraging different plants and animals. Dog-walkers, please do not allow your dog to go in the pond, as that will put off creatures trying to settle there.

This spring, look out for the Community Orchard coming into blossom and wildflowers blooming along the pathway and in the meadow. Last year we saw a great variety of butterflies and birds, so it's becoming a haven for them. Take a quiet moment on one of the seats the Council has installed and listen to the rich variety of wildlife that Shipston has to offer.

**Hilary Kelly**



*The newly-dug scrape, with water from Pig Brook*

## Lent lunches

As Easter approaches (this year Easter Sunday is on 5<sup>th</sup> April), Shipston's churches will be holding their traditional annual series of lent lunches in aid of charity.



**Lent lunches**

**Please support these, all in aid of charity**

St Edmund's Church Our Lady & St Michael's Church Shipston Methodist Church	March 4th at 12.30pm March 12th at 12.30pm March 24th at 12.30pm
---	--

## Regular Events

### Monday

**IT Help!**: 10am-12pm Shipston Library (appointment only)

**Story Stomp**: 10am, Shipston Library. See ad on page 7

**Shipston Community Warm Hub**: 10am-12pm, Ellen Badger Health and Wellbeing Hub

**Seated Exercise Class**: 10:30am or 11:30am, Ellen Badger Health and Wellbeing Hub  
Pickleball: 1:30pm – 3:30pm, Townsend Hall.

**The Stour Toy Library**: 2-3pm at Ellen Badger Health and Wellbeing Hub

**Shipston Duplicate Bridge Club**: 6:50pm for 7pm start. The Church Room, Darlingscote Road, Contact Matthew Hunter - 01608 684499

**Shipston Knitting and Crochet Group**: 7-9pm, Low Furlong

### Tuesday

**Strictly Fitsteps Fab**: 10am, Townsend Hall

**Rhyme Time**: 10.30am, Shipston Library

**Dementia Café**: Shipston Lodge, 10.30am-12pm

**Age Concern Lunch Club**: Stour Court 12pm. Contact Jill Case 01608 662226

**Baby Time (under 12 months old)**: 12:30pm-2pm, Badger Valley Children's Centre, Tileman's Lane. Book via Eventbrite.

**Let's Play for Toddlers**: 1:15pm-2:45pm, Badger Valley Children's Centre, Tileman's Lane. Book via Eventbrite.

**Community Warm Welcome**: 2pm-4pm, Shipston Methodist Church, New Street (Sep-Mar) free refreshments, a chat, games and jigsaws

**Lego Club**: Shipston Library, 3.30pm

### Wednesday

**Seated Tai Chi**: 9.30am, Scout Hut

**Stour Valley Stitchers**: 10am-1pm, 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wed, The Hall, Stourton, CV36 5HG

**Standing Tai Chi**: 10.30am, Scout Hut

**GLOSS Coffee Morning**: 11am, The White Horse

**Indoor Curling**: 2pm, Townsend Hall

**U3A weekly scrabble**: 2-4pm at the George Townhouse. Free for all U3A members.

**Shipston Training Band**: 6pm-7pm at the Band Hall, New Street CV36 4QR

**Shipston Town Band**: 7.30pm – 9.30pm at the Band Hall, New Street CV36 4QR

### Thursday

**Shipston Community Warm Hub**: Every Thursday 10am-12pm, Ellen Badger Health and Wellbeing hub

**Community Social Prescriber drop in**: 10am-12pm, Ellen Badger Health and Wellbeing Hub

**The Stour Toy Library** click and collect 11:00am - 12 noon, Ellen Badger Health and Wellbeing Hub. <https://borrow.shwp.org.uk/>

**Age Concern Lunch Club**: Rainbow Fields 12pm.  
Contact Christine Grant 07939 595600

**Scrabble Club**: 2pm-4pm, Shipston Library

**Stour Singers**: We rehearse on Thursdays from 7.30-9.30pm at Shipston Primary School. Contact Gayle Burch on 07791 769102

### Friday

**Pilates for Complete Beginners**: 9.30am Townsend Hall

**Walks with a friendly group**: 10am Mill car park. Call Marleen 01608 663616

**Age Concern Lunch Club**: Fortnightly, Rainbow Fields, 12pm.  
Contact Maryann Dobbin 07779 730774

**Shipston Stitchers**: Every fortnight at The Church Room, Darlingscote Road. Contact Anita Spencer on 01993 832665

**Shipston Knitting and Crochet Group** - Friday afternoons in Mrs. Browns from 2-4.30pm

**Alcoholics Anonymous**: 7.30-9pm, Ellen Badger Health and Wellbeing Hub, 28 Stratford Rd, Shipston-on-Stour CV36 4AU, 01865 242373, 0800 9177 650

**Stour Concert Brass**: 7.45pm – 9.15pm at the Band Hall, New Street CV36 4QR

### Saturday

**Lego Club**: Shipston Library. From 10am

**Shipston Food Bank**: 10.30am-12pm, St Edmund's Church, Shipston.  
No referral or voucher needed

## What's On Calendar: February 2026

**1st Lego Church**: 10.30am, first Sunday of the month during morning service at St Edmund's. For school age children. Please bring an adult. Contact [rector@shipstonchurch.org](mailto:rector@shipstonchurch.org).



**3rd Bereavement Café**: 11am-1pm, Ellen Badger Health & Wellbeing Hub

**3rd Shipston Library Reading Group**: 2pm-3pm first Tuesday of each month.

**3rd & 17th 'Dance for Joy' Monthly Circle Dance Group** in Stretton on Fosse 2.30 – 4pm. First and third Tuesday of each month. Dances from around the world – all taught from scratch. Please contact Geri Hunting [geraldinehunting@icloud.com](mailto:geraldinehunting@icloud.com) or 07968 338848



**4th Shipston on Stour WI**: A Talk from Chipping Norton Astrological Society.

Meetings held every first Wednesday of the month in The Catholic Church Hall, Darlingscote Road Shipston on Stour CV36 4DR at 7.00 pm. For more information contact: Gill Smith – Telephone 07759 232899

**4th & 18th Stour Valley Stitchers**: 10am-1pm, The Hall, Stourton, CV36 5HG. 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays

**5th-7th Shipston Amateur Dramatic Society: Aladdin** – see ad on page 16

Townsend Hall 7.30pm and 2.30pm Saturday matinee. Tickets John Lyne or [ticketsource.co.uk](http://ticketsource.co.uk) NOT on the door. £10 adults, £5 children. Children in fancy dress at the matinee will receive a treat!



**7th Shipston Town Council Monthly Litter Pick**: All welcome. Meet at New Clark House, West Street at 10am. Equipment and refreshments provided. Children's equipment available

**9th Town Council Meeting**: 7pm, New Clark House

**10th Stour Valley Lions Meeting**: 6.30pm–9.30pm; The Lion in Tredington, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month

**13th Lions Cinema**: Downton Abbey – The Grand Finale. See ad on page 16

**15th Breastfeeding Support Group**: 9.30-11.30am, Ellen Badger Health & Wellbeing Hub



**18th People, Planet, Pint; sustainability drinks**. The Horseshoe Pub. Come and hear what is going on in Shipston and see how you can join in to make Shipston more sustainable. 1<sup>st</sup> 10 drinks are free. Booking essential on Eventbrite.

**19th Drop-In Clinic**: For the over 65s. 10am-12pm, Ellen Badger Health & Wellbeing Hub. Every third Thursday

**20th Royal British Legion Social Evening**: The Shipston on Stour Branch gathers for a social event on the third Friday of each month at The Horseshoe, starting at 7:30pm. Additionally, every other month, the Branch Committee meets on the third Friday at St Edmund's Church from 6.30pm to 7.30pm, before joining the social gathering. If you are interested in Branch events or enquiring to join the Branch, please contact the Branch Secretary, Ali at [ShipstonOnStour.Secretary@rbl.community](mailto:ShipstonOnStour.Secretary@rbl.community)



**20th Shipston Music Society**: Melodies We Love with Robyn Pullen (Soprano). See ad on page 16

**24th GLOSS (Great Ladies of Shipston and Surroundings)**. A social group for women to have fun and make friends. 7.30pm- 9.30pm at the Catholic Church Hall, Darlingscote Road. The 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month (except December). All ladies welcome. Entry £2.

**24th Shipston U3A**: 2pm Townsend Hall. See ad on page 10

**25th Shipston Literary Society: Beowulf Poem and Hero** – our oldest epic resonating across the ages 7.30pm, Community Hall Tredington. Contact: Alison 07772 202915

**26th Local Quaker Meeting for Worship**: St Edmund's Church, last Thursday in the month at 2.30pm, followed by tea/coffee, biscuits & chat

**Still Space Community Group**  
Stillness, Reflection, and Creative Presence

You are warmly invited to a gently held group space for calm, reflection, and quiet presence.

Together we will slow down, rest from doing, and allow space for stillness—supported by poetry, music, and art.

Simply a place to pause, listen, and be.

We meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday (10.15am-12pm) of each month at the Wellbeing Hub in the Ellen Badger Hospital. There is no charge for this event. If you would like more information about this group, please contact Emma [elhughes@outlook.com](mailto:elhughes@outlook.com)

**Branching Out**

**LIFE SKILLS FOR EVERYONE!**  
Money made simple, futures made strong



**FREE workshops for Warwickshire residents 16+**

**Our Workshops:**

- **Power Down** - energy saving hacks to reduce your utility bills
- **Savvy Shopper Secrets** - the art of shopping for less
- **Cheap Eats, Big Flavour** - tips for cooking on a budget
- **Rent Smart** - understanding renting & your tenancy agreement
- **Budget Home Makeover** - furnishing your home on a budget using interactive software
- **Money In Motion** - learn the basics to manage your household bills

To find out more visit our website or contact the Branching Out team at CWCDA

T: 02476 633911 W: [cwcda.co.uk](http://cwcda.co.uk) E: [info@cwcda.co.uk](mailto:info@cwcda.co.uk)  
 [Instagram.com/@CWC\\_CDA](https://www.instagram.com/@CWC_CDA)  
 [facebook.com/CovertryandWarwickshireCDA](https://www.facebook.com/CovertryandWarwickshireCDA)

 **CDA** Community Development Agency  
 **COMMUNITY FUND** MAKING A DIFFERENCE

**SCAN ME** 

**Shipston Library**

**STORY STOMP** 

For ages 2-4



 **Free**

 **Mondays 10.00am**  
Just drop in, no need to book

 **Free, fun sessions for 2-4-year-olds and their parents/carers.**  
Stories and rhymes to help children's speech and language development.

**Rural Enterprise Hub**  
Supporting Rural Businesses In Warwickshire

**UNLOCK YOUR BUSINESS POTENTIAL WITH FREE, FULLY FUNDED BUSINESS SUPPORT**



 **Calling all business owners based in Shipston On Stour & surrounding villages**  
Join us on **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March**  
 **Drop in between 10:00am & 2:00pm**  
 **Shipston on Stour Council Offices**

 **A Free Friendly drop in for business owners, sole traders, start ups & entrepreneurs**

 **Whether you've got a new idea, looking to grow or overcome challenges, we're here to help.**

**Providing access to:**  
**FREE, FULLY FUNDED business support**  
**Workshops, training, funding and mentoring**  
**Helping you start, grow and overcome challenges**

To find out more contact Vicky:  
[vicky@minervamill.co.uk](mailto:vicky@minervamill.co.uk) or [01789 761334](tel:01789 761334)

## Focus on Shipston business... The Cottage Garden Florist



This month, as Valentine's Day approaches, we are placing a timely focus on a small, local, independent business, The Cottage Garden Florist. Located in Ashleys Alley, this is a lovely shop specialising in plants, gifts and flowers.

Business owner Jemma Parnell was born and bred in Shipston, and, in a twist of fate, she now occupies the same shop once home to her father's printing business. Work

experience at a local florist called Flora's sowed the seed for her interest to pursue her love of flowers. Jemma introduced her business to Shipston in early 2020, just as the pandemic was starting to tighten its grip across the country. Prior to this, Jemma had been working from Stratford Garden Centre. Despite the initial tough period, the business has gone from strength to strength. Jemma provides her service over a wide area of south Warwickshire but also has an online presence, offering national and even global access to her shop and services.

Supported by another family member, Aunty Liz, and her two French bulldogs, Kobi and Milo, the business has built up a strong clientele to include supporting the BBC's Shakespeare and Hathaway production, a famous Harry Potter actor and the RSC. A specialist vegetable wreath for a celebrity funeral also featured in the media. The Cottage Garden's core strengths are in its bespoke service for events such as weddings and funerals and corporate events. It was among many local businesses who supported the Mayors D-day Darlings Civic Event at the Town Hall in November.

With Valentine's Day in mind, the Cottage Garden offers a standard free delivery across Shipston and the surrounding villages. When you are in town, please take a moment to pop your head in, say hi to Jemma and take a look at the variety of gifts and flowers on offer. Local support is always needed and very welcome, as we all want to keep these independent gems thriving in our town.



## Protecting Shipston's future: together!



Photo credit: James Kerr

*This is how much space a lorry takes up on Barcheston Bridge. We are told by the developers that Fell Mill construction will take between 10-15 years. Imagine the construction traffic on this bridge!*

In this month's update, SOS Save Our Shipston, the campaign to stop unsustainable development, says it has great news and not so good news.



The great news is:

- ✓ Our campaign has raised over £40,000 so far to fund planning consultants and legal support to defend the proposed unsustainable development of up to 1,150 houses at Fell Mill. The expertise they provide is already paying off in the form of substantial response to the developer's inadequate and inaccurate scoping document. The case officer at Stratford Council has added his robust response to the developers. All responses can be seen at Stratford Council e-planning website (quote Scope/00044).
- ✓ We have a new information and fundraising leaflet out which is being distributed through Shipston and affected villages by us volunteers.
- ✓ Our social media is hitting the spot. The Facebook page got 179,637 views in a single month and has 1,194 following; Instagram has 302 followers and TikTok 1,349 likes and 313 followers. Reels (videos) seem the most popular receiving 26,000 views! And we now have over 300 people on our mailing list.

The not-so-good news is that Taylor Wimpey has submitted its planning application for 110 houses at Hanson Avenue. Anyone wanting support in having their views heard can get information on our website and through our social media.

At time of going to print, there is no news on the other planning applications that were submitted



Photo credit: James Kerr

in 2025. Stratford Council has been inundated, so progress is understandably slow. We also have no news about when the application will be submitted for the Fell Mill site.

### Our calls to action:

**Donate:** we will need more funds to deal with any legal challenges the Fell Mill application may face, and we need more promotional and awareness raising literature for the whole campaign (the graphic design and website is being kindly done for free).



**Follow us on social media and encourage others to do the same,** and for friends or relatives who don't do social media, encourage them to go to the website and sign up to our email list so they get the latest news and information too.



Send any evidence you have that might support objections; for instance, people have been kindly sending photos of flooding, so if you have anything that will help, do get in touch.



## Witness of War

News from the Ukrainian frontline came to Shipston from activist, humanitarian and poet Iryna Starovoyt at an event on



3<sup>rd</sup> January. This was Iryna's second interview here at the Townsend Hall and she said how pleased she was to be among her Shipston friends again.

Despite the short notice – communication and travel with Ukraine is challenging – and bad weather, 30 people came to hear about life there. Over

£200 was also generously raised for Children of Heroes: those who have lost parents due to the war.

Iryna told us of her friend, Victoria Amelina, a war crimes researcher and the chronicler of extraordinary women like herself who have joined the resistance. She tragically lost her life due to a Russian missile before she could finish her book *Looking at Women Looking at War*. It has a foreword from Margaret Atwood and has been described as destined to be a classic, with a poet's powerful look at the courage of resistance.

A particularly poignant moment for the audience was when Iryna read: 'There are experiences and gestures that a writer's imagination could never invent. Do you know why modern Ukrainians in big cities, when going to bed, put dog food in one pocket of their pyjamas and flower seeds in the other?'

The first is so that search and rescue dogs can sniff them out faster if they're still alive but unconscious under the rubble – the quicker they can locate a person in distress, the better the chances of clearing the ruins in time to save someone. The second is in case they don't survive. Then they can at least leave some trace at the site of their murder in this unpunished terror, by letting their favourite flowers sprout and bloom there.

This emphasised not only the bravery of Ukrainian people, but their hope and inspiration – a point Iryna emphasised. She thanked everybody involved in the event, saying, 'I keep very fond and vivid memories: they are still so fresh and touching.'



*The empty chair next to Iryna is a PEN International tradition to symbolise a writer who could not be present because of being imprisoned, detained or disappeared.*

## Stour Health and Wellbeing Partnership February 2026 activities

### FEBRUARY 2026



#### Contact details for activities in Shipston on Stour

Warm Hub, Toy Library and Bereavement Cafe	01608 691129	rowena@shwp.org.uk
Strictly Fitsteps	07764 496947	michellefitsteps1@gmail.com
Seated and Standing Tai Chi	07808 291899	juliareeves21@gmail.com
Pilates for Beginners	07854 289446	subabotting@outlook.com
Yoga	01608 661410	sophie.mobberley@swft.nhs.uk

1st Week

Warm Hub 10 - 12  
Seated Exercise 10:30 or 11:30  
Toy Library 11- 12

Pickleball 1:30 - 3:30

**TUESDAY**

Strictly Fitsteps 10 - 10:45  
Bereavement Cafe 11 - 1

**WEDNESDAY**

Seated Tai Chi 9:30  
Standing Tai Chi 10:30  
Booking required

Disordered Eating Drop in Session, 12 - 1  
Indoor Curling 2 - 3

**THURSDAY**

Warm Hub 10 - 12  
Cooking with Wendy, Booking required

Toy Library 11- 12  
Annual Membership £5

**FRIDAY**

Pilates for Beginners 9:30 - 10:15

2nd Week

Warm Hub 10 - 12  
Seated Exercise 10:30 or 11:30  
Toy Library 11- 12

Pickleball 1:30 - 3:30

Strictly Fitsteps 10 - 10:45

Seated Tai Chi 9:30  
Standing Tai Chi 10:30  
Booking required

Indoor Curling 2 - 3

Warm Hub 10 - 12  
Cooking with Wendy, Booking required

Toy Library 11- 12  
Annual Membership £5

Pilates for Beginners 9:30 - 10:15

3rd Week

Warm Hub 10 - 12  
Seated Exercise 10:30 or 11:30  
Toy Library 11- 12

Pickleball 1:30 - 3:30

Strictly Fitsteps 10 - 10:45

Yoga 11:30 - 12:30

Seated Tai Chi 9:30  
Standing Tai Chi 10:30  
Booking required

Indoor Curling 2 - 3

Warm Hub 10 - 12  
Frailty Nurse Drop in Sessions

Toy Library 11- 12  
Annual Membership £5

Pilates for Beginners 9:30 - 10:15

4th Week

Warm Hub 10 - 12  
Seated Exercise 10:30 or 11:30  
Toy Library 11- 12

Pickleball 1:30 - 3:30

Strictly Fitsteps 10-10:45

Seated Tai Chi 9:30  
Standing Tai Chi 10:30  
Booking required

Indoor Curling 2 - 3

Warm Hub 10 - 12  
Bereavement support from SHN

Toy Library 11- 12  
Annual Membership £5

Pilates for Beginners 9:30 - 10:15

**Venues**

Community Wellbeing Hub @ the Ellen Badger Hospital CV36 4AX

Townsend Hall, CV36 4AE

Scout Hut, CV36 4EW

**KEY**

£

**Free**

Need to book.  
Waiting list

# SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE AND NORTH COTSWOLDS

HIGHLY IMPORTANT SALE OF AUCTION POSTERS

**ROBERT GARNE HARPER**

Formerly a Member of the Chartered Auctioneers & Estate Agents Institute

Will sell by Auction, all Proceeds for Shipston Home Nursing, Save Our Shipston, Shipston Educational Society, Shipston Museum and other worthy local causes.

AT 5:00 PM FOR SIX O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON

ON TUESDAY 31st MARCH 2026

AT THE GEORGE HOTEL, HIGH STREET, SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR

**TWENTY FIVE LOTS**

OF

**EARLY 20TH CENTURY**

HIGHLY COLLECTABLE

**AUCTION POSTERS**

INCLUDING ONES OF FREEHOLD PROPERTY, ANTIQUE FURNITURE, LIVE AND DEAD FARMING STOCK ETC. FROM VARIOUS LOCATIONS INCLUDING ARMSCOOTE, BATSFORD, BLOCKLEY, BROADWELL, BOURTON-ON-THE-HILL, BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER, CHELMSFORD, CHIPPING CAMPDEN, CONDICOTE, COMPTON VERNEY, DARLINGSOFT, EBRINGTON, EVENLODE, HONINGTON, IDLOCOTE, ILMINGTON, KINETON, LOWER BRAILES, LOWER TYSOE, LONGBOROUGH, LITTLE COMPTON, LITTLE ROLRIGHT, MORETON-IN-MARSH, RADWAY, SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR, WILLINGTON, STOW-ON-THE-WOLD AND UPPER BRAILES

CONDITION IN ACCORDANCE WITH AGE

**CATALOGUES AVAILABLE PRICE £2**  
FROM LOCAL HOSTELRIES AND WHERE THIS POSTER IS DISPLAYED

COMMISSION BIDS WILL BE ACCEPTED

SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS PRINTED IN CATALOGUE

 THE AUCTIONEER BEGS TO INFORM YOU OF THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS UNIQUE COLLECTION OF AUCTION MEMORABILIA 

Auction sponsored by The George Townhouse, High Street, Shipston on Stour.

**THE AUCTION WILL COMMENCE AT 6.00PM TO THE MINUTE**

Printed by 21st Century Print, Hardingsstone, Northampton

Shipston on Stour Area

U3a

Registered Charity 1170969

Tuesday February 24

2.00pm at the Townsend Hall



Julia Sorrell talk takes the audience through her life as an artist, and being brought up with both parents being blessed artistically, it was not surprising she began embroidery from the age of 3, and won a painting competition at 5. As an artist she has been influenced by circumstances in her life, and so her work has undergone many changes. It has been a long journey not yet completed.

Admission      Members free      visitors £2

# ANNUAL ALLOTMENT MEETING

AT THE  
TOWNSEND  
HALL

TUESDAY,  
17TH MARCH  
AT 6.30PM  
ALL ALLOTMENT  
HOLDERS WELCOME

Any queries, please contact  
Emily, Town Clerk/RFO, on  
01608 662180 or  
email [clerk@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:clerk@shipstontowncouncil.org)



# ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

AT THE TOWNSEND HALL  
TUESDAY 21ST APRIL 2026  
AT 7PM

The Annual Town Meeting is a meeting for all local government electors of the Town.

It is not a meeting of the Town Council.

Anyone may attend and registered electors of the town may speak during the meeting.

Local organisations and community groups are invited to attend and report on their activities during the past year and their future plans

**YOUR TOWN. YOUR VOICE.  
YOUR FUTURE.**

For further information please contact

Shipston Town Clerk on  
[clerk@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:clerk@shipstontowncouncil.org)  
or phone on 01608 662180.



## Shipston Primary School

Throughout January we have been creating memorable moments as the children embark on their new topics of learning. These included welcoming a real life explorer and taking part in a night walk after school hours.

### A 'cool' encounter

Year 6 were honoured to welcome real-life Arctic explorer Simon to the classroom for a day of frost-bitten facts and incredible tales of endurance.



He began by showing us how people have to dress when they visit the Arctic and Antarctic in order to keep warm. Firstly, they wear thick coats, with goggles and of course, gloves. If their coats are too thick, their sweat would freeze. They also wear boots and hats.

After break, Simon the explorer amazed Year 6 with his incredible knowledge of polar wildlife. He made our minds blossom with new learning about Arctic and Antarctic creatures. He taught us about eight Arctic and Antarctic animals and four that live elsewhere. The eight Arctic and Antarctica animals are: narwhals, orcas, walruses, arctic foxes, polar bears, beluga whales, emperor penguins and arctic wolves. Did you know that orcas are actually a type of dolphin? The other four animals were: snow leopards, king cobras, piranhas and mountain lions. Afterwards we used our imaginations to design animals that might have lived millions of years ago. We then wrote a fact file describing our animals. It made our imaginations run wild!

Year 6 very much enjoyed the morning and couldn't wait for the afternoon to begin.

After lunch Year 6 were presented with some gruesome stories, pictures of frostbite and information about the dangers of the Arctic and Antarctic. Crevasses are extremely dangerous because you can't see them! They're deep drops covered in a thin layer of ice. Nearly impossible to avoid. Ever heard of frostbite? Simon the explorer had it on his ears once. They're mere scars now, but could have been a lot more serious. If frostbite is not treated quickly after being infected, the area where it is could have to be amputated. This only scratches the surface of the dangers of the Arctic. Thank you for sharing your experience with us, Simon.

Written by Anisya Dragan, Beatrix Daniel and Finn Darlington  
Year 6 Pelicans

### Reception's starry night

On Tuesday 6th January, our Reception children and their families returned to school when it was dark for an exciting night walk! Armed with torches, we walked around the school field to see how the landscape had changed once the sun went down. While the stars, moon and nocturnal animals like bats decided to stay hidden that evening, the lack of moonlight only made our torchlight adventure more exciting. To warm up afterward, everyone headed into the hall to enjoy a well-deserved hot chocolate, a biscuit and a bedtime story. It was a wonderful way to experience the school grounds in a whole new light!

### Year 4 take on the loom

Our Year 4 classrooms were buzzing with creativity as the children dived into the wonderful world of weaving and textiles. Taking inspiration from professional designers, the students mastered the art of the warp (the vertical strings) and the weft (the horizontal threads) to create their very own colourful fabrics.

## High School

### Introducing the Acting Headteachers

We are delighted to introduce ourselves to the school community as Acting Headteachers during this interim period while the formal recruitment process for a new Headteacher takes place.

It is a privilege to lead Shipston High School, and we are committed to ensuring stability and continued excellence throughout this time. Both of us have stepped up from our roles as Deputy Headteachers, giving us a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of the school, its values, and its aspirations.

Together, we bring a combined 19 years of service at the school – Jordan Allsworth (8 years) and Andrew Larkin (11 years) – and we share a clear vision: to reinforce and raise expectations for all students, ensuring every child thrives academically and personally.

We are excited about the year ahead and look forward to working closely with students, parents, and the wider community to continue building on the strong foundations of our school.

### Reflecting on a fantastic end of year

It was a wonderful way to end the year, full of festive spirit, community engagement, and enriching experiences for our students.

Our annual Santa Dash and Christmas raffle, expertly organised by Sarah Davies, Head of PE, raised vital funds for Shipston Home Nursing, topping just over £1,000! We are grateful to

Winchcombe Farms for their generous donation of prizes, which helped make the event such a success.

Students enjoyed special trips to celebrate the end of term. Years 7 and 8 were treated to the pantomime, while Years 9-11 explored cultural experiences including the Pompeii Exhibition and the Barbican. These opportunities were a fantastic way to broaden horizons and create lasting memories.

We also strengthened our ties with the local community. Residents from Low Furlong and members of Shipston Warm Hub, along with the Mayor, joined us for festive celebrations, including a preview of our Christmas show and a lively quiz. In addition, our students decorated Christmas trees for residents at Low Furlong and Shipston Lodge, spreading joy and seasonal cheer.

Finally, we launched our Tubs for Pubs campaign, which is still running. Donations of chocolate tubs are welcome. They will be taken to a Greene King pub, with proceeds donated to Macmillan Cancer Support. Last year, we raised an incredible £4,658.67 through charity events, and this year we are determined to beat that total. Thank you for your continued generosity and support – it truly makes a difference.

We look forward to an exciting year ahead and to working together to make 2026 another year of success for our students and community.

**Jordan Allsworth & Andrew Larkin**  
Acting Headteachers

## Stour Valley Lions



December was a very busy month for the Lions team, with four community events in addition to all the usual Christmas family events.

One of the highlights was attending and helping with the Shipston Lodge Christmas Fete, which is a great event for both residents and locals, and our team helped with the set-up and running of the event and followed up with also attending the Esmere Lodge Christmas fete at Moreton in Marsh.

December 13<sup>th</sup> saw our Book Sale team swing into action at the Scout Hut for another successful book sale, supported by many Shipston on Stour residents who went away with armfuls of books. The next sale is on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March at the Scout Hut – doors open at 9am. The Lions also donated books to Shipston Pre-School, and supported local charity Noxaid with a package of books for Ukrainian schools.

We finished our Christmas events with the Lions Bingo Night on 20<sup>th</sup> December at the Townsend Hall, which was fully booked and enjoyed by all who attended, and was a very festive end to the year.

The Stour Valley Lions are committed not only to organising numerous fundraising events for local causes, but also to nurturing a vibrant social life within the Club. Our social activities are enjoyed alongside our valued Friends of Lions Volunteers, fostering camaraderie and a strong sense of community.

### 2025 outings

In 2025, our members participated in a variety of enjoyable outings and gatherings, which provided opportunities for relaxation, entertainment, and social interaction. The highlights of our social calendar included:

- attending the Shipston Amateur Dramatic Group's annual pantomime
- enjoying a lively game of skittles at The Butchers Arms in Mickleton
- taking part in a medieval banquet held in Brailes
- gathering for lunch at The View
- spending an evening at a play presented by the Caramba Theatre
- meeting for breakfast at The Rev on the Fosse, which has now become a monthly tradition
- visiting the Broadway Museum
- returning for a second round of skittles at The Butchers Arms in Mickleton
- capping off the year with a festive Christmas bash at Mrs Brown's Tea Rooms.

Planning for our 2026 programme of outings is already underway. We aim to fit these enjoyable events into our busy activity schedule, ensuring a balance between our fundraising commitments and the social wellbeing of our members.

### 2026 forward diary dates:

- 13<sup>th</sup> February – Lions Film Night, Townsend Hall
- 7<sup>th</sup> March – Book Sale at Scout Hut
- 14<sup>th</sup> March – Shipston Gold Race Night at Townsend Hall

Finally, our thanks must go to all Shipston residents who have helped us with time, donations and coming to our events in 2025, making it a successful Lions year.

Interested to come and join us or help with events? Send an email to [enquiries@stourvalleylions.club](mailto:enquiries@stourvalleylions.club) or call us on 0345 833 2835. 

## Shipston Rotary's Christmas fundraising

In the run-up to Christmas, Santa met hundreds of excited boys and girls, along with their parents, when he spent six nights walking around the Shipston housing estates. For any children who missed him then, he was also in the High Street on the Saturday before Christmas. With grateful thanks to Unity and Subaru, Tredington Crossroads, for supplying Santa's truck again this year and to David Arnold for his amazing decorating skills.

Altogether, the generous donations amounted to £1,923 raised



for Shipston Rotary local charities and good causes. The Tree of Life, which shines out in the High Street throughout Christmas, with every bulb sponsored in memory of a loved one, raised a total of

£1,261 in donations and sponsorship, which will be presented to Shipston Home Nursing.



## Shipston Music Society

Our 2026 programme begins on 20<sup>th</sup> February with a recital by soprano Robyn Pullen, a local girl from Newbold who is establishing a reputation as a young, rising British singer. She has sung for us before – in a young persons' concert – but not since she was still at primary school! This will be her fourth visit to Shipston in the last 12 months. She was the memorable soprano soloist at the last two Stour Singers concerts and also appeared at last year's Shipston Proms.

Her programme promises an evening of timeless favourites, memorable arias and musical theatre gems. In short, there will be something for everyone. Robyn will be accompanied by Charles Matthews. The concert starts at 7.30pm and, as always, will be in Shipston Methodist Church. Tickets cost £10 and will be available at E.H. Spencer in town or on the door. Cash only, please.

Our concert on 20<sup>th</sup> March will feature another local musician, George Wilkes (cello). More about that next month! We shall be delighted to welcome new faces. If you enjoy the evening the ticket price can be offset against your subscription, should you decide to join us.

Please get in touch if you would like more information: 01608 662998 or [dlaurie.grove@gmail.com](mailto:dlaurie.grove@gmail.com).

Laurie Grove



## Townsend Hall

### THE TOWNSEND HALL

Save the date! On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April the Townsend Hall will host Ray Gelato and his band as part of an exciting programme of Jazz Evenings this year. Ray Gelato, the UK's Godfather of Swing is a British jazz, swing and jump blues saxophonist, singer and band leader. He is considered by many to be one of the last in a long line of classic swing and jazz entertainers. Expect to hear some foot-stomping big band tunes. This, combined with Ray's fun and original songs, make for an unforgettable evening that will leave you wanting more!

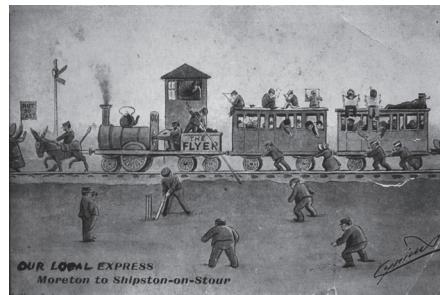
'Awesome band' – Van Morrison. 'He plays what he means and means what he plays' – Jools Holland. Tickets will be on sale at the end of February, online via [ticketsource.co.uk/townsend-hall](http://ticketsource.co.uk/townsend-hall) or [townsendhall.co.uk](http://townsendhall.co.uk) or from the Flower House, 3 Market Place Shipston-on-Stour.



## Shipston Museum history talk

### The Tramway: celebrating 200 years of innovation

Don't miss a fascinating journey into our town's industrial past.



Shipston Museum invites you to an unmissable history talk that brings to life a remarkable chapter in our local story.

Two centuries ago, the Stratford to Moreton Tramway transformed

our area, connecting Shipston to the wider world during the height of the industrial and agricultural revolutions. This pioneering venture is illuminated by Museum Trustee Stephen Hartley, as he relates the story and tells us what became of the Tramway and the Shipston Branch Line. Event details as follows:

**Date:** Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2026

**Time:** doors open at 2:15pm to start the talk at 2.30pm

**Location:** The Townsend Hall, 52 Sheep St, Shipston-on-Stour CV36 4AE



**Tickets:** £5 (available in advance from Eventbrite, Richard Harvey's on Church Street, or on the door subject to availability).

The story doesn't end there. From 4<sup>th</sup> April, visit Shipston Museum's Tramway display, featuring authentic period objects, original drawings, and an impressive, scaled Lego model of Shipston Station.

Stay tuned next month for details of our display and local history talk on the Romans in the Stour Valley.

### Join our team

Love history? The Museum is seeking enthusiastic volunteers to help with research, cataloguing our extensive collection, and welcoming visitors during opening hours. It's a wonderful way to connect with our heritage and community and any assistance is gratefully received. Contact [enquiries@shipstonmuseum.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@shipstonmuseum.co.uk) for more information on how you can help.

## Shipston WI



Despite icy conditions, the January meeting was well attended. Philip York spoke about female spies during the Civil War - they tended to be on the Royalist side, and being a woman worked to their advantage because women could infiltrate where men dared not tread!

The next meeting of the WI will be on Wednesday, 4th February when someone from the Chipping Norton Astrological Society will be speaking. As usual, the meeting is in the Catholic Church Hall, Darlingscote Road at 7pm.

## Stratford-upon-Avon Astronomical Society



The speaker at 8pm on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2026 will be Professor Susanne Schwenzer from the Open University, with a talk called Thirteen years and counting: curiosity at Gale Crater, Mars. Please note that the speakers start promptly at 8pm.

The Society meets every first and third Tuesday at 8pm (doors open at 7.30pm) at Alderminster Village Hall. Everyone is welcome, especially beginners and those wanting to learn more. The first Tuesday is a club night.

*Member Adrian Wakeham tells us about the planets this month.*

A big issue for observing is clouds and a nearly full moon: bright moonlight will drown out the stars and planets. The best time to observe the night sky is when the moon is at first or last quarter or less.

This month on Monday 16<sup>th</sup>, Saturn and Neptune are in conjunction, with each other. (Visually, they are within a degree of each other.) They are to be found in the west at sunset, below the square of Pegasus. Saturn is yellowy brown in colour and with binoculars, the rings might be visible. In the same field of view, Neptune will be visible, although not easy to see and you really need a telescope, as it might be Titan, Saturn's largest moon.

Jupiter will be at its closest to Earth in February and will be high and bright, making this one of the best times to observe the gas giant and its moons. As Mercury continues to rise above the western horizon, it will join Venus in conjunction. Venus is really easy to spot, being the exceptionally bright 'star' in the west. This will happen on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February, and on the next day, seven of the eight planets will be visible as well as a virtually full moon.

Saturn, Neptune, Venus and Mercury will be close to the western horizon shortly after sunset and will disappear below the horizon within 90 minutes. If you head east, you'll find the Pleiades or Seven Sisters cluster, in which you can see a number of the stars, but with binoculars you will see many, many more. Then slightly south of the Pleiades you will see a green 'star'. This is the planet Uranus.

Continue east and just below Gemini's Castor and Pollux, will be another bright 'star'. This is Jupiter. With binoculars you should see some of the 4 Galilean moons and with a telescope you should be able to make out the bands and the great red spot. The planet missing out on the party is Mars – at the moment, it is pretty much behind the sun.

Happy observing!



## County Council

Yesterday at St Edmund's church, Canon Jill reminded us that pancake day is on 17<sup>th</sup> February (well she was reminding us of the day after, Ash Wednesday). The sun did come out and there are more murmurations of starlings – what a noise – indicating that spring is closer than we think! Yippee for spring! Then as a politico, I remember that elections are usually looming, not for us this year, but I will be helping friends elsewhere. I am not pleased that elections in so many places have been postponed for a second year (again, not here). It does not seem fair that when seismic changes are going on around us, there is no chance to vote. And I say that as someone who I hope you agree is not scared of my voters. Since the latest Nadhim debacle, lots of people have reminded me that it was he they were voting against in local elections, not me!

By the time you read this, Trump and NATO may be having a reshape over Greenland, the Iranians may have overthrown their religious autocracy and Traitors will be over for another series!

For me, a really troubling issue which affects all of us is social media. I dooms scroll and lose the odd hour so doing. I play Angry Birds, a game populated by middle-aged types just like me. I use as much tech as I can although I have been heard to say that I will not be put through Chat GPT thank you very much! (Note to editor...)

I only started using all these tools when I was a reasonably fully functioning adult. I have asked the question a lot about the effect that screentime, social media and gaming have on younger people. Our Director of Public Health's report this year, 'Growing up Online' which you can reach by scanning this QR code,  is on this very issue (have a look at the WCC website)!

WCC will be spreading the message more broadly via social media (irony not lost here) on ways to handle the pressures as individuals and families. Interestingly, there is growing evidence of the effect on the neuroplasticity of young brains of the level of usage of screens. The genie is out of the bottle, but I really wonder whether in 20 years time we will look back and wonder what we were at? I am pleased that a cross-party consensus is forming. I don't like the word ban but on the other hand, we don't let under 16s drink, smoke or drive, so perhaps we need to take a more parental approach to them on this?

I am also trying to help coordinate a SEND parent group, and maybe some sessions too! SWUFT, SHWP and other individuals want to come together and offer support. So, a busy young person-centred month awaits!

If anyone wants to meet up, let me know and we can arrange. Otherwise, I will advertise advice surgeries on the Shipston Noticeboard.

PS: WCC are asking people to consider becoming childminders and also joining the Reablement Team.

Give me a bell or email.

### Jo Barker

County Councillor, Shipston Division

077489 68712 | [jobarker@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:jobarker@warwickshire.gov.uk)

## District Council



I think we've got to the end of this ridiculous eight months of unprecedented planning applications in Shipston. If they all went through, Shipston would grow by 64%. I'm not just being optimistic to say that 1,700 houses aren't going to be built in Shipston in the next 20 years. I'm being realistic. The building industry only builds houses if they're going to make a profit. Stagnant house prices, and a shortage in building materials and skilled workers, make the government's promise to build a million houses in the next four years look like a pipedream. But we still have to deal with each application as they come in front of the planning committee, and we are all rightly anxious about the cumulative impact of multiple developments. 'Cumulative impact' is a valid planning argument especially when it comes to sewage, transport, and landscape.

There is a need in Shipston for more quality social housing and more affordable housing, but 10s, not 100s. There is a group looking into the viability of setting up a Community Land Trust in Shipston. A trust set up properly can borrow money to buy land and give the decision-making power to the community, whether it is for workspace, or houses available to rent. Anyone interested or who has some expertise in this area, do get in touch. I am a QUIMBY, (Quality in my back yard), not a NIMBY (Not in my back yard). We will continue to battle for this.

We are worried about WCC's plans to impose paid on-street parking in Shipston. The administration should be doing all they can to support our amazing town centre independent businesses, not imposing barriers for them. We will be inviting their Highways portfolio holder to come and see how Shipston works, and what effect paid on-street parking would have on our unique town centre.

The Rural Enterprise Hub is a great resource for local businesses, providing free practical business support. It is hosting its first drop-in session at New Clark House on 10<sup>th</sup> March from 10am to 2pm. This is for all businesses in Shipston and the surrounding area, whether you're already established, or if you're in the planning stages of starting something new. One of the Hub's 'Business Navigators' will be available for one-to-one information on how the hub can help with workshops, training, funding and mentoring. Whether you've got a new idea, are looking to grow or need to overcome challenges, the Rural Enterprise Hub will be there to help.

Finally, anyone who has an experience good or bad using the IndieGo PLUS app, please let us know. This is the low-cost on-demand bus service for when the number 50, 51, or 75A isn't going where or when is convenient. It operates 9.30am to 7pm, but we'd like to extend it, so it is useful to those working or going out later than that. If using apps is not your thing, you can book a ride by actually talking to someone on this number: 01926 742000.

### Olivia Hatch

District Councillor, Shipston North

07752562114 | [Olivia.hatch@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:Olivia.hatch@stratford-dc.gov.uk)



## Your town councillors



**Tony Booth, Mayor**  
*General Purposes and Communications Working Group Chair*  
 e: [tony.booth@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:tony.booth@shipstontowncouncil.org)



**Richard Walters, Deputy Mayor**  
 e: [richard.walters@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:richard.walters@shipstontowncouncil.org)



**Gerry Kelly**  
*Planning Committee Vice Chair*  
 t: 07471 687720  
 e: [gerry.kelly@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:gerry.kelly@shipstontowncouncil.org)



**Ian Cooper**  
*Finance Working Group Chair*  
 t: 01608 663785  
 e: [ian.cooper@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:ian.cooper@shipstontowncouncil.org)



**Paul Tesh**  
*Planning Committee Chair*  
 t: 07711 433566  
 e: [paul.tesh@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:paul.tesh@shipstontowncouncil.org)



**Jo Barker**  
 t: 07748 968712  
 e: [jobarker@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:jobarker@warwickshire.gov.uk) (for town and county matters)



**Hilary Kelly**  
*Environmental Working Group Chair*  
 e: [hilary.kelly@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:hilary.kelly@shipstontowncouncil.org)



**Chris Howarth**  
 e: [chris.howarth@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:chris.howarth@shipstontowncouncil.org)



**Michelle Kelly**  
 e: [michelle.kelly@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:michelle.kelly@shipstontowncouncil.org)



**John Williams**  
 e: [john.williams@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:john.williams@shipstontowncouncil.org)



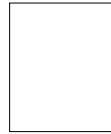
**Steve Crockett**  
 e: [steve.crockett@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:steve.crockett@shipstontowncouncil.org)



**Vanessa Benjamin-Smith**  
*SAFAG Chair*  
 e: [vanessa.benjamin-smith@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:vanessa.benjamin-smith@shipstontowncouncil.org)



**Vacancy**



## Useful contacts

Community Links Transport	01789 264491
Shipston Library:	0300 5558171
- 24/7 renewal line	01926 499273
Highways customer services	01926 412515
Severn Trent Emergency Line:	0800 7834444
Shipston Volunteer Transport Scheme (VASA)	01789 262889
Shipston Leisure Centre	01608 662354
Shipston Medical Centre	01608 661845
- Out of hours	111
Shipston Link (local transport)	01386 593446
Shipston Recycling Centre	01926 412593
Stratford District Council	01789 267575
Townsend Hall	07514 704057
Warwickshire County Council	01926 410410
UCHW Hospital	024 7696 4000
Warwick Hospital	01926 495321
<b>Local police (non emergency)</b>	<b>101</b>

Shipston Police Safer Neighbourhood:  
 PC1508 Sid Hammond – 07967303185  
 PCSO Katie Brooks – 07870978973

### Churches of Shipston:

Stour Valley Baptist	01608 664876
Our Lady & St Michael	01608 685259
St Edmund's	01608 661210
Methodist Church	01295 257193

### Shipston-on-Stour Town Council

New Clark House, West Street, Shipston-on-Stour, CV36 4HD



#### General Enquiries

t: 01608 662180 e: [enquiries@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:enquiries@shipstontowncouncil.org)

#### Town Clerks

e: [clerk@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:clerk@shipstontowncouncil.org)



### County Council Contact:

#### Councillor Jo Barker

t: 07748 968712 e: [jobarker@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:jobarker@warwickshire.gov.uk)



### District Council Contacts:

#### Dave Passingham (Shipston South)

e: [dave.passingham@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:dave.passingham@stratford-dc.gov.uk)



#### Olivia Hatch (Shipston North)

e: [olivia.hatch@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:olivia.hatch@stratford-dc.gov.uk)

t: 07973 846605



## Something exciting to share?

If you have a story that's relevant to Shipston residents, please contact the editor, Laura Parker, by email: [forum@shipstononline.org](mailto:forum@shipstononline.org) or, if you don't have email access, on 07989 530069



To request posts on the council's Facebook page, contact [enquiries@shipstontowncouncil.org](mailto:enquiries@shipstontowncouncil.org)

### Forum copy deadline:

### Second Monday of the month

– but the sooner you can notify the editor of a potential story the better.

The Shipston Forum is produced monthly by the Town Council.

While every effort is made to ensure information is accurate, the Town Council and its contractors do not accept responsibility for material submitted by readers or third parties and does not endorse any organisation or event publicised. Contributions may be edited to fit available space.

**Shipston Music Society**  
Registered Charity No: 1146459 (England)



*Melodies We Love*  
FROM OPERA TO THE WEST END

Join local musicians  
*Soprano Robyn Pullen and Pianist Charles Matthews*  
For an evening of timeless favourites, memorable arias, and musical theatre gems

Friday 20 February at 7.30pm  
Shipston Methodist Church, New Street, Shipston on Stour CV36 4EN

Tickets: £10 (cash only) on the door  
or in advance from E H Spencer (from late January 2026)

For further information, call 07779 151 947

**making music**

**STOUR VALLEY LIONS CINEMA**



**DOWNTON ABBEY**  
THE GRAND FINALE

When Mary finds herself in a public scandal and the family faces financial trouble, the household grapples with the threat of social disgrace. Certificate PG

**TOWNSEND HALL**  
**FRIDAY 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2026 at 7.30pm**

Tickets on sale from The Flower House, Shipston for cash £6.00, or pay on the door, Drinks, Chocolate and raffle.

**Lions Den 2026**



**DO YOU OR YOUR ORGANISATION NEED HELP OR SUPPORT?**

**We are here for you!**

We can support....

- Schools
- Clubs and Societies
- Charities
- Individuals in need and much more....

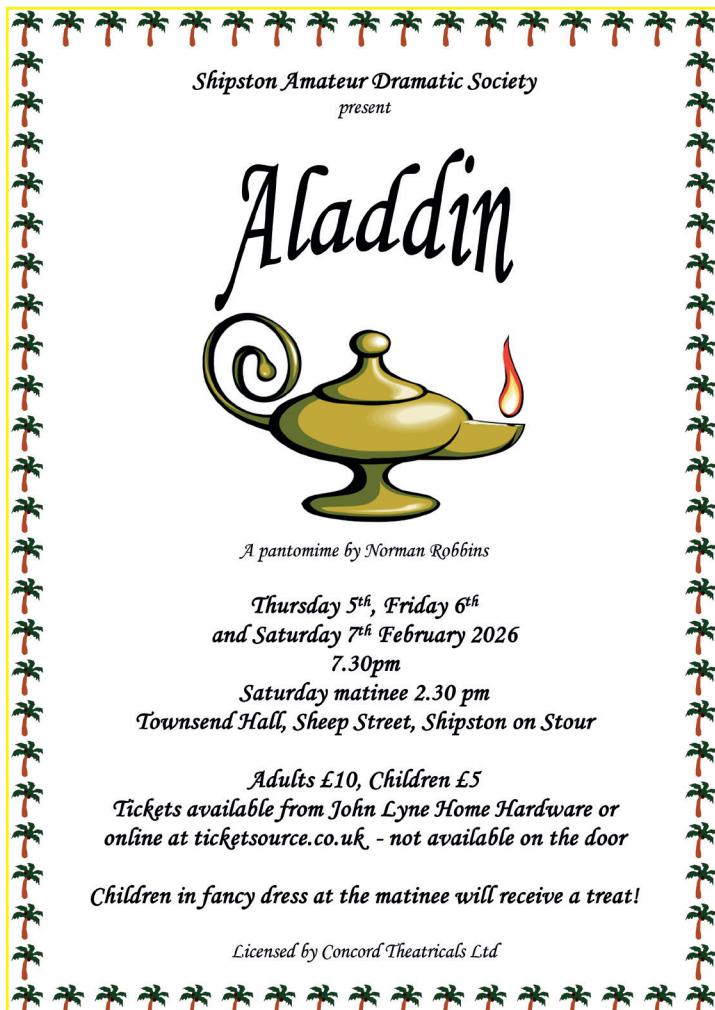
Why not take part in the Stour Valley 'Lions Den' initiative for the chance to get funding or support?  
Closing date 27th March 2026

Scan the QR code or contact us now using the details below to obtain an assessment form



For more information contact us on:  
**0345 833 2835**  
<https://stourvalleylions.club>

**an initiative supported by**  
Stour Valley Lions Club



Shipston Amateur Dramatic Society present

# Aladdin



A pantomime by Norman Robbins

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup>, Friday 6<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2026  
7.30pm  
Saturday matinee 2.30 pm  
Townsend Hall, Sheep Street, Shipston on Stour

Adults £10, Children £5  
Tickets available from John Lyne Home Hardware or online at [ticketsource.co.uk](https://ticketsource.co.uk) - not available on the door

Children in fancy dress at the matinee will receive a treat!

Licensed by Concord Theatricals Ltd