

Westcott Village

Magazine

September 2026



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Cover photo - 'Early Harvest' by James Friend

Westcott has a population of over 2,000 and this is the only magazine written specifically for the Westcott area by the people of Westcott. It is hand delivered, free of charge, to every household and further copies are available at the church, local shops, pub and doctor's surgery.



If you have any articles, photos, letters, etc that you think we may like to feature in the next issue, please email the Editor on:

editor@westcottmag.com

But please note, publication will always be subject to space and at the discretion of the Editor.

Copy deadline for
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8th September 2026

This magazine, published by the Church in Westcott, is printed on Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) accredited paper from a sustainable source. The views expressed are those of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Church, Editor or Westcott residents.

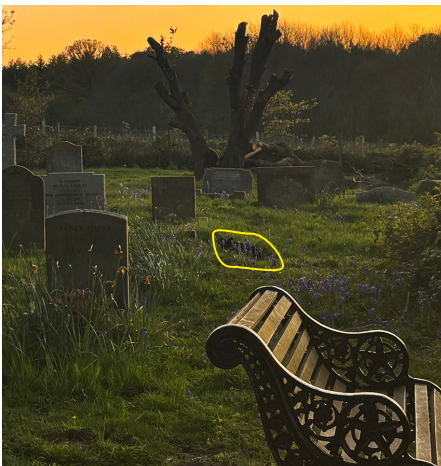
FROM THE EDITOR



Welcome to some slightly cooler weather (hopefully)! As I write this it is still very hot and everywhere is golden rather than green.

September is all about new beginnings if anyone in your house is in education at any level, so good luck to all those starting out anew this month wherever it may be, whether you are 4 or 44!

If you struggled to spot the cat on the previous cover, you are not alone! I have circled it in the zoomed in picture below, but it was a tricky one - thanks Maria! Please keep sending in your photos and you might end up on the cover too. We have lots of photos this month, of the Open Gardens event on page 51 and more general local pictures on pages 31 and 33.



The village coffee morning is on the 2nd, with the usual refreshments and books and jigsaws (in case the weather does ever break!).

Sadly the Westfest team have decided to call it a day, see page 13 for details, but it means if you have any ideas for a replacement now's your chance! Thank you so much to all who have been involved over the years, you've done wonders!

There has been a lot of discussion about the future of the Riverbank surgery and you can find a letter putting forward Dr Tom Guilder's perspective at <https://westcottvillage.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Statement-of-Consultation-August-2026.pdf> starting on page 53 of this document.

Kids eat free at the Hub continues Tuesday-Saturday until the kids go back to school. The community fridge van is also still on Tuesday 2.15-2.45, with the Hub opening times now being Tuesday 12-2, Wednesday 10-2, Thursday and Friday 10-4 and Saturday 10-2.

I hope you all have a successful September whatever you are doing, and if you're not already starting something new, maybe you should think about giving something a go anyway!

Cath
editor@westcottmag.com

...FROM THE CHURCH IN WESTCOTT



VICAR MEETS HEAVY METAL

Last year I found myself at the gym. It may sound unlikely from the look of me, but I can assure you that I do occasionally make it along with the intention to pump some iron. I found myself in there with one other chap who had clearly pumped considerably more iron than me of late, his biceps quite possibly weighing more than my whole entity. We followed the generally accepted gym etiquette - a short, grunted greeting with minimal eye contact - and carried on our merry way.

I did some preliminaries, before moving onto the bench press. If you are unfamiliar with the furnishings of the gymnasium, this is where you lie on a bench and push some weights vertically into the air. Now, in defence of what is about to come, I must stress that I was well within what I would normally press in this scenario, but for whatever reason when I had lifted the weights up once, then twice, I found that they stubbornly refused to ascend a third time. I paused for a minute or so and tried again. It once again remained wilfully connected to my chest.

At this point I realised that I had two choices. I could remain in my current



predicament indefinitely, resigned to watch the years pass by while being slowly crushed in a horizontal position, or (perish the thought), I could ask my fellow gym user for some assistance.

I waited another couple of minutes in the vain hope that a third option may reveal itself.

It did not.

'Mate,' I reluctantly mumbled. Then, slightly louder: 'Mate. Excuse me, mate...'

Having acquired his attention, I proceeded to lay out my predicament. He was infuriatingly pleased to help me out.

I was of course grateful to my saviour for his help, but did he really need to lift the weights off me using only one hand?

One of the deepest recurring experiences of my Christian faith is God lifting from me the burdens that weigh me down. The worries, fears, insecurities and situations which could all too easily keep me pinned in place unable to move. 1 Peter 5.7 says 'Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.' In other words, give God the stuff that is weighing you down - he can take it!

...FROM THE CHURCH IN WESTCOTT

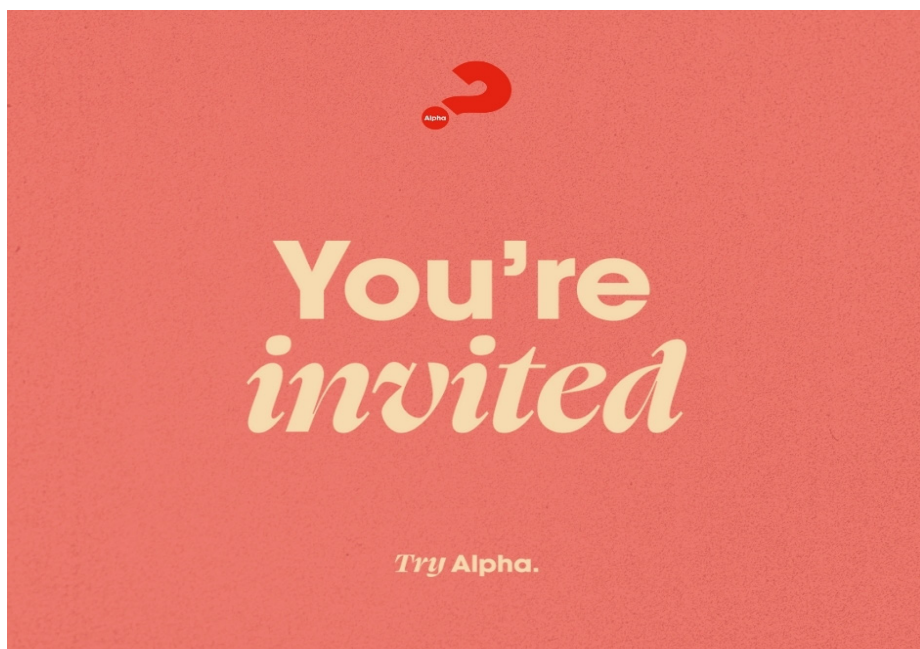
He would rather you let Him carry it than watch it stop you knowing the fulness of life that he desires for you. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus says, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.' I meet plenty of people who are weary and burdened by global, local and personal situations at the moment. If that is you, Jesus invites you to come to Him with the things that weight you down – whether it is relationships, work, finances, health, fear, failure, mistakes or anything else. In my experience, bringing this stuff to Him makes all the difference in the world.

Not that the situations instantly resolve (although sometimes through prayer they do), but something changes within me.

I can't fully explain it, but it is not all that different from having a weight lifted off my chest by a stranger in the gym. Although with Jesus there is no smug grin, just a warm invitation to walk with him as he shoulders the stuff that was pinning me down. It's pretty great to be honest.

Want to find out more? We're running an alpha course from this September where you can meet new people, watch a talk and share your thoughts. You're invited. Visit alpha.org.uk/try.

Every blessing.
Tim



SUNDAY SERVICES AT HOLY TRINITY



8.30am Book of Common Prayer Communion, A warm welcome in our beautiful, traditional service.

10.15am Friendly, relaxed service, using Common Worship and a range of music styles. This service is also livestreamed on Zoom.



For 10:15am Zoom service connection, please scan this QR code, or visit the Online Services page of thechurchinwestcott.org.uk and follow the link.

The church is open every day, 9am-4pm for private prayer & reflection

DATE	THEME	8:30AM	10:15AM
6th Sept	Trinity 14	Book of Common Prayer Communion	Communion with Baptism and Sunday Club
13th Sept	Trinity 15	Book of Common Prayer Communion	20-20-20 with Breakfast
20th Sept	Trinity 16	Book of Common Prayer Communion	Communion with Sunday Club
27th Sept	Trinity 17	Book of Common Prayer Communion	Morning Prayer with Sunday Club



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MIDWEEK PRAYER & WORSHIP

Wednesdays	10am	Communion at St John's
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IF YOU'VE GOT ANY TIME TO VOLUNTEER WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! WE NEED SUPPORT FOR EVENTS IN THE CHURCH, NOT THAT OFTEN - WEDDINGS, FUNERALS AND THE ODD SUNDAY SERVICE. TRAINING WILL BE GIVEN ON THE SYSTEM AND SUPPORT ALONGSIDE FOR YOUR FIRST FEW EVENTS. IT WOULD BE GREAT TO EXPAND OUR TEAM OF VOLUNTEERS AND IT'S A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE 'VILLAGE LIFE' IN ALL ITS RICHNESS - AND HELP OTHERS FULLY APPRECIATE OUR SERVICES.

IF YOU'D LIKE TO FIND OUT A BIT MORE DROP US AN EMAIL ON CHURCHWARDENS.HTCWESTCOTT@GMAIL.COM

Your seat is saved

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THE CHURCH IN WESTCOTT

The Church in Westcott is part of the Westcott Good Neighbour Scheme and we are always here for a chat, prayer, pastoral need.

Debt advice: Paul Stacey (paulstacey88@gmail.com)

Holy Trinity Pastoral Assistants: Mark Shakespeare (01306 888010)

For help, or more information, please contact

Tim Armstrong, Vicar: vicar@holyltrinitywestcott.org.uk
or visit thechurchinwestcott.org.uk



FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS

Death:

15th January 2026 Christine Imianowski (78)

13th May 2026 Ruby Baker (87)

29th May 2026 Terry Wooden (89)



FLOODLIGHTING

The September floodlighting has been sponsored by Laraine in memory of James Watkinson and Michael Player.

If you'd like to sponsor the church floodlighting, please contact Sarah Massey at admin@holyltrinitywestcott.org.uk. (Suggested donation of £75 to Westcott Church Funds.)

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*Good Luck to all
starting a new school,
college or university
course this month,
(both teachers and
pupils!) I know it
might be a bit scary
but just be yourself and
you'll smash it, and
maybe even enjoy it
when you get the
hang of it!*

WEST *festivity*
2026



**Westcott
Christmas Fair**

**Saturday 14
November
2026**



Westfestsurrey@gmail.com

Brockham Choral



Brockham Choral's rehearsals for their Christmas Concert starts on 1st September at 7.30pm at St John's CofE Primary School, Dorking, RH4 2LR. The programme will include music from Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, Vaughan Williams *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* and other themed Christmas music. Welcoming back Musical Director David Swinson with Marion Lea as our superb accompanist.

Many social events occur during the year. If you would like to join this friendly music making society, all voices welcomed, no audition required. Please visit www.brockhamchoral.org

D&G 20th Anniversary Concert 7.30pm, 24th October 2026 at St James Church, Abinger

The D&G Choir are celebrating their 20th Anniversary with a concert of music chosen by the Choir of much loved pieces that they have sung over the years both from the early formative years when this local Choir was just a group of women learning to sing and from recent concerts put on at St James or on tour in Yorkshire or learned in Spain while on a singing retreat. Led by new Musical Director, Jody Robinson, it promises to be a fun evening bringing back many happy memories of the Choir and the concerts put on over the years.

Proceeds from the concert are being donated to two charities who have supported a member of the Choir. *Live Life Give Life* is an organisation that encourages people to make loved ones aware of their wishes relating to organ donation, and *Kidney Care UK*, the country's leading kidney patient support charity. The D&G Choir would love to fill the Church, both to enjoy the evening celebrating 20 years of this brilliant choir but also to support these very worthwhile charities.

Tickets are £12 each for adults, £8 for children and can be obtained via the Choir's ticketing website: tickets@dandgchoir.net



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♥ CONNECT ♥ SHARE ♥ SUPPORT ♥ THRIVE

WESTfest Announcement

Dear Westcott,

It is with a heavy heart that the WESTfest team need to let you know that we've decided not to run the summer WESTfest event any more.

In these divisive times our community needs opportunities to come together more than ever, but sadly the WESTfest volunteer organisers are now working full time, and the event has become too big for us to manage.

So, no WESTfest means there's a gap for others to fill... WESTstock maybe? A picnic in the park...?

Hopefully a village event will happen next summer! If you'd like to discuss an idea with us do get it touch: westfestsurrey@gmail.com



WESTfestivity 2026 will run as planned on Sat 14 November 2026
 Contact: westfestsurrey@gmail.com



**DORKING
LOCAL
HISTORY
GROUP**

Dorking Local History Group

In September, Dorking Local History Group will be resuming its popular programme of live and Zoom talks after a short summer break. These fascinating talks are free to members, but non-members are also welcome. Upcoming dates are:

Guildford's Wool Trade in Medieval Times and Later - Live talk by Mary Alexander, examining wool production and trade across Surrey. Monday 7th September at Crossways Community Baptist Church, Junction Road, Dorking, RH4 3HB. Doors 7pm, for 7.30pm start. £2 at the door for non-members.

Vickers at Brooklands - Zoom talk by Richard Marks in conjunction with Surrey Industrial History, exploring Brooklands' remarkable aviation heritage. Thursday 17th September, via Zoom, 7.30pm.

For further details of talks and other activities – or to join DLHG – go to <https://dlhg.org.uk>



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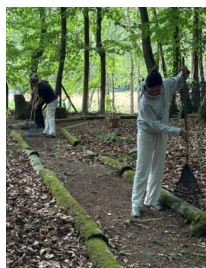
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I do hope everyone has had a great Summer, I imagine most of our gardens have had a very difficult time, the Memorial Woodland being no exception. Some of the young saplings have really struggled and the pond is very low on water. But I am confident all will recover once the rain does come.

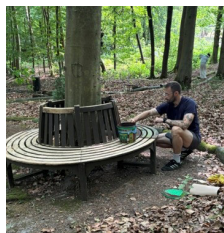


In July we had a group of volunteers who spent the day with us and quite honestly worked their socks off. They were a number of young employees

from UNUM, an absolutely delightful group of young people. They took on the tasks asked of them with great enthusiasm;

raking the leaves and twigs from the pathways, cleaning the benches, rubbing down the timber gate at the

entrance to the car park ready for me to apply linseed oil and painting the circular seat by the monument



with wood preserver. What they achieved in a day was so much



appreciated.

It's groups like this we are keen to encourage to come to the woodland to not just work but to find out more about the Charity and the work we do for our Veterans in times of need. Please do contact Debbie our Charity Secretary for more information if you are a group looking for a day's voluntary work to help our Charity.

Our next event at the woodland will be our annual Remembrance Service on 11th November. We are as always pleased to welcome the children from Surrey Hills School and St John C of E School, Dorking. They always attend our Remembrance Service and take part by singing and reading poems plus laying poppy wreaths at the Monument. So do please come along and remember those brave servicemen who gave the ultimate sacrifice so we may be free today. We meet at the Monument at 10.40 followed by a Remembrance Service, The Last Post, two minutes silence and Reveille. All are welcome.

Do remember the woodland is open 24/7 for you to come and reflect and enjoy the flora and fauna. I look forward to seeing you and remember the kettle is always on!

Paul Cooling, Chairman
The Quick Response Memorial Woodland
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September will appear
on 26th, and is known
as the Harvest,
or Corn, Moon*

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Fund raising for our new Village Hall continued in June with two events.

Rock Choir: Back in Westcott!



On Friday 19th June the Dorking Rock Choir, led by the incredible Sam Smith, performed a night of classic rock and pop anthems, raising the roof of Westcott's Holy Trinity church. We were in awe as the 60 Rock Choir voices belted out familiar songs; you couldn't fail to be transported by the wonderful sound and their

collective passion for singing. We all got to join in at the end! Our warmest thanks to the Rock Choir, who gave up their evening to perform for us, raffle prize donors, and all those who helped run the evening. The night raised over £1,500 for the Westcott Village Hall development project. If you're thinking of joining Rock Choir, give it a try. No auditions, no need to read music... go to www.rockchoir.com and sign up for a taster.

Westcott Open Gardens 2026

The Westcott Open Gardens event was run for the second year on 28th June, and proved to be an enormous success, attracting not just village residents, but also visitors from the wider Surrey and Sussex areas. Our Open Gardens route featured 8 private gardens plus the Community Garden at the Hub, and the nature garden on Westcott Meadow. Around 600 visitors made the walk around the gardens, enjoyed browsing the plant and craft stalls, and enjoyed tea, cake, Pimms and a barbecue at the village hall. We are hugely grateful to everyone who supported the event.

Thank you to everybody who made this such an enjoyable day – the organisers, those who donated generous raffle prizes and cakes, those working on the stalls, and a special thank you to all the incredible garden hosts. It's a massive task to open your garden, not least all the preparation to get it looking tip-top, especially tricky in the hot dry summer. We raised a fantastic £5,300 in total and donated 10% of our takings to F@SH at Surrey Hills All Saints school.



Westcott Village Hall Trustees

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By the time you read this we will be back raring to play! With new faces and a few siblings and our school leavers heading safely off to school we're ready for lots of exciting adventures. But before we get into those we have loads to tell you about the end of last year. Get yourself a cup of tea and let us begin...

Our Summer term is always the busiest with lots of lovely fairs to attend, a vegetable patch in full bloom, father's day, leavers trip and sports day to name but a few events.

We'll start off with the leading men in our lives – our Daddies! The



plan was to have a father's day forest school cooked breakfast, however the weather had other ideas. Not ones to be deterred we let Henry do her thing in the kitchen and voila, the yummiest of inside cooked breakfasts was served. We absolutely loved being able to show our dads exactly where we play – we think they wanted to stay longer!

Next up was the Abinger Medieval fair. We love that we are a part of the procession and feel very important p a r a d i n g into the ring – practicing our most royal waves and then having front row seats



for the marvellous maypole dancing. Our clapping along is exemplary!

Heading to the penultimate nursery week our super brilliant school leavers were treated to a trip on a minibus to Little Street – where they had the whole village to themselves. How many children can you fit into one fire engine? And motorbikes?! How many grown ups can get arrested at once? How many supermarket sweeps can be swept? Safe to say everyone had a great time and heads were nodding on the way back.

It is a nursery tradition to finish the year with sports day and graduation and this year was no different. A team of pirates assembled on the shores of the Evelyn Hall ready to battle it out on the stormy seas. Luckily they remained calm and treasure and medals were heartily won. We're still not quite sure who won the parents' three legged race but there were some interesting techniques! Then came the very proud moment for our graduates who each got a charismatic keepsake picture and certificate then sung a superb song to us all! Well done and we shall miss you!

If you would like to join our nursery family please don't hesitate to get in touch - we still have spaces available. For more information or to book a show around call 07842 978823 or email abingercommonnursery@gmail.com We can't wait to meet you!

Kate Fairbrass

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GARDENERS' CLUB SUMMER SHOW REPORT

The Summer Show was held in the Village Hall on 4th July at the start of yet another heatwave. The Vegetable and Flower Judge, Jean Griffin, was surprised at the number and quality of the exhibits considering the adverse growing conditions this year. We had 25 adult exhibitors who submitted 176 exhibits between them, and this made for a impressive display as seen in the photograph taken by Edward Bennett.

The results were as follows:

Lannon Challenge Bowl - Angela Deloford

Habgood Challenge Cup - Kay Meldrum

V. Hermes Challenge Cup - Edward Bennett

Sir John Hay Challenge Cup - Zillah Nicole,

Rosette for Best in Section - Jo Smewing

Dr R. Kingsley-Jones Rose Trophy and

Rosette for Best in Section - Janice Carter

J.D. Dow Challenge Cup - Kay Meldrum,

Rosette for Best in Section - Edward Bennett

G.S. Dee Challenge Cup and *Rosette for*

Best in Section - Angela Deloford

Salmon Cup and *Rosette for Best in Section*

- Angela Deloford

Ron Lucas Memorial Cup and Plaque - Kay Meldrum, *Rosette for Best in Section*

- Sarah Massey

Forresters Cup and *Rosette for Best in Section* - Angela Deloford

Kateley Challenge Cup and *Rosette for Best in Section* - Thomasine Burnap

Brooks Cup and *Rosette for Best in Section* - William Deloford

Willis Cup - Sarah Massey, *Rosette for Best in Section* - Sue Farman

Jill Flower Novice Summer Cup - Sarah Bradley

Peter Meldrum Cup - Angela Deloford, *Rosette for Best in Section* - Zillah Nicole



Our next show is 5th September at the Village Hall.

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Alistair Meldrum



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WESTCOTT HISTORY GROUP

Reg Ward – Westcott's diminutive lion tamer



Reg Ward was born in Westcott in 1916 and lived in St John's Road until 1940 when he married a n d m o v e d away. He

attended the village school when James Gore was the headmaster and in those days the school leaving age was 14, but his need for pocket money was such that by then he had already tried his hand at several jobs. He delivered newspapers before setting off for school each day and on Saturdays he would take his cart – a wooden Tate & Lyle sugar crate acquired from Balchin's Stores to which two old pram wheels had been added – to the Bury Hill wood yard in Milton Street to collect firewood for various friends and neighbours. The cart also proved very useful for collecting the laundry from houses in and around Westcott for washing at his aunt's house in St John's Road where Reg grew up.

When he was 13, because he was friendly with the Head Keeper's sons on the Bury Hill estate, Reg was regularly

engaged as a beater for Mr Barclay on his Saturday shoots. Another 'little earner' was making chips for Jack Tucker's fish and chip shop in Furlong Road. This entailed filling a big wooden barrel with hot water in which he cleaned the potatoes by scrubbing them, and then 'chipping' each one individually. The pocket money he earned enabled Reg to buy sweets from Mr & Mrs Woods' shop on the main road, although Mrs Elliott's little sweet shop in St John's Road, almost opposite The Cabin beer house, was always more interesting because he and his chums loved watching mice scuttle around the window display.

Entertainment in the village was provided at the Hut, originally the YMCA Red Triangle Club before being taken over by the British Legion. Jack Robinson was the steward and the snooker tables were popular with Ronald Howard, who was occasionally accompanied by his film star father. His first full time job was with local builder Bill Smith who had won the contract to develop Milton Avenue on land that had previously formed part of Milton Farm but which at that time was where the Westcott Football Club played its matches. Reg's task was to carefully remove the grass from the football pitch and relay it to provide instant lawns in the gardens of the new houses. Much more exciting was his next role as gardener at the



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Old House (the white house with the wonderful wisteria adjacent to the smaller of our two general stores). This belonged to Professor LF Rushbrook Williams, a British historian and civil servant who spent part of his working life in India, and was an expert on the subcontinent. When Mohandas K Gandhi came to England, he would often stay with Williams in Westcott, who had long periods of separation from his wife and two young sons at home in Westcott. Prior to a return visit in 1935 the Maharajah of Nawanagar insisted that Williams take a gift of a lion cub home to his young son Francis. The journey home, with the lion cub, by ship and then train from Rome was eventful and included meeting Mussolini.

The Old House had a conservatory and a high-walled brick fence and the lion lived there, sleeping in the glassed building and able to roam the rose garden at will. Reg Ward was 19 by this time and had to quickly learn to take responsibility for the young animal, christened Singh by this time. Francis recalls the wonderful summer he had with Singh playing indoors and with the run of the garden was 'just like a pussycat'. The cub had learned, from Reg to wipe his face with a flannel, using his paws, after eating and Professor Williams recalled that after every meal, he carefully wiped his milky mouth on a cloth which was



left beside his feeding bowl.

Lion cubs grow very quickly and London Zoo sent a man down every week to see how he was getting on and they soon insisted he be put on a meat diet. Reg said it was interesting to see how he tore and shook pieces of meat before swallowing them. It was quickly realised that this arrangement could only be short lived and so at the end of the summer the family called a black cab – history is silent on the driver's reaction to the feline passenger – and drove to London Zoo. Singh walked in the main gates on a lead, borne by Francis and Reg. An extant letter from the secretary of the zoo records the transaction: *"I am directed to return you the thanks of the Zoological Society for your kind gift of the undermentioned animal which has arrived safely and makes a welcome addition to our collection."* Newspapers the next day bore the headlines: "Lion Walks in By Front Door", "The Lion Arrives – by Taxi, Singh: One of the Zoo's Politest Pets".

With war approaching Reg was called up but at only 4ft 9in tall he

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was rejected for duty at the front and found himself in various war related manufacturing in Dorking. By this time Reg had acquired a wife, Phyllis Cooper, whose father worked on the Broome Hall estate. She lived at North Holmwood and it was whilst he was courting that Reg fell foul of the law. After a dance at Holmwood he was stopped by the police when he drove his mate's motorbike home from a dance at Holmwood, with his mate on the pillion. Reg was fined 10/- for driving without a license and a further £2 for having no insurance!

He led a blameless life thereafter and eventually retired to Lancing Court, near Horsham.

New to Westcott? Then you need to buy the recently published History of Westcott. Cost £7 and available from the Hub, Nisa or Dorking Museum.

Westcott Local History Group has an excellent website westcotthistory.org.uk or via the Village Association website westcottvillage.com

John Clachan



Baby Meals



In early August the Cooks were delighted to swing into action on the same day brand new baby Gracie came home from hospital! Mum Emily and Dad Alastair were delighted to not have to think about dinner for a couple of weeks while they adjust to their new arrival!

If you're expecting a baby, or know someone who is, or if you know someone in difficulty who might need our support with a few home cooked meals (for free!), please let us know. And if you want to join the Westcott Volunteer Cooks list, (no obligation, just sign up to rotas if and when you can) please get in touch!

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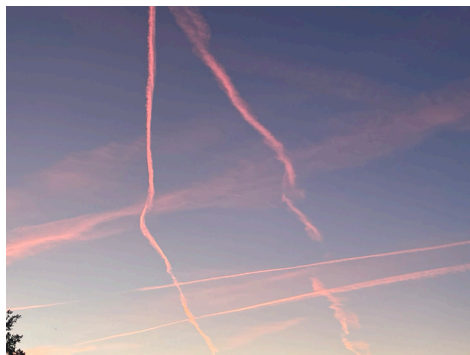


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These summer shots of the sky looking like it's been hand-painted and a tractor going about its work were sent in by Andy Cunningham



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WESTCOTT

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Starting and finishing in Westcott, we'll be walking up 6 of the picturesque Mole Valley hills, including Leith, Box, Holmbury and Ranmore. Or join us for a half-marathon distance (13 miles). Suggested participation donation £1 a mile, but all donations and sponsorship welcome. Closing date for sign up Sat 26 Sept.

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These pictures taken by James Friend remind us of how the fields used to look before the drought really kicked in, when there were still flowers in bloom and how early the harvest was this year!



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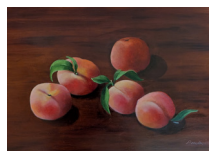


Imogen Hartridge

Dorking Group of Artists October Exhibition 2026 Denbies Wine Estate, Dorking, Surrey RH5 6AA

*Open to the public: Friday 9th October,
Saturday 10th October 10:00 – 17:00, Sunday
11th October 10:00 – 16:00*

Do join the Dorking Group of Artists for our next exhibition at Denbies Wine Estate from 9th to 11th October, and enjoy a perfect autumn day out! As one of Surrey's largest art groups, we are showcasing around 200 vibrant, new pieces created by our local members and professionals, displayed in Denbies Gallery and adjoining Suite. Whether you are looking for a framed masterpiece or a budget-friendly unframed painting, there is something to suit every taste and budget. The paintings should appeal to every taste, featuring different subjects and styles and covering a wide variety of media. It is the perfect opportunity to find unique, thoughtful Christmas gifts ahead of the holiday rush. Admission and parking are completely free. Come for the art, and stay for the day to enjoy Denbies' brilliant café, restaurant, shop, and vineyard tours.



Pauline Allbeury

Why not consider joining us? For more information about our activities, exhibitions and how to join see www.dorkingartists.com follow us on Instagram [Dorkinggroupartists](https://www.instagram.com/dorkinggroupartists) or get in touch at contact@dorkingartists.com

*Angela Hall, Chair, Dorking Group of Artists
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DON BRADLEY'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

Born on the 27th of September 1926, Don's family lived in Beckenham, Kent where he went to Abbey Prep School. When war broke out, in September 1939, the whole school was evacuated to Woolacombe in Devon where the school took over several hotels and Don's mother went with them to help. However, they only stayed two terms as in 1940 Don's father decided to move the family to Epsom Downs for safety. Here Don attended Epsom College as a day boy and made good friends. These teenage years living in Epsom and attending the school are large in Don's memory: playing tennis with his best friend Keith Carpenter when a fighter aircraft, attempting to shoot a doodlebug down, dropped its shell cartridges all over the tennis court; observation duties at the top of the college tower during doodlebug raids and pressing the button for the siren to get the boys to take cover; helping with the Home Guard and racing on his bike to call the men out when the phones were down, are just a few of those memories.

The family house on Epsom Downs was Battle HQ for the Home Guard, who were frequently trained by the Welsh Guards stationed in the Grandstand on the racecourse. From here they could see the dog fights in London and watched for aircraft going over as they would dump their bombs on the Downs, and Don kept a detailed record of raids during this time.

In 1943, and just 17, Don put his place to read economics at Oxford on hold and joined up. He volunteered for aircrew in the Fleet Air Arm, and in 1944 was called up for training as a pilot. He flew in open cockpit planes with no ear defenders and the noise of that and the weapons firing, damaged his hearing permanently. In May 1945 the armistice meant his flight training was ended, and much to his disappointment he therefore never received his wings. Instead, he was sent to work on communications in the jungles of Ceylon for 18 months - but he was thrilled to find his best friend Keith Carpenter there too! Don was demobbed on 20th April 1947. In later years it has been Don's great honour to lay the wreath at St James' church Abinger on Armistice Day.



Oxford no longer seemed relevant after his war experiences and Don started work at Anthony Gibbs Insurance brokers, and although changing companies a number of times, he remained in insurance for his whole career. In 1954 Don met his future wife Audrey at a party. After only 2 months they knew they were right for each other and got secretly engaged, not announcing it till May the next year.



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DON BRADLEY'S 100TH BIRTHDAY (cont.)



They married on 5th May 1956 and Don's best man was his dear school friend Keith

Carpenter. Sarah, Jane and Simon were born while they lived in Westcott. and in 1969 the family moved to Pasture Wood House in Abinger beginning 65 years of happy married life in Abinger.

One striking memory Don has is of the fires in the summer of 1976. The fire officer called him to come home quickly from work as the fire had reached their garden fence. He remembers going down to the Abinger Hatch to get volunteers to help beat the flames. The fires raged round the woods in Friday Street, Leith Hill and the Pasture Wood. The family later moved to Cherry Tree Cottage where, in 1987, the house was completely cut off by the hurricane. All the trees along the road and up the track came down and there was no electricity, phones or water. The family remember sitting in the road picnicking off all the wonderful food that had defrosted in their neighbours' freezers! Cherry Tree Cottage was the last house to be freed.

Don retired in 1985, and the Headmaster of Belmont School asked him to join the board of governors. This was a voluntary post, and Don was honoured to be asked. He later became

Chairman and was responsible for the school becoming Co-Ed, a move which proved to be very successful. In the February of 1991 a fire took hold at Belmont, destroying much of the house. This was a terrible time, but Don is proud of the hard work he and the other volunteers did to enable its rebuild. In all, the work took about 4 years to complete. On Don's 70th birthday the headmaster called him at home to ask him to pop in and to his surprise the whole staff had assembled to wish him a happy birthday! (Belmont is now Leith Hill School).

Looking back on his life Don has such happy memories. He has been a stalwart



supporter of the Abinger Fair, helping run the Tombola for many years and in 1988 he started up the Old Codgers' lunches with Bernard Sheldon. He loves the beautiful countryside and stresses how much we must look after it. As to how he has lived till 100? - he said it was thanks to all the care and help he has received, and he was very thankful for his family and the National Health Service. But sitting with him in his living room, it seemed to me that his interest and zest for life, and his warmth and humour, must have a lot to do with it.

Jenny Parker

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Thank you to everyone who attended the WVA Annual General Meeting on the 24 June. In case you missed it the full presentation and draft minutes of the meeting can be viewed on the WVA website <https://westcottvillage.com/agendas-minutes/>

At the meeting concerns were raised directly with Hazel Watson about the overgrown vegetation reducing the useable width of the pavement adjacent to the A25 from Balchins Lane towards the centre of the village. Our thanks to Hazel who took on board the feedback and subsequently arranged for the Surrey County Council Clean Up team to act, the pre and post photos below show the significant improvement that was achieved as a result.



There is always more to be done in these areas and everyone is encouraged to keep using the Report section of the Council website to ensure areas of concern are logged, this includes missed bin collections and potholes both of which continue to be an issue <https://www.molevalley.gov.uk/report/>



We had a super turnout for our August litter pick with many willing volunteers. Thank you to everyone who came and took part and enjoyed refreshments with us at The Hub afterwards.

By the time you are reading this we hope to have attended the first meeting with Mole Valley District Council at the end of August about the creation of our new Parish Council, along with representatives from Box Hill and Dorking who are also embarking on the same journey. Once the next steps are clear we will kickstart the Westcott Working Group made up of volunteers with an interest in seeing the Parish Council get off to a great start. It's not too late to get involved in the working group if you would like to, there is no commitment required to the Parish Council long term just a willingness to help get it off the ground. Please drop an email to contact@westcottvillage.com if you would like to join the group.

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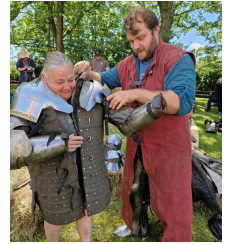
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it was the 70th anniversary of the revival of the Abinger Fair! We celebrated with the Invicta Men at Arms who put on a great show for us in the arena, and everyone was fascinated by their armour, weapons and rules of combat. We were also treated to the Medieval tunes of Rabscuttle, a band of wandering musicians. Our first big thanks go to all of you who attended on the day and spent your hard-earned pennies on the stalls. There would be no fair without you all. We would also like to thank all the new recruits this year, it is always lovely to gather new enthusiasm and new ideas. We are also always grateful to those of you who have helped out over a number of years and continue to do so. We must mention the excellent work of Tarek, the arena manager, who is stepping down after 15 years. We also thank all of you who were involved in any way, on stalls, behind the scenes, making breakfast, donating items, buying raffle tickets, the maypole, music in the church, staffing car parks - the list goes on! All that is left to say now is... see you next year!



If your charity or organisation would like to benefit from the proceeds, please put your request in writing to Liz Irvine, Abinger Fair Secretary, abingerfairsec@gmail.com

Liz Irvine, Abinger Fair Secretary



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DORKING MUSEUM

Dorking: Cycling capital of England:



Dorking Museum's summer exhibition continues. The original Dorking

Cycling Club was formed in the 1880s, and by the 1890s, Dorking had several cycling clubs, which provided both companionship for touring and competitive possibilities. Clubs did not always encourage female members, and so many women founded their own. Cycling also influenced how women dressed, with some experimenting with the knickerbocker and skirt combination known as 'rational' dress, allowing them to cycle without heavy skirts.



The exhibition includes our 'penny-farthing' bicycle and an original 'boneshaker', the first type of true bicycle with pedals. A wealth of information, photos and memorabilia also features.

Walking in Dorking: Enjoy one (or more) of our popular guided walks, featuring:

- *Hidden Dorking:* Features of Dorking that you may have missed before. Sunday 6th September, 11am.
- *Up and Down the Greensand:* Follow the greensand through Dorking, from

West and South Streets to Rose Hill, the Glory Wood with its tumulus and Goodwyns, to Dorking Golf Club and Terrace to explore the features resulting from the particular geology of the area. Saturday 26th September, 2pm.

- *The Deepdene Trail:* Beautiful gardens, enchanting woodland, and stunning views, with exclusive access to the restored 19th century Hope family mausoleum. Cream teas available at the Dorking Golf Club Clubhouse before or after our guided walks. Sunday 27th September, 2pm.

Please see dorkingmuseum.org.uk/guided-walks-around-dorking/ for details and booking of scheduled walks (please book in advance) or for private group bookings.

Heritage Open Days Walks: Enjoy one of our free guided walks during Heritage Open Days:

- *Historic Pub Walk:* Saturday 12th, 6pm.
- *Betchworth Castle:* Sunday 13th, 2pm.



- *Everyday Histories:* What do everyday names tell you about the history of the town? (Sunday 13th, 2pm)

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DORKING MUSEUM (cont.)

- *Working Lives in Dorking* in the 18th and 19th centuries (Saturday 19th, 2pm).

These walks will be available to book through the Heritage Open Days booking system. See <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/> for more information.

South Street Caves tours:



Beneath Dorking's busy streets lie the 17th century South Street Caves, featuring

a series of staircases, galleries, wine vaults, and chambers, leading down to the 'Mystery Chamber' 50 feet below street level. At the time of writing, our September open day is sold out, but why not get a group together for a private tour? See dorkingmuseum.org.uk/south-street-caves/ for details, or e-mail caves@dorkingmuseum.org.uk to arrange a date.

Family Activities at Dorking Library:

Future town - Design your perfect Dorking for the year 2076. What makes a town? Use cardboard cutout templates of buildings with differing frontages to design a future Dorking street. Led by The Arts Society Dorking as part of Heritage Open Days. Saturday 19th September, 10am-2pm. *Celebrate Roald Dahl*: What story do you like? Make a craft or colour

in a picture from his books. Saturday 26th September, 10am-noon. Both at Dorking Library, St. Martin's Walk. Free, materials provided and children must be accompanied.

Dorking Refugee Committee papers:

The Museum's archive team is working with the University of Surrey on the *Accessing Refugee History in Surrey Project*. Led by Professor Constance Bantman and Dr. Beth Palmer, and funded by the Community Foundation for Surrey, the project will create a digitised and publicly accessible archive of the Dorking Refugee Committee's records. These records contain powerful stories of those escaping Nazi persecution, and of E.M. Forster and Vaughan Williams' involvement with the committee and refugees. The project will be launched on 24th September.

Museum Access: You may have noticed some construction work relating to the development behind the Museum. We expect to stay open throughout these works, but we will notify everyone through our website and social media should this change.

Dorking Museum, 62 West Street. Thursdays 1pm-4pm, Fridays and Saturdays 10am-4pm, free entry. www.dorkingmuseum.org.uk. Visit dorkingmuseum.org.uk/digital-guide/. 01306 876591.



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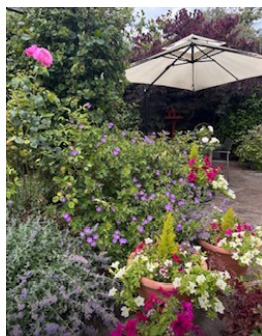
MUSIC IN DORKING



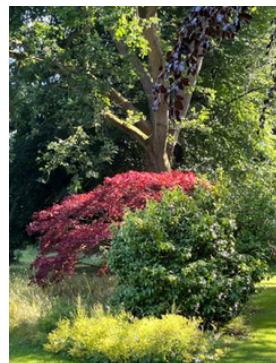
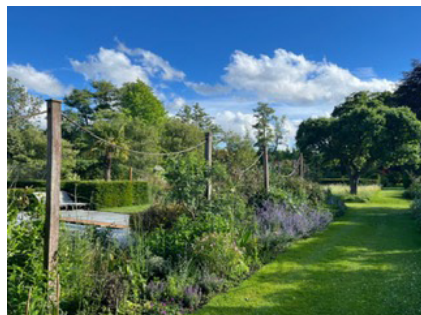
While September remains quiet, the new concert season resumes in October and there is plenty of excellent music to look forward to in the coming months. The Dorking Concertgoers have their usual enterprising series of concerts planned, including three concerts by the Sacconi string quartet and a visit from the Orchestra of the Swan. The Dorking Choral Society will be singing two major works from the baroque - Bach's *Magnificat* and Vivaldi's *Gloria* - in November. Next year's Leith Hill Festival will include, alongside music by Holst and Vaughan Williams, a mass inspired by Argentinian tango music, and Rossini's *Solemn Mass*, performed with two pianos and accordion. Plus much more – full details to follow!

Ian Codd

OPEN GARDENS PHOTOS



Here is just a small selection of photos from the Village Open Gardens from Melissa Byrne.



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I think therefore I am



When I started to think about what to write this month, I thought about AI. I could have written an article about the massive amount of water needed to cool and run data centres and the impact on the environment. I could have written about the light and noise pollution from them, affecting both people and animals. The detrimental health impacts causing increased rates of respiratory diseases and cardiovascular conditions, along with the elevated cancer risks among nearby communities, through the particulates being released into the atmosphere. I could have written about their prevalence in the UK (over 500 in operation with over 100 more to come in the not-too-distant future). But I figured that most people already know this anyway.

So, I then sat down and really started to think about AI and in so doing, started to think about the word AI – Artificial Intelligence – what does that mean? It made me wonder about all things artificial. With so

much information coming at us in the world today it's difficult to work out what is real or well, artificial. The news we are fed is not necessarily the full reality but a biased, view with an agenda. Even our mainstream daily papers (whether in print or online) have failed most recently to make adequate mention of the climate emergency in its reporting to the recent heatwaves.

During the period 22nd – 28th June analysis of top UK national media, tracked how many articles including the phrase, 'extreme heat' or heat wave' also went on to mention 'climate change' or similar. Out of 2500 articles only a quarter mention anything to do with global heating (Guardian 2026). The science is clear on climate change and yet what we get is only half the information.

Research by Imperial College London found that around 2,700 people died from overheating in the UK in May and June (Guardian 2026). This is shocking. Would it not have been salient to mention the causes of the heatwave at this point? People cannot make informed decisions if they do not have all the information. It is not that the media are lying per se, but to withhold information as important as this is surely irresponsible?

Social media is governed by AI



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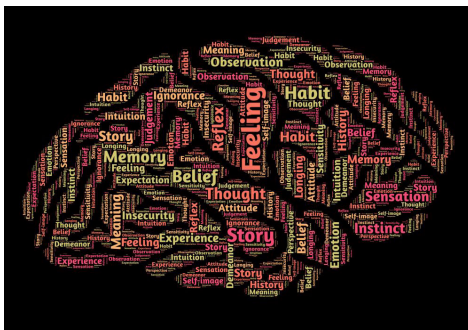
algorithms which feed the 'interactor' content, which is often biased in a certain direction, according to the attention given by the 'interactor' to the said content. This model uses AI to determine what you are interested in but the nuances of this are not lost on me (nor I'm sure, on many of you). We don't just think one thing, or just have one view. Whether you are right or left leaning, or somewhere in the middle, all of our views are influenced by our thinking, by our experiences and our interaction with others.

Whether you believe in a god or reincarnation, or the Universe or some other belief, all of the conclusions that we come to around these topics have come through the lens of our own experiences and thought processes, analysing what we believe and what we 'know' to be true. But if our thinking today is being influenced by something that in and of itself, is marketed as artificial intelligence, how can we be sure we are making informed choices when

the information we are given may not be correct?

I would argue, that much like artificial grass which denudes the soil of nutrition and biodiversity, perhaps AI is also denuding our minds of all of the complex ways we might potentially think? The mind is a complex entity and, as the saying goes, use it or lose it. Remember the days when you didn't know the answer to something and how this prompted conversation - a dialogue between friends or family to explore possibilities, to come up with an answer. Today it is so easy to just Google the answers and many of us do, perhaps robbing us of that opportunity of interaction with others.

Google holds 91% of the global search market. It has also recently altered its interface, becoming an AI prompted search engine, so that when you search for anything, it will immediately throw up sponsored content along with AI generated answers. If you want to actually look at the search results to your enquiry, you will need to scroll down the page a fair way to reach what you're looking for. This, you may not consider to be that much of an issue. However, many people will go to the first answer they see because its easy - which in this case is AI generated - thereby increasing AI usage and increasing all the impacts this has on



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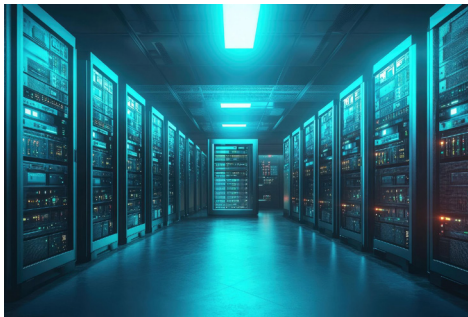
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GREEN WESTCOTT (cont.)

our planet, to say nothing of ignoring (perhaps) that AI is not always right.

To take the answers from AI as fact, without any discourse or proper investigation is like meeting a man on the street who claims to be god and just accepting that, without any further information or questioning. AI will tell you what it thinks you want to know without the nuance of discussion or context. Is this not the fundamentals of what makes us human – to be able to reason and question?



I am not an absolutist on the use of AI, it can be very useful for some things but I can't help feeling that the dominance of AI generated answers

and AI chat bots for quick answers are stripping us of our critical thinking minds and I feel this is a dangerous place to be. If you are concerned about the effects of data centres on the planet there are a number of other environmentally friendly search engines below.

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Ekoru is all about saving the oceans, they provide funding to global partners to remove rubbish from the oceans. They use hydroelectricity to power their servers meaning they generate 1205% less CO2 than Google!

Ocean Hero is another, this one allows you to turn on 'Ocean Mode' to see coral and schools of fish behind your search results. They have currently removed 32,506,976 bottles from the sea!

Nancy Lund

For a fully referenced version of this article please visit <https://greenwestcott.org/blog>

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Birds Sunbathing

On a sunny day in July, a bird was 'sunbathing' on the trunk of a fallen tree with its wings spread out, prompting the author to investigate this activity further.

An article by the British Trust for Ornithology entitled 'Sunbathing Birds' opens with the following paragraph:

"Sunbathing' is used by some birds as part of their routine feather maintenance and is most

commonly seen by garden birdwatchers in Blackbirds and Robins. The birds invariably adopt a posture in which the body feathers are fluffed up and one or both wings are held out from the body, with feathers spread. It is thought that using the sun in this way does two things. It both helps the preen oil to spread across the feathers and drives parasites out from within the plumage. Some of these parasites feed on the feathers themselves and all are highly specialised, with many only found on a single species of bird."



Sunbathing Bird



Juvenile Robin

The sunbathing bird in this case was a juvenile Robin, but it is interesting to consider whether this is instinctive, innate behaviour in a recently fledged bird or whether it had been taught to do this by its parents.

See more on our activities and photos or if you're interested in joining below

Facebook: RSPB Dorking and District

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Website: <https://group.rspb.org.uk/dorkinganddistrict/>

Rob Carr
Dorking and District RSPB Local Group

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