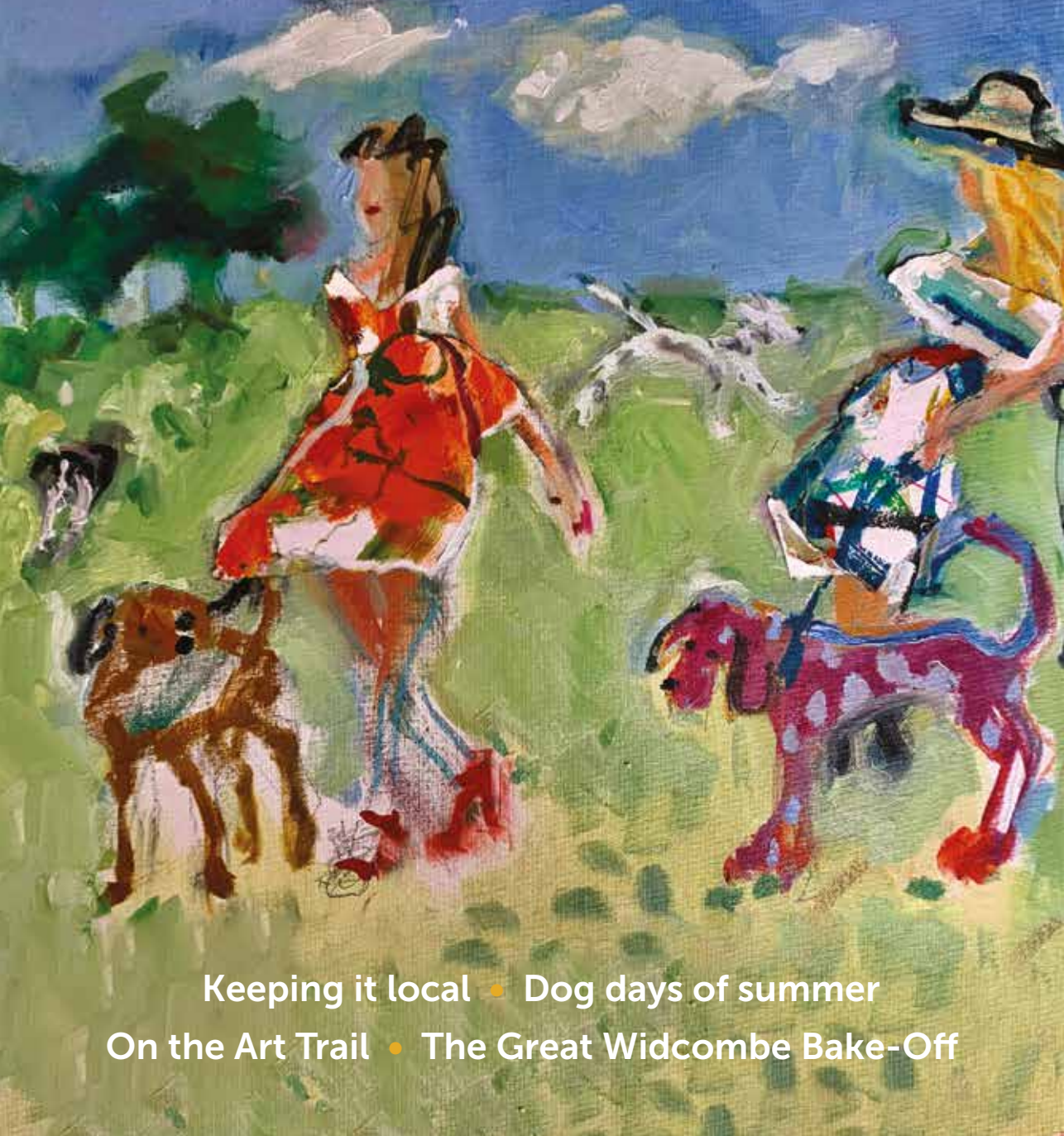


# Widcombe magazine

SUMMER 2025



Keeping it local • Dog days of summer

On the Art Trail • The Great Widcombe Bake-Off



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## Hello again!



**W**e're back with lots more to do and see in Widcombe this summer from movies at the Widcombe Social Club to the first ever Widcombe Bake-Off, the long-anticipated Widcombe Art Trail and Bath Opera's presentation of La Traviata (picnics encouraged) at Prior Park College. Then there are bike rides, walks and garden visits to make the most of the summer weather.

Behind the scenes, the Widcombe Association has been busy working with our ward councillors to improve roads and help manage anti-social behaviour. And we have responded to planning applications for smaller (the White Hart) and larger projects (the rugby stadium).

We are building a new website and expanding our presence on social media to help support local businesses. And we continue to fill the planters in the Parade with colourful plants to enhance the area.

Everything we do is undertaken by a growing cohort of awesome volunteers and we always welcome more to join us. Right now, we could do with cheery people to join our team and help make this winter's Christmas Market on 22-23 November the best ever. We offer you a grand sense of achievement, the pleasure of contributing to your community and the chance to make new friends. So, if the mood takes you, do drop me a line!

**Colette Hill**

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**WIDCOMBE ASSOCIATION WA**



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**Cover Illustration** by Carol Symon. You can see her work, at the Widcombe Art Trail on 28-29 June (find out more overleaf).





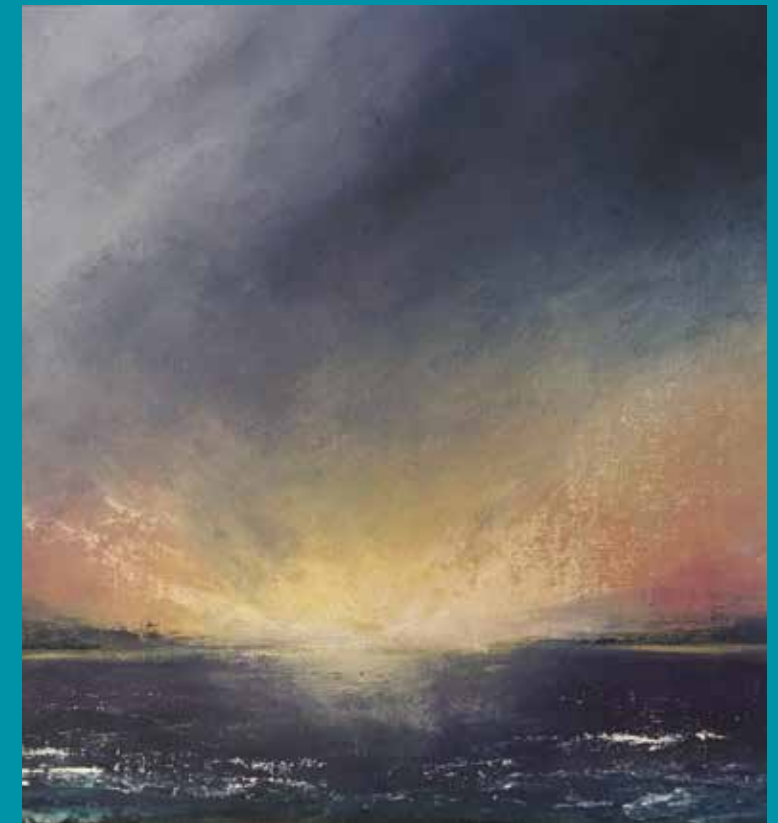
## On the trail

Art lovers are in for a treat with the Widcombe Art Trail weekend on 28-29 June. The trail will showcase 33 artists who live and work locally in seven venues - the artists' homes and studios as well as the Widcombe Social Club and the Baptists' Church. Many pieces, prints and cards will be available to buy and for those interested in affordable art this is an occasion not to be missed.

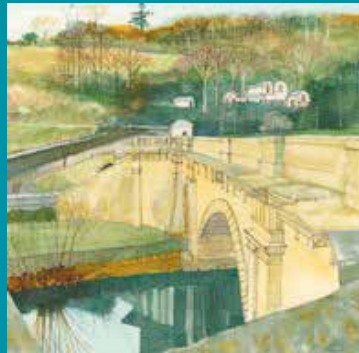
More info at <https://widcombearttrail.com/>.



Stella Wain-Heapy



Angela Frith



Anthony Sheeran



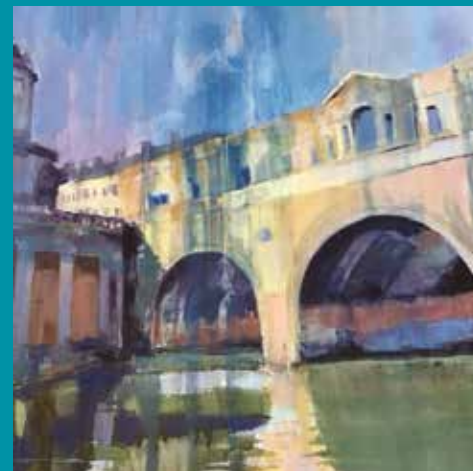
Jessica Palmer



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Madeleine Town



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## WA diary dates

Join us at the Widcombe Association's many events for which tickets will come available on the WA website through the year.

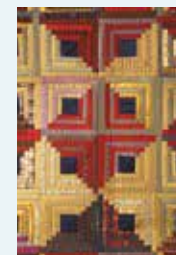
**26 June** – tour and tea of town garden in Newbridge Road, Bath

**28 June** – fundraising talk at St Thomas à Becket Church

**10 July** – tour of the remodelled gardens at Bath Priory Hotel

**18 July** – Verdi's La Traviata performed by Bath Opera at the Julian Slade Theatre, Prior Park College

**3 September** – private visit to the American Museum quilt collection



**10 September** – open cemeteries annual trail



**4 October** – ceilidh in aid of St Mark's community centre



**16 October** – visit to Upton Cheney chilli farm



**22-23 November** – Widcombe Christmas Market

To stay informed about all of these and more, sign up for the events mailing at <https://widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/pages/sign-up-for-events-information>

## Go Green Widcombe

A free evening of talks for homeowners interested in reducing their energy usage is on Wednesday 25 June 7-9pm at Widcombe Social Club. Retrofit – why bother? will cover loft insulation, windows and grant funding. Book your place via <https://widcombe-association.whitefuse.net>

## Widcombe Wayfarers

Join the Widcombe Wayfarers for a friendly stroll, making the most of the wonderful countryside on our doorstep. The walking group meets at 10am on the second Wednesday of the month, at the west end of Widcombe Parade, outside Noad. Walks last one or two hours and are medium paced. They are limited to 20 people so please register at <https://widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/events/7-widcombe-wayfarers-walking-wednesdays>.

## On your bike

The Wobblers was founded around 2013 to encourage reluctant cyclists to enjoy the freedom of cycling around Bath with a friendly group of like-minded people. The wearing of Lycra is definitely not required!

The rides are very sociable so there is usually a pub or café en route. Most rides are local and aren't too long or testing - with the occasional challenge thrown in.

Depending on the distance, rides are either on a Thursday evening or during the day at a weekend. Increasingly, electric bikes are the norm, though some still enjoy the challenge presented by Bath's hills on ordinary bikes.



Rides are planned to Stowford Manor Farm on Saturday 5 July, Upton Inn on Thursday 10 July evening and to the Apple Tree pub

in Shoscombe on Thursday 24 July evening. To sign up, visit [widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/pages/3-events](https://widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/pages/3-events).



## Widcombe Choir



**ENJOY SINGING?**  
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## WIDCOMBE CHOIR

(founded 2012)

**We are a friendly, no-audition Community Choir.**  
**We meet on Thursdays from 2pm to 4pm.**

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**Widcombe Social Club**  
**Widcombe Hill, BA2 6AA**

**We are affiliated with the Widcombe Association.**  
**For more information, visit...**

<https://widcombe-choir.mailchimpsites.com/>

**COME ALONG & HAVE FUN**

## WSC pick and mix

**W**hether it's music – from jazz to folk, rock 'n' roll to swing, disco to soul – or the arts or film – there's something for everyone this summer at the Widcombe Social Club. Take your pick from choirs to quizzes to yoga classes – you can even learn to play the uilleann pipes. See the posters and flyers in the foyer, sign up for our weekly newsletter or check out [www.widcombesocialclub.co.uk](http://www.widcombesocialclub.co.uk).

### Great Widcombe Bake-Off and Feast



**Saturday 5 July, 6-11pm.** The first Great Widcombe Bake-Off will be judged by French baker and chef Richard Bertinet. Entries for the daytime Bake-Off will form the basis of a three-course feast in the evening followed by music and dancing with Junction 18. Tickets on sale at [www.widcombesocialclub.co.uk](http://www.widcombesocialclub.co.uk).

### Music

Friday Waterside Nights – live music 7-9pm; pizza 6-8.30pm, including vegan and gluten-free options. Free entry.

### Coming up in June

The Strays (20th), Three Bites of the Cherry (27th)

### And in July

John Green Trio (4th) - Merlin Smith (11th), Pacific Groove (18th), Pete Finch Jazz Band (25th)

### DJ Nights

**Saturday 12 September**  
Bath Soul Club

**Saturday 4 October**  
Electric Dreams: the biggest 80s night in the city!

**Saturday 12 July and 6 September**  
Transmission: alternative sounds from the 80s, 90s and beyond

**Saturday 19 July**  
Frug: dance music from across the decades

### All of the Above presents

Friday 27 June Breabach: uniting Highland and Island tradition with the innovative musical ferment of their Glasgow base. More details at <https://alloftheabovemusic.eventbrite.com>



### Musical Theatre cabaret

**Saturday 13 July** with MD Matt Finch and nine soloists. More details at [www.finchmusic.co.uk/MTCabaret](http://www.finchmusic.co.uk/MTCabaret)

### Film

Screening monthly on Sunday evenings, Off the Wall Films presents engaging, hard-to-find films with guest speakers and other extras in the relaxing and spacious Wharf room. Sign up for more details: [offthewall@gmx.co.uk](mailto:offthewall@gmx.co.uk). (See also page xx)

### Comedy

**Saturday 28 June** – Instant Wit, quick-fire comedy improv with sketches and songs based on audience suggestions. Doors 7.30pm. More details at <https://ticketscandy.com/e/instant-wit-the-quick-fire-comedy-improvisation-show-9675>

## Dancing at St Marks

**Saturday 6 September** – Ceilidh in aid of Genesis Trust. 7–10pm. Tickets at <https://www.trybooking.com/uk/events/landing/85374?>

**Saturday 4 October** – Ceilidh run by the Widcombe Association in aid of St Mark's repair and roof fund. 7–10pm. *Tickets on sale from July on the WA website.*



## Off the Wall celebrates

**C**ommunity cinema Off the Wall Films is celebrating its first birthday with a trio of independent films to be shown at the Widcombe Social Club over the summer.

Off the wall was launched a year ago by Chris Baker – founder of the Bath Film Festival – with a sell-out screening of Closely Observed Trains introduced by director Ken Loach. The initiative was set up to generate funds for the Widcombe Social Club.

Every middle Sunday of the month sees WSC hosting recent and classic films that are otherwise difficult to come by. Chris says: 'Community cinema is a social occasion and a very different experience to attending a cinema or streaming a movie at home. People arrive in good time for a drink and a chat and a punt on raffle tickets'.

Upcoming screenings are: 15 June, To a Land Unknown (2024) and 20 July, Antigone (2019). *For more info, email [offthewall@gmx.co.uk](mailto:offthewall@gmx.co.uk).*



## A bigger splash

**H**ot from Bristol and Worcester, Splasherist art studio has arrived in Widcombe to help you release your inner Jackson Pollock and splash, spray and pour paint over your very own take-away canvas. Splasherist is the brainchild of Hungarian couple Bernadett Huszti and Laszlo Megyesi who are already dreaming of further outlets in Europe. In the



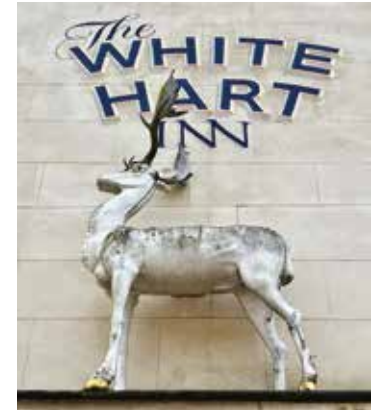
*Bernadett Huszti and Laszlo Megyesi*

meantime, they have taken over and transformed the old Aga showroom, equipping customers with coveralls, goggles, face shields, shoe covers and gloves, so they can release their inner exuberance, rage and creativity and still go home stain free.

Bernadett says: 'The sessions suits all ages; children 5-16 are welcome too, if accompanied by an adult. Just let your imagination run wild and forget about life's rules and guidelines.'

## Halfpenny enjoys a revamp

**T**he Halfpenny has celebrated its first year with a fresh lick of paint, new seating inside and out and an updated menu. The café has serves all-day breakfast, salads and bagels, and its small plates menu is available Wednesday to Saturday evenings.



## Reviving the White Hart

**W**alcot Group has submitted planning and listed building applications with Bath and North East Somerset Council to refurbish The White Hart. The scheme includes the main building on three floors plus basement and the long building on two floors on the Widcombe Hill side, the ground floor of which was originally a brewery. The building at the far end of the courtyard which was occupied by the Widcombe Gin distillery (now relocated to Walcot Street) will be incorporated into the scheme. The proposals include a bar and restaurant, a function room and 10 en-suite bedrooms. The courtyard will be landscaped with a new glazed gallery along Prior Park Road.

The historyofbath.org website tells us that the White Hart was built around 1733 by Richard Jones, Clerk of Works to Ralph Allen. Its distinguishing emblem is the statue of a white hart which itself has had a chequered career. Originally it was the symbol for a former coaching inn in the centre of Bath, also called the White Hart, which was demolished in 1867. After a brief interlude attached to a wine and spirit shop, the statue was moved to the White Hart in Widcombe. In 2001 it was stolen only to be found in the Lyn Brook, minus its head. It was restored and re-installed in 2003.

## New faces in Widcombe

**M**ediaClash, publisher of Bath Life and Bristol Life, has bought and refurbished 1 Widcombe Parade, taking up the first floor of the office block. In addition to its magazines, the company produces the Bath Life Awards, Bath Property Awards and Bath Boules.

Owners Greg and Jane Ingham have renamed the building Media House and have let the ground floor and second floor to like-minded businesses, including Anthem Publishing, publisher of Vegan Food & Living and Women's Running, interior designer The Curator's House, and marketing consultancy Floresco. Commenting on the move, MediaClash sales manager Pat White said: 'We were drawn by the creative vibe of Widcombe, the great transport links and the strong sense of community. We are already making the most of the wonderful cafés and eateries on the Parade.'

And number 2 Widcombe Parade also has new occupants – Austen which offers everything from jewellery and watch repair to bespoke jewellery design and making. Also at No 2, its sister businesses are jewellery design insurance claims specialist LMG Jewellery, which works alongside UK insurers and loss adjusters to manage claims for theft, loss or damage to valuables, and The Guild of Valuers and Jewellers, which provides valuations.

## Report it

**W**e continue to experience anti-social behaviour in and around Widcombe Parade and the canal basins. As you may be aware, these areas are covered by a Public Spaces Protection Order. Action is being taken to reduce the nuisance but, if you witness disorder, the police ask that you dial 999 for a live incident or 101 otherwise (or on-line on the Avon and Somerset Police website). The police, whose priorities are very much governed by statistical evidence, are more likely to respond when complaints mount up.

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## Ring that bell

**M**ick and Liz Dempsey are back running The Ring O Bells, to the delight of customers old and new. The couple have been at the heart of pubs in Widcombe for a decade.

Mick, originally from Carlow in south east Ireland, came to London when he was 18, where he met university student Liz from Cheshire. They married and moved back to Ireland where their son Cormac was born.

A few years on, they came to Bath just as the Ram in Widcombe Parade became available. They took the pub on in February 2014 and with their arrival it became renowned for the warmth of its welcome. When five years later, Mick and Liz were faced with a £99,000 rent increase, they crossed the road to the Ring O Bells, taking many of their customers with them and establishing the RoB as an authentic pub serving great food.



Mick and Liz Dempsey

In 2021, the couple took a break, leaving the Ring O Bells under management. Two years later, they acquired independent free house The Curfew across Cleveland Bridge and now they have returned to the RoB much to everyone's delight.

The pub's walls are decorated with work by local artists and on a warm day there's a sun-soaked beer garden at the back. The new menu is packed with traditional dishes with a modern twist, using locally sourced ingredients, and the RoB promises a buzzy atmosphere on any day of the week.



Sue Mullett

## We bid farewell to...

**S**ue Mullett and her wonderful gin distillery and herbal apothecary on Prior Park Road. Sue arrived in Widcombe in 1998 and has been a familiar face in the area ever since. You may well have spotted her vintage painted bicycle parked near the Baptist Church, advertising the apothecary. While Sue has moved on, she has not gone far. You can pop in and see her at her new apothecary at 76 Walcot Street (next to the Yellow Shop).



## ...and we welcome....

**S**imon Malley, new general manager at Prior Park Garden Centre. Simon has an extensive background in plants and garden centre management. He says: 'I'm delighted to be part of Prior Park, which over 50 years and under the stewardship of John Leach, has earned a reputation for high quality plants and expert horticultural advice. I'm looking forward to continuing its aim - to give customers the opportunity to relax in an inspiring space looking for ideas to enhance their homes and gardens.'

When Simon isn't steering the ship at Prior Park, he's at home enjoying time with his wife and teenage children, and early morning cross-country running in the Quantock hills.



WA volunteer Clare



Mercy in Action manager, Lesley

## Widcombe's guerrilla gardeners

**P**lanting in the Parade is a perennial. Each season, Widcombe Association volunteers fill the planters with scent and colour and volunteer traders keep the troughs watered. Then there are the verge enthusiasts and the wild flower gardeners who enhance the parade at the station end to make the whole area welcoming to visitors arriving from across the river. New volunteers (and plants!) are always welcome. To join the guerrilla team, message Colette on 07971 557690.



Local hero James Parsons

## Widcombe Heroes

**C**hair of the Widcombe Social Club Nella Stokes has nominated manager James Parsons for a genuinely heroic endeavour.

Says Nella: 'Early this year, James saved a man's life. I glanced out of the balcony window at the Club and was shocked to see someone apparently sinking under the water on the other side of the canal basin. I alerted James and he leapt at once to the rescue. He and another man, builder Lee Ford, hauled the submerged man out of the wet - no easy feat given his weakened state and his layers of sodden clothes. Once on the side of the canal, he seemed in danger of falling back in so Lee and James dragged him well away from the edge. James called an ambulance while a bystander ran for dry clothes. And so the poor man's life was saved.'

once to the rescue. He and another man, builder Lee Ford, hauled the submerged man out of the wet - no easy feat given his weakened state and his layers of sodden clothes. Once on the side of the canal, he seemed in danger of falling back in so Lee and James dragged him well away from the edge. James called an ambulance while a bystander ran for dry clothes. And so the poor man's life was saved.'

*Do you know someone who deserves a cheer or three? You can nominate your Hero by emailing [magazine@widcombeassociation.co.uk](mailto:magazine@widcombeassociation.co.uk)*

## Join up, join in

**N**ew members are always welcome at the Widcombe Association and there are plenty of reasons to join right now with a busy year of events and activities. Your membership will also help strengthen the voice of the WA, Bath's largest residents association, in its campaigns to improve planning and traffic, upgrade the public realm, address environmental challenges and support local businesses.

All that for just £12 a year for single membership or £15 for two in the same household. Visit <https://widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/pages/7-become-a-member-today>. We look forward to welcoming you to our growing community.



# Keep it local

**Colette Hill** and **Biddy Walcot** go shopping close to home and find a trolley-load of surprises.

In these times of online overload and city-centre sameness, it is wonderful that Bath enclaves like Larkhall, Moorland Road and our own Widcombe have such a wide and interesting range of retail and service offerings – and not always what you'd expect.

Bath-born Charlotte Rogers, who owns **The Widcombe Laundry Company** keeps it in the family with mother Sue and sister Hailey helping out in the shop. They wash, dry and fold service washes, and offer onsite ironing. They also take in large items such as duvets, pillows and sofa covers. Charlotte's father Chris delivers to customers' homes, free of charge. 'It's all part of the service,' Charlotte says.

The big surprise at the launderette is that since November last year it can also wash dogs! Charlotte explains: 'People bring their dogs when they come with their laundry, they're in the pub with their dogs, they're on their way to the vet, or they're just out for a walk. There are always dogs about. I love dogs myself and was thinking about opening a dog parlour at the back of the shop, then I saw this dog-washing machine at a car garage in Devon. I googled the manufacturer and that was that. It's such a perfect concept and actually very good value to the customer – shampoo, conditioner, flea treatment and blow dry all on tap for just £8 a 10-minute go.'

For Charlotte, the success is seasonal. Christmas was a high point as everyone prepared their pets for family gatherings; the soggy new year was good too with plenty of muddy dogs brought in post-walk. But the drought in April and May meant no mud and no dirty dogs – so, like gardeners, Charlotte is looking forward to some proper rainfall.

**Bath Lock & Key** has also spotted Widcombe's love affair with pooches and has introduced a self-serve machine to deliver bespoke dog tag engraving to its dog loving customers.

At **Luca and Fig**, in addition to the eclectic range of gifts for all ages, there is easy-to-wear fashion

from independent labels like Black Colour, Gabrielle Parker, Dreams and Cadenza, plus have-a-look reading glasses, and housewares such as lampshades by Regenerate. Luci says: 'My aim is always to find inventive designs at sensible prices. Good-looking doesn't have to be expensive.'



There's more for the home at **The Curtain Exchange**, where – despite the name – 70% of the curtains are newly made to order. Owners Katie Barker and Mel Eyles also make bed valances, headboards, and cushions in the fabric of your choice from pretty much any fabric house.

Across the street, Tash at **Bath Spa Florists** agrees that diversifying is key to success. In addition to the flowers, bouquets, and house plants, she sells handmade chocolates and ornamental vases. Duck and goose eggs are delivered by a local farm twice a week and there is a constant supply of fruit and veg.



Matt, the mobile tool sharpener

'In lockdown we delivered boxes of fruit and veg to people's homes and customers still pop by to top up their supermarket shop.'

John Leach, managing director of **Prior Park Garden Centre**, says inviting two small businesses to sell their goods and services at the garden centre was a conscious decision to extend the garden centre's range of services.

Matt will sharpen your garden tools, kitchen knives and scissors while you wait. His van rolls into the garden centre at 9.30am on the first Thursday of every month, as it has been doing for the past eight

years. The garden centre is the only place Matt comes to regularly and business here is very good. Many of his customers drop off their tools, then have a coffee or lunch in the garden centre cafe, collecting the tools afterwards.

John said asking **Southern Fresh Seafood** to operate a weekly stall in the garden centre car park came about when he tried (and failed) to buy fresh fish locally. Grieg has been a regular here for a year, coming every Thursday from 9.30am until 2pm. He sells fresh caught fish and seafood from Dorset and business is always brisk.

**STOP PRESS:** on Thursdays, you can now also pick up meat from Larkhall Butchers – place orders by close of play Tuesday, using the garden centre's printed form which includes prices for the great range on offer.



Greig from Southern Fresh Seafood

## Widcombe's World on a plate

It has never been easier to eat out in Widcombe, with more and more to choose from in the Parade's many eateries.

With roots deep in Rajasthan, Bikanos offers a mix of north and south Indian dishes. The restaurant is open daily for both lunch and dinner. In addition to its daytime menu, the Widcombe Deli at The Ram now serves midweek supper until 8pm. The Ring O Bell's kitchen has reopened, offering an à la carte menu as well as traditional Sunday roasts.

Take-home is always an option, of course: Ruposhi serves fine Indian food to take away and family-run Manhattan has been serving up 100% beefburgers and chicken burgers as well as pizzas since 1979.



Tony Jones, owner of Manhattan



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## A cut above

**Biddy Walcot** talks to Harriet Barber to discover the secret of B Hairdressing's enduring popularity.

**H**arriet Barber, owner of B Hairdressing in Claverton Buildings, comes from a long line of Bathonians. Granny still lives in Bathampton, Dad went to Ralph Allen School and Harriet herself went to Oldfield School and then Bath College.

She started B Hairdressing in 2016, soon after the successful campaign to divert heavy traffic away from Widcombe centre. Harriet says: 'The shops started changing a bit after we arrived and the traffic quietened down. Widcombe's lovely now - it's a lot more relaxed and you get to see familiar faces all the time.'

Harriet's career choice was made early on: 'I used to get a doily and put it on top of my Mum's hair and then use a crochet hook to pull her hair through the doily, like I'd seen hairstylists do with tints. When I was 14, I worked Saturdays and Sundays at a salon and just really fell in love with it, so when the opportunity came up to work after school I did that as well.'

'I managed a salon in Frome before coming here and continued my education in the industry with Paul Mitchell Schools. I became an art team member with them and travelled all over the world. By the end, I was juggling this salon, going to Rome on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday coming back into the salon. It sounds glamorous but the reality is that your model pool starts at 6am, and you're doing hair in a kitchen. But it was really good fun and I did really enjoy it.'



Tom at B Hairdressing



Harriet Barber

**B Hairdressing** uses only vegan and cruelty-free hair and beauty products, a reflection of Harriet's own life choices. She says: 'We have a lot of clients who come to us because it's something they feel passionate about.' The salon also has gender-free pricing, with cuts based on the length of a client's hair, not on how they identify.

The five team members - Harriet, Tom, Ella, Gemma and Angelica - are all long termers. There is definitely a comfortable buzz in the salon: 'People aren't coming in just for a haircut - they want time to relax, unwind, switch off. The salon has become an extension of home, where clients feel comfortable. Some clients bring work with them - one even had a job interview on the phone while she was having a haircut (she got the job). There's no pressure to chat to us.'

And Harriet says it's not all about hair: 'We also offer beauty treatments. Tom trained before the pandemic and when we re-opened after lockdown it was nice to have something new to offer to people. Tom does eyebrows and eyelashes, so brow tinting and waxing, lash tinting and curling, and brow lamination.'

'We started off using a room downstairs but it was a bit quiet - the clients said they missed the buzz in the salon, so we now have a chair in the salon just for beauty treatments. Clients can join in the chat while they're having their brows done. It's very popular!'

Harriet has always had great support from her parents - Mum still works mornings and Dad is always quick to respond to calls for assistance. 'During Covid, I had a massive salary bill to pay with no money coming in. I was panicking - Dad sold the motor home.'



# Ward News

Ward councillors **Alison Born** and **Deborah Collins** report on a range of local transport improvements.

## Safer driving

It's been especially busy on the streets of Widcombe this year. In February, Prior Park Road was resurfaced with drainage improvements made at the same time. Unfortunately, the imprint crossing at the White Hart was damaged by the drainage works, and the council is hoping to replace it soon. In March, Widcombe Hill was closed for several weeks so traffic calming measures could be installed at Macaulay Buildings and further down by the Widcombe Social Club. Then in April, Ralph Allen Drive was resurfaced, thankfully during the school holidays which minimised disruption.

## On your bike

Alongside these works, the council has consulted on the additional elements of the Church Street Liveable Neighbourhood scheme. We continue to advocate for a crossing at the Prior Park end of Church Street to support safe access for pedestrians and cyclists to Perrymead, Lyncombe Vale and the two tunnels path, as well as the planned crossing at Widcombe Hill. The council has also consulted on a new cycling and walking link from the two tunnels path to Lyncombe Vale to support better access to the cycle network.

## River and canal troubles

In addition to all this transport related activity, work to salvage five sunken boats from the river started in mid-March and continued into early May due to the complexity of the task. The work, initially scheduled for October last year, was delayed by the storms that flooded the river in October. The council is working on



Alison Born



Deborah Collins

plans to reduce the risk of further boats sinking. Other local water related activity has included work by the council's public health department to investigate the mass death of fish in the canal, possibly due to an algae bloom resulting from lack of rain. It is clear that climate change is already affecting our lives and in addition to the upgraded drainage, the council will need to take further actions to mitigate climate impacts wherever practical. Lastly, we have been supporting the local swan rescue volunteers in their negotiations with the Canal and River Trust to try to safeguard the cygnets that hatch each year in Widcombe and are at risk of drowning in the canal overflow structures.

## Keeping in touch

Finally, the council's community engagement team is planning a Community Conversation event to offer local people the chance to discuss the issues that affect them directly with council members, representatives from the police and fire services as well as Curo, our primary social housing provider. Further details will be advertised once the date has been finalised.

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**Deborah\_collins@bathnes.gov.uk 01225 395954**



# Building for the future

Planning specialist **Jan Shepley** finds the council in a pragmatic mood as they review their options.

The change of government last year has delayed progress on the Local Plan which will establish the planning framework for Bath and North East Somerset up to 2042. The intention now is that the draft plan be ready in spring 2026 – with examination in public in the summer next year and adoption in spring 2027.

The new government wants to prioritise the urgent need for new housing nationwide, with a strong emphasis on affordable housing. In Bath, this has resulted in a doubling of the building target to 29,000 homes within five years.

The council has written to deputy prime-minister Angela Rayner to draw her attention to Bath's unique position as the UK's only twice-designated World Heritage Site. To retain the city's status the council must protect both the city and its green setting.

For the moment, the planners are working on the basis that the targets will not be significantly reduced and are seeking to identify suitable sites, while continuing to work alongside regional government (the West of England Combined Authority – known as WECA) to meet the sub-regional targets that WECA has been set. They are also undertaking another review of the green belt around Bath with a view to identifying land that might be considered 'grey belt' and so suitable for development.

In addition, they are planning for growth in the key economic sectors (promoting new and resilient businesses, focusing largely on the Bath Quays and Somer Valley Enterprise Zone) to attract young workers. Transport modelling will focus on improving bus, cycling and walking infrastructure along the A4 corridor.

# Permission to go green

Jan Shepley offers reassurance to those wanting to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

More and more of us are looking to improve the carbon footprint of our homes and there is plenty we can do without having to apply for formal permission, such as installing loft insulation, hanging heavier curtains or adding interior wall insulation (in unlisted buildings, at least). But more radical improvements affecting the outside appearance of the home, such as secondary glazing, solar panels and heat pumps (see page 20), are likely to require planning permission and/or Listed Building Consent. In the case of listed buildings even new flooring could fall into this category.

In principle, the council supports the use of heat pumps, both ground and air source in homes new and old. But since most of Widcombe and Lyncombe lies within the Bath conservation area, even homes that are not listed still require planning permission and probably also building regulation approval before work starts. It isn't as bad as it sounds though: approval is granted almost 95% of the time and, where permission isn't granted, council officers can often advise on alternatives.

The answer is to apply for planning permission or a certificate of lawfulness (a sensible route if whatever you intend to do is unlikely to require formal planning) before any work starts, as well as checking if you will need a separate application for building regulations approval. The council has published a useful checklist at [https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/permited\\_development\\_checklist.pdf](https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/permited_development_checklist.pdf).





# Adapting our homes for a different tomorrow

**Philip Haile**, Energy Convenor at Transition Bath, argues that any home can benefit from the installation of a heat pump.

It may come as a surprise to learn that even in our heritage city, every building and home could have a heat pump. The Assembly Rooms has just received Listed Building Consent to install pumps and Bath Abbey has already converted, as has Beckford's Tower. The even, steady heat it provides will, according to the tower's owner, The Bath Preservation Trust, 'be better for the building fabric and enable the museum to be open for much more of the year.'

Heat pumps reduce a home's carbon emissions by over 90% compared with a gas boiler, so they are emerging as a key technology for decarbonising home heating. These highly efficient systems extract heat from the air, ground or water, providing sustainable warmth while reducing energy bills. While installation costs are higher than for gas boilers, they reduce long-term energy bills, especially when paired with solar panels. However, installing heat pumps requires careful planning - especially for listed buildings or historic properties.

Heat pumps work best in well-insulated homes, so improvements in draught proofing may need

to be considered first. Also, they operate at lower temperatures than boilers, so larger radiators or underfloor heating may be needed for optimal performance. Correct sizing is crucial; an oversized or undersized heat pump will reduce efficiency. Heat pumps require a new cylinder to provide hot water and space will be needed for the outdoor unit - typically a 1m x 0.5m x 1m box. While heat pumps are cheaper to run, the installation costs are higher, £4,500 - £12,000 net of the current £7,500 government grant (see [www.gov.uk/apply-boiler-upgrade-scheme/what-you-can-get](http://www.gov.uk/apply-boiler-upgrade-scheme/what-you-can-get)).

In Bath, Bath and West Community Energy and Transition Bath offer a subsidised independent heat pump assessment service which includes a heat loss assessment, advice on insulation, radiator upgrades, cylinder and outdoor unit locations, recommended installers, Solar PV and batteries and support with decarbonising your home. If you would like more information on heat pumps grants, assessment services, or their place in listed buildings, contact Go Green Widcombe - [ggwidcombe@gmail.com](mailto:ggwidcombe@gmail.com).



# Taming the traffic

Widcombe Association chairman **Michael Wrigley** applauds moves to calm and reduce traffic across Bath.

The unacceptable impact of traffic in Bath and how we deal with it has been the subject of debate over many decades. Widcombe has been a particular focus, having the main east-west road A36 Pulteney Road/Rossiter Road/Claverton Street running through it plus being at the confluence of a number of radial roads that come down the hill from the south to join A36.

The Council has pursued an accretive approach through the introduction of Liveable Neighbourhood Schemes. Seeking to protect residential areas from the harmful effects of traffic must be in everyone's interest, but the responses across the city have varied as residents have been fearful of the potential impacts on their freedom to travel on the roads.

In Widcombe, we have two such schemes, in Church Street and on Widcombe Hill. They differ, but they have similar objectives, to protect people in their homes and out on the streets as pedestrians and cyclists from excessive number of vehicles, from their noise and pollution, and from the threat to their safety. The Widcombe Hill scheme is designed to restrict vehicle speeds and reduce risk to cyclists, especially travelling downhill. Though it does require some modifications, it should bring significant environmental benefits to those who use it and live along it.

An important step across the city has been the introduction of lower mandatory speed limits, not just on local roads, but on some of the principal routes. Twenty-mile-an-hour speed limits are now imposed



on the London Road, on the Upper Bristol Road and on Widcombe Hill. The lower limit on principal roads is likely to be extended.

Perhaps the greatest reduction in vehicle impact in Bath has come by default due to the poor structural condition of the Cleveland Bridge. Despite recent extensive works, it can't be re-opened to vehicles weighing over 18 tonnes. This means the HGVs travelling from

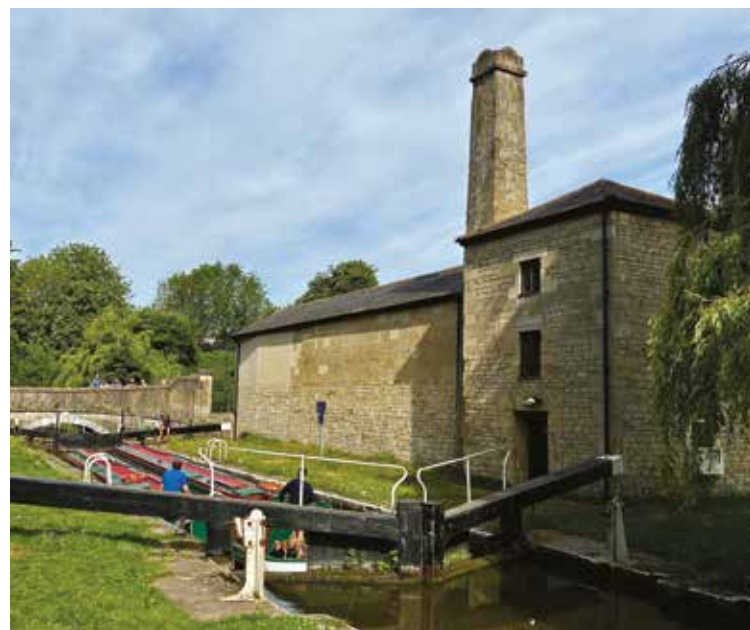
the M4 to the south coast are off our streets, an outcome that was inconceivable just a few years ago.

The schemes in Widcombe were in response to local problems, but also they should be seen in the wider context. They are part of the solution to control the impacts of traffic across the whole of Bath in order to create a more acceptable quality of urban environment for us all to enjoy.



# Discovering industrial Widcombe

Local author **Paul Fisher** strolls along the Kennet and Avon canal to discover our rich industrial heritage.



Thimble Mill

The Kennet and Avon canal was a revolutionary achievement, bisecting England to link Avon, Kennet and Thames. I start my walk behind the Travelodge, at Lower Lock No 7. Just across the water is Thimble Mill, which once housed the steam engines that replenished the Widcombe Flight. Millers down

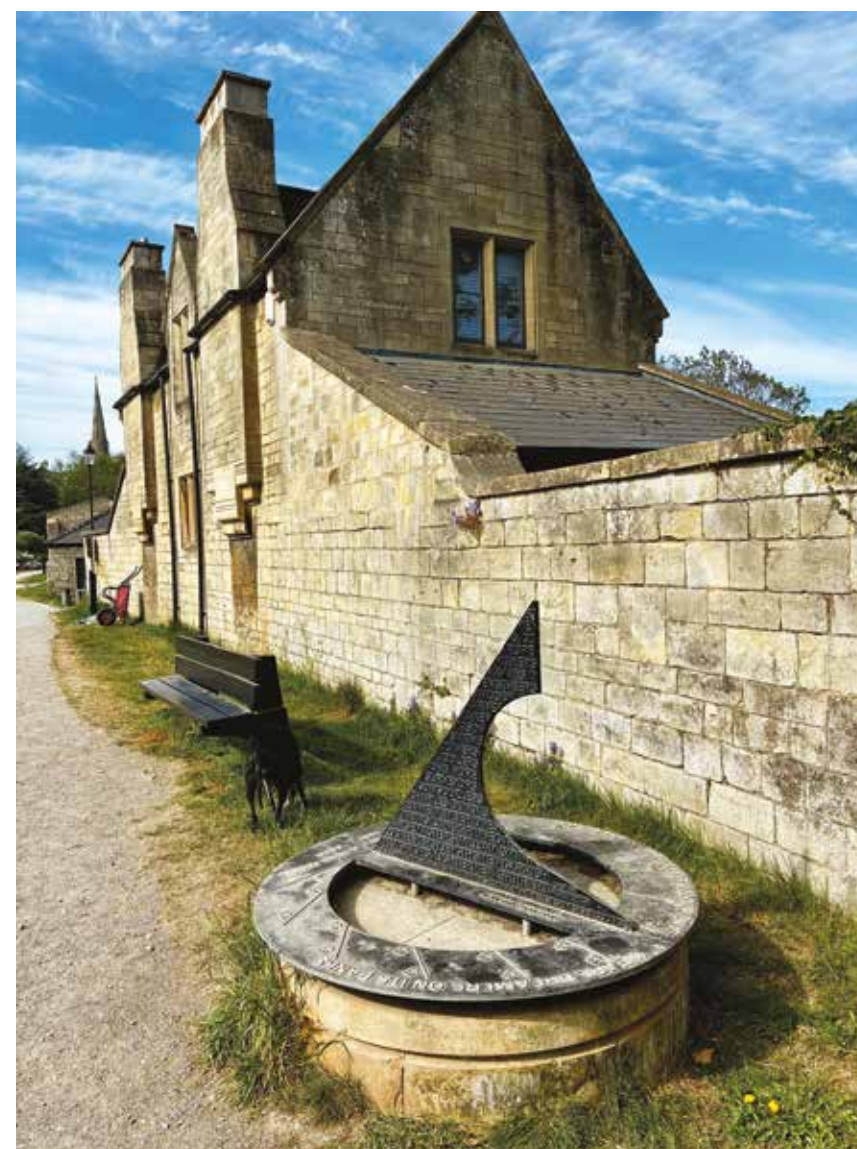
river contested water drawing rights and forced its closure in the 1850s. Nobody made thimbles here and it wasn't a mill either.

The construction of Rossiter Road in the 1970s forced the replacement of Locks 8 and 9 with Bath Deep Lock, Britain's second deepest (and

probably leakiest) lock. Beyond it is Widcombe Wharf, once a barge building yard. The white painted Wash House Bridge was made in Bath by iron merchant Stothert & Pitt whose factories on the Avon half a mile east manufactured dockside 'cranes for the world'.



Wash House Bridge



Gas works manager's house



Pulteney Lock Bridge

The allotments across Wash House Bridge are in an area known as Razor Fields where once there were mills whose business was

sharpening knives and agricultural tools.

A little further along, the Gas Works Manager's House with the dual chimney stacks showed its back to the river so Mr Manager could keep an eye on his gas works, now long gone. There is a sundial on the grass verge, marking the 200th anniversary of the completion of the canal in 1810.

Across the bridge at Pulteney Gardens, is Lock 11, Rasamar Lock on old maps. Here too was a pump house and the chimney still remains, a neo-classic column for the coal age. A little further along, Pulteney Lock Bridge was completed by Stotherts in 1820 to restore a right of way and give access to Sydney Buildings.

On the left is Top Lock cottage, a little piece of tow path excellence

that follows the old Bath trend of turning away from the water. This symmetrical lock-keeper's cottage is straight out of the modest domestic-Gothic copybook, with its hipped roof and pointed arches.

As per the early industrial revolution way, smart housing mixed it with industry, and a little further on there were two hefty enterprises on the opposite bank: the Somerset Coal Wharf with canal-frontage grey-framed picture windows followed by the Hugh Baird & Sons Malthouse.

The Somerset Coal Company moved to the top of the Widcombe Flight from Sydney Wharf, the canal's end point until 1810. The new site had a larger yard and continued taking in coal from the Somerset Coal Canal, a south-west spur that had opened in 1800 and joined the early section of the canal half way between Bath and Bradford-on-Avon. The building houses architects the Nash Partnership which undertook its conversion in 1989 – one of the partnership's many local industrial renovations.

*A more detailed account of this and other Bath industry can be found in Walks to Works 2 available from Prior Park Garden Centre and local bookshops.*



Sir Hugh Baird & Sons Malthouse



# Memories of the Bath Blitz

**Ron Frost** recorded his memories of living through the blitz when he was a child in Widcombe.

The first Baedeker raid on Bath was on a Saturday night at the end of April 1942. The sirens sounded and our family gathered downstairs, thinking Bristol was in for a hammering again.

Whenever the air raid sirens sounded our father, a driver for the corporation, had to collect his lorry and crew for duty as one of many rescue squads. So off he went and the rest of my family, my mother, three brothers and my sister took shelter in the basement of the house as the first bombs were dropped. There we stayed listening to the screech of the bombs and the crumps of the explosions, scared to death and longing for the end of the attack and the all-clear siren.

Then suddenly it was all over and of course we were all thankful that we were safe, but aware that many others had not been so lucky. Soon after daylight on the Sunday morning our father called home to check on us and, over the ever present cup of tea, he told us that there was a lot of damage, but Widcombe had escaped lightly except for Holloway. Then he was off again to his rescue work saying that he would try to check on us again if possible.

My brother Tony and I tried to wander around to see what was happening but many of the streets were covered with rubble and some were blocked off with special police on duty owing to unexploded bombs. We collected some shrapnel which was at that time a schoolboy hobby, and then returned home.

## Return visit

People were of the opinion that the German planes would be back that night and many families began trekking out to the countryside or to relatives and friends outside the city for safety. Our father did not manage

to check on us that day and we decided to stay at home and hope for the best. Hopefully it would turn out to be a quiet night. Some hope! The Luftwaffe did return at dusk and with the air raid sirens sounding again our whole family was in the basement once more.

This time the bombing and machine gunning seemed to be more terrible than the previous night and we were all scared. One particular explosion seemed really close. My brother remarked that it sounded as if the bomb had dropped into the canal and if that was so our house would be plastered with mud.

After a while our father managed to find time to look in on us and told us that more people were leaving Bath for the shelter of the outskirts. He told us to go up to Claverton Down where, near the cats and dogs home, there were some haystacks where we could bed down for safety.

So off we went warmly dressed and laden with blankets to trek up Widcombe Hill. 'Stay up there until I can look in on you in the morning,' he said as he returned to work.

## On fire

When we reached Macaulay Buildings, we could see most of Bath and on the opposite side of the railway station, (in the area which is now the bus station), the whole area was a mass of flames and because of the reflection on the river it appeared that all of Widcombe was on fire. We saw the tower of St James's church in Stall Street topple in a mass of flames.

Claverton Downs Community Hall was packed with people sheltering from the raids, so we went on and found the haystacks Dad had told us about and settled down as best we could.



Ron Frost

The German planes did return and bomb the city again before daylight but I think most people were out of harm's way. We returned home every day but for about a week we spent each night up at the haystacks. The next few days there being no schools open, my brother and I visited the bombed areas and continued our shrapnel collecting.

Eventually the schools opened again and things returned to normal. Most of the fatalities were buried in a mass grave at Haycombe Cemetery but some families opted for private burials. Lots of bomb sites had to be cleared up and many houses and other properties had to be rebuilt and repaired. This work went on for many years.

Widcombe escaped quite lightly. A bomb landed in the grounds of Prior Park near the Palladian Bridge, one in the grounds of Widcombe Manor, another in Prior Park Road near what is now the garden centre. One dropped at Lime Grove in which the only casualties were a pair of nesting swans by the canal. The grounds at Prior Park being full of springs meant that the bomb crater quickly filled with water and although it was very cold it became a favourite swimming site for us young lads of Widcombe for some years after.

With thanks to  
bathheritagewatchdog.org

# So different, so much the same

**Matt Williams**, collections manager for the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, shares some of its Widcombe-connected treasures.

The Reverend Doctor Francis Lockety (1796–1869) was a Bathonian clergyman, typical of the many such men in the nineteenth century who pursued a serious interest in science alongside their pastoral duties. Lockety was an early adopter of printable photography and his calotypes are some of the oldest photographs of Bath. In 1849 he began experimenting with William Henry Fox Talbot's process for creating printable negatives on waxed paper, which Talbot had patented in 1841. The Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution care for 86 of Lockety's negatives. They are too sensitive to damage by light to be displayed, but they have been digitised and inverted.



## White Hart and St Matthew's Church (1856)

The White Hart Inn is a long surviving landmark. At the time of Lockety's photograph it was run by brewer Frederick Jenkins who advertised 'Genuine Home Brewing, families supplied with casks of all sizes'.

## Kennet and Avon Canal Basin (1856)

Bath stone was quarried at Combe Down. A tramway, built by Ralph Allen in 1731, originally brought the stone down to this river wharf at Widcombe, where it was sent by barge to Bristol and beyond.



# Swift welcome

Ecologist **David Goode** looks forward to the cry of the swifts heralding summer.

**W**e had a wonderful spring this year. Primroses and cowslips were spectacular on Lyncombe Hill Fields and we had the pleasure of hearing several summer visitors, including chiffchaffs and blackcaps in full song. I was also pleased to see great-

spotted woodpeckers and nuthatches nesting in one of the trees by the steep steps up to the viewpoint on Alexandra Park. In late April, an osprey was seen heading north over Beechen Cliff, no doubt on its way back from Africa to meet its partner at their nest-site somewhere in Cumbria or Scotland.

Now we are in full summer, when it is always a pleasure to see the swifts. They are with us for such a short time



from early May to the end of July. You will hear their screams over the rooftops.

Recently our small group of volunteers, who regularly check the birds present on Lyncombe Hill Fields, joined with members of the Bath Natural History Society for one of their many field meetings. While most people don't notice creepy crawlies Alvan White, the leader of the Bath Natural History Society, was very adept at spotting unusual insects and other tiny creatures. Many bee species were on the wing, including an early bumble bee, several hairy-footed flower bees and a possible grey-patched mining bee. It is good to know that the fields support so much diversity. I have noted more species of butterflies in my garden this year, including lots of brimstones, and holly blues as well as the usual speckled woods.

*To find out more about the Bath Natural History Society, visit [bathnats.org.uk/](http://bathnats.org.uk/).*



# Widcombe's secret garden

The National Trust's **Heloise Clough** hails the proximity and pleasures of Prior Park Landscape Garden.

**L**ast summer we reopened the lower entrance at Prior Park Landscape Garden and installed the new tea cabin, where visitors can pay for entry or scan their NT members' card as well as buy refreshments. This has made it so much easier for local people to pop in for a quiet moment in the garden. Visitors can sit at one of the picnic tables, surrounded by greenery or sit on the lawn in a deck chair with views across the lakes and to the Palladian bridge. We have slowly been improving this new access point with fencing and shrubbery. The latest instalment has been the long-awaited bike racks.

We are open every day until after the autumn half term at the end

of October, when we will return to our winter hours, so enjoy daily access while you can during these summer and early autumn months. On Monday 30 June we will have a summer seasonal walk with the gardeners (free with standard entry, but places must be booked via our website below), with the autumn instalment on 6 and 8 October. We will be taking part in the Festival of Archaeology from 19 July to 3 August, with the dig carrying on from previous years in the pasture as well as guided walks. We will also have children's activities during the school summer holidays.

We plan to take part in the Jane Austen Festival in September with some exciting events – details to



follow. Please check the website for more information about all our upcoming events [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/prior-park-landscape-garden](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/prior-park-landscape-garden) or ring 01225 833977.

Our summer season opening times are 10am-5pm, with last entry one hour before closing (the tea cabin closes one hour before closing), seven days a week.

# Summer growing tips

**John Leach**, managing director of Prior Park Garden Centre, offers advice on judicious watering and extending colour in the garden.



**T**his spring, we were blessed with wonderful sunshine to show off the spring bulbs and frost free days for perfect magnolias. But the drier weather reminds us how important it is to use water carefully in the garden.

Most established plants need no supplementary watering. A little dribble every day does no good at all and just wastes water. The secret is thorough weekly watering morning or evening; target the root zone, aiming for one bucketful of water for trees, and half that for shrubs and herbaceous plants. Remember that newly planted trees, hydrangeas and roses will need plenty of water, as will pots. Don't waste water on lawns. Dry, straw coloured grass may not look pretty, but it will recover when rain arrives.

Many of our most popular early flowering shrubs - Forsythia, Weigela, Ribes and Philadelphus - can be pruned now. Once flowering has finished prune out the flowered stems to encourage new shoots that will flower next year. It's also an opportunity to restrict their size, if you need to.

Continue to plant up hanging baskets and window boxes. If odd plants die pop in a replacement,

and remember to give all planted containers liquid fertiliser once a week to keep them looking fresh and to prolong their flowering season.

If your garden tends to run out of colour towards the end of the summer, try a tip from the wonderful Christopher Lloyd of Great Dixter, a master of maintaining colour in the garden through the season. He advocates sowing batches of annuals such as zinnia, calendula, Californian poppy and Clarkia right into late June. These can then be popped into gaps that arise in beds and containers, and they will provide colour well into the autumn.

Wallflowers are so colourful in the spring, and so easy to grow. Sow the seeds now and grow them on ready to plant out in the autumn. Grown this way can have really strong plants at a fraction of the



price of wallflower plants in the garden centre.

Continue to sow a wide range of vegetables including French beans, carrots, parsnips, lettuce, beetroot, spinach and chard.

Many people seem to have problems with growing carrots and parsnips. I wait for a few days when rain is expected, water the seed drill before sowing the seeds and water the area if weather turns dry. As soon as the seedlings appear protect them from slugs and snails, which will munch the seedlings very happily. It is a good idea to cover with horticultural fleece or insect proof netting to protect against carrot root fly.

Finally, plant up patio pots with your favourite herbs, maybe parsley, basil, thyme and oregano so that when you enjoy a barbecue you will have fresh herbs to hand.

# Painting al fresco

**T**his spring saw the revival of the Widcombe Association's painting days with a visit to the Prior Park Landscape Garden. New painters and pros alike made the most of the fair weather and the demonstrations on painting with acrylics and watercolours. The delighted attendees voted in favour of a repeat session, and we will be posting future dates on the website.





# A taste of home

Mick and Liz Dempsey from the Ring O Bells share their recipe for a favourite dish – and a reflection of Mick's early life in Ireland.

## Irish stew

Serves 6

### Ingredients

1kg beef or lamb cut in 3cm cubes  
3 tbsp olive oil  
750g carrots, cut in 2cm chunks  
6 Irish potatoes, cut in medium chunks  
2 yellow onions, large chop  
4 stalks celery, medium chop  
3 cloves garlic, chopped  
700ml beef broth  
350ml stout beer  
250g flour  
1 1/2 tsp salt  
1 tsp pepper  
1 tsp dried thyme  
1 tbsp dried parsley



### Directions

Wash and chop the vegetables.

Transfer the chopped vegetables to a large mixing bowl and season generously with salt and pepper. Add the flour and mix until the vegetables are well covered.

Salt and pepper the meat. Heat a very heavy casserole, then add the oil and sear the meat. Add the vegetables and mix well. Pour in the broth and the beer.

Cook the stew on medium heat for 2 hours.

Add the parsley and thyme, salt and pepper to taste, and cook on low heat for a further hour.

*Alternatively, cook the stew in a slow cooker, set to high for six hours or set to low for eight hours.*

Serve hot with Irish soda bread.

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# Snapchat

Chris Baker, Widcombe Social Club film programmer and sometime leafleteer, tests the snappy Widcombe letterbox.

Promoting Off the Wall Films' monthly programme at the Social Club involves pushing publicity through the letterboxes of Widcombe, especially if I have surplus fliers and there's an imminent film screening. Sounds like a chore? – not at all! It's a pleasant way to wind down while discovering parts of the village hitherto untrod, but the thing that's really piqued my interest is the variety of letterboxes gracing Widcombe's front doors. I've formed some strong opinions about what makes a good one.

Of course, many letterboxes are unremarkable oblong slots fronted by a simple flap opening directly onto the occupier's hallway – flier goes straight in, job done, that's what I



Brass zeppelin letters

like. But these letterboxes are often backed up by an array of devices intended to keep out the draughts. Over-engineered springs, vicious brush attachments, magnetic inner flaps. All a bit self-defeating as they also impede passage of the paperwork. Some even try to remove digits, but I appreciate that a local letterbox is up against local weather. What really makes



Bright brass letters, knocker missing



Fancy cast brass letters at top, lovely

integrated. Presumably, these were installed at a time when their function had to be clarified, and letters were no more than folded, wax-sealed slips of paper and thus very small. Although impractical for the delivery of modern post, it's a delight to see these still in use almost two centuries after installation (Royal Mail first encouraged the fitting of letterboxes into front doors in 1849). Some

have flaps that operate with a roller action rather than being simply hinged. These make me skip with joy down the pathway.



French lettres

I'm less keen on florid Victorian models, over-ornate and rather self-conscious, and I even came across a very fancy example embossed 'lettres' – either French or dyslexic! Pictured here are some examples I snapped while on my rounds –



Dull brass letters, knocker missing

if you can identify yours, email your street address to [offthewall@gmx.co.uk](mailto:offthewall@gmx.co.uk) to claim a pair of complimentary tickets to a film of your choice at the Widcombe Social Club.

Beats me why nobody has yet invented the electronically-controlled letterbox which automatically opens as it senses the proximity of letters, then snaps shut again after delivery. Perhaps such a thing exists, just not yet in Widcombe where residents seem to cherish their traditional letterboxes!



Vert brass flipper



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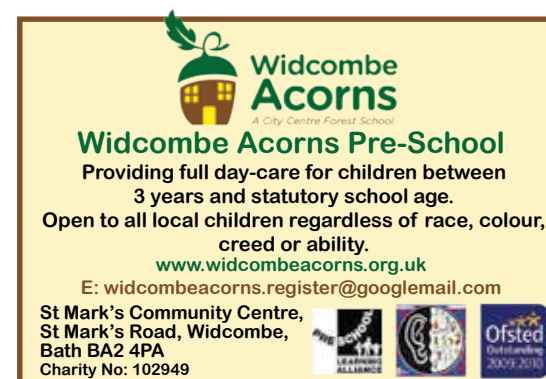
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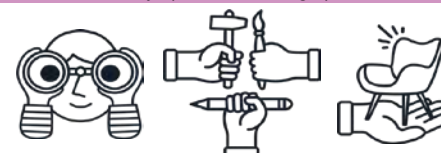
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The advertisement for Widcombe Baptist Church features a background image of the church building. A semi-transparent white box in the upper center contains a window icon and the church's name. In the lower left, an arched inset shows a group of children and an adult in a worship setting. The main text is on a tan background at the bottom.

  
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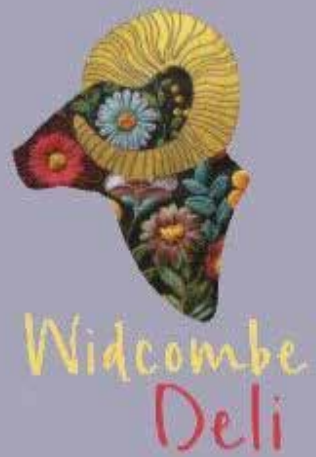
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