

## WALTON ON THE HILL & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

FOR HEADLEY,  
KINGSWOOD,  
TADWORTH &  
WALTON



*Bonsor Drive, Kingswood Village*

Charity Reg. No. 803796

Hon. Secretary Sandie Hunt [huntsandie47@gmail.com](mailto:huntsandie47@gmail.com)

## NOTES FROM THE CHAIR



Our April gathering at Headley Village Hall proved to be a resounding success, with a packed audience enjoying a truly fascinating talk by local food historian Jessica Thurtell.

Jessica's presentation, *Dining With History: English Meals & Eating Customs Through the Ages*, took us on a lively journey from Saxon hearths to the present-day dinner table. Along the way, we sampled stories of humble pottages and lavish feasts, discovered how daggers gave way to oyster forks, and learned how eating customs reveal much about daily life across the centuries.

Her engaging storytelling style brought the past vividly to life, mixing humor with surprising insights that had the audience both entertained and informed.

We are also indebted to the custodians of Headley Village Hall, whose efforts ensured the venue was welcoming and perfectly set for the evening.

All in all, it was a memorable event that blended history, hospitality, and community spirit — a fine example of how sharing the past can enrich the present.

[Lorraine Spindler](#)

**Our next meeting**  
***Rediscovered: The Stories***  
***of the Surrey Hills in World***  
***War II***

**Wednesday 8 October 2025**  
**Headley Village Hall**  
**Doors open 7.45 pm**  
**AGM followed by talk**  
**8.00 pm Start**  
**Refreshments available**

**Come along for an evening of newly unearthed stories, revealed through recent National Trust research. We'll bring to life extraordinary local tales — from the courage of a Canadian nurse and moments of romance amidst conflict, to the secrets of how Churchill's agents trained here to fight the Nazis.**

**Discover the surprising history of the so-called Bonzo agents — men who turned from Nazi allies into some of Britain's bravest operatives and how their top secret work connects to our area.**

**This promises to be an evening of local history, intrigue, and human drama — not to be missed!**

**£4 to non-members**  
**Free for members**  
**Refreshments available— donations welcome.**

***Please check your emails before our meeting***

## AN ANNIVERSARY MARKED WITH PRIDE AND JOY

In early May, Kingswood Village Hall was transported back in time to 1945, as those fortunate enough to secure tickets joined together for a marvelous celebration of VE Day's 80th anniversary. The Hall was filled with joy, echoing the same emotion that once overflowed into the streets of Britain on 8 May 1945—what Winston Churchill memorably described as “a brief period of rejoicing” marking the end of the war in Europe.



The evening opened dramatically with the wail of an authentic air raid siren, operated by Izzy Bright, a reminder of the constant fear that had overshadowed daily life between 1939 and 1945. Churchill's stirring words to “fight them on the beaches” recalled the grave threats Britain had endured until that long-awaited moment of victory.



*Land girl Caroline Neame serves tea*

Guests were then treated to food with a wartime flavour—evoking the rationed meals of the 1940s, though prepared to modern standards. A joint team of KVCA and KRA volunteers, with our “Land Girls” nattily attired in costume, served the packed hall. Lively musical entertainment came from Atlantis, our local music group, whose programme of well-known wartime and post-war songs lifted spirits and filled the Hall with nostalgia.



*Pia Chamberlain, Derek Bird, Sir Bryan Nicholson, Rosa Hale and Mary Hudson tell their stories.*

But amidst the celebration, there were poignant reminders of sacrifice. Pia Chamberlain shared the stories of Kingswood residents who gave their lives in WWII and are honoured on our village war memorial. Their names, and their losses, reminded us that freedom was dearly bought. Striking images showed local devastation: Whitecroft, Furze Grove scarred by a V1 strike, the wreckage of a Messerschmitt that crashed near St Andrew's Church, and damage to houses that today belong to families still living in the village. In the foyer, a detailed map of wartime strikes on Kingswood formed part of a wider exhibition that fascinated guests.



*Whitecroft, Furze Grove showing V1 damage*

The human side of wartime survival came vividly to life through personal stories. Derek Bird and Sir Bryan Nicholson, both of whom narrowly survived bombing raids as children in London, gave gripping first-hand accounts. In contrast, the younger Rosa Hale shared her grandfather's wartime story—what her family lost, and her heartfelt plea that we should do all we can to avoid war in the future. Each story was deeply moving, and readers can find fuller accounts in the following pages.

History and community pride also met in the tale of the Thirteen Society, told by Mary Hudson. Founded out of Kingswood's 13th platoon of the Home Guard, the Society still thrives today. Its endurance demonstrates how the camaraderie forged in wartime continues to shape our village life.



*The exhibition of wartime memorabilia*

The celebration tea was accompanied by an outstanding exhibition of wartime memorabilia, with items generously loaned by the Bright family and other Kingswood residents. Curated by Pia Chamberlain, Julia Hale, and Valerie Evans, the display featured posters, medals, citations, photographs, and evocative personal items. Adding a lighter touch, Chantal Cox's imaginative postbox toppers, specially themed for the war years, charmed visitors with their creativity.

The presence of our local Royal British Legion branch, complete with Standard, was a proud reminder of the continuing importance of remembrance. Branch Chairman Tim Snuggs expressed thanks to Kingswood for its steadfast support of the annual Poppy Appeal and for the strong community spirit evident in this VE Day commemoration.

Eighty years on from that historic day in 1945, the celebration at the Village Hall captured both the relief and rejoicing of peace and the solemn gratitude owed to those who secured it. It was, in every sense, a tremendous community event—one that honoured the past while bringing neighbours together in the present, a true reflection of Kingswood's enduring spirit.



*Atlantis play to guests*


**VE DAY**


**CELEBRATION**  
**AFTERNOON TEA**




with music from the 1940s onwards  
 by  
**ATLANTIS**

**Monday**  
**5 May**  
**3pm**



**Kingswood**  
**Village Hall**  
 Waterhouse  
 Lane,  
 Kingswood  
 KT20 6EB

**Tickets £5**  
 from Kingswood Village Store  
 Profits will be donated to the Royal British Legion  
Kingswood Village Community Association (Charity No. 275187)



## The Bomb Map of Kingswood Area

see *Surrey World War Two Bomb Incident Map* [www.exploringsurreypast.org](http://www.exploringsurreypast.org)

At 19.40 on 18 December 1940, a large number of incendiary bombs fell over many parts of Kingswood village. Several houses had small fires and minor damage. On the same night at Outward Lane and to the west of High Road Chipstead, 2 High Explosives and incendiary devices fell: one in the field off Outwood Lane, 200 yards SW of the Southern Railway viaduct. Another hit in open ground west of High Road between Rectory Road and Fair Lane. No casualties and minor damages to the roofs reported. An unexploded bomb was also later reported, at the Recreation ground, Chipstead Valley Road School. Thought to have been there several days before discovery. Found 10 yards from any building.

During the Second World War, Surrey—like much of southern England—found itself on the front line of enemy action. Its proximity to London, key airfields, railways, and military sites meant that civilians here faced real danger from the skies. Different types of bombs were used against the county over the course of the conflict, each bringing its own kind of terror.

The most familiar weapons of the Blitz years (1940–41) were high-explosive bombs,



*High-Explosive Bombs (HEs)*

dropped from Heinkel, Dornier, and Junkers bombers. These ranged in size from relatively small 50 kg devices to the devastating 1,000 kg “blockbusters.” Their purpose was clear: to destroy homes, roads, factories, and infrastructure. They caused widespread damage across Surrey’s towns and villages, leaving many families homeless and inflicting heavy civilian casualties.



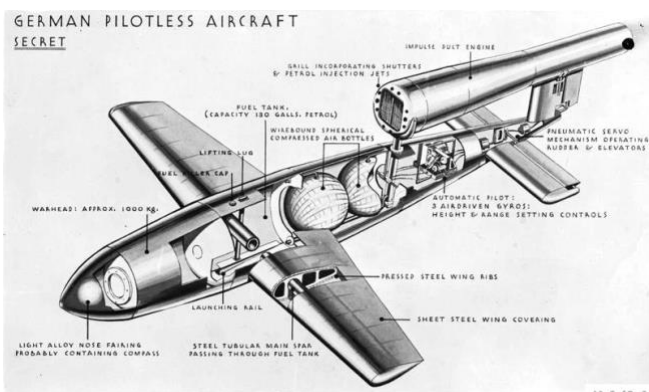
*An Incendiary Bomb*

Often dropped alongside high explosives were small magnesium or phosphorus incendiary bombs, delivered in clusters. Their aim was to start fires—particularly dangerous in residential areas and timber-framed houses. Quick-thinking civilians, including Air Raid Precautions (ARP) wardens and volunteer fire watchers, regularly tackled them, sometimes with nothing more than buckets of sand or stirrup pumps. Their vigilance saved countless buildings from destruction.



### Parachute Mines (Land Mines)

Even more terrifying were parachute mines: large naval mines adapted for dropping by air. Floating down slowly under parachutes, they detonated with immense blast effects that could level entire streets. In some cases, they failed to explode immediately, forcing mass evacuations until bomb disposal teams could make them safe. Several were dropped in outer London boroughs and across Surrey during 1940–41.



### V1 Flying Bombs ("Doodlebugs" or "Buzz Bombs")

In June 1944, the nature of the bombing campaign changed. Germany began launching V1 flying bombs, pilotless jet-propelled weapons carrying around 850 kg of high explosive. Surrey residents became

familiar with their ominous buzzing sound—followed by sudden silence as the engine cut out just before impact. While many were aimed at London, a number fell short, exploding in Surrey, including one which fell on Kingswood at *Whitcroft*, Furze Grove. These bombs causing heavy casualties and destruction. Locally, modern-day boroughs of Croydon and Merton, suffered some of the most concentrated damage from these "doodlebugs".



### V2 Rockets

Later in 1944 came the V2 rocket, the world's first long-range ballistic missile. Faster than the speed of sound, it struck without warning. Unlike the V1, there was no characteristic buzz, no time to take cover—only the sudden devastation of its impact. Although targeted at London, several landed in Surrey, either overshooting or falling short of the capital.



Surrey also saw occasional machine-gun attacks from enemy aircraft, as Luftwaffe pilots strafed villages, railways, and roads on their return flights. On rare occasions, clusters of “butterfly bombs” (SD 2 bomblets) were dropped—small, deadly anti-personnel devices, disguised by their toy-like appearance, designed to kill or maim anyone who touched them. There were several reports of butterfly bombs dropped onto Headley Heath during the war – discovered by locals dripping from the trees.



## Headley Heath Military Trail By Peter Denyer

Headley is quite a small village however during WW11 it played a not insignificant part in the war effort. Most of the larger houses were requisitioned by the Government for the War Effort. Headley Court became the Headquarters of The First Canadian Army Europe where everything from the day to day running of the Canadian Forces in the UK to planning for D Day was carried out.



*General Sikorski, General McNaughton, Winston Churchill and General Charles De Gaulle at Headley Court, 1941*

High Ashurst House was taken over by The Canadian Corps of Engineers as their headquarters and Headley Heath was used as a training ground for engineers to learn to use construction plant. As well as the Canadian presence in the village the American Ambassador used Headley Park as his residence and Villains Wyke housed a member of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile.

On the Boxhill side of The Heath it was much more secretive with the SOE using Bellassis House as its base for training mainly Czechoslovak operatives to be dropped back into their country to carry out underground operations including Operation Anthropoid the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich. There was also a very secretive POW camp mainly for Austrian German Officers who the SOE believed could be persuaded to work for the Allies, some went on to assist in the recovery of art works looted by the Nazis.

After WW11 Headley Heath was gifted to The National Trust along with the Lordship of the Manor of Headley but with no financial endowment, a local committee was set up to raise funds and maintain the Heath which was in a very poor state after The Canadians left for D Day. Today it has been absorbed into the structure of the NT and is run centrally along with all the other North Downs properties. About 10 years ago a group of interested staff and volunteers was formed to try and research and record the military goings on during WW11 this was very successful and a lot of research done including interviewing local men who as boys had gone on the Heath and fraternised with the Canadian troops.

Unfortunately, as with many things internal politics intervened and the whole project was mothballed.

A couple of years ago a staff member responsible for community engagement heard about the previous project and started asking questions with the possibility of bringing this information to the visitors to the Heath. Some of the original volunteers from the first project got together with the interested current staff members to see what could be done. From those meetings, the idea of a new physical trail to interpret the various features was born and

it was decided to go all high tech and go for a trail with physical wooden posts which at points of interest would carry a QR code which when scanned by a smartphone would take you to a description of the feature in audio form.

The Friends of Headley Heath an independent Charity supporting Headley Heath was approached for possible funding help, the charity had been given a sum of money a few years ago in memory of a local couple who were great supporters of the Heath Robert and Tessa Bridges and it was decided that this bequest would provide the physical infrastructure of the new trail. Permission from Natural England was required to dig the posts into the ground and this was granted and the NT fencing contractor was engaged to supply and erect the posts. Meanwhile Robin Hunter a local actor was commissioned to read the audio scripts which were uploaded to the website and QR codes prepared. These and direction arrows were printed in Dorking onto plastic discs.



It was decided to have a formal opening on May 10th two days after VE day and also the date of Surrey Day. The ceremony which had a very good attendance was started by an introduction by myself, who handed over to Michal Hayman who is one of The Deputy Lord Lieutenants of Surrey and happens to live in the village, after a few words he handed over to Lord George Bridges the son of Robert and Tessa who outlined his family's involvement in Headley and also that his Grandfather was

Winston Churchill's Cabinet Secretary during the war. He then declared the Trail officially open.



I was then able to tour some of the attendees, round the trail where the QR codes were tried out.

If you would like to follow the trail which is free to use. Go to the Headley Heath Main Car Park opposite the Cricket Ground. (Parking charges apply for non NT members) Go onto the grass area behind the Car Park and locate the Yellow and White topped post near the Cairn. Just use your smartphone to scan the QR code and listen to the audio, then follow the black and white arrows there are 9 QR codes spaced round the trail each with a different commentary.

It will take approximately 1 1/2 Hours the paths are good but stony in places and muddy in winter so good footwear is recommended. Should be suitable for robust pushchairs but Wheelchair users will find it very difficult.

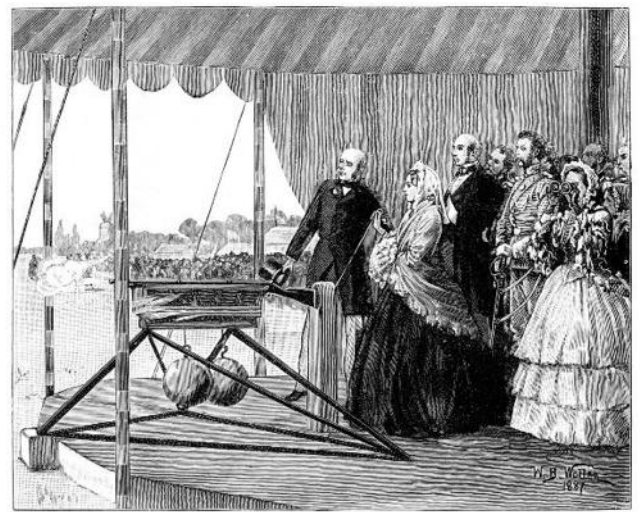
## A TROPHY WITH A STORY TO TELL By Pia Chamberlain



An old sporting trophy in search of a new home recently sparked off an interesting piece of research, which led right back to the end of the Second Boer War in 1902 and one particular consequence of it.

Although in the end the British army won that war, mainly thanks to the bold tactics of its commander in chief, Lord Frederick Roberts, its fight against the Boers had exposed one glaring weakness in that it had found itself completely outclassed by the Boers' superior marksmanship. This realisation gave rise to a movement, spearheaded by Lord Roberts and supported by a number of military men and politicians, to encourage the training of soldiers and civilians in rifle shooting.

fired the opening shot from a rifle resting on a cradle and triggered by a silk lanyard. The gun had been carefully sighted by the organisers to make sure that the Queen scored a bull's eye.



The Wimbledon meeting of 1860



*Field Marshall Lord Frederick Roberts by John Singer Sargent*

The National Rifle Association had been founded back in 1859 'for the encouragement of the Volunteer Rifle corps and the promotion of rifle shooting throughout the country'. Its first meeting had taken place on Wimbledon Common in July 1860, when Queen Victoria



*Boers preparing to do battle*

However, the popularisation of shooting with large calibre military rifles was hampered not only by the necessity of suitable ranges, which required large spaces that could only be found in rural areas, but also by the cost of ammunition. The development of a device which could be fitted inside the barrel of a

large-calibre rifle to allow it to fire small calibre ammunition, as well as the manufacture of small-bore rifles, meant that these could be fired either on short outdoor ranges or even inside larger buildings. By 1900, a small-bore rifle could be purchased for £1 (just over £130 in today's money) or less, putting the sport within reach of a much wider section of the population.

This resulted in the creation, all over the country, of so-called 'miniature' rifle clubs and, as is shown by the following article, published in the Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser of 25th July 1908, Kingswood was about to acquire its own club:

#### *Proposed Rifle Club*

*A large gathering met at the Gymnasium on Thursday of last week under the presidency of Dr. Home Ross to consider the foundation of a rifle club for Kingswood district. Dr. Ross, in opening the meeting, spoke of the great necessity of every man being able to use a rifle. As things were, judging by the daily newspapers, we never know when soon our patriotism might be put to the test...*

How prophetic these words were going to prove! A committee was duly elected, and things went ahead quite swiftly. On 18th September 1908, the Surrey Mirror was able to report the following:

*On Saturday afternoon, the new Rifle Club Range at Lower Kingswood was opened by Mr. Cosmo Bonsor. After inspection of the range by the visitors, the chairman, Dr. Home Ross, in a brief speech, detailed the steps by which the range had become an accomplished fact, and warmly acknowledged the hearty response which was being made by residents of the neighbourhood who had been asked for their support. Mr. Cosmo Bonsor, who is president of the club, replied and said that he congratulated all club members on the capital range that had been constructed and believed that the rifle clubs that were being formed throughout the land would prove of great benefit to the country. 'We had seen', he said, 'how a comparative small number of men in the Transvaal had been able by their marksmanship to keep at bay one of the finest armies, and it was for us to learn the lesson*

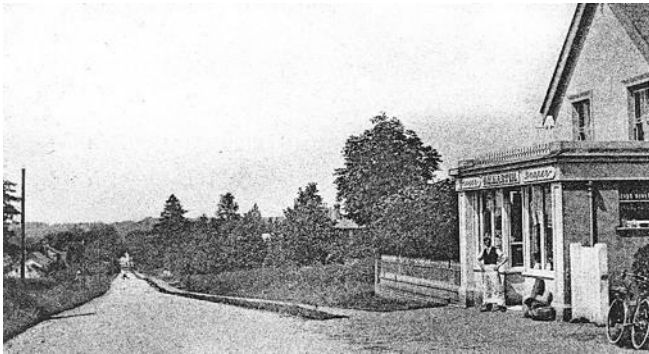
*which recent history had so plainly put before us. The existence of rifle clubs was no sign of, or incentive to, that militarism which so many in this country deprecated, but rather a guarantee of peace'... After a few trial shots by the president and members of the committee and a round of cheers for Mr. Bonsor, who had kindly given the necessary ground, the range was declared open.*

The Kingswood & District Miniature Rifle Club, to give it its full name, was situated along the Brighton Road, in a small hollow near what is now the entrance to the Holly Lodge mobile home park. The club's membership literally came from all walks of life and embraced a wide social spectrum, from the local squire (Cosmo Bonsor) to the simple workman. The chairman, John Home Ross, was the local G.P., Thomas Grubb, one of the instructors, had fought in the Boer War and was a handy man at Margery Hall.



Even the Curate at the Church of the Wisdom of God, the Rev. Martin Boyd Thurnburn (pictured above), was a member, somewhat surprisingly considering his position. His father had been a colonel in the British army and had fought in India. Martin himself had attended Dulwich College and Oriel College, Oxford, a background which might explain his skills at handling a rifle. We know that he represented the club on a number of occasions at local competitions. Then, there was Mr. George

Martin, the local grocer in Lower Kingswood. The photograph below shows him outside his shop. Further down the road, on the left, was the shooting range.



What is intriguing is that the rifle range was situated right next to Holly Lodge, which belonged to a renowned racehorse trainer, Charles Victor Tabor. How happy was he about having a shooting range practically on his doorstep? Would the noise not have frightened the horses, quite literally? He ran a pretty substantial establishment, with 13 stable lads to look after his horses, not to mention the house staff taking care of him and his wife (source: 1911 Census). He was clearly an influential personality in the local community and would surely have had a say in the matter. The picture of Victor Tabor on the left is by caricaturist Peter Ronald Buchanan, aka 'The Tout'.



The Kingswood Club was a member of the Reigate and District Miniature Rifle League and regularly met with other member clubs for matches, losing more often than not, judging

by press accounts. So called 'Spoon' competitions, in which a silver spoon could be won, were also frequently held and duly reported in the local papers.



*Silver spoons with the emblem of the Society of Miniature Rifle Clubs*

The Club ceased operating during the war and remained closed for a number of years afterwards. In fact, the number of rifle clubs all over the country fell dramatically after the end of the war, as many club members had either lost their lives or were no longer inclined to shoot as a pastime after having lived through the horrors of the trenches. Another factor which played a part in the decline in the number of shooting clubs generally was the passing of the 1920 Firearms Act.

Until then, there had been no laws regulating the possession, purchase, and peaceful carrying of firearms in Britain. Anyone, child or adult, could buy a pistol, load it and carry it around with no legal consequences. From the passage of the Act, the ownership of firearms ceased to be a right, but instead became a privilege. The Act introduced a registration system and allowed local police forces to deny a licence to anyone who was 'unfitted to be trusted with a firearm'. These regulations were to be further tightened in the ensuing years.

There were several reasons behind the introduction of such legislation. One of them was that the Government became concerned about the number of weapons which had been brought back by the soldiers returning from the trenches. The fears of the establishment were further heightened by the rise of socialist and anarchist movements and the Russian Revolution of 1917.

But back to our story. The following announcement appeared in the Surrey Mirror of 23rd March 1928:

*It is proposed to re-start the club known as the Kingswood and District Rifle club which has been in abeyance since the war. A meeting for this purpose will be held this Friday evening at the Tea House, Lower Kingswood. Dr. J. Home Ross will preside and Mr. Owen Nelsey, of Mount Hill, Lower Kingswood, will act as secretary, pro tem.*

Then in the Surrey Mirror of 27th April 1928 it was announced that

*the rifle range is now ready for miniature rifle shooting. The club hours for firing are from 6 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, 6 to 8 p.m. on Thursday and 2.30 to 4.30 p.m. on Saturday. A great number of competitions etc. is to be shot for...*

The next Surrey Mirror article, dated 1st February 1929, reported on the AGM, held again at the Tea House, in Lower Kingswood, and followed by a prize-giving ceremony. The distribution of prizes was carried out by Lady George Wellesley, who, according to the paper, *made an excellent speech on her own experiences of miniature shooting.*



*The Tea House, on the Brighton Road, Lower Kingswood*

Cosmo Bonsor was no longer on the scene by then and was to die later that year. His place as patron of the club had presumably been taken over by the Wellesleys. Lord George Wellesley was the grandson of the Duke of Wellington and the family lived at Mount Hill, in Lower Kingswood. Owen Nelsey, the Rifle Club's secretary, was a long-standing family friend who lived with them and acted as their chauffeur.



*The Wellesleys in 1918*

This is when we finally come across the trophy which inspired this whole research. It is described as the 'Kingswood Challenge shield and bronze medal', which was presented annually for 'consistent shooting'. This was awarded to J. Mitchell in 1928, to R.W. Taylor the following year and one last time in 1930 again to J. Mitchell. John Charles (Jack) Mitchell was born in Horley and had trained as a plumber before joining the Territorial Army.

Nothing more is heard of the Kingswood club after 1930, which might indicate that it had probably folded. The reasons for this are unclear. Had people simply lost interest or did the Great Depression and the hardship it brought play a part in the demise of the club? We shall probably never know, but nationally the sport slowly recovered over the coming years and is still going strong nowadays.



## Upcoming Events

### ***Annual General Meeting & Rediscovered: The Stories of the Surrey Hills in World War II***

Wednesday, 8th October 2025,  
7.45pm

Headley Village Hall

Join us for our AGM, followed by a fascinating talk on research conducted with the National Trust about recently rediscovered stories about Surrey Hills during World War II.



*Rudolf Hrubec, Bellasis SOE 2 Czech Commander 1941*

## Christmas Meeting

### ***The history of our local pubs***

Wednesday, 10th December 2025,  
7.45 pm

Walton Primary School

This year's festive theme will explore the history of the pubs and houses in our local community—perfect for a fun and engaging seasonal gathering!



We are currently seeking to help save the planet! Please let us know your email address if you are still receiving your newsletter by post.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS. DO YOU HAVE AN ARTICLE FOR OUR NEWSLETTER OR WISH TO CONTACT US? Please email [lorrainespindler@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:lorrainespindler@hotmail.co.uk)

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[huntsandie47@gmail.com](mailto:huntsandie47@gmail.com)