

Issue  
Mar 26



# Mawsley Newsletter

*Spring is here*



## From the Editor

In this edition of the Newsletter, Mawsley Parish Council discuss their activities and, as we enter a new financial year, detail the new precept, there is a link for further information.

You may have noticed some work activity in the Centre; the toilets are being refurbished with financial support from the MPC. Further redecoration is planned when funds allow. You will see on the TCAM page the numerous events planned for 2026, if you missed the last Comedy Night make a note in your diary - they are extremely popular and a great night out.

If you are new to Mawsley you may be interested to learn a little about the history of this greenfield village. Richard Barnwell explains the thinking and planning around the creation of Mawsley.

The Mawsley user groups are always looking for new members, why not join in some of the many activities - choir, WI, gardening, bowls, coffee club and walk and talk would all love to see you.

Mawsley Villagers Association (MVA) has been very active around the village helping to make Mawsley a better place to live. The charity does need to organise some fund raising activities so if you have any ideas and want to help please make contact, details on the MVA page.

I debated long and hard whether to put daffodils or dandelions on the front cover, dandelions do seem to be a Mawsley phenomena. Either way Spring is on its way.

Finally I want to say thank you to the local businesses that advertise in the Newsletter. It is the advertisements that off-set the printing costs of the Newsletter and allow the publication to continue. Many of the businesses are regular contributors so a big thank you to you all.



**Website:** [churchesbmc.org](http://churchesbmc.org)

**Facebook:** [cransleymawsleychurch](https://www.facebook.com/cransleymawsleychurch)

**Instagram:** [bcm\\_benefice](https://www.instagram.com/bcm_benefice)

We would love to welcome you to Mawsley Church one week. We meet at TCAM on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each month at 11am for about an hour. On Easter Sunday (5<sup>th</sup> April) we will also be holding a special All-Age Easter Celebration Service at 11am. Most weeks we run a Sunday Club with activities for children. We are linked to Cransley and Broughton Churches, so there are services you can attend every week.

There are plenty of other events happening too – so to be added to our email or postal list, please contact Revd Nicki Hobbs on 01536 799522, or email [bcmchurchoffice@gmail.com](mailto:bcmchurchoffice@gmail.com).

Finally, if you would like prayer, a listening ear, or would like to book a christening, wedding or funeral, please get in touch.

### Our church is turning 800!

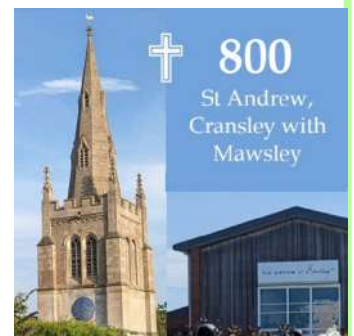
2026 marks the 800<sup>th</sup> year of our beautiful parish church, and we would love as many of you as possible to join in with the celebrations.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> May, Cransley church will be open from 10am - 3pm with history displays, flowers, stalls and refreshments.

There will be a Songs of Praise service at 3pm on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May with Bishop Debbie Sellin, the Bishop of Peterborough.

To help us compile the history displays, we are looking for photos, orders of service and other souvenirs that people might have from weddings, christenings or other services and events which have taken place at St Andrew's over the years.

If you would like to contribute, please email Laura at: [bcmchurchoffice@gmail.com](mailto:bcmchurchoffice@gmail.com).



# MVA

Mawsley Villagers  
Association

So what have the MVA been up to since the last Newsletter!

## Public Benches

The public benches project is now progressing well. I hope you have all noticed we now have a new bench along the path in the Eco Meadow as per the photo – I know some of you have already used it and commented on how good it is to have somewhere to sit, rest and admire the view. Thank you to NNC for donating this bench to the village and MVA for funding its installation.



A further three public benches are now on order and will be installed by NNC in the coming weeks – one in the Spinney Wood (replacing the one that had to be removed), one by the top entrance to the wood, and the third by the playing fields. Many thanks to Mawsley Parish Council funding the purchase of these benches, and MPC & Mawsley WI for covering the installation costs. From talking to numerous User Groups and individuals we know how much these additional benches will be appreciated.

There are opportunities to install memorial benches in the Village, if anyone is interested please contact the Chair at [chair@mawsleyvillage.co.uk](mailto:chair@mawsleyvillage.co.uk)

## Skate Mawsley

MVA are continuing to support the Skate Mawsley Group, now a sub-group of the MVA, especially with the negotiations with NNC. See the Skate Mawsley article for more info.

## Litter Pick

We are continuing to run Village Litter picks – the next one is on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April. If you are able to give an hour to help keep our Village tidier please come along. We meet at TCAM at 11.00am – litter pickers, bags and gloves are provided. TCAM are offering free tea/coffee and soft drink for children to all volunteers.

## And finally....

An MVA grant has been given to the Mawsley Ladies Rounders Team to help them with the purchase of new equipment.

# OVEN REVIVE

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## Mawsley Parish Council

By the time you are reading this the Easter bunny will be way on its way and the weather will hopefully be improving.

We have had a busy year in Mawsley. The Mawsley Villagers Association have worked really hard on a project to install new benches in the village, the parish council were delighted to be able to financially support this project. The new benches will be installed by the middle of Spring offering our residents the chance to sit and rest and enjoy the summer sunshine. The parish council also pay for the annual in-water maintenance needed on the pond, the timing of the work is really important so that we preserve and enhance the biodiversity of the pond.

It is still hoped that there will be a new skate ramp in Mawsley, the parish council have earmarked £25,000 in the reserve funds for the next financial year.

Over the last financial year the council have helped to install solar panels and heat pumps at TCAM, this is to help the Centre be more self-sufficient and less reliant on the escalating energy bills.

The new council tax bills will shortly be falling onto our residents door mats, the precept for the parish council last year was £100,000, we had a lot of projects that required considerable funding last year. This year we are pleased to have been able to reduce the precept to £79,871.66. The precept is the portion of the council tax that comes directly to the parish council.

As a council we are fully committed to making sure all our financial decision are fully transparent.

If you would like to know more about how the budget and precept works or what projects the Council is working on, you're always welcome to come along to a meeting or drop us an email on [clerk@mawsleyparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@mawsleyparishcouncil.gov.uk)

### Here is a short fun quiz for Easter to keep the brain ticking over.

1) Which park is at the southern tip of Manhattan	7) Who was the youngest actor to play James Bond in the official series of films
2) What is the study of birds called	8) Who's studio albums include Faith, Older and Patience
3) What is the opposite of occidental	9) Which classic TV sitcom had episodes called 'A Touch of Class', 'The Builders' and 'Communication Problems'
4) What colour is cochineal	10) What kind of fruit is a morello
5) Who or what is Shank's pony	11) Not including the Paralympics, how many medals in total did team GB win in the 2026 winter Olympics
6) Who wrote the words and music for Evita	12) Gordon Sumner is the real name of what British musician

## Mawsley Short Mat Bowls Club

On a green the size of laughter, under village light.  
Wood will meet gentle aim, and afternoons feel just right.  
Roll a bowl, find a rhythm, hear the friendly cheer,  
new faces, steady hands — everyone belongs here.  
No need for perfect posture, no need for polished shoes,  
we teach the line and measure, we share the wins and news.  
Tea and biscuits in the break, stories passed around,  
quiet focus, bright applause, community is found.  
For the first-timer's wobble, we offer patient tips.  
All ages, short mat bowls is a simple art —  
a steady hand, a laughing heart, a place to play your part.  
Come try a roll, make friends, learn how the green can glow.

**Mawsley waits with open arms**  
**Beginners welcome, come and grow.**  
**Afternoon: friendly coaching.**  
**Mondays 12:45 – 3pm**

**Christmas 2026 will be brighter thanks  
to Taylor Wimpey East Midlands**



Our Village Christmas Tree is decorated each year by Mawsley WI. The tree has continued to grow over the years, and it was clear this year that the lights are no longer sufficient, the display was not as vibrant. We need more lights was the conclusion.

Step in Taylor Wimpey East Midlands, who have very kindly purchased more Christmas lights for the tree. Many thanks to them for their kind donation to the Village.

Mawsley Church

## Easter Craft Afternoon

Wednesday  
1st April  
2:30-4pm



The Centre  
at Mawsley

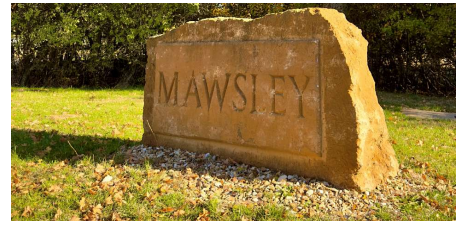
Join us for some creative half-term fun!  
Refreshments available (please bring a cup)  
It's free! (donations are very much appreciated)



The image features a central illustration of a brown wicker basket filled with several colorful Easter eggs. The eggs are decorated with various patterns and colors, including stripes, polka dots, and solid colors. The basket is surrounded by several stylized flowers in shades of pink, yellow, and orange. The background is a light beige color with a subtle pattern of blue and green shapes.



# MAWSLEY VILLAGE FOUNDATION



*Mawsley is now an established village but pre 1990's this was all greenfields, owned and farmed by the Barnwell family. Richard Barnwell reflects on the planning behind Mawsley and the subsequent development of the new village.*

In the late 1980s Kettering Borough Council were struggling to provide enough building plots in the Borough due to local opposition for the expansion of rural village development boundaries. It was decided to opt for a totally new community and an appeal/competition was launched to find the most appropriate site.

At this time Richard Barnwell was working with developers in Cambridgeshire and following consultations it was decided to put forward an imaginative plan for a development of 350 Houses on 135 acres of the Barnwell Family Farm at Cransley Lodge.

Several sites in the Borough were put forward, 6 potential schemes shortlisted, and the site then known as Cransley Lodge was selected. This scheme was promoted by Essex Developers Stock Land and Estates and following a public inquiry in 1993 the scale of the development was increased to 750 homes to enable the village to be able to sustain community facilities. The subsequent planning application and negotiation over the following 4 years was successful and planning consent was granted. The scheme was duly marketed and a phased sale agreed with McAlpines in late 1998, who would implement the terms and the spirit of the project.

Early on in the development McAlpines sold their interest to Taylor Wimpey who then sold part to David Wilson Homes.

Part way through the project Taylor Wimpey applied to Central Government to increase the density of the development which was opposed by Kettering Borough Council. The matter went to appeal and the Inspector allowed an increase of over 200 homes on the same area, meaning that open spaces were restricted and garden sizes reduced. KBC had been so convinced they would win the appeal that they had made no formal request for an increase in S106 payments, so there were no further funds to cope with the increased demand for services this additional development would cause.

However, some 25 years on, some of the Village roads and services are still unadopted.

My late father spent the last 10 years of his life working to make the potential new Village a success (he died from cancer on the day we signed the sale agreement) he would have been so pleased to see how the Village has developed into a real rural community.

As a member of the Parish Council for Mawsley since its foundation, I am so delighted to hear people say how much they like living here. I have been fortunate to meet and get to know so many people in the Village who have worked and continue to work to promote an important sense of place and somewhere residents are proud to call home.

Richard Barnwell 2026

# Mawsley WI



Mawsley WI have been having lots of fun learning new skills and knowledge over the past few months. In December, we were entertained and educated by Stanwick Bellringers,. As well as getting into the Christmas spirit with some beautiful playing, we learnt about the history and art of bellringing – some of us even had a go! Who knew bell ringing was so skilled.



January was a feast for the tastebuds. Giovanni brought a wide selection of Italian foods, including sauces, dips, charcuterie, cheeses, olives, and olive oil, many from his home region of Calabria. Members learnt how to make authentic Italian meatballs and a tomato-based pasta sauce, (just like his mamma used to make!) and how best to use the different types of pasta. The sampling session was great fun and very tasty.



February saw us learning the art of paperfolding with Nic from Nixiemade. As is obvious from the photos everyone came away with some lovely artwork. We learn the art of Teabag folding and how to make a flower (a more complex process). The name Teabag folding is thought to derive from the Netherlands in the days when loose tea came wrapped in patterned paper.



We have lots more interesting talks and craft sessions throughout the year and in April will be learning about CPR. You are very welcome to come along as a visitor to any of our meetings – we are a small, welcoming and friendly bunch. Please see our programme below for the next six months and leaflet in TCAM / Facebook posts for further information.

## **11th March – AGM & Quiz**

AGM and election of Committee & President for the year 2026/27. Followed by a fun quiz!

## **8th April – Resolutions & CPR**

Open discussion and vote on this year's National WI resolution - always a fascinating and important topic. Followed by learning more about how to be a life saver – CPR & defibrillation (the WI's Resolution for 2025).

## **8th July – From Ration to Fashion**

A very popular talk from Patricia about the impact of the WWII and the subsequent rationing years on fashions and the ingenuity people showed to overcome the shortages. Also, an opportunity to share family stories, photographs and memorabilia of this era.

## **13th May - Chutney, Cheese & Charcuterie**

You'll be in foodie heaven learning about and tasting various chutneys, cheeses & charcuterie with Steve.

## **10th June - Craft evening with Karen**

Another craft evening with our own highly talented Karen – these are always sessions not to be missed. You will come away with a beautiful and original artwork - made by you!

Quiz answers: 1) *Battery Park* 2) *Ornithology*. 3) *Oriental*. 4) *Red* 5) *Walking or travelling on foot*  
6) *Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber*. 7) *George Lazenby (29)* 8) *George Michael*  
9) *Fawlty Towers*. 10) *Cherry*. 11) *5*. 12) *Sting*



Our 2026 programme of monthly meetings began in February with presentations by two of our members and continued in March with a visiting speaker. We will now move outside for meetings until October and have various outings arranged.

On 15<sup>th</sup> April a group of us will visit Tulley's Tulip Fields near Warwick. We will car share for this trip and can offer lifts to anyone who would like to join us. Leaving Mawsley at 10am and returning by 4pm. Tickets are available to book online. If you are interested please contact Steve. (Details below.)

We will be in Mawsley for our May meeting, on 27<sup>th</sup>, which will be our traditional Garden Walkabout. From 2pm we will visit a variety of Mawsley gardens finishing in one of them for refreshments. If you would like us to visit yours please let us know.

In June we put our efforts into preparing our gardening stall for the village Fun Day. We grow plants for sale, make and decorate garden items and prepare a raffle and competition. Do come and grab a home made or home grown bargain.

We are looking forward to an afternoon guided tour of Delapre Abbey Gardens and Parkland in Northampton, followed by a cream tea, on 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

If you have an interest in gardens or gardening why not join us for any or all these events? We will be very pleased to see you.

If you would like to join in any of the above, or for more information, please contact Steve on 07802 331088.

## India 2 Mawsley

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### Banquet Night

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EASTER SUNDAY, CHRISTMAS EVE, BOXING DAY, NEW YEAR'S EVE, NEW YEAR'S DAY.

**BOOKING ADVISABLE**

## How did you get on with the last Newsletter quiz?



Venice



Mont Saint Michel



Brokenwood  
Police station NZ



Singapore



Laxey Wheel IOM



Arthur's Pass  
New Zealand



St Pauls



Notre Dame



Charlton FC



Knarborough



Betty's Cafe  
Harrogate



Tongariro  
New Zealand

## ABBA You Raise Me Up I Dreamed a Dream

When we moved to Mawsley over three years ago, we didn't know anyone in the village and wondered how we would integrate into the community. One day, when visiting TCAM, I noticed a poster on the board promoting the local choir, who would meet every Thursday evening for a two-hour rehearsal. Even though I hadn't been part of a choir in over twenty years and not feeling particularly confident with my singing voice, I decided to show up at the next rehearsal. Little did I know I would be welcomed with open arms and become a devoted member.

For fourteen years under the auspices of Carole Lyttle our musical director, the choir grew from strength to strength, winning awards at eisteddfods, performing at religious ceremonies and holding multiple concerts at the village hall. There is nothing we love to do more than spread the joy of music.

Our last Wassail was a roaring success, with the choir from Weston Favell Academy joining us in our performance as well as some exuberant audience participation. Carole has now stepped down as the director, so we are now actively looking for a pianist, musical director and as always, new members.

If you have a love and appreciation for music, are looking for camaraderie and a relaxed evening of singing and light-hearted banter, then please reach out to our Chair **Janine Hughes (07827322912)**. Even on the coldest winter nights we still feel better-off for making the effort to attend our Thursday night rehearsal. Singing is no doubt hugely beneficial, we learn to read music, practice breathwork and in general it helps us to destress from our busy lives.

You'll Never Walk Alone



Wind Beneath My Wings

Queen

## One John Rutter Make You Feel My Love



# What's on at TCAM



Mark your calendars! We have an excellent line-up of events planned for everyone this year!

## April

- Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> - Meat Raffle - £1 per ticket available from the bar. Easter Egg Hunt - Tickets £3.50 available from the bar
- Monday 6<sup>th</sup> - Mega Jackpot Bingo

## May

- Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> - Family Fun Night - Inflatables outside, Big Grilla BBQ, Live Music in the bar - see socials for more info

## June

- Friday 5<sup>th</sup> - Comedy Night
- Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> - **FUN DAY**

## July

- Friday 17<sup>th</sup> - Family Fun Night - Inflatables outside, Big Grilla BBQ, Live Music in the bar - see socials more info

## September

- Friday 4<sup>th</sup> - Family Fun Night - Inflatables outside, Big Grilla BBQ, Live Music in the bar - see socials for more info
- Friday 19<sup>th</sup> - Comedy Night

## October

- Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> - Children's Halloween Party

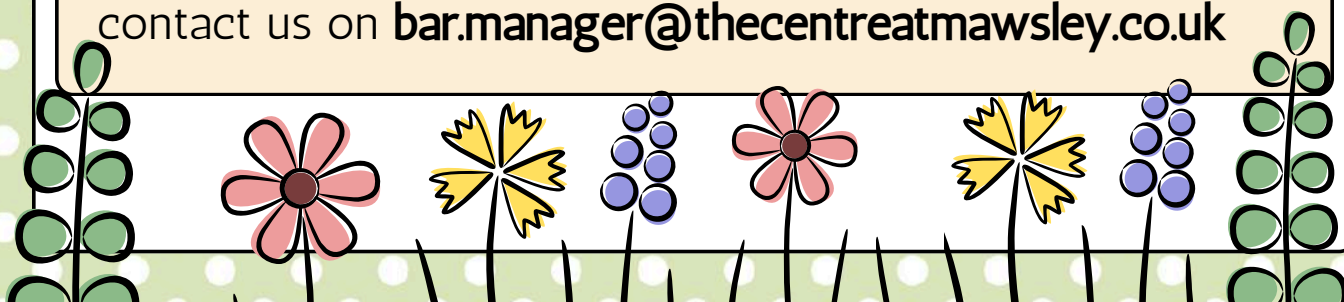
## November

- Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> - Bonfire Night, with live music in the hall afterwards
- Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Fair 10am - 2pm

## December

- Friday 11<sup>th</sup> - Raffle Night
- Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> - Children's Christmas Party 3pm - 5pm
- Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Quiz
- Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> - NYE Party

**Fun Day** is fast approaching, planning is in motion and we have some wonderful ideas coming through. If you are a user group or even just interested in having a stall please contact us on [bar.manager@thecentreatmawsley.co.uk](mailto:bar.manager@thecentreatmawsley.co.uk)



## Mawsley Coffee Club

Founded during the early days of the new village, Mawsley Coffee Club has become a popular spot for residents to connect, make friends, and enjoy themselves.



Once a month, usually on a Thursday, we host coffee mornings at The Centre in the bar area, sometimes featuring our own entertainment, or welcoming guest speakers. Refreshments are available at the bar from 10am.

We started our programme this year with a bring-and-share buffet lunch at The Centre, paired with a challenging picture quiz.

In February we had another quiz featuring the names of different chocolates. Judy provided some mini chocs as visual aids to munch on whilst we searched for the answers.

We also had fun guessing "Who's Who" from childhood photos that members shared.

In March, Bill Martin joined us as our guest speaker. He spoke about his time as a young police officer "a Bobby on the Beat" in Northampton during the 1960s. His talk, "Off Beat," included humorous stories and singalongs to classic pop tunes with his guitar.

After Easter, we're planning to have an authentic Thai lunch at 'So Thai' restaurant in Kettering.

If you're new to the village or recently retired, we invite you to join us at one of our coffee mornings—you'll always find a warm welcome. Check the notice board at The Centre for upcoming events, or contact Jean Wilson on 01536 799 490.

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## Mawsley Walk and Talk Group

are celebrating 2 years of strolling around our beautiful village.

We have observed the changing seasons in the lovely gardens and enjoyed the feeling of being out in the countryside on the playing field, the eco meadow and the spinney. We all feel better for the 4-5 thousand steps that we have hardly noticed because we were so busy chatting!

The big change we have made is to change our walking day to Wednesday. We meet at **TCAM at 10am every week** and return there at 11 to sample their delicious coffee. I can highly recommend their iced coffee with caramel syrup.

If you would like to join our small, friendly and very talkative group pop up to the Centre to meet us or give me a call.

We'd love to see you.

Rosie Todd Walk Leader. 07767871143

## Mawsley Skatepark Update

We're pleased to share that we recently joined MVA (Mawsley Village Association) to help support our continued efforts to bring a skatepark facility to Mawsley.

Our working group had a very positive meeting with a representative from North Northants Council, where we discussed building permissions and requirements for the new skatepark and potential funding avenues.

The area for a new ramp has been identified and measured and we are now reaching out to several specialist companies for quotes and initial design ideas, and we are also actively exploring grant opportunities to support the project.

As always, this remains a community-led effort, and you can take part in fundraising activities or make a donation directly through The Good Hub.

 Goodhub - <https://app.goodhub.com/skatemawsleyproject>

Every contribution brings us closer to delivering a fantastic new facility for Mawsley.

Follow our progress on Facebook - SkateMawsley

## Spring has Sprung, Summer is coming

Visit our giftware and crafting shop situated between Mawsley Barbers and Coffee at No9 in Barnwell Court, Mawsley

Browse our age related items, occasion-ware, memorial and a variety of other giftable items. See our collection of greetings cards, wrap, gift bags and helium balloons to add the perfect finish to your present.

For our Knitters and Crochet enthusiasts, we have a selection of Wendy wools.

Please support your local entrepreneurs also displaying their craftwork in the hand made section of the shop.



***Taratay Creations***

***Pamperkin***

***Jan Oksana***

***Claire Warner***

A big thank you to all our crafters in Mawsley and the surrounding districts who have been supporting our crafting lessons each month. We welcome any budding new crafter considering or interested in our forthcoming classes covering Card Making, Cricut for Beginners, Needle Felting, Crochet, Mixed Media Journaling, Watercolour Painting for beginners and advanced demonstrated by Claire Warner. Craft and Chat sessions are held on a weekly basis, bring your own project and sit with fellow crafters over a cuppa and a biscuit whilst you craft and chat.

For more information, please call in for a full listing and prices or follow us on Instagram @glittabitiz or Facebook Glittabitiz Crafts and Gifts Ltd.

**We hope to see you soon.**



## 1<sup>ST</sup> MAWSLEY SCOUT GROUP

February 2027 will mark our 20-year anniversary so you can say we have been one of the regular groups at TCAM. TCAM has served us very well over the years and acted as a great base within the village for both our indoor and outdoor activities.

We have three sections in our Scout Group each with its own adult volunteers, programme, and values:

Beaver Scouts (Thursdays 18.00-19.00hrs),  
Cub Scouts (Tuesdays 18.10-19.25hrs) and  
Scouts (Tuesdays 19.30-20.45hrs).



For more information follow us on

1<sup>st</sup> Mawsley Scout Group – Public Facebook Page or enquiries  
via [mawsleyscoutgroupenquiries@gmail.com](mailto:mawsleyscoutgroupenquiries@gmail.com)

Since the last newsletter, all three sections have been very active, despite the colder weather. We have had an Indoor Winter Camp at Overstone which included building and cooking on open fires, team challenges, assault course, bouldering wall, wide games, and night hikes but most importantly the camp's foundations was built on trying new things and time away from home (and devices!) in a safe but fun environment.



Our Beavers and Cubs have welcomed some new members and celebrated Shrove Tuesday and Chinese New Year as part of their Chefs and International badges as well as completing their Emergency Aid badges too – always helpful skills to have. A busy term up until Easter is on the cards!

Scouts too have been equally busy and active. For them camp activities were up a level as they competed to complete their Survival Skills badge. Using knives, axes, saws and safely building fires all par for the course to execute a 3-course meal on open fires. Plucking and gutting their pheasants was a new skill for all Scouts but definitely a favourite and made a change from fish!

We asked our Scouts (a collective of 11 to 14 years old girls and boys) to pull together the content for the newsletter this time round. Here are their reflections (in their own words) to give a bit of context as to what Scouts means to them:

"I've only been a few weeks but it's awesome! All the tasks and games – so fun and my Patrol win was the best! All the adventures ahead will be incredible"

"Scouts is fun because we play fun games and go on cool trips like camps, London and one time we went scuba-diving"

"Scouts is fun - don't trust the marshmallows, they can be hot!"

"Scouts is fun because of the games and the activities and camps. One time someone used a pickaxe on our last camp" (PS *not sure they did* – Leader edit)

Some new Cubs made their Promise.....then in Beavers they learnt about astronomy"

"Camp – we gutted pheasants and told stories (scary) around the campfire"

"Week One – Hungry Hippo's, Week Two – DIY, Week Three – Pancakes, Week Four – Chinese New Year, Week Five – Puppets"

**We think this says it all.**



## Mawsley Community Choir seeking new music director

*Do you love choir singing and have the passion and skills to  
lead a small community choir?*

Mawsley Community Choir, a well-established Village Choir, is seeking a new music director. Our previous MD has retired after 10 years+ with the Choir. We are an enthusiastic, small choir used to singing a wide repertoire of musical styles in harmony. We hold a summer concert and Wassail in December each year, plus other performances as requested. We rehearse on Thursday evenings at The Centre at Mawsley (TCAM).

If you are interested in this role and would like more information please contact our Chair, Janine Hughes on [janhughes70@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:janhughes70@yahoo.co.uk)/07827322912.



@mawsleycommunitychoir

**Knit and Natter** continue to decorate our postbox. In case you missed them here are a few of the recent decorations.



# ESPIONAGE

*The activity of secretly collecting and reporting information, especially secret political, military, business, or industrial information. A brief look at some of the events in the long history of spying.*

It is easy to think of spying as a relatively modern activity but espionage is regarded as the world's second oldest profession. Some of the earliest references to spies come from the region of modern-day Syria and Iraq, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century BC. Information written on clay tablets describe well-developed approaches to military and civil espionage.

The 15<sup>th</sup> century BC Egyptian Armana Letters discuss deceitful diplomacy, uncovering disloyal citizens, covert operations and details of rival kingdoms. The Hittite King Muwatalli II sent spies in the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC posing as deserters to lead Ramesses II into an ambush at the Battle of Kadesh. Shortly after this, it is recorded in the Bible, that Moses sent twelve spies into Canaan to prepare the Israelites to conquer the region.



A clay tablet from Mari with espionage details.

Everyone will be familiar with the story of the Trojan Horse a very practical form of deception. (But was it true?)



The Ancient Greeks used the scytale, an early encryption device that involved wrapping a material around a cylinder of a specific size, then writing a message, letter by letter across each strip. When unwound the strip of cloth would appear as a random string of letters. The person receiving message would wrap the strip around a cylinder of same circumference thus enabling them to place the letters in the correct order again. Decoding the message by someone who was not the intended recipient required them to recognise it for what it was and then correctly determine the size of the cylinder.

Moving into the years after the birth of Christ, there were many threats to the Crown. In the Elizabethan times, Sir Francis Walsingham became an invaluable aid to the safety of Elizabeth I. Walsingham served as Secretary of State during times of international conflict, including the Spanish Armada and running the Secret Service. His best-known role is probably his work in securing the grim fate of Queen Mary of Scots. The Catholic Mary was seen as a major threat to the Protestant Elizabeth. There are many accounts of the role of espionage in helping to keep our country safe but space does not permit any further examples to be included. Time to look at more modern times.

Sir Francis Walsingham



## Spying in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries

Espionage played a vital role in World War I. The need for intelligence gathering became paramount. Nations needed to know what the enemy was planning, they needed to have the knowledge and the understanding of enemy movements, strategies and capabilities. This period spawned the development of organised intelligence services in many countries including MI6 in Britain and the Abwehr in Germany. Rapid developments in spying between the two World Wars saw human intelligence (HUMINT) being enhanced using new technologies. The use of radio and radio interception (SIGINT) and the rise of codebreaking became important in the shadowy world of espionage. Spying activities included Ideological Surveillance, Industrial and Naval Spying. Following the 1917 revolution, intelligence services were tasked with focussing on monitoring Soviet activities across Europe. During the late 1930s a Nazi network operating in the USA was uncovered by the FBI. This network was sabotaging war materials and collecting naval intelligence on shipping.

The outbreak of the second World War saw the lessons learned from the somewhat amateurish spying of 1914-1918 refined into the professional organisations that dominated World War II. Germany developed sophisticated machines to encrypt messages that were impossible to read until the well documented activities of the Code Breakers of Bletchley Park, Bedfordshire.

## Espionage during the Cold War era and later

The Cold War was a state of military tension after World War II, between the Western allies (Western Bloc) and the Soviet Union (the Eastern Bloc). Information was a key commodity during this era, each side needed to know what the other was doing and relied on human spies to operate in enemy territory undetected. As this article was being researched new tensions have arisen. A recent update email from the i Newspaper bore the heading "UK spies on high alert for Iranian sleeper agents plotting attacks in Britain". Activities could include terror incidents, cyber attacks and the spread of misinformation. New technologies of course have their place in our every day lives but their development makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction, misinformation or real facts. AI is a great help in many things, but will it be allowed to develop to the extent that it can't be controlled? To quote from the X Files which is enjoying a re-run, "The truth is out there".



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