



WINTER 2024

Widcombe magazine

Staying well in winter • Seasonal cheers!

Christmas Market bonanza • Spotlight on Perrymead



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Welcome

As we think about getting out our woolly jumpers, hats and mitts, our winter issue features tips on staying well in the colder, darker months, along with recipes for delicious toddies to warm our hearts. Widcombe is no less active in winter as you will see from our event listings overleaf. Topping the bill, the 18th Widcombe Christmas Market on 16-17 November is our biggest ever.

Did you spot that your magazine has grown a little? We hope you like the bigger, airier look and our updated logo (on show in its full cinnamon regalia at the bottom of this page).

Many of our favourite contributors are with us, including John Leach on gardening through winter, David Goode birdspotting in Lyncombe, and Ralph Oswick with his hilarious recollections of Widcombe past.

Let us know what you think of our new livery or what you'd like to see in future issues. We love hearing from you.

Colette Hill

magazine@widcombeassociation.org.uk



Editorial Team

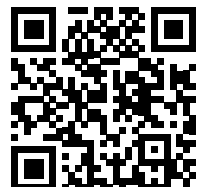
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WIDCOMBE ASSOCIATION **WA**



One-stop Christmas shop!



The 18th Widcombe Christmas Market takes place on Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 November 2024 with a record-breaking 75 vendors taking part. Come and support our talented local makers and artists and buy unique high-quality gifts that you really can't find anywhere else.

The market will be held on both days in the Widcombe Social Club and The Natural Theatre Company and on Saturday only in St Matthew's Church and hall. Refreshments will be served, so bring some friends along to this fabulous community event. www.widcombechristmasmarket.com



James Hourigan



Agnes Pollock



Laura Jorgenson



Sarah Targett



Ruth Thorpe



Julie Green



Vicky Yates



Celebrate New Year's Day with the Mummers

The Widcombe Mummers are back on 1 January with a brand-new folk play, *Medieval (and good) Magik Mummahs*, written by Oliver Sandbrook.

Good weather performances:

- 12.00 noon Widcombe Manor
- 12.30pm Prior Park Garden Centre car park
- 1.00pm St Mark's Community Centre car park

Wet weather performances:

- 12.00 noon St Mark's Community Centre
- 12.40pm St Mark's Community Centre

Widcombe Social Club

Whether it's music or the arts, literature or quizzes – there's something for everyone this winter at Widcombe Social Club. See www.widcombesocialclub.co.uk to book as well as for regular updates and to join the mailing list.

Fridays 7.00 – 9.00pm: free entry to Waterside Nights – live music; pizza served 6.00 – 8.30pm, including vegan and gluten-free options.

Saturday 2 November: Charity fundraiser in aid of Bath Mind and the Dyson Cancer Centre. Featuring Bath crooner Steve West and classic rock and blues cover band Driftwood. Tickets www.eventbrite.com/e/charity-event-tickets-1021834724167.

Saturday 7 December: book a table for the WA/WSC seasonal quiz. Food served in the interval.

Tuesday 31 December: New Year's Eve Party – see in the new year with our resident DJs.

Friday 3 to Sunday 5 January: Fifth Annual Jazz Festival.

Off the Wall

Screenings of engaging films with guest speakers and other extras in the relaxing and spacious Wharf Room, £9 (£7 concessions) offthewall@gmx.co.uk.

DJ Nights

Saturday 9 November
Frug, dance music from across the decades

Saturday 30 November
Transmission, alternative sounds from the 80s, 90s and beyond

Saturday 14 December
Electric Dreams, the biggest 80s night in the city

The Arts Society Bath
www.theartsocietybath.com

Monday 4 November
David Garrick: Actor and Impresario

Monday 2 December
The Christmas Story in Renaissance Art

Monday 3 February
200 Years of British Surrealism

Monday 3 March
Seventeenth Century Dutch Painting

St Mark's Community Centre



Get in on the action at St Mark's Community Centre:

Dance with Curtis School of Dance: curtisschoolofdance.com. Weekday classes from 3.30pm and all day Saturday.

Perform with Zenith Youth Theatre Company: zenithytc.co.uk, for young people aged 13-21.

Practise Tai Chi for wellbeing: daytime classes by Paddy Nisbett 07769 733580.

Dance with ecstaticdance-bath.co.uk, Saturdays or Sundays throughout the month.

Try martial arts with Bath Historical Martial Arts
www.bath-hema.com
Tuesday evenings 7.30 – 9.30pm

Garden in the community garden with the Garden Group led by Ruth 07962 868182.

Saturday 30 November: Food Bank Bop. Local band Junction 18 play favourite rock classics. £10 on the door.

Sunday 8 December at 1.00pm: Widcombe West Christmas lunch. All welcome. Bring a dish to share and something to drink, and a raffle donation. Craft activities and games for children. Come and meet your neighbours and make new friends.

Monday 20 January, 7.00pm, Food Bank Quiz

Saturday 22 February, 6.30 - 10.00pm Town/Gown Food Bank Ceilidh



Widcombe Book Group

Last Tuesday of the month at 8.00pm. New members welcome. Contact Jocelyn Ridley jocridley@gmail.com.

Widcombe Baptist Church

Toddlers@WBC, Thursday mornings 10.00 – 11.45am, toys, crafts, stories and singing.

Friday Youth – meet-ups for young people through the evening, Junior (7–11 years), KS3 (11–14 years) and KS4 (14–18 years)

Café International, Tuesdays, 7.00pm – cultural café for international students to meet local people

Coffee Plus, Tuesdays 10.30am – 12.00 noon, 50+ coffee, cake and friendship

Craft Together, 21 November, 7.30 – 9.30pm

Café joins foodie Parade

Widcombe is fast becoming the go-to destination for Bath foodies. Joining The Colombian Coffee Company, Manhattan's, Bikano's, The Widcombe Deli and the Ram, Ruposhi, and the Ring O' Bells is The Halfpenny, which opened on the Parade in May.

Widcombe-born owner Roy Hayward also owns the Secret Garden Café in Prior Park Garden Centre as well as the Bridge Tea Rooms in Bradford-on-Avon. Roy's wife, Alison, is involved in the business and son Oliver is bar manager at the Halfpenny.

Having launched The Halfpenny with an all-day menu of salads, waffles and sandwiches, as well as coffees, soft drinks, wine and cocktails, Roy soon added evening tapas to the mix. In October, he started offering Sunday lunch and plans are afoot for Christmas parties in December.



White Hart set to re-open next summer

The Walcot Group, owner of Bath restaurants Walcot House and Solina, acquired Widcombe's much-loved pub The White Hart earlier this year and is working through the planning process with a view to reopening by early summer 2025.

The pub, which has been closed since March, is expected to undergo significant refurbishment to restore its historic features and increase the size of the bar and restaurant areas. It will remain at the heart of the community as a pub for drinkers and diners alike, with a menu of seasonal British classics.



Welcome to our new defibrillator



An appeal for funds to replace the defibrillator, which went missing in 2022, has been answered by members of the Widcombe Association, with two significant donations by the family of the late Ed Cole and by local residents Sam and Fabi Dyson. Many thanks to everyone who contributed and to the Baptist Church which organised the purchase and installation of the new equipment.

If you're a bit hazy about the use and value of defibrillators, check out the British Heart Foundation's website (www.bhf.org.uk) for more information. In short, a defibrillator is a device that gives a high energy shock to the heart of someone who is in cardiac arrest.

There are 30,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests a year in the UK. Some three quarters of these occur in the home or workplace, and half are witnessed by a bystander. The use of CPR and a defibrillator in the first few minutes after a cardiac arrest can double the chances of survival. You don't need to be trained to use a defibrillator – if you need to use one, simply phone 999 and await instructions.

NT renovates garden

The last few months have seen lots of change at Prior Park Landscape Garden, including the long-awaited reopening of its lower entrance via Church Lane.

According to The National Trust's Heloise Clough, the renovations have been a process of trial and error with more in the pipeline. 'We have been thrilled to hear how happy visitors are with the change.'

Access is now through the original cast iron gates, beyond which visitors can pay or scan their NT membership cards at the new tea cabin where a range of refreshments are available.

There is no parking (aside from limited, pre-bookable accessible spaces), but visitors can reach the gardens by bus (to the main entrance), on foot, or by bike (a new bike rack is to be installed).

Over the winter months the park will be open at the weekends, the garden 10.00am – 4.00pm, the tea cabin 10.00 – 3.00pm. Last admission to the garden is an hour before closing.



The park will be open daily 21 to 31 December (closed 24 and 25 December). The 12 Days of Christmas will be brought to life around the garden with a family trail. Check the website for dates as well as other upcoming events at nationaltrust.org.uk/prior-park-landscape-garden or call 01225 833977.



Raise the roof

A £90,000 fundraising campaign is under way for urgent repairs to St Thomas à Becket Church in Church Lane. This much-loved medieval building is one of the most picturesque in Widcombe and has been at the heart of our community for over 500 years.

After several lead thefts, permission has been granted to replace the roof with an alternative material and additional works are also needed to keep the building dry and secure as winter sets in.

Several people have already responded to the appeal and, together with money from insurers and Gift Aid pledges, the total raised to date is almost £65,000, enough to put up the scaffolding and get the first phase of work under way.

Donations can be made at <https://widcombe.church/donate> or use the QR code below. If you are a UK tax payer, Gift Aid can add 25 per cent to your donation - please contact the church treasurer for a form finance@widcombe.church or text/phone 07792779587 for further information.



Exploring Perrymead



Dan Lyons takes a walk along Perrymead and meets a host of colourful characters from its past.

Today Perrymead is a quiet and semi-rural residential road, but in the last years of the 18th century it was visited by three of the most distinguished men of the age: a campaigner, a composer and a poet.

In June 1791 the MP for Hull and famous opponent of the slave trade William Wilberforce took a short lease on a house in the lane, most likely one close to the junction with Ralph Allen Drive. Writing to his friend Lord Muncaster he asked 'where, I hear you say, is Perry Mead? It is situated in a country which, except in the article of water, comes not far behind Cumberland and Westmorland themselves.'

The business of Parliament took Wilberforce back to London and

three years later, in 1794, a man with a very different distinction came to stay. This was the Austrian composer Franz Joseph Haydn who was visiting his Italian friend Venanzio Rauzzini who lived either in what is now Perrymead Court or in Woodbine Cottage further up the road. Rauzzini was at that time a singing teacher and musical director but had been a celebrated castrato (look it up if you must) singer. Mozart wrote the motet *Exsultate Jubilate* for Rauzzini in 1773.

Haydn was obviously rather taken with Rauzzini's residence, writing 'his summer house, where I stayed, lies in a very lovely site on a hill which overlooks the whole city.' In the garden Haydn discovered the grave of Rauzzini's favourite hound

Turk and set the rather odd epitaph 'Turk was a faithful dog and not a man' to music in a four-part canon.

Finally, in 1798, perhaps encouraged by Wilberforce's comparison of Perrymead with the Lake District, the great poet William Wordsworth visited for dinner. He was the guest of the antiquary and author Reverend Richard Warner who lived at what is now Fersfield but was then called Warner's Cottage. Incidentally, Warner was the author of the first comprehensive history of Bath (1801), a 500-page tome without an index which apparently 'fell into many errors'. Sadly, Wordsworth did not see fit to write a poem about Perrymead but let's hope that he enjoyed his dinner.



Widcombe Heroes

Helen Peter has been nominated a Widcombe Hero by Anita Breeze for the part she has played 'forever' in the enhancement of Widcombe. She was a driving force in initiating the murals for the underpass, turning a drab and intimidating thoroughfare into a cheerful route into town. She's a key member of WAVE (Widcombe Association Verge Enthusiasts) and can often be seen on Widcombe Parade helping the team keep the verges clear of brambles and weeds and leading litter-picking efforts. She is a trustee of St Mark's Community Centre and works on improvements to Beechen Cliff. She started the Widcombe Choir. She campaigns for safer cycling routes. The list goes on and on because, as Helen puts it, 'it is a great privilege to live in Widcombe, so it seems a natural thing to give some time, effort and enthusiasm to make things happen here'.

Remembering Richard Squires

Richard Squires, who lived in Tynning End and led the Widcombe Association from 2002 to 2005, died in the summer and is missed by all who knew and loved him. As chairman of the WA, Richard grappled with many issues affecting Widcombe that we are familiar with today. The principal one was the reduction in traffic in Widcombe Parade which would not be resolved until 2016. Other issues included the closure of the post office in Widcombe, improving the accessibility and condition of Abbey Cemetery, and resolving the traffic problems on Widcombe Hill which are finally to be addressed 20 years on.



Coming home to yoga

Ruth Timms tells **Biddy Walcot** how a varied early career helped her develop as a yoga teacher.



How many people have grown up in Bath, fled as young adults to the bright lights of London or elsewhere and eventually returned 'home'? Ruth Timms admits: I came back because, frankly, we wanted to buy a home and we couldn't afford to do that in London.' But her return to Bath seven years ago has been successful on many levels, not least for her growing business as a yoga teacher.

Yoga was not Ruth's first career choice (media sales – 'great fun') or even her second (teaching – 'more meaningful but the hardest job I've ever done'), but once her children reached school age it was time to think about what next.

She had an interest in yoga and settled on a two-and-a-half-year yoga teaching qualification with the British Wheel of Yoga. 'Many courses are much shorter but I wanted to understand more about yoga and deepen my practice. But then I started teaching and I guess because of my teaching experience, I already knew about talking to a group of people and planning lessons. And because of my experience in media sales, I knew a little bit about how to sell my classes.'

Mindful yoga

Among some, there is a perception that yoga is a bit 'alternative' – a fashionable name for what is essentially lying on a mat and stretching. But Ruth explains: I think the main difference between yoga and say, a stretch class, is the mind-body connection. We spend so much time worrying, fretting, planning, just living our lives in our head. It can be really beneficial for mental, physical and emotional health to find ways to be more 'present' in our bodies. And yoga – mindful yoga in particular,



which is yoga at its best - gives you an opportunity to do that. It's about feeling over thinking. It's very simple but it doesn't come easily without practice. I see my job, primarily, as guiding people to pay attention to the sensations that arise in the body, moment by moment, as they practise.'

Do people sign up for classes in mindful yoga? Or to do handstands?

'Often, people come because they'd like to be stronger or more flexible. Or they want a really good stretch. And then the longer they practise these mind/body exercises, the more they realise it's the psychological effect - the sense of peace and calm - that keeps them coming back. Yoga is a beautiful mix of physical exercise, breathing techniques, rest and mindfulness. All of these aspects contribute to the feelgood factor. That said, yoga is a broad church. Some classes are more posture-based. Others focus more on breathing and some classes are based on meditation or deep rest. Think about what you'd like to get from the class and try a few until you find the right teacher and style for you.'

Ruth teaches at the Widcombe Social Club on Wednesdays and Fridays from 10.00 – 11.00am in term time, and runs retreats in the UK and abroad. See also Ruth's tips on staying well in winter on page 11. You can find out more at www.ruthtimmsyoga.com.





Staying well in winter

Much as we might love frosty days and cosy evenings in front of the fire watching *Strictly*, there is no doubt that winter brings its challenges. **Biddy** 'just one more mince pie' **Walcot** and **Colette** 'I'll join the gym in January' **Hill** asked a few professionals for their top tips on staying in shape over the colder months.



Sian Lewis – keep on walking

'It's well known that walking is a brilliant all-round low-impact exercise, and walking in the cooler months has added benefits, keeping us connected with the world around us and boosting our vitamin D intake.

'Walking with others is particularly good in the winter, taking time to chat, to boost our mood and to reduce feelings of isolation.

If you'd like to join us on one of our Widcombe Wayfarers walks, we meet on the second Wednesday of each month at 10.00am at the west end of Widcombe Parade.

<https://widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/events/7-widcombe-wayfarers-walking-wednesdays>

Emily Ballinger – protect yourself

Widcombe Pharmacist Emily Ballinger says: 'there are simple steps we can all take to stay well in winter, like getting the flu jab (available at Widcombe Pharmacy), taking vitamin D supplements and eating well. Layering clothes is a good way to stay warm – lots of thin tops rather than one thick jumper, for example – and that's true at bedtime as much as in the day. Finally, the winter months can take a toll on our mental as much as our physical health so be kind to yourself and tune in to the things that make you smile.'



James Baker – keep moving

James is a health and fitness coach working with clients in Widcombe and across Bath. He focuses on maintaining and improving fitness into later life.

‘My top tip would be to try and invest in your movement or mobility each day. It’s all too easy, especially in the winter months, to return home from work or a busy day and collapse on the sofa for the rest of the evening. But just spending 15 minutes on some simple movements will nourish your joints and stimulate your muscles.

‘Try some deep squats, or lunges, (you can do these while watching TV), or balancing on one leg (while you’re brushing your teeth). See if you can do two minutes – and don’t forget the other leg! And sit-ups, planks and back extensions are all good for your core.

Contact James on 07469 001785.



Ruth Timms – be kind to yourself

Yoga teacher Ruth Timms says: ‘We can be very hard on ourselves. I think in winter we naturally withdraw a little bit. Many of us need more rest but it’s also important not to stop moving altogether. Yoga teaches us to tune in to the signals our bodies are sending us all the time. For example, if you’re feeling groggy, lethargic and stiff, is this because you’re bone tired and desperately in need of rest? Or is it because you’ve been sat at a desk for hours and your muscles and joints are in need of a good stretch? What you need today might be completely different to what you need tomorrow. With practice, we can learn to be guided by and to trust our inner experience and then respond with wisdom, kindness and compassion to what we really need, day by day, season by season.’ (See our profile of Ruth on page 9).



Paddy Nisbett – meditate to boost your immune system

At St Mark’s Community Centre Paddy Nisbett teaches classes that combine meditation, Qigong and T’ai Chi. Paddy advocates meditation to shift your mind from fight/flight to rest/digest. ‘Meditation can help calm the mind, calm the breath, calm the body and put you in a better place to fight off stress and illness.’

Try Paddy’s simple daily three-minute meditation and see where it takes you: place your hand on the centre of your chest to bring your awareness to your heart; as you focus on the area of the heart, imagine you are breathing in and out with your heart, and, if you are comfortable doing so, slow your breath and make the outbreath a little longer than the inbreath. Think of something uplifting - something that makes you feel grateful or appreciative, that makes you smile or feel compassionate. Stay with the meditation for three minutes.

T’ai Chi stillness and movement at St Mark’s: Tuesday 10.30am, Wednesday 10.00am and Friday 11.30am and 2.00pm. Paddy Nisbett 07769 733580



Bath Touch Thai Massage Spa - Improve your circulation

Siriporn Chimpanich and her small team of skilled therapists have been delivering Thai massage in Widcombe for 11 years. They have built up a loyal following among locals who return regularly for the benefits that Thai massage delivers year round.

But Siriporn says that Thai massage can be particularly beneficial in the winter months. ‘It’s great for relaxation and the stretching we use relieves muscle pain and tightness – which we feel more in colder weather. The massage softens muscles and improves circulation which is also hugely beneficial in the cold.

‘Thai massage is different from other forms of massage in that we don’t normally use oils – we use a balm made from Thai herbs instead – and we massage you from the soles of the feet to the head. It really is a top-to-toe experience.’

www.bathtouchthaimassage.co.uk

Ward News

Ward councillors **Alison Born** and **Deborah Collins** report on the big issues in their in-trays.

Cleaning up along the tow-path

Following extensive lobbying, Network Rail has at last tackled most of the graffiti on the railway bridge and the arches, which blighted the walk from Widcombe into Bath. In addition, the council has appointed a dedicated officer to manage the stretch of river for which it is responsible. Notices have gone up to warn owners that the council is planning to remove the sunken boats and the officer is also working on measures to prevent the illegal mooring of unsafe boats which will help to avoid further unplanned costs to the council.



Widcombe Hill safety measures

Many thanks to everyone who gave us their views on the safety measures needed to prevent speeding on Widcombe Hill. As Michael Wrigley reports (page xx), final designs are being produced so work can start in the coming months.



Alison Born



Deborah Collins

More pedestrian crossings

The Church Street liveable neighbourhood plan included pedestrian crossings to create a safe, quiet walking and cycling route across the ward. We now have the funding for at least one pedestrian crossing either at the Widcombe Hill end or the Prior Park Road end of Church Street (although we continue to lobby for both). That, and the improvement for cycling access from the two tunnels onto Lyncombe Vale is hoped to create a safe route particularly to our local schools. We haven't given up on trying to get safer crossings around the White Hart either, but haven't yet managed to get the money for that.

Playparks

New play equipment has been installed to replace the damaged equipment in the playpark by Widcombe Infants and Junior School. We are now working with the Widcombe Association and local residents to try to bring the Calton play park back to life.

Planning matters

We are very disappointed that our strong representations with the Widcombe Association and the Bath Preservation Trust failed to halt the Kosy Living development at the bottom of Wells Road. We will monitor this huge development of co-living studios to ensure the promises are kept to improve the local environment and to ensure there is no increase in parking stress and traffic as the block is built out.

Drains

And finally, during the recent downpours we were pleased to see that the new drains at the bottom of Widcombe Hill and Prior Park Rd and along the Parade have held up to prevent flooding. Thank you to everyone who alerts us to blocked drains. You can report those on fix.bathnes.gov.uk and we also alert the team responsible for clearing them so hopefully we can manage our increasingly wetter world.

Go slow

Michael Wrigley reports on plans to calm traffic and make Widcombe Hill safer for pedestrians and road users alike.

The Council is proposing significant measures to address the problem of speeding traffic on Widcombe Hill. The problem is most acute at the bend by Macaulay Buildings where parked cars are regularly hit and, despite warning signs, cyclists have repeatedly come to grief travelling downhill. Lower down Widcombe Hill, if the road is clear, vehicles travel too fast in both directions. One particular issue is vehicles accelerating across the junction from Widcombe Parade and speeding up Widcombe Hill.

The issue has been of concern to residents and the Widcombe Association for over two decades. The introduction of a 20mph limit along the length of Widcombe Hill has been largely ineffective due, no doubt, to insufficient enforcement. Recent speed checks by the police have recorded significant numbers of drivers exceeding the speed limit, with some travelling at almost twice the legal limit.

The principal measure proposed is the introduction of a series of narrowings to reduce the width of the road to a single lane with priority in one direction. The direction (uphill or downhill) will vary between the narrowings. The position of street parking will also be used to narrow the carriageway, thus helping to reduce the speed of moving vehicles.

The preferred option for Macaulay Buildings has been produced in consultation with residents. Priority will be given to uphill travel with a stop-line just above the bend for vehicles and cyclists travelling downhill. The road will be narrowed by building out the kerb just below the bend on the downhill



side, which will also protect the parked vehicles. The stop-line at the narrowing will be positioned to give vehicles and cyclists travelling downhill enough time to slow down before having to make the decision to give way to uphill vehicles.

At the bottom of Widcombe Hill, the street parking will be moved across from the Natural Theatre side of the road to the Social Club side to slow vehicles approaching from the Parade and Pulteney Road.

In addition to but not part of this scheme, alterations are proposed at the junction of Widcombe Hill and The Tynning to give a better line of

sight for drivers leaving The Tynning. A new pedestrian crossing, close to The Tynning junction, is also being considered.

There have already been informal consultations with residents on the proposals for Widcombe Hill. A general consultation will be carried out as part of the formal procedures and installation is expected in the next few months. The scheme has been welcomed by the Widcombe Association, though it does not include proposals to improve the crossing for pedestrians at the bottom of Widcombe Hill by the White Hart, something on which the WA continues to campaign.

A disappointing decision

Jan Shepley explains how, sometimes, the collective power of the WA, Bath Preservation Trust and our local councillors can't always keep development in check.

The Widcombe Association keeps a close eye on planning applications for development or changes of use in Widcombe and Lyncombe. Where we believe they might be detrimental to the character of the area we make comments or objections via the Council's website.

This was the case with Kosy Living's proposal for a four-storey live/work block of 77 studio flats at the bottom of Wells Road, on the site partly occupied by Great Wines. Tenants – young professionals, according to Kosy – will share three larger kitchen-dining rooms, a gym, rooftop terrace, and ground-floor co-working space, covered under one rental payment.



I presented the WA's case against the scheme at the Planning Committee alongside Alex Sherman of the Bath Preservation Trust, citing the building's scale and the lack of servicing space. Councillor Deborah Collins also made a strong case that this was the wrong

location for such a scheme. Under Council procedural rules, having made her case, she was then not allowed to take part in the debate. As a result, with the members' votes split 50/50, the committee chair used his casting vote – in favour.

When street drinking turns sour

Ward councillor **Deborah Collins** reports on efforts to manage anti-social behaviour on Widcombe Parade.

We have been working with the police, the Widcombe Association and local people to find a solution to the persistent problem of street drinking.

The first step was, on police advice, to put up signs warning people that a Public Space Protection Order is in force. This was the only way that the police could use their enforcement powers where they saw drinking, but no crime. For a while, this discouraged street drinking and antisocial behaviour, but with only one police community support officer available to enforce the order, the drinkers were soon back.

There is little reporting of crime or anti-social behaviour in the area and the police say they need the data to back up giving policing here a priority. The - perhaps surprising - advice is that if you witness such behaviour, you should call 999. Even if this doesn't bring an immediate response, it will create a report, which helps the police to prioritise resources. You can also log crimes and anti-social behaviour retrospectively on the Avon and Somerset police website Bath City South | Avon and Somerset Police.

Finally, the availability of cheap alcohol is clearly a draw and we

have asked the council licensing team to advise local businesses on what they need to do to be within the terms of their licence. At the time of writing, it seems that this is reducing sales to problem drinkers and we have seen fewer incidents in recent weeks. Long may this last, but if the problem comes back, please note the police advice and dial 999 or report on their website. www.avonandsomersetpolice.uk/yourarea/bath-city-south/

Plug the gap

Steve Cross from Go Green Widcombe sounds the rallying cry for retrofitting our beautiful but leaky housing stock.

Energy consumption in our homes accounts for over 20 per cent of the UK's CO2 emissions, so targeted retrofitting is key to helping us achieve net zero. And while the prospect of doing the work might seem daunting and expensive, the benefits are indisputable. Here's how the owners of a three-bed Victorian house in Widcombe reduced their CO2 emissions and heating costs by over 65 per cent.

Reducing heat loss

The owners increased the thickness of their attic insulation from 50mm to 270mm; they applied 110mm thick insulation and plasterboard to the inside of the outer walls with return panels on adjoining walls to avoid cold bridges. They also installed triple-glazed windows with a U Value of 0.87W/m2K, compared to single glazed windows (at least 5W/m2K).



Energy efficiency

They replaced their original gas fire (44 per cent efficient) with a modern gas fire (over 80 per cent efficient), and swapped their gas boiler (40 per cent efficient) for a condensing boiler (88 per cent efficient). This work was completed over a decade ago. Had they undertaken the work now, they would have installed an air source heat pump.

On the ground floor they installed underfloor heating. The tubing is filled with water heated to 50°C, whereas radiators need to be heated to 75°C.

Renewables

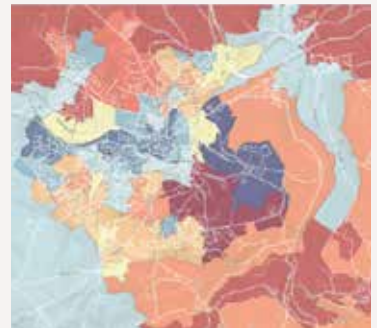
Finally, a solar thermal panel on their south facing roof provides hot water at no daily cost, from March to November.

To find out about retrofitting options for your home, email Go Green Widcombe (ggwidcombe@gmail.com) and we'll send you the presentation from our recent Sustainability Talk, which deals with insulation, windows and doors, the primary projects to focus on.

You can also contact us if you want to use our thermal imaging camera to check for cold spots in your property during the winter period.

Widcombe's carbon footprint highest in Bath

For an estimate of carbon footprint per person across Bath, check out the Place Based Carbon Calculator at: <https://www.carbon.place/legacy/#12.86/51.3771/-2.33877>. This takes you to the map which you'll be able to click on to see a summary of your neighbourhood's carbon footprint, taking into account household energy use, travel, and consumption of goods and services. Widcombe, it seems, is the worst offender, presumably because of its relative wealth – food for thought for us all.



All change



Ecologist **David Goode** marks the passing of seasons by the migration of birds in his garden on Lyncombe Hill.

The birds that we have as summer visitors have returned to their winter quarters, and soon it will be time for our winter visitors to appear. Our garden feeders now attract blackcaps from Eastern Europe, while the blackcaps we had breeding with us have returned to winter in Spain or North Africa. They are the same species, but a different race.

Our main visitors in winter are the thrushes. I find that we get small flocks of song thrushes in our garden as soon as cold weather strikes. And if we get a blast of really cold weather all our trees seem to be full of redwings. They are about the same size as a song thrush, but much more colourful with bright red flanks and a cream eye stripe. Very often it is their high-pitched flight call that alerts me to their presence as they fly over after dark.

We may even get some fieldfares coming to us from Iceland or Scandinavia. They are very striking birds, much bigger than song thrushes with a grey head and brown back. They tend to go around in small gangs making a lot of harsh calls shack: shack and taking any remaining apples on the trees or on the ground.

As we approach winter robins bust into song again and, of course, we always have the owls to entertain us.



A more colourful thrush, the redwing



Our favourite songster, the song thrush



A female blackcap on our feeder



A Fieldfare enjoying late apples in the first snowfall

A winter walk in Lyncombe Vale

Annie Legge, founder of The Bath 5k Map, takes us on walk 37, one of the winter strolls from her second series of 5km walks.

From Bath Spa Station, cross the river using the pedestrian footbridge, then cross Rossiter Road. Bear right into St Mark's Road and continue along to St Mark's Community Centre. Behind the church, a footpath leads eventually to Holloway.

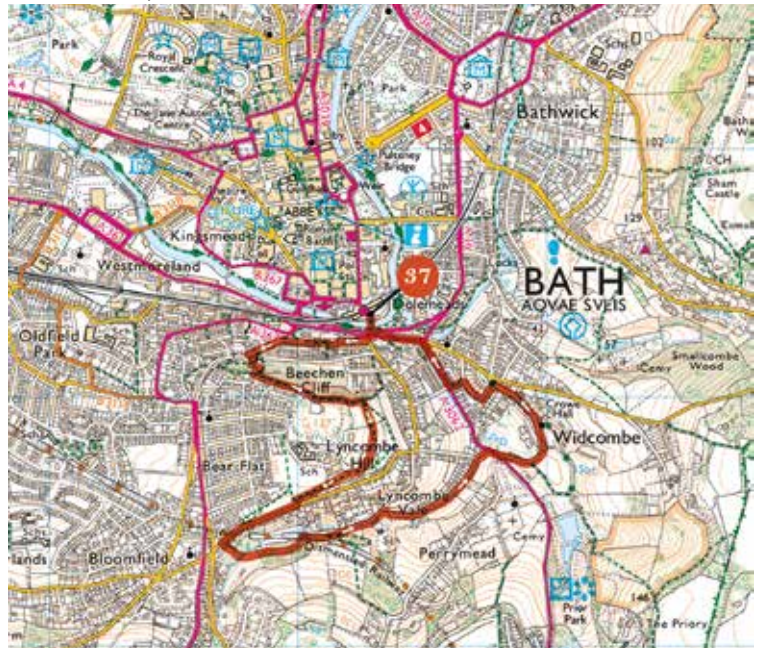
Walk uphill along Holloway, passing a modern housing estate. The road eventually opens out, with woodland to your left. Take the first footpath towards Calton Gardens. As you enter the path, bear immediately right and climb the steps. Then, take the left fork up a steep footpath to the top of Magdalen Gardens — a peaceful, green space where you can catch your breath and enjoy the surroundings.

Now, bear left and continue into Alexandra Park with its stunning elevated views over Bath. The park, named after Queen Alexandra, opened in 1902 to commemorate the coronation of Edward VII. Take a moment at the seated lookout to enjoy the view of the city below.

From there, take the steps down past the allotments. Turn right at the first footpath gate to enter Lyncombe Hill Fields. Keep to the higher path, passing below the allotments. As you continue walking, you'll emerge onto the open playing grounds of Beechen Cliff School. Continue straight ahead to the end.

Turn right onto Greenway Lane, but keep an eye out for a narrow

© Ordnance Survey



footpath on the left between houses that descends sharply into Lyncombe Vale. At the junction at the bottom of the path turn left and follow the path through a quiet stretch of woodland. Eventually, you'll cross beneath the cycle path and arrive at the edge of Lyncombe Vale Road.

Lyncombe Vale is a peaceful enclave, and as you follow the road, you'll find yourself surrounded by woodland. Paragon School is nestled behind the trees on your right.

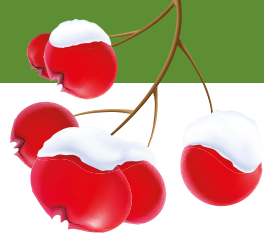
Continue to Prior Park Road and cross this road, then turn right before quickly veering left into Church Street. This part of the walk

The Bath 5k Maps offer easy-to-follow 5km circular walks to reconnect with nature while supporting Mentoring Plus and Off the Record Bath & North East Somerset, which supports the mental health of young people in our community. The second edition of 20 more routes is available from local stockists and online.



brings you past some of Bath's most historic houses. You can never have too much of the magnificent Widcombe Manor, a grand house built in 1656, or the Grade II listed St Thomas à Becket Church, parish church of Widcombe.

As Church Street comes to an end, take the steps to your left just before the road joins Widcombe Hill. These steps will bring you down to Widcombe Crescent, where you'll turn onto Clarendon Road. Follow the road as it bends sharply to the right, and after a short distance, join the footpath Widcombe Rise down to Prior Park Road. Turn right to reach Widcombe Parade for refreshments and a return to the start of the walk.



The winter garden

John Leach, managing director of Prior Park Garden Centre, celebrates the pleasure of winter gardening.

Have you noticed that gardening programmes on TV and gardening articles in the press have woken up to the fact that we have gardens in the winter as well as the summer, and that we can enjoy winter gardening and have real beauty in the cooler months?



Sarcococca

Many winter flowering shrubs also have wonderful fragrance. My absolute favourite is Viburnum 'Dawn' which carries clusters of fragrant pink flowers through the winter into early spring. Christmas box, with the tongue twister name Sarcococca, is not a glamorous looking plant but it has dainty white flowers with a heavenly scent in the middle of winter, and it is quite happy to be grown in shade.

There is still time to plant spring flowering bulbs. Don't delay with daffodils, they appreciate early planting. My favourite is Narcissus 'Carlton',

one of the later flowering varieties with gorgeous almost round flowers that really stand out from the crowd. Tulips are happy to be planted right up to the end of the year. Tulip 'Red Riding Hood' is a favourite with vibrant red flowers and striped leaves. It's not too tall and looks wonderful in pots. If you prefer pink, Tulip 'Peach Blossom' is a double flowered beauty and also short-stemmed.

When doing an autumn tidy-up look and think before you clear away. Many of our annual and perennial favourites have seed heads loaded with energy rich food for our garden birds. The seeds of hardy annuals will often germinate readily in the autumn and go on to flower in the spring long before those sown from a seed packet in the New Year.

If you have some of the less hardy border plants you can really help them survive the winter frost by gathering up the freshly fallen leaves from a beech tree.



Viburnum 'Dawn'

Spread a good cushion of leaves around the base of plants such as fuchsia, salvia, echinacea, dahlia, agapanthus and gaura. This helps to keep the root area cosy and dry, greatly improving their chance of surviving prolonged frosts.

Lawns really suffer if left with a carpet of fallen leaves into the winter. Use your lawn mower as a leaf gatherer and make wonderful organic rich compost full of nutrients to spread on your borders in the spring.



Tulip 'Red Riding Hood'



Narcissus 'Carlton'

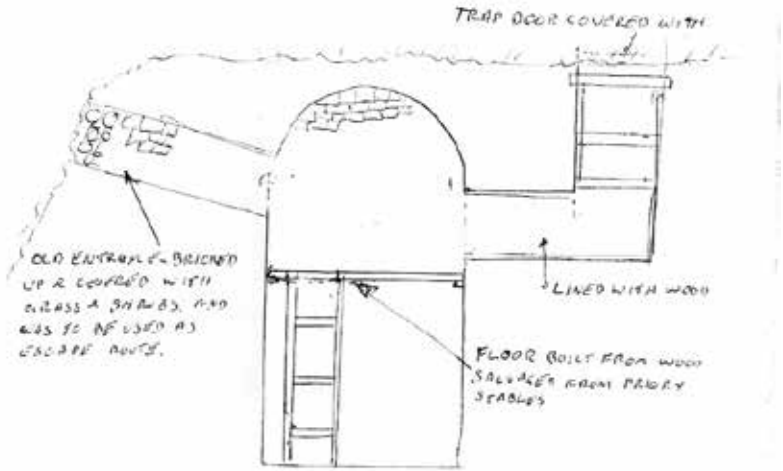
Widcombe's Secret Army

While doing some research for a forthcoming guided walk on Widcombe and the World Wars, **Dan Lyons** came across a story that could belong to the world of the Famous Five.

Our story starts in the summer of 1940: France had just fallen and all the talk was of an invasion of England by the victorious German armies. In Widcombe, 11-year-old Ron Frost and his two older brothers were taking advantage of the summer closure of Prior Park College to play in the extensive grounds of the school (Prior Park Gardens then being part of the College).

Near the lakes, the boys found a strange iron ring attached to a wooden hatch which, when opened, revealed a 10-foot shaft with a ladder descending into the dark. Being made of stern stuff the boys immediately climbed down and found a lantern on a table which, as they were carrying matches, they lit to illuminate a small room complete with four bunk beds and, to the boys extreme excitement, a collection of firearms and ammunition.

As the brothers were wondering what on earth they had stumbled upon one of them noticed that the lantern had been manufactured in Germany! Immediately the boys were convinced they had



discovered the secret lair of a group of Nazi sympathisers waiting for a German invasion before rising up to attack British forces in the rear.

The plucky lads went straight to Bath Police Station, then at Orange Grove, to report their discovery. After some understandable initial suspicion, the police officers were persuaded to drive up to Prior Park and saw the secret hideout for themselves. At this stage other, better informed, forces must have intervened as the boys were politely thanked but sworn both never to reveal what they had discovered

and not to play in the woods again.

At the beginning of the war Churchill had set up a secret army of highly-trained volunteers, the Auxiliary Unit Patrols, to act as the last ditch line of defence in the event of a German invasion. The boys had found the underground base of the Admiralty 4 (Prior Park) Patrol of the Auxiliaries which had been cunningly built into Ralph Allen's old ice-house. The entrance is still there – see if you can find it.

With thanks to the Bath Blitz Memorial Project



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Your good health!



Could we have a bit less Christmas spirit? **Biddy Walcot** finds unlikely inspiration at Widcombe's Botanical Gin Distillery and Herbal Apothecary.

We don't normally associate gin with good health but Widcombe's own distillery owner Sue Mullett is also a qualified medical herbalist. Her interest in the health benefits of bitters and herbal aperitifs led her to experiment with distilling botanical spirit. The result is her very popular No.1 Gin and a wide variety of cocktail bitters and herbal elixirs, each based on the gin.

Sue explains: 'Alcohol is used primarily as a solvent and a preservative. The main attraction is the herbs. Aperitifs, digestifs, bitters and spirits have been used for hundreds of years as medicinal drinks – think Italian Amaro and French Benedictine. They are not sweet, and they are not for glugging.'

For something to warm you up in cold weather, try Winter Warmer – Sue's herbal elixir containing elderberry syrup, ginger and cinnamon – there is an

additional version with chilli! Simply add hot water and a slice of lemon for a delicious winter toddy. Other herbal elixirs include echinacea, and white willow – drink them neat, or with hot water, or experiment with soda and ice.

Sue also makes bitters – fruit and herbs steeped in No.1 Gin and distilled water to extract the properties of the plants. The bitters are supplied in 5cl bottles but a little goes a long way. Try adding a few drops to tonic water to create a refreshing and very low-alcohol drink. Flavours include Orange and Pink Pepper. And Sue says Cocoa Bean and Chai bitters are lovely added to hot milk!

For more information, visit www.bathbotanics.co.uk.



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A Rosie glow

Ralph Oswick was artistic director of the Natural Theatre Company for 45 years and is now a patron of the Bath Comedy Festival.



Many years ago, despite being firmly based in the wonderful world of Walcot Nation, us hippy types of the Bath Arts Workshop, and more specifically, the fledgling Natural Theatre Company, would occasionally make a foray into the equally wonderful world of Widcombe. Our destination of choice was The Ring O' Bells, partly because it was a genuine local pub, and partly it was one of the few hosteleries that didn't object to our sartorial extremes (colourful flares, shoulder length or even longer hair, platform shoes, mascara, tie-dye smocks...and that was just the boys!)

Several city centre pubs had a 'one drink and then leave' policy, especially after a narrow-minded councillor referred to us as 'hippies, layabouts and hobbledehoy's', a nomenclature we later incorporated into a song in one of our scurrilous topical cabarets.

That The Ring was so tolerant was surprising as the then landlady, Rosie, ran a tight ship and could be pretty formidable if any trouble was brewing. To this day, some

Widcombe residents still fondly refer to the pub as 'Rosie's'.

I hasten to point out that I never went the Woodstock way and was more likely to be seen in my Pierre Cardin herringbone sports jacket, or more latterly in that classic 1970s community theatre activist uniform, the khaki dungaree.

Rosie was notorious for regaling her customers at kicking-out time with the time-honoured cry of 'Come on you buggers!' Indeed, when regional radio broadcast a folk night from the pub, as the programme faded out, one just caught the famous catch phrase. On the BBC! Cue the sound of quill on paper from Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells.

My mum used to visit Bath from the wilds of Essex, mainly to help at the Walcot Festivals or the annual Christmas Day dinner for the old and lonely. She got on with the Workshop gang like a house on fire. Quote: 'They may look like rough diamonds, but they all have hearts of gold!'

Mum hardly drank, due she said guardedly to an 'incident' in her

youth. Indeed, she could eke out the bottle of Bristol Cream in her sideboard over several years. On one of her visits, we decided to take her to the Ring O' Bells. Someone told her that Natural Dry Cider, or Natch as it was fondly called, and after which the Natural Theatre Company had been named back in 1969 in a failed attempt at commercial sponsorship, wasn't particularly alcoholic.

By the end of the evening, mum had developed a taste for the stuff and was a wee bit unsteady on her feet and getting lairy. When it came for chucking out, Rosie spotted mum lingering and delivered her usual expletive 'Come on you bugger' directly at her. Mum first looked startled, and then affronted.

Someone had a word with the indomitable landlady. 'Don't you know who that is? That's Ralph Oswick's mother you're shouting at.' Such unsolicited advice immediately raised Rosie's hackles and she responded even more forcefully 'Come on, Mrs Oswick, you bugger!'

Ralph Oswick

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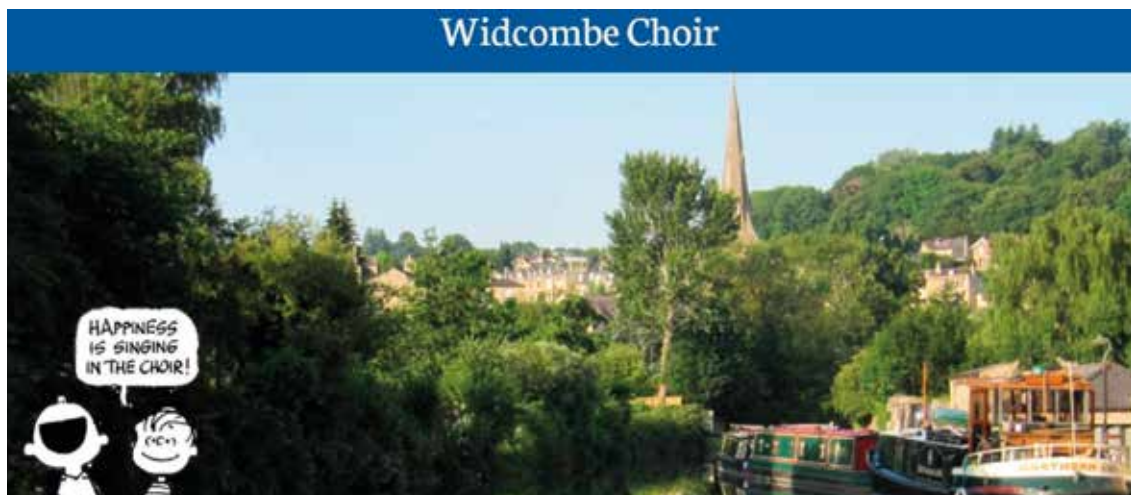
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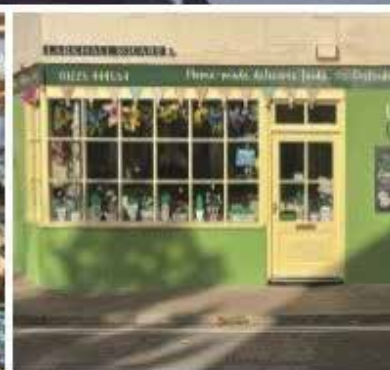
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