

An impressionistic painting of a winter scene. The background is a dense forest of trees with dark, textured foliage in shades of blue, green, and brown. A path or stream winds through the center, reflecting light. The overall style is expressive and painterly, with visible brushstrokes and a rich, somewhat muted color palette.

WINTER 2025

Widcombe magazine

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Cover illustration by landscape painter Jo Slade – www.josladeart.com. Follow Jo on Instagram @josladeart and visit her stall at the Widcombe Christmas Market on 22-23 November.

Welcome!



We're back with another busy issue and lots to do and see in Widcombe this winter, from the Bath Jazz Weekend and monthly movie nights at the Widcombe Social Club to live music and quiz nights at The Ram. There's also our Christmas Market on 22-23 November, the perfect opportunity to tick off your Christmas shopping list while supporting our finest local makers.

On pages 12 and 14, meet local creative Matthew Cook, whose fine illustrations have graced The Times, The Spectator and the Wall Street Journal, and amateur photographer Phil Dean, whose photographs of the Parade's traders capture the camaraderie of our lovely shopping street.

On page 22, WA chairman Mike Wrigley considers all the ways the WA works to enhance our streetscape and, on page 21, Steve Cross of Go Green Widcombe tells us how we can make our homes more energy efficient as we edge towards the coldest days of the year.

WA work also continues behind the scenes: planning expert Jan Shepley has been monitoring proposals large (The Rec) and less large (The White Hart). Ann Ashworth and Biddy Walcot have been working on our smart new website and Lucy Scott-Ashe has been working with her events team to bring you a continuous supply of exciting dates for your diaries.

If the mood takes you to join our regular volunteers or help ad-hoc – to set up an event, wrap lights round a Christmas tree or fill a planter with winter flowers – please get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

Colette Hill

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WIDCOMBE ASSOCIATION WA



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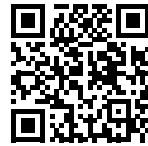
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What's on in Widcombe

Your essential guide to the huge range of local events and where to find them.



Annie Hastings



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Christmas Market

The festive season gets under way with the Widcombe Christmas Market on the weekend of 22–23 November at the Widcombe Social Club and across the road at the Natural Theatre Company. It promises to be a bumper year with brilliant makers vying for a spot at this go-to festive event.



Jessica Jewitt

Behind the scenes at events HQ



Justin Webb



Amy Frost

Just six people make up the volunteer events team which puts on year-round entertainment and activities with something for everyone.

Pippa Wrigley masterminds the Widcombe Art Trail in June and the Christmas Market in November. The Garden Club thrives under Annie Hastings, with sell-out visits to private gardens in and around the city. And Geraldine Stork recently had us Lindy Hopping at the Widcombe Social Club.

Our talks, organised by Elaine Taylor, Lucy Scott-Ashe and Susie Nouhan, draw large audiences with a mix of local and international themes.

On **Wednesday 19 November**, Dr Amy Frost considers the changes to Widcombe during the Claverton Street clearance, offering a unique glimpse into how our neighbourhood was dramatically reshaped. The talk starts at 7.30pm at Widcombe Social Club.

On **Wednesday 28 January** Justin Webb gives a talk, also at the WSC. Justin grew up in Bath and is now a distinguished journalist and presenter on Radio 4's news programme 'Today'.

You can keep up to date with all WA events at widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/pages/3-events.



Join up, join in

Are you a member of the Widcombe Association? If yes, thank you. Your subscription enables the WA to run events, publish this amazing magazine and offer lots of other benefits to the Widcombe community.

If you're unsure, it's possible you're a member of the Widcombe Social Club. It's a fantastic community hub, and we often host our events there, but the WA is a different organisation. You can be a member of both and max out your benefits.

If no, have you thought about joining? The WA is Bath's biggest (and we think most fabulous) residents' association. It is staffed entirely by volunteers, we receive no external funding, and we are not a charity, relying on our membership to keep afloat. A modest subscription fee gets you members-only discounts to certain events, as well as a nice warm feeling inside. In return, we get to continue campaigning on your behalf on local planning and traffic improvements, address environmental challenges and support local businesses, along with all the lovely social stuff that goes on in Widcombe.

All that for just £12 a year for single membership, or £15 for two in the same household. Visit <https://widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/pages/7-become-a-member-today> and thank you from the team.



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Social club marks 10 years

Marketing volunteer Tina Ryan celebrates WSC's first decade in its canal-side home.

It's hard to believe it's almost 10 years since Widcombe Social Club moved into its new premises on Widcombe Hill. Redevelopment was completed in March 2016 to provide a venue more fit for purpose for the community.

The club flourishes as a not-for-profit venue with a membership of nearly 350. It has rooms for hire with sound systems, catering and everything you'd expect from a modern venue, and is home to choirs, book groups, classes for yoga, Spanish, guitar,

dance, and public events. What a long way it has come since its first incarnation in 1899, in a shop in Claverton Street.

We also have conferences, training events and lectures. Our manager, James, and his deputy, Sid, adapt readily to all sorts of requirements. We host Widcombe Waterside nights (see Live and kicking on page 16), DJ nights, jazz, comedy, folk, and quizzes. Once a month, Off The Wall Films offers interesting films you can't find on streaming platforms.

We are kept busy with events and classes which support our free music and subsidise our room hire. Everyone is welcome to the public events listed on our website and in our newsletter.

To join, sign up at membermojo.co.uk/widcombesocialclub or ask at the bar on a Friday night or at any public event. Members enjoy discounts on drinks and many events, but non-members are always welcome.

Music

Widcombe Waterside Nights: every Friday; doors open at 5.30pm; free live music 7-9pm; pizza 6-8.30pm, including vegan and gluten-free.

Coming up: Flash Harry Trio (21 November); Are Friends Acoustic (28 November); Dub Souls (5 December); Saspafellas (12 December). Non-members welcome or you can join to enjoy discounts and never miss a great gig.

All of the Above presents 9-11 January 2026: Bath Jazz Weekend
28 February 2026: Martin Taylor
alloftheabovemusic.eventbrite.com

DJ Nights

Friday 28 November: Bath Soul Club
Saturday 29 November to Saturday 7 February: Transmission Indie Disco – alternative sounds from the 80s, 90s and beyond

Saturday 13 December: Electric Dreams, the biggest 80s night in the city

Wednesday 31 December: New Year's Eve party



Film

Screening monthly on Sunday evenings, Off the Wall presents engaging, hard-to-find films with guest speakers and other extras in the spacious Wharf Room.

Sunday 16 November: Tampopo, Japanese film in partnership with the Bath-Beppu Friendship Association

Sunday 30 November: The Jazz Loft, in partnership with PhotoBath and the Bath Jazz Weekend

Sunday 7 December: Les Parapluies de Cherbourg, French film in partnership with the Bath-Aix Twinning Association

To receive updates, send a request to join.themailinglist@offthewall@gmx.co.uk

Widcombe Book Group

If you love reading and would like to share your thoughts on a wide and far-reaching choice of books with a friendly group of fellow enthusiasts, then try out Widcombe Book Group. Last Tuesday of the month, 8pm. New members welcome. Contact [Jocelyn Ridley](mailto:Jocelyn.Ridley.jocridley@gmail.com)

Art

Throughout November and December, the sketches, drawings and etchings of jazz musician the late Joe Spibey are free to view in the Waterside Bar on Friday evenings and during other public events.

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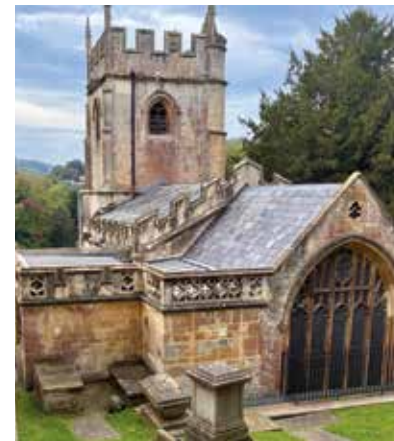
Roper Rhodes is a Bath-based bathroom furniture supplier. Fitting, then, that one of its ranges has been named The Widcombe. The company describes its Widcombe range as a combination of tradition with modern features to create a timeless style, and reassures readers that 'you will find a piece of Widcombe that suits you'.

George (pictured) found the Widcombe loo was perfect for his and partner Emma's new WC. George lives in Bristol now but grew up and went to school in Widcombe. He says he is delighted with their Widcombe loo. Every flush reminds him of home.



Dolemeads in bloom

Dolemeads Community Garden has won the Mayor's Prize for Community Group in Bath in Bloom. Garden volunteers Tina Ryan and Rachel Meyrick were at the award ceremony to collect the award on behalf of all the volunteers. Rachel said: 'The garden is an oasis of green within the red brick housing of the Dolemeads, here for everyone to enjoy, so do come on down.'



St Thomas' raises the roof

Fundraising for the roof of St Thomas' à Beckett in Church Street has raised a magnificent £95,000, over half of which was made of donations from the community. The church will host a community event to thank everyone involved on Saturday 25 April 2026.

Jewellery shop offers expertise



You can find jewellery and watches for sale at Austens Jewellers on Widcombe Parade, but manager Sophie Archer-Drew says Austens can also help with watch and jewellery expertise in all areas, from specialist probate and insurance valuation to jewellery design and making – not only can they value your pieces, they can suggest ways of remodelling dated items, repairing clasps or replacing lost stones.
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A future for St Marks

Community Centre trustee Mark Lord reports ambitious plans for the future.



Consecrated in 1832, Grade II listed St Marks Church served its parishioners for over 100 years until its de-consecration in 1970. Its transformation, spearheaded by then Mayoress of Bath Cicely Edmunds, saw its re-opening in 1975 as a much needed community centre.

Fifty years on, Edmunds' vision lives on, managed by a board of volunteer trustees and brought to life by the huge variety of community groups that use its facilities. Generations of children attest their early memories to Acorns Nursery and hundreds of budding dancers their first plié to the Curtis School of Dance.

To secure St Mark's future, the

trustees are working on a 10-year plan for the building, with new investment in the interior, greater connection with the gardens and improved facilities for users. Fundraising is already under way for urgent repair to the fabric of the building, as well as the roof and the tower.

The support of users and the wider community is vital in sustaining St Mark's for generations to come and we very much welcome new trustees and volunteers as well as donations to secure this wonderful hub of activity for the future.

To donate or to explore becoming a trustee, contact St Mark's chair of trustees Chris Jones chair@st-marks-cc.org.uk.

Widcombe heroes

This issue's nomination and award goes to the team at Noad Roofing who cheerfully volunteer to put our Christmas trees up along Widcombe Parade.

It's a skilled job – holding a tree in one hand and a ladder in the other, although the Noad chaps make it look easy and they do it with a smile. Thank you, Noad.

Office manager Alice Noad says: 'It is lovely to see the street sparkle and it gives a wonderful sense of togetherness in the community at this special time of year.'

'The tradition lifts spirits, brightens the neighbourhood and reminds us of the value of our local community and businesses, which we are proud to be part of.'

'We are grateful to be able to play a small part in making Widcombe feel special at Christmas time.'

Do you know someone who deserves a cheer or three? You can nominate your Widcombe Hero by emailing magazine@widcombeassociation.co.uk.



Green light for White Hart

The council has granted The Walcot Group planning permission and listed building consent for its proposals for the White Hart, to include a restaurant with private dining and bar area, kitchen with back-of-house facilities and 10 guest bedrooms, overlooking the newly landscaped courtyard.

From Wimbledon to Afghanistan

Colette Hill visits illustrator **Matthew Cook** at home in Widcombe and discovers the global reach of his work.



Reportage artist Matthew Cook and his family moved to Widcombe because of the wonderful schools and to be closer to Matthew's parents. Their Victorian house is next to St Matts on Widcombe Hill, and may have been built as a vicarage. It is typically upside down, with the bedrooms by the front door and a staircase leading down to the living spaces below. The large tree-filled garden tumbles down to the canal where Matthew plies his artistic trade in a canal-side studio designed by local architect Jonathan Logsdon.

It is here that I teased out the details of Matthew's eclectic career and that he showed me some of his work, which – as a reviewer put it – 'has the candid quality of a photograph, giving you a window into a specific moment in time that feels alive thanks to his emboldening colour washes and wonderful use of lighting.'

Matthew's cv (were he to write such a thing) would be hard to keep to a single page. He has travelled the UK to illustrate town and country walks for The Times and The Sunday Times, sketched ink portraits of candidates for four national elections, designed commemorative stamps of Royal Ascot, the Highland Games and Henley Regatta for the Royal Mail, and captured British forces on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Pictures from his time as the first Wimbledon artist hang in the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club Museum. His portraits of the famous and the brave have appeared in the Wall Street Journal, the Financial Times, The Spectator and Monocle magazine. He recorded a year in the life of the Clothworkers' Company and of Santander Bank, as well as The Times' editorial offices and printing works before the newspaper left Wapping. He has drawn patients and staff at BUPA facilities. He has provided drawings for animated TV ads for the Daily Mail. He travelled to North Korea for Condé Nast Traveller (where he ended up supplying copy as well as pictures). He has



illustrated Penguin books. He produced double page covers for The Times' obituaries of Queen Elizabeth II, Nelson Mandela, and Margaret Thatcher. Last year, he travelled to Sierra Leone to draw and teach in the slums of Freetown, losing 11kg in weight during his three months away.

To cap it all, he was a reservist in the Parachute Regiment for four years and in The Rifles for 10. He was mobilised for both Iraq and Afghanistan and returned seven times to Afghanistan as an illustrator for the Ministry of Defence and The Times.

He has also drawn Bath, finding ways to present a different picture of this much drawn city. 'I sketch Bath at night, the lights and the flashes of traffic, or I draw the less grand buildings and the corner shops,' he says.



You can see more of Matthew's range of work at https://www.workbook.com/portfolios/view/matthew_cook/all



In the picture

Retired production engineer Phil Dean has reinvented himself as a photographer 'of people who know they are having their photo taken'. His most recent project, taking pictures of the shopkeepers and restaurateurs, haircutters and other workers of Widcombe Parade, captures the warm sense of community and camaraderie of the street that drew him to Widcombe when relocating from London.



Community service

Bathonian Laura Doe has spent her first six months as interim minister for the benefice of Widcombe talking to people about how to ensure our two parish churches are fully used. She is particularly keen to draw more people from the community into the two wonderful buildings, St Matts on Widcombe Hill and St Thomas à Beckett in Church Street.

Already, St Matts has introduced a new multigenerational play group – a space where all ages can come together to enjoy conversation in the self-service café, with toys and activities for the little ones. The sessions are held on Wednesdays, 10.30am-12 noon.

Reverend Doe says: 'Other plans are in the pipeline, but I would really welcome people's ideas about how both buildings can best serve the community, so please do email me at laura.doe@widcombe.church'

Reverend Doe grew up in Lansdown, Weston, Solsbury and Larkhall, going to school at Kingswood. After reading International Development at the University of East Anglia, she returned to Bath to take up an admin/intern role at her childhood church, St Michael's Without. It was the vicar there, Reverend Martin Lloyd-Williams, who first suggested she think about ordination. She studied at Trinity College in Bristol and undertook her curacy at St Nicolas in Bristol. By this time, she was married and had two small children. The family moved to Bath because Laura wanted her daughters to have the kind of childhood she had, living in a thriving city that is small enough to feel like a close knit community. The move to Widcombe is the first time Laura has lived this side of the Avon.

And how does Reverend Doe manage two such different churches – the



informal St Matts and the traditional Thomas à Beckett? 'I love that we can offer people breadth of styles of worship. People can pick and choose depending on their preference and mood on the day. It reflects the ethos of the Church of England, passing down the history and traditional liturgy yet still being relevant to people today.'

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Live and kicking

Widcombe has become a hotspot for live music in Bath. **Biddy Walcot** checks out what's on offer.



Bath Jazz Weekend

What to do in Widcombe in the gloomy days of January, when the Christmas tree needles have jammed the Hoover and you can't face another mince pie?

The Bath Jazz Weekend is probably the answer.

The event takes place early in January at the Widcombe Social Club, attracting top-class jazz musicians from all over the country and beyond, and earning encouraging reviews from the music press.

Nod Knowles came up with the idea as a response to his years involved in programming jazz, folk and world music for the Bath International Music Festival.

As the festival declined over time, so too did the programme, and the jazz offering disappeared.

Nod says: 'There are a lot of really good musicians here and they said they missed the jazz programme. By the 2010s, I was on the management committee of the WSC. There was room available at the club and not much going on at the beginning of January, so we ran the first event there

in 2019. Apart from a Covid break, it has run regularly ever since.

'We've attracted interest from top names in the jazz world, which over the years have included Iain Ballamy, Laura Jurd, Joanna MacGregor and Jason Rebello.'

With no supporting budget, the weekend was – and still is – run on a co-operative basis, with musicians and crew taking an equal share of the proceeds after expenses. The musicians are obviously not doing it for the money, says Nod, but there is a great deal of enthusiasm for joining in the weekend, which offers 10 performances and, in 2026, will include a jazz-related film and photographic exhibition.

Nod says the weekend has snowballed. 'Now', he says, 'each session is pretty well packed, and musicians are lining up to perform here.'

Audience members can buy tickets for a session or for the entire event. Find out more about the Bath Jazz Weekend on 9, 10 and 11 January 2026 at www.bathjazzweekend.com

Music at The Ram

There have been big changes at The Ram since the Widcombe Deli moved in. The once traditional drinkers' pub is also now a café during the day. On most Friday nights there is live music. On Sunday evenings there is also live music. Ditto Tuesday evenings and occasional Saturdays. The Ram is making its mark in the music world.

Says deputy manager Nick Steel: 'Lots of Bath's live music venues have gone – like the Farmhouse and the Hat and Feather. We're lucky to have loads of professional musicians round here and they've approached me about playing in smaller spaces for more intimate gigs.'

'We started out with live music on the last Friday of the month. Then word got round – we started doing the occasional Saturday, Irish sessions on Sundays, and now we've got a full programme until May 2026, and I'm planning to get musicians in on a Tuesday – maybe pianists – we have a lovely 1893 Bechstein.'

Nick says the emphasis is on fun. 'It's music for everyone.'



Widcombe Social Club Waterside Nights

Friday Waterside nights at Widcombe Social Club have become an institution. Local musicians and bands perform for a couple of hours and sourdough pizzas are available to accompany drinks from the bar.

There's a relaxed buzz – the music is pitched at conversational level – and the audience reflects the Widcombe demographic – families and people of all ages enjoy the space together. Sometimes there's dancing and even singing. And the evening celebrates events around the year with food to match. Like everything WSC, it's very chill.

WSC volunteer chair Nella Stokes says: 'A few years ago, we realised that, although we were open all the time, no one came in unless something was on – so yoga classes, choirs, DJ nights and private events were very busy but the bar was empty. So, post-Covid, we made significant changes.

'There weren't many artists on our radar, so the committee members pooled their music contacts and we researched what had worked well elsewhere. We compiled a fresh list of performers and trialed some of them.'

'We just wanted to cover costs and to encourage everyone – not just WSC members – into the club.'



James Parsons and Nella Stokes

It worked. Nella says: 'We encourage feedback and audience suggestions, and we think we've got a successful recipe – and the bands enjoy coming here, they like the atmosphere.'

Find out what's on at the WSC Waterside at www.widcombesocialclub.co.uk

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Retired teacher **Mark Snell** discovers our city smells sweeter.

Situated as it is on the edge of the city, Widcombe is a delightful place. But, with the traffic of the A36 crawling and speeding by turns, can we be sure that the air we breathe is as lovely as our views?

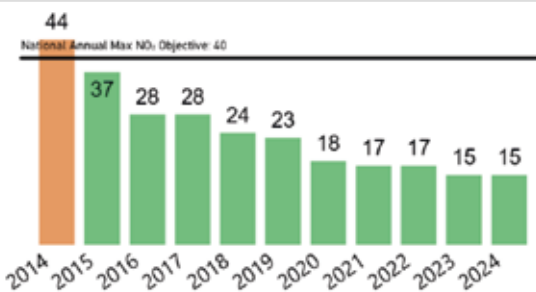
Vehicles with internal combustion engines produce nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and particulates, both of which are hazardous. Diesel engines produce more nitrogen oxides and particulates than petrol engines (though less carbon dioxide). Then there's the greater weight of fully electric cars as well as the trend to larger, heavier SUVs: greater weight means greater wear on tyres, brakes and road surfaces producing more particulates and pollutants.

A study by Public Health England (PHE) and Imperial College in 2018 calculated that, nationally, vehicles produce about 33% of all NO2 and 12% of particulates. While the effects of NO2 are well understood, the

effects of carcinogenic particulates are less so and there is no clear evidence of safe levels of exposure.

So, can we breathe easy in Widcombe? 'Yes,' claims the council. You may not have noticed, but we have a number of NO2 meters in Widcombe: two of the longest running are attached to lamp-posts in the Parade and by Widcombe Primary School. They show that our levels of NO2, as is true of Bath as a whole, are far lower than they once were.

The council is keen to show that the Clean Air Zone has made a great difference, with a 40% decrease in NO2 concentrations since it was introduced. Other factors no doubt play their part, including the closure of Cleveland Bridge to heavy traffic, the clean bus scheme, the growth in electric vehicle sales, and the introduction of 20mph speed limits. We can indeed breathe easier in Widcombe and long may that continue.



Average NO2 emissions in Widcombe Parade (left) and outside Widcombe School (right)

Source: bathnes.gov.uk

Go for green

Steve Cross of Go Green Widcombe signposts the help available to householders keen to reduce energy costs.

According to Go Green Widcombe's study of ONS stats, between 2010 and 2023 gas usage in Widcombe fell by 20% and electricity usage by 15%. We just need to keep going and there is plenty of support available to help us on our way.

WECA (the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority) provides grants to local community energy projects. It also set up Retrofit West which has funded Go Green Widcombe's sustainability talks and our new retrofit-focused website, gogreenwidcombe.org.

Central government is offering the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS, www.gov.uk/apply-boiler-upgrade-scheme/check-if-youre-eligible) to help us move away from gas central heating.

Bath & West Community Energy provides free home energy surveys designed for those who want to explore what's possible in their home. If you have concerns about your property, are unsure where to start, or are curious about its potential, this is for you. An expert assessor will visit your home to provide a high-level overview of issues



and opportunities. They will take up to 30 minutes to discuss your interests, budget and options available.

This free service is delivered in partnership with Retrofit West and funded by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority. See www.bwce.coop/home-energy/get-expert-support#not-sure.

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Parading in style

WA chair **Mike Wrigley** considers what more we can do to enhance this focal point of our community.

Widcombe Parade is very much the heart of the village of Widcombe, with its 'meeting point' under the plane tree by Noads, its thriving cafés and pubs, its shops, surgery, dentist and two hairdressers. The street is also an architectural gem of 1770s Georgian buildings. So it's no surprise that Widcombe Association volunteers put a lot of their energy into making the most of this streetscape.

The WA campaigned for the planting of the elegant plane tree in front of Noads and funded the Himalayan birch added by the council to the centre of the wildflower patch opposite. Then came the planters which we tend year round, with pansies through the winter and petunias, fuchsias and geraniums for spring and summer. Each planter is watered by volunteers from Mercy in Action, Luca and Fig, Widcombe Pharmacy, The Ram, and resident Anita Breeze. Robbie from Fine and Dandy took on the phone box when the White Hart closed last year. He says, 'watering the phone box flowers is the highlight of my week'. Thanks Robbie!

The shops and pubs also add their own individual touches. Bath Spa Florists have ever more exuberant displays spilling out onto the pavement: the colourful planting by the Ram/Deli, the Ring O'Bells and the The Halfpenny Café bring joyous colour to their frontages, Touch Thai Massage has flower troughs, Austens Jewellers has its hanging basket, and the surgery has a trio of first-floor window boxes.



Bath Spa Florists put on a great show

Shortly, the Christmas trees will be delivered to traders by Prior Park Garden Centre, dressed with lights by WA volunteers and raised above the shops by the team at Noads, bringing festive sparkle to the street from now until January.

And we know there is more we could do. In our recent conversations with traders along the Parade, they highlighted plenty of room for improvement.



Flowers bloom outside the Ring O Bells and Touch Thai

Perhaps the most difficult is finding a way to resolve the behaviour of some in the street community who have this year been seen trampling the verge next to Noads, drinking on the street, selling and buying drugs behind St Mark's, and dismaying bus drivers, shopkeepers and passers-by with aggressive and abusive behaviour. Our regular approaches to both police and council are beginning to bear fruit and we are hopeful of action following a walk-about in October by Avon & Somerset Police chief inspector Scott Hill and Kevin Guy, leader of BANES Council, along with representatives from the WA, ward councillors and local residents.

We have already started to repair the trampled verge. On the other side of the street, the wildflower patch is being tended by local resident Anita Breeze and Paul Pearce, who was

with the council and continues to help on a voluntary basis. Anita and Paul have just planted more gems to prolong the flowering period of this lovely corner of the street.

Litter is a perennial problem and two stalwart volunteers, Isabel Clarke and Stewart Owen, can be seen at weekends litter picking in the Parade and adjacent areas. Once a year, WA volunteers join the River Avon litter pick, which covers the Parade and the canal side as well as the riverbank.

The WA also plans a spring clean

of the pavements, work to remove weeds, and more cycle racks for the growing number of cyclists.

And the ideas keep coming. Might more businesses add hanging baskets to their frontages? Could the Christmas tree holders, present on most of the buildings, be used at other times for flags? Might more trees be introduced into the Parade? Can we reduce the number of signs and sign poles that clutter the streetscape? Could the double roundabout at the bottom of Widcombe Hill be redesigned as an urban square?

Many of the recent actions within the Parade have been ad hoc. Looking to the future, there is a need for a more coherent design strategy to ensure that our high street continues to improve as an attractive and buoyant local centre offering a wide range of services for everyone.

Do you have ideas to improve our streetscape? Share them with us! magazine@widcombeassociation.org.uk

Ward news

Ward councillor **Alison Born** reports on the focus of her work this autumn.



Many of you will be aware of Deborah Collins' decision to step down from her ward councillor role to allow her to focus on her recovery from cancer treatment. I will really miss Deborah; she has been an excellent colleague and we have achieved a lot for the ward since she was elected in 2023. I'm sure that you will join me in thanking her for her hard work and wishing her a full recovery.

Go slow

Plans are being developed to complete the traffic calming scheme on Widcombe Hill. This will include some minor modifications to improve the measures at Macaulay Buildings and the installation of speed cushions in the section below St Matt's Church. We are also awaiting confirmation of when work will start on the pedestrian crossing below The Tynning. We will continue to monitor the situation on Widcombe Hill and other speed hot spots in the area to determine whether or not additional measures are needed.

Residents and businesses have raised concerns about increased street drinking and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in and around the high street in recent months. Deborah and I have been concerned about the lack of police enforcement activity of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) which is clearly advertised in the area. We have been working with a number of agencies to address the range of factors that contribute to the ASB and will continue that work following our October walk-around. (see Parading in Style, left)

Cut-through cut off

New barriers have been installed at either end of the footpath that links the Claverton Street car park with the Widcombe shops. This has been done in response to concerns that delivery motorbikes were regularly using the path as a cut-through, which was putting pedestrians at risk. The barriers still allow wheelchair access but force any wheeled vehicles to take it slowly.

Playtime!

The barriers have gone up and the ground work is beginning for the long anticipated replacement of the Calton Play Park. By the time you read this, I hope it will be open. The new playpark has been moved to protect the existing trees, and the ground has been raised to better support the new structures. There is a variety of equipment for younger children, all constructed from sustainably grown hardwood. I am very pleased to see what was an eyesore that attracted antisocial behaviour finally being restored to a lovely place for children to play. Although it hasn't been possible to include adult gym equipment within the enclosure, there is a separate council project for installing this across Bath, and we have pointed out that the remaining green land outside the playground would be an excellent place to site some of that, so fingers crossed for the future!

Alison_born@bathnes.gov.uk 01225 319188

Fly past

Ecologist **David Goode** tracks the comings and goings of our birds through the seasons.



Swift - with us for just three months

I have lived in Widcombe for 13 years and have always kept records of the birds I see. During that time I have recorded over 60 species, falling into six separate groups.

Almost half (29 species) are resident in Widcombe. They include all the garden birds – tits, song thrush, blackbird, robin, wood pigeon, magpie, and goldfinch, as well as buzzard, sparrowhawk and raven, which I see regularly.

Then there are the five that come in summer to breed with us as migrants from the south. Swifts stay only three months, living the rest of the year in Africa, particularly the east coast of South Africa. Other summer visitors are house martins, which can be seen from April to October, and again spend the rest of the time in Africa. Two species of warbler breed in Widcombe, Chiffchaff and Black Cap, and very occasionally I have also seen garden warblers. All the warblers tend to arrive in March or April, these tiny birds having flown from southern Europe or north-west Africa.

We have a similar number of winter visitors, most notably the winter thrushes, fieldfare and redwing that come from Scandinavia or further north from Iceland. Flocks of siskin are also evident at this time, coming down from



Great-spotted woodpecker, a regular visitor

Scotland or from the continent. Winter birds also include black-headed gulls which are much smaller than the larger species that nest on our rooftops and black caps from eastern Europe and Russia – quite a different race from those that breed with us.

There is another group of resident birds I occasionally see in my garden and elsewhere in Widcombe, for which sightings are irregular. These include bullfinch, mistle thrush and tree creeper. Then there are occasional passage migrants, spotted as they pass through heading north, including willow warblers and even the odd spotted flycatcher. This group also includes some astonishing rarities such as firecrest, corncrake and osprey. Birds seen flying overhead include cormorant and red kite, and of course the peregrine falcons that nest nearby on St John's church. The whole picture is one of great variety.



Herons nest in a small heronry near Ralph Alan Drive



Jay, a regular visitor to many gardens

Take a walk to academia

Local author **Paul Fisher** strides up to the University of Bath to assess its architectural heritage.

Town and gown never make a romance. So it was when Bath City Council gave the uni-on-the-hill a 150-acre site on condition it couldn't be seen by townsfolk in the valley. Opened in 1966, the university has remained out of sight and mostly out of mind. The National Trust's Bath Skyline Walk gives it a swerve, though that's no excuse for Widcombe-ites.

The cafés up there are welcoming and there are sublime views walking back down. Take a stiff half-hour hike up Widcombe Hill, bearing right along Claverton Down Road



The Business School

to the stubby dry stone wall announcing the University of Bath. Flat and sylvan, the way ahead curves left then right to pass between a pair of new slab-u-like buildings. The one with no windows, according to the official website, fronts 'the £35 million Team Bath Sports Training Village'. The windowed building opposite is the School of Management, a £70-million extravaganza where the line between business and academia is utterly blurred.

Go diagonally left up steps into the '60s part of the campus. The buildings are as cheap as the newer ones are expensive and frame a spacious pedestrian-only parade running above a service road. These flat-roofed monoliths used the CLASP building system, an acronym for Consortium of Local Authority Special Projects. Higher spec architecture followed, starting in the mid-90s with a glazed frontage grafted on to the CLASP framework of the library.

The landscape from steps opposite the library is of lawns, water and trees and a wider campus where people and traffic are separated. Buildings emerge out of the greenery, most notably the Milner Centre for Evolution next to the Department of Biology and Chemistry. One side of it has colour-coded gene sequences and the front's rubble limestone and Georgian height windows are a nod at the city below.

You can find more Bath walks in Walks to Work 2, available from Prior Park Garden Centre and local bookshops.



Café society



Learning in the green

A very social enterprise?

Retired electrical engineer **Robert Morley** finds community and achievement in dry stone walling.

Dry stone walls are part of the fabric of the countryside. They are found in areas where rough stone is readily available for free - either as broken pieces from nearby quarries or collected from the stones brought up during ploughing. They are particularly characteristic of limestone areas, such as the Cotswolds. In the past, when rural labour was cheap and farm workers had time on their hands, it made sense to use this free resource to create field boundaries and stock-proof enclosures. Although dry stone walls have been around for thousands of years, it wasn't until the land enclosure acts in the 18th century that most of the walls we see today were built.

So, what is a dry stone wall? Simply put, it is a wall built without mortar. Four types of stone are used. At the base of the wall, large stones are used to spread the load. Above this, the wall is built in courses using face stones and heartings. Face stones, as the name implies, go on the outside of the wall. As these will be seen, they are generally larger and have at least one flat face. The wall is given greater strength by placing some long face stones at right-angles to the length of the wall. The heartings are small stones that are packed tightly between the courses of face stones, in the heart of the wall, for strength. Finally, top stones are placed vertically on the top of the wall. In the Cotswolds, the top stones usually alternate between a tall stone (a cock) and a shorter stone (a hen). It is the weight of the cocks and hens that keeps the top

course in place. To improve their strength, walls taper slightly as they go up (this is known as the batter).

Left on their own, well-built dry stone walls can last hundreds of years. But sadly, it is not uncommon to see walls that have collapsed. Roots of trees and ivy are the main culprits, although walkers seeking a short-cut can also be to blame!

The Cotswold National Landscape has a dedicated team of over 20 dry stone wallers – men and women – who repair about 400-500 metres of walls every year in Bath and the surrounding area. The oldest member of the team has just retired, aged 91. Most of the others are retired engineers, teachers, accountants, and surgeons – and there's a couple who are not allowed to tell you what they have done! A strong camaraderie has developed in the team so it's more a social club that happens to build walls.

The art of dry stone walling is quick to learn. It takes you into the countryside and it keeps you fit; it requires you to focus and it provides a sense of achievement. For anyone who has spent a career that takes years to deliver results, achieving something worthwhile in a morning is a joy.

More information is available at www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering/cotswold-voluntary-wardens/



Winter garden work-out

John Leach, managing director of Prior Park Garden Centre, cracks on with seasonal garden chores.

Winter is a great time to get down to some gardening, and all you need is a really good old coat, warm hat and gloves, and waterproof footwear. Once you begin, all the troubles of the world disappear. So, let's get started.

Check your roses and prune back the tallest shoots to minimise winter root rocking, then use a narrow spring rake to gather up as many fallen leaves as possible and pick off any leaves still on the plant that have blackspot. Spread a layer of garden compost around the base of the plant. This attention will give your roses a much better chance of staying disease free next year.

If you have tender plants in pots invest in a roll of horticultural fleece and put it in your shed so that when severe frost is forecast you have it to hand to wrap around your plants, ideally at least two layers, and don't forget to also wrap the pots and raise the base of the pots on little feet or stones to improve drainage and to prevent the plants' roots freezing.

There is still time to plant spring flowering bulbs, the sooner the better for daffodils and narcissi. Tulips prefer to be planted later, even right up to the end of the year. The general rule for planting is for the planting hole to be at least twice or three times the depth of the bulb, so daffodils need to be in a hole at least 15cm/6inches deep.

Despite the very dry summer, many shrubs have made considerable extension growth. Shrubs that flower on new wood will benefit from winter pruning to keep them a tidy shape. Suitable plants for this treatment include buddleia, cornus, abelia, caryopteris, hypericum and abelia, and these can all be cut back quite hard. Do not winter prune shrubs that flower on their old wood such as lilac, azaleas and forsythia since you would cut off next year's flower buds.

If you have a compost heap (and if you don't shame on you), now is a good time to dig it out and spread your

compost over the soil. Newly planted trees, shrubs and roses will love you for it. Spread the compost over your vegetable garden, don't worry if the material hasn't completely broken down, it will do by the spring, and let the worms to a great job for you, incorporating it into your top soil. Having finished spreading you now have space to start your next heap with all the plant material that you have cleared up.

Happy gardening.

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Calling guerrilla gardeners!

As we get set for the 2026 gardening calendar, come and help us plant up the planters and dig in the new shrubs to make the very best of Widcombe. To join the 2026 guerrilla team, message Colette on 07971 557690.

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Holiday trail returns to landscape garden

The National Trust's **Heloise Clough** counts down to Prior Park's 12 Days of Christmas.

We were so pleased to hear how much locals have been enjoying the reopening of the Church Lane entrance to Prior Park Landscape Garden. It has been open over a year now, and we are still making little changes to improve the experience for all. The bike racks went in at the beginning of summer, and we are hoping to add a covering to the front of the tea cabin soon. A new play library has also been added, to keep little hands and minds entertained. If you have any ideas that would improve your visitor experience further, we would love to hear them.

This winter, we are looking forward to the return of the 12 Days of Christmas trail. Visitors can watch the Christmas carol come to life around the garden, with each line interpreted – last year there were seven swans-a-swimming on the serpentine and a partridge in a yew tree. Some may be located in different areas this year, but

the five gold rings will most certainly be returning to the Palladian bridge. The Christmas trail will take place from 29 November to 14 December weekends only, then daily during the Christmas holidays from 20 December to 4 January (closed 24 and 25 December). The tea cabin will be stocked with winter favourites, such as mince pies and hot chocolate.

We recently trialled our first gong sound healing bath on the Palladian bridge, and we're hoping to introduce more wellbeing events in 2026. Keep an eye on our website and on social media for updates.

We have now returned to our winter opening hours (until mid-February), so we are open weekends and the Christmas holidays, closing at 4pm with last entry at 3pm.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/bath-bristol/prior-park-landscape-garden



Five gold rings

Time out

Mum and entrepreneur **Lizzy Tomley** offers some winter Widcombe fun for our younger readers.



Instructions

1. Grease the cupcake trays with a little butter on some baking paper. Preheat your oven to 220C / 200C fan / gas mark 7 / 425F.
2. Place the flour in the bowl and add the cubes of cold butter. Rub the butter and flour between your fingers until it resembles breadcrumbs.
3. Add a tablespoon of cold water and mix thoroughly. Add another tablespoon of cold water and mix thoroughly. Repeat this process until the mixture just starts to come together.
4. Stop adding water and use your hands to squeeze the pastry together into a ball.
5. Sprinkle your work surface with a little flour and pop your ball of pastry on top. Flour the rolling pin so it doesn't get sticky and roll your pastry out as thin as you can.
6. Using a circle-shaped cutter, cut out 24 circles and place them into the greased holes of your cupcake trays.
7. Put a teaspoonful of mincemeat in the centre of each circle.
8. Squeeze together the rest of the pastry, roll it into a ball and roll out thinly again. This time cut out 24 stars, using a star-shaped cutter if you have one, otherwise the same round cutter. Place the stars on top of the mincemeat, roughly in the centre, and press down slightly so the star sticks.
9. Using a pastry brush, brush over a little milk (not strictly necessary, but it makes the mince pies go a more golden colour).
10. Put the mince pies in your preheated oven for 15-20 minutes, until the mincemeat is bubbling and the pastry is golden on top.
11. Take the trays out of the oven and leave them to cool a little before scooping out the pies and placing them on a wire rack to cool right down. Take care not to burn yourself as the mince will be super-hot!
12. Put a couple of tablespoons of icing sugar into a sieve and dust the icing sugar over the mince pies to look like snow!

With Christmas just around the corner, here is an easy mince pie recipe.

Extra challenge: Can you find all the ingredients in our shops in Widcombe?

Ingredients

- 345g plain flour plus extra for dusting
- 170g cold butter cut into 1cm cubes (plus extra for greasing)
- A little cold water (roughly 6-8 tbsps)
- 250g mincemeat
- A little milk
- 3 tbsps icing sugar to give them a snowy look at the end!

Equipment

- Very clean hands!
- Two 12-cupcake trays
- Mixing bowl
- Rolling pin
- Circle and star pastry cutters
- Pastry brush
- Sieve



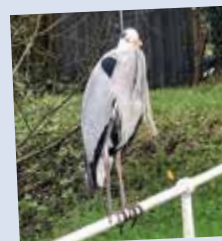
When Lizzy is not adventuring with under-10s, she runs an online rug business, pinkwalls.co.uk.

Scavenger Hunt

Let's wrap up warm and go exploring!

Hunt out **Widcombe's saints**. We spotted five, maybe you can find more? (Clue: look at street names and places of worship).

Take a walk along the Kennet and Avon Canal. How many of these beautiful birds can you spot?



Grey Heron

(they have very long legs and are great at fishing!)

Mallards

(the male has a yellow bill and the female an orange one)

Moorhens

(their beaks are red)

Kingfisher (look out for their stunning bright blue and green feathers)

Swans (so graceful gliding over the water)

Robin (a sign that winter is here!)

Fun fact

Did you know that Widcombe is home to Britain's second deepest canal lock? It's called the Bath Deep Lock and has a depth of 5.92 metres. In the photo, you can see a boat has sunk to the bottom of the lock, blocking the way for the canal traffic. This was in September, so by now the boat will be gone and the barges will be on the move again.



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Pictures and cards of Widcombe and Bath by local artist Sue Porter.
Prior Park Garden Centre, Luca and Fig in Widcombe and www.vanillawhite.com





Happy birthday, Jane Austen

Biddy Walcot wonders if Bath's most famous resident has left us a culinary legacy?

This year Bath has been celebrating the 250th birthday of Jane Austen who, by all accounts, never quite decided whether she adored or merely endured Bath. And did she ever visit what we now know as Widcombe? Whatever the answer, we happily raise a teacup to Jane – our reluctant resident and, whether she liked it or not, Bath's brightest literary jewel.

As a nod to her wonderful legacy, we're publishing a recipe written by her great friend Martha Lloyd. Who knows whether Jane liked – or even tasted - Apple Snow, but we like to think she admired the theatricality of this sweet and fluffy concoction.

We are also in awe of the fact that this version of Apple Snow has to be whisked for an hour before it's ready!



Apple Snow

Core and pare a lb of apples boil or steam them until tender and put them on a strainer to drain – add six oz of fine loaf sugar and two whites of eggs whipt to a froth by itself – whip up the apples also separately then put altogether and whisk it up for a full hour until it looks like snow.



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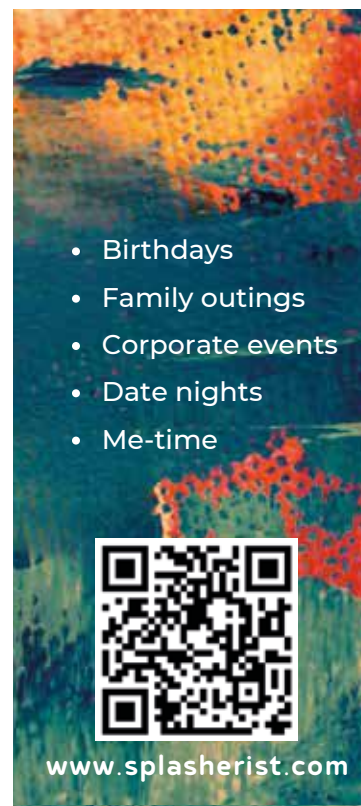
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Whatever happened to Widcombe?

Amy Frost, senior curator at Bath Preservation Trust, mourns a village lost in the name of progress.

In 1973, Adam Fergusson published *The Sack of Bath* in the conviction that, if the wreckage could be cut short, Georgian Bath could yet be saved. The book's publication was intrinsic to the development of building conservation legislation and to the layers of protection built around Bath's historic buildings. But sadly, for Widcombe, it was already too late.



Back of Claverton Street from the Railway Station March 1964. Museum of Bath Architecture-Bath Preservation Trust

homes. Instead, given the poor state of repair of many, demolition was seen as more cost effective than repair.



Waterloo Buildings recorded by S. Marks 1964 before demolition

It wasn't just the clearing away of perceived sub-standard housing that led to the Widcombe clearances – one of the biggest drivers of demolition was just that, drivers. The new 'relief' road for the southern entrance to Bath required more removal of buildings. The western end of Claverton Street was lost, including Cold Bath House, an early Georgian cold bath fed by a spring under Beechen Cliff. Claverton Buildings (opposite Widcombe Parade) was demolished at the western end, including the Southern Dispensary building of 1855. Waterloo Buildings which hugged the canal at the back of Claverton Buildings was swept away to create the new circulatory road to Bathwick, dramatically changing the view of Widcombe from the city north of the river.

The 1960 revised City Development Plan declared Widcombe as the first comprehensive development area for the city, spelling doom for Calton Road and Holloway. Georgian and early Victorian terraces and cottages – home to the trade and craftspeople that populated the southern side of the Avon – were swept away. The solid and stone-built row of Calton Road was demolished in 1969. Private housing developer Kent Living Design replaced them with new 'homes of distinction', naming the row Calton Gardens. Holloway was systematically removed, including several seventeenth-century (and possibly earlier) buildings. The term 'artisan' once used to describe the comfortable homes of the working classes was weaponised during the Sack of Bath, becoming a useful term for downgrading properties that with investment might have made long-term sustainable

The new road system may have solved problems in the planner's eyes, but it increased heavy goods traffic along what remained of Claverton Street (Widcombe Parade). Having been unable to stop the demolitions, residents were determined to limit the number of vehicles. During 1977-78, the Widcombe Action Group (later the Widcombe Association) protested against the changes, including stopping traffic by unfurling large banners proclaiming 'Heavy traffic – no way' across the road.



Claverton Street west from bottom of Lyncombe Hill August 1965. Museum of Bath Architecture-Bath Preservation Trust

Thanks to the volunteers of the Bath Buildings Record and members of Bath Preservation Trust, the Sack of Widcombe was well documented and through images, drawings and archives in the Museum of Bath Architecture Collection we can piece together what was lost and use it as a stark reminder of what can happen when cars are prioritised over homes.

More on the fate of Widcombe will be explored by Amy Frost on Wednesday 19 November at Widcombe Social Club <https://widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/events/the-claverton-st-clearances-talk-by-amy-frost>.



What's on in the week?

Sunday

10.30am
Morning Service

6.30pm
Evening Service

Monday

7pm
Football

Tuesday

10.30am
Coffee Plus

7pm
International cafe

Wednesday

10.30am
Ladies Bible Study
(with creche)

7pm
Homegroups

Thursday

10am
Toddlers

7pm
Homegroups

Friday

6.30pm
Lighthouse
(ages 7-11)

8pm
Transformed & T2
(ages 11-18)

Monthly

Prayer Meetings
Craft Together
Men's & Ladies' Breakfasts
Bath Christian Cantonese Ministry

Find more information at widcombebaptist.org

Zippy reports for duty

We're delighted to announce the appointment of our first four-legged Honorary Member.

Zippy will also fulfil the role of Ambassador to the WA and has promised wholeheartedly to rave about Widcombe to anyone who'll listen.

Widcombe Magazine editor Colette Hill says: 'We're so pleased that Zippy has agreed to spread the word about us. The entire Widcombe community joins us in congratulating him on his well-deserved appointment to this prestigious new role. His boundless enthusiasm for all things Widcombe, combined with his natural charisma and innovative thinking, makes him the perfect choice to represent our vibrant neighbourhood. 'Residents have already expressed their excitement about Zippy's creative event proposals, particularly the prospect of a Widcombe Oktobercarrotfest, which promises to put our area firmly on the map as a destination for unique seasonal celebrations.

'Local business owners are equally thrilled at the potential boost to tourism and community engagement that Zippy's ambassadorial efforts promise.'

Other events up for consideration by the WA committee

include a carrot tasting menu at local eateries, carrot bobbing for Halloween and an Easter Hunt the Carrot.

As Zippy embarks on this exciting new chapter, he can count on the support of not only his fieldmates, Jorge and Bungle, but the entire Widcombe Association membership and broader community.

Says Colette Hill: 'Zippy's genuine passion for promoting local talent in music, theatre, and comedy – exemplified by his dream of hosting an evening with Jasper Carrott—demonstrates his commitment to showcasing all that makes Widcombe special.

'We have every confidence that under Zippy's enthusiastic promotion, more people than ever will discover the charm, character, and community spirit that make our corner of the world such a wonderful place to live in and visit. Cheers, Zippy!'



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Pulteney Road (South), Bath, BA2 4JR

from 2:00pm-4:00pm

Come along and meet us and have a Good Afternoon

www.goodafternoonchoir.org

Christmas in Widcombe Parish

Please join us as we celebrate Christmas across the Parish!

St Thomas à Becket - Church Street, Widcombe, BA2 6AZ

St Matt's - Widcombe Hill, BA2 6AA

7th December

St Matt's, 5pm - Alternative Carols

14th December

St Matt's, 10:30am - Carols and Christingles

21st December

St Matt's, 10:30am - Christmas Family Communion

St Thomas à Becket, 6pm - Nine Lessons and Carols

24th December

St Thomas à Becket, 11pm - Midnight Mass

25th December

St Thomas à Becket, 9:30am - Christmas Service

St Matt's, 10:30am - Family Christmas Celebration



Widcombe
ST THOMAS & ST MATT'S

More services running throughout December,
see our website for details

Email - admin@widcombe.church

Instagram - [@widcombeparish](https://www.instagram.com/widcombeparish)

Website - <https://widcombe.church/>

Widcombe Choir



ENJOY SINGING?
THEN JOIN...

WIDCOMBE CHOIR

(founded 2012)

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

Come and join us, upstairs at
Widcombe Social Club
Widcombe Hill, BA2 6AA

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

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

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