

Widcombe magazine

SUMMER 2026



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SOS swan rescue • Meet Widcombe's awesome artists



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Contents

- 4 | Local news**
What's going on in Widcombe
- 8 | Out and about**
Our run down of summer fun
- 17 | Meet the neighbours**
Vicki Beach talks about a life changing moment
- 19 | Features**
From swan savers to fundraisers, we meet some awesome volunteers
- 24 | Your Widcombe**
The latest from the Rec and the future of the A36
- 27 | Nature notes**
About turn on bird-feeding
- 31 | Looking back**
The Abbey Cemetery gives up its ghosts
- 35 | Family fun**
Bored kids? We have the answer
- 37 | Food and drink**
A saving summer soup in seconds
- 39 | Last word**
Zippy has another bright idea

Cover illustration
by local artist Jessica Palmer - jessicapalmerart.com.
Visit her studio as part of the Widcombe Art trail
on 20-21 June.

Here comes summer!



Actually, summer apparently arrived in April, when tulips, wisteria and bluebells all made an early appearance, along with shorts, Factor 50 and shades. Let's hope the glorious weather stays with us through the coming months as Widcombe hots up for the holidays.

While we are all out having fun, the army of wonderful volunteers who help keep Widcombe an idyllic place to live will be litter-

picking along the back streets, planting in the Parade, sorting through donated clothes in Mercy in Action, saving our swans in the canal, managing our unique Social Club, running workshops on greening our homes, and much more. So, this issue is a shout out to all the people who, without any kind of fanfare, enhance our lives in lots of ways.

It's also a time of celebration: the Widcombe Association notches up 10 years since it won its long battle to reduce the traffic on Widcombe Parade, the Widcombe Social Club hails 10 years in its new home, Prior Park Landscape Garden marks 30 years as a National Trust property, and choral group Paragon Singers sing out their 50 years.

Colette

Colette Hill

We love hearing from you, with suggestions for features. Do email us at magazine@widcombeassociation.org.uk



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**WIDCOMBE
ASSOCIATION WA**

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The WA celebrates 10 years...



It's 10 years since the Widcombe Association's long campaign finally bore fruit: to have Claverton Street – Widcombe Parade – closed to through traffic. As the new scheme came good, the village of Widcombe at once became a safer, quieter and more attractive place to be. It is easy to forget that until 2016, the westbound

lane of the A36 came straight down this tiny street, with thundering lorries threatening pedestrian safety, creating noise and air pollution and damaging buildings. Today, the Parade is a go-to destination for coffee drinkers, shoppers and diners, with new businesses opening and thriving every year.

...and so does the WSC

The Widcombe Social Club is marking a decade in its fine building on Widcombe Hill.

The club began life in 1899 as the Lyncombe and Widcombe Liberal Working Men's Club at 25 Claverton Buildings, an old butcher's shop. In those days, it attracted members from as far away as the Somerset coal fields.

In the 1960s, it shortened its name to the Widcombe Social Club and moved to a purpose-built low-rise building at the bottom of Widcombe Hill, where it became home to Somerset Darts as well as boasting two skittle alleys, a lounge overlooking the canal basin, a stage, and a flat for its steward.

A plan was hatched to release some of the land for a convenience store and student accommodation and to build a new club more suited to modern uses. Nella Stokes, volunteer chair of the management committee, says: 'A decade on, the club is a light, modern venue, which holds true to its roots as a hub for community-run events, providing entertainment with local audiences in mind.'



Out with the old



and in with the new

School project cheers parade

Flags will fly over Widcombe Parade for the first time this summer thanks to the children of the arts club at Widcombe Junior School. Fifteen children, ably assisted by art teacher Gemma Martin, have produced collages of Widcombe landmarks and themes, which the Widcombe Association is now busy turning into flags for the Parade. The children's designs feature pubs, swans, barges and bicycles as well as allotments, the phone box and GWR.

We would love to run this project again in 2027. Send your suggestions for next year's theme to magazine@widcombeassociation.org.uk



Gemma Martin and her art club

Garden centre supports planting



Prior Park Garden Centre has generously committed to providing summer and winter bedding plants, compost and plant food to keep the Parade blooming all year round. In April, WA gardening volunteers Colette Hill and Clare Ogilvie met general manager Simon Malley to discuss their requirements. In May, they collected and planted red geraniums and orange osteospermum to bring colour to the planters through the summer. Simon Malley said: 'We already supply the Christmas trees at cost and this is a great next step in supporting the Widcombe Association's work.'

Magic touch for the Ring O Bells

The Ring O Bells quietly changed ownership last October when magician Paul Brookes and his wife Sarah bought the popular pub from Mick and Liz Dempsey. Paul and Sarah are delighted with their investment: 'the pub was very well established and thriving, and we had an amazing Christmas,' said Paul. 'So, we won't be making any big changes.' The couple have introduced acoustic afternoons on Sundays and Paul, who founded Bath's unique Sleight Bar on Bog Island is planning to bring a bit of magic to the Ring O Bells soon.



Paul and Sarah Brookes

Walk for wellbeing

Bath 5k Map, the wellbeing charity, has added a new Widcombe walk to its guided walks in and around Bath. Walk 42, a circular ramble from Prior Park College through Fox Hill and Lyncombe Vale, was created in partnership with Bathscape and Walk Bath.

Two other Widcombe walks explore the area's hills, lanes and green spaces: Route 1 climbs from the Kennet and Avon Canal past Prior Park Landscape Garden to the Skyline; Route 37 takes in Alexandra Park's sweeping city views before dropping into peaceful Lyncombe Vale.

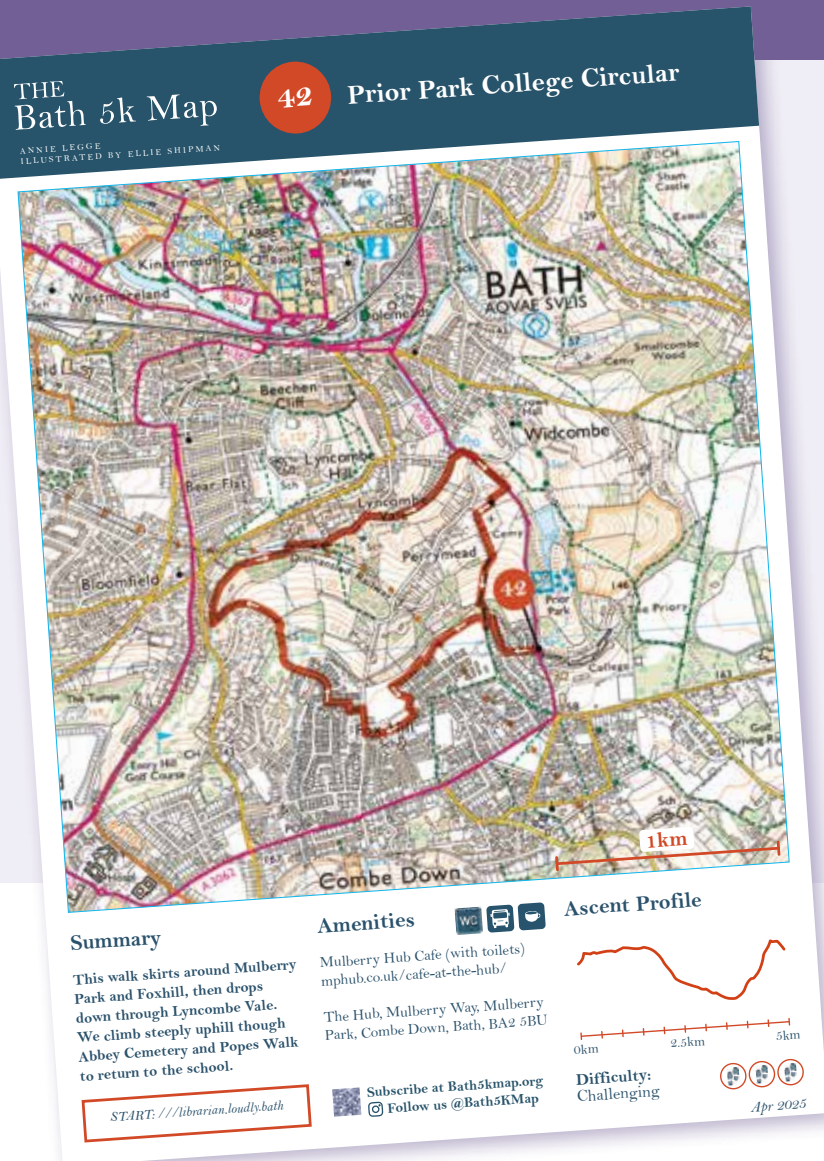
For more information, visit bath5kmap.org or follow on instagram at @bath5kmap.

Safer start to school days



Bath and North East Somerset Council has introduced timed vehicle restrictions to create safer spaces outside Widcombe Junior and Infant Schools at the start and end of the school day. Volunteers are installing temporary barriers to traffic the full length of Archway Street and Excelsior Street (excepting local residents, some school traffic, those with accessibility needs, and emergency services) for two 40 minute periods from 8:20am and 2:50pm. During these times pupils walk from the traffic barriers to the school.

If you would like to volunteer your help, visit: bathnes.gov.uk/widcombeschoolstreet



Stop idling

Bath and North East Somerset Council has joined councils across the country in warning drivers about the dangers of idling while parked up, waiting at the lights or in a traffic jam. Its Kick the Habit campaign also aims to discourage drivers from idling their engines to keep warm while parked, or while waiting outside schools and shops. The campaign points out benefits all round: savings on the cost of fuel, lower pollution for those inside the vehicle and cleaner air for everyone outside.



Calton Road play area back in full swing

The Calton Road play area between Calton Road and Alexandra Road has reopened after a lot of campaigning and hard work by local residents, the WA and the council.

The original play area was inaugurated in 1980 in memory of 9-year-old Tessa Maddocks. Popular with local families, it gradually fell into disrepair and the council announced its intention to close the playground in 2018.

Following local protests, and years of campaigning, the council reversed its decision and construction of the new play area finally began in late 2025 and was completed early this year. The enlarged and enhanced play area was officially opened in February by former local councillor Deborah Collins who had been instrumental in the securing the project.



Green website spotlights energy saving tricks

Go Green Widcombe has launched a practical website to help householders track the best ways to minimise energy usage. The website provides step by step guidance and offers case studies of different house types to illustrate what can be achieved.

Go Green Widcombe also holds regular free talks and workshops. Dates for your diary: 10 June (workshop on air heat pumps), 16 September and 18 November. To find out more, visit gogreenwidcombe.org.



Join up, join in

Did you know the Widcombe Association is the largest residents' association in Bath? We are staffed entirely by volunteers, we receive no external funding and we're not a charity. Everything we do is funded by our members. A modest subscription fee gets you members-only discounts to many fabulous events, as well as a nice warm feeling from knowing that you're supporting your local community. In return, we get to continue campaigning on your behalf on local traffic and planning 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. If you're already a member, thank you! If you're thinking about becoming a member head over to <https://widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/pages/7-become-a-member-today>.

On the trail

The Widcombe Art trail is back on 20-21 June, with paintings and crafts for sale. This year's sponsors include three Parade businesses – Noad Roofing, the Curtain Exchange and Widcombe Deli.

The trail is a walkable treasure hunt of affordable art by aspiring and professional artists, depicting landscapes, experimental art and abstracts. As well as paintings, there will be embroidery, pottery, mosaics, photographs, and enamel.

Trail venues are open on Saturday and Sunday from 10.30am to 5pm. For more information and the trail map, visit www.widcombeatrtail.com.



Madeleine Town



Lorelei Hunt



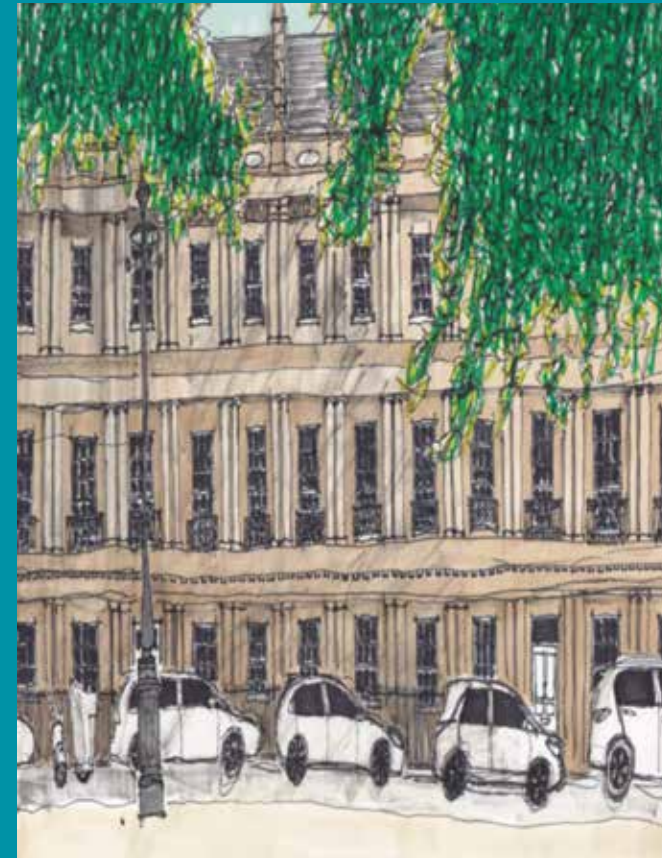
David Janes



Kate McDonnell



Tim Perry



Gome Muwowo



Sue Pryor



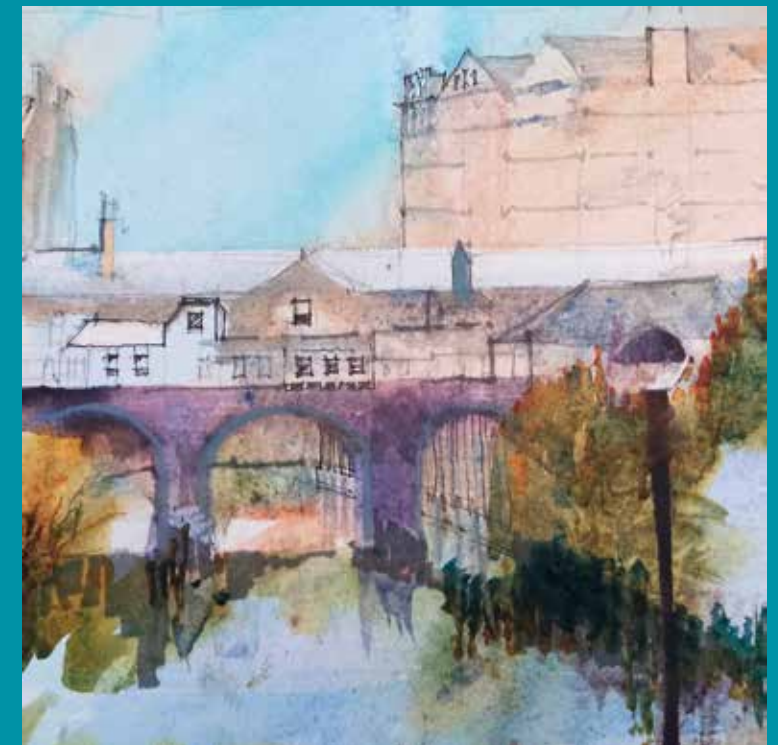
Carol Baines



Divya and Mitali Atkins



Jim Edmiston



Pippa Wrigley

Coming up at St Mark's

Family BBQ: 5 September, 4 – 8pm

St Mark's Ceilidh: 14 November, 7.30-10.30pm, in aid of St Mark's roof and refurbishment fund.



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, try out Widcombe Book Group at the WSC.

We meet on the last Tuesday of the month, 8pm. New members welcome. Contact Jocelyn Ridley jocridley@gmail.com.

WSC dates for your diary

Birthday weekend

The WSC celebrates its 10th birthday on the 10-12 July with a family-friendly weekend, showcasing what it does best. There will be a themed quiz, DJs and live music, both tennis finals will be shown on the big screen and a film will be screened. All events are free but you will need to reserve your place and book food.

Music

Widcombe Waterside Nights – free live music every Friday, 7-9pm; pizza 6-8.30pm, including vegan and gluten-free. Other food options available to order in advance.

Saturday 20 June: Transmission Indie Disco – classic old school from punk and new wave through to baggy and Britpop. 8pm-1am.

Friday 26 June, Friday 4 September, Friday 27 November, Bath Soul Club 7-11.30pm.

Check out the website for yoga, choirs, musical theatre, dance classes and much more. The venue is also available to hire. www.widcombesocialclub.co.uk.

Cricket Society at the WSC



David Gower

Once a month from October and through the winter, cricket lovers gather at Widcombe Social Club to hear well-known experts talk about the summer game.

In the West of England Cricket Society's most recent programme, there were three former captains of England (David Gower, Chris Cowdrey and Jos Buttler), Test Match Special commentator Daniel Norcross and an international coach, Andy Moles, who described his years in Kabul working with the Afghan national team. Previous speakers have included Mike Brearley, Graham Gooch, Devon Malcolm and Mark Ramprakash, who as a past winner of Strictly Come Dancing attracted a higher turnout of women than usual.

The talks are on a Tuesday afternoon and cost £5 on the door, with free interval refreshments and a bar for those wanting something stronger.

For more details, contact Stephen Chalke at stephen.chalke@hotmail.co.uk or ring 01174 523760.



WA hosts private garden visit

The WA is hosting a private tour of Corsley House near Warminster on 29 July. Recently featured on Gardener's World, the garden overlooking Cley Hill is full of surprises including a sculpted wave lawn and exceptional walled garden. Visit widcombeassociation.org.uk.



Art al fresco

Following the success of its painting day in April, the WA hopes to arrange a repeat next year. Some 25 people, both beginners and experienced painters, attended the event in Sydney Gardens, where painter John Nash painted 100 years ago.

Paragon Singers celebrate 50 years in tune

As the Paragon Singers mark 50 years of singing, founder member Maggie Graham recalls the early years of rehearsals in her Widcombe home.

Paragon Singers started life early in 1976 when a small group of us got together to sing with friends in their flat opposite the Paragon. We were members of an established choir, Bath Cantata Group, which wasn't meeting over the spring and summer months, but we very much wanted to keep singing.

At the time, my husband Tim and I lived over our bookshop in the city centre. I was pregnant with our eldest son and we moved to our new Widcombe home in The Tynning in the middle of the heatwave of summer '76. After Rob was born, he came with us to the Paragon on singing nights. Eventually it became untenable carrying this increasingly awake baby around so we suggested the little group start rehearsing in our Widcombe home instead.

Over the years we acquired three more sons and they all remember

Monday nights when every chair we owned was carried into our front room. Parking was a lot easier in the '70s and '80s and neighbours were remarkably tolerant of the Monday evening invasion and the sounds that came out of our window, particularly on summer evenings.

Having launched our anniversary year with a promenade concert in Bath Abbey, we continue our celebrations on 11 July with a

performance of Purcell's Lament at St Swithun's Church in Walcot Street. This dramatised production by one of our members, scriptwriter Stewart Harcourt, weaves together Purcell's most moving songs and choral works in a portrait of loss, love and the joy of music that endures.

Tickets are available from Bath Box Office, bathboxoffice.org.uk.



You are invited to a weekend of *FREE* events this summer!
At Widcombe Baptist Church, BA2 4JR

11th July, 7:30pm

QUIZ NIGHT

With a short Gospel talk



12th July, 1pm

FAMILY BBQ

With face painting & a bouncy castle



Widcombe Baptist Church

widcombebaptist.org
Registered Charity no. 1118796

Summer at Prior Park Landscape Garden

Prior Park Landscape Garden is celebrating 30 years with the National Trust. The NT's Heloise Clough invites us to make the most of the garden in this special year.

On Saturday 18 July, Prior Park Landscape Garden will open its gates after hours to celebrate 30 years with the National Trust with food and music. We advise pre-booking as spaces are limited (please see the website to book your place). Tickets are free for National Trust members. For non-members, entry is £5 for adults and £2.50 for under 18s (under 5s go free). This will be a very special evening, and we look forward to seeing you there.

We have recently started to hold seasonal watercolour sessions before or after opening hours, to allow those taking part to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the garden. Tickets are usually £20 and include a bake and a drink.

Other summer events will include our regular programming, with Summer of Play (20 July – 6 September) and the Festival of Archaeology (18 July – 2 August). We hope to let people peek inside the Grotto for the Festival of Archaeology, which has been closed for years. There will also be guided archaeological walks and information on display about previous digs in the Pasture.

At the end of September, we will be taking part once again in the Jane Austen Festival.

Special events will involve a Regency banquet and another watercolour session.

Looking forward to Christmas, we will have a new trail on display, featuring scenes from The Nutcracker.

There may be need for volunteers to aid in some of the preparations (such as knitting), so if you would like to be involved, please contact priorpark@nationaltrust.org.uk to express your interest.

Prior Park Landscape Garden is open daily until the October half term.





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2 Widcombe Parade, Bath, BA2 4JT

Music and drama at the American Museum



Garden Lates: Last Night's Fun – 5 June, 5.30–8.30pm. A vibrant folk ensemble blending Celtic traditions with English and American influences, featuring fiddle, accordion, whistle, banjo and more.

Garden Theatre: Othello – 12 June, 7pm. The Lord Chamberlain's Men present Shakespeare's powerful tale of jealousy, manipulation and tragedy.

Garden Theatre: Sherlock Holmes, The Hound of the Baskervilles – 17 July, 6.30pm. An inventive retelling of the classic mystery, with live music and audience interaction.

Garden Lates: Jonnie Melancholy and the Sad Cowboys – 24 July, 5.30–8.30pm. A six-piece band playing country, bluegrass and transatlantic folk.

Garden Theatre: The Jungle Book – 9 August, 6.30pm. A high-energy, family-friendly musical adventure following Mowgli and friends through Kipling's much-loved jungle world.

Garden Lates: The Strays – 28 August, 5.30–8.30pm. A lively mix of Americana, country, blues and soft rock, driven by three-part harmonies.

Circus of Curiosities: An Exhibition of Moving Marvels – 4 July-3 January 2027. Interactive mechanical sculptures inspired by the spectacle of the circus, each piece springs to life at the push of a button or the turn of a handle - offering moments of surprise, humour and ingenuity for visitors of all ages.



For tickets and more information visit americanmuseum.org



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 paragonschool.co.uk
3-11 years

 priorparkcollege.com
11-18 years

Life changing

Widcombe resident Vicki Beach told **Colette Hill** about her life change from curtain-maker to the stars to philanthropist.

Leaving school at 16, Vicki Beach's early career ranged from cooking Cordon Bleu directors' lunches in London to flying the world as an air hostess for BOAC (now BA).

A few years of settled family life followed until her divorce in 1992. Now a single mother and in need of an income, Vicki enrolled on a curtain-making course. As soon as she completed her first pair of curtains, she was hired by the Conran Shop where her clients included Mary Quant, The Pet Shop Boys and Antonio Carluccio.

Vicki's can-do attitude came to the fore when her life pivoted again. Now remarried and living in Widcombe, Vicki was called to a new vocation as a charity fundraiser.

In 2002, after A-levels, Vicki's elder daughter, Fiona, volunteered as a teacher at a girls' primary school in Namunyumya, a remote village in Uganda. The school was in desperate need of everything and returning to the UK, Fiona enlisted Vicki's help. They started by collecting

and shipping over 5,000 books, building a school library to accommodate them.

That first initiative led Vicki to form RedEarth Village Schools Uganda, which went on to build classrooms, a kitchen and a medical centre. It funded a phonics teacher and a school nurse and paid for the children's lunches.

In 2009, the charity built a secondary school where A' Level teaching started earlier this year. Vicki has forged links with Bath University's Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering and this summer a group of its students will volunteer at Namunyumya.

In 2023, Vicki was awarded an MBE in King Charles's Birthday Honours, an honour she sees as a catalyst to do more. She was accompanied by Rev Sr Judith Nantongo, Headmistress of St Michael's Girls Nursery and Primary School.



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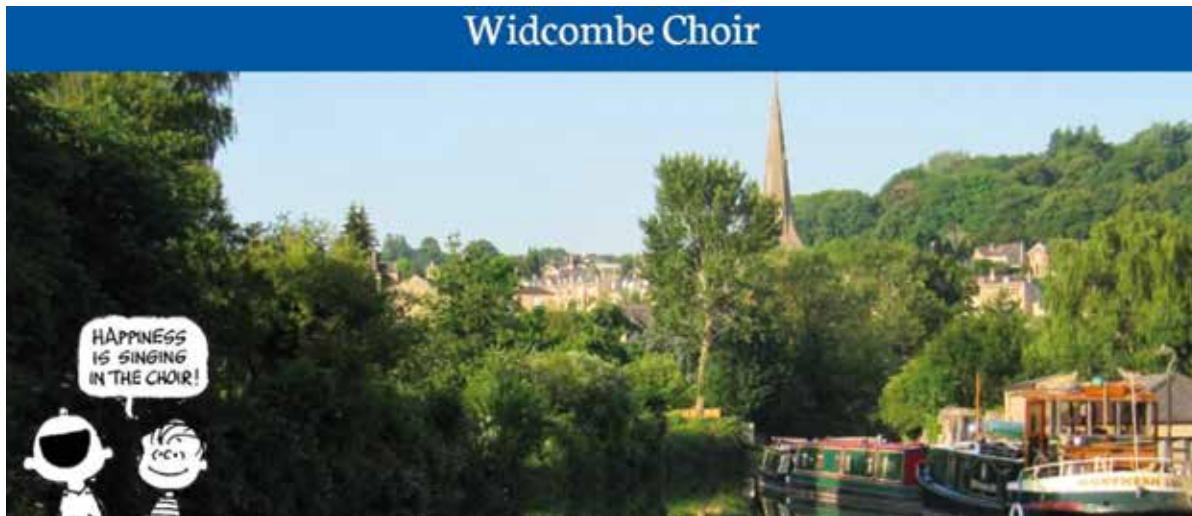
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We are affiliated with the Widcombe Association.
For more information, visit...

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

COME ALONG & HAVE FUN

Swanning about

As team lead of Bath Swan Rescue, Amy Lovell can often be seen around Widcombe. She explained to **Biddy Walcot** what – exactly – the swans need rescuing from.

We often get asked that question and the answer is a lot! Despite being incredibly powerful birds, they face many risks – embedded or swallowed fishing hooks or dog attacks, or injuries from other swans as they are very territorial.

Last summer, we removed fishing hooks from six cygnets and three adults in the Widcombe area alone. And swan politics are at play in Widcombe too due to the proximity of different pairs. Territorial fights can be fatal as can cygnets washing into locks and overflows which happens every year. In autumn, we see high numbers of crash-landed juvenile swans which mistake wet road for river when first finding their wings. And adult birds often get trapped in boat locks as they need 30 metres run-up on water to take flight.

But we're lucky to have so many of these lovely creatures in Bath. They play a really important role in canal and river ecosystems. Their feeding habits support the spread and growth of aquatic animal eggs, and so help the growth of other plant and animal species. As they forage they dislodge sediment which helps circulate nutrients and keeps the bodies of water they inhabit healthy.

We work closely with local vets, providing a life-saving service for waterfowl and other avian patients. We've also made training resources for our wonderful colleagues at Avon Fire and Rescue around safe handling techniques for swans and we remain committed to



advocating for birds.

We have a drivers team with over 50 volunteers in the Bath area so we can stabilise very sick birds and then arrange transport to suitable rehabilitation hospitals.

We rely on people getting in touch when they find swans and cygnets in need of help. If you come across cygnets or swans in locks

please notify a Canal and River Trust volunteer if one is about (usually in blue t-shirts) or contact one of us.

And finally, if you find a baby bird, check whether intervention is needed; every year, too many fledglings are taken away from their parents unnecessarily. Where wildlife is orphaned or injured, please don't try to rear them yourselves. Our team witnesses the sad reality of imprinted birds that members of the public have tried to raise and which can't then survive in the wild, or baby birds which have aspirated because people have tried to give them water. Always contact a wildlife rehabber who can hydrate them appropriately.

Call 07711 130328 or email bathswanteam@gmail.com.

Get involved

- See our Facebook page for lots of useful tips and to read our rescue stories
- Buy rescue equipment or supplies on our Amazon wishlist: [amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/90D7KDJEMQ8T?ref_=wl_share](https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/90D7KDJEMQ8T?ref_=wl_share).
- Check out team PayPal for supplies not available from Amazon: [paypal.com/paypalme/BathSwanRescue](https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/BathSwanRescue).



Other ways to help

- Keep dogs on leads on the canal paths.
- If you encounter discarded fishing line/hooks, and it is safe to do so, do dispose of them. This protects a whole multitude of wildlife, not just swans.



Amy with rescued cygnet

Stepping up

How many volunteers does it take to run a community?

Biddy Walcot discovers it's more than you might think.

Scratch beneath the surface of a village like Widcombe, and you might wonder how it would survive without the can-do people who volunteer time and skills to support their neighbourhood.

We set Widcombe Association chair Mike Wrigley the not inconsiderable task of calculating (roughly) the number of volunteers engaged in the WA – our residents' association which is run entirely by volunteers. It took him a little while and the result was heavily caveated, but he estimated around 100 people offer their services for free to the WA over the course of a year.

From producing and delivering magazines, through organising the art trail, the Christmas market and all the many other events, serving on the committee, litter-picking, keeping Widcombe Parade looking lovely with seasonal plants and Christmas trees and so on, organising the sub-groups (garden events, choir, Wobblers, Wayfarers, Go-Green Widcombe) to staffing events, it's clear the WA is nothing without its people.

Ditto The Widcombe Social Club, the National Trust's Prior Park Landscape Garden, Mercy in Action, St Mark's Community Centre and Widcombe-based charity Bath Welcomes Refugees all of which rely on their volunteers – some 300-odd roles taken on by volunteers – who often support more than one organisation or who take on more than one role in one organisation.

Tell us your story

There are obviously lots of fabulous volunteers in Widcombe and we'd love to hear from you.

Email us at magazine@widcombeassociation.org.uk and tell us what you've been doing for your community. What do you enjoy about volunteering? Maybe you're in touch with volunteers in your organisation? How do they contribute?

Do get in touch. We look forward to hearing from you.



Lesley Gillard, manager at Mercy in Action, Widcombe

Mercy in Action

The yellow charity shop on Widcombe Parade is a much-loved destination attracting many regulars from this area and further afield, folk who like to re-use, recycle, upcycle and who enjoy the unexpected, finding a treasure they never knew they were looking for.

The shop currently has 15 volunteers whose tasks include serving at the till, rotating stock, pricing and displaying items and steaming – as every item of clothing is steamed and quality-checked before going out on the rails.

There is always a contracted member of staff on duty so volunteers are never short of guidance and encouragement. *Tina Ryan*



Helen Peter, St Mark's trustee

St Mark's Community Centre

Currently supported by 10 volunteer trustees who manage and run the centre for the community, taking bookings, doing DIY, managing the money. Says trustee Helen Peter, all the trustees contribute their time, energy and skills to keep costs down so that charities like Zenith Youth Theatre Company and Widcombe Acorns pre-school can use the space at very low cost.

Other groups benefiting from the space are Love Jam Music Group, Deborah Curtis Dance School, Paddy Nesbit Tai Chi, Ecstatic Dance and Bath Historical Martial Arts – plus the St Mark's Garden Club, covering a range of ages.

If you want to find out about volunteering opportunities in your community, visit:

- volunteering@bathwelcomesrefugees.org.uk
- www.widcombeassociation.org.uk/pages/volunteer
- www.stmarksc.co.uk



Alex Randall-Atkins from Bath Welcomes Refugees

Bath Welcomes Refugees

Alex Randall-Atkins is the volunteer co-ordinator of Widcombe-based Bath Welcomes Refugees. She says: 'We have around 150 volunteers in a variety of roles, ranging from people who teach an English class every week to people who help out maybe once or twice a year with a fundraising event or preparing a house.'

'Our aim is to help people achieve independence. As they settle into life in Bath, they need less support as they gain confidence with the language and how everything works here, so they might come to our English classes and our social events, but they no longer need help with housing or enrolling in schools or college.'

'We're very much volunteer-led – our trustees and management committee are all volunteers. And all our volunteers are local – they deliver all our day-to-day services. We couldn't do anything without them. We have just three members of staff – and two of those are part-time.'

'Our volunteers are an amazing resource with a fantastic range of skills – they help us identify ways to work more effectively because they work directly with the people we support. One volunteer who works in our creche has been delivering training sessions to other volunteers about how children acquire English as an additional language – her background is supporting teachers in schools. And another volunteer has helped us with impact monitoring so we can report the difference we make.'

'Our name is Bath Welcomes Refugees and we do exactly what it says on the tin. We make people feel welcome – when you hear the rhetoric out there it's good to know that here, in this small community, there are 150 people who want to be welcoming. It reflects well on Bath, and to me it's what this community is about.'

St Matt's and St Thomas à Becket



1st Sunday of the Month

St Thomas - 9:30am
St Matt's - 10:45am (with
kids work)

2nd Sunday of the Month

St Thomas - 8:00am
St Matt's - 10:45am (cafe
church)

3rd Sunday of the Month

St Thomas - 9:30am
St Matt's - 10:45am (with
kids work)

4th Sunday of the Month

St Thomas - 9:30am
St Matt's - 10:45am (with
kids work)

Interest Evenings ...



THURSDAY 25TH JUNE

**EDWARD NASH, SENIOR AND FOUNDING
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DRAWING BREATH**

EDWARD, RECENTLY RETIRED FROM NASH PARTNERSHIP – A BUILT ENVIRONMENT CONSULTANCY IN ITS 36TH YEAR – REFLECTS ON HOW LIVING AND WORKING BETWEEN THE CITY AND ITS HILLS SHAPED HIS OUTLOOK AS AN ARCHITECT AND URBAN DESIGNER. DRAWING ON HIS BOOK, DRAWING BREATH, HE EXPLORES HOW ARCHITECTS OF HIS GENERATION USED DRAWING AS A CREATIVE MEDIUM BEFORE IT GAVE WAY TO THE SCREEN AND KEYBOARD.



TUESDAY 13TH OCTOBER

**PROFESSOR VERONICA HOPE HAILEY, EMERITA
PROFESSOR AT BOTH THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL
AND THE UNIVERSITY OF BATH**

**THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING TRUSTWORTHY IN A COMPLEX AND
UNCERTAIN WORLD.**

WHAT DOES BEING "TRUSTWORTHY" LOOK LIKE IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPLEX WORLD? IS ANYONE ENTITLED TO TRUST OR MUST IT BE EARNED DAY BY DAY IN OUR BUSY LIVES? WHAT CAN WE EXPECT OF OUR LEADERS AND WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT FROM OURSELVES?

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7PM REFRESHMENTS, 7.30 START

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What's in a name?

WIDCOMBE
ASSOCIATION **WA**



The Widcombe Association and The Widcombe Social Club – what exactly is the difference? **Tina Ryan** investigates.

Given that WA events are often held in the WSC, it's no wonder people get confused. In fact, they are two quite separate entities, which sometimes co-operate to hold events; meetings of the former are often held on the premises of the latter.

The Widcombe Association started life in 1981 as a campaigning group to banish heavy traffic from the centre of Widcombe.

Meanwhile the WSC has existed in various forms since 1899 as Lyncombe and Widcombe Liberal Club, later the Bath Working Men's Club, and in the 1960s as Widcombe Social Club when it moved to its first purpose-built premises at the bottom of Widcombe Hill. It was home to skittles, darts, snooker and cribbage teams. The club still has some of the old trophies awarded back then.

The WA worked tirelessly to try to make Claverton Street the relatively quiet village street it is today. Its primary aim was realised in 2016 when west-bound through traffic no longer thundered through the centre of our village, but was re-routed along Rossiter Road. If you enjoy sunny days at pavement bars and cafés, that's why.

The WA continues as a residents' association, commenting on planning, environmental and traffic issues and representing residents to the city council. It also organises a whole range of community events such

as talks, meetings, and craft events, many of which are held on the premises of the WSC. The WA is also an umbrella for groups as diverse as cycling, gardening, and singing. Finally, it produces this twice yearly magazine, which is delivered to homes in Widcombe.

Meanwhile, the WSC developed its current modern, spacious building which opened in 2016 and hosts lots of community groups including, of course, the Widcombe Association.

Something they have in common is they are both non-profit organisations, run by volunteers. WA volunteers run the events, carry out litter-picking and guerrilla gardening. WA relies solely on subs, plus advertising revenue from this magazine.

The WSC receives some grants and, of course, there is revenue from venue hire, ticket and bar sales. There is a small paid staff team and a committee of volunteers.

At time of writing, the WA has 713 members including 69 business members. The WSC has 345 members. Of course, many people are members of both and both welcome non-members to events.

Benefits to membership include priority booking and discounts and knowing that you are making a contribution to the well-being of our community.



Widcombe Association committee meeting attended by volunteers from both the WA and the WSC

WA raises concerns over plan

The Widcombe Association has reservations about the impact on our area of the council's Movement Strategy.

Mark Snell reports.

Readers who follow the council's website (banestransport.co.uk), and may have contributed to the consultations on its – now adopted – Movement Strategy, may well have recognised the focus on the key routes through the city including the A36 which is designated a 'primary strategic route' for general traffic and freight.

As the A36 is designated as the only principal east-west route through the city, we can see the already-congested situation only getting worse, with a rise in atmospheric pollution, and see no mitigating measures that would alleviate this.

Allied to this is the potential threat coming from the intention to carry out further restoration works on the Cleveland Bridge. Since the establishment of a lower weight limit on the bridge, there has been a significant

reduction in heavy lorries passing along A36 through Widcombe. The additional strengthening works to the Cleveland Bridge could open up the possibility of removing the current weight limit of 18 tonnes. To quote the plan: 'To maintain the economic importance of the primary and major routes, further works will be required in the near future to ensure the structural integrity of Cleveland Bridge and safeguard this historic bridge for future generations. This would support cleaner electric buses and in turn unlock place shaping opportunities in areas currently used by heavy through-traffic (eg Queen Square).'

The WA has strongly urged the Council to commit to the retention of the current weight limit, and we will continue to watch for any hints that the Council plans to revisit this.

Countdown to the new Rec

Jan Shepley reviews some controversial development plans.

The construction of a permanent 18,000-seat stadium at the Rec is set to start at the end of the 2026/27 rugby season next summer. The objective is to provide a year-round community venue that secures the long-term financial future of the club, which lost £2.78 million last year. The work and the end result will affect everyone in the city, but none more so than those living close by in Widcombe and Bathwick.

The plan is to rebuild the stadium through a phased construction approach so Bath Rugby can continue playing there. The work should be completed within three years, although the timeframe could be affected by the resolution of outstanding issues.

The planning permission allows for 77 events a year of over 1,000 visitors. The new riverside bars and restaurants permitted within the stadium building may be open every day and the impact this will have on existing businesses in the centre of the city will only become apparent over time.

The Section 106 Agreement, still to be finalised, is expected to secure improvements to community sports facilities – largely on Bath Rec Ltd's land – as well as to the riverside path. This agreement will also cover

improvements to traffic and parking arrangements, particularly on match days.

For now, there is little information about what

mitigation measures might be put in place to protect local residents affected by noise and transport disruption. There is also scant reference to measures dealing with safety and security, or provision for disabled access. In addition, a number of trees on the site are to be removed and plans for replanting are unclear. References to Park and Ride provision will also need to be clarified, as will details in relation to flood risk assessment and an effective flood evacuation plan, given the proximity of the often-overflowing Avon River.

The WA will continue to monitor this developing project closely on behalf of affected residents.

Many thanks to Jan, who is stepping down after 14 years reporting on planning issues to the WA.



Ward news

Ward councillors **Alison Born** and **Stuart Bridge** review the council's priorities in Widcombe.

Speeding traffic continues to be an issue in Widcombe and there is always much to report on the subject.

The remaining planned calming measures on Widcombe Hill will be installed soon, as will a new crossing just below The Tynning, which is part of the Church Street Liveable Neighbourhood scheme.

We have also received requests for additional measures in the Claverton Down Road section at the top of the hill and other areas where speeding remains a problem. These have been passed to the Highways team for review. In addition, we are arguing for Bath University to fund traffic calming measures and a crossing on Claverton Down Road as a condition of planning permission for new halls of residence on its campus.



Alison Born



Stuart Bridge

Turning to Prior Park Road, we are also pushing for pedestrian crossings at the end of Church Street and near the White Hart junction.

The council has implemented a 20mph limit on North Parade Road and Rossiter Road east of the Travelodge and we are arguing that the limit should be extended along to the bottom of the Wells Road following a fatality near Halfpenny Bridge in October 2025.

In other news, we are delighted that progress is finally being made on upgrading the canal towpath from Bathwick Hill to Abbey View. This section will reopen in time for summer and there are plans to upgrade the section from Abbey View to Deep Lock in the autumn.

We have received fewer reports of antisocial behaviour in recent months. An old school site near St Mark's Community Centre which was a meeting point for drug users has been boarded up, which will certainly have helped. We will work with the police to hold more Beat surgeries in the coming months and to monitor and respond to antisocial behaviour which tends to increase over the warmer months of the year.

A British Heart Foundation (BHF) temporary donation bank has been placed at the end of the Parade by the Student Community Partnership (SCP) which works closely with the council.

They aim to encourage charitable donation, reducing what goes into landfill as students move out of their properties and donation banks will be in place for three months across the city. In 2025 alone, the Bath campaign raised £208,920 and diverted 111 tonnes of material for reuse and recycling. The donation banks are monitored by the SCP and emptied regularly. Any feedback about the donation banks should be directed to scp@bath.ac.uk.



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Pinch, prune and snip for summer-long success

John Leach plans for busy days in the garden.



Summer has arrived and our gardens are looking plump and perky, with plenty of colour and harvests of veg and fruit repaying the spring time labours. However, no time to rest on laurels as a little attention now will keep the garden fresh into the autumn.

It is good practice to tour your garden once a week with a pair of secateurs in hand and deadhead summer bedding plants and herbaceous perennials to ensure continuous flowering. Pinch out the tips of fuchsias and petunias for bushier growth, snip salvias and roses to encourage new blooms. It also gives you a chance to check for bugs and beasts.



Newly planted roses, shrubs and trees should have a thorough watering once a week even if there is light rain. This can greatly improve establishment and is far more effective than a daily sprinkle.

Spring flowering perennials such as pulmonaria and early varieties of geraniums should be cut back very hard after flowering to encourage a fresh flush of foliage and often a late burst of flower. They will thank you for a light fertiliser dressing. Summer pruning of wisterias to encourage flowering involves cutting back the long vigorous shoots to a couple of buds to encourage the development of short flowering spurs that will produce the flower buds.



This is the crucial time to be about with a ball of garden string. Tying up the very vigorous growth made by rambler roses will not only keep things tidy but also enhance next year's display. Blackberries and hybrid berries also need firm control, tying in to strong supports. Perennials that have become top heavy can be supported with string and stakes, but a more attractive option is to push twiggy shoots amongst the stems for a more attractive effect. Clematis and honeysuckle often benefit from a little encouragement to grow in the desired direction.

If you are a vegetable grower and suffer from onion fly on leeks and carrot root fly the best control method is to grow under a tunnel of Environmesh, and make sure that you grow in an area where they didn't grow last year. The nasty little maggots that make their way into apples and plums can also be controlled organically with the use of pheromone traps which ideally are set out in May, but are certainly worth using in June.

Happy gardening.



Feed the birds

Morwenna Alldis of the RSPB, summarises the charity's new guidance for bird feeding through the summer.

There is a worrying decline in some of our much-loved garden birds due to trichomonosis. This highly contagious disease spreads where birds gather in large numbers such as at bird feeders.

During summer and autumn, there's a higher risk of disease spreading, and it's also the time when there are more natural foods available to birds, such as seeds and insects. So, a good moment to adjust bird feeding, following these simple steps.

- There's a higher risk of the disease spreading on flat surfaces so bid a fond farewell to feeders that have a flat surface, including bird tables.
- Pause filling your bird feeders with seeds or peanuts, but continue to offer small amounts of mealworms, fatballs, or suet.
- Give your feeders a good clean at least once a week and place feeders in a different spot after each clean to prevent the build-up of contaminated debris below them.
- Only offer water if you're able to change it every day and use tap water. Bird baths should be cleaned once a week.
- There are other ways to attract and feed birds, of course. Fill your outdoor space with bird-friendly plants – such as sunflowers, honeysuckle, raspberries and blackberries, rowan, teasels and ivy, all natural food sources for birds.



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- Me-time

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Explore our glorious trees

The council's new series of 15 walks showcases Bath's wonderful variety of trees. Widcombe resident **Stewart Owen** highlights the finest on Tree Trail J which runs from Claverton Street to Alexandra Park and beyond.



Copper Beech

Tree Trail J, the Beechen Cliff Clamber, starts and finishes at the bottom of Lyncombe Hill. It goes along to Holloway, then back along Calton Gardens before passing through the woods on Beechen Cliff. It then follows the extended but least strenuous route up to Alexandra Park, then downhill across Lyncombe Hill Fields to return down Lyncombe Hill. A preliminary survey of the route identified at least 70 types of trees on the walk, but there was only space for 20 in the illustrated trail guide so there are plenty of opportunities for observant walkers to add to the trail guide list. The trees vary widely in size and age, from those planted in Victorian times to trees planted in the last 50 years. Many have thrived, but a few have been less successful – planted in the 'wrong' place so affecting buildings, or damaged by disease such as Ash dieback or suffering from changing weather patterns.



Judas tree blossom

Some trees are particularly notable: the huge copper beech in Magdalen Gardens, the elegant deodar cedar in Southcot Place, the snake-bark maple in Holloway, the pretty, late-spring, pink flowers of the Judas tree by St Mary's Chapel in Holloway (one of the oldest trees in Bath), the large cones and purplish bark of the single Maritime Pine in Alexandra Park, the mature Wych Elm in Lyncombe Fields that has avoided the ravages of Dutch Elm disease, and the stunning autumn colour of the narrow-leaved ash by the play area in Calton Road.



Deodar Cedar

The walks are free to download at www.bathurbantreescape.com.
Printed leaflets are available at Prior Park Garden Centre.

Nigel Dando

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Garden centred

As he heads off to enjoy a well-earned retirement, **John Leach** reflects on 50 years at the helm of the Prior Park Garden Centre.

In the late summer of 1974, I was invited to an interview in an office in Railway Place, almost opposite Bath Spa railway station. That meeting changed my life.

My wife Judith and I were living in Bath. I had been working for two years at a large garden centre following graduation from university where I read Horticulture and she Agriculture.

We had become friends at church with the legendary Fred Daw's son, John. Fred Daw - along with Geoff Clarkson and his son Alan, and Bill Mannings - had plans to build a garden centre in Prior Park Road. At that interview I was offered the position of manager of a garden centre that hadn't yet been built.

The centre, a wooden building about the size of a classroom, opened in late 1974 with an official opening with Percy Thrower in spring 1975.

Initially, there were just three members of staff - Fred Daw as managing director, myself and Paul Willis - my colleague and friend for over 40 years. Five years later, Fred Daw retired and I took over as managing director.

The business grew and in the early 1990s we were granted planning permission to extend the centre with a new building. We also landscaped the site, planting dozens of trees and shrubs that are now such a feature of the area.

In 2010 our original building was demolished and replaced with a new building with a planted roof - now our pet department and café.

Over the past 51 years we have given employment to hundreds of people. Several weekend students became wonderful full-time staff.



We've often received comments from our visitors, who arrive here with their families and say: 'I worked here when I was 17'. We have gone from three members of staff to over 30, and many have been part of the garden centre family for a very long time.

Just inside the main gate of the garden centre there is a magnificent weeping beech tree. Paul Willis and I planted that tree 50 years ago. As I bow out into retirement I am very proud of that tree, and what I believe is really a rather special garden centre.

Such great folly

Jonathan Holt, editor of *Follies* magazine, laments the loss of Prior Park Landscape Garden's many fine follies and guides us to those that remain.



Gothic Temple at Rainbow Hill

The landscape features we see today in the 18th century gardens of Prior Park are just a fraction of what there used to be, for neglect, weather and vandalism have taken their toll. The most prominent is of course the Palladian Bridge, copied by Richard Jones, Ralph Allen's clerk of works, around 1735, from the first such bridge in Britain at Wilton House. It is one of only four Palladian bridges in the world, and has perfect detail down to the Ionic columns, pulvinated frieze, Venetian balusters, pediments and stucco.

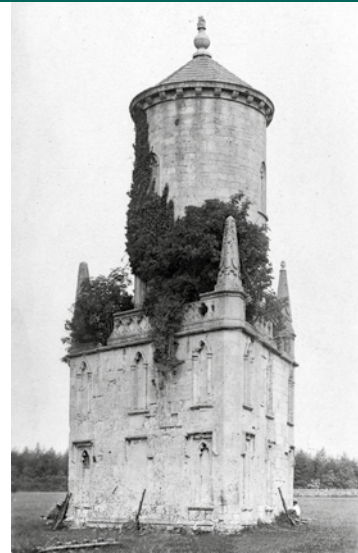
The buildings that suffered sad fates were the Dairy House, the



Palladian Bridge Prior Park

Thatch'd House and the Cold Bath, of which few traces remain. Fortunately, the Gothic Temple was removed to Rainbow Hill House before it decayed too much. It has a short colonnade with three ogee (s-shaped) arches along its front, one similar arch on either side, and an ogee doorway and pointed-arch leaded windows. A low crenelation runs along the parapet, beneath which there is a decorative frieze.

After Allen's death, his niece Gertrude inherited the estate, and her husband Bishop William Warburton ordered the construction of Ralph Allen's Monument. It stood for many years



Ralph Allen Monument

in Monument or "Monny" Field to the south-east of the mansion. The triangular base was probably a reference to the Holy Trinity. On each corner of the base was a pinnacle between which was a parapet pierced with quatrefoil openings, and a round tower, with 75 steps, rose another two floors to a conical roof and ended with an ornate pinnacle.



Gothic Temple in Prior Park

The monument became associated with Bishop Warburton to the extent that it was often called 'Bishop Warburton's Tower', even though he soon left Prior Park to become Bishop of Gloucester. As with the other follies, it soon started to crumble and by 1953 not a stone remained.

Pausing on the Grave Trail

Jeremy Boss lingers at Grave 3 on the Abbey Cemetery Grave Trail to recount the story of George Augustus Robinson's treatment of Aboriginal Tasmanians during the Black War in Tasmania.

George Augustus Robinson's final years in a fine house on Widcombe Hill and his burial in an unassuming grave in Bath Abbey Cemetery belie his career in Tasmania as Protector of the Aborigines – a career that earned him the sobriquet of Black Robinson.

Of humble origins, Robinson had been a bricklayer and self-taught preacher in London. He married in 1848 and had seven children, but financial scandal forced him to flee to the farthest reaches of the Empire, followed later by his family.

Robinson landed on Van Diemen's Island (modern day Tasmania) at a time of open conflict between European settlers and traditional owners. The Government's solution was to relocate the Aboriginal population to island reservations and in 1829 Robinson accepted a job as Protector of Aborigines on Bruny Island. By January

1830, disease had decimated the settlement and it was closed. Undeterred, a new one was established on Flinders Island in 1835 and Robinson undertook many expeditions across Tasmania to contact and bring in remaining Aboriginal groups. He learned the Aboriginal language and recorded details of the local tribes in his journals.

On Flinders Island, Robinson presided over the death of Aboriginal Tasmanians in his care from disease and the harshness of the regime. When the settlement was abandoned in 1847, fewer than 50 returned to the mainland where settlers had annexed their lands and they were hunted to almost complete extinction.

Returning to England a widower, Robinson married his second wife and had a further six children, settling in Widcombe in 1859. He had collected many objects,



artworks and human remains from the Aboriginal Tasmanians and his journals provide some of the most important accounts of European settlement in Tasmania, the Aboriginal Tasmanians and their persecution.

The Abbey Cemetery Grave Trail can be found at <https://www.widcombeassociation.org.uk/resources/local-history-pamphlets->

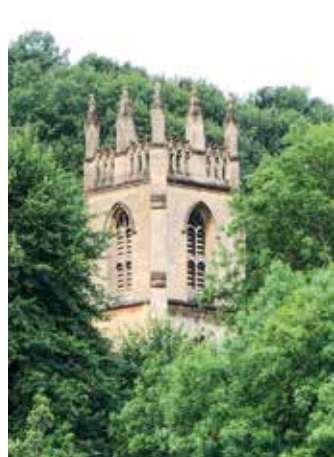


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Hooray for the holidays

Plan ahead for the summer break with some of our favourite activities around Bath, put together by local parent **Laurel Sims**.



Go wild outdoors

Pack a picnic (or grab the wellies!) and burn off some energy in the fresh air. We love:

- Smallcombe Vale and Wood
- Rainbow Wood on Claverton Down
- Under the trees in Henrietta Park
- Watching the squirrels in the botanical gardens at Victoria Park

Take on a challenge

Banish boredom and set your child a challenge - or why not try them as a family together!:

1. Write a letter to your future self. Seal it.
2. Find your way to an address using only a printed map. No phone.
3. Have a day with no technology.
4. Learn to juggle three objects.
5. Fillet a fish. Then cook it.
6. Make and cook your own pasta from scratch.
7. Learn to say hello, thank you and goodbye in five languages.
8. Interview an adult about their life. Write 200 words about them.
9. Create a board game from scratch. Teach the family to play.
10. Learn to read a map of the sky. Find at least one constellation.



Chill out

Make a dozen delicious strawberry milk lollies.

You'll need:

- 400g ripe strawberries
- 200ml semi-skimmed milk
- 405g can light condensed milk

Plus: food processor, 12 ice lolly moulds, 12 lolly sticks, freezer!

Method:

- Hull the strawberries and blitz in a food processor
- Mix in milk and condensed milk and blitz again
- Pour the mixture into the ice lolly moulds and insert sticks
- Freeze for six hours or overnight, until firm
- To release the lollies from the moulds, dip briefly in hot water
- Enjoy!

Don't let rain stop play

These Bath heroes offer family-friendly indoor events and activities all year round:

- The Holburne Museum (holburne.org)
- Victoria Art Gallery (victoriagal.org.uk)
- No.1 Royal Crescent (no1royalcrescent.org.uk)
- Herschel Museum of Astronomy (herschelmuseum.org.uk)

Dates for your diary

Sat 27 June – Widcombe Schools' Summer Fair

17-19 July – Bath Summer Fayre (city centre)

2-26 July – The Secret Garden @ The Egg, Theatre Royal



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Henley Regatta summer soup

As a cash-strapped student, I worked occasionally in event hospitality to earn a bit extra. In one of the VIP marquees at Henley Regatta, a guest complimented the chilled tomato and orange soup and asked me to find out what the recipe was – off I trotted to ask the (very scary) chef, who pointed at a carton of orange juice and a carton of tomato juice with the word: 'That'. I don't know what the guest thought, but I was delighted, and have used and embellished the 'recipe' loads of times. It's particularly useful when you have surprise visitors or you're pressed for time – I think you could serve it in under a minute.

You can absolutely use long life juice (as per the original) but nowadays I prefer fresh orange juice and tinned chopped tomatoes, but it's up to you and they all taste good. Also, start with the tomato element and add and taste the orange (you don't want it too sweet). Add black pepper and maybe some dry sherry, and garnish with finely chopped parsley, spring onions, fresh chillies, basil and mint, crème fraiche (or non-dairy equivalent), roast peanuts or anything you like!

Biddy Walcot

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A view from the field

In which **Zippy** writes the first (and possibly only) chapter in his definitive and scientific guide to animal identification.

Ola Widcombe! We have all very much enjoyed reading this issue of the Widcomberonian Magazine particularly the article on Bath Swan Rescue. Bungle thought a swan might be a shorter type of alpaca, but Bungle is not the sharpest hoof in the punnet so nobody took much notice!

However, on further reflection I thought it might be useful to put together a few tips on how to tell the difference between an alpaca and a (let's be honest – very similar looking) swan.

As you can see from the pictures, swans and alpacas both have long necks. They are both – in this instance – roughly the same colour – although you do get brown alpacas – and brown swans. Swans have legs – and so do alpacas. So far, as you can see, the alpaca and the swan must be quite closely related.

Crucially though, alpacas do not understand swans. We're fine with vicunas and even uncouth llamas, but swans speak a totally different language. I rest my case – you can tell which of us is a swan by asking us a question. If you can't understand the answer, we're a swan.



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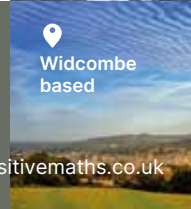
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