BROOKWOOD NEWS

April 2026

COUNCIL UPDATE FROM CLLR LESLIE RICE

We have had a couple of meetings on a Neighbourhood Forum and community representation and, hopefully, we are finding a way forward.

With the elections for the new West Surrey Council due on 7 May, a couple of things spring to mind that I would also like to mention. Firstly, there are two candidates for each ward, and that means we will all have two votes. Secondly, there is concern that the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation will reduce the number of councillors in Woking from 37 (30 WBC and 7 for SCC) to 14 for West Surrey, which is a 60% plus reduction. Along with many others, I am very concerned at this loss of community representation. One possibility is for Parish Councils to be formed, which is being proposed in Pyrford. Brookwood has a number of community groups and one possibility is to bring these closer together for better representation. There is a separate article on what might be suitable for Brookwood, but please contact me at CllrLeslie.Rice@woking.gov.uk or on 07932 700586, if you have any questions.

BROOKWOOD VILLAGE VOICE

Brookwood Village Voice is a new community group for anyone who wants to play a part in Brookwood's future. It aims to bring together residents, businesses and interest groups from across the village, so local priorities can be shared more clearly and taken forward more effectively. That feels especially important now. As Leslie notes in his article, local government reform will mean fewer councillors representing our community. That makes it even more important for our village to speak clearly and with confidence, so decisions affecting our area are not shaped elsewhere. The group has already held its first meeting, where it discussed the hard work underway to upgrade the playground in Connaught Crescent. It is a great example of what can be achieved when we come together around a shared goal. To help shape what happens next, Brookwood Village Voice is launching a community survey. This is a chance for you to tell us what you would love the group to focus on. You can complete the survey using the link below or by scanning the QR code at the end of this item.

The next meeting is on Wednesday 29 April, 7pm, in Brookwood Memorial Hall Committee Room. Everyone is warmly encouraged to join. The survey results will be shared, and the next steps discussed. If Brookwood Village Voice is going to work, it will only be because people across the village take part, speak up and help shape what comes next. This is the moment to get involved.

Please contact Leslie at CllrLeslie.Rice@woking.gov.uk if you have any questions.

Ed Thomas

EDITORIAL

There has been a great deal of talk about Artificial Intelligence recently and many of us are saying that we don't want anything to do with it and are highly suspicious as to how it might change our lives. I recently went to a talk about AI where the speaker was explaining that it is a tool we can use to make our lives easier and that we need to embrace the change, rather than pretend it isn't happening. So, feeling a little more positive, I have attempted to write an article using AI and the result, I must admit, is amazing and saved so much time. See if you can guess which item in this newsletter it is! I hope you enjoy reading this edition which has mostly been put together and distributed by real humans.

Yvonne Craven – Editor

Brookwood Village Voice — Tell us what matters to you

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BROOKWOOD ART GROUP

Spring? Yes please! At last nature wakes up, birds build nests with purpose, trees come alive, flowers brighten the scene, and humans feel moved to spring clean (maybe), even move house or book a holiday. Perhaps you feel a bit restless and need to do something different. So what about joining a local art group? You may have done a bit of art at school but, since then, with other demands on your time you had to let it go. You probably live in, or within reach of Brookwood, and if you are free on Friday mornings then this could be for you. There is opportunity to join in with workshops, or learn various new techniques from visiting artists who inspire us with demos. It can be therapeutic and uplifting to focus on something creative, taking you away from the news which, let's face it, can be quite overwhelming these days. If you happen to be a newcomer to the area, this could be a great way to meet like-minded people and make new friends. Exciting things are lined up for 2026, so if you fancy trying out our friendly, welcoming group, please let us know. No charge for a taster, so you have nothing to lose. Friday mornings, Memorial Hall, Brookwood (Art.brookwood@outlook.com; 07775 297938; www.brookwoodart.wordpress.com)

Miriam Wakerly

MEMORIAL HALL AGM

Louise, Maria and the management team at Brookwood Memorial Halls would like to invite you to join us for our AGM on Monday 20 April at 8pm in the Committee Room (off the large hall). If you've attended a party, learned to dance or trained your puppy there, join us to find out what has been going on and our thoughts for the future. If that's not exciting enough, there will be wine and nibbles!

If anyone is interested in supporting the hall in any way we'd love to hear from you, so why not pop along and meet our super team?

25th PIRBRIGHT PLANT SALE

Come and join us in Pirbright churchyard on Saturday 9 May, 11am to 2pm, to celebrate 25 years of the church plant sale. There will be lots of healthy homegrown annuals, perennials, veg plants and hanging baskets for you to purchase, along with some rather tasty home-baked cakes, barbecue hot dogs (using Fulks sausages), a garden paraphernalia stall with items you never thought you needed, and try your luck on the tombola stall. Tea and coffee will be served all morning. All proceeds go to Pirbright Church.

Helen Whitworth

MAGIC MOMENTS AT BROOKWOOD WI

In March, Brookwood WI celebrated its 73rd birthday. The committee and members got together and celebrated with a meal in the large hall, where we were entertained by Magic George with some close-up magic. George grew up in the village, and his mum Margaret still lives here, so it was lovely to have a familiar face return. George managed to wow us all and we were left spellbound and unable to work out how the magic tricks were done. It was a wonderful opportunity for the members to get together and reminisce about past meetings.

We are continuing to keep it local with the next meeting in April when Neville Broyd, another well-known local resident, will be giving us a talk on his years as a local teacher and a demonstration. Brookwood WI meets on the third Tuesday of each month in the small hall, 7.30pm. If you'd like to find out more, please pop along on 21 April.

Chris Duffield and Maureen Gray

HOW CAN WE HELP OUR PRICKLY NEIGHBOURS?

The hedgehog is one of Britain's most familiar and well-loved wild animals, yet it is sadly in decline. Studies suggest that hedgehog numbers have dropped significantly across the UK in recent decades, with habitat loss, busy roads and changes to gardens all contributing to the problem. Today, fewer than one million hedgehogs may remain nationwide, and in some areas they have disappeared entirely.

Despite these challenges, villages like Brookwood can play an important role in helping hedgehogs survive. Hedgehogs thrive in places with connected gardens, hedgerows and green spaces where they can find food and shelter. A single hedgehog may travel up to two kilometres in one night while searching for insects such as beetles, caterpillars and worms. However, there are several simple things that we can do to help:

- Create "hedgehog highways" by leaving a small gap (around 13 cm) at the base of fences so hedgehogs can move safely between gardens.
- Leave some areas a little wild, with log piles, leaves or longer grass to provide insects and shelter.
- Avoid pesticides and slug pellets, which can poison hedgehogs or kill the insects they depend on for food.
- Provide a shallow dish of water, especially during warm or dry weather.
- Check bonfires, long grass or shrubs before strimming or lighting, as hedgehogs may be resting inside.

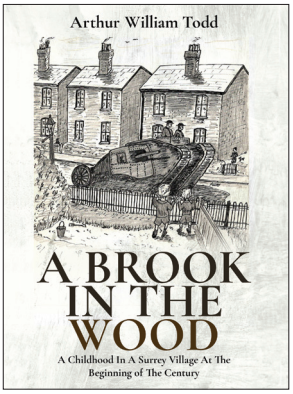
Local organisations such as Surrey Wildlife Trust also encourage residents to record hedgehog sightings, helping conservationists understand where these animals are still active and where protection is most needed. With small changes to our gardens and a little community effort, Brookwood can become a safer place for hedgehogs. If you are lucky enough to spot one on a summer evening, consider it a sign that your garden is helping to support one of Britain's most charming wild residents.

BOOK REVIEW, 'A BROOK IN THE WOOD'

A childhood in a Surrey village at the beginning of the twentieth century by Arthur William Todd

The newsletter team was recently contacted by David Todd who had found his father's notes and stories about his childhood growing up in Brookwood and has published them. He thought we would be interested in reading the book and telling residents about its existence. Jane Pettinger has kindly reviewed the book which is available on Amazon for £8.50.

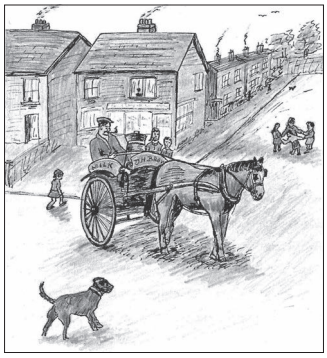
At a recent book club meeting, I was told of a memoir written by Arthur Todd (known as Will) of his childhood in Brookwood. As



someone interested in local and social history, this immediately piqued my interest. Will moved to Brookwood aged about three in 1911, when his father gained employment in the cemetery as a mason. He tells us, with a very good eye for detail, of our village at that time: the canal and the lock keepers' cottages, the shops, including the Post Office and its deaf Postmaster, and the sweet shop when your halfpenny could buy you an "Everlasting Strip" of black liquorice. Vivid descriptions of the weekly clothes washing routine, baths in the copper pot and the excitement of listening to his friend's gramophone bring home "How We Used to Live".

Will also explains his experience of Brookwood school. He tells of the separate playgrounds for boys and girls, being a monitor who rang the school bell and the teacher who "was a deft hand with the cane." And did you know of the "Halfpenny Bridge" across the canal? If you weren't a resident and didn't have the guile of Will and his mates, you had to pay for the privilege of crossing it, apparently!

He gives a child's eye view of the First World War and the impact this has on the village, mentioning seeing the squads marching, hearing the soldiers on manoeuvres and



when the first tank came down Connaught Road. Poignantly, he also describes the many military funerals in the cemetery, of the "rows and rows of little crosses," how some were without names and, "We would put little bunches of wildflowers on them."

Perhaps best of all are the "folk art" style illustrations of the houses, school, bridges, and canal that accompany his writing, all of which are scenes easily recognisable.

So, overall, for those who value Brookwood village life today, this is an interesting glimpse of what it was like to live here 100 years ago.

Jane Pettinger

MEMORIAL GARDENING

The small team of volunteer gardeners for the station memorial garden were delighted to see that the newly planted trees and shrubs have all survived the winter and are budding and sprouting profusely in the recent lovely spring weather. The aim of the Brookwood team is to keep the garden looking neat and tidy until we can establish how the plants are developing, in particular the wild flower planting by the contractors around the perimeter. Meanwhile, the daffodil display is delightful. This month the team were asked to check everything was presentable ready for a small memorial service for a railway colleague, which we were pleased to do.

Sue Gale and Brenda Dyer

BROOKWOOD CEMETERY SOCIETY WALKS

Sunday 12 April, 2pm (note this is the second Sunday due to Easter). Booking is essential via walks@tbcs.org.uk or phone 07714 289375. A donation of £7.50 will secure a place, and includes refreshments at the Lodge. Meet at the Society Lodge adjacent to the Cemetery Office.

Symbolism Walk

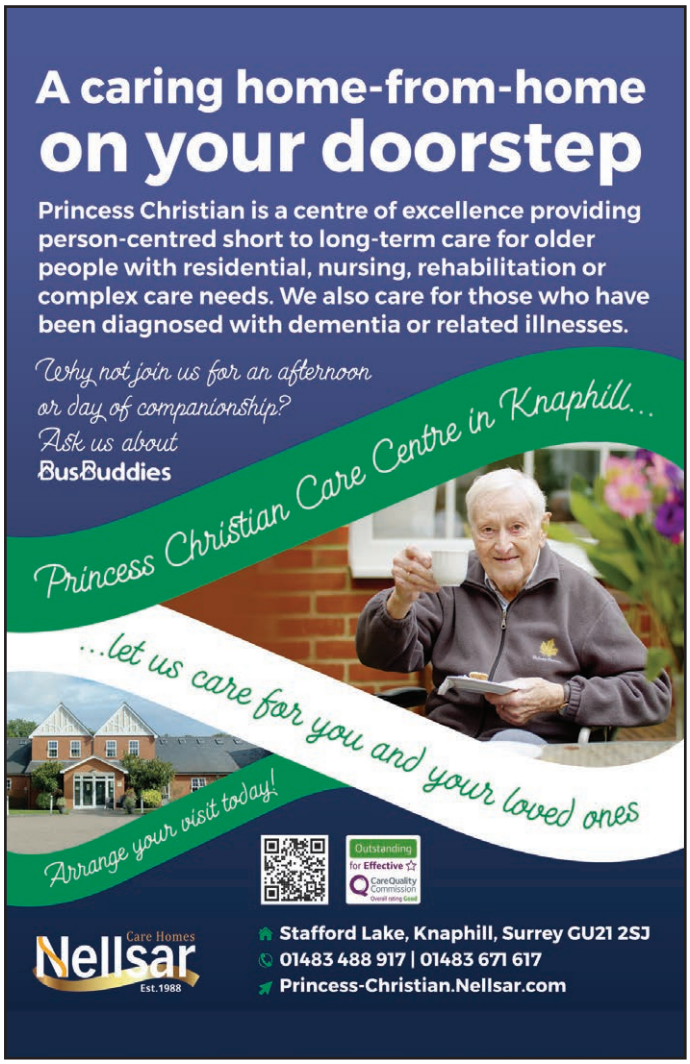
The Victorians placed great importance on symbolism on their graves to help the living mourn and ensure their loved ones went to heaven. Alison Vince is the guide.

London Churches in Brookwood
(new walk)

Jon Leech will lead a walk on the south side revealing the many and varied connections the cemetery has with London.

Local People – North Side
(new walk)

Kim Lowe will introduce a range of familiar and unfamiliar names of people who lived in and helped shape the local area.



CANAL SOCIETY NEWS

Maintenance work along the Brookwood stretch of the canal continues and last month, new gates were seen being loaded at Pirbright bridge and taken along the canal towards Brookwood crossroads.

In its 60th year, the Basingstoke Canal Society has many events and trips planned for Easter and throughout April, but the biggest event is a family friendly celebration at Boundary Road Recreation Ground in Woking on Saturday 18 April, 12–4pm. On the day, Kitty II, the new electric trip boat on the Canal, will be officially named, and there will be entertainment, live music and stalls from local charities, along with information about the history of the canal. Although walking distance from the town centre, you can take a ride on Kitty, which will be acting as a shuttle to the event from the town centre. Visit the website www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk for more information.

VILLAGE DIARY DATES

(also see the village website at www.brookwood.org.uk)

Every Sunday (not Easter Sunday)	Evening Service, 6pm, Woodhill Church (Connaught Rd)
Every Monday	Babies and Toddlers Playgroup, 9.45am, Brookwood Memorial Hall
Every Friday	Brookwood Art Group, 9.30am to 12.30pm, Brookwood Memorial Hall
Every Friday	Pop-up Coffee, 10am to 12pm, Woodhill Church (Connaught Rd)
Thursday 2 April	Maundy Service, 7.30pm, Woodhill Church (Connaught Rd)
Friday 3 April	Good Friday Reflection & Worship, 2–3.30pm, Woodhill Church (Connaught Rd)
Sunday 5 April	Easter Service, 10.30am, Woodhill Church, Knaphill
Sunday 12 April	Various walks (see article), 2pm, Brookwood Cemetery.
Saturday 18 April	Basingstoke Canal Society event, Boundary Road, Woking, 12–4pm
Monday 20 April	Memorial Halls AGM, 8pm, Committee Room
Tuesday 21 April	Brookwood WI meeting, 7.30pm, Small Memorial Hall
Wednesday 29 April	Brookwood Village Voice meeting, 7pm, Committee Room, Memorial Hall
Thursday 7 May	West Surrey Council elections
Saturday 9 May	Plant Sale, 11am to 2pm, Pirbright Church

BLUE PLUME

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NB: DEADLINE FOR MAY NEWSLETTER IS MIDDAY 20th APRIL 2026 preferably by e-mail to community@brookwood.org.uk or telephone 01483 480273 or a note through the door of 78 Connaught Road.

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