BROOKWOOD NEWS

September 2025

INCREASE IN OUTDOOR FIRES

A fire service has said that there has been a 200% increase in outdoor fires it has responded to compared with the same time last year. Surrey Fire & Rescue Service was called to 120 outdoor fires in June alone. As a result, the service has renewed its warning to residents to be aware and help prevent wildfires.

"We are encouraging residents to swap barbeques for picnics this season," a spokesperson said. He added: "The wider campaign, running all summer, aims to highlight wildfire risks in open spaces and how simple actions can help keep Surrey prepared. Outdoor fires can start easily and spread quickly, and, unfortunately, many are caused by barbecues that haven't been properly extinguished."

A wildfire on Hankley Common in July is estimated to have destroyed 2.6 hectares of common land. Another at Valley Wood Place, near Chobham Common, damaged one hectare of land – roughly the size of two football pitches.

Advice to the public offered by the service to prevent outdoor fires includes:

- **Avoid burning garden waste or starting bonfires**
- **Dispose of cigarettes properly**
- **Leave the area if you spot a fire and call 999**

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the September edition of Brookwood News. I hope you all survived the mini-heatwaves and are prepared for the ever-closer winter months. This time last year we were all talking about the cuts to the government winter fuel payments. This year there seems to be a U-turn. Most unusual for any Government to do that. It has been a great summer for sport so far, with the England ladies winning the Euros and a great Lions tour. The Red Roses will be kicking off their challenge for the women's rugby world cup, COME ON THE ROSES. With September comes the new school year, and we wish good luck to all our young Brookwood residents taking their first steps into education; we look forward to seeing them at the Christmas Fair. Oops, did I mention Christmas? Only 16 weeks to go – time to put the sprouts on. There seems to be no news on a Post Office opening up in the village and I'm unaware of any one applying for the sub-Post Office licence, but fingers crossed hopefully someone will take up the challenge. If you have any stories, events or news you would like to share, please send a copy or get in touch with us at community@brookwood.org.uk.

Graham Hunt – Editor

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WOODHILL CHURCH NEWS

Following the well-attended Bereavement Journey courses that have been held at Woodhill Church (formerly St Saviour's), over the past few years, a Bereavement Cafe is starting up on the first Thursday of the month for anyone who would like to come along to meet and talk with other people who are bereaved, over a cup of coffee and cake. This will be held in the church and the first one is on Thursday 4 September, 10.30am to 12pm. Please just drop in and join us if this is something you feel would be helpful and would like to come along to.

Bereavement Journey Course
There will also be a new Bereavement Journey course starting on Wednesday 8 October at Woodhill Church, Connaught Road, which runs for 7 weeks, and includes videos and the opportunity to talk to others, helping people who are bereaved, whether recently or many years ago, and are finding it difficult to adjust or cope with their situation. Please go to www.woodhill.church for further details about the course and to sign up to attend.

Church Clean Up Day
If you have any time to spare, we would be grateful for any help to tidy up the church on Saturday 20 September, from 9.00am to 1pm. Refreshments will be provided!

Evening Services
Starting Sunday 7 September, 6.30pm. A regular, informal, hour-long service with music and refreshments.

Lunch with Friends
Wednesday 24 September, 12 to 2pm. A way of meeting up with neighbours and friends over lunch, held once a month.
Please refer to www.Woodhill.Church for all the other services, information and events happening at both Woodhill Churches. We look forward to seeing you this autumn.

RED ROSES' POOL A FIXTURES

- England v USA – Friday 22 August, 7.30pm kick-off, Stadium of Light, Sunderland
- England v Samoa – Saturday 30 August, 5pm kick-off, Franklin's Gardens, Northampton
- England v Australia – Saturday 6 September, 5pm kick-off, Brighton and Hove Albion Stadium, Brighton and Hove

POST BOX VANDALISED

You may be aware that our central village post box is missing its main collection plate, which seems to have disappeared about 3 weeks ago. Nominally the post box is still in use, as the opening has not been sealed but can we be sure of this?

David Stonor

Reply from editor: It is disappointing that the front plate is missing, perhaps stolen? However, we have heard from a local lady, Rose, who lives in Eleanor Terrace, and who has spoken to the postman about it. He assured her that the post box is still in use. The collection time plate is also missing and has been for some time because it isn't the standard shape and can't easily be replaced. It is very old, and is a GR not an ER type. Rose has very kindly phoned and reported it, but it is a case of watch this space. Many thanks Rose

PLAYGROUP READY UP AND COOL DOWN FOR SUMMER

Thanks to the team of volunteers who have run Brookwood Babies and Toddlers Playgroup once again over the summer holidays, welcoming 5s and under with their grown-ups to the Brookwood Memorial Hall on Mondays throughout the summer break.

Because of the wonderful improvements made to the outside space at the large hall, there are plenty of shady gardens to explore as well as water toys on hot days. There are also two indoor spaces, with one for babies. Brookwood is so lucky to have this great facility - please do join them whilst your little ones are still little! Email brookwoodbabies@gmail.com for more information.

WINTER FUEL PAYMENT UPDATES

In June 2025, the government announced that, for 2025/26 onwards, winter fuel payments will be made to all pensioners in England and Wales. However, the payments made for 2025/26 will be recovered in full by HMRC from pensioners with a total income of more than £35,000. For those on higher incomes, there will be an option to decline the payment to avoid future tax adjustments.

The Winter Fuel Payment is available to those who have reached State Pension age; for the 2025/26 tax year, this means individuals born on or before 21 September 1959. The amount payable will be between £100 and £300, depending on individuals' dates of birth and whether the benefit is a joint claim. Visit www.gov.uk>winter-fuel-payment for more information.

POISONOUS ALGAE CONTAMINATE BASINGSTOKE CANAL

Acting on Environment Agency advice, the Basingstoke Canal Authority has closed a stretch of the canal between Ash Lock and Greywell to all unpowered vessels until further notice. This includes canoes, kayaks, rowing boats and other crafts. Signs have been erected near the water's edge to alert people to the danger and warn against touching or entering the water. Blue-green algae occurs naturally but can cause skin rashes, eye irritation, vomiting, diarrhoea, fever, and muscle and joint pain. It is also dangerous for animals, and dog walkers are advised not to let pets drink or swim in the water.

A spokesman for the canal authority said that people should take extra precautions, such as washing their hands before eating or drinking, as well as contacting a doctor or vet if they or a pet becomes unwell. "We are monitoring the situation and warning signs are going up at all key access points along the Hampshire section of the canal," added the spokesman. "Further updates will be issued if the situation changes."

A spokesman for the Environment Agency said a sample of the water was passed to the agency on 29 April for analysis following suspicion that blue-green algae was present. "We looked at a sample and that came back as being above base levels for blue-green algae," he said. "We alerted the local canal authority, who have since acted on that information. It is an environmental health issue rather than a river health issue, which is why the canal authority is taking action."

BASINGSTOKE CANAL SOCIETY – BECOME A VOLUNTEER

As always, the Basingstoke Canal Society volunteers have been hard at work both on the canal with our working parties on Tuesdays and Saturdays, on our two trip boats, and behind the scenes too with lots happening over the summer.

Our 2026 calendar competition is now closed, but keep an eye on our socials and online shop for the 2026 calendar, planned to be released for sale in the coming months. We always see such great success with our calendar, and we hope this year is no different as we received some beautiful entries from the length of the canal, with many aspects of what we love about the canal captured: from activities to wildlife and from all four seasons, with the best images selected by our panel of judges who all take this important role very seriously.

If you're looking for an end of summer read we do already have plenty of good books in our online shop and available at events but volunteer, Neil Barton, has been writing a book all about the nature along the canal over the past months. We're hoping this will be on sale at the end of the summer; please look out for news of this on our website and in a future edition of Brookwood News.

During the August warm weather, our working party volunteers took the weed cutter to clear some weed from a stretch near Woodham. You may have spotted our volunteers out clearing weed near you recently. We work hard to keep the canal navigable for all.

We know we can't take the beautiful Basingstoke Canal for granted and of course we run many initiatives, like the calendar competition each year. Most recently our free wills month was a good success, with many appointment slots filled. We plan to repeat this event next year.

If you'd like to support us, then there are many ways to get involved:

- Donate via our website and help us protect the canal through helping to fund essential projects
- Become a member for as little as £15 per year and with your membership join many others in supporting the Society, receive a quarterly members' newsletter and receive a free space on our annual members' boat trips too
- Get involved and volunteer, help us to help the Canal!

If you don't already and are active on social media, please follow us and share our posts with your friends. You will see we're most active on Facebook, but we're also present on Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

FRIENDS OF PIRBRIGHT SURGERY – OPEN EVENING

On 15 September at 7.30pm in Lord Pirbright's Hall, Pirbright Surgery will host an information evening, sharing the latest news from the surgery and the NHS plus an update on the new triage appointment booking system.

Dr Ellie Atkins will join us to talk about how we can cope with the challenges of our children, families, and ourselves, when suffering from mental health issues such as anxiety and self-harm. She will also talk about autism. Her work puts her in a great position to be able to help us all cope with these issues. All are very welcome to join us.

BROOKWOOD CLUB

Bingo First Saturday of the Month
11th October Band , Goldsworth Gerry 8PM all welcome.

BROOKWOOD SCOUTS HOST MEMORABLE FAMILY CAMP

1st Brookwood Scouts recently held their biennial family camp, welcoming 30 families from Brookwood & Pirbright to Bentley Copse activity centre in Shere. One hundred people enjoyed a weekend packed with adventure and new experiences for everyone, with new friendships made and fears conquered by young and old alike.

Campers tackled activities like the exhilarating leap of faith, a jump from an 8-metre-high platform up in a tree. There were also familiar favourites like archery, crate stacking, adventure course and a zip line – a big hit with our youngest camper, 3-year-old Cameron! Saturday evening wrapped up with a traditional Scouts campfire, full of songs and skits to amuse and entertain.

This wonderful event, and indeed all of Scouting in our area, relies entirely on our small team of dedicated volunteer leaders. We urgently need more adult volunteers to keep our group thriving and ensure that local young people can continue to benefit from Scouting. If you can spare some time and would like to contribute to our community, please contact Joe at gslbrookwood@gmail.com. We'd love to hear from you!

VILLAGE DIARY DATES

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

Every Sunday
Evening Service, 6.30pm, Woodhill Church (Connaught Road)

Every Monday
Babies and Toddlers Playgroup, 9.45am, Brookwood Memorial Hall

Every Friday
Brookwood Art Group, 9.30am, Brookwood Memorial Hall

Every Friday
Pop-up Coffee, 10am to 12pm, Woodhill Church (Connaught Road)

Saturday 6 September
England v Australia women's rugby, Brighton and Hove Albion Stadium, 5pm

Monday 15 September
Friends of Pirbright Surgery open evening, 7.30pm, Lord Pirbright's Hall

Saturday 20 September
Church Clean Up Day, 9.00am to 1pm, Woodhill Church (Connaught Road)

Wednesday 24 September
Lunch with Friends, 12 to 2pm, Woodhill Church (Connaught Road)

Would you like to advertise in the newsletter?

The cost of advertising is £30.00. The advert will feature on the back of the newsletter and will be no less than a 1/4 of a page. We do not normally put advertising anywhere else in the newsletter. For more information on advertising please contact us on community@brookwood.org.uk

NB: DEADLINE FOR OCTOBER NEWSLETTER IS MIDDAY 20th SEPTEMBER 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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