BROOKWOOD NEWS

December 2025

BROOKWOOD SCHOOL

After the much needed half-term break, Remembrance Sunday approached, and Brookwood Primary School was proud to reflect on the contributions of its service children and families. With a deep understanding of the unique challenges faced when parents are deployed, these children come together weekly in the school's Military Club (led by school staff and the Army Welfare Service), a supportive space where shared experiences foster resilience and friendship.

In preparation for this year's Remembrance Service, the children created a wreath, which was laid at the local Military Remembrance Service on Sunday. This annual tradition is a meaningful moment for the school community, as staff and pupils gather to honour those who have served and continue to serve.

This time of year, our thoughts also go to Children in Need and by wearing Pudsey- or spot-themed clothes and accessories, we were able to raise £140 towards this very important cause.

We were also delighted to welcome into the school Steve Williams, a Welsh author now residing in Surrey. Steve, the writer of the hilarious and action-packed children's book Teachers vs Aliens vs the Kids, delivered a fun, interactive presentation for pupils in Years 1–6. During his visit, Steve talked about how he became an author, shared the inspiration behind his new book, and entertained the children with his trademark humour and storytelling.

Both the Remembrance activities and Steve Williams' visit reminded us of the importance of community, creativity, and reflection. At Brookwood School, we value opportunities that help our pupils learn, grow, and connect – whether through honouring those who served or being inspired by stories that spark imagination. Thank you to everyone who contributed to making these experiences so memorable for our children.

EDITORIAL

I hope you enjoy reading the wide variety of content this month and have found Brookwood News interesting throughout 2025. It takes quite a bit of work behind the scenes by a number of volunteers to produce Brookwood News and get it to you, so I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the team. The direct team includes editors, distributors, a proofreader, a graphic designer, website administrator and a treasurer. We couldn't produce the newsletter each month though without the help of Knaphill Print, Seymours our sponsor, our advertisers, and those who submit content each month. Their continued support is much appreciated.

Happy Christmas to everyone involved in making Brookwood News happen and to all our readers.

Like many others, the team is having a rest over Christmas so there won't be a January edition, but we'll be back in February with more local news. If you have any ideas on what we can include, are thinking about advertising or joining the team, please contact us at community@brookwood.org.uk.

John Power – Editor

CHRISTMAS MUSIC

The Octavian Singers present a programme of Christmas music at Woodhill Church, Brookwood, at 6pm on Saturday 20 December. They invite you to relax with a drink as they work through a selection of seasonal favourites; you are welcome to join in with a few!

There will be something for everyone with traditional carols telling the different episodes of the Christmas story, some festive solos and some familiar jazzy Christmas songs like "Winter Wonderland". Free entry with a collection at the end.

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MORE CANAL TOWPATH CLOSURES

Access to the canal will be closed near the Esso garage on Bagshot Road until Christmas while the footbridge at lock 12 is replaced. Canal users are asked to cross the canal at the pedestrian crossing at the junction between Brookwood Lye Road and Bagshot Road. In addition the upper lock gates here are due to be replaced in February or March 2026. The work will take approximately a week and the towpath may be closed for brief periods whilst the gates are moved safely into position.

There will also be some repairs to lock 14, behind Lockswood, from January 2026 for a few weeks that may require brief periods of towpath closure to allow the work to proceed safely.

BROOKWOOD CEMETERY WALKS

The monthly guided walks provided by Brookwood Cemetery Society will start again in March next year. In the meantime the Society will be planning a programme of walks that will include old favourites as well as new additions. Walks usually start at 2pm from the Society's Lodge and have up to 20 people. A donation of £7.50 per person will secure your place.

The walks are very popular and get booked up quickly, so please see keep an eye on their website (tbcs.org.uk) and Facebook page as well as Brookwood News for updates and further details.

CAROL SINGING

St Michael and All Angels Church would like to invite you to community carol singing at 6pm on Friday 19 December in Pirbright churchyard. There will be festive refreshments to warm you, all your favourite carols to sing your heart out to, a visit from someone special, and all proceeds will go to Crisis at Christmas.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Brookwood WI has been very busy recently. In September we had a demonstration of alternative things we can do with flowers as a centre piece for a Christmas theme. It was a very interesting talk, with us all coming away feeling inspired by the simple but high-impact displays. Our Christmas tables are bound to be a talking point at this year's festive meals!

For November, some of our members worked hard to produce some wonderful figures as a post box topper in the village to commemorate Remembrance Day. We also had our AGM during which we were reminded just how much we have done this year and of some of the opportunities that our members have taken up. As we look forward to our Christmas party in December, 2026 promises to be another busy and inspiring year.

Over the last two months we have been pleased to welcome five new members into Brookwood WI. If you are interested in joining us, please feel free to come along and join us at 7.45pm on the third Tuesday of each month in the Small Memorial Hall.

THANK YOU PENNY

Penny will be a familiar face to those who shop in Wildflour Bakehouse and to many of us for a lot longer. However, Penny left last month to start a new career elsewhere in Brookwood.

Penny started working part time at the Bakers Dozen, as the shop was named then, in 2010. She went to full time as her daughter Maddison grew and joined Brookwood School, and the business grew to become our local café and bakery. In 2012, the shop became our local Post Office, so Penny was serving up a full English breakfast in between selling stamps and pricing parcels. In 2020 we all had our lives changed for some time as covid took hold. Overnight the café had to shut and was replaced with fruit, vegetables and other groceries. Penny says this was the most challenging period of her journey and for all of us in the village.

Penny has really enjoyed her time in the shop getting to know and help many people, especially when she was running the Post Office until it closed in 2024. I'm sure that we are all grateful for the help that Penny has provided over the years, will miss her welcoming smile, and wish her good luck in her new career.

GORDON'S SCHOOL MARCH

On the morning of Wednesday 22 October, several coaches pulled up outside Brookwood station, and pupils from Gordon's School began to pour out and prepare their instruments ready to set off on a 140th celebratory march back to the school on foot.

This was to mark the first time, in December 1887, 100 boys travelled to Brookwood station and marched, led by their band, to their new home at West End. By chance, I happened to be at the station and watched them move off in perfect time and with the delightful sounds of the pipe band playing. They walked down to Connaught Road, crossed Sheets Heath bridge and then followed the canal, marching and playing all the way.

Gordon's School is the national memorial to British war hero, philanthropist and martyr, Major-General Charles George Gordon (1833–1885), and was founded in 1885 when it began existence as 'Gordon Boys' Home' for disadvantaged boys aged 13–17 years. Queen Victoria demanded that a fitting national memorial should be created in Gordon's honour. The initial objective of the home was to teach boys vocational skills, but subjects became more academic after World War II. Regular drills, marches and parades instilled discipline in the boys. Signalled by bugle calls, the same as those used in the army, the boys would be called to meals, marches and parades.

The early full dress consisted of tartan trousers, a dark blue jersey embroidered with G.B.H. and a Glengarry cap with plaid band and Gordon badge, whilst the undress evolved into green cord clothing with brass buttons. The Home colour (flag) was donated by Dr Hope of Chobham, who was the Home doctor, and presented by Lady Elphinstone in 1895. In 1990 girls were included and the name changed to Gordon's School. The pupils are a great spectacle when they are marching, and regularly take part in parades in Whitehall and Guildford Cathedral.

Yvonne Craven

MITCH INTERVIEW

We mentioned in the last edition of Brookwood News that John "Mitch" Mitchell, the head coach of England women's World Cup winning rugby union team lives in Brookwood. Since then, Richard Johnson, a fellow editor of Brookwood News, has taken on the role of special correspondent and had the privilege and honour to interview one of Brookwood's most famous residents. Mitch was kind enough to answer questions for over two hours and the fascinating interview can be read in full on the village website (https://www.brookwood.org.uk/).

Here are some snippets to whet your appetite.

Mitch comes from a sporting family. His Mum was a very good sportsperson who played for the North Island basketball team in New Zealand and also coached. While he was at school Mitch had to decide whether to play basketball or rugby and chose basketball. However, when he left school he chose

to play rugby as an amateur and was the successful captain of the Waikato rugby team for a good stretch while working as a quantity surveyor. During this time his leadership skills were identified and he realised what he really wanted to do was to help people reach their full potential.

He started coaching with his club in Hamilton, and had to learn the skills and decisions needed by most team positions as he had only ever played as a number 8 in the forwards. His career progressed upwards and, following coaching the All-Blacks for the 2003 World Cup and club coaching positions, he became the defence coach for the England men's team in 2019 and then Japan's defence coach for the men's World Cup in Japan. He was appointed as the England women's rugby head coach in May 2023.

Mitch has some great ideas about what is needed to enable the Red Roses to maintain consistency and reliability, and how they can evolve while maintaining their core. When pressed for a vision, it's probably to help this be the first England women's team to win back-to-back World Cups.

Please read the full interview for more detail on the above and to learn about Mitch's coaching mentors, rugby heroes, match day routines, hobbies and interests.

Finally, I'm sure we'd all like to thank Mitch for giving up his time to be interviewed and for all he has done for both the men's and women's rugby union game, and wish him every success in the future.

ROBIN HOOD PANTO IN PIRBRIGHT

Pirbright Players next production will be Robin Hood, a pantomime written and directed by Sharon Harrison. It will be a fantastic panto with superb songs, comedy, dancing and your favourite characters: the dashing Robin Hood, his Merry Men, the beautiful Marion, the evil Sheriff of Nottingham and his crazy henchmen. Will Robin overcome the Sheriff, bring justice to the Forest and find true love? Come and find out on Saturday 24 January at 2.00pm and 7.00pm, or Sunday 25 January at 2.00pm in Lord Pirbright's Hall. Tickets are £16 for adults or £8 for children aged 15 or under. Tickets are on sale now from our website (https://pirbrightplayers.spanglefish.org/).

BROOKWOOD ART GROUP

Since our Autumn update we had visiting artist, Karen Pearson, a much travelled lady whose last stop was running classes in Montenegro and before that Africa, who came to do a demo on pen and wash. Using watercolour and ink, she painted this autumn woodland scene. But as well as using pen and brush, she employed a stick! It was fascinating to see what interesting twists and shapes were created in a simple line, as in a tree trunk or branch. We look forward to her return in April when she will turn her hand, and possibly a twig, to running a workshop to help us produce a springtime scene.

We've just had our Christmas card competition with brilliant entries, and plans are afoot for our Christmas party, which involves no art apart from exciting announcements of various competition winners. More activities are being lined up for our Friday mornings in the Memorial Hall. Whether you are a newcomer to art, or experienced, please contact us at Art.brookwood@outlook.com if you fancy trying out our friendly, welcoming group. There is no charge for a taster, so you have no excuse!

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 to 12.30pm, Brookwood Memorial Hall
Every Friday	Pop-up Coffee, 10am to 12pm, Woodhill Church (Connaught Road)
Third Tuesday each month	Women's Institute, 7.45pm, small Memorial Hall
Friday 5 December	Christmas Fair, Brookwood School
Saturday 6 December	Christmas Trail, 4–6pm, Brookwood Memorial Hall
Sunday 14 December	Carols by Candlelight, 7pm, Woodhill Church (Connaught Road)
Saturday 20 December	Octavian Singers' Christmas Concert, 6pm, Woodhill Church (Connaught Road)
Wednesday 24 December	Puppets around the Crib, 4pm, Woodhill Church (Connaught Road)
Wednesday 24 December	Christmas Eve Communion, 6.30pm, Woodhill Church (Connaught Road)
Thursday 25 December	Christmas Day Celebration, 10.30am, Woodhill Church (Chobham Road)
Saturday 24 January	Robin Hood Pantomime, 2.00 and 7.00pm, Lord Pirbright's Hall
Sunday 25 January	Robin Hood Pantomime, 2.00pm, Lord Pirbright's Hall

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NB: DEADLINE FOR FEBUARY NEWSLETTER IS MIDDAY 20th JANUARY 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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