

SPRING 2026

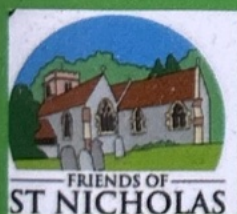
ISSUE 01

FRIENDS

Hurst Apiary:
Hive
talking

Meet

Hurst's Worthy
Maestro



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Editorial

Welcome to the very first edition of **Friends** magazine! The Friends of St Nicholas (FOSN) is a relatively new organisation that aims to preserve, maintain and improve our historic parish church and ensure that it remains a community asset for use by all for the foreseeable future.

This magazine fulfils two main purposes - firstly, through paid advertising from local businesses, we aim to raise funds that will help us meet the aims of FOSN. Secondly, we have a very local focus. Through that focus, we will help to highlight and promote the many and varied clubs, organisations and businesses in our fantastic community of Hurst.

We hope that you enjoy reading this and if you have any thoughts or suggestions please let me know. There will be 4 issues per year.

Spring is finally here and those grey, miserably wet days of January and February are finally behind us. I wondered if we should start building an Ark at one point!

So how are your New Year's resolutions going? Your editor vowed to hit the gym more often and to abstain from 'the dreaded drink' mid-week - so I have hit the rowing machine in frustration and am now trying to establish precisely when most people consider mid-week to be!

Apart from the some useful contacts, dates and information, we have two special features in this season's edition. Firstly, we meet up with Laurence Alkin. Laurence combines a busy sales job in 'tech' with bee-keeping! Secondly, we meet Simon Roberts. Simon is another Hurst resident who keeps his light hidden under a bushel - the world's biggest and best music festival down in Somerset could not happen without our Simon. We have talked to them both to find out more.

There is also an update on The Church Hill Pathway project - the first project launched by Friends of St Nicholas. We hope that you enjoy the magazine and find it useful. Please let us know what you think.

Issue Number 0001 Spring 2026

Copy for the Summer issue by Friday 12th June 2026
Editor: Mark Say - editorfosn@gmail.com / 07799 065762

Advertising enquiries to Steve Curnow - AdSalesFOSN@gmail.com

Friends magazine is published by The Friends of St Nicholas and is distributed free to every household in the parish. Copies are also available at £1.00 each from St Nicholas church, The Castle Inn pub and the Village Shop. Postal subscriptions within the UK are £15 per year. For details of subscriptions and advertising rates please contact Steve Curnow. Views expressed in the magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the editor nor the PCC. The publishers do not accept responsibility for products and services advertised within and reserve the right to refuse adverts at their sole discretion.

Front Cover: Dinton Pastures

Diary Dates - The Main Highlights Upcoming

Events in May 2026

Sunday 3rd May - Country & 'Cue Festival - 11:00am - 6:00pm

Dinton Pastures Country Park

A full day of family-friendly fun at Country & 'Cue, a lively celebration of Country culture, great food, music and hands-on entertainment!

Try your hand at line dancing and axe-throwing, cheer on friends in the hot wing challenge, or hang on tight to the rodeo bull!

With a dedicated children's fun zone, mouth-watering BBQ and street food vendors, bars, and a variety of stalls, there's something for everyone to enjoy!

Ticket includes entry to the event area. Enjoy free demos & live entertainment all day. Additional costs for activities.

Tickets - Adult £16, child £9

[Please note additional parking charges apply. To help reduce congestion around Dinton Pastures, we encourage visitors to walk, cycle, car-share or use public transport where possible. Pre-book your reduced car parking ticket for £5.00 per car.]

<https://www.wokinghamcountryside.co.uk/>

Saturday 17th May - Hurst Picnic: Hurst Community Orchard, Church Hill

From 1.30pm. Come along for an afternoon of relaxed family fun. Games, cakes and much more.

<https://nhvs.org.uk/>

Events in June 2026

6th & 7th June - The Great British Food Festival: 10:00am - 5:00pm

Dinton Pastures Country Park

A mouth-watering mix of the finest local and regional artisan producers, sizzling street food stalls, top chefs live on stage, bars, craft and gift stalls, children's entertainment, foraging walks, all set to the soundtrack of fantastic live music.

Tickets: <https://www.wokinghamcountryside.co.uk/>

Tuesday 23rd June: Storytime in the Cafe; 11:00am - 11:30am; Dinton Pastures Country Park

Come join us on the Coffee Deck for a delightful short story with Wokingham Libraries. We'll be reading from 11:00 to 11:30am - perfect for some mid-morning fun! Cost: Free

<https://www.wokinghamcountryside.co.uk/>

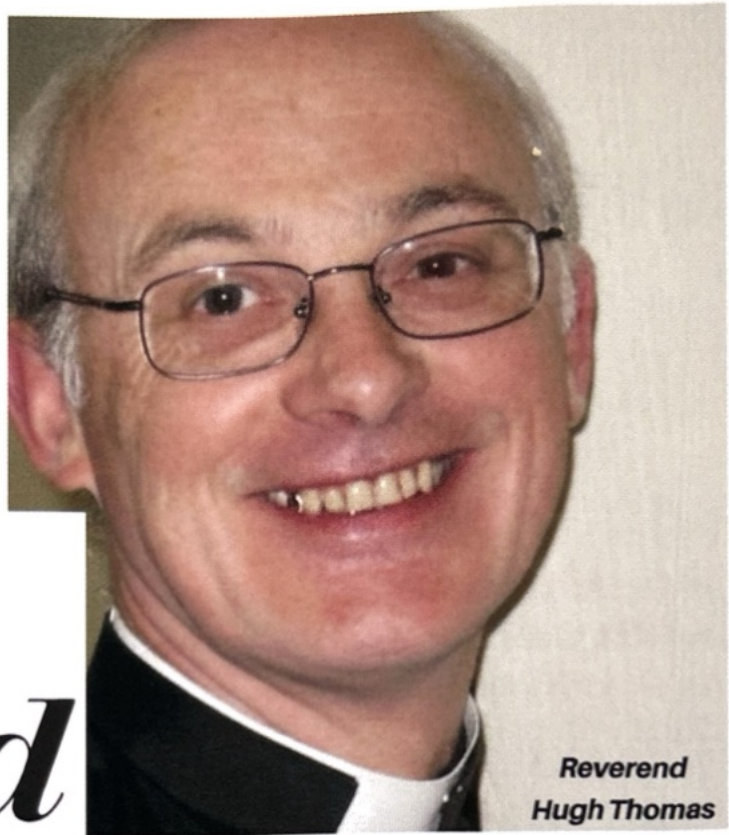
Saturday 27th June and Sunday 28th June: Hurst Show & Country Fayre

Details of events later on in this issue. See <https://hurstshow.uk/>

For all the latest, up-to-date goings on in and around Hurst, please go to the best source of local happenings - www.woodedhill.org

Details correct at time of going to press

Vicar's *World*



Reverend
Hugh Thomas

Welcome to this first edition of the ***Friends*** magazine!

When I started as the vicar here in Hurst last March, I was immediately struck by the amazing history of the church, which goes back to 1084 when the original part of the church was built.



In the last 942 years, the church has remained a consistent and stable symbol of the community and its faith through many wars and revolutions. It is somewhere that all in the village know, even if they only visit occasionally (more frequent visits are always encouraged!).

I strongly believe that a church should be a positive community asset to benefit all those in the parish. It is a great venue for music concerts, and St Nicholas Primary School regularly visit for their school services and other end-of-term events.

Over the centuries, the village community has supported the maintenance of the church and all its various extensions. It is fascinating to see how the additions all seem to merge, underlying the continuity of the building.

An ancient building and its ancient churchyard need constant maintenance to preserve this community asset for future generations. That was the genesis of the idea of the "Friends of St Nicholas". Some of the maintenance might be done by willing volunteers, whilst others need specialist tradesmen who are experienced in working on ancient buildings. None of that comes cheap! The hope is that the "Friends of St Nicholas" will be able to raise funds to supplement the church's own funds to ensure that such maintenance can happen whenever needed.

Whilst the church is an amazing ancient building, its location slightly away from the village centre is, perhaps, a shame. However, the church is at the top of the hill and so does not suffer from the floods that many other parts of the village face. The ancient builders knew where to build! Many of you may have seen the schoolchildren and others walking up Church Hill for events very carefully. Sadly, with the increase in the use of cars, this can be a challenging walk, as I have found on many occasions.

As a result, one of the first projects of the "Friends of St Nicholas" is the construction of a safe pathway from the village to the church. With the co-operation and agreement of four wonderful local landowners, plans are being drawn up, and permissions are being sought to build the path during the next year or so. It is believed, and feedback has confirmed, that this would be most welcomed by the village.



It will also provide a tangible example of the connection between the residential parts of the village and the ancient church from which it takes its name.

We will provide updates on the progress of this exciting first project for the "Friends of St Nicholas" later on in this issue.

So, thank you for opening and reading a copy of this magazine and hopefully supporting the local advertisers.

Hurst is a wonderful village with a unique ancient church that has supported the village community for 942 years. I hope that, with your help, the church will remain for future generations for another 942 years at least!

Many thanks, Hugh.

LOCAL FOLK: HIVE TALKING

*We meet Laurence Alkin, a resident of Hurst, a Friend of Saint Nicholas, and a local apiarist
...er...OK - beekeeper!*



Laurence collecting a local swarm

OK folks...a date for your diary - 20th May 2026 is...World Bee Day!!

The date commemorates the birthday of Anton Janša, a pioneer of modern beekeeping, and serves as a global reminder to appreciate and protect pollinators and their critical role in nature. World Bee Day was officially recognised by the United Nations in 2017, thanks to the efforts of Slovenia, a country with a long beekeeping tradition.

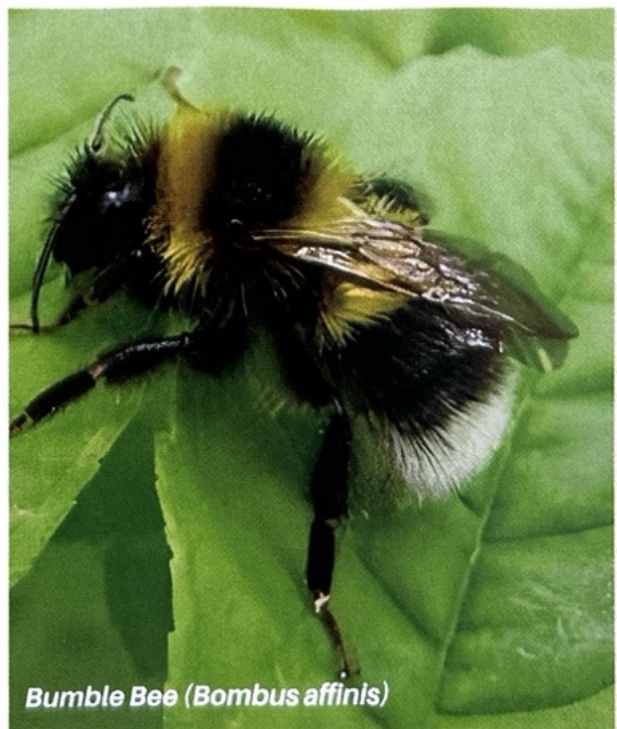
The day honours both bees and beekeepers, emphasising the need to protect these tiny, yet powerful, creatures that are essential for pollinating plants and maintaining healthy ecosystems.



Honeybee (Apis mellifera)

There are over 270 species of bees in the UK, comprising one species of honeybee, around 24 species of bumblebee, and over 250 species of solitary bees. While honeybees are doing well many of the bumblebees and solitary bees are struggling due to habitat loss and climate change.

I was amazed to know that there are over 100 local beekeepers who are members of Wokingham and District Beekeepers' Association (WDBKA - www.dbka.org.uk).



Bumble Bee (Bombus affinis)

HIVE TALKING (CONTINUED)

We met one of them who has lived in Hurst for the last 20 years. Laurence Alkin is a sales director for a large IT company and got into bee keeping when a swarm of bees turned up in his garden 10 years ago.

Laurence said, "if you look on the internet everybody says how easy it is to keep bees - how wrong they are!"

His initial two hives perished, but he persevered and now Laurence looks after about 30 hives in his garden.

He is a volunteer swarm collector and from late March to September gets random calls from local people in the community asking him to come and collect swarms that have landed on their properties.

"Only honeybees swarm and when 30,000 bees arrive in your garden it can be very loud and scary. However, they are generally not aggressive when looking for a new home.

In nature only about 20% of bee swarms survive their first winter, but once collected and rehomed by beekeepers, we can increase their chance of surviving up to 80%".

This year's warm wet winter has been bad news for honeybees and there are reports of large numbers of colonies dying across the UK. Bees don't hibernate in winter, but cluster together to stay warm and conserve energy and



even in mid-winter they will venture out looking for nectar when temperatures are over 10°C.

"A lot of people ask how much honey each hive produces, but every hive is different and every year is different. Some hives produce lots of honey, some none and every batch tastes slightly different depending on what the bees have been foraging on.

Last year we harvested several hundred jars of honey, but in 2024 it rained for the first half of the year and we hardly got any honey. Remember, we only harvest the surplus - honey is produced to get the bees through the winter and their survival is our main priority".

I asked Laurence if honey goes 'off'. He laughed and pointed out that 3000-year-old pots of honey were discovered by archaeologists during an excavation in Tutankhamun's tomb and they were still perfectly edible.

Honey was a significant part of ancient Egypt's culture, used in various aspects of life, including food and wound healing. It became the first civilization to exhibit evidence of

HIVE TALKING (CONTINUED)

systematic domestic beekeeping, not just the harvesting of wild bees, suggesting that honey was mass-produced.

If you buy honey from a supermarket BEWARE!! A lot of supermarket honey is fake having been adulterated with sugar or rice syrup. Even if it contains some real honey then the industrial processing and heat treatment has probably destroyed much of its goodness.

Pure locally-produced honey may cost more but it is a natural, nutrient rich sweetener. It has anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and anti-inflammatory properties which is why it has been used in traditional medicines for centuries.

"Our honey is from local hives in and around Hurst village. It is 100% pure, simply extracted, filtered and jarred so it maintains all its natural properties".

Laurence has a Facebook site if you want to find out more and his honey is available to buy from his home while stocks last.



What should you do if you find a swarm in your garden? Firstly, don't panic...and remember we want to save the bees, not kill them.

You can contact Wokingham and District Beekeepers' Association or if you are within 5 miles of Hurst give Laurence a call or contact him on WhatsApp and he will collect your bee-utiful visitors for free!!

His number is 07812 325349.
www.facebook.com/HurstHoney



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Our First Friends Project: The Church Hill Pathway

**Getting up or down
Church Hill on foot is
dangerous – we will
build a safe, pedestrian
path to connect the
village back to the top
of the hill**



With The Castle Inn, the Bowls Club and the Church at the top of Church Hill, ever since the advent of the motor car, pedestrians have taken their lives in their hands if they wanted to get to those places.

The children at St Nicholas Primary and the Pre-school must march up to church services two-by-two marshalled by nervous adults bedecked in Hi-Vis jackets.

We have agreed that our first project for The Friends of St Nicholas is to drive and lead the delivery of The Church Hill Pathway.

We aim to deliver a path that two people can walk along side-by-side. It will be dog and push-chair friendly.

The route of the path is shown on the next page.

There are 5 sections to the pathway:

- 1). The Village Halls Area
- 2). The Old School House corner
- 3). Orchard Nursery field
- 4). The Commonwealth Graveyard and Lychgate
- 5). The Path through the graveyard behind the Cottages

This project has come about through the generosity and community-mindedness of four different landowners.

They are the trustees of The Philip Martineau Trust (who own the land on which the Village Hall / Scout Hut stands), Maggie Sanderson at The Old School House, Chris and Angela James of Orchard Nursery and finally The Venerable Stephen Pullin, Archdeacon of Berkshire.



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The Church Hill Pathway (cont'd)



The project has applied to Wokingham Borough Council to confirm that we don't need planning permission.

2 months ago, we were told that this was confirmed and any development of the land into a pathway was able to be done under permitted development.

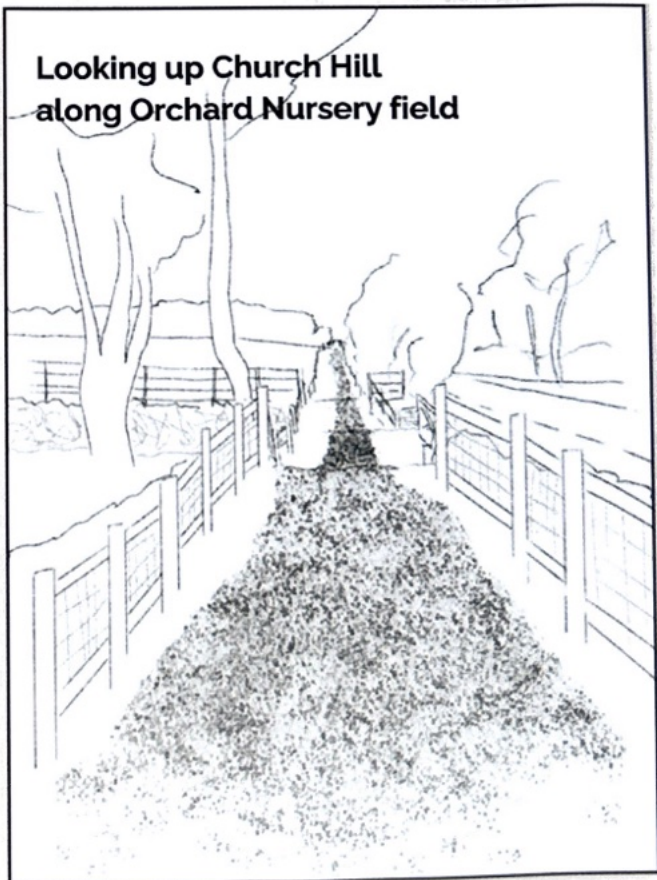
The next main phases of the project are:

- Put the contract out to tender to landscaping contractors
- Fund raising via several different routes

Then once we have firm costs and the money is in place, we are hoping that the work can start in the next 9 months with the aim being to complete the path (and open it to the village) in mid-2027.

Huge thanks must go to the different landowners and the support of members of our local community - especially Sue Cummings for her fantastic illustrations and to Mark Leedale (a local Planning

Looking up Church Hill
along Orchard Nursery field



Consultant) who has worked on our behalf pro bono.

We will keep you updated on progress through this magazine, village events and other community newsletters.



Hurst Show & Country Fayre

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Coming Up: Hurst Show & Country Fayre

*Visit the Hurst Show and Country Fayre 2026
for a day of family fun and community spirit
27th and 28th June*

The much-loved Hurst Show and Country Fayre returns this summer, bringing over 45 years of community tradition, family fun and countryside celebration. This long-standing, non-commercial event continues to offer exceptional value for money, with all proceeds going directly to support local charities and good causes.

Taking place in the heart of the village, this year's show promises a packed programme of entertainment, activities and attractions for all ages - alongside an exciting new feature for 2026: **The Hurst Show Discovery Trail**.

Designed especially for children and families, the Discovery Trail invites visitors to explore every corner of the event. By following the trail and collecting hidden letters, participants will enjoy the wide variety of activities on offer with a well-earned prize at the end!

With a slightly changed layout for this year, there will be plenty to enjoy on School Field, which becomes the new home for our Event arena.

The arena schedule includes fun hobbyhorse jumping, dance displays, tug-of-war and dog agility.





In the Activity Zone, Fusion Extreme will be performing thrilling BMX bike displays on Saturday, with Dinton Activity Centre bringing their mobile climbing tower on Sunday.

Visitors can also try archery, meet animals in the petting area and enjoy bouncy castles, soft play and children's stalls.

Martineau Green will host a busy schedule of acts in the live music tent, offering a relaxed space for families and

friends to come together, with refreshments from the bar, BBQ or tea and cake stalls. Visitors can also browse a fantastic selection of local craft stalls.

The popular Art Show returns to the Village Hall, showcasing the very best of local talent and creativity. Other show favourites include the ever-popular fun dog show (weather permitting), classic vehicle show and tractor exhibits.



At its heart, the Hurst Show and Country Fayre is a celebration of community. Run by a committee of dedicated volunteers, the event continues to thrive thanks to the support of local residents, businesses, sponsors and visitors. Every ticket purchased helps contribute to a wide range of local initiatives and charitable causes, making a day out at the show not only enjoyable but impactful too. For more information and online tickets, please visit www.hurstshow.uk or follow us on Facebook and Instagram.



Hurst Show 'Pink Shirts' 2025

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

It takes a village to put on a show, so any time people can give to help out is much appreciated, even if it's just an hour. It's a great way to meet new people and get involved in our village – we are a friendly bunch!

There is something for everyone to do - help as much or as little as you are able to - all help is very much appreciated...especially on **Thursday 25th June for set up** and then **Sunday 28th June** when we have to restore the village so it looks like we haven't even been there!

We will need people to help with site set-up before the show, tasks over the weekend including manning the bar, BBQ stints and site clear-down afterwards.

For further info and to be added to our volunteer distribution list, please email us at:

hurstshowandcountryfayre@gmail.com

COMPETITION TIME

Who wants to win a pot of Hurst Honey?

Please email your answer, name and phone number to editorfosn@gmail.com or text 07799 065762

Q: How many different types of bee are there in the UK?

First correct answer drawn on 31/05/26 gets the prize!



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Any funds raised by FOSN can only be used for the upkeep and improvement of the fabric of St Nicholas Church and it's assets. They will not for any religious purposes.

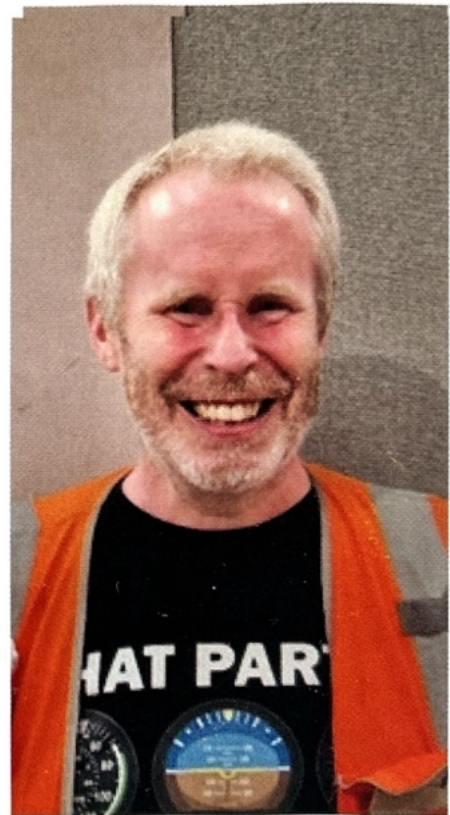
EYEBROW *Raiser*

This is the first in a series of articles about people who live in Hurst and do something a little bit different - hence: Eyebrow Raiser

Worthy Effort!!

Let me introduce you to Simon Roberts, who has lived in Hurst for the last 17 years. He trained as an aeronautical engineer and then migrated into IT. Nothing eyebrow raising so far until I tell you that he is the Facilities Manager that provides the Event Control team with everything they need to run the world's largest ticketed greenfield (and best) music festival in the world - Glastonbury!

Event Control is responsible for the safe and effective delivery of the festival including crowd management, stewarding, water provision, toilets, medical support and liaison with the Emergency Services. They also manage traffic around the site, noise monitoring and co-ordination with local residents. Simon makes sure that they have everything they need to allow them to do their relevant jobs - lots of coffee, chairs and tables!



The scale of the Glastonbury Festival is mind-blowing! Essentially for a 5-day period, Worthy Farm - and some surrounding farms - turn into the 27th largest town in the UK! The festival is approximately the population size of Preston. About a quarter of the population of the southwest of England is contained in the festival site.

There are 40,000 volunteers and paid staff that are there to look after the 180,000 festival goers and entertainment acts. It has the largest collection of emergency services outside of Bristol. And all for 5 days!

The history of the festival goes back to 1970 when Michael Eavis, a local farmer, decided to put on a musical event that was attended by about 1,500 people. Since then, it has grown exponentially and in 2000 it was estimated that 250,000 people attended whilst only 100,000 tickets were actually sold!

The local district council threatened to revoke the festival's licences unless the event became more professionally managed and staged. That professionalism has grown year-on-year. The main logistical and security elements of the festival are now run professionally and then there are the volunteers who make it all happen.

Event Control is responsible for ensuring that all suppliers can provide enough food, water, toilets, security effectively for the course of the festival.



Event Control Team inside the Barn

Simon relates how things have improved over the last 20 years with, for example, water provision...the site used to be supplied by a single tap in the early days! Then water was bought in by bowzers. But now SW Water have installed a water main to the site and there are also four purpose-built water reservoirs located on high ground surrounding the venue.

Event Control operates out of two barns on the farm and the busy times for the team are the set-up and then the take-down. Once things are up and running, generally Simon only has to worry about making sure the decision makers don't run out of coffee!

The festival is in the middle of nowhere and yet has a huge requirement for electricity. This started out from a single supply and has now morphed into a massive generation scheme all of its own. Generators are monitored to ensure that they are being used efficiently and effectively. They are now supplemented by battery storage. There is a small solar farm in place and even a wind turbine that generates electricity even on cloudy days.

However, there are the ongoing duties that need to be carried out.



Thousands of litter bins stored at Worthy Farm

Litter is a huge issue. Simon has ten tractors and trailers that go around the site each night collecting the full bins and replacing them with empties. They are 40-gallon oil drums that have been hand-painted – storage of these requires a lot of room and they are kept in a quiet corner of Worthy Farm year-round.

There are two sides to Glastonbury – the bands, visual effects, the other acts and performers and this is run by the Eavis family – who are responsible for the values and moral compass of the event. Secondly, the operational management that make it happen is run by a team of professionals, of which Simon is one.

Glastonbury raises £millions for charities each year. In 2025, they raised over £4.2 million for 300 different organisations. Their principle three Joint Charity partners Oxfam, Water Aid and Greenpeace received more than £2 million in donations and payments in exchange for volunteering during the festival.

To give you an idea for the scale and sophistication of the festival, there is a minor operating theatre on site that can deal with appendicitis and initial triage for the Ambulance Service. There is a fully operating dental practice and a very sophisticated drug testing unit that protects those who might have imbibed something untoward(!).



Glastonbury has a reputation for MUD! As the festival plans organically each year, they are getting better at knowing where the places are that can get the muddiest.

They now know that putting straw down just does not work - it gets slippery and doesn't absorb the moisture.



Better drainage has been installed, and hardcore / wood chip has been put down in the worst places. As Simon points out - "mud is not the main danger for festival goers...it's uncomfortable, but not life threatening. The biggest danger is heat. Sunburn and heatstroke can be much more serious."



The Pyramid Stage, Glastonbury

Does Simon ever get to see any of the acts?
Yes - his Event Control barn is directly opposite the main Pyramid stage, and his highlight last year was seeing the Pet Shop Boys perform - he gets to stand at the back and watch for free - or at least until a drama occurs that needs his co-ordination and input!

2026 is a 'fallow' year for the festival - so Simon will be at a loose end as typically Glastonbury coincides with our annual Hurst Show.

Given Simon's undoubted expertise, we are leaning on him to give the Show Committee the benefit of his knowledge and experience. We may be just a shade smaller, but nonetheless we always need people like Simon to make it all go smoothly!



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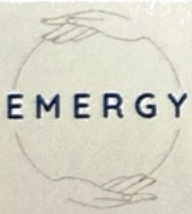
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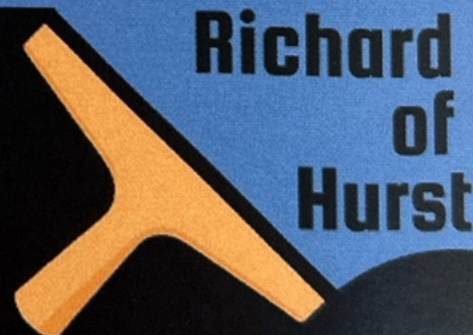
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Useful Contacts

Hurst Parish Council

Penny Curry Chair Penny.Curry@hurstparishcouncil.gov.uk T: 0118 934 0866	David Boyd Vice Chair David.Boyd@hurstparishcouncil.gov.uk T: 07764 905135
Paul Eastaugh Paul.Eastaugh@hurstparishcouncil.gov.uk T: 07889 432014	Nicky Ewart Nicola.Ewart@hurstparishcouncil.gov.uk T: 07803 154536
Duncan Kendall Duncan.Kendall@hurstparishcouncil.gov.uk T: 0118 934 2852	Jono Openshaw Jono.Openshaw@hurstparishcouncil.gov.uk T: 07951 422217
Zoe Percival Zoe.Percival@hurstparishcouncil.gov.uk T: 07503 966327	Tony Robinson Tony.Robinson@hurstparishcouncil.gov.uk T: 07976 263814
Ian Smith Ian.Smith@hurstparishcouncil.gov.uk T: 0118 934 0864	Maria Bradshaw Clerk clerk@hurstparishcouncil.gov.uk T: 0118 979 8914

St Nicholas Church

<u>Vicar:</u> Revd Hugh Thomas Email: hughstnicholas@gmail.com Telephone: 0118 214 6238 NB: Revd Hugh's normal working days in the parish are Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.	<u>Associate Priest:</u> Revd Graham Theobald Clergy can be contacted via email at the 'Get in touch' page at www.achurchnearyou.com/church/5339/
<u>Church Warden:</u> Situation Vacant (being recruited) T: tbc	<u>Church Warden:</u> Steve Curnow T: 07793 845174

Useful Contacts

Local Organisations

Bell Ringers	Practice Mondays @ 7.45pm	Graham Slade	Hurst@sdb.odg.org.uk
Cricket Club	Senior Training nets Tuesday and Thursday evening	Website: https://hurst.play-cricket.com/home	Email: hurstccofficial@gmail.com
Bus Service		Thames Valley Buses	0118 973 3486
Hurst Bowling Club	Club practice evening is every Tuesday during the playing season at 6pm	Membership Secretary: David Broomfield	07784 519340
Hurst Show & Country Fayre	Last weekend in June every year	Suzy Turner (Chair)	07747 457212
St Nicholas Primary School		Sarah Hilling (Head)	0118 934 0727
Village Hall	Bookings	Website Booking Form	www.hurstvillagehalls.org.uk/

Emergencies

Fire, Police, Ambulance	Emergencies only (in progress)	999
Thames Valley Police	Non-emergency calls	101
Crimestoppers	Anonymous crime reporting	0800 555 111
Doctors' Surgery (Twyford)	6, Loddon Hall Road, RG10 9JA	0118 934 6680
Doctors' Surgery (Wargrave)	Victoria Road RG10 8BP	0118 940 3939

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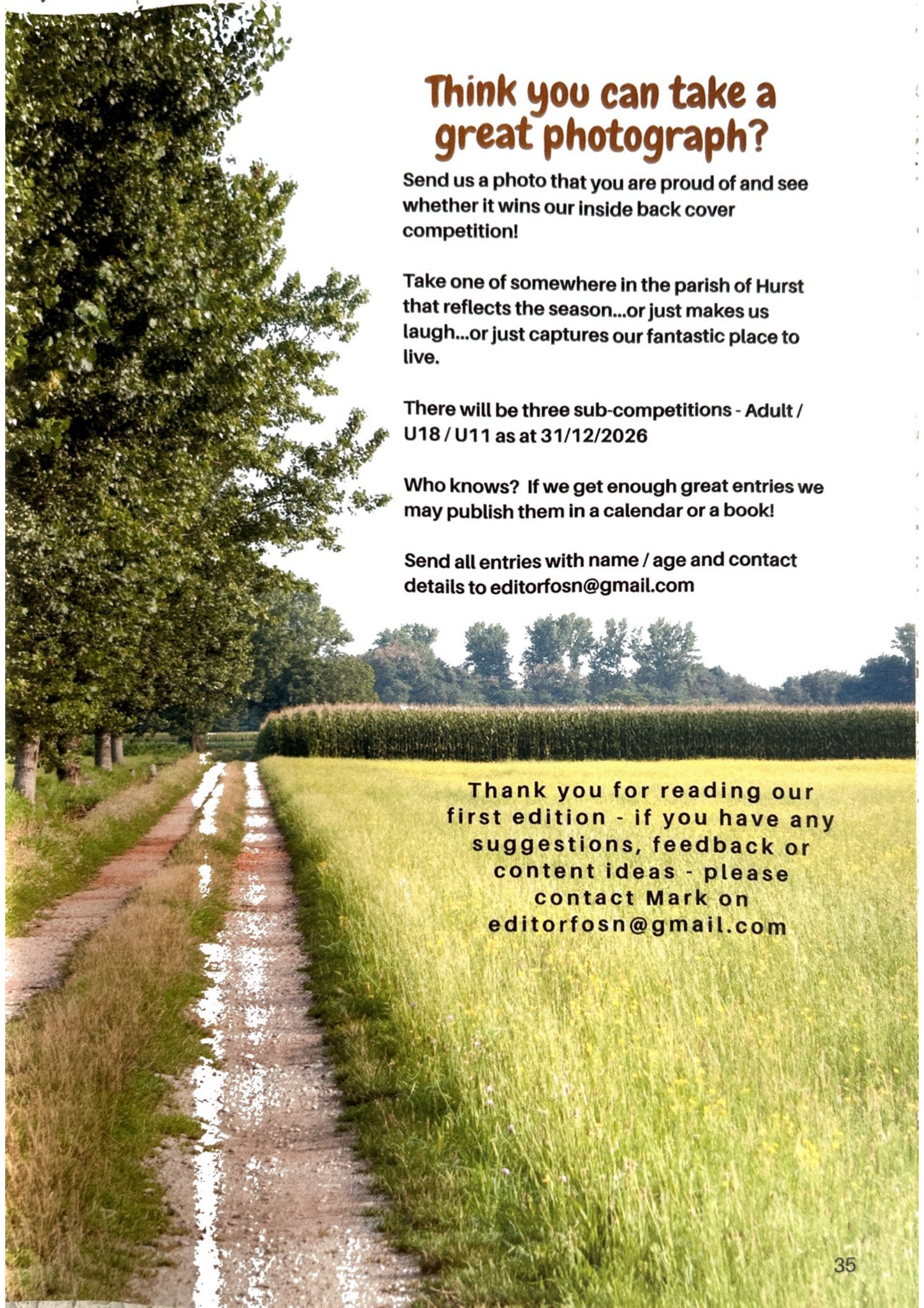
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Take one of somewhere in the parish of Hurst that reflects the season...or just makes us laugh...or just captures our fantastic place to live.

There will be three sub-competitions - Adult / U18 / U11 as at 31/12/2026

Who knows? If we get enough great entries we may publish them in a calendar or a book!

Send all entries with name / age and contact details to editorfosn@gmail.com

Thank you for reading our first edition - if you have any suggestions, feedback or content ideas - please contact Mark on editorfosn@gmail.com

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