

IN-TOUCH

Great Hockham News Sheet

Issue No 576
September 2026



Editorial

At the time of writing we are still in a heat wave - the fifth this summer - with temperatures well above 30°C at times and hardly a drop of rain for weeks. The threat of fire is worrying and real. Our farmers are suffering the worst drought in years and our gardens are suffering, too, with a hosepipe ban in this area.

But some things in the garden are coping well including the lavenders, rosemary, sage and marjoram. So it looks to be a good idea to grow lots of herbs and sunflowers if hot summers are to be the future. Thereby much of the charm of the South of France can be experienced here at home. And the bees and butterflies will love it.

Harling Road Allotment Fees

Due to unprecedented water use in 2026, the Parish Council will debate the annual fees at their next meeting on 07/09/26.

Please do not send in your fees until then, as a potential increase may be voted in.

Allotment holders will all be advised individually, of the potential change to fees.

Note anyone wishing to give up their plots, please can you advise the clerk by email to clerk@hockhamparish.gov.uk or 07770710307 as soon as possible.

Thank you.

CGG

HISTORY OF HOCKHAM Exhibition weekend

October 10th & 11th
10am-4pm

At Holy Trinity Church
Great Hockham

Free entry

Food & Drink will
be available

The Wayland Group of Parishes
Breckles, Caston, Great Hockham, Griston, Stow Bedon and Thompson
In the Church of England Diocese of Norwich

Worship in the Wayland Benefice
September 2026

Sunday 6th September

10.30am United Holy Communion
St Botolph, Stow Bedon

Sunday 13th September

10.30am United Holy Communion
St Martin, Thompson

Sunday 20th September

10.30am United Holy Communion
and Harvest Festival
St Margaret, Breckles

Sunday 27th September

10.30am United Holy Communion
Holy Cross, Caston

Sunday 4th October

10.30am United Holy Communion
Holy Trinity, Great Hockham



***'There is hope
beneath the
surface....'***

As I write, the dry earth of August waits for rain, and our farming communities face a heavy burden. Wildfires and

drought are testing our strength, our patience, and our land, because summer has left our fields thirsty and tired. The crops struggle under a relentless sun, and the threat of fire hangs heavy in the dry air. We look at the brown pastures and feel the weight of worry.

But farming is a life of hope despite that hope being hard to find when the land is dry. For even in these parched and anxious days, we are bound together by faith, resilience, and the deep roots we share in the soil.

It is true that one tiny spark can change everything in a minute, that we watch the horizon with tired eyes, realising that every missing drop of rain means hard choices for feed, water, and livelihoods. And yet, the relentless work goes on from dawn to dark, often in lonely and stressful conditions.

But there is hope. During hard times we can stand together. Our greatest tool is each other. When the fences break or the worry grows too large, the power of a neighbour's hand can reach out when the load is heavy. They check on the farm down the road, share a word of comfort, a cup of tea, or a spare set of hands. Even a short phone call or visit can lift a heavy spirit.

So, be assured that there is hope beneath the surface of soil which may seem dead, because life waits underneath it. Just as the earth holds seeds through the harshest dry spell, our community holds a deep and quiet strength. We have weathered hard seasons before. We will weather this one, too. Let us pray for the rain that heals the land, but let us also thank God for the steady hands and brave hearts we find in one another today.

May the peace of the quiet evening watch over our homesteads, and may the autumn rains soon bring new life to our thirsty fields.

With love and many blessings

Vanessa.

X

Reverend Vanessa is the rector for the Wayland benefice of Breckles, Caston, Great Hockham, Griston, Thompson, and Stow Bedon, and is available for Weddings, Funerals and Baptisms. You can contact her on 07984 318885 or by email at vanessadlayfield@gmail.com

THE EAGLE

Harling Rd, Great Hockham, Thetford IP24 1NP
01953 498893

Dates for your Diary:

1st September 7.30pm
Book Club

2nd, 16th & 30th September
Bingo 7.45pm arrival for 8pm
£6 to play 18+

3rd September 5-8pm
The Field Kitchen (Food Truck)

10th September 5-8pm
Hoggies (Hog Roast Truck)

17th September 5-8pm
Marg and Rita's (Pizza Food Truck)

19th September
Head Shave raising money for
Alzheimer's Society
With Cocktails and Tapas Afternoon
See our Facebook for more information

24th September 5-8pm
Patron (Paella Food Truck)

Opening Hours

Monday – Thursday 12-2.30pm/6-11pm
Friday – Saturday 12-11pm
Sunday 12-10.30pm

Food Available

Fish and Chip Fryday: 12-8.30pm
(Takeaway and eat in)
Saturday: 12-8.30pm
Sunday: 12-3pm

Head Shave for Alzheimers Charity

At 2pm on 19th September I will be in the Eagle in Great Hockham having my head shaved. I am raising funds for the above charity which is very close to my heart.

I am hoping to raise £1,000 or more. I have a Just Giving page up and running - www.justgiving.com and search for Patsy Harris.

Every £1 will be so appreciated and please feel free to come to the Eagle and join in the fun.

There will be a raffle and Aaron is doing a special lunchtime menu for the event.

What have I got to lose apart from my hair!

Patsy Harris

Mobile Library Service

CHESTNUT SQUARE	10:55 – 11:10
SCOTGATE CLOSE	11:15 – 11:35

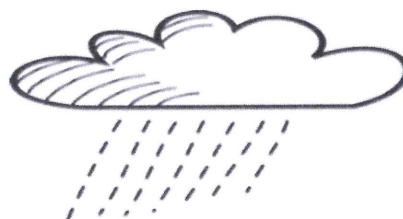
Date of forthcoming visits (Thursdays):

10 Sept / 8 Oct / 5 Nov / 3 Dec



July Rainfall

July 2026		12.3 mm
July 2025		32.0 mm
Jan-July 2026		218.2 mm
Jan-July 2025		163.0 mm
Highest July since 1979	2002	132.4 mm
Lowest July since 1979	2022	5.4 mm





Great Hockham Gardening Club



Wednesday 9th September
Green Pastures Garden Centre,
Bergh Apton
Café

Membership fees are £10 per annum

Indoor meetings are held in the Edinburgh
Hall, Harling Road, Great Hockham, IP24
1NT on the second Wednesday of the
month

Doors open 1.30 pm / Speakers start
at 2 pm

Indoor meetings free to members / £3 to
visitors

Outdoor visits are subsidised by the club
but members may have to pay a small
contribution for some visits

Secretary: Stacey Smith

secretaryghgc@gmail.com

Website: greathockhamgardeningclub.org.uk

HAWITAGE

In 2008, a site at Hockham Woods (the forested area to the left all the way to Wretham), was identified as a possible area for a huge gravel pit and subsequent landfill following gravel extraction. It horrified the whole village and way beyond, and a group was formed called **Hockham and Wretham In Tandem Against Gravel Extraction**.

It was a fight against a huge organisation, The Forestry Commission, and created a community spirit that became legendary.

It was at a time when social media was in its infancy, but word needed to be spread far and wide that the effect of this going ahead could be devastating on all our lives, for many years to come.

Posters were printed and distributed, meetings held where the village hall would be packed, and many a sleepless night for those at the forefront and behind what became affectionately known as the Four Fat Controllers, were a vast team of people, making banners, distributing the leaflets and getting a huge petition organised so it had to be heard in parliament. A HAWITAGE website was born and people craved for updates.

A film was produced that brought several people to tears and had a huge YouTube following and slowly but surely, the press latched onto the story and on an infamous Easter Sunday we walked the area to potentially be decimated and explained to the masses, why this would be a disaster for our community.

We employed a gentleman from Carbrooke, Geoff Nobes, who conducted a survey of water beetles in the pingos scattered over the area. The results were staggering and there were several rare species that the ponds held and one, *hydroporus glabriusculus*, that was nationally rare.

At a packed village hall, around St Georges Day I recall, we had the honour of advising the three parishes that Geoff's report had hit the Natural England desk, the representative was going on holiday that very day but had written a report that condemned the Forestry Commission for considering destroying such a rare species. As a result, the Forestry Commission withdrew and even asked the group for help to train their managers in how parishes could get together and using digital means to fight a cause. We even had offers of helping other Norfolk groups in their fights.

A final film was made claiming our victory and the Four Fat Controllers were allowed to bask in the glory of turning the stone to celebrate.

Items from the fight are in a time capsule under the stone.

It can be found online at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMbQTRDavEI>

Of the Four Fat Controllers, three are still with us, one sadly departed, and from time to time the three reminisce, usually on a Thursday evening in the Eagle.
Chris Garrod



PUTTING THEIR BACKS INTO IT:

Turning over the Great Hockham stone, which weighs more than three tonnes, are, from left, Geoff Stuart, Trevor Mason, Ben Campbell, Julia Wiltshire, Vince Thurkettle, Chris Wiltshire (back), Gerald Shaw (back), Harry Stebbing (front), Chris Garrod and Mike Reidie.

Pictures: DENISE BRADLEY

Stone turned for quarry heave-ho

IT is a ceremony that only happens on very important occasions.

And villagers felt that the scrapping of proposals by the Forestry Commission to turn Hockham Wood into a quarry and waste site was one such time.

More than 100 people attended the traditional turning of the Hockham Stone – last carried out as part of the millennium celebrations.

Mike Reidie, who helped co-ordinate the campaign, said: "It is traditional that the stone at Hockham Green, which weighs three-and-a-half tonnes, is turned at times of great importance and a time capsule, which is underneath, is updated.

"It started with the Boer War and has continued through various coronations, the Queen's jubilee and, lastly, at the millennium.

"It was felt that the success of having the waste and quarry plans withdrawn warranted the stone being turned again."

Earlier this month, the Forestry Commission announced it was pulling out of plans to turn areas of woodland into massive quarry and waste sites.

For weeks there had been fierce opposition to proposals for quarrying, landfill and waste recycling centres at Hockham Wood and West Harling Woods at East Harling.

The sites are two out of more than 100

potential mineral extraction and 64 waste management sites identified by Norfolk County Council to meet housing and infrastructure needs.

But local people were horrified at the proposals, which would have seen the destruction of 128 hectares of forestry and woodland at Hockham and 399 hectares at Harling.

Mr Reidie added: "It was a terrible shadow hanging over the village."

Tradition allows for six people using blocks of wood and poles to turn the stone, and more than 100 people turned up to watch.

The time capsule was updated with a petition to 10 Downing Street and photos and documents relating to the campaign.



TEAM HELPER: Toby Slaven, 16 months, with the updated time capsule to put beneath the stone.

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Defibrillator

The defibrillator is located in the telephone box
by the Village Green.

Press the button to the right of the unit to
connect to the emergency services who will give
the code to unlock the cabinet.



The book club met on the 4th August at The Eagle,
and the book being discussed was The
Lamplighters by Emma Stonex.

Based on a true story, The Lamplighters is a locked
room mystery, set against the daily challenges of
working on a lighthouse.

On New Year's Eve in 1972 a relief boat arrives at
the remote Maiden Rock lighthouse, 15 miles off
the coast of Cornwall - the lighthouse is locked
from the inside and the three keepers have
completely vanished.

Speculation on what could have happened to the
keepers continues over the years. In 1992 a writer
decides to take up the story and approaches the
three women left behind, his presence forces
them to confront old grief, long held secrets and
the blurring line between reality and madness.

We agreed the descriptions of the lighthouse,
especially the claustrophobic confines the men
lived in, and atmospheric sea were very good,
together with the gradual unfolding of the
plot. However most agreed the ending was
contrived and disappointing, lacking resonance
and authenticity.

This book scored 6 1/2 out of 10.

The raffle prize was won by Leonie.

The next book is In Cold Blood by Truman Capote
and it will be the subject of discussion at our next
meeting on the 1st September.

Leonie Jones

Coffee Cake Chat

This month ...
Mark from
Guide Dogs for
the Blind will
give a great talk
and demo
using his trained
labrador, Laine



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19 September, Village Hall, 10.30 am

*The content of the articles in In-Touch is the responsibility of the
named contributors, not the Newsletter Committee. Anonymous
items will not be accepted.*

Village Hall Bookings

Regular Bookings

Monday	Reserved for Parish Council	Evening
Tuesday	Carpet Bowls	7.00-9.00pm
Wednesday	Yoga	6.00-7.30pm
Thursday	Taekwondo	6.00-8.00pm
Dog training Monday and Friday evenings, subject to hot weather conditions		

September

Sat 5 th	Soundbath	PM
Mon 7 th	Parish Council	7.30pm
Tues 8 th	Private Booking	AM
Tues 15 th	Exploring Drawing	10am-1pm
Sat 19 th	Coffee, Cake & Chat	AM
Tues 29 th	Exploring Drawing	10am-1pm

Contacts

For Hall bookings contact Chris Garrod 07770 710307 or e-mail chris@oaklands4.co.uk.

For Yoga information ring June on 07766 108075

For Taekwondo contact Dave Robb 01953 882848 or 07710 666133

For Sound Bath contact Tracey Mathison 07748 213397

For Carpet Bowls contact Jackie 07947 508835.

Can anyone re-home our koi, about six
and a couple of goldfish.

Many thanks.

Please call on 07816 975099



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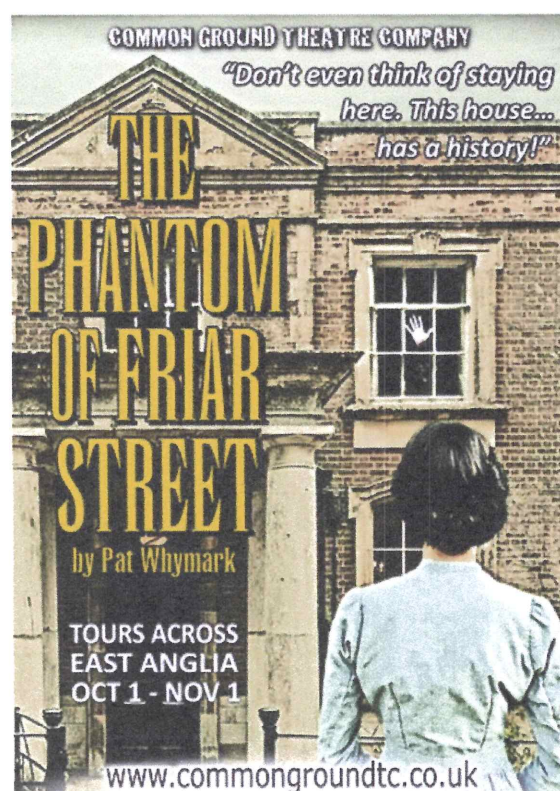
THE PHANTOM OF FRIAR STREET

BY PAT WHYMARK

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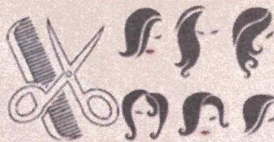
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If you think your child would benefit from extra support to help prepare them for their move to secondary school, or for independent school entrance exams, please call or email me.



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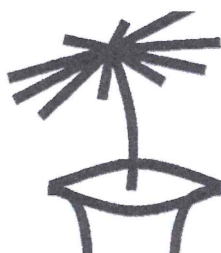
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