

Witheridge Voice



Winter 2026

Issue 63



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Advertising in Witheridge Voice

Advertising rates to include the next 4 quarterly issues of the magazine are:

Full page £119

1/2 page £65

1/3 page. landscape £49

1/6 page box £29

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Editorial

I'd like to wish you a belated Happy New Year and 2026 has certainly thrown some weather at us. Thankfully we've not experienced the winds that parts of Cornwall had though.

I hope you spend some time browsing through this edition; there are some interesting articles.

I thought it was fitting to have a photo on the front cover of part of the Two Moors Way (albeit the diversion) as this year marks the 50th Anniversary of the 'opening' of this long distance walk. If you read the article you will see there are a number of special walks taking place, with one going through Witheridge at the end of May.

We are aware of how supportive our village community is and some of you will be aware of Witheridge Gifts of Kindness which was set up to 'give a little hug' to individuals in our community. There were 38 nominations and all of these people received gifts before Christmas.

Things to look forward to include live music events at the Parish Hall and The Knight's St George's day Celebration.

You may notice there are some empty spaces in this issue where businesses could place adverts. Please contact Robin (advertising) if you're interested.

Ruth Towers

Deadline for the Spring issue is 4th April.

Please let me have your articles, by email before that date, so I can edit the magazine and have it to the printers in good time. It is important that this deadline is kept to as we have a very quick turn around with the printers.

This deadline also applies to advertisers, if they need to change any details on their adverts please let us know as soon as possible.

Parish Hall Update

The Christmas show for the kids was a great success, Zoe deserves a huge vote of thanks for all the work she put in on this. Indeed everyone who helped did a great job and the children seemed to enjoy themselves.

I think we can all agree the hall is looking really lovely now that the cladding work has been finished. As well as smartening things up, the extra insulation should make it warmer too. Do let us know what you think — we'd love to hear your feedback.

On a slightly less cheerful note, we're still finding litter being left around the play area by those using the youth shelter. There is a bin right beside the shelter, and it would be great if it could be used so everyone can enjoy the space.

Finally, a quick apology from me. In my last article I said that the band *Country Strong* would be playing in the hall on Friday 30th January, when it should have been **Saturday 31st January** — sorry for any confusion caused.

Big Al will be back in the Spring, so keep an eye on our Facebook page for more details.

Please send any feedback to me spicerclare@gmail.com

Witheridge Rocks

Our first quarter of the new school year was as busy as ever. The new year 6's settled in quickly and have enjoyed all the activities available.

As well as the usual activities of pool, badminton, table tennis, table football and numerous crafts, we always like to have something a little bit different each term. This time we had the opportunity to meet our local police officers and to find out what their job entails. The young people engaged with them really well and conversations continued after the official end of the session.

If you think that you have something our young people would be interested in then please get in touch.

Witheridge Rocks meets on 2nd (year 6 & 7) and 4th (year 8 upwards) Thursday of each month, in the Parish Hall from 7.15 - 8.45pm.

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Any questions then please contact Andrea at andreacourt@hotmail.co.uk

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Witheridge Ladies' Club

In October we had a return visit from Ian Williamson, this time his talk was on his travels in India. His group first visited a hospice for children with cancer; they were asked to decorate an outside wall so that the children had a bright view from the hospice windows. Fortunately one of the group was artistic and she outlined the objects for the rest of the group to paint! The group did a great deal of trekking and visited a tea plantation, they also had a tour of the factory where the tea was processed. They had their photograph taken on 'Diana's bench' at the Taj Mahal in Agra. A very interesting and informative talk.

In November we gave a warm welcome to Ruth Towers who regaled us with Songs from the Musicals. We enjoyed a good old sing-along too. Ruth has a terrific voice and told us about her background, in being part of a musical family. She has had many roles in amateur productions. Ruth told us the back story to each of the musicals she played on her CD player, this made the songs much more interesting. We hope to welcome her back again next year.

The weather was very wet and windy for our trip out to the London Inn at Morchard Bishop for our Christmas lunch in December. The food was delicious and abundant, and we enjoyed great service.

We look forward to our first meeting of 2026 on 13 January, our AGM. We will also be enjoying a quiz, and tombola on that day.

We have a full programme booked for the coming New Year, great speakers, outings and lots of activities. A warm welcome awaits members new and old.

Our club also has a book club and lunch club. Why not come along to see what we are up to! We meet on the 2nd Tuesday in the month in the Parish Hall 2–4 pm.

Coral Simmonds



Witheridge in Bloom

Hi Everybody!

The start of another year!!!

We were lucky to have more volunteers join us this past year which has helped enormously, but we would always welcome more. It takes but a few hours each year of your free time to make a difference. Fresh air and a sense of achievement – what's not to like!!

We received a donation from two residents which was a complete surprise and which will be wisely spent.

We are in the process of restructuring what we call “the Stumpery” on Chapple Corner – so bear with us if it looks like “Work in progress” this winter.

Slightly belated I know, but I wish you all a Peaceful New Year

Carol Northam,

carol.northam1@pobroadband.co.uk

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The Rest A While

charity number 801038

A happy new year to you all from The Rest A While.

We are a registered Warm Space looking out for the wellbeing of everyone within our community.

The centre is open from 10 – 12, every Monday to Saturday and everyone is welcome. Come in for a chat and a cuppa with like-minded people. There are lots of things going on.

Our Christmas raffle raised a grand total of £140, which helps us with running costs.

All our volunteers at The Rest A While were treated to a Xmas meal at the London Inn, M orchard Bishop in December in appreciation of all their hard work in keeping The Rest A While open, Thank you all.

The Men's Den is proving very popular and is held on the 2nd and 4th Wed. of the month from 2pm – 4pm. Sean and Peter are the able hosts

A Bring and Buy sale is held on the last Friday of the month, offering seasonal produce and home made goods.

The live music sessions will be continuing into 2026. These sessions take place on the third Saturday morning of the month and are very popular. It will lift the Winter Blues.

We are hoping to continue with the Chair Pilates sessions, run by Rebecca Cunningham, on a Tuesday Afternoon. Please look out for posters and messages on What's on Witheridge.

We are always looking for volunteers to join out happy band, so if you have 2 hours to spare per fortnight you would be very welcome. Please contact Val on 01884860709

Pat Grant
secretary

Witheridge Golf Society



On 3rd December for the Winter Trophy due to the weather conditions only 9 holes were played. This was followed by a 2 course Christmas lunch of turkey with all trimmings and dessert. Many thanks to Waterbridge Golf Club...

The winning team was: Richard Hurd, Tom Clow, Jacky Harvey .
The Wooden Spoon went to the Buggie Boys!
Thanks to all those who played in 2025.
New members welcome for 2026

Contact: Ken Ramsbotham 01884 861108 mob: 07702226287

Bell Ringing Practice

Anyone wishing to learn to ring the church bells or previous ringers wishing to ring again, we meet at the church tower 7.30pm

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Film Club

Our next film is on February 21st, and we are showing Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale. It is the third and final film in the Downton Abbey film series.

So, thank you to all of you who continue to support our film nights and hopefully see you on February 21st.

Margie



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St John the Baptist Church

I am writing this in early January on a bright and frosty morning. It is a picture-postcard scene. The holy days of Christmas are now behind us and we begin a new calendar year.

I wonder what you might be looking forward to in the months ahead: perhaps a wedding, a holiday, a graduation, or the birth of a child. The possibilities are endless yet very personal to each of us. Having something to look forward to matters. Anticipation helps us to keep going and often makes special occasions even more meaningful.

Much of our lives are shaped by routine. Familiar patterns give structure to our days and help us cope with what lies before us. When happy moments come, they lift our wellbeing and raise our spirits. We put a spring back into our step and carry ourselves a little taller, grateful for the good things we receive.

I hope you can put some time in the diary for something that brings you pleasure and refreshment, and that you allow yourself to enjoy it without guilt.

In the Book of Genesis, we read that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. The Sabbath has shaped the rhythm of life for thousands of years, reminding us that rest is part of God's gift to us. From time to time, a change of pace is needed; perhaps engaging in a hobby, reading a book, gardening or simply enjoying a quiet day at home. Our whole being benefits from this pause.

As we step into the new year, may you know God's presence and blessing in your lives - whether busy or resting, at work or with family, travelling or staying close to home.

Adrian Wells
The Vicar

TWO MOORS WAY 50TH ANNIVERSARY – 29 MAY 2026

Did you know that there's a 102-mile promoted walking route running right across Devon, which goes through the middle of Witheridge? Well, there is – and it's 50 years old this year!

The Two Moors Way (TMW) starts in Ivybridge on the southern edge of Dartmoor, and heads northeast, via Holne and Hamel Down, before passing near Chagford and through Drewsteignton. Devon's rural heartland comes next – Morchard Bishop, Witheridge and Knowstone – followed by Tarr Steps, Withypool and Simonsbath. A crossing of Exmoor's highest ground leads to a dramatic finish above the East Lyn valley before a steep descent to the coast at Lynmouth.

And in 2005 the TMW was officially linked with a section of the Erme–Plym Trail to form Devon's Coast to Coast walk, a 117-mile route between Wembury on the south coast, and Lynmouth on the north.

To mark the 50th anniversary the Two Moors Way Association is holding a series of circular guided walks (8–12 miles) along the route:

Saturday 28 March Lynmouth

Saturday 11 April Simonsbath

Saturday 25 April Holne

Saturday 16 May Withypool



Friday 29 May **50th Anniversary Event** Two linear walks (c. 7 miles) from Witheridge and Whelmstone Cross, meeting in Morchard Bishop for a celebratory tea, with speaker

Saturday 30 May Drewsteignton

Saturday 6 June Ivybridge

We would love you to join any of our walks (more details in the next issue of the *Witheridge Voice*). To register your interest please email jointhebigwalk@btinternet.com; for anything about the route, email info@twomoorsway.org. For more information, or to order a copy of the guidebook, visit www.twomoorsway.org.

Visit www.facebook.com/twomoorsway for regular updates about anniversary plans.

Witheridge Garden Club October Meeting 2025

Tony Lindsell and Malcolm Crook from the Tiverton Bee Keepers came to talk to us about Bee Keeping. Tiverton is a branch of the Devon Bee Keepers Association. Between the two of them, they have 80 hives. Malcolm is the Apiary Manager and Tony the Chairman.

The branch was fortunate to be offered a site for its apiary by the National Trust at [Knightshayes](#). Since 2014 this site has been run as a training apiary, providing beginners and improvers with the opportunity to handle bees. In years when honey is harvested from the apiary it is sold on the branch stand at local country fayres and shows.

We learnt about the early days of bee keeping when Skeps were used instead of hives, and then transitioned to the wooden hives we know today. In Great Britain, there are 52,789 beekeepers, 96 of these being bee farmers who each have more than 150 colonies of bees. Between the 1st and 2nd World Wars, a lot of the bee colonies died out.

Disease weakens the colony – in particular the Varroa mite, which are external parasites that feed on honeybees. These reddish-brown mites attach to adult bees and their developing brood, feeding on their fat bodies and spreading harmful viruses. They are oval-shaped, roughly 1-2 mm in size, and visible to the naked eye. Varroa mites reproduce within the brood cells of honeybees. Female mites enter the cells just before they are capped and lay eggs on the developing bee larvae. The offspring feed on the larvae and mature into adults before emerging with the newly hatched bee. This life cycle allows mites to multiply rapidly, particularly during periods of brood production.

Dusting bees with icing sugar may sound bizarre, but the bees clean themselves and in doing so get rid of the mites.

Asian Hornets are a major threat to our honey bees, and the use of The Asian Hornet Watch App is a useful tool to report sightings to the National Bee Unit. You can also report them to local bee keepers.

Single flowers are better for pollinators as they can easily collect nectar. Dandelions and brambles are favourites with honey bees.

The Queen Bee flies away from the hive, and drones (male Bees) mate with her. On her return, she can lay up to 2,000 eggs a day, the unfertilised eggs become drones.

We were shown some flowers which had been dipped in Beeswax – a process developed by the Victorians – and which allowed the flowers to keep their shape and colour surprisingly well.

A very interesting and informative evening.

Jill Horwood



Witheridge Garden Club

AGM November 2025

AGMs are normally boring, quite formal meetings when members sit there with bored looks on their faces. That all changed this year! The Committee decided to make the whole evening a social and fun affair. The tables were decorated with Christmas tablecloths, table runners, coloured ribbon bows and small LED tea lights giving the Parish Hall a very festive look.

After the short AGM, when all the Committee members were re-elected en bloc, with the exception of Sheila Manley who has retired after over 20 years of service, and the rest of the business dealt with in record time, food was served and each table was given a copy of Alan's Christmas Quiz and a sheet of Dingbats. There were bottles of Red and White wine, soft drinks and teas and coffee available.

Sheila was presented with a planted basket and Garden Vouchers as a token of the Club's thanks for all her hard work over the years.

There were lots of very positive comments from members so it looks as though this new AGM format is here to stay.

The AGM was our last meeting of 2025, and restarts on Wednesday 25th February 2026 with a talk by Jonny Hartnell on "Flora of Madeira".

New members are always welcome – our annual subscription is £15 per person, and visitors pay £3 per visit.

Jill Horwood

Garden Club programme for 2026.

All meetings are in the Witheridge Parish Hall, starting at 7.00pm

DATE	TOPIC	SPEAKER
25 th February	Flora of Madeira	Jonny Hartnell
25 th March	Tawny Owls	Stephen Powles
28 th March	SPRING SHOW	
29 th April	New Tricks for Old Gardeners	Katherine Crouch

27 th May	Plants for Five Seasons – Intrigued?	Michael Stephens
24 th June	Woodland Gardens	Saul Walker
29 th July	My Favourite Cornish Gardens	Clive Lloyd
1 st August	SUMMER SHOW	
30 th September	Growing a New Garden	Becky Searle
28 th October	People4ponies	Faye Stacey
25 th November	AGM & SOCIAL EVENING	

Gordon William Murrin Pyne (Gordy) 1930 – 2025

(With thanks to Gordy's family and Queenie for their permission and help with this article and photographs.)

Gordy's funeral was on 6th November 2025, and Revd Adrian Wells led the procession through the village and into the Square. Gordy's coffin was taken to the house he and Queenie had lived in for 69 years, and then into St John the Baptist Church. The Church was full with family and friends – a lovely service with poems read by Gordy's nieces Ruth and Linda, a beautiful rendition of 'Twas you who invited me here' sung by Rodney, and a very moving tribute read out by Revd Adrian Wells. Gordy was buried in the Churchyard.



Gordy will best be remembered for riding his bicycle in the Village and his cheery greeting to everyone he saw.

Gordy aged 90 - painting the outside of their house





WITHERIDGE GIFTS OF KINDNESS

Happy New Year to all in Witheridge and the surrounding area. We are a new Committee set up by Lisa Williams to give a little hug to members of our Community. Our first meeting was during November with around 7 weeks before Christmas. We may only have 6 committee members, but we have had lots of help from Witheridge residents, local businesses and a national company.

We promoted our aim via social media and posters around the village. Anyone could nominate either an individual, family or organisation. All nominations were kept anonymous.

Donation boxes were placed in St John the Baptist Church and the Doctor's Surgery. Many thanks to all that contributed.

In total we received 38 nomination forms and managed to cover each and every one. This could not have been achieved without the help of your Community.

We would like to give a special thanks to the following for their kindness and generosity.

Monthly Farmer Market Table	Personal Donations totalling £30.
Very Generous Donation	Personal Donation of £100
Tiverton Tesco Voucher	£50
Nomandlands Beer Festival	£300
Witheridge's Little Dart Fulfilment	3 Luxurious Blanket Hampers
Witheridge Village Stores	Food Hamper
West Ridge Veterinary Practice	Food Hamper
Witheridge Car Show	Food Hamper and family items
Individual	Baby Items
Benita Project	10 Individual Hampers
Monthly Brunch at East Worlington	£123 from the Raffle

The Committee also ran a Christmas tombola at the December Farmer's Market and put another £106 in the pot.

A BIG THANKS to everyone who supported us at this expensive time of the year.

We would like to carry on with this venture so please look out for fundraising activities which are in the pipeline.

Many thanks again

Gifts of Kindness Committee

The Little Library

Happy New Year to all. The Little Library has been helping us all to enjoy books for over a year. Many books have been donated and reread by others. At this time of the year I'm sure lots of us embark on the annual spring clean and sort out. Any popular adult fiction will always be welcome or fictional children's books will be gratefully appreciated. All books can be left in the box by the library. I thank you in advance.

Sam

Thelbridge Parish Hall



The photos show the hall before and after the refurbishment, which was done by Leach Brothers in Witheridge. Facilities include parking, kitchen and an accessible toilet.

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Witheridge Methodist Church

We had an enjoyable few months at the Methodist Church on the run up to Christmas. As well as our usual monthly coffee mornings and community lunches we also hosted a Christmas Tree festival, where individuals and local groups could decorate a tree to represent what they did.

The trees were all decorated in differently, and often in imaginative ways. Two Moors Store— the newsagents— had decorations made from newspapers while The Bell Ringers' tree was decorated with bells. The Gardening Club used a gold painted 'twig' while the Toddler's Group used a simple cardboard cut out but decorated in 4



different styles.

It was lovely to see new faces calling in both on the Friday evening and on the Saturday when we held our usual coffee morning - but with the luxury of Bacon, Brie and Cranberry Rolls.

(Methodist Church—continued)

As part of Christians in Witheridge we also hosted The Posada which started its journey at our breakfast church, on November 30th— the first Sunday in Advent, and finished at the Christmas Eve crib service at St John's.

A group of us also went Carol Singing, around the village, on Saturday 20th December. It was a very wet evening but it was good to have new people singing with us and to be welcomed at the Sports Club.

We have our coffee mornings, with bacon rolls and Jigsaw Library, on the first Saturday of the month and community lunch on the first Wednesday.

Coffee Mornings, 10am-1pm on Feb 7th, March 8th, April 5th

Community Lunch 12.30pm on Feb 4th, March 4th, April 1st.

Booking essential for the Community Lunches: Please contact Carol on 07901 377411 or Ruth 07980 104347

The next Christians in Witheridge event will be Café Church on Sunday 29th March (Palm Sunday) at the Parish Hall at 4pm. This will be a short act of worship and is family friendly.





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News from Witheridge C of E Academy

We wrapped up last term with festive cheer and plenty of exciting events.

PTFA Pantomime – ‘Solar Express’ Our PTFA treated the children to an incredible performance of Solar Express, and it was an absolute hit! The excitement and laughter could be heard echoing through the halls as the children sat entranced by the show. A massive THANK YOU to the PTFA for organizing this magical event and for providing the popcorn that kept the children happily munching throughout the performance. A wonderful start to our festive celebrations!

Our KS2 children went to the Village Hall to sing carols with the Monday afternoon club! The children sang beautifully and their behaviour was exemplary. Well done to all of KS2. We have received several emails from members of the Monday afternoon club this week thanking us for joining them and congratulating the children on an excellent performance.

Rocksteady Concert – We were treated to an unforgettable performance from our talented Rocksteady musicians. The concert was full of energy, with children showing off their hard work and musical skills. What a joy to see their enthusiasm and confidence as they took the stage – we’re so proud of each and every one of them. A round of applause to the Rocksteady team and all the performers!

Christmas Dinner was nothing short of spectacular! A heartfelt THANK YOU to Bobbie and Sophie for preparing a delicious and festive feast that everyone enjoyed. The turkey, roast potatoes, and all the trimmings were a real treat, and the Christmas crackers added just the right amount of fun. It was the perfect way to get into the holiday spirit! This year was extra special as it is Bobbie's last school Christmas Dinner after 25 years!

What a beautiful Christmas service we had at the church! A huge well done to our Year 6 pupils for their wonderful readings. They spoke so clearly and with such confidence – truly an inspiration to us all. And let's not forget the amazing tableau performed by the children in Year R – their portrayal of the Nativity story was both moving and joyful. Thank you to everyone who took part and made this service so memorable.

We had an extra special visitor joining us at our Class Christmas parties this year ... yes, you guessed it! Father Christmas himself will be stopping by to spread some holiday cheer. What a perfect way to end the term! We want to extend a special thank you to our amazing PTFA for their continued fundraising efforts. Thanks to them, every child received a special present from Father Christmas to take home, along with a Class Present to enjoy in school. Your generosity is so appreciated, and it made this holiday season extra special for all our pupils.

It has been lovely to welcome our students back to our new term in 2026! We are looking forward to plenty of exciting experiences this term.

Kind regards,
Miss Ratcliffe

*Head of School
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We meet on the third Wednesday of each month in the Cherith Hall, Old Blundells Road at 2.00 pm. We usually have a guest speaker, followed by time for tea or coffee and a chat and finish about 3.45 pm. We pay a small charge each month to help towards the cost of the meeting.

If you would like to find out more about us why not come along?

If you wish to find out more about our U3A, please contact our Membership Secretary Jill Riddiford on 01884 258091 or email her via our website <https://exevalley.u3asite.uk/>



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Winter Reflections and Community Engagement

As I write this, we are experiencing the first snow of winter, though it is heartening to see the evenings gradually drawing out. Since our last correspondence, the Knights have had the pleasure of sponsoring the entertainment at a recent Science Event and Christmas Party, which took place in the Parish Hall. The event attracted over 100 children and proved to be highly popular. Congratulations are due to the organisers and Devon Science for making the occasion such a resounding success—we hope this will be the first of many to come.

February Grant Applications: Supporting Local Initiatives

The next important date in the Knights' calendar is the annual call for grant applications. Each February, we invite local clubs, organisations, and societies in Witheridge and neighbouring villages to apply for grants or sponsorship for their projects or community events. If there is a piece of equipment you wish to purchase, or you are planning entertainment as part of a fundraising event and would appreciate a contribution, we encourage you to apply. Please keep an eye on the various Village Facebook pages or the Knights Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/780955702008444>) where we will post the application link and outline the rules for submissions.

St George's Day Celebration: Volunteers Needed

Another upcoming highlight is the St George's Day Celebration, for which you may have already seen some advance publicity . This event is scheduled for Saturday, 25th April, and will take place in and around the Sports Club. Our Chairman, Fred Hanbury, is currently coordinating the programme, but its success is entirely dependent on the number of volunteers we are able to recruit from the village.

(Knights of Witheridge-cont.)

The planned activities include a brunch, cream teas, cricket nets, Morris dancing, a selection of folk and patriotic music, children's fancy dress, various games and competitions, a barbecue or beef roast, bingo, and an evening disco. If you would like to offer your support, please send your contact details to witheridgeknights@gmail.com.

Ongoing Fundraising Activities

Our regular fundraising activities, including the fortnightly quiz and the meat raffle, have continued throughout the year. We are also grateful to the Sports Club for organising Bingo Nights, which have been a welcome addition. The meat raffle is currently taking a short break but will resume in February. Meanwhile, the quiz nights will proceed as usual, with upcoming dates as follows: 21st January, 4th and 18th February 4th and 18th March, 1st, 15th and 29th April, and 13th and 27th May. All quizzes commence at 19:30 in the Sports Club, and tickets are excellent value at just £2 each.

Join the Knights: Make a Difference in Your Community

A final appeal—for those who may not know us, the Knights are a small group of currently ten members, dedicated to raising funds in support of clubs and organisations in Witheridge and the surrounding areas. However, our success depends on the generous support of the local community, whether by attending events or helping to raise funds. If you are interested in joining the Knights and contributing to local good causes, please call the telephone number on the back page of the Voice. The more members we have, the more funds we can generate to benefit everyone.



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Witheridge Parent and Toddler Group

Good morning from Toddlers!

We have had a lovely Christmas period with lots of festive activities and treats. We started by making a crafty Christmas tree for Witheridge Methodist church which all the toddlers got involved with. Thank you to Bobbie for allowing us to make so much mess with glitter and feathers everywhere! It turned out beautifully and was definitely the best on show! Although I may be a little biased there.

We continued the fun with light up lanterns and Christmas beads, followed by the Christmas party which was very kindly run by the school. Thank you for organising and making the magic happen!

This year we will be focusing on the changing seasons and what we might be able to see in nature. On a final note, from September I will be stepping down from my role at Toddlers and looking for someone who might be interested in the post! Please let me know on 07875 127064 or rebeccarobin44@gmail.com.

Toddlers runs on Wednesday afternoons and Friday morning, 9 till 10:30. £1 a family, snacks and hot drinks provided.

Hope to see some new faces in the new year!

Rebecca Robinson



Witheridge Sports Club

A welcoming community run members sports and social club. We support Witheridge AFC and other sports clubs in the area, as well as regularly holding music and games events for all ages.



The Club is a Members Only establishment. Membership is open to all.

Details can be found on our facebook page, by contacting the club at

WitheridgeSportsClub@gmail.com
or just pop in and see us!

Our regular opening hours

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Witheridge Warriors FC



Witheridge Warriors Youth Football Club have had a busy, if at times frustrating, few months. Like many grassroots teams, we've had several training sessions cancelled due to the weather, but that hasn't dampened spirits. We've still managed to play plenty of matches across Mid and North Devon, enjoying some great games, making new friends and, most importantly, loving the beautiful game.

Off the pitch, the club also enjoyed a loud and boisterous Christmas party at Cruwys Mochard Hall, which was a brilliant way for players, families and coaches to celebrate together.



The club is continuing to grow and now has well over 50 young players. We are currently recruiting new players from school years 1 to 9, so if your child is interested in football, we'd love to hear from you. Witheridge Warriors is a fully inclusive club. We have a large selection of football boots available, along with shin pads, and full funding support can be offered where costs may otherwise be a barrier. Everyone is welcome.



Training takes place every Thursday evening from 6–7pm at Witheridge Sports Club, with the first two sessions completely free. Most of our matches are played on Sunday mornings.

We would also like to say a huge thank you to our sponsors so far this season:-Nobby at Mark Couzens Carpentry for sponsoring the U7s kit Gary at Bucks Blasting and powder coating for sponsoring the U10s kit , Jon at South West Heritage for sponsoring the U12s kit The Firs Care Home for sponsoring our training kits Nomansland Beer Festival, Luke Axon, Legal and General Benson Grange

Your support makes a real difference. You are all amazing, and our young people are incredibly grateful to you.

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WITHERIDGE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

A new year and hopefully some clear skies to observe the stars and planets. Things do not change much overhead, or do they? All stars do move at a range of speeds. The fastest ones, near the centre of galaxies move at 621 miles per second. Here on Earth we are hurtling through space at between 124 and 155 miles per second. Over time, thousands of years, this movement of stars can be seen as the shape of constellations changes subtly.

Looking to the southern sky the Orion Constellation is highly distinctive and is with us for some months. The line of stars forming the belt are quite recognisable. Just below is the vertical line of three 'stars' forming the 'sword'. With good viewing the central star appears as a hazy spot. This is the Orion Nebula, a star forming region where stars are being formed from huge clouds of gas and dust to begin their journey through space. Using binoculars the nebula is an amazing sight, well worth going outside to view. The nebula is illuminated by the four stars that form the Trapezium cluster.

In the Spring months our galaxy, the Milky Way can be seen as a band of stars stretching from low on the northern horizon, passing overhead to the southern horizon. To the naked eye it looks like a milky white belt in the sky. But, with binoculars or a telescope, wow! The eye is met by countless stars all shining brightly. Of all sizes and colours to us they may seem as just points of mainly white light, but when we associate each star to its constellation, and then look up its details, we then learn that star's characteristics, its colour, size and type. No longer just a point of light it now has a name and quite probably some special characteristics appertaining to it.

February brings two bright planets into the night sky. At mag. -3.9 Venus shines brightly all night. If you can find a dark space you may be lucky to see your shadow cast on the ground by the reflected light from Venus. The other bright planet is Jupiter at mag. -2.6. At the end of the month it may be found just south of the Moon. Saturn, at mag 1.0 can be seen for a few hours after sunset.

March brings the start of Summer Time & Spring. The clocks go forward an hour on the 29th March. In the skies we see the familiar 'W' of Cassiopeia, always good to reacquaint oneself with an easily recognised constellation. The red planet Mars shining at mag. 1.2 is visible for most of the month and

April and the brighter parts of the Milky Way become visible running parallel to the horizon. There is an interesting pairing of planets on the 19th April with Mars at mag. 1.2 just 1.2° north of Saturn mag. 0.8.

We have a meteor shower to look forward to peaking on the 22nd April. The best time to see the meteors will be in the early hours of the morning after the Moon has set. Should you miss this shower there will be another shower opportunity in May peaking on the 6th, the η-Aquariids. As the Earth rotates the leading edge of our planet occurs after midnight, this being the best time to observe any meteors.

Early Notice - On August 12th we shall experience a partial Solar Eclipse at tea-time. Classed as partial we shall see about 98% of the Sun covered by the Moon and so expect there to be significant darkening. More details in the next issue but make a note of the date now.

The Witheridge Astronomical Society meets monthly at 7.30pm on the third Thursday in the Committee Room of Witheridge Parish Hall. We are not a 'highbrow' society, our aim being to introduce people to the hobby/ science/ wonders of the night sky. If you have an interest do come along and join us. No experience or knowledge is needed. We have kindly been given some telescopes which are available to borrow.

Steven Smith

Police Advocacy

I act as a go-between, a middleman, for the people of the parish. I may be found in the Parish Hall Committee Room as follows:

Each month:-

1st Monday evening from 6pm to 7pm

2nd Thursday morning from 11am to 12 noon

4th Thursday morning from 11am to 12 noon

You are invited to come along to share your problems. These I can send directly to the appropriate police department without any delays. If appropriate I can offer advice or suggestions. If any matter is urgent call 999 immediately.

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Witheridge Allotment Society

As I write this we have snow and the ground is frozen! However as we start to see the days lengthen we turn our attention once again to growing our own fruit and vegetables and planning what we will grow.

Growing your own potatoes is one of the most rewarding vegetables to grow, but to grow them successfully you'll need good quality seed potatoes rather than seeds produced by the flowers. There are many different varieties so you can grow your own throughout the summer seasons. The first earlies which are ready June onwards for harvesting, are particularly popular as are December-ready varieties that are planted in July, but no matter what type you prefer they're all grown in roughly the same way.



There are two ways to grow your seed potatoes.

- Dig over a patch of ground and remove all the stone and roots, if you add some well-rotted manure this will give your seed potatoes a boost. Dig to a depth of ten centimetres and place one potato in with the chit facing up and plant them at least twelve inches apart. As the greenery grows keep covering them entirely, this is called 'earthing up'. You'll create a mound of earth like a mole hill which keeps growth safe from frosts.

You can also grow all types of seed potatoes in a bag or container. This method means you can use compost which is stone-free and simply upturn the pot at harvest time. Plant them as above and keep well-watered.

So even if you only have a patio you can still grow a few and who doesn't like that taste of a new potato!

Shop around as many garden centres, agricultural stores or discount stores stock them. A top quality seed potato will look firm and feel springy rather than soft and soggy.

If you would like to give an allotment a try this year please get in touch as we have two plots available.

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District Councillor Update – January 2026

I hope you had a happy and relaxing Christmas and enjoyed time with your friends and family. I would like to wish you all a very Happy New Year.

I also want to say a big thank you to everyone who helps make our community such a special place to live. In particular, I would like to thank the chairs and councillors of our parish councils. A small group of people do a huge amount of work for the community, often behind the scenes and without much gratitude. Your work really does make a difference.

Below is my latest update as your District Councillor.

Trade Waste Collections for Businesses

Despite my efforts to highlight the impact on local businesses, a decision has been made to end trade waste collections for businesses. I am continuing to explore what can be done to minimise the impact, so please do contact me if you are likely to be affected.

Local Government Reform in Devon – Update

The Government is considering replacing Devon's current two-tier system with unitary councils, where one authority would provide all local services.

One proposal, put forward by most councils, including North Devon, would create three unitary authorities. The first would cover the west, south, and Torbay area, including West Devon, Teignbridge, South Hams, and Torbay. The second would cover the east, north, and mid-Devon area, including East Devon, Exeter City, Mid Devon, North Devon, and Torridge. Plymouth City Council would remain a standalone unitary authority.

Another proposal suggests four unitary authorities, with expanded city councils for Plymouth, Exeter, and Torbay each forming separate authorities alongside a fourth authority covering the remaining rural and coastal districts.

Supporters say this could simplify decision-making and reduce duplication. I fear it could weaken local voice and identity, and the savings are not certain.

A decision is expected in mid-2026, with elections in May 2027 and the new councils starting in April 2028. Current District Councillors would likely remain in post until then.

Affordable and Social Housing at Benson Grange

The final affordable and social rent homes at Benson Grange are now being released over the coming weeks. Allison Homes expect to complete work on the site by March, and possibly earlier.

I am pleased that the way homes were allocated was changed to prioritise people with a local connection. This has benefited many local families, and homes are still being offered to those with a local connection.

Shared ownership homes are now also available. These offer another way for local residents to afford a home and get onto the property ladder.

I am also very pleased that Allison Homes and L&G honoured their agreement with the community. Over £30,000 was provided for community projects in addition to the £400,678 of Section 106 funding, which has now been fully paid. We are already seeing the benefits of this investment in the community.

Old Allotment Land next to the Park at Willow Rise

I have been exploring whether the land next to the new park at Willow Rise could be rented or purchased from the District Council for community use. This appears to be possible, and I am currently reviewing the full details so the Parish Council can consider the options and decide how to move forward.

One suggested use has been a community orchard, but the Parish Council would welcome other ideas and suggestions from residents.

Section 106 Community Projects

Additional funding has been agreed for the Parish Hall. An extra £8,000 was used to improve drainage and guttering, completing the insulation and cladding work. This work is now complete and the hall is ready to serve the community for many years to come.

Other projects funded by the Section 106 community fund are currently being worked on. These include improvements to the sports field facilities, plans for a new state-of-the-art skatepark, and the refurbishment and enhancement of the pump track. The pump track project is being supported by Allison Homes and is expected to start soon. Further updates will be shared as these projects develop.

Potholes and Blocked Drains

The wet and cold weather is causing serious damage to our roads. Please report potholes and blocked drains on the Devon County Council website.

If an issue is urgent or not being dealt with, please contact our County Councillor, Richard Hopley, at richard.hopley@devon.gov.uk.

Stay in Touch

I am here to represent you and help wherever I can. You can contact me by email at peter.jones@northdevon.gov.uk, by call or WhatsApp on 07708 187 305, or through Facebook Messenger on my councillor page. Please also follow my Facebook page for the latest updates and information.

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Council & Committee Meetings

Meetings are usually held monthly on the first Thursday with additional meetings scheduled as required, see www.witheridgepc.org for full schedule and any changes.

Agendas detailing venue and start time are published at least three days in advance on noticeboards located in the Square & Drayford Green, and on the council website together with minutes of meetings. Minutes of proceedings of a council and of its committees must be kept. They are intended to be formal records of official acts and decisions, not reports, still less verbatim reports of speeches.

Planning applications received after agenda publication will be dealt with owing to a 21 day limit on the council responding to consultations from the Planning Authority. The parish council is only a consultee, and does not determine applications.

Residents can make representations in writing to the clerk or in person during the public session held at the start of a meeting. Please note in accordance with Council Standing Order 3(h) a question shall not give rise to a debate or require an immediate response

Contacting the Council :- **Tele** : 07922 926017

Email : parishclerk@witheridgepc.org

Website: www.witheridgepc.org

Chair : Cllr J Harvey Tel: 07751 974412

Parish Councillors are listed in the Register of Interests on the website.

Contact Details for the District & County Councils services and councillors can all be accessed via the parish council website **Council Contact / General Info.** page.

Links to report Highways issues (potholes, block drains etc), issues with overgrown trees are also available including "A-Z" links to other services.



Witheridge Newsagents t/a Two Moors Store

16a The Square, Witheridge

New opening hours:

Monday – Thursday 6.00am - 6.00pm

Friday and Saturday 6.00am -7.00pm

Sunday 6.00am - 1.00 pm

A little known fact is that we have been delivering groceries throughout this year and intend to continue this service. We also accept payment by debit card over the phone making life easier we hope. If you've not been in to see the range recently please come on in and have a nose. Tel: **01884 860815**

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Becky: 07368 499893

Wednesday Charity Bingo.

Well Happy New Year to everyone and we sincerely hope you all had a good Christmas and New Year. Wow what a Christmas Bingo we had such an amazing evening and over 70 people turned up which made it a lively evening. Thank you to all of those who helped make it, tea and coffee making, mince pies serving.

Our Bingo dates for the next 3months are as follows,
February 11th and 25th.

March 11th and 25th,
April 8th and 22nd.

A quick reminder that our prices for the six books and the two fliers have increased, this is so we can carry on offering good prizes and hopefully raise some monies for the charities. The two draws will remain the same price.

Thank you for all your support looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Marion, David Suzi and Hayley.

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Mens' Den

Mens' Den started 2026 .13 of us there at our last meeting in January. Tea, coffee, biscuits and some very nice rock cakes. Well done guys, nice to see you all.

For those out there who have not ventured to Men's Den yet, here is a list of dates until June. We have been running for nearly 2 years now and have proved popular. It's not a club, just turn up, tea/coffee £1 a cup. We chat, "put the world to rights" and have a laugh. Just enjoying the company.

Sean

Men's Den 2026

Wednesdays 2-4pm

At 'The Rest A While'

Witheridge

Date

January – 14th + 28th

February – 11th + 25th

March – 11th + 25th

April – 8th + 22nd

May – 13th + 27th

June – 10th + 24th

For more information contact:

Sean Murphy - 07503 197282

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Drop-in Café

9.30-11am

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26th September

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Short mat bowls

We meet in the Parish Hall on Thursdays at 2pm. Club woods are available for those who have not played before. The first three afternoons are free and tuition will be given.

Green fee is £3.50 per session thereafter

Short mat bowls is open to residents of Witheridge and surrounding villages. Children over 10 and under 16 must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Greg Henderson



Photo - Robin Thomason

Badminton

The Badminton club meets on Fridays at 7.30pm and the cost is £3.00 per session.

Anyone interested in coming along should contact Linda Williams 07966131522



Table tennis

Come and join our small friendly group for adults aged 16 or over. All equipment is supplied and we offer tea and coffee too. Come along and pass an enjoyable hour. All levels of ability, from beginners to Olympic contenders, are most welcome.

Friday 11.00am - 12.00 in Parish Hall

Greg Henderson

Brownies and Guides.

We had a busy Autumn term, and Brownies and Guides took part in the Remembrance Service at the Church, and they went to visit West Middlewick Farm and had a tour of the farm and shop. On our final evening they visited the Firs, nursing home and sang Christmas songs and Carols to the residents and staff, this was followed by a Christmas party at the School before we took a break for the Christmas Holidays.



We are always happy to welcome new girls and Volunteers to help run the sessions.

If you would like to know more, please contact me Carole Chapple by phone or e mail to 07957808981 or carolechapple50@gmail.com.

What's Happening in the village.

Parish Hall Chair		Clare Spicer 860135
Parish Hall booking	(meetings are free)	Steven Smith 861037
Allotment Society	David Williams	07811979488
Art Group	Rest a While –Wed 7.30pm	Eileen Curtis 860564
Badminton	Parish Hall Fri 7.30pm	Linda Williams 07966131522
Brownies and Guides	Witheridge School	Carole Chapple 855329
Charity Bingo	Thelbridge Hall alt Wed 7.30pm	Marion Crane 860530
Bell Ringer	Belfry Thur 7.30pm	Ken Ramsbottom 861108
Dog training	Parish Hall Mon 6pm	Jackie McDevitt 01769 550155
Film Club		Margie Cosker 861695
Gardening Club	Parish Hall last Wed 7pm	Jill Horwood 861323
Knights of Witheridge	Chairman	Ian Tench 860770
Ladies Group	Parish Hall 2nd Tues 2pm	Coral Simmonds 07759845052
Methodist Church	Sunday 10.30am	Ruth Towers 07980104347
Monday Club	Rest a While alt Mon 2pm	Val Dickinson 860709
Rest a While	Mon– Sat 10-12,	Val Dickinson 860709
Short mate bowls	Parish Hall Tues 6.30, Thur 2pm	Greg Henderson 860819
Table tennis	Parish Hall Fri 11-12	Greg Henderson 860819
Tennis club	Www.witheridgetennisclub.com	Sarah Vertigan 07939241025
Taekwondo	Parish Hall Thur 6-7pm	Kevin Raven 07804471165
Astronomical society	Committee Room 3rd Thur 7.30-9	Steven Smith 861037
Witheridge in Bloom	Carol.northam@pobroadband..co.uk	
Witheridge Golf Society		Ken Ramsbottom 861108
Witheridge Parish Church	Sunday 9.30am	Rev Adrian Wells 861383
Witheridge Primary School	& pre-School Head of School	Miss Ratcliffe 869518
Witheridge parent and toddler group	Witheridge School Wed 1.45-3.30 Fridays 9-10.13am	Rebecca +Nick Robinson 07875127054
Witheridge ploughing association	Gill Gilbard	gill@helebartonfarm.co.uk
Witheridge Young Farmers	Emma Gilbard	em ma.gilbard@markalengroup.com
Witheridge Youth Club	Parish Hall 1+3rd Thurs 7-8.30pm	Andrea Court 860815
Witheridge Striders	Edward Fyson 07517148284	Janet Ashelford 860234
Worlington Photography group	Worlington Parish hall 3rd Tue 7.30pm	Terry Brown 861268



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