

Wheathampstead Magazine



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February 2025



It Must Be Love

Stressed and Anxious

When The Going Gets Tough

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WELCOME

February is the month of Love, or so the chocolate makers and flower sellers would have us believe – but who cares, if love is in the air, you won't find me complaining and, of course, I absolutely never complain about chocolate or flowers. We took a little look at the history of valentine's day and what other countries do to celebrate and then we went out around the area to find out what local people have planned.

We heard from local electrical specialists, Bart Foley, who explained that it's a good idea to get the electrics at home tested once in a while, and we found out about the many helpful services offered by the local Citizens Advice Bureau.

We found that January was so cold and frosty and, whilst we are hoping that the weather improves for February, just in case things get frosty, we look at Snow and ask, 'do we love it or hate it?'

Now it's firmly and irreversibly 2025, we check out food swaps that might help with shifting some Christmas weight and *Health Matters* reviews Cataracts; the causes, symptoms and treatment.

Finally, we decided to share a few new things that we have discovered this month as we believe that you might enjoy them too.

Have a great month!

Eve

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Useful Phone Numbers

Doctors Surgery: Marford Road
01582 832258

Dentist: Marford Road 01582 833 408

Gas Emergency: 0800 111 999

Electricity Emergency: 0800 404 090

Power Cuts: 105

Healthline: 111

Police non emergency: 101

Parish Council: 01582 832541

County Council: 0300 123 4040

Local Pharmacy: 01582 832102

Help Lines

Mind: 0845 766 0163

Advice for Mental Health Issues

The Samaritans: Freephone 116123

Confidential non-judgemental emotional support

Alcoholics Anonymous:

0845 769 7555

Stroke helpline: 0845 303 3100

Advice from the Stroke Association

Age Concern: 0800 00 99 66

Frank: 0800 77 66 00

Advice about drugs from professional advisers

Beating Eating Disorders:

0845 634 1414

Cruse Day by Day: 0844 477 9400

Help and support for people who are bereaved

Macmillan CancerLine:

0808 808 2020

Autism Helpline: 0845 070 4004

Did you know...

It was 35 years ago in February 1990 - In South Africa, the 30-year-old ban on the African National Congress was lifted by President F.W. de Klerk, who also promised to free Nelson Mandela and remove restrictions on political opposition groups. He kept his word and Nelson Mandela was elected president in the first all-race elections in April 1994.

We've Heard...

That 2024 was another landmark year for the National Garden Scheme with the charity donating a record £3,501,227. This means that thousands of people who live with health conditions such as cancer or Parkinson's, who have poor mental health, or who struggle financially as unpaid carers, have been supported by our funding of the nurses, health professionals and case workers who support them. So visit an open garden near you when you can, See What's On page 7 for gardens open in February.



Valentine's Day

It's February 14th and an unofficial holiday celebrated by lovers and romantics everywhere. To ensure that you look your best, why not use our local village businesses like Coppertop for ladies' hair styling or pop into The Swan Pub for a celebratory drink or two?

Thought for February

Stay upbeat and Positive,,, dance like there's nobody watching, love like you'll never be hurt, sing like there's nobody listening and live like it's heaven on earth!

Contents

6

What's On

8

Stressed & Anxious

11

Health Check at Home

13

Museum of the Moon

14

When it's Tough Going

17

It Must Be Love

21

Flakes & Flurries

22

Health Matters

27

Clubs & Groups



8



14



13

Tax problems?

Talk to:

Fenlon & Co

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- Accounts for Ltd Companies
- Self Assessment Tax Returns
- Accounts for Self Employed
- Payroll & VAT Returns
- HMRC investigations

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Email: laskier@fenlonandco.co.ukwww.fenlonandco.co.uk**What's On...**
*regularly***• Foodbank**

Confidentiality is assured. We now hold this at the Memorial Hall in Marford Road, still every Thursday but from 11:30am - 1:30pm. Tel: 01727 613019

• Recreation for the Retired

The Chapel Halls Brewhouse Hill All welcome. Various activities available. 2pm-4pm most Fridays

• Wheathampstead Dementia Friendship and Support Group (WDFS) - Bluebell Club

Meets at the Mead Hall every 1st and 3rd Wednesday (except August). All welcome. Enquiries to: Isobel Poole, 07949 630228.

• W.A.S.P.S. After School Play-SchemeFantastic, affordable and experienced child-care before and after school each day, Beech Hyde Primary School, www.wasps-asc.org**• Quiz**

The Swan Wheathampstead. Wed 5th & 19th January

• Herts Musical Memories

Singing for people with dementia & their carers/loved ones. Monday mornings 10.30am - 12.00 midday. Memorial Hall Call Wendy Hyams 07483 307545 or Kerry Brabant 020 8950 5757

• Harpenden Farmers Market

70 + stalls running north bound along the Lower High Street from Sainsburys offering a huge selection of produce and gifts.. It's a great place to browse on the 4th Sunday of every month.

• Community Library

Wheathampstead Community Library Monday - Thursday 2pm - 6pm and Saturday 9am-1pm. Knit Natter & Know Craft group every Wednesday 10am-Noon. Fire Station and Library Marford Road Wheathampstead.

• Roast & Meat Raffle

Weekly Sundays at The Swan, Wheathampstead

• Swan Bingo

It's Eyes down once again for a great night of Bingo Fun at your favourite local pub in Wheathampstead Village 7.30 Thursday 6th February at The Swan Wheathampstead.

• Harpenden Riding for Disabled (RDA)Lessons to local people (over the age of 5) with physical disabilities or learning difficulties. Wednesdays 4.15-5.00 pm & 5.00 -5.45pm early Spring through Autumn. Sandridgebury equestrian centre, Sandridge. Contact harpenderda@yahoo.co.uk and via FB

Please contact event organisers for full details, ticket prices and availability.

What's On This Month**• Museum of the Moon, St Albans Cathedral, Open Now until...**

Museum of the Moon is a touring artwork by UK artist Luke Jerram. Measuring seven metres in diameter. At an approximate scale of 1:500,000, each centimetre of the internally lit spherical sculpture represents 5km of the moon's surface. St Albans Cathedral is open from 9am - 5pm daily. On Sundays the Moon will only be available to view from 12.30pm until close for visiting at 5pm. Now until 15th February St Albans Cathedral, Sumpter Yard, St Albans

• Mind + Matter: Towards Co-Creation Open Now until...UH Arts + Culture and Art: Sci Research Lab are thrilled to present a group exhibition exploring how artists and scientists can work together. The exhibition follows six artists' journeys through their practices as they explore ways in which meaningful cross-disciplinary collaborations can be achieved with both human and non-human partners. (FREE Art/Science Exhibition) Open weekdays 10am-4pm + 15th February 11am-3pm. Now until April. Art + Design Gallery, University of Hertfordshire, College Lane Campus, Hertfordshire, AL10 9AB www.uharts.co.uk**• Live Music with Carnegies 1st February**

Live Music from popular local band Carnegies celebrating 10 years together at this party gig playing great covers from across the musical spectrum. Come on down and join the fun. 9pm Saturday 1st February The Swan Wheathampstead Village

• Open Gardens 1st February

Walkern Hall is essentially a winter woodland garden. Set in eight acres, the carpet of snowdrops and aconites is a constant source of wonder in Jan-Feb. This medieval hunting park is known more for its established trees such as the tulip trees and a magnificent London plane tree which dominates the garden. Following on in March and April is a stunning display of daffodils and other spring bulbs. Saturday 1st Feb Sunday 2nd Feb Walkern Hall, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG2 7JA Open for NGS

• Books On The Hill Breakfast club 2nd February

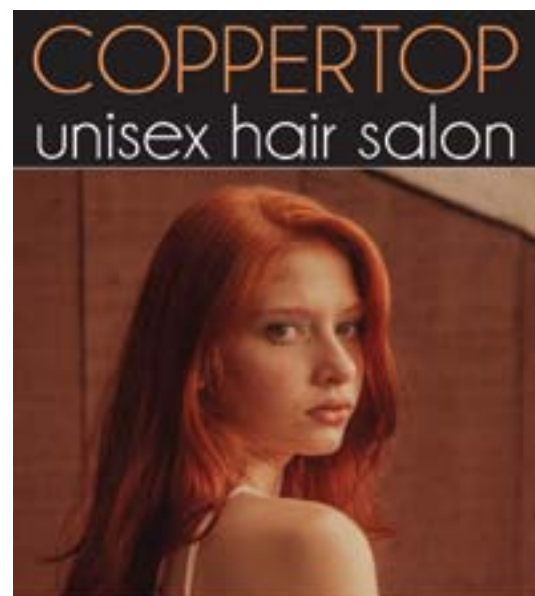
At Books On The Hill, they love all things books so they thought it would be great to get people together over breakfast to have a chat about books.

Sunday, February 2, 2025 10:00 AM 11:00 AM Books on the Hill1 Holywell Hill St Albans, To find out more visit <https://www.books-on-the-hill.co.uk/>**• Donkey Dots Music & Verona's Musical Balloon Band 5th February**Verona invites you to weekly sessions filled with live piano, percussion, singing, movement, learning, balloons and lots of joining in. It's a fun, inclusive and educational experience for toddlers, babies, carers, family and friends and ideal for children around the age of 4+ years and younger. Ideal for pre-schoolers, rollers and crawlers, siblings and their grown-ups. 9.55am | 11.15am | 12.30pm Wednesday 5th & Wednesday 12th February. The Olde Watermill Shopping Village Faldo Road Barton Le Clay Bedfordshire MK45 4RF for ticket details www.musicalballoonband.com**• Charity Quiz Night 8th February**A quiz night to raise money for our charity the OLLiE Foundation, a suicide prevention charity founded in St Albans. If you are interested in entering a team (4 or more) or want any more information, or to find out more about the OLLiE foundation visit <https://theolliefoundation.org> Harpenden Scout Hut, Crabtree Fields, Waldegrave Park, Harpenden, AL5 5SF**• Half Term Family Activities at Hertford Museum 18th February**Fun crafts this half term. Looking at a painting by Magritte, Mondrian and Kahlo. We will create our own versions of their art styles using paper, paints, sponges, acetate, marker pens and felt tips. 10am-1pm Tuesday 18th - Thursday 20th February Hertford Museum 18 Bull Plain Hertford SG14 1DT for details and tickets www.hertfordmuseum.org tel: 01992582686**• Wheathampstead u3a 27th February**

The speaker at the u3a February meeting will be a retired Metropolitan police officer who was awarded a Queens Police Medal for her services. She will talk about her life as a Counter Terrorism Officer. Meeting on Thursday 27th February 2025 the Memorial Hall at 2:00 for 2:30pm

To add your events please email: eve@minimagazines.co.uk

Please Note: Events, dates and times correct at time of going to press.

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Local Update

Stressed and Anxious? There's help out there

Optimism is great although there is no doubt that the cost-of-living crisis has hit hard and there seems to be no real sign of things changing. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) the independent social change organisation, the numbers of low-income households going without essentials like food and heating and/or getting into debt seems to be at worrying levels.

There's no shame in having debt, and it's completely understandable to be stressed and anxious about it.

The good news is that there is help out there. You just need to take the first step to find the help you need. With the cost-of-living crisis constantly in the news and so much worry and anxiety all around, we spoke to Citizens Advice St Albans District to find out just how they can help.

With a team of 27 staff and 80 volunteers, Citizens Advice St Albans District provides free, confidential, impartial and independent advice. The team are trained to advise on virtually any issue and can work with you to sort out any debt worries and help you claim the benefits you may be entitled to. They can help with housing and employment

problems, or deal with queries about consumer or tax issues. They can advise on family and personal matters too. Practical support such as help with filling in forms and writing letters is also available.

Advice is available over the phone, online, via email, or face to face at various locations across the district. There is a drop-in advice service every morning from 10am-1pm at The Hub in the Civic Centre, St Albans and in Harpenden, Redbourn and Wheathampstead for people who find it difficult to call or go online.

So, it seems that the best place to start is probably via the telephone. Phone lines are open Mon-

Thurs 10-4pm;
Fri 10-1pm
01727 811118.

When you call, a trained assessor will call back the same morning or afternoon to find the most appropriate way to help you. This can be giving information for you to resolve the issue, or it

could be making an appointment to discuss complex issues with a specialist advisor via the phone or face-to-face. Citizens Advice also offer an Adviceline which is a national service with opening hours to cover the evenings and Saturdays. The number is free to call: 0800 144 8848

Mon-Wed 10am-9pm; Thurs & Fri 10am-8pm
Saturdays 10am to 4pm.

We asked Citizens Advice for a couple of



CAB impact

- £195, 584 debts written off for clients during 2023/24
- 44% increase in clients with homelessness issues compared to 2022/23
- 10,537 people helped over the phone, in person and via webchat and email
- 25, 833 issues - employment, benefits, housing, debt, and family were the top issues

What they say...

"Hugely appreciate the easy accessibility and opportunity to speak to someone face-to-face and superb advice, thank you!"

"Excellent, professional, the kindness and generosity has really touched me. I was in a really difficult place and your support has been a lifeline."

examples of the work they do and they explained: "We successfully helped a husband make a claim for Attendance Allowance for his wife who has dementia. Both parties in the couple were finding it harder to cope with the situation they were living in. The client (husband) had all the medical evidence and a full knowledge of his wife's needs but did not have the confidence to complete the form on his own.

We have also worked alongside the foodbank to support a client to reduce their reliance on the foodbank. This has involved a few stages including helping the client to reduce their costs (e.g. applying for social tariffs for utilities), manage their finances and debts and organising payment plans for utilities. The client has also benefitted emotionally from feeling supported at the foodbank and feeling able to ask for help when needed."

If you'd like to know more about how Citizens Advice St Albans District can help you or you'd like to volunteer to help others, to make a start, just call one of the numbers mentioned above or visit their website www.citizensadvicestalban.org.uk

The Hillydyke Centre

The Hillydyke Centre is there to benefit the inhabitants of the Hillydyke Estate in Wheathampstead and the surrounding neighbourhood, by providing a meeting place and facilities for those living in the area of the community building.

According to reports, there was a plan for the centre to close at the end of 2024. It has been announced that Wheathampstead Parish Council is working with St Albans District Council to take on the lease as soon as possible. The Parish Council will work with the community and assess the viability of taking responsibility for the

centre.

Until late last year, Hertfordshire Family Services offered various support services for children, young people, their parents, families and carers from the centre. Now families can visit other nearby centres such as Southdown, Batford, Harpenden and St Albans for various activities including: Active Rhyme Time, Baby Group, Becoming Dad. To find out more visit www.hertsfamilycentres.org



We've Discovered...

We've been out and about over the past few weeks in search of this or that, just to see what's out there and what we might discover. There are definitely a few things that we are happy to share; - We've tested a new service, found an interesting little shop and realized something about one of our [Continued on page 11](#)





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big local stores that we can tell you about. And for those that are interested, I can confirm that my Bio Sculp manicure from Heavens Above beauty salon at Copper Top still looks good and I've only had to touch up my nails for the new growth!

Anyway, if you are anything like me and are not keen on ironing, try **Ironing Express**. We found their service for sheets, duvet covers, and pillowcases to be marvellous and they also do shirts, laundry, drycleaning and they offer alterations and tailoring too. The service and the prices are really good too and they will come to collect and deliver back the next day! It's just silly not to use them. Call Guy on 01582 622050 or take a look at their web site www.ironingexpress.co.uk

If you are into Crystals, love looking at dreamcatchers or are tempted to have a tarot reading, visit **Destiny Rising**. This tiny shop has the lot;- so many different types of crystals and jewellery as well as Angels, Faeries, Buddhas, Incense oils and resins, divination tools, Aura sprays, Tarot cards, Books, CDs and Candles. They also offer various Workshops, Therapies and Readings. We really enjoyed our time browsing around this rather special little shop which is based in Battlers Green Farm. We loved the home-made cream tea served at the Bull Pen tearoom (next door) and just had to browse around the other 19 or so unique outlets based in the same lovely, rural shopping village. Battlers Green Farm, New Road, Radlett, Herts, WD7 8PH www.destinyrisingshop.co.uk.

Did you know that we have Hertfordshire's largest supplier of smallholder pet and equine feed and bedding right on our doorstep? Of course that's **GJW Titmuss**, the big store halfway up Lamer Lane, just outside the village. They sell everything you could want for any animal care, it seems and they sell home and garden products too. In fact, they have huge stocks at great prices from all the leading brands and you can order it all online and just pop up there to collect it, using their online click and collect service. <https://www.gjwtitmussltd.co.uk>

chatted to local electrical specialist, Bart Foley, who explained the benefits of giving your home an electrical health check every 10 or so years. There may be nothing at all wrong, or maybe some updates will be recommended, however, a check could uncover some potentially dangerous situations in your home which are fairly easily addressed with a bit of forethought.

We wanted to find out about Bart's electrical credentials and he explained that his business, Foley Electrical Services, was established in 2019 and serves Wheathampstead and all surrounding areas. Bart and his team are fully qualified electricians with full testing and inspector status. Registered with NAPIT (National Association of Professional Testing & Inspection) which grants



them privileges to notify Building Control and to sign off and issue all safety certificates. They are fully insured for Public Liability and Professional Indemnity. Bart said: "As a member of NAPIT, I personally have to undergo an assessment every year, where an inspector comes to me and assesses me on current and previous work. This ensures that we maintain a very high level of knowledge and expertise, as well as keeping up to date with all changes in the electrical regulations and guidelines."

We asked Bart for answers to all our concerns as follows: -

Which areas of our homes need safety checks?

For domestic properties, the wiring regulations BS 7671 recommend that electrical installations are inspected and tested *Continued on page 12*

Health Check at Home

There's always plenty of words in the news about physical health checks but what about checking various elements of your home? We



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every 5-10 years. This frequency may vary depending on the property, usage, and any changes to the occupancy or electrical systems. In the private rented sector, landlords are required by law to have electrical installations inspected and tested by a qualified and competent person at least every five years.

What are typical problems that checks could uncover?

Outdated wiring. Older properties often have wiring that may have deteriorated and now doesn't meet today's safety standards. This can cause circuit overloading and be a fire risk. Loose or faulty electrical connections are another common problem. Bad connections in a switch or a socket can lead to arcing and overheating, which is a major fire hazard. Faulty Consumer Unit / Fuse board. Outdated fuse boards are a safety issue. Damaged circuit breakers and a lack of an RCD (Residual Current Device) is common in many older properties. RCDs are essential safety devices that protect against electric shocks and reduce the risk of electrical fires. Many older electrical systems lack these devices, which is a significant safety

concern. These are essential safety devices in any home for both inside and especially outside electrical outlets.

Overloaded Circuits. You can completely be overloading a circuit without knowing. Persistent overloading can damage electrical components and increase the risk of fires.

Which areas could be fine on the surface but trouble underneath?

Socket outlets, switches. Cables concealed under floors or in the ceilings. Lights, in fact any electrical appliance or accessory can become faulty.

Why do things suddenly become unsafe?

Some parts of an installation deteriorate with age, but some areas may suddenly become dangerous. Frequently used outlets like switches being turned on and off regularly. Sockets where items are plugged in and out regularly. Also, all wiring undergoes a heating and cooling cycle when used. This over time can loosen connections and can seem like a sudden fault, but it's being developing over time.

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How do we know when something becomes unsafe?

There are obvious signs when something becomes unsafe. It stops working. A mild burning smell. An arcing sound when switching something on. However, unfortunately, there can be a lot happening beneath the surface that you can neither hear, see or smell.

What should I do to make sure my electrics are safe?

An EICR (Electrical Installation Condition Report) is essential for ensuring electrical systems' safety and compliance in residential properties. Regular inspections can identify potential hazards and necessary repairs, safeguarding occupants and property. A current EICR is becoming more important and is regularly requested by insurance companies and mortgage companies.

If you think its time to give your home an electrical once-over to make sure it's safe, give Bart a call. See page 19.

Museum of the Moon visits St Albans

Enjoyed by more than 20m visitors around the world, Luke Jerram's Museum of the Moon is now at St Albans Cathedral.

Museum of the Moon is a touring artwork by UK artist Luke Jerram. Measuring seven

metres in diameter, the moon features 120dpi detailed NASA imagery of the lunar surface. At an approximate scale of 1:500,000, each centimetre of the internally lit spherical sculpture represents 5km of the moon's surface. Over its lifetime, the Museum of the Moon will be presented in a number of different ways, both indoors and outdoors, so altering the experience and interpretation of the artwork. As it travels from place to place, it gathers new musical compositions and an ongoing collection of personal responses, stories and mythologies, as well as highlighting the latest moon science. The installation is a fusion of lunar imagery, moonlight and surround sound composition created by BAFTA and Ivor Novello award winning composer Dan Jones. Each venue also programmes their own series of lunar inspired events beneath the moon.

"The Museum of the Moon is much more than just a demonstration of technical and scientific prowess. It creates a personal connection with the nocturnal sky, heightening the experience of gazing at a "full moon" by generating a sense of nearness. The installation exudes extraordinary gentleness and inspires reflection, contemplation, celebration, and respect," said a visiting arts curator in Marseille.

The Cathedral is open from 9am - 5pm daily. On Sundays the Moon will only be available to view from 12.30pm until close *Continued on page 14*



for visiting at 5pm.
Now until 15th February St Albans Cathedral,
Sumpter Yard, St Albans, AL1 1BY



When the Going Gets Tough... do Some Swapping

Once Christmas is over and February arrives, many of us begin to think about summer holidays. So it's probably around about now that we can sometimes realise that we just ate too

much over Christmas and did a lot of sitting around, eating and drinking and making merry and all that goes with that, so not much exercise. We all know that eating a healthy diet, as well as being physically active is good for us and will help to prevent weight gain, but for many people it can be a real struggle to put this into practice. This is primarily because we are living in an environment that encourages us to eat too many calories and not be physically active. It's just too easy to eat takeaway food and sit in front of the TV.

According to public Health England (PHE) nearly two thirds of adults England are classed as being overweight (a body mass index BMI of over 25) or obese (a BMI of over 30) and apparently, almost a third of all children aged 2 to 15 are overweight or obese and younger generations are becoming obese at earlier ages and staying obese into adulthood.

It's likely that the NHS in England spends £Billions on overweight and obesity-related ill-health conditions. We all know that the NHS is struggling across the board, so it seems that failing to address the challenge posed by the

Some easy swaps and tips you could try at home or when you are eating out

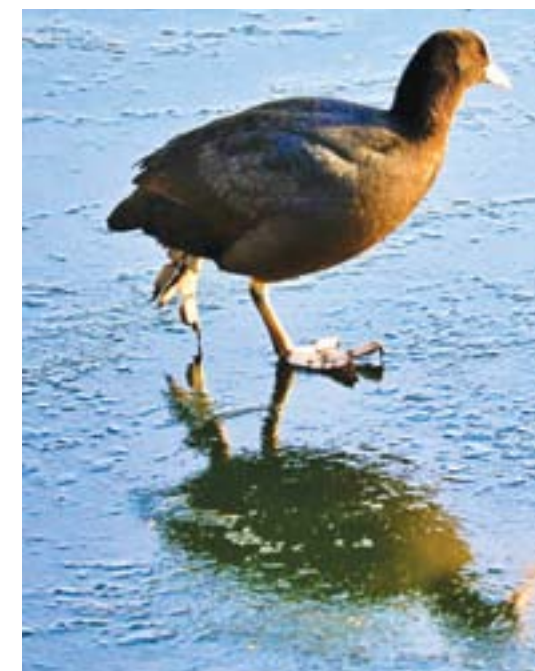


- Swap pies, bacon and sausages for healthier protein, such as lean cuts of meat, chicken without the skin, and lean meats like ham or fish (not fried).
- Swap cream and cheese sauces for tomato and vegetable sauce.
- Swap fried rice (such as egg-fried rice) for plain boiled rice.
- Swap chips and creamy mashed potatoes for baked, boiled or steamed potatoes with their skins on. Swap cakes, chocolate creamy puddings and ice cream for fruit salads or other fruit-based desserts and lower-fat, lower-sugar yoghurts.
- Avoid snacking on bread and nibbles before your main meal arrives.
- Don't order too much – you can always order more later if necessary.
- Bulk up your meal with a side order of low-calorie steamed vegetables.
- When ordering dessert, share one dessert between two.

obesity epidemic will place an even greater burden on NHS resources. We've heard reports in the news about a new wonder drug to tackle obesity and help generally with weight loss, but, at the moment, the NHS say they can't afford it for everyone, which means that, currently, there is no magic trick for obesity, so weight loss needs a plan. Its causes are complex, with many drivers, including behaviour, environment, biology and physiology and culture.

There are thousands of fast food and takeaway outlets in England and more and more delivery services that will even bring food to your door. On average, there are more fast food outlets in deprived areas than in more affluent areas. More than a quarter of adults and one fifth of children eat food from outlets such as cafes, takeaways or restaurants at least once a week. These meals can be high in calories, fat, sugar and salt.

Clearly we can all exercise more and make healthier food choices and those healthier choices should be the easy choice. But often healthy choices are hard to find on menus. But we can easily make a few changes and do a few swaps, which could make a difference. Take a look at our suggestions:-



Local photographer Robert Gregory captured this image of a coot walking on the ice at Stanborough lakes



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It Must Be Love

Valentine's Day, also known as Saint Valentine's Day or the Feast of Saint Valentine, is a special occasion dedicated to expressing love and affection to those closest to our hearts.

It's a real celebration of love observed on February 14th each year and is celebrated in many countries around the world.

The day was first associated with romantic love in the circle of Geoffrey Chaucer in the High Middle Ages, when the tradition of courtly love flourished. A popular account of Saint Valentine states that he was imprisoned for performing weddings for soldiers who were forbidden to marry and for ministering to Christians, who were persecuted under the Roman Empire.

According to legend, during his imprisonment, he healed the daughter of his jailer and apparently, before his execution, he wrote her a letter signed, "Your Valentine" as a farewell.

In the 18th-century England, it evolved into an occasion in which lovers expressed their love for each other by presenting flowers, offering confectionery, and sending greeting cards (known as "valentines").

In Europe, Saint Valentine's Keys are given to lovers "as a romantic symbol and an invitation to unlock the giver's heart." Valentine's Day symbols that are used today include the heart-shaped outline, doves, and the figure of the winged Cupid. These days, Valentine flowers, gifts and cards, remain unsigned by the sender and today it's possibly more a sign of affection than love - although perhaps we will never know!

The day is popular in many countries around the world, including the UK, United States as well as

in Canada, and Australia, and it is also celebrated in other countries, including Argentina, France, Mexico, and South Korea. In the Philippines it is the most common wedding anniversary, and mass weddings of hundreds of couples are not uncommon.

We're all familiar with the traditions surrounding Valentine's Day here in the UK - a dozen roses, a box of chocolates, a card with a love poem or similar. But in other parts of the world, many cultures have their own unique and frankly quirky twists on Valentine's Day traditions such as carved wooden spoons, public weddings, and even lucky pigs? Read on to find out more.

Argentina

The passion of the Argentinians can't be contained by just a single day, so they set aside a week in July as "Sweetness Week," when lovers and friends exchange candies, kisses, and good

cheer.

Brazil

Brazil does not celebrate Valentine's Day on February 14, as it falls too close to the weeklong carnival celebration.

However, June 12 is "Dia dos enamorados" ("Lovers' day"), where couples exchange gifts, cards, and

chocolate. On this day, some single women perform rituals (simpatias) to get in the good graces of Saint Anthony, the patron saint of marriage whose day is June 13.

France

France is a lover's paradise, and couples flock here for Valentine's Day every year. French couples exchange letters and cards on the day, a tradition which was actually started in France in the 15th century, when

Continued on page 18



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the imprisoned Duke of Orleans wrote a poem to his lover and called her "my valentine."

Ghana

The Ghanaians know the way to our heart: chocolate! February 14 is National Chocolate Day, an initiative introduced by the government in 2007 to shed light on the fact that Ghana is one of the world's largest producers of cocoa. Ghana holds concerts and performances, and restaurants offer special chocolate-themed menus, for the special day.

Germany

In Germany, the symbol for luck (as well as lust) is an odd one: the pig! Lovers exchange flowers, chocolates, and all manner of pig-shaped gifts, including statues and stuffed toys. Heart-shaped ginger cookies with love messages written in

icing are also popular.

Ireland

Many Irish folks in search of true love make a pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Valentine in Dublin, (church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel) Pictured opposite, which allegedly houses relics of Rome's original Saint Valentine, who was martyred for performing secret weddings for soldiers.



Italy

Another passionate nation, Italy couldn't pass up a chance to honor the universal emotion of love. Couples on Valentine's

Day give each other gifts like the baci perugina, a small box of hazelnut-filled chocolate kisses (baci means "kisses" in Italian). Each candy has a small love note inside written in five different languages. An older tradition states that the first

man that a single woman spots on Valentine's Day will become her husband within the year.

Philippines

People in the Philippines take this in completely the other direction, as the government sponsors mass Valentine's Day marriage ceremonies for dozens (or hundreds) of couples at a time!

South Africa

South Africans celebrate with flowers and gifts, and some women pin the name of their love interest on the sleeve of their shirt, which ensures that secret admirers don't remain secret for long! This dates back to the ancient Roman sacrificial festival of Lupercalia, held on February 15, where women wishing to become pregnant would hope to touch the sacrificial animal's hide for good luck.



Thailand

Thailand's adventurous lovers often take risks on Valentine's Day, with skydiving, bungee jumping, and underwater weddings becoming common traditions!

Wales

The Welsh get a jump on the rest of the world for Valentine's Day, instead celebrating St. Dwynwen's Day on January 25. He's the patron saint of lovers, and men traditionally give their significant others hand-carved wooden spoons, which dates back to the time when love-sick

Welsh sailors carved designs into their spoons to give to their lovers upon returning home. In Wheathampstead, romance is always in the air - in our lovely village high street you can buy flowers, chocolates and cards or visit the local pub and book dinner in a local restaurant. If it's not too chilly, you can even sit by the river and look at the stars!

We went out and about to find out what local people have planned for the day of love in 2025. Miss P told us that she was hoping to be wined and dined and confessed to a love for all things romantic, including red roses and chocolates. "I'm hoping that he might just pop the question this year," she said. Miss D and Mr L explained that they were planning to go out for dinner and

had booked into a local restaurant. "We do buy each other cards and send them anonymously, which is probably all rather silly, but we like it."

Mr T said: "I don't do valentines. I'm a single bloke and can't be done with all that lovey dovey stuff. What will I be doing on the 14th? I'll be watching sport on TV I expect."

Mrs F admitted to being a romantic at heart and liked the idea of celebrating love on Valentine's Day and a man popping the question, but couldn't see anything special happening this year. She said: "The only question that is likely to be popped in our house is what time is tea?"



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Flakes or Flurries, It's Snow; Love it or Hate it

According to TV news reports, in January, we experienced the coldest January night for 15 years. Does that mean it's just too cold to snow or are the constant threats of snow by weathermen actually going to come to fruition in February? The truth is, weather reports bang on about the possibility of snow far too often in the winter, but thankfully the white stuff usually confines itself to falling in the northern regions of the UK and stays right away from Wheathampstead, so let's hope that trend continues for 2025.

The best sort of snow is a light fluffy covering which falls gently from the sky early on a Sunday morning; driving isn't a necessity, nor is any sort of train travel or outdoorsy stuff, so you can just admire the way freshly fallen snow looks from the comfort of your living room.

Looking through the window, heavy snowflakes or snow flurries are fine with me just as long as I don't have to go outside. To start with, someone has to shovel snow off the drive and then, if it's not still covered in ice and you can actually get

your car out of the said drive and onto the road, driving can be very dangerous.

When the roads are icy there are some conditions where you can actually lose control of your car altogether as the ice takes over and the car careers along a road, or worse, down a hill with what seems like a mind of its own. If this has ever actually happened to you, then you will appreciate how scary it can be. The pavements and walkways are always icy and, if there is no ice, it's usually because it's been replaced by dirty



grey sludge, which can be just as slippery if you are not careful.

But having said all that, if you are wrapped up warm with boots and waterproof gloves and you are outside in your garden, throwing soft snowballs and building a snowman, fresh snow can be great fun, especially if you are with children. I've also heard of people having a barbeque in the snow, roasting sausages and burgers whilst drinking warm mulled wine - now that I could probably manage. I know that lots of people are great fans of winter sports and skiing too. Understandably, perhaps, enjoying ski lifts and stunning mountain scenery as well as the exhilaration of 'flying' down a snow-covered slope on skis with the wind in their faces. So, all things considered, I suppose the love or otherwise of snow depends on where you are and where you've got to get to.

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Cataracts

The main cause of impaired vision worldwide is Cataracts; In England and Wales, it is estimated that around 2.5 million people aged 65 or older have some degree of visual impairment caused by cataracts.

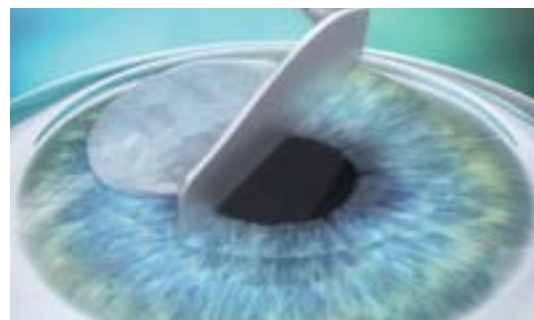
When we're young, our lenses are usually like clear glass, allowing us to see through them. As we get older they start to become frosted, like bathroom glass, and begin to limit our vision. Cataracts most commonly affect adults as a result of ageing and are when the lens of your eye, a small transparent disc, develops cloudy patches. If your optician mentions cataracts during a routine eye exam don't worry, some people are never really bothered by them and if necessary you can have a simple procedure to remove them via the NHS.

What causes cataracts?

Cataracts occur when cloudy patches develop in the clear lens inside your eyes, stopping light from reaching the back of the eye and causing blurred or misty vision.

In most people cataracts simply develop as they age. It's not entirely clear why we are more likely to develop cataracts as we get older, but some things may increase your risk of cataracts, including:

- A family history of cataracts
- Smoking
- Regularly drinking excessive alcohol
- A poor diet lacking in vitamins
- Lifelong exposure of your eyes to UV light
- Taking steroid medication over a long time
- Previous eye surgery or injury
- Certain health conditions, such as diabetes



What are the symptoms of cataracts?

Blurred, misty or cloudy vision. You may find it more difficult to see in dim or very bright light and bright lights may be dazzling or uncomfortable to look at. You may have double vision and colours may look faded or less clear with a yellow or brown tinge. You may see haloes (circles of light) around bright lights, such as car headlights or street lights.

Cataracts develop over many years and problems may at first be unnoticeable. They often develop in both eyes, although each eye may be affected differently. Cataracts are not painful and don't make your eyes red or irritated. You'll usually have blurred, cloudy or misty vision, or you may have small spots or patches where your vision is less clear.

Diabetes can cause the lens in your eye to become cloudy. If you have diabetes, you're more likely to develop a cataract, and at an earlier age than might be expected in someone without diabetes.

How can diabetes affect my eyes?

Not everyone who has diabetes develops a related eye condition, so it's possible that your diabetes won't cause any changes to your vision. However, when diabetes does affect the eyes, it can do

Health Matters

so in other ways including an unstable glasses prescription

The changes in blood sugar levels caused by diabetes can affect the natural lens inside your eye making your vision become more blurred or more variable throughout the day or from day to day. This can make your glasses prescription variable and unreliable. As your blood glucose becomes better managed, this variation in your vision will settle down.

Testing for age-related cataracts

Your optician will do a series of eye tests, including a visual acuity exam, which measures how well you see at various distances. If your optician thinks you have cataracts, you may be referred to an eye specialist (ophthalmologist) for more tests and treatment.

Treating age-related cataracts

If your cataracts are not too bad, stronger glasses and brighter reading lights may help for a while. But cataracts do get worse over time, so you may eventually need surgery to remove and replace the affected lens.

Cataract surgery involves *Continued on page 24*



replacing the cloudy lens inside your eye with an artificial one. Surgery is the only treatment that's proven to be effective



that have been proven to improve cataracts or stop them getting worse. **Before surgery,** you'll be referred to a specialist

for cataracts. It's the most common operation performed in the UK, with a high success rate in improving your eyesight. It can take 4 to 6 weeks to fully recover from cataract surgery. If you have cataracts, clearly it's your decision whether or not to go ahead with cataract surgery. Surgery is usually offered on the NHS if your cataracts are affecting your eyesight and quality of life. You can choose to put off having surgery for a while and have regular check-ups to monitor the situation. There are no medicines or eye drops

eye doctor for an assessment. During the assessment different measurements will be taken of your eyes and your eyesight. The assessment is an opportunity to discuss anything to do with your operation, including: your lens preference, such as near sight or long sight the risks and benefits of surgery if you'll need glasses after surgery how long you'll take to fully recover If you're used to using 1 eye for distance and 1 for reading, which is called monovision, you can ask



to stay that way. This usually means you'll get a near-sight lens fitted in 1 eye and a long-sighted lens fitted in the other eye.

The operation

Cataract surgery is a straightforward procedure that usually takes 30 to 45 minutes and is often carried out as day surgery under local anaesthetic and you should be able to go home on the same day.

During the operation, the surgeon will make a tiny cut in your eye to remove the cloudy lens and replace it with a clear plastic one. With the NHS, you will usually be offered monofocal lenses, which have a single point of focus. This means the lens will be fixed for either near or distance vision, but not both. If you go private, you may be able to choose either a multifocal or an accommodating lens, which allows the eye to focus on both near and distant objects. Most people will need to wear glasses for some tasks, like reading, after surgery regardless of the type of lens they have fitted.

If you have cataracts in both eyes, you'll need two separate operations, usually carried

out 6 to 12 weeks apart. This will give the first eye to be treated time to heal and your vision time to return.

Benefits of surgery

After cataract surgery you should be able to:

- see things in focus
 - look into bright lights and not see as much glare
 - tell the difference between colours
- It's worth noting that if you have another condition affecting your eyes, such as diabetes or glaucoma, you may still have limited vision, even after successful surgery.

If you have any concerns about cataracts speak to your optician.

Information provided by NHS and <https://www.rnib.org.uk/>





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At the first sign of a stroke, call 999



The NHS has launched a new campaign to help us all spot the first signs someone might be having a stroke – and to call 999 immediately. A stroke is a leading cause of disability in the UK, striking every five minutes with around 100,000 strokes happening a year causing 38,000 stroke-related deaths.

The sooner you spot the signs and get help, the better.

The first sign of a stroke might not seem serious, like not being able to raise your arm, or struggling to smile, or slurring when you speak. Stroke symptoms can be less dramatic, painful or obvious than you might expect. Even if it doesn't seem like it, any sign of a stroke is always an emergency, so call 999 immediately if you or someone else experiences a single symptom. A stroke is a medical emergency that requires

immediate attention as every minute is vital. Acting FAST on any sign of a stroke gives stroke patients quicker access to specialist treatment that can be life-saving and could reduce the long-term effects such as a disability. Whether it is a friend, loved one or even a passer-by, dialling 999 quickly saves lives. Face or Arm or Speech, at the first sign, it's time to call 999.

Visit the NHS website for more information.

If you are a British Sign Language user, deaf, have hearing loss or communication difficulties you can text 999 by registering your phone in advance.

Call 999 at the first sign of a stroke and paramedics can take you or your loved one to the nearest specialist stroke unit, depending on where you live.



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Local Clubs and Groups



Tennis

Wheathampstead Lawn Tennis Club with 3 all-weather floodlit courts, a short tennis court and a clubhouse located in the heart of Wheathampstead on Marford Playing Fields, just alongside Brocket View. Wednesdays at 6.30pm every week, or Sundays at 10am most weeks. Visit the website for further information www.wltc.org.uk

Thursday Club

The Thursday Club is a friendly, volunteer-run companionship and support Club for Wheathampstead residents who are over 60 and unable to access other activities without support. The Club meets every Thursday from 10am-2pm. Tea/Coffee is provided upon arrival, followed by a home cooked meal and then we finish with some form of entertainment. Transport to and from the Mead Hall can be arranged. To find out more, or if you have any questions, call Val Hughes on 01582 629682 or Michael Corley on 01582 833018.

The Village Surgeries PPG.

The objective of the group is to contribute wherever possible to the health improvements in Wheathampstead and Harpenden. We are now arranging monthly medical talks on-line. There are also newsletters 4 times a year where members can gain information about local initiatives. We are always looking for new members and it is free to join and participate. To be included and receive the newsletter and get details of the talks please send a request to chair@thevillagesurgeriesppg.co.uk

Archery

Wheathampstead Archery club was founded in 1956, and has about 70 members. Always happy to welcome newcomers; beginners or experienced. Beginners will need to complete a beginner course run by our Archery GB qualified club coaches. There is a Junior Section for under-18s, but the minimum age is 10.
<http://wheathampsteadarchery.org.uk/>

Forging Friendship Club

Affiliated to the Men's Sheds Association, this new club has recently formed in Wheathampstead. Members meet socially and form friendships while facilitating creativity, passing on skills and learning from each other. Meet weekly on Wednesday at 10am to 12 pm in the Old Forge building near the entrance to the Meads.

To join or find out more email:
forgingfriendshipsclub@gmail.com

Wheathampstead Baby & Toddler Group

We are a relaxed and friendly group for 0-4 year-olds and their parents and carers, run by parent-volunteers. We provide toys, craft, music, snacks, hot drinks and the chance to get to know other local people. We meet every Friday during term time, 9:45-11:15am at The Memorial Hall on Marford Road.

Find us on Facebook or contact
wheathampsteadtoddlergroup@gmail.com

Wheathampstead Community Group (WCG)

WCG seeks to support anyone in the Parish of Wheathampstead who is looking for assistance. If you or anyone that you know needs help, or you wish to volunteer for WCG, please call 07539 176481.

If you need transport to hospital or the doctor, please call 07918 136870.

www.wheathampsteadwcg.org
email: Secretary@wheathampsteadwcg.org

Continued on page 28

Kimpton Bowls Club

Bowling for everyone- Come and try bowls. 'Beginners Welcome' Friendly members to help you play. Woods provided but flat shoes please. Come and have fun on Sunday 23rd April 2023 from 2pm. Kimpton Bowls Club, Recreation Ground, Kimpton.
For further details contact John 07785960353

Business Group

Wheathampstead Businesses (known as WEB) has a mission to Promote, Protect & Support local businesses and the local community. BILLY the Bee is our mascot promoting Buy It Locally. Twice monthly networking meetings provide an opportunity to collaborate, learn from each other and gain customers. For more details contact Ginny Cooper, Chairman: chair@wheathampsteadbusinesses.co.uk

Cricket

Wheathampstead Cricket Club has five adult teams and an expanding colts section. Cricket is played on Nomansland Common on Saturday and Sunday throughout the season, with occasional mid-week



and evening fixtures. WCC really is a club on the up and we now have some of the best cricket facilities in the county. New players and spectators are always welcome. www.wheathampsteadcc.hitscricket.com

Wheathampstead Dramatic Society

The Dramatic Society is always looking for new members who would like to join this friendly group. For information about our next planned production visit our website: www.wheathampsteadramaticsociety.co.uk

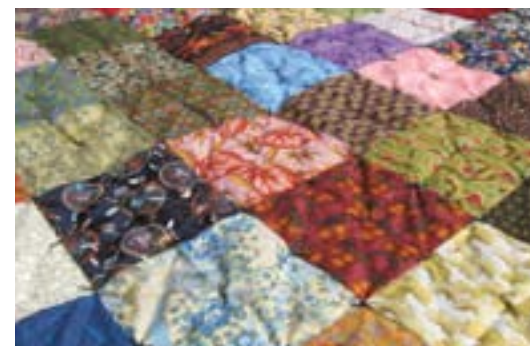
Wheathampstead & District Preservation Society

The aims of the group are to protect what's best about the village, make the best use of its assets, object to inappropriate planning applications and take part in community initiatives. The more members we have, the louder is our voice. To join, please see our website: www.wheathampsteadpreservation.org.uk or call 01582 833789.

Mead Quilters

We are a long established, forward looking and friendly quilting and patchwork group who meet at the Mead Hall in East Lane, Wheathampstead, AL4 8BP.

We meet on the first Tuesday morning of each month 10.00-12.00pm, and the 3rd Tuesday evening 7.30-9.00pm. Visitors are welcome at both sessions. For further information see our website www.meadquilters.org



Wheathampstead W.I.

Lively, interesting and varied meetings. Every 2nd Wednesday 7.30pm at the Mead Hall in East Lane W/stead. Social events and outings throughout the year. See W.I Noticeboard in the High Street for more information or contact our Secretary Gillian Keen: wheathampsteadwicommittee@outlook.com
New members always welcome.

Football

Wheathampstead Wanderers was formed in 1990 by a small group of families from the village to promote and support youth football for the benefit of children and young people in Wheathampstead and surrounding areas. An FA Charter Standard Club, granted in 2008, with around 300 boys and



girls playing football.

www.wheathampsteadwanderersfc.co.uk

Horticultural Society

Meets: St. Helen's School, Wheathampstead AL4 8AN. 7.30pm, first Wednesday of the month. A friendly village gardening club welcoming everyone of all ages and enthusiasm- even armchair gardeners! A wide range of speakers [some selling plants], socials, visits to interesting gardens, a Plant Sale on 3rd Sunday in May - all are on the agenda. Affiliated to the R.H.S. Occasional meeting on Zoom. For more information please e mail whortsoc@gmail.com or phone Jill on 01582 460394

Wheathampstead Dementia Friendship and Support (WDFS) - Bluebell Club

Social group for those living with dementia and their carers. 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month, 10.30 to noon at the Mead Hall, East Lane AL4 8BP. Call Isobel Poole, 07949 630228 All Welcome

Brownies and Rainbows

1st Wheathampstead Brownies meets at St. Peter's in Gustard Wood on a Tuesday.

3rd Wheathampstead brownies meet at the Scout Hut on a Thursday.

1st Wheathampstead Rainbows meets at the Scout Hut on a Monday. There are currently spaces available so, if you would like your daughter to join please visit: go.girlguiding.org.uk to register your interest.

One of the leaders in the village will be in touch when a space becomes available. Registering your

Continued on page 31

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 Delaport Cub Pack Wednesday 6:30 to 8:00
 Lamer Scout Troop Friday 7:30 to 9:00
 Explorer Scouts Tuesday 8:15 to 10:00
 If your child would like a place, please contact: w11stwheathampstead@outlook.com

Music and Singing

Introducing the Clover Singing Club, a new concept in ensemble singing for ladies, with emphasis on laughter and relaxation. Try us out - first session free. No need to read music. Sessions are term time on Mondays 1.15-3.15 p.m., Mead Hall, Wheathampstead.
 Contact Charlotte 07791 741233.

new skills or refresh old ones through our wide range of interest groups. Enjoy first-rate speakers at monthly meetings in the Memorial Hall and participate in organised outings to places of interest. Find out more at:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/wheathampstead/home>

Wheathampstead History Society

The society meets at 7.15pm, the third Wednesday of each month, in the Mead Hall, East Lane.

It offers a programme of talks promoting local history & heritage, undertakes research projects and encourages and supports members' research. For further information visit our website www.wheathampsteadheritage.org.uk

Wheathampstead Warriors

Your local running club, all abilities welcome! The best way to find out more about the Warriors is to come and join one of our club runs on a Tuesday or Thursday evening.

Currently all runs need to be booked in advance but please contact us on wheatywarriorsmembership@gmail.com and we'll be able to arrange for you to join us for a run.

More information can be found on our website - <https://wheathampsteadwarriors.co.uk/>

Positive Movement

On-line classes twice per week (term time) via Zoom, Tuesdays at 2pm and Thursday at 10.30. Classes are for those with reduced mobility. Gentle, chair-based exercises to improve Posture, Balance, Strength and Stability. Call Lynn on 07866 168242 to arrange for a trial class.

The Hardynges Choir

The Hardynges Choir is keen to help people experience the joy of choral singing, and welcomes new members, whatever their previous expertise, especially Altos, Tenors and Basses. We rehearse on a Monday evening 7:45pm and 9:45pm during school term time at the School Hall of St Helen's C of E Primary School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead.

Call Primrose Watts on 01582 460092
www.hardyngeschoir.org

Wheathampstead U3A

Wheathampstead U3A is open to anyone who is retired or semi-retired. No qualifications are needed, and none are given. Make friends, learn

new skills or refresh old ones through our wide range of interest groups. The Community Kitchen comes together to prepare a three-course restaurant style meal with up to three choices from a freshly prepared menu. You can help to cook and/or mix and mingle with diners and volunteers.

Working on an anonymous, pay what you can afford basis, the group meet on the last Tuesday of each month (unless specified), arrival from 5.30pm to eat at 6pm at The Chapel Halls, (behind the Chapel Gym), Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead, AL1 4AG. Call or text Maria on 07727 207818 to book your place or with questions.

THE SWAN

Wheathampstead

- Lunch served daily 12 till 2.30pm
- Friday evening Hand Battered Cod, Burgers or Pizza
- Monday evening full menu 6 till 9pm
- Pizza served daily, eat in or take away
- Live Music, Quiz and Bingo
- Sunday Meat Raffle
- Friday Drinks Raffle



Showing football on Sky and TNT Sport
Outdoor covered seating area
Function room available to hire
Dog friendly

56 High St, Wheathampstead, Herts, AL4 8AR, 01582 833110