



The

Hills

Echo

**The Village
Magazine of
West Malvern**

**February/ March
2026**

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WELCOME TO WEST MALVERN'S HILLS ECHO MAGAZINE FOR FEBRUARY & MARCH!

And to begin with an apology – that this edition will need to cover two months (February and March) rather than the usual one. This is because of changes in our team, in particular, the stepping down of Jen Close, who has done so much to re-establish and reshape the magazine to its present format. Thank you Jen.

Despite this change we have done our best to provide as comprehensive an Events Calendar as possible for the two monthly period, and we hope that any other events and activities that we have not been able to include here, will indeed be separately and successfully advertised by other means, e.g. by digital communication and via the village notice boards.

Being the first issue of 2026, it is of course appropriate to commence this issue by wishing all our readers a very happy and fulfilling New Year. Then next to say that, as always, we welcome your ideas and suggestions for themes and subjects that we might perhaps feature or develop in forthcoming issues. It is important to us that the magazine stays fresh and continually evolves and develops its coverage, in so doing, embracing as wide and varied a set of subjects and interests that are pursued and enjoyed within, or relevant to, our village.

To this end we encourage each and every-one of our readers, to feed in their ideas about the themes that they might perhaps welcome being featured in future issues of the magazine. Our hope indeed is that the Hills Echo is, and remains, of on-going interest and value to all within our community and village. In addition to publishing the ready-prepared contributions that we are always grateful to receive each month, we will also always greatly value your ideas for subjects on which we might perhaps focus in future issues, perhaps by commissioning pieces.

Although we are already a month into the new year, we wish all of our readers a very happy and successful 2026.

Chantal Baxter, John Raine and Shameem Sanoon.

URGENT

The Hills Echo is looking for a volunteer to join the Editorial Team - which has a vacancy following Jen Close reluctantly needing to step down. If you might like to join the Team - Chantal, John and Shameem - please email us as soon as possible (westmalvernhillsecho@gmail.com) and providing us with your contact details.

THANK YOU

News from your Parish Council

The January meeting of the Parish Council opened with an expression of thanks and appreciation for the leadership and contribution of the outgoing chair, Andy Turner. The Council then voted Councillor Glen Harnden to assume the role of Chair.

County and District councillors McVey and Raine provided reports of issues of relevance for the parish from the respective principal councils. Cllr McVey also referred to concerns raised by some residents about the condition and maintenance of the Danel Spring, which provides a number of residents within the village with their water supply. There was also discussion of the Government's proposed reorganisation of principal councils in favour of unitary authorities and in place of the current two-tier structure of district councils within each county council area. It was reported that, within Worcestershire, a clear majority of respondents had responded to a recent survey by favouring a structure comprising two unitary councils – one for north Worcestershire (embracing the current council areas of Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest Districts) and the other covering the three more southerly districts (Wychavon, Worcester City and Malvern Hills). However, in the same survey, about one third of respondents had expressed a preference for a single unitary authority covering the whole county. The final decision, however, will be made by central government and is expected later in the year, for implementation in 2027-28.

Meanwhile, key other business discussed by the Parish Council concerned improvements to the West Malvern playing fields. Here, it was reported that the funding was now available for the laying of tarmac along the stone footpath to the pitches and play-area. There was also discussion about how best the Council might address the problem of mole damage to the recently refurbished playground area, this being prompted by questions from attending members of the public. In response, it was explained that the proposal was to install a metal barrier in the ground around the play area, with the aim of preventing moles from burrowing into the play area and damaging the surface there. This, the Council has been advised, is probably about the best option possible in the circumstances.

Also raised at the meeting were the reported concerns of a number of residents about several of the gas lamps in the village that were currently not working very effectively or indeed not at all. By way of response, the Council agreed to invite resident expert, Brian Harper, to undertake additional maintenance work to ensure that all such lights are indeed operational once more.

Finally, concerns were voiced about the future of the 675 bus service, with agreement that this was indeed a very important matter for a number of people within the village, particularly for those without cars and dependent on the service, and should be followed up as a matter of urgency to find out future plans for the service, and for which an update was to be sought from County Councillor McVey.

Applications Wanted for Parish Council Clerk

The West Malvern Parish Council is seeking a new Parish Clerk, remunerated post 35 hours a month. This role combines the duties of **Clerk** and also that of a **Responsible Finance Officer** – for more information, please see the Parish Council website

It would be preferable if applicants live in close proximity to West Malvern they will be expected to attend Parish meetings as required and undertake other village duties as required.

Please contact us at clerk@westmalvernparishcouncil.gov.uk with expressions of interest.

Would you like to become Parish Councillor and help shape the future of our community?

Currently we have two vacancies and we are looking for people who care about local services, green spaces, and the wellbeing of residents. Bring your ideas, represent your neighbours, and make a real difference.

A Parish Councillor plays a vital role at the heart of local democracy, representing the interests, concerns, and aspirations of the community. As the first tier of local government, parish councils deal with the issues closest to residents' daily lives. Councillors help shape decisions on local services, community facilities, planning applications, green spaces, events, and initiatives that support wellbeing and neighbourhood pride.

The role includes listening to residents, raising their views at council meetings, and working collaboratively with fellow councillors, clerks, and partner organisations. Parish Councillors contribute to setting budgets, prioritising projects, and ensuring public money is used responsibly and transparently. They help develop policies, support community groups, and champion improvements that make the parish a better place to live, work, and visit.

No special qualifications are required—just a willingness to engage, learn, and make a positive difference. The role is flexible enough to fit around work and family commitments. What matters most is enthusiasm, integrity, and a genuine desire to help shape the future of the local area.

Becoming a Parish Councillor is a meaningful way to give back, influence change, and ensure the community's voice is heard.

From the Vicarage

When I was a child, I'd hear my father sigh at the news and say, "What is the world coming to?" Back then, I didn't really understand. The world felt big, exciting, full of possibility. Forty years on, I catch myself saying the same thing. Maybe you do too.



Each new year brings both hope and uncertainty, and the headlines rarely help. But perhaps that old question isn't only about worry. Maybe it's also about wonder. The world is coming to something; it is changing, surprising us, inviting us to look again for signs of God's presence. If we pause long enough, we may notice that God still speaks, not only through scripture and worship, but through the world he made.

That's why I'm so excited about our new Orchard Church at St James' Church. There is something quietly powerful about worshipping outdoors: fresh air in our lungs, trees and birdsong around us and a fire pit drawing us together. In a noisy and unsettled world, creation reminds us that life is a gift and that in it, God whispers peace and wholeness to our bodies, minds, and spirits. It slows us down, helps us breathe, and gently reminds us that faith is not confined to four walls.

As we step into this year, perhaps we can reclaim my father's question. Instead of asking, "What is the world coming to?" we might ask, "What is my part in shaping what the world becomes?" Our actions may feel small, but together they matter. Choosing kindness, seeking justice, caring for creation, and nurturing hope are not grand gestures, but faithful ones. And they ripple outward, changing more than we realise.

My hope is that Orchard Church will be a place where we learn to ask those questions together, slowly, honestly, and prayerfully. A place to listen, to notice, and to rediscover God already at work in the world around us. I hope you'll come and join us.

Rev Becky

Join us for a wonderful winter

CHARITY CONCERT

7:30pm

Saturday 28th February 2026

AT COLWALL PARK HOTEL

Bands include:

- Set 'em Up Joe
- Hedgehog
- Blue Notes Jazz
- Worcester Ukulele Club



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All proceeds go to Malvern Hills Foodbank

For details or to book, please contact:

maryrowswell@btinternet.com or phone 01684 564050

What's Happening with the 675 Bus?

If you've ever hopped on the 675 to get from West Malvern to Ledbury or Great Malvern, you know how important this little bus is. It's more than just a ride—it's a lifeline for many locals who don't drive, helping them reach shops, appointments, and friends.

But here's the worry: Worcestershire County Council is reviewing its transport budget, and the 675 route could lose its funding. Without it, some residents could be left stranded, and our community might feel a lot less connected.

Why does it matter?

- It keeps West Malvern linked to essential services.
- It helps older residents and those without cars stay independent.
- Our road is already narrow and congested—more cars would make it even harder to drive through safely.

Local councillors are actively seeking alternatives to keep this vital service running—but at the moment the future of the 675 seems bleak.



Malvern Hills Community Car Club

For those unfamiliar with The Car Club, this was established more than a decade ago to provide members with a significantly cheaper alternative to owning a car. Membership is an ideal option for households without a car (or needing a 2nd car sometimes) but who are able to drive and are happy to borrow a Car Club vehicle as often or rarely as they need to do so.

As well as providing a positive alternative to owning a car, the Club actively supports less carbon-intensive forms of transport. Particularly if you are using or needing a car, say, just two or three times a week, then by using the Car Club instead of owning and maintaining your own vehicle, you can easily halve your transport costs – indeed, many members of the Club indicate that they are saving much more!

Access to a Car Club vehicle also saves all the hassle of taxing and insuring your own vehicle, the costs of depreciation and those unpredictable expensive repair bills – there being merely a charge per hour and per-mile travelled (and which covers all such fixed costs and the fuel). Moreover, the Car Club is run by volunteer members, so there are no staff costs, no commercial overheads nor a profit margin factored into the charges for usage.

A vehicle based in West Malvern.

The Club HQ is in Colwall but the cars are located all around the Malvern Hills, and one is based here in West Malvern. If local demand from residents in the neighbourhood were to grow, one or more additional vehicles could also become stationed here in the village.

The 'E-Bike to Work' Scheme.

The Club also operates an 'E-Bike to Work' scheme. Particularly given the limited availability of public transport especially in the rural areas, this scheme has proved particularly valuable in facilitating young peoples' access to work and education. Under the scheme, which is financially supported by Malvern Hills District Council, members are loaned an electric bike (Ebike) to enable them to access their apprenticeships, jobs or training programmes, and is proving especially valuable for those who live or work in rural areas and without a driving license (or for whom the costs of car ownership seem prohibitive).

Potential new members usually take part in the Two-Week Trial Scheme first, to make sure the hire of an Ebike will work for them. Indeed, the trial scheme is open to all residents who want to see if an Ebike might suit them as a means of reducing their Carbon Footprint, improving their health and fitness and, of course, saving them money on their shorter journeys.

To learn more about the Community Car Club and/or the E-Bike-to-Work Scheme, please visit the following website: <https://malvernhills-carclubs.org.uk/contact-us/>

News from St James' primary school

During these winter months we've been wearing our coats and hats and pressing ahead with our new outdoor learning curriculum. Here's a little window on what we've been up to in Design Technology, where we have been considering the seasons and our environment.

Class 1 made Christmas decorations from found and natural materials, including reindeer crafted from twigs, conkers and twine and some beautiful boughs hung with fir cones and dried fruit. Learning to make knots challenged the children's fine motor skills, and exploring our local area to collect materials for their designs built investment and excitement. The children felt pride in their creations and enjoyed a calm and meaningful Christmas project.

Class 2 have been working in groups, making bug hotels. This followed the children's interest as several of Class 2 had been caring for and thinking about how to accommodate the mini-beasts in our willow playground during break times. The new hotels are thoughtful and varied in their designs and materials and the children enjoyed the opportunity to use tools.

Class 3's ambitious outdoor weather stations are ongoing so watch this space! Highlights for the children have included doing their own sawing and painting to ensure the wooden boxes are weather-proof and ready for their microbits. Over the coming weeks we hope to be able to monitor and record the arrival of Spring.

Empowering Explorers

St. James' CE Primary School, Class 1, invite you to join them at Forest School.

Who: Pre Schoolers and their parents/carers
(parents are responsible for their child/children)

When: Monday afternoon 1.45 pm
(please check the school Facebook page or call the school office if weather may prevent it going ahead)

Where: St. James' Church Orchard

Where muddy boots meet bright minds



Please call the school office on 01684 561207 if you have any queries. We look forward to seeing you.

EVENTS CALENDAR -FEBRUARY 2026

DAY	DATE	EVENT/WHERE	TIME
Sun	1st	Morning Praise-St. James Church Sunday Session- Social Club	10.30am Doors Open 8pm
Mon	2nd		
Tues	3 rd	Friends of the Brewers Committee Meeting- Armpit	7.30pm
Wed	4 th	Paint and Pint- Armpit	6.30pm-8pm
Thur	5 th	Village Coffee Morning, Village Hall Open Mic Session- Social Club	10.30 a.m. Doors 8pm
Fri	6 th	PTA Bake Sale- Sugarloaf Cafe Jazz Jam-Social Club Quiz -Village Hall Bingo West Malvern Club, Lower Road	3:15pm 7.30pm 8pm 7 for 8pm
Sat	7 th		
Sun	8 th	Holy Communion-St. James Church Sunday Session- Social Club	10.30am Doors Open 8pm
Mon	9 th	Parish Council Meeting- Village Hall	7.30 p.m.
Tues	10 th	Quiz- Brewers Arms Garden & Nature Club, Elim Conf. Centre: 'Alpines in the wild and in cultivation'	7.30 p.m. 7.30 p.m
Wed	11th		
Thur	12 th	W.I. Meeting-Elim Conf Centre Open Mic Session- Social Club	7.30pm Doors 8pm
Fri	13 th	Quiz-Social Club Bingo West Malvern Club, Lower Road	8pm 7 for 8pm
Sat	14 th	Scott Levene- Social Club	Doors 7.30pm
Sun	15 th	Morning Praise-St. James Church Sunday Session- Social Club	10.30am Doors Open 8pm
Mon	16 th		
Tues	17 th		
Wed	18 th	Paint and Pint- Armpit	6.30pm-8pm
Thur	19 th	Open Mic Session- Social Club	Doors 8pm
Fri	20 th	Friday Night Disco – Social Club Bingo West Malvern Club, Lower Road	7.30pm 7 for 8pm
Sat	21 st	Alex Hart- Social Club	Doors 7.30pm
Sun	22 nd	Holy Communion-St. James Church Sunday Session- Social Club	10.30am Doors Open 8pm
Mon	23 rd		
Tues	24 th		
Wed	25 th	Paint and Pint- Armpit	6.30pm-8pm
Thur	26 th	Open Mic Session- Social Club	Doors 8pm
Fri	27 th	Friday Flix- Social Club Bingo- West Malvern Club – Lower Road	8pm 7 for 8pm
Sat	28 th		

EVENTS CALENDAR -MARCH 2026

DAY	DATE	EVENT/WHERE	TIME
Sun	1st	Morning Praise-St. James Church Sunday Session- Social Club	10.30am Doors Open 8pm
Tues	3 rd	Friends of the Brewers Committee Meeting- Armpit	7.30pm
Wed	4 th	Paint and Pint- Armpit	6.30pm-8pm
Thur	5 th	Village Coffee Morning – Village Hall Open Mic Session- Social Club	10.30 a.m. Doors 8pm
Fri	here	Jazz Jam-Social Club Quiz -Village Hall Bingo West Malvern Club, Lower Road	7.30pm 8pm 7 for 8pm
Sat	7 th	Jon Pollard plays Roy Harper	Doors 7.30pm
Sun	8 th	Holy Communion-St. James Church Sunday Session- Social Club	10.30am Doors Open 8pm
Mon	9 th	Parish Council Meeting- Village Hall	7.30pm
Tues	10 th	Quiz- Brewers Arms Garden & Nature Club, AGM Elim Conf. Centre	7.30pm 7.30pm
Wed	11 th		
Thur	12 th	W.I. Meeting-Elim Conf Centre Open Mic Session- Social Club	7.30pm Doors 8pm
Fri	13 th	Quiz-Social Club Bingo West Malvern Club, Lower Road	8pm 7 for 8pm
Sat	14 th		Doors 7.30pm
Sun	15 th	Morning Praise (Mothering Sunday) Orchard Church - St. James Church Sunday Session- Social Club	10.30am 3pm Doors Open 8pm
Mon	16 th		
Tues	17 th		
Wed	18 th	Paint and Pint- Armpit	6.30pm-8pm
Thur	19 th	Open Mic Session- Social Club COPY DATE – APRIL ECHO	Doors 8pm BY 12 noon
Fri	20 th	Friday Night Disco – Social Club Bingo West Malvern Club, Lower Road	7.30pm 7 for 8pm
Sat	21 st	- Social Club	Doors 7.30pm
Sun	22 nd	Holy Communion-St. James Church Sunday Session- Social Club	10.30am Doors Open 8pm
Mon	23 rd		
Tues	24 th		
Wed	25 th	Paint and Pint- Armpit	6.30pm-8pm
Thur	26 th	Open Mic Session- Social Club	Doors 8pm
Fri	27 th	Friday Flix- Social Club Bingo- West Malvern Club – Lower Road	8pm 7 for 8pm
Sun	29th	Palm Sunday-St. James Church Holy Week Passion Music Service (Holy Trinity Augmented Choir) -St James'	10.30am 6.30pm

2026 is designated the Year of Reading!

Volunteering in the Malvern Amnesty bookshop; a personal view

Amnesty International has grown since 1961 to be the largest grassroots human rights organisation in the world, with over 10 million members. Amnesty defends people's right to freedom, truth and dignity by investigating and exposing human rights abuses.

After 25 years, the Malvern Amnesty bookshop has moved from Edith Walk to exciting new premises on Church Walk, staffed by book shop volunteers (BSVs). From being a habitual customer, I became a volunteer just under a year ago, joining a band of people united in their love of books and a commitment to the work of Amnesty.

Volunteering is great fun, the four-hour shift passes quickly as we take in donations, price the books, stock the shelves, chat with the customers and manage the till. Each shift has three volunteers so there is always help around. Our Wednesday afternoon shift, is full of laughs, resembling an episode of *Last of the Summer Wine*. We enjoy chatting to the customers and swapping book recommendations. One of the occupational hazards of being a BSV is yielding to the irresistible temptation to buy books while working on your shift.

Amnesty welcomes book donations, Malvern residents have been most generous in parting with their books. The shop has a terrific selection of books on a wide range of subjects for adults and children. In its wish to encourage everyone to read, particularly children, the shop has links to other charities, donating some books to the West Malvern telephone box book exchange.

The BSV team are keen to have new volunteers, no matter whether you can commit to a regular weekly shift or an occasional weekend morning or afternoon. If you are over 18 years of age, and interested in the possibility of helping, please pop into the shop and chat to a BSV or pick up an application form.

Amnesty International aims to give people hope in adversity. Please drop in to your local Amnesty bookshop, enjoy a browse, bring your dog, and support a most worthwhile cause.

David Jeffrey

dijeffrey@btinternet.com

Happy scenes in the snow around West Malvern



Toilet Twinning in West Malvern

A themed service at Holy Trinity Church in Malvern by the Benefice's Eco Group (a body of volunteers from Holy Trinity and St. James churches looking to promote environmentally friendly practices) drew attention to the global lack of proper sanitation, highlighting that while many people in the western world take these facilities for granted, millions around the world still live without access to a safe toilet. This shortage particularly affects women and girls, exposing them to danger, poor hygiene, and barriers to education.

The service promoted **Toilet Twinning**, a charity that provides simple, hygienic toilets in deprived communities for just £60 each. The charity's work helps prevent disease, improves safety, and supports dignity and education. Inspired by the appeal, the congregations of Holy Trinity and its sister church St. James in West Malvern donated enough to fund seven toilets overseas, each linked ("twinned") with facilities in the local community. These are in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (twinned to Holy Trinity Church, St James's Church and West Malvern Social Club), Tanzania (twinned to St James's School), Uganda (twinned to Holy Trinity Church and The Brewers Arms in West Malvern) and Pakistan (twinned to Holy Trinity Church).

Pictured below, the Rev. Becky Elliot and ECO Group members Eileen Tomlin, Sue and David Mathews present framed certificates for the twinning to Nick Brown (left of picture) of the West Malvern Social Club and to (right of picture) Brian O'Connell (Secretary of the Brewers Arms Community Pub) and Landlords Lee Jones and Kim Boughton.



The Brewers (West Malvern) Community Pub Limited

News from The Committee

On the 13th and 14th January HeartStart Malvern held two further training sessions, in The Armpit, on CPR and the use of the Defibrillator. We now have nearly 40 locals who have attended the sessions and know how to act/re-act in an emergency. We might organise another session, later in the year, if there are enough people interested. If you are one of those let me know.

The new share issue has now closed. We have 30 or so new members/shareholders who have purchased 43 new shares (£10750). Our current share value is £145,000.

Acoustics! We have had an initial report on soundproofing and should be able to make a decision and see to any necessary work shortly.

Once the weather improves the exterior painting will be completed and the further minor repairs to the roof will be addressed.

We do wish to remind everyone that The Armpit is a venue for everyone (not just shareholders). All Clubs, Societies, Groups etc are welcome to use this "community asset" for which there is no charge! All we ask is that you make sure you book in by liaising with Lee and Kim, who have the diary, and use the pub by buying a drink or two!

Brian O'Connell

Email doc10352@aol.com

Welcome to 'Candlemas' and 'Groundhog Day': 2nd February 2026

'Candlemas' traditionally concludes the Christmas season, with crib/manger scenes often kept in position in churches and other public places until this date. As this, of course, might suggest, Candlemas is essentially a Christian festival – one, indeed, that particularly marks the presentation of the infant Jesus at the temple in Bethlehem, and Mary's purification, in line with Jewish law. That said, however, the event is also strongly associated with the ancient Pagan 'Feast of Light'.

The term 'Candlemas' particularly derives from the church tradition of blessing the candles for the new year, and symbolising 'Christ as the light of the world'. Indeed, many churches round the world celebrate it with candle-lit processions. While Christmas decorations are often traditionally removed on Twelfth Night (Epiphany Eve), in some Christian countries, this is regarded as an important task to be undertaken immediately after Candlemas. Also, in many Christian countries, there is the practice of taking the household's supply of candles to the local church for a blessing, ahead of their use throughout the year ahead – the candles serving as symbols of Jesus Christ as 'the Light of the World'. In various European countries, and most notably in France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland, the tradition is that 'manger scenes' should not be dismantled, nor stowed away, until Candlemas – the last feast of the Christmas Cycle. Moreover, in several European countries, Candlemas is also known as 'the day of crepes' (pancakes) – this apparently reflecting a tradition that commenced in circa 490AD when Pope Gelasius 1st distributed pancakes to pilgrims as they arrived in Rome. Indeed, this remains an established practice, particularly in modern-day in Belgium, as, indeed, is the eating of pancakes by candle-light – a tradition based on the historic belief that a clear sky at Candlemas foretells of a potentially beneficial year for beekeepers. Perhaps here lies the on-going association of syrup with pancakes?

In Germany, too, Candlemas has long represented a significant day in the calendar – albeit with the origins also carrying a rather different significance – that of being a deadline for the payment of bills and debts, and also for marking the beginning of 'the farmer's year' – when the work of preparing the land for planting needs to begin. Historically, in Germany, Candlemas was also the time when servants were paid the balance of their annual earnings and, indeed, when they were considered eligible to seek new jobs should they so wish. Indeed, there was also a well-established custom of providing each servant with a new pair of shoes at Candlemas – whether as a reward for their work over the past year or to assist them in seeking new employment.

In Hungary also, Candlemas is strongly associated with historic traditions – with many children dressing up as bears, lighting candles and eating honey – indeed, national folklore here describes Candlemas as the time when bears come out of their dens and, if in sunny weather, perhaps seeing their shadows, and probably retreating to sleep for longer. Such behaviour has tended to be interpreted as suggesting that the temperature is likely to remain cold for longer (not unlike the expectations and traditions of Groundhog Day in America). Somewhat similarly, many Catalonians like to make weather predictions at Candlemas – believing that bad weather at this time of year is likely to mean good weather will follow imminently, and vice versa.

February 2nd is also sometimes referred to as 'Groundhog Day' – so named because it was once the date when people would watch to see if a groundhog emerged from the soil – this being regarded as a reliable indication of the end of winter. Particularly if the groundhog was able to see its own shadow (i.e. in sunshine), winter was considered as having ended. On the other hand, if it was cloudy, it was said that six more weeks of winter could be expected!

West Fete News!

We are going for the 4th July for this year's West Fete. The date has been chosen to avoid the World Cup and the Wimbledon finals.

The format will change a little to reflect the successful parts of the previous fetes, the dog show will be larger more children's games will be on offer and the evening music will become more of a part of the event with catering and bar facilities open longer.

We hope to change the field layout a little to make stalls a more integral part of the day. Entry charge will remain the same and anyone who wishes to take a stall again this will be free of charge hopefully a donation will be made to the event as all profits go into the local community.

We will keep all informed as we progress and again we ask for volunteers and of course will be approaching previous volunteers. Please contact John Brook with queries, offers of help and questions on 01684 574070.

The Theatre of Small Convenience: A Tiny Treasure Brought Back to Life

The Theatre of Small Convenience was created by West Malvern puppeteer **Dennis Neale**, who ran the much-loved miniature venue from 1999 until his retirement in 2017. After a brief period under the care of Warwickshire College Group, the theatre suffered a devastating fire in 2018. With the building left exposed to the elements, water damage and deterioration quickly followed.

That might have been the end of the story—until Loz Samuels, Dibah Faroogui, and Jan Birtle stepped in. Determined to save the theatre, they formed a not-for-profit organisation and began negotiations with Malvern Hills District Council in January 2023. Two years later, in January 2025, they finally received the keys.

Following an intense period of restoration and fundraising, the theatre triumphantly reopened on 24 October 2025. Loz Samuels worked closely with Dennis to preserve as much of the original character as possible—even restoring the iconic Shady Lady usherette outfits.

Since reopening, the theatre has flourished. It has secured sponsorship from MiniRig, who provided a bespoke tiny sound system, and Aputur, who donated state-of-the-art lighting this year. The team continues to curate a wonderfully diverse programme while honouring the quirky spirit Dennis first brought to the space.

The theatre has already taken part in the Great Malvern Festival of Children’s Stories and the FEAST Theatre Festival, hosting puppet shows, a ghost walk, and even a séance. Their five-week Father Christmas Grotto proved hugely popular with families, and more puppet shows, drama, horror storytelling, music, and other surprises are on the way.

“We are delighted with the response,” Loz said. “Tickets sell out very quickly—sometimes within an hour.”

In December, the theatre hosted its first wedding, with another already booked for later in the year. Events like these help support running costs and fund further improvements. The team is currently raising money to purchase additional lighting to enable visual arts exhibitions.

For more information, visit

www.ticketsource.co.uk/the-theatre-of-small-convenience
(ticketsource.co.uk in Bing)

and find them on **Facebook** and **Instagram**.



West Malvern WI

We meet on the 2nd Thursday of each month, 7.30 pm, in the conference unit at Elim. For more details see westmalvernwi.wordpress.com

For our February meeting we have a local wildlife expert coming to talk about birds and recognising them by their songs. It promises to be a lovely way to look ahead to more time outside when Spring arrives!

On 12th March Worcestershire Breast Haven are coming to tell us more about the background of the charity, its success and how we can support them towards more super outcomes.

AND FINALLY...:

As always, we hope that you, and all of our readers, have found this month's Hills Echo to be both enjoyable and informative – and with at least something of interest for everyone! We endeavour to include as wide a range of articles and features as we can – aiming to reflect and represent the considerable diversity of activities and happenings in and around our lovely village of West Malvern. But, of course, we also look to everyone in, or connected with, the village to feed us much of the information and perspective that we would hope to include and feature in future issues.

While, not least for reasons of space limitation, we cannot of course guarantee to publish all the copy that we receive, we do most certainly rely to a large extent on the contributions and notifications that we receive, and particularly welcome advance information about up-and-coming events! We are also always very pleased to receive suggestions as to subjects on which we might perhaps commission pieces for future issues. Please don't hesitate to let us have your ideas and suggestions of subject matter for future editions of the magazine.

Either contact any one of us or via the general email: westmalvernhillsecho@gmail.com

With all good wishes

Chantal Baxter, John Raine and Shameem Sanoon (The Hills Echo Team).



Repair Café Malvern Hills has now been open for 12 years and will continue to provide a trusted and reliable service during 2026. No job is too small and the repair teams love a challenge! There are no fixed charges but we rely on donations to cover running costs and enable us to support other local projects.

Bring your damaged or broken hand-portable personal or household belongings to one of our sessions that are held on the third Saturday in the month from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm at Malvern Cube Community and Arts Centre in Albert Road North, Malvern WR14 2YF. Last orders are at 12.30 pm. No booking is necessary but if you think your repair may take some time, please arrive soon after 10.00 am.

Often, only a very simple repair is needed to extend the useable life of an item for several months or even years. You're invited to sit with the repairer who will happily explain the repair process and pass on their skills. PAT testing and sharpening of tools, knives and garden equipment are also available at every session.

We can fix electronic and electrical appliances and gadgets, furniture, clocks, jewellery, ceramics, toys, clothes, textiles, luggage.....and much more. Have a question? email: repaircafemalvern hills@gmail.com or visit our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/RepairCafeMalvernHills/>

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Contact: Dr Elise Kearney at admin@drelisekearney.co.uk www.centreofthehills.co.uk

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