

THATCHAM NEWS



Thatcham Memorial Foundation trustees Jan Cover and Mike Farmer removing the offensive graffiti

Ref: 13-0925D



Mike Farmer and Nathan Gregory hard at work

Ref: 13-0925J

Graffiti vandals target play park

Work takes place to make equipment accessible

A CHILDREN'S playground has been vandalised in Thatcham.

The Queen Elizabeth Play Area, which was named in memory of the late Queen, was sprayed with offensive slurs over the weekend of March 22 and 23.

The park, which cost £101,546 to install and is located in the Memorial Play-

ing Fields, was being re-installed after flood alleviation works when the incident occurred.

The graffiti appeared over the weekend and was first noticed by volunteer trustees on the morning of Tuesday, March 25.

Chairman of Thatcham Memorial Foundation Nathan Gregory said the

situation was "appalling".

He and his team of trustees spent last Wednesday morning removing the graffiti to make the park accessible to little ones again.

The park opened in May 2023 and features an accessible seesaw, slide, swings, monkey bars and roundabout.



Jan Cover cleaning up the graffiti at the Thatcham Memorial playground

Ref: 13-0925G

MP's vacated town and district seats up for election

DON'T miss your chance to vote in the Thatcham North East by-election.

Elections will be taking place on Thursday, April 24 (7am to 10pm), to elect councillors to both the town and district seats recently vacated by Newbury MP Lee Dillon.

The nominated candidates standing for town councillor are: Mike Brook (Lab), Gary Clark

(Reform UK), Louis Clement (Con) and Mark Thomas (Lib Dem).

The nominated candidates standing for district councillor are: Lee Allen (Labour), Tom McCann (Lib Dem), Dominic Parry (Conservative), Alfred Stokes (Reform UK) and Michael Wakelyn-Green (Green).

The polling stations for Thatcham North East are the Central Family Hub in Park Lane,

Frank Hutchings Community Hall in Bradley-Moore Square and the Thatcham Catholic Hall on the Bath Road.

Voters in the south of Cold Ash can only vote in the district seat election and will use the Central Family Hub polling station.

The deadline to register to vote is Friday, April 4, if you live in the north east ward of Thatcham.

If you are registered to vote, you will have been sent a poll card after Wednesday, March 26.

You do not need to take your poll card with you to the polling station to vote, but you must take photo ID.

The deadline for postal voting applications is 5pm on Monday, April 7. You must be on the electoral register to vote in elections, polls and referendums in the UK.

THATCHAM

Keeping in touch

Have you got a story? Contact our Thatcham reporter MIREK GOSNEY on (01635) 886637 or email: mirek.gosney@newburynews.co.uk Twitter @mgosney_nwn



News updates from Thatcham are now available online throughout the week. Go to newburytoday.co.uk and select the district pages

newburytoday.co.uk

Town meeting invite

THATCHAM residents are invited to attend the town's annual town meeting.

The meeting, open to all registered electors, will be at 6.30pm on Thursday, May 8, at the town council's offices in Brownsfield Road.

The meeting provides an opportunity for residents to raise concerns and to discuss local issues with town and district councillors, as well as representatives from Thames Valley Police.

The meeting will also include an overview of the town council's work and achievements during 2024-2025.

Contact enquiries@thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk to submit questions ahead of the meeting or visit the council's offices by 4.30pm on Wednesday, May 7.

Visit <https://thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk/event/annual-town-meeting> for more information.

Makeover at café

A FAMILY-run café is due to reopen soon after being closed for refurbishment.

Bella Luna, previously Jade Cottage, is an Italian-themed restaurant situated on Thatcham High Street.

Its adjoining café, La Luna, has been closed in recent weeks to allow a refurbishment to be carried out inside.

Owner Arti Selaj said breakfast will be served from 7am and confirmed the venue will also open as a Turkish restaurant in the evenings.

He added he expected to reopen the café on Monday, April 7.

Floral exhibits return for Cold Ash show

A COMMUNITY has celebrated the return of its annual spring show and plantsale.

Cold Ash Gardening Club hosted the event at the Acland Memorial Hall on Saturday, March 22, where a cheerful glow of yellow and the scent of narcissi enticed visitors inside.

There were plenty of floral art exhibits to browse, including some by new exhibitors, encouraged to enter after a recent floral art demonstration by Mad Hatter Floral Design, in Aldermaston.

Eddy Smith won the Hardwicke Cup for the most points in the narcissi section, while Chris Jones won the Hillman Cup for the most points in the flower section.

Jacqueline Smith won the Mann Cup for the most points in the floral art section with her magnificent arrangements.

The MacDonnell Cup for the best handcraft exhibit was



Cup winners Jacqueline Smith, Eddy Smith, Chris Jones and Jen Samuels

won by Jen Samuels for her fabulous patchwork quilt.

This year, the handcrafts section, always featuring a wide range of items, included more unusual items such as a foraging basket woven from twigs, a knitted bag and a quirky crocheted hanging basket, containing a crocheted

hanging plant.

Show secretary Kate Miller said: "It was wonderful to see a wide range of narcissi, from trumpets and cups to clusters and miniature.

"Despite the recent cooler temperatures, we also had flowering shrubs including some camellias and rhododen-



Jacqueline Smith's floral art arrangement

drons, plus tulips and other spring flowers."

The organisers wish to thank all exhibitors, committee members, helpers, judges Kelvin Mason (flowers), Marilyn Piper (floral art) and Elizabeth Whitehead (handcrafts) and those who donated plants for the plant stall.

New youth support service

A NEW youth wellbeing service started in Thatcham on Monday.

Oxfordshire mental health charity Response announced last autumn it was expanding to provide early, preventative care to young people in the Thatcham area.

It hopes to open its next new facility at Carramar, in Church Lane, in May.

Until then, it has started offering individual and group drop-in and organised therapeutic sessions for those aged eight to 25 through partnerships with local schools and community groups.

The charity's associate director of children, young people and families Jamie Douglas explained: "We've already agreed with Kennet School we're going to do at least one day a week, but then also using the school as a way of getting young people to start connecting with us, because some young people probably won't want to see us in school.

"With the older children, it might be we're doing a session in coffee shops, but to the outside world, it looks like a couple of people having a coffee.

"That works really well sometimes because it's a bit more anonymous and people don't necessarily know there's a therapeutic session going on.

"In the nicer weather, we'll also be walking around having a chat because sometimes for some young people, sitting down face to face, two chairs opposite each other, isn't the best way of doing this kind of work."

The charity is interested in hearing from any community groups who might be willing to host its services.

It is still fundraising to complete its new facility in Thatcham.

It has so far raised more than £20,000 and just needs £8,000 to hit its target.

Visit <https://shorturl.at/v1Rkf> to donate.