



Thatcham Musical Theatre Choir at last year's Fest Off

Big Thatcham Fest Off's back this Saturday

THE Big Thatcham Fest Off is returning this weekend for a day of enjoyment.

On Saturday, the High Street will be transformed into a hub for music, food and entertainment from 4.30pm to 9pm.

As part of a wider celebration included in the Thatcham Festival, the Fest Off will see a wide range of local music.

The Fest Off is free to attend and hosts a number of things to do including gift stalls, entertainment and food and drink stalls.

New for 2025 is the silent disco which invites visitors to have a boogie, with multiple channels available and open to everyone.

Acts on the main stage will include the Thatcham Musical Theatre Choir, the Casino Birds and headliners Moonstate.

They are described as a signature fusion of 2000s girl pop, indie rock and modern-day hits.

The acoustic stage will also be full of local talent all through the day.

Thatcham Festival, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, runs from tomorrow (Friday) until Sunday, October 19.

Activities on other days of the festival include talks, guided walks, children's activities, craft workshops and art exhibitions.

The focus this year is on local history and heritage.

For more information on the Festival visit the Thatcham Town Council website.



Scenes from last year's Big Thatcham Fest Off

A celebration of all Thatcham has to offer

Plans are under way for a new Community Hub in town

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PLANS for a new Community Hub in Thatcham are taking shape, with work now under way to explore what the space could look like and how it will serve the town's growing population.

The council has hired consultants to look into what could best be delivered, and residents will be involved in shaping the final design towards the end of the year.

Driven by Thatcham Town Council, and supported by West Berkshire Council, the hub was first identified and requested by residents in the 2023 Thatcham Town Centre Strategy study.

The vision is to transform the Brownsfield Road and Memorial Fields area into a community destination, including sports facilities, creative and entertainment spaces.

There are also plans for an enhanced connection to the town centre – improving access across Bath Road.

Justin Pemberton (Lib Dem, Thatcham West), executive member for economic development and regeneration at West Berkshire Council and councillor for Thatcham Town Council, said: "The Community Hub will be a celebration of all that Thatcham has to offer – building on existing facilities while unlocking new opportunities for residents and visitors alike."



Draft plans for the Thatcham Community Hub

"Once completed, this newly-designed space will bring together culture, history, health and sustainability in one place."

"Our goal is to create a hub that supports everyday life, from sport and wellbeing to civic, residential, and leisure needs, while shaping a more ambitious and inclusive future for the town."

"Far more than just an improved landmark, this will be a sustainable community space for everyone to enjoy."

The cash for the project is from the old levelling up, now UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and Adams & Sutherland is the appointed consultant.

It is a multi-disciplinary architectural and urban landscape consultancy behind the Newbury Wharf project, one of the town centre projects detailed in the Newbury Masterplan.

Following agreement on a preferred option by March 2026, the next phase will focus on securing funding to bring the project to life.



Members of the Kennet Group with Thatcham mayor Petra Pemberton and David and Marion Canning (front centre)

Happy 18th to group of Kennet pioneers

FORMER pupils of Kennet School have gathered to celebrate 18 years of reunions.

Twenty-one former students who attended the school when it first opened in 1957 came together last week to commemorate the 18th reunion of the Kennet Group.

The group was formed by David and Marion Canning, who met on the day the school opened in 1957.

The members met on Sunday to reminisce, look through old photographs and even have a raffle at Kennet School.

Thatcham mayor Petra Pemberton was also in attendance alongside West Berkshire councillor Justin Pemberton (Lib Dem, Thatcham West).

Mrs Pemberton recognised the community spirit of the group to come together with such great effort.

The idea for the group was formed when Mr and Mrs Canning wrote a book on the school for its 50th anniversary and helped to arrange a reunion for those who attended Kennet when it first opened.



From left, councillor Justin Pemberton, Marion Canning, mayor Petra Pemberton and David Canning

When it first formed after the school's 50th anniversary there were originally 150 members worldwide, but that has now dropped to just under 90.

Some members have now moved to countries all around the world, including New Zealand, the USA and Australia.

"It was a most rewarding experience for us, making all the hard work well worth the effort," said Mr and Mrs Canning.

THATCHAM

Keeping in touch

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Man, 27, accused of theft from vehicle

A MAN is to go on trial charged with interfering with cars, theft and breaching a Criminal Behaviour Order [CBO].

Liam Watkins appeared in the dock at Reading Magistrates' Court on Wednesday, September 17.

The 27-year-old, of Halifax Place, Thatcham, faces three charges.

First, he is accused of stealing money, jewellery and sunglasses together worth £60 from a motor vehicle belonging to James Farrell.

Next, Watkins is charged with interfering with a Nissan X-Trail with intent to commit theft.

Finally, he is said to have breached a CBO imposed by Reading magistrates on April 2.

All the above offences were said to have been committed in Thatcham on July 19.

Watkins spoke only to confirm his details and to plead not guilty to all three charges.

He was told the case could proceed no further that day and that it would be adjourned for a trial to take place.

Watkins was meanwhile released on conditional bail.

Drug-drive charge

A WOMAN is to go on trial accused of drug-driving.

Siana Longsmith appeared in the dock at Reading Magistrates' Court on Tuesday, September 16.

The 41-year-old, of Ermin Walk, Thatcham, is charged with driving a white Vauxhall Corsa on the A4 Bath Road at Padworth on January 5 when the amount of a metabolite of the Class A-controlled drug cocaine in her system exceeded the specified limit.

Ms Longsmith spoke only to confirm her details and to plead not guilty to the single charge.

She was told the case could proceed no further that day and that it would be adjourned for a trial to be arranged.

District judge Davinder Sandhu meanwhile released her on unconditional bail.

Defib fundraiser in memory of Peter

THE Spotted Dog in Cold Ash is running a fundraising event this Saturday after one of its beloved customers died at the pub.

Almost 600 people are expected to attend the 'Party With A Purpose' after Peter Seward suffered a fatal cardiac arrest in the pub garden in July.

Landlord Kevin Dobson was good friends with Peter and after his death was inspired to raise enough money to buy seven defibrillators for the pub and surrounding areas.

There will be a barbecue between 2pm and 4pm with a visit from first responders who will be able to talk about the role of defibrillators and how to use them.

They have already raised £5,000, with it costing around £1,000 per machine.