

# The Pilot

May 2026



Charminster, Charlton Down and Stinsford

# DEAR COMMUNITY,

As I write this, the American rocket Artemis 2 is about to return to Earth, having completed a circuit of the Moon. I find the whole adventure quite intriguing, especially as it may lead to more Moon landings. I remember clearly watching the Apollo landings in my childhood - one of the few times I was allowed to watch TV before school.

But I have never been able to find answers to any of my (strange) questions: Is there some rule that says one of the astronauts has to be upside down in every camera shot shown on TV? Why do women in space like to have long hair, when surely short hair would be more comfortable and practical? And what purpose do the national flags on display in the cabin serve? We know where the astronauts come from.

But far more important is this question: Apart from a 40 minute hiatus while the rocket was behind the Moon (from our perspective), NASA was able to maintain full radio communication with the crew even though they were so far away. Yet when my wife is more than 100 meters away from me in Dorchester town centre, we are unable to get any mobile phone signal to allow us to talk.

If you have any answers, please email me!

In this edition, you can find the answers to these questions:

1. William the Conqueror's nephew was Bishop of Salisbury. What was his name?
2. 4 groups want your comments - the planners, Dorset Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency and who else?
3. Who is a 45 mph couch potato?
4. When is Thomas Hardy's birthday celebration?
5. Where can you find beavers in Dorset? (The animal, not the baby Scouts!)

**Francis**

**Dates for submissions for our June edition - 5th May 2026.  
Editor@charpilot.com**



## STINSFORD NEWS

**It has been said ' April is the 'cruellest' month',** it is nevertheless a busy month particularly for the clergy. There is so much going on as we approach Easter and those events leading up to it during March. Beginning with Shrove Tuesday the last day to eat well before the start of Lent on the next day Ash Wednesday, abstinence for 40 days but not including Sundays so I read, as they are considered days of celebration, commemorating Christ's resurrection, making fasting and mourning inappropriate. Then passing Lady Day, March 25th to Palm Sunday 29th the first day of Holy Week and thus to April 4th Holy Thursday or Maundy Thursday, the time and occasion at which the last supper occurred with the blessing of the bread and wine, the first Eucharist. A Maunday service was held this year at Stinsford starting in the south aisle by the Easter Garden and what we believe to be the Lady Chapel when we were a Catholic Church i.e. pre-reformation, hence the mother and child in the niche in the south wall albeit new, the original either destroyed during the reformation or Cromwell's men years later. The key elements are the mass of the Lord's Supper, a foot washing ceremony, the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the stripping of the Altar to signify Jesus' abandonment and the traditional blessing of holy oils. To what extent Leila followed all these I do not know, not being there, but thought it interesting to recount the ritual when seeing the stripped altar on the Good Friday, the day of Crucifixion. The Easter Vigil was held on Holy Saturday and our service of Fire as it is lit outside the boundary of the church and with the church is in total darkness.

**The Easter Vigil is the greatest and most ancient liturgy of the entire Church year** beginning after nightfall leading the faithful from darkness towards the blazing light of the Resurrection. As the Paschal Candle takes light from the fire and in turn passes that light to the candles held by all present who then process into the darkened church, with song and responses to bring the light in. A truly traditional liturgical service.

**Floral displays welcomed all** on Easter Sunday 5th April 2026 with Bruce Dixon taking the service supported by Richard Press, formally the Vicar of Chickerell and now a member of the group of retired priests within our Benefice. We are so lucky to have such a number allowing all of our churches to have a Sunday Service. The Easter Egg Hunt followed enjoyed by both children and the grown-ups.

**As to the remainder of April** we find ourselves at present passing through a period of exceptional fine sunny weather in the 20's, no showers in sight at the moment.

**May has its own liturgical calendar** with the Ascension of the Lord on Thursday 14th May 2026 then to Pentecost on th 4th Sunday's Evensong when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles, Mary and other followers of Jesus while in Jerusalem and were given the ability to "speak in many tongues", thus often referred to as the birth of the church.

**On 5th Sunday's Evensong, the 31st May at 6pm we are joined by members of the Thomas Hardy Weekend Birthday celebrations which will bring a special service including a Choral presentation, wreath laying, refreshments and a special Recital by Natalie Burton at 7.30pm and all are most welcome to attend.**

**Michael Clarke**



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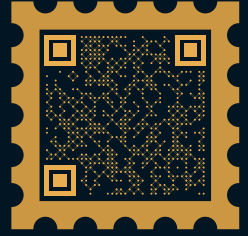
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## WHY IS ST MARY'S CHURCH WHERE IT IS?

Why was St Mary's church built by the Normans in such a stupid place between where the river Cerne used to be and where it is today. It keeps getting flooded as it did this winter with water rising through the floor? They must have had a reason, but why?

Before the Normans arrived, the site was a boggy floodplain.

The church is built on a heap of chalk, most likely dug when the Normans made the "canal" for the mill at Wolfeton. This suggests very close co-operation between whoever built the "canal" and whoever controlled the Parish of Charminster and was responsible for building the church.

They were two very important Norman knights who accompanied William the Conqueror from Normandy 1066.

One was Osmund the King's nephew and personal chaplain. Lord Chancellor in 1072, he was much involved in the production of the Domesday Book. He became Bishop of Salisbury in 1078 after Herman his Saxon predecessor. Osmund was largely responsible for developing the new English ritual along Roman lines. As Bishop of Salisbury (previously Sherborne) he held the Parish of Charminster, a relatively wealthy parish that had suffered little in the Conquest. Osmund and his successors were responsible for building St Mary's. It was probably in use by 1100.

The other was William de Mohun, the founder of the Mohun dynasty that held 55 manors in Somerset, including Dunster Castle. The King's Tenant-in-Chief, Mohun also had 11 manors in Dorset and an important role in Dorchester. He controlled the area to the North of Dorchester and Wolfeton House would have been a good place to base himself.

In this role he needed better links to the North

from Dorchester than the old roman road across the various branches of the Frome and its boggy floodplain. So, a raised causeway was built across the floodplain, most likely using excavated chalk from digging the "canal" to his mill at Wolfeton. (It is possible that the raised path on the north side of Old Sherborne Road is based on William's original.) He would have needed bridges over the Frome and Normans had the technology. Today this work is commemorated by the names of today's listed Great and Little Mohun Bridges. His bridges are long gone, but the Mohun name remain.

In pre-Norman Times Charminster was called Cerneminster: the minster on the Cerne. Some say that our church is that minster, but it is not. In Saxon Britain a minster was not a church. The word comes from the latin *monasterium* for a Christian community or settlement. It would have been quite a large fortified area where they lived and grew food, probably surrounded by a ditch and palisade. Times were dangerous and fortified settlements were normal; Wolfeton, *wulf tun* refers a fenced or fortified dwelling or village. The minster likely had a church, possibly outside the ditch and palisade. The Saxon church would have been a small wooden structure designed for Saxon ritual in the local language. This would not have been acceptable to the Normans and their Rome-led ritual, particularly to Charminster's very important people with wealth like the Mohuns. Religious, they are unlikely to have been content to use the existing wooden church whilst St Mary's was being built so they may have "improved" it using stone whilst waiting the decades for their new church to be built.

### **Where was the Minster**

There do not appear to be any written records of the minster and its church. It is most likely

that all traces of the minster's ditch, palisade and wooden buildings have vanished, although pottery may be found. Have you found any? It is likely to have been on one of the old routes through the parish, likely a crossroads.

Before 1066 Charminster was a very insignificant place. There was an old roman road (Weir View – East Hill – Westleaze), with a shallow ford across the river. This was part of the route from the West round Dorchester towards London: it must have been well-used. There was the prehistoric road where the Old Sherborne Road is today, and probably a link following a line down Mill Lane, across a ford, and on to Wanchard Lane. North Street would have been a boggy track, instead people would have used routes on dry ground on each side the river. These are commemorated today by footpaths, one East of Charminster House part of the popular the footpath towards the Sun; the other from what would have been from the old centre of the village, where the Compasses is today, alongside Charminster School to Wanchard Lane. East Hill did not exist.

#### **Where should we look for the Church? Conjecture**

It is possible that stone foundations of a church may still exist

The human drive for the powerful to demonstrate their dominance and superiority over the defeated is extremely strong. Osmund and William de Mohum must have wanted their new St Mary's Church to be bigger, taller and more beautiful than the old Saxon church that the villagers had been using, particularly as the

locals may have persisted in using the old ritual where they could. It would have make sense to put the new church as near as possible to the old one so as to amplify that ecclesiastic superiority. This could justify the seemingly illogical siting.

That puts the old church's site on dry ground very near the existing church. There are remaining Saxon stone churches, St Laurence in Bradford on Avon, for example. It is small, just is just 7.5m x 4m. Have you seen traces of a stone building or foundations of a building about this size?

It could be to the West of St Mary's in the Church Path area as human bones have been found in gardens there, suggesting a graveyard. Likewise, the gardens of houses in East Hill have revealed burials. But I am not aware of any official excavations so I do not know if any pre-date 1066.

My best guess is somewhere east of the river, near the river, near the roman road and near the footpath above the river.

**Keith Beeson.**



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aid**

## **CHRISTIAN AID WEEK - 10-16TH MAY 2026**

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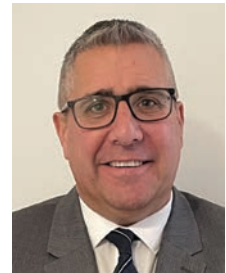
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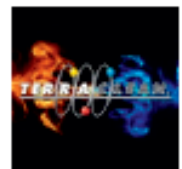


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# HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE RETURN OF BEAVERS TO DORSET'S WILD PLACES

Dorset Wildlife Trust has launched a major public consultation to explore the potential for reintroducing wild beavers to parts of Dorset. The consultation follows the licensed wild releases of beavers at Studland, Dorset last year and this year in Cornwall and Somerset, as well as five years of monitoring at the Trust's enclosed beaver project on the River Hooke, where a pair of beavers were introduced in 2021.

Since their arrival, the influential mammals have transformed the site through natural behaviours such as coppicing and dam-building. Independent studies by University of Exeter, Wessex Water and other partnership organisations have shown that beaver activity can slow water flow, create diverse wetland habitats, boost biodiversity and help landscapes become more resilient to drought and flooding.

Beavers are now recognised as a native species in England, and the UK Government has committed to supporting their return to suitable areas. Dorset Wildlife Trust has submitted an expression of interest for a potential licensed wild release within the River Hooke and wider River Frome catchment. Over the coming months, the Trust will be engaging with farmers, landowners,

communities, partner organisations and the wider public through meetings, workshops, drop-ins (now past) and an online survey.

Steve Oliver, Dorset Wildlife Trust's Rivers Conservation Officer, said: "Our enclosed project has given us clear, science-based evidence of the multiple benefits beavers can bring to Dorset's rivers and wetlands. Wild beavers are already present in parts of the county, but any future releases in new locations must be shaped by the people who live and work here. This consultation is an opportunity for everyone to share their views, raise questions and help us understand what a future with wild beavers could look like for Dorset."

The Trust emphasises that no decisions have been made, and the consultation will play a central role in determining whether a full licence application is taken forward. Members of the public are invited to take part and share their views at: [dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/BeaverSurvey](https://dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/BeaverSurvey)

To find out more, visit

**[dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/BeaverConsultation](https://dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/BeaverConsultation)**

***Hazel Ormrod, Dorset Wildlife Trust***







# CHARMINSTER FETE

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# CHARMINSTER FETE

We are getting ready to welcome you to our afternoon of fun, laughter and activities in the beautiful grounds of Charminster House, West Hill DT2 9QL.

We are deeply indebted to all our sponsors and volunteers who have been working hard to make this event possible.

Now, we'd like to call on readers to help the stall holders by donation good quality items to fill their tables.

Please see the table below for items needed and where to drop them off. We thank you all for helping to make our village fete be as amazing as possible, and we look forward to seeing you there.

Stall	Items	Contact
Books & Jigsaws	Only good condition & complete sets please	Church Porch
Bric a brac	Good condition linens, lace, kitchenalia, garden tools, watering cans, ornaments, etc	<b>Susan McCrea</b> - 1 West Hill 07818 508011
Cake stall	Cakes accepted from Friday 5th June or on the day	<b>Linda Jeffrey</b> - 9 Charlotte Close 07811 000649
China & Glass	All things china & glass in good condition	<b>Susan McCrea</b> - 1 West Hill 07818 508011
Children Adopt a Toy	Good clean condition soft toys	<b>Ali Barlow</b> - Caddy Shack 07354 309595
Plants	All plants accepted from Thursday 4th June or on the day	<b>Tina Scott</b> - 5 Greenacre 07858 235062
Tombola	In date bottles of drinks, food packets, tins, cosmetics, unwanted gifts, candles, toileteries, etc	<b>Susan McCrea</b> - 1 West Hill 07818 508011

# CHURCH SERVICES

CHARMINSTER AND STINSFORD - MAY 2026

## 3 May - Easter 5

11.00 am Parish Communion (Charminster)

11.00 am BCP Communion (Stinsford)

## 10 May - Easter 6

8.00 am BCP Eucharist (Charminster)

9.30 am Holy Communion and APCM (Charminster)

11.00 am BCP Matins (Stinsford)

6.00 pm BCP Evensong (Charminster)

## 14 May - Ascension Day

7.00 pm Sung Eucharist (Charminster)

## 17 May - Easter 7

11.00 am Parish Communion (Charminster)

11.00 am Holy Communion (Stinsford)

## 24 May - Pentecost Sunday

8.00 am BCP Eucharist (Charminster)

9.30 am Holy Communion (Charminster)

6.00 pm BCP Evensong (Stinsford)

## 31 May - Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth (Patronal)

10.30 am United Benefice Patronal Eucharist (TBC)

6.00 pm Thomas Hardy Birthday Evensong (Stinsford)

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# PUBLIC CONSULTATION CONTINUES INTO PROPOSED FIRE STATION CLOSURES

The ongoing public consultation into the potential closure of eight fire stations by Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service will run until Friday 15 May.

The eight locations under consultation are all on-call fire stations: Bradford on Avon, Charmouth, Cranborne, Hamworthy, Maiden Newton, Mere, Ramsbury and Wilton.

Chief Fire Officer Andy Cole said: "Nobody wants to close fire stations but, despite saving over £15 million in the last ten years, our financial position remains very challenging due to a 19.5% cut in funding provided directly from Government. We still need to make sure our operational staff have the equipment and training they need to stay safe, and we've pared back our Corporate staff numbers as much as possible. This isn't Plan A, we've worked through many difficult options before this point."

He added: "The elected Members of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority are responsible for keeping the Service sustainable, and they recognise that tough decisions need



to be considered.

"This consultation is therefore essential. We understand that people care about what this means for their community. That is why we want them to tell us what they think, and if there's anything important that we might have missed. No decisions have been made. The final decision will be made by the Fire & Rescue Authority at their meeting on 30 June. We

would urge our residents to have their say via our survey or the upcoming online meetings."

In-person meetings have been held already in six of the eight locations, with further dates booked for Charmouth and Maiden Newton in April. There will also be an online meeting for each location during April.

Full details of these, FAQs, station-specific data, the consultation leaflet and the survey can be found at [www.dwfire.org.uk/proposed-station-closures](http://www.dwfire.org.uk/proposed-station-closures)

**A paper copy of the survey can be requested by calling 01722 691000 during office hours, or by emailing [consultation@dwfire.org.uk](mailto:consultation@dwfire.org.uk)**

## VILLAGE HALL NOTES

The past few months have seen a welcome surge of activity at Charminster Village Hall.

The hall, which will be 150 years old next year, has recently welcomed a men's keep fit class and the Wessex Morris Men among its regular users.

Eighty people attended a recent talk on local history and there was standing room only for a meeting in February about local planning matters. When St Mary's was flooded, the hall became the church's temporary home.

But the cost of maintaining this historic building in the centre of the village continues to rise. The hall receives no public money and retires entirely on attendance fees, donations and fund-raising.

A small committee of volunteers is responsible for maintaining the hall and organising fund-

raising events like the popular bingo and quiz nights. **If you would like to help keep the hall at the centre of village life, please contact the chairman Nigel Kay on 01305 269401 or email [nigelrkay@gmail.com](mailto:nigelrkay@gmail.com)**

The annual meeting of the hall committee takes place in the hall on Monday, May 11th at 5.30pm. If you have a suggestion to make about possible future events at the hall, or if you'd just like to join the committee, then please come along.

**Nigel Kay**





## Getting back to being you

Please allow me to introduce you to **COUNTRYMEN UK**. We are a charity-group based at a farm near Sherborne, not too far from Charminster.

We meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. with the aim of providing fresh air and, a little, exercise for men who love the country life but feel isolated due to health challenges or changing social circumstances. We offer a welcoming and supportive environment. A safe outdoor space to enhance their quality of life.

We engage in many and varied activities including farm-animal care, gardening, crafting, woodwork, painting...or any other activities that the Countrymen wish to pursue (within reason!). We normally end our sessions with tea and cake and, a great deal of chatting, where folks share their life-stories and experiences. Sometimes we have guest speakers and may finish the session with a

sing-song, you don't have to join in but many folk find it uplifting when they do.

Carers benefit from a couple of hours respite each week and we have a 'Carers group' which meets occasionally to share their experiences and advice in an informal setting.

Overall 'caring' and 'friendship' are the watchwords. If you think you, or someone you know, could benefit please contact [admin@countrymenuk.org](mailto:admin@countrymenuk.org) or take a look at our website for more information [www.countrymen.org](http://www.countrymen.org).

We are always on the lookout for Volunteers and Trustees to help things run smoothly, again, please take a look at the website or send an email.

Thank you

**Andrew Woodcock**

**Volunteer & Trustee, Countrymen UK**

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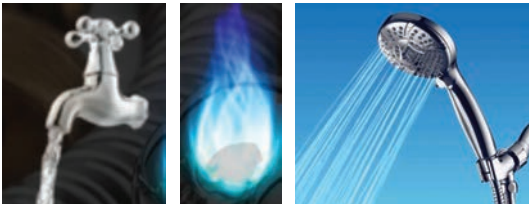
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## PLANS PUBLISHED FOR ELLERSLIE CLOSE DEVELOPMENT

Charminster villagers are being urged to make their views known on an outline planning application for 94 new houses on open farmland behind Ellerslie Close.

The Charminster Action Group, which was set up after this year's floods, says the development would be an "unwelcome intrusion" into the rural heart of the village. They want locals to look at the plans on Dorset Council's website before the deadline for objections expires on May 1st.

The scheme has been vigorously opposed by Charminster Parish Council.

The plans have been submitted by London-based Obsidian Strategic who are expected to sell the site to developers if they are successful in obtaining planning permission. Their website says the company delivers "best value for landowners."

Two hundred villagers attended a public exhibition in December and expressed fears about flooding, traffic and the impact on the village's historic centre.

Since then, the village has experienced some of the worst flooding in living memory. Rob Goldhawk, chairman of the new action group, said Obsidian appeared to have ignored the concerns of residents.

He said: "Our group was formed precisely because people in the village are deeply concerned about the impact of a wave new developments on the character of our village. This destruction of farmland behind Ellerslie Close is an example of big business prioritising shareholder profits at the expense of local people. We must not be the victims of profiteering. This is our village, not theirs."

Mr Goldhawk added: "Generations of villagers have enjoyed the walking the footpath from York Close and Mill Lane to Higher Charminster, stopping to enjoy the views across the valley. If Obsidian get their way, the path will be lined by soul-less modern boxes."

Obsidian say a third of the houses will be affordable and that the development will be served by a new junction off the Old Sherborne Road.

The impact on local traffic is one of the action group's major concerns. They have also expressed fears that the runoff from the site will contaminate the River Cerne and add to the risk of flooding in the heart of the village.

Footnote: Developers Bellway have now published their plans for another 152 houses on land off Drakes Lane, Charminster.

**Watch this space!**

**Nigel Kay**





## Pet of the Month ...

Our beautiful recently adopted ex-racing Greyhound Maya (born in May hence her racing name) she will be 7 & my 7th Greyhound. If you like a lazy dog then this breed is ideal known as "A 45mph couch potato" as they sleep a good 15-18 hours a day.

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**Ellie Davies**



## WERE YOU AFFECTED BY FLOODING?

If so, the Environment Agency and Dorset County Council want to hear from you. They are holding public events to give residents an opportunity to share experiences of recent floods. Our nearest events are in Sydling St Nicholas, on 21 May or in Stratton Village Hall on 4 June.

For more information, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dorset-drop-in-events-announced-for-flood-affected-residents> or email [floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk).

## THE PILOT IS GETTING MORE INTERESTING I HEAR!

Lots of you have mentioned that our new Ed, Francis, is making a difference.

So all the more reason to pick up your regular copy from the doormat and peruse for interesting stuff.

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Just occasionally we must seek other willing members to the Pilot Delivery Team as some need cover and some are thinking of delivering their last.

Might you, dear reader, be willing to help?

Once a month a few Pilots are delivered direct to your doorstep. You could drop off a parish mag to

homes in your area as you pop out with the dog, stroll home from school (children are amazing at running up paths and posting a Pilot) or simply out for some air. Your monthly community effort can easily fit into your life and you tend to meet lots of folk out and about too.



We are especially keen to cover the Broken Cross area of Charminster as Jane, who has covered this route for a few years, is finding those years are getting the better of her. A HUGE thank you to Jane.

Could you be the person who takes her round?

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Please contact me, Jenny Mulligan on

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# VILLAGE'S DIRECTORY

## DORSET COUNCILLOR

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## LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICE TEAM

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## CHARMINSTER CONTACTS

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Please see our website for contact details and more info on meetings

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