

Ewelme



News

February/March 2026



Open evening success at
Ewelme Village Store... pg 16

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Parish Directory

Parish Council

Chairman	Barry Tindall barrytindall@ewelmeaparishcouncil.gov.uk
Vice Chairman	Rebecca Lanigan rebeccalanigan@ewelmeaparishcouncil.gov.uk
Councillors	Nigel Layton nigellayton@ewelmeaparishcouncil.gov.uk
	Sally Stockings sallystockings@ewelmeaparishcouncil.gov.uk
	Paul Stillaway paulstillaway@ewelmeaparishcouncil.gov.uk
	Mike Ibbott mikeibbott@ewelmeaparishcouncil.gov.uk
Parish Clerk	Jo Brock clerk@ewelmeaparishcouncil.gov.uk (Mon-Fri 07510 250508)

County & District Councillors

County Councillor	Gavin McLauchlan gavin.mclauchlan@oxfordshire.gov.uk
SODC Councillors	Sue Cooper 01491 835631
	Andrea Powell Andrea.Powell@southoxon.gov.uk

Ewelme Church

Rector	Rev. Dr Patrick Gilday 01491 838535
Associate Priest	Rev. Marion Harrison 01491 281341
Churchwardens	Sally Fehr sally_fehr@hotmail.co.uk
	Martin Spence martinhsjpenca@gmail.com
Visits Co-ordinator	Sally Fehr 01491 824822
Flower Co-ordinator	Angela Smailes 01491 836964

Almshouses

Almshouse Warden	Sam Cunningham warden@ewelmealmshouses.org
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Ewelme School

Headteacher	Joe Ottaway 01491 839240
Chair of Governors	Peter Ryding Peter@peterryding.com

Village Groups & Services

Ewelme Society	Carol Sawbridge 01491 833154
Ewelme Store	01491 834467 manager@ewelmevillagestore.co.uk
Village Hall	Anne Critchley 01491 834403
Village Preschool	Jo Hoskin 01491 281266
Admissions	01491 613143
Veterinary Surgery	Larkmead 01491 651379
Millstream Surgery	Dr Lucy Jenkins 01491 838286
Millstream Centre	Emma Gallagher 01491 834889
Newelme Club	Angela Harrison 01491 834111
Watercross Painters	Trisha Scott 01491 834734 / 07884 330453

The Village Diary

Thursday 5th February 7.45pm

Benson Garden Club talk by Guy Deakins
- Benson Parish Hall (£5)

Friday 6th February 5.30pm-8pm

OCC Pizza & Politics ages 11-18
Wallingford Town Hall

Wednesday 11th February 7pm-9pm

Craft Night - Watercress Centre
£5pp more info on Facebook

Saturday 14th February 8pm-11pm

McGrath Duo - Nettlebed Country Music
Club £10pp Live music & bar

Wednesday 11th March 7pm-9pm

Craft Night - Watercress Centre
£5pp more info on Facebook

Regular Events

2nd Friday in month

Newelme Club
2.30pm Village Hall

Every Wednesday

MUGS - coffee, everyone welcome
10.20-11.45am Shepherd's Hut

1st Sunday in month (May-Sept)

Watercress Beds Open Afternoon
2.00-4.30pm Watercress Centre

3rd Sunday in month

'Break Out' - St Mary's Church
11am Family friendly service

The Ewelme News is published bi-monthly by the Ewelme Parish Council. The copy date for the next issue is **15th March 2026**. Please send your contributions to the editor, Tash Troth at tashtroth@outlook.com

EWELME VILLAGE HALL YOU CAN HIRE THE VILLAGE HALL

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BOOKINGS AND INFO

ANNE CRITCHLEY ON 01491 834403

Thank you Ann and welcome Tash!

After 7 years in the editing hot seat of the Ewelme News magazine, Ann Sayer has decided to hang up her blue pen and retire from this position.

We are very grateful for all the sterling work she has done over this period, making the publication an interesting, informative and necessary addition to our village life.

Three cheers for Ann!

As this “door closes”, another opens in the appointment of a new editor, Tash Troth who has kindly stepped up and offered to take on the role. This is great news and I’m sure we all wish Tash the very best in her new position.

Ann has kindly offered to help with a diligent handover of the technicalities, so things should seamlessly move forward into Tash’s “reign”.

Good luck Tash and thank you again Ann!

Barry John Tindall
Chairman
Ewelme Parish Council



Ewelme Parish Council



Notes on Parish Council meetings held on 10th December & 14th January 2026

The purpose of these notes is to summarise some items discussed at recent Parish Council meetings, there is no intention to duplicate the minutes, which can be viewed on the PC Website at www.ewelme-parish-council.gov.uk.

Not all matters discussed at the meetings are covered here.

Co-option: Mike Ibbott has been co-opted to the Council.

Hazell & Jefferies (H&J): Some parishioners believe the volume of traffic to and from the site has increased and operating hours are outside of the CLEUD. Neighbours close to the site feel the lighting has become brighter. OCC has ordered H&J to remove the large mounds at their site. All reports from parishioners will be sent to OCC. Benson and Ewelme PC will coordinate cameras to measure volume and timing, on the same day.

Footpaths: The overgrown footpath from the bridge to the RAF base has been reported on Fix My Street. The Cat Lane & Parson's Lane working group are meeting regularly. There is overgrown vegetation along the route, so pedestrians are pushed into the road. The working group will identify houses which have overgrowing vegetation and write to them. County Cllr Gavin McLaughlan is keen on a Quiet Lane status along school routes.

Railings & Manor wall: The railings which were damaged on the bridge, have been repaired and reflectors have been installed. It was noticed that the wall by London Cottages, part of the Manor House, looks dangerous. This was reported to the Ewelme Trust, they are aware and monitoring.

Common: Most gates on the Common have been replaced. This is set to be completed by the Spring. The tree surgeons have started pruning the trees with the help of local volunteers

Ewelme News (EN): The current editor, Ann Sayer, has retired from the EN. Resident Tash Troth has taken on the role. The PC are looking for more volunteers to distribute the EN, especially in the Kings Pool to primary school vicinity. If you would be interested, please email clerk@ewelme-parish-council.gov.uk

Treasure: Cllr Barry Tindall discovered a silver seal matrix whilst metal detecting, which was valued at £50. EPC agreed to donate this to the Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock.

Reflection for January 2026

Welcome to a new year, and the slow turning of our planet to longer daylight hours and the warm days of summer. It's hard to see an end to the roller-coaster of our seasons. Even harder to keep an upbeat attitude to our day-to-day living, when the darkness seems so close. Do we sit at home or go out? Is it safe to visit friends and relatives when we either walk in the dark or drive home at night? So many questions and no short-cut answers.

It is in darkness like this that we have the time to ask ourselves the Big Questions. What is the point of life? Is there something more after death? Does God exist? Just what do I believe, and do I live up to that belief?

These are the questions we have so often laughed at in the past and mocked as irrelevant to our modern way of thinking. It has been all too easy to think we were fully in charge of our lives, what we made life to be. In truth, very little is in our control, but the elusion still feeds our way of living.

In this fast-paced world, dark winter nights gives us the time to ask the questions, look for answers and find faith, what ever shape that takes for you. For me that shape is called Elohim, Jehovah, Ancient of days, Abba, Father. And many other names such as The Christ, Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, Son of God, Lamb of God or simply, brother. And even Comforter, Holy Spirit, Light of life, Healer, Guide. Whatever name I use I pray and live in relationship with the ONE that to me is all the above and so much more. From this, come strength to face whatever comes, to believe in ultimate good over evil, to trust and not worry, and believe that there is so much more to life and death than we can ever know or imagine.

May God, whatever you perceive God to be, bless you abundantly and walk beside you throughout the coming year.

Rev. Marion Harrison

BREAK OUT



**Jump The Fence
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**You are Invited to A Different way to
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**3rd Sunday of the Month, St. Mary's Church.
Followed by refreshments**

Green Spaces News

The hedge between the road and the recreational area of Cow Common is now three years old and has had its first gentle trim. The hope is to be able to lay this hedge in time so a light touch is required with the cutting back to avoid the plants developing knuckles and becoming top heavy which can happen if repeatedly cut at the same height. The plants should have established good tap roots now and therefore be a bit drought resistant, they started to look stressed at the end of last year's hot summer and had to be watered.



Ewelme Brook will be receiving some health checks this spring. March 3rd will be see a wide scale nutrient survey being carried out by the **Chiltern Chalk Stream Project**. Following the outbreak of some brown algae, Mark Powell has been carrying out some surveys and these are now to be scaled up. We have a number of volunteers to collect samples from along the brook, these will be returned to the Cress Centre for analysis. **Mud spotter** surveys will also be taking place. Mud entering streams is a natural process but excessive quantities, usually as a result of



human behaviour can lead to serious problems for aquatic ecosystems by smothering and clogging coarser sediments and depleting the oxygen supply for aquatic organisms. The Mud spotters, after a brief training session, will monitor places where water enters the brook during rainfall to determine the amount entering and the discolouration from the mud. This will be repeated over time to give us a picture and to determine whether there are areas of particular concern.

Old father thyme

Drum

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Ewelme & Benson Cricket Club

est. 1878

The sound of the thwack of bat on ball resonates in many English villages at summertime cricket matches. Ewelme is particularly favoured to still have a Cricket Club to play on our picturesque cricket pitch. For supporters the bank beneath the car park forms a natural grandstand to view the whole pitch and straight down the wicket. A perfect spot for a summer Sunday afternoon to meet old friends, make new ones and share some liquid refreshment.

Cricket in Ewelme has been part of the warp and weft of village life for at least 175 years, being first mentioned in the records in 1850. Particularly between the wars and for more than two decades after, most of the village men and youths played in the team. Initially players were transported by wagonette for away games - and later by bicycle or charabanc. With no dedicated sports ground, there were few suitable venues for home games. Accommodating farmers made five fields available for pitches, the two most favoured along the Pightles at Prospect Farm, (handy for The Lamb for a post-match beer), or the field behind the New Churchyard. A tractor towing a trailer with a portable wooden changing shed arrived, animals were chased off, and obstructions such as cowpats removed before play.

An initial request was made to the Parish Council for a sports field in 1905. In 1937 headmaster Robert Quixley suggested an area be levelled for a playing field, and in 1945 a proposal was made to fence off a portion of the common. In 1959 movement was made and the Parish Council agreed. After decades of debate, planning and hard work (picking up stones from the levelling work and seeding) a sports field was ready with the first matches played in the early 1960s. So popular was cricket, that Ewelme even had its own Ladies Team! Sadly, from those heady days when Ewelme also had a football team, interest has dwindled, with but a handful of the 42 available players last year being resident in Ewelme, as the renaming to the Ewelme & Benson Cricket Club indicates.

However, thankfully despite disruptive flooding and droughts the Cricket Club has remained, and on December 19th the 2025 Awards Dinner was held at the Shepherds Hut. Chairman Andrew Firth opened with a welcome and a briefing of the year. After thanking the committee members for their hard work he reported the statistics for 2025 season which had 30 fixtures listed, with 16 won, 13 lost and 1 cancelled. [their opponents failed to raise a team]. The Club went on tour to Yorkshire and played in all 3 of the scheduled matches.

Andrew then invited the Club's President Lord Jay to present the awards. A special trophy was awarded to Cynthia Winfield as 'Supporter of 2025'. A most fitting tribute, as Cynthia's father Fred had once been a stalwart of the team and Cynthia had been secretary and scorer for many years.



Left: Cynthia and Lord Jay. Right: Other prize winners Wilf Rice, Owen Pemberton and Edward Abnitt.

The first home match of 2026 will be held on 10th May. Schedules will be available at the Village Shop and the Shepherds Hut. We encourage you to join the small band of loyal supporters at this enviable venue on a sunny Sunday afternoon. (Some mid-summer matches are played on a Friday evening). A knowledge of the rules is not essential, and sometimes, for those keen supporters prepared to stay to the end, a victory score can be a nail-biting one run!

The Bus Shelter Gallery



For some months David and Yvonne Solomon have been posting pictures of bygone Ewelme in the bus shelter. They have recently refreshed the display, and it now reflects the many shops that once flourished in the village. It is well worth pausing to take a look, and we thank them for their hard work in starting this initiative.

Carol Sawbridge
Ewelme Village Archive

Further afield on the buses

One of my favourite possessions is my bus pass which I have been pleased to use on the buses in England from the age of 60. I was lucky. Now residents have to wait until they are 66 (linked to a rising retirement age) before they can apply for an older person's bus pass.



I have been far and wide on my pass - England only of course. I cannot use it in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland as they have their own systems. It's a great way to sightsee in London. It may be slower than the tube with its endless walking to reach the right platform, but it is much more interesting. Londoners have more flexibility with their freedom pass which covers all transport routes including national rail.

I use my pass on my regular visits to Liverpool, I have to wait until after 9.30 unlike Oxfordshire where I can use it between 09:00 and 23:59 Monday to Friday, or at any time over the weekend and public holidays. It is even possible to go from Oxford to Cambridge via Buckingham and Milton Keynes. It used to be a through service on the X5 from Gloucester Green but now I would have to change at Bedford. Also the pass is acceptable on the Oxford Tube between Oxford and Lewknor. That was a surprise to me and many others.

You can apply for a pass online, by telephone or by visiting the library.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/public-transport/bus-passes/older-persons-bus-pass>

Ann Truesdale

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Cressbeds Annual Social and Fundraising Event 2026

Saturday March 21 2026, Ewelme Village Hall, 19:00

Cost is £15 per head and funds raised will be used to cover the costs of maintenance and management of the Cress Beds and the associated Local Nature Reserve undertaken by our dedicated band of volunteers.



The event will follow our usual varied format which has proved so popular in the past. It will include a hot supper (covered in the price), an entertaining table-top quiz with prizes, a raffle, a bar, a musical interlude by “Shiraz”, and a well-illustrated exhibition on the Ewelme Stream and the nearby reach of the Thames.

You may recall some of our earlier popular exhibitions of cress-bed art, a history of the working cress beds, and wildlife of the cress beds and nature reserve. These last two have been preserved as permanent exhibitions in the cress centre. We can promise you a high quality varied and enjoyable evening of entertainment!

Advance booking is essential (hall capacity is limited and we need to know numbers for catering). If you wish to attend please make an online payment (£15 per ticket) to The Friends of Ewelme Watercress Beds, sort code 30-98-56, account number 00900695 and email Andrea Powell (andreaipowell@yahoo.co.uk) to let her know that you have made payment and who the payment covers.

If you can't make it along to the social evening this year, but would like to renew your membership of the Friends for 2026, please transfer £5 per member to the same account. Thank you!

Full details can be found on our website www.ewelmewatercressfriends.com



SODC Update

New Chief Executive and new Leader now in place

Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers, member for Goring and the former deputy Leader was elected as the new Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council in December following the stepping down of Cllr David Rouane.

Adrianna Partridge, who was previously one of the deputies, has now taken up her position as the new Chief Executive of South and Vale Councils.

Local Government Reorganisation

The government is consulting on the “technical details” of the 3 proposals for reorganisation in Oxfordshire and we await the verdict. Meanwhile, we become more restricted in terms of cost and timings for any suggestions for new or better services.

Leisure Facilities Contract Renewed for 3 Years

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), who operate under the brand ‘Better’, has run seven leisure facilities in South Oxfordshire for many years. A short-term contract extension, rather than a new long-term deal will provide the greatest flexibility for the new unitary council that will be replacing the two districts in the next few years. The new three-year contract will generate cost savings with no compromise on service with a focus on quality, accessibility and sustainability. This follows our recent investments in major energy-saving decarbonisation projects across several sites, such as new windows, solar panels, air source heat pumps and external wall insulation. These aim to reduce the Councils’ overall carbon emissions by more than 25 per cent.

In South Oxfordshire the contract covers the following facilities:

- Didcot Wave.
- Didcot Leisure Centre.
- Abbey Sports Centre, Berinsfield.
- Thame Leisure Centre.
- Henley Leisure Centre.
- Park Sports Centre, Wheatley.
- Riverside Outdoor Pool and Campsite, Wallingford.

Car Parking Charges in the Next Financial Year

There will be some minor alterations to car parking charges later this year but the 1 hour free will remain. Hourly rates will increase by about 5% but parking permits for a particular designated car park will decrease slightly as they will be subject to a discount of 50% rather than the current 40% of daily usage. There will also be a consultation on changing car parks to pay on arrival, and ticketless/paperless (rather than Pay and Display). No charge will be made for using the SODC car park in Benson.

Ewelme Village Store



The festivities are behind us and we enjoyed a very successful Open Evening, early December, when the school children and Miss Lee sang carols beautifully around the tree. This was despite the downpour of rain all around us! Thank you to everyone who turned out and thanks also to Donna and Peter Mitchell for the loan of their gazebo which, as it turned out, was sorely needed!

So another new year has turned. January can be a quieter month than most, in your village store. Please don't forget us, your custom is very much needed and appreciated!



Fresh cheese scones, home-made cakes and warming soups are being prepared daily, just what we need in the cold snap we have recently been enduring. We have just taken delivery of Mr & Mrs Parks sausages, chicken pieces and minced beef. The quality is extremely high so don't miss out!

Our greetings cards are always popular and a new delivery has just come in. We are slowly gaining a reputation for our range of cards for all occasions, including local artists who paint local scenes.



We are all very fortunate to live in this area of outstanding natural beauty and, to this end, several local knowledgeable folk have written booklets and pamphlets of our history and our walking trails, our flowing chalk stream and even accounts of tv programmes and movies shot in the area! These booklets and more are available to buy. Just ask a member of staff if you can't find what you are looking for.

We would like to wish all our customers a Happy and Healthy New Year. We look forward to seeing you very soon!

Sue Evans

Ewelme Horticultural Society

By the time you receive this edition, Geoff Watts would have kindly organised another Village Quiz on behalf of the Ewelme Horticultural Society. The proceeds from the evening will help fund the Annual Village Show to be held on **August Bank Holiday Monday**. Many thanks Geoff.



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Household recycling booking system

Oxfordshire's household recycling centres have introduced a new booking system effective from 14th January 2026. Under the new system, bookings will be available up to two weeks in advance or 30 minutes prior across Oxfordshire recycling centres. It is still free to visit (unless taking chargeable items) but people living outside the county will be charged £15. You can book for a single vehicle per booking and you must use the same vehicle you booked with.

Book online: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/book-recycling-centre-visit

Or book by phone: 01865 519 800 (Monday–Friday, Oxfordshire County Council customer services)

What to Bring

Please bring all of the following:

- Proof of address (driving licence, council tax bill, or utility bill)
- Booking confirmation (email or reference number)
- Booked vehicle (registration must match)

Without proof of address, you may be charged or refused entry.



Holy Week/Easter Services across the Benefice are as follows:

Maundy Thursday (2nd April) - 8.00pm

Liturgy of the Last Supper at St Helen's, Benson

Good Friday (3rd April) - 12.30pm

Devotions in church; 3.00pm Liturgy of Good Friday at St Helen's, Benson

Holy Saturday (4th April) - 9.15pm

Easter Vigil at St Helen's, Benson

Easter Day (5th April) - 6.00am

Dawn Eucharist at Easington; 11.00am in church in Ewelme.



Benson Garden Club

Benson Garden Club's talk on 8th January was given by Katharine Woods who shared shade-loving plant ideas for a woodland garden or shady area. Before making any plant choices, Katharine suggested we observe and understand at which times of year the area is in shade and whether the soil is dry or damp. This will then inform your ability to choose the right plant for the right place. She then went on to give lots of suitable planting suggestions, along with how she had created her own woodland area by renovating an overgrown and shady part of her garden. By the end of the talk, we had plenty of ideas for creating a shady garden - what had seemed like a problematic space could now be seen as an exciting opportunity to create something special.

On 5th February we are looking forward to welcoming Guy Deakins with his intriguing talk on 'Sexy Pollinators'. This talk is £5 for visitors, £2 for members – just turn up on the door, no need to book.



On 5th March we are very pleased to announce that we have Rachel de Thame coming to speak to us. Rachel is a regular presenter on Gardeners' World and hosts her own BBC series, Small Town Gardens and Gardening with the Experts.

Previously she was gardening consultant for The Vanessa Show and a reporter for Heart of the Country. As well as Gardeners' World and other shows, she is a regular on the BBC's coverage of the Chelsea and Hampton Court Flower Shows. Rachel has written a number of gardening books and

regularly writes columns for The Sunday Times, the Telegraph, and Gardeners' World magazine. This is a ticketed event - £16 for visitors, £10 for members. Please email us to purchase (contact details below) or buy them in person from Derry's Den (26 High Street, Benson).

Both events will be at our usual venue, Benson parish hall, OX10 6LZ. Doors open at 7.15pm for a 7.45pm start.

Further information about the club and how to join as a member can be found on our website <https://bensongardeningclub.weebly.com> or please feel free to email bensongardeningclub@gmail.com

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Ewelme Watercress Beds

As we put 2025 to bed and welcome 2026 it seems a good time to reflect on the passing year.

Weather

In 2025, national temperatures were the highest on record, while this region saw its third warmest year.

Rainfall, as measured in my Benson garden was just below the 30-year average but most of the rain occurred at either end of the year with a very dry summer.

Volunteering

The total number of volunteering hours recorded was 1700, similar to previous years. It is interesting to note that if the cress beds had to pay for this labour even at the minimum wage rates (and our volunteers are worth well above the minimum wage) we would have to find nearly £22000.



Birds

During 2025 56 species were recorded which is marginally down on previous years but probably due to less recording time being spent on site. The longer-term trend remains upward both of species' numbers and of overall numbers. The overall total for the site stands at 101 species.

Riverflies

Monitoring of Riverflies continued, monthly, through 2025. The larvae of river flies are vital to the health of the brook, and they form the main food source, both in their larval and adult forms, of many other creatures. They are also a good indicator of the health of the water as they are the first creatures to be affected if contaminants enter the stream. The health of the brook remained good though improvement would be possible if somehow of reducing nitrates from farmland could be found.

Butterflies

Butterfly numbers and species were recorded weekly through the summer period. 1580 individuals of 21 species were recorded. Numbers were the fourth highest recorded since the exercise started in 2009, though with such a hot, dry summer I might have expected more.

Dragonflies

Just seven species were recorded in 2025, but this is almost certainly an underestimate as sufficient time could not be devoted. The one highlight, it appears that beautiful demoiselle has become visitor to the site.

Wildflowers

A full survey was not feasible with the available resources, but an assessment of the orchids indicated that they continue to flourish.

Moths

The annual BANG "moth breakfast" event took place on August 25th, recording a total of 83 species. Of these, 25 were identified as new to the site, increasing the cumulative species count to 374.

As you can probably tell from this there are many volunteering tasks apart from the more evident working in the beds so if interested you would be welcome with open arms.


Just to finish up there are several interesting birds to be seen on the reserve including little egret (three seen together recently), green sandpiper, water rail and kingfisher. Guided walks on first Sunday each month at 10:30 – come and see if you can spot any of these. Book by emailing watercressbookings@outlook.com

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Friends of Ewelme Church (FOEC)

Ceilidh on 30th November 2025



To celebrate St Andrew's Day, FOEC hosted a Ceilidh at the Village Hall, and what a lively evening it turned out to be. The hall was filled with warmth, laughter and plenty of energy, and the event was clearly enjoyed by all.

The band was excellent, with clear and friendly calling that helped even complete beginners to Scottish dancing feel confident and join in. Between dances, there was no shortage of refreshment, with drinks on hand for the thirsty and delicious pizzas available from the van just outside the hall.

It was lovely to welcome people not only from Ewelme but from the surrounding area too, and we hope this Ceilidh will become an annual event, attracting even more local residents in future.

We always welcome feedback on the events we organise, which help us care for our beautiful and much-loved church building. Do let us know what kind of events you'd like to see next - friends.of.ewelme.church@gmail.com

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CONTACT US

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