

It's Christmas in Farnham

Farnham families showed that they know how to have fun at Saturday's Christmas lights' switch on party, which featured new attractions for 2019.

Undeterred by the cold weather, people spent the afternoon being entertained by a non-stop programme of entertainment – most of which was free. Local schools and theatre groups sang and performed on the big stage while an ice sculptor captivated his audience when he used a chainsaw and chisel to transform blocks of ice into a reindeer and Father Christmas.

In the children's zone, there were fairground rides, animals, face-painting and pop up craft activities courtesy of the Farnham Maltings. There was also a free gift for every child who visited Father Christmas in his grotto.

This year, Farnham people got to choose who they wanted to switch on the Christmas lights. Farnham Town Clerk Iain Lynch explains: "The Christmas lights switch-on is a big community event which lots of people attend. This year, we thought it would be good to work in partnership with the Farnham Herald and invite readers to nominate a community hero to join the Mayor of Farnham, Councillor Pat Evans in throwing the switch to illuminate Farnham with festive lights.

"We were delighted that Gail Whattingham, Farnham's very own queen of Christmas lights was chosen for the job. Every year, Gail festoons her house in Greenfield Road with lights to raise money for Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice – we think this made her a very good choice."

The Mayor and Gail Whattingham were also joined by cast members from Aladdin who are starring in pantomime at The Harlington Centre in Fleet, Father Christmas and his team of elves and the Taiko Drummers.

In summing up the afternoon Iain Lynch adds: "Without doubt, I think this year's Christmas lights switch-on was bigger and better than ever and this is mainly down to the support we received from our sponsors Durham House Chiropractic Clinic, Bourne Wood Manor care home and Personnel Selection. I am truly grateful to our volunteers and business community for the support they give in helping us put on some great events for Farnham people to enjoy."

Details about other events happening in Farnham in the weeks leading up to Christmas can be found at www.farnham.gov.uk/christmas.

Christmas market date announced

Over 100 stalls with gifts, tableware, food and drink will be at this year's Christmas Market in Farnham town centre on Sunday 8 December from 10am to 4pm.

"We have hand-picked a fabulous selection of stallholders this year so if you have a relative or friend who is hard to buy for or you are looking for a Christmas decoration that's a cut above what you can find on the high street, this year's Christmas Market is the place to come. We also promise a really festive atmosphere and plenty of refreshment stops," says Iain Lynch, Town Clerk at Farnham Town Council. "We are operating a free shuttle bus too, to make it easy to get to and from the market. Look out for details on our website."

The market will take over Castle Street, The Borough and the Bush Hotel. As well as plenty of stalls to browse and shop at, there will be a Santa's grotto, live music and Christmas carols, and food and drink to enjoy on the go.

"Abbeyfield Wey Valley Society, The Castle Inn and Kidd Rapinet Solicitors are generously supporting the fair, which enables us to provide the free bus and to add to the Christmas feel with our music and entertainment during the day," says Iain Lynch.

Gifts include jewellery, homewares, glassware and ceramics, clothes and accessories, food and drink gifts, photography and arts prints. Experience gifts such as massage and therapy consultations are also available to buy. Unusual and handmade gift wrap, decorations and home fragrances are on sale too from local suppliers.

With over 40 stalls dedicated to food, drink and confections, home cooks and hosts can start to shop for festive meals and parties from local gin suppliers, brewers and wine experts, cheesemongers, and stalls selling preserves, cured meats, chocolates and sweets.

When visiting the market, Farnham Town Council encourages shoppers to save some time to explore the town's fabulous retail and food and drink offer in the Lion & Lamb Yard, Downing Street and Cambridge Place.

Farnham Remembers

The public mood was reflective on Sunday (10 November) as people gathered in Farnham to commemorate those who lost their lives in conflict.

Hundreds of people lined the streets to watch the Mayor of Farnham, the Vice Lord Lieutenant Bill Biddell, the Deputy Mayor of Waverley and representatives of the armed forces, uniformed services, cadets, scout groups, community organisations and local dignitaries parade from Castle Street to the war memorial in Gostrey Meadow.

At the war memorial, a short service was held which included readings by the Mayor of Farnham Councillor Pat Evans, Roger Brown who is chairman of the Farnham Royal British Legion, Parade Marshall Ian Hunter and Louis Muddle representing young people of Farnham. At 11am The Last Post was played, and the standard was lowered as people paused to observe a two-minute silence. This was followed by the laying of wreaths on the war memorial.

After the ceremony which was jointly organised by Farnham Town Council and the Royal British Legion, there was a march past and the taking of the salute outside the Town Hall in South Street. The parade ended at St Andrew's Church where there was a remembrance service led by the Revd David Uffindell with music played by the Alder Valley Brass Band.

Speaking after the Remembrance Sunday parade, Councillor Pat Evans, Mayor of Farnham said: "Here in the town centre and across Farnham, people were united by the act of putting their busy lives on hold and pausing for two minutes to honour those who have risked or lost their lives in many conflicts.

"Farnham is proud to have held the world's first two-minute silence on Sunday 1 May 1916. With every year that passes, it becomes more and more important for us to take this time to remember our forefathers and their families and to give gratitude for the freedoms they fought for and that we enjoy today."

Elsewhere in Farnham, remembrance services were held in The Bourne, Hale, Badshot Lea, Rowledge, Wrecclisham and Weybourne.

On Friday (8 November), the Mayor of Farnham welcomed children from the Farnham Schools' Confederation for a special remembrance service with the Royal British Legion and councillors at Gostrey Meadow war memorial.

Supported by representatives from 229 Squadron ATC, the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, Farnham Sea Cadets and veterans, the Mayor of Farnham read a tribute entitled 'In Memory' contributed by Farnham Heath End School. This was followed by students from Weydon and Farnham Heath End School taking it in turns

to read 'They Shall Grow Not Old' with Deputy Lieutenant Brigadier Roger Hood QVRM TD DL.

After a two-minute silence, children from William Cobbett, St Peter's Primary and South Farnham read poems they had written for the occasion. The service concluded with the laying of wreaths and the planting of crosses.

Carol Service ballot opens

The ballot opens this week for tickets to attend the Civic Christmas Carol Service. The traditional Christmas service includes readings, seasonal music and singing from the internationally acclaimed Farnham Youth Choir who won double gold at the European Choir Games 2019. The Civic Christmas Carol Service is hosted by the Mayor of Farnham and takes place at 7.30pm on 12 December at St Andrew's Parish Church.

To enter the ballot, look out for the form in this week's Farnham Herald (due out on 14 November). All instructions are on the form, including the deadline and how to return it.

"The Civic Christmas Carol Service captures the meaning of Christmas beautifully and includes many of the traditions that we enjoy about this time of year. Each year, we allocate half the places at the service to representatives and volunteers from local good causes and community groups. The remainder are offered to the wider Farnham community to apply for through our ballot," says Town Clerk Iain Lynch. "After the service, the Mayor will host a reception with light refreshments, thanks to the support of the Farnham Herald. Everyone who attends the service is invited."

The civic service is a Farnham tradition that brings together people from all walks of life in the local community. It provides an opportunity for the Mayor, on behalf of the town, to thank local people and organisations who have contributed to town life during the year and for local residents to participate in a joint Christmas service.

The ballot will be drawn on 26 November and all successful entrants will be provided with their tickets by 6 December.

Bloomin' Kids get planting

Children got stuck into some serious gardening over half term at the Bloomin' Kids gardening workshops. Around 50 children with their mums, dads, carers or grandparents took part in the workshops run by Farnham Town Council and the award-winning Farnham in Bloom Community Group at the Town Council's greenhouses.

"These workshops are always really popular – which is great as it means we're growing a generation of children who enjoy gardening and the natural world. The children learnt skills such as how to plant a bulb and got an understanding of what is needed to grow healthy, strong plants. As the workshop was the day before Halloween, the children also worked with their grown-ups to make a papier-mâché spider to take home," says Iain Lynch, Town Clerk at Farnham Town Council.

The two workshop sessions were held on the Wednesday of half term and, thanks to sponsorship from The Farnham Institute Charity, they were completely free, which provided families with a cost-free all-weather activity. The workshops, which take place each year in the October half term and Easter holidays, are run by volunteers from the Farnham in Bloom Community Group alongside Council staff.

The organisers brought even more enthusiasm to the workshops than usual, spurred on by the astounding news last week (Friday 25 October) that Farnham had not only won gold in the Britain in Bloom competition but also best in category for best town / city centre.

Involving all parts of the community, particularly children and young people, is an important part of Farnham's approach to its In Bloom activities and one of the reasons judges scored it so highly in the competition. The Farnham Institute Charity sponsored the workshops, providing all the additional materials and equipment needed. Although the fruits of Farnham in Bloom are most visible in the summer months, the organisers run activities and need volunteers all year round. The planning for next year's competition entry is already underway and residents are encouraged to keep an eye out in the coming months for ways of supporting and getting involved.

Christmas lights switch-on

Farnham's Christmas lights switch-on is on Saturday 16 November, bringing festive spirit and Christmas shoppers to the town centre. The switch-on at 4.30pm will complete the party atmosphere, complementing an afternoon of music,

entertainment, fairground rides and food stalls in Gostrey Meadow.

Councillor Alan Earwaker, the Lead Member for Tourism and Events, says: “We promise a glittering afternoon of family fun at our Christmas party in the town centre this year. Whatever you love about Christmas, we have it covered: we have performances from schools and theatre groups, fantastic food and drink stalls, plus – and most importantly – Santa will be in his grotto ready to hear children’s Christmas wishes.”

A full guide to what’s happening at the Christmas lights switch-on is available on our [Christmas lights switch-on page](#).

“With just six Saturdays until Christmas Day, the switch-on marks the beginning of Christmas trading for many of our independent shops so do come and support your local high street. This year we are lucky to have three local businesses, Durham House Chiropractic Clinic, Personnel Selection and Bourne Wood Manor Care Home, generously supporting the switch-on as gold sponsors so it is set to be a really fun afternoon,” says Councillor Earwaker.

To make sure little ones do not miss out on the action, there will be a big screen showing what is happening on and off the stage. Among this year’s entertainment line-up there will be musical theatre performances from Stagecoach, Starburst, Theatre Rocket and Farnham Music and Drama as well as dance from Magic Feet and Showshack Dance and Theatre. Among the schools taking part in song and dance performances this year are St Peter’s Primary School and William Cobbett Primary School. The event will finish with some party tunes from local covers band ‘Extreme Ways’.

Venison Dinner tickets

Tickets are selling fast for November’s Venison Dinner at Farnham Castle. A tradition that goes back over 400 years, the Venison Dinner is thought to be unique to Farnham. It is a four-course meal which sees the Mayor of Farnham presented with the venison to carve for the assembled guests.

“This is a very special Farnham tradition that anyone can purchase tickets for so get a group of family, friends or colleagues together and enjoy an evening of amazing food in the atmospheric setting of Farnham Castle,” says Pat Frost, Chairman of the Venison Dinner organising committee. “As well as providing the wonderful venue, I’d like to thank Farnham Castle for sponsoring the table wine this year. Among the special guests joining the Mayor are the Deputy Lord Lieutenant Bill Biddell, local MP Jeremy Hunt and Colin Channon the editor of

the Farnham Herald. If you have not come to a Venison Dinner before, I would encourage you to join us this year and be part of this great tradition.”

The dinner takes place on the evening of Thursday 14 November. Tickets are £70 a head which includes a four-course meal (vegetarian option available), pre-dinner drink, coffee and petits fours. To apply for tickets, visit the Farnham Town Council website at www.farnham.gov.uk.

The Venison Dinner dates back to 1605, the same year as the Gunpowder Plot, when the bailiffs and burgesses of Farnham arranged for a venison dinner to be offered to the townspeople in an attempt to discourage them from poaching deer in Farnham Park. Nowadays, the meal is an opportunity for the people of Farnham to dress up and enjoy a formal but relaxed meal among friends with some entertaining speeches to introduce formal toasts to the town and responses.