

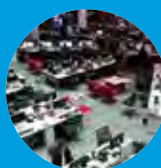
SC SONNING COMMON MAGAZINE

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40 years of teaching
martial arts
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30 YEARS AT THE BBC

In Focus: Helen Fort
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PETS AS THERAPY

Enhancing lives through
animal assisted therapy
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SONNING COMMON IN LOCKDOWN

2020 – A VERY DIFFERENT YEAR

DEC/JAN 2020/21



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FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

What a strange end to the year! Here we are on Lockdown again, hoping for some celebration at Christmas but knowing that it will not be like anything we expect to experience in terms of partying and entertainment. It is the first December magazine in the 8 years I have been editor, that has not been packed full of local Christmas celebrations!

Just as much of 2020 has made us focus on our community and how important that has become to so many people. In recognition of this, two calendars have been produced, one which celebrates our countryside and the many acts of kindness that occurred and the other is an acknowledgement of the agencies and retail outlets that supported us so well (see page 11). On page 10 there is an appeal for donations to provide boxes of treats for as many residents whose names come forward. Some of these residents would have attended the Christmas Day lunch which we cannot hold and others may be from elderly or vulnerable groups.

A great variety of stories appear in this issue of the magazine. I hope you will find some to inform and some to entertain you. We will have to make our own fun at home while pausing for thought for people in the village who may be less fortunate than others.

Perhaps we should all celebrate what we have rather than what we are missing? Enjoy!!

With the best of wishes and good health

from the magazine team ●

Diana

Diana Pearman Editor

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MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM



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DEC/JAN 2020/21

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MAGAZINE

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WELL IT'S BEEN QUITE THE HALF-TERM!



Having returned to work in mid-August and presided over a very strange results day we have been at it ever since.

The school despite the pandemic is in better shape than it has been in a number of years. A stable staff, a well-qualified, experienced and thoroughly focused leadership team and a very supportive parent body have all worked closely together to ensure that the students are very much the focus of our work (despite everything else going on!).

In the classroom we have focused on knowledge retrieval as one of key elements for future success, with students regularly tested and questioned on previous learning. This allows staff

to ascertain how much has been understood and adjust and adapt lessons to meet the students' learning needs. We are also seeing the fruits of our curriculum audit that took place during lockdown. Each subject has a five-year sequenced curriculum which builds upon the primary school learning experience and layers knowledge and skills all the way to the end of the GCSE course. These elements and other foci along with our strong focus on behaviour and high expectations are definitely leading to stronger outcomes and progress. As I walk around the school on a daily basis I am delighted at what I see- teachers teaching, students focused and engaged, quiet classrooms and books full of high-quality work.

We have also worked hard at ensuring that our students with greater need- SEND and More Able- have the opportunities they need to progress. This is either through high quality teaching with adjustments made for learning needs, setting in core subjects, a choice of activities in lessons such as Maths or by opportunities beyond the curriculum. We have teams entered in the Oxfordshire Model United Nations this month and another team in the Reading

Mock Trial competition in January. Both of these opportunities will really support our most able students in developing both their reasoning and also their oracy, something we will be really moving forward in the next year or so.

Despite the pandemic we have been working hard with outreach activities showing pupils at six local primary schools what secondary school is all about. Ms Hardman, our Head of Science, has been into Sonning Common Primary School and Kidmore End Primary School delivering some wonderful science activities on space and fossils. Our intention is also to deliver some Maths problem solving along with some proposals for Performing Arts and Technology work. We hope that these learning experiences will enthuse the pupils for these subjects but they will also show parents and the local schools that the March 2017 OFSTED report is about a school that bears no resemblance to the energised, dynamic and vibrant learning institution that Maiden Erleigh Chiltern Edge is today.

Take care and stay safe. ●

ANDY HARTLEY
Headteacher

NEWS FROM SONNING COMMON PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (PTA)

by **CHRISTINE ATKINSON**

As with many other charities the school PTA has not been able to fundraise for most of this year. In autumn and winter they would usually host a couple of events for parents, and the annual Christmas Fair. Sadly these, along with the postponed On Your Bike event, could not go ahead.

But they have had ongoing success with second hand uniform sales, and also have fantastic news that, with support of the local community, they will be building a purpose built 'shop' to store and sell uniform.

And - the PTA has launched a big project and over the coming year all

funds will be going towards constructing a covered area on the field. This will be used as an outdoor learning space, a shelter at break and lunch times and for outdoor PE. It can also be used for various fundraising events and performances. The cost of the project is £35,000. They already have £10,000 to put towards this but need to raise a further £25,000. A Just Giving page has been shared with parents and can be found on the website if you search for SONNING COMMON PRIMARY SCHOOL PTA

They have already been selling potted Christmas Trees which have been

growing on site for two years, and pre ordered Christmas Trees that they bought in specially to raise funds, and are producing a Family Cookbook with recipes contributed by children, parents and staff at school.

In 2021 they will be celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the school PTA and need to make events next year bigger and better than ever! So, please put the following dates in your diary : On Your Bike on Sunday 28 March 2021 and the Summer Fair on Saturday 26 June 2021.

<https://www.justgiving.com/.../sonningcommonprimaryschoolPTA>

THE HUNT FOR BURIED TREASURE



X marks the spot - or maybe not!

A time capsule was buried in the garden of Sonning Common Pre-School in 2000 to be retrieved 20 years later. The staff were finally able to uncover the buried time capsule, but it took a while to find, as the post where it was buried had been moved! It was due to be uncovered in April, but due to Covid-19 closure of the preschool we were unable to do it until October.

The children loved digging and trying to find the 'treasure' and were so excited to open the tin to see what was inside. We finally got into it to find all sorts of information from 2000, including names of those who had worked at the Pre-School and the committee members, as well the children who attended at the time. It was interesting to see the curriculum from 2000 and note the changes that have happened over the past 20 years in how children learn. We contacted a couple of the parents from 2000 - Caroline Conway and Linda Stevens - and they had memories of the children burying the capsule. Caroline, who now works at the Primary School told us 'Yes I remember it well. In fact my son Adam helped bury it and plant the tree next to it', and Linda said 'How exciting. Teri, my daughter, and I had a trip down memory lane this evening'.

The Pre-School, which has been running since 1966, has undergone a lot of

changes over the past years, including a new building in 2011. We are still working hard fundraising to keep quality affordable childcare for all. The current staff have been at the pre-school for some time, and some can remember working with those staff 20 years ago. It was a difficult time during lockdown, but we managed to open in September as close to normal as possible. We will be adding to the time capsule and burying it for another 20 years. Quite an interesting year to talk about for the next generation. ●

CLARE SAUNDERS
Manager



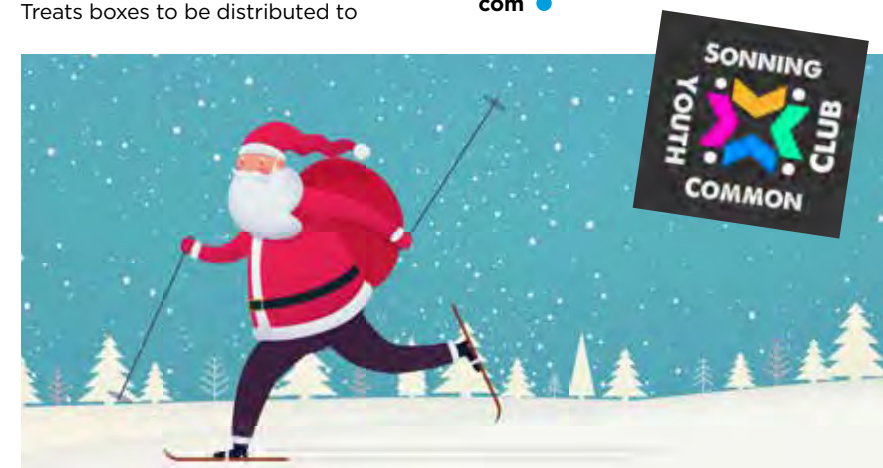
SONNING COMMON YOUTH CLUB

We are running sessions each week on Tuesdays and Wednesday evenings which are fully booked as the sessions can hold 15 young people in line with the government guidelines.

Our first week back in November was our glow night. We will be holding a Christmas card competition and all the cards will be going in the Christmas Treats boxes to be distributed to

vulnerable adults and families in the village. We're just all really enjoying being able to provide the young people with the service they desperately need in these hard times. From the great feedback we're getting from parents they feel it's an asset to the community.

As always if anyone feels they have any spare time and skills to help out please do email me on sunny.clubsc@gmail.com. ●



COMMUNITY SINGING - WE WILL MISS YOU SO MUCH

The first Friday there were 9 then it grew and grew as people in the village and beyond heard about it.

Now ten years later we are 70 strong and have become so much more than just a choir. There is a real sense of fellowship and camaraderie. Margaret and Elaine have worked so hard and forged a wonderful community spirit. The choir has raised thousands of £s for local organisations, sung in care homes and at Sue Ryder and walked round the village singing carols.

This dreadful pandemic, despite research that has shown that singing is more therapeutic than harmful, has meant the demise of the choir and all it stands for.

It will be missed more than I and any of my fellow singers can say Margaret and Elaine have brought such pleasure and joy to so many people who did not realise that they could sing. ●

CHRISSIE GODFREY

DRAMATIC UPDATE

Or What have Chiltern Players been doing?

Although like everyone else we have been unable recently to do our thing, never fear, the curtain has not come down on Chiltern Players. During the long days of lockdown and beyond we have still been meeting regularly - albeit via Zoom - and coming up with ways to entertain each other with a view to once again entertaining our audiences. So, whenever the lights come up again we'll be ready!

Online play readings are a popular feature - by logging onto one of the various drama websites we can simultaneously access the same script. You can't buy a drink at the Butchers Arms unfortunately but a glass of the cold stuff from the fridge will still make the evening go with a swing and produce some highly entertaining results - especially when you're trying to speak to a tablet while reading a script on a phone. Never let it be said that Chiltern Players are not up

for a challenge! One of our most successful readings to date was Under Milk Wood: a cast of interesting characters to get your teeth into and created as a play for voices. How perfect is that? Written in 1954 but it could have been designed for 2020 - clearly Dylan Thomas was a man of foresight!

We might be under playhouse arrest but it's obviously served our creative juices well - unless it's just desperation - as some of our members have branched out into writing and presenting their own 'coronareations'. The hope is that this might evolve into a creative writing platform with stories, monologues and poems written by our group. No potential social distancing problems with them - could this be a solution to future productions?

Any thought of setting foot on stage at the moment is obviously a no go - sadly we

had to put on ice our production of the comedy Forget-Me-Knot scheduled for April this year which promised to be hilarious: certainly if rehearsals were anything to go by anyway, and likewise have had to cancel our dates booked for December. However, ever the optimists, we are looking ahead to (hopefully) happier and healthier times in 2021 and are planning to put on an entertainment next April in Peppard Memorial Hall - socially distanced for cast and audience if necessary. We are also considering reprising the idea of an outdoor production at some of the local hostelrys which have previously been very well received.

We hope you are well and will continue to be so and we look forward to seeing you again in 2021. ●

Cathy Brabben



Explorers walks around the Chilterns

The second book has been produced and covers walks exploring the foothills of the beautiful Chilterns. It is available free at Carl Woods, Beville's, Sonning Common Garage, Heath and Watkins and The Herb Farm

£5 donations are welcome on the Just Giving page <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/activeleaders>



OPEN, CLOSED, OPEN AGAIN

We reopened the Library on Monday 28 September, under Covid-secure conditions. This means that everyone over the age of 11 has to wear a mask in the library (unless medically exempt), sanitize their hands on entry, and fill in an NHS Test and Trace form (or use the NHS App). Only 6 people are allowed in the library at one time, and short visits are encouraged. The opening hours have been reduced to these:

Monday 2 - 5pm
Wednesday 2 - 5pm

Friday 9 - 1pm; 2 - 5pm
Saturday 9.30 - 12.30pm

At time of writing no definite decision has been made about Christmas opening times, but I think it's likely that the library will close on Wednesday 23rd December at 5pm, and open again on Saturday 2nd January 2021. Let's hope 2021 brings happier and healthier times ●

Rosemary Dunstan
Library manager

HEALTH WALKS

There are tentative plans to restart the Health Walks in January 2021, albeit with a reduced timetable of walks. Information about starting points and times and days will be available on the website at www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk/timetable as soon as something definite has been decided. To talk to someone about any aspect of the Health Walks phone Chris Brook on 0118 924 2515. Meanwhile, get out and enjoy our beautiful local countryside! ●

Rosemary Dunstan

SPECTACULAR SCARECROWS, SPIDERS, ZOMBIES AND PUMPKINS



Yet again Sonning Common villagers pull together to bring joy in times when plans change at the last minute and in such times of uncertainty.

On 31 October and 1 November, a Halloween Hunt, organised by Helen Coyne, took place in the village, drawing lots of local families from the village and surrounds to enjoy displays put on by 45 houses.

The displays ranged from spectacular scarecrows such as 'Booris Johnson' and 'Petrifying Scarecrow of Death' on Peppard Road to creepy spiders as seen at 'Willoughby Web', 'Spid-Zilla' and 'The Spider Den'. There were creepy zombies seen in action at Zombie Invasion, with child zombies putting on a very good

zombie impression and rising from a grave, a zombie nun and putrefied zombie who successfully scared many onlookers. There was some amazing carved pumpkin, some placed on scarecrow bodies as seen at 'Spooky Scarecrows' and 'Small and Scary', some of which were spectacularly huge! There were flashing balloon faces in cars at Rowan Close and some rather haunting clowns at Lea Road on a tricycle and as a jack in the box.

During the event a Just Giving site was organised and to date has received donations of £443.00 for ROSY (Respite Nursing for Oxfordshire's Sick Youngsters), who provide nursing care at home for children with chronic, life-limiting or terminal illnesses in Oxfordshire.

The event appeared to be a huge success in the village and much enjoyed. All the

displays were brilliant, and lots of effort was made to make this special for the children coming to view them, despite trick or treat being off the cards. It was also lovely to hear that the charity that we supported was used by people in the village and surrounds and those that contacted me were grateful for our support.

I cannot thank everyone who took part, making displays, taking part in the hunt and donating to the Just Giving site enough, you have made the village have another successful community event yet again.

Perhaps we could do the same again next year. ●

Helen Coyne



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ERICA CUNNINGHAM PLASTIC FREE - MY DILEMMA



It wasn't just the prospect of mulled wine and mince pies that piqued my interest, I was genuinely intrigued by an invitation to businesses to come along to Heath & Watkins for a meeting about making Sonning Common plastic free.

Even before dear Sir David Attenborough highlighted it, I was concerned about the amount of single use plastic waste in the floristry business. Especially as most weeks I end up throwing away a bin bag full of compacted waste plastic film which currently cannot be recycled or composted.

On the other hand waterproof ribbon is incredibly useful when an arrangement or tribute is to be left outdoors and colourful cellophane finishes off a bouquet nicely.

Understandably growers use plastic film to protect their stock in transit. I don't want my stock to arrive damaged so I can only ask growers to consider using more paper, corrugated card and cardboard boxes.

Indeed, many growers are already looking into reducing plastic waste but with stock of plastic film and sleeves already purchased it would be ridiculous

to expect any business to throw away money already invested.

So what can/could/should I do?

In an ideal world we would just stop using plastic wrapping on all bouquets and just deliver them in a waterproof container.

Currently many of our bouquets go out in colour co-ordinated papers and fabric wraps. They are tied with string, and accessorised with hessian, fabric ribbon, jute or raffia.

However, when it is necessary to have a waterproof wrapping we have managed to source some bio-degradable film which looks just as effective as the plastic type but will rot down in three to six years.

Our regular ribbon distributor found us a satin feel ribbon made from recycled plastic, even better it is made by a UK company.

We don't use the plastic clips for message cards anymore, instead we hand craft wooden pegs onto bamboo canes and even add small wooden shapes to enhance the bouquet.

As we have become an increasingly throwaway society, an arrangement in a

container or basket has been labelled "old fashioned" and many people found they had too many baskets and containers cluttering up their homes (and sheds)!

I have always tried to encourage people to leave any such items by the shop door as I will happily re-purpose and upcycle them by refilling them to donate to charity auctions and raffles.

Now we have a deposit scheme on the vases/containers our flowers are supplied in, so that if it is no longer required it can be returned to us for a discount on another bunch, bouquet or plant (just check for the label underneath).

We are always happy to consider any eco-friendly ideas, so when we discovered that one florist had invented a range of vases made entirely from recycled plastic milk bottles we tried them out. They make a useful addition which can be used repeatedly or recycled again.

We hope this means that whenever you are choosing a gift of flowers or plants you feel confident that we have considered the planet, and find something in our selection that won't make the plastic situation any worse! ●

ERICA CUNNINGHAM



ROD HEYWARD

MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTOR STEPS DOWN AFTER FORTY YEARS OF TEACHING IN KIDMORE END HALL

By JOAN GRUMMANT



Rod Heyward is a local man who has spent all of his life in Sonning Common. When he was unable to play football for Chiltern Edge Old Boys, his wife Gill told him to "go out and find something to do". He certainly did that! He attended judo classes in Sonning Common Village Hall in 1977 and three years later when that finished, he, with his friends Dave Mew and Tony Willis, started to teach classes at Kidmore

End Hall in a club that eventually became the Kurakawai Akido Club (small village club). It remained there for the next forty years. When the classes were in full swing there were thirty adults and thirty children participating and all the grades from white to black were being worked upon.

The club, which catered for 5 year olds upwards held one session a week... 2 hours for adults and 1 and a half hours for children. The classes were mixed and Rod found he never needed to advertise for pupils and that as students took their grade awards they started to help with the teaching. During the Easter holidays the club went all over the country to take part in workshops and displays. One year it took over a whole caravan park and it was very much a family occasion where strong bonds were formed. Today Rod still keeps in touch with many ex members from all around the world and their letters tell how appreciative they are for having had the opportunity to take part in a

sport that emphasises respect, responsibility and self-discipline as well as strength and agility. Rod was especially delighted by the increased self-confidence it gave to girls and boys, and that this was transferred to their attitudes in daily life.

The decision to retire after forty years has been a very difficult one for Rod and precipitated by the Covid 19 pandemic. He has a strong sense of community and has never forgotten the day Chiltern Edge School opened and he was one of their first pupils. To provide something useful and lasting for our local young people has always been in the front of his mind and he took great pride in watching youngsters mature and develop under his care. He now admits that Gill did him a big favour when she told him to find something to do and that it resulted in many hours of fun teaching, making life-long friendships and giving youngsters some really valuable life skills. Good luck in the future Rod. You and the club will be sorely missed! ●

Christmas Treats Appeal

CHRISTMAS 2020 SHOULD NOT BE CANCELLED THIS YEAR!

We cannot hold the annual Christmas Day dinner but we can ensure that our most vulnerable residents and families enjoy some treats

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Donate to Just Giving
<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/scchristmastreatsappeal>

Cheques can be made out to Sonning Common Parish Council and posted in the letter box next to the main door on the Village Hall. Please write Christmas Treats on the envelope.

- Donate items, small Christmas puddings, dates, cakes, biscuits, sweets, canned drinks both non and alcoholic, tinned goods, jams ...
deliver to the FISH office 9.30 to 11.30 weekdays
or to the Food Bank at Christ the King or Springwater

If you would like to be the recipient of a Christmas Day Treats box, or if you know of a neighbour, a relative or friend who would enjoy a special treat then please contact:

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We would love to hear from you.

At this very difficult time for everyone, let us make it a memorable Christmas for US ALL to enjoy.

Please phone to let us know if you have attended Christmas lunch in the past and would have liked to this year

SONNING COMMON DURING LOCKDOWN CALENDAR 2021

This last year has been unique and challenging for everyone. All the people, groups and businesses of Sonning Common came together to provide immense support during this period and are continuing to do so. These calendars are a tribute to their work.

It was Carol Johnson's idea, which has been achieved by a small team who have spent time producing the funds and layout for the calendar in the last few weeks. Many of the readers of the magazine have provided photos, some of which could be used and they reflect snippets of what happened in the village during lockdown.

The calendars have been sponsored by a number of businesses in Sonning Common who supported the community well during lockdown and have given money so that the calendars could be

printed. Two calendars are available for sale. The calendars are similar, sharing many of the images, but give a choice of style and format which it is hoped will broaden their appeal.

The calendars will be available for sale at £6 (plus a donation is optional). They can be purchased at Heath and Watkins, Day Lewis Pharmacy, Wood Lane dentistry, SC Garage (petrol station), Davis Tate and Beville estate agents and the Library.

A Just Giving site has been set up for online payment <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/sonningcommon-calendarappeal>

and will require an email to editor@sonningcommonmagazine.org or phone 0118 972 2381 to leave a message to give your choice of calendar and your address for delivery. ●



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SAFE CYCLE PATH TO EMMER GREEN/READING: UPDATE

Further to the article in the last magazine, I would like to thank everyone who wrote to me in support of this initiative - a great response.

The next stage will be to get formal support from the Parish Council and then to apply to the Government for funding.

IN THE INTERIM - Several people have highlighted a route they use to avoid the busy B481. This involves going down the country lane next to the Bird In Hand pub and along to the crossroads with Kiln Lane then turning right and down to Emmer Green. Whilst this is clearly a quieter road it still has two-way traffic along a very narrow road, so is far from ideal for safe cycling.

The attraction of our ideas is the separated, dedicated lane.

CONTACT - Anyone else who would like to lend their support and be kept informed of progress please contact me by email below. We need as much local support and enthusiasm as we can gather. I look forward to hearing from you. grantdesigns@talktalk.net

JONNY BIDGOOD

I wholeheartedly support the Emmer Green / Reading cycle path initiative. Access for cyclists and pedestrians is long overdue, especially given the increasing flow of traffic and the nature of the road. Walking that road you take your life in your hands, even clambering onto the grassy edge; cycling that road you have no choice but to cling to hope. For these reasons it is now off-limits for me. It would be wonderful to have a pleasant solution to this long-standing problem. It is a healthy, sound, workable measure long extolled by the Dutch.

IRENKA MOTYKA

WHAT A CAPITAL CONCEPT!

Keep bikes off the road!

MOTORISTS' BENEFITS:-

Not having to wait (a few precious seconds) to pass a cyclist before catching up with the cars in front, all dashing to the traffic jam (caused by cars not bikes) at Prospect Street.

Not building up a bad mood about "those ***** cyclists, always in the way".

Benefits for people who ride bikes (and cyclists*)

Safer, healthier - the exercise and being away from toxic exhausts, quieter journeys, possibly quicker even. Parents, relatives, and loved-ones would be happier with all those aspects.

Capital indeed - Yes some cost involved, but at what saving?

Safer = fewer accidents with their associated costs - physical and financial; Healthier = fewer visits to the GP, the hospital, with the enormous cost to NHS.

Quieter = Arrive more relaxed, ready for a day's work/study/play/whatever. Return home happier.

What about the financial cost? - The government is offering funding for such projects.

There's clear evidence that cycling saves money, not only the bike rider's 1000%* financial advantage, but the **real saving** to the government, the tax payer, you and I. *"Every day, cycling in Bristol takes up to 28,000 cars off the road; annually prevents 222 serious long-term health conditions, saves 15,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions creates £69.5 million in local economic benefit"* - (Sustrans).

*(1000% was a guess, but I'd happily examine the reality with you.)

Amending a few words from an earlier SC Mag - "Because it's Flat"? - *"Invent a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door"*. **Get the infrastructure right and bike riders will use it.**

Anything which separates cyclists (Oops! BIKE RIDERS) from motorised traffic is better for both camps.

Support the **Cycleway to Caversham** scheme, for the health of the nation, you, your children, your grandchildren:-

1) Write to this magazine, then to the Parish Council. Send a copy to your MP, and the opposition.

2) Offer help, vocal, written, physical, whatever you're best at. Contact Jonny Bidgood, or myself through the magazine.

PAUL W - (Won't see 70 again)



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HIGHLIGHTS OF 30 YEARS AT THE BBC

Many moons ago, a brave sub-editor on the Times is reputed to have queried something written by the economics guru, Peter Jay. The mighty correspondent apparently dismissed the man's concerns saying that his article was really directed at only two people in the country: the Chancellor and the governor of the Bank of England. I never worked with Jay but dealing with similar egos was one of the highlights of my 30 odd years at the BBC. I started in the national radio newsroom in London in 1989, having worked on two local newspapers – the Reading Chronicle and then the Evening Echo in Southend, where one of my colleagues was Andy Coulson (later to find fame – and infamy – as David Cameron's head of communications).

From the beginning I loved it – the Berlin Wall was falling, it was exciting but nerve wracking. In those days, we still used typewriters so mistakes and second thoughts were hard to hide...piles of discarded paper were a give-away. One day I found myself with what had unexpectedly become the lead story on the “flagship” six o'clock bulletin on Radio Four. (It was the start of the Iraqi supergun affair – remember that?) I was told that it was the privilege of the lead writer to dictate their copy to typists – OUT LOUD with everyone able to hear. It was truly awful. As I stood there with



pieces of paper in sweaty hand, the clock ticking and the typist tutting at my umms and errs, I thought I was going to faint. But of course, I got through it and computers soon arrived so I never had to repeat the experience.

As a lowly sub under the direction of more senior journalists, I was expected to write two or three minute summaries on the BBC's national radio networks or take charge of three or four stories on the longer bulletins. In those days we worked with reel to reel tape and were banned as journalists from cutting it – that was someone else's job. Without the internet, checking facts meant ringing the library and asking for cuttings and previous scripts – a hugely time-consuming process which sounds

incredible now, even to me.

Gradually new technology arrived: computers, the internet, desk top editing and then more sophisticated systems which in theory made it easier to share audio and visual material across the whole BBC. Of course, like cars the more technical things got, the more disastrous were the breakdowns. The TV Ten O'clock news was taken off air not so long ago by the latest bit of kit designed to make things easier and cheaper.

For the ten years before I left, I was an assistant editor which meant I decided what went into the bulletins, and in what order, wrote headlines and commissioned dispatches from reporters and correspondents in the field. Editing scripts inevitably meant a few confrontations with the

big beasts, like Peter Jay. One of the biggest was Robert Peston – now with ITV but at the time a BBC star. He had amazing contacts and certainly never undersold his stories, even those which some of us regarded as less than a “scoop”. His strangled broadcasting style is well known, my husband invariably shouted abuse when he was on, but his writing wasn't always suited to radio either. It could be discursive and never the length we wanted. Obviously challenging people paid four times as much as you wasn't easy – they had to be flattered and then carefully encouraged to make what many of us euphemistically called “the odd tweak”. Unfortunately, one busy Sunday night during the phone hacking investigation I couldn't get hold of Robert so I took the decision to cut two sentences from his very long dispatch to make it fit my relatively short bulletin. This was quite normal practice, but he didn't take it well and fired off a blistering email threatening never to file a piece for me again. My boss stepped in and (so he

told me) took my side; Robert did file again and resumed his habit of calling me (and some other women) darling in public. On the Today programme, the producers had the presenters to deal with as well. “I love my job” one young harassed producer told me one night. “I spend all night trying to fix an interesting programme and then at five in the morning a man who's old enough to be my grandfather comes in and gives me a sh*tbagging because he doesn't like any of it”. What a way to talk about John Humphrys.

The best correspondents realised that if they were under pressure, the subs and output editors were the last line of defence against the factual howler or the irritating grammatical mistake. Doing the job well for me meant being a non-expert, a listener. If I could follow the story and found it compelling, hopefully other people would too.

I was proud to work for the BBC and when things went well it was great, but those moments are hard

to remember...the mistakes stay with you. Announcing three minutes before the final whistle that Spain had won the world cup in 2010 was not good, cutting five minutes off a 15-minute bulletin was also tricky – the continuity announcer who had to fill the hole in the Radio Four schedule was not pleased!

I miss the people – they were interesting and entertaining. But I don't miss the weekends, the eleven hour shifts and getting home at two in the morning, or worst still, ten in the morning after night shifts. Commuting is now a one-minute stroll down the road to Sonning Common's best retail outlet, where I work two days a week. I've gone back to college and am occasionally getting paid to do some gardening, which I love. So please don't ask me how retirement is. I haven't retired, I've changed my life and found a new direction. ●

HELEN FORT



PETS AS THERAPY

Why was a huge, honey-coloured lurcher lolling around at an Oxford Brookes University Open Day?

The dog had a yellow vest with 'Pets As Therapy' emblazoned on it, and was on the end of a blue lead held by a lady who was also wearing a yellow shirt with the same words. My curiosity got the better of me, as usual; the PAT (Pets As Therapy) volunteer told me that they were visiting the University during exam time, with the aim of interacting with any stressed students to help calm them.

PAT is a national charity founded in 1983 by Lesley Scott-Ordish. The charity enhances health and wellbeing in the community, through the visits of trusted volunteers and their behaviourally assessed animals. They visit: Hospitals, Care homes, Hospices, Prisons, Schools, and a variety of other venues all across the UK.



These visits:

- Enhance lives in our communities by providing companionship and friendship and help to tackle loneliness.
- Improve the lives of people suffering from debilitating mental and physical health conditions and illnesses such as Autism, Dementia and Stroke by including animal assisted interventions as part of a holistic approach to treatment.
- Improve literacy in children by developing their confidence, interest and enjoyment in reading through the PAT read2dogs scheme.

Our beloved family collie dog, Bali, loves people, so I thought she and I would enjoy making visits and would be able to help others at the same time. All breeds of dog and cat can become part of a PAT team. They must have been with their owner for at least 6 months, be over 9 months of age and be able to pass the temperament test. All pets must be fully vaccinated and not fed on a Raw Meat based diet.

This idea of helping others very much appealed to me and so I completed the application to become a volunteer with Bali as my PAT dog. I was asked questions about Bali's temperament and behaviour in different situations, and then asked to book an assessment with our local assessor. We met with the assessor in a busy public space and luckily Bali greeted her like a long lost friend!

Bali had to take a treat gently from an open palm, show she could be brushed, have her tail touched without fuss and the assessor watched Bali's reaction when she kicked over a metal chair to make a loud noise - she hardly flinched. Bali had passed the test and we were good to go.

We have been making weekly visits to a local Care Home for three years. Bali is always keen to get in. We spend time in the lounge allowing the residents to stroke Bali and then, accompanied by a member of staff, we visit some of the less mobile residents in their rooms. Many of the residents have had pets at some time in their lives and seeing

Bali can help them to remember those times and talk about them.

PAT also run a 'Read to Dogs' scheme, and Bali and I have also visited a local school where the teachers saw a noticeable improvement in the children's reading ability and confidence, so we carried on for a full school year. Bali would "listen to" the children reading and then the children got to have a little play and cuddle with Bali after they had finished.

We have also made regular visits to Brookfields Special School where again the teachers are amazed at the positive changes they can see and feel in the children during Bali's visits. One boy who normally suffers from severe spasms, is so focussed that the spasms subside enough to enable him to throw a ball for Bali to catch. His beaming face warms our hearts & touches us all.

Being a volunteer involves us making regular visits to a particular setting but we also get asked by the charity to carry out one-off visits; for example, joining Fresher's week at Reading University to mingle with some other PAT volunteers and their dogs to give comfort to any new students who wanted to come and meet us, and who were perhaps missing their own pets from home. Bali and I also attended The LEGOLAND Staff Mental Wellbeing Week to interact with the staff as one

of the special activities designed to improve mental well-being.

Volunteers and their pets are also often asked to attend group meetings such as the WI and local fetes. The charity is happy for us to carry out all these activities, and kindly asks for a donation to be made in recognition of the charities' work

Unfortunately, many of the in-person activities mentioned above have been affected during these difficult times. However, visits can now start again subject to approval by the establishment and the volunteer having both notified PAT Head Office and received authorisation. I feel very proud of Bali when I see her patience and understanding and the pleasure that she brings to the people we are visiting.

If you think you have a friendly, patient pet and would like

to volunteer, or if you would like to request a visit for your organisation or make a donation, please contact Pets As Therapy or visit their website. It has lots of interesting information including videos of what a visit entails and many volunteer's stories. •

Tel. 01865 671440
Email. reception@petsastherapy.org
www.petsastherapy.org

IONE STACEY



PETS AS THERAPY

NEED SUPPORT, HELP OR SOMEONE TO TALK TO? THESE ORGANISATIONS MIGHT BE OF HELP

A new telephone support service has been launched by **Age UK Oxfordshire**, offering advice and assistance to older people concerned during this time. **Call 01865 411 288**, leave your name and phone number and you will get a call back as soon as possible.

If you need support **MIND** could help, their phone number is **01865 247788**, or email **info@oxfordshire-mind.org.uk** or the website is **www.mind.org.uk**.

FISH who offer so much, shopping trips, collection of prescriptions, transport to appointments, and friendly phone chats, are just a few of the activities available - **0118 972 3986** or **office@fishvolunteercentre.org.uk**

A few tips: Try connecting with people, in person at a safe distance, by phone or social media.

Being active as much as possible and having fresh air. Take up a new hobby. ●



FLU CLINICS

The Sonning Common Health Centre team has been running flu clinics for eligible patients on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, 4-6pm, and some Saturday mornings since mid-September. Uptake for flu vaccinations has been high.

If you are eligible for a flu jab and have not made an appointment yet please contact the Reception team at the health centre to make it.

If you are unable to attend your Flu clinic appointment or if you have already had the vaccination PLEASE remember to



cancel. There are many who phone and can't get an appointment or have long waits for a clinic. There were 24 patients that 'Did not Attend' on one occasion, so PLEASE think of others.

The following patients are eligible for a free flu vaccination and will have received a letter: Children aged 2 and 3 years, adults over 65 years, pregnant women, registered carers, care home residents, patients 4 years and above in a clinical risk group.

If you think you are eligible and have not had a letter please contact reception.

Instructions and clinics for 50-65 year olds (not at risk) will be managed following national guidelines.

Primary school aged children will be offered a flu nasal spray vaccination via the school nurse teams. Parents are advised to contact their child's primary school or the school nursing team if they haven't received information about a flu vaccination for their child (primary school age).

Children aged 2 and 3 years are able to have a flu vaccination at the health centre. Please contact our reception team to make an appointment for your child if you haven't done so yet. ●

NEW GP TRAINEES

The Health Centre has three new GP trainees. **Dr Lizzie Sherwin, Dr Nasrin Elmustafa and Dr Michael Weeks** who joined in August 2020. **Dr Weeks** is with the HC for a year, **Dr Sherwin** for 6 months and **Dr Elmustafa** for 18 months. Welcome to the Health Centre.

Two of the former GP trainees, **Dr Fung and Dr Montero**, have now moved on, we wish them good luck with their careers.

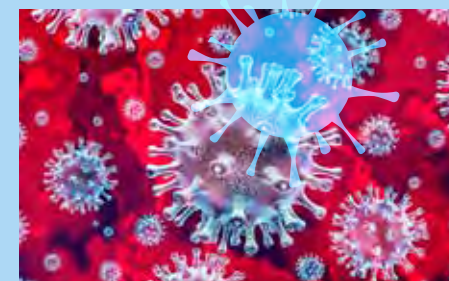
APPOINTMENTS AT THE HEALTH CENTRE

The doctors continue to take telephone appointments unless it is decided a physical examination is necessary, in which case you will be given an appointment to attend the surgery.

The doctors take some 200 calls a day, so are as busy as ever. Don't delay until after COVID if you have a medical concern. Phone reception to arrange this.

A face mask must be worn, at all times within the health centre including any face to face appointments and in the treatment room.

COVID-19 MATTERS



What are the differences between colds, flu and COVID-19?

Colds, flu and COVID-19 all come with at least some similar symptoms - a cough, sore throat, high temperature, fatigue, aches and pains. So how can you know which is which, and what should you do if you're worried?

It isn't entirely clear why colds and flu are more common in the autumn and winter, but scientists do have a few ideas. Cold weather may influence the way our immune systems deal with viruses. A lack of humidity in the air may help these viruses thrive. And since we spend more time indoors, we may come into contact with more people who are harbouring infections.

Unfortunately, this winter we'll be dealing with another nasty on top of the usual suspects. At this stage, it's hard to say how colder temperatures will affect transmission of COVID-19, but we do know there's everything to play for in terms of avoiding a second wave.

It's crucial to remember, though, that no diagnosis based on symptoms alone is 100% accurate, and if you have any symptoms that might be due to COVID-19, it's essential to self-isolate, and arrange a test as soon as possible, stay in isolation until you have the results and follow the instructions you're given if your test is positive. If your test is negative, you can leave self-isolation as soon as you feel better.

If it's just a cold...

If it's just a cold, the symptoms tend to stay in the upper airways, meaning you're most likely to experience a blocked nose, sneezing and a sore throat. You will probably feel OK in yourself otherwise, though there may be a sense of malaise or being run down. It can lead to a cough but that does not mean that it is necessarily a chest infection. Other symptoms can include aches, pains and fatigue.

Most colds will go away by themselves in a week or so without treatment, but you can take over-the-counter remedies to relieve the symptoms.

If it's the flu...

Flu is typically more serious than a cold, and can lead to complications such as

pneumonia in vulnerable people. The flu tends to cause more whole-body symptoms rather than upper airway symptoms, like fever, fatigue, aches and pains, and headaches. You can experience a dry cough and a sore throat. This year it is even more important to have your NHS free flu vaccination.

If it's COVID-19...

COVID-19, which is caused by a new type of coronavirus, can be extremely serious in some people, while only causing mild (or no) symptoms in others. Because of the risk of passing it on to vulnerable people, it's vital to contain its spread, even if you're at low risk of serious illness yourself.

The key difference with COVID-19 is that a fever and dry cough are the main symptoms. Another difference is that COVID-19 can cause shortness of breath and the loss of the sense of taste and smell. These can be accompanied by fatigue, aches and pains.

While the list of possible symptoms is long, the main three are fever, dry cough and anosmia (loss of taste and smell).

If you develop any of these symptoms, please self-isolate immediately. This helps prevent the spread of the virus that could cause a severe form of the illness in people with weaker immune systems.

The PPG (Patient Participation Group) has been pleased to support the Health Centre staff in the very efficient running of their flu vaccination clinics this autumn. This also gave members of the PPG the opportunity to meet many more of the patients and explain the role of the PPG to them. ●

For those readers not familiar with the PPG. We are a group of (patient) volunteers who assist in providing a link between patients and Sonning Common Health Centre. We meet regularly with representatives of both the administrative and medical team and work on projects to inform on health issues and on tasks to support the smooth running of the health centre. For more information about the PPG please visit the PPG page on the Health Centre website www.sonningcommonhealthcentre.co.uk (under the feedback tab).

TOM FORT SIGNS

There used to be a sign on the edge of the village coming from Caversham which read 'Sonning Common Welcomes Careful Drivers'. I always thought it was too polite – it should have added 'and detests drivers who speed and park without consideration for others.' I used to wonder if it ever had any effect – did potentially careless drivers take more care after reading it? Or go somewhere else?

As I observed in a rant for this magazine six years ago, our roads are lined with pointless exhortations and warnings. What about 'Think, Don't Drink'? I can see the point of this sentiment reversed and hung over your drinks cabinet at home. But nobody in their right mind consumes alcohol

while actually driving. And if they did, would seeing that sign persuade them it was a bad idea?

The same applies to the one telling you to stop for a rest if you're tired. Are you likely to exclaim: 'Gosh, thank you Highways Agency, I'd quite forgotten that driving while yawning and falling asleep was not very sensible'?

I'm happy to offer my services at my usual consultancy fee of £300 an hour (plus expenses) to go around removing useless signs starting with the ones on motorways signs telling you to watch out for deer. There used to be one of them on the M4 going west which specified that the warning applied for the next 37-and-a-half miles. Did that mean that at 38 miles you could relax

because the danger was over? Did the deer know about it?

'Road liable to flooding' is another irritation. What use is that? Any fool knows that any road is liable to flooding if it rains hard enough – just slow down. Ditto 'Spray' – please show me a road where spray is not possible after rain and I'll be suitably astonished.

As for the 'Danger Ice' icon within a red triangle – particularly when encountered on a boiling hot summer's day – that is pure genius ●



COOK'S CORNER

By SANDY ONOFRIO

A handy recipe for the Christmas leftovers

TURKEY FRICASSEE - serves 4

- 50g butter
- 50g plain flour
- 100ml white wine, extra for deglazing
- 400ml vegetable stock
- salt and pepper to taste
- 500g cooked turkey (or chicken)
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 leek, sliced



1. Melt the butter in a large saucepan then add the flour and mix until you have a smooth paste
2. Add the white wine to the pan stirring the liquid into the paste to stop lumps forming. Immediately add the stock and turn up the heat and stir or whisk the sauce while it thickens. The sauce is ready when you can coat the back of a spoon. Add salt and pepper to taste. Remove the

sauce from the heat and add the diced turkey to let flavours infuse.

3. Put a glug of oil into the frying or sauté pan over a medium heat. Fry the onion and leeks until brown then add the sliced mushrooms. Cook until the mushrooms have turned colour then add a glug of white wine to deglaze the pan before adding the pan's contents to the fricassee sauce.

4. Cook the fricassee in the pan over a medium-low heat for between 20 to 30 minutes which is sufficient time for the white wine alcohol to cook-off.

Serve with rice and mixed vegetables, as a filling with a jacket potato or with chunks of crusty bread.



VERA RESEARCHES HER LATEST BOOK



The Ship of Death, the fourth crime novel in Vera Morris' The Anglian Detective Agency Series, was published by Headline on 15 October. Vera lives in Caversham, and in a previous existence was headteacher of Chiltern Edge School, Sonning Common.

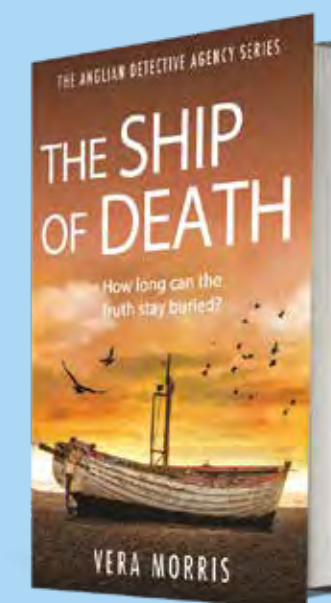
She recently returned from a fantastic week on the Suffolk coast, where the novels are set, meeting local people who have helped

her with research and knew the area in the 1970s, the era in which the novels are set. She had to sample the oysters and drink Muscadet to make sure they were up to the male detective, Frank Diamond's, high standards and visit Mr Fryer, the fisherman, to check Dover sole and seabass are available at a particular season!

Research also involved sampling the products of Aldeburgh Fish and Chips and meeting the owner for coffee and a chat; having a delicious lunch at a local hotel with the Lifeboat Manager for the Aldeburgh RNLI and his wife, and visiting the Eel's Foot Inn to have lunch with a volunteer at RSPB Minsmere Bird Reserve and his wife, who helped her with research for The Ship of Death.

Vera says it's the best kind of research,

meeting kind and interesting people who generously give time and knowledge to a grateful writer. ●



WINTER FUN

Winter Fun is a collection of activities, games, recipes and crafts aimed at primary school age children and for all the family to enjoy. Active Leaders has produced this to help children be active and have fun especially during the winter months and the Christmas holidays. There are 56 full colour pages packed with ideas which do not require expensive equipment and make as much use of the open air and countryside as possible.

Winter Fun is available as a pdf or in printed copy from penny@activeleaders.co.uk

We hope very much that this will be helpful in lockdown and bring some fun and joy. ●

PENNY SNOWDEN
Chief Executive Officer



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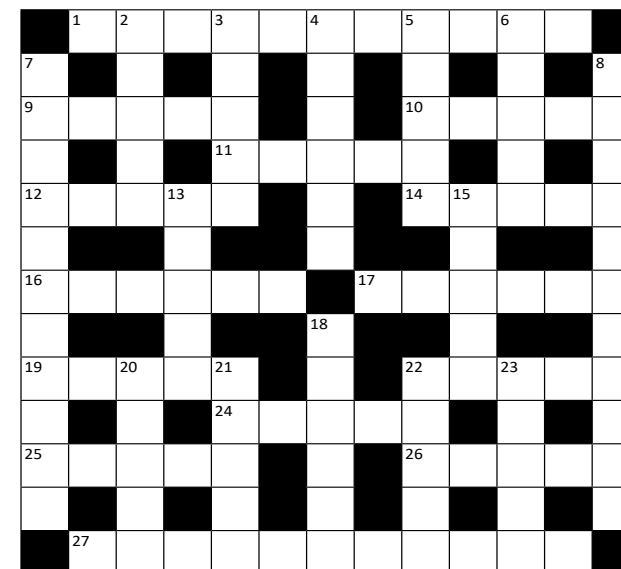
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PUZZLE PAGE

By **DAVID DUNSTAN**

Cryptic crossword



ACROSS

- 1 and 11 across. Err foresightedly perhaps in nearby village (11,5)
9. Fear studied by 500 (5)
10. Eastern man, we hear, got the message (5)
11. see 1 across
12. Instruction to Alice found in wheatmeal (3,2)
14. Coach convoy (5)
16. Child holds crazy ape where drink is brewed (6)
17. Loiter and waddle around (6)
19. Revise for the school subject group (5)
22. Winner with no backing for vegetable (5)
24. County way in the village (5)
25. Custom of the American era (5)
26. British upper class with pounds of tulips, for example (5)
27. Mall in British island grove for school in the village (11)

DOWN

2. Past time in the open (5)
3. Avoid the fence (5)
4. Salesman has lunch – come again (6)
5. That is sited incorrectly (2,3)
6. Lavinia initially has a place in Tibet (5)
7. Daring Dave runs out carelessly (11)
8. Small banker with a head for delicacy (11)
13. Chart the French close in the village (5)
15. Argument with article that is close in the village (5)
18. Idle talk of pigs – so wrong! (6)
20. Religious teacher took a dip with one (5)
21. Oddly, to exert the power to enforce (5)
22. Bull with rosette seen on lake (5)
23. North American house has one good little room (5)

Sudoku

Grading: easy to medium

		4					5	1
						7		
7	3		1	9		8	4	
4		6			3		1	7
1	7		5			9		8
	4	8		7	5		3	6
		9						
3	5					4		

Cryptogram

The following quotation has been encoded using a simple letter substitution. What does it say?

YO LEWO E KAMAGB VI YNEH YO
BOH; YO LEWO E KATO VI YNEH
YO BAMO.

– FAS YAGFHUG RNC SRNAKK

Name the city

Here are the former names of some famous cities. What are they called today?

1. Leningrad
2. New Amsterdam
3. Eboracum
4. Pressburg
5. Madras
6. Saigon
7. Constantinople
8. Leopoldville
9. Kristiania
10. Danzig

See answers on page 34

EVA HAYES - CENTENARIAN



A Centenarian born on 27 October 1920 in Dublin City.

Married Robert Hayes June 1942 in Dublin City.

Lived at Wood Lane Close, Sonning Common from 1954 to 2020 (65 years)

Eva came to England in 1946, joining her husband Robert who had been a patient at Peppard Sanatorium for a year until May 1946. Bob, as he was known, had been serving in the RAF doing general duties when he contracted a mild case of TB.

Eva secured a job as the Matron's maid at the Sanatorium where Bob was working as a ward orderly having been discharged on health grounds from the RAF.

They were not allowed to live together in Hospital Quarters. Mum would often tell us the story of how she once approached the Matron asking if they could live together in Hospital Quarters as they were married. She was very firmly told "No, what would the nurses think if they saw a man in their quarters?" Eventually they were able to find rented accommodation, two rooms in a house, in Sonning Common. Their first son, Richard was born here in April 1950.

In 1950, a military camp nearby at Kingwood Common in Peppard was vacated by the Royal Artillery and previously had been used as a P.O.W camp, was taken over by Oxfordshire C.C. who decided to use the Nissen Huts as temporary accommodation for people waiting for Council houses to be built. After applying for one

of these huts Mum and Dad were successful and moved into their "luxury accommodation" consisting of four rooms, a kitchen, living room and two bedrooms. Pretty primitive, no running water and bathing was done in the tin bath in front of the fire. Their daughter Joyce was born here in August 1953.

In 1954 the council houses were completed and the family moved into Wood Lane Close; a three bedroom house with running water, bathroom and toilet, kitchen, living and dining room and a very large garden. This must have felt like moving into a mansion after what Mum and Dad had been used to for so long. Dad soon had the back garden ship shape where all the vegetables were grown and the front had a few rose bushes and a lawn. The youngest son, Alan was born here in 1959.

The small community of what was then 19 houses thrived and most families continued to live in the Close for many years. Some bought their properties in later years when a Government scheme sold Council Houses to tenants at a reduced rate according to how long they had lived there. Mum and Dad were able to purchase number 10 Wood Lane Close and at last had a home they could call their own.

Mum and Dad never owned a car and Dad never learned to drive a car. The main form of transport for the Hayes family was bicycle. Mum continued to ride hers up until her 80th birthday. She was a familiar sight around the village, cycling up to the shops and walking back with the shopping bags on the handlebars.

Most of Mum and Dad's families remained in Ireland. Mum had 3 sisters, one emigrated to Australia, and a brother. Both parents died in their early 60's, her brother and 2 of her sisters did not reach 60, the youngest sister survived into her early 70's. A family with a very short lifespan due to heart disease!

Summer holidays were spent at Greystones near Dublin. Quite an adventure with 3 children and luggage in tow! Bus into Reading. Train to Crewe and then on to Holyhead, again by train. Finally, a ferry across the Irish Sea to Dun Laoghaire where Mum's brother Jack would drive us to the cottage in Greystones, by the sea. Thankfully, none of us experienced sea sickness as some of the crossings were quite stormy.

In 1964 Mum became a lunchtime playground supervisor often found skipping with the children at the primary school. She loved this job, stayed for 18 years and was known as Mrs Hayes, "the Dinner Lady." After Dad passed away in 2004. Mum remained in the house in Wood Lane Close among neighbours and many friends in the village. Sadly, over the years her sight deteriorated, her hearing and her mobility. She became quite isolated and would no longer go outdoors, due to her poor sight but she would not hear of a move. Eventually Mum gained help from carers to stay at home until January 2020. Luckily, we were able to get a room for her at Abbeycrest. She left Wood Lane Close, her home for 65 years, without a backward glance!

Many have asked if Mum had a telegram from the Queen. She did not. This is because Mum and Dad were very proud of their Irish heritage and never took UK citizenship even though they lived here in England for more than 75 years. She did receive a lovely letter from the Irish president along with a very generous cheque. The Irish bounty. ●

Joyce Langham



HENLEY LIONS 2020 WINTER FUEL APPEAL



Once again Henley Lions are launching their appeal for funds to assist those in Fuel Poverty over the Winter. This year, more than any other with COVID, lockdowns, and people having to stay indoors more, their heating, cooking and lighting bills are increasing. At the same time, some people are suffering as a result of furlough and redundancies plus problems with mental health exacerbated by these events.

Can you help by supporting this appeal? Perhaps you receive the Government's Winter Fuel Payment and could donate some of this to the Winter Fuel project serving

Henley and surrounding villages. Any donation, however small, can help make a difference. If you can help donations can be made online via www.henleylions.org.uk - click on "Donate" and please identify your donation as "Winter Fuel Project". If you are able to Gift Aid this increases your donation by 25%. Donations can also be made by cheque or bank transfer.

Please email donate@henleylions.org.uk or phone 0345 833 7387 for information.

Thank you for your support ●

Ian Tritton
Chair Henley Lions Community Service

JOB REDUNDANCY: CHECK YOUR RIGHTS AND TALK TO CITIZENS ADVICE

One of the most serious outcomes of the current pandemic problem is that thousands of people in the UK are losing their jobs. If you are one of these people, and are made redundant or offered voluntary redundancy, it is important that you thoroughly understand your rights and options.

- The first thing to do if you are at risk of redundancy is to look at your contract of employment, which will spell out your basic rights
- You can't be made redundant in an unfair way or for discriminatory reasons. The reason must be a genuine one, i.e. the job you do or the skills you have are no longer needed, or the employer can't afford you, or the business is failing.

- You might be entitled to receive redundancy pay, which increases with length of service and has two elements - statutory and contractual.
- You can check that your redundancy pay is fair by using the calculator at <https://www.gov.uk/calculate-your-redundancy-pay>.

All the implications of redundancy are helpfully described on the Citizens Advice website at <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/leaving-a-job>. The website also gives advice about claiming benefits or dealing with your debts if you need this. You can talk to an adviser on our Adviceline, **0300 330 9042**. Visit www.ca.org.uk to find your local Citizens Advice office. ●

STREET TAG

Street Tag is a family-friendly game app that rewards primary school pupils, communities and schools for their physical activities such as walking, running, cycling. The app turns physical activity into a game and converts steps or exercise into Street Tag points known as tags. Turning the streets and parks in Oxfordshire into a giant virtual playground. The technology of the app also means that players can remain safely socially distanced from one another ●



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www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/oxfordshire-south-vale/volunteer/

Parish news

The content of this page is the sole responsibility of, and is paid for by, Sonning Common Parish Council

VICKY BOORMAN



Vicky Boorman joined the parish council 18 months ago after finding herself becoming increasingly interested in a number of local improvements.

Said Vicky: "I'm trying to offer my contribution wherever I can to help make Sonning Common a better

place to live in for all of its residents. I feel fortunate to have such a wide range of amenities in our village and to be surrounded by such beautiful countryside.

"I've lived and worked in and around South Oxfordshire for nearly 20 years and moved to Sonning Common seven years ago with my partner. In my professional life I work for a local authority and have a love for drainage that my friends find bizarre, branding me the 'water geek'!

"I like to sometimes wild swim and paddle board in our local stretches of the River Thames. Outdoor activities have really kept me going during the pandemic.

"In my short time on the parish council I've contributed to the design improvements to the village centre and to the creation of a new recreation space near the Memorial Hall on Reade's Lane.

"I was so impressed by the enthusiasm of the large number of people who were involved in the annual village litter-pick and clean-up event last year, as well as those people who run our local community groups, including FISH, and by those who are helping out during this ongoing pandemic.

"I'm proud to say I live in Sonning Common, we have such a good community spirit in our area." ●

MICHAEL CANN

Michael Cann is the newest member of Sonning Common Parish Council, having joined the council in August. He lives in Grove Road with his wife Caroline and son Thomas. His other son, Oliver, moved out four years ago and now lives in Caversham. Michael's wife, Caroline, whom he met at university, runs the Barn Café at the Herb Farm.

Michael was a professional cricketer, playing for Glamorgan between 1984 and 1991, before joining the pharmaceutical industry. A biochemistry graduate, he gained an MBA from Warwick Business School before progressing to the boards of Actavis UK and Accord Healthcare where he was Vice President for Europe.

More recently he joined the management board of the Day Lewis Plc pharmacy chain and is a Fellow of the Institute of Directors.

With a career background like that the parish council's Finance Committee was an obvious choice for him and he has been actively involved with the committee since becoming a councillor.

Michael said: "It has been very rewarding to have joined the parish council and I have been struck by the depth and range of responsibilities the council carries. It has been great to get to know the Parish Clerk, Philip, and his team. The community and the facilities are growing all the time and it is an exciting time to be involved with the council."

Michael continues to play cricket for the village team and is a member of Mapledurham Golf Club. He and his wife enjoy walks with their dogs Monty and Morgan. ●



Sonning Common Parish Council
Parish Office, Village Hall, Wood Lane, Sonning Common RG4 9SL
T: 0118 972 3616

E: clerk@sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk (Philip Collings)
deputyclerk@sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk (Ros Varnes)
W: www.sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk
Reminder to all readers to use the Parish website for information

Church news

ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, PEPPARD ROAD, SONNING COMMON

Parish life is still governed by the Covid-19 regulations that affect us all. You might have read in an October edition of the Henley Standard the practices we and the other local churches have in place to keep our congregations safe. Celebration of Mass is only possible due to the volunteers who act as stewards. They ensure the church is ready to receive people safely, keep an eye on things during the Mass and sanitise the church afterwards. The latter has been speeded up by investing in a couple of fogging machines rather than cleaning the pews with soap and water. It is encouraging to see a gradual increase in numbers as people become more confident in returning to church. All our Masses are live streamed on YouTube for the benefit of those still unable to attend in person.

Despite the pandemic we thought it important to mark our patronal feast of St Michael over the weekend closest to 29th September. On Friday evening Deacon Brian led a Taizé-style reflective Holy Hour and on Saturday Fr Michael gave a talk on angels followed by a time of private prayer. Unfortunately, we were unable to conclude the weekend with our traditional parish lunch. A number of our children are now beginning to make their first Holy Communion in ones and twos rather than the big parish/school celebration that had to be postponed in early Summer. This year we were delighted to contribute our Harvest Offerings to the local foodbank being coordinated at Springwater Church.

We are now in Advent and will be marking this special season with a Holy Hour each Monday evening (7-8pm) in addition to our usual Masses. Our Christmas Masses will be celebrated at 8.00pm Christmas Eve and at 9am and 10.30am Christmas Day. We are limited to 40 people so encourage people to consider attending Mass on another day during the Christmas season so that we can all celebrate Christmas safely. Visit our website for the latest information and

links if you wish to join us on YouTube.

The parish of St Michael's wish all readers the joy and peace of Christmas.

www.saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk

.....

SPRINGWATER

At the time of writing we are still meeting on a Sunday at 10.30am, applying all the Covid regulations and are able to host several other events each week under the same restrictions or on Zoom. For full and up to date information do please have a look at our website.

The Foodbank is still functioning and is in the process of moving location from Springwater to Christ the King Church. It's exciting that it will become a "churches together" foodbank and we are very grateful to Christ the King for helping this to happen.

We are incredibly grateful for the grants the Foodbank has received, including, recently, a substantial sum from SODC South Emergency Assistance (huge thanks to Sonning Common Parish Council who applied for that on our behalf) and also the financial help we have received from Rotherfield Peppard Parish Council, one of the Henley Rotary Clubs and the numerous individual donations from local residents.

Our other exciting news is that we are planning to create a café, a welcoming safe space, especially for those who are feeling vulnerable or isolated, where we can engage with local community groups and provide more than food and drink but also engage in building relationships and helping people on their journey towards hope and freedom. Covid restrictions will apply of course.

We at Springwater passionately believe that the gifts God has given us should be used for the benefit of the community and hope this café will be a blessing to many.

Chris Girdler Tel: 01189724519
Website: springwaterchurch.org.uk

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL ...

'Small is beautiful - a study of economics as if people mattered' by EF Schumacher was published back in the 70s, advocating an intermediate technology which would benefit but not dominate our lives. And it's surely a mantra to which we're being encouraged to return at the moment, as the implications of the pandemic and its repercussions are reminding us how important it is to value the small things: the smile, fish and chips, free blackberries and apples; a million acorns, a swoop of kites, a proper letter...

Yes, we miss the greater gatherings of friends and family, hugely; especially at significant times like weddings, funerals and with Christmas on the horizon. Yet it's also true that we may be able to engage more deeply, and appreciate more the few with whom we are able to share these times; when we cannot go wide, maybe we can go deep.

Small can be powerful (remember the mosquito?) We may not be able to solve the pandemic or change the world, but living 'as if people mattered' - every person - will help to change the atmosphere around us. Christmas should not, after all, be a major commercial celebration so much as the love of God personified: in Jesus, and now in us.

During the lockdown, we are hoping to open all three of our churches each Sunday for private prayer; Christ the King will therefore be open for an hour from 9.30am and St John the Baptist at 11am. When the lockdown is lifted, we will hope to offer either a Eucharist, a form of Morning Worship or private prayer each Sunday. At the time of writing, we are still planning how we will celebrate Christmas - did I say planning? Foolhardy..... So please do check our websites! There is a plan afoot for all in our Deanery to stand outside our doors on Christmas Eve at 7pm to sing a (chosen) carol: details to come!

May you know the presence and peace of God, and his help to do the small things with great love.

Sheila Walker Associate Priest

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PUZZLE PAGE ANSWERS FROM PAGE 27

- WE MAKE A LIVING BY WHAT WE GET, WE
MAKE A LIFE BY WHAT WE GIVE. — SIR
WINSTON CHURCHILL
- Name the city
1. St Petersburg (Russia)
2. New York (USA)
3. York (UK)
4. Bratislava (Slovakia)
5. Chennai (India)
6. Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)
7. Istanbul (Turkey)
8. Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo)
9. Oslo (Norway)
10. Gdansk (Poland)

9	2	4	8	3	7	6	5	1	8	6	1	4	5	2	7	9	3	7	3	5	1	9	2	4	8	3	7	6	5	1
8	6	1	4	5	2	7	9	3	6	4	7	5	3	1	6	4	7	5	3	1	6	4	7	5	3	1	6	4	7	5
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1	9	2	4	8	3	5	1	6	4	7	5	3	1	9	2	4	8	3	5	1	6	4	7	5	3	1	9	2	4	8

S	D	O	O	W	S	P	O	H	S	I	B	S							
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