

DEC/JAN 2025/26

# SEASON'S GREETINGS

## CHRISTMAS EDITION

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## Congratulations Marcus!

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Richard with his maturity and enthusiasm in his interview. Marcus has continuously developed over the past decade into an approachable, trustworthy and highly dependable sales manager. Marcus has also become a valued member in the local community. His enthusiasm extends beyond the office, where he regularly supports village events, from *On Your Bike* to the *Sonning Common 10k*, giving his time to help local fundraising efforts.



November 2015



November 2025

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## FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

In my front garden there are two holly trees covered with berries, a blossoming rose and a magnolia full of buds. It is a November day and there has just been a snowstorm and up until today the weather has been clement for this time of year. However, the trees will have been stripped of their berries by Christmas the rose will be dead and the magnolia flowers? Who knows.

All of this seems to have altered the system we used to expect. Is it out of kilter. Autumn arrived too soon and the winter is predicted to arrive half way through November. OH DEAR

Christmas day will be as it has always been, grey skies and mild. I can only remember one snowy Christmas in recent years (in 2010 and it lasted for a while). I love the sameness it is one of my favourite days of the year. Some of us are very lucky with family arriving to celebrate with us.

The magazine is full of photos celebrating the wonderful volunteers who raise funds for the schools, Pre -school and MECE. Photos do not all fit onto the assigned pages so there are QR codes directing to our website if you want to look.

Soco Eco describes their very busy time working to repair, recycle and refresh. Also trees and bulbs have been planted across the village. There are many events and activities described in this issue and I hope you are able to participate in some of them.

However you are celebrating, the editorial team wish you ALL the best and a very happy and healthy 2026. ●

**Diana and Christine**

### FUTURE DEADLINE DATES FOR MAGAZINE COPY

1 January, 1 March , 1 May – we would love to receive your articles! 😊

## MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM



Diana Pearman



Christine Atkinson



Joan Grumman

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Wintery scene by Christine Atkinson

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**SC** SONNING COMMON  
MAGAZINE

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# MECE NEWS

## A Bright Start to the New School Year at Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge



The first term back at Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge has been filled with energy, achievement and community spirit. Students returned in September ready to learn, and it has been wonderful to see classrooms buzzing with enthusiasm and creativity once again.

This term has already seen a range of exciting events and opportunities. Our Open events were a real highlight, with prospective families visiting to experience the warm, welcoming atmosphere that defines our school. Student ambassadors proudly led tours, showcasing our excellent facilities, dedicated staff, and the vibrant learning that takes place every day. Feedback from visitors was overwhelmingly positive, praising both the confidence and courtesy of our pupils and the enthusiasm and pride in which staff spoke about the school.

Beyond the classroom, students have embraced a full programme of extracurricular activities—from sports fixtures and music rehearsals to art exhibitions and community projects. These opportunities continue to help our young people grow in confidence, teamwork, and ambition. Particular highlights have included Mock Interviews for all of Year 11 with local employers to practice ahead of potential College or Apprenticeship interviews later this term,

Year 10 & 11 enjoyed a Performance of Macbeth to support their GCSE English Studies, and a number of staff and students got creative in designing and constructing our annual entry to the Village Scarecrow Trail – where we were delighted to learn we were awarded 2nd place!

Over October Half Term 40 students and 4 staff visited the Belgian Battlefields to enhance their History studies – the trip included trips to Ypres, The Somme, replica trenches and Tyne Cot Commonwealth Cemetery and we were privileged enough to lay a wreath at the evening ceremony at the Menin Gate.

As the term continues, we look forward to more successes and celebrations. It has been a fantastic start to the academic year, and we are proud of how our students are approaching their studies and embodying our key values. ●

EMMA BLISS,  
Headteacher



Cycleways - much needed between Sonning Common and Reading

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Scan the QR code for details



# SCPS NEWS

## Rites of Passage



I have written before about some of the rhythms to life at primary school and the various points in the year when key things happen.

There are regular activities too. I like to think that we are always showing our commitment to providing the most broad and balanced definition of education that we can. This means staff and parents (plus the children) putting themselves out to enhance this wider provision.

Some of these become rites of passage, defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a 'ceremony or event marking an important stage in someone's life'. Most schools offer activities that fall into this category – events, visitors and trips that

(especially in young minds) leave a lasting, and sometimes lifelong, impression.

One category we remain very committed is residential trips.

Our Year Four children usually spend two nights at Ufton Court, which offers a history-themed experience, and in their final year with us Year Six spend a week at Woodlands in South Wales.

They left bright and early on a morning in October – a military-style operation involving a vast coach, sixty bags and suitcases, medication, picnics, card games for the journey, an array of cuddly toys and five members of staff. Plenty of waterproof gear too, given the forecast. Very few tears. Perhaps one or two from the parents – many of the children will not have been away from home for a week before.

Woodlands offers our children a unique experience and we know the lasting impact the trip can have on them, from multiple reports by our former students. Yes, they challenge themselves during the week with full days spent hill walking, climbing, canoeing and caving, but they also need to organise themselves, familiarise themselves with complex new equipment and live communally in a large Victorian house. Those challenges can be daunting for

some, and equally beneficial once conquered.

Given our long history with Woodlands, the collaboration between our staff and theirs is usually seamless, and the team manages to allow the children just the right balance of freedom and supervision. Very often, children develop their sense of self and a sense of responsibility whilst they are away. They quite often have lots of questions. Quite often the answer is, 'See if you can work that out for yourself.'

And usually they do.

We enjoy hearing from them when they return at the end of the week. Normally they return a more bonded and cohesive group. The adventures they have had and the stories they have to tell will stay with them. They then had half-term to wind down from the trip before focusing back on their Year Six studies.

And now we are on the run-up to Christmas once again! It is always a special time, and it is a real privilege to help children celebrate a wide variety of different festivals through the year.

Please see below for your invitation to be part of it. Best wishes from all of us. ●

RACHEL SALMONS



## Community Carol Concert

Please join us if you can on Wednesday 17th December at 6.00pm. This is a mix of traditional carols and groups of children showing off the Christmas songs they have learned, all under our brightly-lit canopy on the school playground. Mince pies and mulled wine will be served. Everyone welcome for this magical seasonal event!

# CHRISTMAS 2025 GIFT VOUCHER APPEAL

## Request for donations to provide a gift voucher for disadvantaged people in Sonning Common at Christmas 2025

Over the past few years Sonning Common magazine has led the fundraising for this charitable cause. It all started during the Covid lockdown at Christmas 2020, when it was perceived to be a 'bit of a treat' for disadvantaged members of our community. Treat boxes were prepared and delivered that year and has increased each year. In 2024 the number had risen to 90.

Following discussions with the food bank organisers and the staff at FISH, giving people choice seemed to be the way forward, and with it came the idea of vouchers. Furthermore, some SODC personnel visited the food bank at Springwater where they heard about the Christmas vouchers, and they thought it was a splendid idea. We have therefore

decided to fundraise for vouchers again this year. The value of the voucher will be dependent on the amount we can raise from various charitable companies and through a Just Giving page.

These vouchers are likely to be All for One or for the Co-op store in the village. All for One vouchers can be used in a wide range of stores so give plenty of choice to the recipients. The Co-op vouchers are better for those residents who do not travel outside of the village.

A just giving page is now set up in and shared to the community through our facebook page and in the library. You can also donate cash if preferred by leaving your donation in an envelope with the Pearmans at 50 Kennylands Road, or through their letterbox.

Many thanks for the two received already for £50 and the other £30.

We do hope that you are able to support this worthy cause at this very special time of year for giving. Any amount would be most welcome and much appreciated. ●

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/scmagazinechristmasvoucherappeal>

OR pay by Bacs transfer phone  
07702 237956 for details

Diana Pearman and Christine Atkinson



# A LOVELY LETTER

## Dear Mrs. Pearman and the Magazine Team,

Having lived in the village for many years and read the Sonning Common Magazine for as many years, I thought it was time to let the team know why I enjoy reading it so much.

- The articles are interesting and informative with the right number of (high quality) pictures.
- The magazine is very well laid out / designed.
- The magazine is also the perfect size,

with luxuriant glossy paper so it feels nice to the touch.

- What a wonderful easy-to-read webpage – I love clicking the right arrow to read it as if holding it like a book.
- I would be happy to pay to receive it (as I do with the Henley Standard).

It is clear that a lot of time, thought (and money too no doubt) has gone into making this a "quality" magazine; it really does tick all the boxes. Since there is no Letters' Page and I don't

know the e-mail addresses of the rest of the editorial team, I've e-mailed you as the Editor.

Since the Henley Standard made the unpopular decision to scrap its Bargain Adverts column, might it be possible to incorporate something similar into the Sonning Common Magazine, or would this be too difficult? ●

Kind regards  
NICOLA ROBINSON



# A POTENTIAL OLYMPIC CHAMPION IN OUR MIDST

## Underwater Hockey - what's that I hear you say?



I have always been a water baby, starting at my first swimming club at just 3 years old and joining a Synchronised Swimming Club at six and a half, where I spent the next 16 years competing at a high level with my club. I moved through Junior GB and into the senior GB Team in 2018 where I took part in the European and World Championships, and at the London 2012 Olympic Games.

After retiring from synchro in 2013, I understandably felt a bit lost and unsure where to go next. Being a highly competitive individual sport and competition are very important to me, and for a few years I competed in kayaking and swimming, until I found underwater hockey!

I started playing underwater hockey in February 2020, unfortunately just before the lockdown started. After a couple of years of playing on and off, I joined a club based in Egham and progressed surrounded by some incredible and experienced players. This year in particular has been a very successful year with my team, London Ladies, where we have defended 2 titles, European Club Champions and National Champions.

Not only this but I was also selected

to compete for Team GB this August in the Netherlands with the Masters ladies, where we became Intercontinental Champions (Europe/Africa including USA). We beat the current World Champions, France, in a very tense final that

ended up going to extra time after a 2-2 draw. We rose to the occasion, scoring three times to seal the gold medal in style! The team was mostly made up of players who had been playing for most of their lives, and I felt incredibly lucky to be able to play alongside and win with these amazing athletes.

All of the GB teams have qualified for the World Championships showing the strength, depth and spirit that Team GB underwater hockey currently have. This is a result of a lot of hard work in and out of the pool and we have all been following a tough training programme as we head towards the World Championships in 2 years' time.

The squads have much to do to make sure we continue this success and come out on top. It is an exciting time for the sport, and I am looking forward to seeing how my hockey skills can be further improved!

Underwater hockey, also known as Octopush, isn't a particularly well known sport however the game originated in Portsmouth in 1954 when an open water diving club needed an alternative during the cold winter months. The game consists of wearing a snorkel,

mask, waterpolo hat, fins, a tough glove on the playing hand and a short stick. There are 10 players on each team in the pool, 6 playing and 4 players as substitutes. The aim of the game is to get the heavy puck along the bottom of the pool and into the opponent's goal! I had a lot of transferrable skills from synchronised swimming but if you have a love for water (especially being under it!) and sport then please come and give it a try. It is a bit different, but it is also a lot of fun and so many great people are involved with the sport.

Local residents of Sonning Common can give it a go with Caversham Underwater Hockey club. They meet every Tuesday and Thursday 9pm-10pm at Queen Anne's School Caversham. You can find them on Facebook or contact Roy on 07884257247. ●

VICKI LUCASS



# PARISH NEWS

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## The Heart of Our Village

As I approach my sixth month in post, and with Christmas drawing near, I've found myself reflecting on what makes our village truly special.

Behind the lovely houses and beautiful buildings, it's the people who make the real difference – the volunteers who quietly, consistently, and generously give their time to make this community thrive.

## One Man, One Dog, Four Thousand Pieces of Litter

Each evening, on my walk home from the office, I often see a man with his dog, a bag in one hand and a litter picker in the other. He stops for every scrap of rubbish – bottles, crisp packets, even the tiniest bits of paper. One day, he told me he'd made a New Year's resolution to pick up five pieces of litter every day. Sadly, he said, it's never hard to find them – he often returns home with a full bag. That small daily habit has removed around 4,000 pieces of litter from our streets.

His story is a reminder that the best way to make a difference is through

small, consistent actions. Imagine if we all picked up just one piece of litter when we saw it – what a change we'd see.

## The Village Volunteer Army

This litter-picking hero is just one of many volunteers who make our village such a wonderful place to live. Our Village Gardeners tend to public spaces with care. EcoSoCo and the SoCo Spring Clean teams protect our environment and keep the village beautiful.

The PTAs at both our schools, led by parents like Cate Sturgess, enhance our children's education through countless fundraising efforts. Shedquarters, run by Sheila – recently and deservedly recognised as a Henley Hero – provides a vital community space for creativity and connection.

FISH volunteers offer transport and companionship to those who need it most. The Friends of SC Library keep our library thriving. The Lunch Club brings people together, while the WI continues its long tradition of community connection. Age UK's Coffee Mornings and Film Club

provide warmth and friendship for older residents, and our Scouts and Guides leaders nurture the next generation.

And, of course, a special thank you to the dedicated team of Youth Club volunteers, who give their time every week to create a safe, fun space for young people to socialise, learn, and grow. Their energy and commitment make a real difference to the lives of our village's younger residents.

I must also mention the volunteers who helped the council pump 500,000 litres of water into our pond during the hot, dry months – a huge effort that saved a much-loved village feature.

This list is far from complete, and I apologise if I've missed anyone – every act of volunteering, large or small, matters deeply.

## Your Turn: How Can You Help?

As we enter the season of giving, perhaps you might consider picking up a piece of litter, volunteering an hour or two, or simply saying thank you to a volunteer when you see them. Small actions, done consistently, create remarkable change. ●

From all of us at the council, thank you to every volunteer who makes our village the special place it is. Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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Rotherfield United Football Club  
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A Community Coffee Morning for all

All welcome for refreshments and a friendly chat. A great social morning with a chance to meet your local Community Link worker, along with our colleagues at **Dementia Oxfordshire** and **Carers Oxfordshire**.

We'll also be supported by your local Social Prescribers and support staff from Sonning Common Health Centre, our Digital Support Volunteer, and different local services in your community, including FISH Volunteer centre.

**When:** First Thursday of the month, 10am-12pm  
(3rd October, 7th November, 12th December and 2nd January 2025)

**Where:** Sonning Common Village Hall, Wood Lane, Sonning Common, RG4 9SL

**Cost:** FREE - with support from Farrans Construction.

**Transport:** Bookable places on the FISH minibus available. Please call the FISH office on **0118 972 3986** to confirm transport arrangements.

Rachel 07827 235 420  
Abbie 07827 235 431  
community@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk  
www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire

**FARRANS**  
**FISH**



**Santa on a Tractor will be out in the village on Sunday 14th December**

Please come out and support us as we raise funds for local charities Ways and Means Trust and Oxfordshire Foster Care Association

More details of timings and volunteer requests to come soon on our facebook page - SoCo Santa Claus

## Sonning Common Health Walks: December 2025 - January 2026

The Health Walks will be taking a break over Christmas and New Year: there will be no walks on the weeks commencing 22nd and 29th December, and there will be new meeting places in the New Year.

As there are no walk timetables in paper form at the moment, you will have to check the website for days/starting places/distances: [www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk/](http://www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk/) timetable.

If you want to speak to someone about any aspect of the Health Walks, phone  
Chris Brook 01189722609

**Community Speedwatch**

If you are and would like to help make our roads safer, why not join your local **Speedwatch Group** for an hour or two per month or whatever you think is reasonable.

Please go to <https://communityspeedwatch.org> to read more about this initiative which is supported by Thames Valley Police and other Police Forces across the United Kingdom. You will not be alone, currently there are more than 11000 people in the United Kingdom who are involved in supporting this scheme.

If after reading the details you would like to make a difference then why not join your local Speedwatch Group.

To do this please go to <https://communityspeedwatch.org> and click on the **Register** button at the top of the page.

Then click the **Join Existing** button on the left hand menu

Choose **Thames Valley** Police Force from the pull down and click **Continue**.

Choose **South Oxfordshire** and the **Vale of White Horse** from the pull down and click **Continue**.

Choose **Sonning Common, Reading Common Speedwatch Group** from the pull down and click **Continue**.

Finally complete your details on the registration form and follow the emailed instructions. You can help make a difference.

<https://communityspeedwatch.org>

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# SONNING COMMON 10K

## Record Turnout and a Course PB for the 3rd Sonning Common 10k



Sunday 5th October was the third edition of the Sonning Common 10k, with 302 runners taking on the scenic route - our biggest field yet! Near-perfect running conditions helped many achieve fantastic personal bests. Runners included 89-year-old Tom Harrison of Reading Roadrunners, who inspired us all with his effort. We are already looking forward to seeing even more runners on the start line next year.

Returning champion, Rob Corney, defended his title and in the process, shaved off an impressive two minutes off last year's time to win in 31 minutes and 10 seconds. The female title, also went to a familiar face- Nicola Lee, last year's winner, who once again took first place in a brilliant 38 minutes and 10 seconds.

The event, which raises vital funds for the Sonning Common Primary School, managed to raise over £8,000 this year - an amazing achievement for our school. A special thanks go to our generous sponsors: Shiplake College, Focus at Badgemore Park and Beville Estate Agency whose continued support make this event possible.

Before the race, runners enjoyed an energetic warm-up led by Jacqueline from Focus gym on the school playground. The chip-timed route took runners from Grove Road towards Memorial Park before heading out onto the peaceful country roads around Wyfold before heading home through the village of Kidmore End and then entering the finish line sprint on the school playground. Whilst the route is fairly undulating, we were delighted to

see so many runners achieve lifetime personal bests.

A huge thank you goes to everyone who makes this event possible- our fantastic marshals, whose encouragement keeps spirits high throughout the course; the staff from the primary school who marshal and run the BBQ and cake stall; photographers Kathryn Fell and Simon Booker for capturing the action; Kate and Becky from Raise the Bar Bootcamps for staffing the ever-popular halfway water station; PSCO Graham Davey for his ongoing presence and support; and the Sonning Common First Responders for keeping everyone safe.

If this year's race has inspired you to lace up your trainers, we'll be back on Sunday 4th October 2026- and we'd love to see you on the start line! We're also always looking for enthusiastic volunteers and marshals so if you'd like to get involved, please email: [sonningcommon10k@outlook.com](mailto:sonningcommon10k@outlook.com)

And don't forget - our "On Your Bike" charity family cycle ride returns on Sunday 10th May. For further details, visit: [www.onyourbikesonningcommon.co.uk](http://www.onyourbikesonningcommon.co.uk)



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# POWERING SONNING COMMON

## Powering Sonning Common: Rooftop Renewables for a Greener Future



CPRE (The Countryside Charity) Oxfordshire Launches Community Rooftop Renewables Project with Special Film Screening

Residents of Sonning Common and surrounding villages are being invited to an inspiring evening on Tuesday 21 January, as CPRE Oxfordshire and partners launch a new community initiative, Rooftop Renewables: Powering Sonning Common, with a special screening of the acclaimed documentary Power Station.

Power Station tells the uplifting story of a community that came together to take charge of its energy future, following the journey of artist-activists Hilary Powell and Dan Edelstyn on their mission to turn their street into an energy-generating powerhouse.

After the screening, local residents can find out how to get involved in the new project which kickstarts in February with a series of workshops. Designed to support the village to explore the potential of rooftop solar energy as a practical, community-led step toward

net zero, the project aims to help to reduce emissions and energy bills while protecting Oxfordshire's countryside from unnecessary large-scale solar developments.

Lisa Warne, Director of CPRE Oxfordshire, said:

"We're excited to be working with Sonning Common to show that renewable energy

doesn't have to mean losing our countryside. By focusing on rooftops first, we can power our homes, protect our landscapes, and strengthen our communities."

The project is a partnership between CPRE Oxfordshire, Sonning Common Parish Council, EcoSoco, Oxfordshire County Council, Cosy Homes Oxfordshire, and the Renewable Energy Co-operative Ltd.

### Event Details

**What:** Film screening of Power Station & launch of Rooftop Renewables: Powering Sonning Common

**When:** Tuesday 21 January 2026, 6.30 for a 7pm start. Ends by 9pm

**Where:** Peppard War Memorial Hall, RG9 5JA

**Price:** £5

**More Info:** <https://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/care/rooftop-renewables/>

### About the Project

Rooftop Renewables: Powering

Sonning Common is part of CPRE Oxfordshire's ongoing campaign to champion renewable energy solutions that work with, not against, our countryside. The project will include community workshops, practical advice sessions, and opportunities for residents to assess their rooftop's solar potential.

### About CPRE Oxfordshire

CPRE Oxfordshire is an independent charity which works towards a sustainable, vibrant and thriving countryside that promotes nature and enriches all our lives.

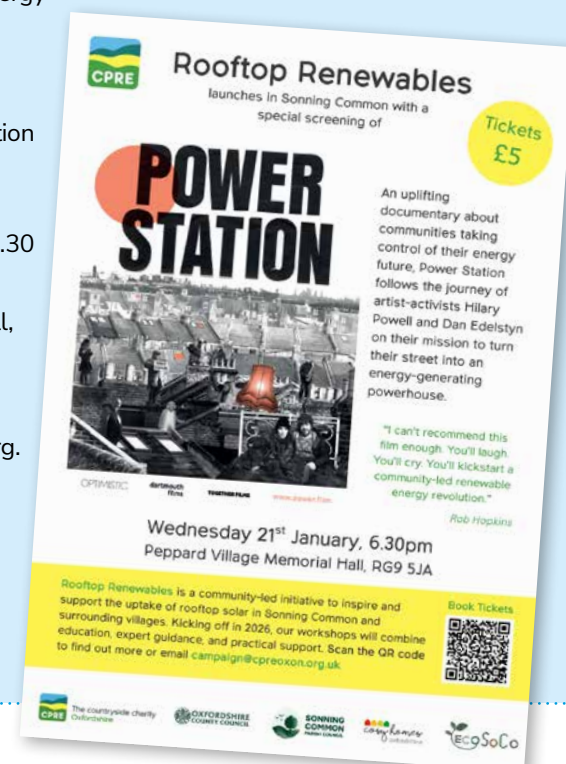
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# CHANCE2DANCE4CHARITY

## Peppard Memorial Hall - 12 September 2025

A huge thank you to all who came or donated to our 8th chance2dance4charity on 12th September - it was brilliant! We had a record 51 people who spent the evening dancing, laughing and having fun with friends.

Thanks as always to our wonderful dance teacher, Kayleigh Rixon @DanceFitFun for providing the music and the two mini dance lessons. It was so much fun!

Our two chosen good causes for this event, Amnesty International & Bravemind, received almost £300 each which was raised through ticket sales, raffle tickets and donations, some of which came in after the event. The raffle prizes were kindly donated by the Crown at Playhatch, the King William IV pub

at Ipsden and the Herb Farm in Sonning Common.

Simon Trower, founder of the charity [www.Bravemind.co.uk](http://www.Bravemind.co.uk) very generously offered 2 tickets for the rugby Premiership final at Twickenham in June 2026 for our raffle, but "my husband and I" decided we'll do a silent auction via Henley Rugby Club instead over the coming months, as we feel we can generate a lot more income for the charity that way. When we have worked out the logistics of this, details will be circulated on The Henley Rugby Club website and social media.

This event was a special one as it kicked off the celebrations for my 70th birthday, which isn't till October but this was my big chance to dance. I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 2008, and cancer in 2019, so being able to dance the night

away in my 70th year was not always a foregone conclusion. I thank my lucky stars every single day.

Watch this space for the next chance2dance4charity in spring! •

SUE BINGHAM



## ROTHERFIELD UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB



As your local community football club

Rotherfield continue to grow and expand, we also aim to provide opportunities to be involved in football across all age, genders and abilities.

The club are excited to announce that in October Oxfordshire FA approved the club as an FA Comets provider. Comets is the FA's scheme to introduce pan-disability football into the community via approved clubs.

Rotherfield are starting their sessions focused on school age children aged 5-11 who are on their schools SEN register. More details are on the poster. To sign up for the free sessions please register via the QR code or through our partner Performance Sports web site: [www.performancesportsgroup.co.uk/event/rotherfield-united-fc-send-football-courses/](http://www.performancesportsgroup.co.uk/event/rotherfield-united-fc-send-football-courses/)

Saturday morning girls and boys development sessions for school year Reception, 1 & 2 children.

The club continue to run our highly successful Saturday morning development sessions and welcome boys and girls of all football abilities to come along and get involved in our fun sessions. The first two sessions are free of charge so for more information please contact the club directly. •

## CHILTERN EDGE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR

Thanks to all who came along and supported us.

We are looking forward to 2026 with Spring & Autumn shows, six talks, and at the moment, two coach trips to local gardens and newsletters.

All the talks are at Peppard Memorial Hall at 7:30pm with some talks at 2:30pm in the afternoon. Please look out for posters and see [cehs.co.uk](http://cehs.co.uk) for more information, and we are also on Facebook.

Please join; all are welcome, beginners and seasoned gardeners, as it's only £10 per year (coach trips are at an additional cost) to help support your local gardening club.

As a member, you can enter the Spring & Autumn shows, held at Sonning Common Village Hall, and members' children can enter the children's classes for free. We have many classes: Flowers, Vegetables, Fruit, Domestic, Photography, and a plant stall with tea, coffee, and cake available.

Arts & Crafts, and children's. All winners win a cup in the relevant classes.

Happy Christmas.

Hope to see you in the new year. •

COLIN MATHER

# MEET ALISON SMITH

Loves reading, quizzing and being a volunteer!

By JOAN GRUMMANT



Alison Smith is a very familiar figure in Sonning Common Library and at all the social and literary events that have been taking place there. She is stepping down as Chair of the Friends of Sonning Common Library (FOSCL) after four eventful years and from five years of being a committee member. Five continuous years is the maximum time one can serve, and this enables our thriving library to encourage new members to bring fresh ideas to an established system. Alison has thoroughly enjoyed her time on the committee and feels that being mentored by Jenny Jones gave her a confident start. As someone who had never chaired a committee, Alison grew from strength to strength as she truly valued her colleagues. Her ambitions were to make committee work fun and enjoyable, and to ensure all ideas were valued, and lots of them implemented!

During her time as Chair, she has been instrumental in bringing forward new initiatives such as the very popular Big Bear Hunt, Friday Social Mornings, and the Easter I-Spy Trail, all of which will continue. She has also organised many author evenings which are very well attended. Her warm and friendly welcome has been a very positive influence on volunteers and staff, and has contributed to the library becoming a great focus for our community.

Alison was born and brought up in Henley and became an avid reader at an early age. She has many happy memories of visiting the library in the basement of Henley Town Hall before it moved to its present location. While at King James's College studying for her A-Levels, she met Jeremy who she would go on to marry. He has been a constant source of support and encouragement during all her ventures, and they went on to have two children together. However, not all her memories of Henley are as happy and carefree. Alison experienced a very frightening incident when she was working for Portman Building Society. One Saturday morning she and her supervisor were held up at gunpoint by an intruder demanding cash. The alarm was pressed, but he escaped with money leaving behind two badly affected women. Alison finds it ironic that she was due to take part in a raid awareness course the following week!

One of Alison's great passions is quizzing. As a very enthusiastic quizzier she has been on TV taking part in 'Wogan's Perfect Recall' with the legend that was Sir Terry, and as part of a team called The Common People on 'Tenable' hosted by Warwick Davies. This lifelong passion is one she will enjoy pursuing and will be well supported by her love of books.

As a long-time user of Sonning Common Library, Alison decided to volunteer there when new recruits were needed for its partial re-opening during the pandemic, and she was welcomed with open arms. This is a decision she has never regretted and one that opened many new possibilities for her. She will still be volunteering at the library after she steps down as Chair of FOSCL. This, together with her part-time job, will keep her busy but she also intends to do some work on her family tree and maybe some writing. She believes that volunteering has brought her the opportunity to discover new interests as well as appreciate old ones. She will be sorely missed but her contribution to our library is incalculable.

Good luck Alison - we wish you all the very best! •



# GREETINGS FROM THE LIBRARY!

It may be a bit dark and dreary outside, but don't worry, there is plenty of sparkle in the Library. Elaine and I definitely have a "more is more" attitude when it comes to crafts and decorations so you will find your local library an oasis of festive fun. As well as our special Christmas books displays, the youngsters can enjoy three weeks of Christmas stories, crafts and cake sales on every Saturday morning in December in the lead up to Christmas. I also have a feeling that our Friday socials might have a few mince pies amongst the normally more sensible biscuits!

I am afraid that we have to close over Christmas and New Year and we will be shutting our doors at 5pm on Monday, 22nd December so remember to pick up your Christmas recipe books and novels by then. We will be back open to embrace our New Year resolutions on Friday, 2nd January 2026. And, as a special New Year treat, we have an author visit on Monday, 12th January! It is none other than crime writer Robert Thorogood, of Death in Paradise and The Marlow Murder Club fame. It looks to be a great evening and will definitely brighten a dull January. More details will be posted

on the Friends of Sonning Common Library website.

Thanks for all your support in 2025 and see you soon. •

JULIET LEGG

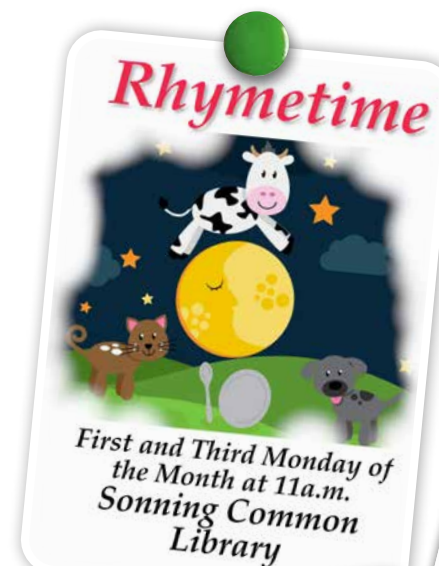


Robert Thorogood



We presented Alison, and her husband, with beer, flowers, and a John Lewis voucher at our AGM.

GILLIAN LAST



# GREAT SCARECROW TRAIL

**A Village United by Straw and Smiles:**  
Pre-school's 5th Great Scarecrow Trail a resounding success.

From October 18th to November 2nd, the village came alive with creativity, laughter, and a touch of whimsy as the pre-school hosted its 5th Great Village Scarecrow Trail — a heartwarming celebration of community spirit and imagination.

Sponsored by Beville Estate Agents, the trail saw 18 families and local businesses transform everyday materials into delightful scarecrow creations. With the pre-school supplying the crafting essentials, participants let their imaginations

run wild, producing everything from classic straw-stuffed figures to quirky characters that brought smiles to passersby.

Trail maps were available for purchase at The Co-op, Heath and Watkins, and the local library. Those who returned completed maps were rewarded with a packet of sweets and entered into a prize draw — a sweet incentive for exploring every corner of the trail.

The competition for best scarecrow was fierce but friendly. Prizes for the top three entries were kindly donated by The New Inn, Pierreponts Café at the Herb Farm, and Heath and Watkins.

More than just a seasonal activity, the Scarecrow Trail has become a cherished tradition, bringing together neighbours, families, and businesses in a shared celebration of creativity and community. With laughter echoing through the streets and straw-stuffed figures peeking from gardens and shopfronts, this year's trail was a true testament to the village's vibrant spirit.

Here's to another successful year — and to many more scarecrows to come! ●

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# TOM FORT BIG CARS

**My elder son and I were outside a supermarket in Penrith where we were going to buy supplies to feed the family on holiday. I had just parked the car, with care, when we were approached by a woman brandishing her phone. This is how the exchange went, starting with her:**

'You touched my car. I saw you.'

'Did I? Did I do any damage?' We looked. Not even a mark. I asked her why she was being aggressive.

'I'm not being aggressive. You're being arrogant' (she was local and I don't think she liked our accents). 'I saw you'. She pointed up to the café above the supermarket. 'Through the window'. She then spoke into her phone. 'Courteney, they say I'm being aggressive. Am I being aggressive?'

At this point my son — who is a droll fellow — intervened. 'Oh, well if Courteney says you're not being aggressive that's all right.'

I pointed out that the problem was that her white SUV was too wide — I couldn't get out of my car without my door coming into faint contact with her bodywork.

'Your car's bigger than mine, well, longer anyway'. I said the issue here was not length but width. She continued to fume at me, running out of steam only when my son referred to me as both elderly AND suffering from mobility issues, which was slightly beside the point.

It's always disconcerting when ordinary people explode in irrational rage. I would speculate that this happens in

supermarket car parks more often than in most other places — and the main reason is that cars today are just too big for the painted spaces. Why do people need — or think they need — such massive vehicles?

As I write this, Rachel Reeves is pondering what to do in her budget. If I were Chancellor, I'd slap £1000 a year in extra tax on SUVs (and another £1000 on leaf blowers, but that's another matter).

Happy Xmas! ●



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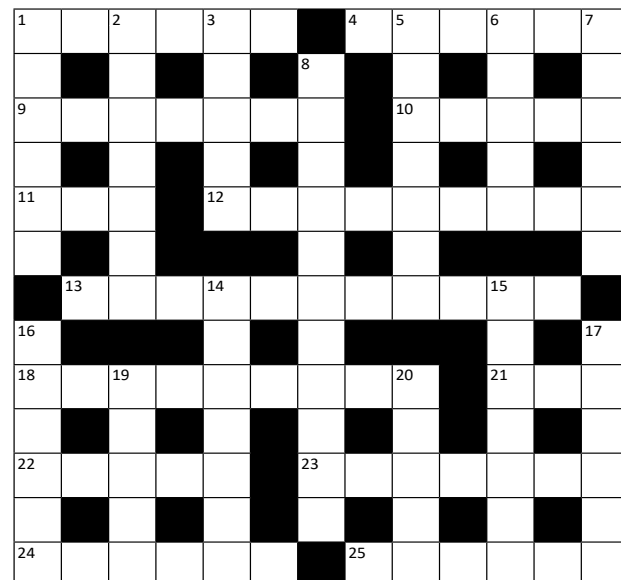
Tori Yates, Google Review



# PUZZLE PAGE

By DAVID DUNSTAN

## Cryptic crossword



### ACROSS

1. Slander and make me fade (6)
4. See 9
- 9&4. Hare can devour concoction in road in village (7,6)
10. Sonning Common, for example, is reduced to a large country house (5)
11. Signal thus second (1,1,1)
12. Oak, for example, comes down in road in village (9)
13. Kill beavers unexpectedly in road in village (11)
18. Raced mile badly and recovered (9)
21. Hand father whisky (3)
22. Dog found in Quebec or Gibraltar (5)
23. Baby Ben worn out (7)
24. Cyst burst before he gets a tool (6)
25. Island jumper (6)

### DOWN

1. Arguments in empty dormitory makes sleepy (6)
2. Plant, if such, a hybrid (7)
3. I am dismayed before a cry of pain – from a cat? (5)
5. Oral exam with broken lid for seasonal composer (7)
6. New York to half of London for textile (5)
7. Out of order – please pass (6)
8. Modern jaunt disrupted — meeting suspended (11)
14. Vanish in confusion after king is dishonest (7)
15. Circuit caps computers (7)
16. Bishop runs for support for trousers (6)
17. A number went about with heartless tearaway (6)
19. Frizzy dog lays oddly (5)
20. Does badly around well initially in search for water (5)

## Sudoku

Grading: medium

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

## Cryptogram

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

E UOWL USYD UOTL, DNEA HBSIDN ER  
IADAFT'Y HSOTM,

DNEA, RBEF UNEYS ATYSST GBSYSTPS DNS  
WSICSY LSIL

IBS LBOCST, WOVS MNEYDY RBEF IT  
STPNITDSB RWSSOTM.

GSBPK HKYYNS YNSWSK:

ELS DE DNS USYD UOTL

## Quiz: How many?

1. How many is a gross?
2. How many lines in a sonnet?
3. How many bones in the human body (adult)?
4. How many in a baker's dozen?
5. How many yards in a mile?
6. How many syllables in a haiku?
7. How many edges on a cube?
8. How many kings called Edward have there been (since 1066)?
9. How many bicycles are there in Beijing (according to Katie Melua)?
10. How many old pennies are there in a pound?

See answers on page 34

# ABBEEYCREST

## ARIA CARE

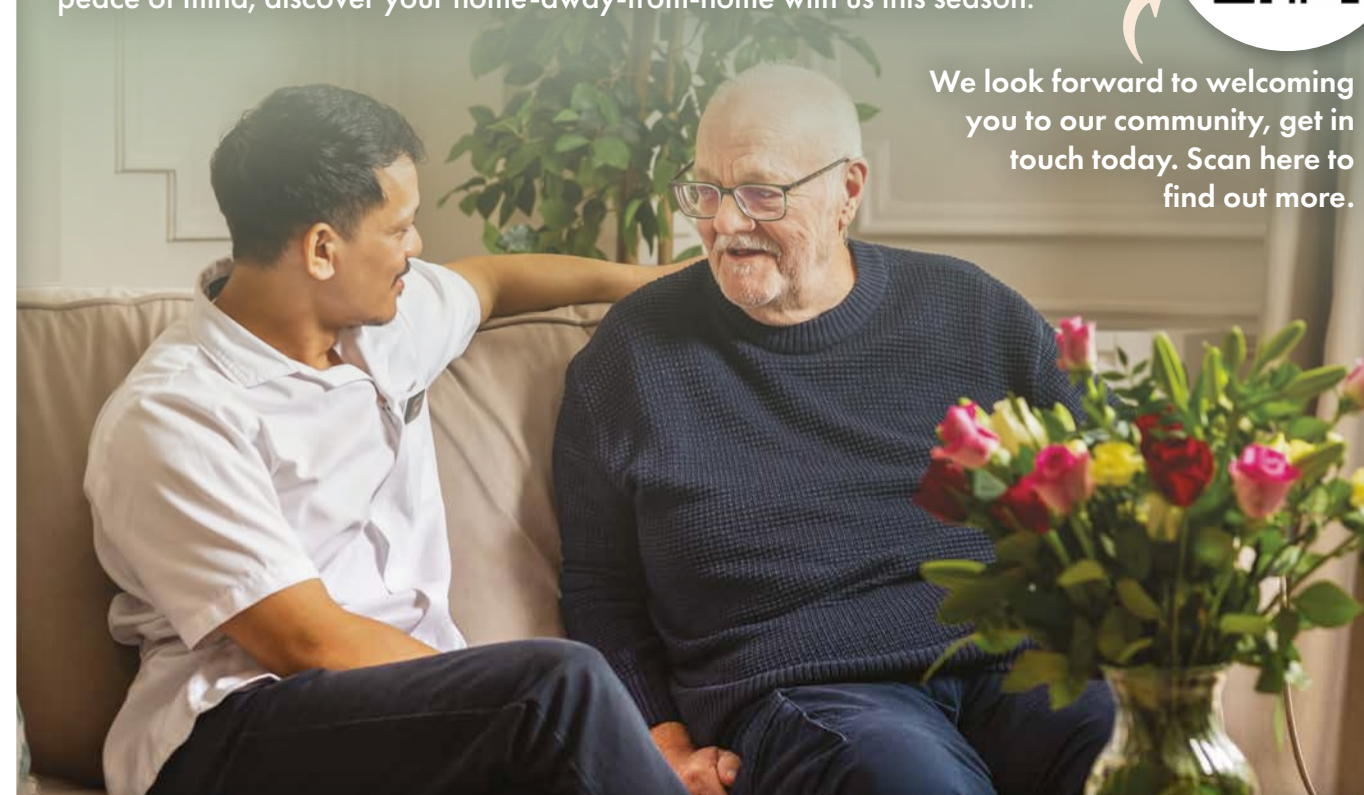
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# A BIG, FRIENDLY HELLO FROM ECO SOCO,



your village community environmental group. We're passionate about our local environment and nature and we've got all sorts of projects going on to support it, right here in SC. Here's a look at what we've been up to and where things are headed.

**Planting for pollinators** ... did you know that this year saw a 63% decrease in flying insects sampled on vehicle registration plates since 2021?

Shocking, isn't it? And it's scary too, as we rely on pollinators for so much of the food we depend on. One of the best things you can do to help is to plant pollinator friendly plants and boy, have we been busy doing just that!

This Autumn Eco SoCo members, a group from Sonning Common Primary School, SC Guides, volunteers from Springwater and St. Michael's churches, a team of neighbours in Woodlands Road and a lone pollinator champion – Graham Bowles have planted over 3000 pollinator friendly bulbs! That brings our two year total to over **9000 bulbs!** Look out for the crocus and wild daffs next Spring! Many thanks to Phil Fletcher and Henley Rotary for the donation of 2000 bulbs!

**Orchards get TLC** ... the new orchard at Abbeycrest got a bulb blitz too and to add to the bee banquet, we planted Ox Eye Daisies, Primroses, Buddleia, Marsh Mallow too. The new orchard at Chiltern Bank also



benefitted from a broader planting mix. A massive thank you to David Litchfield and Clare Talbot for your kind donations.

**As a thank you to our friends at Abbeycrest (Abbeycrest kindly give us a place to meet)** ... we planted up the flower bed on the main drive with an abundance of colourful, pollinator friendly perennials, including a range of Salvia and Asters, donated by our generous supporter Michelle Young.

**MP Freddie van Mierlo paid us a visit** ... Freddie visited our monthly Repair Café in October with his family and took part in one of our free workshops. We were celebrating International Repair Café Day offering free knitting/crochet, bunting making from recycled materials and bike maintenance workshops alongside our usual free repair service and wickedly delicious homemade cakes!

**Please join us for our last Repair Café of 2025** ... on Saturday 6th December from 10 – 12.30 @ Springwater Church, where our talented Repairers will be available to mend your electricals, textiles, woollens, bikes, toys, clocks, small wooden furniture items free of charge and you'll be able to enjoy a range of fabulous homemade cakes, all washed down with a coffee or cuppa! And why not join in with a free star making workshop – see Springwater church's FB page for details.

**Please note**, in January we'll be taking our usual holiday, and we'll be back in action again on Saturday February 7th.

**Our dirty Christmas secrets** ... UK stats: 227,000 miles of wrapping paper, enough to wrap the Shard 4567 times, 114,000 tonnes of plastic waste



not recycled, 12,000 tonnes of waste from real Christmas trees and much more! Staggering, isn't it?!

So how can we all enjoy a less expensive, less wasteful Christmas this year? Apart from the old favourite – the secret Santa – there are loads of great options such as giving homemade gifts, choosing a special outing together rather than exchanging presents, donating to a favourite family charity and giving vouchers offering your time/ special skills such as babysitting, weeding, decorating etc.

There are lots of eco-friendly, recyclable cards and wrapping paper on the market now days and the readily available biodegradable Sellotape is every bit as good as the old stuff!

**New Year's Resolutions at the ready** ... want to do your bit for nature and climate change in SC but not sure how? Whether you only have an hour to spare now and again, you have plants to donate or you'd like to get your teeth into something juicy, Eco SoCo has something to offer. You can help with our eco cinema, wildlife talks, planting for pollinators, our community veg garden, looking after our beautiful new orchards, our monthly repair café or teaching others how to garden for wildlife.

**Special Request** ... calling jewellery makers...could you help at our monthly Repair Café?

Any help gratefully received.

To find out more about our projects or to join our group, scan the QR code, see our Facebook page, email [ecosoco24@gmail.com](mailto:ecosoco24@gmail.com) or pop along to the Repair Café for a chat. We'd love to hear from you.

Happy Christmas one and all! ●

**JULIE SHORTER**

A film organised by EcoSoco



# CHURCH NEWS

## Karen's Big Day



Saturday 1st November was a very special day for Karen Broadbent. It's when, along with five other candidates and after two years of study and preparation, she became a Licensed Lay Minister in the Church of England at a special service conducted at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, by Bishop Gavin, the Bishop of Dorchester.

So who is Karen? 55-year-old Karen is a local girl, born in Reading, who has lived in Sonning Common since the age of ten. She attended Sonning Common Primary School, followed by Chiltern Edge, The Henley College for A levels, then City of Birmingham University where she qualified as a Librarian. She works

as Senior Librarian at The Henley College and is married to Paul, they have two daughters, Anna and Charlotte and two grandsons Elliott aged four and Alexander almost one. Her parents, Rosemary and David, also live in Sonning Common.

Karen's a busy lady who has an amazing ability to pack a lot into her life and somehow make it all look easy! She is a

very involved grandmother, enjoys singing, music and handicrafts and makes incredible celebration cakes for special occasions.

She was brought up within the United Reformed Church and Congregational Church. Christ the King, Sonning Common became her church of choice as an adult and young mother, due to its convenient location and relaxed 'in the round' worship space. Over time she gradually become increasingly involved with the church to the point where it was suggested she should train as a Lay Minister and she decided to go for it: I don't know what we would do without her!

Christ the King is part of the Benefice which includes St John's Church, Kidmore End and All Saints' Church, Peppard Common with Revd. James Stickings, Rector and Revd. Sarah van der Watt, Associate Priest. Karen is well known and loved at all three churches so members of all three congregations wanted to go to the Cathedral to attend Karen's licensing. We are so grateful to John Pearman, Bus Manager at the FISH Volunteer Centre and Frances Woolaway, CEO of the Ways and Means Trust on Peppard Common who both agreed to drive their charity's minibuses to Oxford taking a full load of 32 passengers from all three churches to be there on 1st November. So, along with many members of Karen's family we were proud to be part of the service at Oxford Cathedral.

For the future Karen tells me she is looking forward to developing her ministry with children at Sonning Common Primary School and, of course, we will all continue to enjoy her calm and caring ministry at Christ the King.

She says, 'Training for ministry is not something I ever thought I would do, but the whole experience, whilst challenging at times, has been joyful and inspiring. I look forward with hope to wherever I may be called and am thankful to have so many friends offering support and encouragement.'

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# CHURCH NEWS CONTINUED

## THE STAR OF WONDER!

It's hard to believe that we are nearing the end of another year and we are excited to share with you all that will be happening at Springwater Church over the festive season .

We would love you to join us this Christmas as we look at the Star of Wonder and go on the journey of following the star everyone is invited!

### STARRY NIGHTS

December 5th, 12th, 19th 4.00pm – 6.00pm

A time to come together over hot chocolate and cookies whilst crafting stars to leave your mark, be part of our community decorating or take your star home.

Take some selfies and have some fun too!

Drinks and Cookies will be £2 each

and all proceeds will be going to the Foodbank.

Visit our cabin and see the transformation of it into a stable ! and learn more about the journey taken by those who followed the star.

### STARRY WORKSHOP

December 6th- 10am – 12.30 pm

Collaborating with Eco Soco Repair Café making eco friendly stars! Enjoy some treats from the café too!

### STAR OF WONDER CANDLELIGHT CAROL SERVICE

December 24th – 4.00pm - .6.00pm

Sing some carols , hear about the star of wonder and enjoy some festive goodies!

Star of Wonder Christmas Day Service – 10.30am – 11.30 am



A short Christmas message, carols and a time of reflection .

For further details please email [contact@springwater@gmail.com](mailto:contact@springwater@gmail.com)

Facebook Springwater Church Peppard Common

We hope you can join us this Christmas and that you will enjoy meeting others in the community too ! ●

**ROB AND SARAH SIMONS ,AND THE TEAM AT SPRINGWATER CHURCH.**

## ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Although situated in Sonning Common, St Michael's serves the Catholic community living in Sonning Common, the surrounding villages, Emmer Green and Caversham Park Village. Our parish school, St Martin's, is located in Caversham Park Village. Our key event each week is the celebration of our Sunday Masses (Sat 5.30pm (vigil Mass), Sun 9am and 10.30am) where we offer worship to God and support to one another. From this all our social and charitable efforts are developed. We always look forward to welcoming people who have recently moved to the area or are rediscovering their faith.

Our St Michael Parish weekend at the end of September was not only a time to reflect on the changes that had occurred in parish life during the last

year, but to look forward to see how we can improve our relationship with God, our support of one another and the local community.

Early in November we held a service in which we commemorated loved ones and parishioners who have died. On this occasion family photos and funeral booklets collected over many years were displayed. This helped us remember and appreciate the contribution made to parish life by those who came before us. During a time of silence families lit candles as they remembered and prayed for their loved ones. On Remembrance Sunday a visit was made to Kidmore End cemetery, the resting place of many of our parishioners.

Christmas will soon be with us. During Advent we prepare ourselves to celebrate this wonderful feast. Each Monday at 7-8pm during Advent we

have a time of quiet prayer to which everyone is invited. Other activities, including our Christmas pudding evening and flower arranging workshop will take place. Details will be found on our website.

For Christmas itself our Christmas Masses will be at:

5pm Dec 24th for families with young children

7.30pm Dec 24th carols followed by 'Midnight' Mass at 8pm

10.30am Dec 25th Christmas Day Mass

The parishioners of St Michael's pray that all readers will know peace at Christmas and be blessed during the New Year

To contact the parish or check dates and times see our website: [www.saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk](http://www.saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk) ●

## ST JOHN THE BAPTIST AND CHRIST THE KING

As we begin the season of Advent, the start of a new church year, we have the opportunity to reflect on the year that has passed. For Christians, autumn is traditionally the time for remembering: saints and martyrs on All Saints' Day (1st November); those we have loved who have died on All Souls' (2nd November); and, on Remembrance Day, people killed in conflict (second Sunday of November). Then Advent brings light to brighten the winter darkness as we look forward to the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. To mark the start of Advent, a candlelit Advent service will be held at All Saints Church, Rotherfield Peppard, on Sunday 30th November at 6.30pm.

The next parish fundraising event will take place on Saturday, 6th December when the parish Christmas Fair will be held at Christ the King Church, Sedgewell Road, from 12.00pm – 2.00pm. There will be stalls to browse, raffles to enter and homemade food to enjoy: do come along!

Christmas services in the parish will follow the familiar pattern this year, with the exception of the Carol Service, which will take place at Christ the King Church, with young singers joining the

choir from our local primary schools. Please do come along on Thursday, 18th December at 7.30pm for readings and traditional carols followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

On Wednesday, 24th December, Christmas Eve, join us at Christ the King again for the annual Christingle Service at 4.30pm. This is a lovely relaxed service, suitable for all the family. There will be carols and a Christingle to take home.

**Please see below for details of all services taking place over Advent and Christmas:**

- Sunday 30th November: Advent service, All Saints, Peppard, 6.30pm
- Thursday 18th December: Service of lessons and carols, Christ the King, 7.30pm
- Christmas Eve: Christingle at Christ the King, 4.30pm
- Christmas Eve: Midnight mass, St John's, 11.00pm
- Christmas Day: Family Eucharist, Christ the King, 9.30am
- Christmas Day: All-age Communion, St John's, 11.15am
- Sunday 28th December: Benefice Eucharist, Christ the King, 9.30am

Preparations are well underway to begin much-needed work at St John

the Baptist church, Kidmore End. The project has been a little delayed, so the church will be open for Christmas and is likely to be closing its doors in January. The work will take some months, so parish services will be held at Christ the King. Do check the parish pages on [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com) for details of all church services and activities.

Wishing everyone a blessed, peaceful, and happy Christmas. ●

## Christingle Service



**Christ the King Church,  
Sedgewell Road  
Christmas Eve  
4.30pm**

**Please join us at this very special event - the perfect way to start Christmas!**

*All welcome!*

## CEC

**The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.'**

John 1:5

I heard a story recently about a man who met a neighbour while scraping frost from my car. They laughed about numb fingers and foggy windscreens, and then his friend said, almost without thinking, "I always hope Christmas brings... something. Peace maybe? A reset?" He didn't know exactly what he longed for - only that he was longing.

Perhaps you've felt that too. We wrap

presents, hang lights, fill the calendar with meals and parties - and yet somewhere inside, a quiet question lingers: Is there more than this?

The first Christmas began with longing as well - a world tired of waiting, people weighed down by uncertainty and silence. And then, quietly, almost hidden, God stepped into the cold night. Not as a king on a throne, but as a child in straw. The Creator breathing our air, touching our soil, stepping into our ordinary streets and ordinary worries.

Christians believe Jesus didn't just come to decorate a holiday. He came to meet

our deepest need: forgiveness and peace with God, light for the darkness, life that begins now and stretches into eternity.

Maybe this year, amid lights and laughter and the ache beneath them, you could scratch that longing itch and look for the true hope that is at the heart of Christmas.

A Saviour born to rescue and save us.

Join us at CEC for our Christmas services. See details at: [www.cecuk.church](http://www.cecuk.church) ●

**MARTIN SECCOMBE**

# NEWS FROM YOUR HEALTH CENTRE



## Staff News

We have exciting baby news....3 of our team are pregnant and all expecting their babies around the same time in February. Dr Kim Wild will be starting her maternity leave at the beginning of January followed soon after by Emily, one of our clinical pharmacists and Dr Pratiksha Panthee one of our registrars. All 3 are doing well and are looking forward to meeting their gorgeous bundles of joy in February.

We welcomed Shelley to our Reception team. Shelley has a passion for ensuring people are cared for and brings a wealth of transferable skills to her new role.

We sadly recently said goodbye to Abbie, one of our Social Prescribers who has worked at the health centre for over 3 years providing valuable support to many of our patients. Abbie also supported Rachel, our other Social Prescriber, in running the monthly Hive coffee morning held at in the village hall. What started out as an idea between Rachel and Abbie to give people an

opportunity to meet other people, and to also provide support for those who have been diagnosed with Dementia, with support for their carers and families, has now been rolled out nationally by Age UK. Abbie was a great member of the team she will be missed. In good news we welcome Charlie to our Social Prescribing team. Some of you may remember Charlie who worked at the health centre previously, you may also recognise her face from our Hive coffee mornings. Charlie is delighted to join the health centre and continue to get to know our patients.

## COVID-19 and Flu clinics

We ran various clinics through October with a huge uptake in appointments. COVID-19 clinics are now finished but we are still offering Flu appointments with our nurses. If you have an appointment with a GP and are eligible for your Flu vaccination please mention it during your appointment as our GPs and nurses are very happy to give you your vaccination during your consultation.

Christmas prescription requests: As with every year we anticipate a huge surge in prescription requests the closer we get to Christmas. To guarantee you will receive your medication in time for the Christmas bank holidays please ensure you have given us your prescription request no later than Sunday 14 th December. We will try to process any prescription requests submitted after this date but will be unable to guarantee your medication will be ready in time.

There are many ways to request your prescription – by sending us an email, schc.admin@nhs.net, ordering through your NHS App, through Sonning Common Health Centre's website or by popping into the health centre and completing a prescription request form. We are unable to take prescription requests over the phone. Please help our Admin and Dispensary team by requesting your medications with plenty of time. ●

PRACTICE MANAGER KATIE WILLIAMS

# WINTER WELLNESS

## Why the darker months affect your mood

**As the days get shorter, the evenings colder and the mornings frostier, many of us look forward to cosy nights in, warm fires and Christmas festivities.**

For others the idea of darker days, cold weather and less time outside can be a daunting prospect. In fact, as winter creeps in, google searches for 'seasonal affective disorder' rise by approximately 500%, with many finding that the colder months negatively influence their motivation, mood and productivity, and many people find that the colder months leave them feeling sluggish, tired and struggling to keep on top of mental wellness habits.

One of the best ways to counteract this and help ourselves is to 'Find the Light'.

Try to make opportunities for brightness throughout your day. This might include getting outside in natural sunlight where possible (even if just for 5-10 minutes at a time), opening blinds and curtains in your home, situating your desk close to a window and using lamps and mirrors to increase brightness indoors. Whilst natural light is ideal for boosting mood, studies have found that exposure to bright indoor lights during the day help our bodies to regulate the sleep cycle and stimulate the brain to feel alert and revitalized.

And if you can get outside into nature that will help your mood too. We are very lucky to live in a beautiful area with opportunities for walking using the many public footpaths through woods and

fields or just get down to the Millennium or Memorial fields for a stroll. Take a waterproof or umbrella just in case!

The Health Walks are great if you would rather walk in a group so have a look at the noticeboard for their website details.



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PUZZLE PAGE ANSWERS FROM PAGE 24



**Quiz: How many?**  
1. 144 (12 dozen); 2. 14; 3. 206; 4. 13;  
5. 1,760; 6. 17; 7. 12; 8. 8; 9. 9 million;  
10. 240.  
**Cryptogram**  
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY:  
ODE TO THE WEST WIND  
ENCHANTER FLEEING.  
ARE DRIVEN, LIKE GHOSTS FROM AN  
LEAVES DEAD  
THOU, FROM WHOSE UNSEEN PRESENCE THE  
AUTUMN'S BEING,  
O WILD WEST WIND, THOU BREATH OF

**Sudoku**

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

**Cryptic crossword**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | C | Y | T | H | E | J | E | R | S | E | V |
| E | L | E | S | T | S | P | S | T | P | T | T |
| C | O | R | G | I | N | E | W | B | O | R | N |
| A | U | V | E | O | E | T | E |   |   |   |   |
| R | E | C | L | A | I | M | E | D | P | A | W |
| B |   |   |   | N | N |   |   |   | A | T |   |
| B | A | S | K | E | R | V | I | L | L | E |   |
| Y | I |   |   | U | D |   |   |   |   |   | E |
| S | O | S | W | O | O | D | L | A | N | D | S |
| W | H |   |   | J | A |   |   |   | O | P |   |
| O | R | C | H | A | R | D | V | I | L | L | A |
| R | U |   |   | A | I |   | Y |   |   |   | L |
| D | E | F | A | M | E | A | V | E | N | U | E |

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Widmore Park  
Retirement Redefined

Opening Spring 2026, Widmore Park is more than a place to live — it's a lively new hub for Sonning Common. Rooted in connection, wellbeing, and shared experiences, we're excited to welcome both new residents and the wider community.

**Thursday 18th December - 11am-1pm  
Community Christmas Craft.**  
Join us for some fun-filled Christmas crafts! In this free session we will be painting baubles and decorations to take home and brighten up your tree. All ages are welcome, and tea, coffee and cake will be provided. Our team will also be available to chat and answer any questions you may have about Widmore Park.

**Thursday 15th January - 11am-1pm  
Chatty Cathy's Coffee Social.**  
To help beat the January blues, we'll have plenty of tea, coffee, and friendly chat at our cozy "Chatty Cathy" table the perfect place to talk with others in the village not just about Widmore Park, but about anything that's on your mind. It's a great opportunity to share ideas, meet neighbours, and enjoy some good company.

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Want to learn more? Call us on 01189 145 941

Join us at our **Friends of Widmore Park** events at:  
**Sonning Common Village Hall, RG4 9SL**  
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