

OCT/NOV 2026

AUTUMN HAS ARRIVED

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SONNING COMMON 2036

How Eco SoCo can shape our
future
P4

LET'S BRING BACK PLAY

How OPAL is transforming
playtime
P8

FOLLOWING THE EAST COAST

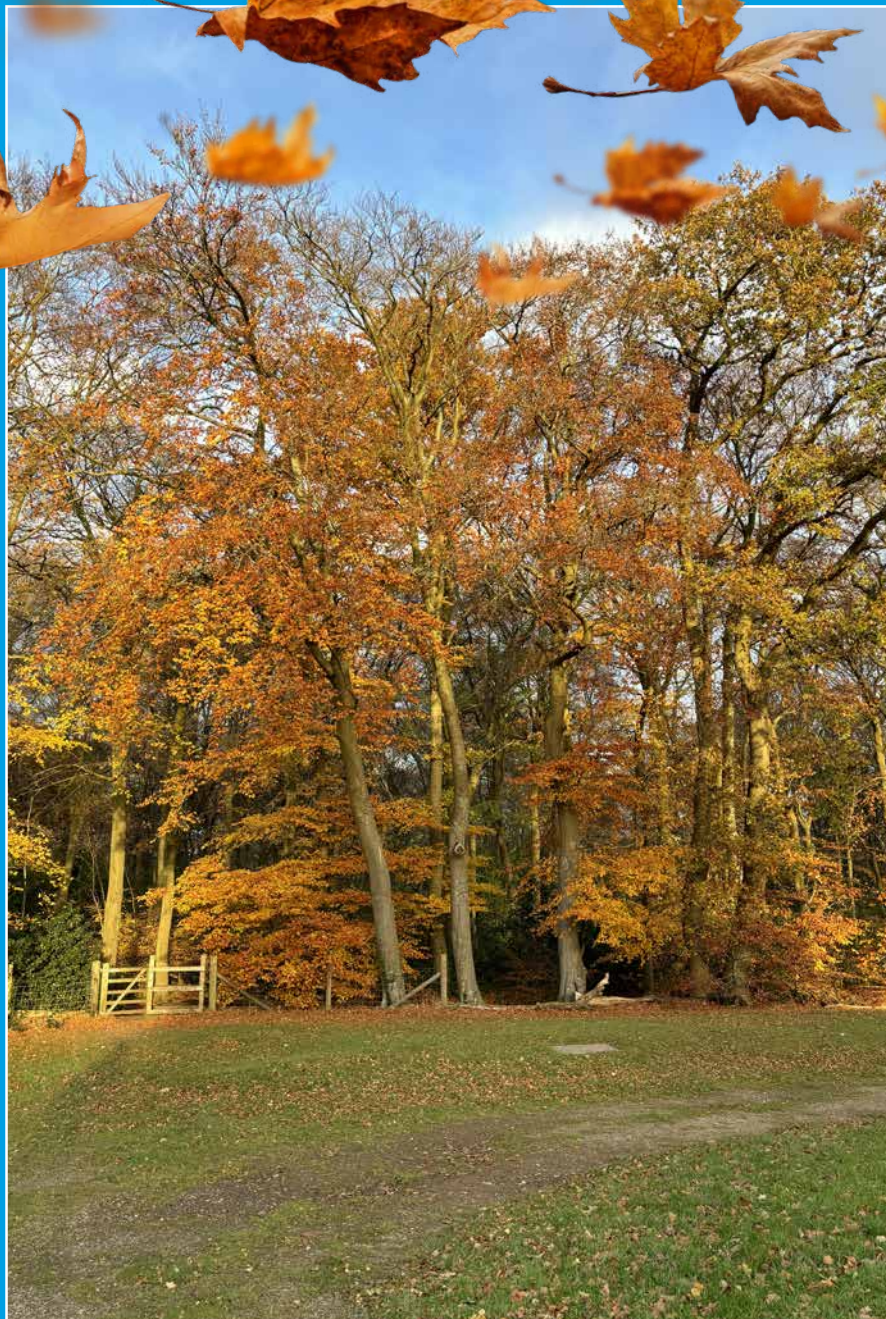
33 buses and 709 miles later
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Returning to our foundations
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THANK YOU, RICHARD!

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A simple step-by-step guide to selling your home



- Sales & Lettings
- Free residential valuations
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- Land & Planning advice
- New Homes
- EPC's



FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, and what a strange one this year.

Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,

John Keats was forecasting this in the 19th century....

Hoping the holidays have been in the sun and enjoyed. The children are back at school and most will be pleased.

The notice board and some more pages where clubs and events are recorded.

Lots of choice for you to join in. •

Diana and Christine

FUNDRAISING 2026

Sonning Common Magazine are again highlighting the local Springwater Foodbank in our annual Christmas fundraiser.

We are working with the foodbank, and all funds raised will be used by them to provide a little extra at this special time of year to those who need it.



Once you donate, we will withdraw funds directly. It's the most efficient way to donate and saves time and costs, which means more funds to make Christmas special in our community.

Scan the QR code to donate

FUTURE DEADLINE DATES FOR MAGAZINE COPY

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

MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM



Diana Pearman



Christine Atkinson



Joan Grummant



Alison Smith

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By Christine Atkinson

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SC SONNING COMMON
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A LETTER TO OUR VILLAGE

Sonning Common 2036 - can you imagine our village in 10 years time?

Dear Sonning Common

We have all been only too aware of the climate challenges facing our world today - news items, weather reports and walks in our usually lush countryside are constant reminders.

Sonning Common Parish Council and Eco SoCo plan to host a free screening of the People's Emergency Briefing on 9th November 2026. The film features footage from last November's National Emergency Briefing, bringing together leading UK experts in climate science, food security, health, economics, national security and nature.

While the 50 minute film is an important watch, the main focus of the evening is to encourage us to think anew - not innovation, but implementation of what we know already. How can we make our village even more sustainable?

Many in the village are already supporting projects such as the

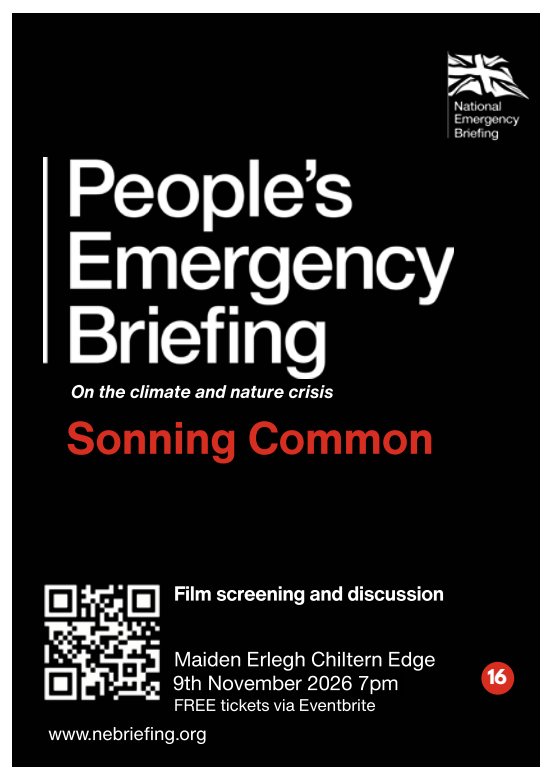
Green Gym, Village Gardeners, Eco SoCo and the Sonning Common Cycleway. They are planting trees, improving habitats for local wildlife, changing to green energy providers and lobbying our local MP for action on climate and nature. Let's get together and share further ideas on how we can shape our village over the next 10 years. The answers are already available to us - small adjustments that we can make in our everyday lives.

Please save the date! The People's Emergency Briefing, Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge School, 9th November at 7.00pm.

This is a ticketed event. Tickets are free and can be obtained via: SoCo36 Tickets, Monday 9 November • 7 PM - 9 PM | Eventbrite •

Best wishes for the future,

SCPC AND ECO SOCO



FREDDIE VAN MIERLO

In August, I took a short - and much needed - break from politics with a family holiday to Austria, and returned with a verve to get stuck back in. My Summer Tour was a chance to get out to parts of the constituency I hadn't managed to visit during the year. I'm back in Westminster now and grabbing opportunities to pin down the new Government on converting Burnham's vibes into concrete wins.

In Westminster

Westminster took a break over the summer, but I busily wrote letters to ensure ministers had a full post bag to come back to. I penned a letter to stick up for parents with young children at UK borders who need to wait the longest of anyone to pass checks. I also wrote again to the Government (but this time the new Secretary of State Angela Eagle) on Marsh Lock Bridge. This is the third Defra secretary I'm on in 2 years - Labour seem to be keeping up the Tory tradition of not allowing anyone to settle in their job for long.

Summer Tour

My Summer Tour (see video!) took me to all corners of the constituency, focussing on villages that I don't normally get to in the year (I'm never short on reasons to go to Henley, Thame, Chinnor etc).

I'm grateful to everyone who came and saw me in Stanton St John, Forest Hill, Warborough, Little Milton, Stoke Row, Checkendon, Kingston Blount, Sydenham, South Stoke and Whitchurch-on-Thames. We got through nearly sixty appointments and also had useful meetings with parish, district and county councillors.

I'm keen to continue listening and engaging - solving local issues where I can, and weighing in on national and

international concerns on your behalf. I'm already planning where to go next year!

Campaigns

Some key campaigns took positive steps forward over the Summer too. I attended a meeting about HGVs in Henley, attended by the very top of the County Council hierarchy - the Chief Executive Martin Reeves and Leader Cllr Tim Bearder. The Council outlined its plan going forwards, including for public engagement in Henley once the feasibility studies are completed. There are far too many HGVs barrelling through the town and I'm hopeful that the work being done now will change that.

I also attended a summit in Watlington with the Parish Council and more top brass from the County Council, ensuring the Watlington Relief Road stays on track.

Following the excellent news of a banking hub coming to Henley, I met with Thame Town Council to discuss getting one secured for Thame. I have submitted a joint request from myself and the Town Council to LINK (the responsible body) to assess the town again.

Round the (rest) of the constituency

I was honoured to be invited to present prizes at a charity football match in Henley - huge congratulations to all who took part and raised an impressive £500 for charities Legend on the Bench and Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide.

I had a busy but brilliant day in Thame this month, starting with Friendship Centre and Memories Cafe both are run by a dedicated team of staff and volunteers who have created an invaluable support and friendship network for older members of the community, with the latter providing

an environment ideal for those with dementia and their carers.

I was later put through my paces when I met with founders and members of the Thame Shed, it was inspiring to see creativity and community coming together in one place - skill sharing and social interaction producing an incredible range and quality of both projects and relationships.

After a stop off at Chinnor Rugby Club to hear about plans for an exciting season ahead with a new Director (and former England Captain) Nick Easter, a new kit and and lots of new ideas. I ended my day in Thame exploring the buzzing Tuesday Charter Market - this weekly market hosts a superb range of stalls and is definitely worth a visit!

And finally, with September now upon us, my 'Evening with Freddie van Mierlo' event at the Thame Players Theatre on 30th September is getting close! I'll be talking about my life as an MP followed by a Q&A. All proceeds go to the The Sharing Life Trust in Thame. •

With very best wishes,

FREDDIE VAN MIERLO MP
Henley & Thame



MERV AND STEVE RETURN!

They have each been on the Country Music circuit for many years and travelled the length and breadth of the country. As a duo they entertained us at Nettlebed a few months ago and were very well received. Hence we have asked them to appear again and **THIS WILL BE ON SATURDAY, 26th SEPTEMBER.** They cover a broad range of songs and tempo varying from popular Country Music, some Irish songs and sounds from the 60's/70's onwards. You **DON'T** have to dance! Come along and relax, enjoying the sounds of an evening of live entertainment - **bring your family and friends. Not sure? -the only way to find out is - give us a try!**

We are a NOT FOR PROFIT club with NO membership fees and run solely by volunteers! We simply request a donation to cover the cost of these events - just £10 pp for an evening's entertainment! No tickets required - just arrive at the venue: The Nettlebed Hall, High St, RG9 5DD The doors open at 7.30pm for an 8pm start running through to 11pm. Free parking. Bar also sells tea/coffee/soft drinks. Comfortable seating. This venue offers a welcoming, relaxed friendly atmosphere. Your contact is Keith on 07752 374 610 should you have any queries.

THEN OUR NEXT DANCE is SATURDAY, 24th OCTOBER. with the renowned and talented PAT JORDAN, accompanied by IRENE. A group of Nettlebed regulars recently enjoyed a great Country Music weekend at a venue in North Devon, when amongst other artists, Pat and Irene were on top form!

These events are run by the Nettlebed Country Music Club. All dates and artists are subject to change and/or cancellation at short notice. ●


Chiltern Evangelical Church




www.cecuk.church/whats-on/mainly-music

Fridays 10:30

@Chiltern Evangelical Church

A music group for babies and preschoolers. Come along and enjoy interactive music with your child in this warm and welcoming group. Morning coffee and a slice of cake provided!

£3 per family. Waiting list operated at busier times.

Chiltern Evangelical Church, Grove Road, Sonning Common, RG4 9RL

NEWS FROM SONNING COMMON HEALTH CENTRE

Change of roles

Steph, Nathalie and Sharron have all moved from reception to different departments within the Health Centre. Steph is now working in our Care Coordinator team, Nathalie is now working as an HCA within our nursing, and Sharron is now working as a dispenser within our Dispensary. Congratulations to them all for learning new skills and obtaining various qualifications.

New staff

Due to the internal departmental

changes we would like to give a warm welcome to 3 new receptionists, Ashley, Karen and Maddie. We are sure you will have already met them as they started with us a couple of months ago. They are all doing a great job of learning a new complex role.

Autumn booster for Flu and Covid

It's that time of year again when we schedule our Flu and Covid clinics. Our Care Coordinator team are ensuring all eligible patients are being contacted inviting you to attend one of our clinics. Please make sure you call our main

telephone number 0118 972 2188 and choose the Flu and Covid option to book your appointment. Clinics are booking up already so if you have a specific date in mind please call. Our scheduled dates are:

Saturday 03rd October – Flu and Covid
Thursday 08th October – Flu and Covid
Saturday 17th October – Flu only
Wednesday 21st October – Flu only

If you haven't received any communication from us and believe you are eligible for one or both of the vaccines please contact our reception team who will be happy to help you. ●

REMEMBER, REMEMBER THE 5TH OF NOVEMBER: GUNPOWDER, TREASON AND PLOT



GUY FAWKES: The Man Behind the Rhyme

Guy Fawkes Night, also known as Bonfire Night, is one of autumn's best-known celebrations. But why do we commemorate a man who tried to destroy Parliament?

Fawkes is one of the best-known figures in British history. His story grew from religious conflict and political desperation, then became shaped by centuries of myth-making. It is still remembered every year on 5 November.

Guy Fawkes was born in York in 1570, forty years after Henry VIII broke with Rome. England remained divided between Protestants and Catholics, and practising Catholicism was dangerous. Fawkes's father, a Church of England lawyer, died when Guy was eight, and his mother later married into a Catholic family. Drawn to Catholicism, Fawkes left England at 21 to fight for Spain in the Eighty Years' War. He became a

disciplined, capable soldier respected for his courage and technical skill.

By the early 1600s, hopes that the new king, James I, would relax restrictions on Catholics had disappeared. Instead, the laws became harsher, fines and resentment increased. Fawkes then joined a group whose charismatic leader planned to destroy the political establishment in a single devastating attack.

The scheme became known as the Gunpowder Plot. The conspirators rented a cellar beneath the House of Lords and filled it with enough gunpowder to destroy the building, killing the king, his ministers and much of the Protestant leadership. Because of his military experience with explosives, Fawkes was chosen to guard the gunpowder and light the fuse on 5 November 1605, during the State Opening of Parliament.

The plot unravelled after an anonymous letter warned a lord to stay away from Parliament. Shortly after midnight, searchers found Fawkes in the cellar with the gunpowder and arrested him. Tortured in the Tower of London, he eventually named his fellow conspirators.

Fawkes and the surviving conspirators were convicted of high treason and sentenced to death. On 31 January 1606, Fawkes jumped from the gallows and died from the fall.

Parliament ordered that 5 November be marked each year with bonfires celebrating the king's survival.

Over time, the tradition evolved into Bonfire Night, when people gather around bonfires, wave sparklers and watch fireworks symbolising the explosives Fawkes never ignited.

Bonfire Night also has its own food traditions. Parkin, a sticky ginger cake popular in northern England, remains a favourite. People across the country also enjoy toffee apples, hot dogs, bonfire toffee, mulled cider and jacket potatoes roasted in the embers. These warming, nostalgic foods are now as much a part of the celebration as the fireworks.

Today, Guy Fawkes occupies a curious place in British culture: is he a villain or a folk hero and symbol of rebellion. More than four centuries after he was discovered beneath Parliament, his failed plot is still remembered with bonfires and fireworks every 5 November. ●



HAVE OUR KIDS FORGOTTEN HOW TO PLAY?

Sonning Common Primary School have been working on how to help them remember ...



SCPS talked about their partnership with Open Play and Learning (OPAL) in the June/July issue. OPAL is based on the idea that, as well as learning through good teaching, children also learn when they play. As 20% of their time in school is playtime, the school have been working on improving this time for the children to make it as good as possible.

In what ways, if any, do you think you benefited from playtime? Think about your own childhood, what did you like playing at school or at home? Children today don't have the same freedoms we once did, so SCPS want to give children back time to really enjoy and learn from play. After all, it's a child's basic human right.

Play can provide opportunities for physical activity, socialisation, cooperation, coordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment through improved play – and having fun!

One reason the school is carrying out this programme is that childhood has changed, and many children no longer get their play needs met when they are out of school.

- Average screen time per day is six hours
- Average outdoor play time per week is five hours
- Percentage of UK children who only play outdoors with other children at school is 56%

Another is that through play children

can get more enjoyment of school, less teaching time lost to disputes between children, fewer accidents and greatly improved behaviour. Play is not messing about. It is a part of the process in the brain to help children learn all of the things that cannot be taught, while also having so much fun. There are certain things children must have in order to be able to play. These include:

- Having clothes that they can play in
- Having things to play with
- Having a certain amount of freedom

Head teacher Mrs Salmons said 'As the school improves play opportunities for your children, you may find us asking you for resources and making changes about how the children use the school grounds. We want them to use more of the grounds, for more of the year.



Your children may get a bit messier, be exposed to more challenges and have greater freedoms to play where, with whom and how they like. The experiences the school is fostering are essential for children's physical and mental wellbeing and are in line with all current good practice advice on health and safety, wellbeing and development. We have a new enormous sandpit which has 50 tonnes of white sand, a new running track, a fantastic new shed to hold all the play stuff, and lots of other tyres, wood and a mud kitchen!

The school will be supported by OPAL for 18 months and if you would like to learn more about the OPAL Primary Programme, please have a look at the OPAL website (www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk), where you will find lots of useful information and several videos about the programme.

The staff and children are really excited about this project and the children have written some words themselves to explain how it makes them feel about it. ●

WHAT THE CHILDREN THINK ...

try and remember being 8 or 9 and playing with your friends. So very important and lovely words from them.

"Opal is great because of the trikes and you can go really fast. I like playing in the big sandpit."

From Forest

"I just LOVE OPAL! All the things we can do in the sandpit and running and the dolls house. We have a calm corner and a craft section and even more! You and OPAL do so much for our school. I can't wait to see what's next."

From Evie

"I really love it all! It is very generous. I love the new shed – it is really cool!"

From Sophie

"Playtime is much more exciting. Bikes are like mini cars and if a friend pushes you you can break the sound barrier! Never ending fun."

From Rafa

I love Opal because everyone has something to do! Whether it's the running track, the sand pit or even trikes and bikes! There's always something to do! I love Opal!



SC SONNING COMMON MAGAZINE

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The Hive

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, Soha Housing and other different local services in your community.

When: First Thursday of the month, 10am-12pm

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

Cost: FREE



Rachel 07827 235420
Charlie 07570 300458
community@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk
www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire

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Saturday
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31st
5-9pm

Call in to
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LIGHT HOUSE

All Ages
welcome
to drop in

Fun craft, hot chocolate, sparklers & sweets



Chiltern Evangelical Church, cnr Grove Road / Peppard Road

The Millennium Green Trust will be holding its Annual General Meeting in the Village Hall at 7.30pm on Tuesday November 10th 2026. All residents are welcome.

Designed for Glory



Hear the story about the design of the fastest Olympic bike in the world.

Professor Stuart Burgess will talk about how he developed the bike for the **Team GB cycling**, at Rio, Tokyo and Paris.

This entertaining talk will last about 45 minutes and is **suitable for all ages**.

Stuart's Christian faith was important to help him through the highs and lows of the design



A bike will be on display, Any questions? Contact info@cecuk.church

Saturday 17 October
2026 at 6.30pm for
7pm.

Sonning Common Village Hall
Organised by Chiltern
Evangelical Church



The Reading Offshore Sailing Club

The Reading Offshore Sailing Club are hosting a talk on Monday 5th October by Jill Rogers entitled 'Round Britain in a Sadler 25'.

Jill is a serving Army Officer who sailed around Britain, doing most of it single-handed. She will recount her adventures with amusing anecdotes describing the thrills and difficulties, as well as friendship encountered during her successful voyage.

The club is for anyone interested in sailing and the sea, including non-boat owners, and meets monthly in Sonning. We gather from 7.30pm and the discussion begins at 8pm.

For further details of this and other events, please see www.readingoffshore.org.uk or contact sailrosc25@gmail.com

COFFEE MORNINGS

Sonning Common Village Hall

**WEDNESDAY 7th OCTOBER
and 4th NOVEMBER**

10.30 a.m. - 12 Noon

**All Welcome - Please join us for
a Cup of Coffee/Tea and Biscuits
- meet Old Friends and Make New**

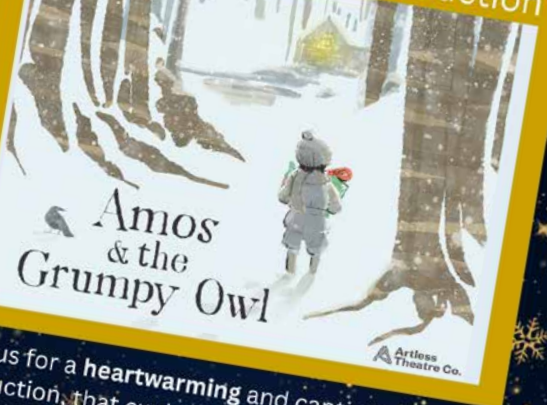


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A Family Christmas Production



Join us for a **heartwarming** and captivating stage production, that explores the importance of joy, friendship, and the true meaning of the nativity.

Date: Friday December 4th 2026
Time: 6pm - 7.30pm

Where: Peppard War Memorial Hall
Gallowstree Common

Tickets: £5 (£10 for a family)

Refreshments provided



Chiltern
Evangelical Church

HENLEY AND DISTRICT STAMP CLUB

The Henley Stamp Club is a friendly group and we would be delighted to see new visitors or members. If you are interested in facts concerning stamps or postal history, why not come along and find out about how you can promote your interest?

Meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month in Bix Village Hall at 7.30 p.m

New Members and visitors welcome

Further details can be obtained by phoning Steve on 07767 251670 or on our website: -

www.henleyphilatelic.org.uk



CHILTERN EDGE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

We have two talks this autumn starting with "Growing Elatum Delphiniums by Graham Austin on 13 October (Tuesday) at 7.30pm at Peppard War Memorial Hall RG9 5JA. Then on Tuesday 10th November an afternoon talk at 2.30 pm by Justine Hutchinson "Refreshing Your Garden Design: Border by Border". Also Peppard War Memorial Hall. Please check if you wish to attend if it is an evening or afternoon talk. Only £5 for non-members.

We are having the afternoon talks as the weather can be unpredictable during the winter months. We have a full line-up of speakers for 2027 and the usual shows Spring and Autumn.

Please come along and help support your local gardening club still only £10 per year. Please see our website cehs.co.uk for full details on how to join and dates re talks, shows, and photos of shows etc.

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PARISH NEWS

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Living in a rural village

As summer gives way to autumn, the village enters its familiar seasonal transition. The evenings shorten, the air cools, and the countryside begins its slow turn from green to gold. But this year, the shift feels different. After a summer marked by repeated heatwaves, prolonged droughts, and wildfires across parts of the UK, many residents have noticed that it isn't only the season that is changing – the seasons themselves seem to be shifting.

Living in a rural village means we see these changes up close. The fields around us dried earlier and more severely than usual, with some crops and hedgerows showing signs of stress long before August. Gardeners reported plants struggling in the heat, and wildlife behaviour altered as birds and mammals sought water wherever they could find it. Even the woodland edges looked tired by late July, with early leaf drop in places where trees simply couldn't cope with the prolonged dry spells.

Now, as autumn arrives, the landscape begins to recover. Cooler nights and the

first steady rains bring relief to the ground, and the hedgerows soften into their familiar autumn colours. It remains one of the most beautiful times of year to enjoy the countryside — whether walking the lanes, exploring the wooded paths, or simply pausing to take in the changing light across the fields. For many older residents, autumn offers a welcome steadiness after the intensity of the summer months.

The Parish Council will continue its usual seasonal maintenance as vegetation dies back and leaf fall increases. After such a dry summer, ground conditions can change quickly once the rains return, so we encourage residents to take care on rural paths, especially where surfaces may become uneven or slippery. As always, reports of issues around the village help us respond promptly and keep shared spaces accessible.

This year's unusual weather has prompted many conversations about how communities adapt and how we can look after the place we live. In November, EcoSoCo and the Parish Council will be co hosting a screening of

The People's Emergency Briefing as part of our SoCo36 initiative. The aim is simple: to help us think together about practical, local actions — big and small — that can make the village more sustainable over the next decade and beyond. It isn't about alarm; it's about awareness, resilience, and taking sensible steps that benefit both residents and the landscape we depend on.

Autumn remains a season of calm, reflection, and connection. Whether you enjoy the cooler air, the colours in the trees, or the slower pace, we hope you find time to appreciate the beauty of the village as it moves into this new chapter — and to notice not just the changing season, but the changing patterns that shape the world around us. ●

Andy Donachie

Parish Clerk

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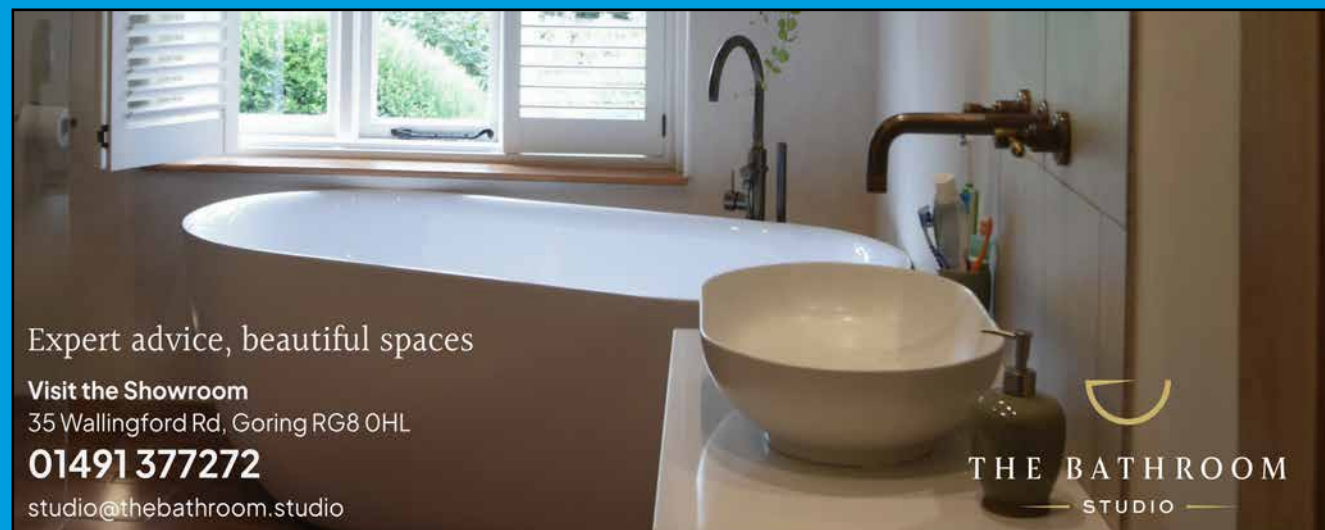
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THE EAST COAST ROUTE



Last year, we did Land's End to John O'Groats by local bus (see Oct/Nov 2025 issue): 40 buses in two weeks, making use of our bus passes. It was quite an enjoyable experience, as the buses wind their way through the local villages and you get a good view from the top deck. The buses were very reliable and we never got stuck (apart from the one time the road was blocked by an accident near Pershore, but we still made it to our destination). And we were able to stop for a break or stay overnight in a lot of different places that were new to us.

So we decided to do a similar trip this year. But where should we go? Scotland and Wales were excluded, because our bus passes are not valid there. So we decided to travel up the east coast of England, following the coast as closely as we could, as far as Berwick-upon-Tweed and the Scottish border. It's a part of the country that we were not very familiar with. So we planned our route and accommodation and set off on Monday morning, 13 July, talking the number 25 to Reading station and then the train to London,

as we decided that the 'official' starting point would be Trafalgar Square, in the centre of London.

From Trafalgar Square it was quite slow-going, as the London buses don't go very far or very fast. Taking the number 15 from The Strand to Aldgate Bus Station, we passed lots of well-known London sights – St Paul's, the Tower of London and so on – but then we were in the never-ending suburbs. We wanted to get out of London on the first day, which we did, after taking another four buses, to spend our first night in Chelmsford.



We had decided not to visit Southend-on-Sea, or indeed Clacton-on-Sea, as we headed the next day for East Anglia and hit the coast at Aldeburgh, where we stayed on our second night. Aldeburgh has a certain mystique, because of its connection with Benjamin Britten. The hard stony beach and bracing wind off the sea perhaps evoke the grimness of his opera Peter Grimes! We queued for the famous Aldeburgh fish and chips (cooked in beef dripping), but thought they were just 'okay'.

From then on, we were hugging the coast as much as we could, stopping at Southwold, Lowestoft (the easternmost point in England), Great Yarmouth, Happisburgh (pronounced Hayz-bruh), Mundesley (Munz-ly),



Cromer (for a crab sandwich) and Wells-next-the-Sea. Then it was around The Wash into Lincolnshire: Skegness, Mablethorpe (donkey rides on the beach) and Grimsby. We were struck by the many fields of wheat, cabbages, leeks and potatoes on our way: this is where much of our food comes from!



Now it was Sunday, when there aren't so many buses, and we like to take a break from the buses. We were in a nice hotel in Grimsby overlooking the Minster, but there wasn't much else to do in Grimsby, so we took the train to Lincoln, and had a pleasant afternoon climbing 'Steep Hill' and listening to Evensong in the Cathedral.

On Monday, we were crossing the Humber Bridge into Hull, and then heading back to the coast at Bridlington and on to Scarborough, where we stayed. Scarborough is a very classy place – a taste of how



seaside resorts used to be (if you keep to the south side!), and we enjoyed a concert by the excellent Scarborough Spa Orchestra in the Grand Hall.

Then it was on up the coast of Yorkshire to Robin Hood's Bay and Whitby, then Hartlepool, and via Newcastle to Alnwick, then via Dunstan (a tiny village), Craster, Seahouses and Bamborough to Berwick-upon-Tweed. Berwick is an attractive place with its three bridges



over the Tweed (the railway bridge features in Harry Potter) and its city walls. We spent a day here so we could walk up the coastal path to the Scottish border, a distance of five miles. There was an amazing amount of wildlife: flowers, butterflies and birds (both sea and land). We didn't walk back though: we walked across to the A9 and caught the bus back to Berwick.

Berwick is on the main line, and we caught the train back to Reading (Rosemary insisted we avoid London, so it was a cross-country train via Birmingham). History repeated itself: just as last year the train back from Thurso to Inverness never made it because of broken points, so this train



terminated at Rugby because of a broken down locomotive somewhere on the line, and we made it home on later trains, first to Birmingham and then to Reading. It once again showed that the buses are more reliable than the trains. We still made it in time for a late 25 bus home.

Overall, it was another fascinating trip. While the south of England was enduring a heatwave, it was a little cooler along the coast. We noticed a lot of baby gulls on the ground (it takes them up to six weeks before they can fly), a lot of lovely flower displays in the towns, and a lot of mobility scooters on the streets! And the people up north were very friendly. ●

David Dunstan



Route (overnight stops): Chelmsford, Aldeburgh, Great Yarmouth, Wells-next-the-Sea, Skegness, Grimsby, Scarborough, Hartlepool, Berwick. Distance (London to Berwick): 709 miles (33 buses).



GROWING GREENER TOGETHER



Sonning Common's community environmental group, Eco SoCo, continues to bring residents together to care for nature, reduce waste and make our village an even more wildlife-friendly place to live.

FREE trees for your garden...felt the heat this summer? The addition of trees to your garden will create shade and give a much-needed boost to wildlife. Details on how to register for your free trees will be available at www.ecosoco.org.uk and our Facebook page around mid/late October. Trees suitable for all sizes of gardens.

Has the hottest summer on record left you concerned about the changes to our climate? Wondering what we can do to help ourselves and make Sonning Common a more resilient, greener, healthier place to live? You are warmly invited to a showing of

The People's Emergency Briefing at 7pm 9 November, co-hosted by Sonning Common Parish Council. The film brings together expert voices and public responses on the climate and nature crisis, and the event will offer a chance for us to reflect, discuss and consider what practical action can be taken here in Sonning Common. Although this is a free event, it is ticketed. Tickets available via the QR code below:



Sadly, young hedgehogs are not going to make it through the winter. Due to the drought any juvenile hedgehogs that have managed to survive are severely underweight and won't survive hibernation unless they can bulk up quickly. Putting out a saucer of cat food / cat biscuits and a saucer of water each evening will make a huge difference.

Meanwhile, SC Hedgehog Hero, Charles Smith is leading a hedgehog tracking survey, helping build a clearer picture of where these much-loved animals are moving through the village. Can you help these beautiful, endangered animals by creating a hole in your fence or a tunnel underneath it, creating safe routes to shelter, food sources and a mate? Need help making the hole, contact Annie and Charles at email: hogs.ecosoco@gmail.com

Bees @ Bishopswood and Flowers @ Football! We're planting for pollinators again this autumn – early Spring bulbs and wildflowers in various locations around the village, including areas at Rotherfield United Football ground. A BIG thank to the Walking Footballers Gavin, Ian and Mike who helped secure the way! A massive thank you too to Rob Butler and Johnson Matthey for letting us harvest your wildflower seeds! Want to help bees and butterflies at Bishopswood? Got an hour or two to spare? No experience is needed—just enthusiasm, a willingness to get involved and, if possible, a pair of gardening gloves. Families welcome! Get in touch via ecosoco24@gmail.com

Are you camera shy? We most definitely are, but we took one for the team and embraced the moment... check out our new film at www.ecosoco.org.uk. Thanks to BBOWT for choosing to make a short film about Eco SoCo. We hope our project inspires others to help nature where

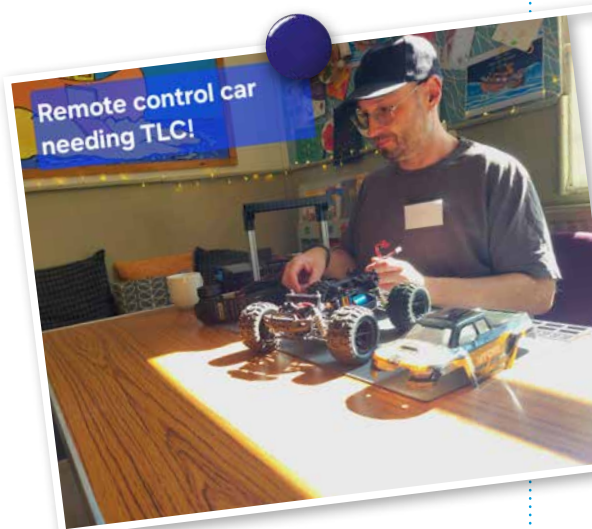
they live, encouraging small changes that make a real difference for climate and nature.

Don't mention the C word! Christmas, yes, it'll be happening again this year! There's still time to have those conversations about avoiding the excess (thousands of tonnes into landfill each year) and suggesting a secret Santa instead or how about a fun outing, rather giving and receiving yet more STUFF! On a practical note, are your Christmas lights working? Has your festive jumper seen better days? Bring all your festive woes to our Repair café! First Saturday of the month, 10-12.30, Springwater church. Cakes, tea and coffee on offer too!

WANTED: To join our fabulous and friendly Repair Café team: Volunteer Jewellery repairer (costume, not precious stones!).

Whether you can spare an hour, help at a one-off Eco SoCo event or join in more regularly, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

Together, we can keep building a greener, healthier and more connected Sonning Common—one garden, verge, orchard and hedgehog highway at a time. www.ecosoco.org.uk. Email Julie at ecosoco24@gmail.com.



MECE NEWS

Smiles, enthusiasm and determination



The new academic year has begun with a wonderful sense of optimism at Maiden Erleigh Chiltern Edge as we welcomed students back to school with smiles, enthusiasm and a determination to achieve their very best. Our opening assemblies focused on encouraging students to be ambitious, not only in their studies but also in their future aspirations. We challenged everyone to embrace the opportunities available to them and to make the most of our extensive enrichment programme, which offers something for every interest and talent.

We were also delighted to welcome back students and staff who spent part of their summer on an unforgettable expedition to Kenya. During their visit, they completed community projects, delivered lessons in local primary schools and experienced some of Africa's spectacular wildlife and breathtaking scenery. The trip provided invaluable opportunities for personal growth, service and cultural understanding.

The summer months also brought much to celebrate academically. Our Class of 2026 achieved an impressive set of GCSE results, with 15% of students gaining at least one Grade 9. We are especially proud that every student secured a place in post-16 education, training or employment, reflecting their dedication and the support of staff and families.

Across more than 20 qualifications examined this summer, students achieved particularly strong outcomes in Science, Music, BTEC Sport, Drama and Mathematics, highlighting the breadth of success across our curriculum.

The autumn term already promises to be a busy and exciting one, with our annual Open Evening



in September and Year 11 Mock Interviews in October among the many highlights ahead. Please see our website for upcoming activities. We look forward to another successful year for our school community. ●

Emma Bliss
Headteacher



HENLEY COMMUNITY LARDER CELEBRATING THEIR FIRST YEAR!

We will all have experienced the rising costs when out doing the food shopping.

The Henley Community Larder is a different concept to a foodbank. It is under the umbrella of the South Oxfordshire Food and Education Alliance (SOFEA) and the start up in 2013 was funded by the Oxfordshire Community Foundation which was established in 1995.

SOFEA work with FareShare (the food surplus charity) to give young people work opportunities in their warehouses and gain qualifications and skills. This led to the creation of the Community Larders, and the opening of our own in Henley based at the YMCA in Noble Road.

The larder opened in October 2025 with around 25 members and run by

volunteers with support from YMCA. It has grown to over 65 members on its first anniversary. It is open to all and members pay an £18 monthly subscription which entitles them to collect up to 14 items and help themselves to a plentiful supply of fruit and vegetables. Many attend to bring down the cost of their weekly shop, reduce food waste or simply to socialise with others.

All food is sourced from FareShare, which collects and redistributes surplus food from retailers, manufacturers and producers, and delivers to Henley each Thursday. There is a variety of food available and it varies week to week. Always a good choice of fruit and vegetables, but also meat products, dairy and others, both fresh and frozen.

The project is also supported by Warings Bakery, in Henley, which gives surplus bread and cakes. These are used in the "donation only" café where members and volunteers to sit down, have a hot drink and snack, and enjoy one another's company. Any fruit and veg which is not taken is sent to local schools for playtime snacks or donated to an animal welfare farm in Woodcote, where the animals make good use of them.

Caroline Lock, who is a retired school teacher, is the lead volunteer. She said: "We want to provide wraparound services — this is not just about food or money. We help signpost visitors to other services offering help with things like finances, mental health, doctors' surgeries and dentists, whatever members may need. We're also more of a 'hand up' as opposed to a 'hand out' because people do pay. I think psychologically people tend to do better when they feel that they are helping themselves rather than being helped." ●

The larder is open from 2pm to 3.30pm on Thursdays and to join up or get some more information please visit their website at www.sofea.uk.com/community-larder/henley-community-larder/



DESIGNED FOR GLORY



Renowned scientist Stuart Burgess speaks about winning design

In the end, the difference can boil down to a chain drive.

The British Olympic cycling team has won a gold medal at every summer Olympic Games since 1896. Their consistent success, especially more recently at the Rio, Tokyo and Paris Olympics, is based on hard work, training, and clever inventions that make slight improvements to gain a competitive advantage.

Central to one of the recent 'marginal gains' has been the work of Professor Stuart Burgess. Stuart invented a test which was so accurate that it enabled British Cycling to try out tiny adjustments which were then used to design a new chain to develop a winning bike for Team GB.

Stuart is coming to Sonning Common to talk about his work for the British Olympic cycling team, and will bring an example of the fastest bike in the world with him! Stuart will talk about the highs and lows of the journey to the winning design,

how his Christian faith played a central part, and where the invention has led both him and Team GB.

Much of Stuart's research is based on using amazing design solutions found in nature, including birds, whales and fish, and applying these to robotics and other engineering problems. The talk promises to be captivating and entertaining. ●

Everyone is welcome to join us!
Saturday 17 October 2026
Doors open with refreshments at 6.30pm
Talk: 7pm – 8pm
Sonning Common Village Hall

This free event is hosted by Chiltern Evangelical Church (<https://cecuk.church>)

Scan the QR code for more information



BIOGRAPHY:

Professor Burgess has taught engineering design at Cambridge University and at Bristol University, where he is currently Emeritus Professor of Engineering Design. He has also worked for the European Space Agency on all four of their major earth observation satellites. He led the design team that created the robotic arm that carries the solar panels for each of these satellites. His recent book, *Ultimate Engineering*, explores the design of the human body, and shows how the theory of intelligent design is leading cutting-edge scientists into fresh technological breakthroughs inspired by solutions found in nature. He has been invited to speak at conferences in over 30 countries, and to exhibit his work at the Royal Society. He holds seven patents, has published over 200 scientific papers, and has received over twenty prizes and awards, including the James Clayton Prize, the highest professional Mechanical Engineering Award in the UK.

JILL KENDAL



Meet Jill Kendal - Always happiest when she's busy!

Jill, 92, presently lives in Gallowstree Common and enjoys being active and busy. She has spent a large portion of her life living and working in Sonning Common where she immersed herself in village activities and is still a very familiar face.

This very active lady was born in Beckenham in Kent as an only child, where she enjoyed the outdoors and this love of the county side has remained with her ever since.

She met her husband Roger at Bristol University where she went to study economics and when, during a hockey match, she struck him with a hockey ball! He was standing quietly in goal when he was inadvertently hit! They got married in Hitchen in 1957 and moved about quite a bit after that. Jill and Roger had two daughters Susie and Sally in the following years when they lived in Dover, and this enabled Jill to stay at home to bring up the girls. It was there that Jill reignited her love of am dram because the local clubhouse and hall staged dramas and Roger was soon roped in to help with scenery but also got the acting bug as well. They were soon both committed Thespians!

They settled in Sonning Common

in 1972 when Roger's work needed a move nearer to London and they have been in the area ever since. After enrolling her daughters in Sonning Common Primary School the headteacher Mr Johnson unexpectedly asked Jill to accept a part-time teaching post and she worked there for twenty-four years, thoroughly enjoying it. She has never had to apply for a job those were the days! It was at this time she became Guide Leader of one of the two companies in Sonning Common. She did this for ten years becoming a registered camping leader and the many camping expeditions were highlights for the girls and the leaders.

It was also at this time she returned to playing hockey, playing for Ranelagh Club, and when Bishopswood was being set up as a sports ground they all spent hours stone picking on the site, building changing rooms and helping to create and maintain the current pitches now all football pitches. The club played hockey there for several seasons before the arrival of AstroTurf ended things, but Jill did spend two seasons of hockey coaching at Bishopswood for 9-11 year old boys and girls on Saturday mornings.

In 1987 when her hockey days ended Jill and Roger moved to Gallowstree Common and she joined the Ramblers and led numerous walks for Mid Berks Ramblers in the area and for thirteen years she organised and led the U3A walking group as well. At half term holidays with her friend Jill Greenwood, she began to embark on long distance walking expeditions. She has completed about 14 long walks including walks in Nepal, the Mediterranean Islands, the Coast to coast, the Cotswold and Mendip Ways. She was also an original member of the Sonning Common Health Walks and led a walk every week for many many years.

.At this time Chiltern Edge Adult Education was thriving, and Jill was chair of the Adult Education Committee

for three years. She joined a small drama group there and the Chiltern Players put on plays in the school hall. They made their own scenery and props producing dramas and pantomimes that quickly became very popular local events. In the 1980's the players moved to Peppard Memorial Hall and Jill has particularly fond memories of that time and especially of directing *Oh What a Lovely War*.

Through the eighties Jill attended WEA local history classes and a group with the help of Joan Dills wrote a booklet about Victorian gallows trees and this inspired Jill when she retired in 1994 to research and write a booklet about Nineteenth Century Life in Sonning Common called 'A Little World Apart' that tells what life was like in our growing village at that time. There is a copy of the booklet in the library

Incidentally to this she volunteered to become editor of the Sonning Common Magazine, a post she held from October 1990 to October 2003. She says she likes to think she bridged a gap between being an amateur production to the age of IT and colour! She was able to get the editions professionally printed in black and white with occasional colour and that devolved into the superb magazine we have today. She really loved meeting all the interesting people in Sonning Common.

Inexhaustible energy, love of the outdoors and the desire to keep busy has enabled Jill to contribute hugely to village life and as well as valuable work on the Sonning Common Magazine Jill still made the effort to volunteer at the library and Green Gym until very recently. Without her many contributions to local life and organisations Sonning Common would not be such a thriving village.

Many thanks Jill. I think we can all admire your energy and drive to improve our growing community. ●

Joan Grumman

CHURCH NEWS

Christ the King and St John the Baptist

Following the long and very hot days of summer, the cooler months of autumn may be particularly welcome this year. For Christians, autumn has traditionally been a time to explore the big questions about life and death. As we watch the leaves fall from the trees, as it grows colder and the nights draw in, it somehow seems appropriate to contemplate love and loss and to remember, in special ways.

November begins with All Saints', a day when all the saints in Christian history, known and unknown, and particularly those who do not have their own special feast day, are remembered. All Saints' Church, Peppard, celebrates its patronal festival on All Saints' Sunday, 1st November, and there will be a benefice service at 10.30am (no morning services at Christ the King or St John's that Sunday).

All Saints' is followed closely by All Souls', which is a day of prayer, remembrance and thanksgiving for the faithful departed, those we have loved but see no longer. There will be an Evensong service with Remembrance for the Faithful Departed at St John's,

Kidmore End, on Sunday 1st November at 6pm; all are warmly invited to attend and to light a candle in memory of their loved one.

Remembrance Sunday is marked on the second Sunday in November. The parish Service of Remembrance will be held on Sunday 8th November, beginning at Kidmore End War memorial at 10.45am, followed by a service in St John's.

As well as these special services, several events are planned for the months ahead. On Saturday 17th October a charity lunch is being held at Christ the King from 12pm. A guest speaker from the Henley Debt Centre has been invited to talk about the centre's important work, and any donations received will go directly to this charity.

The popular Wine & Song evening will be held on Saturday 21st November at 6pm at Kidmore End Primary School. This is a fun community event. Come along for an evening of wine tasting and excellent entertainment provided by local musicians. Contact Nick Room (churchwardennick@gmail.com) for

details and tickets.

Thinking ahead to the festive season, some dates to note. Firstly, Carols in Kidmore End on Friday 11th December, from 7.30pm: an evening of carol singing at The New Inn to which all are invited. Come along and join in with some popular carols! Following this, on Sunday 13th December there will be a Community Carols event at Christ the King, 4pm, followed by refreshments. Finally, the parish Carol Service will take place at St John's on Tuesday 22nd December at 7.30pm. A wonderful and peaceful start to Christmas.

Regular services continue at both Christ the King (Sunday Eucharist, 9.30am) and St John the Baptist (Sunday Sung Eucharist, 11.15am; Evensong first Sundays, 6pm). Please see our website: www.achurchnearyou.com/church/166/ to find contact information for the Ministry Team, times of regular services, links for the parish magazine and more. If you have never visited our churches, either to attend a service or just to look around, you would be most welcome at any time! ●

St Michael's Catholic Church, Peppard Road, Sonning Common.

The feast of St Michael and the Archangels falls on 29th September, and on the closest weekend our parish community celebrates its patron saint. We were delighted to welcome our area bishop, Bishop Richard Walker. The weekend involved a quiz and chilli evening, a time of reflection, a youth treasure hunt, our regular weekend Masses, and concluded with a parish lunch and parish AGM. We also began to look ahead to next year when we celebrate our 80th anniversary. As part of our anniversary year, we intend to

improve the décor of the church.

Our doors are always open to those who want to know what the Catholic faith is about. We intend to run a short course in the autumn about the Catholic faith that is open to everyone. Please contact the parish if you are interested. In addition, there are other things you might want to participate in. On 2nd November, at 7pm, we will be holding a short service remembering our deceased loved ones, and 2pm 8th November we will visit the graves

of relatives buried in Kidmore End cemetery. At 6.30pm on the first Monday of the month, and every Monday in Advent and Lent, the church will be open for anyone seeking a place for quiet reflection. Come and go as you please. Our Christmas pudding making evening is scheduled for 20th November.

For the most up to date information on services and events access our weekly newsletter from our website: www.saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk

Chiltern Evangelical Church

Returning To Our Foundations

A well-known parable in Matthew 7:24-27 encourages us to build our lives on the foundation rock of God's truth. Our British castles stand firm in the face of storms and endure for centuries. If built on sand, buildings collapse in storms and floods.

On what foundation is Western Civilisation built? The famous poet, TS Eliot, who taught nearby at Royal Grammar School in High Wycombe, wrote:

"If Christianity goes, the whole culture goes."

Jordan Petersen is a sell-out speaker throughout Britain who has often

engaged in Oxford Union debates. His repeated view is:

"The Bible is way more than just true. It's the bedrock of Western civilization."

How true are we to this bedrock? An 1851 UK Consensus indicates 40-50% of the population attended church regularly.

Current estimates are around 5-7% - considered one of the most significant social changes in British history.

Chiltern Evangelical Church, (<https://cecuk.church/>), is a small but active family church remaining faithful to the unchanging bedrock of God's

truth – the Bible. God's unchanging truth matters in our warm and friendly services followed by refreshments held at 4:30pm on Sundays at the corner of Grove and Peppard Rd's.

Why not reverse the declining trend and join us?

God's truth is not only the bedrock of our civilisation but also at the heart of intelligent design. Join us at Sonning Common Village Hall on 17 October at 6:30pm to hear Cambridge Professor Stuart Burgess tell the fascinating story of designing the fastest bike in the world. (<https://cecuk.church/whatson/stuart-burgess-evening/>) ●



So new we haven't unwrapped it yet!

This is Harringtons' new oil tanker. From October you'll see it on the roads around Sonning Common as we start delivering heating oil for the very first time!

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CELEBRATING A BUSY SUMMER AND LOOKING AHEAD

It has been another lively and successful summer for the Friends of Sonning Common Library, with a range of events bringing local people together while raising valuable funds to support the library.

In June, we welcomed local author Steve Lunn for an engaging evening. Guests enjoyed hearing about his work and experiences, making it a memorable occasion for all involved. We also took part in Village Day, where our popular quizzes attracted many visitors and helped raise funds for the library. Our regular cake stall was once again well supported by

the community and remains one of our favourite ways to connect with residents while generating additional income. During the summer holidays, families took part in the Village Bear Hunt, which proved a popular activity for children and encouraged them to explore different parts of the village.

There is still plenty to look forward to this autumn. Our ever-popular Quiz Night returns on 16 October, promising an enjoyable evening of friendly competition in support of the library. This will be followed by an autumn-themed Adult Crafternoon, offering an opportunity to get creative and meet fellow residents. We also have an exciting programme

of activities planned for the autumn half-term, including a special event with children's author Fiona Barker, who will share stories and inspire young readers.

The Friends are grateful for the continued support of the residents, volunteers and local businesses. These events help strengthen community connections and ensure the library remains a vibrant, welcoming and well-used resource for people of all ages. We look forward to seeing both familiar and new faces at our forthcoming events. ●

VERA GALYASZ

GREETINGS FROM SONNING COMMON LIBRARY!

Health is vitally important and we have the wonderful Health Centre and Pharmacy in the village so we are very well looked after. Don't forget that you can also get health information in Library. We have books on physical and mental health including dealing with thyroid issues, losing weight, anxiety, dementia and being gluten-free. A new addition is a blood pressure monitor which are now available in all Oxfordshire libraries. Obviously, the staff and volunteers can't give advice, but you can use the monitor in a separate room and we have a "Know your numbers" booklet on how to use the monitor and what your numbers mean.

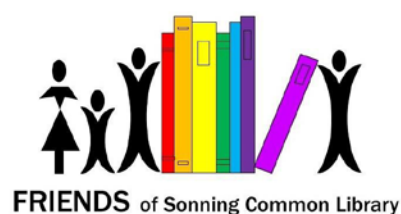
We have lots of upcoming events including an adult craft afternoon and a children's author visit in October, and in November there is a Teddy Bears' Sleepover and event celebrating International Men's Day. Keep an eye on the Friends of Sonning Common Library's events page for more information and tickets: <https://www.friendsofsonningcommonlibrary.org.uk/events>

We're also encouraging you to Get Online this autumn. We have two new Digital Helpers, Sofia and William, and you can arrange to meet them at the Library where they can help you with your laptop, tablet or phone and show you how to manage your email, download an app or work

your way through a long online form! Look out for books displays and other helpful information on this topic as well. Other book displays will include "Dark and Dangerous" fiction/non-fiction as well as the slightly tamer "Where...How...Whodunnit?" cosy crime!

So, as usual, there's something for everyone in the Library this autumn. See you soon. ●

JULIET
Library Manager

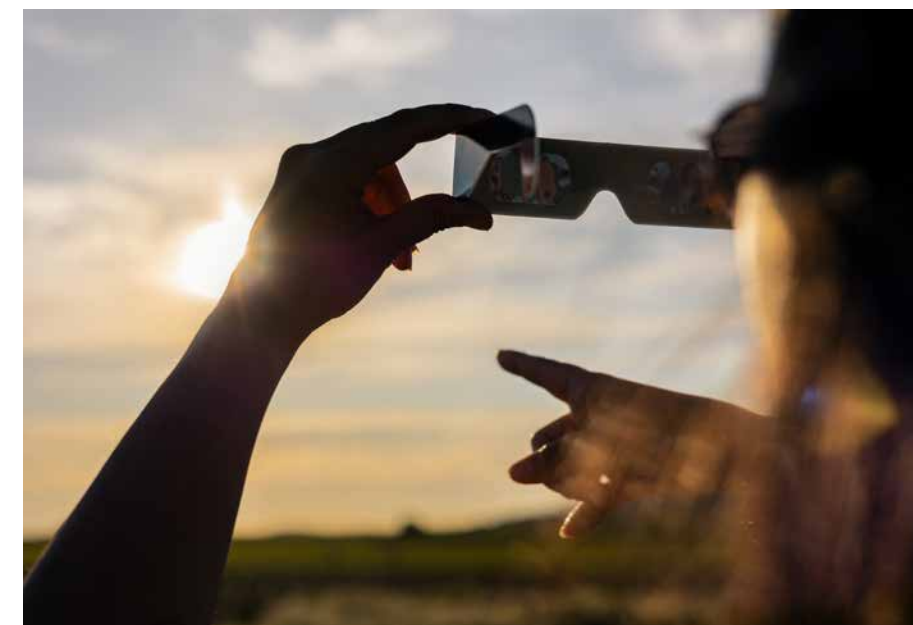


ECLIPSED BY THE PEOPLE

What a very strange year it's been weatherwise. I'm sure you'll recall the seemingly endless succession of heatwaves we endured through July and August, but do you remember the relentless rain at the start of the year? Thirty-one consecutive days of it in Sonning Common. Then, just when we thought things were getting back to normal, June came along and dealt us 18 days of it. I guess the advantage to long stretches of weather is that you don't have to think what to wear: rain, don your wellies; sun, slap on a wide-brimmed hat! Still, it turns out, I find both scenarios rather tedious. If I wanted rain I'd move to Norway, and if I wanted endless sun I guess I'd brave the U.S. and move to Florida. But I don't, so I choose to live in Sonning Common where I expect the weather to behave and be average with the occasional day (not month!) of extreme conditions so I have something to moan about.

Mind you, falling in the middle of a heatwave as it did, meant I was well prepared for the solar eclipse in August. Actually, when I say, "well prepared" I mean I knew where my picnic blanket, sandals, and sunhat were, which is quite an achievement for me. I'm the type who usually only gets to grips with summer just after the August Bank Holiday when it's on its way out. Still, I've had most of my summer wardrobe for years because it hardly gets any wear!

With memories of the spectacular eclipse of 1999, my husband suggested we venture out to Memorial Park to get a good view of this year's. I duly put on my sunscreen (you can't be too careful), large hat and sunglasses and we headed out. What a lovely surprise to arrive to find the park a hive of



activity. I don't know why it hadn't occurred to me that other people would think of going there too. It's such a popular public space, I really shouldn't have been surprised. There were families having picnics; young children playing on the swings; a herd of boys having a kick-about; and groups of adults dotted around the place chatting. We managed to snag a bench, as I'd forgotten the picnic blanket, and cracked open a couple of cans of fizzy pop (don't tell me I don't know how to live!) and settled down to watch. My husband busied himself taking photos using a selfie-stick angled to avoid being blinded by ultraviolet and infrared rays while I glugged down the drink. Children ran around with pinhole viewers made out of cereal boxes, and I lamented not being organised enough to have made one for myself or to have bought a pair of the special solar eclipse glasses needed to view the sun. I needn't have worried though, a kind lady took pity and offered us a look through hers, and that generosity summed up the feel of the evening.

To be honest, the actual event was a bit of a let-down (no offence to the aforementioned lady, but even her special glasses couldn't save the day). If I remember correctly, the eclipse in 1999 took place in the morning so when the Moon covered the Sun the sky noticeably darkened and the birds went quiet. In contrast, this year the sun was already going down so the impact on daylight was minimal, and the birds weren't particularly chirpy to start with so nothing seemed to change there either. Much more memorable was the calm atmosphere of villagers gathered for a relaxing evening out, and the feeling of a community coming together to witness a rare natural phenomena.

During this year's eclipse the Moon covered over 90% of the sun. The next total lunar eclipse won't be until 2090 so I won't be here to see it. Hopefully some of the trees that have been planted in the park will be though - weather permitting! ●

ALISON SMITH

JOIN OUR FRIENDLY TEAM AT CITIZENS ADVICE!



Are you seeking a new challenge, and want to contribute something positive to your community? Citizens Advice Oxfordshire is looking for dedicated and compassionate volunteer advisers to work in our offices.

Citizens Advice gives people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward - whoever they are and whatever their problem. Our volunteers play a vital role, ensuring that people receive the advice and support they need.

A Citizens Advice volunteer recently commented on the way many clients are transformed after benefitting from the close attention and help of an adviser. Lewis told the Henley Standard: "There are problems that seem insurmountable to those experiencing them, but we break down those seemingly impenetrable problems into manageable steps, providing a route out of despair. This process has a profound impact on the resilience and happiness of our clients."

What kind of basic skills will you need to volunteer with us? You will need to be confident with computers and have a both a willingness to learn and a positive desire to help people. In the course of your volunteering you'll learn new skills and meet new people, helping clients with problems in the areas of debt management, benefits, employment, housing and relationships (no prior knowledge necessary). After extensive training you will be giving confidential advice to clients, mainly on the telephone at first, and then later by emails, in person or by using webchat.

We would like you to be available for two sessions per week, either mornings or afternoons or for a whole day. We offer a rewarding, flexible and supportive working environment.

If you would like to discuss these volunteering roles, please email: volunteer-recruitment@caox.org.uk and one of our staff will contact you. ●

FISH

At our recent AGM, FISH Volunteer Centre celebrated the contribution of Richard McQuillan, who is standing down as Chairman after seven very successful years in the position. Richard has overseen many initiatives during his tenure including the purchase of a new minibus, moving to a new office and getting a new shed for wheelchairs, whilst co-ordinating all the different departments in the charity. Richard gained an excellent understanding of the voluntary sector through training with the National Council of Voluntary Organisations

and he also attended meetings with other volunteer-led community organisations such as Oxfordshire's Good Neighbour Scheme, to see what could be learnt from them.

Richard, who will continue as a trustee and a driver, was presented with two beautiful wine glasses, engraved with the FISH logo, and a very good bottle of red wine to go in them. We thank Richard for everything he has done for FISH over the last seven years.

Our new Chairman is David Whitehead. David brings to his new role his wide

experience of finance, marketing and managing teams, gained running IT businesses for most of his working life. For six years he has been the FISH cashier, a responsibility he will continue until a replacement is found. David has been instrumental in developing and launching the new website and also increasing the use of social media to reach more of the community and attract new volunteers. We wish David every success in his new role. ●

SUE SADLER

GREG WHEADON



There is an air of wistfulness at Heath & Watkins (the world's greatest hardware shop) this week - even sadness. That mechanical miracle worker, known to all and sundry as Greg, is moving on.

For as long as anyone can remember, Greg has been servicing mowers, strimmers, bikes, motorbikes, chainsaws, hedge-clippers and pretty much any other garden machine in

existence in his workshop next to H&W.

But Greg does more than servicing. He brings machines back from the dead and a smile to the face of owners who have almost ruptured themselves yanking in vain on the starter-rope. At the height of the mowing season, the space outside the workshop resembled a casualty ward crammed with the victims of grass-cutting disasters - yet more often than not, those broken machines emerged from Greg's treatment as good as new and ready for battle again.

For years Greg has performed wonders keeping the machinery at my old cricket club, Twyford and Ruscombe, in working order. Our ancient roller looked as if it belonged in a museum, but Greg coaxed it into useful life season after season. It has now been replaced, but the cutters on the club's Ransome Auto-Certies pitch mower - at least 60 years old - are still whirring and cutting the grass like billiard cloth.

I shall miss Greg terribly - and not just for the mowers of mine that he has

tended to, the bikes he has salvaged from disaster, and the extra-long spike he welded onto my shooting-stick recently. His great passion in life was and is the Triumph Bonneville motorbike that he restored with infinite pains, and on which he still roars around on whenever he gets the chance.

I shall miss his cheery whistle, his friendly smile, his sometimes outspoken comments yelled at his radio, the amazing smell and clutter in his workshop, the incredibly extended conversations with his customers. Although he is gone from Sonning Common, Greg will continue doing the work he loves at his home in Woodley - contact details available from Sharona in the shop. ●

TOM FORT



SONNING COMMON HEALTH WALKS OCT/NOV 2026

Autumn is here, and winter will soon be upon us - get out and enjoy a brisk walk in the countryside while you can! I wonder how long it will be before all the paths are muddy again? There are no walk timetables in paper form at the moment, so please check the website for days/starting places/distances: www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk/timetable

NB Starting places change at the beginning of October

If you want to speak to someone about any aspect of the Health Walks, phone Chris Brook on 0118 972 2609

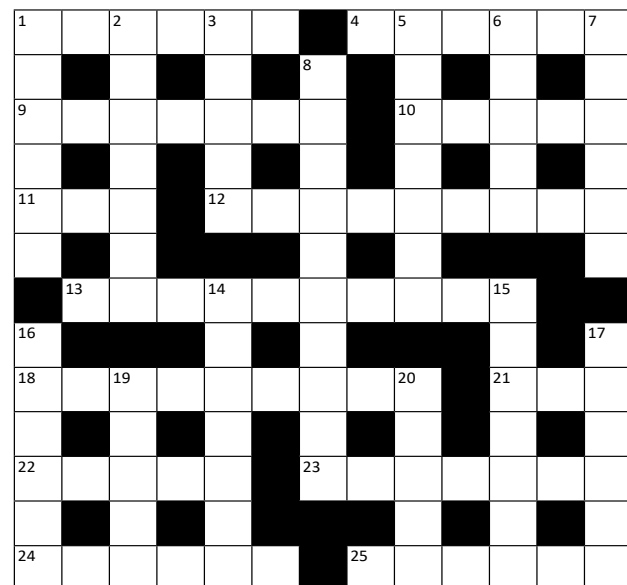
ROSEMARY DUNSTAN



PUZZLE PAGE

By DAVID DUNSTAN

Cryptic crossword



ACROSS

1. Print again concerning genre (6)
4. Removed and crossed Red Sea (6)
9. Hairstyle for good number in facial feature (7)
10. See 22
11. Container for kitty (3)
12. Tailless cool seabirds in the hills (9)
13. Her dietary disorder is passed on to the children (10)
18. Butcher carves ham in nearby village (9)
21. Grain is ironic, we hear (3)
- 22&10. Wheat, unripe, in suburb of 18 (5,5)
23. Men bewildered in dark country (7)
24. Fall back in London Mutual Society (6)
25. It's inadequate to run one's eye over page unknown (6)

DOWN

1. Brazilian city replacing loud with soft instructions (6)
2. National emblem the list mixed up (7)
3. Go to pieces about article in photo (5)
5. A target smashed in river event (7)
6. Impale southern fruit (5)
7. Pastry from 23 (6)
8. Schubert symphony is half-done (10)
14. A murder involved a membrane (7)
15. Three-foot sleeve marks end of support for sail (7)
16. Plan to give me cash failed (6)
17. Magazine we hear faintly (6)
19. Bring up versus leave out (5)
20. Benjamin skulks hiding capital (5)

Sudoku

Grading: easy-medium

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

Cryptogram

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

UF TATN UF UBSBGT TUFSE, O FMUTT TAS
 MUHI MUTVF, DUTHUF UTV DATABCF ITABNM
 SA RUOTS SMI PIUBSOEBT SMOTNF O FII -
 HOTDITS HUT NANM

Quiz: Autobiographies

Who wrote these autobiographies?

1. Becoming (2018)
2. Before and Laughter (2021)
3. Boy (1984)/Going Solo (1986)
4. Me (2019)
5. Mud, Sweat and Tears (2011)
6. My Word Is My Bond (2008)
7. Open (2009)
8. The Diary of a Young Girl (1947)
9. The Long Walk to Freedom (1994)
10. Spare (2023)

See answers on page 34



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Google review, May 2026



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PUZZLE PAGE ANSWERS FROM PAGE 32



AS LONG AS AUTUMN LASTS, I SHALL NOT
HAVE HANDS, CANVAS AND COLOURS ENOUGH
TO PAINT THE BEAUTIFUL THINGS I SEE –
VINCENT VAN GOGH

Quiz: Autobiographies

1. Michelle Obama, 2. Jimmy Carr,
3. Roald Dahl, 4. Elton John,
5. Bear Grylls, 6. Roger Moore,
7. Andre Agassi, 8. Anne Frank,
9. Nelson Mandela, 10. Prince Harry

Quiz: Autobiographies

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

Cryptogram

Sudoku

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

Cryptic crossword

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