

SC

SONNING COMMON MAGAZINE



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.....

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OCT/NOV 2020



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FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

The next season is very much apparent to us all and it is with some trepidation that we face the oncoming winter with all the concerns about Covid 19 and its possible spike in infections. Sonning Common has weathered the storm well so far, with few cases and a community who have effectively supported those in need during lockdown and shielding.

The production of the magazine has seen the same sort of support from residents who have written fascinating articles and collected information to share, at a time when we are bereft of community events. The team effort has been appreciated by residents and again we have plaudits.

My thanks to you and the team for continuing with the publication of our village magazine to its usual high standard throughout this difficult time. All the hard work and dedication given is greatly appreciated.

Alison (Bishop)

Julia, you've written a super worded and heartfelt note in the summer edition of this Magazine and I just wanted to acknowledge that and add my thanks to the Editor and her sterling team. Best wishes to all.

Nick Room

In the last issue we publicised Carol Johnson's request for photos to be used to celebrate Sonning Common's year of Lockdown, which reflect the creativity and spirit of this community. A calendar is to be produced for 2021 and the money raised will go to local charities. So far, I have received 5 potential entries. Please send some more to me, via email.

This issue has a variety of articles ranging from praise for our wonderful First Responders, the reopening of the Youth Club and the Library, potential infrastructure changes with the cycling initiative and 3rd Bridge threat, celebrating special people, the WI, Summer Fun and lots of information pieces. As well, of course our regular contributors. I hope you enjoy reading it! •

Diana

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MECE SEPTEMBER UPDATE



It would be completely disingenuous of me to fail to acknowledge that as I write this a few days before the start of the new school year there is a real sense of trepidation about what the new school year will bring. The last two weeks have been very much about readying ourselves for the re-opening of the school to all students and indeed we also spent many hours discussing this before term ended. The raft of government guidance is head-spinning and subject to regular updates, yet I have been exceptionally fortunate to be supported by both the Maiden Erlegh Trust and a very talented Senior Leadership Team who have worked tirelessly to ensure we will be as ready as we can be! However, one thing is certain, for all the rigours of hand washing, hand sanitiser, bubbles of students, one-way systems, face coverings in communal areas, new seating arrangements and the vast range of other new routines, we will keep our absolute focus on learning, ensuring that we pick up where we left off in March.

As a new headteacher the frustration has been that we established a wonderful momentum before lockdown whereby behaviour was markedly better, staff morale had vastly improved, the focus was very much on teaching and learning and the school had a real 'buzz' about it. When we re-opened in June and July for Year 9 and Year 10 these improvements seemed more secure with students arriving with the right attitudes to learn and make the most of the days at school. The parent feedback that we received at a very well attended (but socially distanced!) parent forum in July confirmed the positive feeling that is echoing through the local community about the school. This will be a very exciting year to see what we can achieve and how far we can take the school despite the context of the Covid pandemic.

At the end of term, staffing was very stable, with only two teacher departures. This will help our students to feel a sense of stability about their return to the classroom. In addition, we have been fortunate to secure capital grants for new lighting and new windows recently which will go some way to improving the cosmetic appearance of the school. I hope the students will notice of some of the changes such as a much-improved lighting system in the Sports Hall. However, to support this further I will be launching a series of MECE community site mornings across the school year focused on sprucing up some areas of the school that need



a little TLC. These will take place on Saturday mornings and I hope we can have some members of the local community in attendance. Please watch our Twitter feed and website for details later this term as the date is still fluid and somewhat dependent on the Covid situation.

I hope students will also notice the difference with our teaching and learning plan. We took some time in lockdown to really unpick subject curricula and ensure there is a five-year sequenced journey in each subject area. Furthermore, to ensure everyone gets the chance to catch up, to consolidate and to move forward we are putting a real emphasis on knowledge retrieval and learning how to recall. The new GCSE specifications require an exact and broad knowledge but we also hope to repair some of the gaps that the lockdown period may have caused through the use of this strategy. I have no doubt that the lockdown period, despite our best efforts, undoubtedly led to some of our most disadvantaged students falling further behind and this approach will hopefully alleviate some of those knowledge gaps that developed recently whilst also allowing our most able students to hone and sharpen their knowledge of the curriculum ready for any future challenges.

Take care and stay safe. ●

ANDY HARTLEY
Headteacher

SONNING COMMON PRIMARY SCHOOL

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE PTA

Christmas Trees will be sold from the primary school instead of the 2020 Christmas Fair. Look out for more details in the next issue of the magazine ●



FIRST RESPONDERS TO THE RESCUE



I collapsed on Caversham Heath Golf Course on the 4th August. The prompt actions of my playing partner and CHGC staff had a major beneficial impact on the outcome.

Sonning Common/Kidmore End's amazing First Responder, Chris Brook was on site VERY quickly and, I think against the odds, with Will the paramedic, saved my life. Perhaps, I was lucky that the First Responders had just taken delivery of a Dacia Duster 4x4, purchased as a result of local fundraising

events and donations. This meant that, with enhanced training, they are now able to provide additional services. They need to continue to raise funds and I hope that we will all continue to support this amazing and voluntary resource.

An ambulance from RBH arrived and the Air Ambulance landed on the eighth fairway a little time after Chris and I was ambulated to the RBH.

After assessment I was transferred to ICU and an external PaceMaker connected. The doctor explained to me that some electrical connections to my

heart had failed (Bradycardia). The next day I was transferred to the Cardiac Care Unit and fitted with my own PaceMaker (smaller than a matchbox). I was also given an angiogram which confirmed that my heart was in good condition and that no medication was required.

After checks to ensure the pacemaker was functioning optimally I was discharged from hospital on Saturday 8th.

I am so grateful to the MANY people involved in caring for me during those days ... some of whom I do not know and will probably never meet again. The service and treatment I received from all concerned was SUPERB.

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart - Caversham Heath and Ely Golf Staff, First Responders, Para Medics, Air and Ambulance medics and of course the NHS at the RBH. ●

ALAN GIBBON



SONNING COMMON YOUTH CLUB

WE'RE REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING EVERYONE!

Sonning Common Youth Club has reopened at Kidmore End Memorial Hall Tuesdays from 7-9pm and Wednesdays from 6.30-8.30pm.

Working really hard behind the scenes we have ensured the safety of our young people and staff, following all the guidelines set out by the government. We will do all in our power to make sure our young people have some fun after a really hard summer of restrictions, all while keeping to the rules.

We won a grant from One Stop so we're

starting a new project to help our young people with body confidence/ image as well as mental health after lockdown and how it's affected us all. There are some fun things we have planned, so do come along.

Also, some exciting news to let everyone know we are starting a Youth Allotment up at Kidmore End Memorial Hall with help from the Parish Council and Chiltern Edge Community Association. Our young people will be involved over the coming months. We want young people to build the planters and to help in every

aspect of starting and maintaining the allotment.

Booking for Youth Club will be essential so please email me on sunny.clubsc@gmail.com if you would like to join us. We are also introducing a new way of payment, where you can pay for the term and for tuck online, which is another step we're taking to keep everyone safe.

SUNNY SMITHERS
Youth Club Leader



THE LIBRARY IS OPEN!

By the time you read this I expect this to be true... WELCOME

It's been a long time, and we've missed you.

LOTS OF NEW BOOKS and reservations from other libraries continue - fee down to £1.15!

Please come and visit the library - but be prepared for some changes:

- You need to sanitise your hands at the door, fill in an NHS Test and Trace form, and wear a mask (unless exempt for health reasons)
- If the library happens to be busy, you might have to wait at the door: visitor numbers are limited according to the floor space to maintain social distancing
- All returned books will be put in a box by

the door and quarantined for at least 72 hours before being discharged and shelved

- There is a one-way system, with the exit at the far end of the library, down the steps
- You are free to browse - but please limit your visit to 30 minutes
- Please remember and use your library card, to limit contact with the staff
- There are only 2 computers available - again limited to 30 minutes use
- All books which were taken out before lockdown have had their due dates extended into October - bring them back ASAP! If books were overdue before lockdown you still need to pay fines on them, but the lockdown months will not be counted

- There have been slight changes to opening hours - check on the website (www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries) or in the library for details

Sadly, no extra activities at the moment: no storytimes or rhymetimes, Reading Group, Scrabble Club or Craft Group, and no Digital Helper sessions. 😞

So do come in, even if it's just to say hello and welcome back - Annabel and I will be delighted to see you. ●

Rosemary Dunstan

The recycling bins have all been moved to the school grounds, by the kitchen at the Lea Road entrance - they are available whenever the school gate is open (weekdays, term time only)

JUST WALK

Our countryside is beautiful in all its Autumn splendour

So just go out and walk in it!

Government advice at time of going to print was for groups of no more than 6 people to meet outside. Until this changes the Health Walks cannot restart.

Explorers walks around Sonning Common

Collect a free booklet (donations welcome) from Carl Woods, Heath and Watkins, Herb Farm, Vauxhall Garage and the Library.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



Plans to make the library Covid-19 secure were drawn up some months ago, but we were forced to wait as the Oxford library service prioritised the reopening of the county's 19 larger libraries. After making some noise, we now believe we should be among the first tranche of the community libraries to open their doors again. (If we aren't open, please write to Oxfordshire County Council and ask why.)

Things will look different and the number allowed into the building will be limited but we are hoping to provide a proper lending service. A big thank you to all those volunteers who have already said they are ready to help out. Some are

understandably unable to return, so we are looking to recruit anyone else in the village who might be able to spare a few hours once a fortnight. Duties vary and not everyone will need to enter the building but volunteering could involve re-shelving when the library is closed and sitting at the door to explain to customers how the Covid rules work. Anyone and everyone over the age of 18 is welcome, including gap year students. Please get in touch if you feel you can help get this vital service running again.

friendsofsonningcommonlibrary@gmail.co.uk ●

Helen Fort

RE-VAMPING WIDMORE POND

The Village Gardeners gained the grant to fund the works on Widmore pond and liaised with the parish council to find a suitable contractor.

The Parish Council chose the contractors carefully for the work- using Cook Piling, a family business who have worked on the Thames and the Henley Regatta course for many years.

Cook Piling graded the bank edge so there is no longer a drop off below waterline and it gently drops to the level of the silt laid on the pond bed, this is to prevent the majority of slippage, as well as any erosion caused by adverse weather conditions.

The specific stone (Oxford Shingle) was chosen as it comes in an oval shape, and is used for areas which are load bearing, such as driveways, while maintaining its strength and not slipping from underneath



the load like regular p-shingle does. As it is a local stone, the carbon footprint has been kept to a minimum while making it easier to source should it need topping up in the future. The bank is now secure and the pond area looks attractive. ●

Becky Jenkins
Sonning Common Parish Council

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN OUR HALLS

Sonning Common Parish Council is now managing and taking bookings for both Kidmore End War Memorial Hall (KEMH) and Sonning Common Village Hall (SCVH) via our new website www.sonningcommonvillagehalls.co.uk.

All hirers must comply with government guidelines and our hall use guidance as well as undertaking a Covid risk assessment. Covid safety adjustments have been made to both halls and we continue to monitor and act on government advice as it comes through.

As well as the smart new website, we used the last week of August to have the SC Village Hall repainted after some internal alterations to improve furniture storage and provide a bit more space for the office. On 7 September the entrance to KEMH will be enhanced by widening the vehicular gates and creating a new pedestrian entrance opposite the school layby. ●

Philip Collings
Clerk to Sonning Common Parish Council
0118 972 3616

GENEROSITY AND THANKS AT 1 WOODLANDS ROAD

I put out surplus apples on the pavement for people to take. What a lovely surprise to receive the following note with no signature "Thank you for the apples. I have made two delicious puddings for my 94 year old father in law." I am so glad they were appreciated. More fruit will follow!! So nice to know that food is being used and not wasted. ●

Geoff Adams



NOISE INTERFERES IN OUR LIVES

COMMENT ON TOM'S LAST ARTICLE

Dear Editor,

This one captured my attention.

At the risk of starting a curmudgeonly top ten noise gripes, I feel Tom is missing the creme de la creme of noise abusers based on (decibels x numbers annoyed / numbers benefiting)

The top award has to go to the acrobatic stunt planes that fire up every summer with a repetitive series of air polluting noise that send me and presumably tens of thousands like me nuts across a huge affected area whilst they indulge their hobby.

It's like Chinese water torture waiting for the next repeat, I'm developing a Herbert Lom twitch even as I write this.

As a semi-retired raver, I'm all for live and let live, but surely one person's freedom/enjoyment should not be impacting so many others. ●

Andy Johnson

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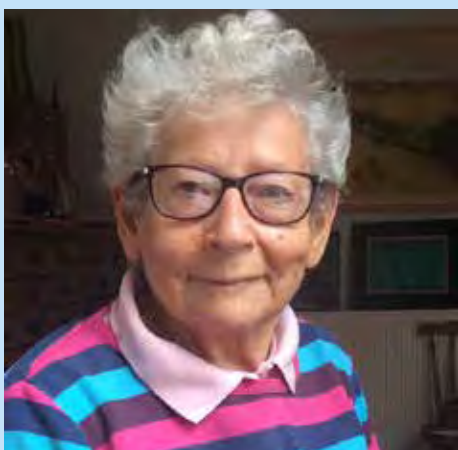
 

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FIFTY GOLDEN YEARS OF ART

By JOAN GRUMMANT



Pauline Twyman is stepping down from a remarkable 50 years of teaching Art. She has lived in Sonning Common for sixty-two years and is a successful artist as well as being a passionate and inspirational teacher. The decision to retire was not an easy one and it was made even more poignant as some of her pupils have remained in her class since day one. Throughout her teaching career to the present day her commitment is on going and has enabled her to achieve this significant achievement.

She will be greatly missed by many from her 30 years of part time teaching in Sonning Common Primary School as well as by those she has taught and nurtured through her Friday classes of adult education. Her teaching career started within days of arriving in Sonning Common when she found herself replacing Reg Judd who ran the adult education centre at Chiltern Edge School. She took over his school work and his painting and drawing evening class. She



had a gap from this to produce three children and then restarted her teaching career in 1970. This continued unbroken until Covid 19 prompted her decision to retire in her eighty-fifth year. Her art teaching life has also included four years of teaching remand prisoners at Reading Goal and with an adult class for patients at Borocourt Hospital. For this the patients came to Chiltern Edge School for a special class and many ended up joining her adult education class. Her belief in the therapeutic value of art is very strong.

Alongside her teaching career Pauline has continued as an artist producing paintings



for the Henley Guild of Artists and for the Reading Guild of Artists that she joined as a student while at Reading University's Fine Art Dept. She ended up exhibiting her work in the very studio where she had slogged away at life drawing classes as a student – she felt her life had come full circle!

Pauline's approach to teaching art has always been to treat each student as an individual and work with them to develop as an individual using projects of their own choice. Students came from Henley, Emmer Green and surrounding areas and they became a very strongly bonded group. Her last years saw her working with two groups

at Christ the King Church Hall – 18 students in the morning session and 15 in the afternoon. She always made sure there were three still lifes addressing specific challenges to work from and she was able to provide interesting and unusual objects and fabrics from her many visits to France and the car boot sales she frequented.

One of the main aims of Pauline's classes was to encourage students to observe the world around them with increasing understanding and sensitivity. She actively encouraged the exchange of ideas and because the classes encompassed all abilities, she felt it very important to encourage and lead students to be confident in their work and feel that something worthwhile and personal to themselves has been achieved.

Pauline's classes have enabled students to work using a huge variety of materials and sources of inspiration to interpret in their own way. Her guidance, patience and approachability have made her a teacher who is well able to communicate her passion for the living world and to pass this gift on to others. We hope that her well earned retirement will enable her to have more time for her own artistic projects and that those she has taught so well will continue to see the world through clearer eyes. ●



SARAH SAYER

By CHRISTINE ATKINSON



You may have read in the Henley Standard recently about the very lovely Sarah who supplied meals and support during lockdown to the children of Sonning Common Primary School.

Sarah was nominated by the headteacher Chris Hirst to the National Association of Headteachers award #aboveandbeyond for providing hot dinners to the key worker pupils who were in school. Sarah

started her catering business Kites Kitchen in 2011 when she took over the running of the school kitchen. All four of her own children went to the primary school.

When the school closures were announced in March it was suggested that caterers should, if possible, keep providing meals to those children who were in school. Sarah was in school every day, including the Easter holidays, to provide a hot lunch for the 50-100 children who were in, and also made up to 30 weekly food boxes for the children who were entitled to free school meals, including pupils at Bishopswood Special School and Sonning Common Preschool.

These boxes contained not only healthy and nutritious ingredients, but also recipes with instructions that the children could follow to make their own meal. She said "we wanted to make it fun by including child friendly ideas that they could cook



Hi all

This week we have included a recipe for one of the favourite school puddings – fruity flapjack!

You can add different fruits that you like, our recipe has chopped dried apricots.

50g margarine
25g sugar (one tablespoon)
2 tablespoons of syrup
8 tablespoons of oats

1. Heat the oven to 160
2. Melt the sugar, margarine and syrup in a pan on a low heat until all mixed together
3. Add the oats and fruit (if you want to include)
4. Stir well and spoon the mixture into the takeaway container
5. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes until the oats are golden brown
6. Cool for half an hour, cut into squares and enjoy

Let us know how you did and send a photo.

themselves. Stir fry, pasta bolognese, brownies, pizza and flapjacks." Sarah told us that she had received photos from some of the children who were proud to share what they had achieved.

She said "I wanted to ensure that the children had access to plenty of good food as they couldn't come into school. At the start of lockdown there were lots of items that were hard to get – flour, pasta etc – which I could obtain from catering suppliers. This meant that we could provide ingredients at the same quality they would have had in school."

Chrissy Matthews, who is the school secretary, was also in school every day and helped with deliveries each week. Chris Hirst was indeed very proud of both of them, and the school is now almost back to its full capacity with nearly 250 pupils enjoying their school lunches – even if in different circumstances with most of them eating in their class 'bubbles'. ●

PROPOSED THIRD READING BRIDGE

It's been a year since I last wrote on this subject for Sonning Common Magazine and the large volume of enquiries I get about it suggests readers would welcome an update on the proposed mile-long bridge. Before I do this, I will re-cap on the background for the benefit of those who may have recently moved into the area.



Location and traffic route

On the Berkshire side, the bridge would be connected to Reading's Inner Distribution Road (IDR) and the M4 via the A3290 & A329(M).

On the Oxfordshire side, the bridge would land on the A4155 opposite Caversham Park Road.

Historically, bridge supporters have stated this will get 55,000 cars a day out of the centre of Reading.

HGVs and cars arriving on the Oxfordshire side would have two main onward options and two secondary ones:

1. Along the A4155 through Shiplake into Reading Road/Duke Street in Henley.
2. Along the B481 through Sonning Common, Rotherfield Peppard, Highmoor, Nettlebed and Watlington.
3. Along the A4155 into Prospect Street, Reading.
4. 'Rat-running' through Emmer Green and Kidmore End to join the A4074 at Cane End.

A parish councillor jokingly, but perhaps with some prescience, commented to me that the proposal could effectively turn the B481 into the A481(M) as it would become the de facto link between the M4 and the M40 (see map).

Recent project history

In 2015, Oxfordshire and Berkshire parties agreed to undertake a traffic modelling study to understand the traffic impact of the proposed bridge. With no political input from Oxfordshire, the traffic modelling study was morphed by the Berkshire parties into a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC), of which the traffic modelling study was merely a subsidiary part. Even before the SOBC was completed, Berkshire applied to central government for funding to take the project to the next stage (Outline Business Case). The bid was unsuccessful at that time.

The SOBC was completed in May

2017. Its findings were welcomed by Berkshire proponents but attracted limited challenge from Oxfordshire councils, which had little interest in the project at that time. The cost of building the bridge was then estimated at £110m (but is now likely to be in excess of £150m). Critically, this excluded the cost of mitigation measures in South Oxfordshire.

The project stalled in early 2018 when the proponents were unable to identify funding of £750,000 to develop the Outline Business Case.

In the autumn of 2019, I successfully moved a motion at both Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) objecting to the bridge (see opposite).

Latest developments

The proposal has gained significant new momentum over the last year and the situation can be summed-up as follows:

- A new bid for funding for an Outline Business Case has been submitted by the Berkshire authorities. OCC and SODC are participating in order to 'have a seat at the table'.
- Reading BC confirmed in its Transport Strategy Consultation published earlier this summer that the bridge remains one of its top transport priorities.
- A government organisation called Transport for the South East (TfSE) has applied to become a statutory body with its own budget; it shares the ambition with Reading to create the crossing.
- Reading BC has come up with a new concept called the 'North Reading Orbital' in recognition of the flaws in its earlier proposal (no specified mitigation measures for traffic arriving in Oxfordshire) – but the solution may just add to the problems.

The 'North Reading Orbital'

Despite its name, this road would be entirely in Oxfordshire; it would start where the bridge lands at Caversham Park Road, then sweep around Emmer Green, pass near Kidmore End, then join the A4074 at Cane End. There would be three 'Park & Ride' sites along the way taking people into Reading. An 'orbital' road of this scale carving its way through rural South Oxfordshire is causing widespread concern.

What's happening now

At the time of writing, OCC and SODC are preparing their responses to the Reading Transport Consultation. These responses will have been submitted by the time this article is published.

I will update this article again when there is more news. ●

Cllr David Bartholomew

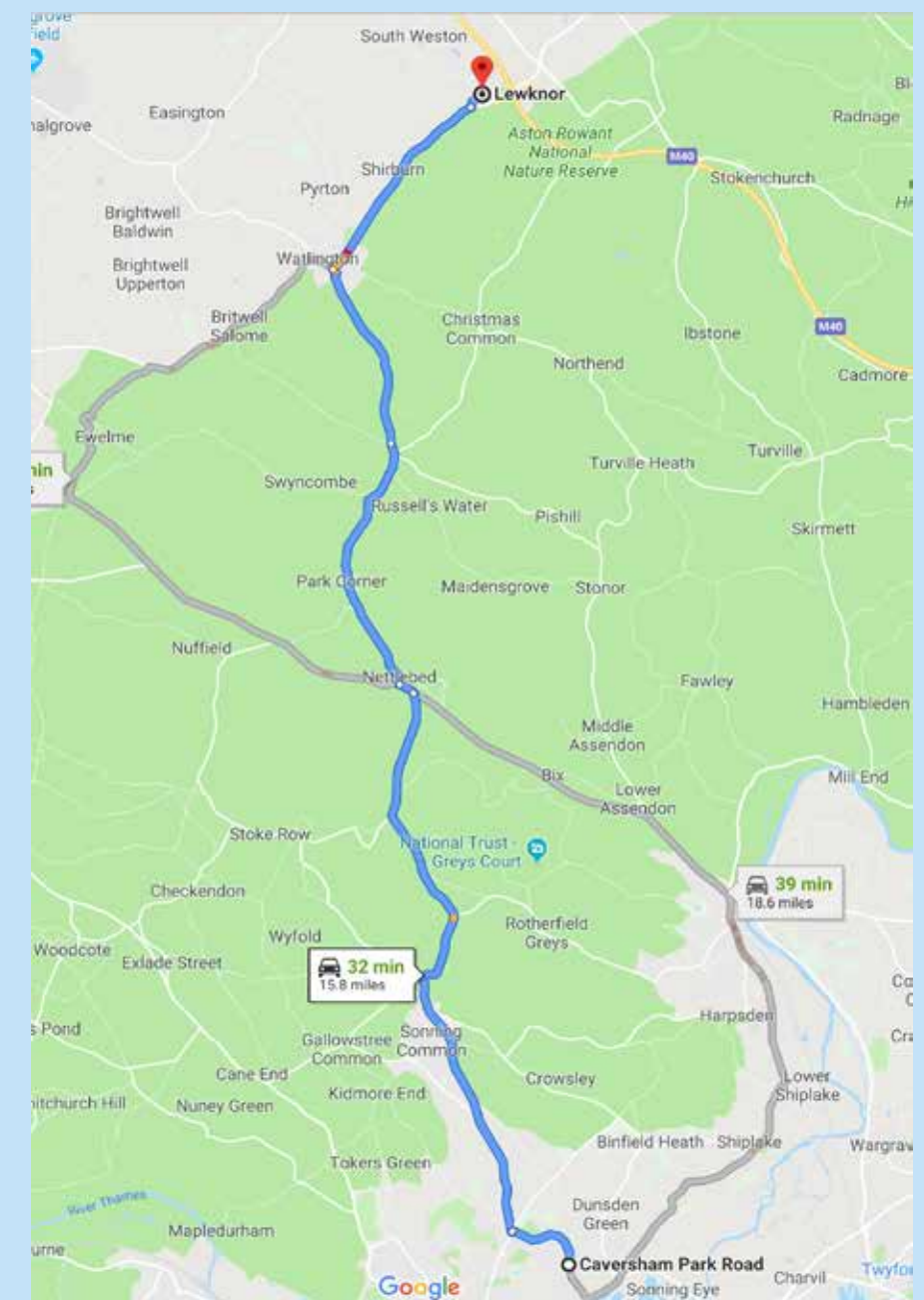
An extract of the motion by Cllr David Bartholomew passed by Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council, Autumn 2019

This council calls on the Leader to write to council leaders at Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell, plus MPs John Howell, John Redwood, Matt Rodda and Theresa May, stating that:

a) In the context of the Climate Emergency a car-based solution to a car-based problem that would pour thousands of cars and HGVs into

Oxfordshire is totally inappropriate and should a new bridge be built it should be restricted to public transport, cyclists and pedestrians;

b) Notwithstanding the above, if a car-based solution is pursued, the bridge and necessary mitigation measures (i.e. improvements to the Oxfordshire road network) must not be considered as two separate projects, but as one project so that the benefits, disadvantages and costs of the scheme can be holistically assessed.



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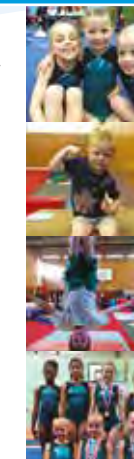
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SAFE CYCLE PATH TO EMMER GREEN/READING

There is a big Government initiative in the pipeline for Cycle Lanes / Paths which has been heightened recently by lockdown guidance, with talk of helping people to use bikes to get to work.

TRAPPED - Of course here in Sonning Common we are 'trapped' by the lack of a safe cycle route to Emmer Green and thence Reading. The B481 Peppard Rd is not suitable - there's not even a footpath!

There are public footpaths cutting across fields but these are not suitable for cycling and would be considered 'unsafe' particularly if alone.

SOLUTIONS - What we need is a dedicated cycle way and footpath from the village to Emmer Green. There is space to create it alongside the B481 and it could be raised up on the existing banks, away from the road traffic. This could need a major commitment from Oxfordshire Highways to undertake it.

Another way of achieving a path has come from Cllr Dirk Jones, who's dubbed it the "Cinder Cycle Track". The idea being



to lay a path within the farmers' fields alongside the main road, on the other side of the hedgerow.

This would have the advantage of being further away from motor traffic but relies on permission from landowners to enable it.

EITHER WAY - However it's done, this is a project that may fit with the Governments investment plan. We're hoping to attract some funding from the new plan to invest in cycling.

REACTIONS - I've already received a lot of good reactions for example from Tom Fort who said:-

"A cycle way to Emmer Green would be wonderful. I have pedalled the B481 many times and it is not nice."

Also, Chrissie Godfrey wrote:

"I really like this suggestion, my grandchildren live in Emmer Green and cycle regularly to Sonning Common and I worry about them on that road".

WHAT NEXT - It is going to take a good deal of effort to achieve this:-

- WORK UP A SCHEME FOR PRESENTATION
- LIAISE WITH AUTHORITIES
- PUBLICISE

CONTACT - We need as much local support and enthusiasm as we can gather. I'm looking for individuals and groups to support the idea and help me to take it forward.

Please contact by emailing me at grantdesigns@talktalk.net ... or contacting the magazine editor

JONNY BIDGOOD

PUZZLE PAGE ANSWERS FROM PAGE 27

(Colours of the rainbow) V I

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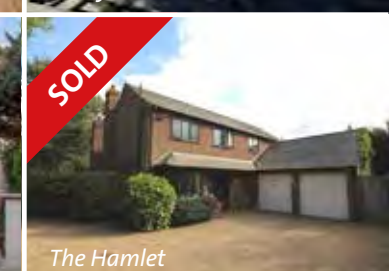
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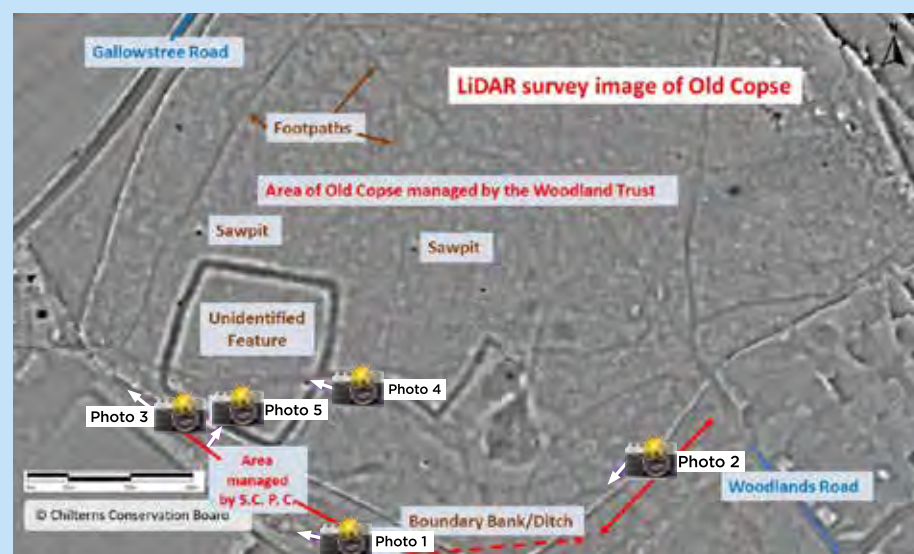
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A VERY DIFFERENT VIEW OF SONNING COMMON



One advantage of lockdown has been the introduction of videoconferencing facilities like Zoom as a means for the general public to meet virtually. Whilst this is no substitute for actual meetings, it does have the advantage of allowing one to participate in meetings that are further afield. Consequently, early in July I was able, with other members of Reading U3A, to join the Didcot U3A Mathematics, Science and Technology Group for a presentation by Dr Peveler, Landscape Heritage Officer of the Chilterns Conservation Board, about the LiDAR survey of the Chilterns landscape.

I had become aware back in 2016 that the LiDAR survey of the 1400 square kilometres of the Chilterns AONB was due to take place when, as one of the Councillors responsible for footpaths, I had been given a tour by John Morris, Director of the Chiltern Woodlands Project, of the part of Old Copse which the Parish Council had just purchased on behalf of the

residents of Sonning Common. This small addition meant that the bulk of Old Copse now belonged to the village, as its large central square had been purchased with donations from villagers back in the 1990s and transferred to the Woodland Trust for management in 1995. Whilst Mr Morris's information mainly related to how the woodland should be looked after, he also gave us some information



about its history and archaeology. The first photograph shows a wide bank which he suggested might be over

1000 years old. More can be found by visiting the Old Copse section of the Chilterns AONB website. Mr Morris also mentioned that the LiDAR survey due to be done at the start of 2019 might reveal interesting new details.

Dr. Peveler explained that LiDAR is a method for measuring distances by illuminating the target with laser light and measuring the reflections with a sensor. Differences in laser return times and wavelengths can then be used to make digital 3-D representations of the target. He then showed us how to access and use the website containing the results of this LiDAR survey of the Chilterns. Members of the public are allowed to study the results freely, and it is hoped that some will become "Citizen Scientists" by helping to analyse the data, which is far too vast for the two scientists employed on the project to do by themselves. Their brief is to concentrate on the Iron Age Hillforts. You can access the website at www.chilternsaonb.org/projects/beacons-of-the-past

During question time after his talk, Dr Peveler showed me the survey results for Old Copse and explained certain features. The LiDAR survey image for this article was kindly supplied by Dr Morrison, who works with him on the project. Areas of the image that are black indicate land which is below that surrounding it, for example a ditch or a hole. White areas are higher and could be a bank or a mound. The light grey lines are footpaths, where the land has been slightly lowered by walkers. A bank and ditch structure is quite clearly shown by the white and black



lines on the LiDAR survey image where the boundary between the Woodland Trust and Parish Council woodland occurs. The second photograph shows a part of this boundary bank, which has a fence and some trees on it, neither



of which appear on the LiDAR image. The third photograph has a higher, more obvious boundary bank, but this time the fence is absent. A bank and ditch system was commonly used for defining areas of ancient woodland.

Dotted around the wood are sawpits, which show up on the LiDAR survey as black ovals with a white bank on one side. One possible example is shown in photograph four. A sawpit is simply a hole or depression in the ground about six feet deep. A log to be sawn into planks is fixed securely over the pit, and one man stands on top of the log, and another in the pit beneath it. They each hold one end of an especially designed pit saw, and between them they can saw the log into planks.



The most interesting feature revealed by the LiDAR survey is a deep ditch between two banks in the shape of a sort of square with each side about eighty metres long, joined to another L-shaped ditch running into the middle of one side. Dr Peveler said that its origin and purpose had not yet been established. The feature is not at all obvious when one walks along the footpath crossing it. The final photograph shows a small section of this ditch, largely concealed by undergrowth. One huge advantage of LiDAR is that it allows you to get an



overview of broad, continuous features covered by vegetation that are indistinguishable from the ground.

I have concentrated on this area of woodland within our village because that is where I first became aware of LiDAR. However, you are free to examine anywhere, as the whole of Sonning Common is covered by the survey. You might like to start with the area around your own home! Looking at the website will allow you, if you will pardon the pun, to see Sonning Common in a very different light! ●

STAN RUST

SO MUCH MORE THAN TEA AND CAKE



As Sonning Common WI members number 70, the social distancing requirements have made it impossible to hold our monthly meetings, host the Village Coffee Mornings or go on our planned Summer Outing. Meanwhile the hardworking Committee have held regular Zoom meetings. Jenny Ward stepped down as President in March, and our new President is Sue Frayling – Cork. Sue, in at the deep end, has recently held 11 tea parties in her garden, so in turn the majority of the 70 members have been able to meet up. The only downside found by Sue was, with over 12 cakes baked, the necessary quality control played havoc with her waistline.



In these strange times it is easy to feel cut off, anxious or lonely. As many phone calls as possible have been made to as many members as possible. Members who are not online are not left out and they all receive a copy of our Sonning Common WI monthly Newsletter, which keeps our members updated with the latest news from our WI. Enthusiastic members of the Darts Group have been meeting in the back garden of one of our members. The weather has been a little hit and miss, rather like the games of darts – especially after the Pimms!

The Craft Group has held Garden Coffee Mornings. With no Village Show this year, Sue Hedges was keen to show off the various flowers she has grown during Lock Down. The giant dahlias are quite spectacular. The Craft

Group will be meeting to share and exchange plant cuttings and will be potting them up ready for next Spring.

Throughout lockdown, Jenny Ward has done sterling work from her home and second hand books, jigsaws and plants have been available to buy. Jane Handley's handcrafted greetings cards have been very popular. Donations have been made and local causes have benefited. The books continue to be available on Wednesdays 9.0am – 5.0pm at 22 Lea Road, Sonning Common.

News that the WI Denman College at Marcham will be closing is very sad. The loss of income during lockdown, with no further revenue for the remainder of the year, has made it impossible for Denman to break even and operate commercially. It was in 1945 that Lady Brunner sketched out her vision for the WI to have its own further education college. Over the years members of SCWI have enjoyed good times at Denman. Courses on Floral Art, Silver Clay



Jewellery, Singing, Cooking, sewing with former Sewing Bee judge May Martin, and much more. The Oxfordshire Federation Weekend, held last November, which ended with a happy "let your hair down" Mamma Mia Party, will never be forgotten.

Happier times will return and we **WILL ALL MEET AGAIN** and Sonning Common WI will return to host the monthly Village Coffee Mornings. ●

Sue Hedges



QUESTIONS TO OUR HEALTH CENTRE FROM THE PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP

How have you coped during the Covid pandemic?

The practice staff have worked robustly, tirelessly and without complaint to adapt to the new system forced upon us by the Covid pandemic and to provide the best possible service for patients while maintaining safety. The dispensary team and reception have done a great job to minimize waits for medicines, making deliveries to those who need them and keeping supplies available when other pharmacies have struggled. PPE supplies from the NHS were limited initially and we are grateful to all the offers of PPE from local bodies and individuals. We are also very grateful to all the community support groups who have helped our patients.

What are the main differences in the way the practice is working now?

The main difference is the restriction of patients visiting the Health Centre and being even more meticulous regarding hygiene and infection control. We are still seeing patients face to face where essential. However, the majority of work by clinicians is via telephone or video consultation, involving 150 – 250 telephone consultations daily, each lasting from a few minutes to over an hour. We have worked over normal hours coping

with the considerable backlog, where patients have held back on seeking help until recently, as well as current demands.

Are there any long term changes which the practice will be implementing?

While the pandemic continues we cannot return to our previous ways of working and our present arrangements will continue, including the likelihood of a very different flu vaccination programme this year, itself a practice run for future Covid vaccination.

Have you had to treat Covid – 19 positive patients? If so how is this conducted?

We have not treated Covid positive patients at the Health Centre. Covid cases were relatively limited locally and only the specific home visiting service from Townlands was used to see these patients.

Will the experience gained during lockdown influence future ways of working?

The current systems are going to stay in place whilst Covid is in circulation and until there is a proven vaccine. It is too soon to predict what future ways of working will be. However, it is likely that more remote consulting, using telephone, video and email, having

been proved to be effective and more convenient for patients, will continue long term.

What is the best way for patients to currently access the Health Centre for normal GP care?

Doctors will organise a face to face appointment where needed but it is remarkable how much help we can give to patients over the phone or by video. Patients can book routine telephone appointments. However, because of the current additional pressures we ask patients to be clear about symptoms and concerns, to try the chemist for minor ailments first and to use Townlands Minor Injuries Service. Patients with serious injuries should go to A+E.

The health service will not simply resume to pre-Covid conditions, for safety reasons. However, we encourage patients not to ignore health problems and to contact us if they have concerns.

We wish to maintain our strong community links and think the support from the Sonning Common community has been amazing, a key reason why people, especially the vulnerable, have managed to cope through the lockdown. ●

DEMENTIA UPDATE

The new Dementia Adviser for Henley, Nettlebed, Sonning Common and Goring is Melissa Spearman, melissaspearman@dementiaoxfordshire.org.uk or 01865 410210 Monday - Friday 9am - 6pm Support Line: 01865 410 210 9am - 6pm Monday to Friday

Fran Mada is the Admiral Nurse for Oxfordshire. She is based at Chilterns Court Care Centre on Monday and Tuesday where she has a Community role for Henley on Thames. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday she is at Care Homes throughout Oxfordshire

As a result of COVID-19, Fran has started Melody Lane- Music for families living with Dementia on Zoom that any families or carers/ the person

with dementia can join. Melody Lane is part of Foresight Music Project and is advertised on the parish boards. Melody Lane will continue face to face activity when it is safe to meet again. Fran is open to referrals from families themselves and other professionals. ●



LATE SPRING BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS

The groups offer an opportunity for people to meet with others in a warm, friendly and supportive environment. It is not a counselling service. The meetings are twice monthly, with coffee and cake and together they look to the future without forgetting. Within the groups, they provide an opportunity for you to talk about and remember openly your loved one. These sessions are facilitated by a member of our community team and occur in relaxed and friendly settings with others who understand about how being bereaved can make you feel, simply because they are 'feeling it too'.

Although the meetings are on hold because of COVID, there is still help and support available remotely, call 01235 849343. The meetings will return. ●

SONNING COMMON HEALTH CENTRE FLU CLINICS 2020-2021

Please book an appointment with Reception. Our clinics are by appointment only and are not walk in clinics. You must bring your invitation/consent letter with you.

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Monday 28th September
4 - 6pm

Wednesday 30th September
4 - 6pm

Monday 5th October
4 - 6pm

Wednesday 7th October
4 - 6pm

Monday 12th October
4 - 6pm

Wednesday 14th October
4 - 6pm

Monday 19th October
4 - 6pm

Wednesday 21st October
4 - 6pm

Monday 26th October
4 - 6pm

Wednesday 28th October
4 - 6pm

UNDER 65S AND CHILDREN
(if capacity all ages)

Saturday 26th September
9am - 1pm

Saturday 3rd October
9am - 1pm

Saturday 17th October
9am - 1pm

Clinic dates and times may change due to demand. The following are eligible for a free flu vaccination and

will receive a letter: Children aged 2 and 3 years, over 65 years, pregnant women, registered carers, care home residents, patients 4 years and above in a clinical risk group.

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

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



WEAR PINK ON 23RD OCTOBER FUNDRAISE IF COVID-19 PERMITS

What is breast cancer awareness month?

It is a worldwide annual campaign taking place in October, involving thousands of organisations, to highlight the importance of breast awareness, education and research. During Breast Cancer Awareness Month, 'Breast Cancer Now' aim to get as many people as possible involved in raising awareness and funds to help support our life-saving research and life-changing support.

This Breast Cancer Awareness Month do something great - make life-saving research happen by supporting 'Wear it Pink'.

Right now, an estimated 600,000 people are living with or after a breast cancer diagnosis in the UK. And every year we lose over 11,500 lives to the disease. That's someone every 45 minutes. The charity won't stop until everyone diagnosed with

breast cancer lives - and is supported to live well.

It is known that in women aged 50 up to their 71st birthday, about 1,300 lives are saved each year by finding breast cancer early. This means that one life is saved for every 200 women screened.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in the UK. But over a quarter of cases are preventable.

One in seven women will get breast cancer at some point in their life. However, studies suggest if you make changes to your lifestyle your risk of getting breast cancer could be significantly reduced.

For more information go to www.breastcanceruk.org.uk

NHS Breast screening

All women aged 50 up to their 71st birthday are invited for breast screening every 3 years.

All you need to do is phone or write to your local breast screening unit to make an appointment. Call Reading Breast Screening Service in Craven Road on 0118 322 8282 for appointments or visit NHS.uk for more information. During COVID-19 these appointments have been put on hold but if you or a relative have history of breast cancer an appointment is still possible.

The risk of getting breast cancer increases with age. About 1 in 3 of all breast cancers occur in women aged 71 or over.

You might not have any symptoms but take the opportunity to have a mammogram; it could save your life. ●



THANK YOU

Sonning Common Health Centre team is most grateful for the generous donations of PPE from our local community.

Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge School, Shiplake College and Wallingford School produced more than 100 face visors from their DT departments. Ru Butler from Peppard Building Supplies arrived one day at the end of March with huge bags of gloves, goggles, face masks, etc.- amazing.

Local businesses and patients have donated many items including hand gel, car seat covers, and crochet headbands (to keep elastic away from the ears). A special thank you goes to Annelize Littlefair who has made more than 2000 face coverings and a number of scrubs for Abbeycrest Nursing Home and of course to our very own retired nurse, Rika Adams for her face masks. ●



TOM FORT THE JOY OF JAM

This is how I like my breakfast: muesli or porridge – two slices of sourdough toast – fresh strong coffee – the daily newspaper – peace and quiet and no interruptions.

Each time there is one choice to make: what to put on the second slice of toast (the other is always marmalade, made in January according to the recipe my mother gave me). It has to be jam, and that jam has to be homemade. But what kind?

Commercial jam is just no good. It all contains artificial pectin, an acid that occurs naturally in fruits – enabling jam to set – but when combined in the factory with other elements gives the jam a slight but unmistakable aftertaste. Shop-bought is to home-made as ready meals are to home-

cooked – one is the real thing and the other isn't.

The virus has been terrible in almost every way but excellent for jam. I have made raspberry, strawberry, damson, gooseberry and apricot – plus a big batch of bramble jelly. The strawberry was the least successful (strawberries are very low on natural pectin, making a good set very difficult) – the result is incredibly sweet and flavoursome but has the consistency of glue. The gooseberry got a touch burned owing to my inattention, but I rather like the slightly charred tang.

Making jam is easy. All you need is the fruit, a big pan, ordinary granulated sugar, lemon juice and some pots. Do NOT use sugar with added pectin.

I grew the raspberries and gooseberries myself, but you can buy them.

I got the apricots cheap at the market in Henley, the damsons from a couple of overhanging trees on the Peppard Rd which I spotted while cycling. Blackberries are freely available by the hundredweight from hedgerows all around Sonning Common.

The season is over now but remember for next summer. And if you can't be bothered, the next best thing is to be nice to someone – like me – who can in the hope that they might spare a pot or two. ●



COOK'S CORNER

By SANDY ONOFRIO

A couple of really easy recipes ideal if you, or one of yours, is off to Uni - no need for a Pot Noodle lifestyle!

EASY PEASY FISH CAKES - serves 4

- 2 tins tuna, drained
- 1 onion, diced
- 400g mashed potatoes*
- flour for dusting
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 100g breadcrumbs
- 100ml cooking oil
- 50ml milk
- salt and pepper to taste

1. In a bowl, mix the onion, tuna and potato then using floured hands, shape into 8 cakes.

2. Lightly dust with flour and dip into eggs and then breadcrumbs. Chill for 30 minutes.
3. Heat 1cm cooking oil in a frying pan on a high heat.
4. Fry the fish cakes in batches for 3 minutes on both sides and drain onto paper. (*can be substituted with instant mashed potato but reduce the liquid content)



BAKED POTATO WEDGES

- 1 large baking potato - (1 per person)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic granules
- 1/2 teaspoon chilli powder
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder

1. Preheat oven to 230 C / Gas 8.
2. Cut potato into wedges. Mix olive oil, paprika, garlic granules, chilli powder and onion powder together.

Coat potatoes with oil/spice mixture and place on a baking tray.
3. Bake for 45 minutes in preheated oven.



THE CINNAMON TRUST

THE NATIONAL CHARITY FOR THE ELDERLY, THE TERMINALLY ILL AND THEIR PETS



Earlier this year I mistakenly thought that all the stories shown on Channel 5's The Dog Rescuers had happy endings. Not so, unfortunately. I watched while the RSPCA warden prized away a lovely, friendly, seemingly happy, little staffy from his distraught owner who was deemed to be too ill to look after him anymore. It was heart-breaking. I thought that there must be a charity which could help in this situation and on googling, came across The Cinnamon Trust.

Via a network of 15,000 volunteers, The Cinnamon Trust offers the following services all over the UK to elderly and terminally ill pet owners.

- Dog walking
- Care – Any day to day pet care the owner can't manage
- Short term fostering – for pets whose owners face a spell in hospital
- Long term fostering – for pets whose owners have died or move to residential accommodation which does not accept pets
- The Pet Friendly Care Homes Register – The Trust's guide to care homes and sheltered housing that will welcome residents and their pets.

I phoned, completed the forms, primed my kind referees to respond quickly to the reference requests and before I knew it, I had an email welcoming me as a volunteer. I was ready.

It was a few weeks before my services were called upon but then I heard of someone in the village who could possibly benefit from the Trust.

Now I am one of three local volunteers who take it in turns, every week, to walk a great, little, 14 year old staffy/lab cross for his owner, who is awaiting an operation (delayed by lockdown) and can't walk his dog. We will continue walking the dog until his owner can manage to do it himself again. The Trust policy says you should not take dogs in your car or let them off the lead so there is no pressure here which is a relief. This week I took my collie along as well, so now, both dogs have company on their walks.

If you enjoyed getting out and walking in our amazing countryside during lockdown, why not continue with a four-legged companion and

help their owner out at the same time? Do you know someone who could do with a little help looking after their pet? If you are interested in learning more about The Trust and how they could help or how you could help them, please contact them:

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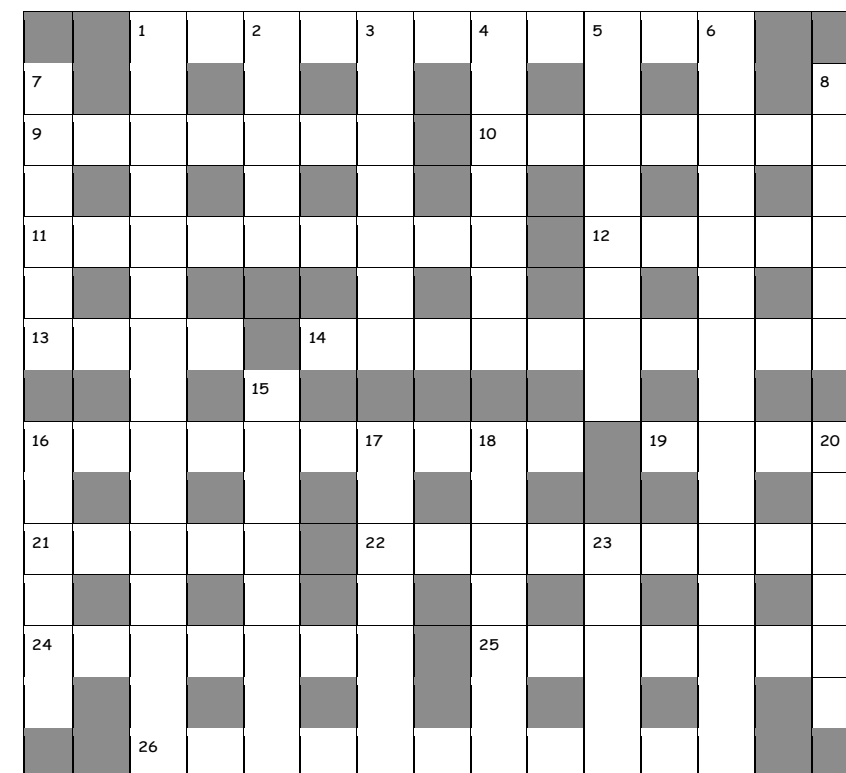
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PUZZLE PAGE

By **SHEILA WALKER**

WOMBAT 3



ACROSS

- Alice's late friend (5,6)
- One way to serve lamb: tie it up! (7)
- In church circles, shrinks back (7)
- Winter wear for birds under 50 (9)
- Birdman pays his share (5)
- He goes round in circles (4)
- Space inside for provisions (10)
- Bending over backwards? (10)
- Yokel provides seafood (4)
- Milan Cathedral in two secs (5)
- Flake (9)
- Banged up with only half a drink (7)
- New students? (7)
- It's all a long way off (7,4)

DOWN

- Where to find Bulgaria in London? (9,6)
- Mature, for an insect (5)
- Relaxing after supper won't get you to the top! (7)
- Diabolical title (7)
- They may need you to get plastered (8)
- If suffering from 5, could become unbalanced (9,6)
- Look up record for animals on the plain (6)
- Unquiet dealers help at wedding (6)
- Root worm out, but not today (8)
- He plays dice, but is in credit (6)
- Altered old machine (7)
- Controversial rule? (7)
- Asleep, but polite (6)
- Fifty-first article states need to be agile (5)

DINNER TIME

Add a 4 letter word between each pair of words, making two new words. The first letter of each will give you something for lunch....

HAND WORM

DRUM OVER

PULL ARCH

OVER COAT

MAST SHIP

CALL MY BLUFF

Which is the correct definition?

ALLETHRI:

- insecticide
- Anglo-Saxon king
- medication for allergic reactions

BAGS O'MYSTERY:

- baggy trousers
- left luggage
- sausages

PEERIE:

- clear glass marble
- female peeping Tom
- type of Scotch broth

MYSTIFIED?

How many words of 4 or more letters can you find in the word MYSTIFIED - there should be at least 24, including one of 7 letters.

SEQUENCE...

What are the next 2 letters in this sequence.....

R O Y G B - - ?

See answers on page 16

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SUMMER FUN 2020!



funding as well as all those who donated towards the popular Map Books which raised sufficient funds to pay for the activity booklets.

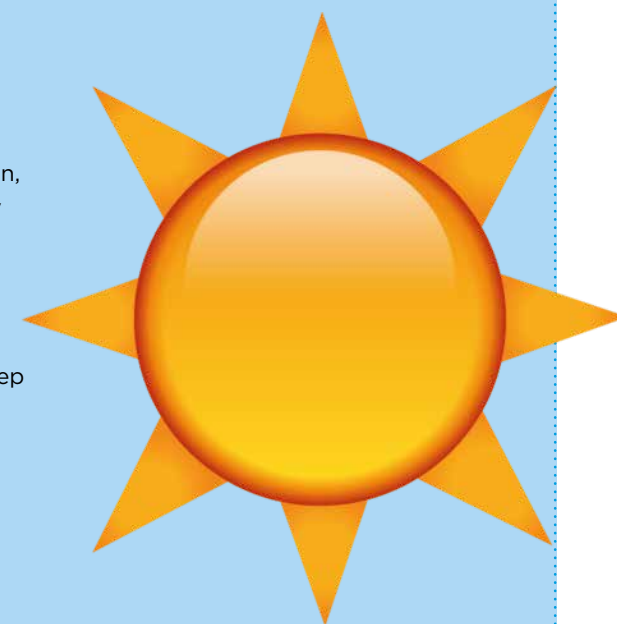
The navigational activities were attended by over 60 local families and although a very different summer for all of us, we hope we still managed to provide a little fun and enjoyment for our community, plus it was fantastic meeting you all!

Fingers crossed that Easter and Summer Fun 2021 will be able to return to a more recognised format where we can all join together again.

Many thanks to everyone who attended the activities and a huge thank you to the trained Active Leaders who helped run the navigational events: Sophie Snowden, Emma Dawson, Lucy Dawson, Emily Edwards, George Batty, Josh Saker and Jack Thomas.

Please follow us on Facebook: @activeleaderssonningcommon to keep up to date with future activities we will be running in the village. ●

Penny and Amanda
(Active Leaders)



Due to 'you know what', Summer Fun 2020 was forced to take a slightly different format this year.



We produced a 60 page 'Summer Fun!' activity book jam-packed with arts and crafts; recipes; outdoor activities; new local walks and design tasks. We contacted the local primary schools at Sonning Common, Kidmore End, Peppard and Stoke Row and the headteachers requested booklets for their pupils to enjoy and help keep them occupied during the summer holidays. We also distributed booklets to grandparents in the village who were expecting visits from their grandchildren this holiday and we have

had some wonderfully positive and supportive comments.

In addition, we also set up a series of 'socially-distanced' navigational activities in July and August which families could enjoy together and make the most of the wonderful countryside in which we live.

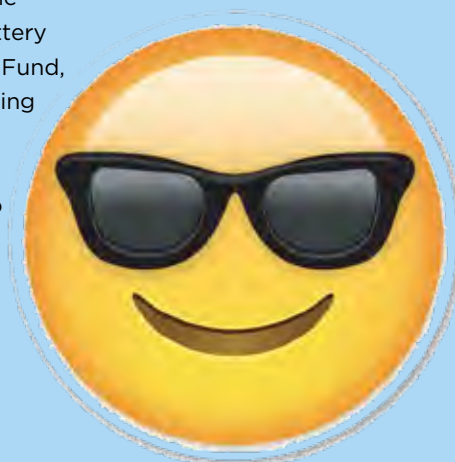
On Tuesdays we had 'George's Cartographers Challenge!' An activity invented by trained Active Leader, George Batty who is currently in Year 11 at Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge. The aim was to get to three local landmarks in the fastest time possible!

On Wednesdays it was a Photo Scavenger Hunt! We listed five items for the participants to find from around the

village. They had to photograph each item and then go home and create a collage using the pictures.

Orienteering was the focus on Thursdays, with various themes including Harry Potter, Olympics, Disney and Superheroes. The orienteering was particularly well-attended and there were some very competitive performances by some groups!

Thanks to the National Lottery Community Fund, and to Sonning Common Parish Council who applied for the



VALMAI (VAL) EVANS

(1923-2020)

Val Evans arrived in Sonning Common with her husband Gwyn to settle in Baskerville Road in 1953. She had been living and teaching in Reading prior to marrying Gwyn. Their two children, Caryl and Alun, were educated locally, and when the time was right in 1961 she took up part-time posts as a primary school teacher in both Sonning Common and Kidmore End.

What follows was written to be read out at her small funeral on 17 July during lockdown. I am well aware that similar words could have been written by any number of her friends far and wide. She was much loved by us all and we will miss her.

I have been thinking about what made Val so special. It is a word that has been said to me so often over the last few days. I feel sure it had to do with the warmth that seemed to be the essence of all she was; and that wonderful low Welsh voice made everyone feel at home as soon as they met her.

Then came questions about what you had been doing, how the family was, and what they had been up to ... followed by enquiries about what you were reading and how your current painting was going. And on and on, with never an awkward moment. She rarely focused on herself.

She was a role model to so many people. Twelve years my senior, we were close friends for almost sixty years. We had so many interests in common and she was a stalwart

of our WEA literature class for nearly forty years. Everyone loved to hear her reading out loud in that distinctive voice, and they enjoyed her insightful and well researched contributions to discussions. Learning was a lifetime experience for her, and in her late 80s she followed WEA courses in the making of stained glass and classical music appreciation.

Towards the end of her life she left the class, and it was not the same without her. She always maintained, however, that she really preferred biographies to novels. Her next-door neighbour, Ian Burgess, used to keep her supplied with suitable reading material courtesy of the Sue Ryder bookshop, which he helped run.

We sat on Adult Education committees together, went on protest marches, fed the Greenham Common women, and delivered hundreds of political leaflets. During the miners' strike she whispered in my ear that most Welsh mothers would cut off their right hand rather than have their sons go down the mines!

She taught at Sonning Common Primary School for many years, and there are people in the village in their fifties and sixties who still recall her with great fondness. Our children remember her as a wonderful teacher - and she taught a reception class of forty. How on earth did she manage to make every child feel so special?

Val loved art and we went to many an exhibition together in London. In later years we used to catch the bus into Reading, swish through the racks of clothes in M&S and John Lewis. She would always persuade me to buy something, but never bought anything for herself! And then we would have a coffee together and watch the world go by. She was a great observer of the human condition.

I shall remember her most fondly for how she would straighten my collar and do up my buttons, and then pat me like a reception child. To the end, she was always caring of others and always neat and tidy.

Pauline (Nin) Twyman



Church news



supporting many initiatives during Covid, always ready to encourage and lift others in prayer, even when at times they must have been exhausted. During all the difficulties of the pandemic they also had to cope with the loss of Kevin's father in late August.

Peace and good health to you all! ●

springwaterchurch.org.uk or 0118 972 4519

Chris Girdler

ST MICHAEL'S

St Michael's re-opened for the celebration of Mass with a congregation at the beginning of July. An emotional experience to gather again as a community to give praise and worship to God and receive Holy Communion after such a long absence. There was a sense of returning home. To maintain social distancing, the congregation is limited to a maximum of forty. Due to the generous response for stewards we have been able to resume all three weekend Masses and weekday Masses.

A significant number of people are still unable to attend Mass so we continue to live-stream all our Masses for their benefit. Recently, we celebrated a number of Requiem Masses. Our live streaming capability introduced due to the pandemic means that family and friends of the deceased, living in different parts of the country or abroad, can participate in a way that would not have been possible a few months ago.

At this time of year, we would be thinking about religious and social events taking us through the autumn towards Advent. The annual prayers and blessing of graves at Kidmore End cemetery in November should go ahead as it is held outside. Restrictions applying to St Martin's school and Abbeycrest still prevent contact by our church.

Our Holy Hour on the first Monday of each month between 7 and 8pm is resuming. Everyone is welcome (up to the 40 limit). ●

www.saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk

SPRINGWATER NEWS

Meetings restarted at 10.30 on Sunday mornings and we continue to film the service so it is available as a live feed, or recording through our website, or YouTube. Weather permitting we meet with less restrictions in the garden afterwards.

I was recently interviewed by BBC Berkshire about the Steering Wheel Fellowship which was a great opportunity, fun and an interesting experience. The foodbank has continued to be very much in demand and it has been a privilege for us, as a church, to be able to build relationships and help local people during these extraordinarily challenging times. The efforts of all the volunteers are much appreciated. The women's group, Aspire, have continued to meet digitally on Zoom, as have Compassionate Loaf while baking amazing bread for the food bank, local care homes and people who have been shielding.

A big thank you to our pastors Kevin and Linsey who have been leading and

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

I hesitate to put pen to paper - or finger to keyboard - at the moment, for fear that yet another variation on the theme will issue forth from the Government the minute I press 'send'... I am only grateful that the Good Lord didn't keep changing his mind about the ten commandments...

Uncertainty and confusion often seem harder to live with than specific, evident difficulties and challenges, don't they? One of the great strengths of the Christian faith is that we believe in an unchanging God whose love for us is unshakable. No, he doesn't guarantee that we won't face hard times - Christians are no more exempt than anyone else - but he promises strength, patience and wisdom to see us through. Our part is to ask, and trust: easier said than done, to be sure, in the face of redundancy or bereavement, but as the saying goes, in acceptance lies peace, and in trust lies hope.

Church-wise, you can find up-to-date information on our websites via www.achurchnearyou.com.

The church - that is, the Christian community - is still very much here! ●

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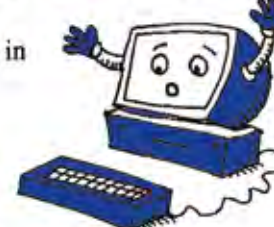
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