

FEB/MAR 2025

A VERY SPECIAL COUPLE!

Farewell, best wishes and thanks

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Recently confirmed in Rightmove's annual statistics, Beville Estate Agency sold the most properties in Sonning Common in 2023.

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"Would thoroughly recommend the team at Beville Estate Agents, they found us a buyer in a matter of weeks and led us through to a successful sale and completion. Excellent service and customer care." *Mr & Mrs Pilling*

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FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

On behalf of the Magazine team I wish to thank the many residents and businesses who were incredibly generous with donations for gift vouchers to families less fortunate than our selves. Residents donated £820 via the 'Just Giving' site which added to donations from local businesses.

Feedback was summarised by one man and repeated by many...
"Thank you so much for the lovely surprise and gift. I hope you all had a lovely Christmas"

One Facebook message kindly stated:

I would like to say a VERY big thank you to the Springwater Foodbank and to the incredible volunteers who have been delivering us a food package for the past few weeks. We've fallen on hard times and having these food parcels has taken a huge amount of stress off me while I try to get back on my feet. To the amazing and kind people who donate, thank you. You have no idea how much it helps. I will eternally be in debt to your kindness and I hope to pay it forward as soon as I'm able to. Thank you very much, may you all have a blessed Christmas.

The vouchers are the Christmas treat but items for the Food Bank are all year round and it is even more a priority in the winter especially when it is really cold. Packaged food can be left in the containers outside the church or in the box in the Co-op.

Wishing all of our readers and your families, a happy and healthy 2025. ●

Diana and Christine

MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM



Diana Pearman



Christine Atkinson



Joan Grummant

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SC SONNING COMMON
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MECE NEWS

A wonderful community

A Happy New Year from all at Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge. We returned to school with a few flurries of snow, but we were not perturbed. Students have arrived with the same enthusiasm and determination as they finished the Christmas term!

I write this update as Interim Headteacher, following Mrs Bowers' resignation. Whilst this is far from the ideal way in which to begin a fresh term our core values and commitment to excellence remain unchanged. Situations like these present both challenges and opportunities, but I have full confidence in our collective strength and resilience. Having worked at MECE for 8 years I've truly grown to love being part of this wonderful community and the growth, development and wellbeing of our students remains my highest priority as I assume the role of Headteacher.

The Autumn term is punctuated with other wonderful opportunities for the school to engage with the community – most importantly for the school are the Open events sitting across September and October. This year we welcomed over 250 families to visit the school and meet staff and students. Visitors are always quick to praise the wonderful student guides who represent the school with confidence and speak proudly of their experiences. We look forward, later this term, to providing further opportunities to year 6 families to visit the school once Secondary School Offers are released in March.

At October Half Term 50 students and 5 staff visited Battlefields in Belgium which

was a poignant experience for all. As a school we place high value on the extra-curricular opportunities we provide for the students, and I am extremely grateful for the huge number of staff who go above and beyond in making these opportunities available. Later this year we also have trips to Iceland (Geography) and the Italian Dolomites (skiing) to look forward to.

November saw our annual Astronomy Evening where students are invited to enhance their science studies with short lectures on Astronomy & the Science of Space given by members of a local Astronomy Club and then the opportunity to view the moon, planets and constellations using highly technical equipment too. After a nervous start, whereby it seemed cloud cover might thwart our attempts, we were rewarded by some wonderful clear images of Venus, Saturn and of course the moon. Staff, students and parents were wowed by the images we were able to capture and we are already looking at ways we can share the experience with other schools from across the Trust at next year's event.

Our spotlight event at the end of term, a whole school production of Bugsy Malone, was a roaring success epitomising the school value of working together. We were pleased to welcome year 5 & 6 students from Sonning Common Primary School and Kidmore End CE Primary School to our matinee performance and from the rapturous laughter and applause I think we can safely say they enjoyed their visit!

All in all around 70 members of the school community were involved in



the production including the cast, pit band, production team, backstage crew and front of house; students, staff and parents all volunteering their time to make the show a success. Every year the Performing Arts team pull out all the stops to inspire students and this year, for many, was cited as "the best yet".

This term we will continue to work together to build on the great work already accomplished and to embrace the new opportunities ahead and I thank the many members of this community who support us. ●

Yours,
EMMA BLISS



SCPS NEWS

A day in the life (of a headteacher)



6.10pm. Phew! That was a long day as I've been up since five thirty.

I tend to rise early. The house is quiet before everyone else gets up and there is often stuff to catch up on from the day before. There rarely seem to be enough hours in the day. Once I have fed the dog and cats, I send a few emails and by 6.15am one or two of my colleagues will start to respond about things we need to discuss later in the morning.

I usually arrive at school by eight as we often have early morning staffing decisions, keeping track of who is in that day, and who is not. I feel strongly that we are better supporting our children with people they know, or at least recognise and am lucky to have a flexible staff team. People muck in, and I often ask them to!

Some children need closer support and benefit hugely from it being the same person each day. We try our best, but of course sometimes we have to fill in with people they are less familiar with. Funding this is difficult as grants are based on student numbers. In order to staff each area appropriately we need to focus on attracting as many children to our school as possible and I firmly believe that we have a great offer - that we get our priorities right.

When children are having a bad day we offer them timeouts, with new faces. I am part of this, and often find myself pulled

away from my computer to construct something out of Lego or to sit on the floor and chat to a child struggling with big feelings. Is this my job? Absolutely. I would not ask my staff to do difficult things if I could not demonstrate my view of how they should be done.

Rhubarb, my young dog, is a constant source of support. My daughter and our friends help look after her to make sure her life is rich and varied - mornings outside with horses and chickens; afternoons in school. By lunchtime, I often have children coming for a quick chat with me, or more likely the dog! We've found she has a talent for calming children down and helping them feel ready to return to class. She even enjoyed her own Christmas dinner at the end of last term.

When I am at my desk there are a lot of emails, documents and policies. I often think about how a school reflects its headteacher, and what that means for me (and the school!). I hope I am calm and professional and hopefully our parents appreciate this approach. We are very much like the proverbial swan, trying to keep things looking serene on the surface. I love meeting children on the gate (a real positive legacy of the post-Covid years) and try to make myself available at the end of the school day. After school finishes there will be staff meetings or our Senior Leadership Team, or with parent meetings many of the other days. I am forever grateful to be surrounded by supportive people, and occasionally they need to help me with big decisions that can affect young people's lives. It is a serious team effort.

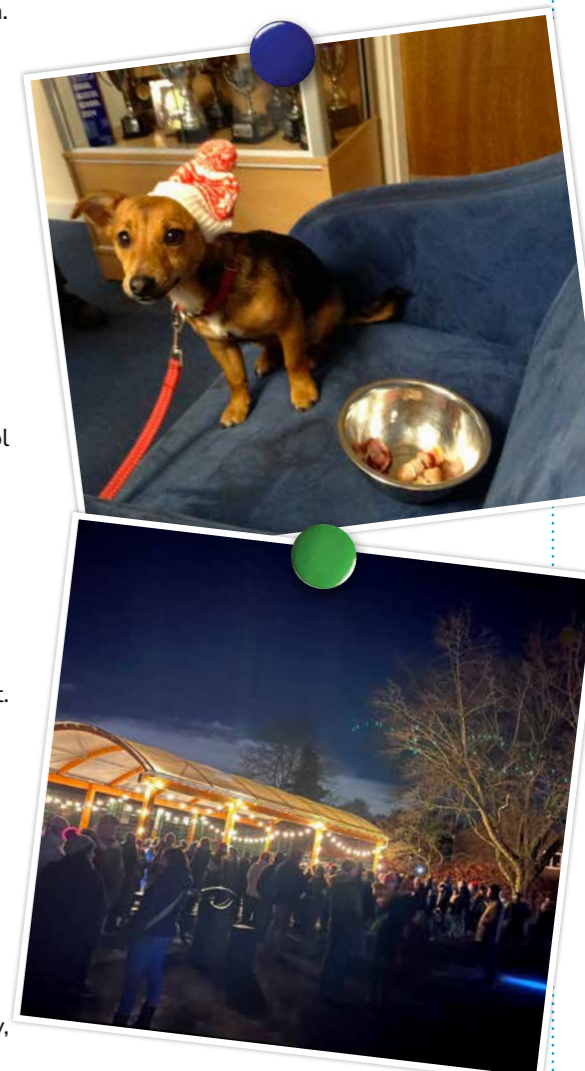
Our local authority and national bodies are our constant companions - sometimes supportive, always challenging. It is a balancing act and questions do get asked, but they are gentler and more supportive if the fundamentals are right. I am proud to confirm my belief that we are a good school, and repeated inspections have confirmed that. We are, ultimately,

working for you – our children, our parents and our community.

I am always looking for ways to improve communication and interaction between us all. We have become a bit more public on social media, our website and invited the whole local community more explicitly to recent events (for example the Christmas Fair and the Carol Concert, both of which were fabulous events with a lot of fun and singing!). We are always open to suggestion and improvements.

SCPS is a proud part of the Sonning Common community, and we are determined to reflect that. ●

RACHEL SALMONS
Headteacher Sonning Common Primary School



Open evening and Bugsy
See more photos on our website:
Scan the QR codes for details



Open evening photos



Bugsy photos

SC PRESCHOOL NEWS

The children have a lot of fun during the lead up to Christmas.

Our fabulous local WI have been busy making knitted phone box toppers around the village and made a special one for the postbox in the garden at preschool, with snowmen, Father Christmas and Rudolf! A big thankyou to them...

The staff and children would also like to say thankyou to the Tree Barn in Christmas Common for donating a tree to preschool. The children very much enjoyed decorating it. All at preschool are looking forward to a successful 2025.

Do you know we have extended opening times during the week? There is early drop

off from 8:30 am, and children can stay after their pre school session on Monday to Thursday until 4pm. All enquiries for future places to the office on 0118 972 4760 or email info@sonningcommonpreschool.co.uk



WOW WHAT A RED SLEIGH

What a fabulous night had on 15 December 2024 as Santa on a Tractor came to town for our 9th year! Who'd have thought after 9 years on Santa that the team would have evolved so much. From hay bales on the back of a trailer with some borrowed lighting had been transformed and scrambled together volunteers became a well-oiled team with new helpers each year and a fine red sleigh to boot!

The jolly elves were dancing in the street to this year's dance hit Christmas tunes and giving out the chocolates and collecting money for two deserving charities. This year collecting for Sonning Common Scout Hut and Shedquarters.

Shedquarters was set up with a mission to reduce loneliness and isolation as experienced by older people. They bring together men and women to share knowledge, learn new skills and to make new friends. Shedquarters is located alongside Peppard Memorial Hall.

Sonning Common Scouts work hard to give children stimulating experiences. Scout leaders believe in preparing young people with skills for life. They encourage our young people to do more, learn more and be more. Each week, they give young people the opportunity to enjoy fun and adventure while developing new skills they need to succeed, plus new friendships.

Thank you to the many elves, the night wouldn't be possible without your help and good cheer.

At the end of our journey, stopping at the Hare and Hounds, thank you Mick and Claire for hosting us and warming the helpers with nibbles and the mince pies, just what we needed. Thoroughly warmed

up, although very lucky with the mild weather and the rain held off too!

Thank you to CESA for their support and funding for the chocolates, and other consumables purchased to enable the evening to be so successful.

A huge thank you to Paul Jenkins for ensuring Santa was safely steered around the streets.

Without Matt White and Matt Hopson on their walkie talkies, directing traffic, moving small people safely out the way, then the night just couldn't happen. A massive thank you to you both along with the Elf and Safety Team ensuring little people are kept safe through the night by walking next to the sleigh.

After all that I bet you're wondering how much we raised. We'll... I can tell you that the night raised an outstanding £950 - wow!! £475 has been sent to each of the charities to help them to continue with their hard work and dedication.

So, all that's left for me to say is thank you to all the villagers and those who donated. We cannot thank you enough for your support and the enjoyment we get from seeing you all having fun.

Looking forward to doing it all again next year. If you'd like to help us, please get in touch, the elves are very friendly you know, and welcome new helpers!

HELEN AND THE TEAM



Bishopswood School

Bishopswood School is dedicated to equipping our pupils with special educational needs (SEN) with essential life skills, communication abilities, and knowledge required to engage with the wider community confidently. Our approach emphasises real-life experiences, ensuring pupils can apply and transfer their learning beyond the classroom.

We are raising funds for a minibus further to enhance our pupils' access to the local environment.



Scan the QR code to donate.

SC SONNING COMMON MAGAZINE

online

Bishopswood School

Read more on our website:
Scan the QR code for details

SING, ENJOY, GO HOME HAPPY!

This is the motto of Harmony Community Choir



There are nearly 100 members on our books, and most weeks between 50/60 attend. The choir sings a wide variety of songs, a lot from musicals.

Our session ends with tea and cakes which enable us all to mingle and chat.

Anne Fairbrother is our musical director, and with her vast experience and sense of humour, we have come along in leaps and bounds. So much so we were able to sing at Abbeycrest nursing home in May, then again before Christmas, singing

many of the songs we sing throughout the year and ending with Christmas carols which all the residents enjoyed.

Our summer term ended with a cream tea and we were entertained by a trio called Ad Hoc who delighted us with a number of old songs. It did get some of us up dancing.

Our main event of the year is our Christmas concert. We had an audience of over 100 with a full programme of songs we sing all year and ended with traditional Christmas carols.

This was followed by tea and mince pies, plus a super raffle, our members contribute items and along with donations, 2 loyal members put together splendid hampers.

All proceedings from our concert and the raffle are donated to local organisations.

In 2024 it was £500 to purchase All in One Vouchers for 68 local families who receive support from the Food bank and 27 isolated residents who are supported by FISH. Adults received £20 and children £10 each.

As we go into another year, new members will be most welcome. No audition is required, so do come along to give us a try to see if our motto is for you ...

Sing, Enjoy, Go Home Happy!

Meeting every Thursday at Peppard Memorial Hall 1.30pm fees £5

For more details please contact

Jackie
07388 360989

Clive
07934 875127

Ray
07793 214385

On behalf of Harmony Community Choir A Happy New Year ●

JACKIE BROWN

GET HEALTHY

The festive season is a time for indulgence, but once the decorations come down, many of us feel the need to reset. If you're ready to leave the mince pies behind and prioritise your health, here are five straightforward steps to bounce back after Christmas.

1. Recalibrate Your Nutrition Start by focusing on whole, nutrient-dense foods. Fill your plate with lean protein, fresh vegetables, fruits and healthy fats. Cut back on processed snacks, sugary treats and alcohol. If you overindulged, don't stress - just aim for consistency rather than perfection

2. Hydrate Like a Pro Water is your best friend for flushing out toxins and improving digestion after holiday excess. Aim for 6-8 glasses a day. Add slices of lemon, cucumber or fresh mint for an extra refreshing twist

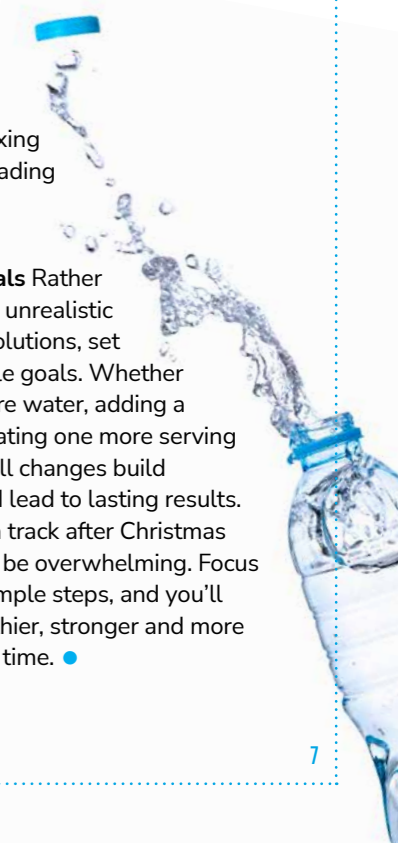
3. Ease Back into Exercise Don't dive straight into intense workouts if you've taken a break. Start with moderate activities like brisk walks, yoga or a light gym session. Gradually rebuild your routine to include strength training, cardio and mobility work.

4. Prioritise Sleep Late nights during the holidays can leave you feeling sluggish. Aim for 7-8 hours of quality sleep by creating a consistent bedtime routine. Ditch screens an hour before bed and wind

down with relaxing activities like reading or meditation.

5. Set Small, Achievable Goals Rather than diving into unrealistic New Year's resolutions, set small, actionable goals. Whether it's drinking more water, adding a daily walk, or eating one more serving of veggies, small changes build momentum and lead to lasting results. Getting back on track after Christmas doesn't have to be overwhelming. Focus on these five simple steps, and you'll be feeling healthier, stronger and more energised in no time. ●

CHRIS DYER



Eco SoCo Seed Library @ Sonning Common Library NOW COLLECTING SEEDS!



What is a seed lending library? In simple terms, a seed library is just how it sounds – it loans seeds to gardeners and works much like a traditional library. The benefits of a seed lending library are many: it builds a community with fellow gardeners, supports people who are new to the world of gardening and encourages gardeners to save quality seeds that are suitable for our local growing area.

So how does a seed library work? A seed library takes some time and effort to put together, but the way the library works is very simple: gardeners “borrow” seeds from the library at planting time. At the end of

the growing season, they save seeds from the plants and return a portion of the seeds to the library in an envelope marked with the date, seed details, sowing tips. In addition, gardeners can donate unused / part used commercial seed packets.

A collection box is now available at Sonning Common library, where Juliet Legg has kindly agreed to give the seed library a home. Once we have a reasonable collection of seeds, we will categorise them and store them in a very smart donated filing cabinet. We would be delighted to receive your seed packets / envelopes! ●

MARGARET MEAD



NATIVE TREES

In other news, we are looking forward to the new native trees being planted on SC verges in February and the FIVE new community trees being planted in March! We will need your help watering the trees this summer. Would you be willing to water a new tree on your road? To find out more or to join our friendly team of tree watering guardians, please email ecosoco24@gmail.com

On the subject of trees, Eco SoCo distributed over 50 native garden trees just before Christmas. We hope all those who collected a tree, enjoy the addition to the biodiversity in their garden for many years to come!

Last but by no means least, fancy some cinema in Sonning Common? We're hoping to show a number of interesting and inspiring films, starting with the film 'Wilding' which follows the journey of the Knepp Estate to regenerate its land. It's a truly beautiful film and it will leave you feeling hopeful and inspired about giving mother nature a helping hand.

“Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” ●

MARGARET MEAD



COMPASSIONATE LOAF

Handmade & heartfelt - delicious bread, making a difference to local people.

A one-day bread making course, way back in 2013, was the inspiration for what has since become a thriving bread making group, raising over £20,000 for charity and teaching dozens of local people the joy of making their own bread.

Founders, Clare Pelling and Jane McIlroy baked from home for four years until Springwater Church offered to back Compassionate Loaf and support their mission. Now, every Monday morning, local people gather to learn bread making skills with an ever-increasing repertoire, from Focaccia to Sourdough, Chelsea Buns to Oaty Spelt and all the bread made is sold to raise money for local charities.

To order fresh bread and buns (Bloomers, Apple Spelt, Sourdough, Carrot Spelt, Focaccia, Ciabatta, Walnut and Raisin Ring, Oaty Spelt, Six Seed, Crispbreads, Fougasse, Chelsea Buns and Cinnamon Buns) please email Clare Pelling by Saturday evening, for collection from Springwater Church on Monday around 1pm. Email Address: CompassionateLoaf@gmail.com

POP UP BREAD SALE coming soon! Look out for posters and updates on Sonning Common Facebook groups!



Are you a budding baker? To join our merry band of Monday morning bread makers and learn how to make amazing bakes, please contact Clare for more details.

We look forward to baking for you! ●

Thinking of moving in 2025?

At Bridges, we love what we do and pride ourselves on delivering a first class service.

We are dedicated to giving expert advice and benefit from over 32 years' experience selling properties in and around Sonning Common.

Our reputation is built on old fashioned qualities like honesty, transparency and hard work.

Please contact Bridges for a free market appraisal, we'd love to hear from you.



Meet the team



Andy as well as his team, responded promptly, with constant progress updates. Communication was excellent. They were all friendly, helpful, professional, throughout the sale, also the purchase of a new property. I would highly recommend them.

SALLY
Heatherfield Place, Sonning Common – OCTOBER 2024



A huge thank you to Bridges in Sonning Common. From Andy and Liana's honest and spot on valuation, to their personal and always professional service. We had used other agents before instructing Bridges and no one matched their experience and knowledge.

D CRESSWELL
Gardeners Copse, Sonning Common – OCTOBER 2024

33 Wood Lane, Sonning Common, RG4 9SJ
post@bridgesproperty.co.uk

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2025: celebrating 57 years

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A new year - help to help others! Please speak to us about our volunteering opportunities! We are busy getting ready for spring - planting seeds, bringing on perennials and planning a riot of summer colour, ready for sale from April. In addition to our regular weekday openings, we will open on the following five Saturdays in May, from 9.30 to 3.30:

Saturdays: 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st May

For more information, please call 01491 628 933
Email: frances@waysandmeans.org.uk
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SOCIAL MORNINGS

A cuppa and a chat
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AT THE LIBRARY
10:30 - 12:30 every Friday

Come and dunk a biscuit

Oxfordshire **ageUK**

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, our Digital Support Volunteer, and different local services in your community, including FISH Volunteer centre.

When: First Thursday of the month, 10am-12pm
(2nd January, 6th February, 6th March, 3rd April, 1st May and 5th June)

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

Cost: FREE - with support from Farrans Construction.

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

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VILLAGE COFFEE MORNINGS
Sonning Common Village Hall
WEDNESDAY 5th FEBRUARY
and
WEDNESDAY 5th MARCH
10.30 a.m. - 12 Noon

All Welcome - Please join us for a Cup of Coffee/Tea and Biscuits

TOMBOLA AND SALES TABLES
WOOL • HANDCRAFTED CARDS
JEWELLERY • 200 BOOKS

GREENSHOOTS: selling Produce, Plants, Jams, Chutneys and Gifts

Profits benefit local good causes
Hosted by: **Sonning Common**

World Day of Prayer 2025
Friday 7th March 2025 at 6.30pm.
Springwater Church
The Manse, Blounts Court Road, Peppard RG9 5EU
"I made you wonderful"
Kia Orana!
(A greeting and blessing from the Cook Islands meaning:
"May you have a long and fulfilling life!")

Sonning Common Primary School PTA invites you to:

WINE TASTING

With special thanks to our sponsor **Abbeycrest**

ARIA CARE

ENJOY

- Canapés and wine pairings
- Welcome drink on arrival
- White, red and dessert wines with introductions from Madame Baillie.

WSET DIP

Friday 7th March
7:30pm to 10:00pm
SCPS School Hall

With thanks to:

Advance Tickets only, £20 per person.
pta@sonning-common.oxon.sch.uk

All proceeds go towards Sonning Common Primary School
Minimum age 18

SONNING COMMON PRIMARY SCHOOL

On Your Bike

Sunday 18th May 2025

Registration open

Visit our website
www.onyourbikesonningcommon.co.uk
Or Scan QR Code below

Join us for a bike ride

- Register online
- Free prize draw - Win a new bike!
- A choice of 3 routes/ distances 6, 12 or 20 miles
- Friendly community event
- Open to all - regardless of ability
- Raising money for Sonning Common Primary School and two local charities. Sonning Common First Responders and Sport In Mind

With thanks to key sponsors

SONNING COMMON HEALTH CENTRE

Sonning Common Health Centre Patient Participation Group (PPG)

is a group of patients and GP practice staff who meet to discuss practice issues and patient experience, to help improve the service, to provide practical support to the health centre team when required and to organise health events of interest to our local community.

We aim to be representative and welcome your views, feedback and ideas for improvements to the healthcare services provided.

If you would like to hear more about what the PPG is doing and the health events which we are organising then please sign up to the mailing list for relevant, up to date information. Please email saying that you would like to register for the mailing list on:
SCHCPPG@gmail.com
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Eco SoCo

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PARISH NEWS

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SCPC Business

The Parish Council has launched a Community Calendar to keep residents informed about different activities, groups and events which are happening in the Village.

The Community Calendar can be found on our website - <https://sonningcommonparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

If you would like to add anything to the calendar, or have any queries, please email Jess Moss – jess.moss@sonningcommonparishcouncil.gov.uk

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING DATES 2025

The Parish Council meets every month on a Monday at 8pm in the Village Hall. Members of the Public are welcome to attend. Dates for future meeting can be found below and will appear in future issues.

- MONDAY 10TH FEBRUARY
- MONDAY 10TH MARCH ●

Sonning Common Youth Club

Last year Sonning Common Youth Club had a great half term. We went ice skating at Winter Wonderland, had a roller disco to end the year, threw Halloween and Christmas parties for the young people, made Christmas decorations and much more.

This term we will be looking forward to taking the young people on a trip, making more crafts and baking lots of yummy snacks. ●

SUNNY
Youth Leader



SPEEDWATCH

The Parish Council has agreed to fund, order and then display eight new speed signs in support of the monitoring by the Speedwatch group. These will be purchased from the Oxfordshire County Council highways authority. These display the Thames Valley Police logo at the bottom. The 20 mph speed limit throughout the village was agreed by the Oxfordshire County Council in 2022 and the new speed signs were installed then.

It is hoped the new signs will help to raise awareness of speed watch. The signs will be displayed at every road entrance to the village so at Kennylands Road, Reade's lane, Wood lane, Grove Road, Westleigh Drive, Sedgewell Road, Newfield Road and Blounts Court Road, and as vehicles drive in they will see the signs and these will explain that speed watch people are working in this area.

The 20 mph has been adopted widely in the UK in villages and on roads in towns and cities. There is significant evidence that people are more likely to survive if hit by a car at 20mph.

After all we would prefer to be safe?

Speed Watch have had a good response to the appeal for help in last months magazine but are still seeking more volunteers. Please contact the community speedwatch website or leave a message with the Parish office. ●



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DID YOU KNOW? TOWNLANDS

By CHRISTINE ATKINSON

We have probably all used Townlands minor injuries clinic or had an appointment at a clinic there for an eye or ear issue at some time. Some may have had cause to stay in one of the rehab beds that it used to have following a major operation.

But did you know that the building was originally a workhouse?

At the end of the 16th century and beginning of the 17th century, churches were encouraged to help provide work and support to the poor rather than allow them to beg in the streets. Local parishes then began to set up poor houses (or workhouses) in purpose built buildings, where families could live. Adults being

given work to do to earn their keep, and children kept safe.

By 1727, many poor in Henley could not manage to provide their own roof over their heads, and so a poor house was set up in cottages in New Street. This was used until 1790 when an increase in numbers required a larger facility, which was erected by local builder John Strange on the site now known as Townlands. It was designed by the architect Henry Bradshaw, who also designed the old Henley Town Hall which was demolished, sold and rebuilt in Crazies Hill! (another story).

The bigger workhouse could house 150 people. The purpose of a workhouse was to provide the poor with accommodation that was not as comfortable as if they were outside. If someone became poor enough to need to be admitted to the workhouse, the whole family were taken in, the males and females separated, and the children separated from the adults.

A school was set up, to train them for an occupation, such as laundry work or as a servant, so as they could make their own way in the future. This all sounds like a good system, but during the Victorian era the harshness of the workhouse institutions became known for their terrible conditions, forced child labour, long hours, malnutrition, beatings, and neglect. Scenes from the tales of Oliver Twist are not dissimilar to how it would have been in some of the workhouses.

The bell to rise would be rung at 6am (7am in winter), followed by roll call and prayers before breakfast. Those capable of work did a variety of jobs that were needed to keep the workhouse running - laundry, cleaning, cooking, looking after the boilers, blacksmith - using whatever skill they had. Long hard days with many rules to follow and punishment if broken. Breakfast or dinner withheld, sometimes whipping and sometimes locked up - although not much of this happened here in Henley.

During the next 100 years the building was added to in various ways, addition

of a 'pest house' or isolation ward for inmates with infectious diseases in the centre of the workhouse site. The Poor Law Act in 1834 allowed Commissioners to be appointed forming a group from all the surrounding parishes to take over the running of Henley workhouse. It was then enlarged to accommodate 250 people. An infirmary was added in 1841, a full-time nurse was appointed, and schoolrooms were built in the workhouse with a schoolmaster and schoolmistress to educate the pauper children.

One of the appointees was a Henley District Medical Officer who was required to be present at the workhouse and tend the sick and attend to births (many being single mothers), for which he was paid a salary of £110. Help was also given to the poor who were not living within the workhouse. They might have broken a leg, got a lung infection, or in some other way become unable to support themselves and their family, or had a child needing medicine. Other relief might be the provision of coffins to the poor.

Each fortnight there was a meeting of the group of commissioners who would hear from the Master of the Workhouse on how he dealt with the inmates. He was responsible for housing, feeding, and clothing the inmates, and had to keep accounts for all costs. The Master's wife would be the Matron who had no formal training and would involve the pauper women to assist her. There was also a 'house porter', whose task was ensuring no unauthorised person came either in or

out - "keep them in but not let them in".

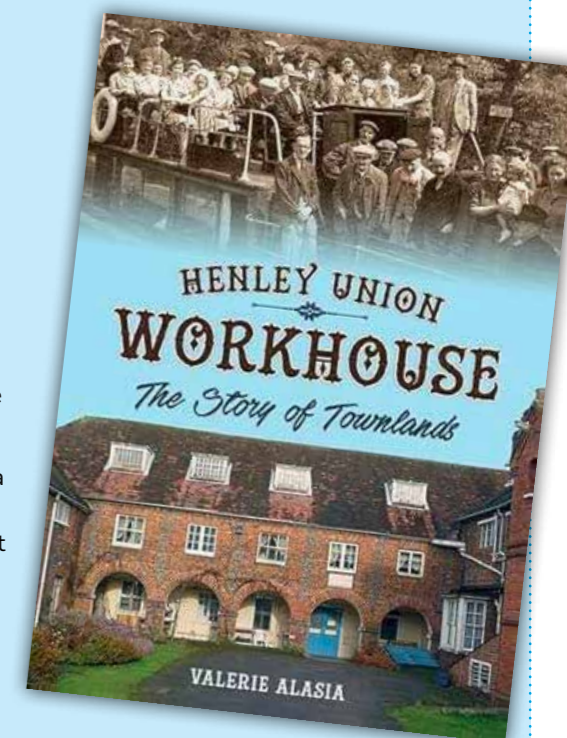
Running a workhouse was not without its problems - such as nurses who were drunk on duty! The Master's accommodation had a bay window overlooking the courtyard, so he could see what was happening, and alongside was the dining room - males and females ate separately, and were well fed.

Samuel Mortlock was appointed as Master of the Henley workhouse in 1848 and his wife Ann became Matron with his niece Eliza joining the staff as Assistant Matron. She became Matron in 1866 following the death of Samuel's wife. Samuel Mortlock died aged 75 in 1884 having been Master for 36 years. He appears to have been a kind man who cared for those living in the workhouse and arranged an outing for the children to The Great Exhibition and set up a charity to pay for Christmas Dinner for the inmates.

At the beginning of the 20th century extra wards and a mortuary were added to the infirmary and in 1929 a Local Government Act abolished all Poor Law Authorities, and the workhouse became a Public Assistance Institution, run by Oxfordshire Council. With the forming of the National Health Service in 1948 the Henley workhouse then became the Townlands Hospital. The buildings of the workhouse remained at the hospital and newer wards and offices were built. It was kept in use in this

way until the new hospital was built and replaced it in 2016 - another story!

Henley local author Valerie Alasia has written a book about the workhouse at Townlands which is called *Henley Union Workhouse: The Story of Townlands* if you would like to delve deeper into the history. ●



Location of Henley workhouse from 1910 map



Source: 'The history of the workhouse' by Peter Higginbotham, Workhouses.org, British National Archives

SPRING RESOLUTIONS



How are your New Year's resolutions going? We're a month in now, so they will either be a firmly established part of your daily routine or will have been forgotten about 3 weeks ago! Mine was the old classic - to cut down on chocolate. Not an easy one given the surplus of the stuff in our house after Christmas and having a January birthday certainly didn't help. Given that I've been making the same resolution every year for the last 20 years or more, I've come to the conclusion that January 1st is a rubbish time to try to change anything in my life. The days are short and cold; money is tight; and it's hard not to feel low after the highs of the festive season. So, I propose that March 1st be the new date for change. Spring into your new way of life. I'm sure we'll all be feeling much more positive then and therefore more likely to succeed.

What might a positive and achievable spring resolution be? To get out and about more? To socialise more? To join a new club? To read more? To help the community? To do more gardening? All of these could be achieved by visiting the library in Grove Road. A walk is always far more rewarding if you have

a destination in mind. Make that the library and you can stop for a chat (another resolution ticked off), and if it happens to be a Friday morning you can even enjoy a drink and biscuit at the Social Morning (yet another tick). If it's a Thursday morning, board games are on offer so if you fancy it you can join in and have a cuppa too (tick, tick). It's not compulsory, you might just want to sit and catch your breath. Everyone is welcome, it is a community space. Although you might want to take a look at the seed exchange while you are there. The Eco SoCo Group has set it up. It's a wonderfully simple concept, you bring any excess seeds that you have and swap them for some that have been donated by someone else. A wonderful way to diversify the plants in your garden.

Whatever day you visit, you might want to choose a book. There are all sorts on offer: crime and thrillers; romance; biographies; fantasy; gardening books; the list goes on. If you are interested in a particular title which isn't on the shelf, you can order it in for a small fee. Not sure what to read? Just ask and the friendly staff or volunteers will come up with some suggestions for you. The wonderful thing is it's free, so you can

take a selection home, and it won't cost you a penny! Books can be a great form of escapism. I particularly enjoy a series as each one I start after the first is like catching up with old friends. If you too love reading - classics, chick lit or something in between - then you might consider volunteering in the library. Why not have a chat while you are there to find out more?

No matter what your spring resolution is, I wish you luck with it. I'll be starting mine on March 1st so I'm just going to polish off that last couple of boxes of chocolates while it's still February. ●

ALISON SMITH
FOSCL

LIBRARY OPENING TIMES

Monday	2:00pm-5:00pm
Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	2:00pm-7:00pm
Thursday	9:00am-1:00pm & 2:00pm-5:00pm
Friday	9:00am-1:00pm & 2:00pm-5:00pm
Saturday	9:30am-12:30pm

GREETINGS FROM THE LIBRARY

We are tackling 2025 with enthusiasm and coming up with new ideas to delight, amuse and inform you over the coming months.

The Library Service likes to promote "Everyone's Welcome" in February and that is certainly the case for Sonning Common Library. Sometimes people feel that a Library is just for the very young and very old and no one in between but that's not the case with us. We are used by all ages for a wide range of reasons from books, to printing from the computers, events and board game mornings. Is there someone you know who thinks the library isn't for them? Nudge them in our direction and we'll change their mind!

An event coming up is an author evening with Jasper Forde. He has been called "one of our most



inventive and exciting living authors" with "inventive wordplay", "fiendish plotting", "wit" and "comedy in depth" so ask at the Library for tickets for his talk on the evening of Tuesday, 18 March. I have also bought extra copies of his books for the library stock, thanks to money from the Friends of Sonning Common Library.

For our super-keen crafters, we will be doing special story times with crafts

and cakes on 8th February to prepare for Valentine's Day and 29th March so lovely presents and cards can be made as Mother's Day gifts (and for grandmothers!).

We look forward to welcoming you soon. ●

JULIET LEGG
Librarian

TOM FORT SCHOOL DAYS

Our younger daughter had two friends around for supper last night, both dating back to their time at Kidmore End Primary School. They are all in their early 20s now, but the years fell away as they dredged out their memories and cackled with laughter as they recalled mishaps and triumphs.

Listening to them took me back as well: our daughters wobbling along Kidmore Lane on their bikes with me behind issuing forth a stream of warnings and encouragement; getting them dressed and breakfasted; Nativity plays and parents' evenings; most of all the wait in the playground for them to emerge and the burst of chatter and laughter as they did.

Most of the lasting friendships we

have made in Sonning Common were forged at that school. I was by some distance the oldest parent, closer in age to some of the grandparents who were on regular pick-up duty. I'd like to say that the younger mums and dads and mums were eager to take advantage of my great wisdom and experience, but it would not be true. However, it was easy to make friends.

I realise now that primary school was as formative an experience for me and my wife as it was for our girls. They went on to Gillotts in Henley and then one to Borlase in Marlow and the younger to Wargave Piggott in Twyford, forming good friendships at all of them. They live away from home now, but when they come back at Christmas they are intensely

busy picking up on those relationships.

I was sent away to boarding school from the age of seven, and when I came home in the holidays, I had no one apart from my brothers to spend time with (ah, poor old Tom, I hear you say!) I would defend to the death the right of parents to spend what seem to me to be surreal sums on private schools; it's their money and they should do with it what they think is right.

But there is nothing to beat the village school. ●



BRAMBLES & BOTANICALS

Little, Local, Lovely



Happy New Year from everyone at Brambles & Botanicals in Sonning Common, where you can order bespoke bouquets and carefully crafted flower arrangements. You may be aware that we have been trading in Sonning Common for almost twenty years, and last year we moved to bigger premises on Wood Lane. If you've yet to visit us, pop down to the village to see everything that we have to offer, and to enjoy some of the friendliest customer service in the area.

Our recent relocation has allowed us to expand our range of goods and services. Historically, we have always offered quality fresh flowers, whether that be for birthdays, weddings, funerals or other occasions. The move to larger premises has provided us with the space to offer so much more, and we take pride in stocking goods that are little, local or lovely – sometimes all three. The three LLLs, as we call them, are the inspiration for our range of goods.

• This article was paid for by Brambles & Botanicals

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If you've not heard of Brambles & Botanicals until now, you might be wondering who we are and what we stand for. Erica started the business from home when she and her family moved to Sonning Common back in 2006, and then set up in the garage at the end of her garden. Her passion for flowers and arranging them has always



conveyed itself readily in conversation, and she and Kerry, her able colleague, take great pleasure in providing flowers for the local community. If you are looking for a warm welcome and an experienced eye in floristry, all set in the heart of a local Oxfordshire village, the team at Brambles & Botanicals are right up your street. Well, Wood Lane in Sonning Common, to be precise! Why not pop in to say hi? Whether you're a new customer or a seasoned one, they will welcome you and do their best to assist you. •

Calling all Young People

Are you doing your Duke of Edinburgh award and struggling to find somewhere to volunteer? Or is your son or daughter looking for such an opportunity? Sonning Common Village Gardeners may be the answer. The group meets every first Sunday and third Thursday of the month for an hour to maintain the flower beds and pots in the village centre and outside the FISH office. Your own gloves would be useful, but gardening knowledge is not required and tools can be provided. Weeding is a big part of the job – but we

also do pruning and planting; all in the hope of making the village centre a little more colourful. It's a great way to get some fresh air and help keep our lovely village welcoming and cheerful. And it might get you started on a path that eventually leads you to Buckingham Palace to collect your D of E gold award!

A big Thank You should go to those organisations and individuals who over the years have given us money, allowing us to buy new plants and bulbs. In 2024, we received a grant from the Parish Council and a very

generous donation from A.B Walker and Son funeral directors. We also had anonymous gifts and cash handed to us while we worked! Harry Skinner of Harry's Hedges provided his time free of charge to help us tame some larger shrubs.

If you'd like to join in, whatever your age, just turn up outside the Village Hall at ten o'clock on Sunday 2 February or the allotted days, keep an eye on the village noticeboards for news of what we're doing or get in touch with Helen Fort. (helenfort@btinternet.com) •

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MEET LINSEY AND KEVIN POTTER

A force for change in the global community

By JOAN GRUMMANT



Kevin and Linsey have worked at Springwater Church, Peppard since 2015 as co pastors and are now moving on to pastures new in March. This is a suitable time to celebrate the many achievements of this dedicated couple and the passion they show in a lifetime of commitment to integrated faith-based church and development work. They have developed very strong community links wherever they have worked and their experiences in various parts of the world have clarified their vision and faith. Their empathy for others and drive to improve difficult challenges shines through all their work.

Linsey was born into a Christian family in Iran where her father worked as a geologist and the very close family had six children. She travelled a lot as a child and spent time in Australia, London for five years and Bedford for seven years. She had an aunt who did faith work in Indonesia, so Linsey was well acquainted with this kind of life. She went to Manchester University to complete a degree

in Nursing and worked in ICU before becoming a Health Visitor.

Kevin was born and brought up in Taffs Well, S. Wales and trained as a civil engineer working for the local authority. He found his faith and purpose in his mid-twenties and went to S. India for six months on a civil engineering project for a charity. This was an experience that totally engrossed him, and he was able to use his practical and engineering skills to significant effect. He loved working in rural jungle areas as well as urban and his enjoyment in Outward Bound activities proved to be extremely useful indeed. The vibrancy of life

and of sharing faith in a practical way proved to be a huge stimulus and inspiration.

Kevin and Linsey met at a friend's wedding in Reading. She laughed at his jokes, and they found a common bond in experiences of India and Christian belief. After marrying the couple stayed in Reading working as a civil engineer and health visitor and attended All Nations Christian College where they completed a course in Cross Cultural Training. During this time, they had two sons Ben and Josh and made a commitment to work in India.

In 1993 the couple and two small boys aged 2 and 8 months went to Coonoor in S India with a development company called Interserve where Kevin was involved in building purpose-built schools and training centres for marginalised children and young people. The language spoken was Tamil as well as English and Linsey, as well as nurturing her two boys worked in social enterprise and set up a show room that exhibited and sold local craft work.

In 1996 the couple moved on to Mumbai where both parents, and their sons, learned Hindi at a school in the Himalayas. It was at this time that they welcomed their third child, a daughter called Charys into their very busy lives. They were working for a charity

called Oasis India and Kevin and his team of community care workers were directly involved with the physical, emotional, and spiritual care of women, children and babies impacted by HIV and Aids. The site was called Purnatabhavan and covered seven acres, where the integrated approach of living in the same small community, eating together and supporting each other also focused on learning valuable life skills and health education that enabled a sustainable life. Linsey worked on the social committee and mentored and supported groups and individuals. The couple thrived in this challenging place and loved the people and the time they spent there. They are still in contact with the people that work there.

They returned to Reading in 2001 and during this time Kevin set up the Mustard Tree Foundation, still thriving in Reading. This is a charity working with local churches, the police and local council to provide support for vulnerable and often isolated people around the Oxford Road area. Linsey taught piano to individuals and groups that could not afford music lessons.

In 2004 they relocated to Colorado USA where Linseys' parents lived. They were invited to support American and Mexican Christian groups working in areas known as colonia where drug use and violence affected many vulnerable people. They worked at this for 5

years offering support and their belief in integrated care before moving on to California. Their mission there involved working for Oasis USA to establish Traffic Free Communities in places where people trafficking was a widespread problem. The focus on establishing places around the USA that were safe for the vulnerable and where support was available to enable and empower people to rebuild and move forward was challenging but rewarding work. By 2016 after 26 years of working in many counties Kevin was by now the Community Coordinator and then interim director of Oasis USA and Linsey had undertaken two masters courses at Fuller Theological Seminary. The effect of the catastrophic fires in this area in January has had a profound effect on Linsey and Kevin as several of their friends have lost their homes.

A challenge to strengthen and develop the structure, faith, and community life at Springwater Church in Peppard was offered in 2015. They came originally as part of a 6-month sabbatical and stayed on. Their complimentary skill sets and faith in Jesus and partnering with other local churches have enabled them to make significant changes to the Church community. At the beginning of Lockdown, a food bank to support people in the area was established. Local organisations and volunteers

worked together during challenging times and Springwater partnered up with SOCO. Sonning Common Parish Council, local churches and schools and various individuals to gather supplies that could be distributed around the area. Now the foodbank supports fifty-one local families and has forty-five volunteers across the community still fulfilling the need to support in the community.

As well as gathering on a Sunday morning, the foodbank, parent and toddler group, breadmaking workshops and small groups, Springwater runs a Lifeskills programme and Warm Space and hosts a Repair Café with EcoSoco and Revive Café. It is a huge testament to the work, energy, and commitment of this dynamic couple. Wherever they have lived in the world through their faith in Jesus they have truly made an enormous difference to the lives of others.

Linsey and Kevin move at the end of March. As yet they do not know their next destination, but we know that wherever they settle next they will have a positive effect on the community. Thank you both for all that you do. We will miss you both but wish you well in all you do in the future. ●

HEALTH CENTRE NEWS



It is with great sadness that at the end of December a goodbye was said to Kay. She has decided to hang up her uniform to spend more time with her family and grandchildren. Kay worked at Sonning Common Health Centre for nearly 23 years and was a

well-liked and hugely respected member of the team and well-loved by all our patients. Kay is already deeply missed. She is wished a very happy retirement.

Welcome Stephanie, a new Receptionist to the team. We are

pleased to have Stephanie join us and know that she will settle into the reception team very quickly.

On behalf of the Partners and all the staff at Sonning Common Health Centre we would like to wish everyone a very Happy New Year. ●

FROM THE PPG

The Sonning Common Health Centre Patient Participation Group (PPG) is a group of patients and GP practice staff who meet to discuss practice issues and patient experience to help improve the service, to provide practical support to the health centre team when required and to organise

health events of interest to our local community.

We aim to be representative and welcome your views, feedback and ideas for improvements to the healthcare services provided.

If you would like to hear more about what the PPG is doing and

the health events which we are organising then please sign up to the mailing list for relevant, up to date information. Please email saying that you would like to register for the mailing list on: SCHCPPG@gmail.com You can unsubscribe at any time. ●

RAYNAUD'S DISEASE

Raynaud's phenomenon is common and does not usually cause any severe problems. You can often treat the symptoms yourself by keeping warm. Sometimes it can be a sign of a more serious condition. ●



Check if it's Raynaud's

Raynaud's affects your blood circulation. When you're cold, anxious or stressed, your fingers and toes may change colour.

Other symptoms can include:

- pain
- numbness
- pins and needles
- difficulty moving the affected area

The skin turns white as blood flow is restricted.

Sometimes the skin turns blue as blood vessels react. The skin turns red as blood flow returns.

Some people also find their ears, nose, lips or nipples are affected.

The symptoms of Raynaud's may last from a few minutes to a few hours.

Things you can do to help with Raynaud's

DO:

- keep your home warm
- wear warm clothes during cold weather – especially on your hands and feet
- exercise regularly – this helps improve circulation
- try breathing exercises or yoga to help you relax
- eat a healthy, balanced diet

DON'T

- do not smoke – improve your circulation by stopping smoking
- do not drink too much tea, coffee or cola – caffeine and other stimulants can stop you relaxing

NON-URGENT ADVICE: SEE A GP IF:

- your symptoms are very bad or getting worse
- Raynaud's is affecting your daily life
- you only have numbness on 1 side of your body

- you also have joint pain, skin rashes or muscle weakness
- you're over 30 and get symptoms of Raynaud's for the first time
- your child is under 12 and has symptoms of Raynaud's

TREATMENT FOR RAYNAUD'S FROM A GP

If your symptoms are very bad or getting worse, a GP may prescribe a medicine called nifedipine to help improve your circulation.

Sometimes a GP will examine you and suggest a blood test. In rare

cases, Raynaud's could be a sign of a more serious condition, such as rheumatoid arthritis or lupus.

INFORMATION:

Support from SRUK

SRUK is the UK charity for people with scleroderma and Raynaud's.

It offers:

- further information and advice about living with Raynaud's
- information on how to find support groups

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ANNIVERSARY WALK MESOTHELIOMA

See more photos on our website: Scan the QR code for details



'Friday 18th October, marked the second anniversary of losing my Dad, James Watkins, to Mesothelioma. Keen to keep his memory alive and raise much needed funds for Mesothelioma UK, my mum and I organised an almost 12 mile return walk to the Cheese Shed in Nettlebed with family and friends. Despite a deluge of rain overnight and into the morning of the walk, the sun came out for our departure and thirty hardy souls (aged between 9 and 83) battled their way to Nettlebed through very boggy and muddy conditions. We were all more than deserving of a delicious cheese toastie on our arrival! Bellies full of cheese (and maybe the odd cake!) blue skies, and beautiful

Autumnal sunshine we then made our way back to Sonning Common with plenty of chat and laughter.

Milestones like anniversaries are always hard, but this year was made so much easier for mum and I by the friendship, love, and support we received from all those who joined us that morning.

Mesothelioma is a cruel, needless illness caused by historic exposure to asbestos. We wanted to not only remember Dad but increase awareness and raise money for the charity which helps those affected by it. We were also joined by sisters Chrissy and Jenny on the walk who lost their Dad to

the disease forty years ago. Through donations on the day and a Just Giving page, we have raised almost £900 for the charity this year. Last year, £1800 was raised from the Walking Netball 'Grudge match' between the Rotherfield United Walking Football Men and the Walking Netball Ladies. (Just a reminder that the ladies THRASHED the men 18-14 for anyone who had forgotten! 😊)

A huge thank you from Mum and me for everyone who has donated and joined us on the walk-we are hugely grateful, and are already in the process of plotting next year's adventure! ●

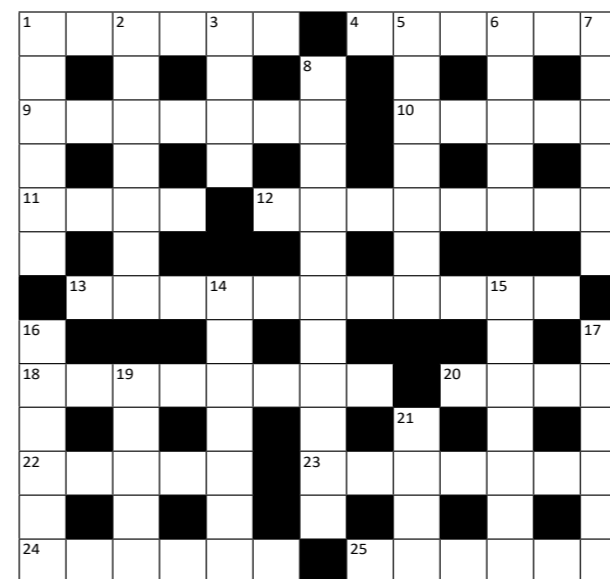
AMANDA WATKINS COOKE



PUZZLE PAGE

By DAVID DUNSTAN

Cryptic crossword



ACROSS

- Port involved in making Dan skip lunch (6)
- 4&22. Hazy cheetah disturbed in Hamlet (6,5)
- 9&10. Village nun ends greed madly (7,5)
10. See 9
11. Save broken pot (4)
12. Guardian of French screen around the fireplace (8)
- 13&25. Confused newcomers go to mall in village (11,6)
18. Notice inlet with involuntary movement in sea (8)
20. Threesome is a wild riot (4)
22. See 4
23. It sounds like I saw something ugly (7)
24. Comment about stain (6)
25. See 13

DOWN

- Lady from Coventry is a prima donna taking a turn (6)
- Motoring club includes pits for lack of recall (7)
- Therefore US lawyer is a mixer (4)
- The sigh expressed is most elevated (7)
- Unknown born on completion of sharp turns in road (1,4)
- Aid to meditation found in Kenyan transcendentalism (6)
- Guarantor is inferior to Dickens, say (11)
14. Hide the French heart broken (7)
15. Wriggle after organ tune you can't forget (7)
16. Bacon is more impulsive (6)
17. Contemporary fashion service (6)
19. True male world (5)
21. Love at rock bottom (4)

See answers on page 34

Sudoku

Grading: medium

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

Cryptogram

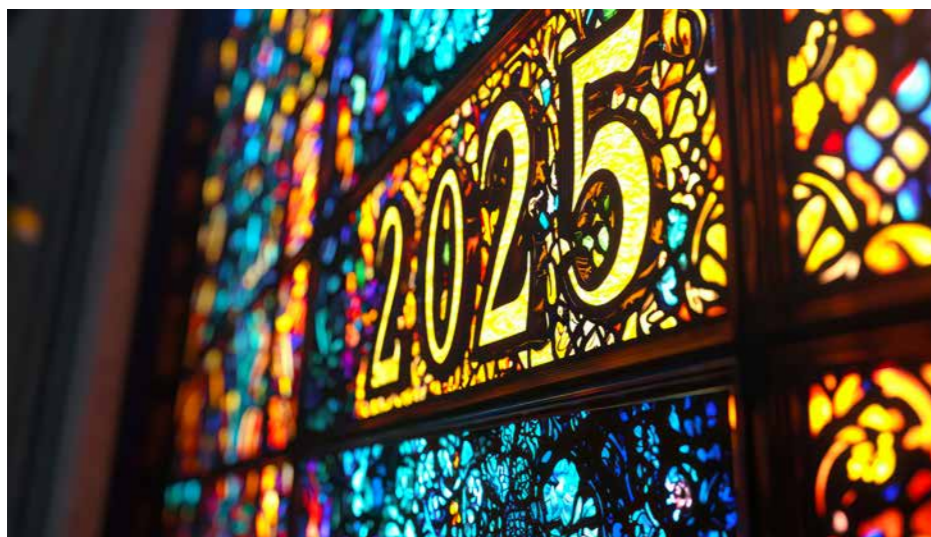
The following quotation has been encoded using a simple letter substitution. What does it say?

OI TEW ARP AN IFAWP HESMF CEDW TFPR
IFP WYR WFORPW FAI ERC IFP TORC UBATW
MABC: TFPR OI OW WYHPS OR IFP BOLFI,
ERC TORIPS OR IFP WFECF. -
MFESBPW COMGPRW: LSPEI PKXPMIEIOARW

Quiz: Who died in 2024?

- 2 February 2024 (aged 77). English actor who played the youngest member of the home guard in *Dad's Army*.
- 12 February 2024 (aged 69). English disc jockey on BBC Radio 1 and Radio 2.
- 5 June 2024 (aged 67). British doctor, broadcaster and author, presenter of BBC Radio 4 series *Just One Thing*.
- 20 June 2024 (aged 88). Canadian actor who played the evil President Snow in *The Hunger Games*.
- 19 July 2024 (aged 91). Welsh snooker player who won six world titles between 1970 and 1978.
- 27 September 2024 (aged 89). English actress who won an Oscar for *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*.
- 23 October 2024 (aged 75). Lincolnshire-born shot putter, who twice held the title World's Strongest Man.
- 12 November 2024 (aged 90). English actor, married to Prunella Scales, who filmed *Great Canal Journeys*.
- 24 November 2024 (aged 91). Yorkshire-born writer best known for the novel *A Woman of Substance*.
- 29 December 2024 (aged 100). US president who helped broker a historic peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002.

CHURCH NEWS



ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

At the time of writing Christmas Day has passed and the New Year yet to be welcomed. This year our parish celebration of Christmas was not what we might have anticipated just a few weeks earlier. During November it was with great sadness the parish learnt that our parish priest, Fr Michael Sharkey, had to retire and leave the area due to unexpected ill health. His pastoral care of the Catholic community in Sonning Common and the surrounding area will be greatly missed. During 2024 we had celebrated his 50th anniversary of priestly ordination. However, the life of the parish goes on due to the commitment of its parishioners assisted by the parish deacon. Masses are celebrated by priests from the neighbouring parishes of Henley, Goring, and Watlington. Over the Christmas season, when our local priests were committed to their own parishes, we welcomed two young priests who are currently undertaking further studies in Rome and were in England for their

Christmas holiday. There was great joy at our Christmas Masses helped by some wonderful singing and beautiful flower arrangements. Once again, the church was full and we were able to welcome friends old and new as well as many visitors.

Since the summer we have been trying to put into practice the message of Jesus to help other less fortunate than ourselves. A produce sale during our parish lunch in September raised enough funds to cover the cost of the Christmas lunch hosted by CIRDIC for the homeless of Reading. In addition, we made Christmas puddings and mince pies for the occasion. Other charities supported through fund raising events were Reading Refugee Group and Missing People Charity.

At the moment we cannot say for sure what the future holds for the parish, but we have every faith that God will guide us over the coming weeks and months for the good of all.

The parishioners of St Michael's wish all readers every blessing for the 2025.

To contact the parish see our website: www.saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk •

CHILTERN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

On the assumption that God really does exist, we need to know what pleases Him.

God has told us in the Bible: 'without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him' (Hebrews 11:6).

We instinctively think that God wants us to be good: to do more good things than bad things. But He is more interested that we have faith.

So what is faith? It is not a leap in the dark. If I say about my friend that I have faith in her, I don't mean that I trust what I don't know about her. I mean I can have confidence because of what I do know about her. I have faith in her because she is dependable.

I can have faith in God because of what I know about Him. He is truthful and dependable; He is also powerful and kind. He has told me exactly what He is like, in the Bible.

I can believe Him about everything He has said because He knows me, the world, the past, the future. Everything is part of His plan and under His control.

And simply by taking Him at His word, He says that He will be pleased.

How reassuring that is. •

CAROLYN JENKINS

Find out more: Sundays, 16:30, Chiltern Evangelical Church, Grove Road, Sonning Common

CHRIST THE KING AND ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

I hope I am not too late to wish everyone a Happy New Year! Many were welcomed to our churches throughout Advent and Christmas. Highlights included the Parish Carol Service at St John's and the wonderful Christingle service at Christ the King on Christmas Eve, as well as Midnight Mass and Christmas morning services.

The Parish Church Fair, which was held in December in the Village Hall, was a great community occasion and raised a generous amount towards the St John's Fundraising Appeal. Thank you to everyone involved, including the Parish Choir who sang outside the hall, and everyone who called in and

supported the event.

Christ the King Church closed its doors on Sunday, 29 December. This is by no means a permanent arrangement, but just whilst very exciting and important interior and exterior improvements and refurbishment are being carried out. The site, including the car park, is now fenced off and out of bounds whilst the contractors complete the work. The project includes replacement of the flat roof, with insulation; installation of solar panels and associated power bank; front extension to provide a separate entrance into the church; interior decoration and flooring; reordering of the church layout, including the removal of the existing font; new bifold doors between the church and the main hall. This is an ambitious

project and will take approximately sixteen weeks to complete: we hope that we can welcome everyone back to the fully refurbished church and hall at the beginning of May.

The season of Lent begins on Wednesday, 5th March (Ash Wednesday). There will be a Benefice Eucharist service, with ashing, at All Saints' at 7.30pm (tbc). There will be no services at Christ the King, but services at St John's will follow the usual pattern: Evensong at 6.00pm on the first Sunday of the month, followed by Sung Eucharist at 11.15am on the second, third and fourth Sundays. Services are subject to change occasionally, so please do check the Kidmore End church pages at www.achurchnearyou.com for updates at any time. •

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PUZZLE PAGE ANSWERS FROM PAGE 31



Quiz: Who died in 2024?
 1. Ian Lavender. 2. Steve Wright. 3. Michael
 Mosley. 4. Donald Sutherland. 5. Ray Reardon.
 6. Dame Maggie Smith. 7. Geoff Capes.
 8. Timothy West. 9. Barbara Taylor Bradford.
 10. Jimmy Carter.

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE MARCH DAYS WHEN
 THE SUN SHINES HOT AND THE WIND BLOWS
 COLD: WHEN IT IS SUMMER IN THE LIGHT, AND
 WINTER IN THE SHADE. — CHARLES DICKENS:
 GREAT EXPECTATIONS

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

Cryptogram

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

Cryptic crossword

Sudoku

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