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From the editor



Welcome to your new look Sonning Common Magazine! I hope you like the fresher, brighter, more modern feel to the magazine. Please let me know what you think.

And a special thank you to our advertisers whose continued support allows us to develop the magazine for the benefit of the community.

One thing I'm keen to do is more features about local people – what they do that may be interesting or unusual, or the contribution they make to the community. If you can think of someone who fits the bill, please let me know.

I'm always on the look-out for good, general interest articles so, if you feel so moved to write one, please send your ideas in.

Thank you for your support and have a great summer.

ROS VARNES Editor

Email me at:

sonningcommonmagazine@googlemail.com

ps...

Sonning Common Magazine is sold at the village library in Grove Road for £1. Annual subscriptions are available for £9.

Contact distribution manager Geoffrey Adams.

Email: geoffrey.adams5@btopenworld.com Phone: 0118 972 2134

WHILE EVERY EFFORT IS MADE TO ENSURE THE ACCURACY OF INFORMATION PRINTED IN THIS MAGAZINE, THE EDITOR AND THE PUBLISHER CANNOT ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF ERRORS THAT OCCUR.

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COVER IMAGE – REGATTA VIEW

Justine Harrison-Wood Henley Photography
www.henleyphotography.co.uk

Design and artwork by:
tensevennine.
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tel 07887 902 376
www.tensevennine.com

COPY DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE 01 JULY 2010

Getting tough on dog fouling

A local councillor has taken personal action to rid the village's streets of dog mess.

Councillor Alan Rooke, who sits on both Sonning Common Parish Council and South Oxfordshire District Council, volunteered with his friend Ian Emmett, from Pages Orchard, to clean up the village following residents' concerns over dog fouling, as reported by this magazine.

Last month the pair went around the village with a container of disinfectant, towed by Ian's pick-up truck, removed the dog mess and sprayed the pavements where it had been.

Said Alan: "Sonning Common is a great village and it's up to us all to look after it. Hopefully now that the streets are clean people will try to keep them that way."

The parish council also has plans to put up new signs around the village with the no-nonsense message to irresponsible dog owners: 'Clean up or pay up'.

Councillor Rooke warned that police would be patrolling the village and if they saw anyone allowing their dog to foul the pavement they would issue an immediate £50 fine. n

RIGHT:

n Councillor Alan Rooke with the new Parish Council signs

n A notice put up by a householder in Woodlands Road.



Police to issue fines for speeding and poor parking

Police are cracking down on poor parking, speeding and anti-social behaviour in Sonning Common after village residents identified these as their key concerns.

The Henley Rural Neighbourhood Policing Team covering Sonning Common ran a consultation with the community, which concluded on 15 April. Questionnaires were delivered to homes and a series of open meetings were held with the police.

PC Barb Taylor and Sergeant Graham Pink, who assessed the feedback, found that people were most concerned about:

n **parking, particularly along Grove Road, Lea Road, Wood Lane and Woodlands Road**

n **anti-social behaviour, particularly in the play areas at night and also outside the One Stop shop in Wood Lane**

n **and speeding, especially along Kennylands Road.**

Police are now setting to work on tackling these issues to make Sonning Common a safer place in which to live.

Said Tina Heslop, of the neighbourhood policing team: "In terms of the parking issues, drivers committing parking offences, including parking on double yellow lines, causing an obstruction and/or causing a danger to other road users, can expect to receive a £30 fine.

"With anti-social behaviour, the team will be increasing the amount of high visibility patrols in the area and engaging with young people to encourage them to meet in more appropriate areas. Anybody found causing a disturbance or intimidating residents will be moved on.

"With regards to speeding, speed enforcement has been carried out along Kennylands Road over the last few months. Drivers caught exceeding the

speed limit have been issued with a £60 fine and three penalty points on their driving licence. Speed enforcement will continue."

Police are planning further Have Your Say meetings where residents can speak to their local police officers and police community support officers about any local issues. No appointment is necessary.

These meetings will be held with police community support officer Lisa Wallman on:

WEDNESDAY 9 JUNE, 7pm – 8pm at the One Stop, Wood Lane

THURSDAY 24 JUNE, 10am – 11am at the One Stop, Wood Lane

For further information or advice contact the neighbourhood policing team on 0845 8 505505 or email SonningCommonNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk. Please note this email address cannot be used to contact Thames Valley Police to report crimes or for any urgent matters. n

Batting for success

Sonning Common schoolboy Jonathan Abbott has reached the finals of a national table tennis competition.

Jonathan, from Wood Lane, qualified to play in the English Table Tennis Association's championship final in Doncaster after winning the southern regional final in Southampton recently.

Jonathan, who plays in the under-11 boys category, took up table tennis two years ago. He is now ranked 11th in his age group in the country.

Said Jonathan: "It is fun to play table tennis instead of just staying inside and watching TV. I really like winning."

His mother Sue Abbott is very proud of her son's achievement. She said: "I feel really excited. It is a great opportunity for him and I have to thank the coaches at Sonning Common and Peppard Table Tennis Club, where Jonathan plays, for all their support and encouragement."

Much of the competition success among local children is down to the dedicated support they receive from volunteer coaches Alan Dines and John Taylor together with Sonning Common

and Peppard Table Tennis Club for the use of its facilities.

The pair hold coaching sessions every Monday at Peppard Memorial Hall from 5pm to 7pm. The sessions, which are split into two separate categories, regularly attract 20-24 keen young players. Youngsters who are aged 8-13 can just turn up and pay £1.

A number of boys from the club play in the John Cunningham youth league on Friday evenings at Reading Blue Coat School in Sonning Eye. These include Jonathan Abbott, Danny Dockree, Anieth Singh, Elliot Whittingham, Marcus Pike, Guy Thurlow, Liam Peachey, Mathew Chapman, Rowan Stacey, Zach Atfield and Adam Fearnside.

It has been an all-boy line-up to date but the club is keen to encourage more girls to take up table tennis.

There is also a thriving interest in table tennis at Sonning Common Primary School where around 50 pupils regularly play games before and after lessons on the school's outdoor tables.

For the past two years the school has entered a team into the regional championships run by the English Schools Table Tennis Association. This year's under-11s boys team, made up of Anieth Singh, Adam Fearnside, Dan Bayliss and Jonathan Abbott, reached the semi-final of the competition.

For further information on junior table tennis locally contact John Taylor on 0118 954 6990. For adult table tennis contact Nigel Maltby, chairman of Reading Table Tennis Association, on 0118 946 3191 or email n.maltby587@btinternet.com n



n Jonathan Abbott, 11, who got through to the finals of a national table tennis competition.



n Lucas Gray

Grant boost for playgroup

Sonning Common Baby and Toddler Group has been awarded £3,000 for the purchase of new toys, equipment and a replacement shed.

The group, which meets every Wednesday at Christ the King church hall, in Sedgewell Road, has also joined Reading Toy Library which allows it to borrow even more fun toys.

The group would like to thank the Rev Graham Foulis-Brown for his support with the grant application to Oxfordshire Community Foundation and for the £50 donation from the church. It also wishes to thank Mike Farina Auto Services for taking delivery of some of the larger toys.

The small, friendly, parent-led group is for children aged 0-5, accompanied by parents, grandparents or childminders. Activities include craft, play-doh, messy play, jigsaws, books and ride-on toys.

Fees are £2.50 per session or £20 per family per term. There is no need to book - just go along and play. Contact Alison Howson on 0118 972 1131 for further information. n

Chiltern Edge Bridge Club

I am not sure how many people know that there has been a flourishing bridge club in Sonning Common for over 40 years. We meet every Tuesday evening in Christ the King church hall in Sedgewell Road.

It all started in 1966 as an evening class in the adult education wing at Chiltern Edge School. The following year it developed into a club and has carried on ever since. We currently have about 50 members who come from Henley, Caversham and Reading as well as the immediate area surrounding Sonning Common.

The club is regularly represented in both

local and county competitions. Team bridge consists of either teams of eight or teams of four. We currently field two teams of eight, one in the Berks and Bucks county league (3rd division) and one in the local Chiltern league. We also have three teams of four in a local league (premier division).

The club has a reputation for being welcoming and friendly and we would like to attract some new members. If you are interested, please contact our secretary, Ian Hodgkinson on 0118 9479945 or ian.a.hodkinson@btinternet.com or our chairman, Peter Bowles on 9722916 or peter.bowles@bp.com. See www.bridgewebs.com/chilternedge/.

For rubber bridge players who have not played duplicate before, we can offer some introductory tuition before your first evening.

Members of Chiltern Edge Bridge Club teach minibridge to children at Sonning Common Primary School and have helped them to take part in competitions. n

Gill Vickers
Red House Drive
Chiltern Edge Bridge Club

Villagers raise their voices

Nottakwire – Sonning Common's new singing group – is now well underway.

The group meets in the village hall on Friday mornings once a fortnight and the number of members has grown to around 50 men and women.

Following the early sessions, it was apparent that group members who said they couldn't really sing actually produced a very pleasant sound when singing together.

Each session adds a little more help with breathing and vocal technique and the group has begun to tackle the rudiments of simple notation and part-singing.

A local concert is in the pipeline for 23 October. The idea is to use the songs we have been working on to entertain villagers, families and friends and to raise money for a local, charitable cause to be chosen by Nottakwire members.

We hope that village residents will support us in this first, bold venture. Look out for further details in subsequent editions of Sonning Common Magazine.

Forthcoming Nottakwire sessions, from 9.45am to 11.15am, are to be held on:

- n **June 4, 18**
- n **July 2, 16, 30**
- n **September 10, 24**
- n **October 8, 22**
- n **Concert: 3pm, Saturday 23 October**
- n **November 5, 19**
- n **December 3, 17**
- n **Concert: 7pm, Saturday 18 December**

Contact 0118 972 1248

Margaret Moola and Elaine Williams



ABOVE:

n A singing session

LEFT:

n Nottakwire leaders Margaret Moola and Elaine Williams

Helping the world to see clearly

In the past year local Lions club members have gathered in 1,300 pairs of old or unwanted spectacles for visually-impaired people in Africa and Asia.

Sonning Common Health Centre offers a collection point for people wishing to donate spectacles.

Every spring a large truck tours the country to gather the spectacles collected by Lions clubs around the country. The spectacles are taken to Sussex for sorting before being transported to Le Havre, in France, where Lions there clean, grade and package them ready for distribution to the third world.

Lions club members volunteer their time to humanitarian causes in their local and global communities. In the British Isles, Ireland and the rest of Europe, Lions donate around 5.7 million hours and raise more than £88 million pounds each year for humanitarian causes.

For further information please contact Goring, Woodcote & District Lions Club on 0845 833 9837 or email info@lions-gwd.org.uk. Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month. n

Pre-school children need your help

If all goes to plan, our much-loved – if somewhat dilapidated – village pre-school is going to be knocked down this summer.

While hundreds of children have enjoyed learning and playing in the pre-fabricated building over the last 30 years, it's simply too old and too small for us now.

Oxfordshire County Council has agreed to build us a brand new pre-school this coming autumn, subject to planning consent, on our existing site in Grove Road.

We are thrilled by this brilliant news, and are now faced with the enormous task of raising enough money to fit out and equip our new state-of-the-art home, before we are due to move in next January.

We need to raise at least £12,000 for furniture, appliances, play equipment, educational tools and to landscape the

gardens. This is particularly daunting, because it's four times more than we usually manage to raise each year.

Can you help us? If you are entering a sports event soon and are not sure which charity you want to raise sponsorship money for, would you consider us as a worthy local cause?

Your business may be able to supply us with a raffle prize, some free items for goody bags or something we could auction at our next big fundraising event. All contributions will be acknowledged in our regular newsletter to parents and in the local press.

The plans for the new building will be on display in the library for most of the summer, so residents and parents can see what we are hoping it will look like and comment to the relevant authorities if they want to.

The pre-school is attended by 70 children from Sonning Common and the surrounding villages. We currently have

30 children whose full entitlement to free, government-funded sessions can't be filled due to a lack of space. The new building will help to address this.

You can find out how to contact us and more about our building project at: www.sonningcommonpreschool.co.uk n

Nikki Hampton
Sonning Common Pre-school fundraising team



n Children having fun splatter-painting outside the pre-school

Reason to be proud of your school

One of the many joys of being a headteacher is when the pupils within your school achieve great success.

One recent success of note is when our pupils took part in the Stonor Run, in Stonor Park, as part of the annual Henley Youth festival. Of all the running events over the season, this is the hardest with several hills to tackle and slippery and stony pathways to contend with as well as the sheer distances involved.

A total of 25 boys and girls from Sonning Common Primary School took part. They won the Year 3/4 boys and girls team events, the Year 5/6 boys and girls individual events while the Year 5/6 boys' team came third in their event.

Thank you to all the staff who organised and attended the event.

On a side note: if you have vouchers from any supermarket that you do not know what to do with, give them to us along with any Nestlé box top tokens. We collect all types of vouchers to trade in for equipment which saves us hundreds of pounds every year! n

Chris Hirst
Sonning Common Primary School headteacher



n Chris Hirst

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Thank you also to **Greenshoots**, of Manor Farm, Peppard, for their donation of flower pots for our potting-on programme and to the Sonning Common resident who donated £25.

Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury
The Village Gardeners



IN SUPPORT OF
HELP for HEROES



MORE SPACE AT THE LUNCH CLUB

Sonning Common Lunch Club meets in the village hall on the second Wednesday of the month except during August.

The club is open to residents of Sonning Common who are over 60-years-old.

Since the club moved to the village hall a few vacancies have become available.

To join the lunch club phone Freda Buckner, lunch club organiser, on 0118 972 2924.



Festival to help wounded heroes

The Red Lion pub at Peppard is planning a major live music, beer and hog roast festival on Saturday 17 July in aid of the Help for Heroes charity.

Help for Heroes, founded in 2007, supports people who have been wounded in Britain's current conflicts.

Graham and Julie Martin, who run the Red Lion, decided to help the charity after the nephew of pub regular Craig Allen, from Blounts Court Road, lost both his legs in an explosion in Afghanistan around Christmas.

Said Graham: "All the money from ticket sales will go directly to Help for Heroes, not just in support of Craig's nephew but for all our brave, wounded soldiers. Help for Heroes is a fantastic charity and we are hoping to raise more than £2,000 on the day to help it."

Five local bands will play sets throughout the afternoon and evening, covering everything from country and folk music to modern pop. Up to eight guest ales will be on tap and the hog roast will include a vegetarian option.

The event will run from 3.30pm until 11pm. Tickets are priced £10 for adults and £8 for children and include food. They are available in advance from the pub. On the day they will cost £15 and £13 respectively. Phone the pub on 01491 628329 for more information.

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY:

The village library is holding another day of one-to-one Internet taster sessions on Friday 11 June. Places are limited so book your slot soon.

The Summer Reading Scheme for children will be starting in mid-July. This year's theme is 'Space Hop'. Look out for more details nearer the time.

For further information about these, or any other library activities, call in at the library in Grove Road, or phone 0118 972 2448.

Rosemary Dunstan
Library Manager



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Master crafts

FROM A TINY VILLAGE WORKSHOP

By ROS VARNES

You name it and if he
hasn't made it he'd
probably have a fairly
good idea of how to.

Master craftsman Barry Laughler, from
Baskerville Road, has been making things
all his life, from fishing rods as a boy to the
most intricate ukuleles and banjos.

As a keen archer who shot for Oxfordshire,
he used a personally-designed and built
bow to defeat the reigning English and
Dutch archery champions in one day.

His "superbow", as he calls it, made of a
combination of extremely rare Brazilian
rosewood, Canadian rock maple and
fibreglass, is testimony to his amazing skill
as a craftsman.

Capable of shooting an arrow at 300mph,
it took Barry about 150 hours over the
course of four months to build the bow
from scratch.

Said Barry, aged 75: "The incredible thing
was that whatever people asked to make
all down the years, I knew how to do it. It
was a wonderful combination of mind,
eye and fingertips."

Barry takes inspiration from all sorts of
events for the goods he produces. When
King Henry VIII's ship, the Mary Rose,

was rescued from the deep in the 1980s,
Barry was fascinated to see that many
of the crew's wooden drinking tankards
were still intact.

So, he set about making his own replica
tankard, using a piece of 400-year-old
oak, and fashioned it in the same way
as a cooper fashions a barrel. He made
13 tankards in all - one for every man in
the family.

For Barry, all his items have to serve
a practical purpose and his tankard
"regularly has a beer in it."

"When I make something it has to be a
challenge," said Barry. "If it isn't a hard thing
to do it becomes a pointless thing to do.
Once you say something is good enough
you stop so you have to push yourself
beyond that point."

Among the items that Barry has "scratch-
built", as he puts it, are: seven ukuleles,
12 bows, a chess set for his grandson,
candlesticks, hunting knives and jewellery
- all produced from Barry's tiny workshop
behind his house. Even many of his tools
he made himself.

Barry comes from a long line of artists and
artisans. His family tree has been traced
back to 1490 and includes goldsmiths,
silversmiths, embroiderers and chandelier-
makers. His father was a cabinet-maker
and his grandfather a respected gunsmith.

As Barry laughingly says, his ancestors
are always looking over his shoulder so
wouldn't want to let the family down by
producing inferior work.

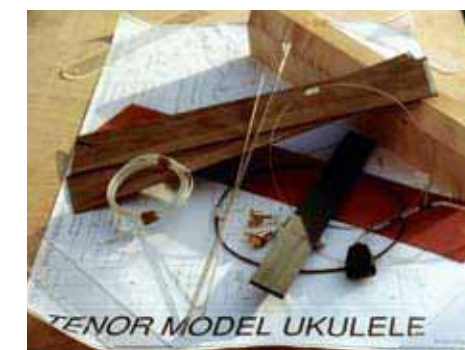
Barry moved to Stoke Row as a boy in
1947 after being bombed out of London.
His father bought a piece of land there so
the family lived on it in an ex-army tent for
a year before building a bungalow.



He moved to Sonning Common about
15 years ago and made his career out of
building work, joinery, antique restoration
and car bodyshop repairs before retiring.

Sadly, Barry lost his wife Jo to lung cancer
last year but his daughters Michaela
Griffin and Jocelyn Laughler live locally in
Lea Road and Shiplake Bottom. His sons
live in Sweden and Bracknell. He has six
grandchildren with a seventh on the way.

**Barry was nominated to take part in this
feature by his friend of six years Roger
Parker, of Woodlands Road. The pair
became firm friends after discovering a
mutual interest in stringed instruments.
Do you know of someone locally who
does something interesting or unusual?
Contact: [sonningcommonmagazine@
googlemail.com](mailto:sonningcommonmagazine@
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TOP:

Master craftsman Barry Laughler

LEFT:

Part of Barry's collection of hand-
crafted items

ABOVE:

Materials for making a ukulele




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Rain?

WHAT RAIN?



OPPOSITE PAGE

Main Picture:

n Group wave

Left:

n Health walkers

THIS PAGE

Top Row from L-R:

n SCPS Radio team

n Henley MP John Howell

Bottom Row from L-R:

n Tabitha Lusted from Year One

n An early rider on the course

n Year Three pupil Isobel Barnett



On Your Bike was a record success!

Words: PENNY SNOWDEN Pictures: LISA REES and JOHN DOWNEY



A total of 658 cyclists and walkers gathered in Sonning Common Primary School's rain-soaked playground to participate in this year's On Your Bike event.

The fine weather leading up to the event on 25 April had assured a record entry and despite the heavy rain which fell steadily from 7am, the planned participants all arrived, together with 114 additional entrants, to make this the largest event of its kind in South Oxfordshire.

Between them, they cycled a staggering 6,622 miles and raised more than £3,500 for Sue Ryder Care, Nettlebed Hospice and Sonning Common Primary School.

John Howell, who started the ride, said: "This is an important event in the

calendar for Sonning Common but it is much more than this. It is an exemplar of what can be done to create community cohesion and to have fun. The rest of the UK should look on and copy what has been achieved here."

Riders of all ages pedalled around the country lanes, making this a wonderful community occasion. They were supported by more than 40 volunteer marshals who helped to ensure everyone's safety.

Penny Snowden from the organising committee commented: "This event could not take place without the enthusiasm of the organising committee and all our sponsors and volunteers.

"Their generosity of time and funds has guaranteed that every penny of each entry fee could be donated directly to the charities along with all sponsorship monies, raffle ticket sales and proceeds from refreshments.

"Over the years we have found many different companies willing to help, from our local Beville Estate Agency and Sonning Common Garage to the multinational Hovis company. We even had marshals who came from as far away as Gosport and Bedford to support us. The Henley Standard's advance publicity was a huge help in securing pre-registrations and meant that we were less affected by the bad weather on the morning of the ride."

On Your Bike was first staged in 2007 and over the years has raised more than £13,000 for Sonning Common Primary school and various charities. n

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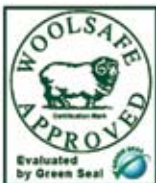
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Edwin, who runs EDS School of Motoring from his home in Sonning Common, believes new drivers need more than just practical skills.

"The roads are so busy and hazardous these days that simply knowing how to handle a car is not enough," he says. "I try to equip my students with the mental skills they need to cope with everyday challenging situations on the roads."

Edwin is an approved Driving Standards Agency (DSA) driving instructor and has been teaching people to drive in Sonning Common and the surrounding area for more than 10 years.

Although most of his students are teenagers, he teaches people of all ages and provides tailored courses of lessons to suit their individual requirements and abilities.

Originally from the North East of England, Edwin spent 17 years travelling the world

on cruise liners as a heating, ventilation and air conditioning contracts' engineer.

His love of cars and driving led him, in his spare time, to become a member of RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents), passing its advanced driving test and qualifying as an advanced driving tutor.

When seeking a career change, it seemed obvious to Edwin to train as a driving instructor. Since then he has passed the requisite periodic 'check tests', conducted by the Driving Standards Agency, to ensure that instructors maintain a high level of professional performance.

Edwin is also a member of the Driving Instructors Association (DIA) which, although not compulsory, allows him to keep abreast of current developments and ever-changing regulations. Particularly reassuring is that he is also CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checked.

For him the most rewarding part of his job is seeing the big smile on students' faces when they pass their tests. But, says Edwin: "I don't just want to get people through their tests. I want them to excel as drivers."

"I don't just want to get people through their tests. I want them to excel as drivers."

To this end he is keen to promote the Pass Plus training scheme designed by the Driving Standards Agency for new drivers. This course, which Edwin as a registered adjudicator offers, is also suitable for under-confident drivers. It trains people on how to drive safely on motorways, dual carriageways, at night, in all weathers and in towns and rural areas.

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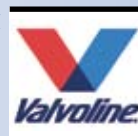
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competition success

FOR LOCAL DRAMA GROUP

By **CAROL EVANS**



Amateur dramatics are alive and well in Sonning Common, especially as Chiltern Players now boasts a prize-winning playwright among its members.

Jane Brough was one of four winners out of a field of 47 who won top honours in the Raising Voices competition for new writers run by the Watermill Theatre, near Newbury.

As well as feedback from a panel of judges, her prize was the opportunity to have her stylish romantic comedy, Nearer to Shakespeare, performed as a 'rehearsed reading' by professional actors at the Berkshire venue.

The judges described the university-set drama, which was first staged by Chiltern Players at Peppard Memorial Hall two years ago, as 'beautifully put together....the writing is extremely accomplished and the story-telling superb.'

Jane said: "It was very exciting, mostly because it was the recognition that someone thought it was good. When you're writing something for an amateur group, everyone is nice to you about it,

but to get an independent professional opinion is really good."

As yet, Jane doesn't know where her competition success will lead but in the meantime, she has other plays on the burner. This includes a follow-up to last summer's highly successful medieval murder mystery. Her second foray into crime-writing, Murder at Peppard Grange, will be an Agatha Christie-meets-Evelyn Waugh-meets Noel Coward pastiche, set in the stylish 1930s and will take place in September.

When not writing, Jane is a regular on stage and has appeared in many of the society's productions at Peppard Memorial Hall. She said: "It's a very friendly drama group and because it's small, you can do lots of different things, both onstage and behind the scenes. Some drama groups are too regimented and you don't get the chance to do that."

Indeed, in recent times other Players have taken on the challenge to leave their theatrical comfort zone and try something new – with some success. Jenny Titchener, normally a stalwart with the prompt book and props, was persuaded to direct a

one-act play, The Edge, for a local drama festival and the scrutiny of a professional critic. Not only was it well-received, but one of the actors, Peter O'Sullivan, was awarded the Best Actor trophy.

This year, sound man and actor John Evans is undergoing a similar baptism of fire, directing a surreal one-act play for three summer festivals. "It's daunting but the adjudicators' comments should be invaluable," he said. The two-hander, The Extraordinary Revelations of Orca the Goldfish features two of the society's most accomplished actors, Peter O'Sullivan and Rosemary House (herself, a previous award-winning director.)

Jenny so enjoyed her festival experience that in April, she directed her first full-length play, Alan Ayckbourn's comedy Table Manners. Who knows, maybe John will follow the same route. [n](#)

ABOVE FROM L-R:

[n](#) The cast of Table Manners.

[n](#) Jane Brough.

[n](#) Rosemary House and Peter O'Sullivan in The Revelations of Orca the Goldfish.



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The Icelandic volcano was no match for my wife's determination

Like thousands of other unfortunates, doubtless including many from Sonning Common, we were stuck abroad - Benalmadina, just outside Malaga - when the Icelandic volcano blew.

This was our first holiday with our Scottish grandchildren, aged 11, eight and six. On Thursday 15 April the news broke and we were advised to wait for instructions, which did not appear.

We ventured in vain to Malaga Airport and discovered a locked departure lounge and one cleaner.

By Sunday the television news was warning of further eruptions, total airline chaos, and possible months before a rescue operation was organised. Most of the local travel companies appeared to have doubled or tripled their prices, being onto a good thing.

At this point my wife started phoning around to see whether a coach could be found to take us to Calais. She discovered a 50-seat coach on the 22nd attempt that was prepared to travel to Calais, provided we agreed within half an hour and paid cash.

A rapid tour of our holiday complex provided 50 prospective passengers and every local

ATM machine was swiftly emptied. I then sat all afternoon counting small notes into thousands and clipping them together with my granddaughter's hair grips.

Some people dropped out and others leapt in. Finally our coach was ready to depart at 11 am on Monday morning with three drivers and a full complement of passengers, including 13 children.

Twenty-eight hours later we were dumped, tired, dirty but triumphant, at Calais docks. Horror upon horror, queues stretched right around the departure building but somehow, within an hour, we were mid-Channel on the Pride of Kent.

We arrived home on Tuesday night. Whether we could have got back more easily or cheaply we shall never know, but it was definitely a victory for female determination. n

Peter Dayton
Kennylands Road

Great to see spring blooms

After a long and cold winter how lovely to see the spring flowers planted by The Village Gardeners volunteer group.

Thanks to these brave souls who were out in all weathers last autumn, we have been treated to a wonderful display.

Well done to all involved. Your hard work has been much appreciated. n

Susan Rusman
Blounts Court Road



A writer's life

My new book was officially published on April 1st (in retrospect perhaps not the most auspicious day of the year). It's the fifth time I've been through this particular form of birth labour and it gets no better.

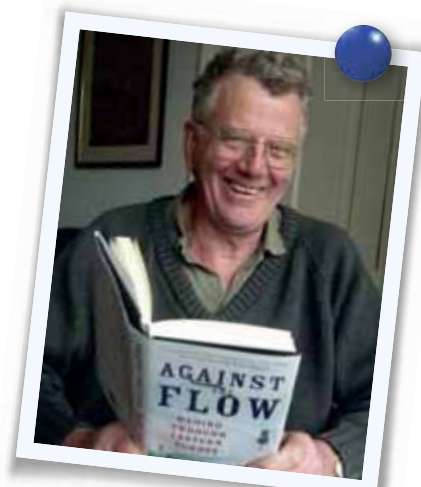
Well-meaning friends say: "It must be so exciting, you know, having your book published, seeing it for the first time." And so it is, briefly. But, unlike with a baby, the feeling of delight soon wears off, to be replaced by a constant, gnawing, unappeasable anxiety.

This presents itself in the form of a swarm of questions that buzz around the brain like irritated wasps. Is it any good? Is anyone buying it? Will anyone buy it? Will it get reviewed? What will they say? Is that pile in the Bell Bookshop as big as it was last week? Does anyone like it? And so on.

It is difficult to convey to anyone who is not a writer just how anti-climactic and angst-making the immediate post-publication phase is. You appear on radio to plug the beastly thing, and while you try to sound bright and bubbly about it, a little voice whispers in your ear: "Who do you think you're kidding?" You pick up the book to sign it, and you suddenly remember that this is three years of your life, a stack of hopes and dreams, most of them fated to remain unfulfilled.

Then someone asks how the book's doing, and you want to run off into the woods howling; and someone else wonders if you shouldn't consider a more commercial subject next time, and you want to murder them, slowly.

So if you happen to see me about the village - a tall, shabbily dressed man in glasses, bowed by cares - please don't ask me about such things. Just say: "Bought the new book. Loved it." And watch me smile. n



Tom Fort's *Against The Flow: Wading Through Eastern Europe* is published by Century at £14.99 and is available at the Bell Bookshop in Henley. Tom lives in Wood Lane.

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Out and about with the WI

Sonning Common Womens' Institute is planning a whole series of day trips in coming months with everything from historic ships to magical puddings on the agenda!

Planned trips include:
Wednesday 9 June
WISLEY GARDENS, SURREY

Tuesday 29 June
HIGHGROVE ESTATE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Wednesday 14 July
CHATHAM HISTORIC DOCKYARD, KENT

Tuesday 20 July
THE MAGICAL PUDDING CLUB, OXFORD

Wednesday 18 August
LUNCH CRUISE, LONDON

The trips are open to non-WI members also. For further information contact new secretary Jenny Titchner on 0118 972 4705.

At the April WI meeting members elected their new president Jackie Million and secretary Jenny Titchner. Anne Croxson remained as treasurer.

The group enjoyed a talk by Daphne Payne from Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. She explained that 75 per cent of hearing dogs came from


rescue centres. They undergo a five-month assessment and training programme at a cost of £5,000 before being carefully matched with new owners. There is now a scheme to provide hearing dogs for deaf children too.

After the talk a quiz was held to see who could identify the most noises. This was won by Margaret Caldicott and Ann Chivers. Beverley Porteous was first with her flower of the month, Audrey Turton second and Margaret Dolphin third. n

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Spring SHOW RESULTS

Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society's spring show took place at Chiltern Edge School on 27 March.
The results are as follows:



Avern Trophy

Best exhibit of daffodils/narcissi
WINNER: FRANK WILLIAMS

Grove Cup

Most points for daffodils/narcissi/tulips
WINNER: FRANK WILLIAMS

Frank Pritchard Cup

Most points in pot plant class
WINNER: MOIRA POOLE

Certificate of Merit for Floral Art

Most points in floral art
WINNER: MICHAEL WHEELER

Illuminated Plaque

Most outstanding exhibit in the show for flowers/fruit/vegetables
WINNER: FRANK WILLIAMS

Geoff Mitton Cup for best front garden

WINNERS: MR AND MRS DAVID BREWER
Woodlands Road

Children - under 7s

1ST: HARRY MILLER
2nd: Max Miller
3rd: Jack Wright

Children - over 7s

1ST: NATHAN WHEELER AND ISABEL MULLIGAN
2nd: Jasmine Wheeler
3rd: Dale Thurston

Spring front garden competition

1ST: MR AND MRS DAVID BREWER,
Woodlands Road
2nd: Mr and Mrs Bob Newnham,
Reades Lane
3rd: Mrs Gill Franklin,
Woodlands Road

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First time winners of village quiz

A total of 22 teams took part
in the annual village quiz at
Sonning Common Primary
School on Friday 19 March.

At the half-way stage Comets led by
one point from two previous winners,
Brenda's Buddies and The Teechers.
Scoring was very close throughout the
second half. With one round to go, two
teams were on 101 points with three
others a point behind.

However, in the last general knowledge
round, Comets scored nine points and
won the competition by two points
from four other teams who tied for
second place.

The winning team comprised Steve and
Trish Rockell, Clare and Melvyn Keen,
Chris Bickerton and Joan Lamprell.

It was an exciting evening played out in
a great atmosphere. Thus a new name

appears on the trophy and it is fitting
that the winners have been constant
supporters of the quiz.

This was another fun evening and I am
grateful to all those who helped to make
it a success and particularly to all the
teams that took part. As always I am
indebted to the primary school for the
use of its hall and to caretaker Pat Butler
for help with setting up the room.

But my special thanks go to members,
and former members, of the Sonning
Common Primary School PTA committee
for all their help and who, with Lovibonds
Brewery of Henley, successfully provided
refreshments and a raffle.

The surplus from the quiz, plus the
proceeds from the bar and raffle,
amounted to over £600 and the PTA
committee is very grateful to all those
present for their generous support. n

Fred Curzon

The full result was as follows
(out of a total of 140 points):

Comets	109
Joy's Team	107
Microbes	107
The Teechers	107
Red House Drive	107
Between the Covers	105
Brenda's Buddies	104
Minus IQs	101
Catalysts	100
Graham's Team	100
Mongoosees	99
On the Tiles	98
S.C.W.I	98
Bejabs	97
Odds & Ends	97
P&Os	96
FISH	95
Wood Lane Wanderers	95
People's Front of Judea	91
Antepenultimates	84
First Timers	78
Desperate Housewives	71

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JUNE

Wednesday 2 **Into The Musicals** presented by **Read Dance & Theatre Company** 4.30 - 7.30pm
DANCE A musical variety, with extracts from Sister Act, Les Miserables, Fosse and Dreamboats and Petticoats.
Performed by the students with ages ranging from 5 to 16. The show is produced and directed by former West End
professionals Jamie & Helen Read. - A non-professional production Tickets call: 08451 307408

Friday 4 **An Audience with Denis Norden** - In conversation with **Samantha Norman** 8.00pm
Even without his clipboard, Denis Norden is instantly recognisable as one of television's most enduring
personalities. Tickets No Concessions Full £25, £20

Saturday 5 **C'Mon Everybody** Henley Midnight Matinée supporting **KENTON for KEEPS** 8.00pm
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Extend your evening and party with a three-course dinner by Philippe Brillant of Le Parisien, dress - smart
casual in 50's or 60's if desired! Theatre and Dinner £45 limited availability Theatre only £20

Tuesday 15 **Guys and Dolls** presented by **Woodley Light Operatic Society** 7.45pm
MUSICAL With music and lyrics by the Academy and Tony Award winning songwriter, Frank Loesser, the
wonderful Guys and Dolls is packed with fantastic songs like Luck Be a Lady, Sit Down You're Rockin' the
Boat, Take Back Your Mink and, of course, the wonderful title song.
A non-professional production £14 - £13 Concessions available

Wednesday 23 **Rodney Bewes - Three Men in a Boat** - Supporting **KENTON for KEEPS** 8pm
Thursday 24 PLAY Rodney Bewes, one of the original Likely Lads, has adapted Jerome K Jerome's well-loved comic
novel Three Men in a Boat down to a charming and hilarious one man show. This is the 'Final Tour' and
'Definitely the last opportunity to see this award winning one man show' 'For the very last time'
Full £13 Concessions Students/Senior Citizens £1 discount, Kenton Friends £2 discount

Friday 25 **Into My Own** - presented by **Hijinx Theatre Company** 7.30pm
PLAY There are two lasting legacies we can give to our children: one is roots, the other is wings.
It had just been Anne and her Mum for years... A play about stepping into the unknown, finding a new life
and celebrating the joy and discovery that independence brings. While the story focuses on issues about
someone with a learning disability it has appeal for a far wider community, bringing gentle humour to this
universal theme. A professional production to mark Learning Disability Week from a leading Welsh theatre
company. Full £7 Concessions £1 discount

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terminally ill. A lower rate of £47.10 a
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If you think you might qualify for this
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572129 for advice and information.

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Our Lent course (When I Survey ... Christ's Cross
and Ours) attracted a good attendance, and
it was pleasing to see a number of new faces,
particularly since some of them were young faces!
Gratifyingly, too, the evening group could claim to
be ecumenical with St Michael's and at least one
other church being represented.

The course proved to be an excellent preparation for Easter
and our churches were full on Easter Day for the celebration
of the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ.

Saturday, 19 June is the date of our Gift Day when all
parishioners – whether church members or not – can make
a donation towards the support of our two churches. Christ
the King will be open to receive donations between 2pm

and 3pm while St John's will be open between 10am and
12noon. The choir will present a short concert at 11am –
admission free.

The Little Lambs group (for children under five and their
parents/guardians) will have their last meeting before their
summer break on Wednesday 30 June, at 9.30am, in St
John's. Enquiries to: Felicity Cooper on 0118 947 7862.

The Lamb and Flag is our church magazine. For only £5 per
year, a copy will be delivered to your door each month –
together with a free copy of the Oxford Diocese newspaper.
Enquiries to: Neil Scott on 0118 972 3890.

We thank all those who collected for and contributed to
Christian Aid during May. n

Neil Scott

June

July

FRIDAY 4 Nottakwire meeting Village Hall 9.45am	MONDAY 7 FISH – Garden centre visit 1.30pm	FRIDAY 11 Sonning Common Society AGM Christ the King, Sedgewell Road 7.30pm	SATURDAY 12 World cup summer fair Sonning Common Primary School 12pm-3pm
THURSDAY 17 FISH – Pub lunch 11.30am	THURSDAY 17 Sonning Common WI – “Gold: past, present & future” Village Hall 7.30pm	FRIDAY 18 Nottakwire meeting Village Hall 9.45am	SATURDAY 19 Choir concert St John’s Church, Kidmore End 11am - 11.30am
MONDAY 21 Sonning Common Parish Council Village Hall 8pm	SATURDAY 26 Fun day, Woodcote & District Lions Club Prospect Park, Reading	FRIDAY 2 Nottakwire meeting Village Hall 9.45am	MONDAY 5 FISH – Garden centre visit 1.30pm
SATURDAY 10 Community summer festival Chiltern Edge School 3pm - 6pm	SATURDAY 10 Woodcote Rally. Festival of steam, vintage and veteran transport 10am - 11pm	SUNDAY 11 Woodcote Rally 10am - 6pm	MONDAY 12 Sonning Common Parish Council Village Hall 8pm
THURSDAY 15 FISH – Pub lunch 11.30am	THURSDAY 15 Sonning Common WI – “Kimonos & their making” Village Hall 7.30pm	FRIDAY 16 Nottakwire meeting Village Hall 9.45am	SATURDAY 17 Help for Heroes fundraiser. Live music and beer festival Red Lion pub, Peppard 3.30pm - 11pm
SATURDAY 17 Goring and Streatley Regatta Bishops Farm, Streatley 9.30am - 6pm	MONDAY 19 Sonning Common Parish Council Village Hall 8pm	FRIDAY 30 Nottakwire meeting Village Hall 9.45am	

FISH runs regular shopping trips to Tesco in Henley and Henley and Reading town centres. For more information and to book call 0118 972 3986. n



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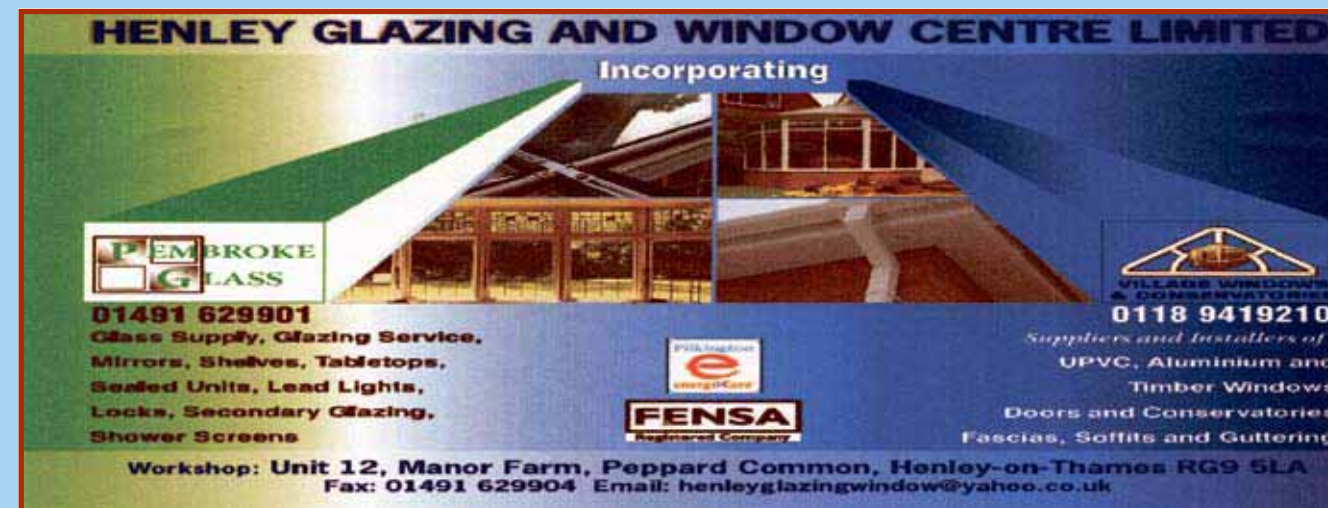
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