

SC

SONNING COMMON MAGAZINE



APR/MAY 2026

SOCO SPRING CLEAN 2026



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Thank you to all of our customers in 2025 and for helping us achieve yet another record-breaking year. We are proud to be the longest serving estate agency in the village. According to Rightmove, Beville Estate Agency sold almost 50% of properties that were sold in the RG4 9 postcode in 2025.



I have worked in estate agency and this firm is fantastic. The entire team is quietly tenacious whilst always utterly charming. They have encyclopaedic knowledge of the local market, coupled with first rate project management.
Mr Giles, Sonning Common

The best estate agent in the area. There is genuine honesty and integrity to Richard, his team within this family run business. Hardworking with great communication from start to finish. Highly recommend.
Mr & Mrs Mullin, Sonning Common

The entire team were absolutely brilliant. We were so happy we even increased their fee which in itself speaks volumes of their service. We can't recommend them highly enough. If you are considering selling you really must speak with them...
Mr & Mrs O'Reilly, Kidmore End

Marcus and the whole team have been fantastic throughout the process of buying a bungalow for my mum. I am now dealing with the lettings team, who are equally helpful and efficient...
Mrs Cheyney, Caversham

Scan to see the rest of our reviews:



Beville provide a very professional service. Of particular value is the honest and expert opinions on how to market a property and the dynamics of the local market. Additionally, good advice on ensuring a smooth property transaction.
Mr Berkeley, Woodcote

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FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

The editorial team is excited about exploring ways to engage our readers even more. To start, we're considering a small update to the first few pages of the magazine. These pages would showcase and celebrate the many events and activities happening across the village – and there are plenty to highlight!

This first edition features the village-wide Litter Collection, the outstanding production of Sister Act, a Gold award for primary pupils for their eco work, and initiatives helping children expand and improve their vocabulary.

If you like this approach, we'd love to hear from you – just send me an email.

As I write the sun is shining and we are appreciating the flowers and trees planted by willing volunteers. They are much valued and Eco Soco helps to remind us of the importance of what we are planting in the village and our impact on the environment, where we live.

As ever there are some interesting articles and publicity for events and meetings to involve ourselves. We need to appreciate what we have in our village as there is a lot going on.

Some of you will remember a teacher in the primary school, Margaret Fieldhouse. She sadly died at the end of last week having been unwell for many months. We will miss our neighbour. ●

Diana and Christine

FUTURE DEADLINE DATES FOR MAGAZINE COPY

1 May, 1 July, 1 September – we would love to receive your articles! 😊

MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM



Diana Pearman



Christine Atkinson



Joan Grummant



Alison Smith

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Design & Artwork: Kevin Taplin
tensevennine.com
kevin@tensevennine.com
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USEFUL CONTACTS:

Chair: Sue Rawlins
The Hoot 6 Woodlands Road Sonning Common RG4 9TE
chair.sonningcommonmagazine@gmail.com
Tel 0118 972 2565

Editor: Diana Pearman
editor.sonningcommonmagazine@gmail.com
Tel 07702 237956

Distribution: Helen Gavin
distrib.sonningcommonmagazine@gmail.com
Tel 0118 972 4680

Advertising: John Pearman
advert.sonningcommonmagazine@gmail.com
Tel 0118 972 2381

THE SOCO SPRING CLEAN 2026

Considering January was the fourth wettest in 120 years* all eyes were on the weather forecast on Sunday 1st March, for the 8th SoCo Spring Clean, our annual village litter pick. Luckily for us, the forecast downpour didn't materialise and 90 volunteers turned out for the event! Well it was actually 89, but we could resist counting our youngest picker to date, 4 month old Thea Harley, who joined her big brothers and mum Sally.

Our favourite finds this year included an abandoned mobility scooter and a crisp packet pre 1995. There was a lovely

moment when a group of young pickers returned to the hall, triumphant with an air vent, held aloft for all to admire!

Litter remains a significant environmental problem across the globe. You don't have to look far to find alarming statistics, about the millions of tons of plastic waste in our oceans and the RSPCA national helpline receives daily calls about animals affected by litter. Whilst negative impacts may appear less in Sonning Common, we live in a cared-for community with infrastructure to manage waste properly, nonetheless litter does build up.

Organising a litter pick directly improves our local environment, protects wildlife from ingesting or becoming entangled in waste, and prevents hazardous materials from contaminating ecosystems. But litter picks aren't just good for wildlife, they can help humans too! Through direct action we can come together to celebrate our community spirit, foster a sense of ownership and responsibility for local surroundings and highlight the importance of environmental responsibility and the impact of waste. ●

EMMA LAWRENCE



A special mention and thanks to Alison Bishop, Sue Fraying-Cork, Kathy Brooks and Lesley Davis from the WI who donated home-baked cakes and served tea and drinks to our hard working volunteers as they returned from the pick. Thank you also to the WI home-bakers; Sue Hedges, Gill Hayward and Carolyn Goffe.

Thank you to Joanna and her team at Sonning Common Coop who donated tea, coffee and drinks.

Thank you also to Councillor Leigh Rawlins for the use of his trailer and who collected full bags of litter and larger items from around the village assisted by Alex Lawrence.

The next SoCo Spring Clean will take place on Sunday 7th March 2027. Please like, share and follow us on Facebook @soco.springclean and if you'd like to get involved in any way, contact us at soco.springclean@gmail.com #LitterHeroes @soco.springclean

We'd like to thank the following organisations who helped support The SoCo Spring Clean 2026: South Oxford District Council, BIFFA, Sonning Common Parish Council, Davis Tate, Peppard Building Supplies and Sonning Common Coop. ●

*according to data from the Reading University Atmospheric Observatory.

Sonning Common Primary Eco Council achieve GOLD

Sonning Common Primary's Eco Council can now proudly say they are officially a Plastic Free School and a Greener Henley Gold Award winner – a remarkable double achievement that reflects months of commitment and teamwork.

After more than a year of determined effort, the Eco Council has successfully met all five objectives required to earn Plastic Free School status. Their work included:

- Litter picks in the school grounds
- Writing to the local MP to raise awareness of plastic pollution
- Campaigning to companies to adopt more sustainable practices
- Reducing and removing single use plastic within school life.

One of their boldest actions was contacting Haribo to challenge the company on its plastic packaging. The pupils were thrilled to receive a reply acknowledging their concerns and confirming that Haribo is exploring alternative, more sustainable packaging options. A real example of young voices making a difference.

The Eco Council's second major success came with the announcement that Sonning Common Primary has been awarded Gold in Greener Henley's Green Futures Schools award. This award recognises schools that show exceptional commitment to sustainability, environmental education and community action. We would like to thank Chris Hirst, for his support to achieve this award. ●



ABOVE: Jasper, Oscar, Miss Snowden, Lili, Mrs Salmons, Vivienne, Georgie, Gracie and Oliver.



MECE (CHILTERN EDGE) PRODUCTION 2026



Mrs Morgan and the cast produced a really entertaining show of music, drama and brilliant singing, with a backstage team of many helping with costumes lighting and sound.

The lead roles were acted out brilliantly with wonderful singing and speaking (sometimes shouting!)

I haven't been to see one of the annual plays at Chiltern Edge for a number of years since my children left, but my niece was in it this year so I was really looking forward to it.

The new drama teacher at the school – Morgan Richmond – led a very successful production of SISTER ACT JR Chiltern Edge School musical production which was performed over two evenings in February to a packed hall. It is a scaled down version of the film Sister Act but is more upbeat and optimistic, with a focus on friendship and community.

voices. The part of Deloris was played by Jorgia Petford who showed great skill taking on an American accent, along with the 'baddie' Curtis played by Wilbur Stoves. Amy White as Mother Superior had a lovely voice and there were a few solo pieces for them all which takes bravery in front of an audience of parents, staff and peers!

Brambles and Botanicals in the village supplied a beautiful bouquet for Mrs Richmond presented by one of the cast Isaia Charles, who played the 'goodie'

police officer Eddie. The PTA ran the bar during each evening with proceeds going towards school projects. ●

One of the standout moments has been the excitement building around Sister Act Jr, with preparations in full swing and tickets selling at an impressive pace. The production was a vibrant celebration of student talent, both on stage and behind the scenes, performed to packed audiences – a triumph for all involved.

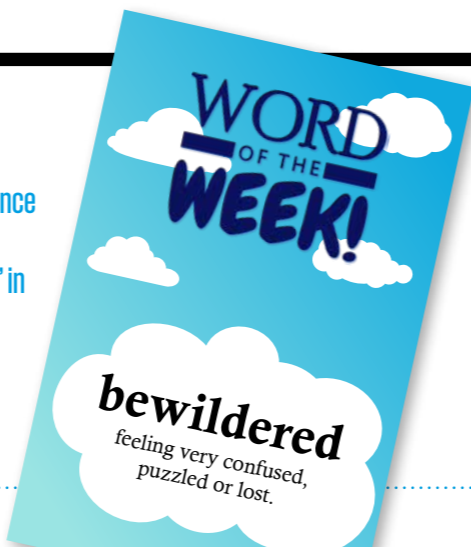
Emma Bliss



SC PRIMARY SCHOOL FOCUS

Last term we had a focus on poetry, leading to public performances at our Poetry Performance Showcase in April, and around the school are posters advertising a 'word of the week'. For example children have been encouraged (and rewarded) for using 'bewildered' or 'epiphany' in their speech or writing! Try it - it isn't easy!

RACHEL SALMONS



ROOKIE "TREADS THE BOARDS"

Unsure of my agency writing this article, being "A Rookie" in the world of Amateur Dramatics; a recent newcomer to the area having moved from a back of beyond village on the south coast where nothing ever happened, I was certainly ripe to take a new path.

Serendipity struck; borrowing a wheelbarrow from a neighbour, a long-standing member of CHILTERN PLAYERS, I was about to be ENLIGHTENED.

Always a keen theatregoer, never having remotely considered joining "The Other Side" of the curtain, imagining a closed network, I was enthusiastically welcomed.

My mentor led me to assist in the Props Department, a branch which necessitates an infinite amount of effort, time and precision not appreciated previously by myself or perhaps others.

Joining in with our regular "Play Readings"

to determine our next production was great fun; I recommend anyone considering joining us to come along to see how we work.

My first presentation last year was "CONFUSIONS" by Alan Ayckbourn.

I dived into the deep end helping with promotions, resulting in walking miles around the village tacking up multitudes of posters; waylaying unsuspecting locals with flyers in playgrounds, at local events and meetings – no one escaped!!

We SOLD OUT all three nights.

Our next production "BODY OF THE PLAY" is a Murder Mystery Supper evening at Peppard Memorial Hall,

Saturday 25th April. Tickets available £18 in advance only. Tel. no. 07597 845632.

My last thoughts – most of us are not aware of our potential, are wary of trying something new or perhaps revitalizing a previous niche we had almost forgotten.

You never know until you try. I did just that. ●

Maureen Oldale



ROTHERFIELD UNITED WALKING FOOTBALL CLUB

On 8th January we were very proud to present cheques of £3700 each to FISH in Sonning Common and Prostate Cancer UK; these being our nominated charities for 2025. These amounts exceeded our wildest expectations and were up by over 50% compared to 2024. We are particularly grateful to Widmore Park Retirement Village who sponsored our Annual Music Night fundraiser, and the many local businesses and organisations who supported us with raffle and auction prizes.

The inclement weather has caused us to reorganise some of our regular sessions but they continue to be very well attended often with enough for 4 teams of 7 to play. Also, a number of new members recently joined the club, bringing total membership to 78.

Our musical arm, The Bootboys Band, are now back in rehearsals with a new set ahead of a charity gig in aid of Blood Cancer UK at the Flowing Spring on 17th May.

New members are always welcome to come along to watch one of our sessions, meet some of the team and see if it is right for them. Our regular sessions are:

Mondays from 4.45pm at Highdown School, Emmer Green

Thursday from 9.45am either at Bishopswood Sports Ground or Rivermead Leisure Centre.

For more information and to confirm timing and locations please contact the Secretary at wf@rotherfieldfc.com ●

Scan the QR code to watch our walking football video



Gardening Society

Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society has had another successful year, thanks to all who came along and supported us.

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

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

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

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

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

Colin Mather

PROFESSOR MICHAEL TWYMAN 1934-2025



A man of extraordinary vision who pioneered the study and use of typography. He was an inspirational teacher with a worldwide following in the development of design and technology. His publications and pioneering work leave a lasting testimony to his many great achievements.

Michael was a well-known and respected figure in Sonning Common where he lived with his wife Pauline for over sixty years. He was born in Chingford and was evacuated to Broadway in the Cotswolds during World War 2. He came to Reading University in 1953 where he gained a degree in Fine Art in 1957 and this was followed by winning a scholarship to study the history of lithography. He spent a year at Cambridge University and then returned to Reading University in 1959 and started on the path of what became a stellar career in his specialist field.

As a young schoolboy Michael was taken to see the Bayeux Tapestry in

France and this work of art became a source of fascination throughout his life. He kept a postcard he'd bought at the event for many years and returned to the subject in later life when he wrote a book *The Bayeux Tapestry Over Three Centuries of Reproduction* In 2024. This was a project very close to his heart and was dedicated to his daughter Nikky who died not long before its publication.

Michael was an innovator who recognised the power of graphic communication and how its development could influence the emerging technological changes happening in the world. His course in Graphic Communication became a separate degree course in 1968 and a separate university department by 1974. The department flourished and gained a reputation as a centre of excellence that attracted PhD students from all over the world. The impact and influence of his work was felt in the commercial as well as the academic world.

Michael travelled widely for his work and had a passion for all sorts of printing and ephemera linked to communication. He gathered an extensive collection of fragmentary documents of everyday life that he felt were as significant as books and a different way of working out history. This collection of ephemera then became the basis of what is now the Centre for Ephemera Studies at Reading University.

Michael and Pauline brought up their family in Sonning Common where the children attended local primary schools and Chiltern Edge Secondary School. Michael was a great family man with a passion for cricket and

gardening. The family garden was often the venue for numerous cricket matches where children from the village came to try out their sporting skills and have fun. The garden was also a haven for Micheal to escape to and tend the vegetables for all the family to enjoy. His love of gardening was a source of immense pleasure throughout his life.

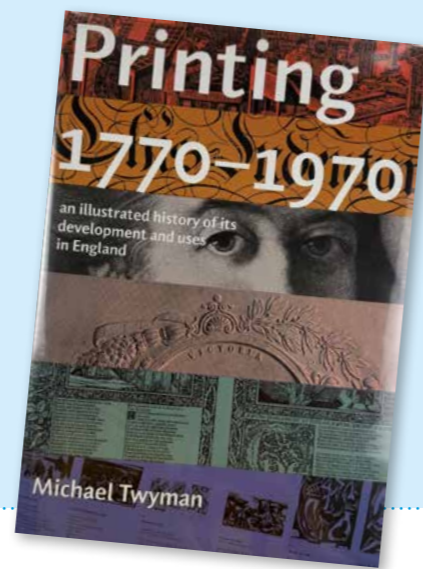
A large number of awards were given to Michael during his life that recognised not only his work but also his great passion for books and communication. Among his many awards are:

Samuel Pepys Medal for his Outstanding Contribution to Ephemera Studies

The Sir Misha Black Medal for Distinguished Service to Design Education

Michael will be sadly missed not only by Pauline and the family but also the world of Lithography and Graphic Communication where his academic rigour and drive left a thriving university department. Many of the textbooks written by him will stand the test of time and honour his pioneering work. ●

Joan Grumant



SONNING COMMON YOUTH CLUB

In a world where young people are constantly on the go, online, in school, and juggling growing pressures—having a safe, welcoming space to relax, learn, and simply be themselves is more important than ever. That's exactly what our youth club offers: a vibrant community where fun, friendship, and personal growth go hand in hand.

At the heart of our youth club is variety. No two weeks are ever the same, and that's what keeps our members excited and engaged. We believe that young people thrive when they're given opportunities to explore different interests, try new things, and discover talents they didn't even know they had.

One of the biggest highlights of our programme is our trips - a day out exploring new places, visiting local attractions, or heading off on special activity days - helping young people build confidence, independence, and unforgettable memories. These shared experiences strengthen friendships and give everyone something to look forward to.

Back at the club, energy levels stay

high with our sports sessions. From team games to friendly competitions, sports encourage teamwork, resilience, and healthy habits—all while having a great time. It's not about winning; it's about participation, encouragement, and enjoying being active together.

For those who love getting creative, crafts sessions are always a hit when young people can express themselves through art, design, and hands-on projects, taking pride in creating something uniquely their own. These activities are not only fun but also help develop patience, focus, and self-confidence.

And then there's baking—one of our most popular activities. From cupcakes to simple savoury treats, baking sessions fill the club with laughter (and delicious smells). Working together to follow recipes, measure ingredients, and share the final results teaches practical life skills while creating a real sense of achievement.

More than anything, our youth club is about connection. It's a place where young people feel listened to, supported, and valued. Friendships are formed, confidence grows, and everyone is encouraged to be



themselves in a positive and inclusive environment.

Through trips, sports, crafts, and baking, we're doing more than filling time—we're helping young people build skills, discover passions, and feel part of something special. Our youth club isn't just an activity; it's a community, and one we're incredibly proud of.

We are open Wednesday and Thursdays from 6:30pm till 8:30pm, find us above the sports hall at MECE. Entry is £2 and we have a tuck shop if you would like a treat. ●

Sunny Smithers





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We'll also be supported by your local Social Prescribers and support staff from Sonning Common Health Centre, our Digital Support volunteer, Soha Housing and other different local services in your community.

When: Thursday 2nd April 2026, 10am-12pm
No meeting in May 2026

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

Cost: FREE - with support from Farrans Construction


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chance2dance4charity



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SCHW is celebrating its 30th anniversary with a gathering at St Michael's Church Hall, Peppard Road, on Saturday 25th April.

There will be a walk starting at about 10.30am, followed by refreshments. Come and catch up with old friends!

Please let us know in person, or via the website, (www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk) if you hope to come, and if you have any special dietary requirements

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SONNING COMMON YOUTH CLUB

Chiltern Players present

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PARISH NEWS

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DAFFODILS



Spring has arrived in Sonning Common, and it's bringing some welcome colour across the village. Many residents will have noticed how fantastic the bulbs are looking this year, especially on the corner of Shiplake Bottom, Crowsley Way, and the Red House Drive bank. These displays are the result of hard work by local residents and EcoSoCo volunteers, who planted thousands of bulbs in recent seasons. We are delighted to see these areas in full bloom, adding brightness to the village after winter. Additional bulbs were also planted in Baskerville Road Play Area and Memorial Park; some are already beginning to show, and we expect an even stronger display next spring as they establish.

Thanks to a grant secured by the Parish Council from TOE and Grundon, EcoSoCo have recently

planted five new native trees in Baskerville Road Play Area. These additions will help increase biodiversity and strengthen the natural environment for years to come. EcoSoCo continue to work with the Parish Council on planting and environmental improvements around the village, and we are grateful for their ongoing commitment.

Residents may also have spotted the new bus shelter installed in February at the Brinds Close stop on Wood Lane. This project was funded jointly by a grant from the County Councillor and the Parish Council. The new shelter offers improved durability and fits well with the surrounding area. We hope it provides a more comfortable and reliable waiting point for bus users.

We would also like to reassure residents that Widmore Pond

remains a top priority for the Parish Council. We know how important this space is to the community, and work continues behind the scenes to move the project forward. Updates have not always been as frequent or detailed as we would like, so we are looking at improving how we share progress — including creating a dedicated page on our website. This will allow us to keep residents better informed as the project develops.

Thank you to everyone who contributes time and energy to keeping our village thriving. Community involvement makes all the difference, and we look forward to sharing more updates in the months ahead.

It's always a pleasure to hear from residents, so feel free to get in touch with any thoughts about village projects. ●

Kind Regards
Andy



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BISHOPSWOOD SCHOOL



In 2021, our school faced a most challenging moment. An Ofsted judgement of Inadequate, which was difficult for everyone connected to the school, pupils, families, staff and governors alike. However, it became a defining turning point.

What followed has been a period of sustained, determined transformation. With a transition to Propeller Trust and officially recognised as a new school, I was appointed to the school as Headteacher and the focus has been unwavering: raise expectations, stabilise staffing and create a culture where wellbeing and ambition go hand in hand.

This has not been about quick fixes. It has been about rebuilding from strong foundations. Inspectors recognised that leaders have demonstrated "a considerable track record of rapid improvement," carefully judging the pace of change from what was a low baseline. That improvement has been rooted in consistency, high standards

and a relentless focus on pupils' best interests.

Walking through the school today tells its own story. As the inspection team observed, "pupils' smiles and exclamations as they arrive show they are happy to be in school." and "There is a calm, controlled and purposeful atmosphere. Warm relationships, familiar routines and dedicated personal spaces give pupils a strong sense of safety and belonging." These are not incidental features, they are carefully nurtured conditions that allow pupils to thrive.

Stability has also been central to this journey. Considerable effort has gone into building and supporting a committed staff team. Leaders have ensured that staff welfare and workload are well considered, creating an environment where adults feel valued and supported. That stability is reflected in classrooms and corridors alike, where expectations are clear and consistently applied. Ofsted recognised this hard work and focus "Staff say that their welfare and workload are well considered by a supportive leadership team."

Inclusion remains the school's core purpose. As inspectors noted, "overcoming barriers so that all pupils thrive sits at the heart of the school's work." Pupils' needs are identified swiftly and met with care and expertise. Every child is known well. Every child matters. This clarity of mission has led to strong attendance and above national comparators for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities because pupils feel secure, understood and motivated to attend.

The school's personal development offer has also flourished. Inspectors described it as rich and ambitious, carefully tailored to individual needs. Pupils are prepared well for their next steps and move on to meaningful placements that continue their education and development. The ambition extends beyond academic outcomes, it is about equipping young people with the resilience, confidence and skills to succeed in life.

Rebuilding trust within the community has been another important strand of the journey. The school has demonstrated considerable commitment to forming constructive relationships with parents and carers, strengthening partnerships and renewing confidence locally.

The inspection affirms the strength of the foundations now in place in our school and confirms what the school community already knows: the culture has been transformed for the better, expectations are high and the direction of travel is firmly forward. Above all, it reflects a shared pride in the hard work undertaken to secure an excellent education for every pupil and to prepare them well for their futures. ●

Priya Bhagrath,
Headteacher

Ofsted
raising standards
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SCPS NEWS



SKILLS FOR LIFE

I've always believed that primary school, and especially ours, is about much more than just the curriculum, and we feel very keenly our responsibility to foster a love of learning from the very earliest age, to help our children become enthusiastic committed learners for the rest of their lives.

We have been talking recently about life skills - what do we want our children to look like (not literally!) when they leave us. What messages do we want our children to be sending to their secondary schools

and the wider world beyond?

Over the first three terms we have had a real push on manners, and we think it is paying off. Children are more confident, more polite, and have understood the two-way nature of being good-mannered - a two-way street. At a recent event at another school, one of our Year Five pupils went out of his way to thank (and shake hands with) the organiser. He was probably the only one. Simple stuff, but important skills for life.

There has also been a recent national focus on oracy - the range of skills and techniques that we use to express our thoughts verbally - which seems to boil down to young people coming off their phones and actually talking to each other. If our youngsters can speak confidently with their peers, their parents and their teachers, they are more likely to be able to involve themselves in society more generally, both now and into their future lives.

To enhance this we have launched Speak Up! A campaign of ideas and activities to get children (and teachers!) talking to each



other, and we have also started regular 'conversation corner' activities. These are striving to get children talking to each other and their parents.

Last term we had a focus on poetry, leading to public performances at our Poetry Performance Showcase in April, and around the school are posters advertising a 'word of the week'. For example children have been encouraged (and rewarded) for using 'bewildered' or 'epiphany' in their speech or writing! Try it - it isn't easy!

In short, at Sonning Common, we want to create confident communicators. By building oracy into all aspects of the school day, we aim to give our pupils the physical, linguistic, cognitive and social/emotional skills to enable them to express themselves clearly and engage with others effectively.

Come and speak with us - any time!
Wishing you all a very Happy Easter. ●

RACHEL SALMONS,
Headteacher

MECE NEWS



It has been an energising start to 2026 at Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge, with students embracing a rich variety of academic, creative and community opportunities. The school continues to "aim high, be inclusive and work together," and this term's events truly showcase that spirit.

Early in the new term, MECE astronomy enthusiasts enjoyed the school's Annual Astronomy Evening, held in partnership

with the Reading Astronomical Society. Whilst the January weather put stargazing off the agenda for the evening, students and their families were fascinated by the equipment and fully engaged by the experts and their stories. —an inspiring event that blended science learning with real wonder.

One of the standout moments has been the excitement building around Sister Act Jr, with preparations in full swing and tickets selling at an impressive pace. The production was a vibrant celebration of student talent, both on stage and behind the scenes, performed to packed audiences - a triumph for all involved.

A dedicated group of students (and their parents) and staff is preparing for a challenging 20-mile sponsored walk to support Grace Academy School in Nakuru, Kenya ahead of their visit there this summer. Students will be delivering assemblies to MECE students as part of their build up highlighting the incredible



challenges students at Grace Academy face, not least in getting to and from school each day. Donations can be made at www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/mece-kenya2026

Creativity continues to flourish across the school, particularly with the Annual Photography Competition. This year's theme, "January..." sparked imaginative entries from both students and staff. The competition offered a lovely glimpse into the artistic perspectives within the MECE community with winning images being displayed on site for all to enjoy.

As Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge continues thriving at the heart of the community, these events highlight not only the hard work of staff but also the enthusiasm, kindness and talent of its students. We look forward to sharing more successes as the year unfolds. ●

EMMA BLISS,
Headteacher

IT'S BLOOMING LOVELY!



A big, friendly hello from Eco SoCo, your village community environmental group. We're passionate about our local environment and nature and we've got all sorts of projects going on to support it, right here in SC. Here's a look at what we've been up to and how you can get involved.

Did you notice all the wonderful Spring flowers springing up around the village? Crocus, Wild Daffodils, Winter Aconites to name but a few – Eco SoCo volunteers planted over 9000 bulbs across the village over autumns 2024 and 2025. These beautiful blooms not only look great, but they also improve our wellbeing and very importantly, they provide essential

food for early emerging pollinators.

Want to see Spring flowers on verges in your street next year? Happy to pull a planting team together with your neighbours? Get in touch and we'll pop you on our 2026 bulb plan.

DARK SKIES COMING TO A VILLAGE NEAR YOU...

Join us on June 9th @ 7 pm Sonning Common Village Hall for an inspiring talk on how we can address light pollution and reclaim the beauty of the night sky! Light pollution robs us of the wonder of starlit nights and negatively impacts nocturnal wildlife, including moths, bats, birds, and pollinators. These disruptions have cascading effects on ecosystems.

Professor Richard Harding, a research scientist, environmentalist, and a former branch chair of CPRE Oxfordshire, will share his insights and practical tips on reducing light pollution to help restore balance to nature. Email: ecosocotalks@gmail.com to reserve your seat ***tickets to this event are free of charge but you still need to book as numbers are restricted***

22 Football pitches and counting... that's the size of SC's hedgehog highway! Want to help endangered hedgehogs access your garden but need help creating a hedgehog hole in your fence? Want to reduce the number of slugs destroying your prize plants? A CD sized hole in your garden fence is the answer!

We have a small but perfectly formed team of skilled volunteers who can create a neat, discreet hedgehog hole for you! To register your interest please contact: ecosococharles@gmail.com

Wild Oxfordshire comes to SC...one sunny (!) morning in February we met with Ecologist Imogen Parker from Wild Oxfordshire, to explore opportunities to enhance biodiversity at the Rotherfield Football ground at Bishopswood, Memorial Park and at Abbeycrest. Lots of great ideas – watch this space for news later in the year and opportunities to get involved! ●

JULIE SHORTER

Water fountain

We're pleased to announce the installation of a new bottle-refill water fountain in Memorial Park, situated right beside the MUGA. The fountain allows visitors to refill reusable bottles hygienically and easily, supporting active park users and encouraging a reduction in disposable plastics. This marks the first completed

element of the ongoing improvement project for Memorial Park. Several further enhancements are planned, and the Parish Council looks forward to keeping residents informed as each new feature is delivered to make the park even more useful and welcoming for everyone.



ECO SOCO REPAIR CAFÉ

Eco SoCo Repair Café at Springwater Church takes its Easter Break in April but we'll return on Saturday May 2nd 10-12.30, raring to go! Did you know we've saved over 850 items from landfill so far! Bring your broken electricals, textiles, bikes, clocks, toys, small pieces of wooden furniture and we'll work our magic for

free - just make sure items are light enough to be carried by one person! We're looking for a volunteer who can repair jewellery - can you help?

Jenga - do you have a Jenga you no longer need? Please let us know.

Do you have a spare hour or two? Want to make a positive difference

to SC wildlife and environment or the Repair Café? We'd love to hear from you!

'Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.' Dr. Seuss Email ecosoco24@gmail.com or pop by the Repair Café for a chat about either!

SC PRESCHOOL

Sonning Common preschool has, as usual, had a busy and joyful first few months of 2026 full of creativity and celebration.

World Book Day was great and filled the setting with colourful t-shirts that we printed ourselves along with plenty of storytelling fun.

We hosted a special Mother's Day stay and play in March when we welcomed our families in, and where children proudly shared activities with their mums and special grown-ups.

Spring brought lots of Easter crafts, with children creating bright, seasonal artwork. For Earth Day, we explored recycling, nature, planted seeds in the garden and made a giant collage from leaves, flowers and twigs.

We have also enjoyed learning about Eid, focusing on kindness, community and togetherness.

The preschool is run by a dedicated committee of volunteers and plays an essential role in making sure our pre-school continues to flourish. The committee supports staff, helps with fundraising and ensures we meet all our legal and financial responsibilities.

In simple terms, the committee helps make sure our pre-school can continue to offer a safe, nurturing, and fun environment for all our children.

We're looking for new volunteers to join our committee. You don't need any special experience, childcare background, or lots of spare time - just enthusiasm, fresh ideas, and a willingness to help. Being part of the committee is not only a rewarding way to support your community, but you also meet other parents and help shape the future of our valuable pre-school.

Please see the poster on the noticeboard for more information and contact details. ●



Can You Help Our Village Pre-school thrive? Join Our Committee!

Our wonderful village pre-school is at the heart of our community since 1981, giving local children the best possible start in their early years.

As a registered charity, we rely on the support and involvement of parents, carers, and community members to keep things running smoothly - and we need your help!

Committee roles range from light-touch support, decision making and helping with fundraising and/or events.

If you'd like to find out more, please get in touch - we'd love to hear from you!

Together, we can ensure our pre-school continues to be a joyful part of village life for years to come.

Contact us 0118 9724760
info@sonningcommonpreschool.co.uk

JOIN OUR FRIENDLY TEAM AT CITIZENS ADVICE HENLEY!



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

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

people receive the advice and support they need.

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

on the resilience and happiness of our clients."

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

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

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

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Please can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

My first career was as a chef and I then re-trained as a chartered accountant. Both of these careers have helped me to be good at problem solving and working with a wide range of people.

How long have you been volunteering with Citizens Advice Henley?

I think I've been volunteering for around 7 or 8 years.

What made you decide to volunteer with us? What made you choose Citizens Advice Henley?

I had been working for Age UK in London and was starting to move towards retirement. I knew I wanted to continue to do something to 'give back' to the community. I worked with someone who volunteered for her

local Citizens Advice and felt it was something that I would like to explore.

Can you describe your role and what you do in a typical day?

There really isn't a typical day. We give advice on the phone (Adviceline) and the queries can be about absolutely anything. Seeing clients face to face usually gives one more time to research their issues, but not always!

What training and/or support did you get when you started?

There was extensive training both face to face with other new volunteers and also online course work. The training covered a lot of the most common query types - but one will always get queries and situations that were not covered in the training.

What did you expect going into your volunteer role and how did the reality compare?

I wanted to be able to help people navigate through their issues. Sometimes you feel you have made more of a difference than other times and sometimes you want to know the end of the story, but that doesn't happen on the phone line. I enjoy some of my longer term relationships with clients helping them to move forward from difficult situations. ●

CHRISTINE ATKINSON



Scan the QR code to access a more comprehensive list of questions you may be asked.

TOM FORT ORCHARD



The more observant among the users and lovers of our Millennium Green may have noticed something different down there recently - namely the sprouting of a small plantation of new trees on the far side (from Abbeycrest) of the green at the north end.

We, the Millennium Green trustees - I am the chairman of the Trust - are very careful indeed with our precious responsibility, knowing full well that change is something to be viewed with suspicion. But, after long consideration, we decided that to instal a modest community orchard would fit very well with the ethos of the place. And that is what we have done.

The choice of trees was critical. We have come up with a mix of apple, pear and

plum trees, with one damson, because everyone loves a damson. The varieties are mainly what one would call 'old-fashioned', their names resonant with associations with the traditional orchards of England - so many of which have been lost.

The apples are Peasgood Nonesuch, Orleans Reinette, Ellison's Orange, Tydeman's Late Orange and Blenheim Orange. The pears (French names but long-standing English histories) are Doyenne de Comice and Beurre Hardy. The plums are Early Transparent, Reine Claude Violette (both actually greengages) and Jubilee, a modern variety. And the damson, for those who know about damsons, is a Merryweather.

I have eaten all of them at one time or another, and they are all delicious. I have also grown a few, and I can testify that there are few pleasures to match picking and eating a ripe fruit from a tree that you have grown yourself. But with fruit trees - as with many of the good things in life - you have to be patient. It will be several years before our Millennium Green community orchard starts producing -

I just hope I'm still around, and still able to do a little gentle pruning, when that time comes.

In the meantime we will be looking after them with due care and attention, and we would be very grateful if our Millennium Green community (if I can call it that) show them due respect by treading softly in that area, avoiding kicking footballs at them and so on. And if anyone does see anything amiss, please let us know by emailing scomit@outlook.com or calling me on 07847 503610.

One further development. By the time you read this a proper new footpath should have been created between the entrance to Essex Way and the north-west corner of the Green, to replace the current unofficial one running up the side of Abbeycrest. The Trust - using some of the proceeds from selling the land under the access to Kennylands Gym and the new housing development at the back of it - is funding this much-needed improvement. It will provide a safer access from those approaching the Green along Kennylands Road, which I hope will be appreciated by our friends. ●

ALISON SMITH LOVE A ROUTINE

I'm not sure when it happened, but I've definitely grown to love a routine. In fact, these days, anything spontaneous has to be planned into my week which, by definition, means it's not spontaneous at all. I guess it's the natural result of having a job and bringing up a family. Having to continuously co-ordinate with others means you end up following a timetable whether you like it or not. And timetable is really just another word for routine.

There's also a sort of security from routine. A feeling that you're in control and you know what to expect. And when life has thrown you some curveballs, there's a lot to be said for that.

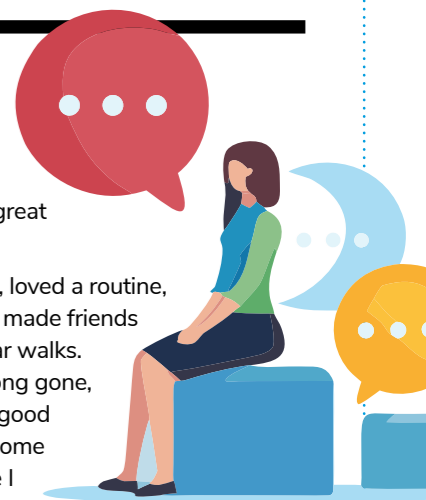
Routine also means you have things to look forward to. During the long days of January, and the damp days of February, the thought of the upcoming

Village Litter Pick in March was strangely comforting. Now, I know that sounds mad (who would look forward to cleaning up somebody else's rubbish?), but to me it heralded the start of spring, and the opportunity to catch up with people I hadn't seen over the winter. Of course, the chance to eat some of the WI's wonderful cake might also have had something to do with it! Similarly, Village Day on June 28th will signal the start of summer, although it can be a bit challenging seeing so many familiar faces out of context.

Human beings are, by nature, sociable creatures. Having a routine that coincides with someone else's means you cross paths frequently and get to know them, or at the very least to recognise them, and they you. A brief exchange of smiles as you pass by is all it takes to make you both feel like you belong,

and that's a great feeling.

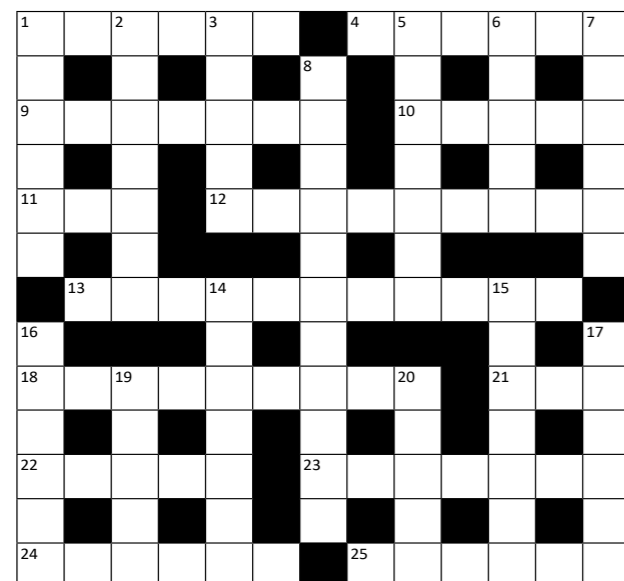
My dog, Jack, loved a routine, and we both made friends on our regular walks. Sadly he is long gone, but I am still good mates with some of the people I trudged around muddy woods with week in week out. By the law of averages though, there are bound to be others who met me once and spent the next ten years trying to avoid me. Of course I would never do that, so if you spotted me diving behind a wheelie bin last week I was obviously doing some out of season litter picking, not biding my time until the lady with the aged terrier had gone by. ●



PUZZLE PAGE

By DAVID DUNSTAN

Cryptic crossword



ACROSS

1. Textbook for a bookworm (6)
4. Old boy with desire for a rectangle (6)
- 9&10. Devastated Gunners ended in local village (7,5)
10. See 9 across
11. You formerly with son is positive (3)
12. Peer veers off to keep going (9)
13. Mum heard pal dancing in local village (11)
18. Tune rings out for rebel (9)
21. Born before nine in local village (3)
22. Scot and I arranged to not complain (5)
23. Tenor toured around and taught (7)
24. Why, we hear, go bankrupt in local estate? (6)
25. Capone has manners every time (6)

DOWN

1. Night flight that it sounds like I take after wine (3-3)
2. Am I sane suffering memory loss? (7)
3. Finish with tail raised (3,2)
5. Pet hate is a small animal and a big animal (7)
6. Honour south-east stout (5)
7. Spicy root – chestnut? (6)
8. Designer tin repurposed is what is needed for cooking (11)
14. Learner with yen confused Clair, being poetical (7)
15. Einstein with a Canadian province (7)
16. Dance, saying it's a puzzle (6)
17. Book flight (6)
19. Mock wolf (5)
20. Infant and Pacino add up (5)

Sudoku

Grading: medium

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

Cryptogram

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

AW YUT ISO IN WFITO HUMRF CUET YFOS
 WFO TPS TFASOT FIW USC WFO YASC DBIYT
 RIBC: YFOS AW AT TPHHOM AS WFO BALFW,
 USC YASWOM AS WFO TFUCO. –
 RFUMBOT CARGOST: LMOUW OKXORWUWAIST

Quiz: Towns in Berkshire

1. Location of the world's most famous race meeting, attended each day by the royal family.
2. Head office and central distribution centre of Waitrose.
3. Location of a massacre on 19 August 1987, when Michael Ryan shot and killed 16 people.
4. The start of the Marlow Branch Line.
5. Town famous for the Three Bs: beer, bulbs and biscuits.
6. Location of the Royal Military Academy.
7. Home of the motor insurers' automotive research centre, researching vehicle safety, security and repair.
8. Location of the only Legoland park in the United Kingdom and the largest Legoland park in the world.
9. Where the 18th century Ballad of Molly Mogg, the beautiful barmaid at the old Rose Inn, was written.
10. Location of an aerodrome from 1929 to the 1960s, now home to the Museum of Berkshire Aviation.

See answers on page 34



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SPRING INTO YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY

As the bluebells begin to peek through the soil and the days grow a little longer, there's a welcome sense of energy across our community. Spring brings new ideas, and the Friends of Sonning Common Library have been busy planning a programme of events for all ages. Whether you're picking up a new book or looking for ways to keep children entertained over the holidays, the library is ready to welcome you.

To mark the National Year of Reading 2026, we're launching a year-long

challenge to get everyone turning pages. Book Bingo is now live! Read between 10 and 12 books this year and enter our prize draw once you've completed your list. With separate challenges for children and adults, it's a great opportunity for a bit of friendly competition at home.

School holidays can make even the most organised families run out of ideas, but the library has plenty to keep young minds busy. Throughout the Easter break, families can enjoy the Easter I-Spy Trail, a simple way to get outdoors and make the most of the brighter spring days.

Our much-loved Teddy Bears' Sleepover returns on 1st April. Children can drop off their favourite cuddly friends for a cosy bedtime story before the bears stay overnight in the library. We'll share photos of their after-hours adventures - they're always up to mischief!

For children who enjoy hands-on fun, Fizz Pop Science will join us on 8th

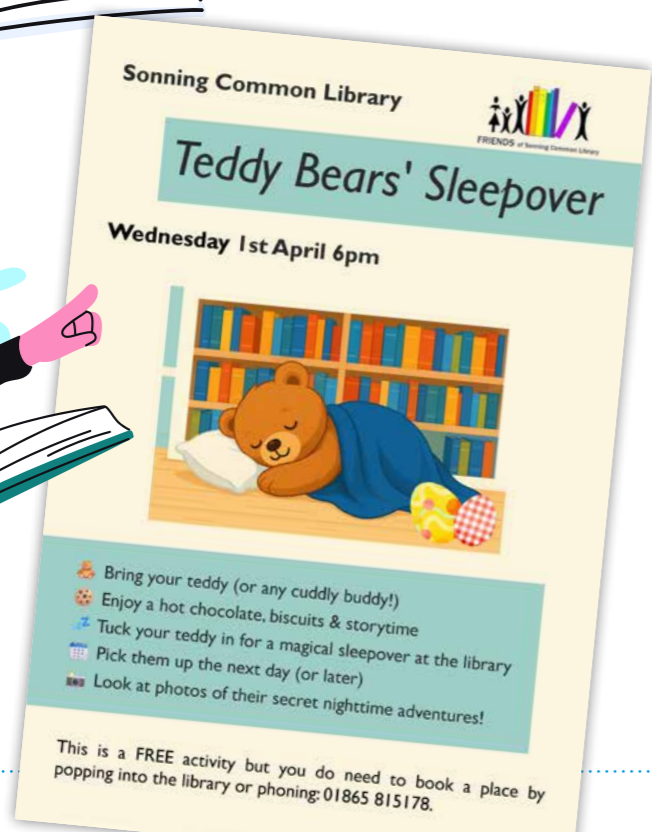
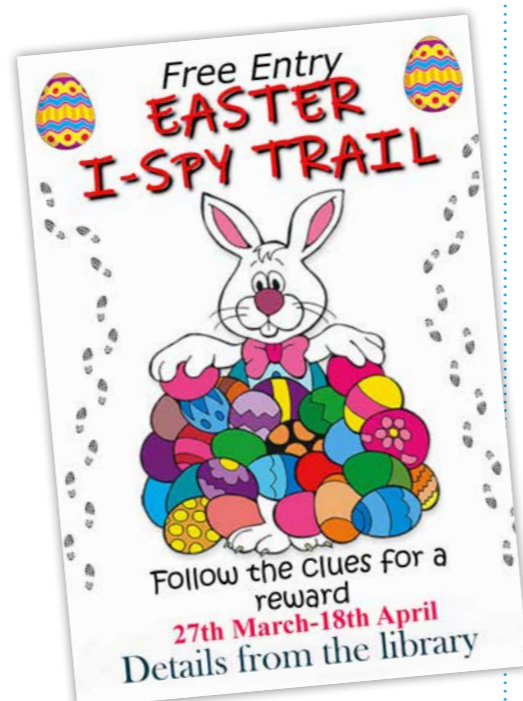


April with an energetic workshop full of lively experiments. It's a brilliant way to discover that science can be just as exciting as play.

And during the late-spring half-term, look out for our Prepare Robo workshop, where children can build and code their own LEGO creations, turning digital technology into an afternoon of imaginative learning.

Spring is the perfect time to explore what's happening at your library. We look forward to welcoming you - and your teddy bears - very soon! •

VERA GALYASZ
Friends of Sonning Common Library



NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY

Greetings from the Library! The ebb and flow of visitors to the library continues. Sometimes it can be quiet with a mum in the corner reading stories to her toddler, a woman researching her family history using Ancestry on a library computer and a man searching the crime shelves for a new whodunnit. More often it is a bit chaotic with a social morning group at the table, a fierce chess match on the go, children doing a treasure hunt around the shelves, someone printing out a returns label on the computer and an enquiry being made about the latest Robert Galbraith.

But what if you can't get to the library? We have some lovely,

friendly volunteers who provide a Home Library Service. You may need their help if your mobility has been reduced for various reasons, you don't own a car and live outside the centre of the village or you are recovering from an operation. Chris, Lyn, Clare, Jane and Gillian find out the sort of books (or audio books) you are interested in and then will regularly come to the library to choose items for you and bring them directly to your house or to Abbeycrest if that's where you are located. All our Home Library Service volunteers are DBS checked and trained so to register for this service or for further information call the library or telephone the Home Library Service on **01865 810259**

or email homelibraryservice@oxfordshire.gov.uk

In the library in April we will be entertaining the children with Easter events and, for adults, we will have book displays on classic books that you either want to revisit or never quite got around to reading in the first place! May concentrates on our health and wellbeing and is also local and community history month. So, if you're interested in up-to-date information about the village or want to dive into the past, pop in and see myself and Elaine and you can be assured of a friendly welcome.

We look forward to welcoming you soon. •

JULIET LEGG
Librarian

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HEALTH CENTRE NEWS



Hours of appointments being lost

We totally understand that sometimes you can't make your appointment with either a GP or a nurse however please call and let us know you can't attend. We try very hard to ensure our waiting times for an appointment are kept as short as possible but are finding a big increase in the number of patients that fail to attend their appointment and don't let us know resulting in wasted appointments. For the month of February alone we lost over 11 hours of nurse's appointments and nearly 16 hours of GP appointments where booked patients failed to come for their appointment and failed to let us know they couldn't make it. A worrying 27 hours of lost appointments that other

patients could have used. Please help us reduce this number. If you can't make your appointment, please either cancel through the NHS App or call our reception team to let us know. The more notice we have the better chance we have of giving your appointment to someone else who really needs it.

Staff news

Please give a warm welcome to Sarah who joined our Medical Secretarial team on 23rd February. Sarah has a lot to learn however we know she will be a great asset to the team once she has completed her training.

Covid-19 Spring booster programme

Our clinics dates have been set and we are now making appointments for all eligible patients. The cohorts for the Spring booster are over 75 years, care home residents, and immunosuppressed patients. If you haven't received your invitation and are eligible from one of the cohorts, please call the Covid appointment booking line on 0118 972 2188 and select option 6. Our Covid appointment booking line is available Tuesday – Fridays 1000-1600. Our clinics are scheduled for Wednesday 15th April 1400-1700 and Tuesday 28th April 1400-1700. ●

KATIE WILLIAMS
Practice Manager at SCHC

Patient Participation Group (PPG) Review of 2025

The Patient Participation Group (PPG) has had a productive and engaging year, continuing to strengthen communication between patients and the Health Centre while promoting health awareness across our community.

Health Information Events in 2025

In **February**, we hosted "New Year, New Start",

In **June**, we welcomed Clare Burnett, Lead Nurse for Sepsis at RBH, who delivered an informative and important session on recognising and responding to sepsis.

In **September**, our focus turned to Caring for Elderly Relatives. this session provided valuable advice and support for those caring for older family members, addressing both practical and emotional aspects of caregiving.

Working Behind the Scenes

A number of ways to improve communication and support patients. Putting together a Health Centre Information Dashboard to keep you updated on things you may not be aware of.

Involved in discussions around the Primary Care Network and local neighbourhood planning, helping to ensure the patient voice is heard.

Working more closely with Social Prescribers, who play such an important role in connecting people to community groups and practical support beyond medical care.

Looking Ahead to 2026

We're already planning another interesting year ahead. Proposed events include:

- A Mental Health Information Event
- A Patient Satisfaction Survey

- A Vaccination Information Event
- A Falls and Fall Prevention Event

As always, we welcome your suggestions for future topics.

The PPG is made up of local volunteers who care about our community and our Health Centre. We remain committed to supporting patients, improving communication, and promoting better health across our community. We welcome new members and encourage anyone interested in contributing ideas or getting involved to get in touch by emailing schcpgg@gmail.com or leaving a note for the attention of the PPG for us at reception.

Here's to another year of working together to keep our community informed, supported and healthy. ●

VICKY MYNOTT
PPG Chair



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CHURCH NEWS

Christ the King and St John the Baptist

It's wonderful to be enjoying spring after the long (and wet!) winter months. Although the doors of St John the Baptist are closed for the time being as refurbishment takes place, there is still much activity throughout the parish.

The long-anticipated works to improve the heating, lighting and general interior of St John's began at the start of February. An impressive amount of scaffolding has been put in place to facilitate the works and, if all goes to plan, the church will be open once again by the end of May. A celebratory concert to be held at St John's is planned for Saturday 27th June, 3pm: all welcome!

Our dedicated Churchyard Tidy Group continues to meet at St John's every week to take care of the grounds so that they still look neat and tidy even though the church is out of bounds. If you are passing through on a Wednesday morning why not stop for a chat to find out what is going on.

At Christ the King, spring bulbs are flowering, a wild flower area is taking shape and new trees are being planted. Two EV charging units will soon be available at one end of the newly-resurfaced car park.

Christ the King continues to welcome all to weekly Eucharist services at 9.30am every Sunday. The church and hall are now being well-used once again. A new sound system has been installed and bi-fold doors, which separate the church from the main hall, have now been fitted. If you are looking for a hall to host an event or for a regular booking, please contact the Benefice Office on 0118 972 1383. Please note that donations for the Food Bank, which has a permanent base in the building and provides food and essentials for many local families, can be left at the church as well as at several other points throughout the village, and both churches also collect toiletries, food and clothing for CIRDIC, which helps homeless people in Reading.

Easter services this year will be held at All Saints' (Rotherfield Peppard), and Christ the King:

Thursday 2nd April: Maundy Thursday Eucharist with foot washing - 7.00pm Christ the King.

Friday 3rd April: Good Friday Ecumenical Walk of Witness - 10.00am from Christ the King car park, with hot cross buns and coffee/tea in the church hall after the walk.

Friday 3rd April: Good Friday service - 2.00pm All Saints'.

Saturday 4th April: Easter Vigil & first Eucharist of Easter - 9.00pm Christ the King.

Sunday 5th April: Easter Day Eucharist service - 9.30am Christ the King; 10.30am All Saints'.

For further details of these and all other services, as well as contact information, please check the Benefice pages (All Saints', St John's and Christ the King) at www.achurchnearyou.com where you can also read copies of the parish Lamb & Flag magazine.

Please come along to a church service this Easter: you can be sure of a warm welcome! Stay for a cup of tea or coffee with biscuits and friendly conversation afterwards. Wishing everyone a blessed and peaceful Easter. ●

Springwater

It's hard to believe we are well into 2026 now and it's been a very busy time at Springwater so far this year.

We have started Springwaters Social Spaces every Monday and Friday from 2-4pm and a warm welcome awaits anyone who would like to attend. It's a time to enjoy community, cuppas and cake! Please feel free to bring a craft with you to do, read a book, play a game or simply enjoy some you time or joining in with community chats.

This Easter we will join with the other Churches in the area in their annual walk of witness on Good Friday and, Springwater will also be open from 2 pm Good Friday for prayer and reflection.

On Easter Saturday we will be doing an Easter egg hunt from 10am till 12.30pm in our grounds, followed by the showing of the Chosen film at 2pm looking at the story of Easter.

We will also have a celebration service on Easter Sunday at 10.30am and you would be most welcome to join us at all events, please feel free to pop in we would love to see you! ●

SARAH SIMONS
Senior Minister
Springwater Church

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

The distribution of this edition of the magazine coincides with the most important week in the Christian calendar – Holy Week. It is the week we walk with Jesus and reflect on his suffering, death and glorious

resurrection. Key events at St Michael's are:

- Mass of the Lord's Supper, 7pm, Maundy Thursday. We relive when Jesus gave us Holy Communion for the first time, and by washing the feet of twelve parishioners are reminded that Jesus came to serve, not to be served.
- Good Friday village walk of witness with other local churches, departing from Christ the King at 10am. At 3pm we remember the passion and death of Jesus and pray for the needs of the world.
- The Easter Vigil, 8pm, Easter Saturday, the most important celebration of our year. It begins with the Easter candle being taken in procession into the dark church, reminding us that Jesus has risen.
- Easter Sunday Masses are at 9 and 10.30am.

Thinking ahead we wish to acknowledge how important pets are in the lives of many people by holding an informal Pet Blessing Service at 11am, Saturday 25th April. We will give thanks for all that our pets mean to us. Come along with your pet suitably restrained or contained! Let us know who you are bringing at: stmichael.pets@gmail.com.

We have heard that many people want to find out a bit more about Jesus and other aspects of Christianity but are not sure how to begin. The Alpha Course has proved to be an excellent way of finding some answers in an informal setting without any commitments. We aim to run an Alpha Course in the village during the summer months (May to July). If interested let us know at stmichael.alphacourse@gmail.com and look out for confirmation on our website: www.saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk

The blessings of the Easter season to all readers. ●

Chiltern Evangelical Church

British Summer time is here. You will have noticed that the days are getting longer. In about a month we will enter solar Summer (7 May), the three months of the year with the longest days (not necessarily the warmest!). It all reminds us of God's promise over 4,000 years ago "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease"! We can rely on God's promises as we organize our lives.

At Chiltern Evangelical Church we have two Sunday services each week, 10.30am at Emmer Green Youth Centre and 4.30pm at the church in Sonning Common on the corner of Grove Road and Peppard Road. If you have ever wondered what Christianity is about, you will be welcomed at these regular services, where the Bible is explained and God praised.

We have many other activities in the Sonning Common Church building including: a prayer meeting/Bible study every Wednesday at 7.45pm; Mainly Music, for toddlers and parents, Friday morning at 10.30am in term time; activities for children and young people on alternate Saturday evenings.

If you have practical problems with transport, active young children, caring for others, don't let that be a reason for not joining us, send a post to info@cecuk.church or come along and talk to us about how we can help. ●

Kidmore End & Sonning Common PCC awarded National Lottery funding for St John's Church

The National Lottery Community Fund has awarded £20,000 to the Parochial Church Council in response to a bid to raise money for the works about to begin at the church of St John the Baptist, Kidmore End. These works cover rewiring of the church, new heating, new lighting, interior redecoration and repairs to the stained glass windows. Starting in February, this is Phase 1 of our renovations aimed at making the church a more attractive and comfortable place for the village, school, and for worship. Phase 2 will bring hospitality facilities which are in our plans but not funded at present.

Nick Room, Project Lead on behalf of the PCC, said "the PCC have been planning improvements at St John's for several years. Conscientious work to pull together all stakeholders and raise enough funding to pay for at least part of the work accelerated during 2025. We are thrilled to be at the cusp of beginning the work which will make a significant difference to our stewardship of the building, and make St John's church a more welcoming space". ●



LOVE ME ... FORGIVE BARNEY FOR THE MUDDY PAW MARKS

Villager Fran Godfrey extends an invitation to a special event

If you live around Sonning Common, and especially if you are owned by a dog, you may well recognise the photo - not of me, but of Barney the Cavapoochon. To introduce myself, the person at the human end of the lead, my name is Fran. Never had a dog before; worked in London as a BBC Radio 2 Newsreader for over 20 years; moved to Sonning Common about 8 years ago - and I love it. I'm still working from my little home studio doing programmes for Boom Light and Magic Classical.

When I moved here, a dear friend said, 'You must get a dog'. My response: 'No. I mustn't. I cannot be doing with all that poop-scooping stuff and walking in the rain.

Within two years, after much research (the dog must not moult, dribble, yap, bite, smell) I ended up with Barney. The Puppy Months were not easy, but we weathered it together, borne aloft by the encouragement of dear friends and other dog owners. What a community you are! I speak to far more people when I have Barney with me than when I am on my own.

My other joy on moving to the village was to find St Michael's Church. I'm a Catholic and to find a parish filled with the kindest people was a huge bonus. I was welcomed immediately and offered as much friendship and support as I wanted.

When it comes to friendship and support, of course, a good dog takes the biscuit - as it were! Loyal, obviously, doesn't judge you, is always delighted to see you, and

whatever love you show your dog you will get back several-fold.

I am sure that there are many people who have other pets whom they rate very highly/love to bits. I think we can all agree that pets are a real blessing in our lives. Yes, even when they want to go out at 6am, bark at the postie, tear open the Amazon parcel, chew your socks/gloves/slippers. Bless them all. And that is what we want to do.

To this end, you are WARMLY invited to St Michael's Church on Saturday, 25th April at 11 a.m. for a Pets' Blessing Service. Any pet, all pets - all creatures great and small. You don't need to be 'religious' - just someone who would like to mix with other like-minded people. It won't be a Holy Mass - just some prayers, blessings of pets and we might sing All Things Bright and Beautiful - pets can join in, of course. It will be fun and doubtless, chaotic. But it will be a blessing to see you.

The only condition really is that you should have your pet on a lead, in a basket, cage, bowl, harness - or under as much control as you can muster. Young people and children will be especially welcome, as long as they are on leads (joke!).

If you can come, and it will only be a lovely occasion if you do come, please email stmichael.pets@gmail.com

Let us know whom you will be bringing so that we can get enough treats for the dogs and cats, millet for the budgies, carrots for the rabbits, sugar lumps for the horses... you get the idea. Don't let me down please. I'll set Barney on you! ●

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