

SC

SONNING COMMON MAGAZINE



OCT/NOV 2025

AUTUMN IS UPON US

THE SEASON OF CHANGE

IN THIS ISSUE

OPEN EVENING + DAY VISITS

MECE celebrating higher achievements
P4

ELLIE'S ACHIEVEMENTS

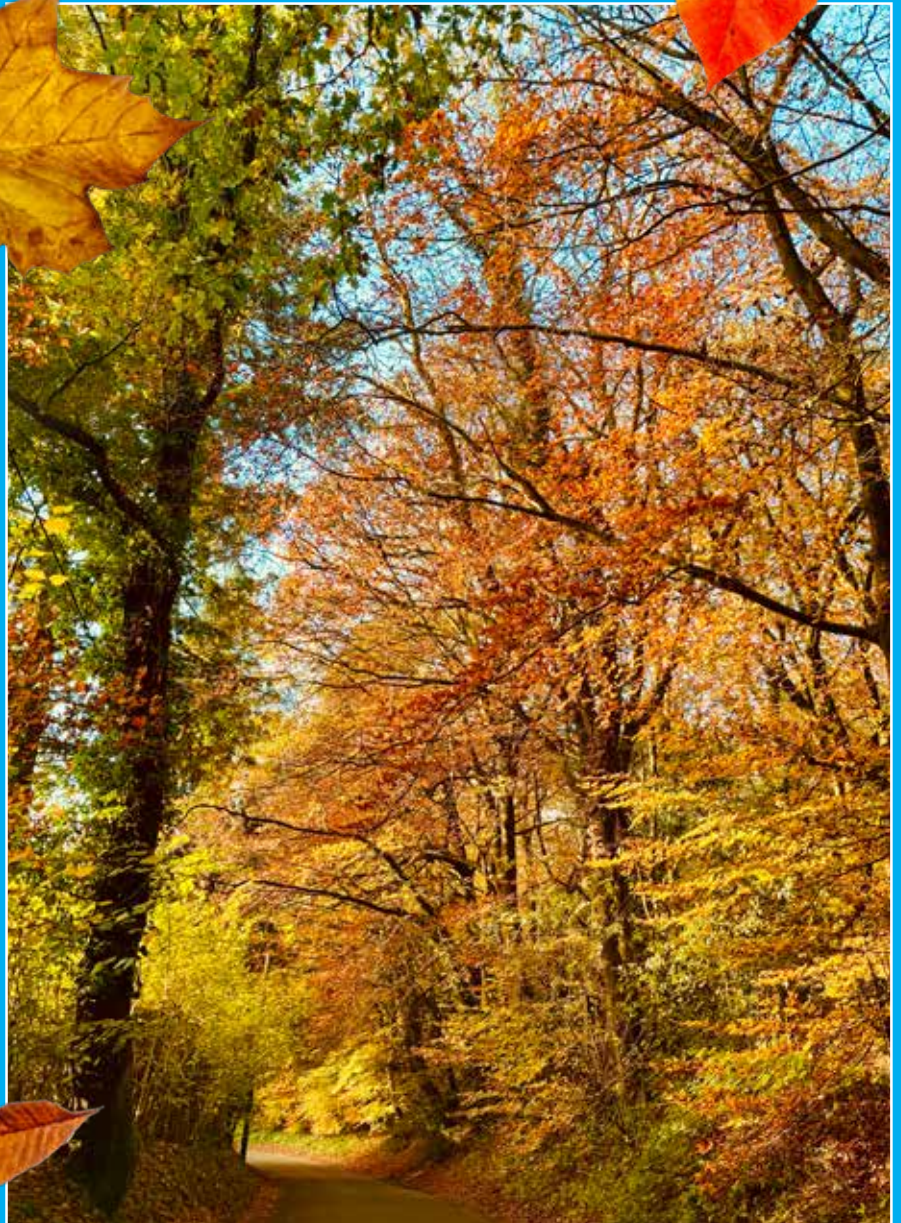
Raising over £3,000 for a
Guides trip to Canada
P18-19

DEATH IN THE LIBRARY

A challenge to solve the
mystery
P20-21

CHRIST THE KING CHURCH

Magnificently renovated
P28



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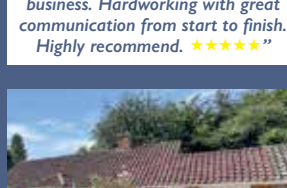
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 Kennylands Road "Great team that helped us move to the area and our dream home"	 Kennylands Road "The best estate agent in the area. There is genuine honesty and integrity to Richard, his team within this family run business. Hardworking with great communication from start to finish. Highly recommend. ★★★★★"	 Brinds Close "The whole team were so professional, helpful and nothing was too much trouble. They are a truly local estate agency with local knowledge."	 Peppard Road "Thank you for all your support with this process and your care and help"
 Lea Road "We recently sold through Beville's and they were great from start to finish. The team are all extremely knowledgeable about the local area and market. Their communication was honest, transparent and yet friendly throughout. Richard, Marcus and Karen were excellent at driving our sale forward."	 Shiplake Bottom "Thank you for everything you've done to make the process as smooth and swift as you have."	 Chestnut Gardens "Well done on getting this over the line. Your commitment and helpfulness in this transaction is well appreciated."	 Chalkhouse Green Road "From our initial meeting through to completion we found dealing with all the Bevilles team a real pleasure. They have fantastic local knowledge & really help you navigate through the challenges of selling your home. We would have no problem in highly recommending their services."

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FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

The season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, as described by Keats has come early this year. It is the start of September and the Holly trees in our front garden are covered in red berries - no chance of seeing them on Christmas Day 2025! But we did like the sun and it is very many years since it has been hot and sunny during the long school holiday.

In contrast it could prove to be a long/cold/wet winter. Return to school always signals the return to normality and we think about what next.

Accordingly, you may feel the need to join a club, do some more walking, read lots of books, attend classes in the village halls, have a FISH visitor if you are housebound, attend the coffee and chat meetings open to all, find a new hobby, write an article for the magazine and many more ... some are listed in this magazine. Find a new activity and volunteer, Eco Soco, Food bank delivery, hospital drivers for FISH, library and many more

One of these might raise your spirits and the time will fly by. Sonning Common has a very welcoming community and appreciates its volunteers. This winter one might be YOU. I hope so. ●

Diana and Christine

FUTURE DEADLINE DATES FOR MAGAZINE COPY

1 November, 1 January, 1 March

We would love to receive your articles! 😊

MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM



Diana Pearman



Christine Atkinson



Joan Grumman

CONTENTS

- 3 Editorial
- 4-7 Community News
- 8-9 Eco Soco
- 12-13 Noticeboard
- 16 Parish News
- 18-19 In Focus - Ellie's challenge
- 20 Kate Eke
- 21 Library
- 22 MEG/Giveaway trees
- 24 Puzzle page
- 26-27 Le Jog
- 28-31 Church news
- 32 SCHCentre
- 34 Advertisers directory

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 Autumn has arrived!

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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MECE NEWS

Well done Year 11 students



Students at Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge have returned to school this September with a positive spring in their step and the site has its familiar and warm buzz back following the extended summer break.

Just a week before the end of the break many staff were in school to celebrate the Class of 2025's GCSE results – we were delighted with their results which

reflected 5 years of hard work, desire to succeed and ultimately their resilience.

70% of students achieved at least five GCSEs at grades 4–9 – a pleasing uplift from last year's headline figure of 43% – reflecting the commitment of students over their years at the school to succeed. Additionally, this year, 18% of all grades awarded were at Grade 7 or above, with 16% of the cohort bagging one or more of the coveted Grade 9s within their suite of results – a testament to their hard work, determination and the culture of high aspirations that has been built at the school.

We are extremely proud that all of the year group are now embarking on Post 16 study at a range of Sixth Forms, Colleges and into Apprenticeships across Oxfordshire and Berkshire. This summer, the school facilitated 24 different qualifications including, for the first time, Further Maths and Home Languages including Spanish, Turkish and Chinese and just under 5% of all grades were awarded at the coveted

Grade 9.

With these results as motivation, students in current Years 10 and 11 have returned with renewed determination to succeed in their GCSE studies and students in Years 7–9 have settled well back into routines as term gets underway. As ever we welcome our new Year 7s to our MECE Community and look forward to seeing them blossom over the course of the next few weeks.

The Autumn term affords plenty of opportunities for prospective parents to visit the school and see us in action – we have 4 Open Morning events in late September and early October and our official Open Evening on Tuesday 30 September – we warmly invite you to come and have a look round and meet our students and staff. ●

EMMA BLISS,
Headteacher



SCPS NEWS

Ready, Steady, Go!



That's right, we are up and running again. Another summer gone in a flash! New faces in new classes, and already a happy glow about the place.

I guess if there is one thing guaranteed to raise a teacher's quizzical eyebrow, and particularly that of a headteacher, it is that old trope about how great it must be to have long holidays.

Of course, we all appreciate a bit of a reset from time to time, and you will know from your own children how tired they seem to get towards the ends of terms. Our staff are no different – we encourage them, as far as possible, to put their absolute all into each teaching term and to wind down and relax a little in the interims.

But we don't really stop. There is lots to do, and we never want to rest on last term's laurels.

This summer has seen us working on (or at least supervising and checking on) two major projects.

Our reception class area has been transformed, with colourful new installations, upgraded fencing and two covered areas for our youngest children to explore. The PTA have

been instrumental in funding this and it represents a much-appreciated investment to enhance this end of the school.

On the other side of the site, the pool has been renovated – hooray! Several staff have spent time over the summer supervising the install and it looks fantastic. More of this elsewhere in this issue, but we will be re-opening soon and without you we simply could not have done it. Thank you so much for your support.

There are more modest tasks to deal with as we start a new year as well.

As staff finish in July they are asked to consider our priorities for the coming year, and they come back a few days early to help put these into place. In particular this year I want a real focus on manners – children will be guided and expected to show good manners without fail, and staff will in turn need to model this. I feel strongly that this is a key element to becoming a caring and respectable citizen and we need to start it early. In addition, we are re-invigorating our literacy curriculum this year (including a focus on oracy and public speaking) and embedding a new system for recording and assessing children's progress. We have spent a few (children-less) days training staff on all this, and we feel ready to go.

Speaking of which, as I write, I can hear some excited young voices outside my office. They're back! Time to crack on!

I hope you have enjoyed a peaceful summer. Best wishes for the new term. ●

RACHEL SALMONS
Headteacher
Sonning Common Primary School



A BRILLIANT VILLAGE RESPONSE

You will have seen in recent issues that Sonning Common Primary School's community pool was in dire need of an upgrade. You may have contributed to this summer's campaign.

In short, you have saved your pool!

An incredible community response to the appeal, plus generous donations from local businesses and other funding bodies, including the Parish Council, CECA and the Harmony Choir, means that the pool has been renovated over the summer holidays. There is still some work to do on the changing rooms and we are hoping to get this done in the coming months.

It really shows off the very best of our village – recognising the need for

this facility and perhaps remembering swimming sessions with your children and then responding in the most generous way possible and in very quick time.

The pool will re-open for lessons on September 15th and it is anticipated that it will soon be up to full capacity again – with 750 enthusiastic local people making use of it each week, and many more instructing, training or volunteering.

Thank you so much for all you have done to support this initiative. If you would like to see the refurbished facility, we will be holding a weekend open afternoon in the coming weeks – look out for details on social media. Staff will be there to thank you personally and show you around. ●

RACHEL SALMONS
Headteacher



CHRISTMAS 2025 GIFT VOUCHER APPEAL

Over the past few years Sonning Common magazine has led the fundraising for this charitable cause. It all started during the Covid lockdown at Christmas 2020, when it was perceived to be a 'bit of a treat' for disadvantaged members of our community. Treat boxes were prepared and delivered that year, and the number has increased each year. In 2024 the number had risen to 90.

Following discussions with the food bank organisers and the staff at FISH, giving people choice seemed to be the way forward, and with it came the idea of vouchers. Furthermore, some SODC personnel visited the food bank at Springwater where they heard about the Christmas vouchers, and they thought it was a splendid idea. We have therefore decided to fundraise for vouchers again this year.

The value of the voucher will be dependent on the amount we can raise from various charitable bodies and through a justgiving page.

These vouchers are likely to be All for One or for the Co-op store in the village. All for One vouchers can be used in a wide range of stores so give plenty of choice to the recipients. The Co-op vouchers are better for those residents who do not travel outside of the village.

A just giving page will be set up in the next few weeks and shared to the community through our facebook page and in the library. You can also donate cash if preferred by leaving your donation in an envelope with the Pearmans at 50 Kennylands Road, or through their letterbox.

We do hope that you are able to support this worthy cause at this very special time of year for giving. Any amount would be most welcome and much appreciated. ●

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/scmagazinechristmasvoucherappeal>

Diana Pearman and Christine Atkinson



PARKING

A resident has contacted me asking car drivers to be more thoughtful when parking in Wood Lane or Grove Road. Too many are parking across their drive, consequently they are trapped waiting for the person to reappear. Please be more thoughtful. ●

A call out for volunteers for the Food Bank

Over a fortnight we deliver to around 50 households, Wednesday to Friday in Sonning Common and surrounding villages.

We are looking for a few more volunteers to join our team for packing and/or delivering the food parcels. It would usually be a regular day commitment of 1-2 hours fortnightly. ●

Please email Esther on foodbanksupport@springwaterchurch.org.uk

ROTHERFIELD UNITED FC Resurrected Men's Team



Last season the brand-new men's side won the title-winning first season in the Thames Valley Premier League Division 4 and moved to League 1

Under manager Ollie Wagstaff, assisted by Justus Larter, they began their Division 4 campaign with determination and flair. They finished the season in second place, narrowly behind Bracknell. Promotion to Division 3 was confirmed, and the squad rightly celebrated their success. Meanwhile Bracknell had been docked points for a disciplinary action matter. This meant that Rotherfield United were crowned as champions!

This promotion places Rotherfield in much tougher competition next season, but the feeling around the club is that this group of players has well and truly earned the challenge and will rise to it in the coming season.

Rotherfield's success was a true team effort, and individuals were recognised at the club's end-of-season awards night.



Captain Harry Green – Golden Boot top scorer for 2024/25.

Luke Mullin – Most Improved Player

Dan Beech – Clubman of the year award – recognising his outstanding service, sportsmanship, commitment to the club, including managing one of the Rotherfield youth teams.

Ben Morgan – Goal of the Season, plus his all-round contribution named Manager's Player of the Year.

Charlie Wagstaff – Supporters' Player of the Year.

Warren Gardner – Chairman's Player of the Year for consistent excellence.

Will Beville – Player of the Year, showing the high regard in which he is held by his teammates. He will be sorely missed as he moves on to pastures new next season.

As manager Ollie Wagstaff put it, "Each and every player played their part in this success – it's a real squad achievement."

Up the Yellows! ●

ROTHERFIELD UNITED WALKING FC Announces 2025 Charity Music Night Auction and Raffle

Charity Music Night Saturday 25 October 2025 at Peppard Memorial Hall.

Live music, 60s, 70s, and 80s, local performers plus DJ. Fabulous food, affordable wines and beers. Proceeds will benefit FISH Volunteer Centre and Prostate Cancer UK. A raffle and auction will close the night, featuring incredible prizes. If you would like to donate a prize, please contact Barry Stevenson, RUWFC Chairman, at barryjstevenson@gmail.com ●



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



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 where things are headed.

Why replace, repair ... Our free monthly **Repair Café**, which takes place on the first Saturday of the month at Springwater Church (10-12.30) saw a record number of 63 items in August and we repaired 48 of them! Terry, a furniture restorer joined us recently, so we've added minor wooden repairs to our list too. A massive thank you to our 27 volunteers whose skills and dedication make our Repair Café such a tremendous success! Nothing to repair? No problem, come along for coffee, homemade cake and a warm welcome!

Be inspired and learn ... October heralds International Repair Café Day and we'll be celebrating at our October 4th Repair Café by running mini workshops alongside our usual repairs. Mini workshops: simple textile repairs, bike maintenance, beginners knitting class and pattern reading advice, how to wire a plug and a make your own bunting craft session. Adults and children over 10, accompanied by a parent welcome. Places limited, email ecosoco24@gmail to register interest.

Championing the environment ... In July a group of us attended a Mass Lobby at Westminster organised by The Climate Coalition, where we met our MP Freddie Van Mierlo to lobby for increased support for the environment.

Freddie was very receptive and as a result agreed to hold a constituency meeting three times a year to champion local environmental concerns and initiatives.

Local food for local people ... Our community veg garden has bloomed this year and due to the dedication of passionate volunteers it has provided a bounty of veg for Sonning Common Food Bank. Keen to get involved? Please email us (address below).

Kids go green! ... Courtesy of our friends at Shedquarters, children built 40 free bird boxes and insect hotels with the help of local Scouts at our stall on Village Day. We helped out at a children's planting session at the library, where children enjoyed planting cress and flower seeds.

Community cinema ... As chosen by our audience at our first community cinema event, our next film will be 'Six Inches of Soil' on November 9th. See magazine noticeboard for details.

Feeling fruity ... To support our 5 new community orchards in SC we've been busy watering and attending a fruit tree pruning course, so that we know how to keep them in good shape. Early Winter will see us weeding and renewing mulch around the trees! Please drop us an email to join in.

Upping biodiversity in our green spaces ... we've surveyed several green spaces in the village to assess the opportunities to plant additional trees, hedgerow and unmown sections for wildflowers. We'll be discussing the options with the various landowners over the coming weeks.

Terrific Trees – thank you to all the amazing villagers who have been



watering the new verge trees this summer! The trees are alive because of you! Look out for the lovely new tree labels – produced by Tim Elwell from Shedquarters from left over cedar roof shingles. Coming soon an exciting tree trail for SC – tree folklore, historic uses of the wood and more!



Free Garden Trees ... once again we will be hosting the annual free garden tree giveaway. Look out for posters and FB posts coming soon!

Spreading the word ... we presented at SCPC AGM and have been supporting the development of an Environmental Strategy for our village – good things to come for our natural environment, a boost for people and wildlife.

To find out more about our projects or to join our group, please email ecosoco24@gmail.com •



SIX INCHES OF SOIL

Sharing the inspiring story of three young British farmers standing up against the industrial food system to transform the way they produce food, championing regenerative farming to heal the soil and build viable businesses. By focusing on local food systems and shorter supply chains, they find ways to provide for their communities sustainably. With guidance from seasoned mentors, they become part of a new agrarian renaissance. •



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Rhymetime



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The Library Quiz night

Cash
raffle

Bar

Sonning Common
Primary School Hall

17th October 7:30pm

Tickets in advance from the Library (☎ 01865 815178)
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£30 per table (teams of up to 6)

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yet another really good night. Any queries please
call Keith on 07752 374 610

Sonning Common Health Walks

Autumn is here, and winter will soon be upon us – get out and
enjoy a brisk walk in the countryside while you can! There are no
walk timetables in paper form at the moment, so please check
the website for days/starting places/distances:
www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk/timetable

NB Starting places change at the beginning of October
If you want to speak to someone about any aspect of the
Health Walks, phone Chris Brook on 0118 972 2609

HENLEY AND DISTRICT STAMP CLUB

Summer is now coming to an end and we are re-
commencing our meetings in Bix Village Hall.

Have you thought of resurrecting a hobby from your
past, like stamp collecting, Postal history or Postcards?

You will find it more than just collecting a little bit
of sticky paper. If you look into the history and
background of the stamps and postal history, there is
a lot to learn, have a look at our Website and find the
Newsletters..."Steve's Stamp Stories"

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

Meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday
of the month in Bix Village Hall at 7.30 p.m. Further
details can be obtained by phoning Steve on
07767 251670 or on our website:
www.henleyphilatelic.org.uk

Oxfordshire
ageUK

The Hive

A Community Coffee Morning for all



All welcome for refreshments and a friendly chat. A great social morning
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colleagues at Dementia Oxfordshire and Carers Oxfordshire

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

When: Thursday 2nd October and Thursday 6th November 2025
10am-12pm

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

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Sonning Common Village Hall

**WEDNESDAYS 1st OCTOBER
and 5th NOVEMBER**

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PARISH NEWS

The content of this page is the sole responsibility of, and is paid for by, Sonning Common Parish Council

New Website Launch - We Need Your Input!

We're excited to announce our brand new parish council website at www.sonningcommon-pc.gov.uk. We're now reviewing all content and would love your thoughts plus photos of the village to feature on the site - landscapes, community events, historical shots, or everyday village life all welcome.

Share your feedback and photos by emailing admin@sonningcommon-pc.gov.uk or clerk@sonningcommon-pc.gov.uk, or pop into the office.

Youth Club Summer Success

Our Youth Club had a fantastic summer staycation, with 15-20 young people joining each day for bowling, escape rooms, climbing wall, roller disco, and an activities day featuring arts and crafts, FIFA tournaments, inflatable darts, and baking.

Youth Club is back for term time! Wednesdays and Thursdays, 6:30pm - 8:30pm, just £2 entry. Ages 10-16 welcome (any school), located above the sports hall at Chiltern Edge School. Each session includes sports, baking, and crafts. Come and support this brilliant community resource!

Environmental Focus with Our MP

On 18th September, MP Freddie van Mierlo visited the village and met with local organisations to discuss environmental issues. More details will be in the next edition of the magazine.

Pond Update - Active Progress

Many of you have asked about the village pond. Here's what we're doing:

Survey Commissioned: Water Resources Associates started work at the end of August with their report due by late September, giving us the technical insight needed for long-term solutions.

Ongoing Monitoring: We are monitoring water levels, especially during rainfall.

While cleared drains do help during heavy rain, levels continue to drop in dry periods.

Next Steps: We're working with South Oxfordshire District Council on regular drainage maintenance to keep water flowing properly to the pond.

Your parish council is actively tackling this issue through professional surveys and ongoing monitoring to develop the right long-term strategy •

ANDY DONACHIE

Parish Clerk

Sonning Common Parish Council

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ELLIE'S CHALLENGE AND STAMINA



Hi, my name is Ellie and I'm 13 years old. I decided to do a 75-mile kayak from Reading to central London to help raise money for a big trip to Canada that represents Oxfordshire Guides. In total I had to raise £3,500 and I had till summer 2027 to raise it all.

The reason I picked kayaking was because I love sports and being active. At my secondary School I was selected to go to Henley rowing club and practice rowing on Fridays. I also love doing sports clubs at lunch time. You may have seen a write up about my sponsorship in the last edition of the Sonning Common magazine. I'm going to tell you about my exciting adventure on the Thames.

DAY 1

On day 1 we started out from Reading bridge, and it was a lovely sunny day. I felt ready and prepared to know that my feet were not going to touch dry ground for a good few hours. I was feeling excited and nervous all in one.

One hour into the trip a grumpy looking swan swam towards me hissing so I wasted no time in paddling on. We were having lunch, and some ducks were

swimming to my mum eager to have a taste of her food and were pecking at her boat!

The rain came later that day and it chucked it down. We saw a beautiful double rainbow though, so it was worth it. There was also so much wildlife and throughout the day we saw 9 kingfishers and many more herons.

We got to Marlow around 6:30pm and finished having paddled 17 miles. Day one nailed.



DAY 2

We started out from Marlow and were hoping to get to Runnymede. The wind was picking up that day and for a lot of the trip we were paddling against it. It was really hard and at points I felt like it was just pointless to keep on paddling against the wind because we weren't really getting anywhere, but we powered on.

I went to get out of the boat onto a bank for a minute and it was quite a tall bank, so I climbed up, stood up and completely lost my balance. I questioned whether I should try to fall back onto my kayak or if I should just accept that I would get soaked. In the end I leapt to the boat which was now maybe half a metre to a metre away from the bank and landed in a spider man-like pose! It surprisingly worked and so I paddled on dry!!!

There were many locks that we had to get out and carry our boats around- about 7-8 in all - but 2 of the lockkeepers were very kind and let us ride in the lock.

Overall, it took us 11.5 hours because of the wind, and we paddled for 20 miles. Day 2 complete!!



DAY 3

We planned to do 18 miles of kayaking today from Runnymede to Teddington Lock. My Dad joined me for the last 2 days and he brought my earphones, so I happily listened to my music for most of the journey. For snacks I was practically living off Dairyleya Dunkers and waffles.

We paddled past Hampton Court and saw our very first red London

bus followed by many more throughout the day. For the last two nights we had been camping out but, for this night, we were able to book a hotel right next to the water. Pure luxury! After a long day of paddling, we got to the hotel, and I had the longest bath I have ever had before and then got into my bed and fell fast asleep early because we were having to wake up at 6:00am the next day.

Day 3 done and 18 miles complete.

DAY 4

This day was one of my favourites because we were riding with the tide downstream towards Central London. We had only been on the river for half-an-hour when a very apologetic rower hit my boat, but no one fell in, so it was all good!

A swan was chasing me down the Thames at one point too, which was quite scary. There were a lot of big boats that created massive waves which were exciting to go over. We met a man who was trying to save a swan that was being attacked by another swan (not the best idea) and had fallen out of his kayak while the boat was floating away.

We paddled all the way to Big Ben, The House of Parliament and the London Eye. The sights were amazing to see from our kayaks and we all really enjoyed it. On the last day we did 20 miles, and we finished metres away from the London Eye itself!

Overall, it was a great

adventure with funny moments and hard moments but I'm very happy that I did it as this is probably a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. So many people supported me in being able to do this, especially my mum who paddled all four days and helped me to keep going and my dad who worked out all the planning and rules of the river.

A great thanks to everyone who donated



towards this as well. I have raised over £3,500 now which is amazing seeing as I still have 2 years before my Canada trip. All extra money will be sent to support my primary and secondary schools in Sonning Common.

Thank you to everyone for all your support.

The daily write ups from the trip are all available on the JustGiving page below, which is still open for anyone who would like to now support our local schools. ●

ELLIE DENSHAM



Ellie's crowdfunding page:

www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/ellie-canadatrip-2027 or scan the QR code



KATE EKE

By JOAN GRUMMANT

The Escape Room was a huge success at Sonning Common Library during August and early September this year.

The library is always a busy place in the summer holidays, and the attraction of a problem-solving adventure murder mystery just added to its many attractions. The Escape room is the brainchild of Kate Eke who is a committee member of the Friends of Sonning Common Library and who has lived in the village for over 6 years. The game evolved from a social meeting of the Friends when entertainment was required, and Kate and Juliet Legg provided an "Escape Room" style puzzle for the volunteers to solve. It proved highly successful, became quite competitive, and resulted in Kate devising the present game from this starting point.

Kate has always enjoyed puzzles and formulated a game that can be played by the whole family or a team of up to five people. It is interesting and fun for all age groups but especially to teenagers and can take place by using the clue stations sited around the library. No prior knowledge is necessary. The instructions are very detailed and clear, but it requires collaboration to solve the various challenges which might include code breaking or finding out information. The props and information sheets at each station ensure the game can take place without any support but usually two trained volunteers are at hand if guidance is necessary. The game takes about an hour to solve (although the current leaders

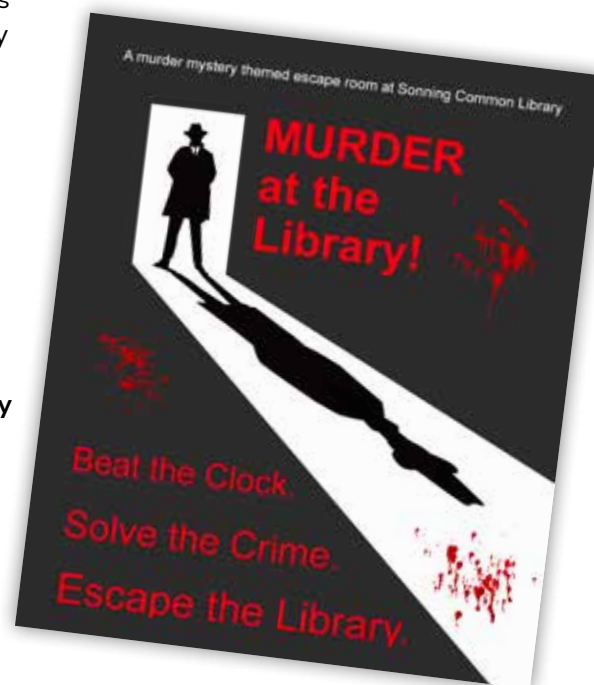
at time of printing, Team Ellis, only took 31 minutes!) and the team with the best time over the summer will receive a small prize. It is great fun and very entertaining and can be adapted to different themes in the future. The present game is a murder mystery and, although finished for the time being, will hopefully be brought back during October Half Term for those who didn't have a chance to play during the summer holidays. Keep a look out for posters.

Kate spent a huge amount of time and effort in producing the Handbook and ensuring there are contingency plans in place if anything gets mislaid. She also has plans to produce a booklet so that other libraries can produce their own games. It is a terrific way of getting all age groups into the library and finding out about the huge range of activities on offer. This year's game has three well known literary detectives as characters and a murder mystery waiting to be solved.

Apart from a huge thank you to Kate for bringing this about we must also thank Juliet, Elaine and all the volunteers who enabled this exciting game to happen. If you would like to find out more, please follow the library website, FOSCL www.friendsofsonningcommonlibrary.org or Facebook and Instagram to keep up with more exciting developments and events in the future. We should all look forward to them with great interest. ●



The photos are the clues for solving the murder. Look at them carefully and you might decide 'who done it'



GREETINGS FROM THE LIBRARY!

Gosh, we had a busy old summer including a few unexpected things. One of those was the closure of the library for a week due to some work needing to be done in both the Primary School and Library. The scaffolding and holes in the ceiling were not conducive to having residents browsing the bookshelves! I would like to give a big thank you to Sonning Common Parish Council,

especially Councillor Bidgood and Parish Clerk Andy Donachie, who kindly allowed Elaine and I to do a Pop-Up Library in the Village Hall on a couple of days when we were closed. It was lovely to be able to welcome customers, including children eager to pick their Summer Reading Challenge rewards and people who hadn't visited the Library before and wanted to find out more about it.

Autumn will continue with much to do in the Library for all ages. Keep an eye on the website/Facebook/Instagram of the Friends of Sonning Common Library for more information including half term fun, the return of the Escape Room and a book display on memories and remembrance. ●

See you soon.
JULIET LEGG

TOM FORT MEG IN LATER LIFE

It occurred to me that it is a long time since I updated the readers of this magazine on the life and antics of Meg, our small and highly vivacious Lancashire Heeler (that's a dog, more specifically a terrier). I'm sure everyone will be delighted to hear that she is very much still with us.

Meg is now 14, which is pretty ancient for a dog, but overall, she wears her years pretty lightly. She remains amazingly sprightly, which I definitely am not. She can still leap off the ground if something excites her, and manage a short, explosive dash down the garden in pursuit of imagined enemies.

But she has slowed down. On walks she matches her trot to my snail-like lurch, and if anyone tries to take

her too far, she just stops and stares reproachfully and makes it clear that she wants to go home. Recently her hearing has sharply declined. As a consequence, she no longer hears the postman coming to the door. In times past this event infallibly aroused her to a frenzy of barking, climaxing in a leap at the letters as they came through, leaving them with tooth marks. These days she either misses him altogether, or summons a half-hearted bark as he disappears.

Meg has mellowed. The arrival of the editor of the magazine at our house used to provoke prolonged yapping and growling, but now she registers a brief protest before returning to her own business. There was a time when other dog owners avoided her

because of her propensity to snap and snarl, but in the autumn of her days she ignores other dogs unless they really bother her, and in the case of certain breeds – she likes males with floppy ears and curly coats – she tries to make friends.

She still has issues – as they say – and we can't take her to other houses because of her neurotic tendencies. We're fond of her – what she thinks of us, I cannot tell. ●



GARDEN TREE GIVEAWAY 2025



The 2025 Oxfordshire Garden Tree Giveaway (GTG) is being organised by International Tree Foundation and Community Action Groups Oxfordshire. Eco SoCo is delighted to be one of the community groups from across the county which will facilitate the distribution of free trees for people to plant in their gardens. This is the fourth year of running the Giveaway - the second in Sonning Common - and it's a really exciting scheme to be part of, good for both wildlife and people.

The application is quite straightforward.

Visit www.internationaltreefoundation.org from 3rd - 13th October and select which type of native tree you would like for your garden - there are varieties for small, medium and large gardens.

In November you will hear if your application has been successful and be given details of when and where to collect your tree. The trees come as bare root stock (60-90cm) and are easily transported.

The collection point and date for Sonning Common will be Abbeycrest Nursing Home on 28th November (pm) and 29th November (am).

Last year 52 households in the Sonning Common area took part in the GTG and we hope that many more will get involved again. ●

MARY LEWIS
Eco SoCo

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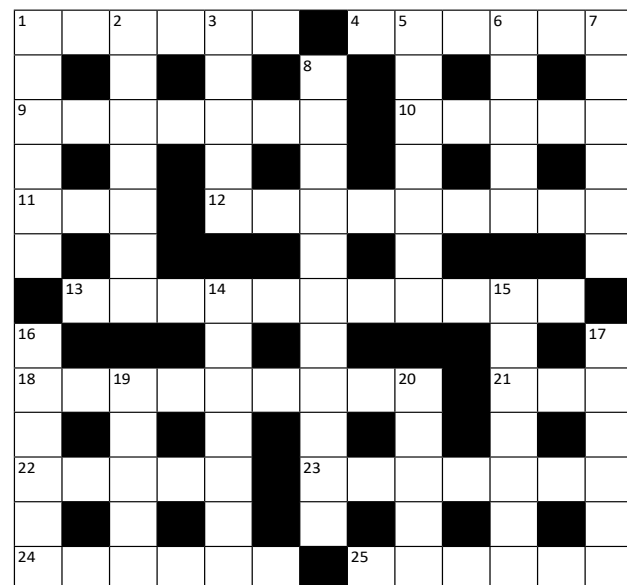
Tori Yates, Google Review



PUZZLE PAGE

By DAVID DUNSTAN

Cryptic crossword



ACROSS

1. Play I-spy in race for office worker (6)
4. After US state, sail around port (6)
9. I repair broken grassy plain (7)
10. Woodland road in village (5)
11. Poem for the heart of Kate Moss perhaps (3)
- 12&20 Down. Road in village delights viewer unexpectedly (9,5)
13. Accrue a ruby deviously — it's red tape (11)
18. Board property for 2 (9)
21. Ale drunk in road off 12 (3)
22. Special benefits for each US state (5)
23. You and I are in since, mistakenly, cooking (7)
24. Hasten madly to capital (6)
25. Protective hat for visitor from space on part of boat (6)

DOWN

1. Walk without heels from end to east (6)
2. Platter with gold on high flat land (7)
3. Good person with unrefined paper tube (5)
5. Bony, ruined gala run (7)
6. Use oil and AI to make garlic mayonnaise (5)
7. Glimpse article and be angry (6)
8. A nurse's care reworked to give emotional support (11)
14. Silly men sore at US poet (7)
15. US state and Channel Islands, with hesitation, produce element in bones (7)
16. Chateau topiary hides perfect society (6)
17. Sneakily entrap mother, for example (6)
19. Whip found in close off 12 (5)
20. See 12 Across.

Sudoku

Grading: medium

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

Cryptogram

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

COECUM UP FACSC EMV FONNUG
PTRASPRNMOCC,

JNUCO LUCUF-PTAOMV UP SKO FESRTAMH
CRM;

JUMCIATAMH GASK KAF KUG SU NUEV EMV
LNOCC

GASK PTRAS SKO WAMOC SKES TURMV SKO
SKESJK-OWOC TRM.

— SU ERSRFM, DUKM BOESC

Quiz: What's missing?

1. Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, -----
2. Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, -----
3. Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, -----
4. Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, -----
5. sanguine, choleric, melancholic, -----
6. solid, liquid, gas, -----
7. saltiness, sweetness, bitterness, sourness, -----
8. Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa, -----
9. Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, The Bronx, -----
10. Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature, Economic Sciences, -----

See answers on page 34

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LAND'S END TO JOHN O'GROATS (LEJOG) BY LOCAL BUS



The idea for doing LEJOG by bus came from a book I read with my reading group, called 'Move along, please' by Mark Mason, in which he details his LEJOG journey by bus in 2012. I showed the book to David, suggesting that we could do the same - and he didn't say no!



The hardest thing was to find two weeks when neither of us had any commitments (yes, I know we're both retired, but that doesn't mean we sit around all day!). Once the dates were decided, David started working on our route, using online bus timetables (something which Mark Mason couldn't do in 2012). Once the route was sorted we were able to book our overnight accommodation, using Airbnb, Booking.com, Travelodge and Expedia. We wanted B&Bs which were within easy

walking distance of the bus stations – and preferably not too expensive!

So on Friday 11 July, we boarded the number 25 bus from Sonning Common to Reading, took the train to Penzance, and then the number 1 bus to Land's End. We made sure we had our photo taken by the official signpost – but we had to wait until after 5 pm so that we didn't have to pay.

We thought we'd start off in style by booking our first night at the Land's End Hotel – but it wasn't to be. There was a fire at the hotel the week before, and they phoned to cancel our reservation. So we ended up in a historic hotel in the backstreets of Penzance – with no view. But it was clean and the bed was comfortable, which are important details.

The first few days in Cornwall seemed to go quite slowly, with us taking 3 or 4 buses each day, with an hour or more between each bus. These breaks gave us time to stretch our legs, have a quick look around the towns, and even have a cup of tea.

Then the buses became more frequent and we were able to do up to 5 buses a day. The buses were all on time, and the only hold up we had was when we came upon an accident which had just happened between Evesham and Worcester. We were in the front seats of the top deck, so we had a good view of the arrival of the police, the ambulances, the fire engines and then the air ambulance. The road was completely blocked, and we ended up having to walk about a mile back to Pershore to catch another bus.

The good thing about bus travel is that you can see over hedges (especially from a double decker) with magnificent

views over the passing countryside – but you can't ask a bus to stop while you take a photo! It was obvious as we travelled north that there had been more rain in the north than in the south this summer – the verges and lawns got progressively greener as we travelled beyond the Midlands.

In Mark Mason's book he mentions passing Barton-under-Needwood Christadelphian Hall. We didn't take the same route, but we got very excited in Crewe when the sign came up in the bus: 'Next stop Christadelphian Hall'. We were so busy trying to get a photo of the moving sign that we missed getting a photo of the hall!

We had a two-night stop in Keswick, taking a break from bus travel on the Sunday, and giving us a chance to Zoom in to the Sunday meeting. We did a bit of walking around Derwentwater – it was good not to have our suitcases with us all the time! We had several heavy showers though.

When we reached Scotland the bus travel was no longer free as English bus passes aren't accepted over the border (and vice versa). The towns are further apart and the bus routes are longer in Scotland, so we travelled further each day, but taking only two buses a day. The journey from Aberdeen to Thurso was a very long day: 4½ hours to Inverness, then 3½ hours to Thurso. (And we had to pay 30p to use the public toilet in Inverness bus station!)

We reached John O'Groats on Thursday 24 July, and had our 'official' photo taken without any suggestion of having to pay. We tried to decide which was the least tacky: Land's End or John O'Groats: both have overpriced gift shops and eateries, but there's more to entertain children at Land's End (not

necessarily a good thing).

Our trip done, we caught the bus back to Thurso, and then the train to Inverness. All was proceeding as planned until we approached Inverness and found that there was a problem with some points and the train could go no further ... so it took us back to Wick, from where there was a bus replacement service to Inverness, arriving 6 hours later than planned. Oh, the irony! The next day we took the train to Edinburgh, then King's Cross, and then Reading – and the number 25 bus home.

Route (overnight stops): Land's End, Roche, Camelford, Exeter, Bristol, Evesham, Stafford, Warrington, Keswick, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Thurso, John O'Groats.

Distance: 1,136 miles

Buses: 40 (female drivers: 5)

We were well blessed with the weather.

'Move along, please' can be borrowed through the library service if anyone would like to read it. We also have a copy of 'Land's End to John O'Groats with a bus pass and a dog' by Eric Newton if anyone would like to borrow it (not available from the library)

As a fundraising idea for the primary school

pool, we decided to run a 'Guess the miles travelled by bus competition, with people paying £1 for the privilege of guessing. (The distance, according to Google, is 817 miles on foot, 838 miles by car, and 968 miles by bicycle)

People seemed quite hesitant to enter, and we only raised £20 - but better than nothing, I suppose! The actual mileage was 1136 - and the winner, with a guess of 1125, was ... Juliet Legg! ●



CHURCH NEWS

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST AND CHRIST THE KING

The newly extended and refurbished Church of Christ the King is open for worship once again! After eight long months, the first service to be conducted in the church was held on Sunday 31st August. The church was full, with many spilling out into the hall, most staying for coffee and a chat after the service, to look around and take in all the improvements.

Following this, on Saturday 20th September, the church hosted an afternoon tea party for those who had been involved with the project, as well as the church and local communities.

The completed improvements include a full replacement of the flat roof, with insulation; installation of solar panels and associated power bank; front extension to provide a

separate entrance into the church; interior decoration throughout and replacement flooring in the hall and coffee rooms; reordering of the church layout, including the removal of the existing font and reorientation of the central altar; a widened opening between the church and the hall with new soundproof bifold doors; energy-efficient lighting and heating. To the front of the building, a replacement fence and gate was constructed, new signage and cladding added to the face of the building, and new signage and flower bed adjacent to the public path. There is still work to do to improve the grounds (after many months of building!) and plans to resurface the car park, with installation of an EV charging point.

The entire project was skillfully managed by the Parish churchwarden, Nick Room, who worked tirelessly to ensure that the work was carried out to the highest

standard. And of course, the project would not have been possible at all without a generous legacy left by Mrs Jill Scraggs, faithful and long-standing member of the Christ the King Church community. A plaque to honour her has been placed on the wall in the new church entrance.

The Bishop of Dorchester has been invited to Christ the King to conduct a rededication service (date to be confirmed) to which all are warmly invited to attend.

Meanwhile, St John the Baptist is likely to be closing its doors in the middle of November so that vital work to the lighting, heating and decoration can be carried out. This will take some months, so Christmas services will be held at Christ the King. Do check the Parish pages on www.achurchnearyou.com for details of all church services and activities: everyone is welcome! •



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CHURCH NEWS CONTINUED

CHILTERN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

The Most Important Choice: Who Is Jesus?

Jesus Christ has sparked more debate than almost anyone in history. People call him a teacher, healer, prophet—but he claimed far more.

C.S. Lewis, author of The Chronicles of Narnia and a former atheist turned Christian, famously wrote in Mere Christianity:

"You must make your choice: either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse... But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

Lewis argued that Jesus's claims—like forgiving sins and rising from the dead—don't allow for neutrality. If he was lying, he wasn't moral. If he was

deluded, he wasn't wise. But if he was telling the truth, then he is Lord.

This trilemma—Liar, Lunatic, or Lord—forces a choice. Jesus didn't present himself as merely good; he claimed divinity. And if that's true, it changes everything.

So, the question remains: Who do you say Jesus is?

It's not just a theological puzzle—it's the most important decision you'll ever make. •

SUSAN JUDGE

ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH,

For about four months Fr Colin Blayney from Australia has been living amongst us and acting as our parish priest. During this time, he shared his experience as a pastor of a

much larger parish back home. Upon his return to Australia in September we will be in a better position to discern and fulfil the mission of the Church in our locality. He has encouraged us to be better listeners to God and one another, as a means to discern how the parish moves forward over the coming months and years. We will miss him but are grateful for the legacy he leaves. Through his encouragement we now have adults, along with children, serving at the altar during our Sunday Masses for the first time in many years. He has also boosted the team that looks after the grounds.

The Catholic Church is celebrating a Year of Jubilee, as it does every 25 years. We are invited to reflect on our relationship with God and one another and see where things need changing for the better. We are encouraged to participate in a pilgrimage together and as a parish we will be walking to Our Lady and

St Anne's in Caversham (designated as a Jubilee church). There we will be joined by those unable to make the journey on foot and participate in a time of prayer together.

Looking forward we are planning how we can continue to support CIRDIC, particularly in enabling them to provide a special Christmas for its clients. We also look forward to the end of September when we celebrate the feast of St Michael, after whom the parish is named. Over a weekend we will enjoy a time of reflection and social activities, concluding with our parish lunch and AGM, where we will look back on the past year and forward to the next.

November is the month when we remember in a special way our loved ones who have died. We will visit Kidmore End cemetery at 2pm on Remembrance Sunday for a time of prayer. Anyone with family or friends buried there are welcome to join us.

If you have moved to the area and have been looking for your local Catholic church, we would be delighted to welcome you. To contact the parish, see our website: www.saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk •

Earlier in the year a number of parishioners from St Michael's Catholic church undertook basic first aid training. The parish then decided to purchase and install a defibrillator outside the church for community use. A request for financial donations was made and the target reached within a couple of weeks. Installation was completed during the first week of September. If you walk past St Michael's church on the Peppard Road, you can't miss the red box to the right of the front doors.



SPRINGWATER CHURCH

We do hope you have all had a wonderful summer and enjoyed the lovely sunny days that we were blessed with.

Summer at Springwater has been a time of change as Pastors Kevin and Linsey Potter started a new chapter in their ministry in Aberdeen. Rob and I joined the Springwater team as the new Co- Pastors in July.

In August we all had some wonderful fellowship with the Greenhouse Church from Hurst and were blessed by their leader Sharon's challenging and inspiring message about living in the light.

This theme continued throughout some of our Sunday services and we also enjoyed some interactive reflection services too.

We are now looking forward to the new Autumn term :

September

Aspire Women's Group:
Every Tuesday at 10am

Bible Study:
Every Thursday 10.30 am

Sunday Service:
10.30am

We are so excited to see the return from the summer break of Compassionate Loaf - September 8th at 10am and The Ark - September 10th at 10am.

These teams work so hard and creatively in bringing these groups to the community and we look forward to what this new Autumn term will bring. 'Thank you' to all of those who have served so faithfully on the team over the years and, to those of you who continue to support and enjoy attending these groups, it wouldn't be the same without you !

The Foodbank team continues to do an amazing job in supporting those in need and a big 'Thank you' goes to all of those who not only give of their time as a volunteer but to those who continue to donate food.

We continue to collaborate with Eco Soco at the Repair Cafe the first Saturday of every month. The work they do with their team of volunteers makes a real difference to our community and what an inspiration they are.

Why not pop along to the next session (Oct 4th, 10am in our main building) and enjoy some lovely homemade cake from Springwater's cafe too!

Rob and I are so enjoying our new chapter here and would like to thank everyone for such a warm welcome to the village.

We are so looking forward to building relationships with you all and seeing what God will do amongst us.

Please do feel free to pop along to our main Church service at 10.30am every Sunday, you can be guaranteed a very warm welcome! •

SARAH SIMONS

www.springwaterchurch.org.uk
Tel 0118 972 4519



STAFF NEWS

Dr Sarah Baker has sadly decided not to return to work following a year of maternity leave. Dr Baker has worked at the health centre for over 6 years and was a core part of the health centre's women's health team. She always brought a warm and caring nature to all of her patients and was liked by both patients and staff.

One of our Receptionists Anna has decided it is time to spend more quality time with her family and resigned from her role. Anna has been an important member of the team for over 3.5 years, brought an understanding and compassion to our patients and has been supportive to her colleagues and new receptionists. Sadly, we also goodbye to Julie, one

of our nurses, at the end of September. Julie has been working at the health centre for over 4 years, joined us as a phlebotomist and then expanded her knowledge to be able to help in other roles in women's health. Julie is leaving to further her career within women's health.

We will miss Dr Baker, Anna and Julie, and wish them all well in new roles and with their families.

Abbie, one of our dispensers, has found juggling work and her young child was becoming too difficult and decided to leave us. We are sad to see Abbie go as we were just getting to know her. She leaves with our best wishes and hope she enjoys time with her daughter. We welcome a

new dispenser, Anne, to the team. Anne brings a wealth of primary care dispensing knowledge with her.

Please join us in congratulating Nathalie, one of our receptionists, who is expanding her skills and knowledge within the health centre by training to become a phlebotomist at the health centre. Her new phlebotomist role will run alongside her receptionist role. ●



COVID-19 AND FLU CLINICS

We have been inviting all eligible patients to contact the health centre to book their Flu and Autumn booster COVID-19 vaccinations. This year the cohorts for the COVID-19 programme will need to be 75 years or over or immunocompromised. Flu Vaccines are given to those over 65 or immunocompromised. If you haven't already made your appointment please call the Health Centre on the main number and pick the option for the Flu and Covid Appointment line. Our clinics will be running on various dates through October only. ●



PRESCRIPTION REQUESTS

Please be advised that a repeat prescription request may take up to 5 working days. This is to give your GP time to sign your prescription off and for our dispensing team to process and dispense your medication, in some cases they may also need to order your medication. Please ensure you allow enough time for your prescription to be processed before your medication runs out. ●

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Business manager

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PUZZLE PAGE ANSWERS FROM PAGE 24

1. Neptune (the planet). 2. Kyushu (main islands of Japan). 3. Belgrade (capitals on the Danube). 4. Silytherin (Hogwarts houses). 5. phlegmatic (the four temperaments). 6. plasma (states of matter). 7. umami (basic tastes). 8. Maggie (The Simpsons). 9. Staten Island (New York boroughs). 10. Peace (Nobel prizes).

Quiz: What's missing?

SEASON OF MISTS AND MELLOW FRUITFULNESS,
CLOSE BOSOM-FRIEND OF THE MATURING SUN;
CONSPIRING WITH HIM HOW TO LOAD AND
BLESS
WITH FRUIT THE VINES THAT ROUND THE
THATCH-EVES RUN.
— TO AUTUMN, JOHN KEATS

Cryptogram

Sudoku

Cryptic crossword

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

T	E	M	I	L	H	S	N	S	A	T	H	E	V
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E			I		N			T		L			I
S	A	I	S	C	A	L	A	I	T	Y	P	I	S

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Thursday 20th November - 11am-1pm
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