

SC SONNING COMMON MAGAZINE

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FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Do you feel the light really is at the end of the tunnel? As I write this editorial it all feels very similar to most of our previous year, but not quite Lockdown.

Enough of the uncertainty.....

The magazine is fascinating how it takes on a theme and this one is no different. Many articles are sent in and some are commissioned but this issue has evolved into a celebration of what we have to appreciate in and around our village. These include the lovely Crowsley Park and history of the house, to the Widmore pond with its possible Roman heritage and the attraction of Millennium Green which so many of us have appreciated over the last year. This theme we will be developed for the next magazine, so if you have 'gems' to add to this list do let me know.

The hardest pages to fill are the community ones and the Noticeboard, which in the past the latter foretold the events and then they were reported on in the following issue. However, the community pages have returned albeit with fewer happenings but the noticeboard has not. Perhaps it will have events listed in the next issue ready for the autumn and then we will feel a sense of normality returning.

Meanwhile, our usual favourites add to 'life' in the village from the Schools, Parish Council, Health Centre, Churches, Library, the puzzle page, Tom and Sandy. There is an article about some Special people, a Duke of Edinburgh's award participant and a drivers' group.

I hope you find something to read and enjoy? ●

Diana

Diana Pearman Editor

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MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM



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JUNE/JULY 2021

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Crowsley Park House around 1730

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HEAD'S REPORT



I have been the Headteacher of Maiden Erleigh Chiltern Edge for four terms now and with the support of the senior leadership team, am delighted with the improvements made which have been borne out by our recent parent and student survey results which came into school in late April.

The results were very strong and we feel so proud of the progress that this indicates: 97% of respondents would

recommend the school to someone else, and 99% of respondents rated the school as good to excellent. I was also delighted that 99% of parents rated the quality of teaching as good or better. Of course, this doesn't tell the complete picture of the school but my daily walkarounds, my weekly hot chocolate feedback sessions with the students and our visitor comments all point to a significant uptick in the school and how it is running and how it is perceived. However, we always want to hear other peoples' views so as I write this article we are about embark on a 'Quality Assurance week' with visitors from across our Trust coming in to school to observe lessons, meet students and hear their views, meet Heads of Departments and quiz them over their curriculum sequences and content. We can't wait to hear what they have to say!

It was with great pleasure that we resumed after-school clubs on March 15th, one week after schools reopened. It is clear from the very positive attendance figures for our maths clubs, art clubs, dance clubs and sporting clubs just how ready the students were for these

extra opportunities. Alongside this we now have a number of lunchtime clubs up and running again such as Eco-club (currently planting saplings donated by the Woodland Trust) and History club which had almost 30 attendees on its first meeting. Our only frustration is that inter-school fixtures look unlikely for the time being but at least we will have teams, who have been coached and will be ready to go when the time comes.

We are also very keen to resume our outreach work after the May half-term and our science, art, performing arts and maths teams will be visiting a number of local primary schools over this half-term delivering workshops, expertise and enthusiasm to Years 4 and 5. Normality definitely seems to be beckoning.

If you want to know more about the weekly activities and events in the school please don't hesitate to access our website and my 'Headteacher's Welcome and Communications' page in the Parents section of the website. ●

ANDY HARTLEY
Headteacher

STAND UP 2 CANCER

by Christine Atkinson

Jessica Philbrick was watching the Bake Off celebrity special Stand Up 2 Cancer on tv and was moved by the stories told by people of their cancer journeys and experiences. So moved, that she decided there and then to do something.

Jessica messaged her friends about baking and signed up for a fundraising pack that very evening. She thought of the idea of a stall on the same day, as the jumble trail would get lots of passers by, and even more by having it outside the local Hare and Hounds pub.

Around 20 of Jessica's friends baked cakes and with her sister and friends helping on the stall, they sold out completely! One man passing was on his way to the Co-op for a cake, but stopped and bought a delicious home made one instead!

The current total on Jessica's fundraising page is almost £800 - which is a great achievement. ●



BAKE OFF

by Christine Atkinson

Move over Paul Hollywood, there are some new bakers in town!

Sonning Common Primary School PTA has been thinking outside the box for ways to fundraise this year and have run two 'cook-along' online sessions with pupils via the internet. The results were delicious!

For the first cook-along, children logged on to Google Classroom to follow instructions from Mrs O'Connor (chair of the PTA) to make Welsh cakes to mark Saint David's Day. The second time round, they created Easter Rocky Road.



Thanks to generous donations from the parents following each event, the school has managed to raise over £280 for their current fundraising project to create a covered area to facilitate outdoor learning. ●

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/sonningcommonprimaryschoolPTA>

JUMBLE TRAIL

by Christine Atkinson

Jules Cook has organised two Jumble Trails around the village with entry fees donated to the school. Funds raised from sales were then kept by the stall holders. The idea that you use your driveway or garden to set up a stall also saves packing/unpacking a car and taking it all to a central point.

On a chilly December day last year £100 was raised. Jules organised another in April on a lovely sunny day and the entry fees raised another £110. The PTA ran their own stall which did very well and contributed an additional £107 to the fund.

The school thanked Jules for all her organising and here are a few comments from those who took part -

'It was lovely to see real people! And the sunshine was a bonus'

'We had a steady stream of people and rehomed some bits. Thank you for all your hard work in coordinating this event'

'Brilliant day, always had a steady flow of people. Cleared lots and had some lovely chats with people. Oh, and it was sunny!' ●



THIS MAGAZINE BECOMES A CIC

At the last AGM of the Sonning Common Magazine held on 12 May 2020 the committee was mandated to convert from an unincorporated business to a Community Interest Company (CIC). As its name implies this is for the benefit of the community but does mean that the Directors (who were the original committee) have limited liability in the event of any claim against the magazine. All functions and assets i.e. the money - have been transferred to Sonning Common Magazine CIC under the management of the directors. If, for some reason, the business is wound up, any assets must go to a designated charity, in our case FISH. In practice there is no difference to the running of your magazine. We have exactly the same people fulfilling the same roles. However, the committee has been closed and so there will be no further AGMs. The directors will however call an open meeting each year when they will welcome suggestions for developing the magazine and any associated activities. The first such meeting is likely to be in the autumn 2021.

GEOFF ADAMS
Chairman



HEALTH WALKS

Health Walks are back so come and join us

Mondays 10am (First Steps in the Millennium Field), Tuesdays and Thursdays 10am, Fridays and Saturdays 9.30am. For more walk information about starting points and times and days go to the website at www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk/timetable. To talk to someone about any aspect of the Health Walks phone Chris Brook on 0118 924 2515 •

POST BOXES

Thank you to Sonning Common residents who have installed shoulder high post boxes when their front door letter boxes are at ground level. I, for one, when delivering literature for the village would never get up again if I were to attempt delivery at ground level. This must also be a problem for our postmen both in terms of time and strain on their backs.

YVONNE KEDGE



KEEP DOGS ON LEADS



Keep dogs on leads around livestock and under control at all times, urge conservationists and farmers

1. With the lambing season underway, conservation groups, farmers and The Kennel Club are reminding dog owners to keep dogs under control at all times, and to always keep them on a lead around livestock.

2. And as birds begin to nest and rear young, walkers and countryside users can help protect ground nesting birds and other wildlife by keeping to footpaths and bridleways.

We are fortunate to have over 2,000 km of footpaths in the Chilterns AONB and, inevitably, many of them pass through

fields of sheep or cows. This is a timeless rural scene, but, sadly, one which has seen a sharp increase in incidents of livestock being wounded, or even killed, by dogs which have been let off leads. This is devastating for all involved.

NFU adviser Georgia Craig says: "Most dog attacks on livestock are completely preventable.

The Chilterns Conservation Board's Chief Executive, Dr Elaine King, said "It's great that more people are getting out and enjoying the nature and the beauty of the Chilterns during lockdown. However, we urge people to follow the Countryside Code, to ensure that people, farm animals and wildlife can all stay safe". •



SAVE THE DATE THIRD TIME LUCKY?

We hope this 50th celebration will take place on Saturday 4th September 2021.

Please put the date in your diaries. It may be a little premature and we may have to postpone again but with festivals being planned we thought we would be optimistic and make some tentative plans.

It will be a celebration not only of the 50th Anniversary – but also the return to a new normal post Covid -19.

We still hope to have an open house with catering and activities for the young and not so young. There will be a

display of the history and successes over the years. Groups such as Green Gym, Health Walks, Health Cycling, Functional Physio/Pilates and Active Leaders will be invited to have stalls to display information on healthy activities.

More information will be available when we can be more certain of the event taking place on the SCHC website www.sonningcommonhealthcentre.co.uk and in the next issue of the magazine.

You can also contact; Sue Abbott sue.abbott6@nhs.net or Sue Litchfield sue.HAT1999@gmail.com



OPEN, OPEN, OPEN ... USE IT OR LOSE IT

The library is open again (again)! We reopened on Monday 12 April, under Covid-secure conditions. This means that everyone over the age of 11 has to wear a mask in the library (unless medically exempt), sanitize their hands on entry, and fill in an NHS Test and Trace form (or use the NHS App). Only 6 people are allowed in the library at one time, and short visits are encouraged.

The opening hours are:

Monday 2 – 5pm
Wednesday 2 – 5pm
Friday 9 – 1pm; 2 – 5pm
Saturday 9.30 – 12.30pm

Activities will return as soon as allowed and the annual Summer Reading Challenge for children will start in July. 'Use it or lose it'.....You will be very welcome •

Rosemary Dunstan
Library manager

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LIBRARY TO CELEBRATE 21 YEARS

Hopefully most of you now know that at long last the Library is open again – and this time we hope it's for keeps. Twenty one years ago this autumn the library moved from a portakabin next to the school caretaker's house in Grove Road to its current site just along the road. To celebrate this special anniversary, 210 books are being bought with the funds generously raised by the subscriptions from FoSCL members. Cheque-book at the ready, Rosemary is on a spending spree – trawling through the suggestions so far to check they are available and suitable! But we need more ideas so if you have a favourite author and want to encourage your friends to read them, let us know and they can borrow the books from the library – enjoying your enthusiasm without breaking the bank. Email us on friendsofsonningcommonlibrary@gmail.com

Covid roadmap allowing, our third Authors' Evening is to be held on Tuesday 20 July – the first of a series of FoSCL events to celebrate the anniversary. We'll raise a glass of wine and have the opportunity to hear from two Oxfordshire writers, Sylvia Vetta and Loraine Fergusson. Tickets are £5 (including a glass of wine) and will be available from June 21st in the library. More details are available on our facebook page: <https://facebook.com/FoSCLibrary> and our website: www.friendsofsonningcommonlibrary.org.uk •

Helen Fort



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Phil Sweetman

WIDMORE POND

“A LINK BETWEEN ROMAN ENGINEERING AND AN ENGLISH POND?”



ORIGINS

Investigations into the poor health of a rural pond surrounded by an otherwise vigorous environment were revitalised by the discovery of an article written in 1677 on the Natural History of Oxfordshire (Dr. R. Plot, 1677). The pond lies just below the edge of a plateau at the start of a small valley, probably a glacial era run-off tributary, with no obvious source of water other than surface rain from three small enclosing sides with any surplus water draining onwards from the fourth side.

Written history of the pond is scarce and mostly handed down stories or in recent centuries from incidental mapping and folklore, and a few photographs. But it is known to be structurally quite deep in places, but whether this is due to a geological fault, such as an old sink hole, or human activity is currently unproven due to lack of investigation. The wider area is known for gravel extraction and clay pits with known potting and kiln firing industries but all that is known of the current pond is that the water has little flow through it, is not in the best of health, and only the surface within reach of oxygen supports any form of life. It's most recent history was one of supplying water for steam engines and blacksmithing, and a small public house for travellers.

EXCAVATION

The size of the excavations reported in 1677 were of about 20 yards diameter and

between fifty to sixty feet in depth, which is quite a large hole of about the half of the current pond surface diameter but with a structural depth beneath sedimentation currently, an unknown.

One of the most fascinating discoveries was of large oak timbers lying in the lower strata of the pond basin, with two complete trees trunks showing evidence of deliberate felling and 'planting' in a vertical position. With science in its infancy at that time there was no knowledge of tree ring dating or of the chemistry of decomposition, nor were there archaeological disciplines in recording findings in strata chronology to date or synchronise any history of geology or human activities there. But an excellent account of the findings none the less!

The most notable of the findings was the 'black hiew like Ebony' appearance of the timber and its state of almost perfect preservation. Along with chestnut, oak is a prolific producer of tannin in its bark and very fine tree ring structure (and its acorns especially) which is both a preservative and a poison, a fact long known to owners of horses and cattle and used in the preservation of leather hides and some medical treatments.

The white stone rubble reported as 'Marble or Alabaster' could be calcites deposits formed in static ground water solutions and leads to the possibility of a sink hole being the underlying structure of the pond. This would also explain the available depth

for the upending and burial of whole trees at that location.

The report made no mention of the water levels, if drained at that time, but the 'bluish substance, much of the consistence of the flower of Sulphur or finest blue starch' bears all the hallmarks of Cyanobacteria (also called blue-green algae) which is an ancient group of photosynthetic microbes that occur in most inland waterways, reservoirs and ponds which can have a major effect on water quality and functioning of aquatic ecosystems.

The discovery of 'Roman Urns and a Stag's head complete with juvenile brow antlers' are extremely interesting if related to our period of Roman occupation. The Romans were prolific builders with vast architectural skills and knowledge of the processing of stone and timber materials, and their preservation against the ravages of time.

Many Roman structures were 'blessed' and one explanation for the Urns and the Stag's head would be 'Diana' the Goddess of Hunting and Childbirth, often depicted in the presence of a young Stag in statue or mosaic forms. This may also be an alternative explanation of the presence of the 'Marble or Alabaster' fragments which quite possibly were the remnants of a statue of 'Diana', perhaps on a timber plinth surrounded by water, later destroyed when or even before the Romans left?

The permutations of presumptions are endless, the trees could merely have been used to 'plug' a swallow hole to create an artificial local water reservoir, but the findings do at least point towards a possible reason for the continued biological ill-health of the pond which can only be resolved by further investigation and perhaps intervention. ●

Capt. Dirk HR Jones (ATPL, MRAS, FRGS)

Some more recent history of Widmore Pond will appear in the next issue of the magazine.

A FISHY UPDATE

Despite its ecologically impoverished state, the pond sustains a surprisingly abundant fish population – most visibly the carp, but also gudgeon, perch, roach and probably other species. Angling there has long been banned on safety grounds, but it was not always so.

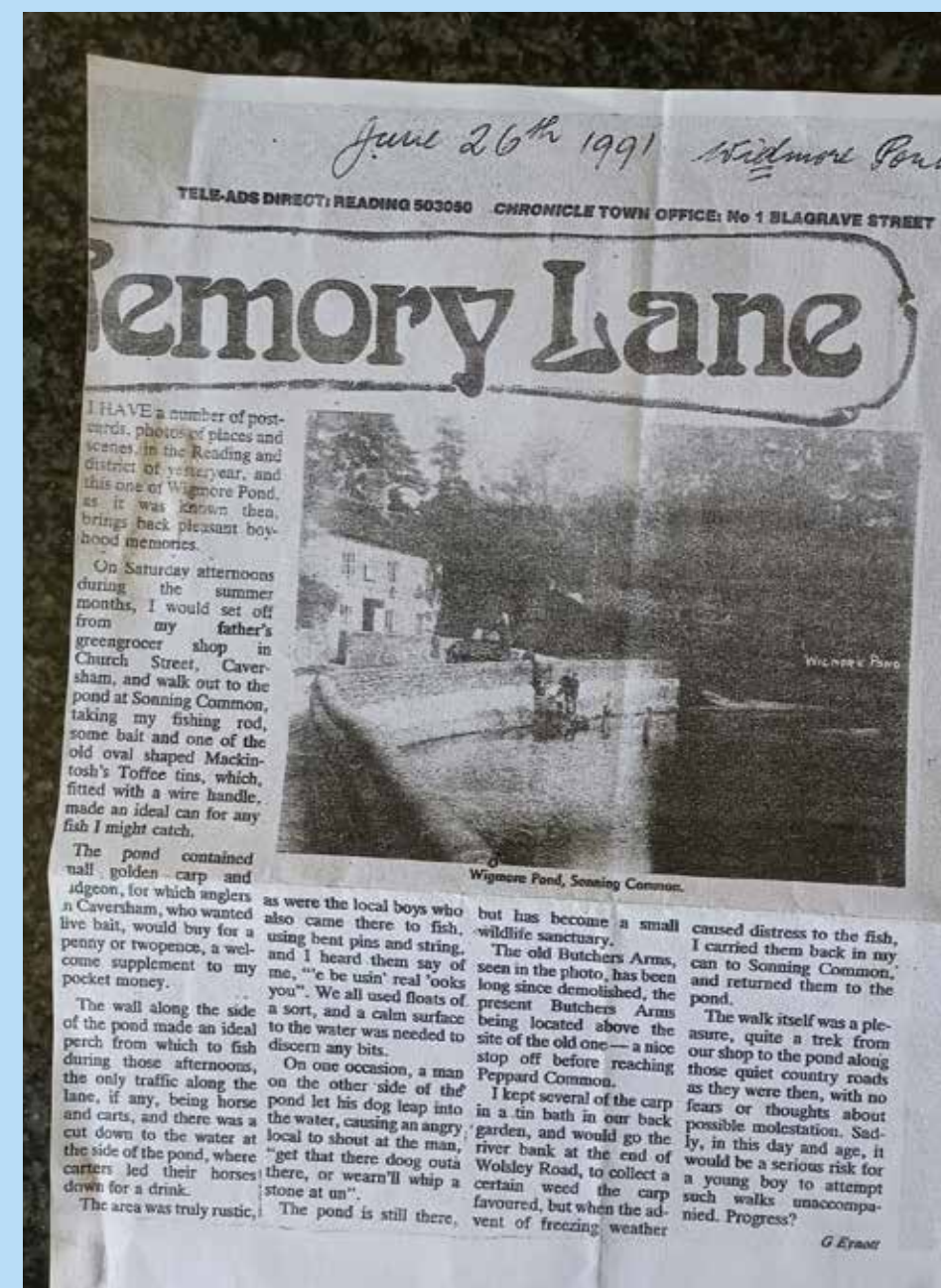
I have a cutting – unfortunately I have no record of who sent it to me – from the Reading Chronicle of June 1991 in their Memory Lane column, in which a Mr G. Eynott reminisced about fishing the pond, misnamed Wigmore Pond, in his distant youth.

'On Saturday afternoons during the summer months', Mr Eynott related, 'I would set off from my father's greengrocer shop in Church St, Caversham, and walk out to the pond at Sonning Common, taking my fishing rod, some bait and one of the old oval shaped Mackintosh's toffee tins which, fitted with a wire handle, made an ideal can for any fish I might catch'.

The wall along the pond made an ideal spot from which to fish, the traffic in those distant days being limited to horses and carts, and the carters would lead their animals down a cut at the side to drink. According to Mr Eynott, the local lads used bent pins and string to fish and regarded him as very advanced for having 'real 'ooks'. He kept several of the carp he caught in a tin bath in the back garden, but eventually took them back to the pond and returned them.

Maybe some of their descendants are still there. ●

Tom Fort



PRAISE PLAQUE

In 1981 an order of evangelical sisters placed a 'Praise Plaque' on the north side of the pond with an inscription from the old Testament Book of Psalms. They have placed similar plaques in beauty spots around the world.



SONNING COMMON MILLENNIUM GREEN

by Tony Chandler

The year 2000 was celebrated in a number of ways. For many the establishment of Millennium Greens was a valuable forever asset. Sonning Common proudly has its Millennium Green situated on the southern end of the village. During the Second World War it was the playing fields for Kennylands School which catered for Essex school children. It is still referred to as Kennylands Field.

The vision of our Millennium Green is a place for Nature shared with people.

It is 15.8 acres (6.4 hectares) of mature unimproved grassland bounded on the east, south and west sides with wide field margins comprising mature trees (oak, ash, holly) and natural hedgerow species (hazel, blackthorn, hawthorn, spindle, elder) and the Bonham Carter Spinney. Bluebells abound along the hedgerows and areas can be seen from the paths. Where possible, the hedgerows are maintained in a healthy state using the Midland hedge laying style.

Our Millennium Green is an unspoilt area of countryside which is accessible to all from both Kennylands Road and Peppard Road without ever needing to cross a road or venture down a narrow footpath and the occasional encounter with a stile.

Information boards tell you about the defined areas. We ask for little more than respect for having such valuable access to the countryside on your doorstep. ●



In springtime, the wonderful display of blackthorn blossom skirts the Peppard Road



WILDLIFE AREA

A large area of the open grassland is the reserve of wildlife. It is marked by corner posts and rails. Inevitably, social distancing has led to cutting corners. Hopefully this will cease in time.

This may appear to some as a waste area but not all of Nature is above ground as trees and flowers. This area is very healthy with a high worm count. It never pools water or causes water runoff. Please do not go onto or

traverse the Wildlife Area. Instead, take a seat and look. In springtime listen for a Skylark singing. Try to spot the bird hovering high. After a while watch it plummet groundwards.

During summer, you will see large areas of white hedge bedstraw and yellow lady's bedstraw.

It has numerous anthills with the ants having their eggs on the warmer south facing side. ●

THANK YOU

Despite the restrictions in place, our volunteers have managed to do some but not all of the winter maintenance needed.

They have been delighted by the number of you who have time to say hello and more so from those who have lingered. We are grateful to receive loads of praise for looking after the Millennium Green so well. We are particularly pleased for people to tell us

how wonderful it has been to have this access to Nature and the benefits it has brought during the pandemic period.

We would like to offer our thanks to all our visitors. A big thanks to those who pick up behind their dog and the lack of litter speaks for itself.

You can even become a friend of the Millennium Green. For details and any other comments, please feel free to email us on scomit1@outlook.com ●

THE GREEN

This is the only formal area of our Millennium Green. It is mown several times a year and provides a flat surface, together with a picnic bench, for get togethers. Please do not allow dogs onto the Green or walk your dogs across it. There are signs.

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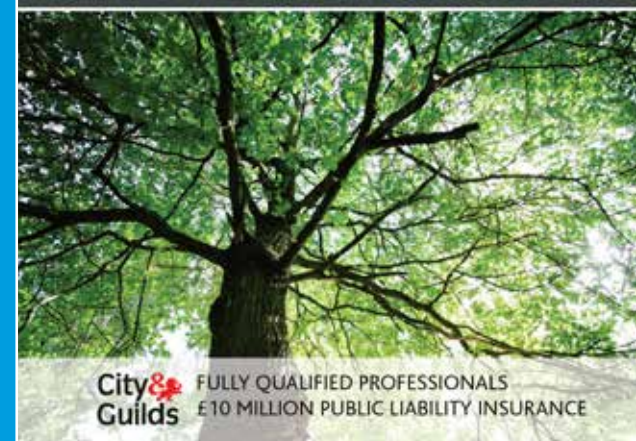
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COOKING FOR NHS CARERS ON THE ICU - A LOCKDOWN STORY



It was the beginning of a cold day in early February when the phone rang and a very enthusiastic Joss Lynch invited me to co-ordinate five cooks to represent Sonning Common, in a project started by Joss and Krissie in Kidmore End.

Funds raised in fond memory of the Rev. Graham Foulis Brown were being used to supply food to cooks in Kidmore End and the surrounding area. These teams were cooking meals for others to deliver to the Intensive Care Unit at the Royal Berks Hospital.

Krissie Stitt had come up with a selection of recipes that were allergy aware and it was she and Joss who held our hands as we started to help. Krissie provided and organised labelling, use by dates, and containers. Joss explained to me the process of collection and delivery.

The recipes were the cooks' firm favourites and each recipe was made up for eight people. They were delicious - with a variety of meals for vegetarians and meat eaters ...big and small appetites alike.

The idea appealed to me.....something to do in Lockdown.....I started my search

by asking Freda Buckner who is very used to catering on a large scale, having run the Sonning Common Luncheon Club successfully for many years. Yes, Freda and Brian were really enthusiastic. And so it was that a phone call was made to Carolynne Goff, a fellow SC Luncheon Club cook. Yes, Carolynne was eager as were Val Heywood, Pauline Whitehead and Sue and Nick Launder. I had my five cooks. The age of the cooks ranged from 60's to over 80's, quite a challenge to us younger ones. Where did they get their enthusiasm and energy from!?

The meat and vegetable distribution centre was at the Parish Rooms in Kidmore End, which became a hive of activity. The original 5 groups had now grown to 9 and there were 120 meals a week being taken to the hospital.

The local fresh vegetable supplier Jane Mather and her team were co-ordinating the vegetables, delivery from Dudman's, bread rolls from Waring's and...the meat came from Carl Woods. These women ran a very efficient operation and their cheerful greetings were uplifting.

Sonning Common meals would be

delivered once every three weeks on a Friday afternoon at the Maternity entrance of the Royal Berks hospital. A quick phone call to the desk and along came folks to collect our cool bags, very kindly donated each week by Kath and Jason Stevenson.

It was at this handover that we were introduced to Grace, Tich, Martin, Jackie and Teyda. They were delighted and their gratitude was very moving. We even found ourselves handing over cool bags full of lemon drizzle cakes and other treats, donated from bake ups of the village's women.

It has been an extraordinarily tough year for the ICU and receiving meals cooked by others was such an encouragement. To be able to heat up a frozen meal during a night shift was a game changer, particularly at the weekends. One that was nutritionally well balanced as well as delicious, another bonus.

The good news is that Covid numbers are in decline and the work is finished for now.

Thank you, Sonning Common Cooks, one and all, without exception. Your willingness, enthusiasm and reliability was brilliant and I thought a mention in the magazine justly deserved.

Thank you very much, Joss, and Krissie and all those who worked with you to bring this about. ●

Ursula Walker

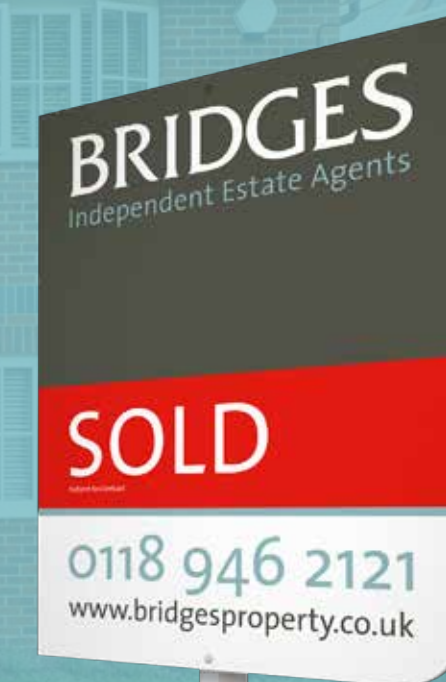


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A HIDDEN GEM

By **CHRISTINE ATKINSON**

There are many large manor houses in the local area – Caversham Park (BBC) being the largest, and others like Joyce Grove, Shiplake Manor, Coppid Hall, Harpsden Manor, Wyfold, Stonor and Fawley Court to name only a few.

During the lockdown locals have discovered another great estate that has public footpaths through it, and generally free access to most of the land. We are talking about Crowsley Park on Blounts Court Road ...

For the last few years I have walked in and out of this vast estate (I think about 160 acres) on weekend circular routes, usually ending in a pub! But during the last year of lockdown, with walking being one of the few reasons to leave your

house, news has spread about the lovely park and it has become more popular. Some people that have lived in Sonning Common for many years did not even know it existed and have visited recently for the first time.

It was known mainly for the huge satellite dishes around the edges, and most people know that it was owned by the BBC and used as a radio monitoring station. I guess not many realised that you could walk through the non-BBC areas freely. But it has a much longer history.

So – back to the large manor houses.

Some will recognise the old family names of Lords that owned the big estates locally – Pipard, Butler, Stonor, Fleming – some of these names will be familiar. Crowsley Park is mentioned as part of a much larger 'Shiplake Estate' in the 13th century. Mary Atkyns Wright acquired



Crowsley Park through her family in the 1790s and eventually the remaining part was sold (to clear large debts following her death) to Henry Baskerville in 1844. Apparently, this Henry and his family were the inspiration for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous novel The Hound Of The Baskervilles, and Henry appeared in it! The manor was at the time in

The house as it is today



BBC Station



the hands of a certain Colonel Henry Baskerville, who had hounds on his family crest and the gateposts. It is said that Conan Doyle lived for a while on a neighbouring farm but did not get on too well with the colonel and could not resist the temptation of notoriously immortalising him.

There is also a ghost story associated with the house at this time. Many years ago, an engagement party was being held for the eldest son of the family and his fiancée in the mansion. Rumour was that the young lady did not want this marriage, and was in fact in love with the younger son. During the party the young lovers decided to run away and elope. They quietly left the party, mounted a horse, and rode off into the park to the far side, intending to escape through a hidden exit. But, their disappearance was soon noticed. The head of the family ordered the hounds to be given the scent of the son and released in order to track them. This was quickly done, and followed by a posse of riders, all in full cry, set off in pursuit of the hapless couple.

It was not long before the hounds overtook the couple, felled them, and set about the younger son, tearing him to pieces by the time the followers had reached them. The father was so distraught, and so remorseful that he ordered that all the hounds should be immediately destroyed.

Since that time, whenever a Baskerville dies, the ghosts of those hounds run through the park in full cry!

There are still hounds on top of the gates at the entrance, there is Baskerville Road in the village, and of course 'The Baskerville' pub in Shiplake to uphold the connection. The Baskerville family lived there until the late 1950s although much of the park had been requisitioned by the government by then and given to the BBC during WW2. Caversham Park and Crowsley were then the main monitoring station for the BBC for many years. A lot of the original Shiplake Parish was sold to the Phillimore Estate who still own much of the area today.

The house fell into a state of disrepair and then in the late 1960s London architects, Hugh and Beeban Morris found the house and agreed a 20-year lease from the BBC free of charge on condition that the house was maintained as the listing required. Hugh Morris took on the restoration including the roof from which the lead had been stolen. Unfortunately, the Victorian part was too damaged and was demolished, leaving only sections of its ground floor wall and what became a "gazebo" tower. Hugh Morris also took on the 7-acre wild garden uncovering a range of plants, shrubs and trees typical of the gardens from the late Victorian era. He used it as a weekend playground for his young family and shared it with many friends. New owners purchased the house in the 1990s and still live there. It is a family home.

The estate grounds are now used as pasture for cattle and horses, a gated path is in place for the public to access the grounds passing the house, and the walks through the parkland are now enjoyed by the local families, walkers and dog owners who have become regular visitors during the last year especially - discovering a wonderful local hidden gem. ●



Parish news

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THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN OUR SURVEY!

The parish council wishes to thank all the residents who took the time to complete our Sport and Recreation needs survey recently.

The survey – aimed at establishing residents' priorities for the development of new sport and recreation facilities on Memorial Hall Field (opposite Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge School) – ran from 09 to 23 April.

Printed surveys were distributed to around 2,000 village households. The survey was also available to complete on-line, via the parish council's website.

Nearly 670 surveys were returned, an excellent response, providing valuable insight into how residents would wish to use the new facility. The parish council, together with the Memorial Hall Field Working Party, will use the survey results to guide decision-making in relation to the development.

Ros Varnes, Deputy Clerk for Sonning Common Parish Council, said: "We are delighted with the response to our survey and thank all the residents who contributed to it. Both on-line and written responses to this independent survey are now being analysed by a specialist survey unit which will produce a full report on the results. Data will be published on the parish council's website in due course.

"We intend to do some more focussed consultation work with specific age and interest groups, such as senior and disabled residents, so that we can do our best to cater for everyone."

Results

Topline results from the on-line survey show that people's top four priorities

for sports provision on-site are: outdoor gym (60%); football, including walking football and five-a-side (40%); parkour (36%); and netball and walking netball (35%). There was also interest in tennis, padel tennis and organised fitness sessions. Basketball and a climbing wall were the top priorities for teenagers.

The provision of basic services and facilities on the 4.1-hectare site were prioritised by residents with 94% of respondents saying toilets, 86% saying picnic tables and 81% saying lighting of the perimeter path were important for the safe and enjoyable use of the park.

The majority of on-line respondents (73%) said they would walk to the Reade's Lane site. A total of 51% of people said they would use the site regularly for social activities, including meeting friends and having picnics, while 45% of respondents said they would occasionally use the park and 4% said never.

Residents were consulted on the name of the park. A total of 65% of respondents said they liked the suggestion of Memorial Park, 22% said maybe and 14% said no.

Countdown to opening

It is hoped that the new park will be fully open for use in the Spring of next year.

The groundworks are currently underway and should be completed by this July. Contractors are now carving out and shaping the site, laying a multi-use games area, perimeter path and erecting fencing. Parts of the site will then need to be seeded and the new grass maintained.

A planning application for lighting the site is currently being considered by South Oxfordshire District Council.

51%

said they would use the site regularly for social activities

81%

said lighting the perimeter path was important for the safe and enjoyable use of the park

65%

liked Memorial Park as the suggested name

Sponsor a bench?

The parish council is considering offering residents the opportunity to sponsor a hardwood bench at the park, perhaps in memory of a loved one.

The cost of sponsoring a bench will be approximately £400. Please contact the Parish Office if you are interested.

Tel: 0118 972 3616. Email: deputy.clerk@sonningcommonparishcouncil.gov.uk



SSEN FUNDING HELPS EXPAND OXFORDSHIRE'S GOOD NEIGHBOUR FOOD BANK



Funding from Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) has helped a South Oxfordshire parish council to support its vulnerable residents during the coronavirus pandemic through the expansion of a local food bank scheme.

Springwater Church's Good Neighbour Food Bank was under increased demand to provide additional assistance to community members who had been affected by the pandemic. The church worked with the Parish Council, who successfully applied to SSEN's Resilient Communities Fund for a £3,000 award.

The funding enabled the two organisations and their volunteers to continue and increase the work of the food bank for the local community. Volunteers donated, collected and delivered the items to those who had become vulnerable through issues of isolation, shielding or being unable to work.

Their efforts continue to help 28 local families; providing them with the fresh fruit and vegetables, non-perishable food items and toiletries that they need

on a weekly basis. Across the UK last year, over half of the people who had used a food bank had never visited one before. This increase has been felt locally, and the Springwater Church intends to keep the Good Neighbour Food Bank running for as long as it's needed.

Becky Jenkins, Deputy Clerk of Sonning Common Parish Council said:

"When the pandemic hit, Sonning Common Parish Council reached out to its local residents to find out how it could help and where that help was needed most. It quickly became apparent that assisting the food bank was the main priority in the village, and we turned to SSEN and its Resilient Communities Fund for the extra help we needed to support the food bank due to the increased demand.

"The food bank is now well-established through the ongoing work of their volunteers, so we intend to keep the Good Neighbour Food Bank open for as long as it is needed and would like to thank those who continue to give their time or donate goods. For now though, the need is still there and we'd encourage anyone who can help to join

us in donating the food and essential items that vulnerable members of our community need, by dropping items in to the box outside the church on Blounts Court Road.

"We'd like to thank SSEN for its support and for helping us to build a stronger community in Sonning Common."

Anthony Urquhart, SSEN's Head of Region, said:

"Springwater Church, Sonning Common Parish Council and their volunteers have shown how quickly they've been able to adapt to the issues that arose at the start of the pandemic, and how they continue to support their community.

"In addition to helping meet the nutritional needs of vulnerable residents in the village through the food bank, they have expanded a scheme that has built a network others can contribute to, either through their time or donations to the food bank.

"I'm proud that, through the award they received from SSEN's Resilient Communities Fund, I have been able to help them achieve this."

SSEN repurposed its Resilient Communities Fund, making £320,000 available to support local efforts to help those most vulnerable during the first phase of the coronavirus pandemic. Successful applicants from community, parish, town and borough councils were awarded up to £3,000 each for projects that supported vulnerable community members, enabled volunteers to support community coronavirus initiatives, provide PPE to vulnerable and frontline workers, run community befriending schemes and improve community communication. ●

Becky Jenkins

WHY DO REFUGEES NEED HELP?



I am a Year 9 student doing my Duke of Edinburgh bronze award. For my volunteering I chose to work with Care4Calais, a charity that helps refugees in the UK and France. In my research I found out some shocking facts about the plight of refugees and what they have to go through in their own country, and on their journey to a place of safety.

Refugees leave their home countries for many reasons. Some leave to avoid war and violence (like in the South Sudan war, which caused 2.3 million people to flee). Some leave because their government is inciting hatred towards certain groups of people which they are a part of, not unlike Jewish refugees fleeing Germany in the years leading up to WW2.

Refugees take great risks to travel to their new home. Many refugees will try to cross the sea in the first boat available. These boats will often be riverboats or barges designed for canals. Sometimes the boats will be filled with up to ten times more people than their intended capacity. It is not uncommon

for the boat's motor to fail and the boat to be left adrift in the middle of the sea, eventually taking on water and slowly sinking.

Despite the dangers faced by refugees, the UK only admitted about 20,000 refugees into the country last year. (Compare this to Germany which admitted 140,000 in 2019, and in 2016 admitted just under 1 million.)

The Government also opposed the Dubs Amendment. The Dubs Amendment was designed so that any families who fled from a country together and got split up could be reunited in the UK. It would have ensured that child refugees would be reunited with other family members. (The Dubs amendment was named after proposer and child refugee campaigner Lord Alf Dubs. Lord Dubs was himself a child refugee in WW2, brought to the UK by the Kindertransport.). Charities like Care4Calais campaign for the right to reunite refugee families but the rejection of the Dubs Amendment makes this harder.

Care4Calais also provide food and clothes. There are clothes donation points in Oxford, Bracknell and Newbury. People can also help by donating mobile

phones. Asylum seekers need phones to communicate with people who are helping, including when seeking asylum, as they need to demonstrate they would be in danger if they went back to their home country.

Care4Calais also assist any non-English speaking refugees to learn English. They have day centres where children can have social interaction with other child refugees and English speaking people. Anyone can donate money, food or clothes to Care4Calais using the contact details below.

Refugees need a warm welcome to the UK. Let's make the UK what the refugees hoped it would be: a beacon of hope. ●

Lawrence Lewis

To learn more about Care4Calais's work in the local area contact: **Sam Jonkers, Care4Calais Local Lead Reading Area**

sam.jonkers@care4calais.org
care4calais.org

CITIZENS ADVICE NEEDS VOLUNTEER ADVISERS

We can all face problems that are too stressful or complicated to sort out alone.

In 2019 our 150 volunteers advised over 11,000 people. We helped three quarters resolve their debt, benefits, employment and housing problems.

We now need more advisers to help us during and after the Covid-19 crisis.

Our main offices are in Abingdon, Didcot, Henley and Thame. Since March 2020, 90 volunteers and staff have been advising the public from home on our Adviceline service. Recently we partially re-opened our offices, in part to train new advisers.

What will you get out of it? You will join a friendly team, meet new people, develop your skills and make a real difference to people's lives.

You'll need to have good listening and interpersonal skills, a willingness to learn and be confident with computers. Full training will be provided.

If you have eight hours a week to spare for the next two years or more and are looking for a satisfying and stimulating volunteer role in your local community, please contact us at:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/oxfordshire-south-vale/volunteer/ ●

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HELP WITH LONG-TERM COVID



Over a million people in the UK are suffering from Long Covid, the accepted term for Coronavirus that lasts more than four weeks. And, sad to say, more than 70,000 people in this country have had Covid symptoms - fatigue, breathlessness, numbness, pain or partial hearing loss - for over a year.

If you are one of those affected, you should know that PIP (personal independence payments) may be available. PIP is financial support for those who have an illness, disability or mental health condition, making it hard for them to do everyday tasks

or get around. Income, savings and employment status don't affect your PIP eligibility, and PIP can supplement any other benefits you might be receiving. To apply, you need to be aged between 16 and your state pension age, and you need to have had these health problems for at least three months and expect them to continue. For help with applying for PIP, contact Citizens Advice Adviceline on 0808 278 7907 (for Oxfordshire South and Vale). There is more information about PIP at <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/sick-or-disabled-people-and-carers/pip/> ●

SHARE YOUR LIFE, CHANGE A LIFE

Could you give someone the opportunity to live the fullest life they can live? Help them grow in confidence? Encourage them to become more independent and do things they never thought they would be able to do?

The Shared Lives scheme matches people who need additional support to be independent, with carers and their families. The opportunity to share a family's life, as part of their household, gives them a valuable alternative to staying in residential care or being looked after by a team of support workers. Becoming a Shared Lives Carer for Oxfordshire County Council will make a big difference to someone's life. If you love people, and are looking for something that is rewarding, paid and home-based - share your life, change a life.

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sharedlivescarers



TOM FORT CARS

Last week I watched someone succeed at the sixth attempt in reversing a Land Rover the size of a shipping container into a space in the Waitrose car park, and it reminded me that I need to think about getting a new, smaller car.

By 'new' I don't actually mean new, I mean different from and less old than the 12-year-old veteran Toyota Corolla that I've had for the last few years.

I have now been driving for fifty-two years, and inevitably I have been through a few vehicles in that time. The first was a hand-me-down from my granny, a Morris Traveller which I shared with my three elder brothers and which served us well until the rear-offside wheel fell off while I was driving it through the outskirts of Guildford – a

catastrophe that was entirely my fault, as I had put the nuts on the wrong way round when screwing the wheel back after a puncture repair.

The first car I paid for was a horrible, rust-riddled 1959 Austin Cambridge, price £45. Our relationship never recovered from my breaking my wrist trying to crank it into life one freezing morning in Oxford.

In early manhood I drove successively two Saab 96s, a weird bulbous Scandinavian creation which were pretty reliable. Thereafter my choice of vehicles was generally dictated by my growing family and declining reserves of cash. A couple of Volvo estates were followed by a succession of Peugeot 405s. The first of these was the most expensive car I've ever had (I had been

left some money by an aunt) which I unwisely left on the slope of a hill in Scotland with the handbrake not on properly. When I returned from my walk it had rolled backwards a significant distance into a drystone wall. The wall was repairable – very expensively – but the car was not.

So what now? My problem is that I have no interest in cars. All I want is for them to start and to be able to contain my long body comfortably. Should I go electric? Hybrid? Suggestions please ... ●



COOK'S CORNER

By SANDY ONOFRIO



Halloumi and Watermelon Salad – serves 6

- 120g halloumi cheese
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 500g fresh watermelon cubes
- 12 mint leaves, sliced
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced

Cut the halloumi cheese into chunks. Heat the oil in a pan over medium heat,

and gently fry the halloumi until golden, about 3 minutes. Toss the watermelon cubes, mint leaves, onion slices and fried halloumi in a salad bowl to serve. [Can be made in advance and kept in the fridge, flavours blend really well].

Pitta Bread - serves 8

- 250ml (9 fl oz) warm water (45 C)
- 375g (13 oz) plain flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons caster sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried active baking yeast

Place all ingredients in a large bowl

and combine thoroughly. Knead for a minimum of 5 mins, place in a warm place until risen and doubled in size. Repeat.

Turn dough onto a lightly floured surface. Gently roll and stretch dough into a 25cm (10 in) rope. With a sharp knife, divide dough into 8 pieces. Roll each ball into a 6 to 18cm (3 to 7 in) circle. Set aside on a lightly floured work surface. Cover with a cloth. Let pittas rise about 30 minutes until slightly puffy.

Preheat oven to 260 C / Gas mark 10. Place 2 or 3 pittas on a wire cooling rack. Place rack directly on oven rack. Bake pittas 4 to 5 minutes until puffed and



tops begin to brown. Remove from oven and immediately place pittas in a sealed brown paper bag or cover them with a damp drying cloth until soft.

Once pittas are softened, either cut in half or split top edge for half or whole pittas. They can be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for several days or in the freezer for 1 or 2 months. ●



I AM ... IAM

Has your car been sitting on the drive for the last year? Have you just driven as far as the local supermarket in Henley or Caversham and do not feel very confident because you are out of practice. Help might be at hand to support your confidence and provide some tips for improvement in a one to one situation, plus a lot more ...

Thames Valley Institute of Advanced Motorists has existed for over 40 years as a branch of the national road safety charity, the Institute of Advanced Motorists, recently rebranded as IAM RoadSmart. The IAM has 85,000 members – and TVGAM have 220 of those. Based in Maidenhead, our area covers Wokingham, Bracknell, Reading and touches South Oxfordshire. Several members of TVGAM live in Sonning Common.

Members join the IAM for a number of reasons, but the central motive is to improve their driving skills – and seek to get more from driving. The core purpose of TVGAM is to put Associates through the IAM test, with an approved

examiner, to emerge with a qualification that records their ability to drive to a certain standard that represents progress over and above the DVLA test. The IAM borrow on methods employed by police traffic officers, promoting high levels of awareness in real-time situations. Courses are open to all, and because they are all delivered by volunteers, costs are very reasonable.

As we emerge from lockdown and begin again to take non-essential journeys as government guidance dictates, roads will get busier, and some drivers will be getting reacquainted with using their vehicles more regularly. This could be an ideal time to consider taking a course with the IAM – and through that action, joining TVGAM. From the day you join, you'll be welcomed into the fold and have access to experienced IAM drivers. TVGAM have a regular Newsletter sent to members six times per annum and hold at least ten evening social meetings a year. And it's not just for people who are nutty about cars – they care for their cars, but they also care for the safety of



others and want to achieve a personal goal that is theirs for life.

To learn more, contact our Membership Secretary, Alex Beeston, on his email: membership@tvgam.org.uk or drop me a line ●

Nick Room
chair@tvgam.org.uk

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HENLEY SOCIETY

The Henley Society is enjoying an increase in membership as the Chairman, Geoff Luckett is working hard to raise its profile. If you are interested in its activities, please visit the website www.thehenleysociety.org

At its recent AGM Geoff Luckett went on to say that 'irrespective of what the Society has achieved over the past twelve months, there is no room for complacency and the Society will continue to lobby and campaign for what it believes is in the best interests of the town of Henley and its inhabitants.' We must remain a town in which people wish to live, work and play, and indeed visit.

He noted that the Society would celebrate its 60th birthday in 2022 and plans were well underway to celebrate the year in an appropriate manner. He also advertised the following which may be of interest.

The River and Rowing Museum re-opens on May 20th and will include a new exhibition 'Painting in Coloured Light' featuring the modern stained-glass designs of John Piper. John lived at Fawley Bottom for many years and was a founder Vice President of the Society in 1961. He retained that post until his death in 1992. His work can be seen locally in the churches of All Saints, Farnborough, West Berkshire, St. Bartholomew's Nettlebed, Remenham Church, and in Coventry Cathedral. ●



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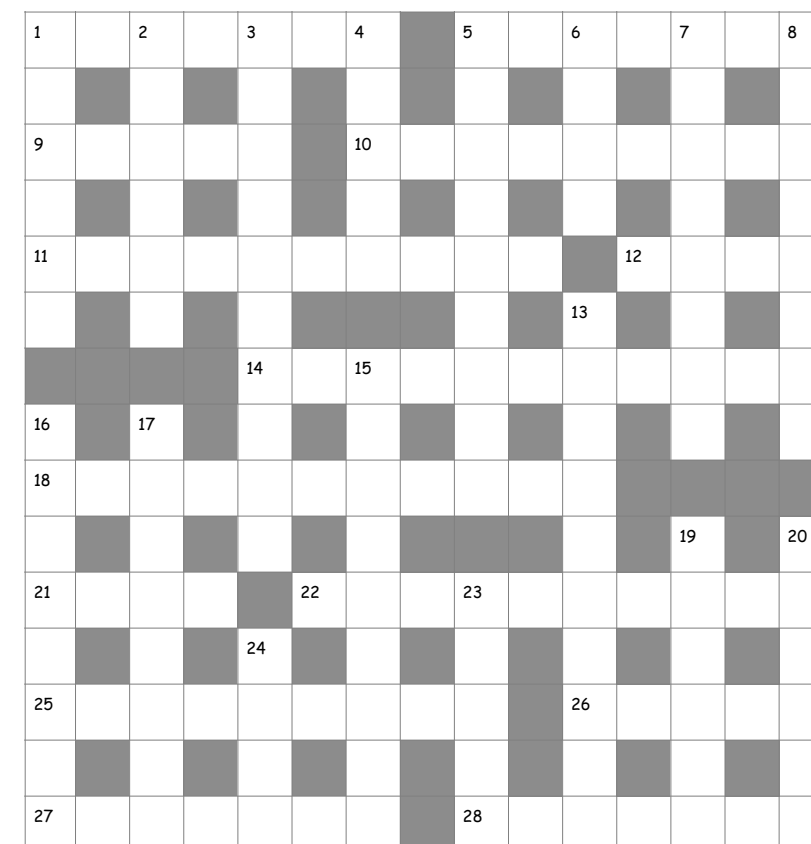
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PUZZLE PAGE

By **SHEILA WALKER**

WOMBAT 6



CROSSWORD CLUES:

ACROSS

- What one does when the lights go out? No! (7)
- They have you in stitches (7)
- Grand award, by the sound of it (5)
- Not much coming and going at such times (4,5)
- All colours of the rainbow, surprisingly (5,5)
- See 16D
- A former Livingstone? (11)
- Preoccupation of sailors being pulled away (10)
- Ever change direction (4)
- His dream is 'art rules, OK?' (10)
- Transport to Norfolk, and takes possession (9)
- Imply iron is popular, right? (5)
- Tired, not to say insulted, even knocked over (3,4)
- Neither pole is underneath, so it's all go (3,4)

DOWN

- Warren owner finds fame (6)
- Great material, with the right person in charge (6)
- Wales river sets a fine table (10)
- Nuns, I think, could not join him (5)
- Western food, found around 24D? (9)
- Sum up national shopper (4)
- Has new thoughts – about winds? (8)
- Heard such sittings should come to an end (8)
- What happens when 24D goes over the top (10)
- Uncoils in order to experience belonging 16, 12 See 22 (8,4)
- Leads the way – to the wedding? (6,2)
- Odd one out not quite as healthy as she seems (6)
- Agitate because harness is not quite right (4,2)
- Keep going wrong with the sticky stuff (5)
- Rely on artist - for watercolour? (4)

PUZZLES:

HOW MANY WORDS ... of 4 or more letters can you make from SONNING COMMON? There are at least 25 ...

CALL MY BLUFF Which is the correct definition for the following:

KIANG (a) Tibetan ass (b) Thai cooking pot (c) small tent used by the Chinese military

TABARET (a) sequence in ballet (b) striped cloth (c) small side-drum

XYST (a) covered walk (b) sci-fi, half human, half robot (c) malignant mole

HIRAGANA (a) type of martial art (b) Japanese script (c) Ashanti coming of age ritual

BOCCIE (a) elf (Gaelic) (b) old Irish dance (c) Italian version of bowls

CRIBBLE (a) small marine crustacean (b) to keep on complaining (c) finer grade hardcore

WHICH ARE THE NEXT 2 LETTERS IN THIS SEQUENCE;

Y, Y, H, L, Y, E, Y, T, R, R, ? ?

See answers on page 34

COVID VACCINATION UPDATE: 7TH MAY 2021



The surgery has been giving vaccinations twice weekly for most weeks since January. First vaccinations have now been given to 94% of our patients who fall under Cohorts 1-9. During April, the health centre provided a total of 1776 vaccinations – the biggest month to date since the rollout commenced. In total, over 5800 of our patients (58% of our patient population) have received first vaccinations.

Currently patients aged 40 – 49 (priority group 10a & b) are being invited, whilst also giving first or second doses to those in groups 1-9. Patients outside these groups are asked to wait until their priority group is released nationally. The health centre will be in contact to invite patients aged 30 – 39 in priority group 11, to book both their 1st and 2nd vaccination as soon as supplies are confirmed, and permission released. This option may be more convenient for those patients who find it difficult to travel to a Mass Vaccination Site. For those in this group who are fit and healthy, the current advice is not to give the Astra Zeneca vaccination for the time being although if you have already had a first vaccination you should go ahead and have a second vaccination.

The health centre would like to say a really BIG thankyou to all the volunteers who have helped with this huge project over the last six months. We could not do it without you! ●

CHRONIC PAIN & LONG COVID MANAGEMENT

Sonning Common Health Centre and it's active PPG are delighted to invite you to join us to an evening with 'the UK's Go-To Doctor in Pain Management'

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TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST PLEASE EMAIL: schcpgg@gmail.com

STAFF UPDATE

Dr Claire Webster will be returning from maternity leave in the autumn.

Dr Shams Aljoboori has decided to take a break from general practice and left at the end of April. We wish her well for the future. Dr Abi Taylor, who was a GP trainee at the practice, has taken over her patients.

Jane, our healthcare assistant, and phlebotomist, retired at the end of May after 10 years at SCHC. And on reception our long serving staff members Catherine and Rita have also retired after 42 years of service between them! We wish them all a happy retirement and thank them for their dedicated work over the years. ●

SUMMER APPROACHES – STINGS, BITES AND LYME DISEASE



Most insect bites and stings are not serious and will get better within a few hours or days. Some people have a mild allergic reaction and a larger area of skin can be affected. Very occasionally, a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) can occur, causing symptoms such as breathing difficulties, dizziness and a swollen face or mouth and will require immediate medical treatment. Anaphylaxis is a severe and potentially life-threatening reaction to a trigger such as an allergy to food, medicines or insect bites. The best thing to do in this situation is call 999.

What to do if you've been bitten or stung

- remove the sting or tick if still in the skin
- wash the affected area with soap and water
- apply a cold compress such as an ice pack to any swelling
- avoid scratching the area, to reduce the risk of infection

Ask your pharmacist about medicines that can help, such as painkillers, creams for itching and antihistamines.

There are some simple precautions you can take to reduce your risk of being bitten or stung by insects.

- remain calm and move away slowly if you encounter wasps, hornets or bees – don't wave your arms around or swat at them
- cover exposed skin by wearing long sleeves and trousers
- wear footwear when outdoors
- apply insect repellent to exposed skin – repellents that contain 50% DEET (diethyltoluamide) are most effective
- avoid strong perfumes, these can attract insects
- be careful around flowering plants, rubbish and outdoor areas where food is served
- check skin, clothing (and your children) for ticks if you have been in a known tick infested area
- check your pets too
- Contact your GP or call NHS 111 for advice if worried about a bite or sting.
- Call 999 if there is a severe reaction

LYME DISEASE - is an infection spread by tick bites that attacks the nerves, brain, heart, joints, and eyes, and can also

cause skin rashes. Ticks are small spider-like creatures that are mainly found in woodland and heath areas where there are animals. They attach to your skin, suck your blood, and can cause Lyme disease in some cases. It is important to remove any ticks you find as soon as possible, taking great care.

The only symptom that is individual to Lyme disease is the bull's eye rash (a red spot with a lighter red area around it like the bulls eye on a dart board!) but not everyone develops this. If spotted and treated quickly, most people can make a full recovery after a short course of antibiotics. However, the symptoms of Lyme disease are similar to a lot of other illnesses, making it tricky to diagnose.

Removing a tick is a very tricky business. Information is available on the internet, but here are some tips:

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
2. Pull upward with steady, even pressure
3. After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.
4. Never crush a tick with your fingers.

Patient participation group



Church *news*



CHILTERN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

A new name!

In March 2021 we changed our name to **Chiltern Evangelical Church**. This links to the famous 'Chilterns' which is a clear and popular representation of the beautiful area in which we live.

Identity is important. Names mean something.

Our old name – Caversham Evangelical Church – reflected the place where the Church first started. Our Sunday services were taking place in two different venues – Emmer Green Youth and Community Centre in the morning and our Church building (previously known as Sonning Common Free Church) in Sonning Common in the afternoon. With our members living in the wider local area, the old name no longer made sense. Our Church is not the physical building but is better represented by the people themselves.

So, who are we?

We are a 'good news' church! This is the significance of the word 'Evangelical'. 'Evangelical' simply means 'good news'. We are a group of around 50 ordinary people from all walks and stages of life who have come to believe that the message of the

Bible is the best news we could ever hear. We are thrilled at what God has done for us and we are passionate about sharing this good news with the community around us.

A new logo

As well as a new name we have a new logo!

Our Church identity is centred around Christ, as is reflected in our tree icon. This tree represents life and growth and is an image heavily represented in the Bible. Our name may be new, but we are well established.

The tree structure represents the connection we share – being rooted together in Christ, with branches reaching to the edge and out showing how we are still growing by extending out to those around us.

The new name also has the benefit of keeping the same acronym CEC, by which we are often affectionately known.

We are a welcoming and growing family, and we would love to have you attend any of our services and events. You do not need to be a Church member or familiar with Church and there would be no expectations made on you.

A new website

We have also launched a new website where you can find a wealth of

information, including:

- Stories from members
- What to expect if you are new to Church
- Exploring Christianity
- Sermon Streaming
- Full details of the activities we run, including:
 - **Mainly Music:** Fun interactive musical baby/toddler group
 - **Adventurers:** FREE Youth Club for 5-11 year olds
 - **Courses that explain the Christian faith:** Delivered in a very accessible and relaxed forum based around videos and discussions over cake and coffee!
 - **Sunday Services:** 4:30 pm in Sonning Common every Sunday

You can find full details for all our activities including programmes, dates, and information about how we are operating under COVID restrictions on our website: www.cecuk.church

Why not come along and meet us and find out more? You would be warmly welcomed by all of us here at 'CEC'. ●



**Chiltern
Evangelical Church**

ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

At the time of writing we are still in the Easter season. What a difference between this year and last year. In 2020 all liturgies were conducted behind closed doors and we had no streaming capability. This year, using Covid guidelines, we were able to admit up to 40 people for our Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday services. In addition, between 70 and 80 households followed live on YouTube. Despite the disruption to parish life over the past year there is a sense that people are eager to participate fully once more. During Lent we had an appeal to support a local initiative providing hot meals for the ICU at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. There was a generous response of both volunteer cooks and cash donations.

Last year many of our young people were unable to make their first Holy Communion or be Confirmed. With St Martin's, our parish school, we are working out the best way this can be addressed during the summer months. If there are Catholic families with members wishing to receive Holy Communion for the first time or be Confirmed please contact the parish office.

St Michael's choir is currently a virtual choir. Each week with the help of Audacity software they prepare at least one hymn and a psalm to play at our 10.30am Sunday Mass while congregational singing is forbidden. It has enabled the choir to work together during lockdown.

The church remains open for our weekend and weekday Masses. Currently advance booking is not required. The Masses can be accessed live on YouTube and links can be found on our website. It is still difficult to plan future events with certainty so any activities will be shown on our website. ●

Parish website:
www.saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk

SPRINGWATER

The Spring, our café, has had a great start, having been well received by many local people, some who have come because they were recommended by others! The café serves several barista coffees from our professional machine, prepared by well-trained people, plus home made cakes, flapjacks, soups and much more. All absolutely delicious.

This is a Springwater Community Project so everything is offered at well below the normal commercial prices, also, until the rules change and depending on the weather, the lovely food and drink can be enjoyed in our beautiful garden where all the plants have a Biblical theme. It is our aim that this place should be a resource for local people to enjoy, a place of peace, friendship and joy.

We are really enjoying meeting again in the building, albeit with some restrictions and we have been able to have coffee and a chat in the garden after the service.

Compassionate loaf is baking again on the premises on Monday mornings, so that wonderful smell is back. Much of their bread goes to the Good Neighbour Foodbank which currently supports about seventy local people. If you would like to donate to this there are receptacles at the front of the church.

The Ark parent and young children's group is flourishing and offering a friendly place (and the café) for the parents and loads of fun for the children.

Aspire women's group still meets on a Tuesday morning for conversation, prayer and to run their own book club.

For news of everything that Springwater engages in, or to watch our services online, do please have a look at our website, 0118 972 4519, or email us at: contactspringwater@gmail.com ●

Chris Girdler

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

So much of our lives today is lived in two dimensions: more so, of course with the increased use of social media and Zoom during the pandemic. No wonder we feel impoverished, hollowed out, flat.... The joy of that first live meeting, first hug, first truly three-dimensional encounter has proved to us - if we ever needed proof - that virtual reality is absolutely no substitute for the real thing. Hopefully by the time this issue comes out, we'll be blessed with greater freedom again.

Thinking about dimensions reminds me of those moments in a funeral service when we share the promise of heaven - quite a challenge, as we've no clear picture of what heaven is like. The temptation is either to try to imagine a glorified, magnified version of all that is best here and now - or maybe to see it as an absence of certain things - like marriage, or decay, or tears, but without any clear idea what to put in their place.

I wonder, though, if we might think in terms of added dimensions.... CS Lewis likens it to the difference between a cathedral and an architect's drawing of a cathedral. Certainly, it will be in whatever way, more rather than less real than all we experience now: and as Christians we trust that, through Jesus Christ, we will be able fully to enjoy the presence of God.

In the meantime! We hope to welcome you, in three dimensions, to all three of our churches at the end of June, with celebrations for St John the Baptist at Kidmore End, and a coffee concert at Rotherfield Peppard.

Given the ever-changing rules, please check our website for confirmation. ●

Sheila Walker
Associate Priest

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PUZZLE PAGE ANSWERS FROM PAGE 27

Wombat 6

P	O	T	S	N	O	N	.	N	W	O	D	N	U	R
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R, R (last letters of months of the year)

NEXT IN SEQUENCE:

GRIBBLE (a)

BOCCIE (c)

HARAGANA (b)

XYST (a)

TABARET (b)

KIANG (a)

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