

AUG/SEP 2025

MECE OPEN EVENING

TUESDAY 30 SEPTEMBER

MECE NEWS - PAGE 4

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SPECIAL PEOPLE

Grace and Nicki jump
for charity
P9

IN FOCUS

The importance of
solar power
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SC LIBRARY

The 'go-to' place for
summer fun
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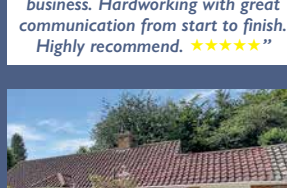


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FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

I am often reminded that we are lucky to live in Sonning Common.

The schools have completed the year so there are lots of children around. Many will be lucky and have some of the weeks away but for those who remain here there are many activities for enjoyment, especially in the library.

For older children and adults there is a murder mystery and the opportunity to take home a wrapped book from the library. and some of the events are free. Page 24 and 25 in this issue of the magazine recount what is available and some of the events are free

There are a number of interesting articles, solar power, girl guides, young people and information such as concerns about Widmore Pond, the success of Village Day plus adverts for future events.

The Year 6 children at Sonning Common primary school have achieved some very good SATs results and are to be congratulated for their very hard work. Well done to ALL and their teachers.

Happy holidays to you all. ●

Diana and Christine

Further summer activities can be found on the South and Vale Holiday Activities website and facebook page.



MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM



Diana Pearman



Christine Atkinson



Joan Grumman

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MECE NEWS

Excitement and trepidation



The Summer term is one filled with a healthy mix of excitement and trepidation as Year 11's Secondary School journey comes to a close and we turn our attention to the incoming Year 7 cohort.

The Class of 2025 finished their final lessons in May and commenced their 6 weeklong GCSE exam period. Their conduct and commitment during this long period remained positive until the last exam. At the end of June we gathered as a school community to

celebrate their time at Chiltern Edge at their Year 11 Prom. An evening filled with laughter and dancing, wonderful frocks and suits and even an arrival on a tractor. We look forward to their results in August and to hearing their future achievements in the years to come.

Year 10 have been spending time thinking more carefully about their Post-16 options and careers beyond that too. All students have benefited from a personalised action plan devised following a 1:1 Careers interview and some students have started the process of visiting Sixth Forms and local colleges to help shape their plans for applications in the autumn term. During a dedicated Careers Week in May the students completed workshops on CV writing and interview techniques, undertook visits to a variety of providers and each completed a day's work shadowing. A huge thank you to all the local businesses who provided students with opportunities to join them for a day.

Students from Key Stage 3 have been enjoying a variety of activities to extend their learning outside the classroom – trips to Hampton Court



Palace, the Jurassic Coastline and walking expeditions as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme to name just a few. Year 9 have balanced this with taster sessions for their GCSE options subjects and a first experience of exam-style assessments in the Main Hall – the students have really engaged with this process, and they can be rightly proud of their achievements.

With just a handful of days left this term we excitedly welcome our upcoming Year 7 cohort to school for 2 days of induction. Students have a packed programme whereby they meet their tutor and tutor group, have their first lessons in Science, French and History as well as have an induction into their House and compete for the first of the House competitions of their High School careers. All these activities are designed to welcome students into our school community, build friendships and reduce any nerves ahead of students starting in September.

We wish all of our community a relaxing and restful summer break. ●

EMMA BLISS,
Headteacher



SCPS NEWS

Where did the year go?



Life in primary school has a certain rhythm to it. There is the regularity of each school year of course, and as we get towards the end of another cycle, there is much to contemplate, and much to celebrate.

But there are other seasonal markers too.

There is the excitement of a new year in September, with lots of little people meeting new experiences and new teachers. For some there is the major step of entering a new key stage or beginning their final year at school. Year Six children are reminded that there is a notable increase in their workload for three quarters of the year (leading up to SATs). After that there is a palpable end of school feel, with multiple performances and trips, and the serious business of preparing for secondary school.

The run-up to Christmas is always a special time in the lives of primary-age children, and we are happy to support that excitement with themed lessons, a nativity show, and the Village Carol Concert – always a highlight, with children performing on stage, under lights, in the crispness of a December evening.

January and February tend to be quieter – full of hard work and often to the background of freezing days and rain. Sometimes we must bolster morale during these shorter, damper days.

But Spring picks us all up again and after Easter we can start making full use of our grounds, for lunches and playtimes outside, and myriad sports activities – more often than not on the field. Forest Camp really comes into its own as children learn about how nature regenerates each Spring.

And so, the rhythm brings us to the end of the year. As I write Year Six have just returned from their Woodlands residential, and we are looking forward to their results being made public. We are always proud of the efforts children and their teachers put into each class and year group, and these older children deserve the validation they will get. And then they will (hopefully!) show off their other talents – acting and singing in their end-of-year play and proving that they are ready to move on. We never forget our leavers and always welcome them back when they re-visit us.

There are many people to thank as I approach the end of my first year as Head. As always, I will start with thanking the children who make our lives and our jobs so worthwhile. No day is wasted. And then my colleagues, on whom I depend on every day and whose professionalism, sense of purpose and sense of humour sees us through. And of course, our parents and carers – thank you for sending your children to us each day, and for helping us build our school into something special. Finally, Sonning Common itself – we just love being a central part of the village and intend to be that for many years to come.

I must finish with a special thank you to our wider community, our alumni, our PTA and our current cohorts for your

support of our fund-raising initiatives this year. Thanks to you we should have a shiny upgraded pool and a bright new Reception class area by September. Your support is always appreciated.

Enjoy a peaceful summer. ●

RACHEL SALMONS
Headteacher
Sonning Common Primary School

10K Entries now open

Entries for the 3rd Sonning Common 10k taking place on Sunday 5th October are now open! Starting and finishing at the Sonning Common Primary School, the 10k road course takes runners out through the village and into the countryside around Wyfold before returning to the school via Kidmore End. This event has sold out for the last two years so please enter early to avoid disappointment!

All proceeds from the run go towards supporting the primary school. To register, please visit www.SoCo10k.co.uk

If you are not running but you are able to marshal on the day, we would love to hear from you. Please email sonningcommon10k@outlook.com

With thanks to our sponsors for their continued support with this event: Focus at Badgemore Park, Shiplake College and Beville Estate Agency.



RUFC UPDATE



Supporting the Next Generation of Volunteers RUFC

As we look ahead to the 2025/2026 season, we are keen to encourage more young volunteers to get involved with the club. Whether it's helping at events, supporting maintenance projects, or contributing behind the scenes, our young volunteers play a vital role in the heartbeat of our club.

To support this, we are actively seeking a sponsor for the Junior Clubman Award. We would love to partner with a business or individual who shares our passion for developing young people and giving back to the community.

Sponsorship would help us offer an added incentive to our young volunteers – whether that's a sports brand voucher, a fun day out, or another meaningful reward. This is a fantastic opportunity to champion local youth, support grassroots football, and help nurture the next generation of community-minded individuals.

If your business is interested in sponsoring this award or supporting our young volunteer programme, we'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch at hello@rotherfieldfc.com

Together, we can continue building a club where everyone – on and off the pitch – has the opportunity to thrive.

Junior Clubman Award - Celebrating Lucas's Incredible Dedication!

At RUFC we pride ourselves not only on the football played on the pitch but also on the incredible spirit, teamwork, and community that thrives off it. This year, the Junior Clubman Award goes to someone who truly embodies those values – Lucas, a shining example of what it means to be part of the Rotherfield family and a true role model.

Lucas is not just a talented and dedicated U9 player for the Rotherfield Rebels, but someone who gives his heart and soul to the club far beyond match days. His commitment stretches well beyond the white lines of the football pitch.

Over the years, Lucas has been at the heart of so many projects that help keep the club running smoothly. Whether it's rolling up his sleeves to help paint the famous yellow shipping container, installing sponsor banners, setting up car park signage, or helping to set up the club's Boot Room sale. Lucas is always ready to lend a hand.

His dedication doesn't stop there. Come rain or shine, Lucas is one of the first volunteers to arrive at any club event and one of the very last to leave – making sure every tent peg is packed away and every job is done. His enthusiasm, work ethic, and positive attitude set an example for everyone, young and old.

The club is absolutely delighted to present Lucas with the Junior Clubman Trophy,

recognising his incredible contribution, tireless effort, and unwavering commitment to making Rotherfield United FC the special club that it is.



Rotherfield were also very proud to receive three awards at the Oxfordshire FA Awards in June. A reflection of the dedication and hard work from all the volunteers and coaches.

The Lioness Award winner was Louise Colom who is involved in the women's and girls' teams and is also a trustee of the club. A very worthy winner.

The Respect Award Promoting Positive Behaviour went to Rob Holland who has been a coach for many years and has proven to be a great one!

Jon Durrant was highly commended in the Bobby Moore Award, which is an accolade presented to somebody who has made a remarkable and invaluable impact on football across Oxfordshire.

Congratulations to them all! ●

SC PRESCHOOL NEWS

Many thank you's to Sonning Common Parish Council for our new shed to store equipment and SODC for our garden grant which has been spent on replacing our old sandpit, filling it with sand and a swing for forest Camp.

The summer term was a busy one! We had our sports day, leavers presentation,

transition visits to the primary school and teacher visits to us, Father's Day stay and play, joining in with the Village Day and SCPS Summer fair. We also held our third summer camp for 2 weeks which was another success.

Wishing our leavers well in their new schools and looking forward to welcoming

our new starters and their parents.

As ever, feel free to tweet! And thank you very much. ●

JO ERBETTA
Pre-school Administrator

YES...BUT, WHO ARE GREENSHOOTS?

Volunteer and friends Open Day

Ever wondered what we do and what motivates us to get out of bed in the mornings? Well, come to find out!

We are holding an open day on Wednesday 8th October to showcase the activities and opportunities we offer to our trainees (the Charity's beneficiaries), and they are already excited by the prospect of showing what they do.

Nearer the date we'll advertise an RSVP invitation on our Facebook and Instagram pages, plus display posters locally, inviting you to register to join us. It also doesn't take long to click that follow button on Facebook! We'll keep you up to date with our local Charity events and our large and small wins here at Greenshoots.

Our trainees are busy planning the event; there will be refreshments and homemade cakes, their work will be on show, together

with their plans for the festive season.

We hope to welcome lots of local people who wish to support our work or join our volunteer network. We would love to hear from local businesses and organisations who may be interested in sponsorship or awareness partnerships. And of course, the event is a perfect opportunity to say a big thank you to everyone who already supports us.

You'll also have the chance to meet and mingle with our amazing trainees – see



what they do, ask questions, and let them tell you about the work they take so much pride in. It's their enthusiasm, effort, and achievements that inspire us every day. THAT, is exactly what gets us out of bed in the morning. ●

SHEDQUARTERS

Since the beginning of the year, Shedquarters has been extremely busy. We've been attending local events promoting Shedquarters and welcomed 16 new members since January. We now have 47 members visiting our sessions on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and/or Saturday 10-12.30, adjacent to the Peppard Memorial Hall. Each session is managed by a Day Leader offering a wide range of knowledge on wood or metal working tools. We have several projects to suit all abilities from Bird Boxes, Bee hotels and Benches. We have made more than 30 bird boxes, 12 bee hotels, 5 planters, 6 wellie boot stores and 1 bench. You can join in with any of the above projects or bring your own item to repair or to make!

The Shed is usually used for woodworking, metalworking, for a place to chat over a cuppa, to play dominoes or to do a puzzle. However, during April, Nicola Kantorowicz, a locally based Stained Glass Artist ran a workshop for us. Nicola is extremely

talented, and her work can be seen in churches in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, and she divides her time between working on commissions, exhibiting and teaching. www.nicolakantorowicz.com

Shedquarters would love to host more arts and crafts courses (painting, drawing, photography – or something else. Would you be interested in teaching at The Shed. Please email Sheila at info@shedquarters.org.uk

Shedquarters have had stalls at local fetes including the Village Day at Sonning Common and Whitchurch Hill Fete. Our Day Leaders and Members, love talking to people and showing them the work that's been done. We were lucky to have glorious weather for our Official Opening at the end of May with an amazing barbeque (cooked by our Member Tim Elwell and helped by his wife Ruth and family). This was our way of saying a huge thank you to all those individuals and business who have helped with financial contributions, donations of

time or services. On a sad note, our dear member, friend, and "full of ideas man", Mike Woods passed away recently, we will remember him dearly. Shedquarters would not be where it is now, without the support of all the above – we are super proud to be a part of this community – it really is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

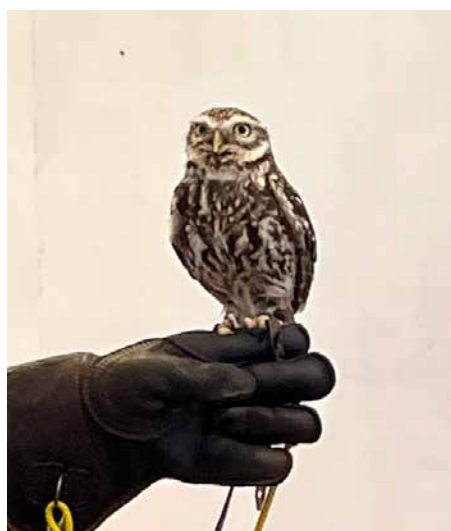
Please do call in and visit The Shed. We're in the car park of Peppard War Memorial Hall, Gallowstree Road, RG9 5JA. You'll receive a friendly welcome and a cuppa. ●

SUE ABBOTT
Trustee Shedquarters
www.shedquarters.org.uk



WOW, WHAT A SUMMER IT TURNED OUT TO BE FOR ECO SOCO!

We launched Eco SoCo community cinema showcasing the inspirational film 'Wilding', kindly sponsored by Beville Estate Agents. A sell out event with a long waiting list for tickets! In addition, our guests were invited to take part in one of our exciting new projects: Patchwork for Pollinators; free British grown native wildflower seeds, alongside planting and care advice. The aim is to create a patchwork of native wildflowers across the village, in gardens, pots, or any receptacle that suits your fancy! Check out ecosoco.org.uk for further info.



food chain), providing a large, shallow receptacle of water (Tawny owls love a bath) and reporting owl activity to the Owl Conservation Project, such as owls calling to each other at night. The Owl Conservation Project will in turn advise on how to track the owl's location. Once identified the team will check the owl's habitat and if necessary, provide support such as owl nesting boxes.

Interesting Owl facts:

Owls almost always mate for life.

The flight of an owl is soundless.

The wide, round shape of the Barn Owl's face helps the owl 'hear'

Owl's eyes take up 70% of their skull!

Little Owls were often kept as pets historically, despite being very smelly and prolific poopers!

To find out more, please visit www.owlconservationproject.org.uk

SCPC invited us to present at their annual parish meeting with the aim of kick starting an environmental plan for our village. Watch this space, we're excited for the future!

And last but by no means least, over 30 free birdboxes and bug hotels were built



at our stall on Village Day! We are very grateful for Shed Quarters for providing the kits and to SC Scouts for helping children of all ages to build them. Our thanks also to Pierpoint Cafe, Sonning Common Garage, Pressed for Time, The Maltsters Arms, Stoke Row store, Pet Barn, Heath & Watkins, SC Pet Shop, Forresters, Abbeycrest and The Red Lion for generous donations to our tombola.

As you read this, we will have experienced a very hot and dry spell. If you are lucky enough to have one of the new verge trees or community orchards near you, please pop out and give the trees a good drink. They need our help to survive hot summers!

At Eco SoCo the autumn / winter seasons mean planting; new hedgerows, pollinator friendly plants and more trees. To find out more and join in the fun, please contact us at ecosoco24@gmail.com. Look out for our next Eco SoCo Cinema event, coming soon! You can also find our fab monthly newsletter at ecosoco.org.uk!



HIGH FLIERS SMASH THEIR TARGET

By JOAN GRUMMANT



On June 1st Grace Lawrence and Nicki Walker, who work at local hairdressers Intensions in Sonning Common, completed a parachute jump from 10,00 feet to raise money for MacMillan Caring at Home – a small community charity that offers support for patients and families dealing with cancer treatment and post operative care. Both of these very plucky women completed the jump with real commitment and have raised over £4,000 for their amazing effort. Their original target of £1000 was totally smashed and it was a brilliant result. Both are local, with Grace born, raised and still living in Sonning Common and Nicki in Reading.

The day started incredibly early for them at 5.30am when they drove to Sarum, near Salisbury to meet up with their tandem partners Milas and Marianne. After a lot of nervous anticipation leading up to this point both found that the actual day brought a calm acceptance and a sense of huge excitement. After a safety briefing and donning body suits, they found they were the first to

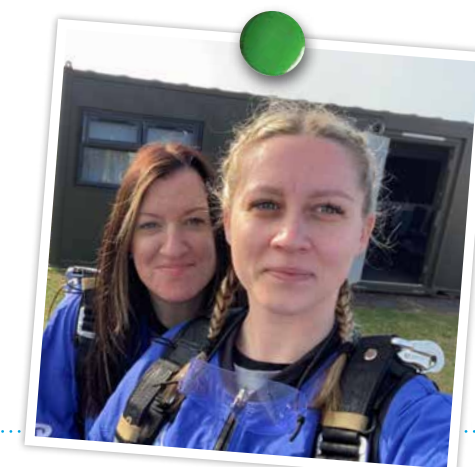
jump that day and were soon sitting on benches either side of a small plane. It was extremely noisy in the plane but when they reached the correct height they were edged out of the door, flying with heads back and holding on to their harness. The aircraft noise blotted out the sound of their initial screams and when the parachutes opened it was a moment of sheer exhilaration. Both said it was a fantastic experience, and that it was very quiet and peaceful looking down at the small buildings and tiny figures below. They describe it as a hugely enjoyable experience and one they are both anxious to repeat again sometime.

The jump was over by 9am and after a very good landing both had family waiting for them to celebrate and congratulate them on their momentous achievement. It was certainly a moment to savour but both never forgot the reason for their flight. MacMillan Caring is a cause very close to their hearts as both are managing the shop in Sonning Common while their boss and friend Mari is recovering from treatment. Raising

awareness of the fantastic work being done by MacMillan is a recognition of the amazing work being done as well as applauding the fortitude and bravery of all patients and families receiving support.

A huge well done to you both. We applaud your very bold spirit and wish you both success in any other challenge you embark upon. Also, many thanks to all who have shown such great generosity.

Raised £4,352 including a bake sale by Paul in which he raised £200 in support of this very worthwhile charity. ●





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The Big Bear Hunt



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PARISH NEWS

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Village Update

Annual Parish Meeting Success

Our Annual Parish Meeting brought together residents for an informative evening featuring presentations from nine local groups and initiatives. Speakers included Eco SoCo, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Extension, Inspired Villages, Village Gardeners, CPRE Oxfordshire, Cycleway Group, Millennium Green, Bees at the Allotments, and SoCo Spring Clean. Thank you to all the speakers and attendees who contributed to these important discussions about our community's future and environmental initiatives.

Village Hall Gets Green Upgrade

New planters have been installed at the village hall, featuring an innovative rainwater collection system that channels water directly from the hall's roof to keep the plants hydrated. This environmentally friendly addition not only beautifies our community space but also makes efficient use of natural rainfall.

Village Day 2025 - Our Best Yet!

Sunday 22nd June saw another fantastic Village Day in Memorial Park, and this year's event was bigger and better than

ever! Building on the success of previous years, the community came together for what proved to be our most successful Village Day to date. Thank you to all the volunteers, participants, and attendees who made it such a memorable occasion.

Widmore Pond Water Level Recovery

With water levels in Widmore Pond continuing to drop, the Parish Council has secured a licence to pump water into the pond to support local wildlife and maintain this important village feature.

Our first pumping operation took place on Friday 27th June, when we successfully added 79,000 litres of water, raising the pond level by 7cm. We plan to continue regular pumping throughout July to help the pond recover.

We understand some residents may have concerns about using mains water due to chlorine content. The Parish Council has consulted with the Environment Agency, who have confirmed that maintaining water levels is more beneficial for wildlife than allowing the pond to dry out completely. The chlorine levels, when mixed with existing pond water, remain well within safe limits for wildlife. Additionally, chlorine naturally evaporates

over time, and our planned intervals between refills allow for this process to occur.

The Parish Council remains committed to preserving Widmore Pond as a vital part of our village environment and will continue monitoring water levels throughout the summer months. ●



ANDY DONACHIE

Parish Clerk

Sonning Common Parish Council

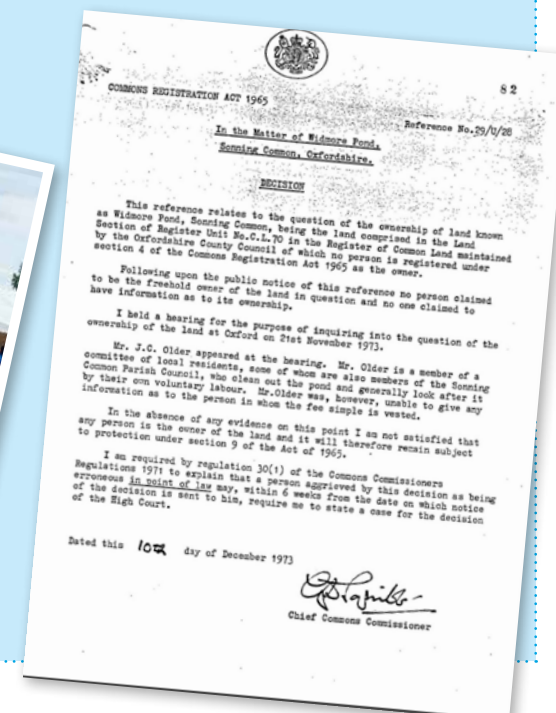
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NEW POWER PLANT FOR SONNING COMMON?

Well, I hope the headline has grabbed your attention! Given the Parish Council intent to develop an Environmental Strategy I thought it was timely to report back on our recent experiences of going greener.

Our old family car, an Audi diesel, was starting to creak in potentially expensive places so it was time to consider alternatives. We were keen to go for greener personal transport and given most of our local journeys are under 40 miles we weighed a plug-in hybrid versus an all-electric car.

Range anxiety and lack of charging points are often highlighted in the press as reasons why people don't go all electric. However, after researching brands, battery ranges etc we settled on a Polestar 2 with long range battery option and single rear-wheel drive motor. This offers a real-world range of around 300 miles, seats five with a hatchback and decent sized boot space. It's built on a Volvo platform and feels solidly built.

More on the car later. Whilst looking at car choices we also looked into solar panels and a home car charger. Charging the car with "free" solar powered electricity felt like a sound, green approach but would it be cost-effective? More research and advice necessary!

We explored advice and quotes from three solar panel installers. One national – Octopus, our energy supplier, took our details over the phone and

sent us a quote and cost-benefit analysis without even a site visit! The regional company we engaged with did come out to check the site but we were not impressed by their sales pitch which felt like a pressure sell to us. Finally, Jason from local firm Tethys, came to meet us and do a thorough site survey, including checking our roof space and joists etc.

Between the quotes there were small differences in the number and output of panels, proposed wiring and recommended battery options. However, whilst prices were broadly comparable Tethys were clearly the best value and we felt very comfortable working with them. We settled on 11 roof panels capable of generating 5.6kw of electricity and an 8kw battery to store surplus energy for evening use. As a ball park figure I'd suggest a typical family household would need to budget about £10k to have solar panels and battery installed.

At this point it is necessary to understand the sort of electricity supply tariffs available. At current prices Octopus charge us 28p per kw during the day but only 7p per kw, off-peak from 11.30pm to 5.30am. In addition, any surplus energy we generate during the day is bought from us for 15p a kw. By charging the car and running the washing machine etc overnight we benefit from the low, 7p rate whilst selling our day-time surplus at the higher 15p rate.

Last week, for instance, our panels generated about 100kw and we only used 30kw, including charging the car, so the 70kw excess was sold to the grid. The net result being no electricity

costs and a £10 surplus! Clearly, the system will not be as productive in Winter with less daylight. However, the modelling of power generated and savings suggested the system would pay for itself over an 8 year period. Given that the solar panels have a 25 year warranty we should see many years of truly free power in the long-term.

Enough of the technicalities! How has our experience been to date? Back to the car first. We are loving it! Very relaxed to drive with the electric motor providing braking as you lift your right foot off the accelerator we hardly need to touch the brakes. You soon get used to gradually lifting your foot off the accelerator to slow the car to a stop. There are no gears to deal with, just smooth, brisk acceleration and no need to use a hand-brake the car holds itself still when stopping on a hill.

Our longest trip to date has been to Bristol and back which is very comfortably within the 300 mile range so, since having the home charger installed, we've done all our charging from home at that cheap 7p off-peak rate. Even without our solar energy system that's about £6 for a full charge compared to about £50 for 300 miles worth of diesel! For longer trips, the car has Google built in, estimates battery use based on your driving and recommends charging points to stop at along the way. With a fast charging point the battery can be topped up 80% in about half an hour – time enough for a coffee and comfort break.

Back to the solar system. We had scaffolding up for a week but the installation and commissioning only

took two days. The panels are neatly aligned on the roof, the battery is fixed to the wall down the side of the house and the extra fuse box and car charger sits next to the existing gas and electricity meter boxes.

As I'm no great fan of concrete roof tiles I don't believe the modern solar panels are aesthetically problematic on the roof – we don't really notice them. Whilst cabling is unobtrusive it has to be recognised that the various units do clutter up a stretch of front wall but that's where the electricity and gas meters were anyway.

The system comes with a smart app that lets you track energy use, solar panel output, energy transfers etc.

Lots of data for anyone taking an

interest in how their energy is flowing. An Octopus app links to the car charger and automatically set up charging times – I just plug the car in and it sorts the rest overnight.

So, what are the down sides? Well very little to report other than the slightly slow and cumbersome process for getting the house registered as an energy supplier. This involved SSE, who run the supply grid around here, giving you certification, which then needs to be processed by your actual energy provider, in our case Octopus. Even though the house supplies the grid from the installation day you don't get paid for the energy until the administrative process is complete! The whole process seems to take 6-8 weeks and you don't get

retrospective payment for the energy you've generated for the grid during this period.

I'm not sure we would have gone for an all-electric car if we didn't have driveway parking but even without an electric car I'm convinced the solar panel system would be a worthwhile green investment for many homes. •

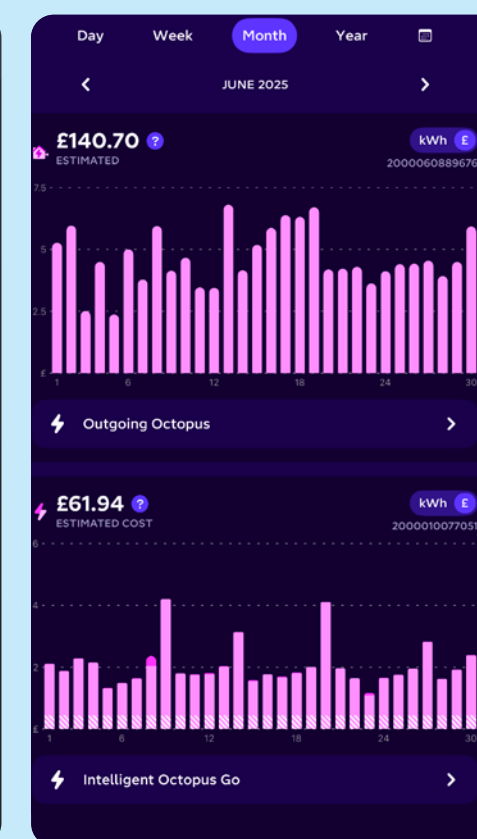
DAVE MURRAY



Picture 1 shows a sunny day with the panels generating 4.7kW of power. The battery is fully charged to power the house in the evening. From the power generated 1.49 kw is supplying household needs with the rest sold to the Grid.



Picture 2 shows the solar power generation in June and how it is used.



Picture 3, from the Octopus app shows the June value of solar energy sold back to the grid. Also the electricity purchased which is almost 100% at the off-peak rate.

GIRL GUIDES IN SONNING COMMON HOW DID IT ALL START?



Back in 2019, I started volunteering with Girlguiding, not because I had a grand plan, but because my daughter's Rainbow unit had just closed. She loved being part of Girlguiding, and when the leader moved away for work, there was suddenly nothing local for girls her age. I saw how much she missed it, and I thought, "Why not give it a go myself?"

At the time, there were no units in Sonning Common for girls aged 5 to 7, so I decided to start one (1st Sonning Common Rainbows - we meet at the Scout and Guide Hut on Baskerville Road, Sonning Common). I already had two daughters in that age group, and although my day job is behind a computer, I figured I could bring something to the table. And honestly, I was looking for something more fulfilling to do with my Wednesday evenings.

Starting the Rainbow unit was one of the best decisions I've made. Every week, I get to help the girls take on fun challenges, try new things, and earn badges that they proudly sew onto their uniforms. It's not just about the badges, it's about what they represent: confidence, creativity, teamwork, and a sense of achievement. Watching the girls grow and come into their own has been incredibly rewarding.

After three years of running Rainbows, and with a little encouragement from my then 9-year-old daughter, I started thinking about the next step. There were girls finishing Brownies with nowhere to go next. So, in January 2023, I reopened the 1st Peppard Guides unit for girls aged 10 to 14. It had closed the year before due to low numbers and funding issues, but I

believed there was still a need and I was right.

We started with just three girls. It was a bit daunting at first, but by September, word had spread and our numbers began to grow. Now, we have 22 Guides, and the energy they bring each week is amazing.

Volunteering with Girlguiding has given me so much more than I expected. I've met brilliant people, learned new skills, and most importantly, I've seen firsthand how a supportive, fun environment can help girls thrive. It's not always easy, but it's always worth it.

Looking Ahead

Right now, I'm working towards completing the Going Away With Scheme, a residential licence that allows Girlguiding leaders to take girls on overnight trips, from indoor holidays to full-on camps. A big milestone was leading our first unit camp at the Scout Adventures Youlbury in Oxford which was a fantastic experience for both the girls and the leaders.

And there's more on the horizon. I'm incredibly excited (and a little nervous!) to have been selected as one of four leaders taking a group of 12 Guides and Rangers from Oxfordshire to Sangam, one of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts' World Centres, located in Pune, India. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity where girls from

around the world come together to learn, share, and give back to the local community.

As I get ready for this exciting journey, I'm also busy fundraising to help cover travel costs and make sure these trips can actually happen. It's going to be such a meaningful experience for the girls and for us as leaders.

If you've ever thought about getting involved, whether as a volunteer or by signing up your daughter, I'd say go for it. You never know the difference you might make. ●

Yours in guiding,

HANNA (SUNSHINE)
1st Sonning Common Rainbows & Guides



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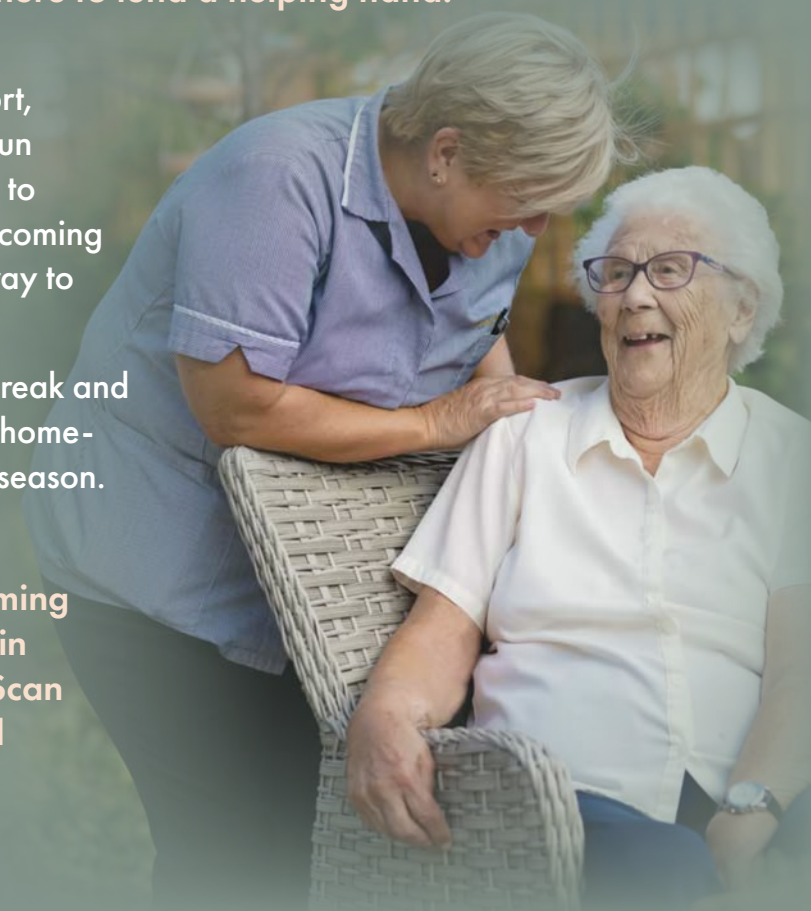
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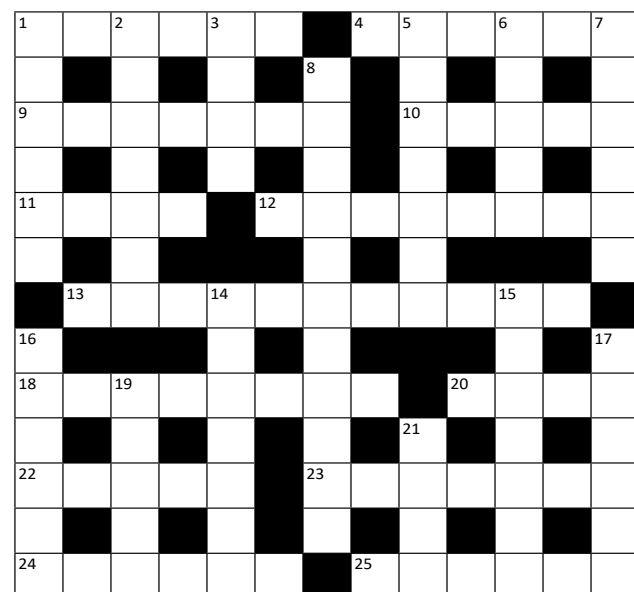
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PUZZLE PAGE

By DAVID DUNSTAN

Cryptic crossword



ACROSS

1. Seed said to open a cave (6)
4. Football team is one (6)
9. Howl, Hazel, perhaps, for plant with aromatic leaves (3,4)
10. Herb measured by the clock, we hear (5)
11. Piece of meat from slaughtered lion (4)
12. Ocean loses carbon and gains sulphur in lost world (8)
13. Berth he confused with female member in village attraction (3,4,4)
18. Strangely, be a tense person who is not there (8)
20. Bridge time (4)
22. Mad film character, I'm saying (5)
23. Town of learning (7)
24. Dog's tooth (6)
25. Dutch gin heard in lake (6)

DOWN

1. Bluest mixture is nuanced (6)
2. Chic house for pigs is in left hand (7)
3. Just a pond (4)
5. Maybe a quarter? Yes, indeed! (3,4)
6. Attempt street meeting (5)
7. 2 is a gown with an unknown factor (6)
8. Rest eyes, Ray is confused about past times (11)
14. Word game for public executioner (7)
15. Snake, perhaps, exposed in elite PR mixup (7)
16. Sailor with raincoat found in road surface (6)
17. Puzzle in game played (6)
- 19&21. Amazon sex arranged in 13 (5,4)

Sudoku

Grading: medium



Cryptogram

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

“SECY MWAT CY,” CEC OIGO. “AE ATY
HVLBIBG. LEERO IKN ODCCYBAWCY UE
AEUYATYB.” – HWOI OSTBEYNYB

Quiz: Which country do these beers originally come from?

1. Amstel
2. Carlsberg
3. Corona
4. Harp
5. Kingfisher
6. Kronenbourg 1664
7. Peroni
8. Pilsner Urquell (aka Plzeňský Prazdroj)
9. San Miguel
10. Stella Artois

See answers on page 34

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Tori Yates, Google Review



GREETINGS FROM THE LIBRARY!

Summer and early autumn is always a busy time. You would think that, with the schools closed, things would quieten down, but we like to ramp it up for the holidays!

Summer Reading Challenge for primary school aged children throughout August. Your youngsters can collect stickers for reading or sharing books with you while they don't have reading homework. There is the bonus of a prize draw for one of four goody bags for those who finish the challenge. We

don't miss out teeny tiny humans either. The under-4s have a mini challenge which also includes sticker prizes and a prize draw for a slightly differently filled goody bag. And, as I always say how lucky we are with our volunteers, some young people of the village are volunteering to help Elaine and I out with signing up the children, giving out stickers and encouraging them with the challenge so thank you in advance to Jasper, Tilly and Samuel!

Book fun for the adults. This year will see the return of two popular displays. One is the Blind Date with a Book. The challenge here is to borrow a book

that has been wrapped up, so you don't know until you get home what you have borrowed. You never know, you might come across a new author to love! We will also have a display of light, summer novels to read on the plane, the beach or just in your back garden with a nice cup of tea or glass of wine!

Check the opposite page for all the other activities.

JULIET LEGG,
Librarian

DEAD BODY FOUND IN THE LIBRARY

So don't let anyone tell you it's not summer - whatever the weather may be doing! And you'll surely know by now that summer in Sonning Common means Big Bear Hunt time. Those of you quick off the mark may have already picked up your free map from the Library to start tracking down those pesky bears. Don't worry if you haven't, it's not a race and is, in fact, best enjoyed over a few trips as there are 30 in total spread right across the village. As usual, intrepid types who return their entry form to the Library will be rewarded with a sweet or bookmark and, if they've found all 30, will be entered into the prize draw.

If you get out into nature, perhaps you should sign them up for ZooLab who will be visiting the library on 13

August. The chance for children aged 5+ to see up close and handle a range of small creatures is not to be missed. www.friendsofsonningcommonlibrary.org.uk or call in to the library to find out more and book your ticket there.

Now, as for the dead body found in the Library, if you feel a bit too old to be galivanting around looking for bears, maybe you'd be better suited to a different type of hunt. Rumour has it a murder has been committed! Could you, and your friends or family be the ones to figure out who done it? We are launching a new escape-room type activity suitable for adults and secondary school students. Check out www.friendsofsonningcommonlibrary.org.uk to book your slot. It's great fun for families with children aged 11+ or groups of up to 5 friends - teen

or adults. Come and exercise your little grey cells! Successfully solve the interactive clues and get your picture added to the Wall of Sleuths. No need to head into Reading for an Escape Room - there's one right here in Sonning Common

Whatever you do, enjoy the summer and, rest assured, no bears were harmed in the making of this fun!

ALISON SMITH
Chair of FoSCL



SUMMER FUN

Saturday, 5 th July, 9.30am	Summer Reading Challenge Starts – This year the theme is “The Story Garden”
Monday, 7 th July, 11am	Rhymetime
Monday, 21 st July, 11am	Rhymetime
Monday, 21 st July, 2pm	Bear Hunt Starts
Saturday, 2 nd August, 10am	Special Storytime – Enchanting/Fantasy gardens
Monday, 4 th August, 11am	Rhymetime
Monday, 4 th August (various)	Escape Room begins (for teens and adults)
Saturday, 9 th August, 10am	Special Storytime – Rip-roaring adventures
Wednesday, 13 th August, 9.30am and 10.45am	(tickets from Library or online)
Saturday, 16 th August, 10am	Special Storytime – growing gardens with EcoSoCo
Monday, 18 th August, 11am	Rhymetime
Saturday, 23 rd August, 10am	Special Storytime – Bug life
Saturday, 30 th August, 10am	Special Storytime – Ocean gardens
Monday, 1 st Sept, 11am	Rhymetime
Saturday, 6 th September	Bear Hunt ends
Saturday, 6 th September	Summer Reading Challenge officially ends
Saturday, 13 th September, 11am	Prize draw for Summer Reading Challenge Finishers
Saturday, 13 th September	Escape Room ends
Saturday, 20 th September, 12:30pm	Last chance to pick up your final rewards from the Summer Reading Challenge

At Sonning Common Library

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION



WELCOMING OUR NEW DISPENSARY TEAM MEMBERS

We are pleased to announce the newest additions to our dispensary team - Ann-Marie Petit and Abbie Watson. They joined the practice in April this year and both bring with them a wealth of experience in pharmacy and patient care. They have been warmly welcomed by staff and patients alike. We are confident that their skills and dedication will continue to enhance the high standards of care we thrive to provide.

WHAT IS URGENT MEDICATION?

Requests for prescriptions outside the normal prescription protocol impacts significantly on both doctors and administration staff time. Unless a medication is clinically urgent, requests will be processed routinely. A minimum of 3 working days (excluding weekends and Bank Holidays and the Christmas period) is needed to process a patient's request for medication. Our reception and administrative staff always follow this policy, and they are not authorised to make any exceptions.

Urgent medication may be issued on an urgent same-day basis: These are medications that the patient could endure harm within 2 working days by missing the doses. This includes:

- Anticoagulants such as apixaban
- Anti-seizure medications for epilepsy
- Anti-psychotic medication such as aripiprazole
- Medications for Schizophrenia/ Bipolar/Psychosis such as lithium and quetiapine
- Parkinson's medications such as co-careldopa
- Long term steroids taken every day e.g. hydrocortisone
- DMARDs - Disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs e.g. methotrexate.
- Anti-rejection tablets such as tacrolimus
- Certain heart medications
- Palliative care medications
- Adrenaline
- Diabetic medication for type 1 diabetes
- Specialised baby milk

THE GP IS CLOSED BUT YOU NEED URGENT MEDICATION...

If you run out of medicine outside of your GP practice's normal opening hours and need some urgently, there are a few ways to get an emergency supply quickly, even if you're away from home.

Visit a pharmacy

Under the Urgent Provision of Repeat Medication Service, Community Pharmacists may be able to supply you with a further cycle of a previously repeated medicine, without having to get a prescription from your GP. It's a good idea to take an old prescription or the medicine's packaging with you, if you have it.

You'll be interviewed by the pharmacist to find out:

- if you need the medicine immediately
- who previously prescribed the medicine (to make sure they're a trusted source)
- what dose of the medicine would be appropriate for you to take

The pharmacist will need to know the answers to all these questions before they can supply a prescription-only medicine without a prescription in an EMERGENCY

Controlled drugs and antibiotics are not provided through this service, you will need to ring 111 for these.

Use the NHS pharmacy service search to find other nearby pharmacies and their

opening hours - some are open even on public holidays.

NHS 111 service

Patients can now access 111 online (www.111.nhs.uk/emergency-prescription) to request a limited emergency supply of a medicine you've completely run out of. This must be a medicine you are prescribed regularly, through a repeat prescription.

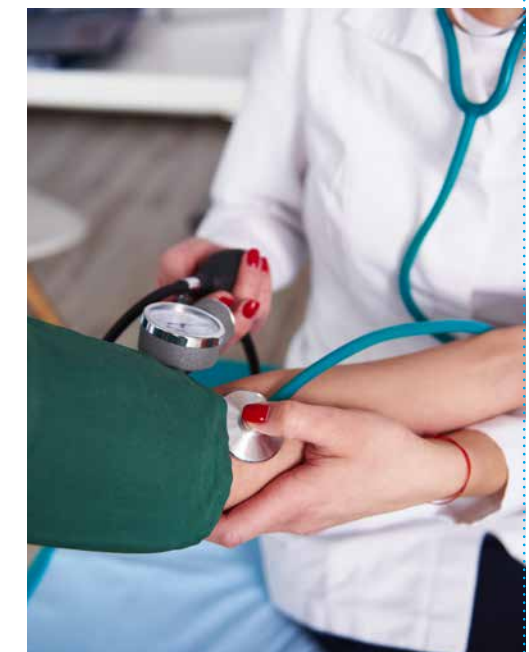
If you'd like to speak to someone first, call NHS 111 free of charge by dialling 111 on your mobile or landline. The person you speak to will be able to look up an out-of-hours pharmacy or another NHS service in your area.

MORE SCHC STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are very sad to announce that Dr Alison McKinlay is retiring at the end of July. She's been such a key part of Sonning Common Health Centre for the past 12 years, and her NHS GP career goes back 30 years and an incredible 37 years since she qualified in 1988! Over the years, she's done just about every kind of GP role you can think of—Army GP, retainer, partner, out-of-hours, video doctor, locum, trainer, appraiser, and salaried GP. It's quite the list! Dr McKinlay will be hugely missed by all the staff at the health centre and by her patients—for her teamwork, calm wisdom, depth of experience, and just for being a really brilliant GP. Dr Corrie Bruce will be taking over the care of Dr McKinlay's patients.

It is also with sadness that we have recently said goodbye to 2 of our team, Lynn – one of our medical receptionists has retired after almost 8 years of working at the health centre. Her knowledge and

experience will be greatly missed. We have also said goodbye to Alfie – one of our care coordinators who amongst other things helped coordinate our Covid-19 and Flu clinics. We are however delighted to announce Steph, one of our medical receptionists will be increasing her hours to continue to work as one of our medical receptionists and to also take over Alfie's role as a care coordinator. Steph joined the care team on 1 July and already has lots of projects to start. We are also pleased to announce that William, who recently finished his post-graduate degree, will be joining our medical receptionist team. William has a great passion for service and for helping others. Some of you may recognise William from round the village where you may spot him helping some elderly patients with their gardening.



SPONSOR ELLIE

One of our current Guides in the group has just been selected to go on a trip to Canada representing Oxfordshire Guides. She shares her experience below.

'Hi I'm Ellie,

I have just turned 13. I attend Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge (MECE) School and am a regular attendee at my local Guides group, here in Sonning Common. At Guides we get to do a variety of activities including earning badges, learning about other cultures, doing crafts and camping!

I recently went on a selection weekend in Oxfordshire to try and get a place on an international trip to Canada. I had to stay away overnight, meeting other Guides from Oxfordshire and to participate in various challenges and activities. The leaders then assessed our leadership skills and looked at how we had interacted with the other girls before selecting 8 of us. I was so excited when I found out I was one of the 8! I will therefore be representing Oxfordshire Guides on a 2-week trip to Ontario, Canada in the summer of 2027 camping alongside a Canadian girl Guide group.

I need to raise £3,500 in total to go on the trip and am planning to raise it all myself. I know this will be a huge challenge but I'm excited to accept it!

A few ways I am going to raise money include: dog sitting (and walking) and a stall at Sonning Common Primary School fete (selling handmade earrings and keyrings and running a bake sale).

My main fundraiser is to kayak 75 miles from Reading to Central London. I will do this over 4 days with my mum or dad accompanying me in another kayak each day. This is a great challenge but one which I am excited to do. I have always loved sport including rowing and kayaking so I think this is the perfect challenge for me!



If you feel able to support me by sponsoring me, I would be very grateful. Even £5 would be wonderful. Here is my crowdfunding page:

www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/ellie-canadatrip-2027

If I happen to raise any additional funds, I will donate these to Sonning Common Primary School and my secondary school (Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge) as they really need some money to refurbish the schools.' ●



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PART OF THE



CHURCH NEWS

ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

If you walked or drove past our church on the third Sunday in June at midday, you would have seen young girls wearing beautiful white dresses and young boys looking smart in suits, surrounded by friends and families in colourful outfits, chatting excitedly and exchanging hugs. Our young parishioners were celebrating their First Communion, one of the most important events in their young lives. Father Michael Doyle from Henley conducted the Holy Mass, stressing the importance of inviting Christ to be with us every day, not just on special occasions.



Even though a couple of months have already passed since our new pope, Leo XIV, was elected, it only seems like yesterday when we were all waiting with bated breath for the white smoke to emerge from the Sistine Chapel. Pope Leo XIV was chosen as the leader of the Catholics in one of the shortest papal conclaves, lasting only two days. We didn't have to wait long for the successor of Pope Francis. Our new pontiff is drawing on the priorities set by Pope Francis, focusing on social justice encouraging peace, addressing the impact of climate change, and expressing the need for interreligious dialogue, as well as

the urgency of bringing Christ to all people.

In May, we welcomed Father Colin Blayney from Sydney, Australia who is staying with us during the summer months. He is helping us deepen our understanding of the Bible through a series of Scripture Talks. In July, Father Colin will also lead our first Synodal Assembly, a collaborative meeting of clergy and parishioners to discern and discuss matters relating to our parish. Over the years, our parishioners have raised thousands for many charitable causes. Our latest fundraising efforts focus on funding the defibrillator, which will be placed on the front of the church and accessible to anyone in the community to use. A group of parishioners have recently been trained as First Aiders to ensure that we are able to provide emergency help if needed. We are also busy making jams and preserves as well as handmade gifts for our Produce and Craft sale at the Parish Weekend in September to raise money for CIRDIC. No such thing as a lazy summer!

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

WELCOME TO OUR NEW PASTORS

I am very pleased to announce that we have new joint pastors, Rob and Sarah Simons, all the way from Cornwall. They are joining us at the end of July, so, all being well, they will be here by the time you read this.

Kevin and Linsey Potter, our previous and much-loved pastors, have moved to Aberdeen, from where they will continue to develop their Christian work, both there and getting alongside, mentoring and supporting several people and organisations overseas.

We were thrilled and encouraged when a young man who attends Springwater with his family, decided he wanted to be baptised in the river, as a statement of his faith and the beginning of his new life as a believer and follower of Jesus Christ and the freedom this brings. This took place on the 6th July.

Some of the activities that take place during the week will cease in the school summer holidays, so do please check with the church office during this period, before turning up. The Sunday service, of course, continues as normal at 10.30am and we truly look forward to seeing you, Prayer is always available to those who would like it, as is a coffee or tea and a friendly chat.

May God bless you and bring you peace. ●

CHRIS GIRDLER

www.springwaterchurch.org.uk
Tel: 0118 972 4519



THE WEIGHT OF A PROMISE

Some promises are small — like “I’ll call you tomorrow.” Others carry weight: vows made at a wedding, reassurances whispered to a child, commitments spoken in quiet moments. We make them hope we can keep them. But life happens — things change, we fail, we forget.

And yet, something in us still longs for promises that last. For words that mean what they say, and a person who won’t let us down.

That’s part of what makes the message of Christianity so striking. At the heart of the Bible is a promise — not made lightly, and not dependent on us getting everything right. It’s a promise from God Himself, that He sees us, loves us, and stepped into our world in the person of Jesus to bring hope and life that won’t fade.

It’s summed up in these words: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

We all live by promises — some broken, some beautiful. But God can be trusted absolutely to fulfil this extraordinary promise, come what may. ●

PETER SECCOMBE

[Chiltern Evangelical Church](http://ChilternEvangelicalChurch)
www.cecuk.church

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST AND CHRIST THE KING

The past few months have been busy ones at both churches. The extensive work to renovate, extend and refresh Christ the King church has, inevitably, taken longer than expected, due to unanticipated ‘discoveries’ in the fabric of the building. Although the

church was due to reopen at the end of June, as I write this has been delayed until the end of July. It is hoped that the Open Morning for the village community, and planned originally for 19th July, can be rescheduled for a date in September. This will be publicised as widely as possible, so please do look out for it! A service of rededication will also be arranged, but this will depend on the Bishop of Dorchester’s availability – again, watch this space! We remain grateful to the late Mrs. Jill Scraggs, without whose generous legacy very little of the vast improvement would have been possible. A plaque to honour her will be placed in the new church entrance. It is hoped that, once finished, many local groups will take advantage of the improved facilities on offer in the church hall (please call the Benefice Office 0118 972 1383 for more information).

Meanwhile, at St John’s, Kidmore End, work is in progress to make urgent repairs to the roof and windows to ensure the building is safe and weatherproof. We anticipate more major works will commence in the autumn when Phase 1 of several projects will begin. This will include work to the interior lighting, heating and sound systems, with the church likely to be out of bounds until early 2026. Parish services will move to Christ the King and further updates regarding services will follow in the next magazine.

Throughout June a wonderful month of special events were held at St John’s to raise funds for the Parish Fundraising Appeal. These included a Parish concert, ‘The Sweet Things in Life,’ on 14th June, a Flower Festival over the (very hot!) weekend of 22nd/23rd June and rounding the month off with a beautiful Sung Evensong on 23rd June to celebrate the Patronal Festival of St John the

Baptist. These events, organised and delivered by a dedicated team, gave much pleasure and a much-appreciated boost to our fundraising efforts!

During August, as in previous years, a series of Benefice services will take place as follows (all welcome):

Sunday 3rd August

Service at All Saints’, Peppard, 10.30am

Sunday 10th August

Service at St John’s, Kidmore End 11.15am

Sunday 17th August

Service at Christ the King, Sonning Common, 9.30am

Sunday 24th August

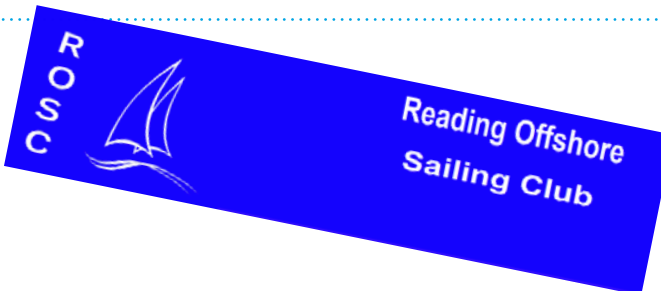
Service at All Saints’, Peppard, 10.30am

Sunday 31st August

Service at Christ the King, Sonning Common, 9.30am

And to finish: congratulations to village residents and faithful worshippers Alan Wilson and Caroline Turner on their confirmation. A wonderful Confirmation Service was held at All Saints’, attended by Bishop Gavin (Bishop of Dorchester).

Please check www.achurchnearyou.com for information about church services, facilities, and more. ●



SAILING CLUB SUMMER BARBECUE

The Reading Offshore Sailing Club (ROSC) is holding a Summer BBQ on 1st September at 5.30 pm. The BBQ is to be held on the waterside behind the Mill at Sonning, a delightful spot to socialise and enjoy the beautiful surroundings, with access to the Upper Thames Motor Yacht Club premises as well. ROSC welcomes potential new

members to the Club and visitors are very welcome to join us. Tickets cost £15.00 and should be booked by 15th August with the organiser, Kate Gilbert. Please email gilbertuk@yahoo.co.uk. See the club's website www.readingoffshore.org.uk for further details of the venue.



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

**Charity Music Night Saturday
25 October 2025 at Peppard
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Live music, 60s, 70s, and 80s, local performers plus DJ.

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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

Rotherfield United Walking Football Club was founded in 2016.

For membership enquiries, please contact christophergguy@gmail.com

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PUZZLE PAGE ANSWERS FROM PAGE 22

Cryptogram

“COME WITH ME,” MOM SAYS. “TO THE LIBRARY, BOOKS AND SUMMERTIME GO TOGETHER.” – LISA SCHROEDER

Quiz: Which country do these beers originally come from?

1. Netherlands (made by Heineken).
2. Denmark. 3. Mexico. 4. Ireland (made by Guinness). 5. India. 6. France (also brewed in the UK). 7. Italy. 8. Czech Republic.
9. Philippines. 10. Belgium.

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

Sudoku

S	E	S	A	M	E	U	N	I	T	E	D
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A	B	S	E	N	T	E					
R			A								
M	A	X	I	M							
A			O								
C	A	N	I	N	E						

Cryptic crossword

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