

JUNE/JULY 2026

VILLAGE DAY PARTY IN THE PARK

IN THIS ISSUE

FOODBANK NEEDS YOUR HELP

How to donate and volunteer
P6

JANE ARCH

The great organiser for
the community
P8

ECO SOCO HIGHLIGHTS

Environmental successes
in our village
P20

GET INVOLVED

Try out a range of activities
P22-24



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DAY**

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

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

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FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Hello! We have received yet another fascinating bundle of articles for this magazine issue. It is a really good balance of events, some of which have taken place, and also those to come.

There is a section which is encouraging residents to GET INVOLVED on three pages which are flagged with the logo to the right, in order to encourage your participation. These range from activities like football and tennis, to exploring at Greys Court, walking and talking, looking after the swifts that are falling in number, and encouraging the number of hedgehogs in the village. Look out for this sign in the magazine!



Fascinating, as I am sure there was no collusion, so perhaps the message for us all is to keep active, preserve what is becoming scarce, and to be led by the ECO SOCO team who frequently remind us to repair and recycle.

"Think globally act locally" and then turn it around to "act locally then think globally" said Jane Goodall

The village Bash is organised for the Saturday evening 27th June (evening before The Village Day) intending to be a lot of fun from 6pm to 9.30pm. Maggie's Mobile Catering will be on hand selling food which can be enjoyed with a drink from Loddon Brewery, who will have a full bar, DJ Tingles will be doing his thing, and there will be a fun quiz for those who fancy that all at the Memorial Field ... drop by and enjoy the fun.

Diana and Christine

Scan the QR code to read about events at Greys Court



FUTURE DEADLINE DATES FOR MAGAZINE COPY

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

MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM



Diana Pearman



Christine Atkinson



Joan Grummant



Alison Smith

USEFUL CONTACTS:

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

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

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

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

CONTENTS

- 4 Sarah Thomas
- 5 Party in the Park
- 6 Food bank
- 7 Outdoor play - SCPS
- 8 Jane Arch
- 9 Reflection am dram
- 12-13 Noticeboard
- 16 Parish news
- 18-19 KEMH past and future
- 20 Eco soco update
- 21 Hedgehog highway
- 22 Walking Talking
- 23 Tennis and Probus
- 24 Swifts and Village Gardeners
- 26 Library
- 27 30 years of health walks
- 28 RUF
- 29 MECE and Pre-school
- 30 St Michaels and Springwater
- 31 CTK and CEC
- 32 Puzzle page
- 33 Answers

Design & Artwork: Kevin Taplin
tensevennine.com
kevin@tensevennine.com
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SARAH THOMAS

Sarah Thomas is an exceptional young woman which her story demonstrates

We moved here about 4 years ago having grown up in Shiplake. I love it here.

Setting the context

10 months ago I was diagnosed with Functional Neurological Disorder (FND). If you're not familiar with this, it is a disorder of the nervous system which means my brain mis-communicates with my body, impacting my speech, gait and regulation (among other things). Unfortunately, this has meant I have been signed off work (as a teacher at Shiplake Primary School) and

am trying to slowly recover back to some state of 'normal'.

At the end of April I attempted to run, walk or cycle a 5k (or as near to it) to fund raise and gain awareness for the charity FND Hope UK. 5k is a huge distance for me as I can only walk 400-800m before my legs stop functioning properly. We did this at the Memorial Park in Sonning common. A perfect spot for me as I can take the distance a lap at a time and rest in-between. I am committed to running/walking/cycling as much as I can, but not pressuring myself to go the distance as I suspect my symptoms won't allow me to.

This run has become a huge challenge for me, mostly because when I signed myself up for it back in the summer I thought it was an achievable goal. Sadly I have not made the progress in my recovery that I would have liked to (despite my every effort) and I am now very nervous about it.

I have been overwhelmed by the support and love of my friends and family. Not only have I raised over £3000 for FND charities, but I have over 30 people coming to support me. ●



On the day

Approximately 60 of my friends and family (from as near as 'raise the bar Bootcamp SoCo' and as far as London and even Devon ages 18months to 70 plus) turned up to support me. Some ran with me, others bought glittery signs to cheer me on around Memorial park.

Despite hoping to achieve 5k and planning to train towards this, my symptoms leading up to the event meant

I was struggling to walk much more than 400-800m. I knew going into the event I could only do what I could do and that was an achievement in itself. With the support and love and cheer of everyone there I achieved 5.5 laps of the park (3k) and raised a total of almost £4000 for charities FND Action UK and FND Hope.

Afterwards, I was overwhelmed by the love and support of everyone that day and I don't think I stopped smiling for days to come.

I actually feel it was a turning point in my recovery too. Since then I have gained strength and movement I can achieve cycling, swimming and resistance training.

I really feel like I'm on a journey and doing everything I can, not only to overcome this disorder and find a new life for myself, but to continue to raise awareness in the community. ●

SARAH

ALISON SMITH PARTYING IN THE PARK



Who can remember what used to be opposite the secondary school in the village? I must have driven past it a hundred times but honestly can't say that I do. I'm assuming it was a farmer's field but I could well be wrong. Is there a Sonning Common historical society that keeps track of these things? If not, should there be? Of course, now it's Memorial Park which always seems to have someone using it whenever I drive by. In fact, I've been known to amble around it myself on occasion. Personally, I've never broken into a run although there are plenty there who do, and others who use the hard courts or playground. Some use the swings, but I'm more of a bench-user myself. Each to their own!

If this year is anything like the last few, come 1pm on June 28th a huge number of people will descend on the park for Village Day. Live music will keep us entertained all afternoon as we wander around craft and community stalls while trying to decide which food truck to visit. There will be fairground rides, and an array of inflatables for youngsters. Some stalls will be under cover in the marquee so if you need to shelter from the rain (surely not!) or the sun (fingers crossed!) you can have a mosey around those

while doing so. Hopefully, the weather won't be too extreme and the dog show will be able to go ahead as planned. I've also heard that the exotic creatures stall will be back by popular demand, not sure I'm brave enough to go near that though.

I shall, no doubt, be meandering about with my indecisive-weather bag containing sunscreen and a sunhat, a thick cardigan (and possibly gloves), and an umbrella and plastic bag (to sit on on a wet bench if it's been raining). I won't let our great British weather force me into the marquee whatever it does.

Luckily for me, I live within walking distance of the park. For those of you who don't, a tractor shuttle will be running from the Village Hall to Memorial Park. The FISH minibus will also be on hand to ferry people to and fro - keep an eye out for further details.

This year the marquee is actually arriving the day before, so the ingenious committee have organised a Village Bash from 6.00pm-9.30pm on Saturday 27th June. Maggie's Mobile Catering will be on hand selling food

which can be enjoyed with a drink from Loddon Brewery who will have a full bar, DJ Tingles will be doing his thing, and there will be a fun quiz for those who fancy that. Drop by and enjoy the fun. I'll definitely be there because I do love a raffle, and the one planned for that evening has great prizes. And don't panic, the event has been planned to allow time to get home for the England match. As I said, each to their own!

To think that only 5 years ago Memorial Park was probably (who knows for sure, not me) a farmer's field. On June 28th it will be a hive of fun and activity. Don't miss out! Come along and see for yourself what's going on. There's something for everyone because as we know - each to their own! ●



REMOVAL OF HOLIDAY VOUCHERS FOR FAMILIES ON FREE SCHOOL MEALS

The decision to withdraw centrally funded holiday food vouchers for families whose children receive Free School Meals (FSM) has caused concern among parents, schools and community organisations. The vouchers helped families cover food costs during school holidays and ensured children from low income households could still access nutritious meals outside term time. Springwater Foodbank has also reported a recent increase in requests for support.

Our community has always supported one another, and we need that same spirit now....

To help ensure no child goes hungry during the school holidays the magazine and Springwater are launching a local community funded initiative this summer to provide holiday food and/or vouchers to the families who need them most.

JustGiving link: <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/holidayfoodvouchers>

Every pound helps a local child eat well during the holidays, and every donation strengthens the safety net our community is proud of. If you can help and donate a little it will be much appreciated. ●

The Springwater Foodbank currently supports about 50 households in and around Sonning Common. We are in need of volunteers to drive and deliver food parcels and are particularly short on Wednesdays or Fridays. It takes about 1.5 hours, delivering in and around Sonning Common. Depending how many people come forward it could be either a fortnightly or monthly commitment. Volunteers would need a car and be able to lift and carry bags.

Please email: foodbanksupport@springwaterchurch.org.uk and provide your number so we can call you back.



10K RUN

The much loved Sonning Common 10k is set to return on Sunday 4 October 2026. That is just under six months until runners once again take to the village's scenic roads! Organisers have announced that entries are now officially open, inviting both seasoned athletes and enthusiastic newcomers to secure their place in this popular community event.

Registration is available online at www.SoCo10k.co.uk, and every entry plays a meaningful role. All proceeds go directly to supporting Sonning Common Primary School, which has spent the past three years fundraising for an all weather running track. Thanks to the dedication of participants and supporters, the

project is now within reach. This year's race could be the final push needed to turn the vision of a permanent athletics facility on school grounds into reality.

The event continues to be backed by its long standing sponsors, Shiplake College and FOCUS at Badgemore Park, whose commitment has been instrumental in bringing the 10k to life year after year. With special thanks to Beville Estate Agents who also return again this year, helping ensure the race remains a highlight of the local calendar.

With community spirit at its heart and an important cause driving it forward, the Sonning Common 10k promises another memorable year. Runners are warmly invited to join the journey.

And if you are not participating but would be able to marshal on the day, we would be grateful to hear from you, please contact us at: sonningcommon10k@outlook.com for more details. ●



PLAY ON!



Last month I wrote about the 'soft' skills - having good manners and speaking well in public - that we are helping our children with.

This month, something a little more concrete – or in fact many materials! We currently have two exciting sets of plans afoot for our school.

The first is a long-standing ambition to install an all-weather running track. This will be a facility to encourage all children to participate in athletic activities, perhaps on a daily basis. In the past we have had initiatives involving a 'daily mile' at the start of the day, and 'jumping jacks' or early morning yoga sessions. The track will make all of this easier and less weather-dependent.

Funding for the track has come almost entirely from our three (soon to be four) SoCo 10k runs. This year's event is on 4th October – please see elsewhere in this issue for how you can enter. The new track, funded by running events, seems entirely appropriate and we are hugely grateful to Cate Sturgess and her team of helpers for keeping the event going.

Secondly, we are investing in play....

For a primary school, this may seem obvious – young children need time to play. Indeed playtimes (and lunchtimes) are often cited as the highlight of some children's day! Even more than English and Maths in some cases if you can believe it!

But playtimes do not come without a need for some structure and planning.

To this end, we are investing in the OPAL scheme. OPAL stands for Outdoor Play and Leisure and is a structured scheme involving advice for, and training and monitoring of, our play activities. It involves an intense focus on the benefits of play to children, and the best ways to make play happen safely and happily, whilst encouraging exploration and experimentation. We have appointed a group to run the scheme at our school, with key members of staff having specific responsibilities. Naturally a key feature of OPAL is equipment or "loose parts" – things to climb on, ride on, move around and build with. Children will be encouraged to problem-solve, collaborate and innovate.

We are optimistic for the outcomes – a school whose children not only enjoy the 90 minutes or so they play each day, but who also learn and benefit from it. And a school where children simply have plenty to do, using their imagination and each other, to make their day better. ●

Mrs Rachel Salmons
Headteacher



JANE ARCH

1934-2025

A wonderful friend, teacher, and Innovator



I would like to write about Jane, my friend and fellow teacher who recently died aged 91. She was a great organiser and worked endlessly in our community to provide care and activities involving many volunteers. FISH was one of her major achievements (Friends in Sickness and in Health) in which she was major force at its inception in 1979.

Jane's main love was the National Theatre which she represented in our area and she was allowed to watch previews in the hope that she would like a performance and buy tickets for our local theatre group. She had set up the Sonning Common Theatre Club which started with a few friends and then grew to nearly 207 members. She even took groups to the Oberammergau Passion Play, the Edinburgh Festival and to Dublin as well as visits to theatres all around Britain. This theatre club remains a flourishing organisation in our village today.

Jane was also a founder member of the South Chiltern Choral Society and a great support to her husband Gwyn It's conductor for many years. She was also a founder member of the Exploring London Club with Mike McLeod and amongst our many visits we found ourselves in the Houses of Parliament. Inside the Thames Barrier and at the Law Courts – all with professional guides!

She was born in S Wales and for her 60th birthday Jane decided to walk from her birthplace, Machen, to Sonning common with friends accompanying her along the way. An epic journey I'm told but she loved a challenge!

But above all she was a wonderful primary school teacher at the local school in Grove Road, Sonning

Common where she became Deputy Headteacher and stayed until her retirement 1985. Child cantered education meant the world to her and her classroom was always a joy to enter with so many experiments going on and with natural objects to inspire the children. She was also a great supporter of sport in our school and produced some wonderful musical concerts. Both her sons David and Jonathan Arch are musical and contributed much to our musical life- Jonathan as a double bass player who started learning cello at our school and David who continues to astound us with his many ongoing achievements.

Jane adored dogs and her bitch Labrador gave birth to a huge litter who all survived with the help of half the village! Maybe some descendants still walk our streets today....

Always efficient and caring Jane was an inspiration to her many friends. She was cared for over many years by Sonning Common's wonderful Elaine Louk who she dearly loved and relied on and leaves a lasting legacy to us all. This inspirational lady who did so much for our community will be sorely missed.

Thank you Jane. ●

Pauline Twyman

MEMORIES OF CHILTERN EDGE PLAYERS

Some fifty-odd years ago roughly in line with the start of this magazine, a Mr & Mrs Clive-Spencer formed an Amateur Dramatic society, using the beautiful stage of what was then Chiltern Edge school as part of the then extant evening classes. I was an early member, originally enlisted to build scenery by the lady concerned who happened to be my boss's secretary, but on arriving was handed a script and was next seen on stage as the village idiot in a murder mystery. (If male and breathing you were in: the same lady did not imagine that I would later marry her daughter.)

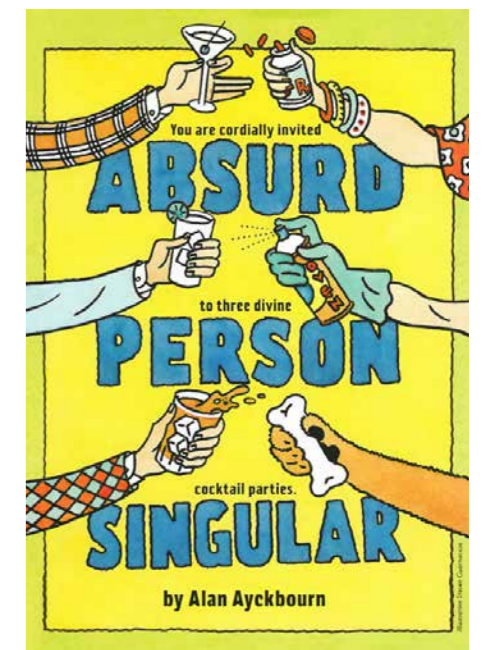
We performed for some twenty years with varying success, Rattigan, Coward, Ayckbourn etc., but probably our greatest triumphs, artistic and financial were our pantomimes. (We were invited to take two of our Christmas shows "Scrooge" and "Frankenstein the Panto" to the Kenton in Henley) We were allowed almost unlimited access to the school buildings during the Christmas holidays and spent an inordinately amount of time on our sets and were given the area under the youth wing to keep and build our scenery. Part of this area was then open to the elements and piled high with dead leaves; all broken furniture, desks tables, chairs were discarded there and I used to mine it for timber. (I also found the old school bell, which after a distinguished history marking the end of intervals now calls the sheep home at a farm in Scotland). Frequently, we used any number of children in our panto's and were, therefore, very popular with local parents who knew where their children were and that they were doing something at least

vaguely constructive. Now there is a requirement for chaperones which renders it impossible and the children rake the streets, so much safer. Grrh! I loved scenery; my first attempt was for "The Prime of Miss Brodie" which required a large number of mini-scenes (and a nude). I worked out how to keep the action running and never looked back. I was no great shakes as a carpenter, but the audience was too far away to see faults in finish. Background scenery was painted onto "flats", canvas stretched over wooden frames; once a year they were washed down in the open area to the right of the school, an extremely dirty process, taking most of the day and usually followed by a riotous party. Our best effort was I believe "Absurd Person Singular" by Ayckbourn in which three different kitchens were produced by one Pat Port, unfortunately no longer with us, who scoured Oxfordshire for props, even finding the complete front of an Aga. We managed to rig two extra curtain rails, a lot of lighting and even a backcloth roller. (This last failed rather dramatically; look for drill holes in the overhead girders.) The workshops of several local companies (Gillette, Metal box etc) supplied useful units e.g. an UV system without being aware. I played a variety of roles, usually villains, never romantic leads. Several others of our members survive locally, notably one ex-editor of this magazine, who shall be nameless, but was an excellent actress (not note, actor) and director, with a reputation as a pyromaniac and for producing costumes which just lasted the final performance. I should of course also mention my wife, costumier and director par excellence who still runs the annual drama festival in Henley.

(but cannot remember lines)

Alas the golden age came to an unhappy end. Some jobsworth decided that the school caretaker must attend all rehearsals and be paid overtime, despite there being several teachers in the society. We tried once, a play in which we had a paddling pool in the wings to drown the anti-hero, but it proved financially impossible even though the caretaker never appeared but gave us the key to drop in to his door on our way home. All our extras were swept away under "health and safety" that miserable act which only arrived due to the enormous increases in insurance claims. Some members bravely moved to Peppard Hall where they still do excellent work despite the reduced facilities, and others deserted to the Kenton. Even there, financial strictures are killing the old days of extravagant sets. It was, I feel a great loss to the village and great fun while it lasted. ●

Peter Dayton





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Cost: FREE

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Lee Miller: A Woman at War exhibition to go on display at Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock, this summer.

- Exhibition of war photographs by renowned photojournalist, photographer and surrealist, Lee Miller from 23 May - 13 September 2026.
- Follows a major exhibition of her photographs at London's Tate Gallery.
- Includes photos taken of nurses at Churchill Hospital Oxford, her first wartime assignment for Vogue.
- Alongside many iconic photographs taken in wartime Britain, Miller accompanied US troops into Europe, a correspondent on battles and the liberation of concentration camps.

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PARISH NEWS

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Quiz Night - Saturday 27 June

The evening before Village Day, on Saturday 27 June, we will be holding a Quiz Night in the marquee on Memorial Park. Loddon Brewery will be there providing refreshment and we will have food available from Maggie's Mobile Catering. It promises to be a fun evening, with something for everyone, and a cash prize at the end. There will also be a raffle with fabulous prizes with the proceeds going towards the maintenance fund for Widmore Pond, so get your thinking caps on and come along!



Supporting Biodiversity in the Village

The Parish Council continues to place a strong emphasis on improving biodiversity throughout the village. Several areas are now being managed specifically with wildlife in mind, encouraging native plants and creating habitats for insects, birds, amphibians, and small mammals. These wildlife managed areas may sometimes appear less "tidy" than traditional planting, but this is intentional and beneficial. Allowing grass to grow longer and native species to flourish helps support a healthier and more resilient local ecosystem than traditional planting, but this is intentional and beneficial. Allowing grass to grow longer and native species to flourish helps support a healthier and more resilient local ecosystem.

Andy Donachie
Parish Clerk



Widmore Pond

Residents may have noticed that the water levels are still struggling and as we approach the warmer weather the Council took the decision to act early and pump water in to help the wildlife whilst a long term solution is agreed. The first pump took place on Wednesday 06 May with 142,000 litres pumped into the pond. A big thank you to everyone who volunteered and helped with the pumps.

Village Day - Sunday 28 June

Village Day will take place on Sunday 28 June, and plans are well underway for what promises to be another enjoyable and much loved village occasion. This event brings together residents of all ages and is a real highlight of the local calendar. As always, Village Day relies heavily on the goodwill and time of volunteers, and we are now appealing for help.

If you can spare a little time on the day, whether helping with setting up in the morning, assisting on a stall, stewarding, or packing away afterwards, it would make a real difference. Even an hour of help is valuable. Village Day is entirely community run, and its success depends on people getting involved. Anyone willing to volunteer, or who would like more information about what is needed, is encouraged to contact the Parish Council.

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PAST ...

A bit of local history

By **CHRISTINE ATKINSON**

Kidmore End Memorial Hall was built to commemorate those who gave their lives in the Great War 1914-18 as a memorial to their sacrifices. It was decided at a meeting of parishioners in 1919 that they wanted to build somewhere to serve as a hub for the social and educational use of the people of the parish of Kidmore End, that would be owned and managed by them. By May 1920 there was a committee formed and officers elected to manage the project.

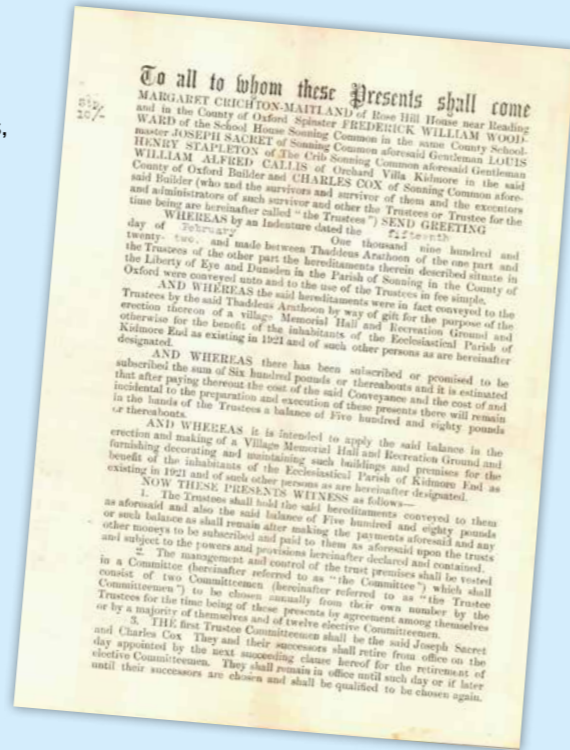
A generous donor – Mr Arathoon of Caversham Court – who owned Bishopswood farm – gave a strip of land in Reades Lane which would be easily accessed from the three main areas of population in the parish. According to the local **READING STANDARD** newspaper at the time a condition of this offer was that the £600 estimate required to build the hall should be raised by the locals within 12 months, but the Trust Deed mentions that the £600 was also

gifted. The newspaper mentions fundraising functions including dances, village fairs, bazaars etc (all sounds very familiar!) and the sum was achieved with time to spare.

From the old newspaper article, it seems that the work to actually build the hall was by volunteers – a very personal and local community effort. From the drawing of the plans, to the carpentry, roof and structure, all done by a group who gave their spare time to the cause and it must have been exciting to watch it go up bit by bit. The article quotes that “the indoor provision will comprise a central hall, stage, dressing rooms, library, kitchen, coffee bar and offices”.

The hall was opened in November 1922 with a dedication from the local Reverend Bird, and the ceremonial ‘opening of the door’ by Lord Phillimore. There was a Roll of Honour naming those who had died in the First War. The committee running the hall encountered much the same issues as there are today. Finding a caretaker, replacing broken crockery in the kitchen, maintaining the car park, covering insurance and upkeep of the décor.

The hall has not changed much since 1922 except for an upgrade in the kitchen and some new paint. Since it was first used until today it has been a hub for the local community. Many activities in the 1920’s like dances (but the committee would not allow a bar!) and indoor sports like bowls and badminton. Apparently a library was run for many years, and there was a men’s club after the second world war. It was used for Brownies, dance classes, brass



band practices, performances of plays and, later on, as a cinema. More recently it has been used for roller skating, walking netball, parties and even dog training.

After the second world war fundraisers were held for those returning home – a VE dance and Welcome Home Suppers. A Roll of Honour naming those who died is in place – 34 villagers from the first and 13 from the second.

The Memorial Hall became a charity in June 1965, and is still run by volunteer trustees and used by many local groups for social and leisure activities including keep fit, yoga, dance classes, birthday parties and community events. The hall is available for hire for all these activities and discounts are offered to local charitable organisations. ●

Please see: www.kemh.org or contact phil.kemh@gmail.com

AND FUTURE ...

Kidmore End War Memorial Hall (KEMH) is now being managed by the Trustees of the Charity in which the Hall and land are held. The Trustees are local residents who bring a range of skills and experience. It continues to be a much needed local facility, with more and more people wanting to hire it for a range of activities.

Exciting plans are underway for KEMH to become an Activity Hub, aligned with its original purpose to be a centre for recreation for the community. The aim is for KEMH to be re-modelled to support users of Memorial Park, with a café and accessible toilet, whilst providing the hall, kitchen and toilets for private hire to help meet operating costs. This will only be possible if funding is forthcoming from the developer to undertake the internal remodelling needed and grants are secured for the insulation and re-roofing of the building to improve its energy efficiency. This new vision has the full support of Sport England and South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and enables MECE to sell off its land to provide the housing stock which is required in Sonning Common, to fulfil the NDP (Neighbourhood Development Plan).

Why an Activity Hub?

Activity is defined as “the state of being active, or a specific action, pursuit, or motion performed for work, leisure, or purpose”. In the planned Activity Hub context, this means social, physical and cultural activities which bring people together – exactly in line with the original objects of KEMH.

Sonning Common is identified as a priority area for activity, and one of South Oxfordshire District Council’s stated infrastructure needs is the development of health and wellbeing facilities. The Activity Hub will help meet this need.

Population data suggests approximately 50% of South Oxfordshire’s population live outside the four main towns of Didcot, Henley, Thame, and Wallingford and much of this population is concentrated in the southern, rural-urban fringe near Sonning Common. However, infrastructure provision has not even matched the current local population size. Sonning Common is considered one of SODC’s larger communities for housing development and clearly serves a wide population area.

Sonning Common has always had a proactive, positive attitude towards healthcare, championed by the Health Centre. Initiatives like the Health Walks and Green Gym started in Sonning Common, making use of the rural environment in which it is located.

The KEMH project builds on that heritage, enabling a facility of historic and cultural significance to become a modern, cost-efficient destination, widely accessible to the surrounding community. KEMH Trustees have already helped local clubs, societies, charities and organisations to try out new programmes, fund raise and offer taster sessions to new participants. This builds relationships within the

local community and more widely in the surrounding rural areas.

The hall’s location also avoids creating congestion in the village centre, enabling groups from outlying communities or with particular access needs to travel to KEMH by car and park directly adjacent to the building.

KEMH occupies a prominent and accessible location overlooking Memorial Park, enabling activities both indoor and outdoor to be provided, increasing the use of Memorial Park as well.

The KEMH Trustees are working tirelessly to submit robust grant funding proposals, gather data, communicate with local people and create a sustainable future for the Hall. Keep a look out on the KEMH website (www.kemh.org.uk) for walking routes, activity ideas and upcoming events. The Hall can be booked on line.

In the near future the Trustees will be inviting all those who run clubs, societies, have ideas for activities or know of groups who need particular support, to hear about the future plans for the Hall.

We look forward to seeing you there. ●



CELEBRATING COMMUNITY ACTION ENVIRONMENTAL SUCCESSES IN OUR VILLAGE

How Eco SoCo is Making a Real Difference Through Teamwork and Passion

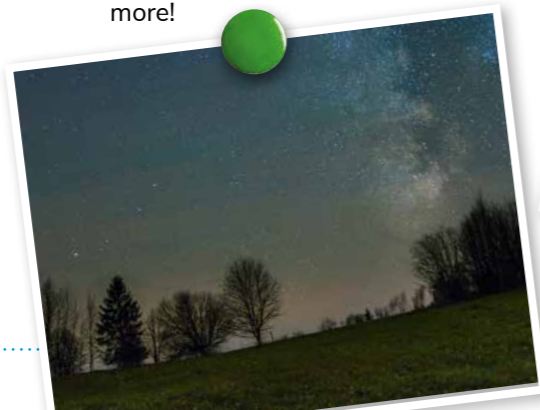


Our local environmental group has been busy creating positive change around the village, and there's plenty to be proud of. From inspiring talks to hands-on projects and a major milestone in charity recognition, our community's enthusiasm is shining brighter than ever. Here's a look at some of the highlights from the past month and exciting things to come.

Celebrating Great Big Green Week - Shining a Light on Dark Skies & Free Bird Box Building on Village Day

On June 9th we'll be hosting a free, captivating Dark Skies Talk in the village hall, you're invited to learn about the importance of reducing light pollution. Professor Richard Harding will share practical tips for protecting nocturnal wildlife and preserving the beauty of our night sky. Attendees will be left with a renewed appreciation for stargazing and a better understanding of how simple changes make a difference.

Due to space restrictions, booking is essential. Email Kat at: ecosocotalks@gmail.com
Join us at our Wild for Sonning Common stall on Village Day, June 28th, for free bird box building for kids, exploring nature under the magnifying lens, meeting Henry the hedgehog and his very own hedgehog highway, wildflower seed giveaway, our fun tombola with great prizes and so much more!



SC Repair Café Birthday Celebration!

This July marks a special milestone for our FREE monthly Repair Café as we celebrate its second birthday on Saturday 4th July, from 10:00 to 12:30 at Springwater Church. Join us for cake and camaraderie as our dedicated team of volunteers work to fix household items and hopefully reach our 1,000th repair! Whether you have something to mend or simply want to see the magic happen, everyone is welcome – it's a brilliant way to cut down on waste and connect with the community. Bring along bikes, toys, household electricals, textiles, clocks, things to be sharpened and small wooden items for repair.

FREE Birthday Upcycling Special: join us at the 4th July Repair Cafe to make beautiful bunting for your garden and summer celebrations! Places limited, booking essential @ ecosoco24@gmail.com



SC Hedgehog Highway Takes Shape

Our aim has been to build a network of wildlife corridors that support local hedgehog populations, so far it covers ground of the equivalent of 22 football pitches! Thanks to everyone who's helped so far, we're already seeing signs of hedgehogs returning! Want a neat hedgehog hole at the bottom of your fence? Contact Charles who can arrange this for you free of charge! Email Charles at: ecosococharles@gmail.com

SC just got wilder!

The 'Wild Oxfordshire' ecological report we commissioned is now in! We'll be meeting with members of Rotherfield Walking Football group, SC Parish Council and the team at Abbeycrest to formulate next steps! Want to help build biodiversity in SC? Please contact us to get involved in these exciting plans right here in SC!

Church Vegetable Garden: Growing Together

The vegetable garden project at Springwater church brings people together to cultivate fresh produce for the village foodbank. Volunteers pitch in by planting, watering, and harvesting. The garden not only provides healthy food but also offers a space for learning new skills and making friends. Contact Bev for more info at: ecosocoveg@gmail.com

Charity Status

One of the highlights of our year has been our group's successful bid to become a registered charity. This status allows us to access new funding, expand our projects, and strengthen our ties within the community. It's a testament to everyone's dedication and teamwork, opening doors for even more impactful environmental efforts.

Looking Ahead: Join Us!

With so many achievements already, the future is looking bright – or perhaps delightfully dark, when it comes to our night skies! We invite all residents to get involved, whether you've got a passion for wildlife, gardening, or simply want to meet your neighbours and make new friends. Together, we can make our village greener and more welcoming for everyone.

Please contact Julie at: ecosoco24@gmail.com



WALKING, TALKING AND TALKING SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER



A new weekly group in Sonning Common is helping men open up - one step at a time

On a Monday evening in Sonning Common, something quietly powerful is happening. As the clock strikes 7pm, a group of men gathers outside Sonning Common Health Centre. There's no pressure, no awkward introductions, and no expectation to share more than you're comfortable with. Just a simple walk, shared company, and the freedom to talk—or not.

This is Men Walking & Talking, a national initiative created with one clear aim: to support men's mental health through connection and conversation. The idea is refreshingly simple—bring men together in local communities for a weekly walk, creating a safe, relaxed space where it's okay to listen, chat, or simply enjoy being alongside others.

The Sonning Common group held its first walk on Monday 27 April, joining more than 80 Men Walking & Talking groups that now meet across the UK every week. 11 men and 1 dog attended and enjoyed a lovely evening out in the fresh air. Each walk is led by a volunteer, and locally the group is led by Geoff Davis, proud to be helping establish something that feels both long overdue and deeply needed.

Breaking the stereotype

For a long time, I was the very stereotype many of us recognise—particularly men over the age of 35. I found it hard to talk to others about how I was feeling, convincing myself that it wasn't important, that struggles were something to "man up" about, or that admitting an impact on mental health was a sign of weakness. Nobody told me that. I told myself.

Ironically, I've always been surrounded by a loving, supportive family. But even then, those ingrained beliefs can be hard to shake.

Research by BUPA highlights just how common this experience is. At some point in their lives, half of men in the UK

experience poor mental health, yet many struggle in silence. Only around a quarter of men who have experienced mental health difficulties say they would talk to friends about it, and fewer than half would seek medical advice—often due to the stigma that still surrounds men's mental health.

More than a third of men admit to hiding mental health issues from their partner. These numbers tell a clear story: while awareness is growing, the barriers are still very real.

A walk can be the first step

Traditional support options don't suit everyone. That's where walking side by side—not face to face—can make all the difference. There's something disarming about being outdoors, moving together, conversations happening naturally without pressure or expectation.

That's exactly the gap this group aims to fill—for men in Sonning Common and the surrounding villages. This is already a wonderfully connected community, rich with local businesses, churches, schools, a library, and other vital services. We're fortunate to have a calendar full of events that bring people together, from male and female football teams at Rotherfield United, village events like On Your Bike cycling, the SoCo Spring Clean and SoCo 10k, to health walks, community gardening, Shedquarters, our eco group and more. There's also a strong and supportive online community to be proud of.

Within all that vibrancy, there is still space—very much so—for a group like this.

You don't need to be in crisis to join. You might feel a bit isolated, fancy a chat, want to meet new people, or simply enjoy

a walk at the end of the day. All are welcome, including well behaved canine companions.

Looking forward together

This year, Men Walking & Talking was also invited to sign the Armed Forces Covenant, recognising and supporting members of the Armed Forces community. With veterans, reservists and families already involved nationally, it was a meaningful step in reaffirming the group's commitment to fairness, respect, and inclusion.

At its heart, Men Walking & Talking is about something very simple: reminding men that they don't have to carry everything alone. Sometimes, a walk and a chat really can be the first step towards better wellbeing. ●

Men Walking & Talking - Sonning Common
Sonning Common Health Centre
Every Monday, 7pm
One-hour walk | No pressure, no judgement

SONNING COMMON GROUP
MEETING POINT - SONNING COMMON HEALTH CENTRE, WOOD LANE, SONNING COMMON, RG4 9SW
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- ✓ WEEKLY GROUPS LOCATED AROUND THE COUNTRY

MENWALKINGANDTALKING.CO.UK



WALKING FOOTBALL



Inspired Villages at Widmore Park have generously sponsored the club and the funds allowed us to buy new shirts to wear in the regular Oxfordshire Walking Football league matches and also to buy a new set of goals for our use at Bishopswood.

We took some photos of the team in the new shirts, with other players in the club tracksuit tops all standing in front of one of our new goals together with our sponsors from Inspired Villages.

New members are welcome and for more info on the club see Walking Football – Rotherfield United Football Club. ●



SONNING COMMON AND DISTRICT TENNIS CLUB

Did you know that we have these two fabulous tennis courts in the village next to the nursery school off Horsepond Road behind Rotherfield FC football pitches? The committee of Sonning Common and District Tennis Club look after the courts and membership. Dave Pinder is Chairman and Gill Last is the Treasurer. The committee determines whether maintenance needs to be done and a member (usually Dave) will obtain quotes if it's something that the committee members cannot do themselves. All committee members volunteer their time.

Just over two years ago the courts were resurfaced and this season we have put up new nets. We are extremely fortunate to have these courts in our village. The ethos of the club is to keep fees affordable as we can and at a level that cover the maintenance of them and other costs that we incur. This year we have been able to keep fees at the same level as the previous two years at £40 for a Household, £25 for a single player 18 and over and £10 for a junior player under 18. We do not run a booking system

as there are only two courts and we don't want the scenario where people prebook courts, don't cancel and then do not turn up. It's a case of turn up and play. We ask that if people are waiting to play you keep your game to just an hour.

Visit our website for more details <https://sonningcommontennisclub.org/>

Why not take advantage of this great facility. Tennis is fun and extremely sociable. Join up especially as we are having longer hours of daylight and the weather has warmed up. We hope to see you there. Further if any current members are interested in joining the committee please let us know via the website. ●



WHY NOT JOIN US?

Are you retired or semi-retired and looking to join an active social club? Then why not join Reading East Probus Club? The Probus movement is an organisation which enables retired or nearly retired Professional and Business people to meet for a range of social activities. It was formed around 58 years ago by ex-Rotary Club members who wished to continue to meet socially after retirement from work.

The Reading East Probus Club was formed in 1993 and currently has a membership of around sixty. It became a mixed club in March 2025 and female members now make up about 10% of the total membership.

Monthly lunch meetings are held at Sonning Golf Club, usually on the fourth Monday starting at 12.00 noon. Lunch is served around 12.45pm and is followed by an invited speaker on a range of topics: history, travel, sport, science and engineering etc. The meeting closes at around 3.00pm.

As well as the regular monthly lunch meetings, we organise visits to places of interest, regular walks and mid-month coffee/lunches at local pubs. Partners are welcome at these events. Recent visits have included: the Mini assembly plant at Oxford, the Savill Garden at Windsor, the RAF Museum at Hendon and Brentford watches in Henley..

If you are interested in finding out more about membership, please contact our Membership Secretary via e-mail: readingeastprobus@outlook.com

Potential new members are encouraged to come to one of our monthly meetings at Sonning Golf Club so that they can see the Club in action. ●

ENCOURAGING ENDANGERED SWIFTS TO NEST IN SONNING COMMON



During March Eco SoCo hosted Edward Mayer of Swift Conservation, who gave a talk at the Sonning Common Village Hall about Swifts.

Edward is both an informative and entertaining speaker. We learnt about his career involved in property management including 12 years at the Tate Gallery and how he became involved with Swift conservation. Research shows that urban areas now support more species than the countryside. With the loss of forests and ancient trees with their nesting holes Swifts rely on us to provide suitable homes for them to raise their young. Edward now spends a lot of time talking to architects, town planners and developers about how urban diversity can be improved for both Swifts and human well-being.

We can help too. Various actions were highlighted to enable us to encourage these summer visitors, such as:

- Asking developers around Sonning Common to incorporate swift bricks into their build.
- Approaching property owners with scaffolding erected whether they would be willing to put up a Swift box.
- Asking the Parish Council to consider installing Swift boxes on their buildings.
- Contact local aerial installers to see if they would like to be involved in installing nesting boxes.
- Investigate the purchase of a Swift sound system which will encourage Swifts arriving from their migration to stop off in Sonning Common to build nests.



If you would like to be involved in this project to help these endangered summer visitors, please contact Kat Bonner at: ecosocotalks@gmail.com

VILLAGE GARDENERS STILL GOING STRONG ... JUST!

Yeah yeah, there's a lot of grey hair, but we can still work pretty hard. We are part of the small team of gardeners who spend a couple of hours each month making the village centre just a little bit greener and a little bit prettier.

Since the creation of the Village Gardeners by Chrissie Phillips Tilbury (as she was then) and Jill Greenwood sometime before 2010, a gang of volunteers have met for an hour on the first Sunday and third Thursday of every month. When we can't make those dates, we individually do a bit when we can.

Over the years, we've planted flower beds, containers, grass verges and pavement edges with trees, shrubs, grasses, and bulbs. We've tackled the scrubby corners of car parks, put up trellis and installed railway sleepers

as raised beds. We even made a floral display of the old red telephone box when it stood on the corner of Wood Lane and Green Lane. Our efforts are often kindly acknowledged by fellow villagers, as they pass us en route to the shops – but in 2013 and 2014 we also won Britain in Bloom awards.

Inevitably, gardeners come and go. One of longest serving members, Andrea Baple, is stepping down from her role as group co-ordinator after many years of keeping us on our toes. We'd like to thank her for all her hard work. We have several new members – but we still need more (no experience necessary). So if you can spare just an hour or two a month, please get in touch with me, Helen Fort, on 07906 661611, or come and introduce yourself at our plant stall at the Village Day, on Sunday June 28.



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RIGHT ON OUR DOORSTEP



When people think of libraries, they often picture shelves and silence. While Sonning Common Library certainly offers space to read, think, or simply be out of the way for a while, that impression only tells part of the story. Today, the library is also lively, flexible and in tune with how shared spaces are used. Sometimes it can be both at once - somewhere with shelves brimming with children's books that buy me ten minutes of peace and quiet while my two-year-old happily explores them.

Over recent months, the Friends of Sonning Common Library have added

a range of activities that complement the services the library already provides. Adult readers have enjoyed creative sessions and relaxed social evenings around books, while children have been treated to imaginative and interactive activities during the Easter break. From cuddly toys causing mischief overnight at a Teddy Bear Sleepover, to hands-on science and the popular I-Spy trail around the village, these events show how the space can spark curiosity and joy well beyond traditional reading.

As this magazine is published, a Robotics Workshop is taking place, giving children the opportunity to build, code and test Lego robots. It neatly captures what the Friends aim to support: using the library to introduce skills and interests that may prove valuable in years to come, while keeping learning accessible and enjoyable.

Looking ahead to June, the programme continues to offer the same sense of variety. An author evening with thriller writer Steve Lunn gives adults the opportunity to engage more deeply with storytelling, while Village Day will see us out in the community with a stall full of light-hearted quizzes and games. Do stop by and say hello if you're there.



Alongside the events programme, there are a number of ongoing initiatives that encourage regular use of the library. Book Bingo runs throughout the year and provides a simple way for readers of all ages to keep track of their reading, while also prompting the occasional new choice. Library members can also make use of additional resources, including access to Which? magazines, online eBooks and music, free use of library computers and low-cost printing to support the everyday needs of the community.

It can be tempting to look further afield for entertainment or inspiration, yet some of the most useful and rewarding spaces are right on our doorstep. As summer unfolds, Sonning Common Library continues to offer a place to learn, explore, unwind and connect, meeting different needs at different moments. Whether you are looking for ideas to fill long holiday days or simply a calm place to pause for a while, the library offers that balance with ease - and often more than you might expect when you step through the door. ●

VERA GALYASZ
Friends of Sonning Common Library

GREETINGS FROM SONNING COMMON LIBRARY!

Life is never dull in the library, I can tell you that! You never know who will come in or what they will want. A lovely lady visited recently and was researching her family history in Gallowstree Common, a place she hadn't visited in 50 years. We were able to show her a copy of "Hard times but happy: Voices from a rural community: Gallowstree common and surrounding Hamlets" where she found many references to her relatives. We also have some boxes of local history

ephemera donated by village treasure, Jill Kendall, and lo and behold, letters from this lady's grandmother were in there. There were a few tears shed and happy memories shared.

We also look forward, not just back, and we have a lot going on in June and July. As befits the time of year, we will be getting out the travel books to tempt you with summer holiday trips. And although we have books on Peru and Vietnam, we can also help you with jaunts closer to home such as walks on Dartmoor and

holidays in the Lake District. We won't forget the young people either. Want to surprise your dad or granddad with a card and present for Father's Day? Come to the Library on Saturday, 20th June for a morning of stories, crafts and a cake sale. And our books' displays will include heroes and I expect we will get our football stories out for the World Cup!

See you soon! ●
JULIET
Library Manager

SONNING COMMON HEALTH WALKS CELEBRATED

On Saturday 25 April, Sonning Common Health Walks celebrated the 30th anniversary of the walking scheme. It was the idea of Dr William Bird MBE, who, as a GP at Sonning Common Health Centre, was in charge of the diabetic clinic in the early 1990s. He wanted to encourage his patients to get more exercise by using the beautiful countryside on their doorstep. Val Lunn was a local fitness instructor and together they pioneered the scheme, with the first health walks taking place in April 1996. Both were able to attend the anniversary celebration in April this year.

Dr Bird said: "I never imagined it would still be going in 30 years. I am so delighted to see you all still here".

More than 80 walkers, past and present, gathered at St Michael's Church Hall for a 3 mile walk or a 1½ mile walk,

followed by refreshments, a fabulous cake made by Karen Jerram, and of course a catch-up with friends.

The event was free, but the donation buckets which were put out raised over £210. This was divided between 2 local charities – the FISH community transport service and The Sonning Common Village Gardeners – and a national charity, The Institute of Cancer Research.

Health walking is for fitness – and it's friendly, fun and free! The walks are for everyone, whatever their age and ability, and are graded accordingly, with at least one trained person leading every walk. Not all of them are fast walks: contact us (see website address below) for advice about which one is best for you. If you want to speak to someone about any aspect of the Health Walks, phone Chris Brook on 0118 972 2609

Meeting places change in July, so check the website for up-to-date information on days/starting places/distances: www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk/timetable. ●



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ROTHERFIELD UNITED FC

Let's build something incredible, together....



Rotherfield United Football Club is your local grassroots community based football club. Established in 1973, we are an FA Charter Standard Club and Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

We have around 500 members comprising of mixed football teams from the ages of 5 to 18, as well as a men's team, women's team, vet's team (over 35's) and walking football team. In addition, we have Girls' Wildcats Centre status by the FA which covers girls' only football from the ages of 5 to 11. We have also recently been awarded Comets status by the FA to deliver football to pan disability children between the ages of 5 and 11. In 2025 we were awarded Club of the Year by Oxfordshire FA.

As a grassroots club we really need the help of all our members and the wider community to help maintain and improve our facilities over the coming years.

The club has recently launched a monthly Supporters' Draw, which

gives our supporters the opportunity to be prize winners every month whilst helping the club to raise some much needed funds towards our 3G pitch and pavilion project. Each month winners will receive a 50% share of the pot. The great part is anyone can enter the draw, you don't have to be a member of the football club.

The club is close to securing planning permission for a new 3G football pitch and pavilion, but we really need the community's help to take the project forward to the next stage. What does the next stage look like? Once planning permission is obtained, the club will need to engage with funding partners and the wider community to develop a business plan. The project will progress to finalising the detailed design and seeking competitive tenders from supply chain partners.

So far the club has raised and funded £45,000 to get the project where it is currently. So what more does the club need to raise? The club's further costs are estimated to be in the region of £25,000 and include:

- The appointment of a funding consultant to support our bid to the Football Foundation
- The appointment of a VAT consultant
- South Oxfordshire District Council legal costs

- South Oxfordshire District Council's fees to monitor biodiversity net gain works to offset the development

By backing the Rotherfield United Supporters' Draw, you are helping us bring this project to life.

Join the campaign and back your local club by using the QR code on the poster to get involved in our monthly Supporters Draw or email chair@rotherfieldfc.com to get a link to the Draw.

Let's build something incredible, together. •

MATT BEECH
Chair, Rotherfield United



MECE NEWS

Spring Term Highlights



The spring term at Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge has been marked by steady progress, important milestones and a strong sense of community, with the Spring Term offering opportunities for both reflection and achievement.

A key moment in the term was the Year 6 Welcome Event, which saw our incoming Year 7 students and their families welcomed to school for an informal social event – an opportunity to meet other parents, purchase uniform and meet key staff. Current students acted as ambassadors playing Table Tennis, handing out snacks and chatting through the “MECE ways”. For Year 11 students, the focus has increasingly turned to

examinations. During March and April, pupils completed several formal assessments, including French speaking exams, where students demonstrated confidence and resilience to perform in an assessment worth 25% of their final grade. Alongside this, practical examinations took place in Food Tech and Art with students producing impressive final outcomes that reflected many months of sustained effort and preparation.

The Easter holidays provided both a pause and a highlight of the term. While many students enjoyed a well earned rest, a large group took part in the Maiden Erlegh Trust Ski Trip to Italy. 30 MECE students joined 200 from four Trust secondary schools, supported by 25 members of staff, to enjoy a fantastic week of skiing. The trip offered not only sporting challenge and enjoyment, but also opportunities for independence, teamwork and lasting friendships across the Trust.

On returning after Easter, students settled quickly back into routines, with a calm and purposeful atmosphere across



the school. Clubs, sports and enrichment activities have continued alongside classroom learning as the summer term begins.

As ever, Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge remains proud of its students' commitment and positive attitudes. The spring term has reflected the school's ongoing focus on supporting young people academically, socially and personally while maintaining strong links with the local community. •

EMMA BLISS,
Headteacher



SC PRESCHOOL

Spring Term Highlights

It's been a wonderfully busy term at preschool, full of learning, laughter and big steps forward as we prepare our older children for their transition to primary school. We're so proud of our leavers — they've grown in confidence, curiosity and independence, and we wish them all the luck as they take their next exciting step.

Getting “school ready” has been a big focus, alongside this, we've been making the most of the outdoors. Forest Camp has been a huge hit as always — from imaginative play to exploring

nature — and we're delighted to have our playhouse fully repaired and ready for action again. A huge thank you to **Sonning Common Garage** for sponsoring the repairs, and to **Shedquarters** for carrying out the work so beautifully.

We've also been busy planting sunflowers, learning about how things grow and taking responsibility for caring for our little seedlings. Sports Day preparations are well underway too, with lots of practising, cheering each other on.

One of the highlights of the term was a fantastic visit from **Farms2Ewe**, giving the children the chance to meet and learn about a range of friendly animals — a magical experience for everyone.

As we head towards the end of term, we're grateful for the support of our families and the wider community. Here's to a sunny, joyful summer and a brilliant start to school for our leavers. •

CHURCH NEWS



St Michael's Catholic Church

The Easter season for the Church continued until Pentecost Sunday (24th May) when we recall the Holy Spirit coming upon the first disciples and reflect on how that same Spirit is present with us today. Years ago, this was commonly known as Whitsun. Easter itself seems a long time ago now. At St Michael's the Lent/Easter seasons were a mixture of spiritual reflection and charitable activities. During Lent there were opportunities for quiet, personal reflection; a well-attended retreat day and a reconciliation service to prepare us to celebrate our Easter services. Our charitable efforts focused on supporting CAFOD, the Church organisation that helps those most in need throughout the world. In addition, we collected clothes for Smart Works that assists women seeking employment, and Easter eggs for the children of inmates at Huntercombe prison. Over Easter itself we were delighted to welcome many old friends and visitors. For the first time on Easter Saturday, we held a 'Blessing of Easter food' service.

This is a traditional event in eastern Europe and was much appreciated in Sonning Common. One highlight was the Walk of Witness on Good Friday with our neighbouring churches.

Another first was our service to give thanks for all that pets bring to our lives. Given that there were dogs, a cat and guinea pigs in the church things went surprisingly smoothly. You might have seen the Henley Standard article.

Looking towards the summer our young people will be making their first Holy Communion and being Confirmed. Our gardeners are back at work looking after the grounds and a plant sale raised money for local charities. Our charitable activities are guided by our Thoughtful Living Group.

To contact the parish visit:
www.saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk ●

Springwater

We do hope this finds you all well.

A big 'Thank You' to all of those who attended our Easter events .

We had a wonderful time with the children in the garden on an Easter egg hunt! It was great to see new faces at our Easter Sunday Celebration and to celebrate our Risen Saviour.

We so appreciate the Ark team here who faithfully week in week out provide a wonderful morning for Mums Dads and carers! The children are starting to enjoy playing in the garden more now the sun has returned!

As always a big 'Thank You' goes to all of those who are part of the Foodbank and give of their time volunteering and donating. Niki, Esther and the team work incredibly hard to help those most in need in the community .Please do continue to donate food over the summer and check our socials for what is needed most.

Social Spaces is now running on a Friday only from 2-4pm due to its being the most popular day to attend. Please do feel free to join us for a cuppa and cake anytime we would love to see you, it's a great community time.

As we look towards enjoying the warmer longer days we would love to invite you to our garden for a picnic on Saturday 25th of July from 2-4pm , children are most welcome to bring their Teddies too! Please just bring your food and blankets and enjoy chatting and relaxing together.

We continue to enjoy meeting together every Sunday at 10.30 am and you always most welcome to join us. Have a great start to your summer! ●

Christ the King and St John the Baptist

Summer has arrived and the doors of St John the Baptist have reopened after several months of refurbishment. The much-needed work to improve the lighting and heating, together with repairs to windows and redecoration has been completed to a high standard. The interior of our Parish church looks revived and refreshed, much as it must have done when the building was first opened in 1852 (but with the benefit of modern light fittings and efficient heating!). The first service to be held following the reopening was a sung Eucharist benefice service on Sunday 31st May at 11.15am (if you have received this copy before the end of May, you are very welcome to come along!).

Two further celebratory events are planned for later in June:

- **Saturday 27th June** – 'Light and Life' concert 3pm, St John's Church. A community celebration which will involve the Parish choir, children from Kidmore End School, as well as local talent. Free to attend and please stay for refreshments afterwards.
- **Sunday 28th June** – Patronal Festival Evensong, 6pm, St John's Church. A special Evensong service to celebrate St John's Day and the reopening of the church. All welcome.

Meanwhile, at Christ the King church two electric vehicle chargers have been installed in the church car park (Sedgewell Road). At this trial stage, these are available for use by those attending church and those using the hall. Two new trees will be planted in the grounds, one a gift from our neighbours celebrating the coronation of King Charles III (delayed due to the building works) and the other in memory of former

churchwarden and dear friend, Joan Lamprell.

The Parish continues to support CIRDIC (Churches in Reading Drop-in Centre), hosting a charity lunch on 20th May and welcoming centre manager, Mabel Boyd, who spoke about the charity's work. For over 34 years CIRDIC has offered help to the homeless, the unemployed and those with mental health issues by providing meals and drinks, warmth and company, clothing and toiletries, baths and showers as well as access to computers, a postal address and access to professional services. CIRDIC relies on donations of men's clothing, toiletries, shoes and bedding. If you would like to donate please bring your contributions to either of the churches at any time. Monetary donations are also welcome via CIRDIC's JustGiving page

www.cirdic.org.uk/donation.html

Please check the Parish pages on www.achurchnearyou.com for details of all church services and activities, you can be sure of a warm welcome. ●

Chiltern Evangelical Church

Summer is here. Barbecue time in the warm dry evenings. Looking ahead time for holidays. Exam time for secondary school children! Slowing down time for many businesses.

But wasn't the weather good in April! Can it last for the Summer as well? If it is sunny and dry for June and July, will our gardens wilt and die and Thames Water send us messages about water shortages? Like the weather and the environment there is so much uncertainty and variety in life, not all of it welcome!

Benjamin Franklin reminded us that there are two certainties in life,

'death and taxes'! But actually there are more certainties than that. They are preached about each Sunday at Chiltern Evangelical Church. What can you be sure about? The Bible tells us that there is a great God and a great Saviour, Jesus Christ. That is certain. And it can make a difference to your life.

Chiltern Evangelical Church meets each week, 10.30am at Emmer Green Youth Centre and 4.30pm at the Church in Sonning Common on the corner of Grove Road and Peppard Road, where the Bible is explained and God praised. Come along, you will be welcome

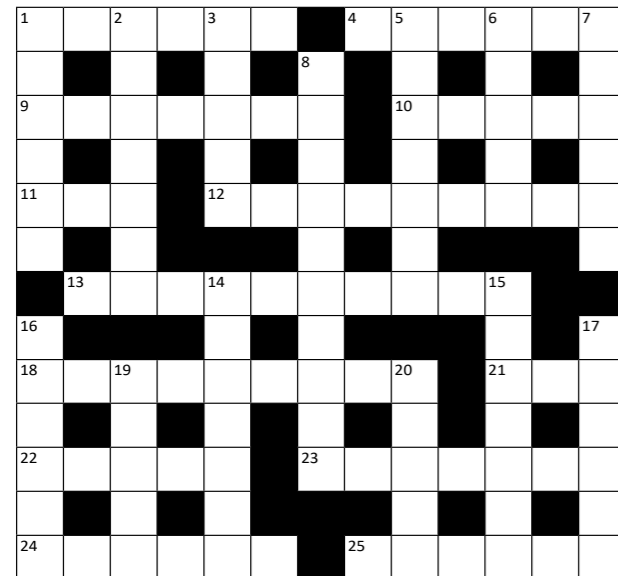
If you have practical problems with transport, active young children, caring for others, don't let that be a reason for not joining us, send a post to info@cecuk.church or come along and talk to us about how we can help. ●



PUZZLE PAGE

By DAVID DUNSTAN

Cryptic crossword



ACROSS

- Made bed in local town (6)
- Kingsley, perhaps, is working in local village (6)
- Gale, confused, has support for a kind of mathematics (7)
- Warning: it's beer, right? (5)
- A long time in consideration (3)
- Computer background is a barrier to thesis (9)
- Hide me and a disruption in local town (10)
- Earl's coat entangled in moving stairs (9)
- Post loses head to be ill (3)
- Composer consumes drink, we hear – a consignment! (5)
- Greek letter obvious in energy source (7)
- Turn to call in local village (6)
- I spend recklessly in local village (6)

DOWN

- Artist's desk storage (6)
- Go mad at mixed-up religious doctrines (7)
- Bull with a nod to a type of lake (5)
- Former partner with abundance for instance (7)
- Brush small blubber (5)
- Tea urn brewed to produce character (6)
- Twin gal not drunk in local town (10)
- Old confused with measure of acidity in sea mammal (7)
- Inactive tip in cul-de-sac (4,3)
- Eat badly and acquire something to make a cuppa (3,3)
- Flowery, losing old penny, with new for old coin (6)
- Provide food for Tom and Queen (5)
- Review dicey caper (5)

Sudoku

Grading: easy

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

Cryptogram

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

RDFON EJSONMUUM – RDFON EJSONMUUM;
 SU FO STURO TEHO EVLEWR GOOM STO SLU
 FURS GOEDSAJDV LUNBR AM STO OMYVART
 VEMYDEYO. – TOMNW IEFOR

Quiz: Name the cake

- Two or three layers of butter cake, often coloured white, pink and yellow, topped with a thin layer of icing.
- A light sponge cake with pink and yellow sections, held together with jam and covered in marzipan.
- A cake containing dried fruit such as sultanas or raisins, cinnamon, treacle, cherries and almonds, and perhaps some brandy or sherry; topped with marzipan and icing.
- A fruit cake without glacé cherries, topped with almonds.
- A pastry filled with currants.
- A light butter cake, usually flavoured with lemon.
- A gingerbread cake made with treacle and oats, popular in Yorkshire and Lancashire.
- A rolled sponge cake of varying colours filled with jam or cream.
- A light butter cake covered with a thick layer of chocolate and decorated with marzipan fruits.
- A sandwich of two layers made with egg whites, flour, and sugar, with jam and cream in the middle; and dusted with icing sugar.

See answers on page 34



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