

SC

SONNING COMMON MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE



OUR WINNING MAGAZINE!

Magazine comes first
in national competition
P4



CATHERINE ABBOTT

World Skills champion in
Visual Merchandising
P18



FLOURISHING BUSINESS

Brambles celebrates
20 years
P27

DECK THE HALLS

SEASON'S GREETINGS
TO ALL OUR READERS

DEC / JAN 2017/18

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DEC / JAN 2017/18

FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

It has become apparent that a major theme of this issue of the magazine is the recognition of a number of 'Firsts'.

Just a few days before finalising this editorial the Magazine Committee were informed that we had been awarded first prize in the National Parish Magazine Awards for 2017. A wonderful achievement and one that recognises the huge contribution from so many residents who contribute articles, source relevant items for inclusion, work on the editorial layout, proof read the content for accuracy, design and print the final draft, organise distribution and deliver to all households. Not forgetting those on the committee who manage the finances, keep the website updated, post on social media and liaise with our many loyal advertisers who fund the whole endeavour and add to the overall appearance and usefulness of our publication and, of course, not forgetting our readership who provide constant support and encouragement with their suggestions and comments. It says an enormous amount about the strength of our community.

Another first was the magazine being read on line in Afghanistan of all places where Mick Stanyer was showing his garden to the disbelievers who denied such an exotic urban jungle could exist in SC. The Russian dinner was also a first, as is the celebration of Catherine Abbott's achievements in Visual Merchandising AND Jackie's Craft page appears on our Facebook page for this issue.

The magazine is full of Christmas events and activities together with the usual favourite contributors and a new one, Will Pomeroy our PCSO.

Wishing you all a very happy, healthy and enjoyable Christmas 2017 and New Year 2018. ●

Diana

Diana Pearman Editor

Email: editor@sonningcommonmagazine.org



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'Brambles Christmas Wreath' by John Pearman

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MEET THE TEAM ...



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Jo Stoves



Joan Grummant



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A NATIONAL AWARD FOR SONNING COMMON MAGAZINE VOTED THE BEST IN BRITAIN



by Diana Pearman

Our magazine has been awarded the Best Overall Parish Magazine category for the year 2017. There were over 400 entries from across the country and they were all assessed against five categories

- **DESIGN** - which focusses on any artwork within the magazine, page layout and use of graphics
- **CONTENT** - the variety of articles, use of photo and general information included
- **EDITOR** - order of content, variety, accuracy and interest value
- **PRINT** - quality of printing and finishing of the magazine
- **OVERALL** - a general overview of all the above categories.

Sonning Common Magazine was the overall winner in the A4 size category (there is also an A5 size award). These national awards are made annually and sponsored by Parish Mag Printers, a subsidiary of Sarum Graphics Ltd., who have been running the scheme since 2008.

It is a most gratifying and heart-warming achievement and recognises the considerable efforts and involvement of a very large number of people as mentioned in my editorial. Well done to us all. ●



THINKING OF OTHERS LESS FORTUNATE

August, Charley, Harriet and Alicia from Year 6 at Sonning Common Primary School had a joint birthday party and invited all of the children from their year group. The girls decided that they would prefer for guests to donate to the chosen charity 'Children in Need' rather than bringing gifts. With the aid of very generous children and parents, the girls have managed to raise a staggering £604.80 to put towards the school's collection for Children in Need. We are incredibly proud of their maturity and kindness. ●

CHILTERN EDGE UPDATE

Firstly, the Review of the teaching and learning experience in the school conducted on 30 and 31 October was a positive experience. I have been asked to keep the results confidential until the Cabinet papers are published. At that point, I will be able to share with you the progress Chiltern Edge has made.

The Headteachers' Board, who make the decision about academisation, have met. They require more information before they make a final decision. I am working closely with Maiden Erlegh Trust to provide them with the additional information that they need. This will be considered at the next meeting in November. It is positive sign that the Board are asking for more detail. ●

Moira Green
Headteacher

KENYAN CHILDREN BENEFIT FROM THE CHANGE OF UNIFORM

by Christine Atkinson

A lovely story came out from the recent uniform changes at Chiltern Edge School

A friend of one of the parents, volunteers for a charity called the Nasio Trust.

The Nasio Trust is a registered charity based in the UK and Kenya working and supporting individuals regardless of their beliefs or background.

They have a community-based approach aimed at providing a holistic solution to ending the cycle of poverty by working with the community and creating strong partnerships. The charity is focussed on tackling poverty through education, child care, healthcare and sustainable income generating projects. Aiming to help communities to help themselves.

The friend talked about all the great things that the charity did, and about poverty in the area, so when the new uniform was announced an idea formed to put the old

uniform to good use with Nasio. A collection of the old PE polo shirts was made from the school's stock, which was new and unused as the PE kit had changed, as well as from parents and students.

Two boxes and a few bags were taken to Kenya and divided between two schools. They all looked very happy with their new uniform!

More uniforms will be going out in the new year. Read more about the Nasio Trust here <http://www.thenasiotrust.org/about-us/the-nasio-story/> ●



WINNERS OF THE YOUNG WRITERS COMPETITION

by Helen Fort



'The Friends of Sonning Common Library have recently celebrated National Libraries week with a quiz in the Village Hall and a Young Writers' Competition.

The quiz raised over £500 for books and equipment for the library - and was declared such a success by those who took part that it may be repeated. Two Hoots led by Parish Councillor, Leigh Rawlins, won the top prize. The chair of FoSCL, Jill Hutchinson, thanked all those businesses in

the village who donated so generously towards the raffle. We had a pleasing number of entrants to the Young Writers' Competition. In the category 16 years and under the winner was Isabelle Chandler with her story 'Tag'; the runner up was Mimi Fraser with her story 'Hair from Hell'.

In the 11 years and under the winner was Alice Kaseki with her story 'The Magic Book'; the runner up was Amelie Cazez and her story 'Travel in Time to Where'

The winner of the under 7 category was Shriyaans Aravind with his story 'Mini Men'.

In the Special category the winner was Judith Stickings with her story 'Elmo in Shotover Class'; the runner up was Angel Munakarmi with 'Splash'.

Certificates of achievement were awarded to all the entrants. The competition was generously supported by Bewley Homes, Peppard Building Supplies, Sonning Common Vauxhall and Johnson Matthey.

It's now a year since FoSCL held its first AGM. The membership scheme - allowing everyone to support the Library - has been a great success. Our fundraising efforts have paid-off handsomely, but we may not be able to match that in the future so your annual subscriptions of just £10 a year will remain the bedrock of funding for new books at the library. Many members have renewed but if you have been sent a reminder and have not yet responded, please dig deep. A big thank-you, as always, to our team of volunteers who give their valuable time to support the professional staff. ●

From L-R: Ben Fraser; Mimi Fraser; Alice Kaseki; Judith Sticking; Nina Newman; Oskar Kihlstrom; Chloe Newman

THE ONGOING SAGA OF OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Many residents will be aware that the consultants Gallagher have appealed against the SODC decision to refuse planning for 95 homes on SON 6. This site is listed in the NP for 26 homes.

The decision notice for this application was issued on 20 March 2017. The applicant submitted an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate on 31 August 2017, within the 6-month timeframe. It took until the 13 October for the Inspectorate to process and validate the appeal.

It will entail a formal public inquiry as opposed to an informal hearing. The Parish Council's original comments on the application have been forwarded to the Inspectorate and it is hoped that many residents have written again to object to this application.

It is crucial that Gallagher's do not win this appeal as it is such a gross breach of the NP. Effectively it would undermine the Plan and render the rest of the site decisions vulnerable to similar breaches. ●

A MUSCLE WASTING DISEASE FOR WHICH THERE IS NO CURE

Our next fund-raising venture is a treasure hunt we have created. It is a series of cryptic or family clues that you follow around Henley. Each clue has a bit of information about the town. It can be used by downloading the free app, Huntzz onto a phone or tablet, then the hunt will cost £1.29.

All the profits go to the Cori's Disease Trust, www.corisdisease.org ●

by Ailsa Arthur

JACKIE'S CRAFT COLUMN

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VILLAGE COFFEE MORNING SUCCESS



On the 15th October a MacMillan Coffee Morning was held at Sonning Common Village Hall and raised a tremendous amount of money for this very worthwhile cause. This event started about nine years ago by Linda Webb and June Fisher as a coffee morning for friends but it has now grown into a truly community affair where the hall is buzzing with good will, as well as being full of stalls selling books, cakes, bric-a-brac, plants and so on, as well as the ever popular raffle.

June Fisher was the main organiser and she was ably supported by many people who donated their time, donations and good will on, and before, the day. As usual there was an opportunity to partake of coffee and cake and there was a huge range of delicious home-made goodies to buy. All helpers, stall holders and cooks deserve a great deal of thanks because the total

money raised this year was a fantastic £1460!! This was the first event without Linda Webb and it was a poignant reminder of how much she is missed by all and also of the value of contributing to such a valuable organisation. ●

Joan Grummant



A COMMUNITY MEAL RAISES £1,400 FOR CHARITY

The Gala Russian dinner held in the Sonning Common Village on Friday 14 September was a community event which raised £1,400 for the Sue Ryder Hospice and Cancer Research UK.

The hall was filled to capacity with 70 guests who ate a traditional Russian four course meal together with vodka and caviar, evidenced in the photos.

Once again, many thanks to all our supporters and helpers. ●

Jill Vallis and Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury



A FEAST OF FESTIVE SONGS



The South Chiltern Choral Society (SCCS) choir invite you to tuck into a veritable banquet of seasonal songs this Christmas featuring special guests The Hill Primary School Choir and the Chiltern Brass Quintet.

The programme opens with Cecilia McDowall's Christus natus est, which takes as its starting point five well-known Christmas carols arranged for choir, children's choir, brass quintet, percussion, and piano. Full of rhythmic energy and invention, McDowall gives these familiar

melodies new life; particularly potent are the gentle Infant holy, infant lowly and the vivacious Gaudete!, full of unexpected twists and turns.

The centrepiece of the evening is Alan Bullard's A Feast for Christmas, which was commissioned and premiered by SCCS in 2007; this year's concert in fact marks ten years to the day since the premiere. Using texts that deal with the many and varied facets of the Christmas season, A Feast for Christmas includes the reflective 'Christmas Eve, 1913' and a humorous setting of a Victorian Christmas dinner recipe! The

audience also has a vital role to play, singing 'We wish you a merry Christmas' to conclude the work, and after interval, all will be invited to join in with Christmas carols in the second half of the concert.

SCCS is a large community choir that loves to sing all sorts of music – classical, traditional, easy listening, jazz and contemporary. Based at Chiltern Edge School, Sonning Common, the choir rehearses every Monday evening during term time and is looking for new members – no audition required! More information is given on its website. ●

YOUNG ATHLETE OLIVER MATTHEWS IS PART OF A WINNING TEAM

Oliver who lives in Sonning Common, represented Berkshire in the English Schools Combined Events Championships in Boston, Lincs. He qualified for the Berkshire Team earlier in the year when competing for his school at Palmer Park in Reading, securing the fourth and final place in the team in his first year of competing in this event. The team then won the regional competition in June at Kingsmeadow Stadium, Kingston. Winning this event meant they qualified for the finals which took place in September. Oliver is a member of Reading Athletic Club and trains regularly with his coach, Mike Dyer.

Combined Events at the U17 age group is the level before undertaking a full Decathlon. Oliver competed in 8 events over 2 days in, at times, horrendous conditions. Day 1: long jump, discuss, javelin and 400m. Day 2: 100m hurdles, high jump, shot and 1500m. He achieved a personal best performance over the two days. The combined team points over the two days saw the Berkshire Team victorious, the first time in the 30 year history of the competition. To put this into perspective, the top four placed athletes over the course of the two days were selected to represent England. ●



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 search for child care providers in your area

Snack & Chat
 An invitation from St Michael's Church
 Come and enjoy a bowl of soup and a chat with your friends.
 It is free and is not part of a religious service.
 Place: St Michael's Church hall (situated behind the church on the Peppard Road next to the petrol station).
 Date: 19 December and 16 January
 Time: The hall doors open at noon and lunch served at 12.30pm.

VILLAGE COFFEE MORNINGS
 Sonning Common Village Hall
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May Festival 2018 is now open
 - CLOSING DATE for entries is the 31st December 2017.
 See www.artweeks.org or contact Jo Golding - Artweeks Administrator artweeks@artweeks.org 01865 865596 for more details.
Don't miss your chance to take part: Artweeks is non-selective and open to all amateur and professional artists and craft makers living or working in Oxfordshire. Artweeks is also open to artists that live outside the county but are members of an established Oxfordshire based art group, society or guild. Artweeks festival is organised by a not for profit members company.

Christmas at the library
 • Christmas story and craft sessions for under 10's Saturdays 9 and 16 December from 10am
 Homemade cakes on sale
 • For the first time in living memory the library will be open between Christmas and New Year:
 Wednesday 27th: 2 – 7pm; Thursday 28th and Friday 29th: 9 – 1pm, 2 – 5pm; Saturday 30th 9.30 – 12.30
 Closed 25th and 26th December and 1st January
 Look out for more activities in the New Year – contact the library for details (tel: 0118 9722448 or email: sonningcommon.library@oxfordshire.gov.uk)
Health Walks:
 The Health Walks continue through the Winter into the Spring except for the days between Sunday 17 December – 2 January
www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk for more information

Santa rides in Sonning Common again
 Santa will be on his tractor
 19 December
 6:30pm and 8:30pm
 He has an event page on Facebook at <http://cdmh.co/2ila8T9>
ROUTE
 Start at Kennylands Rd, Westleigh Drive, Lea Rd, top of Grove Rd, Kennylands Rd to Reades Lane, Ashford Ave, Wood Lane, Woodlands Road, Baskerville Rd, Orchard Ave, Widmore Lane, Pond End Rd, Churchill Crescent, Butchers Arms brief stop, before ending at bottom of Widmore Lane.

South Chiltern Choral Society
 with The Hill Primary School Choir Conductor – Paul Burke
A Feast for Christmas
 Alan Bullard
 Christus Natus Est - Cecilia Mc Dowall
 Plus Christmas carols and songs for choir & audience
 Accompanied by Brass Quintet, Piano & Percussion
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 Sunday 17 December 2pm
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Our 8th year of celebration Christmas Lunch in the Village Hall
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 Are you a couple fed up with cooking turkey for two?
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AN INTERVIEW WITH ...

CHRISSIE PHILLIPS-TILBURY 'I FELT THE ARMS OF THIS VILLAGE AROUND ME'

By ROS VARNES

Strengthening community ties seems to be at the heart of so much of what Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury does.

For eight years now Chrissie, her good friend Jill Vallis and their team of willing helpers have been volunteering to organise and host a full-blown Christmas Day lunch in the village hall.

Every year the hall is beautifully decorated and each resident who attends the festivities receives a hand-made gift. The party carries on well into the afternoon with no one going home until they've had a cup of tea and some cake!

Chrissie is determined that no one should be alone at Christmas. Her concern that some elderly residents were missing out on a sociable day and traditional festive food prompted her to start holding the Christmas Day lunches.

The village hall can accommodate up to 70 guests for lunch on Christmas Day, including the helpers. The event is open to elderly residents living alone and couples who would otherwise be on their own on Christmas Day.

The cost is just £10 per head because the event is subsidised by the Co-op, Waitrose and Tesco.

Said Chrissie: "We have space for another 10 people or so for lunch on Christmas Day. We are anxious to

reach those people who may not know that they can come to the village hall for lunch. If people know of elderly neighbours who would enjoy the event, please encourage them to get in touch."

Chrissie and her friends do not just organise village lunches on Christmas Day but also hold annual, themed charity lunch/dinners as well as special events celebrating national events such as a tea party for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. These are open to residents of all ages and have raised thousands of pounds for good causes.

This year's charity dinner was Russian-themed and raised a record £1,400, which was divided between the Sue Ryder Nettlebed Hospice and Cancer Research UK. Previous events have been French, Spanish, the Swinging Sixties and Best of British-themed.

Chrissie says that village businesses and organisations are always very supportive of her charity endeavours, particularly the volunteers of the CCA (Christian Community Action) Shop on Wood Lane.

She said: "When we held the Queen's Diamond Jubilee tea party the CCA volunteers knitted a load of red, white and blue tea cosies and made sure to gather up lots of sherry glasses for the Spanish lunch.

"I don't think we always realise how fortunate we are in this village to have such a tremendous support network and how much is going on for residents

to get involved with. No-one needs to be alone.

"We have a marvellous health centre, FISH, an active village hall, a proactive parish council, health walks, the Village Gardeners, Nottakwire, the WI, the Sonning Common Luncheon Club and a thriving village library.

"Moving to Sonning Common was the best decision we ever made. It is such a friendly and supportive village. When you walk down the street there is always someone to talk to.

"When I was nursing my late husband, Michael, and when he died, I felt the arms of this village around me. I had tremendous support and I think I am incredibly fortunate to live here." ●

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GOOD ADVICE FROM WILL POMEROY PCSO



Protecting your home

Recently there has been an increase in the number of burglaries in the South Oxfordshire area. So I would like to inform you of what you can do to help keep yourself safe, particularly as the darker nights draw in.

If no light is on in your home, curtains are not drawn and no car is in the drive, it's an obvious sign to an opportunist burglar that nobody is at home. At this time of year it pays to secure your home more than ever. There are a number of simple and cheap ways to do this, all of which will help reduce the chance of your home becoming a target.

Make sure your property is well lit from the outside using motion lights or dusk till dawn lights, use timers for lamps so they come on throughout the night. Make sure gates are locked and there is nothing in your garden that could aid climbing, such as bins or unsecured ladders. And that you remove any items that could assist breaking into your property (loose bricks, garden tools etc.)

Trim back trees, hedges and plants, this helps reduce places that burglars

can hide and also makes your property more visible to passers-by and your neighbours.

If you'd like more advice on crime prevention for your property, you can have a free survey by one of our neighbourhood officers, just contact TVP either via email to HenleyNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk or call the police non-emergency number 101 or visit the station on Lea Road, opening times below.

Distraction burglaries

Distraction burglary is where criminals call at your house posing as officials or asking for your help with something. They make up a story to get in to your home. Generally targeting older people, they have just one intention: **to steal!**

How do they operate?

Some work alone, but often they work in groups of two or more, usually one person will knock at your door with a convincing excuse that seems genuine or urgent. The talker will persuade you to let them into your house and keep you occupied whilst others sneak in and search your house to steal cash and valuables. They can be men, women or children and sometimes a combination, smartly or casually dressed.

Remember a genuine caller will happily wait outside while you check on them by calling their organisation and or calling a family member or neighbour.

Telephone fraud

We have had a recent spate of telephone fraud in the area. A fraudster will telephone claiming to be from your bank, HMRC, Inland Revenue, the Police



or similar agencies. They may say you owe money or they have had issues with your bank account, and they will try to get your bank card details from you or for you to send them money.

They may suggest that you hang up and ring the bank/police back to ensure the call is genuine. Don't be fooled – they stay on the line. They then tell you to read out or key in your PIN.

They might send a taxi/courier to you to collect your bank card with this and your PIN, they can spend your money. Alternatively they may ask you to go to a supermarket and purchase a gift with a receipt.

JUST REMEMBER: These agencies will never ask for your PIN or bank card – don't give them to anybody!

The Sonning Common Police Station on Lea Road is still open to the public, weekdays from 9am to 1pm.

Come in if you'd like more information about the above or to sign up to the Neighbourhood watch and to the TVP alerts. ●



“I THINK WE LIKE OUR PHONES MORE THAN WE LIKE ACTUAL PEOPLE.”

AN EXTRACT BY DIANA PEARMAN

What happened in 2012 to cause such dramatic shifts in behaviour? It was after the Great Recession, which officially lasted from 2007 to 2009, and had a stark effect on a generation shaped by the smartphone and by the concomitant rise of social media, trying to find a place in a sputtering economy.

Born between 1995 and 2012, members of this generation (iGen) are growing up with smartphones, have an Instagram account before they start secondary school, and do not remember a time before the internet.

The arrival of the smartphone has radically changed every aspect of teenagers' lives, from the nature of their social interactions to their mental health. These changes have affected young people in every corner of the nation and in every type of household. The trends appear among teens poor and rich; of every ethnic background; in cities, suburbs, and small towns. Teens living their lives on their smartphone.

Some generational changes are positive, some are negative, and many are both. More comfortable in their bedrooms than in a car or at a party, today's teens are physically safer than teens have ever been. They're markedly less likely to get

into a car accident and, having less of a taste for alcohol than their predecessors and are less susceptible to drinking's attendant ills.

Psychologically, however, they are more vulnerable than Millennials were. Rates of teen depression and suicide have skyrocketed since 2011. It's not an exaggeration to describe iGen as being on the brink of the worst mental-health crisis in decades. Much of this deterioration can be traced to their phones.

The twin rise of the smartphone and social media has caused an earthquake of a magnitude we've not seen in a very long time, if ever. There is compelling evidence that the devices we've placed in young people's hands are having profound effects on their lives—and making them seriously unhappy.

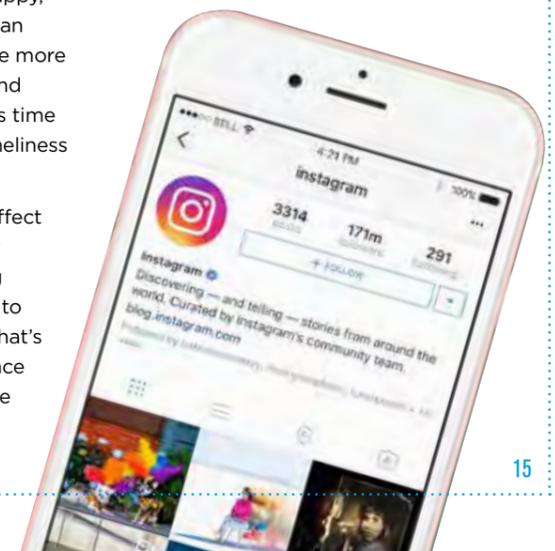
So, what are they doing with all that time? They are on their phone, in their room, alone and often distressed. Teens who spend more time than average on screen activities are more likely to be unhappy, and those who spend more time than average on non-screen activities are more likely to be happy. When teens spend more time on smartphones and less time on in-person social interactions, loneliness is more common.

So is depression. Once again, the effect of screen activities is unmistakable: The more time teens spend looking at screens, the more likely they are to report symptoms of depression. What's at stake isn't just how kids experience adolescence. The constant presence

of smartphones is likely to affect them well into adulthood. Among people who suffer an episode of depression, at least half become depressed again later in life. Adolescence is a key time for developing social skills; as teens spend less time with their friends face-to-face, they have fewer opportunities to practice them. In the next decade, we may see more adults who know just the right emoji for a situation, but not the right facial expression.

More seems to be at stake in urging teens to use their phone responsibly, and there are benefits to be gained even if all we instill in our children is the importance of moderation. Significant effects on both mental health and sleep time appear after two or more hours a day on electronic devices. Some mild boundary-setting could keep kids from falling into harmful habits. ●

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/>



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WORLD SKILLS NEVER HEARD OF IT?

By **CHRISTINE ATKINSON**

In the late 1940s after the war ended, there was a great shortage of skilled workers in Spain. A group of business men decided they needed to inspire young people to train in vocational roles. They needed to also convince parents, teachers and employers. So, they set up a competition, firstly within Spain, with around 4,000 apprentices taking part. It very quickly spread amongst the Latin countries of South America, before the rest of Europe joined. WorldSkills became the collective voice for skills excellence and development in vocational, technological and service oriented careers around the globe.



Today WorldSkills represents more than 45 skills in over 75 countries and regions, all working together with youth, educators and industries to help prepare the workforce and talent of today for the jobs of the future.

The competition is held every other year and entrants come from a huge variety of areas and jobs. Competitors are all young people, and depending on their skill, they can enter up to 25. It is just like the Olympics - from local competitions right through to international finals - this year held in Abu Dhabi. There is an opening and closing ceremony when the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in each category are awarded, and all through the week the competitors take part in showcasing their own skill.

WHAT IS A SKILL?

The apprentices come from many and varied roles within engineering, media, IT, hospitality, retail and construction. Some examples include, bricklaying, hair dressing, mechanics, welders, graphic design, jewellery making, butchery, catering, web design and visual merchandising. The competitors are the best in the country at their particular skill and are chosen via their college or work place.



AND SO - WHAT HAS THIS TO DO WITH SONNING COMMON YOU ASK?

Well - amongst the younger generation of the village is Catherine Abbott, who has been working very hard through WorldSkills in her role as a visual merchandiser for a major high street clothing chain. Visual merchandising is used to 'hit' the shopper as they enter a store with the newest and most popular items for sale. This includes the shop windows, as well as the whole set up of the inside of the store.

She has previously been to the European finals, but this year has gone one better and went to Abu Dhabi in October, representing the UK with TEAMUK against the Rest of The World! This was a huge honour and has taken a LOT of hard work getting through regional, national and European rounds against many other competitors. The finals were held over a week with judging taking place on the last evening.

STARS ARE BORN.....

After a send-off at parliament by Anne Milton, apprenticeship and skills minister, the team flew out together to Abu Dhabi on the 11 October.

"We desperately need your skills, we desperately need you as ambassadors and, more importantly than anything, we desperately need you as an inspiration to the generation that are coming up behind you." said the minister.

As part of a World Skills "one school, one country" initiative each country's team went to visit a local school. Team UK went to Al Ezza School, Abu Dhabi. The opening ceremony is just like the Olympics with a dance and music show followed by the teams walking out together in the stadium.

Catherine's parents were there all week supporting her as she took part in her tasks. The first one was to showcase two red handbags, and the second involved showing off a dinner service. Judging took place as the tasks were being completed.

During the closing ceremony the medal winners were announced and Catherine was awarded the silver medal - meaning that she was second best in the whole world!

The finals were covered on BBC Breakfast TV where Catherine was interviewed, as well as in all major press and media. Catherine said *"I've missed family and friends' weddings, 21st birthday parties and holidays to attend training sessions, but it is all worth it to come home with a silver medal. In the end that is what it takes to be the best"*

It really is an enormous achievement for Catherine and maybe she can inspire others to take part in such a great competition. ●



Church news

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, PEPPARD ROAD, SONNING COMMON.

During the Autumn several events took place within the parish. We were delighted to join with the neighbouring Anglican parishes, Springwater and Stoke Row chapel for a 'Safari Supper'. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet Christians from the local community as we visited each other's churches to share a meal. At St Michael's we served the dessert (sticky toffee pudding) to bring the evening to a close.

At the end of September, we celebrated the feast of St Michael by inviting Archbishop Kevin McDonald to join us for a weekend and speak to us about the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Our free monthly 'Snack & Chat' lunches have continued and are open to all. In November we visited Kidmore End cemetery to pray for the members of our community buried there and held a service to remember all our deceased relatives and friends. ●

BRIAN THEOBOLD

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS - KEY EVENTS TO WHICH ALL ARE INVITED

Sunday 17 December at 5pm

Pangbourne Silver Band Christmas Concert

St Michael's Catholic Church, Peppard Road

Come and listen to the band play a range of popular Christmas favourites. Refreshments will be served in the interval. Children are welcome.

There is no charge but a voluntary collection will be made in support of our Advent charity 'Embrace the Middle East'.

Monday 18 December at 7.30pm

Service of Reconciliation to help us prepare to celebrate Christmas.

Sunday 24 December at 4.30pm

Carols followed by First Mass of Christmas at 5pm for families with young children.

This service is very crowded so please consider alternatives

Sunday 24 December at 7.30pm

Carols followed by 'Midnight' Mass at 8pm.

Monday 25 December at 10.30am

Christmas Day Mass.

For regular weekend and weekday Mass times visit the parish website.

Contact details: phone 0118 972 3418 email stmichaels.rc@hotmail.co.uk website www.saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk

CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT KIDMORE END AND CHRIST THE KING

Friday 22 December 7.30pm

Lessons and Carols at St Johns Kidmore End

Sunday 24 December 4.30pm

Christingle at Christ the King

Christmas Eve 11pm

Midnight mass at St Johns Kidmore End

Christmas Day

9.30am Eucharist at Christ the King

11.30am Eucharist at St Johns

A FEAST FOR TRAVELLERS

Energetic preparations for a unique event were underway on Friday 22 September in four of our local churches. And for what? A safari supper for 60 people.

During lunch following the annual Women's World Day of Prayer back in the spring, Linsey Potter from Springwater Church and Val Jeffries from Stoke Row Chapel came up with the idea of a Safari Supper as a way of uniting Christians within the area and strengthening relationships that had formed during WWDP rehearsals, the hope being that many local churches would participate. It would be a free event but monies raised by donation would be given to FISH and the CCA shop in Sonning Common.



Working out the logistics for a number of people travelling from one church to another, discussing the menus and synchronising the times was a challenge but representatives from other churches soon got on board: Bev Allen from Kidmore End, Ursula Walker from Christ the King, Krissi Stitt from St Michael's and Sue and Nick Launders from All Saints, Peppard. So, by the afternoon of the 22nd it was all systems go.

All the rooms were beautifully decorated with bunting and lit with fairy lights, lanterns and candles to create a friendly dining ambience.

A whole host of helpers laid tables, washed up, carried crockery, set up and cleared away and generally gave of their time and creativity to make dining a pleasure....

Delicious starters were shared at Kidmore End Parish Room and Stoke Row Chapel, washed down with a pretty strawberry punch; some of the amazing mini pizza starters were made by Father Michael from St Michael's, a keen amateur chef.

Travelling diners arrived at Christ the King

to enjoy the main meal of Chilli con carne served with sour cream, guacamole, salsa and tortilla nachos, whilst at Springwater the menu was Tarragon Chicken served on crushed new potatoes with roasted vegetables... all prepared in the spanking new Springwater kitchen!

Awaiting itinerant foodies at St Michael's was a dessert of sticky toffee pudding or fresh fruit salad, followed by coffee and afterwards a raffle was drawn. The Rev James called time by giving thanks in prayer to everyone concerned and was very happy to have won a raffle prize! ●

And the verdict:

"What a wonderful evening... it was great to meet so many new people"....."we found the interior of the churches all so different and yet so lovely"...."Can we do this again please"...."can we do this in the summer please..."

And the objective: to get the Christian community together for a wonderful evening? DEFINITELY ACHIEVED.

ANTIQUES ROADSHOW AT CHRIST THE KING CHURCH

Crowds gathered at the church hall in October to pay a small fee in the hope they would be told their heirlooms were priceless.

Professional Valuer, Simon Jones from Jones and Jacobs Auction House, Watlington was on hand with his equipment to inspect and value pictures, jewellery and other sentimental items.

Initiated by Sue Nickson to raise funds for the Parish of Christ the King, Sonning Common and St John's, Kidmore End the event attracted a number people from a wide area. They patiently waited their turn to show their precious possessions to Simon. 32 people brought a total of 66 different items for Simon to value for them, some pleasantly surprised with the present value of items bought in charity shops!

To pass the time church members laid on refreshments and ran a sale table and a satisfying total of £255.80 was raised.

This isn't Simon's first visit. He last came to help with fundraising two and a half years ago when this event was as popular as before and we are very grateful for his time and expertise. ●

SUE NICKSON



COME AND HELP US CELEBRATE OUR CHURCH'S 50TH BIRTHDAY!

Christ the King Church, Sedgewell Road, Sonning Common was built in 1967 so is now 50 years old.

We will be holding a birthday tea party to celebrate and everyone is warmly invited to join us. So come along to Christ the King Church Hall on Sunday 10 December 3-5pm. No charge but a donation would be appreciated towards a specialised wheelchair for a young girl in the village. ●

More information from Sue Nickson 0118 972 4520

AN EVENING OF WINE AND SONG

Mix together live music, wine-tasting and delicious snacks and you have a recipe for a lovely evening. Some 75 people, gathered together in Kidmore End School hall to boost church funds whilst enjoying musical offerings, a European quiz and savouring four whites, one rosé and three reds.

Presenting the tasting was Nick Room, wine buyer for Waitrose and our parish treasurer, who took us through the geographical regions, grape varieties and flavours as we sampled. The quiz on food and facts relating to the wine growing countries generated much amusement and not a little competitive spirit! To complement the wines were some delicious canapés created by Beverley Allen and her team.

Interspersed with these gastronomic delights were the musical contributions compiled by Francis Brewitt Taylor and performed by the combined choir of St John's/ Christ the King and other musicians with ukelele and guitar. The Rector, James Stickings, made a surprise vocal contribution during the riotous Harvest Home song and to finish off the evening the audience were encouraged to take part in a light hearted musical round.

Thanks to the team of organisers a very healthy amount in excess of £800 will be put into much needed fabric funds for the church. Looking forward to the next one! ●

ROSEMARY HOUSE

Parish news

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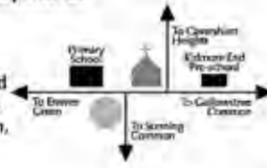
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NEW ERA FOR THE VILLAGE HALL

Residents may not know that Sonning Common Village Hall has been run by a small committee of volunteers since 1973.

It is now the end of a small but important era in the hall's history as the management of the village hall has now been formally handed over to the Parish Council.

Well known members of the former Village Hall Management Committee have included Don Naish, Cliff Pryke, Anne Symons, Rosemary Hunter, Jill Vallis, Barbara Butler, June Fisher, Barrie Greenwood and many others.

I would like to thank the outgoing committee, particularly Sue Launders who has managed the finances so efficiently.

While shredding past minutes, I discovered that I joined the committee in September 1999 - quite a long time ago but nothing compared with the volunteering record that many people have in our village.

I shall miss the interaction, the challenges and the occasional hiccups of running a very busy and popular village hall but am sure I will find something else to do. ●

Councillor Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury

PURCHASE OF WOODLAND

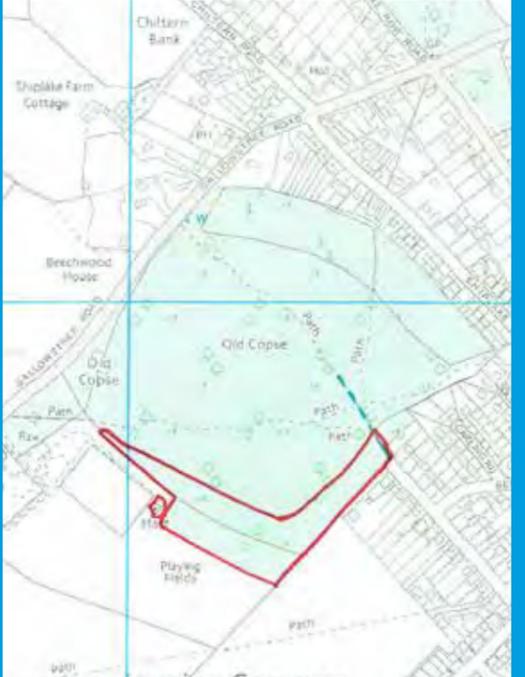
The Parish Council has bought a six-acre portion of Old Copse, at the end of Woodlands Road, on behalf of the community.

The six-acres (2.5 hectares) of woodland is shown on the adjoining map and runs along the south-eastern and south-western perimeter of Old Copse. The purchased area excludes the telecommunications masts, ringed in red on the map.

The purchase will protect the footpath through Old Copse to the skatepark and ensure that the area can continue to be used for public recreation.

In future, the Parish Council will be responsible for managing this section of the woodland and arranging tree inspections, as necessary. The remainder of Old Copse is managed by the Woodland Trust on behalf of the community.

A new Environment Working Party has been set up by the council to oversee the management of Old Copse, Widmore Pond and take general care of the village environment. ●



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN TO BE REVIEWED

The Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan (SCNP) will be reviewed and amended to keep it up-to-date with new planning policies and local priorities, the parish council has decided.

Councillors voted at their October meeting to formally review the Plan, which is part of the local planning policy framework after being adopted by SODC on 13 October last year.

The review will involve assessing potential new sites for additional housing development which is due to be allocated to the village by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) under its new Local Plan 2033.

The village's current neighbourhood plan allocates suitable sites for 195 new homes. The parish council is seeking volunteers from among residents to support this important opportunity to shape development in the village.

Look out for a new community survey in coming months aimed at assessing current village demographics, local housing needs and priorities. The survey results will be used to inform the neighbourhood plan review process. ●

Contact the Parish Office for further information: telephone 0118 972 3616 or email deputyclerk@sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk

CLUBSC

The Parish Council is taking on the administration of ClubSC, the village's youth club which it funds with £10,000 a year. This arrangement replaces the volunteer management committee with a new Working Party chaired by Councillor Mika Rinta-Suksi. The Working Party will work with the paid staff, the volunteers and the young members to provide and improve the services and facilities for young people. Adult volunteers are always needed to help out. ●

Sonning Common Parish Council
Parish Office, Village Hall, Wood Lane, Sonning Common RG4 9SL
T: 0118 972 3616

E: clerk@sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk (Philip Collings)
deputyclerk@sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk (Ros Varnes)
W: www.sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk

The Edge

HIYA! 😊

It's me, Olivia here and for this article, I thought I would share a collection of books I have been reading recently. Just a little heads up, the books I read may not be suitable for younger children but I have tried to include a variety of books I like.



ALL THE BRIGHT PLACES

Jennifer Niven

This book is similar to The Fault in Our Stars, it's a story of two teenagers who meet on top of a bell tower. A class project leads them to discovering all the unseen places of their hometown - Indiana. As one begins to come out of their shell, the other is beginning to shrink. This book was very sad and I was on the verge of tears towards the end but I think that's what makes the best books. This one may not be suitable for young readers but I strongly recommend it!



AFTER THE FIRE

Will Hill

This one, again has quite mature themes. It's a thrilling and exciting read about a girl who grew up inside the Lords Legion, with her Brothers and Sisters. Father John runs the Legion and set rules in place. As she begins to question the rules, it seems she needs a way out. But what if the only way out is to start a fire? This book was quite scary and upsetting in some cases. I really enjoyed it and if you like books with startling plot twists, then this is perfect for you.



MAZE RUNNER SERIES

James Dashner

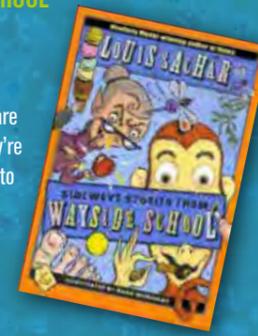
These books are very popular and if you haven't read them, I insist you do. It's a futuristic fiction of a group of boys who have been carefully selected and put inside a stretch of land. The catch? It's surrounded by a maze. Every month, a new boy will arrive. This cycle goes on until Thomas arrives. And two days later, so does a girl. This book is more suitable for younger readers, it's fast moving and there are 4 books in the series, each as exciting as the last.



THE WAYSIDE SCHOOL SERIES

Louis Sachar

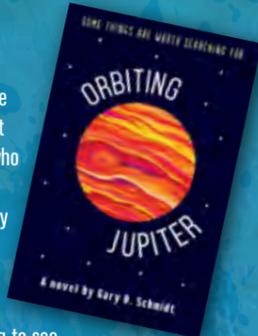
Again, these books are part of a series, they're short and very easy to read, enjoyable for people of all ages. They're very funny and completely random. In the first book, you are introduced to every student taught in Mrs. Jewls class along with her not very helpful lessons and Louis, the yard teacher. The next book will show you that picture day won't always go as planned and try as you might, you can't deliver a note to Miss. Zarves on the 13th floor because there is no 13th floor... and there is no Miss. Zarves...



ORBITING JUPITER

Gary D. Schmidt

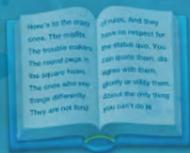
By the end, this book had me in tears. It's a relatively short book about a troubled boy who comes to live with his foster parents. Throughout the story he begins to open up about his life. They learn that he has a daughter and that he wants more than anything to see her. All seems like it's going well until the very tragic end. I really loved this book and if you enjoy reading shorter books then this is definitely the way to go.



THE WRONG TRAIN

Jeremy de Quidt

Within this book review, this book is the only one that creeped me out. I wouldn't say it was scary, just eerie and ominous. The idea is that a boy gets off at the wrong stop and whilst waiting for the next train, an old man offers to tell him stories. Only they aren't just stories. They're nightmares. As this book is a little more disturbing, I would not recommend it to younger audiences unless they have an appetite for fright.



WHAT ARE WE ALL WORTH?



By LEAH TILLEY

A net worth is one description of the overall value of a person - their salary, how rich they are and/or how much their business is worth. In summary, a net worth is putting a price tag on a person.

Net worth is usually associated with celebrities, including all the famous business owners such as Microsoft founder Bill Gates and social media stars like the Kardashians. Although Bill Gates is indeed the richest man in the world with a net worth of \$89.7 billion, people like the Kardashian/Jenners are not. Their average net worth is around \$84 million, which is considerably more than me, for sure, but compared to other celebrities it doesn't seem so big.

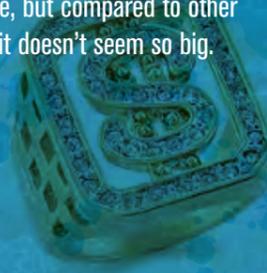
Here's a list of the most wealthy singers and actors:

1. Oprah Winfrey	\$3.2 billion
2. Jami Gertz	\$2 billion
3. Celine Dion	\$805 million
4. Madonna	\$800 million
5. Tom Cruise	\$570 million
6. Simon Cowell	\$550 million
7. Mariah Carey	\$520 million
8. Dolly Parton	\$500 million
9. George Clooney	\$500 million
10. Beyoncé	\$455 million
11. Victoria Beckham	\$450 million
12. Jack Nicholson	\$400 million
13. Taylor Swift	\$380 million
14. Clint Eastwood	\$375 million
15. Jennifer Lopez	\$360 million

Surprisingly, a lot of these people are not well known to my generation. For example, when looking online I noticed that people like Justin Bieber and Brad Pitt are surprisingly far down the list.

Now that we've had a look at some famous people's net worth, maybe you would like to know your own net worth. Well, the average British person's net worth is £147,134; in case you're interested that's one ten thousandth of David Beckham's net worth.

Incredible isn't it... or maybe a little bit annoying.



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BRAMBLES CELEBRATES 20 YEARS IN SONNING COMMON

Erica has been supporting the magazine for 20 years, advertising in every issue all 120 of them.



passed her driving test she would join the rank of available delivery drivers.

Eventually we moved much of the business down to the converted garage where it is now, which is easier for family harmony, although they still help out in many ways.

People often say "it must be lovely playing with flowers all day" but in fact it is the people who make it most interesting; from the annual request for three arrangements to thank helpers at the AGM, to the desperate call from some chap needing a last minute Anniversary bouquet.

Over the last twenty years I have had the privilege to be with people at the happiest and saddest points in life, I have laughed and cried with them, shared wedding cake, Christmas chocolates and the occasional glass of wine. I would like to say a big THANK YOU to all of you for making Brambles a success, and my life so interesting.

Although I can't promise to be here for another twenty years, when my scissors do slow down I don't suppose I'll be any good at turning down a plaintive call from someone saying "could you just do me a quick arrangement"?

ERICA CUNNINGHAM



If it hadn't been for one of my daughters enthusiastically offering my services to her new friend, I probably wouldn't have started Brambles at all. The two girls were discussing Christmas decorations and my daughter told her friend that I would make a door wreath and a table centre for them. I was duly informed and had to supply the goods.

After that more work turned up and I concluded that as Sonning Common didn't have a florist I should offer my services to the village. I named the business after the house, BRAMBLES and took out my first advert in the Sonning Common magazine in 1997.

My early customers would come to the front door of the house to place orders and collect their purchases. We expanded into the conservatory at the back of the house but outgrew the space all too soon.

There were times when family mealtimes were delayed by the need to move large funeral tributes or wedding bouquets from the dining room table. The family would be drafted in to assist with order taking, bucket washing, wrapper making and later delivering. As each daughter

It wasn't that it was difficult, I had studied at floristry college for two years previous to moving here and worked in partnership with a Constance Spry trained florist, but the request came out of the blue when I was looking for a "proper job".



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TOM FORT FORAGE

Foraging is just a fancy word for going out into the countryside or the woods, or on the seashore, and helping yourself to things useful or edible on the basis that no one owns them or that whoever does own them doesn't know they do or doesn't care. I love it.

As I write this, my woodstore is stacked with beech logs from branches of wood retrieved from the side of a lane out towards Checkendon. I have a dozen pots of seductively delicious bramble jelly on the shelf, made from blackberries harvested from great prickly thickets along the edge of one of our dog-walking fields.

On the counter two jars of what will soon be sweet and highly intoxicating sloe gin are maturing, made by my missus from

the dark, bitter fruit picked at the same time as the blackberries.

At the seaside in south-west Ireland on our summer holiday we gathered mussels and cockles to go with the prawns netted along the sea fringe, and feasted that night on a sumptuous seafood risotto.

All free, which is part of the joy of it.

But my foraging portfolio has suffered one major tragedy. Of all the gastronomic delights produced by nature's bounty, nothing beats the field mushroom - chalky white on top, delicate coral pink underneath darkening in time to chestnut brown. Fried in butter and heaped onto toast or fried bread, they make a kingly or queenly treat.

Fields speckled with sprouting mushrooms are very rare indeed these days - blame pesticides and herbicides and horribly, fertilisers. But there was one



such field, between here and Kidmore End, where they came in wondrous abundance when it was warm and damp in early October - until this year. The farmer - I wish I could get my hands on him - had the grass killed off and replaced with a juicier, more fattening strain for his cattle. Result: no more mushrooms.

So if anyone knows of a mushroom field and is prepared to share the secret with me, please get in touch. I promise I won't tell. ●

SC MAGAZINE READ IN AFGHANISTAN

This must surely be a first ...

'I'm at a military base at over 6000ft altitude in the mountains above Qargha Afghanistan, been here for the last 3 weeks and reading the latest edition of the SC magazine, nobody here believed me when I told them I had an exotic garden back in the UK! ●

Mick Stanyer
(by email)



Here is more proof of Mick's exotic garden - perhaps this page will be seen in another far flung place when Mick is on his travels providing our troops with communications support?

COOK'S CORNER

Sweets and Treats for Christmas

By SANDY ONOFRIO

CHRISTMAS CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES

150ml double cream / 25ml Baileys/ 225g dark chocolate / 25g unsalted butter / Cocoa powder

Line a baking tray with non-stick paper. Break the chocolate into small pieces and place in a bowl along with the butter and Baileys. Pour the cream into a small saucepan and heat until it's just at boiling point. Remove from the heat and stir into the bowl of chocolate that has the butter and Baileys. Continue stirring until the chocolate has melted and the mixture is smooth. Leave to cool in the fridge for 2-3 hours, or until firm enough to work with. Remove the truffle mixture from the fridge about 20 - 30 minutes before you intend to use it. Using a teaspoon, scoop the mixture onto the lined baking sheet. Wearing disposable gloves, roll the truffle mixture between your palms to get a more rounded shape. Toss in cocoa powder and return to the lined baking tray. When all the truffles are made, place them back in the fridge for a couple of hours before using. ●



MINI CHRISTMAS PUDDINGS - makes 35

700g fruit cake / 4 tablespoons brandy or sherry / 200g milk chocolate / 100g white chocolate, melted / green and red jelly sweets, chopped

Crumble fruit cake into a bowl. Set aside. Melt milk chocolate in microwave for 30 seconds (depending on the microwave). Add to crumbled cake with brandy.

Once combined roll into bite-size balls and top with melted white chocolate and chopped sweets or fondant icing, to represent leaves and berries. ●



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DID YOU KNOW?

OUR HEALTH CENTRE SUPPORTING ANOTHER FITNESS INITIATIVE

One of the more recent health initiatives in our area supported by SCHC is local Walking Football, see <http://www.sonningcommonhealthcentre.co.uk/info.aspx?p=12>

The initiative is in conjunction with the local football club, Rotherfield Utd, who see this as part of their community role. Walking Football is one of the fastest growing activities for older people in the country. We now have a group of over 20 members but never have that number at any one session. Members ages range from 57 -73. Our weekly sessions are friendly and supportive. Anyone can join regardless of their perceived ability and you play at your own pace. For those who want to take it further there are a growing number of tournaments available which we are now entering, but these are entirely voluntary.

We also have a sponsor in 'Berkshire Physiotherapy Centre' who have paid for our tournament kit. The Clinic's director,

Jim Adkins, explains the benefits of Walking Football,

"Most forms of exercise are good for us, improving our heart and lung function, promoting increased circulation, muscle strength and flexibility, improving bone density, healthy cartilage and toning our gut and digestive system. Walking football offers all of these, but the best that walking football offers over cycling, swimming, walking and running is that it improves balance and co-ordination - essential in older people as this becomes compromised as we age, especially those over 60.

In addition, one of the group said recently "it's a great weekly social gathering, with plenty of humour and camaraderie on and off the pitch."

On 29 September, we entered a 6 a side charity tournament involving 12 teams in Maidenhead in aid of Macmillan Nursing. We did exceptionally well in getting to the semi- final considering we were up

against longer established clubs which have larger urban populations.

We aim to serve Sonning Common and the villages around us and meet every Wednesday at Bishopswood Sports field at 10.30am. ●

Further details are available from Ian Massey 07982 600054



CAN YOU HELP SOLVE THE MYSTERY?

I am attempting to solve a problem.

It is with respect of an illegitimate birth that took place in Baskerville Road, in June of 1921. The mother was called ALICE FLORENCE SHEPHERD, and she was 21 years old. Alice was the daughter of George Thomas and Sarah Ann Shepherd of Oxford. Her mother was deceased when Alice had her baby boy.

The child was called WILLIAM LESLIE SHEPHERD and he was left in Sonning Common to be bought up by what was thought to be an 'aunt'.

Then the mystery begins.....

Alice came from an ordinary working-class family - her father was a scaffolder. But somehow her son became close to the family of DUDLEY WILLIAM HICKMAN who was born in 1907.

When baby William had grown up and the second world war broke out, he joined up, and stated that he had no next of kin. But on his papers, this had been altered to say that Dudley William Hickman was his 2nd cousin.

The Hickman's were quite wealthy and eventually Dudley lived in Yeovil, Somerset, and it was from his house that William Leslie Shepherd eventually married.

I wonder if any of your readers have any knowledge of the Shepherd family or the Hickman family in Sonning Common. I am attempting to discover exactly how Dudley Hickman was William Shepherd's 2nd cousin - if he was at all!

This is quite a quandary and I would be grateful if any of your readers have any knowledge of any of the people concerned, or of who lived in Baskerville Road who might have taken in an illegitimate baby so long ago. ●

MARY HYLAND

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By COLLEEN PAVIOUR

Every issue we randomly select and interview a reader who has liked Sonning Common Magazine's facebook page so readers can get to know their fellow villagers better.

John Evans and his wife, Carol, have lived in Sonning Common since 1980. They first lived in Peppard Road before moving to Grove Road in 1995. The couple have two grown children who both attended primary and secondary school in the village. Their son now lives in Edinburgh and their daughter lives in London.

Where are you from, John?

I'm Welsh. I was born in northwest Wales and lived in Caernarfon for 18 years before moving to England, first to Leicester, then Reading.

Why did you choose to live in Sonning Common?

We chose Sonning Common as it was well located for our jobs back then - I was working in Reading and Carol was based in Henley (she was the Sonning Common area news reporter for the Henley Standard). It was also ideal for us to be on the fringe of the countryside rather than in the centre of town. We still find Sonning Common convenient for travelling in all directions.

You trained as a software engineer and then worked in mobile communications for the airline industry before going into marketing. How has your career helped

the volunteer work you do now?

It was the decade in marketing I've used most in my current position as a member on the volunteer-run board of The Corn Exchange theatre in Wallingford. I enjoy working in theatres, on stage and behind stage. Over the years I've extended my skills, providing sound and light design at the theatre. I was also a member of Chiltern Players, I acted and made sound plots for them.

What are your hobbies?

My outdoor pursuits are skiing and walking. Carol and I have done a number of long distance walks in this country and abroad. This year we completed Hadrian's Wall and in the past we've done the West Highland Way, the GR5 (the Grande Randonnée Cinq, a long distance hiking trail in western Europe) and the Tour de Mont Blanc in France. I also spend a lot of time growing vegetables, specialising in unusual varieties of potatoes. Other than that, I like all sorts of music. I used to sing with Gwyn Arch's choir, the South Chiltern Choral Society. When I gave that up they asked me to review their concerts and I've been doing that since the late 80s.

Is there anything you don't like about our village?

My one bugbear is that Sonning Common is like a forgotten part of Oxfordshire as far as the county council is concerned. We rely on Reading Transport for buses even though there is a regular bus from Oxford to Reading until the late evening. (Our service finishes at 8.30pm). That's not good for

the village especially for youngsters who might want to go into Reading for the evening. Also the recent debacle with Chiltern Edge has shown that OCC are simply not interested in us. Given that most of our services come from Reading (A&E, hospital), we might as well be part of greater Reading.

What positive changes have you noticed in the village in recent times?

I much admire the work that Barrie Greenwood and his team have done in writing the Neighbourhood Plan. It's an excellent outline of what we want in our village, but I fear the district council's planning department is not inclined to take much notice of it. But you need a statement of intent and our plan is just that.

Favourite walk or nature spot in the area?

There's so much about that we're spoilt for choice really. We've been walking the Thames Path in sections and we've nearly completed it now.

What's something that might surprise people about you?

Some of your readers may have come across my recording of Fred Richens' book The Village That Never Was. It features members of the Chiltern Players and is still available from our library. I'm also a film extra and have been in a number of productions, including a small speaking part in a Welsh language TV soap, Pobl y Cwm. Lastly, I'm a member of the Labour Party, a bit of a minority set in this area, but growing rapidly. ●

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DIARY DATES

DECEMBER 2017

Wednesday 6
10.30am - 12noon
Village Coffee Morning hosted by Sonning Common WI. Open to all. Village Hall

Saturday 9
11am - 2pm
Christmas Fair, Sonning Common pre-school, Grove Road

Saturday 9
1.30pm
Nottakwire presents "A Christmas Cornucopia". Village Hall

Monday 11
2.30pm
FISH - Tea party. Village Hall

Saturday 16
7.30pm
South Chiltern Choral Society - "A Feast for Christmas" Chiltern Edge School

Sunday 17
2pm
South Chiltern Choral Society - "A Feast for Christmas" Chiltern Edge School

Sunday 17
5pm
Pangbourne Silver Band Christmas Concert St Michael's Catholic Church, Peppard Road

Monday 18
8pm
Sonning Common Parish Council. Village Hall

Tuesday 19
12 noon
Snack and chat. St Michael's Catholic Church, Peppard Road

Tuesday 19
6.30-8.30pm
Santa on a tractor

Thursday 21
11.30am
FISH - Pub lunch

Monday 25
1pm
Christmas Day dinner - call Chrissie (972 1058) for details Village Hall

JANUARY 2018

Monday 8
2.30pm
FISH - Tea party. Village Hall

Tuesday 9
7.30pm
Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society - "How to get the best from Heathers" by John Hall Peppard Memorial Hall

Monday 15
8pm
Sonning Common Parish Council. Village Hall

Tuesday 16
12 noon
Snack and chat. St Michael's Catholic Church, Peppard Road

Thursday 18
11.30am
FISH - Pub lunch

Thursday 18
7.30pm
Sonning Common Women's Institute - Keep active and staying well: seated exercise led by Jeanette Hughes. Visitors welcome Village Hall

Thursday 25
FISH - Henley Farmers' Market

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G B Transport (Removals)	33	TV Aerial Services	29
Girl Power (Electrician)	9	Undeniably Podiatry	12
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Kennylands Gymnastics	16		
Kidbys Sheds	9		
Kidmore End Pre-School	22		
Langley Arb (Tree Surgery)	29		
Laurence Hansen (House & Property Services)	22		
Mike Farina Auto Services Ltd	Back		

The FISH Volunteer Centre runs regular door-to-door shopping trips to Tesco in Henley every Monday morning and to Henley Waitrose, Henley Farmers Market, Morrisons in Reading and Reading Town Centre every month.

The programme of shopping and leisure trips for each month is published and distributed on 20th of the preceding month and bookings are taken from that date. Copies of the programme are available the FISH Volunteer Centre, Sonning Common Library, the Christian Community Action shop, Pet Country Supplies and on request from Carson's Chemist. The monthly programme of trips is posted on noticeboards in both Peppard and Sonning Common.

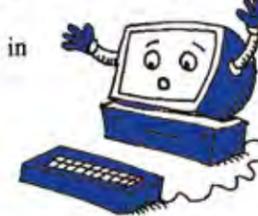
Details of all minibus trips can also be found on the FISH website www.fishvolunteercentre.co.uk

For more information and to book any trip call 0118 972 3986 any weekday between 09.30 and 11.30 a.m. ●

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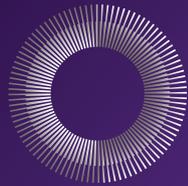
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