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From “the editor



Let's hope you're managing to keep your sanity in the run-up to Christmas - there is so much to do and think about at this time of year!

After three years, nearly 2,000 responses, and hours of painstaking analysis, we finally have the results of the Sonning Common Community Plan survey. A leaflet, detailing the survey's main findings, has been circulated with this magazine.

I'm very pleased to say that we are now able to extend the distribution of this magazine to those parts of Peppard Common which adjoin Sonning Common. This is not a takeover of the Peppard News circulation area! - but simply a way of keeping our neighbours informed about what's happening in the village.

So, as of now, households in Shiplake Bottom, Gravel Hill and the Peppard Road end of Blounts Court Road, will receive both the Peppard News and Sonning Common Magazine.

We have already had some kind offers of help with the extended distribution but more volunteers are always welcome. So, if you would like to help distribute the magazine six times a year, please contact distribution manager Geoffrey Adams (see details opposite).

Thank you to all of our advertisers, contributors and distributors who have supported the magazine over the past year. And thank you to the magazine committee and everyone behind producing Sonning Common Magazine for all their hard work.

From all of us to all of you, happy Christmas and good wishes for 2011.

ROS VARNES Editor

Email me at:

sonningcommonmagazine@googlemail.com

ps....

Sonning Common Magazine is on sale at the village library in Grove Road for £1.50 a copy. Annual subscriptions are available for £15. Contact distribution manager Geoffrey Adams. Email: geoffrey.adams5@btopenworld.com
Phone: 0118 972 2134

Magazine contributions may be posted to: 1 Grove Road,
Sonning Common RG4 9TD.

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COVER IMAGE – WINTER WONDERLAND

Last winter's snowfall at the hill opposite the Herb Farm on Peppard Road, taken by Philip Theobald

WHILE EVERY EFFORT IS MADE TO ENSURE THE ACCURACY OF INFORMATION PRINTED IN THIS MAGAZINE, THE EDITOR AND THE PUBLISHER CANNOT ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF ERRORS THAT OCCUR.

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COPY DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE 01 JANUARY 2011



New pre-school to go ahead

Sonning Common Pre-School is celebrating after winning back its £450,000 grant to build a much-needed new pre-school in the village.

All those associated with the pre-school were delighted to get the news that the planned cedar-clad construction in Grove Road is to go ahead after all.

In the summer it was announced that the pre-school's grant had been suspended while the Government reviewed its budgets.

While work on the new building is underway, staff and children have moved into temporary premises - the old library in Grove Road.

Nikki Hampton, from the pre-school's fundraising committee, said: "The staff have done an incredible job of making the temporary classroom a real home-from-home and the children are enjoying exploring their new surroundings.

"The new building should be finished in March, so we will have a month or so to re-landscape the outside play area and garden, before we move in at Easter.

"Word about our new building certainly seems to be spreading, as we are getting quite a lot of new enquiries from parents who'd like their children to join the pre-school next year. If you would like your child's name added to our waiting list, please contact us on 0118 972 4760." ■

RIGHT:

■ The pre-school being demolished



It's good news too for the children's centre ...

Chiltern Edge has also had its £600,000 grant re-instated to re-model the school to make way for a new children's centre.

The Government is building children's centres throughout the country to provide safe and friendly places for under-fives and their families to play and to get information, advice and support.

Children's centre services include advice and support on breastfeeding; parenting support; access to health visitors and midwives; and help with adult learning. This includes information about getting back to work and/or training.

The whole front of Chiltern Edge School will have to be re-modelled to incorporate the children's centre. This will include creating a larger and more comfortable reception suite together with a new science laboratory and computer suite.

Chiltern Edge head Daniel Sadler said: "The project has already started and is due to be completed by mid-February. The new children's centre is scheduled to open in May, I believe." ■

■ Father Christmas on the Lions club sleigh.



Ho! Ho! Ho! Here we go

Father Christmas will shortly be taking his annual tour of the village, courtesy of local Lions club members and their helpers.

Sitting upon his sleigh, the red-suited icon will be greeting villagers, both young and old, playing Christmas carols and collecting charitable donations.

The Lions Club of Goring, Woodcote & District have organised Father Christmas tours of Sonning Common and other South Oxfordshire villages for the past 29 years.

Sonning Common tours will take place on Thursday 9, Friday 10 and Wednesday 15 December from 7pm until 9pm.

Jon Solman, from the Lions club, said: "It is extremely difficult to know how much ground we are likely to cover each night as it depends on how many volunteers we have as well as the weather.

"However, we always start off at 7pm from outside the Post Office in Wood Lane. On the first night we head past the supermarket, usually turning into Woodlands Road with the intention of progressing along most roads between Reades Lane and Shiplake Bottom.

"On the second night our route normally takes us along the other side of Wood Lane to Grove Road and Westleigh Drive in the south of the village.

"On the third evening we normally cover the outstanding areas, probably the Henley side of Peppard Road and/or towards Kidmore End." ■

The Co-operative invests £500,000 in Sonning Common

The new Co-operative food store in Wood Lane opened its doors late last month after an extensive £500,000 re-furbishment.

The move secures the existing 29 jobs and creates 15 new posts at the store. The conversion follows The Co-operative Group's £1.56 billion acquisition of the Sumerfield supermarket chain last year.

Store manager James Lees said: "We are proud to serve the local community and this substantial investment in the store means we can now provide a much enhanced service. Customers are welcoming the changes and benefits shopping at The Co-operative brings, including our ethical trading policies which underpin our product ranges, price reductions and our *cash back dividend scheme.

"At a time when consumers are looking for both value and values in business, The Co-operative has become even more relevant and distinctive. We will meet all the community's daily food shopping needs and, in the best traditions of The Co-operative, make our contribution to community life."

To this end The Co-operative Group will be donating two wooden benches to sit outside Sonning Common Village Hall.

*Under the Co-operative's share of profits dividend scheme, customer members receive cash back on their trade with the Group's businesses. Members can choose to keep the cash or donate all or part of their share to local good causes. Last year, The Co-operative paid out £41 million to members and over £1 million to local community groups. ■

Looking forward to a bright and blooming Spring

The Village Gardeners, together with more than 20 willing helpers, have successfully planted 3,000 bulbs around the village in preparation for Spring.

The gardening group organised a village bulb-planting day in early October. The helpers who turned out were aged between four and 60-plus and they managed to complete all of the planting within an hour and a half.

Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury, from the Village Gardeners, said: "The great volunteering spirit of Sonning Common prevailed. We're very grateful to all of our helpers."

The following sites were planted with crocus and daffodil bulbs:

- the green bank opposite the village hall
- the Peppard Road/Blounts Court Road junction
- the flower-beds near the dental surgery
- the Red House Drive bank
- the Kennylands Road/Reades Lane junction
- the Shiplake Bottom/Peppard Road triangle
- the Lea Road/Grove Road junction
- the flower-beds outside the library

500 naturalised bluebells were planted under the silver birch trees at the Wood Lane and Peppard Road crossroads.

The Village Gardeners have now exhausted most of their funds for the year. Outside the growing season they will carry on with weeding and tidying up around the village.



Charity fundraiser says 'thank you'

Help for Heroes is £4,700 better off thanks to one local lady's inventive fundraising efforts.

Over the past 16 months Pamela Pratt, from Westleigh Drive, has held car boot sales, charity dances and barbeques to raise money for the national charity which supports soldiers wounded in Britain's conflicts.

She also holds regular sales at Batten House where the residents are very supportive of Help for Heroes, she says.

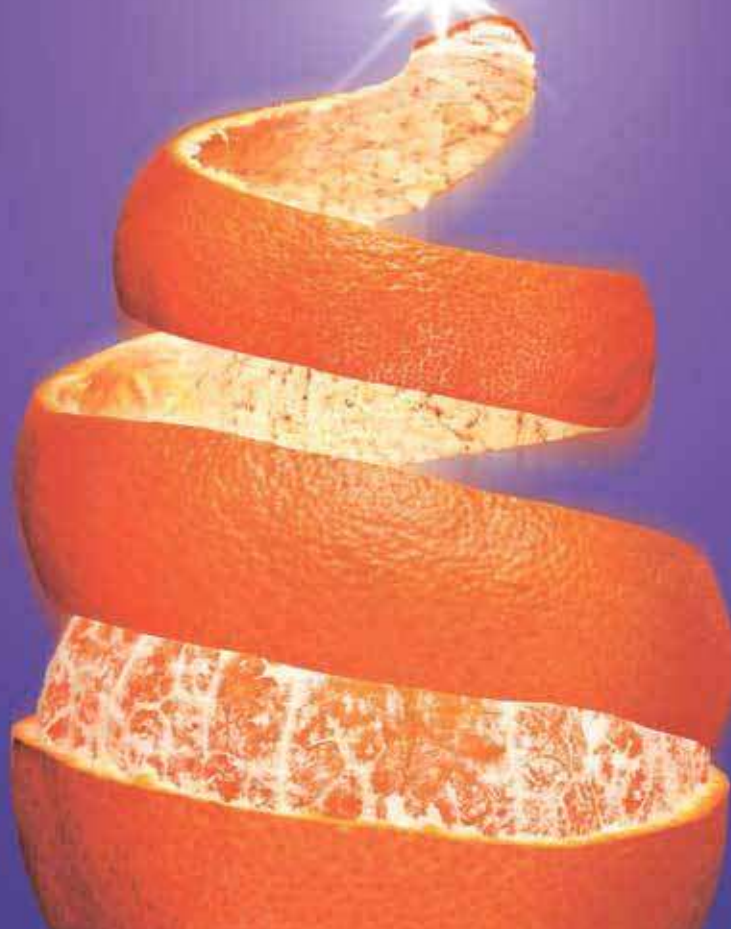
Seventy-nine this month and showing no signs of slowing down, Mrs Pratt said: "There are two lads from Sonning Common currently serving in Afghanistan. I knew Freddie Slough from the village who was killed in the Falklands conflict and Cyrus Thatcher from Caversham was another local lad who lost his life in Afghanistan last year. I decided I wanted to do something to help them and others like them.

"I would like to thank everybody who has supported me in raising money for Help for Heroes by donating goods and raffle prizes or by donating money." ■



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Henley Offshore Group

We're a small band of individuals who like to keep in touch with our love of boats and boating during the winter by having some very diverse topics presented by quality speakers.

We have winter talks based at the Badgemore Golf Club where we usually meet on the second Monday of each winter month, from October to April.

On 13 December we will be hearing all about the Tall Ships Youth Trust and on 10 January our talk will be from a couple about their 25-year sailing adventure in the South Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Henley Offshore Group (HOG) is a not-for-profit organisation which contributes to charities such as the RNLI and the Ellen Macarthur Trust from funds raised from our meetings.

All are welcome to join us at this extremely comfortable venue for £5 at the door on each visit or for a £25 annual subscription.

For more information see www.henleyoffshore.org/events

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Can you give a cat a home?

Winter is an ideal time to consider adopting an unwanted cat or kitten, according to Thames Valley Animal Welfare.

The charity is urgently seeking suitable, new homes for the growing number of cats in its care. It currently has 30 cats and kittens in its foster homes with an additional 20 animals awaiting a foster home place. Sue Nickson, vice chair of Thames Valley Animal Welfare, said: "During the winter, people tend to keep their windows and doors closed so a cat is much less likely to escape in the first few weeks when it needs to be kept in to get used to its new home.

"This year we have had many more kittens than normal waiting to find new homes. But it's not just kittens which are staying too long in our foster homes, so are cats of all ages.

"Reasons for cats needing new homes vary enormously. The most commonly presented problem is children's allergies but the death of owner, emigration, the break-up of relationship and moving house are also common.

"Since the beginning of the recession, we have taken in more abandoned cats than ever. The loss of the owner's job is more frequently given as the reason for cats being handed in to the charity.

"Combine this with people putting off taking on a new pet due to fear about possible redundancy and we quickly become overwhelmed with cats going nowhere! It's a problem being faced by all animal rescue charities. We can only hope for brighter times ahead."

If you would consider taking on a cat or kitten please phone Monica Hornsey on 01494 484527 or Ann Butler-Smith on 0118 972 1871.

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY:

There are no details yet about what, if any, cuts the library may face in the near future. We wait and hope – and the more people who use the library, the better.

Last month we celebrated 10 years of being a joint-use school and community library.

We are planning a special Christmas Saturday Storytime on 18 December, at 10am, for four to eight-year-olds.

The library will close for the holiday period on Friday, 24 December, at 1pm, until Wednesday, 5 January 2011, at 2pm.

We'd like to wish all our library users a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year.

For more information about any library activities, call in at the library in Grove Road, or phone 0118 972 2448.

Rosemary Dunstan
Library manager

PEPPARD REVELS 2012 CAN YOU HELP?

We urgently need a volunteer to take charge of the dinner for the next Revels event in June 2012. The job involves sorting out the caterers and menu in conjunction with the Revels committee.

The 2012 event will be featuring the Peppard Olympics (ahead of the London ones) and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

For further information please contact Dr John Hasler on 01491 628478. johnhasler@supanet.com

You're invited to lunch

A special Christmas Day lunch is to be held in the village hall.

After the success of the first event last year, organisers Jill Vallis and Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury have volunteered to do the same again.

They are inviting village residents who are on their own, or couples who find all that shopping and cooking a bit too much, to join them.

Tickets, priced £10, are available from Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury on 0118 972 1058, or Jill Vallis on 0118 972 3251.

If people require help with transport they are advised to say so when they book. Guests should assemble from 12.30pm for the lunch at 1pm.



Do you want high speed internet?

People can vote to have high-speed broadband by BT installed in the village.

As part of BT's race to infinity, it is inviting residents in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse district to vote to get BT infinity fibre-optic cables installed.

The five areas with the highest number of votes by 31 December will be successful.

Individuals can vote for their area by visiting www.racetoinfinity.bt.com.

Unsuccessful areas may still be in with a chance to increase their internet speed by helping South Oxfordshire District Council to measure current broadband speeds in the area.

For further information, please email corporate.strategy@southoxon.gov.uk or call Emma Morris on 01491 823612.



Local Guides group may be forced to close

We urgently need a new Guide leader and assistant leaders for our village group, the 1st Peppard Guides.

Since our unit, which meets on Wednesdays in the village from 7pm to 8.15pm, was established four and a half years ago many of our local girls have participated. We are lucky to have such wonderful girls who are easy to please, will have a go at anything and are pleasure to spend time with.

I now need some enthusiastic new leaders to take over my role as unit leader from January. Full support and training will be given and no previous experience of Guiding is necessary. Interested parties must be over 18-years-old.

Guiding is a very rewarding pastime and I would urge you ALL to give serious thought to becoming a Guider as sadly our attempts for the last few months to find new leaders have drawn a blank.

If we do not have a response soon, Guides will sadly close at the end of the December school term.

MELANIE QUINCEY

Unit leader, 1st Peppard Guides

Phone: 0118 924 2814

Email: melanie@e-quincey.freemove.co.uk

New spring courses to inform and enlighten

The Reading branch of the Workers' Educational Association is offering a series of new courses on a range of interesting and stimulating subjects from mid-January.

The Spring term programme contains a mixture of morning, afternoon, evening and Saturday day school courses on subjects including art history, architecture, music and philosophy.

For a copy of the brochure contact:

WEA Reading

27 Derby Road Caversham RG4 5HE

Phone: 0118 946 4137

Email: WEAreading@goolemail.com

Want to be a Brownie?


The 1st Kidmore End Brownies group meets in Sonning Common on a weekly basis and is open to girls aged seven to 11 – younger girls can go on a waiting list.

For more information please contact Claire Swannell. Phone 0118 9483744 / 07834 766485. Email claireswannell@yahoo.co.uk

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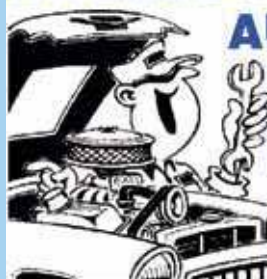


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Trading the village library for the Great Wall of China

In October village library manager Rosemary Dunstan undertook a two-week charity trek along part of the Great Wall of China. Here's how she got on...

Big ones, small ones, crumbling ones, slippery ones – steps. We found all sorts on the Great Wall of China.

Our first impression of the Great Wall was of its alarming height and the steep path descending from it. Our introduction to it was a two-hour walk, ending with trembling legs from the long, steep descent.

We trekked for seven days, for between two and six hours a day. By day four my muscles were getting used to the steps, which made them seem easier.

We had no rain while we were walking, but not much sun either. One day was particularly misty. The sheer effort of walking made us warm, but we soon cooled down when we stopped for food, so we never rested for long.

The 'hotels' where we spent the nights were fairly basic by western standards: we didn't always have hot water or heating, and there were some alarming insects around!

We were not able to walk on the wall all of the time. In some places it's too broken or inaccessible to be safe. So, at times we walked beside the wall, often on paths which had been cleared in the spring but had become overgrown, steep and slippery.

Where the wall is easily accessible by road it has usually been restored, and is very popular with Chinese tourists. Some Chinese people are not used to seeing westerners, and we received much interest, especially when doing our warm-up exercises.

On the final day we had a two-hour trek on a very popular section of the wall at Juyongguan. There were many Chinese tourists around, taking photos of themselves in different positions on the wall. We were glad that most of the trek had been on the more remote sections of wall: tourists just got in our way. As we approached our final flight of steps our Chinese guides sprayed us with champagne to celebrate our achievement – and there was enough left for everyone to drink some too.

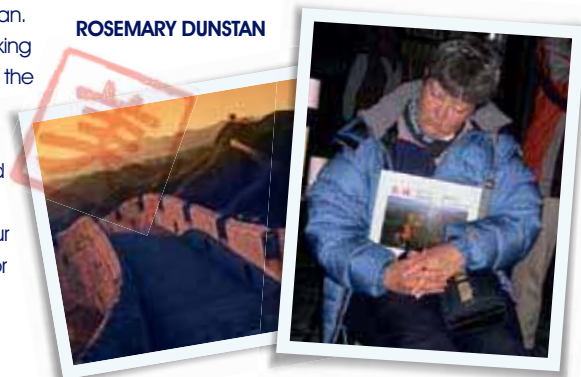
The Great Wall is magnificent and majestic, marching relentlessly through the Chinese countryside, and I'm grateful that I was able to experience it. The rest of the countryside is quite

ordinary. Beijing is a polluted and noisy city, with too many people and too much traffic. China's answer to its traffic problems is to build more roads, which is not really a satisfactory solution.

The trek was an experience not to be missed, and if I can raise money at the same time, then it's worth every aching muscle.

Thanks to everyone who has sponsored me, and if you haven't yet done so, it's not too late. Cheques should be made payable to ICR (that's the Institute of Cancer Research), or payment can be made online at www.justgiving.com/rosemary-dunstan

ROSEMARY DUNSTAN



■ Tired after trekking: village librarian Rosemary Dunstan

That Big Yellow Bus....

When you see the fish symbol on our community minibus you might assume we are a religious organisation, but in reality we are a local charity run entirely by volunteers, some of whom are believers and some of whom are not.

FISH Stands for Friendship In Sickness and Health. We aim to provide much-needed community transport for the sick and elderly, although anybody in need is welcome to use our bus and car services.

Our drivers take people to hospital appointments, clinics, dentists, opticians and to visit loved ones in care homes. People who cannot drive or cope with public transport use our services, which often provide a valuable lifeline at a distressing time.

From Sonning Common we serve Peppard, Gallowstree Common, Kidmore End, Binfield Heath and places in between. We number 30 in total. A team of volunteers mans the telephone and organises our services from an office in Sonning Common Village Hall. Many office volunteers generously double up as car drivers too.

Everybody at FISH volunteers because we like people and we enjoy serving our community. Other local villages and towns admire what FISH provides. It is a feature of our friendly village of which we can all be proud.

Last year we carried out more than 1,000 trips. In a typical month the bus covers 600 miles, transports 200 passengers on 17 trips with the volunteer drivers collectively contributing 80 hours of their time.

The bus's primary task is to take our senior citizens on shopping trips. We pick up clients from their doorsteps and assist them with heavy shopping. Clients can use a bus pass to pay for this service, but on some trips a small fee is charged.

We also do leisure trips to garden centres, National Trust properties and have monthly pub lunch and afternoon tea excursions. The fares charged for leisure trips help to fund the bus.

We need to replace our bus soon and a new one will cost nearly £50,000.

We urgently need more volunteer drivers, particularly car drivers, who will be paid a

mileage allowance. So, if you can spare some time and would like to help in any capacity, we would be very pleased to hear from you. ■

ALAN GOSWELL

FISH bus manager

Further information is available from:

FISH Volunteer Centre

Sonning Common Village Hall

Wood Lane

Phone: 0118 972 3986

The web site now displays the bus calendar: www.fishvolunteercentre.co.uk

■ FISH volunteer bus drivers. Back row, left to right, Alan Goswell and Roy Proctor. Front row, left to right, Peter Rickards, Ian Fraser and David Cunningham.



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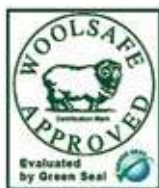
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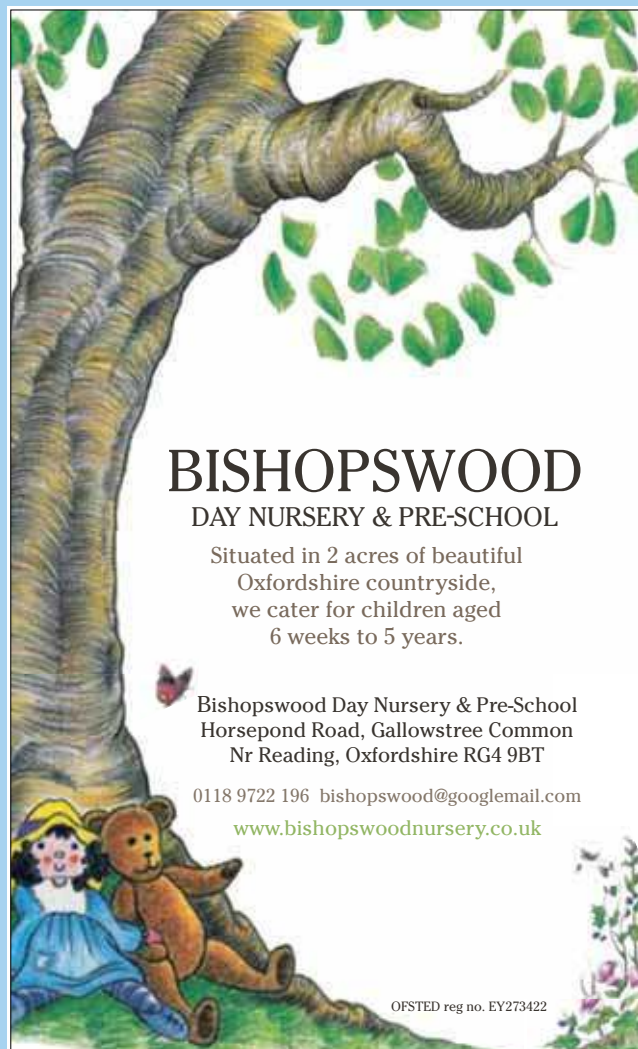
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BELOW FROM L-R:

- Helen, right, sister Justine and Mum Christine in Kuoni on the Ionian island of Ithaca.
- Helen, right, and sister Justine beside Sarina.
- Helen with her new son, Harry.



Last edition we left Helen James early on in her childhood sailing adventure, catching up with relatives near Rome. The next leg of the journey took Helen, her parents and sister Justine to the sparkling blue waters surrounding Greece and Turkey where they roamed free from the normal constraints of daily life. Here's a snapshot of what life was like for them then, in the 1980s, Helen aged 11, her sister Justine, nine.

"From Italy we decided to go to Corfu for the winter. This involved a two-and-a-half day crossing of the Ionian Sea with no sight of land.

At one point we thought we saw land - unexpectedly, in the middle of the sea. My Dad rushed to plumb the depths, thinking we had gone wrong somewhere with our navigation. When our plumb line failed to reach the bottom, our 'land' turned out to have been a whale.

We stopped in the main port of Corfu for water, with food on board but no money. While Dad was waiting in line on the quay for water, a man from an expensive motor boat tried to jump the queue.

With (not so) typical British reserve, Dad explained that this was 'not on'. The chap left in a huff and later on his wife came to apologise for his behaviour and invited us to their boat for drinks to make up for it.

Well, after a couple of rather large G&Ts, the next thing we knew we were being asked to look after the couple's boat, ironically named Dad's Boat', for the winter, and being offered more money than we could have hoped for during our stay. So, with finances secured, we berthed in the marina at Gouvia that winter.

To top up the wage from looking after Dad's Boat, Dad got work servicing and maintaining boats for a yacht charter company, while Mum and I cleaned the boats between charters.

Now, strictly speaking, working on the island required a permit, which we didn't have. So, between cleaning duties, my sister and I were tasked with keeping watch for any figures of authority to warn those working 'on the black'.

During our stay on Corfu my sister and I went to a Greek school for eight months. We had to mostly self-teach using the books we had taken from home, while learning to speak some Greek.

Thankfully, children aren't as xenophobic as some adults and play was always the common ground we could enjoy, irrespective of language barriers. So, we made plenty of local friends... and some, not so local!

One day, as we were settling into life in Corfu, a huge motor yacht appeared on the horizon on its way to the marina. Now, in Monaco this wouldn't have been out

of place, but in a sleepy fishing village, populated by small boats, this was BIG news. So my sister and I rushed to catch its ropes and help to tie it up, intrigued about its occupants and owner.

As it turned out the yacht, Sarina, belonged to music producer Robert Stigwood, the Simon Cowell of his day. Although Robert Stigwood was not aboard during the winter months, as neighbours in the marina we got on famously with his crew and they adopted us as junior deck hands.

We had never seen anything like Sarina before (millionaire's yachts were not places we normally frequented) and, as you'd expect, everything was spotless - even the engineers' white overalls! By contrast my dad looked like he'd been down a coal mine after working on Paddington's engine.

We were regularly invited aboard Sarina to enjoy some luxuries such as watching movie premieres of the latest films. At Christmas time they really spoiled us. There was a live turkey running around the deck, which later became lunch, while the Chinese chef made us handmade chocolates and silk puppets as gifts.

To be continued ...

Helen lives in Woodlands Road with her husband, Chris, and their sons Charlie, five, and baby Harry, who was born just a few weeks ago.

SONNING COMMON *Community Plan*

How it all began

In July 2007 a group of like-minded individuals met in Christ the King church hall to discuss the possibility of producing a parish plan for Sonning Common - to inform the future development of the village.

Little did I know, that three years later, I would have a garage full of questionnaires, carrying a wealth of information about our community, and that we would produce the report you have received with your magazine!

We officially launched in October 2007 with an open meeting in the village hall. We were delighted with the response from villagers and formed a number of working groups to delve deeper into the key areas of concern that had been identified - the village environment, traffic and transport and facilities for young people.

For the next 18 months, we made it our business to ask as many questions as possible to try to better understand the views of villagers of all ages and backgrounds.

We organised a number of events to publicise the plan and to garner further opinion and ideas. You may remember Inspire 08 for young people, our stalls at village fairs and at On Your Bike.

Or maybe you attended our Business Breakfast at the Herb Farm.

Having assimilated all this information we then needed to lock ourselves away and formulate the questionnaire, which was to be delivered to every household in the village.

This certainly proved to be the most challenging part of the whole process!

At the end of 2009 we were ready and armed with our questionnaires. We knew that we needed to get a very high response rate to give credibility to our data so that the results could be used to inform the future planning of Sonning Common.

It was pleasing that so many villagers responded to our plea for volunteers to deliver and collect the questionnaire. All our volunteers took the task most seriously and doggedly chased down every last questionnaire during the worst winter in years!

This year has seen the committee trawl through all the responses and compile a summary of all the data. We were most fortunate to have been joined at this stage by Mrs Heidi Davis of Peppard Common and by Mrs Diana Pearman of Sonning Common.

Once all the data had been collected, we invited the interested parties - South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and the police - to comment on the sections relevant to them. Then, finally, we sat down to compile a report of our findings.

We now need to hand the baton on so that all this hard work can continue and help take Sonning Common forward.

If you would like to use the raw data to help develop your business or organisation locally, or would like further information on how to take forward one of the issues raised in the plan, then please do not hesitate to contact me. See the leaflet for details.

Lastly, I must thank all my hard working committee members who have turned into great friends; they are Faith Lusted (vice-chair), Ros Varnes, Lisa Rees, Robert Matthews, Trish Selby, Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury and Douglas Kedge. Thanks also to parish councillors Jane Holmes and Alan Rooke who took turns sitting on the committee during its lifetime. ■

SARA CAPALDI
Chair, Sonning Common Community Plan

Community plan survey: the results

A remarkable 78 per cent of households returned the community plan survey:

- 60 per cent of respondents were women; 40 per cent were men
- 40 per cent were retired
- 70 per cent of households contained no children under 16

People's top priorities for action were:

- improving the village centre and general village environment
- improving parking
- and improving pavements and pathways
- Controlling housing and increasing policing were the other top priorities

- 82 per cent of respondents said the village centre needs to be re-modelled
- 68 per cent of households favoured a ban on parking in Wood Lane
- 68 per cent of households wanted a zebra crossing in the village centre
- 81 per cent of respondents wanted housing developments, if they occurred, to be dispersed around the village
- 54 per cent of people thought policing levels were poor or inadequate

Above is a summary of the Sonning Common Community Plan survey results. A leaflet, outlining the main findings of the community plan survey, is being distributed to all village homes with this edition of the magazine. See inside for details.

BELOW:

■ The Sonning Common Community Plan team. Back row, left to right, Douglas Kedge, Robert Matthews, Anne Symons, Faith Lusted. Front row, left to right, Lisa Rees, Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury, Sara Capaldi and Ros Varnes.





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Beauty therapist Janet Copp strives to give every client the level of good service she would like to receive herself.

Working from a converted room in her home in the village, Janet has been running Chiltern Beauty for more than six years and has clients ranging in age from 18 to 86!

She specialises in electrolysis but offers the full range of beauty treatments including aromatherapy facials, waxing, manicures and pedicures, eyelash tinting and eyebrow shaping.

She also does special occasion make-up for weddings, Christmas or evenings out and gives make-up lessons.

Janet is planning to offer a new spray tanning service from next Spring, in preparation for the holiday season.

And one current, popular and luxurious treatment - especially beneficial during the winter months - is her paraffin wax manicure.

Janet explained: "Thick, nourishing creme is applied to the hands followed by warm wax. Hand mitts are worn for 10 minutes and afterwards, the instant result is beautiful, soft hands. It's like a facial for the hands."

Janet has 20 years experience as a beauty therapist. After qualifying she worked full-time in a beauty salon for five years before moving into office work. She eventually became a successful information technology (IT) project

manager, but always maintained her beauty therapy work in the evenings.

She now works two afternoons a week managing IT for a Marlow-based training consultancy and the rest of the time concentrates on Chiltern Beauty.

She said: "My biggest priority with this business is to give people the best possible experience. I want them to feel special. I always try to provide the treatment that I would like to receive myself.

"I never do back-to-back treatments so that I always have time between clients and no-one ever feels that they are being rushed out.

"I enjoy this job because I meet a variety of people and it's rewarding to help people feel good about themselves. Clients know when they come here that they get me, and, working for myself, I know that I always do the job to the best of my ability."

One of the advantages of working from home is avoiding salon overheads, so Janet is able to keep her prices competitive.

Christmas is the ideal time to take time out to enjoy some pampering. To book treatments or buy gift vouchers contact:

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"I always try to provide the treatment that I would like to receive myself."



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Playing a part in local democracy

In May 2011, all parish councils must stand down for election. In some parishes the number of nominations will not exceed the number of seats available, and the places will be filled without a vote. This generates the possibility of complacency and detachment from the electorate.

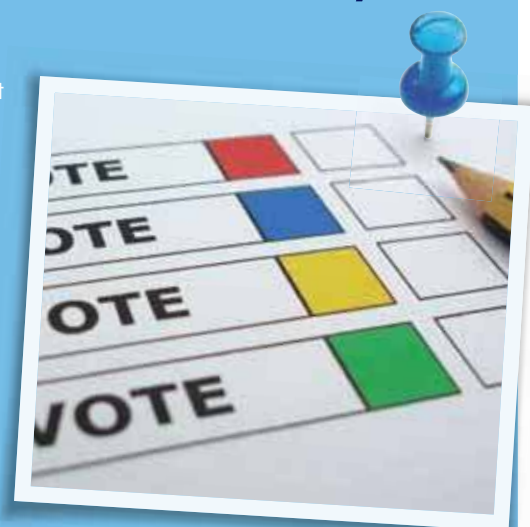
Vigorous, democratic parish councils are largely the product, I suggest, of having enthusiastic, informed local residents who are prepared to stand for office and to vote.

Considerable sums of taxpayers' money are allocated to parish councils and it is right that the work of councils and the contributions of individual councillors should be assessed by the electorate, and voting decisions made on this basis.

All council meetings (including committees) are open to local residents, who can have their say during the public participation sessions. Agendas and minutes are public documents, available for scrutiny on request to the parish clerk.

I believe it is in all our interests to be involved in making next May an important time for local government. ■

DOUGLAS KEDGE (Parish Councillor)
Lea Road



A brilliant performance from Nottakwire

On 23 October Dr Margaret Thomson, chairman of the Sonning Common and District Community Care Fund, and me were privileged to be guests at the Nottakwire concert held in the village hall.

We must congratulate the choir on a brilliant performance, which was also great fun. Congratulations too to Nottakwire leaders Margaret Moola and Elaine Williams who worked so hard to put on a very polished performance.

On top of this, they were very kindly raising funds for our organisation for which we thank them and the audience. ■

JOAN THORNE
Honorary Secretary
Sonning Common and District Community Care Fund

From a frustrated runner/jogger bored of the same runs

I was hoping that maybe other frustrated runners would write in with local runs they love to do. Here's one of my favourites.

Starting out fresh-faced and lycra-clad, go down Wood Lane towards the butchers - alas not the pub but Carl Wood's.

Turn left onto Peppard Road, go past the shops and petrol station and straight up the hill, trying not to slow to a complete standstill. At the top of the hill, (hiding the fact that you're wheezing), turn left into Stoke Row Road.

Fighting the urge to stop at the Unicorn, turn left into Wyfold Lane. Follow an undulating lane with great views on both sides and at the cross-roads, turn left into Wyfold Road.

At the end of Wyfold Road turn right into Horsepond Road (taking care not to get hit by speeding motorists) then immediately left onto Wood Lane.

Follow the road to the picturesque Kidmore End, then turn left by the pond into Kidmore Lane (ignoring the tantalising view of The New Inn). Then follow Kidmore Lane to the corner with Kennylands Road where you turn left and go back up Wood Lane again. ■

DEBORAH FIELD
Wood Lane
Amateur runner and mother of three (two kids plus one husband)





Let's act now to ease congestion in the village centre

I am sure many of you, like me, have noticed just how busy the centre of our village has become recently. And, of course, the situation will only get worse.

So, planned action from our parish council is needed now, before the situation becomes so dangerous as to be intolerable.

The proposed development of Lea Meadow may or may not go ahead, but I believe it is inevitable that development within our village will take place.

This, coupled with the development of surrounding villages, which depend on The Health Centre, chemist, dentist, Post Office and shops of Sonning Common, will considerably increase the amount of on-street parking and consequent congestion in our village centre.

We need more off-road parking to make the village centre safe again. I have identified three areas that could accommodate several additional parking spaces (I'm certain there are others).

Sonning Common Parish Council has a surplus fund in excess of £50,000. It holds this in trust, to be used for the benefit of the community.

I suggest the council needs to be encouraged to act now and use some of this fund to purchase or lease parcels of land close to the village centre for parking.

Less money in the parish coffers and greater safety in our village centre will benefit us all. So, I implore you to canvas your parish councillors and urge them to act.

Only if we become engaged and demand action will the parish council listen, and action is needed now – before the village becomes grid-locked. ■

JOHN STOVES
Woodlands Road

Watching the Neighbourhood

Hello Baskerville Road, Walnut Close and Smith Close.

I was asked and have agreed to become the Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator for these roads. To make it easier to distribute any relevant information, could those people who have access to email please send me their addresses? Anybody who is not into cyber-space, please drop their postal addresses through my door.

Thank you. ■

JOHN DAWSON
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Thank you for your support

I would like to thank all my neighbours and friends who have helped and shown such kindness during the illness of my late husband, Tom.

It was much appreciated by me and all my family. ■

CHRISTINE GIBSON
Bramley Crescent

Any spare wool?

If anyone has any unwanted double knit wool, would you please consider donating it to us?

We are a group of three knitters who make jumpers and blankets for children at a new creche in Kenya. The creche acts as a daytime home to around 400 children so we need lots of wool!

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Tom Fort

HERE WE GO AGAIN

At 5.15 this morning (1 November) I began writing a new book. I'd had the date in my mental diary for some time, viewing it with a familiar mixture of excitement and dread, the dread definitely on top.

Unfortunately, I had forgotten to notify my dear wife, who'd arranged for someone to come and make new shelves. There were words – warm words – and now the shelf-maker isn't coming, at least for a while.

The dread comes from the fear

– which visits each time – that no words will flow; or dribble for a while then dry up. The fear that they will be no good comes later.

But it's all right, this time at least. I did 1500 words by lunchtime. One tiny step on a long road.

I'm always interested in how other writers go about it, so here's how I do it.

I start around five each morning (it's the best time if you have that kind of body clock: children asleep, road diggers asleep, telephone callers asleep, car alarms generally exhausted).

I write in ball point onto lined A4, rather than tapping at a keyboard. The first draft is on the right side, corrections and rewrites on the left. Then it all goes into the PC for further revision.

Winter is the best time, because of the lack of outside temptations such as fishing, cricket, tending the fruit and veg, lounging in pub gardens and so on.

My office looks out on my shed, which comforts me but does not distract me. Apart from the occasional hyperactive squirrel in the hazel, there's nothing much to see.



I work until lunchtime and have a snooze after it. I don't write in the afternoon or evening, although I will prepare for the next day's slog by wading through notes and research material.

I go to bed early and usually dream about the book. With luck it will be pretty much finished by next summer.

So that's it: the writer's life. It's all very boring and I won't mention it again. ■

After Tom's tirade against muntjac deer in Beasts in the last edition, he received the following reader's letter:

Hello Tom,

I thought I would share some information with you about my efforts to deter muntjacs from visiting my garden. Although these animals are rather adorable, they are less appealing when munching the heads off my roses!

It was a chance conversation with a hairdresser that has allowed my garden to become a muntjac-free zone.

Apparently these lovely creatures do not like human hair and so I stuffed some (collected from the floor of the hairdresser's) into the feet of a pair of tights, stitched up the little parcels and tied them to my back gate which was the deer's entry point to my garden.

Magic - it worked. Since then I haven't seen a muntjac in my garden. However, after reading your article in the last edition of the magazine, I rather suspect that they have decamped to the Wood Lane/Grove Road area ... sorry! ■

Carole Lewis
Woodlands Road

Dear Carole

If only I knew when the beasts were coming in I would hang a huge bunch of girls' hair (mine is much too precious, as you can imagine). But their ingress/exit is still a mystery.

Tom

TOP 12 BOOKS

Sonning Common Reading Group has just celebrated its 10th anniversary with champagne and cake, followed by an intense discussion on the top books from the last decade. They are:

FINE JUST THE WAY IT IS Annie Proux

SUITE FRANÇOISE Irene Nemirovsky

A FINE BALANCE Rohinton Mistry

THE ROAD Cormac McCarthy

MRS PALFREY AT THE CLAREMONT Elizabeth Taylor

THE SIEGE Helen Dunmore

THE BOOK THIEF Marcus Zusak

NEVER LET ME GO Kazuo Ishiguro

LIFE OF PI Yann Martel

A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY J L Carr

THE KITE RUNNER Khaled Hosseini

LOVE IN A COLD CLIMATE Nancy Mitford

Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury

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A unique school: this is how Ofsted described Bishopswood Special School due to it sharing sites with local, mainstream schools.

Bishopswood Special School is for pupils with severe and multiple learning difficulties.

In a recent inspection, Ofsted viewed the shared sites as being unique and said they were used, "to broaden pupils' experiences and to ensure that the pupils are fully included in many stimulating and memorable experiences".

Ofsted was impressed by the positive comments made by the headteachers and parents of mainstream pupils and by the pupil interactions they observed.

Bishopswood head teacher Jenny Wager said: "Bishopswood governors are very proud of the school and of its hard working, gifted and dedicated staff.

"We currently have 33 pupils, aged between two and 16. All pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need. The children come from a wide area, from Wallingford to

Watlington and down to Henley, Shiplake and Sonning Common. Some children come from other local authorities, including Reading and Wokingham."

The school is split across three sites. During the early years/foundation stage, Bishopswood pupils attend Valley Road Primary School in Henley, where nursery provision has been rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted for the second time running.

Between the ages of five and 11, Bishopswood pupils attend Sonning Common Primary School. From here they enjoy many opportunities for inclusion in mainstream school life, including weekly music and PE lessons.

Bishopswood's senior department is based at Chiltern Edge School within the main school building. Again there are a range of opportunities for special needs' students to participate with mainstream students on residential visits and in reading schemes and sporting events.

Said Mrs Wager: "All inclusion opportunities and collaborative projects are planned jointly by Bishopswood and mainstream school staff

who are positive about the advantages for both groups of pupils.

"We believe there are advantages for everyone in this co-location model of inclusion. For our very special pupils, we believe it offers them the best of both worlds through the links with mainstream schools and through the specialist teaching and learning we can offer."

For more information about Bishopswood Special School visit: www.bishopswood.oxon.sch.uk

BELOW:

- Bishopswood pupils at a recent activity morning at the primary department.



Christmas church services

Christ the King, Sonning Common
St John the Baptist, Kidmore End

Dates and times of Christmas services:

Friday, 17 December

Service of carols and readings, 7.30pm,
St John's

Friday, 24 December

Christingle service, 4.30pm, Christ the King
Midnight mass, 11pm, St John's

Saturday, 25 December

Family eucharist with carols, 9.30am,
Christ the King

Family eucharist with carols, 10.30am,
St John's

We wish, at this time, to record our appreciation of the Christian fellowship we have enjoyed with Father Chris Bester, formerly of St Michael's Roman Catholic Church, during his time with this community. We will miss him – not least his participation in our Lent study groups – and we wish him a long and happy retirement.

The annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is held between 18 and 25 January each year. Look out for details of a local ecumenical service to mark this occasion.

On Sunday, 30 January, All Saints, Peppard, will join us for a united service at 10.30am in Christ the King Church.

Thank you to all those people who contributed to our successful Christmas fair in November. Our clergy and church members wish the Editor and all readers a Happy Christmas.

NEIL SCOTT

(on behalf of the Parochial Church
Council)

Springwater Church (Peppard
Congregational Church), Blounts
Court Road, Peppard Common

The new leadership team at Springwater Church would like to extend a warm welcome to everyone in the Sonning Common area. We would particularly like to invite people to the following events, in addition to the regular Sunday services at 10.30am.

Dates and times of Christmas services:

Saturday, 4 December

Carols and mince pies outside the CCA
shop in Wood Lane, 10am

Sunday, 12 December

Family Nativity service, 10.30am

Sunday, 19 December

Christingle service with carols and candles,
10.30am

Carols and cake, Sonning Common
Village Hall, 4pm

Saturday, 25 December - Christmas
day service, 10.30am

In January an Alpha course will start.
All are very welcome.

Saturday, 15 January

Alpha supper and introduction

Wednesday, 26 January

Alpha course begins

At Springwater we hold weekly/monthly meetings and gatherings for mums and babies, children, young people and many more. For more information please call 0118 972 4519 on Monday/Wednesday/Friday mornings, from 9am to 1pm, or visit www.springwater.org.uk

CHRIS MILLS

St Michael's Roman Catholic
Church, Peppard Road

At St Michael's we sadly said goodbye to Father Chris Bester, who has now retired. And we have welcomed Father Robert Devaney (Father Bob, as he is known) to our parish.

Dates and times of Christmas services:

Friday, 24 December

Mass for families with children, 6pm
Midnight mass preceded by Christmas
readings, music & carols, 11.30pm

Saturday, 25 December

Mass, 10.30am

Sunday, 26 December

Feast of the Holy family, mass, 9am and
10.30am

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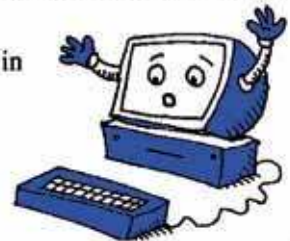
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Dec Jan

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TUESDAY 7 Chiltern Edge School – Grease. Tickets from reception or 0118 972 1500. (Until Thurs 9 Dec) Chiltern Edge School 7pm	WEDNESDAY 8 Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society – AGM Chiltern Edge school theatre 7.15pm	FRIDAY 10 Sonning Common Pre-school – Christmas fair & market Village Hall 3 - 5pm	SUNDAY 12 Art & Craft exhibition - Christopher Poynter Village Hall 10.30am - 5pm
MONDAY 13 Sonning Common Parish Council Village Hall 8pm	THURSDAY 16 Sonning Common Women's Institute - Sainsbury Singers Village Hall 7.30pm	FRIDAY 17 Carol service St. John's Church, Kidmore End 7.30pm	FRIDAY 17 Nottakwire practice & dress rehearsal Village Hall 9.45am & 2.30pm
SATURDAY 18 Nottakwire Christmas concert. Tickets £3 adult, £1.50 child. Village Hall 3pm	SATURDAY 18 South Chiltern Choral Society - Christmas concerts. Today and tomorrow. 7.30pm Sat / 2.30pm Sun. Box office: 01491 575727.	MONDAY 27 Sonning Common Society - Christmas walk Village Hall 10am	
MONDAY 3 FISH - Garden centre visit 1.30pm	FRIDAY 7 British Legion Tea dance Village Hall 2 - 4pm	FRIDAY 7 Nottakwire practice Village Hall 9.45am (Today and Friday 21)	WEDNESDAY 12 Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society - The incredible world of honey bees, by Steve Moll Chiltern Edge school theatre 7.30pm
MONDAY 17 Sonning Common Parish Council Village Hall 8pm	THURSDAY 20 FISH - Pub lunch 11.30am	THURSDAY 20 Sonning Common Women's Institute - Cuffy Sark, by Martin Woodgett Village Hall 7.30pm	FRIDAY 21 British Legion Tea dance Village Hall 2 - 4pm

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