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From the editor



Welcome to the autumn edition of Sonning Common Magazine. I hope you enjoy the mix of news and features we have put together for you this time.

Included is an update on the library situation, following another packed public meeting in the village hall last month when residents met with county council representatives to discuss the library's future.

Oxfordshire County Council is due to announce its decisions regarding library provision by the end of this year.

In Focus looks at the role of the Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in our community. Levels of crime in the village are also examined.

In Youth Zone, two boys talk about their experience of starting secondary school while one resident's collection of historical postcards provides an interesting view of the village's past.

We can always use photos from around the village - past or present - so if you would like to share some of your images, please do get in touch (sonningcommonmagazine@googlemail.com).

The hard-working committee of volunteers who run the magazine could do with a boost in numbers. If you are interested in becoming more involved with the magazine, please contact the chairman Geoff Adams for a chat (0118 972 2134).

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 Geoffrey Adams. Email: geoffrey.adams5@btopenworld.com
Phone: 0118 972 2134

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

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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PC Barb Taylor and Colin Boyes from the Neighbourhood Police.

by John Pearman

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Plea to protect the library service



Around 150 people attended a meeting in the village hall last month to call on the county council to safeguard the future of Sonning Common Library.

Oxfordshire County Council is proposing to cut professional staff hours at the village library by two-thirds and is expecting volunteers to fill the gaps.

An estimated 50 to 60 volunteers would be required to maintain the current opening hours.

Of the 43 libraries in Oxfordshire, the county council is proposing to fully fund and resource 22; cut professional staff by one-third at five libraries and by two-thirds at 16 libraries. Sonning Common falls into the third and lowest category of library provision.

Campaigners at the meeting, hosted by Sonning Common Parish Council, called the county's plans unrealistic and unfair, especially for libraries in rural areas, which would shoulder the majority of the cuts.

John Pearman, from the Friends of Sonning Common Library, said: "The needs of Oxfordshire residents living in rural areas are just not taken into account.

"We don't deny that cuts need to be made but they should be spread fairly across all

libraries in the county, whether they are in rural or urban areas."

County councillor Judith Heathcoat, cabinet member with responsibility for libraries, spoke of the need for the county to save £119 million from its budget by 2014, as the result of a cut in Government funding.

Reducing staff in 21 of the county's libraries, cutting back office costs and introducing other measures including self-service machines in larger libraries would save £800,000 per year - 10 per cent of the library service's annual budget - according to the county council.

Isabel Mulligan, a former Sonning Common Primary School pupil, spoke eloquently of the need to protect the village's library service. "My family and I have used the library for many years and we all think that Mrs Dunstan [the library manager] and her team are marvellous.

"I am worried that Sonning Common Primary School and the village won't be the same without a properly staffed library. I don't want people to stop reading and to lose such an excellent facility."

Year 6 pupil at the Grove Road school, Oliver Matthews, from Shiplake Bottom, also stood up in front of the crowd. He said: "I want our library to stay as it is. It's great just as it is now so please can we keep it that way."

Mr Philip Marples, retired headteacher of Sonning Common Primary School, appealed to the county council to consider reducing professional staffing levels at the library by just one-third as opposed to the planned two-thirds.

He said: "This library is on the school's campus and that helps everybody to keep costs down. The school still pays for heating, lighting, caretaking and the upkeep and that is a real partnership. I would like you to consider this very strongly and think of Sonning Common as a specific and special case." ■

*** Last month Sonning Common Parish Council, supported by the Friends of Sonning Common Library, put forward a motion to the county council. It called on the county to reconsider spreading cuts evenly across all libraries in Oxfordshire. And if that was not possible, to move Sonning Common up to the second tier of library provision, allowing it to be staffed by professional people for two-thirds of the time.**

Representatives from the Friends group were due to meet with the county council towards the end of last month to discuss the future of the library.

The public consultation on the future of the library service closed on 30 September.

WI campaign to love libraries

Sonning Common Women's Institute has pledged to support the village library, as part of a national Love Your Libraries campaign.

At a meeting of the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) earlier this year, 98 per cent of members agreed to launch a national campaign in support of threatened libraries.

Members have been asked to visit their local libraries and to encourage people to sign petitions and lobby the Government over the integral part libraries play in the life of communities.

Locally, WI members have been fundraising for the library by providing cakes, tea and coffee at Saturday morning story times. ■



A taste of Spain

A superb community event took place in the village hall last month. More than 70 people attended a splendid three-course Spanish lunch featuring tapas, pollo ala caswela and patatas bravas - all washed down with sherry!

The Spanish lunch followed the success of last year's French lunch. Both events were organised by Jill Vallis and Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury and were supported by teams of willing volunteers.

The Spanish lunch was a thoroughly convivial event and the friendly atmosphere enabled people to renew acquaintances as well as meet new people and hear about events in this thriving village.

As organiser Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury said: "Sonning Common is a place where nobody should feel lonely."

At least 12 community organisations were represented at the Spanish feast. Many people made an enormous effort to ensure the event was successful and it also raised £500 towards the village hall fund. ■

JOAN GRUMMANT



■ A group of residents enjoy the Spanish lunch in the village hall.

The hall is there for us all to use

I have recently become the new chairwoman of the Sonning Common Village Hall Management Committee.

Taking over from someone is never easy, but with routines set by Jill Vallis, the former chairwoman, and a lot of support from the committee, it has been fairly easy.

Small changes have been made and new equipment purchased such as a better First Aid bag, bright new floor brushes and bars on which to hang decorations on the end wall.

These have been used to display the clever and dramatic art-work done by the children at Sonning Common Primary School.

The new outside unisex public toilet is now open, which I'm sure will be a welcome relief for everyone!

The village hall is here for all of the community to use and enjoy and I hope that the future may bring more activities in which we can all participate.

If you would like to find out how to join the village hall management committee, please give me a call on 0118 972 2312. ■

SUE FRAYLING-CORK Chairwoman,
Sonning Common Village Hall Management Committee

Parish council update

Sonning Common Parish Council is now working towards becoming a Quality Council, which means that it will have to demonstrate that it is in touch with the community and is listening to people's concerns.

Six councillors have attended a refresher course to ensure they are familiar with current parish council practices and up-to-date legislation.

New fencing and safety gates have been ordered for the Churchill Crescent and Baskerville Road play areas with notices forbidding the entry of dogs.

At the request of the Village Gardeners, all the brick walls surrounding the flowerbeds

in the centre of the village and outside the library have been either rebuilt or repaired.

The parish council is working with South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) to find sites for the delivery of salt for winter gritting.

The unisex lavatory outside the village hall is finally open.

Parish clerk Philip Collings has reorganised the office and extended his hours. The official opening hours for the office are from 9.30am until 12.30pm on Mondays. But Mr Collings is also there most Wednesdays and Fridays and operates an 'open door' policy. A parish council letter box is situated to the right of the front door.

A dead tree has been removed from the

car park behind the Co-operative and a large tree to the right of the hall will be removed to give more light. At the request of the parish council, the Co-operative will replace an area of fencing and re-tarmac the footpath leading to the car park.


All land owned by the parish council is being registered by the Land Registry to ensure continued ownership.

A new sub-committee has been set up to manage Widmore Pond more effectively.

Councillor Gail Noble has volunteered her professional garden design services and is considering opening up Brinds Close Copse for the benefit of the village. ■

COUNCILLOR CHRISIE PHILLIPS-TILBURY

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Doing their bit for 2012

Two local WI members have been busy making pennants for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in London 2012, as part of a nationwide community initiative.

Sue Hedges and Beverley Porteous, from Sonning Common Women's Institute, created the pennants to provide two competing athletes with unique and personal mementoes of the Games.

Under the Quilts 4 London initiative, people around the country are aiming to provide all 14,000 athletes with individual pennants to exchange with one another as a mark of friendship.

The pennants can be created by groups, such as schools, Guides and Scouts, or can be made by individuals. A template is available from the Quilts 4 London website (www.quilts4london.org.uk) and the pennants can reflect different sports, the local area, heritage or culture in their design.

Sue Hedges, from Gallowstree Common, who made a river-themed pennant, said: "I wanted to make a small contribution to the Games. I decided to make a pennant that would sum up the local area with the River Thames and rowing at the heart of it."

All of the pennants from Oxfordshire WI members will be displayed at a WI Federation textile exhibition at Horton-cum-Studley, near Oxford, on 7 October, before being forwarded to Quilts 4 London. ■

BELOW: Sue Hedges, from Gallowstree Common, with the pennants from Sonning Common Women's Institute.



■ Lea Meadow

Campaign to protect Lea Meadow

Two residents of Birdwood Court have formed the Save Lea Meadow Support Group to oppose the building proposal at Lea Meadow next to the Herb Farm.

Suzi Primrose and her neighbour Julia Whitelaw live in homes which back on to the site and wish to protect the land and surrounding area from urbanisation.

They circulated leaflets to village homes during the summer, urging residents to oppose the plans.

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) is currently considering a second application from the landowner, Richard Scott, this time to build 80 new homes on Lea Meadow.

The public consultation period on the revised plans ended on 2 September and the target date for SODC to reach a decision on the application is 2 November.

During the first public consultation period - on the initial plans to build 105 new homes on Lea Meadow - around 160 comments from the public were received by SODC.

Eighty-nine comments have been received this time in relation to the latest application.

The vast majority of these are from village residents or users of village facilities. Ninety-seven per cent of comments oppose the second application. The main reasons mentioned are:

- urbanisation and density and scale of housing (in 81 per cent of comments)

- increased traffic and congestion in the village centre (in 91 per cent of comments)

- detrimental effect on services and utilities (in 78 per cent of comments)

A total of 26 per cent of commentators saw a need for additional housing and said new homes should be built on a number of small sites around the village.

Sonning Common Parish Council rejected the latest proposal at a planning meeting on 15 August, attended by more than 20 residents.

Reference was made to the Sonning Common Community Plan. A survey of residents, conducted in 2010, found that around 80 per cent of respondents preferred a number of small housing developments to a single, large one.

Ken Dijkman, agent for the Lea Meadow landowner, said: "We know that the district council needs to build more houses in the larger villages, and this village is one of the largest with the best facilities.

"This scheme puts houses where the minimum number of people are affected. Houses will be built on another site in the village if this application is refused. All the other sites back onto more gardens and homes and will affect more people." ■

Are the bulldozers coming?

By **DIANA PEARMAN**

In July the coalition Government published its draft national planning policy framework which proposes changes to the current planning laws with a bias towards 'sustainable development'.

The draft policy was greeted by a raft of media concern and opposition with claims that the Government was intent on concreting over the countryside.

However, John Howell, MP for Henley, insists: "The framework is about making existing policy simpler and more accessible."

Under the proposals, residents would be able to feed into the planning process by helping to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the area.

So what do we need to consider for Sonning Common? On the pro-development side people need new homes and will be attracted to Sonning Common due to housing development. This could breathe new life into the village and boost businesses and schools.

But, as the public consultations on the proposed housing developments for Lea Meadow and Kennylands Road have shown, many residents feel that the infrastructure is not in place at the present time to support more homes.

The planning application submitted by TA Fisher to build 50 new homes at the rear of Kennylands Road has been refused.

However, the developer has lodged an appeal against South Oxfordshire District Council's decision.

The revised proposal to build 80 new homes on Lea Meadow, next to the Herb Farm, is still being considered by the district council.

Meanwhile, the district council's new 25-year core strategy, covering transport and housing plans for the area, is being scrutinised by an independent inspector appointed by the Government. A decision is likely towards the end of this year and, if agreed, the strategy may be in place by 2012.

Rural communities need jobs, homes and a healthy environment. 'Sustainable development' hopefully means new construction that is good for the economic, social and environmental life of the countryside.

In Sonning Common we need to decide what that means for our community. When we develop our Neighbourhood Plan we need to give our views on where the new houses should be built. ■

■ Sergeant Barry Weston



Praise for a village son

Tributes have been paid to the late Royal Marine Sergeant Barry Weston who was born and brought up in Sonning Common.

Sgt Weston, aged 40, died in a roadside bombing while leading a patrol in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan at the end of August.

While he was growing up, Sgt Weston lived in Beech Rise but left the village when he joined the Royal Marines about 20 years ago. He had been due to leave the Armed Forces next year.

Family friend Frances Perrin, from Baskerville Road, paid tribute to the man she had known since he was a child: "Barry was a likable, cheeky sort of guy. He was very friendly and always lit up a room when he came in."

Sgt Weston, known to his family and friends as Baz, is a former pupil of Sonning Common Primary School, Chiltern Edge School and the Henley College.

He is also a former member of Rotherfield United Football Club, Kidmore End Cricket Club and Abbey Rugby Club in Emmer Green.

Sgt Weston lived in Plymouth and was married with three daughters. In a statement, his family said: "We are devastated by the loss of Baz. He was a caring, loving husband and son and devoted father. He died doing the job he loved and we are very proud of him."





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Sonning Common Primary School

100th Anniversary

In January 2013 our school will celebrate 100 years. There will be parties, events, displays and a book about the history of the school.

We need your help

If you have photographs of any event, buildings, class or team, documents or anything interesting from the last 100 years please get in touch through the library (Mel White) or school office or see our website: scps100.co.uk. Any memories (the earlier the better) are invaluable to us.

There will be boxes in the library and school office where you can leave contributions that you would be happy for us to display or copy – we will look after everything and return it to you.

Happy 100th Happy 100th Happy 100th

Leap into learning

The Oxfordshire Adult Learning service, based at Chiltern Edge School, is offering Saturday workshops including:

Beads and wire
How to use a sewing machine
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To browse or to enrol on 2011/12 courses see www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/adultlearning. Phone 0118 972 3362 for a brochure.

Join the lunch club

Sonning Common Lunch Club has a number of vacancies for new members.

Members meet in the village hall on the second Wednesday of the month to enjoy a lunch, prepared by volunteers, and to socialise. It is a friendly and relaxed club for residents aged over 60.

The club is also looking for a volunteer driver who would be happy to collect and take home three guests.

For further information please phone organiser Freda Buckner on 0118 972 2924.

Library news

The library ran special Saturday Storytimes throughout August which were a huge success, thanks to lots of community support.

I would like to thank all of the children who took part in the Circus Skills summer reading challenge as well as Matt Lovegrove for his balloon modelling; Val Harris and Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury for their story-reading; Maggie Brakspear for her face-painting; and Ruth Douglas who told children all about her experience of working in a circus.

Teenage volunteers helped on some Saturdays so thanks to Zoe Pike, Louisa Carlisle and Jake Smith.

There were also drinks and home-made cakes on sale to raise funds for the Friends of Sonning Common Library. A total of £116 was raised, thanks to the efforts of the ladies from Sonning Common and Peppard Women's Institutes.

I'd also like to thank all the parents and children who came to the library so often over the summer, and my long-suffering staff who are always supportive.

Saturday Storytimes are continuing at 10 o'clock and we hope to continue serving drinks on a self-service basis, for a small charge.

Rosemary Dunstan
Library manager

Bonkers about conkers

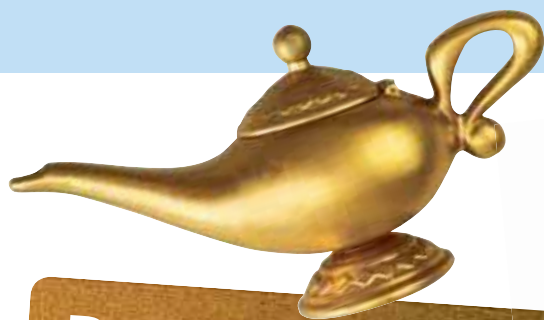
How good are you with a conker?
Put your skills to the test at the Lions' Annual Conker Challenge at:

Cross Lanes Fruit Farm, Mapledurham, near Reading RG4 7UW during the Apple Open Day on Sunday 9 October 2011, from 10am to 5pm.

The event is organised by the Goring, Woodcote and District Lions Club. In return for a £1 donation to charity, the Lions will provide participants with a fresh conker on a string. Then, let battle commence to find the toughest conker!

There will also be a wide variety of apples on show from the Cross Lanes Fruit Farm. Entrance to the fruit farm and car parking are free.





Panto time is here again!

ALADDIN – Hexagon, Reading
10/12/2011 - 08/01/2012

JUNGLE BOOK – Kenton Theatre, Henley
21-24/12/2011

MOTHER GOOSE – Oxford Playhouse
02/12/2011 - 15/01/2012

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS –
Wartermill, West Berkshire
24/11/2011 - 07/01/2012

CINDERELLA – Swan@Wycombe
10/12/2011 - 08/01/2012

CINDERELLA – Wilde Theatre, Bracknell
29/11/2011 - 01/01/2012

SLEEPING BEAUTY – Theatre Royal, Windsor
07/12.2011 - 08/01/2012

ROBIN HOOD – The Corn Exchange, Newbury
02/12.2011 - 02/01/2012

MIKI –
Norden Farm Centre for the Arts, Maidenhead
29/11/2011 - 31/12/2011

Can you help with distribution?

Thank you to all those readers who responded to our earlier appeal for help with distributing Sonning Common Magazine.

We now need to find a volunteer to take over the management of the distribution, since former distribution manager Geoff Adams has become magazine chairman.

The main task of the distribution manager is to receive the bulk supply of the magazines, split them into bundles and call on the five bundle deliverers to collect their batches. This usually takes about three hours.

In addition, there is the need to arrange cover for distributors due to holiday, sickness and other commitments.

Ideally the manager also maintains the database of deliverers and prints out the address labels for the bundles.

The distribution manager sits on the magazine committee which meets about six times a year.

We are also looking for someone in or near Churchill Crescent to deliver from numbers 33 to 64.

Please let Geoff Adams know if you would be prepared to take on this task six times a year. Telephone 0118 972 2134 or e-mail geoffrey.adams5@btopenworld.com.

Switch over to digital TV Correction

Some of you will have seen the note in the last issue that the switch over to digital television was due to have been last month, September.

This was only true for those households tuned to the Oxford transmitter of which there will be few, if any, in Sonning Common.

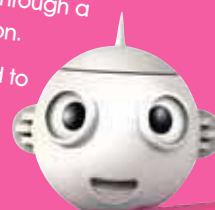
We apologise for this error, caused by inaccurate source information, and wish to thank those readers who contacted us to point it out.

According to Laurence Austin, of local TV sales and service company Austin and Harris, most of us will be tuned to receive either BBC South and Meridian or BBC London and London Tonight.

Those receiving BBC South will need to make the switch to digital television in February and those receiving BBC London in April of next year.

The change is only necessary for those people who receive their TV signal through a roof top aerial. Those who receive their signal through a satellite dish need take no action.

Mr Austin said: "You do not need to throw away a perfectly good TV set just because of the change. The purchase of a digibox will do the trick."



get set for digital ☒

New support group

A new social group to support people with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and their carers has been formed in the village. The group meets every Tuesday at 7pm in the Hare and Hounds pub in Woodlands Road.

The group plans to meet initially just to chat but, if successful, may go out together for meals and to live music gigs and local events.

Organiser Val Lunn said: "This is an opportunity for people affected by OCD to make friends in a caring and supportive environment, among those who will not judge and who will understand the sometimes strange rituals that rule their lives."

"The aim is to keep the evening friendly, fun and informal where everyone is involved in the organising. Friends, carers and family are also very welcome."

For more information ring Val Lunn on 07802 430392 or email vallunn@tiscali.co.uk



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Words and pictures: **JOHN PEARMAN**



■ PCOs Richard Howard (left) and Colin Boyes with PC Barb Taylor (centre).

POLICING THE community

In this issue In Focus looks at law and order in Sonning Common and the joint contribution made by both police and the community to crime detection and crime reduction.

The police are, of course, in the front line for enforcing the law and protecting property. But behind them is the Neighbourhood Policing Team, of which less is known.

Every neighbourhood in the Thames Valley Police area has a Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Most residents will be familiar with the small team of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), based at the police office in Lea Road - Richard Howard, Colin Boyes and Tim Forrest. They are supported and managed by a Neighbourhood Specialist Police Officer, PC Barb Taylor.

PCSOs have a different role to police officers. Their prime function is to undertake high visibility patrols and tackle local level crime such as anti-social behaviour, vandalism and nuisance.

Although PCSOs do not have the power to make arrests, they do have extensive powers in their own right. These include powers to issue fixed penalty notices, confiscate alcohol and tobacco, seize drugs, disperse groups and to enter and search premises to save life or prevent damage.

They also gather information for police and provide intelligence about crime and its perpetrators. PCSOs have radio access to police officers at all times, if they require additional support or assistance.

Although based in Sonning Common, our PCSO team also patrols Peppard, Kidmore

End, Harpsden, Shiplake, Binfield Heath and Dunsden - an area of some 10 square miles.

PC Barb Taylor, the Neighbourhood Specialist Police Officer, makes the point that PCSOs are a bridge between the community and the police and residents should feel able to talk with them freely, expressing any concerns or worries they may have.

Our PCSOs also take a proactive role in addressing community issues which affect the quality of people's lives.

One example of this would be the recent survey they carried out along Kennylands Road which identified concerns among residents about the speed of vehicles travelling down the road. Only five of the 60 householders spoken to believed that speeding was not a problem.

Previous attempts to slow traffic led to a vehicle-activated speed sign on the road. However, this has not deterred motorists so police will continue to monitor drivers' speeds and to discuss other ways forward with Sonning Common Parish Council.

So, if a PCSO comes knocking on your door to discuss some other issue of concern, please help them to help us all! ■

PCSOs may be contacted via the police office in Lea Road or by phoning Thames Valley Police on 0845 8 505 505. This number may also be used to report suspicious or unusual behaviour.

Police office

The Sonning Common Police Office in Lea Road was first opened to the public in 2003 and offers the following services:

- reporting of crime or suspicious activity
- production of vehicle documents
- lost and found property
- postcode marking of bicycles, mobile phones etc.
- general enquiries

Currently, 11 volunteers offer a front counter service and more helpers are always required. If you are interested in joining this small team and can commit to four hours or more each week, then please call into the office.

Also, if you have lost something in the village remember to check with the police office in case it's been found. Many items are handed into the office and never claimed! ■

How do we fare in the crime stakes?

What would you say if asked what the main type of crime committed in Sonning Common was? Burglary may spring to mind but the main crime is, in fact, anti-social behaviour, accounting for 44 per cent of incidents reported over the three months until July of this year.

The recently introduced crime-mapping website (www.police.uk) provides a quick and relatively easy way to see the number of criminal offences reported in any given area. The site allows for searching by area, postcode or even by individual street name.

Reported offences are broken down into six categories. The following are the crime figures for an area roughly equivalent to the circulation of this magazine and relate to Sonning Common, Shiplake Bottom and Blounts Court Road. The offences reported were:

Burglary	12
Anti-social behaviour (ASB)	29
Robbery	0
Vehicle crime	1
Violent crime	7
Other crime*	17
Total	66

(*Other crimes would include shoplifting, criminal damage, drug and sex offences).

It is immediately apparent that anti-social behaviour represents a high proportion of the total - 44 per cent, as we've said. Now compare this total figure with those for Henley and Reading for the same period.

Henley **293**
(of which 114 or 39 per cent were ASB offences)

Reading **2601**
(of which 833 or 32 per cent were ASB offences)

It is no great surprise that crime may be at least partly related to population and increased urbanisation in any given area. But similar levels of anti-social behaviour or 'nuisance' offences still predominate. ■



■ The Sonning Common Police Office in Lea Road

Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch is the largest voluntary organisation in the UK.

It is the best known and most effective example of the police and community working in partnership to reduce crime, build safer communities and improve the quality of life.

Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators are invited to attend meetings with local police officers to discuss any local issues or problems. They are sent police messages about crime in the area and receive crime prevention packs. Members may also be entitled to a discount on home insurance.

Neighbourhood Watch started in the village in 1992 under Eric Wyatt who retired in 2006. It is now run from the police office in Lea Road.

Currently, 63 watches cover around 95 per cent of residences. Only seven areas lack schemes: Farm Close, Carling Road, Old Copse Gardens, Maple Close, Elm Close, Red House Drive and Isley Close.

Mike Brennan is the Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator for the area. He said: "We believe Neighbourhood Watch, working closely with the local PCSOs and police officers, is responsible for the relatively low incidence of crime in the village."

If you are interested in becoming a Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator, please drop into the Lea Road police office or contact:

MIKE BRENNAN Area Co-ordinator
Sonning Common Group
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Meditation Evening

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(eg 10th October, 14th November)

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increase energy levels..."

Some things don't change

The world may be a different place to how it was 52 years ago when Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society (CEHS) ran its first autumn show, but the time and effort that goes into preparing for the show remains just the same. Here CEHS member Jo Stoves gives us an insider's view on what's involved.

The last week in August saw me pouring over the schedule for the autumn show. Chrysanthemums and dahlias - don't grow them, roses - over, courgettes - haven't got three the same size . . .

Then it's 8.15am on show day (3 September) and a group of dedicated helpers arrive at the venue, Chiltern Edge School. Tables are set up for the exhibits; green covering for flowers, fruit and veg, white for cookery and handicraft. Plant and produce sales' stalls and tombolas are organised, recently-polished cups arranged for presentation and the refreshment area is transformed.

By 10am 51 eager competitors arrive and start presenting their produce to its best advantage, arranging flower displays in

an adjacent room. Meanwhile, the show secretary and assistants check and double check entry records. Then a final adjustment and prayers are made before judging commences at 12 noon. The judges are very professional and they take their time. They measure blooms and runner beans, weigh marrows to find the largest, ensure entries conform to the schedule, taste cookery entries and write encouraging notes to exhibitors for future reference.

Just time to put up our feet now for a well earned cup of tea and a sandwich.....

The show opens at 2.30pm. Throughout the afternoon about 150 visitors view some 270 exhibits of a very high standard. There are some magnificent flower arrangements, two huge marrows, some enormous cabbages, polished onions and shallots, cakes, jams and bread, soft fruit, apples and pears, paintings, needlecraft, photographs and a wall full of colourful seahorses from the children of Sonning Common Primary School.

At 3pm John Howell, MP for Henley, arrives to spend time looking round before presenting the prizes at around 4pm. He tells us he enjoys gardening when he has the time, but admits to using someone to cut the grass and

hedges for him. He is very complimentary about our show and the standard of entries and has something encouraging to say to each winner.

With the raffle drawn and John Howell presented with a basket of fruit, veg and flowers grown by committee members, it's all over until the next spring show. Exhibits that have been envied during the afternoon are removed and willing muscle power dismantles the show. After a final sweep up, it's the end of a long but very successful and enjoyable show day.

You don't have to be a show grower to become a member of CEHS. An interest in growing things or just looking at other people's gardens is enough. So, if you are interested in joining the Society, please contact our membership secretary Sue Hedges on 0118 972 3678. ■



ABOVE:

■ Some of the home-grown produce on show.

LEFT:

■ The autumn show prizewinners. Back row, from left: Michael Wheeler, Jean Mason, Roger Parker, Ann Holt, John Howell MP, Grace Johnson, Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury, Sylvia Dickens, Frank Williams, David Smith and Martin Hedges. Front row, from left, Sylvia Newnham, Ilse Eve and Margaret Crush (seated)

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Fat cats are taking more of the cream

With reference to Leigh Rawlins' letter about our threatened library service (August/September edition), the proposed £490,000 to be saved by cutting professional staff from libraries is not a huge amount out of Oxfordshire's budget (and the figure is probably manipulated anyway).

When you consider how much the fat cats running the council are earning, a small cut in their generous pay (some earn more than the Prime Minister), their benefits, their expenses and a further cut in the unnecessary courses they are always going on, would easily foot the bill.

These fat cats are not only taking more and more of the cream but they are unable to move fast enough to catch any mice. If the fat cats want to cut our meagre services and reduce the level of educational support to the next generation then it's time we let them know how we feel and stop paying - or make it very difficult for them to collect - our council tax.

Our council tax is never cut in line with reduced services. We are receiving very few benefits for all the tax we pay in rural areas. ■

PETER OLDFIELD
Shiplake Bottom



A wonderful service from the FISH bus

I recently went on my first outing with the FISH bus, having secured a seat from the waiting list. And what a pleasant experience it was!

I was picked up from my house before collecting other people from around the village. It was interesting to find new roads in Sonning Common that I didn't know existed, although I have lived here for 26 years.

Once our bus was full and we were on our way to author Enid Blyton's former home at Bourne End, our driver was most helpful and informative, making for a very relaxed afternoon.

Everyone seemed to enjoy our visit to this garden, which finished with tea and homemade cake, before returning to our various addresses.

What a wonderful service for us 'oldies'. I shall hope to go again. ■

JANET WRIGHT
Essex Way

Let's see more wooden kissing gates

How much better of late to witness and use the new-style wooden kissing gates that are appearing on footpaths locally. They are such an improvement on the clanking, galvanised ones that warn off wildlife as soon as you use them.

The wooden gates are very welcome in our rural landscape. Let's see more of them. ■

JAMES WATKINS
Grove Road



Please keep the village tidy

We have an excellent street cleaner but he cannot always be on duty.

Like lots of residents in Sonning Common, I regularly pick up litter and put it in the nearest litter bin.

I am dismayed to find that most of it is child orientated - drinks' cartons and crisp packets as well as ice lolly and ice-cream wrappers.

Some adults still dump black bags by the side of the already full charity bin and fill the public bins with household rubbish which should be recycled.

The Village Gardeners are working hard to improve the look of our village, and judging by the compliments we receive when we are out gardening, people are pleased with what we are doing. But we want to concentrate on planting and weeding flower beds and tubs, not on picking up litter.

Please could all adults who read this magazine remind their children, grandchildren and themselves that the village belongs to us. If we don't look after it, who will? ■

CHRISSIE PHILLIPS-TILBURY
Woodlands Road

CHRIST THE KING – SONNING COMMON ST JOHN THE BAPTIST – KIDMORE END

We thank all those who collected for and contributed to this year's Christian Aid collection; the amount raised was more than £1,400 – a great result. Our thanks, too, to Eileen Pearson for organising the collection yet again.

Our discussion group, led by the Rev Barry Olsen, continues to meet on the first Wednesday of each month, at Christ the King, at 7.30pm. You can read about our discussions in the Lamb and Flag, our church magazine (there's a copy in the library).

Not everybody can manage to get to church on Sunday morning; parents of young children can find it particularly difficult. Little

Lambs is a friendly church group, which caters for children under five and their parents/carers. It meets at St John's Church, from 9.30–10.30am, on the last Wednesday of the month during term-time and provides a short service, craft activities and refreshments. Enquiries to Felicity Cooper on 0118 947 7862.

This year's 'bring and share' harvest lunch will be held on **Sunday 9 October**. Tickets are required.

All Soulside is when we hold a special service to remember dear ones who have died, possibly, but not exclusively, in the last year. This year's service will be held in **St John's, at 6.30pm, on Sunday,**

30 October. All are welcome, whether regular churchgoers or not.

Friends and family may light a candle in memory of their loved one. A list of names of those to be specially remembered will be read out. Names should be submitted, beforehand, to the Rector, telephone 0118 972 3987, or to one of the church wardens – Jenny MacGregor, 0118 947 2855 or Karen Broadbent, 0118 972 4606.

On Sunday, 30 October a joint service will take place at All Saints', Peppard, at 10.30am.

Remembrance Sunday is on **13 November** this year. Those wishing to attend the service at the

War Memorial in Kidmore End are asked to assemble at 10.50am. Following the service at the War Memorial, there will be a service in St John's Church.

Our Christmas Fair – a joint church/school event – will be held in Kidmore End School, on **Saturday, 19 November** from 12 noon until 3pm.

On Sunday, 20 November a service to mark the feast of Christ the King will take place at Christ the King Church at 9.30am. ■

NEIL SCOTT
On behalf of the Parochial Church Council

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Tom Fort

GROWING YOUR OWN

One of the many depressing things about coming home from summer hols is the state of the vegetable garden. It never ceases to amaze me how swiftly the order imposed with such tedious labour on my raised beds degenerates into anarchy.

Weeds sprout, lettuces bolt, slugs go ape. Climbing beans that were scarcely visible before you left have swollen into stringy inedibility. Courgettes smaller than your little finger have exploded into green monsters as thick as your leg.

The melancholy truth of growing fruit and veg is that you cannot

really afford to take your eye off them in the growing season.

Holidays should really be taken in the depths of dormant winter, or without you, neither of which tends to get much family support. So away you go, and inevitably you miss the best of your raspberries, your carrots, your beautiful sweet beetroot.

Nevertheless I continue to derive a pleasure from growing soft fruit and vegetables which is connected only tenuously with the produce itself. The labour of digging over, spreading manure and viciously attacking weeds is soothing and

beneficial. It is a joy to see the first gooseberries form, and a keen delight to squish the caterpillars intent on ravaging their leaves. Best of all is the opportunity your fruit and veg provide for boasting.

Have you noticed how gardeners always ask how your efforts are progressing but never listen to the answer?

If you tell them how well your carrots are coming on, they will tell you how they are already eating theirs. If you lament the failure of your leeks, they will email you a picture of theirs standing thick and tall and luxuriant. Mention



your onions and they will cup their hands to indicate the size of theirs.

So, thanks for asking: my beans and courgettes are flourishing, my autumn raspberries are wondrous, my cauliflowers are a source of grief, my leeks are a scandal. I am a happy gardener, if not a wholly successful one. ■

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'Thumbs up'

for Chiltern Edge

youth zone



Please help to support

our young people

I asked two of our local boys, Harry Sayer and Ed Drakeford-Lewis, about their experience of the first few days at secondary school last month. They had both attended Sonning Common Primary School and had previously visited Chiltern Edge only for sports events. They told me:

"We were a little nervous on the first day. But the fact that only the new year 7 children, and some mentors from higher years, attended school on the first day made it a bit easier. We were given a small map to help us find the classrooms and made only one wrong turn!

"Finding our way around has been much easier than we thought although going from one

teacher for most of the day to six or seven is a big change for us.

"We are in different houses for lessons and probably won't see much of each other during the day, but can join after-school sports clubs where we can meet up with other friends.

"The school has a tutor group system and we both like having older children around. All the students and tutors seem very helpful and friendly.

"Our headteacher, Mr Sadler, is teaching us geography which is a great way to get to know him quickly.

"In the first week, we both enjoyed English and science best as well as the snacks in the cafe, of course!" ■

CHRISTINE ATKINSON

Exam results

Congratulations to all the pupils, their parents and teachers at Chiltern Edge School for another set of good GCSE results. A total of 71 per cent of students achieved five and more A* to C grades. English and mathematics were included in this result for 56 per cent of young people.



■ Ed Drakeford-Lewis (left) and Harry Sayer.

Many people in the village will know that Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) withdrew support for The Edge Youth Club at Chiltern Edge School from the end of August.

The management committee, in partnership with Chiltern Edge School, is working hard to replace the youth club with a locally-managed and resourced facility for young people.

We have already secured a promise of substantial financial support from Sonning Common Parish Council and an application has been made to the OCC's Big Society Fund for set-up costs. The school is busy negotiating the transfer of the premises into our ownership.

Recruitment is underway for staff to run the club and we are hoping to open in the near future. The main stumbling block going forward will be finance and the management committee will be approaching local organisations and businesses looking for help with this.

We hope that many people in the village will be keen to see this evening provision for young people continue and will support us in any way they can. ■

DANIEL SADLER

Headteacher, Chiltern Edge School

JUNIOR

BOOK REVIEW

PERCY JACKSON AND THE LIGHTNING THIEF

By Rick Riordan (suitable for age 9+)



This book review was written by the Three Boys reading group - Scott Barnett, Alfie Ireland and Daniel Jordan - when they were in year 6 at Sonning Common Primary School.

The book is about a boy called Percy Jackson, who accidentally vaporises his maths teacher on a school trip.

It is set in the present time, but it is about the ancient Greek gods' kids: it turns out Percy is half boy, half god – his father is Poseidon. Zeus' lightning bolt has gone missing, and Percy's mission is to track it down before war breaks out among the gods.

Alfie says: "It is quite slow starting, but very exciting and full of adventures when it gets started. I would recommend this book to anyone who has already read Harry Potter."

Dan says: "Percy Jackson is a must-read for children aged 9-12 as it is both compelling and action-packed. I really enjoyed the bit where the minotaur attacks Percy, especially as he wins against all the odds. Once you start reading this book you won't be able to put it down – I read it so quickly it left me wanting more!"

Scott says: "I liked the fact that it was very descriptive and interesting, and has a lot of suspense and excitement. The bit I found the most exciting was when Mrs Dodds took Percy into a deserted gallery and then tried to kill him."

Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief won the Red House Children's Book Award in 2006, and is the first in a series of five books about Percy Jackson. All of Rick Riordan's books are available to borrow from your local library. ■

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HISTORICAL POSTCARDS

Looking back

Here images on postcards collected by one village resident provide a window on Sonning Common's past.



1. Brinds Corner in the 1930s.
2. Sonning Common Primary School circa 1950. It shows the car belonging to the then headmaster, Mr A G Miller.
3. Widmore Pond. The postcard was sent in 1917 and said: "It's lovely all round here. The air is beautiful."
4. The Well at Old Copse, circa 1919.
5. Stannard's, the first shop in the village, a general store founded by Fred Stannard in 1903 and now the premises of JDP Engineering.
6. Woodlands Road (posted in 1927).
7. Kennylands Road (dating indiscernible).



Oct

MONDAY 3 FISH - Garden centre visit 1.30pm	FRIDAY 7 Nottakwire practice Village Hall 9.45am	WEDNESDAY 12 Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society - Planting for winter colour, by Tony Clear Chiltern Edge school theatre 7.30pm	FRIDAY 14 Nottakwire practice (Shiplake group only) Village Hall 9.45am
FRIDAY 14 Chiltern Edge School Association - Family quiz night Chiltern Edge School 7pm	MONDAY 17 Sonning Common Parish Council Village Hall 7.30pm	THURSDAY 20 FISH - Pub lunch 11.30am	THURSDAY 20 Sonning Common Women's Institute - Cross Lanes Fruit Farm with Gill Franklin. Visitors welcome Village Hall 7.30pm
FRIDAY 21 Nottakwire practice Village Hall 9.45am	FRIDAY 28 British Legion - Tea dance Village Hall 2 - 4pm	SATURDAY 29 FISH Christmas cards & gifts sale Village Hall 10.30am - 2pm	FRIDAY 4 Nottakwire practice Village Hall 9.45am
SATURDAY 5 Sonning Common Women's Institute Autumn Fair Village Hall 10am - 1pm	MONDAY 7 FISH - Garden centre visit 1.30pm	WEDNESDAY 9 Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society - Undercover work, by John Negus Chiltern Edge school theatre 7.30pm	FRIDAY 11 British Legion - Tea dance Village Hall 2 - 4pm
SUNDAY 13 Remembrance Sunday service War Memorial, Kidmore End 10.50am	THURSDAY 17 FISH - Pub lunch 11.30am	THURSDAY 17 Sonning Common Women's Institute - Continental Chocolate with Bob Whelpton. Visitors welcome Village Hall 7.30pm	FRIDAY 18 Nottakwire practice Village Hall 9.45am
SATURDAY 19 Christmas Fair Kidmore End primary school 12 noon - 3pm	MONDAY 21 Sonning Common Parish Council Village Hall 7.30pm	FRIDAY 25 Nottakwire practice Village Hall 9.45am	FRIDAY 25 British Legion - Tea dance Village Hall 2 - 4pm

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