

# SC SONNING COMMON MAGAZINE



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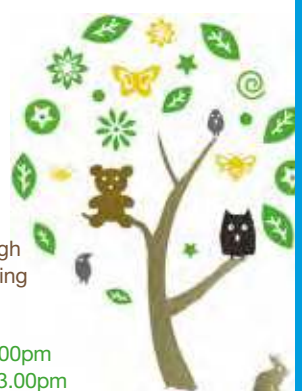
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# FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

This issue commences with the good news messages we received from so many readers, congratulating us on the National Magazine Award. The production of the magazine really is a huge team effort with many volunteers playing a part and they must share the honour.

In the grey days of February if you are feeling lonely and live in Sonning Common there is plenty to do. The library runs a range of clubs, there is a new exercise class, the churches have lunch dates, FISH will be running their trips and there is a monthly film show in the village hall. If you are not able to leave your home, make sure you have contacted FISH and someone will visit you.

Interesting stories in this issue, include Hearing dogs for the deaf, the history of Nepalese crafts (thanks to the workers in the One Stop), the 17th century Civil War's impact on this area as well as the celebration of all the Christmas activities.

I am sure you will notice that on the Parish page the increase in work load for the Council has incrementally grown to a considerable extent. They have taken on responsibility for additional buildings and activities, so these have added to costs. A breakdown is shown on page 23.

I hope the new year has started well for you. Please do continue to send in fascinating articles. ●



**Diana Pearman** Editor

Email: [editor@sonningcommonmagazine.org](mailto:editor@sonningcommonmagazine.org)



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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.

**SC** SONNING COMMON  
MAGAZINE

## MEET THE TEAM ...



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# A SHARED DELIGHT

*Many congratulations to you and the magazine committee on your top place in the national magazine competition. Not at all unexpected, but a splendid achievement nonetheless.*

**Congratulations and thanks to Diana and all those involved in the production and distribution.**

Wow! Fantastic news! Well done all

*OMG OMG!!! That's HUGE! Well done to everybody - amazing*

**Great news hey?**

Hopefully you'll be making a song and dance about it!!

*It's brilliant, SO exciting, so congratulations to all concerned.*

**That's terrific news - I can't believe it - and just in time to announce the good news in the next edition!**

We read in the Henley Standard yesterday of the Magazine's recent, huge success. Congratulations are due to you and the whole team, for such an outstanding achievement. We have always said that our Village Magazine is excellent in both design and content. Also, the fact that it is distributed free to so many households is marvellous.

*Please extend our warmest wishes to everyone involved - and long may you all continue.*

**I've just seen about the award in the paper, congratulations, you must be very proud.**

Have just seen the announcement on the SoCo Network!

*Congratulations to you and the team for being voted First in the National Parish Magazine Competition in the A4 category. Well deserved.*

**Well done on the 1st place!**

Just read my copy & was DELIGHTED to read that the magazine won the award this year.

*Congratulations*

**Many congratulations on being voted 'The Best Parish Magazine in Britain'. Well done to you all for the continued hard work on behalf of Sonning Common.**

The website now includes a banner for your award. Congratulations on that achievement!

**MANY CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU ALL!!**

*Well done for the national award. Thanks for all the work. Hope you have had a celebration.*



## GREEN SHOOTS WILL BE SEEN BY OCTOBER

In the Summer Term of 2017, Moira Green Headteacher at Chiltern Edge School committed to 'green shoots of improvement' being visible in the school by October of the same year. These 'shoots' were praised and confirmed in the reports by an independent consultant and a visit from Ofsted, in the Autumn Term.

Members of Oxfordshire's County Council voted for the school to remain open last November. The Save Our Edge campaign played a significant part in this decision 'the parents have done a wonderful job for the children at Chiltern Edge' praised Councillor Hilary Hibbert-Biles, cabinet member for education.

In the summer the GCSE results were better than the national average despite the pressure and uncertainty over the school's future. It was a great achievement for those students.

Miss Green stressed the importance of securing the school's future as it made it easier to recruit teachers and added 'There is still work to be done and we are committed to doing that. It has been a tremendous team effort to get to this place. Top of my list is making sure there is great teaching in the school, which leads to excellent outcomes for students'.

Discussions about the school becoming an academy are continuing with the Maiden Erlegh Trust. ●

**Moira Green - Headteacher**

## NOTTAKWIRE

Nottakwire held it's Christmas Concert in the Village Hall on 9 December. By a stroke of luck the snow held off until that night and a packed hall enjoyed a varied programme of not-so-usual Christmas music. This year our concert included three young people who live locally. Abby Geddes - singer; Michael Varnes - guitar & vocals and Jennifer Ellis - clarinet. They each performed their own individual slots between the four sets of songs from the singers and added another level of enjoyment for everyone assembled.

Margaret and Elaine owe grateful thanks to so many local people on whose support we now rely: Our Stewards- Alan Gibbon, David McKnight, David Rusman and Peter Rickards: Our Ladies Refreshment Team - Jill Grinsted, June Fisher, Margaret Warrick and Diane Soden - and the gentlemen of Nottakwire who gave their time and skill to both set up and dismantle the hall and staging and also transported necessities back and forth.

Nottakwire continues to grow and we have new members joining us next term starting on 12 January. We have really outgrown the Village Hall and will possibly be re-organising future formats for performances, in order to keep the singers in the centre of the village and to ensure that music remains accessible to all who want it. ●

**Margaret Moola**





# THE EIGHTH

**The eighth annual Christmas Day Lunch held in the village hall was well attended with 52 guests and volunteers sitting down together to eat a traditional Christmas lunch.**

We are enormously grateful for all the support that we receive both from local trusts, businesses, local shops and individuals who support and who all help to make the day so enjoyable.

A special thanks also to FISH volunteers who put their own celebrations on hold to bring guests to the hall.

We are hoping to keep going until our tenth year in 2020 but if this event is to continue beyond that date we need younger people to come forward to

organise ticket sales, printing and the cooking. It is a very satisfying and fun day despite the hard work.

This year was particularly noticeable how important support in the community is for those people on their own or with challenging debilities.

Many thanks to all our volunteers who make this day happen. ●

**Chrissie Phillips-Tilbury**  
**Jill Vallis**

## YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST!

**Get your regalia out for a very special tea party in the village hall to celebrate the Royal wedding on Sunday 20 May**



## KENNYLANDS ROAD OWN WINTER WONDERLAND RAISES £3,500

**The story of Sonning Common's Christmas lights.**



**When our own children were growing up we had a few lights that we put up outside every Christmas. Then along came the grandchildren so we bought a few more lights to decorate the house and garden**

It was in 2013 my wife said why don't we do it for a charity. She suggested that as Christmas is for children why don't we donate to Great Ormond Street hospital for sick children. So the decision was made. We were a little worried that the collecting box was at the gate but in all these years there has been no trouble, for which we are very grateful. The collection has gone from £600 in the first year to £3,500 in 2018.

At the end of each Christmas period we have a count up of the money and we take it ourselves to the hospital in London. We meet the children and their parents and then see why we make the effort for these sick children. It makes it all worthwhile.

We would like to thank everybody who has donated to the Great Ormond Street children's hospital. Thank you, thank you, thank you from John and Carole. ●

**John Lambourn**

## A YEAR OF CAKES, QUIZZES, FAIRS AND THE OCCASIONAL GLASS OF WINE!

**2017 was another successful year of fundraising for the Sonning Common Primary School PTA. Events have ranged from cheese & wine tasting, quiz nights, seasonal fairs and a host of other activities held throughout the year. Each event during 2017 has contributed to raising a grand total of £16,000 of much needed funds. This could not have been achieved without the generosity of the school children's families, local residents and the dedicated school staff. Thank you for your support, donations and volunteer time, all of which are vital in raising funds for our school.**

All the money raised goes towards enhancing the learning experience of our children at Sonning Common Primary School. In 2017, PTA funds have been used to purchase a variety of things including maths 3D modelling equipment, science resources, sports equipment and funding exciting science and technology workshops that bring learning to life.

Although fund raising is our primary goal, it is not the only aim of the PTA; we also want people to have fun. Life can be busy enough and leisure time in short supply, so events where friends and families can come together and enjoy themselves is also important.

As we move into 2018, we would like to give our thanks to the host of volunteers, the generous local businesses and to all who have attended and made each event in 2017 such an outstanding success. ●

**Wendy Perry**  
**Chair of PTA**



## FRIENDS OF SONNING COMMON LIBRARY

The FoSCL AGM of 2017 – our second since reforming -- was held in the Library in November. The chairwoman, Jill Hutchinson, outlined the main developments of the year; she said the FoSCL Quiz would be repeated while the committee are currently considering whether to have another short story competition. All budding young writers should "Watch this Space". A list of other events – including a rescheduled author's talk – is also being drawn up.

Jill thanked Lyn Smurthwaite and Dan Remenyi, who are both standing down from the committee after putting in lots of hard work over the last year. Lyn produced the beautiful FoSCL logo as well as posters and flyers for last year's events while it was Dan who encouraged the committee to hold both the Quiz and the Writing Competition. Jill gave a warm welcome to two new committee members, Clare Keen and Trish Rockell. The current members were all re-elected.

The audited accounts were presented to the AGM. Of the funds raised this year, more than £800 have been spent on new books – a list of what has been bought is available in the library. Rosemary Dunstan said she would welcome any suggestions for books she might buy – particularly in the adult non-fiction section. She thanked the Friends and her team of Volunteers, without whom the library could not function. Jenny Jones, the volunteer co-ordinator, echoed her words – adding particular thanks to all those who are willing to cover holidays and illness at short notice.

Rum punch, mince pies and nibbles were served in the Library in the week before Christmas – a perfect way to end 2017. Happy reading 2018. ●

Helen Fort



## FISH – BUSINESS AS USUAL

The Fish Volunteer Centre has moved temporarily

**On Friday 22 December a car moving at considerable speed left the road and crashed into the office of the FISH Volunteer Centre in Kennylands Road doing extensive damage to the building. Thankfully no one was hurt but the office was rendered unusable.**

Fortunately, we have been given temporary accommodation in the meeting room at Christ the King Church in Sedgewell Road, Sonning Common so it is business as usual, just from a different address. Everything, telephone lines, computer systems have been transferred and there is parking available in the car park at the front of the Church.

Contact us as usual on 0118 972 3986  
email [office@fishvolunteercentre.co.uk](mailto:office@fishvolunteercentre.co.uk)

We are extremely grateful to the Rector and Churchwardens for agreeing to give FISH a temporary home and may be at the Church for a few months while our normal office is repaired. ●

Clive Mills  
Chairman FISH Volunteer Centre



## THANK YOU TO CLUB SC VOLUNTEERS



**Club SC Youth Club volunteers were treated to celebration Christmas Dinner at Phyllis Court Club on Thursday 14 December. The dinner was donated by a retired business person to thank the volunteers for their hard work and commitment to the young people of the local villages.**

It was also a chance for the volunteers, who include the former Management Committee, to meet and exchange views with the Parish Council Chairman, Carole Lewis and the new Youth Lead Member for the Parish Council, Mika Rinta-Suksi. Also attending was Douglas Kedge, former Chairman and Philip Collings, Parish Clerk who helped me set up the Community Youth Club in July 2011 when Oxfordshire County Council closed all rural youth clubs. The Youth Club, which is sited in purpose

built rooms above Chiltern Edge Sports Hall in Sonning Common, has up to 80 young people attending the club over the two days (Tuesdays and Wednesdays) when the club is open each week.

At the beginning of 2018 it will be taken under the aegis of the Parish Council, who will deal with all administration for the club. The two Youth Leaders, Ruth Elwell and Sunny Smithers, both former volunteers, are very committed to making it a safe place for youngsters to be with friends and take part in the activities provided.

It has been a pleasure to help provide somewhere safe for the young people to 'hang out' and have fun for the past six and a half years. ●

Carol Viney  
Retiring Chairman of Club SC Management Committee



# HO, HO, HO! WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

**A cracking good murder mystery to welcome in the festive season staged by the Chiltern Players at the Peppard Memorial Hall on Saturday 2 December.**

The hall festooned with Christmas decorations, the tables all heaving with people looking forward to a great evening's entertainment and we were certainly not disappointed.

Written and directed by Rosemary House, compered by Tom Brabben, the tables strewn with multiple perplexing clues we were in for a challenging experience.

Staged almost completely in the round we met all the characters in the Pippard Garden

Emporium who were celebrating the company's 50th anniversary. However, after meeting and talking to them it became apparent it was not a happy ship, as each character told us their side of the story and then some!

It became pretty clear that Nick Pippard who ran the business was an unpopular man with a gambling addiction and a womaniser, with few people skills. So it was hardly surprising that it was he who met a very sticky end, bopped on the head by a large Christmas gnome. But who dunnit?

As we were comparing notes and trying to interpret the clues we were treated to an excellent chicken stew with the characters

circulating the tables and answering any questions we put to them.

After we had sampled a delicious lemon tart and were on to our coffee and mince pie the cast were open to any final questions for us to be able to name the culprit. After an assortment of answers the guilty party stepped forward and explained the reasons for such behaviour.

In case the evening is ever repeated that remains a secret! A terrific evening and thanks must go to all involved, the writer/director, the cast, the kitchen, the bar, FOH.

**What's in store for us next December?** ●



## SANTA RIDES AGAIN

**On 19 December, Santa and his Elves visited Sonning Common again. For the second year, a team of villagers helped arrange this event independently of any organisation, so that the children of the village would see Santa. The Lions group of Goring used to organise the Santa visit.**

Collectors walked approximately 4.5 miles around the village on a cold night for two good causes, Club SC and The Ways and Means Trust and £566.33 was raised

The children who came out to see Santa enjoyed sweets and stickers and we are grateful for the contributions received. The sleigh was brightly lit and baubles lined the street behind it as it travelled through the village.

Helen Coyne co-ordinator, would like to thank all those who helped with the event; Paul Jenkins-driver, Richard Mackenzie-Black, Craig Henderson, Alison Baillie, Karen Lowe, Mathew White, Matt Hopson, Maria Gallardo Diaz, Becky Jenkins, Zoe Shorter, Amanda Watkins-Cook, Howard Cook, Emma Ashleigh, John Lambourn, Martyn Cooper for loan of PA equipment and Kate Cooper for co-ordinating this.

Helen will be planning the 2018 visit in the spring. Anyone who would like to be involved would be very welcome. ●

**Helen Coyne**



## WHAT IS A PPG?

In Sonning Common we have a forward-thinking Health Centre, which includes a Patient Participation Group (PPG). These volunteers provide a link between patients and the Health Centre, to the benefit of both. It has recently been reformed and the members now reflect a reasonable cross-section of people to represent our local community. We meet every 6 - 8 weeks to discuss a variety of topics. Surveys have been undertaken to ascertain patients' needs. In 2014 access and information issues were identified. This resulted in improvements to car parking, entrance door, display of information (waiting room screen) and updating the new patients' booklet.

### PATIENT INVOLVEMENT

Early in 2018 we plan to have another survey, asking for patients' views on a variety of items and identifying local issues that will affect patients. Your comments will count.

### FUTURE PLANS

The Health Centre and PPG are exploring whether patients would be interested in events which could improve their understanding of health issues such as Dementia, Smoking, (National No Smoking Day is on 14/3/2018) and Nutrition. Suggestions are welcome.

### HOW TO CONTACT US

By email [schcpgg@gmail.com](mailto:schcpgg@gmail.com)  
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## Story time in the Library

Mothers' Day storytime and craft session  
 Saturday 10 March  
 10am  
 home-made cakes will be on sale

## Health Walks

If you're still struggling to lose your Christmas weight, why not give the Health Walks a try? It's good to wrap up warm and get out into the beautiful local countryside for a guided walk. The Health Walks timetable continues into the new year with a programme of walks to suit all levels of fitness: it's fun and it's free!

The timetable is available from the library, the Health Centre and the Herb Farm, or on the website at [www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk/timetable](http://www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk/timetable). If you'd like to talk to someone about the health walks, phone Colin Davies on (0118) 9722527

## Free taster event for over 60's

**Sonning Common Village Hall**

**Monday**  
 12 February 2018  
 10 am - 12 noon

(Please wear comfortable clothes and shoes to take part in activities)

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# RON WAS AN INSPIRATION

By ROS VARNES

**It was a true privilege to know Ron Brindley MBE, as a friend and neighbour. His selflessness and kindness were evident in everything he did; he thrived on helping people.**

Ron, who died peacefully on 15 December 2017 after a short illness, was an inspiration to many people. Few 96-year-olds are blessed with as much energy and motivation as Ron had.

Each day had a purpose for Ron and I think that is what kept him going, independent and capable up until the end. On every visit to him he reeled off all the things he had done and everything he intended to do.

Despite his many decades I don't think Ron ever really thought of himself as old. He didn't like to admit his age either. When asked how old he was he used to say, 'about 90', which I thought what a good tactic to employ!

His mind was as sharp as a tack. His memory was superb and he ensured he kept up-to-date with current affairs by having national and local newspapers delivered regularly.

Ron's mantra was, 'keep going', and he certainly did that, especially after his beloved wife, Betty, died in February 2015. The couple were happily married for 62 years – what an achievement!

Until a few weeks before his death Ron was still driving. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of every A road between here and Betty's native Edinburgh and used to enjoy discussing all the potential routes for

getting between A and B.

Ron and Betty did not have children, a fact which probably led to them adopting and being adopted by many families. The pair had a deep impact on numerous lives and their friendships stretched across the world, as evidenced by their Christmas postbag.

Ron and Betty moved to Woodlands Road, Sonning Common from Kidmore End in 2000. As well as getting immersed in the Sonning Common community, particularly FISH and the village's luncheon club, the pair retained their close links with Kidmore End, the St John the Baptist Church in particular.

For nearly 60 years Ron served the church in various roles, including as church warden for 25 years, and, until recently, as vergers, present at christenings, weddings and funerals.

He also did the church reading rota and delivered the Lamb and Flag church magazine around Kidmore End.

Other voluntary roles in retirement included helping at the Batten House day centre and being a FISH minibus driver.

Ever humble, no one was more surprised than Ron to have been awarded an MBE for services to the community. In his own words, "In 2000, something I never dreamed about and could not believe, I was awarded the honour of an MBE, presented at Buckingham Palace by Prince Charles".

That was Ron: not fully realising how special and inspirational he was but others recognised it. ●

**BELOW: Ron Brindley MBE on a Thames boat trip in July 2014.**



# THE HISTORY OF NEPALESE CRAFTS

In Nepal, the production of handicraft is an age-old practice. For the last 25-30 years, export of handicrafts has been growing. The development of handicraft helps the conservation of national heritage and culture of the country; which in return contributes to appease poverty by creating job opportunities. The handicrafts of Nepal are produced in a traditional way and this continuity has given the survival to Nepalese handicrafts, preserving their heritage, cultural values, aspects, and tradition. More recently, these arts and crafts have been one of the major exporting industries of Nepal, earning foreign exchange and providing employment to thousands of Nepalese craftsmen, artisans, promoters, and businessmen generating revenue to the government.

**Garments:-** Nepalese readymade garments, casual wear, funky clothes, cotton apparel, are getting more and more market demands for their quality and price.

**Felt:-** It is made by compressing and matting fibres together until they connect to form a sturdy fabric. Felt has a long history and is the oldest form of cloth known. Felt has been used in Himalayan cultures of Nepal as a material for clothing, footwear, rugs and even tents.

**Pashmina:-** Pashmina products are made from pure Nepal mountain goat wool. And they are very soft, light and warm. Nepali Hemp products like bags, purses, keyrings, bracelets, belts, backpacks, jackets, shirts, pants are in popular demand in lots of countries. Hemp is made from green Cannabis (Hemp) plant. Nepal's Cannabis Sativa is famous worldwide for its natural high and unique flavour.

**Wool:-** Nepal's woollen products are made by groups of women from the rural part of Nepal and also by small women's welfare organisations which help to support their wellbeing. Special yak and sheep wool are used to make the products.

**Handmade Paper:-** Handmade Paper Production is based solely on paper made from "Lokta" (Daphne), which grows at an elevation of 2000 to 3500 metres in the understorey of the forest of Nepal's hills. The paper is prized for its rough, attractive texture, its durability and its resistance to insects. Lokta paper has historically been used in Nepal for all government documents and religious texts.

**Singing Bowls:-** Nepalese Singing Bowls have been used for centuries for healing and meditation purposes. They create a range of sounds to restore the normal vibratory frequencies of diseased and out-of-harmony parts of the body, mind and soul. The sounds generated by Nepalese Singing Bowls are a type of energy medicine that promote healing from stress disorders, pain, depression, and most forms of disease.

**Metalcraft:-** Nepal metal statues coated in bronze, brass and copper is Nepal's oldest living craft tradition, dating back at least 1300 years.

**Leather Products:-** The pure leather comes from Nepal. Buffalo, sheep and goat skin are the most used to make

the products. Although the skins are processed through machines for best quality, the final products are handmade.

**Nepal Wood Carving:-** Wood carvings of Nepal are created by clans of Newars, the "old people" of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, gracing traditional architecture of Nepal since the 12th century. The oldest woodcraft can be found dating back to 1396. All the world heritage sites of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur have wood carvings on doors, windows, roof, all the ancient temples and houses are filled with wood carvings. The same tradition of wood carving is still alive.

**Wooden Mask:-** Religious masks are the cultural heritage of Nepal. Different ethnic groups have their own set of masks identifying and separating them from other communities and even the world.

In December many residents enjoyed viewing and purchasing these crafts from the village hall. ●

GAMBHIR RAJ KATRY





# SONNING COMMON AND ITS NEIGHBOURS DURING THE ENGLISH CIVIL WARS

## PART 2

Whilst Reading changed hands four times between 1642 and 1645, Henley remained firmly under Parliamentary control for the duration of the war. Bulstrode Whitelocke, local Lord of the Manor and owner of Phyllis Court and Fawley Court, organised a military presence which kept the town from King Charles. John d'Oyley, the Royalist owner of Greenland House two miles downstream, quickly offered the property to Charles, and its Royalist garrison held out until forced to surrender in 1644; the building was demolished to prevent Royalist reoccupation.

Henley was already a successful market town and river port, and during the military crisis of the 1640s its position as a vital river crossing magnified its importance. As early as October 1642, as King Charles and his army moved eastward towards London after the battle of Edgehill, Henley's inhabitants broke down the wooden bridge deck to prevent him crossing the Thames there. A newspaper noted that 'The Cavalliers are not a little vext at it, and 'tis said that they have sent a sharpe message to Henley, willing them forthwith to set up the Bridge, or they would fire the Towne, but the Inhabitants are resolved to stand upon their guard and are not affraid of their bigge words.' Evidently their defiance did

not prevent the Royalists visiting, as in November another newspaper reported that Prince Rupert had hung a suspected spy there 'on a tree neere the Bowling-ally' (at Northfield End).

The next bridges upstream were at Sonning and Caversham, both controlled by Reading, and when Reading was Royalist a fierce rivalry arose between it and Henley. Reading frequently sent cavalry raiding parties towards Henley, a mere seven miles if they avoided the probably well-defended river route and cut across high ground via Playhatch, Binfield Heath, and Harpsden. Although most military encounters would have occurred en route, in January 1643 a party of 'about one thousand horse, riding two and two on a horse', managed to reach Henley itself at 2:00 a.m. from the direction of Reading Road. In what famously became known as 'The Battle of Duck [Duke] Street', the raiders found themselves faced with a large Parliamentary cannon. A witness recalled that it was 'laden with one great shot, and two cases of shot, containing 120 Musket bullets ... we let flie, my selfe being within a yard or two at most when it gave fire, and saw the execution it did,' and the survivors fled.

Parliament also garrisoned Twyford, which also suffered from Reading's attentions: although subsequently burned by raiders, during winter 1642 it was protected by '[the] River, which through the

multitude of land floods, is now become unpassable.' After Duke Street, Prince Rupert approved a second attack in March 1643; however, the plan was discovered, and the Henley garrison was doubled by bringing in the Twyford troops and some from Wargrave. Almost certainly it was Whitelocke who organised this, so Henley's modern inhabitants have this previous resident to thank for preserving their ancient town from Twyford's fate.

Part 3 will give an account of Reading and its various garrisons during the Civil War, and how it was besieged by the Parliamentarians in 1643. ●

SERENA JONES





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# PLANNING

By **ROS VARNES**

**Planning and development issues in Sonning Common seem to be taking on ever greater prominence, so this In Focus feature looks at how the planning system works, our future prospects and our Neighbourhood Plan – opportunities and threats.**

People like living here so they extend their properties when they outgrow them; people want to move here because of our extensive village amenities, surrounding beautiful countryside, good road links and our proximity to Henley and Reading.

Developers see clearly the village's attributes. Land is valuable here and they are keen to secure a piece of it from which to profit. Additional housing is widely recognised as being required. So, what can Sonning Common expect to see in future?

## **1. Allocated sites within our Neighbourhood Plan to be developed.**

These include new homes on Lea Meadow, Bishopswood Middle Field (SON 2), along the Kennylands Road (SONs 5 & 6) Chiltern Edge Top Field (SON 15a) as well as major new sport and recreation facilities on Memorial Hall Field (SON 3). Sites have been allocated for 195 new homes under our Neighbourhood Plan.

## **2. Pressure from the Government to build more houses in Oxfordshire.**

The district's future housing development will be managed by the emerging Local Plan 2033 from South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC). Under this plan additional new housing targets will be set for Sonning Common.

## **3. A revision of our Neighbourhood Plan, taking into account our future housing allocation from SODC.**

Additional new sites for housing and development will need to be found, assessed and consulted upon before being included in our revised Neighbourhood Plan, which will once again be put to a public referendum.

Our current Plan was adopted by SODC in October 2016. We discovered its 'shelf-life' is only two years, so, by the autumn of this year the Parish Council

hopes to have a revised Plan in place to ensure that it remains current and helps to shape development, as residents desire. The Parish Council hopes to recruit some new volunteers to help with this process.

## **4. New applications for infill developments.**

Infill is classified as filling in gaps in an otherwise built-up frontage. This usually means garden development. We are currently seeing large plots being bought by developers, existing dwellings demolished and additional new houses being built in their place. We can expect to see more of this.

Infill development can be positive when adequate space is available for the number of new houses being constructed, the rights of existing residents are respected and parking and landscaping requirements can be met. New residents of infill developments may feel better integrated into the village community than they would if they lived on a new development on the edge of Sonning Common.

However, if unsuitable infill development is permitted it can cause over-development, be detrimental to the privacy of neighbours, cause traffic and parking problems and adversely affect the character of the area. Our Neighbourhood Plan contains policies aimed at protecting our village from unsuitable infill development.

## **5. New applications for amendments to and the enlargement of properties.**

Some alterations can be made to houses under 'permitted development rights', which are aimed at relaxing planning rules and making it easier for minor applications to proceed. SODC's Planning department should be consulted for more information.

## **6. Breaches of existing planning consent.**

SODC's Planning Enforcement team relies on the public to be its eyes and ears and report breaches of planning permission in the hope that action can be taken against unscrupulous developers.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

**Unless you have had first-hand experience of making a planning application to extend or build a property you may not understand how the planning process works.**

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) is our local planning authority and has a dedicated department responsible for handling all planning applications.

Often the first stage for people interested in making a planning application is to seek pre-application advice on an outline proposal from SODC's planners.

During this process planners will advise the prospective applicant on the suitability of the proposal, the site, proposed design as well as requirements for parking and landscaping. The impact of the proposal on neighbouring properties, local landscape and character issues will also be assessed and discussed with the applicant. Planners will then suggest amendments to the outline proposal, if required, prior to a formal application being submitted to SODC.

There are several different types of planning applications. Minor applications, for example, extensions to people's properties, or the construction of a garage/outbuilding, are usually classified as 'householder' applications. However, some proposed, minor alterations may not require planning permission at all and are allowable under a householder's 'permitted development rights', which are rules designed to relax the planning process. Certification is required from the local planning authority for such developments.

Major applications are usually classified as 'full' and a detailed planning application is required. Or, applicants may choose to submit an 'outline' application, which seeks to establish a principle for future development to take place with more detailed proposals to be submitted later.

Once a planning application has been formally submitted to SODC it is assessed against local planning policy, which includes the district's Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan (if one exists), national planning policy and Government





guidance. The planning officer organises a public consultation on the plans lasting for several weeks. Oxfordshire County Council's Highways department is routinely consulted along with relevant parish councils and neighbouring properties. Sometimes advice is sought from the police, countryside, tree and infrastructure officers, utilities providers, landscape architects, the Chilterns Conservation Board and Natural England among others, depending on the nature of the plans.

Sonning Common Parish Council's Planning Committee usually meets twice a month to consider the planning applications upon which it is being consulted by SODC. At these public meetings planning applications are discussed and assessed – often with the applicant, neighbouring residents and the press present. Councillors then return a consultation response to SODC recommending that the application is approved, refused or recording that they have 'no strong views' on it.

In most cases the relevant SODC planning officer will make and publish a decision on each planning application, taking into account relevant planning policy and the views expressed during the public consultation process.

However, sometimes there is a difference of opinion between the planning officer and the parish council as to whether a planning application is acceptable. Where a planning officer supports an application objected to by the parish council and often residents, the application is referred to SODC's Planning Committee for a decision.

Interested parties – the applicant, agent, parish council, public – have an opportunity to address SODC's Planning Committee at a public meeting, after which councillors will vote on the outcome of the planning application.

If the application is refused by SODC, applicants sometimes decide to appeal against the decision. Appeals are determined by independent Government inspectors, often following written representations from interested parties or by means of a public inquiry.

There are opportunities for the public to participate at various stages of the planning process from the time that an application is first lodged with SODC. Residents can register their views via SODC's website, attend parish and district council planning committee meetings, make representations to appeal inspectors and, of course, lobby their political representatives at parish, district, county council and Government level.

## SONNING COMMON SAYS NO TO GALLAGHER

### CROWDFUNDING TO PROTECT OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

**Your help is needed with funding a crowdfunding appeal to protect our Neighbourhood Plan and fend off an attack by a developer intent on derailing it.**

A Sonning Common resident has launched an appeal to raise funds towards the cost of fighting an attempt by Gallagher Estates to build 95 homes on SON 6, off Kennylands Road – instead of the 26 homes agreed by the community in our Neighbourhood Plan.

The crowdfunding initiative, launched on Friday 26 January 2018, will run for four weeks until Thursday 22 February. Donations may be made via [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/sonning-common-says-no-to-gallagher](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/sonning-common-says-no-to-gallagher) from 26 January. The target is £5,000.

Readers may recall that no sooner was the ink dry on the village's thoughtfully-constructed Neighbourhood Plan than Gallagher Estates threatened to ruin it by submitting a new planning application to build 69 more homes on SON 6 than had been agreed.

Gallagher Estates' blatant disregard for our Plan led to a successful campaign by the Parish Council and many residents to oppose the destructive planning application.

Two coach-loads of angry residents – more than 100 individuals – went to a meeting of South Oxfordshire District Council's (SODC's) Planning Committee to persuade councillors go against their planning officers' advice and refuse the application in March of last year. Local campaigners were convinced that, if

successful, Gallagher's proposal would have torpedoed our Plan before it got underway, setting a precedent for developers to ignore not only our Plan but many more like it.

Unfortunately, the threat from Gallagher Estates has not diminished for the company is now appealing against SODC's refusal of planning permission. The developer is determinedly pressing for 95 homes to be built on SON 6 – an important and beautiful green field separating Sonning Common from Reading's environs.

Gallagher's appeal against SODC's refusal of planning permission will be heard by a Government inspector via a public inquiry from Tuesday 10 – Friday 13 April this year. The Parish Council is lobbying for the inquiry to be heard at the Village Hall, in Wood Lane, to make it easier for residents to attend and participate.

Gallagher Estates is employing a top legal team to attempt to force through its proposal and overturn the democratically-expressed will of residents and SODC councillors. Sonning Common parish councillors are equally determined to protect our village and uphold our Neighbourhood Plan. The council is employing a planning consultant and barrister to help it make, and present, the case against Gallagher at the public inquiry. SODC will also be opposing Gallagher at the inquiry.

At the end of last year parish councillors voted to budget for £15,000 to be spent on fighting Gallagher's appeal. However, it is likely that the defence of our Plan might cost more, so extra support from residents is requested.

**Look out for further notices in the village about the appeal. Help to protect our Neighbourhood Plan! Contact Ros Varnes [deputyclerk@sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:deputyclerk@sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk)** ●



# WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

(INTERNATIONAL AND INTERDENOMINATIONAL)

## ALL GOD'S CREATION IS VERY GOOD!



The interdenominational movement of the Women's World Day of Prayer invites everyone to attend one of over 5,000 services being held on Friday 2nd March with the title 'All God's Creation is Very Good!' We will join an estimated 3 million people around the world that day in a service which has been written this year by the women of Suriname in South America.

Starting in Samoa as the sun rises, and ending as the sun sets off the coast of American Samoa, the service will have been translated into more than 95 languages and 1000 dialects as we are reminded that we have responsibilities in caring for this wonderful world we live in. With its vast rainforest and wealth of



resources, Suriname asks us to pray for conservation and the protection of wildlife, through an awareness of pollution, misuse and abuse, as well as for the situation in Suriname and concerns for the future. This is not simply

a day of prayer for women, but for everyone who cares about our world and those who live in it. For details of services in your area and for further information and resources, please visit the WWDP website: [www.wwdp.org.uk](http://www.wwdp.org.uk)

## HUSTLE AND BUSTLE AND CHRISTMAS CHEER

Over 200 people gathered in Kidmore End primary school at the end of November to kick-start the Christmas season. There was a variety of stalls selling everything from magic squares to craft items made in Kidmore End. A delicious barbecue supplied by Carl Woods of Sonning Common, mince pies and mulled wine helped to boost Christmas cheer and there were edible delights aplenty. Amongst all the hustle and bustle excited children got ready to meet Father Christmas in his grotto.

The fair was opened in prayer by the Rev James Stickings, Rector of the parish, after which Kidmore End choir gave a very jazzy performance accompanied by piano and drums to get the fair off to an energetic start.

A whole team of well organised helpers fronted up by Robert Heilbuth of the school association KESA and Jocelyn (Joss) Lynch representing St. John's Baptist Church Kidmore End with Richard and Ursula Walker from Christ the King church Sonning Common, made sure the day went with a swing.

Proceeds from the very successful event amounted to over £5000 and is to be shared between school and church. ●

URSULA ANDREWS



## LENT LUNCHESES FOR CHARITY AT CHRIST THE KING CHURCH HALL

At Christ the King Church Hall, Sedgewell Road, Sonning Common RG4 9TA we are holding three bread and soup lunches to raise money for charity. This year these popular lunches will all be on Mondays; 19th February, 5th March and 19th March all at 12.30pm. We will serve home-made vegetable soup, bread, fresh fruit, tea or coffee followed by a brief talk from a representative from the charity being supported that day. The charity on 19th February will be PACT (Parents and Children Together). Based in Reading it has been an adoption agency for over a hundred years and supports parents and their children experiencing such issues as domestic abuse, debt and mental health. On 5th March it will be Launchpad the local charity for the homeless and on 19th March our local South Central Ambulance First Responders. There is no charge for the lunch but an opportunity to give a donation to the charity of the day. ●

Booking is essential. Please contact Sue Nickson 0118 9724520 email [sue@suenickson.com](mailto:sue@suenickson.com).



## 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

In spite of heavy snow on Sunday 10 December Christ the King's stalwart congregation decided to carry on with its planned 50th birthday celebration. It was clearly the right thing to do and 55 or so brave souls came to celebrate and support the church. There was a profusion of home-made cakes and tea for all - free of charge.

After Churchwarden Karen Broadbent had given a short speech about the history of the Church there was the cutting of the centrepiece cake. And what a beautiful cake it was! Made by Karen herself, it featured the distinctive but beautifully simple, stained glass window in the Church.

Reverend James Stickings said a prayer and donations were given towards the purchase of a wheelchair for Charlotte Broadbent. All in all, it was a lovely successful celebration and altogether donations to the Church and for Charlotte's wheelchair totalled a fantastic £1,470.

Well done to everybody who contributed! ●

JOAN LAMPRELL AND  
SUE NICKSON



## ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

**Romero - Heartbeat of El Salvador.** A powerful portrayal of Oscar Romero who changed from someone who kept his 'head down' concerning the repression and human rights abuses of the government to its most outspoken critic. His outspoken criticism resulted in his assassination at the altar while celebrating Mass. Just over 100 people watched the performance, many from the wider community.

**The Advent service** was led by children from St Martin's, which opened in candlelight. A prayerful atmosphere was maintained and the church was full. A perfect preparation for Christmas.

**Pangbourne Silver Band** gave their Christmas concert and money raised went towards our Advent charity, 'Embrace the Middle East.'

### Lent and Easter services and events

14 February Ash Wednesday  
Monday evenings Quiet prayer and reflection  
Thursdays A series of talks  
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it's clear for all to see,  
The village gardeners working  
hard with every plant and tree.*

*The pond is a place of interest, and  
kids think it is "cool,"  
Heard a young child saying,  
"looks like a duck's swimming  
pool."*

*Then there's another place nearby,  
but fairly hard to spell,  
An amazing place to look at,  
called The Maharajah's Well.*

*Everything is catered for, you  
don't have to look low and high,  
There's a chemist, hall and  
surgery and they even have WI.*

*The charity shop is popular; the  
staff are kind and caring,  
Wondering what might be for sale?  
Just look at what I'm wearing!*

*There's shops and pubs and  
services, homes to buy or let,  
And if your treasured pet gets sick,  
you'll even find a vet.*

*It isn't even necessary to go to  
Reading for your shop,  
Just pop down to the village to find  
the very nice Co-op.*

*There are numerous clubs and  
interests for folks to get together;  
There's lots for them to see and do,  
no matter what the weather.*

*I often wonder where I'd live, if not  
around this way,  
Most people who have moved here,  
usually want to stay.*

*But if you think I'm missing and  
am nowhere to be seen,  
Well, that's because I'm from  
Berkshire and live in Emmer  
Green!*

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# Parish news

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## HOW YOUR MONEY WILL BE SPENT THIS YEAR

**When your Council Tax Bill for the 2018/19 financial year arrives it will show an amount included for the Parish Precept. This Precept is the money that your Parish Council has asked for to fund the provision of day-to-day services. The amount is always set in relation to Band D properties.**

**This year it was set at £64.73 per Band D home, or £1.24 per week, to produce £103,504. For the year from April 2018 we have set our precept at £77.68 per Band D home, or £1.49 per week, to produce a precept income of £123,847 to which we hope to add at least £14,500 from other sources. So for a Band D home we will be taking an extra 25p per week.**

**In addition to the Parish Precept the Council has a small amount in reserves – the result of one-off payments – which will be used to fund capital projects in the village.**



This is how your money will be spent:

**\*General Administration** covers the cost of running our Parish Office which manages all the other activities below. It includes salaries, computers, professional fees plus insurances, memberships and the cost of this page in every issue of SC Magazine. This takes 37% of our income (£51,030).

**\*Environment** includes street – cleaning, grass and hedge cutting, tree works, footpath maintenance, seats, bins, signs and various small grants. This takes 31% of our income (£42,313).

**\*Play Areas and Skate Park** – the maintenance of these important areas takes 7% of our income (£9,300). In 2018 we will be starting a programme to replace worn out play area surfaces to ensure that our play areas comply with safety standards. To start on this we have set aside £25,000 from our reserves.

**\*Allotments** – our 44 plots on Horsepond Road require a small subsidy to maintain the site which amounts to 1% of our income (£1,547).

**\*Village Hall** – we have taken back management of the hall and are making provision for it to cost 4.8% of our income (£6,622). We have set aside £14,000 from the hall's reserves for re-roofing the flat roofs.

**\*ClubSC** – we have recently taken on full responsibility for the youth club's operations. We expect it to cost 6.6% of our income (£9,156).

**\*Widmore Pond** – is now being managed by the Parish Office. There has been a partial clean-up this year and we are providing for 0.9% of our income (£1,200).

**\*Woodlands** – we have recently purchased the beech woods alongside

the Rotherfield United Football Club to preserve them for the community. We forecast costs at 1.1% of our income (£1,500).

**\*Village Centre** – This budget is for maintaining what we already have (plants and planters, winter works etc.) at a cost of 3.4% of our income (£4,750). We are also providing for future enhancements for which we are holding £97,663 in reserves.

**\*Memorial Hall Field** – the provision of major new sport and recreation facilities on this field, off Reades Lane, will become a significant investment for the village, starting in 2018. All costs will be met from reserves held for this project which currently stand at £294,976.

**\*Neighbourhood Plan Revision** – we are allowing for £15,000 to be spent from our reserves and grants from outside, amounting to 10.8% of our income.

**\*Planning Appeals** – to protect the village from predatory planning applications that threaten our Neighbourhood Plan we plan to fight the appeal by Gallagher Estates on SON 6 and to contribute to the costs of fighting the Emmer Green application by Gladman. We are budgeting £19,000 equivalent to 13.7% of income which will have to be found from our reserves and grants from outside. ●

# The Edge

HIYA! 😊

It's me Olivia. I hope you all had a fantastic Christmas and that you received everything you wished for!

Now it's that time of year again, the time of New Year's resolutions that you never keep, a time for fresh starts and a clean slate. However, this year, I have decided that no resolutions will be made. Instead, I am eager to try this type of mindfulness known as 'Feng Shui'. If you haven't already heard of this, you're probably wondering what it is. Well, in short, it's pretty much arranging furniture and various household items according to a diagram and it's supposed to create harmony in your home. For example: blue items should face north east to bring wisdom and knowledge.

I'm not sure whether putting objects in a certain place will bring you knowledge and wisdom but it's a fun way to decorate a room and who knows perhaps it does work.

## FROM MY RESEARCHING OF FENG SHUI, I DISCOVERED THAT:

- Blue items should be north east to bring wisdom and knowledge
- All things green should be east to insure family
- In the south east be sure to place purple for wealth
- Every red object should be south to receive fame
- The south west should contain all things pink for love, marriage and relationships
- The west of your room should be filled with whites to boost creativity
- Silvers and greys need to be north west to enhance travel and helpfulness
- Facing north should be all black items which will help provide luck towards your career
- Finally, all yellow things should be right in the middle to incorporate health

If this made no sense, here's a little diagram to help you out.

As well as a feng shui guide, on my search for household harmony, I found out that there are many rules on how to have a harmonious bedroom, here are my favourite/most helpful ones:

1. Avoid sharp edges
2. Purchase a head board
3. Nothing should hang above your bed
4. Your bed should not directly face the door
5. But your bed should never be in a corner

Now try doing these steps whilst following the Feng shui colour scheme and perhaps incorporate some Feng shui gem stones? Yeah, I don't think so...

I wish you all the best of luck for the upcoming year and I will also wish you luck if you're going to attempt some 'Feng Shui' in your home.





# CONGRATULATIONS MADELEINE!

Madeleine Staples has lived in Sonning Common since 2013, since which time she has been a member of the Reading Royals Synchronised Swimming Club. She trains anything up to 18 hours a week at her sport, (lots of late nights and early mornings!) including stamina and speed swimming, technical drills, routine swimming to music in the water and gym based strength work. She's worked really hard over the past 4 years, and this year all her efforts have been rewarded.

In the recent Synchronised Swimming National Age Group Championships, which took place at the end of November in Gloucester, Madeleine won a hat trick of Gold Medals and is now the Solo National Champion, the Duet National Champion (with her duet partner) and a member

of the winning Team Competition as well. All in the 12 and Under age group category.

Based on her results at this National Competition, she was invited by England Synchro (part of Swim England) to a trial for the England Synchro Squad on 6 December in Bristol. She spent a whole day, along with around 40 other girls of various ages from all over the country, being rigorously tested in both the water and in the gym.

Subsequently Madeleine has been selected to join the England Synchro Development Team next year, training with girls from across the UK with England coaches. We are more than proud and find her dedication at such a young age inspiring. It is a brutal sport, requiring swimmers to be as fast and strong as a speed swimmer, as flexible as a gymnast and as graceful as a ballerina - all done holding their breath while mostly upside down in the pool!



## CHRISTMAS FUN



THE DUKE OF  
EDINBURGH'S AWARD

I have been doing the Duke of Edinburgh's award for nearly 3 years now and throughout that time I have achieved many things, such as learning to canoe and orienteering. My latest achievement however was a fundraising event that I organised with the 1st Sonning Common Beavers, who I've been volunteering with for my silver award.

It was held just before Christmas - two hours of fun and games. We had a tombola, a raffle, a cake sale, and some home-made games, including guess the name of the Teddy, a coconut shy (baked bean cans instead of coconuts) and a lucky-dip. We also sold home-made fudge and Sonning Common honey, donated by friends in the village. As well as eating lots of sweets, the Beavers helped run the games and stalls while the Scouts showed people how to make bracelets.

I was amazed and grateful at the number of people who came and supported my event.

Not only did we raise £240.19 for Club SC, but the event enabled the Beavers to gain their Community Challenge Impact badge. This event would not have been possible if it wasn't for the Beavers, Scouts and their leaders.

KATIE FORT





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# TOM FORT VIGILANTE

Why, in God's name, do so many people park their cars across the pavement making it impossible for pedestrians, invalid carriages, wheelchairs and buggies to get by? It happens all over our village, but I notice it most in the village centre because that's where I live. Most of the offenders are shop customers nipping in and out, and their thoughtlessness is particularly irritating because more often than not - contrary to popular misconception - there are spaces free in the Co-Op car park.

I long to shout at them, let down their tyres, kick their doors in or snap off their aerials, but instead I act as an extremely polite vigilante. I ask them

with exquisite courtesy if they are aware of the consequences of their actions and if they would consider a different course of action in future. Mostly they say sorry and promise not to do it again.

Not always though. A while back there was a black car right over the pavement across from the sandwich shop. Two blokes in high-viz jackets and helmets came across with their sarnies and I pointed out the error of their ways. Ooops, sorry mate, the driver said and off they went. Next day, blow me down, same car, same place, same blokes, probably same sarnies. But different response.

"Your'e the \*\*\*\*ing \*\*\*\* who had a go yesterday," the driver said. I admitted I was. "Well, why don't you \*\*\*\* off and mind your own business?" I replied, gently, that I thought it was my business.



"Well you get away from my \*\*\*\*ing car you \*\*\*\*ing busybody". There was quite a bit more, in the same vein. Eventually, thinking the exchange had run its useful course, I walked away. "Yeah, well \*\*\*\* off you sad old \*\*\*\*", he said. The "old" hurt.

I didn't feel that I covered myself in glory. But on the other hand, I haven't seen them since, so maybe they did learn a lesson after all. ●

## COOK'S CORNER

By SANDY ONOFRIO

### GLUTEN FREE RED VELVET CAKE

160g brown rice flour /25g coconut flour/100g sorghum flour /100g tapioca flour/ 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

1 teaspoon xanthan gum/ 1/4 teaspoon salt /4 tablespoons cocoa powder, divided /240ml vegetable oil/300g caster sugar /2 eggs/185g jar apple sauce /240ml buttermilk /2 tablespoons red food colouring paste/1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 180 C / Gas 4. Grease and flour two 23cm round cake tins with gluten free flour. In a bowl, whisk together the all the flours, the bicarbonate of soda, xanthan gum, salt and 3 tablespoons of cocoa powder. In a separate bowl, thoroughly mix the oil and sugar add in the beaten eggs a little at a time. Stir in the applesauce and then beat the flour mixture into the wet ingredients, alternating with buttermilk. Mix the remaining cocoa powder with the red food colouring and vanilla extract to make a paste and add to the cake mixture. Pour the mixture into the prepared cake tins. Bake for approx. 25 mins. Turn out on to a rack & allow to cool. ●



### CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

250g cream cheese \* / 250g mascarpone cheese / 150g icing sugar / 1 teaspoon vanilla extract / 225ml double cream

\* can use 500g instead of mascarpone

Whisk together the cream cheese and mascarpone till smooth and fluffy. Add icing sugar and vanilla and beat again till smooth. Add the double cream in batches, whisking well between each addition until thick and creamy ●





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# INTERESTING FACTS...

Christine Atkinson

My husband works in London and, like many others, leave and returns home in the dark through the winter months. So we were so looking forward to the shortest day in December as the dark and lack of sunshine, is not good for your mental, or physical, health.

The day came and went and I thought - but it's still getting darker in the mornings!

Apparently, despite December 21 being the shortest day of the year, the sunrise continues to arrive later following that date for another 17 days... until January 7. The sunset also arrives a little later.

Therefore it's not until January 7, when the sunrise is a full 2 minutes later than on December 21, that the mornings again begin to see sunrise arrive earlier.

By then, sunset is 14 minutes later than on December 21, making the daylight hours longer by an additional 12 minutes, despite the progressively annoying stumbling around in the dark we have just endured for the past 17 days!

Following December 21, as the sunrise slowly arrives later over those 17 days, we add, at best, a mere minute of daylight to each day at sunset. By January 7 we're adding just two minutes each day to the daylight hours - one at sunrise and one at sunset.

After January 7, the days are getting longer twice as fast as they were between December 21 and January 7. By January 7 each year, it's like emerging from the Dark Ages!

**Roll on BST.....**



## MEN'S SHEDS

Years ago, before Men's Sheds were even heard of I tried to start a Shed Club in Sonning Common which some of you may remember. It consisted of blokes who were keen on old cars mainly although I did have other things in mind, principally some premises consisting of a workshop cum tea room where retired men could get together; work on cars, do a bit of woodwork, DIY, repair things, have a natter and a cuppa and help each other out. In other words, a practical social club for retired men. My effort petered out after about a year. I think it failed because we did not have any premises. I thought it was worth another go.

There is a successful Men's Shed in Reading, others in the UK and lots in Oz I have been told. This website explains the idea <https://menssheds.org.uk>

If anyone knows of any suitable local premises in this area I would like to hear about them. The essential features would be...

- A secure building with some parking or a yard
- Electricity and water
- A toilet or drainage
- Inexpensive with a long lease

If you are keen on the idea please contact me, or if you know of the existence of any suitable premises I would be grateful to hear from you. [SCshed@gmx.com](mailto:SCshed@gmx.com)

Alan Goswell

## FIBRE BROADBAND DELIVERY UPDATE

The superfast broadband infrastructure upgrade scheduled for Sonning Common has moved from being expected to complete last December, to the first half of next year. We understand this is likely to be very disappointing, and we wish to reassure that all effort is being made to have this work completed as soon as possible. For context, the programme has achieved it's 95% coverage target on time, but as part of a major infrastructure project which has delivered over 73,000 premises with access to superfast broadband, there are some instances where mostly engineering related challenges have not been overcome in time for completion by December. These instances are normally related to gaining

access wayleaves, high cost structures needing re-planning, collapsed ducts requiring new track (with commensurate traffic management notice periods), or in some cases a technology change where we are not confident the proposed new technologies such as Fibre to the Remote Node, will be properly deployed.

If you would like to have further specific information in respect of your location, please see our website map <http://www.betterbroadbandoxfordshire.org.uk/cms/content/postcode-checker-map> or contact us and we will provide you with all the information we have, and if necessary we can arrange a call in the new year to discuss this with you. ●

## OXFORDSHIRE CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP

### REGISTER WITH THE TALKING HEALTH NEWSLETTER

You can receive the Talking Health newsletter by registering with OCCG's online consultation tool 'Talking Health' and selecting the newsletter option - email to: [richard.mccrann@nhs.net](mailto:richard.mccrann@nhs.net)

The newsletter highlights initiatives and events taking place in our localities and among our partner organisations in the NHS, local government and in the voluntary and charity sector. ●

**NHS**

Talking Health

# WHEN DOGS BECOME THE EARS OF THEIR OWNERS

**The National Charity which trains dogs to alert deaf people to sounds they would otherwise miss – is actively recruiting dog-loving volunteers within South Oxfordshire and surrounding areas.**

So how did I become involved as a volunteer in the Breeding Scheme. Having seen an article about Hearing Dogs I decided to find out more about the charity as both my husband and I suffer with hearing loss. I booked for us to visit the headquarters in Princes Risborough on one of their regular weekly tours and we were so enthralled with what we saw and heard we immediately decided we wanted to become volunteers. Having had dogs in the past we knew a role involving a dog was what we wanted. Having listened to some of the volunteering options we decided that the breeding role was for us. WHY – because when the time came for the dog to be retired from the breeding scheme we would then be given the option to keep the dog.

Having previously owned a dog is obviously helpful, as you will have an understanding, of what is required as a responsible dog owner. However, having any experience of dog breeding is not required as you are given a very detailed information pack, and some actual in-house training sessions and lots of helpful tips from other breeding volunteers. You also have a Breeding Scheme staff member allocated to you and 24/7 support is always available in the event of a concern or emergency. Prior to the whelp you will be given every piece of equipment and materials that you will require for the whelp and the following period. You need supply nothing apart from your love and time.

The puppies are with you for their first

8 weeks and then go on to a volunteer Socialiser. Is it hard giving up the puppies at eight weeks old? Yes it is! You cope with lots of tissues and cuddles from staff and other volunteers. But the way you really cope is knowing that you have played a small part in a journey for that little puppy to eventually change a future Recipient's life.

Being a volunteer with Hearing Dogs is joining a large family of like-minded people. Whenever you go to the headquarters at Saunderton you immediately feel a sense of friendship and warmth. Everyone you meet has got a smile for you and greets both you and your dog. Plus, there is also the wonderful opportunity to sometimes meet and speak with recipients with their dogs and potential recipients. As a result, of being a volunteer, I have made good friends with socialisers and other volunteers. Maintaining friendships with my socialisers has meant I have been updated regularly on the puppies' progress, received lots of lovely photos and met up with them on various occasions.

In addition to this generally when out and about you will also have the opportunity, to speak with other people. Members of the public, shopkeepers, restaurant owners will generally show interest when they see your dog with its Hearing Dog slip lead and many will ask about what the dog does and what you do, giving you a fantastic opportunity to create further awareness about the charity. Not only does it enrich your life but when you have met and spoken with a recipient and learnt first-hand what it means to them to have a Hearing Dog you absolutely know why you do it and love it so much. ●

ROSEMARY EDGINTON

## Very special four-legged visitors

1st Henley Brownies were delighted to welcome – Teaka, Tandy and Archie, three Hearing Dogs, to their meeting last week.

The Brownies learnt how the dogs are bred, trained and how they help people with hearing loss. Rosemary and Joanne from the Hearing Dogs charity told the girls how the dogs inform their owners that the doorbell or phone is ringing and how the dogs wake up deaf children for school after hearing the alarm by pulling their duvets off.

Michaela Clarke, Leader of 1st Henley Brownies said, "All of the girls knew about guide dogs for the blind so it was great for them to learn about Hearing Dogs and what it is like not to be able to hear. The girls had a lovely time stroking and cuddling the dogs and they got lots of licks in return! The visit is part of the Disability Awareness badge which the Brownies will also learn how to spell their name out with the finger-spelling alphabet."

Rosemary from Hearing Dogs said, "It was lovely meeting with the Brownies. The dogs seemed to love all the attention and it's great that the girls now understand something about what the Hearing Dogs can do to help and change a deaf person's life." ●





# ABOUT THE CHARITY

**Hearing Dogs for Deaf People is a registered charity that trains dogs to alert deaf people to household sounds and danger signals such as the doorbell, telephone and smoke alarm – providing life-changing independence and confidence. Hearing Dogs provides a national service and no charge is made to recipients. Since its inception in 1982, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People have placed more than 1750 hearing dogs.**

Victoria Leedham, lives locally and works at headquarters in Saunderton near Princes Risborough:

*"I know first-hand how fabulous the dog-walking is in the South Oxfordshire and what great opportunities the local*

*area affords for training and socialising dogs. We already have a number of committed volunteers in the local area and are very keen to hear from some more! As long as you have a car, a secure, private garden, and enough time to train a puppy or dog on a daily basis, then we would absolutely love to hear from you. You really can make such an enormous difference."*

To find out more about volunteer opportunities, please contact the Hearing Dogs volunteering team: [volunteer@hearingdogs.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@hearingdogs.org.uk), 01844 348122 or visit [www.hearingdogs.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.hearingdogs.org.uk/volunteer)

**VICTORIA LEEDHAM**  
Volunteer Manager



Photos by Henley Herald



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# DIARY DATES

## FEBRUARY 2017

### Wednesday 7

10.30am - 12noon

Village Coffee Morning hosted by Sonning Common WI. Open to all. Village Hall

### Monday 12

10.00am - 12noon

Go active taster event. Village Hall

### Monday 12 2.30pm

FISH - Tea party. Village Hall

### Tuesday 13 7.30pm

Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society - "The Story of the National Garden Scheme" by Angela O'Connell. Peppard Memorial Hall

### Thursday 15 11.30am

FISH - Pub lunch

### Thursday 15 7.30pm

Sonning Common Women's Institute - "Wildlife on your Doorstep" by Tom Way. Visitors welcome. Village Hall

### Monday 19 8pm

Sonning Common Parish Council. Village Hall

### Tuesday 20 12.30pm

Snack and chat lunch St Michael's Church Hall

### Thursday 22

FISH - Henley Farmers' Market

### Thursday 22 2 - 4pm

Film Club for the over 50s. Village Hall

## MARCH 2018

### Wednesday 7

10.30am - 12noon

Village Coffee Morning hosted by Sonning Common WI. Open to all. Village Hall

### Saturday 10 10am

Mothers' Day storytime Sonning Common Library

### Monday 12 2.30pm

FISH - Tea party. Village Hall

### Tuesday 13 7.30pm

Chiltern Edge Horticultural Society - "The University of Oxford Botanic Garden - The First 393 Years" by Timothy Walker. Peppard Memorial Hall

### Thursday 15 11.30am

FISH - Pub lunch

### Thursday 15 7.30pm

Sonning Common Women's Institute - AGM followed by a quiz. Village Hall

### Thursday 15 7.30pm

Chiltern Players present "Rumours" a farce by Neil Simon. Peppard Memorial Hall

### Friday 16 7.30pm

Chiltern Players present "Rumours" a farce by Neil Simon. Peppard Memorial Hall

### Friday 16 7.30pm

Annual village quiz. Sonning Common Primary School

### Saturday 17 7.30pm

Chiltern Players present "Rumours" a farce by Neil Simon. Peppard Memorial Hall

### Monday 19 8pm

Sonning Common Parish Council. Village Hall

### Tuesday 20 12.30pm

Snack and chat lunch. St Michael's Church Hall

### Thursday 22

FISH - Henley Farmers' Market

### Thursday 22 2 - 4pm

Film Club for the over 50s. Village Hall

# ADVERTISERS DIRECTORY

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| Langley Arb (Tree Surgery) | 29   | Zero Dry Time               | 29   |
| Laurence Hansen            | 22   | (Dry Carpet Cleaning)       |      |

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

The programme of shopping and leisure trips for each month is published and distributed on 20th of the preceding month and bookings are taken from that date. Copies of the programme are available the FISH Volunteer Centre, Sonning Common Library, the Christian Community Action shop, Pet Country Supplies and on request from Carson's Chemist. The monthly programme of trips is posted on noticeboards in both Peppard and Sonning Common and is also sent to individual email addresses. If you would like to receive a regular monthly copy, please email [busmanager@fishvolunteercentre.co.uk](mailto:busmanager@fishvolunteercentre.co.uk) with the message 'bus programme please' and your name.

Details of all minibus trips can also be found on the FISH website [www.fishvolunteercentre.co.uk](http://www.fishvolunteercentre.co.uk)

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

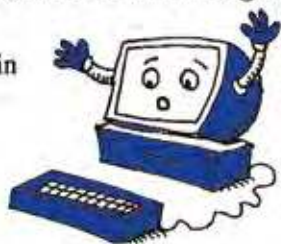


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