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**Editor:** Alison Leigh 07983 752 454 ([thevillagerbcs@gmail.com](mailto:thevillagerbcs@gmail.com))

**Chairman:** Anne Brooker 835109 **Secretary:** Angela Lewis

**Treasurer:** Kat Southwell **Advertising:** Martin Dix 07767 864735

**Assembly:** Shena Luck 834543 **Distribution:** Tony Guntrip 07754 690264

**Production:** Anne Brooker, Angela Lewis, Steve Luck, Jim Sanger, Susanne Tuffrey

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## Editorial

I'm sitting on the kitchen deck of my house looking out across the water to the city which is about to turn yellow and gold with the sunset. There's a delicious smell wafting up from my neighbour's back yard – there are prawns on the barbee (BBQ). It feels like a time warp. This is my house, but no longer my home. I am back in Sydney Australia where I lived for 30+ years, and like Robert Browning I'm having 'Home Thoughts from Abroad'.

We left Brightwell the first week of February. The garden was full of daffodils. Weird. We learn from our regular weather report (see p17) that February was 3 degrees warmer and 2½ times wetter than average. The weather has gone mad down under too with tropical cyclones becoming the norm and a mass coral bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef underway, the fifth in eight years. So sad.

It was exactly two years ago this April that Brightwell welcomed a dozen or so refugee families from Ukraine into our homes. We all thought the war would be over within 6 months, but sadly that was not to be. Rather than stay in limbo some of them decided to stay and move into rented accommodation, but most decided to go back. Where are they now? Find out on p12-14.

Those of us who worry that Reading wRiting and aRithmetic are long lost skills in this age of social media will be delighted to read about all the events held at Brightwell Primary school to celebrate World Book Day – not a day, it turns out but a whole week. As well as being encouraged to read, the children were given instruction on how to write poetry, see p9. I look forward to publishing some of their gems in future editions.

The young children in the village are doubly blessed because as well as having a wonderful primary school to attend they can start their education at the Brightwell Preschool. They rely on fund raising and volunteers to keep going, see p10-11 for all the ways you can support them.

And finally, a shout out to a couple of the village's nonagenarians – the late lamented Lionel Cooper who died recently aged 94 and Tony Vincent Isaacs who has just celebrated his 90th birthday. Both are splendid adverts for the old adage: you're only as old as you feel, see p3 and 5-7. The painter Francis Bacon said "Old age is always 15 years older than I am". With that in mind I wish everyone a happy Easter, especially all the ancient teenagers in the village.

*Alison Leigh*

## Lionel Cooper: 21/8/1929 – 13/02/2024



Lionel Cooper was born in Coleford in the Forest of Dean, Gloucester, one of 3 children bought up by their mother as their father died when Lionel was only 6 years old. Educated at Lydney Grammar School he began work as an apprentice cabinet maker and was then called up for National Service in Germany and North Yorkshire. He married Dorothy in 1953, and they had one son, Michael. He was a father, grandfather and great grandfather.

Lionel was a very independent man. He was much loved, someone who helped many people throughout his life. At one time he was a Parish Councillor responsible for transport. He pushed

through the 30mph speed limit for the road from Wallingford to Shillingford Bridge. He built the bus shelter for residents of the Shillingford Park Home Site. At *The Villager* we are grateful to Lionel for distributing the magazine in the Shillingford area. He will be sorely missed by family and friends.

## Community Association

### Village Quiz

A big thank you to everyone who came and supported the quiz again this year. I am very grateful to everyone on the CA team who arranged such a fun evening and to the Bells who set such a challenging and entertaining quiz.

Congratulations to the winners A-Z on their triumph in a hard one victory.

### Safari Supper – Saturday 18 May 2024

7pm – tickets £20 each

Yes, but what *is* a Safari Supper? It's basically a meal in 4 parts. Visualise a walk with a fork.

The evening starts at St Agatha's church with drinks and nibbles. Here each diner will be given a piece of paper with the name of the host and the address for the first course, and you head off.

Whilst you are enjoying the food you are given the next venue for the main course. And finally, you reach your last host for dessert.

You can circulate as one or two people but not groups as the idea is to enjoy meeting new people and get together with old friends. For full details please contact Lynn Burridge - [lynnburridge@gmail.com](mailto:lynnburridge@gmail.com).

### Village Fete – Saturday 6 July 2024 at Sotwell House

I am very pleased to say that once again Jennie and David Dobbin have kindly offered to hold the fete in their lovely gardens. Full details will be given in the next *Villager* but put the date in your diary and start looking in the attic for those previously loved treasures to contribute to the White Elephant Stall.

*James Davys*

## BcS WI News

I am writing this report in early March; the snowdrops have long gone but the daffodils still brighten up our roadsides and gardens, days are lengthening, and we are definitely looking forward to drier and sunnier days. Back in February we enjoyed a lively meeting listening to Sandrine Arnould on 'How the houses of Chanel, Dior and YSL influenced fashion in France and worldwide', thankfully in English.

As always, the March meeting is set aside for our Annual Meeting, this year to be followed with a lighthearted quiz. From April onwards we will be starting a new and exciting program of speakers, outings and activities. Already we are directing our thoughts towards visiting some of the 'Open Gardens' locally during the summer.

Coming up on the calendar are:

- 9 April – 'The ingenuity of the Victorian Household' a talk by Stuart Cummins
- 14 May – 'The Forensic Experience' with Hayley a former Crime Scene Examiner

On a general note, the WI online learning hub is up and running and members can now enjoy free online learning, in their own homes either alone or with friends.

As always, we meet on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. Please drop by to see what is happening and meet new friends.

*Karin Matthews*

## Meet .... Tony Vincent Isaacs

It's Sunday night in the Red Lion and I am suddenly transported back to the late 70s. A haunting solo on a soprano saxophone. Gerry Rafferty. Baker St. It's not vinyl, it's a glorious improvisation that is even more melodious than the original.

And the guy on the sax who is playing like an angel is about to celebrate his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Tony Vincent Isaacs.

Tony is a man of many talents: musician, writer, architect, but first and foremost a musician, although he's never been formally trained.



"I've never stopped thinking about music. There have been gaps through my life where for one reason or another I haven't been able to play but I'm whistling tunes all the time, it must drive my wife mad."

The love affair with music began when he was a child listening to the radio. "I learned so much about music just listening to the BBC".

Aged 10 he began playing the ukulele, then when he was 15 he teamed up with some friends who all shared a love of jazz – Louis Armstrong, Sydney Bechet and the like. Between them they had a trumpet, a trombone, a clarinet and a banjo and hung out on bomb sites where they could make a noise together.

Mention of bombs triggers memories of childhood. Tony was the youngest of 7 siblings, just 5 years old when war broke out. The family lived in Clerkenwell but they rarely slept at home because of the blitz. "It was terrifying. There were bombs every night." So every evening they used to walk down the road to the air raid shelter under the school scared stiff that their home might not be there in the morning.

Given the constant danger, his parents evacuated him and his siblings first to Lincoln and then to Norfolk. Ironically he almost lost his life twice in the 'safety' of the countryside, once when he fell into a deep well and was rescued by his older brother in the nick of time, and again when the same brother pulled him out of the way of a very angry bull that was charging straight at him.

He left school at 15 and got a variety of jobs: signwriter's apprentice, plumber's mate, stagehand at Sadlers Wells.

But then in 1952 he was called up to the army; these were the days of conscription. His great good fortune was to pass the audition to be in the military band, because he didn't want to be a soldier. "Those days were idyllic for me. I couldn't believe my luck. We played everything from popular songs to serious music and of course we did a lot of marching".

Postings to North Africa followed. The conditions were tough, stuck inside the garrison in Egypt, a massive circle of barbed wire in the desert where the heat was intense. He remembers playing in Port Said for the Queen's Coronation, worrying that the heat would make his clarinet go out of tune.

When he came out of the Army Tony did odd jobs until he went into a drawing office, which led to 35 years working as an architect.

During the sixties he was diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis, a painful condition caused by an overproduction of calcium which collects along the spine. The doctor prescribed exercise. Off he went to a yoga class and there he met his wife Barbara. They married in 1974. When their children came along they moved to Wantage, eventually moving to Brightwell in 2018 to be close to their daughter Adelle who was already living here, and to see more of the grandchildren.

In total he had 4 children, two with a previous wife and two with Barbara. Musical genes run in the family. His son Glenn is a serious musician who plays the guitar and his daughter Delinne became an opera singer. Life wasn't kind to Delinne. An accident on stage caused such a severe back injury that she had to abandon her stellar career, and aged 49 she died from breast cancer.

All the time that he was working as an architect Tony had a second career, writing lyrics for well-known artists. His break came when he was introduced to a man called Ivan Chandler at CBS music publishers who recognised his talent and asked him to write lyrics for foreign tunes. After that came a gig with the Swingle Singers, writing words to the music of Scott Joplin's *The Entertainer* and then the lyrics for their album 'Rags and All That Jazz'. A partnership with composer Christopher Bowers Broadbent followed. Tony wrote the libretto for two operas, one was about cricket of all things. It premiered at historic Gray's Inn in the same room that *Comedy of Errors* was first performed in 1594. \*\*\*

Tony writes poems as well as lyrics; some have been published in *The Villager*. He wrote his first poem when he was a plumber's mate. In 1990 he won a prize in a national poetry competition. Simon Armitage, the current poet laureate was one of the judges.

Before we close I have to ask: what's good about being old, and what's bad?

“Bad? The body doing what you don't want it to do and not doing what you do want it to do” he laughs. And what’s good? “Being a grandparent. It's the pure joy of seeing the children born and developing.”

*Alison Leigh*

\*\*\*Tony would love to revive the cricket opera and is looking for places to stage it. Perhaps at the Corn Exchange? All ideas welcome. Meanwhile he now plays regularly at the Red Lion accompanied by Martin Dix on guitar. They are really good. Be sure to go and hear them.

## Brightwell Supporting Refugees (BSR)

Thank you to all our supporters for continuing to come to our events and donating to BSR. We ended the 2023 year with a total annual income of just over £18,000 enabling us to distribute more than £16,500 in grants to our various projects, in Jordan, Uganda/South Sudan and here at home in Oxfordshire. If you read this before our AGM on **Wednesday 27 March**, then do come along and hear more of what we are doing (7.30 pm in St Agatha’s Church Room).

### Hope School, Amman:

As many of you know, one of our ongoing commitments is to support students at the Hope school in Amman, Jordan which has refugee children from a range of countries in the Middle East. We fund two teachers at the school and are hoping to fund a third this year to help with secondary education which is being introduced. Refugee families struggle to make ends meet, so supporting some of their hygiene needs is incredibly important. We responded to a request from the school for family hygiene packs and lessons to the children on best practice. See our Facebook page for pictures of the children learning how to use them.

### Give Directly

Following up on a very informative talk in January by Grace Jackson on her earlier career (and some amazing adventures!) in Africa with the FCO and currently with Give Directly, we have donated recently to their work with refugees in Kenya and Uganda. Give Directly is a global charity which sends funds to people living in poverty in the form of cash transfers with no strings attached. It has been shown to be a successful way of helping people on their journey to self-reliance.

We also continue to support Asylum Welcome, a local charity which gives practical support to asylum seekers, refugees and vulnerable migrants living in Oxfordshire.

## Events

A very successful dinner and music evening - Eats and Beats - was held in early March in the Village Hall (thanks to Anthony Finn for cover pic). A big thank you to Caroline Oakley and her cooking team and Martin Dix whose ensemble provided the music, and also to all the helpers and musicians who made it such a success.

Our next event will be a presentation by Polly Vacher - ‘*Wings around the World*’. Polly is known to many of you for her intrepid round-the-world flying and skydiving as well as her support to Ukrainian refugees in North Moreton. Some of the funds raised will go to the Red Cross Ukrainian Appeal. It is on **Friday 5 April** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. Tickets are available from the shop.

## New email

We have a new email address, [bsr@bsr-charity.org](mailto:bsr@bsr-charity.org), set up as part of work we have been doing to improve our communication processes. This sits alongside our website – [www.bsr-charity.org](http://www.bsr-charity.org) and our Facebook Page - Brightwell Supporting Refugees, where you can keep updated with BSR news.

*Helen Connor and Ann Linton, co-chairs of BSR Trustees*

## Community Orchard: New trees in new gardens

The Winter Tree Project went really well, with 15 villagers taking up the offer to plant a new apple or pear tree in their garden. We now have trees in new parts of the village - Greenmere, High Road, Kings Orchard, West End, Datchet Green, Brightwell Street and two in Church Lane. We chose old varieties like Rosemary Russet (1831) as well as new varieties like Surprize (2017) (yes, it is spelt with a z). Modern varieties will be the heritage ones of the future and these trees could live for 50 years. Some orchards in the village are over 100 years old.

The new trees are Elstar 1972, Rosemary Russet 1831, Rosette 2011, Scrumptious 1980, Arthur Turner 1915, Surprize 2017, James Grieve 1893, Sunset 1918, Red Windsor 1985, Herefordshire Russet 2000 and Fiesta 1972.

*Alison Bloomfield*

## BcS CofE Primary School

Unbelievably, we are now half way through another school year – but we have absolutely no plans to slow down when it comes to what we are doing here at Brightwell Primary School!

This week in particular has been absolutely jam-packed with everything book related in order to celebrate World Book Day, which was held on Thursday 7 March. We are passionate about instilling a love of reading into our children as it opens up so many different worlds for them to explore so we wanted to make sure that everyone had a week to remember.

Our events actually kicked off last week when we welcomed our friends from the Wallingford Book Shop in to hold a book fair and give the children the opportunity to buy some wonderful new books – and in return, the school also received 20 books of our own to add to our library for everyone to enjoy! We also teamed up with Wallingford Library who very kindly hosted our Reception and Key Stage 1 children for an afternoon, which allowed them to listen to a fabulous story before being given the chance to browse the shelves and take some books back to school to be enjoyed in the classrooms.

We were also lucky enough to secure a visit from the author and poet James Carter, who spent the whole day with us. After a mad-cap assembly to launch the event (including, to the children's great delight, the staff team performing the 'Dance of the Dung Beetle'), James shared his techniques for writing simple but incredibly effective poetry with each of our classes. Examples of what the children had written were then shared in our final assembly at the end of the day. I cannot tell you how exceptional some of those poems were. A huge thank you to James for a truly awesome day.

World Book Day itself was just fun all the way – from the traditional 'character catwalk', where all the children got to 'strut their stuff' and show off the absolutely incredible array of costumes, to the Battle of the Books (won by 'The Worrysaurus') and the Masked Reader where the children had to guess which member of staff was reading one of their favourite books.

To finish the week, our wonderful FOBs team hosted a gorgeous Mother's Day Afternoon to celebrate all of our fabulous mother figures. The weather couldn't have been better as everyone enjoyed tea and cream scones on the school field.

There's now hopefully chance for a slightly quieter week, before we step it up again and launch STEM week...

*Sue Potts*

## Brightwell Toddlers

It's been a busy couple of months at Brightwell Toddlers. We've celebrated Valentine's Day with card making, St David's Day with making daffodils, World Book Day with story time and dressing up, and Mother's Day! The little ones have also been having their usual fun chasing each other up and down the hall, playing on the slide and racing around in our push along cars. A reminder also that our group is suitable for younger babies too, with a cosy corner with baby toys and play mat.

Toddlers runs every Thursday morning during term time 9.15-11am and is suitable for children aged 0-5. The cost is £2.50 cash or £3 online per session. We can be contacted at [brightwelltoddlers@gmail.com](mailto:brightwelltoddlers@gmail.com) or via our Facebook page @[brightwelltoddlers](https://www.facebook.com/brightwelltoddlers).

*Emily Paton – Smith*

## Brightwell Preschool

Brightwell Preschool has been part of Brightwell family life for nearly 50 years. We started as a playgroup in the village hall and have evolved into the independent, Ofsted rated childcare setting of today. We registered as a charity in 1990 and moved to a cabin on the school site in 1992. In 2005, an incredible fundraising effort (involving a TV appeal!) led to a £55,000 National Lottery grant and secured the future of the preschool by providing the wooden building we are in today. Ten years later £20,000 was raised to landscape the garden and build an outdoor classroom.

Meanwhile our team have adapted to the ever-changing requirements of early years teaching. Our most recent update is to offer After-School care to support working families; we are now busier than ever. Our focus is on child-led early years education and 'taking care of little adventures'. We work closely with the school to give the children a gentle and considered transition. We have a wonderful, experienced staff team, supported behind the scenes by a parent committee.

Unfortunately, community preschools such as ours are becoming increasingly rare, 1 in 4 early years settings in Oxfordshire has closed since 2017 (EYA 2023). We rely on volunteer support and fundraising to keep the grounds and premises as they need to be. This is no small task given how wet Brightwell can be! Our next big undertaking is to replace our decking area, which is coming to the end of its working life, with a new play surface. This will enable our children to play outside under cover, whatever the weather.

Please support us: we are doing Cakes and Coffee in Kings Orchard Park on at 2.30pm on Sunday 24 March, after our Sponsored Welly Walk. Do pop down. We're also running a pub quiz on 7 May and fund raising at Brightfest and the Village Fete.

We would also like to ask for physical help. Would you enjoy being an extra pair of hands when we take the little ones exploring in the village? Could you help us with the premises in the school holidays? Maybe you could spare a few hours a month to help in our garden? We have a range of volunteering opportunities and would love to hear from you.

*Ellie Sharps, Co -Chair Brightwell Preschool*

## Save the Children

Spring is nearly here! When sowing your seeds and splitting plants in the garden please give a thought to the Save the Children **Plant Stall on Saturday 11 May**, 10-12 noon on The Square. We can make sure all your green fingered efforts can be turned into money to give children in the UK and around the world a better future.

**1 June Save the Children Country Fare & Fun Dog Show** on the Recreation Ground. Start training your dogs to enter the different fun classes. Look out for posters around the village and on the Brightwell Facebook page for all the details. Also, for the children we will be holding a 'Best decorated Wheelbarrow' parade in the main arena. Come and enjoy a barbecue, tea tent, farm machinery and sheep. An afternoon of fun for all ages.

*Celia & the Save the Children Team*

## Village Stores and Post Office

In the last two months we have welcomed four new volunteers to the team, the youngest, Joe, is just 14years old. This has been a real help, it means there is not such a daunting feeling on a Sunday when looking at the rota for the week ahead.

Our Easter opening hours are as follows:

Good Friday – 9-12noon (shop and Post Office),

Easter Saturday – 9-1pm (shop and Post Office)

Easter Sunday & Easter Monday – closed

The AGM will be held in the afternoon of Saturday 29 June. All welcome.

*The management team*

## Where are they now?

In April and May 2022, as part of the UK government's Homes for Ukraine scheme, the Brightwell community offered accommodation to 12 Ukrainian families, mainly mothers and children fearing for their lives. We met Marianna, Lesya, Maryna and Larisa in our October/November edition 2022. As the war dragged on they had to decide whether to stay or return to Ukraine.

### Marianna Altukhova

I returned home in October 2023. And I feel like it was my right decision. Historically, Ukrainians have led a sedentary lifestyle. In a way, I feel absolutely happy at home with my family. Kyiv is my place of strength.



There are no safe places in Ukraine now. You could be killed at any moment, but people have realized that this is not a reason to despair and be despondent, you need to live in the present. And I don't want to live in Limbo anymore, so I'm doing everything possible for my family and others. We believe in our victory, although we feel that the world is already tired of the war. But the war was not our choice and without help, Russia would wipe us off the face of the earth, as they did with Mariinka, the city in which I was born and lived for 18 years.

In Brightwell I saw and met incredible people, people with huge hearts and patience. In moments of melancholy, I miss our Monday tea, English lessons at Church on Tuesdays, yoga lessons on Wednesdays and Sundays, and our noisy Friday meeting in the orchard. I hold it all in my heart, but I never want to be a refugee again. Marian goes to the school where I worked before the war. He has many friends, girls especially. But he calls Ruby, Elsie and Gigi his best friends. Yehor continues his studies in Nottingham and dreams of returning to us.

I almost forgot; I drink my favourite coffee every morning and invite you all to share it in my kitchen. When the war is over I want to show you Ukrainian hospitality and culture. Keep our fingers crossed it will happen soon! Love to you all!

## Maryna Lutsac

I have been living in Britain for almost 2 years. I really like it here. I feel safe. I have many acquaintances and friends here. I now live in Didcot with my daughter. Here we rent an apartment. I am very grateful to my hosts Ruth and Tom. They helped me find an apartment and organized my move, and I am very grateful to the people who helped with furniture and appliances for my apartment.



I am a carer at Sotwell Hill House. I enjoy my job at work. I communicate with people. This is important for me, because I am learning English and I am also attending English language courses at Oxford City College. This is a very good experience for me. I often go to Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. I like it here.

I have a lot of good memories associated with Brightwell. Most of my acquaintances and friends live here.

## Larysa Romanenko

Greetings to the hospitable and beautiful Brightwell and the sincere and kind inhabitants of this village. Currently, I am in Dnipro with my youngest daughter Yaryna and my husband. The eldest daughter Maria lives in Kyiv, studies at a master's degree and works. Yaryna attends school three times a week and she studies online twice a week. When the air raid alarm sounds, teachers and children go down to the bomb shelter.



Unfortunately, everyone who currently lives in Ukraine, in any city or village, cannot feel safe. But we all understand that life goes on, difficult and dangerous, but life goes on. And I am glad that I have the opportunity to be at home. Thanks to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, thanks to the support of our Western partners. All of us here wish for a peaceful life and victory as soon as possible. We don't stop hoping and believing in the Great Victory of Ukraine and the entire civilized world over the terrible and cruel enemy of all mankind!

My family and I are sincerely grateful to Brightwell for providing us with safe, sunny and warm days together! We will always remember the time we spent in Brightwell with words of gratitude to all its residents! You supported

us when we really needed it, and by continuing to support Ukraine, you give us faith in our joint victory!

## Lesya Chaus

Gruezi mitenand! Swiss dialect (It means Hello all)

My twins and I moved from England to Switzerland. Friends invited us to live with them. We moved during the New Year holidays and Carnival Time. This is a very fun time in Switzerland, in the towns there are folk festivities: all residents dress up in carnival costumes and walk along the streets: socialize, go to bars and restaurants to drink wine or Prosecco, or traditional alcoholic drinks, eat traditional Swiss food, which is distributed to everyone on the street for those who wish.

Brightwell left indelibly pleasant impressions and memories. Brightwell is associated with the phrase "My English home", with cosy family evenings and dinners, cheerful holidays, with an apple orchard, with the smiles of the village residents, with a bench opposite the church, where Marianna and I loved to sit and chat in the mornings.

Thank you very much to the Brightwell community for everything they did for Ukrainian refugees. The most important thing is the opportunity to live in a Ukrainian commune. You gave us the opportunity to form a small Ukrainian 'state within a state'.



In my last interview, I already said that my visit to England is an experience. I think as a person I am greedy and insatiable for experiences. I think it was a brave act for the second time packing things in a suitcase, picking up the children from school in the middle of the school year, while leaving the eldest son in England... and leaving for Switzerland! I really like my courage and my country of residence and I would like to stay here to live, perhaps forever! But who knows what will happen next..., because life is full of surprises. As Paulo Coelho says in 'The Alchemist', "And remember: when you want something, the whole Universe will help make your wish come true."



## South Oxfordshire Choir

We have a far-reaching name, but for scores of BcS villagers we've always been the local choir! And for new and lapsed singers there's no better time to come and join us.

2024 will be chock full of delightful music. We're practising now for a highly innovative concert in June: singing a selection of works showing how great poets from Shakespeare to Shelley have inspired top composers such as Vaughan Williams and Saint-Saëns.

Then we plan to repeat last year's highly successful appearance at Bunkfest in Wallingford. After the Summer, we go straight into practising John Rutter's *Requiem* as part of our major concert in February 2025. And if that isn't enough, we'll put on a popular 'Come and Sing' session for anyone who wants to help us perform Handel's *Messiah* at Christmas.

Originally known as Cranford Choral Society, we've been singing together for 25 years. We're a friendly bunch and our Music Director Crawford Wiley is inspiring and fantastic fun to sing with.

So do come and sing with your neighbours: 8pm each Monday evening in St Mary-le-More Church, Wallingford. For more details email me at [chair@southoxonchoir.org](mailto:chair@southoxonchoir.org) or check us out at [www.southoxonchoir.org](http://www.southoxonchoir.org).

*John Linton, Chair, South Oxfordshire Choir*

## The Red Lion

We hope you all enjoy the new beer garden which, fingers crossed, will be completed by Easter weekend at the latest. It is a huge undertaking and a mammoth task. The garden is going to be much more accessible to all with the gravel/shingle gone and smooth paving slabs all the way along with open space to enjoy the sun when it finally reappears and covered areas for those wanting shade or to dodge the rain!

This work will cost many thousands to complete so we will be running a big prize draw. (As you know, we run our quizzes, bonus ball and meat draw to help raise funds for all of the refurb work we do here at the pub). We are putting together a fantastic 1st prize of a weekend stay for 2 people in one of the local Airbnb's in the village, a bottle of champagne on arrival, dinner here at the pub one night, the 2<sup>nd</sup> night dinner courtesy of the Shellfish Cow in Wallingford and a Sunday roast back here at the pub on the Sunday. We understand that you may not think 1st prize is for you but how lovely to win

this for your friends or family so they can come and stay in the village and be close by without you having to put them up! We will have more prizes on offer and a grand draw one evening in the pub. Details on when and how to enter will follow shortly. Please look out for emails and social media posts. Please note, whilst the work is being completed, entrance to the pub is via the front door only as the garden and some of the car park will be completely out of bounds for safety and to allow the builders to get on with work.

We have live music every Sunday from 6.30-8.15pm and remember, arrive before 6pm to enter the meat draw! Here are some diary dates:

31 March – Live Music, The Faith healers 6.30-8.15pm

2 April – Quiz Night in aid of Brightfest

12 April – Boogie Bingo

21 April – Jazz Jam

7 May – Quiz Night in aid of Brightwell Preschool

19 May – Jazz Jam

26 May – Live Music, The Tubthumpers 6.30-8.15pm

*Corinne....the new Mrs Mouse!! xx*

## BcS Environment Group

The Swan Stream had its third birthday on 9 March and a group of volunteers have been carrying out some maintenance in an attempt to keep the more virulent plants under control. This is part of a planned scheme that will see some areas along the stream kept more tightly trimmed through the year with other areas left to go wild. We will review how it performs next year.

Looking at it now, the stream could have been in place for many years and, indeed, newcomers to the village assume that it has. The high flow through this last winter has helped clear the silt and make it more lively and interesting. You may have noticed that some trees have been trimmed at the downstream end, this being necessary due to ash dieback affecting many trees in the Swan woodland.

The talk on owls by The British Owl Project was very well attended with over 100 people filling the village hall. It was good to see all ages present who were privileged to see and hear three types of owl and learn how they live. Unfortunately, the barn owl had gone broody and wasn't able to be brought along. Given the popularity of the talk we are hoping to arrange a workshop to learn how to dissect owl pellets. These are produced from the remains of creatures they have eaten but can't digest and so are regurgitated through their beak. It will allow people to find more about the life of owls. This time we



hope to have owls at the event so you can meet the donors of the pellets!  
Details will be advertised once known.

## Weather

The rainfall recorded at Highlands Farm for January and February was 68.1mm and 101.2 mm respectively. Although the Met Office has said that it was the wettest February on record for the country it was just second to February 2018 when we had 108.2mm. For this general area the rainfall was over 2.5 times the average for February. By contrast, Feb 2023 only recorded 4.9mm. Certainly the presence of a large ponded area at the end of Church Lane for several months together with springs emerging from gardens and drives towards the top of Church Lane indicate a prolonged wet period. For the winter (December to February) the rainfall was about 50% above the 1991–2020 average.

Although the temperature in January was about average, that for February was about 3 deg C above average with the winter as a whole between 1.5 and 2 deg C above average. This led to plants flowering early and wildlife waking early. In my pond the frogspawn arrived by 20 February which is about 10 to 14 days earlier than in recent years. One only wonders what the summer will bring.

*Steve Capel-Davies, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Environment Group*

## St Agatha's Church Bells

As I write this, in early March, I'm delighted that we have two new youngsters learning the ropes. Early indications are that they will have progressed well by the time of publication - fingers crossed! We are holding beginner sessions from 7-7.30pm on Tuesdays, ahead of our regular practice, from 7.30-9pm.

After ringing for Easter we'll be thinking about our Ring For Peace in the early evening of 6 June. Perhaps a quarter peal - that's a continuous ring of about 45 minutes duration. The bells change their order around 1,080 times - according to a pattern that we ringers memorise. That's six factorial, plus half again - every 'change' being different (on six bells). Listen out for us!

You may have heard visitors ringing an excellent performance of a three-hour long peal, which included our very own Rev Kev, on the morning of 20 February. Congratulations to all, it really did sound lovely. Contact me about our bells at any time - [johnedowling@hotmail.com](mailto:johnedowling@hotmail.com).

*John Dowling*

## Parish Council News

Thank you to everyone who attended the update on the Neighbourhood Plan meeting in the village hall in February, I hope you found it useful. We have to thank Jason yet again for all the work he has put into the plan and its update. We also want to thank Stuart Hill and his team for the renovation of the bus stop at the top of Bell Lane. It has been a bit of an eyesore for some time and now looks lovely.

### Out of date posters

Can we ask that people remove out of date posters from telegraph poles etc after their events and anyone out for a walk feel free to take them down and dispose of them. Thank you.

### Jubilee Pavilion

Plans for the renovation/upgrade of the Jubilee Pavilion are progressing now. We have had a meeting with the various groups using the Pavilion to confirm what they would ideally like from the renovation and we have appointed an architect to draw up some designs for approval. It will take some time, as these things do, but hopefully the days of lugging table, chairs, tents etc. down stairs are limited! In the meantime, it is still great space so please do consider using it for your parties and events. There is now a brand new kitchen; the hall and entrance lobby are painted and clean, there is ample parking and having the outdoor space to use in the summer months is a huge bonus. It's also the cheapest hall for hire locally.

### Annual Parish Council Meeting

The annual Parish Council meeting will be on the 21 May at 7pm in the Village Hall. This is a chance to meet the Parish councillors, hear what they have been doing and ask any questions you might have about the work of the Parish Council. There will be snacks and lovely Brightwell wine to tempt you.

Please remember that we now have a 6 monthly rolling Chair of the Council so if you have anything to report or ask please send an email to the clerk at [bcsparishcouncil@googlemail.com](mailto:bcsparishcouncil@googlemail.com) and she will forward it to the appropriate Councillor. If it's something that urgently needs attention you could use the community Facebook page as several councillors keep an eye on that regularly.

*Sue Robson*

# Stewart Village Hall

A huge thank you to everyone who supported the planning application for the Village Hall project; we are delighted to announce planning permission was granted. This is a huge milestone as potential grant making bodies ask for this to be in place when you apply to them for funds. We are now identifying the first tranche of grants to apply for and will keep you updated with our progress.

The other aspect of fundraising is garnering local support and you, our lovely community, have already been supporting us through attending events, using the hall for your own events, parties and fundraising including the successful Ladies Night Disco, The Clothes Swap Shop and the Bridge drive all held in March. These events were all organised and run by villagers and monies raised will go to the hall project, as will the monies we hope to raise in these upcoming events:

- On 13 April join us for an Evening at the Races, details below.
- On 1 June there will be another great Wine Tasting event hosted by our own resident wine aficionado, Nick Zalinski, more information to follow.
- On 4 July Marea from Art of Jaipur will host 2 block printing workshops (3-5pm and 7-9pm); for more information and to book go to [artofjaipur.com](http://artofjaipur.com).

We will be holding an open event to share more details of the project, to answer any questions and to continue to gather your input, suggestions, and feedback. Date TBC; see noticeboards, Facebook and website. In the meantime, if you have any comments, questions, or feedback you can use the contact us page on the hall website, pop a comment in the mailbox at the rear of the hall or speak to any trustee. If you have any queries or would like to book the hall please visit our website: [stewartvillagehall.org.uk](http://stewartvillagehall.org.uk) or contact Shena at [shenaluck@btinternet.com](mailto:shenaluck@btinternet.com) or on 01491 834543.

## An Evening at the Races

Join us on Saturday 13 April for a fun evening AT THE RACES, live on the big screen in the Village Hall. There will be 8 races, all sponsored by local businesses, and you have an opportunity to be an 'owner' or 'jockey' for the evening. In between the races there will be plenty of time to pick your favourite to win the next race and to place your bets, then sit back and cheer your horse on to win. A chilli supper (veggie option available on request) is included in your £10 ticket and a cash bar will be available throughout the evening.

Tickets can be purchased from the Village Store or by contacting [info@stewartvillagehall.org.uk](mailto:info@stewartvillagehall.org.uk) where you can also reserve a table for your group. Over 18s only. Doors open 7pm, first race 7.30pm.

*Annette Kilworth*

## Cosy Café Update

The weekly cafe began on 8 January, so has now been running for 8 weeks. It is open from 10-11.30am every Monday and I would like to thank those lovely villagers who've supported it, many on more than one occasion. It is planned to continue every Monday, even Bank Holidays, for the rest of the year, or as long as it is a success within the community. The cafe sells hot drinks and a selection of homemade cakes either made by me or donated, with all proceeds going to the Village Hall Project. It has also proved to be a great place to catch up with old friends and make new acquaintances.

Please get in touch on [shenaluck@btinternet.com](mailto:shenaluck@btinternet.com), in advance, if you are planning to visit and require a vegan, gluten or lactose free option so I can make sure it is available. Thank you.

*Shena Luck*

## The English Music Festival 2024

Do you love music and would you like to spend a weekend in the best of company, with a friendly and welcoming group of volunteers helping at an internationally-acclaimed music festival, with celebrated musicians and a wonderful array of music?

If so, please come and join us at the English Music Festival! We are looking for volunteers to help with stewarding, refreshments and looking after artists. Not only will you be warmly welcomed by our affable and inclusive group of helpers, but you will have the chance to meet and work with our star artists such as the BBC Concert Orchestra, clarinettist Michael Collins, conductor Hilary Davan Wetton and pianist and Radio 3 presenter Paul Guinery, and the opportunity to attend all the concerts.

The Festival takes place over the second May bank holiday, from Friday-Monday 24-27 May 2024, in Dorchester-on-Thames in Oxfordshire and we would welcome help over the whole weekend if possible, but whenever suits your own timetable. Duties can be tailored to your own interests, abilities and preferences. See the full programme at [www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk/2024-](http://www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk/2024-)

[may-festival/programme.php](#). Please contact Festival Director Em Marshall-Luck at [em.marshall-luck@englishmusicfestival.org.uk](mailto:em.marshall-luck@englishmusicfestival.org.uk) for more information or if you are able to help.

*Em Marshall-Luck*

## The Cello & the Nightingale

100 years ago on 19 May 1924, just two years after the dawn of BBC broadcasting, radio listeners heard something utterly amazing: a cello playing while a nightingale sang to it in an improvised duet, live from a Surrey garden. The cellist was Beatrice Harrison, and she and her nightingale became internationally renowned, recording every Spring over the next 12 years and receiving over 50,000 fan letters.

John Reith, the BBC's Director-General, was at first unconvinced that the live broadcasts would work, but later said of them: "a glamour of romance has flashed across the prosaic round of many a life". What eloquence! The broadcasts remain a unique moment in radio history: the first ever radio Outside Broadcast, the first radio programme featuring nature at large, the very first radio hit. Importantly too, they are both intimate and universal, creating a new community of listeners never possible before.

We'll be marking this moment with a special event in the village around the anniversary moment in May – including specially commissioned new writing from Head of BBC History and poet Robert Seatter, accompanied by a live cellist. All profits will go to Brightwell Supporting Refugees. Watch out for posters around the village nearer the time!

*Robert Seatter*

## Colour and Clay – Sat-Sunday 4-5 May

Colour and Clay is back for the fourth exhibition at St Agatha's Church, Brightwell cum Sotwell, OX10 0RU:

Saturday 4 May 10–4pm and Sunday 5 May 10 30–4pm

We are very pleased that Sue Hollebone is joining us to exhibit her colourful textiles alongside Rosemary Greasby's paintings, Roger Symes pottery and Marion Symes paintings & prints, including silk scarves. And Jen Pozzoni's pots & ceramic pieces.

Bring friends and family. All welcome. Refreshments available to enjoy whilst browsing and raising funds for St Agatha's.

*Jennie Pozzini*

## Church Spring Fair - Saturday 25 May

The Brightwell cum Sotwell Annual Church Spring fair will be held once again in St Agatha's Church and church grounds, 2-4pm. If you would like to be involved in any way, please contact [louise@grassmoon.com](mailto:louise@grassmoon.com). We would welcome donations for White Elephant, books, Tombola and cakes.

*Louise Wymor*

## Summer Concert - Sunday 30 June

Last year the summer concert marked the Coronation of Charles III with a whole series of highlights. Who will forget the opening Seal Lullaby, Alex Kingston's lines from *The Tempest* or the sound of Tony Isaacs playing his soprano saxophone accompanied by Martin Dix? On 30 June this year we will be offering you more delights from the talented inhabitants of our much loved village.

The village choir goes from strength to strength and amazingly we also seem to uncover new musical talent every year. This will be our 14<sup>th</sup> summer concert and I promise you it will be the best so far!

The concert is on the last Sunday evening in June. What better way to celebrate mid-summer than coming to St Agatha's to enjoy great entertainment with your friends. Tickets (£10) will be on sale from the Village Stores from early May. See you at the show.

*Alec McGivan*

## Village Choir in the Summer Concert

The village choir has had wonderful praise in recent years for singing in the Summer Concert, last year with *Zadok the Priest* and *I Was Glad*. We are coached by Gilly Kitchen, our resident professional choir leader, and are now encouraging anyone from the village to join us. This year we are singing *This is the Day* and *Look at the World* both by John Rutter as well as *Give Us this Day* by Ward Swingle with words by Tony Isaacs, also a Brightwell resident. Three beautiful pieces!

Rehearsals this year will be on Wednesday evenings from 7.30-9 at St Agatha's on 15 & 22 May, then 5, 12, 19 and 26 June for the concert on Sunday 30 June. Please let me know if you are interested: Anthony Finn, 07711 746083 or email me on [anthony@emroka.com](mailto:anthony@emroka.com) saying whether you are soprano, alto, tenor or bass. Men are particularly encouraged to join to help balance the sopranos and altos!

## Wallingford Art Club

Join our friendly Wallingford and District Art club for a live demonstration as professional artist Jessica Parker demos painting street scenes using mixed media. Her work often features derelict and abandoned buildings or structures, and she uses discarded materials and artwork to emphasise her reuse/ recycle/ re-purpose mindset. The demo will be held at Centre 70 from 7.30-9.30pm on Tuesday 16 April and is free for club members or £5 for visitors. If you would like further information about this event or other club activities, please visit the club website at [www.wallingfordartclub.org.uk](http://www.wallingfordartclub.org.uk) or email [admin@wallingfordartclub.org.uk](mailto:admin@wallingfordartclub.org.uk).

*Nicola Webb*

## The Red Box Gallery

If any villagers would like to display their creativity in Brightwell's own time travel gallery ie the reinvented telephone box near the Red Lion pub, then please get in touch. It needs to be visual to catch the eye, but can be artwork (by old or young). pottery, photography, text works, history artefacts, sporting glories, allotment triumphs...

Contact Robert Seatter on [robert.seatter@bbc.co.uk](mailto:robert.seatter@bbc.co.uk). Many thanks!

## The Earth Trust

The Earth Trust has a wonderful range of Easter holiday activities for youngsters to enjoy, inspired by the natural world: Little Acorns Springtime - Tuesday 2 & Thursday 4 April; Ancient Adventures -Friday 5 April; Little Acorns Explorers - Monday 8 April; Orienteering Adventures - Tuesday 9 & Wednesday 10 April. The gates at the Earth Trust Farm will be opening again in early May, a chance to meet the newborn lambs, calves and goat kids and enjoy mini farmer games, stalls and more. Details, dates & ticket prices at [earthtrust.org.uk/whats-on](http://earthtrust.org.uk/whats-on).

## What's On at the Corn Exchange

See [www.cornexchange.org.uk](http://www.cornexchange.org.uk) for all cinema performances.

### Live April Screenings:

NT Live: 3 April - Dear England 15 April - Vanya  
The Royal Ballet 9 April MacMillan Celebrated 24 April – Swan Lake  
16-17 April John Singer Sargeant – Exhibition on Screen  
18 April An American in Paris (Musical)  
**Coming Soon: 21-25 May** Sinodun Players present The Invisible Man

## VILLAGE DIARY

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### April

|    |                              |             |         |
|----|------------------------------|-------------|---------|
| 2  | Pub quiz for Brightfest      | Red Lion    | 7pm     |
| 5  | BSR talk by Polly Vascher    | VH          | 7.30pm  |
| 9  | WI talk by Stuart Cummins    | VH          | 7.30pm  |
| 12 | Boogie Bingo                 | Red Lion    | 7pm     |
| 13 | Evening at the Races         | VH          | 7pm     |
| 21 | Jazz Jam                     | Red Lion    | 6.30    |
| 28 | Annual Parish Church Meeting | St Agatha's | 10.45am |

### May

|     |  |             |        |
|-----|--|-------------|--------|
| 4-5 | Colour & Clay exhibition (times see p 21)  | St Agatha's |        |
| 7   | Pub quiz for Preschool                     | Red Lion    | 7pm    |
| 11  | Save the Children Plant Stall              | The Square  | 10-12  |
| 14  | WI talk 'The Forensic Experience' - Hayley | VH          | 7.30pm |
| 18  | Safari Supper (starting at St Agatha's)    |             | 7pm    |
| 19  | Pentecost Sunday Confirmation              | St Agatha's | 9.30am |
| 19  | Jazz Jam                                   | Red Lion    | 6.30   |
| 21  | Annual Parish Council meeting              | VH          | 7pm    |
| 25  | Church Spring Fair                         | St Agatha's | 2-4pm  |
| 26  | Live Music with The Tubthumpers            | Red Lion    | 6.30pm |

## Advance Notice

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| 1 June  | Save the Children Country Show & Fun Dog Show, The Rec |
| 1 June  | Wine Tasting, Village Hall                             |
| 4 June  | Village Lunch Club, 12.15pm Village Hall               |
| 30 June | Summer Concert, St Agatha's                            |
| 4 July  | Block printing workshops, Village Hall                 |
| 6 July  | Village Fete, Sotwell House                            |

## Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Grey bins            | Thursdays 11 & 25 April<br><b>Friday 10</b> and Thursday 23 May                               |
| Green (& brown) bins | <b>Friday 5</b> & Thursday 18 April (+extra garden)<br>Thursdays 2 & 16, <b>Friday 31</b> May |

## Village website

For more information about Brightwell-cum-Sotwell visit the village website: [www.brightwellcumshotwell.co.uk](http://www.brightwellcumshotwell.co.uk).