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Editorial

It's been a wonderfully warm autumn and the colours in the trees and hedges around village are truly stunning. A recent highlight was the village Apple Day. Holding it at the Rec this year meant that it could be bigger and better, and the weather was glorious. You can read more about it on the next page in young Lily Quantrell's piece and see some photos. Thank you, Keith Brooks, for the cover photo of Paul Chilton's magnificent apple display.

A bumper year for apples I think, thanks to the fine weather but possibly last January's Wassail had something to do with it! Next year's Wassail will be on Sunday 8 January 2023, a date for your diary (details on page 19).

Sadly, we have lost one of our *Villager* team, Trevor Morgan, who died on holiday in Canada in September. Trevor was our advertising manager for many years and part of the printing team until recently. He will be greatly missed by us and more widely in the village. We send our condolences to Jennie and his family.

Christmas is coming and *The Villager* has lots of information as usual about festivities in the village, including Christmas carols (on page 12), decorating your Christmas window (page 7) and Christmas menus and music at the Red Lion (page 22); and not forgetting the Art exhibition on 3 December (page 7).

We are continuing with our new interview feature 'Meet', introduced by Alison in the last issue. Hearing about Hilda Behan's life makes interesting, as well as in places poignant, reading. Look out for the next one in the frame – who will it be?

A couple of new village initiatives are written about – the Heating Project where the Parish Council would like your views (see page 10) and the Car Assist group which is open to anyone to join (page 9). Please take a look at both, especially if you are not Facebook users where there has been more discussion on them.

A big personal thank you to Alison Leigh for taking over as Guest Editor last time and giving me a very nice rest. I am back again here as you can see and will be doing the next issue too whilst Alison is in New Zealand (lucky thing!), but she will be taking it on again in April when she returns. If anyone else would like to be a Guest Editor for one or two issues a year, then do let me know and we can show you the ropes. It is fun, not too much work and a good way of meeting people if you are new here. Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and hope 2023 is a good one.

Helen Connor

Apple Day in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell



Apple Day is a celebration of all things apple in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. One of the people who inspired Apple Day is Paul Chilton; he used to be one of Brightwell's commercial apple growers, and he has amazing knowledge of the apples in Oxfordshire.

The apples were picked and collected the week before from two village orchards by a small number of villagers (including Paul and me!). It was great as I got to go around the village picking apples on a Saturday morning with my family and a few of my friends.

After scouts at the Rec on Friday evening, we lugged down the foldable tables, gazebos and the event shelters from the loft. The following morning, an army of volunteers came to help set up the event.

Paul Chilton had a five-table long apple display, labelling more than 100 varieties of apple from Oxfordshire. There were so many kinds, including Golden Noble, Jonathan, and Christmas Pippin, as well as a few different types of pears. There was apple tasting too, all to spread the word of the history of apple growing in Brightwell.

There were many stalls at Apple Day, one of which was the cake stall. At the cake stall my friends and I helped with the gluten free section, and with taking the donations made in exchange for cake. Quite a few of the cakes were taken whole, as they were just too amazing to go as individual slices. These included two huge, beautiful apple pies and some other incredible apple cakes.

Some others volunteered for the apple pressing, and to fill up the barrels with freshly pressed apple juice, so people could come and taste. The juicing is a 2-stage process; first you put the apples into the crusher, and then you put the resulting mash into the press. The press uses water inside a bladder to push the juice out. This juice was then poured into the barrels for tasting.



Many local businesses were involved in Apple Day. One of these that did very well was the Five Little Pigs – an independent restaurant in Wallingford. They were selling Nettlebed cheese toasties with buttered apples, as well as pulled

pork rolls with cider butter. They had sold out after only a couple hours as there was a constant queue for their amazing smelling food.



As well as the cake stall, there was chocolate apple decorating for the children. This was very popular, and Kat, who was running the stall, had to keep topping up the chocolate - they ran out of sprinkles very quickly!

The money raised at Apple Day will go towards other orchard projects and replacing the two vandalised trees in the community orchard. Helping at Apple Day made me feel proud to be a scout and proud to live in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. It was such fun, and I'm really looking forward to Apple Day next year.

Lily Quantrell, aged 12

Some statistics on the day

- between 500-600 visitors
- 25-30 juice pressings
- 300-400 litres of juice produced
- 16 varieties of apple to taste
- 5kg of chocolate used in the dipped and decorated apples
- plenty of apple artwork by children
- tours of the orchard to over 30 visitors
- and most important of all Paul's display of over 110 varieties of apples and pears - surely the largest display anywhere in Oxfordshire.

The Orchard Group would like to say thank you to EVERYONE who made jams, chutneys, honey and all those amazing cakes. We couldn't have had such a successful stall without your contribution. We received just over £1,100 in generous donations on the day.

Ali Quantrell on the cake stall said "we probably had 30 cakes, plus bakes. There must have been 100 individual cakes (probably an underestimate) and flapjacks, and if each big cake was cut into 8 slices (conservatively), that is 340 portions of cake!! All of them were free. People were so amazed they were very generous with their donations."

Alison Bloomfield

Community Association

AGM at the Stewart Room– 26 October 2022

We are delighted that Caroline Annets, Lynn Burrige and Charlotte and Mike Woods, Robert Lidstone, Alison Bloomfield and Tony Guntrip were all happy to be re-elected. Our Chairman (James Davys), Treasurer Tom Rogerson were re-elected also.

Bill Horsfield stood down after many years of dedicated service to our committee and we thank him for all his hard work and support. Jim Sanger has kindly agreed to be Honorary Auditor again this year. We are delighted that Issi Burrige has joined the committee – welcome!

2023 Events

The Community Association is committed to running a programme of events next year. These will include the village quiz and the fete as well as another event to raise money for local good causes. Look out for more information.

Christmas Hampers

The Community Association is pleased to provide a Christmas hamper full of store cupboard favourites and festive treats for the senior residents of the village. If you know of anyone over the age of 70, who you think does not currently receive a hamper but would appreciate one, please telephone me direct on 01491 834195.

In these difficult times the committee has agreed to offer other members of our community, who are perhaps struggling, one of our hampers, just to give a helping hand. If you know of someone in the village who could do with our support, please let me know - we want to help.

May I wish you all a very healthy and happy Christmas and joyful New Year.

James Davy - Chairman

Christmas windows

Now in its third year, villagers are once again invited to take part in decorating their windows or an outside area to form a Christmas window display around the village.

This year, all will be unveiling their windows on the same date, **Sunday 11 December**, leaving them up until Christmas. A map will be created of those households/businesses taking part.

If you would like create your own festive-themed window, look out for the information on the village Facebook group or email Kat Southwell at southwellhousehold@gmail.com.

Brightwell Toddlers

We have been having a fantastic time at Brightwell Toddlers with lots of families joining us each week. We've done lots of arts and crafts, playing, singing and everybody enjoyed fancy dress for Halloween.

We meet at the village hall on Thursday mornings, 9.15-11am. The cost is £2.50 per family and the group is suitable for children aged 0-5 years. We can be contacted at brightwelltoddlers@gmail.com or via our Facebook page, [@brightwelltoddlers](https://www.facebook.com/brightwelltoddlers).

Emily Paton-Smith

BRIGHTWELL ART CLUB
ANNUAL EXHIBITION
SATURDAY 3rd DECEMBER
OPEN 10 am - 4 pm ALL DAY!

BRIGHTWELL-CUM-SOTWELL
VILLAGE HALL.

CHARITY STALLS
ART CARDS
REFRESHMENTS
RAFFLE
FREE ADMISSION **ALL DAY!**

Parish Council

Community Defibrillator

Another defibrillator has been installed in the Parish (outside wall of the Pavilion), making a total of four now available in the village. We are grateful to the Brightfest Committee and the estate of the late Jane Dix for their donations which have funded the latest equipment – thank you so much.

Litter

Unfortunately, there has been a great deal of litter discarded at the entrance to the Millennium Wood recently. We aim to get a second bin installed there by OCC Highways department. In the meantime, if the bins in the village are full, please use another bin or take litter home for disposal.

Fallen Trees Storm Damage

We are entering the season of high winds and storm damage. Please could we request that you let the Parish Council Office know of any fallen trees that are blocking roads or footpaths, by logging on to our email address. This will allow us to make the area safe as quickly as possible. Thank you for your continued vigilance.

For this and other Parish Council enquiries please contact Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Council, email bcsparishcouncil@googlemail.com.

James Davys

Review of the 2017 Neighbourhood Plan

There is still time to comment on the Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Neighbourhood Plan before the Parish Council submits the new plan to South Oxfordshire District Council. There will be an examination in public sometime next year – we will keep you posted.

You can view the Submission Version of the Neighbourhood Plan on our website and paper copies will be available to read in the Village Stores and the Red Lion.

Jason Debney

Parish Clerk vacancy

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Parish Council is very sad to lose its brilliant and efficient Clerk who is moving on to a new, exciting career change. So it is looking for a new clerk to take over from January (with a period of handover in December). Please see below for details and note that the hours are flexible and can fit in with school hours.

Job Vacancy - Parish Clerk

Brightwell Cum Sotwell Parish Council is a proactive Council looking for an enthusiastic and organised Parish Clerk & RFO (Responsible Finance Officer) to join their team. If you have a genuine interest in helping our forward thinking and energetic council develop and deliver quality and innovative services to the Brightwell Parish this post is ideal.

You will ensure through excellent admin and communication skills the smooth running of the day-to-day operation of the Council. The role also includes:

- Managing the meetings of the council, preparing the agenda, taking the minutes, monitoring actions and decisions
- Working alongside the planning committee to ensure planning applications are considered, and submitting responses to the District Council
- Work with the Finance Councillor to manage the Parish Council's finances, preparation of accounts and reconciliation, payroll and PAYE, payment of invoices, banking, end of year accounts, submission of accounts for external audit, VAT reclaim, preparing for budget review and precept
- Dealing with a variety of correspondence and public notices
- Assisting with grant applications and the management of projects in the Parish

The role is part time, 12 hours a week, with a combination of working in the Parish Office and at home. You will be required to attend the evening council meeting once a month, plus quarterly Pavilion committee meetings. Our Clerk's pay scale is typically NJC Scale LC1 (13-17). Salary is dependent upon qualifications and experience.

Applicants should have previous experience in a similar role or demonstrate transferable skills. Knowledge of local government legislation would be an advantage and ideally the postholder will possess or would be willing to obtain a Certificate in Local Government Administration (CiLCA). Training will be available.

To request an application form or if you have any further questions and want to discuss the role, please contact the clerk at bcsparishcouncil@googlemail.com. Closing date for applications is 30 November 2022.

Village Stores and Post Office

The shop and Post Office have lots to offer in the run up to Christmas, from posting your cards, parcels, letters and doing your banking at the Post Office counter to looking around the shop for presents or that special treat. It's all under one roof at your village Community Shop, so do come in and see us.

Our Christmas opening hours are as follows:

24 December	9am to 1pm
25-27 December	Closed
28-30 December	9am to 5.30pm
31 December	9am to 1pm
1-2 January	Closed
3 January	Normal opening hours resume

Wishing you a very happy Christmas.

Village Stores Management Committee & the team

BcS Community Car Assist

Do you occasionally find yourself or a family member needing transport to/from Didcot Station? If so, our new WhatsApp group may well be of interest to you.

We currently have 41 villagers participating in the group and obviously the more people we have the better chance of a match. The idea is that you put out a call on the WhatsApp group to see if anyone is either going to the station or coming back to the village that coordinates with the time you need a lift. You only respond to a request if you can help and then engage in direct messaging with that person thereby cutting down traffic on the group chat. Hopefully, what goes around, comes around and you'll be able to assist someone else at some point in the future.

At a time when we are all looking for ways in which to save money, energy and fuel, this system will hopefully help in a small way.

If you would like a link to join our group, please send me an email: s.e.butt@btinternet.com.

Sue Butt

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Community Heating Project - your views are needed please

Background

Reducing both one's carbon footprint and heating costs are high on many people's agendas. As you may know, the Parish Council commissioned consultants to look into providing low carbon district heating. This initial study has been completed with a public presentation given in October.

Your Views

There are many issues to be resolved before any scheme could be considered which would involve commissioning further studies. However, these would not proceed unless there is sufficient public support. So, the Parish Council would like to hear your views by filling in the New Community Heating Survey which, together with the report, is available on the Heating Brightwell-cum-Sotwell website (www.heatingbrightwellsotwell.co.uk). It is only your views that are needed and there is no commitment required to support any scheme. The Parish Council will be discussing the report at their 20 December meeting so it would be appreciated if you could provide any feedback before then.

Briefly, the report considered two options.

Centralised Community Solution

This investigated using heat pumps to extract heat from the groundwater and air. The resultant hot water (about 70 deg C) would then be pumped around the village through heavily insulated pipes which connect to each house before being returned via pipework to the ground at some distance away from where it was extracted. A heat exchanger would replace the individual gas or oil boiler in each house and use would be made of the existing radiators. An 'energy centre' would be required to house the heat pumps and associated equipment. Electricity used to operate the pumps etc would be from the grid (which, over time, would have a reducing carbon footprint) together with any local renewable energy sources that become available.

This type of scheme is currently being implemented for the village of Swaffham Prior in Cambridgeshire, although there are many examples of district heating operating in urban areas both in the UK and on the continent.

The scheme would only be able to cover the main village, possibly including Mackney. This type of scheme has a high capital cost which would need external funding.

Decentralised Community Solution

The second option would provide a private ‘Smart Micro-grid’ electricity supply to houses which would be used to power individual air source heat pumps fitted to each house. This would allow the purchase of electricity and air source heat pumps to be made in bulk which would lead to cost savings compared to individual purchases. Again, the electricity could make use of local renewable supplies. Whilst it may be possible to use existing radiators the lower water temperature may lead to further work being required for individual properties, especially for older less well insulated homes. This scheme would have a lower capital cost but would also need external funding.

Next Steps

The study was a first step and much more work needs to be done including determining what volume of groundwater is available, scheme costing, planning and surveys of houses to see how appropriate any solution might be. This will allow firmer costings and viability of any scheme to be reviewed. Houses outside the main village would need to consider an individual air source heat pump and/or some renewable energy source.

Assuming a scheme is viable and wanted, it is likely to take five years or so to come to fruition. In the meantime, many people might be wondering what they can do to lower energy use whether through better insulation, installation of solar photovoltaic panels etc. If anyone has an interest in joining a group to explore these issues, please let Katie Fanstone at the Parish Council know (clerk@brightwellcumshotwellpc.co.uk).

Steve Capel-Davies

Village Christmas Lunch Tuesday 6 December

The traditional village Christmas lunch will be on Tuesday 6 December from 12.15pm to approx 1.30pm. Price £8. If you would like to come, please ring Jacqui Brown, 01491 836018 or Eastlyn Horsfield 01491 832041.

Christmas Church services and carols

Join us to celebrate.

The Reason for the Season: Emmanuel ‘God with Us’!

- BSR Carols St James’ on Tuesday 6 December at 7.30pm
- Carol Service St Agatha’s Sunday 18 December at 6pm
- Crib Service St Agatha’s Saturday 24 December at 4.30pm
- Midnight Communion St James’ 24 December at 11.30pm
- Christmas Day Festival Family Communion St Agatha’s at 9.30am

Save the Children

The beautiful Save the Children Christmas trees in the Square are given to our village annually through the amazing generosity of our Save the Children sponsors to aid our Christmas fund raising.

Please consider a small donation not only on Christmas Eve at ‘Carols round the Christmas Tree’ but any time before then especially if you are not able to join us on the 24th. Sue Butt has very kindly set up a *Justgiving* page to make this easy. Here is the link https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Sue-Butt3?utm_campaign=lc_frp_share_transaction_fundraiser_page_launched&utm_content=a8a6aa3a-6426-4d09-9a03-29eade39afb2&utm_medium=email&utm_source=postoffice&utm_term=1667854303856 and the QR code (if poor printing allows it to work!).



By harnessing the power of people – and by giving the microphone to children – we can work together towards a better world. Together, we can rewrite the rules. Because every child's future is worth fighting for.

Have a lovely Christmas,

Celia & the Save the Children team

St Agatha's Church Bells

We are fortunate in many ways with our bells, more of which in a future edition. This good fortune extends to having a new, full set of 'muffles' which were put to good use in our recent ringing. Let me explain....

Ringling at the time of the death of Queen Elizabeth II

As anticipated in the last edition of *The Villager*, we rang on several occasions following the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II, making full use of our muffles. In brief, prior to fitting our muffles, we tolled a single bell, our lovely tenor bell, on the evening of the announcement of her death (9 September). We followed this with some assorted ringing for the proclamation of His Majesty King Charles III (10 September). We then switched to 'half-muffled' for the duration of the public mourning period.

The ringing for the State Funeral (19 September) was undertaken 'fully muffled', with the tenor bell 'half-muffled'. This is a particular style of ringing reserved for very special occasions, such as the death of the monarch and therefore a once-in-a-lifetime event (probably) for most of us. In the hour before the funeral, our ringing included 96 changes of 'Queens'* (one for each year of her age) and several other 'call-changes' on all 8 of our bells. We interspersed these rings with tolling of a single bell which included our two young ringers each tolling the treble bell 70 times (once for each year of her reign). My thanks go to our local band who turned out for the occasion, a 100% turn-out, fittingly.

*For those interested, for the change of 'Queens', we ring the bells in the order 1-3-5-7-2-4-6-8.

What are Muffles?

What, you may well ask, are muffles? These are leather pads that we strap on to the clappers, so as to muffle the sound of each strike. 'Half-muffled' is where we strap a pad onto one side of the clapper. One side then strikes as normal, while the other side is muffled, and so the sound is partly muted and toned down. 'Fully-muffled' has a pad on both sides - and every strike is muffled. My thanks go to Mark and Amelie for their help - they went up and down the tower, fitting, removing, re-fitting and removing said muffles!

That doesn't really leave me room for more about our bells; until the next time, then....

John Dowling, Tower Captain

Brightwell Preschool

Christmas lasts for three months at preschool... at least. We begin in November with sparkly glitter, fun Christmas songs, Nativity practice, fancy dress photo-booth and creative Christmas crafts. In December we decorate our tree donated by Root One, wrap odd presents in our workshop, use more sparkly glitter, perform songs and present our Nativity play to families, enjoy a frantic Christmas party where the children receive presents from Father Christmas and finally a family Christmas dinner.

All-in-all, Christmas gives the opportunity for new language, new experiences, new concepts, new skills, new stories and new connections. Remember, this is often the first Christmas they will remember, so it really is all new. Children use all of their senses to learn about the world. They will try new tastes with traditional baking, new smells with our scented play dough, new textures with pretend shaving-foam snow with glitter (of course), new sounds, creating songs, using instruments, and new movements with action songs.

As we move into the new year, with all of the new stuff that's been going on, it becomes a time for reflection and sharing stories. 'New' becomes experience and experience becomes knowledge; this is how we learn. We just can't wait to get going as it really is so much fun to be here!

Natasha - Preschool Manager

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell WI

November has regularly become our Crafts for Christmas evening. This time, three members demonstrated cracker making, ribbon tying and pom-pom wreath making. There was much hilarity and some very good results. Marion provided the lovely refreshments.

Upcoming events include our Christmas meal at the Red Lion, the usual Coffee Meet-up at Root One on 19 December, the start up again of the knitters and crocheters meetings, and a visit to Basildon Park 'Winter Ball' with afternoon tea in January. Our next evening meeting on 13 December will be Sarah Slater, a Hampton Court Guide, talking about Scandal, Sex and Salacious Gossip in the Royal Court, postponed from September.

Annie Brooker, President

Meet Hilda Behan



I first met Hilda when I needed to have a pair of trousers shortened. She did such a good job that I trotted around to her place a few days later with armfuls of shirts and trousers that needed taking up or taking in. In a few weeks she had transformed my wardrobe.

I had her as a professional dressmaker, but no, she is self-taught, building on the basics she learnt at school. She used to make clothes for friends and family but now she concentrates on repairs and on craft items, currently producing quantities of Santa gnomes for our local

Christmas fairs and markets.

Hilda lived all her life in Cholsey, until she moved to Brightwell 11 years ago. She has three children, two stepchildren, five grandchildren and four great grandchildren and she says having her kids, and being a good mum to them, is her proudest achievement. Perhaps this comes from a subconscious desire to create the happy childhood that she never had. Hilda barely knew her own mother. *'My mother died when I was three years old. I went into hospital with rheumatic fever and when I came out, she was gone. I didn't know what was happening. I was separated from my two siblings, put into a home, and then fostered out. I grew up not knowing where they were or what had happened to them. I never knew my Dad'*.

And that could have been that if it hadn't been for a chance meeting many years later. Her foster parents had looked after her well enough, but she never really felt wanted, so as soon as she turned 18, she left home, got married and got a job as a domestic at Fairmile hospital. She worked there until she had children and returned once the children were old enough to look after themselves.

'One day, when I was working on one of the wards, one of the workmen said I've got to go off early today, I'm taking my Mrs to the dentist in Burfield. I told him that I was born in Burfield and I told him my story.' The man in question did some scouting and came back a week later with enough information to help Hilda trace one of her cousins. *'I went to see my cousin and she gave me the phone number for one of my sisters. I phoned her up and*

I said you probably don't remember me. She said I DO (she was older). She said we wanted to find you, but we were frightened to interfere because we knew you'd been fostered". They met up soon after. Hilda reckons that finding her sister was one of the best moments of her life. They discovered that they had a lot of common interests, and had even both called their sons Andrew. They kept in touch until she died 11 years ago.

Hilda is coming up to her 80th birthday in 2023, so that begs a number of questions: is she happy with her lot? is she in good health? does she have any regrets? does she believe in life after death?

Yes, she is happy. She's been happily married to Tony for 38 years – *'a life sentence'*, she says laughing. Regrets? Well, yes - she does have one big regret, and that is that she didn't take nursing seriously and do a diploma. When Hilda first started working at the hospital, she was one of the pantry staff. She gravitated to the laundry and when that closed down, they put her on the wards. *"I absolutely loved it. I wish I'd done it earlier. When I worked there as a teenager the nurses and matron encouraged me to come over on the nursing side, but I didn't and I wish I had. I've always done caring work. I just love helping people'*.

With regards to her health, earlier this year she had a hip replacement which has transformed her mobility. But now the other hip is starting to hurt so that one has also got to be replaced soon. This brings us then to the topic of mortality. Hilda really doesn't know what to expect. *'I just don't know. My foster mother used to call me an atheist but I'm not. But nor am I a church person. When I go, I've told my kids if there's any good in my body take it. I've signed up to donate my organs. And I'd like my ashes to be scattered somewhere nice and peaceful – not on my parents' grave –I don't know where but somewhere with flowers.'*

Not that Hilda is planning to depart anytime soon. As well as the never-ending pile of sewing to keep her busy, she has just received an older dog. Ever since her own dog Pippa died, aged 15, Hilda has been looking after elderly dogs when people go on holiday. And then there's the helicopter ride that's been booked since last Christmas that she is planning on taking anytime soon. *'That'll be a first! And I'm really looking forward to it.'*

Alison Leigh

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Environment Group

Swan Stream and Wood

In July, I reported that John Bloomfield had been surveying the stream for insects. Since then he has confirmed that '*we officially have only the third ever record of *Macrostelus sardus* leafhopper for the UK!*' He is also waiting to hear back about a type of Mirid Bug, *Dicyphus tamaninii*, which is thought to be only the fourth recording in the UK. This is very encouraging and shows how creating new habitat can make a difference to the wildlife and we are grateful to John for his work.

A further piece of good news is that a group of friends who attend the primary school decided to help 'save the planet' by holding an impromptu cake sale and donating the money to the Environment Group. It is great to see such enthusiasm. We were very pleased to receive the donation which it was agreed would go towards providing an owl box. We will find a suitable tree and attach the box before the nesting season and hopefully we will have some owlets next year.

Millennium Wood

The recent wet weather has ensured that pond is doing what it should do! The area around the pond greatly benefited from clearing of hemlock and other dominant plants by a team of volunteers from James Davys' former colleagues at Vertex.

Weather

The rainfall recorded at Highlands Farm was 53mm and 79mm in September and October respectively. By comparison, the local averages for the months are about 69mm and 67mm based on the records in 'Portrait of a Rural Parish' published by the group in 2013. Hence, across the two months, rainfall was about average.

The Met Office report that '*The autumn so far has been warmer than average, although the weather has been unsettled with regular rainfall almost throughout, any dry spells being short-lived. Sunshine has been above normal in some eastern areas, but below normal for some areas to the west and north.*' It also said '*...it was the seventh warmest October in a series from 1884*'.

Flows in the River Thames at the start of September were generally between 'below normal' to 'normal' with flows increasing through October. However,

with rainfall for the last 12 months at only around 71% of the long-term average, groundwater levels are still relatively low. This is reflected in the recent note from Thames Water - the drought order still continues (not that there is currently much need to use a hose pipe!).

Steve Capel-Davies
Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Environment Group

Brightwell Supporting Refugees

We have continued our Friday night fundraising events with a talk on modern art by Mary Acton in October and an interactive music night 'Funky Friday' from Maff Potts in November, both very enjoyable. Your support and kind generosity at these events, and at the church summer concert, has meant that we have been able to donate funds to help refugees in our projects abroad and in the UK. This has included support to the Hope school in Amman, Jordan and to the Windle Foundation in East Africa. Recently, we made a grant of £2000 to provide 'AFRIpads' (reusable menstrual pads) at Rhino Camp High School in Northern Uganda. In many cases a refugee girl's menstrual health and hygiene needs are unmet, thus affecting her attendance at school. In Oxfordshire, our donations to Asylum Welcome have helped them stock up the Food Bank for winter and supplement their Hardship Fund for refugees and asylum seekers who have little or no income.

Upcoming events

The ever-popular Carols in St James's is being resurrected this year. Come and join us on Tuesday 6 December at 7.30pm for a Christmassy collection of songs and readings. Tickets will be available in the shop, no charge but needed to limit numbers. Mulled wine and nibbles will be served after, so donations welcome.

Instead of the Christmas market this year we will be serving mulled wine and selling a few things like holly, mistletoe and goodies on a stall outside the village hall on Saturday morning, 3 December, 10-1pm.

Ukrainians in the village

Some of our Ukrainian guests are now finding more permanent accommodation in and outside the village; others are still staying with their hosts. We thank everyone who has helped them to kit out their new homes. Yoga classes have stopped for now, but we thank Emma Diserens for her

generosity in giving these free Sunday night classes. The English conversation classes in the church continue, complimenting the Monday afternoon coffee group and the more formal classes being taken at the Old Counting House Wallingford and at local colleges. Thank you to everyone who has helped with these. Improving English is a key goal to helping them secure better jobs here.

If you would like to know more or wish to donate, please visit our new website www.bsr-charity.org.

Helen Connor

Wassail 2023

Help keep this fabulous village tradition going by reserving the late afternoon of Sunday 8 January 3-5pm as a time to make some noise whilst walking around the lanes of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell from orchard to orchard. We are delighted that Armaleggan Morris will be with us again, joined by the fabulous village belly dancers accompanied by drum and bagpipe. We will also be joined by the Brightwell and Sotwell Mumming Troupe.

I don't know yet where we will start but details will be posted nearer the time on telegraph pole posters etc. It would also be good to try and break that world record again for the world's largest Shepherd's Hey dance.

See you 8 January. Wassail!

Jason Debney

Stewart Village Hall

Thank you to everyone who continues to support the hall by using it for groups, activities, parties, and celebrations.

We would like to express sincere thanks for the financial support we have received from Brightfest and the Community Association, as well as our local SODC Ward Councillors. The grants received have allowed us to carry out electrical repairs and install a timer on the boiler to ensure all users have hot water, while improving energy efficiency. We are also installing some radiant heaters in the Main Hall to provide instant heat.

Sadly, one of our trustees has decided to retire from the role. We would like to take this opportunity to thank John Rodda for his time, commitment, and dedication to the hall for over 20 years. If you would like to know more about the role of being a trustee and how you can support your Village Hall, please do get in touch - don't worry, you won't have to commit to 20 years!

Looking back briefly, the trustees would like to share the results of the financial year

1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022

Life was much more settled for all of us during this period as we tried to get back to normal after Covid. Groups and clubs returned to the hall, and parties and celebrations were held. It took some time to return to 'normal' levels, but we were lucky enough to be eligible for government support grants to help during this time.

We have worked to control expenses, carry out fundraising activities and build our funds in preparation for the future refurbishment project. Our total income was £23,902 and expenditure £10,393, meaning we ended the financial year with a credit balance of £13,509.

AGM

More information will be shared at our AGM on Wednesday 18 January at 7pm. Please come along to hear how the hall is doing now and what plans we have for the future.

The hall is very important as a village facility, a meeting place and a hub for groups and parties. Please keep an eye out for some new Village Hall notice boards - we plan to use these to keep you informed about what is going on at the hall, including regular classes you may want to join.

If you have any comments, questions or feedback, please 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 or contact Shena at shenaluck@btinternet.com on 01491 834543.

Annette Kilworth on behalf of the trustees
www.stewartvillagehall.org.uk

The Red Lion

Here at The Red Lion, we have just finished a steady autumn and we are now busy preparing for what we hope will be our first real Christmas. We would love it if you could join us at some point over the festive period.

Christmas menu

Our Christmas menu is now available to book, and you can see this by visiting our website and clicking on menus. We will be serving our festive menu from 30 November to 23 December for lunches, Wednesday to Sunday, and supper Wednesday to Saturday. Pre-booking is a must and we ask for all Christmas bookings that menus are sent in no later than 4 days before your booking. Throughout the month, we will also be offering a smaller non festive menu which will include some pub favourites such as our homemade pies, delicious fresh fish and of course our fab burgers along with other choices.

Live music

We have some great live music planned for December and we would love for you to come along and join in the fun. On Sunday 11 December we have 'The Faith Healers' back again. They were here in the summer and a great hit with all those that came with some saying they were the best they had ever heard here. They are a 3-piece bluesy/funky and all-round fun band playing a variety of hits from over the decades. The band will start at 6.30pm after the Sunday night meat draw and we hope to see you there.

We are also extremely lucky that on 18 December, we have the fabulous Fleur Stevenson and Matt Potts here to really get us all into the Christmas spirit. We will have mulled wine & mince pies available on the evening. This will be a very popular event so get here early to secure yourself a spot to watch this magnificent duo perform for you. Entrance is free for both events but there will be a bucket going round asking for voluntarily contributions to help with the costs, so please remember to bring some real cash with you

New Year's Eve Party

Once Christmas is done, we will then be getting ready for the tradition of New Year's Eve! Although we are yet to experience this, we are carrying on with the pub's tradition and celebrating on the 30th. This year's theme is Rum & Reggae. We have a disco booked and we would love for you to join us to party the night away until the early hours of the 31st. Fancy dress is

recommended although not essential but with this year's theme, just find your loudest shirt/dress/top available, pop on some shades you are good to go!

Although we will be closed New Year's Eve to give all our wonderful staff the night off and time to celebrate with their loved ones, we will open for New Year's Day Breakfast/Brunch for you all to enjoy a good hearty breakfast! The Full English along with other dishes will be available so please get booked in if this sounds like your sort of start to the New Year! Timings will be confirmed asap but if you fancy booking in, please call us to reserve your table.

Christmas New Year Openings

These are not yet set in stone, but we have put our initial thoughts below and will update on our social media and send out via newsletter if these times change. If you wish to be added to our mailing list for updates, please email info@theredlionbrightwell.co.uk and request to be added.

Christmas Eve – Open all day 12-11pm

Christmas Day – 11.00-2.30pm

Boxing Day – 11-6pm

27 Dec – Closed All Day

28 Dec – Open 12-4pm

29 Dec – Open 12-3pm & 6-11pm

30 Dec – Open 12 -3pm & 6-Close

New Year's Eve – Open 12-4pm

New Year's Day – Open 10.30-5pm (Breakfast/Brunch being served)

2-3 Jan – Closed

4 Jan onwards, open as normal

As we did this year, the pub will be closed for a short period of time in January to allow us to undertake some decoration works amongst other jobs that need doing. The pub will be closed from 9-17 January, reopening at 6pm on Wednesday 18th where we look forward to welcoming you all back to The Red Lion. Be sure to join us on 8 Jan (Wassail Day!) to ensure all the beer is drunk as we would hate to throw any away!

To finish, we would like to wish all the readers a very Merry Christmas and we look forward to seeing many of you in your local at some point over the next couple of months. We thank you for all your support and cannot wait to see what 2023 brings and remember.....your local pub is for life, not just for Christmas.

Corinne, Mouse & Ruby

Changes to waste collection over Christmas and New Year

SODC will not be sending out details to individual households so here is the information you need:

Normal Collection Day

Thursday 29 December 2022

Thursday 5 January 2023

Thursday 12 January 2023

Revised Collection Day

Saturday 31 December 2022

Saturday 7 January 2023

Friday 13 January 2023

Please note that Garden Waste Services are suspended over Christmas period (no brown bin on 31 December). They will resume in January, see bottom of next page.

To find out more about recycling tips and waste over the Christmas period go to www.morerecycling.co.uk.

Distribution of *The Villager* - vacancy

After many years of being involved in the distribution of *The Villager*, Keith Brooks is looking to hand over the role to another villager.

The way it works is that one person (Keith) counts the 700 or so magazines into 22 lots. They are then taken to local distributors for onward delivery to houses in the Parish.

It is a social role both in assembly as well as delivery to local distributors and only takes about five to six hours every other month. In addition, it provides the opportunity to catch up with villagers who you might not otherwise see very often. If you would like to know more or express your interest, please give Keith a call on 01491 839044.

VILLAGE DIARY

December

3	Brightwell Art Club	VH	10-4pm
3	BSR mini-Xmas stall (outside VH)		10-1pm
6	Village Christmas Lunch	VH	12.15
6	BSR Carols at St James's		7.30pm
11	Christmas Window Displays		
11&18	Music in the Red Lion	RL	6.30pm
13	WI talk by Hampton Court Guide	VH	7.30pm
24	Carols around the Christmas Tree	The Square	5.15pm
30	New Year's Eve Eve Party	RL	

January

1	Breakfast/Brunch at the Red Lion	RL	From 10.30am
6	Wassail		3pm

Dates of Christmas Carols and church services are on page 12.

Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

Black bins Thursdays 8 & 22 December
Saturday 7 & Thursday 19 January

Green & brown bins Thursdays 1 & 15 December,
green only on Saturday 31 December
Friday 13 & Thursday 26 January

More details of bin collections over Christmas on page 23.

Village website

For more information about Brightwell-cum-Sotwell visit the village website: www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk or Brightwell Community Facebook page.