

Contents

Editorial	2
Go Trailer Swift	3
The Vicar writes	4
Village lunch Club	4
The Red Lion	5-6
Brightwell Toddlers Group	6
Summer concert	6
Meet Gerry Creagh	7-9
The Community Association	9-10
The Village Stores & Post Office	10
The Flower & Produce Show schedule & entry form	11-14
Parish Council News	15
Stewart Hall	15-16
BcS Environment Group	17
St Agatha's church bells	18
Brightwell Supporting Refugees	18-19
Brightwell School Eco Alliance	19-20
Brightfest	20-21
Save the Children	21-22
Brightwell Village History	22
Brightwell Preschool	22-23
BcS Women's Institute	23
South Oxfordshire Choir	23
The Curfew Bell Celebration	23
70, 700, £7,000 update	24
Village Diary	25

Editor: Alison Leigh 07983 752 454 (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

Items for the next edition should be sent to the Editor by 10 July 2024. *The Villager* is published every other month and delivered free to all households in the village.

Editorial

In Brightwell we mark the passing of time not just by the seasons but by the annual events that have become beloved village traditions. We kicked off the year with our Wassail, and we've just had the splendid church fete featuring many of our old favourites, Roy's flea circus and the human fruit machine to name just two. Saturday 8 June sees the return of Brightfest. Everyone said that last year's event was the best ever (see report p20) so no pressure. And then on Sunday 30 June the prodigious village talent will be on display once more in the not to be missed Summer Concert (see flyer & p6).

Talking of talent, in May Brightwell's resident poet Robert Seatter treated us to an extraordinary premiere in the Barn at Smalls House, (cover pic by David Dugan). Along with cellist Elizabeth Reid and the recorded sound of nightingales he read from his latest book of poems celebrating the 100th anniversary of the first live outside BBC broadcast - a duet between renowned cellist Beatrice Harrison and the nightingales in her garden. It was a preview of a documentary 'The Cello and the Nightingale' that went out on Radio 3 on Sunday 19 May. If you missed it tune into the podcast on BBC Sounds. And you'll find a hand printed limited edition of the poems in the village shop.

Ever heard of Trailer Swift, sic? That's the name of an electric go-kart that is currently being designed and built by 9 Brightwell youngsters, as part of the Greenpower's national Formula Goblin kit car project for 10-11 year olds. We wish them all the best in the race at Goodwood Motor Circuit on 30 June (see p3).

I gather that some equally enterprising youngsters are making good progress in their efforts to learn the intricacies of bell ringing (see p18). Nothing gives me more pleasure than listening to the bells on a summer evening as I potter about in the garden, so I'm delighted that this tradition will continue thanks to new village blood.

Continuing our theme of 90 is the new 70 - I met another nonagenarian for this edition - the multi-talented wild Irish rover, now Brightwell resident, Gerald Creagh. Gerry exudes Irish blarney. People like him remind me that life is good when you make the best of what you've got. See p7.

I trust we all exercised our democratic right to vote in the local elections in early May? For future reference you must take your ID with you, or else you will be sent home to get it. Have a great summer.

Alison Leigh

Go Trailer Swift!

Beware, the once quiet lanes of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and Aston Tirrold now have 9 racing drivers! Florence Clancey, Naomi Davidson, Jasper Dixon, Laurie Quantrell, Grace Richards, Maggie Richards, Annabel Rooney, Theo Tapping and Angus Winckworth are taking part in Greenpower's national Formula Goblin kit car project for 10-11 year olds. Over the next two months, our team will be designing and building an electric go-kart, which we will race against other teams at Goodwood Motor Circuit on 30 June. So far we've



unpacked all the parts and decided on a name for the kart: Trailer Swift. We still need to build the chassis, axles, steering mechanism and electrical system, before designing the bodywork from recycled materials. It's a big challenge, especially for a new team. "I have no idea

how we're going to build it in time" admits Laurie. "I think screwing in all the nuts and bolts correctly might be a bit tricky" explains Angus. "We'll need everyone working together" says Maggie.

Our team will take part in slalom, drag, circuit and head to head sprint races at Goodwood. We're excited and are already considering race tactics, like letting down the tyres a bit for better grip in the slalom. Annabel is "looking forward to being a team". Jasper thinks there will be "shouting and cheering" on race day, whilst Grace acknowledges there may be "some tension in the air" and Naomi thinks it could "get a bit hectic". Theo is aiming high: "It's a great feeling when you win".

At the end of the project, the kart will be dismantled and another team from Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and/or Aston Tirrold can build it next year. If anyone currently in year 5 is interested in participating next year, please contact Emma Clancey (emmaclancey@icloud.com). As Florence says, "It's really fun because you get to drive a car at 15mph, which you can't normally do when you're 10".

"Don't worry, we won't be driving on real roads for another seven years".

Emma Clancey

The Vicar writes...

A former Liverpool Manager Bill Shankly famously said, "Some people believe football is a matter of life and death, I am very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that!"

This month sees the start of the UEFA Euro 24 football tournament, which will be watched by millions across Europe and the world. Yet it also illustrates some key points about the Christian life. As Paul writes: "But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13b,14).

A prize to be won: The dream of every player in the competition is to be able to hold up the Cup themselves. For us the prize is the eternal life, God's gift of relationship with Him for now and eternity through Jesus. But there's an important difference between football and the Christian faith. To win the Euros you have to be good enough, while Christ's love for us is undeserved and is not dependent on how well we've done.

Training to be undertaken: If a team is going to win Euro 24, they need to have trained hard beforehand. Our training, as Christians, starts the moment we accept the gift of God's life. On a daily basis, we must train ourselves to say *no* to the wrong things in our lives.

As we build up our *godly muscles*, we are better able to choose to do what is right in God's eyes. To enable us to do all this we need to engage in the spiritual disciplines of prayer, studying the Bible and being part of a church and small group. How is your training going?

I hope to see you in church over the summer months! We meet at St Agatha's each Sunday at 9.30am, except on 23 June when we meet at St James' Sotwell instead and on 30 June when we join the rest of the Wallingford Team at Crowmarsh at 11am.

In God's Love,

Rev Kev

Village Lunch Club

The next lunch is on Tuesday 4 June at 12.15pm in the Village Hall, £5. If you have not already booked and would like to attend, please contact Eastlyn Horsfield, 01491 832041 or Sue Collett, 01491 837617.

The Red Lion

The Red Lion Courtyard is now open and ready for you to enjoy. If you have not been to see us for a while, please pop in to take a look and we hope you love it as much as we do. Our builders did an amazing job and once finished, it was left to Clive & Mouse to wire all our new lights and heaters to make the space even more inviting and I must say they have done it beautifully. When the sun sets the Courtyard really is the place to be. We have bought new furniture for the garden and we would like to say thank you to



everyone who has sponsored a table/bench or donated an amount towards the cost of the whole garden project. I know many are not on social media or do not receive my emails so to explain, we are asking our lovely locals/villagers if they would like to help with the garden fund and perhaps sponsor a table or bench. There are still some sponsorship opportunities available with chairs starting at £124.95 rising to the benches at £174.95. Many have donated towards the cost of a bench and all donations I promise, are simply put into the business to cover a little of the outgoing costs and we are very touched by all who have done this. If you would like more information, please email us here: info@theredlionbrightwell.co.uk, call us on 837373 or pop in and see Corinne.

As you know, all refurb work, renovations and repairs are solely up to us to fund and we can only keep doing this with the help and support of the village. We do a weekly meat draw and bonus ball draw and each week, excess funds after prizes paid out goes directly towards the ongoing costs so if you would like to take part in these, please come and buy some tickets knowing you are helping the pub with a bonus of perhaps winning a prize.

Over the next few months we have a few events going on which are listed here and on the diary page:

4 June - Quiz night in aid of Wassail

16 June - Jazz Jam

21 June - Boogie Bingo (weather permitting, this will be outside in the Courtyard, so bring a jumper)

30 June - Live Music 6.30pm start, Let It Bleed, Rolling Stones tribute Band

2nd July - Quiz night in aid of The Red Lion garden fund

Let it Bleed will kick off after the meat draw on Sunday 30 June. If the weather is kind to us, we may have them perform outside so anyone living close by and not here enjoying the night, please note you may hear this up until around 8.30pm. All of our music events so far have been free to come to so please come and enjoy. We can only keep booking bands if we get the people in.

To finish, I'd like to let you know that on 8 June, Brightfest day, the pub will be closed during the day as all staff will be down at the Rec serving you drinks and keeping you hydrated. We will have the main bar with a smaller Pimm's/ Gin/Spirits bar which we hope will shorten the queue and we will have extra pay points. Please note, unless you need beer from the pumps, you will be able to buy all other drinks from the other bar so if that queue is shorter and if you want bottles and/or spirits/soft drinks, please use that bar. The pub itself will re-open in the evening from 6pm-ish for all those who are partied out and want to sit down but no food will be served all day in the pub. Thank you all, here's to a busy summer and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Corinne, Mouse & Ruby

Brightwell Toddlers Group

Our spring/summer term at toddler group has been packed full of fun so far. We kicked off after the Easter break with a bouncy castle as a special treat for the children and they all had a fantastic and very energetic morning. We've also been busy singing our favourite songs, playing with all of the toys and reading stories. Our weekly snack time is always a hit with the children and recently they had a go at making their own sandwiches which they loved.

Toddlers runs every Thursday morning during term time 09.15-11am and is suitable for children aged 0-5. The cost is £3.50 cash or £4 online per session. We can be contacted at brightwelltoddlers@gmail.com or via our Facebook page @[brightwelltoddlers](https://www.facebook.com/brightwelltoddlers).

If you're new to the area or haven't had a chance to bring your little one down to our group, please do come along. We love meeting new families.

Emily Paton-Smith

Summer concert 30 June 7pm St Agatha's

Don't miss father and son team Jim and Jasper Lynch playing together for the first time at this year's concert, along with many other great acts (see flyer).

Meet Gerry Creagh

Gerald Patrick Creagh, alias the “WIR” (Wild Irish Rover) will celebrate his 95th birthday in December which is indeed a miracle. Gerry is a devoted father, grandad, great grandad, retired business executive, singer, writer, raconteur but above all, he is a survivor. He’s endured bomb blasts, a near drowning and persistent heart problems and he’s still with us. These days he’s not very mobile but not a single marble is missing and they rattle away as he thumps out the fourth volume of his *magnum opus*, ‘Readers Troubles’, as yet unpublished, along with numerous short stories and travelogues.



So where did it all begin and how did it so often nearly end? Gerry was born to Irish Catholic parents in Caterham in 1929, the youngest of three siblings.

During WW2, Caterham with its Guards Depot, was a dangerous place to live in. His first near death experience was courtesy of a German incendiary bomb that fell on his house and burst into flames against the outside chimney wall. Luckily he was sleeping in a ‘Morrison’ shelter, a big steel box, downstairs inside the house. There were plenty of other near misses: machine-gunned by low-flying Heinkels en route to bomb Kenley RAF base; another bomb, 50 yards away that created a massive crater in their road and left them without water, gas and electricity for many weeks. Wasn’t he frightened? “It was frightening at times, of course. But it was exciting too!”

With an old naval telescope from someone’s Grandad and a pair of old binoculars, Gerry and his mates watched the Battle of Britain play out, from the vantage point on the top branches of a chestnut tree, in Caterham Golf course. “With Biggles overhead, it was a big aerial game of ‘cops and robbers’ and we were the good guys. We were never, ever going to lose!”

The grim reaper fancied his chances again in 1948. Just turned 18, Gerald was called up. He chose to do his National Service with the Queens Royal Regiment based in Guildford. During a ‘battle inoculation course’, which involved firing live ammunition at soldiers to accustom them to the sounds and fury of battle before they actually went into battle, Gerry was blown up and endured a year in military hospitals, with two crushed discs and was partially paralysed down his right side. He had a successful double

laminectomy operation and was in a walking plaster case for six months. “Eventually they decided I was unfit for duty and they discharged me, on seven shillings and sixpence a week”. He still has the pension. It’s now worth the mighty sum of £2,275 a year!

The 50s saw Gerry training to be a teacher and falling in love. Having set out to qualify in English and French, he was so determined to overcome his injuries that he spent hours in the gym and ended up majoring in Physical Education. He even overcame his fear of contact sports and played on the wing for the London Irish Wanderers. “I was so s**t scared of being tackled that I ran as fast as I could. They’ve never seen anybody move so speedily on Sunbury’s rugby pitch and I was renowned for **not** tackling but I excelled as a heel tapper!”

Una O’Cleary who came from Galway, was at a party given by an old school pal. When he spotted her across a crowded room, it was love at first sight. “No question. Awesome. Absolutely”. On 2 April, 1955 they married.

Realising that he would never make his fortune teaching, Gerry joined Procter and Gamble living in Canterbury and covering the “Salesman’s Graveyard of East Kent. “Instead of selling English or French, I sold soap”. He was so good at selling soap that he rapidly climbed the greasy pole into management and was headed-hunted by Gillette, to become their UK sales director and then moved into International Marketing. The family spent 3 years in Japan and another 2 in South Africa.

The heady days of international cut and thrust ended abruptly in 1991. The grim reaper waved his scythe again in Gerry’s direction. He had a heart blockage. A successful angioplasty unblocked his artery, no stent in those days and it seemed a good time to retire and enjoy a calmer life style.

He didn’t need to work, thanks to good luck with a string of property deals. In the late 90s, he and Una lived an idyllic lifestyle – six months in their cottage in County Cork and six months in a leasehold flat in St James in central London, where they overlooked the back door of Christies and treated Fortnums as their corner shop.

His luck changed in 2002 when his beloved Una was diagnosed with bowel cancer. She received the last rites and died in August, surrounded by the family. He might have sat around moping: “You could go two ways; stick a bottle of Jameson on the table and look at the four walls and drink yourself stupid, or travel; I rejoiced in my memories and mourned her through travelling”. Along with his golf clubs, he went around the world 5 times.

Along the way, he sat in the field below El Capitán in Yosemite to watch the sun rise over Boulder Mountain with El Capitán revealing himself at his back and he wept, remembering his holiday with Una, decades earlier. Taking six months, he drove around the entire coast line of Australia, 49,000 kilometres (the Equator is 43,000km!) and he had another brush with death sailing across the Atlantic on the ‘Star Clipper’ when she got caught in a gale force 11 Mistral, keeled over dangerously and seemingly almost capsized, throwing him out of his bunk to land on his head!

Three years ago, he almost had a heart attack flying home from Spain. A TAVI - Trans Aortic Valve Implant - brought him back from the brink and has given him a new lease of life.

Now he lives in Brightwell two doors down from his daughter Pippa. The Creagh dynasty is flourishing :1 son, 3 daughters,14 grandchildren, 3 great grandsons and one more on the way. He zooms everyday with his 3 daughters and meets his friends at noon every Saturday in the Red Lion for a couple of pints of Guinness. You might catch him in the pub at other times, singing from his repertoire of 127 folk songs. On 15 March this year he was awarded an ‘Honorary Degree in Education’, B.Ed, from his *Alma Mater*, St Mary’s University, Twickenham.

When his time comes, he will become ‘a member of the Turf Club’ and join Una in the “double decker” plot he bought in the graveyard in Dorchester on Thames. His glass isn’t just half full, it overflows. In Gerry’s words: “I am blessed. I am fulfilled”.

Alison Leigh

Community Association

Safari Supper 18 May

This was a great success again with over 70 people enjoying the hospitality of old friends and making new ones. A big thank you to Lynn who organises the event so well (and so patiently!), to all the hosts who entertained everyone so magnificently and to everyone who supported the event.

Village Fete – Saturday 6 July 2-4.30pm at Sotwell House

This year the Village Fete will be held in the lovely gardens of Sotwell House, kindly hosted by Jenny and David Dobbin. Our plans are well advanced and we hope to provide the usual fun filled afternoon for all the family. I am sure that the weather will be perfect!

As usual, the Fete works as a collaboration between groups in the village. Each activity is managed by a separate group or individual (the PCC run the teas, for example). The Community Association (CA) collects the funds from each activity and then invites interested groups and societies to submit requests for grants from the money which has been raised.

We are always looking for volunteers to help with the set up before this event. Look out for the schedule and entry forms for the Flower and Produce Show elsewhere in *The Villager*. The Show has entry and categories for all ages.

Our aim is to make sure that the Fete has a good balance of activities for everyone. As well as the established stalls and games (the white elephant stall, coconut shies, teas, books, brass band etc.) look out for something different. We would like to make the book stall more manageable this year, so we would prefer donations of paperback fiction and children’s books only please.

Committee members will be collecting for contributions to the white elephant, book and bottle stalls during the week before the Fete, so now is a good time to start thinking about what treasures you are planning to discard! Please remember that we can’t take any electrical goods to sell, because of liability in case of accidents, and all donations (especially toys) must be in good working order - they simply won’t sell otherwise. Thank you!

Jumble Sale – 5 October 2024 – Pavilion, Mackney Lane

Following the success of last year’s event, we are in the early stages of planning the next jumble sale - full details will appear in the next *Villager*.

James Davys, Chairman

Village Stores and Post Office

Please join us for Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Community Village Stores AGM on Saturday 29 June between 2-4pm in the Village Hall. Pimms, Squash or tea will be served from 2pm with some nibbles. The meeting will start at 3pm. Everyone is welcome to attend the meeting, although only Members may vote. To maintain the business as a social enterprise, run by volunteers, we are required to have an annual meeting to present the accounts and reports. Also we must be quorate, therefore we need as many members as possible to attend.

This is villagers’ chance to come along and find out about your Community Shop and Post Office, what goes on behind the scenes and meet some of the team over some refreshments.

The Management Committee

BRIGHTWELL-CUM-SOTWELL FLOWER AND PRODUCE SHOW

at
THE VILLAGE FETE

SATURDAY 6 July 2024

TO BE HELD IN THE GROUNDS OF SOTWELL HOUSE
Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, OX10 0PT
By kind permission of Jenny and David Dobbin

Flower and produce tent entries on the day will be received from 9–10.30am.
No late entries after 10.15am. Judging starts at 11am.

Entrance Fee: 50p each adult entry – 25p each junior entry. **Late entries will be charged double.**

The show will open to the public at 2pm. Exhibitors are asked to collect exhibits and prize cards at 4pm.

TROPHIES

The Chilton Cup is awarded for the best exhibit in the fruit and vegetable classes.

The Win Glendenning Memorial Salver is awarded for the best flower arranging exhibit.

Two trophies are awarded in memory of Gilbert Talbot. **The Talbot Rose Bowl** is awarded for the best rose exhibit. **The Talbot Cup** is awarded on a points system, but may not be won by the same person for two years running.

The Joan Sheard Cup will be awarded for the best under-16 entry in an adult class. Trophies will also be awarded for the top two junior classes.

The Swan Allotments Cup is awarded for the best-kept allotment. Judging takes place during the week before the show.

The Sally Dugan Cup is awarded for the best entry in the creative writing section.

The Bakers Bowl is awarded for the most points won in cookery.

Best Entry in Show is judged by the most votes made by the public. Prize: £10 for the Village Stores.

THE SCHEDULE

To be judged by popular vote: Best Entry in Show. Prize: £10 voucher for the Village Stores.

Flower Arranging. Flowers from the garden to be used where possible.

Height is unlimited, except for miniature arrangements

1. A miniature flower arrangement in an egg cup. Max 4" x 4" (10cm x 10cm) height unlimited
2. A bowl of floating garden flowers
3. An arrangement – Olympics (accessories allowed). Max 18" x 18" (45cm x 45cm including container) height unlimited
4. A foliage arrangement featuring a sports shoe. Max 16" x 16" (40cm x 40cm) Max height 15" (38cm)
5. A Vase of Garden Favourites – 5 stems, one variety or mixed
6. Most scented flower, single or small bunch of up to 5 stems
7. Most scented rose
8. A rose, Hybrid Tea – 1 stem
9. A rose, multi-headed – 1 stem
10. Potted plant, flowering foliage or succulent

Flowers and Vegetables.

11. Dish of soft fruit of one kind
12. Box of vegetables – 3 varieties. Box not to exceed 16" x 12" (40cm x 30.5cm)
13. Box of salad vegetables. Box not to exceed 16" x 12" (40cm x 30.5cm)
14. 3 broad beans
15. 6 pea pods
16. 3 courgettes
17. 5 potatoes (named variety)
18. 4 named herbs in one jar

Cookery. Note – please ensure new lids are used on jars

19. A jar of chutney – min. weight 12 oz (350g)
20. A jar of marmalade – min. weight 12 oz (350g)
21. A jar of any jam including jellies – min. weight 12 oz (350g)
22. A jar of fruit curd
23. A loaf of sour dough
24. 5 pieces from a tray bake – any recipe
25. A decorated cake
26. A fruit topped cheese cake

Parish Council News

AGM Tuesday 7 May

The AGM of the Parish Council was well supported this year and thank you to all those who attended. Councillors were pleased to engage with villagers on the work that they do on their behalf. Cllr Robson introduced the meeting to council members and explained their responsibilities and gave a summary of the work that the Parish Council does for the community.

A wide-ranging discussion followed on topics including concerns such as EV charging points and drainage issues in the village. Councillor Debney updated the meeting about a tree survey that is currently underway and Councillor Nielsen gave an update on the progress that the Parish Council is making on the redevelopment of the Pavilion.

We were pleased to welcome representatives from the Primary School who gave an interesting presentation on their plans for a new eco classroom, and the Stewart Hall restoration committee. Thank you to all who attended.

Slade End Speeding

We have had complaints from residents regarding cars speeding in and out of the village, particularly at Slade End. Please can all motorists in the village observe and stick to our speed limits.

We would also like to make residents aware of a Community Speedwatch initiative run by Thames Valley Police. Could anyone who is interested contact the TVP and discuss a speed monitoring programme.

Charging Points

A request was raised from a resident for EV Charging Points in the village and this was discussed at a recent meeting. Cllr Sudbury our County Councillor stated that he would ask those responsible for EV Charging within the county to visit the village and advise how we can best meet the needs EV car owners.

James Davys

Stewart Hall

Hopefully you will have seen the posters confirming planning permission for the Village Hall restoration project has been granted. Please come along to our stand at the **Spring Fair, Brightfest and the Village Fete** to find out what happens next.

To support the project, we are holding a series of fundraising events, including:

On **1 June** there will be another great Wine Tasting event hosted by our own resident wine aficionado, Nick Zalinski. Nick will lead us through tasting some lovely summer wines accompanied by nibbles and tapas. Tickets £20 each from the Village Stores or can be reserved by emailing info@stewartvillagehall.org.uk Over 18s only.

On **4 July** Marea from *Art of Jaipur* will host 2 block printing workshops (3-5pm and 7-9pm). Join us to learn the art of Indian Block Printing and create your own beautiful designs using a wide range of hand carved blocks. Print either a set of napkins or three other items including cushion covers, tea towels, scarves, tote bags and drawstring gift bags. You will first have a demonstration and then you will practise on old fabric until you are ready to create your own designs. Please wear old clothes or bring an apron!



Already our lovely community has helped by organising events such as Bridge afternoons, Ladies Dancing and the Clothes Swap. If there are other events, classes or activities you would like to see in the Hall please let us know; we would be very happy to support these.

Finally, thank you to everyone who comes along to Shena's Cosy Café on a Monday morning in the Stewart Room, it is a lovely start to the week to meet with friends and neighbours and enjoy coffee and cake.

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, speak to any Trustee or [email info@stewartvillagehall.org.uk](mailto:info@stewartvillagehall.org.uk).

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 or on 01491 834543.

Annette Kilworth

BcS Environment Group

As the dawn chorus heralds Spring I have often wondered which birds can be heard. Although interested in birds I have struggled to identify them by their song. Indeed, I often fail to identify them by sight as they seem to fly away from me and mainly are seen as a silhouette! For those like me there is help at hand in the form of bird identification apps for one's mobile phone. These have been around for a while but I have only recently installed one and was very impressed. As the phone is held the app identifies each bird as it sings with a photograph. As other birds join in so the species is named and so a list appears with the species highlighted as it sings. The results can be saved as a recording if desired and individual songs called up to help as desired. Hopefully, over time, one should be able to pick out many birds without the app.

As an example of the types around here I recorded the more common ones such as Blackbird, Robin, Wren, etc but also, within 10 minutes or so down by the Thames were Willow Warbler, Reed Bunting, Grey Wagtail, Greater Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, Black Cap and Sedge Warbler. The next thing will be to try to see them all!

There are various apps available and the one I use is called Merlin which is free as the developers want to encourage as many people as possible to learn about birds.

In the last news I mentioned our intention to have an owl pellet dissection day. This is still the case but those running the event had run out of suitable pellets so the event is not likely to happen until the autumn. We will let you know details when available.

Weather

The rainfall recorded at Highlands Farm was for March and April was 76.4mm and 57.9mm respectively which are both more than the respective averages of 36.3mm and 52.0mm measured at the farm between 1999 and 2012. For the general area the Met Office indicate that for March the rain was around double the 1991-2020 average while for April it was around 50% greater. Maximum mean temperatures were about 1 deg C higher for March but about average for April. This seems slightly surprising as it has felt cold although this was probably due the frequency of northerly winds and low levels of sunshine duration.

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

St Agatha's church bells

As foreshadowed in my last update, our new young ringers are progressing very well. Moreover, there are now three youngsters learning and all doing well. In mid-May they will be ringing for their own confirmation service, with the Bishop of Dorchester among those listening to them! An honour indeed!

We will ring our Ring-for-Peace in the evening of 6 June, and will be attempting our own peal in mid June. That's three hours of non-stop ringing, on all eight of our bells. Fingers crossed!

John Dowling

Brightwell Supporting Refugees

Brightwell Supporting Refugees (BSR) has hit the amazing milestone of having donated more than £100,000 by way of grants and charitable donations to those we support. We are immensely proud of this achievement. When we started BSR in 2015 we had little idea how successful we would be but thanks to our supporters and trustees we are going from strength to strength. You can read more at our new website: bsr-charity.org.

Where our money goes - a new secondary education initiative



As you may have read in previous *Villager* editions, we have on-going commitments at home and abroad to help refugees and displaced people. One of these is at the Hope Centre in Amman, Jordan where we have funded two teachers for many years and also provided humanitarian aid to refugee families there. We are extending this support by giving an initial one-off grant to help fund new secondary classes for 20+ students where the students will follow the Jordanian curriculum and be taught by qualified teachers. It may lead to us giving further support if funds allow.

Up to now, students leave Hope after completing primary education and enter the state system but, sadly, very few complete their education and gain certificates. This is because secondary school classes are overcrowded and refugee students get fewer hours than Jordanians. With no school certificates, they end up in poorly paid insecure jobs, lack literacy skills and many marry young. Children then are born into households with financial insecurity. The hope is that by investing in secondary education like this we can help break the cycle of poverty.

Events

Our April event - Polly Vacher's talk on 'Wings around the World - raised £952 which was sent to the Red Cross Ukrainian Appeal, a charity which she nominated.

In May BSR benefitted (£950) from another premiere in the atmospheric Barn at Small's House in Mackney, 'The Cello and the Nightingale', celebrating the 100th anniversary of the first live outside BBC broadcast - a duet between renowned cellist Beatrice Harrison and her garden's nightingales. Poet and head of BBC History Robert Seatter performed from his new collection of poetry interspersed with music from cellist Elizabeth Reid. Thanks to both, and to hosts Dani & Jonathan Brown who provided refreshments before and after in their gardens in glorious sunshine, happily accompanied by the song birds of Mackney Lane.

Once again we will be running the tea tent at Brightfest on 8 June. This requires a number of helpers on the day and donations of lots of cakes. If you can help with either, please send an email to helen@bsr-charity.org, or text/phone 07790025908.

Helen Connor and Ann Linton, Co-chairs of the Trustees

Brightwell School Eco Alliance (BSEA)

Our Brightwell school has been on an incredible journey over the last decade, from financial instability & low pupil numbers to a bustling hive of education. Brightwell School is an asset to the village, one that not many other villages can boast of!

Thanks to the Merchant Tailors, former Headteacher Mrs Lewis, & continued support from Ms Potts, the popularity of Brightwell School within Wallingford & surrounding areas has resulted in a strong, consistent & steady intake of approximately 25-30 children per year.

However, this success brings with it a new challenge, a significant one, one that threatens the future of our village services – simply put, we no longer have enough space! The increase in pupil numbers, whilst shoring up the financial stability of the school, has resulted in the need for 1 additional classroom.

Unfortunately the Merchant Tailors do not have the capacity to fund this requirement and, rather disappointingly for the village, Oxfordshire County Council do not see Brightwell-cum-Sotwell as part of their pupil placement programme! Instead, they wish to see children travel across rush hour traffic at

Calvin Thomas Way to attend the new school on the High Croft development (yet to be built).

Brightwell School Eco Alliance (BSEA) has been established to plug this gap (run by parents of the school, Maddie Lowe & Charlotte Todd). The Alliance, an ecofriendly registered charity, is on a mission to keep Brightwell school a financially sound & bustling hub of education for our village.

BSEA will be fund-raising and accessing grants to build not just a classroom, but a green, eco hub, to be used by the complete Brightwell community – providing improved infrastructure, protecting our environment and keeping our vibrant village as bright as possible!

Please contact brightwellschoolecoalliance@gmail.com with other fund-raising ideas or if you wish to donate.

Louise Mercer

Brightfest

With another Brightfest to look forward to on **Saturday 8 June** it's timely to report the figures from 2023. It truly was an amazing day. Many villagers commented on the bands, food, beer, activities, and the sheer number of people that poured into the Rec to enjoy a beautiful summer's day - a great example of community (high) spirits.

Of course, it just couldn't be done without the tremendous efforts of village volunteers and businesses, and we must take a moment to name a few here: the Norfolk's for kicking off the pre-Brightfest activities with Bubble Dogs – a simple idea, perfectly organised and timed, that helps considerably with the early funding needs; Corinne and her Red Lion crew providing drinks and food; Sam Rogerson with burgers & chips; the Kidzone, courtesy of FOBs and the Preschool; Brightwell Supporting Refugees for running the Tea-tent. Although initially business was a little slow, there was a sudden rush on the last few cakes once the usual food-fayre had all gone, and the 'munchies' kicked in mid-evening resulting in a record year for funds raised.

We rely heavily on the generous support of local 1155 charity for equipment needs, from vans to water fountains to gazebos, Mark Brett and Didcot Plant Hire who don't charge us a penny for all the barriers.

A special mention to Steve Colam and the usual corps of collectors seeking donations on the gate. The fact that we managed to go electronic was reflected in gate takings, which were £5,053 before tax adjustments (vs £3,612 the year before), showing the fantastic support from you, the villagers. This increase

helped to counter the overall drop in our total net income £12,563 (vs £14,099). The biggest decrease was on sponsorship support reflecting the difficult economic conditions we were all facing (down £2,300).

It's worth noting that whilst Brightfest benefits local charities, good causes and businesses, they also contribute with their resources and a portion of their takings in the numbers above.

The costs to put on the event were £7,030. This included main expenditures on the stage hire £3,030; electrical supply £1,437; and bands £900. This was £1,191 higher than for 2022 (+20%).

Accordingly, last year we distributed less cash on to 'Good Causes', £2,300 (vs £5,685), and instead increased our cash reserves to £6,766, with the stated aim of retaining at least one year's worth of event costs for this year. In 2023 on professional advice we formed Brightfest Events Limited, giving us a platform for greater transparency and governance to sustain the event for future years. Our annual accounts are published at Companies House.

Finally, our thanks go to the Brightfest Organising Committee for bringing the whole thing together on the day. We are now looking forward to doing it all over again on 8 June. See you all there.

Eliot Forster, Director

Save the Children

Thanks to our wonderful green fingered supporters, we had lots of lovely donated plants at our annual Plant Sale on 11 May, and raised £921.50.

Don't forget **Save the Children Country Fare & Fun Dog Show on 1 June**.

All the money raised goes to help children in the UK and around the world. We have recently received an update from Rafah, Gaza's 'last refuge' causing yet another huge displacement of vulnerable children, who have already suffered so much. Save the Children's Emergency Health Unit (EHU) is providing vital treatment to children who've been severely injured by the bombing. Our Save the Children Response Team Leader, Rachael Cummings, reported about the reality of the situation in Rafah right now.

In this time of multiple crises, we need to showcase the impact humanitarians can and do still have. It is easy to lose hope, but in fact, there is so much still that can and should be done. Save the Children is dedicated to ensuring children are helped whatever way is possible. Thank you for your support.

Celia and the Save the Children Team

Brightwell Village History Group

Pictured is the village fete of 1970 at Slade End House presided over by the Reverend Hutchins. At this year's fete the History group will exhibit a dinosaur bone unearthed in Brightwell some years back. They will also have experts on hand to identify any finds that people may have discovered in their gardens, or somewhere in the parish. This could be coins, bits of pottery or any other item that you feel may be of interest.



Brightwell Preschool

Like wonderful little fruit trees, our children have sprouted and blossomed during the Spring term and by the time this edition comes out, their leaves will be open ready to soak up all of the new experiences they will receive during their transition to school.

With thanks to Sue and the team at Brightwell Primary School, the littles leaving for their school adventure will be well prepared. Utilising the school field and hall all-year round familiarises the children with the school environment and over the summer term they will get to play in the reception class outdoor area once a week too. We will have Sports Day, Graduation and a party - we will all need a break after that.

Luckily we are able to be outside as much as possible whilst the weather is good, which is incredibly important for young children's physical health and for emotional regulation and a healthy mind. Our decking area is hugely beneficial as this provides undercover fresh air and space for physical development outside at all times of the year, so we are hugely grateful to Tony and the Brightfest committee for nominating our decking project as a Brightfest 2024 chosen charity. The money will help us to ensure this area is safe and that we are able to use it to its full potential once more as the weather closes in at the end of the year; an exciting development for our little ones who will be staying with us for another year and for the new children starting with us in September.

Natasha Hillier

BcS WI

Since our AGM in March we welcomed two new committee members. Helen Connor and Liz Murray are jointly taking on the role of treasurer replacing Janis Stevens who, with much regret, resigned her post as she is planning to move out of the area. On behalf of all WI members, I would like to use this opportunity to thank Janis for all her hard work and steadfast support over many years.

So business continues and in April we heard about 'The Ingenuity of the Victorian Household' from Stuart Cummins who brought along an number of interesting objects from times gone past. It was a fascinating look into daily lives many years ago but left us feeling grateful for automatic washing machines. For our May meeting we shall hear about the work and experience of a former Crime Scene Examiner with the Metropolitan Police.

Other forthcoming Tuesday dates:

- **11 June** 'A place for everything and everything in its place' by Helena Mc Bride founder of Maker Space and winner of the Organiser of the year Award.

- **9 July** - It's our Annual Summer Garden Party

But before that, we hope to have another very successful stall at the Village Fete. Please do come and see us for a variety of produce, cakes, plants and a children's Jarbola.

Karin Matthews

South Oxfordshire Choir

The next performance of BcS's 'local' choir, South Oxfordshire Choir, is on Saturday 15 June in St Mary-le-More Church in Wallingford, 7.30 pm. The title of the concert is to be 'The Poetry of Music'. It will be a highly innovative concert showing how poets from Shakespeare to Shelley have inspired top composers including Vaughan Williams, Saint Saens and Morten Lauridsen. Tickets will be available through the SOC website and on the door on the evening.

John Linton

The Curfew Bell Celebration

Wallingford was granted an extra hour before curfew in 1069 by William the Conqueror for allowing his army to cross the Thames in 1066. In memory of this privilege the curfew bell rings at 9pm every evening to this day. Eat, drink, dance, be merry in celebration and see the Brightwell Players' Mummer's Play on Saturday 6 July 6-9.30pm in Wallingford town centre.

70, 700, £7,000 UPDATE!

Thank you to all the volunteers who have helped me either on the day, at my fund-raising events, or by donating cakes, raffle prizes or coming along to enjoy themselves.

I am over halfway to my £7,000 target, but the best way you can support the Village Hall's fundraising is to go to events. There have been a range of activities, from Ladies Discos and a Bridge Afternoon to a Race Night and this Saturday, 1 June, Nick Zalinski is hosting a wine tasting evening. Every Monday the Cosy Café is open, from 10-11.30, even on Bank Holidays, there are homemade cakes and a hot drink for £5 and always someone to chat to – **3, 10, 17, 24 June and 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 July.**

On Friday 19 July, from 10-12, Sheila and Geoff Cordey are helping my fundraising for the hall and the National Kidney Foundation by hosting a coffee morning at St Michael, Sotwell St. There will be a raffle, bring and buy and a tombola and the £5 entry is by ticket. Please contact Sheila on sheiladavie65@gmail.com or shenaluck@btinternet.com to get a ticket or arrange to drop off or have donations collected. Tickets will also so be available from the Village Store and the Cosy Café.

Shena Luck

VILLAGE DIARY

June

1	Save the Children Country Show & Dog Show	Rec	1.30pm
1	Wine Tasting with Nick Zalinski	VH	7pm
4	Village Lunch Club	VH	12.15pm
4	Red Lion quiz in aid of Wassail	RL	7pm
8	Brightfest	Rec	1pm
11	'A place for everything and everything in its place' by Helena McBride	VH	7.30pm
15	S Ox Choir 'The Poetry of Music' concert, Wallingford	StM	7.30pm
16	Jazz Jam	RL	6.30pm
21	Boogie Bingo	RL	7pm
23	Concert for Ukraine, St Mary's, Wallingford	StM	3pm
29	Village Stores AGM	VH	3pm
30	Trailer Swift team racing at Goodwood		
30	Summer Concert at St Agatha's	StAg	7pm
30	Live Music - Let It Bleed	RL	6.30pm

July

2	Red Lion quiz in aid of Red Lion garden fund	RL	7pm
4	Block printing workshops	VH	3 & 7pm
6	Village Fete at Sotwell House	SH	2pm
6	Brightwell Players - Curfew Bell Celebration, Wallingford	Town Sq	6pm
9	WI Annual Garden Party		
19	Coffee morning at St Michael, Sotwell (see page 24)		10-12

Advance Notice

5 October Community Association Jumble Sale

Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

Grey bins Thursdays 6 & 20 June
 Thursdays 4 & 18 July
Green (& brown) bins Thursdays 13 & 27 June
 Thursdays 11 & 25 July

Village website

For more information about Brightwell-cum-Sotwell visit the village website
www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk or to contribute, contact Wendy on
brightwellwebsite@gmail.com.