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Thanks to Becky Shears for allowing us to use one of her paintings on the cover. She is currently Artist of the Month at the Red Lion

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Items for the next edition should be sent to the Editor by 7 January 2021. *The Villager* is published every other month and delivered free to all households in the village.

Editorial

*I won't arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
I'll sanitise the doorknob and make a cup of tea
I won't go down to the sea again; I won't go out at all,
I'll wander lonely as a cloud from the kitchen to the hall
There's a green-eyed yellow monster to the north of Katmandu
But I shan't be seeing him just yet and nor, I think, will you
While the dawn comes up like thunder on the road to Mandaley
I'll be ordering in a pizza or fetching a take away
Give me your hands, I shan't request, albeit we are friends
Nor come within a mile of you, until this lockdown ends.*

I read these lines from a Covid lockdown poem (author unknown) in a newspaper and it made me smile on a grey November day. I hope it will make you smile too. This is the fourth *Villager* since the pandemic began – I never expected I'd be saying that. I am very appreciative of the regular contributors who keep providing me with news to include. I hope we do get out of it this week and you can enjoy Christmas with your family and friends.

Christmas in Brightwell will be different this year. However, we are hopeful still of having the usual Christmas church services and the 'Save the Children Carols around the Tree', albeit restricted in some ways (see page 6). Many of you will be decorating your houses which will make the village look cheerful but to make it an even more magical walking experience on Christmas Eve, especially for children, it has been suggested that we put out candles or lanterns on doorsteps and in gardens. Look out for more information nearer the time. And we have some new Christmas events – an Advent Window Trail is being designed as I write and there is a Christmas 5k fun run/walk. We are hoping the village Wassail can go ahead, provisional date is Sunday 3 January (see page 12).

This issue also includes updates on various planning matters affecting the village – including the street lighting on the bypass and environmental concerns at the Site B housing (see Parish Council report, page 11); and the development of the new stream at the allotment/orchard area (see Environment group report, page 16). Some tree felling alongside the village roads are planned by OCC in January. There is an interesting article about farming locally, thank you David Greasby at Highlands Farm.

A happy Christmas to you all and here's hoping we can be back to more normal life, safely and healthily, in 2021.

Helen Connor

Your Villager

Online or print?

Many thanks to those who responded to my request for views about delivering *The Villager*. The vast majority of you wish *The Villager* to remain in print and delivered to all houses in the village. We are looking into the use of recyclable paper of good enough quality. It will continue to be available also to read online at the village website (brightwellcumshotwell.co.uk) for those who prefer it that way.

A big thank you to all our volunteers

The Villager group would like to say a big thank you to all the volunteers who have made it possible to bring you *The Villager* this year. This is the second time that we will have got it out during a period of 'lockdown' so we are particularly appreciative of Angela and Steve, who did the printing between them, in isolation, and the Luck family who took on the huge task again of assembling it in the hall as we couldn't mix households.

After some years, Geoff Cordey has stepped down from his role of organising the local distributors (14) in the Sotwell part of the village. Thank you Geoff for all the work you have done over the years. We are very pleased that Adrian Wood has agreed to take over this role and welcome him to the team.

We also have two new local distributors - Donna Huckin who takes over from Mrs Barbara Wallis for the houses in Wellsprings and Liz McGivan, taking over from Jo-Anne Wornham in the Street. We thank Barbara and Jo-Anne for their many years doing the distribution and welcome Liz and Donna to the distribution team.

Brightwell Christmas Cracker Fun Run /Walk

Support 'Hope for Children' by running or walking 5k around Brightwell anytime between 14-27 December. Entry costs £5 and everyone will receive a Christmas cracker. You can choose your own route or the follow the festive signs. To sign up, email rosierunsfar@gmail.com.

Rosie Lanyon

Obituaries

Simon Gardiner was brought up in the village with his brother, Nicholas, who sadly died last year. Neither of them have lived here for many years but were frequent visitors to their Mum's grave. Their father, Ian Gardiner, died in September. Simon has written these obituaries for those who might have known his brother and dad. He has also given us a short memory walk which will be printed when more room next time.

Ian Murray Gardiner (1930-2020)

Dad was born in Georgetown, Penang in Malaya in 1930 before moving to Singapore from where he was evacuated, aged 5, back to the UK with his brother Derek and sister Daphne. He spent his formative years at Blundell's boarding school in Devon before conscription into the army. Two years in Egypt with the Royal Signals straight from school must have been a tough requirement "enjoyed" by many at that time. After this he was able to return to the UK and attend Cambridge University where he graduated in geography. His first job after leaving university was at the Hydraulics Research Station in Wallingford where he would remain for the entirety of his working life and where he met my mum, Eileen Cotton. They married in 1958, bought a house in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and had two sons, me and then Nick.

Sadly, we lost Mum in 1972 but Dad kept us together. Happily, he later met Pam, they married in 1983 and with young children, Stuart and Neil, they moved to Crowmarsh. In all this time, he continued to support Nick though his many medical challenges which he had had since birth with many visits to hospitals in Oxford and London, both arranged and emergencies. Dad finally left his beloved HR Wallingford in 2000, having officially retired some years earlier. He and Pam then moved to East Hagbourne until one last move in 2014 down to Portland in Dorset where he continued to enjoy country and coastal walks with Pam and their dog Bess. Aged 90, Dad passed away unexpectedly but peacefully in his sleep in September this year. Dad was always a kind and gentle man in possession of a calm wisdom who never gave up looking after others. He is desperately missed.

Nicholas James Gardiner (1962 –2019)

Nick was born in Wallingford in 1962 and shortly afterwards rushed to hospital in London suffering with hydrocephalus, the beginning of a life constantly in and out of hospital. Despite the medical challenges, Nick had a happy childhood in Brightwell and I remember the good times we had running

around the village together until the day we lost Mum. Things changed for all of us, but Dad continued to look after Nick for many years to come.

In 1990 Nick started work for Waitrose in Wallingford and this soon became a real cornerstone in his life. He left home and lived firstly in Cholsey and then Didcot. Nick loved Waitrose and he developed a strong work ethic. He always enjoyed a holiday, or a trip to visit family. In 1995 he was diagnosed with leukemia and had to endure the whole bone marrow transplant procedure. He remained cheerful and positive throughout and as soon as he could, got back to work. Nick continued to travel when he could, mostly visiting family wherever we may be. He often needed to be cajoled but once his mind was made up to do something, he did it.

During his life, Nick had so many operations we lost count, though I am sure he did not. Eventually this took its toll and in early 2019 he had two minor heart attacks. Yet more regular trips to the JR with all manner of tests due the complexity of his condition continued during the year but sadly Nick's heart gave up in November 2019, aged 57. Nick was dealt a difficult hand at the outset, but he lived with honesty, integrity and courage. Always there with a mischievous smile. He left us far too soon. A greatly loved son, uncle and brother. We miss him so very much.

Save the Children

Christmas cards and wrapping paper

We have a good stock of Save the Children Christmas cards (starting at £2 for a pack of 10) plus wrapping paper. If you are interested please let us know: you can email myself at collett.c.2@gmail.com or Sue at s.e.butt@btinternet.com. We can arrange a way for you to view the stock safely.

Charity Christmas market

Save the Children and Brightwell Supporting Refugees are jointly hosting a 'Charity Christmas Market' on Saturday 5 Dec (or 12th, date to be confirmed) 10am to 1pm. There will be pop up stalls outside the village hall and around the War Memorial offering lots of Christmas gifts and goodies, a cake stall, a raffle, plants, Christmas cards and wrapping paper. We will keep you updated by poster, Facebook, email and village website. Both charities do so much to support children and refugees both in the UK and abroad; we hope you will join us.

Carols around the Christmas Tree

Thanks to our sponsors, the 'Save the Children Christmas Trees' will be on the Square as usual. There will be 'Carols around the Christmas Tree' on Christmas Eve in some format (even if it is virtual). We will keep you updated. After 26 years this has become a tradition which is enjoyed by all ages, particularly the children, and is one of our major fundraisers. This year we all need the magic of Christmas more than ever... maybe we can make it even more magical whilst raising money to make less fortunate children's lives better.

We will follow the government guidance, social distancing, face coverings, hand sanitizer etc. at the proposed events.

Thank you for your support for Save the Children and stay safe.

Celia Collett

Brightwell Art Club



The Club managed to hold a few outdoor sessions in August and September thanks to the pleasant weather. Because going to the village hall would not have been suitable for a number of our members, we have continued this term via Zoom. By the end of November, we will have had seven interesting sessions with a core group of people attending.

One of our members is continuing to contribute to our online gallery where we have displayed paintings completed during lockdown. Do take a look. You can find it on the Brightwell Art Club page of the village website brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk. The Art Club is under 'Arts & Crafts' in the local services directory of the website.

We still have no idea when the club will be able to recommence but you can find out more about us on the website, or you can email me at brightwellartclub@gmail.com.

Veronica Wood, Secretary

Brightwell Supporting Refugees

At the time of writing this, we are once more in lockdown and as a consequence were not able to have the joint Christmas Market with Save The Children on 28 November. However, we sincerely hope this can happen on Saturday 5 December or, failing that, the 12th. We will keep you informed.

In the meantime, Angela Lewis has worked very hard putting together a 'virtual' Christmas market so you can see many of the items we are selling. You can take a look at it from the Brightwell Supporting Refugees Facebook page and make purchases by emailing brightwellrefugees@gmail.com. We have a variety of home-made produce and craft items from jams and chutneys to lavender bags, plants and knits, cushion covers and much much more. So you can start your Christmas shopping here! Hopefully, you will have already seen this on Facebook but if you are not a Facebook user, and you wish to see the items available on paper, contact the above email address or ring 01491 825680.

We really do hope we can raise some much needed funds to be able to help those not as fortunate as we are. Wishing you all well.

Ann and all the BSR team.

Village Stores and post office

The team has been extremely busy in both shop and post office to maintain our services through the 2nd lockdown and also bring Christmas to the village. We hope you are enjoying the Christmas delights we have on offer. We understand how frustrating it is at times with the restriction on numbers of people allowed in the shop. On 28 November we extended our opening hours (for the shop, to 4.30pm) to allow our customers extra time to do their Christmas shopping and if successful we may be able to do this again in December.

The shop and post office can only operate successfully with a team of dedicated volunteers and paid staff. If you have any spare time and would like to join us please either leave your details in the shop or email the shop on brightwellshop@btconnect.com. We are very grateful for any help you can give to keep these vital services available to all.

Best wishes and stay safe.

The shop team

The vicar writes...

Christmas is coming and nothing can stop it, so let us remember our hope as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Amid the uncertainties and challenges of this year, our God remains constant and the Incarnation reminds us that God chose to be with us in our humanity with all the problems of this life. This brings us comfort and joy as it did to those facing a different set of challenges some 2,000 years ago.

This year has been tough in many ways for so many people. Even our Sunday worship hasn't quite looked the same, but we hope to return to our COVID-safe worship again in December, including the Christmas Eve 'Midnight Service' (11.30pm at St James') and the 9.30am Christmas Day Festival Communion at St Agatha's. There will be sign-up sheets in the churches during December as we will only be able to use half of the pew seating. On Sunday 27 December we will join the Wallingford Team at St Mary's 10am service to celebrate the feast day of St John the Apostle and Evangelist.

We are currently looking at alternatives to our traditional Carol and Crib Services as congregational singing, close proximity and mixing of family bubbles must be avoided. A pre-recorded Crib Service with contributions from children in Nativity costumes, readings and carols is looking favourite, so please contact me if your children would like to submit some video footage, with words from a provided script – not just Mary, Joseph, inn-keeper, shepherds, angels and wise men, but also the donkey, ox, sheep, camels. Our Junior Choir are already busy rehearsing under Liz Hanson's leadership.

Churches Together in the Wallingford Area hope to host 'Drive In' Carol Services in the car park of the Lidl supermarket after they close on Sunday evening 13 December, ideally with a family-friendly service first followed by a more traditional format, so that we make full use of the big screen. A booking system will be in place once we get the go ahead.

There will be an Advent Window Trail around the village with a new display each day in December, ending at St Agatha's on Christmas Eve. Thanks to all those taking part by decorating windows or displays in front gardens, and to Kat Southwell for co-ordinating these.

Whether we manage to worship together at some point or not, I pray that you and your families will be able to share a blessed and peaceful Christmas as we reflect once again on Emmanuel – 'God with Us' and open ourselves to his comfort and joy. Blessings,

The Revd Kevin Beer

Pilgrim

*There he is
with the pierced cockle shell
around his neck: the Saxon man*

*who walked all the way to Spain
and back, for a glimpse of God.
How many years to arrive?*

*And the winter sea, baked mud roads,
beaten gold sun above his head –
the like of which he had never known;*

*the passing people too, their unknown
languages buzzing in his ear,
their alluring, coal-dark eyes.*

*And arriving there?
It was a windy city at the edge
of the world, with a sleeping saint*

*fogged behind glass. And coming back?
It was to a little life, too unremembered,
strange. Some nights he seemed still*

*to be walking: they say that feet
never forget – is it muscle memory
or what? – just keep on walking.*

This poem was inspired by the body of a Saxon man found when they dug down to create the foundations for Waitrose in Wallingford. He had a cockle shell around his neck, indicating that he had made the long pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain. Heaven knows how long it must have taken him! Our own St James church is of course named after the same pilgrim saint, and the same cockle shells adorn the interior walls of the church.

Robert Seatter

Community Association

AGM by Zoom – 25 October 2020

Many thanks to everyone who logged into our Zoom AGM. Sadly, due to Covid restrictions, we were unable to make donations to various clubs and charities in the village this year. We did offer to look at emergency funding requests but none were made. We did however provide hampers for the elderly in the village last Christmas with the generous support of the Fairthorne Trust.

We are delighted that Caroline Annets, Bill Horsfield, Lynn Burrige, Charlotte and Mike Woods, Andrew Klevan, Tom Lester and Liz Parker were all happy to be re-elected to our committee. Our Chairman (James Davys), Treasurer Tom Rogerson and Secretary Andy Stevens were also re-elected. Jim Sanger has kindly agreed to be auditor again this year.

Dates for 2021

The Community Association is still committed to running our normal programme of charitable events next year if government restrictions and guideline will allow us. Please pencil these events into your diaries.

Date tbc - Quiz Night at the village hall

Sunday 23 May – Open Gardens

Saturday 10 July – Village fete at Sotwell House

Date tbc - AGM

Christmas Hampers

The Community Association is pleased to provide a Christmas hamper for the senior residents of the village. If you know of anyone over the age of 70, whom you believe does not currently receive a hamper but would appreciate one, please telephone me on 01491 834195.

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

James Davys, Chairman

Parish Council

Site B street lighting on the bypass

Two members of the Parish Council together with County Councillor Pete Sudbury attended a meeting with the developers to raise the concerns that the village has regarding light pollution created by the new street lights on the Calvin Thomas Road. Sadly, despite putting forward a very strong case, the outcome is that the lights will be staying. There was agreement that the lights will be dimmed at night, but there is some confusion regarding how dark this will be and the percentage of brightness that will be turned off. This will be investigated further by the Parish Council. It was also agreed at the meeting that shields will be fitted to some lights to see if this makes a difference to Brightwell's dark skies. Once fitted, a meeting will be facilitated in Mackney to assess if the shields have any effect. When the sign-off work has been completed by SODC, the final outcome will be relayed to the village.

Site B development

Four members of the Parish Council attended a meeting with the developers of Site B, to raise our concerns regarding the lack of inclusion of environmental measures within the buildings. The PC reiterated the importance of this especially with the new school. Concerns were raised about enough car parking and drop off spots for the new school, and also swift boxes and hedgehog fence holes. The Site B team were receptive and open and we are all keen to keep open the lines of communication.

Kings Meadow

Sadly, there has been some vandalism to the picnic benches at the park and the skateboarding signs. The village is justifiably proud of our public recreational areas which are also used by our many visitors. Please discourage any anti-social behaviour so that we can protect the valuable amenities.

Neighbourhood Watch

We have been approached by a member of the village regarding the reforming of the Neighbourhood Watch Committee. The Parish Council would like to support this initiative and will encourage this new support network for people who are the victims of crime.

James Davys

Christmas services and carols (all subject to change)

St Agatha's Brightwell

24 December Crib service. (format to be confirmed)
25 December Communion 9.30 am

St James' Sotwell

24 December Christmas Eve Midnight Mass 11.30pm

** Sign-up sheets in churches during December **

St Mary's Wallingford

27 December Celebration of Feast of St John 10 am

Carols around the Christmas Tree

24 December Traditional Carols, in the Square, Brightwell
around 5pm (time tbc)

Lidl's car park, Lupin Road, Wallingford

13 December Drive-in Carols service after supermarket closes at
4.30pm, tbc)

Booking system to be announced.

Wassail 2021

We are hoping to continue our fine village tradition of Wassailing the orchards although we will be led by any Covid restrictions that are in place. The Wassail is planned for Sunday 3 January, 3-5pm. Whatever happens it will be very different to previous years, with just one or two orchards included. We are putting together a socially distanced Wassail - along the lines of the fabulous Halloween event.

The highlight of the Wassail will be a special Mummer's Play written and performed by the Brightwell Players and staged in one of the orchards. We cannot give you any more details at the moment but as more information

emerges about restrictions in December we will post details on the village Facebook page, on the parish website and of course on the notice boards and telegraph poles. Keep the date free and watch out for emerging details.

Jason Debney

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Primary School virtual Open Days

What makes our school so special?

The September return to school and the ongoing adjustment to new routines very quickly enabled us to see what could be possible when it came to showing prospective parents exactly this. We created virtual tour videos to offer a taste of what life is like in Pippin class for our children alongside the experience our children enjoy all the way up through school. These were placed on the school website and parents who had already been in touch with us and registered for our Prospective Parent Experience were contacted and socially distanced tours to be conducted outside, no matter what the weather, were arranged.

The second lockdown put an end to our on-site plans but presented another opportunity; a virtual meeting with Mrs Lewis, Headteacher and Mrs Collier where parents could put questions to us and in return we could talk attainment, culture and values, enrichment and share our pride in the school, the staff and students and community around this and more.

We are delighted with the response we have had from those involved, and although there is no substitute for meeting prospective families face to face, these have offered families and our school yet another opportunity to share what makes our school so special.

It's not too late to join us for a Virtual Open Day. Our videos can be viewed on the website and a "behind the scenes" look at day to day life can be found on our Facebook page. Contact Mrs Major in the school office to arrange a time to meet with the Headteacher before the 15 January 2021 deadline for primary school place applications.

Fin Lewis, Headteacher

Highlands Farm

It's unbelievable – where has 2020 gone! In farming terms this has probably been the most difficult year ever experienced in our 45 years here! Rain at the end of 2019 when we should have been planting, rain again in early 2020, problems with drying out waterlogged land with everything being followed by a hot summer!

All our produce from the recent harvest is currently stored at a facility very close to Stonehenge. This is a highly efficient cooperative owned by farmers, enabling arable crops to be dried, cleaned and blended to improve quality and sold by a professional marketing team.

Hopefully, planting for the 2021 harvest will be completed or well underway by the time this is read! We grow mainly autumn sown crops which suit this soil type. These include barley for malting or animal feeding, wheat destined for milling and beans for livestock feed or usage in the processed food market. Some of the straw residue left after harvesting is baled and goes for livestock feeding or bedding, usually to Devon and Cornwall.

Anyone walking the Roman Road over the hill towards the river, may have noticed a large field with an abundant green crop of purple and white flowers. This is a 'catch crop' planted immediately after the barley harvesting in July and provides many advantages. The crop contains a mixture of black oats, phacelia and fodder radish and utilises much of the residual nitrogen left in the soil, aids soil structure and provides organic matter for the following wheat crop. It also can be used for grazing by sheep.

We have a range of other enterprises including the 'diversification' or workshop lettings side of the operation for an interesting variety of small businesses.

The sheep flock, now majorly reduced in size, is due to lamb in March next year. The rams have done their darndest, and results will be known at the end of December when the ewes are scanned. Gone are the days when we used to lamb in November and December aiming to break off for Christmas before starting again – thank goodness! When an unpopular farmer once got the dates wrong and peak lambing occurred on Christmas Day, the Aga was a focal point for warming lambs all battling for space with the turkey and cooking needs!

We're learning Welsh again! Our latest challenge has been to start a small pedigree flock of Llanwenog sheep which is a breed classified as 'at risk'. The

initial base stock came from west Wales, a 400 mile round trip from here. These animals were uncooperative from the start until eventual realisation they had never been taught the good old English language! A smattering of Welsh commands and friendly gestures has now transformed their behaviour and all is well! The only problem is the looks of despair from walkers as they hear an 'aged' farmer holding forth in a foreign tongue!

Roll on a happy and healthy 2021!

With best wishes for Christmas from all of us at Highlands Farm.

David Greasby

The Red Lion

At this time of writing, although we know we will be back open from 2 December, we are waiting to hear which tier we will be in but once we know, we will update everyone with our opening hours, any rules etc and how things will work going forward. So, fingers crossed they put us back in tier 1 and you can all enjoy your pub as before!

We would like to thank you for the tremendous support you have given us during this very difficult period. We have had some amazing weeks of takeaways, with most nights fully booked which is just great. On Thanksgiving Night we offered something different – an early traditional Christmas Dinner with all the trimmings! We were unsure if it would be popular still being November but with 75 bookings, it seemed you loved the idea and we hope it brightened up a dark winter night for many of you and brought some festive cheer to all!

Once opened and we know our restrictions, we will continue to offer takeaway on certain nights and we will keep everyone updated via the mailing list and on our social media pages. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please email us on info@theredlionbrightwell.co.uk and we will add you to it. As many of you have seen, we now have our wonderful marquee in the garden. Many thanks to James Pargeter for his kind donation which helped us secure this, to Clive Collett who ensured the electrics are all sorted and to those who helped build it. And thanks again to everyone who came out in force to support our takeaways which saw us through the last month. Let's hope it isn't too long before we are back to some sort of normality. Stay safe and well.

Corinne and Mouse

BcS Environment group

Millennium Wood

We are very grateful to James Davys and his band of volunteers from Vertex who managed a day of Covid compliant management of the wood. It involved clearing the path including the removal of low overhanging branches and cutting down the hemlock. The wet weather through October continued to help the pond/wetland area and the November sun on the fallen leaves makes for an attractive setting.

Allotment Stream

The proposal to re-create the small stream by removing it from the current pipe, together with regenerating a section of the Orchard Wood that is affected by ash die-back, has been progressing well. The overall objective is to create new habitats and add to the interest for villagers and visitors who walk through the area. We were considering how to fund the scheme when Lizzie Rhymes noticed The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) had a deadline for grant applications within 48 hours! This was just achieved and in October we had a visit by an assessor. The initial feedback was very positive and the project will be considered in full by TOE in early December so we should hear before Christmas if we have been successful.

Some aspects of the work will require skilled expertise but we will be wanting assistance from keen villagers to help with general clearance, planting and reinstatement etc. If all goes to plan, we should be able to start in early 2021 before the birds start nesting. If you are interested in helping please let me know (scapeldavies@gmail.com).

A small display of the proposals in the old red telephone box opposite the Red Lion was initially planned for October but this was delayed and we now hope that it will take place in late November/early December.

Weather - a very wet October!

The rainfall recorded at Highlands Farm was for 26.3mm for September and 159.3mm for October. The September figure for the general area was around 50 - 60% of average but this was more than made up for by the October figure. October's rainfall was the highest figure for any month recorded at Highlands Farm since their records began in 1999 and appears to be around double the 1981 – 2010 average. October started with storm Alex leading to 3

October being the wettest day across the UK ever recorded since records began in 1891.

The Radcliffe Met Station at Oxford recorded 185.3mm for the whole of October making it the fourth wettest month since their records started in 1767 (the wettest being 223.9mm in September 1774). It was only around 4mm lower than the October 1875 rainfall which led to extensive flooding on the Thames and other rivers although on this occasion the Thames kept within banks in this area at least. The reason probably lies in the hot summer leading to a high soil moisture deficit of around 100mm meaning the soil absorbing much of the rainfall leading to lower runoff and river flows.

It certainly has been quite a year for unusual weather so far and we still have winter to contend with!

Steve Capel-Davies

Nora's Kitchen - the Bach Centre's new café!

Nora's Kitchen, the Bach Centre's café, is finally ready to open and will be serving teas, coffees, cookies & cakes, healthy snacks, lunches and afternoon teas. Unfortunately, due to the current lockdown period, we cannot operate our full menu, but will be offering take-away hot drinks, cookies, date balls and brownies for those taking their morning walk and fancy a freshly brewed coffee, tea or hot chocolate and a bit of energy as they go past. Please see our board on the ramp by the side gate for what we have available.

Once the lockdown is lifted and we can operate 'normally' again, please pop in! There is no need to book for drinks and cakes, but we have a booking system on our website for lunches and afternoon tea (bachcentre.com). And we are offering all our friends and neighbours in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell a discount with the coupon below!

Judy Ramsell Howard



Nora's Kitchen at the Bach Centre

20% off with this coupon!

We look forward to seeing you soon

Stewart Village Hall

Annual Review meeting

On 4 November the trustees held the Annual Review Meeting for the financial year April 2019 – March 2020. We were delighted to be able to welcome attendees both in the hall and on Zoom. The review included an update on the status of changing the charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This has been a long process but at last an end is in sight, thanks to the time and expertise committed to this by Robert Field. Robert has now stepped down as chair but we are very pleased he remains as a Trustee.

The hall operated successfully during the year thanks to the support of all the local groups who use the hall regularly and the people who book it for meetings, parties and celebrations. Whether for fun or fundraising, the hall remains at the heart of our village. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the Community Association, the Village Stores and the Parish Council for their support.

Income for the year was £24,477. This included £6000 received in grants which was ring fenced for architects' fees. For this, we must thank our SODC ward councillors for a £2000 grant and our Parish Council for a £4000 grant. These grants allowed us to start working with architects without eating into our valuable reserve funds.

Expenditure was £20,647. We carried forward £3060 of the ring fenced grant money and ended the year with a profit of £770.

Looking Forward

The big issue for the trustees is the future of the hall and the redevelopment project – Project Blue Sky. We will be working closely with the Parish Council and the Village Stores on this to ensure all stakeholders are fully informed and involved.

For now, we await guidance on when we can reopen the hall and we are looking at our ways of working to ensure all hall users stay safe and we meet current requirements.

If you would like to hold meetings or groups where people can attend in the hall and by Zoom, we can offer the use of our excellent sound and vision equipment to help with this, by linking your laptop to the system you can include Zoom attendees. We have external speakers and microphone to

enhance the sound for both hall attendees and people on Zoom and are happy to offer support in setting this up.

If you would like to book the hall, restart a group or would like to book for the first time please contact Shena (Shenaluck@btconnect.com or 01491 834543). We are happy to help you set the hall up in a way best suited to your needs and to keep all users safe.

Thank you for your ongoing support, if you have any questions, comments or feedback please contact the trustees using the contact us page on our website, or leave a note in the Village Hall mailbox at the rear of the hall.
<http://stewartvillagehall.btck.co.uk/>.

Annette Kilworth

Organise your winter fuel bills - Citizens Advice tips

Now is the time to sort it out before winter closes in.

Did you know that Citizens Advice has advisers who can help you sign up with a new fuel or electricity company, or switch to a better tariff? There's no charge for their time and you won't be steered towards one particular supplier because they're impartial, having no links with any of them. They offer one-on-one sessions (by telephone at present) and will take a close look at your individual situation if you want.

Citizens Advice can also tell you about energy efficiency measures around the house, like draught-proofing windows and doors and installing LED light bulbs. Grants may be available to pay for thermal insulation. They can check your benefit entitlements and help you to claim them if you're eligible. There are several helpful schemes like the Priority Services Register and the Warm Home Discount. And if you have any complaints against your current supplier, they can help you resolve them.

You can find the relevant information on their website at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/energy or phone the Advice line on 0300 330 9042.

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell WI

In October we found out that one advantage of having to meet by Zoom rather than in the hall is that we can get speakers from all over the country, and we got a terrific one for our October meeting from Manchester – Misba Khan. She enthralled us with her account of the *Women's Euro-Arabian North Pole Expedition* in 2018. She was one of 12 women chosen for the expedition – all 'normal' women she said with no particular experience. They were self-funded and she spent a year getting fit, learning to ski and to pitch tents. Her talk about the expedition was truly inspiring. It was so cold that her eyelashes froze! Batteries and mobile phones had to be kept in pockets in underwear to stop them from freezing. There is a documentary on it which will be aired next year – well worth looking out for.

Another lockdown in November and again sadly it had to be a Zoom meeting! This time we tried to keep to our advertised programme theme 'A Sustainable Christmas' but do it virtually. We invited the girls from Giddy – Laura and Josie from the village – to talk about recyclable wrapping. They explained how the idea to make sell cards and gift wrap was prompted by the first lockdown and how they have set out to inspire us to use eco-friendly products to wrap gifts and to get creative, giving the recipient something very personal and unique. Members then had the opportunity to show some Christmas ideas of their own – from pomanders to table decorations and tea lights – and we showed a short video from Felicity Jennings, a previous 'crafty' Zoom speaker we have had from Harrogate WI, on making Christmas cards. This was followed by the essential chat as we now cannot meet monthly at Root One either.

We are supporting the national WI's campaign 'No More violence against women' by choosing, as our annual charity this year, to help a local Women's Refuge. We are currently collecting new or unused items for delivery to them in early December. They particularly want treats for women such as beauty and hygiene products, Christmas gifts and decorations.

Anne Brooker

Little Martins

A new public space will be opened in December for the village at Little Martins. This was negotiated from the Little Martins developers and will be handed over to the parish council on the 21st of the month. The new park is designed to be a natural space and to retain the rural character of Waterman's Lane as much as is possible. It gives a very clear message to future would-be developers too, that this is the western edge of the village and that Great Martins Field (between Little Martins and the Millennium Wood) is not up for grabs!

The wish for more natural play areas was highlighted in the Parish Plan of 2014, with many residents wanting more wilder spaces like the Swan Wilderness in the village. Lots of native scrub will be planted around its edge and we hope to install some felled tree trunks for the kids to climb on. At its heart, will be a shallow depression with a 3 foot sarsen standing stone in the centre, surrounded by four smaller sarsen stones, sourced from a large garden in Berkshire being built on. During the 2017 archaeological dig at Little Martins, many sarsen stones were found on the Iron Age layer indicating that they must have been present in great numbers before being removed by successive generations of villagers. Villagers are asked to let the grass grow before the park is fully opened for use.

Jason Debney

Support for unpaid carers



If you are looking after a loved one or friend who could not cope without your help, the team at Action for Carers Oxfordshire are here to support you. We have a dedicated team based all around Oxfordshire who are working hard to ensure family carers receive long term specialised support, information and practical advice and we are making sure that we stay in contact for a regular chat to reassure carers they are not alone. And if someone you have been caring for has moved or is moving into residential care, our team is here to help support you through the challenging and emotional times.

If you would like more information call our Carers line on 01235 424715 or email carersreferrals@carersoxfordshire.org.uk.

Wallingford Museum – exciting news

Wallingford Museum's dedicated team of researchers is working with architectural model maker Ben Taggart to create a 1:300 scale model (1.5m x 1.6m) of Wallingford's royal castle as it may have been in the mid-14th century. This amazing collaboration draws on 15 years of research, unravelling the castle's history, using archaeology, geophysical surveys, LiDAR, maps, and the transcription, translation and analysis of many documentary records. Some of these records, from the 12th-19th centuries, also contain surveys with measurements, which greatly help the study.

Virtual meetings with Ben use all the available evidence to try to accurately position the walls, drawbridges, moats and buildings, such as the great hall, kitchens and stables, as they would once have looked. The culmination of all this research will be this magnificent model of the castle at the height of its power, to share with everyone, once the museum reopens in 2021.

We look forward to re-opening in 2021 to celebrate our 40th anniversary – a museum created and entirely run by volunteers since 1981.

Sue Wright

Wallingford Country Market – update

As our regular customers will know, Wallingford Country Market, usually held in St. Mary-le-More Church in the Market Place each Friday morning, has been closed due to the Covid pandemic. We are hoping to open in Centre 70 or the church from Friday 4 December for three weeks, if restrictions are lifted by then.

An ordering system has been set up for December, so if you would like to make an order, please contact one of the committee members listed below who will pass your requirements on to the best producer/s for the items you require. – eg home-baked goods, preserves, local honey, home-grown winter bedding, flowering bulbs, handmade Christmas wreaths, table decorations, Christmas gifts and cards. The producer will then get in touch with you to discuss your requirements and arrange collection. A small charge for travel will be made if an order has to be delivered by the producer. The names to contact are: Alison Broadbridge (681596), Gwen Strong (873338), Shirley Joy (281338) or Sandra Halstead (836527), all 01491 numbers.

Gwen Strong

What's on at the Corn Exchange

We are feeling rather frustrated having built a programme up for November and then having to cancel it just as we'd started. But we do need to keep safe. So, we're hoping things are going to free up in December which is why we've booked up some films and will get some more in the next few weeks. We can't promise that it will be a normal Christmas but we've got a few events that may interest you on the big screen. And there's a real live play in January, not the panto that you were expecting sadly, but still top-quality drama from our resident company Sinodun Players.

John Evans

What's on in December

Films:

Tuesday 8th 7:30pm Military Wives (12A)

Friday 11th 7:30pm and Sunday 13th, 2:30pm... A Gift from Bob (12A)

Wednesday 23rd 7:30pm.... A Christmas Carol (PG)

Live theatre:

Saturday 12th, 7:45pm...A Solo Christmas Carol, featuring Guy Masterson, 'Scrooge's journey of redemption'.

Live screening from the NT:

Saturday 19th, 7.30pm, War Horse (12A)

Coming Soon

Wednesday 20 to Saturday 23 January, 7:45pm. A Daughter's a Daughter by Agatha Christie, performed by the Sinodun Players (subject to Government restrictions relating to Covid permitting).

Please look on www.cornexchange.org.uk for further programme updates.

Late News – Treeworks

Oxfordshire County Council is planning a series of works to the village's hedgerows and verges that run alongside the roads in January. This will include the felling of some large trees and the cutting back of long lengths of suckling elm. More news of plans for replanting trees and creating wildlife habitats in the next issue.

VILLAGE DIARY

December

5 Save the Children & BSR Christmas market 10-1pm
– around the war memorial & outside the village hall

8 WI – 'From Taxi driver to poet' Zoom 7.30pm

January

3 Wassail 3-5pm

12 WI - Resolutions Zoom 7.30pm

Advance Notice

Date tbc	Quiz Night at the village hall
Sunday 23 May	Open Gardens
Saturday 10 July	Village fete at Sotwell House

Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

Grey bins Thurs 10 & 24 Dec, **Sat 9 Jan** & Thurs 21 Jan

Green (& brown) bins Thurs 3 & 17 Dec, **Mon 4 Jan & Fri 15 Jan** (no brown)

Thurs 28 Jan

Village website

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