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Editorial

The other day I heard an episode of Foreign Correspondent on the BBC which saddened me. Apparently the fear of invasion is so great in Poland that they are introducing military training for civilians. But the young people quoted in the story will not be joining up. One said "I'd be the first to run". Another said "I don't think there is anything here worth fighting for".

What would the brave young people of our parent's generation have thought of that – the ones we remembered as we gathered together on that glorious peaceful VE Day evening – see page 22. Thanks to Jason Debney's for his cover photo. I have two little grandsons. I hope they never have to make such a choice. But I hope even more that we, the generation that never fought a war but have enjoyed a golden age thanks to those who did, leave our children and grandchildren a country worth fighting for.

Standing in silence in front of the Brightwell memorial that evening I reflected on the great good fortune that we, as residents of Brightwell, all share. For a start, there's so much going on in this village. In April, Brightwell Supporting Refugees treated us to the unofficial premiere of an award-winning documentary. See page 15. The programme of events which they provide is consistently outstanding; next month we have their piano and organ concert to look forward to. See page 16. There's plenty more live music with Brightfest coming up in June, and also a fabulous live music program throughout the summer at the Red Lion. See page 18, (and not forgetting how lucky we are to have a thriving pub in our village. Thank you Corinne, Mouse and Ruby!).

A village wouldn't be a village without a fete, and in case some of our readers thought the village fete to be a quaint old custom that went out with the ark, Alison Bloomfield will put you right. See page 10. You will find the schedule and the entrance forms for the Flower and Produce Show on pages 11–14. And Brightwell wouldn't be Brightwell without the annual Summer Concert. See leaflet for details.

Until recently all I knew about Paul Gauguin was his penchant for young Tahitian women, so it was a pleasure to meet with his great grand-daughter Mette Gauguin who is his biggest fan and has many fascinating tales to tell about him and about her own life with its many ups and downs. See page 6.

As for the constant sunshine that we've been experiencing for many weeks, call me a killjoy but I see nothing to celebrate about 1.5deg C above average. See page 5. But I do hope the weather holds for all these outdoor events that do bring joy. See you in the tea tent.

Alison Leigh, Editor

Parish Council News

We held our Annual Parish Meeting in May as usual; this is the meeting where the Parish Council invites the village to come and hear about what the council has been working on over the year and is an opportunity to meet the councillors and ask questions. It was unfortunate that the evening clashed with another event in the village so wasn't well attended this year. It is a testament to what a thriving and exciting village we live in that it is hard to have an event that doesn't clash with something. For those that couldn't make it here is a summary of the evening:

The present chair, Bob Nielson, opened the meeting by introducing the councillors present and giving a brief description of their area of interest, followed by Annette Kilworth who spoke about the plans for the village hall, see below. She also told us about the Village Hall Lottery and encouraged as many people as possible to join.

Bob then told the meeting about the plans for the refurbishment of the Jubilee pavilion which doesn't have planning permission yet but we hope this is imminent. This is not such a huge undertaking financially so it is hoped that the money can be raised quite quickly. For both of these projects we can use the CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money that we get from the developers of the new houses that have been built in the village.

Next Sue explained the Community Speedwatch Project that is being implemented very soon. One of the most frequent complaints we get is from people concerned about the speeding in the village. Despite many initiatives to try and address this (20 mph bin and telegraph pole stickers, children's drawings made into signs at all of the entrances) the problem persists, so a group of villagers have joined the Community Speedwatch Scheme and are being trained to operate a speed detection gun with a view to using it at certain areas of the village to warn people about their speed. When it goes live we will advertise where and when it is happening. People who are going over the speed limit will be sent a warning letter from the police but they will not be liable for points on their license unless they are repeat offenders. We gained a new Speedwatch member at the meeting and if anyone else wants to join our happy band you'd be very welcome – the more people in the team the easier it is for everyone.

Jason Debney then talked about the various roles of the Parish councillors, highlighting particularly the councillor without portfolio role, a general sorting out of things that need sorting out that crop up all the time. He also reminded everyone that if you do have a question, please contact the clerk, Nettie Gray

and she will alert the appropriate councillor. Nettie works Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning (but she does check emails on other days for emergencies) or you can ask a question on the Brightwell cum Sotwell Community Facebook page if you need a quicker answer.

Janet, who handles the finances, reminded everyone that there is a small amount of money in the pot to give out as a grant to suitable village projects subject to approval. If you wish to apply for a grant you can get an application form from Nettie.

We were very pleased that the SODC councillor Anne Marie Simpson and the newly elected Oxford County Councillor James Barlow both joined us, at the meeting. We welcome their support.

Lastly, we need to say a huge thank you to Helen Baines - the longest serving councillor on the parish council who has resigned this month due to work commitments. Helen has been one of the most active councillors over many years working in several roles during her tenure and latterly keeping the web site and Community Facebook page up to date among many other duties. She has worked tirelessly for the village over the years and been incredibly committed to her role in the parish council, she will be very much missed. Hopefully by the time you read this we will know who will be joining us.

Sue Robson, Brightwell cum Sotwell Parish Council

Stewart Village Hall

We were pleased to present an update on the Village Hall restoration project at the Annual Parish meeting on 6 May and would like to share a summary with you:

Since achieving planning permission, we have spent a lot of time and energy investigating grants and seeking support from many sources. Coincidentally, we had meetings with SODC, Oxford Community Fund and the National Lottery the following day. Unfortunately the National Lottery officer was unable to attend, but a future meeting is planned. The other meetings went ahead and were very useful. All the conversations reaffirmed that we need to provide significantly more detail on the project, and we need help to achieve the massive fundraising targets.

We are now in consultation with Kingerlee, the developer on Little Martins, to help get us to the next stage where we will have detailed plans, costs and a programme for the works. We are also working with a professional fundraiser

who has a track record of achieving significant grants for charities he has worked with.

We took the opportunity to thank the Parish Council for their continued support. When we apply for grants, it will be very important to show we have the support of the community and the support of the Parish Council will be crucial to this.

If you would like to know more about the project we will again have a stand at Brightfest and the Village Fete where we will share information and updates on the project, collect feedback and suggestions and answer any questions. Please stop by the stand and say hello.

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.

Annette Kilworth

The weather; are we heading for a drought?

The rainfall recorded at Highlands Farm was for March 6.1mm and April 11.8mm. Both figures are in complete contrast to rainfall over most of the last year being only 17% and 23% of the averages (1999 – 2012) respectively. So, instead of an average total for the two months of 88.3mm only 17.9mm occurred. Given that not much rain is being forecast up to mid-May, drought is a real prospect which is of concern to farmers and indeed to gardeners.

At the end of April two thirds of river flows across the Thames region were below normal or lower for the time of year, the trend likely to continue as May progresses. The groundwater level on the Stonor Estate (which is used as a reference) was still exceptionally high at the end of March, there always being a much slower response to rainfall than river flows.

Fortunately, reservoir stocks at Farmoor increased to 99.3% by the end of March.

Taking March and April together (the first two months of Spring) the Met Office report indicate that rainfall across the wider region was a little higher than measured here but still less than 50% of the average. On the brighter side, sunshine duration was the highest recorded for both months across England at nearly 50% above average with temperatures for both months being about 1.5deg C above average.

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

MeetMette Gauguin

Mette Gauguin has lived in Brightwell since 2009. She is the world famous artist Paul Gauguin's great granddaughter, pictured here with the bust of her great grandmother, Gauguin's Danish wife, Mette, after whom she is named and with whom he had five children.



Great grandma Mette was a feisty female. She cut her hair, she smoked cheroots and swore like a trooper. Mette says they loved each other deeply which comes as a surprise given that Gauguin is famous for his paintings of young Tahitian girls, many of whom he took as lovers earning him the reputation of a cad who abandoned his wife and children. He was even a paedophile according to his detractors who also claim that he died from syphilis. Mette says this is nonsense, and that according to recent bona fide evidence he never had syphilis. What's more, "He didn't abandon his wife, they agreed to separate".

Being known as the namesake of a famous person could be a curse rather than a bonus, but Mette has embraced it. "It's brought me tremendous fun and knowledge and excitement", she says and ultimately it has brought her great happiness about which more later. As the only descendent of Gauguin's family in the UK (the rest are in France and Scandinavia) she is frequently invited to give talks about her great grandfather, and she is a fierce advocate for him. She's also participated in three TV films about Paul's life and work, and is frequently invited to many exhibitions and events, including a free trip on the inaugural voyage of the Paul Gauguin cruise liner which took the entire Gauguin clan to Peru, Tahiti and the Marquesas.

As Mette tells it, it was lack of money that drove the couple apart. Gauguin was a stockbroker who lost everything including his job in the stock market crash of 1882. He turned to painting full time but his work wasn't appreciated. Mette hated being poor, so they moved to Denmark where she could get financial support from her family. Gauguin tried his luck as a tarpaulin salesman (who knew?) but that didn't go well so he moved back to Paris, and then to Brittany. "All his letters say if I sell these paintings we will be united and I will be able to support you properly" says Mette.

But it wasn't to be. His pictures didn't sell, and that's why he left for Polynesia. He told his wife that he would go somewhere where he could live very cheaply, take a gun and shoot game, catch fish and pick fruit off the trees.

“In fact he was rather impractical and lived on tinned sardines and brandy most of the time”.

As for the charge that Gauguin exploited the locals, it's another myth that Mette debunks. “It was quite the opposite; he actually defended the Polynesians against the colonial authorities that were exploiting them”. And what about those young girls, was he exploiting them? “The age of consent in Tahiti was when they became sexually mature and they were encouraged to have multiple relationships. Monogamy was almost anathema”.

Mette's own life has been a series of highs and lows, rather like her great grandfather's. She was born in Norway, and her earliest years were spent on a small island, that sounds like a setting for a Tove Jansson novel. “I learnt to swim before I could walk, catching fish and picking berries”. Moving to England and going to an English school where she was taunted for her funny accent was a rude shock, “I was very unhappy”.

Things looked up when she went to Art School in the swinging sixties. (She has inherited Gauguin's talent for drawing). Pete Townsend was a classmate, the Animals played at the college dance and the Rolling Stones were regulars at the local pub.

Then tragedy struck. She got married too young and her first daughter Keryn was born brain damaged. She had a second daughter, Justine, and then her marriage broke up. To cap it all her 20 year old younger brother died in a car accident. The world felt very cruel. Now single, with two children, Mette had to give up her artistic aspirations. She trained as a social worker so that she could support them. She did however also find work as a muralist in the 1980s and there is still a ceiling in the Dorchester Hotel that she painted with flowers and birds.

Things looked up again when she met and married her second husband Roland, a successful journalist on the Financial Times. They spent 20 happy years together in a beautiful home near Bristol until in his late fifties he began to act very oddly. He gradually became confused and abusive. He could barely speak and he was writing gobbledegook. A journalist's worst nightmare. A scan revealed that he had frontal lobe dementia. “The whole front of the brain had gone, it was truly horrible. He just wasn't the same person at all”.

When Roland died Mette found a house in Brightwell where she could care for her mother and be close to her daughter Justine and her grand-daughter Alina who were already living here. Her mother lived until she was 102, but died of Covid in a nursing home. “The tragedy wasn't that she died” says

Mette; “it was that I couldn't be with her when she died and that she couldn't have a proper funeral.”

Sometime after her mother's death, the granny annex was developed to provide a home for Justine and Alina. Keryn is now being cared for in a nearby care home. Mette spends her time happily gardening and making prints in her little studio.

So all was well again, but fate had one more card to play and here's how her surname finally brought her true happiness. It's a great love story, pure Mills and Boon.

In 2011 there was a major Gauguin exhibition at the Tate Gallery. A fellow called Archie turned up to see it. Mette and Archie had met briefly as children. His mother had been friends with Mette's mother. Although their paths crossed once more as adults they had gone their separate, but remarkably similar, ways. Archie also had had a broken first marriage and his second wife had died of brain cancer. He told the curators that he had once known a woman called Mette Gauguin, did they know of her? They did, and they promised to seek Mette's permission to forward her contact details to him. He then emailed her, but he didn't get the reply email because she had sent it to the wrong address. After a few months Archie had another go at making contact via the curators. This time he reached her but now he was off for a long trip to North Africa, perhaps never to be seen again. However, he did come back, they met up and they fell in love. They are still going strong.

And just one more thing. Mette has another illustrious and feisty ancestor: Flora Tristan, Gauguin's grandmother. Although not so well known in the UK, she is very famous in France and Peru. Born in 1803, French mother, Spanish father, she was a pioneer of international socialism and a feminist before the term was even coined.

Alison Leigh

To find out more about Gauguin read the newly published biography, Wild Thing: A Life of Paul Gauguin by Sue Prideaux.

Village Lunch Club

Our Summer lunch is on Tuesday 3 June, 12.15 in the Village Hall, £5. If you have not already booked and would like to join us, please contact Eastlyn Horsfield, 01491 832041 or Sue Collett, 01491 836617.

Eastlyn Horsfield

Community Association

The Village Fete

This year the fete will be held on Saturday 5 July, 2-4 30pm in the lovely gardens of Moreton House, kindly hosted by Luke and Emma Clancey. 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. Then the CA 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 - one of the highpoints in our village calendar. 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 to take part in and enjoy. As well as the established stalls and games (the white elephant stall, coconut shies, teas, books, brass band etc.) do 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. In a change of plans this year, we will all be collecting on 3 July between 6-8pm. So now is a good time to start thinking about what treasures you are planning to discard! Please leave any donations outside your front door on 3 July before 6pm.

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

Following the success of last year's event, we are in the early stages of planning the next Jumble sale on October 4 – Pavilion -Mackney Lane. Full details will appear in the next Villager.

James Davys, Chairman

Brightwell cum Sotwell Village Fete

Do villages still have traditional village fetes? And in glorious private gardens? Surely not. Those are the sort of things you went to as a child with your grandparents, with some precious money in your pocket and the freedom to spend it on what you want. And **cash** too! But yes we do! Why not come along to Moreton House on the High Road on Saturday 5 July and relive old memories or discover something new.

What to expect?

Hm. What shall I do first? **Hook a duck**? I reckon I can try grabbing one of the rubber ducks that are floating around in a paddling pool with hooks on their backs. How much is the **Coconut Shy**? I reckon I can knock off one of those coconuts and take it home to impress my friends. **Bottle Stall**?



One for the adults although I know they will spend all their money hoping for that bottle of gin and only get the tonic. Ha! I think I will go over to the **Toy Stall** next. How much have I got left? Transformer toy for me or Playmobil for my brother? There's bound to be a jigsaw for Grandad.

They've got a special **Jigsaw Tent** this year. I'm going to see if they have anything cheap on the **Book Stall**.

Where is my mum and her friend? Over in the **White Elephant Tent**. It will take ages for them to look through all the bric-a-brac, pictures, jewellery, pots and pans, vases, bags and even some golf clubs! I reckon my dad is in the **Flower and Produce Show** seeing if he has won a prize for his jam or his roses. My cousin, who is only little, entered a picture in the **Children's Painting Competition**.

I must find my sister and see if she wants to play the **Sports Games**. Which one do I reckon I will be good at – tennis competition, ladder game, quoits? I've got just a bit of money left for the **Human Fruit Machine**. It's a bit bonkers but it is really good fun to watch. I'm sure Gran will be having **Tea and Cake** and listening to the **Silver Band**.

Moreton House is on the High Road OX10 0PT. Street parking only or take the 33/33A bus to the front door. Entrance £2 adults, 50p under 12, under 5 free. See you there, 5 July, 2-4 30pm.

Alison Bloomfield

BRIGHTWELL-CUM-SOTWELL FLOWER AND PRODUCE SHOW

at
THE VILLAGE FETE

2-4.30pm SATURDAY 5 July 2025

TO BE HELD IN THE GROUNDS OF MORETON HOUSE
Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, OX10 0PT
By kind permission of Luke and Emma Clancey

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 Amazon voucher.

THE SCHEDULE

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 – in an unusual container. Max 18" x 18" (45cm x 45cm including container) height unlimited
4. A summer wreath - Max 12" diameter (30cm)
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

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 or lids with wax and cellophane top

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 savoury snack using pastry
24. 5 scones
25. A decorated chocolate cake
26. A summer trifle

Photography

[Max size 7" x 5" (17.5cm x 12.5cm), except where otherwise stated]

27. Photograph, unmounted: 'Everyday items in a garden shed'
28. Photograph, unmounted: 'village architecture'
29. A set of four mounted photos, b/w or colour 'Transport'
30. Photograph, unmounted: 'Make us smile'. Amusing, with or without caption
31. Photograph, unmounted: 'Pets'

Arts and Crafts

32. A handmade toy
33. Handmade item of jewellery or pottery
34. Any item crocheted, knitted, embroidered or sewn
35. Drawing any medium 'flowers', max size A4

Creative Writing

36. Write a fresh take on a well-known fairytale which may have a new 'happy ever after' ending. (100-150 words)
 - Did Cinderella really marry a prince or become an astronaut instead?
 - Was Little Red Riding Hood really eaten by the wolf or did she and gangster granny send him packing?
37. Interview an interesting villager. Is there someone you know in the village who has an interesting story to tell? Paint a portrait of who/what/why and how the encounter changed you a little too.

9-12 year olds

38. Make and decorate a kite (max size 40cm x 60cm)
39. Draw a poster of your dream job (max size A3)
40. Best joke

5-8 year olds

41. A stickman model
42. A jar of garden flowers
43. 5 flapjacks

Under fives

44. A paper plate animal face
45. Collect 5 nature items and display them nicely
46. Make a sock puppet

ENTRY FORM

Please complete by Wednesday 2 July and return, with total fees and place in the Village Fete box held in the Village Stores:

Queries to *Hvsatchell@icloud.com*

[illegible]

Total fees:

Address:.....

Film Review: *Mr Nobody Against Putin*

Co-directed by David Borenstein and Pavel Talankin

On 23 April, Brightwell was privileged to watch the documentary *Mr Nobody Against Putin* fresh from its premiere at the 2025 Sundance Film Festival where it won the World Cinema Documentary Special Jury Award.

Pasha (Pavel) is a young, dedicated teacher, working in Karabash, a remote copper mining town in the Ural Mountains. Karabash is known as the most toxic place on earth, with mountains stained black and a shortened average life span of its community because of pollution, but Pasha loves his hometown, and the people in it. Pasha is pro-democracy, pro-free speech, and pro-individualism; his office is a safe space where his pupils can hang out, and discover who they are.

The film documents events between 2022 and 2024, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Pasha is the school videographer. Following an edict from the Kremlin it is his job to film the staff teaching the government's new mandatory curriculum. He finds himself recording the school's mutation into a centre for propaganda and ultimately military indoctrination. Appalled, he bravely decides to share his story with the West.

The film has veins of dark humour, notably in the 'straight from central casting' villain figure of Pasha's colleague Pavel Abdulmanov. The depiction of Pasha's relationship with his mother, a widow and the school librarian, is bittersweet. Mostly though, the documentary is incredibly moving and deeply chilling. Pasha's camera lens is our window to both the story of the invasion and the shocking impact on the young people living through it. Despite this Pasha's love for his community and his country shine through, against a backdrop of coercion, lies and loss.

In the Q&A with writer/director David Borenstein we learnt about vital editorial decisions made to keep everyone safe, while filming a covert, real time documentary inside a totalitarian state. In an era of AI, social media manipulation, and fake news, this film highlights how important it is to have a record of history, as it unfolds.

Our unofficial UK premiere took place thanks to David Dugan (one of the Executive Producers of the film), and friends. All proceeds went to Brightwell Supporting Refugees. *Mr Nobody Against Putin* on BBC Storyville in October.

Sian Norfolk

Brightwell Supporting Refugees

BSR continues its popular series of events on Saturday 14 June hosting a one-man show with maestro pianist Stephen Hope. Stephen has performed his show *Face the Music with Hope* around the country to huge acclaim, playing piano and organ, and will be entertaining us in St Mary-le-More Church, Wallingford starting at 7.30pm. It is an informal evening with audience participation – an event not to be missed. Tickets will be available, price £10, from Brightwell Village Stores and the Wallingford Bookshop (cash only). For further information please bsr@bsr-charity.org or visit www.bsr-charity.org.

We are also excited to be exhibiting in the Red Box Gallery in June, coinciding with Refugee Week (16-22 June) and World Refugee Day (20 June). This year's theme is 'Community as a Superpower' – that phrase could have been written about our much-loved village! So do call by the Red Box Gallery for some possible surprises, and to share your thoughts on welcome, kindness and belonging – open the door and take a peek!

Anthony Finn and the BSR team

The Village Stores and Post Office

The AGM of the Community Shop and Post Office will be held on Saturday 21 June at 3pm; please put the date into your diary. The meeting will be held in the Village Hall. To meet regulations we have to hold an open AGM every year to report back to our members and the community. The meeting has to be quorate otherwise we are required to reconvene on another date.

To keep both the shop and the Post Office running successfully we need a large team of volunteers and of course customers! Community support is vital. Please come along to the AGM, it is your chance to find out how the business works and learn more about the services we offer. We hope to see you there.

The Management Committee

Digital Voice

In collaboration with BT, Neighbourhood Watch will be answering questions about the change from traditional analogue landlines to a digital connection (due January 2027), at Wallingford Library 10-12 noon, 24 June. All network providers will be switching with the old landlines becoming obsolete. If you have a personal alarm that relies on your existing landline you may have questions as to how things will work in the future. This is especially important for elderly and vulnerable people who may not have access to a mobile.

The Swan Allotments.

As very much the 'new boy' at the allotments, I thought I would share some early impressions of taking over a plot there. I began work clearing the ground back in August 2024, so the autumn and winter were spent clearing, forking and digging the ground over. During this time, I discovered a weed that was new to me - horsetail or maretail. There are apparently two types, field



(*Equisetum arvense*), and giant (*Equisetum hyemale*). It's a particularly resilient weed having been around since prehistoric times. It has a wiry long tap root which can penetrate up to two metres into the soil, so constant removal is necessary to keep it in check.

Looking around there are many well-tended plots, which seems to indicate that the soil, if well husbanded, can be productive. Of course, as with any hobby and pastime, to achieve the best results, allotmenting requires time and effort, so those of us with the luxury of time have a distinct advantage.

The allotment holders I've met have been very generous with their encouragement and advice, sharing local knowledge and in some cases, surplus seed. The peace and tranquillity of this part of the village is enhanced by the sound of the Swan Path stream babbling away in the background, so a big thank you to the folk who created and maintain it. I think I shall enjoy it here.

Phil Skipp

(There are no vacant plots at the moment, However, if you are interested in getting an allotment, contact Celia Collett on collett.c.2@gmail.com for your name to be placed on the waiting list. Ed)

Water and wildlife

The whole area of the Swan Stream, Orchard and Woods have given an excellent Spring display of vibrant greens and flowers and blossoms. The presence of water is always an attraction for wildlife and, if you don't have a garden pond, then now is as good a time as any to think about creating one.

If for wildlife only (ie not for fish) then virtually any pond from a washing basin size upwards can prove a real attraction. But a warning – once in place it

can be a time consumer as one can get absorbed looking for frogs, newts and dragonfly larvae not to mention birds of all shapes and sizes drinking and bathing. Any shape can be readily constructed using a flexible liner. Some section of the pond should be at least 0.5 – 0.6m deep. A key feature is to ensure that there is a gently sloping bank along at least one edge to allow hedgehogs and other garden visitors to drink. It is also a good idea to continue the slope under the water so that, in dry periods when the water level drops, the animals and birds still have access to shallow water. It is a good idea to use gravel to cover the liner and form the slopes. The pond should be in a predominately sunny location although some shade is fine.

Incorporation of underwater shelves is useful for planting and a bog garden can be made by placing stones or slabs across one end of the pond and filling the area with soil. Using rainwater to top up the pond is preferable to tap water and can be done by using the overflow from a water butt.

Root One has a selection of pond plants and there are many websites such as RSPB which can give further advice.

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

The Red Lion

Here at the pub we are gearing up for a busy summer we hope. The lovely weather in May was a huge boost for the pub. May it continue. Thank you to everyone who supported our live music month of May! We had some great live bands perform.

Looking ahead to Brightfest the pub will be closed during the day so we can have all our staff down at the rec but we will open in the evening for drinks from approx. 6.30pm depending on weather and staffing. As usual we will open late for people wanting to come back at the end. We will be serving up some filled baguettes on the day so if you fancy a snack, pop over and see us.

One final date for you all to save ... Saturday 12 July. This will be the date of this year's and only our 2nd 'Party in the Pub' We have 4 live acts confirmed and we hope you can all make it. We will be open for lunch as normal and then the live music will start from 3.30/4ish and continue right through until 10.30pm. Food will be served up until 8.30pm so come along for the day, grab a table in the courtyard and come and dance the day and night away! Thank you to all who continue to support us, keep an eye out on our socials for more events or email info@theredlionbrightwell.co.uk to sign up to our newsletter.

Corinne, Mouse & Ruby

BcS WI

Our Annual Meeting in March saw several changes at committee level. Olga Gold, having served steadily on the committee for many years first as Treasurer and later as Secretary, decided it was time to retire. Her commitment to the branch and the WI movement throughout the years is unquestionable. In appreciation of all her hard work, we thanked Olga with a large basket of flowers and a round of applause.

Jane Hawker was elected Secretary at the meeting. Welcome Jane and welcome Kate Allan who takes over from Anne Brooker as keeper of WI Membership records. A big thank you to Anne for holding the fort and supporting the WI in so many ways over the years. We also welcomed three new branch members during April.

Following that, at our April meeting, Louise Walton, a local milliner, showed us how to wear 'A Hat for all Occasions'. She brought along a large, colorful selection of hats in all shapes and sizes for us to try. And try we did, with surprising results. Returning to a more serious topic at our May meeting, we learned about the 'Works of the Air Ambulance' and watched a video on how to use a defibrillator.

Forthcoming events: the annual garden party in June in Anne Brooker's lovely garden (thank you, Anne, for your hospitality); July - a talk from a medical herbalist iridologist *How Herbalism can help you*; and the BcS WI will once again have a stall at the Summer Village Fete selling produce and cakes plus a Jarbola for younger villagers.

As usual, we are meeting every second Tuesday at the Village Hall at 7.30pm. Visitors are always welcome.

Karin Matthews

Brightwell cum Sotwell Cricket Club

The season is underway with astonishing numbers of children joining the club, filling the field on Friday evenings. The teams have started well too with a number of good wins against much larger clubs across the county. We can also report that members of the squad are progressing well at the county level in both the boys and girls streams. Training is on Friday at 5.15 until 6.30pm for U11s with the U13 Squad from 6.30-7.45pm.

The U15/Colts players can join nets on Friday evenings from 6.30pm too, which has been helping to dust off the cobwebs.

The senior team have started well with the inaugural 'Windsor Cup' going to Ian Hadland and Chris Smith whilst there were 4 pairs within a boundary of their winning score. A hard fought game against Superstars CC was lost with 10 balls to go. Fixtures at home to Peppard, Reading Uni are next with the AGM taking place on 23 May. Watch out for our 'Sponsor a Deckchair' campaign as we seek to improve the comfort of our supporters at the Rec.

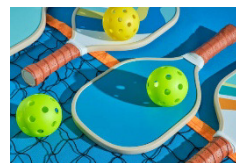
Chris Benarr, Secretary, BCSCC

BcS Kings Meadow Tennis Club

BCSKMTC are pleased to announce that Pickleball will soon be able to be played at the Kings Meadow Tennis courts. The courts will be marked out/overlayed for Pickleball on each of the tennis courts. For those that do not know about Pickleball it is the fastest growing sport in the UK and there are already a number of keen players in the village.

<https://www.pickleballengland.org/>.

Pickleball is best described as a cross between tennis, badminton, and table tennis: tennis height net, with a badminton sized court and paddles similar to a table-tennis bat. The ball is the size of a tennis ball, made of hollow rigid plastic with holes making it at times unpredictable in its behaviour.



Usually played as doubles with an easy underarm serve, anyone can play pretty much straight away. It is a very inclusive sport for all ages with mixed games of both men and women, and boys and girls, as well as those between the generations making it a great game for all the family.

A new Pickleball section will be created within the tennis club and the plan is to have two dedicated Pickleball drop-in sessions a week - Tuesday evenings for juniors and senior players as well as Friday afternoons during the spring and summer with attendant WhatsApp groups so that players can find out who is playing.

We intend to run one or more 'taster' sessions where people can come and try it out with equipment provided by the club. If they enjoy the experience and want to play on a regular basis, they will need to join the tennis club to be eligible to join the WhatsApp groups. If you are interested, please contact Robert Lidstone at robert@lidstonecourt.com.

Tony Windsor, Chairman BCSKMTC

Brightwell Preschool

Preschool has been like a spa resort with all of the warm weather we have experienced so far this summer. It has been a real sensory experience with toes buried in the sand, tantalised in our outdoor foot-spa, tickled in the long grass and buffed with towels. Taste-buds awoken with delicious bakes, tropical fruits, soothing ice-pops and picnic-style snack times. Torches, sensory lights, black-out blinds and our dark den offered sanctuary away from the daily preschool hubbub. Poetry has been a hit at our resort too, with the rhythmic patterns pulsing through the children's bodies as they clapped and moved to the beat of the words. I definitely want to come to this resort again next year.

With the summer holidays ahead, it is time to celebrate and say goodbye as the big little-ones move on to their next adventure. Especially in the early years it is with mixed emotions that staff say farewell to the children and families, as those strong bonds, built to make everyone feel safe and loved, are hard to relinquish.

It feels like an opportune time to say a huge thank you to the many wonderful people who make this preschool such a special place you know who you are!

Natasha Hilier, Manager

Save the Children

On the morning of 10 May we held our Annual Plant Sale, the generosity of the many green fingered members of our community donating plants to us again was overwhelming. From all their efforts we raised over £1,200. Many thanks to all our supporters and helpers. In the afternoon Helen Coles, very kindly donated the proceeds of her garage sale and teas to Save the Children and raised a further £173.00, a perfect day!

We have been invited to run the Tea Tent at Brightfest this year. We will be very grateful if anyone is able to bake a cake for us.

The Ball in the Hall is already sold out! A fantastic response. Thank you.

Thank you again to all our supporters, we always endeavour to make our events enjoyable, whilst raising funds for the ever increasing need to protect, advocate, educate, feed and help as many children as possible with the love and support they deserve.

Celia & Save the Children team

VE Day

Brightwell cum Sotwell marked the 80th anniversary of VE Day on 8 May with a service of remembrance at the war memorial. Rev. Janice led the service accompanied by Micky Moore, Micky Rooney and Chris Benarr (all ex-military themselves) - *see cover photo*.

Union flags and red, white and blue bunting fluttered overhead as more than 100 villagers turned out to hear the names of the fallen read out and observe a two minutes silence. Sue Robson provided a moving tribute on the bagpipes. A wreath of village hedgerow flowers was laid on the memorial – thank you Running Wild Flowers. Immediately afterwards, the bells of St. Agatha rang out in celebration.



Thanks for the lefthand image of the VE Day tea party 1945 from the Village History Group Archives, and to David Dugan for this year's photo.

Jason Debney

St Agatha's Church Spring Fair

Saturday 17 May brought wonderful weather, a record attendance and record taking (£3964) at the Church Spring Fair, now well-established in St Agatha's church yard and in the church itself. It is wonderful for St Agatha's to be at the centre of village affairs and for so many, young and old, enjoying the fun to be had; picking up bargains from stalls selling toys, plants, books and bric-a-brac; and consuming delicious teas. We hope that all have seen just how special our church is, dependent as it is on the support of those who live here.

Our thanks are due to the many who helped and baked, as well as all who attended, and for their generosity. We owe a particular debt to Louise Wymer whose capacity to organise the whole thing and motivate us all really is beyond compare.

Michael Drury - Churchwarden

Wallingford Photo Club

Wallingford Photographic Club has wrapped up for a summer break after the 2024-2025 season, but not before a great photography day out to Paddington Basin, our season-ending annual main competition, and Annual General Meeting. In September we will start a new season of weekly talks, presentations, competitions and practical sessions on Thursdays, 7.30pm at Crowmarsh Pavilion. We discuss a wide range of topics, not just technical, including getting feedback on your photos if you're keen to show them. Some sessions are online, where we make the most of speakers from far away.

But in the mean time we have a summer photography competition in the pipeline, open to all: 'Summer In and Around Wallingford', and our annual exhibition in Wallingford on Bunkfest weekend! www.wallingfordphoto.club.

Phil Swarbrick

Cholsey Repair Café

Yet another repair session is on offer at Cholsey Repair Café, which takes place on **Saturday 19 July** at **The Cholsey Pavilion**. Doors open at **10am** and close at **12.45** and you can pause for a good cuppa and cake from Cholsey Community Café, which is in the foyer.

Our aim is to help you repair all manner of ordinary domestic items, including electricals, garden tools, toys, bicycles, textiles and ornaments, but we sometimes branch out into furniture, ultrasonic cleaning of watches and jewellery, and can even help with spectacles and new watch batteries, although it's advisable to get in touch a few days ahead to check whether the particular repair will be available. Check: www.cholseyrepaircafe.com or email repaircafe@cholsey.com for further information.

Ian Wheeler

Kingmaker

Prominent Conservative Graham Brady will be at Wallingford Methodist Church on Tuesday 17 June to discuss his memoir *Kingmaker* - revealing the secrets, lies and truth about five former prime ministers. Lord Brady, who was responsible for overseeing leadership elections from 2010-24, will be talking to Methodist minister Rev Bruce Thompson, 12-1pm and taking questions. Tickets, £10, are available from Wallingford Bookshop. All proceeds to charity. An optional light lunch follows, for a donation to the church.

Nicky Lidstone.

VILLAGE DIARY

June

3	Village lunch club	VH	12.15
3	Quiz night for Wassail	Red Lion	7pm
7	Brightfest	Rec	1-11
10	WI Garden party		
14	Face the Music with Hope (BSR event)	St Mary's	7.30pm
15	Fathers' day lunch / Jazz Jam	Red Lion	.. /6pm
20	Midsummer in the Barn	Small's House	7.30pm
21	Village Stores & PO AGM	VH	3pm
22	Summer Concert	St Agatha's	7.30pm
28	SCF Ball in the Hall	VH	6.30pm

July

2	Jazz Jam	Red Lion	6pm
5	Village Fete at Moreton House		2-4.30
8	WI talk 'How herbalism can help you'	VH	7.30pm
12	Party in the Pub	Red Lion	3.30-10.30

Advance Notice

4 October Community Association Jumble Sale

Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

Grey bins	Thursdays 5 & 19 June
	Thursdays 3, 17 and 31 July
Green (& brown) bins	Thursdays 12 & 26 June
	Thursdays 10 & 24 July

Village website

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