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Items for the next edition should be sent to the Editor by 10 November 2025. *The Villager* is published every other month and delivered free to all households in the village.

Editorial

I know I am not alone in finding it increasingly unbearable watching our world order disintegrate on TV and in social media: riots, shootings, mass bombardments, bleeding citizens, starving children. As Celia Collett reminds us in her Save the Children report on page 10, it is easy to get overwhelmed and feel helpless. But it is cheering to read about the daily acts of selflessness and courage of the aid workers and medical teams and to know that we do make a small but significant difference when we support our village charities. There is a particularly inspiring example of how a little money goes a long way in Cameron Wood's report of his recent trip to Zambia. See pages 19-20.

Talking of Celia, you probably know her as the lady who runs our shop but she has been working on behalf of the community for decades and was recently awarded a gong for her efforts. Read about Celia and her memories of village life on page 7-9.

And talking of the shop, there are quite a few new titles by local authors on sale there. If you would like to write a review of one of the titles, please contact me (contact details page 1) before the end of October as it would be great to review as many of these books as possible in our Christmas edition.

The weather continues to remind us of what a topsy turvy world we live in: last October I was remarking on the abundance of apples and the over-abundance of rain. This October we have a drought – even if officially it's called "prolonged dry weather" (see page 15-16). Even so the trees in the village are once again groaning with apples, and there is only so much apple crumble any one can eat. Luckily it's Apple Day on 12 October where we will discover all sorts of different ideas for what to do with apples and apple juice. (See page 17).

Perhaps we have Toby Egan's Grandpa – or more specifically – his Grandpa's bees to thank for the profusion of apples this year. Find out more on page 12-13. Thanks to the Molls for the cover and centre page photos.

Out of all the many and splendid autumn activities that the village is providing to cheer us all up, the one you absolutely must not miss is the live screenings of Strictly Come dancing in the Village Hall because, my friends, Brightwell's super star Alex Kingston is one of the contestants - Go Alex! Someone very close to you has a lot of money on you winning. No pressure then. Good luck! I'm sure we will all be rooting for you.

Alison Leigh

John Geoffrey Cordey - "Geoff"

May 1940 – June 2025:

The sudden death of Geoff deprives this village of a good friend and an eminent scientist. He and his first wife Anne moved into Sotwell in 1973, and as is so often the way with village friendships, much began at the gates of Brightwell School, in this instance when two little boys, Julian Cordey and Jason Debney, turned up for their first day of school in May 1974. Geoff seized that moment to start a Saturday morning boys football game, and followed it up with an invitation to join them camping.



By 1977 his camping initiative had grown to 4 village families and 8 children, which in time became lunchtime drinks for 5 couples, and then long, long, Sunday lunches. After nearly 50 years we continue to meet every 3 months, which for over 40 years has always begun with a Weigh-In, essentially a peer group weight watchers club. Mercifully we have now forgotten why this odd ritual began. Geoff always supervised the scales and declared each result to an eager circle of friends, whilst Tony Lascelles has archived our weights now carefully preserved on a multicoloured scroll beginning to take on biblical proportions.

Geoff was a wartime baby born in Sheffield as the Battle of Britain filled the skies, sadly losing his mother at a very early age. Curiously, he seemed destined for South Oxfordshire whilst still in school. At Firth Park Grammar School it rapidly became apparent he had a natural gift for mathematics; he once admitted it seemed unfair but he intuitively knew what was being taught. His physics teacher, aware of the opportunities that a nuclear age might offer such a talent, planned a career that by September 1959 saw Geoffrey reading Applied Mathematics at Kings College, London. He stayed on as a post-graduate researcher submitting a PhD in Theoretical Physics by July 1964, just five years after leaving school.

He moved from college to Harwell, and then in 1965 to the newly formed Culham Centre for Fusion Energy, where he spent the rest of his working life becoming part of the multi-national Joint European Torus [JET] team in 1978. A Google search will reveal he published around 200 scientific papers collaborating with other fusion scientists in the USA and Japan. Some 30 years after we became close friends I picked up enough courage to explain I really didn't have a clue what he did every day after the Culham bus collected

him at the Chestnut tree. He thought for a minute and came up with an explanation that went something like this: *"Tony you are a geologist and I assume your work is trying to understand what happened millions of years ago. I am concerned with particle physics trying to understand what happens in that millionth of a second when we can persuade atoms to collide. My job is to capture what occurs in that millionth of a second, it's a bit like making one of your geological maps, but just a bit quicker."*

We first met at Kings College on our first day at university anticipating our children's first day at primary school by some fifteen years. 1959/62 was a time of great music and we would meet on Saturday evenings at the Union Jazz Club listening to Lyttleton and Barber, and later Tommy Steele and The Stones. He met his first wife, Anne, at one of those evenings; they married in 1963 and celebrated their Golden Wedding a few weeks before she sadly died in 2013.

He had a quiet but surprisingly energetic personality. In London he worked as a part-time groundsman at the Wimbledon All England Tennis Club, and also in the Union bar. Here he variously helped organise distribution of *The Villager*, played his golf at Hadden Hill, and was a stalwart of the village walking club, organising the most recent walk, appropriately along village byways, just days before he died.

In retirement he travelled, no bucket list, just a joy in new places and faces, one of whom, Sheila, became his second wife in 2018. But it was bridge that defined the man at play, a pastime that ran throughout his life. He would talk of games with his stepmother, "Aces Mabel", and in London he played most lunchtimes in the Union bar. He was a long-standing member of the Wallingford Bridge Club, where he will be remembered as a founding member of a foursome that played with villagers such as Fred Hayworth, Joan Everex, and Keith Owen. It still runs regularly. His last game was away with Sheila at a bridge weekend just eight days before his death. I feel sure the Cordey Game will continue under the watching brief of Irene Lascelles, whilst the remaining six of us will continue to meet for Sunday lunches, although perhaps it's time to retire the shirt of our weight reader extraordinaire.

Tony Debney

Wassail 2026!

Save the date for Brightwell cum Sotwell's annual Wassail and Mummers Play. Saturday 3rd January 3-5 pm followed by music and singing in the Red Lion.

Jason Debney

Parish Council News

The Parish Council very much appreciates the response to our request for people to cut back their hedges bordering the footpaths; many have been cut back, thank you. If you haven't done yours yet, the time is right – birds have all fledged now.

We are still looking for someone to fill the vacant position on the Parish Council. Please get in touch if you think you might be interested. I repeat, it is not onerous and can be interesting and fulfilling and it is possible to combine with a full-time job and family, some of the council do. The Parish Council meets every third Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in the room at the back of the church – anyone is welcome to come and observe the meeting to see what goes on, also, there is a 15-minute slot at the beginning of the meeting for observers to speak if they wish.

We are pleased to see some of the abandoned cars in the street have now been given notices and removed. Presumably this is due to increased reporting to DVLA and SODC. Please do report any vehicles you see that shouldn't be there, i.e. no mot or tax. The more reports that are filed the more action happens.

Lastly, the community speedwatch team have moved forward to the training stage and are now ready to monitor the speeds of traffic in certain areas of the village, so look out for their fluorescent jackets and give them a wave.

Brightwell cum Sotwell Parish Council

St Agatha's and St James'

As I am writing this article the rain is pouring down! Much needed, of course, but I'm sure, for those with children the warm and mostly dry summer holidays have been such a blessing. We are coming to the end of Creationtide and as we move into October we give thanks for the food our land and seas produce with our Harvest Festival service, which will be held at 9.30 am in St. Agatha's on 5 October, this is our Family Service slot, so there is no communion. We welcome donations of tinned and dried goods for Wallingford Food Bank, which will be collected during the service.

This is also a good time to reflect on how well we use all the resources God gives us. Sadly war and violence between neighbouring countries and tribes continues and much of our planet suffers as a result, yet most people, whatever their faith want to live in peace; not to have to worry about the safety

of their families, or where they are to get shelter, find food and medical help if needed. Once again we are holding a Day of Prayer in St Agatha's Church during the Week of Prayer for World Peace, which this year runs from 12-19 October. Our Prayer Day will be on Wednesday 15 October starting at 8am with Celtic Morning Prayer. There are additional set prayer times at 12 noon, 4pm, and concluding at 6pm with Celtic Evening Prayer.

Otherwise the church will be open all day and you can sit quietly and pray or use one of the prayer stations in the church, these will include activities for children. Wednesday is also our regular Community Coffee Morning so come for refreshments, which will be available in the church room on that day from 10am until 4pm, and have a look in the church at the same time

We will be holding our 'All Souls' Memorial Service, when loved ones who have died can be remembered, on Sunday 2 November, in St Agatha's at 4pm; and on Sunday 9 November our annual Service of Remembrance will be held beginning at the War Memorial at 10.45am followed by a service in church. On St Andrew's Day, 30 November, we will be part of a Team Communion Service in St Mary's, Wallingford to mark the beginning of Advent and the start of a new Church year.

While we are waiting for a new team vicar to be appointed the services in Brightwell may vary from what was our normal pattern of worship. Full monthly details of all services are on the gate at St Agatha's, the notice board at 2 Fairthorne Memorial, next to the Village Hall and the notice board at Sotwell. Do come and join us; if you want to know more there is always a church member at our Community Coffee Morning, every Wednesday between 10am and 12 noon, who you can talk to.

Rev. Janice - Associate Priest

The Village Stores and Post Office

Autumn is coming, the schools are back, here at the shop and Post Office we are gearing up for Christmas. This year we are focusing on local and ethical goods, working with our suppliers to come up with some different ideas for presents and Christmas fare.

We have already started to introduce some new cheeses, products and suppliers, which you can order. We very much welcome and rely on feedback from customers to help us; the feedback we are receiving on our three local bread suppliers is very informative where ordering is concerned. When searching out new suppliers we look for ethical, local and healthy options.

The Village Stores & Post Office team.

Meet Celia Collett

Lots of us live in this magical village after stumbling across it while house hunting. Celia Collett was born here and has never thought of leaving.



One word sums up why Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is so important to Celia: community. That's the theme of her earliest memories and it's been a driver for her life. How appropriate then that in July she won the prestigious Plunkett Community Contribution Award for being a champion of our Community Village Stores. The 'shop' is of course where we see her daily, but that's not half the Celia story...

Ask Celia about her early life in Brightwell in the 1950s and her recollections sound like

History Society archives. *"It's true, our childhood was very different from today. Brightwell School is now the Village Hall, and our playground was where the shop and car park are now. I remember racing to Mrs Kew's bakery to get fresh Tommy loaves after school, or up to Mrs Brooker's sweet shop in Church Lane."*

Celia was born into a farming family. Her father Les Everex and his brother Tom bought Brightwell Dairy Farm together and built two farmhouses on The Street (opposite where Brightwell Garage is now). Celia entered the world on the day the family moved into Meadowlands.

"It was a Darling Buds of May childhood. I've got so many fond memories of the farm, going to the market with Dad, learning to drive in the fields at 12. Mum was a typical farmer's wife. The farmhouse kitchen was always open for employees, villagers and farm visitors. Even the milk lorry driver would take time out of his busy day to stop at the farmhouse for a cup of tea and piece of cake".

Does Celia resent the huge changes to Brightwell over recent years? *Not at all. My father always said nothing ever stands still. You've got to make the best of change. When new people come to the village it's vital to keep a sense of community and encourage everyone to work together.*

Celia stayed on. After Blackstone School (now Wallingford School) she joined Lloyds Bank in the town, met Clive and married in 1973, and bought the house in Church Lane where she and Clive still live - a hundred or so

yards from the family farm. Clive started their electrical business and they helped on the farm even after their two boys were born.

Well aware of her own happy family life Celia developed a passion for helping children elsewhere in the world. She became involved with Save the Children after hearing a talk in the village when her sons were toddlers. She has now been on Brightwell's Save the Children committee for over 45 years and served Wallingford and District branch of the charity as Treasurer and Chairman.

I'm so impressed by Save the Children's ambitions. They empower people to help themselves to give children a better chance in life. We're very privileged in our village. I wanted to do what I could to raise funds to help those less fortunate.

Following the tragic tsunami of 2004 Celia and Clive went to Thailand and saw communities and families rebuilding their lives with the help of charities, including Save the Children. *We witnessed people's resilience in a seemingly hopeless environment. The humility and gratitude towards volunteers was overwhelming.*

Celia was a Brightwell Parish Councillor from the early 1980s until the recent election and an Independent District Councillor on SODC for two terms. She has been Group Scout Leader, a school governor, a trustee, and on various committees in and outside the village.

I was never party political. I was only interested in what the community wants and tried to speak up for people whose views need to be heard. Everyone can play a part in improving life for their community.

A major achievement in 2004 was developing the Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Community Led Parish Plan. Brightwell was one of the very first parishes in the country to set out a detailed vision for the future, based firmly on residents' views backed by a village-wide referendum.

In that year Celia received an MBE from the Queen for services to Save the Children and to the community.

As a farmer's daughter Celia has never shirked physical challenges. She and Clive were part of the team that created the stream and the Swan Walk and helped to build the waterfall at the bottom end of the stream. *We enjoyed that so much we donated a seat so that people can rest and watch children and grandchildren playing in the water.*

And so to the Community Village Stores. Brightwell once had three general stores, a Post Office, a butcher, a baker and a sweet shop. Shops and their

services are of course crucial in binding the community together, but in 2002 the village lost its last shop and Post Office.

In response to the closure, Celia was part of the team of people that secured a Post Office outreach service in the Red Lion three times a week and then with an ever-expanding group worked to establish a Community Shop. The group was tireless, investigating building opportunities, seeking funding, and getting advice from community ventures around the country.

The Village Stores was opened in purpose-built premises in August 2010. Then came the opportunity to bring the Post Office service into the shop. After a long and sometimes painful process the proposal was agreed by the village. In May 2016 the Post Office was opened with Celia as volunteer Post Mistress. Celia continues to be central to the shop's success. She chairs the management committee, and with the rest of the committee deals with the many responsibilities and processes associated with any modern shop.

She's also still Post Mistress, a role that requires meticulous attention in managing finances and computer systems. She finds, trains and supports the loyal team of Post Office clerks who serve customers using Post Office services. I asked Celia the obvious question: how do you do it? *Well I don't pretend we don't have challenges. We have good times and bad times and take every day as it comes. We're a dedicated team of volunteers and staff who work together for a common goal. However, it's the village that ultimately decides if the shop will succeed.*

Celia has a simple view of community. *It's about looking out for each other. That might just mean saying good morning and listening to people's stories or concerns. So much these days is about putting a price on things, but if you can give time freely without expecting any return that's a fulfilled and happy life.*

Hugh Roderick

Help Fight Typhoid

The Oxford Vaccine group (University of Oxford) is seeking volunteers aged 18–55 to take part in the BIVISTA study to find a vaccine against typhoid and paratyphoid A fever. Participants will be vaccinated with the new vaccine or a control, then exposed to the bacteria that causes paratyphoid fever. All participants will receive antibiotic treatment and all will be reimbursed up to £4585 for their time, inconvenience and travel. Contact Tel. 01865 611400 or email info@ovg.ox.ac.uk and see <https://www.ovg.ox.ac.uk>, but be quick; the study begins in October.

Eleanor Wilson

Community Association

Grants: We were pleased to make the following grants in September: Scouts- £1000, Brightwell PCC- £600, St James's Churchyard, £300, Preschool- £2048, Tennis Club - £250, Cricket Club - £250, Village Hall - £500, Lunch Club - £100, Toddler Group - £200, BcS Website -£264, Brightwell Players - £250, Brightwell School/FOBS - £200, History Group - £500, Wassail Group - £200, **total - £6662.**

Jumble Sale - Saturday 4 October, 2-4.30pm Pavilion, Mackney Lane

After last year's success we are organising another Jumble Sale. Please bring donations of clothing, toys, paperback books and small items of bric-a-brac to the Pavilion on the morning of the sale from 10am or the evening before and join us in the afternoon from 2pm to pick up a bargain.

AGM – Wednesday 29 October, 7.30pm Stewart Room, Village Hall

We would like to invite members of our village community to join us for a glass of wine at our AGM to hear about our work and events over the past year and to learn about our future plans.

James Davys

Save the Children

The news contains so many terrible stories affecting children lives that it is easy to get overwhelmed and feel helpless. However, thank goodness there are charities and organisations like Save the Children that day in and day out work tirelessly to help improve children's lives even in the worst of circumstances.

In Gaza Save the Children and their partners are doing everything possible: treating malnourished children, delivering clean water, providing cash support, and creating safe spaces for children. Over the past twenty-two months, Save the Children has reached more than 1.6 million people in Gaza and over 100,000 in the West Bank. Yet, sadly, the crisis is deepening daily and the needs far outstrip what is currently reaching families. A famine is taking place in Gaza and the situation deteriorates as I write this. This was entirely preventable and predictable after almost two years of severe restrictions, including six-months of near-total siege, preventing food and medicine from entering Gaza. Thank goodness for all the aid workers, doctors and agencies who haven't abandon the people and children of Gaza and risk their own lives daily to support them.

In Afghanistan Save the Children, after the earthquake, deployed a medical team to the worst-hit areas, providing water, sanitation and hygiene support, child protection and shelter kits with tarpaulins; one team had to walk 20km carrying medical equipment on their backs to reach a remote community with support.

All this work can only be done through individuals, business, organisations and governments that support charities like Save the Children. We are lucky that in our community there is so much support for good causes, people like Dulcie Salisbury who with the help of mum Sophie raised funds for both Save the Children and Brightwell Supporting Refugees by selling bunches of lavender cuttings in the summer holidays.

Our next two fundraisers in the village are a quiz in the Red Lion on Tuesday 7 October and on Saturday 15 November at The Red Lion Christmas Market; many thanks to Corinne and Mouse.

Thank you for being by children's side through the scariest time of their lives wherever they are in the world.

Celia & the local Save the Children team

Brightwell Toddlers

It was such a joy to be back after a busy summer, filling the hall once again with the sound of little voices and laughter. This year Brightwell Toddlers is being run by a new team of village volunteers, and we're really looking forward to sharing lots of fun, crafts, and seasonal activities with the children in the months ahead. We loved welcoming both familiar and new faces, and to kick things off, the children enjoyed making their own colourful ice cream cones with sprinkles galore, before finishing the morning with music and singing.

Alongside toys and playtime, each week includes different activities, crafts, and songs, as well as tea, coffee, and biscuits for parents and carers. Our group runs every Thursday during term time from 9.15–11.15am in the Village Hall. All babies, toddlers, and preschoolers (with their parents or carers) are warmly welcome. 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.

Alice Nicol

Life as a BcS beekeeper

My Grandpa, Steve Moll is a beekeeper and I wanted to interview him for the 2025 Village Fete. There were so many questions that I wanted to ask him. Here is my interview.



T: Can you tell me when and why you started keeping bees?

Steve: I have been beekeeping with Granny for about 19 years now, so in 2006, when I came back from Belgium I was not working and I wanted something to do. There was a lady from the village called Viola Crowe. She was about 80 at the time and she had always kept bees. She called me saying "Steve! There's a swarm of bees in someone's garden! Will you help me out?" I said yes, and together we collected the bees and put them in a box. In the car, I said "But what will we do with the bees?" Then she said that I could keep them, and so I did! I put them into a hive, and over the years, I collected more.

T: How did you feel when you opened a hive for the first time?

Steve: It can be very scary opening a hive for the first time. Once I got stung up the nose by one and everyone was laughing even though it was not funny at all for me!

T: How many bees are in one hive?

Steve: It depends on the time of year, in summer there can be around 40,000 bees, however in winter there are only around 5,000 to 10,000.

T: How do bees communicate?

Steve: Bees often communicate by smell, or honeybees have a type of dance called a waggle dance.

T: What's the most surprising thing you've ever seen a bee do?

Steve: Good question, it's probably the way that they know that their queen has died. They release a special scent so that all the other bees know. But they also do lots of other surprising things too.

T: Do you have to check on your bees every day?

Steve: No, normally just once a week, but I don't check on them much at all in the winter.



T: Have you ever given names to any of your hives or bees?

Steve: I haven't, but I know another beekeeper who does... he names his hives after Greek gods.

T: How do you collect the honey from the hive?

Steve: I go to the hive and the honey boxes, called supers, are full of honey. I lift off the supers and put them on a stand. I have a leaf blower, and I blow all the bees out from the honey super so they can go back into the hive. I then put the super in the car. When I get home I take it into the honey room and cut the top of the wax off the comb and put it into a honey extractor and spin it.

T: Do bees have favourite flowers?

Steve: Yes, they like the flowers that produce the most nectar. Their favourite one in the spring is probably the crop oil seed rape. In the summer, their favourite flowers are bramble (blackberries) and lime trees.



T: What can children or families do to help bees?

Steve: They could plant bee-friendly plants. Two things I would recommend are spring bulbs like snowdrops or crocus. In the summer they really like lavender, so that is a good plant. People can even welcome bees to their garden using bee hotels.

T: If your bees could talk, what do you think they'd say?

Steve: "We love sunny, dry weather – this has been a lovely summer for us, because it has been dry, warm and hot". That is what they really like.

T: If I wanted to keep bees when I'm older, what advice would you give me?

Steve: The advice that I would give you is to find a nice place to put the bees where they will be out of everyone's way and buy some lovely, nice flowers.

T: I have one last question, that I have just made up. What is your most successful hive?

Steve: There are always some hives that are really successful. I have had one or two this year – you don't always know why – but one hive had 9 honey boxes on it. I had to use a stepladder to get them!

To find out more about honeybees you can visit www.brightwellbees.co.uk.

Toby Egan

Brightwell Preschool

Thanks to our wonderful Community Association and all of their efforts, our tired playroom had a fresh coat of paint ready for the new term and amongst other essential electrical works, some new outside lights to help with our longer opening hours over the winter months. Larger projects have included support to replace the rotting decking area and providing a new kitchen to meet with health and safety requirements, the preschool and families cannot thank you enough.

September offers new beginnings, not just for our wonderfully revived playroom; a room is only a room after all, but the life and soul of the space belongs to the children. The little ones become the big ones who can model and show the newest members how things are done around here - this has its own challenges as you can imagine because 'how things are done' can be open to interpretation ...

With hellos, there are always goodbyes and it will be with great appreciation that we say goodbye to many of our committee members who work tirelessly to keep the preschool running, with no pay or recognition for the hours of work behind the scenes to piece together the puzzle of how we can actually remain open. A huge thank you to all of you, but in particular the chairpersons, Barbara, Emma, and Tom our treasurer, who take on the lion's share of the work; I think it's time for a well-earned rest

Natasha Hillier

Stewart Village Hall

There has been a lot of 'behind the scenes' activity of late. The Trustees are working with a contractor to progress detailed reports and costings for the proposed restoration project. As soon as we have information to share, we will arrange to present this to you. In the meantime, we really need to recruit some additional support for the Trustees; the challenge of managing planning and preparation for the restoration project, the day to day running of the hall and organising fundraising events can be overwhelming. Please consider if there is some way you can help with publicity and communications, posting updates on social media and keeping our community informed. Please let us know if you would be able to help before, during or after any of these fundraising events:

27 September: Strictly Come Dancing, First Live Show. Doors open 30 minutes before the show starts, bar and nibbles available.

1 November: Strictly Come Dancing Halloween Special. Doors open 30 minutes before the show starts, bar and nibbles available.

15 November: Ladies Disco Dancing. Back due to popular demand 😊 with amazing music from three great DJ's, under the mood-setting lights above; all supplied by volunteers! Doors open 7pm. Tickets are still only £5 from the Village Store (cash only) or by card via info@stewartvillagehall.org.uk. There is a cash/card bar. All proceeds go towards the renovation project. For more information, please contact shenaluck@btinternet.com or call 01491 834543.

22 November: Strictly Come Dancing Blackpool Special. Doors open 30 minutes before the show starts, bar and nibbles available.

9 December: Festive Block printing events, make 3 lovely items to take home for Christmas, these will make lovely presents or look great on your Christmas table. Go to Artoffaipur.com to book.

17 December: Traditional Christmas Carol Concert, look for more information on our website, on Facebook and for posters on our notice boards.

20 December: Strictly Come Dancing Final. Doors open 30 minutes before the show starts, bar and nibbles available.

To book the Hall, to provide comments or feedback or for more information, please visit our website stewartvillagehall.org.uk or contact Shena at shenaluck@btinternet.com or on 01491 834543.

Annette Kilworth

BcS Environment Group

The Swan Stream, which is largely fed by groundwater from the Sinodun Hills, has continued to flow all summer, and, with rain having started in late August, it should continue, although there is always a time lag before the groundwater recharges, so we are not quite out of the woods yet!

We have secured a donation of young trees from the Woodland Trust for planting the Millennium and Swan Woods this winter, but there are likely to be some available for planting elsewhere in the village. If you know of any suitable location, please let me know.

A note for your diary: on Thursday 4 December at 7.30 pm Jonathan Stamp will be giving a talk in the Village Hall entitled 'The Summer of 43' which will put forward the historical/political background to his hypothesis that our Roman road was used very early on in the Roman invasion. No booking is required, and entry is free.

Weather

The rainfall recorded at Highlands Farm was for July 27.5mm and August 35.3mm, representing 59% and 56% respectively of the averages for 1999 – 2012 at Highlands Farm. These continue the run of extremely dry weather that started in March with the six month total from March to August the being 129.9mm compared to the average for Highlands Farm for this period of 303.2mm ie only 43%. Rainfall across the region from the Met Office anomaly maps indicates that the totals for July and August figure was about 60% and 40% respectively of the 1991 – 2020 average.

The Met Office records show this general area to have had a mean temperature of about 2 Deg C above the 1991 – 2020 average for July and 1 deg C for August which has led to 2025 being the warmest on record. Sunshine was around 30% above the average for the summer.

The prolonged dry spell, unsurprisingly, led to a hosepipe ban by Thames Water which started on 22 July. It is likely to continue for a few months. When a ban was last in place in 2022 it was not lifted until late November, although by that time there is little need for using a hosepipe!

From the Environment Agency records, flows in the upper River Thames are classified as notably low although the groundwater level at Stonor Park is still 'Above Normal', thus still reflecting the very wet winter and spring. Farmoor reservoir levels at the end of July were 'Below Normal' at 90%. Interestingly, the EA classify the Thames catchment as suffering from 'Prolonged Dry Weather' rather than a drought, although that term is used for areas of the Midlands and the North.

Steve Capel -Davies

Flower and Produce Committee

The annual Flower and Produce Show is looking for a new committee to take over the running of the tent. For further details, please contact Alison Hedges Alisonhedges@aol.com or Helen Satchell Hvsatchell@icloud.com.

Brightwell cum Sotwell WI

Who said long hot summers are a thing of the past?? Summer 2025 will surely be remembered for brown grass, sitting in shady spaces, drinking lots of Pimms and watching the Lionesses win the European Championship once again.

We regrouped in September to start our winter programme of talks and activities. Starting on 9 September, Charlotte Wood talked to us how she and her husband Mike planted a vineyard in the village, the grapes they grow and how to tend them. Later in the month, the WI ladies met in Oxford for a guided tour with Lizzie Rowe entitled 'Christopher Wren's Oxford'.

Coming up next:

14 October: keen on more history, we invited Robert Seatter, (poet in residence) for a talk about Kelmscott Manor, the home of William Morris.

11 November: we are planning an evening of seasonal crafting again. This is always a relaxed and chatty time for learning new skills and sharing ideas.

9 December, our last meeting of the year, will hopefully see us again sharing a festive meal at the Red Lion.

A final note, for anyone interested or just curious, we always meet on the 2nd Tuesday in the month at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. Please feel free to drop by, you will be most welcome.

Karin Matthews

Apple Day

Apple day returns **Sunday 12 October, 12-4pm at the Recreation Ground.**

This will be our 13th Apple Day, and as always it promises to be a lively, apple-filled afternoon celebrating our village's orchard and long-standing apple history.

We're planning all the favourite stalls: apple pressing and juice tasting (bring a bottle to take some home and have a go running the press yourself!), an apple-themed cake stall, the heritage apple display, tastings of fresh apples and homemade cider, as well as some local apple-themed stalls, drinks and delicious food; fun for all ages, whether you're an orchard enthusiast or simply here for a slice of cake and a chat with neighbours. Entry is free.

Would you like to help before, during or after the day? Cakes, biscuits, muffins, pies, tarts, flans and puffs are all very welcome. Last year our cakes kept going for 3 hours. This year we hope for 4! And then there are the logistics for the day – making sure that everything is in the right place at the right time for as long as it takes. It's all fun stuff and hugely rewarding when you have 400 happy visitors.

Contact Amanda Potter for cake donations at amanda.potter@live.co.uk and Martin Suttle for helping with Apple Day (stalls or logistics) at villageorchardgroup@gmail.com. See you there.

Martin Suttle

War in Ten Poems From Cholsey Downs to Flanders Fields – the Great War in the words of its greatest poets

Written by local author Peter Adamson (*A Town Called Wallingford, Landmark in Time*), *A War in Ten Poems* tells the story of changing attitudes to the Great War through the voices of its greatest poets. Coming just ahead of Armistice Day 2025, the event is being held in aid of Brightwell Supporting Refugees, on **Sunday 2 November** in **St Mary-le-More Parish Church, Wallingford.**

The story begins just outside Cholsey where in the summer of 1914 a group of friends gathered to write poetry and walk on the Downs. The host was the future Poet Laureate, John Masefield, who at thirty-five was too old to be sent to the front but who volunteered as an orderly in a field hospital on the Marne. Returning to his isolated farmhouse on the Downs, Masefield went on to write some of the finest literature of war. Among the others who gathered on the Downs in that last peaceful summer of 1914 was Rupert Brooke - 'the handsomest young man in England' - who welcomed the coming of war but who was to die of an infected mosquito bite on the way to Gallipoli.

A War in Ten Poems is less than an hour long but promises to be an absorbing experience, built around what the author describes as some of the greatest poems ever written. Poets such as Masefield, Brooke, McRae, Sassoon, Owen and Carol Ann Duffy will be voiced by a cast that includes Clare Thomson, Ben Manning, Alistair Luck, Catriona Woolhouse and David Fox. The performance will be directed by Christopher Baines.

Tickets for the performance, which begins at 7.30 pm, are available price £10 (£5 for 16-18s) from Brightwell Village Stores and Wallingford Bookshop or by emailing: bsr@bsr-charity.org. All welcome.

Peter Adamson

Brightwell Supporting Refugees

Two great events coming up: 7.30pm, **Friday 3 October** at Brightwell Village Hall, a **Night of Jazz, Soul & Blues** from George Potter, Maff Potts and friends. It was certainly a night to remember when they played for us in 2022 so we are very grateful to them for coming back to entertain us once again. Tickets £10 from the Village Stores, or email bsr@bsr-charity.org.

We are also indebted to Peter Adamson and his team for involving BSR in their '**War in Ten Poems**' event on **2 November**, described above.

Angela Lewis

Changing Lives

This summer Rev James Stevenson, a BSR trustee, took 8 young people, 2 from Australia and 6 from our village to an orphanage on the sub-Saharan NW Zambian border with the Congo (Solwezi). The orphanage is home to approx. 45 children, but gets no government support.

First of all my sister Annabel and I would like to say a massive 'thank you' to our supporters for their kind donations towards our social impact work at the Emmanuel Orphanage, just outside the town of Solwezi, in North Zambia. We raised a grand total of £1,175.

The 10 of us on the trip arrived to a very warm welcome at the orphanage, where we were greeted with a welcome song and a sea of smiles on the kids' faces. As soon as we set foot in the orphanage we could feel a real warm sense of community, it is a happy place.

It is a happy place, even though they cook on an open fire, even though their kitchen is a food prep table made from an old door jacked up on trestles, even though the bunk rooms where the kids sleep resemble an agricultural livestock shed, even though the loo is a hole in the ground.

After spending the first day with the kids - attending their lessons and absorbing their day-to-day routine and dining on their local delicacy of nshima (white maize and water) - we identified their core needs and set to work finding solutions and supplies for them from the local town of Solwezi.

Annabel used some of the money to buy 2 Buffalo Bikes - a tough African-based brand built to carry large loads and withstand African dirt roads - as previously the orphanage had no means of transport to travel anywhere and is based in the bush, a 40-minute drive from Solwezi. Some of the kids also walk 2 hours to school and 2 hours back and bikes will reduce this. Furthermore it allows the staff at the orphanage transport as and when needed.

We took on looking at solutions for their infrastructure too. This entailed repairing broken bed frames, purchasing building supplies and transporting them to the orphanage so their local builder could finish one of the school



buildings and we also set about upgrading the orphanage's farming irrigation system. We bought an additional 350m of irrigation pipe and installed a T junction on their existing solar powered water pump, meaning they have now doubled their farmable area, which they use to feed themselves. In due course they will hopefully monetise their surplus produce at the local market to support the orphanage. In addition to this as a group we also purchased 15 new mattresses so fewer kids had to share mattresses or sleep on the floor and purchased more school supplies to support their education.

All of these supplies were bought locally in Solwezi with your donations. With the surplus funds between the 10 of us who went, we have started a fund for the orphanage to work towards purchasing a small truck in the future. Rev James will manage this and ensure it is spent appropriately.



We are still finding it hard to form an opinion and put into words how we feel about the experience we had there. We have never witnessed such absolute poverty first hand, yet also never experienced such warmth, friendliness and so many happy kids in one place. We have come away feeling uplifted and inspired by how humans can live and sustain themselves and create so much from so little.

Cameron Wood

The Red Lion

We really appreciate the support we've had for our live music events over the summer. Having the amount of people here listening really gives the pub a boost. Along with our monthly Jazz Jam (3rd Sunday of the month) we are also now hosting what I like to call 'Fiddly Diddly Dee Night' which is organised by Sue Robson. It's an informal night where local musicians can get together to play/sing some Scottish tunes and all musicians, singers and listeners are welcome. It takes place on the 2nd Tuesday of every month from 7.30-9.30pm. We've had 3 months so far and it really is great fun with a mixture of talents so even if you've only just started out come along as it's a very welcoming group for all abilities.

Moving into Autumn/Winter, we will not be able to hold events outside with the exception of course of this year's Christmas Market which is being held on Saturday 15 November. As last year we have some fabulous local sellers lined up, so please do come down and pick up some local crafts from local people. It is so important to support small local businesses.

If you are on our mailing list you will have seen we have launched our Festive menu and bookings are already coming in so if you'd like to book a lunch or dinner with us in December and would like the Christmas menu, please do book early to guarantee your preferred date. All bookings require a £10pp deposit and menu choices must be with us at least 5 days beforehand. I will update you in the next edition of the opening hours over Christmas as these are still yet to be decided.

Thank you as always for your support and we look forward to seeing you in your local pub over the coming months as remember the pub is for life, not just for Christmas 😊.

Corinne, Mouse & Ruby

Pickleball

A reminder from Kings Meadow Tennis Club that Pickleball is available on the tennis courts. Both courts have been painted with orange lines to mark out a PB court. The existing tennis nets are used – lowered to 86cm (34”).

Currently there are two sessions a week – Tuesday 6-7pm (while the light lasts) and Friday 2-4pm, weather of course permitting. Beginners are welcome and the increasing numbers of people now playing can provide instruction regarding the rules and how to play. KMTC members have access to paddles and balls, and can also benefit from belonging to two WhatsApp groups where you can see who else is planning to attend on a given date.

So why play? Well, it is easy to learn. Pickleball utilises an underarm serve. All ages can play together and compete so kids can thrash parents and parents can thrash kids! Also men and women compete equally and it is of course great exercise for everyone irrespective of age.

KMTC annual fees are very reasonable– adult single £25; Family £45; Junior £10.

If you are interested contact Robert Lidstone by email
robert@lidstonecourt.com.

Robert Lidstone

Book Review

A Cactus Called Ironside by Kath Crew

A Cactus Called Ironside is an engaging romp largely set in 1980s Cambridge. The heroine, whip smart Roni McNamara, a.k.a. Barking's Biggest Bookworm, has left suburbia far behind to embark on an English degree at the University. Her main preparation having been watching the Brideshead Revisited serialisation with her Mum, Roni's initial impressions of her new college are somewhat disappointing. Neither the brutalist block where she's to live nor the homely, studious, cocoa-drinking girls inhabiting it appeal to her sense of romance. She soon realizes there is another side to student life, peopled by the big players in college: the rugby players, the rowers, the actors. Roni decides this is where she should be.

An invitation to her college reunion, leads her to ponder on why she lost touch with so many people so important in her formative days, although she knows that she's being economical with the truth; going back could open Pandora's Box. What follows is an entertaining dissection of class and expectations against the backdrop of the 1980s. Kath Crew's fluent writing transports you back to another, more innocent time, though with a dark underbelly. It's a world where public adulation for Lady Di and Prince Charles's fairytale wedding co-exists with the Miner's Strike, where romance is the dream, but not if it involves a mixed race or gay couple. The author's observational skills and humorous social satire lead to laugh out loud moments, especially when Roni's two worlds collide. Deft characterization brings to life Roni's new college – from the posh and privileged (largely going by ludicrous names; Chummers, Bomber, Binka et al), to Cambridge's very own Heathcliffe, Webster Ferris, an enigmatic Northern, working-class radical English student in the year above.

This is a coming-of-age novel about the forces that shape us, the secrets everyone keeps and whether they should stay buried.

Sian Norfolk

Kath Crew's sequel novel "A Feather Between the Lines" is soon to be available on Amazon and to order in local bookshops.

Thank you Martin Copus

... for repairing the bench dedicated to John Scott in the Church Yard at West End. You kindly bought new wood to do a permanent repair job, and you plan to paint it as well. It's very kind of you, as an ex-village lad, to come back to help the community.

Shena Luck

St Agatha's church bells and handbells

As some of you will have heard (be that in earshot, or in passing by), we have been busy since the last update. We had special ringing for Rev Kev's retirement (3 hours non-stop, by an invited band of his friends far and wide), VE day (45 minutes non-stop, by a local band), as well as VJ day (a 2 minute pause, by a band of learners)! Plus our usual requests from visiting bands to ring our lovely bells, as well as for a funeral of a parishioner (8 bells, while the family followed the coffin to St James').

Nevertheless, there are times when we struggle for numbers. So, if you'd like to explore this historic craft, do please contact me and come and have a try.

As the days get shorter and the end of BST approaches, we start to think about Carols on Handbells. Will it be viable this year? Could you help? We need a couple more handbell ringers. Again, please contact me if you'd like to explore the possibility! (johndowling@hotmail.com, or contact me on 07979 863649). Let the bells ring out, and not just for Christmas 😊!

John Dowling

Out and About

Autumn Adventures: Tales and Trails! at the **Earth Trust:** 18 & 19 October, plus 25– 31 October, half term. Visit <https://earthtrust.org.uk/whats-on/> for more information.

Pop Art screen printing demonstration: Wallingford and District Art club on Tuesday 21 October at 7.30pm at Centre 70 (off Goldsmiths Lane in Wallingford).

Cholsey Repair Café: Saturday 15 November, Cholsey Pavilion, Station Rd, for help with getting your broken household items back into regular use.

Wallingford Photographic Club's new season is up and running, exploring diverse topics on camera and phone photography, feedback on members' photos, and guest speakers. Thursdays at 7:30pm at Crowmarsh Pavilion.

Life after Stroke: Wallingford and District Stroke Club welcomes stroke sufferers and their families and carers for activities, companionship, tea and cake. 4th Thursday of each month, Crowmarsh Village Hall

VILLAGE DIARY

October

3	BSR Night of Jazz, Soul & Blues	VH	7.30pm
4	Community Association Jumble Sale	Pavilion	2-4.30
5	Harvest Festival (food donations welcomed)	St Ag	9.30
7	Save the Children Pub Quiz	Red L	7pm
12	Apple Day	Rec	12-4
14	WI talk – Robert Seatter – Kelmscott Manor	VH	7.30pm
15	Prayer Day	St Ag	8am on
19	Jazz Jam	Red L	6-8pm
29	Community Association AGM	VH	7.30pm

November

1	Strictly Come Dancing Halloween Live showing	VH	30m bef 4pm
2	All Soul's Memorial Service		
2	War in Ten Poems – Peter Adamson & friends	St MleM	7.30pm
9	Remembrance Day- starts at War Memorial	St Ag	10.45am
11	WI Seasonal crafting	VH	7.30pm
15	Red Lion Christmas Market	Red L	1-5pm
15	Ladies Disco	VH	7pm
16	Jazz Jam	Red L	6-8pm
22	Strictly Come Dancing Blackpool Live showing	VH	30m bef
23	Live music - Cutwater	Red L	6-8pm

Advance Notice

Village Lunch Club	2 December
Roman road talk	4 December, VH, 7.30pm
Festive Block Printing	9 December, VH 11am
Christmas concert	17 December, VH
Wassail	3 January 3-5pm

Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

Grey bins	Thursdays 9 & 23 October, and 6 & 20 November
Green (& brown) bins	Thursdays 2, 16 & 30 (extra brown) October
	Thursdays 13 & 27 November

Village website

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