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The cover photo shows the new allotment stream, see Environment Group article on page 8.

Editorial

A year gone by, hard to believe. It's been a challenging and difficult year for most of us, especially in the latest lockdown when weeks seemed to blur into each other and we have been unable to see family members or friends together. A sad year too for those of you who have lost loved ones through Covid, some unexpectedly. Our sympathies go to you and your families.

But I feel we are over the worst (for now at least). It is good to be able to give news here of previously cancelled events being planned for this summer and see the village calendar starting to fill up – and the pub re-opening on 12 April! St Agatha's Easter Sunday family service will be going ahead (but you must book a place, see page 10); and BSR is holding another fun family challenge around the village, this time a house name hunt, on Easter Saturday, 3 April (Covid restrictions permitting). In May, Save the Children's plant sale will be on Saturday 22nd and ArtWeeks will in the village hall on 22-24th weekend. The Colour and Clay exhibition in St Agatha's has been put back to 11-12 July, while the village fete has moved to 11 September. The church's 'spring fair' has been provisionally set for the August Bank holiday (30th). Sadly, however, others such as Brightfest, Open Gardens and the Summer Ball have been postponed till 2022.

Last month, we lost one of our oldest residents, perhaps the oldest, Joan Sheard, aged 99 years, who lived most of her life here in Wallingford and Brightwell. Her daughter, Anne, has written about her life on the next page. Derek Batten another long-time resident passed away earlier in the year. He worked on the farm at Mackney and in later years did gardening jobs around the village. His regular trips down Mackney lane on his tractor will be missed. We send our condolences to their families.

I am always taken aback at how much talent we have in this village. Many of you will be familiar with Alec McGivan's writings. I thought his *Great Pub Culling* poem, about the time we went from four to just one pub, was worth seeing again (page 12), especially since we have had no pubs during the lockdowns this year. Robert Seater has written some very thoughtful and amusing *Lockdown Fairytales*, worth purchasing (see page 21) and a third poet, Mary Mallia, from Shillingford Park, has a collection of poems due to be published next month by Pegasus. It seemed appropriate to feature some of our own poets to celebrate World Poetry Day on 21 March.

Well, I can't wait to get back to the tennis courts and get out and about again in hopefully warmer weather. Wishing you all a happy Easter.

Helen Connor

Joan Mary Sheard (4.8.21- 9.2.21)

Mum was one of the oldest residents of the village and lived to 99 years. She was born in Reading and moved to Wantage Road when she was 7. She attended Wallingford Grammar School where she loved sport and played tennis and hockey for the school and later for Wallingford. When the war came, Mum volunteered for the ATS, and was stationed at Bournemouth. Unfortunately during the war she lost many friends from her school days.

She was discharged from the army in March 1946 and a week later married her childhood friend, Frank Sheard. They started married life in Porch Cottage, Bakers Lane where Paul and I were born. There was an outside toilet and a tin bath in front of the fire. Five years later, we moved across the road to what was then Woodlands.

In the early days, Dad and his brother Charles kept milking cows and Mum would tell us stories of how Buttercup 1, Buttercup 2, Daisy and Tulip had been milked by hand sitting on 3-legged stools and the milk delivered around the village. Dad and Uncle Charlie were also fruit farmers and Mum and her sister-in-law, my Auntie Joan, would deliver strawberries to local hotels as well as having a stall at Henley Regatta. They would be up to 4 am picking and weighing the strawberries with the help of many local ladies. Later, they started what was to be one of the first ever farm shops in this area and Mum could be seen selling cherries under a tarpaulin in the corner of the orchard. This was later to become Sheard's Farm Shop and Garden Centre, now Root1.

During these years Mum became church warden for her beloved St James, a position she was proud to hold for many years.

In 1982 Dad died and in 1985 Mum and Paul came to live with Philip and me at Sinodun. Mum continued working until she was nearly 80, doing the paperwork, wages and books for the business. She also helped look after her granddaughters, Sally, Lucie and Polly, while I was working in the Garden Centre.

Mum always had a happy disposition. She considered herself lucky that she survived a serious illness in the early 60s although this left her with her ever-suffering legs. She developed dementia in her later years and finally a serious stroke. She is buried in the beautiful St James' churchyard.

As was written about Mum's generation in one of the lovely cards we received – *'Their passing marks the end of an era, an era of hardworking folk who experienced much of what is now history'*.

Anne Elliott

The Parish Council

Site B Street Lighting

The Parish Council continues to liaise with the Site B developers and Oxfordshire County Council regarding the installation of the streetlights along the Wallingford bypass. Light guards were installed to some of the lights on the Brightwell side of the bypass and have proved to reduce considerably the impact of the light to the village. It is hoped more guards will be installed. Ways to reduce the impact of the lights facing us on the Wallingford side of the bypass are proving more difficult but work on this is still ongoing. Peter Sudbury continues to investigate the feasibility of a new pedestrian crossing between Brightwell and Wallingford.

Tree Planting

The planting of 500 native trees in the village has continued through the winter months using a grant from the county council. We would like to thank Dan Baines for his help and hard work on this project.

Village Rubbish/Dog Bins

Unfortunately, our request for new bins to the District Council has been put on hold - the Council are doing a bin mapping project and it was decided that entering into a private bin contract was not something that the Council wished to start at the moment.

However, the County Council have launched a dog fouling awareness campaign, and dog waste bags can now be put in any public litter bin. Hopefully this will help with bags being left around the village hung on trees and bushes. As part of the Wallingford 1155 litter pick initiative, the Council have kindly donated some signs for us to put up around the village to encourage people to clear up after their dog.

Duke of Edinburgh Scheme candidates and several volunteers who clear litter as part of their daily walk are helping to maintain the appearance of our lovely village. We would like to thank all of them sincerely for their great efforts.

Hopefully between us all we can keep the village clear of litter and dog waste!

Grass Verges

Due to the very wet weather that we have experienced in the past few months the grass verges in the village have become very waterlogged, which means that when driven over they become eroded and rutted. We would like to

remind drivers in the village not to use the verges to pass other vehicles if at all possible, to prevent further erosion.

Planning Applications

We would like to remind everybody that any planning applications should refer to the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan which are on the Parish Council website. Failure to do this may result in delays in the planning process.

Car Parking

We have received comments from villagers about inappropriately parked cars. Please may we ask that you park your car considerately, as close as possible to your property, making sure not to block anyone else's drive. We appreciate your co-operation in this matter.

Outdoor Gym

We would like to remind villagers that the Outdoor Gym is currently closed. It will re-open as soon as Covid restrictions are eased.

James Davys

Save the Children

We are planning to hold our annual Plant Stall in the Square on **Saturday 22 May**. Like last year, we will be following the Covid guidelines. Please keep us in mind when trying to find a home for any spare plants you may have. This is usually one of our best fundraising events, so we will be very grateful for your support.

Save the date for next year - **Saturday 25 June 2022** for the Summer Ball. It will be worth the wait!

Lastly, in late summer we will be holding a dog show (date to be confirmed). We were hoping to repeat our Country Fair this year, but with all the uncertainty, we are planning just the dog show. Get all those puppies trained, plus a chance to teach the old dogs new tricks.

Celia Collett

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Primary School

Back to School

With the Prime Minister's announcement that schools would fully reopen from 8 March, that day couldn't come soon enough for many of us. Although our school community had shown tremendous support and engagement with our remote learning offer, it was never a substitute for the real school experience. As families dropped off their children on that first day and staff welcomed children back to class, it was like the children had never been away and the smiles said it all. They settled quickly into their routines, demonstrating fantastic learning behaviours and revelling in the many opportunities given to socialise with their friends.

Our parent community is to be praised and thanked for their support of the school, the staff team and, of course, the support of their child during this second lockdown. With many juggling the impossible task of balancing their own work commitments alongside managing the remote learning provided by the school, we are very grateful for their ongoing support. With our dedicated teaching assistants leading the learning in school for our key worker and vulnerable children, our teachers were able to deliver a strong offer of live and recorded lessons, class check-ins, Story Time, live whole-school assemblies, musical breaks (provided by The Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra) and 'wellbeing hangouts'. Remote learning also provided lots of opportunities for fun with everything from attending a live call in disguise, to quizzes, scavenger hunts, bingo and "odd one out" activities. Mrs Lewis even made an appearance dressed as a crayon!

There is no doubt that this lockdown has been much harder than the last one for many of our families and I wanted to publicly thank the volunteers at the Wallingford Fridge and Foodbank for their weekly support and our external professionals who continued to support us to provide the best support they could to our families at this time. Their support made the difference to a number of families.

FOBS

This lockdown didn't stop our FOBS (Friends of Brightwell School) team who continued their efforts in sourcing alternative fundraising activities. A total of £349 was raised through Bag 2 School donations. A school lottery has been set up with a £1 ticket entering you into a £25,000 draw as well as weekly prizes. Entries are not limited to our school community so to be in

with a chance of winning, you can purchase your tickets using this link.
<https://www.yourschoollottery.co.uk/lottery/school/brightwell-primary-school>

Brightwell Bears

In the middle of this second lockdown, our FOBS team supported the school in purchasing a 'Brightwell Bear' for each child.

The bears offered a connection between school and home and provided a well needed boost for us all just before February half term. The bears made several appearances on live calls and families shared photos of the bears in their new homes offering some comfort or reassurance at a tricky time for many of our community.



Brightwell Bears were centre stage on World Book Day as they did the dressing up instead of the children and we didn't go without our free World Book Day book thanks to Ali Manning and The Wallingford Bookshop. Our in school 'front cover' window designs of books such as *The Boy, the mole, the fox and the Horse, Mixed, Varjak Paw, Holes, Ruby's Worry, Elmer and*

How to Catch a Star caught the eyes of several of the authors, as did the window designs our children and their families created at home. If you haven't seen them yet, have a look at our school Facebook page.

Only way is up....

One thing we are all agreed on is that the only way is up and we are fully focussed on ensuring that our positive 'can do' approach continues to thrive at Brightwell School. Our children showed us in September what resilient learners they are and we feel excited by what we can all achieve both academically and more widely by the end of the academic year. Our new Reception cohort will be finalised from April and with secondary places already confirmed for our Year 6 children, our staff team continue to do everything they can to ensure all children of all ages flourish during their time as part of the Brightwell School community.

Best wishes

Fin Lewis, Headteacher

Allotment Stream and Swan Wood Project



The Environment Group is pleased to be able to report that very good progress has been made on the new stream project with a great input from volunteers and contractors alike. Clive Collett and his band of volunteers did a sterling job managing the clearance of the brambles etc along the course of the stream. This literally opened the way to have the deer fence erected alongside the allotments followed by work to create the stream. The tree clearance in Swan Wood, which comprised mainly of ash, suffering from dieback, was efficiently carried out in January so that all clearance work was done before the bird nesting season.

An early start was made on clearing the roots of the felled trees by Mark Butterfield who not only supplied his time but also his own mechanical excavator! This paved the way for our contractor, Jim Baxter, to continue the work and to start on the stream in early March. The work commenced in bitterly cold weather with storms threatening to cause havoc if there was any delay. Wet weather is always the bane of carrying out earthworks and we were only just able to start the excavation due to high flows from the moat causing the partially blocked pipe to overflow and make the ground very boggy. A concerted voluntary effort in February to clear the roots alleviated the overflow and gave a couple of weeks for the ground to dry.

Once started, the excavator carefully worked its way along the course of the proposed stream to create a meandering channel which enters the stream in the recreation ground via a stepped overfall. It is hard to generate a natural looking stream but we have tried our best by varying the slopes of banks and streambed plus also creating wider wetland/pond areas. The excavated soil was disposed of alongside the course of the stream and also within the cleared woodland area.

We were making good progress but on the last day of excavation, Tuesday 9 March, as we were working on the last few metres of channel, an unexpectedly high inflow of water resulted from a surge affecting the moat. This led to us having to rapidly complete the work as the water approached the excavator! Rather alarming, but a quick response allowed the water to safely

flow away using the new stream. Although the timing was a bit early (we were intending to have a test later in the day), it did prove that the stream worked!

It is early days but it is clear that the stream has the potential to really make a difference to the area and nicely link the allotment, orchard and recreation ground as well as providing a useful new wildlife area.

The next phases of work will be to place some gravel in the stream to create a good wetland habitat followed by seeding of the areas alongside the stream and within the woodland with suitable wildflower/ grass mixes. The majority of the mix will be as previously used in the orchard area. In-stream planting will follow in the summer and woodland tree planting in the autumn. As previously mentioned we hope that restrictions will allow full community involvement in these activities.

This work is a fine example of many people giving up their time to help improve our village.

Steve Capel-Davies

Community Association

As I said in my last article, sadly it is still difficult to make definite plans for future social events in the village due to Covid restrictions. We were hoping to have an open gardens event in May and our traditional fete in July. However, looking at the latest government guidelines and consulting with a leading expert, we have decided that it would be prudent to delay these events. So, the fete will now take place on **Saturday 11 September 2021** and the Open Garden Event on **Sunday 22 May 2022**.

I know many of you, like us, will be very disappointed that we cannot run these events sooner. But the most important thing to us is the safety of our community and ensuring that the pandemic is well and truly behind us before we all get together again. More details of the plans for the fete will follow in the next edition.

James Davys

St Agatha's and St James' - roadmap

We are currently planning our own road map for a return to regular Sunday worship. The good news is that there will definitely be a Sunday service at least fortnightly at St Agatha's and weekly online. People are welcome to attend either in person at the church or online via our live stream on Facebook (also available on our website www.wallingfordcofe.org.uk). We recognise that there is a very diverse attitude to the risks from coronavirus, so we leave it to each individual to decide what is best for them.

Easter

St Agatha's will host a Family Festival Communion on Easter Sunday at 9.30am and we ask people to pre-book their places (i.e. the number attending in their household bubble) so that we can make best use of the available seating. Please contact Margot Shawyer (826677 or brightwellcw@wallingfordcofe.org.uk) if you wish to attend.

Easter Sunday will be especially poignant this year as it also marks the anniversary of the death of our much loved organist Derek Nightingale. Easter reminds us of the empty tomb and we worship our risen Lord, who promises us life after death for all who believe in him. We are still waiting for confirmation of when we are allowed to sing in church again, after which we will confirm dates for a (late?) summer concert and a proper memorial service for Derek.

Funerals and weddings

Despite the pandemic, both St Agatha's and St James' have continued to host funerals with up to 30 mourners (and live streaming for anyone who cannot attend) and no one has yet been turned away due to space restrictions. We are now rebooking the weddings that have been postponed from last year to a time when more guests are allowed. The current limit of 6 guests is due to increase to 15 at Step 2 on 12 April and to 30 at Step 3 on 17 May, with no limit at Step 4 after 21 June.

Postponed church fair

The church and village diaries are already getting busy, so the provisional date for our twice-postponed spring fair is now the August Bank Holiday, Monday 30 August. Our church income has suffered considerably during this past year, whilst expenditure continues, eg. building funds have recently been depleted by £21k for the drainage gulley renovation around St Agatha's. We rely on

the support of the village, including fundraising and legacies towards the remedial work on both of our churches which is estimated at £500,000. A huge 'Thank You!' to all who responded to my previous appeal.

Blessings, Rev Kev

Kevin Beer

HENGE21- Settlement



An exciting Community Arts event is planned for September 2021 - HENGE21- Settlement, a collaboration between the arts celebrating our first settlement at the Dyke Hills beneath Wittenham Clumps. A double ring henge will be constructed to provide a stage for dance, drama, art, music and poetry,

performed by local and professional artists, during the Autumn Equinox.

We would like to invite families and artists in Brightwell, Berinsfield and Dorchester to take part, as these sites represent the genesis of our respective settlements. We also hope to work with our schools and libraries, and to offer a writer's workshop and a call to artists to submit designs for land art to be displayed on site. The onsite WW2 Pillbox will be transformed into a digital gallery for a family art challenge, and there will be opportunity for us to deepen our connections over a drink.

The link below leads to a short film which introduces HENGE21- Settlement. <https://vimeo.com/506469244>. More detailed information will follow for those who would like to be involved either as audience or participants. You can also find us on Instagram - henge.21 and FB - HengeSettlement and soon on our website.

Adrian Brooks

Donkathon

Polly Vacher is going to drive her two donkeys from her home in North Moreton to a remote church in North Wales - St Melangell - on 25 June, to raise funds for research into Multiple Sclerosis (MS). More details to follow.

The Great Pub Culling

Some were in the Black Duck
A crowd from Mackney Lane
Drinking their ale and cider
When the bad news came

Some were at the Button and Loop
Discussing the blessed Queen
Dreaming of the Empire
A quiet and pensive scene

And some were at the Old Swan
With a party on the go
A lively lot it must be said
They were in full flow

The squire tapped on the window
Didn't dismount his horse
"I've had enough" he shouted
These pubs have run their course".

Behind him stood the Reverend
Haldane Stewart was his name
"We've tried to stop your drinking
But all has been in vain"

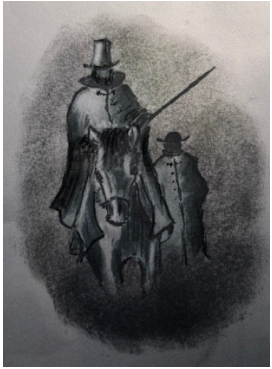
The Squire's grim intention
Was plain for all to see
"We're buying up these houses
Then we'll close all three"

The locals left in ones and twos
Feeling very glum
For they liked to go a drinking
They liked to have their fun.

Squire Fairthorne soon acted
Their local haunts were gone
The villagers missed them badly
Especially The Old Swan

But while they'd lost the battle
They hadn't lost the war
The locals were not giving up
And soon came back for more.





The Red Lion became their new abode
It stands there to this day
Used by many folk
As they wend their way

But sometimes at the window
Specially late at night
You will hear a tapping
You will see the sight

An eerie, stark reminder
Of what has gone before
One figure up on horseback
Another by the door.

*Words by Alec McGivan
Illustrations by Olive Sutcliffe*

This poem is taken from *Beneath the Clumps* published in 2018, available still from the shop or by contacting Alec at alec.mcgivan@gmail.com. Price £5. Proceeds from sales shared between Brightwell Supporting Refugees and the Bone Cancer Research Trust

Brightwell cum Sotwell Kings Meadow Tennis Club (BCSKMTC)

Good news – the tennis courts will be open from 29 March (unless Covid restrictions change). Annual memberships are due. Current members have been sent an email about payment but if you wish to join then email tony@bcskingsmeadowtennisclub.org.uk.

Junior coaching for 3-11 year olds will recommence on Saturday afternoons from 2-5pm, starting 3April. This is delivered by a coach from the National Tennis Association. Please use this link to book a place <https://brightwell.nationaltennis.org.uk>, or call the NTA on 0800888 6030 or email hello@nationaltennis.org.uk.

Tony Windsor, Chairman

The re-opening of the Red Lion

Here at The Red Lion we are busy preparing for what we hope will be our last re-opening from a lockdown on Monday 12 April. As you will know, for the first 5 weeks we are limited to outside tables only which means we will be operating with reduced opening days/times along with a reduced menu in those weeks.

It is a very tricky balancing act with these restrictions and we are very reliant on the weather. So, if we get the glorious weather we had last April and the demand is there, we will increase the opening hours/days and try and have as normal operation as possible. However, for those first 5 weeks, we ask that you understand the need for us to play it by ear and be patient with us to ensure we get the pub through this.

During this time, we will continue to offer takeaway on certain nights and ask for your continued support with this as it will make a huge difference to us when we open. We understand not everyone wants to come back as yet or sit outside so by ordering a takeaway from us, it keeps us going and it will also make it worthwhile having the kitchen open for a small amount of tables. We do of course have our fabulous marquee with heaters on each table and we strongly advise that for any night you wish to come down, even if it's just for drinks, and you want to sit in the marquee, you must book in advance to guarantee your table.

We have everything crossed that the road map ahead doesn't change and that from 17 May we will be able to offer tables inside and then from 21 June, all being well, the village will finally have their pub back!! We are already coming up with plans for a celebration but will hold off from planning anything too much, in case Boris and his advisers change their mind! Mouse and I had a total of only 8 weeks of trading with no restrictions so it will be strange getting back to normal as neither of us can remember what it was like!!

For now, we just want to thank you all for your support over this last year, we hope you are all keeping well and we look forward to this final countdown of getting The Red Lion back to where it should be.....OPEN!!

Corinne & Mouse x

Reflections from Dee and Bob

Having lived in Brightwell for 19 years, Covid has given us time to reflect. Prior to moving here we lived in Wallingford for 48 years. The first link to BCS was when Bob was asked to play in the village football club. Every other Saturday our two boys and I would be there to cheer them on, the highlight being a trip to the sweet shop at half time. The second memory is coming to Kew's bakery on Saturdays to buy their delicious bread. The third is Bob engaging a graphic designer for his art studio who's family were and still are a long established Brightwell family, namely 'the Lays'

Fast forward to 2002. After house hunting for five years we heard through the grapevine that the couple from Nunsacre were emigrating to Australia. (The property was never on the market). After some in-depth detective work, a viewing was secured and the rest is history. We moved in and quickly became immersed into village life. Bob was invited to play tennis at Moreton House (Highballs) which led to valued and lasting friendships. The ensuing years saw Bob reading to the pre-school children, coaching football, helping at the tennis club and we both joined the wine club. I volunteered with Save The Children, sang with Didcot Gospel Choir and rowed at Wallingford. Phew ! Did we really do all that.

Then came 2016. Bob's big dream of going to the Ryder Cup in Augusta was realised but shortly after, he had a life changing stroke. Our world turned upside down. We were wrapped in a cloak of friendship and support from friends and family which is still ongoing. We have visitors often (not during Covid). We have quizzes and chats, one plays the guitar and another reads to Bob. We hope it will continue and may 2021 be a good year.

Bob and Dee Howarth

Speed Crows

You may have noticed a few scarecrows (speed crows) around the village recently. These are an attempt to try to tackle the problem of people driving too fast in the village. A community led project to make a scarecrow with a traffic calming message and put it somewhere visible to the road (but on your property). Anybody is welcome to have a go (I have some straw if you need some). There may even be a small prize!!

Go on. Give it a whirl!

Sue Robson

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell WI

Currently, the group meets monthly online via zoom. We have managed speakers at most meetings and discovered the advantage of zooming as booking speakers at a distance is no object!

We now have a private Facebook page to keep members entertained and we hope to be able to meet for walks in the near future. Our link-up coffee meet ups have moved online again and are open to all, not just members. Please contact our email brightwellcumsotwellwi@gmail.com if you are interested in joining us for a chat on the third Monday of the month. We will meet again at Root One as soon as we can.

Our future programme is not yet finalised due to the fluid nature of the current situation. Our annual business meeting was on 9 March. The business was soon conducted and committee unchanged. Helen is stepping down as President and Annie was elected to take over.

The business meeting was followed by a spoons playing workshop!

Something different and fun again - last month Lana Walker showed us how to do a virtual facial and shoulder massage – wonderful! The Spoons workshop was a great success also and members had a real laugh as they tried to manipulate 2 spoons to make a reasonable percussion tempo. Jo May was an excellent teacher and we finished with a rendition of “drunken sailor” with much hilarity.

Anne Brooker

Mystery Seed Competition

Pods of mystery seeds, costing £1, are still available. The pod comes with germination instructions. A PRIZE will be given later in the year, to the person with the most successful plant!

I am thrilled to say that one of my seeds has germinated and is about 4 cm tall! It looks like no plant I have ever seen. If you are up for the challenge contact Shena Luck on 01491834543 for details, or purchase the pods from the store. All proceeds go towards the Village Hall project. GOOD LUCK!

PS Hollyhock seeds are also still available.

Stewart village hall

As with all venues, we are eagerly awaiting confirmation of the date we can open the hall again. It will be so nice to welcome everyone back to the hall and we will continue to work to ensure Covid safety precautions are in place so you can visit with confidence.

SO Charitable Lottery

Although the hall has not been in use for most of the past year, we have been lucky to have ongoing support from the village through the SO Charitable Lottery. We would like to thank everyone taking part and choosing the village hall to support. If you would like to get involved tickets are £1 each, and 50p of this goes to your chosen charity (hopefully the village hall), at www.socharitable.co.uk/support/stewart-village-hall. The jackpot prize is £25,000, although none of our supporters have won this amazing prize, we regularly have winners of extra free tickets to the following week's draw and 2 lucky winners have won cash prizes. The prize draw on 24 April will also include £1,000 to spend at Currys PC World.

Bookings

For now the only bookings in place are for local elections to be held in the hall on 6 May and the ArtWeeks exhibition on 21, 22, 23 May; more details on this are below.

If you would like to book the hall for future events, parties or activities then please contact Shena Luck and she will advise what is possible within the current regulations (Shenaluck@btinternet.com or 01491 834543).

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

Annette Kilworth

Artweeks 2021

We are holding a wonderful exhibition of artwork in Brightwell's village hall on Friday 21, Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 May, open from 10am to 5:30pm. Check us out at Site 186 at www.artweeks.org. You will see our personal

profiles and samples of our artwork. There are seven of us this year: Angela Lenman, Harry Megaw, John Stephen, Judith Payne, Lin Kerr, Paul Gibbs and Valerie Dearlove, displaying well over 100 diverse paintings, strong and colourful, of landscape, still life and figurative subjects, including water colour, oils, acrylic and batik. Cards and other items are for sale also.

The Art Group has had an exhibition in the village hall during Artweeks since 2004. We are all excited and eager to get back to exhibiting again, and delighted by the support we receive from the village. We are looking forward to meeting our regular visitors and new ones also this year. You can browse and enjoy, with no pressure to buy. We will be fully compliant with Covid-safe procedures. We all look forward to welcoming you to our Art exhibition in May.

John Stephen

Village shop and post office

Have you seen or sampled many of our new products and produce? We regularly source new products and suppliers, especially local goods. By supporting your Community Shop you are supporting local businesses, saving food miles and buying quality products at fair prices. If you aren't one of our many loyal customers, do come in and see what we have to offer.

If you have some spare time why not consider joining the Community Shop's friendly team. For more information please come and see us in the shop or email brightwellshop@btconnect.com. There are many opportunities either volunteering in the shop and/or the post office, consider becoming a member of the management committee, or paid work as shift leaders where we currently have vacancies.

The shop team

Wallingford Talking Newspaper

Many people will already have heard of the Talking Newspaper. In Wallingford and District we have been producing a weekly edition, with news drawn mainly from the Wallingford Herald and the Henley Standard, for over 30 years and have kept going all through the Covid lockdown. Using makeshift 'recording studios' at home, we have been able to continually record the Wallingford & District Talking Newspaper (WDTN) from several of our homes throughout the pandemic and have not missed one edition (yet!).

The Talking Newspaper is normally associated with people with visual impairments, but we would like to publicise the fact that the Wallingford & District Talking Newspaper (WDTN) is also available to a wider range of people who, for any reason, have difficulty reading a newspaper but are not eligible for the free postage that blind and partially sighted people enjoy. It can be listened to on the WDTN website (wdtna.org.uk) simply by a click of the mouse. People can also listen online to back numbers and a monthly edition containing a digest of articles from village and parish magazines in the local area, including The Villager, but would need an access code to do so. Please get in touch by email: wdtninfo@gmail.com or by calling 07976 302136 for more information.

The WDTN sends weekly and monthly recordings on memory sticks to visually impaired listeners, using the free postage that is nationally available when sending 'articles for the blind'. We are always pleased to hear from anyone who is visually impaired and who would like to receive the Talking Newspaper by post. We provide, free of charge, a player for the memory sticks that is designed to be easy for people with poor sight to use. But as said above, if you would find it easier, you can listen to it online via our website.

Keith Tibbs

Bus service changes

In January 2021, the 33 service replaced the X2 between Wallingford and Didcot Parkway, stopping on the High Road, Brightwell (3 bus stops) every 30 minutes or so in both directions, Mon-Sat (reduced to one an hour Sun). One bus per hour continues from Didcot to Abingdon via Sutton Courtenay and Culham. For timetables, see www.thames-travel.co.uk. There is no longer a through bus service to Oxford, change at Didcot or Wallingford.

Brightwell Supporting Refugees

We did manage to have the Christmas market sale on 5 December which was run jointly with Save the Children – a huge success thanks to all the generosity, kindness and enthusiasm from villagers and our supporters. It raised a massive £1,200. We also ran an online pop up shop which raised £600. All so heart-warming. Thank you!

....And then lockdown followed again as you are too well aware. We did, however, manage to send £2,000 to Hope School in Jordan before Christmas and a further £1,000 in February, which has sponsored two teachers until June. This, along with other donations, has helped the school to remain open through to the end of summer and pay the rent for the whole of 2021. One less worry for them. The school at the moment is running two shifts so social distancing can be adhered to.

We also gave £2,000 to the Windle Trust through the 'Big Give' promotion in December to help continue with the education so badly needed in the Rhino refugee camp in Uganda.

None of this could have happened without your support.

The Great House Hunt - another family challenge

It now feels as if, at long last, we are slowly coming out of hibernation. Signs of spring are showing and lockdown restrictions easing.

So....

Did you enjoy the Great Village Date Hunt last year? Now you can try another family challenge, the Great Village House Hunt, deciphering clues to the house names on a circuit around the village. Most clues are anagrams (jumbled up letters) or have missing vowels. A few are cryptic clues.

The event is planned for Easter Saturday, **3 April**, Covid restrictions permitting. You can register between 10am and 3pm by the phone box gallery opposite the Red Lion, and complete the trail at your convenience. It might take between one and two hours. Those emailing a correct final answer before 10 April will have the chance of a small prize. Registration cost is £5 per person or £10 for a family.

Please observe social distancing and the prevailing Covid regulations.

Up to date details will be posted on our Facebook nearer the time or contact brightwellrefugees@gmail.com.

The BSR team

Ten Lockdown Fairytales

What did lockdown mean to Cinderella, waiting in a high rise for her life to happen? Or how about the too-close-for-comfort proximities of Beauty and the Beast, the out-of-control comfort eating of Hansel and Gretel, the ever-extending hair of Rapunzel...?

What's certain for all of them is that their lives, as ours, have been transformed forever.

All this and more, in ten adult-only poem-tales by local writer Robert Seatter, accompanied by the dark elliptical illustrations of Jessica Palmer and the stylish design of Nick Redeyoff. All have donated their services in support of NHS Charities.

So please buy as many copies as you can – for just £5 including postage & packing. Email robert.seatter@bbc.co.uk with your name/postal address, Robert will pop them in the post to you and supply payment details. Here's a taster poem...

Sleeping Beauty

Sleep, sleep, this is all I know -
in this mess of my bed, this chaos
of my room.

But who cares anyway?
Nobody sees me: I never zoom
or skype. Nobody writes to me,
and I never email friends
from before.

I just watch the garden grow
through my skylight window,
its fog of bitter green,
its leafy claustrophobia.

They say there's a cure for me out there:
a man in a white coat
in a lab with a starry name
is watching me closely under his microscope:
I'm on his glass plate and his dark
blue eyeball is moving closer.

Robert Seatter

Another poet in our parish

Unknown to many of you, we have another published poet in our parish – Marie Mallia, who lives at Shillingford Park. Her recent writings, soon to be published by Pegasus - *A Return to Love – To the Heart of God* is an invitation through poetry to read how despair and death are triumphantly overcome by love, faith and forgiveness. For those interested it can be found at <https://pegasuspublishers.com/books/coming-soon>.

Brightwell Art Club



The Club has been continuing with Zoom sessions over the last few months which over half our members have attended and enjoyed. We still do not know when we will be able to recommence in the village hall but if the weather is suitable we might be able to arrange some outdoor sessions.

We are still adding paintings to our 2nd Lockdown on-line gallery. You can find this on the Brightwell Art Club page of the Village website, under 'Arts & Crafts' in the Local Services directory of the website. If you are interested you can find out more about us on the website, or you can email me at brightwellartclub@gmail.com.

Veronica Wood, Administrator

Corn Exchange Wallingford

The planning appeal for building eight residential units abutting the Corn Exchange has been turned down by the Inspector who has recognised the importance of the venue to the local community for its social and economic benefits. It gives us an assurance for the immediate future but at a cost - this legal battle has cost £83,000 in professional fees which had to come from reserves as the theatre has been closed for much of the year.

The management of the Corn Exchange would especially like to thank members, volunteers and supporters for their active support throughout this process. We can't wait to welcome you all back to our wonderful theatre.

John Evans

Donation to NHS

The Villager makes a small surplus each year from our advertising. Some of it has to be kept for meeting future printing costs and some goes to good causes in the community (like the new a/v equipment in the village hall). During the Covid pandemic we have all been in admiration of the hard work and commitment of NHS workers looking after Covid patients and so the Committee decided to donate £500 to help make their lives easier. This has been sent to the Oxford JR hospital to pay for the welfare care of frontline staff on the wards – such as providing teatime treats, fruit and snack packs to eat at their rest pods when they have not had time to take off their PPE in a break and go to the canteen. We have heard that this kind of support makes a real difference to the hard-pressed staff there and couldn't be done without our help.

If anyone would like to make their own donation, cheques can be made to Oxford Hospitals Charity, Unipart House Business Centre, Oxford, OX4 2PGI or contact us at thevillagerbcs@gmail.com and we can give you the name of the person at the JR we dealt with. More general information about how the money from donations gets spent can also be seen at www.hospitalcharity.co.uk.

The Villager Committee

Weather report

The rainfall recorded at Highlands farm was 87.5mm in January and 36.8mm in February. January was a very wet month with the general area having around 25% above the long term 1981–2010 average. This led to flood flows in the Thames to be their highest locally since 2014 with the footpath by the river being around thigh depth and unpassable for a couple of weeks or more. February, on the other hand, was drier than average.

Taking winter as a whole it has been about average for this area but with some local variations showing up on the Met Office site with a noticeably dry area centred around Newbury! Temperatures were about average although sunshine was below average. No wonder we are looking forward to a sunnier spring.

Steve Capel-Davies (Environment Group)

VILLAGE DIARY

April

3	The Great House Hunt - in support of Brightwell Supporting Refugees (start/finish by the phone box gallery)		10-3pm
4	Easter family service	St Agatha's	9.30am

May

22	Save the Children Plant Sale	The Square	10am
22-24	Artweeks	VH	10-5.30pm

Advance Notice

Fri 25 June	Donkathon sets off from North Moreton
Sat 10 & Sun 11 July	English Wine and Food Festival at Brightwell Vineyard
Sat 4 & Sun 5 July	Colour and Clay exhibition in St Agatha's Church
Mon 30 August	Church Fair at Brightwell Manor
Sat 11 September	Village Fete in Sotwell House

Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

Grey bins	Thursdays 1, 15, 29 April and 13, 27 May
Green (& brown) bins	Friday 9 , Thursday 22 April and Friday 7 , Thursday 20 May (extra brown 20 May)

Village website

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