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Editorial

It's beginning to feel a lot like Christmas..... Earlier into the shops this year I think, perhaps because we missed out on much of it last year due to Covid restrictions. Hopefully, we will have a near-normal Christmas this year with family and friends. By the number of events taking place in the village, it looks like you think so too.

There is lots of information in this *Villager* on what's on. Turn to the centre pages for dates of Christmas church services and carols along with the shop and post office opening hours over the festive season and a Strictly Finals night in the village hall on the 18th. Earlier, on the first Saturday in December, the popular Art club Exhibition in the village hall returns (see page 4) and outside around the war memorial, BSR are running their Christmas Street Market again - an opportunity to purchase Christmas gifts and stock up with goodies, and donate to charity at the same time. The Advent window trail is also back (thank you Kat Southwell for our cover image).

You can read about what's going on at the Red Lion over Christmas and their opening times on pages 17 and 18. What a different Christmas it is for them. After a very difficult year, it's really good to see that our pub has not only survived, thanks to your support and also the commitment of Corinne and Mouse to keep going against the odds, but also has some exciting plans for the new year.

To round things off, our traditional Wassail! will take place again this year, making its way through Brightwell from Little Martins to the Red Lion with music, dance, drama and fireworks along the way (see pages 22-23). If you have never gone along, do join them on the afternoon of 8 January to take part in some truly mad activities and a lot of fun.

But this issue is not all about Christmas. Inserted between the pages you will find a questionnaire on the future of your village hall. It's very important that you give your view on how you would like to see it developed in the future. It is an important community resource, the main large indoor space we have for recreation and meetings, so it needs careful consideration to get the maximum benefit for all of us. Also, we have an interesting article on a hidden treasure in the village – the organ in St Agatha's - and a lovely poem by Tony Isaacs.

So, lots to read about and enjoy I hope.

Happy Christmas!

Helen Connor

Thank you, BcS and beyond

Trevor and I would like to thank everyone for all the support we have had since Max and Francis were injured in a road accident. We have had wonderful cards, emails, messages of support, cakes and meals, flowers, a wonderful pottery ghost and especially prayers.

Max, our son, is home and staying in Brightwell so he can visit Francis, age 7, daily. He is in the JR hospital with his mum. Francis is having lots of intensive therapy - speech and language, physiotherapy, play therapy and school! He is doing well, little by little.

A thank you to all the people who helped at the scene of the accident and are following the family progress

Jennie Pozzoni

Update: We are so pleased to say that Francis left the JR hospital on 12 November and returned to his home in South London. I think he was very pleased to see Margherito the cat! Max is back in London too and hopefully back to work soon.

Community Association

AGM October 2021

Many thanks to everyone who joined us at the AGM on 25 October. We are delighted that Caroline Annets, Bill Horsfield, Lynn Burrige, Charlotte and Mike Woods, and Sam and Hannah Rees were all happy to be re-elected. Our Chairman (James Davys) and Treasurer Tom Rogerson were re-elected also. We are also pleased that Robert Lidstone and Tony Guntrip have joined us and Jim Sanger has kindly agreed to be Honorary Auditor again this year.

2021

The Community Association is still committed to running our normal programme of charitable events next year if government restrictions and guidelines will allow us to do so. More details will follow in the next edition of *The Villager*.

Christmas Hampers

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

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

James Davys, Chairman

BRIGHTWELL ART CLUB
ANNUAL EXHIBITION
SATURDAY DECEMBER 4TH
10 am - 1 pm



BRIGHTWELL-CUM-SOTWELL
VILLAGE HALL



CHARITY STALLS

ART CARDS

REFRESHMENTS

RAFFLE

FREE ADMISSION



Stewart village hall

Have your say

I hope you have already seen the questionnaire delivered to you along with this copy of *The Villager*. As many of you know, for some time now, the Trustees of the Stewart village hall have been looking at how we can maintain and improve the hall to ensure it meets your needs in the future. We hope to create a warm and welcoming venue with multipurpose rooms that can be hired both individually and together, all of them with access to kitchen and toilet facilities.

As with many things, Covid has caused frustrating delays with this project but has given us time to reflect on the best way forward. As the village grows and its demographics change, it is vital that we have your input on what you want from your village hall. So please take this opportunity to have your say. Every member of your household is invited to complete the survey online at <https://stewartvillagehall.org.uk/survey-november-21>.

If you would like more paper copies of the survey, these can be picked up from the hall, the village shop or the Red Lion. Completed questionnaires can be popped into the mailbox at the rear of the hall.

Financial results

Looking back briefly, the Trustees would like to share the results of the financial year 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021.

We had assumed that the year would continue with normal events, activities, groups and clubs supporting the hall, and our income would remain steady. When the hall had to close for several months and then reopen with limited capacity we were extremely concerned, as it could have been devastating financially. However, we were lucky enough to be eligible for government support grants which were a lifeline for us.

Our total income was £24,382 and expenditure £17,425, meaning we ended the financial year with a credit balance of £6,958.

We are delighted to see our regular users back in the hall now and we have welcomed new users and groups. The hall is very important as a village facility, a meeting place, a hub for groups and parties and an iconic building with its roots going back to 1870 when it opened as the village school.

Our focus for this year is on maintaining the hall, ensuring all our users have everything they need and, crucially, working tirelessly on the forthcoming refurbishment project to secure the future of the hall for many years to come.

Your input and involvement in this project are vital, so again I ask you to complete the survey and provide us with the information we need to work towards a refurbished hall you will be delighted with.

Annette Kilworth
[_www.stewartvillagehall.org.uk](http://www.stewartvillagehall.org.uk)

Save the Children

As usual, the Save the Children Christmas Trees will be put up in the Square in the early part of December together with a 'window' in the Advent Window Trail. Father Christmas (with his elves) has promised to try once again to stop off in the Square on Christmas Eve, we hope all of the above will get you into the Christmas Spirit.

On that note, our local branch of Save the Children is focusing this year's Christmas's fundraising on Afghanistan. It is undescrivable the plight of the children in this part of the world. Save the Children, along with many other charities, are helping to deliver humanitarian aid, healthcare and 'hope' in the most difficult of circumstances.

We hope our efforts in helping to bring Christmas to Brightwell-cum-Sotwell will give pleasure and help us to raise as much money as possible for the Afghan children in these desperate times.

Details on how you can give will be on posters by the Christmas Trees and on the Facebook page.

Happy Christmas & best wishes for 2022

Celia Collett

A knock at the door

Our roots nurture wings
To venture on life's flight,
To fly away in order to return.

Now sharp stars glint the season
As travellers wend back
To family hearth-side and tree,
Trimmed and dressed in sparkling finery.

The warmth of welcome embrace,
Loved faces and familiar voices,
So much part of us that
The distance of separation
Evaporates in a touch.

We are the blessed,
We are the fortunate ones
As we gather at the table
To celebrate yuletide and toast
To good health and future happiness.

What if life's flight took us
In fear to a distant shore,
In a strange world where
Nothing was warm, nothing familiar
And we shivered in all that we stood in?

Should there be a knock at the door
Could we make room for this lonely traveller,
Could we find a place at our table?
Will we be home to this cold caller?

Tony Vincent Isaacs



Brightwell Supporting Refugees

'Educate, inform and entertain...' was Lord Reith's mission for the BBC. Robert Seatter followed that mantra to the letter, when he delivered a dazzling performance at our October talk. Romping through a hundred years of Auntie's greatest hits, from Muffin the Mule to the Coronation, to The Archers and Live Aid, it soon became clear why the BBC represents the heart of the nation. It also became clear why Robert is Head of History at the BBC. He managed to distil a heady cocktail of major events, cultural icons and landmark radio and TV programmes into a thoroughly memorable 40 minutes – with a quiz to follow, just to make sure we had all been paying attention, we had! Thanks to Robert for an electric evening (and thanks to John Burdass too for his continuing technical support at these talks).

November's event was a screening of the BAFTA-winning documentary, *For Sama*, which follows the story of a young mother, who falls in love, has a baby and then has to survive in Aleppo under siege during Syria's civil war. Afraa Hashem, a teacher who is a key character in the film, talked about her involvement in the film after the screening.

On Saturday 4 December we will be holding BSR's Christmas Market next door to the War Memorial. This was a huge success last year. It's an opportunity to buy stocking fillers, cakes, jars of goodies and to enjoy a glass of mulled wine... And the proceeds all go towards helping refugees.

We continue to be amazed by the generosity of our village. It means we have been able to donate £1,500 to Asylum Welcome to help refugees from Afghanistan who are living in Oxfordshire. We will be donating £2,000 to the Big Give at the end of this year. We continue to support the Hope School in Jordan (last month we donated £1,100 to support humanitarian needs and to pay for the teacher's salaries till April 22).

We want to be able to continue to fund two teacher's salaries for the rest of next year from money raised from our monthly events that we hope you will continue to support in 2022. Thank you to everyone who has helped support and organise these events.

David Dugan & the BSR team

Parish Council News

Community Heating Project

The Parish Council recently had a meeting with the steering group who are assessing the possibility of obtaining a government grant, to commission consultants to look into the feasibility of a community green energy project. This would probably use ground source heat pumps and other low carbon energy sources. The PC is supporting this study effort on the basis it will be 100% grant funded.

Traffic Management

We are looking into ways of improving traffic management particularly at Sires Hill and Shillingford. The PC has written to OCC highways formally requesting a reduction of the speed limit on Shillingford Road from 60 to 50mph. The initial response from OCC appears positive. Once we have change underway on this first request, we will be asking for a reduction of speed limit on Sires Hill together with other traffic calming measures. Discussions with the Highways Authority continue on this matter

Fallen Trees and Damage to Recreational Equipment

Residents have kindly reported fallen trees and equipment damage on Facebook during the recent storms but please could we request also that you let the Parish Council Office know by logging on to our email address bcsparishcouncil@googlemail.com. This will allow us to make the area safe as quickly as possible.

Review of the Neighbourhood Plan

The Parish Council will be reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan over the coming six months. The reason for the update is to produce a Design Code and strengthen our environmental policies. A Design Code would allow the parish council to have more of a say regarding the style and size of new buildings. We feel that this would be welcome following comments from villagers. The Government has also published a new environmental policy since our plan was published. This allows for additional green measures to be written into our plan that we could not include last time.

It may only be four years since the plan was published but an update will also give our revised plan more weight to fight off unwanted speculative development. We have spoken with SODC and an independent planning consultant, both are confident that we would not need to allocate any

additional new housing beyond those houses that are already in the plan. Little Martins proceeded as planned and there are several developments in the current plan still to be built. This should continue to give us protection against the raft of potential developments that could come our way without protection. The Design Code will help us to guide those one-off developments that take place in the village, often new houses replacing a bungalow or similar property. If you would like to find out more, we will be holding a public meeting on Wednesday 12 January at 7pm in the Village Hall. Everyone is welcome.

James Davys

Brightwell Toddlers

We are having so much fun at Toddlers - lots of lovely families and smiling faces!

We have also had some special guests come along recently to entertain our little ones which has been brilliant. We have even managed to fit in some crafting, storytelling and singing as well!



Thank you so much to everyone who helps out at the sessions and also to our kind volunteers - we couldn't do it without you!

If you would like to come along we meet in the village hall on Thursday mornings (term-time only) 9:15-11am. Ages 0-4yrs, £2.50/family.

We would also welcome any volunteers who could help us set up, make hot drinks and/or do an activity with the children eg. craft, storytelling, singing etc. Please get in touch if you are interested! Email brightwelltoddlers@gmail.com.

The Vicar writes...

Last year we experienced a Christmas like no other as many families were forced to celebrate separately with only Zoom to share the festivities. Thanks to the vaccine rollout and availability of testing, this year we hope to see our loved ones in the flesh in a far more relaxed and intimate manner. This itself is a metaphor for Christmas.

When God came to Earth in the flesh as a human, our relationship with Him changed forever. No longer was God remote and only speaking through certain angels and prophets who had all the right passwords and a reliable connection. The stable in Bethlehem opened access to all, from the poorest shepherds to the wise magi. Now humanity meets our maker face to face. God incarnate literally means 'in the flesh'. Jesus shows us exactly what God is like - he said '*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*' (John 14:9). And through his teaching and example, he shows us the way to live.

If you think God's way is a strict set of rules that are impossible to follow, think again. Jesus says: '*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*' (Matthew 11:28-30). Instead, God welcomes us into an intimate relationship, as we share with our closest family. We are invited to sit at his table for a banquet in heaven. As with any invitation, there is an RSVP. So how will you respond?

Opportunities to worship will be as our usual format, but we advise all who attend to wrap up warm due to increased ventilation requirements and to wear a mask if possible as there will be singing. The dates of Christmas church services and carols are given overleaf (on page 12).

May God bless you and your family this Christmas.

The Rev Kevin Beer

Email: teamvicar@wallingfordcofe.org.uk

The Advent window trail is back

From 1-24 December, finishing at the crib service in St Agatha's, you can look out for windows decorated by residents with a Christmas theme. To find a map go to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/bcsadventwindowtrail>.

Christmas church services and carols

Festival of Christmas Carols for Choir and Audience

Saturday 11 December - Cranford Choral Society, Saturday 11 December at 7.30pm at St Mary's Church, Cholsey

Lidl's Car Park

Sunday 12 December 5.30 & 7pm CTWA Drive in Carol Service
Booking info www.facebook.com/groups/CTinWA

Brightwell Free Church

Saturday 18 December Carol Service commencing 6pm

St Agatha's Brightwell

Sunday 19 December 6pm Christmas Carol Service
Christmas Eve, 24 Dec 4.30pm Crib Service (the end of the Advent trail)
Christmas Day, 25 Dec 9.30am Christmas Service
Sunday 2 January 9.30am Epiphany Service

St James' Sotwell

Friday 24 December 11.30pm Midnight Communion
Sunday 30 January 4pm Candlemas Christingle (ending the Christmas season)

St Mary Magdalene, Crowmarsh

Sunday 26 December 11am Joint Service

BSR Christmas Market

Saturday 4 December from 10-1pm around the War Memorial



Do some Christmas shopping – chutneys, jams, crafts, cookies, Xmas puddings, mistletoe – order wreaths and cakes and enjoy a mince pie with mulled wine



Village shop and post office

Christmas is coming to your local community shop and post office. We have tempting Christmas goodies and gifts, many from local suppliers. Please do come and see what we have to offer.

Below are our Christmas opening times for both the shop and the post office:

Fri 24 December, Christmas Eve	- 9am-1pm
Sat 25- Tues 28 December	- closed
Wed 29 December	- 9am-5.30pm
Thurs 30 December	- 9am-5.30pm
Fri 31 December	- 9am-1pm
Sat 1- Mon 3 Jan	- closed

Latest recommended UK posting dates - Saturday 18 December for 2nd class, Tuesday 21 December for 1st class mail, Thursday 23 December for special delivery guaranteed. More details on international destinations and other services can be found in a leaflet at the post office.

Calling all Strictly fans



Come along to the village hall on Saturday 18 December to watch the Strictly Come Dancing Final on the big screen.

We will watch the show live and vote for our favourite to win - will our results match the judges scores? Doors open

at 6pm so you have plenty time to arrive and get settled, treat yourself to a glass of fizz from the cash bar and enjoy some delicious nibbles before the show starts.

Tickets from the Village Stores: Adults - £5: Children, up to 16 - £2.50, under 10 – free (all children must be accompanied by an adult).

Staniland's organ in St Agatha's church

Embedded in the village for the last 118 years – just sitting quietly in its own space most of the time but ready to come to life at the touch of a switch when called upon – there is a quite remarkable instrument. Many visitors come to St Agatha's Church, although covid times have been a bit of an exception. Some are just casual visitors, interested in the church's long history, but most are attending the various services and special events throughout a church's year. Hymns and anthems are played on the organ, people sing along, concerts are held to great applause– and the organ is always there, sometimes in a starring role but generally as an accompanying background, solid and supporting, and not usually given much thought. Time maybe for some enlightenment about what makes our church organ just a bit special?

In 2005 the organ was listed as Grade II by the British Institute of Organ Studies (BIOS). This award is for 'organs of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them'. A small un-showy plate between the upper and lower manuals – keyboards to the uninitiated - simply says 'G Staniland – Builder'. We already knew this to be George Staniland, that the family had a grocer's shop in Wallingford and, unlikely as it seems looking at the size of the organ, somehow it had actually been built in the store-room at the back of the shop. The commemorative brass plate is dated 1903 but the BIOS report and a complete inspection carried out in 2019 suggest the organ to be about 150 years old.

Now I must digress a little. On a recent visit to see his family's past residences and guided round by Chris Baines, Andrew Wells visited both of our churches. The Wells family had played a big part in local affairs. Andrew is an organist and in St Agatha's, Chris and I listened as Andrew played the same music, in the same church, and on the same organ as had been played in the late 1800s and early 1900s for some of his ancestors' weddings and funerals. It was quite a moving experience. Impressed by the quality of the Staniland organ and how it seemed to have come into being, Andrew – being Andrew - did more research! So now we know that the organ is indeed a bit older than the brass dedication plate of 1903 suggests. Old newspaper reports and articles in the Berks & Oxon Advertiser unearthed by Andrew, and added to by our organ records and census details, chronicle the story.

George Staniland was born in Abingdon in 1824. In 1844 he married Caroline Alice Wells in St Agatha's. He was an 'Organ & Pianoforte Tuner'. (Caroline Alice, of course, links into Andrew's family tree). They lived on Boar Street in Abingdon and had 7 children according to census records.

A letter to the B&O Advertiser written after George Staniland's death in 1895 by a friend, R.T. Clarke, tells how George had started building the pipe organ in Abingdon in 1858. By 1871 he had moved to Wallingford with his family as 'Grocer & Dealer' with a shop in St Martin's Street and the part-built organ stored 'in the loft over the Lion gateway in St Martin's Street'. The Red Lion, demolished in 1940, seems to have been on the corner where Waitrose currently sits and presumably had a passageway through to a stabling yard. When a storeroom had been built at the back of his grocery store, George's organ project moved in. From census details, it appears the grocer's shop was roughly where Wallingford Tea & Coffee is now and next door to The Eight Bells pub on the corner of St Martins Street and Church Lane.

Mr Clarke's letter describes how the organ structure grew and gives some detail about the couplers, pipes and stops. The pedal board was modelled on the Radley College organ which was under George's care. Sometime in the decade to 1881, George and Caroline with daughter Martha (who was a music teacher) and, according to R.T. Clarke, the unfinished organ moved to Staines while one of George's sons, Charles, took over the 'Grocery & Provision Merchants' in Wallingford.

What happened next? To be continued in next month's issue

Olive Sutcliffe

theWI INSPIRING WOMEN Brightwell-cum-Sotwell

We welcomed new members and visitors to our meetings in the village hall in October and November. Lizzie Rowe, an art historian and teacher, spoke to us on the subject of *Monet and Impressionism*. She had some beautiful images to show in a very interesting and enjoyable talk. Our November meeting was about being crafty for Christmas and members got stuck in to making lovely decorations and cards.

In December we are welcoming Karina Jordan for a ukulele workshop – a fun evening. If anyone would like to come along with or without a ukulele then let us know by emailing brightwellcumshotwellwi@gmail.com, find us on Facebook, or ring our President Anne Brooker on 835109.



Next year is the Centenary of Brightwell & Sotwell Women's Institute, as it was known when established in 1922. Life for women then was very different from now but the WI has a very important role still for women today. We will be celebrating the anniversary and also looking back at the achievements of our WI over the last 100 years – watch this space!

Helen Connor, Secretary

FOBS Lottery

YOUR SCHOOL LOTTERY

WIN CHRISTMAS

WIN

HUGE FOOD HAMPER

LUXURY CHRISTMAS TREE

TABLE & TREE DECORATIONS

FESTIVE DOOR WREATH

BUBBLY & CHOCOLATE

LIGHTS, CANDLES & STOCKINGS

- Give a little back by supporting our lottery
- Help boost school fundraising
- Tickets cost just £1 a week
- Weekly cash prizes, up to £25,000

To play now, go to:
www.yourschoollottery.co.uk
and search for: Brightwell

Supporters must be 16 years of age or older. Offer ends 11th Dec 2021. Terms and conditions apply (see website).

Friends of Brightwell school (FOBS) have signed up to a national organisation which runs a lottery, open to anyone. Some of the money raised from ticket sales goes into a local prize pot which one of the local ticket holders wins. A small amount raised through ticket sales also comes back to us (Friends of Brightwell School). We are the registered charity PTA for the school. Tickets are purchased directly from the school lottery website.

Sarah Green

The Red Lion

Here at The Red Lion, we are busy starting to prepare for the festive season and also planning our New Year's Eve 'Eve' party. Many of you may have seen our Christmas menu but if you have not, please visit our new website www.redlionbcs.co.uk, click on menus and then Christmas menu.

We have various dates throughout December that lunch and dinner are available so if you want to book in, please contact us for details. If you want to visit the pub during December and don't want to have the set menu, we will have a smaller menu available.

An important date for your diary for anyone with little ones at home or visiting is Tuesday 21 December as we are very lucky that Father Christmas will make an early visit to us to say hello to all the girls and boys. Although the exact timing has not been confirmed by the big man himself just yet, it will be early evening to ensure all the Mums and Dads have time to get home from work to get everyone ready for a special visit to the pub. If you would like to come along, it would be really helpful for Santa to know who is coming to ensure there is a little gift for everyone so call us to book in and we will confirm the timings as soon as possible.

Christmas and New Year opening hours

Over the Christmas week, our opening hours will vary as we are planning on spending time with our families and although these may change, these are the dates as we see them at the moment.

Up to 23 December - business as usual

Christmas Eve 12-3pm & 6-close

Christmas Day 11-2pm **drinks only**

Boxing Day 11-6pm (bacon baps, pigs in blanket baps and other snack type items available)

27 & 28 Dec Closed

29 Dec 12-3pm & 6-10pm

30 Dec 12-3pm & 6-close (New Year's Eve 'Eve' party)

31 Dec 12-4.30pm

1 Jan 10.30-4pm (New Year's Day breakfast served from 10.30am)

2 Jan Open but timings and menu TBC

3 & 4 Jan Closed

Please note, from Christmas Eve through to early January, a limited lunch & supper menu will be served. Food may not be served on all days but we will update you all as much as possible on the village website and our FB page.

New Year's Eve 'Eve' Party

On 30 December, we will continue with the long tradition of hosting New Year's Eve 'Eve'! This year the theme is 'Rum & Reggae' and although fancy dress is optional it is highly encouraged, so dust off that wild Caribbean shirt from the wardrobe or think outside the box (someone is coming as the Jamaican flagpole), get those dancing shoes on and come on down to party the night away. This will be our first New Year's party since taking over and we would like everyone who has supported us since Day 1 to be there. Without the villagers' support, the pub simply wouldn't have survived this pandemic so please do come along. We have a disco booked, there will be a special rum punch on the bar and we will be open until late celebrating the New Year albeit 24 hours early! If you have recently moved to the village and not heard of this, come and check it out as apparently we are the place to be on December 30th!! You will see from the opening hours that we are closed New Year's Eve in the evening. We have decided to not ask anyone to work but to go and enjoy it with their family and friends and for us to have the night off!

Closure for refurb

When we get into January, the pub will be shutting for a small period of time. We have refurbishment work to do and we will keep you posted with dates but I'd imagine the pub will be shut for just under 2 weeks. We will open in time for our Burns Night Supper so please save the date, Saturday 29 January and once we have more information about the evening, we will be sure to let you know. Burns Night was our first night of opening back in 2020 and we hope to repeat it all over again as it was such a lovely evening enjoyed by many.

Big Thank You

Finally before I finish, I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported us especially this last year whether it be ordering one of our takeaways, coming for dinner or just popping in for a drink. It is scary how many pubs are still shutting down that haven't survived these last 2 years and we've not only survived it, but we have come out the other side and hope it can continue for many years to come - but we can only do that if you continue to support your local!

Corinne, Mouse and Ruby xx

The Environment Group

Swan Stream and Wood Project

Fine weather marked the opening of the stream on 26 September and we were pleased that Carol Baxter was able to attend in celebration of Jim Baxter's work.

The stream came into its own during a period of heavy rain in October when the road drain was blocked. A hastily dug relief channel was formed connecting the road to the top end of the stream giving time to rod out the drains and clear the system. An interesting discovery made during this exercise was the unearthing of several very large stag beetle larvae in the pile of wood chippings. They look a bit scary as they are the size of a large thumb and resemble a bloated maggot! It is hoped they and any others in the pile will hatch next year – look out for snapping jaws.

By the time you read this we should have planted most of the remaining trees and shrubs in the woodland area with local volunteers.

Millennium Wood

I am pleased to say that a group of volunteers arranged by James Davys spent a day clearing the very overgrown central area so it is now much more accessible. A couple of diseased ash trees were also removed.

Weather

The rainfall recorded at Highlands farm was 30.7mm and 106.2mm in September and October respectively with 29mm falling on one day, 2 October. These reflect the values over the wider area which, for September are between 50–75% of the 1981 – 2010 average and October 125–150%. Both months were warmer than average with September being the equal third warmest since 1884.

Village Fete

The group had a small stand at the fete and I am pleased to say that several people put their names down to help with running the group. We are planning on having our first in-person meeting for many months to discuss matters in the near future and come up with plans to help our environment.

Steve Capel-Davies

FA Cup 150

Brightwell cum Sotwell resident Phil Annets has self-published '*FA Cup 150*', a compendium of facts, stats and Top 150 lists to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the oldest knockout competition in the world, the FA Cup, taking place this coming 2021/22 season.

Phil runs a popular blog and twitter account called **@FACupFactfile** and has established himself as the go-to person for FA Cup facts and stats having occupied multiple pages in the last six FA Cup Final programmes, writing a regular column in the national *Non-League Paper*, and being a regular contributor to national press, on-line blogs, radio shows and podcasts covering the FA Cup.

'*FA Cup 150*' has been described as being more than just a dry book of facts, rather it is considered a 'page-turner' and one which covers facts, stats and achievements of small town and village clubs just as much as it does the big names of the Premier League. It has endorsements from well-known figures in the world of football, with Henry Winter (Chief Sports Writer at *The Times*), John Murray (Senior football correspondent on *BBC Five Live*) and Steve Wilson (TV football commentator on shows such as *Match of the Day*) all providing bespoke quotes included in the book.

'*FA Cup 150*' costs £15 (great value at £1 per decade) and can be purchased on-line on Amazon or via facupfactfile.co.uk/shop. Villagers, however, can acquire copies with free delivery by contacting Phil on 07805 748933 or via email at phil@facupfactfile.co.uk. ('*FA Cup 150*' is also planned to be available in the Village Stores in the run-up to Christmas and ahead of the FA Cup 3rd Round scheduled for early January).

Phil Annets

Wallingford Theatre Club

Do you love live theatre? Would you like to share your passion with other like-minded folk? Then you may be just the person to help Wallingford Theatre Club get going again after lockdown.

Wallingford Theatre Club is keen to get started again after its enforced inactivity because of Covid but finds itself without someone to organise the

purchase of group tickets from various theatres, keep an eye out for and select plays and theatres that would be suitable for members and liaise with the box offices.

The Club, which has members across the whole Wallingford area, including Didcot, exists to organise coach trips to various theatres to watch live performances and share the experience with others. Club members have visited the Richmond Theatre and the Orange Tree in Richmond as well as theatres in London and Birmingham.

The reward? The satisfaction of enabling fellow drama enthusiasts to visit theatres and see plays that they might not see otherwise. There is also a modest honorarium to cover out of pocket expenses.

If you are interested and think you could help, please get in touch with the Theatre Club chairperson, Sue White (sueandterrywhite@ntlworld.com) or telephone Sue on 01491 200978, to find more details of what is involved.

Sue White

Festival of Christmas Carols for Choir and Audience

Cranford Choral Society is holding its annual Christmas Festival on Saturday 11 December at 7.30pm at St Mary's Church, Cholsey, and everyone from Brightwell is welcome!

The festival will include a mix of traditional and more unusual (but beautiful) Christmas carols, plus a selection of Handel's Choruses. We hope it will appeal to all ages and musical tastes.

Cranford has long been popular with people from Brightwell. Roy Thorpe, who died earlier this year, sang with the choir and was Treasurer for many years. His great service, commitment and friendship will be remembered at the festival by fellow chorister Sue Hunt.

Do come along to sing or listen. It's a great way to feel the Christmas spirit! Tickets are available from www.cranfordchoral.org.uk at £10 for adults. Children are free.

Hugh Roderick

Wassail!

As long as we don't get locked down again, we hope to have a big Wassail this New Year. Our last perambulation around the village was January 2020 when we wassailed the trees in Mackney. Before we set off, we were treated to a fabulous Mummers' play in the splendid Small's House Barn with music from the wassail band The Shady Wilcox Experience and three local Morris sides. Our apples must have missed the 2020 wassail (cancelled as we entered the second national lockdown); this year's harvest being way down on the previous year.



We rotate the route between our three villages (Brightwell, Sotwell and Mackney). This year it is the turn for us to visit Brightwell. **The 2022 Wassail will start at 3.00 pm on Sunday 9 January.** The parish will have been handed over the new open space at Little Martins by this day so, to celebrate this, we will meet in the meadow by the stones. At Little Martins Meadow we will plant some fruit trees and an English oak to mark the start of HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

We will then set off on our walk, wassailing several orchards along Brightwell Street including Brightwell Manor before finishing at 5 pm at the Red Lion. Please do bring along anything that makes a noise. Wassailing is about waking the fruit trees up after their winter sleep. Whistles, horns, drums all very welcome. Don't forget to dress up as well. People from Brightwell wear something gold, those from Sotwell red and/or green and if you are from Mackney, wear something blue. We will be seeing which part of the parish can make the most noise!



We are delighted that Armaleggan Morris will be joining us - they will dance and play throughout the afternoon. No Wassail would be complete without them. This year we will also be treated to that most traditional of English spectacles – belly dancing! Brightwell's very own Julie Bellyfire and her side of dancers will be performing,

climaxing with a fire dance outside the pub accompanied by Harry Gow on the bagpipes! Somewhere along our way we will also be treated to the annual parish Mummer's Play specially written for the event. We will of course crown the Wassail King and Queen and serve up the Wassail cider punch made to the ancient village recipe. The day will finish in the Red Lion. A new Grand Wassail Master will also be appointed as Robert Field who has led the Wassail for almost a decade stands down and his apprentice Marcus Harris takes on the ancient role.

For those of you who have not been on a Brightwell cum Sotwell Wassail before it really is a fabulous and completely bonkers day. It is also the largest processional Wassail in England, so put the date in your diary and help keep this tradition alive. It is noisy – so a little warning. We will have a short fireworks display at 4.45 pm and guns will be fired throughout the event.

Jason Debney

In Brief - round and about

Wallingford Country Market

Open on Friday mornings in St. Mary-le-More Church (Market Place), between 9.30 am - 12 noon. Christmas orders can be placed for seasonal and other home baked goods. Last market for 2021 will be Friday 17 December, but orders can be placed for delivery the following week by arrangement with the producer. We return after the Christmas break on Friday 14 January 2022.

It's Panto time again

Booking is now open for *Sleeping Beauty*, the ever-popular French fairy-tale performed by the Sinodun Players at the Corn Exchange Wallingford. Opening on Friday 14 January, it runs until Saturday 29 January. Twelve evening performances (Tuesday to Friday at 7:30pm and Saturdays at 6:30pm) and three matinees (Saturdays at 2pm). Tickets £12 (adults-Tuesday to Thursday), £15 (adults (Friday, Saturday), £8 (under 16s)

Booking online at www.cornexchange.org.uk.

OSJ at Dorchester Abbey

Hallelujah, it's time for Handel's Messiah! Don't miss this festive favourite, 7pm 18 December. Other concerts include Britten's Ceremony of Carols on 11 December and a New Year's Eve Concert at 6pm on 31 December. Tickets and more details at osj.org.uk.

VILLAGE DIARY

See page 12 for church services and carols

December

4	Brightwell Art Club Annual Exhibition	VH	10-1pm
4	BSR's Christmas Street Market	Around the War Memorial	10-1pm
14	WI Meeting – Ukulele Workshop	VH	7.30pm
18	Strictly Come dancing Final	VH	Doors open at 6pm
21	Father Christmas visits Red Lion early evening		
30	New Year's Eve 'Eve' party	Red Lion	

January

9	Wassail!	Starts at Little Martins Red Lion	3pm 5pm
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Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

Grey bins	9 and 23 Dec, 10* and 21* Jan
Green (& brown) bins	2 and 16 Dec, 4* , 15* and 27 Jan
* changed dates due to holidays	

Village website

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