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Editorial

*Mature Autumn mellowed by seasons gone and finished,
paints the land with leaves, gold, brown and burnished*

*November mists creep by and muffle sound and heavy dew
drips down from branch to ground*

*The birds sing 'bye and wing their way to warmer climes.
More sense to go than stay and bear these times*

*But men remain, though chilled, are of good cheer as they
look forward to Christmas and the New Year.*

(Anon)

This poem reflects well I feel the current season, one that I love here in the village because of the colours in the trees and hedgerows. The recent cold snap has heralded in winter a little earlier than usual, and our cover picture from local artist Marion Symes introduces us to the Christmas season. Not that some of you need much introduction. A lot of activity is being planned in the village – from the traditional carols and Christmas services (see page 12) to a New Year's Eve party in the village hall, re-establishing a past tradition, see advert on page 9. A new event will be the Wassail Dance on Saturday 6 January, a good old fashioned barn dance which follows the Wassail procession and activities in the afternoon (more details on page 13-14). The Christmas menu is about to start being served at the Red Lion and will continue till the 23rd so get along and book a table.

If you've been out and about lately you might have seen some of the Brightwell Rocks that have been hidden for children to find. Thank you Kathy Marshall for bringing to Brightwell and Sotwell the idea of painting stones and hiding them for children to find and re-hide. You can see many of these posted on the Facebook page 'Brightwell Rocks'. It's been great fun and some of them are real beauties.

Have you been down to the War Memorial? You will see alongside the poppy wreaths on the memorial a ring of ceramic poppies made by the school for each of the villagers who gave their life in WW1 and 2. Next year we will be commemorating the centenary of the end of WW1 with a number of planned activities. Read about this on page 17.

I hope you all have a happy Christmas and find peace and happiness in the New Year.

Helen Connor

Community Association

AGM

Many thanks to everyone who attended our AGM on 26 September. Our treasurer Tom was pleased to be able to report that £4,514 was distributed to various clubs and charities in the village. We also provided hampers for the elderly in the village, with the generous support of the Fairthorne Trust.

We would like to record our sincere thanks to Jim and Madeline Sanger, who again this year lent us their lovely garden for the fete.

Two hard working members of our team, Sarah Jackson and Annette Kilworth have resigned. We will miss the enthusiasm and commitment that they brought to our committee. We are delighted that Caroline Annets, Bill Horsfield, Claire Foulon, John Burdass, Lynn Burrige and Charlotte and Mike Woods were all happy to be re-elected. Our chairman, James Davys, along with our treasurer, Tom Rogerson, and secretary, Andy Stevens, were also re-elected. Jim Sanger has kindly agreed to be auditor again this year.

Fun Run – 24 September 2017

Once again we were lucky with the weather for our third 5K Fun Run. Congratulations to everybody who took part and thank you to those who came along and supported them. I would also like to thank Charlotte and Mike Woods and Caroline Annets who worked tirelessly to make it such a success.

We were fortunate to get sponsorship from a number of local businesses and we are grateful to them and also to the Island Farm Donkey Sanctuary who allowed us to hold the event at their premises. I would also like to acknowledge the support that we had from the Didcot Running Group who gave us lots of advice and helped with the marshalling on the day.

The committee would like to extend the Fun Run to a 10K race (as well as keeping the 5K version) as this would attract more athletes and generate more income for our good causes. This would involve more marshalling and therefore more volunteers. The date for this event is **Sunday 23 September** next year. Please telephone me if you would be interested in helping us in this new venture.

Christmas Hampers

The Community Association is pleased to provide a Christmas hamper for the senior residents of the village. If you know of anyone over the age of 70,

whom you believe does not currently receive a hamper but would appreciate one, please telephone me on 01491 834195.

Dates for 2018:

Saturday 24 February

Race Night at the Pavilion (in conjunction with the Scout Group)

Saturday 10 March

Quiz Night at the village hall

Saturday 19 May

Safari Supper (in conjunction with the PCC)

Saturday 7 July

Village fete at Sotwell House

Sunday 23 September

Fun Run

Tuesday 25 September

AGM

James Davys

The Village Stores

It's been a busy few months for the village stores with the introduction of the new EPOS till and preparation for Christmas, all on top of coping with the local broadband issues!!

The EPOS till is now up and running and all of our volunteers and staff have embraced it wholeheartedly so thank you to everyone for all your hard work and support as the system was implemented. It's a huge positive change for the shop and will transform how we manage our stock, ensuring we are able to remain competitive.

Christmas is fast approaching and we are looking forward to stocking our shelves with seasonal products. We will soon begin to take orders for meat, cheese and wine.

Our 2018 calendar is now at the printers and will be available to purchase very soon. The photographs are stunning and truly represent the village so thank you to all who contributed.

Lastly, can I thank everyone for supporting the shop. We all work very hard to make sure we provide a warm, welcoming and valuable service to the community. We do also appreciate any feedback and suggestions so please let us know if there is anything you would like us to consider.

Sam and the team

Village Stores opening times over Christmas

CLOSED Monday 25 Dec- Christmas Day
 Tuesday 26 Dec - Boxing Day
 Monday 1 Jan - New Years Day

Normal opening hours all other days.

Post Office last recommended posting dates as follows:

UK Wed 20 Dec - 2nd class and 2nd class signed for
 Thur 21 Dec - 1st class and 1st class signed for
 Thur 21 Dec - Special delivery Guaranteed
 Fri 22 Dec - Special Delivery Guaranteed Saturday delivery

International

Sat 2 Dec - Africa, Middle East
Wed 6 Dec - Cyprus, Malta, Asia, Far East, Eastern Europe (except Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia)
Thur 7 Dec - Caribbean, Central and South America
Sat 9 Dec - Greece, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand
Wed 13 Dec - Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Poland
Thur 14 Dec - Canada, Finland, Sweden, USA
Fri 15 Dec - Austria, Denmark, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland
Sat 16 Dec - Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg

HM Forces Mail

Mon 27 Nov - International Standard to operational HM Forces Mail
Mon 11 Dec - International Standard to static HM Forces Mail

Parcelforce Worldwide Services

Wed 20 Dec - Express48
Thur 21st Dec - Express24

Brightwell School Christmas fair

Come along and enjoy a festive evening on Friday 8 December from 6pm. There will be crafts, games and activities for the children, a chance for some shopping at the pop-up Village Stores and of course, mince pies and mulled wine.

Belinda, Friends of Brightwell School (FOBS)

Parish Council update

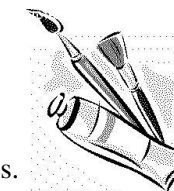
Now that the Neighbourhood Plan has been made, the Parish Council has begun a consultation with the developers of the Little Martins site to ensure their proposals conform to the plan.

The Parish Council has given permission for a flagpole to be erected on The Square for a year as part of the First World War Centenary commemorations in 2018 (see page 17 of this issue).

The refurbishment of the playgrounds is progressing. Weather permitting it is hoped that Kings Meadow will be completed by Easter. Donations for the ongoing work at both play areas are very welcome.

Lucy Dalby, Parish Clerk

Brightwell Art Club and exhibition



The Art Club has had an interesting term with a varied programme of workshops and techniques offered by our tutors for those members who wish to take advantage of this. We had our usual still life and portraiture sessions, and those of us who were new to acrylics had an opportunity to get to grips with this medium. Before the end of term we will have a chance to make Christmas cards and one of our tutors will give a critique of our paintings.

During the summer we had two enjoyable open air painting days at Sutton Courtney and Little Wittenham, with gorgeous weather on the latter day. We were again able to exhibit at the Red Lion so our annual Exhibition is the second chance to show what we can do.

Our sessions are held on Saturday mornings and if you are interested in joining, or just want to learn more about us, you can always pop in and see us, we have coffee at about 11 am, or you can email me at brightwellartclub@gmail.com. We also have a link to a web page on the Brightwell-cum-Sotwell website under Local Services.

Annual Exhibition on Saturday 9 December 10am -1pm

As well as our very reasonably priced art, there will be cards, local craft stalls and, of course, refreshments at this year's exhibition, so do come along, have some coffee and cake, and look at our work. Admission is free.

Veronica Wood, Secretary

Party party party!

The hall is hosting another party, on Saturday 9 December from 8pm to midnight. We have booked the ‘entertainer’ Steve Asque! Many of you will have enjoyed *The Evening for Alex* on 28 October, when Steve was performing. Why not organize your club or group of friends to come and have your Christmas party in the hall, for only £10 per adult? It will be the same format as before, bringing your own drinks, nibbles and glasses. You would also have the chance to set up your table in the afternoon.

With limited numbers, there will be a high demand for places, so it will be entrance by ticket only. You will have a ticket number, which could win you a prize! These can be purchased by contacting shenaluck@btconnect.com or on 01491 834543.

Shena Luck

Brightwell Supporting Refugees – Jordan visit

‘Are we going the right way?’ This question came more than once as our group of six BSR supporters tried to navigate the confusion of Arabic street signs in Jordan. But it was also a question at the heart of our October fact-finding trip.

At an early stage in BSR’s life, we made a decision to channel our aid through Helping Refugees in Jordan. Catherine Ashcroft, the human dynamo and founder of this charity, has done a great job of keeping us informed. But some of us were keen to see exactly how our money is being spent. We funded the trip ourselves, the idea being to take much needed tourist income into Jordan, as well as visiting schools and meeting key people.



The BSR team in Jordan, from left to right Liz McGivan, Sally Dugan, Angela Lewis, Amanda Potter, Ann Linton and Helen Connor, with Catherine Ashcroft (far right) and Farhan Ayeas Al-Enazy, a local charity worker (far left).

We lost count of the number of cups of thick, cardamom flavoured coffee we drank in school offices and in people’s houses. Jordanians are incredibly welcoming, reinforcing the

cliché that those who can least afford it are often the most generous. For despite being at the heart of the supposedly wealthy Middle East, Jordan is a poor country. It has no oil, and precious few other natural resources – and, crucially, is very short of water. It has also taken the fall out of the region’s many conflicts: waves of Palestinians in 1948, Iranians, Iraqis and – over the past five years – over 1 million Syrian refugees. The Zaatari refugee camp near the Syrian border is now Jordan’s fourth largest settlement.

Our concern, however, was not with the camps but with projects that were helping refugees build new lives in Jordan. We visited Hope School, near Amman, a place full of song and laughter where children were celebrating National Children’s Day; at Asraq School in the bleak Eastern Desert, we distributed thick coats to help children through the imminent harsh winter. While the boys were very happy with what they were given, the girls were more discriminating – and it was heartening to see this sign of recovering self-respect.



We helped distribute food parcels to individual families in Madaba. We also learned about the Collateral Repair Project – formed by a group of American women as a counter to the collateral damage of the Iraq War – and another charity called Hands-on Help. This last one has helped provide the logo-free school bags which generous Brightwellians funded – and it was a magic moment when we saw children proudly wearing them at going-home time.

Although our focus was inevitably on the plight of the Syrian refugees, it also became increasingly obvious that poor Jordanians need help, too. If these communities are to continue living in harmony, we cannot discriminate at the point of need. If we do, that oft-repeated phrase ‘Welcome to Jordan’ might start to wear a bit thin.

Our visit convinced us that, yes, we are going the right way – and if our help is to be worth anything, we have to be in it for the long haul.

We hope we can rely on your continuing generosity at BSR’s next fund-raiser, ‘Light up a life on a winter’s night - Carols for Refugees’, at St James’s Church on 11 December at 7 pm.

Sally Dugan

Save the Children

Many thanks to everyone who supported our recent events in the Red Lion, Save the Children quiz, and the coffee morning where we had on sale our Christmas cards and wrapping paper. As usual, I will have a small stock of the Christmas cards and wrapping paper at my house, "Thistledown" The Square for those last minute shoppers.

We will be holding our Christmas Eve event "Carols around the Save the Children Christmas Trees" as usual on Christmas Eve at 5.15pm (after the church service). If you can't make the event, but enjoy the trees in the Square and feel you would like to give a small donation to Save the Children it can be put through my letter box "Thistledown, The Square".

Have a very Merry Christmas and a happy and peaceful New Year.

Celia Collett

Stewart Village Hall

Free WIFI

The trustees are delighted to offer village hall users free WIFI. Many thanks to the Parish Council for their support in making this available. Please ask for login details when you make your bookings.

Party in the hall

We're holding a fundraising party, in aid of the village hall on 9 December - see page 7 for more details.

New Year's Eve party

Please come along to the party on New Years Eve: good food, good music and good company - what better way to welcome in the New Year. For more information on this fundraising party in aid of the village hall, contact Anne Brooker :
anniebrooker10@gmail.com or on 01491 835109.



Advance notice

In the new year, the trustees will be sharing a summary of the results of a structural survey carried out on the hall along with a questionnaire to gain your feedback on how you would like to see the future of the hall develop.

Trustee vacancies

We would welcome additional trustees to help us run and maintain the hall, keeping it at the heart of our community. If you are interested in becoming a trustee and would like more information please call Annette on 01491 834050 or email *annette.k@hotmail.co.uk*. We would love to hear from you.

stewartvillagehall.btck.co.uk

Claire Booth's song recital in St Agatha's

For her second song recital in St. Agatha's, Claire, accompanied by Charlotte Brennand, selected a varied range of works. She started with the American composer Samuel Barber's Hermit Songs. Claire spoke about how these beautiful settings of translated 8th and 12th century Irish texts had somehow 'slipped under the radar'. Similarly less well-known was Claire's second choice, Edvard Grieg's 'Haugtussa - Mountain maid'. A programme note explained that Grieg brought to the fore a simple yet utterly sophisticated folk style. It was impressive that Claire sang this cycle in the original Norwegian, with great dramatic intensity, ranging from the contrasting verses of 'Blueberry Slopes' to the jolly 'Dance of the Young Goats', which ended with a remarkable articulation of 'tra-la-la'. A translation in the programme was helpful as it highlighted Claire's interpretive skills.

Following drinks and canapés in the interval, Claire and Charlotte resumed with a brilliant rendering of 'Ho perduto il caro sposo....Lempio rigor del fato' from Rodelinda, one of Handel's most successful operas. This was followed fetchingly by Juliet's opening aria from Gounod's opera 'Romeo and Juliet'. The programme concluded with a superb performance of Musetta's teasing aria from Puccini's 'La Bohème'. The applause clearly called for an encore. Claire chose 'Sprig of Thyme', a folksong setting by Percy Grainger.

The afternoon ended with expressions of thanks from the Team Vicar to Claire and Charlotte and to all who had helped with the arrangements and refreshments. The concert raised £1,330 for Brightwell churches and the playground appeal.

Derek Nightingale

St. Agatha's with St James' Church

Will you be missing the X-Factor?

The 2017 edition of the X-Factor finishes in early December rather than just before Christmas – perhaps they needed more time to guarantee a Christmas No 1? But I wonder whether you will be missing the X-factor this Christmas? I'm not talking about Simon Cowell's latest pop-idol, but the 'X' in Xmas. In algebra, normally we have to solve an equation to work out what 'x' equals. And so it is with Xmas...

We will be bombarded with adverts selling us a dream Christmas that means over-indulgence, with mountains of food and drink and presents, often paid for on credit that brings long term misery. More important still, is to be surrounded by happy families, but we also know that it is a peak time of stress, not least where relationships in families are already strained. Some people just look to Christmas as a week off work with a time to reflect on where they are going, or "careering" through life, with a view to be defined by more than the job that they do in the year to come, with thoughts of 'there must be more to life than this'.



So, if the X-Factor seems to be missing in your Christmas, I'd simply invite you to consider what it means to put "Christ" back into Christmas. The 'X' originally stood for the Greek character "Chi" which together with "Rho" formed an early symbol for Christ, the "ChiRho".

All the historical evidence points to Jesus walking this Earth as a human being. Hardly anyone would deny that he possessed great wisdom and was an exceptional teacher. Unlike Father Christmas, he cannot simply be dismissed as make-believe. 2.3 billion people around the world recognise him as the Son of God, and a further 1.8 billion Muslims revere Jesus, or "Isa, son of Maryam" as a holy and blessed prophet. His birth is celebrated with great joy. Jesus is the reason for the season.

I pray that you will find Emmanuel (meaning "God with us") as the true source of joy and peace, purpose and identity this Christmas.

Rev Kevin Beer

All are welcome to join us on a Sunday or at any of our special services shown on page 12.



Christmas services and carols

Sunday 17 December: 6pm Carol Service at St Agatha's
6pm Carol Service at Brightwell Free Church
(both followed by seasonal refreshments)

Sunday 24 December – Christmas Eve:

8am Communion Service at St James'
9.30am Family Communion at St Agatha's
4.30pm Crib Service at St Agatha's
11.30pm Midnight Communion at St James'

Monday 25 December - Christmas Day:

9.30am Family Service at St Agatha's

Sunday 28 January 2018: 4pm Candlemas Christingle Service
(in aid of the Children's Society)

Light up a life on a winter's night!

Come and join us for an evening of carols and Christmas songs in the beautiful setting of St James' Church, Sotwell on Monday 11 December at 7pm. A collection will raise funds for Brightwell Supporting Refugees, helping those in Jordan and elsewhere struggling to rebuild lives disrupted by Mid East conflicts.

Space is limited, so entry is by tickets available free in advance from the village shop. Refreshments will be served afterwards. Please donate generously.

Island Farm Donkey Sanctuary

Begin your journey towards Christmas by joining us for a very special carol service on Thursday 14 December - 7.30pm at the Donkey Sanctuary in Brightwell - live animals, the Christmas story, music provided by Roke and Benson Silver Band and refreshments afterwards.

Revd. Janice Chilton

Carols around the Save the Children Christmas trees

Christmas Eve at 5.15pm (after the Church Crib Service) in the Square.



The Red Lion

Santa Claus will be coming for lunch on 10 December; book early.

Christmas Opening times

On Christmas Day the bar will be open from 12-2pm and on Boxing Day from 12 -11pm. There will be normal weekday menu at lunchtime on the 24th. Then no food until 27th when we will be back to normal. On New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, bar and lunch as normal but no food in the evening.

New Year's Eve party (30 December)

This year's fancy dress theme is 'Pirates of the Caribbean' as all proceeds will go to the British Virgin Islands' VI Hurricane Fund. £10 ticket will include a rum punch, buffet and DJ.

Mark Brock

Wassail!

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell hosts one of the largest Wassail processions in England and this year's activities promise to be as lively and wacky as ever. We will be Wassailing on the weekend of Twelfth Night - Saturday 6 January which is the traditional time to Wassail so we have decided to do things a little differently this time.

Meet at the Red Lion for a 3pm start. Everyone is welcome and do remember to bring something to blow or bang - basically anything to wake up those apple trees! We will have a slice of Twelfth Night cake before we start, in which will be hidden two tokens to find our Wassail King and Queen. The Wassail procession is organised by the Village Orchard Group and will take in a number of orchards. There will be a short burst of fireworks at 4.30 pm and some delicious 'Lambs Wool' to drink. We are delighted that Armaleggan Morris will be joining us again and will perform their traditional fire dance at the war memorial. We will finish at the village hall (where soft, hot and alcoholic drinks will be on sale) for children's dances and some songs. Delicious food will also be on sale (between 5 and 6pm), raising money for Maeve's Magical Journey. So come along and be part of this most special event.

Jason Debney

Wassail Dance

To mark the end of Christmas and the evening of the village Wassail (page 13) at 8pm, a good old fashioned barn dance will take place in the village hall. The Rockall Ceilidh Band will be leading the dances (one of the UK's youngest and most fabulous Ceilidh groups and not to be missed). They will include many traditional and more modern numbers to get us dancing. At some point during the evening our very own Brightwell Village Mimmers' Group will burst in to entertain us with this year's play. All profits will go towards the refurbishment of the village playgrounds. The Red Lion will be running a fully licensed bar. Hot food will be on sale - to raise funds for Maeve's Magical Journey (see page 19) and will include dishes with an 'orchard' theme to round our day of Wassailing off nicely. Tickets are £10 from the Village Stores.

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Primary School



A lot of things have to be in place for a school to improve as much as Brightwell has over the last 18 months; a committed governing body, children who want to learn, supportive parents, a strong team of staff and a supportive community. Somebody has to hold all this together and offer leadership though, so having the right headteacher is crucial to what has happened here.

Mrs Lewis was a highly-respected deputy headteacher at Wallingford, who, at various stages, led on teaching and learning, staffing, the curriculum and pastoral support. She is highly-regarded there and might very easily have moved on to a secondary headship. I know Mr Willis would have her back at Wallingford in a heartbeat. The governors were initially concerned at how she might adapt to the very different challenges of working in a primary school and some of the unique challenges that come with being a primary head; we needn't have been. She adapted quickly through the joint headship with David Burrows and, since Easter has been in sole charge.



In that short time she has presided over our conversion to an academy and joining with the Merchant Taylors' Oxfordshire Academy Trust, appointed three teachers, had the kitchens upgraded, redesigned the library, decorated much of the school with bright new images, taken our staff on a two day conference on teaching and learning and delivered the best set of results we have seen in a very long time (on the back of a couple of years which we were a little disappointed with).

What people are noticing is her willingness to talk to parents and react positively if something else needs to be improved. She is at the gates to greet people in the morning and say goodbye at the end of the day. She spends a lot of time in the company of the children and they clearly like being around her. Her presence is felt throughout the school and her cheerful, positive nature has led to the children feeling just as enthusiastic about Brightwell.

Mrs Lewis is openly appreciative of the very strong and encouraging community that exists at Brightwell and we should all be pleased with what we have achieved, whatever our part. We should also be grateful that she took the risk and joined us to such impressive effect.

She remains full of plans for the school and reassures us there is still plenty she wants to do to keep things 'on the up'. We are all delighted to be part of this stage in the school's story and look forward to seeing where Mrs Lewis will lead us all next. It will certainly be with a lot of hard work and a smile.

*Alastair Wilcox
Chair of Governors*

Environment Group report November 2017

The Millenium Wood

As you may know, the Environment Group developed the idea of the Millennium Wood in 1999 and now manages it on behalf of the Parish Council, the owners. The wood is located close to the westernmost exit from the village and is freely open to all to visit and explore. If you haven't seen it please call in to have a look around.

The wood, which covers some 2 acres, was planted in early 2000 with the help of many individual donations as well as grants. Comprising trees such as ash, oak, cherry, whitebeam and other native species the wood attracts a wide range of insects, birds and mammals. Management work to date has mainly consisted of thinning trees and removal of excess scrub and brambles with a path being constructed to provide better access within the wood.

Nearly 18 years on the area is maturing well, but we are conscious that some improvements could be made to allow a greater variety of habitats and improve the long-term health of the wood. As such we are in the process of preparing a longer-term plan for managing the wood. This will include creating some clearings to allow a better under-storey to develop, and potentially creating a wetland area/pond.

Currently we pay a contractor to do much of the work, this being supplemented by occasional voluntary input. We feel that we could both save money and better engage with villagers of all ages by having a proactive group of volunteers and so are proposing forming 'The Friends of the Millennium Wood'. The plan is that the Friends would meet at intervals throughout the year to carry out the work required. The work would be supervised by someone with the appropriate skills although some work such as felling would still need to be done by a specialist contractor. We are hoping to have the first meeting in January or February so why not give it a try! If you are interested in joining please drop Lizzie Rhymes, secretary to the group, an e mail at lizrhymes@hotmail.com.

Local wildlife

We are very pleased to have been awarded a grant from the Community Association which will be used to buy equipment to monitor and record wildlife within our parish. We will be using thermal imaging and camera traps to try and capture some of our more charismatic wildlife including badgers, owls, foxes and deer.

During the spring and summer of 2018, we hope to use our new equipment to hold events for local people, including evening bat walks and moth surveys. All events will be advertised on our Facebook page (Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Environment Group), and we will share any wildlife footage captured online too! Our new equipment will also be helpful to monitor how wildlife is using the habitats provided in the Millennium Wood. Our Facebook page is being added to all the time and has lots of interesting information – we are always on the lookout for photos so please keep your camera handy and send some in!

Weather watch

The rainfall for September and October was 51.4 and 24.3 mm with the general area receiving only between 50% and 70% of the 1981 – 2010 average. Temperatures were slightly up while sunshine was down.

Steve Capel-Davies

WWI Commemorations

In November 2014 we held an evening in the village hall to commemorate the start of World War1. This was also marked by the excellent exhibition in the church of all those fallen soldiers from the village on the war memorial.

In the lead up to the armistice of WW1 in November 2018 there are many things happening in the village. The children at our primary school are doing a project which we hope to link with. You will notice that we have erected a flag pole in the Square, which will fly the Union Flag for the year. During this time we will be placing clay poppies (made by Jennie Pozzoni) to commemorate the fallen soldiers. The poppies will be placed to coincide with the date they fell in the war together with information.

Following on from this, during next summer Mickey Moore, on his Lambretta, and his team are going to visit the soldiers' graves; Mickey hopes to set up a blog so we can follow his progress.

On Saturday 10 November 2018 we will be holding another evening in the village hall as part of the ending of the commemorations.

Clive Collett

When we started the year we had high hopes that our programme for 2017 would be successful. We need not have worried. Almost everything went to plan with just one hiccup, a talk about energy efficiency was cancelled and replaced by a much more worthwhile talk given by John Fieldsend on the evacuation of Jewish children from Germany at the start of the Second World War. Being a survivor himself made the talk all the more personal as did our trip to London arranged with our very own guide from the village, Jason Debney, when he enthusiastically escorted a group of us around the Arcadian Thames.

In recent years there has been an increase in the photography of wildlife so we had Peter Preece visit us in November to show us the best ways to go about it. Maybe we shall see some results of his guidance in the photographic element of our annual village show. We are certainly not short of opportunities in this lovely village.

As the year draws to a close we plan a festive approach again for our December meeting on the 14th with a Christmas bake off, news of the national campaigns in the year, songs, poems and I expect, as usual, a lot of laughter. We are always ready to welcome new members so do come along on the 14th or next year. We meet in the village hall on the second Tuesday each month at 7.15 for 7.30. There are lots of friendly people and groups to join as well as excellent refreshments at our meetings.

Happy Christmas wishes from your WI.

Margaret Smith

Village Christmas lunch

The Christmas lunch in the village hall will be on Tuesday 5 December at 12.15 pm. Contact Jaqui (816018) or Belinda (836223) for more details.

Maeve's magical journey

In summer 2014 we were lucky enough to move to Brightwell. Our delight at moving to such a lovely place was quickly tempered by our 15-month old daughter Maeve's diagnosis of cerebral palsy two months after we arrived. We were not entirely new to the village – Sian's parents moved to Brightwell when she was 17 – but we hadn't realised what an exceptionally strong community it is. During our time here we've made wonderful new friends whose support has been heart-warming as we learn to deal with the challenges Maeve faces.

An unexpected arrival

Maeve was born two months early, weighing just 3lbs 13 and three quarter ounces, and spent her first few weeks in Special Care Baby Units. Over the years she's made great progress – while she can't stand independently she can pull herself up into a high-kneeling position and with the help of her walker she can get around. Aside from Maeve's own steely determination, combined with her wicked sense of humour, much of this progress is down to the amazing people at Footsteps in Dorchester, where Maeve has regular, intensive physio sessions. The teams at Allsorts Preschool, Penguins Group at Wallingford Children's Centre and Riding for the Disabled at Hampstead Norreys have also played an important part.

Maeve now has a wheelchair which has given her more independence, but we're always looking at how to improve her mobility and one route is an operation called selective dorsal rhizotomy (SDR). This is not currently available on the NHS and costs almost £25,000. Maeve is currently in the assessment phase at Bristol Children's Hospital to see if she is strong enough to benefit from the procedure at this point. We've known from the time of her diagnosis that SDR could be a possibility for her and we've been able to make provision for the cost of the procedure. However, the team at Bristol has made it clear that an optimum outcome is largely dependent on the quality and extent of post-operative rehabilitation. Meeting the costs of ongoing physio and specialist equipment will cost approximately £15,000 annually over the next three years.

Planning ahead

We are determined to give Maeve the best chance possible, so we have launched Maeve's Magical Journey, a fundraising campaign to raise the £45,000 needed for her rehabilitation. Our inaugural Maeve's Supper Club

was held in the Red Lion and went very well. The next one will take place in March but in the meantime look out for other events including carol singing on December 23 and provision of the food at the Wassail Ceilidh on 6 January.

Thanks for taking the time to read about Maeve and if you'd like to join her on her journey please visit www.facebook.com/MaevesMagicalJourney or www.justgiving.com/fundraising/maevenorfolk.

Sian and Peter Norfolk

Allsorts Preschool

This term we have iced biscuits like pumpkins, made pumpkin soup with our preschool-grown pumpkin, made firework pictures and talked about how they made us feel. We have visited the village shop as part of our shop theme and made the home corner into a shop. We are starting Christmas soon and will have our Nativity and Christmas party. We will also be holding a pyjama day in aid of Save the Children and a baking week in aid of Children in Need.

A huge thank you to the Community Association for their generous donation to help us buy programmable robots.

If anyone has any of the following toys that you would be willing to donate to preschool we'd be very grateful: pirates and ships, figures of any kind, small animal figures, Happy Land.

Saffron Nowinska

Letters

Thank you

A huge thank you to all who came to the 'Evening for Alex' in the village hall in October in aid of BCRT, and to those who couldn't make it but donated anyway. Our particular thanks go to Ann Caistor & Caz Bowen for coming up with the idea and making it all happen, to Steve for entertaining us all so brilliantly, and to the amazing team of cooks, decorators and helpers whose hard work made the evening such a success. We are thrilled to tell you that the incredible sum of £2246.75 was raised for BCRT's Alex Appeal.

Whilst writing we'd also like to welcome Michael Stewart and his apprentice Ethan Nash to BcS and flag to villagers what a great experience we have just had having our car MOTed and serviced by them at **Brightwell Garage**. We had heard from others how quick, efficient, friendly, helpful and reasonable they were, and we certainly found this to be true.

Best wishes, Angela & Andy Lewis

Old Days

What a pleasure it was to see my name again in *The Villager*, even though I've been tucked away in far-off Herefordshire for the last twenty two years. The editorial and piece on looking back over the years in the 250th edition brought back so many memories – not least of which was to remind me that I still wear Fred Heyworths's sports jacket!

The Villager was a home-spun institution in those days – a sort of collective effort to get it produced and out on time. After Fred had decided on what to include (or even exclude, on occasions) the impetus lay with Betty Price and, later, Nonnie Hobson, to type it up on the long-carriage typewriter that we'd been given. I have the smell of correction fluid in mind, even now.

In those early days, the duplicator had to be turned by hand. A hot summer's evening would find Fred (in shorts) and me putting the machine outside under the yew tree at St Cecilia. Fred would provide the motive power – for a time, until the inevitable proposal that we adjourned to the Red Lion and do the rest tomorrow.

Then there would come the evening when it was all put together in the kitchen, with Fred heading a line of half a dozen souls traipsing round the workbench picking up one (not two, please) sheet from each of the piles, and then passing the whole to the others in front of Percy Smith, sitting at the kitchen table, in charge of the “bonker”, the long-arm stapler. By his side were Betty Johnson and Bess, the “boners” whose job it was to fold down, check each copy, and put in further piles for Shena Luck to pick up for distribution. It was all good humoured and fun, with far more gossip than was in the actual magazine.

Like the magazine with which I'm associated with here, *The Villager* was a spin-off from the earlier church magazine. But that was nearly fifty years ago, and I'm afraid that change has been inevitable.

So, my best wishes to *The Villager* – here's to the next fifty years.

John Griggs

Thames T'ai Chi & Qi Gong

The first term of T'ai Chi in Brightwell draws to a close on 6 December. Classes will begin again on Wednesday 17 January in the village hall. The 9am class currently running will continue, learning new moves as we progress through the 'form'. At 10am there will be a new class exploring the '8 Ways of T'ai Chi Chuan' and Qi Gong – ideal for beginners and accessible as a 'drop in' class on any Wednesday running up to Easter. All are welcome and the first class is free.

T'ai Chi in its purest form...



T'ai Chi in its purest form is nothing less than the manifestation of a human being in perfect harmony with the environment, be it nature or culture. It is a way to reach the highest evolution of consciousness. Starting with an awareness of one's own movements on the physical plane, T'ai Chi soon becomes a journey of self-discovery. Teachers and fellow students are a necessary source of progress and inspiration. Every waking moment, whether one is engaged in physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual activity, offers the possibility of new insight. The softest of all things overrides the hardest of all things.

For all classes in South Oxfordshire please visit:
www.HealingQi.co.uk/tai-chi E: ThamesTaiChi@gmail.com Mobile: Mark on 07966 253399/ Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous 2018.

Mark Preston

Christmas shopping in Didcot and Wallingford

30 November- Didcot Street Fair in Broadway and Orchard Centre, 4-9pm, see didcotevents.co.uk.

3 December - Wallingford Christmas Shopping Extravaganza from midday, see wallingford.co.uk.

The councils are offering free parking in their car parks in the run up to Christmas – every Friday from 1 December in Didcot and every Thursday from 30 November in Wallingford.

Volunteers needed to teach digital skills

The Council is appealing for digital helper volunteers to teach basic digital skills to people in their community.

Digital helpers teach basic digital skills to people with little or no experience of using computers or the internet. They volunteer in libraries, providing one-to-one support and encouragement to boost confidence and help people to help themselves. They show people how to set up an email account, search for jobs, complete online forms, navigate the internet and find useful websites, and use e-learning courses.

Could you volunteer? If you are patient, have good communication skills, enjoy working with learners of all ages and can spare a few hours a week, we want you! Schedules can work around you so that you can fit it around your busy life. Visit www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/digitalhelper or contact your local library.

New health walks

Arranged through Wallingford Medical Centre Patient Participation Group, the walks are for beginners to mid experienced walkers, taking about an hour, and starting from the Wallingford Medical Practice entrance at 10.30 on frequent Saturday mornings. Next walks are 2 and 16 December. For more information contact Maureen Norton at: maureen_norton@yahoo.com.

Earth Trust

As usual, the Earth Trust has a number of events over the next few months, such as:

Wreathmaking for families: Friday 8 December 3.45-5pm. £20 per wreath, includes a hot drink and a mince pie! There is also wreath making for adults only at 1 and 2pm.

Winter Wetland Birds: Sunday 28 January 9.30 -11. £6 adults, £3 children.

For more details see their What's On page at earthtrust.org.uk
To book call 01865 407792.

VILLAGE DIARY

December

5	Brightwell Village lunch	VH	12.15pm
8	Brightwell School Christmas fair	School	6pm
9	Brightwell Art Club exhibition	VH	10am
10	Santa Claus' lunchtime visit	Red Lion	
11	BSR Carols for refugees	St James	7pm
14	Carols at the Donkey Sanctuary		7pm
14	WI Christmas Bakeoff	VH	7.15pm
24	Save the Children carols around the Christmas trees	Square	5.15pm
30	New Year's Eve party	Red Lion	
31	New Year's Eve party	VH	7.30pm

FOR CHRISTMAS CHURCH SERVICES see page 12

January

6	Wassail (from Red Lion)		3pm
6	Wassail Dance	VH	8pm
9	WI meeting – 2018 National Resolutions & birthday party	VH	7.15pm

Advance Notice

24 February	Race Night - Pavilion
10 March	Community Association Quiz Night - VH

Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

Grey bins	Thursday 14 & Saturday 30 December Friday 12 & Thursday 25 January
Green (& brown) bins	Thursdays 7 & 21 December Saturday 6 & Thursday 18 January

Village website

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