

## February

3	Candlemas Christingle	St James'	4pm
12	WI Open Meeting: Talk by Liz Wooley 'Beer, Sausages and Marmalade'	VH	7.30pm
25	Allsorts Pub Quiz	Red Lion	8pm

## March

12	WI AGM	VH	7.30pm
14	BSR AGM	St Agatha's	7.30pm
15	BSR talk by Emily Dugan 'Finding Home'	VH	7.30pm
16	Community Association village quiz	VH	7.30pm
25	Nuffield Church quiz	Red Lion	8pm

## Advance Notice

See Annual Village Diary 2019 (pages 12-13)

## Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

Grey bins	Thursday 7 & 21 March
	Thursday 4 & 18 April
Green (& brown) bins	Thursday 14 & 28 March
	Thursday 11 & <b>Friday</b> 26 April

## Village website

For more information about Brightwell-cum-Sotwell visit the village website: [www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk](http://www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk) or on Facebook – the Brightwell cum Sotwell community web group.

## Contents

Editorial	2
Letters	3
Community Association / SODC Local Plan	4
An appeal from St Agatha's	5
Wassailing	6
Sing! Sing! Sing!	6-7
WWI Commemorations	7
Save the Children / Brightwell Toddlers	8
Parish Council	9
Stewart Village Hall / Brightwell Talent	10
Art Club / Can you help?	11
Annual Village Calendar 2019	12-13
King's Meadow Tennis Club / Welcome Packs	13
Where have all the sparrows been?	14
BcS Environment Group	15
BcS WI	16
BcS Primary School / Learning specialist	17
Tudor finds and questions at St Agatha's	18-19
Brightwell Supporting Refugees / Bus timetable changes	20
The Red Lion	21
Fire safety in the home/ Salt Grit Bins	22
In brief – round & about	23
Village diary	24

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**Items for the next edition should be sent to the Editor by 10 March 2019.** *The Villager* is published every other month and delivered free to all households in the village.

## Editorial

It's that time of year when the cold dark days are upon us and Christmas seems a while ago. New Year resolutions to be fitter/thinner/healthier/dry, or whatever you were going to do in January, have faded, sadly (again). We have the political turmoil of the Brexit vote and its uncertainty that continues to give us concerns. But this *Villager* is a Brexit-free zone I hope. There are lots of nice things to remember over the recent festive months and Spring to look forward to – I've already seen a yellow crocus in my garden today! Our annual village calendar is printed in the middle pages so you can get some dates in your diary for 2019 now.

The Old Time Music Hall seems a long time ago now. What a great night! I would like to add to all the other congratulations that have come in - a big thank you to everyone involved. Chris Baines took many lovely photos, one of which we have used on our cover, showing, appropriately I feel, Clive Collett, the mastermind behind it all. There is talk about maybe doing something else next year, hope so.

Wassailing on the day before Twelfth Night was again a great success, with over 500 taking part including lots of children. You can read more about it on page 6 and see more photos on the Community Web Page on Facebook.

Work has started down at St Agatha's church to replace the lead on the roof stolen earlier this year. While we love and use the church as a village asset it does need hard cash to help pay for its upkeep, and also St James'. Both are very old buildings in need of constant maintenance. So, the Rev Kev is directly appealing to you to help, see page 5. Interesting news about the restored brass effigies in the floor of St Agatha's, pop in to take a look at them (and read more on page 18 about their history and mystery surrounding them).

*Helen Connor*

Did you take part in the BIG GARDEN BIRD WATCH on 26-28 January? Would you like to share with *Villager* readers anything interesting you saw? Please send in to [thevillagerbcs@gmail.com](mailto:thevillagerbcs@gmail.com) for the next issue.

Turn to page 14 for this month's 'Tweet' and read about the return of house sparrows in our gardens and some birds who have recently taken up residence in the village.

## In brief – round and about

### Cholsey Repair Cafe

The next Cholsey Repair Cafe will be held at The Pavilion in Station Road, Cholsey, on Saturday 16 March. Volunteer fixers will try to help you repair your broken domestic items in return for a voluntary donation towards operating costs. A sharpening service is also expected to be available. Doors open at 11am but early arrivals can enjoy tea, coffee and cake at the Cholsey Community Cafe next door, which opens at 10.00. The Repair Cafe closes at 1.45 pm.

### Wallingford Photographic Club

The new year has kicked off with a busy programme. On 7 February there is a club competition involving digital projected images. Then on the 14<sup>th</sup>, club member Martin Wiggall will take us on a 'Panama Transit and Central American Odyssey'. This will be followed on the 21<sup>st</sup> with a visit by representatives of Fotospeed to provide 'all the answers on printing from workflow to paper'. Finally, on the 28<sup>th</sup> we will be hosting an inter club competition with Abingdon Camera Club. Visitors are most welcome to all club meetings. Full details of our programme along with information on how to find us can be seen on our website <http://www.wallingfordphoto.club>.

### The Great British Poster Artists: The Golden Age of Posters in Britain

Dr Graham Twemlow will talk to The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society (TWHAS) about Great British Poster Artists on Wednesday 13 February, 7.45 for 8pm, at St Mary's Church, Wallingford. Visitors (£4) are most welcome. Poster art in Britain during the 1920s and 1930s was a thriving industry enabled by enlightened clients such as Shell-Mex, the London Underground, and the four railway companies. This talk will explore the works of the pioneers of British poster art – artists include Tom Purvis, E. McKnight Kauffer, Paul Nash and Graham Sutherland.

### Earth Trust

Lots of winter activities taking place at Earth Trust, from finding out about wetland birds (3 Feb) to winter tree ID (9 Feb). Also half term family activities (18-22 Feb) and lambing weekends (23/24 and 30/31 March). For details contact [earthtrust.org.uk/what'son](http://earthtrust.org.uk/what'son).

## Fire safety in the home

### A message from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service:

Did you know....

... a house fire doubles in size every 30 seconds?

... 1 in 3 people rescued from house fires in Oxfordshire are rescued from a cooking fire?

... and that distraction is the main cause of cooking fires?

### All it takes is one distraction

It's easy to get distracted when cooking - the phone rings, someone's at the door or a TV show catches your attention. If you need to leave your cooking, even for a couple of minutes:

- turn down the heat
- set the timer
- or ask someone to watch it for you

... or you could find that Oxfordshire firefighters join you for dinner!

### Don't let the sparks fly

There were over 260 chimney fires in Oxfordshire last year, and nearly 50% of them happened during January, February and March. If you enjoy cosying up in front of a log or open fire, make sure the sparks don't fly at home this winter.

- Get your chimney swept at least once a year
- if you regularly have log fires get it swept more frequently
- if you have a 1<sup>st</sup> floor fireplace check that it is clear of debris
- store logs away from the fireplace

Find out more about fire safety in the home at: [www.365alive.co.uk/cooking](http://www.365alive.co.uk/cooking).

## Salt grit bins

If the weather turns bad and we have snow and ice, you might like to know that there are a number of salt grit bins placed round the village for your use – eg outside the village hall, top of Church Lane and Bell Lane, Monks Mead, Slade End and Greenmere.

## Letters

### Old Time Music Hall

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all those involved with the production of the Old Time Music Hall including the production team, performers, compere, orchestra, stage hands and all those who made / constructed the staging and scenery. It was a huge amount of work. I am frequently amazed at the numerous skills and talents in this community. The costumes, music and sketches were excellent conjuring up the 'Old Time feel' really well.

It was a truly enjoyable evening yet a poignant reminder of those young men from this village who so sadly lost their lives in the wars.

*Corrine Jones*

### New Year's Eve Party

The party was a great success; over 60 people were welcomed with a glass or two of bubbly and with Tim Valentine entertaining us on the piano. Tim has the amazing testimonial from Dame Judy Dench who said "If there's a better piano player on the planet I haven't heard them." He certainly did us proud, finishing his set with a traditional sing-a-long.

After a two course meal, Helen Connor led us in Scottish Country dancing and then Steve Luck kept us dancing with a disco through until midnight when the New Year was welcomed with a hearty rendition of Auld Lang Syne.

A huge thank you must be given to the team of people who helped with the set up and clear up of the hall, to those who prepared the delicious food and the donors of the raffle and auction prizes. We are pleased to announce that the party raised £1100 for the village hall funds.

This was the second year the team have hosted this event and we have had lovely feedback from the guests attending. Thinking ahead, if you or your group would be interested in taking on this event this year, for fun or as a fundraiser, then please contact Shena Luck to book the hall and please feel free to contact any of the organising team from last year for any information that might be helpful.

Many thanks again for all the support in making the last two New Year's Eve parties such successes and raising £2300 in total for the village hall.

*Annie Brooker, Anne Honeyball, Annette Kilworth and Jennie Pozzoni*

# Community Association

## Christmas Hampers

Some of the money raised by the Community Association goes to help pay for Christmas hampers for our senior residents in the village. The Fairthorne Memorial Trust has made a very generous contribution again this year and we would like to take this opportunity to thank them for this.

We are very grateful to Celia Collett and the village shop team for selecting and sourcing the hamper items and to the scouts, cubs and beavers, with their families and led by Tim Scane and Tim Dailey, for packing and distributing the hampers. I am pleased to report that we are distributing more hampers than ever - if you know anybody who is eligible please let me know so that we can update the list for next year.

## Village Quiz Evening – Saturday 16 March 2019

Entry forms have been emailed to all teams that took part last year. Anyone else who wants to enter a team should contact me on 01491 834195. Numbers in the village hall are limited because of the event's popularity and fire regulations, so entries will be taken in strict order of the receipt of completed forms. All entry forms were emailed at the same time to ensure everyone has an equal chance of acceptance.

## Advance Dates for the diary in 2019

Saturday 16 March	Village Quiz in the village hall
Saturday 11 May	Safari Supper
Saturday 29 June	Village Fete at Moreton House
Tuesday 24 September	AGM

*James Davys, Chairman*

## SODC Local Plan

South Oxfordshire's updated local plan is currently out for consultation. Drop-in events have been arranged around the county in January and February. You still have got time to go to one locally, at the Ridgeway Community Church in Wallingford on Saturday 2 February, 10-2pm. More details at <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2034>.

# The Red Lion

After a long, dark January we've got lots of live music and special weekend menus to see you through to Spring!

## Live music

3 February	Monkeyfist. New to the Red Lion for 2019 – based in Oxford, they are the most landlocked sea shanty band in the UK!
10 February	Al Jenkins
17 February	Jazz Jam – home grown talent!
24 February	Stanley Moon Trio
3 March	Phil Baker
10 March	Al Jenkins

## Artist of the month

Hannah Elizabeth - *Creating beautiful images of places you know and love.*  
Her wooden postcards are currently for sale in the Village Stores.

## Pub quizzes

Join us for some mind boggling quiz questions and a bowl of hot chilli to support these local charities:

25 February	Brightwell Allsorts Preschool quiz
25 March	Nuffield Church quiz

## Dates for the diary

14 February	Valentine's Day – come and enjoy a romantic sharing menu with your favourite person
15-24 February	Half term – kids eat free with adult main course
17 March	St. Patrick's Day

We hope to see you all soon.

*The Red Lion Team*

## Brightwell Supporting Refugees

### Next fundraising event

When: Friday 15 March, 7 30pm

Where: Stewart Village Hall

What: A talk by Emily Dugan about her book 'Finding Home'. "*An honest, unflinching portrait of ordinary people, all immigrants to the United Kingdom, struggling with extraordinary obstacles to find somewhere to call home.*"

Emily is the daughter of David Dugan who gave a talk for us last year about the TV programme his film company made about the journey Captain Blythe was forced to make after the mutiny on the bounty. It was an excellent talk and we are sure that Emily has the same (if not better!) talent at captivating an audience!

Refreshments will be available.

Tickets available from the Village Stores or can be reserved if you email [brightwellrefugees@gmail.com](mailto:brightwellrefugees@gmail.com) or [helenconnor21@btinternet.com](mailto:helenconnor21@btinternet.com).

### AGM

We will hold our AGM on 14 March in St Agatha's Church Room, 7.30pm. Please do come along to hear the latest news of projects we have ongoing and new ones to which we hope to donate.

Thank you to all our supporters and look forward to seeing you in 2019 at our AGM and March event.

*Ann Linton*

## Bus timetable changes

From Wednesday 2 January 2019, changes have been made to our local bus services, the X2 and X38/39/40, and also some others. Some additional early morning and late evening journeys have been added whilst some less well used trips have been revised or withdrawn.

Please check new timetables at <https://www.thames-travel.co.uk/news-service-updates/service-changes-january-2019/>

## An appeal from St Agatha's Church

Hopefully by the time you read this, work will have started to replace the stolen lead from St Agatha's roof with 'terne-coated' stainless steel, which will resemble the original material whilst being unattractive to metal thieves. This work and repairs for the associated damage will cost in the region of £23,000, whereas the insurance claim was limited to around £8,000, a shortfall of £15,000. Contrary to popular belief, we receive absolutely no income from the Government – the only help we get is that we can reclaim the VAT on repairs. We also had our 5 yearly architectural survey of both of our churches last autumn, and the resultant schedule of works is daunting – upkeep of our two listed buildings is akin to painting the Forth Bridge! Despite this, your PCC (Parish Church Council) is committed to this objective as long as finances allow it. Which is where you may be able to help us ...

In line with church members across the country, our regular worshippers already give an average of £10 per week via the Parish Giving Scheme, a direct debit that allows Gift Aid (currently an extra 25p for every pound) to be efficiently and automatically reclaimed each month. This pays for the ministry and mission and general running costs of the church, but there is little left to commit to the necessary buildings maintenance programme. This is needed to demonstrate the commitment of the village to the upkeep of the churches, which then helps to secure grants from various trust funds which will also be required for major works, eg the re-roofing of St James'.

We are aware that many villagers support the church and want it to be available for when they might need it, for example for weddings, Christenings, funerals, school services, concerts and Christmas. So, on behalf of our PCC, I extend an invitation to you to express this support financially, even for a small amount, via a regular gift using the Parish Giving Scheme. A website explains how this works for donors: [www.parishgivingscheme.org.uk/for-donors/](http://www.parishgivingscheme.org.uk/for-donors/) and the sign-up forms are available from Margot Shawyer or Andy Lewis, who can also answer any questions. (I can pass on their contact details to anyone who doesn't know them – email [teamvicar@wallingfordcofe.org.uk](mailto:teamvicar@wallingfordcofe.org.uk)).

From my own point of view, I find it sadly ironic that we all pay an insurance company to protect us from the historic 'Chancel Tax', when a similar amount given regularly could contribute to the upkeep of what are the oldest community buildings in any village. I hope that you'll join us in righting this moral anomaly!

Blessings, Rev Kev

*The Revd Kevin Beer*

## Wassail 2019

What a day! Our village tradition of waking the apple trees (as midwinter passes and the days start to lengthen) continues to grow and get better each year. We count the number of people attending the Wassail and this year there were a staggering 560 people representing Brightwell, Sotwell and Mackney including 100s of children. A big thank you to Nick and Claudia Spencer and Brightwell Manor for the use of their orchards. The Wassail had all the usual elements: tree bashing, shouting, drumming, fabulous folk music, lamb's wool, guns, air raid sirens, fireworks and singing. One of the highlights of this year was the impromptu Shepherds Hey dance on the Rec. With so many



people joining Armallegan Morris for this dance, it looks like we broke the Guinness World Record for the largest Morris Dance ever (by over 200 people) but with no formal verification it will have to just be a village secret!

The day finished with a Wassail Ceilidh at the village hall. The band was fabulous, with the dance floor full throughout the evening. Many people have asked for a summer event, so the band is booked for a Midsummer's Evening Barn Dance in the Greasby's Potato Barn on 21 June. Save the date, tickets will be on sale later this year!

*Jason Debney*

## Sing, Sing, Sing!

For those who love singing, here are some great opportunities to exercise your vocal chords:

### **Cranford Choral**

Cranford Choral will be rehearsing the wonderfully popular Fauré's Requiem, Fauré's Cantique de Jean Racine and Gounod's St Cecilia Mass for a concert in June. Rehearsals started on Monday 28 January but there is still time to come along. If you would like to sing with us, please call Anthony Finn on 835540.

The 1509 brass of a man and his wife (with a small missing brass of a child) is in the middle of the central aisle. This is of Robert Court who was auditor to Prince Arthur, son of Henry VII. What can we find out about them and where did they live in Brightwell?

The other brass, from 1512, which is in the floor just in front of the bell tower, is of Richard Hampden and his wife.

### **A rare find – a palimpsest**

During the repair process it was found that the inscription under the Hampden brass was a PALIMPSEST, a rare find as not that many have been located in England. A palimpsest is a brass inscription with another inscription on the reverse. Our brass has had a resin facsimile made containing the Latin poem on the reverse and this will be seen near the brass in due course. The original probably won't be seen again for another 500 years!

These unusual brasses are of great interest to specialists and collectors and we expect visitors to come just to see the facsimile. There will be more questions to be asked and answered about the palimpsest.

### **Yet more mysteries**

The marble slabs and brass material used for the brasses are a story in themselves. The marble was apparently mined in Purbeck, Dorset, but how did the very heavy slabs get here? The brass was mined in Turkey and cast somewhere in Europe, but what else was involved before the effigies ended up on the floor of St Agatha's?

### **Brass rubbing**

Taking a copy of a brass by covering it with paper and rubbing it with wax, known as brass rubbing, has been popular for some time. We have been advised that we can allow this to be done to our brasses. We hope the school, many villagers and visitors alike will come and see the restored brasses and learn a bit more about the people depicted and the Tudor period. The church is open every day from approximately 9am – 5pm. But do take care if walking near the brasses – no high heeled shoes please. We plan to have more information available in the church soon about the brasses themselves and the people in them.

*Margot Shawyer  
Church Warden*

## Tudor finds and questions at St Agatha's

We are fortunate that the two Anglican churches in the village have considerable history attached to them. St Agatha's story goes back to Norman times when it was founded in 1152-3. There are a few visible remains of that period, particularly the entrance on the south side, walls and pillars. Additions and changes have been made every century since, particularly in the mediaeval times, during the Reformation and by the Victorians.

From the Tudor period there are three brass effigies set in the floor, which have been covered with carpets for some time. These were not in good condition or secured safely and with the help of two charities dedicated to preserving and researching the ancient brasses of the country, our brasses have now been restored and relaid. They are easily visible in the floor of the main body of the church and we hope people will pop in and see them.

### Who do the brass effigies depict?

We know something of the likely history of the brasses and of the people depicted in them but there is more to discover



This single brass with an inscription in Latin, which can be seen in the south aisle, is of a former curate wearing clerical garb, John Scolffyld, who was murdered in the church in 1507. What is the story behind such an event? We know a man called Robert Forde from East Hendred carried out the murder with a dagger, but not why.

## Cat's Chorus

Cat's Chorus is an a cappella choir who meet every Monday night in Crowmarsh. We provide a fun, supportive yet hard-working environment for lapsed singers to rediscover the joys of singing or for existing singers to take on a new challenge and sing a variety of popular styles including pop, jazz, latin, blues, folk, traditional and show tunes.

An 'Open Evening' for anyone who would like to give us a go will be on Monday 4 February at 6.30pm at Crowmarsh Pavilion, OX10 8ED. The event is FREE, although pre-registration is required. Sign up at [www.catschorus.co.uk](http://www.catschorus.co.uk) where you can also get further information about the choir.

*Anthony Finn*

## WWI Commemorations



The Old Time Music Hall was a great success thanks to the large number of people who performed, helped back stage and front of house, plus, the overwhelming generosity of local businesses, organisations and individuals. Unfortunately I can't name them all here as it would take up too much space. However, without

them all it would not have been so special and successful. It raised over £4,000 (£1,000 for each of the four charities - The Royal British Legion, Bone Cancer Research Trust, Maeve's Magical Journey and Save the Children). The small residue will be held by the Parish Council for future use.

December marked the end of the year long commemorations during which we got to know the 25 men from our village, along with many others, who sacrificed their lives in WW1. Their stories are powerful and sometimes overwhelming, but reiterate how important it is to remember and commemorate. To make some additional money for the British Legion I am selling the 25 ceramic poppies. If you are interested in buying one please let me know. If I have more than 25 people wanting them they will go to the highest bidder.

Many, many thanks,

*Clive Collett*

## Save the Children

Save the Children was very lucky, along with the three other charities, to receive £1,000 from the Old Time Music Hall; we were extremely pleased to have been part of this special production.

The Carols around the Christmas Tree collection raised £570.23. We have since received a further £150 making a total of £720.23 which has been sent to the Indonesian Tsunami Appeal. This could not happen without the amazing generosity of so many people and local businesses; we are, as always, extremely grateful to them all.

Save the Children is 100 years old this year and we intended to make the Centenary Year special. Along with many of our usual events such as our Annual Plant Stall on 11 May, we are, in June, going to be part of a 'Midsummer Mayhem' starting with helping at the Midsummer's Evening Barn Dance in the Greasby's Potato Barn on Friday 21 June. On Saturday 22 June there will be a Save the Children Countryside Fair with lots of exciting events. We will give more details in the next *Villager*, but in the meantime please keep the dates. We hope give the village an enjoyable weekend.

*Celia Collett  
Chairman*

*Save the Children Wallingford & District Branch*

## Brightwell Toddlers

Happy New Year from Brightwell Toddlers! We started back on 10 January creating animal masks and catching up with a cuppa and delicious home baking. There are lots planned for the new year including another visit from the amazing Claire of Shake and Make Club.

As always we would love to see you and your little ones (babies, toddlers and preschoolers) so please come along on Thursdays 9.15-11am (term time) in the village hall.

If you need any more information or would like to volunteer to help out (making teas, washing up, baking snacks, helping with the children etc), please contact us at [brightwelltoddlers@gmail.com](mailto:brightwelltoddlers@gmail.com).

*Laura Woodford*

## Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Primary School

As I approach the end of my second year in post, you will, no doubt, be already very familiar with my references and thanks to the local community, parents and staff who have supported the strong progress we have made over this time. Without this support I am not certain of where the school would be, and it would not have been possible without the courageous decision made by the Governing Body back in the summer of 2016. The role of the school governor is a demanding one and many villagers in the community have held such a role over the years whether it is as a Parent, Foundation or Community Governor. This volunteer role is very rewarding and is a great way to give back to your local community whilst working alongside me to deliver a strong offer to the children in our local community.

Since the Governing Body took the decision to join The Merchant Taylors' Oxfordshire Academy Trust, previously Wallingford Schools Academy Trust, the school has gone from strength to strength delivering for the growing community of families. It was a pleasure to show the increasing number of prospective parents around our school ahead of the January deadline with our children in all year groups epitomising what it is to be part of the Brightwell School community. The Governing Body have been highly supportive of the changes we have made at Brightwell over the last two years and they continue to work hard, along with the staff and me to ensure that the school delivers a high quality education for all. We currently have a vacancy for a Community Governor that may be of interest to you. Please have a look at our website and Facebook page for further details or contact Alastair Wilcox, Chair of Governors, at [brightwellchair@gmail.com](mailto:brightwellchair@gmail.com).

*Mrs Fin Lewis, Headteacher*

## Learning specialist

Mary Mountstephen MA(SEN) is a learning development specialist who was brought up in the village and has recently returned to live here. She offers advice, assessments and support for schools and families where there is concern about possible dyslexia or other aspects of a child's development. There is no charge for an initial chat about presenting strengths and weaknesses. Age range covered: 4-11 contact: [email:kcsmary1@gmail.com](mailto:email:kcsmary1@gmail.com).

*Mary Mountstephen*



January saw the celebration of our fifteenth birthday when we had a Fish and Chip Supper as a special treat whilst we discussed the Resolutions for 2019. There were six shortlisted from members' suggestions nationally, ranging from improving plant biosecurity and planting more trees to a call against the decline of local bus services and improving some specific health issues for women – ending the taboo around menstrual education, 'don't fear the smear' and improving pelvic floor education (but the latter we heard was for men too). So, something for everyone to get their teeth into. At the end, we individually voted for the one we supported the most. After votes are counted at federation HQs, the final selected resolution will be considered at the National Meeting of all WIs in the UK in June.

With Christmas behind us and the Spring ahead it is always a good time to regenerate and make new plans. Our programme for 2018 worked out well and now we have to find subjects to compete with that success. We now have February and March to look forward to when first of all we have Liz Woolley, an author and speaker on local history. Her talk will be about Oxford food and drink in the 19th century and has the title 'Beer, sausages and marmalade'; interesting when we are just getting over the surfeit of Christmas fare. Then in March we have our AGM, when we review the past year and elect our committee.

We are always ready to welcome new members and there is no age limit or restriction on this. A once monthly meeting where we meet friends, socialise a bit, learn a bit, enjoy some fun things, for a small annual membership fee. In addition there is the opportunity to join any of our groups of knitting, reading, quilting, walking etc. If you are interested come any second Tuesday of the month to the village hall at 7.30 for a taster or look at our website, [www.brightwellcumshotwellwi.com](http://www.brightwellcumshotwellwi.com).

*Margaret Smith*

## Parish Council

### **New houses**

The parish council continues to work with Kinglerlee during the building of the new homes to the west of the village. They have been really good at keeping us informed about progress. Recently, external factors have held up some of the utility network connections which unfortunately will delay the start of works forming the access at Didcot Road. This should now be completed by the middle of February. Once this happens they will concentrate on opening the byway at Watermans Lane, hopefully at weekends from early March and permanently by the end of March if all goes well. If you have any concerns about anything on the site do let us know and we will take them up with the site manager.

### **New playgrounds**

Graham Gilgrass has spent some time dealing with snagging issues connected with the new playground at Kings Meadow. Hopefully these will be sorted in the next couple of weeks. The tennis players are enjoying the newly cleaned court surface which has meant slippage risk is decreased.

We are waiting to hear back from Sports England to hear if the grant we have applied for has been approved. If it has then we can start immediately on the new playground equipment and gym equipment at the Recreation Ground on Mackney Lane, as well as some additional improvements to the tennis courts and the basketball court at Kings Meadow. We have raised some funding for this but would prefer to wait to get this grant so we can do the whole lot together.

### **SODC Plan**

We were disappointed to hear about the changes to the SODC Local Plan and have responded accordingly. We urge parishioners to write to express their views by following links on the SODC website or going along to the drop in meeting (see bottom of page 4).

### **Potholes**

We have noticed there are still many potholes around the village. The best way to get these dealt with is for as many people as possible to report them to 'Fix My Street' – you can do this via the app or their website.

*Sue Robson*

## Stewart Village Hall

It's been another busy festive season in the hall with many varied activities.

The hall was transformed into an Old Time Music Hall, hosted Christmas parties, the New Year's Eve party and the Wassail Dance as well as carrying on with all the regular activities that take place in the hall.

In time for the Village Christmas Lunch the Brownies did an amazing job decorating the Christmas tree. It is such a shame the Brownies have now ceased, but let's hope they are able to find a new Brown Owl and restart the pack in the future.

The festivities continued with the fundraising party on New Years Eve, the second year the team has raised funds for the hall whilst putting on a great event. The trustees were delighted to receive the donation of £1100.

So now its back to business as usual. Several projects are ongoing including implementing an online booking system allowing 24/7 access to availability and booking for the hall. We will also be completing the installation of our new sound and vision equipment which will enable us to put on regular fundraising film shows. We are looking for other fundraising opportunities and welcome suggestions for this.

Of course, the key focus for trustees continues to be on how to re-develop the hall, while still encouraging the support of new and existing users. We will keep you informed of all progress and, of course, come back to you for input. Updates will be posted on the village hall website at <http://stewartvillagehall.btck.co.uk/>.

As always, we thank you for all your support, which is very much appreciated. 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 suggestions box in the kitchen of the hall.

*Annette Kilworth*

## Brightwell Talent

Congratulations to villager Helen Sheppard (Helen Baines), winner of this year's BAFTA in the Children's/Pre-School Live Action category. Helen is the producer of 'Get Well Soon Hospital' which received the award on 25 November 2018.

## BcS Environment Group

I am very pleased to say that we had a fascinating talk by Dr Richard Fortey on 22 November entitled '*A Small Chiltern Wood: History and Natural History*'. He gave a lively presentation about how he and fellow experts have been researching and recording the life in his small wood located near to Grey's Court. Of particular interest was a box with a collection of items found and/or made including pottery and glass from materials he excavated on site. His book *The Wood for The Trees: The Long View of Nature from a Small Wood* recounts much of the work and he sold many copies on the night.

### Millennium Wood

Work has been progressing on the Millennium Wood and since the last report we have met with a representative from the Forestry Commission. He was pleased the way the wood is developing and said it was better than many he has seen of a similar age. He agreed with the proposals to manage the wood including the thinning which does not need a felling licence as we are spreading the work over a few months. We had surveyed the trees to be removed with the great majority being ash, several of which, as I have previously mentioned, are showing signs of die-back. The Parish Council have agreed to the thinning and the first tranche of trees was felled in December. The remainder are to be felled in the coming weeks before the bird nesting season starts. When completed we will let villagers know and set a time when the timber would be available (for a donation) for wood-turning or firewood.

### Weather watch

The December rainfall at Highlands Farm was 66.3mm giving a total for 2018 of 589.9mm. Thus, although rainfall has varied greatly through the months, the yearly total ended up very similar to the 594.4mm recorded in 2017. The Met Office anomaly maps indicate this is probably a little less than average for the period 1981 to 2010 but about average when compared to the period 1961 to 1990 so hopefully water resources should not be a problem in coming months.

It will not come as a surprise to know that the Mean Maximum Temperature for 2018 in this area and indeed most of the south and central England was between 1.0 and 1.5 deg C warmer than the 1981 to 2010 average.

*Steve Capel-Davies*

## Where have all the sparrows been?

Twenty five years ago, when we moved into the cottage next to the village hall, we had a population of between 15 to 20 house sparrows in the garden. Within a few years there were none. That remained the situation until four years ago when a small flock built up in gardens on the other side of the hall, but we never had any in our garden until two years ago when we began to get one or two visitors. This year we have flocks of up to 40 feeding on the sunflower hearts and other seeds we put in the bird feeders. The sparrows congregate in the thick hedge near the feeders and are exceedingly noisy and chatter all the time, when they are not feeding. We just hope they stay this time!

In previous years we would have seen goldfinch, greenfinch and chaffinch in the garden, but at present we have none. Why? – probably because there is enough food out in the countryside for them. Many of the blackbirds, fieldfares and redwings that we see at this time of year are visitors from Germany and other parts of Europe. They were around in abundance just before Christmas, but having stripped the local hedgerows they have now moved on.

A kingfisher has taken up residence on the moat at Sotwell House and can be seen when you are feeding the ducks, if you are lucky. I have seen it several times in the last few weeks. Also, if you are walking up the Wellsprings path, look out for a grey wagtail. This bird is often mistaken for a yellow wagtail, as it has a lot of yellow in its plumage, but yellow wagtails are migrants and not around at this time of year.

An interesting pair of birds took up residence briefly in Sotwell just before Christmas. Ring-necked parakeets – thousands of these birds live in London, and there are colonies in Kent and a small resident population in Henley. Our pair have moved on, I think, or perhaps provided a tasty meal for our resident sparrowhawks!

There is currently a nation survey of tawny owls being undertaken by the British Trust for Ornithology. We have 2, if not 3 pairs in the parish. These birds are at their most vocal in the autumn and early new year, when they are establishing their territories.

2nd January – just seen my first black-cap in the garden.

*Paul Chilton*



## Brightwell Art Club

First of all a big thank you to all those who supported our art exhibition before Christmas which seems a long time ago now; it was good to see so many people. The charity which benefitted from our raffle was Helen & Douglas House, and we also had stalls for the Alzheimer's Society and the RNIB.

By the time you read this we will have started our Spring term and as usual we have a varied and interesting programme. Our members have given input into which subjects our tutors cover during the sessions. Alternatively, they can continue with individual work which the tutors will help them with.

As usual if you are interested in the Art Club you can pop in and see us on a Saturday morning during term time. We have coffee at about 11 am. Or you can email me at [brightwellartclub@gmail.com](mailto:brightwellartclub@gmail.com) for further information. You can also find us on the village website, [www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk](http://www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk).

*Veronica Wood, Secretary*

## Can you help?

### Wallingford Museum

Wallingford museum is currently closed but will open again on 1 March with a full programme of exhibitions and events. It is looking for people to help with the running of this popular attraction and would love to hear from you if you have half a day or more to spare once a month. It's band of volunteer custodians are critical to the museum's success and people are needed to greet visitors and be in attendance for a morning or afternoon once a month between March and November.

No previous experience is necessary other than a desire to meet people! Please contact Jenny Carpenter 01491 826734 or [jenacarpenter@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jenacarpenter@hotmail.co.uk).

### Oxfordshire County Council - Shared Lives Scheme

If you have a spare room to offer and would like to play a key part in making a positive difference to a vulnerable adult's life, then we really want to hear from you! Call the Oxfordshire Shared Lives Scheme on 01865 897971 or visit our website [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sharedlives](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sharedlives).

# Village Annual Calendar 2019

## February

Candlemas Christingle, St James'	Sunday 3 February
Brightwell School term 3 ends	Friday 15 February
Brightwell School term 4 starts	Monday 25 February

## March

Brightwell Supporting Refugees AGM	Thursday 14 March
Brightwell Supporting Refugees Talk	Friday 15 March
Community Association's village quiz	Saturday 16 March
Mothering Sunday	Sunday 31 March

## April

Brightwell School term 4 ends	Friday 5 April
Palm Sunday procession to St James'	Sunday 14 April
Easter Festival Family Communion	Sunday 21 April
Brightwell School term 5 starts	Tuesday 23 April

## May

Save the Children Plant Sale	Saturday 11 May
Safari Supper	Saturday 11 May
Church Spring Fair, Brightwell Manor	Saturday 18 May
Rogation Sunday & Beating the Bounds	Sunday 26 May
Brightwell School term 5 ends	Friday 24 May

## June

Brightwell School term 6 starts	Monday 3 June
Midsummer Mayhem Barn Dance	Friday 21 June
Save the Children Country Fair	Saturday 22 June
Village fete	Saturday 29 June
Summer concert at St Agatha's	Sunday 30 June

## July

Brightwell School term 6 ends	Wednesday 24 July
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## August

## September

Brightwell School term 1 starts	tbc
Community Association Fun Run	tbc
Community Association	Tuesday 24 September

## October

Brightwell School term 1 end & 2 start	tbc
Harvest Festival	tbc

## November

Remembrance Sunday	Sunday 10 November
Art Club exhibition	tbc

## December

Christmas Carol Service at St Agatha's (tbc)	Sunday 15 or 22 December
Crib Service at St Agatha's	Tuesday 24 December
Midnight Communication (venue tbc)	Tuesday 24 December
Christmas Family Communion at St Agatha's	Wednesday 25 December

## January

Wassail	tbc
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## Kings Meadow Tennis Club

A reminder to all members of Kings Meadow Tennis Club to opt-in to the BCSKMTC Wimbledon club draw 2019 before the end of February. You can opt-in by email ([info@lta.org.uk](mailto:info@lta.org.uk)) or telephone (0210487 7000) and select option 1) or online (log into members area of LTA [lta.org.uk/member/login](http://lta.org.uk/member/login)).

## Welcome packs

The Community Association's welcome pack aims to help newcomers find their feet and provide those bits of useful information that are so difficult to accumulate. If you are new to the village, or you know of someone who is, please contact Bill Horsfield on [wthorsfield@yahoo.com](mailto:wthorsfield@yahoo.com) / 832041 or Lynn Burridge on [lynnburridge@gmail.com](mailto:lynnburridge@gmail.com) / 833009.