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Items for the next edition should be sent to the Editor by 10 March 2020. *The Villager* is published every other month and delivered free to all households in the village.

Editorial

A new year and some new faces in the village to welcome. Sue and Bob have handed over the running of the Red Lion to Corrine Cook and Steve (Mouse) Pryor (see page 5). At the Village Stores and Post Office, we say a hello to the new manager, Ingria, and assistant, Melanie, but sadly bid farewell to Sam and wish her good luck. There are also some new volunteers in the Post Office and shop who are very welcome I'm sure (see page 8). Our *Villager* team has some new recruits also – Lily Hepworth is going to be assisting me with the editorial work and Tom Lester helping Trevor and Steve on the advert printing.

We will be seeing more new faces around the village soon as people move into the new houses in the Little Martins development. I feel they have gone up quickly, but probably not so for those who live next door to them. Hopefully, building work will be finished as planned by August.

You can read here about some very enjoyable events in the village at Christmas. The Wassail on Twelfth Night was another great success. Taking a different route this year, it started in the beautiful Small's House Barn at Mackney and made its way through Mackney orchards to the Red Lion. Our cover shows some of the key figures in this amazing event – Jason, Marcus and Robert (thank you Eric Dore for the photo). The day rounded off with a fun evening in the village hall – a performance of the Mummers' play "St George and the Wassail Dragon", with delicious food in between the acts. You can read more of the Wassail day and evening on page 18.

Although the days are rather dreary (and very wet!) at the moment, there's lots to look forward to in the year ahead as highlighted here in this *Villager* and also if you look on the village website (brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk) and community Facebook page. The annual village calendar is printed in the centre pages so you can get some key dates for 2020 in your diary now.

The village's 75th VE Anniversary celebrations are being planned as I write, see pages 13 and 14. This will start down at the Rec at 2.30pm on Friday 8 May for a re-dedication of the WWII plaque, followed by a traditional street party in The Street in the afternoon and music/dancing in the evening. A parade and church service will take place on the morning of the 10th. There will also be an exhibition of individual's memories of the war. So make a note of the date and look out for more details coming soon.

Helen Connor

Letter

Dear Editor,

Since the results of the General Election were announced, we have been receiving messages of congratulations from friends and neighbours, congratulations about our son Matthew (Matt) who was re-elected to the Reading East seat with an increased majority. Through *The Villager*, we would like to thank everyone for their kind words which we have transmitted to Matthew. Matthew says it is an honour and privilege to represent Reading at Westminster.

Annabel and John Rodda

Save the Children

To celebrate the end of Save the Children's 100th Anniversary we wanted the Christmas trees in the Square to be extra special. This happened, thanks to the Drury's, Root One and Ann Elliot for donating the trees; to Clive, Ed, Mark & Johnny for putting them up and decorating them; and to the school and preschool children plus other children writing message tags to hang on the trees.

Carols round the Christmas Tree on Christmas Eve rounded off the celebrations. Thank you to John Burdass for providing the sound and our other special guests, plus everyone who helped and came along to support us again this year. The collection on the night raised £423.53p. When added to the very generous donations from several individuals, plus the school and preschool and the impromptu and very enjoyable *Christmas Carol* in the Red Lion on 22 December, the total came to £1007.84p.

What an amazing amount, from an amazing community, to end off our anniversary year. Many, many thanks.

Celia Collett

Are you ready to Save the Bone?

Following the huge success in 2018, we are busy arranging a Music Evening on 3 July and Summer Ball on 4 July in aid of the Bone Cancer Research Trust and Save the Children. Please don't miss out if you'd like to attend the Ball as many tables have already been reserved. Tickets for the Ball are £55 pp. Email s.e.butt@btinternet.com for further information.

Community Association

Christmas Hampers

Once again I am pleased to report that we were able to deliver hampers to many of the senior residents in the village. A big thank you to Celia and the village shop team for all their hard work in preparing them and to the scouts, cubs and beavers who delivered them, together with their parents and leaders. We are also very grateful to the Fairthorne Trust who provided a very generous donation to help fund this project.

Pub quiz – Red Lion 24 February 7.30 pm

As a warm up for the Village Quiz please join us for an evening of brain teasers set by our committee. Entry is only £2 and there will be a raffle. Please bring along your friends or join a team on the night and make some new ones. Supper is available. We look forward to seeing you there.

The Village Quiz – village hall 7 March 7.30 pm

Please join us at the village hall for the annual Community Association Quiz – it is a fun evening and always very popular. Tickets are £10 and include supper so why not make up a table (maximum of eight people). As this is such a popular event we recommend early booking. Please contact our Treasurer Tom Rogerson – tarogerson@aol.com - to receive an application form.

Village Fete – Sotwell House 11 July 2-4.30 pm

As this is one of the highlights of the village calendar, we like to give plenty of notice. Jenny and David Dobbin have kindly agreed to allow us to use their lovely garden for the fete again this year. More details to follow.

Safari Supper

This will be held during September, the date is to be confirmed. More details to follow.

James Davys – Chairman

Village lunch club

The next village lunch will be held on Tuesday 3 December at 12.15pm in the village hall. To book, contact Jaqui on 836018 or Belinda on 836223.

The Red Lion

A farewell from Sue and Bob...

By the time you read this we will have handed over the running of the pub to Corinne Cook and her partner Steve (Mouse) Pryor. Once again we want to thank the village for the tremendous support they have given us over the past six months. It has been a stressful, exhausting, challenging, expensive, but also extremely fulfilling and enjoyable, time. We also have to thank all the amazing staff who have made the whole thing possible.

Unfortunately, when we took over in June the pub was in a sorry state. The extensive renovation, repairs, and upgrades have cost upwards of £20,000 so we are confident that we are handing over a pub that is in a good state and ready for Corinne and Mouse to take on and move forward. They are keen to keep the atmosphere of a local village pub at the heart of the community; and they also have lots of new and exciting ideas, which is essential in the current climate. All we ask is that you give them the same support and level of custom you have given us. The Red Lion in Brightwell is a special place and it's up to us all to keep it that way.

Thanks again and we look forward to seeing everyone at the other side of the bar soon.

Cheers

Sue and Bob

...and a hello from the new landlords

To follow on from Sue & Bob; Mouse and I would like to take this time to say hello. We would also like to say that we are very much looking forward to becoming villagers and getting to know as many of you as possible along with our beloved Labradoodle, Immy (13 years of age, very friendly and loves nothing more than a roast spud on a Sunday whilst laid in front of the fire!)

Having our own pub has been a dream of mine for probably almost all my life. Even from a very young age, I knew that one day I would get there but what I didn't know was that we would be lucky enough to take over such a wonderful pub in such a beautiful village. Being at the heart of the community was always our number one priority. To be the central hub of the village where everyone feels welcome was very important to us when we were looking at possible locations and I think we have found the perfect spot.

The process for us first started back in September when a friend of mine shared a post on FB that the pub was for sale. The very next day we came for lunch, the following week we booked a viewing and the rest they say is history and we honestly cannot wait to get stuck in.

We would like to take this time to thank Sue & Bob for trusting us with the Red Lion and for knowing we only have the best interests of you all at heart. Together, we can carry on the goodwill and excellent service they have been giving for the years before and more recently in these last 6 months. It has been a hard few months for them both and I think they now finally deserve to put their feet up and relax and enjoy being the other side of the bar!

Warmest regards

Corinne & Mouse

Modern Jive dance evening

On Thursday 13 February, Brightwell village hall is hosting a modern Jive dance evening. Sarah and Mark, our hosts and teachers for the evening have many years of experience and are in fact celebrating ten years as *Jive Temptation*.

Modern Jive is a fusion of salsa and rock 'n roll which is an easy-to-learn partner dance, although you don't need to come with a partner. Neither do you need any experience, as all tuition is given on the night.

Come along in comfortable clothes, preferably layers as we'll quickly warm up, and wear smooth bottomed shoes rather than trainers which can be too grippy.

There will be a licensed bar (tea, coffee and soft drinks will also be available) and the whole evening begins at 7pm with the first lesson at 7:30.

It's a fun session for all ages and abilities so buy your tickets now for £10 each or £12 on the door. All proceeds will go to village hall projects, so come along for some great fun and support our community while doing so.

Tickets in advance from:-

Shena Luck 01491834543 or Trisha Halstead 07968801556

Parish Council

Tennis courts

Although we financed the cleaning of the court surfaces recently, in conjunction with the Tennis Club, a grant application has been made to resurface the courts. We hope to update you all on this shortly.

Precept

The Parish Council decided at the last meeting not to ask the District Council for an increase to our precept as we are able to successfully balance our budget.

Village hall

The village hall committee has requested help with funding the plans that are being drawn up for repairs and improvements to the building. This was approved.

Little Martins development

The planning sub-committee met with representatives of Kingerlee Development and were updated on the programme for this site. We were advised that the first residents will be moving in during March and the whole project will hopefully be finished in August.

James Davys

PS – If you are still feeling the effects of the festive season the outdoor gym at the Recreation Ground is fully operational.

Village Stores and Post Office

In August 2020 our/your Community Shop will be celebrating its 10th Anniversary. We will be organising a party to celebrate, probably sometime in August, so look out for the date.

By now you will know that Sam (the Manager) has decided to leave us to branch out into a new career. We wish her every success and know you will join us in thanking her for her time with us.

Please welcome Ingria, our new manager, and Melanie, our new assistant; we hope you will be patient whilst they are in training. We are lucky that Sam is with us until the middle of February to help with the transition.

Also, you may have noticed two new people on the Post Office, Tom and Helen who came forward and volunteered to take the training. They helped out over Christmas and continue to help us (together with the other “bank staff”) to ensure we provide the Post Office service to which you have all become accustomed. This now means we have twelve trained for the Post Office, five of us volunteers. Also, some new volunteers have joined on the shop side, plus we have a new volunteer co-ordinator (Louise).

To continue to maintain the shop and the Post Office, however, we always welcome anyone who has a few hours to spare, whether that is serving in the shop, training for the Post Office or joining the Management Committee. Whichever you choose, we want you to enjoy the experience as this is the only way we can keep this a thriving community enterprise.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like to become involved.

*Celia Collett
Chairman Management Committee*

Brightwell Art Club



Our Annual Exhibition was in November last year which seems a long time ago now but thank you to everyone who came and supported us and the charity stalls which were for the Alzheimer's Society and the Children's Society. Our raffle was for SENSE, the Blind/Deaf charity.

We have an interesting programme for the Spring Term which we look forward to after the Christmas break including still life and portrait sessions, and workshops suggested by our members. You can find more about us on the Village website, www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk under “Local Services”, or pop in and see us on a Saturday morning during term time (we have coffee at about 11am). Alternatively, email me at brightwellartclub@gmail.com for further information.

Veronica Wood, Secretary

Facing our own mortality



Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on 26 February when many Christians will be marked with an ash cross on their forehead, given with the verbal reminder: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.”

Whilst the second sentence may only apply to Christians who have the hope of the resurrection and life after death, the inevitability of death is something that all must accept: we shall all return to the elements from which our bodies are temporarily constructed. This is made much clearer in the Bible where the original Hebrew words for “ground” and “man” are very closely related: “Lord God formed man (ha’adam) from the dust of the ground (ha’adamah), and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being”. Our own language has the same Latin root for “human” and “humus”, so you have been warned!

Whatever our faith, we must prepare for the inevitable, not in a morbid way, but just to be honest and practical. I often deal with bereaved families where death was a taboo subject and they have no idea what their loved ones wishes had been - they are then left to make some very difficult decisions in the midst of their grief and mourning. Some families can be torn apart by the absence of clear instructions which is the last thing that we would wish on our loved ones – so please don’t let it become the “last thing” you leave them.

So, what should we do about it?

1. Draft a will and keep it up to date. Professional help is not mandatory, but is certainly advisable. A will kit is a start, but is immediately invalidated if not properly witnessed. Don’t forget your favourite charities in your will, not least because it may significantly reduce any tax liability (our church’s buildings rely on such things!)
2. Given that death from dementia or Alzheimers is rapidly increasing (currently 1 in 8) and sometimes occurs even before retirement age, think about assigning a power of attorney, for taking decisions about your welfare or your financial affairs, or both.
3. Are you happy for any or all of your organs to be donated? The law may soon change such that the default expectation is for all rather than none, so have the discussion and make your wishes known to your next of kin.

4. Burial or Cremation: What about the environmental considerations? Where will your final resting place be? Will there be a permanent place where your loved ones can remember you?
5. Funeral arrangements: why not plan your own funeral and leave written instructions with your will, perhaps some favourite hymns, a Bible reading, psalm, poem, etc – even an outline of your life to give a structure to whoever gives your eulogy. For a church funeral, the website www.churchofenglandfunerals.org will help.
6. Finally, make a folder “In the event of my death” and keep a copy of all the above, along with financial details, account numbers, people to contact, etc and tell your family (and executor) where it is kept.

If you would like to discuss any of the above with me, then please get touch.

The Revd Kevin Beer

Email: teamvicar@wallingfordcofe.org.uk

The great paper chain challenge 2019 and community link

We did it! A huge thank you to all those who helped to make the links for the giant paper chain that was a colourful addition to St Agatha’s over the Christmas Season and New Year.

The chain measured an astonishing 163 metres! That’s 53 metres more than the paper chain we made in 2017. We even had enough to decorate the bell tower. Doing the maths; there are 14½ links per metre, so that makes an astonishing 2,363 links that were made and joined together.

It really was a community effort this time, with help from children, parents and other adults and the residents of Sotwell Hill House who contributed 11 metres of shiny chain, some of which we used to decorate the church entrance. We also had a contribution from the members of Wednesday Church, some of whom live, or have lived, in this parish.

Thank you also to those who helped me put the paper chains up and take them down!

Rev. Janice Chilton

Kindness – it costs nothing and means everything!

Here at Brightwell School, our shared culture and values mean that our children and adults are supported in a caring and nurturing way at all times. In addition to the focus on academic progress, a strong learning experience, extending beyond the classroom, enables our children to flourish. As a school staff team, we are always aware of the responsibility that working with young people brings and what a privilege it is to be in a position to shape the future. And so, at Brightwell, we place as much importance on what happens outside the classroom as we do on what goes on inside.

This term we are highlighting kindness as a way of impacting on our school, wider community and society. This can be as simple as thinking about how we feel at times when we have received and given acts of kindness. The children at this school already demonstrate a great deal of kindness, so it is not an absence of it that is encouraging this focus, but more a wider responsibility of how we want our society to behave. The Christmas period will often generate such acts of kindness and we are keen to extend this in to 2020.

Whether it is a simple thank you, an offer of help, a friendly note for someone, telling someone the reasons you admire them, or picking up some litter that isn't yours, kindness costs nothing and means everything.

If you would like to hear more or to take part in our Kindness Bingo, please have a look on our Facebook page.

Fin Lewis, Headteacher.

Save plastic bottle tops

Please wash and save all your plastic bottle tops from milk, juice, water or items with tops of a similar size. There will be a box outside the rear of the village hall and inside the front door. By recycling your tops, you are not only helping the planet but the money collected for them will help a cancer charity to buy wheelchairs for young adults.

For more information please contact Shena Luck 01491834543.

Village Annual Calendar 2020

February

Christingle Service, St Agatha's'	Sunday 2 February
Community Association Red Lion Quiz	Monday 24 February
Brightwell School February holiday	17-21 February

March

Community Association's village quiz	Saturday 7 March
Brightwell Supporting Refugees (BSR) AGM	Thursday 12 March
Mothering Sunday	Sunday 22 March
Brightwell Pop-up Bistro (BSR)	Saturday 28 March

April

Brightwell School term 4 ends	Friday 3 April
Palm Sunday procession to St James'	Sunday 5 April
Easter Festival Family Communion	Sunday 12 April
Brightwell School term 5 starts	Monday 20 April

May

VE Day 75th anniversary weekend	Friday 8 & Sunday 10 May
Save the Children Plant Sale	Saturday 16 May
Church Spring Fair, Brightwell Manor	Saturday 16 May
Brightwell School late spring holiday	25-29 May

June

Brightfest	Saturday 6 June
Summer concert at St Agatha's	Sunday 14 June

July

'Save the Bone' Music Evening	Friday 3 July
And Summer Ball	Saturday 4 July
Village Fete	Saturday 11 July
Brightwell School term 6 ends	Tuesday 21 July

August

September

Safari Supper	date tbc
Brightwell School term 1 starts	Thursday 3 September
Community Association AGM	tbc

October

Brightwell School October Holiday	26-30 October
Harvest Festival	tbc

November

Remembrance Sunday	Sunday 8 November
Art Club exhibition	tbc

December

Christmas Carol Service at St Agatha's	Sunday 20 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

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VE 75

The parish will be celebrating the 75th anniversary of VE Day on a special bank holiday - Friday 8 May. Our events will start at 2.30pm on the Rec to re-dedicate the VE Day plaque followed by the piping of "The Battle's O'er" – part of the national commemoration to mark the end of the war. We will then walk up to the pub for a good old-fashioned street party along The Street. There is lots planned during the afternoon as we wait for the church bells to ring out at 7pm. As the bells finish we will have 1940s themed dancing and music as dusk approaches.

On Sunday 10 May we will remember the fallen with a service of remembrance at St. Agatha's Church. This will include a procession from the Red Phone box Gallery to the War Memorial and the sounding of the Last Post before we move into the church. Please do put these two dates in your diaries – it promises to be a memorable weekend.

In the run-up to the May celebrations, the parish will be collecting people's memories about WW II to be displayed in St. Agatha's Church. It is intended that these memories can be about anything to do with WW II or from

anywhere - not just Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. They can be about your experiences as a child with a parent serving in the war, the bombing of the city where you were living, your time as an evacuee or maybe you served yourself and wish to mark this? It is whatever you would like to share. It also provides a chance to write down memories about the wartime experiences of a relative who is no longer with us. We would ask for these to be written down and printed along with any photos or images. More details from Amanda Wood on amandawood2004@btinternet.com or at 43 Greenmere.

Look out for further information on the VE Day celebrations but if you would like to help or have a suggestion please contact Jason Debney on 07761 169343.

Toddlers

We hope everyone has had a lovely start to the New Year! As always we are in the village hall on a Thursday morning (9.15-11.15am) to brighten your day with a cuppa, cake, and lots of toys, crafts and activities for your little ones. The group is suitable for newborns, babies, toddlers and preschoolers so please come along and say hello!

Please note we run term time only so there will be no Toddlers group on 20 February.

If anyone would like to volunteer to help us out by making drinks, setting up or playing with the children then we would love to have you! For further information please email brightwelltoddlers@gmail.com.

Laura Woodford

The Orchard Group

The Orchard Group will be pruning the apple trees and the hedges around the orchard this winter. We are looking for volunteers to help, no experience is necessary. If you would like to join in, we will publish the date on the orchard website - www.brightwellorchards.co.uk - or you could contact Paul Chilton for more information - 01494 836661. Hope to see you soon.

Alison Bloomfield

BcS Environment Group

Millennium Wood

We were very pleased to hear from a villager that two species of orchid were noted in the wood last year, a bee orchid and a pyramidal orchid. The following descriptions are from the Wildlife Trust:

- The **bee orchid** gets its name from its main pollinator - a species of bee which is thought to have driven the evolution of the flowers. To attract the bees that will pollinate the plant, it has flowers that mimic their appearance. Drawing them in with the promise of love, the bees attempt a mating. As they land on the velvet-textured lip of the flower, the pollen is transferred and the poor bee is left frustrated. Sadly, the right species of bee doesn't occur in the UK, so bee orchids are self-pollinated here. Look out for their diminutive flower spikes on dry, chalk and limestone grasslands from June to July.
- The **pyramidal orchid** is a small orchid that lives up to its name - its pink flower spike forms a pyramidal shape. It grows on chalk grassland, coastal habitats, scrub, roadside verges, old quarries and railway embankments. It flowers in June and July, its densely packed flower spike holding up to 100 flowers. It attracts a range of butterflies and moths.

It just goes to show what can be seen and we are always grateful to hear about sightings of any unusual flora and fauna.

Work is still ongoing to finish the pond which we plan to complete within a few weeks.

Weather

- The rainfall recorded at Highlands Farm was 84.8mm in November and 90.7mm in December which was the wettest month for 2019.
- The Met Office maps also indicate that the general area received around 125% or more of the average rainfall in each of these months. This is also reflected in the overall rainfall for autumn.
- The total for 2019 was 651.6mm which made it the 8th wettest since 1999. The highest was 824.2mm in 2000 and the lowest 467.7mm in 2011.
- The Met Office indicates that the 2019 rainfall for the area is about average.

- The year will no doubt be remembered for the hottest day ever in the UK with 38.7deg C recorded for Cambridge and 36.5deg C for Wallingford.
- The daily maximum for the area was about 1.5 deg C above the long-term average between 1961 – 1990.

The Met Office comments “*The decade 2010 to 2019 holds eight [note one December record from 2019 is still pending verification] high UK temperature records, compared with only one low-temperature record in the set of official Met Office UK climate extremes.*”

Dr Mark McCarthy, head of the National Climate Information Centre, said: “*It is notable how many of these extreme records have been set in the most recent decade and how many more of them are reflecting high- rather than low-temperature extremes: a consequence of our warming climate. It is to be hoped that governments around the world act decisively to stand some chance of managing climate change.*”

Steve Capel-Davies

Sustainable Living Fair

Saturday 7 March - put the date in your diary now. It's an opportunity to share ideas about how to reduce our impact on the environment and campaign to persuade government and business to react faster to the developing climate and environmental emergency.

There will be information stalls, short talks and shared food. You can find out more about green finance, tree planting, repair and repurposing, car sharing, growing your own food and many other ways of making your life more sustainable.

The fair will take place at St Mary-le-More Church, Wallingford after 1pm when the local market ends.

If you would like to help with this or have an idea for an information stall, or a 20 minute talk please email me on acgriff9@phonecoop.coop.

Amanda Griffin

Village Litter Pick - 14 March

If you want to take part contact Alison Wood on 07541 106046 or 01491 0824791 or alison@aaacw.co.uk. Meet at Slade End Farm 9.45am.

Allsorts preschool

The children have moved on from the excitement of the Christmas festivities and have settled into the winter term. The big Nativity performance was a great success, with the baby Jesus arriving on time despite the presence of a dinosaur and lion in the stable at the time. Songs were sung beautifully and the Christmas crafts were taken home to share with families.

Now we have moved into winter, where the children start to learn that gloves, hats and coats are usually a good idea, not that they would ever agree of course. The children love to feel the smooth ice, crunch on the frosty grass, roll in the snow, see the bare bones of the winter trees and feel the comfort of a warm blanket. Children do not shy away from cold weather if given a choice and we are always firm believers of the idea that there is never bad weather, just bad clothing. The children smile and laugh in the cold, appreciating the warmth of the sun on a winter afternoon, just keep moving, keep jumping, keep singing children.

We are looking at a “Healthy Me” this term, with a focus on healthy foods that the children enjoy at home and healthy foods from abroad. We will be working with families to compile healthy lunch ideas, recipes and healthy swaps. There will be lots of baking too and looking closely at fruit/vegetables, where they come from, what they smell, taste, look and feel like. We will use them in our arts and crafts too, creating a healthy eating rainbow. We would love to hear from you if you are a health professional and willing to come to talk with the children on this topic. We will also be looking at growing later on in the term, so if there are any keen gardeners who are willing to help the children grow something, we would also love to hear from you. Please email me at: manager@allsortspreschool.org.

Work is continuing on our rebrand to Brightwell Pre-school, with the changes slowly rolling out. Do look out for our exciting plans in the Spring.

Natasha Hillier, Manager Allsorts Preschool

Make do & mend

Learn a new skill, up-cycle your wardrobe, and enjoy a two course meal and welcome drink, all for just £28. In aid of Marie Curie.

Wednesday 5 February, The Cartshed, Preston Crowmarsh.

To book your ticket please, email charlottetodd80@gmail.com.

Wassail

The 2020 Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Wassail was as big and merry as usual with almost 700 people taking part as we woke our village orchards up and marked the end of Christmas on Twelfth Night. It was so special to start at Mackney in the magnificent barn of Smalls House. Special thanks to Dani and Jonathan for hosting us and letting us dance on their lawn and bang sticks on their apple trees. Wassailers were given Lamb’s Wool cider punch (made to an ancient village recipe by Helen Satchel and Alison Hedges) and listened to wonderful folk music by village band The Shady Wilcox Experience (AKA The Hot Ashes). At 3 pm, the Wassail Party set off, led by Robert Field, the Grand Wassail Master and his apprentice Marcus Harris followed by this year’s Guns (Ed George and Chris Freemantle). The Party was piped into the barn by Sue and Harry and followed by not one but three different Morris sides – Armallagen, Datchet Border Morris and Borderline Morris – big thanks to these three groups.

The gathered Wassailers were greeted by John Sheard, our Mackney Wassail Master, who also provided two orchards for us to Wassail in (thanks to Monica for even more mulled cider to help us on our way!). Before moving from the Smalls House barn, we were treated to the fabulous annual Mummers’ play “St George and the Wassail Dragon” written and performed by the Brightwell Players and the Wassail Prayer, given by Rev. Janice. We chose a Wassail King and Queen in the traditional way, this year ending up with two Queens – very modern (thanks to Lucy our Chancellor of the Trees and Sara Beddall for making the cakes). We danced a massive Shepherds Hey on the Rec and were treated to fireworks in the Community Orchard lit by our Firestarter Bruce Gordon, The Keeper of the Wassail Flame!

The afternoon finished in the dark outside the Red Lion with the annual fire dance performed for the very first time by Datchet Morris – what could have gone wrong? All in all, a very enjoyable day, huge fun and a great celebration of our village fruit growing past. What better reminder that we are a rural parish and wish to stay so!

Jason Debney

Mummers’ postscript

On Wassail eve; 12th night to you,

A Mummers’ play was run.

The Brightwell Players, a motley crew,

They certainly had some fun.

The 4 act play was interspersed
by a 3 course extravaganza.
A simply delicious caponata
And Barbara's' great Lasagna.

There are many traditional plays
From Snow White to Aladdin.
But they are all blown away
By St George and the Wassail Dragon.

The play opened with a speech
From a Trump impersonator.
Under orange tan and awful wig
Who was that perpetrator?

St George fought Trump's mate Mike Pence
And he was nearly destroyed.
It took two docs to save him,
Bogoff and Emma Royd.

And then appeared the dragon herself
A green vision from above.
Fairy Nuff worked her magic spell
and with Chance she fell in love.

Trump's interest in Orchards has waned
The NHS, his new desire.
Steph O'Scope puts him right
and they set his pants on fire.

The play ends with Chance and bride
Heading off to wedded bliss.
And if you didn't get to see it,
You don't know what you missed.

Praise to Robert, Roy, William and John,
To Caroline, Anne, Ben, Dave
To Rachel, Bob, Sue, Helen, and Ben
To Ann, Luca and Maeve
To Maddy, Peter, Emilia, Bill.
To all who worked to promote it
That's our great director, Chris
And trump the bloke what wrote it.



Andy Lewis

Red Box Gallery

A photographic display of the Wassail festivities will be on display in our own Brightwell gallery later in January.

And later this Spring, Brightwell Bees will be taking over the same space. It is hard to believe it is now 14 years since Viv & Steve Moll of Brightwell Bees started their beekeeping journey. In March they will be having a display in the Red Box Gallery. Go inside to learn more about the beehive.

Robert Seater

Brightwell Supporting Refugees – Update

Last year, Brightwell Supporting Refugees raised over £12,000 thanks to the generosity of villagers. The money is helping Syrian refugees in schools in Jordan and the Rhino Camp High School in North West Uganda. This year we plan to extend our donations to help refugees that continue to arrive at the Greek Island of Lesbos and to a local charity, Host Abingdon, that supports Syrian refugee families. We've raised money through a number of well attended events, including the Summer Concert, Wallingford School Fun Run, the BrightFest tea tent, George Potter's fabulous Jazz Night, the Red Lion Quiz and Carols in St James Church. Thank you for your continuing support.

This year's first event was Mike Bartlett's talk on screen and stage writing – a rare chance to find out how a playwright enters the mind of his characters. He described the genesis of his highly successful BBC series, **Dr Foster**. His



stage adaptation of the Greek tragedy, Medea seeded the idea of a wife seeking revenge for her husband's infidelity. The antics of this deliciously vengeful GP became unmissable viewing for over nine million people across the nation. Using a clip from the opening scene, Mike carried out a forensic deconstruction of the way it was edited, explaining that the inclusion of a brief smile was vital to ensure the audience loved her character.

He went on to talk about how his award-winning play, **King Charles III**, was adapted for television. Mike wrote the original stage play in iambic pentameters and clearly enjoyed the process. He confessed that writing in blank verse was so addictive, he began to understand why Shakespeare plays were so long. (His first draft was over four hours and needed heavy pruning.) On the big screen in the village hall we watched in awe as Tim Piggot-Smith gave his opening monologue (and last performance) as King Charles, reflecting on his long wait for the crown and ominous future as King.

Mike treated the audience to a sneak preview of his new BBC drama series, **Life**, which is still in the edit room. We were drawn into a highly charged scene featuring Alison Steadman and Peter Davison, as she confronts her terminally ill husband with his infidelity. Arresting TV – and once again the chance to tease apart, not only why the scene works, but how to make it even stronger. Mike’s insights into how he creates such potent drama will make us all watch TV with new eyes.

Thanks to the efforts of John Burdass’s video archaeology, we were also able to enjoy a few scenes from the aptly named **A Head of Its Time** one of Mike’s first forays on film, shot in Brightwell when he was a schoolboy.

It was a thought-provoking evening and we are lucky to have such talented people in the village prepared to give up their time to help raise funds for Brightwell Supporting Refugees.

You can look forward to further talks, concerts and film screenings over the next year. We hope to have a special screening of *For Sama*, the BAFTA-nominated documentary about a Syrian family surviving the onslaught in Aleppo. And on 28 March there will be another Pop-Up Bistro at the Jubilee Pavilion – a chance to savour Caroline Oakley’s French cuisine accompanied by a band playing French café music – tickets available shortly. Places will be limited so if you would like to reserve one, contact us on brightwellrefugees@gmail.com

David Dugan

Wallingford Photographic Club

Wallingford Photographic Club meets every Thursday at 7.30pm for an 8pm start (7.45 start on competition evenings) at Crowmarsh Pavilion – visitors are always welcome! See www.wallingfordphoto.club for more information.

In February there will be a practical evening on the 6th, then on the 13th there will be a talk by Peter Greenway on “The Challenge of Photographing The National Trust”. On the 20th, professional fine-art photographer Viveca Koh will give a talk called “The Joy of Seeing – Photography My Way”. Finally, on the 27th we will have our annual “battle” competition against Abingdon Camera Club (to be held in Abingdon).

In March we will have a two-part talk by Brian Worley on the topics of “Live Shoot With A Single Light” and “Compacts” on the 5th. Then on the 12th there will be a competition on the subject of “Reflections”. The 19th will be a practical evening and on the 26th we will have our annual “battle” competition against Whitchurch Hill Camera Club.

Emily Dunn

Volunteering opportunities

Citizens Advice

We are a local charity providing free, confidential advice. Last year, our 150 skilled advisers helped over 11,000 local people from advice centres in Abingdon, Didcot, Faringdon, Henley, Thame and Wallingford and we helped three quarters to resolve their problems.

Citizens Advice in South and Vale needs volunteers to help with:

- Reception duties in Abingdon, Henley and Thame
- Advisers in Abingdon and Didcot
- Head office administration in Abingdon
- IT support in Didcot and Thame
- Fundraising (from any location)
- Communications and website designers (from any location)

For volunteers, we offer a welcoming office environment and an opportunity to gain new skills, meet new people and make a real and valued contribution to your local community. It’s up to you when you volunteer. We normally ask for two half days a week but can be flexible. If you are interested, please follow this link:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/oxfordshire-south-vale/volunteer/>. Or, if you would like to discuss these volunteering roles, please email Jon Bright, Director: jon.bright@osavcab.org.uk.

Wallingford Museum

We would love to hear from anyone interested in volunteering, whether to be a custodian, assist with the archive, delve into research, assist at events, or be a walk guide etc. If you would like to join our team please contact Jenny Carpenter 01491 826734, jenacarpenter@hotmail.co.uk.

Winter Warmth campaign

This campaign of Oxfordshire County Council is aimed at helping vulnerable residents to stay independent, safe and well in their homes. It will start from the middle of January to run indefinitely.

Housing can affect physical and mental health, especially if people can't find the help they need. A single point of contact has been created, where residents (or carers) can make a referral to the most appropriate organisation, based on postcodes, to get the help they need.

The type of help that can be provided are new boilers, repairs to boilers, loft or cavity wall insulation, access to a local and trustworthy repairs service and general advice on how to stay safe, well and affordably warm in your home.

For more information or to make a referral, visit www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/homerepairs.

Kate Eveleigh

In brief – round and about

Wallingford Museum: reopens Tuesday 3 March

Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society: The next talk will be given by Dr Elaine Jamieson (Reading University) "The Re-Use of Castles" Wednesday 12 February, 7.45 for 8pm, at St Mary's Church, Wallingford. Visitors (£4) are most welcome.

"Guys & Dolls" at the Wallingford Corn Exchange from Tuesday 10 to Saturday 14 March, 7.30pm plus matinee at 2.30pm on Saturday 14th (featuring as Sarah our very own Emma Parr, nee Lewis).

Also at the Corn Exchange, Sinodun Players present Agatha Christie's intense family drama, "A Daughter's A Daughter". From 1-4 April, Corn Exchange, Wallingford.

Tickets for both shows are available from the Corn Exchange box office 01491 825000 or <http://www.cornexchange.org.uk>.

Cholsey Repair Café at The Pavilion in Station Road on Saturday 15 March. Expert fixers will endeavour to assist in return for cost of parts and donation towards operating costs.

VILLAGE DIARY

February

2	Christingle service	St Ag	4pm
11	WI Meeting – talk on Changi quilts	VH	7.45
13	Modern Jive dance evening with refreshments	VH	7pm
17	Coffee link-up	Root I	10-12
24	Red Lion quiz in aid of the Community Association		7.30pm

March

7	Sustainable Living Fair	St Marys	1pm
7	Community Association Annual village quiz	VH	7.30pm
10	Village Lunch	VH	12.15
10	WI Annual General Meeting	VH	7.45pm
12	Brightwell Supporting Refugees AGM	Church Rm	7.30pm
14	Village Litter Pick (starting Slade End Farm)		9.45
16	Coffee link-up	Root I	10-12
22	Mothering Sunday service	St Ag	9.30am
28	Brightwell Supporting Refugees Pop-up Bistro	Pav	TBA

Advance Notice

See pages 12-13 for the Annual Village Calendar 2020

Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

Grey bins	Thursdays 6 & 20 February
	Thursdays 5 & 19 March
Green (& brown) bins	Thursdays 13 & 27 February
	Thursdays 12 & 26 March

Village website

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