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# Editorial

It's not too late I hope to wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous 2016.

Although Christmas seems a long time ago now, it was great to see so many people out and about and supporting the music and art events in the village, which I think was looking especially pretty this year with all the lights in the trees and gardens. The Christmas concert in its new format was a particular hit I think. Let's hope it has encouraged more of you to take part in it next year as it was good fun to do so (speaking personally). The festivities were rounded off with the traditional Wassailing in early January. Despite the rain and dampness underfoot a good crowd 'wassailed' around the orchards accompanied by music, torches and lots of noise. Our cover image shows the wassailers setting off from the Red Lion (thank you Keith Brooks who took this picture), and you can read more about it on page 8.

On a more serious note, the new year brings changes and decisions are soon to be taken on the future of our village postal services. Our current sub-post office cannot continue in the Stewart Hall and as Ceila Collett, chairman of the Village Stores Management Committee, writes on page 6, the proposal is to take it into the village shop. There are pros and cons in doing this as was apparent in discussions at an earlier members' meeting in November. The shop management committee have decided to support the proposal after extensive negotiations and gathering of more evidence since then. The final decision will be taken by members in a secret ballot at an Extraordinary meeting to be held on 2 February in the village hall. For the latest on the debate, including how two other villages have got on when the post office was put into their shop, take a look at the Brightwell website [www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk](http://www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk). Varying views are expressed in our Letters section on page 3-4 and a \*Stop Press\* article from our present subpostmaster on page 23.

If you are a Facebook user, there is an opportunity to add your pennyworth to the debate on the Brightwell Community Facebook page (or comment there on any other issue from dog fouling to lost cats). By the way, if you go on, you will see some lovely pictures of the opening of the new Red Box Gallery (opposite the Red Lion). If you haven't been along yet, its worth popping in as some exquisite drawings of wildlife by local artist and author Robert Giddings are currently being exhibited.

*Helen Connor*

# Letters

## **Dog fouling**

Following complaints of dog fouling in the park by the school, I went yesterday to put signs up in the park area asking people to pick up after their dog. Unfortunately children are treading in the dog faeces and then treading it into school.

There is a certain irony in my ‘sign putting-up’ as when I got into the police van I realised I had trodden a huge piece of dog faeces into the van via my boot which I had trodden on in the park. This was extremely unpleasant and myself and my colleague had to use what we could from our first aid kit to clean this faeces from the van and my boot. It took us over 30 minutes and we were retching from the smell. If you saw a Police Community Support Officer in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell with her trouser leg rolled up dancing in a puddle that was me trying to clean my boot!

This is really unpleasant and easily solved by dog owners picking up dog faeces and putting in the dog faeces bin in the park. I own a dog and always pick up after him. It only takes a minute and is the responsible thing to do.

*PCSO Sue Harris*

## **Post Office in the Village Stores?**

We are all, I am sure, very grateful to Celia Collett and Gina Coupar for their efforts in extracting a proposal from the Post Office for a continuing service in the village. We would all like to see a Post Office service in the village but it is important that the question clearly is “Do we want a Post Office in the Village Stores?”. There are other possible locations in the village.

A huge amount of effort went into creating the Village Stores. It has developed well under Steph and now Margot and Mandy but it is still only just covering its cash costs and not making a profit. If the Post Office relocation were to add to the expenses of running the Village Stores, it could turn it into an unsustainable loss. A number of volunteers also have understandable concerns about the practicalities of putting the Post Office in the Village Stores with its requirements for privacy and space. We cannot put the future of the Village Stores at risk.

I understand that there will be an Extraordinary General Meeting before any vote is taken – hopefully from every member, not only those attending the EGM, by way of postal and proxy votes. They must have all the commercial and practical information presented to them to make a balanced decision – and be told of other venues.

*Jim Sanger*

## **Revised Post Office plans**

I do hope that a means can be found to keep the Post Office in the village. Unfortunately, for the following reasons, the present P.O. plc. proposal is unsatisfactory.

- (i) The addition of a P.O. counter will seriously overcrowd the shop at busy times. It will make difficulties both for shop staff and customers and may discourage volunteers.
- (ii) The P.O. equipment will take up valuable space which is currently used to display shop goods.
- (iii) The proposed PO hours are unreasonably long and it is likely that we will be unable to find people (volunteers or employees) who will be prepared to staff them.
- (iv) The P.O. plc. is offering nothing for salaries of the P.O. employees and no rent for the space the P.O. will take up.

We must investigate how we could make arrangements to provide at least some of the services which the P.O. at present provides. Some suggestions are:

- (i) Install an ATM. As shop takings can be banked in an ATM this could make banking more convenient for the shop and reduce banking fees.
- (ii) Arrange a “cash -back” service from the till.
- (iii) Sell stamps, paper, padded envelopes and install a franking machine.
- (iv) Arrange transport for pensioners to Wallingford to collect pensions once a week.

Other suggestions for compensating for the potential loss of the Post Office should be sought.

*Garry McCracken*

# Community Association

## **Christmas concert – Friday 11 December 2015**

It was great to see so many people enjoy a festive fun-filled concert in the village hall. It was a different format this year with many of our local groups showcasing their talent. There were so many memorable performances from all sections of our Community ranging from the Scouts shadow play to the WI's rendition of the classic "These boots are made for walking".

So, a big thank you to them for taking part and to Andy Lewis, John Burdass and Helen Baines for organising it (with great behind-the-scenes help from Chris Baines).

## **Christmas hampers**

Profits from the concert go 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 again for this.

We are very grateful to Celia Collett and Margot Shawyer for selecting and sourcing the hamper items and to the scouts and cubs (especially Hilary Rogerson, Tim Scane and families) 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 19 March 2016 at 7:30**

Many apologies for my mistake in *The Villager* last time – the date should have read Saturday 19 March (not 16). We plan to send entry forms to all teams that took part last year. Anyone else who wants to enter a team should contact me on 01491 834195.

Numbers are limited because of the event's popularity and fire regulations, so entries will be accepted in strict order of first receipt of completed forms. All entry forms will be despatched at the same time to ensure everyone has an equal chance of acceptance.

## **Advance dates for the diary in 2016**

Saturday 19 March	Village quiz in the village hall
Saturday 9 July	Village fete at Sotwell House
Sunday 28 September	Run Fun from the Donkey Sanctuary
Friday 9 December	Christmas Concert in the village hall

*James Davys, Chairman*

# The Village Shop

Members of the Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Community Village Stores Ltd are being asked to vote on whether to take the Post Office services into the Community Shop. A secret ballot will take place at an Extraordinary meeting in the Village Hall on 2 February. The results of the ballot will be posted on the village website, the notice board at the front of the Village Hall and in the shop on the following morning.

The Management Committee is supporting the Post Office Local proposal as a sound business and community venture. It has reached this decision after extensive negotiations with the Post office, gathering and carefully considering all the facts and evidence received from a number of sources and in the knowledge that the contract can be reviewed after one year. However, on following a co-operative democratic process, the final decision will be taken by a secret ballot of the members.

A big thank you goes to our staff (Margot and Mandy), our volunteers and customers for making 2015 a great year for the Community Stores. We were very encouraged with the sales particularly over the Christmas period and hope you enjoyed the range of Christmas food and gifts on offer, together with the wide range of goods, especially local, we stock all year round.

The 2016 Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Village Calendar sold out twice! Thank you to the local photographers who provided the pictures. Start taking photos as your picture could be featured in next year's calendar.

*Celia Collett*  
*Chairman of the Management Committee*

# Brightwell Brownies

Brightwell Brownies meet on a Monday evening to have lots of fun and adventures! They have spaces for new Brownies (girls aged 7-9) from January. The group's activities include games, trips out, cooking and crafts as well as learning about our world and our community. This term for example we will be going to the pantomime and having a torch-lit night in the dark!

If you would like your daughter to come along, please get in touch with the Brown Owl Tora Hallatt (07827 239094). We meet in the Stewart Village Hall, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell.

*Tora Hallatt*

# Parish Council

## **Queen's birthday celebrations**

This year, Her Majesty the Queen will be celebrating her 90th birthday. The Nation has been invited to join these celebrations over the weekend 11-12 June by holding a street party. The Parish Council will be discussing this at the January meeting.

## **Traffic survey**

The report of the traffic survey which was recently carried out is expected in January; more news of this will be in the next *Villager*.

## **Broadband**

Many areas in the village are still experiencing low broadband speeds. The Parish Council is looking at how other villages have achieved higher speeds through companies such as Gigaclear.

## **Neighbourhood plan**

As reported in the last *Villager* the Neighbourhood Working Group is preparing the draft "Site Selection Criteria", and this will be consulted on with the community through an open meeting in early spring (see page 11).

*Celia Collett*

# Brightwell Art Club

A big thank you to everyone who came along to our Exhibition at the beginning of December. This is the highlight of the Art Club year and we do hope you enjoyed looking at our work, and also at the local crafts which were on display. There are some photos of the Exhibition in the Photo Gallery which you can find on the main menu of the village website - [brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk](http://brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk) - so do take a look.

We are now looking forward to our spring term with a number of interesting workshops already planned. We are a friendly club and if you would like to know more about us you can find us on the village website under 'local services' (just follow instructions), or you can contact me at [brightwellartclub@gmail.com](mailto:brightwellartclub@gmail.com).

*Veronica Wood*

# Save the Children

Carols around the Christmas tree raised £467.10 on Christmas Eve, and since then we have had further donations of £132 bringing the total raised to £599.10p for the children caught up in the Syrian crisis.

Many thanks to Clive, Yies Reed (sound), James Moore (poem), Marcus Harris (you know who!) for their help on the night, plus our sponsors Clive Collett Electrical Ltd, Root One (the Christmas tree) and Slade End Garden Company.

*Celia Collett*



## A 'Wassailing' 2016

Another year of wacky fun for the residents of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell as vast numbers joined in the Wassailing on Sunday 3 January. An event which is fast becoming a fixture on the village calendar, it raises the human spirits in the aftermath of Christmas festivities and wards off evil spirits in the village fruit orchards ensuring a good harvest for the year.

We all enjoyed beating the trees with sticks and feeding them with cider soaked bread in the tradition of wassailing, but this year we were treated to Brightwell-cum-Sotwell's own minstrel band to lead us in the revelling as well as the musical expertise and dancing energy of Armaleggan. We even had a Mummers play enacted in the Community Orchard, courtesy of Sue Robson and thespian friends. What fun!! Fireworks and hot spiced apple juice rounded off the evening to the content of all.

Huge thanks to Robert Field who organised it and to all those who made Wassailing such an enjoyable event.

*Sue Hunt*



# Brightwell Parish – St Agatha’s with St James’

## **New vicar appointed**

Good news! I am very pleased to say that we have a new Team Vicar. The Revd Kevin Beer has been appointed as Team Vicar to the Wallingford team, with pastoral responsibilities for Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and Crowmarsh Gifford.

Kevin (not surprisingly known as “Rev Kev”) is currently completing his curacy in Beaconsfield where he works in three different churches each with different churchmanship, congregation sizes, ages and parish profiles. Kevin, and his wife Lesley-Ann, know this part of South Oxfordshire having lived in Abingdon for several years and are looking forward to returning to the area. He is involved in the Oxford diocese Cursillo group and will bring enthusiasm, experience with young people, a background in IT, and a passion for sharing the gospel to the job. Kevin should arrive in late April and there will be a special service to install and welcome him. We will also organise opportunities for the village to meet their new vicar.

## **Christmas services**

Christmastime saw many parishioners come to church for the special services and to worship the baby born to be our King and Saviour. The annual Carol Service, Crib Service and Midnight Communion gave the parish chances to remember the true meaning of Christmas and it was very good to see healthy numbers at these services.

## **Lent and Easter**

Before Kevin arrives to lead the spiritual aspect of the parish, the work of the church continues and the church year moves on to Lent and then Easter time. Coming up on 6 March is a Mothering Sunday service at St Agatha’s, followed by services on Palm Sunday (at St James’) on 20 March, Good Friday on 25<sup>th</sup> and Easter Day on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup>. The St Agatha’s and St James’ congregations will join the Free Church congregation to celebrate a Maundy Thursday meal together on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

Happy New Year!

*Margot Shawyer, Churchwarden*

# Save Our Bells

## **Contributions ongoing**

Although the Bells Restoration Appeal reached its initial target of £45,000 in November, financial support has continued to be received which is very encouraging. Primarily this has been through grants from charitable trusts in response to applications made earlier in the campaign. Trusts may hold just two or three meetings a year to consider grant applications, so consequently awards can be forthcoming many months after requests are submitted.

These grants would not have been awarded without the evidence of tremendous support from our own local community. They put the Appeal in an excellent position to meet additional needs.

## **The PCC pledge**

At the start of the campaign, our Parochial Church Council (PCC) generously pledged to contribute 10% of the initial target. This sum would have needed to be met through separate PCC fundraising, but the main Appeal has generated sufficient funds to obviate the need for such additional activity.

## **Further known restoration needs**

The original quotation for restoration of the bells was based on a minimal, essential work requirement. As with any project, additional costs will invariably be incurred; further tower reinforcement work is certainly necessary to ensure the structure is sound for the future. Any extra funding may enable additional, related areas to be addressed. One particular task would be to improve the ease and safety of access up the church tower to the bells for ongoing maintenance; at present only Tarzan can make this journey with any degree of confidence.

## **Further unknown restoration needs**

It is also possible that some essential work on the bells or fittings will not become apparent until after the bells have been lowered and removed to White's of Appleton – this is the nature of this type of project and, like the scouts, we should be prepared. A previously unidentified crack in a bell, for example, could require another £3,000 to repair.

## **At the end of the day .....**

Appeal funds can only be used for the bells, not diverted towards other church restoration. Many grants have been received in the form of pledges, to be paid

upon completion of the work. Should there be any element of overfunding once the project has successfully been completed, not all of these need to be taken up.

While the funding activity may be drawing to a close, financial control remains critical. The Building Committee under the majestic control of David Greasby will continue to take the project forward. In the next issue of *The Villager*, David will be describing in more detail the background to the restoration and the next steps. A display board in St Agatha's will be set up to give a regular update on future progress.

Once again, our sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed in any way to this project.

*Tony Lascelles*

## Neighbourhood Plan Update

The Neighbourhood Plan is moving forward and we are now ready to consult on our Local Site Selection Criteria. These will form part of the way that any sites earmarked for development in the final plan will be chosen.

We will put the draft criteria up on the parish website in mid February (with details on how to comment) and also hold a public meeting on 10 March at St. Agatha's Church at 7.30pm. At this meeting we will update you on our progress and give you the chance to let us know if you agree with our draft criteria.

It is an important meeting. The future shape and size of our community will be decided by this plan so I look forward to seeing as many of you as can make it.

*Jason Debney*  
*Neighbourhood Plan*

# Village annual calendar 2016 – main events

## February

Brightwell School first half of spring term ends	12 February
Brightwell School spring term restarts	22 February

## March

Community Association's village quiz in the village hall	19 March
Palm Sunday service at St James'	20 March
Brightwell School spring term ends	24 March
Good Friday / Easter Day services at St Agatha's	25 & 27 March

## April

Brightwell School summer term starts	11 April
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## May

Allsorts garden trail	8 May
Brightwell School first half of summer term ends	27 May
Church spring fair	TBA

## June

Brightwell School summer term restarts	6 June
Queen's birthday celebrations	11-12 June
Summer concert at St Agatha's	26 June

## July

Village fete at Sotwell House	9 July
Brightwell School summer term ends	21 July

## September

Brightwell autumn term starts	5 September
Harvest festival	TBA
Community Association Fun Run	25 September

## October

Brightwell School first half of autumn term ends	21 October
Brightwell School autumn term restarts	31 October

## **November**

Remembrance Sunday

13 November

## **December**

Art Club exhibition

10 December

Community Association Christmas concert

9 December

Brightwell autumn term ends

20 December

## **What's on at the Red Lion**

### **February:**

Special Valentine's dinner menu on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup>

Sunday music nights:

- Open Mic Night on 7<sup>th</sup>

- Live music from singer and guitarist, Al Jenkins on 14<sup>th</sup>

- Jazz Jam on 21<sup>st</sup>

- Music from *Other Way Up* (Jazz group) on 28<sup>th</sup>

Friday Fish Night on 26<sup>th</sup>

Monday Quiz Night for Nuffield Church on 29<sup>th</sup>

### **March:**

St David's Night Dinner – special Welsh-themed menu on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup>

Mothers Day (free bubbles and chocolates for mum with Sunday lunch) on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> followed by Open Mic night in evening

Sunday music nights:

- Live music from singer and guitarist, Al Jenkins on 13<sup>th</sup>

- Jazz Jam on 20<sup>th</sup>

- Stanley Moon Trio on 27<sup>th</sup>

St Patrick's Night Dinner – special Irish-themed menu on 17<sup>th</sup>

Friday Fish Night on 25<sup>th</sup>

Monday quiz for Action on Podoconiosis on 28<sup>th</sup> (see page 15)

# Allsorts garden fundraising update

## Garden trail – Sunday 8 May

2016 is promising to be an exciting year for Allsorts, as we will be running a ‘Brightwell-cum-Sotwell garden trail’ on Sunday 8 May. Funds from the event will help to top up the pot for our garden initiative, which aims to raise £20,000 to create a beautiful play-garden to replace the, very tired, existing one.

The trail promises to be a real treat, featuring a selection of the village’s best gardens. Highlights will include talks and demonstrations from resident horticulturalists Paul Chilton and Ali Quantrell (University of Oxford Botanic Garden), Jason Debney sharing his expertise in garden history, a childrens’ garden and a garden given over to folk music. We will also be showcasing what donations over the last year have made possible in our own garden. Please do put 8 May date in your diaries and come along and support us.

## Allsorts memories

An installation in the Phone Box Gallery will also run in May to coincide with the garden trail. This will be based on memories of Allsorts – or ‘playgroup’ as it was historically known – from local people. We started collecting these memories last year to mark our 40<sup>th</sup> year celebrations and have some lovely stories. However, we could do with a few more. Did your children go to the preschool? Are you a former pupil? Have you worked there or do you have any other connection? We would love to hear your memories as well as what you are doing now. Please email [allsortsfundraising@gmail.com](mailto:allsortsfundraising@gmail.com) with your stories and pictures.

## Thank you

Finally, we would like to say a big thank you for the help and support we have received from villagers over the last year. Our fundraising programme is vital for Allsorts as government-funded hours and fees only cover staff wages and basic running costs. Our fees are much lower than nursery fees, so that we keep early years education affordable for all. Special projects, like the garden, tend to get left until they need a lot of attention – and a lot of money too.

With best wishes for a happy and fulfilling 2016,

*Kristen Dudley and Sally Jackson (Allsorts fundraising)*

# Pub quiz on Monday 28 March in aid of Action on Podoconiosis



## **Podo what?**

Podoconiosis is a non-infectious neglected tropical disease caused by irritant minerals from alkaline volcanic soil entering the skin of the feet through cuts and abrasions. It mainly affects poor, illiterate, subsistence farmers who walk barefoot. It causes elephantiasis of the lower legs and feet with swelling and nodules. Frequent acute pain in the legs results in lost workdays with a subsequent loss of income. Those with the disease are stigmatized and unable to marry, go to school or take part in village life. The disease occurs in 20 countries in the world. In Ethiopia where I have been working over the last 4 years it affects 3 million people with 19 million at risk. There is no cure but it is treatable.

## **Action on Podoconiosis Clinics**

The six clinics run by this charity are based in the rural highland areas of south west Ethiopia where the rates of disease are high. In each clinic there is a nurse and social worker. Patients are taught how to treat their legs and feet with a daily lifetime combination of washing, soaking and the application of moisturizers. Soap, bleach for purifying the water and moisturizers are supplied monthly at a nominal cost. Leather shoes which are custom made may also be provided. Within 3 months there is a noticeable change in their legs and feet with reduced swelling, less wounds and less malodour. The result is a major improvement in the quality of their lives.

## **How you can help**

Please support the work of this small but very effective charity by coming to the pub quiz on 28 March and by buying raffle tickets. Further information can be found at: [actiononpodoconiosis.org](http://actiononpodoconiosis.org).

*Jill Brooks*

# Allsorts preschool

## **On the News**

The Allsorts children enjoyed a moment of fame when they appeared on BBC Oxford News in November. Allsorts was used as an example of a preschool which encourages children to appreciate and enjoy their natural surroundings. It formed part of a piece about a petition against the removal of nature-related words from the Oxford Children Dictionary. The children were filmed on one of their popular forest school outings, paddling in the Wellspring stream and collecting sticks. Our manager Julie had a small speaking part, and the children really enjoyed the filming, competing to show off their nature findings to the correspondent.

## **Christmas fun**

The children also had a fantastic time over the festive period. They produced a range of creative and delicious Christmas goodies to bring home as well as enjoying a Christmas party, lunch and carols at the Church. The highlight for the children and parents was the nativity play, where the children impressed family and carers with their impeccable behaviour and beautifully sung songs. The children also decorated plates to adorn a tree in the style of when 'Santa Got Stuck up a Chimney' in St Mary's Church as part of the Wallingford Christmas Tree Festival.

Their Christmas craft has also been used as the latest exhibit in the Brightwell phone box. A big thank you goes to the staff for arranging all of these well organised events. Thank you too to Root One which once again kindly donated a Christmas tree for our playroom, and to Salvador's Deli which supplied thermal beakers for drinks for the nativity play.

Our Christmas hamper raffle and refreshments at the nativity play, plus stall at the school Christmas fair raised over £100 for our fundraising account. We also joined forces with Wallingford Baby Bar (the breastfeeding support charity) to raise funds by selling Phoenix greetings cards through preschool. To date, this has raised over £100 towards preschool.

## **This term**

This term we have welcomed five new children to Allsorts. Our theme for the term will be 'arctic/winter'. We will also be continuing with our weekly French, yoga-inspired Tatty Bumpkin, and Forest School sessions. The children are also using our literacy and numeracy area in small groups every week.



Allsorts still has spaces available for a number of sessions this year. Please contact us at [allsortsadmin@btinternet.com](mailto:allsortsadmin@btinternet.com) if you are interested in knowing more, or would like to look round the preschool. We are open every morning and Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. We also encourage early bookings for next year to guarantee your place and help us in our planning.

*Allsorts Team*



## Brightwell-cum-Sotwell

We brought the year to a close with a festive evening where the committee provided the refreshments of mince pies and mulled wine whilst the members were entertained by storyteller Chloe Lees. We re-entered the magic of childhood with her tales from Russia and, much nearer home, of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

A few days later some members took part in the Village Christmas Concert. A new venture for us and very satisfying and, I think, well received. We have the confidence now to give it another go next December if we are asked.

We celebrated our 12<sup>th</sup> birthday in January with a party. A very good start to a new year.

As we go from strength to strength with our innovative programmes we are happy to welcome new members and if you think you would like to join please look on our website - [brightwellcumsotwellwi.com](http://brightwellcumsotwellwi.com) - where you can find out more about what makes us tick and who to contact if you have any questions to ask. Alternatively, come along on a second Tuesday at 7.30pm at the village hall. There would be a small charge of £3.50 for a visit which includes excellent refreshments.

Our next meeting on 9 February is an 'open meeting' which means anyone (male or female) interested in the subject matter is welcome. Gabriel Hernery from The Sylva Organisation will be talking about 'Trees'. This is a charity based at Long Wittenham concerned with the revival of Britain's wood culture and forestry.

Hope to see you there.

*Margaret Smith.*

# Artist of the month at the Red Lion

Last summer we started an idea for regular exhibitions in the pub which seems to have demonstrated the wealth of artistic talent in Brightwell and the surrounding areas! *Artist of the Month* will be in its seventh month in February and the response from local artists and the community has been fantastic. Apart from raising the profile of all our local talent, it is also raising money for local charities from every sale.

In February and March, well-known local artists Marion Symes and Rosemary Greasby will be exhibiting in the Red Lion – so prepare yourselves for some wonderful local landscapes and farm animals! If you want to know more about these exhibitions, look out for the posters around the village and in the Village Stores. Do go along and enjoy a drink or meal at The Red Lion at the same time!

*Susan Ganney*

# Healthwatch Oxfordshire

Healthwatch Oxfordshire is your voice on health and social care, whether it is improving local services today, or helping to shape them for tomorrow. It was set up in April 2013 as a result of the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

In order to ensure that we have the best possible evidence and the widest possible views to influence the delivery and design of health and social care services, we need as many people as possible to speak out about their experiences. Please tell us how you would like to be treated and cared for, and what is important to you when using health and social care services, and we can make a difference together.

To find out more about Healthwatch Oxfordshire, please visit our website, [www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk). Contact us on 01865 520520 or email [hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](mailto:hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk). You can also follow us on Twitter @HealthwatchOxon and find us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/HealthwatchOxfordshire](http://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchOxfordshire).

*Richard Maynard*

# Environment Group

## **Climate change**

Analysis of UK temperature records by the Met Office shows that 2015 was the warmest year in the recent series of warm years, with 2016 likely to be even warmer. A similar analysis of global temperatures is expected to give the same result. Many pundits thought that the recent Paris climate conference (COP21) would fail in the same way that COP 20 in Copenhagen had failed some years before. That it was a success bodes well for the future, providing that the promises made by governments are kept and more stringent targets are set for CO2 reduction as the century progresses.

## **Rainfall**

Northern England and parts of Scotland experienced repeated high rainfalls in December, triggering a series of disastrous floods in many rivers with large numbers of homes ruined as a consequence. Rainfall records were broken, a total of 341 mm was recorded at Honister in 24 hours, far exceeding the next highest daily fall of 281mm observed at Martinstown in Dorset in 1955. Is this evidence of climate change? Here the rainfall has been close to the average month by month with annual totals near the long term mean (Sherwood Farm 565mm, Highlands Farm 598). Dull, cloudy days have given the impression of a wet autumn, but the flows from the Wellsprings have been relatively low and the fields alongside the Millbrook have not flooded as they usually do.

## **Talks on the environment**

Since 1996 the Group has staged two talks a year in the Village Hall to raise awareness of environmental problems and to encourage parishioners to become involved in the Group's activities. A wide range of topics has been addressed – bats, bees, bugs, waste recycling, the River Thames, farming and the red kite are a few of the subjects discussed by experts in their fields. Talks on energy efficiency have prompted villagers to install solar panels and to improve home insulation. To encourage attendance entrance to the talks is free and open to everyone.

The well-attended talk by Richard Soulsby on 17 November was on “Butterflies of the Wallingford area” with some brilliant pictures. Richard responded to a lot of questions. For example, did you know that the average life of a butterfly is barely 3 to 4 days? The next talk in the series will be in April.

## **Millennium wood**

Work on keeping down the blackberries and removing some of the trees will continue during the spring. This is to give space for those trees that have been selected to grow to maturity some years hence.

*John Rodda*

## **The Earth Trust**

### **Half term activities**

**Mud Pie Monday!** 15 February, 10am-11.30am. Wellies and waterproofs advisable. Free taster session; no need to book.

**Build a Bird Box** 15 February, 2pm-4pm. Take home your own handmade bird box and help encourage more wildlife into your garden. Tools and materials provided. £10 per box; booking essential (1hr slots): 01865 407792 or [admin@earthtrust.org.uk](mailto:admin@earthtrust.org.uk).

**Woodland Adventure** 17 February, 10am-12pm. An expedition for 5-8 year olds. £4 suggested donation per child, accompanying adult(s) free. No need to book.

**Wildlife Wednesday** 17 February, 2pm-4pm. New for 2016: come and join us at Mowbray Fields in Didcot (OX11 8SS) to learn about local wildlife and have lots of outdoor fun! £2 suggested donation per child, accompanying adult(s) free. No need to book.

**Discover and Play** 19 February, 10am-12pm. Forest School for the under-5s. Join the Earth Trust for a morning of play and discovery in our woodlands. £4 suggested donation per child, accompanying adult(s) free. No need to book.

### **New wild flower meadow**

Thanks to funding from Biffa Award, the Earth Trust has launched the first stage of a project to create 17 hectares of species-rich wildflower meadow along the banks of the River Thames near Wallingford. Part of a larger project, River of Life, it entails sowing 25 different species of wildflower seed and fencing along the riverbank to enable grazing with sheep and cattle. This grazing, along with seasonal hay cutting, is the traditional way in which wildflower meadows would have been managed. Grazing is vital as it helps create a more varied habitat, with vegetation at different heights and bare ground where wildflower

seed can germinate; it also helps control the more competitive grasses. All of this generates the optimal conditions for wildflowers to thrive.

“The meadow will take time to establish properly, but within two or three years we should have a beautiful meadow full of flowers that will not only be attractive for visitors to the Earth Trust Farm but, importantly, also for bumblebees and other pollinators” said Chris Parker, Earth Trust’s Head of Land Management.

For more information please see [www.earthtrust.org.uk/riveroflife](http://www.earthtrust.org.uk/riveroflife).

*Lucy Benyon , Communications Officer*

## The Bach Centre

As usual over the winter, things have been fairly quiet at the Bach Centre over the last few months. We usually run our last courses of the year in October or November – last year it was November – which means no students. And with the garden not looking its best at this time of year the number of casual visitors also drops off.

About now – in February – is when we look forward to the more active part of the year. The first remedies will probably be made towards the end of this month, when flowers appear on the cherry plum and aspen trees. The rest of the garden will also begin to wake up soon, as the days lengthen.

The first courses of 2016 are scheduled to take place in March, when we have three courses running back-to-back, all of them fully booked. The local B&Bs will be busy! - and will remain so throughout the spring and summer, as we have groups of practitioners booked in to visit from France and Italy, as well as the regular courses.

As for more casual visitors, the number of people arriving tends to pick up around Easter, when people take holidays and the sun is more likely to be out. If you haven't popped into the Centre yet and live in the village, why not plan a visit yourself then? There's no need to book and it's very casual – just ring the bell and say you'd like to look around, and we'll leave you to it!

*Stefan Ball*

# In brief – round and about

## **Wallingford Gardening Club**

At the February meeting of the Wallingford Gardening Club, Duncan Grosart will talk about 'Principles of Garden Design'. Ridgeway Community Church, Wallingford, 7.30pm, Thursday 11 February. Visitors very welcome £2.

## **Wallingford U3A**

The next meeting of Wallingford U3A will be on 3 February. The AGM will be followed by a talk by Jim and Pat Fish on "Travels and Wildlife in Tanzania." For more information go to *visits.u3asites.org.uk/wallingford*, or phone Hermione on 01865858024. Meetings are at 2pm on the first Wednesday of each month in Crowmarsh Village Hall, where visitors are always made welcome.

## **TWHAS**

February's talk to The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society (TWHAS) will be given by Steve Capel-Davies on 'Thames Crossings - Ferries, Fords and Bridges'. The talk will be preceded by a short (as usual!) AGM. Friday 12 February, 8pm at the Methodist Church Centre, St Leonard's Square, Wallingford.

Visitors (£3) are most welcome. *www.twahas.org.uk*

And looking a little further ahead to May and June:

## **Wallingford Vehicle Rally & Parade**

The Wallingford Vehicle Rally and Parade returns on Sunday 8 May 2016. The event will kick off at 11am with a parade of 250 vehicles through the town, snaking around the streets, through the Market Place and culminating in a static show at the Kinecroft in the centre of town. Throughout the day there will be displays and side stalls hosted by local suppliers and charities, and also local food traders. Pre-registration of vehicles for the parade is essential. More details on the car rally will be in the next issue but you can visit their website *www.wallingfordcarrally.org.uk*, or drop an email to *info@wallingfordcarrally.org.uk*.

## ***La Boheme at North Moreton***

The Regents Opera Company will present 'La Boheme' on Monday 13 June 2016 at 7pm in the aircraft hangar at Melhuish Farm, North Moreton OX11 9BA. Tickets are now available at £55 per person. Dress – Black tie. Contact [Melhuishfarmopera@gmail.com](mailto:Melhuishfarmopera@gmail.com) for application form.

**\*\* Stop Press \*\***

## **Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Post Office**

As your Subpostmaster for the last 16 years I would like to make a plea on behalf of the Chairman and Committee of the Community Shop to be supported in their endeavours to incorporate the Post Office into the shop.

I have been following the Post Office policy for the last 3 years of making the last shop in a village the Post Office as well as a shop and have found no way to change their ideas. ie Cholsey and Stadhampton to name two that have converted to Post Office Locals.

I have written to our MPs and have been told that this is now a matter for the Post Office since the Government has indicated that it is removing the Post Office subsidy now that Royal Mail has been privatised. In Feb last year I was pressurised to say that I was leaving the Post Office Network and had to sign a letter of resignation. However I was requested to stay until a new operator was found.

Thus I do recommend that those of you who have a vote, should vote to allow the shop to take over running of the Post Office in accordance with the Post Offices wishes, I am afraid that although the Post Office say they will maintain a Post Office in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell this will only be an Outreach with attendance on say two or three mornings a week as I did originally if you are not able to support the Community Shop taking over the running of the Post Office.

Please do think carefully about this situation as I would hate to see the Post Office not provide the service that you have all grown use to having and I have enjoyed immensely this community activity both in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and Warborough.

*Mike Powell*

# VILLAGE DIARY

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## February

2	Village Shop Members Extraordinary Meeting	VH	7.30pm
9	Quilting Group	VH	9.30am
9	WI Open Meeting – The Sylva Organisation 'Trees'	VH	7.30pm
23	Quilting Group	VH	9.30am

## March

6	Mothering Sunday Service	St Agatha's	9.30am
8	Quilting Group	VH	9.30am
10	Neighbourhood Plan Meeting	St Agatha's	7.30pm
19	Village Quiz (Community Association)	VH	7.30pm
20	Palm Sunday Service	St James	9.30am
22	Quilting Group	VH	9.30am
25	Good Friday – Hour around the Cross	St Agatha's	2.00pm
27	Easter Sunday Communion Service	St Agatha's	9.30am
28	Quiz in aid of Action on Podoconiosis	Red Lion	8.00pm

## Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

Grey bins                      11 & 25 February, 10 & 24 March

Green (& brown) bins    4 & 18 February, 3 & 17 March & **Friday 1 April**

## Village website

For more information about Brightwell-cum-Sotwell visit the village website:  
[www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk](http://www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk)