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Items for the next edition should be sent to the Editor by 1 May 2016. The Villager is published every other month and delivered free to all households in the village.

Editorial

It is my favourite time of year I think – springtime – when the bulbs start bringing colour back to my garden, there is more warmth in the sun and the lighter evenings get noticeably longer. Lambing is almost over now and it is lovely to see the new-borns out in the fields. We are delighted with our lamb cover photo this month, donated by Eric Dore. You can read about life in the lambing sheds at Highlands Farm in Rosemary Greasby's personal account on page 15. It is a fascinating picture of the commitment and skill needed to successfully produce these cute and cuddly bundles. Thank you both Rosemary and Eric.

The next few months in the village are some of the busiest in the year as you can read in this issue. In May, there is the Open Gardens Day to raise funds for the Allsorts Preschool Garden (8 May, see page 4), Artweeks and the Church Spring Fair (28 May), while in June we have Brightest on the Saturday (11th) of the weekend of the Queen's 90th Birthday Celebrations (11-12 June), and the summer concert at St Agatha's on 26 June (see page 20). Coming up later in October will be the Brightwell Film Festival so look out for details.

With this issue of *The Villager* is an insert giving you an update and an appeal for help on the Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council would like to get views from residents on the policy issues and the site selection criteria in order to help guide the next stage of developing the Plan. It will be an important statutory document affecting housing and other land use development in our parish between now and 2031 so I urge you to respond as requested.

While we live in a relatively crime free area, there has been some recent increases in burglaries and vandalism. Some simple steps to help prevent break-ins are given by the police on page 19 and how to report any incidents or suspicious activity.

It is also a time for hellos and goodbyes. We will be welcoming our new vicar, the Rev Kevin Beer, at St Agatha's and St James' at the end of April. But we will be saying a sad farewell to our sub-postmaster, Mike Powell, and his assistants in the Post Office when that closes in the village hall on 21 May. We also have to say a farewell to the village shop managers, Margot Shawyer and Mandy Finn who will be leaving in April. They have all served our community extremely well over the years. We look forward to welcoming new personnel in the shop /Post Office and wish the new venture well.

Helen Connor

Letter

Thank you

It was not until I received my *Villager* a few days ago that I remembered I had not sent my annual 'thank you' letter via *The Villager* to the kind people for their generosity in providing once more a Christmas hamper, delivered to me by a cheery young boy cub. I take great pleasure in giving thanks for the 'goodies' therein. I hope it's not too late to THANK YOU VERY MUCH ALL CONCERNED, MUCH APPRECIATED.

*Yours sincerely,
Mrs June McKenzie (89½ years)*

Community Association

Village quiz evening – Saturday 19 March 2016 at 7.30pm

As I am writing this ahead of the quiz, I cannot announce the winners but congratulations to them and a big thank you to the Street Wise team who set the questions. We are very grateful to all who attended and look forward to seeing you all next year.

Village fete – Saturday 9 July 2016 at 2pm - Sotwell House

Once again we are grateful to Jennie and David Dobbin for allowing us to use their lovely garden. Please book 9 July in your diaries, and ensure all conflicting holiday plans are changed! Look out for more details about the event and the schedule and entry forms for the Flower and Produce Show in the next edition of *The Villager*.

Fun run – Sunday 25 September 2016

The Community Association is again organizing a fun run at the end of September with the emphasis on the fun aspect and everybody enjoying the delightful scenery of our village. More details will follow next time.

*James Davys
Chairman*

Allsorts fundraising update

Allsorts has two exciting public events this spring/summer to help us reach our target of £20,000 to transform our garden. So far, the Allsorts garden appeal has raised just over £8,000.

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Open Gardens Day

Our lovely open gardens trail on 8 May, 2-5pm, will feature over 10 gardens from the big and beautiful to gorgeous and intimate. As well as being able to visit any of the gardens at your leisure, you can choose to listen to expert talks and demonstrations throughout the afternoon in various gardens. Teas will be provided and we have arranged off-road parking for non-locals. Also, throughout the afternoon, Viv and Steve Moll, of Brightwell Bees, will showcase their observation hive and Celia and Clive Collett will open their garden, complete with tree house, for young visitors with storytelling by Alison Jinks of The Wallingford Bookshop. And of course you will be able to pop into Allsorts garden to see what is happening with our garden.

Our programme of demonstrations in brief is:

- Ali Quantrell (University of Oxford Botanic Garden) will offer a demonstration of natural woven birch staking followed by a garden advice surgery over tea and cake
- Resident horticulturalist Paul Chilton will share his expertise in the rare art of fruit tree grafting
- Assembled Brightwell players will perform garden and nature inspired folk music sung by local singer Madeleine Lowe (ex national youth choir)
- Jason Debney will enlighten us on the history of cottage gardens.

To visit the open gardens simply pay the suggested donation of £5 and pick up your map at any of the open gardens. For a full list of participating gardens and a more detailed demonstrations programme please visit www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk and follow the links through from the 'events calendar' or visit the Facebook page – 'Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Open Gardens 2016'.

Alongside the open gardens event, Allsorts will also be running an exhibition in the Red Box Gallery throughout May. In addition, the Oxfordshire Artweeks exhibition at The Red Lion by Susan Ganney and Simon Irving will be donating 10% of sales to the appeal (see page 12).

We would like to extend particular thanks to Tony Lascelles, Jennie and David Dobbin as well as Helen Connor for their help with the open gardens event.

Brightfest

We are very pleased that our garden appeal is one of the charities for Brightfest this year on 11 June. We are working alongside Mark and the team to make the event every bit as fantastic as last year.

Kristen Dudley and Sally Jackson

The Parish Council

Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting will take place on the evening of 24 May at the village hall. This year, in addition to the normal Parish Council updates and guest speakers, representatives from village groups and societies (such as the school, the shop, WI, church and so on) will be invited to give an update of their activities and plans. Everyone, from all four corners of our parish, is welcome. It should be an excellent evening and to tempt you we will finish with a glass of wine from Brightwell Vineyard!

20mph zone in the village?

Following the publication of our Parish Plan in 2014, each of the 40 actions (recommended in the plan) was allocated with a lead organisation to take it forward. The Parish Council is continuing to explore ways to implement its actions. One of these actions was to explore whether a 20 mph zone is feasible for the main village. You may have noticed a number of speed cameras around the lanes over the winter. These have been monitoring speeds as there are certain requirements that have to be met. We now have all the results back and some recommendations. Come along to the Parish Meeting to find out more.

Neighbourhood Plan

Work continues on the Neighbourhood Plan. We are beginning to think about our parish policies and site selection criteria having completed much of the red tape. At the time of writing an open meeting was planned for 10 March to update parishioners and gather more information. *See insert with this issue.*

Not lovely – dog poo

Dog poo continues to be a problem. The police are taking this more seriously and have visited the village on several occasions. It is an offence not to pick up your mess – kicking it onto a verge or further into a field does not count as removal!

Playgrounds makeover

The consultation feedback sheets we distributed late last year, to find out how people would like our playgrounds to be improved, have now been returned. A small sub-group of the council is looking at how we can improve these facilities and fund any improvements.

Verge cutting

Summer is approaching and we will be cutting our own grass verges and cutting back vegetation along our footpaths again this year using a small team of excellent and dedicated village gardeners. Any problems you notice just let us know.

Jason Debney

Save the Children

Save the Children Week - this year runs from Sunday 24 April to Saturday 30 April. We will be carrying out a house-to-house collection in the village.

Plant Stall – our annual plant sale will be held as usual in the Square on Saturday 14 May between 10am and 12noon. We are very lucky to have talented gardeners in the village that provide us with plants every year. If you have any spare plants please consider donating them to Save the Children Plant Stall, we will make sure they are found a good home.

Brightfest – Save the Children will be running the tea tent again this year for the Brightfest on Saturday 11 June. We are very grateful to Mark and his team for choosing Allsorts Preschool and Save the Children as the charities which will benefit from money raised by this event.

Many thanks for your continued support.

Celia Collett

Brightwell Parish Church - St Agatha's with St James'

Following the recent Easter services when Christians celebrate the risen Christ, there are many more things in the life of the church locally to look forward to.

The arrival of the Rev Kevin Beer as the team vicar

Kevin has a big task – pastoral care of both Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and Crowmarsh Gifford as well as oversight of the Wallingford Team's work with children, young people and families. Kevin's licensing and induction service will take place on 27 April at St Mary's Wallingford and his first service in Brightwell will be the 9.30am Parish Communion in St Agatha's on Sunday 1 May. We look forward to welcoming Kevin and his family to the village.

Whit Sunday

Festival Family Communion Service on Sunday 15 May, St Agatha's 9.30am
Come and celebrate Pentecost, the birthday of the church.

Spring Fair

This year's Spring Fair will be on Saturday 28 May 2–4.30pm at Brightwell Manor. All the usual games and stalls – including bouncy castle, white elephant, second-hand book tent, bottle stall, golf game, plant stall, tea tent and lots more!

Summer Concert 26 June St Agatha's

Always a very enjoyable evening of music and verse, a mixture of comic and not-so comic, performed by villagers. Read more in an article on page 20.

We look forward to seeing you at any or all of these events over the next few months and at our regular services in St James' and St Agatha's churches.

Margot Shawyer

Kings Meadow Tennis Club

Singles, doubles and junior events have a new exciting format! So please sign up at the clubhouse or via the contacts below, or join the club, annual memberships from 1 April are: junior £10, adult £20 and family only £35. Look out for posters or, contact Shena on 834543 or Sophie at whinbank@yahoo.co.uk.

Dem bells, dem bells, dem St Agatha's bells!

I blame Roy Thorpe, Tower Captain, abetted by Jeremy Goulston, former vicar of this Parish, and Tony Lascelles, who, after a bottle or two of wine, agreed to manage the fundraising side of the St Agatha's Bell Project! Having got this far, it's now up to the building management team to bring the work to a satisfactory conclusion, on time and within budget.

Getting to the starting blocks

Although a bell-ringer at St Agatha's, my understanding of the actual mechanics and engineering involved with the complex ringing structure hidden in the tower was negligible. Consequently the learning curve has been steep – canons, clappers, crown staples, pulleys, wheels, flapper boards and sliders, plain bearings, gudgeons, all contained in a language and design that has not changed over hundreds of years.

Anything associated with alterations to a church structure demands a 'Faculty' from the Diocese which, effectively, is planning permission as we all know it. Nothing is easy and reports were needed to initially unlock approval from the Diocesan Advisory Committee, Diocesan Bells Adviser and Historic England before having the audacity to actually apply for the elusive Faculty itself! We obtained the necessary permission earlier this year. Phew! Experience gathered from the Church Extension Project undoubtedly helped this time - take advice from others and ensure to have the back-up of an architect and structural engineer!

Four specialist firms of bell-hangers quoted for the restoration work providing very detailed reports and specifications in the process. Whites of Appleton proved the most comprehensive value for money and coupled with their good reputation and local accessibility satisfied the team that they should be awarded the contract.

The church tower collapsed in 1795! With this nagging knowledge it was imperative to check for any potential problems. Following a structural survey, advice for extra reinforcement work included the 'stitching' of settlement cracks in the tower and this task will be undertaken once the bells have been removed for restoration. Another matter being reviewed as part of the project involves the provision of easier and safe access to the tower for management and essential bell maintenance purposes.

Lowering the bells

4 April is the date for the diary! Like well honed runners on the starting blocks, complete with hard hats, metal toecaps and boiler suits, we are poised ready to help with the dismantling process!

The bells will be lowered from the tower through existing trap doors, pulleys and all the ringing gear will be removed leaving the frames in situ for strengthening and repair work. They will be transported to Appleton for most of the restoration work and the cracked 7th bell will eventually visit Newmarket for a specialist welding repair. Hopefully no similar faults will be found with the other bells as this repair process is very costly!

The bells will then go all the way to Whitechapel, London for tuning, this being the only place in the country with specialist equipment for the job. Finally, they will be transported back to St Agatha's for re-installing in the tower later in the year, probably around September/October time if all goes well.

Outstanding craftsmanship

The craftsmanship and traditional skills associated with the bell-hanger profession is truly outstanding and has to be seen. We hope to arrange a visit to Whitechapel to view the tuning process and the work of the oldest bell foundry in the country.

St Agatha's bells will be silent for a while but, when all is done, the church will have a peal of bells that will be good for generations to come and a fitting legacy to the generosity, effort and enthusiasm invested by so many.

David Greasby

Mendelssohn's *Elijah* - Saturday 16 April

Cranford Choral Society is to perform Mendelssohn's stunning choral masterpiece, *Elijah*, with one of the south of England's leading ensembles, Southern Sinfonia, and an exciting team of soloists – including tenor Hugh Hetherington as Elijah. The performance is in St Helen's Church, Abingdon on Saturday 16 April at 7.30pm. Tickets are available via www.cranfordchoral.org.uk, or by phoning Anthony Finn on 01491 835540.

An unusual opportunity

St. Agatha's church boasts a powerful tracker action organ originally built by a Wallingford grocer, George Staniland, in his shop in about 1870 and installed in its present position in 1903. With two manuals plus pedals and 20 speaking stops it has a British Institute of Organ Studies Historic Organ Certificate and deserves to be used.

The current organist is therefore offering free organ lessons to one applicant with the ability to sight read on the piano a simple hymn tune. If this interests you or anybody you know, please contact d_nightingale@talktalk.net or tel 01491 835712.

Derek Nightingale

The village shop

Since the members voted on 2 February to accept the Post Office contract we have been working towards taking the Post Office into the shop. The Post Office Local is due to open on Monday 23 May, with the old Post Office counter in the Stewart Room closing on Saturday 21 May. As a community we have been extremely lucky with the service Mike Powell and his staff have provided over the years. Our aim is to continue this good work.

Sadly Margot and Mandy decided to leave the shop's employment. We thank them for all their hard work, particularly over the last couple of years, to ensure the continued success of the Village Stores. We are also grateful they agreed to stay whilst we recruit new staff.

This is an exciting new venture, and already three new volunteers have signed up to being part of the team. We operate an online rota to make it easy for volunteers to have regular shifts and/or to fill the gaps when they have the time. It is a great way to get to know people and be an integral part of the community; if you would like to join the team just pop into the shop and leave your details.

This next stage is very exciting for the benefits it can bring to both the community and the village shop. It will not be without its challenges; however we will meet them with positivity for the benefit of all.

Celia Collett
Chairman of the Management Committee

Post Office - Stewart Room of the village hall

The Post Office facility has been located in the Stewart Room of the village hall since March 2007, prior to that in The Red Lion from 2003. Due to the withdrawal of Government subsidies and changes in policy by the Post Office this arrangement is no longer available. It is with regret that Mr Mike Powell, the sub postmaster, has formally advised the trustees of the village hall that the present arrangement will be coming to an end on 21 May 2016. In accordance with the formal agreement between the trustees and Mr Powell, he is planning to remove the existing counter/secure screen in the Stewart Room during the period 23 - 31 May.

Mr Powell has provided an excellent Post Office facility in the village hall and we, as trustees, would like to thank him and his team for the service provided for the village over the last 13 years and particularly the relationship that has worked extremely well in the village hall since March 2007. We are aware that the community shop is planning to open a Post Office facility within the shop with effect from 23 May 2016 and that the present secure screen does not form part of this plan. If, during the planning process for the move, it is felt that the counter/secure screen in the Stewart Room could provide a viable alternative location for the Post Office for either an interim period or even long term, the trustees of the village hall would need to know, prior to the planned removal by Mr Powell.

We would like to state that the trustees are fully supportive of the continuation of a Post Office facility in the village and hope the foregoing is seen as our constructive position during this planning period.

Once again we would like to thank Mr Powell and his team for the excellent service they have provided over the years.

*Steve Luck, Chairman
On behalf of the village hall trustees*

New at the Red Lion

Scrabble Night - every Tuesday at 8pm. For more info contact Lynn Burridge on 07989 270605.

Next Brightwell Village Lunch

The next Village Lunch is to be held on Tuesday 7 June at 12.15pm in the village hall. Please contact Jaqui 836018 or Belinda 836223 for more details.

Oxfordshire Artweeks

During May each year, Oxfordshire artists and crafts people have an opportunity to exhibit their work. There are nearly 500 stunning exhibitions throughout the county, ranging from group exhibitions in large public spaces to individual artists showing in their own homes or studios, painting, photography, textiles, sculpture, ceramics, furniture, glass, mosaics, jewellery, and much more. Entry to all these exhibitions is free.

Oxfordshire Artweeks will be back at the Red Lion again from 7-30 May. This year, village husband and wife, Susan Ganney and Simon Irving, will be exhibiting paintings and photographs of the local landscape and its wildlife. Susan's constant sketching and Simon's photographs taken on his early morning walks (mud allowing!) over the Wittenham Clumps, through Little Wittenham Woods, along the river and around the villages have inspired and influenced their paintings over the last year and they hope you will enjoy the results. 10% of any sales will be donated to the Earth Trust, as much of the land portrayed in their work is owned by them, and 10% will also be donated to Allsorts Garden Appeal for their wonderful work with introducing the children to their landscape and nature. Little explorers of the future!

Returning to the village hall from 20-22 May will be a number of artists who have exhibited there for the last few years. Those who attended the last WI meeting might like to visit the Sylva Wood Centre at Little Wittenham, where craftspeople will have their workshops open to visitors between 14 and 22 May. Other invited artists will be exhibiting there also.

Examples of Simon and Susan's work and the over 400 artists participating in Oxfordshire Artweeks this year can be seen on the Artweeks website at www.artweeks.org and on Susan's website www.susanganney.com. Trail maps and catalogues will be available at The Village Stores, The Red Lion and Waitrose. Please do come along and support us!

And more artiness...

April artist of the month at the Red Lion

Jamie Lewis (son of Andy and Angela) will be exhibiting his wonderful illustrations throughout the whole of April. Jamie grew up in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, but went off to study Illustration at The University of the West of England in Bristol some twelve years ago and since then his career has

flourished. He now has an impressive portfolio of work covering a really wide range of illustration; from commissions for The Sunday Times, book covers and posters, to commemorative deckchairs for Hampton Court Palace! His latest venture is the illustration of a children's book about The Great Fire of London



and details of this will be at the Red Lion during his exhibition. Jamie now lives in South London with a studio based in Dalston. Do take a look at his website www.jwestonlewis.co.uk for some examples of his work. 20% of all sales will be donated to The Bone Cancer Research Trust.

Susan Ganney

Red Box Gallery

The WI has taken over the Red Box Gallery this month with “potty petunias”, made by WI members at last summer’s summer party. Thanks to Jennie Morgan for designing the fabulous display. In May it will change to an exhibition by Allsorts linked to their garden project.

Environment Group

Talk on the *River of Life* project

In 2013 the Earth Trust and the Environment Agency completed the first phase of a project to create new wetland habitats across 50 hectares of land at North Farm adjoining the River Thames, on the north side of our parish. Lizzie Rhymes from the Agency and Chris Parker from the Trust worked on the project. They will talk about the challenges of digging wetland habitats, the results to date and plans for the future, together with the benefits the *River of Life* will provide. As with previous talks organised by the Group this one is free, so please come to the village hall on Tuesday 19 April, 8pm.

The annual meeting of the Group will also take place at this talk.

Oxfordshire mistletoe survey

Paul Chilton has reported the results of a survey of the village he conducted recently. The aim is to record the distribution of mistletoe across the county, to establish a baseline against which changes can be measured, changes which

may be due to alterations in the climate. Walking around the village and counting the number of trees carrying mistletoe, Paul found just how much mistletoe exists, especially on garden trees. He counted 509 clumps on 112 trees of 7 different species. The most prolific was the ancient Bramley apple tree in the Swan Allotments. In contrast, there was no mistletoe in Mackney, none in the orchard in Brightwell Manor and none in several of the other orchards. Mistletoe is not confined, as most people think, to apple trees, as the results below show:

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 84 apple with 399 clumps | 6 lime with 39 clumps |
| 6 poplar with 7 clumps | 9 false acacia with 44 clumps |
| 4 hawthorn with 18 clumps | 1 rowan with 1 clump |
| 1 alder with 1 clump. | |

It will be interesting to see the results for the whole county and what will have changed when Paul repeats the survey in a few years time.

Air quality

There has been a large amount of publicity recently about the quality of the air we breathe and the rising number of deaths resulting from high levels of pollution, particularly in cities. There is an SODC website showing air pollution levels at selected sites across the county and the Council is consulting on its draft action plan. Air pollution in the Parish results largely from the exhaust fumes from road traffic with a certain amount from wood burning stoves.

‘Growth at all costs’

Are you aware that the Strategic Economic Plan for Oxfordshire proposes that 100,000 new houses are built across the county by 2031? This is a far higher rate of house building than has been achieved previously, one that would result in the creation of two new cities the size of the present City of Oxford. So far there has been little or no public consultation about the SEP. Need not Greed is the name of a coalition of 20 or so community organizations across Oxfordshire who believe that local people deserve a voice in the future of the county. More realistic and sustainable growth rates are highly desirable, full public consultation and a Strategic Environmental Assessment are necessary. Will the already overloaded infrastructure be able to cope? Will the target of a 50% reduction in CO2 be achievable? Is there enough water to serve the expanded population?

John Rodda

Lambing at Highlands Farm 2016

A distant plaintive baa, a rush of excitement quickens my pace ... the first lamb is born. The barns soon become alive; but where do I start? Stuffing my pockets full of long polythene lambing gloves I check my lambing bag; lubricating gel, iodine, spray cans, towel, stomach tubes, plastic containers, a record book plus pencil and my computerised digital recording light sabre.

Two woolly lambs with fat tummies warm my hands. Holding them by their two front feet I spray iodine onto their umbilical cord; this helps prevent infection entering the blood stream. With my digital reader pointed to the ewe's ear tag I can magically read her flock number. Then I try to write G307, neatly onto a moving target of wool. Tucking a lamb firmly under my arm I desperately try to restrain all wriggles as I spray her mother's number onto her side for identification.

In the neighbouring pen, cold wet lambs shiver on the straw. Their mother ignores her new born; she fails to lick them dry to stimulate warmth. I roughly rub them with my rejected kitchen towel and grip them by the fore legs, support their body between my knees and with the other hand insert a thin plastic tube through the mouth which then slowly slides down the oesophagus to the stomach. On lowering my ear to the end of this tube I listen for the crackling gaseous moans of the stomach juices. Clutching a syringe with my spare hand I draw 150mls of warm colostrum from a once household jug. Slowly I syringe this creamy substance down the plastic tube into the stomach of this pathetic slimy creature, tummies slowly swell and they shakily stand.

Quads or quins are not welcome; ewes are not physiologically made to feed four/five, yet four well fed fluffy warm lambs snuggle together. A ewe groans from the far end of a lambing pen; she is expecting a single lamb and has separated herself from the flock. I hover with a fluffy quad lamb swaddled in a towel and wait. After a gentle pull a new lamb enters the world, rapidly I bury a little quad lamb beneath her new foster brother covering her thoroughly with all his warm birth slime. The ewe turns her head to view her new progeny two!!! This method of fostering often works although some ewes are canny and will not be so easily fooled.

I move from pen to pen four rounds a day every day. One week slips into another, I become robotic with lambing monotony. Yet I still faintly look forward to lambing and in hindsight enjoy.

Rosemary Greasby

Leaders, leaders, leaders...

Scouting numbers in the village are very healthy, with up to 70 young people taking part in beavers, cubs and scouts every week. However, we are operating at capacity and running waiting lists in all sections, and need additional leaders in order to take on any new members. We have a variety of roles open to adults, some uniformed and others not. If you can help in this capacity, please contact Richard or me (contact details below).

Joining the scout section is a significant event and we always try to make it interesting - over the years, we have invested scouts on top of Pen y Fan, on a hovercraft (on the way to Jersey), up a tree and on a climbing wall. This year, thanks to Steve Colam and friends from the Wantage Diving Club, we had our first underwater investitures! Currently, we are all saving hard and fundraising for our upcoming trip to Kandersteg in Switzerland, our first international camp. We plan to run another car wash at the Pavilion on Saturday 23 April so come and support your local troop and get your car cleaned into the bargain!

2016 is also an exciting year for the cub section as it is their national 100th birthday. All manner of centenary celebrations are planned including a county camp in June and a plan to walk 100 miles in the year. It is the stated intention of the Scouting Association that scouting should be open to all - to this end, the beavers and cubs have started an exciting initiative where we have teamed up with Kingfisher School in Abingdon to provide scouting opportunities to their young people with severe, profound and complex needs.

If you would like to know more about any of the above, please contact Richard Dale-Emberton (Group Chairman) on 07833 110088 or richard.dale-emberton@talktalk.net or myself, Tim Scane (Group Scout Leader) on 01235 511448 or tim.scane@ntlworld.com.

Tim Scane

Would you like an allotment?

We have new allotment plots available. On your way to the Rec or through the orchard you might have noticed that some of the keenest have already started working their plots but new members still have plenty of time to catch up. We can help you to prepare the ground, provide tips and ideas for crops and help you find the essentials you need to get going. If you would like to join the Allotment Club please contact Steph Rourke at stephrourke@gmail.com for more information.

Allsorts preschool

This term at Allsorts has been out of this world, with the theme being ‘Space’, which saw the home corner being turned into a space rocket which regularly blasted off with the children to enjoy some intergalactic adventures! The space theme continued on the mother’s day cards, which featured each child turned into an astronaut.

Another stellar event this term was a trip to Highlands Farm, hosted again this year by Mr and Mrs Greasby. The children bottlefed the baby lambs and got to sit up and ‘ride’ in the giant tractor and combine harvester which provided some adorable photo opportunities. The trip finished with the children receiving an early Easter egg. Huge thanks go to the Greasbys for hosting us once again.

The children were also out and about for the annual Welly Walk. It was a great success again this year, with the weather thankfully holding out despite the dreadful forecast. After tramping round the village, families returned to Allsorts for tea, cake and some welly wanging. The last welly was luckily chucked before the heavens opened again.

Back at preschool, the children have started going over to the school again to use the sports hall for PE on a Monday, which has been a huge hit and an opportunity to burn off some energy in the chilly weather we’ve been experiencing. The children have also continued to enjoy yoga-inspired Tatty Bumpkins sessions on Tuesdays and French lessons on Thursdays.

Staff changes

At the end of last term, we said farewell to Julie, who has managed the preschool for the last six years. Many children will have fond memories of Julie at the start of their academic journey. She has been instrumental in making the preschool into the success it is today, with a ‘good’ rating from the last Ofsted inspection. Huge thanks to Julie for all she did for Allsorts. We are pleased to announce that our deputy manager Natasha has taken over from Julie as manager, and we are sure that she will continue to build on all that is lovely about Allsorts.

Another change is that Lisa S has stood down from the treasurer position on the committee – thank you to her for the consideration and time she gave during her time in the role. Steph R has taken on the treasurer role following a comprehensive handover from Lisa.

New afternoon sessions

Four new children have started at Allsorts since January, and have been settling in well. We have added a new Monday afternoon session, which now means Allsorts is open from 08.45–14.45 Monday to Thursday and 08.45–12.45 Friday. Allsorts still has spaces available for a number of sessions this year. Please contact us at allsortsadmin@btinternet.com if you are interested in knowing more, or would like to look round the preschool. If you are thinking of your child joining us next academic year, please do get in touch as soon as possible to guarantee your place and help us in our planning.

Hannah Ball



Brightwell-cum-Sotwell

We had a very successful open meeting in February when Gabriel Hemery came to talk to us about The Sylva Foundation. 28 members were in attendance and 13 guests. Based at Long Wittenham, the charity is concerned with the revival of Britain's wood culture and forestry. It was a very interesting and informative talk and the many projects they are concerned with are directed at all ages. There are several hands-on areas for children at the Long Wittenham site. Details of the foundation and their open days can be found on their website www.sylva.org.uk.

March was the month for our AGM when we looked at the year ahead and established our committee for the year. There were one or two changes but we remain as confident as ever. During the past year we have been pleased to welcome new members but there is always room for more. Look out for our posters around the village at the beginning of each month and see what we are up to. In April, for example, we are having a go at Indoor Bowls. And in May, wellwhy not have a look at our website and see what else we do or have done: www.brightwellcumshotwellwi.com

Margaret Smith

Welcome Packs

If you know of a newcomer to the village, please give their name and address for a Welcome Pack to Bill Horsfield 01491 832041 wthorsfield@yahoo.com and/or Andy Lewis 01491 825680 lewisaanda@gmail.com.

Burglaries watch

Unfortunately, we have seen an increase in burglaries in our area in recent weeks. House break-ins are very rare in this area normally so I do not want to alarm you but to make you aware of simple steps you can take to protect your property. Remember burglars don't need brains, just an opportunity.

Doors and windows: Ensure you have good window locks and use them. Make sure you deadlock the doors and that your doors are fitted with good locks. Get into the habit of double checking doors and window locks before going to bed.

Timer lights: Use timer switches on lights and radios when you are not at home. Burglars will think twice if they think somebody might be home.

Alarms: Burglar alarms are a really good deterrent to the opportunist burglar.

Garden gates and fences: Ensure garden gates are locked and that you cannot reach over and unlock the gate. Consider fitting Prikka Strip (plastic spikes) on top of tall gates and fences. Flimsy trellis is good as it breaks easily and burglars do not like this as there is a risk of cutting themselves and leaving DNA behind. Prickly plants also act as a deterrent. Also please do not leave any tools or items in the garden that could be used to break windows or force entry to your property.

Garages and sheds: Ensure you have a solid garage door and it is always locked. Consider upgrading the locks on your garage door. Ensure sheds are locked with a high quality padlock and that the clasps are fitted with non return screws. Consider fitting a shed alarm which can be purchased for approximately £20.00.

Crime Prevention surveys: local police community support officers can attend your address and carry out a survey for free. Please email sue.harris@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk to arrange this.

If you look at the Thames Valley Police website www.thamesvalley.police.uk you can find a section entitled crime reduction which offers really good advice on home security.

Looking out for suspicious activity

If you see someone in your street who you think is acting suspiciously try to get a good description of them and a registration number and description of any

vehicle they are using. Don't hesitate to phone us either on 999 if you think a crime is being committed or 101 (non emergency number) and we can stop-check them and find out what they are doing. Remember your instincts are normally right. If something feels or does not look right it probably isn't.

PC Sue Harris

Increase in vandalism too!!

As we go to press, a particularly nasty act of vandalism took place in the grounds of Sotwell House and in the allotments overnight on 11/12 March, smashing up pots and destroying plants. This is not the first time that this has happened in recent months. If anyone has any information on this or other acts of vandalism in and around the area please contact the crime numbers above.

Americans fly in for concert

Yes folks it's true. The village summer concert is finally achieving international status. Trudie and Glen Thomason (guests of Sue Robson) are flying in from Texas and have timed their holiday so that they can be at the summer concert on SUNDAY 26 JUNE (7pm, St Agatha's). They said to Sue that fitting in the concert was top of their list, followed by visiting the location for Downton Abbey!

The first summer concert took place in 2009 as a way of raising some funds for the church extension. So this year will see the eighth such event which has firmly established itself in the village calendar.

As usual there will be plenty of local talent on display but new faces are always welcome. If you would like to join the entertainment yourself or know someone else who would like to join in please just drop me an email (alec.mcgivan@gmail.com). Likewise we would like to increase the size of our ad hoc village choir. If you like a bit of singing why don't you join us this year? The chosen songs will not be too challenging so you'll enjoy yourself and be made very welcome. If you are interested in helping out for the concert please contact our conductor Derek Nightingale on d_nightingale@talktalk.net.

Tickets will be available from the beginning of June either from the shop or direct from me. And by the way this year will be a slightly shorter event conscious that however good the show those church benches do get a little uncomfortable after a while. (Additional hot tip: bring a cushion!)

Alec McGivan

Recycling contamination

Recently, South Oxfordshire District Council has seen increasing amounts of food waste and nappies going into the green recycling wheelie bins – even what looks like a small amount of food can end up covered over large amounts of recycling once it has been in the back of the recycling lorry for a journey. This means that large amounts of the waste can't be recycled.

Waste crews are already being a bit tougher with their collections – if they notice contamination in a green recycling wheelie bin they won't empty it, especially food waste, nappies, wood, and metal, or textiles and small electrical items which can go next to your bin.

So what can you do to help?

The majority of you are excellent recyclers. A few small changes will make a big difference to the quality of your recycling.

- Put food waste in your food waste caddy, and nappies in your grey bin
- Don't use black bags – this is so crews can see what's in a bag, and can stop things that might contaminate recycling from getting in the back of the lorry. Please put your recycling in the green bin loose or use a clear bag.
- Rinse out your food trays – they don't have to be spotless, but a quick rinse will get rid of any loose food – it'll also help keep your green bin smelling fresh.
- If you've got more than one child in nappies in the house and you're struggling to fit their nappies in your grey bin, give us a call on 03000 610610 to see if we can give you some extra sacks.

Visit www.southoxon.gov.uk/recycling for more information.

Jane Murphy

Lighting the Queen's Birthday Beacon at the Earth Trust Thursday 21 April, 5.30pm-6.30pm

Join us on top of the Wittenham Clumps to light a celebratory beacon to mark the Queen's 90th birthday. Exact time of lighting to be confirmed, please check the Earth Trust website for details, www.earthtrust.co.uk

In brief – round and about

A lot is happening in the next few months around Brightwell but there is room to include only a few events. To find out more, check out websites like the Earth Trust www.earthrust.org.uk, Cornerstone in Didcot www.cornerstone-arts.co.uk and of course the events page of our own village website www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk.

- **Sinodun Players'** next production is *TWO*, a drama by Jim Cartwright set in a northern pub with two actors playing all 14 characters. April 13-16 at 7.45pm at Wallingford Corn Exchange.
- **Wallingford Garden Club's** speaker on 14 April is the renowned Timothy Walker, formerly Director Oxford University Botanic Garden, 7.30pm, Ridgeway Community Church. Also their Annual Plant Sale is on Saturday 14 May in Wallingford Market Place.
- **Two guided history walks** have been arranged by Judy Dewey (Wallingford Museum) on 2 April, at 11.30am and 2.30pm. Just come along or contact Judy Dewey for details 01491- 651127, www.wallingfordmuseum.org.uk
- **The Wallingford Vehicle Rally and Parade** returns on Sunday 8 May. Parade of 250 vehicles through the town, starting at 11am. Displays and stalls at the Kincroft throughout the day. Pre-registration of vehicles for the parade is essential. More details on the car rally at www.wallingfordcarrally.org.uk.
- **Talking Science's** up coming summer lectures aimed at young people includes *Why bats don't get flu* on Friday 15 April, 1.30pm and 7pm (audience age 10+) and *Indestructable Energy* on Friday 20 May, 1.30pm and 7pm (age 7+). Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Harwell, details at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/talking-science-at-rutherford-appleton-laboratory-tickets-18000505998>.
- **Wallingford Country market** is celebrating the Queen's 90th birthday with a free raffle to win *A birthday basket fit for a queen* on Friday 15 April. Regal Centre every Friday, 8.30–11.15am, home-baked, home-grown, home-crafted items on sale, as well as honey, preserves and eggs.

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Post Office

Your Post Office is open in the Stewart Room of the village hall until 21 May at the following times: Monday to Friday 9-1pm, Saturday 9-12. The last collection time by Royal Mail is 11.05 am.

End of an Era

It is with great sadness that I write this last contribution to the *Villager* as your Sub-postmaster for Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all of our loyal customers who have used our facilities in the Stewart Room of the village hall and prior to that in the Red Lion.

It has been a privilege to serve you and the community in Warborough and Shillingford and to see how much you have appreciated our ability to help you with the various Post Office services. I do hope you will all help the village shop to retain your Post Office custom as I am sure you will find that here also will be people like yourselves who are happy to serve their community. I am very sorry that the Government's commitment to the Big Society did not extend to providing adequate funds to allow us to continue to serve you in the larger facilities in the Stewart Room of the village hall. I wish all the best of luck in their endeavours to continue to make the village shop a success and hope that in the longer term the Post Office will help to contribute to the present success of the village shop. My thanks also to the Chairman and trustees of the village hall who have supported the Post Office greatly.

The following facilities will still be available from the Post Office in the shop. Do also continue to access the Post Office website at www.postoffice.co.uk or through the Post Office icon on the Brightwell-cum-Sotwell website to see what can be provided.

Cash and Cheques: Do remember you can draw cash from all the main banks, and also Nationwide and American Express, at the Post Office Counter Pin Pad, and bank your cheques and cash with separate paying slips.

Bill Paying: Just bring your payment slip and you can pay by cash, cheque, debit or credit card. Contactless payment will also be available.

Foreign Currency: We can obtain any currency within 24 hours, Euros available over the counter.

Postal Charges: These are set to rise again so come and buy your first and second class stamps ahead of the increase.

Mike Powell

VILLAGE DIARY

April

| | | | |
|----|--|-----------------------|--------|
| 5 | Quilting | VH | 9.30am |
| 12 | WI – Indoor Short Mat Bowls | VH | 7.30pm |
| 16 | Cranford Choral Society - Mendelsson's Elijah | St Helen's Abingdon | 7.30pm |
| 19 | Quilting | VH | 9.30am |
| 19 | River of Life Project Talk | VH | 8pm |
| 21 | Queen's Birthday Beacon Lighting | Clumps | 5.30pm |
| 23 | Scout Car Wash | Pavilion | |
| 27 | Rev Kevin Beer's Licencing & Induction Service | St Mary's Wallingford | 7.30pm |

May

| | | | |
|----|---|------------------|--------|
| 1 | Rev Kevin Beer's first Brightwell service | St Agatha's | 9.30am |
| 3 | Quilting | VH | 9.30am |
| 8 | Allsorts Preschool Open Gardens | | 2-5pm |
| 10 | WI – Jubilee Sailing Trust Talk | VH | 7.30pm |
| 14 | Save The Children Plant Sale | The Square | 10am |
| 17 | Quilting | VH | 9.30am |
| 24 | Annual Parish Meeting | VH | 7.30pm |
| 28 | Church Spring Fair | Brightwell Manor | 2pm |
| 31 | Quilting | VH | 9.30am |

Advance Notice

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| 7 June | Brightwell Village Lunch |
| 11 June | Brightfest |
| 11-12 June | Queen's Birthday Celebrations |
| 26 June | Summer Concert, St Agatha's |
| 9 July | Village Fete, Sotwell House |
| 25 September | Community Association Fun Run |

Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Grey bins | 7 & 21 April, Friday 6 and Thursday 19 May |
| Green (& brown) bins | Friday 1 , Thursday 14 & 28 April, 12 & 26 May (26 May extra garden waste for brown bin customers) |

Village website

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

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