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THE BENSON BULLETIN



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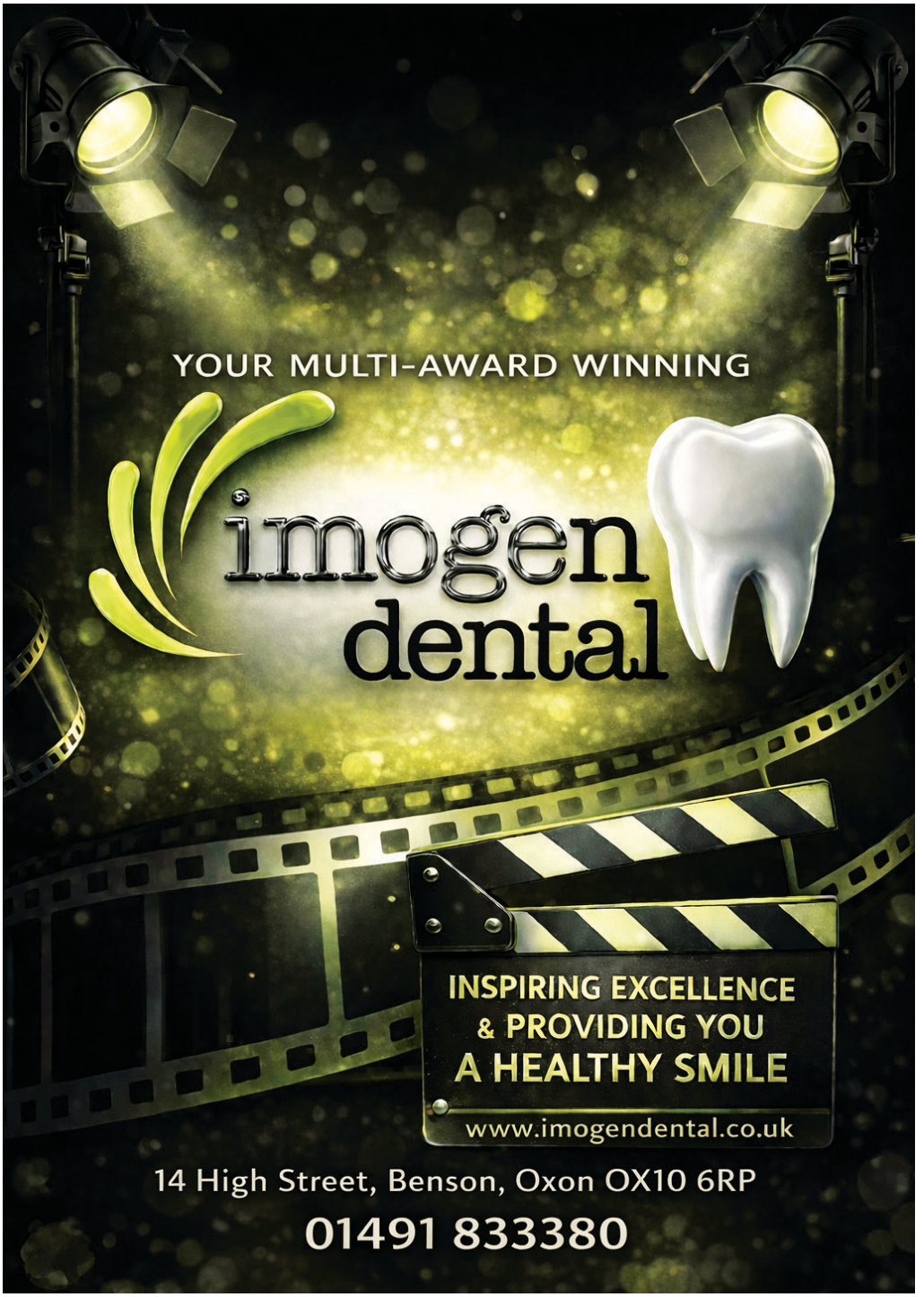
THIS MONTH

- Million Acts of Hope
- SODC Update
- A Benson Diary
- Parish Council Update
- Benson Garden Club
- Benson WI
- From The Rector
- Bensington Society

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BENSON BULLETIN

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EDITORIAL

As a callow youth I once tried to impress a fellow student I was very much taken with, by inviting her to come and see **"Die Valkyrie"**, the second opera of Richard Wagner's **"Ring Cycle"**, in Leeds. It was in English, and conducted by the legendary Wagnerian Reginald Goodall - in those days there were people who actually understood that high art was as important to the regions as to St Martins Lane in London the home of English National Opera who at the time were subsidised to take their productions on tour.

So off we went and at the moment Wotan banishes his daughter Brünnhilde, one of Wagner's great musical climaxes, overcome by all the musical emotion she clung on to me. "Cracked it," I thought, but unfortunately she fell in love with Wagner and not with me.

Nevertheless Wagner remains one of the leitmotifs of my life - he just keeps cropping up.

When the Editor of the BBC Radio programme Kaleidoscope, who to my annoyance used to send every other producer to the USA and me in the opposite direction, decided I should go with Michael Oliver to cover the Wagner Festival at Bayreuth in Germany I knew I had hit the mother load. Apart from entering the Festspielhaus past the local fire brigade – the theatre is built mostly of wood and canvas and is a fabulous fire risk – and attending the whole cycle of operas we also got to interview the most authentic Wagner figure of the time – Richard's daughter-in-law Winifred.

She was of course English and born in Hastings but her German hauteur was magnificent. She very grandly cancelled us twice then finally agreed to meet in her own room in the Opera House, where Michael and I sat, surrounded by unseen paintings of Liszt and Wagner, and interviewing this magnificent matriarch, a close friend of Adolf Hitler (although she hated his persecution of the Jews) and a direct line to the master himself.

I am now researching not Wagner but a couple who bought an island so they could escape society's disapproval and enjoy their love. One of them is Cecil Baring, a Baring Brother who oversaw the near collapse of Barings Bank – no not that one – this near collapse was at the end of the nineteenth century. Cecil was a thoughtful withdrawn Englishman who preferred plants, cricket, Greek and Wagner to much else, though imagine my surprise when I read the following Cecil wrote in the late 1920's:

"Tariffs, in their origin the fruit of laudable ambitions, have become in the course of time, a sort of Alberich's curse on civilisation (the premise of Wagner's Ring). *By reducing the volume of trade they bring about bankruptcy and destitution… Tariffs lead to the twilight of civilisation and the deterioration of the moral code just as surely as in the myth Wotan's condoning of the Rheingold robbery leads to the dimming of the old standards of faith.*

Such a stipulation brings before us at once the ideal, which needs imagination to see, of universal free trade, or at least a federation, under a single Customs Union. 'A poets dream.' whispers one voice across the Atlantic. 'Yes neighbour: but your poet sometimes sees further through your brick wall than your statesman or your bank president.'"

Apart from being a hundred-year-old condemnation of what is going on in the world at the present, it's that last sentence which resonates with me the most. The poet does indeed enable us to see beyond the brick walls that sometimes surround us – and I thank Cecil Baring for reminding me of that.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I was interested to read in the April Bulletin about both the strain on the magazine's finances due to the new housing, and the strain on the "sustainable" drainage system… also due to the new housing.

As a resident of Chiltern Grange I feel somewhat guilty on both counts. My wife and I moved to Benson just over a year ago, from Warborough (a long trek!) and we have found it a welcoming and friendly place. We appreciate that fields have been sacrificed to provide our home, and we are anxious to ameliorate the impact so far as possible.

As to the first issue, I wonder whether it would be possible for those of us who wish to, and are able, to support the Bulletin financially? I would gladly make an annual payment, in the same way that many organisations have a " Friends of…" supporters' group. We are grateful for the Benson Bulletin and would like to see it thrive.

As to the second issue, this is complicated with incoherent planning decisions playing their part, but also other individual decisions. For example, over several years we have seen from our walks on the Warborough side how fields were flooding, and crops being ruined, and that understandably, farmers have improved their drainage into the Lady Brook. Which of course compounds the problem. I do feel that a more coordinated approach to managing water is needed. We all live on a floodplain, after all.

David Harris

Re: Jackie Spencer's letter published in April's Bulletin

Dear Sir,

Like Jackie Spencer I too have spent a lot of my life in Benson and remember all that Jackie wrote about. Benson has always been my favourite place and, although it has grown so much, it is still a village.

My grandfather lived in a cottage in Littleworth Lane, and my mother and I were invited to live with him and one of my father's sisters when my father was called up to join the RAF at the beginning of World War Two.

I too remember the sweet shops (I wonder why). Sweets were rationed and one of the highlights of the week was when another aunt brought a chocolate bar and gave me one very small piece. I remember the cows walking through the village from Westfield to College Farm to be milked. Shopping trips had to be carefully timed so you didn't run into them. There was great excitement one day when the bull escaped. As there was very little traffic it was possible for the family to play our version of cricket using a bucket as a wicket.

I remember swimming in the river in a roped off area complete with a diving board. There was also a small paddling pool for the younger children. After the war my dad came home – he had been five years in a German Prisoner of War Camp – and we went back to Feltham but still came to Benson for the summer and sometimes Christmas. This involved catching a train from Feltham to Reading, then another train to Cholsey and the "Bunk" to Wallingford and walking to Benson.

I still love living in Benson.

Pandora Huntingford



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CROSSING THE THAMES

April 1 was the day set for the re-opening of the weir at Benson – after three long years – thus affording access along the Thames Path to Wallingford. No-one quite believed it - could it be an April Fool? However, I am reliably informed that it did indeed open at 9am although it was later in the day when I got there. I missed the free cakes and cold drinks put on by the Environment Agency to celebrate this event, but I can attest to the fact that everyone I saw was really happy to have this facility available to us all once more. How long it will it be before we all take it for granted again?

However, long standing residents of Benson and the local area will remember that the route across the river at the weir is relatively recent. In 1986, when we moved here, the iron gate at the end of the wooden bridge was shut and firmly padlocked and it was 1991 before the weir was opened to the public as part of the Thames Path.

I was reminded of an article I wrote for the BB in 2020 outlining the history of the Thames Path. The path itself evolved piecemeal as negotiations took place to walk through or round private riverbank property, weirs were made suitable for walkers and bridges were built to replace ferries. Now there are none of the old towpath ferries in regular use. Although the path was an aspiration in the early 1900s, work did not begin in earnest until 1947. The River Thames Society was formed in 1962 with a main objective of securing a "continuous walking route from the source to the sea" and other groups such as the Ramblers joined in the planning. There was much work to be done and numerous difficulties had to be overcome, but the resulting path is over 180 miles long and is one of the country's long distance National Trails. It is enormously popular with walkers including visitors from abroad.

It might be a surprise to learn that the official opening for the path was only 30 years ago: on 24 July 1996. Wallingford Museum has commemorated this with a small exhibition on various aspects of the River Thames and this is available to visit throughout 2026. Opening times are detailed on the museum's web site.

Kate Hart

WAR GRAVES TOUR

War Graves week tour at St.Helen's Churchyard and Churchyard extension - Saturday 23rd May 2026 1100 - booking required:

eventbrite.co.uk/e/cwgc-war-graves-week-tour-2026-benson-st-helen-churchyard-and-ext-tickets-1983940710070?aff=oddtdtcreator

Learn about history on your door step during War Graves Week, organised by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The CWGC is hosting a range of talks, tours and events at some of its most interesting cemeteries and memorials. You'll be able to discover more about how the CWGC cares for the casualties of the world wars and hear some of the stories of the men and women commemorated near you.

As a CWGC volunteer I will be hosting a war graves tour at St.Helen's Churchyard and Churchyard Extension. Here at Benson - there is one burial from the 1914-18 War in the churchyard and 31 war graves of the 1939-45 war in the churchyard extension. 29 of these are from the RAF, many connected with RAF Benson. You will be able to discover some of the stories of the men and women buried at Benson as well as more of the history of the CWGC.

Sue Wright



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A BENSON DIARY

Whether in the woodland brown
I heard the beechnut rustle down,
And saw the purple crocus pale
Flower about the autumn dale;
Or littering far the fields of May
Lady-smocks a-bleaching lay,
And like a skylit water stood
The bluebells in the azured wood.

With Easter came a sudden flush of summer's heat and it stirred Nature to dress her spring collection. Rape fields, bright in yellow glory, frame many walks around the village. Lilac too has come suddenly to wear her scented crown. The pear blossom is as quickly gone but apple blossom has come in her sweet pale grace. (Mention of apple blossom reminds me of my mum's favourite perfume by Helena Rubenstein.)

Blossoms' confetti are scattered all around our villages, witnessing to Spring's happy nuptials that have hitched her wagon to the wheels of Apollo's golden chariot. Even in Benson's heart by the parade of shops white blossom coats the pavements. By the Marina as sun sets over the untroubled waters of the Thames all is caught in rapture of the moment – accompanied by bird song - the majestic glory of an orange sky painted by the flaming fingers of the setting sun. And then the tiny buds of leaf, tinier than pillows in Titania's bower, burst forth into a symphony of many, many, greens: shrubs and trees, beech and oak, in thicket, weald or copse, along woodland walks and even by the edge of busy roadsides. I've watched with some fascination as the fig tree in our garden coming into leaf, in its own small way as remarkable as any grander display. Our many hydrangeas too are now in leaf. I've been carefully nourishing them with coffee grouts to which I'm told they're particularly partial.

And so, with so many signs of Spring's imminence, it had to be I made my annual first pilgrimage to the woods overlooking Swyncombe. It was one of those cooler days we recently had, with spits and spots of rain from time to time and a cool breeze that made one glad of an overcoat. Yet the sky was mainly blue and the year's young sun, strong. I knew this perfect combination promised its own perfection.

Ten years now I've trod the path through this woodland down towards the hilltop overlooking St Botolph's below. Constable might have caught this view in grand style in oils or even Wordsworth might have found words to immortalise it, had he but stumbled into this vista one April afternoon long past. We park by the footpath sign. The dogs were already pretty much overwrought by the expectation and anxious to be out and off the leash. And so, we let them go dancing into the woodland as if beguiled by some spirits of the glade to relive their puppy days.

There are bluebells about at first in dainty clumps and then more widely spread beneath the beech trees. Shimmering, in the speckled sunlight they've already makes magic ponds of delicate blue-grey set in that distinctive bright green, strap-shaped, foliage. They stand in such a contrast to the dull brown surrounds of the woodland floor. These however are merely the hors d'oeuvre. The woodland path winds away from the hilltop and back through the trees where more clumps appear and some single harebells have run wild, until the pathway reaches an open avenue. Here deer are stalked and, in the trees, hides abound where shooters might take full advantage of the glut of birds the beaters run their way. Here again that breathtaking grand vista overlooking Swyncombe below, that spreads beyond to the breathless mantle

Continued overleaf...



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of the Thames Valley edged as it is by the Ridgeway and the Wittenham clumps. It brings a lump to the throat and words simply fail to do it justice.

This is a precursor to a greater failure of words as one turns one's back on this staggering view to behold carpets of bluebells running in every direction. A lake of turquoise blue shimmering within the woodland and banks of cerulean strung along each side of the entire length of this man-made avenue. Every year I see. Every year I marvel at the sight. Every year I'm grateful I still have sight to see. What is more remarkable to this part of the world than bluebells in their effulgence? What sapphires set in regal crown can outdo bluebells in the sunlight of their brief lives? It is a joy without equal. A sight for sore eyes. A balm for heavy hearts. A tear of joy to soothe tears of loss to which every life and every time is heir. Over these years, the sweet-scented English bluebells have spread far and wide and seem to be boundless in their ambitions.

Boundless ambitions are the byword for these times of ours. For many these days, the delicate hope of spring sunshine simply illuminates a manuscript of malevolence that tells a darker tale. The sweet narcissus has given way to belligerent narcissism. The values of the world are replete in this year with menace and foreboding. Presently it seems we stand by, powerless, observers, unable to shape these boundless ambitions of others to make war and rather helpless victims of its myriad harms.

Yet there is always hope and it comes most often from unexpected places. Hungary having been among the first to set off on this strange adventure into the netherworld of dictatorship's intolerance, has now decisively turned its back upon it. And this will matter to the world and to the people of Ukraine – some of whom are still refugees hereabouts, refugees from the war unleashed upon them by President Putin – another autocrat for whose cold ambitions his fellow countrymen must die. Hungary's return comes as hopefully as that dove returning with a green olive leaf to Noah's ark. I hope the world sees its chance to turn back too -

John Murphy

I see
In many an eye that measures me
The mortal sickness of a mind
Too unhappy to be kind.
Undone with misery, all they can
Is to hate their fellow man;
And till they drop they needs must still
Look at you and wish you ill.
(A E Housman, A Shropshire Lad)

ST HELEN'S ECOCHURCH ECOTIP

Support pollinators. Nothing says Spring like the buzz of a bee! But these precious pollinators are declining due to habitat loss, climate change and agricultural intensification. Wednesday 20 May is World Bee Day, so look around to see how you can improve habitats for bees and other pollinators.

A key meaningful way to participate in World Bee Day is to create a pollinator-friendly garden by planting native flowers - Lavender, Foxgloves, Verbena, Cosmos and Hardy geraniums are some of the top flowers for UK pollinators.

Also avoid using pesticides and support Local Beekeepers by buying Local Honey and other Bee products to help support sustainable and ethical beekeeping practices.

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WHAT'S IN A NAME

ALDRIDGE CLOSE

The name commemorates the Aldridge family of Benson, who owned the old orchard the Close was built on. The late John Aldridge wrote many fascinating articles looking back at life in the village he loved during the twentieth century. In these articles, published in the Benson Bulletin, he shared his extensive knowledge of Benson's old buildings and their inhabitants.



The family have lived in the village since 1861, when William Aldridge married Mercy Chamberlain in Ewelme Parish Church. Over the years, generations of Aldridges have been shoemakers, drapers, postmen, saddlers, wheelwrights, garage owners, carpenters, builders & decorators.

For many years, Sarah (Granny) Aldridge built and ran the Gospel Mission Hall in Crown Lane, with the family garage down the road in Crown Square. Just over the road, opposite the Crown was her shop selling drapery & shoes. Facing the shop was Aldridge's Garage, which closed in the late 1940's we believe.

The Aldridge family donated the triangle of land, which they owned at the junction of Crown Lane and Watlington Road, to the village. It is now a well-maintained green space with a small plaque recording the generosity of this family.



Dave Rushton, with acknowledgements to John Aldridge

Bensington History Group
bensingtonhistory.org

GRAND PLANT SALE

Ewelme Horticultural Society will be holding their annual Plant Sale in Ewelme Village Hall on 9th May from 9.30 to 1pm. There will be a great selection of good quality bedding and perennial plants, vegetables , herbs and hanging baskets. Light refreshments and a raffle. Cash or card. Look forward to seeing you there.

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THE BENSINGTON SOCIETY

In a previous piece in the Bulletin in relationship to our March talk, to be given by the international photographer Tom Way, I said "Expect some stunning images". No truer statement has ever been made. Tom had only returned from an assignment in Africa the previous day so what we saw were some of his most up to date works. He is also an engaging speaker so in addition to showing us his photographs we were given the background stories. His aim is not just to capture an image of an animal but in doing so to try and show its character. Achieving that aim takes both creating the opportunity and patience, lots and lots of patience! As he explained, getting the image he wants could take up to 4 days in the same position taking over 1000 shots! And that applies to getting the right picture of a tiger or a water vole. For those of you who want to see more, I encourage you to visit his website: **tomway.co.uk**

When you are reading this it will be the beginning of May, the month in which the 29th will be our last meeting before our summer break. Our autumn season begins on the 25th September. Details can be found at the Library or the recently updated Society notice board at Bob's Corner by the Chemist.

For members who may have been disappointed not to have heard Liz Woolley's talk "The Story of Elizabeth Skeene"- at the April meeting , we apologise but unfortunately, for personal reasons, Liz had to cancel. We are trying to arrange a new date. The talk in May will be another wildlife talk but this time on an animal considerably smaller than an Elephant or even a Water Vole – a bee, to be specific "Bees in the UK", to be given by Yvonne Park of the Oxford Beekeepers Association. You might be surprised to learn there are more than 250 types of bee in the UK. Bumblebees, mason bees, mining bees etc. Come along and learn more about them and how we can help them help us.

Apart from our usual Friday evening meetings several one-off events are to take place in the Village, all of which we are supporting: The trip to the Fawley Hill Railway and Museum on 28th June is now full. The Benson Community Shed is opening on Saturday May 9th, open doors from 2 to 4pm. The Bensington Society has been supporting the founding of this organisation from its inception.

Million Acts of Kindness at the Parish Hall is on Saturday 16th May. As well as many local groups and clubs who will have stands in and around the Parish Hall, including us, there will be a chance to take part in taster sessions of activities, and an opportunity to celebrate the many small acts of kindness and care that happen in Benson every day, as well as to talk to local councillors. So please do encourage your friends and neighbours to come along and see what the Society and many of the other Village groups clubs and societies have to offer. More information about the event can be found elsewhere in this issue of the Bulletin.

War Graves tour on Saturday 23rd May. A very popular walk and talk starts 10am from St. Helens, booking required. Check it out on the War Graves Society web site, or contact David Rhys Davies our Membership Secretary.

Preparation of the new Constitution and Rules required for application to the Charity Commission to become a Registered Charity continues thanks to the appointed sub-committee led by our Chair Fenella and with a lot of hard work, time and effort by our secretary Ann Wright. The target is to have everything ready to submit to a short General Meeting later in the year.

Hope to see you soon, David McGill



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FROM THE RECTOR

Some years ago, when I worked in another church, a priest who had stepped back from ministry came to join our congregation. She suffered from multiple health issues, but the real reason she had stopped ministering was because (as she put it) 'I have a ministry of prayer, and there wasn't room for that in everything the Church wanted me to do'.

Around the same time, another member of that parish confided in me that she wasn't very confident in her prayer life. 'What's your prayer routine look like?', I asked, thinking that I might be able to give her some practical tips. 'Oh, it's so little', she replied, entirely seriously. 'I can only ever manage about two hours of prayer each afternoon.' I almost fell off my seat!

Another lady, now sadly deceased, lived in a nursing home I used to visit every few weeks. I often sat with her in her room for a cup of tea, and every time she would say to me, 'I feel so useless! I can't do anything for Jesus stuck in here!' This time, I could offer useful counsel: 'But you can pray!', I said, 'and that is more powerful than anything you could possibly do!'

It didn't take me very long to work out that people in our churches and our communities often think that doing things is of greater worth than praying. But that's a worldly miscalculation. In fact, it's the other way round. Prayer is the active agent in our relationship with God, and the basis for all of his and our action in the world. Doing things for Jesus, by and large, has only a temporary effect; whereas praying involves us in the mind of God and hence its effects are eternal.

That's good news: because, in truth, you and I aren't altogether great at accomplishing much of lasting significance ourselves. But we are more than capable of asking God our Father, in fervent prayer and petition, to intervene on our behalf.

For what – or for whom – will you pray this month? Take some time to ask God to place people, situations, or concerns upon your heart to take to him in prayer. Praying can be as simple as sitting in a quiet room, and whispering under your breath, 'Lord, I bring these things to you and ask you to make things better…'. However we do it, praying makes all the difference in the world.

Sunday services take place at St Helen's, Benson every week at 9.30am.

There are services at other times this month, too: 4 O'Clock Church (especially suitable for young families) meets in the Canons' Room at 4pm on Sunday 3rd; there's an early said service of Holy Communion at 8.15am on Sunday 17th; and the new contemporary service, Sanctuary, meets in church on 24th at 6pm.

Sunday services take place at St Mary's, Ewelme every week at 11 o'clock, except Sunday 31st, when there is no service in Ewelme.

Everyone is very welcome to join us in worship and prayer!



WALKING FOR HEALTH

Benson Community Walkers ready for the off.

They meet every Wednesday at 10am for a walk of 1 or 1.5 hours from the Parish Hall.

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BENSON GARDEN CLUB

The Club's talk in April was given by Sam Mallett on 'Creating a Small Garden'. Sam began with an interesting fact that gardening is the UK's most widespread interaction with nature, engaging around 41 million people at least once a month. She also told us that UK gardens represent three times the size of all the UK's nature reserves combined. Significantly, even the smallest garden can act as a stepping stone to form a nature corridor with other gardens. Sam then went on to describe how to create a green haven in the smallest of spaces and gave some useful tips on plant choices, having brought a wide range of plant specimens to show us.

In small spaces pots can be a good option, but they do need management. For example, Sam warned us that plants in pots are vulnerable to frost and freezing. So while an evergreen such as holly can look lovely in a container all year round, always protect it over winter, surrounding the pot with bubble-wrap and lifting it off the ground to prevent it freezing. Patio climbing roses were suggested as an excellent choice for containers - they have foliage from top to bottom, can cover a small obelisk and are often repeat flowering with lots of blooms (the only drawback is that the scent is not so powerful as with traditional roses).

Sam also advised that if you like a particular lime-hating plant but have non-acidic soil then a container may be your solution; you grow them in ericaceous compost where they will thrive. With this in mind, Sam brought along some compact varieties of lime-hating plants, such as rhododendrons, that would normally be far too large for containers. Fresh ericaceous compost will provide nutrients for around three months, so after that you need to remember to feed your plant. Sam warned against using tap water on lime-hating plants – instead, use rainwater.

Other useful gardening tips were shared with us – for example, if you choose a climbing hydrangea, be prepared to be patient as it will take a few years to start clinging but will (eventually) do so and look fabulous! Another useful piece of advice was that if you buy plants in coir pots, take them out of the pot and plant them directly into the ground as it can take as long as four years for the coir to break down, restricting root spread in the meantime.

Sam also warned us of plants to avoid if we had small spaces to fill and suggested possible alternatives. If you want catmint, avoid Nepeta 'Six Hills Giant' and instead choose Nepeta 'Junior Walker'. Similarly, don't choose Old English Lavender and instead buy 'Vera' for its compact growth habit. If you envy the bright foliage of Photinia 'Red Robin', which can grow 4 metres high, choose instead Photinia serratifolia 'Pink Crispy', which reaches only around 1.8 metres and can be grown in a large pot. By the end of the talk, we had lots of planting ideas. In particular, 'favourites', which we may have previously discarded on the basis they grow too big, were now seen as possibilities to consider if we sought out compact varieties.

BENSON GARDEN CLUB'S ANNUAL PLANT SALE

To get this season's planting off to a flying start, on Saturday 16th May we will have our annual Plant Sale at Bob's Corner, (opposite the Co-Op), from 9am to midday. This sale is always very popular and there will be a wide selection of plants available, together with advice on how to grow them. Further information about the club and how to join as a member can be found on our website **bensongardeningclub.weebly.com** or please feel free to email: **bensongardeningclub@gmail.com**

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A MILLION ACTS OF HOPE

Hope matters. And it's something we can all actively create and share. In a world where news headlines often focus on conflict, division, and hardship, it's easy to feel powerless. But all around us, people are looking out for one another, welcoming new neighbours, volunteering their time, and offering friendship. Here in Benson, a wealth of village organisations and groups enhance our community life, and countless small acts of kindness and care for neighbours go on every day. This is worth celebrating!

A national campaign was launched in April to recognise 'A Million Acts of Hope', with a special week from the 13th to 20th of May to remind ourselves that even the smallest good deed can make a big difference. The idea is simple: do something – anything – that spreads hope. It could be as easy as smiling at someone in the street, helping a neighbour with their shopping, or sharing a slice of cake over a cuppa. When we all chip in, those small moments add up to something powerful.

Here in Benson, we have plans to get everyone involved, look out for more information on social media and on posters around the Village. In addition to the Community event on 16th May, perhaps your shop/street/club would like to create their own "Hope Tree" during the week, or will have other ideas to celebrate kindness, compassion and connection? There is further information about the Million Acts of Hope initiative at **millionactsofhope.org** There's no sign-up sheet, no cost, no pressure. Just join in however you can. Come along to the Parish Hall on 16th May, find out what Benson has to offer, and add your message to the Hope Tree - or simply do something nice for someone. Here in Benson we can choose to focus on what brings us together. Every kind word, every helping hand, every smile – it all counts.

THE BENSON SHED

BenShed
make - share - belong

Benson Community Shed (BenShed) is delighted to announce that it will be opening its doors 3 times a week from Monday 11th May. Many thanks to all who have made this possible through donations of time, money, equipment and expertise.

We will be open initially from 2-5 on Monday afternoons, 2-5 on Wednesday afternoons, and 10-1 on Friday mornings. There will always be a supervisor on hand at 18 Oxford Road to welcome you and show you around. The kettle will be on, so do pop in to say hello and see what it's all about. Shed membership will be available from 11th May, and you are welcome to come along to a couple of sessions before joining. Membership is £100 per year, and membership fees will cover the day to day running costs of the Shed. More information at **benshed.org.uk** or email: **info@benshed.org.uk**

Our Opening Party is on Saturday afternoon 9th May, 2-4 pm when there will be tea and cake, tours of the workshop, demonstrations and displays. All are welcome, and we hope to see you there.

We will also be taking part in Benson's Million Acts of Hope Community Celebration on 16th May at the Parish Hall. Shed members will be on hand there to promote the Shed and what it's all about.

BENSON LIBRARY

REGULAR EVENTS

Rhymetime: 1st and 2nd Tuesday plus last 2 Fridays of the month

10am -10.30am followed by coffee morning

Knit and Natter: 2pm - 4pm 1st Tuesday of the month

Carers Coffee Morning: 10.30am - 12 noon 1st Thursday of the month

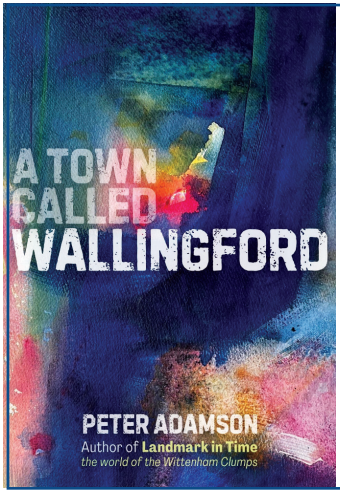
Family History Group: 6pm - 7pm 2nd Thursday of the month

Gadget and IT Support: 2pm - 4pm Last Tuesday of the month

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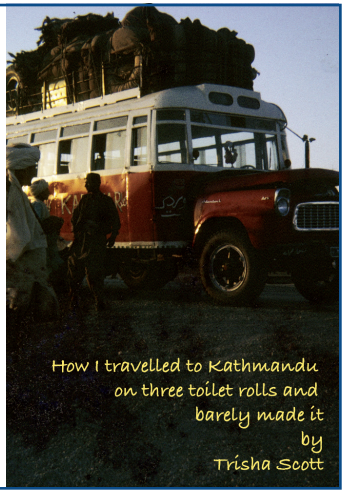
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Two local authors have new books out. Peter Adamson's can be purchased from peteradamsowriting.com

Trisha Scott's book can be found in Derry's Den and the Ewelme Village Store all profits for her book go to the World Cancer Research Fund.

Both books are available at the Wallingford Bookshop.





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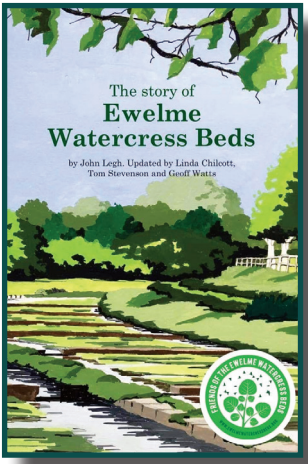
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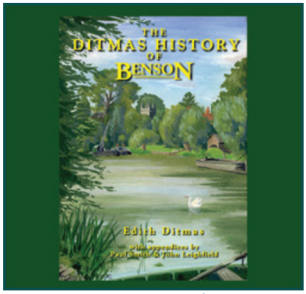
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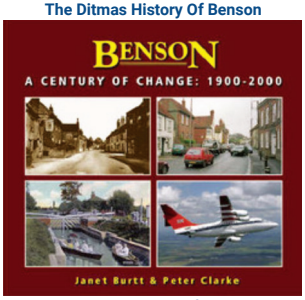
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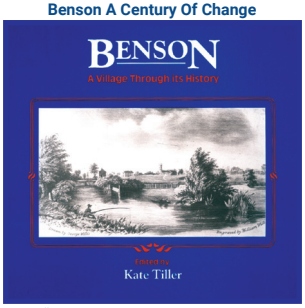




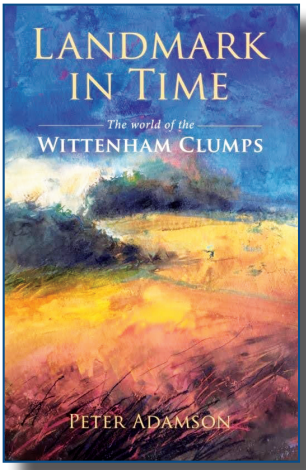
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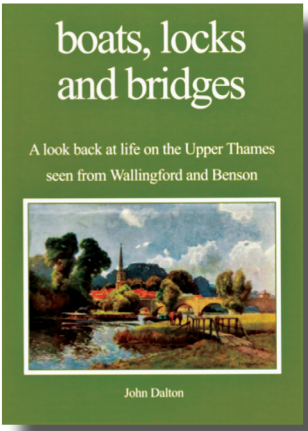


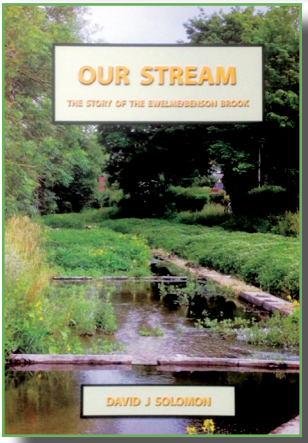
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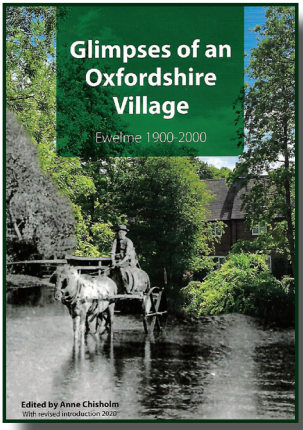


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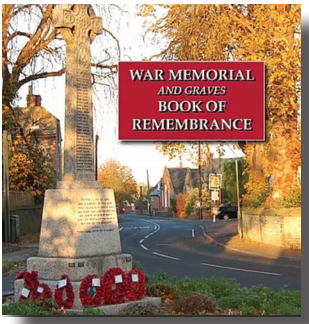








You can buy some of these Books at: bensington-society.com Others directly from John Dalton, Peter Clarke or Tom Stevenson, or at Derry's Den where some can be bought but not all. And some can be found on Amazon.



"Landmark in Time" is available at Wallingford Bookshop on Amazon and from peteradamsonwriting.com

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EVERY TUESDAY - 10.30-12pm COMMUNITY COFFEE MORNING Millstream Centre
EVERY WEDNESDAY - COMMUNITY WALK 10am Parish Hall
EVERY 1st THURSDAY OF MONTH Carers Coffee Morning: 10.30am - 12 - Library

MAY

1st - 10th/ Dorchester Festival
2nd - 10th/ Oxford Art Weeks Ewelme.
7/ Wallingford Photographic Club 7.30 Crowmarsh Pavilion
9/ BANG Family Nature Morning 9am Roke & Berwick Parish Hall
9/ BenShed Grand Opening 2- 4 Old Youth Hall.
9/ Community Allotment "Natural Dyes Workshop" 2-4pm
9/ Ewelme Village Hall Plant Sale 9.30 - 1pm
10th -16th/ Christian Aid Week.
14/ Wallingford Photographic Club AGM 7.30 Crowmarsh Pavilion
16/ Benson Garden Club Plant Sale 9 -12 Bob's Corner
16/ Cholsey's Repair Cafe Cholsey Pavilion 10-12.45
16/ Million Acts Of Hope 10- 2 Parish Hall
17/ Benson Antique Fair Parish Hall 9 - 3
23/ War Graves Tour St Helen's 11am (need to book).
27/ Benson WI 2.30 Parish Hall
29/ Bensington Society 7.30pm Parish Hall





Please send all Diary information to: diary@bensonbulletin.co.uk
FULL DETAILS Of Upcoming Events
Please Go To: bensonbulletin.co.uk - "Village Information/Events"

About The Benson Bulletin

bb.editor@hotmail.co.uk Est. 1994

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BENSON AREA NATURE GROUP

LOCAL FARMERS SHARE REGENERATIVE JOURNEY

With some experts believing our soils are now so poor and compacted that we only have 40 harvests left, the regenerative farming movement, whilst still small, is attracting increasing interest. And so, a record audience attended the screening, in collaboration with St Helen's Eco-church, of "Six Inches of Soil" in which three young farmers recount their journey into regenerative farming. The film shows it is possible to farm with nature rather than against it and that healthy soils, thriving ecosystems and productive farms go hand in hand.

Modern intensive agriculture has led to compacted soils that cannot absorb rainfall and atmospheric carbon dioxide. It increases dependency on chemical inputs and is a major contributor to climate change and biodiversity loss.

By contrast, regenerative farming uses chemicals only sparingly, gradually reducing their use, whilst at the same time using various methods to restore soil fertility.

We were fortunate to be joined by 6 local producers dedicated to regenerative farming who provided further insights. Our sincere thanks to:

Rupert Belcher, Hale Farm, Benson sells their own beef. Enquiries and orders: **07804 305681**. **Mark Stevenson**, The Clays, Warborough sells at Wallingford Local Producers Market on Saturday mornings. Their apple juice is sold at **Just Trading** in Wallingford and Warborough village shop. Their online shop **vitalityfarm.co.uk** sells a range of organic and ethical produce delivered by van, including their own pork products. Ben Robins, Orchard Battle Farm, Preston Crowmarsh produce apple juice, vegetables, soft fruits, eggs and willow for basket making. Contact **info@orchardbattlefarm.co.uk** or **07533 819133** and **07789 191818**. **Will Davey**, Cadwell Farm, Brightwell Baldwin. Follow: **@cadwellfarm**. They grow for **Wildfarmed** and hope to have their lamb for sale next year. **Katherine Murray**, Cadwell Farm, Brightwell Baldwin works for **First Milk**, a regen farmer-owned dairy.

The evening was finished with a free raffle. We thank the donors for their generosity: Nettlebed Creamery (producers of organic cheese, milk and kefir, available from their Shed Shop, Nettlebed High Street, and online), Mark Stevenson - the Clays (see above) and Bridgid Hess - Bridgid's Calendula Creams, with other items donated by Eco-church members·

In other activities, a recent water monitoring exercise showed high levels of phosphates and nitrates in Benson/Ewelme Brook, particularly within the villages. People can make a difference by not using fertilisers in gardens near the stream, checking septic tanks/pipes for leaks and swapping out high phosphate household detergents eg fairy liquid. Road and agricultural run-off also contribute.

Upcoming Events:

Saturday 9th May, 9:00am - Family Nature Morning

Roke & Berrick Parish Hall, Berrick - including checking a moth trap, kick sampling in nearby streams for riverflies, owl pellet dissection and more. A great opportunity for children (and adults!) to learn more about local nature.

Saturday 16th May, 10am–2pm

Benson Community Celebration Event, Benson Parish Hall, Sunnyside

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BENSON MILLSTREAM CENTRE

We have had a busy month at the Centre, enjoying Easter activities including crafts, singing and word games. We had a fun visit from Mike at Cycling Without Age Wallingford and he took some of our customers out on one of his unique electric trikes for a trip around Benson. We are hoping to make this a regular activity for our customers!

Big news this month: As you read this, one of our volunteer drivers Rachel and her husband Mike will be on an amazing 480+ mile hike along the Camino de Santiago in Northern Spain. They are very kindly donating all the money raised to the Centre in memory of Rachel's father Joe Craven who was a volunteer and a then customer at Millstream.

This is from their JustGiving page: *Millstream Day Centre is a lifeline for the elderly community in Benson and surrounding villages. It provides so much more than a hot meal, it brings fun, laughter and a family to those who need it, literally a home from home. We would like to raise some much-needed funds so that the Centre can maintain its wonderful and essential work.*

We became involved with the Day Centre through my father, Joe Craven, who both worked, and later enjoyed the kindness and camaraderie that they provide - our walk is dedicated to his memory in this, which would have been his centenary year.

We are leaving Berrick on April 30th, and after a ferry and bus rides we will depart from Saint Jean Pied de Port to begin our walk on May 5th. We aim to do 15 miles a day which equates to 33 days. We have no accommodation booked but aim to find a bed each night along the way in hostels.

If you would like to sponsor Rachel and Mike please go to their JustGiving page, every penny goes to the Centre **justgiving.com/page/the-ct-wanderers**.

We will be updating you on their progress on our social media, so please follow us! We are so grateful to Rachel and Mike, and everyone who donates to the Centre. Rachel is one of our wonderful volunteer drivers, who enable many of our customers to reach the Centre – we need more – so please if you can spare as little as an hour a week, or a month – we need you!

GET IN TOUCH

For details of how you can get involved with us as a volunteer or join us as a customer, or for any other information please go to our website: **bensonmillstreamcentre.org** or contact us by email at **bensonmillstreamcentre@gmail.com** or phone **01491 834889**. You can also find us on Facebook and Instagram.

MILLSTREAM MEALS AT HOME

Don't forget if you have family or friends who can't get out and about, we offer a lunch delivery service. We deliver hot lunches to Benson and the surrounding areas on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Cooked by our chef, it's two courses, a main and dessert, delivered to your door by one of our amazing volunteer drivers.

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SODC UPDATE



Andrea Powell & Sue Cooper



LITTER

First of all a big thank you to all those who took part in the recent litter picks to tidy up our villages.

And a special thank you to all those who carry out litter picking on a regular basis making the place look better all year round. It is much appreciated.

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils are classed as 'Principal Litter Authorities' and have the responsibility for "maintaining the highway (and adopted highway) and ensuring that the relevant land within their areas is kept clear of litter and refuse so far as is practicable." The Council and its waste collection and street cleaning contractor, Biffa, use the Defra 'Code of Practice' to assess the type of cleaning required. Biffa is therefore employed to carry out the following tasks:

1): Adopted highway, pavement and path mechanical sweeping. **2):** Litter picking.

3): Litter and dog waste bin emptying (from bins belonging to the District Council on the adopted highway. (Parish Councils employ whoever they wish to empty their dog bins). This will be done as frequently as is required to ensure sufficient capacity is available for use. So there is no set timetable for bin emptying but if a bin is reported to the contractor as full, it must be emptied within a set timescale depending on the location of the bin. **4):** Deep cleaning including leaf fall – to be arranged in conjunction with the parish council. **5):** Fly tip removal **6):** Graffiti and fly posting removal from District Council owned property. **7):** Dead animal removal.

Town centres with heavy pedestrian and/or vehicle movements are cleaned on a daily basis.

Other areas are cleaned when it is needed. So if you think a particular location is in need of some attention, please email Biffa at **admin.southoxford@biffa.co.uk** or call them on **01235 422123** giving them details of the location including the street name and ask them to clear it. Likewise if you come across instances of other problems they have to deal with from the list above, it would be helpful if you could notify Biffa with details. Of course if everyone behaved responsibly and took their rubbish home and put it in the appropriate bin, all this extra work would not be necessary. If only!

RECYCLING UPDATE

We are disappointed to report that South Oxfordshire dropped to third place amongst English Council areas for our recycling rate for the year 2024/2025 having been top for the previous 2 years. Our rate actually dropped to 61.3% and the national figure for recycling also fell. These figures were for the year ending in March last year so let's try and get back to the top during this current year which

Continued overleaf...

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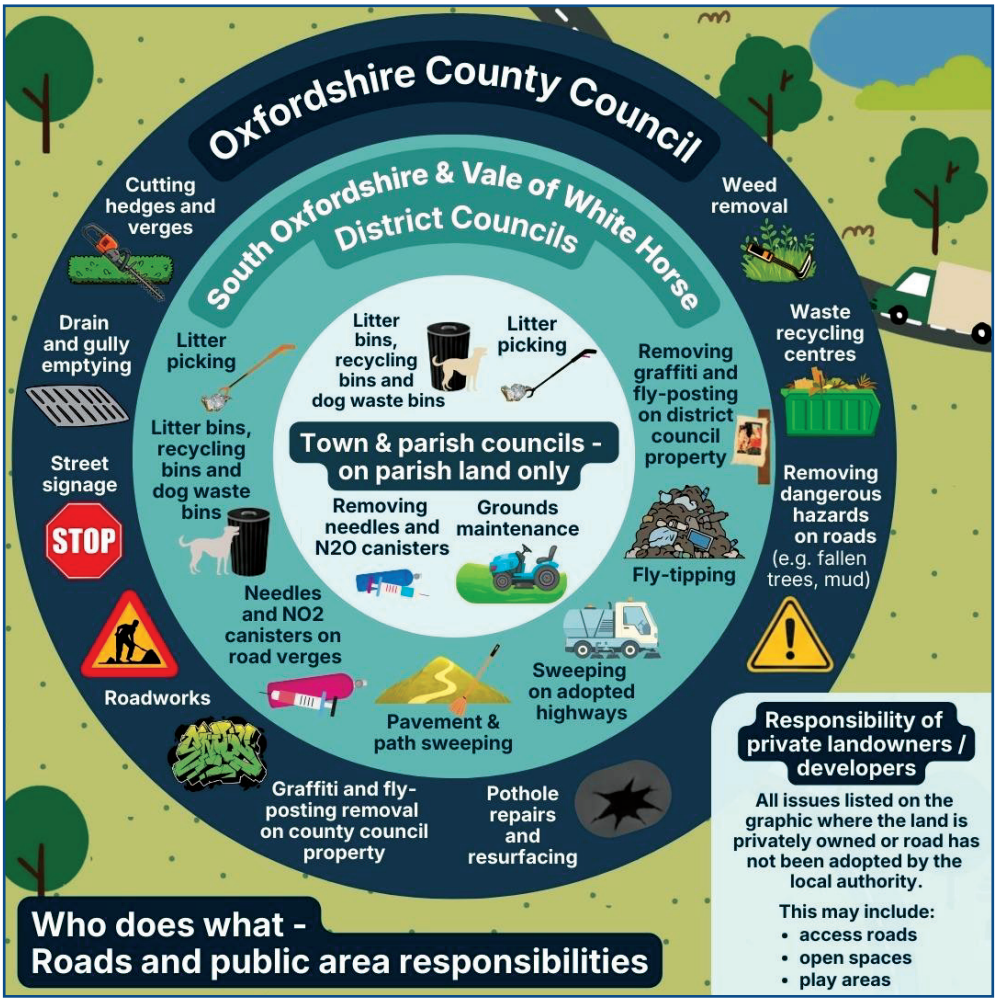
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has just started please? And better still would be to reduce the amount of waste we generate. The County Council has to pay a gate fee of so much per tonne to have our residual waste burned to generate electricity. That fee is quite high so reducing our residual waste would help ease the financial burden on OCC. Just to note, the County Council provides the Oakley Wood household waste recycling centre and indeed others around the county like Redbridge. Since the booking system for these was introduced there have been concerns this might increase flytipping. So incidences of this are being closely monitored by the district councils. According to the latest figures that has not been the case but it is early days so please be alert and report any fly tips you see to Biffa please, carefully noting any evidence of where it might have come from. SODC has carried out a number of successful prosecutions on offenders.

Finally please see below. Before you lift the phone or go on line to explain or complain please check which authority is responsible for what.

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THE BENSON WI



Members of Benson WI held their Annual Meeting in March when they elected their committee, appointed a new President (Suzanna) and had a look back on the year which had been quite a busy one. We said farewell to one member who had moved away, in turn welcomed a new member and thanked Elizabeth, as our outgoing President, for steering us through the last couple of years and keeping us all together. Existing members renewed their subscriptions so, as we enter our 100th year, the meeting ended on a very positive note.

Following the business of the Annual Meeting, we welcomed Cath Somerville from Sustainable Wallingford (also of Wallingford WI). Cath talked to members about water usage which represents a significant part of our monthly bills, the average person in the UK can use 145 litres of water a day. We talked about saving on water costs by maybe using a timer in showers or fitting a flow aerating device to existing taps. Food wastage was also discussed with households throwing away on average 1.96Kg of food per day. This can add up to 8 meals per week. We discussed recycling clothing and the use of charity shops which, it was suggested, are being used more and more by younger people.

We hear that polyester is made entirely from oil and it was suggested that we should read the labels on articles before purchasing. A selection of information leaflets were available with hints and tips, plus contacts for energy saving websites.

Refreshments followed and social time continued with a chance to further discuss the issues raised and to check out the notices and a photo display on the information table. Bookings opened in April and May (via OFWI website) to include a workshop on the art of Geli-Painting, OFWI outings to Croome and Tewksbury and Camden Market, the Christmas holiday to Chatsworth and a 'History, Heritage and High Tea' at The Vale and Downlands Museum plus the ongoing VIA Learning Hub with lots of courses free to members.

On 16th May, Benson WI hopes to join in with the planned Community Celebration event and the members next main meeting will be on Wednesday 27th May at 2:30pm in the Parish Hall. The new committee is currently finalising our programme - for May we will be discussing the shortlisted top two 2026 National Campaign Resolutions 'Accessible Public Toilet Facilities to promote dignity, health and social inclusion' and 'Action on Women's Homelessness'. A Quiz and our usual social time will follow.

New members to our group would be very welcome, please contact the Secretary for further details at **bensonwi@oxfordshirewi.co.uk** or on **0778930390**5.

Sue Brown

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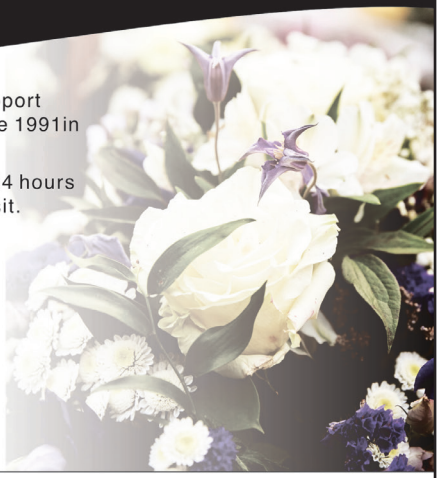
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BENSON PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE

COMMUNITY CELEBRATION & PARISH AGM
SATURDAY 16TH MAY 10AM–2PM

Come and discover why Benson is such a great place to live! A wide range of village groups, organisations and clubs will be coming together to showcase what's on offer in our community. There will be taster sessions, activities and refreshments, so there's something for everyone to enjoy. Alongside this, we'll be hosting the equivalent of the Parish AGM as an information stall, where you can find out about everything the Parish Council has achieved over the past year, learn about our current projects, and chat with councillors.

The Community Celebration forms part of the **"Million Acts of Hope"** - a national campaign led by charities alongside community groups. The campaign celebrates everyday acts of hope and kindness, from litter picking and donating to food banks, to coaching children's football teams, running youth groups and working together to improve our community. The ethos is that there is far more that connects us than divides us. Everyone is welcome, so do come along and celebrate Benson.

The Annual Playday is returning to Benson this summer - Saturday 6th June 11am–3pm on Sunnyside. Entry and all activities are completely free, and the event is open to all families.

A POLITE REMINDER ABOUT WASTE DISPOSAL

Please do not to fill public bins in the village with household waste, this results in a lot of residual litter strewn about the parish. The Oakley Wood Recycling Centre is just a short drive away and is excellently run.Visits now require **booking an appointment**, but these can usually be made at short notice, with plenty of slots available: **oxfordshire.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/book-recycling-centre-visit.** This system was introduced because neighbouring councils already operate booking systems, which previously left Oxon sites open to significant 'out of county' use.

YOUTH HUB UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who responded to our Youth Hub survey. Feedback showed strong support for an afterschool youth club. The most popular requests included: a relaxed space for friends to meet with snacks and drinks on offer, gaming, sports pool and table tennis. We'll be sharing initial ideas shortly.

THE CUCKOO PEN

Clearance work at The Cuckoo Pen is now complete. The final task will be removing the membrane, after which design ideas will be developed. More information will be available at the Community Celebration.

BENSON WEIR

We're delighted to share that Benson Weir reopened as planned on 1st April. The resident lock keeper, Katie officially marked the occasion by cutting the ribbon, welcoming walkers and runners back onto the walkway. Improvements include upgraded weir gates, a new fish and eel pass, a wider weir walkway and resurfacing of the footbridge from Benson. Thank you to the ferry service for providing an alternative crossing during the closure.

PARKING AT COLLEGE FARM

A gentle reminder that this is a Benson PC car park for use by people visiting the shops and other village facilities.

Benson Community Celebration

16 MAY 10-2

Benson Parish Hall

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Community Groups and Clubs

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BENSON COMMUNITY GARDENS

May is the month of Maypole, morris dances and hope of summer. At 13yrs I was Prince Charming for my local maypole dancers! At the Community Gardens we are awakening to the summer and offering a natural dyes workshop on Saturday 9th May from 2 - 4pm on the allotment. It will be £15.00 p.p. to cover costs; materials will be supplied. Either contact Marta or e-mail us to secure a place.



May is a nail-biting month for planting out the new plants and seedlings from the poly tunnel, while courgettes, cucumbers and tomatoes are moly coddled in the warmth of the house. Courgettes and cucumbers are particularly susceptible to temperature changes and wilt overnight if the temperature drops too much. They are curious plants, because once established, they are strong, sturdy robust and reliable producers. Some of the outdoor sown seed have already been eaten by mice, never to show their heads above ground. We contend with nature when planting out seedlings. Mice beneath the ground, slugs and snails on the ground, muntjac deer and rabbits munching two feet off the ground and pigeons diving from above. Egg shells help to deter slugs and snails and we have resorted to some fencing around the beans and courgettes this year. We are growing some climbing courgettes along with trompochino squash to help save space and protect from marauding teeth. This will hopefully keep the fruits out of reach of deer and rabbits. There are two perennial kales that we are growing in the fruit cage (to protect from pigeons). Both kales provide large tender leaves that will hopefully survive winter frosts and give plentiful food to pick. Many wildflowers have been sown, and we hope for their promised glory. We will do a more continual sowing to ensure a longer flowering season.

We have promotional postcards now that will be available free of charge around the village. As you can see, we are putting more effort into bringing this community space into a higher profile as a way of engaging in a healthy, ecologically friendly and healing space for our community in Benson.

One of our philosophies on the community allotment is for community to get involved but not to feel burdened; to enjoy some gardening but not feel trapped and to enjoy community and friendship through connecting with nature. You will often find one of us there on a Tuesday and Thursday afternoon.

Please come down and see what's going on and enjoy a wander round, pick some herbs or just relax with nature while on a walk. We always welcome anyone who would like to be more actively involved in the space and come to do a little weeding or watering. You can get in touch with us at: **bensoncommunitygardens@gmail.com**.

Bridgid Hess

BENSON TREFOIL GUILD

Spring is here, bulbs have broken through the cold soil and birds start their courting rituals and nest building, getting ready to bring a new generation of hatchlings into the world. What better way then, to celebrate all things spring than an afternoon of handbell ringing with John and Friends. All our members were in charge of a bell and with the help of John's posters, that showed us when to play, we practiced several of our favourite tunes. With a bit of practice we were soon able to play our way confidently through "Edelweiss", "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean" and other classics we love from campfire singing and previous sessions with the handbells. As always handbell ringing was a great success with our members and everyone was pleased to see John, Shirley et al once again.

Over the past few months Benson Trefoil Guild has been happy to welcome several new members, the more the merrier we say and if you would like to join us, we meet on the third Tuesday of every month at the Millstream in Benson. If you would like to know more about Trefoil Guild Membership please look at the Trefoil Guild website at **trefoilguild.co.uk** or just come along to our next meeting. Although we are part of Girlguiding you do not have to have had previous involvement with the Girlguiding movement to join Trefoil Guild and we do not wear a uniform. We offer fun, friendship and enjoyment in a supportive environment catering to all interests and abilities. Our closing quote this month is about the sound of bells:

"Bells are Music's laughter" – Thomas Hood

Helen Horton

DORCHESTER FESTIVAL

DORCHESTER ON THAMES
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1st-10th May 2026

The biennial Dorchester-on-Thames Festival from the 1st to the 10th of May is one of Oxfordshire's leading Festivals, taking place over 10 action-packed Spring days, based in and around the stunning location of Dorchester Abbey.

Since 2005 the Festival has regularly attracted over 5,000 people each year, from serious followers of the arts to schools, families and children of all ages and has raised significant profile and £350,000 for Dorchester Abbey and local charities. In 2026 we are partnering with local charity Be Free Young Carers. This wonderful charity enables Oxfordshire Young Carers to achieve their full potential by delivering a far-reaching developmental and emotional support network of people and resources in their daily lives, schools and communities.

Highlights in 2026 include The Kings Singers, Regents Opera, Brian Bilston, the BBC Elstree Concert Band, the now legendary abseil down the abbey's 100ft tower, cookery and art workshops, poetry, comedy, folk and jazz nights, a gift and food fair, dog show, fun run and even a duck race. Details at: **dorchesterfestival.com**

THE BULLETIN DOES NOT DISTRIBUTE FLYERS.
If you wish to insert a Flyer for an event or a charitable initiative we will print these in full on a full page for £120 per issue.
Any artwork should be submitted to the Editor at bb.editor@hotmail.co.uk

THE MILLSTREAM SURGERY

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For many years at Mill Stream Surgery, we have had the privilege of having qualified doctors in the surgery for some of the years of their specialist training to be fully qualified GPs. Two of those we have trained have gone on to join the team permanently as partners (Dr Lucy Jenkins and Dr Ellen Keith) and one as a salaried GP (Dr Sadi Dhakal).

We have also for many years been supporting Oxford University Medical School with teaching medical students across all of their 6-year course. We are grateful to our patients who give permission for these students to be involved in their consultations and care during their placements at the surgery.

Three years ago, our practice manager, Karen Washbourn, set up a new programme for students who are hoping to go to medical school. They have the opportunity of working for us during their gap year.

This is a wonderful opportunity for these young people to work in the surgery and gain experience of how a general practice works. Each of the students we have had in this programme so far have gone on to gain a place in their first-choice medical school. Working at the surgery has given them a head-start when they have begun their medical studies.

We are currently looking to recruit a student who has applied for or is planning to apply for a place in a medical school for the 2027/2028 year, who would like to work for us from September 2026. Please contact Karen Washbourn if you would like more information about this "incubation" programme.

And thank you again to all of our patients who contribute to the teaching and training we undertake in the surgery. You are helping us grow the next generation of doctors!



ST HELEN'S ECOCHURCH ECOTIP #2

Consider Sustainable Gardening - Creating an eco-friendly garden is rewarding, and benefits the environment and encourages wildlife. By using no-dig, compatible planting and crop rotation you will improve soil health, reduce pest problems, and increase the quality of your plants. Avoid Chemical Pesticides and Fertilizers, which can harm beneficial insects, soil health, and water quality and use natural alternatives like home-made compost to nourish your plants. Try white vinegar to kill your weeds, ground coffee and copper bands round you plant tubs to deter slugs. Encourage ladybirds to reduce aphids. Install birdhouses, bat boxes, and bug hotels and leave a small area of your garden undisturbed for insects and small animals. A small pond or water feature can attract amphibians and beneficial insects.

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

THIS YEAR CHRISTIAN AID WEEK IS FROM MAY 10TH TO 16TH.

I would like to tell you a little about Dagoretti, a densely packed sprawling informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya. It's a precarious, stressful life there, with no formal work opportunities, heartbreakingly low pay, high food prices and no social support. People rent corrugated metal shelters. There's no running water and only shared toilet facilities.

Fridah Moraa, is a mother and grandmother who became the sole provider for her family (twin sons, a daughter and a 4 year old grandson) when her husband died last year. They used to share paying the rent, school fees and hospital expenses, but now Fridah is responsible for everything. To bring in money, she has been selling vegetables that she bought daily from a wholesaler. It's a two hour round trip, six days a week, a relentless, time-consuming way to make an unreliable income.

But thanks to a programme of support from Christian Aid partner Beacon of Hope, Fridah can see a future. Beacon of Hope trains people like Fridah as urban farmers, cultivating their own vegetables in small, unused city spaces. Training sessions cover matters such as pest management, compost production, and space-saving techniques of seed cultivation, as well as business skills. Participants are supported with the tools, seeds and plots they need to get started.

Fridah says 'At first I didn't understand. I wondered where someone can farm here in Nairobi.' Her urban farm is hidden at the end of a concrete alley. You'd never guess that lush crops could thrive there, but she has learned to produce crops that can grow vertically so making a very economical use of space. She says proudly: 'When what I have planted grows – that is what makes me happy. When I get money that I have earned – that is what makes me happy'. Fridah's now feeding her family with her own nutritious produce and selling it on her market stall to generate income. From living meal to meal, not knowing if her children will go to bed with empty stomachs, Fridah now cherishes the security her small farm brings her. 'Urban farming has changed my life.'

For more than 80 years Christian Aid, with the generous backing of kind communities like ours in Benson, has been fighting poverty by supporting organisations like Beacon of Hope to enable people on the edge to help themselves. Now, with the continued reduction or withdrawal of aid by major donors, our help is needed more than ever. So please give what you are able, to **caweek.org/donate**, or send a cheque payable to Christian Aid to Christian Aid, York House, Wetherby Road, Long Marston, York, YO26 7NH, or donate by phone **020 7523 2269**.

With very many thanks for your support,

Alison Reid, Benson Christian Aid Group organizer.

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CROWMARSH BATTLE FARMS



Drier weather meant we were able to carry out spring cereal planting, which consisted on barley, across the farms. Some blocks of land were direct drilled into the over winter stubble, whilst others had pig manure applied which was cultivated in prior to planting. These crops are now up and growing, and say it quietly, could do with a bit of rain.

The drier weather has also meant we have been able to get on with fertiliser applications, as well as early fungicide applications on the winter cereals to help keep them clean through the early spring. During the growing season our agronomist walks the fields weekly to keep check on if there are any diseases or pests that need to be controlled. Weather conditions play a big part in the spread of disease.

We use both solid and liquid fertiliser, as well as organic fertiliser called digestate. This is the byproduct of the anaerobic digester just outside Benson, where the local kerbside food waste collection is turned into electricity.

Work has also started on preparation of the Stewardship plots around the farm. We will be re-establishing overwinter bird food plots a bit later in the year.

We regularly have an external tester come to the farm to check all of our farm trailers, and make sure that the breaks are working correctly using a rolling road and software that analyses breaking capacity.



Now that the days are longer and people are enjoying being out in the countryside, we would like to remind people that we have areas of the farm that are managed for wildlife, and you can help the success of these by keeping to designated rights of way.

CHOLSEY REPAIR CAFÉ

Saturday May 16th will be the date of the next Cholsey Repair Café at the Cholsey Pavilion. Doors will be open from 10.00 until 12.45 and you can bring along all manner of domestic items, including bicycles, for the expert attentions of our volunteer fixers, who will do their best to help you repair them. If the session is busy, you can make the wait more pleasant with a really good cuppa and cake from Cholsey Community Café, right next door. We are one of the longest-running and most respected repair cafes in Berks and Oxon. More detail can be found at **cholseyrepaircafe.com.**

ARTWEEKS

Living in the charming, historic Oxfordshire village of Ewelme with its ancient church, school and watercress beds, provides plenty of inspiration for the textile artist, **Debbie Farrell** and oil painter, **Trisha Scott**. Debbie is providing a stunning Oxfordshire ArtWeeks venue at her home Chantry House in Nolay Close, Ewelme (OX10 6HG) in which she and Trisha will be exhibiting their artworks in her lovely garden gallery.

Debbie is a trained textile designer who uses freemotion embroidery *(see one of her works on the cover)*. She produces embroidered landscape works, capturing the seasons of the countryside in Oxfordshire. Each piece is built up with layers of thread and this enables the shades to blend together. She changes her wthread like one would change their paint, but the individual colours remain vibrant and strong. She is particularly inspired by sunlight through trees studying the light at various times of year – coppers in Autumn, silvers in Winter and pinks and golds for Spring and Summer.





Trisha loves vibrant colour and the richness and buttery quality of oil paints. She will be exhibiting an eclectic mix of subjects in her paintings including landscapes, local scenes and mountain views particularly of her native Scotland. She is interested in scenes that tell a story as well as depicting the beauty of the surrounding Chilterns scenery.

They hope to have the opportunity to welcome you all to their Oxfordshire ArtWeeks exhibition in lovely Ewelme – open 2-10 May from 11-5 excepting Tuesday and Wednesday 5 and 6 May (closed). Debbie Farrell (07957 663807) and Trisha Scott (07884 330453).

What three words for Chantry House: **companies.never.ridge**

YOUR LOCAL ARTISTS, DEBBIE FARRELL AND TRISHA SCOTT, WOULD LOVE TO INVITE YOU TO THEIR ART WEEKS EXHIBITION AT CHANTRY HOUSE, NOLDAY CLOSE, EWELME OX10 6HG

OPEN 2,3,4,7,8,9,10 MAY 2026 (closed 5 and 6 May)





CORN EXCHANGE - WALLINGFORD

CINEMA

Tickets £10 for Adults and £5 for under 16s unless otherwise stated. Doors open at 2pm and 7pm and the bar will be open so there's plenty of time to collect drinks beforehand. Films with subtitles will be shown on Wednesday afternoons at 2:30pm. Please check the website **cornexchange.org.uk** for any updates.

May Cinema:

1st: **Orwell 2+2=5** (15) - 2nd: **The Drama** (15) - 3rd, 4th: **Wizard of the Kremlin** (15) 5th, 6th: **Father, Mother, Sister, Brother** (15) 7th, 9th: **Glenrothan** (12A) 24th: **Koln 75** (15) 25th, 26th: **Primavera** (15) 30th, 31st: **Funny Girl** (PG)

Live on Stage:

Murder, Margaret And Me. Presented by the Sinodun Players

Agatha Christie and Margaret Rutherford should never have been friends. But they were. Their paths crossed when they found themselves at the heart of one of British cinema's most successful franchises. However, the Miss Marple films almost didn't get made. This production is one of the events being staged to mark the 50th anniversary of the death of Agatha Christie. It is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd, on behalf of Samuel French Ltd.

May 19th to 22nd at 7:30pm and 23rd at 2:30pm & 7.30 Tickets £12 (May 19, May 23 matinee), £15 (all other performances).

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