JULY 2026

VOLUME 32 NO:10

THE BENSON BULLETIN



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THIS MONTH

- Doctor Ross
- Benson At War
- A Benson Diary
- Parish Council Update
- SODC
- Benson WI
- From The Rector
- Bensington Society

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EDITORIAL

A long time ago when the world was young, I was sitting in a café on the Asian side of the Bosphorus drinking Turkish coffee and eating baklava. It was newly made. A perfect blend of filo pastry, chopped pistachios, all soaked in local honey. It was an epiphany – I was finally eating "Ambrosia" and could understand why the Gods of antiquity ate it too.

Many years later – last week in fact – I was sitting in a café near Carnaby Street drinking Syrian coffee and eating baklava in **"Imad's Syrian Kitchen"** with the chef himself. I complimented Imad on the baklava as it bought back that memory (his was that good) and on the Syrian coffee which was more pleasant than its Turkish counterpart. He laughed.

We were meeting to talk about my latest venture - the adaptation of a diary of the Syrian Revolution by Hadi Abdullah called **"Critical Conditions"**. It is harrowing. The story of a man, Hadi, struggling to tell the truth of his country's suffering under a murderous regime on social media and TV. All around him his friends are killed by Assad's forces and his own life remains in perpetual mortal danger. As he is forced to flee around Syria, he never loses hope of one day returning home.

Imad knew all about Hadi, he was enthusiastic about the project and has offered to help bring it to fruition. But he also bemoaned his own lack of bravery. Hadi stayed and defied the regime, Imad had escaped Syria and after a horrendous journey across Europe had made it to England – he was sad he lacked Hadi's courage to remain and fight.

But I told Imad that I think bravery has many dimensions and to leave everything and everyone you love and make a journey so dangerous that at any moment you could be either killed or sent back to a murderous regime was in itself an act of bravery. And to create a future in a foreign land with a different language and do it successfully was an equal act of courage. And Imad didn't come to England because its streets are paved with gold, he had family here, and there was sanctuary for both him and his beloved wife and three daughters, he left behind in tears in Syria.

The chance to adapt Hadi's diary had fallen into my lap after a chance meeting in Benson Parish Hall with a Syrian Professor who specialises in forced migration. I was sceptical at first but agreed to read the book which arrived in short order from a publisher in Los Angeles. As I read my scepticism fell a way. It reads like the "Odyssey", the story of man who journeys for years and loses everyone he loves as he yearns to return to his Ithaca, in Hadi's case the city of Homs.

And I love story telling so decided to set my new play in a Syrian Café with a Hakawati, a traditional story teller dressed in a long robe, who holds a sword and a book. Once every café in the Levant gave hospitality to a Hakawati who spends his day enchanting their customers with tales told from myth and history.

And once as a teenager I was in the chorus of **"Oedipus Tyrannus"** in ancient Greek. It was an experience so profound that I decided to use that structure of Greek drama, complete with a Chorus, to emphasise the universal nature of Hadi's story. And I also decided to include The Wanderer, the blind Tiresias neither man nor woman, who reflects on the state of a world that spins on its axis as human nature remains unchanged.

As the 32nd volume of the Bulletin comes to its conclusion I reflect that the magazine has its own story tellers who I hope throughout a long and confusing year have occasionally engaged you, as you sipped your instant coffee, ate jam doughnuts and reflected on the acts of courage that make up all our lives.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir.

After suffering a heart attack in January I am now resident at Benson House care home being very well cared for by the staff. I wish to thank my many Benson friends for their kindness in showering me on my 94th birthday with visits, cards, flowers and loving attention. I don't know how long I shall be here but anyone is very welcome to come and visit me if they wish. Thanks to Keith Tibbs, I am still able to enjoy the Bulletin and listen with interest to everything that is going on in the village.

Kind regards,

Janet Burtt

REMINISCENCES OF A VILLAGE ANCIENT

I look forward to the eventual opening of the Relief road, apparently now sometime next year. It should make Oxford Road much quieter and a relief for a busy road as it passes the school. Meanwhile I drive around the thousand plus new houses of what might be termed New Benson and wish the householders every happiness in those new buildings.

Meanwhile, readers might be interested in that area west of Littleworth Road, from a historical aspect. Up until the Second World War it was hunted over by the South Oxfordshire Hunt. I hope they enjoyed it but could never quite see the point of hunting a fox, even if it was a colourful part of a bygone England. The only exception being when a fox got into my grandfather's chicken run. It killed most of the chickens in an act of wanton pleasure!

Now to the 1940s when I was an infant at our Primary School. On the corner of Littleworth Road and Oxford Road there was an enormous Elm tree. Further west were more Elms, and the roundabout by McDonalds used to be known as the Elmtree roundabout. Sadly since the Dutch Elm disease these have disappeared from the English countryside. Equally sadly after the introduction of Myxomatosis rabbits have virtually disappeared. But see below below on that.

Since retiring back to Benson thirty five years ago two matters of interest. Instead of houses there was an attempt to dig up all the gravel in that area. It was met with a great deal of resistance and a movement called CAGE (Campaign against gravel extraction) was ultimately successful. Many regretted this for we could by now have had a great lake similar to the ones north of Dorchester instead of a thousand houses.

Secondly, a personal note, I used to be an enthusiastic game shooter. Where Benson House now cares for people, a colony of rabbits had survived myxomatosis. My wife's rabbit pies were delicious and remain a happy memory. I shot pheasant where the BP garage is and there was always a couple of coveys of partridges in the fields west of Littleworth Road. Finally my Springer spaniel would occasionally put up a couple of Mallard ducks out of the stream that flows past McDonalds.

Gosh, what a lot has happened in my near ninety years! But my final comment is that I simply don't understand why there is no General Store amongst all those new houses. If I were seventy years younger I think I would try to start one. It would surely prosper.

Peter Clarke



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REMEMBERING VICE ADMIRAL MILLER

Charles Blois Miller was a notable resident of Benson and involved in village life in many ways after his naval career. He was captain of HMS Nottingham at the Battle of Jutland in 1916, where he "commanded and fought ... with great skill & gallantry," for which he was awarded a CB – Companion of the Order of the Bath – and was still in charge of the ship when it was sunk by a German submarine later that year. He died in a car accident in July 1926 and is buried in St Helen's Churchyard.

Come and join us at St Helen's to remember Vice Admiral Miller on Saturday 11 July at 3 pm. We'll share the story of his life in an informal concert (including both the sea – with scale model of HMS Nottingham - and his involvement with the Scouting movement), hold a short act of remembrance and end with tea and cakes. More information from **sthelensevents@bensonandewelmechurches.co.uk**

MANAGER FOR WALLINGFORD FOOD BANK

We are a registered charitybased in the centre of Wallingford with the aim of providing emergency food packages to those who need them. We are well-established with a capable and supportive trustee board, an experienced management team and clear policies. We are seeking a dedicated and proactive Manager to lead Wallingford Emergency Food Bank. It is a voluntary role with typically 8 - 10 hours per week.

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Support & Retention of volunteers: Ensure that there are appropriate numbers of volunteers; identify new volunteer roles; keep in touch with volunteers and be a point of pastoral contact. **Session leader support:** Ensure that this key team have the training and information to run sessions effectively. **Communication**: Maintain the flow of information with the local community. **Collaboration**: Work alongside other local organisations to improve support for clients; work closely with the management team to plan ahead. **Impact Measurement:** Track and evaluate data, to assess the ongoing need; report monthly to donors and the community; quarterly to Trustees.

Do you have relevant experience: in managing, leading, and motivating volunteers or staff. **How are your communication skills:** The role needs excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate effectively both in writing and verbally with volunteers, clients referrers and donors. **Are you organised:** This role needs good organisational skills, with the ability to anticipate needs. Able to maintain boundaries. **Are you values-driven:** Compassionate, with a clear strategic view of the purpose of the food bank.

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We intend to interview in late September 2026. The new manager should be able to start in the role at the beginning of February 2027.



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A BENSON DIARY

Well--one at least is safe. One shelter'd hare
Has never heard the sanguinary yell
Of cruel man, exulting in her woes.
Innocent partner of my peaceful home,
Whom ten long years' experience of my care
Has made at last familiar; she has lost
Much of her vigilant instinctive dread,
Not needful here, beneath a roof like mine.
Yes--thou may'st eat thy bread, and lick the hand
That feeds thee; thou may'st frolic on the floor
At evening, and at night retire secure
To thy straw couch, and slumber unalarm'd;

During the very hottest days we had to walk the dogs by around 7am. The air was fresh even if it was still warm enough just for shirt and trousers. If we and our dogs loved being out at that time-of-day, others had not yet gone to bed – deer large and small crossed our paths and a sleek elegant fox slipped through a hedge and into the field of barley and all manner of rabbits ran along the roadside hedges sometimes more dangerously crossing roads. All this as watchful kites and crows ceaselessly scan for unhappy accidents. And there are hares in ones and twos.

When the thermometer rises and it's too darn hot, even in the best regulated houses there's a tendency for tempers to fray and argument break out. My grandfather had a saying to calm these troubled times: "let the hare sit" he'd growl over the hubbub and generally sibling volubility ebbed and quiet was restored. It was a favourite phrase amongst my mother's brothers and sisters.

It's said that the hare sits motionless when it already has espied a predator and knows it'll safely outrun danger. The predator knows the game's up and usually slips away. However, that Uber predator – humankind – has long been wilier than most hares. Foxhunting was the cause célèbre of my school debating days, but hare coursing was also mentioned in dispatches. Jugged hare was still talked of a delicacy way back then too - although I've never eaten hare – I knew a rather good old-fashioned cook who used to jug hares in her younger days. I won't bore you with a recipe as I'm sure the eponymous Mrs Beeton will have something to say on that subject.

I've always been fond of hares and sight of them brings pleasure to my eyes and joy to my heart. And it is one of the wonders of hereabouts to have seen them bounding about quite regularly in the run of long summer days, and especially in the countryside beyond Ewelme. They're such beautiful creatures. I've somehow assumed everyone else thinks the same way about as I do. Assumptions are always dangerous things. Therefore, when on one of our walks, I saw an estate car parked in a field although I thought it curious or unusual I assumed it might be a farmer. Just as we walked on with Milo and Finn ahead, I saw a horse and rider approaching us at walking pace on the bridle path: we leashed our hounds of hell. Unusually the rider stopped to say more than hello. The white estate car by this time had reversed off the field and had driven away into the afternoon at some speed.

Our rider asked us if we saw any dogs in the car – we weren't close enough – and she told us they'd a lot of trouble with hare coursing in the recent weeks. And so, we parted. And so, I was sorry indeed that the hare was once more on the menu of

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sports man and woman. And so, I was reminded of William Copwer's the Garden. It meant so much more to me today than it ever had in those hot June yesterdays, when Third Form school day afternoons were of filled with poetry without emotion.

There was poetry in motion too. At last, I've walked again that winding river path from Wallingford back to Benson for the first time since the weir closed. The evening was warm without being stifling, and I needed the torch on my phone to light my way along the path. Water lapping the river's bank kept us company. There were boats here and there moored along the riverbank and here and there lights on boats. These marked out the route much as a tracery of faint chatter and distant laughter from them filled the air…interrupted by splashing water and determined birdsong. Yet though the summer light was fading, there was still enough sun to brighten the sky and under light cloud to dramatic effect. Distant trees were darkly silhouetted against the flat wide sky. It was startlingly beautiful. As we reached the weir, we thought the gates had been closed but that proved to be a false impression much to our relief. I'd quite forgotten what a lovely walk this is. So, come mid-summer I will be able to restore the circular walk via Howden Park and Crowmarsh over the bridge at Wallingford and back along the Thames to Benson to walking schedule. Milo and Finn will be delighted.

I write all of this from Devon. We're all back with friends near Dartmouth. The weather is better than last year although squally showers suddenly make heavy weather from sunny days. Devon is a good place to make use of a National Trust membership. Overbeck's gardens at Salcombe are quite the sun trap and even on the day in the middle 60s Fahrenheit it felt as sultry as it looked lush. An olive grove and bananas, tropical ferns of every luscious type and varieties of amazing cacti competed for attention. Along a walk down to the gardens with the dogs, we caught glimpses of the petrol sea in bright sun. We then ventured out to South Milton Sands where Thurlestone dramatically sits majestically offshore. Our dogs love the open sandy beach. It was almost deserted. Milo also found a brand-new tennis ball – Finn managed to find a bag of chips. The accidents of retrieval revealing the substance of their contrasting characters. And so, as if on cue, came rain. And what could better encapsulate the English summer?

However, in the long grasses and amidst even long horned cattle lazily grazing their lives away, there wasn't a hare to be seen.

John Murphy

For I have gain'd thy confidence, have pledg'd
All that is human in me to protect
Thine unsuspecting gratitude and love.
If I survive thee I will dig thy grave;
And, when I place thee in it, sighing, say,
I knew at least one hare that had a friend.
(The Garden, William Cowper)

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BENSON AT WAR – PART 1

SUMMER 1940



Next time you're down at the Lock, have a good look at the pillbox sitting in the field and maybe walk along the lock and discover the one hidden in the vegetation on the far side of the river. When and why were these – and the others in our parish – built? For the answer, we must go back to June 1940……

By the 2nd June 1940, most of us know that over 300,00 British & French troops had been evacuated from Dunkirk in Operation Dynamo. Some of might even know that another 190,000 followed them out of Western France in Operation Ariel, but these were just numbers of men – men who escaped with virtually none of their essential equipment, no tanks, no guns, no transport. The BEF lost enormous quantities of all these in France, including over 63,000 vehicles of all kinds – so as the nation prepared to face a German invasion in the summer of 1940 the army was ill equipped and simply could not fight a mobile battle such as had just seen the Germans victorious in France & Belgium.

So, in early June '40, General "Tiny" Ironside was appointed CIC Home Forces and tasked with coming up with a defence plan, which was that we needed to slow down any invaders whilst the army slowly concentrated what forces could be thrown together. Initially called the Ironside Line, but more correctly the GHQ Stop Lines, these lines consisted of roadblocks/pill boxes/fortifications, anything behind which a few brave men might hold an invader for a while. Of these, the one nearest us in Benson was the GHQ Red Stop Line, which ran from Reading along the Thames to Abingdon and then west to Newbridge and there were also the Blue Stop Line (Kenet & Avon Canal) and the Green Stop Line (Bristol) protecting the west.

However, it was vital that the Red Stop Line held if invasion came; stop the invaders at the Thames and the defence had a chance. One nightmare that had to be faced was that the Germans would use airborne troops – gliders & paras – to seize a bridge over the Thames and then rush their Panzers across, just as they had done in Belgium.

So, the pill boxes had to not only cover any possible river crossings, but also any potential landing sites for gliders/paras. Which is why we now have some remaining pill boxes sitting in some apparently strange positions out in the middle of fields, as well as tucked in securely on the riverbanks. All were built in the months following Dunkirk, as the nation waited for the invasion which – we now know – never came.

Dave Rushton bensingtonhistory.org

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THE BENSINGTON SOCIETY

"Where the bee sucks there suck I, in a cowslip's bell I lie ……..". That was one of the first poems I had to learn (and sing) in my early school years thanks to an English master who was besotted with Shakespeare and at the start of Yvonne Parks's talk on bees the memories came flooding back.

No one should be able to say they don't know the importance of bees in the food chain given the amount of air time spent on the subject or the acres of paper in our national journals but I for one did not understand just how numerous their types were in the UK (over 250!) or how complex their lifecycle is. We all know what a Bumble Bee looks like but, I would guess, most of us know little about Solitary bees which make up about 90% of the UK's bee population. The facts kept coming almost too fast for my note-taking and certainly too many for me to cover here.

Yvonne's talk was both fascinating and informative and given by someone who obviously knows and loves her subject. So if anyone wants to know more about these fascinating and essential insects there is a mass of information online. Also, if you fancy keeping bees, get on to the Oxfordshire Beekeepers Association's website https://obka.org.uk/.

Progress on the writing of our new Constitution, required due to our proposed registration with the Charity Commission, continues and is all but finished with work now starting on the associated rules. Progress is still on track to present it for approval to a short EGM later this year.

Our seemingly tireless Membership Secretary, David Rhys-Davies, continues to remind us all of forthcoming events, the last one being the summer trip to the Fawley Railway Museum on the 28th June, which will have taken place before you read this. Let us hope the weather was kind and all who attended had a great day out.

We have several members who live in Dorchester so a 'shout out' for the St Birinus festival will not go amiss. It takes place from the 9th to the 12th July at St Birinus church and Dorchester Abbey, with a mix of lectures, recitals and services. My two highlights are the Lecture by Prof. Glenn Richardson at 6:30 on Thursday 9th entitled "Mary Tudor and Philip of Spain" and on Saturday the 11th, also at 6:30, the wonderful 1610 Monteverdi Vespers. For the full programme and ticket sales visit: **thedaveyconsort.co.uk**

Enjoy the summer,
David McGill

BENSON EVERGREEN CLUB

The club met in May where we enjoyed listening to our speaker Suzanne Rose with regard to her early working life and recently as a J.P. To finish she gave us fictional questions with the Evergreen members as a jury "what would they decide on the punishment?". The afternoon finished with our usual excellent refreshments of tea and cake.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday September 9th when our speaker will be Mr Pete Eldridge commencing at 2.30pm. We welcome visitors to our meetings. For further details please contact the leader on:- **ian.leppard@outlook.com**. Or **01491 838580**.

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FROM THE RECTOR

When I was a teenager growing up in rural Hampshire, there was one shop we could walk to. It was a junk shop, and there being no other retail alternative, I periodically used to go in and pick up some rather niche bargains. One such uncool buy was a series of engravings from the British Workman, from the 1850s. Among them was a frontispiece, which would become the basis for Thomas Jones Barker's famous portrait several years later, in which Queen Victoria is depicted handing a Bible to a visiting African prince. The engraving is accompanied by the words: "This is the secret of England's greatness".

In recent years we've become rather uneasy about the connotations: Britain is great, and the Bible is the legitimation for her imperial conquests of the nineteenth century! Even as a teenager in the 1990s I could sense that there was something slightly, well, off about the idea that the Bible offered full-throated justification for colonial policy. But I recall vividly discussing this with my school chaplain at the time, and likewise his response: he looked me straight in the eye and said, "but do you think the Bible is the secret to greatness?"

It is a very pertinent question. Is the Bible – the story of God's interactions with his people over many centuries, beginning in ancient Israel and culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – the book that delivers the wisdom necessary for greatness? I suppose it depends what one means by "greatness": surely, if what we mean is wisdom and maturity of spirit, there can't be many other contenders in history.

For those of us who believe in God, the Bible is nothing less than God's authoritative and trustworthy communication to us of his character, his purposes, and his love for us. The Bible is mediated by human writers and written down under specific conditions, for sure; but Christians throughout the ages have discerned in it a truthfulness and a reliability that means we have no doubt its ultimate author is God himself through his Holy Spirit. As a consequence, we measure our own thoughts, deeds, and words – as well as the meaning of everything else we encounter in life – through the peculiar challenge, correction, and blessing of this book we call the Bible.

Perhaps you have a Bible on your shelf. Do pick it up and read it! St Gregory the Great once said that it is "shallow enough for a lamb to go paddling in, but deep enough for an elephant to swim in". You might find it especially helpful to start with one of the Gospels – perhaps Mark's – which you can find about three quarters of the way through. Do give it a go: you never know, you might well find some of the wisdom you seek, and (best of all) you might find the echoes of the voice of the Living God speaking to you. For whether or not it is the secret of greatness, it does offer the gift of getting to know God himself.

Sunday services at St Helen's, Benson take place in July and August every Sunday morning at 9.30. There is also an additional family service (4 O'Clock Church) on Sunday 5th July at 4pm in the Canons' Room, and a said service of Holy Communion according to the Book of Common Prayer on Sunday 19th July.

Sunday services take place at St Mary's, Ewelme every Sunday at 11 o'clock, except on Sunday 30th August when there is no service in Ewelme.

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PPG PROSTATE CANCER

THE MOST COMMON CANCER AMONG MEN : PROSTATE CANCER KILLS ONE MAN EVERY 45 MINUTES.

1 IN 8 WHITE MEN BUT 1 IN 4 BLACK MEN WILL DEVELOP IT

Prostate cancer is currently the most common cause of death in men, but it can be treatable, particularly at an early stage. The Statistics in England: in recent years, some 44,000+ new cases of prostate cancer are being reported every year, with over 10,000 deaths per annum. Circa 440,000 men are living with or after prostate cancer.

So, why do many men only face diagnosis when it becomes serious, say, at Stage 4? Well, a number or reasons: feeling embarrassed to talk about it and possibly more if you think you will be offered a digital rectal examination; an attitude of laissez-faire "I'll see how things go…" especially when there are no severe symptoms; lack of knowledge about up-to-date diagnostics and treatment; fear of the word 'cancer', and so on.

It may be a cliché – but often they are true – that men can be less likely to take notice of health issues than women who may be more alert to dealing with warning signs of, say, breast cancer and therefore having better outcomes.

Dealing with embarrassment: you might feel comfortable having the first conversation anonymously with a Specialist Nurse on **0800 074 8383** at Prostate Cancer UK, which has helpful, straightforward information on the condition. You may prefer to speak to someone in your GP practice who knows you and who will understand your worries. Lack of knowledge: a good starting point might be to know what the risks are that you will develop it.

THREE IMPORTANT RISK FACTORS:

Age: 50 - 74, and the age risk obviously increases as you get older – highest incidence in 75 – 79 age range;

Genetics: as for women with breast cancer, if there is a family history of prostate problems, especially if a close relative died of prostate cancer before the age of 50;

Ethnicity: In black men, the age risk starts at 45. The risk is double for black men.

All these can be exacerbated by another health issue: being overweight which, of course, can negatively affect many health problems.

Know yourself: you can do a 30 second initial risk factor check online, especially if you do have early warning signs, however minor. Your GP will take your concerns seriously.

Symptoms: there are often no noticeable symptoms, so if you think you are in a risk category, do consult your GP for an early test. However, you may think small urinary changes, like more frequent nocturnal trips to the loo, may not be important or be a natural part of the ageing process; don't ignore them! The sooner your doctor deals with concerns, the more likely any treatment will be more minor or more effective.

Diagnosis: the thought of the (very quick) digital rectal examination may put men off going to their GP early. A PSA blood test (though not infallible) can show the amount of the specific antigen in your blood. Having a raised PSA level may be caused by other factors or benign conditions. Your GP will advise you on what's most appropriate for you. Over the counter self-testing kits are not necessarily reliable.

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Treatments for Control or Cure: Nowadays, we know that surgery is not the sole option; there are several effective treatments available: hormone therapy by implant, injection or tablet; chemotherapy; radiotherapy; a combination of any of these; and less common treatments like cryotherapy. Sometimes, it is just a matter of 'wait and watch' – actively keeping an eye on it, with regular checks, especially if it is a slow-growing cancer.

Every day, new research is finding ways of dealing with cancer. Despite the survival rate, it is worrying that there are reports of rising levels. Don't be part of that trend, speak to a health professional today!

BENSON STRIDERS

RUNNING TOGETHER, SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY



Whether you're an experienced runner chasing a new personal best or someone taking their very first steps into running, Benson Striders offers a warm welcome to all.

Based in the heart of the village, Benson Striders is a friendly and inclusive running club that brings together people of all ages and abilities. Members enjoy regular group runs, social events, local races and the encouragement that comes from being part of a supportive community.

The club caters for everyone, from beginners looking to build confidence through our popular Couch to 5K programme (next edition set to run [pun intended] in January / February 2027), to seasoned runners training for 10Ks, half marathons and beyond. Above all, Benson Striders believes that running should be enjoyable, sociable and accessible to everyone.

As well as helping members improve their fitness and wellbeing, the club is proud to play an active role in village life, supporting local events and encouraging people to get outdoors and stay active. If you've ever thought about giving running a try, why not come along and see what we're all about? New members are always welcome.

For more information, visit our website or find Benson Striders on Facebook or email **info@bensonstriders.com**



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.

Everyone welcome. No charge and no booking required, just turn up.

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

For more information please call 01491 838474

oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries

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THE NETTLEBED ART AND CRAFT SHOW

CALLING LOCAL ARTISTS!

We are delighted to announce the Annual Nettlebed Art & Craft show will be taking place on Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd August 2026 at Nettlebed School — a wonderful weekend celebrating local creativity, talent, and a great slice of cake.

Come along to enjoy a wide variety of artwork, handmade crafts, and exhibits from local artists and makers. Refreshments will be available, and everyone is warmly welcome to browse and maybe fall in love with a painting.

We are also keen to welcome new local artists and craftspeople to exhibit their work this year. Whether you are an experienced exhibitor or showing your work for the first time, we would love to hear from you - please email **Nettlebedas@gmail.com** to more info and entry forms.

Proceeds from the event will go towards supporting local charities and community causes. We look forward to seeing you there!



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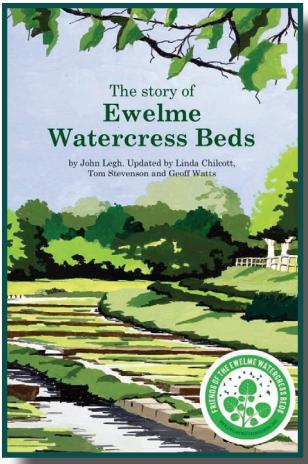

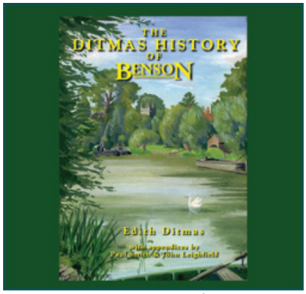

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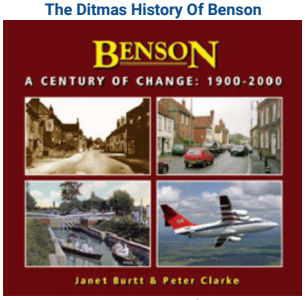
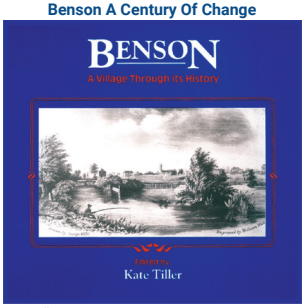


Benson A Century Of Change



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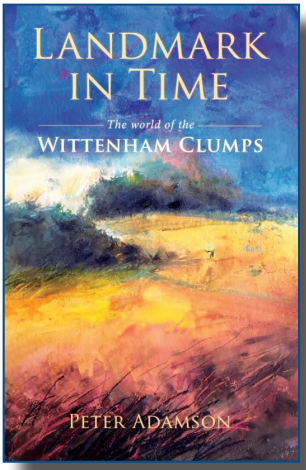
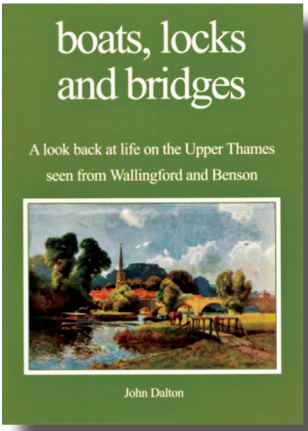
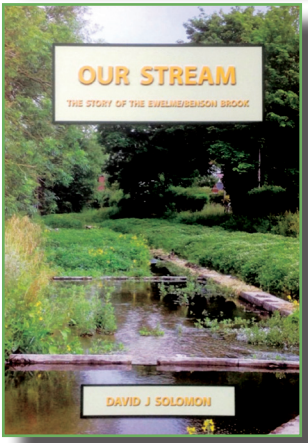
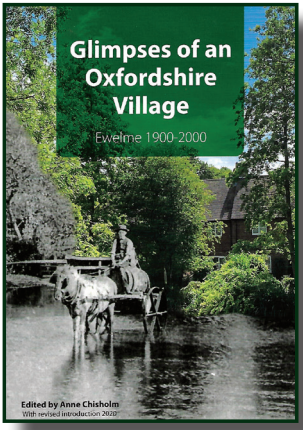
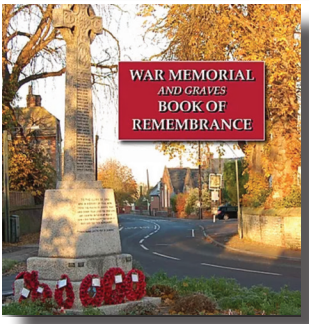








You can buy some of these Books at: bensington-society.com Others directly from John Dalton, Peter Clarke or Tom Stevenson, or at Derry's Den where some can be bought but not all. And some can be found on Amazon.



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

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EVERY WEDNESDAY - COMMUNITY WALK 10am Parish Hall
EVERY 1st THURSDAY OF MONTH Carers Coffee Morning: 10.30am - 12 - Library

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

SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

READ TO THE BEAT

Get ready for the The Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge 2026, where you can "Read to the Beat"! This summer, children from Benson and beyond are invited to join the fun by reading awesome books and discovering cool stories, poems or facts. Sign up from July 4th 2026 at Benson Library. The challenge finishes September 5th 2026.

As you read, you can earn stickers, keep track of your books, and take part in exciting activities at Benson Library. Whether you're rocking out with your favourite stories or trying something new, "Read to the Beat" makes reading extra fun! So grab a book, feel the beat, and let's make this summer one to remember!



About The Benson Bulletin

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

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BENSON AREA NATURE GROUP

WARNING SIGNS IN BENSON BROOK, OUR PRECIOUS CHALK STREAM

Benson Area Nature Group (BANG) is encouraging greater awareness and actions to protect Benson Brook after signs of pollution were discovered in a stretch of the chalk stream running through Ewelme and Benson.

Concerns were expressed during a recent meeting with local landowners to discuss how to support the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. While plans are still in the very early stages, efforts to enhance and protect our chalk stream are expected to play a key role.

Chalk streams are among the world's rarest habitats, with fewer than 300 in existence globally, of which the vast majority are to be found in England. The stream flowing from Kings Pool in Ewelme via Benson to the River Thames is regularly monitored by members of BANG, who collect monthly samples from several locations to assess water quality and ecological health.

Recent testing revealed troubling signs. Samples taken along Brook Street in Benson contained dead mayfly larvae and other distressed invertebrates, indicators that pollution may have entered the watercourse. Although the exact source cannot be identified, possible causes include road run-off, chemicals from nearby gardens and substances from pet flea treatments entering the stream.

We therefore encourage people to minimise the use of garden chemicals and to speak to their vets about environmentally friendly alternatives to commonly used flea treatments containing imidacloprid and fipronil.

Despite these concerns, there is also plenty to celebrate in our natural environment locally. Warwick Spinney is well worth a visit, with masses of ox-eye daisies, some bee and pyramidal orchids, and an abundance of butterflies including meadow browns and painted ladies. Visitors have also reported various local sightings of dragonflies and damselflies, including this striking **white-legged damselfly**, also at Warwick Spinney *(see opposite - photo credit - Tom Stevenson).*



Meanwhile, another threat facing local nature has been highlighted: birds colliding with household windows. Recent incidents have prompted recommendations for residents to put up bird-deterrent window stickers, which can significantly reduce collisions. Such products are widely available from wildlife organisations such as the RSPB online shop and other online retailers.

Small changes we can all make can help, and will protect our local habitats and wildlife.

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BENSON MILLSTREAM CENTRE

This month we welcomed some new customers, which is wonderful. We love to see new faces so please do join us if you think you might benefit from a friendly lunch club for the over 60's. As well as our usual activities at the Centre, we recently had a lovely visit from Hunters Bees in Didcot who talked to us about their bees and treated us to a honey tasting. Silvertime Legal also gave us an interesting talk about wills and LPAs. We also attended the community celebration organised by the Bensington Society and BPC. It was a wonderful way to showcase what we do and meet with members of our community.

Good news: Rachel and Mike have completed walking the Camino Way in Spain in memory of Joe Craven and in aid of the Centre. We are so grateful to them both and have loved hearing all about the journey. It was more of a challenge than either of them thought. Here is a message from Rachel sent on the day they finished:

We started in France at a place called St Jean Pied de Port on 5th May. We crossed over the Pyrenees into Spain on that first day - which was horrendously long, and then just kept walking, averaging just over fifteen miles a day. We had two rest days, one in Logrono and one in Leon. Much needed days off and they both had beautiful launderettes!

We arrived in Santiago de Compostela this morning after thirty-two days walking. As soon as we arrived in the Cathedral square I burst into tears. We are both a bit overwhelmed, quite honestly, and not sure how to relax! We met some lovely, lovely people along the way, who also made it to the square (everyone has their own Camino) and so we had plenty of people to hug and congratulate. I will miss the rhythm of it all, you don't think about anything except getting up that hill, eating, sleeping and repeating, every day. We don't know where the time has gone. We will not miss sharing dormitories with many, many strangers, the majority, it seems, who snore!! Thank you so much to everyone who has supported our cause and helped us surpass our target, your support, and very kind words kept us going.

Rachel and Mike have exceeded their fundraising target, so a massive thanks for all your donations. The sponsorship page is still live so if you would still like to donate, please go to their JustGiving page, every penny goes to the Centre. **justgiving.com/page/the-ct-wanderers.**

GET IN TOUCH

For details of how you can help 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**.

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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BENSON PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE

BENSON COMMUNITY AWARDS AND PARISH UPDATES

We are delighted to announce that this year's Community Awards have been presented to two Benson residents: **Marie Finch** and **Oscar Cowlard**.

Marie Finch was awarded the Don Fletcher Community Award, which recognises an individual or group who has made an exceptional contribution to the Benson community. Over the past few years, Marie has led the decoration of the village centre during the Christmas season. She was presented with her award at the Community Celebration on 16th May.

Oscar Cowlard received the Bob Griffiths Shield at last month's Full Council meeting. This award recognises a young person or youth organisation for a notable achievement during the year. Oscar was nominated for his dedication, enthusiasm and positive approach to both sport and life. He captained the Under-13s football team and was named Supporters' Player of the Year. In addition, Oscar volunteers at St Helen's Church, assisting with grass cutting and maintaining the churchyard, and is an active fundraiser for Myeloma UK.

Our congratulations go to both Marie and Oscar on their well-deserved recognition.

We would also like to highlight a new page on our website, where reports from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) councillors can now be accessed: **bensonpc.org.uk/parish-council/district-and-county-councillors-reports/**

For updates on road closures, please check our Facebook page and the news section of our website. Alternatively, you can find comprehensive information at **one.network/**

Residents are kindly reminded to check any hedging or vegetation on their properties that may overhang public pavements and footpaths, and to cut it back where necessary. This will help keep pathways clear and safe for everyone.

Regarding the proposed Mobility Hub, we will share updates and plans from OCC on our Facebook page and website as soon as they become available. Updates on parish projects—including the Cuckoo Pen revamp, the Youth Hub/Pavilion project, Rivermead, and Public Art—can also be found online.

Finally, after 20 years of service, our Facilities Manager, **Tanya**, will be leaving us this month. We are very grateful for her long-standing commitment to the parish and will be sorry to see her go. We wish her every success in her new role.

FROM OUR MP

Dear Residents of Benson,

You may remember that in March I wrote about my introduction of a Bill to Parliament that would have prevented water companies such as Thames Water from delaying payment of fines. Under the current system, water companies have been able to negotiate away penalties, while Ofwat has failed to take effective action. Although my proposed legislation fell at the end of the parliamentary session, the Government has since brought forward new legislation on water regulation. I will therefore be retabling my proposals as amendments to the Government's Bill, continuing to press for greater accountability and ensuring water companies are held responsible for their actions.

Continued overleaf...

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In Parliament, I have also been following the progress of the Government's Health Bill. While it is unlikely to attract significant public attention, it contains important changes to the structure of the NHS, including giving the Secretary of State for Health greater powers to intervene directly in local services. During the Bill's Second Reading in May, I welcomed the opportunities this could create for local campaigns, ensuring that community concerns about service changes or proposed cuts can be escalated more effectively to the national level.

It has also been a pleasure to take part in this year's Great Big Green Week. I was delighted to attend the Big Green Festival in Henley on 6 June and to see so many residents, community groups and local organisations involved. Through Greener Henley's Pledge for the Planet campaign, people across the town are helping to make our community greener, healthier and better prepared for future challenges. I will be taking the "Spread the Word" pledge myself, highlighting the importance of building resilience within our communities whenever I have the opportunity.


Freddie van Mierlo

Thank you for all that you do to make Benson such a strong and active community. As always, if there is a local issue you would like me to raise or pursue on your behalf, please do get in touch at **freddie.vanmierlo.mp@parliament.uk.**

With best wishes,
Freddie van Mierlo MP

SODC UPDATE

South Oxfordshire District Council
Listening Learning Leading



Andrea Powell
&
Sue Cooper



CHAIR'S CHARITIES FOR 2026/27

At its Annual Meeting on 14th May, SODC elected Cllr Andrea Powell as its Chair for the 2026-27 Municipal Year. As the author of this Benson Bulletin article, I can state what a privilege it is to have been elected by fellow Councillors to this important non-political role and how much I am looking forward to a year of meeting volunteers, charities and residents from across the District. I will also have the "pleasure" of chairing the meetings of Full Council and keeping your councillors in order! It's worth noting that I take on the role of Chair exactly thirty years after my fellow ward representative, Cllr Sue Cooper, had the same honour. Sue has always been an inspiration to me and I look forward to representing the District Council in our final year as a fully functional local authority as well as she has always done.

One of the best bits about becoming Chair is that I am able to nominate two charities to be the focus of fundraising activities over the course of the year. My two charities are very local and support vulnerable and less able people in our community, enabling them to enjoy fulfilling and active lives. Style Acre is a charity which supports

Continued overleaf...

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around 275 adults with learning disabilities and autism in supportive, creative and dynamic environments that allow them to fulfil their potential and live the life they choose. You may be familiar with the Style Acre shop in Wallingford or the café at Savages garden centre in Blewbury, but less so with the community hub called Turnstyle located at Howbery Park. This hub hosts activities which include arts, crafts, gardening and cookery while acting as a base where people come to learn life skills, make friends, have fun and to develop their independence and confidence. Style Acre also accommodates adults in housing across the District, enabling them to live independently but with appropriate support as needed.



Cycling Without Age is a global charity founded in 2011 which now has over 4000 hubs worldwide, including a brand new one in Benson and another in Wallingford! CWA Oxfordshire provides free trishaw rides to elderly, isolated and vulnerable people, whether they live in one of our local residential care homes or in their own homes. Trained "pilots" take up to two passengers in specially adapted e-trikes for joyful rides around the local area, enjoying social interaction with others, feeding the ducks at our local ponds and experiencing the "wind in their hair" whatever their age or ability. You may already have seen the trikes taking elderly residents from Benson House Care Home around the village; next time be sure to give them a cheery wave!

By the time you read this issue of the Benson Bulletin, the first fundraiser for these two amazing charities will have taken place; on 21st June I will have (hopefully) completed a 66-mile cycle ride across Dartmoor, including some gruelling climbs and 1830m of ascent. Then on 23rd October I will be hosting a Chair's Charity Quiz at Crowmarsh Village Hall, so watch this space for more details. In the meantime, a JustGiving page has been set up for this year's fundraising efforts; if you would like to support these two local causes, please feel free to visit the page at: **justgiving.com/crowdfunding/southoxon**. (Please note that JustGiving does charge a small commission).

LATEST PROGRESS WITH THE LOCAL PLAN

On 18th June, Council will be meeting to review the timetable for the Joint Local Plan and new government requirements to start work on the next local plan before the independent examination on the last one is even finished! A local plan is a document councils are required to prepare to provide plans and policies for all types of development, including new housing and employment sites in the area as well as identifying the infrastructure needed to support them. New government rules mean using higher housing targets and focusing less on supporting policies surrounding issues such as biodiversity and nature recovery. We hope to be able to preserve the excellent policies developed as part of our emerging Joint Local Plan (with Vale of White Horse), but ultimately our new unitary authority will be the one that will adopt the next local plan.

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THE BENSON WI



Benson WI met in May to discuss the 2026 Campaign Resolutions as had been shortlisted nationally. The Resolutions to discuss were regarding 'Accessible Public Toilet facilities to promote dignity, health and social inclusion' and **'Action on Women's Homelessness'**. At our meeting, led by our President Suzanna, we agreed in principle to the Resolutions and our Secretary took them forward to join the voting at the National Federation's Annual Meeting.

Following our discussions, we enjoyed a light-hearted quiz set by our President which included questions on the WI both locally and nationally, and some general knowledge. Our refreshments included some of our Anniversary cake saved from April's 100 Anniversary celebrations. On feedback, members and guests thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and our thanks to Benson Parish Council for their grant award which was really helpful with financing the occasion.

Also in May, we were delighted to receive lots of visitors and enquiries at our stand at the Benson Community Celebration event. It was a lovely to meet up with other stall holders showcasing what our village has to offer.

At the beginning of June, our Secretary acted as Resolutions voting delegate at the National Federation Annual Meeting which took place on Zoom this year. Joined by committee members, we listened to guest speakers who included Mary Lewis of the Jane Goodall Foundation, Michelle Dougherty the Astronomer Royal and Anne Boden the founder of Starling Bank. All were truly inspirational and gave us a great insight into how they reached considerable goals and current positions.

June will have seen us take part in the St Helens Big Green Week event to showcase some of the current National WI campaigns including the WI Week of River Action in September. Since the launch of the Clean Rivers for People and Wildlife campaign in 2023, a number of WI citizen scientists nationwide have measured pollution in rivers, marched to Westminster and generally played a role in keeping pressure on decision-makers.

At the end of June, Benson WI members will have held their meeting at the Root One Garden Centre just outside Wallingford. For July, members will be taking part in a private tour of the Howbery Park Flood Resilience Garden accompanied by Steven Packman the Environment & Innovation Manager from Nurture Landscapes; this is in place of our advertised Summer Garden Party.

As usual there will be no meeting in August but we will return again to meet in September when we will be holding our meeting in Benson House. Visitors (£5) or potential members are more than welcome. For further details please contact the Secretary on **bensonwi@oxfordshirewi.co.uk**

LIBRARY OPENING TIMES:
MONDAY: 2pm - 6pm TUESDAY: 9am -12.30pm & 2pm - 5pm
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BENSON COMMUNITY GARDENS

'Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul, and sings the tune without the words, and never stops at all. *(Emily Dickinson)*.



We see hope in the cornflowers and poppies that are blooming despite the crazy weather that has blown hot and cold with rain and drought. We see hope in our tender nurturing of plants such as courgettes and cucumbers, potatoes and beans that have needed help to survive the cold. They emerge into summer holding their own, but not without our care and attention.

Recently, while pottering on the allotment, an elderly woman walked by on the path between us and the old cuckoo pen. She said, 'Did you see the injured pigeon on the path?' I had not seen it hiding in the grass and to be honest was not overly concerned for a bird that over populates the allotment, looking for opportunities to creep under the netting to crop on the fruits. She returned about half an hour later with a small box. She scooped up the injured bird in her cupped hands and said, 'Now let's get you home and see if you can recover'. It was a lesson for me to recognise that we all have a place on this earth and kindness is not ill-spent. Being in a community space gives opportunity to learn from others and enjoy company. It is wonderful to see the old cuckoo pen being transformed by three young women. They have worked so hard and cheerfully clearing debris, brambles, rubble, and old ground covers. They found a fox skeleton that had been trapped by old, barbed wire in the undergrowth. They also told me that a new fox has found a home there. It has been a difficult work, but it brings us another moment of hope and anticipation for a new community space between us and the brook.

Richard and I have been away for a month from Mid-May to Mid-June and at this critical growing time the group has filled the gaps. Now that we have amalgamated with the library garden it feels that we are even more robust as a team of collaborators. The concept of the community gardens is that no one person has full responsibility for the space, but we can all benefit. We had a presence at The Big Green Week at St Helens Church. It was on the day of our return from South Africa. We shared wildflower posies and enjoyed being a presence there. You can see more on our bensoncommunitygardens Facebook page.

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

In May the Guild came over all philosophical and nostalgic as we thought about and discussed women who we admired or who we thought were inspiring. Our discussions ranged widely from grandmothers who taught their grandchildren country ways and country lore to Hollywood actors with hidden mathematical and inventing talents such as Hedy Lammarr. All this was via the backdrop of our own mothers, guiders and others who we had looked up to when we started our own journey in life. This included women in various public positions and indeed our own group who attend our meetings come rain or shine and on whose support we all rely to make our Guild what it is. All these women have shaped our thoughts and opinions in one way or another. At the heart of this discussion there was one thing that we all agreed upon, every one of us has the ability to be an inspiration to someone, somewhere. It doesn't need to be something big or showy, we don't need to invent dishwashers, lay down the foundations for concepts that would lead to Wi-Fi or Bluetooth or act as human computers who made moon landings possible. All we need to do is be there for someone in their hour of need, bestow a little act of kindness, lend a helping hand, be a shoulder to cry on or just make a cup of tea, whatever is the right thing in that moment. Of course this isn't territory that only women can enter into, this is totally independent of gender and so it should be, everyone and anyone can do something inspiring and we should all strive towards that goal.

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.

Instead of a closing quote this month Benson Trefoil Guild would like to ask everyone who reads this article to think of ways that they can be the person who inspires someone else even in a small way, it all counts!

Helen Horton

ST HELEN'S ECOCHURCH ECOTIP

It's Plastic Free July and this year we're thinking about laundry, a top source of microplastic pollution. Fibres from synthetic clothes (polyester, nylon, and acrylic for example) shed tiny fibres during washing and drying. These enter the sewage systems and are hard to filter out. You could put your washing in a microfibre bag or ball to catch the fibres. Learn more about reducing plastic pollution in the laundry process at **plasticfreejuly. org/get-involved/what-you-can-do/ plastic-free-laundry/** and more about this year's campaign at **plasticfreejuly.org**.

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THE MILLSTREAM SURGERY

DR STEVE ROSS

PLANS FOR RETIREMENT FROM THE PARTNERSHIP ON 30TH SEPTEMBER 2026

I have had the enormous privilege of working as a GP Partner at Mill Stream Surgery since July 2014 when I joined the practice to replace Dr Peter Rose on his retirement.

It is always a difficult decision knowing when the time is right to retire. With the practice having been able to appoint Dr Ellen Keith as an additional partner in September 2024 and take on Dr Sadi Dhakal as an additional salaried GP in September 2025 the time feels right for me to retire from my GP Partner role.

I will not be leaving the surgery completely. I will be available to work as needed to cover any needs such as holiday periods or sickness absence. I will also continue to have a role in medical student education with the longstanding links the surgery has with the University of Oxford.

The 12 years that I have been a partner at the surgery have seen huge changes in the NHS and some enormous challenges, including the COVID crisis.

Throughout all of these years it has been a joy to work with such amazing partners, and such a fantastic team. Every single person in the team, those seen and those working in the background unseen, is committed to providing the best care possible for our patients.

For me, it has been a privilege to contribute to the care of many of our patients over these years. I am deeply aware of the trust placed in me by our patients who come with needs or questions or at crisis points in their lives. I am also very aware that it is a team effort, and it has been wonderful to work with such an open and supportive team.

Ever since its inception the NHS has undergone change after change. Change is the one constant! I know that the team will continue to serve the local community, striving to offer the best possible patient care in an ever-changing environment. I look forward to supporting the team as I am able going forward.

With best wishes - Dr Steve Ross

PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP (PPG)

JOIN UP! JOIN UP!

All patients of Mill Stream Surgery are members of the PPG, but we are always looking for new members for the PPG Committee. We are often asked what our role is.

The PPG Committee is a group of patients who take a proactive role to:

Support the practice, keeping up to date with changes required by the NHS
Act as a link between patients and the Practice
Support and encourage patients to take an active role in managing their own health
Help identify areas for development and improvement

The Practice value the work and support of the PPG. Amongst other things, we:

Promote the use of the NHS App, offering help and support to patients to register with the NHS App and understand its benefits – including ordering repeat prescriptions, booking appointments, viewing test results and consultations, receiving messages,

Continued overleaf...





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.

July Cinema:

1st, 2nd - **Tuner** (15) 3rd, 4th - The Stranger (15) 19th, 20th - **The Christophers** (15) 21st, 22nd - **500 Miles** (12A) 24th, 25th - **Disclosure Day** (12A) 26th, 27th - **Savage House** (15) 28th, 29th - **Virginia Woolf's Night and Day** (12A) 30th, 31st - **The Invite** (15)

Live Screening:

23rd at 7pm, **Verdi's Aida on Sydney Harbour** with Latonia Moore and Milijana Nikolic. Tickets £10 (adults), £5 (under 16s)

Live on Stage:

14th, 15th, 16th, 17th , and Saturday 18th at 2.30pm and 7:30pm, **Underdog: the Other Brontë** by Sarah Gordon, directed by Dorothy Hirsch. Performed by the Sinodun PLayers Tickets £12 (Tuesday July 14, Saturday July 18, 2:30pm), £15 (all other performances)

viewing medical records - **Liaise** with local schools to use the schoolchildren's artwork to brighten up the Surgery waiting room - **Help** promote the Surgery Facebook page - **Support** the JOY Social Prescribing Platform (referring patients to non-clinical services), and we continue to liaise with Village groups to support health and wellbeing locally - **Assist** with admin tasks at Covid and Flu Clinics run at the Surgery - **Have a role in** interviews for new clinicians and other staff - **Arrange** CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) courses, which include showing local residents how to use the AED's (defibrillators) situated in the village *(Please do contact us with ideas for other events*) - **Support** the monthly Carers Group in Benson Library from 1030-1200 on the first Thursday of each month - Early in 2025 **we facilitated** the NHS Change workshop, giving patients across our Primary Care Network (PCN) the opportunity to join the national conversation about the Future of the NHS

We work closely with other PPGs across our PCN and more widely, to share ideas and information. What we don't do is discuss any individual medical conditions or clinical circumstances.

We are always looking for patients who will be active members of our PPG Committee. We meet 3 times each year and encourage members to use their particular skills to take on a specific activity or project within the group. It should not take much time or interfere with your social life! As the NHS 10-year plan focuses more on healthcare in the community, local voices and ideas are important. Interested in joining the Mill Stream Surgery PPG Committee?

Why not have a chat with a Committee member? If you email: **millstreamsurgery.ppg@gmail.com** or leave your contact details with the Care Navigator/Receptionist at the Surgery, one of us will be in touch – no commitment! You can also contact the Practice Manager at the Surgery – email admin.millstream@nhs.net FAO Practice Manager If you are a patient at a different Surgery and would like to find out more about their PPG – please make contact with them direct.

WALLINGFORD PHOTOGRAPHIC CLUB

Although on summer break, the Club has a few activities to look out for ahead of our next season in September. We have an amateur photography competition which is open to all: 'Summer Vibes' is the theme and we have a £100 voucher up for grabs so why not give it a shot? See wallingfordphoto.club for details. Then come and see us over Bunkfest weekend: we will be holding our annual exhibition at St Mary-Le-More Church (behind the Town Hall) on Saturday 5th September. Drop by to view or buy our best work, chat to members and have some refreshments.

In September we will start a new season so come along and join our informal and inclusive group of enthusiasts as we start our new programme of talks, presentations, competitions and practical sessions. We discuss a wide range of topics- not just technical- including getting feedback on your photos if you're keen to show them. We meet on Thursdays from 730pm at Crowmarsh Pavilion, and we'll have a few sessions online where we make the most of speakers from far away. First on 3rd September will be an evening to welcome new members, see what we've been up to over the summer and hear about the upcoming programme. Then on the 10th we have an online talk about sport and action photography, and later in the month we have evenings at the Pavilion to launch our portfolio projects scheme amongst other practical sessions.

CROWMARSH BATTLE FARMS

In the last report we mentioned that the spring cereals had been planted, not long after that the maize was planted too, this is used as a back up feed stock for the anaerobic digestor at Benson. Both of these crops have struggled with the very dry and hot May, meaning that yields at harvest are likely to be lower than average, as well as the spring barley not producing much straw, used as animal bedding. The rain we have had in the start of June will have helped the potential yields of the winter wheat, and won't have done any harm for the other crops, although may have arrived too late to help some.



We have also planted the overwinter wild bird seed plots, although the conditions were very dry at the time of planting, we are hopeful that the recent rain will help these establish and grow well over summer, ready to provide food in the hunger gap over winter.

We have also been moving the last of the grain stored on farm and continued with grain store preparations ready for harvest 2026. The final crop protection of the 2026 harvest crops has been carried out, it is just a waiting game until harvest to see how the crops fair.

Off farm, we have been lucky enough to have been on a study tour to Estonia. We visited several leading Estonian farmers who are trying innovative farming practices, and we discussed issues facing farmers both in Estonia and at home. One thing to be thankful for is that we have no threat of bears or wolves! We were also able to visit the leading arable farming show in England, Cereals, that this year was hosted at Jeremy Clarkson's Diddly Squat farm, much nearer than the usual trip to Lincolnshire. We were able to look at new farm machinery and talk to advisors regarding latest farm policies and techniques.

Since last writing, we have also had a visit from the Owl Conservation Project. They regularly visit the number of barn owl boxes we have around the farm. This spring the found a box with a number of kestrel chicks, another one with barn owl chicks and a third with an owl sitting on eggs. This is great news for us to hear, and gives a real indication that we have a healthy environment for these species to thrive.

By the time you are reading this, the chances are we will have just started harvest, this is the busiest time of the year on the farm. If you see tractors or combines out on the roads, please be patient and allow us extra room and time, we appreciate your understanding.

If you would like to find out more about what is happening on the farm, then please search for us on Facebook and Instagram, we also have a farm website.


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