NOVEMBER 2026

VOLUME 33 NO:3

THE BENSON BULLETIN



THIS MONTH

- Honouring Dave Rushton
- Remembrance Service
- Benson Library
- Parish Council Update
- LEGO
- Benson WI
- From The Rector
- Benson Garden Club

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AN OLD EDITORIAL

SEPTEMBER 2018

The Bulletin is part of Benson's story and I am delighted to be the Bulletin's new Editor. I take over from Anne Fowler whose sterling work and eye for detail have kept the BB in good health, and continuingly relevant to the village, for more than a decade. We are all in her debt. Anne will continue as the Clubs Secretary and keep a professional eye on me.

When the family and I arrived in Benson just over a year ago we would have been lost without the BB and the information it carries. It gave us a sense of the community and was a window on Benson's world. The thought of it closing was too much to bear, so I put out my hand and Anne nearly pulled it off. So the Bulletin becomes part of my story as well as the village's.

I get a great sense in the BB of what Benson was and what it is now but little idea of what it might become. I would encourage new arrivals to write pieces about settling in Benson, and any youngsters who want to flex their journalistic muscles, well, lets have some articles. It is a fine nursery slope and a great place to start.

People want information and to feel they are not alone. I hope the BB will continue to be a welcome arrival in your homes and part of all our sense of belonging.

Christopher Swann

The above editorial was my first as Editor of the Bulletin eight years ago – its message is as relevant today as it was then.

The celebrated author **Ann Patchett** told listeners recently on **Desert Island Discs** that her first break as a writer was to have an article published in her Parish Magazine, it encouraged her and set her on the course to becoming a world renown writer. For any young or new writer – there is nothing better than seeing your writing in print.

It has been suggested that the Bulletin is **"a little dull"** and **"mainly for old people"**. Well it should be for everyone but it is not up to me as Editor to set the village agenda nor should it be, I don't set out to personally create and control the magazine's content– this is the **Bulletin** not **Vogue**. The copy I receive every month is written by villagers to interest, I would hope, their neighbours, and the Bulletin has relied on this '**goodwill**' of free copy for over 30 years. If you feel that there are areas of village goings on the readers of the Bulletin need to be made aware of then please don't let it fester, sit down, write and send me copy that I can consider for inclusion.

I always welcome new ideas and writing.

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A NEW EDITORIAL

"We don't stop playing when we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing."
Jorgen Vig Knudstorp

As I sit down in my office to edit the Bulletin I am surrounded by a lot of stuff - books, ceramic figures, and so on - but in pride of place are a series of models of important architectural buildings. A maquette of Daniel Liebeskind's Imperial War Museum North which he designed by throwing a teapot out of a window and creating the building with its broken shards, a ceramic representation of the Bauhaus apartments in Tel Aviv and three scale models which have something in common. **"The Farnsworth House"**, the **"Villa Savoye"** and (my favourite) Frank Lloyd Wright's **"Falling Water"** are all made of Lego, part of an architectural series for adults the company sadly no longer makes. But the Lego story is extraordinary.

The company has their headquarters in Billund in Denmark and I was lucky enough some years ago to go there and meet Jorgen Vig Knudstorp the then CEO. We spent a day filming with him as he told us the company's history and the turnaround in their fortunes that he had orchestrated.


Ole Kirk Christiansen

The history is simple. Lego was founded in 1932 in the nearby workshop of Ole Kirk Christiansen, a carpenter whose primary business of producing household goods had suffered during the Great Depression. In desperation he turned to making wooden toys, in particular a duck on wheels which proved very successful. He called the toys Lego which comes from the Danish phrase "leg godt" - which means "play well." For over nine decades, this simple idea has driven every brick, every set, and every decision this company has ever made.

Not long before Jorgen took over in 2004 Lego was in deep trouble. The company was hundreds of thousands of euros in debt and the Kristiansen family who owned it were on the verge of having to sell the company. Jorgen was an Academic and Kinsey consultant and had never contemplated going into a business, but he had played with Lego as a child so if he could save any brand Lego was the only one he would ever consider joining. And most importantly he shared the family's ideas and dreams and they trusted him with their baby.

He discovered Lego had become complacent and wasn't listening to its customers. The staff loved the brand but for a long time had resisted having guns or any form of violence in their models. The world was passing them by. Jorgen knew the way out of their debt was to get ahead of the curve which lead to licensing deals with Star Wars, Harry Potter and many others. He also set up a "Future Lab" where staff sit and think about what is going to happen not what has. Jorgen called this 'systematic creativity'.

Lego is now the biggest toy brand in the world with profits in the billions - this is Jorgen's, his team and the family's (who still own it) extraordinary achievement. When I met Jorgen there were 80 lego bricks for every person on the planet, now it is estimated that there are 140. There is however one drawback to Lego - if you stand on it in bare feet it hurts.

But why write about this toy at all? Well Lego is just one of the many things you can go and play with in Benson Library, along with the Knitters and Natterers, the family historians and all the other activities the Library offers to all of you.


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HELLO FROM BENSON LIBRARY!



I'm Kirsty, part of the team – along with Carolyn and our wonderful volunteers – behind the displays, events and all the other little things that aim to make the library feel like a cosy, welcoming corner of the village. Each issue we'll be sharing a peek behind the scenes – the books we're excited about, the projects we're working on – or highlighting ways the library can support you, whether you're a tired parent juggling nap schedules, a teenager looking for somewhere calm to hang out, or just someone looking for a good book.

Currently we are looking at the possibility of running a one-off teen board game session (anyone in Year 7 to Year 13 who is interested, please let the library know!) and preparing for a special December Teddy Bear Library Sleepover for fluffy friends who'd like an overnight adventure.

We are also excited to have started a 1:1 reading programme for primary aged children who would like extra help with their reading. We are offering free 1:1 sessions for 20-30 minutes per session where the child can choose a book to read and then practice their reading with a trained adult. If you would like to sign up, please make an appointment at the library

There are always plenty of other things going on, so keep an eye on the Friends of Benson Library and village Facebook pages.

On November 20th the annual Friends of Benson Library Quiz Night is taking place at the Parish Hall, so book a table and grab your team – it's sure to be a good night.

We can't wait to show you what else we're up to. Please pop along to see us to talk books, jigsaws, or upcoming library events, or simply to enjoy a moment out of the British weather! As the days get shorter and the night's draw in, the kettle is always on.

We look forward to seeing you in the library soon,
Kirsty, Carolyn and the Benson Library Team

Kirsty is currently reading: One Dark Window by Rachel Gillig
Carolyn is reading: Dark, Salt, Clear: Life in a Cornish Fishing Town by Lamorna Ash
The Bulletin Editor has just finished "Styx" the second verse novel by Nikita Gill in her "Goddesses of the Underworld" trilogy and has also nominated Amen Alonge's crime novel "A Killing In Lagos" as a semi-finalist in the "Bloody Barnes" competition.

SEE MORE ABOUT THE LIBRARY ON PAGES 20 & 21 AND EVENTS DIARY PAGE 23

The fact the Library can offer villagers so much variety and inspiration (as well as books) is down to a group of villagers called the **Friends of Benson Library** who fought to keep the library open at a time of massive proposed closures. They were lead by a singular individual, the passionate Bensonite **Dave Rushton**. Among many other things Dave wrote the history articles for this magazine, he died very recently and will be much missed by all who knew him. The tributes have been many and the Bulletin honours him in the pages that follow.



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MY DAD DAVE RUSHTON



My father, Dave Rushton, has died aged 80. He was a well-known, highly respected figure in Benson and across Oxfordshire; before that, in Air Traffic Control, where he worked for 40 years.

Born in Bradford in 1946, Dave was a classic baby boomer: one of five children, trading his sweet rations for his brothers' toy rations, and eating as fast as he could at mealtimes to gain a chance of seconds.

Rejected by the RAF over a heart defect that turned out to be a mistake, Dave became an ATC cadet in 1964 instead - a career well-suited to his rigour, forensic attention to detail, and ability to thrive under pressure. He rose through the ranks to become one of the five Watch Managers at the London Control Centre in West Drayton, responsible for the safety of passengers flying through one of the world's busiest sectors of airspace, covering Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton, Stansted, City, and other airports. Reflecting his seniority, he met Prince Philip and successive Government transport secretaries. He was an excellent leader, proud that his watch had the lowest sickness and the highest training success rate. When Tony Blair promised no civil flights over London after the 9/11 attacks, Dave was heavily involved in the reorganisation of flight paths for around 2,500 daily aircraft movements.



Retiring aged 57, Dave began a fulfilling new chapter as a local and military historian, uncovering the human stories behind Benson's contribution to both world wars, and the changing pattern of land ownership over the centuries. His contributions for Wallingford Museum, South Oxfordshire soldiers, BBC Radio Oxford and the Bensington Society are fondly remembered.

As a campaigner and later a parish councillor, Dave left a lasting mark on Benson village. He helped save the library from closure, maintained the children's playground, improved safety by organising a pedestrian crossing over the busy A-road, and organised renovation of the public toilet block.

He gave his all at everything he did: brilliant speeches for his colleagues' retirement, rigorous road planning, robust book club debate, lively bridge-playing, inventive wargaming, meticulously planned battlefield tours, and gorgeous firework displays.

My Father was a man of firm opinions; a lifelong reader of The Guardian and Private Eye. Not everyone will remember him fondly, for he had a sharp tongue and dark humour, but those who knew him appreciated his incredible generosity with time and money: supporting dozens of charities, conducting family history research for neighbours, working hard for the WWI centenary exhibition, volunteering in many areas of public service such as brook-clearing and hospital-driving.

Continued overleaf...



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He is survived by his beloved wife Susan and daughter Caroline, who are comforted by the knowledge that he created such positive impact for so many people, and who will carry his values with them every day.

The family has been donating to Sobell House Hospice, who help to make end-of-life gentler for so many people. If anyone else would like to donate in Dave's memory, you can do so via **daverushton.muchloved.com**

Caroline Rushton

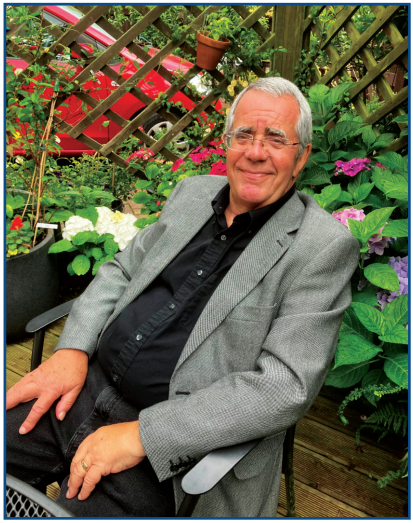
DAVE RUSHTON FROM HIS FRIENDS



It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Dave Rushton and we wish to pay a modest tribute to his remarkable contribution over the years to the well-being of Benson and its inhabitants.

The first and most important thing to remember about Dave was that he was a Yorkshireman. This meant he did not suffer fools gladly but once in his confidence he was a loyal and sincere friend and colleague, even if you had the immense misfortune to have been born outside God's own county. Nowhere was this more manifest than in his involvement in the life of Benson.

After a long career as an air-traffic controller, Dave retired to the village and immediately joined the Parish Council. Among many roles, he was a key figure in helping to draw up the first Neighbourhood Plan. But history was his passion. Dave had a particular interest in and developed a deep knowledge of military history. He ran a clinic in military history, was a volunteer at Soldiers at Oxfordshire Museum, and conducted extensive research on the involvement of Benson residents in the services. As a long-standing member of the Bensington Society's History Group, he ran a Family History Clinic where he offered innumerable people help in tracing their genealogies, wrote regularly for the Benson Bulletin and always contributed enthusiastically to the various public exhibitions as part of heritage celebrations.



Finally, up to the last he was an active member of a small research project on the field systems of Benson since the eighteenth century. The topic was new but Dave threw himself into it with characteristic resolve. Here his diligence in collecting and checking numerical data was invaluable.

Dave's death leaves a big hole, not only in the research but more broadly in the life and history of the village. We wish to extend our condolences to his wife, Sue, and other members of the family.

John Marriott, Chair, Bensington Society's History Group

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BENSON REMEMBRANCE PARADE

SUNDAY 8th NOVEMBER

Roads will be closed at **10.00** am. At **10.40** those marching will fall in, in the High Street and set off at **10.43**. **THE REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY** will commence at **10.53** and the **"Names of the Fallen"** will be read. At **10.59** the **Exhortation** will be read by RBL Fiona Lovesey. At **11.00** the 'Last Post' will be sounded by the Bugler, Standards and Banners lowered and the spectators shall stand.

THE EXHORTATION

"They shall grow not old
As we that are left grow old
Age shall not weary them
Nor the years condemn
At the going down of the sun
And in the morning
We will remember them"



11.00 Two minutes Silence.

11.02 - Reveille and the Kohima Epitaph will be read:

"When you go home tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow We gave our today"

11.04 RAF FLYPAST.

11.05 - The Laying of Wreaths.

11.09 - The Blessing.

11:30 - 12:15 **Church Service in St Helen's Church Benson**

A BENSON DIARY

The ten hours' light is abating,
And a late bird wings across,
Where the pines, like waltzers waiting,
Give their black heads a toss.

There is something sad about the later days of autumn. For all the fireworks and bonfires, it always feels as if daylight is being slowly smothered by an encircling gloom. More so, when the blue sky is brushed steel-grey by flat cloud, and mist lingers on into the afternoon, and before long, the day is over as if before it even began. And in this listlessness of forever grey, it is impossible to feel the joy of inspiration.

And so, we come instead to that season of custards and soft crumbles and mellow fruitfulness. And to slow casseroles taking their gentle time to melt the most sinuous cuts of meat to almost nothing. Oxtail and braised beef – pork shoulder and lamb shanks - even neck of lamb in that most white of stews - the Irish stew – with its potatoes, parsnips, carrots, golden swede and pearl barley - and suddenly the days don't feel quite as dull. There's comfort in the culinary delights of these darker days of the year. Our summer's fig harvest will come into its own, as my mince pies this year will be primarily of the figgy variety.

There's now been sufficient rain at least to turn over soil in the fields about the village. Cows are pasturing near Roke and at the end of Hale Lane and of course on Cow

Continued overleaf...



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Common at Ewelme. The question for everyone is how wet the winter will prove to be with El Nino breaking all records. Be prepared for the worst and hope for the best.

Another village fate has been unsettled as the proposal for the creation of Ridgeway Council has been put on hold. It looks as if the government wants mayoralties to sit over regions and whether that means Thames Valley will get resurrected again none can tell. Meanwhile SODC lives on to fight another election day as does OCC. This is moderately good news for our Library service which has the reassurance of certainty for a while. However, irresolution can become its own worst enemy as good professionals tend to look for a more secure placement whilst everything is up in the air.

Change is also in the wind for our local Catholic community. This autumn there will be episcopal visitations to all the local parishes culminating in that of Archbishop Longley of Birmingham to Dorchester on Thames in early January. The upshot of this process is to be the creation of a new single parish covering all the parishes previously in our Deanery. It will be named for our local patron, St Birinus and it will create a community of interdependent Catholic churches arranged around a priest resident. The abandonment of the parochial structure that has obtained largely since the Norman conquest returns us to a structure more akin to the Anglo-Saxon minsters which dominated from the sixth century. It reflects both a decline in church-going more generally as well as a decline in younger vocations. It will gradually impact village life in Benson as it has elsewhere.

How quickly has the second half of the year passed? It seems no time since I was squinting hopefully into those luxuriant long days of late spring. But after summer's bake-off, it feels the days have flown by. And you know when the year is on the wane when Quality Street and mince pies pepper the shelves and there's talk of Christmas. I sometimes now feel I've no longer got the energy for all that revelry. We've long since packed up on present giving – what a grace that is – but no matter how I plan I always end up getting caught up in the fiddle-faddle of it all. There's melancholy about those carols I used to sing with gusto with their tidings of comfort and joy and the sparkling delight of every tincture of the season of good will and good eating. Sometimes I feel I might settle for a turkey sandwich and a packet of crisps. Of course, I won't and of course I'll be very pleased not to – but for once brief shining moment it does feel a very attractive prospect. Perhaps had Dr Johnson known the consequences of the Victorian re-creation of Christmas, inspired by Dickens, he might have substituted Christmas for London is his famous epigram – a man who's tired of London's tired of life.

I've given up on London and become a country mouse… Who'd have thought I'd ever have come to such an admission - and in print - my younger self in the busy fast lane of England's capitol would be truly appalled…

John Murphy

Beech leaves, that yellow the noontime,
Float past like specks in the eye;
I set every tree in my June time,
And now they obscure the sky …
And the children who ramble through here
Conceive that there never has been
A time when no tall trees grew here,
That none will in time be seen.
(Thomas Hardy At day-close in November)

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Benson House is centred around our residents, their needs and their wishes. Our fully trained nurses and care team are chosen for their compassion and expertise. With stunning gardens and terraces, a cinema, bistro, and hairdressing salon, our luxury facilities and varied daily activities mean that all residents are engaged and supported to live life to the full.

There is always lots happening at Benson House Care Home - why not join us at one of our events.

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Classic Cinema Club

Every Thursday, 2.30pm – 4.30pm

Looking for a fun, social way to spend your Thursday afternoons? Step back in time and enjoy a selection of classic films in the comfort of our cosy cinema room, designed to provide a warm and welcoming environment.

High Tea at Three

1st Weds of every month, 3.00pm – 4.00pm

We'd love to welcome the community to join us for high tea each month. Enjoy complimentary tea and coffee alongside sweet treats freshly prepared by our Head Chef.

For more information about life at Benson House, or to RSVP for one of our upcoming events, please contact our Customer Relationship Manager, George, on the phone number below or by email: gking@caringhomes.org.

Call us
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Find us online
caringhomes.org

Benson House
CARING HOMES

Churchfield Lane, Benson, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 6SH

FROM THE RECTOR

Those who have read this column for many years will know that I don't particularly enjoy the month of November. I'm not the only one: a recent study in the United States notes that Seasonal Affective Disorder, a general underlying low mood that affects millions of people every year, peaks in the third week in November. It probably has something to do with the decrease in daylight. We're wired to like light and to find darkness depressing; so November, with its chilly weather and gradual slide into gloom but without any of the thrill of Christmas celebrations, seems perfectly balanced to upset us.

The Church has always responded pastorally to this, putting two of its most popular festivals right at the start of the month. We begin with All Saints' Day (1st November), on which we celebrate those followers of Jesus in the past who have served as examples for those of us in the present day – they are like pin-pricks of spiritual light, amidst the autumn gloom, winking at us and pointing our way gently to Christ as we remember their lives and stories. Then, on 2nd November, with All Souls' Day, we give thanks not so much for the exemplary lights of our faith as for our own deceased loved ones who have encouraged us along the way of Christ.

Then, on 11th November, we celebrate the Feast of St Martin of Tours (known as Martinmas). Historically this was the last Harvest Festival of the year, focused around a Martinmas goose (there's a reason for the goose in St Martin's vita; do look it up if you're intrigued!), and the story of St Martin himself – a soldier-martyr who cut off half his cloak to give it to a beggar, only to wake the following morning to find his cloak miraculously whole again – further directs our attentions to the love and power of Jesus Christ in the midst of a dank month.

(For those who like religious trivia: St Martin's cloak was said to have been divided multiple times as he gave away parts of it to other beggars, and then miraculously restored to wholeness by God. In time, the supposed pieces of this cloak became holy relics, cherished by Christians and kept safe in specially-built miniature churches. The old Latin word for a small cloak is a capella, and hence those churches were known by the same name, which is where we get our modern word chapel.)

Then, finally, at the close of November, we take our eyes off the saints who have pointed our way to Jesus as exemplars and encouragers, and look directly to the light of Christ himself as we celebrate Advent Sunday. That day both reminds us to look always for the coming light of Christ, and to remember his first coming at Christmas.

If, like me, you get a bit blue during November, remember not only the pinpricks of light whom God has given us to point us towards Christ, but also the fact that in Jesus Christ, the Light of the World is coming. Give thanks to God for those saints and souls who have encouraged you in the midst of bleak days, but don't forget to look forward to that day when (as the Bible puts it), we "will need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God will be their light" (Revelation 22:5).

Sunday services at St Helen's, Benson take place every week at 9.30am. In addition, 4 O'Clock Church (especially suitable for younger families) meets at 4pm on Sunday 1st November; and Sanctuary, a service of praise and worship, gathers at 6pm on Sunday 22nd November.

Sunday services at St Mary's, Ewelme, take place at 11 o'clock every Sunday, except for Sunday 29th November, when there is no service in Ewelme. Please do join us!

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THE BENSINGTON SOCIETY

When you have been involved in helping write a new constitution for our Society, necessary for it to become a registered charity with markedly different responsibilities, there has to be some trepidation that not all will see it as your sub-committee does when offered to members at a General Meeting for approval. However, as it turned out, the resolution to adopt the suggested new Constitution, which will now go forward to the Charity Commission, was passed with no vote against and only one abstention... Phew! And thank you all.

Following the GM, our Chairperson, Fenella, gave us the sad news that three of our long-standing members had passed away – Dave Rushton, Pat Betterton, and Felicity Cooper's husband David. They all, in their own way, had made both the Society and our Village a better place in which to socialize and live. Our condolences go to all their family and friends.

The talk – "The Greatest Story Ever Told" by Professor Tim Coulson was, to say the least, even more enlightening than the sub-title ("The history of you me and everything") revealed. Tim gave us an overview of all we have learned about our place in the cosmos from its beginning to the present day and he succeeded in doing so in a way that became increasingly understandable as the journey progressed. However, it did leave me wondering if the recent development in AI would presage a divergence from the astronomicalbiological trends.

For most readers when you read this the talk at the 30th October meeting will have taken place and it does sound interesting – 'Three Wayward Women and Wallingford Castle'. Although given by a woman – Edwina Johnson – it does have a somewhat male chauvinistic ring about it – wayward to whom?

There is no meeting in November and the December meeting will be on December 4th when we will be entertained by the Benson Military Wives' Choir. I can still remember, all be it many years ago, the inaugural, off base concert given as a church fundraiser in the garden of The Old Vicarage. Thank you Gareth Malone!

David McGill

HENLEY AND DISTRICT STAMP CLUB

The Club is a friendly and enthusiastic community dedicated to the fascinating world of stamp collecting and postal history. Whether you are a beginner discovering the hobby for the first time, an experienced collector with specialised interests, or simply curious about stamps and their stories, our club offers a welcoming environment for learning, sharing, and enjoyment. We are built on friendship, mutual support, and a shared passion for preserving history through philately. Members enjoy exchanging ideas, helping one another identify and value items, discussing new issues, and participating in competitions and displays. The club encourages collectors of all ages and interests, fostering a spirit of cooperation and lifelong learning.

My next Newsletter looks into the history of St. George and how it has been illustrated in commorative stamps.

Meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month in Bix Village Hall at 7.30 p.m. Our meeting in November are on the 11th and 25th . Visitors and new members are very welcome. Further details can be obtained by phoning Steve on 07767 251670 or on our website: **henleyphilatelic.org.uk**

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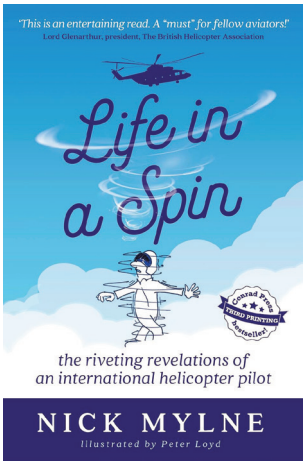
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FOBL AUTHOR TALKS - NICK MYLNE



Friends of Benson Library presents their

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FOBL are delighted to welcome the writer

NICK MYLNE

To BENSON LIBRARY on

Wednesday November 25th at 7.30.

Tickets are £5 to include a glass of wine.

Tickets from

francesmswann@gmail.com



This funny and highly entertaining book allows the reader to make brief and joyous visits to Jamaica, Syria, Iran, Germany, Yemen, the North Sea, Sweden, and Saudi Arabia. Highly experienced helicopter pilot Nick Mylne dazzles and entertains with his recollections of his professional life in a spin.

Nick is writing a second book entitled "Loose Ends". He intends to introduce you all to this second work to seek your advice as to the appeal of its content.

MORE FROM THAT VILLAGE ANCIENT

For most of our lives, when you fall over. you pick yourself up, dust yourself down and carry on. Not so when you get old. I fell over the other day.

Only the older of your readers will remember Dr Anne Millar. She was a no-nonsense, compassionate doctor who cared for so many of us a few decades ago. Aware of the problems of the elderly falling, she must have recommended many to ensure that they wore Alert necklasses to press and get a response from someone who could come and help.

Anne was also a great gardener and her gardens often open to the public. One evening she went out to her garden, tripped and fell. She had no such necklace and lay in her garden for hours before eventually being found. A few days later she died from that fall.

Now back to me. I not only had my necklace but also my mobile phone, a more modern invention. I was able to phone my nephew located some 500 yards away. He arrived promptly on his bike. He trains often in the Wallingford gym and is very strong as a result. He was soon able to get my heavy weight first on to a low stool and then upright. I was much shaken but okay. I don't think I need spell out the moral of this story.

Peter Clarke

LIBRARY OPENING TIMES:
MONDAY: 2pm - 6pm TUESDAY: 9am -12.30pm & 2pm - 5pm
THURSDAY: 2pm - 7pm
FRIDAY: 9am - 12.30pm & 2pm - 5pm SATURDAY: 9.30am - 12.30pm

Friends of Benson Library

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FORTY YEARS IN BENSON: A REFLECTION

Having recently celebrated 40 years living in Benson, I started thinking about what it is that has kept me in the village all these years and what it is that makes Benson such a rewarding and enjoyable place to live.

There were several occasions and reasons during that time for us to have moved away, back to Devon for instance, but we decided to stay and have never regretted doing so.

The first 30 years of my time here saw very little significant housing development. Just a number of small "in fill" developments well within the village envelope. One major change was the reduction of the number of pubs and hotels in that time from seven to just two. I am pleased to say that I had visited all of them at least once, but obviously not often enough to keep them all going!

During those early years working full-time made it less easy to get involved in village life and activities, except as an observer. Pram races – no longer possible as prams barely exist, tug-of -war contests, carnivals as well as the enduring vintage cycle event, all contributed to the richness and fun of village life. When I started working freelance from home I was able to contribute more. I greatly enjoyed being involved in setting up both the health walks programme that thrives today as the village Community Walks and the environmental group BEST, now successfully operating as **Benson Area Nature Group**. Those ventures proved to be a short-cut way of getting to know lots of people , with some of the village's real characters amongst them. Who could forget Ray Lawrernce, a rough and ready man with a great passion for nature who was a sort of poacher turned gamekeeper – and probably vice versa! At the other end of the gentility scale, in the nature group, the delightful Freydis Sharland, now rightly recognised by the blue plaque on her house in Brook Street honouring her wartime exploits as one of the famed women pilots of the Air Transport Auxilliary, delivering planes to the air bases in World War Two.

These two ventures with which I have been most closely associated, are just examples of the wealth of organisations available in the village catering for a wide variety of tastes and interests. The continuing vibrancy of the community is reflected in the establishment of new ventures like **Benshed**.

Of course, Benson has seen major changes in the last quarter of my 40 years with the major housing developments. Although these are larger than many "Old Bensonites" might have wished, they do, and hopefully will continue to, have a positive impact. New residents are joining local organisations and the increased population must help to sustain the exceptional range of shops we have for a small village. Although many of the newcomers are people with young families and busy jobs, as time goes on, and on reaching their retirement age will provide a whole new cohort of people to help run the local organisations that contribute to the richness of Benson village life. So, a warm welcome to all you newcomers, just as I was welcomed 40 years ago.

Keith Tibbs

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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CHOLSEY REPAIR CAFÉ

The Repair Café will be back on **Saturday 21st November** at Cholsey Pavilion, between 10.00 and 12.45. Volunteers will be there to help you attempt repairs to a wide range of household items, bikes, gardening equipment and electrical goods (white goods excepted). No charge is made but if you care to make a donation, it helps cover operating expenses. You can see more at **cholseyrepaircafe.com** or email: **repaircafe@cholsey.com**.



BENSON COMMUNITY WALKS

Benson Wellbeing 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 Volunteer Helpline

For assistance with travel to and from medical appointments

Office open Mon-Fri 9-11am

Call 01491 825992

To ask for help or to volunteer

Out of hours contact:

Albert Bevan:

01491 282868 or 07758 746676

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THE VILLAGE DIARY

Can be found at bensonbulletin.co.uk

At: Village Information/Events

Oxford Welsh Male Voice Choir

Concert in aid of

Oxfordshire Prostate Cancer Support Group



Saturday 21st November, Benson Village Hall
Sunnyside, Benson, OX10 6LZ

Tickets **£15** (Under 12s free*)
Starts **7.30pm** (Doors open 7.00pm)

*Maximum 2 per adult ticket

Comprising a range of music including classical, opera, sacred & secular, modern & old. Come and extend your horizons and be entertained by the emotion of Welsh harmony whilst supporting a most worthy cause.

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The South Oxfordshire CHRISTMAS FAIR

CHRISTMAS FAIR

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Christmas Tree Festival 2026
St Helen's Church, Benson
27th – 30th November

Come and see Christmas trees decorated by our village community
Children's activities and competitions Seasonal refreshments

Friday: Christmas Lights Carol Service 5 - 5.30 pm

Saturday: Open 10 am - 4 pm

Sunday: Morning Service (Sung Eucharist): 9.30 am
Festival open 11 am – 4 pm
Roke & Benson Brass Band at 11.30 am

Monday: Open 10 am - 4 pm

Free entry all weekend (Donations welcome)

BENSON Choral Society

Monteverdi Vespers



Dorchester Abbey
5 December 2026
7.30pm

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VILLAGE INFORMATION

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Opening Hours: Tuesday 9.30 - 12.30 & 13.00 - 16.00 / Wednesday & Thursday 9.30 - 12.30

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BENSON MILLSTREAM CENTRE: open Mon, Wed, Fri 11.30-1.30pm for lunch, drop in coffee morning 'Millstream Mugs' Tuesdays 11-12pm. Hire of the centre for events contact bensonmillstreamcentre@gmail.com or phone 01491 834889.

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CHURCH INFORMATION

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NOVEMBER EVENTS

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

NOVEMBER

5/ Garden Club Parish Hall 7.15 for 7.45 start
8/ Remembrance Service War Memorial see page 12
11/ Henley Stamp Club Bix Parish Hall 7.30
15/ Benson Antique Fair Parish Hall 9am - 3pm
17/ South Oxfordshire Christmas Fair see page 22
21/ Concert in age of Prostate Charity Parish Hall 7.30
25/ Benson WI 2pm Parish Hall
25/ Henley Stamp Club Bix Parish Hall 7.30
25/ FOBL Author Talk Library 7.30
27/ Benson Christmas Party see opposite
27 - 30/ Christmas Tree Festival St Helen's





DECEMBER

1/ BANG AGM 7.30 Millstream Centre
4/ Bensington Society 7.30 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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The Benson Parish Council Presents

Benson Christmas Party 2026

Friday 27th November 2026
6pm - 9pm
Benson High Street

Benson village is coming together for a big Christmas street party!

- LIVE MUSIC
- FESTIVE STREET FOOD
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- LIGHT SWITCH ON

See You All There !

BENSON MILLSTREAM CENTRE

We have recently welcomed a few new customers, as well as volunteers, 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 a great home-cooked meal, our lunch club days feature fun activities such as crafts, quizzes and games, plus regular talks about things like internet safety, bee keeping and much more.

CHRISTMAS EVENTS

We are delighted that the Centre will be part of the St Helens Church Christmas Tree Festival (28-30 November), and the Benson Christmas party on Friday 27th November! We will be open for mulled wine, mince pies and bauble making, as well as hosting a few festive craft and local business stalls too. All welcome, do come along and support the Centre. .

YOU CAN HIRE THE CENTRE

Our Centre is the perfect place for a party or event. It is a large adaptable space, with two kitchens, baby changing facilities and a lovely outdoor patio garden. It is available for hire in the evenings and at weekends at very competitive prices. We host many family events from birthdays to Christmas Day lunch, as well as groups like Slimming World, the Benson Nature Group and the Trefoil Guild.

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**. 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.

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL.

We're looking forward to welcoming you to this year's Christmas Tree Festival, which will again be held at St Helen's Church. Plans are already well in hand, with different village groups, organisations, school and businesses busy thinking about how to decorate their tree or participate in other ways. This year's theme is 'Christmas around the World', and we're sure that the range of ideas will again be a tribute to the creativity of our local community.

The Festival will open on Friday 27 November at 5 pm with a short informal carol service for all ages, with participation from our village school: this will finish around 5.30 in good time to go on to other activities in the village centre. Over the weekend the church will be open on Saturday 28 November from 10 am to 4 pm, Sunday from 11 am to 4 pm, and again on Monday 30 November from 10 am to 4 pm. Seasonal refreshments will be served throughout the weekend, and there will also be a children's mouse trail and activities, music and a raffle.

Look out for more details on posters around the village and on social media nearer the time, or contact us on s**thelensevents@bensonandewelmechurches.co.uk**

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BENSON PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE

BENSON REMEMBRANCE PARADE – SUNDAY 8TH NOVEMBER

Please join us for this special village event, honouring the service and sacrifice of British and Commonwealth military and civilian personnel in the two World Wars and subsequent conflicts. **See page 12 for full timings**.

BENSON VILLAGE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

On Friday 27th November, Benson High Street will come alive with live music from two local bands, festive outdoor bars hosted by our local pubs, a children's carousel, seasonal food, late-night shopping and a craft fair at the Millstream. Santa Claus will switch on the village lights, and Benson's very own Elf-run Christmas post office will be open for children to send their letters to Santa.

This is a brand-new event for Benson, and the whole village is getting involved. The High Street will be closed for the evening, so bring your family along and enjoy dinner, drinks and dancing with your local community.

Save the date: Friday 27th November, from 6pm to 9pm. Join us for an evening of festive fun for the whole community—see the poster for full details.

Volunteers Needed: We are looking for volunteers to help us deliver these events safely. If you can spare some time, either during the event itself or afterwards to help with the clean-up, please get in touch at comms@bensonpc.co.uk.

Even an hour of your time would make a real difference, and we are happy for volunteers to take on a short shift so they can still enjoy the event.

REMEMBERING DAVE RUSHTON

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Dave Rushton, who served as a Benson Parish Councillor from 2008 to 2015.

Among his many contributions to the village, Dave chaired the Recreation and Lands Committee for several years and played a central role in the Neighbourhood Plan team, leading on transport issues. He also championed the implementation of the pedestrian crossing on the A4074. A passionate advocate for the local community, His dedication to Benson and his commitment to improving village life will be remembered with gratitude and respect.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Many of you are already aware of the proposal by Elivia Homes to build 170 new homes on the land behind Blacklands Road. The latest update is, unfortunately, not good news. Although Benson Parish Council maintained its position to strongly object to the application, the date for SODC to respond to the application passed without any decision being made on their side. This enabled Elivia Homes to submit an appeal against non-determination – basically, this says that since the council didn't make any decision, jurisdiction transfers to the Planning Inspectorate, and they decide whether the case will be determined by written submissions, an informal hearing, or a public inquiry.

Continued overleaf...

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So, we now wait to see what direction the Inspectorate feels is appropriate in this case. If it results in a public inquiry (and this would certainly be the developer's preference), SODC will need to decide whether it will invest the significant sums required to mount a defence, including a team of expensive barristers and lawyers. The alternative is not to contest the application, in which case the appointed planning inspector will immediately allow it to pass.

Having met with the developers, it's clear that their interest is entirely commercial. The issues that everyone in the village understands around the strain on infrastructure, both above and below ground, are of no concern to them. More generally, it's clear that changes in the planning process made at government level have moved the balance in favour of housing developers and away from local knowledge.

We'll continue to provide updates on the progress of this housing application in the coming months. We wait to see whether this will result in a public inquiry, and if it does, whether SODC will decide to contest it. Rest assured that the Parish Council will do everything it can to resist further growth in Benson, despite having a severely limited voice in the outcome. Visit the News section of our web site for greater detail and further updates as we have them: **bensonpc.org.uk**

WABC

Wallingford Accessible Boat Club (WABC), the volunteer-led local charity providing boating opportunities for disabled and less mobile people of all ages, celebrates a record-breaking season on the Thames. And the numbers tell quite a story.

Between April and September, WABC welcomed more than 750 passengers aboard 162 Wheelyboat trips – increases of 59% and 65% respectively on last season. Even more remarkably, demand was so strong that by the end of July, every available trip through to the end of the season in September was fully booked.

WABC Chair John Jenkins MBE said: *"We are absolutely thrilled. These figures represent a remarkable season and are a tremendous tribute to our incredible team of volunteers, who have worked tirelessly to give more people than ever the chance to enjoy being out on the river. For many of our passengers, these aren't simply enjoyable boat trips. The experience of getting out on the water can be genuinely transformative, bringing a real sense of freedom and enjoyment as well as benefits to health and wellbeing."*

The plentiful summer sunshine undoubtedly helped demand – although the weather also brought its challenges.

Jenkins continued: *"Ironically, while the sunshine helped make this such a popular season, periods of excessive heat also forced us to cancel a number of trips. Without those cancellations, our passenger numbers would have been higher still. To have every remaining trip fully booked by the end of July is perhaps the clearest indication yet of the demand for what we do. That is an extraordinary position for us to be in. The popularity of our free-of-charge service gives us enormous encouragement as we look at our plans for next year and beyond.*

"Quite simply, we want to do more – and this season has shown us just how much demand there is for us to do exactly that. We are searching for more volunteers to increase our capacity right now so if anyone out there would like to get involved, please do get in touch at **wabc.org.uk** *"*

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SODC UPDATE





Andrea Powell & Sue Cooper

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS – THE SOUTH AND VALE STORY

Shortly after becoming Prime Minister, Andy Burnham announced a national strategy to eliminate long-term rough sleeping. We are fortunate that we do not see large numbers of rough sleepers in South Oxfordshire, but this is only the most visible kind of homelessness; many thousands of people across our communities have no place to call home, relying on temporary accommodation or the generosity of friends and family to give them shelter.

Saturday 10 October was World Homelessness Day – which aims to raise awareness of the needs of people experiencing homelessness and highlight the work being done to prevent it. In South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils this includes working with partner agencies to help support people and purchasing properties for people to live in.

The councils' housing team has a remarkable record on homelessness prevention rates. Over the past five years the team has secured accommodation for around 78 per cent of all people at risk of becoming homeless (within the two-month deadline). This is much higher than the national average of around 55 per cent of cases. By developing partnerships with other local agencies such as healthcare providers, the councils have been able to support households to avoid potential homelessness.

Since 2023 our team has moved nearly 400 homeless households from temporary to long term housing (186 South/ 198 Vale). During the same period more than 3,300 households (1,298 South/2,064 Vale) have been accommodated through the housing register.

The partnership approach is echoed with the team supporting rough sleepers. Nationally there has been an increasing number of people rough sleeping. However, both councils have managed to keep the numbers of rough sleepers down. At the annual rough sleeper count, which is conducted every autumn, a total of nine rough sleepers were identified in South and five in Vale in 2025. These people are offered support by our housing team.

Since 2020 the councils have also participated in a number of resettlement schemes for people who have found themselves homeless due to war and other conflict including from Ukraine and Afghanistan. The councils continue to do everything they can to help and welcome people displaced by war and persecution and provide sanctuary.

People at risk of becoming homeless often have complex needs that require a coordinated approach. Council officers work with partner agencies and make those connections with extremely positive results, adopting a "housing first" approach with wrap-around support services.

Continued overleaf...

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Cllr Tony Worgan, South Oxfordshire District Council Cabinet Member for Housing said: *"Our commitment to our most vulnerable residents is the most vital part of the role. Homelessness in England has increased significantly in the last decade due to rising rents, the cost-of-living crisis, and a shortage of affordable housing. We are looking to tackle this by providing council housing – becoming social landlords for the first time since 1997. With the help of government funding, South and Vale have acquired 81 homes (56 in South Oxfordshire and 25 in the Vale) to date. These properties will provide suitable, affordable homes for local people and help reduce the risk of homelessness in our districts further."*

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION
THE GOVERNMENT PRESSES THE "PAUSE" BUTTON!

We've written in these pages before about the forthcoming plans to restructure local government in Oxfordshire and the choice that the government made to select the "Three Unitaries" model put forward by Oxford City Council. In early September we learned that the Government was pausing the reorganisation so that they could review all aspects of the process (possibly following threats of Judicial Reviews from a number of Councils). At the time of writing, we do not know if they will resume the LGR process in the short term, the medium term, the long term or at all! What we do know for sure is that local elections in May 2027 will take place but they will be to elect Councillors to South Oxfordshire District Council for as long as that council exists. These elections will be on the same ward boundaries as the current situation; in Benson elections will therefore be to select two representatives for the Benson & Crowmarsh ward, which includes Warborough and Ewelme. When we know more, we will let you know!

CELEBRATE A LIFE THAMES VALLEY

Join Sue Ryder this December for **"Celebrate a Thames Valley"**, bringing people together for a shared moment to pause and remember the lives of someone special.

The event takes place at The Barn, Goosecroft Lane, Purley-on-Thames, RG8 8DR on Sunday December 6th with arrival from 3.30pm, offering a warm and supportive space for those living with loss to share memories and reflect.

Led by Sue Ryder's Head of Wellbeing for the Southeast, Simon Smith, the event will include the chance to write a personal dedication to someone important, as well as readings, and live music from the Time to Sing Choir.

Everyone is welcome, regardless of when their loved one died or whether they were cared for by Sue Ryder. Places are free but limited. Register by midnight on Sunday 29 November at **sueryder.org/RememberThames**, email **thamesvalley.fundraising@sueryder.org** or call **0118 9550 433**. If you are unable to attend the event, you can still celebrate the memory of someone special to you by adding a message, photo or precious memory to our Dedication Wall via **sueryder.org/celebrate**

Explore our free bereavement advice, information and support by searching for Sue Ryder Grief Support.

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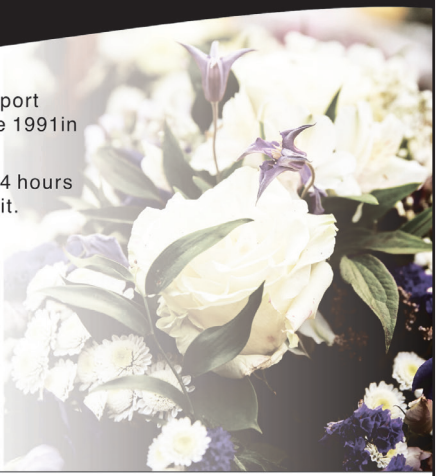
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THE BENSON WI



In September, we were very saddened to hear of the death of Pat Betterton, one of our longest serving members. Pat was a very active member of our WI, always ready to help, and a very dear friend who will be missed very much. We pass on our sincere condolences to her family.

September saw us hold the first meeting of our new Book Club, celebrate 111 years of the WI on WI Day with tea and cake (what else!) and, for a couple of our members, a day enjoying a 'Taste of Persia' in the Parish Hall along with 150 Oxfordshire members. For our main meeting, we were away again from our normal venue. This time, following an invitation from George King the Customer Relations Manager, we met at the Benson House Care Home in Churchfield Lane.

For a bit of WI business and a 'Hello' to another new member, we gathered in the Chalgrove Lounge where we were welcomed by George who gave us an update on forthcoming activities including a Parkinsons Café starting on the 1st Friday of the month and a regular Cinema Club, all open to the local community. Our afternoon moved to the residents dining room where we enjoyed a demonstration by Nadia, one of the in-house chefs. Nadia originally from Ukraine, has been in the UK for the last 3 years; she was introduced and assisted by Lauren the Benson House Wellbeing Co-Ordinator. Nadia made and decorated a Red Velvet cake and the very tasty result was shared amongst members over tea and coffee. We also heard from Lauren about the various activities for residents including themed meals each month, September being from India. Our members really enjoyed their afternoon and our thanks go to George and all the staff for making us so welcome. Nadia's recipe has been forwarded to members and is available via the Secretary should anybody wish to try it out.

On November 25th at 2pm, we shall be being hands on and creative with Christmas floral arrangements in the Benson Parish Hall. This has been a regular item in our programme for the last few years which members always enjoy. Also in November we shall be laying our annual Poppy wreath at the War Memorial and at the end of the month, we will be participating again in the St Helens Church Christmas Tree Festival. Visitors welcome (£5 please) – details from **bensonwi@oxfordshirewi.co.uk**

PATIENTS PARTICIPATION GROUP

Making Your Voice Heard: Playing A Part In Your Future Care

Action, not Words: We all know how easy it is to have a good old moan about things that we feel could be done better. More satisfying momentarily, but in the longer term, it does nothing. Equally we can be cynical about filling in the multifarious feedback requests which land endlessly in our email boxes. Do you fill them it? Where do they go? Are they even seen by a human being?

Astonishingly, every day, millions of people share their views informally about medical and social care through complaints, compliments, ratings, social media, community activities and conversations with staff. If carefully collected, it could make meaningful improvements in services, helping to ensure that care is responsive to people's needs and priorities.

Continued opposite...

PATIENTS PARTICIPATION GROUP (CONT.)

While The King's Fund is working to design a future national system of collecting patient, user and carer to make it more meaningful and less of a burden for patients, there are already many ways of contributing your voice. A quick google search will throw up a plethora of questionnaires and requests for volunteers to participate.

A National Care Service: The Big Conversation is a project launched by Baroness Casey, a highly experienced, independent adviser. She is asking questions about how adult social care should work and encouraging input from as many different people as possible.

She has stated: *"Social care affects every family in this country: whether we need care ourselves, care for someone we love, work in care, or pay for it through our taxes."*

So, between now and April 2027, The Big Conversation will give people across England the opportunity to say what they want and expect from a future National Care Service, asking tough questions in the context of what she describes as a "broken" adult social care system. Who should be supported? What should families reasonably be expected to do? and should the country pay for care in a fair and sustainable way? She is clear that at the heart of reform is building public understanding and consent.

Ipsos, an independent research organisation, will play an important part in The Big Conversation. Questions will cover the values and principles we should all expect in a care system, who should be eligible for support, how care should be funded and how reform should be delivered.

Make your voice heard when the forthcoming second phase launches. Complete a very simple multiple-choice questionnaire – it only takes a few minutes - through a new online platform. If we are fortunate to live reasonably long lives, we will probably all need more medical or social care in our later years. Wouldn't you want to have a say in what that might look like!

WANTED

Voluntary Manager for Wallingford Emergency Food Bank

Would you like to use your experience in a worthwhile local charity?

We are a registered charity operating a food bank based 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 committed volunteers.

We are seeking a dedicated and proactive Manager to lead Wallingford Emergency Food Bank. Currently about 8-10 flexible hours per week.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES: 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 and collaboration:** Maintain the flow of information with the local community; 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.

Continued overleaf...

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HOW TO APPLY

Please write detailing how your skills and experience match the requirements of the role to **manager.wallingfordfoodbank@gmail.com**. Alice Penney is happy to have a chat with anyone interested before they apply. Contact her at the same email address. We intend to interview in late November 2026. The new manager should ideally be able to start in the role at the beginning of February 2027.

BENSON TREFOIL GUILD

In September we welcomed Di Chesterman, Chair of Sustainable Didcot to talk to us about sustainability. She talked about what sustainability means to us in everyday life. How everyone can play a part in lessening mankind's overall impact on our planet by considering what we buy, why we buy it, what we throw away and what happens to it when we are finished with it and how we use energy. We talked about the need to reduce what we consume and the need to reuse or recycle things instead of just throwing them away. Di explained what Sustainable Didcot does to help people make better decisions where waste, energy usage and recycling are concerned.

We learned about Clothing Swishes where we can exchange things we don't wear for worn but still serviceable items that give our wardrobe a new look at no cost and less waste going to landfill. Similarly, there are regular craft swaps where we can exchange craft materials that are surplus to our stash so that others can benefit from using them. Then there is the monthly Repair Café where a team of skilled repairers can take damaged or non-functioning items and turn them back into useable and service tools and appliances with years more use and wear left in them. To back up the Repair Café there is a Library of Things where you can borrow instead of buy something you might need for a one-off use. Library of Things has everything you need from crockery and bunting to a wide range of baking paraphernalia and cake stands.

Sustainable Didcot holds weekly Skills and Chill sessions with varied themes around sustainable skills and living and Craftivism sessions where like minded people get together to craft and pass their knowledge on to others. A new venture is the Wednesday evening Didcot Food Rescue, left-over food from local supermarkets is available at no cost for anyone who can use it. The service is open to everyone and anyone without referral and is advertised on the evening on Sustainable Didcot's Facebook page.

Continued opposite...

If you would like to join the Guild, we meet on the third Tuesday of every month at the Millstream at 2pm. If you would like to know more about Membership please go to our website **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.

Sustainable Didcot. The Green Hub – SoHA building in Lydall's Road, Didcot, rear of the building, last car park entrance. **sites.google.com/site/sustainabledidcot/**

email: **sustainabledidcot@gmail.com** Find us on Facebook. Library of Things **sustainabledidcot.lend-engine-app.com/**

Helen Horton

THE BENSON SHED



Having received many generous donations of tools and equipment — more than we could use ourselves — **BenShed** has donated some surplus items to Tools with a Mission (TWAM). This UK charity checks and refurbishes donated tools, then packs them into trade kits for skills such as carpentry, mechanics and tailoring. The kits are sent to organisations, largely in Africa, where people can learn a trade and gain the practical tools to help themselves and their communities.

The tools can provide much more than practical training. Where possible, they are gifted to trainees after their courses, enabling them to earn a reliable income, start a business and pass valuable skills on to others. Learning a trade can offer a sustainable route out of poverty, while training also brings knowledge, friendship and support to people who may be living in difficult or isolating circumstances.

There is an environmental benefit too. By giving unwanted tools a new life rather than sending them to landfill, we help reduce waste and carbon emissions. It's heartwarming to know that the generosity shown to BenShed can reach far beyond Benson, putting surplus tools to good use in communities across Africa.

Closer to home, we're now open Saturday mornings (10–1), as well as Monday and Wednesday afternoons (2–5) and Friday mornings (10–1). We're also gradually adding activities to reflect members' interests. A sewing hub is taking shape in the Shed on Fridays from 10 am to midday; whether you'd like to join in or simply "chat sewing", you're very welcome to join us.

We're also planning a mosaic to be displayed outside the Shed, with work expected to begin soon on Saturday mornings. Before then, we're busy making Christmas decorations and other items to sell at our Christmas Concert in the Benson Parish Hall, Sunnyside on Saturday 12th December. Tickets for the concert cost £10 for adults, with free entry for children under 16, and are available from Derry's Den, Chapel Lane Hairdressers and **benshed.org.uk** the BenShed website.

Don't miss the Christmas Tree Festival taking place at St Helen's Church from 27th–30th November. Paul in the Shed is making our tree, so it will be a little different from previous years. We will also be displaying various items made by Shed members.

Benson Community Shed, 18 Oxford Road, Benson OX10 6LX

A FANTASTIC DAY OF WALKING TENNIS!

Sixteen enthusiastic Walking Tennis players, eight ladies and eight gentlemen, recently took to the courts for a closely fought Mixed Doubles Challenge.

The format was a little different from usual. Every gentleman played with every lady, with each player keeping their own individual score based on the games they won with their eight different partners. At the end of the competition, the player with the highest overall score was crowned Champion.

And what a worthy one! Carol Phillips took the prestigious title and was absolutely thrilled with her win. She has become completely "obsessed with tennis", having never played before, and is now at the courts at every opportunity!

There was also a closely fought Mixed Partnership Challenge. Carol Phillips and Kim Rawlinson (Portcullis) took on Steve Gothard and Peta Bowyer (Benson) in the final, with Carol and Kim emerging victorious.

Geoff Allen produced the Gentlemen's Shot of the Competition, demonstrating some impressive racket skills. The Ladies' Shot of the Match went to Jenny Jones, who's perfectly executed down-the-line shot left her opponent with absolutely no chance of a return!

A huge thank you goes to No. 25 for generously donating a voucher for coffee and cake, and to The Waterfront Café for providing a fabulous lunch for two as prizes.

The runners-up prizes were purchased from the entry fees, with all proceeds remaining after expenses being donated to The Accessible Boat Club, which provides enjoyable river trips for people with mobility issues.

A brilliant day of tennis, and a great way to showcase just how much Walking Tennis has to offer!

WALLINGFORD PHOTOGRAPHIC CLUB

The Club's new season is up and running, exploring diverse topics on camera and phone photography, feedback on members' photos, and guest speakers. Come meet us Thursdays from 7:30pm at Crowmarsh Pavilion (occasional events online).

November kicks off with a very seasonal practical evening where we will be going to see (and of course photograph) fireworks on Guy Fawkes Night! Venue TBC. This is quickly followed by our first club day out of the season, on Saturday 7th, which is also 'venue to be decided'; check the website for details as it's also a good opportunity to come along and meet club members in an external environment and you can come and go as you please. Past visits have included Paddington Basin, Bath, Bristol, and Didcot Railway Centre.

On the 12th we have a joint evening of a light-hearted competition with Abingdon Camera Club. On the 19th we will be sharing photos and discussions on 'long exposure photography', which will no doubt feature plenty of fireworks and bonfire shots. Our first 'set subject' competition of the season follows on the 26th with the interesting and versatile brief of 'reflections'. Into December we have an online talk about drone photography from Alison Jenkins (3rd Dec) and a practical evening on 10th likely to cover macro photography, focus stacking, and possibly other topics like flash photography. We finish with a social on 17th ahead of the Christmas and New Year break.

WILD OXFORDSHIRE

HOW TO SPOT, HELP, AND RECORD INSECTS OVER WINTER

When the weather turns cold, it might seem as though most wildlife has disappeared until spring. But if you take a closer look, you'll find that plenty of insects and other creepy crawlies are still around.

Ladybirds often spend the winter sheltering together in places such as conifers, old seedheads, and hollow plant stems, clustering together to stay warm. Various species can also be found on ivy, such as the 7-spot, 22-spot, and harlequin ladybird.

Bees have different ways of getting through the colder season. On milder days, you might spot buff-tailed bumblebees out and about, and bumblebee queens may emerge from hibernation during these mild spells. Honeybee queens usually stay inside their hives for the winter, only venturing out on particularly sunny days, while solitary bees leave their nests when they are ready to mate. For any bee active in winter, finding nectar is vital, as there is a real risk of starvation if food is scarce.

One of the simplest ways to help is by growing plants that flower during the colder months. Single-flowered **hellebores** are particularly useful because their open blooms make pollen and nectar easy to reach. **Crocuses** are another good choice, especially when planted in a sunny position where the flowers can fully open. **Snowdrops** and **aconites** also provide valuable food, **ivy** offers both shelter and a late nectar source.

To find out more, visit our website at **wildoxfordshire.org.uk/guidance/helping-nature-on-your-patch** for guidance on helping pollinators on your patch.

BANG

Volunteers Use Traditional Techniques at Warwick Spinney and Millbrook Mead

BANG volunteers have been busy restoring two of Benson's nature-rich green spaces, using traditional scything and good old-fashioned teamwork to prepare them for next spring. Over three weekends in September, teams gathered at Warwick Spinney and Millbrook Mead to cut back long grass and wildflowers before raking up the cuttings and wheeling them to a compost heap. The work provides a satisfying workout while helping maintain valuable habitats for wildlife. At Warwick Spinney, some long vegetation was deliberately left around the edges to provide shelter for insects over winter.

There are already encouraging signs of success from previous efforts to improve habitat by encouraging wildflowers. Devil's-bit Scabious, grown and planted by Tom Stevenson at Warwick Spinney entrance, was covered in Common Carder Bees. Yellow Rattle is also thriving, suppressing vigorous grasses and allowing other wildflowers to flourish.

A big thankyou to all the volunteers whose efforts have prepared these precious green spaces for a flower-rich spring! A lot of planning is taking place behind the scenes to provide our communities with interesting talks, events and volunteering opportunities in 2027. These include:

November (date tbc) Hedge planting at Cuckoo Pen 1st December, 7.30pm
BANG AGM Millstream Day Centre

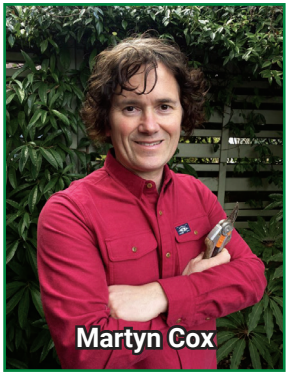
Please join us for our AGM to find out more about our activities in 2026 and our plans for 2027. We welcome your feedback and ideas.

BENSON GARDEN CLUB

The Club's talk on 1st October was given by Gillian Taylor on 'More Colour, Less Work – Fact or Fiction?'. The premise of Gillian's talk was that gardening doesn't need to be hard work. Lots of shortcuts are available to reduce the amount of work needed yet still allow for a garden that provides beauty, colour and structure. One example is that Gillian plants her tulips in her borders rather than in pots. By planting them at a depth equal to three times the length of the bulb, they should flower in future years as well; far less time-consuming and wasteful than planting them for one season in a pot and then throwing them away! If you do want some container planting, select big pots that can retain moisture so you don't have to water them so often and choose plants for them which in combination will provide all year interest.

Gillian also advised us to think carefully about our choice of plants when it comes to maintenance; selecting those that only require one or two garden visits a year can be a great time-saver. As an example, she suggested selecting plants which are self-supporting rather than those which require continual staking. For this, Cephalaria gigantea and Phlomis russeliana were recommended and they also provide interest across the seasons. When it comes to roses, Gillian recommended choosing robust ones – Mermaid was suggested as a climber with repeat flowering suitable for a north facing wall. For a choice of shrub for a sunny aspect, Potentilla fruticosa was highly recommended, flowering over a long period and requiring minimal care.

Gillian's main point was that her practices and planting choices meant she didn't have to spend endless hours gardening but still had a beautiful, colourful garden that was full of interest all year round. This gives her more time for tea and scones and less need for arduous weeding! By the end of the talk, we were encouraged that with selective planting and changing our gardening practices we too could realise this aim.



On Thursday 5th November the Club will have Martyn Cox coming to speak on 'The Hidden World of Fruit'. His topic covers the myths, legends, lore and secret history of a wide range of fruit, including strawberries, figs, pears, grapes, apples and gooseberries. Martyn is a qualified horticulturist and experienced garden communicator. He has written for many newspapers and gardening magazines, along with lifestyle, customer and trade titles. Over the years he has written columns in Sainsbury's Magazine, Saga Magazine and Grand Designs Magazine, and was gardening columnist with The Mail on Sunday for 17 years. Television appearances include Channel 4's SuperScrimpers. His books include The Veg Growers' Almanac, The Gardener's Yearbook and RHS Plants in Pots. He answers questions on BBC local radio and was named garden journalist of the year twice (2016 and 2022) in the Property Press Awards. Martyn's talk is £5 for visitors, £2 for members – just turn up on the door, no need to book. It's at our usual venue, Benson Parish Hall, OX10 6LZ. Doors open at 7.15pm for a 7.45pm start.

More 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**

Liz Harrison

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