

The Four Parishes News Magazine

BECKLEY
FOREST HILL
HORTON-cum-STUDLEY
STANTON St JOHN



Early morning on Otmoor, 2019

February 2022

The editor writes:



Since this is the first issue of our magazine in 2022, I would like to take the opportunity to wish everyone a 'Happy (and Healthy) New Year'! It feels like a very long time since last November, when I wrote my introduction to the previous issue, and many of us have been on a bit of a roller-coaster since then, thanks to the astonishingly rapid spread of the

Omicron variant of Covid-19.

As I write, we do appear to be moving back towards 'normality' once again but it still feels quite fragile and we all need to be vigilant and to continue to look out for each other. However, as the days lengthen and things start growing again, it is a bit easier to be optimistic about the future, especially for those of us who are lucky enough to live in the countryside.

If you have any comments or suggestions about the magazine, we would love to hear from you. Please don't forget that when you have lost your magazine in a pile of other papers, you can still read it online at <https://www.fourparishes.org.uk/magazine!>

Julia Stutfield

All contributions to this magazine are the sole responsibility of the author and do not imply or represent any official editorial view or endorsement.

Our cover photo ...

was taken by Elsie Barker just after sunrise in early Spring 2019.

If you have taken a photo which you think might be suitable for the cover of the next magazine, please email it to

4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com

**Benefice of Beckley, Forest Hill with Shotover,
Horton-cum-Studley and Stanton St John**

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The closing date for the Mar 2022 issue is 15 Feb 2022

The Four Parishes News Magazine is produced under the auspices of our four village churches for the benefit of the whole community. It is funded by advertising revenue, which is used to cover the printing costs.

We are dependent on volunteers to assemble the content, book and invoice the advertisers, compile and edit the magazine, collect it from the printers and distribute it throughout the four parishes. If you are interested in getting involved, please email Julia at 4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com.

Recent issues of the magazine are available to view online at www.fourparishes.org.uk/magazine

Editor: Julia Stutfield

**Assistant Editors: Jonathan Barker
Anthea Beresford**

The Four Parishes News Magazine has 10 issues per year and is distributed free of charge to approximately 850 addresses in Forest Hill, Horton-cum-Studley, Stanton St John and Beckley.

To advertise in the magazine please email JULIA
adverts.4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com

Church Services in the Four Parishes, February 2022

	St Nicolas, Forest Hill with Shotover	St John the Baptist, Stanton St John	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Beckley	St Barnabas, Horton-cum- Studley
6 February <i>4th Sunday before Lent</i>	11am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	11am Morning Prayer
	4pm St Nicolas Children's Service via Zoom			
	6pm Taizé Service via Zoom			
13 February <i>3rd Sunday before Lent</i>		9.30am Holy Communion	9.30am Morning Prayer	11am Holy Communion
	11am Benefice Zoom Service			
	4pm BCP Choral Evensong at Forest Hill (St Nicolas Consort)			
20 February <i>2nd Sunday before Lent</i>	11am Morning Prayer (BCP)	9.30am Morning Prayer	9.30am Holy Communion (BCP)	11am Morning Prayer
	6pm Iona Service at Beckley			
27 February <i>Sunday next before Lent</i>	10am Holy Communion Benefice Service at Horton-cum-Studley			
	4.30pm Family Church Zoom or outside TBC			
	6pm Church Without Walls Stanton St John Village Hall			

Please contact Anthea anthea@fourparishes.org.uk if you would like an invitation to any of the Zoom services listed above, or to be added to the regular mailing list about church activities in the Four Parishes.

Please check our website <https://www.fourparishes.org.uk/> for any last minutes changes to this list of services.

Services for Young Children and Families in the Four Parishes

St Nicolas Children's Service

This is an exciting new venture for St Nicolas. The service will last less than 30 minutes and people of all ages are welcome, but it will be particularly suitable for pre-school and primary school children and their families. The format includes story telling, with scripts specially written for us by Betty Dye, and songs led by members of the St Nicolas Choir, together with some simple prayers. The January Service took place on Zoom due to Covid restrictions and you will find a video on the Four Parishes Website. Please contact Anthea or Julia Stutfield (07766 103427) for more information.

Messy Church

We were sorry not to be able to hold Messy Church in January due to Covid. Having consulted about when to start meeting in person for children's activities, **we have decided to wait until March to start, but it will be held at 4.30pm on the second Sunday of every month**, and the hope is that we can move it around the village halls, depending on the availability of the halls. The activity will last around an hour. Parents need to accompany their children. There will be a Bible story and some gentle teaching and conversation about the story, a craft activity, music and food. Teas and coffees will be available for parents. We look forward to starting this exciting new venture, to add to the other activities we have for children and families in the benefice. **If you would like to join us on 13 March, please do let Anthea know to ensure we have enough food and craft resources for everyone.**

Family Church

This fabulous family-oriented café church will continue in Horton-cum-Studley Millennium Village Hall. The activity will last around an hour. It is a relaxed and fun worship for the whole family. All are welcome (no matter your level of faith or whether you are coming for the first time). There will be a Bible story and conversation about the story, a craft activity, fun live music, games and supper for the whole family. We hope everyone will have fun, build supportive relationships with each other, learn about Jesus, and gently grow in their faith.

A letter from Anthea

Hi everyone,



Today is a dark, dank January day, but we have been blessed with some beautiful, bright, if rather cold days recently, which I love! As I venture out with Bertie, I need to take especial care to remain upright while I negotiate moss covered, icy paving slabs. This means my eyes are pinned to the ground! On lifting them one day, I was delighted to see catkins emerging from their buds, in the nut tree in my front garden. Yippee! Signs of a new season beginning.

I have loved reading the articles by Susan Burge and Lynn Ebbs, highlighting delights for us to look out for as we begin the new year. It is wonderful to have these reminders of the beauty of nature on our doorsteps, and in our gardens. I have certainly enjoyed the winter flowering jasmine and pansies, and early flowering wallflowers in my garden.



The long, dark winter days can be an especial problem for many, and exacerbated in the current circumstances. A friend however recently observed that January is her favourite month, as its arrival heralds the turning point at the end of the downward slide towards the shortest day, and the beginning of the upward move towards the delights of the longest day. Days are getting perceptively longer. Gardens and wildlife are awakening, birdsong is getting louder.



So, what might help us through dark days? Well, for me, the rhythm of daily morning and evening prayer helps enormously, especially as others join me over Zoom. We might sometimes feel tired or distracted by thoughts about the day ahead or the day that has passed, and may not always feel

in the mood. But as we say the familiar words, as we recite the psalms and familiar liturgy, we are somehow held by the words we say and hear. It is a gentle time.

Sometimes we might be challenged or excited by what we hear. So often I find myself jolted by something that speaks into my current situation. Perhaps a line from a psalm; or a simple reminder during morning prayer to be grateful, when we hear the words 'As we rejoice in the gift of this new day'.

I was chatting to someone the other day, moaning about the wet weather, and he rightly reminded me to be grateful for every day! Whatever the weather! Thank you for that reminder! After all, in all weathers, Bertie and I meet fellow dogwalkers and I have delightful conversations as the dogs enjoy a romp together! What a blessing!

In the Book Group we have been reading a book on the psalms. At times it has been heavy going, but reading the final chapter and afterword, I was brought to tears of joy, as I heard how the psalms had sustained the author throughout their life - through ups and downs - bringing to them words of comfort, hope, confirmation. The author's purpose for the book, was to encourage us to immerse ourselves in the psalms. I have certainly been encouraged to do that - and find reading them in morning and evening prayer of great help and sustenance.

I do not suggest you read the book - but follow its sentiment! Open up the psalms! You might find them to be of great value to you. Do please get in touch if you would like to join the Zoom Morning and Evening Prayer sessions which last half an hour (see the bottom of page 8 for times). They may help sustain you.

Please do get in touch if life is tough and you need someone to talk to. Take great care, keep safe and God bless you and your loved ones.

Anthea



CHURCH MATTERS

All the churches in the benefice are now open daily:

Beckley: 10am-6pm

Forest Hill, Horton-cum-Studley and Stanton St John: 10am-4pm

Covid and our churches

At the time of going to press, the Covid safety regime in our churches remained as detailed below, but we will be reviewing this in light of the recent updated Government guidance, and any updates received from the national Church and the Diocese:

For your peace of mind, you might like to know that we have a number of mitigations in place to make our churches as safe as is possible at the current time. These include:

- using hand sanitiser as we enter the building and during Communion
- wearing face coverings at all times during the service except for those leading or reading
- the doors will be open throughout the service to ensure good ventilation, so please do wrap up warm
- please ensure a negative lateral flow test result before coming
- please stay away if you are feeling unwell
- track and trace

We will be as socially distanced as is possible.

Ongoing midweek activities on Zoom

We are continuing Morning and Evening Prayer and the Benefice Book Group on Zoom as detailed. Please do get in touch with Anthea for invitations if you wish to be included.

	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Morning Prayer at 9am		√		√
Evening Prayer at 6pm	√		√	
Benefice Book Group at 7.30pm			√	

Book Group

The Book Group continues to meet virtually by Zoom on a Thursday evening at 7.30pm to discuss the book they are reading. We will shortly be starting a new book (to be decided at the time of going to press), but if you would like to join the Group, please do get in touch with Anthea. All are welcome.

Advent challenge and beyond

I hope you enjoyed reading through Jeremiah. Having had January off, let's have a go at reading Ezekiel this month. There are 48 chapters to spread over 28 days, so I suggest 2 chapters per weekday and one for each day of the weekends, and that will get us through. Happy reading!

Living in Love and Faith

You might remember seeing an article in the December/January Four Parishes News Magazine about the Church of England course we are planning to run in the Benefice: **Living in Love and Faith**. Hopefully you have seen that we decided to delay the start of the course to **9 March**, by which time we are hoping there will be less risk as we meet together in person. Here is a reminder about the course.

What is this? A quote from the cover of the Living in Love and Faith book: *'Living in Love and Faith sets out to inspire people to think more deeply about what it means to be human and to live in love and faith with one another. It tackles the tough questions and the divisions among Christians about what it means to be holy in a society in which understanding and practices of gender, sexuality and marriage continue to change'*.

We are being encouraged by the Church of England, to engage in local conversations on these issues, so do please think about coming along, and being part of this.

What is involved? You are invited to take part in the **five-week course**, starting on **Wednesday 9 March, at 7.30pm**, with each session lasting **1½ hours**. We will meet from 7.15pm in **Stanton Village Hall**, and there will be tea, coffee and biscuits to encourage conversation!

(continued over)

Living in Love and Faith (continued)

Where can I find more out about this? This link takes you to the Church of England resources produced to aid the conversations.
<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith>.

There is a lot of information for you to browse if you wish to, to learn more about the course and what is involved.

What happens next? Please let Anthea know by **23 February**, if you would like to take part in the course. There is no need to purchase or read the large Living in Love and Faith book, but others who have already undertaken the course suggest that each participant having a copy of the course booklet, priced at £4.99, is helpful (although not essential). Please let Anthea know if you would like a copy of the course booklet.

We are each invited to make our own response to our experience of attending the course, or by engaging with the Living in Love and Faith resources individually. The survey can be found here:
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LLFCourse>. We are also encouraged to report back on the experience of the course as a group.

The course will be facilitated by members of the Four Parishes Benefice ministry team.

Please do get in touch with Anthea if you have any questions, or to let her know by 23 February, if you would like to take part in the course.

2023 Benefice Calendar

Thank you to Kate MacFarlane from Horton-cum-Studley, who has already submitted some lovely photographs for the 2023 calendar. Please get photographing and email your entries in to Julia Stutfield at 4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com by the end of each month from now on and throughout 2022. All the chosen photographs will be credited in the calendar, which will be sold in aid of the churches in the benefice.

The subject can be of your choice, but all photos should be in 'landscape' (not 'portrait') format and of the highest possible quality. The idea is to have a calendar with month appropriate photos throughout the year.

* * * * *

GENERAL

A Village Bus Ride: the Otmoor Flyer from Forest Hill

“The day was fine, at least to begin with, and the bus arrived on time in Forest Hill at 10.30am. We were privileged to have an electric vehicle this time, which was on trial. Verdict: Quiet. We all masked up.

There was some light humour, as usual, around my role, as volunteer service coordinator, as I searched my many coat pockets for my supply of tickets, handled money and completed sales. After we have all settled down, we proceed to Stanton St John to pick up a few more passengers.

The next point of interest is whether the driver opts for the shorter, narrower route, which gives views of two small lakes and farmland, or the longer, wider route which has less bends but more traffic.

We pass the Crematorium (still without a direct bus service from Oxford, for which the reason escapes me), and arrive at Green Road roundabout. Access to this busy junction, well-known to millions of motorists, is controlled by lights (apart from on our bus route), which are programmed for a 7-second hold on all 7 roads joining it, so we can get out. The suburbs are the next stop where most get off, and hardy souls venture into Oxford.

Two hours later, the bus collects the same hardy souls from Broad Street. Our purchases range from general shopping to curios from the Covered Market. The driver always gets a small supply of cakes!

With passengers collected we head back to the villages with a choice of routes: one faster but longer, the other with numerous humps and delays, but with an opportunity to see across Otmoor and a lake which often has birds such as tufted ducks, coots, and swans.

The journeys are generally pleasant, as well as being a good opportunity to acquire and exchange snippets of information about local goings-on. The service is essential to those who use it and we are grateful to all who support it in various different ways.”

Malcolm Leeding

The Otmoor Flyer runs from Forest Hill (10.30am) and Stanton St John (10.40am) on Monday and Thursday & from Horton-cum-Studley (10.30am) and Beckley (10.40am) on Tuesday and Friday. Both services return from Broad Street, Oxford (1.15pm) & Headington (1.30pm). Tokens (tickets) must be ordered in advance from Malcolm Leeding (01865 872034) in Forest Hill, Jill Meyjes in Horton-cum-Studley (01865 351496), the Abingdon Arms (01865 655667) or Stanton Village Shop (01865 351532).

One White Elephant Meets Another

As the last Four Parishes Newsletter went to press in November, Stop the Arc and the Buckinghamshire Environment Action Group (BEAG) were demonstrating outside the annual Ox-Cam Arc developers' meeting in the DoubleTree Hilton Hotel in Milton Keynes. Our website records the various attempts we had made to present our views and/or take part in this developers' meeting, thwarted at every turn, and culminating in the Hotel itself cancelling, with only 8 days' notice, a room booking we had made with it for our own 'Alternatives to the Ox-Cam Arc' Conference on the second day of the bigger meeting <https://www.noexpressway.org/news-updates/2021/12/15/the-elephant-outside-the-room-nellie-adds-weight-to-the-stop-the-arc-campaign>.

What were developers afraid of, we wondered? Our protest outside the meeting venue took the form of Brill's Charles Pither's very large Italian blood donor van (Lupetto) advertising our alternative meeting, with Nellie the Elephant dressed for the occasion and operated by Michael Taylor of Kidlington, with Brill's uncomplaining Carolyn Horden as the 'rear end'.



Our own 'Alternatives' Conference eventually took place in a different venue, and the results can be seen on our website <https://www.noexpressway.org/news-updates/2021/12/17/stop-the-arcs-alternatives-to-the-ox-cam-arc-conference-17th-november-2021>.

Events last November are typical of Ox-Cam Arc plans to date. Much is being discussed behind closed doors and without any dissenting voices; and the 3.7 million people who live within the five Arc counties are totally ignored. It is as if we do not exist, and that our views do not count.

But our Councils are now taking notice and action. In October, South Oxford District Councillors called on the Council leader to write to Michael Gove asking him to pause all Arc plans, at least in part because the Government "is not

openly discussing the plans". Then, in early December, Emily Smith, Leader of the Vale of White Horse District Council, told her officers to pause all their Ox-Cam Arc work, following a cancelled meeting with the Ministerial Arc team. It seems that Minister Gove's Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities might be taking its new name seriously.

David Rogers

Situations Vacant

JOB VACANCY FOR A PARISH CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER - 8 HRS PER WEEK

for FOREST HILL WITH SHOTOVER PARISH COUNCIL

To carry out the administrative and clerical functions of the Parish Council and manage the Council's accounts and financial records.

Training is available on specific aspects of the role.

The hours are flexible and mainly working from home with the need to attend an evening meeting approximately every 6 weeks.

Candidates should have good organisational and communication skills (oral and written), be competent in IT including working with documents and spreadsheets and have experience with financial data.

For further details and a job description or to arrange an informal chat please contact the current Clerk.

Email: theclerk@foresthillwithshotover-pc.org.uk or tel: 0844 884 3328

Would you like a job for 1-3 days a week?

Companion/home help for Grandad with early dementia in Beckley

Flexible working (could fit with school day/term time)

Need to be able to drive and have car

Please contact Emma for more information

Mobile: 07967 640446

Email: emmacfergusson@hotmail.com

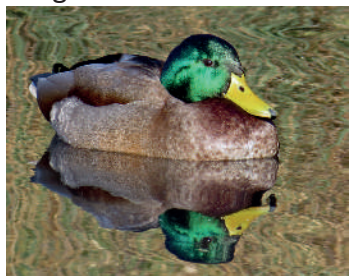
'St Valentine's Day is for the Birds'

by Lyn Ebbs

If, like me you find the modern, commercial trappings of St Valentine's Day rather off-putting, you might like to know that there was an earlier romantic tradition associated with the date. In Geoffrey Chaucer's 14th century poem 'The Parlement of Foules', St Valentine's is the day that Nature convenes a parliament at which the birds will all choose their mates. It looks just as bad-tempered as our parliament in this 18th century painting by Carl Wilhelm de Hamilton. But isn't February a bit early for birds to be thinking of pairing up? If you watch (and listen to) the behaviour of your garden birds or those in the wider countryside you will notice that some of them are already ahead of the game.



Robins, the subject of last month's article, have been singing all winter but you may notice a decline in their aggression and that they are now going round in pairs. Other birds are adding their tunes - the complex, strident song of the wren and the two-tone 'teacher, teacher' call of the great tit.



You can also pick out great spotted woodpeckers drumming to each other on any suitable tree branch or even a telegraph pole. When you are out and about, take a look at the local rookeries; rooks are one of the earliest species to nest and have been building and repairing their nests since January. On

Otmoor, the ducks have come out of their drab eclipse plumage, and many are paired up, with the drakes displaying in full breeding splendour.

The link between St Valentine and nesting time was formally made by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) 25 years ago when they established National Nest Box Week, which runs from 14 to 21 February. As we lose green and wild spaces, tidy up old barns and insulate modern buildings, birds are losing places to nest. By providing nest boxes in our gardens for breeding birds we can bring wildlife to our doorstep.

Installing human-made nest boxes has a long history, though it wasn't always benign. The first nest boxes seem to have consisted of clay flasks and were used in medieval times in the Netherlands for housing starlings and house sparrows, whose young were then eaten! It wasn't until the 19th century that wooden ones were used to encourage birds to nest for our pleasure and entertainment in watching them.



There are plenty of different boxes available in garden centres and from bird food suppliers these days, but it's worth doing some research into the species that you hope to attract. Do they prefer a nest box with an open front or one with a small entrance; if it is the latter, what size entrance hole? Make sure that the box is sturdy enough to support a brood of chicks and look for a box that can be opened so that the box can be cleaned out at the end of the breeding season. If you want the full Springwatch experience, there are plenty available now with cameras installed so that you can watch the whole process from nest building to fledging.



You can find plenty of advice on choosing or making your own nest box and where to site them by visiting the 'providing for birds' section of the BTO website (www.bto.org). Perhaps this year, rather than flowers, chocolates or a meal out, your significant other might appreciate a nest box as a present on St Valentine's Day.

Lyn Ebbs has lived in Stanton St John for just over 33 years and has been volunteering at the RSPB Otmoor Reserve at Otmoor Lane, Beckley, since 2009.

Les Galette des Rois

A cake fit for a king! Laura Mermet-Burnet writes of a French tradition she keeps in her corner of the Four Parishes.

Once a year, on Epiphany, most French people jubilantly celebrate the arrival of the three kings at the birth of Jesus, by sharing a Galette des Rois cake with friends and family. This year was no different for our Anglo-French family. Most years, we invite as many friends and family as we can fit into our house to share this traditional cake. Last year, lock-down forced it to be via Zoom (with non-contact delivery of slices). Thankfully this year, we could share a galette in person (albeit in a pared-down celebration with close family).

So what is it all about?

The Galette des Rois, (the cake of the kings) is a tradition in France and francophone countries dating back to the 14th century. On or around 6 January (Epiphany), families or groups of friends gather together to share a frangipane-filled puff pastry cake with a little pottery figurine hidden inside.

There are many variations on the cake and its filling. The different regions of France each have their own special version: some have an apple filling, others are more like a brioche with no filling. Whatever the style, they are always beautiful and delicious cakes, usually prepared by master bakers of French independent pâtisseries in one's local French town or village, and can be seen adorning the bakery windows at the beginning of January, with an accompanying gold crown. My favourite version involves an almond frangipane and crème patissière filling.



It is usually eaten at about 4pm (the traditional French afternoon tea time) and served with sparkling cider.

The tradition is to cut enough slices for the number of guests present, plus one extra - 'la part du pauvre'- (the slice for the poor) to be given to someone in need.

The youngest of the party then hides under the table and calls out the names of the guests (or touches their feet) and the slices are distributed accordingly. The person who finds the figurine in the cake is then crowned King or Queen and given a golden crown to wear for the day! Some say the wearer will have good luck for the rest of the year.

This year, my sister-in-law felt inspired to pop on a hymn ('Three Kings from Persian Lands Afar' by Peter Cornelius) which helped remind us of the real reason behind this delicious tradition - God's wonderful gift of Jesus, given to us all.

Bon appetit!

* * * * *

Schoolreaders
improving literacy • increasing life chances

Volunteers Needed to Listen to Children Read in Primary Schools

The impact of Coronavirus on education meant that thousands of children didn't have the opportunity to practice reading during lockdown.

Estimates suggest that many primary school children have fallen further behind in reading, with the most disadvantaged pupils now 7 months behind their peers. Children who struggle with reading are more likely to live in poverty and be unemployed as adults.

Schoolreaders needs more volunteers in your area to support children's reading in primary schools and help them catch up on their lost education.

No qualifications are needed; just a love of reading; some spare time each week and a willingness to go where the children need you most. The process to become a Schoolreader takes a few weeks, so please apply now so you can be ready to start as soon as it can be arranged.



If you want to make a difference to a child's life, apply to become a Schoolreader:
www.schoolreaders.org or call 01234 924111 for further information.

Registered Charity: 1159157

The Maple Tree children's centre charity

Hello from The Maple Tree!



If you have recently had a baby or have young children at home, we have a place for your children to play and learn and for parents to meet new friends! Did you know that we are open every weekday?

Monday: Messy Mondays at 10-11.30am (drop in)

Tuesday: Story and Rhyme Time at 10-11.30am and Maple Babies at 1-2pm

Wednesday: Cruisers and Crawlers at 10.30-11.30am and Maple Babies at 1-2pm

Thursday: Little Explorers at 10-11.30am and Twinnies at 2-3.30pm

Friday: Social Butterflies at 10-11.30am (drop in)

3rd Saturday in month: Family Fun at 10-11.30am

Village Outreach: The Maple Tree at Forest Hill Village Hall on Thursdays from 11am-12pm (drop in)

Our sessions are bookable through Eventbrite bit.ly/mapletreeeb. There is a suggested donation of £2.50 per family per session.

Ways to volunteer; would you like to enrich your own life by helping young families?

We are in desperate need of volunteers during our sessions; DBS and training provided. All you need is a pair of hands, a willingness to get a bit messy, a couple of spare hours a week and a friendly smile!

Or become a trustee - do you have extra time and experience in grant-writing, accountancy, maintenance, fundraising, teaching or early years? We would love some extra help and have something for people with all sorts of life experience.

We are here to help young families. If you need advice or support, tel: 01865 236700 or 07849 466249.

Email: info@mapletree.org.uk Website: www.mapletree.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheMapleTreeWheatley

Laura Spencer, The Maple Tree Centre Manager

The Maple Tree community charity (registration no. 1174117), supports families with young children from Wheatley and surrounding villages, including Stanton St John, Forest Hill, Horton-cum-Studley and Beckley.

Wheatley Library

It is free to join the library! To apply you will need the following:

- The name of your local library (i.e. Wheatley Library)
- A memorable four-digit PIN (not starting with zero)
- An email address.



Go to <https://libcat.oxfordshire.gov.uk/web/arena/join> to complete your form.

Anyone who lives in the United Kingdom is eligible to join Oxfordshire Libraries. If you are under 16 we will need the name and address of a parent, guardian or carer, and you must obtain your parent or guardian's permission to provide us with your details. By completing the form, you confirm that they have consented to us holding your details in accordance with our data policies.

After applying online, please visit the library to collect your library card. You will need to provide some personal identification such as a driver's licence, passport, or bank card.

Your card number gives you access to our whole range of digital resources, including:

- eBooks
- eAudio
- EMagazines

Please wait until you have collected your library card and permanent borrower number before using eBooks or Reference Online facilities.

If you forget your PIN, you can reset it online and receive an automated reset link via email.

If you are housebound or have a reading impairment, please ask library staff for options that could help provide a better service for you.

Wendy Stanton
(Wheatley library manager) 01865 875267

The library is located on the upper level of the Merry Bells Village Hall.
For opening hours, visit <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/leisure-and-culture/libraries/find-library/wheatley-library>

BECKLEY

Beckley Church

Details of all church services can be found on page 4. Any changes to the published schedule will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Reflecting back on activities in December

For the second time, Christmas services were limited by Covid, but we decided to go ahead with **Carols and Claret on 19 December**, and to hold it outside at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

With The Reverend Hugh Lee presiding, 30 people, including 3 children, came to stand in the churchyard to hear the Christmas message and sing carols. Helen Stradling and Julia Stutfield had organised a small choir to lead the singing, with accompaniment from Nick Lea, who kindly brought his keyboard and was persuaded at the last minute to play it for us.

It was bitterly cold and misty, and silent except for occasional bird sounds, but without candles and organ music there were no distractions, and the essence of the service seemed intensified in the stillness. Afterwards the mince pies and delicious hot mulled wine were particularly welcome!

Very many thanks to Nick Crowley for again preparing the wine, and to Paige and Lisia Newmark for kindly lending their kitchen.

Update on the chancel roof

At last, it is finished!

The scaffolding is down, and no longer marring the view of the beautiful Church.

We are so pleased to have this completed!



Beckley & Stowood Parish Council

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Thursday 3 February 2022 at 8pm in Beckley Village Hall (tbc).

Parish Council information, including agendas and minutes, is available on the website www.beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk. The Clerk's email address is clerk@beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk if you wish to contact the Parish Council to raise a question for the next meeting.

The Annual Open Parish Meeting will be held on Thursday 19 May 2022 at 7pm at Beckley Village Hall (tbc).

Beckley Village Hall

For information, please see www.beckleyvillagehall.org and to enquire about a booking please contact the Booking Secretary at booking@beckleyvillagehall.org.

Local Bus Services Reminder

The Otmoor Flyer

Travel to Headington and Oxford from Horton-cum-Studley (10.30am) and Beckley (10.40am) on Tuesday and Friday, returning from Broad Street, Oxford (1.15pm) & Headington (1.30pm): only £15 for 10 journeys. Tokens (tickets) must be ordered in advance from Jill Meyjes in Horton-cum-Studley (01865 351496), the Abingdon Arms (01865 655667), or Stanton Village Shop (01865 351532).

Although no longer obligatory please wear a mask on board.

The Otmoor Flyer also serves **Forest Hill and Stanton St John on Monday and Thursday.** For further information, see page 11.

H5 Bus

The H5 bus is run by Stagecoach from Bicester, **through Islip, along B4027, the Bayswater Road, through Barton Park to the John Radcliffe Hospital and Headington shops and back.** It runs every hour starting at 6am in Bicester and 7am at the JR and runs until after 7pm, Monday to Saturday.

New bus stops have been installed near New Inn Farm on B4027 (Forest Hill to Islip road) near its junction with New Inn Road.

Beckley and Area Community Benefit Society
Open Share Offer - a new initiative from the BACBS Management
Committee. <https://bacbs.org/openshareoffer>



Beckley and Area Community Benefit Society will shortly be inviting new and existing shareholders to help fund new projects and to rebuild our reserves via a new open share offer. Our funds have been, and continue to be, depleted by reason of the pandemic and are needed to fund ongoing maintenance and improvement works on the pub building, as well as to enable existing shareholders to redeem (i.e. withdraw) some of their shares if they wish, as permitted within our Rules.

As a listed building in a conservation area, building works tend to be particularly expensive. Some of the more urgent of these are:

- Wheelchair access to the garden terraces - now completed with some help from grants, outstanding amount needs funding and some further additions planned
- Refurbishment of the pub's staff living accommodation - bathroom needs refurbishing, and urgent need for redecoration; particularly important given universal problems with staff recruitment and retention in hospitality
- Replacement of the pub windows with double glazing. Because it's a listed building we need bespoke wooden window frames in keeping with the original style
- Replacement of decrepit boundary fencing
- Ongoing repairs are always needed.

More than a Pub program. <https://bacbs.org/events>

We suggest that for the foreseeable future people attending events in The Abingdon Arms consider taking a lateral flow test before they come, particularly if any relevant symptoms.

Pub quiz

7.30 pm on the first Wednesday of the month in the bar at The Abingdon Arms. No need to book - just turn up.

Community Walks

These usually take place on the third Sunday of the month.

Talks

Sunday 27 February, 6.30pm. Paul Newton: *Public health research, life, and culture in the little-known country of Laos.*

Paul is a Professor of Tropical Medicine at the University of Oxford, and resident of Beckley (<https://www.tropicalmedicine.ox.ac.uk/team/paul-newton>). He worked in the fascinating country of Laos from 1999 to 2019, with hugely welcoming Lao colleagues, building a research unit within the Ministry of Health of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, or Laos. There was little evidence as to which infectious diseases were present and how they should be diagnosed and managed in the Lao context. Together, Paul and his colleagues collected evidence and trained health workers, building a research unit to inform Lao health policy and implementation. He travelled widely and explored the captivating culture and archaeology of the country.

Sunday 27 March, 6.30pm D.A. Holdsworth: *Writing political satire*

D.A. Holdsworth (a Beckley resident) will talk about his two debut novels, both published during the pandemic and both political satires. The first of them, *How to Buy a Planet*, was the culmination of a twenty-year journey. Dom will pull highlights from this journey, including the strange coincidence of completing a novel in 2019 about a global pandemic and a global debt crisis. He will also talk about his experience of self-publishing these books on Amazon.

FOREST HILL

News from St Nicolas Church

Details of all church services can be found on page 4. Any changes to the published schedule will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Reflecting back on activities in December

We would like to say a huge thank you to all who helped with the Christmas festivities: to those who cleaned and decorated the Church, planned, officiated at and took part in services, organised and led community activities, planned, rehearsed and provided music, all in the shadow of the oncoming threat from the new Omicron variant of Covid-19. Despite all the uncertainty, and need to change plans, everything went extremely well, and we shared the good news of the birth of Jesus.

St Nicolas Day celebrations on 5 December were well attended and we had fun together. The service was preceded by a workshop in the Village Hall to make Christingles. A huge thank you to Naomi Hinks for planning and running this. On arrival in the church, people were offered a paper shoe in a choice of sizes and colours (to eventually be filled with a chocolate coin) and the service included a short play by Betty Dye telling a story about St Nicolas which was acted out for us by the Massey family from Forest Hill, complete with props and costumes! A huge thank you to everyone involved, including the makers of these delightful shoes, and members of the St Nicolas Choir who helped everyone to learn a new 'Christingle Song'. If you are wondering what we are talking about, put the first Sunday of December in your diary now and come and join us this year! We are now on the look out for more budding actors and actresses for our new Children's Services later on in 2022 (see page 5).



By the time of our **Advent Carol Service** on 12 December, increasing anxiety about Omicron meant that we had to make a last minute decision to remove the choir carols and restrict ourselves to congregational singing, with everyone masked throughout. This was really disappointing for the choir, but everyone understood the reason for the decision and the service was still very moving. We hope to repeat it in full this year.

Our **Traditional Nine Lessons & Carols** was equally threatened by Omicron but we decided to use a booking system to severely restrict numbers, which enabled us to hold this iconic service in the most Covid-safe way possible.

Plans for **Village Carols** on 23 December had to be changed because the brass band had Covid, so we met (socially distanced) outside the Village Hall to sing along to our 'lockdown recordings' of carols, listen to poetry and readings about the Christmas Story, and enjoy some nice warming drink, with mince pies kindly provided by Val Keston-Hole. Thank you to James Skinner for helping with last minute arrangements. **Between this event and the Christingle, we raised £128 for The Children's Society.**

Sunday 2 January saw our first **Children's Service** for many years. It was held via Zoom, and people enjoyed it very much. Thank you to all those who made this possible, and to all those who came along. Parents told us that it felt less stressful than being in Church, because the children could make a noise and wander around - although this would be fine in the service in Church too! The February service will also be on Zoom, but we hope to be in Church in March. Watch this space!

Our new **Epiphany Carol Service on 9 January**, similar to the Advent Service in December, was similarly affected by Covid restrictions, but it did go ahead without the choir items, and we plan to repeat it in full in Jan 2023.

We hope that, in spite of the pandemic, with restrictions lessened this year, some of you were able to meet with family and friends to enjoy the festivities together. We wish you ALL a healthy, peaceful and happy New Year.

Dates in March and beyond: all being well, we are planning at least two **Sunday afternoon/evening concerts** at **St Nicolas during Lent**, ending with a performance of Pergolesi's beautiful 'Stabat Mater' on **Sunday 10 April at 6pm**, followed by drinks in the garden.



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Village hall*

*TUESDAYS
&
WEDNESDAYS
10:30am - 13:30pm*

Forest Hill with Shotover Parish Council

Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations

Are there residents who would like to form a group for organising community events for the village on the long weekend of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee (2 - 5 June)? Please contact the clerk if you would like to be involved and/or have any ideas.

The date of the next meeting is Thursday 3 March at 7pm in Forest Hill Village Hall. Until further notice social distancing rules remain in place for all meetings.

Current agendas and minutes are posted on the notice board outside the Village Hall. Archived agendas and minutes can be found on the website: www.parish-council.com/foresthillwithshotover/index.asp.

You can contact Helen Cross, the Parish Council Clerk, tel: 0844 884 3328, during the hours 9am to 5pm, or email: theclerk@foresthillwithshotover-pc.org.uk.

Village Mailing List

The Forest Hill Events Mailing List, run by James Skinner and Julia Stutfield, is a new way to find out about community activities in Forest Hill.

Please consider signing up via the online form on the new Community Page of the St Nicolas website <https://www.stnicolasforesthill.org/community-events>. The option to unsubscribe will appear at the foot of all email communications and you can email julia.stutfield@gmail.com if you have any questions or concerns.

The Maple Tree at Forest Hill

The Maple Tree baby and toddler group at Forest Hill continues to take place in the Village Hall, **every Thursday from 11am to 12pm** including half-term and school holidays. We keep the hall well ventilated with windows and doors open as much as possible, so please make sure that you and your child are wearing warm clothing if you are thinking of coming along.

There is no need to book, but if you have any questions, please contact Laura Spencer (laura@mapletree.org.uk) or Julia Stutfield (07766 103427).

HORTON-cum-STUDLEY

News from St Barnabas

Details of all church services can be found on page 4. Any changes to the published schedule will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Flower Arrangements

St Barnabas Church is looking for novice/experienced flower arrangers.

If you would be interested in helping with the flowers in our beautiful church, please email Annie Payne: anniefpayne@gmail.com.

Oxford Homeless Project Christmas Hamper Appeal 2021



Thank you for your generous donations for this Appeal.

These were gratefully received, to be distributed in the East Oxford area just before Christmas.

Wildlife Friendly Churchyard

A Bug Hotel is now installed in the churchyard thanks to Imogen, Oliver, Effie, Isla, William and Georgina who did a great job of filling it with leaves, straw, logs, bricks, flowerpots and moss. We are aiming to provide a safe home for frogs, toads, hedgehogs and mice in the ground floor and all sorts of insects in the upper floors.



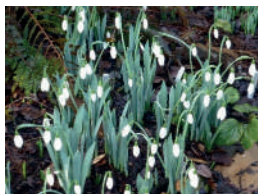
We hope to plan more wildlife activities soon.

Carol Welch

Horton-cum-Studley Gardening Club

What a warm soggy winter and as a result my flower beds are covered in small green weed seedlings and the grass is still growing. Most irritating. The beds will need weeding before I can cover them with a thick blanket of mulch. The scent of winter-flowering plants such as *Lonicera fragrantissima* (Winter-flowering Honeysuckle) *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill', *Chimonanthus praecox* (Winter Sweet) and *Sarcococca hookeriana* (Sweet Box) fill the garden on a warm day. It is worth planting one of these plants near your front door so you can enjoy the scent to the full. The snowdrop season is underway and, as always at this time of year, I am enjoying the early-flowering elegant *Galanthus elwesii* 'Mrs MacNamara' (named for Dylan Thomas's mother-in-law).

Visitors are very welcome to join our meetings on the third Tuesday of the month in the Millennium Village Hall at 8pm. In February, Mandy Bradshaw will speak on "Finding the Angle at Chelsea - a journalist's view of the world-famous flower show". This will be a light-hearted, behind-the-scenes glimpse of what happens on press day. We hope to meet in person in the hall, rather than remotely, but please do check the website for more information: www.horton-cum-studley.org.uk/community/clubs/.



You are most welcome to come and enjoy our snowdrops (but ignore the weeds), just email me to fix a time and may your gardens flourish in 2022! sue.burge@ndm.ox.ac.uk.

Susan Burge, Chairman

Millenium Village Hall

It has been a very quiet few months for the hall, with continued restrictions enforced by Covid and virtually no bookings to provide income. Unfortunately, expenditure continues. The fire extinguishers received their annual check recently and the fire alarm system has its annual check in February. The gales we had in November brought off a tile from the roof. We are extremely grateful to Bob Dingle, who built the hall originally, as he sourced a new tile and then fitted it - a daunting task to some of us as it was high on the roof. As some might say 'where angels fear to tread'! Where does that leave Bob!

Urgent changes are needed to the committee. Elections will be made at the AGM which I hope will be on Thursday 19 May but may be delayed until June. **Nominations for Chairman and Bookings Secretary** should be sent to me (derek.jewell@ndm.ox.ac.uk) with names of a proposer and seconder.

Many of you will have seen the notices reminding dog owners to pick up after their dog. Since Barbara put these in place we have not had any complaints. However, everyone using the field is asked to keep a close watch and report any incidences either to me or to the Parish Clerk.

So, from all the committee we wish everyone a very Happy New Year and very much hope that the hall will soon get back to normal usage.

Derek Jewell, Chairman, MVH committee

Horton-cum-Studley Parish Council news

Oxfordshire County Council is currently consulting on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) which closes on 10 March.

The Local Transport and Connectivity Plan closes on 16 March. These consultations can be completed using the Lets Talk Oxfordshire website: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>.

The Parish has formally applied to be part of the Oxfordshire wide scheme to reduce speed limits through the village from 30mph to 20mph and is waiting to hear from the County Council.

Defibrillator Training

Only one person has responded requesting defibrillator training and therefore this will not take place. As a reminder the only way to use the defibrillator is to dial 999 and the emergency services operator will provide you with a code to unlock the box and talk you through what you need to do, whilst an ambulance is dispatched to you. The defibrillator cannot be used unless you call 999. The defibrillator is checked once per month by the Parish Council and serviced annually, the Parish Council holds a code which allows this checking/servicing to take place, this code is not for use by the general public.

Otmoor Challenge, 11 June 2022

Calling out to all current and future runners or walkers. It is with great pleasure and excitement that we can announce that **on the 11 June 2022, The Otmoor Challenge will go ahead as both a running and walking event.** The committee have decided not to hold an accompanying fete this year to allow us to focus on making the run better than ever. You may notice the date is earlier than normal, this is to ensure there are no clashes with any Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend plans. More details on this event will be published once the committee finalises all the required planning and logistics.

Nick Tribble, Chairman, Otmoor Challenge Committee

* * * * *

STANTON ST JOHN

Stanton Church

Details of all church services can be found on page 4. Any changes to the published schedule will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Reflecting back on activities in December

Village 'kick-off towards Christmas' activities: this was a wonderful weekend of activities, which was kicked off on the Friday evening with Stanton's first Christmas Lights event. A wonderful community event with a very festive atmosphere. The Christmas Tree lights were turned on, there was singing of Carols, hot food and drink were enjoyed, gifts were purchased from the craft fayre, and wonderful prizes won in the raffle.



A huge thank you to ALL who made this possible, but especially to Elaine Warner and Sue Baker for the idea, and for being the driving forces in making it happen. Thanks must also go to the Parish Council for getting behind the vision and bringing our first Christmas tree to the Millennium Green!

(continued on next page)

The Saturday evening saw the **Shotover Singers** singing for us in the Church. It was great to listen and to join in with favourite carols. Our listening was assisted by the supping of lovely warm mulled cider! The Shotover Singers kindly raised funds for the Church, which were matched by a donation from The Gresswell Environmental Trust, for which we are most grateful.

The Sunday afternoon saw an **All-age Advent Carol Service** in Church, which was hugely enjoyed by those there.

Thank you to all who made this a memorable and enjoyable weekend of festivities.

Later in the month we moved the **Carol Service outside, by the Village Christmas Tree**, which, whilst was rather cold, was most enjoyable. It meant we were able to sing without masks, and the beautiful singing of Carols could be heard across the Village. Thank you to all who took part and made this possible.

The Christmas Morning Service was well attended, and it was wonderful to celebrate the birth of Jesus together, despite the continuing difficult circumstances.

Stanton St John WI

We are pleased to continue with face to face meetings. It's been such a pleasure to see everyone in person, after so many Zoom meetings. We are still being cautious about ventilation and hygiene so we hope you feel confident about coming along. This month our speaker will be John Tyler whose subject is "Reading the Countryside". The meeting is on **Tuesday 15 February at 7.30pm in Stanton Village Hall**.

Monthly Village Coffee Mornings - 2nd Wednesday of the month

Come along to the village hall in Stanton St John on the **2nd Wednesday of the month from 10:30am - 12:00pm**. Everyone is welcome. It was lovely to see so many people at January's coffee morning.

Dates for your diary are: **9 February, 7 March** (1st Monday, only in March).

For further details, please contact Sue Baker 01865 351449 or Sarah Coyne 01865 358876.

Sad passing of William (Bill) Ford (1932 – 2021)

Bill sadly passed away on the 17 November 2021, aged 90. He was much loved in the village and will be missed by his family and friends.

Bill lived in Stanton St John all of his life. He was born in 1932 at the



Radcliffe Infirmary and only moved away from the village for his two years of National Service in the RAF. His father Fred had also lived in Stanton St John and his mother Gladys was born in Beckley. During his earlier years Bill lived in Freeland Cottages, then his family moved to Courtfield Road, where he would stay.

In 1954 he married Cleo, who he met and married in Forest Hill Church. They went on to have three boys; Trevor, Andy and David, who in turn gave him and Cleo 6 grandchildren

and 6 great-grandchildren.

Bill worked as a stonemason, and his work can be seen on the church tower in Stanton St John. Within the church there are photos of Bill and his father, Fred, working on the church. Bill also worked on many of the colleges in Oxford during their restoration work. Bill also worked at the Cowley works.

Bill was a keen gardener and cyclist. He would cycle to Headington every day to shop or visit family. Later in life he was always seen around the village walking his dog and was loved within the family for his 'long' walks due to the 'short' cuts he would take! He would always stop for a chat and would often talk about the changes within the village that he loved.

His funeral was held at the crematorium on the 17 December 2021.

'Turn on the lights' Friday 3 Dec 2021

We would like to thank everyone who supported Stanton's first Christmas Lights event.

We have received very positive feedback about it, and hope that everyone who came enjoyed the evening.



Sue Baker and Elaine Warner

Stanton St John Parish Council

Traffic issues in the village

Members of the traffic working party met with a technical officer from OCC's Traffic & Road Safety department in December, together with our County Councillor Tim Bearder, and walked around the village to look at various areas of concern right across the parish. We discussed possible measures to address the key priorities identified in the residents' traffic survey. One of these is speed, and the Parish Council has now submitted an application to OCC for a 20 mph zone to be introduced in the village. The next stage is for survey equipment to be installed at number of locations to gather data over a set period, to ensure the 20 mph zone will cover the most appropriate areas. Proposals will be formulated and presented to the village in due course.

Allotment gates repaired

The vehicle and pedestrian gates to the allotments from Pound Lane have now been repaired, with the costs kindly covered by New College, which owns this piece of land.

Jubilee celebrations - first weekend of June

This summer's long **Platinum Jubilee Weekend, 2-5 June**, seems a great opportunity to share some outdoor celebrations together. Suggestions include a village picnic, displays of bunting, flowers, historic photos and 1950's memorabilia. Some other suggestions for The Big Jubilee Lunch can be seen at www.thebiglunch.com . If you'd like to be involved, whether in a small or large way, please email stantonstjohnpc@gmail.com, or talk to a member of the parish council.

(continued over)

Light pollution

Please be considerate in the use of exterior lighting around your home, and remember that excessive artificial light at night, e.g. from bright exterior uplighters, or security floodlights with a wide area of coverage, can have detrimental effects on wildlife, as well as potentially disturbing neighbours. Information and advice is available from www.gov.uk/guidance/light-pollution.

Local transport and connectivity

Oxfordshire County Council has published a Local Transport & Connectivity Plan, setting out its proposals for achieving a zero carbon network by 2040. A **consultation process is now under way, running from 5 January to 16 March**, inviting residents to comment. Relevant documents and the online survey are available at <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk>, or you can ask for them to be sent in printed form by calling 01865 792422.

Don't be daunted by the scale of the survey - most questions are optional so that you can focus on the ones most relevant to you. As we are all well aware, rural areas such as ours face particular challenges with regard to public transport and active forms of travel such as cycling and walking to key destinations.

Please consider responding to the survey so that our voices are heard!

* * * * *



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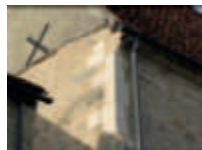
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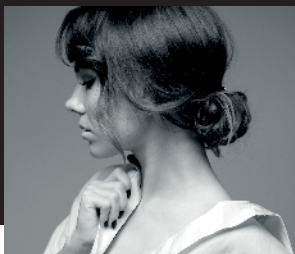
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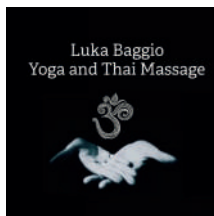
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