The Four Parishes News Magazine

BECKLEY FOREST HILL HORTON-cum-STUDLEY STANTON St JOHN



Prize-winning angel in St Barnabas , Horton-cum-Studley

February 2021

The editor writes:



Looking back at what I wrote for the magazine this time last year, I was amused to see that my biggest problems appear to have been a bit of software trouble and a dodgy laptop. Such innocence! Like most others, I had absolutely no concept of what was lurking round the next corner and would not have believed anyone who could have predicted it.

In the past year our resilience, self-control, courage and resourcefulness have been tested again and again, for some of us much more than others. Those of us who have been lucky so far can only be thankful, and try to do what we can to help those who have been less fortunate.

The contents of this magazine reflect the impossibility of planning at the moment. With only a few dates to put in your diary, we hope you will enjoy our new literary venture on page 20, and the recipe which appears on the back cover! Please keep safe and well and don't forget to support our advertisers as much as possible in these difficult times.

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 Carol Welch.

This beautiful little rainbow angel was created by Imogen Ferguson from Horton-cum-Studley, in response to Carol's suggestion that people could make an angel to cheer up St Barnabas Church in the weeks before Christmas.

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

We welcome contributions or notices for future issues. Please send them to:

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The closing date for the Mar 21 issue is 15 Feb 2021

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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 <u>4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com</u>

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

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

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

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Church Services in the Four Parishes, February 2021				
	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
7 Feb	11am Benefice Morning Prayer via Zoom 6pm Taizé via Zoom			
14 Feb	11am Benefice Morning Prayer via Zoom			
	4pm Evensong from the Book of Common Prayer via Zoom			
17 Feb Ash Wednesday	7.30pm Benefice Ash Wednesday Service via Zoom			
21 Feb	11am Benefice Morning Prayer via Zoom 6pm Iona Service via Zoom			om
28 Feb	11am Benefice Morning Prayer via Zoom			
	5pm Family Church via Zoom			

Currently our churches are closed for services with the exception of funerals due to the country being in Lockdown 3, protecting ourselves and the strain on the NHS.

All are welcome to join our 'Zoom' online services. Simply get in touch with Anthea (contact details opposite) to request an invitation.

We are keeping the situation under review, with the next review following government announcements about Lockdown, or at the end of February, whichever is the sooner. We will remain online until Lockdown 3 ends.

Following updating of the Risk Assessments, all the churches in the Benefice are open for private prayer, as follows:

	Sunday	Wednesday
Beckley	10am - 4pm	10am - 4pm
Forest Hill	10am - 4pm	10am - 4pm
Horton-cum-Studley	9am - 4pm	9am - 4pm
Stanton St John	10am - 4pm	10am - 4pm

A letter from Anthea

Hi everyone,



My goodness it's hard at the moment isn't it! I've heard many people say that Lockdown, when it was warm and sunny, and we could sit in our gardens to while away the time, seemed significantly easier - even though it was still tough. I think part of the problem is also that we're Lockdown weary, having struggled through the pandemic for such a time now. And just as we were thinking things should have been

improving, they're as bad as ever - well not quite - keep reading!

A new hot topic of conversation is whether or not you've had the vaccine. I'm pleased to hear that many of the most vulnerable locally have had a least one jab - so light begins to glimmer at the end of the tunnel.

I'm aware people in our community are busy administering the vaccine, which is fantastic. Thank you for all the hard work you're doing. I'm also aware there are many others in our community working tirelessly to keep us safe and well, teaching in many contexts, providing food, entertainment, essential shops, maintenance, refuse collections to name but a few of essentials still going on in our midst. Thank you for all this.

Earlier in the year we weren't battling with the elements to get outside to exercise either, were we. These days I don't seem so much to be walking

Bertie, as slipping and sliding in the mud! I think it's miraculous I've remained upright! Bertie's been loving meeting other dogs while we've been out and about. I think his social life is looking better than mine! There seem to be lots of gorgeous puppies around, as well as older dogs. It's great when we meet dogs happy to run around with him,



as he gets such good exercise, and I get to chat with lovely people, socially distanced, without falling over! That seems like a win-win situation to me!

I can't begin to imagine what it's like for parents trying to work, whether at home or away from home, whilst also home schooling. And then there are the youngsters missing out on school, college, or university experiences, some not knowing how they will be examined as they look towards the next steps in life. And there are those who have finished their studies and are now struggling to find employment. There are probably many others in our community concerned about job security, whereas before the pandemic life was stable and secure. And there's the continuing concern for loved ones that we can't visit and care for as we would under 'normal' circumstances, and the general stress and strains of the situation, that take their toll on us all.

There are plenty of reasons to feel down at the moment. But let's look towards the positives. The days are lengthening. We've just had two

beautiful days of sunshine with no rain - I keep rubbing my eyes to ensure I am not dreaming! The two photos here are proof the sun has appeared in January, when it has not been raining. They were taken on separate days, and they show what a beautiful place we are fortunate to live in, even if times are hard.



As we approach Lent this year, maybe this is a time to be gentle with ourselves. Maybe this year, especially, it might be an idea to 'take something up', rather than 'give something up'. I'm keen on that concept anyway, although appreciate abstinence from things we enjoy can be a good discipline for us too.

There have been Lents when I've given things up: one year alcohol and chocolate at the same time! As you can tell, I did survive, but it was hard! I gave up television one year to give myself time for reading and prayer - I did give myself time off to watch the six-nations though - which is probably cheating!

I don't mean to be flippant here, as of course during Lent we're remembering Jesus' time in the wilderness before his triumphal entry into

Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and journey to the Cross on Good Friday, for us. But we need to get through this pandemic. We could say that we're in the wilderness at the moment. The purpose of our activities in Lent (and Advent), is for us to draw closer to God. Giving something up can be helpful in showing self-control and in focusing our time and attention. It might involve giving something up, for example watching television, so we have time to read the Bible, pray or read devotional books. Maybe this year think about going for a walk if you are able, taking in the beauty of your surroundings, giving thanks to God for His creation and the beautiful places we live. If walking isn't possible for you, perhaps find a comfortable chair with a view of your surroundings, again focusing on God's creation and giving thanks for it, and the beautiful places we live.

Looking after ourselves and looking out for our loved ones is especially important now, perhaps even more so than normally. Please don't take on anything that makes life harder than it already is. Take up something that brings you joy, and God will rejoice with you. God loves you and wants what's best for you, and at this time especially, it's taking care of yourself, being kind to yourself, and spending time with Him in the best way that suits you.

Please do take great care, keep safe and God bless you and your loved ones. Anthea



CHURCH MATTERS

Christmas feedback

The pandemic meant we were unable to celebrate Christmas as we would have wished with our loved ones, and also as Church communities. As with our families, our Church family, Benefice-wide, still did much to celebrate Christmas, bringing some festive cheer and celebrating the birth of Jesus, despite the circumstances.

During December we had Sunday evening activities online which included Looking for the Light, a relaxed evening singing carols, and a Service of Nine Lessons and Carols (repeated another evening in 'traditional' language). For the youngsters we had a relaxed time singing carols, and a Crib Service, both enjoyed by the older amongst us as well! One of the advantages of doing things online, whilst not through choice, was that we were able to sing, which we were not able to do in Church.

With us heading into Tier 4 on Boxing Day, the difficult decision was taken not to have face to face services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, due to the dangers associated with doing so. We did however have a great online celebration on Christmas Morning together.

For news about Christmas-related activities in our villages, please see the individual village pages in the magazine.

Advent challenge and beyond

I had great feedback from people who enjoyed doing my Advent challenge, reading a chapter a day of the Gospel of Luke for the 24 days of December leading to Christmas Eve, so you had the whole Gospel story in your minds as we celebrated the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day. A number of you mentioned you had some questions, so please do let me know them, and we will see if we can answer them together, or conclude they are mysteries of our faith.

As follow-up, I suggested you might like to do 'John for January': reading the Gospel of John (21 chapters) and the three Letters of John (a further 7 chapters). Several people have asked whether we can meet to talk about our experiences, which is a great idea, so I will set up a Zoom catch-up for that: John for January chat: 2 February at 7.30pm for an hour. Please do come along and share your thoughts, comments and questions.

So what next? Well, as the ditty goes, February has but 28 days clear, so on this basis, my challenge is called **February has but 28 days clear: therefore made for Matthew**! My challenge for February is to read a chapter of Matthew a day. If there is interest, we can meet up at the end to talk about our experience.

And do not forget the **Psalm a Day 150 Days** challenge.

Summary of Lockdown 3 Activities

In addition to the regular services listed on page 5 we have the following weekly activities on Zoom during February. The idea is to have a variety of different events for you to join in with if you are at a loose end, but there is no pressure to come every time, or indeed to do any of it. The 'Midweek Elevenses' and 'End of the Week Drinks' are purely social events and a great opportunity to meet old friends and new in an informal setting. Look out for emails with updates on activities and please do ask me for invitations (anthea@fourparishes.org.uk) if you do not already get emails from me.

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning Prayer at 9am	V			V
Evening Prayer at 6pm		V	V	
Midweek Elevenses at 11		V		
End of the Week Drinks at 7pm				V
Lent Book Group (starting 18 February)			V	

Lent Book Group

Why not join me in reading the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2021, Living His Story, by Hannah Steele. **There are six sessions, starting on 18 February for an hour a week at 7.30pm.** I can get the book for you (£7.99 each at the moment) if you let me know. I will email out more information in due course. Please look out for it.

Informal 'Songs of Praise'

People enjoyed getting together for informal carol singing before Christmas, so we thought you might like an informal **'Songs of Praise'** before we go into Lent. Grab a drink to keep you from going hoarse, and join us on **Sunday 14 February at 7.30pm**. In the meantime, let Julia Stutfield know your favourite hymn.

Ash Wednesday

Assuming our Churches are still closed on Ash Wednesday, we will have a **service online via Zoom at 7.30pm.** It will be slightly different to usual as we cannot do 'Ashing' remotely, but we will meet to mark the beginning of Lent together. Look out for an email invitation in February.

Singing for Zoom Services

Volunteers from all over the Four Parishes have been providing music for our regular Zoom Services, recording themselves singing along to a 'Guide Track' at home and sending the result to me for editing and mixing. Since 1 July, we have created 35 hymn/song/carol recordings, and by the time you read this it will probably be more than 40. You will find them at www.stnicolasforesthill.org/zoom-services. Please listen or sing along to them at home, even if it's not something you would normally think of doing: it will lift your spirits and take your mind off the present situation.

29 singers (excluding me) have been involved in one or more recordings. Some are singing for the first time in their adult lives, and I feel really privileged that they have been willing to trust me with their recordings. I am grateful to all the singers, and to the accompanists, particularly Peter Stutfield, who has valiantly recorded all of the traditional hymns for us. Piano parts for the more 'modern' songs have been contributed by Julie Osborne, Emma Fergusson, Julia Slingo and Sue Baker.

Peter Stutfield and Derek Jewell have also been recording voluntaries (short pieces to be played at the beginning and end of each service) on the organs at Forest Hill, Beckley and Horton-cum-Studley. These pieces can be found at the link above and are definitely worth listening to.

If you love singing, even if you have never done anything like this before, it's not too late to join in. Email me at <u>julia.stutfield@gmail.com</u> and I will be happy to tell you more about it.

GENERAL

This month, in addition to the return of "Knowing our Neighbours" (page 18), we are featuring a short story by Malcolm Leeding from Forest Hill. (page 20). Writing a short story was Malcolm's idea and we're so pleased with it we'd like to publish more short stories or poems, so if you feel tempted to write something or already have something in a bottom drawer we'd be delighted to consider it for the magazine. Likewise, if there's a local or national issue you want to get off your chest we're still looking for articles for our "Have Your Say" section.

Our email address is: <u>4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com.</u>

Face Masks

A big "Thank You" to everyone who has bought a fabric mask from Stanton



Village Shop over the last few months.

We have raised £1000 so far which has been divided equally between the Stanton Church Repair Fund and the Disasters Emergency Committee Coronavirus Appeal.

Thank you also to Kate Macfarlane and Rowan Reavley for their help. Catherine Rye

New Bus Services

We have been notified of the following bus services which might be of interest to some residents of he Four Parishes:

Oxford Bus Company Service 46 - hourly (from around 8am to 6pm) from Wheatley (adj Asda) via the Plough and Littleworth to Cowley Templars Square <u>https://bustimes.org/services/46-cowley-templars-square-to-wheatley-the-plough</u>.

Stagecoach Service H5 - hourly (from around 6am to 8pm) from Bicester via Islip to John Radcliffe Hospital. It goes down the Bayswater Rd and stops at Barton, Stowford Farm.

https://www.stagecoachbus.com/promos-and - offers/oxfordshire/bicester-to-jr-hospital.

Save Bayswater Brook Countryside

In case you didn't see the SODC full council meeting on 10 December we are extremely disappointed to say that we lost and the Local Plan was approved.

The voting was 17 for, 7 against and 9 abstentions. Voting by Party was -

- Lib Dems 4-for, 5-against, 4-abstained (Total 13)
- Greens 1-against, 5-abstained (Total 6)
- Con 8-for (Total 9, 1 absent)
- HRG 2-for (Total 3, 1 absent)
- Lab 3-for (Total 3)
- Indep 1-against



All our speakers representing Save Bayswater Brook Countryside urged the councillors not to abstain. The councillors were pressurised, threatened and given biased, incomplete advice on what would happen if they voted against. Now we can hope for a judicial review on the process, possibly from one of the developers of the 'omission sites' or that the legal challenge on Cherwell's Local Plan is successful. If not nearly 2,000 acres (770 hectares) is now being taken out of the Green Belt, including the 278 acres (112 h) at Land north of Bayswater Brook and the potential damage to Sydlings Copse and road chaos will ensue.

We would like to thank Cllr Sarah Gray for her support, her excellent speech, and for voting against this Plan. We are also grateful to all the local residents for their opposition to this Local Plan. Many thousands of people responded to the 2 SODC consultations, and also submitted Hearing Statements to the Examination in Public. It is a pity the Inspector took such little notice of our concerns.

I would also like to thank my colleagues from the other local communities and parishes for all their hard work. We worked very well as a team and worked our socks off on this. We couldn't have done more. They are Barton - Margaret O'Shea and Angela Dickinson; Elsfield - Lisa Buchan and Ollie De Soissons; Forest Hill - Andrew Waite-Brown and Malcolm Leeding; Sandhills - David Adams and Anne-Marie Sweeney; Stanton St John - Andrew Clark and Nikki Mallows and John Walsh and Ginette Camps-Walsh for Beckley and Stowood.

If there is no legal challenge then the next step is Masterplanning. We will be involved in this and it covers a higher level of planning on transport infrastructure and an overview of the development, whereas the planning application which would follow will cover the detail.

It is also likely that Lincoln and New Colleges will try to use the proposed 'Link Road' (ring road and Headington roundabout bypass) continuation from the Bayswater Road to the A40 between Sandhills and Forest Hill to attempt to take



land out of Green Belt for a development between the Bayswater Road and Forest Hill. Their likely target is the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 or the next iteration of the SODC Local Plan. We will need to fight this as well.

At the beginning of January many members of the Save Bayswater Brook Countryside team made personal financial contributions, along with CPRE, the Gresswell Environmental Trust and others to gain a barrister's opinion on a possible legal challenge to the SODC Local Plan on Oxford's 'unmet' housing need calculations. Cherwell Development Watch Alliance are making a legal challenge against Cherwell's Local plan on this basis, but legal opinion said that we didn't have a case against the SODC Local Plan on this issue.

A Community Interest Company - **Bioabundance** - has been formed by some of the members of South Oxfordshire Sustainability (SOS). SOS is a community action group with over 70 members started in 2011 and Bioabundance has become its campaigning arm. Bioabundance has support from Save Bayswater Brook Countryside, save Sydlings and the Bayswater Green Belt and a number of other local organisations opposing the SODC Local Plan.

On Monday 4 January Bioabundance sent SODC a pre-action protocol letter that sets out the grounds for legal action against the soundness of the SODC Local Plan. It awaits a response from the council and the green light from its barrister before applying to the High Court on Wednesday the 20 January 2021. If the court allows its application to go forward, it will seek contributions to fight the case (STOP PRESS: see note below).

Bioabundance also welcomes new members to support its long-term campaign to set up a nature recovery network across the country. For more information contact <u>bioabundance@gmail.com</u> - web site <u>www.bioabundance.org.uk</u> will soon be up and running.

Local parish councils and community groups have just been contacted by Camargue on behalf of Christ Church to carry out consultations with the local community on the Masterplan for LnBB (Land near Bayswater Brook).

Thank you all for your continuing support. May we wish you all a better New Year and hope that we win.

Ginette Camps-Walsh

STOP PRESS

On 21 January Bioabundance CIC filed in the High Court for statutory review of the SODC LOCAL PLAN 2035, on the grounds of climate change, excessive housing numbers, bullying of councillors and inadequate consultation. It is likely to be a few months before we know the outcome. In the meantime fundraising now begins in earnest. A crowdjustice page has been set up asking for pledges <u>https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/southoxonlocalplan/</u> and contributions can be made via <u>bioabundance.org.uk</u>. You will only be charged if the case meets its target of £10,000 by 20 Feb 2021, 6 p.m.

Oxford-Cambridge Expressway Update

NO EXPRESSWAY no expressway.org

The Ox-Cam Expressway in 2021, and the 'one million houses' mystery solved. The Economic Prospectus for the Arc, mentioned in the November magazine, was clearly a pitch for Government funding in the Chancellor's Spending Review in November. In the event, the Chancellor allocated a mere £4 million 'towards its ongoing Oxford-Cambridge Arc programme, building on the government's commitment to accelerate housing and infrastructure delivery', with a further promise of funding for East-West rail between Bicester and Bletchley; small change on the scale of the Prospectus' ambitions. Does this indicate that, in the post-Covid world, the Government is changing its priorities and will now fund those areas in much greater need of regeneration than the South East, one of the richest regions of the country outside London?

In early 2021 we expect two important announcements. First we will have an update on the still-paused Ox-Cam Expressway, and possibly alternative proposals from England's Economic Heartland (EEH) for a series of road improvements across the five Arc counties. Second, we expect a spatial plan for the Arc which should include some indication of the approximate size and location of any major new urban centres the planners have in mind.

Recently NEG has looked again at the origin of the 'one million new houses' figure associated with Ox-Cam Arc development. We have been told numerous times that the figure was worked out by 'careful research' on the 'needs' of the Arc, its people and businesses now and into the future. By reading through many reports, it is now clear that there was no 'careful research' and that at least half a million houses will be dumped on the Arc either for London commuters (approximately 7,000 of the target 30,000 new houses per year) or to make up any shortfall in the Government's overall ambition to build 300,000 houses per year nationwide. It is expected that other communities can't or won't be able to build their share of the houses, so the Arc must have them instead. The one million figure has nothing at all to do with the needs or wants of the communities across the Arc, or even the new businesses that might grow up in it. It's simply so that an arbitrary nationwide target can be met. If you are shocked, amazed or offended by this, join NEG now, to campaign to protect from over-exploitation our communities and natural environments across the Arc.

Wheatley Library

Wheatley library was open for a week before Christmas but sadly, the coronavirus infection rates rose significantly and we had to close our doors again.



As the global population continues to contend with the impact of coronavirus on our lives, the library service, as a whole, is ticking away, doing our best to serve our customers within the national guidelines.

From 4 January national lockdown restrictions mean the following services are available at 14 libraries:

- New click and collect service.
- Reservation service via the online library catalogue or the library app
- Prebooked access to computers
- Returns facility.

The nearest libraries, to our parish, for these services are Cowley, Headington, Kidlington, Oxfordshire County, and Thame.

Residents can also access our extensive online services, providing inspiration, creativity and relaxation. Ebooks and audio, online music library, Pressreader and RBdigital magazines as well as lots of free resources to help with studying at home are all available at the click of a button.

- All loan periods have been extended until April 2021 and you will not incur fines.
- All activities in libraries have been cancelled until further notice.
- Libraries are unable to validate documents during the national lockdown period for applications such as: Blue badge, Bus passes, Residential parking permits
- The Home Library Service remains operational in line with government guidelines.

Keep safe everybody and we look forward to being able to see you in our village library again as soon as possible.

Thanks all, staff and volunteers of Wheatley Library

Wheatley Library, The Merry Bells, High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1XP Telephone:01865 875267

For the most up to date information see the relevant page at <u>www.oxfordshire.gov.uk</u>

"Knowing our neighbours": Nick Mynheer

"I went to Beckley school and I grew up playing on Otmoor", Nick says. "It comes into my work, the landscape, especially the skies".

Nick is an artist, sculptor and designer who first moved to Horton-cum-Studley when he was around 3 months old. Although he moved around Oxfordshire, living in Marsh Gibbon and Enstone after he got married, he has since returned to the village and has lived in Horton for the past 30 years. He currently resides at the bottom of the village where the quiet and proximity to Otmoor provides lots of artistic inspiration.

Nick studied Graphic Design at Hornsey College of Art in London, learning as much about pool and beer as he did about artistic design. After graduating in 1981 Nick applied himself to various advertising roles including painting bands' posters, one of which was called 'Kiss', illustrating early computer games, and painting on race cars. "I painted on the sides of race cars, which was really lucrative when they crashed", he says "Now looking back, they were sort of a moment in history, so I was really glad to do that".

2 years later Nick decided to focus solely on painting and found a niche in his love of Christian iconography, basing his work on stories from the bible



and their broader themes. "I sold through some galleries in London: that got me going and I started getting more and more commissions for the church and religious institutions". Over the years Nick expanded his skills into sculpture and designing stained glass, as well as painting, and his works can now be found across UK, Europe and the US. Works in Oxfordshire include a set of 14 windows installed in Studley Priory, glasswork in St. Nicholas Church in Islip, and sculptures in Iffley and Beckley.

In his work, Nick is most satisfied by the "journey" from raw material to art, which often involves him travelling, sometimes overseas, to see how materials are made and sourced. For example, around 2 years ago, Nick went to Venice to source the glass for a mosaic. The piece took him exactly a year of daily work to finish, but it sometimes takes longer for Nick's art to go from an idea to a finished installation. "I did a set of windows for Abingdon Boys School and that was 8 years from start to finish".

Although his work feature predominantly Christian themes and imagery, Nick doesn't describe himself as a Christian artist. Instead, he focuses on nature and everyday life, through the lens of a Christian context. Due to this, along with his work's representation of historical figures, Nick often carries a huge responsibility. For example, the Studley Priory windows chart the history of the priory from the 1100's, as a convent of St. Mary, to its role in the present day. "My work is an expression of my own faith", he explains. "And for me the most important thing in my work is that there should be a sense of hope".



Nick often finds it difficult to explain exactly why he loves doing what he does but it is clear he has truly found his calling. "I do it because I can't do anything else, I'm just driven to do it", he says. "Its like somebody asking you how you breathe".

An avid cyclist in his spare time, Nick is part of a local cycling club and every year goes to the Pyrenees to watch the Tour De France. He is also a member of Islip Community choir, which he enjoys for its community and low barrier to entry. "I'm seriously bad but I just love singing", he confesses. Finally, he keeps 'Old English Game' chickens and breeds chicks most years, again, much like his work, seeing the hobby as a kind of project.

Due to the time Nick puts into his work, he hasn't been too badly affected by the pandemic as he had outstanding commissions. Through to the start of 2021 he has remained hopeful and positive for the future. Referring to people in creative roles, he says "There seems to be one extreme or the other, either they found that they simply couldn't work, and another artist felt that this has been a time of freedom".

Meanwhile, Nick's near-endless list of designs and commissions are set to keep him occupied for many years to come.

www.mynheer-art.co.uk Robert Macfarlane, Horton-cum-Studley

A Nature Note

A short story by Malcolm Leeding

The weather was very wet (again!). We thought that a short walk would be a good idea. A "parliament" of rooks was assembling in the distance; it is never clear what they discuss; no doubt there are matters of governance. There was that trouble over the empty nest; it was not clear who had used the nest last year, but in previous years one family had always had first refusal, and they believed that gave them the automatic right to decide who should use it if they did not themselves need it. No precedents existed, and even the oldest rooks were unsure. The elders called a parliament and the large oak tree by the wood seemed the best place, with room for spectators and relatives.

Both parties to the dispute had to be present and had been required to agree in advance that they would accept the findings. The presiding rook invited the longstanding occupiers to speak first. They explained that they were looking after a relative in another wood, but this was only temporary and other members would take over next year, at which time they would need a nest for their use.

The younger family then spoke. They had understood that there would always be a space for young families to rear a family. Many of their friends had had the opportunity; why couldn't they? If they had no nest, then they would be at a distinct disadvantage.

The presiding rook said they would need time to consider all the issues but, in the meantime, the empty nest would be guarded at all times and, if any rook was found there, the punishment would be severe. The parliament broke up and most of the birds flew off, some to their nests and others to the feeding grounds.

The judges called a meeting for noon and everyone was expected to be present. The three judges sat in a row with a clerk to record their decision. The parties to the dispute sat in front.

The judges started by reminding everyone of the previous history of the nest; who had built it and when, and who for. This was important and noone could disagree as this was factual. They pointed out that it was policy not to discriminate on grounds of age and, therefore, that discrimination could not be used in this case. Behaviour patterns had been examined over the years, but both families had contributed equally. Clearly, the older pair had had more opportunity and had made the most of their chances. Although they were younger, the other pair had been especially good at finding crops and other food supplies.

Seniority had considerable pedigree as a criterion; this had been rejected in

this case as divisive. If the older birds got all the advantages, the colony as a whole would lose in the long term. On the other hand, older birds who felt ignored could be a disruptive influence.



The presiding judge tapped his desk for silence. He read the following statement: "The judges, having considered all the facts, have decided that, in the longer term interests of the colony, the nest should be allocated to the younger pair. Some arrangements will be made for the older pair so that they will have comfortable accommodation as befits their contribution to the life of the colony in the past."

Before there could be any discussion, the assembly was dismissed, leaving the parties to the dispute alone in the field. After a short pause, they both agreed that the hearing had been conducted in a fair manner and that the result should be accepted. They all flew off into the afternoon sun. We continued our walk and hoped to see other similar events during the afternoon.

Later on, a flock of long-tailed tits were sitting in a tree. They are very colourful and fly very fast between the trees, feeding on insects that they find in the bark. There was also a solitary robin keeping an eye open for any rivals on his territory. At the foot of the tree was a burrow, possibly belonging to a rabbit, although there were no recent signs of occupation. It could be that a squirrel had stored some nuts there for next winter.

There was a rustle in the grass; a small, pointed head appeared and sniffed the air. The weasel had not eaten for a while. He would have to put that right, but would wait a while to avoid too much wet fur.

HORTON-cum-STUDLEY

News from St Barnabas

Services in Church are still unsafe due to Covid-19 but several opportunities to meet for services, prayer or just social catch-ups are available via Zoom each week. Many thanks to Anthea for her efforts to provide these alternative services for us. Anyone wishing to receive information about services or Zoom, please email <u>stbarnabaspcchcs@gmail.com</u>, or ring David Slingo on 07850004700. Information can also be found on <u>www.fourparishes.org.uk</u>.

Meanwhile, the church will be open for silent prayer and contemplation on Sundays and Wednesdays between 9am and 4pm.

Angels in St Barnabas

Thank you to everyone who contributed an angel to St Barnabas to cheer



the church up for Christmas. We had 12 angels arrive in Church in all shapes and sizes. Thank you so much for all of them. The 'winning' angel which made our vicar Anthea smile the most was created by Imogen Ferguson. Imogen had made a beautiful little rainbow angel and received a robin mug in recognition of her creation. Very

well done Imogen. I think this photo (which also appears on the front cover) will make everyone smile.

Carol Welch

Oxford Homeless Project Christmas 2020

Thank you for the terrific response to my request for gifts for the Oxford

Homeless Project hamper Appeal. Thank you for being so generous. They delivered 115 hampers over Christmas to bring some cheer to struggling and homeless individuals in the East Oxford area. One of our neighbours has asked if we can continue to support this charity throughout the year and I will keep you updated.



Carol Welch

Basil Lyster 13.11.1924 - 02.01.2021

It is with sadness that I write of dad's passing but it is fitting that there are a few words written for him as he contributed so much to village life in Horton-cum Studley.

Mum and dad moved to the village in 1964 from Wheatley and quickly became known for their welcoming house and keenness to be involved in all things possible.

Dad's first venture was the annual Horse show, Gymkhana and dog show

held at Old Arngrove Farm courtesy of Marjorie and Wally Phipps from 1965 - 1980. Over 200 horses annually took part with ponies and small children doing races plus the dog show. Often complete chaos particularly as it was the beginning of May and the weather was not always kind and the field got muddy - horse boxes had to be towed off the field - or the opposite - ran out of water as too hot. I have fond memories of painting poles and setting the field out and helping with tents in preparation for the big day.



Then there was The Otmoor Challenge instigated in 1980 I believe - dad was an integral part of the organisation and it was only last year - at 95 - he decided that he should pass his responsibilities over. Mum and I alongside other family members and friends operated the White Elephant stall for many years whilst dad ran around the field ensuring everything was as it should be. Sadly the 40th anniversary was not able to take place last year as a small virus interrupted life but will hopefully continue in some format in the future as it generates not only much needed funds for the village but brings people together in the annual event.



Dad was part of the team that built the New Millennium hall giving the village much improved facility for functions and gatherings. We used it for milestone parties ourselves, dad's 80th and their golden wedding anniversary to name a couple. *(continued over)* The last time was 2018 when we were fortunate enough to hold a celebration for dad when he was awarded *legion d'honour* for his service as a Royal Marine during WW2.

Both Basil and Anneke made life long friends during their time in Horton and many people have passed on kind messages to say how they will both always be remembered as part of the village and how they exemplified what it was and should continue to be to live village life. *Melanie Cantwell*

Horton-cum-Studley Parish Council

With a form of third 'lockdown' upon us, a reminder that villagers can access the support of volunteers from the AddER group (Adding Extra Resilience) to help with such things as shopping, medical appointments, prescriptions or other needs. Covid-19 guidance is followed to ensure the safety of villagers including the volunteers. Details were shown in the November 4PN, although all you need is to email hortonparishcouncilhelp@gmail.com or call 07850 004700.

The January Parish Council was attended by representatives of spbroadway who presented proposed plans for Magnolia Park Golf Course. The plans are still at a pre-application stage, spbroadway will launch a public website. There are still no firm dates for the submission of plans, but this is likely to take 6 months. The new owner of the site (whose identity was not disclosed) is proposing to build a 100-bedroom hotel, new tennis courts, spa facilities including a swimming pool, new golf club house, restaurant, cafe and orangery.

Questions were raised regarding the access of construction vehicles during the construction phase which could last up to 22 months. The proposed route for construction traffic is via Arncott and Ambrosden. Questions were also asked regarding the potential volume of additional traffic which the development could generate. The Parish Council will remain engaged with spbroadway and encourage everyone to voice any concerns once a consultatation starts.

The Parish Council, continues to meet remotely on the second Thursday of every month, if you would like to attend please email the Parish Clerk at <u>hortoncumstudleyparishcouncil@gmail.com</u>.

Millennium Hall Committee

Sadly the hall remains closed in line with government guidance. The electrics are nearly done but a replacement for a ceiling light in the main hall is on order. Last time it took 3 months to come so patience is the name of the game. However, I think Jason is now able to issue a formal certificate for the insurance company although I have not yet received it. The tennis courts are closed but the children's play area is open. Only 1 adult is allowed to accompany the child. I intend to put a sanitiser by the gate into that area so that parents can spray surfaces. The field is also open for dog walking, ball practice and exercise but organised sport is forbidden.

Please let me know if there are any problems you wish me to address. Hopefully we can be back to normal in the Spring. Derek Jewell

Horton-cum-Studley Gardening Club

Winter has arrived with misty frosty mornings and even the odd sprinkling of snow. Frosted plant stems, seed heads and grasses look lovely in the

winter sunshine so it is definitely worth a wander. Now is the time to enjoy winter-flowering plants with scented flowers such as Daphne bhlua 'Jacqueline Postill', Chimonanthus praecox (Winter Sweet) and Sarcococca hookeriana or S. confusa (Sweet Box). The snowdrop season is underway and I am enjoying Galanthus elwesii



'Mrs MacNamara' (named for Dylan Thomas's mother-in-law). Snowdrops, the 'Fair Maids of February', feature in many myths but above all the snowdrop symbolises hope, something we all need at the moment.

Meetings will be held remotely using Zoom at 8pm on the 3rd Tuesday of the month until further notice. My talk "The Winter Garden" is on 16 February; Mary Stuck's talk on 16 March is entitled "The Pen and the More Congenial Trowel: R.D. Blackmore as a Market-Gardener". Please ensure that we have your email details so that you receive the Zoom invitation. New members are very welcome and we are looking for new committee members please. For more information contact me on 01865 351310 or see the website: www.horton-cum-studley.org.uk/community/clubs/

Susan Burge, Chairman

The Otmoor Challenge - Postponement

We had planned to have the 41st Otmoor Challenge on Sat 5 Jun 2021, but, sadly, we are still not able to commit funds and planning to an event that may well be seriously constrained by the Covid pandemic. With our limited funds, we cannot afford to lose money, so the committee has decided to postpone the event until Sep or early Oct 2021, in the hope that the situation will have improved by then. We are very keen to keep the name of the Otmoor Challenge in the programme of events of Horton-cum-Studley, and intend to stage an event under the Otmoor Challenge banner which may include the run, the walk and the fete, or a combination of any of those. Please keep an eye on our website: <u>www.otmoorchallenge.co.uk</u> for updates, but we will, of course, keep the Four Parishes Newsletter fully in touch with our plans.

We would also like to pay tribute to our long-term founder, member and supporter, Basil Lyster, who passed away on 2 January. He and Anneke will be commemorated through the Lyster Cup, which is awarded to the fastest runner in the age 60-plus category. *Andrew Pennington*

Horton-cum-Studley WI

We would like to wish all our members and the village community a happy new year and can only hope for a brighter and better 2021. The current restrictions suggest that we still have a long way to go before any kind of normal socialising can happen. We long for the day when 'social distancing' becomes a forgotten phrase, but for the moment we have to do all we can to keep ourselves and each other safe. Sadly, our WI group has reached a stage where it will no longer be viable to carry on in our current form. We are all of course very sorry that we are in this position but are happy that we were able to have our final village event a year ago when we shared our Centenary celebrations. We are going through a process that will offer us the opportunity to join forces with Stanton St John WI where we can continue our friendship with them and our involvement in the WI organisation. We should be able to report our final outcome in March. In the meantime, as always, please contact the committee via our Secretary, Jane Pennington (01865 358800) or President, Barbara Raleigh (01865 358955) for information or support.

BECKLEY

Beckley Church

Christmas was strange, with no services in church, no Carols and Claret, no Crib Service. But the benefice carol service by Zoom was wonderful, and we did have the Crib and a Christmas tree in the church. Special thanks to Pam Edmonds-Seal who decorated the font beautifully.



At the end of last term, the Craft Group at Beckley School made a beautiful Christmas wreath, which they gave to the church. We put it on the stone book rest above the font. It was such a pleasure to receive it.

The church will again be open for private prayer, on Sundays and Wednesdays, from 11am to 4pm. When you come in, please scan the QR code on the board in the porch, or fill in your name and contact details on the NHS Test and Trace sheet on the table in the church. Please remember to wear a mask (this is a legal requirement), use the hand sanitiser, and keep at least 2 metres away from other people not in your household or 'bubble'

Beckley and Stowood Parish Council

The next PC meeting will be held remotely on **Thursday 4 February 2021 at 8pm** by Conference Call. Parish Council information, including agendas and minutes, is available on the website <u>www.beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk</u>. The Clerk's email address is <u>clerk@beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk</u>.

Households across Oxfordshire will be asked to take part in Census 2021 this spring. The Census, run by the Office for National Statistics, is a once-in-a-decade survey that gives the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales. It has been carried out every ten years since 1801, with the exception of 1941. This year, for the first time, the Census will be digital. All households will receive a letter in early March with a unique access code, allowing them to complete the questionnaire on 21 March on their computers, phones or tablets.

The Otmoor Flyer – The bus service has been suspended since Boxing Day
due to Lockdown.(continued over)

For **Beckley Village Hall**, please see <u>www.beckleyvillagehall.org</u>. To enquire about a booking, contact Stuart Marshall at <u>booking@beckleyvillagehall.org</u>.

Fix My Street: to report a road or street problem please go onto the County Council website at <u>www.fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk</u>.

Reminder from the Parish Council: Please clean up after your dog and dispose of bagged waste and litter in the dual-waste litter bin on the playing field.

Beckley & Area Community Benefit Society More than a Pub program. https://bacbs.org/events

The monthly Sunday evening talks by Zoom continue and have proved popular, with 30-60 people 'zooming' in; often more than could fit in the pub's old barn area. The talks have ranged across many disciplines and we cannot be accused of not being eclectic! This is the current program:

Sunday 7 February, 6.30-7.30pm: *Walls of sure and solid stone* - presented by Dr Tara Stubbs and Jane Haigh. Join us in a discussion about the structure and content of Seamus Heaney's poem 'Scaffolding' in relation to The Abingdon Arms - the building, and the pub's varied interactions with the community it serves and benefits.

Tara and Jane are co-founders of the 'Poetry and Structure' public engagement project run through Oxford University's Department for Continuing Education: <u>https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/about/poetry-andstructure</u>. They ask us to read the poem in advance and think about possible connections with the pub and our 'More than a Pub' events. 'Scaffolding', can be found in Seamus Heaney's collection 'Death of a Naturalist' (Faber, 1966).

Sunday 14 March, 6.30-7.30pm: *Great Horkesley to Eight Ash Green* - an East Anglian rewrite of 'Larkrise to Candleford'. Join Betty Dye (who lives in Beckley) on a journey which takes you from "settin-on-em -up" in August to the turkey stubbing marathon in December, via glass accumulators and the two-seater privy. This is no nostalgic amble down country lanes as she hated, she says, both "setten-on-em -up" and turkey stubbing, but it is an oral history of things you might also remember.

Zoom access details are distributed nearer the time. If you would like to watch previous talks then email<u>info@bacbs.org</u> with your request.

STANTON ST JOHN

Advent Carol Concert

Many thanks to the Shotover Singers for coming to sing in the churchyard on Saturday 12 December. It was a magical event and raised £306 for church funds!







It was lovely to see lots of villagers singing carols, socially distanced round poles lit by fairy lights on the Millennium Green. It was really Christmassy!

A big thank you to everyone who helped either on the day or beforehand! *Sue Baker*

Stanton St John WI

We have managed to keep in contact despite lockdown regulations by use of email and Zoom. A learning curve !

Some lovely surprise Christmas gifts appeared on doorsteps and there was even a Festive Quiz!

We were delighted to have some neighbouring WI members join us for our very first Zoom meeting on 19 January. Stanton resident Jamie Brown regaled us with some fascinating stories of what a Producer really does and some of the characters he has encountered during his career in film and TV production. It was both enlightening and entertaining.

Our next virtual meeting will be on Tuesday 16 February at 7.30pm when we have Jessica Beare (Waste and Recycling Officer) booked to encourage us to do our bit for the planet by recycling "properly". This could be fun as we may have residents from different local authorities asking just where do we put this object?

Do continue to take care and look after yourselves.

Stanton St John Parish Council

Local Democracy : Participation in The Open Forum held before a Parish Council meeting

The Council meets and makes its decisions in public and is committed to community engagement. It therefore warmly invites members of the public, the press, and ward councillors to attend meetings and contribute within the Open Forum. We have continued this practice monthly by Zoom during this difficult time. You can attend meetings by contacting Julie Stoyle our Parish Council Clerk by email: <u>stantonstjohnpc@gmail.com</u>.

Our council meeting itself is held in public but is not open to public participation. In respect of the Open Forum, there is no legal requirement to provide this opportunity for public involvement, but it is good practice to do so, and SSJPC has been doing this for many, many years. Public engagement is encouraged on any topic within the remit of the PC. Written contributions are also welcome. If parishioners are not sure whether a matter is within the PC's remit, the clerk will be able to answer this.

Consultation with residents

When there is an emergency, the council needs to move quickly, but we still listen to concerns expressed. For major projects we do, and will continue to, consult widely and publicly.

There is a lot of information available on the Parish Council website: <u>http://www.parish-council.com/stantonstjohn/</u>

On the site you can access the records of past meetings, agendas and minutes and you can get up to date on current and past parish issues and inform yourself on parish council activity. We hope that you will do so and we look forward to more residents attending Parish Council meetings even though it is not in person at the moment.

Dog fouling on footpaths

This continues to be a problem according to residents, especially along the path from Hillcraft Road towards Breach Farm. Dogs are beautiful creatures, but their waste is not. Please, please will all forgetful dog owners remember to bag it and bin it in the bins provided, or take it home with you. Thank you to all the dog owners who already do this!

FOREST HILL

St Nicolas

All our services continue to be online during February - see page 5 for details. The church is open for private prayer on Sundays and Wednesdays between 10am, and 4pm. At this time of year St Nicolas is usually filled with music, which sadly can't happen this year, but Peter and Julia Stutfield are still kept very busy in organising music for our online services.

Advent Windows

Huge thanks and congratulations to Naomi Hinks, who organised a beautiful Advent Windows Trail in Forest Hill. 24 housholds selected a

day from 6 December onwards on which to "reveal" a decorated window to be illuminated on a particular day between 6pm and 8pm and for every evening from that date until Christmas. Pictures of the most recent window were posted on the village Facebook page every night and people took the



opportunity to walk round the village in the evenings and look at the lights. It was a really lovely idea and brought much needed cheer during a difficult time for many in our community.



FEBRUARY 2021

ADDITIONAL PAGES for FOREST HILL

Unfortunately, the email containing the contributions from Jane Walker (News from St Nicolas) and Helen Cross (Forest Hill with Shotover Parish Council) landed up in the magazine's Spam folder this month and was not discovered until we had gone to print. I apologise to everyone concerned for not picking up on this beforehand.

Julia Stutfield

News from St Nicolas

Last February in the Newsletter, we wrote "We hope that you all had a wonderful Christmas and that 2020 will be a healthy, peaceful and happy year". **How wrong we were!** We do hope that some of you were able to be with loved ones, and to celebrate Christmas in a quiet and peaceful atmosphere.

We did decorate the Church, and the Christmas tree will stay until Candlemas Day on 2 February.

At the time of writing this, the Church building is closed, but as from Sunday, 17 January the Church building will be open between 10am and 4pm on Sundays and Wednesdays for private prayer. Please remember that we are on lockdown and keep to the rules, which you can read on notices on the Church door.

Services continue on Zoom, please see Service Rota at the beginning of this Magazine for details. If you wish to attend the Zoom services, kindly contact the Vicar, Anthea Beresford, for an invitation.to join - Tel: 01865 351838 or email: <u>anthea@fourparishes.org.uk</u>.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on 17 February.

We trust that you will all be strong, stay positive and look with joy to a better future.

Jane Walker

Forest Hill with Shotover Parish Council

The Parish Council has received reports of dog fouling in the recreation ground. The recreation ground is for the use of all residents and is not a dog toilet. It is an offence not to clean up after your dog and the Parish Council will take appropriate action where necessary.

The Parish Council has a requirement to produce a Community Resilience Plan and is urgently looking for volunteers to help devise the plan. If you are interested in helping please contact the clerk.

Parish Council meetings continue to be held virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions, residents are welcome to join the meetings. The date of the next meeting is **Thursday 25 February 2021**. If you would like to attend a meeting via Zoom or have issues you would like raised on your behalf please contact the clerk.

During Covid restrictions, agendas with planning application details and minutes of meetings will be posted on the website only, along with other Parish Council information:

www.parish-council.com/foresthillwithshotover/index.asp.

You can contact Helen Cross, the Parish Council Clerk, tel: 0844 884 3328, during the hours 09:00 - 17:00, or email: <u>theclerk@foresthillwithshotover-pc.org.uk</u>.





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Lockdown Lemon Drizzle Cake

When clouds are grey and life is dour, and all around seems dismal, Bring out eggs, sugar, butter, flour and make a Lemon Drizzle!

Ingredients

110 g butter

170 g caster sugar (sieve this for a finer texture)

2 eggs

170 g SR flour (sieved)

large lemon - zest ready to add to flour and squeeze the rest

3 tablespoons icing sugar

Preparation:

Grease and line a smallish loaf tin (23 x 3 x 7cm) with baking parchment (greaseproof paper to you and me!) *Hint - make the lining higher than the* top of the tin, so that the lining can be used to pull the cooked cake out of the tin rather than trying to tip it out

Preheat the oven to 180C/ Gas 4/ Neff cyclotherm 160C.

Beat the caster sugar and butter thoroughly together till the mix goes pale. This is much easier to do in a mixer, though elbow grease might help to offset the future increase of calories incurred through testing the completed product! Gradually beat in the egg *Hint- adding a spoonful/* small amounts of the flour alongside adding the egg helps to prevent curdling.

Once all the egg has been added, beat in the remaining flour, lemon zest and milk, pour the mix into the lined baking tin and cook in the preheated oven for 40-50 mins.

To test if the cake is cooked, insert a fine skewer, cake tester or toothpick near the centre. If it comes out cleanly, the cake is ready.

Whilst the cake is still warm in the tin, heat up the lemon juice (easiest in a microwave for c.30/40 seconds), stir in the icing sugar and pour over the top of the cake. *Hint - to help the juice soak into the cake, use a fine skewer to make holes evenly over the top of the cake before you pour the lemon /sugar mix over your cake.*

Take the cake out of the tin and allow it to cool fully before storing in an airtight container. The cake should last at least 3-4 days, but maybe less depending on appetite/ household size. Julia Slingo