

# **Finstock News 128**

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## *“A calm June puts the farmer in tune” – trad*

Optimism is a great thing! As we go to press, we're just past the third big date on the roadmap out of the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions and we're looking forward to going even further by the end of June, all being well. It seems to have been a long and bewildering period for almost everyone and, I suspect, will have made an indelible impression on all of us. One really strong feature of the whole pandemic period has been the support and sense of community generated by looking out for others, as well as ourselves. A number of local people have been notable in this effort and have been applauded on this page in past issues, (plus our local hero, India, below). As we all start to find our way back to a state of apparent normality, how much will this spirit of community and looking out for each other prevail? You'll see elsewhere in this issue a plea for volunteers for the Village shop and there are always requests from others too, calling for help or support – the summer village festival, the May music day, the annual beer festival, the playground, FoFS or the Parish Council to name but a few! Sometimes an hour or two of support is all that's needed and sometimes it's about more, ongoing, commitment. Either way, there's almost certainly an opportunity if you want to give it a go! Go on – keep that spirit going!

### WITNEY HEROES

Many of you may have seen articles in the local press relating how Witney has been thanking both individuals and organisations from the town and nearby villages for their dedication and hard work during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the photo is our own local hero – India Mae Thompson, who kept many a pulse pumping and added energy to activity with her regular Boxercise Bootcamps. “I think it's rather amazing for an 18-year-old from a tiny village to have achieved that” says dad, Marc. “It's nice to see, she works hard and does a lot for the village getting it active”. I think we'd all agree with that!



### The Plough

We're so excited to finally welcome you all back inside the pub! We can't thank you all enough for the ongoing support through the past year. Alongside our Tuesday and Thursday all day specials, keep an eye out for up-and-coming themed nights. Our online menu is updated every single week, so please feel free to visit our website.

We can't wait to see you all!

Don't forget you can view  
the *Finstock News* online  
at [finstock.org.uk/](http://finstock.org.uk/)  
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# VILLAGE EVENTS



## The Lending Library

We are shutting down the Lending Library at 63 High Street at the end of June.

Now that the bookshops are open, the need for a local library has declined. However, should you want the library to continue from your property, you are welcome to take on this service. Please contact Joy on 868575 if you are interested.

A big thank you to everyone who contributed reading material and the odd jigsaw puzzle for villagers during the last year of shutdowns. **You are stars!**

Joy Murphy

## Nicky Higgins

Many of you will have known Nicky, who sadly passed away in November 2019. In the past she actively supported a number of activities in the village including the *Finstock News*, the summer Festival and the village school, where she spent many an hour reading to students and encouraging their learning. In commemoration of Nicky's contribution, the *Finstock News* has now made a donation to Finstock School, which is going to be used to purchase some sets of books to support reading in different year groups.

## Finstock Local History Society

The Committee is hoping to re-launch the Finstock Local History Society Programme at a meeting in the village hall on Friday October 15th at 8pm with a presentation by Tony Cooper and others entitled "The great prize fight at White Oak Green in 1846".

Then the following month on Friday November 19th -

**"After Female Suffrage – what happened between the wars (1919 - 1939)".**

Following the successful "Long March to Suffrage" evening in 2018 which was presented by the Women's Section of Finstock Local History Society this event will explore its impact on women's lives in the following decades as they increasingly participated in public life. As before, we will consider the wider picture as the context for what was happening locally, and have used original documents to look at Finstock itself.

Thereafter FLHS aim to hold regular monthly meetings involving a variety of speakers. We already have some presentations remaining from the past year but would always be pleased to receive additional suggestions regarding interesting speakers or topics of local interest. Copies of the excellent book written in 2019 by Shaun Morley and entitled *Two Wychwood Villages*, (Finstock upon the hill and Fawler Down Derry) and published by the Society will be for sale at the first meeting so do come along. Alternatively, **copies are available from Tony Cooper**. Please ring 868743 to obtain a copy. Price £30.

Refreshments as usual from 7.30pm for early arrivals.

Mike Breakell

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**Finstock Halt** - Hi Folks, wonder if you ever saw the YouTube about Finstock being the least used station in Oxfordshire. Our numbers are still falling but we have some nice pics of the new shelter for the *Finstock News* to encourage numbers to rise! The YouTube is fascinating for rail nerds, especially as it features a visit by the well-known medic Ben Goldacre who wrote a bestseller called "Bad Science" in 2008. Maybe he should write an article on his visit to the station too!

Mike Breakell



# VILLAGE HALL

www.finstock.org.uk/village-hall • villagehallfinstock@gmail.com

By the time you read this article, the Hall should be open once again for business. We hope all clubs and classes will be able to enjoy the facilities in full, and that you notice the refurbishments and redecorations we've made during lockdown. We cannot predict at what point all social restrictions will be lifted, but will continue to evolve our conditions of hire to ensure compliance. However, it is that very uncertainty that has led to the decision to cancel the 2021 Finstock Ale. While it's expected that outdoor festivals will be able to function effectively, it's by no means certain that a fully indoor festival, with everyone mingling and music playing, is guaranteed to be allowed – or that everyone might still feel safe coming along. We cannot therefore invest the upfront costs of festival glasses, etc., without an unacceptable risk to Hall revenues. We take our lead here from the Oxford Beer Festival, held in November in the Town Hall. That too has been cancelled for this year. For those ardent beer drinkers who would love a selection of consistently good ales, with proper temperature control, we would recommend the Big Oxford Beer Bash (BOBB), which will be held on 18<sup>th</sup> September at the TOAD distillery site in Headington.

Rod Ireland



## Short-Mat Bowls at the Village Hall

All the indications are that Short-Mat Bowls will resume at Finstock Village Hall on Monday 21 June from 2pm, and then every Monday at 2pm and Thursday at 1pm.

There is not a better time to try a new sport that anyone can play. Just come along in time for the start and bring a pair of flat-soled shoes with you, like trainers - that is all you need and we have the rest. You will be made most welcome.

For more information contact Shaun at 01993 868134, or email morley.shaun@gmail.com

## Finstock Baby and Toddler Group:

Hopefully, at the time of reading, the weather has warmed up and you're all looking forward to the summer - getting out and about more and meeting up with friends and family!

We're really sorry that we've not been able to open up the Toddler Group as yet. As you may imagine, the guidelines for

opening safely have been difficult for our small voluntary run group to manage at the moment, but we will keep reviewing the situation as restrictions ease still further. We hope to be back up and running in full swing by September!

We are also liaising with Finstock School to re-start the Toddler Group Stay and Play sessions - these will be a great opportunity to see the newly developed outdoor area and for the little ones to have a go themselves! We will keep you updated on our Facebook group with further news on this and our re-opening, so please keep an eye out. All the best,

*Helen and Tammy*

## Finstock Craft Club

Happily, will have resumed on Monday 17th May, in line with the latest government guidelines, although at the time of writing, it is not clear if the number will be limited to just six attendees. We will do our best to keep you updated through our Finstock Craft Club Facebook page.

Our regular sessions will continue every Monday at 7.30pm (except bank holidays). All welcome. You can email me, [rosacharlesworth@icloud.com](mailto:rosacharlesworth@icloud.com) or call on 01993 869283, if you have any questions.

*Rosa Charlesworth*

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*Please feel free to contact me to discuss your yoga journey*



**The Royal Oak Ramsden** has reopened (again!), this time inside as well as out, and our five bedrooms are open for bookings, too.

It's still table-service and we're yet to serve a drink over the new bar, but things are definitely heading in the right direction.

During lockdown we planted and paved the little courtyard at the back, and we've taken down the winter tent to (hopefully) catch a bit of summer sun alongside some beer, Rosé and a roast.

If you're coming to Ramsden Open Gardens on 13th June, come and take a look.

We're looking forward to planning some local events, but as our neighbour wisely said, "Making plans and a pandemic are two things that simply don't go together", so we'll wait until the restrictions allow. Keep an eye on the website, or even better come in and have a chat and try our latest spring menu.

We can't wait to get the beer flowing and that bar open!

[www.royaloakramsden.com](http://www.royaloakramsden.com), or call us on 868213



### Three Bridges

During the work on the GWR rail bridge at Fowler and the annoying road closure I took the opportunity to walk down the hill to view the three bridges. Under normal conditions it is a very difficult and dangerous place to be with cars and lorries coming past at speed.

Not so on the day I went. The GWR bridge work was largely hidden from view by fencing and so onto the bridge which crosses the Evenlode. A picture of calm serenity as the river bubbled under the bridge and the nearby sheep nibbled away gracefully. No Billy goats though.

The river here is surprisingly wide and as we have seen over the winter it is subject to flooding. Our weather has become much more dramatic and floods are something we need to be mindful about. The river runs fast and quite shallow at this point normally, but April has been dry.

The third bridge and the one which gets hit by traffic on a regular basis is the most interesting. It is the Fowler Millstream bridge and has a new parapet which I hope will survive the traffic in the coming months. Beneath the new work are the remains of the much older bridge which has weathered nicely and is double spanned across the stream. There must have been a sluice which divided up the millstream and therefore

gave more control to the miller.

The millstream would of course have powered the water wheel at Fowler Mill and records show that it was here as far back as the thirteenth century, when Richard was the miller. Today the mill is an elegant house.

The millstream itself is very overgrown and silted up so is little help in time of flood. The parapet stones are lying sprawled in the bed of the stream in a tumbled mess and you would have hoped that they might have considered to re-use the stone instead of re-cutting new.

The foundations of the current bridge date from 1800 when the road was turnpiked. We know that John Kibble's grandfather repaired the bridge in 1840, perhaps after it was hit by a fast-moving horse and cart. His work lies in heaps in the millstream.

Vicus

### Extra copies!

We are pleased to announce that we have now had another reprint of our village history book – *Two Wychwood Villages*. **Copies are available from Tony Cooper.** Please ring 868743 to obtain a copy. Price £30.

THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE		
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Plan ahead – Know the deadlines	
Issue	Deadline
Feb/Mar	First of January
April/May	First of March
June/July	First of May
August/September	First of July
October/November	First of September
December/January	First of November

Please keep articles short. As space is limited, the Editors reserve the right to shorten long pieces in the interest of balance. *Finstock News* does not necessarily share the views expressed in readers' letters.



Interesting times for the Village Shop. During the pandemic, we were unable to use volunteers. We asked for new volunteers from the community for once restrictions were removed. We have had no new offers. Is there no one willing to give a couple of hours twice a month for the benefit of the village where you live? Without volunteers, we cannot extend afternoon or weekend opening, and the shop will have to be closed when Karen takes her holidays.

We asked for a new director to join our team. We put up humorous posters in the shop. We have had no offers. Can no one spare an hour or two a quarter to share their business skills? As lockdown eases, and folks return to more normal work and life patterns, we have urged the community to remember the value of the Shop and Post office during the tough times, and maintain their custom. But since the March relaxations there is a clear decline, week on week, of around 30 percent in takings.

Ultimately, the community will get the Shop and Post Office it deserves. And that may just be no Shop or Post Office at all.

Opening times –

**Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri:**  
**8.30am - 3.30pm** (last time for posting 12 noon; P.O. shuts 1pm)  
**Tue: 8.30am - 1.30pm** (and P.O. as above)  
**Sat: 9am - 1pm** (no P.O. services)  
**Sun: CLOSED.**

*Rod Ireland*

*British supermarkets sold 1.58 billion "bags for life" in 2019, or 57 per household! – Greenpeace/The Guardian*



## Scrumptious Gnocchi

(anonymous donor)

This savoury recipe for four is dead easy and quick to prepare!

Ingredients –

2 x 500g packs of gnocchi  
 1 medium sized tub of single cream  
 4 tsp of crushed sun-dried tomato paste  
 2 x 160g tins of tuna (or equivalent)  
 Large handful of grated Cheddar cheese  
 Dried tarragon (optional)

Boil gnocchi for a few minutes, until they float to the surface – drain and put into oven-proof dish. Keep warm.

Scatter tuna evenly over the gnocchi

Mix tomato paste with the cream and pour evenly over the gnocchi and tuna mix

Spread the grated cheddar over the top

Bake on the middle shelf of the oven at 200°C (180°C for fan oven); gas mark 6. For approx. 10/12 minutes

Enjoy!

*If you've got a recipe you'd love to share, send it to the Editor – details on page 4*

## DURING THESE MONTHS:

**12th June** - The official birthday of Queen Elizabeth II

**12th June 1942** – Anne Frank was given her diary on her 13<sup>th</sup> Birthday. It was published in 1947

**2nd July 1928** – Equal voting rights were granted to women in Britain

**13th July** – first Live Aid concert, organised by Bob Geldof

**28th July 1586** – the first potatoes arrived from Colombia, S. America

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**Anne Bancroft, quoted in Forbes**

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# COUNTRYSIDE CONSERVATION

*"The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it" – Robert Swan*

## Rewilding in Britain's national parks?

We're just past the 70th anniversary of the birth of Britain's National Parks, with the establishment of the Peak District National Park in April 1951. At a time of reflection, it's worth considering that the parks are mostly ecological shadows of what they could, and arguably should, be.

Research indicates that nature in our national parks is not in good shape, e.g.:

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are in worse shape *inside* the national parks than *outside* them.

It has been revealed that woodland cover in some of our national parks is below urban levels

In four national parks, pasture accounts for over half the land, while more than three-quarters of the South Downs National Park is agricultural.

Rewilding Britain has been calling for 'wilder areas' in our national parks for several years. A UK Government commissioned report recommended in 2019 that national parks' management plans "should set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery", including the creation of "wilder areas". A committed response is awaited.

Source: [www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/blog/our-national-parks-turn-70-today-now-lets-make-them-wilder?](http://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/blog/our-national-parks-turn-70-today-now-lets-make-them-wilder?)

## No Mow May?

I was watching the mowing man on his ride-on in the village the other day. Unfortunately, his blades were set too low for a first cut of the year and consequently there are now quite a lot of patches of bare scalped mud on our green verges.

Plantlife ran a campaign called "No Mow May", which was intended to give pollinators the best chance of having the greatest nectar food source available each year. They are recommending mowing no more often than once per month throughout the whole season, as this allows low-lying flowering plants to generate the most flowers. One or two inches is the recommended blade height.

Our butterflies and bees are in catastrophic decline at the moment. Pollinators are vital to the survival of humanity, not just for their role at the bottom of the wildlife food chain. The least we can do is feed pollinators - not cut off their food source in order to maintain a blank green space for some sort of unfathomable desire for "neatness". Seventy-four English councils are already taking, or planning, action on rewilding the green spaces they maintain.

Can Finstock lead the way on this locally, showing WODC what can be achieved?

Please have a look here: [www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/about-us/news/no-mow-may-how-to-get-ten-times-more-bees-on-your-lockdown-lawn](http://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/about-us/news/no-mow-may-how-to-get-ten-times-more-bees-on-your-lockdown-lawn)

*Su Jordan*

## Solar Parks

Dear All, there are a growing number of groups around the country who feel that, for all their virtues, some solar park proposals just don't add up. Some of these groups are working together and we are part of this groundswell.

The latest petition is deliberately simple and inclusive:

[www.change.org/p/boris-johnson-protect-prime-farmland-from-solar-industrialisation?redirect=false&use\\_react=false](http://www.change.org/p/boris-johnson-protect-prime-farmland-from-solar-industrialisation?redirect=false&use_react=false) - this reminds us that the

debate is not about food OR fuel, it is about food AND fuel. There is some good text to read.

I hope you will want to sign this and to send it on to friends far and wide.

*Peter Saugman (for the Solar Park Action Group)*

## Public Transport

Right now, in England, many communities have virtually no alternative to driving a car. In parts of rural Switzerland, villages of more than 300 people are guaranteed at least an hourly bus service, from 6am to midnight, 7 days a week. If other countries can do it, so can we – and CPRE have now published a report showing how we can have a world-leading bus network across England with services to every village, every hour.

You can now read CPRE's report 'Every village, every hour', here: [www.cpre.org.uk/news/our-report-shows-a-bus-every-village-every-hour-is-possible/](http://www.cpre.org.uk/news/our-report-shows-a-bus-every-village-every-hour-is-possible/)

*Joy Murphy*



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## NOT ONLY...

### Electric Vehicles (EVs) – Watts it all about?

Greenhouse gas emissions from cars on UK roads account for about 18 percent of the total, a significant percentage that will have to fall dramatically if we are to achieve the government's target of a 78 percent reduction in GHGs by 2135. We traded in our very old diesel Astra estate for a Renault Zoe EV in 2017 and have never looked back! EVs are quiet, easy to drive and low maintenance. With no exhaust pollutants and lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions they make good sense environmentally. However, once we went down to one car only, the range of the Zoe at c.70 miles was a bit restrictive. About 18 months ago we traded up for the VW eGolf with a range of 144 miles.

BUT EVs are not a panacea! Over the last year in lockdown, we have done most of our charging from the 7.2kW wall box (a small box on the side of the house to which you "hook up"). We benefited from a grant towards the cost of the wall charger (Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme); and this is still available, providing up to £350 towards the cost. It works well and charges overnight. Once you are out on the road, it's a different (and very long) story! At the moment there are different suppliers with different apps required on your mobile phone! Sometimes it works, quite often it doesn't, requiring a call to the supplier and a complicated set of instructions to start the charge. On a wet day at Telford M54 Services with 70 miles to go and no charging points ahead, anxiety levels rise! There is progress and, with time, standardisation and contactless payment (e.g., GeniePoint) will become standard but the Government will need to intervene if the take-up of EVs is going to be rapid enough to help towards carbon net zero.

There are questions about the rare earth minerals required for producing batteries, the conditions under which they are mined and the disposal of batteries at the end of their life. And, of course, an EV is only as 'green' as the electricity that is used to power it. In the UK, on a recent sunny and windy day just after Easter, we managed to produce more than 50 percent of supply from renewables. That needs to be 100 percent if EVs are to be truly 'green'. Nevertheless, your next car is likely to be an EV and, for all the challenges ahead, they are a delight to drive (especially that torque that leaves the average BMW still standing at the lights!).

Geoffrey Griffiths & Kath Lucas

## BUT ALSO...

### West Oxfordshire District Council approves joint strategy to accelerate electric vehicle charging

West Oxfordshire district councillors have approved a joint electric vehicle infrastructure strategy, paving the way for zero-emission transport in the county.

With an end to sales of diesel and petrol cars set for 2030, it is expected that 25,000 battery electric vehicles will be on Oxfordshire's roads within the next five years.

To meet this emerging demand, the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (OEVIS) sets an aspiration for 7.5% of all local authority managed public car park spaces to be adapted to fast or rapid electric vehicle charging points (EVCs).

Thirty-five units, servicing 70 parking bays, will be installed in West Oxfordshire later this year, contributing to the Council's target.

Councillor David Harvey, Cabinet Member for Climate Change at West Oxfordshire District Council, said: "Bringing EVCs to Oxfordshire is a truly collaborative project which will revolutionise how transport on our roads will look in the years to come...the roll out of the new EVCs, backed up by the new strategy, will enable residents to invest in EV with confidence, knowing they can charge their vehicle in a way which is convenient to them... encouraging the piloting of new technologies, which support ultra-low carbon-emission transport".

The Climate Change Strategy for West Oxfordshire 2021-2025 is available at: [www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/climate-change-strategy/](http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/climate-change-strategy/)

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## **“20 is plenty”, once more**

With the need for health and safety through our village, Liz Leffman and I are backing the ‘20 is plenty’ campaign, with signs voluntarily being put up by residents on or within their property boundaries. (These cannot be put on the highway as this is highway land and permission needs to be sought)

I feel strongly that this cost-effective interim measure may well have some impact on slowing the traffic and making people who live outside the village more conscious for this road safety measure.

### **“Only Fools Rush in”**

As we come out of lockdown and enjoy going out again, the need to be cautious as we do so will not have escaped our attention. Even when you are able to meet, socialise and go to live events, consideration for others with sensitivity will be needed. It seems to do this will require more testing and, sorry to say, more booster jabs will be needed. WODC will respond and will be ready to support our communities as they have demonstrated during the pandemic.

May I put on record my deep appreciation for the acts of generosity and kindness shown by unsung heroes of every gender who are seldom reported but are just as important as those that reach the media’s attention.

### **“Climate Change Awaits Action”**

Whilst West Oxfordshire District makes small steps to address climate change much more robust action is needed not only to ensure we get to zero carbon emissions but also to ensure that village communities play their part.

Protecting local habitat, the creation of nature reserves, reducing the need to use our cars coupled with effective bus services, preventing flooding and providing sustainable housing to name but a few - all need addressing with joined-up thinking and effective, timelined actions.

A green revolution is upon us and we need to effect change in a proactive way with everyone playing their part and I would dearly like to hear resident’s views and comments.

*Andy Graham, District Councillor Charlbury Finstock and Fawler 07908 832632*

## **News from the Parish Council**

Our April meeting marked the end of the year for councils.

New combined dog poo and general litter bins are to be placed around the village in key sites. They are larger and well designed so hopefully will be well used.

There are requests for some grass areas of the village to remain uncut to encourage wild plants and wild life. A trial will be run to judge whether they prove popular with villagers.

The budget for the past year was underspent to a small degree which allows the build- up of reserves to cover future unknown unknowns. The churchyard has a number of old, very tall trees that may need treatment at some moment in the future. The costs associated with this kind of work can be very significant, so building reserves makes sense.

The Annual Parish meeting was held following the PC meeting.

Reports were received from the PC, The County and District Councillors, the Village hall, the shop, the school and the police. Copies are all available on the website.

Most reports were dominated by the effects of Covid. However, it was clear that through a combination of government grants or sharply increased usage, most have fared reasonably well.

The Shop has seen a diminution in weekly sales since Christmas but did flourish last year. Volunteers are desperately needed.

Volunteers are much needed in a village. The PC needs people to come forward to serve on the PC following the resignation of Nettie Gregory.

This is a worthwhile role in working with councillors to enhance the quality of life for all of us. It needs enthusiasm, a willingness to listen to differing views and priorities – it’s very rewarding and not overly time consuming. The Council is not party political in any way.

Please contact the Clerk if you are interested in learning more - [june.pratley@btinternet.com](mailto:june.pratley@btinternet.com)

**Hywel Davies** for the Parish Council

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## From our County Councillor

I am writing this report as the election is about to take place. I am standing for the District Council and the County Council, and I very much hope that by the time you read this I will have been re-elected. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in Finstock and Fawler for the support that you have given me over the years, and to say that whatever the outcome of the election may be, I will continue to serve the residents in any way that I can. You can always get in touch with me if you have a question or there is something that you think I might be able to help with.

Since my last report, the County Council has approved the new budget for this year. The Liberal Democrats, however, decided that they were not going to vote for the budget, because too little provision had been made for adult social care. The Council was allowed to raise council tax by 5% to provide for this, but unlike many councils around the country, Oxfordshire decided that it was more important to keep council tax low, so they only raised it by 3%, thus depriving the adult social care budget of £8 million. They could have taken this money from reserves, too, but chose not to. For care homes and those who deliver care to people at home, this was a big blow, especially after the incredibly difficult year that they have had due to the pandemic and the extra costs that have had to be incurred as a result.

One aspect of the budget that is good news, however, is that there is a provision for funding 20 mph speed

limits across the county. The amount allocated is small – just £250,000 – but it is a step in the right direction. I know that many people would like to see a lower speed limit in Finstock, especially on the High St, and the speed limit on the B4022 reduced from 40 to 30 mph. I am already working on this with the Parish Council.

The closure of the rail bridge on the B4022 was probably the most disruptive occurrence of the year to date for Finstock residents. This was not under the control of the Highways department as the bridge is the property of Network Rail, who operate under their own legislation. They were also responsible for the diversion signs, which proved to be inadequate. I worked with Highways officers to find the right people at Network Rail to ensure that signage was improved. This took a long time but was eventually put in place.

The B4022 has now been resurfaced, and hopefully this means that Finstock residents will not have to see any more disruption for a long time!

**Liz Leffman** 01608 810153, 07741 073088

### • STOP PRESS •

Liz Leffman was subsequently elected as leader of the County Council and elected as Leader of the Council within the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance of Lib Dems, Labour and Green party members. – ed.

## Explaining MIM

Microscopic Incremental Migration is a product of Nap on the surface of a textile, where hair thin fibres in alignment, powered by the small movement generated by breathing can combine in a multitude of tiny levers to cause a duvet to migrate from one side of a bed toward the other.

However, a foot in the small of the back and a good pull like on a loo-roll will serve to regain one's fair share of the duvet.

*Jim Symons*

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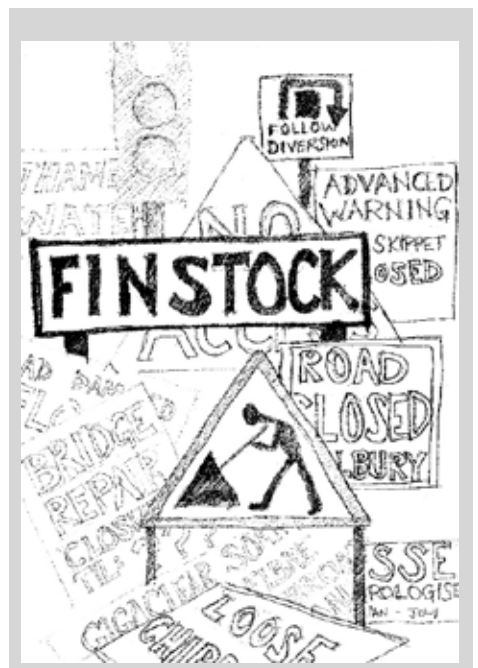
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STRENGTH TO STRENGTH  
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WORK THEY ARE PRODUCING  
IS JUST FANTASTIC.

## Finstock Unplugged Online – March session

The March session was one of the busiest and best online sessions yet, providing continuous songs, tunes and poetry from 7.45 to 11.15pm – I offered a break twice, I promise, but everyone was determined to carry on!

All our attendees were in fine form and a major theme this month was the passing of the seasons, linked with the beauty of the natural world. In her poem Gillian S. celebrated the energy and hope of Spring. Rosie and Paul C. gave us a lovely performance of the John Drinkwater poem 'Country Love' set to music by Johnny Coppin; Rachel F. sang 'It is not always Spring' by Longfellow, set to her own tune; Claire switched from guitar to piano to play her lyrical composition 'To Spring' and later followed this with 'Inversnaid' by Gerard Manley Hopkins, which conveys the beauty of the Scottish highlands; Simon sang about 'The Easter Snow' and besides singing two of her own songs, Lara performed Carole King's 'Sweet Seasons', while Nancy sang her contemplative 'Winter Reveals'.

Nature and the seasons formed only part of the range of material on offer. John S sang Blind Blake's 'That'll never happen no more' followed by a fun rag, and later Ted B sang a fine song of his own, 'Wandering'. These two confident musicians demonstrated their skills further with an instrumental in DADGAD tuning (John) and a Jimmy Driftwood song played on the octave mandola (Ted).

Over the whole evening Americana was well presented – and not just by our Texans with their powerful original songs – in music performed by Anabel ('Hotel California' and 'Desperado'), Simon, Claire and Patrick, who ably accompanied himself on the banjo as he sang the Hank Williams classic, 'Lonesome Whistle'. Traditional English folk song was represented in John's rendition of 'The Poor Sailor'. A modern English folk classic, 'Beeswing' was performed by Anabel, and NealThePoet, who joined us for the first time, offered a wonderful variety of original words and music, from his song 'The Deceiver', through his witty excoriation of Franglais, to his poem 'No Love So Strong'. His writing complemented Gillian's, who treated us to two poems which imaginatively explored the psychology of Lewis Carroll's White Rabbit and Mad Hatter, while Hannah gave us a song followed by Marriott Edgar's darkly funny monologue 'Albert and the Lion'.

After a tiring day Brock and Vixen joined us late in the evening and were surprised to find us still going strong. Fortunately for us, they agreed to perform their latest original ballad based on a true event of the 1870s in Ascott-under-Wychwood, 'Over the Hills to Glory', before we ended the evening soon after 11.15pm.

Ginnie

## News from Friends of Finstock School

After an exciting first face to face meeting since the pandemic began (in the rain under cover at the Plough), FoFS is looking forward to getting active again this summer.

On Sat 3rd July, please join our village-wide **Garage Sale** from 10am-2pm. To buy your laminated pitch number (and place on the map) for £5, please visit Karen in the Village Shop. (More info: [susannastarling@gmail.com](mailto:susannastarling@gmail.com) / 07824 567765.) Later in July we'll be holding a Summer Social on the school field. Please follow us on Facebook for info: /FriendsOfFinstockSchool

If you haven't seen the newly renovated upper play area at school, do have a look (from the field/adventure playground). With mud kitchen, AstroTurf play area, den-building zone, sandpit and more, this is an extremely impressive asset for our little school and FoFS is pleased to have been able to contribute significantly towards it.

Do remember to support us on EasyFundraising whilst doing your online shopping – and please do pick us as your charity when shopping via [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk). You can also buy greetings cards and donate your used stamps via the front porch of the school – open during school hours. Thanks, and see you soon!

Su Jordan, Chair

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## Cranesbills

Hardy Geraniums or 'cranesbills', are wildlife friendly plants providing food loved by insects such as bees. Their range of colour, superb foliage and seed heads are ideal for every garden, creating a magnificent show from May - late September. Not only are they as "hard as nails" and easy to grow, but have the additional interest of attracting seed loving birds. Some leaves are like velvet, soft greens, some green/blue others dark reds and black, with a delicate lace-like outline that any lace maker would be proud of.

For shady conditions *Geranium phaeum* 'Raven' thrives in dappled shade with rich purple flowers. Varieties include a rich blue *phaeum* 'Lily Lovell', 'Album' is white and 'Springtime' is a rich maroon. All producing interesting explosive seed heads, and Bullfinches give an entertaining gymnastic display jumping for the seeds. *Geranium maculatum* 'Elizabeth Ann' has dark foliage contrasting light purple flowers from May onwards. *Geranium sylvaticum* 'Album' is a native species that also enjoys light shade and has pure white flowers in spring for a good length of time and is able to tolerate very dry seasons.

The "Plant of the Century Award" was given by the RHS to *Geranium* 'Rozanne'. It is a plant that scrambles over the ground, in late summer producing clear sky-blue flowers with a white band in the centre. Another favourite scrambler of mine, that enjoys a sunny spot is *Geranium* 'Ann Folkard' with its deep red-purple flowers and black centre, displayed over lime-green foliage flowering from early summer into autumn.

Erect varieties such as *Geranium* 'Mrs Kendall Clark' is a delight in May with pearl-grey, saucer-shaped flowers of palest blue and a grey gothic pattern on the petals, amongst fine lacy mid-green leaves. It is ideal for the front of a sunny border although it can also cope with a fairly shady spot. In a wildflower meadow it can self-seed freely. *Geranium clarkei* is another deciduous perennial with finely-divided, mid-green leaves and comes in various colours, 'Kashmir White' with white, large flowers, 'Kashmir pink' with pale pink flowers and darker veins, 'Kashmir purple' has rich royal purple flowers, or deep blue ones in 'Kashmir blue'. An example of an alpine type, which enjoys full sun and a well-drained soil, ideal for sinks or rockeries is *Geranium cinereum* 'Ballerina' with deeply veined light-pink flowers, from April.

Hardy geraniums need very little care and not targeted by rabbits and deer, or slugs and snails. They can be cut back right to the ground after their first flush of flowers and produce fresh foliage and more flowers in the same summer. Clumps can be easily divided in autumn to produce more plants.

I love to see the sky blue of 'meadow cranesbill', *Geranium pratense* flowering along the road verges on the Chippy road, once common in meadows but killed by herbicides.

Robert



## Timely Tips for June

Check plants daily and water them if the soil is dry — especially newly planted fruit trees and shrubs that are still getting established.

Harden off any remaining half-hardy **bedding plants** ready for planting out. Continue to thin out drifts of hardy annual plants if they're overcrowded.

Lift and divide clumps of snowdrops and bluebells once the leaves start to yellow. Lift and divide overcrowded clumps of other spring flowering bulbs and tubers.

Wait for bulb foliage to die down naturally before cutting back.

Stake tall perennial plants to prevent wind damage. As new shoots grow, use **soft ties** to train climbing plants such as honeysuckle and clematis to their supports.



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