

Finstock News 126

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The snowdrop, in purest white array, first rears her head on Candlemas day (trad)

We should be into February by the time you read this, but let's start with a Happy New Year greeting anyway. 2020 threw us the biggest curveball that probably most of us have ever had to deal with, but as the year ended, many of us, it seems, managed to have some sort of Festive Season, with some moments of lightness and joy, and maybe also some of disappointment and possibly sadness. As my "maiden run" as Editor of the Finstock News I make no apology for the word "Covid" appearing in a number of places. Indeed, it has been the main pre-occupation for most of us and will continue to be so for a while yet, I'm sure! As a result of the various lockdown periods, many of the village organisations have wound right down and so have little to report at this point. However, Spring is not far off and that will open up more possibilities for us, even if it's only getting out and about a bit more as the weather improves. At some point we'll be able to meet together more, with family and friends, when it's right to do so. Let's make sure we celebrate as a village as well! From past experience, Finstock knows how to party! Good wishes for 2021.

It is said that if the weather is fine and frosty at the close of January and the beginning of February, there is more winter ahead than behind.

*"When the cat lies in the sun in February,
She will creep behind the stove in March*

*Of all the months of the year,
Curse a fair February*

If it thunders in February, it will frost in April

*If February gives much snow,
A fine summer it doth Foreshow" (trad)*



*One of the few
figures outside
the Village Hall
recently!
(pic credit:
Tony Hirtenstein)*

FINSTOCK FESTIVAL 2021

The committee and myself would firstly like to wish you a happy New Year and hopefully a brighter & happier 2021.

Little did we realise when we reluctantly had to cancel the already organised 2020 Finstock Festival, that the 2021 Festival could be a victim to this pandemic. However, we have provisionally pencilled in the 18th / 19th June 2021.

In the next couple of weeks our committee will decide on whether to go ahead with this year's Festival & start booking bands and equipment.

This is a very difficult decision and a lot of work, especially if we then have to cancel again.

Things are looking optimistic for the summer, so fingers crossed.

HERE'S HOPING FOR A 2021 FINSTOCK FESTIVAL

Colin Stringfellow. Chairman

The Plough Inn

Throughout January and February, the Plough Inn, Finstock are offering 15% off the Takeaway menu from Tuesday to Thursday. We are open for Takeaways Tuesday to Saturday from 5.30 - 8.30pm and Sundays from 12 noon - 2.30pm. Call us to book yourself a Takeaway! Thank you for all your support throughout 2020 and let's hope for a brighter 2021.

Check our website for the full Takeaway Menu
www.theplough-inn.co.uk or Tel: 868333.

Guy and the team

Finstock Self-Isolating Support Group

The Finstock Self-Isolating Support Group, (or Finstock SIS), is still very much up and running, with a growing group of volunteers to help out. We can supplement the support offered by the Village shop and can do a grocery run for you if you're unable to get out. We have also been able to pick up and deliver prescriptions to isolated residents, and can even deliver a Takeaway from the Plough, if you're unable to arrange to do so yourself. Cooking food, if you are unable, can also be an option. Contact us on finstocksis@gmail.com or 01993 868140.

**Don't forget you can view the *Finstock News* online
at finstock.org.uk/the-finstock-news**



VILLAGE EVENTS



A Sense of Community

Most of us have had many months to consider what our part of rural Oxfordshire is like and perhaps to think about those villagers in the past that spent their working days in the village rather than having to travel to work.

It seems to me that there are probably more people working from home in Finstock today than since the mid-Victorian period when the village community produced what it needed and could call upon a Blacksmith, Seamstress, Cordwainer, Carpenter or a Knife sharpener if required*. Having a work force based in the village must be a good thing both for the environment and for everyone's pace of life.

So, it set me thinking, whilst I walked our footpaths during one of the many lockdowns that we have had, what do my neighbours and other villagers think of their village and what makes them want to live here. It may be a number of reasons - the school, the pub, attractive housing, the green fields and woods, friends and neighbours, peace and quiet or perhaps the fact that our village is a working village and not a dormitory. If you need a local electrician, builder, painter or plumber we have them and we also have musicians, artists and sheep farmers, if required.

I have heard it said that 'so and so' is 'a local', born and bred here and went to the village school. That seemed to give him or her special rights to claim ownership of the village over those who were incomers and only passing through. Having said that I have found that those people who I know to be 'locals' have been very willing to share their memories and experiences and they have now been recorded and not lost. A good thing.

I was born in Oxfordshire and have lived in Finstock for over thirty years. My children went to the wonderful village school and gained much from living in a rural environment and have their own memories of growing up in a quiet friendly village with plenty of opportunity to be out and about with friends exploring the area. Taking part in village activities has been an intrinsic part of my village life and I look forward to the day when we can enjoy them once again, although I make no claim to be a local. For one thing, I don't have the accent. It's very local and yes, you need to be born and bred here to have it! It's hard to imitate and well worth listening too.

So, as you walk or ride our quiet village paths over the coming months consider those that have gone before you and enjoy the time you have spent here in this community.

Vicus

*Finstock census



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Rallying call from Council Leader

Council Leader Michele Mead has issued a rallying call to residents and businesses as the country enters another lockdown.

"This third lockdown presents yet another massive challenge for residents and businesses and I am deeply aware of the problems it will cause, particularly for the most vulnerable in our communities," said Cllr Mead.

"However, the vaccination programme will roll out rapidly in the coming weeks and hopefully there is a light at the end of the tunnel and we will never have to suffer these restrictions again in future.

The number of Covid-19 cases has doubled in Oxfordshire in the space of a fortnight prompting the Government to place the nation into a third lockdown".

"I would urge everyone to protect themselves, the communities in which they live and therefore the NHS as we progress through the early days of 2021."

The number of cases in West Oxfordshire and the whole of Oxfordshire up to January 6th was: West Oxfordshire 383.2 per 100,000 Oxfordshire 566.5 per 100,000.

The rises have been experienced across all age groups.

Detailed guidance about Lockdown rules can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home.

Short Mat Bowls

As far as short-mat bowls is concerned we have no idea when our governing body will permit us to resume but it is highly unlikely to be before April.

Shaun Morley

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VILLAGE HALL

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Rod Ireland, Chair of Hall Trustees, hands over a festive gift to Dave Floy, of Well Hill (pic credit: Jenni Ireland)

We were closed. Then we were open. Now we're closed. Let's hope 2021 sees a return to normal service. Among the casualties this year was the annual Good Companions Christmas Lunch. While a complete "meals on wheels" service was beyond us, the Trustees at least ensured that all of the members received a home visit, suitable distanced, with a large tub of chocolates and a greeting card. Thanks to all involved in making this happen.

Finstock Craft Club

Firstly, all members of the club would like to pass on our sincere thanks to Joy for all her hard work and dedication, not forgetting her patience. We wish her well in her retirement as Editor of Finstock News.

Members of Finstock Craft Club were very disappointed that current restrictions didn't allow us to return to the village hall after the November lockdown, as I'm sure were many other users, (some not having been able to return since the first lockdown). In the interim, we are all crafting away in our own homes in preparation for the festive season and continue to maintain contact through social media. Personally, I am on a mission to make the majority of my Christmas presents! Apart from being good for my mental health, the environment and my purse, there are many other quite important benefits to be had. If you have revisited long forgotten hobbies, you may be aware of the following. All are well known positive benefits of crafting and we're not just talking knitting and sewing! For example:

- Lowering of blood pressure;
- Reduction in stress and anxiety;
- Confidence boosting;
- Enhancement of brain activity and stimulation of the mind;
- Improvement in quality of life in illness, to name but a few!

When (hopefully in the New Year) Craft Club returns to the Village Hall, we will meet as usual on Monday evenings, except Bank Holidays, at 7.30pm. All welcome.

Email: rosacharlesworth@icloud.com if you have any questions.

Rosa Charlesworth

Friends of Finstock School (FoFS)

Having been more or less inactive since the start of the pandemic, FoFS was inspired at its AGM in October to ensure there were some events available to look forward to, with the aim of raising a smile - and a bit of cash too. The lovely ladies of Judds' Juniors put together the village-wide Halloween Hunt, where every entrant was a winner (gaining a certificate and a sweet reward). This was something for the kids to look forward to in place of the annual Fancy Dress Disco - always an extremely popular event. We continued to advertise our presence on EasyFundraising, where anyone can raise funds for FoFS free of charge whilst doing their online shopping (sign up at easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/finstockprimaryschool).

We also finally got round to organising a Covid-safe online Christmas raffle via our TotalGiving page (totalgiving.co.uk/charity/friends-of-finstock-school), with a hilarious live draw taking place on our Facebook page (facebook.com/FriendsOfFinstockSchool) and a total of £219 of our ambitious £250 target raised. This was around a third of our usual income for this event, but not bad at all for only six days of ticket sales! Thanks to everyone who donated prizes and bought tickets, we were able to pledge this money directly to school to cover the full cost of a visit from a mobile planetarium (now postponed until we emerge from lockdown Mark III). Going forward, please watch this space for news of a possible Spring Quiz, Garage Sale and more. As ever, updates appear on our Facebook page first - facebook.com/FriendsOfFinstockSchool - so do hop online and 'like' the page to be kept abreast of our latest plans. You can also scan the QR code below to be taken directly to the page. Get in touch with us via the page if you'd like to help fundraise or get involved - or you can email us at fofsfinstock@gmail.com. May spring (or summer?!) bring us new opportunities for fun and fundraising together!



Su Jordan, FoFS Chair

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Covid-19 testing

An NHS Covid-19 testing centre has opened in Witney to improve support for residents.

The building is situated in the Woodford Way car park and is expected to remain for at least three months.

It means that around 80 long-stay car parking places will be out of action and the recycling centre will also be removed to accommodate the building.

However, all short-term parking will remain in place for shoppers.

Cllr Toby Morris, Cabinet Member for Resources at West Oxfordshire District Council, said: "We realise this will be an inconvenience for some residents and businesses that use the long-stay car parking at Woodford Way as well as the recycling centre.

"However, the NHS testing service had to find a suitable site in the town centre and this was the best option. It will allow easy access for walk-in testing which I am sure everyone will agree is completely necessary in the fight against Covid-19."

Alternative long-stay parking is available on levels seven and eight of the nearby Marriott's Walk multi-storey car park and Zone G of the Woolgate car park, while the Council will make provision for an additional 75 long-stay car parking spaces at its Woodgreen and Elmfield offices.

Collections will also be boosted at the recycling centres in Moorland Road and Hailey Road to cover the closure of the site at Woodford Way.

The site is operating from 8am-8pm.

Broadband Connectivity

More than 10,000 rural homes and businesses in West Oxfordshire now have access to ultrafast full-fibre internet, providing them with some of the fastest broadband speeds in the world.

This milestone for the District has been delivered by rural broadband provider Gigaclear, in partnership with the West Oxfordshire District Council and the Government's broadband agency Building Digital UK (BDUK).

"The way we live and work now depends on the internet and, like any utility, it should be available wherever we choose to live."

"Covid-19 has really underlined the importance of reliable broadband to live and work effectively from home and we're proud to bring it to the most underserved areas of the UK, where other providers simply aren't willing to go to."

West Oxfordshire has historically had slow broadband speeds due to the complexities of undertaking such a large infrastructure project in a rural environment. Gigaclear and its contractors have had to work with heavy duty equipment, all while carefully navigating small roads, rivers and rail crossings.

To see if your property can be connected to Gigaclear's ultrafast network, visit www.gigaclear.com/buy



THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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Pete Welply	868140	Editor

Photographs thanks to staff members and others.

Contact us as above, e-mail the Editor, or write to us at 53 High Street, Finstock, Oxon OX7 3DA.

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.



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(pic credit: Jenni Ireland)

It's a cracker! Karen and Heather celebrate a bumper December and a few days' rest.

The end of 2020 brought a welcome rest for Karen (and Heather) after the most unusual and decidedly busy year, in trying circumstances. As the days grew shorter and the weather colder, the ladies were able to turn up the secret heater we had installed behind the counter. At the time of writing, we are planning to install a traffic light system to make the inevitable queuing at busy times that little bit easier. On behalf of Woodpecker Community Shop and Post office, Karen and the directors would like to thank each and every one of you for the support you gave the shop this year, and wish you a happy, healthy and prosperous 2021, in which we hope to see you all just as frequently as ever.

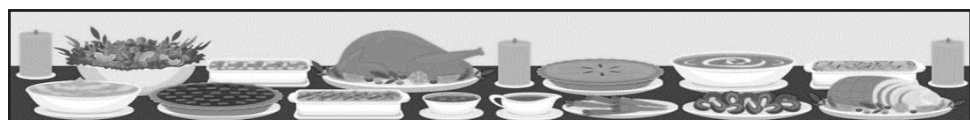
During lockdown, opening hours will remain as at present, unless something we can't foresee happens:

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday	8.30am – 3.30pm
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Saturday	9.00am – 1pm
Post Office: Monday – Friday	9am – 1pm
Last acceptance time for postage 12noon	12noon

www.facebook.com/woodpeckercommunityshopfinstock
www.finstock.org.uk/village-shop

Editor's Note:

Our Village Shop collects food donation for those in need in our county.



KITCHEN CORNER space to share a Recipe!

Healthier Oat Flapjacks – this recipe is a take on the traditional flapjack, with several further changes. Instead of butter, syrup and sugar the Ingredients include:

160g of clear honey	2 tbsp rapeseed oil
40g of soft brown unrefined sugar or muscovado	1 tbsp black treacle
200g Greek yogurt (0% fat works OK)	¼ tsp Allspice
250g oats (best not to use jumbo oats)	20g chopped mixed nuts (optional)

Method: Preheat your oven to 160°C (140°C fan, 320°F, gas 4). Grease a 20x20 cm baking tray and line with baking paper, leaving some overhang for easy removal later.

Mix all dry ingredients before adding wet. Incorporate all ingredients thoroughly before pressing into the baking tray. Spread flat. Bake in the oven for 24 – 28 minutes (you know your oven; less equals a more squidgy flapjack). Leave to cool before removing from the tray and cutting into squares. This recipe will make nine big slices or 36 bite size portions. Enjoy!

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

A Message from Robert Courts, MP

I do hope that you all had a safe and happy Christmas, and I send my best wishes to you this New Year. As you will be aware, the Prime Minister announced a new national lockdown on Monday 4th January, which came into law on Wednesday 6th January. Unfortunately, such harsh measures are necessary now due to the new strain of Covid-19 which is between 50 and 70 per cent more transmissible. This has significantly increased the spread of the virus and led to a dramatic increase in cases.

I entirely appreciate the strength of feeling on this issue, particularly as we have all sacrificed a normal Christmas in order to fight Covid-19. However, unlike March 2020 we now have a clear light at the end of the tunnel. With two vaccines being rolled out, together with the new restrictions, we know that the end of this crisis is in sight. But this is only achievable if we all pull together like before to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

STAY AT HOME

ROBERT COURTS MP

COUNTRYSIDE CONSERVATION

Men argue. Nature acts. - Voltaire

We've got some exciting news

Thanks to you, the government has backtracked on one of their most damaging proposals to change the planning system.

You may have heard of their so-called 'mutant algorithm' that would have caused needless loss of our precious green spaces by unnecessarily ramping up housing targets in rural areas.

We're happy to say that after some very effective campaigning the government has now ditched this algorithm in favour of one that focuses more on building the homes we need in cities and on previously used land.

Building more affordable homes on so-called 'brownfield' land, rather than our open countryside, is something we've been calling for. It's a win-win scenario for people and nature.

Whether you were one of the fantastic people who signed our petition, wrote to your MPs and councillors, or if you donated to support this campaign, we are hugely grateful for your contribution.

This is no small feat and something we should all be very proud of, so thank you.

Although this is a cause for celebration, the problems with the government's damaging planning proposals run much deeper than the housing algorithm itself.

We need a complete reboot to put people and nature at the heart of a new planning system. We will keep campaigning to achieve this vision.

With some exciting plans for 2021, we look forward to demonstrating that when we speak as one voice, we can truly make change happen.

Thanks for everything so far.

Until next time,

Sam, Mark, Maddy and the whole CPRE team.



CPRE is funded by donations from people like you. Together, we can help our beautiful countryside thrive for everyone's benefit - now and for generations to come.

Tales from The Bottom - part one

An overgrown garden with the remaining berries and apples provides a never-ending source of delight during the long winter months for the local bird life. Occasionally a squirrel or a mouse venture out but most are wisely hibernating whilst the birds are all actively avoiding the occasional cat who dares to visit. The robin guards his table from all intruders from his regular perch above. He particularly dislikes other birds, especially other robins or the pair of hedge sparrows who lurk in the bushes below. House sparrows periodically arrive in the branches and are generally acceptable to him especially if shepherded by a male it seems. A pair of blackbirds visit regularly whilst other lively and perhaps younger male blackbirds, affectionately called by me the Donald and Boris Minor, periodically arrive for a squabble that continues for some time and moves around the garden. Then there are two or three wood pigeons usually led by one I call Fat Boy Slim who arrive and eat everything available before they fly up lazily to sleep in the branches above. Seldom do they leave space for the sweet collared doves. Regular visitors almost all day long are the entertaining Great and Blue Tits who love hanging on the nuts. Occasionally comes a lone coal tit and a wonderfully noisy group of long tailed tits just passing through. If one looks carefully one can see the little wren down below or the gold crests high above who occasionally venture out of the yew trees. Also high above one sees groups of finches, mainly goldfinches with occasional linnets in tow. There are far fewer green finches these days and even the lovely chaffinches are less plentiful than previously. However, nothing can better the wonderful pair of bullfinches who arrived and stayed for hours on Christmas morning to feed on the old blackberry bushes! There is the occasional song thrush too, as well as groups of fieldfares and redwings visiting from Northern Europe, and even the odd smart male pheasant who seemed to send four females along one day last week. There are jackdaws galore above and small flights

of starlings too. The odd magpie, or spotted or green woodpeckers pass by occasionally whilst overhead one can see exciting kites, soaring buzzards, rooks, gulls and even the odd heron passing by. Patience and observation are all that it needs.

Mike Breakell

To make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from ... according to TS Eliot, who was baptised in Finstock church almost a century ago.



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The Wychwood Project

The Wychwood Project dry stone walling team, led by Roger Newman, has now largely finished rebuilding the eastern wall of the churchyard. This is a splendid effort given the disrupted year or so. There remains a stretch of wall about 13m long without toppers which will be completed when circumstances allow.



Mike Woodfield

Green Homes Grants



Could you use £5-£10k to improve your home with a Green Homes Grant? Whilst Covid

rages unabated, the juggernaut that is the impending ecological crisis isn't going away either. It's hard not to get depressed in the face of the bleak predictions and stark evidence concerning the future of our planet, but it is at precisely this moment that we need to dig deep and summon up the energy required to work together to rewrite our future. One of the easiest things we can do to help straight away is to save energy at home. Friends of the Earth state that 15 per cent of the UK's 'planet-warming gases' come from heating our homes. If we insulate our lofts, switch to renewable energy suppliers, (such as Good Energy and Ecotricity), or consider installing solar panels or air-source heat pumps to replace their fossil fuel-burning equivalents, we can help to reduce emissions.

But we will also be helping to create sustainable green jobs, (the installers and manufacturers of these new bits of kit). All this, and with the double payback of the warm glow of feeling we are Doing the Right Thing, PLUS the warm glow we feel when sitting in a house that is no longer draughty, damp or expensive to run. Cavity wall insulation alone can pay for itself in 5 years, with a 20 per cent drop not only in emissions - but also in your BILLS. Put off by the cost of change? You needn't be, as the government is currently offering Green Homes Grant scheme vouchers for just these kinds of eco-friendly retrofits and improvements. Homeowners can get two-thirds of the cost of eligible improvements, up to a maximum government contribution of £5,000. If someone in your household receives certain benefits, you may be eligible for a voucher covering 100 per cent of the cost of the improvements - up to a total of £10,000. Installers can still work in your home during lockdown. All you need to do is complete your improvements by 31 March 2022. The time to act is now! Scan the QR code on the left with your smartphone's camera to go straight to the government website to apply, or copy this link: www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-the-green-homes-grant-scheme Good luck!

Su Jordan

Solar Park in Ramsden

Yes, stopakemansolarpark.com is live!

Have a look and see what you think. All comments and suggestions are welcome, especially for additional topics for the FAQs.

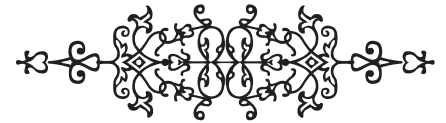
Thanks to everyone who has sent in photographs. Not all can be included at once, and apologies if yours are there but you have not been credited.

Do keep visiting the website as there will be additional material to view within a week or so but this gmail will be your news source... stopakemansolarpark@gmail.com

In the meantime, my thanks to Pete Williams for setting this up, and editing and adding text and photos and his colleague Lynsey Feilden who has been very patient with my confusing additions and subtractions and steam-driven understanding of modern technology, and has created the lovely graphics.

Finstock News readers who would like more detailed local information and who might like to express an interest or concern should contact us via the e-mail address, above.

Peter for Solar Park Action Group



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News from the Charlbury Patient Participation Group (CPPG)

COVID Vaccine: The topic that is uppermost on everyone's minds is COVID Vaccination. The information we receive is changing day by day and by the time this is in print any information will be out of date. The Charlbury Medical Centre (CMC) receives regular information about the rollout of the vaccine and passes it on to us. As soon as we have information it is posted on the Charlbury website **Charlbury.info** and emailed to our members. For the first wave of vaccinations Charlbury patients will need to travel to Carterton to receive their vaccination. *We hope vaccines can be given from Charlbury when we are able to use the Oxford/Astra Zeneca vaccine.*

For CMC patients who do not access the Charlbury website we would encourage you to join the Charlbury Patient Participation Group to receive information. To do so email: patientgroup.charlbury@nhs.net].

Volunteers have been helping as marshals at the 'flu clinics and at the CMC as Meet and Greet and staff at the CMC are very grateful for this help which has facilitated smooth running of the vaccination clinics and the surgery.

We are currently seeking marshals to assist with the COVID vaccination clinics when they are up and running. If you feel that you would like to help please contact patientgroup.charlbury@nhs.net].

Appointments: We have been working for some months with the CMC in an attempt to make making an appointment more user-friendly. Unfortunately, the present message is still confusing but we hope to get this changed as soon as possible.

Other Patient Concerns: Members of the CPPG are frequently approached with concerns about various aspects of the CMC's management, although almost all comments about the medical staff are unreservedly positive. These concerns are taken seriously, logged, and fed back to the CMC.

Staff Changes at CMC: The Practice Manager, Wesley Rouse will continue to be finance manager at the Practice. However, in the New Year a manager who will take control of the day to day running of the Practice and the management of staff will be appointed.

The Charlbury Participation Group wishes all at Finstock a very Happy and Healthy New Year and urges you once again to join the patient group so that you can keep up to date with news from the Practice. patientgroup.charlbury@nhs.net.

Covid-19 lockdown prompts fresh call to hand back unwanted social and healthcare equipment

People in Oxfordshire are again being urged to return unused health and social care equipment loaned to them so others can take advantage of it.

Worldwide manufacturing of items including bed rails, pendant alarm equipment/ sensors (telecare) and mattresses has slowed because of the Covid-19 epidemic, meaning new ones may be harder to come by.

Stephen Chandler, Oxfordshire County Council's Director for Adult Social Care and Housing, said: "We have a great response earlier in the year from people returning items and now we're asking again for residents to have a quick check around their homes or homes of those they care for."

"An unused chair, bed rail or piece of equipment can be recycled and used by somebody else in need so we would appreciate your support with this."

The pieces of unused equipment being sought are:

- chairs, beds, bed rails and mattresses
- wheeled commodes
- any electrical items
- walking and toilet frames
- pendant alarm equipment/sensors (Telecare)
- slings

All items for return must have a barcoded NRS or Millbrook sticker on them.

Because of the pandemic, all items can be collected by NRS Healthcare or taken to the Bicester depot.

People must not take any items back to health or social care buildings.

Anybody wanting to give back equipment can arrange a collection by calling NRS Healthcare on 01869 225420 or by sending their details to enquiries@oxfordshire.nrs-uk.net.

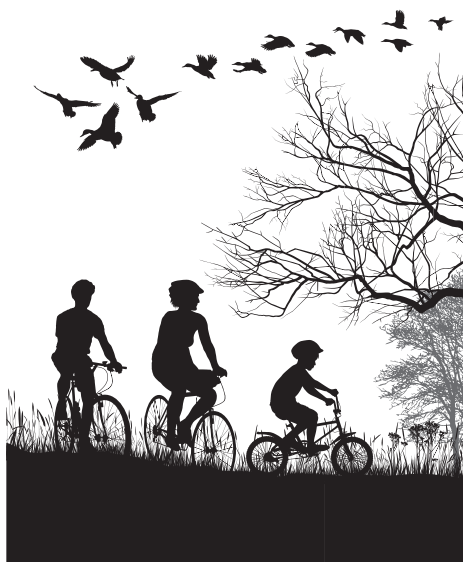
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Tales from The Bottom - part two

Understandably we all seem to be in a trough of despondency fighting floods and pestilence, but hopefully not famine now that a deal is signed and agreed with our European friends. Fifty years ago, I was living an exciting single London life working as a planner in County Hall by day whilst by night running a travel club for lonely Scandinavians new to city life. Sharing a flat with five guys we engaged a nice German part-time model as our cleaner too. One day she surprised us by saying she had met Jimi Hendrix and true to form soon appeared on his next record sleeve! But that was sixties London when anything could happen. Also, there was one long interlude spent in Madison, Wisconsin as a Fulbright Scholar and Mellon Fellow. That involved a trip out on the good old Queen Elizabeth with a short stay at the Biltmore Hotel in New York and then on board the Twentieth Century Limited overnight to Chicago before joining The Morning Hiawatha for Wisconsin. In that year too I got to Expo 67 in Montreal, promoting Morris Dancers from Newcastle at the British Pavilion whilst sharing the limelight with an up-and-coming singer called Pat Boone. Briefly I joined the fun filled hippie lifestyle of San Francisco too, thanks to Pan Am friends there and a Greyhound bus ticket costing just 99 dollars for 99 days travel. Then it was back to Southampton and then County

Hall on the final transatlantic crossing of the good Queen Mary. What a great year.

Mind you that was many years ago in the sixties. In April 1970, desperate to escape from London life, I found a job in Australia and so cruised out via South Africa, on the Northern Star as a 'Ten Pound pom', funded by the Australian Government. An exciting few months marina designing in Perth was followed by driving an MGB across to Sydney to work as a planner again and enjoy running the first mobile disco on Sydney harbour. It was soon time to head back to Europe overland by public transport via Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma, and Nepal. I knew the way back from India, having already driven a bus overland from London in 1969 as part of the Commonwealth Expedition. (a chance to tell these tales with slides again when we get the Village Hall open, perhaps?). Once in Istanbul I luckily got a lift with the Troggs road manager driving a van and equipment back to London. So it was back to what I figured would be the great new opportunity for Britain as a member of an exciting European Common Market. It was also the chance to teach Comparative and European Planning at Oxford Polytechnic and to run annual student visits to Bruges and Amsterdam, as well as Summer Schools for thirty years or so. Subsequently this was extended via Erasmus and British

Council links to many other European cities and Universities, including the new Eastern Europe of the 1990's. It is perhaps less easy to see just where the future of European education lies in the forthcoming Turing scheme that will replace Erasmus. But we shall see!

Now it looks much more difficult for the young to visualise the future, whilst the old can readily dream on and remember the past. In the meantime, we have a great village with great folks and superb rural surroundings to walk around, a village shop to do our shopping in, take away meals to order from the Plough, and if we are brave enough, we can take the bus to Witney, Charlbury, and Chipping Norton or even the train to Oxford from the Halt. It is just so much harder to see a way up from the bottom these days, whether it be from Australia or Covid or life in general. Perhaps we'd better just settle back and say Bottoms up until the Plough re-opens and we can all celebrate a return to more normal times.



Mike Breakell

*Finstock search and recovery team
checking the route to Charlbury*

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County Councillor report

Since the pandemic, we have seen a big increase in the number of walkers who are coming to visit our lovely countryside. This has meant a larger than usual number of people using the footpath that crosses Cornbury from Charlbury to Finstock and there has been concern expressed by residents about the safety of the exit from the footpath onto the B4022. The path is not well signed from the road, and it is not clear to walkers that they are approaching a busy road. A meeting was organised just before Christmas with officers from the County Council, local residents and the Parish Council, to discuss what could be done to make the exit safer. Measures that we are considering include more prominent road signs warning drivers to slow down, better signage on the footpath warning of the exit, and the possibility of lowering the speed limit on the main road from 40 to 30 mph to encourage drivers to take more care. The signs can be put up very quickly, but the speed limit change will take a bit longer and will be subject to consultation. I will be



working on this with the Parish Council and County Council officers and I will keep Finstock residents updated on progress.

Anyone who drives from Fawler to North Leigh may also have noticed that there is now a much larger sign in place warning lorries that the road is unsuitable for heavy vehicles. This replaces a smaller sign and was erected at the request of the Parish Meeting in Fawler. Many cyclists and walkers use the lane, which is an officially designated cycling route, so it was really important to warn lorries not to use the lane which is very narrow.

I am also very pleased to report

that at the last County Council meeting of 2020 it was agreed that we should lower speed limits in built up areas across the county to 20 mph and money will be set aside in next year's budget to implement this. All villages will be able to benefit, but there will be some costs, for example signage, that may have to be borne by the parishes. I will be working with any parishes across my ward who would like to lower speed limits in their community. I also have "20 is Plenty" signs available to anyone who would want some. It is perfectly legal to put them up in your garden, and although they are not official, they do remind drivers to take care and lower their speed.

*lizleffman@oxfordshire.gov.uk
01608 7810153*

And from our District Councillor

Hello 2021 and hopefully we have better news to report than the disastrous 2020.

The roll out of vaccinations brings hope and although there are concerns over this, we have to rely on the medical experts and scientists who have done the research and the practitioners in our doctor surgeries who are doing their very best to support us all. We all know that patience is a virtue, and it has certainly been put to the test, but in another six months we can look to a positive Summer and rest of the year.

At the district council, Liz Leffman and I have been supporting our excellent staff in responding to the needs of our businesses and the vulnerable. We have kept in touch by phone and ensured any needs they have are relayed back to our team to take appropriate action.

We have kept a close eye on the issues you raised with Cottsway Housing and are providing the voice for the younger generation in terms of mental health advice and support and the need to bring back youth services in the coming twelve months.

We have local elections in May 2021, a time for us to play our part in electing our local representative to do what is best for us in looking after our communities. There are

some challenging times but with creative minds and a push to get things done well, I feel positive we can bring back civic pride in preserving our environment and ensuring our infrastructure is prioritised so our communities are sustained and grow at a measured pace.

Above all, we recognise as your local representatives, we are accountable to you.

We will continue to do that.

You can contact us at any time and we will respond within 24 hours.

Here's hoping for a happier and more reassuring New Year.

*Cllr Andy Graham, 07908 832632 or
andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk*

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Finstock Unplugged Online

Always held on the last Monday of the month

The music of our Zoom gatherings in November and December was as varied as ever. At both Chippy Folk and Finstock Unplugged, we continue to exploit one of the few advantages of Zoom – the fact that it knows no geographical boundaries - to allow us to bring ex-members who have moved from the area, as well as new members, into our 'meetings'. On the last Monday of November Lara Linette, a singer-songwriter from El Paso, Texas, joined us for the third time. And for the first time we also lured in Nancy Scott, also from Texas, albeit 600 miles from Lara and in a different time zone. Like Lara, Nancy is a singer-songwriter, and we particularly enjoyed her poignant song about friendship, 'Poco' (www.nancyscottmusic.com/music.html). At least two of our 'core' members, especially Rachel Fox, write songs regularly, so it is great to add these two musicians from across the pond into our mix. The November gathering was almost a seminar group, as there were only about eight of us, but as this allowed for more chat and informal swapping of ideas, there was little sense of loss.

In the session of Monday 28th December, the last Monday of the old year, we were back up to strength of numbers and enjoyed a lively session. As was to be expected, we celebrated the season with a number of seasonal songs as well as other music from our members' varied repertoire. We were delighted that our two Texans joined us again - and during this session we exploited another positive aspect of Zooming; there's no limit on what instruments one brings to the meeting. Claire, a 'Zoom' piano teacher as well as a good guitarist, treated us to two instrumental keyboard improvisations on classic blues songs. Rachel introduced our newer members to her powerful original songs and by switching off our cameras, we even managed to hear Anabel, who has recently re-located to a village near Cropredy where the Wi-Fi bandwidth seems dire. Ah, the adventures of Zoomland! Nevertheless, we persist and look forward to more online musical gatherings in 2021.

Ginnie Redston

Finstock Baby and Toddler Group

We hope you all enjoyed your Christmas, even though things were somewhat different. We're hoping for much better things in 2021 and looking forward to the time when we can open up the group again. As the situation is changing so quickly, we don't yet know when this will be, but hopefully it won't be too much longer. We will keep you updated on our Facebook group of any news.

All the best, Helen and Tammy

News from the Parish Council

The PC approved a budget for 2021-22 at our last meeting. Recent years have seen the PC take responsibility for the whole churchyard. Urgent work was required particularly on trees and walls which resulted in a significant increase in the costs faced by the PC.

However, progress has been made and our budgetary requirements are now more predictable with no need to make such large increases. Next year the precept will rise by 2.5% in line with the forecast rise in inflation.

The village survey has now closed but we have received a solid return which enables the PC to analyse with confidence in the numerical bases and there will be a full report published in the next issue of the FN.

This issue of the FN sees the arrival of Pete Welply as editor replacing the very long serving Joy. The PC congratulates him and thanks him for taking on the job which involves a lot of work and provides us all with the excellent and useful FN.

Hywel Davies

PC meetings will continue virtually for the foreseeable future but are still open to the public. The dates are on the website and if you wish to join the meeting the Zoom code is available from the Parish Clerk

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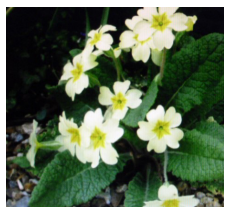
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A welcome sign of spring is on the way

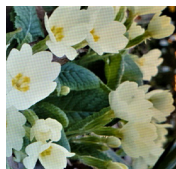


The primrose is one of my favourite plants with its pure yellow flowers and delicate perfume, nestling in rings of velvety green leaves, announcing spring is around the corner, hence its name primrose ("first rose") from the medieval Latin. It does well in our garden in the grass and between stones around the garden and provides an excellent early source of food for butterflies and bumblebees. Primroses used to be widespread along the edges of fields and banks of country roads. Many were picked and sprinkled on the path leading to the Church, a symbol of "eternal love" for a wedding; a child's gift of a bunch for Mother's Day, or a cheerful buttonhole for father. Primroses grew in such numbers around Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire that village wives and children used to make a little extra money by sending bunches by train to Birmingham and London. But primroses are getting rarer, largely due to changes in farming methods and the close mowing of lawns and overtidy verges contributing to their decline.

Primula vulgaris was growing in the Oxford Botanic Garden in 1648. At this time, primroses were considered effective remedies for treating conditions involving spasms, cramps, paralysis and rheumatic pains. Extracts from the roots have been used commercially in cough syrups and used to treat arthritis and rheumatism. The leaves and flowers can also be used as a tea to alleviate anxiety,

insomnia and even migraines. Records also show the Oxford collections contained blue, white, yellow and purple varieties, plus white doubles, whilst herbarium specimens also show a diverse array of other floral mutants in cultivation. Flower colour in wild primroses can be highly variable, with colours ranging from yellow through cream to pink, which is one reason they are so attractive to gardeners, and many breeders have produced some excellent new varieties with a spectrum of gorgeous colours.

Polyanthus look very much like primroses but instead of having individual flowers on their own stalk growing from the centre of the leaves, they have a thick stem that carries a bunch of blooms well above the leaves. Otherwise, the flowers look much the same and in the same range of colours. Not to be confused with the wild cowslip (*Primula veris*), once common in ancient pastures, and now very rare. The cowslip has deep-yellow flowers, borne on tall, erect flower stalks. In contrast, the primrose typically has pale yellow flowers on short flower stalks. A welcome reappearance of cowslips and other rare flowers on Oxfordshire road verges, is due to active reseeding by volunteers, and a policy of delaying mowing after the seed has been dispersed.



It is a cheering tonic to see flowers appearing and welcoming the new year.

Robert Bigwood

CHRISTMAS TREES

Probably too late for this year, but useful to know in any case –

Residents are being encouraged to recycle their real Christmas trees.

Householders already signed up for garden waste collections can simply put them out on their next scheduled garden collection (*which for this year was 18th January - ed*)

However, if the garden waste bin is full, the tree can be cut up and left next to the full bin for collection. Trees larger than 90cm/3ft should be cut into manageable pieces before being put out.

Anyone, including those who are not garden waste customers, can take their tree along to one of the Council's collection points.

Trees will be taken to the composting facility that processes garden waste.

The fortnightly garden waste collection service costs £30 per bin, per year and runs from 1 April one year to 31 March the following year. For more information see westoxon.gov.uk/garden



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