

Finstock News 125

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This will not be the last issue of the *Finstock News*, but there will be a new Editor. It has been twenty years under my Editorship and I am stepping down. We know that you value the information provided by a local independent news source and are very happy to welcome Pete Welply, who will be sitting in the Editor's chair now. We also welcome Su Jordan to the Editorial Committee as our advertising lady, replacing Ann Sullivan.

Our New Editor



I can't say I'm the Editor-elect, as no votes were cast, but I'm now trying to get up to speed with the work of the *Finstock News* Editor in order to do justice from the February issue onwards. It's a great privilege to take on this role and I must say a huge thanks to Joy, not least for her tenacity in trying to persuade me to step into her shoes! I look forward to working with the Editorial Committee, and their collective experience, in maintaining a good quality newsletter for our community.

Together with my partner Annie and son, Rupert, I've lived in Finstock for 26 years. I have been involved with Friends of Finstock School, served as a School Governor and worked with the H2O Church Youth Project, Finstock Community Projects – organising, amongst other things, the Village Summer Festival, Finstock Music Day (and The Bower!). I Chair the Forest Action Group (concerned with proposed building developments in the village) and more recently in co-ordinating the Finstock Self-isolating Support group. My day job was as a Social Worker for over thirty-six-years, working in community based family projects. Although I retired from full time work in 2013, I remain registered and work part-time supporting and assessing Social Work students in their training.

News from the Parish Council



The Parish Council has decided to institute an award for the **Villager of the Year**. This will be presented annually and awarded to the person who has made a major contribution to the well-being of Finstock over a period of time.

This inaugural year, the PC decided that Joy Murphy should be the recipient. Joy has edited the *Finstock News* for the past 20 years – a real labour of love and editorial expertise.

It is a high-class publication for a small village providing vital information and an excellent diary of events and activities. Joy has decided to vacate the Editor's chair and we all thank her for a magnificent body of work – work that was freely given.

The Award was presented to Joy by the Chairman of the PC, Mike Woodfield.

Hywel Davies for the Parish Council

Nobel Peace Prize

The World Food Program was awarded the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize; recognition of the critical work the United Nations agency does to prevent hunger around the world, especially during the coronavirus pandemic. The award is an acknowledgment of the central role the Rome-based organization plays in dealing with impoverished people caught in or fleeing from conflict.

Editor's Note:

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

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



VILLAGE EVENTS



We send our condolences to Mark and Judith the children of Janet Knowles, former resident of Hill Crescent and active member of the community.

Bottle caps and Bra collections

For many years we have collected plastic milk bottle caps and bras for two very worthy charities. Unfortunately as of January 31st 2021 we will no longer accept any donations.

Circumstances have changed and that means ending our local support of these two charities.

Thank you all for your support. Joy Murphy

Finstock Baby and Toddler Group

It is very sad that we've not been able to recommence the group this year - we're really missing meeting up with you all and your little ones, and welcoming new additions in the village. We hoped things would be improving so we could look to opening up in the New Year, but at this stage we don't know how long it will be.

In the meantime, let us wish you all a very Merry Christmas and hope that you enjoy it with your families, whether that's at home or virtually! Let's hope for a brighter 2021 and know that spring will be with us soon.

Take care, stay safe and well,
All the best,

Helen and Tammy

Age UK Oxfordshire

There is a new telephone support service for older people, which offers advice and assistance to older people concerned during this time. Call 01865 411 288, leave your name and phone number and you will get a call back as soon as possible. Assistance includes a friendly, weekly call to see how you are and to problem-solve if you are facing practical problems.



The Lending Library

One way to get through the coming winter months and the negative effects of lockdown is through making mental journeys by travelling in our minds through screens or books to open us to new ideas and other worlds.

The village library is nothing new. At one time there were paperback books available to borrow at the Village Shop. That was when the old shop was run by an efficient and pleasant couple and located on School Road close to Ward's Lane.

The next incarnation was much larger and based at The Plough with the blessings of Nigel and Keith. The books were placed in the back bar as a break between the bar area and the seating area. All in all we had nearly 100 books in that collection. Incidentally, this was also the time that The Plough was handling the distribution of medication from the pharmacy. You would be greeted at the door by Nigel singing out, "Drugs or drinks?"

Now we have a small box in front of 63 High Street where villagers can bring a book or take a book. This has been a successful endeavour and we are happy to continue with this service. But, please limit your donation of books because there is only limited space. Thank you – and happy reading.

Mysteries to read

Looking for something to read on those long winter evenings? If you like a mystery with a local setting, you may want to try the Silver and Simm Victorian Mysteries series, written by Finstock resident Cynthia Hurst. Set in the 1860s, they take place primarily in Witney, with mentions of several local villages. The fourteenth book in the series, 'Diamond in the Dust', was published in October.

Cynthia, a former journalist who has lived in Finstock since 1984, has also written two other mystery series, both set in her home town of Seattle. All her books are available as e-books from Amazon, iBook's, Kobo and Barnes & Noble, and in paperback from Amazon.

Identity fraud

Identity fraud happens when your personal information is misused or sold onto others to commit crime. Fraudsters can use your identity for many things including opening bank accounts, applying for loans and credit cards and ordering goods in your name. To report Identity Fraud call the Action Fraud reporting centre: 0300 123 2040

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Village Hall

www.finstock.org.uk/village-hall and follow the booking instructions,
Email villagehallfinstock@gmail.com

Village Hall AGM

The frustration at the inability of our community to fully enjoy our wonderful Village Hall was in evidence at the 2020 AGM, held in November via an online platform. The financial impact of closure, with bar sales down by £6,000 against last year, income from bookings down by £3,000 and the absence of a beer festival resulting in a similar shortfall meant that the government lockdown grant received earlier in the year was the only reason the Hall trustees avoided drawing on reserves. This welcome income, provided via WODC meant that the Hall's finances remain positive.

Chair of Trustees Rod Ireland offered thanks to the trustees for their tireless work in ensuring the Hall remains a showpiece for our community, to Kelly Peters and Tony Cooper for maintaining the highest standards of cleanliness and repair and to our users, who have been wonderfully supportive and patient in adhering to government regulations, carrying out their own risk assessments and staging their martial arts, yoga, dance, etc. for the benefit of our community. We won't be able to welcome the Good Companions for their usual Christmas lunch, but the trustees will deliver a seasonal gift to each of them and hope to see them again in 2021. The trustees said goodbye to Angela Hall, who is stepping down after 15 years. She is replaced as Secretary by Lesley Dore. And finally, a big thank you to the Finstock News for all the support and publicity you continue to give us.

Our promise is to open our doors as soon as we are legally able and ready to do so. Once again, our priority will be to our established user groups, followed (probably in the New Year) by private bookings.

Rod Ireland, Chair

You Can Report Rural Crimes Online

Rural crime is an issue for large areas of the Thames Valley and we know that it can have a huge impact on our rural communities. However, these crimes tend to go unreported.

We're reaching out to our rural communities and encouraging you to report anything you've seen, however big or small, which can help us tackle agricultural, equine, wildlife and heritage crime. tinyurl.com/yykjo6d5

Finstock Craft Club

After happily returning to the Village Hall at the end of the first big lockdown, (albeit, just six members each session), we returned to staying connected through social media. We remain hopeful that at the end of this lockdown, we will be meeting again, as usual. This of course depends on everyone's compliance with the new lock down rules.

Craft Club members would like to pass on their warmest wishes to all readers of the village newsletter, especially those behind the scenes, as we approach the end of a rather unusual 2020.

Thank you also to all our loyal members for their continued patience throughout this difficult period.

Rosa Charlesworth

The Plough Inn

Takeaways will continue, including wine, real ales at £2 a pint, draft beers and cider and full bar options. There will be more choices on the menu; please visit our website for details. We are open Tuesday to Saturday 5.30-8pm. Sunday lunch 12 -2pm for takeaway. You can order on the night but it is better if you pre-order. Christmas menus will be on our website soon.

Check our website for full information including opening hours over the holiday period. www.theplough-inn.co.uk or Tel: 868333.

Wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and Healthy New Year from all at the Plough!

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New advertising person

We want to thank Ann Sullivan who has handled the advertising needs of the *Finstock News* for several years and is now retiring. We are very happy to welcome Su Jordan on board the Editorial Committee as the new FN Sales lady.



The Parish Council has voted me Villager of the Year in tribute to my 20 years as Editor of the Finstock News. I was given a beautiful award!

Needless to say I have not done this alone. If it were not for the villagers who contribute their time to sit on the Editorial Committee, distribute the newsletters, sell ads, etc. there would be no newsletter. Special mention should be made of the contribution of Tony Hirstenstein, who handled the layout of the newsletter for most of those 20 years. All those who contribute to the newsletter by writing articles and submitting pictures and stories add to the interesting content. This is a community effort involving over 47 individuals in our community on a regular basis.



The most praise however must go to my dear husband Nick, who has supported me all these years through the rough and the smooth of collecting information, assembling it and seeing the newsletter through to its completion.

I have accepted the award on behalf of everyone, past (John, Sean and Nicky) and present who have been part of this great

venture.

Thank you,

Joy

Thanks to Joy

I would just like to say that I think Joy has done an incredible job in producing and editing our Village Newsletter for 20 years or more - I have had people emailing me from America commenting on articles in it. It always contains lovely quotes or sayings, and of course, lets us know all that is happening in our lovely village. Joy will be sorely missed.

Viv Wightman

Public rights of way

To report a footpath problem go to www.oxfordshire.gov.uk Environment and planning > Countryside > Countryside access > Public rights of way > Reporting an issue on a public right of way. You can report any problem including: Bridge/crossing; Crops; Definitive map issue; Fence; Gate; Livestock; Obstacles; Post/waymark; Signs; Steps; Stile; Tree; Vegetation.

THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Kay Connolly	868561	Member
Lesley Dore	868280	Distribution
Tony Hirstenstein	868600	Member
Joy Murphy	868575	Editor

joy.nick@gmail.com

Nick Murphy	868575	Member
Su Jordan	07824 567765	Advertising
Barbara Wells	868776	Member

Photographs thanks to staff members and others.
Read the *Finstock News* online at www.finstock.org.uk.

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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www.worldlandtrust.org/get-involved/gifts

Treesisters – Subscription from £2 a month - treesisters.org/give

Get Safe Online

getsafeonline.org/safechristmas

Bookshop.org

Stay three steps away from cybercrime

We know there is a sea of information out there around how best to protect yourself online. We also all know the horror stories of hacking, online scams and identity theft. But what are the quickest, most important things for you to do today to ensure it doesn't happen to you?

1. Create a different password for your email address (es)
2. Use 3 Random Words
3. Turn on two-factor authentication (2FA)

Now share this with 3 people



www.royaloakramsden.com



The 18th Annual General Meeting of the Village Shop took place November 4th with a difference. Because of the pandemic distancing regulations, this was the first meeting held entirely online. Nevertheless, it was well attended, with all the directors, some of the shareholders, and several others from the wider community joining in. During the more formal presentations, it was explained that while for most of us, the world had turned upside down in the last twelve months, for the shop the fortunes had been reversed dramatically. A year ago, contingency plans were being made for eventual closure. The stopgap of a generous donation from a villager offered a lifeline, and then came the lockdown, which saw daily trade soar from £100 a day to more than £500 at its peak. Though that figure has settled back to £250-300, the shop is now on a sound financial footing, albeit still restricted in its use of volunteers, but able to look ahead with greater confidence.

In his summary, Chair of Directors Rod Ireland began by noting how different our world is from twelve months ago, but the shop's financial position has also, if perversely, turned full circle. He offered his thanks to everyone who has contributed to the success of the shop, including the team of directors who achieve so much with their creative ideas, time and effort, much of it behind the scenes, whether setting gravel traps and spraying new gravel in the car park, weeding and clearing rubbish to the tip, including fly-tipped detritus of the worst kind, sourcing suppliers and equipment, investing time in grant applications, and walking many miles among the constituent villages to deliver leaflets to the doors. He offered his thanks to the volunteers, who give their commitment because of their belief in the shop and the value it adds to the

community and for their patience and forbearing during the pandemic constraints, when regulations have prevented them from working in the shop, and for their willingness to secure supplies during a time of constraint. Heather Harvey-Rice was especially called out for being impossible to expel from the shop!

Thanks also were given to the customer base, from Finstock and from the nearby villages of Ramsden, Fawler and Wilcote, and those from beyond who have supported the shop with their custom and their membership of the 100 Club. And lastly, but hugely to Karen, for displaying the qualities of a myriad of Greek mythological figures, especially in this time of crisis, for being an Atlas, and carrying the weight of the shop on her shoulders, for having the commitment of Sisyphus and rolling the boulder of shop work uphill every day and for the endurance of Prometheus (although thankfully she does not have her liver pecked out) in enduring all that the elements – and difficult customers, suppliers and others - throw at her. Thanks also to anyone else, including Clive, Karen's partner, who makes this shop the wonderful thing it is. THANK YOU. Without you all, this community would be all the poorer. We hope they all continue to support us.

Going forward, we continue to drive improvements. We have an agreed vision of how we want the shop to be. We have concrete plans drawn up. We are slowly building the funds to achieve this. We need to apply caution, because we don't know what challenges the future will throw at us. We continue to apply for supplementary grants. We need more 100 Club participants (currently we have 92, which is great for prize-winners, but every additional contributor means profit for the shop). We believe we will be successful. Life may throw exceptional challenges at us. As long as we can put our hands on our hearts and say we did everything within our power to do the best for the shop and for our community, we will have done our best.

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
Tuesday	8.30am – 1.30pm (main delivery day)
Saturday	9.00am – 1pm
Post Office Monday – Friday	9am – 1pm
Last acceptance time for postage	12.00 noon
www.facebook.com/woodpeckercommunityshopfinstock	
www.finstock.org.uk/village-shop	

Rod Ireland



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To find out more, please contact our Branch Secretary Dorian Grier: Email: dorian.cpre@gmail.com or leave a message on our office phone: Tel: 01491 612079.

The application deadline was October 31st in the first instance, but we are happy to receive expressions of interest on an ongoing basis.

There has been a 75 percent reduction in food waste from British households thanks to better meal planning, batch cooking, using leftovers and freezing.

Oxfordshire's Nature Recovery Network

Nature continues to face an uncertain future, with many birds, butterflies, flowers and other wildlife disappearing from Oxfordshire's countryside at an alarming rate. Experts from around the county are developing a Nature Recovery Strategy for Oxfordshire. You can find the first draft of a Nature Recovery Network Map, identifying places where wildlife can be helped to return. www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/biodiversity/oxfordshires-nature-recovery-network.

Recycle confusion

All over the country councils are thanking residents for their efforts when it comes to reuse and recycling. Although 9 out of 10 UK households say they 'regularly recycle', on average each household puts one or two items in the wrong bins each week. It seems there's still quite a bit of confusion about what can go where. If you're unsure what can go in your recycling or how it should be recycled check the Oxfordshire Waste Wizard. You'll also find plenty of information on what can and can't be recycled, what all the labels mean, and what happens to our recycling on the Recycle Now site. www.recyclenow.com

The Countryside Code

As more people enjoy our beautiful countryside you may be aware of reports of litter and fly tipping; farm animals being chased by loose dogs, and fires caused by campfires and BBQs damaging the landscape. CPRE Oxfordshire would encourage everyone to follow the Countryside Code when getting outdoors. (Visit the NFU website to read the advice in full, including a *Hikers Guide* to learn more about the landscape. Visit gov.uk to find out more about the Countryside Code.)

Fly-tipping reporting service goes live

A new online form will allow the user to pinpoint the fly-tip on an interactive map so they don't have to spend time trying to describe the location or looking up a postcode. That makes it is easier for the County Council team to locate and with previously reported cases visible, it also means less duplication, allowing a quicker investigation and clean-up. To report a fly-tip: community.westoxon.gov.uk/s/fly-tip.

The US and the UK produce most plastic waste per person! The UK is 2nd after the US in terms of waste. We have more work to do to reduce our use of plastic.



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Finstock School

It has been an extremely busy autumn term here at Finstock CE Primary School! In October our children began their new projects. Cherry Class were submersed into the magical world of fairy tales, goodies and baddies in their project *Will you read me a story?* Oak Class launched their project *Movers and Shakers* with a memorable experience of dressing up as a significant person in history. The class researched historically significant people who have had a major impact on the world. Our children were taught to use timelines, stories and historical sources to find out about these significant people and use historical models to explore their significance.

Cedar Class developed their knowledge of evolution and inheritance. The children investigated living things and their habitats, DNA and Darwin's theory of natural selection in their project *Darwin's Delights*. The class thoroughly enjoyed learning about DNA and carrying out experiments to extract the DNA of a strawberry!

Since our return to school we have continued to offer enrichment activities to complement our curriculum offer. Our Year 6 children have completed a cycle training programme, *Bikeability*. The children gained the important practical skills and understanding of how to cycle safely on today's roads.

In addition to this, we are extremely fortunate to have two music teachers who have been teaching 1-to-1 lessons on a variety of instruments. Ali Howes is a brass tutor and Musical Director of Witney Town Training Band. She can offer individual and group lessons in brass instruments at Finstock School to children from age 7. Instruments include cornet, tenor horn, baritone and trombone. We also have Theresa Crawford who offers 1-to-1 piano lessons. It is lovely to hear the children progress each week in their musical abilities. For more information please email office.3040@finstock.oxon.sch.uk.

We have an incredible team here at Finstock CE Primary School. Staff have worked extremely hard during this challenging time to maintain our high standards, all whilst ensuring our children are cared for and kept safe. We very much appreciate all of the support from our families and school community in ensuring we can continue to do our best for the children.

If you would like to learn more about our school, please do get in touch with the school via office.3040@finstock.oxon.sch.uk to arrange a conversation.

Leanne Dixon
Finstock Headteacher

December 18th is the last day of school in 2020. School begins again on January 5th 2021.

Girl Guides

For the last six weeks, Finstock Rainbows have been working hard on their camp skill builder badge during our outside meetings. They have learnt what it takes to be a responsible camper, how to create a shelter in the woods, how to pack their bags and how to cook without a kitchen. It has been great watching the girls embrace all the challenges outside meetings throw at us. We have also welcomed our new helpers Helen (Woody owl) and Hannah (Elf Owl) to our unit.

Moving forward in line with the new guidelines we will be returning to our online meetings where the girls will be able to work towards their bronze awards.

All sections meet on a Wednesday.

Rainbows - for girls aged between 5 to 7 years. Contact for rainbows is Sian –

finstock-rainbows@outlook.com

Brownies - for girls aged 7 to 10 years. Guides - for girls aged 10 to 14 years. Contact for brownies and guides is Kim -Kimberley.lovelock@yahoo.co.uk



The Calling Tree

Call three people today to ask how they are doing. If they call three people, the phone tree builds and we can all help reduce isolation and loneliness.

The Chipping Norton Theatre pantomime has been postponed until next year.



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Report from Liz Leffman

The County Council is living with the legacy of the first Covid lockdown and has had to make savings of £15 million in the past couple of months, because only part of the money spent on the Covid crisis, such as purchasing PPE for care homes and schools, has been repaid by the Government. While at the beginning of this financial year I was confident that we would for once in a long time have money available to repair our roads and manage drainage, we now find that there is no more money available and only those things that have already been scheduled will be done until the new financial year begins in April. Of course, if a huge pothole opens up in a crucial place, then it will be filled. If you do have an emergency of this kind to report, please get in touch and I will ensure that action is taken as soon as possible.

Although we are lucky to be living in a part of the county which is relatively Covid free, there have been some recent outbreaks in Witney, and the numbers are rising across the area. There is evidence that most of the spread comes from households meeting together. This is why the Director of Public Health for Oxfordshire recently recommended to council leaders that we should be seeking to move to Tier 2, to prevent further spread of the virus locally. However, although the Director was supported by the leaders of every council in the county, the four Conservative MPs in Oxfordshire refused to support this and appealed directly to Matt Hancock, the Secretary of State, to keep Oxfordshire in Tier 1.

That decision was made redundant when the government decided to shut-down all of England until December 2nd.

We all need to do what we can to protect older and vulnerable residents, and people in Charlbury, Finstock and Fawler have done, and will continue to do, a wonderful job looking out for their neighbours. I have been inspired by the community spirit that has manifested itself in the support that people have given to each other over the past few months. I was very pleased to be able to support the Cornerstone initiative at the Corner House in Charlbury with a grant from my Councillor Priority Fund. I have also been able to use this fund to support families around the district with tools for home learning, including some laptops. I have also given a grant to the Charlbury Community Centre to ensure its viability.

As Christmas is just around the corner, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy Christmas. I hope that we will all be able to see family and friends during the festive season, and that the New Year will bring about a change for the better.

Contact details: liz.leffman@oxfordshire.gov.uk; 01608 180153, 07741 073088.

Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock

We are open from December 2nd
Visit the **Distance** exhibition.

Distance is now ingrained in our day to day existence. Inspired by the new normal, Oxfordshire Museums Service searched the collections for art that conveys distance. The selected works portray a variety of geographical locations across the county by a mix of ages and styles, and are executed by Oxfordshire artists, including nationally significant painters such as William Turner of Oxford.

The Garden Café will re-open with the Museum for takeaways, including delicious hot mince pies to warm you from the inside, and the museum gift shop has lots of lovely gift ideas for all the family. Don't forget we have free admission!

Given the current situation with so much uncertainty, please check our website for Christmas opening hours.
We would like to wish everyone a healthy and happy Christmas!

Look out for... Cattle Egret

A rare visitor, the Cattle Egret has become established as a permanent resident in Britain and Ireland with widespread records throughout the region. Some impressive flocks have been noted at some sites, including in Somerset.

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Are we about to lose our footpaths?

When you use a footpath, do you ever wonder if it is a public one? And what makes it public?

The law is about to change, thanks to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and the change will happen at the end of 2025. After that date the historical evidence of use before 1949 that can now be used to show that a right of way is public will no longer be allowed.

How does this affect Finstock?

Take one example, the Church Allotment Field. There is only one registered public footpath across the field, which runs up from the graveyard, and turns left to the High Street. Yet there are many other paths which have been used as of right for generations, such as the one that runs along the outside edge of the field. Our Parish Council holds the documents collected in 2008, after the whole area was sprayed with Round Up and used for winter wheat. There are many other examples.

What can we do to protect a path?

Where the evidence has been gathered, anyone can apply to the county council to register a footpath. You are asking the surveying authority to make a definitive map modification order under section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The procedure is described by the Open Spaces Society:-

www.oss.org.uk/need-to-know-more/information-hub/applications-to-record-public-paths-after-twenty-years-use

What are the obstacles?

I believe that a fee is charged for footpath applications; and as most authorities have a large backlog of applications it may take a year or more for the process to be completed. If there are objectors, the order is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for determination, usually by a public inquiry. If an inquiry is held, some or all of your witnesses will have to give evidence.

More research needed?

The only evidence of which I am aware relates to the Allotment Field. Other areas, such as those used by WOOF, will need their own evidence.

Tony Hirstenstein

Solar Park in Ramsden

Plans are advancing for a solar park in Ramsden, across the road from the playground and the playing field. The seventy-acre site will have perimeter fencing running along Akeman Street and St John's Lane which is over seven feet tall. Solar panels will be installed up to the road within Ramsden's 30mph area, and adjacent to the lane opposite the Wychwood Project site in Singe Wood.

This is a for-profit development with an expected output four times and more that of Southill Solar, the Charlbury site. It is big. It is a lock-up-and-go project independent of village involvement or forward biodiversity management.

No opponents of Green Energy have been uncovered in Ramsden, but the size, proximity to the village and impact of this proposal are causing widespread concern amongst the residents. Anyone who walks along Akeman Street or St John's Lane cannot but expect to be affected by such a change to the views, the environment and the local heritage.

The publicly declared ambitions of the developers can be found in the WODC planning portal.

Finstock News readers who would like more detailed local information and who might like to express an interest or concern should contact stopakemansolarpark@gmail.com.

Government Planning Reforms – have your say!

The Government has been consulting on a major shake up to the planning system that would see:

- The introduction of nationally-imposed housing targets
- An increase in housing numbers in the south-east, but a fall in other parts of the country
- A significant reduction in local involvement. Community engagement would be largely restricted to the Local Plan making stage (as it stands, just one six-week consultation), with the public thereafter losing their ability to scrutinise most individual planning applications.

Countryside campaigners CPRE Oxfordshire are concerned about the impact these changes will have on our rural county. You can read more about the issues on their website at www.cpreoxon.org.uk.

The Government's White Paper – Planning for the Future – is out for consultation until 29th October 2020, but the debate will continue thereafter so there is still time to share your views with your local MP.

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District Councillor

I have been working on your behalf knowing how difficult it has been for us all in these difficult times.

By the time you read this Christmas will be upon us and hopefully it gives us a break and we can do a lot of what we like to do, enjoying our time with friends and family. Some, however, may be alone and I hope we all can help with a friendly telephone call or a small token or card being left at their door to show they are not forgotten.

You will forgive me if I dedicate the rest of this report to the needs of children and young people but they are often not talked about enough and their needs are as important as anyone else.

Both Liz Leffman and I are also working to ensure youth services are brought back across the district. Cuts to these services have meant a shortage of youth clubs and youth workers. We know how much is done by community organisations and individuals already but there are some gaps. We are looking to do an audit of what is being provided and we need to know what you feel could be done to support that and what else could be provided and would make a difference.

Look out for notices of a visit from Santa to be posted after the lockdown.

andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk or 01608 659462

Wishing you all the very best at this festive time.

Cllr Andy Graham

Armistice Sunday

During the current Pandemic we were unable to remember our brave young men as normal, but we performed a very small ceremony at the War Memorial in Finstock on Armistice Sunday. We observed the two minute silence, then Vicar Paul and Councillor Hywel both laid a wreath in honour of our brave young men, Hilary read the names of the Fallen from both World Wars from Fawler, and Viv read the names of the fallen from both World Wars from Finstock. Several crosses were laid, and then Viv said The Exhortation, which ended this small ceremony in remembrance of all our young men who lost their lives in both World Wars.

Coronavirus - Community support Local contact tracing system

<https://tinyurl.com/y3kuuwdo>

A local contact tracing team is in place to contact anyone who has recently tested positive for COVID-19, and has been reached by the NHS test and trace system. The national team will pass on details to the local team if they have not been able to reach someone after 24 hours. Oxfordshire County Council staff will then use their local knowledge and expertise to get in touch.

This service will run seven days a week. Calls will come from Oxfordshire Council using a local (01865) phone

number. Text messages will also be sent to people telling them to expect a call and giving you a number to call back if you want.

If we cannot reach you by phone, your details will be passed to the local district or city council team who will visit you at home. Oxfordshire Council will deliver a letter explaining why they are trying to get in touch and how to contact local call handlers.

Charlbury Surgery

Most consultations with GPs at the Charlbury Medical Centre (CMC) are now by phone and although some patients find this an efficient way of consulting their doctor, there are others who miss the face-to-face contact. It would appear that this is also true for GPs, many of whom miss seeing their patients. However, it is important to know that the CMC is following national guidance on remote consultations, (and always offer face to face whenever necessary) to avoid any potentially infected patients coming in. If an infected patient were to attend the surgery they would have to close down completely for two weeks.

If you would like to contact the Charlbury Patient Participation Group (CPPG) email Patientgroup.charlbury@nhs

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is that there is no lifeguard.*

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Finstock Unplugged

As expected, following our reluctant return to Zooming in September, we were a small group of enthusiasts, but well formed! We retained our loyal octogenarian audience member Sylvia, who, despite some hassles with the technology, succeeded in joining us. In a varied and very enjoyable session Claire treated us to a beautiful version of the Rev Gary Davis's 'Death don't have no mercy when you're gone', Patrick showcased his increasing mastery of the banjo, Jim performed as strongly as ever and there was some entertaining joshing between Patrick and Jim on the topic of obscure guitar and banjo tunings – real and imaginary! It was also good to welcome Simon, who is an

established member of Bampton Folk but who this month joined us for the first time in virtual Finstock.

In October we had another interesting evening. As before, so many of our members are 'Zoomed out' that we were a smaller group, but we had a great time revisiting some of our favourite 'oldies', and we were able to go round four times, offering a wider variety of our music. Rachel played two of her compositions: 'Windows' and 'I've Got the Blues Again' as well as songs by others; at my request Claire again sang the Rev Gary Davis's gospel-blues besides her other songs and Simon performed some of his own material as well as more traditional

folk. We had a bit of a Beatles/60-70s thing going on this month. Lara, joining us again from El Paso, Texas (one of the advantages of Zoom!) performed a lovely version of 'Blackbird' as well her own brilliant song 'Gone without a Care', while Claire and Simon also contributed songs from the Beatles' impressive back catalogue.

Although our Zoom numbers are smaller than in a 'live' meeting, perhaps the sessions have become more relaxed as a result; we continue to enjoy sharing music, but we also enjoy sharing some good-humoured chat between songs. We plan to continue to meet online for as long as necessary.

Ginnie Redstone

Finstock Halt

No real article from me other than to say that ghost trains are still passing and even occasionally stopping at Finstock Halt according to the current timetable. No longer do we have the occasional wallaby visiting the station, as we did some years ago and there is even a picture (Witney Gazette or Oxford Mail, I guess) of a couple of policemen endeavouring to catch it on the halt platform. However, there is other exciting wildlife to observe whilst awaiting trains. Animals like foxes, deer, badgers or rabbits, birds ranging from falcons or kites, rooks, magpies, jays, jackdaws or pigeons down to finches

or tits. Then there are Roman snails and grass snakes and insects of all sorts including wonderful butterflies and moths feasting on a whole variety of plants. We have nothing quite to compete with the peacocks that wandered around the lanes of Finstock some years ago either, but lots to maintain your interest whilst nature continues preparing for more normal times to return. Perhaps winter is the time to re-read those Barbara Pym novels or other Cotswold literature like the Cotswold Countryman by J Arthur Gibbs or Cider with Rosie by Laurie Lee in readiness for spring.

Mike Breakell

New way of getting urgent NHS care in Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire residents who need urgent clinical advice this winter, but aren't in a life-threatening emergency, are encouraged to contact NHS 111 before attending an Emergency Department. An advisor will direct people to the best service for their needs and if appropriate can book them into either the John Radcliffe or Horton General Hospital Emergency Department for treatment.



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Christmas Cheer



Poinsettias (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) with vivid red bracts and dark green leaves are arguably one of the most festive plants. Their striking appearance makes them the classic Christmas centrepiece for any home. They like warm conditions as they originated in Mexico, and hate cold and draughty places. Choose a plant which has good stiff dark green leaves and red bracts with greenish yellow flowers (avoid one with yellow pollen showing as it has passed its best). Water the pot only when the surface of the peaty compost becomes touch-dry.

In Mexico a charming legend goes that there was once a poor little girl called Pepita who had no present to give the baby Jesus at the Christmas Eve Service, so she picked a small handful of weeds from the roadside and made them into a small bouquet, in the chapel she knelt down and put the bouquet at the bottom of the nativity scene. Suddenly, the bouquet of weeds burst into bright red poinsettia "flowers", and everyone who saw them was sure they had seen a miracle. From that day on, the bright red "flowers" were known as the *Flowers of the Holy Night*. The shape of the poinsettia "flower" is sometimes thought of as a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem, which led the Wise Men to Jesus.

Traditionally poinsettias possess rich red bracts, which are often mistaken for petals, but there are also forms in pale green, pink and white.

The **Indian Azalea** (*Rhododendron simsii*) is one of my favourite winter houseplants, with its deep green foliage and dark red flowers, just perfect for Christmas. These need a cool windowsill at 10-15C, out of direct sunlight, the compost in their pots must not dry out to ensure a good display. Maintain high humidity around the plant by standing it on a tray of pebbles, filled with water to just below the base of the pot, and remove the dead flowers immediately – this prolongs flowering too. They will be killed if exposed to frosty conditions, so need to be kept indoors at 5-10C.

Another choice of mine is the dark red Cyclamen with its attractive, dark green heart-shaped leaves and light marbling. *Cyclamen persicum* is not hardy, but makes a superb houseplant. Water from the bottom and when the soil surface is just moist, drain well, and it will look good for several months. Also keep the plant at a minimum of 15C (59F) avoiding draughts.

Having healthy plants with gorgeous flowers in the home at Christmas will lift the spirits during these trying times. I wish all of you a happy relaxing Christmas.

Best wishes, Robert Bigwood



Leaves of Grass

Walt Whitman

This is what you shall do: love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labour to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence towards the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown, or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons, and with the young, and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school, or church, or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul; and your very flesh shall be a great poem, and have the richest fluency, not only in its words, but in the silent lines of its lips and face, and between the lashes of your eyes, and in every motion and joint of your body

(With thanks to Poems for Breakfast from the Oxford Poetry Library.)

WODC backs comprehensive Carbon Action Plan

A major plan designed to cut carbon emissions to zero at West Oxfordshire District Council has been agreed by councillors.

Following a comprehensive review of all assets and activities, the Carbon Action Plan sets out a course of action as it drives towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030.



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