

# Finstock News 122

Serving Finstock, Fowler, Wilcote, Mt. Skippett and Finstock Heath

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*What an extraordinary few months we have experienced. The lockdown gave us enough time to become bored, to try new activities and new ways of doing things. Owning a dog has provided a valid reason to be outside in our lovely spring weather. Shopping has become an entirely new experience first with shortages as panic buying took hold of our brains, and then wearing masks and gloves and standing in lines two metres apart before being allowed into the store.*

*Villagers have been outstanding in their support of one another and in their Thursday night participation in support of our essential workers. Please enjoy this issue of the Finstock News.*



## Polar Bears, Lions, Leopards and a Deer in My Finstock Garden!

Shortly after moving to our house on the edge of Finstock over twenty-seven years ago, our son, then aged six, told us that he had seen a reindeer in our garden!

As we settled into our new Finstock life my wife, our three children and I, began to notice the wealth of local wildlife including muntjacs and fallow deer; we have yet to see a reindeer!

We had expected to find such wildlife in the Wychwood Forest and

in the surrounding area. This was part of our reason for moving to Finstock, but we were delighted to find it in our own garden too.

I have always been interested in wildlife and conservation. Travelling on many trips to the Arctic to photograph polar bears; in Africa I photographed lions, leopards and other wildlife; and many other species in other countries. However, I have recently become fascinated with wild deer.

The daily train commute to London for my IT work in the city gave me time to write my first novel, **Down To The Up Up**. The book is a light-hearted fantasy inspired by the Wychwood Forest area. The main characters are young people and the indigenous wildlife.

The story takes you on a dangerous and romantic adventure. It also tries to speak to some of the important issues of today including protection of our environment and morality.

You can find **Down To The Up Up** on Amazon. It is self-published but I would really like to get it published properly! I also have ideas for a sequel and would like to write a wildlife travel book. As I consider future semi-retirement, it would be wonderful to do more professional photography locally (please look out for my advertisement in a future **Finstock News** edition!).

Paul Ogborne.  
Tel: 868388  
Email: [PaulOgborne@aol.com](mailto:PaulOgborne@aol.com)



## Rainbows, Brownies and Guides

Lock down isn't stopping our Rainbow unit. They have fully embraced our online meetings and are working hard to complete badges. We have so far completed our imagination badge and beginning to work through the mermaid badge. The unit has also created a link

with Rose Bank care home in Bampton and we have been sending them art work and letters.

All Rainbows, Brownies and Guide units have the opportunity to take part with their families in this month's camping badge at home. The girls are encouraged to pack their bags, set up camp in their gardens and plan an evening meal for all to enjoy.

We are still looking for volunteers to help our units remain open once we get back to physical meetings. If you would

like to help please contact Sian or Kim on the emails below.

All sections meet on a Wednesday.  
Rainbows - for girls aged 5 to 7 years.  
Contact for Rainbows is Sian - [finstock-rainbows@outlook.com](mailto: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](mailto:Kimberley.lovelock@yahoo.co.uk)

You can view the Finstock News online at [finstock.org.uk/the-finstock-news](http://finstock.org.uk/the-finstock-news).



# VILLAGE EVENTS



## Finstock Self-isolation group



There have been few requests for assistance from the twenty volunteers who formed the Finstock Self-isolation support group. We're supporting six households at the moment with bits of shopping, occasional prescription runs and a regular pub meal delivery. It would seem that Good Neighbourliness is alive and well in Finstock and a good deal of next door support is going on, which is great in so many ways! The shop, of course, is still a central pillar, with Karen doing small deliveries, as well as keeping the door open most days. Team work...

Don't forget to get in touch for any support during this lockdown period! Contact: [finstocksis@gmail.com](mailto:finstocksis@gmail.com), or phone 07809 741735

Pete and Annie



## Bottle caps raise funds

Your soft plastic bottle tops can be donated to me to help raise funds for The Gift of Sight. We collect only milk bottle tops; that is, blue, green, orange, yellow and red variety. We cannot accept anything else. Please drop your milk bottle tops off at 63 High Street, Finstock. Joy Murphy

## Ladies, give us your support!

Give all your unwanted old bras a new lease of life and help raise money for breast cancer research. Bring them to Joy Murphy at 63 High Street. Against Breast Cancer will receive a donation based on the weight of bras we collect, so every bra counts!

**The Tokyo Olympics**, postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic, will begin July 23rd 2021 almost exactly a year later than originally scheduled..

## SOTA Gallery and Framing

Opening its doors back in 2012, the vision of the gallery owners was to promote British and Oxfordshire artists and has been a great success for the husband and wife team Andrew and Jennifer Harrison. The SOTA gallery has grown over the years and expanded to house over 100 artists. Displaying Original Artworks and prints by local artists as well as some of the UK's bestsellers and over 30 ceramic artists to give them one of the best collections of handmade ceramics in Oxfordshire. A variety of sculpture from wire figures to wood, metal and bronze is always on display, as well as a beautiful selection of jewellery and glass. The gallery is welcoming and friendly, has full access for wheelchairs, pushchairs, children and dog walkers are always welcome to visit.

Witney Framing is situated inside the SOTA Gallery, off the Market Square, in Langdale Court. We offer a high quality bespoke framing service with over 300 frames to choose from and a wide selection of mounts and glass. We are able to frame your Original Artworks, Prints, Certificates, Medals, Sporting Memorabilia, Family Photos and Keepsakes.

We use conservation materials to protect and preserve your pieces. Andrew and Jennifer are trained in all aspects of framing and are here to assist and advise you in finding the perfect look for your picture.

# SOTA

## Gallery

[www.sotagallery.co.uk](http://www.sotagallery.co.uk)

Registered in England & Wales  
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Email [villagehallfinstock@gmail.com](mailto:villagehallfinstock@gmail.com)

### Finstock Village Hall

At the time of writing, the Hall remains closed until further notice. The loss of our communal asset reflects the vacuum many of us are experiencing – the inability to meet over shared passions, to exercise together, or to celebrate joyous events is a source of frustration. For the trustees of the Hall, it also represents a vital loss of funds, which the break-even model we operate requires to maintain the building and offer the facilities at the rates we do. We have of course striven to reduce every reasonable outgoing, applying for all available rebates, to minimise the damage.

When we eventually get permission to reopen, no one can be sure of the terms on which we'll be able to operate, or what restrictions we will be required to maintain. A good example to illustrate this is the beer festival, the Finstock Ale, which would be in its eighth year in 2020. Currently scheduled for the weekend of Friday 4th/Saturday 5th September, it's an event whose proceeds are essential to the Hall's budget. It pays for the cleaner and the caretaker throughout the year. It funds the Good Companions' Christmas Lunch. And its success ensures we can continue to hire out the Hall to local community groups and clubs at very competitive rates.

Because it's now a largely indoor event, we can if needed push it out further into the year. But there are still several questions to be answered. Will brewers be brewing beer again of the extraordinary types we like to showcase? Will our wonderfully generous sponsors be able to donate towards the barrels of beer after the economic constraints of lockdown? Will we be hampered by social distancing, restricting numbers attending and the ability to have close conversations with friends? And how do you quaff a pint of ale while wearing a face mask?

At the time of writing, we haven't even ordered the glasses with a 2020 logo (three months' lead time) or organised the Big Lottery (though we can confirm the ability to win your weight in beer will feature once again when we do get going). But when the time is right, we will stage the next Finstock Ale and we will find you exceptional beers and ciders to try. We will deliver a Good Companions Christmas Lunch, no matter how creative we need to be. And I'm sure the Hall will once again play host to parties, clubs and celebrations of all kinds. We hope

to see you all there before too long.  
*Rod Ireland*

### Finstock Craft Club

When we suspended craft club at the start of this dreadful period in our lives, none of us could possibly have imagined the extent of the crisis ahead. The hearts of all our members' go out to all those who have suffered the pain and devastation of losing loved ones. And while we hear daily stories of the fortitude and heroic efforts of so many, I'm sure you will also have been struck, as have we, by the generosity of our friends, neighbours and family, who have been there for us throughout this really difficult time.

I wonder how many out there have turned their thoughts to crafting, to fill the unexpected hours they may now have available to them. I suspect quite a few will have dusted off their sewing machines, got out the old knitting needles or paints and glues in a return to something they'd long forgotten or 'didn't have time for any more'. Hopefully, they will have felt the benefits, not only in the satisfaction that it brings but also because it is believed to be extremely beneficial to your health. There are also enormous benefits from spending time with like-minded people so, when the whole world has safely been returned to the new 'normal', stick with it and come and see us at the village hall. Please email me if you would like to know more at: [rosacharlesworth@icloud.com](mailto:rosacharlesworth@icloud.com) or telephone: 869283.

*Rosa Charlesworth*

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## News from the Parish Council

The PC has continued to operate despite the lockdown through group emailing to discuss and decide issues and make payments.

Our May 25th meeting was via Zoom and we will hold meetings as normal on the fourth Monday of each month at 7.30pm. If you wish to participate you will be able to find the relevant Zoom code on the Finstock web site prior to the meeting - <https://finstockpc.org.uk>. This will be available for the June meeting. If you wish to speak to the Council, the usual arrangements pertain. Please contact the Clerk in advance so that the agenda can be arranged.

Sadly the Playground remains closed but when you read this, restrictions may have been relaxed. If and when it is opened, the web site will provide the details.

The Village Shop has proved a vital service to us all in these fraught times. Our appreciation to Karen and supporting volunteers for maintaining high stock levels particularly of the everyday necessities of bread, milk and eggs.

When normal times return it would be wise to remember the role the village shop plays in providing an easily accessible resource which will be gone if we do not support it as fully as possible.

Hywel Davies for the Parish Council

*Hywel Davies for the Parish Council*

### **Pale Blue Dot**

<https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap200214.html>

Thirty years ago, Voyager 1 looked back toward Earth and saw a "pale blue dot", an image that continues to inspire wonderment about the spot we call home. In his 1994 book, *Pale Blue Dot*, Carl Sagan comments on what he sees as the greater significance of the photograph, writes:

Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and

peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there--on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner, how frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds.

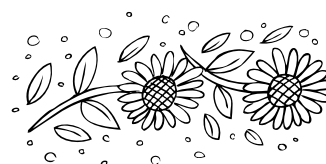
Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.

The Earth is the only world known so far to harbour life. There is nowhere else, at least in the near future, to which our species could migrate. Visit, yes. Settle, not yet. Like it or not, for the moment the Earth is where we make our stand.

It has been said that astronomy is a humbling and character-building experience. There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.

*Carl Sagan*

**2020 is the 125th anniversary of the National Trust. [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)**



### **THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE**

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Photographs thanks to staff members and others.  
Read the *Finstock News* online at [www.finstock.org.uk](http://www.finstock.org.uk); or write to us at 63 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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## Woodpecker Community Shop and Post Office

Out of darkness cometh light. At the turn of the year, our Shop and Post Office was perilously close to having insufficient funds to keep the doors open. Thanks to a very generous and timely donation from a wonderful person in the village, we were afforded an extension of a few months. Then the world as we knew it turned upside down. And it turns out, so did the fortunes of the Woodpecker Shop. The support from the local community has been tremendous, our trade has more than doubled and our new-found prosperity means the future appears far more assured.

So a huge thank you to all who have come and shopped with us; to those who have brought in much needed supplies of essentials like milk, cake, biscuits and wine (our recent top selling lines) as supermarkets restricted volume purchases; to all of you who have respected the protocols on queuing to enter the shop, and understood our reasons for shortening the opening hours. And of course a massive round of applause for Karen, no longer able to have volunteers work in the shop, having to stand with the door wide open in brisk spring chills, and flying around the county after work to bring in produce.

The phenomenon of Covid-19 is sure to stay in our memories for years. The hope is that as we begin to get our lives back, we remember the value of having our local Shop and Post Office, and continue to use it.

Current opening hours during lockdown:  
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday and Friday 9am – 1.30pm  
Saturday 9am – 1pm  
Post Office Monday – Friday 9am – 1pm  
Last acceptance time for postage 12 noon

*Rod Ireland*

## Update from Friends of Finstock School (FoFS)

FoFS hasn't met since the start of lockdown, and several planned events (Pamper Evening, Chocolate Bingo, Garage Sale, Sponsored Walk and Summer Fete) have sadly been either cancelled or postponed due to the current uncertainty. FoFS may be hosting an online event or two over the coming few weeks, but we are holding off on resuming any further fundraising efforts until parents, school

and everyone else know what the future holds. It's a difficult time for everyone and thus not optimal for fundraising! We are very much looking forward to resuming some kind of "normal" activity - both in terms of fundraising, and school and community social events - as soon as is practical when social gatherings are again deemed possible by the UK government. This may be some time. In the interim, please keep an eye on our Facebook page for any further updates - and stay safe!

*Su Jordan*

## An Update from Finstock School

The quietness of Finstock during lockdown is nowhere more noticeable than outside the school with the absence of traffic and lively red-uniform clad children. But let me reassure you that Finstock school children are still very much involved in learning.

If I have ever been guilty of taking the school and its staff for granted, it is over the last few months that I have realized what an important and difficult job they do. And they are still doing it. Each week teachers provide parents with lesson ideas, online resources and projects they can follow. Teachers are also making contact with families by phone, to provide support, feedback and reassurance. At the same time the staff has designed a curriculum for the next academic year, so that our children can catch-up. They are doing a great job in very difficult circumstances.

This is a changing situation but the school is planning to provide some on-site learning for Reception, Year 1 and 6 children at Finstock or at our sister school, Queen Emma's, from the June 1st. This is very welcome news.

Similar to all organisations, our fundraising activities have stopped. We are currently raising funds to create an outdoor learning environment at Finstock School. If you would like to donate to this important project please use the QR code below or email me: [rbarkworth@finstock.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:rbarkworth@finstock.oxon.sch.uk).

*Rob Barkworth*

*Chair of Finstock School Local Committee*

**"The Night Watch" online @Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum..**

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# COUNTRYSIDE CONSERVATION

*Life begins the day you start a garden.* Chinese proverb

## Bokashi composting

My last article mentioned Bokashi. Now it is time to go into details.

### History

Bokashi is a bran made from EM, which means Effective Microorganisms. They were discovered by Dr. Teruo Higa, a professor at Okinawa University researching safe and harmless microorganisms. He collected several strains all in the same bucket. One day, he decided to sprinkle them on a patch of grass. A week later, it was obvious that the growth of grass on the patch was significantly better than the grass elsewhere. As none of his students did experiments on that spot, he was certain that the mixture of several different types of microorganisms he sprinkled had made the difference.

After much trial and error, Dr. Higa discovered an optimal mix in 1980 that promoted healthy plant growth and coined the name "EM" for that group.

### How do you use it?

First of all, you need a pair of sealed bins: the Bokashi process is anaerobic. Every time you put some kitchen waste into the first bin you add a handful of the Bokashi bran and seal the bin until the next application. When the first bin is full exchange it with the second bin and carry on until the second bin is full. By now the first bin is probably ready to be emptied, and there is likely to be a white mould on the top, which

is a good sign! Simply bury the Bokashi compost in the ground (not too close to plants) or in a compost heap.

The beauty of this system is that it will deal with cooked food and even meat. The microorganisms will benefit the ground they are put in. And Dr. Higa's institute EMRO makes sure those EM products cannot be commercialized.

Dr. Higa now reports that in South Korea EM combined with alcohol has been used to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. <https://emrojapan.com/living> See also <https://bokashiworld.blog>. [Livingsoil.co.uk](http://Livingsoil.co.uk) will provide the best bins, also the bran.

*Tony Hirtenstein*

## We love our birds

The most abundant species found in the English Farm Woodland Bird Survey were the blackbird at 84 percent, followed closely by the woodpigeon at 83 percent and the blue tit by 82 percent.

The estimated number of birds in the UK as reported by the British Trust for Ornithology is 85 million breeding pairs, followed by the robin, wren and great tit. The song thrush, sky lark, starling, and house sparrow appear on the Red-listed species, meaning the percentage of breeding pairs is dangerously low.

## Nature recording for your village -

how to use *inaturalist*

Benson Nature Group's brilliant YouTube video on dipping a toe into biological recording: [https://youtu.be/J2f\\_SPphXuM](https://youtu.be/J2f_SPphXuM). It gives a step by step guide to identifying and recording the wildlife you see, even in gardens. *inaturalist* is easy to use for the novice recorder with a smart phone.

## Count Pollinators in your garden

you just need 10 minutes to watch insects

Training resources and information and where to send your results

<https://www.ceh.ac.uk/our-science/projects/pollinator-monitoring>.

**The Waste Wizard** is an online tool to kill the confusion around recycling and help Oxfordshire defeat General Waste. Type in your postcode and the name of any item to find out whether it can be reused, repaired, donated or recycled - [oxfordshire.gov.uk/wastewizard](http://oxfordshire.gov.uk/wastewizard)

**Residents and businesses** are being urged not to dump waste in communal recycling areas.

For everyone's safety please refrain from dumping it in public spaces. Anyone caught flytipping will face prosecution and a large fine.

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(NB: Temporary class in Leaffield Hall every Thursday 7pm while Ramsden Hall is closed for refurbishment)

## Deborah Manning School of Dance

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***Music can be defined as "the exaltation of the mind derived from things eternal bursting forth in sound."***  
St Thomas Aquinas

## Online Shows

The effects of social distancing and lockdown measures due to COVID-19 have been frustrating for everyone in some way. For those of us whose work depends on public gatherings, the restrictions have been particularly thwarting.

As a full-time musician, my calendar has essentially been cleared for the foreseeable future (although some would suggest - perhaps unkindly if not inaccurately - that social distancing has been observed at my shows for years). I was lucky in that I had just completed a tour before social distancing was

## Music, Music, Music

fully introduced, although I have subsequently had a German tour cancelled along with all of my summer dates. Some musician friends of mine have had far more work cancelled or put on hold.

Fortunately, the age of the internet allows the show to go on in some way. Many artists are now streaming live shows regularly over Facebook, Instagram and other platforms. I have been doing this myself at 8pm every Tuesday and Friday in a US-based Facebook group called 'Live From The Lost Highway'. The group was created by Joey Allcorn, a country music artist and historian who works for the Hank Williams Museum. This has been a huge bonus for me as it allows me to play live and still interact with fans whilst also serving as a welcome distraction. Not only that, but fans have been tipping me

very generously via PayPal. Tipping is by no means compulsory but all artists appreciate it at a time like this.

Some have found other creative ways to keep music alive. In April my friend Scott Southworth played a gig at a care home in Tennessee by setting his gear up in the car park and playing to the residents through the back doors. I'm also aware of artists playing live to their neighbours from their gardens; although you will be relieved to hear I am not at such a stage of testing the village's neighbourly goodwill just yet.

If you want to catch one of my live streams you can join the 'Live From The Lost Highway' group on Facebook (show times subject to change): **Facebook.com/groups/LostHighwayNetwork**.

*Ags Connolly*

## FINSTOCK UNPLUGGED - ONLINE!

When lockdown forced The Plough to close for ordinary business, we mourned the loss of the congenial, supportive atmosphere there. However, we were determined not to give up our acoustic sessions on the last Monday of the month, so with some trepidation we decided to experiment and see if we could continue our sessions online.

In March, after a crash course in Zooming, we 'met' online for the first time. Fortunately many of our regulars were willing to give it a try and despite the limitations on audio and bandwidth, the sound held up pretty well. It was cheering to be able to keep the sessions going despite the lockdown, enabling us to continue to share our songs and instrumentals with fellow acoustic musicians. At that first meeting, a couple of our regulars were defeated by the technology, but I am delighted to say that by April we had all got accustomed to online meetings, so that everyone who wished to take part or listen, was able to attend.

During lockdown we have also welcomed newcomers who have found us through personal recommendation; these include people who perform their own material as well as those who

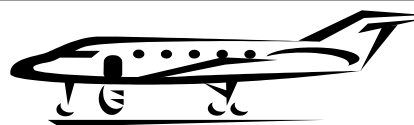
uphold the great folk tradition. The acoustic instruments that one might hear at our sessions are becoming ever more varied: the latest addition to the mix is a mandola to add to the fiddle, Dobro, bouzouki, cello, banjos and assorted guitars, not to mention the occasional use of whistle and harmonica. We hope that when we are permitted to meet in person again at The Plough, Finstock Unplugged can

celebrate with an even more eclectic mix of sounds than we have offered before. Let's hope we can return before too long!

*Ginnie Redston*

***"Truly there would be reason to go mad if it were not for music."***  
Tchaikovsky

Clinic is temporarily closed due to the Corona virus lockdown.



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## County Council

This has been a very strange time! The lockdown started on my birthday, March 23rd, so I celebrated with some friends on a Zoom call, in what was to become the first of many such social calls. We are all getting a lot better at using the available technology, and as I write WODC and the County Council are preparing to have their first online full council meetings. Like many people I speak to, I find that technology doesn't make up for the fact that we are not able to get together in person, and may not be able to do so for many months to come, but it does help, and we have seen some wonderful initiatives, such as the Speakeasy, using technology to help us through the lockdown.

Finstock, like every community in my ward, has a large number of willing volunteers, who are helping those who are required to self-isolate with shopping for food and medicines. The number of people who have come forward as volunteers is amazing. It shows how strong the community spirit is, and how generous so many people are, I would like to thank everyone for all that you are doing for your neighbours. I know that many of you have also been impressed by the work that our bin men have continued to do throughout the pandemic, and I have passed on the thanks of residents to them.

The County Council has been very much at the centre of managing the pandemic. The shortage of PPE has been a great concern to all, especially in the care sector. In April the County decided to allocate £1 million to the purchase of PPE for carers when it became apparent that the government had failed to provide this. This has been distributed to care homes and also to carers who visit people in their own homes. Financial help has also been given by the County Council to care homes to ensure that they are able to maintain the level of PPE that is required. As well as social care, Public Health is a County Council responsibility. The lack of testing has been a great concern. Mental health during the lockdown is also a big

concern for many and help is available 24/7 for adults on 01865 904997, and for children on 01865 904998.

Who knows, by the time you read this we may be out of the lockdown, but if not then I hope everyone in Finstock will remain safe and well throughout this pandemic, and I look forward to seeing you again soon. If you need to contact me, please do so as I am always available, and of course I continue to work as your County and District Councillor.

**Liz Jeffman**  
County Councillor  
01608 810153,  
[liz.jeffman@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:liz.jeffman@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## District Report

Dear Residents,

I hope you are all safe and well. Liz and I have been phoning local residents who are on a vulnerable list to ensure they have everything from shopping, prescriptions and for any health issues that they may need on a weekly basis. Fortunately, they are generally well looked after thanks to friends, family and the community/neighbours.

Having said that there were a few who did not have that support and we have a back up support of officers who are ensuring their needs are met by the council and the various agencies.

We are all turning to virtual meetings and I have been hosting meetings on

a weekly basis for councillors in West Oxfordshire and part of the leaders group in Oxfordshire ensuring we link up services putting the health and well being of our residents as the top priority in facing this pandemic.

Both Liz and I are here to assist so please do feel free to contact us.

The community response has been great and a tribute to what we in this country can do better than any government. We are working together in real ways with that kindred spirit doing the little things that matter.

My thoughts and prayers are with those who lost someone in their family to Covid 19. (I lost an uncle recently, so I know.)

Keep safe and well -- we will come out of this and I look forward to celebrating that with you.

**Cllr Andy Graham**  
07908832632 or  
[andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk)

## Bulky Waste collections

Up to three items per household including: furniture, white goods and large electrical items.

Not at this time: beds, mattresses, sofas or carpets. [www.westoxon.gov.uk/bins-and-recycling](http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/bins-and-recycling).

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## New babies



would like to share the news on the arrival of their Son/Brother Thomas William Crockford born on 26/04/2020 weighing 7.11lb , Thomas is doing very well and is a very happy little baby and can't wait to meet you all when it's safe.  
Xxxxxx

*Helen Fallows*

Congratulations to Simon and Katie Baker of Hill Crescent on the birth of their son Thomas Heath John on March 30th. Simon writes, "He is bringing us much joy in these troubled times."

*William, Amy, Harriet and Scarlett*



## Star Gazing with a Difference

Monday April 20th was going to be an evening of looking out for the Lyrid meteors. Suitably dressed I went outside to observe the meteor shower, but the thing that caught my eye was a string of satellites going west to east -- just to the south of the Plough, one in the sky and the other at the bottom; eight satellites in all over 25 minutes.

This was highly unusual and, as I found out, was part of Elon Musk's Starlink satellite programme to place in orbit some 12,000 satellites with the aim of improving global internet coverage. These first few were part of a payload of sixty satellites being launched in the initial low orbit, and then going further out to become geostationary orbit, which by then will be unnoticeable, we are told.

Come Tuesday further observations were carried out at 9pm. In the space of 20 minutes, 28 satellites were counted! There were six in view at any one time. Wednesday night I counted only two at 9.30pm and one shooting star!

As for the Lyrids, I only saw a single one! But that is stargazing for you.

*N Murphy*

Editor's note: Starlink is a satellite constellation that is being constructed by American company SpaceX, founded by Elon Musk.

## Organisation: Planet Four

Help explore the surface and weather of Mars' south polar region. A researcher said, "With your help, we are learning about seasons on Mars, from activity below its dry ice polar caps to winds in the atmosphere of the Red Planet." [www.zooniverse.org/projects/mschwamb/planet-four](http://www.zooniverse.org/projects/mschwamb/planet-four)

## Oxford University to divest from fossil fuels

Oxford University, according to the CAG (Community Action Groups) newsletter has made a landmark decision to divest from fossil fuels. Along with its decision to pull all direct investments in fossil fuel companies, the motion requires endowment managers to request evidence of plans to achieve net-zero carbon dioxide emissions from companies across Oxford's entire portfolio of investments.



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## Extraordinary Beer, right on your doorstep!



If you've come along to the Finstock Ale, or indeed the summer Finstock Festival in recent years, you'll have had the opportunity to sample the range of extraordinary beers from two of our very local breweries. The good news is that you can still get your hands on their beers, delivered right to your door! Forget cans from the supermarket and enjoy real draught beer in beautiful condition.

Little Ox Brew Company is based on the industrial estate in Freeland. Originally, there were two breweries – Little Ox, founded in 2016 by Ian Hemingway at the Freeland site, and Oxbrew, founded by Aaron Baldwin over at Eynsham. Both brew fuller flavoured modern core beers, bitters, pales and stouts and both were keen to push the boundaries and explore further. It's hard to run a brewery single-handedly, not just brewing the beers that you are so passionate about, but marketing them, delivering them, and then chasing the accounts to collect the money owed. There are more than 2,000 breweries in the United Kingdom today, the highest number for centuries. So it made sense in 2019 for the two breweries to merge and pool their talents and energies at the Freeland site. Ian and Aaron share the same philosophy on their vision, to continue to offer a core of great beers, some of which have featured in the Plough as well as at village events: Wipeout, Goldilox, Yabba Dabba Doo, Oxford Pilsner Lager and others. But in addition their passion for brewing drives them to try other experimental brews, including sours and double IPAs. They recently brewed a hugely impressive Imperial Stout in collaboration with The Oxford Artisanal Distillery (TOAD), using enormous oak barrels to age the

beer for months before bottling. They are open for off sales between 9 and 5.30 on weekdays. Once restrictions are lifted they will be opening a taproom on Friday evenings and all day Saturday. If you call them on 881941, or order on their website: [littleoxbrewery.co.uk](http://littleoxbrewery.co.uk) they'll deliver to your home.

You may have heard that this year, the Witney Beer Festival has "gone virtual"? The two hour event on May 9th featured local bands and musicians through the medium of Windrush Radio, as well as various talks and tasting notes from local brewers. This year the festival is raising funds for coronavirus support groups in West Oxfordshire such as the Mayor's Learning Resource Appeal, and both the Combe and Stonesfield Mutual Aid Groups. It wouldn't be a beer festival



without beer, so Little Oxbrew created a case of beers sourced from local breweries – some may still be available; see their website.

Church Hanbrewery, based on the New Yatt business Park, offer very different beers. Brewed in small quantities, avoiding the use of finings (so vegan-friendly), always using high quality (and often unusual) ingredients, their beers include a red beetroot ale, honey and oatmeal porter, a mango wheat, and smoked beers, as well as IPAs and golden ales. These wonderful brews are the creation of husband and wife team Christian and Luciana, originally from Brazil. And once again, they will deliver (868998 or order online [facebook.com/churchhanbrewery](https://facebook.com/churchhanbrewery)) Thursday to Sunday. What's more, they have teamed up with Sartorelli's an independent takeaway pizzeria, so you can enjoy a delicious pizza with your pint.

Good drinking and we hope to see you at the next Finstock Ale!

*Rod Ireland*

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### Free entertainment at home:

Museum of Modern Art –  
[moma.org](http://moma.org).

Aurora boralis -  
[liveauroranetwork.com](http://liveauroranetwork.com)

National Gallery virtual tours -  
[www.nationalgallery.org.uk/visiting/virtual-tours](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/visiting/virtual-tours)

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*Finstock*

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### The Plough Finstock

Opening times for takeaways:  
Monday closed  
Tuesday to Saturday 5 - 7.30pm  
Sunday 12-2pm

Phone any time – 868333 - preferably the day before to ensure time slot and full menu availability. However, it's not a problem if people want to order on the night or day

If I'm not here to take phone calls, I will always return missed calls when I return to the pub.

Menus are on the website under Take Away Food and they are updated every day.



## Finstock Baby and Toddler Group

We hope you are all keeping well and safe at home during these strange times. We have been missing you all and our regular Wednesday group - we will certainly have some catching up to do when we start up the group again and we can't wait! At the time of writing, we don't yet know when that will be - we will be following Government advice on how and when the lockdown will gradually be lifted and when groups will be allowed to gather together again. Sadly it may be some time, but please keep an eye out on the Toddler Group Facebook page - we will make any announcements on there.

Until then, take care and enjoy the sunshine!

*Helen and Tammy*

## Finstock Donkey Derby



In August 1995, Finstock villagers enjoyed themselves betting on donkeys at the donkey derby. Fifteen donkeys ridden by local children provided lots of laughs in six races at the village playing field off Hill Crescent.

The donkey derby, a new event, was held in association with the annual village fete.

Together they raised £570 for the running costs of Holy Trinity Church and the Village Hall roof repair fund. So far £500 of the £3000 needed to repair the roof has been raised.

The fete also brought in £400 – considerably more than the £250 raised at last year's fete. There were 12 stalls plus a beer tent, Aunt Sally and a raffle.

Mrs Judy Burrige treasurer of the village hall committee, which organised most of the event said, "We are quite pleased with what we got. There was a good turnout although some people wandered off when it rained." (Thank you John Chipperfield Witney Gazette archives

## Waste recycling centre

Household waste recycling centre Dix Pit (Linch Hill, Stanton Harcourt, OX29 5BB) has reopened. You should only visit the site if you cannot safely store your waste at home. For an initial period, no hire vans or trailers will be permitted onto sites. [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wastereopenquestions](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wastereopenquestions)

To keep residents and staff safe, there are some changes including:

Reducing opening hours to 8am – 4pm to allow for cleaning

Limiting the number and size of vehicles

Introducing social distancing measures

## Do you have equipment on loan from the NHS that you are no longer using?

All the NHS services in Oxfordshire, together with the County Council are appealing for the return of equipment which you are no longer using. They need it to help to cope with the current demand.

A new system is in place for the return of any health-related equipment which has an NRS sticker on it. (NRS is the name of the company now responsible for loan equipment.) The sticker will

be firmly stuck to the equipment and will include a bar code. If you find any stickers then telephone 01869 225 420 or e-mail [enquiries@oxfordshire.nrs-uk.net](mailto:enquiries@oxfordshire.nrs-uk.net). Please do not attempt to return the equipment in person.

NB - You may find equipment which has not got an NRS sticker on it. Hold onto this until a system is put in place for that equipment to be returned as well.

## Wild about Gardens

The Wildlife Trusts and the RHS set up Wild about Gardens to celebrate wildlife gardening and to encourage people to use their gardens to take action to help support nature. Many of our common garden visitors – including hedgehogs, house sparrows and starlings – are increasingly under threat. But together we can make a difference. This year's campaign draws inspiration from the dazzling new film, *The Secret Garden*, as it brings the magic of wildlife, childhood and gardening to the big screen this Easter. <https://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk>

*"Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do." Goethe*

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## My favourite plants for shady places



area with rich reds, oranges and ambers of different hues.

For excellent autumn colour try one of the new red leaved varieties of *Bergenias* (elephants ears) which, in spring, produce red, purple, pink or white flowers. *Geranium Rozanne* is a real must for August-November with fine foliage and a continual production of exquisite blue flowers.



In my opinion nothing much beats the gorgeous carpet of velvety green leaves with white spots and rich blue and red flowers produced in spring, by the 'Soldiers and sailors' (*Pulmonarias*). Then there's the magically shaped flowers called 'Angel wings' on their erect stems are the *Epimediums* with their evergreen elegantly shaped leaves, red or bronze when young, turning a fresh green. *Epimedium* has been used to treat conditions from hay fever, to atherosclerosis, nerve pain fatigue, osteoporosis and found to act like *Viagra*.

Outstanding are the silver heart shaped leaves of varieties of *Brunnaria microphylla* (Siberian Bugloss) such as 'Sea heart', and its bonus of rich blue clusters of flowers in April. There are some white flowered forms if you prefer a white border. Its uses include the treatment of cuts, bruises, phlebitis, coughs and bronchitis as well as producing a red dye.

Old personal favourites of mine are the dark red flowers of *Hattie's pincushion* (*Astrantia*) and who can resist *Granny bonnets* (*Aquilegia*) producing many surprise colours; the red ferny foliage of *goats beard* (*Astilbe*) sporting long fluffy tufts of white, pink or red flowers and *Hosta 'Orange Marmalade'* bearing green leaves with broad yellow margins, contrasting beautifully with its purple flowers. For best results, grow in partial shade, ideally with some morning sun to bring out the colour of the leaves. Other excellent *Hostas* are 'Francis Williams' and 'Pauls glory' which are tough and, surrounded by sharp grit, resistant to slugs. For light shade, try (coral bells) *Heuchera* producing a tapestry of colour, brightening up any

One of my new favourites is *Hellebore argutifolius* 'Snow Fever' an evergreen perennial with pinnate cream-mottled, holly shaped green leaflets, flushed purple when young. It produces clusters of nodding, bowl-shaped, primrose-white flowers in the spring.

I like to arrange close planting and cover the ground between with 2" of mulch, to suppress any weeds. This minimises the need to turn over the soil, reducing the release of extra carbon dioxide, and preventing weed seeds germinating. Mulch also prevents the soil from drying out, encouraging worms and other organisms to improve the soil for healthier plant growth.

Why not try growing something new each year, it provides an interesting challenge and something to look forward to.

*Robert Bigwood*

### Get your ear in - birdsong

Birds bring a wonderful soundtrack to spring, and even in towns and cities the array of voices can be quite dazzling. If you are trying to develop your skills in identifying bird songs, you are best off initially trying to familiarise yourself with a few of the more frequent songsters. <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw/about/news/latest/2013/spring-song>

### Voluntary Work

Go to our website to see all the volunteering opportunities available in Oxfordshire. Over 50 groups are offering regular or one-off volunteering

opportunities. [www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/directory](http://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/directory). (Wild Oxfordshire)



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