



Finstock News 130

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

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"The end of the summer is not the end of the world. Here's to October..." — A.A. Milne

Indeed, autumn is with us and when A.A. Milne created this quote he was waxing whimsically about the change of seasons rather than the condition of the world! What a contrast with today. On August 9th the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued a "code red" on human driven global heating, declaring that "Climate change is widespread, rapid, and intensifying, and some trends are now irreversible, at least during the present time frame". Much news over the past year or two has focused on the Covid pandemic that has affected us all in many ways. Increasingly I suspect that news will now focus on aspects of climate change and what might be done to mitigate or reverse the worst effects, and coverage of these issues may well increase on the pages of Finstock News too. I recently re-visited the Centre for Alternative Technology in Mid-Wales, a truly inspirational place to visit and learn from. It was my third visit over a thirty-year period and, although the technology has developed, the fundamental principles are still the same now as back in the 1980's. Further back I recall a scientific friend talking about the ice caps already melting. We've known of the problems and many of the solutions for nearly half a century at least, but still there seems a sense of surprise about the wildfires, flooding and other catastrophic events that we've seen in recent years.

The UK will be hosting the COP26 climate change conference in Glasgow in November and will be in pole position for demonstrating real global leadership in tackling the climate emergency. This edition of Finstock News covers some of the initiatives

being developed nearer home, but let's also see what we can do, going forward, as individuals to address this global crisis.

During these Months:

October 3, 1990 - After 45 years of Cold War division, East and West Germany were reunited as the Federal Republic of Germany.

October 13, 1884 – Greenwich mean time was established as the universal time from which standard times throughout the world are calculated.

November 1, 1993 - The European Union came into existence as a result of the Maastricht Treaty.

November 4, 1890 - The first electrified underground railway system was officially opened in London.

Letters to the Editor

We are writing to express our concern about this year's management of the two fields between Finstock and Ramsden on the far side of the Longcut. In recent months these fields have been treated with herbicide at least twice, possibly three times and now they have been ploughed right up to the field margins with loss of access and semi natural habitat.

We are concerned because there is significant evidence that herbicides are detrimental to soil fauna, soil structure and decrease water holding capacity at a time where we need to be managing our soils for maximum health. It also appears to fly in the face of the current necessity to manage the land for beneficial carbon sequestration

and with a caring response given the desperate loss of biodiversity we are experiencing.

The soil in these fields comprises clay and Cotswold brash and is not inherently fertile for food crops. It may have a yield as pastureland, but it could, with imagination, be a great opportunity for agroforestry which would also yield social benefit for the community and over time, future fertility for the soil and local biodiversity.

*Kath Lucas and Geoff Griffiths,
Finstock for Nature*

To the Editor

My brother and sister-in-law were discussing the housing problem facing those Afghans (and the same applies to Syrians) who have managed to reach the UK, often with nothing more than what they are standing up in. He has a large barn converted to a residence; I have no more than a spare room. Is there any way that we can help these people, most of whom are highly talented and speak perfect English (or at least the head of the family has English)? Are there empty or nearly empty properties in the village?

Tony Hirtenstein

**--- STOP PRESS ---
more on this on page 11**

**Don't forget you can view
the *Finstock News*, in colour,
online at [finstock.org.uk/
the-finstock-news](http://finstock.org.uk/the-finstock-news)**



VILLAGE EVENTS



The Plough Inn

Wow! We cannot thank you all enough for the humongous amount of support you have shown us at The Plough Inn ever since we reopened. We have been busier than ever, and it's all down to you! To all our incredible friends, locals and customers, thank you, thank you, THANK YOU!

More than ever, we highly recommend booking a table a few days before you're planning to dine with us. There's nothing more we hate than having to turn away hungry customers!

When booking, please inform us of any dietary requirements and if you'll be bringing your four-legged friend! We have a designated dining area in the pub where we allow your pooches to join you (we also provide them water bowls and a treat or two!).

Don't forget that we still are offering our incredible deals throughout the week. Come on down on Tuesdays and get two-for-the-price-of-one on our 'Tempura Battered Fillet of Cod and Triple Cooked Chips'. Fancy a steak instead? Not to worry! We offer our incredible Steak House deal on Thursdays which includes two 'Bakers of Witney' 21 Day Aged Sirloin Steaks and a bottle of wine for only £39.50! Or perhaps you'd prefer to welcome in the weekend and start your Friday with a bottle of half price fizz? We truly have something for everyone!

If you're trying to plan for Christmas, our Christmas brochures are ready and situated around the pub and on our website! From family get together, to office parties, we'd love to host your celebrations. Psst! Our Christmas dates typically get booked up very quickly, so if you're thinking of joining us for the holidays, make sure you get in there quick!

Do keep an eye out on our Facebook page for updates on new dishes, themed nights and special offers.

To book a table, please contact us on 01993 868333, or book online via our website - www.theplough-inn.co.uk

Update from Finstock School

In September we welcomed back our fantastic children into their classes to start an exciting new year. We also welcomed new children into our Nursery and Reception classes who got stuck in straight away, making new friends and learning new skills. The classrooms have been invigorated with fresh displays and our teachers have been working hard to plan inspiring lessons ready for our pupils' return. We are proud of our school and the strides we are always taking to ensure our learning environment is inclusive and engaging for all pupils.

Cherry class returned eager to start their learning! Their topic 'Me and My Community' has involved learning about all the people who help us and they have enjoyed role playing in our class animal hospital and dressing up as firefighters and police officers. They are developing their communication and friendships and we are very excited for what the rest of the year will bring.

Our children in Oak Class have all settled in wonderfully and consistently demonstrate our school values of ready, respectful, and safe every day. They have been learning all about the history of Finstock in their topic "School Days" and have been exploring the local area. They really enjoyed walking through the village and mapping all of the interesting sights!

Our children in Cedar Class have travelled back in time to experience Roman and Anglo-Saxon civilisations in our topic 'Invasion.' They have learnt about life in Britain after the Roman withdrawal and significant people, such as King Athelstan. The children have also been busy learning about food decay and preservation in their science topic 'Fresh Food, Good Food,' and about how the artform of weaving has developed over time in their Design and Technology topic 'Warp and Weft.' We look forward to updating you on all our new learning as we immerse ourselves in our new topics: 'Sow, Grow and Farm' and 'Ancient Civilisations.'

We do have spaces at Finstock School in all year groups. If you would like your child to attend, please do get in touch with the school office office.3040@finstock.oxon.sch.uk. You may also like to visit our website www.finstock.oxon.sch.uk where you will find out the term dates and also be able to watch our virtual tour video: tinyurl.com/y6ch3p9n

L. Dixon, Headteacher



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The Hall is now fully open for our normal range of events. We are holding our AGM at 7.30pm on Monday 8th November in the Hall, and you are very welcome to come and join us.

Finstock Local History Society

Friday 15th October: - COVID regs permitting, the first event of the 2021-2 season of the Finstock Local History Society will be held in the Village Hall at the usual time of 8pm on.

The meeting will feature a report of **The Great Prize Fight at Whiteoak Green, 1846**. The talk will cover the build up to the prize fight and outline the events of the 12th May 1846. The prize fight took place at Whiteoak Green in front of an audience of 1000 people. As the day unfolded many of

those involved would have witnessed a truly astonishing occasion in this quiet area of West Oxfordshire although for some it would have brought trouble and strife. Using contemporary newspaper accounts, census returns, maps, fieldwork and local records the speaker will provide a detailed account of the day, concentrating on some of the characters involved and what they got up to on the day and of course the aftermath. We will look at the site of the prize-fight and the route that the spectators took to finally reach the chosen ground.

Please note that as this our first talk of the 2021 season there will be a refreshment break at 8.45pm and the talk will aim to end at 10pm. Ringside seats are available.

Friday 19th November:

“After Female Suffrage – what happened between the wars (1919 - 1939)”

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

look at Finstock itself. Again, in the village hall at 8.00pm

Friday 10th December:

A talk by Frank Collingwood from the Oxford Bus Museum titled **“The life and times of William Morris, later Lord Nuffield”**

Finstock Baby and Toddler Group

By the time you read this, our group should have re-started after an 18-month gap and we couldn’t be happier to have our regular meet-ups back again! Whilst restrictions have been lifted, we intend to run the group cautiously to begin with as it’s been such a long time and ask that you book in advance to attend the group, while we find our feet again and decide what works best for the group. Please follow us on Facebook for ongoing updates or alternatively you can email us on **finstocktoddlergroup@hotmail.com** for further information. We are open Wednesdays (during term-time) from 10-11.30am in the Village Hall - we can't wait to see you!

Many thanks, Helen & Tammy

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A Sloe Walk

I am sure that most villagers will have enjoyed a walk down Dark Lane to the Evenlode. But, have you taken a slow walk to take in this delightful part of our village?

Take time to watch and talk to Simon's sheep, dotted around the Limestone valley as they nibble their way across the landscape. They are really quite inquisitive and if near the fence will assume you are there to provide extra sustenance. Please do not feed the animals. The sheep enjoy the pasture alongside regular visits by the local Barn Owls who regularly search these slopes.

I enjoy the stony ground as the path leads you to more even ground. It feels well walked and appears to be a regular route. But where to?

Today, the sign says Dark Lane

but it has also been known as Blind Lane, indicating a dead end but that of course is not the case. The path takes you uphill past the site of Tappewelle, the long-deserted site of a small settlement. No doubt the inhabitants used the lane to visit and trade with Finstock folk.

As I walked the path in mid-August the crop had been cut in the former open field and ploughing was underway, the gap between the two events seems to get closer each year. No chance of gleaning here. The birds were enjoying the game of follow the tractor and included eleven Red Kites. A delight to see them wheeling and tumbling. The Fallow deer, the current inhabitants of Topples Wood, were unhappy with the noise and disturbance and

headed off for quieter pastures.

Our path is part of the perambulation of the forest that took place in 1298 and 1300 in order to try to ascertain the limits of the Royal Forest. A veritable posse of men, named as jurors, would have ridden the perambulation and trotted up Dark Lane no doubt much to the amazement of folk from Tapwell and Finstock.

Today, we still see the occasional horse rider and walkers and their dogs are plentiful enjoying this fine narrow valley before heading either to Fawler or Wilcote.

As for the Sloes. Well, they are there if you know where to go and this looks to be a good year for them. Try Sloe Gin this winter. Cheers.

Vicus

I live in the English countryside, so I'm surrounded by magpies. Kenneth Branagh

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Pete Welply	868140	Editor
petewelply@btinternet.com		

Photographs thanks to team 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.



To break even, the shop needs an average daily revenue of £350 per day. Over 75% of this sum is the cost we pay for all the goods you buy. The remainder covers wages, utilities, insurance, bank and accountant charges, repairs and maintenance and other sundries. In the last six months of 2020, we were achieving this target. As the restrictions eased into 2021, we started to see a decline. The first quarter's average daily income dropped to £325, in Q2 it was £284 and since July it's been £283. That's the reality.

Our AGM takes place at 7.30pm on Monday 29th November at the Village Hall. You are very welcome to come and join us as we discuss how to retain the shop and post office in our community.



Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire is looking for volunteers.

We are looking for volunteers to help with administration, giving advice, client support and volunteer recruitment. Could you contribute 7-8 hours per week? No specific skills are required. Full training will be provided. All you need is a desire to help others. Find out more at tinyurl.com/ynaxhxm

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Our Barbara Pensom

Barbara is leaving the village and the area. Her contribution and participation in village life was beneficial to the organisations she participated in and to the wider community in general.

Many special memories come to mind including her time sitting on the Parish Council as well as her attendance at Parish meetings as a concerned villager. She and Roger were early financial investors in the Village Shop, as well as working in the shop. Barbara was one of the Women's Institute ladies who worked on our hand-embroidered village tapestry and was instrumental in preserving it and having it photographed for posterity.

The Finstock Local History Society recalls how Barbara spent hours/days translating and transcribing 16th century handwriting of historic wills to support the research behind Two Wychwood Villages. She and Ros Faith came up with the idea of a talk on the Suffrage campaign and recruited a small group to do the research, develop and present the very successful Determined Women evening in 2018. She was a spirited Mrs. Alys Russell BA in the re-enactment of a 1914 suffrage meeting in Witney.

As for me, Barbara was an early participant on the Finstock News Editorial Committee and influenced me, as the Editor. She stepped up to take meeting notes and once even took over the editorial chair while I was on holiday. She supported the newsletter by writing articles, delivering the newsletters and so much more. She believed that the newsletter was an important part of village life.

Barbara's time in Finstock has been an example of good citizenship. She cared about this village and its denizens. She was a friend to many and she will be missed.

Joy Murphy / Michelle Greenwald



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COUNTRYSIDE CONSERVATION

"To be a conservationist is to be an eternal optimist...when you are trying to change the world." – Jan Deblicu



The latest consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 has now launched and **runs until the 8th October**. The Oxfordshire Plan will set the development framework for the county for the next generation. It will affect all Oxfordshire residents, either directly (through development) or indirectly (through impacts on services, infrastructure, our countryside and rural character).

CPRE Oxfordshire is fighting to make sure that the growth options are deliverable without undue damage to our countryside and include good policy proposals for getting to net zero and restoring nature. That means guiding development to the right places and building high-quality compact housing to make the best use of scarce land.

We urge you to respond to the consultation – it is our best chance of influencing both the outcomes of this Plan and the OxCam Arc proposals.

Have your say NOW – it's too late to act when the bulldozers arrive.

Find more information on the **CPRE Oxfordshire website** www.cpreoxon.org.uk



Pete Brady

Wychwood Forest Fair goes ahead at Foxburrow Wood

Local people in West Oxfordshire made the most of the summer sunshine at the Wychwood Forest Fair at Foxburrow Wood, Witney.

Several thousand people attended the historic Fair, which was founded in the 18th-century as a peaceful counterpart to the then-rowdy Witney Feast.

After the original Fair stopped in the mid-18th century, it was refounded in 2000 by the Wychwood Forest Trust to celebrate rural crafts and conservation in the 120 square miles of West Oxfordshire once part of the Royal Hunting Forest of Wychwood, while raising money to support their work restoring habitats in the area.

Attendees enjoyed attractions from ferret racing to pony rides, live music to live hedge-laying at Foxburrow Wood,

which is a new nature reserve on the outskirts of Witney purchased by the Wychwood Forest Trust in 2009 using proceeds from previous Forest Fairs, and transformed in the last decade from bare field to thriving wood.



Cereta Drewett

Local community and conservation organisations including Windrush Against Sewage Pollution, the Combe Mill Society, Wild Oxfordshire and Cotswolds AONB exhibited at the Fair, alongside local rural crafts groups and small businesses.

Local musicians Torrin, 1000-Mile Highway, Cigani Knees Up, the Monkey Fists, David Fitzgerald and Laura Jones christened a new music stage in a clearing in the wood, supported by a generator from the Oxfordshire Music and Arts Trust.

"My only regret was £1 lost on Bob the ferret," commented one visitor to the Fair. "There was a buzz, excitement and happiness amongst the stallholders and visitors, obviously helped by near-perfect weather."



Cereta Drewett

The Wychwood Forest Fair will be back next summer for locals to enjoy. If you would like to find out more about the Wychwood Forest Trust's work, visit www.wychwoodforesttrust.co.uk.

*"Listen! The wind is rising,
and the air is wild with leaves.
We have had our summer evenings,
now for October eves!"
- Humbert Wolfe*

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The Hempcrete Shed - Proudly announcing the creation (still in progress) of our hempcrete shed. Hempcrete is as it suggests...but in more detail, an environmentally friendly material made of hemp stalks (shiv) mixed with a lime binder.

It has fantastic thermal properties and is also excellent at carbon sequestering. We cast on site with this project which was messy and hard work but we are very pleased/relieved with the result and the caterpillars have moved in en masse to pupate inside which is very flattering indeed. Flagging this up as we would be delighted to spread the word about hempcrete and also very happy to show you the result. It won't be available for ever to see in its raw form as it will need to be rendered but if your interest is aroused then please do get in touch. Kath and Geoff 01993 868487 or drop in to 55 High St

West Oxfordshire District Council sets the bar for green housing with launch of free online toolkit

Homeowners and developers looking to boost the green credentials of their property can find out everything they need to know at the click of a mouse thanks to the launch of a brand-new online housing toolkit. Packed full of the latest guidance on how to achieve low-carbon, low-energy homes, the Net Zero Carbon Toolkit is the brainchild of West Oxfordshire District Council, Cotswold District Council and Forest of Dean District Council.

Set out in a practical, easy to follow format, the toolkit is aimed at builders, architects and consultants as well as those looking to self-build. Covering everything from pre-planning, design and construction, even down to the types of products on the market, this is a one-stop guide for anyone looking to build a new property so they can include all the measures needed to make sustainable homes which are fit for the future."

The guide also covers where carbon and energy gains can be made through retrofitting a range of measures to existing properties. A major focus of this document is about how householders can modify their existing homes to help them cut heat loss and how they can invest in renewable energy options to reduce the costs of running their homes and make them more sustainable.

"To help people plan and budget, the toolkit gives a breakdown of the likely costs for each element based on whether the homeowner is looking to undertake a cheaper 'shallow' retrofit, which could save around 30% of a home's carbon emissions, or a 'deep' retrofit which could achieve up to a 90% reduction in carbon emissions.

"Minor modifications can start from as little as £20-£50 and while larger projects, such as installing solar panels, will require greater upfront investment, householders should see an immediate reduction in energy bills, helping offset the costs. Homeowners can, in some circumstances, even receive income for excess electricity sold back to the grid.

To encourage everyone to start making the best environmental choices and switch to low-carbon homes, the Net Zero Carbon Toolkit is available to anyone, including commercial organisations.

The document is now available for free download from West Oxfordshire District Council's website: www.westoxon.gov.uk/netzerocarbontoolkit



Cllr David Harvey, Cabinet Member for Climate Change at West Oxfordshire District Council holding a hard copy of the Net Zero Carbon Toolkit

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OTHER AUTUMN NEWS AND EVENTS

North Leigh History Society

North Leigh History Society is back in business! After over a year of waiting we are up and running with a full season of programmes. As there is clearly still some level of virus around, we are moving to North Leigh Memorial Hall (OX29 6SA) as this will allow easier social distancing and greater spacing between chairs.

At our 5th October meeting Dr Tom Crook will be telling us the story of 'The Great Stink of 1858', when the stench from the Thames became so unbearable that it brought about new legislation to control our rivers and waterways, and raised to eminence an unlikely hero, Joseph Bazalgette. On November 2nd we have a talk about 'The Falklands' by Squadron Leader Geoff Burrell. The Argentinians call these islands Las Malvinas and their ownership has been contested for more than 150 years. Come and find out more about the last conflict fought over them between Argentina and Britain.

A year's membership is £18 or you can come as a visitor to any one of our talks for £4. Further details are available from Diana Power (01993 882301) or Robert Kyte at kyterobert@gmail.com. We look forward to seeing you soon.



Ramsden goes Jazzy! Friday 8th October (8.00) in the Memorial Hall

First peek into October: all the way from Scotland, Ian Millar and Dominic Spencer's 2021 jazz tour reaches Ramsden. This saxophone and piano duo are billed as "the UK's hardest working jazz group". Expect warm, intelligent, reflective, human music.

Tickets are £10 for adults; accompanied under-16s are free. There will be a cash bar. To reserve tickets, call Liz or Mick (our new Hall Managers) on 07384 974055 or email hallbookings@ramsdenvillage.co.uk.

West Oxfordshire District Council

is pushing forward with plans to tackle the climate emergency across the district, helping to reduce its carbon footprint and working with businesses and communities to protect the environment.

Over the past six months great progress has been made in a number of areas including supporting the roll-out of electric vehicles, work to make homes of the future zero-carbon and protecting local wildlife and its habitats.

The Council's recently released 'Net Zero Carbon Toolkit' (see page seven) has received national recognition, with other organisations across the country looking to use the toolkit themselves.

The Council is also working with local communities on their own plans, supporting local town and parish councils to develop their own climate plans.

Cllr Harvey said; "The response from the community to tackling climate change has been brilliant. I would encourage everyone to think about what they can do in their local area and to speak to their local council if they have any ideas..."

"We have work to do to make everything we do as a council carbon-neutral but it is a target we will continue to work towards alongside supporting our communities to do their part in tackling climate change... As a Council, we have made a big culture change to put the climate emergency at the heart of all our decisions..."

The report outlining the WODC plans can be read at tinyurl.com/j2a86mxr

(Extracted from the WODC Newsletter)



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News from the Parish Council

This is our shortest report of the year as the PC does not meet in August. Our summer seemed rather grey and overcast but apparently warmer than average. However, early rain and continued warmth have led to some spectacular floral displays around the village.

There is one important issue of vandalism at the Adventure Playground. The PC view this with severe disapprobation and will pursue the offenders. The Playground is an important part of village facilities for young families. It is well used and appreciated. It is inspected annually to ensure everything is working and safe for all. This costs money, our Council Tax money. Vandalism is simply crass and anti-social and affects us all!

If anyone has any information relevant to this, please contact the Clerk or the Chairman. Your information will be treated confidentially. Email: june.pratley@btinternet.com

Hywel Davies for the Parish Council

News from the County Council

The County Council has had a break during August, but business has continued as far as the new administration is concerned. We are committed to putting decarbonisation and climate resilience at the heart of our policies, as well as tackling inequalities and supporting everyone in the County to achieve their full potential. To this end we are in discussions with bus companies to set up a partnership which will improve access to buses across the county, and we have applied to the government for funding to create a fleet of electric buses in the City. We will be building more cycle lanes, and we have started work on a new way of managing grass verges that will ensure safety at the same time as protecting wildlife.

The previous administration included £250,000 in this year's budget intended to extend 20 mph speed limits across the county. They did not put in place any strategies for doing this but we are working on a new policy and this will

come to the October Cabinet meeting. A pilot is taking place with five villages around the County and starting this autumn we will roll this out. We will support this with more funding in next year's budget. Money will be allocated to villages that express an interest in putting a 20mph zone in place, so I urge Finstock and Fawler to get an expression of interest in as soon as the scheme opens.

In my capacity as Leader, I am also a member of the North Cotswold Line Task Force, and I will be working to make sure that my commitment to dualling the line between Charlbury and Hanborough is met, so that our train service can be improved and sustained.

**Liz Leffman. 01608 81153, 07741 073088,
liz.leffman@oxfordshire.gov.uk**

Wish list may be set up for donations of very specific items for refugees

People in Oxfordshire will be able to donate very specific items to support Afghan refugees with the help of an Amazon wish list that can be set up for that specific purpose.

As is the case throughout the UK, a small number of refugees are currently in temporary accommodation in the county having previously been in COVID quarantine after their initial arrival. In future there will be permanent homes for them in the UK, including some in Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire County Council is providing a wraparound package of care for new arrivals with experts from social care and education.

Councillor Liz Leffman, the leader of Oxfordshire County Council, said: "As we've said before the people of Oxfordshire have been incredibly generous in their response and many of the items they donated during August have been put to good use by the people who have arrived in our county.

"We are now at a stage where we don't need further donations of items. However, there may be occasions in future when we need very specific items to meet specific needs as families go through the very gradual process

of adapting to their new surroundings away from their home country. We thought an Amazon wish list would be an ideal way to get a message through to our kind-hearted residents if and when we need specific items quickly.

"As councils we have the same safeguarding responsibilities to these new residents that we have to people who are in the care of our adult and children's social care teams. However in delivering that care to the refugees there may be moments when the wider public can provide real assistance – and that's where the wish list will come in very useful.

The Amazon wish list would be activated should any needs arise and shared on the county council's social media channels.

People are able to make donations to a number of national appeals, including the British Red Cross and to Asylum Welcome:

<https://donate.redcross.org.uk/appeal/afghanistan-crisis-appeal>

www.asylum-welcome.org/the-afghan-community-needs-our-support/

What makes me really happy is a walk in the English countryside.

A nice sunset, that British countryside - it means I'm home.

– Natalie Dormer



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Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Park Street, Woodstock, OX20 1SN

SOFO Museum first opened during the summer of 2014, tucked away in the beautiful gardens in the grounds of The Oxfordshire Museum and Woodstock Library.

More than a local military museum, SOFO is a museum that everyone can enjoy, from kids to parents and grandparents. We tell stories of how conflict has affected the county and its people, from soldiers serving on the front lines to ordinary people living on the Home Front.

On top range of ever-changing displays and events and our permanent exhibits explore topics that you'll find surprising and moving in equal measure, such as raw accounts of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen from both camp survivors and Oxfordshire soldiers.

SOFO holds a collection of over 3,500 objects and 7,500 archive items from two county regiments, the Queens Own Oxfordshire Hussars (QOOH) and the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. These are our starting point for reflecting on the county's rich and diverse military heritage.

Already installed at the museum is a model trench which was built with help from local Cadets when SOFO first opened in 2014. The trench has proved a hit with visitors of all ages, and an invaluable tool when teaching the First World War to visiting school groups.

When fully funded, an air raid shelter experience will become a vital part of SOFO's WW2 education sessions which teach about the changes to life at home during wartime, while regular visitors will be able to enjoy it during our opening hours.

www.sofo.org.uk frontofhouse@sofo.org.uk
01993 810 210

News from the Charlbury Medical Centre

At the time of writing, we have no news about the flu vaccination programme nor about booster vaccines. As soon as we hear anything we'll let you know.

People in Oxfordshire are being urged to use the right NHS service as hospitals in the county continue to be very busy. It comes following ongoing high attendances at the John Radcliffe and Horton General hospitals, which provide emergency and urgent care across Oxfordshire. Sara Randall, the Trust's Chief Operational Officer, says: "Our hospitals are still very busy. We would urge the public to help us to help you by choosing the right NHS service ... **Unless it is an emergency, please use the NHS 111 online service which offers patients quick advice on the best option for them to get the care they need**, including getting a call back from a trained clinician or nurse, booking them an appointment in an Emergency Department, or providing advice on how to help them recover.

We are fortunate to have Witney Minor Injuries Unit nearby. When should we go to MIU?

Minor Injuries Units (MIUs) are for injuries, such as deep cuts, eye injuries, broken bones, severe sprains, minor head injury, minor burns and scalds.

Many people go to Accident and Emergency departments when they could be treated just as well and probably quicker at a Minor Injuries Unit.

In Accident and Emergency, staff must give priority to serious and life-threatening conditions, so if you go there with a minor injury you may have to wait longer to be seen. It is better to go to a Minor Injuries Unit if there is one locally.

Please call 111 or the unit directly prior to attending the Minor Injury Unit to arrange an appointment. Upon arrival you will be asked to wait in your car until a clinician is ready to see you.

These measures have been implemented due to COVID-19 to reduce contact with other patients and staff.

Witney MIU, telephone number: **01865 903 841** (Minor Injuries)

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Susan Smith, Charlbury Patient Participation Group, steering committee

"We learn from history that we don't learn from history"
– George Hegel



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Traveller's Tales

Biggest overland peacetime expedition ever -

In 1969 I was one of the London drivers on Comex 3, an overland Commonwealth expedition to India led by one Colonel Gregory, who had much experience of life among the Gurkhas in India and had led overland expeditions twice before. On this occasion there were around 500 of us, roughly 25 per coach drawn from various British Universities and a cross section of London life. My three-month summer holiday was hardly like Cliff Richard's, but I was one of four folks sent by the Greater London Council to drive a new Bedford Duple 29 seat coach safely to Delhi and back after passing my London Transport driver's PSV test. A month out via Belgium, Germany, Austria, Greece, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, then a month in various locations in India before returning overland. Representing youth and international goodwill we met officials (including Mrs Gandhi and President Giri) and presented variety shows (including Shakespeare, folk songs, poetry and dance including excerpts from the new musical *Hair*).

En route, through Kabul (at that time with a King and a Royal Palace and the seat of Government), which was quite extreme with some very traditional housing areas and some others, largely shopping opportunities for the hordes of visiting Western Hippies to purchase gems, or fake statues or Afghan coats or hats for the winter. There was the wonderful Khyber restaurant on the roundabout in the centre of the city where you could get a really good meal in the local currency (afghanis) for around five shillings (25p!). Then there was the glorious drive through the magnificent Khyber Pass and equally wonderful Kabul Gorge. Scary too with busy winding roads and oncoming speedy buses, or overloaded trucks as well as unfriendly tribesman on the nearby hills. The only time to my knowledge that I have chatted to a murderer, driving a tractor and armed to the hilt whilst fearful of revenge from the family who he had hurt, yet calmly ploughing his land whilst I had

a break from driving and a quick dip in a mountain stream.

You can see more on the Commonwealth Expedition by searching for Comex 3 on YouTube.

(to be continued)
Mike Breakell

Finstock Unplugged - August 2021

Although we miss the cosy, welcoming atmosphere at the Plough, which remains our spiritual home, for the time being we continue to locate our 'Unplugged' sessions at Wilcote Art Studios. Given the ongoing concern about Covid-19 and its variants, the extra space and ventilation offered at Wilcote allow our more cautious attendees to feel at ease. In August, *Unplugged* was smaller in scale, as so many of our regulars were busy elsewhere, either at Shrewsbury Folk or at the Brasenose Arms, Cropredy, but nonetheless we were treated to some very good music.

Although Jim D. had also been at Cropredy with his band, he continues to support us despite the increasing demands on his time as Creative Director of Folk Weekend Oxford. He made an enormous contribution, both with his own songs and in improvising support for other musicians.

It was great to hear Richard, the Creator of Wilcote Art Studios, play and sing for the first time in his own location, performing some fine close harmony original songs with Laura and Rachel; they all sounded great! Rosie and Paul C, presenting songs both separately and together, were also in good form, and it was a treat to hear Rosie playing on her dulcimer. As always, Colin G entertained us well, initially as a soloist and again later, when he enlisted Jim D to play along with him in a blues number. Frances W played and sang a traditional song beautifully, prompting some pleasant chat about the significance of plant and flower references in folk song.

**Next three Monday dates for
Finstock (Ffolk) Unplugged: 25th
October, 29th November, 27th
December**

In other news, we are delighted to announce the success of our first

'bijou' gig at Wilcote Studios, which took place on August 19th. This is a new joint venture involving 'Ffolk' Unplugged, FWO and Wilcote Art Studios. We provide spaced seating for an audience of approximately 30, but listeners need to bring their own beverages – and a cushion, if they wish! Listeners may enjoy performances by skilled folk musicians who are attracted by the unusually congenial location and the excellent natural acoustics of the high-ceilinged studio space. Our August concert featured The Diggers, a high-energy guitar and fiddle duo, with support from Jim Driscoll, guitarist, music historian and singer-songwriter.

A second concert is now planned: this will feature **The Boot Band, with The Hex Project as support, at Wilcote Studios on Friday October 1st 2021.**

Ginnie

STOP PRESS

Afghan refugee resettlement

Statements from the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing, including:

"To help our current effort we are looking for private landlords to come forward with 3-4 bed homes in the local area we could use. If you think you have a house that could be used visit our website for more information at www.westoxon.gov.uk/refugeesupport"

The full statement can be read at tinyurl.com/nreymb84

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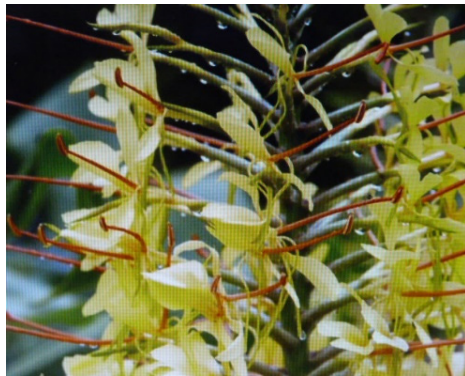
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Autumn colour in the garden

As days begin to shorten, we start to think of berries and autumn foliage colour, but this is also the season when an unexpectedly wide range of hardy perennial flowers start to come into their own, providing a rich source of nectar for butterflies and bees late in the season.

An old favourite not seen so much in gardens today are the Michaelmas daisies, with their vast choice of rich blue, violet, red, or pink flowers. On the lower slopes of the Malvern Hills, and well worth a visit in late September/October, is Old Court Nurseries with its spectacular display garden of these beauties.



If you prefer a yellow palate, try *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen', with its masses of lemony-yellow flowers and dark centres smothering the bright green foliage. Another gem is the impressive, rich yellow *Ginger Lily*. These super-charged treasures throw out tall, upright stems of bold banana palm-like leaves which pad out your planting space with lush, jungle-like greenery.

Late-summer through to autumn these sturdy stems are topped off with a truly fabulous, large flowerhead, formed of highly fragrant ornate yellow blooms with striking red stamens for an extra eye-catching display, bringing a new burst of colour and freshness to the garden just when it's needed most. I found, despite their incredibly exotic and impressive looks, growing *Ginger Lilies* (*Hedychiums*) was easier than I first thought. They just need a good sunny spot in the garden with a nice rich soil, are very strong, and their chunky stems support themselves well, so there's little need for staking.

Hedychium gardnerianum is known to be one of the most hardy and resilient.



Another choice plant is the hardy *Plumbago* (*Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*) with its rare combination of foliage and flower colours. The clusters of blue flowers open in September and October on wiry reddish stems, then the leaves start to turn scarlet as the flowers reach their peak. They are great at the front of a sunny border or container.

Another of my personal favourites is *Cyclamen hederifolium* carpeting a woodland floor. It is a hardy autumn flowering species with large corms sitting almost on the surface of the soil, lying dormant through summer until September when delicate flowers of pink or white emerge from the centre of each one. Attractive, patterned, ivy-like foliage follows to give interest through much of winter. They do well in dry shade so planting them under established trees and shrubs helps brighten darker spots.

Schizostylis is perhaps one of the most under-valued and under-used garden plants. As long as it is given a water retentive soil with lots of sun, it is prolific in late autumn with bright, bold pink and red flowers. I have found it to be flowering right up to Christmas Day!

Happy gardening,

Robert

A few jobs for the garden during October

The change in weather will have a definite impact on the plants in the garden.

- **Plant evergreens**
Plant evergreen shrubs this month while the soil remains warm.
- **Cover plants before frosts**
With an increased likelihood of frosts with the minimum temperatures dropping, all tender plants should be under cover before the first frosts.
- **Get out and enjoy the beauty of autumn leaf colour**
Enjoy autumn colour as deciduous trees begin the process of severing their leaves. Bright warm days and chilly nights result in the best autumn colour.

- **Tend borders and clear spent plants**
Gardeners with stiff sticky clay soils can press ahead with tending borders, clearing annuals and spent vegetable crops and with digging before winter rains set in and make the soil too wet to handle or stand on.

(source: metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice)

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