



# Finstock News 105

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|                                    |   |                        |    |
|------------------------------------|---|------------------------|----|
| Finstock Festival .....            | 1 | School, Shop & PO..... | 7  |
| Village Events .....               | 2 | Village Hall.....      | 8  |
| Beer Festival .....                | 3 | Russia.....            | 9  |
| PC, District reports.....          | 4 | Walks.....             | 10 |
| Sm Ads, County and MP report ..... | 5 | Triathlon.....         | 11 |
| Conservation .....                 | 6 | Gardening .....        | 12 |

## FRIENDS OF FINSTOCK SCHOOL (FoFS)

Thank you to Finstock Community Projects (FCP) for inviting the School to join with the Finstock Festival again this year. Using the infrastructure of FCP is a massive help to us and in return they are then free to enjoy some of the Festival weekend themselves whilst FoFS and the School hold their annual School Summer Fête and Raffle in the afternoon. We had a great day! Thank you so much to Sonia Sherrell, Dawn Simpkins and Lisa Williams for their super organisation of these events for FoFS.

Our Fête raised an impressive £1,102.90 and the Summer Raffle raised £1,015.08, which totals an incredible **profit of £2,117.98** from our summer fundraising activities. This fabulous amount of money will go to support our terrific school. Just to put this figure into context, our profits totalled £1,944 last year and £1,077 at the Summer Fête in 2015.

Thank you to those who did your bit and turned the day into a wonderful success: families, staff and the community for buying and selling all those raffle tickets; all the donations of teddies, bottles and tombola prizes; all the baking and refreshments; helping to man stalls, organising the inside of the marquee and field, clearing up afterwards; sponsorship and loans of items. Thank you for everyone who came along to enjoy the day with their families!

If you have any feedback to give to us on this event, please do send us an email so we can make the Fête even better next summer!

The monies raised from this event and from other recent events are being held until our new School Head is appointed so we can make sure that the money is spent in the best way possible to enhance the experience of our children.

As another school year ends, we are looking forward to next year. We have many changes to our Committee from September with many long-standing members leaving us and being replaced by new faces. May I take this opportunity to say thank you for all the help and support provided by the FoFS Committee and from our trusted bank of FoFS helpers and to give a very warm welcome to those about to join us! Whilst our numbers are good, we are always glad to have new members join our Committee and you don't need to have any connection to the School to help us. If you would like to lend a hand in some way please get in touch.

Many thanks for all your help and support; we hope you enjoy a wonderful summer!

*Rachel Mackenzie (on behalf of FoFS)*  
htcfinstock@gmail.com

## Finstock Festival 2017

We packed away and turned the key on the Festival container when I was reminded to write an article for the *Finstock News*. After six days reflection, I would say on the whole the Festival was successful; having said that, we could still do with increasing the number of people attending.

Three weeks before the event the main Friday night band Highway 61 made the decision to split. Then with only days to go, we had to find a replacement for Alex Chapman due to a family bereavement. In their place we had great live music from Quartermelon and Vinyl Daze on Friday night. Saturday evening Wood Green Big Band gave us a great kick start. They were followed by Jamie Hawkins, who stood in with only a couple of days' notice and was well received. Next on was the headline band Della Grants. They were a great band with great musicians but probably not right for our Festival.

In an attempt to improve the standard of bands at the Festival we increased the ticket price to £10. I think I can say subject to our next meeting, that next year's festival will

be free of charge. We have not had a committee meeting yet, but chatting with those involved during the pull down, I think the Festival needs a good quality, local covers band on Saturday night. If anyone has any suggestions for local bands or for that matter would like to help with the organising of next year's Festival please let us know.

The School Fête on Saturday afternoon was blessed with fantastic weather, which created great demand on our bar; the takings were excellent. The initial finances for this year's event appear to be sound.

All that leaves me to do is say a big thank you to all the people that attended this two day event; without you it would not happen. Also I would like to thank the committee and everyone that helped to pull an enormous infrastructure together. We started at 9am Wednesday morning and finished 7pm Sunday evening so well done to you all.

Here's to Finstock Festival 2018

*Colin Stringfellow*



# VILLAGE EVENTS



## August

12th - Dominoes

17th – Bridewell Open Gardens

## September

8th-10th – **Finstock Ale**

15th – Bridewell Open gardens

30th – Evenlode Folk

## Finstock Baby and Toddler Group - Summer Break

As you read this, Finstock Toddler group will be on holiday for the summer as people go away and the older children from the village are keeping us busy during the school break!

But we enjoyed the lead up to the holidays at Toddler Group with some seasonal activities and managed to keep the hall fairly cool even during the hottest days.

We all enjoy meeting up with our friends and having fun. The group continues to thrive with its many regular attendees plus new joiners who are always welcome! It has meant we have been able to purchase some new equipment - in particular a tufty tray for lots of messy play and sensory activities! We are planning our usual end of term party. As we break for six weeks we are planning a big party including some soft play fun for the little ones to go wild!

We meet from 10am every Wednesday morning (term-time) and have plenty to offer for all that come along: toys and activities/crafts for the babies and toddlers and a snack to keep them going, plus cake, hot drinks and chat for the adults! We will return again on Wednesday September 6th.

You can keep up-to-date with what we are doing on Facebook, or our weekly emails. Contact us on [finstocktoddlergroup@gmail.com](mailto:finstocktoddlergroup@gmail.com) and we can add you to the list. We look forward to seeing you there. If you haven't tried us out yet, come along for a free first session!

*Helen Fallows*

## Finstock Girlguiding

All sections meet on Wednesdays

**Rainbows** - for girls aged between 5 and 7 years. This group meets from 4.45pm until 5.45pm.

Contact for Rainbows is Amy Fox - 07495 064634 (or Caroline, details as below)

**Brownies** - this group is for girls aged between 7 and 10 years and meets from 6pm until 7.30pm.

Contact for Brownies is Caroline Booth - [carolinebooth4@gmail.com](mailto:carolinebooth4@gmail.com); 07890 629001

**Guides** - for girls aged between 10 and 14 years. This group meets from 6pm until 7.30pm.

Contact for Guides is Karen Williams – [phoenixlights@hotmail.com](mailto:phoenixlights@hotmail.com); 07809 724065

Guides have been busy learning about how the charity Wateraid gets clean water to those countries that do not have any and have been fundraising for this charity. One of the fundraisers was to carry buckets of water over distances, as the girls and women have to in those countries without water close to them. We also had six new girls enrol and we welcome them to our unit.

## Hillforts in Britain and Ireland

Hillforts are one of the most prominent types of prehistoric monument across many parts the British Isles and Ireland as well as being the most obvious legacy of the Iron Age period. An atlas has been created containing 4,147 hillfort sites. [www.arch.ox.ac.uk/hillforts/](http://www.arch.ox.ac.uk/hillforts/)

**BBC Countryfile Live** at Blenheim Palace August 3rd – 6th.

**Ready Reference** addition: Finstock Parish Council website [www.finstockpc.org.uk](http://www.finstockpc.org.uk).

## Spendlove Reunion

A reunion for all those who attended Spendlove between 1958 and 1982 is planned for Saturday October 7th from 7.30pm onwards in the newly opened Charlbury Community Centre. Please bring your own drink, glass and £10. No stilettos please. No booking required.

## ChOC Films

**Sunday September 10th** at 7.30pm: **Lion** Memorial Hall, Charlbury, doors and bar from 6.45pm. Admission: £5/ U15s £3.

## 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!

## Bridewell Gardens – Community Afternoons

The Walled Garden and Vineyard at Wilcote (OX7 3DT) will be open on Thursday August 17th and Friday September 15th from 2 pm to 4 pm. Admission £3.50, children free. Refreshments and plants will be for sale. For further information please call 01993 864530 or go to [www.bridewellgardens.co.uk](http://www.bridewellgardens.co.uk) Mental Health Recovery. Reg. Charity 1158456



# FINSTOCK ALE BEER FESTIVAL



The fifth annual Finstock Ale beer and music festival sponsored by

Howse & O'Reilly

electrical contractors runs from Friday September 8th to Sunday the 10th at Finstock Village Hall to raise funds for the Village Hall and its community users. This event is suitable for all ages.

Friday 8th - Race Night on a huge HD screen with a preview of all beers and ciders; free entry; bar from 7pm;

first race at 8pm. Name a horse, sponsor a race or select a winner!

Saturday 9th – There will be at least 22 beers and six ciders from midday to midnight. Normal Village Hall bar and featuring the Finstock GIN PALACE in memory of Annie McEwen-Crosby, with many different gins. FREE music all day in a fabulous location overlooking the Evenlode Valley.

Entry to music and venue free; Beer Festival entry £5 (includes pint Festival glass, one free pint and tasting notes).

The Tour of Britain cycle race that travels through Charlbury will be shown LIVE on the HD screen as it passes through Oxfordshire from midday. The Music Stage sponsored by Sonnox Ltd commences at 1.50pm with an eclectic mix for all tastes including Roughcut Ruby, Drivin' Sideways, James Morgan, Black Max and the Pirates, The Dead Silence, Ags Connolly, Scarecrow and Paul Morris - with an appearance by Charlbury Morris.

Sunday 10th - bar from Midday until stock runs out!

*Shaun Morley*

## Drinking Beer

Firstly, let me start this column by wishing my good friend Osiris my heartfelt sympathy for his current predicament and extend my very best wishes for a full and speedy recovery.

At the end of last November, despite my best efforts and much to the amazement of my daughters, I entered into my sixth decade on this planet. This entitles me to officially become a "Grumpy Old Man" from time to time and this may well be reflected in these writings!

I started my beer drinking career about 46 years ago, (a little early perhaps, but we all did it in those days!) and I have been working hard at it ever since. I absolutely love pubs and good real ale - add the Telegraph cryptic crossword and I'm in absolute heaven.

Imagine my feelings then at the alarming number of pub closures over recent years. In 2008 the greedy government decided it would be a good idea to raise the duty on beer by 2% above the rate of inflation and this continued year on year until 2013. This meant that over a third of the price of a pint went to the taxman and resulted in the closure of over 7000 pubs, many of which were rural and community pubs.

In a bizarre twist in 2013 the government suddenly saw sense and reduced the duty by 1%. They did the same in 2014 and 2015 and froze the duty in 2016. We started to see an increase in investment in the industry and beer price increases were at the lowest since the 80s.

Let's move forward to the current situation and things are looking a little brighter. The number of pub closures has been dropping over the past 18 months and the recently announced figures show the number of closures in the past six months has dropped to 20 compared to 27 in the previous six months. Locally, we have been very lucky with our village pubs and although the Fox in Leafield is currently closed until new buyers can be found (for sale at £295,000) and The Lamb, Crawley shut its doors, I am hopeful that these pubs will resurface.

All good news I suppose, but wait – in his March budget our current chancellor, Philip Hammond has removed the freeze on duty and increased it by the rate of inflation. This means that we continue to pay one of the highest rates of duty across Europe, only consuming around 12 per cent of the beer yet paying nearly 40 per cent of all beer duty in the EU. We are currently paying 52p on each pint of beer in the UK compared to 4p in Germany and Spain and 15p in the Netherlands!

So how does all this make me feel? Yes, you got it. Very grumpy, very grumpy indeed!

Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy. Benjamin Franklin

*Cheers, Paul*



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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); join the Finstock Yahoo group – [groups.yahoo.com/group/finstock](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/finstock); 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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**The Finstock Yahoo Group** is an extension of the *Finstock News*. When information comes in between issues we post that information on the Yahoo website. The site also provides reminders about events such as the latest Local History talk, the Charlbury Farmers' Markets, the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning group that operates our health service in this area and when to put which rubbish/recycle/food waste bins out for collection. Recent coverage has focused on notices from Thames Valley Police through their alert system, which anyone can sign up to receive in their inbox. Keep current with the Finstock Yahoo Group.

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*Children have never been good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.*

James Baldwin

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## Parish Council News

The Parish Council has established a dedicated web site where all relevant information pertaining to its varied activities will be stored. It will be available from August 1st; [www.finstockpc.org.uk](http://www.finstockpc.org.uk). The PC hope this will be much visited and of real practical use to all villagers.

The sewage problems on the path next to the Plough are being monitored regularly by Thames Water. A major flushing of the system was needed causing a road closure in July. This procedure should ensure that there is no recurrence of the problems experienced a few months ago, but the PC will continue to monitor the situation carefully.

The Adventure Playground is inspected each July by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. Last year's report had some suggestions for improvements, all of which the PC have carried out.

At the time of writing, a speculative proposal for a housing development on the allotment field off the High Street has been received by the PC. The developers organised a meeting to present their plan to villagers on July 26th. It must be stressed there is no planning application and the plans are in outline only. The PC has not been asked to comment and will do so if and when, a formal planning application is received from WODC.

*Hywel Davies for the Parish Council*

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## District Council report

The Local Plan is with the inspector and by the time you read this the outcome of whether it has been accepted and approved will be known. We must make sure that this does not happen again as the delay has caused unnecessary property speculation by developers. We must be vigilant to ensure the right balance is struck between the need to build more houses particularly with the younger generation in mind, and over development which would affect our beautiful countryside, villages and towns. We must be forward looking and creative in our thinking to strike the right balance and so ensure any developments are sustainable, well thought out and planned with our communities.

The summer is upon us and it won't be long before autumn brings the new

terms of change and young people go back to school. I want to remind all those seeking activities for young people apart from the great after school clubs, that there are lots of other organisations offering opportunities for young people to get involved. If any young people want to join the youth theatre group in Charlbury it runs on a Monday 5.15-6.15pm 7-11 year olds and 6.15- 7.45pm 11-16 year olds. This is a great opportunity to meet friends have fun and learn new skills. Why not enquire about the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme which can be part of it. The next production will be announced in the next issue but contact me if you want more information, forms, etc.

Any other concerns which I can help you with just let me know.

*Cllr Andy Graham*  
*andyg2439@gmail.com*

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[www.generationgames.org.uk/](http://www.generationgames.org.uk/)

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20p per word, payment in  
advance. Please contact:  
Ann Sullivan on 868597.**

## MP Report

I would like to thank you all for re-electing me as your Member of Parliament on June 8th. This was a hard-fought campaign and I greatly enjoyed the chance to meet many of you on the doorsteps.

Since I first became your MP, I have corresponded with nearly 3000 constituents, visited a third of our schools, a quarter of parish councils, met with over 80 businesses and charities and seen nearly 100 constituents in my advice surgeries. I hope to build on this work and have wasted no time in getting stuck back into the job, speaking in the house and raising things that matter to you.

Locally, I have already had the pleasure of visiting the Charlbury Beer Festival, the Ramsden Village Fête and attend Bridewell Open Garden. My family and I greatly enjoyed all of these events, especially with the fantastic weather we have been having. All are an excellent way of residents coming together to celebrate what makes their community special. I look forward to seeing more

of you around the area, particularly during the summer with Parliamentary recess only a few weeks away.

*Robert Courts, MP*

## County Councillor report

In my new capacity as your County Councillor, I have been working on a number of issues that involve Highways. The roads are of particular concern to local residents, both with regard to the general condition and traffic issues such as speeding. There are also a number of places where signage is not adequate or damaged and lines need repainting. For example, outside Fawler I recently noticed that a 30mph sign was damaged and I was able to get that replaced. This is particularly important in Fawler where speeding is a major issue for the village. Although County Council budgets for roads have been significantly reduced I am finding that there are maintenance budgets which can be used to get things done, so if you have any issues of this sort, please

don't hesitate to get in touch and I will see what I can do.

With my District Council hat on, one of the issues that has come up again, and which also involves the County, is the question of grass cutting. Although the County still cuts the grass on the main road, it is only done twice a year, which means that often grass grows to a height that can impede vision, especially at junctions such as at the Leafield crossroads. Andy and I are both on the Environment Committee at West Oxfordshire and we recently suggested that we should be looking at a district-wide grass-cutting contract as we believe that this could save money and improve roadside visibility. We will be pursuing this, though as the concentration by officers at the moment is on the management of the new waste contract due to come into force in October, it may be a while before we get any further with this.

*Cllr Liz Leffman 01608-810153  
liz.leffman@westoxon.gov.uk*



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# COUNTRYSIDE CONSERVATION

*We should tackle reality in a slightly joking way ... Otherwise we miss its point. Lawrence Durrell*

## WYCHWOOD FOREST FAIR

Sunday September 3rd - 11am-5pm,  
Off Standlake Road, Ducklington A415

From Morris dancers to ferret racing, bee keeping to basket making join us for a day of celebrating all things rural at the 18th annual Wychwood Forest Fair.

The Fair is a fantastic family day-out, offering a wide range of entertainment, rural craft demonstrations, music, food and much, much more. A mouth-watering variety of refreshments will be on offer, including handcrafted chocolates bars, buttons and lollies, giant cookies and tray-bakes, award winning charcuterie, Signal Crayfish Paella, home cured bacon baps; Pie and Mighty pies, Middle Eastern delights from Sufi Spice, Oxford Pizza and delicious local Ice Cream. We also have The Wychwood Tea Tent with fabulous locally made cakes, and the Wychwood Bar supplied by Wychwood Brewery.

Our second-hand bookstall is a treat for book and film lovers with a huge stock of print and audio books and DVDs. The Arts and Crafts marquee offers a great opportunity to see local businesses showcasing their products

and services and the chance to browse their wares and buy interesting and often unique items! The Rural Craft Area will be filled with demonstrations from willow sculpture and hurdle making to beekeeping and pole lathe turning.

Entertainers include Witney Town Band, Berkshire Ferret Racing Club, a traditional Coconut Shy, and Hatwells Fun Fair.

The organiser of the Fair is The Wychwood Project, a registered charity that aims to inspire people to conserve and restore our unique local landscapes and habitats. In addition to the Project's own display area, community and conservation groups will be promoting ways of "doing your bit" for the environment and for your community.

All proceeds from this event go towards the Wychwood Projects' ongoing work of "Restoring Landscapes, Inspiring People" in the Wychwood area.

All the Fun of a Rural Fair!

## Wychwood Bird Aid

Bird aid is targeting three key species: Tree sparrows, Yellowhammers and Corn Buntings at various bird aid sites around West Oxfordshire from October to May. Can you sponsor a bag of seed?

[www.wychwoodproject.org/cms/content/bird-aid](http://www.wychwoodproject.org/cms/content/bird-aid)



## Ancient Oak

This Majestic, 550 year old Oak Tree, by the barns in the grounds of Wilcote Manor was destroyed by a huge thunderbolt in the violent storm of August 27th 2016. The thunderbolt struck right down into the heart of the tree, breaking off all the great branches, and burning slowly right down through the trunk for three weeks.

*Viv Wightman*



*Different kinds of plastic can degrade at different times, but the average time for a plastic bottle to completely degrade is at least 450 years!*

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## Finstock School

It is with some sadness that I write my final piece for the *Finstock News*, as I will be leaving the School at the end of this academic year. Finstock School is such an amazing place, and it has been a real privilege to be a part of its development over the last three years. I clearly remember the first time that I visited, and I was struck by the friendly and supportive environment within the school, and the way that the children were so respectful of each other. This 'family' nature of the school is one of its key characteristics, along with the way that it is supported by the whole school and wider village community. In the current educational landscape, where schools are under such pressure to perform, this has been lost from many schools - Finstock School really is a special place.

It is perhaps fitting that this has been recognised externally during our recent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools - where the school was rated 'good' with some 'outstanding' features. In her report, the inspector noted that 'Finstock Church of England Primary is an inclusive, caring community where staff lead by example to create an ethos of respect, courtesy and compassion ... based on the school's core values, which have a positive impact on the academic standards, personal development and well-being of the pupils'. At this time of change for the school, with new staff and leadership taking post, it is important to note that the leadership and management of the school were rated 'outstanding', with the in-depth knowledge of the Governors and their determination to continue improving the school particularly commented upon. The full report is available on the school website.

This Summer Term really exemplifies everything that makes Finstock School special - we have so many events which celebrate the work of the children, and where we are able to work with the village community. There has been a full range of Statutory Assessments taking place for Year 1, 2 and 6 where all the children did so well and approached them with such maturity. We had a visit from our MP, Robert Courts, where we showcased how we use Outdoor

Learning to extend our learning beyond the classroom. He thought it was 'awesome'! The School Fête, as part of the Festival, was a great success, helped by the superb weather. The weather was also kind for our Sports Day, held on the Community Field, and the children all participated with such enthusiasm and respect for each other (Well done to Evenlode, our overall winners). We have had a Musical Showcase, where around 20 of our pupils demonstrated their musical skills, performing for the whole school. Cedar Class (our oldest children) are busy preparing for their performance of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. We are also preparing for our whole school picnic followed by the Leavers' Assembly and Prize Giving, and finally our Leavers' Service.

We are still collecting postage stamps for RNIB.

I would like to take this final opportunity to thank everyone for their support for both myself, but most importantly for the School, and to wish you all a very happy Summer Holiday.

*Sue Dawe - Headteacher*

### Finstock School - Term Dates - 2017/18

**Autumn Term 2017** Monday  
September 4th to Tuesday December  
19th

**Autumn Half Term Holiday** October  
Monday 23rd to Friday 27th

**Christmas Holiday** Wednesday  
December 20th to Wednesday January  
3rd 2018

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There is so much to choose from it will be an easy job. You can buy cleaning products and paper products; there are a large variety of jams and condiments to go with meals created from the stocked freezer or the fridge; snacks are there from crisps to cookies, cereals to treats; fresh bread and eggs plus the dairy case can provide a good breakfast when coupled with Patrick Strange bacon or sausage.

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*Karen Williams*

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## VILLAGE HALL ACTIVITIES

**Dominoes** at Finstock Village Hall - all welcome, starts 7.30pm on Saturday August 12th, then October 14th and second Saturday of the month thereafter.

**FINSTOCK GOOD COMPANIONS Christmas dinner** will be held on Saturday December 16th. This is free to all those aged over 65 from Finstock and Fawler. Arrive 12 noon for 12.30 pm lunch, followed by entertainment and singing. Booking is essential due to limited numbers. To reserve a space contact Eileen Peters on 868746 or contact her at 45 Hill Crescent, OX7 3BT.

**Short-mat bowls** - Want to try something new in the afternoon? Why not come along to Finstock's short-mat bowls at the Village Hall every Monday and Thursday from 2pm. No experience needed to try this indoor form of traditional bowls in great company. First session free to try it out then just £2 when you turn up.

**Evenlode Folk** presents *Howden-Jones*, a Lancashire folk experience at Finstock Village Hall on Saturday September 30th.

Stripped back, gritty, often poignant, sometimes humorous, observations that reflect life's ups and downs, Kate and Paul's current show is a family friendly mixture of songs, tunes and stories that has the audience joining in, singing along, and laughing as they share their travelling experiences through their music and northern-tinged banter. Tickets £8, £9 on night; doors from 7.30pm, performance from 8pm. Tickets from [www.wegotickets.com](http://www.wegotickets.com) or email [villagehallfinstock@gmail.com](mailto:villagehallfinstock@gmail.com).

you require more information, please get in touch. Details as usual to me at [rosacrafts@btinternet.com](mailto:rosacrafts@btinternet.com). Tel. 869283.

Our weekly Monday sessions continue in the Village Hall from 7:30 -9:30pm (excluding Bank Holidays). Come and enjoy a free taster session then drop in when you can for just £1.50 per session.

*Rosa Charlesworth*

### **Finstock Table Tennis Club:**

Both junior and senior sessions are going well but we always welcome new (or old/new) members, so if you haven't yet been and fancy giving it a try please come along for either the juniors or seniors. If you have any questions please either turn up on a Tuesday or contact me [mikesimpkins1@gmail.com](mailto:mikesimpkins1@gmail.com).

Venue - Finstock Village Hall  
6.30pm - 8pm - juniors meeting every Tuesday during term-time.  
8pm - 10pm - seniors meeting every Tuesday during term-time and school holidays unless notified otherwise.

### **New Ballet and Tap Tots**

Age 2 to 4.5yrs Every Tuesday starting on Tuesday September 5th. First class a FREE TRIAL!

9.30am -10.15am. To book please email: [Deborah.dance@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Deborah.dance@yahoo.co.uk).

### **Finstock Craft Club**

Now into its second year, the craft club continues to thrive and grow.

Following the very enjoyable demonstration of stone painting by Kath Lucas prior to the Finstock Music Festival, we were happy to participate again on the day. And what a lovely day it was, (except for the wind that threatened to blow pots of paint and brushes far away). Many who attended with their children (especially the children) enjoyed the challenge of painting small stones and getting their fingers covered in paint. Some enjoyed it so much that they came back to do their second or third stone. They are artists in the making and future crafters!

In June, we were delighted to receive an invitation from the organisers of the Ramsden Fête. It was a great opportunity to promote the Craft Club outside the village. It was a very busy day with lots of visitors chatting to us and expressing their delight at the variety of hand crafted items we had on display. (See photo(s))

The next major event in our diary is the Finstock Arts and Crafts Fayre on November 11th. We are booking tables now, so if you are a crafter or know of any local crafters who might be interested in booking a table, or



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## Russia



Some people asked why? The short answer is history and architecture and a little bit of getting past 50 years of propaganda. We chose a tour organised by the Russian National Tourist Office which covered more than the standard one of Moscow/St. Petersburg with TGV connection between. We had side trips to the ancient Russian cities of Sergiev Posad, Suzdal, Vladimir and Novgorod. They were the ancient heart of the early medieval land of the Rus. before it became centred on Moscow. We found ourselves on an overnight sleeper train with lots of working class local people snoring away, followed a day later by a local commuter train into St. Petersburg. The first was decades-old rolling stock with toilet facilities to

make statements about the whole. We came across considerable infrastructure investment as they prepare for the 2018 World Cup (including a stunning bridge over the Neva in St Petersburg to a new stadium), but have no idea what is happening elsewhere. We came to realise that although Russians often appear stern, they can be friendly and go out of their way to be helpful.

The Russian Orthodox Church has taken back the important role the Communist Party temporarily usurped as a central figure in national life and Putin has reverted to the old partnership of the tsar and the church. Churches are being rebuilt or restored and reopened at a steady pace.

The days of food shortages and queues seem long gone. We shopped in two supermarkets with a full mixture of local brands and produce as well as imported ones. The food in restaurants was, with only one exception, excellent with wide selection and friendly service.

But we got only a hazy idea of the average standard of living. We usually found someone who could speak English, although occasionally resorted to mime. When I did try out my Russian asking for directions, the reply thankfully came in English.



The tsarist opulence we saw inside the two palaces of the Hermitage and Tsarskoe Selo (one of the summer palaces outside of St Petersburg), is overwhelming. Magnificence surrounded by slavery which could only lead to revolution.

*Michelle Greenwald*

## Premier cycling event

Saturday September 9th cycling fans in the Cotswolds will see the OVO Energy Tour of Britain this year. More than 120 cyclists will pass through towns and villages including Wootton, Charlbury and the Wychwoods before continuing through the Cotswolds,

eventually finishing in Cheltenham town centre.

The race is a major cycling event for the UK. It also has the potential to draw a large number of visitors and spectators, bringing considerable economic boost, increased overnight

stays and provides the opportunity to showcase the Cotswolds.

For example, in 2013 the Sidmouth to Dartmoor stage attracted 188,000 day visitors and 62,000 overnight visitors.



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## A lovely, short circular walk taking in Finstock and Ramsden

This is a walk that perhaps your four-legged friend might not like so much, but sometimes it is great to just walk part of the way through our lovely villages.

Walk up the High Street to half-way up Gadden Hill, (incidentally, this is so called because of Gadden Well, in Blackberry Lane, where everyone got their water in days gone by and the road had a gate across it called Gadden Gate!) Just past a lovely trimmed garden hedge on your left, you will see a 'Footpath' sign, set back from the road. It is a narrow footpath going alongside the bungalow there – do mind your head! Here you can let your doggie off his lead. When you get to the end of this bit of footpath, you will see Skippett Pond to your right. Unfortunately this is now somewhat overgrown but when our boys were young, Dr. and Mrs Rogers lived to the left-hand side of the pond, and Mrs Rogers used to go round all the Second-Hand shops buying up any ice-skates she could find so that whenever the pond was frozen in the winter (and this was a common occurrence) she would just loan the skates to all the youngsters and they had such fun. (Every evening they would spray water on the ice, so that it froze nice and smooth again.) Our boys learned to ice-skate there, but I only ran and slid on the ice!

As you carry on walking you will pass Dr. Roger's garden, now beautifully cared for by its current owner. You will shortly come to a division in the path. The actual footpath branches slightly to

the right, but the other path goes into Ramsden Millennium Wood. You could take this path to have a look around if you are interested; it is especially beautiful in the spring. This path will come back onto the footpath at the bottom of the wood. The main footpath continues until you reach the road going through Ramsden. Turn left and walk into the centre; it is so interesting because you have time to look around, instead of just driving through. You will then of course, come to The Royal Oak right in the centre and, you just cannot pass by without a quick visit. It is pleasant sitting outside in the square looking across at the Memorial (worth a walk-round) and the church.

When you leave The Royal Oak turn left, then immediately left again into Wilcote Lane, another lovely peaceful road to walk up. Go up to the top of the road then turn left through the gate into the field, and carry on to the left, not onto the footpath that points off to the right. Parts of this are slightly long underfoot, but about a third of the way across the field you can divert slightly left, through the hedge, then turn right and continue walking on that side. When you come up to The Longcut, turn left and walk along until the wide opening in it. On the other side you will see the other footpath that goes across the field to Finstock, and all you have to do is cross that, turn right and a short walk to the gate that goes through and down into our lovely village, coming out by The Plough! What luck

*Viv Wightman*

## Wheelie bins for recycling

From October wheelie bins will replace black boxes for most of our recycling, the only exception being glass which will still be collected separately in black boxes.

The recycling service will become fortnightly, alternating with household rubbish and residents will be issued with a new recycling wheelie bin between July and September in readiness for the change.

In addition, small electrical items such as kettles, hairdryers and mobile phones will be recycled at the kerbside. There will be no changes to fortnightly household rubbish and none to weekly food collections while garden waste will continue to be collected fortnightly provided residents have a licence.

During the summer you will receive a letter from the Council about the delivery of your new wheelie bins

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## The First Finstock Triathlon (with a difference)



When someone comes up with the idea of a race between a horse, a man and a bicycle, it seems at first to be totally crazy. But this is what took place on Saturday May 20th for the very first time.

At noon precisely, the three combatants lined up in the driveway of and facing toward the field behind the Plough Inn to race 11km (6.8 miles). Mark McVeigh on David Pratley's horse Troy, Mike Simpkins on his sturdy mountain bike and Frazer Mackay as the runner.

There were at first scant observers present at the Plough, but as it got closer to the start of the race, more and more people turned up. First to arrive was Frazer casually walking down the High Street, then Mike arrived coming down Well Hill on his bike, and finally, what can only be described as the family en masse complete with grandchildren on ponies, came clan Pratley with Mark astride Dave's horse.

Rod Ireland was the official timekeeper, complete with three stop watches and at 12 noon, off they set up the track behind the Plough with

Frazer in the lead followed by Mike on his bike and then the horse with Mark.

That was that for the time being. Photos had been taken and times to complete the race for each entrant guessed.

All of the money raised will be going to fund a school project with HorseHeard, a charity promoting work with horses.

At sometime close to 12.30 the sweaty horse with Mark arrived first to rapturous applause, closely followed by Mike on his bike. We then had to wait some 20 minutes for Frazer to appear, again greeted by much applause.

After a short while, with refreshments taken, a great photo shot of the three participants was taken.

Upon being quizzed it transpired that Frazer had to close all the gates on the way back, as he was last! This was an unfair handicap I think!

There were no prizes for coming first, second or third; just smiling faces. Is this going to be the start of a new triathlon for Finstock? Wait and see.

*N Murphy*



## Finstock Donkey Derby 1988

Fifteen donkeys ridden by local children took part in six races on the playing field at the Finstock Fête in June 1988.



The children in the picture from left to right: Stephanie Hoare, 13, at the donkey's head, Lucy Irwin, 13, holding the young jockeys Matthew Cross and Kerry Wiggins, both three.

(We are grateful to the Witney Gazette reporter John Chipperfield for sharing this picture and story.) You may recognise several current and former Finstock residents among these children.

## Fundraising Preference Service

Visit [www.fundraisingpreferenceservice.org.uk](http://www.fundraisingpreferenceservice.org.uk) or Tel: 0300 3033517. Stop named charities from contact by email, phone, text and post. Specify the charity you no longer wish to be approached by.

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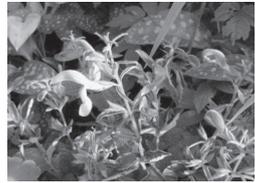
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In August and September many border plants are past their best, but Salvias really earn their keep in the garden, going on to late in the season. The great range of colours and form, make them indispensable in borders, and their nectar-rich flowers are magnets for bumblebees and butterflies.



The eye-catching bicolor blooms of Salvia 'Hot Lips', spice up summer patio pots and individual flowers can come in solid red or white, its aromatic foliage has a fine blackcurrant fragrance that only adds to its charm. This showy ornamental sage is perfect, for cottage garden borders and containers, or incorporated into bedding schemes for a vibrant summer display. *Salvia elegans* has pineapple smelling leaves, and the new hardy *Salvia greggi* "mirage" series, with a lemon fragrance, provide a good range of bright colours to lift any border to new heights. I also love the large vivid blue flowers of *Salvia patens*, with its contrasting deep green foliage.



Outstanding are the spikes of rich cobalt-blue flowers emerging from purple-black buds on dark stems, of *Salvia guaranitica* 'Black and Blue', other sure winners are "Love and wishes" and "Wendy's wish" and they are easy to grow in a sunny spot

with moist, well-drained soil, blooming from midsummer to autumn. *Salvia argentea* provides a striking contrast, with its large furry silvery grey foliage.

Clary Sage (*Salvia sclarea*) was highly praised as a medicinal plant throughout history, particularly owing to its numerous benefits for vision and eye health. In Cheshire in the 16C, just one seed of Clary soaked in water to produce a slimy mucilage, was dropped into the eye to stop inflammation. It is a close relative of common garden sage, but it has a slightly different organic makeup. Furthermore, you may be familiar with it as "Muscatel Oil", a common name given to Clary Sage essential oil, due to its traditional use of flavouring muscatel wine.



Any herb garden usually contains *Salvia officinalis*, used in stuffing with onions.

This sage was introduced by the Romans, who regarded it as a sacred plant and gathered it with a special non-ferrous knife. The Chinese so valued it for its use in medicine, that the Dutch traded a pound of sage leaves for four pounds of tea.

If you want to see a wealth of flower delights including the Salvias, in delightful surroundings, perhaps with a pot of tea and a scrumptious cake, I recommend a visit to Bourton House, (Bourton on the Hill)

Robert Bigwood

## Volunteer for Oxfordshire's Water-Blitz

Volunteers needed for one day only! Schools, local groups and individuals are invited to take part in the county wide water blitz. Check the water quality of your local stream, pond, ditch or river and help build a water quality picture for Oxfordshire. For your free sampling pack register today by emailing [hilary@wildoxfordshire.org.uk](mailto:hilary@wildoxfordshire.org.uk) subject "Waterblitz" and join in on Monday October 2nd. EarthWatch have volunteered to handle the data and map all results on their global water-hub with the resulting data available to everyone involved.

## FREE fortnightly Environmental Email Bulletin

For the latest conservation news, evening talks or an afternoon of volunteering, plus jobs and training SIGN UP to Wild Oxfordshire's email bulletin. Just click on their website [www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk).

## Respiratory Symptoms Campaign

Public Health England is running the campaign to encourage more people aged over 50 to get an earlier diagnosis for possible lung or heart disease. Tell your doctor if you get out of breath doing things they you were able to do, it could be a sign of lung or heart disease, or even cancer. Or, if you have had a cough for three weeks or more, it could be a sign of lung disease, including cancer – finding a condition early makes it more treatable: don't ignore it, tell your doctor. (Talking Health)

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