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Items for the next edition should be sent to the Editor by 10 January 2020. *The Villager* is published every other month and delivered free to all households in the village.

Editorial

Every year, young and old gather at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday to show their respect to those who gave their lives in conflict and express their hope for peace. It is very moving as the names are read out of the village men who died in the two world wars. The Last Post was played beautifully by our very own bugler this year, Alistair Butt, an emotional moment before the two-minute silence. Then, after wreaths were laid, the crowd moved into the church led by bagpipers Harry Gow and Sue Robson. Thanks to Rev Janice Chilton who led the service; the scouts, cubs and beavers who carried their flags, read lessons and so enthusiastically stuck poppies up on the board in church, and their leaders who accompanied them; and our musicians Alistair, Sue, Harry and Derek. It made it a very special village occasion.

As I write, this weekend also marks the 30th anniversary of the collapse of the Berlin Wall, an event I remember with astonishment having lived through most of the Cold War years. There was a feeling that things could really change, anything was possible, but sadly things did not work out quite as expected. A recent conversation with John Rodda about the anniversary led to him telling me his experience of a trip under the Wall he made to East Berlin, and he has kindly written it down to share with you (see page 21).

This is our Christmas issue so, as usual, it is packed full of events going on over the festive season, starting with the Advent Service on 1 December at St Agatha's (see page 9) and ending with the Wassailing on Twelfth Night (see page 4). Enjoy! The middle pages (12 and 13) contain a round up of all the church services, carol evenings and other events taking place in and around the village, plus times of the scout post and opening times of the Red Lion and Village Stores.

I am delighted to see the new adult gym equipment at the Rec as it's only a hop, skip and a jump away for me to get to it. Read more about it and the children's new play equipment in the Parish Council article on page 6. So, there's no excuse now for me or anyone else not to stick to their new year resolutions to get fitter and work off any excessive seasonal eating!

Thanks to Olive Sutcliffe for our front cover illustration, which appears in Alec McGivan's 'A Christmas Story', now on sale at the Village Stores.

It seems some time off still, but not too early I hope to wish you all a happy Christmas and peace and good health in 2020 from *The Villager* team.

Helen Connor

Community Association

Get Involved in your Village

We were very pleased that so many of you took the chance to meet some of the 34 volunteer-led groups, clubs and societies in the village who were present at this event in October. They contribute so much to the wellbeing of our community. A big thank you to all those involved for making this such a successful event.

AGM – 24 September

We are grateful to everyone who joined us for our AGM to hear about our work for the community in the past year and our plans for the future. Tom Rogerson, our treasurer, reported that we had given £4,550 in grants to local charities. I would like to thank our honorary auditor Jim Sanger who has kindly agreed to carry on in the role next year.

The following were re-elected to the Committee:

Chairman - James Davys

Treasurer - Tom Rogerson

Committee Members - Caroline Annets, Mike and Charlotte Woods, Bill Horsfield, Lynn Burridge

Sadly we have to say goodbye and thank you to our hardworking and very efficient secretary Andy Stevens who is standing down after five years of dedicated service. I am pleased to report, however, that we have recruited Emma Butler, Hannah and Sam Fullgraf, Andrew Klevan, Liz Parker and Tom Lester to the committee.

Future events

Make a note in your diary of the dates of following events in 2020:

Pub Quiz - Red Lion 24 February 7.30pm

Village Quiz - Village Hall 7 March 7.30pm

Village Fete - Sotwell House 11 July 2-4.30pm

Safari Supper - September (tba)

James Davys - Chairman

Wassail!

The 2020 Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Wassail will take place on Twelfth Night – Sunday 5 January - when we mark the end of Christmas merrymaking.

This year we have a wonderful event planned which, for the first time, will be hosted by Mackney. Wassailers are invited to gather at 2.45 pm inside the incredible Small's House Barn in Mackney (the lovely old barn next to the big stone house) for the arrival, by tractor, of the Wassail Party at 3 pm. Lamb's Wool will be served and the village's own gallery band, The Shady Wilcox Experience, will be playing. Wassailers will also be treated (in the barn) to the annual Mummer's Play performed by the Brightwell Players (of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* fame).

We are to be joined this year by Datchet Morris who will be dancing for us throughout the festivities including a special dance on the south lawn of Smalls House before we set off to Wassail our orchards.

We will make our way through two Mackney orchards towards the Red Lion pub. On route we will crown the Wassail King and Queen and divert to the Rec to try and beat the world record (again!) for the world's largest Shepherds Hey dance led by our old friends from Armallegan Morris.

After the final Wassail and fireworks (timed to take place at 4.50pm) in the Community Orchard we will finish at 5pm outside the Red Lion for the annual fire dance to be performed for the first time by Datchet Morris. Wassailers are then invited to the pub to warm up!

In the evening tickets will be on sale for further Twelfth Night revelry with a fuller version of the Mummer's Play including music and food at the village hall hosted by the Brightwell Players.

So, pop the date in your diary, don your warmest clothes and bring along something to bang or make a noise. Don't forget that Wassailers from Brightwell should wear something golden, those from Sotwell red and green and, for Mackney folk - something blue. The last Wassail was the biggest yet – keep our great village tradition alive and help make our Wassail the largest Processional Wassail in the UK.

Wassail!

Jason Debney

Stewart Village Hall

Thank you to everyone who came along to our Annual Review and to those who chatted to us at the 'Get Involved in your Village' event. Information on the Hall's performance and future plans is on our website at <http://stewartvillagehall.btck.co.uk/LatestNews>.

You will have seen the flyer in *The Villager* promoting the use of our impressive film projection and sound system. The system has an electrically operated screen and plays Blu-Rays, DVDs and CDs. It is connected wirelessly to the internet and accepts a Bluetooth signal from a laptop, iPad or phone. Laptops can be connected to the projector by HDMI cable and the system has VGA and USB connections. The use of all of this equipment is included in the hire of the hall.

You could use the giant ultra-high definition 4k screen and 5.1 surround sound system at private parties or fundraising events, for example for:

- **Sporting** events like Wimbledon, F1, World Cup events or the Olympics
- **TV live-streaming** events such as royal weddings, ballet, opera, first night of Dr Who, Last Night of the Proms, Strictly Come Dancing final, Eurovision Song Contest
- **Private Parties** to show the films you choose
- **Gaming** events or competitions with friends or online
- **Children's parties**
- **Celebrations** such as birthdays and anniversaries - you could even invite your friends in Australia or Aberdeen to join in the party live on screen
- **Afternoon teas** with a favourite film

The trustees plan to maximise the use of this fabulous equipment for fundraising events including showing more films throughout the year. If you would like to be involved with showing films or setting up a film club please let one of the trustees know or email shenaluck@btconnect.com.

To book the hall then please go to <http://stewartvillagehall.btck.co.uk/> or contact Shena at shenaluck@btconnect.com or on 01491 834543

Finally, the trustees would like to thank you for your ongoing support. It is very much appreciated, and we wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy new year.

Annette Kilworth

The Parish Council

After over eight years as our Parish Clerk, Lucy left us at the beginning of October. We were very fortunate to be able to offer Katie Fanstone the position from an interview shortlist of three candidates. Katie is well qualified for the role which she took up in early October with commitment and enthusiasm; please give her your support.

Play and gym equipment

Installation of the play and gym equipment in the Mackney Lane recreation ground has been completed. The play equipment includes an inclusive roundabout with wheelchair access, an outdoor concrete table tennis table and refurbishment of the existing swings, including a new safety surface. The nine items of adult gym equipment, 5 x strength and flexibility and 4 x cardiovascular, are grouped at the southern end of recreation ground away from the cricket pitch boundary. We hope you all have the opportunity to use and enjoy the equipment in the coming months.



Since its installation and opening in September last year, the new play equipment in Kings Orchard has proven to be a great success and very popular with families and older children alike. Unfortunately, parts of it have been subject to damage on a number of occasions, particularly the fencing enclosing the infant and adventure areas. This is something that we would appreciate everyone's help in trying to discourage.

Tennis courts

The tennis courts will have been pressure washed and moss treated for the winter by now. As reported in the July 2019 edition of *The Villager*, the courts are now in need of resurfacing to ensure that this valuable parish asset remains in a safe and useable condition. Three specialist companies were approached for advice and quotation in October last year. The decision from this was that the parish should go ahead with resurfacing whilst incorporating revisions to the practice area requested by the tennis club. The cost of this work is considerable and outside of the funds available to the Parish Council for such work. The tennis club are able to make a donation towards the cost and some grants are in the process of being applied for as well as fund-raising activities within the village. There is however a need to raise more funds in order to have this work carried out.

If sufficient funds cannot be raised during the remainder of this year, an alternative lower cost solution intended to extend the life of the surface for up to a further five years will be adopted. The parish would then have time to raise the funds necessary for full resurfacing before 2025. Either way this work is scheduled to be carried out in March 2020.

Planning Update

The Parish Council continues to monitor planning applications. We have our Neighbourhood Plan to guide this process but we need our district council to follow its policies. We have found that whilst it uses the plan to determine the big picture, some of the smaller parish policies are not given appropriate weight. For this reason, we have produced a short summary of the Plan and requested a meeting with council planning officers.

A good example of what we are trying to achieve can be seen on the former orchard site on the High Road where recent tree work caused a lot of distress to some residents. The Neighbourhood Plan is clear about the importance of retaining the trees and hedgerows on this site before and during development. This was very important to villagers. However, South Oxfordshire District Council, in determining the outline planning application for the site, did not follow this policy in their decision-making process, stating that some of the hedgerows are of little importance. This is an issue which is not just shared by Brightwell-cum-Sotwell residents but also many parishes across the county which are finding the same problem. As such we have all joined together to form an Oxfordshire Neighbourhood Plan Alliance to give us strength in numbers.

Save the Children

The Save the Children Christmas tree in the Square will be extra special this year to celebrate Save the Children's 100th anniversary. If you are in the village on Christmas Eve at around 5.30pm please come and join us for our 'Carols around the Christmas Tree' event.

As always there will be a collection to raise money for Save the Children. There are no expenses for providing the tree and the event; everything is donated by individuals and businesses. In return, we hope you will help us raise money to give children both here and abroad a better tomorrow.

Celia Collett

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Primary School

There are many partnerships that make for a great school: those between the pupils, staff and parents, and of course, the wider community. At Brightwell Primary School, we are fortunate to benefit from a further partnership; the one we have with The Merchant Taylors' Company.

The Merchant Taylors' Company is one of the 'great twelve' livery companies of the City of London. Its origins can be traced back to 1300 or earlier and it has occupied its present site in Threadneedle Street since around 1347. Originally known as the Company of Tailors and Linen-Armourers, it was renamed by a Royal Charter of 1503 as the Guild of Merchant Taylors of the Fraternity of St John the Baptist of The City of London. It has spelt 'Tailors' as 'Taylors' ever since. Over the centuries, members of the company, including two Lord Mayors, are believed to have founded schools in almost twenty English towns and villages, including Wallingford. Wallingford School is part of the charitable foundation endowed and entrusted to the Company in 1659 by Walter Bigg, Master 1654.

In September 2017, when Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Primary School became an academy, we joined The Merchant Taylor's Oxfordshire Academy Trust, a trust of two schools – Wallingford School and Brightwell-cum-Sotwell CofE Primary School.

The support the school receives through this partnership is wide and varied, but one such way that is very familiar to our children is the annual photography competition. This is open to all schools who have these strong links with the Trust, and, at this time of year, we are all kept busy by the excitement generated by the theme and the influx of entries. With the finalists announced in mid-December, it's a tense time for some! You may have already viewed some of the entries for the competition last year, around the theme of 'character'. These were kindly displayed in the Red Box Gallery, opposite The Red Lion in Brightwell, thanks to Robert Seatter. An interview on BBC Radio Oxford followed with the children sharing their ideas behind their photos with presenter Lilley Mitchell.

This year the children, and staff, have been snapping away around the theme of 'well-being' with entries showing nature, exercise, animals and friends and family. The children share how volunteering brings them pleasure, adventures in the countryside, helps their mental health and exercise which leaves them feeling strong and healthy – good reminders for us all to make time for such activities!

All our photos can be viewed on our school Facebook page, where you can also see what else we have been up to!

Fin Lewis, Headteacher

St Agatha's with St James'

This edition of *The Villager* neatly covers the Christian seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, each of which enhances and draws significance from the other.

The time of preparation for Christmas, called Advent (meaning 'coming'), begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas which falls neatly on 1 December this year. We will mark this with an Advent Carol Service at 4pm so that families with children are able to join us and take part in our junior choir and the readings - this year's theme is 'Looking for the Light'. In the midst of our winter darkness and our fractured politics, the Church proclaims the approach of God's kingdom: 'The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him' (John 1:9-10). Into this darkness 25 December comes as a celebration of the invincibility of the Light.

During the last half of December, when the Roman pagans celebrated the feast of the Unconquered Sun, the Church now gathers to proclaim that the Son has indeed come into the world. As John writes in the gospel: 'In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it' (John 1:4-5). The Feast of Our Lord's Nativity (25 December) celebrates the mystery of God's incarnation in human flesh.

The fulfilment of God's promise of light leads to the proclamation of this 'good news'. So, the celebration of Christmas is followed by the Feast of the Epiphany (6 January). Epiphany (meaning 'to show forth'), celebrated on the 12th day after Christmas, commemorates the visit of the magi, wise ones who travelled from afar to worship the babe in Bethlehem and who represent all the nations of the world. Jesus is saviour for all people. During this part of the Christmas season, we recall Jesus' baptism and early ministry. The season ends with Candlemas which we celebrate on Sunday 2 February with our Christingle Service at St James' at 4pm. We share the news that God's love is for every person, symbolised by the whole world being wrapped in God's love and illuminated by the Christ-light.

Thus, the thematic pattern of Advent-Christmas-Epiphany can be seen as darkness-light-manifestation or as promise-fulfilment-proclamation.

I hope you will join us in church for each step of the journey through the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany season to appreciate the anticipation and preparation, celebration and reflective appreciation of the Incarnation – as one famous carol puts it: *Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing*.

With every blessing and joy in the light of Christ,

Rev Kev

Brightwell Supporting Refugees

Over a month has gone by since the wonderful jazz night featuring George Potter and fellow jazz supremos but the memory of the great musical evening is still as strong as if it happened yesterday. Thank you to the players and supporters. A massive amount was raised- over £1,500!

We have just had the quiz in the Red Lion – a huge thank you to Andy Lewis for being question master extraordinaire once again. Needless to say, a good night was had! Thanks too to Sue and Bob in the Red Lion for hosting and generously donating the delicious chilli.

With that money raised at the jazz night and other generous donations, we have sent money out to the Hope School in Amman, Jordan to pay for two teachers' salaries and help with their rent along with money to buy warm clothing for the cold winters experienced out there. We have also bought laptop computers for the school children in the Rhino refugee camp in Uganda as well as pledging £2000 to the Big Give which will then double this amount. BSR has helped nearer home also by donating money to put a kitchen into the Asylum Welcome headquarters in Oxford so that hot food will be available for the refugee folk who use the centre.

So, although you don't see much in the media about the plight of refugees believe me it is still very much there and not likely to go away anytime soon.

BSR is still beavering away at further fund-raising projects:

9 December 7 30 pm. Carols in St James' Church. Tickets (no charge) from the village shop. Mulled wine will be served. It has proved in the past to be a magical evening to reinforce the uniting of people from all beliefs and circumstances to enjoy the Christmas spirit. Please do come along!

11 January Village playwright Mike Bartlett in conversation with David Dugan, discussing his award winning TV series 'Dr Foster' and what it takes to move from the stage ('King Charles III') to the screen. 7.30pm village hall.

28 March Pop Up Bistro with music in the Jubilee Pavilion. Caroline Oakley has again kindly offered her culinary skills to put together a delicious meal with a French theme and this will be accompanied by a band of musicians who play French Café music. Perfect! More details to follow. We also have other exciting events in the pipeline so watch this space!

Many thanks to all our supporters – we wouldn't have managed to have raised so much over these past 4½ years and been able keep going without you. I know our recipients are extremely grateful and that is what it is all about.

Ann Linton, co-chair

PS If you are stuck for a Xmas present idea, why not give a gift card to help improve the lives of refugee children. Contact us at brightwellrefugees@gmail.com for one.

Brightwell Toddlers:

What a lovely time we have been having at Toddlers! We have had lots of new families coming along, both from the village and also from surrounding towns and villages which is fantastic! Please spread the word if you know of anyone who would like to come.

We have been able to purchase several new toys and playsets thanks to a very generous grant from the Community Association and a kind donation from a former toddler, so we are very grateful to them - thank you!

We will be doing lots of lovely winter-related crafts for December so please come along if you fancy a warm cuppa and delicious home baking while your little ones play. **Sessions take place every Thursday (term time) 9.15-11.15am in the village hall, for under 5s.**

Please note due to elections being held in the village hall on 28 November and 12 December, Toddlers will be held at the Jubilee Pavilion, Mackney Lane on these dates.

For further information or if you would like to volunteer to help at Toddlers please email brightwelltoddlers@gmail.com.

Laura Woodford

Christmas services and carols in the village

St Agatha's Brightwell

Sunday 1 December 4pm	Advent Carol Service
Sunday 22 December 6pm	Christmas Carol Service
Tuesday 24 December 4.30pm	Crib Service
Wednesday 25 Dec 9.30am	Christmas Day Family Communion
Sunday 2 February 4pm	Christingle

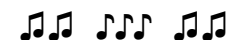
Also available on the regular church diary:
<http://www.wallingfordcofe.org.uk/calendar/>

St James' Sotwell

Tuesday 24 December 11.30pm	Christmas Midnight Communion
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Brightwell Free Church

Sunday 15 December 6pm	Christmas Carol Service followed by seasonal refreshments
Wednesday 25 December 10am	Christmas Day Service



Carol evening in aid of Brightwell Supporting Refugees

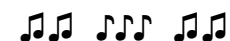
9 December 7.30pm at St James' church

Carols around the Christmas Tree

Tuesday 24 December 5.30pm	The traditional Carols around the 'Save the Children Christmas Tree' in the Square, bottom of Church Lane).
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Island Farm Donkey Sanctuary Carol Service

Thursday 12 December at 7.30pm, carol service led by Rev Janice Chilton with live animals and the Christmas story.



Christmas fairs and other events

FOBS Christmas Fair

Brightwell School will be holding its Christmas Fair on Friday 6 December at 6pm. Come along for a festive, fun evening and to support the school in its fundraising for IT.

Red Lion

Opening hours over Christmas are in the Red Lion article on page 14. Father Christmas will be visiting on Sunday lunchtime, 15 December, booking needed.
Monday 30 December – New Year's Eve party.

Scout post

Post-box in the Village Stores from Friday 29 November. See more info on page 16 about collection, and delivery times and areas.

Village Christmas lunch

The lunch club will be serving their annual Xmas lunch on Tuesday 3 December at 12.15pm in the village hall. To book, contact Jaqui on 836018.

Earth Trust craft workshops

Make wreaths, natural decorations and wooden reindeer at the Earth Trust, Little Wittenham, between 29 November and 20 December. There are adult only and family sessions available, see www.earthtrust.org.uk/events for details.

Wassail

Sunday 5 January. Meet at Mackney at 2.45pm. See article on page 4 for more information on the afternoon and evening.

Village Stores opening hours

The Village Stores will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day and will have reduced hours on some other days. See page 23 for details and also last posting dates for Xmas delivery of cards and parcels.

The Red Lion

We're looking forward to a busy festive season. It always starts quite early in the pub and I must admit I quite enjoy the build up to Christmas and even listening to the Christmas music (to begin with anyway!) There may be changes to our opening hours over the festive season itself and I'm afraid I do not have the exact times at present so keep an eye on our website, Facebook site and signs inside and outside of the pub (or ring and ask).

At the moment we will be open on Christmas Eve for lunch and in the evening for drinks only. Christmas Day we will be open from 12 noon till 2pm just for drinks and closed the rest of the day. Boxing Day we will be closed all day. Father Christmas will be visiting on Sunday lunchtime, 15th December. We are nearly full for this.

We will be offering a reduced normal menu in December as well as our Christmas party meals (please remember if you order the Christmas menu we need to have your choices at least two weeks in advance. Many thanks.) We will, of course be having our traditional New Year's Eve party on Monday 30 December - fancy dress theme is Peaky Blinders so start planning your costume now. We will open on New Year's Eve if people want us too but please ask us; we are very happy to have a New Year's Eve party but if there is no interest we probably won't.

We have started a new book club on the second Tuesday of the month in the pub and a Ukulele evening on the first and third Mondays of the month. Do come and join us if you fancy either of these. I send an email newsletter out every so often with details of events coming up – if you would like to receive this do send me your email (susanrobson2@gmail.com) or sign up via our web site www.redlionbrightwell.co.uk.

Looking forward to seeing you soon.

Sue and Bob

A Holly Jolly Christmas

A Holly Jolly Christmas is the seasonal offering from the Didcot Community Gospel Choir, in which at least 7 Brightwell villagers will be performing.

In aid of Didcot Volunteer Centre, it takes place on Saturday 7 December at 5.30 pm at Didcot Civic Hall. Tickets, £8 or £6 for concessions, available from 07923 453143, didcotgospel@gmail.com or from me.

Nicky Lidstone

BOWLS

Come and join Brightwell Short Mat Bowls Club on a Thursday afternoon, 2-4.30pm in the village hall. We are a mixed group and we have recently gained five new members so you could all improve together.

No equipment is required except for a pair of flat soled shoes. The club has spare sets of bowls for members to use if required.

If this sounds like something you would enjoy and you would like to give it a go, just turn up on a Thursday afternoon.

Should you want any further information please contact one of the people listed below. We look forward to hearing from you.

Roger Symes 01491 83717, Adrian Collett 01491 837617



Brightwell-cum-Sotwell

At October's WI meeting, Helen Fraser, an independent financial planning adviser, gave members practical, down-to-earth advice on financial planning for the future. This included: working out how much income you would have when you retire; paying for possible future care; liability for inheritance tax; and arranging for power of attorney. Everyone felt they had learned something new in the evening, some more than others.

Our November meeting was a Christmas crafty night, with members demonstrating Christmas decorations and hand printing on cards and brown paper. Everyone could try something - a very enjoyable and relaxing evening. In December, we are having our Christmas party at the Red Lion and in January we will be getting down to the more serious subject of choosing next year's national campaigns. We will be discussing a number of proposed resolutions put forward by members across the country to be voted on at the national WI meeting in June 2020 and we will be voting for our preferences. As always, a diverse mix of important subjects are up for discussion including a call to improve stem cell donor registration; giving time to talk about death and dying; and ending modern slavery. Members can find more details of these in their WI Life magazine.

Helen Connor, WI President

Scout post

Yes, scout post will be running again this year.

As previously, I would hope to place the post-box in Brightwell Village Stores from Friday 29 November. However, the first collection will not be until Friday 13 December, while the last collection will be on Thursday 19 December. First deliveries should be on Saturday 14 December, while we are delivering the Christmas hampers, and second post will be from Saturday 21 December.

Our delivery areas are: Wallingford, Winterbrook, Cholsey, Moulsoford, Crowmarsh, North & South Stoke, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, Benson, Preston Crowmarsh, Roke, Rokemarsh, Berrick Salome, Shillingford, Warborough and Ewelme **ONLY**: Wallingford, Winterbrook and Shillingford Hill boundaries are up to the roundabout at the top of Wantage Rd, up to the roundabout at the end of Reading Road, up to the Shillingford Bridge Hotel and up to the Bridge on High Street.

Postage cost will be 30p.

Tim Skane

Explore the past this winter

The green spaces that Earth Trust looks after are steeped in history and this winter we are embarking on five months of exciting excavations ahead of our Gateway project. Before we bring this vision to life, we will be working with DigVentures, from November 2019 to March 2020, to help us uncover more from our fascinating past.

Earth Trust looks after and cares for 500 hectares of farmland, woodland and wetland. Standing proud above this farmed landscape is one of Oxfordshire's most visited places – the Wittenham Clumps. One of these hills is an ancient Iron Age hillfort which is so significant that it is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. A series of investigations across the Earth Trust visitor centre location hopes to add fresh evidence to the stories and lives of our ancestors who settled, lived and worked here.

We are delighted to offer opportunities for locals to get involved and to learn more about the people who shaped our much-loved green spaces. Throughout the digs we will be running a series of events for visitors, from volunteer-led site tours to sessions in the Finds Lab, school visits and a community dig. We

will also publish short videos so you can feel close to the action, even if you can't make it to one of our events! We look forward to giving visitors the opportunity to be part of this exciting project. Find all the details at www.earthtrust.org.uk/dig.

On a more festive note, we have a series of craft workshops coming up to get you in the holiday spirit! Join us to make wreaths, natural decorations and wooden reindeer between 29 November and 20 December; adult only and family sessions available, see www.earthtrust.org.uk/events for full details and booking. We also have some courses in the New Year (hedgelaying and winter tree ID) that would make great Christmas gifts!

Nicola Williams



Robin Hood and Babes in the Wood

It will soon be pantomime season in Wallingford and production is underway!

Sinodun Players present Robin Hood and Babes in the Wood - a rollicking good tale of derring-do in the Forest of Sherwood.

A much loved English legend, combined with traditional pantomime fun, as Robin and his trusted band of Merry Men try to outfox the baddy we love to hate! Can Robin thwart the plans of the wicked Sheriff of Nottingham? Of course he can. But you'll have to come along to see how Maid Marian and the Babes are saved.

When: 17 January to 1 February 2020 - Tuesday to Friday at 7:30 pm;
Saturday matinees at 2:00 pm, evenings at 6:30pm

Where: Corn Exchange, Wallingford

Tickets: on sale in December from Corn Exchange box office 01491 825000
Or online at <http://www.cornexchange.org.uk>.

Jayne Reddyhof

BcS Environment Group

Millennium Wood

There has been quite a bit of activity in the last month with a day from James Davys and the Vertex team which helped with some further tree thinning and the burning of the ash tops which may be affected by die-back. This was followed by a sterling effort on the first Sunday in November by mainly Brownies and Beavers plus parents to dig the pond/wetland.

We sited the pond on the edge of the central clearing in the wood which conveniently had a significant depression to give a head start. A lot of material was dug and wheelbarrowed away to produce a pond area of about 9 metres by 5 metres wide and up to 0.6 metres deep. With gently sloping sides the pond will be lined with a special pond liner which is needed to hold the water as the base of the pond is sandy gravel. Some of the dug material will be placed on top of the liner, both to hide it and give a suitable substrate. We hope to finish construction in the coming weeks so that it can start to fill with rainwater.

There is no other source of water so the level will fluctuate over the year in the same way that many natural ponds do. Hence there will be periods when it may dry out but that is fine as the fauna and flora that will naturally occupy the pond will be suited to this type of habitat.

In addition to thanking all those who took part in the work activities we would also thank the Community Association which gave a grant towards the purchase of the pond liner.

Weather

The rainfall recorded at Highlands Farm was, for September, 65.3 mm and for October, 87.8 mm. From the Met Office maps this general area received at least 125% of the long-term average for each of these months. It certainly feels as though autumn is here with some heavy rain and winds seeming quite a regular feature so far! The temperature in October for southern England was, about average, according to the Met Office maps. However, globally, it was the warmest October on record. This is the fifth month in a row that, globally, records have been broken or been close to being broken.

Talks

We were very pleased to have Dave Endecott, Chairman of the Oxfordshire Bats Group, come to the village hall on 30 October to talk about the Life of

Bats. An expert on the topic, he gave a fascinating talk and even brought guest bats! All very appropriate for Halloween eve.

We also had a good level of interest from all age ranges at the 'Get Involved in Your Village' event and we will be following up with those who left contact details. If anyone couldn't attend and wants to know more then please contact our secretary, Lizzie Rhymes (lizrhymes@hotmail.com) or myself (scapeldavies@gmail.com).

Thermal Imaging

The Group has arranged with SODC to borrow their thermal imaging camera for a few weeks in January. Some of you may remember that we borrowed this some years ago and took photographs of houses and other buildings on cold evenings. Each photograph shows in vivid colours the hot and cold areas which in turn reflects where insulation is poor or good. If you would like your house photographed then please let us know and we will do our best to oblige – weather and time permitting!

Steve Capel-Davies

Allsorts preschool

Autumn has delivered some wet, blustery weather this year, which the children have experienced in all of its glory. The waterproofs have been put to the test, splashing in puddles, and running in the leaves. We have made conker paintings, pumpkin-balloon paintings, glittery spider webs, autumn tree prints and rubbings. We have examined the leaves too, noticing the colour, size and shape. The blustery weather brings the heightened emotions, the whoops of joy and the wild running

We are moving into winter now with the cold wind that cuts through the cobwebs and takes our breath away. Always a good time for being dragons, our breath becoming the roaring smoke and fire. Christmas starts early at preschool and the talk of Father Christmas filters into the playroom. At this time of the year it is easy to forget that children's best gift is often time with loved ones and friends. Here at the preschool we can see that the children love to come and play with the toys, but the magic comes from their interactions with others. We will be thinking of how we can be kind to one another, share with one another and give to one another. We will talk about giving thanks for what others do for us, giving hugs, giving help and giving smiles. It is not to say that this is always put into practice as they learn the skills to be little citizens in their own right.

We have lots of fun ideas for the Christmas period with a Nativity, party and meal at the forefront. Glitter becomes our friend, with a dusting each day on every craft activity or child in the vicinity. We can't wait for the fun to start.

The committee have been working hard to give the preschool a fresh look in the community, with a rebrand coming our way very soon. Watch this space for news of this with lots of fun things happening in 2020.

Natasha Hillier, Manager

PebblesStory

The Miscarriage Support Group – the PebblesStory, as even a small pebble causes a ripple! – meets at Wallingford Family Centre 7.30–9pm, every third Thursday in the month.

For one of the happiest life events that can occur for a family, falling pregnant, one in four experience heartache. A miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy, that is a loss of a pregnancy pre-24 weeks, there is little on-going support, understanding and a taboo subject. PebblesStory is a free face-to-face, monthly support group created to give people a safe, non-judgmental place to share with others who have similar experience. Sharing and being with others is the first step to healing.

If you or someone else has been affected by a loss (even years after), come along to this monthly friendly support group. See Facebook/PebblesStory for more information or contact me on 07955 164674.

Nila Matthews

Work for Oxfordshire Library Service!

Are you a people person who wants to play a key part in your local community? We're looking for confident, enthusiastic and committed people to work as Customer Service Advisers for the Oxfordshire Library Service!

No two days are ever the same - you could be leading events such as rhyme-time and storytelling for children, as well as helping people to access IT and directing customers to reliable online sources of information. We offer flexible hours to suit your lifestyle and where you live. £9.55 per hour.

Apply to join the library service and start a great new chapter: Applications open 11 Nov. Closing date 9 Dec. Go to www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/jobs

Through the Wall

On 9 November, there were celebrations for the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the 27 mile-long death strip that had cut the city in two since 1961. You may have seen several BBC programmes chronicling the event and life in communist East Germany. The celebrations reminded me of the journey I made in 1985 on the underground (the U Bahn), from the Zoological Garden station in West Berlin to Karlsplatz in the East.

It was a short journey in time, but culturally a long one from the booming, technicolour west to the grim, shabby east. Karlsplatz was dark, menacing and uninviting with jostling hordes of sorry-looking East Germans, watched by groups of uniformed police. I waited for what seemed an age for my contact, worrying about what to do if he failed to show up. But Franz arrived to take me to the railway station to Dresden. Our compartment was full, but we were able to chat for most of the journey

My hotel in Dresden was adequate, but needed a complete makeover, in contrast to the hotel hosting the conference, which was a modern palatial, structure on the banks of the Elbe. As an invitee of the Ministry of Water Resources, I had to make a speech at the opening after the Minister, the Mayor and several other bigwigs. For several days the conference discussed hydrological problems, finishing in a dinner in a big hotel in Saxon Switzerland, where we were taken in a cavalcade of large black cars led by the Minister and surrounded by outriders.

I worried that leaving Dresden meant a repeat of my outward journey, but without help from Franz. However, I need not have worried, as I made it safely to Templehof Airport in the west for the flight back to Britain.

Some years later when Germany had been reunified and the Russians had lost their grip on eastern Europe, I met Franz at another scientific conference. *'Did you know'* he said *'as soon as you arrived at Karlsplatz the Stasi were watching you. They listened to our conversation on the train to Dresden and were with you on your return journey.'*

John Rodda

VE Day 75th Anniversary

To mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day the May Bank Holiday 2020 will be on Friday 8 May. There are already loads of activities planned to take place in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell so please save the date in your diaries ready for a day of special events.

Climate Action Fair

Saturday 7 March 2020. Put the date in next year's diary now.

This is an opportunity to share ideas about how to reduce our impact on the environment and campaign to persuade government and business to react faster to the developing climate and environmental emergency.

Information stalls, short talks, shared food and conversation.

Find out more about green finance, tree planting, repair and repurposing, car sharing, growing your own food and many other ways of making your life more sustainable.

St Mary-le-More Church, Wallingford has offered their space so that we can bring this together after the local market on Saturday 7 March 2020.

If you would like to help with this or have an idea for an information stall, or a 20 minute talk please email Amanda on acgriff9@phonecoop.coop.

Amanda Griffin

Wallingford Country Market

Why not let Wallingford Country Market help take the strain of Christmas preparations? Ideas for Christmas throughout November and December. Orders taken for most items sold including Christmas baking, particularly cakes and mince pies. Seasonal hand-crafted decorations and small gifts make welcome presents, as well as special jars of preserves and honey. Gardeners will be producing attractive fresh and artificial decorations and wreaths at competitive prices. Eggs, including duck eggs, are available each Friday.

Our last market of 2019, marking the end of our special Centenary year, will be Friday 20 December. We return on Friday, 10 January 2020. We thank our regular customers for their support and we look forward to welcoming new ones during 2020. A very Happy Christmas to you all!

The market is on Fridays 9.30am–12 noon at St. Mary-le-More Church, Market Place (situated just behind Town Hall). For further information from our market manager Alison, call 01491 681596 or pop in and see her one Friday morning. New producers are always welcome.

Gwen Strong

Brightwell Village Stores and Post Office

Christmas opening hours

Tuesday 24 December	Christmas Eve	9am – 12 noon
Wednesday 25 December	Christmas Day	CLOSED
Thursday 26 December	Boxing Day	CLOSED
Friday 27 December		9am – 1pm
Saturday 28 December		9am – 1pm
Sunday 29 December		9am – 12 noon
Monday 30 December		9am – 1pm
Tuesday 31 December		9am – 12 noon
Wednesday 1 January	New Year's Day	CLOSED

Latest recommended posting dates for Christmas deliveries:

UK	Wednesday 18 December	2 nd Class
	Friday 20 December	1 st Class
	Monday 23 December	Royal Mail Special Delivery Guaranteed

A leaflet with details of posting to international destinations is on the Post Office counter or go to postoffice.co.uk.

Can we take the opportunity to wish all our wonderful staff and volunteers a Happy Christmas.

Our 2019 calendar is now at the printers and will be available to purchase very soon.

Sam and the team

Home-Start

Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire is looking for new volunteers to support local families with young children who are experiencing difficulties.

Are you a parent, or have experience working with young children, and can spare 2-3 hours per week giving friendly practical and emotional support? Full training and on-going staff support given.

Contact 01235 511152 or admin@homestartso.org for more information.

Helen Galsworthy

VILLAGE DIARY

December

CHRISTMAS CHURCH SERVICES listed on page 12

3	Village Christmas lunch	VH	12.15
6	FOBS Christmas Fair at Brightwell School		6pm
9	Brightwell Supporting Refugees Carols at St James'		7.30pm
10	WI Christmas Dinner	RL	
12	Island Farm Donkey Sanctuary carol service		7.30pm
15	Father Christmas at the Red Lion (lunchtime)	RL	
16	Coffee link-up	Root 1	10-12
24	Save the Children carols at The Square		5.30pm
30	Peaky Blinders themed New Year's Eve Party	RL	7.30pm

January

5	Wassail – Small's House Barn		2.45pm
5	Wassail Mummer's Play	VH	7.30pm
11	Mike Bartlett talk in aid of BSR	VH	7.30pm
14	WI meeting Resolutions & 14 th birthday	VH	7.45pm
20	Coffee link-up	Root 1	10-12
25	Burns Night at the Red Lion	RL	7.30pm

Advance Notice

2 February	Christingle Service at St Agatha's
24 February	Community Association Red Lion Quiz
7 March	Community Association Village Quiz VH
28 March	BSR Pop up Bistro

Refuse Collection (Food waste each week)

Grey bins	Thursday 12 & Saturday 28 December Friday 10 & Thursday 23 January
Green (& brown) bins	Thursdays 5 & 19 December Saturday 4* & Thursdays 16 & 30 January

*** no garden waste**
NB Bank holiday collections start from 6am so put your bins out the night before

Village website – For more information about Brightwell-cum-Sotwell visit the village website: www.brightwellcumstowell.co.uk.