

# **BLETCHINGTON**

# **VILLAGE NEWS**

*YOUR COMMUNITY MAGAZINE – SERVING THE VILLAGE SINCE 1979*

**ISSUE 264**

**June – July 2023**



**We celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III**

Reports from village organisations

Coronation celebrations – Report & more pictures

Bletchington Parish Council – Annual Meeting

Bletchington in 1921

Bird Nesting Season



## BLECHINGTON CELEBRATES THE CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III





## **EDITORIAL**

The new King has been crowned and, on the day after the Coronation, we celebrated the event in Bletchington with an afternoon tea party, followed by a barbecue in the evening accompanied by live music and a disco. A big thank you to Grace Tharby and Sue Davies for organising the whole event and also to the many other people who helped out to make this such a memorable occasion. I would like to add an additional personal thank you to Sue for the delicious chocolate cake that I won in the raffle. It was great to see so many Bletch folk get together for a social event and everyone appeared to enjoy themselves. Remember the day (or see what you missed, if you were unable to attend) in our picture gallery opposite and read about it on Page 11.

The tradition of morris dancing goes back hundreds of years. There are several styles of morris and the most familiar form, Cotswold Morris, is firmly rooted in this area. I can't find any evidence that Bletchington has ever had a morris side but our neighbours Kirtlington certainly do, but they have struggled with numbers recently. I was interested to hear they have recently become a mixed side so, ladies of Bletch, perhaps you might like to consider giving this a go. Also, I would like to give a plug for Kirtlington Morris's principal event of the year, Lamb Ale, which takes place on the weekend of 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> June, the main day being Sunday the 4<sup>th</sup>. For more details, please see the article on Page 10.

This is **your** Village News and we are reliant upon material from you, the readers. Please keep your articles and photographs coming and do keep us updated on anything going on in the village. We always love to hear from new contributors and from younger readers. If you don't fancy writing, we can always capture your thoughts via an interview and write the article on your behalf. Please get in touch with us via e-mail at [bletchnews@gmail.com](mailto:bletchnews@gmail.com). The deadline for articles is always the **20<sup>th</sup> of the month** prior to publication – so articles for inclusion in the August/September magazine must reach us by **20<sup>th</sup> July, 2023**.

I would like to say a big thank you to all our advertisers. As a free magazine to readers, we are reliant upon the support of local businesses, through advertising, to cover our ever increasing printing costs. If you run a local business, please consider placing an advert. There are currently no plumbers or electricians amongst our advertisers, trades that are often in demand in Bletchington, so if you run one of these businesses, an advert in Village News may prove mutually beneficial. Our rates are very reasonable.

[bletchnews@gmail.com](mailto:bletchnews@gmail.com)

***Pete Baker***

### **Local election result**

On 4<sup>th</sup> May we elected a new councillor to represent the Launton & Otmoor ward, which includes Bletchington, on Cherwell District Council. Results were as follows:

Hughes, David Leonard	Conservative	1,052 votes
Karslake, Naomi Celia	Labour	315 votes
Nedelcu, Julian	Liberal Democrat	1,120 votes

Julian Nedelcu was duly elected to represent our ward on Cherwell District Council for four years. Turnout was 38.66% from an electorate of 6,490. Congratulations to Julian for his election win.

Following these elections, the Conservatives lost their overall majority but remain the largest single party on Cherwell District Council. As the other parties were unable to agree upon a coalition, the Conservatives will continue to run the council as a minority administration.

### **Chiltern Railways timetable**

Chiltern Railways, which operates train services from Oxford Parkway Station, in common with other train operators, introduced a new timetable, effective from 21<sup>st</sup> May. This is significantly different to the old timetable, so please check your journey times on the Chiltern Railways website before travelling. Key Monday to Friday morning journeys to London Marylebone now depart at 07:12, 07:52, 08:12, 08:26, 08:50, 09:11.

### **Talk: "A One Place Study – Bletchington 1737-1947"**

Friend of the Village News, Charles Eldridge, who has written articles for the magazine, will be giving a talk to the Oxfordshire Family History Society at Exeter Hall, Kidlington on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July at 8pm (doors open 7:15pm). The subject is "A One Place Study – Bletchington 1737-1947". The talk will focus on changes to the village around 1800 and specific events in the village. To accompany the talk, Charles will also provide some background documents (maps, photographs and indexes) for viewing before and after the meeting.

Cost of entry to non-members is £2, payable at the door, and please mention you are a Bletchington resident. The talk will last approximately one hour and there will be a short Questions & Answers session to follow. Please come along and find out more about your village in times past.

### **Ringin' for the King**

To commemorate the Coronation of King Charles III, bellringers across the country were called into action to 'Ring for the King' at their local church. The only problem was, there weren't enough regular bellringers to fulfil the needs of the country, so calls went out for any lapsed bellringers or people interested in giving it a go to come forward.

Here in Bletchington we similarly faced a shortfall in the number of bellringers so calls went out through Facebook and the Village News and, fortunately, Tower Captain Sue Macready and regular bellringer Gus Bridges were joined by seventeen others on the day who turned out to 'Ring for the King'.

Pictured here are some of those who rang the bells, thus ensuring Bletchington played its part in this momentous occasion. A big thank you to everyone who got involved.



## **OBITUARY**

### **Jean Bagnall Smith**

We were very sad to hear that Jean had died on the 17<sup>th</sup> February.

Jean and Tony moved to Michaelmas Cottage in Islip Road in 1995 and not long after their arrival they erected a marquee in their garden and invited all their neighbours to their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary lunch - one way to get to know everyone! They were a most hospitable couple, friends to all, always ready with coffee or a meal and wise advice to anyone who needed help. They were also invaluable members of the church, especially during the fundraising and renovation work in 2000. We knew that Jean was studying for a PhD in archaeology at St Cross, but we learned during the eulogy given by her daughter Sarah, that she had been an avid student in many different fields, from lampshade making to antiques and High German - she was a very bright lady, interested in everything and always wanting to learn more. Her funeral was held in the chapel of Pusey House, St Cross in Oxford on 27<sup>th</sup> March taken by her nephew who is a Canon of Ely Cathedral and the number of people from all parts of her life who attended was testimony to the affection in which she was held by all.

## **ST. GILES' CHURCH NEWS**

We are part of the AKEMAN BENEFICE (Bletchington, Kirtlington, Weston-on-the-Green, Chesterton, Middleton Stoney, Wendlebury and Hampton Gay). The benefice is named after Akeman Street, the Roman road which runs through it.



### **Ministry Team**

<b>Rector:</b> The Rev'd Gareth Miller	01869 350224	akemanbenefice@gmail.com
<b>Associate Priest:</b> The Rev'd Nick Ktorides	01869 324191	nickktorides.akeman@gmail.com
<b>Assistant Priest:</b> The Very Rev'd Robert Wilkes	01869 350159	bobwilkes.akeman@gmail.com
<b>Licensed Lay Minister:</b> Paul Clifford	01869 351652	paulclifford.akeman@gmail.com
<b>Safeguarding Officer:</b> Nicky Donne	01869 351748	safeguarding.akeman@gmail.com
<b>Benefice Website:</b>	www.akemanbenefice.org.uk	
<b>Churchwarden:</b>	Judith Ledger	<b>Treasurer:</b> Kate Ehrman
<b>Assistant Churchwarden:</b>	Fiona Teddy	<b>Members of the PCC:</b> Natasha Pitts
<b>Secretary:</b>	Pam Hayes	Sally Cross

If you or anyone you know would like to talk to a member of the ministry team please do not hesitate to phone or email.

A small prayer group meets remotely each Wednesday morning. If you would like to join or if you have a request for prayer, please phone 351542. The church remains open each day for private prayer.

Details of services and an introduction to the ministry team together with information about the benefice churches can be found on our website at: [www.akemanbenefice.org.uk](http://www.akemanbenefice.org.uk)

### **From the registers:**

9 <sup>th</sup> April	Grace Ophelia Collins	Baptism
We welcome Grace to the family of the church.		
23 <sup>rd</sup> April	Vivienne Bagshaw	Funeral
We extend our sympathy to all Vivienne's family.		
28 <sup>th</sup> April	Jennifer Anne Woodcock	Funeral at N. Oxon Crematorium
We extend our sympathy to all Jennifer's family.		
30 <sup>th</sup> April	River-Reign Roper	Baptism
We welcome River-Reign to the family of the church.		
19 <sup>th</sup> May	Melvena Raffell	Interment of Ashes
We extend our sympathy to Debbie and Will and all Malvena's family.		
21 <sup>st</sup> May	Charles David Cox	Baptism
We welcome Charles to the family of the church.		

### **Ordinands**

We offer our prayers and send our warm congratulations to three people who are to be ordained at the end of June or beginning of July, all of whom have been worshipping with us and helping in various ways over the past year or two:

Alistair Milne (to serve in Guildford diocese)  
Sam Durley (to serve in Oxford diocese)  
Fran Smettem (to serve in Bath & Wells diocese)

### **Akeman Church Community Choir**

We will be singing at two services in June and July. Do come along! On 25<sup>th</sup> June we will be singing evensong at Wendlebury at 18:00. On 23<sup>rd</sup> July we will be singing at the morning service at Hampton Gay at 11:00. New members always welcome. Email [akemanbenefice@gmail.com](mailto:akemanbenefice@gmail.com).

### **Deanery Walk**

The fourth Deanery Walk will take place on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July in the Weston/Bletchington area. Full details to be confirmed. Please note the date (time: approx. 14:00-17:00).

### **Hymns and Pimms at Chesterton**

Come and join us for Hymns and Pimms at Chesterton on 30<sup>th</sup> July at 18:00. Some favourite hymns, and a chance to thank everyone who supports our church community in so many different ways.

### **FROM THE RECTOR**

Dear friends,

I have just come back from casting my vote. I was amused to be congratulated for being the first voter. As I said to the Presiding Officer, it's pretty well the first time I've been first for anything! I was in a meeting the other evening and after the formal business closed the participants continued in conversation. By a slightly circuitous route we got onto politics. I was intrigued that one of those present spoke in such a way as to assume that I shared her political views (I don't!). We are fortunate to live in a country where we are permitted a range of political opinions and that has at least some claim to call itself democratic (though in my view an overhaul of the voting system is long overdue). Yet in recent times, and in supposedly democratic countries, we have seen examples of those who fear losing power trying to manipulate the electoral process. In other countries there is blatant, or only slightly concealed, dictatorship.

A worrying development is the potential for 'bad actors', as they have been called, to use Artificial Intelligence to undermine plebiscites and other electoral processes for their own malevolent ends. Easy access to the internet is also having a worrying effect on our schools. It is difficult for parents to control what their children watch on their screens, and equally difficult for teachers to monitor what is shared in the playground.

On the positive side, our three village schools put a huge amount of effort into reinforcing certain core values, some of them 'Christian' values, some of them 'British' ones, and of course there is a considerable element of overlap. Honesty, integrity, respect, resilience – these are just a few of the virtues espoused, taught and exemplified on a daily basis. We are very fortunate indeed to have such good local schools, and that these fundamental ingredients of a good life are so deeply embedded.

Sharing and developing these values does not, of course, mean that everyone will share the same political opinions, and I hope that we will continue to enjoy a diversity of outlook. Whatever the threats, as well as the opportunities, posed by the inexorable development of sophisticated technology, I have huge confidence that the younger generation will play a positive role in building a world that is more just and more equitable, challenging prejudice and distortion in all their manifestations. Those of us who are older can share our wisdom, but we should also be open to receive the wisdom of the young, who are generally far less governed by unconscious biases.

**Gareth**

### Church services for June & July

<b>JUNE 2023</b>	<b>Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> <i>Trinity</i></b>	<b>Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> <i>St. Barnabas</i></b>	<b>Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> <i>Trinity 2</i></b>	<b>Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> <i>Trinity 3</i></b>	
<b>Bletchington</b>	09:30 Morning Worship		09:30 Holy Communion		
<b>Chesterton</b>	08:00 Holy Comm. (said) 11:00 Family Service	11:00 Holy Communion	11:00 Morning Worship		
<b>Hampton Gay</b>		11:00 Matins			
<b>Kirtlington</b>	10:45 Lamb Ale	09:30 Holy Comm. (said) 18:00 Evensong	11:00 Café Church		
<b>Middleton Stoney</b>	09:30 Breakfast Church		09:30 Holy Communion	10:00 Holy Communion	
<b>Wendlebury</b>	09:30 Holy Comm.		09:30 Morning Wor.	18:00 Evensong ACCC	
<b>Weston-on- the-Green</b>	16:00 Family Service	11:00 Morning Wor.	11:00 Holy Comm.		

<b>JULY 2023</b>	<b>Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> <i>Trinity 4</i></b>	<b>Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> <i>Trinity 5</i></b>	<b>Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> <i>Trinity 6</i></b>	<b>Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> <i>Trinity 7</i></b>	<b>Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> <i>Trinity 8</i></b>
<b>Bletchington</b>	09:30 Breakfast Church		09:30 Holy Communion		
<b>Chesterton</b>	08:00 Holy Comm. (said) 11:00 Family Service	11:00 Holy Communion	11:00 Morning Worship		18:00 Hymns & Pimms
<b>Hampton Gay</b>		11:00 Matins		11:00 Benefice Holy Communion	
<b>Kirtlington</b>	11:00 Holy Communion	09:30 Holy Comm. (said) 18:00 Evensong	11:00 Morning Worship		
<b>Middleton Stoney</b>	09:30 Morning Wor.		09:30 Holy Comm.		
<b>Wendlebury</b>	09:30 Holy Communion		09:30 Breakfast Church		
<b>Weston-on- the-Green</b>	16:00 Patronal Evensong <i>Visitation BVM</i>	11:00 Morning Worship	11:00 Holy Communion		10:00 Holy Communion



# *Coming our way?*



Yes, a 15 metre telecommunication mast like the one on the left (in Kidlington by Miller & Carter's) could soon be on its way to Bletchington, destined for the location below.



A planning application has been submitted by a telecoms company to erect a 15 metre tall telecommunications installation right in the centre of Bletchington, adjacent to the bus shelter and facing the Village Green. Some residents are rightly concerned about this proposed structure.

More details about the planning application can be found on the Cherwell District Council website:

<https://planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk>

Type the reference number 23/01222/TEL56 into the appropriate field and click 'search'. Details of the application will appear in the resultant screen, then you should click on the reference number, then on the next screen you have the opportunity to comment on the application by clicking 'comment on this application'.

You will then be asked to enter your name, address and e-mail details, then under "Your comments", select 'type of comment' from the list, where you can select 'Comment', 'Support' or 'Objection'. Please note the deadline to lodge objections (or messages of support) is 9<sup>th</sup> June.

The site in question is a conservation area and the erection of a mast would blight the appearance of the Village Green and surrounding area for many years to come. Whilst mobile phone signals are not always great in Bletchington, there must surely be a more appropriate site to erect such a mast.

It is understood the Parish Council will be objecting to this planning application but, if you are unhappy with the plan, the more objections that are received by Cherwell District Council, the more likely it is to be turned down.

It is also understood that a similar application to erect a telecoms mast in Kirtlington was turned down, so this proposal is certainly not a done deal.



## **BLETCHINGDON PRIMARY SCHOOL PTA**

### **PTA Chair**

We are delighted to welcome Victoria Ingham as the new chair of Bletchington PTA. Victoria has two children at Bletchington School and is looking forward to getting stuck in with new activities and fundraising ideas!

Victoria will be supported by the existing members of the committee and, of course, new members are very welcome.

We look forward to working with Victoria on fundraising activities going forward and our continued thanks to the community for supporting these fundraising activities.

### **Summer raffle**

We will be holding a summer raffle, so look out for tickets through your door later in June. As usual, we will have a wide range of prizes available! If anyone is able to donate a raffle prize, please drop this in to the school.

## **1<sup>st</sup> Bletchington Brownies**



This term has been busy for the Brownies! We have been working hard on our zero waste and networking badges and have had a few of the girls achieve their bronze, silver and gold awards. Highlights have included having fun with a disco which was planned and run by some of the older members of the unit. A fundraising sale was held to raise money for Magic and Mayhem which will see us sleeping overnight in a circus tent in June. We had a special guest visit from Binbo (left), who taught us all about recycling and how to reduce our waste. Most recently, we celebrated the King's Coronation! Woodstock Brownies joined us for Coronation activities where we made Union Flag crafts and ate Crown biscuits! The flags were given to Bletchington Thursday Club for their coronation celebrations.

A huge thank you to our volunteer leaders Penguin and Bilby - Beth and Amy - who have just been presented with their 5 year service awards.

We have spaces at Rainbows in Woodstock for girls age 4-7  
Brownies in Bletchington for girls age 7-10  
Guides in Woodstock for girls age 10-14

Email us for more information: [girlguidingwoodstock@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:girlguidingwoodstock@hotmail.co.uk)

### **Defibrillators**

We have two defibrillators available in the village, located at the Village Hall, on the side nearest to the Co-op and at the Sports & Social Club. To access these devices, you will need to call 999 to obtain a code whilst also requesting an ambulance. Instructions on how to use the defibrillators and how to keep the patient safe are posted close by. Your prompt action before the ambulance arrives may save a life.

## **KIRTLINGTON MORRIS NOW OPEN TO ALL!**

### **Bring your partner, kids, parents...**

You may recall a piece I wrote for the Dec.22/Jan.23 edition of our Village News entitled 'Could Bletchington Help Save Kirtlington Morris Men?' Sadly we have not been inundated with Bletchingtonian gents leaping to the rescue of their old rival.

There was one spark of interest though, but interestingly from a couple of ladies of this parish, who said that if only we would admit women, they might well be interested. So, after much thought and discussion we announced to Kirtlington in April:

### **THE GOOD NEWS IS – KIRTLINGTON MORRIS IS NOW OPEN TO ALL!**

Still no response from Kirtlington, so now, women of Bletchington, it's your turn...

Many men's morris sides have become 'mixed', or to use the approved term, all-inclusive, in recent years, in order to preserve their tradition. The great morris revival of the 1970s and 80s is in the distant past and we are all that much older, with few if any younger recruits. What was once largely (but not exclusively) the preserve of male dancers is now opening up to all genders, and we have decided to follow that trend, in the name of equality and in the hope of preserving of our own tradition. We have had one or two women dance with us unofficially in the past but now it's official!

This is also an opportunity for couples to join us. Rather than coming on your own, not knowing anyone (although we are very friendly and not at all scary), come with your partner and encourage each other! Or better still, come with a group of friends... And, whisper it, it's a subtle, fun and rewarding way of keeping fit. We're social too; it wouldn't be practice night without a pint afterwards.

If anyone would like to talk to me about joining us for a taster session, please call me on 01869 350219 or 07871 856323, or email me (see below). I'd be very happy to answer any questions you may have. Practices are Tuesdays, 8 to 9:30pm at Kirtlington Village Hall. Unfortunately the practice season is now nearly over for this spring and if we had sufficient numbers we would now be 'dancing out' at nearby pubs that we can find open on a Tuesday evening, which in itself is becoming increasingly difficult. But please do ring or email to register your interest, because if enough people are keen we will be very happy to organise a couple of special introductory practices prior to beginning to practise regularly again in the autumn.

MEANWHILE.....Morris dancing turned up unexpectedly earlier this year at the Brit Music Awards. If you watched (or saw the clip on the national news!) you will have seen Wet Leg performing Chaise Longue, their earworm hit of 2022, accompanied throughout by the dancing of women's side Boss Morris, from Stroud, Gloucestershire. It's unusual to say the least to see morris on the telly unless it's mentioned for comedic effect, so perhaps a few younger people might have seen it and want to know more. Google it! They have quite a slow style of dancing, not unlike Kirtlington's...

### **LAMB ALE MORRIS FESTIVAL**

A reminder that the Lamb Ale Morris Festival 2023 takes place over the weekend of 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> June. Get together music session in the Oxford Arms on the Friday evening. Lamb Roast and Barn Dance (no experience necessary) at Kirtlington Village Hall, 8pm Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> (tickets £10 on the door). Usual formula of umpteen morris sides dancing around Kirtlington on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> June: processions, grand display at the school, etc. I'm sure many of you will have come along in previous years and know the form by now, but for those of you who haven't:

10:00am	Procession from north of the village to Church
10:45am	Lamb Ale Church Service
11:30am	Procession from Bletch end of village to School
12:00 noon	Dance displays at School, Village Hall, Dashwood Arms and Oxford Arms
3:00pm	All morris sides dance off at School

**Nigel Holt** Tel: 01869 350219 or 07871 856323  
[nigel.r.holt@btinternet.com](mailto:nigel.r.holt@btinternet.com)



## **BLETCHINGTON CELEBRATES THE CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III**

It is said that the sun shines on the righteous – and so Bletchington proved itself suitably righteous as the sun shone upon us as we gathered at the Village Hall to celebrate the coronation of our new King, Charles III, on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May, the one sunny day of the three-day long weekend. With the Village Hall and Plaza suitably decked out for the occasion, crowds gathered in the spring sunshine to mark our first coronation for 70 years.



Festivities began with an afternoon tea, consisting of sandwiches and delicious homemade cakes – thanks to the many talented bakers of Bletchington who donated cakes.

Meanwhile out in the Plaza, there were various games going on for the children, together with face painting by Gary Wing, Marion Stockton and Kate Byrne. You could also have your photograph taken with the King – sadly King Charles couldn't make it here in person, so we had to settle for a cardboard cut-out! The resulting photographs can be viewed in Facebook.

We were then treated to an exquisite performance by the School Coronation Choir. Thanks to everyone involved for a very memorable part of the afternoon's proceedings.

Next followed the raffle – congratulations to all winners and thanks to everyone who donated a prize.

For those who were still hungry following the afternoon tea, or who could not make it in the afternoon, there was a barbecue going on in the evening. In the bar, the drinks were flowing, especially the Hooky, but sadly this ran out far too early!

For the evening's entertainment, Bletchington's own resident DJ, the inimitable Tommy Coombes (right), was persuaded to come out of retirement (actually, he didn't need too much persuading). So Tommy's Tunes were heard once again in the village and, inevitably, this included another spin for "Sweet Caroline".

Live music was provided by The Bankers, no strangers to the village, having previously performed here at the Black's Head in June last year. Their mix of rock covers went down very nicely with an appreciative audience.



On behalf of the whole village, a very big thank you to Grace Tharby and Sue Davies for organising a wonderful event for the community.

Thanks also to the many others who contributed in some way to the occasion, too numerous to mention here. Events like this can only happen if people are willing to give their time.

Finally, thanks to everyone who turned up on the day, making this such a memorable occasion. We hope you all enjoyed yourselves.

## **Bird Nesting Season**

### **Thoughts from Green Bletch**

As we finally have our first warm days of spring and we fling our doors and windows open, we realise how lucky we are to live so close to nature and the abundance of wild birds on our doorstep.

The birds are more active than ever right now, feeding their young constantly throughout the day, making them vulnerable to predators.

Providing a bird feeder in the garden really helps the birds throughout the year but it also allows them to become vulnerable from our pet cats. If you do own a cat, please, at the very least, put a bell on its collar.



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#### **Advice from the RSPB for people who feed birds in their garden is:**

- Surround an area with a fence (chicken wire etc) that leans in the direction from which the cat will approach. Cats will find it difficult to climb over an angled fence.
- Place half-full plastic bottles in borders, or string old CDs across flower beds or hang from trees - the light reflection is supposed to deter.
- Feeders should be placed about 2m from dense vegetation, preventing surprise attacks from cats but giving birds easy access to cover.
- Fit tree collars to help prevent cats climbing up trees.
- A downward-opening cone or a biscuit tin fixed to the pole below the bird table should prevent cats climbing up it.
- Placing clippings from thorny or spiky plants under bird feeders and under bushes will help prevent cats from using these areas to stalk birds.
- The garden plant, *Coleus canina* or *Solenostemon canina*, is marketed under the names Pee-off and Scaredy-cat. This plant has a pungent odour that is said to repel cats and other mammals from the garden.
- Scent deterrents will either serve to repel (eg. Citronella) or mark a territory (eg. Silent Roar). Alternatively, try orange or lemon peel, since cats are not keen on the smell of citrus.

#### **Advice from the RSPB for cat owners is:**

- Put a bell on your cat's collar. Recent studies suggest that colourful collars may also reduce predation of birds, and may reduce predation of mice and voles, too. The collar must be correctly fitted and should have a quick release mechanism to allow the cat to free itself, should it become snagged. There are commercially-available sonic collars which are designed to alert the potential prey to the cat's presence.
- Keep your cat indoors when birds are most vulnerable: at least an hour before sunset and an hour after sunrise, especially during March-July, and also after bad weather, to allow birds to come out and feed.



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## **History Corner**

### **William Morris and Morris Motors**

Born in Worcester in 1877, William Richard Morris moved to Oxford at the age of three. A keen competitive cyclist, by the age of 15 he had established a bicycle repair business in an outbuilding at his parents' home in Cowley, soon expanding into manufacturing bicycles, as well as repairing them. Further expansion took the business into motorcycles and by 1901, new premises in Oxford High Street were acquired, followed by a workshop and storage space in Queen's Lane. Morris then embarked upon a couple of unsuccessful business ventures involving partnerships, both of which were quickly dissolved.

In 1904, Morris was operating as a sole trader once again and the following year diversified into operating taxis, then in 1910 and now trading as WRM Motors Ltd, the business began selling new cars. Working from premises in Longwall Street, leased from Merton College, in 1912, Morris designed and built the prototype of his first car, the famous Bullnose Morris or, to give it its official name, the Morris Oxford. The following year, the company moved to the Cowley site, previously the grounds of a military college, enabling the new car to enter full production, retailing at £165. By 1925, the company was producing over 1,000 cars a week and by 1937, Morris was the largest car manufacturer in Europe. A year later the millionth vehicle was produced. As demand for new cars fell during World War I, Morris landed lucrative contracts to produce military equipment.

William Morris was elevated to the peerage in 1934 as Baron Nuffield then in 1938 he became Viscount Nuffield, a reward not just for his contribution to motor manufacturing but also his philanthropy. He founded Nuffield College in 1937 and the Nuffield Foundation in 1943 and for the rest of his life, continued to make generous charitable donations, particularly to hospitals and medical causes.

After the war, WRM Motors Ltd was liquidated and Morris Motors Ltd was formed in its place. The most iconic vehicles of the post-war era were the Morris Minor, launched in 1948 and the first British car to achieve sales of one million, and the Mini, launched in 1959. Both designed by Alec Issigonis, the latter was produced jointly with Austin, the two companies having effectively merged in 1952 to form the British Motor Corporation (BMC). Morris died in 1963 and in 1968 the company merged with Leyland Motors to form British Leyland, which was part-nationalised in 1975. The car plant in Cowley has, no doubt, employed many Bletchington residents over the years. Now under the control of BMW, it is currently used in the production of the new generation of Minis.

The Morris Motors Museum shares a site with the Oxford Bus Museum in Long Hanborough and is well worth a visit. It is open Wednesdays and Sundays plus Saturdays during July and August.

### **Bletchington Thursday Club**

We held our AGM at our May meeting. We did not have any members willing to take on the roles of Chairman and Secretary so these remained the same. We did, however, have two people willing to come on to the committee.

After the AGM we held a coronation party with music provided by Tommy.

We have entertainment from a saxophonist for our June meeting followed by a party for our oldest member.

Thursday club is the first Thursday in the month in the Village Hall and all over 50's are welcome.



## **The Bletchingdon Community Foundation**

### **Coronation celebrations**

The BCF were delighted to support the village's celebration of the Coronation of King Charles III, held at the Village Hall. We offer a massive thank you to Grace Tharby and Sue Davies for all their hard work in organising the event and also to everyone else who helped out in some way. We hope that everyone who came along enjoyed themselves.

### **BCF accounts for 2022**

The accounts for the year 2022 have now been completed and agreed by the trustees at the recent AGM. If you would like to see how the BCF, the Charity and the Village Hall have performed financially, the accounts are available to view on the Parish Council website – go to the 'Bletchingdon Charities' tab, then select the individual charity you wish to view and click the link near the bottom of each page to access the accounts. To find out more about the organisation or ask any questions, please come along to our Public Meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> July (see below).

# **PUBLIC MEETING**

to be held at

## **the Village Hall**

on

### **Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> July at 7:30pm**

Please come along to meet the BCF trustees and find out more about the organisation which also encompasses the Village Hall and the Bletchingdon Charity. Learn what the BCF has been doing over the past year and what its plans are for the future. Have your say – we welcome ideas from everyone in the village.



## Village Hall activities

The Village Hall offers a wide range of activities for all age groups. Our directory below details the regular groups currently operating. If you are interested in joining any of these groups, please contact the organiser.

Event	Days & times	Contact	Telephone / E-mail
Physio-led Pilates/Yoga classes	Monday – 10:00am Thursday – 7:15pm	Gemma Queralt (MCSP Chartered Physiotherapist)	07974 692287 gemma.c.queralt@gmail.com
Zumba Gold (low impact)	Thursday – 10:30-11:30am (Term time only)	Mariana Bujons Palmer	zumbawithmarianoxford@gmail.com
Tumble Tots (walking up to 4 years, play sessions)	Wednesday (Term time only) 10:15am to 2 yrs. 11:15am 2-3 yrs. 12:15pm 3yrs+	Catherine Codd	07305 097209 northcotswolds@tumbletots.com  <u>Website:</u> www.tumbletots.com.northcotswolds
1 <sup>st</sup> Bletchington Brownies (girls, 7-10yrs.)	Monday – 6-7:30pm (Term time only)	Lorraine Wing	girlguidingwoodstock@hotmail.co.uk
Total Body Conditioning	Monday – 7:30pm Wednesday – 6:30pm	Geraldine Jennings	07875 364130 geraldine_jennings@yahoo.co.uk
Stretch & core (non-sweat)	Wednesday – 7:30pm	Geraldine Jennings	07875 364130 geraldine_jennings@yahoo.co.uk
Thursday Club (over 50s)	First Thursday of the month – 2:00pm	Rozz Wing	wingrozzw@aol.com
Bletchington Silver Band (Senior band)	Tuesday - 7:30pm Friday – 7:30pm	Laura	secretary@bletchingtonsilverband.co.uk
Bletchington Silver Band (B band)	Friday – 6:30pm	Laura	secretary@bletchingtonsilverband.co.uk
Children's Martial Arts Class (Jiu Jitsu)	Wednesday – 5:15pm	David Plested	07515 560201 inspirebjjuk@gmail.com



## Do you need support due to the cost-of-living crisis?

The purpose of the charity is to:

- Relieve financial hardship.
- Reduce social isolation.
- Support education

This is for anyone living in the parish of Bletchington. If you would like to apply for financial support, for yourself, a friend, family member or neighbour then you can do this by downloading a form from the village website: [www.bletchington-pc.org.uk](http://www.bletchington-pc.org.uk)

If you do not have access to the website, then a member of the committee will happily drop a form off to you and, if helpful, support people to fill it out. Ring and leave a message on **01869 350180**. Preferred contact is through the e-mail: [charity.secretary@thebcf.net](mailto:charity.secretary@thebcf.net). All applications are treated in complete confidence.

PLEASE DO APPLY if you are in need of some financial help - this charity is there for all who live in Bletchington. Applications will be considered at our meetings, which are held every 2 to 3 months. However, if the application is urgent, we will be able to consider it before this date.

**The next meeting will be held on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Applications to be in by 3<sup>rd</sup> June. The following meeting will be at the end of August or beginning of September, date to be confirmed.**



## BLETCHINGTON SILVER BAND

The Band held its first Concert of the year on 23<sup>rd</sup> April in the Village Hall. The music for this concert was chosen by previous audiences so was very varied from Baroque to a 70s classic and was a lot of fun to rehearse and play. The wonderful B Band played four pieces including the most difficult piece they have ever played - Mars from Holtz Planet Suite and they did brilliantly! Thank you to everyone who came along to support us – we love seeing so many familiar faces.

At last it looks like the seasons are changing which means we are looking forward to our summer season. We will be playing at Duns Tew, Boarstall and Kirtlington in June. These Fetes are long standing engagements for the Band and we love playing outdoors with the hustle and bustle of a Village Fete especially if the weather is good – not so enjoyable if it's raining and the gazebo we are sheltering under gets blown away, but the Band always plays on regardless of the weather!

Date for the Diary - Our next concert will be on **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July at 2:00pm**, which, with the British summer weather permitting, will take place on the courtyard outside the hall. There will be performances from both our bands along with refreshments and cakes. Feel free to bring your own picnic – please come along and support your local village Band.

### **From Kathy & Ian Gedling:**

We went to a lovely concert given by the band on 23<sup>rd</sup> April and listened to music chosen by the audiences at previous concerts. But where were all the Bletchington residents? Only about 8 people who were not connected to Band members were there. We are very fortunate to have had a band here for the last hundred years – they play at all major events in the village from church to fetes. They also have a flourishing training band – where else can you (whatever your age) learn to play an instrument for free? Their next concert is in the Village Hall on 16<sup>th</sup> July at 2pm with refreshments (free but donations welcome) – come and support them as well as enjoying beautiful music, expertly played!

### ***Bletch Diary***

10 <sup>th</sup> June – 8:00pm	<b>Sports &amp; Social Club</b> – Cash bingo
17 <sup>th</sup> June – 11am-6:00pm	<b>Hillcrest, Islip Road</b> – Bletchington Steam Day Steam train rides + tea & cakes
17 <sup>th</sup> June – 9:00pm	<b>Sports &amp; Social Club</b> – Live Music With the Acoustic Experiment
2 <sup>nd</sup> July – 9:30am	<b>St. Giles' Church</b> – Breakfast Church
5 <sup>th</sup> July – 7:30pm	<b>Village Hall</b> – BCF Public Meeting Find out about the BCF's activities (includes the Village Hall & the Charity)
15 <sup>th</sup> July – 8:00pm	<b>Sports &amp; Social Club</b> – Cash bingo
16 <sup>th</sup> July – 2:00pm	<b>Village Hall</b> – Concert With Bletchington Silver Band
24 <sup>th</sup> July – 8:00pm	<b>Exeter Hall, Kidlington</b> – “A one place study – Bletchington 1737-1947” Talk by Charles Eldridge



We're looking for more foster carers in Oxfordshire to provide a safe and secure home to a child when they are unable to live with their parents. It may be for a short period of time, or they may stay with a foster family long term.

Our foster carers receive:

- A welcome payment of £1,500, to help the transition to foster carer
- Generous fees, paid in addition to the child's allowance
- Dedicated social worker support
- Access to professionals involved with the child, support groups and specialised training

Make an enquiry here: <https://service.oxfordshire.gov.uk/fosteringenquiry>

Michelle and William Hunter from Oxford are new to fostering. Michelle said: "There are so many reasons to choose Oxfordshire County Council to begin your fostering journey."

"The council gave us lots of help, including having access to a social worker and a host of other support services. We feel part of a fostering community, making a positive difference to local children by helping them reach their full potential."

"Our advice to anyone thinking of fostering is to take your time to research and really think about it. There are lots of foster carers who would love to answer your questions, offering a realistic perspective of what fostering is like."

A pink poster titled 'Fostering in Oxfordshire' featuring a photo of William and Michelle Hunter. It includes a quote from them about their fostering journey and a speech bubble asking 'What made you want to foster?'. The poster also features the Oxfordshire County Council logo and the 'Fostering in Oxfordshire' logo.

**Fostering in Oxfordshire**  
William and Michelle, Oxford

What made you want to foster?

We want to create a home where children feel they can ask questions, be loved, and cared for.  
We know we can welcome a child to our home that is clean and warm.

**FOSTERING IN OXFORDSHIRE** **OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Would you consider being a foster parent?

We understand you will have some questions, visit [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/fostering](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/fostering)

### ***Did you know.....?***

Our village name has two different spellings and whilst this is unusual, it is by no means unique.

An example of another village with two spellings is Tithby in Nottinghamshire, also spelt Tythby. Meanwhile in Derbyshire, the village of Youlgreave has three spellings, also being known as Youlgrave and Youlegreave.

But spare a thought for the good folk of Trellech in Monmouthshire, South Wales, whose village has no fewer than **twenty-six** different recorded spellings of its name, encompassing Welsh and English versions. Four of these spellings are still in common use and appear on road signs.



## **Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle car club pilot launches**

An Oxfordshire-wide pilot of electric vehicle (EV) car clubs has begun, with fourteen new car club EVs being launched across Abingdon, Banbury, Bicester, Eynsham, Henley, Kidlington, Oxford, Thame, Witney, Wallingford and Wantage. These shared vehicles – operated by CoWheels, Enterprise CarClub and Thame EV Hire Club - will be available for people to use on a pay-per-use basis that provides a convenient and affordable alternative to individual car ownership, as well as providing an opportunity for petrol and diesel drivers to try an EV without any long-term commitment.



Oxfordshire County Council has coordinated the pilot and facilitated the arrangements between participating councils, car club operators and chargepoint operators. The EV car club vehicles will mainly be based at Park & Charge hubs in District Council car parks, and Oxford City Council are also introducing a new EV car club based at the Energy SuperHub at Redbridge Park & Ride.

Whilst car clubs have seen great success within Oxford, little has been tested outside of the City. The aim of this pilot project is to demonstrate the demand for car clubs in more urban and rural areas and test the business models for non-city EV car clubs. The hope is that if successful this pilot will help inform future EV car club roll-out strategy for the County and pave the way for more EV car clubs across Oxfordshire in the future.

The new pilot car club vehicles offer you the convenience of a car, with minimal cost, hassle and zero tailpipe emissions. Give them a try and join one of the new EV car clubs - [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/EVcarclubs](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/EVcarclubs).

## **ALLOTMENTS AVAILABLE TO RENT**

Each plot is approximately 28m. x 8m. = minimum 220 square metres

Rental is £12 per annum per plot

Available in double-plots, single plots and half-plots

If you are interested in renting an allotment, contact the Allotment Association

E-mail: [bletchingdon.allotments@gmail.com](mailto:bletchingdon.allotments@gmail.com)

## **BLETCHINGDON IN 1921**

The 1921 census was held on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June 1921. It had been delayed by 8 weeks because of industrial unrest. This is a look at Bletchingdon on that day.

Just three years on from the end of World War I and in the wake of the Spanish flu pandemic, the 1921 Census took a snapshot of life in England and Wales and found a population forever changed. One change of course was that since 1918 all men over the age of 21 and women over the age of thirty could vote. The seeds of change were evident in the village at the time and a portent of what was going to happen in the next decades.

For the first and only time, information was gathered on orphanhood status, offering insight into the possible effects of war and pandemic. There were five families in Bletchingdon where words “father dead” were recorded but of these at least one was through natural causes and only one was recorded as killed in action. Nine children were affected. The 1921 Census was also the first to recognise divorce as a marital condition but this was not something that featured in Bletchingdon not least because for most people divorce was unthinkable on social and financial grounds.

The population of the village was given as 492. However, ten of these were visitors and there was also an itinerant couple in a caravan on the village green. (He gave his occupation as Evangelist!). Taking this couple and the visitors into account the “true” population would have been 480, a reduction of six from the 1911 census. Of the 480, 250 were men and 230 women (48%) the opposite of the figure for the population as a whole where 52% were women. Males outnumber females in every age group except the 41 to 50. The oldest person was Thomas Green whose age was recorded as 1 month shy of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. (There is however some ambiguity about this). There were two men and two women in their eighties. The table below shows a comparison with the most recently available figures:

	<b>Total</b>	<b>65 or over</b>	<b>0 to 15 years</b>	<b>Average (median)</b>
<b>1921</b>	480	53 (11%)	135 (27%)	32
<b>2019</b>	1,056	207 (19.6%)	197 (18.7%)	41

The number of dwellings had grown from 120 in 1911 to 125 in 1921, though it is not clear in either year how many were unoccupied. Today there are over 400 dwellings. The number of rooms was recorded, with 91 of the 125 properties having 5 or fewer rooms (this did not include bathrooms but did include kitchens). A total of 342 people (71%) lived in these properties with an average of 1 room per person. This meant that in many of the 91 properties there were more people than rooms. To give three examples:

- Henry Cherry of Oxford Road lived with his wife and five children in a 3 roomed house.
- William Kenny of The Green shared his 3 roomed house with 4 other adults and a 12 year old.
- Thomas Green lived in Station Road and shared his 5 roomed house with 4 other adults and 5 children aged 15 and younger.

Work had changed since 1911. Of the 216 people recording their occupation in 1921, 167 were men and 49 were women. This number had fallen from 243 in 1911. 68, including those described as farmers had agricultural occupations. This is 31.5% of the working population, down from 40.3% ten years earlier. 15 people described themselves as farmers. Of course, Bletchingdon Park was a big employer. There were 10 live-in staff (down from 14 ten years earlier) and a further 14 people in the village who gave Lord Valentia as their employer.

One of the innovations of the 1921 census was to ask for the employer or, if out of work the previous employer. There were twenty-five men and two women described as out of work. Eight of the men gave a farmer as their previous employer. Sixteen men had been employed by the Oxford Portland cement company who ran the Kirtlington quarry. There were therefore 12.5% of the working population of the village out of work. Ten of the men were the head of the family, mostly with dependent children. I don't know what caused the cement company to make so many men redundant but can only conclude that it was a result of competition and the decline of housebuilding after the post war boom. Agriculture was also heading for difficult time as the government abandoned the war time price and wage controls and let the markets take over.

There were however some new jobs. Arthur Smith had set up an agricultural engineer business at Enslow and employed four men from the village. Although an old institution, the Thames Conservancy now employed four men from the village. Two men were also employed as chauffeurs, one of them who was the chauffeur to Miss Annesley was only 17. Another man described himself as a motor driver. Mostly interestingly perhaps there were three girls who were apprentices in Oxford. Two were apprenticed dressmakers to Webbers in the High Street and the third a shorthand typist to Hunts in Broad Street. A fourth person, a man worked as a gardener in Oxford. Did they lodge in the City (the census was on a Sunday), catch the train every day or was there some other form of transport?

It is difficult to appreciate from a census what life must have been like a hundred years ago. Many houses may well not have had electricity, running water or mains drainage. Many things have gone; the blacksmith, the station and the chapel for example. The population density in the village itself would have been much higher than today. A number of the older cottages have been knocked together to make one house. Quincotts in Islip Road is an example, it was once five cottages.

A lot of memoirs of the time have the phrase “we was poor but we was happy”. This phrase is usually about childhood however and no doubt children in Bletchington were happy. They could roam around unsupervised and there was very little traffic to worry about. By today’s standards they, and their families, were definitely poor. Rural Oxfordshire was a very poor area. Agricultural depression had set in in 1875 and would continue that way until after WW2. Whether the adults “was happy” is another matter, the unemployment of 1921 was a foretaste of things to come over the next decade or so. Agriculture declined further and what there was became more mechanised and so jobs would also have declined. The houses may also have been tied to farm jobs. People would have had to leave in order to find work. This was no new feature however. Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century many, particularly women and girls, left the village to work or marry. In fact, the population of the village had declined by 30% in the fifty years from 1871 and by 1931 it was down by over a third. Fortunately, by 1921 the car industry in Oxford had taken off and many people moved into the City from the countryside. How many of the 135 under 16s in 1921 remained to live in the village is an interesting question.



*The centre of the village in 1923*



The population also declined from the 480 in 1921 to 459 ten years later and only 478 in 1951. (There is no knowing either how many visitors there were in these two years). By 1961 it was above the 1921 level and only in 1971 had it recovered to much the same figure as 1871. Life in 1971 had changed immeasurably in the previous fifty years and even more so by today's standards.

It is easy to get nostalgic about the past, but I doubt if many of us would want to go back a hundred years where the things we take for granted, running water, electricity, mains drainage and so on were virtually unheard of. It was of course safer and much, much quieter!



Islip Road in the 1920's.

The children are outside the five cottages that are now Quincotts.

Notice also the women in the background cheerfully walking down the road just after the bends. This is not something that you would do today.



Weston Road, also in the 1920's.



## **WESTON ON THE GREEN WI**

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of April we had a return visit from Pam Newall who took us this time on a journey to Austria, with many beautiful and fascinating slides from her walks in the mountains, to a visit to Mozart's Salzburg.

The talk at our May meeting was given by Jill Saint (a Bletchington resident and member) on her experiences in the early 1970s as a dresser and wardrobe assistant at the Oxford Playhouse. It was very illuminating account of what actually happens behind the scenes, from the hilarious to the mishaps! She worked with many stars, most of whom were very friendly and cooperative, a few less pleasant! We won't be able to watch anything at the Playhouse now without wondering what is happening backstage and if the safety pins are handy.

Our social meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> June is to be a meal at the Chequers and on the 19<sup>th</sup> July Sheila Churchill's talk is entitled TB or not to be.

We would like to invite all ladies to join us (several are already from Bletchington and other villages). If you are new to the village, it's a great way to make new friends, or if you have lived here for a long time, give us a try – you will be very welcome. Our WI meets at Weston village hall every month except August, on the third Wednesday at 7:30pm. In addition, we have theatre and other visits, plus occasional coffee mornings and lunches. We also have a craft afternoon on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday at 2pm and walks on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday at 1:30pm (both of which were WI initiatives although you don't need to be a member to take part in these).

We'd love to see you - please contact our secretary Lyn Barnett on 01869 350707 or email her on [wotg.wi@gmail.com](mailto:wotg.wi@gmail.com) if you would like to know more.

## **Kirtlington & Bletchington Historical Society**

What do the following have in common? A Roman roof tile, a Victorian Thames Waterman's badge of office, a German citizen's identity papers from 1922, the original deed of building the Kirtlington Methodist chapel in 1852 and an eagle taken from a French standard at the Battle of Waterloo? They were all brought by members of the Historical Society to its AGM in April.

Each member spoke for a few minutes about their artefact, some of which had family connections. The Roman roof tile had been taken (with permission) from the site of the villa at North Leigh (one of a number close to Akeman Street). The Victorian Waterman's badge belonged to the great-grandfather of one of our members. As part of his official duties he occasionally had to row Queen Victoria and her daughters on the lakes in the royal parks. The German identity papers were the result of a decision taken by the grandmother of another of our members. She was living in the free port of Danzig after World War One (whose inhabitants were technically stateless and were given two years to opt to become German citizens). As a result, her grandson has been able to claim dual German-British nationality (thereby remaining in the EU). The present residents of the Methodist chapel are custodians of the deed which bought the land on which their house stands. They also have the mortgage deed which raised the money for the purchase. The eagle was taken by a forebear of another member. Only a lad of 17 in the British army against Napoleon in 1815, he left a vivid description of the battle and his part in it in two letters written shortly afterwards to his mother. And then they say that history is boring.

***Paul Clifford***

## **From your Cherwell District councillors - Launton & Otmoor District**

Summer is certainly on its way and it is so nice to have some warmer weather after the past couple of weeks. As many of you may be aware Angus decided to step down from being one of your District Councillors but we are delighted that Julian Nedelcu was elected to be District Councillor for Launton and Otmoor in his place. Julian looks forward to meeting as many of you as possible soon.

### **Cherwell Elections**

Elections for Cherwell District Council took place on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May which resulted in no party having overall control of the council. The final councillor numbers are: Conservative 20, Labour 12, Liberal Democrats 10, The Green Party 3, Independents 3. Talks took place between Progressive Oxfordshire (made up of the Liberal Democrats, Greens and one Independent) and the Labour Party to try and form a progressive administration and an agreement was almost ready. However unfortunately the Labour Party pulled out of talks last minute. We are saddened by this development as many residents made it clear to us that they wished for change at Cherwell. At the Annual Council meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> May, the Conservative Leader of the Council was removed as leader to reflect this want for change. At the time of writing, we hope that talks can resume between Progressive Oxfordshire and the Labour Party to deliver a strong majority administration for Cherwell.

### **Community Food Organisations Fund**

Cherwell District Council current have a grant available for community organisations who provide food to support communities in Cherwell District. They are offering grants of up to £750 for capital or revenue. If you know of a group who are eligible, you can apply on the Cherwell website by searching for 'Community Food Organisation Grant'.

### **Get in Touch**

As always, please do get in touch!

Our emails are [gemma.coton@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.coton@cherwell-dc.gov.uk) and [julian.nedelcu@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:julian.nedelcu@cherwell-dc.gov.uk) or phone us on 01869 717712.

All the best,  
**Gemma & Julian**

## **Combe Mill in steam - Blenheim Palace Sawmills, Combe, OX29 8ET**

Combe Mill steaming events are well under way, looking forward to seeing you all. (See our ad on Page 42.)

18<sup>th</sup> June 'In Steam', themed event is *Classic Wheels*. We have invited Cars, Tractors, Motor cycles, Models and much more come along a take a look into the past of any vehicle on wheels.

16<sup>th</sup> July 'In Steam' themed event is *Wildlife by the Evenlode*. We have invited exhibitors to bring along and show wildlife as it is on the River Evenlode.

Combe Mill, a late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Restored Water Mill on Blenheim Palace Estate by the River Evenlode with all Machinery running 'In Steam'. Volunteers will be on hand with lots of interesting information. Come along and see the Blacksmiths in the forge - you might just be able to make a poker. Tea room will be open, along with BBQ, Gift Shop and Tombola. Dog on leads most welcome.

Adults £9.00, seniors £7.00, accompanied children FREE - Open 10:30am to 5:00pm.

Ever thought of volunteering at Combe Mill? Come to a steaming event when you will see what we do and if you have an interest, you can join the 'Team'.

Also open every Wednesday (non-steam) for 'self-guided tours' with volunteer around and Tea Room open. Open 10:30am-4:30pm, last admission 3:30pm. Adults £5.00, seniors £4.00, accompanied children FREE.



## **BLETCHINGTON SPORTS & SOCIAL CLUB**

Bletchington Sports & Social Club is situated at the end of the drive in the playing field on Oxford Road. The Sports field used to be located in the grounds of Bletchington Park. It moved to the current location which was owned by Lord Valentia and was rented to the village to use for football and cricket. In the 1960s Lord Rotherwick generously donated the land to the village. The original clubhouse was described as "a very basic structure". The first bar was opened on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1978 by Mr Arthur Eeley. The go-ahead to build the current clubhouse was given by the committee in 1980 at a cost of £50,000 and was extended around ten years ago adding the veranda and scoreboard.

The club is self-funded and run entirely by volunteers from the village. We offer memberships throughout the year that are renewed on 1<sup>st</sup> September. Memberships cost just £15 for a family, £10 for an individual and £5 for senior citizens and U18's. You are more than welcome to come in for a drink.

We currently have 4 youth football teams (U16, U13, U10 & U9), 3 Cricket Teams, 2 Bar Billiards Teams, 3 Darts Teams, a Quiz Team, Aunt Sally, and a Cribbage Team who all base themselves at the Club. We also have a very active social committee who regularly host Bingo, Live Music and other events that are generally free admission and open to everyone. We have Sky Sports, Darts, Pool and a Billiards Table. We generally open for any major televised sporting events.

Our opening hours vary during the week, but we are always open from 5:00pm on Friday and 7:30 on Saturday evenings. More details can be found on our Facebook page. Please join our Facebook page for details of opening hours and events.

We are able to offer use of the clubhouse outside of normal hours for Private Events such as Christenings and Funeral Wakes. If you would like to make use of the facilities drop into the club or make contact with a member of the committee to check availability. We can also accommodate parties during normal opening times, but members will still be permitted to use the bar.

### **Polite Notice**

There is a public footpath that runs from Oxford Road through the sports field. If you use this, we would be grateful if you could keep dogs on leads and clean up behind them. This helps us keep the area safe for the children and sports teams that use the facilities.

We have also experienced some damage to the clubhouse where ball games have been played against the building. These are costly repairs, and we respectfully ask that this is avoided.

### **TEAM NEWS**

**Football:** The season has now finished.

**Men's Darts:** The men finished runners up in the Kings Arms Invitation League on Wednesday evenings. Joe Palmer got the most wins in the league and Steve Blake got the most 180s. There is no men's summer darts.

**Ladies Darts:** Both ladies' teams are now competing in the Bicester Darts League on a Tuesday evening. The summer league has just started but there will be a couple of needle matches to look forward to.

**Bar Billiards:** Playing in the Witney & District Bar Billiards League, at the finals night Pete Soanes and Will Cormack were runners up in the pairs and Pete Soanes and Marieanne French were runners up in the mixed pairs. The summer league will start soon on a Tuesday evening.

**Cricket:** The season has just started with teams competing in divisions 5B, 6B and 8C. Please visit the cricket club website at [www.obncc.play-cricket.com](http://www.obncc.play-cricket.com) for details and fixtures.

**Aunt Sally:** The team are in section 3 of the Oxford Aunt Sally league. They have won one of their first three fixtures with Wayne Harwood and Paul Sawyer getting most dolls.

**Cribbage:** The Bletchingdon Sports & Social Club crib team have their finals night on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

**Pool:** The Club now have a pool team which plays in section two of the Oxford Invitation Pool League on a Thursday evening. The summer league has just started.

**Bletchington Nomads – Quiz Team:** The summer seasons have just started. In the Oxfordshire league, The Nomads got off to a great start, winning both games so far. They also top the Blockbuster table (a separate tournament which runs parallel to the main league). In the Online quiz league, mixed fortunes, with one game won and one lost. Long way to go.



*Online players, Vince, James and Chris with their latest trophy, the John Jacob Cup*

## ***What's On at the Club?***

**SATURDAY 10<sup>th</sup> June – CASH BINGO (eyes down 8pm)**

**SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup> June – LIVE MUSIC: The Acoustic Experiment (9:00pm)**

**SATURDAY 15<sup>th</sup> July – CASH BINGO (eyes down 8pm)**





Soldiers of  
Oxfordshire  
Museum

## **Women and War: From the Fringes to the Front Line** **New exhibition to tell the stories of women in the armed forces**

*Women & War: From the Fringes to the Front Line* is a new exhibition opening on 3<sup>rd</sup> June to 10<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock. *Women & War* will explore the diverse experiences of women who have been involved with all aspects of military life, from the 'fringes' of history to those now taking on front line roles in the armed forces today. Using unique, personal stories, pen portraits of women in historical and modern roles feature throughout.

Museum Director, Ursula Corcoran, explains: "This new exhibition is a wonderful opportunity to mark and commemorate those women who have lived through and served in conflict. The objects and stories on display give a voice to women who are often not centre stage when we think of war. There are stories not only of suffering and loss, but also of duty, innovation, friendship and love. We are extremely grateful to all of the organisations and individual women who have contributed so generously to the exhibition."

From 1941, women were called up for war work, in roles such as mechanics, engineers, munitions workers, air raid wardens, bus and fire engine drivers. Away from these vital roles more than 80,000 women joined the Women's Land Army, 'Land Girls' enduring tough conditions and long hours in isolated rural outposts in order to prevent Britain from being 'starved out'. Others would join women's auxiliary units of the Armed Forces, such as the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, Women's Royal Naval Service and Auxiliary Territorial Service.

A number of objects, on loan from individuals and organisations that have also shared their stories for the exhibition, will go on show at the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum for the first time. These include an Air Transport Auxiliary jacket which belonged to Mary Watkins of Leafield, Oxfordshire who took her flying lessons in Witney. She was the youngest pilot in the county when she began in 1937. Her story will be told with thanks to Maidenhead Heritage Centre and ATA Museum. A series of letters and a pair of officer's gloves belonging to Rev. Elsie Chamberlain, on loan from the Royal Army Chaplains' Museum help illustrate the story of the first female Chaplain in the RAF, whose appointment sparked protest from both the RAF and the Church of England in 1946. Her name was originally excluded from RAF lists and her service concealed.

In the Special Operations Executive (SOE) Churchill recruited around 60 women who were deployed behind enemy lines, usually by parachute or fishing boats, to help form a 'secret army' of resistance fighters preparing the way for the Allied invasion. Objects used during the war by women recruited by SOE will also once again go on display at the museum, including a radio receiver concealed inside a biscuit tin. Women continued to play a vital role after the war and over the last two decades, women have taken on more jobs in the British Army. Since 2018, all Army roles have been open to them. This includes combat roles in the infantry and special forces units. But even before that, many female soldiers had been serving on the front line and in war zones across the world. Away from the front line, women have taken on positions and broken down the barriers in what were once male-dominated roles in MI5 and MI6; the UK's Security Service and Secret Service.

Members of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY), founded in 1907, most famously played significant roles in the SOE during the Second World War, but remain active today. Members of the FANY have seen service in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as providing vital support during disasters, terrorist attacks and crises at home in the UK. 'We turn up to help, whenever needed.' Says Jessica Lakin, who joined the FANY in 2002. She describes the most impactful experience of her service as a recent as 'three months in 2017 when I mobilized for four disasters. The crescendo-ing emotional effect of assisting after the Westminster Bridge attack, Borough Market attack, Manchester Arena bomb and then the Grenfell fire, was impactful.'



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# YOUR COUNCIL MATTERS

"DEVELOPING A THRIVING, INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE, RURAL COMMUNITY"

## Latest News

### Coronation Celebrations

Bletchingtondon Parish Council would like to say a huge

**THANK YOU**

to all of the amazing people involved in the Coronation Celebrations on Sunday 8th May 2023. Sue Davies and Grace Tharby headed up the wonderful group of people who made the event such a huge success.

There was delicious food, games, Bouncy Castle, Tommy's Tunes, The Bankers, Face-painting and so much more. It was fantastic to see so many from our community attend, even the sunshine made an appearance. The Parish Council were able to donate £500 to this event, thanks to a grant made available by Cherwell District Council.

### Change of Chair

At the time of writing, the Parish Council are aware that the current Chair, Cllr C. Lane, has chosen to step down as Chairman.

Chris has worked extremely hard as your Chairman since February 2021 and his experience is invaluable. The Parish Council would like to say a huge thank you for all he has done.

Who will step into the spotlight next?



### IN OTHER NEWS

#### Annual Parish Meeting

Thank you to those who attended the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 10th May 2023.

If you would like to see a copy of the Minutes of that meeting, they are included in this edition of the Village News.

If you were unable to attend and have any questions or concerns you would like to raise, please contact the clerk or any of your Councillors

### Next Meetings

**28th June and 19th July 2023 - The Village Hall.**

Visit our website for information on public attendance and participation at Council Meetings.



### Primary Contact

**Fiona Mason - Parish Clerk. | Tel: 351967 | eMail: bletchpc@gmail.com**

The clerk is based in the Village Hall on a flexible part-time basis, but will respond to all messages at her earliest convenience.

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

**Volunteers needed for the new tree on Valentia Close.**

Oxfordshire County Council are seeking any local volunteers who may be able to maintain this tree for the first few years to ensure it stays healthy. Maintenance will consist of a full, standard sized watering can of water per day for the tree during the watering period of May-September. Please contact the clerk if you could assist with this.



**Burglaries**

Unfortunately the Parish Council have received reports of a number of burglaries happening throughout our village but most recently on Weston Road, targeting out buildings.

**Please be vigilant and get number plates when you can.**



**Planning Matters.  
March & April 2023**



**New Applications Put Forward**

23/00624/TCA – Mrs Emma Turnbull – Court Yard House, Church End, Bletchingdon OX5 3DL – G1 x Leylandii No.3 and Macrocarpa No.1 – Fell as they have outgrown their limited location and also because of concerns of damage to adjacent walls.

23/00684/CLUE – Mr Simon Valentine – Dairy Cottage, 6 Ingleby Paddocks, Enslow OX5 3ET - Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Development from B1 Office to C3 Dwelling, consent of 06/00762/F (issued 27/03/2007) required part of the dwelling to be used as B1 office space. This condition has been breached for a continuous period in excess of 10 years, with the use of the whole area continuing as C3 use.

23/00899/F – Build the Future Ltd – Heathfield Golf and Country Club, Heathfield, Kidlington OX5 3DX - Retrospective - Use of land for the siting of caravans to include replacement building (office/reception, shop, store laundrette, kitchen, toilets, showers and washing facilities) - Amendment to layout and extent of application site approved by planning permissions 19/01789/F and 21/01485/F.

23/00971/F – Bletchingdon Park Estate C/O Perdix Partnership - Bletchingdon Park House, Springwell Hill, Bletchingdon OX5 3DW – Addition of a basement below the lodge, a new haha wall will separate the lodge from the pasture land.

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## Applications Approved

22/03776/LB – The Old Rectory, Weston Road, Bletchingdon OX5 3DH – New gate piers and flanking walls forming front entrance to the Old Rectory.

22/03775/F – The Old Rectory, Weston Road, Bletchingdon OX5 3DH – New gate piers and flanking walls forming front entrance to the Old Rectory.

22/03585/F – Bletchingdon Park House, Springwell Hill, Bletchingdon OX5 3DW – Erection of agricultural building (revised scheme of that approved under 18/01945/F, intended to maximise ventilated convection for stored feed and bedding.)

23/00624/TCA – Court Yard House, Church End, Bletchingdon OX5 3DL – G1 x Leylandii No.3 and Macrocarpa No.1 – Fell as they have outgrown their limited location and also because of concerns to damage to adjacent walls.

22/03271/CLUE – Diamond Farm, Islip Road, Bletchingdon OX5 3DR - Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use of ten flats/cottages/apartments for permanent resident use, having been used for such purpose for over 10 years in breach of relevant planning conditions.

22/03618/LB – Bletchingdon Park House, Springwell Hill, Bletchingdon, Kidlington OX5 3DW – Repairs to the stonework of the existing Plunge Pool structure, the forming of a new formal capping to the façade to the front and the construction of a protective metal roof over the existing stone dome.

### *Councillors, Responsibilities & Contacts*



Name	Role	Address	Contact Number:
Chris Lane	Chair	Village Farm	350257
Matt Whitehead	Vice Chair	Rogers Cottage, Station Rd.	350991
Mark Taylor	Councillor	Stoneacre, Oxford Rd.	350609
Duncan Ledger	Councillor	3 Islip Road	351542
Rachel Pirie	Councillor	12 Valentia Close	07790 025110
Dan Robins	Councillor	Four View, Oxford Rd.	350007
Nicola Morris	Councillor	The Stables, Islip Road	351025

#### **District Councillors:**

Gemma Coton - Gemma.Coton@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Julian Nedelcu - Julian.Nedelcu@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Simon Holland - Simon.Holland@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

**County Councillor:** Nigel Simpson - nigel.simpson@oxfordshire.gov.uk



## **Bletchington Parish Council**

### **Annual Meeting of the Parish**

Held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 7:30pm

**Present:** 8 Parishioners and Cllr C. Lane, Cllr M. Taylor, Cllr R. Pirie, Cllr D. Robins, Cllr D. Ledger, Cllr N. Morris

**The Notice of Meeting was read.**

**Apologies for absence:** County Cllr N Simpson, District Cllrs G. Coton and S. Holland

**Confirmation of Minutes:** The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022 were published in the Village News following the meeting and made available for all to read prior to the start of the meeting. All electors present confirmed they were in agreement with the minutes. The Chairman confirmed this and they were signed in the presence of the Clerk.

#### **Chairman's Report**

##### **Queen Elizabeth II**

Queen Elizabeth celebrated with the country in June her Platinum Anniversary, an excellent achievement of record reign and total dedication serving her nation.

Later in the year the death of the Queen was announced, a solemn moment in September. Our village and the nation came together in public grief in recognition of the extraordinary dedication Queen Elizabeth II gave. A book of condolences was displayed in the church for many to sign. The parish council wrote to the King on behalf of the village to offer our condolences.

##### **Traffic Calming**

Traffic calming through our village is a major topic and concern. For more than 2 years the Parish Council has asked Cherwell for a breakdown of figures for full width speed humps and despite follow up communication and help from the District and County Council we have had no definitive reply. We have complained about the crossing and beacon malfunction and fading hatched white lines for over two years. The Parish Council has raised these concerns highlighting the safety concerns to Dave Catlin at Highways many times, Nigel Simpson at OCC, Bill Cotton Corporate Director for Environment, Andrew Gant the Cabinet Minister for Highway Management, the Chief Executive, John Howell MP and Nick Mould from the Duchy.

Provisional figures to carry out the full length speed humps was £27,760. To create a further 3 parking spaces near the loading bays on Station Road by the Co-op is £21,942. Parking around the Co-op is also a concern to safety. Villagers are now benefitting from a very successful Co-op, unfortunately with inadequate parking made at the planning stage. The inadequate parking spaces is not helped by residents parking their vehicles in the allocated Co-op parking places instead of their own allocated spots.

We have obtained speed detector guns to monitor speeds in the hope that this will reduce speed through the village. Councillor Matt Whitehead is trained to use this equipment but would really appreciate others to assist him on behalf of the Parish.

The good news is, as you see, along with many villages we now have a 20mph speed limit through the village, the cost being met by the County Council. We are currently trying to obtain prices for vehicle activated signs which show drivers their speed, in the hope that this will help to reduce their speed.

The Parish Council have erected posts opposite the Co-op to prevent drivers going onto the grass and making a mess of the entrance to the village.

##### **Bottle Banks**

Little to report on the bottle banks. To recap, they are not allowed to be close to the gas chamber and not weight bearing over the gas pipeline. This movement is with Cherwell District Council's legal team and has been for 18 months, to move it further back between the field and the allotment wall.

### **Duchy Field Development**

This is getting close to being finished, many years after it should have been. One house now remains unfinished with a hopeful date of completion in the Autumn. The original footpath through Duchy Fields is now open at last and thus closing the temporary one. The new play area was also completed and opened and is very popular with the local children.

### **Rural Bus Service**

This has been a trying and complicated concern for our village and keeping the 250 bus in service was important to many. It has been running commercially unviable for some time. Our public transport representative Anne Maclachlan has been an exceptional help in assisting the Parish Council. A new bus company with a new service timetable was recently agreed with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) so for the time being we still have our bus. The current contract will continue until 29<sup>th</sup> March 2025 and the £2 fare arrangement will continue until at least 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

### **Elections**

Last year the Parish Council elections were uncontested with 6 members re-elected, leaving a vacancy on the Parish Council. The position was advertised to co-opt and we subsequently interviewed. Following this, I am pleased to welcome Nicola Morris to the team. At this year's May 2023 elections for a District Councillor, we welcome Julian Nedelau. Angus Patrick decided for personal reasons not to put his name forward for election. We wish him well and thank him for his services this past year. Our current other two District Councillors are Simon Holland and Gemma Coton. Gemma has been a regular attendee at our meetings and been excellent. Nigel Simpson is our County Councillor and likewise a regular attendee and has too been excellent.

### **Precept**

The Parish Council handles the precept claimed from Cherwell District Council (CDC), this money received covers many items. To name just a few, the play area maintenance, tree surveys and subsequent maintenance, mowing The Green, insurances, dog bins, sign posts, posts on the green, grants to the Church grounds maintenance, Village News and various charities which benefit residents of our village. This year will be the second year when the Parish Council have not increased the precept request making a 0% increase.

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

The Parish Council are progressing a neighbourhood plan application. Many will remember a meeting to inform the village was held some months back, it was well attended and gave parishioners an insight into what it is hoped to achieve. We have been able to secure a grant from Cherwell to assist with these costs.

### **Planning**

There have been a number of planning issues which are always published in the Village News. There are a few refusals and appeals currently ongoing. The main one being the cement operation plant at Enslow.

### **Alms Houses**

Residents from the Alms houses from The Row have now been rehoused to Deddington. Green Square Accord flexed their muscles and gave residents notice to leave with no chance of remaining in the village; some had been here for up to 40 years. It was claimed to be not viable to continue maintaining these old properties and so will be sold on the open market. The Parish Council gave full support to reject Green Square Accord's decision but was unsuccessful.

### **Adult Gym**

The Parish Council are trying to get permission to install equipment for an adult gym at Springwell Close on the children's play area. That area does not seem popular, given the new play area on the Duchy development.

### **Litter Pick**

We are grateful to all those helping again this year - it proves to be a successful operation. As most of the litter appears to be on the road side entrance to the village, it gives concern to the safety of those volunteers at future events.

### **Pub**

Sadly our pub closed again in January due to high running costs. The owner has always stated that renovation work will happen but not at the present time, due to other development commitments.

### **The Slipe**

Unfortunately nothing has changed since last year, despite the PC urging the Bletchington Community Foundation (BCF) to manage this area. It has continued to become overgrown as time goes on. To recap, the word 'Slipe' is an ancient piece of ground that drovers used to rest cattle overnight when moving to other farms or to market. There was no other transport other than walking in those days.

An extract from the BCF annual report says "The BCF has purchased an area of land known as The Slipe on Islip Road, adjacent to Diamond Farm, during 2019. This is an area of historical significance and a grant has been obtained from HUMBY-TECK to cover the purchase of the land and future maintenance and improvements, the land will be retained as grazing land initially pending a community meeting to discuss options for the site." The Parish Council notes that in the BCF 2021 accounts a sum of £37,445 was ring fenced for maintenance and running costs associated with the Slipe. I do hope we get some progress in the near future, as the BCF management of The Slipe is disappointing to say the least. The Parish Council has offered help to meet to discuss further with any assistance they can offer and with their full support.

### **Tree**

We have a new tree that has been donated by CDC in Valencia Close. We are looking for someone to adopt it through the summer with a weekly bucket of water. Please see one of us if you can help.

### **HGVs through the village**

The Parish Council continue to pursue this restriction through our village with the help of our County Councillor. Recently the Government has passed a motion to legalise an increase in the length of articulated lorries by a further 2 metres, up to 18.5 meters!

### **King's Coronation**

The recent event at the Village Hall to celebrate Kings Charles III's Coronation was an occasion to be remembered. It was a pleasure to see so many people together enjoying this special day. It was a great success and a huge thank you to all those that arranged and helped to make this such an occasion to be remembered. Grace Tharby and Sue Davis were instrumental in making this event a success and quickly secured a large team of volunteer's. I apologise for not mentioning all of those who helped as there were many, but it did not go unnoticed so thank you to all of you.

### **Other Items of interest close to the Village**

It has just been announced by OCC that £3m has been allocated for pot hole repairs.

We have supported our neighbouring Parish in raising concerns for the developing of the Botley Solar Farm. If agreed, it is believed to be the third largest in Europe.

The Rail freight interchange at Ardley is still in consultation stages.

The Oxford United Football Ground discussions are ongoing with a decision due in the Autumn, for the football ground on the triangle area near Stratfield Brake in Kidlington.

### **Thanks**

Thanks to those who have assisted the Parish Council throughout the year. Their help, and there's many, has been greatly appreciated. Thank you. Many thanks also to my fellow councillors for the support I have received throughout the year. They have worked selflessly each and every one of them, they each have their own special skills which shares out the Parish Council workload. They really are an excellent team to work with.

My final thanks as always, is to Fiona. Fiona has developed into a perfect Clerk to the Parish Council. She is extremely efficient and continues to be in total control of her duty. She has been an excellent assistant to me as Chairman and I'd describe her as a perfectionist.

As this is my last year as Chairman, the next Chairperson will be so lucky to have her working alongside.

### **Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council Reports**

G. Coton from CDC and N. Simpson from OCC shared their reports via email prior to the meeting. The clerk read these reports to everyone present. If you would like to see a copy of these, please contact the clerk.

## **Parish Council Finance Report**

During the financial year Bletchingdon Parish Council **received £34,314.55**. £24,500.00 of this was from the Precept, which is the money given to a Parish Council by the District Council (Cherwell) to carry out its duties. **Bletchingdon Parish Council made payments totalling £34,274.84 from April 2022 – March 2023**. We had a carry forward balance in April 2022 of £58,642.86, leaving a balance in hand at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 of **£58,682.57**. As reported before, this is a large figure to have as a carry forward however the Parish Council have set aside a large proportion of this for traffic calming measures, road safety and the Neighbourhood and Parish Plan. The PC are still waiting for confirmation of costs with regards to traffic calming measures such as full width speed humps and other road safety measures, so we still don't know if we have enough for the project. The new 20mph speed limit is now in place, and with thanks to the Parish Council taking the opportunity to get this in place during Oxfordshire County Council's scheme, this did not cost our Parish anything.

As part of the Parish Plan, a Neighbourhood Plan has been started. Some of the funds from our carried forward figures have been allocated but our Councillors have also managed to secure grants to supplement the costs incurred so far. A donation was made towards the Blacks Head pub to celebrate the Coronation last summer, which was a community event arranged by the landlords of the pub, for our village and was a great success.

Further grants were awarded to the Parish Council which were used to provide a new storage unit at the Recreation Ground which is a space for the community to store community items such as marquees or sports equipment. There were also a number of repairs to the playground recommended following the annual inspection of the Recreation Ground which the Parish Council have taken care of as well as critical tree work on both The Green and the Recreation Ground.

In January 2023, our Parish Councillors agreed to request the Precept be set at £24,500 as it was the year before but with the increase of residents at the Duchy development this will not increase the Council Tax rate. This has been agreed by Cherwell District Council (CDC). The Parish Council has a budget drawn up to ensure these funds are enough to carry out all the day-to-day duties to ensure the parish remains in good order.

For Bletchingdon PC the largest expenditure, except the Clerk's salary, is on grounds maintenance where we pay a contractor to undertake the grass cutting of the Village Green, verges on Weston Road and in Annesley Close as well as weeding throughout the village. We also have the trees to look after on the Village Green and at the Recreation Ground. We pay CDC to empty the dog bins and we own and are responsible for the play area at the Recreation Ground (but not the one at Springwell Close). We give donations to the Church towards grass cutting, to the Village News and to requests received that are to the benefit of our parishioners. Providing information to departments within Oxfordshire CC and various service departments within Cherwell District Council is a key role of the Parish Council along with making the Parish a nice place for you to live and work. As Parishioners, you are entitled to see how this money is spent and to suggest ways in which the Parish Council could improve the Parish, by attending meetings or talking to the Clerk, or any of the Councillors.

The full accounts can be viewed after they have been audited, either in person or on the website. A notice will be displayed on the Parish Council Notice Board shortly. If anyone is interested in knowing more detail, the monthly expenditure is included in the minutes of each meeting and these can be viewed on the village website or at the Parish Council Office in the Village Hall. The Clerk is the only paid member of the Parish Council. The Councillors are all volunteers.

## **Matters from the Floor**

- A member of the BCF addressed the PC concerns with regards to progress with The Slipe. They confirmed they have been trying to establish contact with Frognest Farm for over a year as they are not very forthcoming. Preferable the BCF are working towards establishing a good relationship with the neighbour of The Slipe so that discussions about access are amicable. They believe that they are close to coming to the PC with plans explaining the next steps and thank the PC for their support.
- A concerned parishioner reported that there have been 3 burglaries on Weston Road in the last two weeks. Sadly the police say they cannot do anything without knowing the number plate of the vehicle used. The advice from the police is to 'be vigilant'. The PC confirmed a warning to residents will be put in the next Village News.



- A question was asked about whether or not a 5G Aerial proposal had been received in Bletchington. At the time of the meeting, the only thing the PC had received was a pre-consultation letter to which the PC replied opposing the idea. Should a planning application be received, the PC will strongly object to any plans.
- With regards to the 20mph speed limit, it was suggested that the repeater signs could be better positioned throughout the village. There are a number of them in places where it is hard to exceed the limit and other places where there are not nearly enough. The clerk will report this feedback to OCC Highways. A question was also raised about the Vehicle Activated Signs and where these might go. Cllr C. Lane reported that they are likely to be placed near the Co-op as you enter the village from Enslow and at the junction near the pub. Before that can be explored in more detail, the PC are working with Highways to get accurate costings.
- A question was asked about the affordable housing recently lost to the village and what can be done to replace them. At this time, the PC cannot influence this situation.
- With regards to the broken bridge at Enslow, does the PC know why this hasn't been repaired yet? The PC agreed to add this to the next PC agenda to enquire with OCC Highways.
- Does the PC know what is happening with The Rock of Gibraltar pub? Unfortunately not.
- Lastly, T. Saunders wanted to add a special thanks to Cllr C. Lane who has worked as Chairman for nearly the last 2 and a half years. He said that he has done an enormous amount for the village and he is very grateful for all of his work.

Cllr C. Lane thanked everyone for their attendance tonight and closed the meeting at 20:30.

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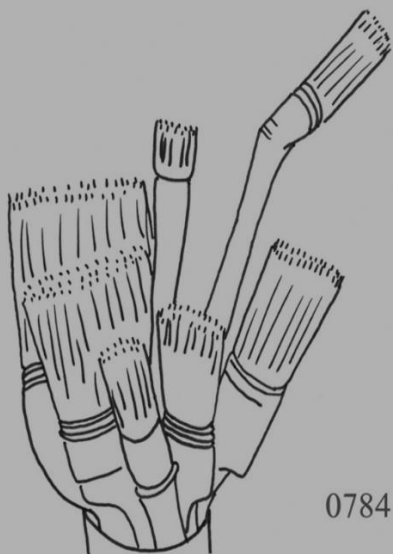
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ESTATE AGENTS



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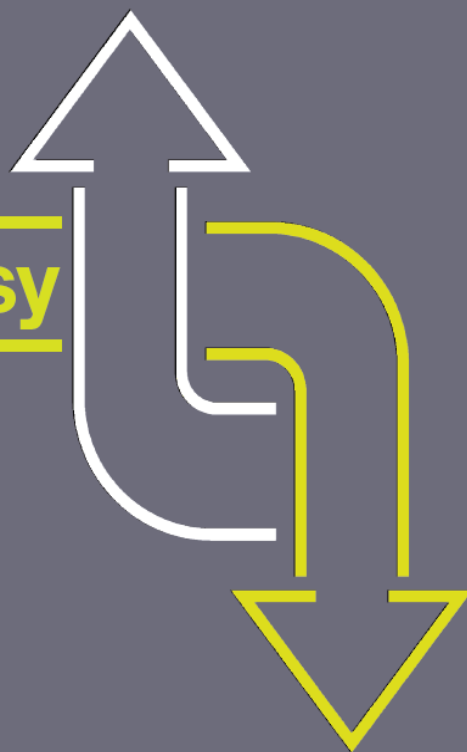
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