

THE DRAYTON CHRONICLE

VOLUME 48 ISSUE 2 | MARCH 2025 | BRIDGET PYNE

CHRONICLE INFORMATION

KEY DATES

The next Drayton Chronicle will be the April issue edited by Margaret Inger.
(margaret@inger.org; 07967730735)

Issue	Deadline for contributions
April	17th March
Printed Chronicles available on: 25th April	

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Contributions to and advertisements in the Chronicle are very welcome. Please send us your letters, reports from village clubs and societies, articles, tips and advice, photos, suggestions etc. Please always include your name, address, and (in case clarification is needed) your phone number. Without names, we will usually not print an item at all. The editor reserves the right to place, edit, shorten or even reject contributions as required.

Please send your contributions by email to:
editor@draytonchronicle.net

Advertisement requests should be sent to:
advertising@draytonchronicle.net

If email is impossible, please place your contribution, typed or handwritten, in the Chronicle box outside Vickery's Hardware Store on Drayton Green, or post to Vickery's. 5 The Green, Drayton, Abingdon, Oxon. OX14 4JA. After the deadlines, only urgent items will be considered for inclusion and then only if emailed, or delivered directly to the editor's house, by the Wednesday following the deadline.

DISCLAIMER: This Journal is published in good faith and great care is taken in its completion. The organisers of the DRAYTON CHRONICLE, and its Agents, therefore accept no responsibility for OPINIONS EXPRESSED, nor for the validity of any ADVERTISEMENT.

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Double-sized adverts (approx. 9cm X 9cm) are charged at twice the above rates. All advertising MUST be paid for in advance, either electronically, in cash or by cheque made payable to 'The Drayton Chronicle' and placed in the box at, or sent to, Vickery's.

Requests for advertisements should (preferably) be emailed to Stephen Fearnley, the Chronicle advertising manager (**advertising@draytonchronicle.net**), or placed in the box at Vickery's. If you wish to discuss your requirements, please phone Stephen on **01235 531347**.



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Administrator: Alison Bampton

admin@@damascusparish.org.uk

01235 847179

The church remains open daily {Sun-Sat, 10-3 pm}

SERVICES INFORMATION

Sunday	8:00am	Holy Communion BCP – 3rd Sunday only
Sunday	9:30am	Regular Sunday service
Thursday	9:45am	Holy Communion (1st & 3rd Thurs)
Thursday	9:45am	Celtic Morning Prayer (2nd & 4th Thurs)

DAMASCUS Service of Holy Communion with the Imposition of Ashes **Wednesday 5th March**, 7.30pm at All Saints' Sutton Courtenay.

YOU STAY WE PRAY

2nd – 8th Mar Furlongs; Plough Lane; Furrows

End; Lammas Land; Virgate; Fallowfield Close

9th – 15th Mar Lockway

16th – 22nd Mar Whitehorns Way

23rd – 27th Mar Corneville Road; Crabtree Lane;

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30th Mar – 5th Apr Drayton Rd; Milton Rd; New Cut Mill; Fisher Close; Marcham Rd; Meads Close; Rippington Court; Stone Hill



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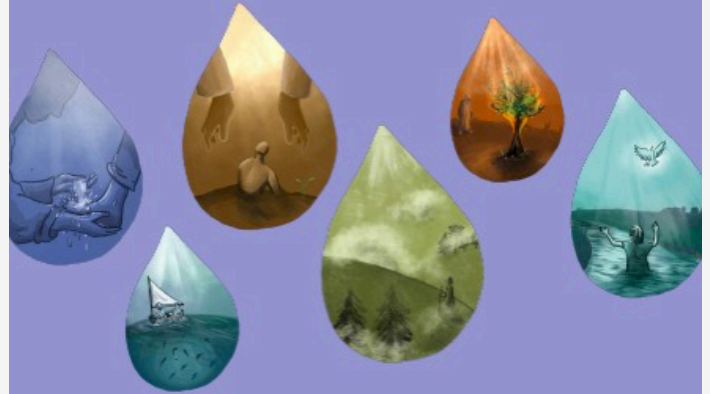
For online updates about services and events.

Search: St Peter's Church, Drayton, Abingdon or scan the QR code.

Answering your questions about faith

This Lent, explore what it means to be human and what it means to be baptised as a Christian. The two questions belong very closely together.

Come and See is for people exploring faith and Christians who have been coming to church for years. You'll receive a daily email and a weekly short video in Lent. Come and See how these life-giving reflections will enrich your life.



Happening here

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12, 19, 26 March & 2, 9, 16 April 2025
Contact 01235 847179 for more info.

COME AND SEE

oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see

First Monday	14:00	Knit & Natter No need to be a knitter, if you'd just like a natter
Monday	19:30	Bellringing practice
Tuesday	14:30	First Tuesday Connections All welcome for a cuppa & chat
Wednesday (term time)	10:00	Pebbles Baby & Toddler For more information contact: Draytonpebbles@hotmail.com



St. Peter's Church Drayton

Mothering Sunday Family Service Sunday 30th March at 9.30a.m

Please bring your families along to join us to remember our Mums and give thanks for them!
Everyone is welcome.



Funerals

29th January David Hale
12th February Brenda Mary Astell

ST PETER'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

During this month of March, the church is in preparation for Easter. It is a time called Lent, which is like Advent for Christmas, a time when Christians seek to refresh, renew or strengthen their faith. It is part of that faith journey Dov was writing about in his letter to you last month. Advent looks forward to the birth of Jesus, of God coming to us. Lent reflects of Jesus' trial, suffering and sacrifice of his life. The joy of Christmas turns into the sorrow of Lent and then turns into the joy of Easter. This is the great mystery of faith "Christ has died, Christ is risen and Christ will come again".

The Old Testament prophet Malachi (3:1-5), warns of this future event, saying that when the Lord comes he will judge against those who do harm to others. There is a long list, and includes those who would "thrust aside the widow and orphan (the vulnerable) the alien foreigner (the refugee) those who bear false witness (the liars)". Throughout scripture in both the Old and the New Testament, the message is clear, that we must look after and take care of each other.

My Grandmother taught me that charity begins at home. I am now beginning to understand how true this really is, because without it our communities and our lives would be the poorer. Our villages are fortunate to have many social and recreational opportunities such as the village hall, sports clubs, art, drama and singing groups, warm spaces, green spaces, the DAMASCUS Youth Project, the village magazine you are reading, to name but a few. All of these, including the parish councils, are there because people volunteer themselves and others support them.

In the Damascus parish, the ministry team are able to provide services every Sunday at various different times in each village, because of the help and support of volunteers. Jesus gives us only two rules to live by, the first commandment is to love God and the second to love one another. Simple yet hard. However, we can all be that "charity" that begins at home, the place where you live. Our communities need volunteers and supporters to take care of each other and to look after our environment. If you are not one of these yet, hopefully you will soon be benefitting from being one.

**Heavenly Father,
Thank you for our village and for every person who lives here.
Help us to care more for our community, to share your love,
and to stand for your truth. Amen**

SESRO (Thames Valley)

As we move into the Spring, our teams will be undertaking a range of environmental surveys to support the next steps in the reservoir design. This involves surveying the local trees and ecology. Additionally, we've started our archaeological assessments with oversight from technical experts, digging shallow trenches in nearby fields to explore any potential findings. These works are necessary to ensure we document and preserve anything of archaeological significance below the surface of the ground. All topsoil is being carefully stored and will be replaced once the surveys have been completed. You may notice our work from the public footpaths.

Our clay compaction trial at Hanney Road continues, and following the creation of the borrow pit, we are planning to test the clay in March 2025, when the weather is drier.

For more details or questions, visit our website for updates: www.thames-sro.co.uk/sesro

THE WELL TOGETHER PROGRAMME

Over 130 activities in ten priority areas across Oxfordshire have received a boost after being awarded Well Together funding.

The Well Together programme offers grassroots groups financial and community development support to strengthen the work they are doing in helping people to make healthier choices for themselves and their families.

Well Together funding has been distributed on a rolling basis, so all groups are at different stages of offering their activities. For some who received a grant earlier in 2024, their activities are now well underway. Some of these include:

- Rose Hill Junior Youth Club who are delivering sessions for ages 5-16 focused on improving wellbeing and building friendships through nature, cooking and art activities.
- South Oxford Community Centre hosts seated exercise classes with the opportunity to make friends in the community café afterwards.
- Oxford Wood Recycling are holding Community Shed sessions, encouraging residents from nearby Caldecott to meet their neighbours while making, creating or dabbling with wood.
- Banbury Young Homeless Project have been running sessions for 16-25-year-olds to promote mental wellbeing.
- UCARE are providing expert advice on urological cancers to other groups funded through the programme.
- SOFEA's 'pop-up' community larders continue to run and expand to new locations. One visitor to Barton Community Larder said: "The staff are friendly and supportive and there are always fresh and tinned healthy vegetables and other food. I often use it to make soups and stir fry and other healthy recipes which I can enjoy throughout the week."
- PEEP baby group is running in Littlemore and one parent said: "Prior to attending this group, I didn't know anyone in our local community. Now I feel a part of the community and regularly see other individuals from the group out and about. This has had a very positive impact on my mental health as I adjusted to becoming a mum."



WORK AT THE COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

If you are interested in working at the election in May, please get in touch as soon as possible and encourage your friends and family to do the same.

Here are some of the roles we have available for the Oxfordshire County Council election taking place in our district:

- Polling station staff – locations across the area, Thursday 1 May (from 6am until finish – likely to be around 10.30pm) – from £220
- Verification staff – Abingdon, Thursday 1 May, from 9.30pm to around 2am – from £23 per hour
- Count staff – Abingdon, Friday 2 May, from 9.30am until finish – from £15.50 per hour

To register your interest, email electionstaff@southandvale.gov.uk. Our Elections team will send all the information and ask you to confirm your availability for the various roles.

For more information, visit www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/electionjobs.

WHAT'S ON LOCALLY

Chair's Charity Quiz Night!

The Chair of Vale of White Horse District Council, Cllr Kiera Bentley is hosting a Charity Quiz Night at The Beacon in Wantage on Friday 25 April.

Doors open at 7pm and the quiz will get underway at 7.30pm. The evening will be raising money for the Letcombe Brook Project and Folly Tower Woodlands.

More details, including how to register your team can be found on: www.beaconwantage.co.uk

The ultimate 80s night

Step back in time as 80s Live! takes the stage at The Beacon in Wantage on Friday 14 March, bringing the ultimate retro party straight from London's West End.

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COHOUSING PROJECT ESTABLISHED NEAR DRAYTON

Stonehill Cohousing Co-operative has successfully secured the first phase of a purchase providing secure housing for 7 households, including 12 adults and 9 children and creating a mixed-income, low impact community.

This milestone marks the acquisition of the first part of an 18-acre historic property, including Grade II listed house, cottages, wedding venue and woodland, now brought into community ownership.

Cohousing is a form of intentional community, where individual households have individual units clustered around shared common spaces, such as gardens, laundry facilities and social spaces. All members of the cooperative were previously renting, exposed to the stress, unaffordability and insecurity of Oxfordshire's private rental market.

As a mixed income group, with members coming from a variety of backgrounds, the project is designed to be financially inclusive, inter-generational and tackle isolation. The group benefited from social investors for Phase 1 of the purchase of the site.

The site boasts the restored 17th century Stonehill Barn, which is a licensed wedding venue and available to book for events via <https://stonehillcohousing.org/wedding-barn/>

"We are so excited to have moved in and have the chance to demonstrate an alternative to modern highly individualised and alienating ways of living" said Michael Hirsch, one of the founding members of the cooperative society, "We look forward to engaging actively with the South Abingdon community and working in partnership to enable others from the local area to enjoy the rich natural environment on the site."

The group will be opening up further opportunities for community engagement later in the Spring and hopes to create a welcoming green space for the neighbouring Caldecott community.

Stonehill Cohousing is currently closed to new members. However, its parent group - Oxford Cohousing - is currently recruiting members. Interested prospective members are encouraged to find out more via their website: <https://www.oxfordcohousing.org.uk/>



COHOUSING FACTS

- Cohousing originated in Denmark in the 1960s.
- There are now over 30 established cohousing projects in the UK, according to the UK Cohousing Network.
- Cohousing enables a more sustainable way of life with car-pooling and shared tools, and reduces the burden on local services, health and social care through promoting a more neighbourly, community-focused way of life.

DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT

Local Government Reorganisation

We are still to become unitarised (sounds a bit painful, really). As a reminder, that means that we'll cease to have separate District and County Councillors and a single Unitary Council will cover all of the functions of both of these. On top of that, these Unitaries will clump together to create "Combined Authorities" with a regional Mayor.

Last time around, I mentioned that we'd be pushing for a Unitary involving ourselves and South Oxfordshire (who have already been working towards unitarisation between the two of us for some years) plus West Berkshire. The intent was to keep Local Government as local as possible.

Unfortunately, not only have West Berkshire reluctantly withdrawn to concentrate on other Berkshire Authorities, but another option reared its head – one which made the "Whole County" option look a lot better in comparison, especially if these were the only two viable options.

Oxford City Council, who had appeared to have received earlier warning of all of this than the rest of the Oxfordshire Councils, were pushing a "Doughnut" option. That is: Oxford City would annex a bunch of wards from the surrounding Districts (including, for some reason, all of the science and technology parks), leaving the rest of us to form a ring around them.

The cynic in me notes that by seizing all of the science and technology parks, they'd receive a lot more in the way of rates, reducing their council tax whilst sending that of the rest of us higher. The "ring" would also not be remotely consistent and coherent and would look a lot like a "dormitory authority" to serve Oxford. (Incidentally, in this model, would we have to officially refer to Oxford City as a "hole"? I don't think they've fully thought this through...)

As it looks to be the only (sane) option on the table, it looks like we'll be throwing our weight behind the "whole of Oxfordshire" Unitary after all. I'm still worried over the remoteness of the Unitary Authority in that case; we're just going to have to do our best to keep as much "local" in "local Government" as we can. However, Government have agreed that the County Council elections will indeed go forwards as planned.

There's no news on the Combined Authority front yet.

The Local Plan, and housing numbers

Yes, I'm banging on about the Joint Local Plan again, and for good reason: it looks as though we just might be getting the benefit from having worked so hard and so quickly to get this done.

A reminder about "five year land supply:" In essence, if we don't have enough sites to cover an expected five years of house building, we lose a lot of control over our destiny, opening up to speculative development and exposing us to any developer having a very good chance of overriding any planning refusal on appeal. The new Government have increased the expected numbers per year – and added a requirement for a 5% buffer, to increase to 20% in mid-2026. This essentially turns the 5-year requirement into a 5.25 year requirement right now, and a 6 year requirement from next. However (and it's a BIG however): any Local Authority with a recently approved Local Plan, or one that has been submitted for examination prior to December 2024 will have their planning measured against the numbers in that Plan. Our new Local Plan was submitted prior to that date, so (assuming it's approved), we'll be held to those figures, which are noticeably lower. We would expect to have that in place before the mid-2026 increase to the 20% buffer (effectively 6 year land supply), which should leave us safe with land supply.

Budget

The annual budget was passed and we remain solvent. We've also managed to sustain investment in community support, housing, and leisure. We're continuing purchasing more one/two bedroom homes for use as temporary accommodation.

Reservoir

You may have seen a lot of activity from Thames Water in the fields nearby, including going up and down Barrow Road. Heavy machinery can be very damaging to roads, so our County Councillor and I looked into the specifics of what they are and are not allowed to do. Water companies have carte blanche to do any activity to do with surveys, which is what they're doing - but they have backed off from using Barrow Road.

Community Hub – support

Something I very much hope that the future Unitary can keep going is the Community Hub, providing support and advice to those who need it. As always, you can contact the hub here:

- Tel: 01235 422600
- Email: communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk
- Website: whitehorsedc.gov.uk/costofliving

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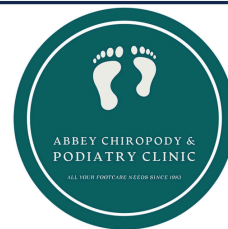
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COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

With Mad March upon us, it is time to look to spring and a new year.

I recently went to London with my family to join the Chinese New Year celebrations, and it struck me as positively uplifting at the end of winter to coincide the timing of new year celebrations with the start of spring and signs of new life, as is apparently quite common in some other cultures. I look forward to our local rituals, like the chance to see new lambs on a local farm.

Following the new year theme, our councils have just debated and agreed the budgets for the new year. This year's budget is much the same as last year; in reality, although the sums are large, there is very little wriggle room to do anything new or different.

Both district and county councils are well run financially and have balanced budgets. However, the county has found more money for repairing roads—ideally making a more permanent job of it than the frequent, fire-fighting, temporary pothole repairs that seem needed just to keep things ticking over.

Oxfordshire, believe it or not, is ahead of many councils in the UK in that it is trying to prioritise enough money to maintain the status quo, and we have also found some money to move from fire-fighting to better, more permanent repairs. The other headline I want to share is that the county has also found new budget for flood alleviation work, which is much needed, as this is now an annual theme for our Thames-side communities.

You, like me, might have received a letter recently from Thames Water announcing large rises in their water bills to pay for long-neglected infrastructure improvements. Although approved by Ofwat, the rises are large and a bad omen for what might be coming with the mega-expensive, new, strategic Oxford reservoir for the South East—to which we have been objecting as excessive and inappropriate.

If they fixed our current infrastructure and improved water management to standards seen in the best-developed countries, it wouldn't be needed. Sight of the new bill increases really rubs this in, as this is just a taster of annual mega-price hikes for years to come to pay for the new reservoir.

We continue to hold Thames Water to account for a better deal.

Looking forward to the rest of the year—the way local councils are run is changing with the devolution bill, with plans to be submitted by November. For us, this means that by the end of 2028, Vale of White Horse District Council will be merged into Oxfordshire County Council. So, not really devolution to local areas. But it may be beneficial in terms of economies of scale and other efficiencies. We have yet to see.

Restructures can take a lot of time and effort, and having been through a lot of restructures personally in the private sector, and knowing how gruelling they can be, my sympathies are with our council staff who must do their best to navigate how central government wants to restructure local services, without adversely impacting the current delivery of high-quality services. Beyond this, the new government is keen to create more strategic combined authorities, ideally led by a mayor—like in big cities. However, Oxfordshire is less convinced this will be beneficial for us, as we are far from a big city with different challenges and demographics. On the plus side, one must believe that this long-overdue new government is delivering changes now that are long overdue. I will keep you posted on how this pans out.

See you in the Spring!

Councillor Peter Stevens

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PARISH COUNCIL REPORT



The Council met on 10th February

Walnut Meadows

At long last, the planning application for the MUGA (multi use games area) pavilion, and car park at Walnut Meadow has been approved by the Vale of White Horse District Council. Work on the sports pitch drainage and construction of the MUGA will hopefully commence in the near future.

We have commissioned an integrated drainage strategy for the area as well as an electrical feasibility study. A Construction Traffic Management Plan will also be required before the work starts.

Miller Homes have begun to investigate the issues with surface water impacting the roads earmarked for adoption on the site. They have already discovered that the swale at the entrance to the site, which should connect to drainage in the Abingdon Road, has not been built correctly and is not linked appropriately to the drainage system! They will be undertaking analysis of the other swales which will involve some mechanical excavation.

As part of the land transfer agreement, Miller Homes were due to plant wetland wildflower seeds in the swales by February 2025. This has now been delayed.

Manor Farm

The PC is still awaiting a response from the Vale of White Horse District Council to its request for the use of pesticides on the site to stop. The PC has offered to hand pull any emerging Hemlock to save further poisoning of the site. We have also requested the removal of the Heras Fencing.

Defibrillator

The PC successfully applied for funding for this from the County Councillor's Priority Fund and the new solar powered defibrillator has now been delivered. We are proposing to site it on or near the village green area (by bus stop and shops) but have not decided on its precise location.

Planning

The PC will be submitting a robust objection to the development of the site between Bisby Close/Halls Close and Little Smiths Farm. An application for up to 31 houses has been submitted to the Vale.

This development was not identified as part of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and would feed into an already overcrowded feeder road and junction onto the High Street. We are also aware that the Vale has identified adequate areas for housing development, of which Drayton is not one!

Footpaths

Work is planned to start on Bridleway 8 (Gypsy Lane) on 24 March, weather permitting.

Sutton Wick Pond

Despite approaching 7 companies we have only obtained one quote for the refurbishment of the pond. We will however, be applying for grant funding on the back of this quote.

Contacting the PC

Please contact the Parish Council via the clerk@draytonpc.org if you have any comments or issues to report.

We recognise that it is sometimes easier to just put a comment on Facebook but please be aware that we don't routinely monitor Facebook and may not spot your comment.

Members of the public are also welcome to attend PC meetings and raise any comments relating to agenda items in the public participation part of the meeting. This is early on the meeting.

Parish Council news as well as dates of future meetings, agenda, minutes and other governance documents can be viewed on the Parish Council website <https://draytonparish.gov.uk/>

Elaine Wade



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01865331501/07894983801

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POLICE UPDATE

For many years the 101, non-emergency contact number for the police has suffered from a poor reputation. This has been an issue nationwide, but it matters not just for those trying to get through, but also for wider public confidence. We all want to know that if we need help the police - and our other emergency services will be there. That's why I've been so keen to see improvements to 101. The time taken to answer these non-emergency calls has been gradually coming down over the last year or so, and whilst they will still fluctuate at busy times the average for January was down to just 1 minute and 9 secs.

By definition the 101 number is for non-emergency issues, for example reporting a crime that has happened earlier, suspects have left the scene or there's no current risk, but I'm constantly aware that no-one ever wants to contact the police unless something bad has happened. So whilst it may not be an emergency, these calls continue to be treated with the seriousness they deserve.

One of the ways that we've reduced the call times is by providing better updates to victims. Until recently a large number of calls to 101 were from people who have already reported something to the police, but wanted to get an update. By asking officers to be more proactive in updating victims and by using a new online victims portal for many crimes, victims are now getting more information, more swiftly and taking the pressure off of the phone lines. More and more people are also choosing to report online. Whilst it's not for everyone, it can be much easier to report something non-urgent, perhaps if you've been a witness to something, on your phone or computer at **thamesvalley.police.uk**.

Of course in an emergency always call 999. The calls are answered by the same team of staff, but the emergency calls are prioritised to ensure they're answered in around 10 seconds!

My plea is that whatever route you choose, 101, online or 999, please report any crime or concerns you have. Not every call can or should result in a blue-light response and not every crime can be solved, but I can guarantee that the incidents the police really will do nothing about, are those that are never reported to them!



Matthew Barber
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Thames Valley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Congratulations to Connie Harrington on your 100th Birthday milestone on 16th April 2025.

Connie came to live in Drayton in 1972. She lives in the same house in Whitehorns Way with her eldest daughter Paula. Connie was born in Manchester in 1925 and once married to Eric - they moved often (seven times we think) owing to his being in the RAF.

In the early days Connie worked for F. Church Plumbing and Heating. She was active with the Brownies, Drayton Wives and the W.I. She was a regular at the Sunday Service at St. Peter's Church, often helping with the teas and coffees afterwards.

Happy Birthday mum with all our love Paula and Sarah-Jane.



Dear Editor,

I was surprised to see a letter in the February issue of the Chronicle saying that without the Parish Council there would be no-one to ensure that the various developers in the village sorted out the snagging issues. My husband Nigel has worked tirelessly to hold Bloor Homes to account and so far he has saved the Dovecote residents well over £100,000.

Vicky Billingham

Note from editor: We can confirm the previous statement submitted by the Parish Council was incorrect and for further information on the great work Nigel is doing visit:
<https://residentsfirst.co.uk>

SPRING HEDGEROWS AND GARDENS

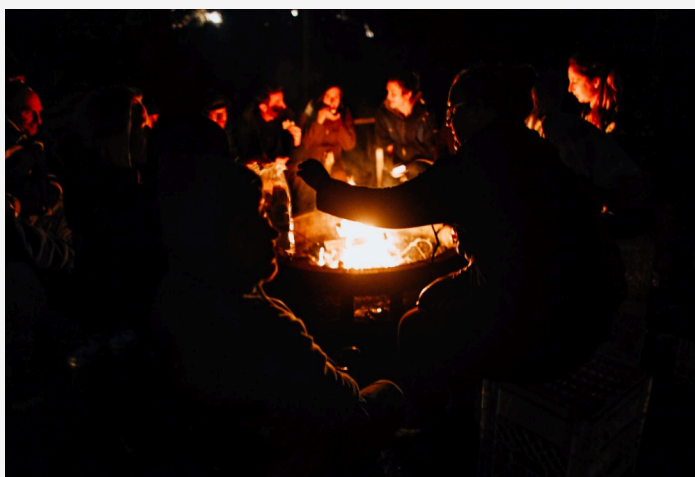
Hedgerows in Spring

Spring is the season of growth, and our local hedgerows are no exception. This season you can expect to see hedge species beginning to flower. Blackthorn will begin to flower from early spring, blossoming before its leaves even begin to show, into beautiful five petal white flowers strikingly similar to Hawthorn. Hawthorn, however, (like Buckthorn, Guelder Rose, Dogwood, Wayfaring, and Spindle) blossoms later in mid spring. Cherry Plum (which began to blossom in winter) will only continue flowering into early spring, preparing to bear berries in early summer. All of these species are extremely beneficial to pollinators as well as other insects that feed on hedges (i.e., Chestnut moths and Brown hairstreak butterflies). Observe the wildlife benefits mature hedges offer this Spring and get ready to see it in your own local spaces once your newly planted hedgerows reach maturity!

Happy Earth Hour! (8:30 – 9:30pm on the 22nd March)

Join people around the globe in switching off all your lights for an hour, and while you're at it, why not check out whether your local nature group has organised any celebrations like an evening nature walk, or hot chocolate round a fire pit! Who needs TV?! Local nature groups are on our map here:

<https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/guidance/community-groups>



Great British Spring Clean

In the spirit of renewal and growth, get involved in the Great British Spring Clean organised by Keep Britain Tidy. Organise a clean-up in your local parish to allow wildlife to thrive free of litter. Report your results to become a 'Litter Hero' and consider joining the Big Bag Challenge! Come together to bring new life to your local green spaces.

A selection of Garden jobs this March:

Everyone's waking up! But remember, it can still go below freezing in March:

- Put out bird food with high fat content to give extra energy when food is hard to come by. Suet treats like fat balls are ideal and sunflower hearts.
- Feed hedgehogs.
- Put in at least one hedgehog gap.
- Have plants in your garden that offer winter/early spring nectar – e.g. mahonia, ivy, willow, hellebores, crocuses and snowdrops to provide a boost for our pollinators after the dormant months. You can also start to think about sowing seeds. Have a look at the packets as many are now marked with a 'pollinator-friendly' symbol. Why not grow your own bird food this year and grow sunflowers?
- Create a pond or improve yours for amphibians.
- Leave perennials and herbaceous, hollow-stemmed plants unpruned until early April or late this month. These will still be providing homes for overwintering invertebrates like ladybirds.
- On freezing days, break the ice on bird baths and water bowls. Refresh the water supply weekly.
- Build a bug hotel.
- Leave piles of leaves and logs undisturbed. In mild weather, it can be tempting to get going in the garden but avoid the urge to tidy away leaf and log piles just yet. Wait until late this month or early April.
- Avoid turning the compost heap until April, even if conditions are mild. Frogs, small mammals, and insects may be hibernating, and any disturbance could harm them.
- Check bonfires before they are lit for sheltering and hibernating animals, such as hedgehogs, toads, frogs, and newts.

Hedgehogs

Our hedgehogs will be waking up this month. With the unpredictable weather, their hibernation patterns are less certain but usually they won't go back into hibernation now until the winter. This means they will be hungry and thirsty after a long dormant period and will need to build their fat reserves and energy ready for the breeding season.



Rhiannon Young – Wild Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Engagement Officer

<https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/>

LOCAL GROUPS AND CLUBS

W.I

At our last meeting, we welcomed Hilary from the Abingdon Food Bank.

It was a most informative talk. She told us how it all started, how it evolved, and how it functions today.

There are three main levels of food centres.

- First, the food bank itself, which is only available to people who have a referral form from an official source and are in immediate need of help for many reasons.
- Secondly, there is the food larder. This is operated on a subscription basis, with a joining fee and a donation on each visit.
- Thirdly, there is the community fridge. This operates on a give-and-take basis. If you have a surplus of any foodstuffs, you can donate it to the fridge; likewise, you can take food from the fridge as you need, depending on its availability. When it's gone, it's gone.

These three venues are in separate places in the town and are staffed by volunteers who oversee the distributions. One notable donation was 1,000 chocolate Easter bunnies from the Blenheim Palace gift shop, rendered unsellable because of lockdown. These were gratefully received and made a lot of people, including the children in the Oxford Children's Hospital, very happy.

Next month is our Annual Meeting. This is when we review our last year and look forward to a new one. This will mean a possible change of officers, but possibly not! We are all very happy with the ones we have, but new members are welcome. We may also hear about the speakers for next year.

When all the business is complete, and if any time is left, there will be some entertainment provided before we have our traditional tea and biscuits.

All this is to happen on **Thursday, March 13th, at 7:30 pm in the Cauldwell Centre, Gravel Lane.**

Since finishing this report, I have just seen that our five bags of donations weighed in at 25 kilograms, and we also donated £50 to the charity from our funds.

Ann Webb

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING

If you enjoy dancing, then why not give Scottish Country Dancing a go?

We meet at Chilton Village Hall on Tuesday evenings at 7.45pm.

We are a friendly club that welcomes beginners and experienced dancers alike. You don't have to be Scottish to join!

No partner is required, and it is a sociable way for all ages to have exercise and fun!

Please visit our website harwellscdc.mno.org.uk for more details.

Angela McCleery (Chairman)

MUSIC CLASSES

New music classes for ages 2 - 7 starting in April.

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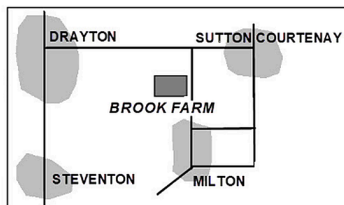


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LETTER FROM WESTMINSTER

With the awful weather we had in January, I was so sorry to see how some constituents suffered yet again with flooding, or threats of flooding. I have been in contact with our local councils to ensure the concerns of constituents who contact me are heard.

It has been a busy month in Parliament, with the opportunity to speak up and debate local and national and, indeed, international issues. In the Didcot and Wantage constituency, I am serving both urban and rural communities, but many of the topics debated affect constituents wherever they live. I voted in favour of support for the women affected by the changes to retirement in the WASPI Bill, in favour of the Climate and Nature Bill (which so many of you contacted me about), and the Sunshine bill that requires new homes to be fitted with solar panels at the outset.

I have asked questions about the shortage of medication for those with epilepsy, ADHD and Parkinsons who need it. I was also able to applaud the work of small post offices whilst arguing they need more support.

Education has featured heavily this month; with debates about the critical need to improve the services for children and young people with special needs. I enjoyed my visits to local schools where I heard from the hard-working staff of their concerns and difficulties but also saw the difference they are making. The young women at Didcot Girls School gave me a grilling as challenging as any I have seen in parliament! I was also able to sing the praises of Bikeability this month; a scheme in many of our schools that teaches children to cycle safely.

While the work in Parliament is serious, there can be lighter moments – and so I was pleased to squeeze in a mention of the divisive matter of mayonnaise on chips whilst discussing the merits of Belgium, Switzerland and Norway! Much closer to home, I have met constituents in my surgery as well as spending time in the constituency, hearing of concerns, and more importantly trying to resolve them where I can. Affordable housing, challenges around the management of new housing estates and transport infrastructure feature heavily.

Unsurprisingly, I have been contacted by many residents concerned about the Chancellor's recent statement and her very public support for the planned reservoir.

I continue to push for a public inquiry – the anguish of those affected by flooding and the rise in water bills is a clear signal that Thames Water does not have the trust of those of us living locally.

My team and I continue to serve constituents in addressing a wide range of personal matters.

Please contact me if you need support or would like to meet or wish to invite me to a local event (I can't make them all, but I try to fit in as many as I can)!

Olly

Contact: olly.glover.MP@parliament.uk

For more regular updates, you can follow me on Facebook:

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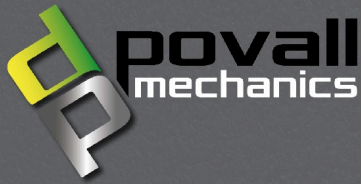
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Deborah and the team



DRAYTON HALL NEWS

We've only just realised that the Hall has a big birthday this year, it was opened in **May 1975**.



Rather a shame then that it had an early birthday present, a few days into the February half-term break, of a busted window. I expect there's a proud parent or two somewhere in the village?

We've another Antiques Fair, **Sunday March 2nd, 9am to about 3pm**, and a few new stalls apparently, that's plus Kathy Head running her excellent value cafe for one of her good causes (lovely breakfast, or perhaps just a bacon sarnie!). Another one on April 6th too.



We've another Jewellery Valuation day, this time reverting back to a **Tuesday, (March 4th), 1pm to about 4pm**. Last time he had a steady stream of customers, and I'm told offers very fair prices.

That's all sorts of items, brooches, watches, (working or not!), rings, chains, etc, he does a leaflet drop round the village ("Wanted - Gold & Silver") a couple of days before the event, with far more details about items of interest.

I hear that the sessions of Keep Fit with Faye, **(Fridays at 11am)**, have quite a crowd now, but still room for a few more, aimed at the 'more mature' customer, so seated if you prefer, they're just £7 per class and get great reviews (she runs them at several other local halls). And MY APOLOGIES, I quoted the wrong fee last month, but that £7 is still great value!

And our Bowls Club ('short mat') is looking for a few new members, especially the **Weds evening** group (other sessions are **Monday & Thurs** afternoons). It's a skilful game, but not too hard to pick up, and they're a friendly bunch, very big on their tea & bikkies! Why not come and give it a try?



Tony Holmes



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Post office has now reopened

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DRAYTON DIARIES

All events held in Drayton Hall unless otherwise stated. To book the Hall email bookings@draytonvh.co.uk or call on **(01235) 531180**. See the website: www.draytonvh.co.uk

Sat 1st	11:45am	Private Function (child's party)
Sun 2nd	9:00am	Antiques Fair (to 3pm)
Tues 4th	1:00pm	Jewellery Valuation (to 4pm)
Sun 9th	10:00am	Private Function (child's party)
Sun 9th	2:30pm	Private Function
Tues 11th	7:00pm	Parish Council Meeting (Caudwell DC)
Sun 16th	1:00pm	Private Function (child's party)
Mon 17th	5:00pm	Chronicle Deadline
Sat 22nd	All day	Private Function
Sun 23rd	10:00am	Private Function
Sat 29th	All day	Dog Show (private club)

Weekly in Drayton Hall unless stated otherwise. [## = Small Hall in Village Hall]

If an entry is incorrect, please contact an editor.

MONDAYS	
2:00pm	Short Mat Bowling Club Session
6:00pm	Damascus Youth ##
7:15pm	Badminton (Looking for new players)
7:45pm	Bell-ringing for 1.5 hours (<i>St Peter's</i>)
TUESDAYS	
9:30am	Pilates (via Alexandra Merson 07788 24892)
1:45pm	Drayton Art Group until 4 pm (<i>Caudwell DC</i>)
2:30pm	Tuesday Connect - 1st Tuesdays (<i>Church</i>)
6:30pm	Karate/'Dojang X' session (Sabrina 07938 537310)

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WEDNESDAYS	
10:00am	Pebbles Baby Group (<i>Church</i>)
1:30pm	Whist Drive (<i>Caudwell DC</i>)
1:45pm	U3A Science/Tech, 1st Weds (07890 385931) ##
2:00pm	Drayton Wives (Last Wednesday, most months) ##
2:00pm	Badminton
6:30pm	Brownies (term-time / Laura 07916 459435) ##
6:45pm	Short Mat Bowling Club (looking for new members)
THURSDAYS	
9:30am	Parent & Toddler Group
9:45am	Holy Communion (**) <i>St Peter's Lady Chapel</i>
11:00am	Baptist Café (to 1pm) NOW IN >> <i>Caudwell DC</i>
2:00pm	Short Mat Bowling Club Session
2:00pm	Crafts Group (2nd Thursday – run by U3A, but it's simple to join. Call Kate for info 01235 550486) ##
5:30pm	Rainbows (girls 5 to 7 yrs) ##
7:30pm	Sequence Dancing (Brian - 01235 531701)
7:30pm	Women's Institute Meeting (2nd Thurs) <i>Caudwell DC</i>
7:30pm	Drayton Community Choir (2nd/4th Thurs) Call Kay for info 01235 204187 <i>Church Room</i>
FRIDAYS	
11:00am	Keep Fit with FAYE (07815 583591)
4:15pm	Karate/'Dojang X' sessions (07938 537310)
SUNDAYS	
(**)	For all the latest info re their Services (Thursday communion, & especially Sundays), please see our <i>St Peter's Church</i> page
6:00pm	Evening Service (<i>Baptist Church</i>)