

WESTON-ON-THE-GREEN

The Village News

APRIL/MAY 2024



Photograph by Joseph Coyle



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WESTON SOCIETY

WESTON WALKERS

FOOTPATH WARDEN

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Non-Emergency Line: 101

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From the editor

Spring seems to have been springing since early February, with blossoms and buds emerging despite the rainstorms reminding us it was still winter but now I feel we can well and truly say goodbye to that season.

This is also the time when the *Village News* team sadly says goodbye and a huge thank you to Colin Rosser, who is stepping back from his marketing duties. He did so much to get the *News* back up and running on a sound financial footing, enabling us to make this a free magazine to all villagers. His marketing expertise alongside his knowledge of the local businesses of Oxfordshire have been invaluable in getting advertisers for the publication and he will be very much missed by Diane and me.

The search for his replacement started a few weeks ago with an advert on the Village Facebook page. If you'd like to be part of the *Village News* team and continue Colin's invaluable work, more information can be found on page 23.

Don't forget, if anyone would like to contribute an article to the magazine, please do email it to me – editor@wotgnews.org. If email isn't your thing, leave a copy at the shop and it'll be forwarded to me.

Happy reading!




Daffs in the snow by Jordie



Snowdrops by Jordie



Tulips in the snow by Patsy

Deadline for June/July edition:
2nd MAY 2024

An Easter message

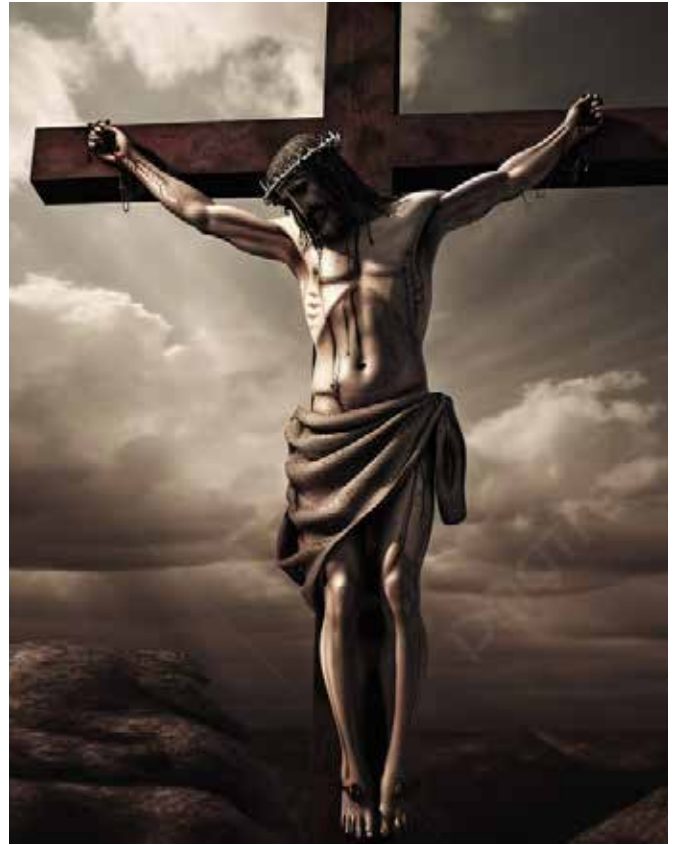
Paul Clifford
Lay minister

I WAS VERY STRUCK by a recent television interview given by a woman in Northern Ireland. She had been a widow for more than 30 years. Her husband was murdered by the IRA because they suspected him of being a British government informant. Remarkably, she said that she had forgiven his killers. When asked why, she said that if she didn't, she would "shrivele up and die".

Forgiving someone can be one of the hardest things we ever have to do. Hurts we suffer at the hands of others, emotional or physical, can be deeply damaging and very long-lasting. But I think that woman had hit on something very important. Lingering hurts can mean that they dominate our lives, poisoning our attitudes and souring our relationships. Forgiveness is an essential part of freeing ourselves from the damage that hurts can otherwise cause us.

I suppose that the other aspect we need to remember is that we also cause hurts to others. Though we don't mean to, that is still the effect we can have. So when we struggle to forgive it helps to remember that we too sometimes need to be forgiven.

Easter reminds us that in God's eyes every one of us needs forgiveness. Jesus, though innocent, suffered a cruel and violent death. Yet on the cross he was able to say "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what



they are doing." Forgiveness doesn't come any more unwarranted than that. And if it was on offer to the thief on the cross and to those who hammered the nails through Jesus' hands and feet, how much more is it offered to us. Perhaps when we are next faced with needing to forgive someone, we can remember that we too need and can find forgiveness. And the further damage we may inflict on ourselves if we don't forgive.

St Mary's Church, Weston on the Green, warmly invites you to join our services in April and May:

7th April	18:00	Evensong (BCP)
14th April	11:00	Morning Worship
21st April	11:00	Holy Communion
28th April	18:00	Celtic-Style Worship with ACCC, Middleton Stoney Village Hall
9th May	19:00	Holy Communion, Kirtlington Church
11th May	11:00	Café Church
19th May	11:00	Holy Communion

From the Register

Funeral: 10th January 2024, Norman Machin

Funeral: 15th March 2024, Angela Mortimore

For other services in the Akeman Benefice please visit:
<https://www.akemanbenefice.org.uk/church-services>

Akeman Benefice

Celtic-Style Worship
with the Akeman Church Community Choir

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Akeman Benefice

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KIRTLINGTON CHURCH

Church news



In the last issue of the *Village News* we were facing the challenge of repairing the damage caused by two trees that fell over during the severe windstorm on 2nd January. The wall damage has been repaired and the trees cut down to portable sizes. Fortunately, all but £250 was covered by our insurance. The large stump and root plate have to be removed carefully to avoid any damage to nearby graves.

We have now received our Quinquennial Inspection report from the conservation architect which prioritises the work to be done to the church over the next five years. We are fortunate that there are no urgent repairs, but the report is a reminder that we must have a works programme to carefully maintain the building and its churchyard. You can note from the picture of the repaired section of the wall that we will have to address the issue of weeds growing into the wall itself which will cause deterioration of the stonework. To avoid a substantial future expense, it is wise to address this problem now. The PCC is also considering the installation of a sound system with a hearing loop as well as wi-fi compatibility to allow the church to broadcast services to those who are unable to attend. This will require a fundraising programme to meet this obligation.

While the loss of trees is a cause for dismay, there can be positive side effects from such events. Several years ago, another tree split and had to be removed from the East entrance of the churchyard. After a few years the surrounding garden seems to have perked up with the increased exposure to sunlight. The snow drops in the northeast section of the churchyard are now prolific. They had obviously been planted many years ago and now have the opportunity to be a display of nature's welcome to spring. We have also noticed an increase in the primroses in the churchyard.



Our 31st December 2023 accounts have now passed examination and the table below is a brief outline of the year's financial performance.

Category	2022	2023
Total Income	£15,349	£13,402
Operating Expenses	£11,786	£11,713
Capital Expenses	£1,635	£0
Surplus	£1,928	£1,003

The 2023 Income excludes any Gift Aid Refund due to problems accessing our account with HMRC. We expect to receive the refund in the first quarter of 2024. Detailed accounts are posted on the bulletin board inside the church.

Our Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be held on Wednesday, 24th April at 7:00 pm at the Memorial Village Hall. We hope you will join us to hear our news and plans. A glass of wine and some canapes will be served. We look forward to welcoming you.

Eric Bohm, Church Warden

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Chair's comments



IT'S A COMPLICATED TIME at national, county, district, and parish level. The ground seems to be shifting with our Local Plan in draft form, a new National Planning Policy Framework in place (Dec 2023) but with further changes expected any day. Planning Inspectorate decisions occasionally shred what we thought was firm bedrock for decision making, i.e. housing numbers. How does a village Parish Council keep abreast of

all of this? I believe the answer is teamwork and networking. Our firm ground is our commitment to serving the village, respecting the views of residents even though they may be vastly different. We especially need to act as guardian of a long and special history. To do this at a time of new ways of working, financial pressures and climate change is a challenge.

The Parish Council of Weston

on the Green gets through this with the hard work of each of the Councillors and Clerk. Our finances are in good shape with great work from the finance group led by Tracy Rowan and Jane Mullane.

One of our key development goals is now moving forward as you will see from the work in the children's playground. Ben Lanham has stepped in and is leading this work with clarity and a strong

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desire to upgrade the provision for youngsters in the village.

Our planning lead, Susan Davis, is second to none in her understanding of the planning process, a sharp eye for detail and a fearless approach to sorting issues. What other village could muster the support for our works team that needs to be done, ideas to save money and a willingness to work hard and quietly than John Miller? Our Clerk, Jane Mullane, is often seen walking around the village reporting potholes, looking into drains, up poles and putting up anti-litter and anti-dog fouling posters. Jane seems to find her way through the maze to find the person to contact for a particular problem at district and county level.

We do need more support on the team. I've mentioned it before and if you are considering this please get in touch. A range of talents, skills and interests makes a strong parish council.

The decisions the Parish Council makes December – February impact on the next year of activity. The team has reviewed all aspects of our work and seen if we need to improve, add more resources, re-think our strategy. We've gone through the budget line by line and asked if we have met our goals set last year. We are pleased that whilst keeping the spinney and hedgerows under control, we have also seen a great success in the use of the Community Van. We've continued our support for

the Bicester Food Bank through a difficult year for so many families in the Bicester area. We've struggled with big projects like the full-fibre project and the removal of the oak tree path, rat running and reducing the speed on the B430. We've spent countless hours chasing those who should be supporting parishes. Thankfully we have a strong group of district and county councillors supporting and battling for us.

There is an opportunity for villagers to hear more about projects and ask questions at the Annual Parish Meeting. This is not a parish council meeting but a meeting of the parish electorate. In the past we have asked leads from village groups to be there to answer questions. It is an opportunity for debate and sharing ideas that concerns all aspects of village life. The date for this event is 15th April.

Our meeting on Wednesday, May 1st is also our AGM, a statutory meeting governed by our standing orders. This is the meeting in which the Chair and Vice Chair are elected and the leads for our committees are agreed. At this time, we celebrate all those who lead work and answer to the Parish Council but are not on the council i.e. the speed watch programme, oak tree footpath, Neighbourhood Watch, technology work and the Community Van. This group of volunteers joined by those who carry out physical work in the village are essential to the smooth working of the village community.

Finally, please don't hesitate to ask questions or give feedback either to me or any of the councillors.

Diane Bohm
Chair



New Tree from Oxfordshire County Council

A new Horizon Elm tree has been planted by Oxfordshire County Council alongside the pond in the middle of North Lane.

This is part of the Council's tree planting policy to replace trees previously cut down in the area.



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Planning Update

Planning applications relating to the parish are discussed at each Parish Council meeting and a report is placed on the Parish Council website. Full information regarding each application is available via the Planning and Building section on the Cherwell District Council website.

BUILDING APPLICATIONS:

Decisions Received – Permitted

23/03531/F – Dower House,
Church Lane

23/03511/DISC – Starbucks, Part of
A34

23/03319/ADV - Starbucks, A34 -
Signage

23/03437/F – Williams Cottage,
North Lane

23/03435/DISC - Williams Cottage,
North Lane

23/03436/DISC - Williams Cottage,
North Lane

23/03411/LB – Williams Cottage,
North Lane

23/03263/LB – The Manor,
Northampton Road

23/03363/DISC – Kelberg,
Northampton Road

23/0329/DISC – Starbucks, A34

23/03126/F – Weston Grounds
Farm

23/01788/F – New Sarum,
Northampton Road

Decisions Received – Refused

23/03300/F – Fir Tree Farm,
Northampton Road



Applications – Withdrawn

24/00161/TPO – Dower House –
Walnut – reduce canopy by 2m

Awaiting Decision

23/03383/F – 2 Church Close
Two storey side and rear extensions
(re-submission of 23/01872/F)

24/00028/F – 20 Westlands
Avenue - Loft extension/conversion
including increase to height of
roof, and garage conversion with
associated internal and external
works

24/00122/F – 22 Milestone Lane
– change of use from agricultural
land to residential garden.

Retrospective incorporation of 5m
of land on the northern boundary
of the development site.

24/00441/F – Fir Tree Farm
– Erection of Wood store.
Resubmission of 23/03300/F

24/00495/TEL – Mast 4962 Manor
Farm – Declaration of compliance

24/00497/F – Cruck Cottage –
Resubmission of 23/02717/F

24/00498/LB – Cruck Cottage –
Resubmission of 23/02717/F

Tree Applications

24/00146/TCA – The Warren,
Northampton Road – Mature
walnut – reduce crown - permitted



hga

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Report misleading websites, emails, phone numbers, phone calls or text messages you think may be suspicious.

Do NOT give out private information (such as bank details or passwords), reply to text messages, download attachments or click on any links in emails if you're not sure they're genuine.

Emails

Forward suspicious emails to report@phishing.gov.uk

Text Messages

Forward suspicious text messages to 7726 - it's free.

This will report the message to your mobile phone provider.

For more information visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/report-suspicious-emails-websites-phishing>

Important Phone Numbers



Voter ID – New Requirements

The government now requires voters to show photo ID when voting at a polling station at elections on 2nd May 2024.

The following documents, including expired versions, will be accepted as long as the photo is a good enough likeness:

- A passport issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, a European Economic Area (EEA) state or a Commonwealth country
- Photographic drivers licence (full or provisional) issued by the UK, Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state
- EEA photographic ID card
- UK Biometric Residence Permit
- An identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (PASS card)
- A blue badge
- Oyster 60+ card
- A concessionary travel pass funded by HM Government or local authority, such as Oxfordshire County Council Bus pass, disabled persons bus pass, Welsh or Northern Ireland travel card.

The full list of accepted photographic IDs is available via <https://www.gov.uk/how-to-vote/photo-id-youll-need>. You can apply for a free voter ID document, known as a Voter Authority Certificate at voter-authority-certificate.service.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can complete a paper application form.



Bicester Food Bank

Emergency food for people in crisis

A collection is held on the first Saturday of every month, 9.00 am – 12.00 pm outside the Weston Pantry.

All donations of non-perishable food received with thanks.

Supported by St Mary's Church, the Village Hall, and the Parish Council.



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Weston on the Green Garden Club

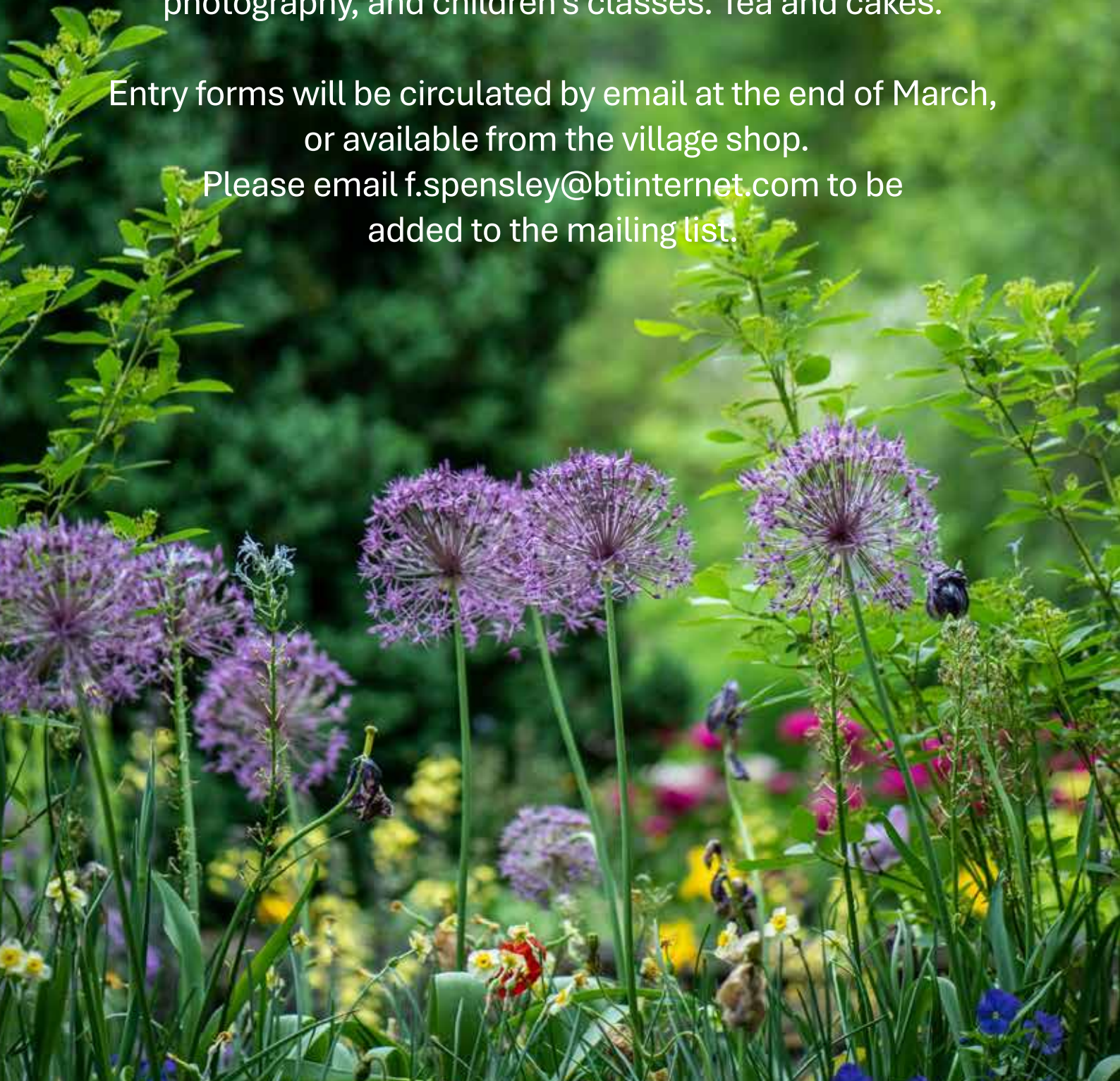
Spring Show

Saturday 13th April, 2.30 to 4pm
in the Village Hall

All welcome! Display or view flowers, flower arrangements, photography, and children's classes. Tea and cakes.

Entry forms will be circulated by email at the end of March, or available from the village shop.

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SPRING HAS TRULY SPRUNG at the Village Hall in recent weeks. The cherry tree in bloom in mid- February was a welcome sight, and although short-lived, the pink blossom was a sign of brighter days to come. The daffodils and narcissi have brought some golden cheer and we look forward to seeing the tulips and roses as Spring continues.

We're also hoping to see some new inhabitants at the Hall via our new bird boxes (specifically



for Blue Tits and Great Tits) kindly made and installed for us by David Williams. David has been involved with installing a number of swift boxes both here in the village and in Bletchington, with great success to date. In our aim to make the Hall more wildlife friendly David kindly surveyed the Hall to check the suitability for nesting boxes and we are so pleased to have them installed.

This is part of our plan to enhance the Hall's biodiversity with additional bee and bird friendly planting and further butterfly boxes. We hope these will make a difference for our wildlife around the Hall. Our thanks go to David

for his advice and help with this element of the project.

A big thank you, as well, to all villagers who have purchased 250 Club numbers in recent weeks. Your generosity and support of the 250 Club is very much appreciated and the monies raised will help to support the up-keep and continued renovations of the Hall. This year we hope to do some maintenance work on the exterior of the Hall, including the planting as mentioned above.

Thank you also to everyone who booked for the Bingo and Curry night held at the end of March. At the time of writing we are still a few



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Please feel free to borrow a book to read. We only ask that you return it in a good condition for the next person to borrow. Stock will be rotated on a regular basis.

Please could we ask that book donations are not left in the phone box. If you wish to donate books please email westonvillagehall@live.co.uk

Many thanks and happy reading



weeks away from the event but all tickets have been sold, the prizes purchased, and the bingo ball machine is all ready to go! A report will follow in the next edition of the *Village News*.

We would like to invite all villagers to our next event, a drinks and canapés evening on Friday 26th April, 7 to 8.30pm. If you're new to the village, or a resident of many years standing, we would love to welcome you to the Hall for some complimentary drinks and snacks.

We hope it will be a relaxed event with the opportunity to make new friends, catch up with old ones, and to discover what's on offer within the village.

All villagers are welcome to come along to this event and we hope to see you there!

250 Club Results

FEBRUARY

1st prize: £18 No 45 Georgina Lamb

2nd prize: £12 No 204 Yasemin Olcay

3rd prize: £6 No 88 Mr & Mrs F Butt

MARCH

1st prize: £18 No 34 Maria Joyce

2nd prize: £12 No 207 Mick East

3rd prize: £6 No 244 Sally Brown

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A Short History of St Mary's Ch

by Bob Hessian



It was built
by C. Martin
of Oxford at a
cost of £189

The current church organ was bought in 1885. It was built by C. Martin of Oxford at a cost of £189 and was pronounced by competent musicians at the time to be very sweet in tone. Originally it was positioned to the left of the Altar and was powered by hand-operated bellows.

The photo of the organ by the Altar (above) also shows the painted interior circa 1890 which went all round the church – I initially thought it was some grand type of wallpaper but that would have kept peeling off the damp walls. Note how low the painting behind the altar is.

The organ was moved to its present position in 1923 and later an electric blower to operate the bellows was fitted. During the Interwar period in the 1930s, a canopy was fitted above the Altar and panelling installed around the church by Mr Boddington, the Weston carpenter and wheelwright.

The organ
was moved
to its present
position in
1923



Church Organ



Mr Hosken shows Mr Hessian the corroded wires on the organ soundboard.

By the end of 1973, there were occasions when notes stuck open or did not play

When I started playing the instrument at the end of 1973, there were occasions when notes stuck open or did not play and it was not easy instrument to learn and at times it was an embarrassment to play! The diocesan advisor on church organs was asked to comment as to whether the instrument was worth spending money on.

The advisor who came out from Oxford was Simon Preston who went on to be the principal organist at Westminster Abbey. He sat down in front of the organ and rattled off several bars of Bach's Toccata & Fugue in D minor. I muttered something along the lines of, "It doesn't sound as though there's anything wrong with the organ when you play it!" However, his advice was that there were a few things that needed attention but it was an instrument that would be well worth restoring.

I think the target needed to have the work done was around £3,500. The work was carried out by Neil Hosken in 1979. Neil had worked for Hele's of Plymouth and had recently branched out on his own. Some parts of the organ he was able to take away and work on them in his workshop near Plymouth. Other times he would stay at the Old Vicarage in Weston and was well looked after by the owner Tessa Laurie.

He continued to visit twice a year to tune the organ and keep it in good condition. Although he retired several years ago, I continued to keep in touch with him and his wife. Sadly he died late last year. We thank him for giving us an organ that remains in good condition today. When some members of the clergy would like the church to switch to more modern methods of providing music, Weston should be thankful that we have an instrument to be proud of.



Restorer and organist with the dismantled keyboard and pipes.



Weston-on-the-Green WI

The talk at our January meeting was very interesting. Paul Barker, who has been a volunteer warden at the Otmoor RSPB reserve for 25 years told us all about its foundation, situated because of the clay deposits there, and how it has developed from boggy farmland and military use during WW2. He had many beautiful slides showing how life changes throughout the year, as well as the many species of birds which now live or winter there.

As a contrast, in February John Coffin came to tell us about his time in Papua New Guinea in the 1980s. John trained as an accountant and spent more than half his life abroad, including in diamond and copper mines in then Rhodesia and South Africa. In Papua New Guinea he trained future accountants for the

Steamship Company. Papua New Guinea is very mountainous, with few roads which meant flying in tiny planes, often very hazardous. He said the people were mostly lovely, but like many countries some were not, known as rascals, which meant living in compounds with other ex-pats.

It was fascinating to hear about a large country which is only 90 miles from the northern tip of Australia, but is occupied by many isolated tribes, speaking many different languages and with different cultures, making law-keeping very troublesome.

Our AGM was held on 20th March.

Lyn Barnett



Weston Walkers

We commenced walking again in February, when just 5 of us squelched through some mud and water following the Heyford circular walk from Lower Heyford along the canal towpath to Upper Heyford and back through both villages.

We will hopefully have walked again in March, then our next walks will be on Monday 8th April and Monday 13th May, meeting at Weston Village Hall at 1.30pm.

All are welcome to join in as and when, there is no commitment to every month, so if you wish to enjoy sociable company, conversation and exercise please

come along and join in or speak to me.

There are now also several local walks to enjoy published on the Weston on the Green Parish Council website, under Health and Wellbeing.

If while out walking you encounter any problems with overgrown vegetation, damaged stiles or footbridges, or any other issues, please let me know for Weston Parish or Katie Holt (01869 350219) for Bletchington Parish, in order that they can be reported to the County Council for repair.

Graham Barnett



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Weston Society

Weston Society met on Monday 8th January when Bob Hessian gave a fascinating talk on the Barn Owls that have nested in the roof of their cottage since 2012.

During this time 75 eggs have been laid, 64 of which hatched and 53 chicks fledged. Bob has kept us abreast of Barn Owl developments in the Village News – see p. 20 for the latest.

We will have met again on Monday 11th March to

hear a talk on Combe Mill, the next meeting being on Monday 13th May when Maurice East will be telling us about the part that Cowley Works played in the Second World War.

All are welcome free of charge to their first meeting, there is an annual subscription of £10 per person for anyone who then wishes to join, which enables us to pay for speakers and to share wine and nibbles after the meeting.

Walking in Oxfordshire

All the information you need to get walking in our beautiful county

With the days getting longer, it's time to dust off those walking boots and head into the fields.

'Walking in Oxfordshire' has loads of interesting walks, both local and slightly further afield, all to download and print for free: <https://www.walkinginengland.co.uk/oxfordshire>.

It also has books of walks, details of all the walking groups in the county and much more. Whether you want to walk on your own or with a group all the information is there in one place.



Photo by Linda Allinson



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Barn Owls

A PS to Graham's Weston Society report:

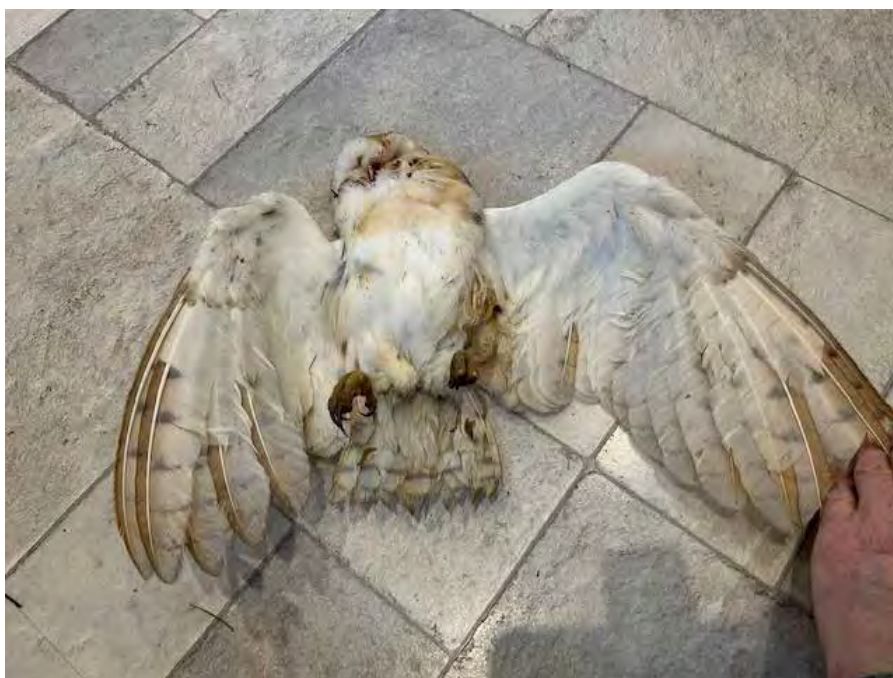
Although the first brood of barn owls appeared in 2012, it was not until 2017 when we started having the youngsters ringed. Twenty-eight young birds have been ringed since then – with only two reports back of birds being found dead.

At the moment there are a pair of barn owls in our nest box but no eggs – yet. They usually lay in the last week of March – first week of April.

I picked up a roadkill a few days ago on the road from Kidlington / A34 slip road and Hampton Poyle. It was a male bird, hardly a mark on it but a slight bloody face. Not one of mine (no ring) but it did give me the opportunity of looking at it closely.

It had a wingspan of 35 inches (890mm) but only weighed 13 oz (c. 350g) – which is normal for a male barn owl this time of year. But you have to admire the colouration of the feathers on its back and wings - beautiful!

Bob Hessian



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Ponderings from a 'Resting' Wood Fairy

Linguistic Challenges for the Aged

You know when you sit and ponder about life and its meaning, usually after a glass or three of Malbec? Having had time on my hands thanks to a hip operation and a lack of dry wood to turn into kindling, I've had a ponder on the use of the English language.

When I went to school, both in the village and then Bicester, we learnt about Boadicea, Queen of the Iceni tribe (who waged war against the Roman occupation) and died around 62 AD. It now appears she is called Boudicca and died around 62 CE - CE for common era so as not to upset anyone who isn't Christian.

I blame the BBC for most of this confusion. Having watched many quiz shows, I now get confused when there is a round on actors and an actress is shown.

Same with comedians and comediennes. Pensioners are now Senior Citizens and instead of going to the doctors, we have wellness centres.

Countries are now a minefield: Ceylon is now Sri Lanka, Rhodesia is Zimbabwe and heaven knows where the rest are. Cities have changed names, Peking, Calcutta etc. Being gay is no longer a happy person and an original selfie is not printable in this esteemed magazine. There are hundreds of others. I am too old (senior) to learn new languages.

Yup, really too much time on my hands at the moment ...

The Wood Fairy



Cherwell District Council are collaborating with Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) to offer Cherwell residents the chance to become part of CFO's oil scheme for FREE (usual cost: £24 per year).

The Community First Oxfordshire oil scheme is in partnership with AF Affinity who purchase over 100 million litres of oil every year from a variety of oil suppliers and, due to their relationship with the suppliers, can give the best possible price available to them on the day of your oil order. The scheme also offers direct debit and payment plan options, making it very simple and easy for you.

Please note, if you are already a member of the scheme and live in Cherwell but have paid this year, then CFO will reimburse you (they have your details and will be in touch shortly).

For more information or to join the scheme please visit the Community First Oxfordshire, call 01865 883488 or email: oil@communityfirstoxon.org

Weston on the Green Community Bus



Our generously donated Community Transport vehicle is an excellent service helping villagers get to their doctor and hospital appointments.

Equipped with a wheelchair hoist, residents can book this for trips in the local area.

To book please contact Graham Barnett on **01869 350707** giving as much notice as possible

Everyone is welcome to ...

Neighbours' Natter

2024

Bring your Magazines to Swap

Weston-on-the-Green Village Hall

Thursday Apr 11th and May 9th 10am - Noon

Join us for coffee or tea and a biscuit.

Weston on the Green Memorial Village Hall

Friday 26th April 2024

7pm-8.30pm

A warm welcome awaits villagers, old and new, at the Village Hall for our

‘Weston Welcomes Evening’

Join us for free fizz & canapés



See what clubs, societies and things are on offer in the village, catch up with villagers and enjoy free Prosecco, nibbles & canapés

All welcome

WESTON-ON-THE-GREEN

The Village News

Village News Team Volunteer Head of Marketing needed!

Thanks to the support of our wonderful advertisers, 600 free copies of the Village News are circulated to every home in the parish.

Could you help keep this going by becoming the next Head of Marketing?

We urgently need a volunteer to liaise with the existing advertisers whilst seeking and developing new ones, maintaining a good relationship with them from recruitment to billing and playing a key role in keeping the magazine solvent and free.

Without a volunteer coming forward the future of the magazine is in doubt as the current team of Editor and Admin cannot be stretched to fill this role.

**If you'd like to help, please email
Diane Bohm at admin@wotgnews.uk**



Could you be our new school governor?

BLETCHINGDON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bletchington School is looking for new governors to join their board. This is a wonderful way to contribute to the community. The role requires time (six meetings a year and a few visits to the school), skill (bring the skills you have!), and commitment. You would be joining a strong team and training is available. Do drop an email to: boster@bletchington.oxon.sch.uk if you are interested and want more information.



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John Howell MP writes...



ISSUES AROUND the environment are never far away as there are so many important issues to pay attention to. As I write this month it's The Big Plastic Count. From 11th-17th March I'm joining lots of people across the country counting the single use plastic that I use this week. It will be interesting to see the data for this year to see how we are doing in moving away from single use plastics. It does take time to change our habits and indeed the manufacture of products. Since the introduction of the Resources and Waste Strategy for England in 2018, significant progress has been made to address plastic pollution, including a ban on microbeads and restricting the supply of plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers, plastic-stemmed cotton buds, plastic plates, trays, bowls, cutlery, balloon sticks and certain types of polystyrene cups and food containers. The figures that lead to these bans are staggering. I understand that in England 2.7 billion items of single-use cutlery and over 700 million single-use plates used to be used in a year with only about 10 per cent being recycled!

Many of the things that we seek to tackle are on issues where we have become more aware of practices that used to be unknown. Just as the need to reduce our plastic has become more commonly known, and action taken towards it, so too are concerns on the testing on animals of chemicals used as ingredients in cosmetics. The Government has recognised the public concern around this and has recently introduced measures to ensure that no new licences will be granted for animal testing

of chemicals that are exclusively intended to be used as ingredients in cosmetics products. This is more good news. The Government does need to look at these things over time. It is always important when introducing new measures that relevant industries are able to respond without undue detriment. Hence the Government is actively committed to supporting and funding the development and dissemination of techniques that replace, reduce, and refine the use of animals in research.

As Spring arrives we are all more aware of our gardens and the countryside around us. Another concern raised with me recently is for our hedgerows which are an important part of our farmed landscape; a landscape with which we are very familiar. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is moving forward on several fronts on this.

There are schemes to encourage farmers, for example through the Countryside Stewardship schemes, where Ministers are supporting farmers to maintain and restore existing hedgerows and also to plant more across the country. Defra is also supporting farmers in assessing the condition of hedgerows, and to manage them

in a way that will work for wildlife and improve biodiversity. However, it's not all about business. There are also plans in progress for domestic hedgerow regulations which will, among other things protect nesting birds in the season. Another area which I know is of interest to constituents is the growing dependence on new technology and the risk of alienation that this can lead to for some people, especially older people.

We live in an increasingly online world and, although for some this is a regret, it is not going to change. This means that digital skills are important - from the basics that people need to make the most of online connectivity, to the skills needed in every job, to the high-level skills for the growing number of specialist jobs in the economy.

The Government is committed to helping those who need support to acquire basic digital skills. The Government is also working to remove barriers, and to ensure that online services are as inclusive as possible by making public sector websites accessible to as many people as possible. This is all part of its broader strategy to reduce digital exclusion and very welcome.

As always I am interested to know the issues that concern constituents. The best way to contact me is via email: john.howell.mp@parliament.uk.

From your local councillors



Launton & Otmoor District Update

We hope you are enjoying seeing the first signs of Spring!

A few updates from us this time:

Full Council and the Budget

At Full Council on the 26th February, a budget was approved. As no party within Cherwell District Council had a majority, it was clear that we would need to work together to ensure that Cherwell could meet their obligation for a balanced budget. The Progressive Oxfordshire Group, made up of Lib Dems, Greens and some Independents, successfully amended the Conservative administration budget to ensure the following:

- There was a delay to the introduction of a charge for replacement waste and recycling bins.
- There was a freeze to the charge for bulky waste collection, with the introduction of an extra service for residents needing faster collection
- There was a freeze to the charges for the use of recreational facilities at the NOA, Cooper School and Stratfield Brake
- Keep the Pioneer Square public conveniences open in Bicester

This budget means that council tax will increase by £5 per year for a Band D household.

Elections in May

Just a reminder that there will be District Council elections taking

place in May. Like at the last elections, you will need a form of ID to be able to vote in person. The rules around Postal Voting have also changed. From October 2023 there is now the requirement to prove your identity when applying for a postal vote and you now need to reapply for a postal vote every three years. If you use a postal vote, it might be worth just double checking that you are still registered with these new rules in place.

Get in Touch

As always, please do get in touch! Our emails are gemma.coton@cherwell-dc.gov.uk and julian.nedelcu@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or phone us on 01869717712.

All the best,
Gemma & Julian

John Dovey

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Dates for the Diary

2nd April	12.30 pm	Golden Leaves Lunch
3rd April	7.30 pm	Parish Council meeting
6th April	9.00 am – 12.00 pm	Food Bank Collection, Weston Pantry
8th April	1.30 pm	Weston Walkers; meet at the Village Hall
11th April	10.00 am – 12.00 pm	Neighbours' Natter
13th April	2.30 – 4.00 pm	Garden Club Spring Show
15th April	7.30 pm	Annual Parish Meeting
24th April	7.00 pm	Annual Parochial Church Meeting, Village Hall
26th April	7.00 pm	'Weston Welcomes' drinks in the Village Hall
1st May	7.30 pm	Parish Council meeting
2nd May	7.00 am – 10.00 pm	Local Elections – photo ID needed
4th May	9.00 am – 12.00 pm	Food Bank Collection, Weston Pantry
7th May	12.30 pm	Golden Leaves Lunch
9th May	10.00 am – 12.00 pm	Neighbours' Natter
13th May	1.30 pm	Weston Walkers; meet at the Village Hall
13th May	7.30 pm	Weston Society



**WESTON-ON-THE-GREEN
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FRIENDS' PRODUCE

Due to going away, Friends' Produce for this edition was reported some 3 weeks earlier than normal. This coupled with the fact the Wood Fairy could not get his hands on dry wood to amass kindling to keep the village warm for most of January and the whole of February as well as contending with a hip operation, the Friends' Produce for this edition is considerably lower than normal.

Thanks to the efforts of Mick, Toddy, Corinne and Bill Lawrie for bringing memories of Pam Miller's outstanding marmalade back to the shop, the total raised in this edition was £64.53 towards St Mary's Church and the Village Hall.



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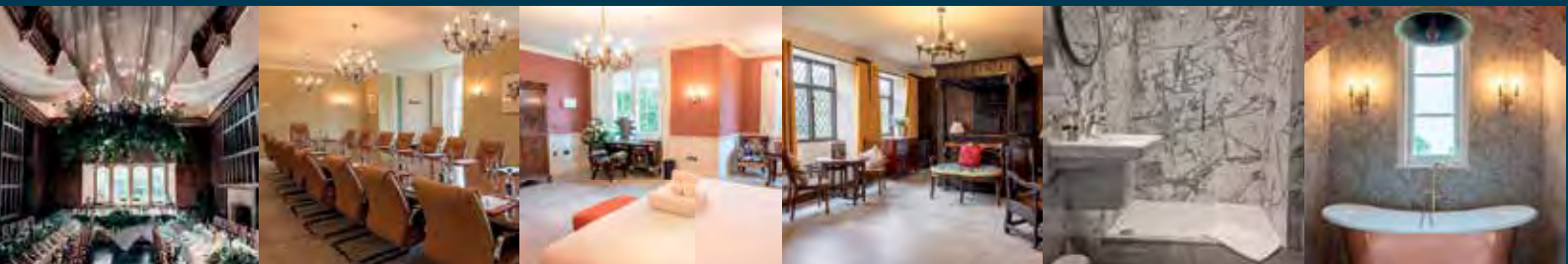


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