



Concert for Ukraine with Montmorency and Elena Piras

On a cold Saturday night in November, St James' Church became an atmospheric concert venue to raise money for the work of the Red Cross in Ukraine. The concert was the vision of Bampton-based Andy Roughton, the vocalist and frontman of local band Montmorency. The band, along with Elena Piras, gave their time free of charge, so all receipts could go to support the huge ongoing needs in Ukraine. We were treated to a warm and friendly welcome in the church, with mulled wine and mince pies to warm us and special lighting creating the ideal atmosphere for the evening.



Elena Piras opened the evening – an unfamiliar name to most of us, but what a wonderful talent! Elena hails from Sardinia, but has lived for many years in the UK - initially in London, then up to Scotland, the Shetlands - and now more locally in Charlbury. She entranced us with a selection of Scottish and Celtic folk songs, some sung a cappella and some with guitar accompaniment. Ranging from sing-along drinking songs, through dark tales of clannish



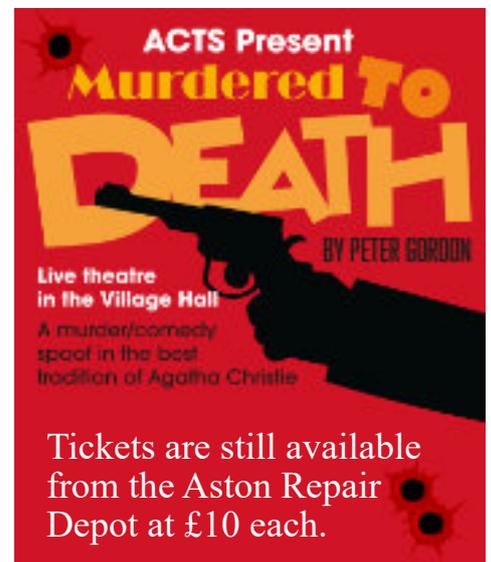
revenge and Gaelic love songs, Elena's beautiful voice and fascinating background insights into the music provided a haunting and atmospheric start to the evening.

And then there was Montmorency! Andy and the band took us on an hour-long, lively and uplifting journey through songs, both familiar and less so, encompassing a great range of classic folk songs, but also venturing into blues, funk, rock and roll and jazz - all delivered with equal panache and aplomb!

I particularly enjoyed their cover of the Beatles classic 'Let It Be', and the jazz classic 'Fever' - and any set which includes 'Matty Groves' will always be a hit with the Barnett family!

A big thank you to Montmorency and Elena for giving their time to setting up this concert and also to St James for hosting it. It was a great concert and raised money for an important cause.

Alastair Barnett



Next Edition...

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Please Note: We have a new email address:

astoncotevoices@gmail.com

The Voices editorial and production team would like to wish all our readers a Happy New Year

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Editorial



The pre-Christmas activity seems to have left a nasty smell!

We feature the Parish flooding in this issue and we include an article by Cathy Smith which draws attention to the causes and implications of the local floods. James Gray, in his Nature Natters, highlights the effects of flooding on local wildlife.

Is there still a gas leak at the corner of Cote Road and Bull Street?

Editors: Andrew Long and Helen Wheaton

Donation Appeal Update

May I take this opportunity to thank everyone who has made a donation to our latest appeal. These have provided valuable funds towards our ever-rising costs.

I was hoping that we would beat last year's total but at the time of writing we are not quite there. BUT THERE IS STILL TIME. If you forgot in the pre-Christmas rush, lost your envelope or surprisingly have found yourself with a little extra cash after the festivities, just visit the Community shop where your donation will be gratefully received or make a payment to Aston Newsletter Sort Code 09-01-51 A/c No. 44115506.

Once again, many thanks for your generosity and may I wish you all a Happy New Year.

Ian Peat - Treasurer



2024 ASTON & COTE SUMMER FETE

Aston & Cote Fete 2024

We are sorry to report there are no plans to put on a fete this year. Despite asking for support to organise the event, we were only offered help on the actual day – thank you to those who did get in touch. Maybe there will be more interest next year. We will ask again towards the end of the year and see if there are enough people to form a committee.

Best Regards

Alex Williams

Tearfund Coffee Morning



On Saturday 18th November the Community Church hosted a fundraising coffee morning at the Fellowship Centre, to raise funds for the aid charity, Tearfund. A small team coordinated the provision of food and drinks for the morning and many others chipped in by baking cakes, scones and other goodies, or by helping make the event run smoothly on the day. There was an amazing array of food and drinks to consume. There was an excellent turn-out from the village and there was a good buzz of friendly chatter all morning. We interrupted the conversation briefly to show a couple of short videos which explained and highlighted Tearfund's work across many nations. Like many aid charities, their focus is on training and equipping local communities to lift themselves out of poverty. As a Christian charity, they seek to partner wherever possible with local churches, which are very often the centres of community life. Also like many other aid charities, they respond to emergencies and at the present time they are getting ready to step in with humanitarian aid in the Middle East, for whenever the time of reconstruction in the region begins.

We were thrilled to have raised about £570 from the morning, so, with a small top-up from the church, we'll be sending £300 to Tearfund's general funds and



£300 specifically to their Middle East emergency appeal. A great effort by everyone involved and a big thank you to all who took part, came along and gave so generously.

Alastair Barnett

Stop Press! The morning was such a success that we are putting on another fundraising coffee morning later this term. It will take place on Saturday 9 March and will be in aid of two charities that work to alleviate poverty both locally and nationally: Christians Against Poverty (CAP) and Besom. *Save the date!*

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Parish News



Mercifully, another routine reporting period for the Parish Council, with our principal focus (other than the Holiday Season!) being the budget for next year.

Budget 2024 – Good News (Again) on the Precept The Parish Budget for Financial Year 2024/25 was agreed at the Parish Council meeting in December. Financial prudence and effective management remain our watchwords and thus in sharp contrast to successive, inexorable Council Tax rises at county and district level, we were delighted, for a remarkable sixth consecutive year, to be able yet again to make no increase to the Precept. This, at £30,935 keeps the Band D equivalent household at £49.74 (around 3.6p/month for each parish resident). As with all Parish Council business, full details may be found on our website, including fully audited annual accounts.

Terra Development Preparations are underway for the new development behind Foxwood, with Harris fencing erected and archaeological surveys completed. We understand that the first occupations are planned for June 2024 and some residents will have seen letters from the developer, Living Space Housing, accordingly. Meanwhile, Pinnacle Group and Sovereign Housing have also held preliminary meetings with the Marsh Furlong Residents Association. These meetings have been well-received, albeit cautiously, and more are planned over the forthcoming months. The Parish Council remains firmly focused upon ensuring strict compliance with all planning conditions and obligations by the developer and other parties. We would therefore be grateful for the assistance of residents in the prompt reporting of any alleged transgressions or issues. More generally, we are determined that lessons be learnt from the appeal process and hope to report more fully on our discussions with WODC shortly.

Responsible Finance Officer Recruitment Applications having closed for the newly created (cost-neutral) salaried post of ‘Responsible Finance Officer’ for the Parish Council, the interview process is now underway and an announcement will be made in January concerning the successful applicant. **And finally** If you have any questions or comments for your Parish Council and you are unable to raise it directly with a councillor, please forward them to the Parish Clerk by email on clerk@astonoxon-pc.gov.uk or by post, c/o 16 Foxwood, Aston, Oxfordshire, OX18 2DZ.

Russell La Forte
Chairman Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney Parish Council



Curtain up this weekend on the murder mystery comedy ‘Murdered to Death’ by Peter Gordon. Aston and Cote Thespian Society have been learning their lines for several months and will be putting on a Miss Marple type spoof. The whole story takes place in a country house with a useless butler, a bumbling detective and some dodgy characters.

If you don’t already have a ticket, please contact: Aston Repair Depot or Poppo Hoskins 07806737954

We would love to print your reviews of the production in the next edition. Please forward to astoncotevoices@gmail.com

ACTS are always on the look out for additional team members, whether on or off stage. Please get in touch if you would like to take part in the future.

Helen Wheaton

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SCAN ME

News from Aston & Cote School

Embracing the Enchantment: A Magical Christmas Celebration



The KS1 Nativity Play

As the winter chill settles in and festive lights illuminate the streets, the spirit of Christmas has woven its magic within the walls of the school. This year's holiday celebrations have been nothing short of enchanting, with students, teachers, and families coming together to create cherished memories and share the joy of the season.

The Early Years Nativity, aptly titled "We're Going on a Baby Hunt," was a heartwarming spectacle that brought smiles and laughter to all who attended. The youngest members of our school showcased their budding talents as they reenacted the timeless story, reminding everyone of the innocence and wonder that define the magic of Christmas.

In the KS1 Nativity, "I'm Gunna Shine," the spotlight shone on our budding stars. The performance at the village hall not only showcased the incredible creativity and dedication of our students but also highlighted the importance of self-expression and confidence. Parents,



The Early Years Nativity Play

teachers, and peers alike were treated to a spectacular show that left hearts aglow with holiday cheer.

Adding a touch of solemnity to the festivities, the Christmas church service was a moment of reflection and unity. Year 3 students took centre stage, enlightening the congregation about the symbolism of Christingles. Meanwhile, the eloquent reading of a heartfelt poem by Year 5 students brought a sense of warmth and contemplation to the service, reminding everyone of the deeper meaning behind the season.

The creative spirit continued to blossom as every child participated in crafting a unique Christmas bauble to adorn the school tree. This collaborative effort not only added a festive sparkle to our surroundings but also symbolized the unity and diversity within our school community.

Beyond the glittering decorations and joyful performances, Christmas at school has been a season of learning and growth. The school has embraced the



Hanging Christingles

opportunity to nurture and encourage each child to 'grow their talents' and the curriculum has been tailored to provide a platform for students to flourish.

As we wrap up this magical season, the enchantment of Christmas at school lingers in the air. The laughter of children, the sparkle of decorations, and the warmth of shared moments will be cherished long after the holiday season has passed. Here's to a school community that understands the true magic of Christmas lies in togetherness, learning, and the celebration of each other's unique talents.

May the light of Christ's love shine upon you this Christmas, bringing joy, peace, and blessings to you and your loved ones. Merry Christmas from all at Aston and Cote Church of England Primary School.

Mrs Chadwick Headteacher

Aston and & Cote Day Centre

The last couple of months of the year were for the Day Centre busy. On November 22nd we had our second anniversary celebrations and on December 13th we had our Christmas Party.



Karen and Day Centre guests at their Christmas party

Just like last year we are fortunate enough to have received an incredibly kind, anonymous donation with the proviso that we spend the funds on giving the seniors a fantastic Christmas at the Day Centre. So, a great big thank you for this support. Also thanks to Aston Community Shop for the weekly ongoing support. Witney Lions again provided us with Santa for our Christmas Celebrations, so thank you to them.

I've been very busy planning the programme from January through to June 2024. We have lots of new exciting things planned; we will have live musicians coming in to entertain us, speakers coming to give out information, demonstrations, arts and crafts, quizzes, and one or two big surprises.

There is going to be some very exciting changes taking place in the "background" to assist me, which I'm very much looking forward to.

We now have a waiting list for potential new members to join us so if you are over 65 years and would like to come and see for yourself, you would be most welcome. If you know of someone that would enjoy this very social, safe place every Wednesday do get in touch.

If you would like to be part of our team of volunteers either for just a couple of hours for the morning shift or a couple of hours for the afternoon shift or for the full day, please contact Karen on 07887974468 or email: target.meukmail.com for more details.

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Karen Stay



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Computing for All New Year, New Me?



Don't try Ham Lane in trainers!

I'm not one for New Year's resolutions, but, like many of us no doubt, I do need to lose some Christmas weight and exercise more. I've always found the thought of joining a gym too daunting and Santa didn't bring any shiny new tech. So, is there a way that I can use the phone I have to help me with getting back into exercise?

Somewhat surprisingly the familiar goal of 10,000 steps a day wasn't originally a medical recommendation. It was created as part of the marketing campaign for a pedometer launched before the 1964 Tokyo Olympics because the Japanese character for 10,000 looks like someone walking. Amazingly, recent research does indicate that walking around 10,000 steps a day does have some health benefits with respect to dementia and arthritis in knee joints [1]. However, it has been shown that the speed of walking is also important. NHS guidelines are for 150 minutes of moderate activity a week which could include brisk walking [2].

Most phones have a basic step count as standard and allow you to view it over a week or a month. This is great for tracking how much exercise you do and as an encouragement to do more, but doesn't really help with identifying brisk walking. The NHS app Active 10 tracks your steps and your walking speed and allows you to set daily goals. It's very easy to use and also free!

There are many other exercise apps out there which don't require anything more than a phone. Many are free or have a free version. For walking or running perhaps the most famous are Strava or Map My Fitness, but many others exist each with their own features which can also cater for the more experienced exerciser. One with an unusual twist is Zombies, Run! which has the added incentive of sound effects of zombies chasing you to encourage you to make the most of your workout!

Tom England

[1] <https://www.nuffieldhealth.com/article/walking-10k-steps-a-day-fact-fiction>
[2] <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-guidelines/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults-aged-19-to-64/>

Eating Out Cote Brasserie, Oxford



Our pre-Christmas family dinner out coincided with my first day of retirement and we settled on Cote Brasserie in Oxford for the seasonal vibe and lots of choice for after dinner drinks.

It was pretty full with a lively atmosphere as we perused the three menu options, with my two daughters, son-in-law, and wife selecting from the Menu de Noël, which had good veggie options, and I opted for A La Carte.

Three had the Parsnip Soup, with chestnut, pear, parsley and white truffle oil, and toasted sourdough baguette, which they all agreed was one of the best soups they'd ever had. My wife had the Prawn Thermidor; King prawns cooked in a Lobster Mornay gratin with Comté cheese, and apple and herb garnish. I had the breaded Calamari with Provençal mayonnaise.

For mains, three had the Butternut Squash Pithivier, a parcel of two puff pastry discs sealing in the mushroom, butternut squash and goat's cheese, served with sage gratin dauphinois, braised red cabbage, French beans, tenderstem broccoli, Chantenay carrots and cranberry jus, again all effusing how good it was.

My wife opted for the Sea Bream Grenobloise, served with a brown butter, lemon, caper and parsley sauce, potato purée, braised fennel, cherry tomatoes and rosemary croutons, finishing it all happily.

I opted for Roasted Lamb Rump on a bed of anchovy braised lentils with Chantenay carrots and crispy leeks. It was recommended medium, but I asked our very nice waiter Tim, if it would be possible to get mine a little on the rare side of medium but that was not possible, but I needn't have worried, as it was a perfect pink and the portion generous. I thought it might look a bit lonely without a potato dish so also asked for a side of dauphinois.

As we chatted while waiting for our starters and sampling a bottle of excellent red and a white wine for the ladies, we hadn't realised it had been 30-40 minutes since we ordered, so I politely mentioned it to our waiter, who said there has been a little issue but they were on the way, and we said not to worry, we were fine. Shortly after, he and the manager appeared with the food and profuse apologies, which we assured him was perfectly okay, but he insisted on giving us another bottle of each wine, which we thought was extremely generous.

Our chosen desserts were spiced crème brûlée infused with star anise, cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg, topped with blackberries, chocolate salted caramel tart with raspberries and vanilla ice cream, white chocolate mousse in a dark chocolate sphere layered with a winter berry compote and freeze-dried raspberries, served with a warm lemon Madeleine and mine was the warm chocolate fondant, salted caramel sauce, hazelnut tuile and vanilla ice cream.

It wasn't a cheap night out, but the excellent food, great service and fab atmosphere was worth the cost.

Russ Avis

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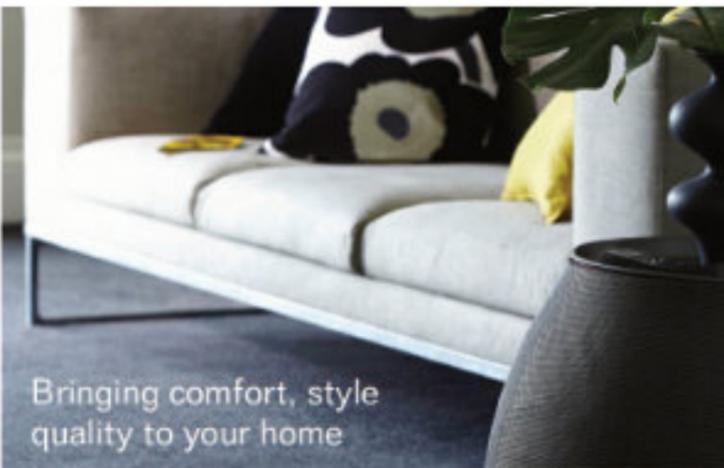
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| No | £ | Name |
|-----|-------|---------------|
| 10 | 40.00 | A Gillibrand |
| 139 | 30.00 | M Dunstan |
| 144 | 20.00 | S Gargan |
| 423 | 10.00 | J & D Savelle |
| 467 | 10.00 | A & Y Carroll |
| 460 | 5.00 | K & E Davies |
| 82 | 5.00 | S Jones |
| 215 | 5.00 | D Souch |

December 2023 Draw Results

| No | £ | Name |
|-----|--------|----------------|
| 160 | 100.00 | S & E Watson |
| 333 | 50.00 | S Lee |
| 137 | 50.00 | K Wootton |
| 132 | 40.00 | Mr Edgley |
| 301 | 30.00 | C Belcher |
| 47 | 25.00 | G Hartless |
| 373 | 20.00 | S Caswell |
| 9 | 10.00 | V Crowson |
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1st Aston Brownies

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all of the Brownie parents for encouraging their daughters to enrol and be part



The Brownies with Santa

of Girlguiding and the Aston Unit, particularly as there are so many after school clubs and activities going on these days.

I as Unit Leader and all other Leaders are volunteers. Yes, we go through the Guiding Training, but all units rely heavily on volunteers to assist the units weekly during meetings and during trips out and about, so also a very big thank you to all of the parents who have given up their free time and volunteered to assist the unit during these last two terms.

Chillax - goes Monster Turkey!



Then in December, we joined in as usual with Monster Turkey - the big youth extravaganza at the King's Centre, Oxford. Over 230 teenagers gathered from across the county for an evening of fun, including massive inflatables, indoor ball games, a silent disco, an escape room, films, computer games, lots of food and much more! Kathy, Abi and I all went along as helpers, and it was great to see several carloads of Chillaxers arriving and having a fun evening!

Chillax takes place at the Fellowship Centre once a month on Fridays from 7.30-9.00pm and is open to anyone in school years 7-9. It's never too late to join in!

Dates for this term are: • 12 January • 9 February • 8 March

Alastair Barnett



A very big thank you to Witney Round table for inviting the Brownies to join Santa on December 19th around the village. I know the Brownies (and parents) loved this opportunity, and also, even more of a surprise to me was that the Witney Round table donated the proceeds to the Aston Brownie Unit.

The unit is now 21 strong, so we have now started a waiting list. For more details please check out the Girlguiding website where you can register your daughter onto the waiting list, also feel free to contact me on 07887974468 or karenthegardener123@gmail.com Stay safe.

Karen Stay, Unit Leader.



Some of the Brownies enjoying their Christmas party



Last term was a great success for Chillax, with numbers of teenagers from school years 7-9 reaching a record 30 in October! Evenings involve the usual mix of fun and games - table tennis, computer games, table football, snooker, craft activities and more, as well as some organised group games and a short 'thought for the day' talk.

Going Green

The Three Rs

Not quite as old as the original three Rs of Reading, Writing and Arithmetic

(how on earth that saying helped anyone learn to spell is a mystery) the phrase 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle' has still been around for some time.

One word gets more attention than the others, having featured in television adverts and even as a song in an episode of Peppa Pig which, having bought a Peppa Pig song CD for my children to listen to in the car, I can sadly still sing! If you haven't guessed, it's the 'Recycling' element of the phrase. This may be because it's the one of the three Rs that is the least invasive to how we live: we can carry on consuming because items can be recycled when we're done with them.

Whilst clearly important, it's often missed that 'Recycling' is the final one of the three Rs. It comes after we have 'Reduced' our consumption and 'Reused' things where possible. So, in this post-Christmas time where we may have received duplicate gifts, unwanted items, or things we can't use, now is the time to remember that we can 'Reuse' things. It takes a little more thought than simply popping things in the recycling bin, but there are options available. The easiest is to re-gift items to those we know would love them. Just make sure it wasn't the person who gave it to you in the first place! Next, is to take them to a charity shop where, as well as being bought by someone who wants the item, the charity will receive income too. Finally, selling them on one of the many online platforms is the most effort but does bring in some cash that can be reinvested.

Whichever option you choose, enjoy the challenge and benefit from decluttering too.

Richard Bloomfield



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Contact Catrin on 07795 835750 or email russcat21@gmail.com or check out my website, russmusicservices.co.uk

News from the Red Lion

Here at The Red Lion we have had a brilliant festive period with a visit from Santa for the kids, Christmas Quiz for the quizzers and Christmas carols for the singers, just some of the activities we've hosted.

The quiz this year was very well attended, lots of fun was had and a generous £322 raised for a local children's charity called APCAM - Thank you to Richard for his hard work in making this a lovely evening. Look out for future quiz dates on facebook and on our board.



Fun and games for the kids too at our children's Christmas party – including an exciting visit from Santa followed by an Open Mic night for the adults in the evening with so many talented people stepping up to the mic. This New Year saw the pub turned into a Wild West bar complete with hay bales, courtesy of Andy and Emily at Whitehouse Farm. It was great to see so many people in fancy dress enjoying the evening which finished off with a few fireworks to mark the occasion.

A big thank you to Richard Buss and Julie Thompson as well as the Red Lion Team who have all worked so hard and have been instrumental in providing these events put on for the enjoyment of the village. Also a big thank you to our lovely customers - we look forward to welcoming you all back in the New Year. If you've not tried the pub for a while or if you're new to the village why not pop in and give it a try. It's a great place to meet new people in a friendly environment.



The Red Lion Team

The Times they are a-changing

West Oxfordshire District Council operates a large number of services for our area. Refuse collection is one of them. For many years a private company known as Publica, comprising West Oxfordshire, the Forest of Dean and Cheltenham Borough council, has run these services on behalf of the Councils as an independent company. These are interesting bedfellows - and many of the staff have worked for Centrica and not WODC. It has now been decided that this company should be disbanded, and all the services should be brought back 'in house'.

Are you keeping up?

As with all schemes there are pros and cons. On the plus side services could become more accountable nearer home. The next time the wheelie bin does not get emptied (a regular occurrence in the Smith household) there could be a cherished illusion that somebody will respond a little sooner to a reported 'miss' when the arrival of an angry ratepayer banging on the office desk is far more likely to happen when the firm is local.

The 'con' side is that the wages and pension bill is likely to rise as the necessary workers are re-employed by West Oxfordshire and this is probably going to put up the Council Tax. The first moves to disband Publica have already taken place. The Forest of Dean District Council has withdrawn from the company "taking its bat and ball home". I am looking forward to WODC regaining control over its own services.

Meanwhile 2024 is on the doorstep bringing with it more changes to Aston with 40 more new homes.

Unfortunately, there does not seem to be any extra provision for flood defence or for sewage disposal.

Perhaps, as "each house will have its own rear garden" we are told, each house could also have its own septic tank. We have one and it works very well.

With this happy thought may I wish you all a very Happy New Year

Brenda Smith

Garden Ramblings – Keep Fit Gardening



After the indulgences of the Christmas season many of us start the New Year with the inspiring idea that we're going to get fitter this year!

For some that means an expensive fee to join the gym and to go regularly to get your money's worth but for others it could be as easy as getting out in the garden and having a workout there.

A bit of stretching while pruning those tree branches or some squats to pull up a stray weed or two. There are still leaves lying around so a good go with the rake will exercise your arms, chest and back muscles and then there's digging and turning the compost - in fact every job you attempt in the garden can be treated as a workout - that's a gym right outside your back door and probably with a better view too.

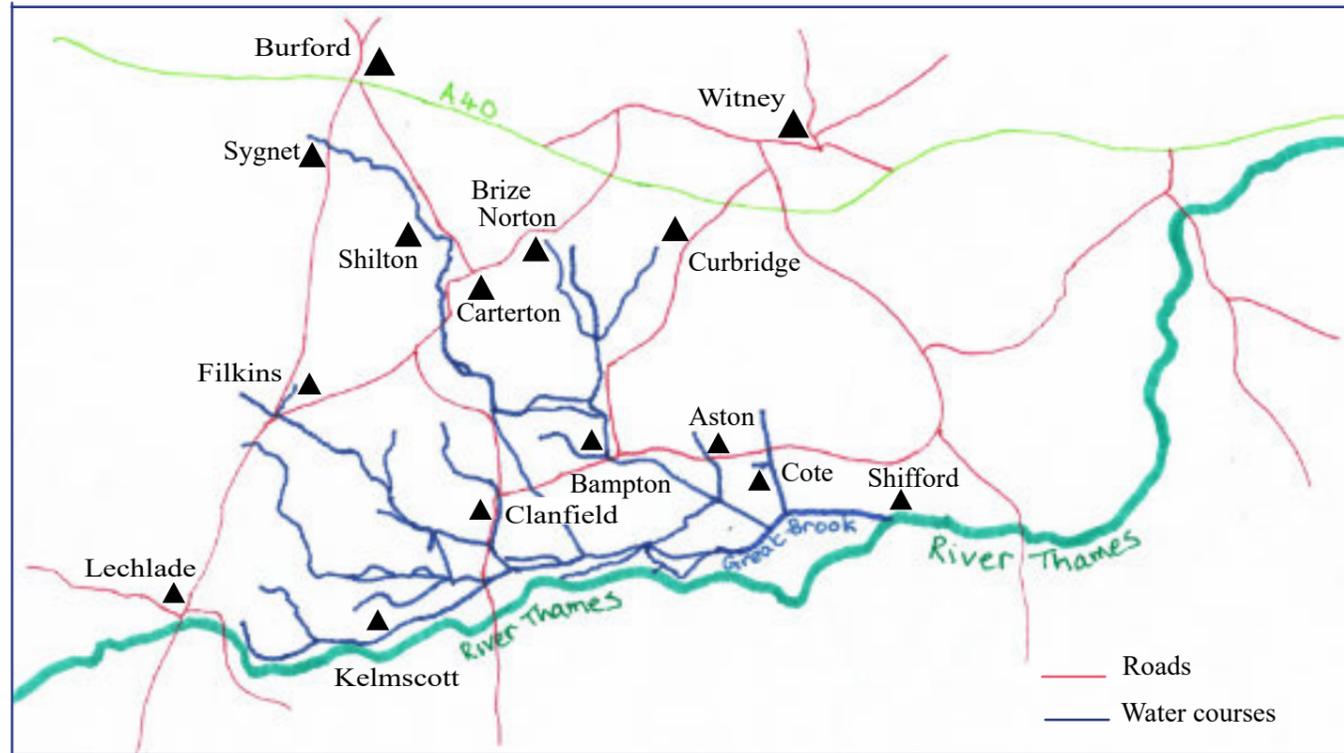


A good session in the garden can burn up to 500 calories an hour and it is now readily recognised that being outside and embracing nature has a very positive effect on our mental health and general well-being. There's the joy of finding the first snow drop opening or seeing the first green spikes of those tiny iris bulbs you planted back in September and as every gardener knows even though things may look dead there's always something coming alive in the garden and ready to cheer our spirits. We just have to take time to enjoy and appreciate it so after your work out just stop and stare. You'll not only be feeling fitter and better, but you'll have an even better garden in 2024. What a great way to start the year.

Happy New Year and happy energetic gardening.

N.M.D.

Water, Water Everywhere



Map of water drainage catchment

Here, in our parish, we are used to seeing water everywhere - but why is this? Well, there's the rain - but it's not just the rain falling here that causes our problems. Rather it is the rain falling across an astonishingly far reaching water drainage catchment - combined with three major factors of situation, geology and lack of maintenance. The parish is situated at the northern edge of the wide, flat Thames floodplain. Land rises gently to the north and northwest, towards Ducklington, Curbridge, Brize Norton, Carterton, Filkins - and far beyond. Water flows downhill from all these areas - as groundwater seeping through the soil - and that carried by the many streams, onto the flat land here - where it stays.

Despite the British Geological Survey stating that the bedrock of Oxford Clay here is overlain by deep superficial deposits of sand and gravel, as are extracted at Standlake, this is not actually the case around Aston, where these deposits are often less than two metres in depth. The blue-grey clay, is impermeable to water when wet. As a result, there is little water storage capacity in the surface deposits, meaning



Flooding January 2023

groundwater rapidly becomes surface water, accounting for the widespread flooding across the fields.

In the past, the accumulated water had little direction of flow over the flat land, creating meandering streams and wide, boggy and marshy areas - evident in old field names and new roads. Housing and arable farming were limited to areas where gravel deposits were slightly deeper, meaning the soil could drain more freely. In 1855, after Enclosure in the area, an engineered system of realigned, straightened, deepened and directed ditches, with calculated falls over every mile, was created to conduct water, in order to incorporate much wider areas into arable farmland. Feeder ditches directed water into Aston Ditch to the west of Aston, and Cote Ditch to the east, both running north/south and carrying



Great Brook

water into the Great Brook. This previously meandering, sluggish waterway, was straightened and directed through a wide, deep, embanked channel, rather like a canal, which flowed from west to east and into the Thames at Shifford.

To maintain effective water flow within this impressive drainage system, the ditches were cleared of vegetation and desilted every two years. Sadly, this is no longer the case, with neither Riparian Owners, nor the EA conducting the necessary clearance to keep the system working as it should.

This can be seen all too clearly in the Great Brook, the main water artery for conducting HUGE amounts of water through our parish. From Isle of Wight Bridge on Buckland Road, to the Iron (brick) bridge on the road to Chimney, it is narrow and shallow, due to silting caused by numerous fallen trees blocking it, resulting in vegetation such as bushes and reeds actually growing within its course. It can no longer carry the quantity of water intended and demanded of it. In addition, the Iron Bridge has two silted and overgrown flood arches, further restricting flow and holding back water.

From this map, we can see the astonishingly large area from which water drains and is directed into the waterway that finally becomes the Great Brook. Not only does water come from vast areas to the north and northwest, but also from large, flat areas to the west, actually adjacent to the Thames - such as Lechlade and Kelmscott. Meandering, sluggish watercourses in these Thames-side areas were directed into a straightened channel, called the Radcot

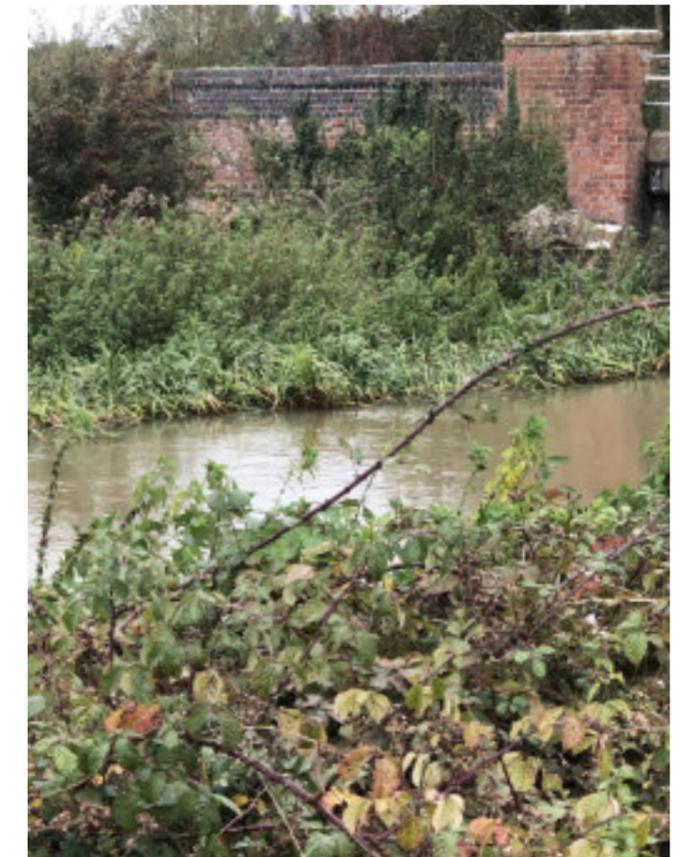
Cut, conducting water eastward into the Great Brook and thus to the Thames.

Without necessary maintenance the drainage system fails. Flooding of the Great Brook is frequent, as is witnessed by repeated closure of the Brook Road, where Satnavs direct unsuspecting motorists into danger. However, it also places the settlements of Aston and Cote under increasing threat. The first picture showed flooding up to the southeastern and eastern edges of village housing in January 2023, with a repetition in March, and is backed up by Government Flood Risk for Planning mapping, showing just how close flood zone 3b is to both Aston and Cote.

Recent large additions of housing have extended Aston onto fields that once retained water, protecting existing homes by creating a buffer from deep flooding. Flooding has always occurred in our area. An engineered and maintained ditch system enabled the Great Brook to conduct the enormous quantities of water conducted into it to the Thames. It no longer can or does. During periods of prolonged rainfall, water can no longer drain into it from our parish, instead accumulating in the uncleared ditches and flooding the fields. In the 40 years I have lived here, I see the resultant flooding happening more deeply, over wider areas and more frequently.

Joined up thinking and action is needed - now.

Cathy Smith



Iron Bridge

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HOBBIES — CORNER —

Blowing up a Storm



As I approached retirement, my wife Monica identified a potential problem: "How am I going to keep him occupied and how am I going to keep him from under my feet?" Her solution, buying me an alto saxophone, came as a great surprise as I'd not previously ever played a note. After a few faltering steps I started to make some progress, joined a local novice band and then progressed on to an Oxford-based Community Street Band called Horns of Plenty, also moving on to the much larger baritone saxophone. Anything between 15 and 25 of us rehearse regularly together and perform at summer festivals and community events such as May Morning in Oxford or the Cowley Road Carnival. Our music is a truly eclectic mix of World Music - New Orleans, South American, Ska, Township, Balkan and Bollywood. This is always delivered with enormous energy and enthusiasm and, even if it is not note perfect, it always goes down well with audiences as it's effect is irresistible - you just have to smile and dance.

The band is made up of people from various and varied walks of life, hospital consultants, teachers, university professors and a retired judge! As with all musical endeavours, there is a great sense of camaraderie within the band and music and the band have become a very important part of my social life. So I think it is fair to say that Monica's gamble has paid off handsomely.

(And I'm so glad she didn't buy me a set of golf clubs).

Paul Read



ASTON & COTE ALLOTMENTS

Happy New year to all current & future Allotmenters.

We would like to thank Roy Williams for all his time & energy he has given to us over the years as our Chairman & Secretary. Replacing Roy as Chairman is Sam Watson, we welcome Sam & look forward to working with him.

Aston & Cote allotments share around 70 plots between them. March is our year end when a few plots may come available. Aston is currently full but we have no waiting list. Cote has 2 half plots available.

Plot-holders are part of a community of like-minded people, many of whom are eager to share their knowledge & sometimes their spare produce.

We will be holding our annual meeting on the 26th March 2024 at the Aston Village Hall. Please arrive at 7:30pm for plot payments & the meeting will start shortly after. A half plot is £11 and a full plot is £22, you can pay by cash, cheque to Aston & Cote Allotments or contact me to get the bank transfer details.

If anyone would like an allotment in either Aston or Cote please contact Claire at acallotments@gmail.com

Award Winning
Aston & Cote
Day Centre

An Award Winning Day Centre serving the seniors in the local community every Wednesday.
 Facebook: Aston & Cote Day Centre.
[https:// www.Aston & Cote Day Centre](https://www.Aston & Cote Day Centre)

Aston & Cote CE Primary School & Nursery

Our new nursery class caters for children from 2.5 years old until they are ready to start school.

Places are available in sessions as follows:

- 2.5 year olds – mornings only (9 – 12)
- 3 – 4 year olds – 15 hours: 5 mornings a week.
- Monday & Tuesday all day & Wednesday morning.
- Wednesday afternoon and all day Thursday and Friday.
- 30 hours full time (9 -3)

Parents can purchase extra sessions if there is availability.

We also offer the opportunity for children to start at 8.30 a.m. at an additional cost of £2.50 per day.

For more information or to arrange a visit, please contact **Harriet Cornell: 01993 850435** or email us on nursery@aston-and-cote.oxon.sch.uk

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Community Trust News and Updates



My piece for this edition must start with the acknowledgement and appreciation of Sylvia Brown, a community trust member / volunteer for many years. She has been prominent regarding fundraising over the years, her folk nights and involvement in the 500 club being a testament to this.

Sadly, Sylvia has had to step down as a community trust member due to recent poor health and will be missed by all the committee members.

As for an update regarding the village hall and playing field I can confirm we will be having the Fascia / soffit boards and guttering replaced on the hall in the early spring.

Planning for the new multi-use games area will hopefully be applied for early next year now that we have had a preliminary ecological appraisal done.

We have also accepted a quote to have lines painted defining the optimum number of spaces possible on our existing car park.

Ian Dunstan. Chair of Aston and Cote Community Trust

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What's in a Name?

Waites Close

Waites Close, like many other parish street names, offers a reminder of Aston's agricultural past.

Waites Close, built in 1991, was constructed on land that had been a farmyard. The barn shown here, later converted to a residential dwelling, was pulled down together with other farm buildings and construction of Waites Close began.

William Waite of Aston, bought a farmhouse from Richard Underhill and left it to his son William (probate 1814). William junior lived in the Bull Street house and he appears in the 1841 Census and is listed as a farmer. It is likely that the house in which the Waites lived was 20, Bull Street. The barn behind the existing house contains elements of an old threshing barn.



A thatched animal pen at Waites Farm

A third William Waite took on the farm and in the 1891 Census he is listed as living in Bull Street aged 77, farming and unmarried.

In time Waites Farm became incorporated into the Church Farm operation that was based in Bull Street opposite to Waite's Farm.

Andrew Long

Aston History Group

With Christmas approaching, a talk about chocolate seemed appropriate for our meeting at the end of November. Melanie King described how chocolate, first discovered in Mexico around 400 BC came from South America to Spain in the 16th century and ultimately to Britain. It was only consumed as a drink until the 19th century when bonbons were produced. The fruit of



Cacao beans

Next meetings:
 January 25th - The group's annual supper and social
 February 29th - Parish History. A talk by Simon Townley

Martin Bowley

W.I. News



Liz Hook demonstrating to the group

As Christmas would be approaching, we invited Marea Brown from 'Art of Jaipur' to show us block printing at our November meeting. To get us started she gave us a short demonstration of how to ink the blocks which didn't need a lot to get the right effect. Then we were let loose to choose the colours and blocks. There were many to choose from including numbers, animals, trees and Christmas themed symbols. We had already selected whether to decorate a gift bag, tea towel or stocking. I had chosen a stocking for my dog and decorated it with printed dogs and bones as well as his name. I think he liked the treats inside rather than the stocking.

Following the hands-on evening, Liz Hook, one of our committee members, demonstrated the making of a table decoration for our December meeting. We were asked to bring a small shallow dish a candle, a few flowers and foliage. Once we were shown what we could achieve we were off. With our piece of oasis well soaked we then had to decide whether to have all greenery or included flowers and ribbons in our decoration. The finished were all different in size shape and colour. It was a very enjoyable evening with us all taking something festive home.

In January we have our belated Christmas meal and this time it is at the Talbot in Eynsham followed in February with a visit from a representative from the Samaritans. We meet on the second Wednesday of the month in the village hall at 7.30. Why not give us a try. We are a friendly bunch.

Happy new year to everyone.

Lesley Brown



A finished Christmas stocking

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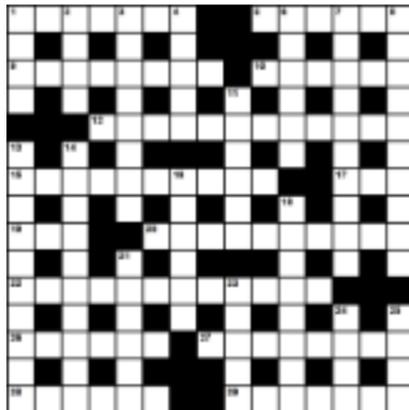
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Puzzle Corner

Cryptic Crossword



Across

- 1 A remark roughly set aside (7)
- 5 Sounds like drunken father is a Roman Catholic (6)
- 9 Adroitly manipulate excessive devotion (8)
- 10 X outspoken (6)
- 12 Eunuch Eva Rio transforms this upstart (7,5)
- 15 A male solver and sister reportedly are employed to write (10)
- 17 Garland round an anonymous line (3)
- 19 Australian inhabitant sounds repentant (3)
- 20 Mica-schist grows in favour of a division (10)
- 22 Inscrutable plebeian term (12)
- 26 Dorian makes a raid (6)
- 27 Zygote factory produces an auberigine (3-5)

- 28 Dull colour round the home counties that can erupt (6)
- 29 Complex iconographer conceals dictionary (7)

Down

- 1 Islamic ruler stuck in the mire (4)
- 2 Othello backed into a space (4)
- 3 Guano ale fermented a non-digital watch (8)
- 4 Russian city gripped by fakir overacting (5)
- 6 Sailor first repaired road to get on ship (6)
- 7 Pure Lucia met ma cunningly (10)
- 8 Heart or spade excited techie peer (5-5)
- 11 I paw it tipsy deer (6)
- 13 Sheep rustling audibly directed at shop fronts (3-7)
- 14 Non U political allegiance (5,5)
- 16 A refinement picked up near Bath (6)
- 18 Xmas poll developed an infectious disease (8)
- 21 Free from Victorian stays by Uncle A (6)
- 23 Glean exotic divine messenger (5)
- 24 Powder revealed in vital capacity (4)
- 25 Knock out crazy backward brazils (4)

Answers are on page 27

Andrew Long – Chair and Editor (Content)
Helen Wheaton – Editor (Technical)
Ian Peat – Treasurer
Martin Bowley – Secretary and Lay Up
Tom England – Lay Up
Liz Harper – Advertising and Distribution
Lizzie Wood
Brenda Smith



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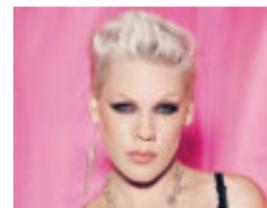
Alphabet Quiz

A simple twenty question quiz, but all the answers begin with the letter P.

1



2



3



4



5



1. What does this symbol represent?
2. Alecia Beth Moore Hart is the stage name of which singer?
3. What is the name of this plant often seen at Christmas and the New Year?
4. Who is this painter?
5. What is the name of this type of pasta, with an end like a fountain pen?
6. In the periodic table which chemical element is represented by the letter K?
7. The three ships of Christopher Columbus were the Santa Maria, Nina and ...?
8. What was Pink Floyd's first album?
9. HMS Victory can be seen at which port?
10. What is the name of the capital of hell in John Milton's Paradise Lost?
11. Which mammal is sometimes known as the scaly anteater?
12. What is the name of a shape with five sides and five angles?
13. The pub at Kelmscott has what name?
14. Which English nursery rhyme talks about baking?
15. What is the capital of Panama?
16. Which word represents P in the NATO phonetic alphabet?
17. What is the name of the Hitchcock horror film which features the Bates Motel?
18. Which field sport is divided into periods called chukkas?
19. Which football team is known as "The Posh"?
20. Which TV drama, set in Birmingham, is about a criminal gang operating in the aftermath of World War I?

Compiled by Andrew Long

Answers are on page 27



Just Jokes

Monkey Madness

A chap with a van load of monkeys breaks down. While he waits for Aston Repair Depot to assist him, another van pulls alongside. "Can I help?" Asks the driver

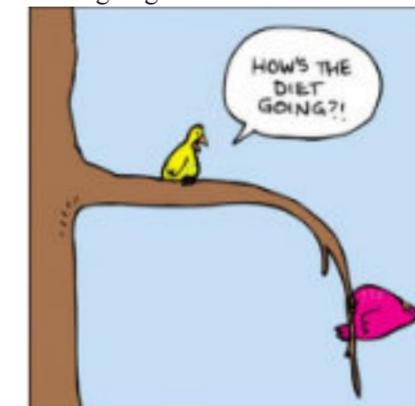
"Oh yes please. I've broken down and the back is full of monkeys. If I give you £100 would you take them to the zoo for me?"

The second van driver agrees and off he goes.

When the breakdown has been repaired, the driver heads off and sees the second van parked up. He looks inside and it's still full of monkeys!

"Why are there still monkeys in the van? I asked you to take them to the zoo?"

"Well," says the second van driver "We've been to the zoo and there's some of your money leftover so now we're going to the cinema!"



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What's on in Bampton ?

Becoming a Bampton Community Archive Volunteer - *may be more interesting and rewarding than you think!*

Could you spare three hours once a month, morning or afternoon, to join the team of volunteers who run the lovely shop that is part of Bampton Community Archive?

The BCA is recruiting additional volunteers for the Vesey Room and Archive Shop. The shop is in the room next to Bampton Library, in the Old Grammar School. Volunteers choose their slot, from 10am to 1pm or from 1pm to 4pm, any day of the week including weekends.

One new volunteer said, "Volunteering for the BCA was how I met so many people in the village when I moved here. It's been more interesting than I thought and helped me to appreciate what a great community Bampton is." Usually, two volunteers cover each shift. Volunteers enjoy welcoming our visitors, some of whom are local, others from the UK and from around the world.

Bampton Archive hosts three new exhibitions a year, all with a local connection. Highlighting local features and activities continues to build on the growing reputation of Bampton as a modern Community Archive. The BCA is as much about the future as the past. The BCA also has a permanent Downton Abbey Exhibition, all about the filming of the TV series in the village, attracting visitors from all over the world.

Our shop sells a wonderful range of arts and crafts, many made or created locally. We also sell an exclusive range of Downton Village memorabilia, popular with our Downton visitors and with locals giving unique gifts from their own village. All the shop proceeds support the development of the Bampton Community Archive, the work we do and all the talks and events we host. Our aim is to keep everything free to attend for our community and our visitors.

Like to know more? Please contact: Jenny Chaundy jenny.chaundy@gmail.com or call 01993 850918

<https://www.bamptonarchive.org/> <https://bamptoncommunityhub.org/>

Wordsearch

*Maybe you plan to learn a new skill or take up a hobby in 2024.
Here are some ideas for the coming year.*

NEW YEAR PLANS



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Knit and Natter Group



Do you enjoy crocheting, knitting, cross stitch or perhaps always wanted to learn? Then please come along and join our super friendly group on the first Thursday morning of every month. 10 – 12pm in the Red Lion.

Whether you're a total beginner or a bit of an expert, we share hints, swap patterns, teach each other, make new friends and of course enjoy a good natter.

Everyone welcome. £5 for bottomless tea, coffee and lots of biscuits.

Gilly Peters-Parr



*The group contributed elements
for the postbox topper
Thank you Jane Poulson for
the compilation.*



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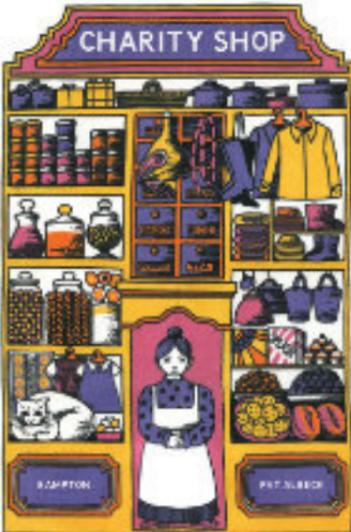
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Playing by the Rules - my path to golf refereeing

When I first started to play golf, I found that rules were often interpreted in different ways, and soon realised that not many players actually read the Rule Book. So, in 2007, when the English Ladies Golf Association (ELGA) offered the opportunity to undertake a Rules Course, I decided to have a go. The course involved answering various



questionnaires followed by a seminar which went into more detail and explained the basic issues of refereeing. Having completed this course, I was included in the Nottinghamshire County Ladies Golf Association panel of assistant referees, able to officiate at County events.

Since then, I have been privileged to assist at County matches and tournaments and occasionally, England Golf events. This was a great opportunity to be part of a wider experience than most ordinary golf club members and, incidentally, to see some superb play along the way. At club level, I tried to help fellow members by staging rules presentations where I used a variety of props to demonstrate rules situations and tried to answer the many queries that seemed to come up time after time.

In 2014 I attended an England Golf 'Rules School' which included a very demanding training day and a two hour exam. Then to keep up to date, I had to sit another exam in 2019 after the 'Rules of Golf' had been completely re-written and all officials had to prove they knew the 24 Rules, plus clauses and sub-clauses contained within the new version.

Although I no longer do any refereeing, my 'Passed with Distinction' certificate still hangs proudly on my wall and I am always happy to share what I have learned with anyone who wants to understand this most regulated of games.

Val Peat



The Happy Golf Ball

I am a happy golf ball
I wander far and wide
I run along the fairway
Then find somewhere to hide
I nestle in the longest grass
Where I am hard to see
Or tunnel through the fallen leaves
And rest against a tree
Sometimes my flight looks straight
and true
There's a perfect spot to land
But then I spot a bunker
And I love to play in sand!

I'm truly not a wicked ball
And know much is at stake
But sometimes it's just so much fun
To splash into the lake
It's true I cover lots of ground
But I never moan or brag
And I don't want to be that ball
Sent off, to the practice bag
So sometimes I must try my best
Play with my heart and soul
Then I can shout with pride and joy
As I roll into the hole!

Val Peat

Nature Natters The floods of 2023

It's easy to forget that healthy soil is made up of roughly 40% mineral matter, 10% organic matter 25% water and 25% air. When land is flooded for more than a couple of weeks, the water content rises at the expense of the air content. The air content can drop to 0%, and this has a dramatic effect on the animals living in the soil. Most of the soil-dwelling animals help the fertility of the soil, and the list of these good guys starts with worms. Worms do a great job of keeping the soil mixed and aerated, and that helps plants grow in the soil. But these soil invertebrates are the first to suffer when the land floods – they drown.

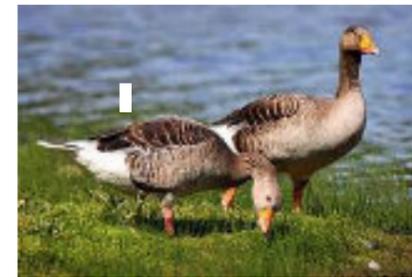
Drowned worms and other soil invertebrates make floods very attractive to several types of bird. We've had big numbers of herring gulls and black headed gulls on the flooded fields during the first few weeks of the flood and they were a lovely sight. There have been small flocks of lapwings making their evocative call. But most of these birds moved on once they had cleared out the dead soil animals.

The other birds that arrived with the floods were geese; Canada geese and Grey-lag geese (much like domestic geese) and they were a wonderful sight. They congregated in the evenings and their calls had a lovely wild feel to them. One evening here must have been two thousand geese in the fields near the nature reserve car park.

However, the present floods are not quite like the rather idyllic picture I have painted above. The sewage pollution levels in the water are probably the highest we have seen and the effects of that will become clear later. It's hard to predict but I don't expect anything good can come from it.



Greylag Geese



James Gray



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Annual Membership:
Adults: £6.00
Juniors(15 - 18): £2.50

Games Fees per (evening):
Adults: £2.00



Many Happy Returns?

I'm sure you will agree that we are very fortunate to have a Post Office branch in the village. I was talking recently with the lady behind the counter about the increased number of returns that people are sending back. As we increasingly buy things online, we have more returns because we can't 'try before you buy' and that is especially true with clothes.

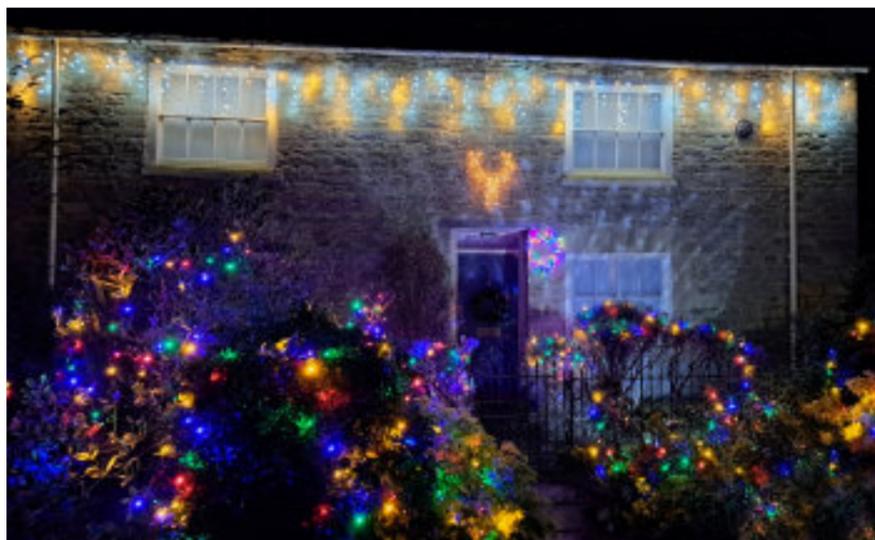
Retailers have become more accommodating even though it does cost them in time, warehouse space and money. There is a statutory return period of 14 days but many retailers extend this. For example, Amazon will accept a return for up to 30 days and will generally provide free return shipping. Other retailers have different conditions and may require you to pay for shipping. As ever, it's worth checking before you buy if you think you are likely to need to return the item.

The return method will vary between retailers and the nature of the item to be returned. I recycle my used coffee pods and the manufacture has just changed to using the Royal Mail pickup service. This is very easy and just requires filling in several pages on a web site. They will even print the returns label for you. In some cases a delivery company is used, which may require you to drop off the package at a drop off point. Yodel, for example, will pick up from the Spar in Burwell Drive in Witney or the Tanning Room in Carterton.

Perhaps the most frequent method is still to drop the parcel off at the Post Office. Please be mindful what you send back as it is only a mobile office in

Aston: it has a counter scale and the packages need to fit into the staff's car to take back to the main office. The person attempting to return a Chopper bike was politely requested to try the main branches in Witney or Carterton!

Tom England



Diary

January

Friday 19th
Saturday 20th
Sunday 21st
ACTS present
"Murdered to Death"
Village Hall
Thursday 25th
History Group
Supper and Social
7.30 Fellowship Centre

February

Thursday 1st
Knit & Natter
10-12 Red Lion
Thursday 1st
Parish Council
7.30 Village Hall
Wednesday 14th
W.I.
"Oxford Samaritans"
Matt Williams
7.30 Village Hall
Thursday 29th
History Group
Bampton and Aston
Dr. Simon Townley
7.30 Fellowship Centre

March

Thursday 7th
Parish Council
7.30 Village Hall
Wednesday 13th
W.I.
AGM

Taking place every week

Mondays
Toddlers
9.00 - 11.00
Fellowship Centre

Brownies
6.00 - 7.30
Fellowship Centre

Wednesdays
Day Centre
10.00 - 3.00
Fellowship Centre

Thursdays
Badminton Club
7.30 - 9.15
Village Hall

..... Church Services.....

St James', Aston



Community Church

Service Pattern
First Sunday
9.30am St James', Aston
Holy Communion

Second Sunday
9.15am St Mary's, Shifford
Holy Communion
9.30am St James', Aston
Family Service

Third Sunday
9.30am St James', Aston
Holy Communion
6.00pm St Mary's, Shifford
Evensong*

Fourth Sunday
9.30am St James', Aston
Family Service

*From April to September
inclusively only

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Mon - Wed 08:30 - 16:00
Thu - Fri 08:30 - 17:00
Saturday 08:30 - 14:00
Sun & Bank Holidays
09:00 - 12:00

Post Office

Opening Hours:

Monday 09:30 - 12:30
Wednesday 09:30 - 12:30
Friday 09:30 - 12:30

All meetings start at 10.00am and are followed by hot drinks and refreshments. Services involve a time of worship (singing and prayers), followed by a talk. There are special children's activities (Sunday School) during the talk, except for Family Services, where the children stay in throughout and the activities are inclusive of all ages.

Our talks this term are based on the opening chapters of Genesis, under the title 'Eternal Truths to Make Sense of our World'.

Contact Alastair Barnett on alastairb@rootsanddrivers.uk for more details, or visit our website at <https://astoncotecce.org.uk/>

Date

14 Jan Family Service
21 Jan Worship, talk, and Sunday School
28 Jan Worship, talk, and Sunday School
4 Feb Worship, talk, and Sunday School
11 Feb Worship, talk, and Sunday School
18 Feb Worship, talk, and Sunday School
25 Feb Family Service
3 Mar Worship, talk, and Sunday School
10 Mar Worship, talk, and Sunday School
17 Mar Worship, talk, and Sunday School
24 Mar Worship, talk, and Sunday School
31 Mar Easter Day Family Service

Puzzle Answers

Answers to the Alphabet Quiz

1. A pawnbroker's shop 2. Pink. 3. Poinsettia. 4. Pablo Picasso. 5. 6. Potassium 7. The Pinta. 8. Piper at the Gate of Dawn. 9. Portsmouth. 10. Pandemonium. 11. The Pangolin. 12. Pentagon 13. The Plough 14. Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man. 15. Panama City. 16. Papa. 17. Psycho. 18. Polo. 19. Peterborough 20. Peaky Blinders.

Crossword answers



Where In The Parish?



Paul Lock took his camera out and about around the village to record some of the lovely Christmas light displays. Others are throughout the issue.

Do you recognise where they were ? Are yours included ?



Carols in The Square – with Special Guest!

Thursday 21st December saw the welcome return of a traditional Aston community event after a prolonged Covid-induced absence - 'Carols in The Square'. Over 130 residents gathered around the tree outside the Red Lion for an hour of traditional Christmas music, accompanied by Mary Wade on keyboard and compered by Russell La Forte. Particular thanks, however, must go to our very special guest all the way from the North Pole – Santa, whose appearance was a delightful surprise for all the revellers, young and old.



Charlotte and Mabel West meet Santa

A Christmas Celebration

On Friday 15th December the traditional Christmas concert at St James raised the curtain on the festive season. Reverend Janice Collier was in good form, introducing the entertainment and regaling us with riddles and jokes of the Christmas kind. There was a familiar feel to proceedings with the Aston Bell Ringers, the "Twelve Days of Christmas" the Aston Ladies' Choir to the fore. The Choir confidently sang pieces that were both enchanting and delightful.

There were seasonal poems and readings and of course Christmas sing-a-longs. Members of the Bampton Folk Group, Jasmine and Reuben Oreffo, sang some lovely traditional songs; they also accompanied the after concert refreshments. The evening, which was very enjoyable, raised funds for St James.

Andrew Long



Bampton Folk Group - Jasmine and Reuben Oreffo