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THE BENSON BULLETIN



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THIS MONTH

- Bell Ringing in Peril
- Royal British Legion
- A Benson Diary
- Parish Council Update
- SODC
- Benson WI
- From The Rector
- Bensington Society

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EDITORIAL

Every year my prep-school had a sports day, the highlight of which was an obstacle race. It ended with a mad dash through a large maze laid out with white tape in the small wood that was part of the school grounds. It was the wheeze of the headmaster Mr Dodd, who may have had a sadistic streak as the whole event was an annual nightmare for me. I could never find my way through the labyrinth and always came out last, much to the amusement of the staff and other boys. On the plus side it did lack a Minotaur.

The only benefit of it was to give me a better understanding of one of my favourite plays **"A Midsummer Night's Dream"** where the star-crossed lovers lose themselves in the woods before the happy nuptials at the end. Their struggles to get out of the woods, resonates with my confusion in that schoolboy maze , though they are surrounded by magic and fairies, a world which was sadly lacking in my prep-school experience.

I not only love this play but we were fortunate enough to go to a performance in the Globe theatre in London one Midsummer's Eve when the sky was clear after a sunny day and as the play progressed the sky turned to black of night and the stars appeared above us. No one could have designed the play more beautifully. Somehow weddings bring out the thespian in me.

That dream of lovers and the reality of a wedding were brought home to me recently at our own daughter's marriage. It was a large and confusing affair. There was so much planning, so much angst, a lot of crying – mostly from the bridesmaids – and much dithering and stress - and that was all in the months beforehand.

Come the day though, the only way I could cope with it all was to think of it as the opening of a play and to be fair my daughter wanted and savoured the dramatic and traditional nature of it all.

In order to get her to her future husband, who was standing nervously at the front of the crowd - we had to navigate the bride and six bridesmaids down a corridor through a narrow door and down some steps before we could glide up to the groom where I had been commanded to give her away.

"Right," I said, "we need to choreograph all this." Which I proceeded to do, even though some of the guests then called me a Drama Queen - but I was in such good spirits I took it on the chin and the whole thing went off without a hitch.

Except for one moment - and all perfection is only remembered through the blemishes that inevitably occur. As the groom was giving his speech everyone's phone went off in a cacophony of rings. The government had sent a nation-wide warning. There was muttering from the guests – "A nuclear attack?", "Trump's coming to the wedding?" "Oxfordshire to be a US state?" All manner of thoughts until the text was read and discovered to be a warning about extreme heat which unsurprisingly as we were sat at the wedding breakfast on one of the hottest days of the year, we were already aware of.

A long and exhausting day and boy were we tired at the end of it all. But our daughter had never stopped smiling, was marrying the love of her life and somehow, we all got out of the maze of emotion together and in one piece.

But now the joys of summer wain, the heat a distant memory, the dark ink of night begins to reassert itself. We move into the world of **"A Winters Tale"** but with warm memories to treasure, dark chilly nights or not.

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BELL RINGING IN PERIL

IS BRITAIN'S ANCIENT ART OF BELL RINGING AT RISK OF DYING OUT?

(AND COULD THIS HAPPEN IN BENSON?)

This was the heading of an article last year in the Daily Telegraph. At the moment there are about 30,000 ringers in the British Isles but according to the statistics 60% of these are over the age of 60, 25% in the range of 40 -60 and only 15% are under 40. Clearly this is of concern for the future of bell ringing and here in Benson the numbers reflect the statistics above.

St Helen's Church has a fine ring of eight bells which were cast in 1781 by Thos. Janaway of Chelsea. Two of these bells were recast in 1852 and 1922 but the remaining six bells are the originals. Thanks to the support of many people and organisations in the village and various charities the bells were all refurbished and rehung in a new cast iron frame in 2009.

The bells are normally rung on Sundays at 9am for the 9.30am service and on Wednesday practice evenings from 7.30 – 9.00pm. We also ring for weddings and other special occasions

We often have several ringers on Wednesdays and for weddings etc but this relies heavily on ringers from other towers in the area. However Sundays is a different matter and you may well notice that we often ring only four or five bells. Understandably those who help on Wednesdays ring at their own churches on Sundays.

We desperately need new people to learn to ring here in Benson so that we can continue with this ancient British tradition. Learning to ring is not a quick thing and takes commitment and time but the rewards are the satisfaction of being able to ring in time with others as part of a team. We will teach any one from the age of 11 up to people in their 60s. You do not need to be particularly strong but once learnt a good sense of rhythm is useful. The only commitment is to regularly attend practices on Wednesday evenings and on Sunday mornings. You do not have to attend church. Some ringers do and some don't. Those who don't, often consider their ringing as part of a service to the church and to keep this historic art going.

If you would like to find out more please contact me by telephone 07774 188613 or email john.tchighi@gmail.com.

Locally the situation is worse. Because of a lack of ringers there is now no regular ringing in Ewelme, Brightwell Baldwin and Warborough.

PLEASE DO NOT LET THIS ART DIE OUT IN BENSON

John Tchighianoff, Tower Captain



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SOLDIERS OF OXFORD MUSEUM

Smoking Apples Theatre presents award-winning show "Kinder" at Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock

- A Smoking Apples production aimed at ages 9 - 18 years
- Tells the story of a Czech-Jewish girl escaping on a 'Kindertransport' train in the 1930s
- Multi-award-winning show uses inventive table-top puppetry and shadow play

Four shows at Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, 1pm and 7pm Tuesday 20 October and again at 10am and 1pm on Wednesday 21 October 2026

Escaping on a Kindertransport train, one small Czech-Jewish girl embarks on a mighty adventure. Crossing between the past and present, Babi travels across Europe; from bon bons in Germany to the smell of the sea in Margate, she discovers how tiny acts of kindness can change the course of a person's life.

With natural synergy with the stories told in the museum's permanent displays, Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock will host four shows this October. The public show at 7pm, Tuesday 20 October 2026 is open to all, while further showings are aimed at school and community group bookings, with discounted tickets perfect for organised trips. These show times are available at 1pm, Tuesday 20 October; 10am, Wednesday 21 October; 1pm, Wednesday 21 October 2026.

Tickets for all show times can be purchased via: **sofo.org.uk/?s=smoking+apples**

Joyful, moving and poignant, Kinder features beautiful table top puppetry and cinematic shadow play, as Babi tries to assemble the parts of her broken identity, to find peace in her future. Kinder is a multi-award winning show, from puppetry and visual theatre company Smoking Apples. Inviting you to take a seat inside an immersive set, the story unfolds through a series of playful hatches and openings.

Kinder has been supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and Enterprise Arts Trust. The won two OFFIE awards for Theatre for Young Audiences in 2023, for both Original Music/Sound and Production. Kinder was also a finalist for the OFFIE award for writing in the same category that year. Smoking Apple's production was also the Ettie Award Winner for Best Theatre for Young Audiences Production in 2023.

Smoking Apples are an award-winning puppetry and visual theatre company. They work with complex subject matter to make bold, visually stunning, enjoyable theatre that holds being human at the heart of their stories. Their work includes indoor touring shows, outdoor and large scale work and outreach/ educational projects. Their productions have toured nationally and internationally, including visits to Germany, Czech Republic, Malaysia and Hong Kong. Their outdoor work and education/ outreach strands have also seen them travel the UK and abroad, working with some fantastic partners. These include Applause Rural Touring (Arbor the Tree & Buzz) and the Little Angel Theatre, where they run Spectrum Youth Theatre.



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THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY - IN READING



You cannot have avoided the publicity about this exhibition in the British Museum. I am no historian and I have no new insights to offer about this wonderful representation of our history. I leave that to others. But I know the first tranche of tickets for the BM has sold out and I know the intention is to allow visitors 40 minutes only in front of the Tapestry. So for those of you who don't know, there is a full size replica in Reading Museum. I have seen the original in Bayeux but I have seen the replica twice and it is as awe inspiring as the original, although the confines of space mean that it does go round several corners to be seen in full. It is well worth a visit if you can't get tickets for the London exhibition, and you will no doubt have far longer than 40 minutes to admire it.

In brief, a couple from Staffordshire called Wardle saw the original in Bayeux in 1885. They had the right knowledge and connections and hatched a plan to make a full size replica "so that England should have a copy of its own". 35 members of the Leek Embroidery Society and others undertook the work. The replica was completed in 1886 and went on tour in England the same year but also went to USA and Germany. In 1895 it appeared in Reading and eventually a former mayor offered to buy the replica and gift it to the town.

Kate Hart

BENSON TABLE TENNIS CLUB

The Club has played on Friday evenings for over 40 years. In 2018 we added a Wednesday afternoon "Over 60s Go-active" session following encouragement and support from SODC. We moved from the Youth Hall to the first floor of the Community Hall in 2023, which was a big improvement. The Wednesday session proved popular and in 2025 we expanded to play on Monday afternoons too.

So now we have three good tables and play on Mondays 2.00 – 4.00, Wednesdays 2.00 – 4.15, and Fridays 7.00 – 8.30 pm. We're a club for adults, but welcome a child to come with a parent or guardian. The afternoon sessions are sociable, non-competitive, and allow for a variety of skills. Table tennis is fun and very good for people as they get older. New members will be very welcome. Please get in touch with me if you would like to join in. We charge £3 per session.

The Friday players enjoy playing others at a similar level. If you play the game, the only way to discover whether you match is to come and play with us one evening. The normal charge is £6 pre session, but the first is a free trial. Do come and try.

Please get in touch with me John Reid if you would like to join and play at any of our sessions.

01491 598517 or john.reid9@talktalk.net

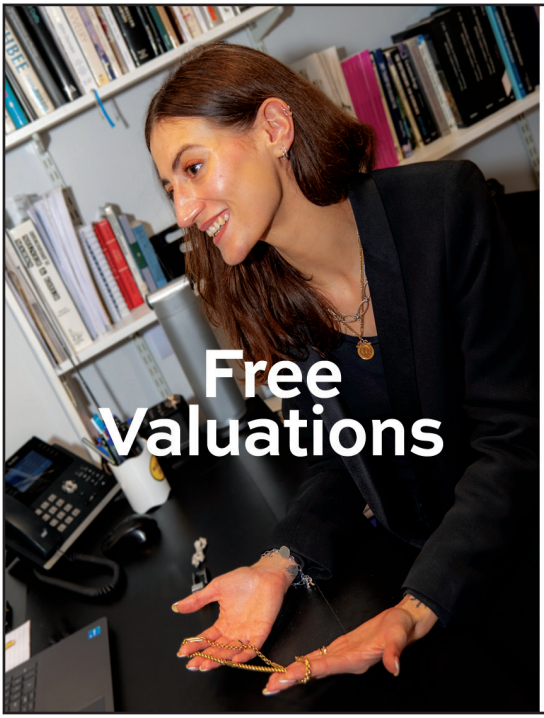


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MORE REFLECTIONS FROM A VILLAGE ANCIENT

I've no idea what "growing old gracefully" means. All I know is that after 70 years behind the wheel I felt the time had come to give up driving. My son came along and drove my dear old Peugeot to the Knackers yard. I was sad to see it go, but so be it.

Then things hit me. No more driving it into Wallingford for the market or for a haircut. No more driving to my favourite pub, the Red Lion in Chalgrove. No more this, that or the other. Now I'm dependant on taxis or kind friends.

And then, just that. Andrew drives me weekly to the Millstream Centre. When I needed to go the half mile to the dentist Martyn drove me there and back. If my decaying body needs another visit to the JR a call to the Benson Help Line and a kind driver will take me there.

In short, Benson is a fantastic community to be old in. It entirely bears out a saying by Isabel Taylor which I quoted on page 307 of "Benson - A century of change" , She said *"I've lived in Benson all my life and find it still has the same friendly atmosphere I have always known. There have always been and still are lots of public spirted people."*

To me the village has never changed - only got bigger. And how right Isabel was; we are all lucky to be Bensonites - the village is a lovely place to live.

Peter Clarke

FINALLY

Finally some recognition of Dennis Bloomfield with a road named in memory of him "Dennis Bloomfield Way". Some of us in the village that knew him have been campaigning for this for many years he left a gift of £50,000.00 in his will and donations to the two churches and many other organisations. Dennis died in 1989 so you can appreciate back then it was a very generous gift and it has taken this long to get this recognition. He was our milkman and friend for 30 years never taking a day off sick or any holidays. This is a fitting tribute to him that will be lasting.

Jackie Spencer

FRIENDS OF EWELME CHURCH

We are excited to announce that The Jumping Fleas (Sam Brown's Ukulele Band) will be performing on November 14th at 7.30 in Ewelme Church. They played for us some years ago: the evening was a rousing success and greatly enjoyed by an audience that filled the church to capacity. Tickets are £15.00, to include a glass of wine and are available from Ewelme Store and from:

ticketsource.com/friends-of-ewelme-church/sam-brown-and-the-international-ukulele-band/e-olgypq

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A BENSON DIARY

Lo! a ripe sheaf of many golden days
Gleaned by the year in autumn's harvest ways,
With here and there, blood tinted as an ember,
Some crimson poppy of a late delight
Atoning in its splendour for the flight
Of summer blooms and joys¬
This is September.
(Lucy Maud Montgomery)

This is September. Tonight is the last Night of the Proms. Nothing tells us more certainly that summer is over than this flag-waving extravaganza of exuberant youth - all Rule Britannia, Sea Shanties and Jerusalem without the jam. This year's Prom will feature a tribute to Dolly Parton sometime Queen of Country and Jolene, and I will always love you will rule the waves. When I first watched the Last Night on TV, Sir Malcolm Sergeant in white tie and tails was king of all he grandly surveyed – mainly students some in racy university scarves or boasting borrowed boating blazers and young ladies sporting top hats borrowed from dad. Nothing perhaps can better illustrate the scale of social change my dull life has witnessed.



But long before this musical feast was concocted, there had been signs everywhere that it is indeed September. Pens and paper galore have been all on special offer and shelves of shoes, white shirts and navy or grey jumpers that compose school uniform have been in pride of place in many a shop window. Their seasonal bow taken, school's now back from summer. It's sixty glorious years since my schooldays, but even from this distant peak I can clearly remember how long every school day felt and how it seemed that elusive concept of eternity might be encapsulated in a Christmas Term. And here in the village, there are other clear signs of autumn's debut – mince pies of course now populate the shelves of supermarkets, and any chocolate or candy treat is already dressed in pumpkin orange for Halloween, for this great commercial trick is only two months away.

There are of course other less well-regulated signs of Autumn – full flights of birds criss-cross our skies – the noisy Canada geese not least. And, as if watching a flight of wild geese has put an idea into their foliage, leaves wither on the branch for they too know the time comes when they must leave. The fields are ploughed up here and there about the village. The ground is still cracked from summer's drought although

Continued overleaf...



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A BENSON DIARY (CONTINUED)

we have had bursts of decent rain to mark the end of this longest and hottest of summers. It has been good walking weather. Fine and warm and an easy tumble from the car for the dogs. Unfortunately, there's been quite a lot of foxes out and about and Finn is particularly susceptible to rolling in the dark temptations they leave behind.

Six months back, Spring's destiny was manifest in daylight's crystal clarity. Today September's wistful song, plays out in orange sunsets that fall earlier each day. Stealthy night nibbles away at day's once expansive realm. And so, with those falling leaves, night falls upon us, making of us all, in one way or another, its creatures. And that reminds me how very much I once enjoyed the onset of these shorter days with the concomitant romance of longer nights. Bars and clubs seemed to hold far more playful allure in autumn and winter. That's another thing that age has changed in me! I'm not a night owl anymore. I don't really like driving in the dark – although on out twisting roads it's easier to spot oncoming traffic in nighttime.

It hasn't yet been cold nor too wet. The rain was welcome but as the ground is thirs ty it readily absorbs steadier rainfall. It's therefore still easy to walk most anywhere without slipping on mud. But I know the science of meteorology promises us a record El Nino and that although that usually suggests a mild winter, it also betokens storms and floods. And hereabouts we are incredibly vulnerable to flood. And floods also have an appalling impact upon farms all around us. El Nino appears also to own power to disrupt far more than local services. Government has encouraged us to stock up on tinned food and even water in case of disruption from storms. Easier said than done for some living on restricted income.

All our basic root crops and winter greens will reflect the length of summer's drought. This again seems to transport me back to the middle 1970s when potatoes and sugar and toilet paper as I recall went AWOL from supermarket shelves. In Leeds Market suspicious shoppers were offered such substitutes as sweet potatoes. I learned to make sweet potato cakes – with green chilli and onion which we had with stuffed breast of lamb. Impecunious students could not run to a proper Sunday joint.

September ends with the great but now neglected festival of Michaelmas. Michaelmas is associated with eating goose and duck and blackberries, and as it fell at the end of harvest, it was also associated with the payment of rents and remains a quarter day for this purpose. Michaelmas also gives its name to the legal term and was adopted as the name of the first term of the academic year by Oxford and Cambridge. The date chosen reflects the dedication of the original basilica to St Michael on 29th September, a practice that itself reflected a custom from the time of that first great builder of churches, Constantine the Great. St Michael's day, together with all these saints' days formed a calendar of feasts in the Roman Missal and as Christian missionaries brought these liturgical books north, the saint's days were adopted into local calendars. In due time local saints were added into these calendars creating a patchwork of traditional celebrations which often spawned local fairs. As with St Swithun, Michaelmas also possesses meteorological prediction. It is of course for you to divine its meaning -

"If ducks do slide at Michaelmas, At Christmas they will swim.
If duck do swim at Michaelmas, At Christmas they will slide"

John Murphy



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FROM THE RECTOR

The Hollywood actor Matt Damon tells how the director James Cameron wanted him to star in his 2009 film, Avatar. As an inducement, Cameron offered Damon ten per cent of the profits. Damon was at the time working hard on another film, so he turned Cameron down, thinking not very much of it. But famously, Avatar went on to be the biggest grossing film of all time – to date, it has raked in over £2 billion takings. "I will go down in history," Damon later said. "You will never meet an actor who turned down more money."

Not everybody makes mistakes that register in the hundreds of millions of pounds. Indeed, some are much more serious: they have lasting, damaging consequences for other people. I suspect every one of us has a catalogue of things we wish we hadn't said or done, or regrets that weigh on us more heavily than even Matt Damon's casting choices weigh on him.

The very strange (and very good news) of Christianity is that these bad choices we have made can be forgiven by God, and we can be entirely free from them.

I'll write that again, because it can be easy to misunderstand what God in Jesus Christ offers us. It can be easy to presume that God is asking us to reason with him, and that he will forgive us only if we do something good in atonement for our sins, or only if we undergo a particular punishment for them that means they can be wiped off our ledger. But actually, Jesus Christ came and lived and died so that he could make the atonement for our sins; so that he could take the blame for all our wrongdoing when he died on the cross; the atonement and the punishment our sins and bad choices necessitate has already been done!

Which leaves us without the burden of having to persuade God to forgive us; the sins we have committed, the bad choices we have made, can simply be forgiven, and you and I can be entirely free from them, with no further questions or conditions. All we have to do is ask.

I wonder, what's the biggest mistake you have ever made? What's the secret regret that eats away at your heart, the burden of guilt you still carry deep down in your soul? Whatever it is: bring it to God. Pray to him, saying, "Father, I am sorry for this; forgive me through your Son Jesus Christ's blood." Then, come and give thanks to him by worshipping him in church – with the rest of us who are bowled over by this extraordinary free gift of complete forgiveness God offers us.

Because we have been set free from all that we have done wrong. Jesus has dealt with it by dying for us and rising again for us. All we need do is ask, and our heavenly Father will forgive us, completely, and with joy.

Sunday services at St Helen's, Benson take place every week at 9.30am. In addition, 4 O'Clock Church (especially suitable for younger families) meets at 4pm on Sunday 4th October; and Sanctuary, a service of praise and worship, gathers at 6pm on Sunday 19th October.

Sunday services at St Mary's, Ewelme, take place at 11 o'clock every Sunday.

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THE BENSINGTON SOCIETY

"Now, of course, we have a hosepipe ban ……." Sound familiar? The opening line of my 2nd paragraph of my October 2025 piece. However this year, following the 'glorious Summer' (at least for the children if not for the gardeners), it somehow seems more justified.

I wonder what happened to the idea of transferring water from the over-endowed 'north' of the country to the under-endowed 'south' using the canal systems.

Back to reality. By the time you have read this we will have had our first meeting of the Autumn season and, for those that attended, found out just what was 'The Greatest Story Ever Told' – sounds fascinating.

The season will continue on the 30th of October, when we will have a talk, given by Edwina Johnson entitled 'Three Wayward Women and Wallingford Castle'. I can't say that I have knowingly ever met a "wayward woman" so meeting 3 in one night sounds quite daunting.

As I am writing this in mid-September, to meet the Bulletin's copy deadline, I cannot comment on the talk or the short General Meeting on the 25th September other than to say that I hope the proposals were well received and approved. As President, I was part of the small sub-committee that did the work to produce the proposals and so know how much detailed work went into producing them. Although it was a team effort I would draw members' attention to the extraordinary work put in by our Secretary, Ann Wright, both in volume and detailed content. The Society is in her debt.

David McGill

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

All the current Officers and members of the Benson Branch Committee have served long periods, and the Branch now needs to bring new members to the committee to maintain the running of the Branch. In addition, recent National RBL changes in the management of Branch Officers and Committees leave Benson and District Branch in a position requiring the election of a new Branch Chair as soon as possible as I have reached a point where I am technically ineligible to continue in the role having served for many years and am well over the limit of 10 years in a Chair's role. Also, if we going to remain as an RBL Branch we need additional Committee Members so that we can rotate the Officer roles for the Branch to keep us fresh with new Members and to help with the running and decisions needed.

We also need to recruit a new Poppy Appeal Organiser (PAO) and ideally a Deputy PAO to run the Benson Poppy Appeal as Jean and I, the current PAO's are giving up the role at the end of 2026. I should note that PAO's do not necessarily need to be a Member of the RBL or a Branch as although the role can be affiliated to a Branch it is not a requirement.

Pete Eldridge

Chair of the Benson and District Branch of the Royal British Legion

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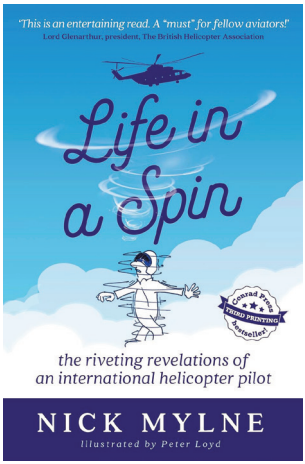
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FOBL are delighted to welcome the writer

NICK MYLNE

To BENSON LIBRARY on

Wednesday November 25th at 7.30.

Tickets are £5 to include a glass of wine.

Tickets from

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This funny and highly entertaining book allows the reader to make brief and joyous visits to Jamaica, Syria, Iran, Germany, Yemen, the North Sea, Sweden, and Saudi Arabia. Highly experienced helicopter pilot Nick Mylne dazzles and entertains with his recollections of his professional life in a spin.

Nick is writing a second book entitled "Loose Ends". He intends to introduce you all to this second work to seek your advice as to the appeal its content.

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

We're looking forward to this year's Christmas Tree Festival, at St Helen's Church from 27-30 November. A short opening service at 5 pm on Friday 27th marks the beginning of the Festival and is timed to flow into the village Christmas Lights at Bob's Corner. Our theme for this year is 'Christmas around the world,' and we're sure that there will be the usual variety of trees reflecting the creativity of our local community. Bookings for the Festival are already coming in; a few additional spaces may be available for local groups and organisations that haven't previously taken part. To find out more, contact **sthelensevents@bensonandewelmechurches.co.uk**

THE BENSON SHED

BenShed
make - share - belong

Many of you will remember the fun and festive concert given by Wantage Concert Brass Band and Benson Community Shed last year. We're delighted that this year there will be another Christmas concert on Saturday evening 12th December in the Parish Hall. There will be mulled wine and other refreshments, and a raffle of course. Various items made by BenShed – including Christmas decorations – will also be for sale. We are raising money for BenShed, which opened earlier this year in Benson, and also for the Wantage Band. Tickets will be available from the beginning of November from BenShed (and other outlets) **benshed.org.uk** or email **info@benshed.org.uk**

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BOOK SALE

The North Moreton Book Sale will be on October 31st in North Moreton Church, from 10am until 3pm. Thousands of books will be on sale, with all proceeds going to support the village hall and church. Tea, coffee and home-made cakes will be available. Free entry and car parking. Donations of spare books are always welcome. Email **northmoretonbooksale@gmail.com** or call **01235 818900** or **07908314771** if you have any books to give, and the organisers will happily collect them.

CHOLSEY REPAIR CAFÉ

The Repair Café will be back on **Saturday 21st November** at Cholsey Pavilion, between 10.00 and 12.45. Volunteers will be there to help you attempt repairs to a wide range of household items, bikes, gardening equipment and electrical goods (white goods excepted). No charge is made but if you care to make a donation, it helps cover operating expenses. You can see more at **cholseyrepaircafe.com** or email: **repaircafe@cholsey.com**.

BENSON LIBRARY

REGULAR EVENTS

Rhymetime: 1st and 2nd Tuesday plus last 2 Fridays of the month

10am -10.30am followed by coffee morning

Knit and Natter: 2pm - 4pm 1st Tuesday of the month

Carers Coffee Morning: 10.30am - 12 noon 1st Thursday of the month

Family History Group: 6pm - 7pm 2nd Thursday of the month

Gadget and IT Support: 2pm - 4pm Last Tuesday of the month

For more information please call 01491 838474

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To ask for help or to volunteer

Out of hours contact:

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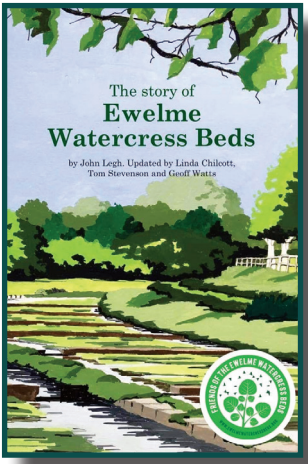
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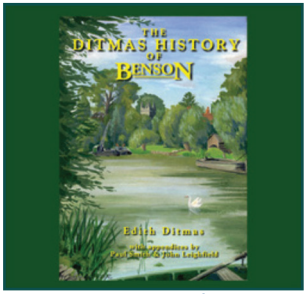
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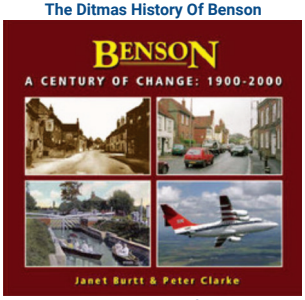
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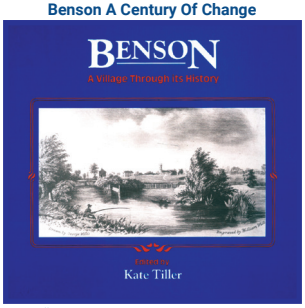




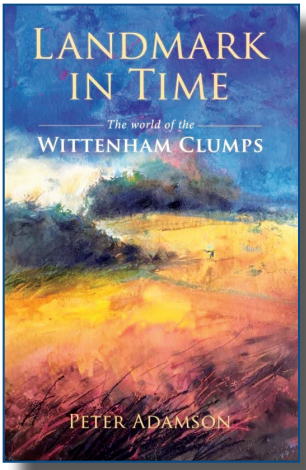
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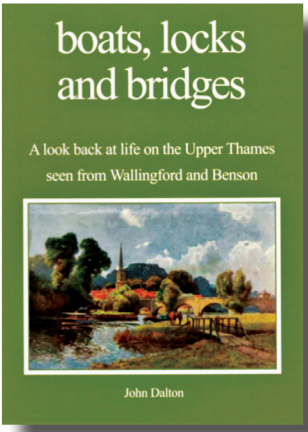


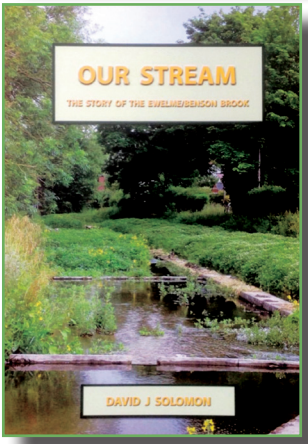
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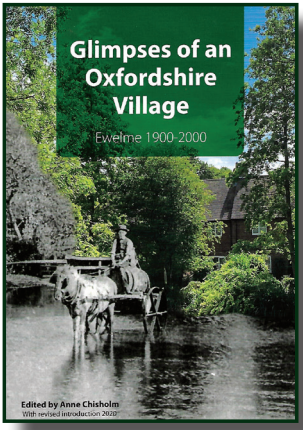


"A Village Through Its History"









You can buy some of these Books at: bensington-society.com Others directly from John Dalton, Peter Clarke or Tom Stevenson, or at Derry's Den where some can be bought but not all. And some can be found on Amazon.



"Landmark in Time" is available at Wallingford Bookshop on Amazon and from peteradamsonwriting.com

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BENSON MILLSTREAM CENTRE: open Mon, Wed, Fri 11.30-1.30pm for lunch, drop in coffee morning 'Millstream Mugs' Tuesdays 11-12pm. Hire of the centre for events contact bensonmillstreamcentre@gmail.com or phone 01491 834889.

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OCTOBER EVENTS

EVERY TUESDAY - 10.30-12pm COMMUNITY COFFEE MORNING Millstream Centre
EVERY WEDNESDAY - COMMUNITY WALK 10am Parish Hall
EVERY 1st THURSDAY OF MONTH Carers Coffee Morning: 10.30am - 12 - Library

OCTOBER



3/ Open Day Corn Exchange 10 - 2
9/ Henley Stamp Club Bix Parish Hall 7.30
16/ Journey Through Cholsey's Past - Pavilion 7.30
18/ Benson Antique Fair Parish Hall 9am - 3pm
28/ Benson WI 23rd 2pm Parish Hall
25/ Henley Stamp Club Bix Parish Hall 7.30
30/ Bensington Society 7.30 Parish Hall
31/ North Moreton Book Fair 10 - 3 North Moreton Church



Please send all Diary information to: diary@bensonbulletin.co.uk
FULL DETAILS Of Upcoming Events
Please Go To: bensonbulletin.co.uk - "Village Information/Events"



About The Benson Bulletin

bb.editor@hotmail.co.uk Est. 1994

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Benson Millstream Centre

Benson Millstream Centre is a community hub in the heart of Benson.

We open three times a week serving hot lunches to elderly members of the community Mon, Wed, & Fri.

Transport is available to and from the Centre and we can deliver meals to those unable to join us. You will find a warm friendly welcome, activities, speakers, music & trips.

Join Millstream Mugs for coffee morning every Tuesday morning from 10.30am-midday. All welcome.

You can hire the Centre, it's a large versatile space with two kitchens and a lovely courtyard garden.

Our website is www.bensonmillstreamcentre.org or contact us by email at bensonmillstreamcentre@gmail.com or phone

01491 834889. You can also find us on social media @bensonmillstreamcentre

A BENSON WINNER



Local salon owner Hailey Golby, founder of HC Beauty & Aesthetics in Benson and Didcot, is celebrating after winning Bronze for Best Beauty Salon at this year's prestigious UK Hair & Beauty Awards.

The achievement placed HC Beauty & Aesthetics within the top 0.1% of entrants nationwide and marks a major milestone for Hailey and the business.

Hailey said she was incredibly proud of the recognition and grateful for the continued support of clients and the local community.

The awards evening also gave Hailey the opportunity to meet and spend time with leading figures from across the beauty and entertainment industries, making the occasion even more memorable.

CYCLING WITHOUT AGE



Our charity passed a significant milestone today. We took four trikes to Benson House Care Home and took residents out for a wellbeing trike ride to Benson village and Howbery park.

Wellbeing team member Lauren accompanied us and made sure all the passengers were comfortable. We visited the strange clock at Benson church, the lovely barns at Battle Farm, the Linden tree avenue in Howbery Park, and a grand finale to Pierre le Vin wineshop. A truly great time was had by all.

Mick Heath MBE - 07712 524874 - cwaoxfordshire.org.uk/

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CORN EXCHANGE VOLUNTEER OPEN DAY

The Corn Exchange in Wallingford is holding a Volunteer Open Day on Saturday 3 October from 10.00am to 2.00pm. This is your chance to see what goes on behind the scenes at the Corn Exchange - both the cinema and theatre. Free guided tours are available and their volunteers will be on hand to chat you through the myriad of volunteer roles available. These include:

Front of house managers - Box office - Bar staff - Ushers - Lighting and sound crew - Stage management - Projectionists - Set design & painting - Set construction - Acting (we do four plays and panto each year) - Directing - Producing - Costumes - Props/Set dressing

Plus many other vital behind the scenes roles covering accountancy, HR, marketing, website, building maintenance and health & safety. So, come along on 3 October to see for yourself. No need to book, just turn up on the day!

Nicola Webb
07739 407259

VOLUNTEER AT CITIZENS ADVICE

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We would like you to be available for two sessions per week, either mornings or afternoons or for a whole day. We offer a rewarding, flexible and supportive working environment.

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BENSON PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE

DATES FOR THE DIARY

The Benson Remembrance Parade will take place on Sunday 8th November. This is a special and proud day for Benson and requires a great deal of careful planning. We are looking for volunteers to help marshal road closures on the morning of the parade. The role involves approximately an hour and a half of your time, and a full briefing will be provided. If you can help, please email comms@bensonpc.org.uk.

The elves are already hard at work preparing Benson's Christmas Extravaganza. Save the date: Friday 27th November!

OUR NEW STAFF MEMBER

We're delighted to welcome Zoe McLauchlan to the Parish Council team as Operations Officer and Assistant Parish Clerk. This is an excellent opportunity to take stock of our facilities and services, so if you have any feedback regarding the halls or allotments, Zoe would be pleased to hear from you on halls@bensonpc.org.uk

ROAD CLOSURES

Please continue to keep an eye on local Facebook groups, the parish council website and Causeway one.network (https://one.network/en-gb) for details of road closures and traffic management information.

VILLAGE LITTER PICK

A village litter pick will take place on Sunday 11th October. Once again, our thanks go to local resident Abi Turner, who is coordinating the event. We have litter grabbers, bags and gloves available to lend to anyone who would like to get involved. If you would like to join the litter-picking WhatsApp group, please message Abi on 07530 427320.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Following the recent government announcement that Oxfordshire would be split into three new unitary authorities, one in the north, one in the south including West Berkshire, and a Greater Oxford authority covering the city and surrounding green belt, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Angela Rayner, has announced that the decision has been paused pending a review. We will keep residents updated as further information becomes available.

PROJECT UPDATE

We have chosen Mackenzie-Wheeler as the architects for the youth hub project. They are busy surveying the area and drawing up draft designs which we will share with you shortly. Please check our projects page on the website where you can find out the latest on all of the council projects Council Projects.

LIBRARY OPENING TIMES:
MONDAY: 2pm - 6pm TUESDAY: 9am -12.30pm & 2pm - 5pm
THURSDAY: 2pm - 7pm
FRIDAY: 9am - 12.30pm & 2pm - 5pm SATURDAY: 9.30am - 12.30pm

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SODC UPDATE





Andrea Powell & Sue Cooper

PLANNING SYSTEM CHANGES ON THEIR WAY!

The UK Government has set an ambitious target of delivering 1.5 million new homes in its first term. In order to achieve this target, which many believe is rather optimistic, the government has determined that wholesale changes are needed to the national planning system, to "unlock" development and remove obstacles to building.

It's important to stress that planning is, by and large, driven by legislation and policy; councils and councillors cannot block developments for political expediency or just because they (or the local community) don't like what is being proposed. If a local planning authority (in our case South Oxfordshire District Council) is deemed not to be delivering enough housing to meet the targets set for it by the government, then the balance tips in favour of development and speculative (i.e. unplanned) applications may be successful.

In August this year the government published the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which is the regulatory framework which determines how many houses must be built, where and with what protections for the countryside and nature. It sets national standards which are then supplemented by local district-wide policies and site allocations, which are set out in the Local Plan, and by hyper-local policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Planning is thus a hierarchical process and planning officers must take all levels of the hierarchy into account when reaching their decisions.

THE NEW NPPF IS AVAILABLE TO READ ON THE GOVERNMENT WEBSITE, BUT IT'S 130 PAGES LONG, SO SOME KEY HIGHLIGHTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- It explains how to go about identifying sites for the different types of development;
- It requires local authorities to work collaboratively with other authorities in their area (e.g. to provide housing for a city like Oxford which has constraints on building);
- It states that contributions should be agreed with developers to mitigate the impact of house building;
- It defines cases where building outside a settlement may be acceptable;
- It states that planning authorities may not require developers to meet standards which go above and beyond national building standards (e.g. on energy efficiency);
- It requires that sustainable and active travel infrastructure be prioritised to reduce carbon emissions;

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- It changes the method used to calculate housing targets across the country, which takes into account current housing stock and affordability (and which will increase the targets set for this part of Oxfordshire);
- It defines the difference between Green Belt and Grey Belt in order to protect the former and encourage development of the latter.

All planning applications must now be considered within the context of this new NPPF.

Changes to how planning application are determined

In addition to the new NPPF, the government is issuing a new "National Scheme of Delegation" on 31st October 2026 which will change the decision-making process for planning applications. The new scheme, established via the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and secondary legislation, strips England's local authorities of setting individual delegation rules, replacing them with a mandatory two-tier system (Schedule 1 and Schedule 2) that shifts minor decisions to planning officers and caps committee sizes at 13 members.

What does this mean in effect? Your local representative will lose the ability to "call in" a planning application for determination by the planning committee and serious objections from parish councils will no longer trigger this same process. Local knowledge and community sentiment will play no role in decision-making and officers will determine all applications up to nine dwellings. Any larger applications will also default to the planning officers for determination unless there are specific reasons why they should be submitted to the planning committee.

The aim of this new scheme of delegation is to ensure that decision-making is faster and more nationally consistent, but we are deeply concerned that the removal of local call-in powers and the weakening of the Planning Committee will lead to inappropriate and unsustainable applications being approved without the opportunity for local objections to be heard.

In a nutshell, it's a time of significant change for planning across England and it will take some time for us all to get used to the new approach. It is already the case that any application for more than 150 dwellings is automatically referred to the Secretary of State if the local planning authority is intending to refuse permission, so we have already lost local control over the larger (and often speculative) applications that we see regularly in this part of the country. It remains to be seen if the changes stimulate more home building or if they have actually focused on the wrong problem, which is the lack of genuinely affordable social housing.

We have a special meeting of full Council on 24th September to make the necessary changes to our constitution for all this. From a local point of view it makes it more important than ever that individuals send in their comments on planning applications directly to the SODC planning department and to Benson Parish Council to inform their consultation responses. So keep your eyes open for planning notices on sites around the village!

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Government has paused this so local changes to transform SODC into part of Ridgeway Council are on hold. More when we know more!



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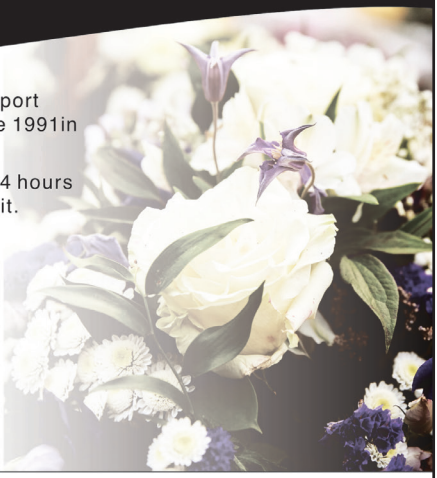
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FROM OUR MP



In August, following a short and much needed break from politics with a family holiday to Austria, I returned to work refreshed and full of energy to start my Summer Tour, which was a chance to get out to parts of the constituency I hadn't managed to visit during the year.

I thoroughly enjoyed visiting all corners of the constituency, and am hugely grateful to everyone who came to meet with me in Stanton St John, Forest Hill, Warborough, Little Milton, Stoke Row, Checkendon, Kingston Blount, Sydenham, South Stoke and Whitchurch-on-Thames. We got through nearly sixty appointments and had very informative meetings with parish, district and county councillors in each location. Whilst Westminster took a break over the Summer, I continued to scribe letters to ensure that ministers had a full post bag to return back to; I penned a letter to stick up for parents with young children at UK borders who need to wait the longest of anyone to pass checks and wrote again to the Government (but this time the new Secretary of State Angela Eagle) on Marsh Lock Bridge in Henley.

I attended an August summit in Watlington with the Parish Council and top brass from the County Council, to ensure that the Watlington Relief Road stays on track.

I was thrilled to hear the news over the Summer that a banking hub has been secured for Henley – access to banking services is vital for our local towns - I met with Thame Town Council to discuss getting one secured for Thame now too and have submitted a joint request from myself and the Town Council to LINK (the responsible body) to assess the town again

On local issues, I met with the Ministry of Defence this week about RAF Benson School; I'm keen to ensure that the school is adequately resourced in the interim period before the launch of the new helicopter fleet.

My Summer Tour surgeries were a real highlight of the Summer for me and I'm keen to continue listening and engaging - solving local issues where I can, and weighing in on national and international concerns on your behalf - I'm already planning where to go next year! In the meantime, please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any issues or concerns I can help with, please contact me by emailing: **freddie.vanmierlo.mp@parliament.uk.**

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THE BENSON WI



Traditionally, Benson WI has not met in August but members decided that they would like to meet and go out to the Root One Garden Centre to resume our meeting that was cancelled in June.

For this meeting, members met in the garden centre café where they watched a video of Jeremy Brundenell (Owner and Director of Root One) sharing his story of how the garden centre came about. On 9th June this year, Root One turned 25 and celebrated this milestone by using the opportunity to give back to the local community by raising money for the 'Wild about Wallingford' charity run by volunteers. The Garden Centre has supported groups such as the local Style Acre with gardening projects. For those who missed it, we understand that the video can be found on U-Tube. Following the presentation, a member of the garden centre staff was on hand to answer members pre-set questions which included replacing a memorial cherry tree, tips on maintaining a wild garden, plants for shady areas and the best time for planting a Brown Turkey Fig. The staff continued to be on hand for more questions as we had a good wander round the garden centre. Our thanks to Andy and all the staff for their very friendly and kind attention.

September 16th was WI Day when nationally members celebrated 111 years since its beginning and shortly after, Benson WI held a meeting of its newly formed Book Club. Lots of interesting events around the county opened to bookings including a trip to the British Museum in October, more popular sessions of Geli-Painting at Tackley and a session on Christmas Cushions at Blewbury. Oxfordshire WI continues to support one of this year's resolutions 'Action on Women's Homelessness' and in September our Public Affairs Committee introduced members to 'Finding Her Way Home' - a women's project sponsored by Homelessness Oxfordshire to which any donation would make the biggest difference.

For Benson WI's October meeting, we hope to welcome our local County Councillor to give us an insight into his time in office. Sure to be many interesting moments. Our usual pot of tea will be available with plenty of time for a social catch up. In October, bookings open for OFWI events including the May 2027 holiday to Cornwall, a day at Winchester Christmas Market in December and November's Christmas Brass Concert at St Peter and St Paul in Botley. All details are on the Oxfordshire Federation website and some events/outings are open to non-members.

Visitors are very welcome – contact for enquiries at **bensonwi@oxfordshirewi.co.uk**

ST HELENS ECO-TIP

Avoid raking up all leaves in the borders of your garden#. These enrich the soil as they decompose and are an essential habitat for many insects, or put the leaves in your home compost ready for spring.

Reduce your fuel usage by finding local activities which support your community. If you can stay local, you will reduce your mileage which also reduces costs and benefits your local area.

BENSON TREFOIL GUILD

The Guild's theme for the meeting this month was our favourite poems. We discovered that we are a poetry loving lot in Benson, short poems, long poems, poems that made us laugh and ones that brought a tear to the eye, we love them all. The funny thing is with poetry it says so much by seeming to say so little. A few short words strung together with care can convey all human emotion and all human life and strangely we tend to remember those words or at least some of them. A few words or a half remembered line can take us back to times and events that shaped our lives; early childhood nursery rhymes, lessons in school, standing by the altar on our wedding day or by the graveside of a loved one gone too soon, or that time we laughed so hard our stomach muscles hurt. Only poetry can evoke such varied memories and such a range of emotions, that's why we love it so much. I have a feeling that a poetry session may become a regular feature of our annual programme because in August we only scratched the surface of the poems that we know and love in Benson Trefoil Guild.

If you would like to join us, we meet on the third Tuesday of every month at the Millstream in Benson. If you would like to know more about Trefoil Guild Membership please look at the Trefoil Guild website at **trefoilguild.co.uk** or just come along to our next meeting. Although we are part of Girlguiding you do not have to have had previous involvement with the Girlguiding movement to join Trefoil Guild and we do not wear a uniform. We offer fun, friendship and enjoyment in a supportive environment catering to all interests and abilities.

We end this month with two quotes about poetry by Robert Frost who wrote dozens of poems including "The Road Not Taken" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

"A poem begins in delight and ends in wisdom."

"Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought, and the thought has found words."

Helen Horton

WALLINGFORD THAMES LADIES PROBUS CLUB

Have you thought about joining our local ladies Probus Club? We offer retired or semi-retired professional and businesswomen from the local area, a friendly, monthly lunchtime meeting, enjoying interesting high-quality speakers covering a wide range of topics. We also make occasional outings to interesting destinations such as the theatre and local gardens.

Founded on a friendship platform, we endeavour to keep ourselves well informed and are supportive of each other. We meet at the Goring and Streatley Golf Club on the first Wednesday of each month where we enjoy excellent facilities and tasty lunches. We have a few vacancies and would be delighted to welcome new members.

Further information and our program of speakers is available on our web site:

wtlp.org.uk

If you are interested in joining or would like to attend a meeting as a guest, please contact the secretary at: **secretary.wtlp@gmail.com** We look forward to hearing from you.

CORN EXCHANGE - WALLINGFORD

CINEMA

Tickets £12 for Adults and £5 for under 16s unless otherwise stated. Doors open at **2pm** and **7pm** and the bar will be open so there's plenty of time to collect drinks beforehand. Films with subtitles will be shown on Wednesday afternoons at 2:30pm. The box office and foyer will be open on Friday and Saturday from 10am to 1 pm and from 7pm to 7:45pm on performance nights. Please check the website **cornexchange.org.uk** for any updates.

OCTOBER CINEMA:

4th - **The Mission** (12) 5th, 6th & 7th - **Late Fame** (15) 8th & 9th - **Tony** (15) 11th & 12th - **Bad Apples** (15) 13th **Hadestown The Musical** 15th, 16th & 17th - **Pressure** (12A)

LIVE ON STAGE:

3rd, 10am – 2 pm, Volunteer Recruitment Open Day tours - come and see what fun you could have by being one of our volunteers

3rd, 2pm, Wallingford Literary Festival - Tickets: free entry, book on **oxia.org.uk/wallingford-lit-fest-26.php**

10th, 7:30pm, **Animal Farm** - Tickets: £18 (adults), £15 (under 16s)

11th , 2:30pm, **The Witch Who Couldn't Sleep** , a Story Time Family Musical - Tickets: £12 (adults), £10 (under 10s)

27th, 28th, 29th & 30th - 7:30p Sinodun Players present **The Immaculate** by Oliver Lansley, Tickets: £12 (Tuesday October 27), £15 (all other performances)

HENLEY AND DISTRICT STAMP CLUB

Have you thought of resurrecting a hobby from your past, like stamp collecting, Postal history or Postcards? You will find it more than just collecting a little bit of sticky paper. If you look into the history and background of the stamps and postal history, there is a lot to learn.

The Henley Stamp Club is a friendly group and we would be delighted to see new visitors or members. If you are interested in facts concerning stamps or postal history, why not come along and find out about how you can promote your interest?

To learn more about stamps and postal history why not visit us at Bix one Wednesday evening? You can then meet people who find postal history and the story of stamps fascinating too.

Meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month in Bix Village Hall at 7.30 p.m.

14th. October –Evening meeting with Philip Cant giving a display on 'I don't do Thematics and other Nonsense' - some thoughts on Thematic collecting - *(An interesting title as Paula, his wife, is a well-known and popular Thematic dealer)!

25th. October– Members evening on - Aspect of your favourite monarch, their stamps, their history, battles or life in general illustrated philatelic items or Postcards etc. Visitors and new members are very welcome. Further details can be obtained by phoning Steve on 07767 251670 or on our website: **henleyphilatelic.org.uk**

CROWMARSH BATTLE FARMS

JULY / AUGUST 2026



A short season where we saw more sunrises than sunsets, and the yields were generally underwhelming, as expected. As always, a big thank you to everyone who helped throughout harvest, and the whole 2026 growing season. Time to look forward to what we hope will be a better year! Our last article, in the July issue, finished by saying that we may have started harvest by the time you were reading. In fact, we started harvest on the 29th June, the earliest that can be remembered for this farm, and 7 – 10 days earlier that the previous few harvests and we finished on Sunday 2nd August, in just under five weeks, with our earliest finish memorable.

It turns out that the rain we had at the start of June did very little for improving grain yields in both winter and spring crops. We only had 103mm of rain from the start of March – end of June, half of which came in two days in June, and only 54% of what would be expected on average during the growing season. The extreme high temperatures in late May and June, coinciding with the flowering of many of the winter crops, probably played a big roll in the eventual poor yields across the board.

Cereals crops need to be stored at just below 15% moisture content, whilst oilseed rape should be stored at below 9%. Due to the high temperatures and dry weather many of the cereal crops were measuring at below 10% and the OSR below 5% during the day. This meant that during the hottest periods we were harvesting in the early hours of the morning to try and increase the moisture content. We have been using the cooler evenings of late to blow cool air through the stored crops to reduce the temperatures to help with long term storage. The other major risk with this weather is fire. We were lucky in avoiding any field fires during harvest, with just a few small verge fires that luckily did not spread.

We have made a start on some shallow cultivations, where needed, and have cover crop seed and oilseed rape in stock waiting for some rain before planting, which usually takes place shortly after the previous crop has been harvested. Daily checking of the forecast doesn't offer much hope, and as of yet we have only had 0.9mm in July - August.

We will soon be making a start on management of our grass and floristically enhanced Stewardship margins and plots around the farm.



BB

BANG

Benson Area Nature Group
Restoring our nature

A NEW CHAPTER FOR NATURE IN BENSON AND BEYOND

As mentioned briefly in last month's issue, we are delighted that BANG in collaboration with Benson Green Space Trust has secured funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, with additional support from Benson Parish Council. The Nature Group and Green Space Trust work in partnership already but this new project will enable us to bring our operations even closer together and will fund a volunteer coordinator for three days a week. This will give us greater capacity to involve local people, develop activities and, particularly, respond to the opportunities created by Benson's expanding population and new green spaces.

The project is expected to get underway in early October and marks an exciting new chapter for community action for nature.

WHAT IS THE PROJECT ABOUT?

At its heart, the project is about giving local people the opportunity to make a practical difference for nature, while improving the places where we live, strengthening our community and providing the well-documented health benefits of being out in nature.

We will build on everything we have learned over the past 18 months, listening to residents about what they would like to see happen and developing activities that reflect local priorities and Oxfordshire's Nature Recovery Strategy.

There are many opportunities to get involved. New green spaces provide exciting possibilities for planting and growing wildlife-friendly species such as Devil's-bit Scabious, Kidney Vetch and Dark Mullein. Our Action for Pollinators work will help create better habitats for insects and other wildlife, while our Green Network will make local nature more accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

Our streams and waterways will be another important focus. The Benson/Ewelme chalk stream is a particular priority, while Berrick Stream and Ladybrook support fascinating wildlife including water voles, dragonflies and otters.

What are the project's objectives?

The project is not just about improving habitats—it is about bringing people together for example to:

- Meet other people who care about local nature.
- Learn new skills and discover more about the wildlife on our doorstep.
- Take part in practical conservation activities, from planting and growing to mowing, scything and habitat management.
- Help shape future activities by telling us what matters to you.
- Explore local green spaces and water courses while making a tangible contribution to their future.
- Help create a healthier, more wildlife-rich environment for future generations.

The next phase will concentrate more effort on Benson, however our neighbouring villages will continue to benefit from the project, with opportunities to take part, learn and make a difference.

BENSON COMMUNITY GARDENS

Top of the allotment menu this last month were hope and faith. It was Saturday 29th August, the day the drought broke. We had planned an alfresco sit-down three course meal for 37 people on long trestle tables and benches. Our back-up plan would have been a watered-down version of the real deal, lacking the essential experience that the five senses offer. We needed to feel and smell the grass and herbs beneath our feet. We wanted to hear the birds in the trees and taste the subtle notes of grass, earth and herb in the food. By mid-afternoon the rain relentlessly saturated the village. We put up our event shelter and a gazebo in a respite gap between the showers and downpours. At 3.30pm Zeus, that wild god of thunder and rain picked up his coat tails and left, just in time for our early evening celebration. It became a double celebration of food from the allotment and the joy of rain at last. I am reminded of the poem by Charles Bowen 'The rain falleth on the just and also on the unjust fella, but chiefly on the just because the unjust hath the just's umbrella.

We served a three-course seated meal for just short of 40 people Each dish used a main ingredient from the allotment. There was a fresh tomato, mozzarella and basil salad served with home baked breads and olive oil dip. This was followed by gluten-free spinach feta and herb tarts, ratatouille and the entire crop of allotment buttered potatoes. Deserts were Mangel-wurzel and chocolate brownies, courgette, lemon and poppy seed cake, compotes of rhubarb puree layered with Greek yogurt and strawberry coulis, topped with honey brittle and lastly Marta's famous cinnamon buns. It truly was a joyful occasion for our village community to get together and worth all the worry and detailed effort that went into it. We try to put on at least four events every year. For more information and photos, you can look at our Facebook page **bensoncommunitygardens**

Each day during the hot summer months our faithful team has watered the spinach, tomatoes, courgettes and beans and we watched life emerging from the dry hot summer scorch. It also takes the pressure off any one person to keep it going. The total gain is more than the sum of the parts. The runner beans have suffered. There have been plenty of flowers, but the hot nights have meant that the pods struggled to set. The tomatoes are rampant in the poly tunnel and my grandson (7yrs), who is not a fan of veg, calls them sweets. The courgettes have done well, rather bulbous, but dense and delicious. Come a pick some tomatoes and herbs along with perpetual spinach and an interesting tree spinach. And while there do a little weeding or change the flowers on the table.

It has been a struggle to keep the space green and productive, but we have managed to keep it going. Fencing around some of vegetables has helped to protect the crops. Growing potatoes in bags has protected them from rats and mice as well as helping to conserve water.

Please come down and see what's going on and enjoy a wander round, pick some herbs or just relax with nature while on a walk. We always welcome anyone who would like to be more actively involved in the space and come to do a little weeding or watering. You can get in touch with us at **bensoncommunitygardens@gmail.com**.

Bridgid Hess



Henry loves to capture special moments with his camera.

At Benson House, he still can.

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