

The Four Parishes News Magazine

BECKLEY
FOREST HILL
HORTON-cum-STUDLEY
STANTON St JOHN



Easter 'Treasure' Hunt, 2021

May 2021

The editor writes:



It looks as if we are finally beginning to ease out of lockdown, and that this time it may be for real. Routines that we have just about managed to get used to are all changing again and some of us are tentatively embarking on activities that we haven't even been able to contemplate for a very long time.

This month our village churches are tentatively opening their doors for in-person services again, while continuing to maintain the safety net of Zoom for those who need it. Anyone involved in planning events and activities still has much to think about, and we all need to remain alert and flexible. Not everyone will welcome the steadily increasing pace and pressure as we return to 'normal' life again and we still need to keep an eye out for anyone who is struggling.

One good thing to come out of this pandemic is that online meetings have enabled many of us to meet neighbours who we didn't know before. Let's hope these new found friendships will help to strengthen our village communities in the months and years ahead.

Julia Stutfield

All contributions to this magazine are the sole responsibility of the author and do not imply or represent any official editorial view or endorsement.

Our cover photo ...

is of Prizewinners from the Easter 'Treasure' Hunts in Beckley and Horton-cum-Studley, posing outside the Abingdon Arms.

If you have taken a photo which you think might be suitable for the cover of the next magazine, please email it to
4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com

We welcome contributions or notices for future issues.

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The closing date for the Jun 2021 issue is 15 May 2021

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We are dependent on volunteers to assemble the content, book and invoice the advertisers, compile and edit the magazine, collect it from the printers and distribute it throughout the four parishes. If you are interested in getting involved, please email Julia at 4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com

Recent issues of the magazine are available to view online at
www.fourparishes.org.uk/magazine

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***Assistant Editors: Jonathan Barker
Anthea Beresford***

The Four Parishes News Magazine has 10 issues per year and is distributed free of charge to approximately 850 addresses in Forest Hill, Horton-cum-Studley, Stanton St John and Beckley.

**To advertise in the magazine please email JULIA
adverts.4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com**

Benefice of Beckley, Forest Hill with Shotover, Horton-cum-Studley and Stanton St John

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Church Services in the Four Parishes, May 2021

	St Nicolas, Forest Hill with Shotover	St John the Baptist, Stanton St John	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Beckley	St Barnabas, Horton-cum- Studley
2 May <i>Fifth Sunday of Easter</i>		9.30am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	11am Morning Prayer
		11am Benefice Service via Zoom		
		6pm Taizé via Zoom		
9 May <i>Sixth Sunday of Easter</i>		9.30am Morning Prayer	9.30am Morning Prayer	11am Holy Communion
		11am Benefice Service via Zoom		
		6pm Choral Evensong from the Book of Common Prayer via Zoom		
13 May <i>Ascension Day</i>	7.30pm Ascension Day Benefice Service via Zoom			
16 May <i>Sunday after Ascension Day</i>		9.30am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	11am Morning Prayer
		11am Benefice Service via Zoom		
			6pm Iona Service	
23 May <i>Pentecost</i>	11am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	11am Holy Communion
30 May <i>Trinity Sunday</i>	11am Benefice Service via Zoom			

To join one of our 'Zoom' online services, simply get in touch with Anthea (contact details opposite) to request an invitation.

Please see page 8 for more information about our plan for gradually returning to 'in-person' services.

A letter from Anthea

Hi everyone,



I am writing this several days into a beautiful sunny period, so have been enjoying some lovely sunny walks with Bertie. One of the joys of this has been seeing the new-born lambs in the fields. Seeing the lambs in the field reminded me of a special time with an Aunt some years ago, as we watched the lambs gambolling in a field, and seemingly playing 'tag'! We stood mesmerised for a while, enjoying the joyful sight before us: this special memory is rekindled year on year when I see lambs in the fields.

Another wonderful experience was on 12 April with the simple pleasure of sitting in a neighbour's garden drinking a cup of tea and chatting together, as the Covid rules relaxed to allow this. And the eating of toasted marshmallows heated in the fire pit of another neighbour! It struck me how much I treasured these simple experiences, which prior to this past year I might have taken much more for granted, but now have taken on a new significance: treasuring meeting and talking with family and friends face to face, even if still distanced; treasuring time **with** people.

As we emerge from Lockdown 3, it feels to me rather like new life emerging. Life begins to feel hopeful again, as the vaccination roll out continues, as Covid cases fall, as hospitals have less Covid cases - but noting how careful we still need to be.

In the Christian calendar we have just celebrated Easter. The horrors of Good Friday and the Cross are overshadowed by the joy of the empty tomb and the sight of the risen Lord. The



Cross, never to be overlooked, because of all that was accomplished for us by Jesus there. But there is new hope and new life offered to us all,

in the truth of the resurrection of Jesus. He has conquered death once for all. And we look forward now to Pentecost and celebrating the coming of the comforter Jesus left with us - the Holy Spirit.

There feels a real sense of hope - a sense of hope Bertie joins in with! He is ever hopeful - see him hidden in the photo, standing hopefully in the



garden, waiting for my neighbour to spot him, and come to play ball with him through the fence!

We have hope for ever in us and with us if we want it. The disciples 'had hoped' but felt lost and dejected until they saw the risen Lord. We know the whole of the story, so we have a

sense of hope open to us - the promise that we are never alone - even if at times it feels as though we are. Jesus has left with us the comforter, the Holy Spirit, whose coming we celebrate later this month. If we are open to their presence, they are with us always, to guide and to comfort.

May the hope of the risen Lord be with you, and may you sense the presence of the Holy Spirit guiding and comforting you. As the shoots of new hope and new beginnings grow, it is with excitement that I am booking baptisms/christenings for the coming months as restrictions are lifted and our churches are opening once again. We look forward to welcoming children (as it so happens, but baptisms/christenings are not restricted to children) into the family of God. Please do get in touch if you are thinking of getting your child baptised/christened - or if you would like to yourself. We are truly in a time of new beginnings and new hope.

Please do get in touch if you need to talk. Take great care, keep safe and God bless you and your loved ones.

Anthea

CHURCH MATTERS

Opening our churches for services

Following decisions by the individual Parochial Church Council's (PCCs) of the Benefice, we are gradually opening our Church buildings for services. In being allowed to do this we must ensure the churches are Covid-secure, so are updating all the risk assessments. We must ensure that the activities follow the strict Covid rules, which are changing over time as the Government roadmap out of Lockdown progresses.

Please continue to look out for announcements, through emails from Anthea, by the Four Parishes website, and on Church noticeboards for any changes, depending on what is safe, allowed, and possible as time progresses. We will continue with online services for the time being, as we are aware of people who are either not yet ready to come to services, or are unable to. It will be great to meet with those who have not wanted to use Zoom, or are unable to, who have been greatly missed at our services and activities.

Please note that **Pentecost** occurs on the fourth Sunday (**23 May**) which would normally be our monthly Benefice Service when we all join together for our service. As none of our churches are big enough to ensure Covid distancing for this at the current time, **we are planning services in all our churches on 23 May**, and are holding the **Benefice Service on Zoom on 30 May**.

Here is a quick resumé of the **Covid rules** as a reminder:

Covid rules until at least 17 May:

Risk assessments must be updated to allow recommencement of in-person services. These can be found on the Four Parishes website here: <https://www.fourparishes.org.uk/covid>.

Inside: 2m distancing and mask wearing remain in place. There is no congregational singing or mingling with anyone not in a household bubble.

Outside: 'rule of 6' applies.

Covid rules from 17 May at the earliest:

Inside: Mask wearing and no congregational singing remain in place. 'Rule of 6' or two households comes into place, otherwise 2m distancing with anyone not in a household bubble.

Outside: up to 30 can mix.

Advent challenge and beyond

We continue our reading through the New Testament and the chats on people's experiences from the month's readings. Our chat on **Acts for April** is scheduled for **11 May at 7.30pm for an hour via Zoom**. Please do come along and share your thoughts, comments, and questions. The challenge for May is to read both letters of Paul to the Corinthians (29 chapters so still only one a day): **1 and 2 Corinthians for May**.

For those doing the **Psalm a Day for 150 Days** challenge, I hope you are doing well. You are probably two-thirds of the way through now! Keep going!

Summary of Lockdown 3 activities

In addition to the Sunday Services and Special Services listed on page 5, we continue for the time being, with the now regular weekly activities on Zoom. As the Government's planned easing of the Lockdown rules continue, we will see if people would still like them as time progresses.

Look out for emails with any updates on activities. Please do get in touch with Anthea for invitations if you do not already get emails from her:

	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Morning Prayer at 9am	✓			✓
Evening Prayer at 6pm		✓	✓	
Midweek Elevenses at 11		✓		
End of the Week Drinks at 7pm				✓

Beckley School

Please continue to pray for the School, remembering those leading during this time of change. By the time you read this magazine the interviews may have already taken place for the new Head Teacher, who will lead the School in the next phase of its life. Assuming an appointment is made, we pray for them as they prepare to take up the post, and for the School as they look forward with excitement and anticipation of their arrival.

Recent services and activities

We had a huge variety of services and activities throughout Holy Week, even though churches in the Benefice were closed except for private prayer. Many people in the Benefice 'came virtually' to these and it was wonderful to see you. We had one very small gathering in St Nicolas Church on Good Friday for a service of meditation and reflection.

A huge thank you to all those involved in decorating our churches, inside and out, for Easter Day, and also to those who continue to open up our churches for private prayer as allowed under current Covid rules.

We held two special services marking the death of His Royal Highness Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, held virtually. It was good to be able to mark this occasion despite restrictions. A huge thank you to all those involved in changing altar linen etc, tolling bells and setting flags at half mast at appropriate times.

Easter Garden Competition

Thank you so much for all the imaginative and creative entries we had for the Easter Garden competition. All the entries can be seen on the Four Parishes website here: <https://www.fourparishes.org.uk/easter-garden>.

The winning entries appear below:



1st: Ella Waite

2nd & 3rd: Lydia and Naomi Hinks

A huge thank you to Rectory Farm and Jane Walker for their generosity in gifting the prizes.

Recordings of Services

Do not forget that you can watch recordings of the Benefice services by following this link: <https://www.fourparishes.org.uk/online-services>. The recordings are edited versions of the live Zoom services and are usually posted on the website by the Monday evening following the service.

You can also listen to the music for upcoming and recent services by following this link <https://www.fourparishes.org.uk/music-for-services>. Most of the music is still being recorded individually by individual singers and players in the Four Parishes and mixed by Julia Stutfield to create a 'virtual choir'. At the last count we had recorded 80 hymns and over 50 organ pieces in this way. We are also grateful to St Martin's Voices, the professional ensemble from St Martin-in-the-Fields in London, who regularly create selections of high-quality recordings specifically for use in Church of England services.

* * * * *

GENERAL

The Overloaded Ox-Cam Arc

"It's a Whitehall plan...." and that's official



The last Four Parishes Newsletter contained the news that the Government has now officially cancelled the Oxford-Cambridge expressway. Earlier, in February, the Government made two important announcements that reveal a little more about its plans to develop the five counties that constitute the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. The first, titled Planning for sustainable growth in the Ox-Cam Arc, outlines three aims: to support long-run sustainable economic growth; to make the area a brilliant place to live, work and travel in; and to support lasting improvements to the environment. The Arc, we are told, is experiencing growing pains resulting from population increases of up to 17% since 2000. The solution proposed is yet more growth that will result in an increase in the County's housing stock (and probably population) of more than 100% in the next 30 years. Clearly, when it comes to the County's growing pains, the planners are like Hilaire Belloc's doctors: They answered as they took their fees, "There is no cure for this disease."

(continued over)

The second announcement came from England's Economic Heartland (EEH) that is designing a Sub-Regional Transport Strategy for the Arc area plus Swindon and Hertfordshire. EEH stepped into the breach long before the expressway was cancelled, and is investigating other ways of increasing connectivity, including between Oxford and Milton Keynes, with a dozen or more improved road corridors and several new rail ones across the entire region.

Meetings were held following each of the two announcements. During the first, the senior person in charge of developing sustainable growth in the Ox-Cam Arc admitted "It's a Whitehall plan....." and then added, as an after-thought, "...including local partners". During the second, England's Economic Heartland's Head of Technical Programme announced that the road corridors were being developed "..only to meet existing need...". EEH's plans would add another 862,000 houses to its region by 2050, an overall increase of 40%, but the associated models predict reduced congestion and net zero carbon for the entire transport system by 2040. George Box, a statistician, said "All models are wrong, but some are useful." We don't question EEH's transport models are wrong: we just wonder if they are at all useful.

You have learnt more in this short article about the scale of development proposed for the Ox-Cam Arc than you will from more than 600 pages of the official announcements that go out of their way to hide the truth from the general public. Please visit NEG's News pages for more information on each announcement: <https://www.noexpressway.org/news-update>.

* * * * *

Local Plan Update and Land North of Bayswater Brook Masterplan Consultation next steps

The initial series of workshops on the masterplan for part of strategic development site Land north of Bayswater Brook (LnBB) - the Lower Elsfield and Wick Farm parts of the site (Bayswater Farm is separately owned) - run by Camargue are now complete. All the documents, presentations and additional detailed reports can be downloaded from their website: <https://bayswateroxford.co.uk/workshop-downloads>.

The site promoters of LnBB - Christ Church, Pegasus Group and Dorchester Residential Management - are now working with the County Council on modelling for new transport infrastructure for the Inspector's 'low car policy'. There will be discussions with the County Council about what alleviation will be required for the ring road and Headington roundabout and our local roads. Our group is confident that substantial alleviation will be required as a significant amount of additional traffic will be generated not only from LnBB but also from the Barton Park development, the other Green Belt sites around Oxford - Northfields and Grenoble Road, and Connecting Oxford and any bus gate schemes within Oxford. We are very concerned about what alleviation schemes will be proposed, as the 'link road' threatens to make use of our local roads as rat runs and to open up more Green Belt land between the Bayswater Road and the A40 in Stanton St John and Forest Hill parishes for development.

The next workshops on a revised masterplan are scheduled for late May, early June. A planning application will follow the masterplan. The site promoters plan to set up a local liaison group to "provide feedback, guidance and challenge at every stage of the scheme". They would welcome any suggestions for membership.

It is particularly important that those living next to and within the site are represented e.g. residents from Wick Farm and Lower Farm, the Bayswater and Elsfield Roads.

The issues concerning us about this site remain -

- Transport infrastructure
- Protection of the SSSI Sydlings Copse
- Flooding
- Archaeology
- Design

Our group would welcome anyone or group with expertise or interests in any of these areas to work with us and help us. Please contact your parish council or Ginette Camps-Walsh, email: camps.walsh@btinternet.com.

Ginette Camps-Walsh, April 2021

'Knowing our Neighbours': Jan Weller

Jan Weller is known throughout Oxfordshire for the preschool that's named after her, and locally for providing childcare and after school activities. She's always lived in the county, growing up in Lye Valley and coming to Beckley in 1962, after she married Fred Weller at Headington Quarry Church. "I just feel I belong here, I don't want to be anywhere else", she says. After marrying, they secured a building plot in Beckley and Jan has lived there ever since.



Jan's upbringing began in Lye Valley, where she went to St.Francis and St.Christopher C of E Primary Schools, after which she got a scholarship to attend the Oxford Central Girls' School. She then cultivated her love of books, working at Blackwell's as a typist, cataloguing books, sending them overseas and typing up documents. "I used to go very early in the morning and help Sir Basil Blackwell open his personal post", she says. It was here that she met Fred. She would take short breaks from the job over the years as she had their first two children, Lynn and Sharon.

Jan's work in childcare started in 1976 with the Beckley Playgroup and her efforts span 33 years. It started with Jan looking after a couple of local children, Harriet Lockhart-Smith and Martha Lane-Fox, along with her young son Richard. Martha now sits in the House of Lords. Louisa, Martha's mum, was the one who encouraged Jan to make the Playgroup a regular event. It proved to be very popular and soon Jan's house was struggling to cope with the influx of children. "I was allowed three other rooms to use in houses throughout the village", she says.

In 1981, the merger of Stanton and Beckley School provided a bigger space for the Playgroup at the former's residence. Roy Roden, headteacher at the time, was more than happy to welcome the group. "Then more children could come from all the villages, Elsfield, Headington, Beckley, Horton-cum-Studley, Stanton St John and Forest Hill. It was nice to meet so many different people", Jan says. The parent committee then decided that as a tribute to Jan and her efforts in

providing activities for children, the Playgroup would be renamed 'The Jan Weller Preschool'. "I wanted to provide for community people, which we did, and I made so many friends", she says. The Jan Weller preschool operated for 39 years in all, although it is now disbanded.

Her other efforts included forming Beckley School Playlink and one of the first After School Care Clubs in Oxfordshire. Jan established the Playlink with a friend in 1978 and intended it to make the transition from preschool to school less daunting. Once a week children were able to meet their teacher ahead of the start of term. It was Richard Falkner who pushed Jan to start the After School Care Club, saying to her at the time how good she was with children. This too, proved to be immensely popular. "It was about 67 children at Beckley School, and I wrote all the names down and I thought 'gosh that's everybody!'", she says. During this time, Jan also became a registered Childminder, so she was always on hand for any families that needed help.

However, Jan says she is fond of Beckley not just for the community, but due to her family history in the area. During the current pandemic Jan's thoughts have often lingered on the grandfather she never knew, who passed away aged 27 from Spanish Flu in 1918. William Watts was born in Stanton St John in 1891 and after he married Jane Sumner in 1914, he became part of a family who had lived in Beckley since the 1700's. After William's death, Jane was left to care for her three young daughters Jennie, May (Jan's mum) and Louise, moving back with her mother on Otmoor Lane.



Nowadays Jan continues providing for the community through being a member of the 'Open the Book' team at Beckley School. "We choose a story from the Bible, and act it out for about a quarter of an hour. The children love it", she says. This of course involves a good amount of dressing up. These fortnightly sessions haven't been running during lockdown and Jan can't wait to get back.

Robert Macfarlane, Horton-cum-Studley

Celebrating Iranian New Year

Fariba Battye, who sent us this interesting article, has lived in Stanton St John for many years, but she was born and brought up in Iran. She and her English husband have two children and four grandchildren.

Iranian New Year, which is called, "Noruz", starts on the first day of spring, 21 March, and is celebrated for thirteen days. The celebration really starts from the last Wednesday of the previous year, which is called, "Chaharshanbah-sury." (Chaharshanbeh means Wednesday, and sury means party.) On the night before that Wednesday, Iranians traditionally jump over seven heaps of fire, reciting the rhyme, "Sorkheyah-tou az man, sardeyah man az tou" (meaning, your healthy glowing red colour comes to my face, my yellow sick colour goes to you to be burnt). This is then followed with fireworks and a party.

For the New Year they display, "Haftsyen" (which means seven things starting with the letter, "S").

This photo shows my own "Haftsyen" for this year, which consists of:



1. Sonbol (hyacinth)
2. Sabzeh (green grassy thing)
3. Sieb (apple)
4. Serkah (vinegar)
5. Sanjat-its (a kind of dried fruit)
6. Samavar (samovar)
7. Samanoo (a very delicious food which takes at least ten days to make, so these days people buy it from supermarkets).

As well as the above, the "Haftsyen" arrangement always includes goldfish, coloured eggs, candles and all kinds of flowers that grow in spring, a copy of the Koran, (Muslim's religious book) and poetry books, including one by the famous Iranian poet Hafez. Hafez's poetry book is included in the hope that it will tell people their fortune for the coming year.

On the 13th day of Noruz it is considered unlucky to stay at home so the whole nation goes out for a picnic, taking their sabzeh with them. The ladies who are not married recite a little rhyme saying "Sesdabadar, salleh degar, khaneha shohar" (meaning next year at this time I will be in my husband's house.) Young ladies therefore make wishes and then tie knots in the sabzeh and throw the sabzeh into running water.

The Noruz celebration has very ancient origins going back to Zoroastrian times, which predates all other official religions. Today Iranians are predominantly Shia Muslims, but Zoroastrianism is in their blood and psyche. The three principals of Zoroastrianism are; Good thinking, Good talking and Good deeds.

Months before Noruz, the dress makers, tailors and shoemakers are very busy making new dresses, suites and shoes. This is because traditionally every member of the family, no matter how old or young, should wear everything new at Noruz, even new underwear, socks or stockings.

Also part of the Noruz tradition is that family and friends visit one another's homes. Iranian families are highly hierarchically structured according to age. Younger family members must first visit the more elderly members of their family. Thus on the first three to four days of Noruz, depending on the size of their extended families, grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles usually stay at home. The visiting usually starts at about 10am and goes on until about 8pm, with a 2 hour lunch break.

In a day each family might receive visits from up to ten or more family members, so for that reason visits are often not very long and in any event shortly after a new group arrives the previous one leaves. The guests are all served with cups of tea, cakes, fruits, nuts and much more. From the fourth or fifth days of Noruz elderly relatives visit all members of the family who have visited them. Only children receive presents from their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

In the second week of the Noruz holidays, close friends visit one another's houses, but the age hierarchical structure is not strictly observed. However, if, for example, I visit my friend's house one year, my friend will be conscious to visit me first the following year.

Fariba Battye, April 2021

FOCUS ON FAMILIES

Friends of Beckley School (FOBS)

This year we will be celebrating 125 years of Beckley School with some covid-friendly fundraisers to celebrate the history of the school in the community.

The first of these is the Beckley School cook book. We'd like anyone with a connection to Beckley School (ex pupils, staff, cooks and parents) to send their favourite recipes along with instructions and photographs to BeckleyFOBS@gmail.com. Recipes will be published later this year in a lovely keepsake book available from school and local businesses. Don't delay; submit yours as soon as possible.

FOBS would like to say a big thank you to everyone who donated items for Beckley School Forest School last month. After a lot of hard work and preparations, the first sessions were able to take place at the end of last term, starting initially with pupils from Tufted Duck class.



We are still on the lookout for logs cut into sections to make fireside seating for children, as well as ropes, tarps, trowels and pots and pans.

Please email BeckleyFOBS@gmail.com if you can help.

You can make a financial donation to FOBS any time at donorbox.org/FOBS.

Friends of Beckley School Friends of Beckley School is a registered charity (1160166) whose aim is to enrich school life by funding new IT equipment, school building updates and school activities.





THE MAPLE TREE AT FOREST HILL

A great place to grow

Play and Learn

Calling parents and carers of babies and young children! Please join us at the Forest Hill Village Hall for an hour of activities, arts and crafts, stories, singing and rhymes **Thursday** from 11:30am - 12:30pm starting on June 10th.

Book your place by emailing:
Laura@mapletree.org.uk



f @THEMAPLETREEWHEATLEY

[HTTPS://WWW.MAPLETREE.ORG.UK](https://WWW.MAPLETREE.ORG.UK)

See page 25 for more information

The Otmoor Flyer

Happily the Otmoor Flyer has restarted taking passengers to the centre of Oxford twice a week from the four villages, leaving at 10.30am and returning at 1.15pm, from Broad Street near Balliol College.

Monday and Thursday from Forest Hill and Stanton St. John; Tuesday and Friday from Horton-cum-Studley and Beckley.

A maximum of 6 passengers only may travel currently, therefore booking is essential. Please book by 10am on the day before travel. For Monday journeys, book the previous Friday.

To book from **Horton and Beckley**, telephone Jill Meyjes: **01865 351496**.
For **Forest Hill and Stanton** telephone Kate MacFarlane: **01865 351086**.

With the importance of Climate Change and the need to reduce pollution from vehicles, coupled with the hassle of taking a car into Oxford and bearing in mind the possible charges for so doing in the near future, please remember the Otmoor Flyer is there for you. New passengers to the service are very welcome. Any queries to Jill Meyjes as above.

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BECKLEY

Beckley Church

Details of all church services can be found on page 5. Any changes to the published schedule will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Beckley & Stowood Parish Council

The next meeting will be held remotely on Wednesday 5 May at 8pm by Conference Call. Local elections will be held in the Village Hall on Thursday 6 May 2021. Parish Council information, including agendas and minutes, is available on the website www.beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk. The Clerk's email address is clerk@beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk if you wish to contact the Parish Council to raise a question for the next meeting.

The Otmoor Flyer – please see latest update on facing page.

For information on **Beckley Village Hall** please see www.beckleyvillagehall.org and to enquire about a booking please contact the Booking Secretary at booking@beckleyvillagehall.org.

Fix My Street: anyone can report a road or street problem on the County Council website at www.fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Reminder from the Parish Council: Please clean up after your dog and dispose of bagged waste and litter in your Grey bin at home or in the dual-waste litter bin on the playing field. Please don't leave bags on the verges and pavements or hanging in the hedgerow. Thank you.

The Countryside Code: advice for countryside visitors – updated 1 April 2021

- Respect everyone
- Protect the environment
- Enjoy the outdoors
- Know the signs and symbols of the countryside

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code-advice-for-countryside-visitors>.

Beckley and Area Community Benefit Society

More than a Pub program. <https://bacbs.org/events>

This month, we hope, sees the beginning of the end of virtual events. We're hoping to resume live events in the pub in June, so we're not quite there yet, and May events will still take place on Zoom.

Sunday 9 May, 6.30pm

Saving Elephants in West Africa.

Dr Susan Canney, a resident of Horton-cum-Studley, has worked on a variety of nature conservation projects across Africa, Asia and Europe, and in sustainable development policy at the Green College Centre for Environmental Policy and Understanding. Over the years her conservation work has become increasingly about finding ways for humans and nature to thrive together. Susan was featured in the October 2020 Four Parishes Magazine ('Knowing our neighbours'), which can be found at <https://www.fourparishes.org.uk/magazine>.

Sunday 27 June, 6.30pm

About Jenga

We are hoping that this will be the first live talk, in the pub, this year. We are planning to Zoom it as well, for those unable to attend in person.

Leslie Scott was born and raised in Africa, and educated in Kenya, Sierra Leone, and England. One of the world's few professional board game designers, she is the creator of the blockbuster game Jenga and a founder-director of Oxford Games Ltd. When not based at the Mpala Research Centre, a 50,000 acre wildlife conservancy in northern Kenya, Scott and her zoologist husband live on their own small wildlife haven, a 100 acre farm on the edge of Otmoor.

Sunday 11 July, 6.30pm

Marlborough's Blenheim Campaign of 1704

A talk by Tim King: the battle itself is interesting - and the political background and the characters involved (including Louis XIV and Prince Eugene) are fascinating, as is the way that Marlborough had to hoodwink both friend and foe on his way eastwards.

Zoom access details are distributed nearer the time. If you would like to watch previous talks, please email Adrian Hampshire at info@bacbs.org.

BACBS Easter 'Treasure' Hunt

Susy Jepson of Beckley and Mary Stuck of Horton, devised an Easter 'treasure' hunt in Beckley and Horton-cum-Studley to coincide with the start of the school holidays.

Clue sheets for each village were made available from the end of March onwards, with answers to be found by walking around the village looking 'carefully around in all directions, including upwards!'

The winners of the treasure hunts - shown here with their prizes, and also on the front cover of the magazine - were Jan and Fred Weller (Beckley) and Lucie Mermet-Burnet, age 7 (Horton-cum-Studley).



Editor's note:

Congratulations to the organisers for coming up with a fun and Covid-safe activity. I'm sure we all look forward to joining in with many more village events in the coming months as soon as it is safe and legal to do so!



FOREST HILL

St Nicolas Church

Details of all church services can be found on page 5. Any changes to the published schedule will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

News from St Nicolas

On Saturday 10 April we heard the sad news that H.R.H. Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh had died. We give thanks for his wonderful life of service to Queen and Country.

During the week leading up to Easter, the altar cloth in the church is changed from purple for Lent to red for Palm Sunday. The altar is left completely bare for Good Friday, and then we put on the gold cloth for Easter Day. On 10 April, as a mark of respect for the death of Prince Philip, we were asked to change the cloth to purple until after the day of his funeral. If you did go into the Church during the week of 10 April - 18 April, you will now know why the altar cloth was purple.

We should like to thank The Reverend Hugh Lee, who kindly came to St. Nicolas Church on Good Friday and led a service of Reflection. It was lovely to spend time in St. Nicolas Church at Easter with eleven people well distanced.

Grateful thanks to Judy Brown, Pat Fraser, Linda Hurren and Rosemary Waknell who decorated the Church for Easter.

Jane Walker, Churchwarden

Forest Hill with Shotover Parish Council

Hopefully we can see the return to some sort of normal very soon. When using the play and communal areas, please continue to follow safety measures to help continue to keep the community safe.

Unless we are informed otherwise, the regulations on virtual meetings run until after our next meeting which is the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on Thursday 6 May 2021, at 7pm. This is a change from the previously publicised date.

The date of the following meeting is Thursday 24 June, at 7pm, which is

proposed to be a physical meeting in the Village Hall. The Parish Council will welcome members of the public, whilst observing government guidelines on the use of community halls and public gatherings. All council meetings have an open session where residents can bring attention to any village issues.

Current and archive Agendas and Minutes can be found at www.parish-council.com/foresthillwithshotover/index.asp. Once Covid restrictions are completely released, the current Agenda and Minutes will be posted on the notice board outside the Village Hall.

You can contact Helen Cross, the Parish Council Clerk, tel: 0844 884 3328, during the hours 09:00 - 17:00, or email: theclerk@foresthillwithshotover-pc.org.uk.

Forest Hill Baby and Toddler Group

Following further conversations with The Maple Tree children's centre charity in Wheatley, we are really excited to announce that the Forest Hill Baby and Toddler Group will be re-starting on Thursday 10 June, 11.30am-12.30pm, under the new name of **The Maple Tree at Forest Hill**.

Laura Spencer, The Maple Tree Centre Manager, will be leading the sessions, and we hope that parents and carers of babies and young children from all over the Four Parishes will take advantage of this opportunity to meet in a safe, local, and friendly environment. This is The Maple Tree's first outreach project in our area but if all goes well, Laura hopes to run sessions in other villages as well. **Please refer to page 19 for details of how to register.**



If you are interested in volunteering to help with setting up and running the sessions on a rota basis (term-time only) or if you have any questions, please contact Julia Stutfield. Telephone: 07766 103427 or email: julia.stutfield@gmail.com.

I'm looking for a paddock/field locally to rent for a well behaved horse.
Anything considered, please call/text Emma on 07753 658056.

HORTON-cum-STUDLEY

News from St Barnabas

Details of all church services can be found on page 5. Any changes to the published schedule will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Horton-cum-Studley Parish Council

This year's Annual Parish Meeting (APM) will take place online at 8pm on Thursday 6 May. All parishioners are welcome to attend: please contact Alexia via hortoncumstudleyparishcouncil@gmail.com for an invitation.

This is a week earlier than the APM would usually happen, as current legislation means that from 7 May Parish Councils are unable to legally meet remotely. The Parish Council do not want to limit attendance due to the number of people who would be able to attend in person, or concerns over the safety of public meetings. Minutes and reports will be published online.

Horton-cum-Studley Gardening Club

The cold snap with frosts and unexpected snow has damaged some blossom but tulips, narcissi, primroses, cowslips, euphorbias and fritillaries are still looking wonderful and my little alpines are thriving in the cold.

The sweet peas had a bit of a shock but have survived. May and June will bring apple blossom (hopefully undamaged by the frost), roses, geraniums and so much more. Veg patches also hold much promise, especially those delicious early potatoes.

I am looking forward to our outings to local gardens. Please see the website www.horton-cum-studley.org.uk/community/clubs/ for more information.



If you would like to know more about the Gardening Club or support the club by joining the committee, please contact me on 01865 351310.

Sue Burge, Chairman

Millennium Hall Committee

With easing of lockdown, there are some bookings coming in, which is very good news; starting 6 May when local elections take place. Arrangements have been made for the hall to be fully cleaned the day before and the one after. A one-way system will be in place and entry will be through the front door and exit via the fire doors at the back of the hall.

Of major concern at the moment is the state of the play area. Although it passed its annual inspection, Barry White has found several of the posts supporting the activities have largely rotted. We are seeking quotes both for renovation or renewal. To have a completely new system to include more challenging items for the older children is likely to be the most cost effective way forward and will allow grants to be obtained (hopefully!).

Urgent News

As reported in the last issue, the AGM of the hall was held on 18 March and the major item was election of officers for the committee. Michael Bennett, having been Secretary for the last 2 years, declined to stand again and both myself as Chairman and Rachael Ayres as Treasurer indicated that we had been in post for 2 years, having originally promised to serve for 1 year. We received one nomination for Secretary and are immensely grateful to Stuart MacFarlane for being willing to take on the post. Thanks were given to Mike Bennett for his contribution. No other nominations were received, and both Rachael and I have felt obliged to continue for another year. Liz Buttery and Tessa Davey tendered their resignations as committee members, which were reluctantly accepted. They have both made substantial contributions to the running of the hall and will be greatly missed. David Russell, our wonderful Bookings Secretary, has indicated that he will step down next year. Thus, we are now back to where we were 2 years ago and this, and subsequent reports, gives notice that the hall will have to be closed this time next year unless other villagers offer their services. Everybody values the hall but nobody wishes to contribute and give up an hour of time once a month for a committee meeting.

It was very disappointing that nobody from the village except the committee and Stuart attended the meeting. If that is indicative of the value that villagers have for the hall, then it is not worth struggling to keep it running despite its excellent facilities. So, **PLEASE HELP!**

Derek Jewell

Junior and Adult Coaching

BOOK NOW to reserve your place

We are taking bookings for adults and kids tennis coaching. Bart Wisniewski our new Head Coach, (also Head coach at David Lloyd) is offering a variety of sessions for different ages (kids) and abilities.

Courses are for 12 weeks starting 19 April to 20 July with a break for half term.

You do not need to be a member of the club to take part in the coaching courses.

All bookings and contact info is here:

<https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/HortonCumStudleyTen.../Coaching>.

Membership

The new season began on 1 April, so please remember to renew your membership asap, as the access codes will change on 1 May. Annual membership fees remain the same as previous years, adults (£47), juniors (£20) & families (£80).

You can now join via the website:

<https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/HortonCumStudleyTennisClubOxford/Membership/Join>.

New members, old and young, are welcome to join and enjoy the lovely courts. We are an inclusive club catering to all abilities. We have a relaxed Sunday Club session for adults, free parking, lovely grounds with a playground, plus toilets on site.



Web: <https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/HortonCumStudleyTennisClubOxford>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/hsctennisclub>

STANTON ST JOHN

Stanton Church

Details of all church services can be found on page 5. Any changes to the published schedule will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Stanton St John Parish Council

Following our meeting on Thursday 8 April, I am pleased to announce that we have a new Parish Council. Four of our previous Councillors had resigned before 31 March and on that date we gained clearance from the District Council to co-opt four new people to serve the Parish as Councillors.

The posts were advertised in the Parish and eight people offered themselves for consideration to be co-opted onto the Parish Council. With the kind help of two District Councillors, Elizabeth Gillespie and Caroline Newman, four candidates were selected and our new Parish Council has the following people to represent the parishioners of Stanton St. John:

Luke McLaren, Clare Ferguson,
Michiel Stofferis, Greta Shepherd,
Alex Smith, Andrew Clark

A big thank you to all who offered themselves for co-option and I warmly welcome our new Councillors and hope that together we are able to serve you well as we go forward. In addition to this I would like to offer my thanks to those former Councillors: Gina Moore, Tom Goss, John Shaw, and David Polgreen who gave of their time to serve us here in Stanton.

*Andrew Clark
Chair, Stanton St John Parish Council*

Stanton St John WI

We continue to use Zoom for our monthly meetings and members are invited to attend by receiving a link to each meeting. On Tuesday 18 May we plan to have our talk start at 7.30pm with an option to log in from 7.20pm. Our speaker is Ann Sharman. She has entitled her talk "I went to a wedding in Delhi", so quite a change from our last topic.

(continued over)

We are compiling a programme of events for the coming year. Do keep a look out for little posters appearing round the villages. Plans are also being made for walks, visits and outdoor events to take place as soon as we are allowed to proceed. Although we are grateful to have been able to maintain connections through the internet, we look forward to being able to resume normal service and meet face to face.

If anyone is interested in joining us for a taster session or would like details about how to join us, please contact the committee by emailing stantonstjohnwi@oxfordshirewi.co.uk.

Charles Merry, 10 August 1932 - 3 April 2021

Charles Merry, who has died at the age of 88, was born in Stanton St John on 10 August 1932. His father was a woodman from Horton-cum-Studley who worked locally, especially in Holly Wood. He met Charles's mother, who was from Bletchingdon, when she worked at Studley Priory. The Mill Street cottage where Charles was born has since been demolished and the family moved to NC 28 (now Mill Stream Cottage). He attended the village school and then Lord Williams's School in Thame. He was called up for National Service and served in the Army in Germany.



His working life was in accountancy; working first for a coal merchant in Oxford, then at Morris Motors and finally at Pressed Steel until his retirement. He carried his financial skill into his private life, acting as treasurer for the cricket teams he played for and for the Stanton St John Village Hall Management Committee.

Following his marriage to Cecilia in 1986 he moved to Headington but he retained close links with the village, serving as a trustee for the Stanton St John Charities as well as the VHMC. Some of you may remember Charles and his school mate, Brenda Knight, recalling childhood memories of Stanton at talks in the Village Hall. He is survived by Cecilia and his younger sister, Anne.

Lyn Ebbs

Another side of Charles Merry

I wanted to share a side of Charles Merry, who sadly died in April, that you might not know. He contributed several pages of notes about his boyhood in Mill Street, Stanton St John when four of us were compiling the Natural History poster for the village's Millennium Project. He was a keen nature lover and shared some very evocative memories of the wildlife of that time. Here are just a few highlights:

"A row of willow trees stretched down Hillcraft from the bottom of Simms Close along the ditch and around Barnard's Close (now Silver Birches). This was the home of several pairs of little owls and stock doves that nested in tree holes. Treecreepers also frequented them, along with the occasional

Turtle dove photographed by Lyn Ebbs



nuthatch. If you were particularly quiet, you might have seen a water rail skulking in the weeds in the brook below the old chapel. Turtle doves were common summer visitors, particularly around the Mill ponds and gardens. Cuckoos called continuously from the trees around Stanton House - twice I

found cuckoo's eggs in hedge sparrow's (dunnock's) nests in local hedgerows."

"A herd of fallow deer was kept in Holton Park but, during World War II, the American army took over the park and built a hospital in the grounds for head-injury cases. So all the deer left the park and dispersed to the local woods. Over the years they became well-established and are now very much part of the local fauna. Muntjac deer escaped from Woburn Abbey and first appeared locally in the late 1930s. They have also become well-established and are comparatively tame, often seen in local gardens being very partial to young rose shoots."

"Holly Lane was a particularly interesting walk as it had a lot of bramble bushes and some fine blackthorn. These encouraged the many woodland butterflies - red and white admirals and also black hairstreaks. Nightingales were fairly plentiful in the woods and, if you walked the length of Holly Wood on an early summer's evening, you could expect to hear three or four in full song."

With Charles' passing we have lost not only a friend but a connection with a time when nature was a lot more abundant.

Lyn Ebbs

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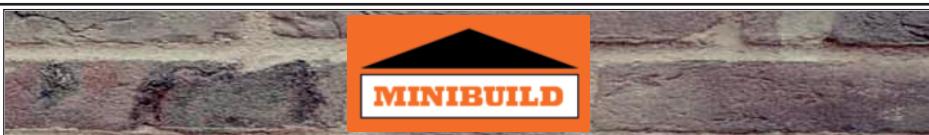
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Julia Slingo's Ginger Cookies

Ingredients in order of use:

375 g flour (plain)

1 tsp bicarb of soda

3 rounded tsps. ginger (ground)

120 g butter (make sure this is chilled and cut into small pieces)

175 g soft dark brown sugar

5 tbsps golden syrup

1 large egg

Recipe

Heat your oven to 190C/180C Fan and line four baking trays with greaseproof paper.

Sieve together the flour, bicarb and ginger into a large bowl or into your food processor if using this.

Add the cold cubed butter into the bowl and rub this in until it looks like fine breadcrumbs. Alternatively, using a food processor, combine the fat with the floury mix in a series of short bursts, till you have the effect of fine breadcrumbs.

Next add in the sugar and combine into the mix, then add the golden syrup and egg, beating this with a spatula till it is a smooth dough. N.B. For an easy life, I use my food mixer to beat in the syrup and egg rather than the spatula as it can be heavy going.

Tip the dough onto a lightly floured work top and knead it briefly to make sure everything is well combined.

Roll the dough out to $\frac{1}{2}$ cm thickness (or if you like your cookies squidgey, as I do, you can make this a little thicker!)

Using your favourite cutter, cut out your cookies (this as adapted from a ginger bread man/woman recipe, so feel free to use this type of cutter).

Put your cookies on baking trays lined with greaseproof and cook them in the preheated oven for 10 mins then cool them on a wire rack.

Make sure that the cookies are fully cool before decorating them.

Store your cookies in an airtight jar. These will last for about a week