
THE OXHILL NEWS

January 2023 No. 578



Spectacular Christmas lights on Diana & Martin Cronin's beautiful snowy tree.

Photo by Gill Stewart

Vanessa Druce, editor & Grenville Moore, consulting editor

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CLUB & GROUP CONTACT DETAILS

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The Peacock Pub	01295 688060
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Warwickshire Mobile Library:	01926 851031
WOT2Grow Community Orchard:	Liz Atkinson (680045), Paul Sayer (680451), Sue & Mike Sanderson (688080) www.wot2grow.co.uk

**If you would like to list your club or group in the Oxhill News
please send details to oxhill.news.editor@gmail.com**

VILLAGE CHRISTMAS

Our village Christmas tree looked lovely this season, especially in the snow. Thank you to all who set up and decorate our village Christmas Tree each year.

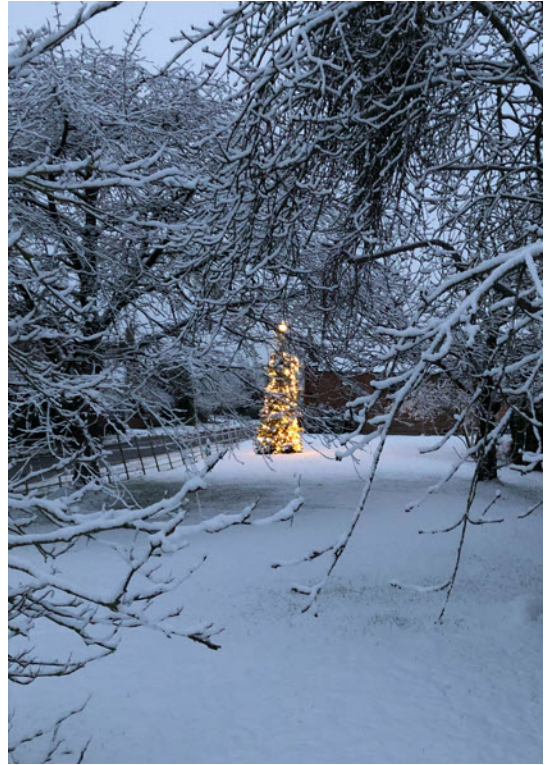
Thank you also to the villagers who organise events, cook, bake, serve and clean up at our village celebrations and parties throughout the year.

And thank you to the couriers that distribute the Oxhill News to our homes.

Finally, thank you Grenville, co-editor, for your help and inspiration in putting together the Oxhill News each month.

~ *Vanessa, ed.*

Photos by Rachel Beesley & Gill Stewart



50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE OXHILL NEWS

The Oxhill News was first published in June 1973. This year marks the 50th anniversary. Below is the front cover of the first issue and opposite, Carol Clark, our village historian, writes an obituary of Betty Smith, the founder and first editor of the Oxhill News.

THE OXHILL NEWS

Issue No.1.

June 1973.

As the result of the recent Questionnaire sent around the village shows an overwhelming majority in favour of a village news sheet, it has been decided to embark upon this venture. At present, Betty Smith (Tel: Tysoe 306) and Annette Summers (Tel:342), together with Stephen Smith and Joan Clark (Tel:276) will be dealing with the editorial side. Joan has also agreed to be in charge of distribution and collection of donations. John Cartmell (Tel:327) has kindly agreed to undertake the actual 'running off'.

The News will be through your door on the first day of each month, except where this falls on a Sunday, when it will be delivered to you on the 2nd. We hope you will find your monthly News both useful and informative. Any items which you wish to be included, or any news which you think will be of interest to the village, should be with the Editor as soon as possible, but not later than the 24th of the month, at the latest.

We hope you will feel that this service is worthy of your donation. We did mention the sum of 25p per year which will pay for stencils, ink and paper, although naturally the labour involved will be given free. Should you require more than one copy, perhaps to send to friends who have left the village, this can be arranged for a small additional sum. If a small profit should accrue by the end of the year, this will be given to the Village Hall Committee for their use.

We should very much like to have your comments and your views on all village matters.

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE.

The Village Hall Committee wish to express their thanks to all those who completed these, and also to the young people of the village who dealt with the distribution and collection. The results of this 'market research' project were most encouraging, and a very brief analysis of the replies is given below :

There are approximately 90 houses in the village, and 76 forms were returned.

60 people definitely wanted a News Sheet. 27 people were interested in Evening Classes of some kind. 11 voted for Whist drives, and 6 were for Bingo. 28 people wanted film shows, whilst a Quiz or a Brains Trust appealed to 13 each. 34 people voted for lectures of some kind, whilst dancing classes and amateur dramatics interested about 16 people each. 36 people thought some kind of charitable activity would be worthwhile, although some reservations were expressed.

BETTY SMITH 1929-2022

by Carol Clark

Readers of the Stratford Herald may recall reading in the 8 December edition the obituary of Betty Smith, retired reporter for the newspaper. Although it covers a long list of her achievements and interests, it doesn't mention that she was also the instigator and first editor of the Oxhill News almost 50 years ago. The first edition, dated June 1973, describes how a survey held within the village identified the desire for a monthly village newsletter; the rest, as they say, is history.

Betty and her family – husband Victor, and four sons aged between 5 and 12 at the time, moved to Oxhill in 1963. They lived at Fern Cottage, with its large garden, outbuildings, and two paddocks providing plenty of room for four boisterous boys. As my family lived in Blackford House, almost opposite Fern Cottage, it was inevitable we became friends and playmates with the three younger boys; I recall very early on in our acquaintance, the boys sitting on the wall at the front of their

Oxhill has a dainty dish or two to set before The Queen

NOT many diners know about Egbert's Ramekins . . . or even about Egbert. They are baked bread rolls with cheese filling.

They make up one of the dishes of Oxhill included in Mrs Betty Smith's Oxhill Jubilee Cookbook and sent to the Queen.

The village has collaborated in the cookbook project containing recipes with royal names. There are such classics

as Hampton Court Maize; there's a fudge sauce called Albert, and Teck Yogold, and Royal Granny's Toffee Apple Pudding. The recipes fit for a "royal" even manage to give an imperious ring to meat balls.

One of Mrs Smith's contributions is Domesday Dumplings. "A quick convenience meal for one of those days of doom".

Most of her favourite dishes contain meat—a hangover from her wartime childhood. She also attributes her love of cooking to those childhood days of rationing. Her cookery lessons at Sparkhill Commercial School were confined to re-constituting dried milk, dried onions, and dried bananas. "That's why I'm a carnivore".

She said that everyone in the tiny village had contributed in some way. Mr George Adams turned the handle of the ancient village duplicating machine though she had done the typing herself. "It only took me two or three days in my spare time"—another result of her Sparkhill commercial training. "They don't call me Fingers Smith for nothing".

Mrs Betty Smith collated her "right royal" recipes of Oxhill under nine headings and has had a letter of acknowledgement from Buckingham Palace. Published by the village jubilee committee, the proceeds will help to pay for commemorative mugs for the children and for jubilee day celebrations



garden and my sister and I perched opposite on the short stretch of wall our side (still there next to the driveway gate), hurling childish jokes and insults at each another across the road.

Life in the Smith household always seemed interesting to us, with Betty's energy and drive to be doing something different or new. As well as starting an old-time music hall group and publishing a "how-to" book to go with it, she also researched and produced the first village history booklet in the days when going to the Record Office to look at old documents seemed very esoteric to me (I'm now perfectly used to the idea, by the way). The Oxhill Cookbook produced for the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 was also one of Betty's projects.

I had moved away from home by the time the Oxhill News first started rolling off the "press", but my sister remained involved in its distribution until she in turn left home as well, and in 1982 the Smiths moved to Brailes, with the Oxhill News editorial baton being handed on to the next editor.

WOMAN'S OWN, TOWER HOUSE, LONDON WC2

NOVEMBER 20, 1971

ANOTHER SUCCESS STORY—largely thanks to Woman's Own! Two years ago Mrs. Betty Smith of Oxhill, Warwickshire, wrote a letter for our column The Way We Live about her troupe of amateur music hall enthusiasts, The Alhambra. Result? She was inundated with letters from people all over the country, interested in amateur dramatics. "You ought to write a book," joked a friend in the publishing business.

Mrs. Smith did just that! And now The Roundwood Press have published *Corn for the Hens*. It's based on housewife Mrs. Smith's often hilarious experiences during six years of staging music-hall



Reader Mrs. Betty Smith, as she really is and dressed for the part

shows, which her troupe perform to Darby and Joan Clubs, old-age pensioners' associations, and so on. Not bad going for someone who has four sons to look after! The book includes a selection of sketches written by Mrs. Smith too. "We're not charging an acting fee for them," she explains, "since I know that self-financed groups performing for charity find it virtually impossible to afford the usual fees for using published material." The book costs 60p, but with a group order of six or more, 50p each.



Snowy Oxhill

Photo of St Lawrence church by Giosué Larucci. Photo of the Peacock Pub by Gill Stewart.

ST LAWRENCE CHURCH IN JANUARY

The New Year is always full of hope and promise: we begin it full of the love and welcome shown around the village during Advent and Christmas, and mindful that that was exactly what God was doing when Jesus was born – bringing His love and welcome into the very darkest places of our lives. May the New Year bring you His joy and the assurance of His presence.

Church Services in January, in Oxhill unless otherwise stated.

Sunday, January 1 st New Year's Day	11.00 am in Tysoe	George Heighton
Sunday, January 8 th Epiphany	9.30 am Morning Worship	Jennie Rake
Sunday, January 15 th	9.30 am Holy Communion	George Heighton
Sunday, January 22 nd	6.30 pm Evening Worship	Jill Tucker
Sunday, January 29 th	11.00 am	United Service in Sutton

The **Wednesday Morning Zoom Worship** will resume on
Wednesday, January 11th, 10.00 am

And from Iona, a prayer for the New Year:

Step Softly

Step softly into your weeping world,
incarnate God;
embrace it in your love.
Bring light into broken lives,
warmth into frozen hearts,
hope to those at war.
May your peace pervade every place.

Help us to approach this new year
filled with the joy of your companionship,
as we step out in faith with you,
ready to face the future,
whatever it may hold.

Carol Dixon, in Hay and Stardust.



*Rev. George Heighton and Choir
(opposite) for an evening of Carols at
St. Lawrence Church.*

THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF CHURCH MUSIC INVITES YOU TO COME AND SING THE CANDLEMAS EUCHARIST

**Saturday, February 4th
St. Mary's Church, Tysoe CV35 0SG
4.00pm until 7.00pm.**

Whether you are a choir or an individual who just loves singing, you are invited to this beautiful church, to sing together and share the Candlemas Eucharist.

The afternoon will be led by Julian Harris, Musical Director and Conductor of the St. James' Singers and Banbury Choral Society.

Rehearsal from 4.00 pm, then all are welcome to join us for the service at 6.00 pm.

There is a fee of £7.50 including loan of music for the day and refreshments.

If you are coming, please could you tell Patsy Howes:
p.howes41@btinternet.com 07747 046374



OXHILL'S ADVENT WINDOWS



A big thank you to everyone who took part in this year's Christmas windows!

It has been amazing to see all the advent windows and lights that have brightened up the village on the dark December nights. This year we had several windows that had the addition of snow making it really feel like Christmas, although it was rather chilly.

It has been lovely to see so many people out for each window, enjoying the opportunity to have a chat, enjoy the mulled wine and nibbles when provided. Each window had their own character and distinctive design. There was a big following on Facebook with nightly pictures, thanks to Adrian and this year I am aiming to put them on the community website, so have a look when you get a chance. www.oxhillcommunity.co.uk

Hopefully next year we can have another advent window display and who knows maybe we will have 2 each night- so get planning only 11 months to go!

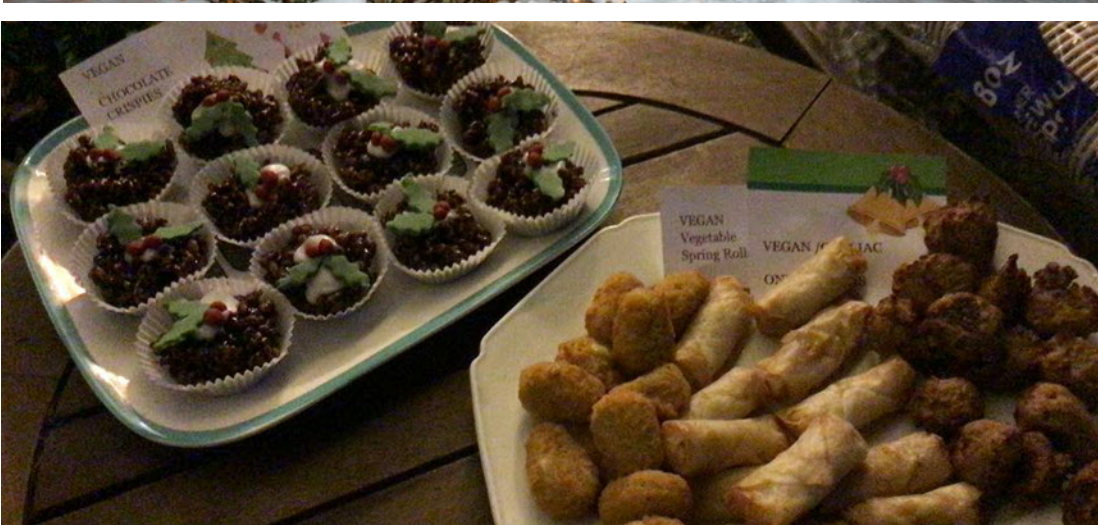
Happy New Year to all!

Lis





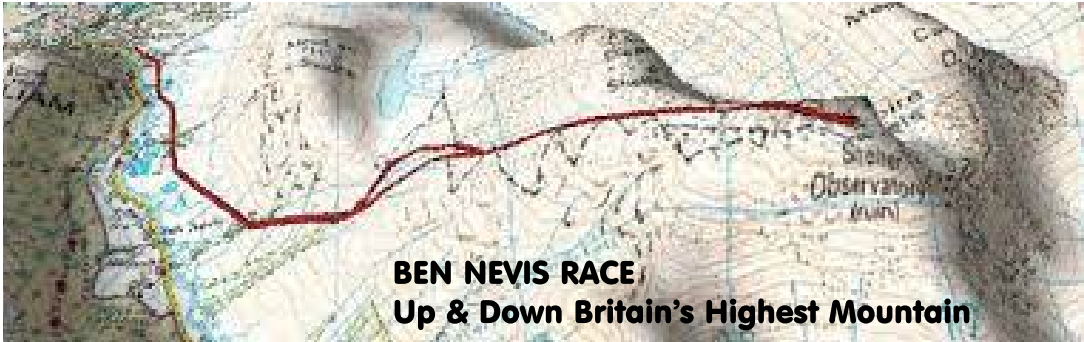




THE BEN NEVIS RACE 1973

Originally published October 1973

Villager Mr John Pocock ran the gruelling Ben Nevis Race in 1973. His adventure was recorded in the October issue of the Oxhill New in 1973. Below is a copy of the article, with the article transcribed on the opposite page for easier reading.



THE BEN NEVIS RACE.

As most of you must know by now, Mr. John Pocock of 'Florita' Whatcote Road, took part in the Ben Nevis Race on September 1st. The conditions for this race were very severe - the worst for at least ten years, and although it started off in light drizzle for the first 450 feet above sea level, and was run on a reasonable surface, higher up there was heavy rain and driving winds behind the competitors. It became very hazardous when they had to climb small stretches on slippery rocks and, not surprisingly, Mr. Pocock's hands were completely numb when he reached the top.

A further disadvantage was that visibility was very poor. In some places down to ten yards, and this slowed down progress considerably. However, the last section was run in hazy sunshine although there was low cloud at the summit. The downward section was not so easy either since there was prevailing mist and the competitors had to battle against driving wind and rain.

Before he set out, Mr. Pocock had two aims. First - to complete the course in two hours, and second - to come within the first one hundred. He completed the entire run in one hour 54 minutes, finishing 61st against 215 starters. As this was his first attempt at this gruelling race, we feel that he is to be heartily congratulated. We hope he is now fully rested and feels no ill effects.

We also wish to thank all those in the village who sponsored this event so generously, and approximately £14. has been raised for village hall funds.

J.E.C.

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J.E.C.



Ben Nevis Race 1979, with better weather than villager Mr Pocock faced in 1973.





OXHILL VILLAGE HALL

2022 was another busy year for everyone involved with the hall with the exciting outcome that our fundraising and the generosity of our sponsors allowed building work to finally begin. There's still a little way to go to be able to pay for our 'nice to haves', but we expect to see the new, improved building become a reality this year. In the meantime, we'll be making sure our popular events go on as usual and we'll be coming up with new ideas to give Oxhill the opportunity to come together with conversation, laughter, some great food, and one or two bottles of Prosecco!

The most recent event at the time of writing was the Seniors' Christmas Lunch. In a nutshell, it was three hours of fun, festivity, and feasting. The excellent three course meal was every bit as good as the regulars have come to expect, and we also enjoyed a quiz, a raffle in aid of talkdementia.uk, and wonderful live music courtesy of Jazz59. It's safe to say that fun was had by everyone, as you can see from the photos.



BandJazz59 playing two trumpets at the Village Christmas Lunch in support of TalkDementia.uk.

Our last event of 2022 was Beer and Bubbles. At the time of writing, many of us are probably still trying to work out what to wear as it's tomorrow night! You can see what we decided in next month's edition.

Finally, don't forget that Karen MacRae (karenmacrae27@gmail.com) is looking for anyone interested in putting on a daft Murder Mystery evening for the village. We have the script - we just need six cast members, a few props, and a generously stocked bar for a cracking evening.



by Ruth Mercer

Gaida Webb makes the best cheese scones and she has kindly agreed to share her recipe this month. She tells me that it is important not to roll the dough too thin and to follow the instructions! Her cheese scones are so delicious that she made a fresh batch each day for Made in Oxhill Pop-Up Shop refreshments and sold out very quickly on both days! They are best served warm, spread with plenty of butter.

CHEESE SCONES

Ingredients

450 g self-raising flour
2 tsp baking powder
Pinch of salt
1 tsp mustard powder
50 g butter, cubed
225 g mature cheddar, grated
200-200 ml milk
Chopped chives, optional

Makes 8-10 large scones



1. Preheat the oven to 210C / 190C fan / Gas 6.5
2. Sieve the flour, baking powder, salt and mustard powder into a large bowl. Add the butter and, using your fingertips, rub it into the dry ingredients until the mixture resembles fine crumbs.
3. Stir in 200 g of the grated cheese and the chives, if using; then add enough milk to bring the mixture together to a soft, but not sticky, dough.
4. Tip the dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Roll out the dough to a thickness of about 4cm / 1.5". Cut out scones with a 6-7 cm / 2.5-2.75" cutter and place on a baking sheet.
5. Brush the tops with a little milk and sprinkle with the remaining cheese.
6. Bake for 12-15 minutes until golden and well risen. Cool on a wire rack and serve while still warm.

STOP PRESS! Last minute photos from the **Beer and Bubbles Party**. What a lot of fun we all had. Thanks to Ali for organising it, all those who prepared the canapés, ran the bar, and helped with the setting and clearing up. You made it a fabulous evening! Photos by Rachel Beesley





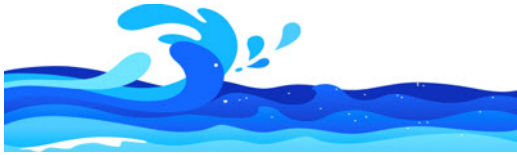
SILENT AUCTION STORY

My husband and I visited the silent auction stand at the Oxhill Fete and I thought it would be nice to bid on the lot which promised a ‘short story all about you’ written by a local author. To my surprise, I won!

Rather than have a story about me, I asked Karen if it could be about my three children and our dog, Pippa. We chatted about the children, what we like to do as a family and what kind of books we like, and also about the time I’d heard Pippa barking furiously in the garden and went outside to find her chasing a cat that was chasing a mouse.

The following story is the result. We all love it and hope you will too.

Christina Isaacs



NEPTUNE’S GIFTS

by Karen L MacRae

Cornwall, August 2012

The sea was kind that morning, the breeze gentle. Luke paused to tread water and fix a memory of the idyllic bay with its grass-topped cliffs and golden sand that stretched out in an almost perfect semi-circle. And not a soul in sight except for Grace, Joe and Pippa lazing on the crimson square of beach towels they’d made that morning. “Best find ever, Mum,” he whispered.

Birds wheeled over the cliffs like small, darting stars in the crystal blue sky, but their cries were fast becoming a soulful soundtrack to the end of his summer. Determined not to waste a second on the depressing thought of looming schoolwork, he kicked off to get in three more laps before lunch when a flash of ginger fluff careering across the beach had him immediately upright, his heart in his mouth. Grace’s ringlets still fell over her latest novel and Joe still examined the broken old clock he’d blown the last of his spending money on yesterday, but Pippa’s head was already up, her nose in the air. He knew it would be twitching, the muscles under her white coat bunching to spring after the cat. And straight after Pippa would come Joe.

Too far to shout, too far to help, Luke waved furiously, but Grace was oblivious. His head down, his arms cutting the waves faster than ever before, he didn’t witness Joe carefully put down his treasure then join the race, his skinny, bruised legs pumping furiously behind the lab that chased a tabby that chased a tiny mouse towards the near vertical path.

The water whooshed. The gulls screamed. His heart pounded. *Why doesn't she bark? For goodness sake, Pippa, bark!*

A quick look up for a gasp of oxygen granted him a snapshot of Grace dropping her book and running full tilt after her little brother. The relief was intense, but the instinct to help them was stronger.

The beach was empty when his feet touched bottom.

“Grace?” he yelled. “Joe? Pippa?” Nothing. He threw his goggles down next to his flip flops and forced reason to prevail. There were only three possibilities when the tide was out: the hillock of rock pools to his left, the wet sand bar that sneaked behind it to a narrow sea cave, or the path to his right. Ignoring mental images of needle-sharp, wet stone and rough-hewn, dangerously uneven steps, he tried to unravel the mess of paw and flip flop tracks in the sand. “Impossible,” he grunted aloud. *I need height.*

His legs shaking from exertion overkill, he sprinted right then scrambled heavenwards. Oversight of a loping line of half-erased, Grace-size footprints had him falling back to the soft sand with less than Buzz Lightyear style, for the tide was coming in and the track went only one way.

“Joseph Isaac, you come back here now!” Silence confirmed that Grace’s attempts to mimic mum had failed miserably. “Seriously, Joe, you need to come back. The tide’s coming in.”

She heard something resembling three o’clock before all sound was smothered by the boom of a wave crashing on the headland.

“Yes, it’s high tide at three o’clock, but we’ll be completely under water before then. We need to leave now!” Pippa’s answering whine scared her more than the deepening stream of water lapping at her ankles. “Joe, are you okay?” The slit of sunlight disappeared as she navigated her way around a bend of bumpy stalagmites. “Joe?” Her voice wavered in fear for her unusually quiet little brother.

“Em... I might be stuck.”

“Oh, for heav...” She took a deep breath. “What do you mean, you’re stuck? Stuck how?”

“I’ve nearly got it.”

“Got what?” Anger crept in despite her best intentions. She stepped towards his voice, grimacing as her ankle caught the rough edge of a dent in the floor. “Joe, whatever ‘it’ is, leave it and come here. We can come back tomorrow when it’s safe.”

“No.”

As always, Joe had spotted the flaw: they were going home tomorrow. “Then we can come back later.”

“Promise?”

She could just make out a Joseph-sized silhouette about six feet up the back wall, his feet precariously perched on a slender horizontal ridge. The fact her accident-prone brother had made it up there in one piece was a miracle. “Don’t move a muscle! I’m coming up.”

That proved to be the easy bit for, not only did Joe have his right arm wedged in a hole, there was no way she was getting him down on her own without dropping him headfirst onto solid granite. She wriggled closer so he couldn’t possibly fall, pressing her cheek against the cold wall.

“Pippa, you need to find Luke.” The wave of a tail-length pale stripe in the gloom confirmed Pippa had heard her name, but she stayed put, desertion not being in her DNA. “Pip, please, find Luke. For Joe.” The request was met with a quizzical head on the side; their faithful friend was thinking hard. “Luke,” Grace begged her. “Find Luke.”

Joe heard Pippa splash her way out of the cave and imagined her racing across the sand, barking at the sea for Luke. Grace interrupted his daydream.

“Why on earth did you stick your arm in a hole?”

“The cat vanished. Just like magic. But the mouse went inside then came back to look right at me.”

Grace’s voice went all smooth and quiet. “There was a mouse?”

Something squeezed into his armpit. “What are you doing?”

“I’m just going to give you a little pull. Tell me about the mouse.”

The scene played out in cinematic sound and vision in his head. “First there was the cat. Pippa chased it all over. Then I saw the mouse. It was at the front. It was running fast, but I thought it should be running a lot faster. A cat and a dog after it. Then me. And you. Do you think we’re in the old woman’s tummy?” Grace didn’t get it. “The old woman who swallowed the fly.

She giggled. He liked the sound even if it sounded a bit different to norma... “Ow!” His knuckles burned anew.

“Sorry. I had to try.”

He heard her mumble something under her breath, but Pippa’s bark was louder. Luke had arrived.

Rather than receive a hero’s welcome, Luke was ordered to take Pippa somewhere safe and find some sea lettuce by his little sister. He automatically stepped towards her voice to find out what was going on only to slice the sole of his foot on the razor edge of a hidden drop. Tilting off balance, he managed to clobber his head on the only flipping stalactite worthy of the name in the whole place. Stifling a series of words forbidden by Dad, he rubbed the sore spots and felt his hands grow warm and sticky. *Great.*

“... and be careful,” Grace continued. “We don’t need another casualty. Stay in the stream and move slowly. And hurry up!”

His smile at the thought of going slowly quickly vanished the moment the word “another” hit his brain. He opened his mouth to ask about Joe when a small, cold wave rolled across his calves to lap on the steep sides of the grotto. *This is no stream!*

He waded outside to hunt for seaweed.

The young man calmly ordered the dog to “Stay!” on the sand then sprinted to the clump of sea lettuce the siblings had discovered days earlier. Yanking at half-submerged, bright green leaves like a madman, he didn’t notice the steady drip drip of blood swirling in the eddy he bent over, or the waves’ creeping progression up the cliff face. Inside, the girl prayed for time to slow or an unharmed big brother to get back very, very soon. Not a thought was for herself and the deep, aching scrapes on goose-bumped ankles that stung in the salty air. The youngest child was too busy to worry about anything but the mechanics of his predicament: how his arm was a bolt and his fist a washer and how, if he could just turn the box a tiny bit more, his knuckles would flatten enough to pull it free.

Small, thoughtful black eyes looked down at the twitching fingertips and willed the boy to succeed. It had been such a long time since anyone had discovered one of Neptune’s gifts.

His companion purred in agreement. *Perhaps we should help?*

Mouse stared into green eyes with stern rebuke. It was forbidden to help.

Cat shrugged. *The seaweed is a good idea.*

True, nodded Mouse.

And the eldest is a leader. Focused, hard-working and ambitious, but without arrogance.

He is worthy, agreed Mouse. And the girl. A jumble of creativity, knowledge and spirituality. A different kind of leader, but a leader without doubt.

But the youngest.

Yes?

The best of the three I think. A fascinating mind coupled with infectious energy and enthusiasm.

And the glue that holds them together.

A knot of brother and sister clutching to the back wall like limpets was an unwelcome sight, but Luke saw immediately what needed to be done. “I’ll come up on your left. Once I’ve got hold of you both, stick your hand in my pocket. Your fingers are smaller than mine.”

The climb was easy for his six-foot frame. “How on earth did he get...” he whispered into Grace’s curls.

She cut him short as she reached for a handful of slippery lettuce. “No idea, but he’s fine. I think his elbow’s stuck on something.”

“This might hurt a little,” she told Joe, bracing herself with a deep breath. Bit by bit, she wiggled her fingers around the six-year-old’s shoulder until it was slippery with slime then pushed and pulled the goo deeper, filling every crevice with a metallic mix of seaweed and the blood from her rock-grated knuckles.

“I’m going to pull again, Joe.”

“No! Not yet!” *I’ve nearly got it!*

“There’s no other way and we have to go. The water’s already deep and getting deeper.”

“Count to ten.”

“Okay, I’ll count to ten. One... two... three... four... five... six...”

“Slower.”

“Six and a half... seven... seven and a half...”

“You didn’t promise.”

“What?”

“You didn’t promise.”

“We can talk about it later. Eight... Nine...”

“From one.”

“**Ten!**” Grace shouted, pulling hard. She let out a shriek of surprise as the sudden weight of Joe’s small body took them both backwards. Instinctively grabbing her precious parcel close, she shut her eyes, ready to fall. Then gravity seemed to stall and she felt the hand gripping the strap of her swimming costume.

Luke grunted with effort as he slowly hauled them back upright.

“Let’s never do that again, please,” Grace joked, her heart pounding, tears of relief glinting in her eyes.

Luke went down first. Joe went second, happily launching himself into his brother’s arms. Grace came third. Her heart sank as the water licked at her thighs; she knew she wouldn’t be able to make it.

Luke also remembered the sucking current that churned the water around the jagged mound of rock pools. “Stay to my left and you’ll be fine. You’re stronger than you think.” The look in her eyes told him precisely what she thought of that platitude. “We’re wasting time!” he snapped. “If I have to, I’ll haul you there by your hair!”

His impatience evaporated as a nugget of long-forgotten knowledge leapt into his mind. He swung Joe into a piggyback and pulled Grace towards the light. “Your hair! Hair’s as strong as metal. We did it in... oh, I can’t remember, but hair can pull a ship!”

Relentless power thundered outside the cave mouth, forcing them to silence. Their eyes said all that needed to be said.

I won't let you go. I swear.

I trust you.

Luke felt the reassuring squeeze of determined arms and legs as he resettled Joe on his back, then wound the fingers of his left hand into Grace's abundant ringlets and led his family into the ocean.

When it finally came, the sensation of soft, warm sand under their toes was glorious. Collapsing with fatigue, the elder Isaacs closed their eyes and lay back, their minds overwhelmed with whole body pins and needles and the pain shooting from countless injuries. Beside them, Pippa rested her head on Joe's feet as he toyed with his new puzzle.

Minutes stretched by.

At the top of the cliff, two strangers watched on. The taller pushed back long, lustrous, ginger locks from emerald eyes and leaned closer to her dark-skinned, black-eyed companion. *He'd never know.*

He knows everything.

But they're only children. And it's a long climb with cut feet, and broken toes, and sprained...

She saw the answering softness in his eyes and smiled.

"Mum and Dad are going to kill us," Luke said matter-of-factly.

"Yep."

"If we can press that bit, that bit and that bit at the same time," a small voice muttered.

Luke and Grace groaned their way to sitting to find Joe cradling a small metal box inlaid with mother-of-pearl. A glow seemed to shine through its ornate carving. Luke didn't have time to even open his mouth before Grace put two and two together. "You little... You weren't stuck at all!"

"I was supposed to find it. The mouse led me right to it."

"The mouse?" Luke asked, mystified.

"Apparently there was a mouse as well as a cat, and then Pippa too, of course." Grace looked sternly at her little brother. "And a monkey with his hand in a jar of nuts!"

Joe was unabashed. He turned the box to point to three embossed shells. "Someone help, please?"

There's not even a scratch on his hand. Grace snapped her head around to gawp at Luke's smooth, suntanned forehead then at her own hands and legs. "Where have all the cuts gone?" she asked him, waving her unblemished knuckles in front of his face.

The pair looked anew at the box. "Put that down this instance," Luke commanded.

Joe's face took on a familiar, stubborn look. As one, his siblings launched themselves forward, their hands outstretched to slap the box away. Time seemed to slow as three hands met and the box tumbled to the sand in a brilliant flash of light. It lay there, open and somehow smaller, waiting for the children to gather their well-proven courage. Three tousled heads were over it in seconds.

Inside nestled a coin unlike any Luke had seen before. With only a line of simple beading around its gleaming gold surface, it looked like a Roman aureus still waiting for Caesar's stamp. *But it couldn't be...* His hand crept forward because he knew deep in his soul that it was meant for him. The moment he touched it, he felt the surface change. Somehow not scared any more, he looked down to see the perfect impression of a sword.

"What's on the other side?" whispered Grace. She smiled as she saw the scales. "Power, strength and courage on the front and justice and fairness on the back, plus balance, of course."

"What?"

"A sword and the scales of justice. That's what they symbolise, roughly. I'd have to look it up to be sure." She looked at her big brother. "They're pretty spot on, you know. When you're being your best self."

Three sets of eyes turned to look again at the box, now closed and still. Where there was something for one, could there be something for two more?

Hands met again and the box grew in length and breadth before the lid popped open. Gleaming in a mossy nest lay an iridescent hair comb, its body shaped into an ancient, majestic tree, its teeth carved like intricate roots that seemed to reach straight into Grace's heart. She sighed as she lifted it from the box and turned it over and over to inspect every detail. "It's as if it's made from a single pearl, but that's," she broke off with a laugh.

"Impossible?" Luke finished.

She nodded. "Impossible." The beautiful comb drew her eyes again and she smiled as she spotted a bouquet of sea lettuce on the back. Next to it lay a sword, a heart, a book, and a couple of symbols she didn't recognise. "And perfect."

A third, fourth and fifth meeting of hands did nothing. Only when Joe reached forward on his own did the lid close and the box shift into a silvery cube of oddly shaped, moving parts that were covered in runes - for the box itself was Joe's gift. An endless mystery to tinker and play with, it would provide a constantly changing challenge for a mind always searching for answers.

For Neptune had seen into these children's hearts and minds and knew precisely what they needed.

For Luke: to pursue his goals with courage and strength, but to never lose sight of the need for balance and objectivity.

For Grace: to stay true to her love of nature and knowledge, and blossom into a woman of wisdom, care, and creativity.

For Joseph: to value his analytical, logical, and curious mind, and to embrace his independence while understanding the special place he held at the heart of his loving family.

Where shall we put the next box? asked Cat.

**20
23**

NEW YEAR'S EVE

CELEBRATE THE START OF A
NEW YEAR WITH THE
PEACOCK

DECEMBER 31ST 2022 - FROM 7PM

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW - £75PP

5 COURSE MEAL
GLASS OF FIZZ UPON ARRIVAL
LIVE MUSIC FROM MONROE ACOUSTIC
CLOSE-UP MAGIC BY 'DUNCAN WILLIAM'
DJ & DISCO TIL LATE
BAR AREA WILL OPEN TO DRINKERS



Season's Greetings to all our Supporters

2022 saw the 25th anniversary of Shipston Home Nursing, and we have celebrated with some wonderful fundraising events, from the Walton Hall 10k in May to our sunny Party in the Park in the idyllic gardens of Alscot Park in July. We rounded the year off in style with our annual Christmas Gift Fair in Ettington last month. It has been fantastic to see so many familiar faces, and so many new ones too!

We thank you all for your ongoing support and wish you a very Merry Christmas and all good things for 2023.

2023 Calendar of Events

The new year is just around the corner and the fundraising team are planning for 2023. Details of our forthcoming events can be found online. But, if you have your diary to hand, here are a few useful dates:

- 18th January - Volunteer's Event at The George, Shipston
- 6-8th February - Pop Up Shop at The White Bear, Shipston
- 7th May - Walton Hall 5k and 10k
- 13th and 14th May - Plant and Home Produce Sale
- 2nd and 3rd September - The Wolf Run
- 15th September - Feldon Valley Golf Day

24 CHRISTMAS QUIZ QUESTIONS



1. Which country sends a Christmas tree to Trafalgar Square each year?	
2. What fruit when stored alongside Christmas cake helps keep it moist?	
3. Who plays Scrooge in <i>The Muppet Christmas Carol</i> ?	
4. "Good King Wenceslas" is a Christmas carol that tells a story of a Bohemian king. In which modern-day city is Wenceslas Square?	
5. Which British group wished it could be Christmas every day?	
6. The Christmas Oratorio was written for the Christmas season of 1734 by which German composer?	
7. The November 1887 edition of Beeton's Christmas Annual introduced which character for the first time?	
8. Can you name the now rather well-known contestant who appeared in the Christmas Day 1983 edition of the BBC TV game show <i>Blankety Blank</i> ?	
9. In which country is it traditional to have a KFC meal on Christmas Day?	
10. Which retailer's 2014 Christmas advert featured the story of Christmas Day in 1914, when German and British soldiers called a truce to play football and exchange gifts?	
11. Which British city annually hosts the largest German Christmas Market outside of Germany and Austria?	
12. What time is the Queen's speech traditionally broadcast?	
13. With 'over 30 sayings', what was the must have toy for Christmas 1996?	
14. Can you solve the following festive anagram: Drastic charms?	
15. In which country did the tradition of Christmas trees first begin?	
16. Traditionally, what name was given to the Sunday when families gather in the kitchen of their homes to mix and steam Christmas pudding?	
17. Which Christmas carol sung by Bing Crosby is the third best-selling single of all-time?	
18. Which 2004 Christmas comedy film is based on the John Grisham novel <i>Skipping Christmas</i> ?	
19. Which American actor, Oscar winner and cultural icon was born on Christmas Day in 1899?	
20. What is the French word for Christmas?	
21. In the popular Christmas movie <i>Home Alone</i> , to which country did Kevin's parents go on holiday?	
22. Invented in Nuremberg around 1610, what has individual parts called lametta?	
23. What first appeared in a 1939 booklet written by Robert May?	
24. Which Italian artist painted <i>The Mystical Nativity</i> ? The artist's name means "little barrel".	

WHAT'S ON IN & AROUND OXHILL

JANUARY

Sat Dec 31st	19:00	New Year's Eve at the Peacock Pub
Sat 4th	16:00-19:00	Royal School of Church Music The Candlemas Eucharist, St Mary's Church, Tysoe
Thurs 12h	14:00-14:30	Mobile Library, outside Village Hall
Thurs	11:45-12:00ish	Awesome Coffee Van, outside Peacock Pub

The coffee van will NOT be visiting the village at the beginning of January but will return to Oxhill at its normal time from January Thursday 12th onwards.

PC MEETINGS

The date of the next PC Meeting is **Tuesday, 17 January, 2023 at 7.30pm**. This meeting will be held in the Old Chapel. The Agenda for the meeting will be shown on the PC Website or a physical copy will be displayed on the village Notice Board, on the wall of the Peacock, a few days before the meeting.

If you want any request to be included for consideration at the above meeting please send details to the Clerk (oxhillpc@btinternet.com) at least 10 days prior to the meeting to ensure that it is included on the publicly visible Agenda.



January 2023			
6	F	R	
13	F		W
20	F	R	G
27	F		

CHRISTMAS QUIZ ANSWERS

1.	Norway	13.	Buzz Lightyear
2.	Apple	14.	Christmas Card
3.	Michael Caine	15.	Germany
4.	Prague	16.	Stir-up Sunday
5.	Wizzard	17.	Silent Night
6.	Johann Sebastian Bach	18.	Christmas with the Kranks
7.	Sherlock Holmes	19.	Humphrey Bogart
8.	Captain Sir Tom Moore	20.	Noel
9.	Japan	21.	France
10.	Sainsbury's	22.	Tinsel
11.	Birmingham	23.	Rudolph
12.	3pm	24.	Sandro Botticelli