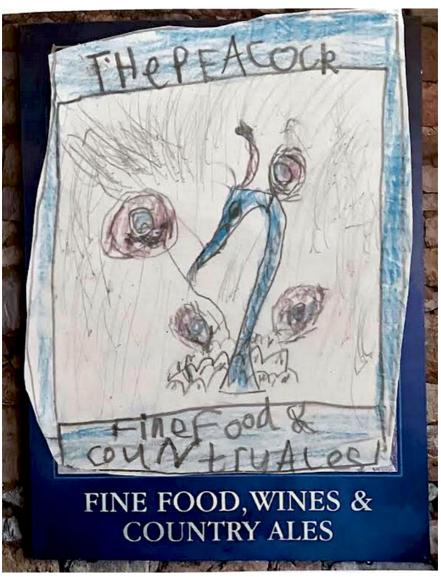
THE OXHILL NEWS

January 2024 No. 590



Milo created a stunning new version of Peacock Pub sign on the cover of last month's Oxhill News.

bymico

Vanessa Druce, editor & Grenville Moore, consulting editor Email: oxhill.news.editor@gmail.com Website: oxhillcommunity.co.uk

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CLUB & GROUP CONTACT DETAILS

St Lawrence Church,	Priest-in Charge Rev. Geo	orge Heighton, 01295 680201
	Associate Minister Rev. He	eather Parbury, 01608 685575

kcarers4carers@gmail.com or tel: 07947 893504

Oxhill Village Hall: Jo Collings - Chair - 01295 680215

Ali Sayer - Hall Hire - 07970 922352 email: village-hall@oxhill.org.uk

The Peacock Pub 01295 688060

Carers4carers:

Tysoe Tennis Club: Club Secretary: Carol Spencer

email: carol.spencer234@hotmail.co.uk

Warwickshire Mobile Library: 01926 851031

WOT2Grow Community Orchard: Liz Atkinson (680045), Paul Sayer (680451), Sue

& Mike Sanderson (688080) www.wot2grow.co.uk

talkdementia.uk Paul & Heather Dowler Tysoe 688376

Carer Support Service email: talkdementia@mail.com

Website: talkdementia.uk

Tysoe Village Hall every Friday from 10am

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

THE PEACOCK VILLAGE LUNCH

Before the pandemic hit, the Peacock used to organise a Village Lunch once a month which was a very popular social occasion. Is it now time to restart the monthly lunch meet-up? A group of villagers believe it is, so have arranged a Village Lunch at the pub on **Tuesday 16th January at 1pm.**



If you would like to come, please book your place on 01295 675019. The Peacock will produce a fixed price menu and ask you to choose what you want to eat in advance so that they can offer a good value meal.

We look forward to seeing you on January 16th!

Vanessa and Ruth



Beautiful model train winter scene for the Advent Christmas Windows displayed in The Sett. ~ Photo by David Hawtin



Year after year, our **Christmas Lunch** for village seniors is a popular event in the calendar and this year was no exception. Seven tables full of hungry Oxhillians were treated to a slap-up turkey dinner, their choice of starters and of puddings, drinks on arrival, and homemade mince pies to finish. Barney Porter then gave us a hugely entertaining rendition of Christmas hits and traditional songs that had many of us singing and dancing along. We even managed to capture some photos thanks to Dave Hawtin, our go-to guy ever since we discovered he was a bit of an expert and was happy to take them!



All photos of the Senior Christmas Lunch by David Hawtin.

At the time of writing, there's only one event left in this year's calendar: **Beer & Bubbles.** The tickets are all gone, the bar is stocked, some of us are wondering what to wear (and, perhaps, if our Christmas budget will stretch to a new dress!), and all are looking forward to what is a brilliant way to celebrate the season. What we'll also be cheering is the fact that the Village Hall is tantalisingly close to being finished. It's been a long haul and a lot of hard work for Richard Collings and his team of trusty volunteers, but they've done an amazing job to deliver precisely what was promised: a village hall truly fit for the twenty-first century.

One of the first events scheduled to be held in the renovated Village Hall is **Burns' Night Supper on Saturday**, **27th January**. Those of you who've been before know just how good an event it is so keep an eye out on Facebook and the village noticeboards for information about how to book.

All that's left to say is a huge thanks to everyone who has helped to keep village hall events going this year, to Jill Tucker for generously allowing us to use The Old Chapel, and, of course, a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all! We hope to see you in 2024.

Karen MacRae























ST LAWRENCE CHURCH FOR JANUARY

All too quickly, Christmas is over: after the pause of Advent, and the whirl, joy and excitement of Christmas, it is so easy to turn round and leave it all behind us. Mercifully, God does not simply move on and leave us behind: his precious gift to us at Christmas is but a beginning. It is the beginning of his presence with us in a new way, the beginning of a ministry of teaching and service by Jesus, and the beginning of the fulfillment of all his promises to us.

Of course, life resumes, but as a result of Christmas it is changed: God is now with us in that life. Time to carry all that we have seen and heard into the future.

Forgive our haste to leave that dirty stable

for somewhere more comfortable; forgive our reluctance to kneel down in the dirt and look the Christ child in the face a little longer. Forgive our need to more on with the busyness of life instead of lingering a while with him. It is time to start over, God. May we start again with you.

Tina Kemp, Spill the Beans.



CHURCH SERVICES IN JANUARY

Sunday, 7th January	Epiphany – the coming of the Wise Men to see Jesus		
	9.30 am	Holy Communion	George Heighton
Sunday, 14th January	9.30 am	Morning Worship	Jennie Rake
Sunday, 21st January	9.30 am	Holy Communion	George Heighton
Sunday, 28th January	Candlema	s – The infant Jesus	is presented in the Temple.
	6.30 pm	Evening Worship	Jill Tucker

COME AND SING CANDLEMAS EUCHARIST

For the singers among you, we are once again holding the Come and Sing Candlemas Eucharist in St Mary's, Tysoe, on Saturday, February 3rd, from about 3.00 pm onward. It ends with the Eucharist itself at 6.00 pm. Julian Harris is once again leading it, with Maddy on the organ. This is a wonderful occasion, which marks the point at which we turn 'from the crib to the cross', and we look forward to you joining us, either to sing or to join in worship.

Further information from Jill Tucker, revjill.tucker@btinternet.com or 07973 994800

Jill Tucker



DO YOU KNOW CALLIGRAPHY?

Our church warden needs someone who can beautifully write the names of church officials onto an important document. Do you know calligraphy? Could you help? If so, please contact Carol Fox 01295680223 ceafox782@gmail.com

A BIG THANK YOU FOR THE BIG CHURCH CLEAN ON DECEMBER 2ND

A wonderful band of merry helpers joined us to give the church its Annual thorough clean. We are so grateful and thankful that you all turned up with brushes and dusters and made the church shine. All ready for Christmas. It was a hive of industry for at least two hours, hoovering, dusting, polishing and cobwebbing. The vestry was turned inside out and clutter removed. It was all amazing. Thank you all.

Carol Fox Church Warden

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

It was a special evening at St Lawrence Church singing carols, meeting friends and sharing minced pies and mulled wine. Carols by Candlelight is a wonderful Oxhill tradition attended by many in the village. Thank you to Rev. Jill Tucker, the choir, organist, the helpers behind the scene and all the attendees. $\sim ed$.













by Ruth Mercer

Chocolate cake is one of my favourites but I will rarely choose to eat it at a café as I can't stand the disappointment of being served a dry chocolate cake. Luckily, I did choose Chocolate Guinness Cake ten years ago in a café in Birmingham Jewellery Quarter and came home determined to find a recipe. It remains one of the most requested cake at village

possibly because supporters are most vocal! This is the third chocolate cake recipe I've contributed to Oxhill Cooks and I can guarantee that none of them produce a dry cake, unless over baked. For information, I never cook large cakes in a fan oven, opting for the conventional setting, as I find that fan ovens can cook the outside well while the inside is still raw. This is particularly so with large loaves of bread. The timings I give in recipes are true to my oven on the conventional oven setting.



CHOCOLATE GUINNESS CAKE

Ingredients

For the cake:

250 ml Guinness

250 g butter or hard margarine

120 g plain chocolate (I use what used to be called Sainsbury's Basics, around 45-50% cocoa solids)

40 g cocoa powder

400 g caster sugar

150 ml soured cream, Crème fraiche or full fat Greek yogurt

2 eggs

300 g self raising flour

1 tsp bicarbonate of soda

For the filling and topping:

300 g full fat Philadelphia soft cheese

150 g icing sugar

2 tsp cornflour

150 ml double cream

2 shots of whisky (50 ml)

You will need 2 round tins 23 cm / 9", preferably loose bottomed

- 1. Grease the tins and base line with baking parchment or equivalent. Set the oven to 180C / 160C fan.
- 2. Put the Guinness and butter/marg into a heatproof bowl and microwave until the butter has melted. (Alternatively, do this in a saucepan on the hob.) Remove from heat and stir in the broken chocolate until melted.
- 3. Add the caster sugar and cocoa and stir until dissolved.
- 4. In a separate bowl, whisk the eggs with the soured cream until pale and creamy. Add the Guinness mixture and whisk to mix together.
- 5. Finally, add the flour and bicarbonate of soda to the mixture and whisk thoroughly.
- 6. Divide the mixture equally between the two tins and bake in the middle of the oven for 30-35 minutes. A cocktail stick inserted into the middle of the cakes should come out clean.
- 7. Cool in the tins as it is a damp cake and will break easily if removed when warm. It is a good idea to run a thin spatula or knife around the edge **carefully** to free the cake from the sides of the tin before it cools fully.
- 8. Prepare the filling by beating the Phili and icing sugar together, add the cream and beat until thick. Finally, stir in the whisky. (Be very careful if you use a food processor to make the filling as it is very easy to overprocess it, meaning that it goes from thick and perfect to runny in a very short time.)
- 9. Once cool, remove from the tins and carefully peel off the baking paper from the bottom of the cakes. I use one of the used baking papers to sit the bottom cake on, top side down, then spread with about ½ of the filling but not too close to the edge and place the second cake on top, top side up. Spread the remaining filling on the top. The aim is for the cake to look like a glass of Guinness so if some of the frothy head (filling) runs down the cake, it looks more authentic!



OXHILL ADVENT WINDOW DISPLAYS

Thank you to everyone who did a Christmas window/ light display this year. It was lovely to see all the different designs, to see so many people out and about enjoying each other's company and catching up. Thank you also to those who provided nibbles and warming mulled wine. Looking forward to next years windows / light displays.

Lis Stuart (Photos by Adrian Stuart, David Hawtin & Vanessa Druce)



































LAST CHRISTMAS

by Karen MacRae



Christmas Eve, the day when everything seemed possible. The presents, long agonised over, had been carefully wrapped with shiny paper and bows of glossy ribbon, their tags written with copperplate handwriting and hope. The fridge was bulging with every possible treat and titbit, even that exorbitantly priced beer that no one but father liked. The Christmas pudding, made with absolute attention to mother's own recipe, looked and smelled amazing. The tree... well, even if I said so myself, the tree was perfect.

I'd finished cleaning my little house just before midnight. It had been scrubbed to within an inch of its life, its cushions plumped, its linen freshly laundered and even its curtains hoovered, twinkling lights strung along pristine curtain

poles, and the detritus of everyday life shoved behind locked cupboard doors. The final touch had been the mistletoe, my bounty from an hour-long trek into the depths of Pixie Week Woods and another fight with a particularly offensive barbed wire fence that my fake Barbour would never recover from. It was a small price, I thought, as I pulled the duvet up under my chin.

My eyes sprang open at one minute to eight. Ever-prescient Monty stretched, curling to precisely the right angle to offer his chin for a rub. 'I haven't even moved,' I told him, laughing, my fingers finding soft, warm fur. 'How do you always know?'

He didn't reply, but his whiskers twitched and the sound of distant pile-drivers vibrated against my chest.

I switched off the alarm then diverted from my normal routine by meandering my way through to the living room in my pyjamas, a confused Monty following in my wake. His plaintiff miaows were eclipsed by Mariah Carey as I pressed play on the cd player and began gyrating around the coffee table, the tv remote control held to my lips as I belted out the chorus. The look on his face suggested he'd be much happier with a portion of Sheba than an off-key promise that all I wanted for Christmas was him. Rather than take pity on his empty belly, I scooped him up and held him high in the air as I swayed along to George Michael. 'It's going to be a wonderful Christmas, Monty,' I told the chubby tabby. 'I can feel it in my bones.'

My parents, brother and sister-in-law arrived within seconds of each other. 'Good journey?' I asked brightly.

Father looked askance and opened his mouth, but mother buried me under voluminous coat, scarf, hat and gloves so I was spared his rebuke. It was Christmas Day. No one got stuck in traffic on a damp, dull Christmas Day, especially when they only had to drive eight miles along main roads. I sighed through the Chanel-soaked cashmere and busied myself laying everything on the bed so not a crease or smudge might befall them.

Back in the hall, I discovered mother inspecting a fingertip that had just been run along the top of the painting I'd hung outside the loo. Beside her, father stood shaking his head at the multi-coloured, shaggy rug I'd made especially to block the draft coming in through warped floorboards. Behind him, Pete and Sarah were almost tapping their feet in time to the fruitless seconds marching into their past. I opened my mouth to apologise for their wait then realised I had nothing to apologise for. 'Sorry' became 'So nice to see you all. Merry Christmas!'

The return greetings were stiff. They all remembered two years before, and the eighteen months of silence before I'd tentatively begun to patch the damage.

They made themselves uncomfortable in the living room while I went to retrieve coffee, mince pies and a selection of Marks and Sparks' finest Christmas morsels. Monty made himself scarce while the four sat on the edge of tatty sofas covered in extravagant homemade throws. They chatted politely, talking stocks and shares, work and their latest acquisitions, each sentence an escalation of the previous boast. A Caribbean cruise paid for by short-selling BAT stock was trumped by a new Bentley which was trumped by Sarah being offered an equity partnership in a top ten law firm. Congratulations resounded as mother reorganised Christmas tree baubles to her liking.

I forced a smile as I placed bone china mugs on coasters. It was only a tree. It had only taken six hours to decorate it. And smiling was supposed to generate endorphins, wasn't it?

'Shall we do presents?' I asked. The anticipation of longed-for appreciation gave my voice a touch of excitement.

'What's the buy-in?' father asked Sarah.

'Nothing we can't handle,' she said smugly, 'but we've decided to take a break first. I thought a week or two in Val d'Isere, but Peter thinks the snow is better in Whistler.'

'These leaves have been in your cupboard too long, Frances,' mother interrupted with a clink of china and a small moue of distaste.

The tea leaves were brand new. 'I'll open another box, mother. Unless you'd like a small glass of bubbly instead?'

She made a show of looking at her watch. Like it mattered what time it was. 'Perhaps a small one, if Sarah will join me?'

'Well, it is Christmas Day,' Sarah replied, 'and we are celebrating.'

'A glass of ale, father?'

Two bottles of 'It's not vintage!' Bollinger, father's 'What, *that* muck?' rejection of the designer beer I'd spent all Saturday tracking down, and a third of my only bottle of Scotch later, it was time for presents. I worked this out because Sarah produced three small, ornately wrapped cubes from her elegant, leather handbag and mother sent father to retrieve theirs from the car.

If I had pierced ears and a penchant for overpriced gold, I'm sure I'd have loved the Tiffany earrings that Sarah's secretary had bought for me. Through my smileache, I watched mother and father enthuse over their necklace and cufflinks then make all the appropriate noises as Peter showed off the Patek Philippe watch that Sarah had given him and Sarah produced a photograph of the Louis Vuitton briefcase and matching leather organiser that Peter had bought for her. I knew full well they'd bought their own 'gifts'. They always did.

'We all know what you think about the family money so I got you something useful,' was mother's introduction to the large, heavy parcel father hefted to my chair. A small nugget of childish joy lit me from within. It couldn't be the new sewing machine I'd craved, could it?

No, it couldn't.

'Thank you, mother, father,' I intoned, the muscles in my face rebelling as I looked down on a hose reel.

'I remembered you saying you needed a new one.'

But not me finishing the sentence with, 'so I couldn't believe my luck when I found one at half price last week.' In September. I hid tears by heading back into the kitchen, muttering that the potatoes needed turning.

Pete appeared as I was pointlessly rearranging things in the oven. He plucked a fresh bottle of Bollinger from the fridge then stopped to watch me basting the spuds with hot oil. 'Don't know why you never wear the earrings we get you. Bit ungrateful, you know.'

My mouth dropped open as I watched him turn and wander back to his wife. I found myself fingering my deformed right earlobe and snatched my hand from under my long hair. Maybe he'd forgotten? It had been eighteen years since he'd encouraged his girlfriend of the time to stick a dirty needle through my eight-year-old ear. The infection had taken three months to heal and left my lobe split in two. Peter had thought it highly amusing although clearly not amusing enough to encourage his brain to move the memory into long-term, retrievable storage.

I hardened my heart and went to face the music.

'You haven't made too much, have you?' mother asked as I was kneeling by the tree to retrieve my gifts to them.

'Just one each, mother.'

'Lunch, Frances, lunch. You know we're having supper with the Ashworths.'

No, I didn't know you were having supper with the Ashworths. If I'd known you were having dinner with the effing Ashworths, would I have spent a month's income on a turkey, all the trimmings, a case of "It's not vintage!" champagne and a bottle of the best port that my meagre savings could stretch to? I closed my eyes and breathed out slowly, my face thankfully turned away from my tipsy relatives. Hang in there, Frankie. Either way, it'll be worth it.

I gave mother her gift first. I'd painstakingly dyed and hand-stitched the silk in an ornate pattern of scarlet, royal blue and dark, almost midnight, purple; her favourite colours. I



remembered holding my breath as I made the first cut, but my hands had been as sure as ever. The finished product, a kimono for her alfresco breakfasts on the west patio, would have sold for £499 on my website. I held my breath as I watched her face, part of me still hoping.

'Do you have the receipt? It's not really me,' she said, bundling the silk back into its silver paper.

'Is it one of yours, Frances?' Sarah asked.

'Yes,' I said with a small smile, thankful that one member of my family had remembered how I earned my living these days.

'Hmm, I thought so. Rather garish.'

I removed the virtual blade from my belly and swallowed the retorts queuing to spring from my tongue.

I got duplicate grunts from father and Peter for their fine gauge, intricately patterned, alpaca jumpers (£399) that had taken me two weeks to design and knit. Sarah at least unfurled the sunset orange, cashmere poncho to look at it properly. Sure, it was a bold (£449) item, but the colour was absolutely perfect for her skin tone and was about as 'in' as it was possible to get. She'd look amazing in it.

She didn't bother to hide her disdain as she dropped it on her lap with a laugh. 'Oh my God,' she said through her titters, 'what on earth made you choose *orange*? I'd look like I was wearing a life jacket!'

The very best examples of my skills were put to one side before I had a chance to mention that I'd been approached by a highly regarded fashion vlogger who thought my work was exceptional; that I'd found the perfect new premises and only needed their advice and a little of the family money I'd run from to expand the business. There was no

interrupting them. Peter topped up glasses as the four of them scathingly assessed my pathetic life choices. My 'hobby' was an eccentricity that was best ignored, my association with the 'arty crowd' an affectation, the rejection of my inheritance an aberration, the break-up with my nobody fiancé the only positive in a series of bad decisions.

If I'd handed them diamonds they'd have complained they were too hard.

I'd been stupid to dream of anything else. I disappeared to put the stuffing balls in the oven; I didn't need to be in the room to have what was left of my affection for them torn apart.

I didn't sleep. Couldn't sleep. Got up twice to make sure the baking tray I'd 'borrowed' from mother's kitchen was in position. When the doorbell rang, I was sitting in the hall, dressed in my newly-acquired orange poncho.

'Afternoon, Miss Walker,' the cop said, his voice gentle. 'We wondered if we might have a quick word?'

'I was just popping to my parent's house,' I told them, baking tray and car keys in hand.

They shared an awkward look. 'If we could talk inside?' the elder man asked.

I played curious and a little confused as I offered them coffee or tea and showed them through to the living room, my stomach heaving with apprehension. We sat in front of my perfect Christmas tree.

'Are you feeling all right, Miss Walker?'

'Yes, fine. Why do you ask? What's going on?'

'I'm sorry to inform you, Miss, that your parents, your brother and his wife were taken to Accident and Emergency last night. It appears that they ingested something poisonous.'

I gasped and stood. 'Where are they? Warwick? I need to go...'

'I'm sorry, Miss, but they didn't make it.'

I sat with a thump, looking from one sympathetic, blue-clad man to the other. 'I don't understand.'

'You cooked the family Christmas lunch here?'

I hugged the baking tray to my chest. 'Yes. Turkey and all the trimmings. Just how they like it.'

'And you all ate and drank the same things?'

'Yes. Except the meat, of course. I'm vegetarian.'

'And the meat was...?'

'Turkey, the gravy had meat juices in it so I guess that counts, the pigs in blankets, the stuffing balls that mum brought with her.' I raised the baking tray in explanation. 'Oh, and the cabbage that's cooked in chicken stock and lemon juice. It's dad's favourite.'

'The stuffing balls. Do you know where your mother got them?'

'They're homemade. Pork forcemeat, herbs, finely chopped onion and lots of dried, wild mushrooms. I found a veritable feast of fungi on a walk in October... My partner and I had broken up so I started taking long walks to clear my head. I... Well, one day I saw the most perfect crop for Christmas so I got them before anyone else did. Same place I got the mistletoe hanging in the hall...' I gave a near hysterical laugh. 'Managed to rip my jacket both times. We had a chuckle about that...' I looked towards the open sewing box on the coffee table; beside it, still looking the worse for wear despite umpteen rows of tiny stitches, was the only Barbour I could afford without admitting I'd been wrong to shut myself off from the Trust Fund. 'She was so pleased with the mushrooms,' I murmured. 'Promised me she'd have someone check them to make sure they were all right because we're not experts... Oh my God... The mushrooms?'

They left soon after, the sergeant telling me a detective would probably be in touch, but he was sure I had nothing to worry about; it was obviously an accident. He and I were underneath the mistletoe when he said a kind goodbye to my wide, wet eyes; Monty winding himself around our feet.

I picked up my faithful friend as the door closed, holding him close, kissing his furry face. 'I told you it was going to be a wonderful Christmas,' I whispered.





SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS

Shipston Home Nursing is now in its 26th year of looking after patients with life-limiting illnesses within the last months, weeks and days of their lives.

Our services are free of charge. We care for patients and their families in Shipston, Wellesbourne, Kineton and the surrounding villages and our care is available to patients 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Striving to be the best we can be also costs us more than it ever has. We now provide over 12,000 scheduled hours of nursing care each year and we need to raise over £550,000 annually to keep doing that.

We currently spend more on patient care than we raise.

If, like us, you believe our charity is an essential part of the community in which we all live, we ask for any level of financial support you're able to offer.

Make a real difference to your community this Christmas and help Shipston Home Nursing keep doing what we do.





May all of us have a Happy Christmas & a wonderful New Year. May God bless us all and keep us safe.

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

I heard the bells on Christmas day Their old familiar carols play, And wild and sweet the words repeat Of peace of earth, good will to men.

I thought how, as the day had come, The belfries of all Christendom Had rolled along th'unbroken song Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head:
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God is not dead, nor doth He sleep; The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, With peace on earth, good will to men."

Till, ringing, singing on its way, The world revolved from night to day A voice, a chime, a chant sublime, Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

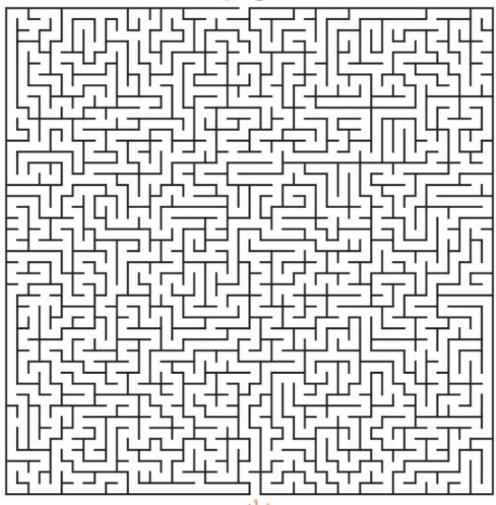




Christmas Maze

Help Santa find Rudolph





WHAT'S ON IN & AROUND OXHILL

JANUARY

Tuesday 16th	13:00	Peacock Village Lunch
Saturday 27th		Burn's Night, Village Hall
Every Thursday	11:45	Coffee Morning, Peacock Pub

PC MEETINGS

The date of the next PC Meeting is **Tuesday**, **9th January 2024 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.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE OXHILL NEWS

The editors welcome any pictures, photographs, drawings, poems, puzzles, recipes, announcements or items of local news for possible inclusion in The Oxhill News. Submissions must be received by the 15th of each month for publication in the following month.

