

# THE OXHILL NEWS

December 2022 No. 577



Here is all the equipment for Peter Taylor's journey along the Thames on the Wiltshire Gold (pictured top left). Read the concluding part of *The Flight of the Seagull* on page 23.

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

# OXHILL ADVENT WINDOW DATES

As you can see, we have quite a few spaces remaining for the advent windows. If you would like to take part this year, please let me know which date you would prefer either on face book (Adrian) or by email [Lis.stuart@outlook.com](mailto:Lis.stuart@outlook.com).

For all those who have already volunteered, thank you, I know people are really looking forward to seeing the 'windows' this year.



Day	Date	6.15 pm - Location	6.30 pm - Location
Thur	1 <sup>st</sup>	3 The Leys, Whatcote Road (Mick & Barbara)	2 The Leys, Whatcote Road (Verity & Patrick)
Fri	2nd	9 Leys Field (Maggie & John)	
Sat	3rd	Fern Cottage, (Celia & Adrian)	
Sun	4th	Holly Blue House, Main Street (Giophe)	
Mon	5th	3 Orchard Close, Whatcote Road, (Geoff & Rachel)	
Tues	6 <sup>th</sup>	Short Meadow, Whatcote Road (Chris & Paul)	
Wed	7 <sup>th</sup>	The Orchard, Rouse Lane (Sue)	
Thur	8th	Briar gate, Main Street (Ali & Paul)	
Fri	9 <sup>th</sup>	15 & 16 Leys Field (Sam & Lucy)	
Sat	10 <sup>th</sup>	The Old Post Office, Main Street (Celina & Peter)	
Sun	11 <sup>th</sup>	Straun, Whatcote Road (Ruth)	
Mon	12 <sup>th</sup>	The Stables, Rouse Lane (Stuart & Katie)	The Granary, Rouse Lane Sarah & Ed)
Tues	13 <sup>th</sup>	Binswood Cottage, Main Street (Lynsey Cleaver)	
Wed	14th	Blackford House, Main Street (Liz & Brian)	
Thur	15 <sup>th</sup>	1 Orchard Close, Whatcote Road (Sue)	
Fri	16 <sup>th</sup>	Barn side, Main Street (Kieran Robuck)	
Sat	17 <sup>th</sup>	Hillox, Whatcote Road (Emily, Duncan & Jane)	
Sun	18 <sup>th</sup>	6 Leys Field (Steph)	
Mon	19 <sup>th</sup>	Oak Wood, Green Lane (Wendy & Toby)	
Tues	20 <sup>th</sup>	Peacock House, Main Street (Grenville & Jane)	
Wed	21 <sup>st</sup>	Medway, Green Lane (Ian & Sue)	Tehidy, Green Lane (Tom & Morna)
Thur	22 <sup>nd</sup>	The Manor, Beech Road (Debbie & Alistair)	
Fri	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Hares Breath, Whatcote Road (Carol & Tony)	
Sat	24 <sup>th</sup>	Oak View, Green Lane (Lis & Adrian)	Box Wood, Green Lane (Clare & Will)







## MADE IN OXHILL

*by Ruth Mercer*

Another successful weekend of Made In Oxhill Arts and Crafts Pop-Up Shop at the Old Chapel has just come to a close. Oxhill is so fortunate to be blessed with wonderful and hard-working artists, crafters and home producers. This was our fourth annual Made in Oxhill event and the range of original gifts, artwork, decorations and produce on sale was the largest to date. Thank you for supporting the event.

Thank you to everyone who baked cakes, scones and biscuits to keep our visitors well-refreshed. Without you, we would have had a lot of hungry visitors! This year we added the option of cake takeaway which helped us raise almost £400, just from the sale of refreshments, towards the upkeep of St. Lawrence's Church, Oxhill. None of this would have been possible without the hard work of the serving and washing up team: an enormous thank you to the fantastic volunteers Sally Williams, Alice and Lucy Mercer, Deborah Holroyd, Sue Robbins, Sue Robinson, Verity O'Donnell, Clare Checkley, Pauline Wyatt, David and Kate Nash. Gaida Webb deserves a special thanks as not only did she spend both days serving refreshments, but she also got up at 5am both mornings to bake fresh scones which sold out very quickly!

Next year's Made in Oxhill Pop-Up Shop will be on November 24th and 25th. Please put the dates on your diary straightaway!

# \* Christmas at the Peacock



## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

November 30th

Xmas menu begins!

December 2nd

Live Music from Barney & Jerv 8-11pm

December 4th

Abi Phillips Acoustic 2-5pm

December 9th

Open Mic Night 7pm

December 18th

Super Duper Xmas Quiz!

\* December 25th \*

Open for drinks only from 11-1

December 31st

NYE Dinner & Party

January 1st

\* Open 12-6





# Live Music

Barney & Jerv LIVE  
The Peacock  
Friday 2nd December 8.30pm  
FREE



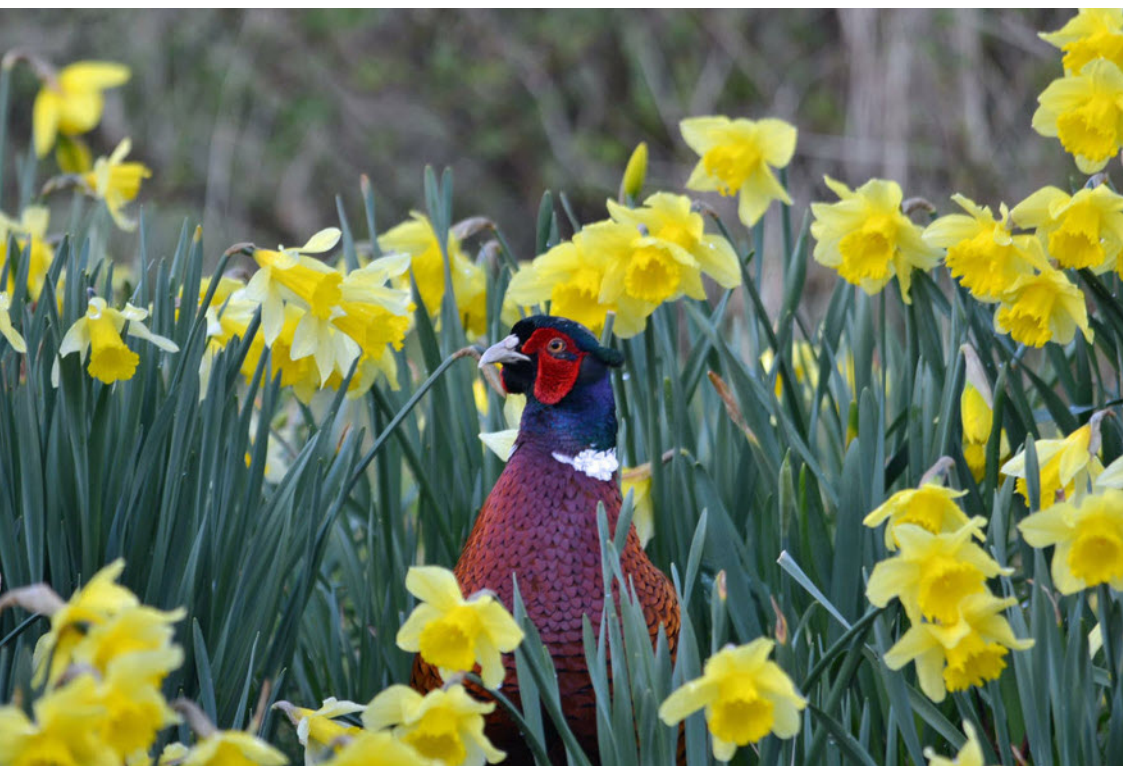
**THE TOWNSEND HALL**

## The Christmas Cracker!

We're really looking forward to welcoming the Carl Sinclair Quartet to the hall on Saturday December 17th for our Christmas Cracker! Don't miss this one! Carl is a professional pianist, vocalist and entertainer with songs for everyone that'll get you dancing and singing along. Tickets are £12.50, available from [www.ticketsource.co.uk/townsend-hall](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/townsend-hall), where you can bag your own table and seating, or from Clarke Electrical Services in town. To whet your appetite, check out his website: [www.carlsinclair.com](http://www.carlsinclair.com).

In other news, we're on the lookout to fill a couple of self-employed roles at the hall that have become available: one is for a cleaner and the other for a hall bookings administrator. Hours are flexible and a negotiated remuneration package is available. Applications, or to find out more, please contact David Squires, Chair/Trustee, Townsend Hall Management Committee, 52 Sheep Street, Shipston-on-Stour, CV36 4AE, [ds@pinneyards.com](mailto:ds@pinneyards.com).

Take a look at [www.townsendhall.co.uk](http://www.townsendhall.co.uk) for more. From here you can see everything else going on at the hall including clubs and sports.



## *In the Wilds*

*Photos by Steve MacRae  
Words by Karen MacRae*

### **BIRD BRAIN OF BRITAIN?**

**Pheasant, Alswear, North Devon: March 2016**

Did you know that crows are known to leave nuts on roads so cars crush the shells for them or that pigeons can recognise themselves in a mirror or that rooks can differentiate between human faces and post lookouts to

warn them of approaching baddies? And then there are pheasants... Well... Let's just say that they must have been at the end of the queue when bird brains were handed out.

Unless you're in a hurry and they're frantically zigzagging up the road because they've got wing amnesia and can't decide between a left or right escape route, pheasants can be endearingly amusing. You know how a lot of toddlers close their eyes to hide? Pheasants do it too. And while they can't cover their eyes with their hands, they frequently stick their heads behind fence posts, flowers, saplings and clumps of grass— leaving their sizeable, brilliantly-coloured rear ends sticking out in plain view.

This month's photo is a prime example of a pheasant in hiding. He and I spotted each other through my kitchen window. He ducked. I grabbed my camera. Let me tell you, it's not easy to get your timing right when you're laughing at a bobbing, red beacon amongst the daffodils. Up, down. Up, down. Up, down, scurry. Up, down. Up, down. Up, down, wait a bit, run for it. Up, down, up, down, up, down... Click!



# THE SEARCH FOR RUDI AND HIS PART IN THE NORMANDY LANDINGS

by Phil Brennan

This is the story of how a chance meeting led to a search into events in Oxhill after World War Two, and the surprising connection with one of the most famous incidents of D-Day, June 1944.

## Jörg's Story

When I first met them in June this year, Jörg and Elke, visitors from Germany, were standing in the drive admiring the cottage. This wasn't unusual, but the conversation soon took a strange turn. Jörg was not sure, but he thought he might have visited the house as a teenager in the 1970s with his parents. All he could remember was that his father, Rudi, had been a Prisoner of War in the area, and had "worked on a farm in Oxhill for someone called Frieda Furman". This made some sense to us: The Furmans had lived in Bilton Cottage after the war, and had run a poultry business. There are still extensive outbuildings which could lead it to be described as a farm, but several things didn't add up, and Jörg wasn't convinced. They left to continue their journey after a short while, but we stayed in touch by email. Even before they had left the country, he had arranged to send some photos from the 1970s visit. These started us on a journey which, like all historical research, mixed satisfaction at uncovering the facts with frustration at being close to the truth but unable to prove it.

The starting point was that they had indeed visited Bilton Cottage. Frieda has been identified alongside Rudi and his family and our first new player, an unknown man.

There were several other pictures from the visit taken at Bilton Cottage, but also some more which led the trail in another direction.

## Rudi in England

Up until 1944, most PoWs in the UK were Italian. The nearest PoW camps in this area were at Long Marston and, amusingly, Ettington Park hotel, [whose commandant was a Lt Col



*R to L: Jörg, His mother, unknown man, Frieda at Bilton Cottage, 1970s, looking toward the long meadow and Edgehill*

Badger, who no doubt stayed in the house while the inmates lived in huts] with several satellites and hostels scattered around. The Italians were under a fairly relaxed regime, and many were employed on the land. They began to be repatriated soon after the end of the war, and, as we know from the Costa family in Oxhill, many stayed or returned to marry local girls. The absence of the Italians left the authorities with a huge manpower shortage both in agriculture and reconstruction, which was to be filled by the large numbers of Germans captured after D-Day. The government persuaded itself that it was legal to still treat them as captives until well after the end of the war, and in fact the last camps did not close until 1948. The regime was relaxed fairly quickly: they were employed outside of the camps, and in general their relationship with the locals was respectful on both sides, judging from newspaper reports.



*In the Dundee (!) Evening Telegraph 22 July 1946*

Among their number was Rudi, captured on D-Day+1. We know that part of his nostalgic visit in the 70s was to Oxhill, but he had some pictures of other locations and people. There was no clue to their whereabouts, but they appeared to be local. Thanks to advice from Oxhillians, and thanks to the power of the internet, I posted the pictures on a Facebook group “Stratford Then and Now” and got answers within two hours. Thanks to the power of Carol Clark, whom of course I asked to help, we found a newspaper cutting which provided a link.

There were three pictures taken in Dorsington, including the rather grand-looking Moat House Farm. A quick trip to Dorsington established all three locations were still there, but I haven’t yet managed to contact the current inhabitants. Carol’s research, however, provided a probable link.

Sadly, for the moment, that’s where the facts end and we are left with conjecture:

Rudi re-visited Moat House Farm, and we know that POWs worked there.

Rudi visited someone in Dorsington and was photographed with him: was that the farm manager who employed him? Or even a PoW who remained?

Unlikely but appealing: was Rudi involved with the incident with the raging bull?

Rudi worked in Oxhill: was it at Bilton Cottage? so far it has been impossible to establish when the barns were built, as they pre-date Stratford DC's records.

No detailed records of PoW camps, such as nominal rolls, exist in the UK, so we can only guess whether he was an inmate at Long Marston and/or Ettington.



*Finally, one of the family's pictures almost certainly dates from Rudi's time as a PoW, and is perhaps the nostalgic and evocative: who were the women and their working dogs?*

*The chain link fencing is similar to that in Bilton Cottage when we moved in. The white stakes in the background could be newly planted trees.*

## **Rudi And The Night Before D-Day**

Rudi's journey to Oxhill started on 5th June 1944. Those historians among you will recall that there were two crucial operations prior to the Normandy landings: the capture of Pegasus Bridge, and further inland, the village of Sainte Mère Eglise, both designed to isolate the invasion beaches.

American Paratroops were assigned to Ste Mère Eglise, and things did not go well to begin with. They were badly scattered on landing, and worse, many were released directly over the village, leading to heavy losses and confused fighting, with many buildings set on fire. One famous incident, still remembered in the village, and vividly portrayed in the film "The Longest Day", involved Private John Steele, whose parachute hung him up on the church tower. He hung there until captured, but escaped shortly afterwards to a lifetime of glory.



Well, not quite. There were gaps in his story, which were never questioned while he was alive. There was at least one other witness to events that night.....

Since we first met, Jörg and I have been corresponding fairly regularly, and almost by accident, he told me this story. Here it is, as his father recorded in an interview years later:

(Rudi was a corporal in charge of ten men) “Everything was quiet that night, so much so that we were having fun racing each other with bicycles around the church square.... At 11pm, I took my post in the bell tower, next to the telephone. Shortly after midnight, aircraft started to fly over.



Soon planes were coming in waves with hundreds of paratroopers jumping out. I could see them landing thanks to a house burning on the other side of the square.... In the bell tower, we were under fire. Suddenly, everything turned black: a paratrooper had fallen on the steeple itself, and remained hanging by his parachute lines. He seemed dead. Then after a while, I heard his voice. One of my men [who sounds like a German relative of Private Pike] wanted to shoot him, but I said “Are you crazy? If they know we’re here, we’ll never get out!” I managed to cut some of his lines so that he could climb down - and couldn’t climb back up to us”.

Soon after that, they retreated, surviving being shot at both by the Americans and their own officers: Rudi was wounded, captured and treated by the Americans. He was shipped as a PoW first to England, then to America, and sometime after November 1945, to Oxhill.

He was a regular attendant at anniversary events in France until his death in 1985, and his story is recounted, in much more detail, in at least one authoritative book on the battle.

This is likely to be posed: the defenders were long gone by daylight.

## Where Now?

In order to put more flesh on the bones of Rudi's time in Oxhill, there are still a number of lines of enquiry:

PoW records (mostly now in Germany)  
Local newspapers, mainly online,  
And finally, anyone who reads this with family records or memories of Oxhill in the 40s to 70s,  
Anyone who knows sources of local history in Dorsington.

One final question is, why did Rudi come back? Clearly his time here had an impact on him, but did he come here just out of nostalgia, or was there a more specific reason? His son believes it was a nostalgic trip, celebrating the friendships he had made: not least a certain Hetty Goode from Stratford, whom apparently, he nearly married! "In the end, she preferred another ex PoW named Adler, who ran a taxi cab in Stratford, but the two families remained friends".

**To Be Continued?**

## HELP SUPPORT OUR VILLAGE CHURCH

It is lovely to see St Lawrence full of friendly faces and to experience the joyous singing at Christmas and the other Church festivals. Obviously the Parochial Church Council (PCC) would welcome attendance at the varied services offered each Sunday at other times of the year but realises that there are competing demands on a family's time at weekends.

Nevertheless, the upkeep of this village asset is very much in the hands of the whole community. A small monthly donation from supporters of this green, spiritual, landmark space will ensure the continued maintenance of the fabric of the building and churchyard for the benefit of future generations. Donate at [parishgiving.org.uk](http://parishgiving.org.uk)

*Thank you, Douglas Nethercleft (originally published August 2022)*

  
**Parish Giving**  
Help Support Our Village  
Church

# ST LAWRENCE CHURCH FOR DECEMBER

Advent may well have started by the time you read this: a time of waiting. For what, asks the poet, are we waiting? The world then was waiting expectantly for God to make good his promise come down and rescue them, from tyranny and hardship, from the suffering it was experiencing. God was to come and live among his people. How similar things are now:



Loving God, we see a world that waits -  
for justice to be done,  
for love to conquer all,  
for someone to do something for the lovers who fear  
and the children who cry,  
for someone to fill the empty tables and the flagging,  
exhausted souls  
of the ones who cannot see beauty through their despair.  
God upon whom we wait,  
come to us.

*Sally Foster-Fulton, Hope was heard Singing.*

## Reverse Advent Calendar

Reflecting our concern for our world, we are going to repeat again the Reverse Advent Calendar: rather than open the calendar window to receive a gift each day, we are invited to make a gift each day, by donating something into the relevant bag for each day. Bags, numbered 1-24 will be found at the base of the font in church, and ultimately all gifts will go to the Food Bank. Please do help if you can: gifts of food, tinned, dried or packeted (in date, please) would be welcome, and also toiletries.



# Christmas Diary in St Lawrence Church

*Please do join us as we celebrate the God who come to live among us.*

Sunday, December 4 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Second Sunday in Advent</b> 9.30 am Holy Communion	George Heighton
Sunday, December 11 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Third Sunday in Advent</b> 9.30 am Morning Worship	Jennie Rake
Wednesday, Dec. 14 <sup>th</sup>	<b>6.30 pm Carol Service</b>	
Sunday, December 18 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Fourth Sunday in Advent</b> 3.00 pm Crib Service	George Heighton
Saturday, December 24 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Christmas Eve</b> 9.30 pm Midnight Mass in <b>Tysoe Church</b>	George Heighton
Sunday, December 25 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Christmas Day</b> 9.30 am Holy Communion of Christmas Morning	Jill Tucker

*Every blessing, Jill*

## ST LAWRENCE CHURCH EXTRA!!

### Church Big Clean. December 3rd at 10am

Hi Oxhillians. Christmas will soon be here and we look forward to your support on December 3rd to spruce up the church with its annual Big Clean. A little while ago a couple of pigeons invaded the church (door left open) and they made quite a mess. Some good people cleaned up as much as they could but the pigeons left some trade marks high up on the wall above the chancel arch!! So if anyone who is able to cope with heights and possesses a long ladder could come along and help us out we could restore the wall to its pristine whiteness. For those new to the village the church was completely painted by Charles and Nadia McCall about 5 years ago (?) and it has looked beautiful ever since. Let's keep it that way. Coffee and cake will be laid on to reward your efforts!

### Crib Service. December 18th at 3pm

We are planning a service which we hope children will come to and enjoy. Sunday before Christmas. I believe something of special interest is being planned that the children can participate in. So put the date on the calendar. Again refreshments will be served. Look forward to seeing you there. It will be a warm church. The heating will be on! The Christmas tree will be all lit up.

### The Carol Service this year will be on Wednesday 14th December.

This year it should be back to normal with we hope a full church pre pandemic!! 7.30 pm.

*Carol Fox*

# NATURE NOTES FOR DECEMBER

by Grenville Moore

As I write this the government have announced a restriction on keeping birds (chickens etc) out in the open due to another outbreak of Avian Flu. Although the outbreak is mainly centred in Norfolk with wildfowl, it does apply to the whole country, so it is imperative that you keep all your bird feeders clean and disinfected.

Christmas approaches and it reminds me of a lovely quote from Dylan Thomas:

*Our Christmas was so much like another... that I can never remember whether it snowed for six days and six nights when I was twelve or whether it snowed for twelve days and twelve nights when I was six.*

According to folk lore when you have a bountiful year with hedgerow fruits then we're in for a hard winter... we'll see?

Those keen eyed amongst you may have noticed, when walking across by Manor pond, a couple of small bird, very fast flying, in a zig zag pattern, birds that give a couple of harsh "scaap" calls as they take off, or erupt from the reeds. These are the Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*). John Clare accurately described it in his poem 'To the Snipe' as a 'Lover of swamps and quagmire overgrown with hassock-tufts of sedge'. If you do manage to catch a glimpse of one, you may notice a beautiful little brown, black and buff wader with a very long bill, they use this to probe the mud for worms. This bill is proportionately the longest of any British bird and the birds original name was 'snite' which derives from this long thin bill. Another old English name is Haeferblaete, meaning 'goat bleater' other derivations are heather bleater and kid of the air. The 'bleat' is descriptive of the unusual sound which the Snipe makes with the end wing primaries and outer tail feathers, a kind of fluting bleat in the wind as the bird drops in a deep descent from a special high rapid flight, which is usually a courtship display flight, some say it also sounds like a horse whinny. It is commonly known as 'drumming' and is also shared by the Woodcock. A large number of Snipe are winter visitors but there are still about 80,000 that breed in the UK, but they are declining and are now on the amber list. Twenty years ago 20-30 million would arrive in western Europe, that figure has now dropped to



*Common Snipe (Gallinago Gallinago)*

about 10 million, and rather surprisingly, they can still be legally shot !

A rather interesting extract from *The Master Book of Poultry and Game Cookery* by Henry Smith published in 1949 “ the Ministry of Food considered it desirably to fix a maximum retail price of 2/- per bird in 1942 (10p today) but few were marketed. With modern canned meats and other fare available to the housewife (!) of to-day, very few people can recall the flavour of this delicious morsel. It can be thoroughly recommended to those seeking adventure in the field of gastronomy.” I’m slightly ashamed to say I have eaten these little birds in the past and they were truly delicious. Henry then goes on to give 8 different recipes including Snipe pie, Danish Style and Snipe and Oyster Pudding.

As Christmas engulfs us I’m pretty certain that there will not be a household in the village that does not have chocolate within, but take heed from William Coles writing in *Adam in Eden* 1657;

*“The Confection made of Cacao called Chocolate or Chocoletto, which may be had in diverse places in London at reasonable rates, is of wonderful efficacy for the procreation of children: for it not only vehemently incites to Venus, but causeth Conception in women....and besides that it preserves health, for it makes such as take it often to become fat and corpulent, fair and amiable’.....you have been warned!*

*A very merry Christmas to all our readers*



*Patrons enjoying chocolate at a 17th century chocolate house*



# SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM OUR VILLAGERS

Season's Greetings from Roger and Gill. We've decided this year that we will make a donation to the Warwickshire Air Ambulance charity instead of sending Christmas cards to chums in the village. You know who you are! So we wish you all the very best for Christmas, the New Year and beyond. May you and yours stay healthy and happy!

*Roger & Gill*



Mike and Heather Bridgman would like to wish all Oxhill residents a lovely, happy and healthy Christmas. We won't be sending any Christmas cards this year and instead making a donation to the Macmillan Nurses Charity and the Migraine Trust Charity.

*Merry Christmas to you all. Mike & Heather*



We will be making a donation to Great Ormond Street Hospital instead of sending Christmas cards to our friends in the village. We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy new year.

*Anne, Jo, Milo and Felix*



We have decided once again that we are going to give a donation to Target Ovarian Cancer, instead of sending our friends and neighbours of Oxhill Christmas cards this year. We would like to wish you all a very Haply Christmas and a healthy and Happy New Year. With love and hugs,

*Ed and Elaine Morgan XXXX*



Happy Christmas 2022

Due to my temporary restricted mobility I will not be able to send Christmas cards this year so will be making donations to charity instead. So happy Christmas all and good wishes for 2023.

*Carol Fox*





by Ruth Mercer

This is a traditional French Christmas bake that looks impressive and tastes even better! It is a very popular recipe with our family. The enriched dough is filled with orange-soaked apricots, walnuts and marzipan, rolled up and twisted around into a crown shape. I make the dough in a stand mixer as it saves a lot of kneading but the recipe below details mixing by hand. Don't worry if you forget to marinate the apricots overnight: just speed up the marination by microwaving the chopped apricots in orange juice for 20 seconds. Please let me know if you are baking one - I'll be round to "test" it!

## APRICOT COURONNE

### Ingredients

#### *Dough:*

250 g strong white bread flour  
5 g salt  
8 g instant dried yeast  
50 g softened butter  
135 ml warm milk  
1 medium egg, lightly beaten

#### *Filling:*

120 g ready to eat dried apricots, chopped  
150 ml orange juice  
90 g softened butter  
70 g soft brown sugar  
35 g plain flour  
60 g raisins  
65 g chopped walnuts  
1 orange  
200 g marzipan

#### *Icing:*

50 g apricot jam  
100 g icing sugar  
25 - 50 g flaked almonds, depending on personal preference





1. First of all, pour the orange juice over the chopped apricots in a bowl and leave to marinate overnight.
2. To make the dough, put the flour in a large mixing bowl; add the salt to one side and the dried yeast to the other. Add the butter, milk and egg and mix with your hands until you have picked up all the flour from the bowl, using the mixture to clean the sides of the bowl. Keep mixing until you have a soft dough.
3. Lightly flour the work surface and tip the dough out onto it. Knead for about 6 minutes, working through the wet stage until your dough is elastic, silky and starting to form a soft, smooth skin.
4. Put the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover and leave to rise until it doubles in size. This will take about an hour, but you can leave it 2-3 hours if you want.
5. While the dough rises, make the filling. Cream the butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Drain the apricots, then stir into the mixture along with the flour, raisins, walnuts and orange zest.
6. Roll out the marzipan into a rectangle around 32 cm x 20 cm (easiest on a piece of baking parchment lightly dusted with icing sugar). The marzipan rectangle will be very thin.

7. Once the dough has risen, tip out the dough onto a lightly floured surface or a piece of baking parchment. (I use parchment as it is easy to transfer the crown onto the baking tray by lifting it on the parchment.) Gently roll out the dough into a rectangle measuring about 33 cm x 25 cm. Arrange the dough so that the long side is facing you. Spread the apricot mixture evenly over the dough, leaving a border of 3 cm along both long edges of the dough. Place the marzipan on top of the apricot mixture.





8. Starting on the long side nearest to you, roll up the dough tightly like a Swiss roll, continuing to roll to seal the dough join. Now carefully cut the Swiss roll almost in half along its length, just leaving it joined at one end, making a pair of legs. Twist the two “legs” over each other and join the ends to form a ring – your crown. Place it on a baking tray. (If you haven’t followed my tip about creating the crown on baking parchment, you will need to line the baking tray.)
9. Put the baking tray inside a large plastic bag and leave to prove for 1 hour, until the dough has doubled in size and springs back quickly when lightly prodded. Set the oven to 200C.
10. When the oven is up temperature, bake the couronne for 25 minutes until risen and golden. Place on a cooling rack. Warm the apricot jam with a splash of water and brush over the hot couronne to glaze.
11. Mix the icing sugar with enough water to make a glacé icing (about 2-3 tsp should be enough but add more if you want a runnier icing). Once the couronne is cool, drizzle over the icing and sprinkle flaked almonds over before the icing sets.



*If and when you create an Oxhill Cooks recipe, please take a photo and send it to us, we would love to put it in the Oxhill News. ~ ed.*



# OXHILL VILLAGE HALL

As you all know, the hall is out of commission while the building works go on, but, thanks to Jill Tucker, our bookings and events continue in The Old Chapel. On Saturday 12th November, we met there for the annual Curry Night. Once again it proved its popularity with dozens of Oxhillians enjoying homemade jalfrezi, madras, korma, and more, along with excellent beer, wine and conversation. If you missed it, why not join us next time?



## SENIORS' CHRISTMAS LUNCH, Tuesday 13th December at 12:30 pm

The invitations are out, our generous volunteer cooks are all arranged, and the bar is stocked. All we need now is to know who's coming so, if you haven't already added your name to the list (or if you haven't received an invitation and would like to come), please let Jo Collings know so you don't miss out. (Jo Collings: 07860 418811, [itsjocollings@gmail.com](mailto:itsjocollings@gmail.com))

## BEER & BUBBLES, Friday 16th December at 7:30 pm

Our last event of 2022 is your chance to dress up and party (black tie optional)! With two drinks and canapés included in the £15 ticket, plus our very reasonably priced bar, you're in for a pre-Christmas treat. Don't forget to book with Ali Sayer as soon as possible so we can make sure we have plenty of Prosecco! (Ali Sayer: 07970922352, [ali.sayer@btinternet.com](mailto:ali.sayer@btinternet.com))

## EVENTS FOR NEXT YEAR

Under discussion is a Murder Mystery Play. To make it happen, we need to find six budding actors who fancy playing a detective, a very wealthy widow, her spoiled son, her tipsy daughter, a grumpy gardener, and a vicar with a secret! If you're up for it, please contact Karen MacRae on 07808 586838 or [karenmacrae27@gmail.com](mailto:karenmacrae27@gmail.com).

## FUND-RAISING

Our events are the fun way to raise money for the renovation project, but we're also more than happy to receive donations of any size to help us top up the thermometer outside the hall. If you'd like to make a contribution, please contact Jo Collings on 07860 418811 or [itsjocollings@gmail.com](mailto:itsjocollings@gmail.com) or John McKail on [jmckail@btinternet.com](mailto:jmckail@btinternet.com). Donations of £50 or more come with the option of adding your name to the commemorative plaque in the new and improved building.

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST: A HUGE THANK YOU TO ALL OF  
OUR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS!

# THE FLIGHT OF THE SEAGULL

## OR 'ONE MAN IN A BOAT'

by Peter Taylor

### Part 2 – Tales from the riverbank, or Ratty's validation.

*For those who missed part one, I told the story of rebuilding a very old British Seagull outboard motor, and hatching a plan for it to power me on a voyage to explore the River Thames. Now for the journey itself.....*



On 2 Sept in a state of great excitement I set off for Lechlade to begin my trip. Once there I offloaded all my equipment onto the wharf, and drove round to the marina where I'd arranged to leave the car.

By 11 o'clock I had the Seagull securely mounted to the back of the 'Wiltshire Gold', and all my fuel and kit stowed safely aboard. I was ready for the off - but there was a last-minute snag. All boats on the Thames have to display a licence issued by the Environment Agency. Mine said in capital letters 'UNPOWERED CRAFT' – it was now a floating oxymoron. Edith, the proprietor of the boatyard, was a bit concerned. After a brief discussion we agreed that I should carry on and hope for the best. But 'It'll be the lock-keepers who'll spot it' she warned. I obscured the licence with my tent bag, and prepared to embark with my fingers crossed.... With a few pulls on the starting rope the Seagull burst into smokey life, and I was away. Turning left under Halfpenny Bridge, I committed myself to the watery bosom of Old Father Thames for the next six days....

The light drizzle that had been falling all morning soon gave way to warm sunshine, and I found myself breaking into a happy grin as I chugged along – this was just how I'd imagined it! All was peaceful, the sun was shining and the river was like glass. 'Idyllic' pretty much summed it up. In a couple of hours I was about 4 miles downstream from Lechlade, and had navigated two locks unchallenged. As this was the only stretch without a handy pub, I'd come prepared for lunch on board, so I tied up to the bank, sat back and had a sandwich and a bottle of beer.

Lunch over, I fired up the Seagull & set off again. I'd realised when planning the trip that sitting down in the back of the boat for 2-3 hours a day was going to be seriously uncomfortable, so my technique was to set a gentle cruising speed, then stand up and steer, using a tiller extension made from a curtain pole. The transition from sitting to standing was a bit of a balancing act, so I made a mental note that one pint at lunchtime was going to be the limit... Ahead of me now was about 3 hours travelling to the Rushey Lock campsite and my first night under 'canvas'. And the sun still shone....

I suspect that most people's image of the Thames is of a big, wide river, gently working its way south to London – it was certainly mine until now. But not far out of Lechlade it gets narrower and narrower, and begins to weave left and right in a long sequence of tight hairpin bends. In places it even doubles back on itself, and the high banks close in on either side, lined with thick beds of reeds. Nothing is visible beyond the river save the occasional top half of a grazing cow. I sailed an hour or more without seeing another boat or human being. Nicholson's Guide describes it as 'a very isolated stretch of river having little contact with civilisation'. I describe it as 'not a good place to break down'.

But I didn't, and eventually lock no. 3 – Grafton – hove into view. Climb back over the curtain pole, sit down and assume the manoeuvring position. The lock-keeper opened the gates, the 'Wiltshire Gold' glided in, and I grabbed a mooring chain to secure it against the inrush of water. As it flows in under the sluices, the boat is propelled forward, but when the water hits the other end it rebounds, propelling the boat backwards. If at this point the boat is turning round, it goes sideways too....It bounced gently between the lock sides and rotated through 360 degrees as the lock filled up. I said to the lock-keeper 'Bet you don't see incompetence like that every day of the week'. 'You'd be surprised' he replied. Followed by 'Can I see your licence please'. Blast! Rumbled! Play the innocent.... I uncovered the licence and professed shock and amazement when he pointed out the anomaly. I apologised profusely. Was this going to be the end of the adventure so soon after it had begun? But a visit to his tiny lockside office revealed a pad of temporary licence forms, and after filling in some details, I was upgraded to 'POWERED CRAFT'. I sensed the tiny Seagull preening its feathers...

So on we went, pausing to refuel mid-afternoon, basking in the scenery, the weather, and just the pure fun of the whole endeavour. Come 5 o'clock the charming Rushey Lock appeared on schedule and I moored up for the night, tired but happy. About nine miles, four locks, and five hours sailing – the longest period the Seagull had run for many a year, and not a beat missed.





*Rushey Lock*

Rushey Lock is absolutely delightful, with its splendid lock-keeper's cottage and a large topiary frog in the immaculate garden. Legend has it that the actor David Niven used to live here, hosting wild parties with the likes of Errol Flynn and Douglas Fairbanks.

A quick chat with the lock-keeper to find my pitch for the night – ‘Anywhere you like, just by the hedge’ – and unloading began. Hungry and thirsty as I was, I realized that pitching the tent for the first time – I hadn't even unwrapped it before setting off – was best done now, rather than in the dark after a couple of pints. It looked easy enough though – the instructions claimed it could be done in 10 minutes. I'm proud to say that by the end of the trip I'd easily got this down to around 25. Fibreglass rods twanged hither and thither, guy ropes were tripped over, and wire pegs pulled themselves out of the ground behind my back. But soon – in the loosest sense of the word – there it stood, with the entrance facing *away* from the river, ready to cocoon me for the night. Now for a well-earned supper.

My master plan told me that the wonderfully-named ‘Trout at Tadpole Bridge’ was about a mile away, so off I plodded. The first pint was so good I ordered a second. A large plate of fish & chips soon put back what the day had taken out, and I stumbled happy but exhausted back to my berth. I wormed my way into the tent, on to the inflatable mattress and into my sleeping bag. The tent claimed to be ‘2 person’ and whilst a pair of pre-teen pygmies might agree, an ungainly 6 footer wrestling with a sleeping bag on a bouncy castle found it a bit of a challenge. But I made it - and before I could reflect on the day, it was 7am tomorrow.

I unzipped the tent flap, and with a bit of servo-assistance from the mattress I catapulted out. What a morning! Not a ripple on the water, the sun gently chasing a thin haze off the surrounding fields, and a heron fluttering languidly out of a nearby tree.....



### *Early morning Thames*

But enough whimsy, there was serious boating to be done! I broke camp, reloaded the ‘Wiltshire Gold’, pulled the Seagull into life & set off. This time I only had a mile to go before mooring up at the Trout again for a cooked breakfast. The plan seemed to be working rather well....

Underway once more, I passed two wild swimmers - who confirmed the river’s cleanliness – and again found myself in the narrows, as I passed through the Chimney Nature Reserve. But after a couple of tranquil hours lunchtime was approaching, and so was The Maybush at Newbridge. A convenient mooring, some light refreshment, and off again – soon to arrive at Northmoor lock.

Most of the Thames locks are manned, but today Northmoor was an exception. Operating a lock and a boat single-handedly is quite a challenge – moor up outside the lock, walk to the lock, raise both sluices and open the gates. Return to the boat, motor into the lock. Moor up again, close the gates and lower the sluices. Walk to the other end, open the sluices and empty the lock, keeping a careful eye on the boat to make sure it’s not left hanging on its mooring line! Open both gates, return to the boat, exit the lock and moor up again. Disembark, walk back to the lock, close the gates and sluices. Have a rest.

Except at Northmoor I added a complication to this procedure. I successfully negotiated the lock and moored up to go and close the gates. I grabbed the landing stage but still had my feet in the boat, and of course it then moved smartly away from the bank. Once the gap was bigger than me, I fell in. My first reaction was ‘bother’ or something similar. My second was amazement at how warm the water was. My third was to thank Lydia who’d bought me a lifejacket for my birthday, and I bobbed instantly back to the surface. I scrambled out and

squelched off to close the lock gates, realising that my phone was in my pocket. Bother again...

The next problem was how to dry off? It was a lovely warm day, so I stripped down to my underwear and set off in the standing position to let the breeze do its work. Just around the next bend was Bablock Hythe caravan site, where many happy campers were sitting in their deckchairs watching the boats go by....

The river was wide and straight now, and good progress was made. Next stop was Eynsham Lock, and sure enough by about 5 o'clock I was there, as per the master plan. Pitch the tent, blow up the mattress, change into some dry clothes, and off to the pub for supper. This time The Talbot, reached by a short hike across a couple of fields, hoping the cows were friendly.

As I savoured a cool beer, I reflected on the day – about 5 hours sailing, 12 miles, 3 locks and one submersion. I enjoyed a well-earned supper, dodged the cows again, struggled into my sleeping bag and went out like a light.

Day three target was Iffley Lock - the turn-round point. Timing was a bit more critical, as our daughter and son in law were driving down from Thame to meet me, ETA 5.30. But it looked a fairly easy run....

After a quick fettle of the Seagul's carburetter, I was underway by about 9.30. The weather continued warm and sunny and I potted happily along, enjoying the scenery and looking forward to my evening rendezvous. But at Godstow lock there was an ominous sign - 'Weed in the river – keep to the centre stream'. Just beyond the lock the river doubled in width, and halved in depth. Shallow water and weeks of sunshine were perfect conditions for its growth. I'd only gone about 100yds when the Seagull staggered to a halt, trails of greenery wound round its propeller. With a bit of effort I *just* managed to reach down far enough to untangle it, and to burn my wrist on the exhaust pipe. But I was running again, for maybe another 100 yards before the same thing happened. After another 3 or 4 short bursts I realised I was in trouble. Maybe I could row through it? I climbed across all the cargo to the middle seat and unshipped the oars. But I made slow and exhausting progress, pulling the oars through the great clumps of weed. When my energy ran out I reverted to running the Seagull until it choked again. This restored my energy for a bit more rowing, and so the cycle continued. I was getting a bit fed-up with this, and my 5.30 rendezvous looked to be going out of the window. Should I ring and cancel, or press on? Well, I'd seen off a good few problems to get this far, so I was in no mood to give up now. I cleared the prop one more time & resumed rowing. As I was about to stop for another rest, something struck me – surely that sandy bank was on the other side earlier? I hailed a couple of walkers – 'Which way's Iffley?' 'That way' they said, pointing in the opposite direction. Whilst I'd been upside down untangling the prop, the wind had gently rotated the boat through 180 degrees and I'd spent 10 minutes rowing the wrong way.... Tired, hungry and cross, I had one of those 'why on earth did I decide to do this?' moments. I turned the boat round and resumed the cycle, on the verge of despair and exhaustion.

But – at last – I was through it, and rarely have I been more relieved. I might still make Iffley on time.

The river soon narrowed again and began to twist and turn between rows of houses, then Osney Bridge and through the lock – I was in Oxford. Under Folly Bridge, past Christchurch Meadow, then the University Rowing Club (I could show them a thing or two!) and finally there was Iffley Lock. I was half an hour early!

It wasn't long before I spotted Lydia, Hugh and Carol walking along the towpath, so I moored up and we had a jolly reunion at the Isis Farmhouse. All parties were somewhat surprised and relieved that I'd made it.

I'd treated myself to a hotel for the night – justified by its surprisingly low price – so after a couple of drinks they dropped me off and we waved goodbye. Soon after checking in I began to understand the 'price-point'. A large bowl of food waste sat on a sideboard in the corridor. I went up to my room where a rather tired 'Happy Birthday' balloon bobbed lazily against the ceiling. (My birthday's in July). It was more securely attached than some of the wallpaper though...But these were details – I needed supper. The dining room was a close adherent to the 'Fawlty Towers' school of décor, and the wall light above my table flicked on and off at random. Two waiters debated whether to move me or change the bulb, finally settling on the belt and braces option. But hunger is a great sauce, and against expectations I enjoyed an excellent curry. As I stumbled up to bed the food waste was still sitting on the sideboard.



*Mooring at Iffley*

It was there again in the morning when I came down for breakfast. The breakfast bar completely eschewed the Fawlty Towers theme and had more of a 'Demolition in Progress' vibe. Several square meters of ceiling and wallpaper had seemingly been torn off at random, exposing concrete and plaster. I was the only customer, so at least the service was prompt and I set about a 'croissant'. It could have been sold as a boat fender without troubling the Trade Descriptions Act, so after that, the food waste, and the general air of decay, I decided I was only going to eat from sealed containers. In defiance of a lifetime's prejudice, I had a pot of yoghurt for breakfast.

But – hey, it was cheap.....

So I packed my stuff and set off on the short walk back to the boat on yet another sunny morning. A quick stop at a passing community shop provided some homemade sandwiches for lunch. I was relieved to see The Wiltshire Gold lying undisturbed at its moorings, and I spent a while tidying the cargo and checking my fuel stocks – I'd used just under half, so



there should be enough for the return trip. But I still had one big worry - the weed bed at Godstow. Surely I couldn't face that again? There's a sort of unwritten rule of life that says the less planning you do, the more good luck you encounter. Not to be relied on as a 'life strategy' but it often works out that way. A quick look at the map showed that just after Osney bridge a sharp right turn led into the Oxford canal. It then ran parallel to the Thames for about 3 miles, completely skirting the affected stretch. There was then another left turn into 'Duke's Cut' that led straight back to the river. Problem solved! I tickled the Seagull, gave it a good tug, swung the boat round and headed for home.

At Oxford I moored up at Christ Church Meadow, and tucked into my sandwich. Then, putting the folly into Folly Bridge, I restarted the Seagull, having forgotten to disengage the clutch. This has a guaranteed outcome – the boat will surge forward, causing the occupant(s) to fall over. Sometimes they will fall into the boat, sometimes into the water. This time I was lucky. Though not as lucky as the drinkers on the Head of the River's terrace, who enjoyed some free entertainment.... But now I had to look out for my sharp right, just after Osney Bridge. I soon spotted it, turned right then left, and into the canal. What started as a gentle drizzle had now become a steady downpour, but I was so pleased with my diversion that I couldn't have cared less.

It was clear by now that not all was well with the poor old Seagull. It kept slowing down, only to speed up again just when I thought it was going to stall. It stopped altogether once or twice, followed by a lot of distressed hissing and steaming - it was obviously overheating. But it had proven itself a robust little thing so I decided to press on for my second night at Eynsham lock, and investigate the following morning. In an hour or so I turned left into Duke's Cut and another lock. The canal locks had a single gate at each end, with a paddle wound by a crank handle. Of course I didn't have one... A couple of narrowboats appeared to be on permanent moorings just beyond the lock, so I set off to see if someone would lend me one. As I approached, a charming-looking chap from the 'ageing hippy' section of Central Casting appeared. Don't worry he said, I'll lend you a handle. He turned out to be a fellow Seagull-fancier, and we had a lengthy chat about their merits whilst he opened the lock. In spite of my protestations, he insisted I keep the handle in case of future need, and I set off again having made a new friend. I was slightly relieved to rejoin the Thames just above King's Lock, and even more so to pitch up for my second night at Eynsham, the Seagull still hissing and staggering.

I followed my established unload/pitch tent/inflate mattress routine, and set off across the familiar fields to The Talbot again. The same hardworking girl seemed to be running the bar, kitchen and dining room singlehandedly.

After supper it was dark, and I didn't want to risk tripping over a sleeping cow and the messy consequences that might follow. A main road ran alongside the field, and half a mile away was a toll bridge – a steady rain was still falling and the glaring lights made it look like Checkpoint Charlie. I crossed it without challenge and spotted a sign to the Thames Path, which would hopefully take me back to the lock. It wound down a steep slope between densely packed trees, the rain began to intensify, I was all on my own, and the whole scene became seriously spooky. I got there in the end – albeit somewhat damp- and crawled thankfully into my tent.

This was to be the night of the Big Storm. Before I'd dropped off, a biblical downpour began, with huge flashes of lightning followed by deafening claps of thunder. It was directly over the tent and seemed to go on for ever – I began to imagine pairs of 'all the animals of the earth' jostling for space on the Wiltshire Gold... The apocalyptic atmosphere was magnified by the clattering of low-flying military helicopters. I lay there waiting for the tent to start leaking, but to my complete amazement it held back the deluge all night. But what about the Wiltshire Gold? Would the downpour have sunk her? How wet would my cargo be? There was nothing I could do but wait for daylight and the hope the rain would stop.

Thankfully it was still there when I got up but there was a good eight inches of water in the bottom, so job 1 was unship all the fuel, tools, spares etc, and start baling. Job 2 was to heave the Seagull into the boat and see why it had been overheating. I cleared a blockage in its water outlet and hoped that would sort the problem.

Just as I finished my camp-mates began to surface – two brothers, canoeing downstream to Oxford. We swapped anecdotes and I warned them about the weed, suggesting they take the canal. 'Good idea' they agreed – 'but we haven't got a lock handle'. 'You will have in a minute' I said. They promised to return it to its owner when they got to the other end...

So now it was Tuesday and I set off for a lunchtime rendezvous with Roger & Gill Goodman – they wanted to film some of the adventure, so we'd agreed to meet at about 12.30. It was raining hard again, and after about an hour's running I spotted a bedraggled couple on the riverbank, one of them holding a movie camera. I moored up and we agreed they would go on ahead whilst I refuelled, and then film my approach to the Maybush, where we'd have lunch. All went well and we then enjoyed a meal together, out of the wind and rain.

We parted after lunch, and I pressed on for another night at Rushey Lock. By now the damp had pretty much got into everything including my sleeping bag, and I began to yearn for a hot bath and a dry bed. I realised that The Trout at Tadpole Bridge was nearer than the lock, so I decided to stop and if they had a room at a sensible price, I'd take it.

It turned out that they had five rooms available, but the price didn't really fit 'sensible'. I persuaded them that at 5.30 it would be better to sell one room cheaply than none at all, so a discount was agreed. I found my rather luxurious room, draped all my damp clothes over the towel rail and stripped off for a long hot shower. There was no hot water. I got dressed again and went to 'have a word'. It turned out the boiler had packed up and there was no one to fix it. I made do with a few kettles of hot water in the basin, and stomped off to the bar for supper. A very apologetic manager then appeared and told me my dinner and drinks would be free by way of compensation. Luckily I'd already ordered the most expensive steak and a pint of Prescott. I finished off with a double brandy.

In the morning my clothes were dry, I'd slept like a baby, and I was ready for the Full English. But more bad news awaited – the gas was off in the kitchen, and there was no hot food! However, everything else would be free and a toaster was on its way. (Where from? I asked). I had a large breakfast of muesli, toast, coffee and a banana. I reckoned the whole stay had cost about 50% of 'retail'. Every cloud etc.....

So now I really was on the home run, and the sun was out again. After a quick stop at Rushey to collect my umbrella – left behind on the outbound leg - I was soon back into the lonely, winding stretch a few miles out of Lechlade, the area that I previously described as ‘not a good place to break down’. Not far into it, I did. A loud bang from the back of the boat, and the Seagull revved as if bent on self-destruction. I lunged for the throttle and shut it down, as a log floated to the surface just behind. I knew what had happened – there’s a safety spring in the propeller that breaks if it hits an obstruction, to protect the rest of the motor. It had done its job, but now I had no drive. But in a rare bit of forward thinking, I’d fitted a new spring during the rebuild, and kept the old one as a spare. I manhandled the Seagull into the boat again and removed the broken spring, feeling pretty smug at my foresight.

I took the spare out of its bag, only to realise that it was broken too! Just maybe though there was enough of it left to drive the prop if I went very gently – it was the only chance I had, so in it went. I wrestled the Seagull back into position, and very gingerly fired it up. I set off at minimum throttle with my heart in my mouth - and it held. The final drama had been overcome, and an hour or so later I chugged gently into Lechlade marina. I’d made it, there and back! About 70 miles, 24 locks and immeasurable fun....

I had learnt many things:

- 1) If one end of you is on the bank and the other end is in the boat, if it’s not tied up you will fall in.
- 2) If a rope is tied to the boat whilst you’re in it, you can pull as hard as you like and nothing will happen.
- 3) iPhones are not waterproof but cheap Halfords tents are.
- 4) People who work on the river are universally helpful.
- 5) Pubs and restaurants are in a desperate state post Brexit, Covid or whatever. We should use them or we’ll lose them.
- 6) Common sense and planning are vital, but a bit of unpredictability never goes amiss.
- 7) Ratty was right – there’s nothing half so much worth doing as messing about in boats.



*The home stretch*

## KISSING GATES

As you may have noticed we have 2 new kissing gates increasing accessibility to the walks across the Manor fields. The Parish Council received a grant for this project during 2021 from Councillor Chris Mills. With a contribution from the Parish Council this gave us the funds to replace 7 of the stiles around the Manor fields really opening them up for all to enjoy the wildlife and the view. Alistair and Debbie Welford kindly supported the scheme and donated additional materials to help keep costs down. As a result, we were able to employ Gareth Attwood (Goof) to carry out the work. I hope that you will agree that he has done a great job and for those of us who find the stiles challenging the gates are a delight.

We would like to thank Alistair and Debbie for allowing us to make the changes and donating materials, Chris Mills and his team for awarding the funds and to Gareth for carrying out the work.

The project will be finished at the beginning of December with the remaining gates being put in place.

*Parish Council*



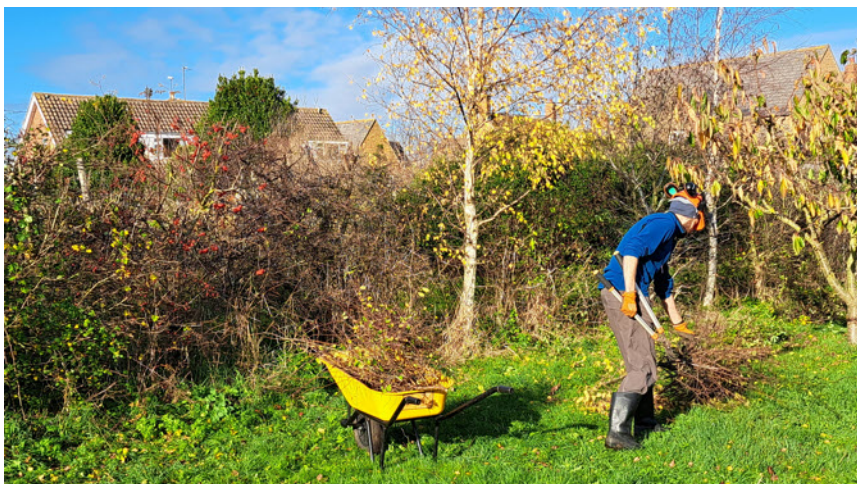


# WOT2GROW COMMUNITY ORCHARD



We seemed to have moved from autumn into winter rapidly as the trees are mainly bare branched with just a few hanging onto the last of their apples. All the pears have gone but we are storing some apples which should last for a few more weeks, such an early crop this year so even the Ashmeads Kernal are almost finished when they usually don't start picking until late November or early December! The trees do look very sculptural without their leaves which is such a change from the leafy fruitfulness of the summer and autumn!!

The latest batch of apple juice has been well received with a very good flavour and like the first batch much sweeter than previous years.



*Hedge cutting and clearing.*

Maintenance is ongoing with the hedges and wind breaks being really cut back as they have put on massive growth this year. Pruning the fruit trees is also ongoing with the number of trees making it nearly a year long activity for the volunteers with only a short break in the spring! The soft fruit pruning etc has been completed for this year all bar the autumn raspberries which are cut back in February.

So the next event at the orchard will be Wassail on Saturday 14th January, look out for the posters!!

We are thankful for the volunteers who do all this work to keep the orchard productive and looking fantastic so if you would like to help out, perhaps learn new skills and get some great organic fruit why not contact us!

Find out more – use the contact numbers below or message us via the web site. The Community Orchard is just behind the allotments on the Shenington Road in Tysoe.

Liz Atkinson (680045), Paul Sayer (680451), Sue and Mike Sanderson (688080)  
website [www.wot2grow.co.uk](http://www.wot2grow.co.uk)



**Tysoe Tennis Club**  
www.tysoetennisclub.co.uk

A strong team turned out from Berkswell and Balsall Common and the Ladies A were therefore defeated. Pershore played against the Ladies B at home. Both Tysoe pairs of Jude Canning, Sylvia Wilcox, Elaine Thorne and Nicki Campbell put in a fine performance and just missed out on a win with 31 games against the opposition's 34.

The mixed matches begin this weekend with the Tysoe A team travelling to Byfield.

Junior play sessions start on Sunday morning, 4th December from 9.30 to 10.30. Players will need to be at least 11 years old and members of Tysoe Tennis Club. I shall be offering free coaching and some competitive play.

Although it is a roll up system, anyone interested in their child/children taking part needs to contact me so that I have an idea of possible numbers.

elaine.thorne@btinternet.com 07842185701  
www.tysoetennisclub.co.uk

Secretary:  
carol.spencer234@hotmail.co.uk

## STOUR SINGERS

conducted by

**Richard Emms, BMus, ARCM, LRAM,**  
present

**Telemann: Magnificat in C**  
**Haydn: St Nicholas Mass**  
and carols for all

with

**Brittany King soprano**

**Tom Lilburn countertenor**

**Julian Stocker tenor**

**Julian Debreuil bass baritone**

**James Birchall bass baritone**

and

**Musicians from the**

**Royal Birmingham Conservatoire**

Vocal soloists appear by arrangement with

Ann Ferrier Artists - Concert Directory International

**Saturday, 10 December 2022 at 7.30pm**  
**St. Edmund's Church, Shipston on Stour**

Tickets £12.50 from choir members,

A. Clarke, 27 High St. Shipston on Stour or at the door  
(accompanied children free)



www.stoursingers.org.uk



# Pantomime tickets have nearly sold out - oh yes they have!

I have 11 tickets left for the trip from Oxhill to the last night of the pantomime at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry. The performance of **Jack and the Beanstalk** is at 7pm on **Saturday 7th January, 2023**.

As in previous years, I have organised a coach to leave the village (outside the pub) at 5.30pm and arrive in time for a drink at the theatre before the performance. We will get back to Oxhill around 10.30pm. The cost of the panto tickets is £29 for adults and £26.50 for children. The cost of the coach will be approximately £8.50 a seat & £5 for children. These prices may come down but won't get any higher. I will send out an email at the beginning of December asking for payment by mid-December.

Please contact Ali Sayer on 07970 922352 or [ali.sayer@btinternet.com](mailto:ali.sayer@btinternet.com) if you would like tickets for the panto and if you would use the coach.



# WHAT'S ON IN & AROUND OXHILL

## DECEMBER



Fri 2nd	20:30	Barney & Jerv Live Music, The Peacock
Sat 3rd	10:00	Church Big Clean, St Lawrence Church
Tues 13th	12:30	Seniors' Christmas Lunch, The Old Chapel
Wed 14th	19:30	Carol Service, St Lawrence Church
Thurs 15th	14:00-14:30	Mobile Library, outside Village Hall
Fri 16th	19:30	Beer & Bubbles, The Old Chapel
Sun 18th	15:00	Crib Service, St Lawrence Church
Every Thursday	11:45-12:00ish	Awesome Coffee Van, outside Peacock Pub

## PC MEETINGS

The date of the next PC Meeting is **Tuesday, 10 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](mailto: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.

Please email: [oxhill.news.editor@gmail.com](mailto:oxhill.news.editor@gmail.com)

## BIN COLLECTION CALENDAR

Check the date on the calendar to identify which bins go out for collection.



December 2022				
2	F		W	
9	F	R		G
16	F			
23	F	R	W	G
SAT 31	F			