

The Sprout



Botley in Bloom Best Front Garden Over All, 100 West Way

The newsletter for North Hinksey & Botley

Issue 149 July 2020

The Sprout

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From the Editor

Welcome to the first paper Sprout since April. Although the crisis is by no means over, our delivery team feel that we can cover the streets of North Hinksey Parish again without risk. Covid-19 themed articles include an account of the Botley Responders (p.17), and on p.25 Riki Therivel takes you on one of the thrice weekly food parcel deliveries to homeless people. The Patients' Participation Group continues to be anxious about the future of Kennington Health Centre (p.27) despite reassurance from the Surgery, and the Parish Council recently resolved to write a letter to our MP in support. There's a poem on page 21 which vividly evokes the dread and bewilderment that come with all the mixed messages, while Lockdown Lessons (p.23) has a laugh at the madness of it all. We have tried to get a handle on which shops we can hope to see open and when (p.34), and there's an update on outdoor spaces now open for visits (p.33). This year Hill End Camp is 100 years old (p.9), but celebrations have been drastically affected, although they hope to open again over the summer holidays. Last but not least, we proudly announce the winners of the Botley in Bloom competition (p.5). The winning garden is shown on our front cover. Congratulations to everyone who entered.

Ag MacKeith

Letters to the editor

Lockdown love

Back in March when the “lockdown” started I wondered how I was going to get through the foreseeable future of home schooling, working from home, not seeing family and friends and being stuck in the house for hours on end. Little did I know that there was such a big local community full of support and hope which already existed!

Aware how lucky I was to be able to continue to work and have a nice house and garden, my thoughts quickly turned to the less fortunate, vulnerable and homeless, and I joined various WhatsApp and Facebook groups to try and help in any way I could. I soon saw how much the local community had already come together in terms of the community fridge, supporting the local homeless community and shopping for the vulnerable. Quickly street coordinators around the area were set up to check up on any more vulnerable neighbours and requests for help processed and actioned by a team of volunteers.

I was also woken up to the amount of fantastic local small businesses I have on my doorstep, which I hope people can continue to support as we come out of this crisis, as they have done throughout lockdown.

Talking to my neighbours more, and coming together every week with the people on my street during the weekly clap for NHS, allowed me to have the regular communication with people that I have missed so much. Yarnells Road has such a brilliant neighbourly spirit!

As time went on and we were able to venture outside for longer periods I started to notice how much love there was in the community with rainbow after rainbow in windows, hundreds of beautiful pebbles painted in every park and nature trail in the local area, free boxes of toys/books/puzzles/plants outside houses and a friendly smile and hello from any stranger who “socially distanced” walked by.

I have lived in the area since I was 15 and never been prouder to be part of such a great community of people and businesses!

Megan Tompkins



The business card is enclosed in a black rectangular border. At the top, there is a graphic featuring a water droplet with splashing lines to its left, and a triangular logo to its right that contains the text 'GAS safe' and 'REGISTER' below it. Below these graphics, the letters 'SJC' are printed in a large, bold, black font. Underneath 'SJC', the text 'Plumbing & Heating' and 'Simon Crowther' are written in a smaller font. Below that is the email address 'Sjcplumbheat@gmail.com'. At the bottom of the text block is the phone number '07709102328'. To the right of the text, there is a large, stylized black icon of a faucet with a single drop of water falling from its spout.

SJC
Plumbing & Heating
Simon Crowther
Sjcplumbheat@gmail.com
07709102328

BOTLEY IN BLOOM

My fellow judge, Janet Bartlam, and I have just finished the most blissful task of strolling around the area looking at the front gardens of those who entered *The Sprout's* Botley in Bloom competition. The competition was resurrected as so many people have taken the opportunity to spend more time gardening this year, but for front gardens only due to the current social distancing restrictions. You may have seen us with our essential judging equipment of comfy trainers, sunhats, pens and clipboards for the scoresheets, and in my case mobile phone for taking photos of the many inspiring and gorgeous gardens. We had many 'ooh, love that' moments, such as the rubber duck on a chair high on the side wall of number 44 Westminster Way, but concentrated on the gardens themselves.



I am delighted to announce the winners in each of the three categories as follows:

BEST OVERALL FRONT GARDEN

1st prize – Flat 1, 100 West Way. Jane Bailey and Jamie Bartram were worthy outright winners with a stunning newly created garden that everyone in the building can enjoy. Top marks for beautiful planting and design. Wildlife friendly and well integrated veg too. (See cover photo.)

2nd prize – 94 North Hinksey Lane. Phil Bloomer and Ruth Mayne's colourful bee-friendly planting is most impressive.

Highly Commended – 50 St Paul's Crescent. Caroline Cockman's pretty pots are a delight.

We'd also like to mention the garden that Danny Connors has created outside SS Peter & Paul Church. He has added a lot of colour and done an excellent job which everyone can enjoy.

BEST CAR BOWER

1st prize – 5 Crabtree Road. Emmett and Catherine Casley have created a design that we felt is really sympathetic to the house and will look good all year round. (See photo opposite)

2nd prize – 43 Arnold's Way. Jan Martin's garden displays beautiful planting.

Highly Commended – 25 Conifer Close. We liked Ruth Cameron's well designed car bower.

BEST VEGETABLE ELEMENT

1st prize – 15 Poplar Road. Peter England and Elisabeth Clarke's really lovely and imaginative garden is a great example of how much fruit and veg can be grown in a small space – and with flair too. (See *photo below*)

2nd prize – 13 Maple Close. Andrea Flear has a wonderful mix of fruit bushes, herbs and veg in a pretty garden.

Highly Commended – 28 Montagu Road. Christie Burland-Upton has some great ideas. We particularly liked the use of recycled materials, including the pallet for herbs and salad.

Thanks to the generosity of North Hinksey Parish Council we can award National Garden Scheme vouchers for all 1st and 2nd places. First prize will be a voucher for £40 with £25 for second. We will be presenting certificates and prizes as soon as present lockdown restraints allow.



Most of all our thanks go to all those who entered the competition, with congratulations to everyone whose hard work and imagination gives so much pleasure to the rest of the neighbourhood.

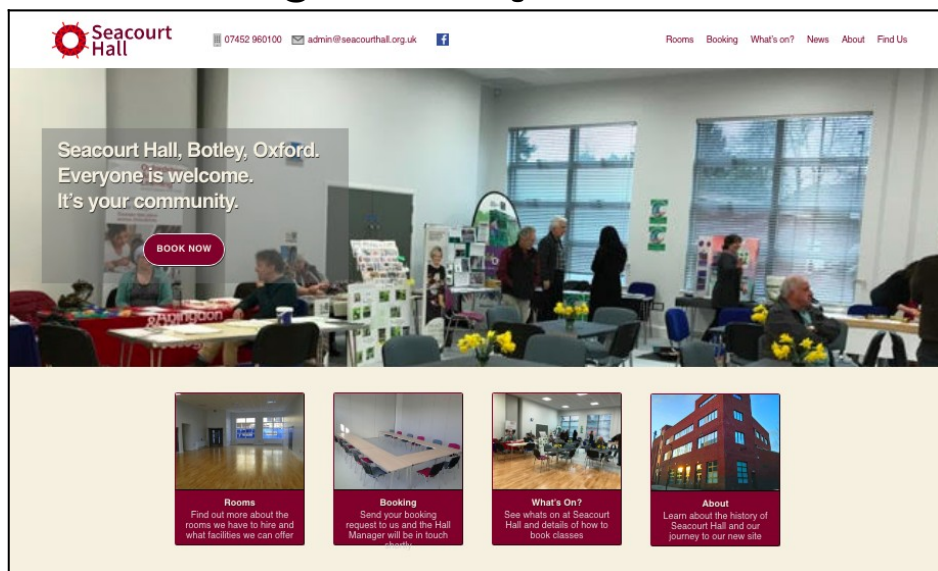
Viv Smith

Seacourt Hall in lockdown: behind the scenes

Around two months after the successful Open Day at the new Seacourt Hall, and a month after the popular Botley Big Green Day co-hosted with St Peter & St Paul Church, we had to close our doors to the public due to COVID-19. That was in late March 2020.

Since that time, as reported in previous issues of *The Sprout*, the hall has been host to the brilliant Botley Community Fridge as their storage and packing facility. We are pleased to continue to support this initiative that is currently providing essential provisions to the community.

Meantime, the work of Seacourt Hall continues behind the scenes. Before lockdown we appointed a new Hall Manager, Lottie Smith. Lottie is currently working from home on reduced hours. She has been in touch with all our regular users, is working on our documentation, administration and our new website. You can contact Lottie on the new email address admin@seacourthall.org.uk.



The new website (*see photo*) and online booking system is now live at: www.seacourthall.org.uk. Please take a look at the new website which is designed to be more user-friendly, so it is easier to find what's on and how to book. It also features our new logo and more photographs. There is a new online booking system that you can use to find a space

and book online. You can expect to hear back within two working days. As we are currently closed until further notice, bookings will not be confirmed but they will be held until we know when we can reopen.

If the government's plan for step 3 goes ahead, it is possible that community halls will be able to open from early July. We discussed this at our recent online Management Committee meeting, and agreed to postpone opening until 1st August at the earliest in order to put in place policies for hygiene, cleaning and other necessary processes. We are monitoring the situation and will review this again shortly. Meantime, Lottie is in touch with our regular users to find out what their plans are for resuming activities.

We also agreed to postpone our AGM which is usually held in September: we would prefer to have it in person so it is easier for the public to attend. It may be in October, look out for an update in the September *Sprout*.

Please keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for updates over the summer. We will announce any changes and reopening plans as soon as we can. We look forward to a time when we can safely reopen this new hall facility to the community and welcome you back.

Lorna Berrett, Chair, Seacourt Hall Management Committee

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News from Hill End

Back in February, a team from Hill End attended the Botley Big Green day, and had a brilliant time meeting local families and letting them know about all the exciting things we had planned for 2020. How things have changed since then.

In the early spring we were busy with school groups and families enjoying the outdoors despite the wet weather. Then, like so many others, we found our bookings dried up overnight. Schools closed, public gatherings stopped, and we experienced weeks of glorious sunshine, enjoyed by the sheep rather than schoolchildren.

This will be such a challenging year as we rely on customer bookings, especially in the summer months, to continue our work. It's going to be a difficult time, but we are determined to keep going, and hugely appreciate the support and donations we have received. Thank you!

It's particularly disappointing as 2020 marks 100 years of education on the Wytham Estate, for us and our next-door neighbours, Wytham Woods. We've needed to postpone all the wonderful community events we had planned, but we do hope our local supporters will be able to join us for those in the future.

But it is excellent news that we've been able to move some of these celebrations online – in particular a fantastic new short history film commissioned by Wytham Woods for our centenary. We've had to



postpone our screening event, but you can view the film online, which also includes some wonderful footage of children and the buildings from the 1930s. See our website for the link to the film: **www.hill-end.org**

We are also incredibly grateful to Wytham Woods for donating the proceeds from their new poetry anthology 'The Woods of Hazel' to Hill End. This lovely book is the first released by their Writer in Residence, inspired by the woods and local nature. It is available to purchase at a very reasonable price



from the University of Oxford, and all these donations will benefit outdoor education for young people. See the Wytham Woods website for details: **www.wythamwoods.ox.ac.uk**

From 6 July we will start to reopen gradually, firstly to schools and those most in need, but we hope also to open to families over the summer if possible. We have 67 acres of wonderful outdoor space, so we hope it won't be too long before it is safe to welcome our visitors back. Please do see our website and follow us on social media to be the first to know!

Until then, the site remains quiet, the flowers are in bloom, and all the wildlife is thriving. We hope it won't be too long before we are able to share it all with you.

Could you be a Friend of Hill End? The Friends are looking for new members to join their friendly group and help support the Hill End Charitable Trust by fundraising or volunteering whatever time and skills you might be able to share. Please get in touch if you can help in any way – thank you! Our email address is **admin@hill-end.org**

Lucy Crittenden, Communication and Finance Manager

West Way Community Concern

update on the plan to increase the size of Block A

Objections: At the time of writing, consultation on the planning application has formally closed, with nearly 200 comments submitted objecting to the changes. North Hinksey and Cumnor parish councils have both objected. The application has been called in by our district councillor which means the decision will be made by the planning committee, not by the planning officer.

Reasons for objection are:

- A building of 9 storeys is contrary to the Botley Centre Supplementary Planning Document;
- No additional car parking is provided, putting additional pressure on local streets;
- The increased density of housing, with no additional outdoor space will create a worse environment for those living there;
- There are issues around the security and convenience of the cycle store and refuse store;
- Increasing the size of this block adds only further environmental harm to the area, provides no economic benefit, and would have an adverse social impact on residents of the block itself and of Botley.

The Crime Prevention Design Advisor for Thames Valley Police has some serious concerns in relation to community safety/crime prevention design. The car park is not secure, with open access 24/7, so it is highly likely that the current homelessness and drug related problems in the vicinity will migrate to these facilities. We understand that Botley Development Company has been reluctant to register with the 'Secured by Design' scheme, which would have meant these issues were dealt with during the design phase. We will raise this with them at the next Community Liaison Group meeting.

Oxford Preservation Trust have objected on the grounds that the development will harm the character of the views from Oxford.

Visual impact: Botley Development Company have been asked to submit a Visual Impact Assessment, rather than rely on vague

statements saying that, although the new building would be more visible from various viewpoints, this does not make any difference.

Once the Visual Impact Assessment has been received, we expect there to be another period of consultation, following which the planning officer will make a recommendation and then the application will be considered by Planning Committee.

Viability and affordable housing: We remain concerned by the Viability Submission which concludes that the development is not making sufficient profit, hence the wish to include more flats. They also raise the case for re-negotiating the payments in lieu of affordable housing agreed in 2016 as part of the planning consent for this centre.

We don't yet understand how it is that, with an increased number of flats, and an assumption that prices will have increased by 15% since 2016, this development does not achieve more profit than the approved scheme. If it is because market conditions have changed, construction costs and other costs have increased in the last four years, then we consider that this is the risk developers must take. It would be quite shocking if BDC were to renege on the agreed payments in lieu of affordable housing. We don't need student accommodation in Botley, but we do need affordable housing.

We trust that the planning officer and committee will recognise that this development must not be allowed to become worse than the approved plans.

Plans for opening the centre: So far Co-op, Tesco, Iceland, Lloyds Pharmacy and the estate agents Chancellors are the only ones signed up, along with Premier Inn. We have been told that the Co-op is planned to open early in July, followed by the others. The centre is expected to open in August with the remaining vacant units to let. The rental charges have been set at a level likely to be affordable only to national chains, and because of the Covid situation potential retail and hospitality tenants are not able to commit.

More information on our website, and email address is below.

westwayconcern@gmail.com; westwayconcern.wordpress.com

Mary Gill, Chair, WWCC

Swapping, sharing, shopping and singing – Botley responds!

In the past three months Botley's community spirit has become a movement for action, help and support in ways many of us could not have imagined.

It started with individual streets setting up support groups using leaflets, email and WhatsApp, and promoting this on the Botley Notice Board Facebook Group. In my Parish Council role as webmaster and Communications Committee chair I started a web page with advice and support and called a Zoom meeting with members of these groups. From there we created the Botley Responders to co-ordinate the street groups, respond to urgent needs, share ideas, news, advice, and support.

This group of more than 50 individuals has achieved so much: from shopping, Community Fridge referrals, prescription pick-ups to a friendly phone calls and information for those unable to leave home because they are shielding, vulnerable, or alone with small children. We act as a local support network and have had 35 cases referred to us by the Vale Council and doctors' surgery.

We've also distributed 1000 leaflets to households not online and put up around 100 posters. Having the network of Botley Responders has been so important. I'm impressed that there is always someone available and willing to help at short notice.

It's also amazing to see neighbours sharing, swapping and supporting and getting to know each other. Here are some highlights from the Botley Responders:

Rosy Owen: It's been lovely in Pinnocks Way! Everyone sharing, lending things or popping to the shops for each other... And when a little one had a birthday, loads of people put happy birthday signs up in their windows!! We're going to try to set up a yearly street party because we've all got to know each other and have enjoyed coming together!

Corinne Simmons: Hazel Road had our scarecrows up on the street that we created and had lots of visitors to see them. We are now all growing sunflowers that will be in our front gardens later this year. Quizzes are regular and we've even had an ongoing story written about our street during lockdown posted regularly by one resident. Also

Georgia Wren from Hazel Road ran a marathon in her back garden over the course of a week. The last metres were run up and down the road in a spiderman costume. Raised £1,046 for Women's Aid and Oxford Hospital Charities

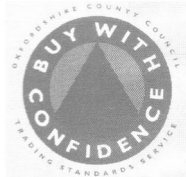
Claire Bunce: Maple Close had a group tidy up the grass verges and weeds, and raised money for SeeSaw, who one resident works for, by walking/running 26 laps of the Close. Along with, like the rest of the community, swapping, sharing, shopping and singing!

Penny Rivers: We've had the 'Swap Shop' going on in the Hawthorns (Denton, Orchard, Stubble and Browns) – redistributing what we have found and no longer have use for during lockdown clear-outs. A neighbour missed out on their wedding day but instead shared a socially distanced glass of fizz. It's really connected so many people who had been neighbours but strangers for years beforehand.

Sarah Clay: Lots of swapping of things on Arthray Road – from books to bricks, toys to egg boxes and various other things. Also picking up prescriptions for someone who couldn't get out, and hiding painted stones on the road for the little kids to find. Definitely feel I know more of my neighbours now!

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Melissa Kinnear: On Cedar Road, Carmen started her photographic project with her local network, different people post bits and pieces about what they have cleared out, one of the neighbours bulk cooks and shares the extra food, and faces are more familiar when we walk along the road or even in the park.

Celia Clark: We've also had people help fix cars, reunite lost dogs and offer space in brown bins. We've directed people with spare food to the community fridge and are now setting up a neighbourhood watch to combat the burglaries we've had around here. It feels like we can be a more resourceful and self-managing community now we're connected.

As some restrictions begin to lift it's important to remember that the crisis is not over and that these support services are still here and ready to help you. Here's a reminder of the contact details: Website: norththinksey-pc.gov.uk/covid-19-community-hub/ and email: **BotleyResponders@gmail.com** Check the list of Street Co-ordinators on the parish council website to find your nearest Botley Responder, as well as local online groups and all sorts of information to help you at this time, There's a list of useful addresses on page 20.

So what about the future? I feel sure all these connections made in crisis will continue with ideas proposed already such as street parties and a local "library of things". In the Parish Council we are discussing how to develop and extend emergency support into an ongoing resilient communities plan. We'd love to hear your ideas. Please feel free to email me (**Lberrett.nhpc@gmail.co**) or any of the Parish Councillors or your local Botley Responder. And a HUGE THANK YOU to everyone supporting the brilliant Botley community!

Lorna Berrett

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**LOCAL PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                        |                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>P20/V1209/HH</b>                                                               | Windrush Vernon Ave. Insert circular gable window and roof lights.                                                     | <b>27 May</b><br><i>TDD: 22 July</i>                          |
| <b>P20/V1297/DIS</b><br>Discharge of #28<br>(travel plan)<br><b>P19/V1731/FUL</b> | Botley Centre West Way. Variation of condition 2 - approved plans to application P19/V0416/FUL for changes to block B. | <b>2 June</b><br><i>TDD:14 July</i>                           |
| <b>P20/V1156/FUL</b>                                                              | Unit 10, Block C Westway Place. Installation of air conditioning condenser to the rear elevation.                      | <b>4 June</b><br><i>TDD:30 July</i><br><i>Comments by 7/7</i> |



# Support during the COVID-19 'lockdown'



## ***Advice from North Hinksey Parish Council & 'Botley Responders'***

More online at: [northhinksey-pc.gov.uk/covid-19-community-hub/](http://northhinksey-pc.gov.uk/covid-19-community-hub/)  
regularly updated information, local services and list of **local street contacts**.

If you need help or can help others email: [BotleyResponders@gmail.com](mailto:BotleyResponders@gmail.com)

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Oxfordshire support for vulnerable and 'at risk' people:</b><br><b>01865 89 78 20</b> (8:30am to 8:00pm Mon to Fri, 9:00am – 5:00pm Sat and Sun)<br>or email <a href="mailto:shield@oxfordshire.gov.uk">shield@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a> |                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Vale of the White Horse District Council:</b><br><b>community support for those in need (not high risk): 01235 422600</b><br>or email <a href="mailto:communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk">communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk</a>  |                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Botley Community Fridge:</b><br>Free food deliveries for those in need and to reduce waste: <a href="mailto:food@myphone.coop">food@myphone.coop</a><br>or phone or text: 07759 135811                                                | <b>Food deliveries from Botley Co-op:</b><br>(limited support from local store for those isolated at home; payments taken over phone): 01865 721935 |
| <b>Age UK Oxfordshire:</b><br>Helpline for older local people: 01865 411 288. <a href="http://www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire">www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire</a>                                                                             | <b>Childline:</b><br>free and confidential: 0800 1111<br><a href="http://www.childline.org.uk">www.childline.org.uk</a>                             |
| <b>Mental Health 24/7 helpline:</b><br>For adults: 01865 904 997<br>For children & young people: 01865 904 998<br><b>Samaritans:</b> 116 123<br><b>Oxfordshire Mind:</b> 01865 247788                                                    | <b>Oxfordshire domestic abuse helpline:</b><br>0800 731 0055 (Mon-Fri 10-19:00)<br>UK Domestic Violence helpline: 0808 2000 247 (24 hour)           |
| <b>Medical:</b><br>Prescription deliveries (by local Scouts): 07514 059123 or: <a href="mailto:spdxoxford@gmail.com">spdxoxford@gmail.com</a><br>Botley Medical Centre: 01865 248719<br>Lloyds Pharmacy: 01865 247023                    | <b>NHS:</b><br>For all concerns: 111<br><a href="https://www.nhs.uk/">https://www.nhs.uk/</a>                                                       |

***Stay safe – stay home – use these services***

## **All at once and not at the same time**

Locked in together and so far apart  
Hold my hand and keep your distance  
Listen to music with me and dance alone  
Smile at me and frown when I get too close

All at once and not at the same time

Shelves and parks are empty and our minds are full  
Go for a run and slow down  
Cook more and eat less  
Laugh until you cry and don't be sad

All at once and not at the same time

Don't hurt yourself and push boundaries  
Climb that mountain and stay safe in your bed  
You're precious and go to work and risk yourself  
Please go out and you must stay at home

All at once and not at the same time

I have everything I need and I want so much more  
I understand and yet I have no idea  
Confuse me and tell me it will be OK  
Such a blessing and so much a curse.

All at once and not at the same time

Dream big and keep your ideals small  
Grow with me and clap alone  
Share your thoughts and keep your secrets close  
You're a complete stranger and a really good friend.

All at once and not at the same time

**Clare Isaacs**

## Lock-down Lessons Learnt

Thank heaven the last four months haven't been wasted. Much has been learnt in preparation for the next bout of plague or pestilence.

### Jigsaws

Marvellous tension relieving diversion but *avoid the 1,000-piece jigsaw* which has more than a quarter of the picture sadistically devoted to a blue sky.

### Haircuts

However uncomfortable you feel, *don't try to cut your own hair*. When out and about it will look as if you have been self-harming or a victim of domestic abuse. Kitchen utensils were never designed for this purpose.



### Gardening

This is a perfect job-creation scheme. *Take care when agreeing to reposition a shrub*, as the knock-on effect is such that by the end of month four, you will find all those shrubs you moved are back in their original positions.

If desperate for gardening jobs, why not *plant out some weeds*? Then a while later, when fully established, you can take the hoe to them. *Perfect, another day taken care of!*

### Family Quizzes

Grandparents in particular should *take care when setting questions* to cover all age groups. 12-year-olds really don't care if Cary Grant's real name was Archibald Alexander Leach. Also try not to patronise the young ones, they will assume a question about Lady Gaga's number one hit is a reference to grandma whacking grandpa.

### Decorating

*Three coats will be needed!* You are at home so long you keep spotting bits you've missed. You've been warned!

### Daily Briefing

*Do not have drink in hand* when watching this programme. TV sets are really not designed to absorb beer or wine.

*Has this helped? Toodle pip, just off to put on the third coat!*

**Mike Bartlam**

## Delivering food parcels

Amy, Joe and I arrive at the Botley community fridge in Seacourt Hall at 4:30pm to pack parcels for our thrice-weekly cycle deliveries to people experiencing homelessness. We pack about 20 parcels when the weather is bad and people are more likely to stay under cover, and 25 when the weather is good. We used to pack 'balanced' parcels containing baked beans, soup, fruit, bread and sweets. However feedback showed that what people really like are what are now our 'standard' parcels - sweets, crisps and soft drinks – and we supplement that with healthier stuff if people want.

The food comes from people's donations, the Oxford Food Bank, and surplus from Aldi and Waitrose.

Amy and Joe load the standard parcels into their backpacks and saddle bags. Amy also fills up a bag with toiletries, including face masks which are now required on public transport. I fill my bags with tins of soup, baked beans, stew and fish (all with pull rings since most homeless people don't own tin openers); pot noodles; cereal and UHT milk; bread, honey and jam; fruit; and plastic cutlery. If we know that we'll see I&H, I also take cat food since they are hosting a cat and her newborn kittens. We are carrying as much as we can manage by the time we leave the hall.



First stop is off the Botley Road, in an area where half a dozen heavy drinkers often congregate. They all want standard parcels, but only two are sleeping rough – the rest are temporarily housed at the youth hostel or in group housing – and only they take extra food. Next stop is an encampment where a shifting number of people have set up a remarkably civilised home, with a fire pit, sitting area, and decorations on the trees. We call loudly "Is anyone home? We're bringing food parcels," but nobody is there. We leave two parcels near the fire pit.

Most of our food disappears at St Aldates Church. The church has

been serving boxes of warm dinner – pasta bake, shepherd's pie and the like – to an increasing number of homeless people every day during lockdown. We arrive near the end of their 5–5.30 session and our standard parcels provide dessert and a drink. Many people there are long-term homeless, sleeping rough or in very precarious accommodation, and take a lot of tins. The tuna and sardines are particularly popular today, and I could have got rid of ten lots of chocolate-flavoured cereal (another favourite) and UHT milk if I could carry that much.

Over time, we have got to know a lot of the people: I&H with their cats, R who dresses beautifully and only wants baked beans, W who takes as much meat-type food as we allow, B who embarrassingly tries to kiss our feet, L who only wants the 'softies' (soft drinks), grumpy G who complains regardless of what we give him but always comes back for more. Social distancing is impossible, as they all hang out in jolly proximity to each other on the benches. The best we can do is wear masks and ask people to form a queue. Everyone thanks us politely and waves goodbye when we leave.

With almost empty bags, we head towards the city centre where a shifting

population of regulars busk and beg. I have held onto a tin of stew for C who loves the stuff, but he is not in front of Tesco so S gets that, with the last plastic fork. "I'm out of bags," says Amy. "I have one left," says Joe. We cycle



back down Queen Street and spot A on a bench. He takes Joe's last bag and my last loaf of bread. It's 5:50pm, and the end of another cycle delivery.

**Riki Therivel**

## **The Future of Kennington Health Centre: report from the PPG and Botley Medical Centre**

At a meeting held on 9th June between Botley Medical Centre and Botley/Kennington PPG, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, and Healthwatch Oxfordshire it was clarified that Kennington Health Centre may continue as a CALM (Coronavirus Assessment Liaison and Monitoring) clinic for the immediate future, depending on how the pandemic progresses. The Kennington clinic is well placed and relatively isolated compared to other possible centres. This may mean that part of the centre is used for Covid 19 testing but another part could be open to other patients.

Nothing is decided yet. It was emphasised that Kennington Health Centre has never been closed and there are no plans to close it.

The PPG urged consideration to be given to the issue of transport for patients having to travel to Botley from Kennington especially on public transport and during busy times when the A34 can be slow. The other concern must be the increase in the population both in Kennington and Botley with the new housing developments in progress with more potential patients moving into both Botley and Radley and surrounding areas, and the impact on appointments.

Various consultation methods have been successfully used for a lot of the patients including telephone, Facetime and Skype, and face to face, although currently face-to-face consultations are reduced due to the pandemic. The PPG pointed out that for many telephone consultations were not appropriate, in particular for those with impaired hearing or speech, those with mental health concerns as well as others who are simply anxious and cannot communicate effectively over the phone.

We were informed that other practitioners are now employed at the practice including a Paramedic and Social Prescriber, which will increase the number of practitioners available. Also, despite being advised earlier by the practice that historically Kennington had a larger than average older population, this is not the case.

The PPG is keen to work with the practice to support them and communicate with them and the patients to ensure changes and developments are reported and understood as they develop.

**Sylvia Buckingham**, Chair, Patients' Participation Group





**Citizens Advice**  
**can help you in so many ways –**  
**and you can help them, too!**

## **Financial advice**

If you are facing financial problems in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, Citizens Advice can help find a way forward.

Citizens Advice research has revealed that currently over 13 million people are unable to pay, or expect to be unable to pay, at least one of their household bills. These bills are higher than usual in any case because the population is spending more time at home during the lockdown. For 11 million of these people, a missed bill could have drastic consequences: eviction, the bailiffs, or disconnection.

It is vital that you do not give way to despair, feel isolated with your problems and consider that you have to solve them all by yourself. For instance, Citizens Advice can help maximise your income with a benefit check if your working hours have dropped or if you are made redundant. We can help you decide on the best way to manage your debts in your individual situation. Get in touch with us by telephone on Adviceline (0300 330 9042). There is also a lot of useful information on our website <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk> where you can also chat online.

## **Research and Campaigns**

People often see Citizens Advice as a “quick fix” centre, rather like the garage that changes your car tyres – you pop into our office, or ring Adviceline, or you check the facts on our comprehensive website. But there’s more to Citizens Advice than quick fixes.

“Research and Campaigns” (R&C) is a part of Citizens Advice with a different task, a long-term one that demands much effort and patience. It has the job of collecting evidence on emerging social problems and then directly petitioning the people or organizations – including ministers, local MPs and government departments – that have the power to solve or alleviate them.

These campaigns have been remarkably successful, often making use of the media to put their point across. In 2019 R&C contributed to the

surge of action that led to the scrapping of tenant fees. It also submitted a “super-complaint” on the Loyalty Penalty, whereby long-standing customers in some services (e.g. insurance) often end up paying more than new customers for the same service. Noting the rise in demand for food vouchers, R&C highlighted the issue of pressure on household budgets because of slow payment schedules for Universal Credit. R&C also issues occasional publications such as “Putting the house in order”, which described failings in the housing market.

Would you like to become one of these dedicated and hard-working volunteers, or work for us in a different role? Details on [www.caox.org](http://www.caox.org) For more general help see our website [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk), call Citizens Advice Adviceline on 0300 3309 042 or come and see us in person. For locations of offices and opening hours visit <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/oxfordshire-south-vale>

## **Citizens Advice in South and Vale needs volunteers**

Could you help with:

- Reception duties in Abingdon, Henley and Thame
- Advisers needed in Abingdon and Didcot
- Head office administration in Abingdon
- IT support in Didcot and Thame
- Fundraising (from any location)
- Communications and website designers (from any location)

We are a local charity providing free, confidential advice. Last year, our 150 skilled advisers helped over 11,000 local people from advice centres in Abingdon, Didcot, Faringdon, Henley, Thame and Wallingford. Many people who come to us face difficult and sometimes frightening problems that threaten to overwhelm them. In 2019 we helped three quarters to resolve their problems.

For volunteers, we offer a welcoming office environment and an opportunity to gain new skills, meet new people and make a real and valued contribution to your local community,

It's up to you when you volunteer. We normally ask for two half days a week but can be flexible. If you are interested, please go to:

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/oxfordshire-south-vale/volunteer/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/oxfordshire-south-vale/volunteer/)

Or email me at [jon.bright@osavcab.org.uk](mailto:jon.bright@osavcab.org.uk)

**Jon Bright**, Citizens Advice Director

## Outdoor pursuits

**HOORAY!** The HARCOURT ARBORETUM has just reopened! Only a short distance from town, in Nuneham Courtenay, it is a peaceful 130-acre site, a perpetually changing feast of trees and flowering shrubs... to say nothing of the (unwanted) resident peacocks. Its affiliate, the OXFORD BOTANIC GARDEN, in the city centre, has also now reopened, though admission is by pre-booked time slot, unless you are a Friend of the Gardens or have an Annual Pass.

After our long lockdown period in such tantalising weather, many NATIONAL TRUST properties are beginning to reopen, albeit with limitations. Currently, only gardens, grounds and car parks have reopened, but not houses. Moreover, entrance must be pre-booked. My perusal of the local NT sites is encouraging, so below is a list of those that already *are* open. It is equally encouraging to learn that the NT is continuing to try to open more and more sites, so by the time you read this, more of your favourite places will once again be accessible.

WADDESDON MANOR, Aylesbury, Bucks

BADBURY HILL, Coleshill, Nr Swindon

BASILDON PARK, Reading, Berks

THE VYNE, Basingstoke, Hants

ASHDOWN HOUSE, Lambourn, Berks

STOWE, Buckingham, Bucks

HUGHENDEN HOUSE, High Wycombe, Bucks

CLIVEDEN, Maidenhead, Berks

and further afield:

OSTERLEY PARK, Isleworth, Middx

CANONS ASHBY, Daventry, Northants

CHARLECOTE PARK, Warwick, Warwickshire

Once again, by the time this is published, there *will* be a lot more choice – and who knows, some of the buildings might even be open to the public again, so do consult the relevant website for up to date information.

**Ruth Cameron**

## **Botley Shops: openings, moves and plans:**

When The Sprout went online for a couple of months my job was 'furloughed', so I jumped at the chance for a bit of job retraining when the Editor asked me to find out what was going on with the Botley shop moves and re-openings.

I assumed this was going to be easy and I could do it in my PJs! Fire off a few emails – *job done!* But then I received this from BDC's leasing adviser and realised that there may be more involved to this journalism lark: *"Co-op, Tesco, Iceland, Lloyds pharmacy and Chancellors are all either fitting out or shortly will be. We expect these stores to begin trading from mid-July onwards but it is entirely the choice of the individual retailers as and when they choose to open.*

*We have had strong interest from both local and national retail and restaurant operators in the scheme and we are in detailed negotiation on a number of the units.*

*I would hope, by the time phase 1 reaches Practical Completion (beginning of September) that over 75% of the available retail space will either be trading or in legal hands. Given the current state of the retail and restaurant market this demonstrates the attractiveness of both the location and the scheme to potential tenants."*

Next I tried being a bit more direct and received this from Tesco Media Dept: *"We're working hard to get our new Botley Express store ready to open in late July and in the meantime our team are welcoming customers to our temporary store in Elms Court."*

So far so unhelpful! My next level of research involved going to the actual shop. There I learned out from the team that Tesco Express are planning to move on 24th July!

Since I was now dressed and actually outside, here is what I found out by talking to real people (socially distanced of course). Much of it may well be out of date fairly soon but it was right at the time of writing!

**Beauty Within:** Likely to open from 4th July but check website [www.beautywithinoxford.co.uk](http://www.beautywithinoxford.co.uk) for appointments and procedures.

**Jason Flowers:** Currently operating for deliveries as normal via telephone and online. Hope to open to walk-in customers during July.

**Co-op:** Planning to move on 9th July.

**Mobile Genie:** Will be rebranded as Tech Hero, offering repairs to phones, laptops and consoles. Opening around now.

**Ideal Eyes:** Open 10--4 but not Wednesday or Saturday. No NHS services. Call for appointment

**David Spicer:** Open 9--5.30 Monday to Friday and 9--5 Saturday by appointment only. No NHS services.

**Botley Dentist:** Normal hours by appointment. No routine inspections and mainly 'emergency' interventions, with priority to current patients.

**Chancellors:** Open now with move planned for August/September.

**Andrews Estate Agents:** Open as usual.

**McColl's:** Open 7 days with reduced hours.

**Hedges Butchers:** Open now with an additional selection of fresh vegetables, eggs and delicatessen items.

**Lloyds:** Open now with move planned for September.

**Andrews Dry Cleaning:** Open 9--1 Monday to Saturday but may open longer when business picks up. Andrew asks that customers collect garments left when shop shut in March.

**S&R Childs:** Open but short staffed. No walk-in, just appointments for now.

**Botley Barber:** Probably open from 4th July.

**Iceland:** Very informative email from their Director of Corporate Affairs saying that they will open on Tuesday 11th August with a low-key launch to avoid queues. Is this clever reverse psychology?

**Taylor's:** Unfortunately, no idea since no one called back.

**Post Office:** Currently 9--12.30 Monday to Friday. The consultation

about a plan to move into the new Coop is finished but if the move goes ahead they expect to be open from 8am to 8pm, 6 days a week.

Further afield **McDonalds** should be open by the time you read this and **Home Bargains** are now fitting out former ToysRUs, next to Aldi.

I am not sure that I will get another journalistic assignment, but we will be back in September with a full issue of *The Sprout*.

**Michael Cockman**, *Sprout* advertising manager

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Randoms

News from Botley Medical Centre

If you are 70 yrs old and above, vulnerable or in the Government's "shielding" list, and a patient of Botley and Kennington Medical Practice, expect to receive a phone call to check on your welfare from one of their Social Prescribers. Frances, (OxFed) and Sarah, (PCN WhiteHorse-Botley) have now been joined by a new member of staff, Hazel, to support them in contacting patients one by one. They will advise you about volunteer groups, prescriptions delivery, life during Pandemic, etc. *(In the meantime, you might like to look at the list of useful addresses at the back of the Sprout, Ed.)*

Art Competition

The Ashmolean is holding a competition for artworks expressing a creative response to a situation which has affected everyone and every aspect of our lives this year. It could reflect on the experience of lockdown and being at home, on things that you are missing or looking forward to when life resumes, or sources of inspiration and hope during the difficult circumstances that we are all facing. The competition is open to everyone based in the UK and will be judged in three age categories:

- under 11 years
- aged 11–17
- aged 18 and over

Your entry can be any type of visual artwork: painting, drawing, printmaking, computer aided design, textiles, photography, sculpture, video art or collage. The deadline is 31 July.

Art exhibition

If you prefer to just look, Botley Arts is pleased to announce that as St Peter & St Paul's Church on Westway has reopened, there is a chance to view the continued exhibition of work by the North Hinksey Art Group. Although some of the paintings have been sold now, there remains a sparkling selection of work by local artists. Protective measures against the Virus are in place, and hand sanitisers are at the door for your use. The Church is open from 10am to 4pm daily.

Thames Water

Thames Water can help in the current crisis. If your water supply should go down, they will deliver bottled water to people with water-dependent medical conditions (i.e. at-home dialysis) and to those with mobility issues, first of all. If you have online access you can register as a priority customer at [thameswater.co.uk/extrasupport](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/extrasupport). If you have no internet access, you can register over the phone (0800 009 3652 option 3) or you can ask for a paper application form in the post with a free return envelope. If you need help with water bills, find out more at <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/my-account/billing-and-payment/help-paying-your-bill> And last but not least, they have developed some fun water-testing games to pass the time, see <https://youtu.be/oJ5DIE-3SKI>

Naturehood

Did you follow up the invitation in the April *Sprout* to join Naturehood in recording the wildlife in your garden? It's a community science project that provides resources for wildlife (e.g. ponds, bird feeders, flower beds) and monitors the effects. You can find tools to support groups and individuals wanting to make a tangible difference for the wildlife on their doorsteps at <https://www.naturehood.uk/> Is this something your Street Responders group could do together after Lockdown? Contact Claire cnarraway@earthwatch.org.uk, or Kat kmcgavin@earthwatch.org.uk for advice and help.

Scouts – 15th Oxford

Come September, the 15th Oxford Scout troop, based in the new shopping centre above the Baptist church in the Botley Hub will have spaces for new Cubs and Scouts. You can find out more by emailing Tom Freeman at tom_fr33man@hotmail.com

