

Issue 534

December 2023

The Crowmarsh News team

The *Crowmarsh News* is run by the Crowmarsh News Association, a group of local volunteers — more help always welcome!

Editorial & Layout: Sian Evans and John Griffin

Editorial support: Toni Taylor, Jane Thrift, James Taylor, Julian Park, Gay Holden and Revd Kevin Beer

Advertising: Pat Shields

Distribution: Frank Sadler and the team

ADVERTISING RATES

Our rates for a one eighth-page display advertisement (nominal 9cm wide x 7cm tall):

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For a single sheet loose insert in the Crowmarsh News (size up to A4) our rate is £33.00 for 1 month. Advertisers must supply their own inserts (930 copies please).

Crowmarsh News

The *Crowmarsh News* is a self-funded publication, and we regret that we are unable to accept unpaid advertising, even from local businesses and societies.

We welcome material for inclusion but do not necessarily endorse the views of contributors. We reserve the right to refuse material or to shorten contributions as may be appropriate: editorial decisions are final.

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Next month's issue

All new advertisements and all copy for the January 2024 *Crowmarsh News* must reach us by our **20th December deadline**.

For all items of news, articles or correspondence, please e-mail

crowmarsh.editor@gmail.com

or deliver to the editors at 57 The Street.

For all advertising, please contact

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Welcome to new residents

A warm welcome if you have just moved into Crowmarsh Gifford, Mongewell or North Stoke. We hope you will be very happy here and quickly become part of our local community.

Parish Council priorities

Crowmarsh Parish Council wants to know what you think we should be spending your money on, so please let us know by filling in the survey on the parish website <https://crowmarshgifford.org.uk/consultation-on-parish-council-strategic-priorities-2> or use the form inside this issue of Crowmarsh News.

Crowmarsh Christmas fair

Come to the Christmas fair on Friday 8th December at Crowmarsh Gifford primary school and help to steal Christmas back from the Grinch! From 3.30pm to 7pm you can enjoy food, drinks, games, gifts, a raffle, a carol shout and Santa's grotto. Everyone is welcome!



Calling new councillors

On the other side of the survey form enclosed is a call for volunteers to join the parish council. Since May this year we have had nine councillors (listed below), but we should have twelve, and there is currently nobody on the council who lives in either Mongewell or North Stoke. We really want all parts of the community to be represented, so do get in touch with Sue Rance or John Griffin to find out more (see page 11 for contact details).

Your current parish councillors are:

John Griffin (chair), Stephen Sherbourne (vice-chair), Andrew Johnson, Julian Park, Liz Ryall, David Rowley, Fleur Stevenson, Julia Streete and David Topliss.

Berenice Pedgley

We are sad to announce that Berenice died suddenly on 9th November. Many Crowmarsh residents will know Berenice through the History of Crowmarsh book, the Walk-Round Guide, her activities with The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society, her work at the Wallingford Community Hospital and her presence in the village and community.

Berenice and David moved to Crowmarsh in 1967 and she was proud to be the longest resident of Thames Mead, having moved in from new. All of Berenice's children went to school in the village, then on to Wallingford School, and prospered. Berenice will be sadly missed by all and we have been touched by the many cards and kind words received.

Berenice had a favourite charity, The Brain Tumour Charity, in memory of her daughter Janet. You are welcome to make donations on the Just Giving page www.justgiving.com/page/andrew-turnbull-1700568211522.

Berenice's funeral will be in Crowmarsh church on 5th December at 11.00.

With our warm regards and thoughts, David and family.

**Please see the parish website for the latest on many local matters:
www.crowmarshgifford.org.uk**

Past Times from David Beasley

Military camp at Howbery Park affected by wet weather

The last few weeks have been very wet, but some 96 years ago in the middle weeks of September 1927, the weather was so wet that a military camp in Howbery Park had to be shortened because the cavalry regiments and the monster tanks (as they were called then) could not participate in the planned manoeuvres.

The 10th Hussars was a regiment in which Prince Henry served as a Captain. Prince Henry was the 3rd son of George V – the late Queen Elizabeth was his niece. The Hussars returned to their headquarters at Aldershot along with several other regiments, and because of the weather the three-day mock battle was cancelled. In fact only the artillery was able to operate as planned, and cavalry, tank and aircraft units were ordered to return to Aldershot. Thankfully when they finally met the German Army in combat, the weather was fine and dry.

The Lamb Corner in the centre of Wallingford presented great difficulties, particularly when howitzers hauled by large lorries coming from Didcot had to turn into Castle Street. In some cases it took around half an hour for one gun to manoeuvre around the corner. One military expert was of the opinion that the day of large tanks had passed, because they had such great difficulty in moving at all in the wet of that September.

At the beginning of the second week the planned attack on Wallingford had to be scaled back to an attack on Rush Court, an



area well above the floods. One of the benefits of the disruption of these manoeuvres was that Wallingford was full of very large numbers of troops in the evenings, much to the satisfaction of the pub landlords.

Crowmarsh Gifford C of E Primary School

It has been an extremely busy time at the school since our new Headteacher Vania Eaglen took over at the beginning of the year. It has been an exciting period of change, with a number of new staff and governors all working as a team to push the school forward.

Anyone walking past will have noticed the lovely new gates and site improvements thanks to a new maintenance team making great progress and parents chipping in with some gardening help during the summer term. The summer term also saw the return of Ofsted, with lots of great feedback including the school retaining its status of Good.

It would, of course, be remiss not to mention the pupils, and the lovely children of Crowmarsh Gifford Primary make this a pleasure. With last year's school leavers moving on to Wallingford and elsewhere, having achieved great results in their SATs, it was an exciting day for everyone when the new children arrived in early September, full of nervous energy. As expected they have settled in really well and are enjoying everything Crowmarsh provides.

As mentioned last month, the school is looking to recruit new governors; there is always a natural cycle of progression in any governing body and some very experienced governors came to the end of their time with us. Being a governor is an exciting and rewarding opportunity to give back to the community and have a strategic influence over the education of future generations. If you are interested in finding out more please contact the school: office.3200@crowmarsh-gifford.oxon.sch.uk

To book North Stoke Village Hall

Phone Nikki Arnfeld on 839736 or email narnfeld@yahoo.co.uk

Henley and district stamp club

We are now coming up to the festive season of Christmas and New Year and trying to think what we can give to Auntie Ethel and what to do with the children to keep them away from where you have hidden the presents. If you would like to have a break from all that, we can suggest coming to one of our meetings. The one on 13th December will have a display of interesting postcards.

The Henley Stamp Club is a friendly group and we would be delighted to see new visitors or members. If you are interested in facts concerning stamps or postal history, why not come along. For further details please call Steve on 07767 251670 or see our website www.henleyphilatelic.org.uk.

Meetings are on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month in Bix Village Hall at 7.30 pm, but there is no meeting on 28th December.

Wallingford Photographic Club

In our weekly programme of talks, presentations, competitions and practical sessions we discuss a wide range of topics - not just technical - including getting feedback on your photos if you're keen to show them. We meet on Thursdays from 7.30pm at Crowmarsh Pavilion, and we'll have a few sessions online where we can make the most of speakers from far away.

In December we start with an online session with Paul Mitchell who presents his 'Woodland ways' (via Zoom / Google Meet) on 7th. Then we have a members' evening at Crowmarsh Pavilion on 14th where Bernard Novell will present his adventure in Western Australia, with particular focus on wildflowers and other wildlife he encountered.

We then break for Christmas / New Year and reconvene on 11th January with '8x10' where eight members present for ten minutes on a topic of their choice. Then on 18th it's really one not to miss, likely to be a season highlight: we have Tom Way joining us again at the Pavilion with an updated presentation on his stunning work, including big game in

Africa. January closes with the third 'no set subject' competition on 25th (also at the Pavilion).

St Mary's Christmas Tree Festival 2023

St Mary's Church in Wallingford will once again be filled with Christmas trees at the start of December ... but this year they're Christmas trees with a difference! What's the difference? You'll have to come and see to find out!

The festival will launch on Sunday 3rd December, the day of the town's Christmas Shopping Event and Santa Dash. Come and see the trees and enjoy refreshments. There will also be crafts for children and a raffle and the church will be decorated with hundreds of twinkling lights to mark the beginning of Advent. As well as our mysterious trees with a difference, there will be a big Christmas tree, generously donated by Notcutts, and a Tree of Remembering, donated by Chadwicks Funeral Services: you are welcome to hang a star on this tree, in memory of family and friends.

The trees will remain in the church for at least a week, with extra events including children's story time on Wednesday 6th and a concert on Saturday 9th December. Keep an eye on our website www.wallingfordcofe.org.uk. It will be a really special event and we're looking forward to seeing you there.

Wendy Muggeridge,
pccsecwallingford@gmail.com

Recycle your Christmas tree and help Sue Ryder

National healthcare charity Sue Ryder is encouraging residents to sign up to their Christmas Treecycle scheme and help raise vital funds for families needing their palliative and bereavement care.

For a suggested donation, the charity will collect your real Christmas trees and recycle them.

Residents in OX10 postcodes can have their trees collected between Tuesday 9 January and Friday 12 January 2024.

To find out more and to book a collection visit www.sueryder.org/thamestrees before midnight on New Year's Eve.



Team Vicar: The Revd Kevin Beer
The Vicarage, 34 Thames Mead,
Crowmarsh Gifford OX10 8EY
Tel: 01491 599873 (day off Monday)
Email: teamvicar@wallingfordcofe.org.uk
Blog: revkevbeer.blogspot.co.uk

St Mary Magdalene's Church, Crowmarsh Gifford

December Services (at St Mary Magdalene unless otherwise stated)

Sunday 3rd December	11am	Advent Sunday Family Service
Sunday 3rd	4pm	Advent Carol Service at Newnham Murren Church
Sunday 10th	6pm	Christmas Carol Service
Wednesday 13th	12.30pm	Lunchtime Carol Service (with soup afterwards!)
Sunday 17th	11am	Parish Communion
Sunday 24th	3pm	Christmas Eve Crib Service
Sunday 24th	11.30pm	Midnight Communion
Sunday 31st	11am	New Year's Eve Team Communion

Morning Prayer – every Friday at 9am

Evening Prayer – every Sunday at 4pm

Full details at www.wallingfordcofe.org.uk/calendar

The Vicar writes ...

We are delighted that our next Rector of the Wallingford Team has been selected. Revd Sarah Nesbitt, a long-term resident and former Church Warden of Crowmarsh, will begin her new role from early March next year. Sarah has lived in the village for 34 years and is married with two sons, a daughter-in-law and a baby granddaughter. She was ordained in 2018 and has spent the past five years serving in the United Benefice of Shiplake with Dunsden and Harpsden, most recently as Assistant Rector and as Assistant Area Dean in the Henley Deanery. She is also one of the Wallingford Street Pastors. Her hobbies include paddle-boarding and ballet, and she sings in an a cappella quintet called 'Shiraz'.

For the festive season ahead, we have a number of extra services, all at the Parish Church except the Advent Carol Service at 4pm on Sunday 3rd December at Newnham Murren Church (suggested minimum donation of £3 for mince pies and mulled wine afterwards).

We extend a warm welcome to all villagers to join us at these and every other Sunday service at 11am at St Mary Magdalene's ...

But why not beat the rush this year and extend the joyful season with us?

Our Advent services are a wonderful way to prepare for the festivities ahead as we light another candle on our Advent wreath each week, and hear the readings which anticipate Jesus's arrival as the long-awaited Messiah.

And of course, there are the 12 days of Christmas, so the Sunday afterwards (31st December) will also be full of carols and celebrations. Then the Sunday after that, 7th January, brings the celebration of Epiphany, traditionally the date when the Wise Men arrived to pay homage to the newborn King.

So, we have a choice at Christmas. Like our dinner, we can either cram, stuff and binge for a short period or we can savour the flavours and go deeper for a full appreciation of the reason for the season... that is "Joy to the world" as we celebrate Emmanuel, God with us!

With every blessing and joy in Christ for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany,

Blessings, Rev Kev

Benson Garden Club

Benson Garden Club's talk on 2nd November was by Chris Day on "Taming the indoor jungle - houseplants made easy". Chris is a professional horticulturalist who served his apprenticeship at Rochford's nursery. This nursery became a leader in the production of houseplants (one of the family owners even coining the phrase "houseplant", in the 1940s).

Before his talk, Chris had taken two large tables and covered them with an extensive variety of houseplants, some familiar, some less so. He then proceeded to share plant care advice and stories for each one, giving us a variety of interesting tips.

First up was that the much-loved Norfolk Island pine (related to the Monkey Puzzle tree) requires ericaceous soil. I was also surprised to hear that moth orchids should be planted in clear pots because their roots need light and that (along with many houseplants) they also dislike sitting in water – roots need oxygen as well as water, so too much water will "drown" the plant.

There was also welcome advice on light conditions. Many plants, such as Tradescantia, need a lot of bright, indirect light to thrive, whereas generally the bigger the leaf, the less light a plant requires. Fatsia japonica was suggested as one that can tolerate dark halls and landings. By the end of the evening, we had a wealth of hints and tips on how to keep our houseplants healthy!

On Thursday 7th December, Paolo Arrigo will be speaking on "From seed to plate". Paolo is MD of Franchi Seeds UK, 'Slow Food UK Person of the Year' 2019, a cookbook author, biodiversity campaigner, multiple RHS medal winner and he is passionate about responsible food. He will cover vegetables from Roman times to present day, look at the seed industry and then take you on a food journey around Italy. Franchi claim to be the oldest family-run seed brand on the planet, established in 1783 and still run by the same family after seven generations. They specialise in seeds of endangered, heritage, ethical and regional varieties with provenance and lost flavours. Paolo will have seeds to sell at a discount – perhaps a Christmas stocking-filler for a keen gardener or a treat for yourself!

On Thursday 4th January we will start the new year with a motivating talk, "A successful year in the kitchen garden." Hélène Dove will talk us through how to plan for this, explaining when to sow and harvest some of the more common vegetables for those new to gardening as well as looking at a few alternative crops for the more experienced. Hélène aims to provide plenty of hints and tips, but also encourages people to come with questions and to use it as a troubleshooting session.

Hélène was a teacher before she re-trained in horticulture. After her trainee year, she worked as the kitchen gardener at Myddelton House Gardens, a historic property in North London before she went on to work at Kew. In addition to her practical work as a kitchen gardener, Hélène writes books on the subject. It should be an excellent talk to get us planning for a horticulturally productive 2024.

Both events will be at Benson parish hall, OX10 6LZ. Doors open at 7.15pm for 7.45pm start. Visitors are very welcome to attend for £5 each (just turn up, no need to book).

Further information about this thriving club is at bensongardeningclub.weebly.com, or email bensongardeningclub@gmail.com.

Liz Harrison

Tree planting

Thanks to everyone who responded to the advert in last month's Crowmarsh News to help plant trees at the recreation ground. More than 150 native tree saplings have been put in, but if you would still like to help plant the rest, please contact the parish clerk (see p.11).

Brightwell Art Club

Brightwell Art Club will be holding their annual exhibition at Brightwell Village Hall on Saturday 2nd December, from 10am to 1pm.

View their paintings in various media, including local scenes. There will also be craft stalls, including hand painted cards – find that special present! Come along for a warm welcome – meet your friends there, browse the paintings and stalls, enjoy a mince pie and coffee, be lucky in the raffle – start your Christmas there!

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Merry Christmas

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Parish council notes

Crowmarsh Parish Council met on Thursday 2nd November 2023 at Crowmarsh Gifford Village Hall. Present were Councillors John Griffin, Stephen Sherbourne, Fleur Stevenson, Julia Streete, David Rowley and David Topliss, Parish Clerk Sue Rance, Finance Officer Yvonne Peet, District Councillor Andrea Powell and one member of the public. Councillor Julian Park attended online.

Public comment

A member of Crowmarsh Gifford Village Hall Committee spoke in support of their grant request towards repairs and improvements to the area outside the entrance to the hall.

Matters from the previous meeting

Cllr Park thanked the Clerk for her work on the grant application to the District Councillors' Fund for the tree planting project. The application is still being considered by District Council officers.

On 11th November, Cllr Sherbourne will meet with the surveyor who has carried out the tree survey at Newnham Murren Churchyard. Three quotes will be sought for carrying out the necessary work.

Alternative quotes are also being sought to replace the sewage pump at the pavilion.

The finance officer will instruct Shield Maintenance to supply and install a dog waste bin in the agreed location at French Gardens.

Finance

A grant of £2,000 was made to Crowmarsh Gifford Village Hall Committee towards the cost of improving the entrance to the hall.

A £300 donation was agreed to Oxfordshire Mind to support residents with mental health issues. In the past year 173 people in the local area had received help from them.

North Stoke Parochial Church Council had requested a grant towards the printing costs of the magazine 'The Window', which is delivered to Ipsden and North Stoke. The total print costs are £300 per year and a grant of £200 was agreed.

Payments were agreed including £534.00 to Oxford Direct Services for a tree survey at

Newnham Murren Church, £166.39 for dog bin emptying, £108.00 to Ashburton Limited for grass cutting at North Stoke Rec, £390.42 to Origin Amenity Solutions for line paint and nozzles for football pitches, and to Morgan Fire Protection Limited £540.00 for risk assessment and £547.11 for fire extinguishers.

Planning

Decisions by SODC

P23/S3125/FUL Black Barn Farm, Church Lane, Ipsden. Change of use of redundant pig building to workshop. Planning Permission

P23/S2817/HH Broomfields, 113 The Street, Crowmarsh Gifford OX10 8EF.

Proposed loft conversion with dormer to the rear and front roof window. Planning Permission

P23/S2887/HH Broomfields, 113 The Street, Crowmarsh Gifford OX10 8EF. Front porch. Planning Permission

Consultations

P23/S3376/FUL Sheepcote Farm Mongewell OX10 8BP, Change of use of former pig buildings and yard to provide small storage units. This is part retrospective. Councillors felt it could be approved if the highway authority agreed.

P23/S3358/S73 Blenheim Farm, Icknield Way, OX10 6PR, Variation of condition 12 (materials) on P20/S0826/FUL to change horizontal softwood timber weather boarding (unstained) to horizontal composite woodgrain cladding in charcoal. The new material will have a greater carbon footprint but require less maintenance and the council had no strong views.

Major developments

The agent for the Newnham Manor development had circulated details of the layout proposed for staff parking and drop-off and the forest school area in the area off Old Reading Road to be transferred to the school. After discussion it was agreed that the Parish Council supports this whole package. Oxfordshire Highways and the Chilterns Conservation Board have also been consulted.

There was no news of proposals for the former SODC offices site.

Neighbourhood Plan

A review of the Crowmarsh Neighbourhood Plan will begin early in 2024. The process will be considered at the February meeting.

District Council report

The District Councillors' report had been circulated and was discussed.

A thermal imaging camera to assess heat loss and level of insulation in a building may be borrowed from the District Council. Residents should contact the parish council if interested in arranging a survey of their homes.

Pumpkins put out with food waste bins have not all been collected: district councillors will investigate.

Consultation on the new South Oxfordshire Local Plan will begin early in 2024. The Thames 21 charity has submitted a further application to secure bathing water status for the River Thames at Wallingford.

There was no report from the county councillor.

Environment and recreation

Final stages of the pavilion improvements are being finished off so the final SODC grant payment can be received. A fire risk assessment has been carried out. The CCTV policy was reviewed and approved with minor amendments.

The County Council rights of way department will carry out remedial work along footpath No. 2 and address encroachment onto the path, as well as getting the highways department to lay tarmac on the lower end to link Benson Lane with the French Gardens estate paths. Bloor Homes will be asked to remove their structures and reinstate footpath No. 3 to connect through to Marsh Lane

Delivery of over 300 trees, stakes and tree shelters is expected and a date or dates will be arranged for tree planting by parish councillors and volunteers. See the website <https://crowmarshgifford.org.uk> if you can help, or contact the parish clerk.

A laurel hedge near the school is very overgrown. The Clerk will send a letter requesting the owner to cut it back. Please will all residents with hedges or trees on their

boundary keep them trimmed back from paths and roads.

The Clerk will ask Southern Gas Networks about a completion date for the current gas works on Thames Mead and The Street.

Traffic and transport

The Highways department will be consulted about reducing the speed limit on Nosworthy Way A4130 to 40mph around the entrance to the Cala Homes / CABI development, as has been done at the west end of the Wallingford Bypass, and a speed survey will be requested.

HGVs parking on residential roads are causing problems in Benson Lane and on the entrance to French Gardens. Cllr Sherbourne has drafted a letter to be put on the windscreen of offending vehicles. The council will work with Thames Valley Police to resolve this.

The new Speed Indicator Device (SID) in The Street is ready to be mounted in position and set to 20mph. The one in Benson Lane is now back in place and also needs to be reset.

Strategic priorities

Now that the pavilion improvements are nearly complete and the new pedestrian crossing in The Street is in use, the council is consulting about our next set of strategic priorities, so please fill in the survey on the website <https://crowmarshgifford.org.uk> or complete the form enclosed with this issue of Crowmarsh News.

Cllrs Sherbourne, Park, Griffin and Streete will meet to discuss how to make progress on improving Watery Lane, starting with a survey of the vegetation and investigating resurfacing options appropriate for a rural bridleway.

Next meeting

The next parish council meeting will be at Crowmarsh Gifford Village Hall on Thursday 7th December 2023, starting at 7.30pm. The draft budget for next year will be discussed at this meeting. Members of the public are very welcome to attend. The parish council doesn't usually meet in January.

Parish Clerk: Mrs Sue Rance, 2 Home Farm, Crowmarsh Gifford, OX10 8EL email: crowmarshparishclerk@gmail.com

Chairman: John Griffin, 29 Thames Mead email: johngriffin@phonecoop.coop.



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The Corn Exchange events

December Cinema and live screenings

All performances start at 7.30pm unless stated otherwise. Please note that we will start on time and that latecomers will only be allowed in after the start of the film where there is no disruption to sitting patrons. This means that we may have to reseat some latecomers.

For live screenings we reserve the right to seat latecomers in the Curtis Room where there is a large screen relay. The bar and auditorium will open from 7pm so there's plenty of time to collect drinks beforehand. Films with subtitles will be shown on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons at 2.30pm.

Please see www.cornexchange.org.uk for updates. Tickets are £10 for Adults and £5 for under 15s unless otherwise stated.

Cinema

Friday 1st to Sunday 3rd *Love Actually* (15)

Monday 4th & Tuesday 5th

The Royal Hotel (18)

Wednesday 6th & Thursday 7th

Dance First (12A)

Friday 8th to Sunday 10th *Journey to Bethlehem* (PG) + Saturday 11th 2.30pm

Monday 11th, Wednesday 13th & Thursday 14th *The Red Shoes* (PG) + Wednesday 13th 2.30pm

Friday 15th, Sunday 17th, Tuesday 19th & Thursday 21st *Napoleon* (15)

Wednesday 20th 2.30pm & 7.30pm *Napoleon*

Friday 22nd 2.30pm & 7.30pm *Wish* (PG)

Saturday 23rd 2.30pm & 7.30pm *Wish* (PG)

Live screening

Tuesday 12th December, 7.15pm Royal Ballet – *The Nutcracker*, live from the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Tickets £18 (adults), £15 (seniors), £10 (under 18s)

Choreography: Peter Wright after Lev Ivanov.
Music: Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky.

Julia Trevelyan Oman's period designs bring festive charm to Peter Wright's beloved Royal Ballet production, as fairytale magic comes together with spectacular dancing in this unforgettable classic ballet.

Live on stage

Saturday 16th December, 7.30pm

Sinodun Players' Punchbowl, Tickets £12

The Sinodun Players present an evening of seasonal readings, sketches and songs, with a second half of music from their own talented band, *Outliers*. The evening will be rounded off with a singalong of some Christmas carols. All funds raised will be donated to charities.

Monday 18th December

Nettlebed Folk Club – St Agnes Fountain

All Tickets £22 bookable from Nettlebed Folk Club on 01628 636620 or 01628 603670

Since their first get together, to record the eponymous St Agnes Fountain album in 2001, the quartet of David Hughes, Fairport Convention's Chris Leslie and multi-award-winning duo Chris While and Julie Matthews have brought musical invention and laughter to the star-dust atmosphere of the season. Sadly David died earlier this year, but Chris, Chris and Julie will be keeping the Christmas Aggie spirit alive celebrating 22 years together.

Coming soon

The Sinodun Players present their annual pantomime – *The Adventures of Sinbad*

Tickets £18 (adults on Fridays and Saturdays), £15 (adults on Tuesdays to Thursdays), £10 (under 16s)

Matinees – Saturdays 13th, 20th & 27th January, 2pm

Evenings – Friday 12th, Tuesday 16th to Friday 19th, Tuesday 23rd to Friday 26th January, 7.30pm

Evenings – Saturdays 13th, 20th & 27th January, 6.30pm

Cholsey repair café

Advance notice that following the festive season, Cholsey repair café will be back on Saturday 20th January at the Cholsey Pavilion, hoping to help even more local residents to repair their broken items instead of buying new. Doors open at 11.00 and the session ends at 13.45. More information can be found at www.cholseyrepaircafe.com

John Howell MP writes ...

The State Opening of Parliament marks the formal start of the parliamentary year and on 7th November the new session was opened with a historic King's Speech, the first for 70 years. The detail has been well covered in the media and there will be differing views on the Bills to be brought forward.

In the Prime Minister's introduction to the speech, I was personally pleased to note mention of the Holocaust Memorial Bill which will progress the construction of a national Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in London. I have been a Trustee of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust for some time. The centre will provide a focal point for national remembrance and help to promote learning the lessons of the past.

As Leader of the UK Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe I was also pleased to see the Prime Minister draw attention to the fact that he has ensured that illegal migration has been on the agenda of every international meeting that he has attended from the G7 to the Council of Europe. His attendance at the 4th Summit of the Council of Europe in Reykjavik in May was very welcome.

Now to a much more local issue which is regularly raised with me, that of Royal Mail deliveries. In some post code areas across the constituency mail is not being delivered on a regular basis and indeed at times people have not received post for over a week. I have challenged Royal Mail on this on a number of occasions and in September met with senior staff to pursue matters further, as I set out on my website at the time. In a recent follow up meeting I was advised that there have been some changes in senior personnel with someone specifically brought in to oversee improvements to delivery in this area.

Where there are delivery problems in specific post codes Royal Mail has promised a local investigation if given the post code detail. Staff shortages remain and if anyone is interested do look online on the Royal Mail website where vacancies are advertised. It was also interesting to learn that some of the delays are with distribution via third party carriers before

mail gets to Royal Mail itself for delivery. With sight of the envelope the team at Royal Mail can use the codes to track the precise journey of a letter to see where they delays are coming from. It was interesting to learn that organisations such as the NHS use these carriers which may explain why some important letters offering appointments are delayed. The situation will remain under review with Royal Mail.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all constituents a peaceful Christmas and to send my best wishes for the year ahead. I know that for many life is not easy and personal and global struggles can weigh us down. Whatever your beliefs I do sincerely hope that the peace of the Christmas season may bring some comfort and joy.

May I also take this opportunity to pass on my sincere thanks to the army of volunteers who give their time to help others in their communities in many different ways throughout the year. Our communities are strengthened by this generous service. Thank you all.

If there is a particular issue that concerns you, please do share your thoughts. My website is www.johnhowell.org.uk and my contact details are on the website.

To book the pavilion or hardcourt on the Recreation ground in Crowmarsh Gifford

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Services at St Mary's Church, North Stoke

Sunday 3rd December	11.00	Holy Communion
Sunday 17th December	16.00	Nine Lessons and Carols
Monday 25th December	10.00	Christmas Day Holy Communion with Carols

Bygone Boating's ferry carries foot passengers across the River Thames from the slipway near the Waterfront Cafe across to the head of Benson Lock. While the river levels remain high, the ferry will not run. When it starts again it will only operate Friday to Monday 9:30 am to 3.30 pm in the winter months. Check at www.bygoneboating.co.uk/benson-ferries or call 07375 677823.

WHAT'S ON — DECEMBER 2023

Regular events and meetings

Tuesdays and Thursdays	14.00-16.00	Short Mat Bowls	Crowmarsh Gifford Pavilion
Thursdays	19.30 onwards	Wallingford Photographic Club	Crowmarsh Gifford Pavilion
Every Friday	9.30-12.00	Wallingford Country Market	St Mary-le-More Church, Wallingford
Every Saturday	10.00-12.00	WAGS Store open	Centre 70, Wallingford
Every Saturday	10.00-12.30	Local Producers' Market	St Mary-le-More Church
Every Sunday	11.00 onwards	Parish Communion. Family service on the first Sunday of the month	St Mary Magdalene's Church, Crowmarsh Gifford
Various days	Differing times	Didcot and Wallingford Ramblers	www.ramblers.org.uk/didcot-wallingford
Various days	Differing times	CTC Wallingford cycle rides	www.ctcwallingford.org.uk/
Various days	Differing times	Cholsey and Wallingford Heritage Railway— Santa Express	www.cholsey-wallingford-railway.com

This month

Sunday 3rd	10.00-17.00	Wallingford Christmas Market	Wallingford town centre
Sunday 3rd	16.00 onwards	Advent Carol Service	Newnham Murren church
Tuesday 5th	19.30 onwards	Sustainable Wallingford meeting	Friends Meeting House, Castle St, Wallingford
Wednesday 6th	14.00 onwards	U3A Christmas Party	Crowmarsh Village Hall
Thursday 7th	19.30 onwards	Crowmarsh Parish Council Meeting	Crowmarsh Village Hall
Friday 8th	15.30-19.00	Christmas Fair (see p.3)	Crowmarsh Primary School
Friday 8th	10.30-20.30	OX10 Community Centre events	Centre 70, Wallingford
Saturday 9th	10.30-12.00	Crowmarsh Community Café	Crowmarsh Village Hall
Sunday 10th	18.00-19.00	Christmas Carol Service	St Mary Magdalene Church
Wednesday 13th	12.30-13.30	Lunchtime Carol Service (and soup)	St Mary Magdalene Church
Wednesday 13th	18.00-19.00	Community Christmas Carols	Wallingford Market Place
Thursday 14th	18.00 to 21.30	The Coming of Christmas 2023	Dorchester Abbey
Sunday 24th	15.00-15.45	Christmas Eve Crib Service	St Mary Magdalene Church
Sunday 24th	23.30 onwards	Midnight Communion Service	St Mary Magdalene Church
Monday 25th	11.00-12.00	Christmas Day Family Communion	St Mary Magdalene Church
Sunday 31st	11.00-12.00	New Year's Eve Team Communion	St Mary Magdalene Church

January 2024

Wednesday 3rd	14.00 onwards	U3A - Dr Martin Holmes 'Boris Johnson: a reputation revised?'	Crowmarsh Village Hall
Wednesday 10th	19.45 for 20.00	TWHAS meeting (details to be announced: www.twhas.org.uk)	St Mary-le-More Church, Wallingford
Saturday 20th	19.00 for 19.30	Winter concert - saxophone and piano	St Mary-le-More Church