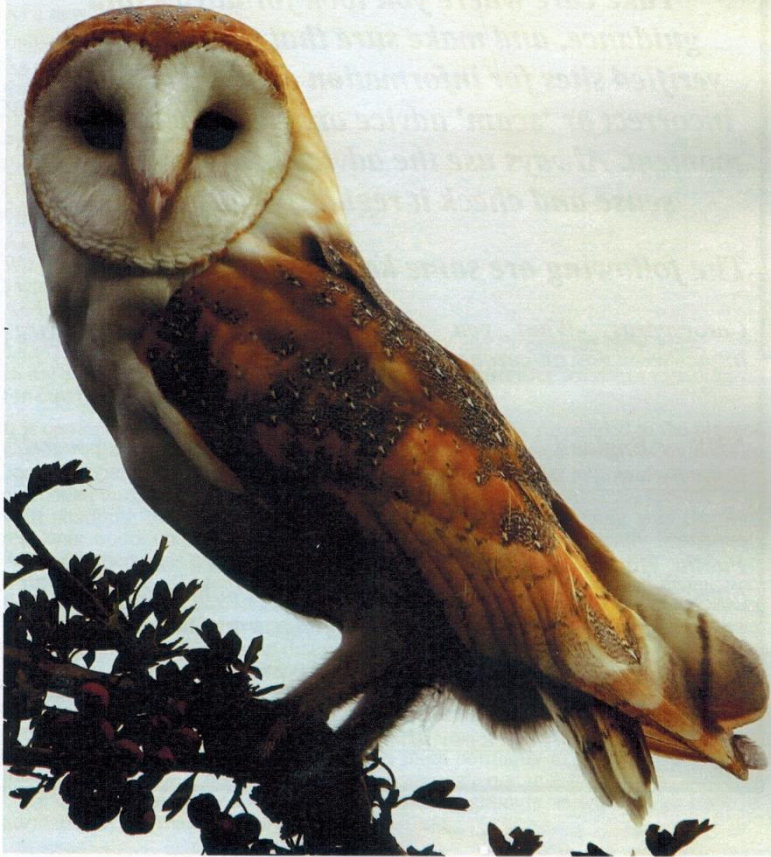


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Little Milton Newsletter



January 2021

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Advice and support on Coronavirus

National advice on Coronavirus- it's changing all the time, so keep up to date with daily updates to make sure you are getting accurate information!

Take care where you look for advice and guidance, and make sure that you are using verified sites for information as there is a lot of incorrect or 'scam' advice on social media at the moment. Always use the advice below from makes sense and check it regularly for updates.

The following are some key websites

Coronavirus -What you need to do: Government advice
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

NHS England for advice on protecting yourself
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Public Health England for up to date advice and guidance
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>
including Easy Read and language translations

Updates from Oxfordshire County Council

<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-from-the-government/>

FROM THE EDITOR

Happy New Year!

© John P. Read (<https://www.familyfriendpoems.com>)

Brush away old heartaches.
Learn from our mistakes.
Another year is finally over.
A new dawn awakes.

Let the old year out.
Welcome the new one in.
Bury the bad things of the past
As a new year now begins.

Make your New Year wishes
As simple as you can.
Pray for peace and love,
Not for wealth or fame.

Pray for health and happiness.
Pray for your fellow man.
Pray for all the ones you love.
Pray for those who've lost their way.

As the midnight hour chimes,
We leave the old and embrace the new.
I wish the things you wish for yourself,
And may God's love stay with you.

I would like to wish all our readers a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year.

In my editorial in January 2020 I wrote “**Who can predict what lies ahead both for our community and our nation?**”

It is certainly worth reflecting on how we as a community responded to the biggest health challenge that our nation/world had faced in a hundred years... Covid 19. It became apparent very soon that our community came together to provide support to each other during the first lockdown. I had a list of contacts that would provide help with shopping or prescriptions. What I found really encouraging was the way residents build up their own support network and that was really reassuring. Although there was a safety net residents took control. As the months moved on from the “shock” of March Covid measures took over our lives. Social distancing. Washing hands, Face coverings we all became aware as to what we could do as individuals. I would like to highlight the excellent imitative of Teresa Quested who started providing a few masks that grew into a cottage industry. She was providing a key piece of PPE but also raised funds for Little Milton School. Thank you Teresa. We all must continue doing the right thing and I know we will. The “light is at the end of the tunnel” is often quoted by our politicians and we need to hold on to the belief that the vaccine will be a new beginning. It may take time to see its full effect but I am very hopeful that 2021 will bring more normality to the way we live our lives. Our community became a more compassionate one in 2020 and we should all carry on with our support for our friends and neighbours as we emerge back to normality. A big thank you to all in Little Milton.

As we enter 2021 it is a time to reflect on what has happened in 2020 outside Covid 19 and to look forward to the challenges and opportunities that 2021 will bring.

The Parish Council has continued to represent our community and 2020 was a challenging year with the Emerging Local Plan and in particular the inclusion of Chalgrove Airfield as a Strategic Site. The Local Plan was formally adopted by South Oxfordshire District in December 2020. Our Parish Council plays an important role in influencing various Partners in Local Government and will continue to do so in 2021. My role as Clerk will come to an end in 2021 as the Council have started the process of recruiting my successor. I hope that my successor will find the role of serving our community as rewarding as I have found it since 2003.

The Village Hall have experienced a frustrating year through the disruption of Covid19. The Committee have been supported by Government Grants and that has allowed the finances of the hall to remain strong. I am sure that 2021 will return to a more familiar pattern of activities and I should like to thank the Committee for their continued dedication to provide an excellent facility for our village

Our Village Shop and Post Office is a very important asset to our village and it played a key role through Covid19 by being able to provide support as well as comfort. Our Post Office provides a very important service and one that has gone from strength to strength. This leads me into thanking on your behalf the excellent work done by Kevin, Alison, Clare and all the volunteers. (More are always required)

We are fortunate to have an excellent school that is supported by hardworking staff and governors as well as a community that values their efforts. We should all recognise that it is not without challenges as roll numbers are at present lower than would be desired.

I would like to thank Ian and Des at The Lamb for providing us with a fantastic pub that the community can enjoy and support and for all their hard work in supporting the Senior Citizens Christmas lunch. Ian and Des provided a takeaway service during the first lockdown and that was greatly appreciated by the village. I know that the pub is valued as a community asset.

St James' has a dedicated PCC and a number of volunteers who clean the church, decorate the church with flowers and maintain the churchyard and I thank them for their hard work. This year the annual village fete was cancelled due to Covid19 but thanks to Lindsay Heath we had a very successful late summer raffle that was well supported by the community. I mentioned last year that the church faced a possible bill of £250,000 but the Covid19 impact will have its effect in 2021 as the church's finances have suffered in 2020. The Church is a key cornerstone of our community and I am sure that sentiment is supported by both church and non-church members of our village.

The publication and distribution of our Newsletter is something that happens each month and I am sure that the Village would like to say thank you to all who are involved. I would like to thank Keith Hodges at Colourplus for his excellent service and support to me as editor as well as the distributors who diligently deliver a newsletter to each house. This was really appreciated during the lockdowns. As editor I appreciate the excellent photographs that I receive from some of the village photographers

I should like to thank Pete and Michael our postmen for delivering our mail so efficiently and to all the Post Office staff for providing such an excellent service to the village. I also would like to thank Nathan and others for delivering our newspapers.

Finally on your behalf I would like to thank Mr Stephen Harrod our County Councillor and Caroline Newton our District Councillor for all their support.

2021 will continue to challenge our community and those involved in the day to running of the various organisations that we all use and value. Let us all believe that 2021 will return to normal and we can start to rebuild confidence in our lives that has suffered so much in 2020

Let us all make every effort to ensure that Little Milton continues to be a great place to live

Raymond Fergusson

EXTRACTS FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 9th DECEMBER 2020

(The minutes will be approved at the meeting held on 13th January 2021)

Planning

P20/S3312/FUL Land West of Old Belchers Farm

The Chairman welcomed the applicant Mr Hue Williams and Mr Henry Venners of JPPC Chartered Town Planners. The Chairman invited Mr Hue Williams to address the Council members following the letter submitted to Mr Paul Bowers at SODC Planning. Mr Hue Williams outlined his long association with the village and his desire to provide an amenity that would be of benefit to the community. Mr Venners addressed the concerns raised by the Council on the first application. The key points were that the application for the change of use was only for a temporary period of eighteen months and that there would be no charge for entrance. The letter to Paul Bowers contained proposals to control the number of visitors, number of pieces to be displayed as well as addressing car parking. When asked it was confirmed that the pieces of art displayed in the sculpture park would be available for sale.

The Council had a number of observations that they expressed.

The proposal of the sculpture park was on balance a benefit to the village and an exciting opportunity.

It was unclear what the mechanism would be to review the success of the temporary period of approval and it was assumed that there would be the need for a further planning application.

The sculpture park was of a commercial nature and that had not been made explicit in the planning application. The Council were concerned about setting a precedent for the use of private land for commercial activities and felt that it would have been better if this had been made explicit in the application.

The Council were not in a position to comment on the detailed aspects of the planning regulations relevant to the application and deferred to the Planning Officers at SODC.

The Council RESOLVED to support the application

District Councillor Caroline Newton highlighted that she had reserved the right to call in the first application. As a result of the Council supporting the amended application the Council requested that she withdrew that request

Local Plan 2035

District Councillor Caroline Newton informed the meeting that the South Oxfordshire Local Plan would be considered for adoption at the full Council Meeting on 10th December 2020. She reported that the Cabinet had recommended adoption of the Plan at its meeting on 8th December 2020. The District Councillor highlighted the various options open to the full Council that had been detailed in the Planning Officers report. Caroline stated that she would support the adoption of the Local Plan albeit there were aspects of it that she did not support, particularly the Chalgrove site. She believed that consequences of not having an up to date Local Plan would leave the residents of South Oxfordshire open to speculative development.

The Chairman expressed his dissatisfaction with the way that Local Democracy had been devalued with the Direction from Mr Robert Jenrick Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Certificate of Lawful Development: 20 Thames Road: erection of a new garden building to create a garage and storage.

The Council had been informed by SODC that they were currently processing the application that seeks a Certificate of Lawful Development. The applicant maintains that the proposed development can be carried out as permitted development under the allowances of the Town and Country Planning (General permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended)

Finance

The Clerk presented the provisional budget for 2021-21 with a plan for 2022-23 and 2023-24 that had been provided to Council members prior to the meeting. The Clerk stated that the estimated general reserves at 31st March 2021 were forecast to be £18,106 and he provided an explanation as to why the reserves were higher than those budgeted. The Preliminary Budget 2021-22 included the full cost of the replacement clerk as well as higher level of maintenance costs for the MUGA. The Preliminary Budget resulted in expenditure exceeding income by £5,159. The Clerk explained that the additional maintenance costs of the MUGA should be seen as a reduction of the reserves but the increased cost of the Council Administration should be mitigated with an increase in the Precept. He stated that he had included the Precept at £13,750, an increase of £1,250. The Clerk outlined the risks and opportunities within the budget. The Council **RESOLVED** to consider the preliminary budget 2021-22 presented by the Clerk and determine the budget and precept at the Council meeting on 13th January 2021.

Current Council members

Councillor Alaric Smith (Chairman)	01844 279993
Councillor Francois Van Der Merwe (Vice Chair)	01844 278180
Councillor Howard Harrison	01844 279946
Councillor Adam Sheppard	01844 279217
Councillor Steve Sidhu	01844 279448
Councillor David Wakeling	01844 278014
Parish Clerk Raymond Fergusson	01844 279150
	lmparishcouncil@btinternet.com

County Councillor: Stephen Harrod	01844 278068
District Councillor Caroline Newton	01491 614662

SODC: WASTE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT

The minimum charge is £40 for up to 3 items and £8 for each additional item. There is a maximum of six items per collection day: if you have more than six, you'll need to book another collection day. Please note that a bed and mattress counts as 2 items and a three piece suite (consisting of 1 settee and 2 chairs) counts as 3 items.

Before you contact us to book your bulky waste collection, have a good think about whether you have any other big items to dispose of. Once we have processed your booking, we are unable to make any alterations or add any other items – even if you have only booked one or two items.

To arrange this service residents can call the Public Amenities Team on 01235 422406 or book on line from the Council's website www.southoxon.gov.uk

Give your furniture to a good home

Have you considered donating your furniture to charity or a good home? Emmaus is an Oxford based charity that will come out to all areas of the county and collect unwanted furniture free of charge. For legal or practical reasons this does not include soft furnishings without a fire label, safety items, or any item that is not in a saleable condition. Please [visit the Emmaus website](#) for more details.

BIFFA: WASTE COLLECTION DATES – JANUARY 2021

	Brown	Grey	Green	Food
7th January ++	No	Yes	No	Yes
13th January ++	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
19th January	No	Yes	No	Yes
26th January	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

++ Change due to Bank Holiday

The Oxfordshire County Council Waste Recycling Centres at Redbridge, Drayton (near Abingdon) and Oakley Wood are open seven days a week including Bank Holidays from 8.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.

CHURCH OPEN ON SUNDAY P.M.

The Church will open every Sunday from 12.00 pm to 4.00 pm for anyone wishing a quiet space to reflect or pray.

GREAT MILTON METHODIST CHURCH SERVICES

The Methodist Church has advised that all churches will cease having services forthwith until further notice.

For further info. Please contact Rev Canon Dr Martin Wellings on 01865 243216

CHURCH CLEANING ROTA FOR JANUARY

W/E 3rd January	–	Mrs M Davies & Mrs S A Dennis
W/E 10th January	–	Mrs L. Lovegrove & Mrs C Coward
W/E 17th January	–	Mrs A Jones & Mrs Sarah Smith
W/E 24th January	–	Mrs E. Summers & Mrs Anne Hawkins
W/E 31st January	–	Mrs A Blagg & Mrs C D'Aeth

BENEFICE SERVICES JANUARY

	Live Service 9.00 a.m.	Virtual Service Zoom 11.00
Sunday 3rd January Christmas 2	Great Milton St Mary's BCP Communion	Invitation To Zoom Morning Prayer
Sunday 10th January Epiphany 1	Great Haseley St Peter's Communion	Invitation To Zoom Morning Prayer
Sunday 17th January Epiphany 2	Little Milton St James' Communion	Invitation To Zoom Morning Prayer
Sunday 24th January Epiphany 3		Invitation To Zoom Communion
Sunday 31st January Epiphany 4	Little Milton St James' Communion	Invitation To Zoom Morning Prayer

CHURCH CLEANING ROTA FOR JANUARY

W/E 3rd January	–	Mrs M Davies & Mrs S A Dennis
W/E 10th January	–	Mrs L. Lovegrove & Mrs C Coward
W/E 17th January	–	Mrs A Jones & Mrs Sarah Smith
W/E 24th January	–	Mrs E. Summers & Mrs Anne Hawkins
W/E 31st January	–	Mrs A Blagg & Mrs C D'Aeth

FRIENDS OF LITTLE MILTON SCHOOL- 200 CLUB

DECEMBER 2020

1st	No 24	Carrie Day	£10.00
2nd	No 40	George Bennett	£7.00
3rd	No 12	Val Coates	£5.00

Diane Austin Little Milton School 200 Club Organiser

TAKE A BOW LITTLE MILTON!

What an amazing village we live in!

In these strange times everything has had to change but, it seems, not always for the worse. Our usual Christmas traditions adapted and carried on. The senior citizens lunches were organised by the Pine Lodge and the Lamb and delivered to guests in their homes. The Christmas Fayre changed to a Walking Christmas Market and combined with the school Treasure Hunt to make a truly magical event. Even the weather was on our side.

I cannot express enough thanks to all those who made it possible – the makers, bakers, crafters, raffle sellers, children's activity organisers, stall holders, table movers, drinks sellers, house decorators, Treasure Hunt creators, and, of course, all of you who turned out in such great numbers to show your support.

When Little Milton gets together all things are achievable.

A very Happy Christmas to you all.

Teresa

NEWS FROM THE PINE LODGE

If the number of cars parked on the recreation ground were to be used as a measure success then this year's Christmas Fayre was a winner. At the Hall we saw a constant stream of excited children and parents grabbing something warm to eat or drink on their way to join the Treasure Hunt. Many thanks to those who helped at the hall Kay, Guy, Leslie, Linda, and Jim.

For the last few years the Hall has sponsored a Christmas lunch at the Lamb pub for the senior residents in the village. Given the current concerns about gathering this year's lunch and a gift were delivered at people's homes instead. A big thanks to Teresa for organising this and to the Lamb for their support.

Yoga and Pilates classes have restarted at the hall in line with the prevailing guidelines (please contact Yvonne and Lee respectively for details).

As soon as the situation changes we will contact the regular hirers to advise them accordingly.

For further information please contact Linda Lovegrove
linda.pinelodge@yahoo.com

Giles Denby gilesdenby@yahoo.com

VILLAGE LUNCH

This has been provisionally reserved for Friday 22nd January 2021 but clearly it will depend on whether we move out of Tier 4

LITTLE MILTON WI

In December, we had a lovely crafting evening on Zoom making tiny Xmas trees from ribbon, beads, felt and buttons. I spent the weekend before creating individual craft boxes and it was lovely to see everyone on my delivery round. Well done to Pauline for being the first past the post to make hers.

Our next meeting on **Thursday 14th January** is traditionally a **New Year dinner** in a local pub. I don't know if we'll be able to do that this year, might have to be a takeaway on Zoom! We'll be **online from 7pm** (if not in the pub). Contact me if you'd like to join us. Everyone welcome, the more the merrier!

Do you live in Little Milton, Great Milton or The Haseleys, want to meet new people, make new friends? Then join Little Milton WI and meet like-minded, local women of all ages in an informal, friendly group. Please phone or email us if you're feeling lonely, want a chat, fancy joining WI.

We meet every 2nd Thursday of the month at 7.30pm

Too shy to come by yourself? Contact me & I'll find you a WI buddy.

Like us at www.facebook.com/lmpinelodge

Details & news on the Pine Lodge page at www.littlemilton.org.uk

Kath Stacey 279438 or email littlemiltonwi@oxfordshirewi.co.uk

WELLS FARM ALLOTMENTS

A New Year and time to write a plan for the growing season ahead. For me, less effort, less digging, more enjoyment is the way forward. Raspberries have spread

across part of my plot so I have decided to let them stay! There is only a bit of manure left and we are a bit short of funds for another load. If you have used it and not donated, could you settle up either by using the tin or dropping some through my letter box please so I can arrange for some more?

Anyone want to swap seeds they have? It is worth considering as I have found local seeds sometimes grow much better than the packet bought ones.

We have people on the waiting list so if you no longer want your plot or are prepared to give up half of a full plot that would really help. Contracts should go out in March for April start. I will also arrange for a Zoom annual meeting late January unless we can have an open air meeting one afternoon on site.

I have been monitoring the badgers and they have been pretty active. I have recorded three at least. We may even get some young ones and if that is the case there may be the possibility of setting up a badger watch with a remote camera I have. Will let you know. I wish I could get them to dig over my plot as they seem to make light work of the area they are in!

Paul. (paulj201@hotmail.com)

FRIENDS OF WELLS FARM

It's a new year full of great things to see and look forward to. Last year has been hard for most of us and Wells Farm has been a lifeline for many of us let alone the wildlife it supports. If it has helped you then why not consider BBOWT membership or even a donation to help protect and maintain what we have ([Support Us | Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust \(bbowt.org.uk\)](#))

Winter is always the busiest time for our stock watchers. Did you see any of them out on Christmas Eve watching the flocks by night? ☺ The animals need supplementary feeding and the bales can be heavy to lift into the feeders, but the consequential happy sound of munching is well worth the effort.

On your walks round look out for our resident murmurations of starlings (up to 500). In the hedge along the bridle path you may see yellowhammers with their bright yellow faces, or flocks of Linnets twitter as they fly over. Fieldfares and redwings (thrush like) will be stripping the last of the berries from the bushes. Listen out for their chat-chat-chat-chat calls.

Some of the paths are muddy and a bit slippery so be careful under foot. The mud is great for recording who, or what, has been through. See what you can spot. Many will be dog prints but you may see some deer prints too. For the trained eye, badger prints can also be seen, especially where they enter and exit the fields under the fences.

The days are drawing out now so enjoy the sunshine and the fresh air..... Stay safe!

Paul. (paulj201@hotmail.com)

NEWS FROM LITTLE MILTON SHOP

Congratulations to Lynne Harris on being the lucky winner of the Little Milton Village Shop Christmas Draw Fortnum & Mason Hamper.

Enjoy all the treats contained within.



**From Alison, Kevin and the Team
to all our customers,
thanks for supporting the Shop
through this difficult year.**

*“Wishing you all
a Very Peaceful, Safe and
Happy New Year.”*

Coronavirus Covid-19 Notice

Please wear a face mask when visiting the shop, thank you.

The Shop and Post Office will remain open as usual.

New Year Hours: 1st January closed, 2nd January 8:30 to 12:30.

(No change to current hours, see below)

The Café operates a Takeaway Service for now.

Opening Hours	Shop	Cafe Take Out	Post Office
Monday to Friday	8:30am to 5:30pm	8:30am to 5:00pm	8:45am to 5:30pm
Saturdays	9:00am to 12:30pm	9:00am to 12:30pm	9:00am to 12:30pm
Sundays & Bank Holidays	Closed	Closed	Closed

Remember, your village shop will use any surplus profits to support your village projects.

LITTLE MILTON CHRISTMAS FAYRE RAFFLE WINNERS

£100	Jean Preece	Sun Cottage 01844 279492
Christmas Hamper	Alison Walker	4 Chiltern View 01844 278773
£50	Gill and Barry	40 Chiltern View 01844 278617
Wine & Snacks Basket	Maisie Offen	c/o 27 Chiltern View
Voucher for a Cream Tea for Four	Chris White	5 Chiltern View 01844 278038
Large Bottle of Wine	Andy Long	07766 082293
Hamper from Little Milton Shop	Craig Teasdale	07811 983733
Wine Gift Box	Morgan	10 Chiltern View 01844 278654
Baking Hamper	A Moffatt	07749 301975
Bottle of Wine	Rosemary Woodyton	6 Gardiner Close, Wheatley 01865 874396
Beauty Room Voucher	Maggie Wheeler	01844 278723
Bottle of Wine	Jess Ford	07507 536331

Name the Teddy – won by Mark Forster 07305 855106

The Teddy's name was Sparky

NEWS FROM LITTLE MILTON SCHOOL

December at Little Milton School proved to be an exceptionally busy month.

As the school operates as one bubble and St James' church is part of our school off-site provision, we were able to still have our annual Christingle service.

It was very strange, not seeing Simon or Jane Willis, who plays some of our carols for us, but we improvised and made a few adjustments, so that this very special service in our school calendar could still take place.

We were also able to have Santa to come and visit us. He sat safely in the garden and children were able to wave to him and get their gifts.

These are certainly a few of the memories I will cherish and take with me as I move from Little Milton School this January. My decision in moving after nearly two and a half years is so that I can continue to focus on my Headship aspect of my role.

Little Milton school is growing numerically. I would like to reassure the community, that with your continued support we will still offer a service for families that want the choice of small class sizes and a very high staffing ratio. We are extremely proud of the educational provision that we provide for the children.

On behalf of Little Milton School, we would like to wish everyone a very happy and healthy New Year. With Warmest wishes,

Hannah Brown

LEADERSHIP AT LITTLE MILTON SCHOOL

The governors congratulate Ms Brown on her appointment as Headteacher at Clifton Hampden School; the new school is very fortunate to have made such an excellent choice. Ms Brown left us at the end of last term, and she goes with our sincere thanks for all she has done for Little Milton School and our very best wishes for the future. We know that we will stay in touch and look forward to sharing news as well as good practice.

Ms Brown's resignation has given governors the opportunity to re-evaluate leadership at Little Milton School in line with our vision, values and the financial position of our school.

Options for leadership and a sustainable future for the school have been explored together with representatives from the local authority and the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education. In order to ensure that the right solution is set in place we have agreed that an interim acting headship provides the best way forward for the school, enabling governors to continue to work to put in place a sustainable leadership model. I am delighted to let you know that current teachers Mrs Blest and Mr Bell will share school leadership responsibilities as Acting Headteachers from January 2021. They will be supported virtually by Mrs Frost, Headteacher at Great Milton School, and so will continue the strong connection developed over the last two years between our schools.

Linda Longshaw
Chair of Governors

VILLAGE INFORMATION GROUP

From time to time there is information that would be beneficial residents of the village. It might be a communication from Homes England or an email from SODC/OCC or just a be-aware type communication. The number of residents who have subscribed is growing but I need you to subscribe to use your email for this sort of information. There is already a Neighbourhood Watch Group that is specifically for Neighbourhood Watch although occasionally I have used the distribution list to share some data. A data base of emails really is an excellent way to instantly distribute information. Under GDPR you need to apply to join the distribution group.

There are 43 residents on the Village Information Group distribution list and if you would like to be added to please send me an email requesting to be added. You can always be taken off the list at any time.

This is an easy way to be kept up to date with local information or to allow the communication of relevant village information.

This is my last time of asking...honest!

Raymond Fergusson
fergie.milton1@btinternet.com



OXFORDSHIRE SOUTH AND VALE

New free phone number



We are pleased to announce that we have a new free phone number.

Adviceline: 0808 278 7907

Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

This free phone number will enable more people in South

Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse to get help from our advisers.

VIEW FROM VIEWS

Since I wrote these notes last month the River Thames has continually broken its banks after very little rain, I do not understand why, it seems that nowadays it will flood at the slightest provocation. It surely can only be due to all the development in this area at the moment, and will only get worse as all the proposed developments in this area are completed. Never can I remember the land being as wet as it is at the moment, there are springs in places never seen before, on the other hand we have a spring that ran all last summer but has now dried up. The spinoff of the floods is that once the water has receded, Egrets have appeared feeding, as many as 7 little Egrets, 1 Great White (Egret not Shark!) and an Otter, seen in one day. I have seen Little Egrets around before, not Great Whites or at least not before this year, these birds were not common in this country until recently, certainly not the Great Whites, I guess could be all part of global warming, which makes us wonder what other wildlife we might be likely to see on our shores. Maybe it is global warming that is having more effect on wildlife than we think, and the cause of the demise of some species from our shores. As an aside, I read that more Hen Harriers fledged this year on Grouse Moors than on RSPB reserves, not something that has appeared in RSPB literature, this is good news as it is always supposed that the moor operators/game keepers are responsible for their demise, this of course shows game shooting in a different light.

Our late planted wheat is just showing thro' the ground having taken some 4 weeks to appear, not a problem in its self, but has laid it open to attention of hordes of ravenous rooks that seem to descend on it most mornings, the result of which remains to be seen. It suddenly appeared over the night of 13th-14th December, just one mild night, the ground must be so cold due to the wet.

It will not have escaped anyone's notice that the new Agriculture bill to replace the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), now we have left the EU, has just been passed by Government which actually poses as many questions as it answers, so I think it is better that I leave it for now, especially as we are (at the time of writing not sure of any "deal" or "no deal"). What we do know is that we are to be paid eventually is what we provide for the public good, not food necessarily, this will include environmental issues, and the care of our soil (which we would be mad not to), I hope this will include flooding as at the moment our flooding is saving floods elsewhere.

Our Agriculture Minister, (a farmer's son would you believe!) says in the future we will be growing food vertically under controlled environmental conditions. To me this will lead to substandard food, which is bland, and probably lacking in basic nutrients, I suggest this is not what the public voted for. So on the whole, as I have mentioned above, the bill poses more questions than it answers. The difficulty is for us, who will have to plan ahead, as, like a tanker at sea, it takes a long time to alter course, we obviously will have to comply as and when. It seems food is not important now that the public have voted in favour of protecting our food and its standards, which encouraged the Government to install the "Trade and Agriculture Commission" to monitor all imports. At least we learn that both the Minister for the Environment and the Agriculture have said that they are committed to supporting our Farmers, we will see!

Dieter Helm, chair Natural Capital Committee has pointed out the importance of ponds & ditches on addressing the biodiversity crisis. This to me illustrates the importance of greater control of surface water drainage from development, and stricter control over the water companies, (mainly foreign owned) over the release of raw sewage at times of high rainfall. Please note that the “River Thames Conservation Trust” latest news letter is now out online and has some very interesting items in it, well worth a look <https://riverthame.org/news/> or you can have it automatically if you sign up via <https://riverthame.org/news/newsletter/>.

I was very disappointed to read recently that SODC have approved their revised planning policy as if they did not their planning powers would be removed by the Minister for Housing, and communities anyone heard of dictatorship/democracy? When the reverse was what the local population voted against in the last local election. Now in the news on the day of submission to editors of the Village news, we read that the Government is to revisit the Algorithm, whatever that means, and to take planning more to brown field sites and city centre redevelopment, rather than Greenfield sites. This could be good news, after all the argy bargy over local plans and interference from MPs with more than one house.

Charles Peers

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT IN FRANCE

Joyeux Noel et Bonne Annee to you all.

Hopefully a Covid-free New Year!

Stuart McGill

stuartmmcgill@gmail.com



John Howell MP writes

December 2020

Although this will be published early in the New Year copy deadlines mean that I am writing mid-December. This time last year we had just been to the polls for the General Election, itself an unusual event for the time of year. Once the Christmas season was over the focus was on Brexit and before much more could be done COVID-19 engulfed the world to lead us into the most extraordinary year. Many of the hopes and dreams we may have had for 2020 we forced aside as the virus took a much stronger hold than any of us might have believed when it first emerged. As I write I am mindful of those whose loved ones have died prematurely at the hands of the virus and those who have suffered in other ways too. I doubt many people have come through the situation unaffected in some way or another. As we turn the corner into a new year, and with one vaccine already rolling out and others potentially close behind, let us hope that as 2021 progresses we will be able to return to a more normal situation.

Whatever their political view, during the course of 2020 many people told me that they did not envy the Government having to make decisions about how best to deal with the COVID crisis with the many different issues to be considered. Whatever decisions were made there were some people who were unhappy – some wanting tighter restrictions, some wanting greater freedoms; and whatever financial support measures were introduced there were some who felt they were too little and some who felt they were too much.

During the year The Speaker did much to keep parliament moving and enable business to carry on but inevitably it was been slower than usual with remote working. Debate was also curtailed to some extent with limited numbers of MPs allowed to be in the Chamber at any one time and so the usual pattern of discussion with interventions was limited. For some time there were also no Westminster Hall debates. This is where MPs can raise specific shared concerns for debate and reply by a Minister.

In all of this it has been difficult to move as quickly as the Government would have liked to act on election manifesto promises. The opportunity to bring things forward was hindered by the more urgent issues. Some things will still come forward but more slowly, and others may need refocus in the light of the experiences of 2020. It is my hope that in the year ahead we will be able to focus on some of the important issues that have been leapfrogged by COVID. I hope too that I may be able to get out and about more to meet people in the constituency in business and in the community as I have in other years. Although technology has enabled us to keep some contact going as human beings there are times when there is no substitute for meeting face to face. However some of the benefits of using technology in ways we had not previously discovered must not be lost. I will continue to use online meeting facilities where it is more efficient to do so. I think we have all learned to be adaptable and must harness new opportunities.

I know that the events of this year will have changed life forever for some and no words can ease the distress. For all of us life has changed in some ways. We cannot turn the clock back and have to look forward. I hope that we will build on the unexpected learning of last year and that the sense of community which has grown so much will continue. As the parliamentary agenda gets into full swing again I look forward to continuing to share views and ideas – my contact details are at the foot of this letter.

With my best wishes to you all for 2021.

John

If you have an issue that you would like to raise with me, if possible, please email me at john.howell.mp@parliament.uk. If you cannot email you can write to me at the House of Commons, London, SW1 0AA or PO Box 84, Watlington, OX49 5XD.

If you would like to receive my periodic electronic newsletters, and briefings on specific issues, please visit my website www.johnhowell.org.uk and subscribe at the link on the home page.

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Church: St James	01844 278349	Revd. Simon Cronk
Doctors	01865 872448 111 0845 345 8995 999	Morland Surgery Out of Hours Service NHS Helpline Medical Emergencies
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Little Milton School	01844 279310	Head:
Milk Deliveries	07773006485	A J Woods Ltd
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