

GREAT MILTON BULLETIN

May 2020

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Freedom of Information Act – Parish Council Publication Scheme

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides rights of public access to information held by Public Authorities. The Parish Council adopted a new publication scheme in November 2019: details can be found on the Parish Council Website at <https://www.great-milton.co.uk/freedom-of-information/>. Residents can see records of the policies and practices of the Parish Council including minutes, financial information and responses to planning consultations, on request from the Parish Clerk or via the website.

Great Milton Parish Council

Chairman:	Stephen Harrod	01844 278068
Ward:	Church Road to Monkey Farm/The Priory	
Vice Chairman:	Bill Fox	01844 279716
Ward:	Thame Road, inc Fullers Field and Green Hitchings	
Councillor:	Peter Fewell	01844 279400
Ward:	The Green from Priory Bank to Tara/Applewood	
Councillor:	Clyde Deacon	01844 278554
Ward:	High Street from North End Cottage to The Old Garage	
Councillor:	George Bennett	07482 339905
Ward:	Thame Road from Green Hitchings to A329	
Councillor:	Malcolm Horsley	07970 924194
Ward:	Kings Head House/Red Roofs to Wheatley Boundary	
Councillor:	Peter Allen	01844 278334
Ward:	Milton Common	

Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer: Tim Darch – 01844 278347
contact@clerkgreatmilton.co.uk

Parish Council Representatives

Rec Ground Committee:	Michael Robinson, Michele Block
Old Field Charity:	Hazel Hand, Niki Patrick
Hard Surface Play Area:	Susan Read, Jon Devitt
Neighbourhood Watch:	Jola Miziniak
Kent & Couling Charity:	—
Sheppard Trust:	Ann Price, Pat Cox

Front cover: The Rainbow Hedge outside the school.
Photo: Carole Greenhalgh.

Key Contacts:

Local Governance

Oxfordshire County Council	01865 792422	Oxfordshire.gov.uk
South Oxfordshire District Council	01235 422422	Southoxon.gov.uk
County Councillor: Stephen Harrod	01844 278068	steve.harrod@oxfordshire.gov.uk
District Councillor: Caroline Newton	07951 477144	caroline.newton@southoxon.gov.uk
Great Milton Parish Council		
Stephen Harrod (Chair)	01844 278068	
Tim Darch (Clerk)	01844 278347	contact@clerkgreatmilton.co.uk
Report potholes, fly-tipping, vandalism, broken paving		Fixmystreet.com
OCC Family Information Service	08452 262636	fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk
OCC Highways	0845 310 1111	highway.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Missed Bin Collection	03000 610610	admin.southoxford@biffa.co.uk
Bulky Household Waste Collection	01235 422406	waste.team@southandvale.gov.uk
SODC Housing	01235 422422	housing@southandvale.gov.uk
SODC Planning Applications	01235 422600	planning@southoxon.gov.uk

Services

Emergency - Police, Fire, Ambulance	999	
Police non-emergency	101	thamesvalley.police.uk
GP Surgery, Morland House	01865 872448	morland-house.co.uk
NHS non-emergency	111	nhs.uk
Gas Emergency	0800 111 999	nationalgrid.com/uk/safety/
Electricity Outage	0800 072 7282	sse.co.uk
Burst pipe or leak	0800 714 614	thameswater.co.uk
Floodline	0345 988 1188	gov.uk/check-flood-risk

Local information

St. Mary's Church: Rev. Simon Cronk		simon.cronk@btinternet.com
Methodist Church: Rev. John Anderson	01235 529563	
Neighbourhood Watch: Jola Miziniak	07917 676463	jolamiziniak7@gmail.com
Citizens Advice Oxfordshire	03444 111 444	caox.org.uk
The Maple Tree Children's Centre	01865 873916	mapletreecc@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Great Milton Neighbours Hall	01844 278415	
Great Milton Pavilion & Recreation Ground	01844 278116	
Great Milton Website		Carina.martin@gmail.com http://www.greatmilton.co.uk
Great Milton Bulletin	07554 516989	contact@clerkgreatmilton.co.uk gmbulletin@hotmail.co.uk
Great Milton Primary School	01844 279388	gmilton.org
Wheatley Park School	01865 872441	www.wheatleypark.org
Comet - for people without access to suitable public transport	01865 323201	oxfordshire.gov.uk/comet
Arriva (280) Bus	0344 800 4411	arrivabus.co.uk
Oxford Tube (Buses to London)	01865 772250	oxfordtube.com
Park & Ride		oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/parkandride
National Rail Enquiries	03457 484950	nationalrail.co.uk

CORONAVIRUS PRECAUTIONS

Sent to his staff by a friend of ours who works in hospitals and labs, Professor of Microbiology/Virology at Warwick. Feel free to pass on.

It is clear that we are all going to be exposed to the new Coronavirus called SARS-Cov-19. What we can do is slow the rate of infection so that no organisation is overwhelmed by staff being sick and diminishing the chances of adequate treatment for those seriously affected.

The following precautions are generally seen to be a way of reducing virus spread and contagion:

- 1) Avoid handshaking, kissing as greeting! Use a fist bump, slight bow, elbow bump, etc.
- 2) Use ONLY your knuckle to touch light switches, lift buttons, etc. If you go for petrol lift the fuel nozzle with a paper towel or use a disposable glove.
- 3) Open public doors with your closed fist, clothed arm or hip. Do not grasp the handle with your hand, unless there is no other way to open the door. Especially important on lavatory and post office/commercial doors.
- 4) Use disinfectant wipes or gloves in supermarkets to wipe handles on trolleys or baskets, including the handle and child seat in supermarket trolleys.
- 5) Wash your hands with soap for 10-20 seconds and/or use a greater than 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer whenever you return home from ANY activity that involves locations where other people have been.
- 6) Keep a bottle of 60% alcohol hand gel available at each entrance to your home AND in your car for use after getting petrol or touching other contaminated objects when you can't immediately wash your hands.
- 7) If you cough or sneeze use a disposable tissue and discard carefully. Use your elbow to catch sneezing or coughing as a last resort. The clothing on your elbow will contain infectious virus that can be passed on for a number of days (presently unknown).

Stock that may be useful to you:

Latex or thin polythene gloves for use when going shopping, using a garage forecourt pump, and all other outside activity when you come in contact with contaminated areas.

Stock up with at least 60% alcohol-based gels.

Remember that your credit/debit card will be handled by others unless you have a touch card for payments.

This virus is spread in large droplets by coughing and sneezing. This means that the air will not infect you but the virus will remain viable on surfaces for up to a week — everything that is associated with infected people will be contaminated and potentially infectious. The virus is on surfaces and you will not be infected unless your unprotected face is directly coughed or sneezed upon.

This virus only has cell receptors for the lungs. The only way for the virus to infect you is through your nose or mouth via your hands or an infected cough or sneeze onto or into your nose or mouth. Remember to avoid putting your unwashed hands near your face.

Masks do little if anything to stop cross-infection but they stop you putting your hands onto your nose or mouth.

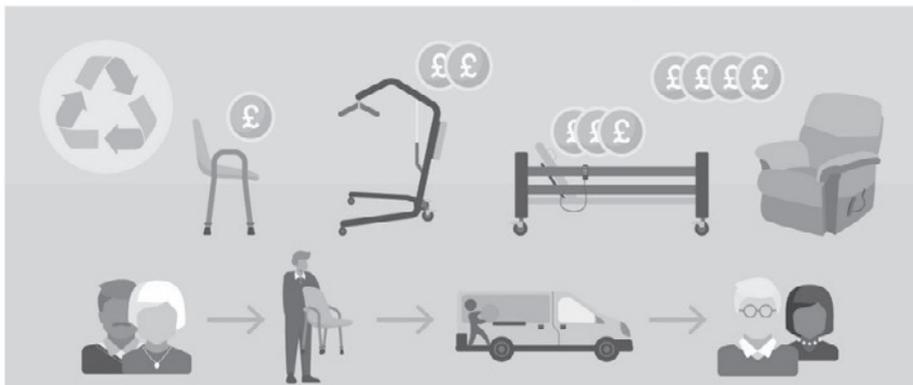
There is some limited evidence that zinc lozenges will stop virus replication in the mouth and nose.

**Due to the COVID-19 Virus
WE NEED YOUR HELP**

If you have been loaned equipment and you no longer use it...

PLEASE HAND IT BACK

To avoid a shortage and so we can send to people who need it.



Please contact us at

Tel: 01869 225 420 or Email:

**enquiries@oxfordshire.nrs-uk.net to
arrange your FREE collection**



The Bulletin

Due to issues surrounding delivery and a reduction in the volume of news items, The Bulletin will not be distributed on a house-to-house basis until further notice. However, a link to the electronic version can be found on the Parish Council website (www.great-milton.co.uk): additionally the village shop will stock 50 copies specifically for those unable to access the website. Please contact the Parish Clerk if this raises any concerns.

Parish Council Meetings

Due to restrictions currently imposed by UK Government on gatherings of more than two people, Parish Council meetings are suspended until further notice. Routine business (mainly payments, administrative necessities and evaluation of planning applications) will continue, and the Clerk is always available should you have any queries

Draft Parish Notes – April 2020

The meeting was conducted through a video conferencing facility. The new arrangements for the Parish Council are allowed under the following Regulation:

THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND POLICE AND CRIME PANELS (CORONAVIRUS) (FLEXIBILITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY AND POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETINGS) (ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2020.

Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Fewell in advance of the meeting. Although only reporting the outcome, Cllr Clyde Deacon declared an interest in Item 56/20 B, specifically the granting of planning permission subsequent to application P20/S0578/FUL for development work on his property.

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday 16th March 2020 and the Extraordinary Parish Council meeting held on Monday 23rd March were approved as a true and accurate record of proceedings, to be physically signed subsequent to the meeting.

Ad hoc updates from the County Council and District Council are currently being received regularly in lieu of monthly reports. These are being cascaded to residents as a matter of course.

Cllr Caroline Newton reported that an emergency backup grant of £2,000 per ward is still available: councillors AGREED to approach SODC for a sum to assist with the COVID-19 volunteer effort.

A new planning application for the Harrington site alongside the M40 is at an early

stage. A formal request for a scoping opinion has been submitted to SODC and an application could be submitted as early as this summer. Cllr Newton suggested that the applicants are ‘testing’ the existing Local Plan, and putting forward Harrington as a more viable alternative to some sites currently included (e.g Chalgrove Airfield). It is assumed that SODC will support its existing Local Plan (which excludes Harrington) as the plan has been democratically decided on that basis: officers are confident in the plan and that the Planning Inspector will agree if his opinion is required, but Cllr Newton has concerns that Harrington may be seen by central government as a means of boosting the regional economy in light of the expected downturn post-COVID-19. Cllr Harrod added that Oxfordshire County Council doesn’t view the Harrington site as sustainable given its distance from rail connections and attractiveness to car-based commuters as a result of its proximity to the M40. He also stated that it is in the government’s interests to stick with Chalgrove as it is now owned by Homes England, the government’s ‘housing accelerator’ which is sponsored by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Planning Applications

The following planning applications received from SODC were considered:

P20/S0929/FUL (Oxen Field, Thame Road, Great Milton). Conversion of existing agricultural barn to form a single family home with garden, parking space, landscaping, and associated works.

This application has been reviewed by councillors in remote consultation, subsequent to which it was agreed that the council had NO OBJECTIONS to the proposed development. The following comments were submitted to SODC:

- There is general support from the Parish Council for the design, layout and use of an area of redundant land.
- If permission is granted for this conversion then it should be on condition of cleaning up rubbish to the front left of the access road from Thame Road.
- If the planning authority is minded to grant consent, Great Milton Parish Council would not want this to act as a precedent for other areas of backland in the village to be brought forward for development.

The following planning decisions received were considered:

P20/S0598/HH and P20/S0599/LB (1 Monkery Farm, Church Road, Great Milton OX44 7PB). Removal of geodesic dome, replacement with car port/store with study in roof. Planning permission is GRANTED for the development described above.

P20/S0578/FUL (6 Thame Road, Great Milton OX44 7HY). New detached dwelling on infill plot next to 6 Thame Road. Planning permission is GRANTED for the development described above.



P20/S0773/LB (Monkery Barn, 1 Monkery Farm, Church Road Great Milton OX44 7PB). Concealment of an opening on the south boundary wall with obscure fixed glass. Planning permission is GRANTED for the development described above.

Financial Resolutions

The following payments were authorised. Cheques were necessarily signed for subsequent to the virtual meeting, along with associated invoices:

Tim Darch. Salary, Tax and Expenses. £610.57

Jonathan Dudley. Bulletin production April. £90.60

SODC dog hygiene: £69.08

Maple Tree Children's Centre annual grant (as agreed at minute 13/20). £500

Oxford Green Belt Network membership. £15

MP Printers (Kindness cards). £48

Donations (as agreed at Minute 44/20):

Oxfordshire South and Vale Citizens Advice. £100

Home Start. £50

Cleanslate. £50

The final reconciliation, bank statement and accounts for 2019-20 were received and APPROVED. The reconciled bank balance on 31 March 2020, and the closing balance for the 2019-20 financial year, was £29,664.22.

It was noted that given income of more than £25,000 in the financial year 2019-20, the Parish Council will be required to submit accounts for a limited assurance review.

To review and agree the proposed dates for Great Milton Parish Council's internal/external audit activities:

- Internal Audit (commenced April 2020)
- Parish Council to receive Internal Audit report (May 2020: TO BE CONFIRMED)
- AGAR return to be approved and signed (May 2020: TO BE CONFIRMED)
- AGAR return and associated information submitted to External Auditor (June 2020: TO BE CONFIRMED)
- Exercise of public rights – 30 working days in June and July: DATES TO BE CONFIRMED
- Accounts to be approved and published/required info displayed on website (DATE TO BE CONFIRMED)
- Receipt of External Auditor's response and Notice of Completion: August 2020 (DATE TO BE CONFIRMED)

Bulletin update

Due to issues surrounding delivery and a reduction in the volume of news items, the parish council has agreed that The Bulletin will not be distributed on a house-to-house

basis until further notice. However, a link to the electronic version can be found on the Parish Council website (www.great-milton.co.uk): additionally the village shop will stock 50 copies specifically for those unable to access the website. So far no negative feedback has been received and advertisers are all happy to carry on advertising despite the change of arrangements.

Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

Parish councils and parish meetings are in normal circumstances required by law to hold an Annual Parish Meeting between 1 March and 1 June, for the purpose of discussing parish affairs and to receive, discuss and approve the Parish Council's accounts as well as reports from its various affiliated groups. It is also a requirement to hold an Annual Parish Meeting of the Parish Council, at which a Chairman and Vice-Chairman are elected for the forthcoming year. Legislation has been passed to suspend the requirement for these meetings: it is anticipated that they will next be held in 2021. It was AGREED that the current Chairman and Vice-Chairman will therefore continue in their roles until then.

COVID-19: update on village response/impacts

Sincere thanks were expressed by all councillors to the village's numerous volunteers and providers of essential services for their sterling efforts in recent weeks.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.

The next meeting of Great Milton Parish Council is currently scheduled to be held virtually on Monday May 18th starting at 7.30pm.

Tim Darch. Clerk/RFO, Great Milton Parish Council



Ramblings from the Rectory

There is evidence that this pandemic began with live animal ‘wet markets’ in China. I say evidence because it is only that, we need to know more.

The United Nations biodiversity chief, Elizabeth Maruma Mrema has given her judgement about our present situation; “The message we are getting is if we don’t take care of nature, it will take care of us.”

This does seem to point to a frightening wake up call that when we don’t relate well with the natural world the natural world will hit back.

Whatever the reasons for this crisis, right now we are faced with the human cost in both life and economic stability. Those who have died have largely been the older and more vulnerable. This is not entirely the case of course. That Boris Johnson was so significantly struck down, a man who is robust and who has never taken a day off sick, made us all sit up and listen. Younger and healthier people and even some children have died, but it is the older and more vulnerable who are the most at risk. One of the things that has emerged from this catastrophe has been the recognition that the vulnerable really do matter. I believe this is a ‘Godly’ insight and hope and pray that we will move forward from this with a stronger conviction of that truth.

There are so many unanswered questions. Why has this happened? What is the best way forward to prevent utter economic catastrophe? What must we do to prevent this again? We might ask the question, “where is God in this?” That is a huge question and it is not a new one. In the Old Testament the book of Job wrestles with the belief in a good and sovereign God in the face of the reality of suffering. The Psalms are filled with questions of this sort. In the face of such questions though I come back time and again to the season we have just been through and especially to Good Friday and Easter Sunday. We see in the events of Good Friday, Jesus, in whom I believe we see God, in a place of weakness and vulnerability. This is what God looks like, identifying in our weakness and vulnerability, identifying with us in our suffering and pain. Again, I believe that when we look at the Cross we see there God in Christ who has taken on himself the full reality of human failing, pain, suffering and of course death. This is what God’s love looks like, being prepared to suffer the very worst that we might know the very best. It is a transforming and ultimately victorious love. After Good Friday comes Easter Sunday. After death, defeat and despair comes resurrection and hope.

So many people have been saying about our situation that we must learn something from this, that the world cannot continue as it has been. I am a Christian and so yes I wonder in all of this what God is telling us? What are we to learn about ourselves and our priorities for human society? Who have been the real heroes in

all of this? It hasn't been the super-rich, the oligarch's or the celebrities scrambling from lockdown to update their Instagram photos. It has been the carers, the one's we have been clapping (or even now and again ringing a church bell!) on a Thursday evening. How are we to continue to honour their role? What are we learning about our relationship with the natural world? At the time when so many have struggled with the most basic of all life giving functions, to breathe, nature itself has been taking a deep breath. We have been forced to pause and think. In some of the Psalms there are pauses with the word Selah, that simply means 'now stop and think about it'.

But I dare also to point to another pause. In the New Testament the word for spirit, is pneuma. Throughout the Bible we see the pneuma, the Spirit of God at work. Spirit though can also be translated as breath. From pneuma, we get pneumatic, we also get pneumonia. It is as if our world has paused as we struggle to breathe. My prayer is that in this pause we will lead us to be more awake to the spirit, the breath, the pneuma, of God. God who has breathed life into his creation, God who enters into the suffering, the pain and the flawed reality of our humanity. I believe though in resurrection, in a God who breathes transformation, forgiveness and hope into the darkest of places. I don't know what lies ahead, but I profoundly believe in a God who is with us as we walk through pain and insecurity and for some tragically through the 'valley of the shadow of death' itself. I believe he can do this because he has been there himself. We need to listen though, to examine what our priorities for life really are? Is there room for God to breathe something completely new into us? We must however pause and think about it. This surely must be a Selah moment we are all going through.

Simon

Christian Aid Week May 10th-16th

Thank you to both Janes – Jane Willis and Jane Jefferis – for hosting Lent Lunches which together raised a total of £372 for Christian Aid this year.

Due to Coronavirus there will be no house-to-house collections but Christian Aid Week will take place on line!! Individuals can donate directly via the Christian Aid website on:

www.christianaid.org.uk/give-money/make-donation

or by telephoning 020 7523 2269.

S.A. Dennis

Practice Nurses – Your County Needs You!

Oxfordshire's Patient Care during Coronavirus programme is asking experienced practice nurses to join the teams in our dedicated COVID-19 clinics across the county.

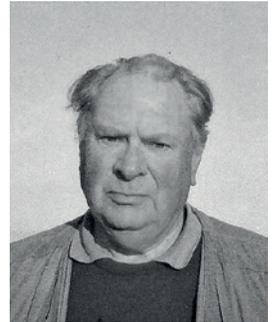
If you are not currently working in one of our Oxfordshire practices but are interested in helping care for patients during the pandemic, please complete this quick availability survey and we will contact you. Thank you and please share this link with your networks <https://surveyhero.com/c/e7684979>.

View from Views

Who would have thought everything, I mean by this not just at home but the world, would have dramatically changed in the month since I last put finger to the key board. Here in the UK, I thought I said last month that we would hope by the next time I wrote we would be praying for rain well now we are, as it is unbelievably dry, with all ground set like concrete. Now of course not to mention Coronavirus, and the quite unusual situation we all face, with none of us knowing how it will affect us personally, the country, or the world after we beat it, as beat it we will.

My reliable informant from the village, Les Preston, tells me he saw the first Swallow on the 6th April, as yet no sitting at Views farm but we have heard the Chiff Chaff though, so in spite of everything nature is following its normal course. We have come to the conclusion that the un identifiable raptor seen around here is a Goshawk, in fact I think there may well be a pair are of them, maybe if there is a pair we may soon be seeing a few more, it has been suggested that it may be a Honey Buzzard.

The farm is just about recovering from the ravishes of the winter, the Winter Wheat has had it's first application of fertiliser and looking as respectable as it has all winter. The Oil Seed Rape however looks as dreadful as ever we think that about 60% of it will be a complete right off, having said that as the weather warms up and the pigeons move on to pastures greener, it is trying hard to catch up, but we are not holding our breath just wait and see (and hope). We planted our Spring Barley on the 2nd of April very late for this farm as I can remember planting as early as January one year and that provided the best crop ever. As the ground was still wet in places, we had to direct drill (plant) straight into what had been grown for sheep feed, but never grew, enough due to the very dry period we had in September 2019, (if you can remember!!!). This is a



practice that would not be possible without the use of Glyphosate, being a chemical under threat to be banned. Alternatively we could have cultivated the ground to a seed bed, by not ploughing we have saved realising carbon onto the atmosphere.

I was very pleased to recently read in the farming press that Prof Tim Lang, who when I had a fair bit of contact with him, has now somewhat changed his tune. In those days he was one of those people that was for ever criticizing modern farming techniques, now he is supporting British farmers and food saying that food security and the safety of local food is of great importance, particularly as several countries have stopped exporting certain foods products, due to the virus. As an aside makes the point that members of organisations such as the “National Trust” and “RSPB” have to eat. In the same paper there is a report of a couple of Vegans who became carnivores and have never felt so good or been so healthy!

Our MP John Howell as some will have noticed has corrected my comments about the stop put on SODC’s local plan by the Housing minister. He did mention this when we met some weeks ago as he comments, which would have been after I had sent in my last article, at that time I based my comments on what I had read in the press, and from councillors comments, I am sorry John for this, it just shows we cannot always rely on the press for the exact truth. Having said that we have just learned that the said minister has not only over stepped the mark on being locked down, but also using/ occupying 3 dwellings, if such people did not have so many dwellings, the so called housing shortage would not be such a problem.

This month would normally see us partaking in the annual Chiltern Vintage Tractor Rally in aid of the Thames Valley Air Ambulance. Needless to say this year’s rally will not take place as scheduled on the 17th May but optimistically we have rescheduled it for 20th September, fingers crossed! However as all of you who have supported us in the past, to the tune of some £6000 last year, this will leave a big hole in their finances, and has to be replaced somehow, we would like to think that all those who have supported us so generously in the past, will feel they can continue to do so again. (some already have done so many thanks to them) Please if you feel inclined to support the Air Ambulance again I have a just giving page, See Below, please feel free to use it, as all the proceeds will go to the Thames Valley Air Ambulance.

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Charles-Peers4

Finally I must say how humbled we are by all the help and offers of help, that we have received from our village, whilst we have been advised to stay at home, when under normal conditions we are more that capable of looking after ourselves. On top of all this support to receive a little gift of good wishes for Easter was overwhelming, just shows what a community we are lucky enough to live in, so a big thank 

you to all that are making it all work so well under such adverse conditions, and I mean everyone who is doing something! A BIG THANK YOU!!

Charles Peers

Next month sees us partaking in the annual Chiltern Tractor Rally in aid of the Thames Valley Air Ambulance and I shall be looking for sponsorship from as many of you who think this is a worthwhile cause. I also have a just Giving page, this of course depends now if it is held.

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Charles-Peers4

News from The Pine Lodge

Regrettably the Village Hall remains closed until we are advised accordingly. We are continuing to monitor the situation daily with the hope of more encouraging news in the next few weeks.

In line with government guidelines on public gatherings the village plans for 8th May VE Day Celebrations have sadly had to be postponed until further notice.

For more details about events or the hall please contact

linda.pinelodge@yahoo.com

gilesdenby@yahoo.com

The Maple Tree

We hope that everybody is managing to stay safe at this difficult time.

Although The Maple Tree is not currently open, we are doing our best to continue to a run a reduced remote programme as best we can.

Our Facebook page is extremely active and our wonderful staff are posting ideas as well as recording videos with their own children of ideas to do at home. <https://www.facebook.com/TheMapleTreeWheatley/> Please do take a look at our new website <http://www.mapletree.org.uk/>

We are also running interactive Facebook Live sessions on a Tuesday and Thursday morning at 11am for storytelling, singing and more activities for you to try at home with the children.

We are delighted to have formed a new partnership with Botley Bridges, NHS Health Visitors, Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support, OXPIP and Motherkind Café and will be introducing a weekly virtual Baby Group beginning on Wednesday 22nd

April at 11am especially for parents who have had babies since the 1st March as we are aware that you haven't been able to get out for the face to face support that you would normally receive. If you would like to join us, please email hayley@mapletree.org.uk and we will send you an invitation to join us via Zoom.

Barb Crowther, who runs our Saturdays session, saved seeds from our sunflower plants at the end of last summer. We have launched a sunflower growing competition, with a prize offered for the tallest sunflower at the end of August. If you would like some sunflower seeds to grow with your children, email info@mapletree.org.uk and we will arrange to send some to you. Do send us photos of your child/ren planting the seeds and progress reports would be appreciated.

If you need any support during this difficult time, please do contact us and we will do our best to help you (or find somebody that can).

If you are interested in supporting The Maple Tree financially, either by making a one off donation, informing us of any grants that may be available or by becoming a Friend of The Maple Tree, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Please do stay safe

Hayley Hayle (Coordinator)

Great Haseley and District Horticultural Society

We have been in lockdown ever since I wrote my last article and how things have changed in so many ways. The weather has been so very kind to us with the gloom and seemingly endless rain of previous weeks lifting and the sun shining virtually every day and the soil has dried out (rather too quickly in some places). Already it is so dry in some parts of our garden that, when I dig a planting hole, the sides cave in almost as fast as I can dig.

I'm adding homemade compost to everything and it really makes a difference. In the dry areas it helps retain moisture and, in the damper areas, it relieves compaction opening up the texture. It really is a magical ingredient and I can not recommend home composting enough. Ours is made in heaps and is largely a mix of mown grass, weed free cuttings from the garden and kitchen waste. It is also possible to add shredded paper and finely chopped woody material. One of our heaps is not rotting well and remains too dry so will need to be turned and probably more grass added.

The spring growth is so far advanced - I would say at least two weeks. We have a small tree in the lawn (it can also be grown as a shrub in borders) called *Malus sargentii* which has been in the garden for over twenty years. This 2m tree has reliably 

flowered for two weeks at the beginning of May every year, except 2016 when it was two weeks late and was covered in flower on 21st May on our daughter's wedding day. This year the flowering began in mid April and it is looking absolutely gorgeous with its clusters of white, single flowers. Rosa Gertrude Jekyll (voted the nation's favourite rose) has opened her first flower this week, so it feels that summer is on its way. My sister lives in Dundee and, when we had a WhatsApp video call earlier this week, her garden still looks like it is very early spring with bulbs just starting and still lots of bare soil. The growing season is so much shorter up there, but it is very concentrated so often the effect can be very different with plants performing all at the same time in a way we would almost never expect to see except, perhaps, after a very hard long winter.

Pots abandoned over the winter have thrown up a few surprises. Outside the greenhouse, there were three large pots which had held tender perennials, one of which had flowered very late into the autumn. I would consider all three plants (two Salvias and a beautiful pale violet Plectranthus) to be very tender and expected to be emptying dead plants from the pots and using the compost in the garden. I always take cuttings as I've never had any of them survive outside. On closer inspection, all three were very much alive, two of them just starting to grow from below the soil level and one happily shooting from dead looking stems. All three are now planted out in the garden with a cosy blanket of compost and we will see what happens. On a less happy note, I have dealt with four tender potted Fuchsias which were putting out new shoots. Three of the plants simply pulled out of the compost without most of their roots; the dreaded vine weevil has struck. I picked out many of the little cream coloured grubs and cut off dead roots, removing as much compost as I could before repotting in fresh compost. I am amazed at the amount of fresh growth with so few roots. Fingers crossed that all will be well now; again, time will tell.

If you can find room, it is a good idea to grow some food crops, particularly in this very difficult year. Herbs and salads are well worth the effort as they are expensive to buy and lovely to pick fresh. Tomatoes will also do well outside if the weather continues so mild, Pat and Christine have a range of seeds in the Post Office in Great Milton so try something new.

We are so very privileged in this area that virtually every home has a small piece of outside space to grow things and, with so much unusual time, enjoy your garden. Meanwhile, I am still getting round the garden on my first big weed, but the end is in sight. I can recommend a Tulip combination which I have grown this year for the second time, Ronaldo (a deep crimson) and Helmar (yellow with deep red stripes like a Dutch painting), which zing together and bring a jolt of pleasure every time I see them.

Liz Moses

John Howell MP writes...

As we work together to fight COVID-19, I know that it is so very worrying for many people. I have been inundated with emails raising many different questions on the situation and, with the help of my dedicated team – all of whom are working remotely – we are trying to answer as best we are able. COVID-19 queries are dominating our work and due to the urgency of most of these we are giving them priority. If you have emailed on another issue, please bear with us. We are dealing first with urgent COVID-19 casework.

Although Parliament has been in recess, Ministers have been working flat out to bring forward measures to try to keep us all safe and help people in so many different situations. Following an initial raft of measures these have been refined as situations that have fallen between the various measures have come to light. If you still have a question please feel free to email me but please do look at the Government advice first (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>) to see if your question has already been answered. This will help me and my team to respond as quickly as we can on outstanding concerns and individual problems.

As Parliament returns from the Easter recess, we too will be working in new ways using technology. A great deal of work has been done to allow Members to continue to scrutinise the Government remotely and Ministers will take oral questions from MPs, some of whom will be in the Chamber and others joining in remotely. I have already taken part in Justice Select Committee evidence sessions online and they worked very well.

More locally, other public bodies have made provision to keep MPs updated on their work in relation to COVID-19 and to question them. I have regular conference calls with the Thames Valley Police Chief Constable and CEO of the Ambulance Trust, the Chief Executive of the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Leader of the County Council, as well as with international colleagues. I have personally surveyed GP practices and Care Homes in the constituency to check how they are coping and to ensure that their needs are met for protective clothing and equipment. I am pleased that, despite media suggestions to the contrary, Care Homes are doing well. I was pleased to see that this week the Government appointed Lord Deighton to lead our national effort to produce essential protective equipment, so we can ensure health and social care staff have the protection they need. It has become clear that a major problem has been poor logistics within the NHS on distribution rather than supply itself. We are grateful to the people who have turned their hand to helping meet the need and to the Army who have been brought in to help.

Despite the dominance of COVID-19 I remain interested to know the views of constituents on the various topics. Whether on a topic due to come before the House or something else, if you have an issue that you would like to raise with me please email me at john.howell.mp@parliament.uk or write to me at the House of Commons (House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA) or my constituency office (PO Box 84, Watlington, OX49 5XD) to share your views.



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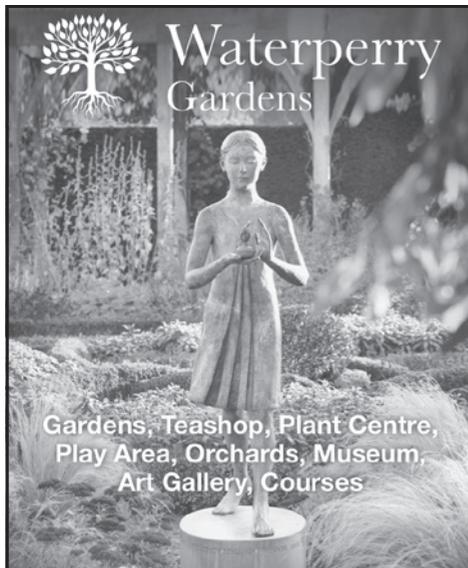
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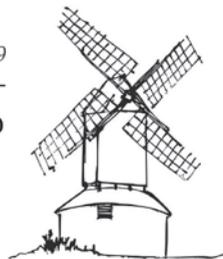
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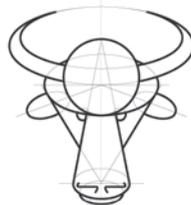
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May

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|----------|--|--------|
| 4th Mon | Star Wars Day (clutching at straws here) | — |
| 8th Fri | VE Day 75th Anniversary | — |
| 13th Wed | The Editor's Birthday (and again) | — |
| 18th Mon | Parish Council Virtual Meeting | 7:30pm |

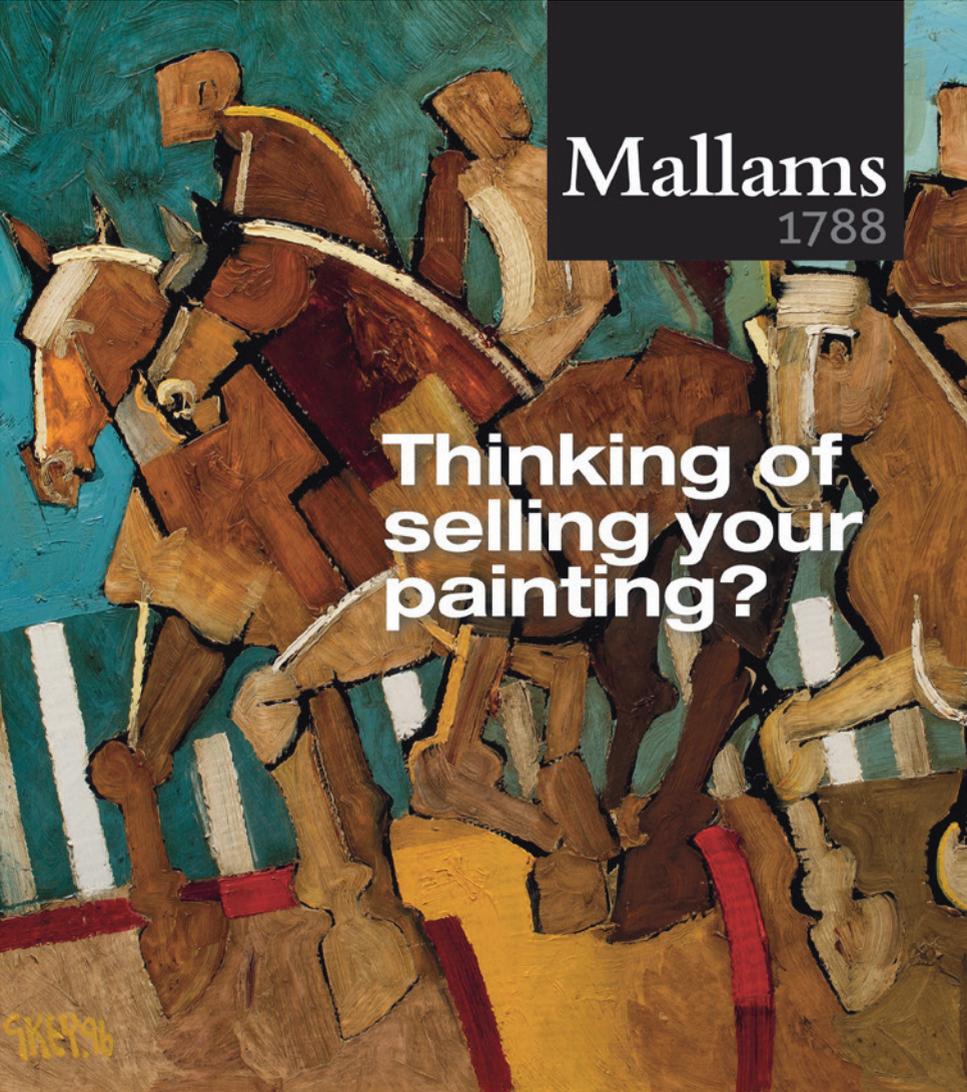
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