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## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – OCTOBER 2019

It's amazing how quickly a glorious summer can turn into a very wet autumn. I still have many fond memories of the hot dry summer and hope everyone made the most of it as I tried to. It was excellent conditions for mountain biking and I even had the opportunity for a couple swims in the Thames.

While the work on the Traffic and Parking improvements and new Pavilion is continuing, in September and October the Parish Council turned its attention to some improvements needed around the village in the shorter term.

I had a walk around the village with Oxfordshire County Council OCC Highways department and we are already seeing some results from this visit:

- **Manor Road repairs:** OCC agreed that there are many aspects of Manor Road that need improvement. This is largely due to wear and tear from the lorries visiting the sewage plant at the end of the road, but there are also spots on the pavement that need attention. Work on this has already been announced for October.
- **Fixed Bollard:** The bent bollard on the lower narrows has finally been replaced after several months of being in a state of disrepair.
- **Hardwick Road repairs:** While inspecting the Hardwick Road gas works repairs, we agreed the work was of good quality by the recent OMJ contractor, but identified areas where previous gas road works was in need of repair. While a complete resurfacing would have been preferred, the worst parts of the previous gas works have now been repaired.

Drainage and flooding comes to mind in the current weather.

- **Drains Czar:** Maintenance of the drains in the High street and elsewhere in the village is an on-going concern. Drain clearing is the responsibility of OCC, but they often need prodding and

the process for raising a concern to them is via the Fix My Street website. While some in the village have worked to chase OCC in the past, the Village Plan identified the need for someone to be the focal point for this and take responsibility on an on-going basis. A Drainage Czar, as it were. I am pleased to say that Warren Beard has agreed to take on that role. He is just getting started so I am sure he will have more to share soon.

- **Clearing Whitchurch Hill drainage:** We also identified the need for the drainage ditches, or offlets as OCC calls them, on the verges leading up Whitchurch Hill to be cleared. With the heavy rains, we believe that this is a cause of debris runoff down into the High Street. OCC has committed to clearing these for us by the end of October.

Other improvements that are planned:

- **Repainting Telephone Booth:** The PC approved use of a local contractor to repaint the telephone booth that housed the defibrillator on the high street and remove the old storage box that is no longer in use.
- **Increased Weedkilling:** We agreed to increase the frequency of weedkilling in the village from once a year to 4 times a year. The area of weed killing will also be increased from just the High Street to also include Manor Road and Swanston Field. Cllr Steward is leading this effort and assures us that poison will not be used, instead it will be a form of strong vinegar.
- **New Village Green Benches** – Cllr Steward is also leading the effort to replace the three benches on the Village Green with a much sturdier design. As you may be aware, two of the benches were recently badly damaged from vandalism. In retrospect, the design of the previous benches installed on the Village Green was probably not robust enough for an outdoor public space. Jon is reviewing two design options for the new benches with key stakeholders in the village. Please fee free to contact him if you have any thoughts on the new bench design.

**The Photography cup:** David Pearson

**The Douglas Allardyce Memorial Rose Bowl** for the most outstanding exhibit in the vegetable, fruit and flowers Section: Tricia Bland for her stunning tomatoes.

The winner of the **Children's cup:** Beth Strange. Eve and Woody Taylor shared second place and Tilly Westcar was third.

**Special mention:** Jo and Beth Westcar and Amelie Way who all entered work in the adult art class.

**The Whitchurch Hill trophy** for most points overall: Dave Sexton

Sue Sexton

## GORING HEATH SPRING SHOW – SATURDAY MARCH 28TH 2020

Several people have asked if we could publish these choices in advance so they can have more time to prepare their entries, so here they are. No excuses!!

Art (painting, drawing)	Vase of spring flowers
Lambs/ sheep	An Easter bonnet
Crafts	A decorated picture frame
An item of knitting	Patchwork or quilting (please state size)
Photography	Scenes from a bridge
A celebration	A water activity

We look forward to seeing lots more entries in the above categories!!!

Sue Sexton

## WINTER 2020 BULLETIN

This is the final bulletin of 2019. The Winter Edition of the Village Bulletin will be distributed to residents around weekend 27-28th January and the deadline for any articles will be Sunday 14th January.

Richard Williams, Editor (mail [rwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com](mailto:rwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com))

Trustees.

If you would like to know more, please do contact Sarah Dixon (our Grant Application Secretary). Contact details: telephone: 0118 984 4262, address: Flint House, Hardwick Road, RG8 7HH or e-mail – [whitchurchunitedcharities@gmail.com](mailto:whitchurchunitedcharities@gmail.com)

*Katherine Higley*

## **GORING HEATH AUTUMN SHOW**

A fine day dawned for our show with only a hint of some drizzle. The colourful displays of flowers made up for the shortage of vegetable and fruit entries. There was also a good turn-out of coffee cakes and shortbread biscuits. The photography and handicraft classes were well supported. It was pleasing to see so many children taking part, some in the adult art class.

My thanks go to the hard working committee members; Liz Gibson, Judith Johns and Sally Trinder. Also to computer wiz Sarah Jane Hanfrey for all the paperwork used in the show and to her husband Tim, who helped Sarah with the teas. Many thanks to willing helpers, Theresa Elsome, Denyse Williams, Tricia Bland and Dave Sexon. It was certainly a case of many hands make light work particularly with the tables! Finally a big thank you to the judges who willingly give of their time and expertise.

The trophy winners were:

**The Allotment cup** – Tricia Bland

**The Betty Haytor Memorial Cup** for most points in the flowers section: Dave Sexon

Liz Gibson won both the **Art Trophy** and the combined **Arts and Craft Trophy**.

Sue Sexon won both the **Floral arrangement** and **Handicraft trophies**.

**The Baking and Preserves cup:** Sarah Dragonetti

- **Manor Road Salt Bin:** We have ordered the replacement of a damaged Salt Bin on Manor Road and changed its location as the damage also appears to have been caused lorries from the sewage plant.

- **Manor Road Pillar:** I would like to apologise for the delay in getting the damage to the pillar repaired on the corner of Manor Road. This was damaged by a lorry rental firm in April, and due to the specialist nature of the material, it has taken the contractor some time to plan the repair. They say they have the material now and I am personally chasing this.

**Village Hall Roof Maintenance:** Work on the Village Hall improvements continues, and I am pleased to say the much needed maintenance of the roof was recently completed thanks to efforts by the Village Hall Team.

**Village Green Vandalism:** We are all concerned about the recent spate of vandalism in the area of the Village Green. We are looking into a number of options to address it, including a revitalised Neighbourhood Watch programme where we could ensure that someone visits the area on a nightly basis which is when the damage seems to happen. Your thoughts on the matter would be appreciated.

**Green Team:** I am pleased to introduce Alexa Duckworth-Briggs who is leading the new Green Team. She is working to coordinate and communicate some of the good work that is already happening with volunteers from WOTHabs and MOWS and others in the village. MOWS will now merge into Green Team. Alexa is also working to improve documentation of maintenance policies and ownership responsibility for each of the open spaces in the village. A key principle for village maintenance is in looking after what we have, but the Green Team will also support improvements for new Open Spaces if requested. One new area they are involved in is development of the Polish Church Memorial Gardens behind Manor Road. There is a short article with contact details and dates for upcoming working

parties later in the Bulletin. I hope you will consider participating. It can be a rewarding experience!

The following two significant planning applications have been a priority for the Parish Council in recent months:

- **Eastfield House** – Ross Healthcare's appeal of SODC's refusal of their planning application has been dismissed by an Inspectorate for the Secretary of State. This is good news for the village as it means their proposal to demolish Eastfield House should now be at an end. They still have the option of proceeding with their earlier permission, granted under appeal in May 2016, to demolish the building except for the retained front façade and create a 45 bed care home. However, we can't predict their next move as they had since said that this plan was not viable. Unfortunately, we are still some way off securing a sustainable future for Eastfield House, but it looks like all the efforts of so many in the village to stop its demolition have succeeded.
- **Coombe Park Fence** – The Parish Council objected to several aspects of a second planning application of a new security fence for Coombe Park estate. This application concerned an area running from its entrance on Manor Road, behind the Village Hall and behind some residences on Manor Road. Our key request was that the owners consider use of a wooden style fence that is more sympathetic to the local residential area and AONB instead of the metal industrial style fence in the proposal. This feedback followed a walkthrough with SODC and Coombe Park planning representatives that Cllr Steward and I participated in along with several local residents. This application is separate from the other application for the fencing on Hartslock Bridleway that is still under discussion between the SODC Planning team and representatives from Coombe Park.

I would like to note that we are still in search of a replacement Clerk for the Parish Council. There is an advertisement later in the Bulletin and on the web-site. I would be pleased to hear from you if you feel this is a role you would be interested in or know if someone would be.

to enable easy transition to Primary School, has started up again for a new intake. Within the dedicated session, there is more focus on writing, numbers, listening and understanding rules.

We currently have a couple of remaining spaces at the Pre-School, so please email Kathleen on [whitchurchpreschool@me.com](mailto:whitchurchpreschool@me.com) if you would like to apply.

*Melanie Uglow*  
Chair, Pre-School

## **WHITCHURCH & GORING HEATH HISTORY SOCIETY**

The last meeting of this year will be on Thursday 21st November when we welcome back Mike Hurst to remind us about old time Christmases – an evening of nostalgia for many.

Meetings are held at Goring Heath parish Hall at Whitchurch Hill, on the B471, and start at 8pm, with coffee served from 7.30pm. Non-members are welcome to join us for £3, to include coffee and biscuits.

*Vicky Jordan*

## **WHITCHURCH UNITED CHARITIES**

The Secretary of Whitchurch United Charities would like to remind all families that the Charity has funds available to help meet the costs associated with educational needs such as books, equipment or educational trips. We did not receive any applications during the last six months and we are keen for appropriate applications to made during the next six months.

Eligible students are young people between the ages of 5 and 25 years and whose permanent residence is within the parish of Whitchurch.

Applications are processed twice a year, with the closing dates being 31st March and 30th September. However, late applications are considered if the available funds for the previous 6 month period have not been fully allocated.

All applications and decisions are treated in strict confidence by the

grazing steep slopes.

The livestock are checked on a daily basis by a rota of kind volunteers, and at least once a week by BBOWT staff. Our stockwatchers are invaluable, without them we would be unable to carry out the essential grazing management on our nature reserves. A stockwatcher's main aim is to make sure the animals are all there, looking well, and are secure within the reserve with sufficient water. Stockwatchers generally commit to one day a week as part of a rota. Checks need to be carried out in daylight with at least 2 hours daylight remaining in order for us to respond to a livestock emergency.

We are currently looking for extra help, so if this appeals to you, please get in touch so we can discuss more details. No previous experience needed, and we will go through a full induction on site.

*Elene Walton, tel 01865 775476, mail [elenewalton@bbowt.org.uk](mailto:elenewalton@bbowt.org.uk)*  
Assistant Reserves Officer, Oxon

## WHITCHURCH PRE-SCHOOL

Whitchurch Pre-School has started a new school year, and we're pleased to welcome some fresh faces to our young community. So far this term, they have been enjoying the new construction area, walked to the veg shed to buy some unusual pumpkins, visited the alpacas and cooked plum tarts, as well as many creative activities in the classroom.

New this term is our Outdoor Learning session and the children are loving it! They have been learning about leaves and trees around the Maze, visited the allotments, and become fascinated by spiders and their webs. Another excellent addition to our repertoire this term is Boogie Mites. Its learning principles give the children not only a great basis for music, but also introduces them in a fun way to many other concepts to phonics and syllables, as well as encouraging counting.

Due to popular demand we are continuing our science session run by Mini Professors. So far this term, our Pre-Schoolers have been introduced to a wide variety of topics, from magnets and forces to water and surface tension.

Rising Fives, a session that gently introduces the children to skills

Cllr Keith Brooks and Dave Bowen have recently resigned from the Council. I would like to thank them for all their work for the village as councillors. Dave has been a councillor for over 4 years, and Keith over 10 years, including 3 years as Chairman. I am grateful that Keith plans to continue his work for the community through activities such as the Village Hall Committee and Green Team.

We are always looking for new Parish Councillors so please feel free to contact me at any time if this is something you may be interested in. We need people with a variety of skills and viewpoints on the Council. There is no specific experience needed to qualify other than an interest in the well-being of the community and a willingness to get involved.

*Jim Donahue  
Chairman, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council*

## THE GREEN TEAM

The Green Team is a team of volunteers who come together to help look after and maintain the green spaces in the village. It's a group of both core and ad hoc volunteers of all ages who use working together as a way to meet new people and grow friendships. The Green Team will work closely with WOTHABs, the MOWs group have been merged into the Green Team.

The Green Team will be working to create a list of open spaces and a maintenance plan and owner for each area. It will also be planning the schedule of working parties, recruiting volunteers, publicising the work that goes on and thanking those involved.

One of the areas for new work for the Green Team is the site of the Polish Church on Manor Road, if you are interested in this project and want to find out more or get involved please come along to the working party there below. There will be opportunity to help and to chat!

### **Upcoming dates for working parties;**

Polish Church Site working party – 27th October 2pm

Maze working party – 2nd November 10am

Clean and trim the Manor Road Playground – 23rd November 11am

Sweep and tidy Muddy Lane – 1st December 11am

We'd love you to get involved! Contact Alexa on 07557 852600 or [alexa@ontherunhealthandfitness.co.uk](mailto:alexa@ontherunhealthandfitness.co.uk)

Alexa Duckworth-Briggs



legislation, applicants are "fit and proper" to be taxi drivers. Points on the licence, complaints from the public, court appearances and notification from other local authorities can all count in the making of the assessment of fit and proper. We hear details of people's lives and circumstances, and the background to incidents and, like a jury, we have to sift the evidence and make a judgement that can ensure that the public will be safe to use a taxi driven by the applicant. In the making these judgement, we often reveal our own basic views and opinions, and realise that whatever our political beliefs, we share a common humanity.

Peter Dragonetti

### **HARTSLOCK SHEEP: HELP NEEDED**

*Would you be keen to have a weekly walk on a beautiful nature reserve to help us check our sheep?*

For those of you who are not familiar with it, Hartslock Nature Reserve is a beautiful south facing slope of chalk grassland, located approximately a mile west of Whitchurch along the Thames Path towards Goring. Rich in wildflowers and butterflies, Hartslock is managed by The Berks, Bucks, and Oxon Wildlife Trust and known for its rare orchids and stunning views over the River Thames. The reserve is currently in a fabulous purple phase, covered in a blanket of marjoram, thyme, knapweed, scabious, bell flowers, and harebells. Definitely worth a visit. [www.bbwt.org.uk/reserves/Hartslock](http://www.bbwt.org.uk/reserves/Hartslock)

Mainly carried out by teams of volunteers and our lovely flock of sheep, we do a lot of work at Hartslock to keep the habitats in tip top condition. Tasks including clearing areas of encroaching scrub and brambles, maintaining pathways, gates and fences, and managing the vegetation. The sheep are a very important part of our team, grazing the grassland and encroaching scrub. Chalk grassland characteristically has shallow soils, lime rich, nutrient poor, with short vegetation. The flora and fauna at Hartslock thrive due to this and the carefully timed grazing and management.

We currently have a very friendly flock of Hebridean sheep at Hartslock, but we also use Shetland and Beulah sheep. These are hardy traditional breeds, all used to being out in all conditions, and

## LIFE AS A DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

I have found it really interesting being a District Councillor, meeting lots of new people, and hearing different perspectives.

Last night, October 10, I was at the long awaited full Council meeting, where there was a proposal to withdraw the existing local plan and do a new one, based on the electoral promises made before the May elections, which had resulted in a change of control. As at the full Council meeting in July, the room was packed with people who had turned out to see the District Council in action, and I now make a point of talking to as many of the watchers on the side as I can. It's pretty easy to see what position someone supports, so while giving a cheery welcome to the tweed clad or banner waving supporters of the new council, crusties from both ends of the spectrum, I aim for the suits. Almost unfailingly, these are property consultants, from all the big names, and they are happy to reveal which companies they represent and the sites that they are itching to develop; Carter Jonas, West Waddy, Barton Willmore and many others crowd the room. They tell me about their plans, such as the Culham new town which, one of them tells me, has the great advantage over rival sites by having a railway station. I forbear to tell the sharp suited young man that the one train an hour Culham station could hardly handle a fraction of the new population of 6,000 he envisages for his new town. So far, I have not met any ordinary people who have turned out at these meetings and who want the houses that the developers are proposing. Although I live in hope of meeting someone who is desperate to buy a new build executive house with four beds and two bathrooms, I never do; perhaps they are actually all quite happy tucked up in their current homes in London.

Away from the heat and passion of the full council, where horns lock along party lines, we councillors also have to adjudicate on taxi licensing and here, where just three councillors form a panel, things are very harmonious. The responsibility of the panel is to adjudicate as to whether, in the language of the rather arcane

## The Whitchurch Society

are holding their annual

### **Art & Craft Exhibition 2019**

at Whitchurch Village Hall, Manor Road  
on the weekend of 16th – 17th November, 10am-5pm

Refreshments served all day

Prize giving at 4.30pm on Sunday

#### *Sending-in of exhibits:*

Thursday 14th Nov 6.30 – 7.30pm &

Friday 15th Nov 10am – Noon

at Whitchurch Village Hall

(Please note: entries for The Brazil Award

must be submitted by 8th Nov)

Joyce Voysey Prize Theme is 'MASKS'

We look forward to receiving entries for the exhibition from ALL age groups, and from previous contributors, but we also hope that there will be lots of new entrants too, especially children who may not have entered before. Young people might be particularly interested in submitting work in the video category. We welcome all ranges of work – it is an enjoyable, friendly event, not an elitist showcase!

All residents (both past and present) of Whitchurch-on-Thames and Goring Heath parishes are eligible to enter their work. Please join in!

If you have any queries or would like to help with running of the exhibition, please don't hesitate to get in touch. Please find full rules & schedule on [wotarts.co.uk](http://wotarts.co.uk) or contact Sally Woolhouse 984 4365 or email [sally@wotarts.co.uk](mailto:sally@wotarts.co.uk)

## PANGBOURNE TRAIN SERVICE FROM DECEMBER 2019

There are big changes to the train services around Reading from 15th December 2019. Crossrail – the Elizabeth Line – will take over the all-stations stopping service between Paddington (mainline platforms) and Reading, and Great Western Railway will be running more trains to Cheltenham, Bristol and the south west. Some trains will run non-stop through Reading, so check before you board at Paddington.

As far as Pangbourne is concerned, we keep the same type of electric trains as we have now (Class 387 Electrostars) which have air conditioning, toilets, wi-fi, power sockets and a top speed of 110 mph. The peak hours will see more fast trains with more seats to and from Paddington calling at Tilehurst, Reading, Twyford and Maidenhead only. These will depart Pangbourne at 0601, 0636, 0704, 0734, 0806 and 0834 with a journey time of about 48 minutes.

In the evening fast trains back to Pangbourne with the same calling pattern will depart Paddington at 1650, 1719, 1751, 1820, 1849, 1920 and 1935.

Off peak trains between Pangbourne and Paddington will run half-hourly through the day as now but call only at Tilehurst, Reading, Twyford, Maidenhead, Slough, West Drayton, Hayes & Harlington and Ealing Broadway. For other stations a change to Crossrail will be necessary.

Looking west, trains from Pangbourne will continue to terminate at Didcot Parkway with a couple of diesel trains in the peak hours running to and from Oxford. There is no date yet for the electric wires, and thus our local electric trains, to be extended to Oxford.

Geoff Weir

## THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S & ST JOHN'S, WHITCHURCH (an independent charity)

The Friends first 'big project' has now been completed. The restoration of the St Mary's Church clock was finished at the beginning of October at a cost of £11,500. The work was carried out by Peter Meechan and team from Chipping Norton over a 6 week period, photo below shows 'the master clock in the bell tower'. One surprise was that the minute hand on the south facing clock face was missing and a new one had to be constructed (see front cover). Virtually no one had noticed this (including me) over a period of at least 10 years!

Following a well-attended Friends AGM on the 5th October, there was an event at St Mary's Church to celebrate the clock being back in action after nearly 20 years. We were well entertained by the Thames Vale Singers followed by a piano medley from Tim Valentine. Drinks and snacks also contributed to an enjoyable afternoon.

The work involving the improvement of St John's Churchyard is nearing completion following a second workday for volunteers in October. This enabled the professional cleaning and painting of the railings along the main road to continue. This particular project should be finished by November.

The Friends trustees will be considering further projects, together with the Parochial Church Council over the next few months.

The Friends 'Music Evening 2019' with music from the Maidenhead Concert Band is booked for the 19th October – just after these notes are written.



As always, the Friends will be running the ArtCafe at the Old Stables on the first Saturday every other month (2nd November, 4th January, 7th March). Thanks again to our 'willing' volunteers !



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**Alexa Duckworth-Briggs**  
[www.ontherunhealthandfitness.co.uk](http://www.ontherunhealthandfitness.co.uk)  
07557 852600

## WHITCHURCH SOCIETY

This year, the Whitchurch Society chairman Peter Smith and honorary secretary Ian Bruce announced their retirement after many years of service. Their efforts are much appreciated by the community. A new committee has been formed, as follows:

- Chairman – Laura Lucas
- Secretary – Will Barclay
- Treasurer – Richard Williams (to April 2020)
- John Bradon
- Sarah Hanfrey

The Society will continue supporting the seasonal village walks, the Garden Walk in June and next month's Art & Craft Exhibition.

Any queries should be directed to [laura.c.lucas@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:laura.c.lucas@hotmail.co.uk). Offers to help with any of the society's events would be appreciated.

There will be a NYD walk – please watch out for details on the Village web-site and posters.

*Laura Lucas & Richard Williams*



## WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH CLERK

The Parish Council seeks to employ a home-based, part-time parish clerk. The successful applicant will have to organise monthly parish council meetings, support parish councilors and maintain accounts including those of the village hall and new pavilion teams. A full list of responsibilities is available on request.

**Location:** Work from home except for monthly Council meetings, the second Thursday of each month and periodic visits to the village as required including Village Hall and new Pavilion team meetings.

**Hours:** 8 hours per week, average of 35 hrs per month.

**Salary** is expected to be in the region of £300 to £500 per month, depending on previous experience, plus expenses.

#### Qualities

- Previous Clerk experience preferred
- Strong administrative skills
- Experience with financial packages – Proficient with MS Word and Excel.
- Knowledge of and passion for parish council related local issues.
- Strong interpersonal skills to work with the team of councillors, stakeholders in the village, as well as representatives from the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and South Oxfordshire District Council.

**How to apply** Please email your CV and a covering letter to the Chair, Cllr. Jim Donahue, [cllrdonahue.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com](mailto:cllrdonahue.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com).

We request applications by 31st October.



## WOT-HABS REPORT

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) held their Autumn Recorders' Day Conference on 28th September. The topics of the day included Nature Recovery and Biodiversity Action Plans. Questions arising were, for example; Which species and specific environments should we seek to preserve or restore? What loss of species and/or habitat is acceptable? How can environmental targets best be balanced against social targets, such as a community's needs for housing, sporting activities etc. Where should our priorities lie?

The datasets compiled by TVERC help provide some of the workable solutions. The information for these comes from individuals as well as environmental and other groups.

Way back in 1996 soon after the WoT-HABS group came together, we carried out a hedgerow survey for this locality. It involved many enjoyable walks, as well as writing up afterwards, but it took us a good while to accomplish it all. Interestingly, the developing use of LiDAR (a light imaging technique) used from flying aircraft or drones overhead, is now helping to provide similar data of field boundaries, and to some extent field margins. The imaging is valuable for revealing absence or loss, as well as whether the boundary is a hedge, is continuous or gappy, or is mainly fence or wire.

A healthy mixed hedgerow is just one example of a feature, that was once more numerous in our landscape and which is of huge benefit to many forms of wildlife, both flora and fauna. There is a fascinating book, 'Landmarks' by Robert MacFarlane, who regrets the loss of many words formerly in use to describe landscape. Here's just one for you; 'Smeuse'. This is a Sussex dialect word for 'a gap in the base of a hedge made by the regular passage of a small animal. As he says, 'Now I know the word 'smeuse', I will notice these creaturely movements more often'.

If you would like to find out more about the work of TVERC or contribute sightings of wildlife go to <http://www.tverc.org/cms/>

Gill Goodwin



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