

AUTUMN 2021

# WHITCHURCH BULLETIN



## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT, OCTOBER 2021**

I hope you have been able to get out more during this post-lock down period to make the most of the glorious late summer weather we have been having. The Parish Council is now meeting face-to-face again at the Village Hall on the second Thursday of each month and members of the public are most welcome to attend.

### **Lower Narrows Pedestrian Safety Traffic Trial and Installation of Bollards – Consultation**

- Oxfordshire County Council Highways (OCC) held a traffic trial at the lower narrows by the Ferryboat Inn on October 7th and 8th, which Cllr Diana Smith and TAPWG member Linda Gray observed. The goal was to evaluate different ways to address pedestrian safety by trying to prevent cars from mounting the pavement where there is no raised kerb. This normally only happens when two cars both enter the narrows at the same time with one vehicle using the pavement as a passing place, jeopardising the safety of pedestrians. OCC looked at two approaches:
  1. Seeing if there was sufficient space for bollards or other safety impediments to protect pedestrians on the pavement.
  2. Giving priority to traffic in one direction. They initially trialled priority for traffic from south to north moving away from the bridge as those coming from the bridge have a clearer view of the narrows and were less likely to proceed when other cars were in the narrows.
- The results of the trial with the bollards was successful. OCC 'lined out' the narrow section with cones and, after adjusting them in consultation with the Ferryboat landlord so to ensure delivery access, they agreed that would be possible to introduce bollards at the agreed locations, to provide improved safety for pedestrians. Based on this feedback, they have asked the Parish Council to confirm if we would like OCC to proceed with the installation of bollards at the narrows to protect pedestrians on the pavement.

- The results of the trial for giving priority to traffic in one direction were less clear. OCC's feedback was that it became apparent that the existing setup with Give Way signs on either end of the narrows, whilst slightly unconventional, does work well and to introduce a 'priority system' introduces an occasional annoyance for northbound drivers having to wait for southbound vehicles to clear before being able to proceed. They therefore recommended that the existing set-up is retained in its current form.
- The key result is that OCC are ready to go ahead with implementing bollards on this stretch of the road that will have a clear impact on improving pedestrian safety in the village. The priority traffic recommendation could be re-evaluated in the future with more extensive trials but would not have the same level of benefit to safety.
- They are offering us the option of "bendable" or "flexible" bollards that have the advantage of being able to withstand a certain amount of traffic damage and would not need to be replaced as frequently from damage. They are proposing to use traditional 'Manchester' style flexible bollards as shown in the photo below to be consistent with the Conservation Area and would be installed with Red/White banding between the top two gold bands for reflectivity. OCC marked the proposed locations of the bollards with white dots which can be seen in the street – there are nine on the 'wall side' and six on the 'pub side' plus one to replace the existing bollard.



**Informal consultation:** The need to improve pedestrian safety at the lower narrows pavement has been overwhelmingly supported by residents in previous surveys including the 2019 Village Plan survey. If you have any comments or concerns about the proposal to install these bollards in the lower narrows please contact me by



A beautiful 18th Century country style pub and restaurant nestled in the small riverside village of Whitchurch-on-Thames, just a few yards from over the Whitchurch toll bridge, a short walk from the car parks in Pangbourne.

- 
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 Telephone 0118 984 2161 email [info@theferryboatwhitchurch.com](mailto:info@theferryboatwhitchurch.com)  
[www.theferryboatwhitchurch.com](http://www.theferryboatwhitchurch.com)

23rd October	10am Village Green working party
6th November	10am Maze (if needed)
27th November	10am Village Green working party
11th December	10am Village Green working party (if needed)
22nd January 2022	10am Village Green working party (if needed)

In addition there are a number of tasks to be scheduled that depend on leaf fall.

*Charles Cotgreave*

### **NEXT EDITION**

This will be the Winter 2022 edition and the deadline for content will be Sunday 16th January. It is anticipated that Bulletins will be distributed close to weekend 29th-30th January.

*Richard Williams*, Editor  
[rlwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com](mailto:rlwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com)

8th November ahead of the next Parish Council meeting where we expect to discuss this topic. [CllrDonahue.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com](mailto:CllrDonahue.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com)

**High Street verge protection:** The council voted to protect the grassy verge on the east side of the High Street between Duchess Close and Racquets by implementing several smaller white bollards/posts. David Baty of TAPWG presented this to the council explaining that the verge had been previously damaged from parking and general traffic and that OCC advised that the posts would be of sufficient height and location to demark and protect the verge.

**Hardwick Road Verges Project:** I met with Sally Woolhouse and John Bradon along with an OCC representative on Hardwick Road to discuss the longstanding initiative to restore and protect the verges along Hardwick Road from the village entrance to Hardwick Estate. The verges are highly biodiverse and several sections have been increasingly eroded from traffic using makeshift passing places. The project would also try to ensure the passing places were fit for purpose including addressing any drainage issues, whilst reinstating the surrounding verge. OCC agreed to support the initiative in general and offered to provide technical and costing support. This would involve a third type of bollard/post at the passing places, but the project is still in the feasibility phase. WOTHabs has been working on a grant application for this project from the Network Rail funded "Mend the Gap" organisation who have indicated that this type of grant application is likely to be supported.

**20mph in the Village:** OCC Highways have confirmed that a program will be progressing to roll out 20mph speed limit in many built up areas in Oxfordshire and that Whitchurch-on-Thames is on the initial list of villages expressing interest in this. This initiative will drive the policy that "20mph is the new 30mph." The initial rollout would be to change the signs to 20 mph without adding any extra traffic calming measures to reduce speed where it may be needed to reach 20mph. This is still going through the OCC approval process and they have not been able to confirm the timings, but it looks promising, and we expect to hear more in the coming months. OCC

are likely to perform a speed survey for this in the village in early November.

**Civil Parking Enforcement:** You may have seen that the Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) authority is on track to come into effect in South Oxfordshire in November being transferred from Thames Valley Police to OCC. It remains to be seen if this will have any impact on parking enforcement in our village given current street layouts and restrictions, but I know that Cllr Smith and TAPWG are working with OCC to see how this may enable us to get residents parking in certain areas in the village.

**Heritage apple trees to be planted at the Polish Church Memorial site:** The Parish Council voted to support the idea of the Green Team and resident Alistair Dunstan of planting heritage apple trees in the Polish Church Memorial garden. Cllr Higley has published a related article in the Summer 2021 Bulletin that provides more details.

**Thames Path signs:** I met with Thames Path Manager Steven Tabbitt in August to address a few issues in the village:

- He agreed to have the bent Thames Path sign at the toll booth fixed.
- He put some stickers with Thames Path arrows on the High Street to address the issues some residents mentioned about people going down Manor Road by mistake. I have more of these stickers if anyone thinks they are needed elsewhere.
- The need for caution signs by the steep dip at the Hartley Steps at the end of Hartslock Bridleway to ask cyclists to be careful of pedestrians to avoid conflict at that point. This is especially important with increased cyclists coming through for the first time on King Alfred's Way. The wording for this sign was agreed by the Council in September and Thames Path volunteers will be installing these in the near future.

buddleia and weeded around the chapel platform, as well as assisting at the installation of the commemorative cross. The Green Team have continued to prepare for the planting of a small number of heritage fruit trees in the south east corner as part of the proposed community orchard.

- *Entrance of driveway to Walliscote House* In mid September a working party led by Leslie Maynerd weeded and tidied the flower beds, and generally improved the site, removing unwanted growth. We completed the refurbishment of the bench which now commemorates both the donor Stan Remington and his wife 'Pockets'. A small ceremony was held in early October to mark this.
- *North verges of Manor Road* In mid October, a working party led by Martin Bengzen and Frances Dixon cleared several areas of the verges in preparation for mowing and for planting new ferns, etc., enhancing the appearance of this area.

We welcome all who would like to help with Green Team work. Our working parties last from an hour up to two or three, but you don't have to stay for the duration. In (say) half an hour or an hour you can still make a worthwhile contribution. If you would like to know more or have a suggestion for work we might undertake, please contact me (details on the website).

Our goals for the remainder of the year include:

- Find guardians for every green space in the village
- Engage and involve more people to help look after our green spaces
- Involve the school and pre-school more in Green Team work
- Complete the Polish Garden Project

The working party schedule for the next three months follows – you can always find the up-to-date version in the village website What's On section

apple chopper and the press from a 'sister' group in Reading, and the crushed apple leftovers went straight to the compost heaps on the allotments. It is very pleasing that this simple and sustainable event can be held without any electricity or running water – thank you PAWS!

*Sally Woolhouse*

## THE GREEN TEAM

Since the last Bulletin, twelve working parties have been held and people throughout the village have, often unasked, contributed help with various tasks. Although the rate of plant growth slackened off as compared what we saw at the height of summer, there was still plenty to do. Some key points are indicated below.

- *List of Green Spaces* We are lucky to have many green spaces in the village; our primary goal is to care for these. The list can be found on our website page: <https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/greenteam.html>. Photos of the team at work appear in the Pictures section of the website.
- *Village Green and the Maze.* We have regular working parties maintaining these areas. We have edged and mowed the central area each month and in late July we liaised with the village contractors when they carried out their annual cut of areas around the maze, including the mound on the right-hand side of the entrance. Work on the village green has been mostly at the southern end where the Green Team have removed a cricket net that had fallen into disuse, cleared a large number of invasive plants and unwanted saplings, planted some cotoneaster shrubs at the entrance to the car park, and trimmed the beech hedge alongside the road and the holly hedge around the car park.
- *Polish Church Garden Project Details and latest updates can be found here:* <https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/polishgarden.html>. In August we cleared ragwort and some thistles from the garden and in early September cut back the

**Whitchurch Sign** – The new gate and Whitchurch sign are finally reinstalled at the north village entrance on Whitchurch Hill. Thanks to our Clerk Jane for coordinating seemingly endlessly with OCC, Kingdom Signs, and the insurance company!

**Active Travel:** I met with the Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability (PAWS) Active Travel group. They are looking at a number of pedestrian safety and cycling related initiatives that are primarily focussed on Pangbourne but also on access between Purley and Whitchurch. What they are doing fits well with our Pedestrian Safety and TAPWG activities. Some of the key things we can work with them on include:

- Pedestrian Safety – including working with us to improve the narrow road and pavement access road to the bridge by the Boathouse surgery. Pangbourne Parish Council are also supportive of this activity.
- More bike racks – on the High Street and also at the Whitchurch Village Hall
- Investigating options to improve cycling in the High Street where cars are parked and at narrow road junctions

**New Councillor** – I am sure that our newest councillor, Nick Brazil, will be no stranger to many in the village as he has been involved in community activities in the village for many years. This was the final open vacancy and the Parish Council now has a full complement of 7 councillors.

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

**QUARTERLY PLANNING UPDATE FOR WOT PC –  
OCTOBER 15, 2021**

<b>Planning Reference</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Comments by WOT PC</b>	<b>SODC status</b>
P21/S0842/S0844HH/LB	Thames Bank South, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7DB	The Council voted to submit no further comment on July 2, 2021	Approved
P21/S2675/HH	Byways Hardwick Road Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HH	The Council voted to support this application on July 2, 2021.	Approved
P21/S2667/HH	Cliff Cottage, Hardwick Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HP	The Council voted to support this application on July 2, 2021.	Approved
P21/S1766/HH	Hérons Reach, North Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ	The Council voted to support this application if a flood risk assessment was carried out July 2, 2021.	Approved
P21/S3770/DD	Technology Centre, Bozedown Drive Whitchurch Hill RG8 7QR	The Council was not able to submit a comment.	Approved
P21/S2887/HH	Skye House Hardwick Road Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HW	The Council voted to support this application on September 11, 2021	Approved

*of which of the exhibitions they are entering) and the old-style paper entry form has been dropped. Exhibits which haven't been booked in using the online system will not be accepted at the sending-in sessions in the Hall, unless there are exceptional circumstances.*

This year's theme for the Joyce Voysey prize is 'New Beginnings'. Also, there is a special extra category this year for a Christmas Card competition. The Whitchurch Society committee are inviting entries of Christmas Card designs and the selected winning exhibit will be used for their 2022 fund-raising card, to be sold in aid of the Society projects in the village. All ages can enter this class.

All residents (both past and present) of Whitchurch-on-Thames and Goring Heath parishes are eligible to enter their work. Children who attend the Whitchurch Pre-School, the Whitchurch Primary School or the Oratory Preparatory School are also eligible to enter, regardless of their place of residence.

Please do join in – your paintings, photos, craft works and videos are all very welcome and remember, they can only be enjoyed by everyone in the village (and worldwide online!) if you make the effort and enter them into the exhibition.

For all the information about entering and viewing the exhibition, please follow this link <https://wa2021.wotarts.co.uk>

Sally Woolhouse [sally@wotarts.co.uk](mailto:sally@wotarts.co.uk)

**PAWS – APPLE PRESSING DAY AT THE  
WHITCHURCH MAZE**

This annual event took place on Sunday 26th September at the Maze, on a beautiful sunny late summer's afternoon. Despite the poor apple harvest, there was a good attendance from the local community – with or without any fruit. It was a very enjoyable social occasion and everyone was able to take away some delicious freshly pressed apple juice. The PAWS committee arranged to borrow the

## THE FRIENDS OF ST.MARY'S AND ST.JOHN'S: WINE TASTING EVENING

On October 9th, after a break of nearly two years, the Friends of St Mary's and St John's held a social event in the Goring Heath Parish Hall. The evening was very well-supported, with 45 people present. They enjoyed the evening learning about the history of wine making in Britain, why wine bottles have dents in the bottom, why 75cl is the normal amount in a bottle of wine, and that it doesn't matter what wine you drink with what as long as you are enjoying it! We had four different cheeses: Stilton, Wensleydale, Camembert and a soft Goat's Cheese with crackers, which accompanied three white and three red wines. There was a raffle, and beautiful flower arrangements on each table. The Friends' re-entry into the social calendar of the village was a well-organised event and a very enjoyable evening.

Special thanks must go to Sally Woolhouse for her meticulous planning. The evening raised just over £600 – after expenses, and the money will contribute towards the maintenance, preservation and improvement of the two church buildings in our Parish, and their churchyards. This is for the benefit of current and future generations of Whitchurch and Whitchurch Hill.

*Paul Witcher, Chairman of The Friends*

## WHITCHURCH ART & CRAFT EXHIBITION 2021

The Whitchurch Society are very pleased to again be holding this popular annual event, in the Whitchurch Village Hall, Manor Road, on the weekend of 20th – 21st November. This year, it will take place in the traditional 'live' format with the prize-giving on Sunday, but the exhibition will continue to be available to visit online for the following two weeks.

*The most important changes to note this year are that all entries must be registered online in advance by 17th November (regardless*

P16/S3445/ HH	Venn Cottage, Hardwick Road Whitchurch-on- Thames RG8 7HH	The Council voted to object to the application for the walling of the front due to the potential plan adversely affecting the Conservation Area. The Council voted to support the extension to the garage September 11, 2021	Application under consideration
P21/S3907/ FUL	Uplands Cottage, Hardwick Road, Whitchurch-on- Thames RG8 7HH	The Council voted to request if this new application raises the overall height on October 14, 2021.	Consultation period
P21/S4199/ HH	Wellesley House, High Street, Whitchurch-on- Thames RG8 7HF	The Council voted to support this application on October 14, 2021.	Consultation period

## DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

What do Nando's, Greggs, McDonalds and South Oxfordshire District Council have in common? The answer, in case you hadn't worked it out, is that all have been affected by the sudden shortage of HGV drivers. The SODC service that has been hit by this issue is the waste service, as all our collection vehicles are HGV. Biffa, our contractor for this service, has been unable to provide the drivers needed when the normal drivers are either on holiday or self-isolating because of Covid. In the past, Biffa would use one

of several agencies that provide temporary drivers, many of whom would be European. Following Brexit and then Covid and better wages back home in Europe, there are simply no drivers available.

Unlike Nando's or Greggs, our specialist vehicles cannot be replaced by smaller vehicles that don't need HGV licences to drive them, and we also have a regular pattern of services with thousands of expectant home owners looking for a collection on a particular day. This pattern of a regular service cannot be changed, as it's a certainty that a chaotic situation would develop before long that could take weeks to sort out.

So what has happened is that all Biffa staff, managers, supervisors etc that are available have been drafted in to support the service, and people have been working long days and weekends to keep things going. SODC is not the only council facing this problem, there are many others that are in a similar position.

At such times, difficult decisions have to be made; the garden waste service is not a statutory obligation, although users have to pay for it. Not everyone has a brown bin, but everyone has the grey and the green bin. And, if not collected, garden waste is rarely as unpleasant as other waste. If you have a brown bin, you usually have a garden and thus probably some space to put the garden waste to one side. This would not really be an option for the contents of the green, grey or food waste bins.

So, the tough decision was taken to go for the least worst option, and concentrate our resources on the most important forms of waste that everyone pays for through Council Tax.

This is the background, and I am pleased to say that many of you will have heard that the situation has eased, that the collections are resuming and payments are being re-arranged.

Was it a Summer of Discontent? Well, we didn't have hedgecuttings and lawn mowings piling up in the streets and I didn't see any rats, so not really a repeat of the winter of 1978-79. My thanks to everyone for being so tolerant and understanding of a situation that arose out

## **AFC WHITCHURCH (Children's Football)**

We are an enthusiastic parent-run football club for children. This season we are running 6 competitive teams with the recent creation of an U8 team (U8, U13, U14, U15 and two U18s) plus a weekly training programme for our youngest members aged 5-7. This latter group is growing massively so please get your sons and daughters involved. Our training and playing principles for all ages are inclusivity, competitiveness, and fun.

The football club has been running for many years and many children have passed through the ranks. We currently have over 80 children representing AFC Whitchurch either competitively or just for fun!

Our coaches and parents are active supporters and advocates of the club and we are always looking for energetic new talent, team-members and coaching support.

We have now restarted training and competitive matches across all our year groups playing home matches locally and away matches in Reading and the East Berkshire area.

As we move into the darker evenings most of our training moves to local floodlit facilities. The village green remains a vital resource for us as we have no other local training facility and the younger age groups still train there on a Saturday morning. The club has completed work on the village green pitch to reseed and re-orientate the goals.

We are always looking for new players and would welcome both boys and girls. We would also love to fill some of the age gaps so if any parents would be willing to start a new year group, they would be most welcome. Any prospective players or parents should contact us at [afcwhitchurch@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:afcwhitchurch@yahoo.co.uk)

We welcome support from the village; please contact us if you'd like to watch some of the matches, both U18 teams play in the top league for their age group.

*Alex Hilton*, Club Chairman  
AFC Whitchurch

We are proud to say that during the summer holidays we replaced the schools Astro turf. It's been amazing to see the children enjoy using it.

We are delighted to be funding a new Phonics scheme within the school, purchasing some Boomwackers and furnishing the ELSA/SEN room.

There are many ways you can support us starting today!

### **Amazon Smile**

Amazon Smile will donate 0.5% of your purchase to our school as we are a registered charity. With so much more shopping happening online, please support us by opening [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk) and selecting "Whitchurch Primary School Association" as your chosen charity. You get to buy the same items, at the same price and Amazon make a donation to our school. How fantastic!

### **Whitchurch 'In It to Win It Club'**

This is a great way to raise funds for the school and our children. For £12 per number you are entered into the draw for 12 months. Each month we draw 3 numbers, and the lucky winners win a cash prize. To join the fun please email [whitchurch100club@gmail.com](mailto:whitchurch100club@gmail.com)

Good Luck!!

### **Matched Giving**

Many companies offer matched funding as part of a charitable giving scheme. If you would like to support our school through this way or have any other ideas, please get in touch at [whitchurchpa20@gmail.com](mailto:whitchurchpa20@gmail.com)

*Victoria Willcock, Chair*

Whitchurch Primary School Parents' Association

Registered charity 1114159

of several factors outside of anyone's control. It does illustrate how much of our society is finely balanced, a smooth running machine that is actually quite fragile.

*District Councillor Peter Dragonetti*

## **THE VILLAGE WALKS**

In 1964 Eric Hartley and his family arrived in the village. In order to exercise their first yellow Labrador, Eric investigated and opened up the then mainly unused footpaths which are now used extensively as our local footpath network. The Hardwick Estate has also recently contributed by opening up a series of permissive paths to further enlarge our access. In 2007 the Whitchurch Society thought that an addition to the usual village activities might be acceptable.

Peter Smith (as its then Chairman) asked Eric Hartley if he would consider organising and leading a walk for the village on New Year's Day 2008. As many residents will remember it was very successful: over 100 walkers, including many children, and a number of dogs, turned out (Eric said that he felt like the Pied Piper of Hamelin as people emerged from every corner of the village). The success was such that he led a further series of walks at varying times of the year, some 27 in all, before he found himself increasingly unfit. The last walk he led in 2015, 'The Boundary Walk', was to define and follow, as near as possible, the ancient boundary of our two villages, Whitchurch and Whitchurch Hill.

Thereafter Roger Crawford, Richard Williams and I took over and we have organised and led a further 7 walks, all based on Eric's knowledge of our local footpath network and all described by him together with snippets of local historical information. The walks are generally based on the now detailed maps of our village footpath network. Eric originally wrote the Guide to the Walks about Whitchurch on Thames in 1980 and it has subsequently survived another five editions with some 2,000 copies produced. With the recent assistance of Robin Giddings the maps of the walks and the associated updated descriptions are now available on our village

web-site. However, the number of participating walkers has sadly declined since the early days and it may now be time for others to take over the organisation of the village walks. If you could spare the time to become involved in this worthwhile village activity, please contact the Whitchurch Society. You will find the email address of the chair, Laura Lucas, in the Society's page of 'Village Groups' in the Village website.

*Mike Scott*

## **VILLAGE HALL REFURBISHMENT AND ACTIVITIES**

The programme to refurbish the Village Hall is now largely complete and you can see how good it is looking by visiting the updated page on the website.

The refurbishments started with basic items like replacing the windows and repairing the roof then moved on to improving the kitchen, replacing floors and other items, repainting and purchasing more comfy seating. More improvements are planned including a new online system to make it easy to book the Village Hall.

Activities that were stopped during the pandemic have restarted including the Bridge Club, Yoga, Tap Dancing and the Camera Club.

Monthly Afternoon Teas are back now with a new selection of home-made cakes. Everyone is welcome to come to this relaxed and friendly drop-in event which will be held every second Thursday of the month from 14.00 till 17.00.

We have just received a grant from the lottery to buy some baking equipment so that Jean Marc Grosfort can bake the cakes in the Village Hall kitchen. Jean Marc welcomes any bakers who would like to help. It will be fun and you would certainly learn some new techniques. The equipment Jean Marc has ordered will be delivered by mid-October. The first baking day at the Village Hall kitchen will take place on 11th November. Anyone interested to join Jean Marc should contact him ([jm.grosfort@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jm.grosfort@yahoo.co.uk) or 07881312233) as some of the baking will take place the day before.

(completely free): [https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/whitchurchonthamespresch/?utm\\_campaign=raise-more&utm\\_content=w4](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/whitchurchonthamespresch/?utm_campaign=raise-more&utm_content=w4)

Please also look out for and support our fundraising activities including the sponsored Whitchurch Walk this Autumn (the children walked almost 400km last year, we will be trying to beat that this year!).

You can help us reach our £10k fundraising target, by donating online, as we try to make up the funding shortfall caused by Covid19. We are raising money for roof repairs and to replace the sandpit and outdoor decking and Astroturf areas. You can donate or sponsor us here, by clicking the white and pink "donate here" button: <https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/charity/whitchurchpreschool>

Thank you for all of your support.

*Kathleen Barrow*, Manager, Whitchurch Pre-School

## **WHITCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION**

After a lovely summer holiday spent enjoying some normality, the children have come back to start the new school year excited and happy. The new arrivals in reception came with a mixture of excitement and nerves but all have settled in wonderfully with the help and support of the teaching team within the school.

Covid measures are still in place in the school setting, meaning we as the Parents' Association are having to find new ways to fundraise this coming year.

The much loved Christmas Market will sadly not go ahead again and in its place will be a Christmas raffle which we are hopeful with the support of the school, children and the local community will be a huge success.

Primary school, are also now incorporated into all sessions. This means children get a chance to participate in the whole range, no matter what days they attend.

The Pre-School team have run a fantastically creative and engaging range of activities for the children so far this term. Exploring nature and finding minibeasts in the preschool garden, making nature sculptures, singing, painting, playdough and junk modelling, playground games such as Simon Says, story time in the garden, listening and learning games with Happy Bear, even brushing dinosaur teeth which is very popular!

The Pre-School also runs early years science sessions which are very captivating and sometimes just a little bit messy – this term the children have been finding out what substances dissolve in water and mixing them up; seeing which items float - learning about bubbles and colourful celery science; learning how plants suck up water by capillary action; even chromatography with skittles sweeties!

All of this makes our Pre-School a really special place for our little people to grow and learn.

### **3 FREE and EASY ways you can support Whitchurch Pre-School**

- Become a Co-Op Member and select Whitchurch-on-Thames Pre-School as your local community cause. For every £1 spent 2p will be donated to our cause.
- Please use <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/> and enter Whitchurch On Thames Pre-School as your chosen charity, 0.5% of your order value will be given to Pre-School when you shop via smile.amazon.co.uk
- Sign up to [easyfundraising.org.uk](http://easyfundraising.org.uk) to support “Whitchurch Pre-School-Whitchurch-on-Thames”. When you use the easyfundraising website or app to shop with retailers like John Lewis, M&S, H&M, the retailer sends us a donation of up to 5%. You can register here

Now the hall is looking fresh and welcoming, other community events are starting up:

- **Exercise Classes.** You can learn a set of exercises designed to help strengthen your body and aid mobility. These free sessions will be run by Katherine Higley, who had recently completed training in Lomi Lomi massage and was taught these exercises as part of her training. The sessions will focus on different parts of the body (feet, legs, knees, hips, shoulders, etc.). If enough people find the exercises helpful and wish to continue to practise them, further regular sessions will be arranged. Why not join Katherine at the Village Hall and decide for yourself? The first session is on 26th November at 10.30 am. Wear comfortable clothing and bring a water bottle. Please contact Katherine at [cllrhigley.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com](mailto:cllrhigley.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com) if you have any questions.
- **Friday Kitchen.** Now that a new kitchen has been installed, we are looking for volunteers to join Jean Marc and explain how to cook a favourite dish of theirs – ideally something simple but tasty. We will arrange a session on the last Friday of each month. An instructional video will be made and shared via the website so everyone can follow the recipe. Jean Marc Grosfort will lead the first session and will explain in that video how other village residents can join him in future sessions. Let's have fun and cook tasty food together.
- **Bloom Baby Mother and Baby Group.** Currently, there are lots of mums in the village with young babies and people have said it would be nice to have a Mother and Baby Group. Happily, Sara Jackson a local provider of baby sensory classes is going to start running her award-winning classes, in the Village Hall starting on 10th January next year. The classes provide babies with music and plenty of activities and, of course, give mothers the chance to meet other mothers. They will run one morning each week during school term times. More information and booking details can be found on [www.bloombabyclasses.com/reading-north](http://www.bloombabyclasses.com/reading-north) or [@bloomreadingnorth](#) on Facebook and Instagram.

Another suggestion for which we'd like to assess the level of interest is:

- **Painting Together.** Once a month, from January 2022, we are planning to open, free of charge, the Village Hall to local artists to meet and paint together for a full afternoon. We hope this will be a lovely way to meet other artists and to exchange ideas and methods in a sociable atmosphere. Dates will be mentioned on the village website. We'd be interested to hear from you if you might be interested in attending or, if you have other ideas. Please contact Jean Marc Grosfort or any of the other members of the Village Hall Management Committee.

Finally, we are arranging a grand re-opening of the Village Hall so you can come and see for yourself how the hall looks now. It's on Saturday 6th November anytime between 3:00pm and 6:30pm. The Village Hall will be set up for an evening dinner celebration and we hope you'll raise a glass with us to celebrate the refurbishment.

John Bradon

### **PANGBOURNE TRAIN SERVICE FROM DECEMBER 2021**

GWR's Winter timetable comes into effect on 12th December 2021. The good news for us is that the weekday off-peak and Saturday trains at Pangbourne will return to a half-hourly frequency from that date, as it was before Covid. They are normally 8-coach trains and call at all stations from Didcot Parkway to Reading, also Twyford, Maidenhead, Slough, West Drayton, Hayes & Harlington, Ealing Broadway and London Paddington.

The Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) trains which currently run from Reading to Paddington mainline platforms will, sometime in the first half of 2022, start running through the new Paddington low-level platforms to Bond Street, Tottenham Court Road, Farringdon, Liverpool Street and on to Abbey Wood in south east London.

Looking west, a development plan has been agreed for Oxford station and the surrounding area. Electrification will be incorporated

into the project, along with the line from Didcot. Only then will our local Electrostar trains run to and from Oxford instead of Didcot Parkway. This is still several years away.

On the main line, the technical problems with the Hitachi Intercity Express Trains (cracks in the aluminium underframe) are still unresolved, so fewer long distance trains are running than originally planned. Some of our local Electrostar trains are being used to deputise: other train operators have lent GWR their Electrostars (the different coloured ones) to fill in.

*Geoff Weir*

### **WHITCHURCH PRE-SCHOOL**

It has been a busy and lovely start to the new school year at Whitchurch Pre-School; we have welcomed lots of new children to the setting and our joiners have been helped to settle in well by our kind and caring staff. Places are still available at Pre-School for this year but are filling up fast with some sessions almost fully booked – which is fantastic news for the continued viability and success of the setting but we recommend that you get in touch as soon as possible to register if you are thinking of signing your child up to join between now and July 2022.

The complete refurbishment of our indoor classroom this Spring is really paying dividends as we see both our settled Rising 5s group and our new joiners aged 2 and 3, making the most of the fantastic set up including a magical book den, home corner, huge activity mat, tray tables and more. Our fundraising target this year is to pay for replacements and improvements to the wonderful outdoor space; in particular the sandpit, decking and Astroturf areas.

We have made changes to our sessions over the past two terms so that our range of activities and learning now rotates across the days of the week over the course of each term – from baking to early years' science, outdoor learning, music and movement, art and craft. Rising 5's activities, which prepare children for starting