



BVRA

Barkham Newsletter

£1, free to Members

Issue 135 Spring 2021

from the Barkham Village Residents Association

<http://www.barkham.org.uk>

Twitter: @BarkhamVRA Facebook: <http://gid.uk/BVRAF>

Wishing you a Happy Easter



**Enter the Easter
ART Competition**
see page 12

Important - 2021 Subscriptions

Due to the current pandemic we will not be collecting your 2021 BVRA membership subscriptions at the door. We do however intend to publish the normal four editions of the Newsletter and get back to social events as soon as this is possible. Whilst we will not be collecting the subscription, we would appreciate your payment of the normal £2. If you have already set up a Direct Debit you do not need to do anything further.

If you would like to pay with Direct Debit please set this up using the link

<https://www.barkham.org.uk/bvra/bvra-membership>

If you would rather pay by cash simply put £2 into the envelop that you have received with the Newsletter and pop this through the letter box of your local distributor at the address on the envelope. Please make sure that you provide your details as stated on the envelope so that we can properly record your payment. Thank you for your ongoing support.

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Chairman's Chat

Welcome to 2021 and the Spring edition of the Newsletter although writing this on a bitterly cold day in February doesn't really feel like Spring is on its way. That said, cold weather is not the main issue at the moment, and I hope that you are coping with the current lockdown and restrictions in the best way possible. As a retired person I have been doing volunteer driving for the last three years. This involves taking mostly elderly Wokingham residents to hospital and GP appointments and has recently evolved into also taking people for their Covid vaccinations. It's great to help people who have often not left the house for months take

their first small steps to getting back to normal. They are all hugely appreciative of the efforts of the NHS staff and enjoy the chat in the car even if this is behind masks. Some of these people have lived in Wokingham for over 60 years and provide a great window into the "Wokingham of old" and what they think of the recent developments within the area (not always positive). The chats in the car often touch on neighbours and it's great to hear that so many of the less mobile and most vulnerable in our community are receiving help and support from their neighbours. Visiting a number of the vaccination locations in the area has made me realise first-hand what a well organised and efficient program we have in place in Wokingham. Everyone who has been involved in setting this up and making it work should feel proud of what has and is being achieved.

As I hope you have seen on the front cover, we will not be collecting 2021 annual subscriptions by knocking on residents' doors. Instead, we would like people to either pay by Direct Debit or by

putting £2 (we have not increased the amount) into the envelope delivered with this Newsletter. Subscriptions are used to pay for the printing costs of the newsletter, maintenance of the BVRA website and part funding of some of the free activities that we put on in normal years like the Easter Egg Hunt and Carols in the Park.

Whilst both our personal and BVRA social calendars have gone into enforced hibernation we will hopefully be resurrecting both as soon as the situation allows. Finally, we are still looking for a Volunteer to join the BVRA Committee as the Membership Secretary. We have been over a year trying to fill the role. There must be someone in the community who would like to offer their services to the residents of Barkham and join a small friendly team of volunteers and carry out this necessary but not very time-consuming role. For more details, please email me, chairman@Barkham.org.uk

Alan Dixon

The BVRA needs a new Membership Secretary!

Duties are to:

- Maintain a membership register
(handling of subscription money will be dealt with separately).
- Print rounds for distributors - 4 times per annum
- Cover for distributors on holiday.

Over the whole year, it takes less than 30 hours to the entire job.

Please contact our Chairman, Alan Dixon (details on p 5), if you are interested in helping the BVRA by taking on this role or would like more details.

Advertising and Newsletter Contributions

Newsletter articles / contributions for the Summer edition should be in by 14 May 2021. It helps if these can be submitted in electronic form by email to newsletter@barkham.org.uk.

For trade adverts, please email treasurer@barkham.org.uk, or call 977 1831. We offer three landscape sizes, 64mm x 54mm at £22, 124mm x 105mm at £52 and 190x130mm at £100, for 4 quarterly insertions.

Distribution of the next issue will take place in early June.

BVRA 2020/21 GENERAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman: Alan Dixon
977 1831
chairman@barkham.org.uk
Secretary: Richard Roberts
07785 228684
secretary@barkham.org.uk
Treasurer: Alison Goudge
989 2287
treasurer@barkham.org.uk
Social: (contact) Gill Powell
978 3373
social@barkham.org.uk
Membership: vacancy
membership@barkham.org.uk
Newsletter: Suzanne Trigg
07411 681272
newsletter@barkham.org.uk
Web Site: Dave Clements
989 2198
webmaster@barkham.org.uk
Development Watch:
Stewart Richardson
979 1914
development@barkham.org.uk



Editorial

Welcome to 2021. I do hope it is going to be better than 2020.

In this newsletter we have updates from local planning, council, church and school plus candid articles from parent and teacher giving their view on how this lockdown is affecting families and their day to day activities. Do check out the Art competition details on page 12, there is a prize for each age range.

Most recently we experienced some very cold temperatures, and this brought forward some beautiful images of ice and snow across the borough. Thank you for sending in your photos some of which are printed within and many others will be posted on the website. Please keep your photos of Barkham in various states of weather coming in, we love to see them.

Regrettably, due to the continued restrictions the social committee have had to cancel the skittles which normally takes place in March and it is also possible the Easter Egg Hunt (Easter Sunday) may also be cancelled but please keep an eye on the website & Facebook pages as more up to date information will be found here.

I am delighted to announce the winner of the BVRA Winter Festive Hamper competition was Phiala Mehring of Barkham Road. I was pleased to present her with a hamper full of goodies sourced from Phil's Good Food and packaged by Something Something florist. She said, "This is fabulous, I really like giving hampers, so it is great to receive one".

A matching donation was also presented to The Food Bank in Wokingham. BVRA committee agreed it was important to give back to the community during these particularly tough times. We intend to make this an annual event so be sure to look out for details of the next competition in our Autumn newsletter.

Suzanne Trigg





Planning

I hope 2021 has got off to a good start for you, your families and your friends – if not, I wish you well as you get back on track. At the end of last year there were many local and national planning issues up in the air and whereas this is not intended to be a 'Review of the Year', here is an idea of where these are going and what 2021 may have in store on the planning front.

The breaking news as this article is being written is that Wokingham Borough Council has launched the consultation on the Barkham Solar Farm as part of the Climate Emergency declared in July 2019. The Council owns farmland in the southern part of Barkham estimated to be around 113 Ha (approx. 280 acres) and some 40 Hectares (approx. 100 acres) will be repurposed for the solar farm. Barkham Parish Council will be expanding on this in the next edition of the parish magazine – Village Info – which is distributed to all households in Barkham including Arborfield Green.

Details for the consultation can be found on www.wokingham.gov.uk under Climate Emergency and comments should be made by e-mailing CommercialProperty@wokingham.gov.uk. Regardless of whether you support the project or not or just have questions, please take the opportunity to

'have your say'. The closing date is Friday 26 Feb 2021 but, because of the timing and pandemic, comments received just after that date will be considered – but be quick. Please feel free to copy Barkham Parish Council at the e-mail address below as this will help us best represent your thoughts.

The draft Local Plan Update issued at the beginning of 2020 assumed that 772 new homes would be built across the Borough each year to 2036. Last time we discussed Central Government's plans to increase this to 1,635 pa. Wokingham, like many other councils, objected strongly and the number has been reduced to 789 pa. A tremendous success which demonstrates the power of mass representation. Well done to all those who lobbied, responded to consultations and wrote to Councillors, MPs and Ministers.

Although this removes a lot of pressure, it does not mean that we can relax as a rolling 5 Year Land Supply still has to be demonstrated. The term '5 Year Land Supply' is a bit of a misnomer. It implies that it is a measure of land available for housing which is the responsibility of WBC via the evolution of the Local Plan. In practice, it is a measure of the rate at which houses are being built which is, largely, controlled by developers and NOT the Council. Very, very different. If the housing market slows then developers will inevitably slow down the rate of build. When this happens, Planning Inspectors can insist that other sites are granted outline planning permission which, as we have just seen, does not necessarily mean it will increase the required supply of homes. It just means that more land is taken for development.

At a time when there is drive to build 300,000 dwellings across the country, market forces and high build targets do not necessarily go hand in hand. In recent years, Wokingham has done well although there were a few sticky patches towards the beginning of the current Core Plan period (2010 to 2026) when infrastructure had to be provided before house building gained pace. One way this risk can be reduced is if the Council takes a greater responsibility to build homes at a cost rather than letting developers develop sites to maximise returns.

This brings us neatly on to the final topic – The Local Plan Update. It now seems that the goal to build a garden town at Grazeley has been kicked firmly into touch by the Ministry of Defence on the grounds that the area falls within new emergency zoning arrangements around the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield. This means that the 3,750 homes which were going to be built in Grazeley by 2036, as laid out in the original draft Local Plan Update, will have to go elsewhere. We are expecting the next version of the Update towards the end of the year.

If you have any comments about anything written here then please e-mail to clerk@barkham-parish-council.org.uk.

Take care.

Graeme Dexter
Barkham Parish Council



Financial health of the council

Who would have thought in their wildest dream we would still be sitting here in the middle of February with lockdown with country having one of the biggest budget deficits since the 2nd world war? With hundreds of thousands of businesses closed and millions of people sat at home working or otherwise, all in all a very gloomy picture. I am hoping we are now on the home straight with the new vaccines being rolled out quicker than almost anywhere else in the world and by the time you read this all the groups vulnerable to worse effects of COVID-19 will have received the vaccine.

The council over the past 10 years has had to reduce its spending in real term by around £35m, the challenge was how to do this without reducing services. It became clear early on cutting the services although would reduce cost was a route to diminishing returns for both residents and the council and would eventually end with nobody being happy. So, we embarked on a number of programmes which would not just deliver existing services but would enhance these services. To enable this, we invested in things such as housing even setting up our own affordable housing companies which not only deliver homes but makes a profit which could be reinvested back into services.

We also invested in Wokingham town centre when nobody else would because we believed our towns are important to residents, I am happy to report the cost is currently being met by the rents and house sales, so if you like a free town centre.

There is no question COVID-19 has had an impact but not as much as you would have thought, and it continues to perform well as can be expected and we continue to sign contract with business wishing to operate in the town.

These investments along with profits from our companies, commercial and treasury investments mean the council has generated over a £1m to be poured back into the council's services meaning the equivalent of £13.4 for every council taxpayer which we expect to increase to over £50 next year and over £60 the year after and this after paying all the councils borrowing costs and not just for these areas, as well as the debt repayment cost.

The impacts on business meant it was important, that the government much needed business grants and business rate reliefs to pass on. It was essential we did this quickly and resulted in nearly £60m being made available.

I am glad to report the past financial control and investments made by the council it has allowed us not just to deliver the support needed such as PPE and food to the shielded among a host of other support packages but now allows the council to offer support and concessions to the poorest and most vulnerable in the borough going forward. In addition, we provided free school meals to children entitled to them during term time through not just the

Christmas holiday period by also during the half term break and until the end of 2021. Fortunately, we came into this pandemic with a strong financial standing created through robust and a sound business-like approach to the council finances over many years.

What about next year's budget?

In the new budget for 2021/22 The council plans to continue to invest in schools, roads in addition to fighting fly tipping, inappropriate development, improving its green credentials, as well maintaining its green spaces and countryside parks such as Dinton and California country park, as one thing has been apparent just how much use and how important it is to have well cared for byways, bridle ways and woodland. All of which have had far greater use lately and will all need investment to ensure residents can use them and enjoy them to the full

This has only been possible due to the successful management of the council's finances, even though we are predicting a fall of Councils general reserves they remain at the level we have enjoyed historically and are more than adequate for a council of our size as well as being higher than lot of councils had going into the pandemic. As I have said on many occasions a council that is financially broke is no use to anyone. Stay Safe

John Kaiser
Member for Barkham,
Wokingham Borough Council
[Tel:07714 192 352](tel:07714192352)
Email: john.kaiser@wokingham.gov.uk

Bearwood Lake

There has recently been concern expressed by residents and local councillors about the cutting down of some trees and general clearance just off Gravelpitt Lane (off Mole Road). Several of the large trees had Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) including The Coombes (this is not in The Coombes). It is in Arborfield parish but its proximity to Barkham may interest Barkham residents, especially in relation to Bearwood Lake. What has been left is an unsightly mess and it is not clear what the landowners have to do to rectify this.

WBC responded to the concerns of a local councillor and an edited version of that response is given below:

“The matter first came to WBC’s attention on 8th December 2020 when the Local Planning Authority received a copy of a 5 day notification from Reading Football Club, notifying us of their intention to remove trees around the dam by felling in order to comply with the Reservoirs Act 1975. A 5 day notification (Regulation 14(2) of the Tree Regulations) is submitted if a person is intending to carry out works that are an exception from the normal requirements. Exemptions include trees that are judged to be dead, dangerous or causing safety issues. To clarify, a 5 day notification is a notification of intention to carry out works and a person submitting a notice does not need to wait for a response from the Local Planning Authority before carrying out the works, however they must be certain that the works are necessary and fit the criteria of a 14(2).

Bearwood Lake is classed as a Category A reservoir, which is the highest category of reservoir and places various statutory responsibilities on

the owner in order to ensure that it is safe and does not pose a risk to surrounding infrastructure and people. All Category A reservoirs are monitored by a supervising engineer who reports every year on any potential safety issues that need addressing. The actions that come from this are monitored by the Environment Agency and are required to be actioned under the Reservoirs Act 1975. The classification of the reservoir is not decided by the Council, nor is it something that can be disputed.

In this case, the reservoir engineer highlighted the need for tree clearance works in the interests of safety under the Reservoirs Act, in order to enhance the capacity of the dam overflow and to allow light penetration to the ground. This is to provide conditions conducive to a uniform, healthy grass swath, which in turn provides both erosion resistant surface in the event of any minor overtopping of the dam, and an area clear for visibility for inspection and monitoring.

Ideally, and in normal circumstances, the Council would notify stakeholders including the parish council, of the intention for works to be carried out on TPO trees. However, motion 413, which requires WBC to notify the town and parish councils, does not apply in this case since the failure of a dam could potentially result in injury or worse, and therefore is a health and safety matter. Motion 413 excludes the need to notify where trees are removed for health and safety reasons. Furthermore, a 5 day notification implies that the works will occur imminently or that works are already in progress, which gives little time for us to notify key stakeholders. Having said this, it would have been prudent for us to cc you (a councillor) in the acknowledgment letter and I apologise that this did not happen.

It appears that despite the 5 day notification, works only began over a month after the notice was given. We are investigating why this is the case and will take appropriate action if deemed necessary. It is disappointing that Reading Football Club did not inform key stakeholders of their intention to carry out works, given the length of time between sending the notice and carrying out the works.

We have seen the Facebook posts regarding the sale of the tree and will notify Reading Football Club. However, the selling of the wood on Facebook is not something that the Council would get involved in.”

The WBC Enforcement Team are now reviewing whether only the required removal has taken place and will take “appropriate action” if more trees than required have been removed.

History of the lake and dam

The history of the dam is not known in great detail however it is known that the lake was constructed when Bearwood House (now College) was built in the 1850s by excavating the London Clay in the area to construct the dam across the small valley associated with a minor tributary of the Barkham Brook, in order to create a large ornamental lake. Water was taken from the reservoir to power a sawmill (disused) that is located below the dam.

The catchment area supplying the lake is very small at about 1.43 square kilometres. This comprises the school grounds, the golf course, a small amount of residential and a large wooded area. The volume of water is estimated at about 315,000 cubic metres and the lake area approximately 19 hectares. This was increased in

the last 20 years by raising the water level to increase the storage capacity to allow additional water extraction for golf course irrigation. The lake is currently used by the landowner for boating activities and is leased for angling to the Red Spinners Angling Society. There are two licensed abstractions from the lake.

The dam consists of compacted clay with a granular material surfaced track along the crest which is in a reasonable condition. The dam is heavily vegetated with mature trees. The water level in the lake is maintained by the overflow spillway located in the south west corner of the lake. This allows flow to discharge to a ditch that runs adjacent to the public highway from the B3030 Mole Road up to Gravelpit Hill. This is where the clearance has occurred.

The watercourse consists of a ditch on the site running a short distance south west before discharging into a ditch running adjacent to the public highway leading to the B3030 Mole Road. The ditch then runs parallel to Mole Road heading north towards Mole Lodge before being culverted below the entrance to Mole Lodge in a 300mm diameter culvert. The culvert crosses Mole Road to discharge into the ditch on the opposite (western) side at the local low point in Mole Road band then south west in a ditch crossing the field following the natural valley bottom to the Barkham Brook.

Stewart Richardson



A very different Christmas

I think it's fair to say we won't forget Christmas 2020 in a hurry. 'How was it? Not quite what we'd expected.'

Which, in many cases, is putting a brave face on things. We knew Covid meant Christmas 2020 was going to be different. But the sudden fear about new variants of the virus and the last-minute move to Tier 4 meant that, for many, it ended up being very different indeed. Lots of carefully planned family gatherings cancelled; so many more people left, once again, feeling very alone.

It certainly meant things were different at church. Thankfully the Government decreed that it would be OK to sing carols outdoors, so we'd already decided to hold our two biggest services outside (huge thanks to the Village Hall for allowing us to use their field for 'Carols by Moonlight' and our Family Carols service on Christmas Eve too). But I hadn't anticipated spending quite so much of 23 December on the telephone to the local authority, as they tried to work out whether, in our case, the Village Hall field could be classified as a place of worship (thankfully, in the end, they decided it could). We knew Midnight Carols on Christmas Eve wasn't exactly likely to draw in the crowds when we couldn't sing indoors. And having to run two consecutive services on Christmas Day, due to the reduced capacity, was always going to mean lots of Covid-cleaning to keep everyone safe.

But, wonderfully, people came! Lots of church family and visitors from the local area joined us for two very happy (and cold, although thankfully dry) outdoor services. The booking and checking-in systems worked well. The stewards and tech teams served us brilliantly. We even had moonlight too. And what a treat it was to be allowed actually to sing again! Midnight Carols was, as anticipated, quieter than normal, but still a wonderful opportunity to pause and reflect on the true meaning of Christmas as we began the big day. And how lovely to begin both Christmas Day services by singing carols in a sunny, frozen churchyard, before heading inside for the rest of the services.

And now, with face-coverings on and social-distancing measures in place, it's back to the new normal. Thankfully those who wish to are still able to gather in person on Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings. We'd love to see you, if you ever wanted to join us. Or, if you don't think you could come along in person, why not look out for live links to and recordings of our services online? More details, as ever, at www.abch.org.uk

If ever there was a year to consider, and rejoice in, the coming of One who said he said he came into a world of darkness and death to bring 'light and life', and that he 'laid his glory by' so people like us 'no more may die,' mightn't this be that year?

Could that possibly be true? We think so. You'll have to make up your own mind, though. But we'd love to help you think these things through.

David Horrocks



At 0835, every morning, four separate gates are opened to the children of Critical Workers and those who

are vulnerable. The four gates ensure that each family group can socially distance. The staff on the gates always have a cheery smile for our families, however, visors are worn. 'Lockdown 3' has proved to be tremendously challenging for all families within the UK. Throughout this time, the staff at The Coombes have been working hard continuing to care for children whether at school or from home.

'Remote Learning' is not a new idea and was used in America during a polio outbreak in 1937. Children living in remote parts of the outback in Australia have been using this system for years. However, the challenges this places on families cannot be underestimated. Since Lockdown 1, the staff at The Coombes have been working hard to develop a remote learning system which is simple and effective for our children and parents and still manages to meet our priorities of:



The Coombes delivers a curriculum which is broad and balanced, providing a wide knowledge base, used by our children to inform their learning. Teachers at

The Coombes produce 4 hours of recorded lessons each day. This means that parents and pupils are free to repeat lessons if they feel more time is needed. It also gives parents the flexibility to be able to schedule the day in line with their own work or that of other children in their family.

Effective communication is a life enhancing skill and the staff at The Coombes create a language rich environment encouraging the effective use of both the written and spoken word. To do this remotely is challenging. So to help our children to practice these skills and to feel connected to their peers and teachers, live registration sessions are held each day. To ensure that progress is being made, live feedback sessions take place where the children can speak directly to their teacher. The children have also become expert in using the 'chat' function in Microsoft Teams to ask questions, share ideas and provide help for others. You can see here a conversation between one of the teachers and a pupil who had identified an issue with their long division. We have all, also become experts in the use of the emoji.

The Coombes is a school with a Christian vision and values which underpin the personal development of our children. The staff know how difficult living and learning during lockdown can be. The weekly Design and Technology lesson inspired one of our pupils to do some home baking. Both the making and eating of, will have a really positive impact. We know how hard our parents are working to support their children and the school during these challenging times and we are so proud of all that we are achieving.

A Barkham 1

'Home schooling' - two words that currently fill parents, throughout the country, with dread and have them reaching for the nearest wine glass! Why is it so stressful? Teachers have done the hard bit in organising work, right? Indeed they have and the quality of work, has been amazing. So I guess the answer depends on many factors; the age of your child(ren), your environment, your circumstances and the weather (yes, the weather) and, crucially, their personalities. Everyone's story and perception is different but this is our story.....

Dad's view

During the first two lockdowns, people often asked me if my situation had changed and my answer was 'not really', I could still do my job normally, just from home and the kids were still doing their sport and schooling from home was manageable.

But since Christmas it does feel a lot different. The stress of the kids home schooling is much more pronounced, the weather is poor and the evenings are dark. I have become IT support for all the Zoom, Teams, Apps, Printing and Device questions. I often reflect that we are lucky to have the technology and space needed at home to make home schooling 'work' for us, but I do feel for families who are less able to access technology.

My wife is having to do most of the home schooling, certainly more than I, and this has added to the pressure. I feel the need to help, but I have Zoom calls to do throughout the day. I want to help

family's experience of Home schooling

but I have responsibilities to my company and so a job that needs doing too. There are frequent examples of where the boys need help, and my wife is out of the house, working lunchtimes at a local school.

The boys might have technology problems that are stopping them from interacting with their teachers and class mates, or stopping them submitting work on time for assessment. They will also have questions about their subjects, but those subjects are taught differently to how we were taught, so we can just make the situation worse and there have been many disagreements/arguments. Time pressure and competing priorities are a daily challenge. So, lockdown 3.0 feels different. The pressure of balancing everything feels more acute, everything seems more monotonous and the end is not in sight!

Mum's view

Lockdown 1 - my eldest's son's school was up and running quickly with online learning with a full timetable to complete daily, in your own time, but everything was in pdf format, reams of reading which for my son was a bit of a struggle. My role become 'reader', verbally giving him the info to digest and work from. There were arguments, born from frustration, when neither of us understood what he was being asked to do but some of it was actually quite enjoyable. It was nice to see what he was being taught and brush up on some history & french.

My youngest had a few bits to do for school but nothing of his was

being marked so as long as he was doing some Maths, English and reading a book then we did most things but we didn't stress if it wasn't all done. I wasn't going in to work so I was on hand all day and although the days were long, the sun was shining, the kids could play in the garden, splash in the 'pool' and for me, reading in the garden took away the stress of the day.

Lockdown 3 - suddenly both boys have full timetables to complete. My eldest is now on Zoom calls which means I have time to sit with my youngest and encourage him through his daily 4hrs of work. But the constant Zooms, whilst great for teacher/pupil interaction bring other problems - a massive time pressure to complete given tasks and hand in that work prior to the next one, therefore if he needs help, he needs help then and there!

I'm working this time, it's only part time, but it takes me out of the house and leaves both boys with a husband who, understandably, can't always stop when in the middle of a work call. My husband is trying, if needed, to help the youngest with Maths whilst I'm out meaning he's juggling his work schedule much more than before. The hardest thing is keeping the motivation going. Both boys are shattered at the end of each day but this time there is no sunshine to brighten the day, just rain, a muddy garden unfit for football and darkness not long after they are finished.

Schools are producing amazing work but a home environment is just not the place for such long hours of 'school', so pass me the

wine and we'll do it all again tomorrow!!!

Homeschooling Resources

www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/learn

www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/find-a-book/library-page

uk.ixl.com/math

www.khanacademy.org

www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours

freetimewiththekids.com/free-home-education-resources/

The 7 Best Online Homeschool Programs of 2021

Best Overall: K12.co

Best Budget: ABCmouse.com

Best for Structure: Time4Learning

Best for Community: Connections Academy

Best Free: Khan Academy

Best for College Prep: edX

Best for Math and Science: CK-12 Foundation

Vicky's Bodyworks present

Body Control

PILATES

'Pilates is the body conditioning class suitable for all abilities and ages'

By improving posture, reshape your body, relieve tension and create a general feeling of well-being. PILATES is medically recommended to help relieve back pain and stress.

Call Vicky on 0118 989 2571

Hi Everyone, here we are a year on and still Zooming!!!! Vicky's Virtual Pilates (VVP) Zoom Classes timetable is as follows:

Monday 10am Tuesday 10am

Tuesday 6pm Thursday 6pm

If you are interested in joining any of these classes please contact me on :

0118 989 2571 Home

0772 978 3240 Mobile

Email: Vickyburrows@hotmail.com

All the best, Vicky

Life at School

Many people have pre-conceived ideas that “Teachers have it easy”. So, I want to try to convey what an incredibly difficult journey we have had this year. Face to face teaching is all we’ve known, suddenly and unceremoniously we were plunged into the unknown territory of coping with online teaching. Very steep learning curves commenced, and new skills had to be quickly acquired.

Head teachers had the unenviable task, under intense pressure, of ensuring that procedures were maintained, whilst doing what’s right for the children and protecting their staff – a massive juggling act given the amount of changes constantly thrown at us, often at very short notice. Easter 2020 was no holiday for us – online meetings, rotas, risk assessments, strategies, more planning and organising.

Lockdown schooling became unrecognisable. Small social bubbles of children and named adults were formed of mixed year groups. It was strange to start with, social distancing was not expected, but we accepted that. No PPE was allowed and although we all felt we were at risk, we just got on and did our job. New routines were established: different drop off and pick up zones for separate bubbles, hand washing 8+ times a day, wiping and disinfecting tables at every turn, noting every cough, sneeze or splutter and ensuring timetables were in place to prevent contact with another bubble group. Tables were repositioned, outdoor playgrounds became zoned so that we always played in the same area. It was weird to be so isolated when normally teaching is a very sociable profession.

The biggest problem was that we had mixed ages (4 – 11 year olds) within single bubbles. Lesson planning, teaching and marking of such a large age range was incredibly challenging. However, the rewards were immense as you watched how the year 6’s helped and encouraged the little ones. They all flourished, and it was a pleasure teaching all the different year groups. The sun was kind and a lot of time was spent enjoying the outdoors.

Extensive and exhausting planning was required to enable the return for all children at the start of term in September. Further measures were put into place over the summer holidays to ensure everyone’s safety, but we were just glad that some kind of ‘normal’ had resumed. However, by mid December, there was a feeling of unease as new highly contagious strains were being announced, and daily infection/death rates were rising significantly. Previously we had done what we needed to do with the feeling that we were protected by the measures put in place, but now we felt extremely vulnerable, there was a feeling of being ‘lambs sent to slaughter’. We spent January inset day wondering how on earth we could cater for all children to come back into school and safeguard everyone involved. The government finally saw sense and we went into lockdown number three.

This time was slightly easier by having year group specific bubbles. We now also have the lateral flow testing twice a week providing some degree of reassurance, but the cold weather was an issue. Windows and doors had to be open (government directive

to ensure adequate ventilation) meaning the classrooms were freezing! On we continue and shiver to date.

It’s been a rollercoaster year. I have experienced all manner of emotions and worrying times such as having to self-isolate and wait with baited breath because a child within my bubble has tested positive. I didn’t want to pass anything to my loved ones at home. I have felt extremely vulnerable and at risk every day, despite the school following all government directives, as we are mixing with children whose parents/carers are key workers, and this in turn puts them and us at higher risk. I have absolute admiration for school leadership teams who have worked their socks off the last year. Personally, I have needed this routine to keep going and wouldn’t have had it any other way. There has been a real camaraderie between staff and I have seen staff pull together and work as never before! I am so proud of my colleagues.

We are not asking for recognition or thanks for doing our jobs, but what I do ask for is an understanding and appreciation of how we have been placed under immense pressure and adapted and thought of new ways to teach. Teachers will always do their absolute best to help children in their care, but this year our vocation has truly been put to the test.

A teacher



Social Matters

Newsletter time again, another 3rd Lockdown, and again very little to report - well, little good news anyway! The vaccine program is being rolled out quite quickly, so we must remain positive that things will get better.

As I write we are in the grip of a very cold spell, and it's almost too cold to go out for the daily exercise. Both Christmas and the New Year are quite distant memories now as we all await the time when life gets back to some sort

of normality. However, the days are getting longer, snowdrops and daffodils are in bloom and some other bulbs and shrubs are showing signs of bursting into life again in the garden, so Spring can't be too far away.

Social events are all on hold as you might well imagine, but the social committee has plans to brighten up the Easter time with an Easter / Spring colouring competition. All details are in the Newsletter, so please check them out and take part. There will be prizes too, so get working on your masterpieces!

Looking further ahead, the Village Hall has been provisionally booked for Saturday November 27th, in the hope that we will be able to hold an event of some form then. In the meantime it has been suggested that we could have a 'Zoom online Quiz Event', so if you are interested in doing this singly, as couples or as a family then please do let us know by emailing social@barkham.org.uk

If we have the interest, then we can certainly arrange the quiz.

So, for the time being, keep safe and well, keep warm and continue to follow the guidelines to help us come through this pandemic as soon as possible.

Shirley Warner
Social Committee Member



Sadly, as with so many other social clubs, another 3rd Lockdown has meant that the Ladies Club has not been able to meet up, although with the rollout of the vaccine program we remain hopeful that at some time this year we might be able to again. In the meantime we keep in touch with each other by emails, telephone calls etc. and within the group there are smaller groups who keep in regular contact. As soon as the lockdown relaxes somewhat we might be able to resume walking again in groups of 6 with distancing as we did last Autumn. But until then we must stay safe and well, abide by the guidelines, and, during the cold weather, keep warm. We will come through all this and enjoy meeting up again I'm sure.

Shirley Warner
Chairperson

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Spring ART Competition – to keep you busy during lockdown

The winner of each category will receive a £5 Amazon voucher and the winning entries will be published on the website. Closing date for entries is 10th April 2021.

Primary: under 7's. Please colour in the picture below.

For the other categories please prepare an original piece of artwork on the theme of Spring/Easter.

The entries will be judged according to age.

- Junior (7-11 years)
- Senior (12 - 18 years)
- Adult (over 18's)

All entries can be either: posted or dropped in by hand to the Social Committee, c/o The Cottage, Hayes Lane, Barkham, RG41 4TA, or photographed and sent by email to social@barkham.org.uk.

Please ensure that you put your name, age (where applicable) and contact telephone number on your entry.

Name:

Age:

Telephone:



The Quiz

After the drama of the recent US Elections, I thought we'd have a theme of US Presidents for this issue. Some were real life presidents, some fictional.

1. Ronald Reagan was an actor before moving into politics. In which 1951 film did he "co-star" with a chimpanzee?
2. Which President pardoned Richard Nixon?
3. Bill Pullman played President Thomas J. Whitmore in which 1996 film blockbuster?
4. Which president was nicknamed "Ike"?
5. Who played the president in the film Air Force One?
6. Four US presidents have won the Nobel Peace Prize but which was the only one to have won after he left office?
7. Which president did Robin Williams play in Night at the Museum?
8. "Assassins" is a musical about the people who have attempted (successfully or otherwise) to assassinate the US President, from Abraham Lincoln to Gerald Ford. Who wrote this musical?
9. "Hanging chads" was a term few people had heard of until it was at the core of a disputed UK Presidential election. Who won the election, whom did he defeat and which state was the centre of the controversy?
10. Who was president when the US war in Vietnam ended?
11.and finally, we have to have a Trump question. According to the Washington Post (Fake News!) how many "false or misleading statements" did Donald Trump make in the 4 years of his presidency? Award yourself a point if you are within 5000 of the number!

Answers on page 23

Where in Barkham?

No need to face up to the muddy paths in the fields and woods to spot this location!

Answer on page 23







Thank you to everyone for the photos, please check out the website for more images of Barkham.



Alan's Patch

We've had fairly typical winter weather with a nice bit of snow for a day or two in January. The woodland paths are extremely muddy because of the combination of the wet weather and because more of us are walking these paths as the Covid restrictions continue. It's all changed this week with a serious cold snap for several days, making gardening impossible.

As I mentioned last time the wooden boards around my raised beds are over 25 years old and needed replacing so that was my main project in the first two weeks of January. I split the 1.2-metre-wide beds which were six metres long into two shorter ones that are 2.8 metre long with a path between them. It suits me better nowadays to have 16 smaller beds than eight large ones: I grow a bit less of everything and want more variety and this makes it easier to organise them. One of the points of this bed system is that you never walk on them as this compacts the soil, generally considered a bad thing to do! When I wanted to get from one side to the other it meant I used to have to walk up to seven metres round the bed. Now I have to walk only up to four metres,

this means I will be less tempted to jump over to the other side!

I bought the timber pre-cut to length and assembled the frames in the garage. I then manoeuvred them into the garden and dropped them into pre-prepared holes. It was quite tricky to get them in line and level. To add to the difficulty there were some crops to work around but eventually I got there without much collateral damage! My friendly tree surgeon dropped off a load of wood chippings to spread on the paths, to add the finishing touch.

Back in December I completed the annual routine of completely emptying the greenhouse and washing it inside and out, a wet and dirty task. It's easily the worst job of the year! But it's worth doing to have clear glass which lets in as much light as possible. I then fumigated it to get rid of any bugs hibernating inside.

In early November I sowed my first crop of broad beans and they have come through well and survived the new bed being installed around them. In fact I had to transplant a few because the new and old beds didn't line up exactly. In the next week or so, after the heavy frost has gone, I'll sow the second batch and, buoyed by my success last year, I'll sow a few around the gooseberries to deter the sawfly. Around that time I also planted some shallot sets which have survived so far and looking good.

A couple of weeks ago I fitted out the clean and empty greenhouse, set up the electric propagator and lights, and sowed my first seeds – tomatoes, chillies and bell peppers. Last year I grew sweet potatoes for the first time. They were really tasty however the

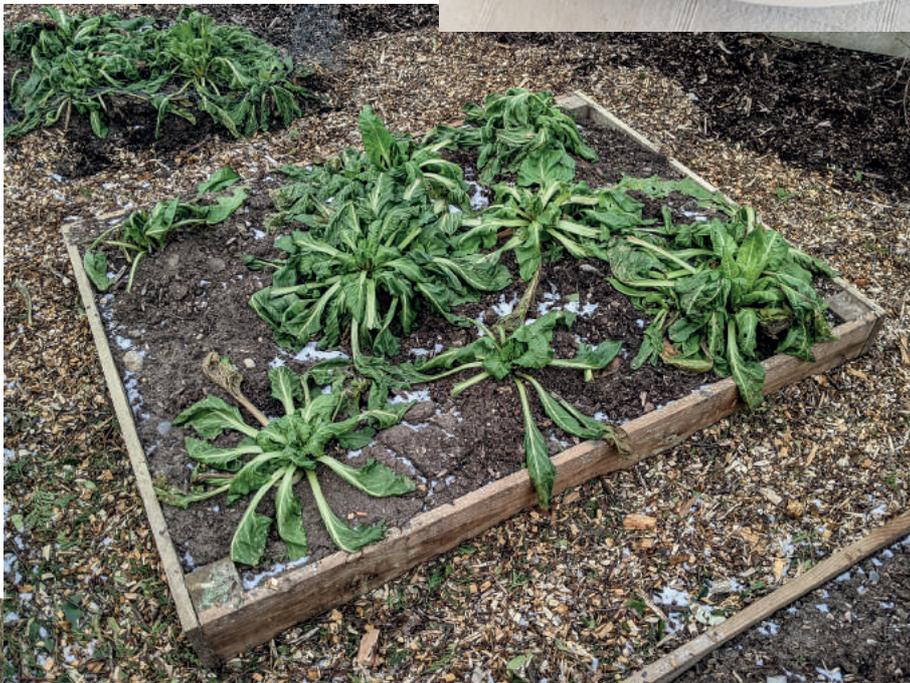
crop was small and they didn't keep long so I don't think I'll grow them this year.

Jerusalem artichoke was another experiment last season. Tall and thin they grew to over six feet high. The crop was very satisfactory. It's a strange looking root vegetable and, as you can see, there seem to be two varieties – one that's long and thin and the other that's basically round and extremely knobbly. They have a distinctive taste and texture which is fine but I need to find more recipes for using them!

The (perpetual) spinach was over-wintering well until the cold spell this week. Now you can see it's hunkered down! It'll recover fine when it thaws. Other crops still in the garden from last season are carrots, parsnips, kale, leeks and Swiss chard plus of course the perennial herbs. In store I have apples, potatoes, butternut squash and shallots. In the kitchen I have a couple of jars of Barlotto beans which I use in casseroles. Finally in the freezer I have a stock of about five kilos of processed tomatoes, which I use in casseroles, soups etc. I've processed some of the carrots, parsnips, squashes and leeks into soups too.

The main item of interest in wildlife over the past few weeks is pigeons, lots of them. Someone told me they have left London or other towns because there are not enough people in the cities to feed them. I don't know if this is true but there are definitely a lot more than usual.

A reasonably extended period of frost is said to be good for killing bugs so I'm pleased about that, nevertheless I can't wait for this current cold snap to finish so I can get back to work in my patch!



Crossroads, a small but perfectly formed charity

Most of us have a favourite charity we support, a charity which is close to our hearts. Mine is Crossroads, a small charity which is based at Wokingham Hospital who support carers who care for those with dementia and life limiting illnesses.

My first introduction was in 1998 when I was working for the Chairman of Wokingham Borough Council and she chose Crossroads as her charity for her year in office. £4000 was raised during the Chairman's year in office and it went towards a project to support the carers who cared for those suffering with Alzheimers. In 1998 little was known about Alzheimers and its causes and it was not a subject which was talked about or discussed openly. The funds raised would give time off from caring, would provide safety equipment in their homes and arrange a conference for those who were caring for those with Alzheimers. The guest of honour was to be Iris Murdoch but Iris died a couple of months before the conference and so her husband John Bailey attended and gave a very moving speech of his experience caring for Iris who suffered from Alzheimers. The conference was supported by a leading professor who was studying the causes of Alzheimers and the carers who attended were very appreciative of being able to share their experiences with other carers who were in similar situations. they were also given the opportunity to ask questions of the experts. Lots of tears were shed that day.

After the Chairman's year in office came to an end a small group, including members of Crossroads

was formed and became the Alzheimers Carers Trust. I acted as secretary and its aim allowed us to continue to support carers who lived in Borough. As there was little information available at that time to support carers it was decided that a booklet would be launched which would be made available in doctors surgeries, libraries and locations throughout the Borough where carers could find useful information to help and support them.

Over a period of 10 years five issues of the booklet circulated with the help of local companies sponsoring the printing costs. Two Wokingham residents whose mothers had died from Alzheimers raised over £4000 by taking part in a rally from Brooklands Motor Museum to Morocco. This donation allowed the Trust to continue to support breaks for carers, run a further two awareness days and support a new group called Singing for the Brain. It is a fact that those with dementia may not remember things that happen on a daily basis but that they can remember words to their favourite songs. This has been demonstrated in television programmes shown over the last few years where dementia sufferers have formed choirs. Alzheimers is the commonest form of dementia and Public Health England in 2020 noted that there are 1076 people over the age of 65 living with dementia in Wokingham Borough.

Crossroads Care Wokingham has 12 care support workers who cover the whole of Wokingham Borough supporting the day to day needs of dementia sufferers and those with life limiting issues. During lockdown the care sup-

port workers have continued to support the carers, abiding by the covid rules, in their own homes. They become part of the family and are a vital help to the carers who are mostly retired members of the community.

I feel proud to be a trustee for this charity and this could be the chance for you to join us and make a difference for this important community-based service operating to meet the needs of local carers in a challenging environment. On the Board there are seven trustees who each have specialist knowledge which helps towards the ongoing support of the charity, but we would very much like to find an additional person to support this wonderful charity. To help achieve a good balance of skills on the Board we are particularly keen to recruit someone with a background in procurement, IT or related areas of business.

If you would like to find out more information and have an informal discussion, please contact me on 07709 946 824. I hope someone in Barkham will find this article interesting enough to want to join this small but perfectly formed charity.

Julia Tredwell
Fundraising and secretary
trustee for Crossroads Care
Wokingham

WOKINGHAM FOODBANK

HELPING LOCAL PEOPLE IN NEED

Wokingham Foodbank is an entirely volunteer run organisation that exists to provide help to those in need in Wokingham. It is a registered charity and is run in partnership with Churches Together in Wokingham. The help it provides includes the supply of food and, where appropriate help with heating and lighting.

How to get help. Families or individuals who need help in this way must register with one of the care agencies in the town, such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Transform Housing, numerous departments in Wokingham Borough Council and many others. They can then request a voucher that can be exchanged at the Foodbank for a food parcel or help with fuel.

How to give help. We want to make sure that no one in our local community has to go hungry, but we need your help to make this happen. Your gift of financial support, time, business partnership and food can make a real difference.

How to donate. To ensure we keep a selection of stock we update the list of items most needed on our Facebook page and website. <https://wokingham.foodbank.org.uk/>

Donation Point	Opening Hours	Comments
Tesco Wokingham	07:00 – 24:00	Front of store near exits. Please only donate items purchased in store.
Sainsbury Winnersh	07:00 – 22:00	Front of store near exit
Waitrose Wokingham	08:00-21:00	Front of store near exit
Morrisons Wooshill	07:00-22:00	Beside checkout area
Most Wokingham churches have collection points		

The Foodbank is situated just off Broad Street, down an alleyway that is nearly opposite Rose Street. Please note there are no car parking facilities at the Foodbank.

OPENING TIMES

Mon 13:30 - 15:30
Tue Closed
Wed 13:30 - 15:30
Thu 13:30 - 15:30
Fri 13:30 - 15:30

Our foodbank relies on your donations of food and finance and we are very grateful for your support. Your generosity means that families, adults and children, who can't afford to feed themselves do not go hungry.

Thank You.



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As many of us continue to stay at home during the Covid pandemic, some amateur music making is continuing but not as we used to know it. As far as the orchestra is concerned our occasional workshops ended abruptly in December and future concerts look unlikely for some time. We must be positive though, and there are still quite a lot of musical things going on that rely on clever technology and imagination. There is a possibility that we may be able to do some workshops and other activities online soon – some CSO members have already enjoyed taking part in online workshops organised by another local orchestra, the Reading-based Aldworth Philharmonic Orchestra. Others have found interesting recitals and concerts streamed on the internet or available via YouTube. Continuing to play our instruments in isolation though is not ideal and we all look forward the time when meeting up to play with the whole orchestra again is possible.

Several members of CSO also belong to the U3A, myself included, and I have had a lot of pleasure organising Zoom sessions for a Music Makers group which includes people from both Wokingham and Bracknell U3A. Normally about 15 or so folk meet fortnightly to play pieces from a range of genres, many of which I have arranged using 'Sibelius' computer software which allows me to create scores for pieces of music with a variety of instrumentation. When meeting face to face was not possible, I started to experiment with setting up Zoom sessions where we could



play these pieces and have some social interaction too. To begin with, I shared the scores visually and audibly during the session and we could play along as the visual score moved through the piece. This caused some 'bandwidth' problems for some of the group and the internet connection became too unstable to be usable. So I modified the procedure to save high quality audio files from the 'Sibelius' scores and just share these audio files during the Zoom session. We are muted when we are playing of course but it is still fun playing along and having a chat in between. I also share the audio files and parts on OneDrive so everyone can practice if they feel so inclined! You may wonder why we don't just play along to Spotify or YouTube but the advantage of this system is that the audio files exactly reflect the parts we use and the key signature of our particular arrangement. I can alter the tempo and include a 'click track' to help us keep in time, and 2 bars rest added at the start of every piece helps us to start playing at the right moment! At a recent session, in addition to the Music Makers group we had members from the Bracknell U3A Recorder Group and from a music group in Chiltern U3A – and it was fun to be playing!

If you are not familiar with U3A and their many activities for retired or semi-retired folk, musical and otherwise, and would like to know more, have a look at e.g. <http://www.bracknellu3a.org.uk/> or <https://www.wokinghamu3a.org.uk/>

Back to the orchestra: We are continuing to send out an edition of our eNewsletter every few weeks or so, with interesting musical items and links. It is easy to subscribe to it (free of course) by going to our website, and the link is on the left of our home page. www.crowthorneorchestra.com As well as our main CSO website, we also have a members-only Facebook page which helps to keep orchestra members and supporters connected.

Keep playing or listening to music - it's good for you!

Chris Gadsby

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Finchampstead Flower Club

FFC used to meet once a month at California Hall. We now meet online using Zoom. Usually, we have a demonstration and then a catch up. Over half the members join in and we try to keep in touch with the others through phone calls.

January's theme for Zoom was Burns Night and Sandie Draper (an area demonstrator) produced some wonderful arrangements, reading a Burns poem to go with each finished piece.

Furthermore, as members of the national association, we have the opportunity to join other workshops and demonstrations.

Since lockdown club members have also been sending photographs of their arrangements to be circulated electronically. There is a different theme each month, for example, January was "Scotland", February "Wales", March is "Ireland", so can you guess what April is? We selected the themes to match the month of the patron saint's celebration. Members sent a variety of photos. (the rest of the photos!)

We are unlikely to meet face to face for a while but if you'd like to follow our activities you can find us on Facebook:

<https://bit.ly/3qrusUS>

or you can phone the chair, Lis Barrett, 01189892092.

We look forward to greeting new members in the future.

Kriss Turner



Barkham Hookers

We continue to meet up twice a week on Zoom to share news and crochet while having a chat. For some of those shielding it is the only time they get to see other people so it has become a welcome break from the monotony for many! Some of the group are also busy creating blankets to donate to Reading Refugee Support Group.

I have designed a new Poncho for the group called the Pandemic Poncho. I release a new section once a week and the idea is that we all do it at the same time and all have a finished piece at the end! This particular CAL (CROCHET ALONG) will take about 8 weeks by which time we're hoping that some restrictions might start to be lifted.

We can't wait to meet up again in the flesh and will be straight up to the park for hooky al fresco when we can!

Madam Gaynor
www.gaynorwhite.blogspot.com
Facebook

The Barkham Hookers



Basingstoke Canal

The Basingstoke Canal is owned by Surrey County Council with the Basingstoke Canal Authority acting as the managing agents for the waterway.

Completed in 1794, built to connect Basingstoke with the River Thames at Weybridge via the Wey Navigation. The canal was at first intended to be an economical means of transportation for the development of agriculture in Central Hampshire. Today, the navigable section of the canal runs for 32 miles from West Byfleet in Surrey through Woking, Brookwood, Mytchett, Ash, Fleet and Crookham, to Odiham and finally ending up at Greywell in Hampshire.

In private ownership and semi-derelict by the early 1960s, a letter to a newspaper from a local resident asking if anyone was interested in doing something with the canal sparked the formation of the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society. After many years of hard work to restore the canal, it was officially reopened by HRH The Duke of Kent in 1991.

The Basingstoke Canal Society now promotes the Canal as a navigable waterway, general amenity, part of our heritage and as host to a wealth of wildlife. It supports the Canal through fundraising, work parties and other voluntary efforts, and it aims to secure a sustainable future for the Canal, to prevent it from falling into dereliction again.

The Society has plans for future projects which will include:

- Increased mooring facilities at Odiham
- Replacement 12 passenger electric boat at Woking to include disabled access.

You can find out more about the canal and how to support the Basingstoke Canal Society via the website at <https://basingstokecanal.org.uk>

Farley Hill Bowls Club

We still hope to be able to start bowling again in late April, but as you will realize that is not in any way certain right now, since most of us are elderly and more vulnerable, and very few of us have even had our first jab yet.

We are trying to run an occasional on-line quiz to keep our members in some sort of regular contact, but they are no substitute for what used to be regular winter, monthly social gatherings in person at the Victory Hall in Farley Hill.

We couldn't hold our AGM in October, and our Annual Dinner that was due this month could not happen either. However, please watch this space and our website for better news soon - I hope.

Bill Dowling
Farley Hill Bowls Club Secretary
www.farleyhillbowlsclub.org.uk

Spring into Action and Secure your Home from Burglars

Help us to keep crime down and make life harder for criminals by following our crime reduction advice this spring.

- Install a video doorbell or CCTV system.
- Service/maintain your burglar alarm.
- Use a timer switch on your lights and radio.
- Lock all front and rear doors at night and when you are out. (If you have a UPVC door, remember to lift the handle and lock it with the key.)
- Keep all valuables and keys (including car keys), out of sight and out of reach of windows and letterboxes. Keep keyless entry fobs in a security pouch.
- Secure access to the back garden. Are all of your gates and fences maintained and locked? Move bins away from
- Keep ladders and gardening tools locked away.
- Cut back your shrubs and hedges to aid visibility.
- Ensure sheds and garages are fully secured.
- Double check your vehicle is locked too.

Consider joining a Neighbourhood Watch scheme, visit www.ourwatch.org.uk

For further information and crime prevention advice, please visit www.thamesvalley.police.uk

Please contact us if you have any information relating to crime in your neighbourhood. Report online at www.thamesvalley.police.uk, call us on 101 or in an emergency dial 999. Alternatively, you can call Crimestoppers anonymously on free phone 0800 555 111.

Contact us

Email: You can contact your local neighbourhood team via FieldsNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk – please note this email address cannot be used to report crimes or for any urgent matters.

Facebook: TVP Bracknell & Wokingham

Twitter: @TVP_Wokingham

You can receive free information updates from Thames Valley Police by registering for Thames Valley Alert at: www.thamesvalleyalert.co.uk.

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Where in Barkham?
Answer: On the wall of the Post Office in Bearwood Road.

- The Quiz - answers**
1. Bedtime for Bonzo
 2. Gerald Ford
 3. Independence Day
 4. Dwight D Eisenhower
 5. Harrison Ford
 6. Jimmy Carter
 7. Theodore Roosevelt
 8. Stephen Sondheim
 9. George W Bush bear Al Gore in 2000. The state was Florida - coincidentally(?) Bush's brother Jeb was the governor.
 10. Richard Nixon
 11. 30573



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