

## New sports area taking shape

As reported in the September issue of the Bulletin, Brixworth Parish Council approved the use of Section 106 funding to build a MUGA (Multi Use Games Area) and new playground on St David's Recreation Ground. The Parish Council subsequently set up a Working Group for the project who reported back on their progress at the Full Council meeting on 28th January.

The St. David's Working Group, made up of three councillors and led by Parish Councillor Sandra Moxon, was tasked with looking into the MUGA and play area project in more detail, ensuring that all bases were covered so that it could 'get up and running' sooner rather than later.

It is hoped that the new MUGA will be a true community space, one that will encourage sports such as netball, basketball and hockey which are currently under-represented in the village and be used by all age groups, both abled and disabled. The Working Group are clearly driven by the ethos that sport and play should be 'truly inclusive' and are determined to ensure that the new games and play areas will be 'as suitable for disabled children as possible'. With this in mind, they have decided on a MUGA surface that will be an open-textured, porous tarmac, this is not only easier to maintain, but will allow disabled sports groups to make use of the facilities as well. The group believe that this is a rare opportunity for BPC to 'make a difference to those adults and children who are less able than others,' and getting the inclusive aspect of the new games and play areas right is crucial as ...

'Play is an important part of life – it is essential for their (children's) physical and emotional development; this is as true for disabled children as it is for non-disabled children and playgrounds should offer the same opportunities for children of all abilities... to meet and play together – to grow together, to accept each other despite any differences – develop friendships and be part of society, to be inclusive.'

In addition to the Section 106 funding, the Parish Council has also agreed to give £45,000 from its Capital Projects budget to replace the current play equipment alongside the MUGA, which will make this a true regeneration project at the heart of the village. Local residents bordering St. David's have been consulted and, whilst most are



The new MUGA would be installed at St David's recreation ground. Photo by Ian Topham

overwhelmingly in support of the project, some had minor concerns which have since been addressed by the working group. The group has researched floodlighting to find an eco-friendly, more directional solution that will have minimum impact on the environment and neighbouring properties, and they have even sourced noise compliant fencing that meets the EN15312:2007 standard.



Multi-use games areas provide a safe surface for a wide range of community sports

At the time of writing, the working group has a few minor tweaks to make to the project brief; but is hoping to have it out for tender with submitted bids returned and ready to review at the extraordinary PC meeting on 18th March. Ideally, the group would like contracts signed

## Brixworth Centre reopens after fire

The Brixworth Centre has reopened in January, after being closed for around three months following a fire which broke out on 9 September.

The fire was caused by sunlight reflecting from a mirror on to the curtains, which eventually cause the curtains to catch fire. The fire damage was largely confined to the curtains, window frame and the window itself, along with some play school equipment and tables. The rest of the building suffered smoke damage and other damage resulting from the fire service inspecting roof voids to ensure the fire hadn't spread further.

Thankfully the cost of the repairs was covered by insurance.

Due to Covid, most the activities that would normally be taking place in the building were already closed down. The pre school who would normally be occupying the building moved at short notice to the Community Centre above the library, and remained operating from there while the Brixworth Centre was being refurbished. – cfw



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The *Brixworth Bulletin* is published  
quarterly in March, June, September and  
December. The deadline for contributions  
and advertising for the June issue is 25  
April 2021.

Visit [www.brixworthbulletin.co.uk](http://www.brixworthbulletin.co.uk), join us  
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before 31st March, when Daventry District  
Council will cease to exist.

The project is still subject to planning  
permission, however, but Cllr Moxon doesn't  
anticipate any problems with this as, to  
date, DDC have been very impressed and

supportive of the project.

The St David's Working Group have clearly  
put in considerable time and effort to ensure  
that this wonderful new facility will go ahead  
and be enjoyed by generations of villagers for  
years to come. – Tracey Calnan

## u3a welcomes a new chair – and mourns a treasurer

Like all organisations, Brixworth u3a has had a  
challenging ten months and our Group Leaders and  
committee have worked throughout the pandemic  
to provide as much contact for our membership as  
possible.

Slowly we all began to get to grips with Zoom which  
has been such a lifesaver for both organisations and  
family meetings. We circularised our membership  
with regular newsletters and monthly letters from our  
Chairperson. Eventually we got to grips with Zoom (who  
knew we would become such technology wizards!!) and  
are now having our monthly meetings online. We have  
had four really interesting speakers. At our last monthly  
meeting over 70 people logged on to enjoy the speaker and the chat afterwards.

We held our AGM via Zoom in December and again had over 50 people logging on. In  
normal times this would have been the meeting when we enjoyed a sherry and mince pie  
and a festive get together but at least we were able to see people face to face albeit in a  
little square box, but I guess we are all getting used to that.

At this meeting a new Chair, Belinda Collett, was appointed. Belinda is married to Brian  
Collett who for many years has been active on the committee and leading some of the  
groups including Bridge and in earlier years the walking group. Belinda and Brian have two  
married sons and two granddaughters. Belinda is an artist and has been actively involved in  
the art world in Northamptonshire. She is now an Honorary Life Member of the Fellowship of  
Professional & Amateur Artists (FPAA) of which latterly she was Chair. She has recently taken  
over management of the Monday evening Brixworth Heritage Bridge Club.



A big thank you must go to our Group  
Leaders and the Group Leader Organiser for  
their support in arranging Group Meetings,  
again via Zoom. Obviously, this is not  
possible for a lot of the groups, but our Art  
Appreciation, Gardening, French, Local  
History and Science and Technology Groups  
now have meetings organised. Armchair  
Travel, Creative Writing and the two Book  
Groups keep in touch via email. Our Choir  
Group have a zoom meeting most Tuesdays  
for a general chat and the Cycling Group  
meet when restrictions allow.

Although this has been a challenging  
time everyone has worked really hard to  
make sure our u3a keep in touch with our  
membership and provide as much support  
as possible in these trying times.

It is with great sadness that we announce  
the death of Stan Evans. Stan was a long-  
time member of the u3a and was Treasurer  
for many years and also a member of many  
groups. He was a well-liked and respected  
member and will be greatly missed. Our  
thoughts go out to Val and their families at  
this sad time.

If you would like to join Brixworth &  
District u3a please go [u3asites.org.uk/brixworth](http://u3asites.org.uk/brixworth)  
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# Red Lion set to make way for new Co-op

The former Red Lion pub is set to be demolished this year so that a new Co-op store can be built on the site. Daventry District Council had refused the planning permission last summer, but the decision was later overturned on appeal.

The work will start once a number of planning conditions and mitigation measures have been met. To date only some preliminary work has been done to stop the electricity supply to the existing buildings and provide a new utility cabinet for a replacement supply.

Before the works can begin, the demolition contractor has to set out tree protection measures, acquire a low impact bat license, and get approval for a delivery management plan. The project also needs a plan for managing noise and vibration of the site, and any external lights. Any required prior submissions and agreements have to be approved by the local planning authority, which until 1 April will be Daventry District Council (to be replaced by West Northants Council after that date).

The decision to allow the development on appeal has dismayed many local residents. The main point of concern is the relative lack of parking and the site's location on a sharp bend in the road, which people are worried is likely to cause accidents.

However, the parking and road safety issues were already discussed and settled in 2019, in a previous attempt to gain planning permission for the project. The inspector at the time found that while the number of parking spaces at the site were only around half of the County Council's requirements, parking was similarly limited when the building was used as a pub and this hadn't caused significant issues.

In his decision to uphold the appeal against the refusal of the second planning application, inspector Ben Plenty noted that a comparable case study showed that it was unlikely that the development would harm highway safety. Plenty wrote in his ruling: "Although I anticipate that the majority of parking demand would be accommodated on-site, the local roads have sufficient spare parking capacity



Photo courtesy of Ian Topham

to accommodate on-street parking without having an adverse impact on highway safety. Therefore, although I recognise that the local community and the Highway Authority remain of the firm view that on-street parking would be problematic, I do not concur."

The main issues addressed in the second application were the design of the building and whether it would preserve or enhance the character of the Brixworth Conservation Area, where the pub is located. The new proposal, Plenty ruled, was a marked improvement on the previous design which would integrate well with the surrounding area. He also noted that the development and improved retail activity would bring economic and social benefits to the area which weighed significantly in favour of the proposal.

All of this did little to assure local residents. Ian Hudson, who lives close to the site, commented: "There is no argument that a larger supermarket is required for the village, but this is simply not the location. It is difficult to comprehend that Brixworth Parish Council objected to the initial application, Daventry District Council refused it, an Inspector rejected the Co-op's appeal (though only on building design), Daventry District Council Planning Committee also refused the second application, yet one inspector can go against all these LOCAL bodies and approve, after a single two or three hour visit to the location, also disregard Northamptonshire Highways

report, who documented their objections, twice. Surely the local 'bodies' know what is "right for our village", and this simply is not."

He added: "The Coop and Post Office, today, is in the village centre adjacent to the core shops, the library, the community centre, café. Relocating them BOTH away from the centre of the village will have a negative impact and alienate some people, by making the walk difficult, up and down a steep hill and across a dangerous road, with no traffic calming measures, causing them great inconvenience. The new location will undoubtedly increase traffic movement from the existing village centre to the new location, two trips now required instead of the current "one stop". – cfw

## Thomas Roe grants for young people

Many families have found things challenging during the Covid 19 pandemic. A small cash grant for educational purposes may help those in need during this difficult time.

The Foundation of Thomas Roe provides small cash grants for people under the age of 25 who live in the parishes of Brixworth or Scaldwell.

Grants have previously been provided to support young people with buying school uniform, books and course materials, musical instruments, computer equipment and travel expenses linked to education, including school trips.

Application forms can be downloaded from Brixworth and Scaldwell Parish Council web sites or from the Clerk at [thomasroefoundation@gmail.com](mailto:thomasroefoundation@gmail.com)

Completed application forms must be returned to the Clerk, preferably by email and in Word format, by midnight on 10 March 2021 for consideration at the charity's next meeting on 24 March.

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# Keep the First Responders' car on the road

A group of life-saving volunteers from villages in Northamptonshire have got the keys to a new emergency response car – but are now appealing for help in raising funds to ensure it stays on the road.

Rural Northants Community First Responders cover villages including Brixworth, Spratton, Scaldwell, Naseby and Mawsley, providing an immediate response to 999 calls if it is likely they can get there quicker than the ambulance.

Volunteers have previously used their own vehicles, but with help from East Midlands Ambulance Service, the Responders scheme was able to lease a dedicated vehicle. This will allow the volunteers



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to carry more potentially life-saving equipment. However to continue the lease, the First Responders need to raise £4,500 every year.

Group Co-ordinator Sandra Cottrell, from Brixworth, said: "We carry out a variety of tasks to support the crews from EMAS and having this new car will make a huge difference to our work. In August last year, when we had use of another responder group's car, we were tasked to 49 incidents. This was more than double the total for the rest of the year."

"As part of the deal we need to raise the money needed to keep it going so we are looking for help both from the community in terms of donations and sponsorship from our wonderful local businesses to support us in our efforts. Any help we can receive will be hugely appreciated."

Sandra, who works as Chiroprapist in Brixworth, has also been volunteering her time to assist with the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

The new vehicle which is linked directly to the EMAS Emergency Operations Centre will allow the team to carry extra equipment such as Entonox pain relieving drug and inflatable mats, used for lifting elderly people who have fallen.

Conor McClelland, County Co-ordinator and Training Officer for EMAS, said: "Community First Responders are a vital resource in getting fast and effective treatment to critically ill patients following a 999 call.

If they can arrive just a couple of minutes ahead of an ambulance and start work before the attending crew get there, it can really make a difference to a patient's experience and ultimately their outcome."

Any businesses interested in sponsoring the vehicle can contact [info@ruralnorthantscfr.co.uk](mailto:info@ruralnorthantscfr.co.uk) or 07970 268288. Alternatively, you can donate online at <https://www.peoplesfundraising.com/wall/rural-northants-cfrs>. – Lynne Saxton

# Surviving lockdown

“There is light if only we are brave enough to see it.  
If only we are brave enough to be it”

Amanda Gorman

Many of us will have watched the inauguration of President Joe Biden in January and perhaps, like me, you were bowled over by the eloquent words and sheer poise of the 22-year-old American Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman. Those final lines of her poem can be applied to so many situations, but it struck me as being so apt as we find ourselves in our third lockdown and what feels like the never ending ‘groundhog day’ that is COVID-19.

But there is light. I know many people in the village and other parts of the country who have received at least their first vaccination, and in some cases both doses. The vaccination isn’t a magic bullet, but it will be part of our ‘light’ as we move forward. I have seen many cases of residents once more providing support for each other, as well as organisations such as church groups and Brixworth Community Food Share. It is difficult in a short piece to highlight all the help that is being given and to recognise those that are giving it, but I must say a big thanks to Kath Cockerill again for stepping up with her soup delivery service as soon as this current lockdown was announced.

Many of us are tired and jaded, but yet again I think of those who are really tired, physically and mentally, working so hard to care for us and in many cases save our lives – our NHS workers. I watched a piece on News Night recently which was a hard watch, seeing the challenges that many suffering from this dreadful illness are going through. But again, there was light: the amazing, dedicated care given by those on the front line who have practically been fighting this disease for nearly 12 months. Let’s not forget our other front-line workers working hard to keep things going - our carers, shop workers, refuse collectors and many more. As time passes it is easy to take all of this for granted.

I spoke before of my desire to convert our amazing community into a lasting legacy by setting up a formal Good Neighbours Scheme, but I will need help. There are groups in the District that have done this successfully that we can learn from and also potentially there is some funding from the Council to get it going. So if you can get involved and get it off the ground please get in touch to make it a reality.

It is no doubt difficult right now. The vast majority of people in our area and in the county are sticking to the rules, so please do your best to STAY HOME; if you have to go out or are volunteering please stay at least two metres away from anyone else, wear a face mask and wash and sanitise your hands regularly.

A final thought. I recently helped an elderly person who had been given a speeding ticket for doing 35mph in a 30mph zone, in a different part of the country whilst on holiday. They do not have any internet access, a computer or smartphone but were advised, as is usual, that they could opt to pay the fine or attend a Speed Awareness course – online (due to COVID there are no in person sessions being held). The person contacted me to ask for help. Several emails and phone calls later I’m happy to say the situation is resolved. Why do I mention this? On the other side of this page I refer to sources of help and guidance that are available online. That’s fine if you have online access however, many don’t. So please share as much information as you can and ensure that anyone you know of in this situation has at least one phone number to contact.

The County Council have a help line which can be accessed by calling 0300 126 1000 and select Option 5 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). If your call is urgent and outside these hours you will hear a recorded message telling you what to do. Or make sure that they have one of our numbers and we’ll connect them with our fantastic group of street champions. Thank you, and keep safe.

– Cllr Jonathan Harris, Daventry District Council

## Further Information

- <https://jonathanharris.mycouncillor.org.uk>
- <https://www.brixworthcovid-19help.com>
- <https://www.daventrydc.gov.uk/your-council/news/advice-on-coronavirus/>
- <https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/coronavirus-updates/Pages/default.aspx>
- Brixworth COVID-19 Help on Facebook

## Brixworth COVID-19 Help Co-ordinators

- Jonathan: 07759 977981
- Liisa: 07592 690902
- Christine: 07899 845627
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# Don't fall for a Covid Scam

As the vaccine is being rolled out, unscrupulous scammers have tried to take advantage and trick people out of money, particularly those who may be alone or vulnerable.

Scams include people offering to arrange vaccinations for a fee, sales of fake products including face masks or hand sanitisers, people pretending to offer help with shopping, or bogus healthcare workers offering tests to gain access to a home.

Remember, the vaccine is only available on the NHS and is free of charge. The NHS will never ask you for details about your bank account or to pay for the vaccine. If you receive an email, text message or phone call purporting to be from the NHS and you are asked to provide financial details, this is a scam.

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The NHS will never ask you for your PIN or banking password.

The NHS will never arrive unannounced at your home to administer the vaccine.

The NHS will never ask you to prove your identity by sending copies of personal documents such as your passport, driving licence, bills or pay slips.

If you believe you are the victim of a fraud, please report this to Action Fraud as soon as possible by calling 0300 123 2040 or visiting [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk)

# Rolling out the

Even though this may have been the winter of our discontent, for many of us the light at the end of this dark tunnel has been the nationwide vaccine rollout programme and the prospect of returning to 'some kind of normal' by the spring.

Many elderly residents of Brixworth and surrounding villages have already been fortunate enough to receive at least one of their vaccines and were happy to share their stories. Paul Ward took his mother-in-law, 92-year-old Nell of Stannard Way, to the surgery at Weedon for both jabs; she was thrilled to be amongst the first to have it and made a day out of it by getting a Starbucks on the way home. She later told her friends on Facebook that 'it was a piece of cake' and they had nothing to worry about!

Fiona Horne took her parents, both in their late eighties, for the two Pfizer vaccines at Weedon and reported that the service and delivery had been 'swift and efficient'. Nanda Marchant said that her 87-year-old mother, Brenda, also found that it was 'a very smooth process and the staff were really friendly and helpful.'

Maureen Garrod-Rose went one step further after having hers, saying that 'I really am full of admiration for the way the whole thing is run. All staff need a great big hug for doing what they are doing and achieving. God Bless them all.'

Den Coles, who initially had some reservations after hearing reports of people being kept waiting outside queueing in the cold and rain, ended up saying, 'Can't believe how quick and efficient it all was. Out of car, enrol, wash hands, see doctor, get jab, sit down for 15 mins. Go home.'

Sandra Warner, who went to Weedon with her husband to have their first vaccination, couldn't fault it either, 'Brilliant set up and service with a one-way system and large waiting area for the 15 minutes after wait – would definitely recommend.'

A Brixworth based volunteer driver, who has been taking people without their own transport, reported that although some of his passengers may be a little bit nervous on the way there and are 'glad it's over' afterwards, the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. He also mentioned that, although the car park at Weedon is on the small side, he hasn't had any problems to date and has never seen long queues outside.

There was some initial consternation about the fact that Brixworth residents had to travel the fourteen miles to Weedon in order to get their vaccines, especially in winter; although most would say it's a small price to pay to keep us all safe and enable our lives to move on. Saxon Spires is part of the Rural Northamptonshire Primary Care Network (PCN) and, with the storage difficulties associated with the Pfizer vaccine, only one surgery within each group could become a vaccine centre. At the time of writing, however, it is known that a mass vaccination centre will be opening soon on our side of town which will have the capacity to vaccinate up to 1000 people a day.

It's not only the elderly and vulnerable who have been getting vaccinated, however, many local frontline workers have also been getting their vaccines. Healthcare worker Symone Rowland Coates found the whole process very straightforward and commended all the staff involved from the stewards outside to the doctors administering the vaccines. She told us: "Huge credit to all staff helping surgeries roll the vaccines out. They are doing a great job. Next day I just had a heavy arm bit like flu jab and felt more tired than usual but apart from that all good."

Sarah Andrew, who works at Guilsborough Surgery, felt very lucky when all employees were offered the chance to have both vaccines back in December. Following her experience, she emailed Weedon Surgery to express her gratitude.

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# Vaccine – Tales from the Frontline

“I was extremely impressed with the whole seamless experience,” she said. “The staff were very professional and explained everything clearly, I was swiftly taken into my appointment and was able to leave after fifteen minutes of waiting. I feel very privileged to have had the vaccine and look forward to seeing many more people being offered the opportunity. Let’s hope this innovation helps to save lives and enables us to reach some level of normality. Hats off to you for providing such an excellent service!”

Brixworth resident, Rupert Oldfield, is ‘The Vaccinator’, a member of the Rural Northants First Responders who has been called upon to help out with the NHS vaccine roll out. First Responders are trained volunteers who respond to 999 calls in rural areas and hold the fort until an ambulance crew is able to get there. A driving instructor in his day job, as a First Responder Rupert has been dispensing vaccines at the centre set up at Northampton General Hospital, vaccinating an average of 200 people a day, including the elderly, care home residents, the vulnerable and, perhaps most importantly, the frontline hospital staff.

He has observed that the majority of people are just relieved to have had the vaccination, with a few reporting a bit of light-



Photo by Stephen Cornfield on Unsplash

headedness and sore arms and headaches for 24-48 hours. The 15-minute post-vaccine wait is a precaution against adverse reactions, but Rupert says that there is only a one in a million chance of being allergic to the vaccine.

So, it would appear that Northamptonshire has made a very strong start to its vaccination roll out programme. We, therefore, have every reason to look forward to the spring and hope that as shoots emerge from the earth so the buds of recovery will emerge from the doom and gloom of this winter. – Tracey Calnan

## Poppy Appeal 2020

With 2019 being such a successful year I was looking forward to 2020s appeal. However, Covid 19 decided otherwise.

The first lockdown prevented poppy merchandise being manufactured. Coupled with distribution difficulties etc it was decided to “make the most of it”. With businesses closed or skeleton staffed limited access in pubs shops and restaurants this meant many fewer tins went out. Social distancing meant it was not viable to stand at the Co-op. Then the second lockdown began in November. Needless to say, I was not expecting a great return this year.

Well, there’s nothing more surprising than Brixworth folk. They made and sold face masks, knitted poppies, painted pebbles and arranged the Tommy evacuee – not to forget the church displays. Soon the donations started rolling in, resulting in an amazing total to date of £3869.93. Wow!

There are so many thank you’s I would need an entire Bulletin to do this, so thank you everyone – you know who you are.

It was also nice to see so many folk take a two-minute break from their daily exercise on Remembrance Sunday at around 11am. This even included a bugler, funny that!

Moving on to this year: 2021 is the 100th anniversary of the Poppy Appeal so, with your help, I aim to make it special. I need as many knitted, crocheted woven or made poppies as possible so the village can have three trailing nets of poppies: One being the Tommy evacuee, another at the church and the third at the pound (opposite Coach and Horses). If anyone is bored in these winter lockdown months, give it a go! Any poppies can be left with Jane Elmore (church) or myself (Tommy and Pound). Any queries, call me on 07979 258659.

Thank you all, once again you did not forget. – Eddie Edmunds  
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# A Covid Diary

After ten months living in fear of catching the dreaded Covid 19, it finally caught up with us!

We were kind of expecting it, our son's girlfriend lives alone and is part of our 'bubble', but as a keyworker, she comes into contact with others on a daily basis, so when she became ill and our son followed a few days later, even though he self-isolated, it was only a matter of time...

## DAY 1

Feeling normal all morning, I start to wonder if maybe I'm going to get away with it, but, by the afternoon, the aches start creeping into my bones, my joints are sore and, although my skin is hot to touch, I just can't get warm. So far, this doesn't feel any different to the onset of any other flu-like illness, but this one comes with the 'fear factor' – if it's Covid, how will my body cope with it, will I end up in hospital? I'm not in the vulnerable category, but the random nature of this virus leaves a question mark hanging over the head of anyone who gets it. We waste no time getting a test at the extremely efficient drive-through centre in Kettering, before heading home to bed for a night of aches and pains, shivers and sweats.

## DAY 2 - 3

I wake up in a twisted torment of sweat saturated sheets and a text from the NHS informing me that I have indeed tested positive for coronavirus. Not exactly a surprise, but still a bit of a blow when I see those words in black and white. This is followed by a phone call from the NHS checking on my wellbeing and making sure I understand that I have to self-isolate for the next ten days. For the next couple of days, I don't really care about anything as the fever continues to control my bed-ridden body in its attempt to fight off the virus.

## DAY 4

The fever abates today; but leaves me with a tightness in my chest and the start of the eponymous dry cough. The NHS call again to check on me and remind me about the ten days - tempted to say something sarcastic, but the caller sounds so young and is clearly just following a script. I read that the next few days are crucial in determining whether I recover or relapse. It's a joke in our family how much my husband likes to buy gadgets on the internet, but one of his recent purchases was a Pulse Oximeter which you put on your finger to measure your blood oxygen level; it's all over the news today

that one of these could save your life if you have Covid - a drop in your blood oxygen level is the first indicator that it might have gone to your lungs, even if you're not feeling breathless. This little gizmo gives me great comfort over the next few days, I religiously monitor my oxygen level and promise never to roll my eyes again when my husband gets a new gadget.

## DAY 5-6

Having become a bit of a slave to the Oximeter, I'm alarmed when my oxygen level drops to 93% and decide to walk around the garden to see if it helps. I end up doing 32 laps, a mile according to my FitBit, and, to my relief, my level goes back up to 98% - proof, if any were needed, that walking is definitely good for you! At this stage, the illness is a bit of a rollercoaster ride, for a few hours, I feel like I'm getting better; then attempt to do a household chore and end up dizzy and breathless, having to rest again.

## DAY 7-9

Everything I read, says that if you get to Day 7 without worsening symptoms, you've most likely only got a mild case and will make a full recovery; it seems that most hospital admissions occur on Day 7 of the illness. Woke up with relief on Day 8 to realise that I was continuing to improve; got my garden mileage up to 2.5 miles (in the snow!) and my oxygen level to 98-99%. Not taking anything for granted, however, I'm still constantly alert to any signs of relapse. The coughing continues but is less harsh now and, as my appetite returns, my energy level increases.

## DAY 10

Final day of isolation – I don't need the NHS call to remind me! Research suggests that I'm no longer infectious and now have five months of natural immunity - the only advantage of this dreadful disease. All indications are that I'm recovering. I almost feel 'normal' again. My relief is enormous, but I'm acutely aware that not everybody is as lucky, and I don't yet know if I'll be left with any long-term effects. The fact is, over 80% of people who contract Covid 19 only suffer mild symptoms and make a full recovery, my experience appears to have followed a very typical pattern.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the friends and neighbours who left shopping, medicines, homemade cakes and soups on our doorstep during our isolation, even though it sometimes felt as though we had a large red cross daubed on our door, we are very grateful for your kindness and support.

– Tracey Calnan

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# Benco put Tommy back on his feet

Specialists from Brixworth Engineering (Benco) repaired Tommy, the silhouette memorial to the WW1 soldier, after he was vandalised at the start of the year.

Vandals had entered Tommy's home, the Millennium Garden below the church, and broke the statue off its base. The rear 'leg' was broken in two, and another piece went missing entirely.

News of the vandalism spread fast on social media. "There was a lot of anger at what had happened and many offers of help to repair or to finance the repair," said Eddie Edmunds, who coordinates the local Poppy Appeal. "Remembrance is very important in Brixworth."

Repairing Tommy required an aluminium specialist. Thankfully, Benco offered to help. "They have put him back together, replaced the missing part and fashioned a new base," Eddie explained. "You wouldn't know anything had happened to him."

All the work was carried out at no cost.

Once everything is finished, Tommy will return to his home at the Millennium Garden.

Thank you everyone at Benco! – cfw



All better now: A freshly-repaired Tommy on his new base, waiting to return to the Millennium Garden



Before the incident: Tommy takes centre stage at the 75th VJ Day Commemorations on 15th August 2020.

Photo courtesy of Ian Topham

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# Enjoy the countryside – sensibly

Access to the countryside has possibly never been more valuable than right now. Covid lockdowns, tier systems, isolation, furloughing and local restrictions have brought into sharp focus the need for fresh air, open space, invigorating vistas and physical exercise.

At Lamport Hall, I try to balance three elements, each with their own benefits: access and enjoyment, conservation and nature, and farming.

In this part of Northamptonshire, we are incredibly lucky to have an extensive network of public rights of way. Lamport Estate alone is crossed by 4.6 miles of bridleways and public footpaths, excluding the Brampton Valley Way. The estate has permitted access to an additional three quarters of a mile of routes – something I hope to expand at an appropriate time in the future. Public access is a legal right on public routes but does not extend to private property, regardless of whether that is farmland, woodland or domestic gardens and homes. Most landowners (including Lamport Hall) are delighted to see people enjoy the countryside via public routes. Natural England publish a regularly updated Countryside Code to help maintain people's enjoyment.

## Respect other people

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Park carefully so access to gateways and driveways is clear
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Follow paths but give way to others where it's narrow

## Protect the natural environment

- Leave no trace of your visit, take all your litter home
- Don't have BBQs or fires



- Keep dogs under effective control
- Dog poo - bag it and bin it

## Enjoy the outdoors

- Plan ahead, check what facilities are open, be prepared
- Follow advice and local signs and obey social distancing

It is easy to forget that the wonderful rural landscape in which we live is not natural, but a manufactured landscape, shaped by centuries of farming and land management. The Lamport Estate invests a great deal in conservation: as part of our farming enterprise we manage 33

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miles of hedgerows and 40 acres of flower-rich grassland. We plant 30 acres of wild bird food plots each year and manage 32 acres of nectar-rich plots for bees and pollinators, twelve beehives, 76 nest boxes, owl posts, two field-scale beetle banks and un-cropped margins around every field to provide a wide range of habitats. The range of species is magnificent and Bill Draper, who monitors our wildlife, gives regular updates, including recently noting for example the Nuthatch, which is one of the only birds to be able to travel head-first down a tree. We try not to disturb these species' habitats to give them every chance to thrive. I am also expanding efforts to further improve nature's ability to turn carbon dioxide from the air into biomass to help combat climate change. It is hard to succeed, particularly when wildlife is disturbed: it can take years to establish habitats for some species of ground-nesting birds and this work can be undone immediately by an unexpected walker off the footpath, even more so by an inquisitive dog off the lead.



Farms are essentially outdoor food factories with their own risks which we try to mitigate. The fields and soil are fragile ecosystems. By managing all kinds of traffic across fields, we aim to maintain effective drainage, high worm counts and healthy microbial activity to ensure that the soil is productive without needing too much added fertiliser and chemicals. This can be compromised even by people trampling across what might appear to be fallow or grass fields but which are actually cropped; more so by a minority choosing to trespass with vehicles, bikes, horses and motor bikes; worse still with more illegal activities such as hare coursing. Not picking up after dogs can result in diseases which cause abortions in cattle and neurological problems in sheep – in this matter particularly I urge caution.

The future for public access, at least on the Lamport Estate, looks positive. But we all have our part to play to keep these valuable opportunities for enjoyment of the countryside intact. I have started work to improve the public routes crossing the Estate, including clearer signs and new information and nature interpretation boards. Whilst it is challenging to counter the effects of the weather on the various footpaths, particularly after two years of record rain, I hope that improved water management and the installation of some stone tracks in the future will improve the situation for all, especially those for whom mobility is more challenging. I also plan to expand access later in 2021 and provide educational visits for a range of ages.

I have been overwhelmed by the welcoming nature of local people. The chance to speak to you as you enjoy walking along our public routes and to hear your feedback is a privilege and a rewarding part of my custodianship of the Lamport Estate. Thank you. – *Mark Herrod, Executive Director, The Lamport Group of Companies*

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## Meet the walking hero



Many villagers enjoyed a walk in the snow this winter. Indeed, for many it came as a welcome diversion in the middle of lockdown.

But for one resident, Gareth Humphrey, it was just another day at the office. Having suffered with his own mental issues and PTSD, the former soldier and firefighter at Brixworth Fire Station has been out walking in all weathers to raise money for the military families' charity SSAFA. He walks at least 10km a day while carrying 20kg.

So far, he's walked over 200km and has no intention of stopping yet. To

follow his journey and support him with a donation, look up '10k a day' on Facebook.



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# Country Eye

## Golden Day

Deep blue sky promises a perfect late spring day as I stow my rusty old bike in a dry roadside ditch. A surrounding wall of birdtalk is led by the shimmering silvery cascade of skylark song, vocally jousting as several of them are locked in mortal aerial combat, mere dots in the cloudless ether. I watch as one by one they spiral downwards until they shoot the final 30 or so feet to land, always some way from the nest, where the female waits to be relieved from patient incubation to go off to feed.

So much is going on in this tiny sliver of our local countryside, at the point where three winding country lanes intersect. Already at this early hour insects galore buzz and hum, or stalk in sinister silence, about their daily affairs. There are bumble bees, their hairy bodies dusted with the gold of pollen. Honey bees, their leg baskets overflowing with the same bounty, and promising honey aplenty as they work their magic back at the hive. An early tortoiseshell butterfly has uncoiled watchspring-like tongue and is busily sucking life sustaining nectar from ragwort flowers. Beneath cinnabar moth caterpillars, wearing black-and-yellow football jersey stripes munch away at the leaves. Soon the deep dull red and smoky black adults will live out their brief life spells.

Nearby a luckless greenfly is being devoured by a ladybird while unheeding a herd of its kind suck the plant juices to sustain themselves. Pale mauve flowers are appearing among the thicket of creeping thistles on the wide grass verge. Bountiful honeypots hoverflies, beetles, bees, wasps, silver Y moths and of course butterflies jostle with each other for space at the table.

And all the while the chorus of bird song and calls continues. As my ears become attuned I pick them out one by one. The short clipped phrases of chaffinch, so different to the nasal wheeze of greenfinch, and backed by the tuneful jingles of goldfinch and linnet. 'A-little-bit-of-bread-and-nooo-cheese' sings a canary-bright yellowhammer, while from the tip of a last year's bulrush the related reed bunting sings a short song, which to my



ears stops just when it ought to get going! And the warblers: greater and the rarer lesser whitethroats, willow warble, and from the patch of woodland close by the chiffchaff, it's simple call repeated with metronome regularity. Blackcap and garden warbler, blackbird, the thrushes, robin, wren and more, the list goes on. What ought to be cacophony is woven effortlessly into an overall tapestry of nature seemingly at its most harmonious.

I climb over the gate into the marshy streamside fields beyond. Here tussocks of rushes are dotted around what the farmer may call sour land. A different wildlife community finds its place here. There are still reed buntings, and skylarks overhead, but reed and sedge warblers are singing; moorhens call and the occasional whinnying dabchick. Chicks of these latter two are around already, little balls of fluff like oversized bumblebees. As I pass through the field, lapwings beat anxiously to and fro, their urgent cries of alarm cleaving the air. As I get my eye in I spot one of their youngsters. Fully feathered but as yet unable to fly, it crouches motionless, relying on its cryptic browns and greys as camouflage. Only its eyes, tiny round pools of black velvet, betray its presence.

From the far side of the field I am instantly alerted by a loud 'call' which sounds a bit like a lamb bleating. I put call in inverted commas because it is the unmistakable sound of a male snipe. Remarkably, this sound is made by two of its feathers. As the bird flies over its territory every now and then it descends in a steep rapid glide. As it does so the two outer tail feathers are juttied out at a steep angle, and it is the wind rushing past these feathers produces this remarkable sound.

So where did I go to enjoy such a spectacularly special day in nature? Not to some faraway nature reserve, but within a few miles of Brixworth. Covered today by some twenty or more feet of water I was walking the valley of the Pitsford brook, starting from the junction where the Holcot-Brixworth road joined the road from Walgrave. Today it is under many feet of water on the nature reserve side of the causeway. The date: about 1948 when I was in my early teens.

– Brian Webster



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# Introducing the All Saints' Heritage Centre

Situated in Church Street, next to the Market Cross and wooden stocks, the Heritage Centre stands on the original village green. Once known as the Thomas Roe Charity Building, it was opened in 1811 as the first purpose-built charity school and has been an integral part of village life since then.

The building eventually fell vacant and the fabric began to decline, leaving the building almost derelict. In 1991 The Friends of Brixworth Church offered to buy the building and, after obtaining permission for change of use, the sale was completed and work to renovate the building began in March 1994.

Over a period of sixteen months many skilled volunteers from the village gave up their time, mainly at weekends, to strip back the building to four walls and then piece it back together into a purposeful amenity for use by the local community and the Church.

The Friends have continued to maintain the building and have made improvements to the facilities for the comfort and convenience of its users.

## Repairing the stonework

The Northamptonshire stone has served us well but two years ago we noticed deterioration on the roadside, where the stone gets spray from passing traffic. The spray from the salt applied to the roads in icy weather is very damaging to the stonework. To prevent damp from seeping through the walls into the interior of the building, and the stonework crumbling into the road, something had to be done.

In October 2020, The Friends employed an experienced local stone mason to refurbish the lower part of the wall on the roadside, replacing and repairing the damaged stone.

John Coleman came highly recommended and we have not been disappointed – the work was carried out to a very high standard, completed on time, and with a minimum of disruption.

You can see below where some of The Friends' money has been spent, but I don't think you will see the join!



## Centre for hire

The Heritage Centre can be hired for activities and functions (daytime and evenings). It is suitable for smaller groups i.e. club and committee meetings, a reception following a family church service; family celebrations, business meetings or training, private exhibitions etc.

### Facilities:

- Comfortable seating for 28 people – 16 on the lower floor and 12 on the mezzanine above.
- The room can be opened up for talks, training or exhibitions (display boards, screen and projector available for a small fee).
- Two toilets, one with full disabled access.
- Open-plan kitchen. Refreshments can also be provided by prior arrangement.



Photo courtesy of Ian Topham

- Fridge, microwave and crockery for up to 30 people.
- Full central heating at no extra charge
- Accessible for wheelchair users.

The hourly rate is £8.50. Special rates can be arranged for regular weekly or monthly bookings. The Friends are now accepting advance bookings for when COVID 19 restrictions allow the facility to re-open.

Please contact Tony 01604 880941 or email [brixworthchurchfriends@gmail.com](mailto:brixworthchurchfriends@gmail.com) for further details and availability. – Kate Knight

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# Beware the lure of lockdown dogs!

Of all the things keeping me and many of my friends sane through this lockdown, the demands of the canine members of our family come pretty much at the top of the list. The feeds, the walks, the training, the playing and the utterly required love!

For many people, the possibility of owning a dog has only been practicable in lockdown as working from home means that walks and training are more do-able. It can all seem like such a good idea, with everyone working from home, children to entertain, excuses to go for walks etc. But the reality can hit those who have never owned a dog before very hard indeed. A dog often wants to go out when it's just not convenient for you; they get ill, which can be expensive; their idea of play might involve disembowelling your favourite cushion and playtime with small children can result in misunderstanding and pain on both sides.

Turning to the professionals, I asked Iain Carpenter of Town & Country veterinary practice in Market Harborough for his advice.

## Supply and demand

Iain writes: The well-proven benefits of dog ownership on mental and physical wellbeing became even more important to many people during the lockdown. Many non-dog owners liked the idea of finding a four-legged friend to accompany their allowed outdoor exercise and to provide companionship and entertainment at home. This has sparked a massive increase in the number of people purchasing puppies for the first time.

The law of supply and demand has driven the price of puppies to previously incredible levels. Inevitably the seemingly insatiable demand has led to supply being met by some breeders driven more by profit. Restrictions on unnecessary travel and social contact means the usual advice to view the puppies with their mother before making any sort of decision has been impossible to follow. Many litters are now reserved by deposit within hours of the week-old puppies being advertised. The unfortunate consequence is unsuitable puppies going to ill-prepared new homes at a time when help in the form of puppy classes and other support is difficult or impossible.

We're already seeing a rise in the number of dogs that have to be rehomed when things inevitably start to go wrong. Most dog charities expect this situation to get much worse, especially when some sort of normality returns and dogs, which have never been left alone for five minutes, have to cope with their owners going back to work, out to social events and abroad on holiday.

## Do your homework

If you are hoping to find a dog for your home, there are a few very

important considerations to help you have a healthy and happy pet.

Most important of all is to thoroughly do your homework. Sadly, too many people selling puppies now have very little interest in how well they will fit into their new homes so may not give useful advice.

Most dog charities such as The Dogs Trust, RSPCA etc, have lots of general advice on the what responsible dog ownership is likely to entail, the demands of puppies and older dogs and the compatibility of dogs and families. Breed societies and the Kennel Club are good sources of information about how the different breeds vary in their traits, requirements and the breed related health problems that so many breeds can be prone to. They can also tell about the issues you are likely to face

After millennia of breeding for different purposes, domestic dogs now come in all shapes and sizes and there may well be a type that will suit you well.

Having decided what sort of dog will fit in with your way of life, how can you go about finding one safely? Please consider re-homing a rescued dog, there are still plenty out there but the best route is through well-known charities such as the Dogs Trust or the different breed rescue societies who will assess each dog and have a good idea of what environment it will thrive in.

To avoid a second rehoming, they usually will "vet" the prospective new owners carefully and may well turn down families with very young children or unsuitable gardens etc. There has been a massive growth in charities bringing in dogs from abroad, especially Eastern Europe. Sadly, many of these organisations do little if any suitability checking and are happy just to find homes.

## Checking for health issues

Please remember that a dog imported legally into the UK will have paperwork detailing its health status (from the EU a Pet Passport). Dogs must be over 12 weeks old before they can be vaccinated against Rabies and then are only eligible for entry at least 3 weeks later so they must be over 15 weeks of age. A younger puppy can only be an illegal import, which is a massive health risk.

## Internet searching

If you resort to internet adverts, please remember that Gumtree is completely unregulated. There are many organisations trying to get the advertising of any pet on this site banned and it is the source of many horror stories. Pets4Homes does much more to regulate its content, providing lots of advice and a secure deposit scheme. It will also take down some adverts if there have been real problems with the advertisers.

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When you see a promising ad, try to get as much information as possible especially about the parents. Many sellers now provide regular video clips of the puppies with their mother as they grow, it is so easy to do with a smart phone so there is no excuse not to – you should be wary of any seller refusing to supply a series of videos showing the puppies' development. The puppies should be eight weeks old and microchipped before being sold. By this time, they should have been wormed at least twice – preferably three times – and usually vaccinated. At least if they have a vaccination certificate provided, they will have been vaccinated and examined by a vet. You should try to arrange to pay the balance only when you are happy with the puppy and if you cannot see the puppy with its mother, be very suspicious.

*Iain Carpenter, Partner, Town & Country Veterinary Practice, Market Harborough*

### Can you really do this?

The RSPCA has some good advice here. They say: "Getting a puppy at any time is both exciting and daunting. With their seemingly boundless energy and ability to find joy in everything, it's rare to find someone who won't smile in a puppy's presence. It's easy to understand why they might be perceived as the perfect antidote to the current crisis.

However, puppies don't stay young for long and, regardless of age, are reliant on you and your family for the rest of their life. This is a significant responsibility and commitment, and one which no one should take lightly.

You may have lots of time now, but what about when everything goes back to normal? It's important to think about your previous lifestyle and whether you would have been able to get a puppy at that point. As well as being wonderful and very rewarding in many ways, puppies are messy, noisy, destructive and very demanding of time and energy on a daily basis. They can also be very costly, so prospective owners need to consider whether they're prepared for all this. If the answer is no, then getting a puppy - especially now - is probably not a good idea."

### Don't get Petfished

On the 6 April 2020, new legislation came into force which banned the sale of puppies and kittens in England from third-party sellers e.g. pet shops, traders or dealers. This means that anyone wanting to buy

or adopt must go directly to a breeder or rehoming centre. Similar legislation is also being planned for Wales. Buying from a random individual could be dangerous.

If you do decide to get a puppy then you need to be really careful and make sure that you don't get caught out by an irresponsible breeder or illegal third party dealer. Defra has produced lots of information to avoid being 'petfished'.

**DOG THEFTS ARE MASSIVELY ON THE INCREASE**

**PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE YOUR DOG UNATTENDED AT ANY TIME**

- Thieves are watching public areas waiting for the opportunity to steal your dogs.
- Stealing dogs left outside shops and left in cars.
- Stealing dogs from gardens, front drives and kennels.
- Watching you walk your dog, they may follow you.
- Snatching dogs while they are being walked.

**EVERY DOG HAS A VALUE, WHETHER FOR RESALE, RANSOM, BREEDING OR BAITING.**

- Never leave your dog alone outside, even on your own property.
- Do not let young children walk your dogs.
- If you know an elderly person who has a dog please try and walk with them.
- Make sure your dog is microchipped and the details are up to date.

**Let's fight back against the thieves and make dog theft as difficult as possible for them!**

### Keeping them safe

As Iain touched on in his piece, there are some very suspicious advertisements for puppies, and hugely increased incidents of dog and puppy theft, often with considerable violence. I was shocked when a dog in a nearby village was recently stolen – and even more shocked because it was a dog we had bred and was a much-loved family companion.

This dog had been targeted and was stolen in daylight and in front of the house. It can't have been a random crime because the house and garden are well hidden from the road – so this was planned.

The huge increase in dog thefts to satisfy the market and, more accurately, criminal pockets, has become big business but is often barely punished by law even if the perpetrators are found. Sadly, dog theft is now a daily occurrence.

### The Crime

Female dogs are often stolen for breeding in the continuing poison that is puppy farming. They are often made to have two or three litters a year. The increased stress, with often minimal veterinary care for the animals to maximised profits leads to much higher rates of congenital defects and infectious diseases, results in the puppies often having short painful lives and heartbreak for the owners.

Stolen dogs and puppies, without proper paperwork or evidence of proper time with their mother should always set alarm bells ringing. Read advertisements with care and watch out for signs that could suggest that not all is well. A few examples of adverts that should make you think again follow.

#### Springer Puppies – eight weeks

*I have to rehome my three springer puppies that I bought for my kids. It turns out my mum is allergic to them and it wouldn't be fair to her to keep them so all I want is the £6000 I paid for them or nearest so that I can make my money back.*

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Alarm Bells! Who buys three springer puppies like that – and then gets rid of them so quickly without taking them back to the breeder who, these days, will have a waiting list? While it can be hard to be sure, be wary of adverts that don't ring true.

Another ad ran: *Eight week old Springer puppy. Got to rehome because my son is allergic. Loves long walks, obedient, friendly. £2000.*

Allergies are a common excuse to offload puppies. Most worrying is the statement that an eight week old pup "loves long walks" and is "obedient." Pups at eight weeks should have only just left their mother and a quick gambol in the back garden is about the limit for a tiny canine. As for "obedient" – at that age, hardly, but somebody will more than likely be innocent enough to be taken in and pay up in good faith.

I turned to the police to get their take on the increasing incidents of dog thefts. PC Kev Lumbis of Daventry Rural North Neighbourhood Policing commented: "One of the main reasons dogs are stolen is for breeding. Neutering your dog not only offers health and behavioural benefits, but it can also help prevent the theft of your dog for breeding reasons."

A microchip, which is a legal requirement for dog owners, gives you the very best chance of being reunited with your pet should they become lost or stolen. Wherever they may end up in the country, a chip will ensure your pet can be tracked back to you.

You also have to make sure you keep this information updated should you move home.

Dogs must also wear an ID tag when a public place, with the name and address of its family. It is best not to put your dog's own name on the tag, as a thief who knows your dog's name can call them by their name and gain their trust.

Never leave your dog alone, such as tied up alone outside a shop, or alone in your car, even if you are only going for a few minutes. This is an invitation for an opportunist to strike when a dog is vulnerable. Leave your dog in the safety of your home instead.

Dogs love running off the lead, but, again, this gives thieves the opportunity to steal unsuspecting dogs. If you do let your dog off the lead, make sure you first train it properly so you can call it away from danger and come to you when it is called.

So a bit of a canine minefield but if you've done your research and approach dog ownership with eyes wide open owning a dog is hugely rewarding. As far as the many hundreds of stolen dogs and puppies go, it's fair to say that some criminals will not be thwarted by anything in order to get what they want – sometimes using violence or threats and with no thought given to the distress of the animal or the owner. The hugely inflated prices now being paid for dogs without proper paperwork and background checks is only fuelling this crisis.

– Kate Calnan

## Railway Winter update

The Railway is currently closed as normal for the winter. However, Covid-19 lockdown restrictions mean we are uncertain exactly when we can re-open in the Spring. At the moment we're aiming for running our first trains over the Easter Weekend.

We were fortunate that restrictions allowed us to run a very successful 'Santa Specials' season during four weekends in December. It was a bit different to the normal experience, with Santa handing out presents in a socially-distanced manner on the platform, but everyone seemed to have a really good time and it brought in some vital income for our volunteer-run line at the end of an otherwise very challenging year.

All being well, 2021 should be a notably better and we look forward to getting back somewhere nearer to 'normal' (whatever that means anymore!) over the Summer. Please keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for all the latest announcements.

Work continues towards finishing our southern extension, all in accordance with Covid restrictions, of course. Visitors to the Brampton Valley Way by The Windhover pub will notice clear progress on construction of a new bay platform, which is being built on land kindly leased to us by the pub's owners (Mitchells and Butlers). All being well, we hope to open the extension at some point later this year.

If anyone has a New Year's resolution to get out more, help a good cause, meet new people, learn a new skill, get fit or just try something different, why not come and join our friendly team of volunteers at the Railway? There really are roles to suit all interests, skills and capabilities, from restoring old steam locos to helping out in the shop or buffet or just doing a bit of gardening. You only need give as much time as you can afford. Visit our website ([www.nlr.org.uk](http://www.nlr.org.uk)) to find out more.



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# Brix & Mortar

## Adding value – on a budget

For homeowners in Brixworth looking to add value to their property, house extensions and renovations are pretty much guaranteed to do the job.

But what if you're a homeowner without the time and/or budget to invest in a full-blown extension?

We often get clients asking us this very question: how can I add value to my property with minimal effort and a limited budget? So, the team at Horts have put our heads together and come up with five easy ways to do just that.

Here's how to increase your property value without breaking the bank or investing too much time:

### Focus on your kitchen

The kitchen is known as the 'heart of the home' for a reason. It's the room we all tend to spend the most time in when we're at home. This is why potential buyers value it so much. If your budget only stretches to one single property improvement, make it the kitchen. A great kitchen can add as much as 4% to the value of your home, and a dated kitchen can easily turn buyers off.

Here are some easy kitchen improvement ideas that can add value:

- Invest in modern worktop surfaces
- Get new kitchen tiles – be bold and opt for a few more striking patterned tiles to create a statement backsplash
- Paint your cupboard doors

- Swap the cupboard door knobs for quirky ones

Yes, they're all small changes. But together, they can really help to spruce up a tired looking kitchen!

### Add more storage space

Never underestimate the appeal of lots of storage space for home buyers.

This is the one thing that we notice time and time again – buyers can easily be turned off a property if they discover that there just isn't enough storage space.

So, how do you deal with this issue if you simply haven't got the space?

Here's how to add extra storage to your home when space (and budget) is limited:

- Make use of all that space on blank walls by building shelves. Shelves are much easier to put up than you might think!
- Work out what you can do with any unused nooks and crannies. For instance, the dead space underneath your stairs. Could you add a cupboard there?

### Make your home more energy efficient

In this eco-conscious day and age, more and more home buyers are interested in finding out how energy efficient a property is before they invest in it. This doesn't just stem out of concern for the environment though. An energy-efficient home can also save you a considerable amount on energy bills.

Make your home more energy-efficient and you'll instantly make your property more appealing. Here's how:

- Make sure all windows and doors are double glazed for effective insulation
- Invest in a heating system with easily adjustable settings so that comfortable temperatures won't mean racking up bills
- Invest in LED lights

These improvements come at a cost, but they'll benefit your wallet, and our planet, in the long term.

### Create a more open-plan home

Working with a smaller property? Create the illusion of more space by knocking down a few walls. Do this effectively, and you could boost the value of your property without any extensions. Modern buyers are attracted to open-plan layouts, which can make a smaller flat or house look more spacious and make it easier for them to move around.

### Find out what movers in the Brixworth area are looking for

Not quite sure where to start? Have a chat with your local Brixworth Property expert as we know your area! We have a good understanding of what home movers in your neighbourhood are interested in and we can also help with recommendations of local trades that can assist you on any small renovations and extensions that can add value to your home. – *Stuart Little*

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# A window on Advent



This year Brixworth Community Church was unable to run their annual open air nativity service ... the first time in 16 years. This set us the challenge of how we would celebrate and share the joy of the season.

As well as producing the on-line service telling the story of Jesus's birth the church decided to celebrate this wonderful story through 24 Advent windows around the village. Volunteers were allocated a date and a Bible verse from the advent story. They were then free to represent their verse however they pleased in their front window. Participants excitedly reported members of the public being heard reading the verses outside their windows. On the 24th the final window was revealed outside the library with hot chocolate being shared and prizes given out to children who had taken part in the advent window anagram.

This has been described by many as a positive event that has come from what was actually a negative circumstance. It brought members of the church together in a joint endeavour at this isolating time and has also been reported by non-church members as a joyful reason to get out as families around the village to enjoy the run up to Christmas day whilst celebrating the story of the first Christmas.



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Facing page, clockwise from top left

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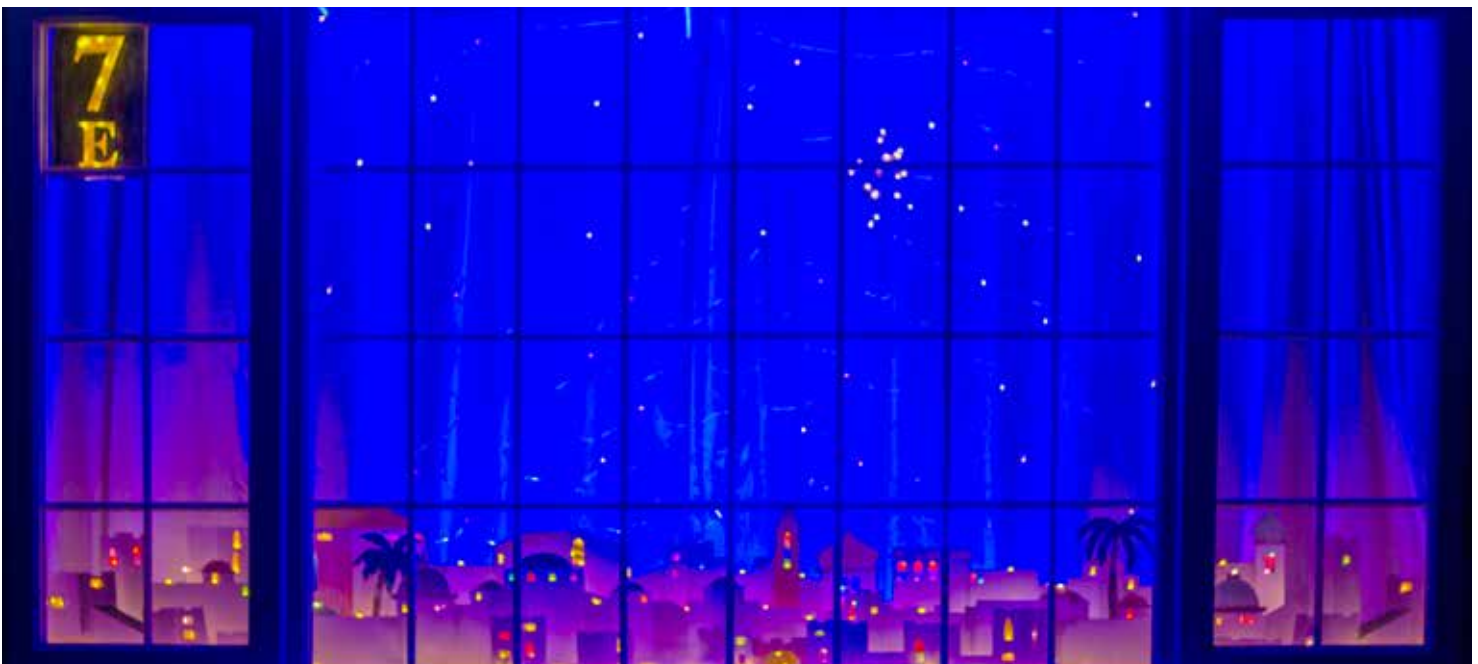
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# The Parable of the Brixworth Chalice

This parable – and you don't hear that word often these days do you? – begins, funnily enough, with a funeral oration at Brixworth's All Saints church. The funeral I'm talking about was for my close friend Victor's father and he was to make the address. His rehearsed attempts had been running at over an hour long and I'd been called in to help him get it down to a more acceptable six or seven minutes.

We'd started by just having him read it through, all twenty five pages of it (when it's your dad you are talking about, everything seems important, and you don't want to leave any detail out no matter how trivial). Hence the need for impartial ears.

"A long time ago," he began as if he were reading a fairy story. "A noble family sent its scion to the Holy Crusades. Two years later a retainer told them he had died in battle. They wanted the details. On the eve of his death, whilst dining in Jerusalem he'd made a toast. 'May the pious gain insight.' Now the only thing they had of his was a pewter cup."

"Stop there," I said. "This has nothing at all to do with your father. We only want to hear about your Dad. Scion? Retainer? No wonder it's taking over an hour to read out."

"But it has to do with the Church – All Saints – where the funeral is taking place. The family rewarded the servant who brought the news, grim as it was, and the cup was inscribed and gifted to Brixworth Abbey as it was then. And because of this for a short while it shone like a beacon."

"Interesting, but you don't slip a history lesson into the middle of a funeral service. Just summarise for me in a sentence the main points of your Dad's life."

"Well, he worked in the fields surrounding Brixworth as an agricultural labourer until he was thirty-five. He married Mum and they lived in a tied house. By the time he was forty he had enough money to buy the farm he worked on outright without a mortgage."

"Getting better. We call that a grabber. How his life turned around. Except it does leave a few questions dangling. Like how he made so much money so quickly?"

"He was on his tractor ploughing the field just like he'd done every day of his working life since he was fourteen, when he thought he saw something in the soil..."

I interrupted again. "Less detail please, just the basic facts. You're losing the audience. It's about his making money? That's all anyone wants to know. How he did it."



"And I'm trying to tell you. He'd only gone and found the famous Brixworth Chalice."

"The who?"

"The pewter cup the family donated to the Abbey."

"It must have been priceless."

"Quite the reverse. He took it to an assayer in Northampton to sell it and could have certainly done with any money. They just laughed at him, saying it was worthless."

"So then what?"

"He kept it. Tried to clean it up himself. It was very dirty. There was an inscription but he couldn't read it."

"Hardly auspicious."

"That was the funny thing. Dad wanted to connect with all those people centuries ago who must have drunk from it even though he had no idea of its true history. After just the smallest sip of water from it he could suddenly read the inscription. Wondered why he hadn't read it before."

"What did it say?"

"It was in Latin. He wrote it down, then got it translated. 'May the pious gain insight.'"

"So he got insight? That's why he could read the inscription?"

"Yes and the more he drank from it the more insightful he got. He quit his job, started all sorts of ventures, but everything he did, worked. For those few years he was like some furious money making machine"

"And this run of success landed him the farm. Did he continue making money after that?"

Victor pulled a doubtful face.

"He ran into an unexpected problem. He was always fairly secretive about the chalice, but Mum, well, he had to tell her obviously. And she became curious as to why he was always so furtive so she tried it for herself while he was out one time."

"And did she start businesses with newfound insight?"

"No. It came to her as clear as anything that he was cheating on her. From then on it became all about revenge. Things went downhill from there really."

"I thought this chalice was supposed to solve everything."

"It gave you insight, that's all. Didn't tell you what to do with it. For instance, Mum knew to hide the chalice from Dad as the very best way of spiting him. Without it he was lost. She taunted that she'd thrown it back into the field where he'd found it. Her new mission in life was now to make his as miserable as possible and she had a tremendous talent for it. He wasted so much time looking for it. He even bought a metal detector but he never found it."

I couldn't see any of this going over well in the church. No one wants to hear about feuding couples squabbles.

"Let's just cut the whole chalice thing and just say your dad was a farmer. Which he was." I might as well have spoken to the wind.

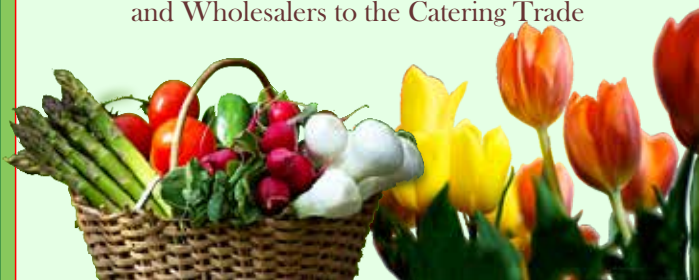
"So dad hired a researcher. A really clever man, sort of like a history detective and got him to find out all about the chalice and that's how I know so much. But you'll never guess what."

"What?"

"The whole thing was a con. The son who'd gone off to the crusades came back alive twenty years later. He hadn't died at all."

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# Be well, be on the water

BBC's Countryfile recently reported on the well-being benefits of spending time near bodies of water following a five-year study by researchers at The University of Exeter. Whether you're in, on or just walking around water, the research concluded that it can improve your mental and physical well-being. And members of Northampton Sailing Club would wholeheartedly agree!

Despite being one of the most land-locked counties in the UK, there are a whole host of water-based activities available on our doorstep in a beautiful countryside location.

During a really tough year, one of the good things to come out of our experiences in 2020 was the appreciation of what's available to us closer to home. Being out on the water (when we could), socially-



distanced sailing, windsurfing and paddle boarding was the tonic we all needed.

We're hoping that lockdown restrictions will ease for outdoor activities in the Spring and we have plenty to look forward to this year. The club provides fun, friendship, purpose and the opportunity to learn new skills or try something different. Hopefully, the spring and summer will give us more freedom and good weather to enjoy what's on offer.

Membership of Northampton Sailing Club is open to anyone of any age who is interested in water sports, from complete beginners to experienced paddle boarders, windsurfers and sailors. We also run taster sessions and courses in sailing, windsurfing and paddle boarding so you can try out different activities.

We have plenty to look forward to:

Windsurfing, paddle-boarding, canoeing and social sailing every day of the week

Youth and adult coaching programmes

Racing on Sundays, plus evenings in the Summer and special weekend events

Friday night paddle – Stand up paddle boarding, kayaking, BBQs, picnics, socialising and chilling

RYA training for sailing, windsurfing, power boating and more

Social events for adults and kids

For more information visit [www.northamptonsailingclub.org](http://www.northamptonsailingclub.org) or email [info@northamptonsailingclub.org](mailto:info@northamptonsailingclub.org).

– Tom Powell, Northampton Sailing Club

Knew nothing about any pewter cup and the servant turned out to have been a trickster who went up and down the country selling fake relics to grieving crusader families and churches. That's why the abbey had to throw it out even though it had a proven record of miracles, drew hundreds and had made them a small fortune."

"Don't say any of that. Drop all of it. People are attending for your Dad. Let's just remember him."

Thing is with Victor; he likes to finish what he's begun telling you.

"Mum lied too of course; she hadn't thrown it into the field at all. It was in the house the whole time and that's why he never found it. I came across it when I was clearing things out."

"You what! You mean you've got it! Only now you tell me!"

I could feel the hairs on the back of my neck begin to rise. What had the fool been waiting for, couldn't he have led with that!?"

"Have you tried it yet? Drunk from it?" I had so many questions.

Victor acted surprised. Shocked, even.

"Not a chance. Remember, I've seen what it can do. There might be things I don't want to find out."

"Balance that against our getting rich."

Victor started chuckling.

"Our? I See it's got to you already. What happened to the cleverest man in Brixworth's impartiality?"

Victor shook his head and got serious.

"When we're graveside and the service is over and we're throwing sods of soil in I'm going to put it in with Dad then."

\*\*\*\*\*

In the event Victor's oration was short and well received, never once mentioning the chalice. One mourner summed it up.

"Insightful." – Clive McDonald

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# News from the Library

Whilst it is not 'business as usual' at Brixworth Library we are still here if you need us, and we have been working away behind the scenes throughout the lockdowns.

With the library closed we had a chance to completely overhaul our shelves and make room for all the brand-new titles that are still arriving each week. So, although our opening hours are currently limited our selection of books definitely is not!

Staff have also been picking and packing books for our Select and Collect service. Later in this article you'll find information about how to sign up for this service.

## Need help?

Alongside our council colleagues we have been busy making calls to over 31,500 extremely vulnerable Northamptonshire residents. Calls ranged from organizing help with shopping or medication collections, to offering a friendly voice at the end of a phone. It was wonderful to be able to help those who needed us and to hear the stories of communities pulling together to support one another.

If you are shielding or self-isolating help is still available. Call Northamptonshire County Council on: 0300 126 1000 (option 5) for assistance and advice.

## Children's activities

The Summer and Winter Reading Challenges went online for 2020. Although we missed chatting with you about your books and awarding you your medals we were delighted to see that Northamptonshire had the highest number of children taking part in the Summer Reading Challenge in the East Midlands. We're now waiting to hear what this year's theme will be.

If like us you're missing our regular children's events, why not take a look at what's happening online? We update our Facebook page regularly with activity ideas and useful links for home schooling. We have even created some digital escape rooms for you to play. Northamptonshire Libraries also has their own YouTube channel where our

colleagues have been posting virtual Rhyme Times and Story Stomps.

Moving offline, Brixworth staff have spent each school holiday packing up activity bags for children to enjoy at home. We stuffed an entire half-term's worth of dinosaur-themed ideas, art materials, competitions, and scavenger hunts into the bags in October, and Christmas-themed resources in December. We are hoping to be able to offer similar packs next holiday.

## Looking for a quarantine project?

We know that it's very early but we need your help. A couple of years ago our wonderful craft group, Brixworth Workbox, along with our customers, created a beautiful, knitted Christmas tree for us.

2020 was not kind to our tree and we really need a bit of help to bring it back to its former glory. If you can knit, quilt, crochet, felt, or embroider some decorations for us we would love to display them on our tree this year. You can drop off your donations in the Returns Box outside the library (whenever the library is staffed). Thank you!

## Goodbye Sheila, hello Hugh

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome Hugh Toal to the team. Hugh is the manager of Daventry and Duston Libraries. As part of the reorganisation of the county into two unitary authorities Hugh will be taking over the running of Brixworth Library as well. We are sad to be losing Sheila Jolley



Photo courtesy of Ian Topham

as library manager. We've loved having her at Brixworth for the last two years, but she won't be far away as she will still be in charge of Kettering Library. So, goodbye Sheila and thank you!

## Current Library Services

Please note that the following information is correct at the time of writing but could change at short notice. The best way to keep up to date with our services and opening hours is to follow us on Facebook: @BrixworthLibrary or visit the County Council website: [www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/library-service/](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/library-service/)

Even when we are closed, there are plenty of services that you can access from home.

## e-Reads

The library is open 24/7 online! Borrow eBooks and eAudiobooks from 'BorrowBox' or 'Libby' or read newspapers and magazines via 'pressreader', all for free. Just download the apps or for more information (including how to access these resources in a browser) visit: [www.northamptonshire.gov.uk](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk) and search for "e-Reads".

## Family history

For a limited time only 'Ancestry' and 'Find My Past' are offering free access at home (normally this is only available via library computers). To benefit from free access, you need to visit the sites via the council webpage. Visit: [www.northamptonshire.gov.uk](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk) then search for "Free Subscriptions".

To access these apps and eResources you will need your library card number and 4-digit PIN.

## Become a member

You can sign up to become a virtual member via [www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/joinyourlibrary](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/joinyourlibrary). Once you receive your member number and PIN you can get started



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right away. If you would like to become a full member just get in touch. We will set up your account and let you know when your new card is ready for collection. We can also reset your PIN if you have forgotten it.

## Select and collect

Library staff can handpick up to five items for you to collect at the door. You can select your own items online: [www.librarycatalogue.northamptonshire.gov.uk/web/arena/click-and-collect](http://www.librarycatalogue.northamptonshire.gov.uk/web/arena/click-and-collect), or you can just tell us which titles, authors or genres you are interested in; plus your library card number and your contact details, and we will pick for you. Paper forms are also available from the library. (Please note that we are only able to supply items that are in stock at Brixworth as we are currently unable to request items from other branches.)

## Renewals and returns

During lockdown all email notifications and late fees have been suspended, however it is still a good idea to renew your books on time. Visit: [www.librarycatalogue.northamptonshire.gov.uk](http://www.librarycatalogue.northamptonshire.gov.uk) or get in touch.

If you are picking up a Select and Collect order you can return your old books in the Returns Box outside the front door. (The Returns Box is available during staffed hours only).

## Blue Badges and Bus Passes

The easiest way to apply for or renew a Blue Badge or Bus Pass is online. Visit [www.northamptonshire.gov.uk](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk) and search for "Blue Badge" or "Bus Pass". If you cannot apply online call the Customer Service Centre who will help you apply over the phone on: 0300 126 1000 (option 6).

## NOT currently available

- MyHermes Parcel Shop parcel returns and collections are currently unavailable at Brixworth Library. Please visit: [www.myhermes.co.uk/find-a-parcel-shop](http://www.myhermes.co.uk/find-a-parcel-shop) to find your nearest alternative Parcel Shop.
- Public toilets
- In-library events

## Opening times

The services we are able to offer will depend on the current local COVID guidelines, but Brixworth Library staff will be on hand to help at the following times:

- Tuesdays 10am to 4pm
- Thursdays 10am to 4pm
- Saturdays 10am to 2pm

## Contact Us

- Email: [brixlib@firstforwellbeing.co.uk](mailto:brixlib@firstforwellbeing.co.uk)
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/BrixworthLibrary](http://www.facebook.com/BrixworthLibrary)
- Phone: 0300 126 1000 (option 6, then option 1, and ask for Brixworth Library)

# What's on

4 Mar	Nature Tots	Country Park
4 Mar	Health Walk	Country Park
11 Mar	Health Walk	Country Park
13-14 Mar	Mothering Afternoon Tea	Lampport Hall
18 Mar	The life of the wife and family of a Canal Boatman	Village Hall
18 Mar	Nature Tots	Country Park
18 Mar	Health Walk	Country Park
25 Mar	Health Walk	Country Park
25 Mar	Brixworth Parish Council Meeting	Online
29 Mar	Brixworth PC Planning	Online
4-5 Apr	Antiques and Vintage Fair	Lampport Hall
5 Apr	Natural Minds	Country Park
13 Apr	SSPPG - AGM	Online
15 Apr	To the Manor Born	Village Hall
19 Apr	Brixworth PC Planning	Online

22 Apr	Annual Parish Meeting	Online
29 Apr	Brixworth Parish Council Meeting	Online
30 Apr	Gardening for Wildlife Tours	Lampport Hall
2-3 May	Art Craft and Design Fair	Lampport Hall
3 May	Natural Minds	Country Park
10 May	Brixworth PC Planning	Online
19 May	Lampport & HH Parish Council	Online
20 May	Bletchley Park, Espionage Factory	Village Hall
27 May	Brixworth Parish Council Meeting	Online
30-31 May	Animals at Lampport	Lampport Hall
31 May	Brixworth PC Planning	Online
7 June	Natural Minds	Country Park
25 June	Gardening for Wildlife Tours	Lampport Hall
26-27 June	Antiques and Vintage Fair	Lampport Hall

# Brixworth & Scaldwell Scouts

Once again Brixworth & Scaldwell Scouts are grateful for the support of our scouts and parents. The COVID lockdown means that we are still unable to meet, but we hope that we can return to face-to-face meetings when restrictions are lifted. We will notify everyone once we are able to resume sessions.

Although we are unable to meet, we want to use the time to build up our leader team so that we can return at full strength. We have a wonderful team of adult volunteers from all sorts of backgrounds who help to run the group for our Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers. Leader roles range

from helping with administration on the executive committee, to running fun-filled and adventurous activities. Commitment is flexible to fit around the amount of time that each volunteer is able to give, but without leaders, parent helpers and executive team members we would not be able to function.

If you would like to get involved, get in touch ([brixworth\\_gsl@btpopenworld.com](mailto:brixworth_gsl@btpopenworld.com)) and we'll help you to find a role that you'll enjoy, that will also really make a difference to the young people in our village.

In the meantime keep safe and well. – Bob Pickles, Group Scout Leader

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# Planning update

<b>DA/2020/0699</b> <b>Myton 9, Northampton Road, Brixworth</b> Construction of detached garden room	BPC objected DDC refused
<b>DA/2020/0597</b> <b>38, The Ashway, Brixworth</b> Erection of new fence and hedge at side of property (retrospective)	BPC supported DDC approved
<b>DA/2020/0575</b> <b>25, Lesson Road, Brixworth</b> Single storey porch extension to front and raise existing roof to rear (revised scheme)	BPC supported DDC approved
<b>DA/2020/0399</b> <b>Brixworth Centre, 12, Church Street</b> Replacement of existing windows with upvc double glazed windows to elevation fronting playground	BPC objected DDC approved
<b>DA/2020/0778</b> <b>16, Stannard Way, Brixworth</b> Insertion of front and rear dormers to form rooms in roof space	BPC supported DDC approved
<b>DA/2020/0758</b> <b>64, Stonehill Way, Brixworth</b> Demolition of existing conservatory and construction of single storey rear extension, first floor side extension	BPC supported DDC approved
<b>DA/2020/0740</b> <b>53, Northampton Road, Brixworth</b> Removal of bay window to front elevation and construction of single storey front extension	BPC supported DDC approved
<b>DA/2020/0666</b> <b>The Woodyard, A508 Brixworth Bypass</b> Cladding to south-east facing of existing building, retention of existing containers and positioning of portacabin.	BPC supported DDC approved
<b>DA/2020/0639</b> <b>1, Waterpike, Brixworth</b> First floor side extension including Juliet balcony to rear elevation	BPC supported DDC approved
<b>DA/2020/0563</b> <b>Marmalade Cottage 93, Northampton Road</b> Single storey rear extension	BPC supported DDC approved
<b>DA/2020/0949</b> <b>17, St David's Close, Brixworth</b> Single storey side extension	BPC supported DDC approved
<b>DA/2020/0917</b> <b>12, Hunt Close, Brixworth</b> Two storey side extension and new front porch and single storey rear extension	BPC supported DDC approved

<b>DA/2020/0969</b> <b>Brixworth Nursery Farm, Holcot Road</b> Variation of Condition 4 of planning permission DA/2012/0477 (Construction of 5 respite care chalets) to allow the chalets to be used as holiday lets in addition to the close care	BPC objected Application withdrawn
<b>DA/2020/0914</b> <b>23, Burrows Vale, Brixworth</b> Single storey front extension, conversion of integral garage to a study and rear	BPC supported DDC approved
<b>DA/2020/0789</b> <b>Berry Bank, Silver Street, Brixworth</b> Conversion of garage/store building to residential use. Single storey link from main dwelling to ancillary building. Internal alterations and additional windows and doors	BPC supported DDC approved
<b>DA/2020/0753</b> <b>The Rookery 36, Church Street, Brixworth</b> Variation of Condition 2 of planning permission DA/2018/0852 (Single storey rear extension, detached garage/carport building and detached pool room) to create first floor space including external stairs, gable roof with higher ridge and roof lights plus changes to ground floor openings	BPC supported DDC approved

## Saxon Spires Patient Participation Group

### Saxon Spires Virtual Carers Drop-In

Saxon Spires Patient Participation Group is working with the practice and Northamptonshire Carers to offer a Virtual Carers Drop-In session on Zoom.



The past few months have been a difficult and lonely time for carers. Carers past and present join together for a chat, relaxation exercises and quizzes at the fortnightly gatherings. They will be held on the first and third Tuesday each month from 1.30pm to 2.30pm. To get the login details for the meeting, contact Kay Giles at Northamptonshire Carers on 01933 677907.

### SSPPG Meetings

The bimonthly SSPPG Meetings are now being held on Zoom. The next meeting will be our AGM on Tuesday 13th April 6.30pm. If you are interested in supporting the work of the Practice and would like to join the meeting, please contact the Secretary.

For more information about the SSPPG, contact the Secretary Barbara Hogg on 01604 880552 or email [hoggbc66@gmail.com](mailto:hoggbc66@gmail.com). There is more information about our meetings and events, on the Saxon Spires website. – *Barbara Hogg*



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# All Saints', Brixworth

Good News for our Community

[www.brixworthchurch.org](http://www.brixworthchurch.org)

## Building (temporarily) closed - Church Open!

Thank you to everyone who came along to one of our Christmas events, online or in-person. Hundreds came to the Christmas Tree Festival. We had a great time baking gingerbread Christmas characters (see below). Loads gathered to sing carols around the Beacon, and then to celebrate the birth of Jesus outside the church on Christmas morning. It was a great joy to share those times with you, so thank you.

With the news of the latest lockdown, the church leadership reluctantly took the decision to close the building once more and move the church services fully online. While it is sad that we cannot see each other face-to-face, we're very grateful to God for the technology which allows us to livestream services.

**“It has never been easier to attend church  
and see what we're about.”**

If you visit our website (above), you will find the link (on a button) to the service which goes live at 10:25am each Sunday. We also meet every Thursday night on Zoom (starts at 7:30pm) for a time of laughter, chat, prayer and praise. You are most welcome to join in (you'll find the link for that on our website too!).

**David Reith, [revdavidreith@gmail.com](mailto:revdavidreith@gmail.com), 01604 880 139**

### A GREAT CHRISTMAS BAKE-ALONG

Over 40 children from 25 families joined in with our Live Christmas Bake-Along. With the help of two expert cooking guides, we managed to bake and decorate the Christmas characters, and tell the story. Thanks to all who joined in!

Congratulations to Rei who won the prize for the best decorated biscuits (right)! Your prize is on its way!



**CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR NEWS OF MORE EVENTS LIKE THIS!**



### Chairman's Chat

Stephen James chats about the precept, elections and staying safe.

### Grants Applications

£5000 granted to the Brixworth Centre.

### Regenerating St David's Playing Fields

Plans for an inclusive children's play park and MUGA.

### Northants Highways

Just one aspect of what Highways does for the county.

### Introducing A New Member of Staff

Meet Ciara Wanstall.



Courtesy of Ian Topham

### Chairman's Chat

At January's Council meeting, the decision was taken to, once again, keep this year's precept for the parish's element of the council tax at the same level as last year. This has been achieved despite income, due to COVID-19, being considerably less than budgeted for, by obtaining more competitive quotations for services.

Elections for this new Unitary Authority are still, at the time of writing, planned for 6 May and this is where you will be asked to cast your votes on three items:

- Councillors for the Unitary Authority
- Police and Fire Commissioner
- Parish Councillors



Due to social distancing there may be two polling stations, so please check your polling card as to which one you should attend.



Finally, as the vaccination programme is rolled out through the country please follow the guidelines—take care and stay safe.

## Brixworth Parish Council Approves A Grant For Brixworth Centre

The Council was pleased to support a grant for up to £5000 for new windows at the Brixworth Centre which was most welcomed as fires, water damage and COVID-19 has put undue stress onto this much loved and used venue.

If your local group would like to be considered for a Brixworth Community Grant, please check eligibility and download the form <https://www.brixworthparishcouncil.gov.uk/forms/>

These grants can be used by voluntary groups to help residents of the Parish.



## Plans For An Inclusive Children's Play Park and MUGA

The St David's Play Park & MUGA Working Group has over the last four months put in many hours of research into how to deliver the much needed regeneration of St David's Playing Fields and in particular the area where the tennis court and children's play area sits. The Group submitted its brief for approval by the rest of the Council and that brief will now go out to tender.

Chair of the Working Group, Sandra Moxon, placed great emphasis on equality and wanted to ensure that both the play park and the MUGA were truly inclusive. In summary, the brief states that the Council is looking to not only encourage unrepresented sports such as netball, basketball and hockey but also enable disability sports to be played on the MUGA and in addition to this the brief emphasises the need for the play park to offer the same opportunities for children of all abilities—a place to meet and a place to play together.

## Improving Facilities For Indoor Sports

In the meantime another Working Group, supported by Tom Mitchell, Chair of the Planning Committee is looking at enhancing and providing indoor sports on the first floor of the library and it is hoped that a new and improved floor, together with energy efficient lighting, may be able to further support sports such as dance, martial arts, Pilates and yoga, in addition to attracting new ones such as basketball, badminton, netball, table tennis, gymnastics, fencing and even a climbing wall.

Jackie Bird, Chair of the Indoor Sports Working Group stated, 'We are working closely with Mike Nice, the Community Centre Manager, on this project and in addition to improving the facilities for indoor sports we also plan to update the storage area and make the Community Centre a truly wonderful space offering a wider range of activities for the children, young people and adults of Brixworth.'

## Consultation

It is important to Brixworth Parish Council that we get these projects right for our community and therefore the residents will be consulted on proposals put forward by the design companies. As we are still in a lockdown situation the Council will use social media for this process, therefore please keep an eye on our website and other social media platforms as this will be your opportunity to identify ideas and feedback to the Council.

## Highways: Flooding, Gritting and Gullies



BPC receive regular updates from Northamptonshire Highways and one of their most recent updates focussed on the effort of the Highways team and the job that they do for the residents of Northamptonshire regarding flooding and gullies.

**Fact** – there are 150,000 gullies across the county and just five teams work their way around cleaning and ensuring that they are doing the job of draining excess water away. Most residents don't take much notice of these important parts of our roads, personally I do as Highways Representative for BPC and often poke a stick down a gully in order to aid drainage – sad but true! But on a County level there is a whole gully programme and with only five teams the priority is given to high risk and A roads; those small village roads rely on Street Doctor or people like me with a stick!

However, Winter not only brings water it can also bring cold snaps which create ice and therefore Northants Highways has to get the gritters out – as Jason Smithers the Cabinet Member For Place, Highways And The Environment says it 'is a delicate balance as [they] do not want to grit if there is rain but to not grit puts lives at risk'.

### Street Doctor

Highways relies heavily on Street Doctor, its online highway defect reporting system allows you to report problems and with the December floods the usual online system triggered an emergency and allowed some 200 telephone calls to be received in one day! If you have any Highways related problems you wish to report please visit [www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/streetdoctor](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/streetdoctor)

## Parish Councillor Elections 6 May 2021—Make A Difference

By becoming a parish councillor you become someone your community will look to for help, guidance and support - a community leader with the power to influence decisions for the benefit of the people you serve. Seeing your community change for the better, as a result of decisions you have helped make, is something that can give you a sense of achievement and pride.

For further details, please contact the Parish Clerk or the Elections Team at Daventry District Council on 01327 871100. Alternatively, you can visit the Electoral Commissions website.

## Meet Brixworth Parish Council's New Assistant Clerk



Whilst 2020 was a difficult year for many, the Parish Council were pleased to end the year on a positive note by welcoming Ciara Wanstall to the Council as an Assistant Clerk.

Ciara is originally from Yorkshire and now lives in Northamptonshire with her husband, Alex, who grew up in Brixworth. Ciara brings a strong skill set to the Parish Council being a qualified, non-practising, solicitor who trained at a top 50 UK law

firm and practised as a Private Client solicitor in a firm commended by The Times Best Law Firms. In light of changing circumstances, notably the global pandemic and the fact she and her husband are painstakingly renovating their whole house, Ciara has retired from the corporate life in order to find a more suitable work/life balance.

Ciara was keen to start working in mid-December 2020 in order to hit the ground running in the new year by assisting the Parish Clerk, Peter Rowbotham, in a variety of tasks to help with the smooth running of the Council's activities. Subject to coronavirus restrictions and guidance, Ciara's role will see her act as a friendly face and point of contact in the Brixworth Community Centre and Library, and until further notice is currently working eight hours per week, namely Monday and Wednesday mornings, from home assisting with various projects and tasks.

In addition to working hard, Ciara is passionate about animal welfare and loves to travel and experience different cultures. Her travel highlights are extensive but a safari in South Africa, back packing across South America and trekking Machu Picchu are particularly memorable!

On behalf of the Council, we welcome Ciara to Brixworth.

**Full Council (Thursdays):** 25 Mar, 29 Apr, 27 May

**Media & Comms (Wednesdays):** 10 Mar, 14 Apr, 12 May

**Planning (Mondays):** 08 & 29 Mar, 19 Apr, 10, 31 May


Please check website and noticeboards to confirm dates and times.  
 Note: All meetings are currently being carried out via video conferencing.  
 For further information please contact the Clerk.

### Contact the Parish Clerk:

Peter Rowbotham, 10 Shelland Close, Market Harborough, LE16 7XU  
 E-mail: parish.clerk@brixworthparishcouncil.gov.uk Telephone: 07983 141786

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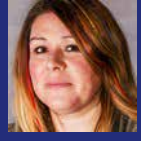
**Stephen James**  
*Chairman*



**Sandra Moxon**  
*Vice-Chairman*



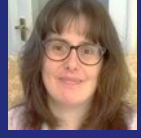
**Elaine Coe**  
*Chairman, Media & Communications*



**Tom Mitchell**  
*Chairman, Planning*



**Frances Peacock**



**Ian Barratt**



**Jackie Bird**



**James Collyer**



**Kevin Parker**



**Lynne Compton**



**Stuart Coe**



**Peter Rowbotham**  
*Parish Clerk*



**Ciara Wanstall**  
*Assistant Clerk*





**BRIXWORTH**  
COMMUNITY CHURCH  
*Following Jesus Together*

# BRIXWORTH MATTERS

[www.brixworthcommunitychurch.org](http://www.brixworthcommunitychurch.org)

(Charitable Incorporated Organisation number 1188559)

Well 'they' did say it would be a tough winter and it has proved to be the case. However, with the vaccines now well and truly being rolled out, there is a sense of hope.

That said, the hope that we have is quite fragile. Many questions still remain and therefore, I guess, a great deal of uncertainty. Are we over the worst now? Will the vaccines work, in light of the new variants? What will life look like when it is finally over?

That is why I wanted to tell you about the Christian 'hope'. It is a different kind of hope. When we hope in something normally, we hope that it will happen but we know too that it might not. For example, we hope the sun will shine tomorrow but we know that it might not. Or, more relevantly perhaps, we hope the vaccines will work but we know there is always a slim chance they might not.

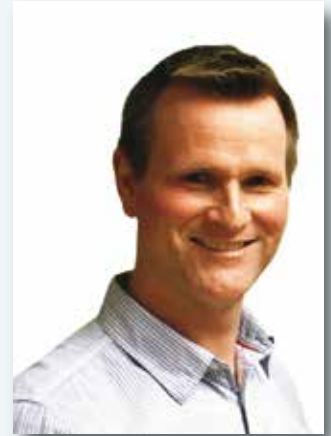
However, the bible talks about another kind of hope that can be so helpful for us as we go through these difficult times. When a person places their trust in Jesus Christ, they begin to enjoy a friendship with God that will go on in this life and then forever in heaven after we die. This is the Christian hope and it is absolutely certain. There is not even a slim chance it will not happen.

But this hope also does something. It is like it shines a light from the future onto our present circumstances and provides us with purpose, freedom and peace. It is able to quench the fears that we all face daily at the present moment. It is even able to quench the fear of illness or death.

We still may have questions about such amazing things, but in the Bible God gives us answers and promises that are completely trustworthy because He is trustworthy.

No matter what is going on in our personal circumstances or the circumstances of the nation, we can know in Jesus, God loves us and is with us and as Jesus said to his disciples before ascending into heaven, he will be 'with us always, to the very end of the age' (Matthew 28 verse 20).

Many Blessings as always. [Andy](#)



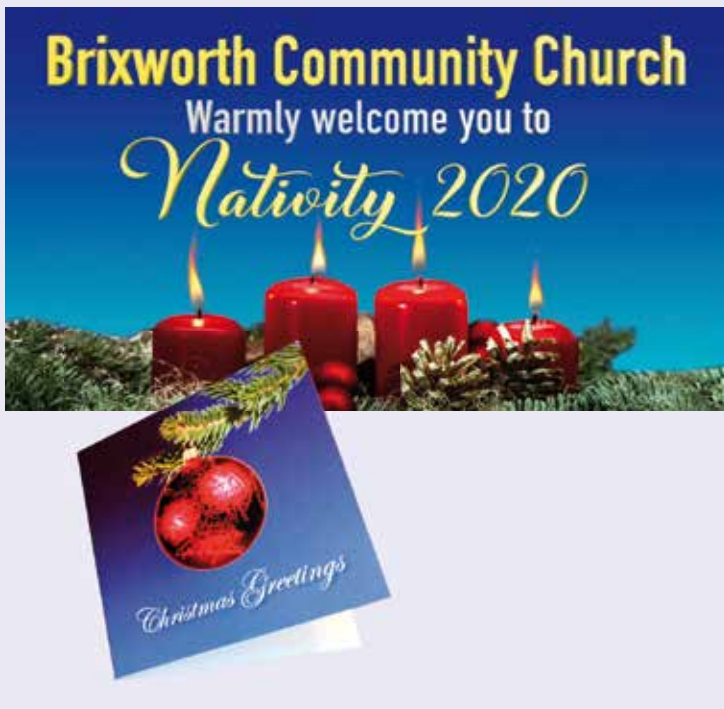
Contact Andy Lloyd-Williams on  
07958 604961



## Senior Citizens Receive Individual Christmas Cakes

Oh COVID-19, destroyer of so many community events and traditions..... but no, wait.... COVID-19, creator of many "think outside the box", we will not be beaten moments!

So it was, one Saturday morning in early October when 5 ladies were enjoying a socially distanced walk over the fields around Arthingworth. Knowing that the annual Pensioners Christmas Lunch would not be able to go ahead an idea came into being that we could show the elderly within our community that we had not forgotten them. A few phone calls and zoom meetings later, a group of 15 ladies were preparing to make individual Christmas cakes. By the beginning of December 180 cakes had been baked, decorated and lovingly packaged and were awaiting distribution. As cakes were delivered to the elderly (in lieu of the Christmas lunch), to the nursing homes, and Saxon House (in lieu of Carol Services), Fun Days and to the shop staff in Hunter's Way (as a thank you for all their sterling efforts throughout the pandemic) the joy experienced by the recipients was truly humbling for the givers.



For the past few years a popular event earmarked for the village calendar has been the Christmas Outdoor Nativity Service organised by Brixworth Community Church. Held outside the Library and always attended by several hundred people only once has alternative arrangements had to be implemented (due to bad weather). 2020 provided the second occasion; this time with no crowds allowed due to the Covid Pandemic.

However the tradition was maintained thanks to modern technology with the Service filmed and (still) available on YouTube. All the traditional ingredients of a traditional Nativity were in evidence via recorded carols, a lovely solo rendering of "O Holy Night" by Deborah Haines, readings by church members plus personal recollections of that first Christmas from Mary, Joseph, a Shepherd and one of the Wise Men. The evening concluded with a strong message from the Church's Minister Andy Lloyd Williams. We are looking forward to returning to a "live" event next Christmas.

## Brixworth Village Advent Windows



Our grateful thanks go to all those who so willingly volunteered to decorate their windows for the Advent Calendar display. Who would have thought that initially some were quite overwhelmed, feeling quite daunted by the prospect.

But thanks be to God whose Spirit gives wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kind of skills, to make artistic designs and all kinds of crafts.'

(Exodus 31 verses 3 - 4) the results were simply amazing. If you missed seeing the windows the video can still be found on the 'Brixworth Community Church YouTube Channel' under Brixworth Advent windows 2020.



**YouTube Channel**

**Brixworth Community Church**

Every Sunday  
Online Short Service.

Every Sunday  
Kids Church Online.

Every Wednesday  
Midweek Message.





# Getting ready for the new cricket season

Looking at the snow-covered cricket pitch in January, it seems hard to believe that it won't be long before the new season starts. But by the time you read this, the snow will surely have melted and preparations will be well underway.

Brixworth Cricket Club is one of the village's leading sports clubs and plays at both St David's and at the Dallas Burston Ground on the Northampton Road. We have four Saturday sides, Women's and Girls' softball and hardball teams and junior teams at under 7/9/11/13/15. We are very much looking forward to the start of a new cricket season in April if government and ECB guidelines allow us to.

The cricket sessions offer a chance for juniors to learn to develop their sporting skills, make new friends, keep fit and learn a summer sport. We have junior training on Friday nights for 100 or so five to fifteen year olds in mixed groups and there is a Women and Girls session from aged nine to 60 on Thursdays.

All new members are welcome to come and try cricket whether you are experienced or just want to try a new sport.

The cricket club has many juniors from all the local schools with a large group from Brixworth primary school, many of which have gone on to play for the Saturday adult teams and ladies and girls teams on Sunday and even county squads. We are Clubmark accredited which means the club is recognized by the ECB as a "safe, rewarding and fulfilling place for participants of all ages."

Thursday and Friday evening's Juniors and Women's and Girls training sessions will start again at 6pm on Thursday 1st and Friday 2nd April and run until early September. The evenings at the ground on Northampton Road are always popular and great fun. With over 100 children being coached on the outfield, parents enjoying a beer/wine/prosecco or two from the clubhouse bar and food available from the BBQ on Fridays. It really is a good, fun night out for the whole family where everyone from the village is welcome at a beautiful venue. (Of course, we will be strictly following whatever the government's COVID rules are at the time!).

The club is also looking for any 'retired' cricketers who may like to umpire our 3rd or 4th Saturday teams. If you are interested, please tell us via the club website (link below).



New Members will be extremely welcome to the club, so if you are up for trying something new you can join us by visiting <https://brixworthcricketclub.clubbuzz.co.uk/join> or contact Arthur for any junior enquiries on 07900 905955 or Kiran on 07708 920037 for any Women and Girls enquiries. – Andrew Dale

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