

Oundle Chronicle

Established 1991

Best Newspaper 2016 Shine School Media Awards

Spring 2020

We'll meet again



A community is defined by how it responds to a crisis. And what has most defined Oundle's response to the Covid-19 pandemic is how people complied with and adapted to government orders to completely reshape their everyday lives in ways not witnessed since the war. Through it all, people have not just looked out for themselves, but have looked out for others.

When the lockdown was announced on 23 March, overnight every shop hung a "closed until further notice" sign in its window, and the streets were emptied of the usual flow of traffic. The few pedestrians running essential errands or taking daily exercise manoeuvred to put distance between each

other on the pavements, unsure whether to extend greetings or turn away. Every encounter has required a mental adjustment to new routines and customs.

The shock of the lockdown initially led to stockpiling of essential goods, and shortages of toilet paper and soap, forcing pharmacies and supermarkets to temporarily impose rationing. Complaints have been aired about people not following the one way systems in supermarkets or not respecting social distancing markers in queues outside shops. Suspicions have been raised about whether groups were part of one household or whether drivers were actually making essential trips.

Few people have voiced conspir-

acy-laced scepticism. In a sheltered rural town like Oundle, if you have not been directly affected by the disease, or do not know anyone who has been affected, the risks can seem either a remote possibility or a looming potential threat. Deciding how much to adapt one's behaviour raises questions about whether masks are essential, or how much hand sanitiser to use.

But what has most defined Oundle's community is how quickly people organised to help those at risk if exposed to the disease. Hundreds of volunteers have been mobilised to offer help to anyone who might be self-isolating and unable to leave the house to pick up prescriptions or food shop. Neighbours have slipped contact cards

through letterboxes offering help or signed up with groups like Care and Share on Facebook, Volunteer Action and Community Action at Oundle School to be on call to respond to requests for help.

Hundreds of volunteers in town organised to respond to the nation-wide shortage of personal protective equipment for health care workers, coordinating streamlined operations that worked throughout the day to contribute to the production of scrubs and face shields for local hospitals, care homes and surgeries.

And on Thursday evenings, streets across Oundle have reverberated with the sound of residents expressing their continued gratitude for health workers.

The Chronicle Team



THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Gwyneth Angel
Zac Atkinson
Alice Blackmore
Ben Clayden
Meagan Iu
Esme Kroese
Millicent Riordan
Millie Trotter
Sunny Woodend

STAFF EDITORS

Leigh Giurlando
Catriona O'Brien

Council tax increases announced

Millie Trotter

The Oundle Town Council announced a 7.3% increase in the town's council tax precept for the 2020-21 budget.

Oundle's precept increased by 2% last year, following annual increases of 11.9%, 9.5%, 8.6% and 10.5%. Since 2014, the council tax for an E band property in Oundle has increased from £1880 to £2408. Oundle has the highest council tax rate in East Northamptonshire.

East Northamptonshire Council agreed to increase its share by 3.5%, adding £5 to the average household's bill.

Nationally, parish councils have increased their council tax income by more than a third since 2015-16. Larger councils can only increase bills by 2.99% plus a further 2% if they provide social care.

District councils were allowed an increase of either 2.99% or £5 on their share. Parish councils do not have a cap.

In a December meeting's debate about the town's precept, Councillor David Chapple cautioned that the council has to be careful about what it spends, but that he is

"proud of the record of this council".

The council has worked to reduce expenditure, in particular, subsidies for The Hub, but without doing "anything drastically significant", they feel there is not much that they can trim from the budget if they want to keep a reserve.

The difference between a 3% or 7% increase helps the council maintain a three months' reserve.

Some councillors expressed concern about how long the council can expect to continue raising the precept, without affecting affordability for many residents.

Councillor David Chapple said: "This council has driven a programme of support for organisations within the town, for our buildings within the town. We try to add to the quality of life in this town, but it doesn't come cheap

"We're not honestly comparing like for like when we look at the other towns in East Northamptonshire. That's not to say we shouldn't be careful about what we spend, or that we shouldn't be critical about what we do."

Council continues delivery of services

In line with Covid-19 measures, the Town Council has scaled back operations, while keeping council business running behind the scenes. All parks, Fletton House, Victoria Hall and the Hub Café remain closed, and staff are working from home.

Following guidance from a Northamptonshire Environmental Health Officer, the Thursday market has reopened with five stalls selling essential goods. A one-way system keeps shoppers at a safe social distance. The council has not yet determined whether the Farmer's Market can reopen safely under the new guidelines, and will be measuring and mapping the Market Place before making a decision.

Council meeting agendas are still posted online, and meetings have been conducted via Zoom, to which members of the public can be invited to attend. The Annual Town Meeting was cancelled, as were all local elections due to take place on 7 May.

Many local authorities across the country are facing funding shortfalls and increased expenditure due to coronavirus pressures. While the Town Council anticipates a decline of revenue due to loss of building hire charges and market fees, they said the impact of the shutdown on the council's balance sheet will be minimal. The precept makes up most of the council's income and is a protected revenue stream. The council has received a £10,000 grant distributed by East Northants Council as part of the coronavirus business relief scheme for the running of the Queen Victoria Hall.

On 8 May new legislation confirmed the new unitary structure for North and West Northamptonshire Councils to start on 1 April 2021. This followed the postponement of the scheduled unitary elections.

Preparations for creating the two new councils will continue to ensure that all services can be safely delivered on day one.

Uncertain future for Oundle Museum

Esme Kroese

Oundle Town Museum has been located at the Courthouse since 2000 and is coming to the end of its 20 year lease on January 1, 2021. It has requested a new 20 year lease from Oundle Town Council, which owns the building.

The Chair of the Management Committee, Carole Bancroft-Turner said they had not heard anything from the council about the status of their lease.

At committee meetings, the council has expressed uncertainty about whether they will plan to sell the building in future years and are debating the renewal of the lease.

The lack of a long lease could be the end for the museum. Without a long lease, it would struggle to apply successfully for grants on which it is dependent for funding.

The council is discussing the future ownership of the Courthouse, and may consider its sale due to ongoing maintenance costs. In 2013 the council offices were located at the Courthouse, and there was widespread opposition from town residents to sell the Courthouse when the offices moved to the newly refurbished Fletton House. Since then, units have been leased to small businesses, as well as the Museum, and the council receives just

over £40,000 annually from rents.

The Museum's first dedicated space was opened in 1994 in the Drill Hall on Benefield Road. It was founded by a group of friends who met in 1981 while studying the history of Oundle. Originally the group organised small three-day exhibitions in Oundle School's Yarrow Gallery, which led to the foundation of the Oundle Historical Society. The town council was supportive of their work and offered a permanent space in the former Drill Hall at subsidised rates. It relocated to larger premises at the Courthouse with funding from a Heritage Lottery Grant, and in 2007 the museum reached accreditation status after meeting the nationally agreed standards for museums in the UK. In 2018, the museum won the Best Volunteer Project Award at the Northamptonshire Heritage Awards held at Althorp House. The main exhibition theme changes every year and aims to appeal to all ages.

Mrs Bancroft-Turner said "There's a lot we'd like to do to modernise the museum, but we can't apply for grants unless we have a long-term lease."

The Oundle Museum is run by volunteers with oversight by a board of trustees. Day-to-day

management is by a committee of twelve volunteers, with some who have served since the founding in 1994 and who have dedicated thousands of hours to the museum. There are 50 stewards who staff the museum during open hours from March to November.

The museum staff are anxious about the future and the lack of communication from the council. "We hope that the council are supportive of us and all the work we've done over the last 20 years," said Mrs Bancroft-Turner.

Oundle Chronicle
Cripps Library
Church Street
Oundle
Peterborough
PE8 4EE

E: oundlechronicle@gmail.com
www.oundlechronicle.co.uk

Neighbourhood Plan rejected by examiner

The Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan suffered a setback in the final report of the independent examiner after he judged that the plan was not fit to go forward.

The examiner said that the plan had procedural issues that had not been complied with. He wrote that the council should have gone back to Regulation 14 after public consultation and should have had Strategic Environmental Assessments. He also said their site assessment methodology was not as robust as it needed to be.

The council "fought tooth and nail for it" but are unable to go further with the plan according to the examiner. The council is not convinced by the examiner's opinion, but having already spent £80,000 on the plan, mostly from grants, it does not have the funds to challenge the decision through the courts.

The collapse of the Neighbourhood Plan effectively gave the East Northants Planning Policy Committee the green light to override Oundle's preferred housing allocations.

On 20th January, East Northants Council Planning Policy Committee gave the go ahead to add three housing sites in Oundle to its own Local Plan, ignoring the preferred allocation of housing sites detailed in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan.

The town council has since discovered that as early as 2018, the ENC revised their local plan to include the three sites in Oundle, but didn't inform the OTC. Most importantly, the ENC needed delivery of housing requirements to be completed by a 2025 deadline, but never shared that deadline with the OTC. Knowledge of the deadline would have changed the actions of other developers in the town and the pace that was taken on the plan by the council.

The proposed developments before the ENC will use up most of the housing allocation that the town is required to provide by 2031.

The experience has left council members feeling cynical about the government's pledge to support localism through neighbourhood plans. "The whole thing was a ridiculous exercise that cost everyone a lot of money," Councillor Clive Humphries said.

He said the intention was good, because it gave people the right to say what was best for the local community. "But it was a smoke screen. All the neighbourhood plan did was open up to developers places that were identified that could be developed," he said. "It's happened nationally. It's becoming a scam."

Council members asked, "This begs the question, do you need a Neighbourhood Plan at all, or do we just try to get the best local plan we can?"

ENC overrides town objections to housing allocations

Despite a concerted opposition campaign by Oundle residents, including over 80 public comments objecting to the plan, the application by Gladman Developers for 130 houses on Cotterstock Road was given outline planning approval by the East Northants Planning Management Committee at a meeting on 28 February.

Objections to the site included the reports of odours from the adjacent sewage treatment works, and the increased traffic load at the entrance to the nearby primary school, as well as objections from the Cotterstock and Glapthorn parish councils.

The ENC commissioned an independent review of the odour impact assessment that had been submitted by the developers, and said that they were satisfied that there was no evidence to refuse the applications on the grounds of odour. They said that eight odour complaints had been received by local residents from 1998 to 2003, and four were received in November 2019, none of which were substantiated.

The committee examined traffic concerns, and were told by the council's highway consultant that there was no evidence that the development's increased traffic would have a material impact on the neighbourhood. The site's proposed improved pedestrian and cycling facilities both on and off the site were thought to be a positive contribution.

Nevertheless, the outline approval specified highway conditions that must be satisfied before the development can progress, including details for a right hand turn ghost island on Cotterstock Road, and a scheme for the reduction of the speed limit. It was stated that the development cannot begin until a permanent extension of the existing 30mph speed limit has been implemented, and the full construction details of the continuation of St Peter's Road have been submitted.

The developers agreed to a request by the Town Council to make a financial contribution in the S106 Agreement of £172,000 to deliver a cycle link from Cotterstock Road to New Road.

VE Day celebrations in Oundle



Dame Vera Lynn's wartime anthem "We'll Meet Again" was the soundtrack for this year's celebrations of the 75th anniversary of VE Day on 8 May. Its nostalgic optimism resonated with people's feelings about separation and uncertainty in the age of the coronavirus pandemic.

Although the anniversary had to be scaled back due to the shutdown, Oundle turned out in style.

At the 11am two-minute silence, the Oundle Branch of the Royal British Legion quietly laid a wreath at the War Memorial in tribute to those who lost their lives.

Later in the afternoon, from houses festooned with homemade bunting, neighbours gathered in their front gardens and doorsteps to celebrate.

Across town celebrations included neighbours on Benefield Road (above) who sat in their front gardens for 4pm tea. A few streets away, but clearly audible in the silent afternoon, households on Clifton Drive lined the street to sing songs led by Christine Eames. In the centre of town, Douglas Butler organised an evening sing-along with Stephen Dalzell for West Street residents.

Limited places still available in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 for September 2020



Laxton
Junior School
OUNDE



Please contact our Admissions team to arrange a personal introduction to our outstanding school, teachers and pupils.

Ms Lesley Taylor, lat@laxtonjuniorschool.org.uk
www.laxtonjuniorschool.org.uk

An inspiring independent co-educational day school for children aged 4-11 years

Police beat

Millicent Riordan

Operation Snap has made its first conviction. The police undertaking allows people to upload dashcam footage of bad driving, and resulted in the conviction of a motorist who overtook a cyclist at 90mph. The man had his license revoked for six months and was fined £592 with surcharges of £59 to be paid to victim funds.

On the night of the 15 December, Designers, was burgled. The door was forced open and cash, an iPad, and other products were stolen. This crime occurred between 22:00 on the 15th and 8:00 the following morning.

Shoplifters were chased out of the Waitrose carpark on 16 December by staff and customers; they dropped all stolen goods. On 23 December a car windscreen was smashed whilst parked on Old School Avenue

Between 8 and 10 January a 14-foot tipper trailer was stolen from Ashton Wold. The police are requesting any information of suspicious activity.

A house on Ashton Road was burgled between 11:30am on 10 January and 2:17pm the next day. The perpetrators searched the house before leaving.

On 19 February, an elderly man, who lives on St Peter's Road, was robbed after two men conned their way into his house three times in one day. The perpetrators entered under the guise of both business men and alarm-fitters. One of the men, aged between 50 and 60, was described as walking with a limp and carrying a dark blue holdall bag with red edging.

Another instance of distraction burglary was also recorded on the 1 February in Victoria Road at 6:50pm. A man claimed to represent the water board and stole £100 from an elderly man.

Police are appealing for witnesses after a collision occurred in St Osyths Lane on 31 January at 9:55 am. An 81-year-old man was flown to Addenbrooke's Hospital with serious injuries after being hit by a white Ford Fiesta.

Between 4pm on 9 February and 2am on the following day, a sports bag was stolen from a vehicle on Benefield Road.

There have been reports of a light-coloured Land Rover being driven by perpetrators who have stolen an assortment of tools from various vehicles. Similarly, tools were stolen from a white Ford van in Main Street, Upper Benefield, between 3pm and 3:10pm on Thursday, 27 February.

On 27 February, between 3:25 and 3:30pm, a white VW van

parked in Glapthorn had £1000 worth of tools stolen. The van's owner chased the thief who drove off in a black 57 plate Mercedes.

On the night of 7 February, between 10:45pm and 9am, a box of newspapers was set alight in front of the Stahl Theatre on West Street. Between the 16 and 23 April, the Stahl Theatre maintenance team discovered an unsuccessful attempt by unknown culprits to break through the rear fire doors.

Between 22 and 24 February, an Oundle School property was entered (a fire door was forced open).

Between 5pm on Tuesday 10 March and 6:30am on Wednesday 11 March, unknown persons removed the front and rear registration plates from a car parked on North Street, Oundle.

On 24 March, damage was done to a vehicle on Hillfield Road between midday and 14:07. A high-value theft of equipment occurred at the Wharf between 4pm on 25 March and 11am on 29 March.

In March, 34 crimes were reported to have occurred in Oundle, a significant increase from February's 23 reported crimes and January's 21 reported crimes.

While burglaries and anti-social incidents were down, there was a marked increase in reports of violence and sexual offences.

On 12 May, police arrested a man in Warmington on suspicion of growing cannabis after finding a small-scale farm in his garage.

Northants police issue spot fines for breaches of social distance rules

Following the Prime Minister's review of lockdown measures on 10 May, the government's message changed from "Stay Home" to "Stay Alert", with relaxed restrictions on how people could practice social distancing. The rules remain enforceable by law.

In Northamptonshire, the police issued 349 people with fines for breaking lockdown rules up to 14 May. Incidents that incurred fines included four individuals not from the same household holding a party; owners of a barber shop that had opened up to give people haircuts; owners of a trampoline park that had opened up and were allowing people to use the equipment inside.

Superintendent Elliot Foskett,

Esme Kroese

In July 2016 three and a half tonnes of lead were removed from the roof of St Andrew's Church, causing repair and replacement damages amounting to £25,000.

While the village began the process of fundraising and organising repairs and additional roof security, residents have been determined to see the culprits brought to justice.

Earlier this year, residents were told that police had finally closed in on the suspects and had gathered evidence that possibly ties three suspects to the crime.

One of the suspects was detained at Gatwick airport from an inbound flight from Austria as part of European arrest warrant.

Thieves who stole roof lead from Cotterstock Church get court date

On March 3, the three suspects were charged in Lincoln Magistrates Court, accused of attempting to steal lead from 46 different church roofs across ten different counties, causing over £2 million in damages between April and November 2016.

Two of the men pleaded not guilty. The third man did not appear in court. Their trial was due to start on May 18.

In a separate investigation, three men were arrested and charged at Lincoln Crown Court on March 20 with theft of lead in over 50 incidents from 2018-2020.

The National Crime Agency says that metal theft is one of the fastest growing crimes across the country.



The artist John Piper visited the local area on a number of occasions and painted Cotterstock Church in the 1940s (Gouache on paper, Oundle School)

said: "We are very lucky in Northamptonshire to have a public who, in the main, want to work with us, and realise how important social distancing is. Our approach will always be to engage with and educate our communities first, with enforcement and fines given as a last resort."

The law says that nobody can be outside their homes without a reasonable excuse. What is a reasonable excuse can vary depending on the exact situation. But it is likely to be reasonable to go out for food, tools and supplies to fix something; exercise, and tending an allotment; any medical reason; escaping an abusive or other dangerous situation at home; work, if you cannot work from home; taking children to school or childcare; moving house, if you cannot delay your move.

The relaxed measures allow people to go to parks and other public spaces, including sunbathing and picnicking; drive any distance for exercise or leisure; spend time outdoors with one other person not from the same household.

Public gatherings of more than two people who don't live together are banned. Exceptions include funerals attended by immediate family members or people working together who cannot work from home.

Shops selling food, drink, medicines and other supplies are allowed to stay open. Cafes, restaurants and pubs are only allowed to open for takeaway food and drink.

The Special Constabulary at Northamptonshire Police have volunteered a huge total of 7,800 hours to COVID-19 patrols since the pandemic's lockdown was imposed to help patrol areas and enforce lockdown measures.

When responding to Covid-19 breaches, the police aim to first "engage, explain and encourage" violators to change their behaviour to reduce the risk to public safety and health.

If people still do not follow the rules the police will enforce the measures including issuing spot fines of £100 for the first offence.

Conservatives have turned marginal seat blue

Gwyneth Angel

In the 2019 general election, the constituency of Corby and East Northants saw a significant turn-out for the Conservative Party, with Tom Pursglove winning a majority of 10,268, more than double the majority of 2017. His vote share of 55% was a significant increase from 2015 and 2017 when he won 43% and 49% of the vote.

Given the turmoil which Britain has been under over the past four years, this show of support for the Conservatives was likely due to their strong stance on Brexit. In the 2016 referendum, Corby voted 64% in favour of leaving, with a turnout of 74%. Mr Pursglove has always held an anti-EU position, and was one of the founding members of the Grassroots Out, a pro-Brexit organisation largely supported by Conservative and UKIP politicians.

In an interview, Mr Pursglove acknowledged that his commitment to the result of the 2016 Brexit

referendum had helped him gain support.

"It was undoubtedly a factor," he said. "People like to know where they stand with their politicians."

"What we have seen across the country is this real frustration about politicians, saying they will do one thing and then not living up to those promises that have been made."

Mr Pursglove also attributes his success to his ready engagement with the public, which sees him actively walking through neighbourhoods, knocking on doors to hear people's concerns and to let them know he is listening.

Besides Brexit, which until recently seemed to completely dominate the political landscape, there are also issues involving housing growth, NHS, education and police funding which the Conservatives have addressed, appealing to multiple demographics.

The focus on the need to move

these issues forward is also what drove voters to the Conservatives, Mr Pursglove said: "There is a general feeling that you need a decisive government, because our system only really works properly with a majority, and people wanted to see things happen."

The Corby and East Northants



constituency contains parts of traditionally Conservative East Northamptonshire that balance the traditionally Labour town of Corby, leading to an historically unpredictable constituency.

At the 1997 election, former Labour MP Phil Hope took Corby and East Northamptonshire from the Tories with an overall majority of 11,860. In 2005, he won a majority with a mere 1,517 and Corby and East Northants became a knife-edge

marginal. In 2005 the decline of the Labour vote was attributed to the out-sized spending of Michael Ashcroft, the longstanding Tory donor who played a role in "the Tory target seats operation" and who helped to fund Conservative candidate Louise Mensch, who won the 2010 election with a margin of not quite 2000 votes. Her early resignation led to a 12% swing to Labour once again in a 2012 by-election, before Pursglove swung the seat back to the Conservatives three years later at the age of 26.

So one concern is whether these former Labour voters are borrowed; will they swing back to the left in the next general election. After months of political turmoil and unrest over Brexit, will the Conservative government maintain its political grip or will a newly-led opposition come fighting back in the next election?

Mr Pursglove was not worried. "The traditional Labour vote is very similar to the values I would argue I have."

"It's the values of hard-working, patriotic Eurosceptic."

Inspection report recognises Prince William School for significant improvements

Alice Blackmore

After nine years of being rated as "Requires Improvement", Prince William School was finally returned to the rank of "Good" in Ofsted's March inspection report, confirming the progress the school has made.

Leadership also ensures that students receive the appropriate level of career advice at every age.

The school was judged a "calm and friendly" place, and the pupils at Prince William were reported to feel safe, happy and always supported by both peers and

tations for students". They have very strong subject knowledge and encourage their students to participate in all of the opportunities that the school provides.

Sixth Form pupils at Prince William School said they enjoy their education and feel confident about discussing and debating their ideas in class.

According to the report, the school achieves its motto "learning for life".

Mrs Dormor said: "I am delighted that Ofsted has recognised the significant improvements we have made since our last inspection in 2017. Student outcomes have been improving year on year, but gaining the 'Good' judgement from Ofsted confirms the progress we have made. Everyone has worked hard to achieve this, and we are all very proud to be acknowledged by Ofsted."

"We will now continue to build on this success and work towards making Prince William School an outstanding school."

treating patients with Coronavirus.

Staff from the school's Art, Design Technology and Engineering departments have been supporting an initiative called the Beds Visor Project. Head of Design, Liz Bull coordinated with a team of schools and produced more than 380 head bands for others to assemble into full face shields.

Textiles teacher Judith Richardson and Design Technology technician Fiona Jones have contributed to the PPE supply making scrubs for NHS staff.

Year 13 student Megan Swales has also been using her time in lockdown to make scrubs for frontline health workers. "I found out that a small group was being formed in my village who were sewing scrubs for the NHS workers. I wanted to get involved so I could do my part to help," she said.



Pupils at Prince William School celebrate inspection report

Leadership at Prince William School was praised for its high expectations for their students in both academics and behaviour, with bullying being rare. If pupils are having trouble, the school's pastoral care team is very strong, with The Hub, being one of the School's best attributes. The Hub has been described as a sanctuary where students can seek help and guidance.

teachers, some of whom are "inspirational" according to the pupils. The report highlighted the mutual respect between staff and pupils. Pupils are proud of their school, and they wear their uniform with much pride.

The teaching at Prince William School was also praised by the Ofsted report. It said that the staff are "ambitious and have high expect-

Teachers and pupils at PWS work overtime to help health workers

Design and technology departments at schools across the country have been stepping up to use their equipment to make PPE.

Staff and students at Prince William School joined the national effort to supply personal protective equipment to local NHS workers



Megan Swales pitched in to make scrubs for NHS health workers

Marafiki Trust builds on friendships to support vulnerable children in Kenya

Gwyneth Angel

Africa has a way of casting a spell over its visitors, and for many, Africa has become something much more important than safaris in its pristine wildlife reserves.

Liz Turnbull first visited Kenya on a project co-ordinated with Oundle School and has spent the last few years supporting the Gilgil Special School for disabled children, initiating fundraising campaigns that have upgraded facilities and funded physical therapy for the children. She is also a trustee of the Kivuli Trust, which supports the school.

Nicola Guise first went to South Africa 15 years ago as a teacher, and their journeys to Africa converged on an extended "adventure with purpose" through east and southern Africa with an international charity, where they forged their dual ambitions to return.

After working with another large charity, they decided to set

projects viable.

Marafiki currently supports two projects working in the slum, the Real Hope Community Youth Organisation (RHYCO) and the Joyful Hearts Centre. Mrs Guise and Mrs Turnbull go to Kenya a number of times a year to visit the projects and see how their work can make an effective contribution. They have developed close working relationships with the project co-ordinators and have become personally engaged with the children, visiting many of the families in their homes.

"Marifiki means friends and they have become our friends," Mrs Turnbull said.

RHYCO was set up six years ago with the charity International Needs, and is run by social workers who were once street children themselves. They operate a drop-in centre for children from 60 families aged four to eleven, providing feeding, counselling, literacy and education, aiming to provide support

on the street. Maureen's husband had recently passed away and she was struggling to support her two sons. The two women formed a friendship and started a support group to help other mothers.

Following confirmed cases of coronavirus in Kenya, the government closed all schools and

port future food parcels, provision of water and help with rent."

Many of their fundraising initiatives take place in Oundle and Wadenhoe, where members of the community have been very generous with in-kind donations and handmade clothes and accessories. A number of their donors have



Nicola Guise and Liz Turnbull have established a new charity to support educational opportunities for street children in Nairobi

up on their own. Their focus on Kenya led to a new initiative, the Marafiki Trust. "It seemed crazy to go through a big organisation when we could do it directly ourselves," Mrs Guise said.

Managing their own charity ensures that all the money donated to the trust goes directly to the children. Often when money is donated through a big charity, overhead expenses mean that not all the funds reach those for whom it is aimed. But through their smaller charity, every penny donated reaches those who need it in Kenya.

The goal of the Marafiki Trust is to support poverty relief and educational provision projects in Kawangware, a slum in Nairobi, by gathering donations and providing a source of funding to keep these

to get the children into full-time school. Without the intervention, the children are at risk of ending up on the street.

Through RHYCO, 74 children have been successfully enrolled in schools with the support of sponsors and donors. Marafiki provides support towards the cost of living and education for children who are supported by the project in Kenya. Mrs Turnbull said, "Sponsoring a child is £20 a month, and all of that £20 will arrive in Kenya."

Another project which they support is the Joyful Hearts Centre, which was set up in December 2019, by a group of seven mothers who each have a son with cerebral palsy. It was opened as a drop-in centre in Kawangware after Lilian Kiriko, the founder, met Maureen



Recent appeals for donations have enabled delivery of food parcels to families affected by Kenya's coronavirus shutdown

gathering places which included the RHYCO drop-in centre in Kawangware and the Joyful Hearts Centre. This was devastating for the children there for whom the centres are their places of refuge and support.

Mrs Turnbull said, "Our biggest concern is the high risk that the RHYCO children may return to the streets to try to find food if there is nothing at home. Caregivers have lost the little income they derived from casual labour. Our children do not know where their next meal will come from, have little or no access to clean water to drink let alone wash their hands and face eviction from their homes. We immediately contacted all sponsors and previous supporters asking for help with financing food parcels.

"We have so far successfully helped fund the delivery of two food parcels per family and have set up a GoFundMe page to sup-

also accompanied them on trips to Kenya to see the projects first-hand. When they go out to Kenya, they take suitcases full of donated craft supplies and clothing to distribute to the children who are enrolled in these projects.

They are keen to establish a larger network of connections between the communities and have spoken to local schools about making contact with the children in Kenya to build relationships.

"It would be great for the children here to learn about the lives of children out in Kenya."

The personal engagement of Mrs Turnbull and Mrs Guise means that they know every child who is sponsored, uniquely enabling sponsors the opportunity to get to know the children and receive regular updates of their progress. For more information, visit their website www.marafikitrust.org.

St Peter's Church spire attracts new rare bird visit

Esme Kroese

Last year birdwatchers from across Northamptonshire gathered by St Peter's Church to watch the peregrine falcon that had settled on the spire for a few months. In early February this year, binoculars were again focused on the spire, but in search of a much smaller sight – a male black redstart.

quite a few years ago. This sighting was first made by birders John Hunt and Noah Wood: "I found one about three years ago on St Peter's Church, which caused quite a stir. This time I was talking to Dr Hunt about birds when we looked up and saw the black redstart flitting around and feeding on the church spire!" said Mr Wood.



Black Redstart spotted on St Peter's Church by Richard Chandler

With cameras poised, Paul Burrows and Bob Bullock stood in the chill wind waiting for the bird to make an appearance.

"Sometimes they stay for a while, and might over-winter. But this is my third visit, and I'm really annoyed because each time I have left, it's been seen, just after I left," said Mr Bullock, a well-known naturalist, birder and photographer who had travelled from Northampton.

The black redstart is robin-sized, and black with a red tail. It is 14.5cm long, with a wingspan 23-26cm and a weight of 14-20g. The number of birds recorded from October to March was 400, miniscule in comparison to their believed doppelganger, the Robin which has a population of 6,700,000. It is rarely seen in Northamptonshire - only two or three times a year.

They are migratory, and like to perch on building sites and on high sites. These birds usually breed and live mainly in urban areas. Bird-watcher Noah Wood said: "Their numbers boomed temporarily during and after the Blitz in London because they like derelict or abandoned buildings. Most of their breeding sites are in big cities these days."

The last sighting in Oundle was

The black redstart is on the red list of birds of conservation concern, and is also listed as a Schedule 1 species on the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

"It is a rare breeding bird in the UK. Much rarer than the peregrine. With probably only 30 or 40 pairs breeding in the whole country," said Mr Wood.

The birdwatchers who came to see the bird heard about it through the bird networks on Twitter via #northantsbirds, and Whatsapp groups.

"It's one of those birds that turns up in towns. There's one near Market Harborough in a farm, which is very difficult to see," said Mr Bullock, from Kettering.

They said the peregrine had returned at the weekend, too, and they had got some good photos. They didn't think the peregrine would have been too interested in the black redstart.

"There are so many pigeons, this would be more of an eleventh hour. Peregrines tend to go far and wide to hunt, anyway, and bring things back," Mr Burrows said. He said that St Peter's Church in Kettering has both a nesting pigeon and some nesting peregrines on alternate sides of the spire, apparently uninterested in their neighbours.

Snipe Meadow boardwalk to be completed this summer

Millicent Riordan

After years of planning by the Town Council, the funds for the replacement of the Snipe Meadow Boardwalk have finally been approved. The project will allow for safe access for fishermen, bird-watchers and dog walkers alike.

Construction will begin as soon as the contractor is able to work safely under the new Covid-19 rules.

The new boardwalk is estimated to cost £65,000, which will come from Section 106 funding and a grant from Grantscape.

The original boardwalk was built in 1988, and was not accessible for wheelchairs. Over the years it had required repairs to seven damaged sections, costing £3480.

The boardwalk ensures the protection of several endangered species and their environments, most notably the nesting sites of snipe and redshank. Both snipe and redshank are species of wading birds protected by The Wildlife

and Countryside Act of 1981 and are under UK Amber conservation status.

The snipe population of the UK has declined in the last 25 years, but Snipe Meadow provides an undisturbed area for nesting.

The Council has consulted with the Wildlife Trust, and said that construction will be monitored in order not to disturb the wildlife.



Cycleway plans get go-ahead

Meagan Iu

Oundle Town Council and Transition Oundle have shared an aspiration to improve cycling in Oundle for some time, and have now moved closer to realising a plan for a cycle network that will run through the town. The feasibility design for the first phase, known as Oundle Cycleway 1, has been commissioned, with plans for the network to be built in the coming months.

Oundle Town Council has £130,000 of Section 106 funds available to build cycleways, and the funds have to be spent by September 2020. At the end of last year, David Wood from Transition Oundle, and Councillor Jerry Hutton met with Northamptonshire Highways to discuss the proposals.

Two routes have been identified for potential early implementation of the cycle network. The first route will run from the west end of the Creed Road estate and Wentworth Drive, and will use existing cycle tracks to allow young cyclists and parents to travel safely towards the primary school. A new two-way shared-use pedestrian cycle route would be created using the existing footway on Cotterstock Road. This route would be about a mile long.

The second route runs from the west of town on Benefield Road,

allowing young and adult cyclists to travel to the centre at the top of New Street. A new two-way shared-use pedestrian cycle route would be created using the existing footway and verges. Cyclists can then travel to the north of town along Glaphorn Road to Wentworth Drive, along another two-way shared-use pedestrian cycle route linked to the town centre on New Street.

The 2014 Oundle Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire reported that eighty-six percent of respondents walk and thirty-four percent cycle weekly. The survey highlighted that Oundle residents value access to the countryside, and that improved access around the town is important.

The Oundle Cycle Network study was conducted by Sustrans in 2015, and took the findings of the transport study further. It outlined a framework of cycle and pedestrian routes within and around the town which can be enhanced, added to and linked together over time to deliver a safe and comprehensive network.

This will aim to help reduce the reliance on cars for short trips, reduce congestion and parking issues in the town centre, and increase the health and physical activity of the community.

International students find home-from-home with local Guardian hosts

Meagan Iu

Every year, thousands of school age overseas students are educated at independent schools across the UK. When their school closes for half term holidays and exeat weekends, they need a host family who will provide a home away from home.

"All of the Oundle International students are required to have a Guardian over the age of 25 in the UK as part of the terms of their study visa. Not everyone realises this," said Vicky Dickinson, the area manager for the East Midlands.

Pippa's Guardians has been providing high quality Guardianship services to international students for over 20 years and understands the value of a good home and how a host family can positively impact on a student's wellbeing.

Pippa's Guardians are currently recruiting host families locally, with their students currently based at schools in Oundle, Oakham and Uppingham.

As well as receiving a generous payment, becoming a Pippa's

Guardians host family provides the opportunity to really make a difference to a student whilst they are studying here in the UK, in many cases a very long way from home.

The families they look for are welcoming and interested in other cultures. Having children of similar ages helps, but isn't the most important thing as they have many successful host families who have no children, younger children or indeed older children who have left home. Internet access is very important and each student will need their own bedroom with a desk or somewhere quiet for homework. Being part of a family and experiencing day-to-day family life enhances students' study and plays a part in improving their English language.

"During the Covid-19 pandemic, some of our host families have been exceptional, and the lockdown has made it clear just how fantastic they are. Pippa's Guardians heard so many life-affirming stories from their host families, both those who have helped students catch repatriation flights - often at short

notice - and those still looking after students who have chosen or needed to stay in the UK," she said.

When the Summer Term started, online learning became an essential part of students' days, and Pippa's Guardians host families had to quickly adapt to supporting their students attend online lessons, from ensuring their teenage charges are at their desks at 9am to the challenges of registering for online study and even supervising virtual music lessons.

"We've heard countless stories of the caring, supportive spirit for which Pippa's Guardians host families are renowned."

The local Area Managers look after the students during term time and are close by to support host families when the students stay in their homes.

Mrs Dickinson said that during term time, "I take on the role of 'UK Mum' for 34 students. I visit everyone in school, attend their concerts, sports matches and Parents' Receptions, as well as sorting out their travel to and from the airports and host families."

The half term holidays fall in October for two weeks, for one week in February and one week in May.

Exeat weekends take place up to three times a year and are usually for two or three nights each time. Most students travel back home to their families for the long holidays in the summer, at Christmas and at Easter.

"Our students come from all over the world," said Mrs Dickinson. It is a marvellous and interesting way to learn about the cultures, traditions and daily life of young people and their families from countries very different to our own. Many of our host families form life-long friendships with our students and their families and stay in touch even after they have left school for university."



International pupils at independent schools are required to have guardian hosts

*Do you have a spare room in your home?
Are you caring, nurturing and supportive?*

**Become a Host Family
for an international
pupil at a local
boarding school**

*Attractive daily rates
Occasional weekend and half terms only*

**Contact Laura to find out more on
laura@pippasguardians.co.uk
or call 01684 252757**

Pippa's 
Guardians

www.pippasguardians.co.uk

Public adopts masks to prevent spread of virus

Meagan Iu

Covid-19 guidelines by the government recommend wearing face coverings in crowded places where it is not possible to comply with physical-distancing measures, for example, on public transport or in some shops.

Evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not offer total protection. However, if you are infected but have not yet developed symptoms, it may provide some protection for others you come into close contact with. Face coverings do not replace social distancing. Frequent hand-washing and social distancing are more effective.

Anyone with symptoms of Covid-19 (a cough and/or high temperature, or loss of smell and taste) must isolate at home; wearing a face covering does not change this.

A variety of face masks are available locally. Stu-Pots has KN95 style masks which are useable for seven days, and single-use disposable masks. The Pharmacy is also selling surgical single-use masks, limited to five per person.

The Oundle sewing group, Material Girls, has joined the Big Community Sew and is using fabric scraps to make masks. Finished masks are dropped off in a box at Pick Arthey for people to pick up free as needed.

A cloth face covering should cover your mouth and nose while allowing you to breathe comfortably and can be as simple as a scarf or bandana that ties behind the head.

Homemade cloth face-coverings can help reduce the risk of transmission in some circumstances, but they must be used carefully to avoid being contaminated by other people's coughs and sneezes, or when putting them on or removing them.

It is important to use face coverings properly: wash your hands before putting them on and taking them off, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth at all times. Used face coverings should be stored in a plastic bag until you have an opportunity to wash them.

Face coverings should not be used by children under the age of two or those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly, such as unassisted primary age children, or those with respiratory conditions.

Covid-19 testing made available to all

On 18 May the government extended eligibility for Covid-19 testing to anyone who is experiencing symptoms. Tests are also available for anyone who lives in the same household, and for social care and NHS workers without symptoms where there is a clinical need.

Children's rainbows spread message of hope across the community



Children across Oundle have painted pictures of rainbows in a message of hope, and in support for NHS and key workers

There are 50 Regional Test Sites that have been set up by the Department of Health and Social Care. The nearest test site to Oundle is in Peterborough.

The government advises that you should get tested in the first three days of coronavirus symptoms appearing, although testing is considered effective up until day five. The test is only guaranteed to be accurate if someone is symptomatic.

Throughout the pandemic the government has said anyone with a new continuous cough or a fever should immediately self-isolate. New guidance now recommends that anyone experiencing a loss or change in their sense of smell, even without any other coronavirus symptom, should self-isolate for seven days.

You can either refer yourself or be referred by your employer for a test if you are an essential worker. Tests are booked online for a regional test site drive-through appointment or home test kit. The availability of home test kits will initially be limited. The government is working towards a total capacity of 250,000 tests a day.

A comprehensive testing and trace system is essential to isolating and eliminating the virus and allowing normal operations to resume.

According to the Office for National Statistics, of the deaths registered by 1 May, 33,408 mentioned Covid-19 on the death certificate, representing 13.5% of all deaths.

Up to 1 May, there were 169 lab-confirmed cases in East Northamptonshire, leading to 60 registered Covid-19 deaths. More granular statistics available up to 17 April reported that the Oundle and Warmington area was the third worst affected in the borough with eight Covid deaths. The Thrapston, Brigstock and Benefield area recorded three Covid-19 deaths.

Coronavirus impacts Market Place

Oundle's Market Place is lucky to have shops in its centre that offer essential services that have been able to remain open during the shutdown. The two pharmacies, Stupots, Trendalls, two supermarkets and the new limited Thursday market have kept the town ticking over. But scores of the remaining shops and businesses have closed and furloughed staff, balancing ongoing bills against a complete absence of revenue.

The government has set up grant funding schemes to help small businesses cope. With funds distributed by East Northamptonshire Council, 115 businesses in Oundle have ben-

efited from grant funds, receiving cash grants of between £10,000 to £25,000. The government has also extended a 12-month business rates holiday for all retail and hospitality businesses. Concessions from landlords about rent remain a private agreement, but landlords have been advised to be aware of problems being faced by their tenants.

When the economy reopens, most shops will be able to adapt to long-term social distancing rules, but the big concern is about whether footfall will return to the Market Place if customers remain nervous about catching the virus, or lose patience with the delays and inconvenience of social distancing.

Oundle resident Marc Folgate had just set up his own law firm in October before he found himself putting up a closed sign in his Peterborough office six months later. His business specialises in injury and clinical negligence, and the demand has dried up. Not only have accidents declined, "Not a bad thing, do not get me wrong," he says, but medical examinations are no longer available and the courts have closed. He remains determined to be positive as he sits this out. "If you work hard most of the time, treat this as way of recharging your batteries, ready for when it all becomes real again."

Some businesses have been able

to adapt their services to keep generating revenue as well as saving perishable stock.

Following the recent lifting of restrictions for hospitality businesses, restaurants are opening their kitchens for walk-in take aways.

Seven Wells Butchers closed their shop on West Street, and moved to home deliveries. This was considered the best way of encouraging customers to "stay home, stay safe", as well as keeping staff safe, too. It will reopen on 2 June, but continue home deliveries.

The Barn Garden Centre was allowed to reopen on 13 May after eight weeks. But at the start of the lockdown, with thousands of plants at risk at the start of the planting season, the Wilson family were looking at potential ruin. However, the phone started ringing with customer requests for orders, and they realised there was still a demand that they could service. Using a very low-tech payment system and one delivery van, they made over 500 free deliveries.

Stephanie Wilson said: "These sales have helped and we have been thrilled to be able to offer our customers something. However, takings are down and in the coming months and years ahead, customers will have to support small businesses like ours all across Oundle to keep them trading."

An army of volunteers mobilise to outfit health workers with scrubs

Alice Blackmore

It is in times of crisis that the resilience of a community is tested. Among the many volunteer initiatives launched across the country in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the dozens of scrub hub teams have demonstrated how effectively communities can be mobilised to work together, even in isolation.

At the start of the pandemic Ashleigh Lindsell, an NHS worker from Lincoln, formed For the Love of Scrubs to encourage people to help make scrubs from their homes in order to fill a gap in provisions for NHS staff.

Because hospital workers' scrubs need to be frequently changed in order to stop contamination, they are in very high demand. The items that volunteers have made include different-sized scrub sets, scrub caps, scrub bags to ensure that the clothes can be transported safely to be washed by staff at home, as well as headbands to reduce the pressure of face masks on the skin.

From its start on March 23, the main Love of Scrubs Facebook group has attracted over 52,000 members, who were organised into regional hubs with local co-ordinators to service area hospitals. The group provided a list of hospitals across the country detailing the scrub colours and sizes required, and coordinators networked with the hospitals and organised volunteers on all the different tasks. The operation quickly went into high gear. Countless YouTube demonstration videos were made and online patterns were shared; people emptied their airing cupboards of old duvets and sheets, unused sewing supplies like rolls of elastic, thread and binding tapes were passed on.

Across the country, thousands of scrub sets were delivered to hospitals. Locally, hundreds of volunteers spent the lockdown working all hours in tightly coordinated networks to deliver scrubs.

The Oundle For the Love of Scrubs group was initiated by Caroline Hawkins. After putting out a call on Facebook on March 23, 154 people joined the group, working tirelessly throughout the month of April. Pick Arthey was used as a depot for the pick-up and supply of materials, which was all coordinated via the Facebook group.

Every willing volunteer had a task to do, whether cutting patterns or sewing. Although no-one was expected to be an expert, the standards were kept high throughout. At a minimum, volunteers who manned the sewing machines were

required to use French seams or overlocked seams, make accurately placed pockets, casings for a drawstring and drawstring ties out of biased binding.

It was ensured that this level was always met and surpassed, especially after reports of some scrubs from other groups being rejected by hospitals. Those who were out of practice were encouraged to set easy targets to practise with.

"Start with a bag, then a hat UNTIL you are confident and competent at making a item that would pass Esme or Patrick on the Great British Sewing Bee! Then do a set of scrubs," said Ms Hawkins.

On May 4, the good news arrived that Peterborough Hospital Trust had enough scrubs to meet their requirements.

In six weeks they produced in excess of 390 items, from scrub sets to scrub bags and hats for Peterborough City Hospital, Thorpe Hall, Boroughby Medical Centre, Charing Cross, London and Oundle Surgery.

Ms Hawkins said: "The Oundle Team were truly amazing; they have been so wonderful just stepping up and volunteering. It has been wonderful to work together as a community."

After folding their successful scrubs operation, the group was reluctant to disband. It has now renamed itself Material Girls, and is looking at other ways they can share and use their skills in new projects.

Another person who used her time to help hospital staff was Kate Doherty, who was furloughed from

an administrative job at the Stamford Shakespeare Company. She said that she had been "in awe of what James Anderson was doing and I felt so useless." This spurred her on to ask a friend who works in Peterborough City Hospital's paediatric ward if she could offer any help. Her friend said they needed scrubs, which they do not normally wear.

Ms Doherty didn't have any official material, but she improvised. She began by putting a call out on Facebook to ask if anyone had any duvets to donate. Then everything took off, and she formed an Oundle Offshoot Group, independent from For the Love of Scrubs. Soon her front room was filled with boxes of donated duvet covers and bags of fabric. Thirty-five volunteers joined her in all sorts of tasks, from washing donated duvet covers, separating and folding fabric, cutting fabric, as well as sewing.

The Peterborough City Hospital paediatric ward had asked for 30 sets of scrubs, and Ms Doherty's team made 38 sets, including wash bags using bright patterns from old duvets. At the end of April, the paediatric dental ward in the hospital also asked for her to provide scrubs, and another contact in the hospital asked them to make gowns for the critical care unit. The hospital was able to hand over 60 large pieces of fabric for the gowns. Ms Doherty and her team members had to work out a pattern that would be suitable and easy to make.

The team worked together on different tasks to streamline the process in order to be efficient. On a busy afternoon in late April, Ms Doherty said: "Sylvia in Wadenhoe makes the paper patterns. She is go-

ing to do ten for me this afternoon for people to pick up, with the ties that have been cut by others, the elastic that has been cut, the fabric that's been folded, the instructions that Ruth helped me redo, because she was the one who helped me on the first gown. Then they go away and a couple of days later they come back with finished gowns."

Kate Doherty said she would carry on the effort "until they stop asking and they don't need me anymore, or my lovely team of people find they have to go back to work."

Lindy Kirk, a physics teacher at Oundle School, is an enthusiastic seamstress and makes clothes for herself and her young nieces and grandson. Her skills were quickly put to use in the national effort to help the NHS.

Mrs Kirk said: "I was planning to spend some time over the holiday making a summer wardrobe for my grandson, but one of the groups that I follow on Facebook mentioned another group set up by a nurse who was desperate for people to make scrubs." Mrs Kirk joined the group For the Love of Scrubs and set herself up making scrubs.

In normal times, a hospital may only require about 400 sets of scrubs every week. But during this crisis, with more staff in hospitals, and contamination making necessary multiple changes in a single shift, the demand outweighed the supply.

"I joined the Hinchingsbrooke and Peterborough group. Within a day, I'd been asked to be an admin. Within a week, we had 500 members, and I was coordinating the Peterborough end of the region," she said.

Coordinating 180 members in her group was like a military exercise. They obtained some corporate sponsorship to pay for the fabric, and within a month had gone through about 3km of fabric, plus many used duvet covers. "Some of the Zoom conference calls were over three hours long!" she said.

Deliveries of supplies included 100 messenger bags, 350 scrub caps and 80 mask holders. In the second delivery, 75 scrub sets were given to the hospitals. Additionally, they responded to requests from the MAGPAS air ambulance, Thorpe Hall Hospice, East Anglia Children's Hospice and a hospice in Norfolk. They sent 350 uniform washbags to the police.

When Mrs Kirk returned to teaching full time after the Easter break she reduced her role to co-ordinating a smaller group. In late April she said: "The group keeps growing. The regional group is about 1750 members now." By late April her group had sent 400 sets of scrubs to the hospitals.



Volunteers used bright duvet covers to make scrubs for a paediatric ward

The community looks after vulnerable residents sheltering at home

The government's rules for the lockdown identified groups of "clinically vulnerable" people who should take precautions to minimise contact with anyone outside their household. The rules included those aged 70 or over regardless of medical conditions. Another group identified as "clinically extremely vulnerable" were told to self-isolate.

As the weeks roll on, concerns are being raised about how these groups will cope with the increasing loneliness. Communities need to ensure that no one is forgotten.

With library facilities across the county closed, around 70 staff from the library service team were co-opted to support Northamptonshire County Council's Community Resilience Service, calling vulnerable people for wellness checks.

The NHS sent letters to those identified as clinically vulnerable due to pre-existing health conditions or immune-compromised due to organ transplants or active cancer treatment. Those who received letters were advised to register with the government for extra support, such as grocery deliveries.

Approximately 16,500 people in Northamptonshire registered with the government as vulnerable

to Covid-19 and have been told to shield at home, and not leave their home under any circumstances or have face-to-face contact.

Library staff based in Oundle have been making courtesy calls to check if people need support with food, prescription medicine deliveries, or just someone to talk to regularly to help them interact whilst socially distancing.

The staff then work with the Community Resilience Service to ensure that people's requirements are matched to the teams managing the deliveries through local community groups and volunteers.

One Oundle resident who was contacted by the county council's Community Resilience Hub was Mel Lee. She was advised by her GP that she was extremely vulnerable due to a pre-existing lung condition and needed to shield herself.

She registered with the government as a vulnerable person, and along with 2.5 million people, was identified as clinically vulnerable. She has been told to self-isolate for twelve weeks.

Major supermarkets have contacted the people on the government list and arranged free priority delivery for online orders. "After I

registered with the government, I got an email about supermarket deliveries, and I was allocated Asda. They deliver my shopping once a fortnight at protected delivery times. It's always the same time," she said.

Ms Lee usually works as the befriending coordinator for Volunteer Action, but now she is receiving their help to help pick up her medication. Her neighbour helps take care of her garden for her.

One of her sons is a computing graduate, so he has made sure she is set up with all the networking apps. Like many people these days she meets her family for regular meetings on Zoom and Facebook.

As a member of the Knit and Natter group responsible for yarn bomb displays around town, most everyone will have seen her knitting creations over the years. She has put her knitting to use now making outfits for the new babies in her extended family.

When the lockdown ends, Ms Lee said she will continue to take precautions and will wear a mask. "If I get the virus, because my lungs don't work at full capacity, it will be a lot worse."

Sheila Johnson is also self-iso-

lating because of an existing condition, and she worries about what would happen if she had a medical emergency. She admits that the lockdown is a bit frightening and not knowing how long it will last is "rather depressing".

"It's a bit frustrating because there is so much uncertainty," she said. Community Action, Volunteer Action and the church, as well as friends are all keeping in touch and helping her. "The good thing is that people are being very kind."

Rita and Keith Johnson are not on a clinically vulnerable list, but as over-70s, they are isolating at home. In lockdown they do not miss the holidays and eating out, "except perhaps the closure of the hairdressers", but they do miss their friends and family. Neighbours and local volunteers have stepped in to offer support and run errands. "We count ourselves extremely fortunate to receive the help that we have been given."

Despite the risks and disruption, Ms Lee has seen a positive side to the lockdown. "The beaches and the water has improved. The air pollution is reduced. There're a lot more little birds around. So there's a lot of good going on."

One pop-up home factory makes over 3000 face shields for NHS workers

Alice Blackmore

Joining an army of volunteers across the country, James Anderson has been a local leader in the effort to help support healthcare workers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Responding to the shortage of essential personal protection equipment required by health workers, Mr Anderson set up a small 3D printing workshop to produce face shields for local hospitals and surgeries. He initially started off with two 3D printers, and through donations raised in a GoFundMe campaign, was able to acquire seven more printers as well as biodegradable plastic filament. In-kind support included the loan of a high-spec printer and electric guillotine from Oundle School.

Mr Anderson explained how he started the project. "I have been living in the East Midlands for 2.5 years now and I have had the benefit of having access to the world's greatest healthcare system, the NHS. So when the Covid-19 crisis broke out and I learned my local hospital was out of personal protective equipment, I got in contact with their head of Health & Safety and offered to help."

His first GoFundMe appeal launched on 28 March quickly ex-



James Anderson worked round the clock to help plug shortages of PPE supplies

ceeded his target and allowed him to immediately buy extra equipment and supplies. He initially started producing 30 masks a day, and with the extra printers was able to scale up to 60-70 reusable shields a day from his own home.

He sent the first 25 face shields to Peterborough Hospital and Oundle Surgery on 30th March, and by the end of April had delivered 1800 shields.

Oundle residents were quick to help Mr Anderson with small tasks. People loaned him extra worktables

and helped with deliveries, and 20 volunteers cut and tied 1,500 elastic bands for him.

Mr Anderson thanked them on his Facebook post: "You have made assembling the face shields much easier and are directly helping the NHS! Thank you so much."

Mr Anderson kept the printers running round the clock and dealt with daily mechanical glitches and repairs, while also continuing to work at his day job, which allowed him to work half days to focus on the shields. His wife, Lauren was

also at home to provide essential help.

"During the day she spends hours sanding, cleaning, and assembling the previous night's prints. I could not do this without her!"

At the end of April, he was asked to continue his supply of face shields to Peterborough Hospital because although they were receiving delivery of stock from central government, "they asked me to keep printing as their staff prefer mine to the official ones".

His second appeal to raise funds for raw materials again surpassed his target. "We hit the revised goal in less than 48 hours, and as I was writing an update to that effect, we received a £500 donation from Peterborough and Whittlesey Roundtable organisation! The generosity of this community never fails to astound me!"

In May, new government assessments for small-scale production of PPE were introduced, so Mr Anderson will shut down his operation at the end of May. Remaining funds will be donated to the NHS Trust, and printers donated to schools.

By 21 May he had donated more than 3000 shields to local health workers.

Churches find new home online

In times of conflict and suffering, churches have served as a refuge and a sanctuary for protection and comfort. Even the bombs of the Second World War did not close churches as places for the community to gather. But the coronavirus pandemic has not only suspended all public worship in churches, it has closed the buildings themselves. There has been nothing more symbolic of this era of social distancing than the south doors of St Peter's Church shut and locked.

In addition to church services, much anticipated family celebrations such as baptisms and weddings have been postponed.

The church closures follow the announcement by the Prime Minister of wide-ranging restrictions as part of a national and international effort to help limit the spread of the disease.



Reverend Martin Hills and Carita Hills film a service for the Oundle Baptist Church

The last act of worship in St Peter's Church was on Mothering Sunday with just a handful of people allowed inside to conduct the service, which was streamed live on social media. Canon Stephen Webster was accompanied by assistant curate Rev Mark Donnelly, Youth Minister Martha Barnes and the pastor of the Baptist church, the Reverend Martin Hills.

After the restriction announcements in mid-March, Oundle church leaders had only a few days to coordinate practical and technical know-how to seamlessly continue delivery of services to their communities.

"As a church community we are working out what this 'new normal' looks like and where our place is within it. How do we 'do church', how do we live as community when we are isolated, how do we support and care for one another from a distance? These are big questions and big challenges that we need to face," said Reverend Martin Hills, Minister of Oundle Baptist Church.

By 18 March, the churches had begun a collaborative project to

conduct a daily series of noon prayers broadcast on their Facebook page. Initially recorded on iPhones, the broadcasts now benefit from tech upgrades, including a camera stand, new microphones and an auto cue.

The lay minister at St Leonard's Glapthorn, Charles Wide, also broadcasts weekday evening prayers at 5.30pm on Youtube.

The Sunday services are more dynamic, taking advantage of technological innovations to bring the congregations together for a full service of worship within their own homes.

"Inevitably our skills with technology have developed. On just the second Sunday service, our team of musicians linked up with one another from their various homes to record songs; it was tremendous to witness such innovative work,"

said Canon Webster. "The Sunday Morning Live 10.30am services are followed by an invitation to join our online coffee break, Church Actually, via Zoom. From there, we organise break-out areas for smaller groups to chat and encourage one another."

The Baptist Church conducts its own Sunday morning worship service, Sunday prayers at 5pm on Zoom, and a monthly online communion service.

An unexpected benefit of going online is being able to reach people who do not attend services in person. "To our delight these have been viewed by many we have not yet had the pleasure of meeting," said Reverend Hills.

Both church communities have mobilised teams of volunteers to run errands, collect shopping and prescriptions for those who are self-isolating. Dedicated phone lines and "connect hubs" ensure that people maintain regular contact with each other.

"This time is a powerful reminder that Church is not a building; it's a community of people," said Canon Webster.

Foodbanks see increased demand

Esme Kroese

The first two weeks of the Coronavirus lockdown saw an unprecedented rise in foodbank use across the UK as household incomes were hit, according to data from emergency food aid charities.

The Trussell Trust, the UK's biggest food bank network, said it experienced its busiest ever period when the lockdown was announced, issuing 50,000 food parcels in one week, almost double its usual.

The Oundle Foodbank operates under the Trussell Trust and is located at the Methodist Church, open from 2-3pm on Tuesdays. Vouchers are issued from local organisations such as Oundle churches, the council offices in Fletton House, health visitors, and both Prince William and Oundle Primary Schools. The customer then brings the voucher to the Foodbank on Tuesday afternoons. In Oundle the demand is normally quite low and sometimes there are no clients in any given week.

The Oundle Foodbank coordinator Peter Lewins said that since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic the numbers of requests have increased considerably. The agency, Northamptonshire Children First has referred more clients to the Oundle Foodbank during this time. Mr Lewins said: "We have noticed that there are more requests from families with children than has been the case in the past. In April, for example, we helped eleven families as opposed to an average of two or three in a typical month."

In Oundle the need for dona-

tions has increased during the lockdown period.

Mr Lewins said: "Instead of providing a three-day emergency food supply, which is the normal Trussell Trust procedure, we now aim to provide a seven-day supply. Because of this, we are distributing considerably more food than in the past. But fortunately we have been able to meet the demand, firstly because the public has continued to leave generous donations in the baskets provided at Waitrose and the Coop, and secondly because Oundle Rotary Club has been very active in collecting a huge amount of donations."

Some businesses such as Salerno's have donated pasta, chocolate eggs and panettones. Prince William School also donated many Easter eggs from an end-of-term raffle. The Oundle Rotary Club has made nine deliveries of donated food, and Waitrose donated many bags that were needed to pack the food for deliveries to customers.

The process of delivery of products has also changed due to the lockdown regulations and social distancing. Instead of customers going to the foodbank to collect food, requests are made via email, and the volunteers assemble and deliver parcels to the customers' homes. The volunteers who deliver parcels are strictly compliant with government recommendations and social distancing regulations. The volunteers who work together to package and deliver the goods are from the same household, and they drop off the parcels from a safe distance.

Volunteer Action adapt services

The local charity, Volunteer Action aims to reduce loneliness and isolation by driving people to visit friends and relatives and run errands, and befriends isolated people in their own homes. The challenge of the Coronavirus has been to find ways to change its operation to continue offering services while protecting the health of clients and volunteers, especially as many of the volunteers are themselves in the at-risk age bracket.

Stuart Anderson, VA Chair, said: "Charities like VA are packed with enthusiasts who can't wait to get stuck in and make a difference. On top of which, local people, many of whom had no previous connection with us, wanted to know what they could do. So, lack of volunteers has not been a problem."

The charity has set up a free

prescription pick-up and shopping service, with social distancing deliveries. Drives to essential medical appointments are still available, although the demand has



Staff member Carolyn Noble with a volunteer driver loading up supplies for delivery to clients

decreased by eighty percent.

Its new Friend-on-the-Phone service has reached out to 150 isolated people, most of whom are over 70 years old. Volunteers have found there is no shortage of things to talk about.

Outdoor sports reopen

Tennis

Zac Atkinson

Amongst the wide range of sports offered in Oundle, the Oundle Tennis Club has been a force in the community since the 1920s. With five floodlit, full size asphalt courts and two mini tennis court, it is well placed to offer both training and competitive opportunities for young and old, and experienced or novice players.

The club is affiliated to the Lawn Tennis Association and coaching is provided by James Muir Tennis Coaching for all abilities. Alongside the tennis courts is a clubhouse with changing rooms and facilities, a kitchen and a large meeting room.

"Tennis is a great sport – it is good exercise and events like the club tournament provide excellent opportunities for social and serious play," said club chairman, Jason Atkinson.

In line with government guidance the club opened on 13 May with social distancing rules in force. Eager to find opportunities to exercise, fifty new players signed on as members following the announcement.

The new regulations allow singles tennis to be played against

people who are not from the same household, while a doubles team must be from the same household.

Four courts are open and must be booked online. During this time, the clubhouse remains closed.

The head coach James Muir publishes a coaching schedule with opportunities for players of all ages and abilities to make improvements to their play. Currently, only 1:1 coaching is allowed. Those wanting coaching must be signed up as a coaching member. They can contact James directly to arrange sessions.

Junior players are normally in action throughout the summer and junior players of all ages take part in club competitions throughout the year.

The Oundle Tennis Club's summer-long tournaments climax in a finals day and BBQ lunch at the end of August. Last year, a record 65 participants entered across five competitions, which were structured so that each player or pair could play in several matches.

The end of the summer also brings the club's participation in the East Northamptonshire tennis leagues to a close. Oundle's men's, ladies' and mixed teams perform well, usually ranking second or third in their division. This year the fixture season has been postponed

and will be reviewed at the end of June.

In the autumn, there are plenty of chances to play tennis regularly. A men's and ladies' singles ladders, the weekly club nights and entry in a local winter league provide club play opportunities.

Golf

The Oundle Golf Club is a member's owned club which has been part of the community since 1893. During the Second World War, the course remained open and was maintained by voluntary labour. In 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic forced the club to shut its course for the first time.

The closure came at a particularly bad time for the club's operation, because the club relies on annual membership renewals in April. It also had a big impact on its older members who are reliant on getting outside for four hours exercise and social exchange on a regular basis.

The club management aimed to keep its membership connected and engaged. "To keep members' spirits up we had to change the way we delivered our product. We immediately sent out golfing activities that you could do at home, and we have been assured no pets were injured in the putting competitions

in the garden, as well as quizzes, treasure hunts, and food recipes provided by our restaurant's chef."

In line with the new regulations, the club was able to reopen on 13 May. To comply with the law, the club has implemented measures to ensure that players can adhere to social distance restrictions and have made the course safe by a variety of methods.

Players must play alone or within a household group or in two balls with one person from outside your household.

Bookings can only be made on-line, group bookings are no longer available, and tee times are staggered. Flags and other equipment that are handled by players have been removed from the course, and traditional celebrations and commiserations on the 18th hole now prohibited, along with any other social gatherings.

Their golf coach was able to resume one-to-one coaching from 19 May.

The clubhouse remains closed and Slimming World and Probus groups have cancelled all events and the club's regular social events are cancelled or postponed until restrictions are lifted.

The club management said "Our members are fully involved in the club and we are grateful for the support they have given us during this time."



Pause

before play

We appreciate just how difficult these past few months have been for everyone but we wanted to let our Oundle community know what is happening with our much anticipated Sports Centre.

We are delighted that after a necessary closure period, construction work has been ongoing. Site operatives are complying with all the social distancing rules and adopting new ways of working under enhanced safety protocols. Meanwhile we have been working on preparing our membership offers, as well as class and pool timetables ready for when we are able to be up and running – and importantly, open to all.

We hope very much to offer a range of activities, courses and classes over the summer holidays, so please do connect with us on social media or visit our website to keep up to date.

www.oundlesportscentre.co.uk

Follow us



Oundle School
**SPORTS
CENTRE**



Veganism is UK's biggest food trend

Sunny Woodend

One of the biggest lifestyle changes that people are making right now, is the shift to veganism, consuming only plant-based products, and avoiding the purchase of items made from animal by-products.

The number of vegans in Great Britain quadrupled between 2014 and 2019, and in 2018 the UK launched more vegan products than any nation; veganism was the biggest food trend in that year. There is a growing market to meet increasing consumer demand. Meat-free food increased in the UK by 987% in 2017, and orders for vegan meals grew by 388% between 2016 and 2018.

People also want to know more about what veganism means and how to live well as a vegan. Waterstones had 9,030 book titles with the word "vegan" in them available for sale in December 2019 compared to 944 in August 2018.

Brighton is considered the easiest area to be vegan, but it would seem that veganism in Oundle is more accessible than you think.

Brew Babu offers a wide range of plant-based options. Their

enthusiastic barista, Millie said, "We do a vegan carrot cake and a vegan apple crumble which is gluten free, as well. There's a vegan flapjack, vegan granola, and vegan chocolate cupcakes, and we do a vegan afternoon tea."

In addition, they serve milk alternatives such as almond, coconut, soya and oat milk.

Beans Coffee Stop also do a

range of milk alternatives for their drinks. Their barista, Tegan Griffiths is a vegan. She said: "We've got dairy free milk so we can make vegan coffees and drinks like hot chocolate. We have vegan cakes and for mains we can do veggie chilli bowls. We can kind of offer a vegan version of anything."

The Italian restaurant, Salernos also offers vegan versions of most

of their dishes, as all their food is made fresh. "You can build your own dish with whichever components you like."

The Talbot Hotel's restaurant is another vegan friendly eatery. In January, they offered a special three course Veganuary menu with three plant-based options for each course. They hope to add more of these options to their main menu in the near future.

In addition to vegan alternatives at restaurants and cafes in Oundle, supermarkets such as Tesco and the Co-op stock vegan alternatives.

In Tesco they offer foods which are "free from", including dairy free options such as vegan salted caramel galaxy chocolate, vegan nut bars and plant-based yoghurts. They also offer vegan wraps in the meal deal as part of their Plant Chef range.

In early January, the Co-op launched their own vegan brand, GRO, which includes ready meals such as ravioli, pizzas, pasties, and plant-based meat alternatives. The Cooperative also have a wide range of dairy product alternatives such as cheese, milk, ice cream and yoghurt.



Fashionistas pause to consider impact of fast fashion

Alice Blackmore

In the twenty-first century, the average person has approximately 103 items of clothing in her wardrobe. This is an extraordinary number of clothes, but it is no surprise considering the popularity of walk-in wardrobes, dressing rooms, chests of drawers overflowing with clothes, and new coats for every season.

Public figures and Instagram influencers reinforce these collecting habits when they are photographed wearing something different on every outing.

The UK is considered the epicentre of "fast fashion" in Europe, with each person buying an estimated 26.7kg of clothing every year, compared to an average 15.6kg in Germany and Denmark.

When we see an item of clothing in a store on sale, we immediately think that it is a "steal" that cannot be missed. People queue at dawn to get into the sale days at Next and Harrods to stock up on bargains. We rarely think about the impact of our purchases, even though we tend to make a lot of them.

But the issue of fast fashion is now attracting more attention, not just from environmentalists, but of the very consumers who buy it. One activist in the field is Lucy

Siegle, who had been scheduled to join the OWL series of talks in March, until it was cancelled by the virus outbreak. A popular presenter for BBC's The One Show and a columnist for The Observer, she has spoken on a range of issues related to the environment, social justice and ethical consumerism.

Her work focuses on destructiveness of consumerism in the fashion industry in the 21st century and in humanising environmental science, from climate change to consumer energy use. Her aim to bring sustainability to the fashion industry is laid out in her book To Die for: Is Fashion Wearing Out the World?

Ms Siegle is very critical of large fast fashion brands pretending to be ethical and says the entire sustainable movement is in danger of being co-opted by big brands. She founded the Green Carpet Challenge to encourage mainstream fashion events and high-end designers to introduce more sustainable styles. She worked with Gucci, developing the first-ever range of certified zero-deforested leather accessories to market, which were displayed at Paris Fashion Week.

Some of the issues that Ms Siegle highlights include the surprising realisation of how damaging the

fashion industry is to the environment. The fashion industry produces 10% of all humanity's carbon emissions (that is more emissions than all international flights and maritime shipping combined), is the second-largest consumer of the world's water supply, and pollutes the oceans with micro plastics. Furthermore, 85% of all textiles go to landfill each year.

Other environmental impacts are caused by increased demand for cotton, causing many fields to become barren or contaminated with pesticides, which trickle down into water sources. Alternative materials are no better, either. Polyester fabrics are a plastic made from fossil fuels. One polyester shirt has a 5.5kg carbon footprint, compared to a 2.1kg carbon footprint for a cotton shirt.

We also need to be conscious, not only about the environmental impact of fast fashion, but about the poor working conditions of fashion industry workers, particularly in developing countries, who work long hours for low wages, and often in poor or dangerous conditions. In 2013, a poorly maintained garment building in Bangladesh collapsed, killing more than one thousand people.

How can consumers change

their buying preferences to help reduce the destructive impact of the fashion industry?

It is not only cheaper, but better for the environment to shop at charity shops, such as Oxfam, which is a way of recycling clothes, reducing the demand for fast fashion brands which produce such a large quantity of cheaply made clothes.

Instead of buying a new shirt when a button falls off or a seam splits, we should mend our clothes, and give them a renewed life.

In addition to this, selling and swapping clothes on websites such as Depop and eBay is a popular and effective way to avoid disposing of old and unused clothes, which would otherwise end up in landfill.

I am not suggesting that you do not purchase any new clothes. But we all need to consider lifestyle changes to reduce the quantity of clothes that are bought every year.

For example, if you are in the habit of buying an item of clothing for every new occasion, make a pledge to instead wear something that you enjoyed wearing previously. Take steps to improve your carbon footprint with fashion. Every small resolution can lead to having a big impact.

Church roof is lifted off for restoration of hidden room

Millicent Riordan

In recent years, St Peter's Church has been undergoing a six-phase restoration programme. Developments have resulted in the installation of iron gates and automatic glass doors, as well as the conversion of the Lady Chapel and renovation of the interior on the west side where the choir balcony and toilets are situated. The work on the building has so far cost about £200,000, raised from a variety of sources, including The Friends of the Parish Church.

roof, the ridge beam of the parvis room had to be lifted in by manpower, and was considered to be the most challenging aspect of the room's restoration.

Because the staircase up to the room, which has to be ascended with the help of a rope, is too narrow, furnishings had to be lowered into the room whilst the roof was off.

The parvis room will now be used by St Peter's as an office space for both work and individual meet-



Restoration of the parvis room above the south door restored the space for use by the church community

The most recent of these projects was the restoration of the 15th century parvis room or 'priest's room', located above the entrance. Robert and Joan Wyatt formed the Guild of Our Lady of Oundle in 1485 and funded the construction of the parvis, as well as the south porch. It is probable that William Laxton, the founder of Oundle School, was educated by the Guild, possibly even in the parvis itself.

Beams that had been fitted within the room between 1642 and 1721 were scrawled with historic graffiti, but had been gradually become rotten and riddled with holes from wood worm and death watch beetle. Specialists from Nottingham employed dendrochronology to date the wood and determined that the wood originated from the same source as that used to construct parts of Apethorpe Palace.

A much later Samson post that had been installed in the middle of the parvis room was holding up the roof and distributing a dangerous amount of weight onto the ceiling of the church's porch.

During the repair of the lead

ings with members of the community.

St Peter's, which has the tallest spire in the county at 210 feet, was founded by St Wilfred of Northumbria in the 7th century. The entire complex was built over the site of a pre-Norman conquest monastery but the only surviving relic of this era is a coffin lid.

Although originally a Norman Church, the building was extended in the 13th century, and the spire rebuilt in 1634. The interior was restored by Sir G Gilbert Scott in 1864.

The church's most interesting artefact is the 15th century lectern, believed to be from Fotheringhay Church. During the Civil War, the Roundheads threw it into the Nene. In the 19th century it was recovered from the river and returned to St Peter's.

Malcolm Winder, the project manager, said that the redecoration of the community kitchen and the repair of the Grocers' stained glass window are next on the programme's agenda for the church's restoration and improvement.

New names under consideration for addition to war memorial

Esme Kroese

Seventy-five years after the end of World War II, two forgotten names are being considered for inclusion on the Roll of Honour of the Oundle and Ashton War memorial in the centre of town.

Stephen Abbott, from the local branch of the Royal British Legion, had been doing research on the memorial and noticed that two men listed on the war memorial plaque in St Peter's Church were not included on the Oundle and Ashton War Memorial. Both men are buried in the Oundle Cemetery.

The two men are Peter Aubrey Forrester Addie and John Arthur Coleman.

Peter Aubrey Forrester Addie died on 17 March 1940 aged only 19 years old. He was a member of the 50 Squadron Royal Air Force and was killed when his aircraft crashed in Windy Gyle, Cheviot Hills, Northumberland due to bad weather and a believed equipment failure during their patrol near Lincolnshire. The aircraft was written off, damaged beyond repair.

He was the son of Alan Leslie Forrester Addie and Effie Morgan Addie, of Chapel-en-le Frith, from Derbyshire, and it is unclear what his connection to Oundle was.

However, it appears that his mother was later also buried in Oundle. The inscription on his

headstone reads: "EFFIE M. ADDIE, MOTHER OF AUBREY, 3 FEBRUARY 1964, AGED 71, IN LOVING MEMORY OF BOTH".

John Arthur Coleman died on 6 February 1945 aged only 21 years old. He was a flight sergeant (navigator) of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. He was the son of Charles and Olive May Coleman of Peterborough. It is not clear what his connection to Oundle was.

The town council has approved funds to pay for engraving the new names on the memorial. Before work begins, conservation officers at the War Memorial Trust are being consulted about the best practice for adding names to the memorial, as well as the Royal British Legion.

The Oundle and Ashton memorial was unveiled in 1920 by Oundle School Headmaster F.W. Sanderson and was dedicated by the Vicar of Oundle, Canon Smalley Law. It was designed by Arthur B. Comfield, architect to the Grocers' Company and the Bank of England and the work was carried out by W. Freeman of Oundle.

From a population of 3,000, as many as 420 men from Oundle saw service. The memorial originally listed 68 names for World War I, including Sanderson's son, Roy. The names of 27 men were later added after World War II.

Stu-Pots Ltd.

A traditional Market Place cookshop with a huge variety of essential hardware, housewares and personal protection supplies

36 Market Place Oundle 01832 275414

Gilbert & Sullivan Players revive production of very first performance

Meagan Iu

The Gilbert and Sullivan Players February performance of *The Pirates of Penzance* in the Queen Victoria Hall revived the company's very first production from 1959. They have staged the play five times since then.

This year's production was directed by Marian Porter and Kate Wishart, with a cast of ten principal performers, a chorus of 18 members, and a live orchestra led by Ben Smith, all supported by an efficient backstage crew.

The production design was inspired by a Christmas card and an advert for a set of placemats. Marian Porter described the design to her costume team as "A Room with a View meets Half a Sixpence, but absolutely not *The Pirates of the Caribbean*." They also modified the plot by adding a new character, Samuel, who was "more like Carson of *Downton Abbey*, but forced into piratical servitude by a destitute master".

Oundle's Gilbert and Sullivan Players was formed in 1958, joining a world-wide society in honour of the Victorian-era theatrical partnership of the dramatist W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and the composer Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900), who collaborated on fourteen comic operas between 1871 and 1896.

H.M.S. Pinafore, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *The Mikado* are among the best known. There are at least 100 Gilbert and Sullivan societies in the UK, and many more groups worldwide.

Gilbert and Sullivan productions have a reputation for attracting an audience that is long past middle-aged. However, trends maybe shifting, with younger audiences growing to appreciate the exuberant comic romp of a good Gilbert & Sullivan show.

Oundle's Players have been successful enlisting much younger performers to sign up and join the cast and stage crew in rehearsals and planning throughout the year.



Principal players: Polly Jackson, Daisy Jackson and Hannah Neighbour



Principal players: Ian Ferguson, Phil Dawson, Tom Rushton and Bernie McDonnell

Art is for everyone at Oundle Art Group

This year, for the first time, the Oundle Art Group was able to stage its annual exhibition in the Yarrow Gallery. The two floors of the gallery were hung with paintings in watercolour, oil and mixed media. The generous space gave visitors the chance to appreciate the variety of styles of the artists.

The group was founded in Oundle 50 years ago by Tony Haywood, who is 93 years old. Members now come from across East Northamptonshire and meet weekly in Tansor on Thursday afternoons.

Sessions are structured, but informal, with a variety of themes or activities scheduled, such as kitchenalia in a still life, "in the style of"

a well-known artist, "white light", caricatures, or movement. Twice a year they bring in a model for life drawing, and in the summer they often go out and paint en plein air on location. There are also workshops with visiting artists.

Some of the members have practised professionally, some people are keen enthusiasts, and some are just having a go to learn new skills.

Tamsin Edwards joined ten years ago. "It can be competitive," she joked. But more seriously, she described the group as a very supportive network. "The art is important, but it's not the only part. It's social and inclusive," she said. "Art is for everyone."



The Oundle Art Group meets en plein air when the weather is fair



"Hazy Day" (left) and "Winter Scene" (above) were part of this year's exhibition, which made use of the Yarrow Gallery for the first time



Traditional butchers are on trend

Ben Clayden

The distinctive, vintage tiled shopfront of Seven Wells Family Butchers lends reassurance this is a shop with a pedigree. In, fact, there has been a butchers on this site for over a hundred years.

The personalised customer service that a butcher can provide is indispensable for both novices and experienced cooks, and contributes to a relationship that builds over years. When you shop at a butchers, you can have a meaningful con-



Photo by Tanveer Sira

Chris Jackson, shop manager, worked at K Johnson and Son for 12 years before joining Seven Wells Butchers 11 years ago

Three local farming families, the Knights, Paskes, and Reynolds bought the business on West Street from K Johnson and Son in 2004 to bring their products straight from the farms to the cooks. Their priority was that their customers knew that their livestock was raised with high welfare standards, and that the "meat is fully traceable back to the day the animal was born".

Sally Knight said the family farm has been in Stoke Doyle since the 1930s. "We rear cattle on our farm. After going to the abattoir, the beef comes back here, so we are very much farm to fork." The beef and lamb sold in the shop is local to Oundle, and the chicken and pork come from farms in Suffolk.

A family butchers could not be more traditional, and yet their business is right on trend, with growing concern to buy British, and more interest in knowing about where our food comes from. Supermarkets still dominate, but more shoppers are rejecting their plastic wrapped, mass produced food, and turning to smaller, local producers.

Mrs Knight said that among the many advantages of buying locally produced meat is knowing where it comes from and who has prepared it. "A lot of it is provenance, and a lot of it is skill. You get the meat in its primal cut and we can actually tailor-make it into what you want."

versation, because butchers don't just prepare the meat, they know how to cook it. If a customer is uncertain about how to cook a particular cut, the butcher can advise on the best preparation. Butchers can recommend what cut to use for a new recipe, and help choose the best selection for your budget. Best of all, they can prepare the piece to your specific requirements, from boning to tying or mincing.

Mrs Knight knows that the future of farming will be more challenging, from volatile global markets to the weather. For instance, she said that this year the early wet weather meant that they had not been able to drill a large amount of crop for the next harvest. People's food choices are changing, too, and they are eating with less red meat during the week. And when we spoke in early March, none of us predicted that the coronavirus outbreak would close the shop and move orders to home delivery.

While current trends and global pressures beyond our control put stress on businesses, they also help focus the consumer on what remains important in sustaining our local communities. Local butchers have been a staple of every high street in every town for hundreds of years, and they have endured for a reason: the relationship is valued, the service is essential.

Bakery favourites never go out of fashion at Cookies

Millie Trotter

In a peak-global economy, the future is localism, and is best represented by Cookies, a quintessentially British bakery in the centre of Oundle.

Cookies opened in Raunds in 1995, and was bought in 2016 by its new owners Mike Doyle and Ian Smith, who had been head baker. The Raunds shop is the bakery's base, and also includes a café. Their products are baked daily in Raunds and brought fresh to the Oundle shop. Cookies maintains the idea of a traditional, English bakery, serving fresh bread and pastries throughout the day for a regular clientele, serving British favourites.

The bakery assistants at Cookies have worked at the shop so long they couldn't remember how long, other than to say, "years". Bakery life means an early morning start.

"We get up at 5am every morning because obviously we have to travel and then set up the shop," Sara said.

children on their way to school."

Anyone who knows Oundle, knows not to go to Cookies during the Oundle School break when the queue snakes out into the street. While Pret A Manger might offer a variety of wholesome quinoa salads, Cookies serves up hard-to-find traditional favourites for hungry teenagers. "The Oundle School trend of getting a crisp bun has increased. They all get prawn cocktail flavour!"

Cookies then experiences another rush at midday, when people queue to buy a made-to-order baguette. "The filled rolls are popular. More people just want other things than bread and buns. And some people come in who are just out for the day and want to sit and eat a pie, or some people take it home."

Their regular customers come back because they know what they like, and they know they can get it at Cookies. For the bakery assistants, it's a familiarity that is reassuring. "It's nicer to be able



Cookies is famous for its spread of traditional favourites

Fresh bread arrives first thing in the morning, with shelves lined high with sandwich, split tin and farmhouse loaves, along with an impressive selection of pastries including top hat donuts, eccles cakes, fresh cream buns, and custard slices.

The morning rush of customers starts at 7am. "We get a lot of workmen in the morning, and some

to know exactly what they want, and what fillings they want in their sandwiches."

A reliable, regular clientele forms the sort of relationship that cannot be replicated by larger chain-bakeries. Oundle is a town that embraces local, home-grown business, and Cookies is the epitome of a traditional British bakery that is at the heart of its marketplace.



Sandwich loaves and top hat donuts do not last long on the shelves

The secret to a good egg is a healthy and happy hen

Meagan Iu

Leigh Fowler, the owner of Fowler's Poultry, produces top-quality free-range eggs on a farm in Kings Cliffe. His farm has sold eggs at the Stamford Farmers' market for 20 years without missing a single event, and he is a regular at Oundle's monthly Farmers' Market.

"I've always kept chickens.

farm house. His partner, Becky, and their four children help out on the farm, and often join him at the Oundle market.

For Mr Fowler, the core of his business is about the care of his hens, and the quality product that he produces. For him, there are no compromises to the designation of "free range".

Free range eggs are produced

on one level, with food and water all accessible on the same level and enjoy a generously-sized well-maintained grazing area. "We have used a breed called Lohmann Brown for the last 20 years and then changed two years ago to a breed called Bovan which we are delighted with and ordering some more for later in the year," he said.

He believes that the secret

the eggs quickly, so they stand up nicely and look lovely and fresh," he said.

There is no difference between white and brown eggs as it is just the shell colour, which depends upon the breed of hen laying the egg; the actual egg inside is the great source of nutrition, though it can be hard to tell what a particularly "healthy" type of egg would be. "Some companies put additives into the chicken food such as omega 3 and market their eggs as being high in such ingredients. I personally believe that freshness, good quality food and good quality of life for the hen are the most important things when producing eggs," he says.

Mr Fowler does not rear the hens himself as this is undertaken by specialist rearing farms who follow a strict vaccination programme to ensure the birds are as healthy as possible and the eggs are as safe as possible.

A laying hen is normally moved at 15 weeks of age from the rearing farm to the laying farm to settle down for around 3-4 weeks before starting to lay their eggs.

Over the course of a year-long lay cycle, they will start with smaller sized eggs to begin with, known as pullet eggs, and gradually produce larger eggs. At that point the birds need to rest, and are ready to moult, which takes about five weeks. Farmers cannot afford to keep unproductive hens, which are normally killed for meat.

However, when Mr Fowler's hens reach retirement, all of them are re-homed, instead of being sold for meat.

"When I go in every day, 'it's morning girls'. I chitchat away to them. I don't feel bad that they're then going to be sent to slaughter. We'll find homes for them at the end of each laying cycle," he said.

"You do what you believe in, I guess," he said. "I went to university to study poultry and I came out knowing how I wanted to do it."



Leigh Fowler is a regular at the Oundle Farmers' Market. While the market is closed, his eggs are still available direct from his farm at Kings Cliffe.

I love looking after chickens. I approach it probably from a softer point of view than a businessman who is just doing it to earn money," he says.

With a surname like "Fowler" he said having an egg farm business was meant to be.

Mr Fowler's passion for keeping hens started at the age of eight, when he bid for a shoebox containing 40-day old chicks on a family holiday to Great Yarmouth. He kept his own hens and after leaving school, he studied poultry production and management at the Royal Agricultural College in Ayr.

He then secured a job with Bernard Matthews, a company said to be the home of "bootiful" food and best known for producing turkey meat products, but he still dreamed of having his own free range egg farm. In 1997, he purchased a grassy meadow in Kings Cliffe. Soon, his free range laying flock was up and running, and he moved onto the site with a caravan, which became his home for seven years before he was able to build a stone

from poultry that are allowed to roam freely outdoors during daylight hours for at least part of the day, rather than being confined in an enclosure for 24 hours a day. On many farms, the outdoors ranging area is fenced, however free range systems usually offer the opportunity for extensive movement and sunlight that is otherwise prevented by indoor housing systems. According to the RSPCA, legal requirements for free-range eggs ensure a minimum amount of space and litter for the hens: no more than nine hens per square metre, 10cm of feeder per bird and one drinker per 10 birds.

For large producers, a compact system has birds on multiple tiers, rather than on one level, increasing the bird population while maintaining minimum standards for free-range classification. This puts more pressure on the grazing area outside the shed because of the increased traffic, but it is still free range, as birds are allowed to go outside during the day.

Mr Fowler's chickens are reared

to producing a quality egg is to provide the hen with the best food possible, well above their requirements, and to sell those eggs as soon as possible, so that customers can enjoy a truly fresh egg. "Whatever the hen eats, comes through in the quality of the egg. You need to buy good food and you need to sell



Leigh Fowler's children are a big help on the farm, where the hens have lots of space to range

Local farmers and food producers bring experience and quality to the market

Meagan Iu

On the second Saturday of each month, an excellent Farmers' Market is held in the centre of Oundle where local produce is sold directly to the public. There are numerous stalls to choose from including vegetables, fruit, meat, eggs, bread and cakes, fruit juices and dairy products.

Grasmere Farm is an award winning, family-run pork farm from Deeping St. James, Lincolnshire. They have three butchers shops in Peterborough, Bourne and Stamford, and an online site specialising in selling meat raised, butchered and prepared on the farm. Their products include a full range of sausages such as Lincolnshire, Cumberland, bratwurst, caramelised red onion, pork & ale, pork & chorizo, Lincolnshire chipolata.

Lincolnshire Poacher Cheese, run by brothers Simon and Tim Jones, produces the very best cheese using only their own unpasteurised milk and traditional methods to produce delicious varieties including Lincolnshire Poacher, Vintage Lincolnshire Poacher, Smoked Lincolnshire Poacher and Lincolnshire Red.

The milk from their 230 Holstein Fresian cows goes straight into the daily cheese-making process. Debbie, who staffs the market stall said, "It's the fact that it's such fantastic quality milk that makes this beautiful cheese." They also sell raw milk as a by-product of their cheese at the farmers' markets. Regulars come and buy as many as ten bottles at a time. "It's more natural, because it's unpasteurised. It has all the lovely nutrients. It's good for your gut. We've been told that the grade of milk is the highest you can get. They always say the best quality comes from cheesemakers," Debbie said.

She held up a bottle to show off a thick layer of cream at the top, and her customer confirmed that it was a treat. "The kids make their chocolate with it," she said.

Greg, a regular who comes to the market from Glapthorn, said, "I get everything here. All the Poachers are lovely, but depends on how strong you like it. The extra mature has got quite a lot of lactic crystals in it, that really nice taste."

Debbie confirmed that it gets tastier as you get near the rind. Greg said, "It's all local. We don't eat anything else anymore. Our fridge is full of this."

Celtic Bakers is a wholesale craft organic bakery from Tottenham, North London, one of London's leading producers of hand-crafted

bread, cakes and patisserie and supplies products to establishments across London. They are especially passionate about making their sourdoughs and use natural leavens, baked on the stone sole of the oven.

New Lodge Farm has been owned by the Singlehurst family for over 100 years, focusing on Aberdeen Angus cattle and sheep rearing with traditional organic methods of farming. Over the past 20 years the farm has evolved from a traditional producer of livestock to a provider of leisure and event catering services, currently run by Simon and Sarah Singlehurst.

Most of their products are sold from their award-winning farm shop near Bulwick, and they bring their meat to the market, along with a hog roast. The pork for their famous hog roasts is supplied by another local farmer near Towcester. Their butchery and cafe near Bulwick serves lunch and coffee overlooking their fields.

Brockleby's Pies, based in Melton Mowbray, was founded in 2003 by Ian Jalland, whose family has been farming for over 500 years. Their farm shop closed in 2012 to make way for a bigger bakery producing their hugely successful range of pies, such as Mowbray pork pie, organic pork pie, beaver pie, kiwi pie, penguin pie, gluten free pies and sweet pies including Isaac's apple pie and Scrumper's Pie.

They source all their ingredients from the Leicestershire area and use original recipes handed down through the family or from the bakers who have worked with them.

A regular customer filled her bag with a selection of pies. "My husband eats these. When I'm not at home, he doesn't need to worry about cooking, and he has one of these. He really likes them."

Longshore is one of the most popular stalls, where there's always a queue waiting to be served. Carol and Simon Long have been coming to the Oundle Farmers' Market for 15 years. With Oundle being landlocked, a supply of fresh fish is a rare treat. Based in Blakeney, Norfolk, they fish from their own boat and also work with other inshore boats along the coast.

Julia comes every month. "Once a month we have a fish fest for a couple of days. This fish is fresh and reasonably local. Supermarket fish is not the same."

Customers choose from a wide variety of seafood including potted shrimp, mussels, monkfish and crab.



Lincolnshire Poacher



New Lodge Farm



Brockleby's Pies



Longshore

Meet the workers who keep Oundle in business

Photos by Tanveer Sira



Tony at Asha's Barbers



Sara and Paula at Oundle Travel



David at Boots Pharmacy



Sandy at Milestones Florist



Amy and Tom at Beans Coffee Stop



Tracey and Julie at Colemans Stationers



Chris at Woodford's Estate Agents



Jim at Trendalls Butchers



Piyush and Alex at Oundle Post Office



Dayalachandra at Oundle News



Stuart at Stu Pots



Eunha at White Vanilla