

No Topic
is off limits *page 5*

Amps in
business *page 10*
since 1901

The blight
of hare *page 13*
coursing

Oundle Chronicle

Established 1991

Best Newspaper 2016 Shine School Media Awards

Winter 2020-21

Plans for new unitary council gather speed

Ned Chatterton

After delays caused by the pandemic, timescales have now been finalised for East Northamptonshire District Council to merge with other district councils to form one of two unitary councils in Northamptonshire.

Current district and county councillors have already formed the Shadow North Northamptonshire Council, which will continue the transition until elections in April 2021 elect new councillors to the unitary authority.

In the new authority, services provided by the district councils will merge with services provided by the county council. Planning, housing, environmental and health services - previously provided by the district councils - will merge with adult and children's social services, highways and trading standards - previously the remit of the county council.

"The unitary will be more transparent and residents will have a clear way forward in terms of getting advice and support," said Annabel de Capell Brooke, Northamptonshire County Councillor for Oundle. "Nothing is more frustrating for a resident to contact the district council only to be told that they need to contact county. Time wasting for them and pointless."

"This should allow for some savings in present overhead costs and also better career prospects for officers in one structure: this would be good for staff morale," said Rupert Reichhold, one of three district councillors for Oundle.

Asked what changes an Oundle resident can expect to see day-to-day, Councillor Reichhold said: "Very little: to the extent people see or meet council officers at all, they are likely to see and meet the same officers, with letter headings showing the North Northamptonshire Council logo."

continued on page 10



Artist Simon Dolby captured the unnatural stillness of Oundle's streets during lockdown in an oil painting now on display at the Dolby Gallery on West Street.

continued on page 2

Headteacher Janet McMurdo to retire after 18 successful years

Noa Anderson

Janet McMurdo, headteacher of Oundle CE Primary School, will retire this Easter after nearly two decades at the school. Mrs McMurdo is well known in the community as the driving force behind the happy and successful school environment which has given generations of Oundle's children the care, confidence and core skills crucial for a positive start to their educational journey.

During her tenure, Mrs McMurdo has boosted Oundle CE Primary from a school rated "Good" by Ofsted to an "Outstanding" one, seen the school through its transition from Reception to Year 4 provision to a

full primary, Reception to Year 8 in 2015, managed the move to new premises in 2016, and guided the school through the Coronavirus pandemic.

Her biggest challenge, she says, was the transition to a full primary: "We had to learn to be a completely different school." Having taught in a three-tiered system with lower school, middle school and secondary, and having had her own children go through it, she felt the structure worked well, but she saw the advantages of a two-tiered system fitting in better with the National Curriculum for England and Wales. The disadvantage of the larger school, however, is that "it's harder to make sure the school has

a unified vision," she explains.

Harder, perhaps, but not impossible. Mrs McMurdo sees her greatest achievement as the successful transition and move to new premises in Cotterstock Road from the previous Milton Road site. "Every step of the way, every new thing that came was a challenge, but also a success when we worked together," she recalls. "Through all that, I have never felt alone. I have always worked with a great staff team, parents and fab kids."

Claire Morrison, assistant headteacher, has worked alongside Mrs McMurdo for 11 years. She said that her greatest achievements were

continued on page 3

The Chronicle Team



THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Noa Anderson
Matthew Atkin
Archie Atkinson
Robert Brettle
William Caskey
Toby Cave
Ned Chatterton
Meagan Iu
Paxton Leung
Priyanka Menon
Sofya Meshechkova
Johannes Mynhardt
Digby Pratt
Gabriel Sun
Jennifer Yang
Cherry Yang

STAFF EDITORS

Leigh Giurlando
Caitriona O'Brien

Oundle Chronicle
Cripps Library
Church Street
Oundle
Peterborough
PE8 4EE

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

The art of lockdown

On any normal weekday morning Oundle is bustling with shoppers, business transactions, café goers and school pupils. But when the spring lockdown shuttered all activities in March, the town fell silent in an eerie calm.

The experience of walking through the deserted streets on daily exercise was both unsettling and exhilarating, and ultimately inspiring for the artists who took the opportunity to capture this unique moment in time.

Simon Dolby lives in the centre of Oundle and has spent years painting its streetscapes. He is intimately familiar with the architectural detail and character of all its buildings. But the changes imposed by the lockdown brought a new dimension to the experience of living in town, and he sat down to record it in his latest work.

"I was inspired by a walk

through Oundle in early spring just after the lockdown. I was amazed to see everywhere so empty, with no vehicles or people," he said.

"The dramatic sky and strong light hitting the school buildings was so unusual and atmospheric, I wanted to paint it exactly as it was."

He did a detailed pencil drawing and two watercolours before he had the composition and colours worked out as he wanted.

The finished painting was done in oils, and took him about a month to paint.

"I'm pleased that I painted something that marked a moment of time in the history of Oundle."

The painting is on display in the window of the Dolby Gallery on West Street, and is available as a limited edition print of 50. Contact simon@dolby-gallery.com for more details.

Oundle Music Trust makes plans for 2021 with Culture Recovery Fund award

Meagan Iu

Oundle Music Trust has been awarded £58,823 as part of the Government's £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund to help arts organisations face the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic and to ensure they have a sustainable future.

The funds could not have come soon enough for the Trust. Artistic Director, Kenneth Richardson said: "Along with the generosity of our friends, sponsors and audience members, this award will enable us to plan ahead."

Oundle Music Trust is one of 1,385 cultural and creative organisations across the country receiving urgently needed support. £257 million of investment has been announced as part of the first round of the Culture Recovery Fund grants programme being administered by Arts Council England.

At the beginning of lockdown, it became apparent that the planned festivals for the summer of 2020 would have to be cancelled. At the start of the year, they had just had a successful festival launch, and ticket sales were going well.

However, when the box office income ceased overnight, as ticketing is a large part of their overall income, it was clear that drastic action was required. The office and the staff were all laid off, and the organisation went into "hibernation, pending better times".

Mr Richardson said the importance of the grant could not be overstated. "It recognises the value

of what the organisation does for Oundle and enables us to re-start operations with our core team, plan events for 2021 and pursue our goal of re-branding the organisation."

Trust organisers are now planning the 2021 festival. "Assuming things proceed much as they are now, we are aiming to present a slightly reduced festival with socially distanced performances."

Following the success of 2020's virtual festival, and with the help of the grant, they plan to continue an online presence and livecast some of their performances, allowing them to have an audience watching both in the venue and from home.

The potential benefit is that they will be able to market their performances to a bigger audience than can be accommodated in person, and take Oundle out to the wider virtual world beyond our regional and national boundaries.

Ann Elise Smoot, Director of Oundle for Organists, also has plans in place for the 2021 Oundle for Organists Summer School.

"The Fund's support, allows us to plan for the future with renewed hope and enthusiasm, building on our successful 35 year history," she said.

Unfortunately, their box office on New Street will not reopen, however the Trust is exploring ways to have a presence in town.

The Oundle Music Trust runs Oundle International Festival, Oundle for Organists, Oundle Cinema and Oundle Food Festival.

Appeal for donations to maintain Responders' vehicle

Matthew Atkin

Many charities are facing hardship this year because of their inability to organise annual fundraising events. One local organisation that relies entirely on donations to support its operation is the Oundle Community First Responders, a group of volunteers who provide emergency medical assistance.

The First Responders were initially told by the ambulance forces to stand down during the first lockdown, but since mid-April they have been back in action.

Had this been an ordinary year, there would have been fundraising events that would go towards covering the £4000 cost for the lease of their vehicle. The First Responders use this vehicle to arrive at the scene of an accident as soon as possible and help to ensure that the injured person remains stable until the paramedics arrive.



First Responder Paul Brackley says they need an annual minimum of £4000 to support their services

Last year alone they assisted 362 patients throughout the community, giving roughly 6,600 hours of their time. Whilst the First Responders have some reserves, and have received donations and support from local businesses, it is not enough to cover their lease plus the expense of maintaining their essential equipment.

The First Responders have appealed to their supporters to donate even small amounts using the link on their website.

In order to become a First Responder, a volunteer must first complete a four-day training course, participate in a monthly meeting and an annual refresher course for the first level. The First Responders are sent to locations where 999 has been called, within a ten-mile radius of Oundle. First Responder Paul Brackley said that a First Responder's job involves "keeping the patient alive to the best of our ability until the paramedics arrive".

The son of one patient who was assisted by the First Responders after a serious fall said: "Oundle residents are very lucky indeed to have this service which certainly isn't commonplace for many people."

Janet McMurdo retires

continued from page 1

the pupils who she helped nurture in their early years. "Janet has been devoted to the children in her care and has worked tirelessly to give them the best start in life they could

teacher in Bradford. She worked as a class teacher and deputy head on the Isle of Wight from 1989 until she moved to Peterborough in 1999. From there it was just a short hop to Oundle in 2002 when she took up her post as head of the lower school at Oundle CE Primary.



Janet McMurdo retires at Easter after 18 years as headteacher at Oundle Primary

possibly have."

Originally from the North West, McMurdo followed a family tradition and trained as a teacher. "I saw myself being more of a teacher who could build longer term relationships with the children." Following her training in Manchester, she taught secondary school in Milton Keynes, Bradford and Rochdale, with a stint as a middle-school DT

McMurdo quickly made her mark. She was highly praised in the school's 2004 Ofsted report: "The headteacher provides very good and clear leadership for the school in which she is fully supported by all her staff... [she] has a very clear vision for the school, which is shared by all who work there."

In September 2007, the school was rated 'Good', and by February

2011 had attained 'Outstanding' status, with the report stating that "the headteacher is pivotal to the school's success."

She credits the school's success to its focus on the children's needs, and the team's commitment to continued improvement to meet high expectations.

She has also made a positive impact on parents and staff alike. Gordon Montgomery, a parent and governor said: "In my professional life I work regularly with head teachers and school leaders and Mrs McMurdo is among the finest that I have known in any context. Her dedication to the Oundle community has been exemplary, there are thousands upon whom her work has made a positive impact. There are few who have made such a contribution."

The latest challenge, of course, is running a school during a pandemic. Oundle CE Primary has formed bubbles, rearranged desks in rows, staggered drop-offs, and banned outside visitors, but endeavours to make learning as "normal" as possible. It is no easy task for the younger years, whose learning benefits from trips and outside specialists.

The school, which remained

open to serve the children of key workers from the very beginning of the pandemic, is working to provide lasting memories even in these difficult times by recording school plays (The Lion King and the Nativity) and recording orchestra and choir activities in conjunction with St Peter's Church.

When home learning is necessary, McMurdo offers simple advice to parents: "Do your best. Some days will go well and other days will go less well. But don't worry and get stressed about the days when it doesn't go quite so well. Keeping your mental health intact, for both the adults and the children, is key."

McMurdo will retire with fond memories of her time at the school. "What gets me out of bed in the morning is coming and seeing the children and the team. The best thing about being the head of Oundle Primary School is that you laugh every day. There is always something that makes you think 'oh my, that's bonkers!'"

Has she made many plans for keeping busy in her retirement? She laughs: "I've worked for 47 years, mostly full time, so I'm ready for a bit of flexibility in my schedule!"

St Peter's welcomes new vicar

Reverend Annabel Copeland has been installed as the new Associate Vicar of St Peter's Oundle, St Mary's Benefield and St Leonard's Glapthorn.

"We're delighted that Annabel is joining our team," said Canon Webster. "She brings a wealth of skills and experience in schools as a teacher, governor and chaplain and this will be invaluable as she helps us to spread the good news of Jesus among our local schools and families."

Rev'd Copeland's background is in primary school teaching in the UK and a three-year teaching role in Kenya.

Her ministry in the Oundle area will include a focus on work with local families and young people, alongside the work of the church's

Youth Minister, Martha Barnes.

After training for ordained ministry in Oxford, Annabel moved to Billericay in Essex to serve her curacy, followed by an appointment as a team vicar in Chelmsford.

She most recently served as assistant minister and director responsible for children, youth and families at a community church in north London.

"I've been warmly welcomed as I've settled into my new home here in Oundle, and I'm so excited about the prospect of sharing the good news of Jesus in this vibrant part of the country," she said.

Annabel has arrived in Oundle with her yellow labrador Layla, and they both share country walks or runs to keep fit.



**A traditional Market Place cookshop
with a huge variety of gifts and
housewares for the festive season
- and every season.**



smeg



LE CREUSET

£399



**具良治
GLOBAL**

36 Market Place • Oundle • 01832 275414

Pink House Craft Club awarded funds to deliver Craft It Bags to members' homes

Meagan Iu

The Pink House Craft Club has been running at Oundle Library for several years, with the focus on helping people who live in rural communities, and especially adults who are feeling lonely or isolated.

The club was started by Caroline Kisby, a freelance creative practitioner, and Charlotte Williams, who used to work at Oundle Library, after meeting on the Friends of Oundle Library committee.

Due to the insecurity of obtaining ongoing funding, they formed the Pink House Arts Community Interest Company in 2018, which allows them to apply for larger grants. A community interest company is a special form of non-charitable limited company, which exists primarily to benefit a community, with a view to pursuing a

knitting, jewellery making, mosaics, puzzle books and jigsaws.

Ms Williams said: "We keep in touch with people by phone to find out how they are getting on and we include a newsletter in the Activity Bags. We've found that people who start off being quite rigid about what they want to do then see what other people are doing and say, 'well I could do that'. They're pushing themselves a little bit more each time, and becoming more confident to try to new things."

They have mostly been working with residents at Stronglands Court in Oundle. But in September they were awarded a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund which has allowed them to move to the next stage and work more closely with libraries in Oundle, Rushden and Corby to see if any of their housebound customers



social purpose.

Earlier this year, when the pandemic hit, the craft club was halted. Because many of the participants had health problems, they had to shield during the lockdown, and not being online increased their loneliness.

It was then that they came up with an alternative scheme to deliver craft supplies to the club members. With funding from the Central England Co-operative, they began to supply free craft activity bags to older people, helping to alleviate some of the stress and anxiety they were experiencing.

"Since coronavirus we have had to change the way we work and quickly adapt to evolving situations, which is why we designed our Activity Bag Project specifically to help people who are having to spend more time at home because of the pandemic," Ms Kisby explained.

Participants are able to choose what sort of activity they want to do and once a month they receive a bag with everything that is needed to do a couple of crafts at home. Activities include painting, sewing,

who get monthly deliveries of books would like to participate, with activity bags delivered at the same time as books. Oundle Baptist Church has also been encouraging people in outlying villages to join the club, and several residents at the Riverside Maltings in Oundle have become members.

Ms Kisby has a wealth of creative experience and has worked in mental health arts since 2006, in adult education and with NHS Trusts, mental health charities and organisations. She has partnered with the Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust and a local mental health charity to establish and curate a public art gallery in the Cavell Centre, Peterborough.

"The creative arts have long been recognised as a beneficial outlet for the emotions of people with medium and long-term mental distress and as an aid to help towards recovery," Ms Williams said. "At Pink House we strive to support every individual to find their own creative voice, enabling their lives to be enriched through creativity and thus improve their long-term health and wellbeing."

Mental health support workers report increase in referrals in the pandemic era

Paxton Leung

Since the start of the pandemic almost a year ago, staying at home for an extended period of time has taken a toll on mental health. Everyone has been affected, regardless of socio-economic groups.

Those with less resilience and effective support networks have been most affected. Young people who watch or overhear news about the virus, might overthink the possibilities, and get confused and are driven into a state of panic. Those who have been furloughed, are in low-income groups, or are essential workers, have been adversely affected by the lockdowns. The financial pressures or worries about infection are increasing the potential for mental distress.

Natalie Jarvis, the mental health lead at Oundle School, has reported "perhaps as much as double the norm" for mental health consultation referrals involving young people, with many cases being anxiety-related or stress-induced.

Denise Slater from Oundle CHAT said that the issues that affected young people changed with the lockdowns and school closures.

"There was a drop at the start of lockdown among young people, which we expected. Young people were thrown into a new world and if they had had anxiety about school or bullying then this was taken away from them. However, as time moved on, other anxieties and concerns started to emerge, and we had a return to normal numbers of young people wanting support."

Regular social contact with friends and family has always been important, and the enforced periods of isolation during the lockdowns have created an imbalance in many people's lives.

Judie Woods, director at Cambridgeshire Consultancy in Counselling (CCC) said: "The pandemic has thrown nearly all of these fundamental aspects of our familiar lives into disarray and confusion with no certainty about when we can expect any return to our old normal. This unfamiliarity, loss of control and social isolation can lead to increased stress, anxiety and depression."

For anyone concerned about the mental health of a friend or family member, the symptoms to watch for include anxiety, depression, bereavement from a loss of a close person, insomnia, depression, or feelings of isolation.

Everyone can play a role in offering support. Acknowledging

that life has been and is still very tough for some people is important. "Notice and comment when people are struggling and offer a listening ear. A lot of the time, this is enough," said Natalie Jarvis.

The CCC recommends using strategies outlined by Dr. Phil Hammond, a doctor famous for his appearance on TV, who has created the following mnemonic to remember eight key steps to improve mental health:

CLANGERS: **C**onnect with other people through meeting online; **L**earn new things to keep yourself intellectually active; **A**ctivity; physical activity; **N**otice the world around you through being more mindful; **G**ive back to the community, volunteering if possible; **E**at a healthy diet; **R**elax by taking time out to rest, chill, switch off; **S**leep around six to eight hours, and have a regular bedtime routine.

Talking to friends and sharing worries is a good first step to improving mental health. There are also several local and national organisations who offer a range of support.

In the first instance, anyone can speak to a GP to discuss mental health concerns. Although they cannot see patients face to face now (except in certain circumstances), they are available on the phone.

There are also private counsellors online who can be found via the Counselling Directory or a simple search. Do be aware that anyone can call themselves a counsellor, so you need to be careful and ensure you find a qualified and reputable person.

One may seek help through several local and national charities or organisations.

Oundle based CHAT offers an opportunity for young people aged 9-25 years old to talk about their concerns with professionals who aim to help improve their wellbeing.

Oundle Rural Mind offers one-to-one consultations for emotional support.

Cambridgeshire Consultancy in Counselling is a mental health charity working in the region that provides affordable counselling to support people with a wide variety of problems, including anxiety.

YoungMinds is a national organisation which aims to reduce suicide rates amongst teenagers.

Childline has counsellors available round-the-clock online or on a phone able to help or talk to any young person about any issue they are going through.

The Exchange where no subject is off limits

Priyanka Menon

A brand new web series for young people explores issues that matter, but that few are comfortable talking about. The Exchange has enlisted influencers and educators to address taboo subjects in an engaging and informative way. Its first series of webisodes covered topics such as consent, period stigma, body confidence, unconscious bias, revenge porn and gambling. Hannah Dawes, Head of Learning for Life (PSHE) at Oundle School hosts the interviews in each episode. We sat down with her to learn more about the initiative.

media was quite interesting to me. We know that 90% of teenagers in the world are on social media and therefore it seems like the obvious platform to have these conversations.

Is your target audience the younger generation?

Yes, 13-16 years. Initially I was thinking 13-18, but there is already a lot of content out there that is geared towards older teenagers. For me the 'forgotten generation' is 13-16. I think we patronise younger pupils too quickly, and say, "for this topic you have to be 16 to talk about sex or drugs". And it's just



Bloggers Jasmeen and Kiran from British Bindi talk about the importance of open conversations around the issue of consent

What is your new project, The Exchange?

The Exchange is a web series that is geared towards educating teenagers about what I would call so-called 'taboo' topics. Things I suppose that I think we should be teaching at schools but so often we shy away from teaching properly. At Oundle School, Learning for Life has been going for the last few years and we have been talking more about these things, but I think nationally there is still this gap in the conversation where we don't discuss what I would call important, but traditionally slightly embarrassing topics. That isn't always to do with sex and relationships, but I think it's also regarding anything where there's stigma.

What was your inspiration for starting it?

I've had this in mind for a few years. I was thinking in my head for a long time about how we could have these conversations with teenagers. Netflix is doing it really well but schools are falling behind. It often feels to me like lessons are great, but that we are not really getting inside people's minds and having decent conversations. The idea of doing something on social

not true. We need to be educating children much earlier so that they can make informed decisions when they come across these things in life and it's no good waiting until someone's 16 or 17 to have these conversations, because by then it's too late.

Do you think that 13-14 year olds are more likely to face these kinds of problems?

I don't think 'more likely', no I don't. To be honest, anyone who's got a smartphone and anyone who's got the internet will be experiencing and engaging with these topics. So even people my age, perhaps not our grandparents, I guess, but I think anyone above the age of 10 will find these conversations interesting.

How long did this take to set up and take off?

I came up with the plan at the start of lockdown and then Oundle School very kindly backed it and are supporting it. The interview process, setting up the website, setting up the social media channels, having these conversations, I think it probably has taken about three months to put together. I haven't finished, so I think it will probably take another two months.

How did you go about contacting the social media influencers?

In some cases it has been really easy to establish contact. When there are speakers and activists already wanting to have these conversations, people are really keen to collaborate on projects. But for the format on The Exchange, we're producing episodes with two people, who can each help explore the topic from a different perspective. For each episode, we wanted at least one guest who had first-hand experience of the topic at hand, and this could be a bit more sensitive, because not everyone wants to discuss the fact that they've experienced racism, not everyone wants to discuss the fact that naked pictures were leaked around the internet of them or the fact they were addicted to gambling. Putting this together was a bit of a team effort between me and my producer, Ben Weaver-Hincks. He was amazing. Little shoutout! There's a lot of emailing and chasing backwards and forwards. It just depends on who's available at the time, but I think because of lockdown, people were more willing to participate. **Where did you find the technical resources for setting up The Exchange?**

My producer, Ben Weaver-Hincks is a friend from uni who's got great contacts within the spheres of arts and entertainment. He was able to find someone to do

the graphics, the website, the social media, the marketing, the PR, all those sorts of things. I can't take any credit for that, because that was him. So, he was my resource! What I'm realising as I move forward, it's all about who you know!

What kind of topics do you think you are going to be discussing in the future?

So, I would love to do a series two. One episode that was difficult to find people to speak about was drugs. I'm keen to do an episode about how science should inform the conversation around drug use policy. What we're learning more and more about is how genetics have a big part to play in the way that your body reacts to drugs and I think we need to be having that conversation more in the classroom, rather than just 'don't do drugs' - people want the facts! I also want to do one on female genital mutilation, which has recently been included in the PSHE curriculum. It's something that is illegal but still very much happening in the UK, underground. I would also like to do an episode on contraception and STIs. These aren't things that we managed to do in the first series but stay tuned for more conversations with cool people!

The Exchange is on Instagram @jointheexchange; and Join The Exchange on Youtube. www.JoinTheExchange.co.uk



Laxton Junior School

OUNDL E

It's the little details that allow them to think big

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

01832 277159

admissions@laxtonjunior.org.uk

www.laxtonjunior.org.uk



Horse-drawn Traveller's sojourn in Oundle

Meagan Iu

It's not often that horse-drawn vehicles come through town. When a handsome cob and cart were seen trotting up and down the streets in September, we caught up with the driver outside Tesco where he was sitting with his dog and guitar.

Dec spent a week in Oundle. He had been busking in Peterborough and was told that Oundle was a nice place, so he came to town to spend some time.

He has been travelling since he left school at 16, about seven years ago. He explained, "I liked education, I read a lot of books, but school didn't work out for me. People thought I was a bit mad. I felt like a misfit, I didn't fit in." Growing up in Somerset, near Frome, Travellers were common in the area, and people living alternative lifestyles was not uncommon.

Life on the road has an appeal that he cannot explain, but he is realistic. "While the lifestyle might seem romantic, the romance wears off very soon," he said.

Dec is a guitarist and plays traditional music, usually earning enough to pay expenses through the year. "I earn my own way through busking. I've never signed on for benefits," he said.

His companions on the road are his 17-year-old lurcher and his cob and cart in which he travels a maximum of 25 miles a day, usually 15 miles. He stops to spend the night

in laybys or a bit of land. He has not encountered any problems and is never told to move on.

"The most important thing is to leave nothing behind. I even find myself picking up stuff I find. I recycle my waste," he said. However, he is worried about possible new legislations that will make trespass



Dec travels across the country with his guitar, cob and cart and lurcher

a criminal offence, and make it more difficult to find places to stay.

Gypsies and Travellers are defined as persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin. This includes 'born' Gypsies and Travellers as well as 'elective' Travellers such as New Age Travellers.

The Housing Act 2004 requires

local authorities to assess the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in the area and develop strategies to meet them. The 2011 report for North Northamptonshire assessed a ten year need for 30 residential pitches and 4 transit pitches.

A common form of Gypsy and Traveller site is a residential site

moderate transit visitors.

The maximum period of residence can vary from a few days or weeks to a period of months. An alternative to a transit site is an emergency or negotiated stopping place which also has restrictions on the length of time someone can stay on it, but has much more limited facilities.

The last year has been difficult for Travellers and there have been few opportunities to busk to earn money. Dec spent lockdown in Somerset, where the council offered him some land and set up a toilet and made him safe. Some local residents objected, but were told that he had a right to stay there. He said he was planning on travelling to the West Midlands after Oundle, though he was not sure where he would spend the winter.

Dec sometimes joins up with other Travellers, but mostly heads off on his own. He prefers to travel solo rather than in a group because his horse does not like to follow other horses. He is not online but does keep a basic pay-as-you-go phone in his pocket. He is never certain about where to spend the night and sometimes wakes up in the morning wondering why he chose such a bad spot. "Then a short bit down the road I find a wonderful place where I could have stayed," he said.

Wherever he travels, he says, "We try to find the magic."

Disputes over river rights muddy the water

Archie Atkinson

Over the hot months of the pandemic summer, record numbers of people headed to favourite swimming spots along the River Nene near Oundle. At times up to a hundred people were estimated to have lined the banks at places in Elton, Cotterstock, Oundle and Wadenhoe, swimming, picnicking and sunbathing. The crowds brought cars that lined narrow village lanes and abandoned debris along the river.

To control and limit access to the river, some landowners and residents in Cotterstock and Wadenhoe were reported to have blocked paths and closed car parks. At a time when many people were seeking an afternoon escape to the countryside from the restrictions of lockdown, the standoff raised issues about public right of access to the country's waterways.

Issues from trespassing to littering caused dispute and discussion, especially on the Oundle and Surrounding Villages Facebook group.

One resident posted during the unseasonably warm weather in June: "Many people have been swimming and having picnics at the Cotterstock lock. There has been a lot of rubbish left behind. The police were there today informing everyone that it is private property. The footpath between Oundle and Cotterstock runs through private property. There is no swimming, picnics or fishing allowed in this area. Permission from the landowners is required."

In September, one village resident was surprised by the increased use of the water by the Lilford lock. "We call it the 'costa del sheep field'. Not sure why it's suddenly become a hotspot for campers, sunbathers and picnickers."

In September, a post prompted debate regarding the wooden bridge in Fotheringhay. The bridge had been barricaded by the landowner, preventing people from enjoying walks along the river. Many people joined the thread in expressing their confusion and dis-

appointment about the landowner's actions.

Similar issues have been seen across the country. The current laws surrounding these issues are complicated. Landowners argue that they own both the riverbank and bed, so they have control over who is allowed on their property.

However, swimmers, boaters and canoers argue that no one owns the waterbed and they should have the right to roam the waters legally. Only four percent of the UK's 41,000 miles of river have a clear and undisputed right of public access. If you swim, fish or paddle without the right permission, you are breaking the law. This has led to a nationwide dispute about the right to use the land.

An amendment to an agricultural bill is currently being considered in parliament to encourage farmers and landowners to allow access to waterways.

Andrew Mansergh is a keen kayaker and runner who uses the paths and river six times a week. He has been a member of the British Canoeing association for many years and believes river users should be

able to use the river as they please, as long as they respect the land itself.

He said: "If people aren't treating the landowner with respect, then they should not be allowed to use the land."

He thinks that landowners should allow kayakers and swimmers to access the waterways, but the expectation must be that there is no mess left behind.

"It should be perfectly possible to go for a swim in the river and for nobody to ever know you were there."

For some people that message is easy to understand and put into practice. Back in June one Facebook poster commented: "Whilst I am not denying that there are plenty of young people being irresponsible and inconsiderate whilst down at the river, the group we encountered yesterday at about 6pm, heading back towards the Ashton bridge from the lock, restored our faith a little bit! Polite and carrying a bag of their rubbish. We got to the place where they'd been and it was spotless. Those kids and their parents should be proud."

Glebe land under threat from light industrial development

Matthew Atkin

The Church of England proposals to sell agricultural land for industrial park development on the outskirts of Titchmarsh have roused heated objections by village residents.

In its July briefing to the Titchmarsh Parochial Church Council (PCC), the Peterborough Diocese outlined its plans to sell 114 acres of Glebe land by the A605 near Titchmarsh. They said: "The proposal for the larger site is to deliver a sustainable industrial and logistics park with significant economic, social and environmental benefits. The smaller parcel of land will deliver an improved roundabout junction with a residential or mixed-use development."

While this was presented in July to the Parochial Church Council (PCC), the diocese had not communicated with the Parish Council and its residents.

The people of Titchmarsh were outraged and immediately wrote letters to the Rt Revd Donald Allister, the Bishop of Peterborough in opposition to the plans. The Bishop himself has not replied. According to the lay chair of the PCC, Stephen Barber, "To date, all letters have been answered by the Bishop's Chaplain, stating that the Bishop has no direct involvement in the matter."

In a letter to Tom Pursglove MP on 7 September, the Bishop said that he was "not directly involved in such matters", but he did outline the complexities of the Diocese's responsibilities. "The Diocese comes under charity law, company law and church law, which aren't always compatible," he wrote.

The diocese is legally responsible for training, paying and housing the clergy, whilst also being

in charge of making significant payments to the Clergy Pension Fund. In poorer parts of the country, the clergy receives very little money from national church funds towards paying for the clergy. The diocese's main source of income is what it can ask for from the parishes in Parish share, but this is only a voluntary payment.

The Bishop said that in order to create sufficient funds and maximise income "the Diocese has to maximise its income from investments, consistent with its aims and objectives. When we talk about this we must also consider the fact that the current situation is not ideal, with the closure of churches and now the only partial re-opening of them. Because of this, the current reserves (enough for two years) are rapidly depleting."

He wrote that agricultural land brings in very little income and the various forms of development that are being explored will bring in more income. He thought that the proposed sale should be reviewed but as quickly as possible. "The review should be thorough, but as quick as possible. The decision to sell should be confirmed or reversed within a few months."

The PCC are doing what they can to help the residents of Titchmarsh stop the sale of land for development. Their meeting in July resulted in a unanimous decision to formally object to the plan because of the negative impact it will have on the locality. Previously, the PCC has supported some limited developments of the glebe land, but according to Mr Barber, "The scale of the development the Diocese now proposes is without local precedent, and is nowhere supported by the policy or detail of local land use planning."

Approval for quarry plans is a blow to campaign by local residents

Cherry Yang

After a year-long campaign against a proposal to build a gravel quarry near their village, residents of Warmington were disappointed by the decision of the Northamptonshire County Council to approve the plan.

The NCC Development Control Committee met in November to discuss the plans submitted by Ingrebourne Valley Ltd to extend and develop quarry extraction on Elton Estate land off the A605 near Warmington. The DCC noted that support for this sort of plan is usually automatic because it was an

allocated site in the Local Plan.

The plan aims to turn 23.3 hectares at the Elton site into a mineral extraction quarry, with a working lifespan of nine years, and extract up to 900,000 tonnes of gravel and sand. Objections from local residents were targeted at the plan's adverse impact on wildlife, the historic and ecological setting, and the increase in heavy goods vehicle traffic on the A605.

Tom Pursglove, MP for Corby and East Northamptonshire, offered his support to the objections of Warmington residents. In a letter to the NCC, he wrote: "Certainly,

Historic country house on the market for £10 million

Johannes Mynhardt

One of the largest stately homes in England came up for sale this year, just a few miles from Oundle.

Lilford Hall is a Grade I Jacobean manor house with Georgian alterations and additions. The house has over one hundred rooms, including a grand entrance hall, seven reception rooms, two dining rooms, a theatre, a ballroom and nine bedrooms, amounting to 32,406 square feet.

The house comes with three cottages, two Georgian pavilions and is set in 321 acres, over 127 acres of which are on long leasehold.

The Hall is on the market for £10m by Savills.

The current owners have done extensive restoration work since they bought the property in 2004, but the effort to restore dozens of rooms remains an ongoing project.

In 2019, Historic England listed the house on its At Risk Register. According to their report, the roof covering was in poor condition leading to water ingress and distress to the upper storeys, and the front bays required structural attention. "A schedule of urgent repairs has been identified but not implemented, and no long-term solution has been agreed."

The immediate garden to the Hall is located next to the south wing. A stone terrace looks over the lawn which is lined by trees on each side and enclosed by a stone balustrade. Two sets of stone steps lead down from a higher lawn to the lower. At the centre of the Hall is a courtyard which is accessed from the back door, down steps that lead to the cobbled central walkway. On either side of this

walkway are rows of box hedges and trees.

The gardens at Lilford are known as the Formal Gardens or the Pleasure Grounds, and are separate from the house. They are vast and sub-divided into sections; the Children's Garden, The Broad Walk and the Rockery which cover an area of approximately five acres on the east side of the estate. However, the gardens are currently overgrown and would need work to restore them.



Lilford Hall has a long and unique history; the Tudor part of the house dates to 1495, with Jacobean extensions and Georgian alterations.

The Hall is best known for being the family home of Robert Browne (1550-1633), The Father of the Pilgrims and The Grandfather of the Nation (USA), due to his teachings about the separation of the church from the state, a founding principle of American democracy.

The Powys family acquired the estate in 1711 and the barony was created in 1797. The 4th Baron Lilford, Thomas Littleton Powys (1833-1896) was a prominent ornithologist, and kept a large variety of birds in aviaries at Lilford. He was responsible for the introduction of the Little Owl into England in the 1880s.

Warmington village is a gem in the rolling Northamptonshire countryside, situated in beautiful and historic surroundings, which I believe would be significantly and adversely affected by the proposed quarry construction."

Councillor Andy Mercer, DCC Chair, said objections to the quarry application had to be for planning reasons.

"I have not heard any planning objections, but have heard a series of suggestions that there is a loss of amenity and potentially an impact on the landscape and the setting of historic buildings." He noted that the impact on the landscape would be hard to justify a refusal, because there was a suggestion that there would be an improvement in the landscape during the restoration stages.

Some members of the committee were sympathetic to the concerns of Warmington residents. Councillor Andrew Kilbride acknowledged that it was an emotional issue and thought it "was quite poor" that the quarry company had not engaged properly with the community.

Whatever reservations some of the committee members might have had, they felt that any objections would not stand up legally on appeal. The committee unanimously carried the motion to approve the plans.

Once the quarry is operational, drivers will experience a considerable increase of HGV traffic on the A605 near Elton. At its peak operation, the quarry will generate on average 112 HGV movements daily, with a maximum of 140 two-way movements.

Eclectic styling and haberdashery at Little Blue

Priyanka Menon

Little Blue is the newest shop to open in the Oundle Market Place, featuring collections of homeware and haberdashery. Upon entering the shop, bright embroidery silks and shelves full of knitting wool catch your eye, alongside sewing supplies and unique novelty items. Mixed in are vintage collectibles from the UK and France, both decorative and functional, and chic upcycled furniture.

Prior to opening Little Blue, Ali Osborn, the new owner, had already been busy with furniture upcycling and restoration where she lived in Shrewsbury. She did an interior design diploma and sold her upcycled furniture on a Facebook page, also called Little Blue.

After she moved to Oundle with her husband, who is a teacher, she spotted an opportunity to expand her hobby into a business when the little shop in the Market Place became available.

"I do a lot of upcycling. It was like a hobby business before, and I had always thought it would be nice to have a shop to do that. Then with Oundle in Stitches closing, I thought maybe we could do with

another haberdashery as well," she said.

Getting the shop ready turned into a family project. "My daughter came down and helped me paint the interior, which was a great help



because it was quite a task."

Ms Osborn admits that she was a bit nervous about opening a new shop in the current economic climate. "We did our sums and decided that we could manage if there's another downturn."

Though small in dimensions, the shop is packed with a surprising variety of objects, both practical and decorative. She said that she prefers things that have longevity and describes her taste in furnishings and soft furnishings as very traditional. But then she also likes to mix in new pieces and even

but it's not particularly any style."

Selling haberdashery is a new area for her, but she is happy to fill the gap in the market for Oundle in Stitches loyal customers. She currently has a limited supply of fabrics, but if these are in demand, more could be stocked. She says that she will see what her customers are looking for.

Chunky wools will be popular at the shop for winter, but Ms Osborn has already started with double-knits and four-ply. Baby wools always sell well.

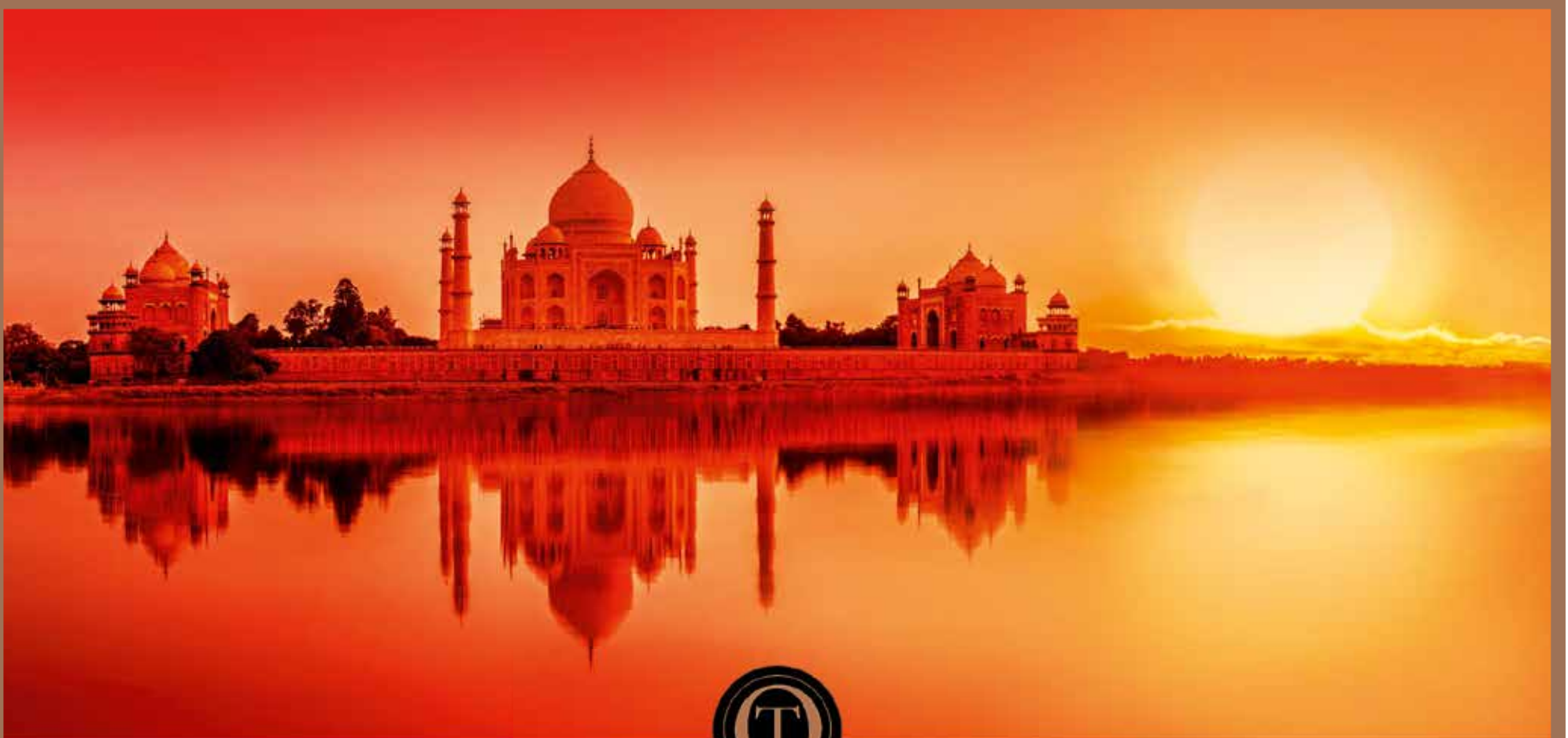
When travel is possible, Ms Osborn sources stock from brocante markets in France. "You get more unusual things over there, more one-offs."

She also sells the Vintage with Grace mineral paints. You put a couple of coats of varnish over the top to make it more hardwearing. In Ms Osborn's own work, she also uses paints by Annie Sloane, French Chic and Farrow and Ball.

Much to Ms Osborn's surprise, she immediately sold a lot of items when she opened. "In the first week I nearly emptied the shop of furniture stock from sales!" she said. "That was a bit of a shock to the system to sell so much so quickly, so I've got to do some work now and get more pieces painted."

rustic items, to add interest. This is reflected in her shop.

"There's both new and pre-loved homewares. It just depends if I've found things I like," she said. "It's very eclectic actually, I've got quite a mixture. I just buy things I like,



Oundle Travel

Our Experience Makes Yours.

01832 273600 | sales@oundletravel.co.uk

www.oundletravel.co.uk

Business in the Market Place carries on during lockdown

Cherry Yang

Oundle was still in recovery mode after the first covid lockdown during the spring, when businesses once again faced closure for a second lockdown in November.

The first lockdown lasted for more than four months, bringing the Market Place to a halt. Social activities ceased, businesses closed and demand for goods and services was deferred. The government distributed various grants, loans and payment holidays for businesses, which helped to cushion the impact. But according to shop owners in Oundle, it has been the community who has supported local shops wherever possible that has kept local businesses on the road to recovery.



Martin Charles at the Bridal Gallery has used his time during the lockdown to take on high quality alterations and make five layer masks in bespoke fabrics

Across the two lockdowns, businesses met demand by adapting to new requirements. Stu-Pots stayed open because some of the products and services the shop supplies are considered essential. Shop owner Stuart Blow also provided area-wide deliveries as far as Laxton, which he felt gave customers more confidence in using the shop. A government grant as well as an understanding landlord helped

with the finances. According to Mr. Blow, "Overall I have had some much-needed help from government, and my customers have been marvellous in their support."

Judy Hibbins at Crackers has been in business since the 1980s and has seen some difficult times. Her shop, which originally sold clothes, was called Country Clubbers before it closed. "We didn't do well with clothes and changed it to Crackers, because my husband said we were bloody crackers for staying!"

She was very concerned about the second lockdown in the run-up to the key Christmas season when she had a lot of new Christmas stock to sell. She felt decisions were arbitrary with regards to what

shops were allowed to remain open. "It's the injustice that gets to me. For instance, supermarkets can stay open and sell gifts, garden centres can stock and sell everything that I sell." She tried out a new online click-and-collect service with her window as the pick-up point.

The lockdowns have proved to be the biggest challenge to deal with during her years, but she is optimistic. "We're just lucky where

we live. The local customers have been amazing," she said brightly. "It's making us resilient."

The knitting and sewing community were disappointed to see Oundle in Stitches close at the end of August after more than 30 years in the Market Place. The owner, who had bought the business ten years ago, said that when her lease expired in August it coincided with plans to retire. But the uncertainty of the business climate meant she did not have second thoughts. "You wouldn't renew a lease in this environment. It's too uncertain."

One of the hardest hit businesses has been the Bridal Gallery on West Street. After an entire season of planned weddings was postponed, owner Martin Charles can only wait for wedding events to begin again in the spring and summer. In the meantime he has kept busy putting his tailoring skills to good use, offering a high-quality alteration service, as well as making covid masks available for sale at his shop.

Another sector that took a huge hit in the pandemic was tourism. It might feel as if the days of travelling freely are gone, but according to Paula Cockcroft, director of Oundle Travel, "Things have changed and they are doing so every day that passes." She remains positive about the rebound of demand after the crisis. "The good news is that the desire to travel has not left us. It will improve quickly and many more countries will open in the months to come." Oundle Travel introduced a dedicated concierge service that will concentrate on vital Foreign and Commonwealth Office updates and a new customer loyalty scheme. Combined with the company's 36 years of experience, the services aim to give her clients confidence about travelling. "This, together with new flexible booking options with our preferred partners, gives clients complete peace

of mind when booking," said Ms Cockcroft.

For cafes and restaurants the lockdowns, partial openings and reopenings have meant months of instability and uncertainty about revenue. For Phil Gilbert, owner of Beans, "It was a huge relief when we finally decided to reopen for takeaway in late May." He provided take away services, which met more demand than expected. It was reasonably good for the rest of the summer and into the autumn when he found business was quite busy at times. However, the November lockdown was more challenging. The only service he could offer was take-aways, which were less in demand with the colder weather.

The pandemic and lockdowns have changed people's outlook about home and work, and as a result the property market has been stable so far. Having remained open for the November lockdown, estate agent Chris Woodford said: "The local market has been super strong, with a slight increase in prices." He has seen interest in property across the price range, particularly in the town centre, and has sold a lot of village property. This is attributed to the pent-up demand after the first lockdown and the stamp duty holiday that bolstered the market. According to Mr Woodford: "I think people have analysed how they live and how they want to live."

But looking forward, he said, "It's really hard to know what is going to happen next year." Though he saw slight cooling in the market in November, that could be seasonal or due to some "gathering clouds on the horizon". He predicted that the stamp duty holiday will be extended for perhaps another three months, which would be able to keep the market moving, help the country out and "kick start the property market earlier than usual in the new year".

"It will be a very interesting time," he concluded.

Pharmacy, Boots and The Co-op.

According to Which?, Neqi reusable face masks, and face coverings made by Bags of Ethics Great British designers, are the top two performing face masks. They are available at Boots and Waitrose.

White Vanilla at 1 Market Place stocks fabric face coverings made with organic cotton by Sea Salt Cornwall. These masks are adjustable and shaped to ensure a good fit for the face.

Masks get contaminated easily by coughs and sneezes and should be cleaned regularly in hot soapy water, or in a washing machine.

Masks should never be shared or handled by anyone other than the user.

Face masks are new must-have accessory

Jennifer Yang

Following the UK's second lockdown, there is no doubt that a mask has become an indispensable accessory to carry at all times. While its purpose is utilitarian, and essential for public health protocols, it can also be a means of self-expression. There is no harm in having some pride in wearing a mask. Masks have drastically changed the way we look. There has been a rise in demand for eye make-up, whilst a decline in lipstick sales. It seems that eyes are replacing mouths in everyday communication!

While there are plenty of places

to buy masks online, there are a few local suppliers to support who make or stock both fabric and disposable varieties.

Martin Charles at the Bridal Gallery on West Street makes different sized masks with five layers and a nose wire, beautifully finished with top stitched seams. His masks can be bought at the shop or made to order, including a new range of masks in festive Christmas themed fabric.

Margaret Hunter, aged 75, has made over 800 masks in all sorts of designs and colours, raising over £4000 for Kivuli Trust and Marafiki

Trust, which helps children in Kenya. She started making masks for her friends when the virus broke out, but then decided to sell her masks to support the Kivuli Trust in Kenya, which she has visited with the trust founders. "It was an opportunity to raise money for the charity," said Mrs Hunter, "and it's just taken off!" Her masks are posted on the Oundle Facebook community pages and can be ordered via email at hello@marafikitrust.org.

Disposable masks can be bought singly or in multi-buy boxes from many shops, including The

Adaptability to changing times ensured longevity for family business trading since 1901

Johannes Mynhardt

Tucked away off the Market Place, Amps Wine Merchants maintains a prominent position in Oundle as the oldest family-run business in town. Originally trading from its Market Place shop as a family grocer, provision merchant, wines and spirits trader and tallow chandler, Amps has been in business since 1901.

Philip Amps is the fourth generation to manage the family business. While most children make pretend shops out of cardboard boxes, Mr Amps had the enviable luck of a proper shop to play in.

"From a very early age we used to play with the tills and operate them on a Sunday. And the poor lady, a lady called Gladys Bosworth who used to do the cashing up, would come in on a Monday and at the end of the day when she did a till, there would be many thousands of pounds missing because we'd been playing on the tills."



Philip Amps is the fourth generation to head a family business that has been in the Oundle Market Place since 1901

As they got older, the shop provided opportunities to learn about running a shop. On school holidays or whenever they were at home, if they wanted some pocket money there were always essential tasks, such as a shelf that needed to be stocked.

After finishing school at Uppingham, Mr Amps had been intending to go to Loughborough to study sport. However, the pull of family business brought him back to Oundle.

"My father suggested I come back into the family business which was probably a bit more of an order than a request," he said.

He honed his skills at a management training scheme with Sainsburys and returned to join his

father in business.

In the early 1980s, wine was a luxury that few people drank. "It wasn't nearly as vast of an industry as it is today," Mr Amps recalled. His father saw an opportunity and suggested that he develop a specialism in the field. While studying and taking his wine exams he developed a strong interest in wine and that became his focus. Although they stocked wine in the grocery store, they could see a growing interest in specialty shops. They purchased their current site behind the Market Place in 1988 and converted it into a wine shop.

In 1993, following the arrival of purpose-built supermarkets in town, the Amps family closed their grocery store and moved into wine.

"I am very lucky that what is actually my passion and interest outside of business is actually also now my job," said Mr Amps.

The Market Place has evolved a lot during Amp's time. The construction of the bypass altered the

type of business that was coming through town, and the introduction of supermarkets presented the Market Place with a dilemma: either evolve, as the Amps did, or close.

The first lockdown earlier this year forced Amps to make new decisions about adapting to change. It was fortunate for the wine industry that the supply chain was not disrupted. Although his wine orders were impounded in South Africa during their strict lockdown, other supply chains carried on as normal, although with slower delivery times.

The biggest change was the vineyards having to use machines to pick grapes because they couldn't find enough workers, which is not ideal for the quality of the harvest.

The wholesale side of business, which comprised seventy percent of sales supplying pubs and restaurants, collapsed in the lockdown. But while supermarkets were restricted to selling two bottles of wine at a time, Amps was able to provide whatever individual customers wanted via online orders, which helped make up their sales.

"Many businesses have had to adapt and change. I mean we changed from a predominantly wholesale to a retail. Thankfully we had a website, that we didn't think was very good, but it certainly worked. We were taking 150 to 200 orders a day, which was a big change from when we used to get that number of orders in a month.

"We were lucky enough to be featured in some of the national newspapers as businesses that were alive and popular with wine merchants, and so that did help us as well; we had a lot of parcels going out via couriers to basically all over the country."

Mr Amps also kept his focus local, and asked, "how is this going to work?" for the Market Place. He talked with other businesses in town and coordinated a collective delivery service including Hambleton Bakery, Cookies, Oundle News, Seven Wells and Trendalls.

"We even delivered some shoes from Norths alongside our wine orders."

Having helped to keep his family's business thriving through 120 years of change in Oundle, Mr Amps still sees a lot of potential. Oundle is known as a beautiful town, with all visitors remarking on its charm, and interesting heritage. Mr Amps thinks that there is much to promote.

"I think tourism is something that Oundle should do a little bit more of. We've got a fantastic river facility, with boats going up and down the river and the people who come into town to visit and I think that's something that we should promote."

Mr Amps is confident that due to the strength of the community, Oundle will remain a prosperous market town.

"The Oundle Business Association is very strong, and it's very active. There are lot of diverse businesses, including those running from home," he said.

"Oundle is a popular place to live, especially with people re-considering where they want to live and work after the pandemic. There's a lot of positivity about localism and people are genuinely looking to support the town and each other."

New unitary council

continued from page 1

Councillor de Capell Brooke was also positive about what the changes would lead to. "Clearer points of contact and responsibility to make access to services much easier for residents," she said. "The process should allow for a fundamental shake-up of some potentially outdated ways of doing things."

Jake Vowles, the Independent district councillor for Oundle, took a very different view. He said: "I have consistently objected to this interference by central government. What we had in East Northamptonshire worked well for all our residents."

He put the blame on the county council's financial problems, and sees no real benefit for a rural area like Oundle. "It is clear that control of this rural area will be amalgamated with the urban conurbations of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough," he said. "What changes in emphasis this will bring I do not know but I am afraid they will not be to our benefit."

The move was deemed necessary in 2017 after central government inspectors found evidence of financial mismanagement at county level. The national government stepped in to appoint officers to aid the transition and put the legislation in place to enable the move, which passed the Houses of Parliament in February 2020.

Councillor Jake Vowles was aggrieved by the government's handling of the matter. "The way that central government overruled the wishes of the seven district and borough councils was shameful," he said.

However, Councillor de Capell Brooke has been impressed by proactive national government at the local level. "Our MP, Tom, reacts and responds positively and promptly to local needs and requirements," she said. "He has demonstrated that he will do whatever possible at a parliamentary level. This is no more apparent in Oundle with him seeing the pressing need for the North Bridge works to be done."

This debate comes at a time when there is greater concern over the government's commitment to devolution. The government's proposed white paper on devolution, which was to be announced in the summer, was pushed back to September and has now been "put away in a drawer", according to the Local Government Chronicle.

Councillor de Capell Brooke was hopeful about a new chapter in local government. "The new structures are well thought out and locals have been listened to. We all need to embrace this as a very positive move forward."

US election

Robert Brettle

The 2020 US election was certainly memorable. During this election season we have seen insult-fuelled debates, a nail-biting election night and long legal challenges. After nearly four years of controversial Trump leadership, the American public voted for Biden, who won the electoral college 306-232, the same margin as Trump did in 2016. But unlike President Trump in 2016, Biden won the popular vote, by more than five million. There was record turnout overall, and Biden won the highest number of votes of any presidential candidate, ever.

However, it was surprising that Trump did as well as he did, considering that his approval ratings never went above fifty percent during his term. The projections of a huge "blue wave" never really materialised.

The issues surrounding this election were unlike any in US history. One of the most important issues was the response to Covid-19, which has killed over 250,000 Americans. In addition, racial justice was a large issue in the election, following the death of George Floyd in May 2020 and the subsequent protests. Issues such as climate change and its associated impacts were also high on the priority list.

This election, however, was not just important for Americans. For the UK, President-elect Biden's victory will mean that issues such as a coveted US-UK trade deal will become especially important. Negotiators will have to carefully consider Biden's and the Democratic caucus' views about the Good Friday Agreement. In September, Biden tweeted: "Any trade deal between the US and the UK must be contingent upon respect for the [Good Friday] agreement and preventing the return of a hard border. Period".

The electoral college vote is on 14 December. At the time of writing, it is uncertain whether Trump will concede the election before then or will continue to contest the result in courts or on Twitter.

In November 2016, we solicited comments about the prospects of an administration under Donald Trump. Four years on, we again asked Tom Pursglove MP and American writer Adam Begley for their views on the US election and Trump's leadership. We also contacted a British university academic who is currently teaching in what turned out to be a pivotal swing state in this year's election, for his state-side perspective.



Adam Begley is the author of Updike, and biographies of Nadar and Houdini. He was the books editor of The New York Observer for twelve years, and has been a Guggenheim fellow and a fellow at the Leon Levy Center for Biography. He has lived in the UK for over 20 years.

Joe Biden won the 2020 United States presidential election by a significant margin. He won the electoral college by the same margin Trump did in 2016, and the popular vote by more than six million. By contrast Trump lost the 2016 popular vote by nearly three million.

In many ways this year's election was a triumph: more than sixty-six percent of eligible voters cast a ballot - a higher percentage than we've seen for more than a century - and this in the midst of a pandemic. There was very little disturbance at the polls, and the results were tabulated relatively quickly, again with only minor disturbance.

In other ways the election was a catastrophe: the loser not only refused to concede but also falsely declared that the election was rigged and that he was in fact the winner. Trump's antics have been shameful and pathetic and also dangerous. He has undermined faith in the democratic process, faith that may be slow to rekindle.

Biden's victory gives hope that the disastrous Trump presidency was an aberration. Instead of a bumbling malignant narcissist in the Oval Office, a man seemingly incapable of truth-telling, an utter stranger to fact, we will have a man who is decent, honest, quietly capable, and abundantly experienced.

Biden's behaviour since November 3 has been impeccably presidential, whereas Trump has behaved like a spoiled toddler; he has demonstrated yet again that he's unfit for high office.

Kamala Harris will be America's first female vice president. She will also be the first Asian-American and the first African-American vice president. That, too, gives hope that the nation will turn away from the racism and xenophobia of the Trump years.

The Senate still hangs in the balance. If the Democrats win the two undecided Senate races in early January 2021, they will have effective control of both houses of Congress. Biden would then have the tools necessary to undo much of the damage done in the last four years.

Hope, in that case, blossoms into joyous expectancy.



Adrian Brettle moved to the United States in 2010 and read American history at the University of Virginia. He is now lecturer in history at Arizona State University.

Symbolically, the "call" by Fox News for Biden to win Arizona on election night marked an enduring shift in momentum; until then, President Donald Trump, with his earlier victories in Ohio and Florida, looked on course to repeat his shock 2016 win. However, President-elect Joe Biden captured Arizona from the Republicans by 10,000 votes, and the state had the only Republican loss in the Senate.

Arizona's modest tilt leftward has a number of causes. Republican divisions mattered here; the spectacular personal feud between the President and the late Senator John McCain disguised deeper disagreements over fiscal and foreign policy. Meanwhile Arizona's recent rapid urbanization, including an influx of Democrat-voting Californians, helped the Democrats. Around thirty percent of Arizonans identify as Hispanic and Trump's divisive border wall rhetoric outweighed his economic appeal to them. Arizona's relatively low unemployment and economic growth was always the strongest Republican message, but the shocking speed and magnitude of the virus's surge undermined Republican support among the huge senior community here. Finally, Democrats got out the Native American vote representing five percent of the population. This community usually sits out elections.

Biden opposes Brexit. Yet the fact that Britain continues to be the second largest defense spender in NATO probably matters more to an administration determined to rebuild alliances and international organizations. After all, it was the Obama administration that started the demands for European members of the alliance to pay up. If Britain retains a close relationship with EU, leverages existing connections with other nations such as the Five Eyes intelligence sharing alliance, and builds new ones - for example with the trans-Pacific partnership - a trade deal will be concluded.

Meanwhile Trump's more than seventy million votes indicates the continued potency of populism; an appeal of a politics that privileges class grievances over racial identity, especially an antagonism toward a perceived globalized elite associated with the social media giants and pro-China policies. Furthermore, lockdowns energize this base, as those who cannot work from home resent the 'zoomer' class.



Tom Pursglove has been Conservative MP for Corby since 2015. He currently holds the government post of Assistant Whip.

The election of Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States and the historic election of Vice President-elect Kamala Harris as the first Black woman in the role, represents a huge moment in American politics. Their ticket impressively achieved more votes than any other in US history. Like after every election, this is an exciting time and a fresh slate this time around - a chance to restart, refresh and renew. Their success will directly impact upon our success, given how our two countries are so inextricably linked.

As this transition is made however, it is important to acknowledge the arguable achievements of the outgoing Trump administration, which, if we are being honest, has at times been unjustly maligned, where I suspect other administrations would have been effusively congratulated.

In particular, the President's personal role in securing the peace deal between the United Arab Emirates and Israel, where the signing of the agreement to normalise relations between the two countries serves as an historic step in the Middle East peace process, leading Israel to suspend its plans for the annexation of the West Bank, something we too in the UK have consistently opposed.

The pre-Covid strength of the US economy, which mattered for jobs and prosperity in this country, was also hugely impressive, and I do believe the current administration has been emphatically pro-British, reflected in the President's desire to secure a mutually-beneficial free trade agreement, and in his regularly expressed affection for our country.

It is also worth noting that, generally speaking, this has been a period of relatively little global conflict, something he said he was determined to ensure. So I hope history will be kind to those achievements.

Ultimately, the United States is our most important ally and I look forward to the close work our two nations will do together in the years ahead on all of our shared interests and priorities, from tackling Covid-19 to counter-terrorism, and collaborating closely through the UK's presidencies of COP26 and the G7 next year.

The friendship between the UK and the US has always been a force for good in the world, and I look forward to seeing that continue to grow with President Biden in the White House.

Police Beat

Sofya Meshechkova

Four teenagers carrying an unloaded air rifle were spoken to by armed police on 15 June. They were seen carrying a firearm in the Station Road area and were then located by police in the St Osyth's Lane area, near the Co-op.

On 9 July, a house on St Peter's Road was burgled between 4.10pm and 5.55pm, and property was stolen.

Overnight on 4 August, a car on Millfields Road was broken into via the driver's side door and items were stolen.

On August 19 at about 11.35pm, a gang of four offenders on two mopeds broke into Harpur's jewellery shop on West Street, smashing the front windows with a sledgehammer. Glass cabinets were damaged and many items were stolen. A similar crime occurred in Uppingham and is believed to be linked to the same gang.

On 27 August in Barnwell, horse stables and a tack room were dismantled and stolen along with the horse and most of the horse's tack and equipment.

An elderly woman on Bellamy Road was disturbed on 3 September by two men posing as water board engineers. They entered her house just after noon, distracted her and stole money.

Entry was gained by means unknown to a motor vehicle on the 13th September between 10pm Sunday and 6am Monday 14th September; items were stolen. The motor vehicle was parked

in the vicinity of Church Street, Wadenhoe. Also, on Monday night, another vehicle on Church Street was robbed.

On 26 September, between 6.30pm and 8.00pm, two men called at a house on Gordon Road claiming to be police officers and are believed to have committed a distraction burglary.

Overnight on Saturday 3 October the catalytic converter was stolen from a car on Millfields Road.

On 9 October a vehicle in Prince George Drive was broken into and ransacked but nothing was reported missing.

Also on 9 October, a mugging occurred in St Osyth's Lane at 11.00pm. A man was approached by two men with a knife and was forced to hand over his phone and wallet and ordered to withdraw cash from the nearby cash machine.

Entry was gained to a motor vehicle parked on St Peter's Road between 1am and 7am on Monday 12 October. Drawers inside the car had been opened, the front tyre was flat and the tire jack was stolen.

On 9.45pm on 13 November, three men jacked up a Toyota Prius parked on the house drive and removed the catalytic converter. Police have reported a 'huge increase' in the number of catalytic converter thefts across the UK since June 2020.

According to last available data provided by police, 43 crimes were reported in Oundle in September, up from 26 reported in August.

Dash cams provide essential tool for police prosecution of dangerous driving

Sofya Meshechkova

Dash cameras are considered a powerful tool for road safety by private drivers and law enforcement. According to the Automobile Association, twenty-four percent of their members own a dash camera, and eighteen percent are considering buying one.

The rules about use of dash cameras vary by country. In some, they are illegal and in some, they are absolutely essential. In Portugal, Luxembourg and Austria, dash cams are illegal due to privacy concerns, and drivers who are caught using dash cams in these countries, are heavily fined.

On the other hand, in Russia dash cams are considered essential due to police corruption and a high number of accidents. Dash cams are helpful for detecting who is at fault in a motor accident.

In Germany, a new law has been passed which allows dash cam footage to be used as evidence in the highest court. However, faces, license plates and any other personal details must be blurred due to privacy reasons.

Use of dash cams in the UK is legal and becoming more popular. Photos and videos from private

dash cameras have even been co-opted by police to help them monitor road crimes. Operation Snap was launched in August 2019 by Northamptonshire Police to enable people to report driving offences that they have witnessed on the road.

Operation Snap enables the public to submit dash cam videos and photos via a simple online portal. In the first 12 months, over 600 were submitted, resulting in 300 Notice of Intended Prosecution letters being sent to registered owners.

The videos have recorded crossing double lines while overtaking vehicles, dangerous driving, ignoring traffic lights and carelessly driving around road users such as horse riders and cyclists.

After submission of material, the police have 14 days from when the offence is committed to take action. Police staff check the footage to ensure it falls within the scheme's remit and contains clear views of offenders' number plates so they can be identified.

The most common reason for a rejected submission is insufficient video evidence to support a prosecution.

Outcry over seating at memorial

Jennifer Yang

During the weeks after lockdown when cafes opened for takeaways, indignation flared up when patrons were seen enjoying their drinks by the Oundle and Ashton War Memorial at the top of New Street.

Oundle community Facebook pages became a forum for heated arguments and complaints about whether anyone should be sitting on the memorial.

Neil Repton began one post: "To those who sit on the war memorial, thinking it is a picnic, food eating area. IT'S NOT! Do not disrespect the fallen."

Most people who joined the argument agreed with his stance. "My personal view is it should be used as a memorial only not a picnic area," said one contributor.

Some said the council should put up signs, and some thought that nearby Beans Coffee Stop should take responsibility for people who sat by the memorial.

Phil Gilbert, owner of Beans said that the issue of the memorial has been misunderstood. He said that the actual war memorial is fenced off by the chain barrier, and that no one should sit inside the chained area. Officially, the Oundle Memorial is a "pillar that stands on a plinth which itself stands on an octagonal four-stepped base on a raised paved area". But the base then stands on a highway roundabout, which is also known as the "circular apron", which does not form part of the memorial.

"This circular apron is the area where anyone wanting to read the names on the memorial stand, so therefore it acts as an amenity exactly the same as it does if someone sits down to rest their legs," he said.

"I only ever see people inside this chain ring late on Friday or Saturday nights, which clearly is not acceptable, nor at any other time."

He feels that the weekend cyclists tend to get singled out

for blame, when there are many visitors to the town who use the apron as a place to sit while enjoying a takeaway.

"The reason why people use the circular apron to sit on is because there is a total lack of public seating at the west end of town, which is a focal area. If there is no seating, where can visitors take a rest? Many, if not most, of the people who sit on the apron are visitors to the town, and they contribute a lot to the local economy."

Mr Gilbert said that his fellow

retailers and regular customers agree with these points, despite not contributing to the online discussion.

Emma Baker, Oundle Town Council Clerk, acknowledged the issues raised, but said that the council was unwilling to add additional unsightly signs to the memorial.

The council is making preliminary inquiries with NCC Highways about the possibility of adding a pedestrian seating area adjacent to the memorial.



Hare coursing continues to blight the countryside

Ned Chatterton

Not often in the headlines, but under the headlamps of the cars which pursue them, hounds chasing hares seems an unimportant problem. However, hare coursing, the illegal sport where dogs race to catch hares, continues to affect farmers around Oundle, while public attention is turned on the more high profile blood sport of fox hunting.

Out of sight and under cover of darkness, hare coursing is proving to be a big problem for local rural communities.

"When the fields are combined we probably get hare coursing every 2-4 weeks. They drive across the fields looking for hares. Apparently, the coursers are often betting money on the successful dogs," said local farmer David Green.

the unfolding chase.

The sport is banned under the 2005 Hunting Bill, along with fox and deer hunting, because of its cruelty towards the animal. Many also object to the trespass and damage to farmland and farm property.

"The main damage is crop damage if crops are drilled, ruts in the soil. Often gates are broken and padlocks cut," said Mr Green.

Ms Thomas had a visit from coursers only the week before this paper contacted her: "Luckily the ground was quite firm so they didn't leave large ruts with their vehicles, but they still damaged the wheat seedlings peeping through and the established oilseed rape crop by driving around them chasing the dogs."

The activity is taking a toll on the farming community. Ms Thom-

reflected this, revealing that there were two reported incidents of hare coursing in the period from January 2018 to October 2020, with one of those linked to criminal damage, although no arrests or crimes have been reported within this time frame.

Alongside this problem, the cost of rural crime rose nine percent in just the past year, reaching its highest level in eight years. Farm theft costs the sector £58 million per year, with expensive tractors, farm vehicles and livestock all targeted.

Many farmers see a link between more trespassers on their land and increased crime. "The people who hare course are often linked to criminal activities," said Mr Green. "I have seen evidence of stolen car radios near the tracks across my land. We have had our tractor

aggressive if confronted," said Mr Green. "They see themselves as being above the law and have no respect for the landowners or their property."

Ms Thomas agreed: "We never approach such people, just inform the Cambs Police who are quite keen to catch, charge and disperse them from the county."

It seems authorities are facing a resilient enemy, as coursers see their sport as a way of life.

A local Facebook buy and sell group promoting activities that support hare coursing, such as dog breeding, was contacted to ask about their participation. "It's a gentleman's sport. It's a sport of royalty that goes back hundreds of years," they replied. Any further questions were then blocked by the group's admin.

Prosecutions are made against poachers through nineteenth century anti-poaching legislation, which does not consistently give police and courts full seizure and forfeiture powers for dogs and vehicles, which are the most effective ways to curtail the activity.

Fines also tend to peak at £900, which is small fry for the amount of money already being gambled on coursing.

Given the inadequacy of these deterrents, there is growing appetite for greater action against the crime.

In March, a letter from a coalition of farm groups to Secretary of Rural Affairs and Agriculture, George Eustice, and the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, urged reform: "Simple changes to the Game Act would give police the powers they need to properly tackle this crime and deter criminals with a sentence that fits the crime."

There is some doubt as to how effective policing can be. "I have not seen the coursers on my land this summer," said Mr Green. "I have only seen the car tracks, so it is difficult for the police, if I have not seen them. Stricter penalties would help to deter the hare coursing."

A campaign was launched in September by Crimestoppers in partnership with Northamptonshire Police and the Fire and Crime Commissioner which encourages people to report rather than confront suspected hare coursing to the Crimestoppers tip line.

The chase will continue, but Ms Thomas is determined about her reasons to fight it: "I am afraid I am a fan of hares, not hare coursing or of people trespassing."

Names of farmers have been changed to protect their property.



PCs James Perring and Martin Green with dogs seized from suspected hare coursers in Lincolnshire

Hare coursing is a blood sport where dogs, often greyhounds, are used to chase down a hare or, less frequently, deer. The aim of this varies; some coursers film the dogs and bet on who will catch the hare first, others do it as a form of poaching.

"They seek out areas where they can travel a big distance without barriers such as hedges and ditches," said another local farmer, Jane Thomas.

Once the hare has been spotted, the dogs, mostly bred and traded among coursers, are set off to catch it. The coursers sometimes follow the chase from in their cars and film

as said, "This is very upsetting when you have taken a lot of time and care to prepare the seedbed for drilling."

Mr Green also took a dim view of it: "I cannot sympathise with their activities. If they approached farmers legally to ask permission, it would be a different matter."

They are facing an uphill battle with one of the problems being a lack of reporting on the crime. "Most farmers do not report it," explained Mr Green. "For the police to take more action, more incidence numbers need to be created."

A freedom of information request to Northamptonshire Police

windows smashed and tools stolen the same evening that the coursers have been chasing deer at night."

Farmers have got to the point of taking extensive precautions against this problem. Ms Thomas said: "We tend to park old machinery or lay telegraph poles in gateways to prevent access and make sure that all fields adjacent to roads and tracks have good hedges or ditches between the field and the road. This tends to keep coursers at bay in their vehicles, but it won't stop them coursing on foot!"

There are also WhatsApp groups to alert other local farmers. "The coursers are renowned for being

Saplings from oak trees grown to commemorate WWI centenary

As part of the Remembrance activities in November 2018 marking the one hundredth anniversary of the end of the First World War, Oundle School pupil, Michael Fuller, now thirteen years old, began an ambitious project that symbolises a commemoration of the past, and renewal and hope for the future.

Inspired by the avenue of English oak trees on Pavilion Drive that had been planted shortly after the war to commemorate the death of Roy Sanderson, the son of Oundle School Headmaster Frederick Sanderson, Michael collected five hundred acorns from the trees. His aim was to grow enough trees to commemorate each of the men from Oundle who died in the war.

Three hundred of the biggest, healthiest and shiniest of these acorns were sorted and put into cold store in order to break their dormancy. Then the acorns were planted into peat-free organic compost after being treated with beneficial fungi that helped to feed and protect the seedlings when they germinated.



Michael Fuller collected acorns from trees planted after WWI to grow 300 new oak trees in commemoration of the Centenary

Most of the acorns emerged in the spring of 2019 and were planted into bio-degradable pots, which gave each seedling more space, water and nutrition. Michael said that during that year, the young trees had to withstand attack by squirrels and jackdaws, long periods of hot, dry weather, and one of the wettest autumns on record.

On VE Day during lock-down, all the seedlings were planted into larger pots and given another dose of mycorrhizal fungi. Over the summer the seedlings grew into a miniature forest, sheltered under the canopy of bigger trees.

Finally, on November 11, the planting-out project was inaugurated. Coordinated by Nick Tebbs, Head of Grounds at Oundle School, pupils began the process of planting the oak saplings at Oundle School, Laxton Junior School, Oundle Primary School and Oundle Football Club.

Michael said: "My hope was to plant a tree in remembrance, and to support wildlife, to help combat climate change, or just for people to enjoy in the future."

Woodford & Co.

PROPERTY CONSULTANTS & AUCTIONEERS



Buying | Selling | Renting | Developing

Talk to the local experts

Offices in Oundle and London

woodfordandco.com

See all our properties at
onTheMarket.com



Sick and 'tyred' of road and pavement neglect

Robert Foskett

Northamptonshire County Council Highways department is responsible for maintaining roads and pavements across Northamptonshire. Despite complaints and dissatisfaction from residents, cracks and potholes are still a common sight, causing havoc to car tyres, misery to cyclists, a hazard to pedestrians and a death trap to motorcyclists.

One of the major reasons for these issues is that small cracks are not dealt with in a timely fashion because they do not meet the standards to be repaired. These small

cracks quickly get worse due to the fact that they fill with water, which expands and contracts with the temperature. This weakens the road structure and the crack enlarges. A way of preventing this would be to fill minor cracks with tar when they first emerge, to prevent water damage.

Everyone can think of pavements churned up by roots of trees that have grown to inappropriate sizes. Again, often only the most serious defects are dealt with in an unsustainable way, whilst smaller defects soon grow. Many a camel would admire the humps on the

Oundle connects to electric car charging network

Gabriel Sun

Oundle drivers will soon find it a bit easier to help the UK government meet its ambitious plan to reduce carbon emissions, with new plans to install public electric vehicle charging points in town. The Northamptonshire County Council has partnered with the government agency, Innovate UK, which is overseeing a consortium of organisations who are working to install public EV charge points.

Currently, the nearest rapid charging points of 50-120kW per hour are in Corby and Peterborough. There are only a few of these, however. There are more fast charging points that range from 7kW to 22kW per hour. There is currently a 7kW charger in the Oundle School Sport Centre car park. The Co-op is planning to place 22kW charging points at their stores nationwide.

Following public consultation in April, the NCC have proposed charging points to be installed in January on South Road and New Street as part of the second wave of the Virgin Park and Charge network.

They are aiming to choose locations best suited to people who do not have access to their own off-street parking. However, the charge points cannot be sited in front of residential houses or next to grass verges. There may be a parking restriction in the charging bays during the day, with a limit of two hours reserved for electric vehicles only. The charge points in Oundle will either be 7kw or 22kW per hour.

The Oundle Town Council has expressed reservations about the proposed locations. Because of the time required to charge a car, the New Street location would not be practical, and would waste a parking space in a normally busy town centre location. The charge station would also take up half of the

pavement in an area heavily used by pedestrians.

The council has suggested other locations such as the long-term car park or the Drill Hall car park. The alternative locations would allow people to charge their cars for a longer period during the day or at night.

Users of public charge points should look carefully at the rate being charged for electricity. Depending on the electricity charge applied by the providers, the charge points might be too expensive, and owners of electric vehicles might prefer not to charge there.

An economic car (55mpg) with fuel at £1.20 will cost £5.40 to travel 60 miles. As a rule of thumb an electric vehicle will use 15kW to travel 60 miles.

David Wood, from Transition Oundle says: "I personally charge overnight using off peak electricity at six pence per kW, so I travel 60 miles at a cost of 90p. Some operators charge over thirty pence per kW so 60 miles will cost £4.50.

"If you are trying to persuade people without off street parking to buy an EV, cost of electricity is a key factor."

At the end of this project, the county council hopes to have 69 charging points throughout Northamptonshire.

The UK government has recently announced an ambitious ten-point plan to ban the selling of pure petrol and diesel cars by 2030. They also plan to place rapid charging points along all the A road network to ensure that travelers can easily continue their journey.

Electric cars have become increasingly more in demand with 127% more registrations for pure electric vehicles this year compared to 2019. As of September 2020, there were 164,100 pure electric cars on the road in the UK, and 373,600 hybrids.

Glaphthorn Road caused by the erupting roots which many of us have tripped over. One section where there were cracks has been dealt with by surfacing over an already large hump, creating an even larger hump. Pedestrians in Oundle are not in need of speed humps.

NCC's website states that they "strive to provide good quality first time repairs, with fewer repeat site visits and less complaints because public perception is important to us". This is not unachievable unless they are prepared to redefine their repair standards so that issues get dealt with as they occur and before they become serious. An example of where this has not happened is the North Bridge, which was neglected for many years until it became dangerous. The works that have just taken place on the bridge are the consequence of not dealing with minor matters as they occur.

There also needs to be greater co-ordination between Northamptonshire County Council and utility companies, who frequently dig up the same areas of roads and footpaths to maintain services.

Councillor Tony Robinson, Oundle Mayor said: "As a cyclist I am saddened by the state of our town's roads. Uneven roads, through potholes and poor repairs are making

cycling a danger in the town and frustrating our desire to reduce motor vehicle dependency. We need durable repairs to the roads that give a smooth route where cyclists are not having to weave about avoiding the holes. As for the footpaths, they should not be treated as the Cinderella; a plan should be developed to make and maintain these vital routes in fit state for both pedestrians and wheelchair users."

A Freedom of Information request revealed that in the past three years Northamptonshire County Council has spent an eye watering £285,438.38 on compensation for damage to vehicles and personal injury resulting from poor highway maintenance across the county. One single pay-out relating to an incident with a pothole outside Northampton came to a staggering £12,756.99.

Rather than spending a large amount of their budget on compensation, Northamptonshire County Council should be focusing their efforts on preventative maintenance. This would be more sustainable.

I would urge everybody to report any and all road and pavement issues they experience on Northamptonshire County Council's Street Doctor system on their website.



~ Est. 1981~
Rockingham Landrovers
18 Main Street, Rockingham. LE16 8TG

Land Rovers have come a long way since 1948 but no matter which Land Rover or Range Rover you drive we can service and repair it. Our skilled staff, 4 workshop ramps and genuine Land Rover equipment ensure a quality service and rapid resolution to any Land Rover problems.



Here at Rockingham we service and maintain all models of Land Rover and Range Rover without affecting the vehicle's warranty.



We offer a free collection and delivery service for all Land Rovers booked in for Service / MOT and Repair.



Land Rover T4 & WDS diagnostic equipment to diagnose and re-set faults on Air Suspension, Engine Management, ABS, Gearboxes, Keys & Fobs etc...



Genuine Land Rover and OEM parts available for purchase.



Renovation and refurbishment to suit your own requirements. Chassis replacement for Defender and Series.



We accept payment by debit and credit card.

Office and Workshop Opening Hours

Monday – Thursday: 8.30am – 6 pm & Friday: 8.30am – 4 pm

Telephone: 01536 770109 / 01536 770078

The Old Forge Yard, 18 Main Street, Rockingham, LE16 8TG

Memories of loyal service in a local royal household

Robert Brettle

Although many of us have become familiar with the inner workings of an aristocratic lifestyle after watching programmes such as *Downton Abbey* and *The Crown*, few can say that they have actually lived and worked in a royal household. For many years, there was one such household at nearby Barnwell Manor, the home of HRH Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester.

Born Lady Alice Christabel Montagu Douglas Scott in 1901, Princess Alice was married to Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, who was the third son of King George V. As the daughter of the Duke of Buccleuch, she was born to immense privilege; one of her four family homes included nearby Boughton House. Throughout her twenties she lived an adventurous life, travelling in Kenya and Australia before finally settling in the UK with her husband in Northamptonshire.

Among the household staff whose work helped to maintain their lifestyle was Margaret Ledner, now 87, retired and living in Oundle.



Margaret Ledner has kept her trove of cards and memorabilia from her years working at Barnwell Manor for HRH Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucestershire

*Her Royal Highness said:
"You have a
very expensive
wife."*

Margaret Ledner was born in Hanover, northern Germany. She had eleven siblings, and when her parents could not take care of her, the children were separated and Ledner was sent to live with a foster mother.

Mrs Ledner spent the war years with her foster mother on a remote farm. Her foster mother, however, was unkind to her. "She treated me like you wouldn't treat animals," Mrs Ledner said. Despite later living in both France and England – where anti-German sentiment was not uncommon – she said that she never experienced any anti-German sentiment.

After the war ended, Mrs Ledner found work with the occupying British army near the Black Forest. It was here that she met her husband, Sergeant Frank Ledner, who was her boss. Her job was making various items out of

parachute silk. The problem was, as Mrs Ledner said, "He spoke not one word of German and I spoke no English – we had to learn quickly!" They were married in 1952 when she was 21.

After Mr Ledner left the army, they went to France where he worked for five years for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in Aras, scrubbing and cleaning the graves. "It was a beautiful but sad place to work."

In the 1960s, when they returned to England, Mr Ledner found a job at Barnwell Manor, where Princess Alice was seeking a head gardener. A few years later, Princess Alice asked if his wife would work as the Head Housemaid. Mrs Ledner accepted, but only after some negotiating:

"I told my husband to tell the Princess that I would be very happy to take that job but not for less than half a crown an hour. Her Royal Highness told my husband "Mr Ledner, you have a very expensive wife". The Princess then had to pay all of the staff at Barnwell Manor the same rate."

Mrs Ledner had a daily routine in the house, and covered personal duties when the Lady's Maid was away. She would wake up the Princess, open the curtains, run a bath and make her bed. In the evenings

she would prepare Princess Alice's bed, filling her hot water bottle and turning down her bedcovers.

"Before she came down in the morning everybody had to do the work downstairs. Naturally, she expected everything should be perfect and she would make sure there was no dust or anything and the furniture was polished."

The Princess was a keen gardener, and was very proud of the garden her husband had created for their silver anniversary. In the summer, the Princess hosted her friends and family, and many famous guests came to stay. This included Setsuko, Princess Chichibu, a member of the Japanese Imperial Family. When the Queen Mother came in an "enormous big limousine", all the staff members would stand outside and welcome her. Every year, the staff would be taken to the Queen's garden party at Buckingham Palace on a private coach.

Tragically, her eldest son Prince William of Gloucester died aged 30 in a light aircraft competition crash in 1972. At the time of his birth, he was fourth in line to the throne, and the heir to his father's peerages.

Two years later, the Duke of Gloucester died of cancer in 1974. Before his death, each of the staff went into his room and said a

prayer for him. This, coupled with the death of her son, resulted in some very difficult times for the Princess and the staff at the manor.

Mrs Ledner recalls, "It was very sad, losing her husband and Prince William. She kept herself busy in her garden every morning."

In the early 1990s, Mrs Ledner and her husband retired, and in 1995 the Princess, aged 93, moved from the Manor to Kensington Palace when the upkeep of the household became too expensive. It was reported at the time that seven staff, including the butler, were let go.

Mrs Ledner continued to receive cards with photographs from the Gloucester family, and invitations to garden parties at Kensington Palace. She also received a small annual allowance until the Princess' death in 2004, aged 102.

Mr Ledner, the man who had swept her up to a new life in a new country, died in 2012. She says, "I still miss my husband very, very much, you know."

Mrs Ledner remains very fond of the Royal Family and her display cabinets feature many mementoes of her connections, along with family photographs, royal memorabilia and the medal presented to her by the Duke of Gloucester to commemorate the Queen's silver jubilee.

Longshore bring fish straight from the sea to the Oundle farmers' market

Meagan Iu

Oundle may be landlocked, but the fish that is available at the local markets is renowned for its variety and quality. Simon Long of Longshore is a Saturday farmers' market favourite whose monthly stall attracts a steady queue of regular customers waiting to fill their bags with his fresh fish.

Mr Long's family have been fishing for four or five generations. He fishes from the small coastal village of Blakeney on the North Norfolk coast in his own ten metre dayboat named "Don't Know", and also works with inshore day boats in Norfolk and Suffolk. Back in their kitchen, his wife Carol makes all the cooked products, such as hand-made fishcakes, soups, curries, pies, and pâtés.

The Longs have grown oysters and mussels near Blakeney Point for decades. Mr Long rejuvenated his oyster beds about 15 years ago after sand and silt shifted on the coast. The oysters themselves need regular maintenance.

"As the oysters grow, they stick together, so I have to give them a shake every month to stop them sticking together and knock some of the new growth off," he said. The

beds lie about 15 feet under water at high tide, so he harvests weekly while the tide is out. The oysters are in bags that swing in the tide, and he gathers them for grading and purification for 42 hours.



Simon Long prepares his lobsters for customers to take home

Crabs and lobsters are their main catch from the Cromer area, with 300 pots for lobster. He

line-catches and nets mackerel, bass, sole, and cod, also picking up flat fish from other boats along the coast. Over the years there has been less cod available, while customers' tastes have changed and become

broader.

The Longs only sell at markets, and have been selling in Oundle

since the start of the farmers' market. "We have very loyal, very good customers that have been coming all that time," he said.

Ken, from Aldwincle, is a regular monthly customer. "I can find interesting stuff here, as opposed to just cod, salmon and haddock." He can spend up to £60 at a time.

After the Saturday market in Oundle, Simon goes back to Norfolk and prepares for the weekly Sunday market in Marylebone, London.

"I will load up again, fillet some fish. There are crabs and lobsters to deal with, and live lobsters to get out of the tanks for people. I'll try and get some sleep at some point," he admitted.

Mr Long says he does not take days off. "Stuff is so fluid on what you've got to do. It's more like hours off here and there."

The boat sets out to sea whenever the weather is suitable, though when the weather is bad, that just means there is time for Mr Long to repair gear or work on the oyster beds. The sea never sleeps, and nor does it seem, do the fishermen who make sure that the freshest fish is always ready to deliver from boat to market.

HAMBLETON BAKERY



You can Click & Collect your Christmas at Hambleton Bakery, Oundle Wharf,
Peterborough PE8 4DE Tel 01832 358529 www.hambletonbakery.co.uk

Ancient music and the natural world inspire the sound of Oundle

Gabriel Sun

If there was one sound that could be said to define Oundle in the last many years, it might be the music of Nick Penny.

Specializing in music for the harp that merges with sounds inspired by the natural world, he is often found performing at public and private events throughout the

instruments such as guitars, lutes and harps in his workshop.

Mr Penny started learning how to play the guitar at the age of 14 by watching others and learning from the way they played. He says that he didn't practice in a formal way. Instead, he "just played a lot".

"There was never any problem with motivation – the guitar was

lutes. Eventually he became an instrument maker and people asked him to make Celtic harps. He then discovered Paraguayan harps and travelled to South America to learn more about them. A local player in Asuncion offered him some lessons and he was hooked.

"I love the sound of the Paraguayan Harp: it looks and sounds like a harp but there's something earthy and immediate about it too," he said.

Musical influences include the sound of the guitarist Julian Bream, whom he credits with recreating the sound of English lute music in an inspiring way. Mr Penny said: "There's such passion and individuality in his playing and in the beginning he had to fight to get his instrument taken seriously."

Mr Penny also admires singers such as Nina Simone for her emotional music, as well as Bjork and Tom Waits for their individualistic creativity.

He draws a lot of inspiration within walking distance of his own front door – birdsong, sounds of wind and rain, children playing in the distance.

Mr Penny has always been interested in natural sounds, but the idea of using birdsong as an inspiration for his music came about by accident. He had recorded a nightingale singing in a local wood and was playing it back in his home studio. "I picked up the harp and started improvising along with it, then hit the record button as it all felt so natural and I was aware that

something unusual was happening. I played it back to some friends later and they were fascinated."

All the recordings he uses are made within walking distance. "We're lucky that there are accessible woods locally, though if you want quiet natural recordings you must be up very early in spring."

He particularly admires nightingale sounds. "They sing through the night and you can record them while the rest of the world is asleep." He notes blackbirds for the beauty and simplicity in their song.

Like a lot of artists this year, due to Covid-19, Mr Penny has been unable to do his usual music workshops in schools and with the elderly, but he has had more time to play and record a lot of his own music instead. Ordinarily he would spend up to a year on a CD album, but due to the pandemic he has been recording a lot of music and videos, often improvised, which he shares on social media.

He also bought a Handpan last year and has been playing and recording with that. He has even done some online collaborations with musicians he has never met and is working on new designs for wind harps.

"I like surprises, trying new things and sometimes ending up in a completely different place I wouldn't have anticipated. And of course, you can share that sense of surprise with other people," he said.

"There's plenty to keep me busy."



Composer and harpist Nick Penny draws inspiration from the natural world close to home and further afield on travels in the UK

year in Oundle. The originality of the distinctive music is immediately recognizable as his.

In addition to performing and composing, he also makes string

my best friend."

He started playing the harp later in life in what he calls "a round-about way". He got interested in lute music and started making

101 realistic ways to reduce use of plastic in your household

Noa Anderson

Oundle author Kim Grove has demonstrated that it's never too late to make big changes in life, from education or career directions to small or impactful lifestyle choices. Inspired by David Attenborough's Blue Planet, she has almost completely eliminated single-use plastic, and has published I Found 101 Ways to Reduce Plastic, You Can Too, encouraging others to do the same.

Ms Grove started her journey after learning that by 2050 there could be more plastic in the sea than fish. Her book documents the journey to change her lifestyle. "When I looked around my house and looked at what plastic I could cut, and thought I might as well capture my journey."

She gave up her social-care job to pursue her writing career and is

now, at 59, studying for a degree in Environmental Science.

Her book focuses on everyday ways to reduce plastic consumption, from swapping cling film for beeswax wrap to pressuring local supermarkets to improve their offerings. There are small but impactful changes that everyone in Oundle can make. Ms Grove suggests starting with reusable bags, containers and cups when shopping or getting coffee.

"Just take it one step at a time. Try to reduce one thing and keep up with that."

Ms Grove suggests visiting Refill Revolution at the Oundle Wharf, where you can refill bottles of kitchen and bathroom products, such as washing-up liquid and shampoo, find plastic-free alternatives for a multitude of household items and restock common

non-perishable foods such as rice, pasta and sugar in your own reusable containers.



Kim Grove's book suggests 101 ways to reduce use of household plastic

The most difficult step for her was finding a plastic-free toothpaste, and she is now experimenting with making her own.

Her book's release was delayed from a planned March date due to the coronavirus outbreak. "I didn't think it would be fair to release

a book on how to reduce plastic when people were struggling." The pandemic has also made it more difficult to completely eliminate plastic, she has realised.

"Sadly, we now have a problem with disposable PPE, which is also made of plastic and seems to be littering the environment in ever greater numbers! I would implore people to buy reusable masks, and wash these regularly. Alternatively, make your own."

She warns about feeling pressure to go all-out though. "It's better to do something and take it slowly, than do nothing at all," she stresses.

"There are over 66 million people in the UK," Ms Grove pointed out. "If each person made just one or two of these changes, we'd have 120 million fewer pieces of plastic floating about in the air, clogging up roadside verges, or entangling turtles in the sea."

I Found 101 Ways to Reduce Plastic, You Can Too is available from Amazon: Kindle edition £3.99; paperback £4.99.

Refurbished Bowls Club welcomes new players



During the winter season, the clubhouse is set up for indoor bowls on short mats

Founded in 1866, the bowls club was originally a quoits club located on Herne Road. In the early 1900s the game of lawn bowls started to become popular and the club changed to bowls in 1906 with four rinks. With its increasing popularity, in the 1970s the club moved to land offered by the council on Occupation Road, where members built a clubhouse and a six-rink green.

The first refurbishment in 2010 incorporated an extension with new changing rooms, kitchen, and toilets. The latest refurbishment in 2020 was designed by Waterlands Architects in Oundle. They added

a new entrance, increased the size of the clubhouse, and updated and improved the interior.

The refurbishment project was supported by a grant of £50,000 from the Community Facilities Funds Awards from East Northamptonshire Council. This amount was matched by a similar amount by Sport England, which is supported by the National Lottery.

The club currently has a membership of 157 members. Most are outdoor bowls players, but there are at least 60 who play indoor bowls on short mats during the winter.

The outdoor bowls season runs

from April to September. For competitive players they organise up to 40 fixtures with other clubs in a twenty mile radius.

On Friday nights, a Roll-up is organised for anyone interested in an open draw competition. Serious players can also join the Northamptonshire Bowls Association.

Under the Covid restrictions, they have been able to arrange indoor play with up to twelve people, and plan to reopen in the new year.

In a normal season, the Oundle Bowling Club hosts social events throughout the year. Highlights include a summer party, bridge days, quiz nights, dinners with speakers, and whist drives.

Full membership is £85 a year. Anyone can join with any level of experience. Paul Pearson, Secretary, said: "A lot of new members join, try a few bowls, realise it is more complex than they thought and sign up for coaching."

A six-week course with certified level 1 coaches is included in the membership and equipment is available to borrow if needed.

David Walker, Chair of the club, encourages new players to try out bowls. "The bowling club is in an ideal location between the tennis club and the rugby club. New members are always welcome to join and enjoy the sport of bowls, and the many other social activities available."

Local schools partnership wins science funding

The Prince William School cluster of schools and Laxton Junior School have been successful in a bid for funding from Ogden Trust Partnership for a science partnership that will provide opportunities for local children over the next five years. The Ogden Trust will provide funding and teacher continued professional development to support the teaching of physical sciences in ten partner schools.

Oundle Primary School will be the hub school for the partnership and will host the outreach laboratory where some of the planned events will take place. The partnership will strengthen links between schools, and allow them to share best practice, develop and share resources, and promote a programme of events to engage children and families.

Stephen Adams, Outreach Scientist at Oundle School, led the bid, and will be the partnership coordinator.

"The partnership is about organising activities to promote awareness and teaching of physical sciences for pupils, the local communities and parents, as well as supporting teachers," he said.



Ready to Play?

We have been working on preparing our membership offers, along with Class, Fitness and Swimming access ready for re-opening and allowing access for all.

Keep an eye on our social media and website for up to date information on:

- Swimming
- Fitness
- Group exercise classes
- Childrens Swimming Lessons
- And more...

We anticipate to be offering a wide range of activities, classes and courses following appropriate guidelines for the safety of all users. Please do connect with us on social media or visit our website to keep up to date on all activity information.



01832 277208
www.oundlesportscentre.co.uk



Shared photos of Oundle landscapes lift the spirits

On most days Oundle's Facebook community pages provide a public forum for debate, discussion and disputes. But since the lockdown in March, Facebook feeds have been brightened with scenic photographs of local landscapes in all their changing moods. The photographs, taken by Tim Stubbs, have been a reassuring reminder of the calming power of nature, and of the good fortune to be living amidst Oundle's beautiful surrounding countryside.

Many fans of his photos are surprised to learn that Mr Stubbs

is not a professional photographer. He moved to Oundle in 1991 and has been taking regular walks in and around the town for the last few years. For company he takes his earphones to listen to music, and walks anywhere from a couple to eight or so miles.

He decided to make use of the phone's camera to take the odd picture along the way that he could share on social media.

Mr Stubbs works in IT, but was furloughed for six months in the first lockdown, which allowed him more time for walking, "which

meant a few more photos to share more often".

He's been encouraged by the response his photos get. "Some of the feedback on Facebook has been positive and very kind."

He uses a Xiaomi Mi9 phone to take pictures of any scene that catches his eye, including flora, fauna, skylines, buildings and the River Nene.

"I find that the town and surrounding area is wonderfully scenic, no matter what time of year or what time of day. The ever-changing weather also plays a big part in

the pictures I take."

He says he doesn't have favourite pictures, they are all "of the moment".

"If my phone didn't have a camera, there'd be no photographs. It's actually all about the walks," he said.

"My dad, a fit and active 85-year-old, has always said to me that walking is good for the soul, and it's true, especially around here. We live in a cracking part of the world and I enjoy taking pictures of it. I hope they do it justice."



Ogden Trust partnership school photography competition

The first event for the newly formed Ogden Trust partnership of ten local primary schools was a photography competition. The theme for this was Animals in Motion. The judges found it difficult to judge the competition, given the high quality of the entries.

The winning entry of a swan in flight was from Louis Mannigan in Year Two at Laxton Junior School.

The runner up, Mackenzie Burton-Axtell of King's Cliffe Endowed Primary School caught a wasp hovering over its nest.

