

Oundle Chronicle

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Patient Participation Group liaises with Oundle Surgery to seek positive change and improvements

Gabriel Sun

The doctor's surgery is often regarded as the most important asset to a community. Communities depend on them and feel invested in them. But when problems arise with services, patients often do not know where to turn and sometimes social media becomes an unproductive platform for people to vent. This was especially felt during the pandemic when services were under pressure, and patients experienced higher levels of anxiety about their health.

One service that aims to address patients' concerns and build confidence in our health services is the Oundle Patient Participation Group (OPPG), which acts as a liaison between the Oundle Surgery and its patients, relaying information and feedback between the two parties.

The OPPG is a voluntary group representing all registered patients with the Lakeside Oundle Practice. It is made up of volunteer representatives from the local community and meets up to six times year. It also holds an annual open practice meeting, usually in October, to which all patients in the community are welcome.

Issues that patients raise with the OPPG are put to the practice manager in question and answer sessions for comment or resolution. At previous meetings, patients' issues included GP working hours, patient records and hospital discharge processes, telephone systems and face-to-face appointments.

Although the OPPG believes that ultimate responsibility for the dissemination of information to patients lies with the practice, the OPPG's purpose is to seek positive change for improvement of services that affect patients by working with



After 52 years at the heart of Oundle's business community, Coles Construction and Coles Builders Merchants closed for trade in November. Paddy and Richard Coles acquired the West Street site in 1970 and set up the business as building contractors and joinery manufacturers before adding the builders' merchants in the 1980s. The yard was originally built in the 19th century by Oundle Union Brewery, which was operational until 1901. The site now has planning for sympathetic conversion of the historic brewery buildings to residential housing. Paddy and Richard expressed gratitude for all the local trade and patronage over the years. In retirement they will remain in Oundle where they have had the pleasure of trading and working with so many colleagues, customers and friends over a lifetime in business.

the practice and suggesting alternative solutions to current systems. They believe that patient feedback is critical to this.

The OPPG spokesperson said: "We are all committed members and are passionate about what we do. Our aim is to bring about positive outcomes to ensure that patient expectations are aligned with the service provided by Lakeside Healthcare Oundle, as well as remaining in line with current NHS and Government guidelines."

The OPPG receives feedback via email and by word-of-mouth. Any comments conveyed to the practice manager are confidential and no names are disclosed. The Q&A sessions with the practice manager are published along with normal meeting minutes on the OPPG pages of the practice website. They are aware of posts on issues the

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Oundle Town Council votes to declare a climate emergency

Jennifer Yang

The issue of climate change is no longer just a discussion among scientists. It has been brought to the forefront of government agendas at both national and local levels.

Addressing the issue, Peterborough Council unanimously declared a climate and environmental emergency in 2019, followed by North Northamptonshire Council in July 2021, which also voted unanimously on the motion. The Oundle Town Council at their meeting on 21 September also tabled the motion and voted 5-3 (1 abstention) to declare a climate emergency.

The Peterborough Council

said: "All governments (national, regional and local) have a duty to act, and local governments that recognise this should not wait for their national governments to change their policies." They voted to make the council's activities net-zero carbon by 2030.

A similar motion to set a target net zero date of 2030 was voted down by the NNC, while the OTC pledged "to reach net zero carbon emissions as soon as possible".

Oundle Transition was represented by Mark Felton at the September OTC meeting. He urged the council to take the lead in responding to the climate change

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The Chronicle Team



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North Northants Council members spar over "anti-democratic" changes to council meetings

Robert Foskett

The governing Conservative group on North Northamptonshire Council were labelled "dictators" by opposition councillors after a change to the regular meeting time has left councillors and members of the public unable to attend meetings.

At the meeting on 29 September, the Conservative group proposed an amendment to the constitution to change the start time of meetings from 7pm to 2pm. The reason given for this change was that an earlier start time would provide more flexibility for debate. This proposal was originally put to a meeting of the Democracy and Standards Committee on 16 September, at which it was agreed that the proposal would be put to the Full Council meeting.

However, opposition councillors and members of the public voiced concerns that the change of meeting time would exclude many working people unable to take time off, as well as people with childcare responsibilities. Young people would also be unable to engage in local government due to school commitments.

One councillor that will be unable to attend afternoon meetings is Cllr Jean Addison, leader of the Labour group. She told councillors that they are "old, stale and grey".

Labour councillor John McGhee

told the group: "We are going down the road of people that they think know all the answers. We should be going through scrutiny. That's real democracy... This is not a democracy, it's a dictatorship."

Following the meeting, he said: "You've witnessed the death of democracy tonight."

Cllr Emily Fedorowycz, leader of the Green Alliance said: "This is why we need scrutiny."

The decision was not, however, unilaterally popular among the Conservative group. Scott Brown, Conservative councillor for Earls Barton, said that the decision would exclude working people.

A spokesperson for North Northamptonshire Council said: "Full Council has voted for the start times of meetings to be moved from 7pm to 2pm for regular meetings and to 10am for February's budget setting meeting. It was envisaged that the business of some meetings would take several hours to determine, so it was felt that an earlier start time would provide more flexibility for debate. This is being done on a trial basis to determine how it compares to the prior arrangement.

The matter was initially discussed and debated at the Democracy and Standards Committee and unanimously put forward by councillors to recommend the change to the time."

By-election to be called for North Northants seat

Robert Foskett

One of Oundle's three councillors on North Northamptonshire Council, Annabel de Capell Brooke, has announced that she will be moving to Norfolk.

She will soon resign her seat on the council, which will trigger a by-election. This will be the first by-election for the newly created council, which was only elected in May.

The by-election will be held after Christmas after Cllr de Capell Brooke has formally resigned.

A spokesperson for Corby and East Northamptonshire Conservative Association said: "In the short term Annabel will continue, along with her fellow Councillors, to serve the residents of the Oundle ward with the same passion that she always has. At such time as there is a by-election, her individual casework would be adopted by the other local Councillors in an orderly fashion to ensure residents of Oundle and the villages continue to be represented and supported."

Cllr de Capell Brooke was first elected to Northamptonshire County Council for the Oundle division at the 2019 by-election, but she has also represented the Prebendal ward on East Northamptonshire Council. In her time as a councillor for Oundle, she has represented the area on a number of issues, including the Fletton Field campaign.

Council pledges to take Afghan refugees

Robert Brettle

In response to the summer's refugee crisis in Afghanistan, North Northamptonshire Council has stepped forward to support ten Afghan families in the North Northamptonshire area.

Arguably, one of the most significant events of this year was the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban. After the US began the final stages of its troop withdrawal in May, the Taliban's resurgence quickly overran the entire country, culminating with the fall of Kabul on 15 August. As well as its wide geopolitical implications, the Taliban takeover resulted in a refugee crisis. Afghan citizens who had worked with foreign governments or media organisations were no longer safe under the Taliban regime.

The delays in processing special visas for Afghan refugees over the

previous months resulted in a chaotic evacuation that galvanised the public's attention. The UK government pledged to prioritise "those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law" as well as "vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups".

The UK committed to taking 5,000 people within the first year. It plans to take a further 20,000 in the coming years, although the scheme to resettle people is not yet open. Afghan refugees will be granted "indefinite leave to remain", with which they can apply for citizenship after living in the UK for five years. The Afghan Citizen's Resettlement Scheme is likely to be similar to the 2015 scheme for Syrian

refugees. Under that system, the government provided support for refugees for three years. The Oundle community previously provided accommodation to refugees from Sudan, who settled here in 2017.

In September, North Northamptonshire council made a commitment to permanently house ten Afghan families. The council has also said that it will explore how it could support a greater number of families. The North Northamptonshire Council leader said: "We owe a debt of gratitude to the refugees from Afghanistan, many of whom have put their lives in danger to help us".

Regionally, some other councils have pledged to resettle refugees. Peterborough City Council has pledged to take in 100 refugees and West Northamptonshire is to take in over 300 people with initial accommodation until longer term arrangements are put in place to resettle them in new homes nationwide.

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A spate of burst water mains strains residents' patience

Charles Bryant

Water is a service we take for granted, until it goes wrong. Lately, Oundle residents have complained that the water supply in town is becoming unreliable. The town's supplier, Anglian Water, solves water issues when they erupt, but this process can be long and inconvenient for affected residents, not to mention the resulting damage to roads and pavements.

Over the last six months there have been six burst pipes affecting five different roads in Oundle: New Road, Hillfield Road, East Road, Glapthorn Road, St Peter's Road and Nene Way. Anglian Water regularly reports problems on a "In Your Area" map on its website. Faults are reported as a "burst water main - interruption of supply - possible low pressure", but there is no report of the cause or the nature of the repair. There is also no report about the number of issues that Anglian Water deals with in a geographic area or time span.

Anglian Water says that in most

cases they are responsible for the large sewers running under roads and pavements and the drains above them. The sections of sewers and pipes shared between neighbours, plus pipes outside a property boundary connecting to their existing network, are also their responsibility.

Many residents question whether the systems in the older parts of town can cope with the increase of new housing developments, and whether the original pipes remain resilient enough. Repairs are piecemeal, rather than comprehensive.

Anglian Water told us that the spate of burst pipes is a coincidence. "There is no link between any burst water mains in the area. Bursts happen for a variety of reasons, including changes in temperature and slight ground movement."

The spokesperson said that the burst pipe that sent water running down New Road was "due to a diversion that brought lots of HGV traffic onto the road".

The hope of keeping Fletton Field for community use looks promising

Robert Foskett

In July 2021, North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) listed Fletton Field as an Asset of Community Value. This means that if the landowner wishes to sell, they are obliged to give notice to the local authority. Community groups can then trigger a six month moratorium in order to raise the funds necessary to purchase the asset.

In Fletton Field's case, the landowner is NNC, which inherited it from the former Northamptonshire County Council. Fletton Field has been in public ownership since 1899 when it was sold to Oundle's Guardians of the Poor as open space for the workhouse. In 1929, the poor law unions were abolished and their responsibilities and assets were transferred to the county councils. This is when Northamptonshire County Council acquired the land. Until 2016, Fletton Field was used as a playing field for the primary school.

The campaign to save Fletton Field began in 2016 when the primary school moved to Cotterstock Road, and Fletton Field was redundant as the school playing field. Since then, Northamptonshire County Council submitted two outline planning applications to develop the field, both of which were rejected.

Fletton Field has remained open to the public, however the threat of sale and development and lack of control by the people of Oundle has hung over the field for many years.

Oundle Mayor, Cllr Ian Clark says: "Fletton Field has a chequered history, but at present there is real hope that it might be heading into a golden age. NNC have flown their green flag with their NNClimate21 conference, and the message from that was the importance of open space."

A community group, supported by Oundle Town Council, Oundle Business Association, Transition Oundle, Oundle's unitary authority councillors and Oundle School, is currently putting together a plan to present to NNC that proposes that the field be leased to the community group. The community group would enable the 1.7 acre field to be used for a range of local green and youth activities, as well as general public open space. Their aim is to provide Oundle with one of the leading shared spaces in the region.

The group hopes to have Fletton Field at the centre of Oundle's Jubilee celebrations in June 2022, with trees planted as part of The Queen's Green Canopy initiative. The plan also includes a potential name change to Jubilee Field.

Northamptonshire vaccine take-up continues to climb

Joe Mynhardt

The vaccine take-up so far has been a success amongst young people in the UK, but there is still a small but significant way to go.

There are many reasons why young people should want to become vaccinated, other than protecting others. When more people are vaccinated, there is less opportunity for the virus to spread. It means that schools and universities are safer and less likely to move online, travel options remain accessible, and clubs and pubs can remain open.

The realisation that a return to previously normal routines and fun days out is within reach, means that attitudes amongst young people are changing. By mid-September forty-six percent of previously hesitant 18 to 29-year-olds had been vaccinated.

As of late November, in Northamptonshire over sixty-nine percent of 18 to 24-year-olds were double vaccinated. Among the 16 to 17 age band, sixty-eight percent were vaccinated.

Since schools reopened in the autumn, the majority of Covid

cases have been among school-aged children, causing disruption to learning and to families. It has been reported that most of the cases among those in their forties were in parents having breakthrough infections. Vaccines for younger pupils were made available in late October, and by late November, forty-one percent aged 12-15 had been vaccinated in Northamptonshire.

They still have a way to go to meet the take-up among the older age bands, where more than ninety-three percent of those above 50 years of age have been vaccinated in Northamptonshire.

The benefits of getting the vaccine are clear; the vaccines are ninety-six percent effective at reducing Covid deaths. Unvaccinated people in England are 32 times more likely to die of Covid-19 than their vaccinated counterparts.

The jabs are not currently compulsory and likely will not become so, however people are strongly urged to get them in order to protect their friends, family, and communities.



Laxton Junior School
Oundle

"We went on a treasure hunt in the Woodland Garden, and we had to get a key from a crocodile!"

Hamish and Madeleine

Fire their imaginations

Read our Big Book of Little Details to find out more about the adventures that children go on every day at our school.

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Lakeside Healthcare launch online consultation platform to patient approval

Olivia Pegge

Lakeside Healthcare at Oundle has introduced a new consultation platform that they hope will address wait times and backlogs to accessing GP services. The Swedish system, Doctrin, has received positive reviews so far. Ninety-two percent of patients said they had received sufficient information, and ninety percent were happy to recommend it to others.

During the first wave of lockdowns communities across

and complaints about long wait times for appointments and lack of in-person consultations.

Some patients have complained that GPs have been slow or unable to adapt, but the demand for GPs has soared since the easing of restrictions. The BBC estimates that demand for GPs is now double pre-pandemic levels. This increase has led to angry and anxious patients putting pressure on GPs. In the modern age of immediacy, people feel entitled to speedy treatment,

there were noticeable changes to the availability of GP appointments. Dr Kathryn Newell, a Practice Partner at the Oundle Surgery, said: "Covid had a massive impact. We had to change within 24 hours to remote triage and working. There was a large clinical learning curve with new directives on a daily basis."

From March 2020 the surgery switched to telephone consultations to keep patients safe and minimise footfall in the building, and by May, a third fewer people were seeing their GPs. Some patients were not able to see GPs in person for 18 months. Repeat prescription services remained unaffected, and when patients in villages were isolating, a volunteer system was set up to deliver prescriptions.

Dr Newell said they are now consulting with twenty-five percent more patients than before the pandemic. However, she said "anyone who medically needs to be seen face-to-face, will be seen". Those who do not, will be contacted by phone, video call or online. It is estimated that fifty percent of the patients at the Oundle Surgery are now being seen face-to-face.

To improve the patient experience, the surgery has adopted a new online platform called Doctrin that promises improved continuity in care. They call this system a "secure online consultation platform designed to provide enhanced services." Users log in using their NHS login. It can

be used on devices from laptops to iPhones and is available all the time, but is monitored between 8am - 6pm. It reduces the need to travel to the surgery and offers triage to the most appropriate professional, as well as a response within one working day.

Anyone with a life-threatening injury or illness is reminded to still ring 999.

"The new Doctrin system means that patients have another way of contacting us for non-urgent problems," Dr Newell said. "This reduces the pressure on the phone lines and frees them up for people who have more urgent issues or cannot use the Doctrin service for non-urgent problems. It may also be useful for patients who have hearing problems and find the telephone difficult."

The response to this new system has been overwhelmingly positive, with users agreeing that it was simple and straightforward to follow. On one Oundle forum a resident said: "It is so much easier than hanging on the telephone in a queue."

The doctors at the surgery have faced enormous pressure over the last 20 months, but have adapted to the new ways of consulting made necessary by the pandemic. Dr Newell said: "Patients and doctors have missed seeing each other face-to-face as much as we used to, but I think people have appreciated the convenience of some of the new services."



Project Manager Justin Wilkinson, Oundle Practice Manager Carol Beesley, GP and Lakeside Chair Dr Mike Richardson and Kerry Gardner, Group Lead Nurse

the country joined together on Thursday evenings to clap in praise of NHS workers dealing with the pandemic. But since those early days, the public has increasingly turned from expressing appreciation to voicing frustration

which has meant that many GPs are facing dissatisfied patients demanding fast appointments when services are overstretched.

With 11,000 patients, the Oundle Surgery is busy. While Oundle escaped the worst of the pandemic,

Patient participation

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community might be sharing on social media, however they choose not to engage with comments made in those forums.

"We believe that whilst social media has its place, patients are encouraged to give feedback direct to us where we can more easily get to the heart of the matter by speaking directly with the practice manager about issues that are important to them," they said.

The spokesperson emphasized that the OPPG is not a forum for complaints. These must be submitted directly to the practice manager under the NHS guidelines for the complaints process. Information on how to file a complaint is on the practice's website.

The OPPG is available to offer advice on how to do this, should it be the only option to resolving personal issues.

The last eighteen months have been a challenge for everyone working in healthcare. From a patient perspective, the OPPG found that many of the concerns were about not being able to see doctors or other medical practitioners face-to-face, and only having telephone or online appointments.

During this time, the OPPG found one of the main challenges was that membership decreased for members' personal reasons. However, a small group continued to operate, embracing the transition to Zoom meetings, which enabled them to support patients throughout the pandemic.

They are now planning to launch a new way of working from January 2022, and will be looking to increase the membership.

More information is available at oundlesurgery.nhs.uk or via email at oundleppg2021@gmail.com.

Climate change emergency

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crisis, focusing on three main areas to make Oundle greener: transport, buildings, and community action. He outlined points about encouraging the use of electric cars, building more footpaths, securing investment in safe routes, and reducing car usage. Mark also suggested that low carbon heating should be installed in homes and public buildings. Oundle Transition has proposed to develop a programme with partners to identify all buildings in the town with a low Energy Performance Certificate and improve them to at least level C.

Camilla Sherwin from Oundle Transition said: "Whilst we are pleased that Oundle Town Council have taken the step of declaring a climate emergency, we are more concerned to ensure that the intention behind the declaration is translated into meaningful, practi-

cal, realisable actions in our home town. Every organisation and individual must, without delay, consider the environmental and social impact of the energy, transport, materials and goods we use, as well as the food we consume, and do all that we can to reduce those impacts.

"The climate crisis will only be solved if we all act together to make a difference."

Oundle Town councillor Ian Clark said the council has developed and planned steps to combat the climate crisis on a local scale. This includes audits of buildings, shifting its energy usage to a renewable energy provider, and reviewing public transport system in Oundle, including roads and bus infrastructure.

"Most importantly, perhaps, this declaration should mean that for every decision OTC takes, we must consider the climate and our future in our decision-making process," he said.

Gas prices and supply chain woes trickle down to consumers

Cherry Yang

Only two months before Christmas, consumers found themselves facing empty supermarket shelves, retail and wholesale stock shortages, and steeper energy bills. The backdrop is the soaring global energy prices. Global wholesale gas prices have soared 250% since the start of 2021, the UK being the hardest hit due to its reliance on imported gas for heating, industry, and power generation.

There were multiple reasons behind this shortage. An especially cold European spring and Asian summer boosted energy demand. Industrial production recovery also meant that more natural gas was required. Disruptions in the supply side, including several gas platforms in the North Sea closing for maintenance as well as damaged cable that imports electricity from France, also pushed up prices. This all combined with a suspicion that Russia's state-backed company Gazprom was manipulating the market by purposely pumping less gas into European stockpiles. All of this led to a tighter gas market with less spare capacity.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson admitted there were "a lot of short-term problems" caused by gas supply shortages, but he said: "This is really a function of the world economy waking up after Covid."

The spiking prices have led to the collapse of a number of small utility firms this year, as they were no longer able to deliver to fixed price promises to customers. The regulator, Ofgem, was forced to

transfer over two million customer accounts to surviving firms. Consumers could see their bills increase by up to thirty percent a month.

The Northampton-based electricity supplier Opus Energy announced that it is confident of surviving the current crisis and will continue to supply over 360,000 business premises. Their spokesman said: "We have a strong balance sheet, and have hedged our supply businesses appropriately, which together should give confidence to our customers and employees."

As a result of the lack of gas supply, food producers have also faced shortages. Commercial carbon dioxide, a by-product of fertiliser production, is used to stun animals before slaughter, package fresh food, and keep food cool during transport. Without the necessary gas for animal slaughter, the British Meat Processors Association warned of meat shortages.

A particular point of concern is the turkey supply. In fear of Christmas shortages, shoppers flocked to supermarkets to stock up for the holiday season. The supermarket chain Iceland said frozen turkey sales quadrupled under panic buying.

Oundle businesses have not been affected. Seven Wells butchers said that they have not faced any shortages. Their products are from local farmers and their seasonal turkeys are sourced from a farm in Aldwinkle, as in previous years. Global supply shocks have not yet seemed to affect local producers.

City councils advance clean air zones

Gabriel Sun

Other than the 2030 target to ban sale of petrol and diesel cars, there is still need for changes in how we tackle climate change and air pollution. Many cities are taking pre-emptive steps to address emissions with new clean air zones in their centres, restricting cars and imposing charges which affect residents and visitors.

On the 25th of October, the ultra-low emission zone (ULEZ) in London was enlarged from merely central London to the North and South Circular Road. This means any polluting vehicles in the zone will be charged £12.50 a day. In an area where public transport is much more supported and accessible, the increase in charges will hopefully encourage local drivers to reduce their reliance on private vehicles and look towards the availability of public transport.

Currently, the Birmingham clean air zone (CAZ) is the only scheme outside of London where private drivers must pay a charge to take polluting vehicles into the city centre. It was introduced on June 14th and the charge on polluting vehicles is £8 a day. Both Birmingham and London now not only have low emission zones, but also have scrapping schemes to further reduce private emissions with budgets of £10m in Birmingham and £20m in London.

There has been a drop in nitrogen dioxide levels in Birmingham since the clean air zone was introduced. Before the CAZ was introduced parts of the city centre were at pollution levels of 45-60 micrograms per cubic metre on weekdays, putting residents at increased risk of asthma attacks, irritated airways, and long-term respiratory issues. To stay within legal limits, average pollution levels must be below 40 micrograms per cubic metre. Since Birmingham's CAZ was

introduced in June, NO2 pollution levels have dropped by up to 20 per cent compared to the same period during 2019 and 2020.

It is said that bad air quality is the cause of around 900 deaths a year in the city, so if the CAZ and other implemented schemes continue to improve the air quality, people's health will improve.

In February next year, Oxford will be joining London and Birmingham with its implementation of a zero emission zone (ZEZ). Unlike London with its 24-hour zone, Oxford's zone will be enforced between daily between 7:00-19:00 and will have varying charges between £2- £20 a day depending on the emission levels of the vehicle.

Cambridge City Council is currently evaluating a clean air zone within the existing Air Quality Management Area in Cambridge, which includes the historic centre and the inner ring road. They have not yet made a decision on whether the zone will be chargeable or which types of vehicles it will seek to restrict.

In Coventry, £3,000 worth of "mobility credits" have been offered to those who are willing to give up a qualifying vehicle and decrease their dependency on cars for transport. For some people a second car is not necessary, and its maintenance can often cost more than other forms of transport. The credits can be used on a range of alternative travel, including car hire and taxis.

If local governments were to make these projects more widespread, they would also have to increase the accessibility of public transport.

Although some cities have rejected introducing clean air zones, many cities are announcing urgent plans with regard to climate change, aiming to act before it is too late to make impactful change.

Promoting bird habitats in home gardens

A local initiative to provide nestboxes for garden birds hopes to offset the decline of natural habitats and promote breeding species.

Over the past year's lockdowns, Barny Dillarstone was rooted to his desk developing his new business startup. But he was also was engrossed by nesting birds outside his office window.

"I was keen to hatch (no pun intended) a plan to share this experience with others," he said.

Garden birds in the UK face a variety of threats, loss of habitat, disease and predation to name a few. Sightings of common garden birds have fallen by four to six per cent over the last three years. Barny says that everyone can make a big difference with small initiatives to promote wildlife. A bird box in the garden is good first step.

In October, Barny enlisted the help of staff and pupils at Oundle



Barny enlisted help to build 100 free nesting boxes for local gardens

School's Patrick Engineering Centre, where they built one hundred bird boxes, including owl and kestrel boxes. Barny offered the free boxes via Oundle Facebook pages and the response from residents was overwhelming.

The new bird homes will be installed in local gardens and monitored for activity in the spring.

"Next year, we'll try and do 1000!" Barny said, hopefully.

Recycling dental waste yields donations for local causes

Transition Oundle's Waste Less initiative aims to demonstrate that every little effort made by individuals to reduce their environmental impact can lead to positive change. Even the initiative to recycle dental waste products can make a small but worthwhile impact.

Recycling drop boxes are located at the Oundle Library and the Oundle and Thrapston Co-ops, and a recent collection by the waste management company TerraCycle yielded £60 for Transition Oundle to share with local causes.

The donated funds were split between the Friends of Oundle Library, Oundle Foodbank and the Thrapston Food Bank.

Acceptable recycled waste includes plastic toothbrushes, toothpaste tubs and boxes, dental floss dispensers and electric toothbrush heads.

People are asked to make note of items that are not acceptable, such as dental picks or toothpaste pumps, because if unaccepted waste is dropped off, the collection risks being entirely rejected.

Police beat

Priyanka Menon

Since October last year, there has been an overall decrease in crime per month in North Northamptonshire. According to the latest available data from East Northants Police, crime levels reached their height this year in January, with there being 81 crimes reported that month. Since the summer months, Oundle has experienced a forty percent decrease in crime levels. 35 crimes were reported in June versus 21 in September.

Of these 21 crimes, seven were violent and sexual offences, three were anti-social behaviour crimes and three were criminal damage and arson crimes. This was a decline from the previous month of August, when there were eleven violent and sexual offences, three anti-social behaviour crimes and three shoplifting crimes. There was an exception in the increase in criminal damage and arson crimes from 0 in August to 3 in September.

Between 4pm Thursday 2 to 4 September, there was a reported theft from a motor vehicle that was parked on the intersection between New Road and Glapthorn Road. A mechanic checked the car after the warning lights were noticed to be on. The catalytic converter had been stolen.

A catalytic converter was stolen from a vehicle parked on South Road between 10pm Thursday 30 September and 6am Friday 1 October.

Between 11:58pm Tuesday 21 September and 1:15am Wednesday 22 September there was an attempted burglary on Benefield Road. A vehicle came to a halt next to a property. Two men got out of

the car and kicked the door of the house. Having been shouted at by a disturbed neighbour, the two men returned to the car and drove off.

Tyres were slashed on a vehicle on New Road. This occurred at either 10:30pm Thursday 30 September or between 5:20am and 8am Friday 1 October.

Criminal damage occurred to a parked car on Church Street, Wadenhoe. This happened between 5pm Wednesday 20 October and 3:45pm Thursday 21 October.

A red 1957 Massey Ferguson 35 tractor was stolen from a field near Ashton. The incident occurred between 4pm Monday 1 November and 11:40am Tuesday November 2. Unknown offenders cut the chains on the gate to a field and drove the tractor into a nearby woodland area.



Between 3:20pm and 3:45pm Wednesday 3 November, an attempted burglary targeted a property on Gordon Road. Reports said that two men with foreign accents were banging on the front and rear doors, demanding access and trying door handles.

Between 9pm and 10pm on Thursday 25 November, a catalytic converter was stolen from a vehicle parked in South Road.

Speeding violations along A605 on the rise

Robert Brettle

Despite the lack of any speed cameras in Northamptonshire, the police do set up camera traps to catch speeding motorists. These camera traps are deployed around the county, including regular monitoring on the A605, a road notorious for its road traffic accidents. This data is available monthly online.

In September, 55 people were caught speeding on the A605, with the highest speed being 89 miles per hour in a 60 mph speed limit. Traffic police spent 2 hours 35 minutes in total monitoring traffic, so approximately one speeding

offence was caught every three minutes.

In October, 81 people were caught speeding on the A605, where the police spent a total of 5 hours and 45 minutes. The highest speed recorded was 91 mph. There was one speeding offence recorded around every four minutes.

This does represent an increase in the frequency of traffic offences compared to our reports earlier this year when people were caught approximately every five minutes in April 2021. This might be due to increased traffic on the roads following the lifting of coronavirus restrictions.

Property market remains buoyant in region

Olivia Pegge

Before the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the housing market in Oundle had been predictable – that of a quiet, scenic market town within commuting distance of London and Peterborough. But since the world was turned upside down in March 2020, the demand for countryside housing, and especially houses with more space, has skyrocketed.

and we have sold twenty-two percent more properties than in an average year. We predict quite a strong year for 2022.”

The boom in house sales had a knock-on effect on the rental market.

Alexandra Palmer-Worth of Just Lets in Oundle said: “We have seen an increase of tenants who had sold their homes to capitalise on the boom in prices and stamp



The property market in the region is up more than thirteen percent in the last 18 months, with many high end properties selling before they are advertised.

This is a trend that estate agents have seen around the country, with a year-long high number of sales. Nationwide Building Society calculates that prices are up 11% from last year, and 13% higher than pre-pandemic levels.

Analysts have said that this spike in sales is due to the 15-month cut in stamp duty on the first £500,000 of a property purchase. Secondly, with more people working online, commuting fell significantly. People realised that working from home was an easier and nicer experience, prompting more people to move further away from their work in search of more space.

There has been a significant impact on the property market in Oundle. Last year the majority of houses sold in Oundle were detached, going for an average of £447,953. Prices in the region increased by 13.7% in the last 18 months. Houses were spending just days on the market during the period when stamp duty was reduced, and some of the more expensive houses sold before they were advertised.

Estate agent Chris Woodford said: “2021 has been exceptional,

duty holidays, then not being able to find a property to purchase for their next step. They have instead come into the rented sector for a ‘stop gap’ home.”

The rental market in Oundle remained buoyant during the pandemic, reflecting people’s need to relocate remained the same despite lockdowns. As with the housing market, demand vastly outweighed supply, and rents increased due to this.

This meant that in 2020 houses could have been let thirty percent quicker than previously, according to Zoopla. This would have had a disproportionate effect on those who are lower income, younger or self-employed, as they tend to be renters more than homeowners.

Alexandra Palmer-Worth said: “What these last two years have taught us is that it’s impossible to predict the future. We are confident that Oundle will continue to have a strong rental market. Despite the rising house prices and the government’s efforts to make buy-to-lets unattractive, our landlords are still increasing their portfolios, in addition to us seeing an increase in new landlords to the market.”

Launch of local new fashion label offers bespoke clothing

Priyanka Menon

Slow fashion is the opposite of fast fashion, an approach which produces clothes that are made to last and are not disposable. "Natascha Bankart" is a new fashion business based in Oundle that focuses on producing sustainable clothing through slow fashion.

In recent years, the fashion industry has been scrutinised for its unsustainable practices, contributing to water pollution, carbon emissions and waste accumulation. Perhaps the best-known business model in the fashion industry is "fast-fashion", a practice which rapidly produces high volumes of clothing at low cost, and has had some of the worst effects on the environment. With climate change related problems now gaining more attention, sustainability is becoming an issue for consumers.

I sat down with Natascha to find out more about her business.

Natascha moved to Oundle when she joined Year 10 at Prince William School. She has always enjoyed needlework, having come from a creative family.

"I've always just liked sewing. My school holidays evolved around 'what projects can I do?'. My family bought and renovated a house, and they had old curtains there, so I made a lot of clothes out of old curtains."

"And I realised that I just love creating looks and fashion, and that's what I really want to be doing."

Natascha studied fashion, design, and technology at MMU Manchester. She graduated in 2017 and worked as a pattern cutter in Amsterdam for a year, working for designer brands such as Tommy



Natascha Bankart has launched a new clothing label that offers unique designs and bespoke fittings for clients interested in clothing that is made to last.

Hilfiger and Calvin Klein. Then she started with a designer for a sustainable fashion supplier who mainly worked with organic cotton. Their main client was a German customer, and she designed kids' clothes, women's wear and accessories for three years.

Before long, she took the leap to

start her own fashion business and create her own designs under her own label, which she markets on her website, nataschabankart.com.

Her business follows the slow fashion business model. She has the fabrics and designs ready, and will create a garment when someone places an order. To start off with

she will be making all the garments herself.

Natascha's clothes are a mixture of ready-to-wear and made-to-measure couture. Customers provide their measurements, so that the clothing is fitted to their sizing and has a more tailored look.

She has been working on her first Autumn/Winter collection and had a fashion show at her home in October. The designs for Natascha's clothes begin with the fabrics.

For her first collection she has been inspired by fairy tales. "The collection is called 'Awakening'," she said. "I love draping, so the designs play around with that, and fairy tale drawings with a bit of Pre-Raphaelite influence."

Natascha's mum's wardrobe from the 80s and 90s, with vintage designs from Laura Ashley, was raided and has been a source, along with some of the more aspirational greats.

"I like the high-end Alexander McQueen, Oscar de la Renta. I love anything where you can see the little details. It makes my heart sing. Vivienne Westwood is also a good one. I love her because she does a lot of draping. I worked as a pattern-cutter, so I do love something that's cleverly cut."

Natascha's clothing line aspires to promote sustainable fashion and allow customers to invest in a garment that will last for more than a mere season and look special.

"I want to create garments for women that they feel comfortable in and can wear knowing that it's made to fit them. I love the formal side of dressing, but with people used to running around in jogging bottoms now, I'm trying to find the mid-way point between being comfortable and looking put-together."

The National Service years remembered by former Oundle history teacher

Matthew Atkin

Kim Morrison, a former Oundle School history teacher, has written a memoir about his years in the National Service, *By the Hair of My Chin*.

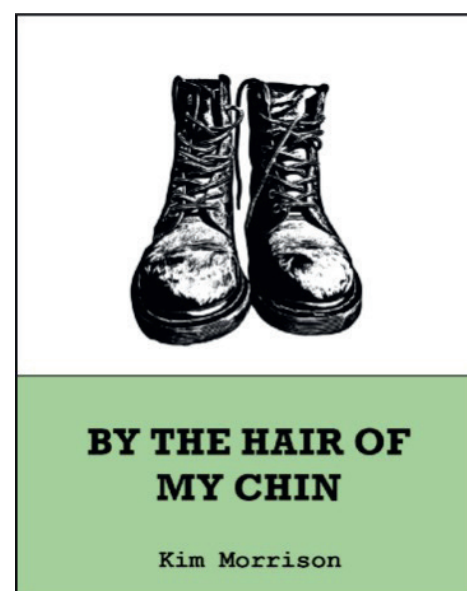
The memoir recounts Kim's journey in the unfamiliar environment of an RAF training camp; first the basic training at RAF West Kirby and later in RAF College Cranwell. He said he arrived without proper

boots, and being "wet behind the ears" it was "a steep learning curve for a boy from Norfolk".

The National Service was introduced in 1947 and was a standardised form of peacetime conscription to meet the rapidly forming challenges faced in a post-war environment. All able-bodied men aged 18-30 were required to serve a minimum of two years, with the final National Servicemen leaving the Armed Forces in May 1963.

After he finished his National Service, Mr Morrison read history at Oxford.

He taught history at Oundle School when the day house was separately known as Laxton School, from 1966 until his retirement in



1991. During his time at school he was "well known for the puns that peppered his pupils' reports". He notes that at Laxton School he worked with five different masters-in-charge and principals.

His memoir was written with a lightness of touch and well-timed humour, reflecting his own inimitable and entertaining style. Readers have been warned to beware of the puns.

The publication of *By the Hair of My Chin* coincides with Mr Morrison's ninetieth birthday in 2021. The book is available at the Oundle Bookshop.

Old English graveyards to be geo-mapped and digitised for family researchers

Robert Foskett

Most of us in Oundle walk through the graveyard at St Peter's Church regularly, but how often do we stop and look at the graves and consider the history of the people buried there and what life was like for them? Probably not very often.

Over time, headstones decay along with the memories. Eventually, it gets to the point that the headstone is near enough illegible and the only hope of finding out about a grave is through records meticulously kept by long passed church officials, gathering dust in archives.

Previously, searching for such records in archives was the only way for genealogists to track down family graves. Sites such as Ancestry and Find My Past have made this record finding process a lot easier, with the digitisation of many

However, the manual process of researching gravestones is gradually set to change with the introduction of a new futuristic piece of technology as part of a scheme to digitise Church of England graveyards.

The Church of England has partnered with Cumbrian-based surveying company Atlantic Geomatics. The project has begun with the Dioceses of Carlisle and Truro. From there, graveyards will be recorded diocese by diocese.

Whilst the operator walks around the graveyard carrying the kit like a rucksack, the laser scanners, GPS and cameras take tens of thousands of measurements every second, recording inscriptions of graves, as well as their position within the graveyard and the positions of other features such as trees. They



In his book *Oundle Wills and Headstones 1820-1858*, David Parker maps the location of burials in the churchyard and records the inscriptions on the now hard-to-read, weathered stones.

of the paper churchyard records.

However, it is still the case that once a genealogist has identified which churchyard a person was buried in, they have a challenge establishing where in the churchyard the person was buried. At this point, vicars and rectors often receive many emails with names and dates requesting any information they might have.

Thanks to the meticulous work of David Parker, many of the burials at St Peter's have already been recorded and published in a book along with transcriptions of deceased Oundelians' wills. He has also attempted to transcribe some of the decayed inscriptions, which is very tedious work.

will also photograph all the visible headstones.

This new technology does come at a significant cost. This project has been funded by Historic England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, genealogy websites, and Caring for God's Acre, a charity whose objective is to ensure that graveyards are cared for.

Due to this funding, the information collected will be published on a free website which the Church of England will launch next spring.

No doubt many genealogists will welcome this digitisation drive. It will further expand the accessibility of genealogy as well as ensuring that the headstones survive natural decay, albeit virtually.

Surge in drink spiking spurs action to address safety on nights out

Jennifer Yang

The return to university this year saw students once again enjoying the freedom to go out to pubs and clubs with new friends. The renewal of nights out on the town, also saw a spate of alleged incidents of drink spiking at clubs, an ongoing issue that has created anxiety, and this time around, has led to an angry response.

Over the past two months, about 200 drink spiking incidents have been reported to the police, plus 24 reports of suspected needle spiking.

Although both men and women are included in the number, young women constitute the majority. Initiated by a student at the University of Edinburgh, a network of women created a movement that expressed their outrage that people could no longer feel safe when they are having fun. Under the name of "Girls Night In," they called for a boycott of nightclubs to protest the issue in November and for improving safety measures in drink venues. A petition that called for nightclubs to thoroughly search their guests gained more than 165,000 signatures.

Locally, Peterborough and Northampton have vibrant club scenes that have not been spared incidents of drink spiking. According to the police, there have been 23 incidents of drink spiking in nine Northampton venues since the beginning of September. Another incident included a 20-year-old who reported a needle injected into her waist in a Kettering nightclub. The incident has left the victim in a state of panic, and she does not feel safe going to town anymore.

across the country, such as Edinburgh and Nottingham, posted on social media pictures and descriptions of what they believed to be a new form of drug spiking via the use of a needle. The posts reportedly showed photos of limbs with puncture wounds and told of blacking out in clubs. Posts like this have gone viral, unleashing widespread panic and anger.

**GIRLS NIGHT IN:
BOYCOTT ALL CLUBS
IN MANCHESTER ON
WEDNESDAY 27TH
OCTOBER**

Experts, however, are urging caution. Several criteria would have to be met by the spiker, the drug, and the victim. The drug would need to be suspended in a large amount of fluid using a thick needle for up to 20 seconds; it would be difficult for such an action to go unnoticed. It is unlikely that an average clubber would be equipped with the technical and medical knowledge needed to perform an intramuscular injection with the few drugs that would be suitable to be injected like this. Police and medical experts need to investigate these allegations adequately.

To ensure the safety of those who want to have a fun night out, the local police has launched Operation Kayak. They are sending plain clothed officers to counter predatory behaviour in town centres.

A spokesperson said, "We're liaising with door staff and businesses in the night-time economy so that if there is a problem inside an establishment, police can be alerted. Door staff will be in constant contact with our officers on the streets. We won't be inside — but we will be outside in hotspot areas around taxi ranks, in alleys and that sort of thing."

"The best way to protect yourself and your friends from being spiked is to be aware of what you consume and never take a drink that you haven't seen being prepared in front of you. Never leave your drink unattended, even for a moment, and if it doesn't taste right, don't finish it. If you start to feel strange or unwell, seek help straight away," says a Northamptonshire Police spokesman.

"We are committed to ensuring our streets are safe and this operation is intended to help do this by making the county a hostile place for those intent on committing sexual offences."

WED 27th OCT
Boycott Bristol clubs

The number of incidents has always been difficult to count as some victims are embarrassed to report suspected cases of drink spiking or they do not remember the details of the night.

Whilst the most common form of drug spiking — dropping date-rape, illegal, or prescription drugs into the victim's drink when they are partying away — is widely known, "needle spiking" a new form of drug spiking, has spurred public concern. Women from universities

Sight loss charity makes an appeal for local volunteers to foster guide dog puppies

Jennifer Yang

Sight loss charity Guide Dogs has launched an appeal in Oundle, Corby and Kettering for volunteers who can provide a loving home to a guide dog puppy for the first year of its life.



Most of the guide dog puppies that are homed with volunteers are labradors or retrievers, breeds known for their friendliness and intelligence.

ment required.

The volunteers, known as Puppy Raisers, are vital to the early socialisation and education of guide dogs, teaching puppies basic commands and helping them get used to the outside world. The puppies then

At least 20 new homes are needed in the area to foster guide dog puppies, which arrive at about seven weeks old and remain until they are around 12-16 months old. The charity covers the cost of all the food, veterinary care and equip-

move to a training centre to begin their specialised training.

Witnessing a fluffy pup grow into a fully qualified guide dog can be a truly rewarding experience, especially with the demand for guide dogs on the rise in the UK.

Currently two million people are living with sight loss, and the number is expected to rise to nearly four million by 2050. The majority of individuals with sight loss are likely to encounter high unemployment, depression, loneliness and financial insecurity throughout their lifetime.

Most of the puppies come from the charity's own breeding programme and are usually labradors or retrievers. The charity would provide all the training and support needed to raise a puppy, so volunteers would feel well-equipped to welcome the new family member.

Volunteers do need to acknowledge that raising a guide dog puppy is a commitment. Suitable housing is required with a secure area for the puppy. Applicants must be at least 18 years old, be able to handle a dog as it grows, and have access to a car for weekly visits for training and vet visits. They also must have the ability to access online content and training materials and have an email address.

Mike Hefferan, a volunteering coordinator for Guide Dogs, who covers Northamptonshire, said: "This is a great opportunity for people in Oundle, Corby and Kettering to raise a guide dog puppy, helping to prepare a pup for their future role supporting someone with sight loss."

New business in Oundle offers personalised counselling services

Mental health is becoming a more open topic of conversation and people are now more aware of noticing their moods and feelings, and asking for help if they are struggling.

People may need to see a counsellor for a variety of different reasons, for example low mood, anxiety, depression, sadness, anger or confusion. Individuals may be in a difficult relationship or need help coming to terms with a bereavement.

Katie B Counselling is a new business based in Oundle that provides services for people who would like to talk to a professional about these personal issues. The practitioner, Katie Frisby offers face-to-face, telephone or online counselling for individuals.

"Talking therapy, or counselling is part of that process of trying to work out those feelings we are having. Imagining an iceberg is a really good way of looking at ourselves. We have the bit we show to everyone, but underneath there are a lot of other things going on which no one else can see. These are the things that can sometimes cause conflict, stress and anxiety and are good to explore in a counselling session," she said.

Counselling is still an unregulated business in the UK, and therefore it can be daunting trying to find the right person to work with. Frisby emphasises that her priorities are keeping her clients safe and providing the best possible service.

The most important part of the counselling process is the relationship between the counsellor and the client. Frisby offers a free introductory telephone appointment to discuss a client's needs. The next step is to arrange some sessions.

Katie Frisby is fully trained, qualified and insured and is a member of the National Counselling Society, working within their ethical framework.

She has previously worked with CPSL Mind in Cambridgeshire, Cruse Bereavement Support and the Child and Adolescent Bereavement Services based in Northamptonshire.

She can be contacted via her website: katiebcounselling.co.uk.

University applicants under pressure for places in 2022

Cherry Yang

Among those affected by the disruptions of the pandemic have been students making university applications amidst the uncertainty of exams, assessments and online learning at university.

In the higher education admissions cycle for 2021, deferrals hit the highest level in a decade. UCAS, provider of the admissions service, reported that over 16,800 students deferred their entry to university to 2022, an increase of over 33% from the year before.

A major reason for this was the likely prospect of having to start freshers' year sitting behind a screen. Due to the rise of Covid cases, many universities opted to keep courses online.

Many institutions also encouraged students to defer after facing oversubscribed places due to CAG/TAG grade inflation. An unprecedented number of students achieved A or A* across a wide range of subjects and more



applicants than usual achieved the grades for their firm choice university.

To deal with the unprecedented demand for places, some institutions offered students incentives to defer their entry. The University of Exeter offered a £10,000 fee reduction and free accommodation for medical students to defer entry. The University of Leeds offered similar incentives for law students.

Because of grade inflation, most

of the oversubscribed places were at the top universities, leaving universities with lower entry requirements actively looking to recruit students.

An additional problem for applicants in 2021 was that there were very few places available in clearing for students to apply to if they did not get a place at their first or second choice universities. Nick Hillman, director of the Higher Education Policy Institute said: "Normally they would let you in anyway, and this year they are just not doing that so much," he said. "Or normally you would go to clearing, and then this year they are not in clearing."

The end result of deferrals and oversubscribed places means greater pressure on current Sixth Form pupils making applications for 2022, particularly for medicine courses where places are capped. Applicants have been advised to be "cautious and realistic" with their applications and insurance choices.

Travel in the pandemic era remains uncertain amidst shifting rules and restrictions

Yves Yuen

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused widespread disruption to travel over the last two years. To prevent the spread of the disease within countries and across borders, precautions and restrictions have been implemented by different governments that complicate and curtail travel.

With so much uncertainty and change, it is essential to get expert advice. Paula Cockcroft at Oundle Travel said: "People need to contact a travel professional so they have one point of contact, who will then follow the guidance of the Foreign Office. Clients then have the guarantee of ABTA and ATOL, so everything is protected. Should the government advice change, there is a full refund in 14 days."

Protocols can differ between countries and change from month to month. Furthermore, the rules for arrivals can vary depending on where the traveller has come from. Required vaccine certificates have become an essential document, leaving little flexibility for unvaccinated travellers.

The countries with the most stringent arrival rules include Australia and Hong Kong.

Hong Kong requires travellers to be fully vaccinated and quarantine for three weeks. In early November China announced the temporary suspension of entry by non-Chinese nationals.

Australia also has a high bar for entry. Visitors must present a compelling reason to enter, and then quarantine for two weeks.

New Zealand is closed to almost all arrivals. However, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said that they will plan to relax covid measures despite Omicron.

Spain requires people travelling from the UK to present a full proof of vaccination; a negative Covid test is not enough anymore due to the Omicron variant. For travel to France, if you are unvaccinated you are only permitted to enter if you have an essential purpose, and then must present a Covid test on entry, as well as quarantine for a week.

To travel to the United States, American citizens and permanent residents can enter unvaccinated, as well as those under 18.

Unvaccinated non-citizens must quarantine for seven days and take a test three to five days after arrival. Due to the new Omicron variant, travel from eight southern African countries has been banned for non-US citizens.

Due to the Omicron variant current rules for returning to the UK are tighter. Anyone arriving in the UK from a red list country must quarantine in a government approved hotel for eleven nights at a cost of £2,285 per person. Returns from non-red list countries must take a PCR test and isolate until a negative result is logged.

The new rules have not dampened interest in travel. Ms Cockcroft said that currently there is a lot of interest in travel to America, Mexico, the Caribbean, Canada and even Iceland for the Northern Lights.

People remain wary about skiing holidays in Europe, particularly Austria, because of the worry that the rules will change.

Paula Cockcroft thinks it is worth booking, "but you really have to use a travel professional. We're here, face-to-face, to help clients through any problems."

Lord Robert Winston joins local Learning Partnership as patron of ExpertEd:Live



The Oundle, Peterborough and East Northants (OPEN) Learning Partnership welcomed Professor Lord Robert Winston to Oundle on 29 November. Professor Winston is familiar to households across the country as a presenter of numerous BBC television programmes, including *Child of Our Time*. He has a distinguished career as a researcher of human reproduction and the early stages of pregnancy, and has been chairman of the Royal College of Music.

Professor Winston met with students from Oundle School and Prince William School to discuss his life in politics as a member of the House of Lords.

In addition, he led a Q&A session at Oundle CE Primary School for Year 5, where they were joined by pupils and teachers from Laxton Junior School. When asked about the secret to his achievements in science, Professor Winston said: "Observing things carefully, working with others and never giving up." He discussed the

importance of preserving the planet for future generations, encouraging the children to consider what they might do with their lives to make a difference.

Professor Winston continues his commitment to education outreach as patron of ExpertEd:Live, a new venture developed by the OPEN LP in partnership with leading independent schools, MATs and universities. ExpertEd is a free resource using three different, cross-curricular strands to engage with all pupils, regardless of background or ability from age 9 to 13. A recent event included the Midweek Maths series involving local families near Oundle.

Regarding his role with ExpertEd, Professor Winston said: "ExpertEd is a wonderful opportunity to bring expertise into classrooms to inspire young people. You all have much more potential than you have ever dreamed of, and I hope that your ExpertEd experiences raise your aspirations to become the next generation of experts."

Information technology support available for new learners

Most people basically carry a computer in their pocket in the form of a phone. But there are many people who do not conduct their lives on a smart phone or have not had the opportunity to develop basic computer skills at work. It is becoming increasingly difficult to interact with any business services without access to a computer, and crucially the knowledge of how to use an online device. Socially, not being connected to family and friends online can be very isolating.

The Community Action programme at Oundle School offers IT support classes for anyone who would like help becoming more

familiar with using any computer device or application.

Some of the assistance that people have requested include setting up social media apps such as Whatsapp and Instagram; reading a book on an iPad; using Skype and Zoom; organising photos and email accounts.

The support classes meet at Oundle School on Wednesday afternoons from 14:30-16:00 during school term time. Everyone is welcome to join a session with one-on-one attention. To arrange a visit, contact the Community Action office at 01832 277267; ca@oundleschool.org.uk.

Take a hike in Northamptonshire with fellow walkers

Matthew Atkin

If walking in the countryside appeals to you, then consider joining the Facebook group "Northamptonshire Walks". With contributions from over 27,000 other walkers there are many posts sharing scenic, and accessible walks across Northamptonshire. Many of the routes are also shared to the website "Northamptonshirewalks".

The walks vary in length and difficulty, meaning that one can start slow and work up to longer and more challenging walks, or find that perfect route to just kick-start the day from the doorstep.

There are many fascinating places in Northamptonshire awaiting discovery. There is the haunted site of pagan ritual in

Boughton, abbeys and churches, as well as many pubs.

For walkers looking to enjoy some company, members organise group walks every week ranging from four to eleven miles each.

In November, walks included the Harringworth Viaduct, Wansford "Dick Whittington", Fotheringhay, and the lost village of Furtho where only a dovecote and Medieval church remain.

As little as ten minutes of daily walking can aid progression toward improved mood, particularly when surrounded by greenery. Moreover, walking can help alleviate the risk of joint pain, chronic diseases, fortify the immune system, and boost brainpower.

Probus clubs thrive in Oundle

Robert Brettle

A comfortable retirement from work after a busy career is an ambition for most professionals. But many find that when they leave the workplace what they most miss is the opportunity to spend informal time with their former colleagues.

The Probus clubs fill that gap for retired professionals and businessmen and women. In the small town of Oundle, there are actually three separate Probus clubs, which each meet about once a fortnight.

The Probus club movement was founded in 1966, by a group of men nearing retirement. The well-established Rotary Clubs were for active businessmen, but there were no organisations for retired businessmen that provided structured opportunities to meet people and share interests.

With the assistance of the Rotary Club, the first lunch club was set up and was very successful. The clubs have since spread across the UK and worldwide, with clubs in places such as Ireland, Canada, New Zealand. The name 'Probus' comes from the first letters of 'Professional and Business'. There are about 2000 clubs local to towns and districts in the UK. Some clubs are

sponsored by a Rotary Club, but there is no central organizing body, and therefore each club sets its own rules, although there is a central newsletter.

Most club memberships are single sex. While the majority of clubs are men only, there are a growing number of mixed membership clubs. There is now a significant number of women-only Probus clubs.

In Oundle, there are three Probus clubs; these clubs each have a membership of around 40 members and each meet around twice a month at the Oundle Golf Club. The clubs are strictly non-political and non-profit, and there is little fuss or formality about the proceedings. They often have speakers who give talks on topics ranging from classic cars to beekeeping and climate change. In addition to meeting for lunch, the members often attend events or go on trips locally and abroad. The aim is to offer an opportunity for a convivial gathering for those with more time on their hands after juggling a busy working career.

After suspending meetings over the pandemic, Oundle Probus club programmes are back on schedule and membership is open to newcomers.

Spotlight on The Posh

Yves Yuen

Peterborough United FC was promoted back to the Championship after an eight year stay in League One, finishing runner-up in the 2020-21 season. They now sit proudly in the second tier of football behind the famous English Premier League (EPL).

However, Peterborough has not been settling in well to life in the Championship and by the end of 2021 was placed 21st in the league out of 24. They are just above the relegation zone which is the bottom three. Reading F.C., a potential relegation rival of Peterborough United, was reported to have been deducted six points after breaching financial rules, which could place them in 19th place if it happens only one place above Peterborough.

On the other hand, the nearest Premier League club, Leicester City is doing well. They managed to finish fifth last year, which meant they qualified for the Europa League. Although they are currently sitting twelfth for the 2021-22 season, they only need three points to be in sixth place. There are still 27 matches left to be played so there is plenty of time for them to catch up.

Leicester's star striker, Jamie Vardy, has been doing very well this season. Despite his age of 34,

he has so far scored seven goals in just eleven games. He is second in the race for the golden boot, out-scoring some of the world's best players such as Liverpool's main men: Sadio Mane; England captain and MBE Harry Kane; Wolves' star striker Raul Jimenez; and the person who many regard as the greatest of all time, Cristiano Ronaldo.

Meanwhile, Peterborough United faces a tense battle to keep their position in the Championship League, which includes players such as former Chelsea captain Gary Cahill, Akinfenwa, Mitrovic and Callum Robinson.

The way it works is that the teams that finish top two in the Championship are automatically promoted to the Premier League and the four teams that finish below that enter a playoff system. The team that finished third plays the team that is sixth and the team that finished fourth plays against the fifth. This is done to give the team that finished highest the advantage.

They then compete in the semi-final where the teams play each other in two games. The aggregate score will decide who gets to the final. The final will then be played in a neutral venue with only one game to decide who wins. Penalties will be used to decide the winner if the game is a draw.

It's all about you at Oundle School Sports Centre

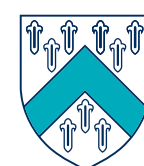
Our latest fitness class timetable launches in January 2022 with an even wider variety of options for all abilities, levels and training needs.

Classes include Aquafit, Pilates, Yoga, Les Mills Programmes and Functional Fitness – why not come and try something new? Most sessions are included as part of our membership packages... or non-members can pay per class.

To book your space or find out more simply visit our website or call our reception team.



Call: 01832 277208
Email: sportscentre@oundleschool.org.uk
Visit: www.oundlesportscentre.co.uk



Oundle School
**SPORTS
 CENTRE**

A night out for hobbyists with Oundle Makers

Cherry Yang

Hobby and craft making can sometimes be a solitary pastime, but a new monthly social gathering welcomes hobbyists to share their interests and learn new some new pursuits.

Organised by James Anderson, the group meets at Fletton House on the fourth Tuesday of every month. A cost of £3 covers the room hire and insurance. The event is called Oundle Makers.

Everyone is invited to come and work on their own hobbies, whilst chatting, sharing, and drinking lots of tea. The event is purely for enthusiasts, so the one rule is that no selling is allowed.

The first session took place in September. Among the group there were a variety of hobbies: patchwork, painting, origami, model boat building and more. James Anderson tried out a new craft and worked on a glass tile mosaic and a space-themed adult Lego.

Reassured by the success of the first few gatherings, the event will continue monthly. Mr Anderson hopes to see new members and more hobbies to be shared.



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