



Oundle Chronicle

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Storm discharges into River Nene near Oundle

Catriona Eke

Nationally, the state of our rivers is poor. Sewage is discharged daily into rivers across the UK, posing a risk not only to the wildlife whose habitats rely on rivers, but also to people who use rivers for recreational use, such as swimming or kayaking.

Following on from *The Times'* Clean It Up campaign launched earlier this year, the Oundle Chronicle looked at the performance of Anglian Water and its impact on the River Nene.

Oundle's Nene River is no exception in this trend. Over the last three years there have been 18 sewage spills over 43 hours at Barnwell Road TPS and 46 spills over 220 hours at New Road TPS, where sewage is discharged in the area of The Maltings (a retirement housing complex), the Oundle Boat Club and a restaurant.

The wider area impacted by Anglian Water proves no better. During 2022, 43 sites on the River Nene were polluted.

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Photo: Ivan Quetglas

In a continuation of centuries-old traditions, the Market Place was criss-crossed in bunting and flags in celebration of the new Carolean era. Residents and visitors alike have been enthralled by the royal coronation tributes made by the Oundle Yarn Bombers whose skilful knitted creations marked the occasion with wit and reverence.

The disruption of war clouds the future for young Ukrainians and Russians

Maria Karpova

For today's young, the Ukrainian war is the largest and most reported conflict they have known. Both Ukrainian and Russian young people have watched their friends and relatives being sent to the war, and have seen their families' lives fracture.

I spoke to young people between the ages of 15 and 18 of both Russian and Ukrainian nationalities who live locally to find out how the war has affected them. They talked about the drastic changes that their families had experienced.

For Ukrainian teenagers, their lives have been uprooted and families put at risk. Nastya's (18)* immediate family left Ukraine and moved to the UK in 2015 following Putin's invasion of Crimea, but they had to leave behind their elderly relatives. She said: "My grandparents were displaced and are now in the Czech Republic. They were staying in a really nice home for the elderly for free, but they had to move because they didn't have enough spaces. Right now they are living in a hostel. My other grandparents are still in Sumy because my grandpa is really ill and they

can't travel long distances. But I don't think they would want to move. They say it's fine, but they don't always have electricity. They have food though, like rations. Our family friends recently came to England and they stayed with us for six months. They have four kids. The eldest one is fighting in the war. He couldn't leave the country, so he joined the army."

Eva (18) is Ukrainian-Russian, living in the UK. Her Ukrainian relatives have been uprooted twice, trying to keep ahead of the advance of the Russian army. "I have family that lived in Crimea until 2014 and then they moved to Lviv. Now they find themselves in London. They had to move out

very quickly. There were queues to Poland for about five days to leave the country. They found themselves in a difficult situation because the move was unexpected. My mum and I spent two months looking for a school for them. There weren't any that were able to accommodate any more Ukrainian refugees."

Teenagers who have family in both Ukraine and Russia have suffered tension within their own family, too. "When we talked to our relatives in Russia at the very beginning of the war, they said, 'Don't worry, we are coming to save you.' I don't think we ever contacted them again," explained Sasha (18), whose immediate family

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Storm discharges

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There was a reported 712 sewage dumps for a total of 2,707 hours.

When asked about the sewage discharges at Oundle, an Anglian Water spokesperson said: "The vast majority of what comes out of storm overflows is rainwater."

They told the Oundle Chronicle: "We are investing £39m to reduce the impacts from storm overflows, and as part of our Get River Positive initiative, we have committed to eliminate all serious pollutions by 2025, a goal we are currently on track to meet."

Tom Pursglove, MP, addressed the significance of this issue: "Tackling storm overflows is a priority and the Government is committed to protecting public health and the environment from discharges. I am mindful that local people want to see urgent action on this issue, too."

He said that by 2035, water companies will have to improve all storm overflows discharging into, or near, every designated bathing water, and improve seventy-five percent of overflows discharging to high priority nature sites. By 2050, this will apply to all remaining storm overflows, regardless of location.

In the meantime, Oundle residents are forced to continue to endure the overflow spills. A concerned resident went down to the river by the North Bridge on April 3 and was shocked by the amount of sludge by the New Road discharge pipe. He contacted Anglian Water about it.

"Anglian Water admitted there was a problem," he said. "They came down and it took six tankers to suck up all the muck." Anglian Water later wrote to him to say that the water had been cleared. "I just cannot believe that no one else has jumped on this. There's certainly an issue, no question."

Anglian Water job notes reported that the debris was believed to be from the combined storm overflow which, after heavy rain in late March, discharged sludge up to 50m along the riverbank in both directions. Water samples did not detect ammonia and they assessed it as a category 4 incident. Inspectors from the Environmental Agency attended the site and were satisfied with the clean-up.

Returning to the site a few days later, however, the resident saw there was the start of another build-up of sludge. "I was really disappointed. It was close to looking worse than what it was before they started to clear it up."

Despite being happy with Anglian Water's quick response, he does not feel the cause of the problem has been addressed.

We asked Anglian Water whether this overflow site would be considered a priority for investment, considering its proximity to housing and a boat club. They pointed out that overflow spills had reduced from 2021 to 2022, but did not mention the predominately dry conditions last year. "Overall number of hours of spills from our storm overflows reduced by over 50% last year compared to 2021."

The Environment Agency conducts weekly assessments from May to September to measure water quality. Currently, the government has a target to increase the number of waters classified as having a "good" ecological status from sixteen percent to seventy-five percent by 2027, but the figure has not changed in five years. The path to clean water for all to enjoy across the UK is long, and without the investment in more modern sewage systems and regular clean-up from the government and water companies, the goal of clean water will remain out of reach.

Speeding violations

Robert Foscett

Northamptonshire currently has no live speed cameras, however, the police use mobile camera vans to monitor speeding and catch drivers. Every month, the police publish this data on their website.

In November 2022, 23 people were caught speeding on the A605 in Barnwell and Thrapston. The police spent 2 hours 25 minutes monitoring the road. One person was also caught for a seatbelt offence in Thrapston. 7 people were caught speeding on the A427 in Upper Benefield. The police spent around 2 hours 20 minutes monitoring the road.

In December, 36 people were caught speeding on the A605 in Barnwell and Thrapston. The police spent 5 hours 15 minutes monitoring the road. 2 people were caught for speeding on the A427 in Upper Benefield. The police spent a few minutes monitoring the road.

In January 2023, 132 people were caught speeding on the A605 in Barnwell and Thrapston, including one person driving 91mph in a 60 zone. The police spent 6 hours 25 minutes monitoring the road. 10 people were caught for speeding on the A427 in Upper Benefield. The police spent 2 hours monitoring the road.

In February, 45 people were caught speeding on the A605 in Barnwell and Thrapston, and 5 for seatbelt offences. The police spent 5 hours 30 minutes monitoring the road. 3 people were caught speeding on the A427 in Upper Benefield. The police spent one hour monitoring the road.

In March, 84 people were caught speeding on the A605 in Barnwell and Thrapston, and two for seatbelt offences. The police spent 6 hours 15 minutes monitoring the road. 2 people were caught speeding on the A427 in Upper Benefield. The police spent 25 minutes monitoring the road.

Oundle's last remaining bank closes

Robert Foscett

On Friday 5th May, Barclays, Oundle's last surviving bank, shut its doors on New Street for the final time. This decision was taken because of the increasing number of people who have access to online banking.

The branch closure means that the town has also lost one of its two remaining ATMs.

Figures released in February by the cash machine network, Link, show that more than 1,500 machines were taken out of action in the previous year.

Despite this, Nationwide Building Society said that last



Bank branch ATMs are no longer available in Oundle.

year withdrawals from their ATMs increased by around twenty percent.

Oundle's remaining cash machine at the Co-op is accessible during shop opening hours. The closest free ATMs which can be used at any time are now the BP garage in Weldon and the Shell fuel station at Peterborough Services.

The Oundle Post Office offers banking services for withdrawals, deposits and account balance checks using a debit card.

Cheques can be deposited using a bank deposit slip and an envelope available at the Post Office.

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Need for information campaign about new voter ID law

Robert Foskett

In May, new laws came into force requiring all voters to bring photo ID to the polling station at elections. Lee Rowley, a local government minister said in Parliament that this policy is to "protect the integrity of the ballot box" and ensure that only those eligible, are able to vote.

There has been great concern about the effect that this policy will have on voter turnout and the potential age discrimination in the accepted forms of ID. For example, whilst Older Person's Bus Passes and 60+ Oyster cards are on the list, university and college student cards and young person's travel cards are not allowed.

There are also concerns as to the impact this policy will have on voter turnout if voting becomes more complicated, as well as on individuals who do not have any ID which conforms to the regulations.

Those without photo ID can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate. The applicant must provide a recent passport-style photo, their National Insurance number and date of birth.

The uptake of the Voter Authority Certificate was low in advance of this year's May local elections which covered large areas of England, not including North Northants. Only around four percent of those without ID applied.

Across the country, levels of public awareness about voter ID appeared to be low with surveys suggesting that around a quarter of voters were unaware of these changes. At a local level, NNC has confirmed that their public information campaign is still in the development phase. They are planning to begin publicity in July, in advance of the May 2024 elections.

Evidence suggests that voter impersonation is very rare in this country. Between 2010 and 2018, there were only two convictions for this. Government impact assessments are that the introduction of voter ID will cost the taxpayer hundreds of millions of pounds. There are questions about whether this money could be spent better elsewhere given the low levels of the crime which it prevents.

The Elections Act 2022 has made provision for a review to take place to consider the effect that the changes have had. However, because some returning officers used "greeters" to triage voters and turn away those without ID, these people were not recorded on

the official figures as having been refused a vote. This means that the review will not be able to fully consider the impact of the policy.

After close of polls on 4th May, the Electoral Commission said that whilst the elections were well run, "the ID requirement posed a greater challenge for some groups in society. Some people were regrettably unable to vote today as a result".

In a speech to the National Conservatism Conference in May, Jacob Rees-Mogg, who supported voter ID, described these changes as "gerrymandering". He said it had backfired on the party, as some elderly people, who are generally more supportive of the Conservatives, had been unable to vote. He also admitted that the change had "upset a system that worked perfectly well."

According to the Electoral Commission website, there will also be changes to postal voting implemented in October. Voters wishing to apply to vote by post will need to have their ID verified, although it is unclear how this will work and there is no information about these changes on NNC's website. It will also be possible to apply for a postal vote online for the first time.

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner elections, as well as directly elected mayoral elections in other parts of the country, will now be conducted using first past the post (FPTP – the electoral system used for general elections and council elections, whereby the candidate with the greatest number of votes wins). Previously, the supplementary vote (SV) system was used. Under SV, voters indicate a first and second preference on their ballot papers. If the person with the greatest number of votes after the first round of counting has a vote share of less than 50%, the candidates outside the top two are eliminated and their voters' second preferences are re-distributed to the top two candidates. This system stops votes from being wasted.

On 4th May, the Conservative Party took the Bedford mayoralty from the Liberal Democrats for the first time ever with a majority of 145 votes. However, due to the change in electoral system, there were a total of 16,250 votes wasted from Labour, Green and Heritage Party voters who could not express a second preference. This is 503 votes more than were received by the winning Conservative candidate.

The Government say that the change to FPTP will "strengthen the accountability of elected mayors and PCCs to their electorate, making it easier for voters to express a clear choice".

OTC presents community awards

Scarlett Zoll

At the annual Town Meeting in April, the mayor, Ian Clark presented the council's Community Award, and the newly established, King Award.

are kept secret, the displays are set out during the evenings, and they prefer to remain unnamed. There is no limit to their decorations, which have included bollard cosies, postbox toppers, bench covers,



Paul King's family were at the Annual Town Meeting to present the first King Award to the Oundle Yarn Bombers.

The King Award was recently created to honour the late Paul King who served as Oundle mayor for three terms and was on the Oundle Town Council for eleven years. The award aims to recognize the person or group that have contributed to the town centre, as that was a focus that Mr King was very passionate about. He strived to make improvements in the Market Place at the heart of what he did. The intention is that the award will be awarded annually in his honour.

This year, the King Award was presented to the Yarn Bombers for the work that they have done in the centre in town, which has seen them transform the Market Place with themed handmade knitted creations. This year their work appeared for the Platinum Jubilee, Remembrance in November, and recently, the King's Coronation.

The Yarn Bombers meet weekly over many months, planning their designs and knitting. Their plans

tree wrappers, bus shrouds and bunting.

Their work demonstrates an enormous effort, dedication and care for the town. It has a huge impact on the town and puts a smile on people's faces. It would have been something that Mr King would have loved to see in Oundle. His family came to Oundle to present the first King Award on behalf of the council.

The Community Award was given to Colin Pendrill for his work with Volunteer Action.

Mr Pendrill has been a volunteer driver for 15 years and he often dedicates many days a week driving elderly or disabled people to hospital, appointments, shopping and family visits both locally and even as far as Birmingham and Oxford. Many people do not know what they would do without Volunteer Action, and as a volunteer, Mr Pendrill said he feels the same.

NNC signs car park contract with Conservative Club

Robert Foskett

Use of public funds demands scrutiny to ensure that budgets are cost effective and that contracts do not seem to create a conflict of interest or curry political favour.

Last year, a question emerged about North Northants Council's use of the car park at the Corby Conservative Club on Cottingham Road to park council vehicles.

Corby Conservative Club is a social club for members and supporters of the Conservative Party. The club also provides office space for the local party and elects a representative to their executive committee.

A Freedom of Information request revealed that in June 2022, NNC signed a five-year parking contract with the Conservative Club at a cost of £13,500.

It is not clear what other parking alternatives NNC considered before signing the contract. We asked Cllr Jason Smithers, councillor for Oundle and Leader of the Council, whether he could explain why the council felt that using the Conservative Club's facilities was the best option. He did not reply in time for publication.

The Oundle Chronicle was unable to obtain copies of correspondence relating to the contract.

Archeaology dig finds burial remains unique in Northants

Priyanka Menon

Archaeological digs are a routine requirement before developments break ground, but it is not often that a unique discovery is made. Last year, an archaeological excavation undertaken ahead of the proposed residential development by St Christopher's Drive uncovered an exciting and significant discovery.

In March and April 2022, the Museum of London Archaeology, an independent charity, was commissioned by Persimmon Homes, to begin "a programme of archaeological mitigation" before building works began.

The aim of the excavation was to determine the nature of potential Iron Age activity which was previously identified in a geophysical survey of the grounds.

The process was successful in revealing evidence of Iron Age activity, with the excavation revealing ring ditches and several pits and postholes. Artefactual evidence discovered on the site suggests that the activity dated from the Middle Iron Age, with

the site used continuously into the middle late and Late Iron Age. However, much of the archaeology was disrupted by modern gravel quarrying in the north and west areas of the excavation.

The most significant discovery was a single crouched inhumation burial, comprising a pit or trench for the deceased covered with rocks, from around the Late Iron Age to the early Roman period found in the centre of the site.

The remains were identified as those of an adult of unknown sex. Within the burial, artefacts found included three brooches and a toiletry set which consisted of a pair of ear scoops and tweezers that had probably been gathered in a cloth bag.

A burial type of this kind is particularly rare, and is of local and national significance as the first burial of its kind to be discovered in Northamptonshire.

The burial is an isolated example of Roman period activity at a site where the remains almost exclusively date to the Iron Age. The decision to use this

previously occupied area may have been significant. It is unclear whether the burial lay at the edge of a contemporary settlement or was deliberately set away from occupied areas such as the Roman town recorded at Ashton.

The site's usage could have simply changed from agricultural to funerary with the arrival of the Romans. There is little evidence of human activity on the site until the post-medieval/modern period to suggest that there was continued use of the farmstead into the Roman period, which may indicate that it fell out of use after the burial.

Prior to the Roman invasion around 43 AD, the Nene Valley area was likely occupied by Iron Age tribes belonging to a larger group called the Catuvellauni.

The tribal population was large and often farmed the agricultural lands which followed the valley, living in farmsteads and villages. However, this way of life was disrupted by the arrival of the Romans under Emperor Claudius. Areas which had previously been used for farming and agricultural

practices may have been levelled or used to build fortresses, as a key military stronghold. The fate of the farmers after the Roman invasion is unclear, though several skeletons were found in farmstead ditches in Longthorpe, which likely represent those who belonged to the Iron Age population.

Liz Mordue, Archaeological Advisor for North Northants Council said: "The burial and its artefacts still require further work, specifically the conservation of the metal objects and some for full publication. In my view, there are elements of the site which warrant further work, in particular relating to the burial, which is the first of its type to be identified in Northamptonshire."

All artefacts found at the site will go into an archive, and the burial license issued to the project allows the human remains to be held for future research in an archive.

The results of the site, including specialist analysis of the artefacts, will be published in the journal *Northamptonshire Archaeology*.

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A directory for car services

Robert Darrell-Brown

When Pick Arthey, Oundle's last remaining car repair garage, closed in December, car owners were left scrambling to find new mechanics to entrust their vehicles to for repairs, services and MOTs. But big dealerships in Peterborough are not the only option. Car owners in Oundle have recommended a variety of local garages.

Aldwinle Garage, Aldwinle

Aldwinle Garage is a class 4 MOT Centre for vehicles with up to eight passenger seats. It provides a wide range of MOT related services that include MOT testing, repairs and servicing, as well as vehicle diagnostics and fault finding. Tel: 01832 720757

Barneys Autos, Huntingdon

Barneys does MOTs, repairs, servicing, clutches and brakes. Tel: 07949 449971
Monday to Friday 8:30am-5:00pm

JB Slater Automotive, Tansor

Slater is a vehicle repair and maintenance shop that offers MOTs, services and diagnostics. It is a Honda specialist. E: jbslaterautomotive@hotmail.com
Tel: 07785 106566
Monday to Friday 8:30am-5:00pm

Tillson Autos, Huntingdon

Tillsons has been a family run business for 31 years. It carries out repairs to all models of vehicles. E: tillsonautoservices@outlook.com
Tel: 01487 832415
Monday to Friday 8:30am – 6:00pm
Saturday 8:30am – 12:00pm

Oundle Tyre and Exhaust Centre

1 New Rd, Oundle
Retail garage, tyres and exhausts. Tel: 01832 274040
Monday to Saturday 9:00am - 5:00pm; Sunday 10:00am - 4:00pm

RJ Sutton, Nassington

RJ Sutton provides vehicle and service repairs, MOTs for both cars and motorbikes and diagnostics. They also provide a welding and fabrication service and have the ability to provide bespoke steelwork requirements which can be carried out in their workshop or via their mobile service. Their workshop has all the necessary equipment to help with various engineering tasks. E: office@suttonengineering.com
Tel: 01780 782577
Monday to Friday 8:00am – 5:00pm

Oundle MOT & Service Centre

Herne Park, East Road, Oundle
A car garage that undertakes all vehicle repairs including MOT repairs, servicing, tyres, clutch. E: oundleservicecentre@hotmail.com
Tel: 01832 275404
M: 07930 156138

K Cooper Motors in Sawtry

They are a repair shop and MOT test centre as well as a tyre dealer. Tel: 01487 830643
Monday to Friday 8:00am-6:00pm

QPrep Automotive Engineering

East Road, Oundle
A local garage and engineering service for both modern and classic cars, including MOT preparation, restoration and repair, modification and fabrication. E: info@qprep.co.uk
Tel: 01832 270027

Disappointment at pub closure

Iona Morgan

In March, patrons of the Chequered Skipper in Ashton were shocked to learn via a Facebook post that the pub had closed overnight. The pub was a popular establishment in the area, with high quality food, welcoming staff, and a lovely atmosphere on the village green, as well as its own patio area and side garden.

The Chequered Skipper was run by Paul Andreff and April McCully, who had rescued the pub from a previous closure. They took on the lease in 2019 and invested £50,000 to reopen the pub and make improvements. The finance enabled the couple to refresh the premises, including a large upgrade of

kitchen equipment, a huge stock replenishment with exclusive wine and food producers, alarm systems, staff accommodation, bespoke uniforms and new picnic tables with parasols. Over the years they also redecorated and furnished the pub to a high standard.

According to the couple, the closure of the pub was forced upon them after four months of correspondence with the landlord and owner. They wrote: "We have been unsuccessful with our bid for the takeover of the lease from the previous tenant."

The Chequered Skipper earned a special place as an idyllic country pub for patrons near and far.

Pubs operate on thin margins, and the closure of pubs is not out of the ordinary. Last year, over 32 pubs closed every month in England and Wales.

Business turns over in the Market Place

When favourite shops and businesses close after many years, it is easy to feel gloomy about the business climate. But Oundle's Market Place has seen businesses come and go over hundreds of years, and it remains a resilient town to invest in. When one shop closes, it is not long before another opens its doors with new services.

A few marquee properties in

town remain on the market with offers pending for new tenancies.

Among the recent changes, Oundle & Stamford Mortgage Services opened on North Street, Savvi Travel opened in the former premises of Seven Wells. Fiona Swan Curtains and Blinds opened a new shop on West Street and Just Lets merged with Aspire under the banner of Osprey Property.

Bumble and Twig



Taryn and Oli Moore welcome children and their parents to Oundle's newest shop on West Street, Bumble and Twig, an independent, family run children's shop. Their brand is named for the bees that remind them of time in their garden, alongside the simple twigs that can be used to create endless different games, like pooh sticks. It reflects their ethos of natural play. Taryn and Oli have curated a collection of exquisite toys and gifts that have been selected because of how they have seen children respond to them. Their timeless range of quality toys, clothing and party supplies promises hours of creative fun

Scarlett Zoll

Georgina Laura Beauty Therapy



Georgina Laura Beauty Therapy has opened a stylish new salon on West Street. Georgina's treatments include a full range of waxes, eyelash extensions, eyebrow tints and nail care. Massage treatments focus on the holistic, including Swedish or aromatherapy and hot stone. Uniquely, she specialises in Farm Girl Essential Facials using Farm Girl's natural oil collection and treatment techniques for a restorative experience. Booking is available via her website at georginalaurabeauty.

The comfort and joy of the fish and chips tradition

Priyanka Menon

Food trends come and go, but few meals are as enduring and satisfying as a plate of fish and chips. In the modern multicultural landscape that characterises today's menus, it remains a symbol of Britishness. Is any town complete without a chippie? Oundle is fortunate to have one at the heart of its marketplace.

National Federation of Fish Friers made Malin the first member, awarding him a plaque for creating the world's first fish and chip shop.

During the First World War, fish and chip supplies were made a priority by the government, and were kept off the ration lists in both wars. To keep prices down, fish and chips were wrapped in cones of old newspapers for queueing



There is always a queue outside the Blue Marlin, where Nick Macovei keeps the fish and chips tradition going in Oundle.

Fish and chips became popular in London and the South-East of England in the 19th century. The first chippie is said to have been established by an Ashkenazi Jewish immigrant, Joseph Malin, in 1860. One hundred years later, the

customers to take away until the 1980s when that practice was ruled unsafe.

You do not have to live by the seaside for a good serving of fish and chips. There are now 10,500 fish and chip shops in the UK,

which outnumber other fast-food places, such as McDonalds, which has about 1,200 outlets. British consumers eat some 382 million meals from fish and chip shops.

Number 10 Market Place started life as a fish and chip shop in the 1950s when Michael Amps bought it. Neville Ganderton then bought the shop in the 1960s. The Ganderton family had owned a game, fish and poultry shop at 88 West Street from the 1930s. When he took over the fish and chip shop in the Market Place, he called it Fri Fair 88, in homage to the family business down the road.

In the 1980s, the current owners changed the name to the Blue Marlin, and it is now managed by Nick Macovei.

Nick came to Oundle from Romania and started to work in the shop in 2007. He recalled his early days there: "I'd been given full time in front. I didn't know much English, but I learnt. And then...I can't remember when, the owner gave it to me, saying right, you'll work here, you'll pay me rent, and you are responsible for everything. And I said yes! Think we've done nearly ten years now."

Open during lunch and dinner hours, the shop is rarely without a queue of customers waiting for their takeaway orders, which is a good indication of how highly it is rated. The shop is frequented by many regulars, some coming in twice a week, often on Fridays.

The Blue Marlin's classic fish and chips is made with a traditional batter of simply flour and water,

and is fried in one hundred percent vegetable oil. "Some chip shops do beef dripping. I've heard they're very tasty, I've never tried them, but apparently they get you really fat," Nick said.

According to Nick, their fish and chips are best enjoyed "within ten minutes for perfection". Salt and vinegar are the traditional toppings for nearly every customer, even the Americans. "They say, let's see, I'll try it."

The shop receives a regular delivery of both fresh-frozen and fresh fish every week, though they have experienced supply issues in recent times. "I found after the pandemic, it was really hard to buy nice haddock again. And I've been told by the suppliers that the bigger suppliers are just trying to sell what they've got in stock or what they've already bought. We've got to buy what they give us basically," he said.

He gets through 750kg of potatoes a week for chips. Once the oil has been used, it's recycled by the supplier to reduce waste.

Though many local pubs have fish and chips on their menus, the benefit of visiting a chippie is that you can enjoy it in the comfort of your home, in front of the TV. Fish and chips are Britain's most popular takeaway with almost 500,000 Internet searches for takeaway suggestions per month.

"We try and keep it traditional. We don't serve pizzas, kebabs and burgers," Nick said. "I'm keeping it traditional because that's how it's been forever."

Fiona Swan Curtains and Blinds



Fiona Swan has relocated her successful showroom to handsome new premises on West Street. She offers a full range of services for soft furnishings, from measuring to fitting handmade curtains and blinds, as well as accessories. The showroom has an extensive library of sample books covering a wide variety of fabric collections. All are welcome to her opening on June 9 and 10.

Fletton Field to host Summer Fete

Since 2016, Oundle residents have vigorously petitioned for Fletton Field to remain an open green space despite the county council's efforts to sell the land for development. Campaigners testified at hearings, documented witness statements about historic use, compiled stacks of ringbinders full of statistics and case studies. They fundraised, organised events, hired consultants and legal representation. The effort was determined, hard fought and ultimately successful.

North Northants Council are now undertaking legal framework for the transfer of Fletton Field, meaning that before long, Oundle Town Council will own the field. The Fletton Field Association have been appointed as a management team. A few remaining legalities, such as access ways, need to be confirmed before the OTC are signed off as owners.

The Fletton Field Association is now planning for potential "Phase



1" developments, which include landscaping meadows and an orchard, and supplying benches and storage facilities.

The first Oundle community event to be held on the field this year will be the Summer Fete on Saturday 8 July, 2.00pm-6:00pm. Pimms and beer tents, cake and teas will provide the backdrop for live music, games, a dog show and family fun. Admission is free.

First Responders are on the frontline

The impressive work that the Oundle Community First Responders do for our community deserves more of our attention.

active volunteers in Oundle spent 3,806 hours on call and were available for any emergency from falls to burns and overdoses. Among the



First Responder Paul Brackley with the emergency response vehicle that is leased for three years.

They support not only Oundle, but around twenty other neighboring villages as well. Emergencies happen unexpectedly, and no one knows when they will need the help of a First Responder who will always be available.

Over the last year, the eight

dozens of life-threatening emergencies were 35 calls about chest pains, 16 cases of cardiac arrest and 10 incidents of hemorrhage.

When Nicola Guise phoned 999 after her father faced a medical emergency earlier this year, she said First Responders Paul

Brackley and Charlotte Barford arrived within a couple of minutes, along with the paramedic on his way to the Oundle School sports pitches. "They administered three defibrillator shocks which brought my dad back after his heart attack."

She said there were no words to describe how grateful she was. "Without their prompt, calm efficiency and expertise, my dad would not still be here."

First Responders are volunteers who meet monthly to practice Basic First Aid and medical life support skills. They are trained by the East Midlands Ambulance Service and are required to pass an annual re-qualification. Various training opportunities are provided, such as dementia or paediatric sessions. A recent development in their training has been how to supply Entonox, a short-term pain relief medication, which has expanded the wide range of care the First Responders are able to provide.

In addition to responding to calls, they maintain checks on the AEDs and defibrillators in the local area, and support Heartstart CPR training sessions. At larger social events such as the Party at the Wharf, Barnwell Fireworks, and the Oundle Christmas Market, the First Responders offer their services to be on hand in case of emergency.

Their work is truly a community mission. One First Responder said: "We all thoroughly enjoy what we do and love being able to support our local community." Some have found the work so rewarding, they have changed careers to join the medical field after volunteering with the charity. Four members of the Oundle First Responder group have gone on to work for the ambulance service, one becoming a paramedic, and the other three becoming technicians.

Because the Oundle Community First Responders is a charity-based organization, they are entirely supported by donations to purchase general medical kits and equipment. They were recently able to buy a Raizer emergency lifting chair, which can help to lift a fallen person from the floor.

Currently, their target is to raise funds for the car that they lease on a three-year basis, which amounts to around £6,530 a year; £544 a month. They are grateful for every small donation. Larger donations such as business sponsorship can be recognised with branding on their car.

They are also always keen to welcome new volunteers. Anyone who would like to join in on their life-saving work or simply donate, can contact oundlecfr@gmail.com, where messages will be happily received by a member of the group.



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The rough road for women clergy in the Church of England

Catriona Eke

It has been 30 years since the first women were ordained as priests into the Church of England, yet women still have a long way to go before they achieve total acceptance within the governing structure of the Church.

me. What was the phrase? That I was deluded and that the Church of England, by agreeing to ordain women to the priesthood, was colluding with my deception, with my delusion. I thought, it's going to be an interesting two years."

This treatment was common



Reverend Maria Coulter was among the early cohort of women trained as priests.

The General Synod (the parliament of the Church of England) made the decision to allow women to be ordained as priests in 1992. After 17 years of debate, the motion was passed by a margin of only two votes among lay people. That is not to say that all churches accepted this decision: 430 priests resigned from the Church of England over the issue and claimed compensation. The conservative evangelical group Reform was established to oppose the ordination of women.

Reverend Maria Coulter, Assistant Chaplain at Oundle School, was among the first women who began their training knowing that they would be allowed to become a priest by the end of it. She recalls the harsh treatment she received in the early days of her training at St Stephen's House, Oxford.

"They did say hideous things to

from both the congregation and fellow clergy members: "You were constantly at odds with people theologically, and they often weren't very hospitable. They did go out of their way to make their views known. It was difficult because the vice principal and the principal of my college did not believe in the ordination of women."

Reverend Coulter was not deterred, and instead stayed motivated during her training years at St Stephen's. She recalled the strict routine she maintained. "You could go to meditation at 6:50, morning prayers at 7:20, Holy Communion at 8:00 every day, and then you'd go into lectures at 9:30."

Coulter was inspired by the regime of silence in the college. "It was a very quiet place. And I'm not a very quiet person. I hadn't come across this kind of religious way of

living before. I'd come back from the student bar at 11:00pm chatting to somebody. I'll never forget this person shouting at me in my first week, 'Remember the greater silence!' It was counterintuitive to be a student and to maintain this quite rigid way of life, but it taught me a lot."

To this day, Reverend Coulter tries to maintain a ritual of silence in her daily routine. "I'm the mother of three sons. I mean, with three sons, you can't maintain any kind of silence during the day. But I have maintained from my training the need for morning prayer. I make sure I get up before my family, so I can have silence. My children know not to go anywhere near my study until I'm finished. That's a good process, the need for quiet reflection."

Reverend Coulter became a vicar at 29 years old, the youngest in her diocese. However, when she became a priest, she faced a backlash, with some people even leaving her parish on the day she was able to conduct Holy Communion. "It's hard for people to understand today. You always went to these social occasions on your guard, constantly defending your right to wear a dog collar or your right to say you were a priest. It was really tough, and I think it's good to remember how tough it was. I don't have to do that now. I'm always quite shocked if anyone ever questions my priesthood now."

There are still people in the Church today, however, who strongly oppose the ordination of women. St Fimbarrus Church in Fowey, Cornwall has been without a vicar for four years. However, despite no men showing interest in the role, the Fowey parochial church council (PCC) will consider only men for the position. This decision has caused both confusion from people who wonder how the parish church can afford to be picky with so few applicants for the role, and outrage, since the majority of residents in the diocese support female priests and are frustrated that a small minority of parishioners are barring women

from this opportunity. Some people defend the decision, arguing that Fowey has always had a male parish priest and they merely intend to continue this tradition while still allowing women to become women clergy members. The future of the parish church is uncertain, as the absence of a vicar has resulted in low attendance at the church.

There are many theological arguments which people use to oppose women's ordination, especially the 'headship' argument. According to Ephesians 5:21-22, women should not hold authority over men since the husband should be the head of the wife, although supporters of women's ordination point out that Ephesians should be read in its cultural context. Supporters also argue that while a priest represents Jesus at the altar, Jesus is representative of all of humanity, male and female, so a priest can be either.

In September, Reverend Coulter will be Oundle School's first female School Chaplain in 467 years. She misses the diversity of life in a parish church where a priest sees parishioners from diverse backgrounds and guides them through life changing events from baptisms and marriages to funerals. But her appointment as Chaplain is a unique opportunity to be able to regularly address a congregation of young people through their formative years when they question and find their faith. Morning services in Chapel instil routines and traditions that remain part of life's fabric. "You don't normally see young people in churches," she said. "It really is good to be with people who generally don't go to church from 11 to 18 years old."

She is especially grateful that the position of women in the Church has come such a long way since 1992. Having a female priest at the front of the Chapel means that young people will grow up without bias or prejudice about their role in the Church. Reverend Coulter does not take this for granted, though. "I'd say to women today, keep going, but always be prepared."

New census data available for UK regions

Clare Wright

The Office for National Statistics published the results of its 2021 census data on migration in November, which revealed that one in six residents of England and Wales were born outside the UK. According to the census data, a general increase in immigration can be identified in comparison to that of 2011.

When comparing the 2021 census data for the Corby constituency to the national statistics, the number of foreign-born nationals has increased both nationally and within the constituency. The UK population of foreign-born nationals increased over ten years from 7.5 million (13.4%) to 10 million (16.8%) in 2021. The constituency with the highest percentage of foreign-born nationals was Brent, with a significant percentage of 56.1%, whereas the lowest, Staffordshire Moorlands, had only 2.6%. The top

three most common non-UK countries of birth in 2021 remained the same as in 2011: India, Poland, and Pakistan.

The Corby constituency has approximately 17% of its population comprised of foreign-born nationals, with 11% coming from the European Union, and the remaining 6% from the rest of the world. Within Corby, while there was no change with regards to immigration from the EU over the last ten years, there was an increase of 7% from the rest of the world.

Within the Corby constituency, the neighbourhoods of Oundle, Warmington, and Thrapston were found to have the second highest proportion of foreign-born nationals born outside the EU, with 8% of the population born in the rest of the world, second only to Snatchill in Corby (11%). Among the foreign born, the Oundle, Warmington, and Thrapston neighborhood has only 4% proportion of its population from the EU, compared to Corby Kingswood, where the EU-born population is 21%.

Immigrants find a home in Oundle

Jennifer Yang

Sometimes described as a “quintessentially English town”, Oundle may not seem very diverse, yet it has attracted a number of immigrants from across the globe who live and work here. Four percent of the population in the neighbourhood of Oundle, Warmington and Thrapston were born in the European Union, while eight percent of the population were born in “rest of world”.

I contacted Oundle residents who have emigrated from other parts of the world to speak about their experiences.

The pursuit of higher education and work opportunities were the main attractions about a move to England. Most transitioned quickly to British life from their native countries. Many said how much they appreciate the English countryside, and commented on how they have observed a respect among the British towards different cultures. While they all feel settled in the UK, they also hold close memories and relationships from their homeland.

Their feelings were mirrored in reflections by the late Professor Peter Pulzer who fled the Nazis from his home in Austria in 1938 when he was nine years old. He wrote about his dual nationality: “I know where my roots are, but I also know where my home is. I do not want to change either of them.”

This is what they told me about their new lives in the neighbourhoods of Oundle.

South Africa

I came to Oundle in 2019 from Johannesburg. South Africa has a lot of cultural similarities with Britain because of its history and because of the Commonwealth. But there are also distinct differences, so there was some adjusting to do. I speak Afrikaans, which is one of eleven official languages in South Africa. Then there’s the food. Some Afrikaans food dishes include bobotie, koeksisters and melktert. We also call a barbeque a “braai”, and we love to braai in almost any weather...even snow. I haven’t felt unwelcome here. We have been blessed with a community in Oundle that provides a lot of support and understanding and that wants to know more about where you come from and your culture, which I think is wonderful. We joined a church which made us feel very much part of the community. I definitely miss my family and friends, the sunshine, especially in the winter months, the landscape, as well as some of the food! We sacrificed a lot to emigrate to the UK. I don’t think we will return to South Africa, but one doesn’t know what the future holds.

China

I was born in China and moved to England for my master’s degree at Oxford. Despite passing my language proficiency exam, actually using English for daily conversations and academic purposes was a challenge at first. Socialising was also difficult initially, as I was not familiar with British culture, and couldn’t participate in pub quizzes or board games. Simple tasks that you knew you could navigate so easily in your own culture suddenly became so different, and I felt like a small child again. There were definitely “sink or swim” situations at times. I was also quite shocked by the open discussion of politics in the UK, as such conversations are rare in China. Teaching proved to be difficult at first, as students would ask deliberately provocative questions about my culture. I have also recently been the target of comments about Covid’s origins, but I have eventually been able to respond effectively. Nonetheless, my experiences have been largely positive, especially the healthy work-life balance. I still miss my family in China. However, I have established a stronger friendship group here over the years. From time to time I crave Chinese food, but I think my standards have lowered over time and an anglicised Chinese takeaway will do.

Australia

Following gap year travels from my home in Sydney, Australia, I got a job in the UK and stayed. The shared Commonwealth understanding at the company I worked at in London made the transition easy. Sometimes, however, I get tired of stereotypes that Aussies are uncultured, have BBQs all the time and always want to talk about sport – my sports knowledge is actually not great! I miss the sunshine, the coast, and outdoor life in Australia, but I do enjoy the distinct seasons here in the UK. I also appreciate the proximity to Europe. I return to Australia for holidays. It is important to revisit your roots as much as possible.

Ireland

I was born in Dublin and moved to the UK because of my former husband’s job with the American military. After living in the States, moving to the UK, and Oundle in particular, was a welcome change. I love the lovely footpaths to ramble on, pubs to socialise in without sport and piped music bellowing competitively, and high-quality farm-to-fork meat available locally. I appreciate the British focus on culture, the quality of the newspapers, and the sense of fairness that pervades life here. There’s nothing like the Irish craic, though!

France

Before coming to England, I was a teacher in a French boarding school, and used to organise school exchanges to Oundle. After spending a year teaching French, I was offered a permanent job. Initially, it was hard, as I had to leave my family and friends behind. British mannerisms were also very different from French ones. French people are much more direct, whilst British people tend to address each other in a more polite way. I have really enjoyed living in England, as a lot of English people can speak French and appreciate what my country offers, despite the occasional stereotype that French people can be rude. I love the English countryside, the opportunities, and excellent quality of education. I miss my family’s informal gatherings, the boulangeries with fresh baguettes, and French bookshops. I hope to return to France for retirement.

Spain

I was born in Spain and came to England through the Erasmus programme for my year abroad. I adapted to life in the UK quickly. There are small differences, though, in the pace of the day. The British have lunch at the time when the Spanish have a “second breakfast/morning coffee”, and have supper at the time when the Spanish tend to have afternoon coffee. I have had a couple of unpleasant experiences with British people. I do not get easily offended, and in the past whenever I have been asked “Where are you from?”, I have always taken it as a compliment in the sense that people were interested about my background. However, in recent years I have noticed that the question is not always asked in the same manner. I miss the sunshine, food, and family in Spain, yet I appreciate all the professional opportunities and friends that I have made in England. I hope to return to Spain, when I retire.

India

We came to England from India in 1990. We were from urban India, so there weren’t many differences. Culturally, we were quite familiar with the British lifestyle. We studied in English medium schools based on a Christian tradition. Both of our schools were established by the British, so coming to England wasn’t a culture shock. What we miss most about our country of birth is the opportunity to spend time with our extended family. Despite some unpleasant experiences in England, we enjoy the greater gender equality. Britain is as much our home as India is; we have both spent more than half of our lives here. In the future, we hope to split our time between the two countries.

United States

I followed my former wife when she was offered a job in the UK twenty-six years ago. To settle into British life, I had to learn a new vocabulary, including words like jumper, pavement, boot, and bonnet; and I had to learn to drive on the left side of the road. After all this time adapting, it’s irritating that I’m still immediately identified as an outsider because of my accent. In the UK, I appreciate the countryside footpaths, bitter, and my wife, who is British. About the US, I miss decent hamburgers, baseball, and old friends, but whether I intend to return to live there, the answer is a decisive no.

Scandinavia

I am from one of the Nordic countries and came to the UK with my English husband. We have lived here now for twenty-some years. I thought I was a city girl, so I was surprised by how much I loved the rural surroundings of Oundle. Language wasn’t an issue; I had already lived and worked outside my native country. But I blithely thought I was just changing one modern, egalitarian EU country for another. In reality, the differences felt vast. There has been a lot of learning and adjusting between then and now. I did feel welcome when I moved here: we already had contacts in the area, and people were curious. Gordon Brown’s “British jobs for British workers” speech was uncomfortable, but it was the EU referendum that changed the atmosphere. It was the first time I was openly challenged by a member of the public. But I appreciate how in the UK, consideration for other people is such a fundamental social skill that many people don’t even realise they live by it. And I like the diversity of life and experience. Ordnance Survey maps, footpaths and the English spring season are special. I do miss speaking my own language, and well-heated houses. My crystal ball isn’t working, so I can’t possibly predict whether we will return.

Poland

I am from Piotrkow Trybunalski, a Polish city, and came to the UK to join my boyfriend, who had been here for three years; we were married in 2011. Life in UK was very different, as Polish political and cultural attitudes at the time were still very much influenced by communism. Since the Brexit vote, the older generation has been a bit less hospitable, but the UK has certainly given me a comfortable lifestyle and warm welcome. It is easy to live here if one is willing to work hard and adapt. I love the pub culture. I don’t miss much about Poland other than my family. I plan to enjoy a peaceful life in the UK, which I see as home now.

What are the key organisations of the NHS that partner to deliver care?

Olivia Pegge

Established in 1948, the NHS provides healthcare services that are free for all at the point of delivery. It sounds simple, but the service is now so big that the structure of the healthcare system in the United Kingdom is a thing of myths and legends; nobody seems to really know what it is and how it all fits together.

The structure and funding in the NHS are a complex network of different organisations which all come under the Department of Health and Social Care, which is the government department that oversees and decides where funding should be channelled to best look after public health. Much of their money is spent on NHS England, but some is also spent on capital investment such as buildings and equipment, and the rest on vaccinations, training and public health.

NHS England receives the most funding, and uses a portion of this money for national level services such as rare cancer treatment. The majority, however, is distributed to Integrated Care Systems (ICS), formerly organised as Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG).

ICSs are largely county-sized covering one to two million patients. They are formed by the merger of local CCGs, general hospitals and GP surgeries. While CCGs were purchasers of the

healthcare funding which they would give to providers (hospitals), ICSs are purchasers and providers combined. The idea is that this reduces the competition between hospitals, encourages co-operation, and reduces the tension between groups within the NHS.

Here in Oundle, our services are part of the NHS England's Midlands Regional Team that includes Integrated Care Northamptonshire, one of 42 integrated care systems across the UK. The system is made up of a combined leadership between the integrated care board (ICB) and the integrated care partnership (ICP). The ICB is the statutory body responsible for local NHS services, functions, performance and budgets. The ICP is a committee of health, local government, community and voluntary sectors whose role is to promote partnership.

The NHS Midlands Regional Team also includes the Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, responsible for the management of Kettering General Hospital. It is a legally independent Public Benefit Corporation with a duty to provide NHS services. Foundation Trusts manage their own budgets free from central government and aim to commission the healthcare services they provide to reflect local needs and priorities. Kettering is an acute trust including inpatient and

outpatient treatment, accident and emergency facilities and specialist services, commissioned by Integrated Care Northamptonshire.

Oundle's ambulance response is provided by the East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust, but East of England also responds when needed. The crews take patients to the most appropriate hospital. For example, cardiac patients usually get sent to Kettering and stroke patients to Peterborough City Hospital. Often it is a matter of what the queues are like at each hospital and the crew goes for the best option. Ambulance Trusts are commissioned by the integrated care system, and also receive capital allocation from the Department of Health with additional funding for response training, and funding boosts direct from NHS England.

Like other local authorities, North Northamptonshire Council is also partnered with Integrated Care Northamptonshire, and is responsible for delivering adult and child social care and public health functions.

Our GP surgery is part of Integrated Care Northamptonshire. But one complication is that GP surgeries are private businesses and are not part of the NHS, though they do receive funding filtered down from the NHS. This means that they need to have a profit margin to continue to operate to a high

standard. For this to work, there are a few structures that GP practices use to organise themselves.

One method is a partnership of GPs, where each GP will invest their own capital into the business to cover location costs and other administrative fees. The practice then receives a certain amount of money per patient from the NHS, as well as bonuses. The benefit of partnerships is that the GPs are self-employed, have more control over the practice management, and have some financial benefits and stability. The downsides are that GPs work more in isolation and have a high level of commitment and liability, as well as the burden of administrative responsibilities.

Some GP surgeries have turned away from that model and are merging their practices with others into a corporation, sometimes referred to as a super-practice. The Oundle Surgery transitioned to this, becoming part of Lakeside Health Centre, which is a large enterprise merging 48 partners across eight GP surgeries. This has the benefit of taking the pressure off the GPs over the back-office management of the business, provides a wider support network of expertise from care providers, and greater consistency of standards across different practice facilities. Crucially it has a stronger voice to influence decision-makers at a commissioning level.

Kettering to receive promised funds for new hospital by 2030

Jennifer Yang

In July 2022, the GP practice in Oundle was transferred from the Cambridge & Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group to the Northamptonshire Integrated Care System. Patients are now referred to Kettering Hospital.

What does this mean for Oundle patient care? Kettering Hospital was originally designed to accommodate 45,000 attendances, but now sees almost 90,000 patients.

In October 2019, the government announced the Health Infrastructure Plan which will build 40 new hospitals by 2030. Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust was one of 40 hospitals selected for funding. However, due to the various delays caused by Covid, the hospital boss and MPs have been concerned that promised funds were not forthcoming.

Tom Pursglove MP wrote to Lord Markham, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Health and Social Care with our questions about the plans and funding. Lord Markham said that the Kettering Hospital Trust



Image: Kettering General Hospital

The hospital released an image of how the new hospital in Kettering could look.

is currently in the fourth cohort in the New Hospital Programme and redevelopment will happen in the latter part of the decade.

He said the timescale for delivery will benefit the hospital in the long term. "The scheme for Kettering will benefit from knowledge and experience gained from previous builds, as well as standardised designs enabling the best use of digital technology,

sustainable buildings, and modern methods of construction."

Assurances about funding for the new hospital cannot come soon enough. The hospital was rated "requires improvement" by Care Quality Commission in 2019. Besides a lack of spaces, the various departments of Kettering Hospital also need improvement: the paediatric emergency department is "too small to accommodate the

number of children attendances", the rooms are not soundproof, and many parts of the estate also do not meet building standards and services were described as "cramped". By 2022, a new inspection had downgraded the Kettering Hospital from "requires improvement" to "inadequate".

Lord Markham said Kettering Hospital can start accessing £38m from an initial funding allocation for the new hospital scheme. He said the government has granted full approval for £4.1 million for high voltage cable work and approved £34.1 million at the Outline Business Case Stage for a new energy centre.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson told the Oundle Chronicle:

"We are working closely with the NHS and Kettering General Hospital Trust on the development of their building plans. Final individual funding allocations for schemes are only confirmed and released once business cases have been reviewed and agreed."

Ukrainian war

Continued from page 1
is from Ukraine.

Eva has had similar experiences within her family. "People find themselves split between different families. I have family that support the war and we find ourselves arguing about it a lot. My own family ties are being disrupted due to a political situation that fundamentally was not my choice and I was thrown into it."

The UK is currently a place where both Ukrainians and Russians have found refuge, but the war has made relationships between teenagers of either nationality uncomfortable at times.

Nastya said: "I haven't spoken to my Russian friends about the war at all. I don't know what their thoughts or feelings about it are. When they talk about Russia I just kind of zone out because I don't want to know anything about Russia."

Vera (15), from Russia, is understanding about how emotions can simmer below the surface. "I'm completely against the war, but I would understand if they have a lot of anger and resentment towards Russians, even if they know that Russian people are not responsible. I wouldn't blame them for being angry at Russian people."

Russians who live in the UK also feel a burden of guilt about a war launched by a homeland where they no longer live. "It almost seems taboo to say I'm Russian at the moment," said Liza (17).

Eva agreed. "Russian guilt is very apparent, in myself as well. I avoid any questions about my nationality or where I'm from because it brings out unpleasant conversations and unpleasant perceptions from people."

Vera said she has had to deal with hostile criticisms from other teenagers. "In a volunteering place that I went to over the summer, a couple of girls told me that I 'had some nerve' being there after they found out we were Russian. They assumed all Russians had something to do with the war."

For some, there are conflicted loyalties about the war. Misha (17), from Russia, admits he felt there is pressure to support Ukraine amongst young people. He does not support the war, but he does worry about the young men not much older than himself who have been forced to join the Russian military. "One of my friends was sent to the frontier against his will. If he didn't go, he would face a sentence of over fifteen years in prison."

If there is any good to come out of this conflict, it is that the war has raised awareness about

international issues among British teenagers. "People actually recognise Ukraine is an independent country," said Nastya. "When I first came to the UK, people would be like, 'Ukraine, where is that?' and I had to explain that it is near Russia."

"I am much more aware of the situation in Ukraine, and its history," said Beatrice (18). "It also really drives home the point that war isn't good for anyone. Hopefully wars like this will put off people in the future from engaging in war."

For those living in Russia, however, access to accurate information is impossible. Since 2003, state controlled Russian media is one of the strongest tools enforcing Putin's regime. Before the Ukraine war, independent journalism was always risky. Since the war, it no longer exists. Diana (18) said: "One of my cousins has been forced to leave Russia because she is a journalist and she was reporting on events of the war for a Western media outlet. She had to pack all her things within four hours, because otherwise the police would seek her out and she would be imprisoned. So, she fled to Tallin then Tbilisi, wherever her company would give her accommodation, really."

Russians currently have no possibility of watching news from any other sources other than the propaganda of state-controlled television. The majority of Russians who do not speak English or do not have access to VPNs exist in a bubble. And the fear about talking about the war or saying anything about it, is real.

"I have only seen true, honest, sincere discussions about the war occur in small circles of people who know each other very well," Liza said. "People are worried over the phone to say anything negative. One of my friends was arrested and jailed for twelve days after he was walking past a small protest of six or seven people. You wouldn't even think that it was a protest. He was handcuffed and taken to jail. How could you not be scared after that. This, of course, was all televised. They made people watch and understand that if you were engaged in this kind of activity, you would be chopped in mid-air."

Vera is glad that people are learning more about the reality of life in Russia. "Even though Putin has been involved in corruption, violence and illegal invasions, no action had properly been taken. People in other countries have become more aware of the way life in Russia and the fact that people are living under a dictatorship."

Beatrice said that learning about the crackdown on information in

Russia has been eye-opening. "It makes you question to what extent governments censor news, not just in Russia, but in general. Now I've questioned freedom of speech."

What many now understand is how deep-rooted Russia's repressive political system really is. It will be the younger generation who will have to pick up the pieces at the end of the war and they wonder about their future.

Many assume that Putin's death will mean little change for the country, as power is bound to be taken over by one of his advisors. "I'm scared of the day Putin dies; most people are. The things that will happen when he dies...I get goosebumps," said Liza. "The propaganda and corruption that will occur is beyond thinking about."

While there is fear in Russia about speaking openly about the government, there is an undercurrent among teenagers to protest the war while they can. As soon as one comes of age, open protest will mean a fifteen-year prison sentence.

"Most teenagers that I have

encountered say they are against the war," Diana said. "I went to a play in the summer in Russia and most actors there were really quite young. They mentioned Putin and Navalny a couple of times during the piece. And at the end, one of the audience members, an old man, stood up and asked them why they were not scared to mention those names. He kept insisting that they would soon be arrested if they continued."

She recalled a quiet moment of dissent that spoke to a hope for peace. "We were on a tour in St Petersburg with another seven families, most with young children or teenagers. At the end of it, the guide made a paper boat and told everyone to write their biggest wish on it. The adults went first, and they wrote something to do with their children's health or other stuff. But when it got to our turn, the teens, every single one wrote 'Nyet Voyne', which means 'No to war', and we released them into the river."

*Names have been changed.

Police Beat

Robert Foskett

A 34-year-old Kettering resident was jailed for six weeks and ordered to pay compensation after stealing £692 worth of alcohol from Oundle Tesco over repeated visits during the month of November 2022.

Between 24 and 25 December 2022, at least six cars were reported as having been keyed on Rock Road and Millfields.

Both wing mirrors were stolen from a Nissan Qashqai on West Street between 11pm on Wednesday, 18 January and 9am on Thursday, 19 January.

A catalytic converter was stolen from a blue Honda in Co-op car park between 7:15pm and 10pm on Friday, 20 January by a suspect in a black hatchback.

A catalytic converter was stolen from a car on Kings Road between 5pm on Friday, 20 January and 6am on Monday, 23 January.

A catalytic converter was stolen from a car on South Road between 8pm on Saturday, 21 January and 7am on Sunday, 22 January.

The front and rear number plates were stolen from a vehicle parked in Gordon Road. The theft occurred between 9pm and midnight on Sunday, 29 January.

Two Oundle car owners had their catalytic converter stolen from their vehicle, on Thursday 2nd February at Ashton Road and New Road between 9:50-10am.

Three unknown males tried the door handle of a car parked

on the driveway of a property in St Christophers Drive between 11pm and 11.20pm on Tuesday, 7 February. The males were described as young and wearing dark clothing.

A car was stolen from the drive of a property in Millfields. The theft occurred between 7pm on Wednesday, 15 March and 12.30pm on Thursday, 16 March.

A 29-year-old Oundle resident was banned from driving for 20 months, fined £392 and ordered to pay costs of £85 and a victim surcharge of £157 after being caught driving over the alcohol limit in Barnwell on 10 March.

In January, 45 crimes were reported in Oundle. Of these 29 percent was recorded as 'other crime', 20 percent violence and sexual offences, 16 percent public order offences, 13 percent criminal damage, 9 percent vehicle crime and 2 percent burglary.

In February, 20 crimes were reported. 30 percent was anti-social behaviour, 20 percent 'other crime', 15 percent 'other theft', 15 percent shoplifting, 5 percent drugs offences, 5 percent public order offences, 5 percent vehicle crime and 5 percent violence and sexual offences.

In March, there were 33 crimes reported. 27 percent was anti-social behaviour, 27 percent 'other crime', 27 percent violence and sexual offences, 9 percent criminal damage and arson, 6 percent drugs and 3 percent 'other theft'.

Cicely is out on the golf green at 100 years of age

Clare Wright

Proving that sport is not just for the youth, Oundle resident Cicely Robinson reached her 100th birthday last November, having been a keen golfer for almost 50 years. She played until she was 94 and remains the oldest member of the Oundle Golf Club. We joined

the pro at St Ives where he was working, and it was for twelve lessons. So, we went and tried it at the St Ives course."

Evidently, she loved it, and has since travelled around the world, golfing at courses from Nottingham to Austria and Spain. Cicely recommends the game for its sociability.



Cicely celebrated her 100th birthday with a visit to the golf course.

her at her home where she still lives independently.

Cicely was 49 years old when she and her husband first learned to play golf after their three children had left home.

"My husband said, 'How about golf?' So, I said, 'Oh I don't know. I don't think I could play golf.'" One day he came home when he said, "Look I had this pushed through the letterbox at work." It was from

"Go and enjoy it. It's very friendly. You make quite a lot of friends, because if you're like me, you go to different golf courses."

At the age of 95, long after most would have bagged up their clubs, she was forced to retire from her long run of golfing due to an injured hip. However, Cicely always pledged she would return to the golf course at the age of 100 "to hit a ball off a tee". In fact, she

kept her word, returning for one more hit on Ladies Day, supported by other members of the golf club.

Cicely grew up in the country, spending much time with her grandparents in a small village near Stratford-upon-Avon, where they farmed. "They made butter which they took into Stratford market every week. They had a large house and a sweet shop on the side."

She recalled a day out, attending the reopening of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1932, which had burned down in 1926. "My granddad took me to the opening and lifted me up and put me on his shoulders and said to me 'Look at that man going in now, that's the Prince of Wales.'"

She left school at 17 when the war started, and would have gone into hairdressing, except her parents would not allow it. She took up clerical work instead, to follow her parents' wishes. Entering the work world as a young woman after living in a small village where she had only known the local village people was a shock. "When I started work on the railway, I was the only girl, and there were 42 men still there. And it was very strange because they really teased me, pulled my leg, and things like that."

Cicely has lived long enough to have had two men in her life serve in both World Wars. Her father served in WWI, and in WWII, her husband was taken prisoner of war and forced to join The March. She has now also experienced three coronations.

She and her husband married in 1947, the same year as the late Queen and Prince Philip. She showed us the invitations that she received from Buckingham Palace to commemorate their shared significant wedding anniversaries, as well as the card King Charles and Queen Camilla sent on her hundredth birthday, when she enjoyed a celebration with her family, including nine grandchildren and eighteen great-grandchildren.



The Robinsons received congratulations from the Queen on their Platinum wedding anniversary.

It is not often that one has the chance to meet a centenarian in such good health. Cicely said she never imagined she would live this long. Her explanation for her longevity and good health was a simple old-fashioned boost.

"Castor oil," she said. "I get a teaspoon, pour a few drops, and take it like that early morning when I get up for breakfast."

An anniversary year for Oundle Horticultural Show

Iona Morgan

While the RHS Chelsea Flower Show might be the pinnacle of competitive exhibitions, there's just as much excitement at what keen amateur gardeners bring to display at local flower shows across the UK. Oundle is lucky enough to have its own horticultural society, which hosts a big show with a range of classes and events.

The tradition of exhibiting gardening specimens in Oundle has a history that has been documented to the nineteenth century. There have been many events throughout the years, for example the Oundle Floral and Horticultural Exhibition (1868), the Oundle Society for the Exhibition of Flowers, Fruit, Vegetables and Poultry (1875), and the Oundle and District Fruit, Vegetable and Flower Society (1898).

The Oundle and District Sweet

Pea Society held its first show in 1922. Research at newspaper archives by local historian David Parker documented its early activities. The society affiliated



with the National Sweet Pea Society and integrated other events such as a demonstration by the Oundle Beekeepers Association, a performance by a military band and even a demonstration of the

production of milk with local cows. Their venue for the shows throughout the 1920s and 1930s was the Rectory off North Street, owned by the Smith brewery family. The Oundle Sweet Pea Show was known to be popular among the local aristocracy. Lady Lilford regularly exhibited at the show and presented a silver cup in 1934 to encourage amateurs to exhibit sweet peas. Judges were often head gardeners from large country houses.

No shows were held during World War Two, and then the society merged with the longer running Oundle Horticultural Society, which had been founded in 1904, to create the society that is known today.

The 100th show of the society will take place over two days on July 15 and 16 at the Oundle Sports Centre on Milton Road. There are

over 150 classes, including exhibits of flowers, vegetables, fruit, cookery, handicrafts and children's competitions. There are 23 cups and awards to be won, including the RHS Banksian Medal, awarded to the competitor who wins the largest total amount of prize money in all the horticultural classes.

In addition to the exhibitions at the show, there will be refreshments, musical entertainment, a raffle and a plant stall. On Sunday afternoon, there will be an informal gardening question and answer session hosted by Matthew Biggs, a gardener, author and broadcaster, who currently judges at the Chelsea Flower show and is a panelist on the Gardeners' Question Time.

With a huge variety of exhibits, as well as a prestigious guest, this year's event is a fitting commemoration of the Society's long, rich history.

The closing date for show entries is July 12.

Rutland Sinfonia is a beacon of excellence

Clare Wright
Audiences at St Peters Church enjoyed a remarkable performance by the Rutland Sinfonia Orchestra in May. Under the theme of 'Postcards from America', the programme included Bernstein's Overture Candide, Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue, and Piazzolla's Libertango.



The orchestra describes itself as an "amateur orchestra", but their dedication and commitment to high quality, enjoyable, and inspiring performances of orchestral music is in no way amateur. The orchestra was founded in 1975 by the late Barry Collett, recipient of the Elgar Society

Medal. Their season now features four concerts of classical and light classical music, two in the Oakham School Chapel and two in St Peter's Church, Oundle. They have also performed at Northampton Cathedral, the Malvern Festival and the Elgar Birthday Concert in Worcester Cathedral. The reviews are unanimous in their praise and performances are often awarded with standing ovations. One concert goer was prompted to write to the Oundle Chronicle about a previous season: "Rutland Sinfonia are always a joy to hear; their well-polished performance enhanced by the obvious enthusiasm of both orchestra and conductor, joined for this concert by the fabulous violin playing of Freya Goldmark. Paul Hilliam clearly inspires the orchestra and shows his appreciation of each of the players, for example recognizing the horn soloist after his beautiful solo in the Tchaikovsky symphony." The orchestra is in an enviable position of having all the different groups of instruments filled by regular players, but they are always happy to hear from people interested in joining. Players are encouraged to contact them: rutlandsinfonia@gmail.com.

Open Gardens in Oundle

Organised by Creative Oundle, the Open Gardens Day in May was an inspiration for both experienced and hopeful gardeners. Whether one has a sprawling lawn or a modest courtyard, everyone can plant a garden in pots or borders and create a patch of paradise.



Rupert and Uli's garden is a theatrical experience in horticulture, reflecting their creativity and passion for plants.



In the courtyard of a former tavern, George and Sally create private corners and grow hundreds of potted hostas.



Cobthorne's garden is unmatched in scale and grandeur, with formal shrubbery softened by old orchards.



Richard's townhouse garden is the place for reading the Sunday papers amidst a profusion of roses.

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Summer music events with Creative Oundle



Blue Mitra

On Saturday 15th July, this year's Party on The Wharf will feature headliners Crocodile Mock, playing an Elton John inspired set list, such as dance-along favourites; Our Song, I'm Still Standing, and I Guess That's Why They Call It the Blues.

This party of the year will also be supported by The B List and The Houndogs, who will open the wonderful evening of

entertainment and music with crowd-pleasing covers.

The Wharf is the place to be whether you simply want to unwind with friends, have a picnic, stop by one of the food stands or let the kids partake in some of the additional entertainments. Gates open from 5pm to 10.45pm.

Book tickets in advance of June 19 to get the best prices.

For more details and tickets go to: www.creativeoundle.co.uk.



Throughout the week beginning July 10, there are a variety of free organ concerts being hosted in beautiful locations in and around Oundle. The first one on Monday 10 July at 4.30pm in Titchmarsh, features performer David Pipe. On Tuesday 11 July, catch Joseph Beech at lunchtime at the Oundle School Chapel. Stephen Farr then continues the concerts at Fotheringhay Church on Wednesday 12 July at 8pm, performing Bach's iconic Goldberg Variations. Fotheringhay is also hosting a morning Coffee Concert on Saturday 15 July, featuring Francesca Massey.

No booking is necessary.

Food Festival promotes local producers

Blue Mitra

The annual Oundle Food Festival will be held on Saturday 17 June in the Market Place.

This year's festival includes live music and entertainment throughout the day, alongside stalls with artisan food and drink, independent local producers, handcrafted kitchen and homeware, and much more.

The event, which annually attracts thousands of foodies to Oundle's town centre, honours some of the best regional farmers, producers, and food aficionados.

The festival aims to highlight the incredible range and calibre of the food and producers, both regionally and nationally. It also aims to persuade people to buy local products at shops, farm stands, farmers markets, pubs, and restaurants to boost the neighbourhood economy and cut down on food miles.

Free parking will be available.



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Gilbert and Sullivan Society repertoire reaches across the generations

Maria Karpova

Oundle's own Gilbert and Sullivan Theatre Company is a remarkable community of talented singers and performers who have staged shows twice a year since 1958, never failing to entertain Oundle audiences. Despite calling themselves an "amateur" theatre society, the performances produced every year are nothing short of professional.

Gilbert and Sullivan was a Victorian-era theatrical partnership of the writer W. S. Gilbert and the composer Arthur Sullivan. They created operettas - short and comical operas - and their legacy is still preserved in Gilbert and Sullivan theatres around England, and is also popular in America.

Oundle's G&S was founded by a small number of dedicated and enthusiastic singers, and for some members of the society, G&S is a long-standing family affair. Daisy Jackson, the society's secretary and principal singer, comes from a family of G&S performers. Her grandfather was one of the first members of the society, and she appeared in her first show when she was ten years old.

"I used to find it really nerve-racking but not so much these days. Nearly 20 years down the line it's a little bit easier than it used to be," she said. "My grandfather was the tenor for many years, which is the leading male role. And then my dad was also involved, and my sister is involved now as well. So, it's a real family affair."

Operettas are not high-brow and are a great option for first-time theatregoers. They are especially popular because of their wit, patriotic songs, and willingness to poke fun at British high society.

"I think at the heart of it, we put on a good show and people appreciate it," Daisy said. "Especially in the chorus, everybody looks like they're enjoying themselves. It's just a nice evening to go and watch people having fun."

The experience of performing and rehearsing is just as fulfilling for the members of G&S. David Raftery has been a member of G&S for over twenty years, and also follows in a family tradition that began in South Africa. "When I came to Oundle in 2000, I was amazed to find on my doorstep, a Gilbert and Sullivan society," he said. "My parents met at a G&S amateur theatre production in South Africa. I grew up hearing the records playing on the turntable."

There are fourteen shows in the G&S repertoire and the society schedules them in order. "We will look at what should be coming next

and if there is another society in the area that's doing the same show, we'll probably try and switch the order so that we're not doing the same, but we tend to follow a fairly set order," Daisy said.

Oundle's G&S are not purists about the Victorian originals, which

which was all about the two political parties. There's a lot that happened then, that is very similar to what's happening now. It does draw parallels," Daisy said. For David's performance as a soldier in *Iolanthe*, he wrote an extra verse which was about Covid and Boris

hippie costumes, and rewrote the libretto. Not everyone appreciated the break in tradition, though. "It worked well," Daisy said. "But there were a few people who weren't so keen, and a couple of people were upset. But on the whole, it was received quite well."

During lockdown, like many other theatre societies, Oundle's Gilbert and Sullivan had to adapt to the new conditions, which had their benefits. David said, "It reminded us how therapeutic singing can be and the pleasure we get from it."

Their most recent show, *The Sorcerer*, was performed in February. And as soon as the curtain came down on the last performance of the run, the company started rehearsing for the summer concert, performed in June, which features four-part arrangements of modern songs from the Beatles, ABBA, Simon and Garfunkel, and Credence Clearwater Revival.

The company begins rehearsals six months in advance and meets once a week. It always welcomes new members who would like to perform or work with the crew backstage or the front of house. Daisy encouraged people who are shy about their abilities to join in. "It's quite easy to sing if you've done a bit of singing here and there. It's really easy for people to pick up."

She emphasised how social the experience is. "It has a real sense of community, it's a real friendly group. I've been a member of a few other local groups, and none of them quite have the same charm. We're there for the rehearsal and then we go to the pub afterwards."

The Oundle G&S has a good mix of both young and older players in its company, and David is confident about its enduring appeal. "Almost every university in the country has got a G&S society that's thriving, and so there are enough young people, it seems, to keep it going."

Audiences still tend to attract an older crowd. "I think more teenagers should come to see it," Daisy said. "I think they would enjoy it. It's lively and colourful, and the jokes are relevant to society now."

"We're incredibly lucky with the calibre of our principal players," David said. "The standard has always been high. We've been so blessed, over so many decades with excellent producers and musical directors. People just drawn from the local community. There's a lovely motto, we don't take ourselves at all seriously, but we take our performance very seriously."



Lester Milbank Photography

This year's production was *The Sorcerer*. Daisy Jackson played the principal soprano role of the recently betrothed Aline.

were a response to contemporary politics at the time. The scripts are sometimes modernised with subtle, comic changes to reflect current events. "Last year we did *Iolanthe*,

Johnson.

They set *Gondoliers* in 1950s Little Italy, New York, and one year they completely modernised *Patience*, set it in the 1960s with

Litter pickers go where councils fear to tread

Blue Mitra

Litter doesn't get cleaned up by itself; it can take years for materials to disintegrate, harming species and habitats in the process. Litter can be anything from a sack of rubbish to a crisp packet or cigarette butt.

All litter is unsightly and gives any neighborhood area a neglected and messy appearance. Items that people leave behind, such as half-eaten burgers, chips, or apple cores, might also attract pests like rats.

All varieties of litter are abundant along roadsides, as it seems people cannot be bothered to take home their rubbish and instead discard it from their vehicles onto the road. Dropping litter is illegal. People who drop litter can be fined or face prosecution in court. Officers have the power to issue a fixed penalty charge of up to £150 for a litter offence, as an alternative to prosecution.

Despite the penalty of fines, littering seems to be getting worse. Online comments about roads in Northamptonshire complain about how "bloody disgusting" the A roads have become. "The A605 is just like a dumping ground at the side of the road." Fly tipping of larger items such as mattresses,

tires, construction materials or garden waste can carry a fine of up to £50,000 and six months imprisonment.

The A45 is a road that is continually complained about for having the most issues. The Northamptonshire Council is contracted to clear the litter four times a year, however National Highways only allows the council to close the A45 once a year because of the traffic issues, so this promise is not fulfilled.

Where councils cannot do the job, volunteers have stepped up to the challenge. The Northants Litter Wombles was founded in 2021 after it was made clear from Facebook posts that there was a community of people who shared a disgust about litter. The group's primary goal is to eliminate litter in Northamptonshire. They are named after the characters from the 1973 animated TV show, *The Wombles*, who were creatures that lived underground, collecting and recycling human rubbish.

The Wombles aim to increase public awareness of the litter problem by promoting an anti-litter campaign; collaborating with other organizations to advance the litter agenda, such as Keep Britain Tidy; working with local governments and their contractors;

working with businesses and youth organisations; and supporting individuals and groups that pick up litter in Northamptonshire.

Wombles have collected 59,028 bags of rubbish since February 2021. They estimate they have saved taxpayers £2,951,400. In one gathering in April, they met at Lings Wood and managed to fill 23 bags and "lots of other grot". There is a Facebook community page, in which everyone is free to share what litter they have picked up, and share their concerns about certain areas around Northamptonshire. It raises awareness of the litter issue and encourages others to go out and clean up their local areas.

Another local group is Blooming Oundle, which is a volunteer-led effort with the goal of enhancing the town's public spaces and bringing more people in contact with the natural world by planting flowers and supporting gardening groups.

One of their goals is to reduce roadside waste. They meet once a month, with dates announced on their Facebook page. Volunteers wear gloves and use litter-picking sticks to pick and bag up the litter in pink bags ready for collection by North Northants Council.

One of the organisers of Blooming Oundle, said: "Some areas are worse than others. Barnwell Road

from the bridge up to the A605 traffic lights is a regular venue as people seem to chuck stuff out of their car windows along here. The volunteers even removed a three-piece suite from behind the bus shelter on this road."

Other places with an abundance of litter are the old Riverside pub at the entrance to Oundle, the Pocket Park and road leading to the Rugby Club. Blooming Oundle heard a lot of complaints about the litter disposed of by smokers in the centre of town, too.

"Some of the worst kind of litter can be found in the Market Place, usually dropped out of parked cars or before people go into the shops. This litter is small, smelly and really difficult to pick up - cigarette butts! They might not fill up many bags, but they are horrid."

Without the efforts of these volunteers, there is no doubt that the town and Northants roadsides would be lined with unsightly heaps of rubbish.

North Northants Council has offered to help volunteers by supplying equipment, including litter pickers, sacks and high-visibility vests, and they offer to pick up and dispose of the collected waste at a pre-arranged location. They also can collect and dispose of any needles found and unidentified cans, chemical containers and oil drums.



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Conservation of River Nene

Iona Morgan

The most controversial thing about the River Nene is its pronunciation, which depends on where one lives. In Northamptonshire, the river is known as the "Nen". Over the Cambridgeshire border, it is pronounced "Neen". With Oundle sitting right on the border, the debate on the pronunciation by local residents is not a settled one. But however, you say it, no one debates that the river is a central part of the community and the ongoing work to maintain it is vital.



The River Nene begins in Northamptonshire and stretches over 100 miles to Lincolnshire. It is and always has been a central feature of Oundle life, with benefits which cannot be ignored. There are many opportunities for the community to enjoy the waterways, from water sports and fishing to just enjoying nature at its finest. There are organisations which aim to protect and promote the river and help the community make the most of it, including the Nene Rivers Trust and Nenescape.

The River Restoration Officer at the Nene Rivers Trust, Viktor Tzikas said: "We work with the local communities to look at access to the river, whether that's walking, cycling, canoeing, paddleboarding, and getting people in and around the river and its catchments and making sure they know what's going on and why things are the way they are."

Recent projects have included the Resilient River, which was part of a wider Lottery funded five-year landscape partnership scheme with Nenescape which involved river restoration around the backchannels at Barnwell Country Park, Elton, Fotheringhay and Nassington.

The restoration work aimed to increase refuge and spawning habitats for fish, increase and diversify marginal habitats for aquatic birds and the local fauna, reduce sediment pollution caused

by cattle and erosion, and also helped the Environment Agency meet its statutory obligations under the Eel Regulations.

"Around Barnwell Country Park there was some revetment works done to stabilise the banks and stop erosion," Viktor explained. "Some hinging and pinning of trees was also done, which is basically the hedge laying technique. You are creating fish refuge and habitat for high flows. You can also vary the flows and the speeds of where it's travelling in certain sections to try and either wash out a bit of silt off the gravels or whatever that might be. Also, tree planting creates a bit more shade on the channels around there."

Much of the ongoing work is "multi-beneficial", taking into account not only the ecology of the river and its catchment but also the flood risks that affect the local population. "There's always going to be flood risk management towards properties or farmers' fields that might be flooding a bit more than they should be. We can take that water away and direct it elsewhere," Viktor said.

Nene Rivers Trust is also the lead partner on the Building the Links for Rockingham Forest project, a two-year partnership project to link people to the habitats and wildlife of Rockingham Forest, launched in November 2022 with funds from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

These organisations face many challenges in their mission to conserve the health of the Nene. One of these problems is that climate change often causes the weather to be unpredictable, which makes long term plans difficult. Viktor noted, "You've got ridiculous heat waves which are causing drought and low levels in the river and water scarcity. And then you'll have a sudden downpour with a month's worth of rain, which causes a massive flooding event. It never used to happen with such regularity."

Another challenge for these organisations is the financing of the projects. The funding from these projects often comes from the Environment Agency, the Heritage Lottery or are allocated on a year-to-year basis which creates instability that can throw up difficult hurdles for the organisations to leap.

It is work that cannot be neglected, however. "Everything we're doing is for the benefit of the environment," Viktor said. "Everything we do looks at making the river more resilient for the future."

Countryside code is ignored by summer visitors enjoying local beauty spots

Catriona Eke

David Attenborough's recent nature documentary series Wild Isles reminded people of the beauty of British landscapes and encouraged us to appreciate our own local wild spaces. However, an appreciation for the natural world is not always matched with care for the fragile environment. In public spaces, such as parks or woodlands, picnickers light barbecues and leave poo bags beyond, often tucked into trees.

On private land, walkers enjoy the right-of-way on designated footpaths, but disregard a code that forbids them from leaving behind waste, leaving gates open or letting dogs run free with livestock. Unfortunately, the local situation is no better.

Residents in Wadenhoe were furious last summer after holiday-makers left litter strewn across Wadenhoe Marsh and the riverside. Some residents reported seeing visitors urinating and defecating in fields. The pressure from visitors began when Covid lockdowns saw people escaping urban restrictions and descended on countryside beauty spots. A Wadenhoe resident expressed concerns over the misuse of the countryside in a small village where the infrastructure cannot cope with the many visitors who now arrive in great numbers.

"Without sufficient public facilities readily available," the village resident said, "visitors have taken to relieving themselves in people's gardens or on private property. The amount of rubbish left behind and destruction of the natural environment along the river has just been heart-breaking for everyone. Wadenhoe was a local secret...but somehow we became a destination for visitors as far as Birmingham, Bedford, Nottingham and Milton Keynes, many without any understanding of the Countryside Code."

The village is mostly owned by the Wadenhoe Trust, a conservation charity set up by the Ward Hunt family. Wadenhoe Marsh is appreciated not only for its natural beauty, but also because it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to its range of wildlife.

In 2007, the late Simon Hoggart wrote about the village in The Guardian: "We sat in the sun in what must be one of the most idyllic settings in the country...it was a reminder that there are still some gorgeous, unspoilt places left here." This tribute to Wadenhoe was overdue but may have put it

on the map for urban seekers of rural retreats.

Alarm about excessive numbers of visitors in Wadenhoe came to a head at the end of the Covid lockdown when the Trust, which runs the village hall, decided to introduce an automatic payment system for use of the car park. Funds would make a useful contribution to its maintenance. However, regular visitors found it unwelcoming and there have been reports of people finding it difficult to use the RingGo payment system, which either requires users to call a number and pay over the phone or use an app.

Discussion about anti-social use of Wadenhoe Marsh arose during the Wadenhoe Village Meeting in September 2022 when representatives from Highways and the Police were in attendance. Issues included irresponsible parking, signage, barbecues, litter, and congestion.

From this meeting, a group has emerged called Wadenhoe Voice, which can approach the Council directly about their concerns or attend Parish Council meetings.

The September meeting concluded with no consensus about the introduction of double or single yellow lines. Proposed solutions going forward included the use of polite notices on cars which block driveways or footpaths, the reporting of anti-social behaviour to the police, and signs to discourage barbecues. Additional bins for both litter and dog waste were to be requested from the NNC, as well as more frequent refuse collections during the summer.

Whether these solutions come into effect and make any improvements is yet to be seen, but how to best care for and appreciate the natural world is a national priority. Anti-social and careless behaviour prompts restrictions, but when people are denied access to the countryside, they do not learn how to engage responsibly and care for it. This can be a difficult balance that has been debated nationwide and has led to restrictions on access to idyllic locations, such as Dartmoor, where a tradition of wild camping has recently been challenged by landowners.

For the time being, Wadenhoe Marsh and the River Nene remain accessible for public enjoyment. The question remains whether this summer's visitors will demonstrate the care that the natural world deserves.

Fishing carp on picturesque lakes near Oundle

Scarlett Zoll

Around Oundle there are many waters that offer fishing opportunities, such as the Nene and the surrounding lakes. The closest ones include Biggin Lake, Princess Lake, and the Bluebell Lakes where anglers can always be seen pitched on the banks. They spend hours fishing, using regulated equipment and practise catch and release, ensuring that what they catch can return to its habitat.

Viktor Tzikas is a keen angler and committee member of the Wellingborough & District Nene Angling Club which has the fishing rights on Princess Lake near Barnwell Country Park. He is also the River Restoration officer at the Nene Rivers Trust and brings an awareness of the environmental priorities that need to be balanced with the sporting interests of anglers.

Princess Lake stretches to about four acres with an average depth of about eight feet, along with some deep holes. Viktor said it is a good all-round fishery that holds tench, bream, pike and carp. In the mid-nineties it was a specimen carp lake, and up until the 2000s there was still many specimen carp. Today, few of the original fish remain because "they got ottered".

About ten years ago, Princess Lake started to slowly lose fish. "Then one year the otters were there for the entire winter and just nailed most of the fish," he said. Currently, there is one original fish in the lake, the remaining carp were restocked after the new otter fence was erected in January 2022.

Since 1972, when the pesticide

DDT was banned from use, which had previously poisoned fish stocks, leaving otters with less food, the otter population has increased. Due to the fish population increasing and captive otters being released into the wild, more fish are being predated. Otters do not have any natural predators to cull their population, and they are also a protected species, so they cannot be harmed by humans. Otter predation has become an increasingly contentious issue for fisheries.

It had been difficult in the past for the club to erect an otter fence at Princess Lake because they lease the land from the Barnwell Estate. Investing in a fence without a long-term lease was not something they wanted to do. But now that they have twelve years on their lease, the club received funding from the Angling Trust and the Environment Agency to erect an otter fence.

They did not require a licence from Natural England to erect the fence as the fence did not impact an otter breeding or resting site. "The lake is set far enough away from the river and it's not in the floodplain," Viktor said. "It was just the landowner's permission that was needed."

Victor admits that anyone walking in the area would be surprised to come across a fence ringing a beautiful lake in the countryside. "It's difficult because ideally you wouldn't have them. They're not nice to look at. It's a fence. But they're necessary in places," he said. "You either fence it or you don't have a fishery. Or you throw money down the drain just restocking fish that end up as

otter food."

Fencing does require some maintenance, such as making sure there are no holes for the otters to get through, or making sure that the fence is clear of any branches ensuring that the otters don't use them to climb over any fencing. But the benefits for the angling clubs outweigh these factors. It is a "no-brainer to fence the lake" if it is needed.

One lasting effect arising from the predation of otters is that the fish end up being wary of their surroundings and will react to bird life or other animal movement that is normal and go hide. "They can be pretty spooked for a couple of years after being hunted by otters."

From an ecological point of view, Viktor points to the benefits of protecting a lake from otters. "Wildlife ends up inside. The ecology thrives because they don't have the predation of the otters. Many bird species enter the habitat, as well. Otters do not just eat fish, but also coots, moorhens, grebes, mallards, whatever else. They'll eat frogs at certain times of the year when they're more abundant. Within the fence that all thrives."

Locally, Princess Lake was not among the most heavily predated. Some fishing lakes in the Nene Valley have been severely affected. "There are other lakes within the valley that have been absolutely wiped out. Otters can eat about three kilos a day of fish, and there's so many in certain places."

However, fences are not fool-proof. On a lake near Ringstead there had been no issues with otters for years due to the fencing, until

this winter. "They've dug underneath it and managed to get their way in."

Luckily, the otters were coming in and out of the fencing, so weaker points of the fencing were fixed whilst the otters were outside the fence. "But they will try their hardest to get in. They're only looking for food."

Aside from maintaining the stock and protecting it from predation in order to promote the sport, the angling club also acts as stewards of the natural environment. Viktor said there is a lot of water quality maintenance, from monitoring weed and oxygen levels to clearing out fallen debris from storms.

"All fisheries have a different level of maintenance, depending on whether they're quite well maintained for a commercial fishery, or whether they are left for people to rough it out in a more natural environment."

If you are interested in fishing at Princess Lake, contact the Wellingborough & District Nene Angling Club. Annual membership is £50 and includes many angling sites further afield in Northamptonshire.

Just outside Oundle near the golf club is Biggin Lake, a seven-acre lake that is well stocked with many species including, tench, bream, and carp. To fish at Biggin Lake contact Alans Angling in Corby, Tel: 01832 274010.

Bluebell Lakes is a commercial fishery in Tansor with five mature carp fishing lakes and facilities including a tackle shop and café. Day tickets are £15 and can only be bought at Reception on the day.

Wardens are passionate about trees

Iona Morgan

Over the last year, a number of communities that feel passionately about trees and their value for both the environment and the landscape have come up against developers who propose plans that include cutting vast numbers of trees. On the main road into Wellingborough, residents were outraged to see forty one-hundred-year-old lime trees being removed to make way for an infrastructure project despite a Tree Protection Order. Residents protested and were even arrested, but North Northants Council said the developer was entitled through legislation to remove the trees to facilitate essential utilities works.

For those who are passionate about the benefits of trees in our towns and landscapes, the Tree Warden scheme is an opportunity

to become actively involved. A Tree Warden is a volunteer who oversees the planting, protection and promotion of local trees. Across the UK, projects by Tree Warden groups have included arranging tree planting days, caring for street trees, raising funds for tree planting projects and going to schools to talk about the value of trees.

The national network of Tree Warden Groups is run by the Tree Council, a platform which works with organisations, the government, communities and individuals to create long-lasting, positive change. They carry out scientific research and run seasonal projects to raise awareness. Their Tree Warden scheme has been running for thirty-three years.

Locally, Rockingham Forest Vision has been building a network

of volunteers to join this scheme. In early December last year, they organised an initial meeting. Over twenty people attended and were inspired to become involved with this project, having heard what it would mean for them and their communities.



This project is relatively young and so the exact role of Tree Wardens within the North Northants area is still being determined, making it the perfect time to contribute to the process, suggest new ideas and listen to different perspectives.

One of the biggest benefits of the concept of a tree warden is how accessible the position is to anyone who wants to help. No training or experience in tree management is needed, all that is required is a love of trees, a passion for helping the community and the environment, and some spare time. The Tree Council provides a large amount of information for Tree Wardens such as presentations from tree experts, and information on tree identification and tree health. There is also a wide range of resources created by Tree Wardens about their experiences, problems, and solutions. These resources help this role to become more accessible to people who have no previous experience in a position such as this.

To get involved, anyone can get in touch with the local co-ordinator through the Rockingham Forest Vision website. <https://www.rockinghamforest.org.uk/tree-wardens>

Summer fun activities by the river

Blue Mitra

Oundle is lucky to have the river Nene running past the town and through the valley. We may be land-locked, but there are plenty of activities to enjoy on the water throughout the summer with friends, family or solo. The most popular water activities are canoeing and paddleboarding, and there are several nearby centres that can supply equipment hire and even instruction.

Adventure Nene on Sibson Lake is fed from the river in Stibbington. It has equipment hire for paddleboarding, canoeing and kayaking, and offers open water swimming sessions twice a week. Aside from paddling on the lake, it is also possible to go further afield on five-mile self-guided river trips. They supply wetsuits, buoyancy aids and helmets, and have basic changing facilities and lockable storage for valuables. Booking is essential, with a range of time slots all week for various group sizes and ages over five years old.

Nene Outdoors Water Sports and Activity Centre is on the edge of Gunwade Lake at Ferry Meadows and is run by Nene Park Trust.

Gunwade is a relatively sheltered and shallow lake (4.5m maximum depth) fed by freshwater from the River Nene. There are opportunities to rent pedalos, rowing boats, dingies, paddleboards, canoes and kayaks. There is the choice of



half-hour or one-hour slots, so the perfect amount of time for beginners or more experienced water sporters. For those worried about not knowing what to do, there are always friendly and experienced members of staff on hand giving advice. For those just looking for a scenic day in the park, or a space to sit whilst your family is in action on the lakes, there is the Lakeside Kitchen and Bar and hot drinks and snacks offered in Ferry Meadows Café overlooking Overton Lake.

For swimmers, Nene Outdoors is one of the venues registered with the National Open Water Coaching Association (NOWCA). Membership with NOWCA costs £15 a year and gives access to over 40 open water venues nationwide. Swimmers with a NOWCA safety wristband can use the 400m loop in Gunwade Lake.

The popular Nene Extreme Adventure used to operate at the Oundle Wharf on Station Road but has now moved to the Oundle Marina on Barnwell Road, a new site on the river where they hire out canoes, kayaks and paddleboards.

Following the summer 2020 lockdown, paddleboards were the hottest staycation purchase, and the sport has become a favourite for low-impact workouts out in the wild. For equipment purchases, Canoe2 is an official Jobe Specialist, stocking SUP boards and wetsuits. You can also rent a paddleboard for a complete day and get a great safety briefing and great advice. They also have Katakana boats, a six-seater boat that is a unique experience for a group to have lots of fun.

Independent users should be aware, however, of the requirement to buy a licence to paddle on waterways. If you become a member of

British Canoeing, you can use the River Nene as part of their 'On the Water' Membership at an annual cost of £45. This includes use of a stand-up paddle board, canoe, a kayak or a rowing boat, with civil liability insurance.

Aside from water sports, there are other opportunities to enjoy the River Nene without getting your hair wet. For those who are looking for a weekend adventure, but don't want to travel far, eco glamping at Fotheringhay Castle Farm is a perfect choice from March until September. Set up away from their caravan site in a beautiful paddock on the river, are two luxury canvas bell tents, fully furnished and equipped with an off-grid camp kitchen, including a fire pit. It's a "perfect experience of wild camping with a touch of luxury". It is also in high demand, so it is best to plan ahead.

The River Nene is a lovely, calm river, and is the perfect place for a novice water athlete. There are many companies awaiting your booking, for a fun, action-filled summer. With water sports, camping or just enjoying ice cream in the sun, the River Nene and its surroundings are enough to supply anyone with an effortless, fun time.

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Celebrating the coronation



Over Coronation Weekend, Oundle joined the national celebrations of the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla. The sun shone for the Coronation Big Lunch on Sunday, and neighbours held street parties across the town where people came together around banquet tables laden with picnic fare to mark a historic day.

Tributes to the coronation adorned the town. Union Jack flags appeared in all forms, from bunting to shop window paintings. The most noticeable change was surely the Yarn Bomb display. Overnight the Market Place was transformed into a knitted wonderland to celebrate the occasion. Postboxes, bollards and benches were cloaked in intricate coronation-themed decorations. They paid homage to the King himself, his environmental passions, and the royal day in general.

The coronation not only marks the new King and Queen, but links us to Oundle's history. In 1953, for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Beverley Palmer's (on the right in bottom photo) mother was among those celebrating the coronation in Oundle. Her mother, Barbara Toyne took part in the celebration 70 years ago when as a fourteen-year-old at Oundle Modern School, she was crowned Carnival Queen on Coronation Day. Her scrapbook is filled with photos and memories of the occasion.

A newspaper report of Oundle's Coronation Day in 1953 described a familiar scene. "The town itself was gaily decorated. Flags, streamers and red, white and blue bunting made a brave show of colour on an otherwise grey day. It was obvious that the residents of this town, whose history stretches back to the day of King Edgar, were determined to be proud of their decorations."

Iona Morgan