

Inside ...

**A Post Lockdown Dinner at Don Giovanni
Wallingford Town Council COVID-19 update
Zebras at Beale Wildlife Park!**



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Welcome to your community magazine

Hi Everyone

I would like to start by saying a huge thankyou to Reggie at Wallingford Tyres and Exhausts, for sorting a little tyre problem out that I had. He is such a lovely chap. Thanks Reggie.

If you are a landlord, or you have a one-bedroom property to let, want a guaranteed rent for 5 years then please read the article on page 11.

Team WoW really want to start a recipe page. I love cooking, not good at cakes but not bad at pies and stews. We all have our favourite recipes, new ones, slightly changed ones, ones passed down from our Mums or Grandmas. They may be quick dishes or take a little time to cook but are well worth the effort. These are the type of recipes I am looking for please.



I know you may want to keep them a secret but please send them into us so Team WoW can start a recipe page. If someone makes the recipe, they can send in a picture or a comment on how it went. It will be fun and something for us "would be chefs" to do!!! Thanking you in anticipation.

Now that we can go out a little bit more to cafes and restaurants, still being socially distanced we have started a "Restaurant Review" page.

Lesley and her husband ate at Don Giovanni and Lesley has written about their experience, the food, the ambiance, and the surroundings. It sounds lovely, please have a look. We hope to bring you a monthly review from now on.

So, this is September, next month October, we are moving towards Christmas fast. Sorry to use that word already. We will be looking at what is going to be on offer in Wallingford on the run up to and for Christmas in the next edition of WoW.

So, until next month...have fun but stay safe

Naomi x

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**Deadline date to submit adverts
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Cover Photo: Tony Stead, Cholsey & Wallingford Railway

John Hall, the Cholsey postie, has been dressing up every day of the current Coronavirus pandemic. Here is accompanied by Alison Crotch-Harvey (driver), Tony Stead (Guard) and Tony Peters (workman) at Cholsey Station with the Cholsey and Wallingford Railway. Calendars featuring John's more adventurous outfits will be on sale later this year in support of local charities from various outlets including the Coffee Stop and Wallingford Station.

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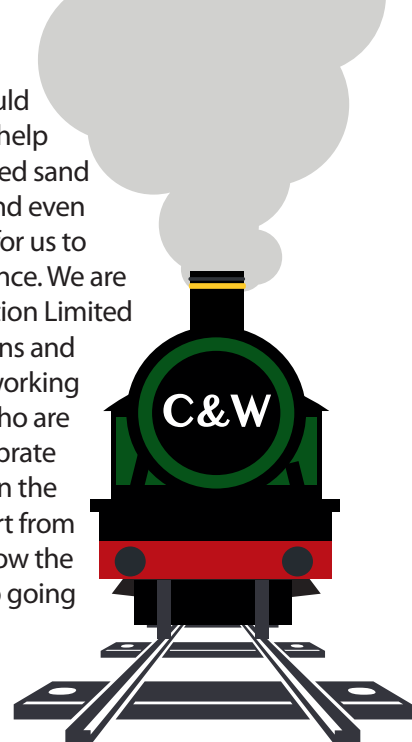
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Cholsey & Wallingford Railway

In these difficult times it was great to see old and new friends visit Wallingford Station when we had an Open Day in early August. Many local residents have been stopping at the **Coffee Stop at the Station (now open Tuesday-Saturday, from 8.30am to 3pm)** and asking about all the construction work that has been going on. The most obvious feature is, of course, the Brunellian Victorian Canopy that was removed from Maidenhead. It is certainly going to transform the station and make the whole site much more of a heritage site for visitors. By the time you read this most of the work, which has been generously funded by the Railway Heritage Trust, will have been completed we hope. Just beyond the canopy we have taken the opportunity that the Covid-19 closure has caused to also extend the platform in readiness for the installation of a signal box and extra points to allow the loco to run round. This wouldn't have been possible without co-operation from Lidl but alas the developers of the land behind Lidl are being far less co-operative despite the local Wallingford and SODC plans identifying a part of this land for use for access and the railway.



The development of the station area and platform extension would not have been possible without help from Grundons who have supplied sand and gravel, moved large items and even blasted and painted metalwork for us to create a better heritage appearance. We are also grateful to Oxford Construction Limited who have helped with excavations and bricklaying. We have also been working with another local firm, Fugro, who are using our railway to test and calibrate equipment that they are using on the 'big railway'. It is help and support from local firms like this that really allow the Cholsey and Wallingford to keep going and, hopefully, improve.



Of course what we all want is to be able to run our trains again; some larger railways have re-opened but with the additional coach cleaning and spacing of passengers it is hard for smaller railways to re-open but we are certainly looking at trying to run our Santa Specials albeit with lower capacity and with Santa perhaps relocating his grotto. If you think you could assist as a volunteer do please drop in at the Station for a chat, the best times are Thursday morning or anytime Saturday although with the construction work going on there is somebody there most days!

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Wallingford facilities impacted by COVID-19.

Wallingford Town Council shares the frustrations of many people, especially those with young families, who are impacted by the ongoing closure of the playground in the Bull Croft, the closure of the splashpark, and the increasing problem of litter on the river banks adjacent to the moorings. Nobody takes these issues lightly, but their ongoing resolution is unfortunately another symptom of the coronavirus pandemic.



The playground was shut in the early stages of lockdown, and as a result of the extended period of inactivity, some mechanical components, based on a visual inspection, appear to be unsafe. The planned inspection in July did not take place as ROSPA, the contractor, could not attend due to their workload and despite our best efforts we have still not been able to secure a new inspection and repair by an appropriately qualified contractor. As we suspect there is a problem we are therefore taking the prudent course of action and keeping the playgrounds closed. For anybody who considers this to be an over-reaction, we would point out that Tower Hamlets council is currently being sued for £2million due to the death of a child on unsafe equipment which had not been inspected. We do not wish see a similarly tragic event in Wallingford. As soon as we can source an inspection and repair, we will take all reasonable grounds to re-open the playgrounds.

The closure of the splash-park is again unfortunate. Whilst several town councillors have lobbied SODC to reopen this facility for the summer, we reluctantly accept the rationale that it is not possible. The transmissibility of COVID-19 in water is still unclear and the likely viable treatment methods would require chemical discharges in to the Thames that require a thorough approvals process to demonstrate negligible environmental impact. Furthermore, the increased staffing required due to social distancing at other leisure venues that are re-opening means that the operator has had to make painful decisions on where to deploy its resources at a time when the profitability of any venue is uncertain. Government advice on the reopening of leisure centres arrived too late to develop the necessary procedures at the splash-park given the short summer season. We have been given assurances that SODC and the operator will start work early next year on plans to reopen the splash-park for 2021, and have been given further assurances that they will engage with the town council and local community at an early stage to seek collaborative solutions to overcome any difficulties that may be forthcoming next year.

An unfortunate consequence of the closure of the splash park has been a reduction in the routine ground maintenance – this is now being resolved by SODC and the operator.

Litter has become an increasing problem along the riverbank. The east and west banks are owned by the Town Council and SODC respectively, although the Town Council manages the moorings on both sides. A condition of all users of the moorings is that they dispose of their own litter in a responsible manner at off-site facilities. Whilst some litter cleaning activities were reduced during lockdown, these have now returned to normal. Town Council staff do undertake litter clearance activities but the volume of rubbish has been growing recently, for reasons which are unclear. SODC have agreed with their contractor, Biffa, that bins along the riverside will now be emptied twice daily. We will continue to work with SODC in keeping the area clear, but the ultimate responsibility lies with individuals to properly dispose of their own rubbish. If you've brought it with you, please take it away.

Despite the easing of lockdown, activities are still impacted on a daily basis. We are working to resolve both a backlog of issues caused by the lockdown, and the ongoing reduction in various resources such as contractors across many services which we take for granted in normal times. We appreciate your understanding and patience at this time.



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Thank you so much all the lovely customers who came to Wallingford Local Producers Market in July and August – and thank you for your comments.

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Wallingford Local Producers Market stalls are set out in the car park of Centre 70, where the Kinicroft meets Goldsmith's Lane, OX10 0DT.



The market is on every Saturday in September from 10am to 12 noon, and we're celebrating our 13th birthday on the 19th. Please come along for a socially-distanced celebration!

September is the month of abundance. Mark Stevenson from The Clays smallholding in Warborough alternates with Matt Livingston from Enso Farm in Little Haseley. The majority of their produce is home grown, with some from neighbouring organic farms, and a few products are sourced from elsewhere.

Keep up to date with Wallingford Local Producers Market news of stallholders and seasonal produce by signing up to our weekly email newsletter. Send an email to newsletter@wlpm.org.uk to be in the know!

We continue to receive enquiries from people keen to have a stall. Last month we welcomed Sophie George from Running Wild Flowers in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. Sophie cultivates a range of colourful flowers including traditional English country garden dahlias, roses, sweet peas, cosmos and zinnias alongside grasses, wild flowers and foraged boughs of berries and rosehips.

In September we're delighted to have Alex, an expert chef who runs his business CLIQ Catering in Benson. Alex makes artisan street food, so look out for delicious ready-to-eat gourmet meat and vegan sausage rolls and hot drinks.

We are considering having a few craft stalls inside Centre 70. This will be subject to Covid-19 risk assessment and Government regulations.

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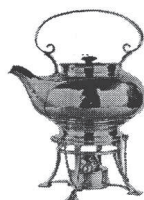
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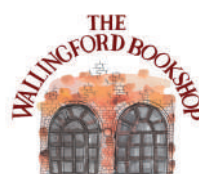


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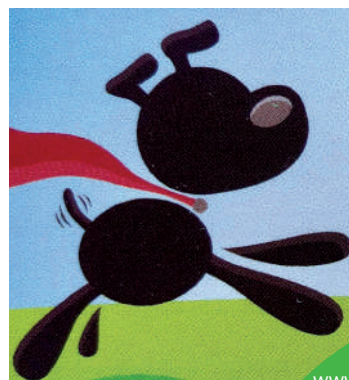
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Organise fuel bills, suppliers before winter - Citizens Advice tip

citizens
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Did you know that Citizens Advice has advisers who can help you sign up with a new fuel or electricity company, or switch to a better tariff?

There's no charge for our time and you won't be steered towards one particular supplier because we're impartial, having no links with any of them. We offer one-on-one sessions (by telephone at present) and we'll take a close look at your individual situation.

Now is the time to sort it out before winter closes in with cold autumn gales.

We can help you understand energy bills and various kinds of tariffs, supporting you if you want to switch and calculating the savings you might make. If you've fallen behind on bill payments, we can advise you on ways to reduce your debt by budgeting or trying a new payment scheme, for example.

We can also tell you about energy efficiency measures around the house, like draught-proofing windows and doors and installing LED light bulbs. Grants may be available to pay for thermal insulation.

We can check your benefit entitlements and help you to claim them if you're eligible. There are several helpful schemes like the Priority Services Register and the Warm Home Discount.

And if you have any complaints against your current supplier, we can help you resolve them.

You can find the relevant information on our website at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/energy or phone our Adviceline on 0300 330 9042.

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Are you a landlord with a social conscience? Would you like a guaranteed rent for the next 5 years?

Help young people thrive.

Local charity, Connection Support, is launching a new service in South Oxfordshire to provide supported accommodation for vulnerable young people. They are seeking one-bedroom flats for rent in Wallingford and Didcot to give these young people who have had a difficult start to life a place of their own to call home. Connection Support wants to help these young people thrive and live independently,

Here are another eight great reasons for landlords to get involved:

- **Low risk** – we will lease your flat on behalf of the young person. We manage the tenancy and pay your rent.
- **Your property maintained** – routine maintenance is covered by us under negotiation within the lease agreement. Any damages will be repaired and at the end of the tenancy, the flat will be returned in the same condition it was initially received.
- **No loss of income** – guaranteed rent for five years. Connection Support is not seeking any discount, they will pay the going monthly rent.
- **Your property is regularly checked by our staff** – Support Workers visit their clients most weekdays and will ensure that the flat is clean, tidy and undamaged.
- **We're looking to build working relationships with our landlords** – if you have flats in these areas to rent but are currently full please say hello. You never know!
- **The young tenants are supported** – to keep to the conditions of the tenancy. Each has a Support Worker who sees them most weekdays.
- **Unfurnished properties** – we arrange to furnish the flats so you don't need to worry.
- **Sense of community** – all young people sign up to behavioural ground rules before moving in. Connection Support engages positively with neighbours and any form of anti-social behaviour is taken extremely seriously.

Interested?

If you are a landlord with one-bedroom flats to rent please contact **Fiona O'Driscoll at Connection Support on ypsa@connectionsupport.org.uk or text her on 07592 376634**. For more information about Connection Support please visit connectionsupport.org.uk

Communication

It seems like only yesterday, that parents, child psychologists and moany old blokes like me, had branded internet chatter channels as the devil's tools. Their dark crimes knew no bounds, from erosion of traditional family life, to the potential destruction of civil society. According to tech haters, the world would be overrun by social zombies, conversing via small screens permanently attached to one of their limbs. ***This bandwagon soon picked up extra passengers, conspiracy theorists declaring that something far more sinister was radiating into our lives.***

They perceived the web as a spy portal, allowing organisations from online retailers to government agencies, unlimited access to our private lives.

Then without so much as a polite warning, we were slammed with a viral pandemic of epic proportion, followed rapidly by a worldwide lockdown. Suddenly, the population of the world (including me) can't live without remote communication.

Choose from Zoom, house party, skype, facetime, Messenger, WhatsApp and many more means of virtual visitation. Gone are the days when Emails and Texts were the height of high-tech correspondence! Lockdown hasn't only encouraged people to explore the full potential of existing forms of digital connection, it has also inspired a fresh crop of advanced communications. You can do just about anything online now, from yoga classes and mindfulness sessions to business coaching and board meetings. Online shopping has seen the likes of Amazon and major supermarkets having to recruit thousands of additional staff to meet the extra demand. There's even a virtual pub on Facebook and people are enjoying anything from family quizzes to fancy dress Zoom discos.

The virtual switchboard is accessible to all, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Only those without internet access are excluded from this infinite virtual loop, and in this modern world there are very few of them. Even my 82-year-old mother is on the hub, she currently skypes me, uses messenger for chats with her granddaughters and facetime's her friends in London. Although internet communication will never replace human contact, it has been a source of great comfort and relief to many during lockdown. ***Frontline workers isolating from their families for safety reasons, were able to virtually kiss their kids' goodnight.***

Grandparents have maintained a presence in the lives of their grandchildren, while following safety guidelines. People listed as highly vulnerable, have managed to keep some sort of contact in a time that might otherwise have seen them left alone, or put at greater risk than necessary.



Home schooling is streamlined by internet access to the work set by teachers, as well as the wide scope of search engines for research. ***Mrs Bun teaches children how to bake tasty treats, while Joe Wicks bounces into your lounge to lead your kids through a fun workout.*** Whatever you do, don't be foolish enough to join in, the NHS have enough work without the added problem of middle-aged back injuries! On a more serious note though, scientists and medical experts have been able to correspond throughout the world while severe travel restrictions were in place. Doctors have also been able to carry out consultations with patients that were otherwise unable to access medical attention.



Increased internet use from home working and extra socialising online, brought the potential of technical issues though. Experts monitoring the extra load on the web, feared a potential meltdown at some point. For me personally, the system coped remarkably well, apart from an occasional dodgy skype connection or a Facetime freeze. ***So in a time when many of us were experiencing severe anxiety and distress, the internet rose as an unlikely champion of the Corona virus pandemic.*** In the great wars of history, from smoke signals and flags, to Morse code and radios, battles were decided due to the communication abilities of an army. Supply chains were maintained, and starvation, disease and defeat were kept at bay. Restrictions may be easing and they are not in the front line, but let's nevertheless pay tribute to the technology and people that kept us together during lockdown.

Nicola Poole is the Managing Director of Hedges Law, currently in its 231st year providing legal services to the Wallingford community & beyond. In the first of her legal columns, she offers some words of wisdom to business owners about how best they can protect their business assets...and their loved ones



"HOPE FOR THE VERY BEST FOR YOUR BUSINESS...BUT DO ENSURE YOU'RE PREPARED FOR THE WORST"

I'm an incurable optimist; the glass -for me- is always half full. As a business owner, it's fair to say that the events of this year have put my usual sunny mindset under quite a strain however. What a year it's been, and there are still more than 4 months to go!

While I'm not the right person to give *financial* advice to any other business owner, and for sure you will all have been working closely with your accountants through lockdown, what I can do is give you a few tips on the key actions you can take -today- to protect your loved ones :

Make a will. Now!

Using an expert who knows their way around company and partnership assets is key. You really haven't worked so hard to build up your business only for all of its value either to be lost or transferred to the wrong people, when you die. And don't forget about your online assets either: without leaving a secure note of your passwords, these could all be lost after your death.

Prepare a Power of Attorney.

If you really care about your employees, you'll want to ensure that if you suddenly became incapacitated, for example Covid-19 struck and you were in a coma for weeks, you had appointed somebody capable to take decisions and run the business in your absence. A Lasting Power of Attorney is a very straightforward document to have in place and could literally make the difference between your business surviving or failing.

Know your business

Do get organised: make sure that you have a written note in an accessible place of exactly what your business structure is, who owns the building you work from, who the shareholders and directors are and who is able to access the business finances: this will make life so much easier if there are any major changes needed and fast action has to be taken. Get close to your numbers: it's your business so no matter how much you're not a numbers person, you need to have a handle on what's coming and going out.

Inheritance Planning

Make plans for the long-term: if you're thinking of passing your assets on to your children before your death, whether business, personal or both, do get proper inheritance planning advice so that you make use of all available tax exemptions. Many of us feel that by discussing these issues, we might be 'tempting fate' but by leaving it too late you certainly aren't doing your loved ones any favours at all!

Digital Assets

The value of a business is increasingly made up of its intellectual property but I am always amazed at how few people protect these in the same way as their physical assets. If you have bitcoin or other digital currency, make sure that access details are held with your lawyer or accountant. Decide who owns your photographs, videos, online music collection, website and intellectual property in the event anything happens to you. Social media sites now allow you to wipe your accounts automatically if you are no longer using them for a set amount of time: maybe you want these to last in perpetuity even if you're not about, but then again, maybe you don't!

Pre-Nuptial Agreement If you're a business owner who's embarking on a new relationship or getting married, do please think about putting a Cohabitation or Pre-Nuptial Agreement in place. Think of it not as a bad omen but a smart insurance policy.



If you'd like to talk to us about protecting your business assets just drop us a line at hello@hedgeslaw.co.uk or call 01491 839839

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Advice for life

Beale Wildlife Park has introduced two Zebras into its animal collection.

Zena and Kelsie are now making Beale Wildlife Park their home as they were introduced to the Park on Wednesday. These Plains Zebras are the start of a small herd and it is hoped that a stallion will be introduced at some point.

"We have been waiting for the Zebra for some time," commented Andrew Nicholls, Head Curator, "The delay was caused by lock down and all of the other restrictions that came along with it and the entire animal team are chuffed to bits that they are finally here. We hope to hear the patter of tiny hooves at some point in the next few years as we are planning a breeding programme."

The zebras are now on show to the public in the former Deer Park.

Beale Wildlife Park is open from 10am daily. Normal admission applies. <https://www.bealepark.org.uk/>

In mid-August, further additions to the animal collection were made when a new group of Prairie Dogs (genus *Cynomys*) arrived. Prairie dogs are named for their habitat and warning call, which sounds similar to a dog's bark.

At the same time a new herd of Wild cavies (*Cavia porcellus*) aka guinea pigs will be on show again.

There is the new Toddler Trail which is a series of cut-out Lemurs which have been placed all over the Park so that younger visitors can see if they can find them. Also throughout the summer months and into the autumn the family discover trail changes from Brilliant Birds to Marvellous Mammals, Terrific Trees and Myths and Legends. There is never a dull moment!

Beale Wildlife Park is open from 10am daily. Normal admission applies.

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Wallingford Museum - summer update

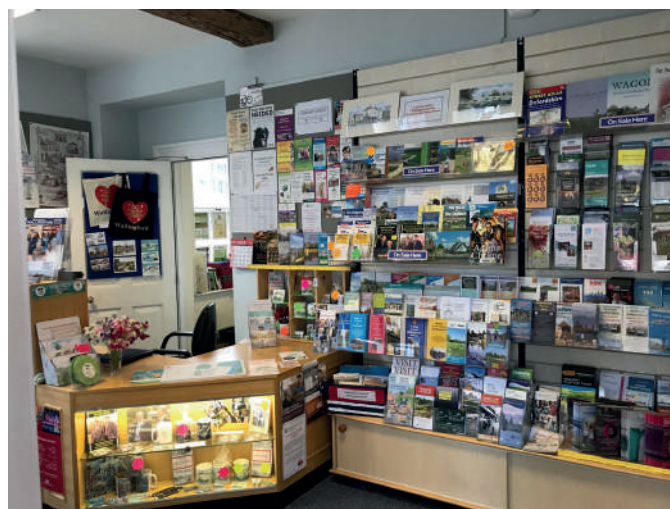
After much thought and assessment of current risks, Wallingford Museum has reluctantly decided that it is not possible to re-open to the public at present. Sadly, we are unable to guarantee compliance with the present regulations for social distancing because of our many confined spaces and the intimate charm of our displays, which are the essence of the museum's attraction. We also have many 'hands-on' experiences which cannot be safely used at present.

We will continue to assess the situation in hope that we may be able to open later in the year, and can assure everyone that we will be back in business just as soon as it is safe to re-open.

In the meantime we hope to be able to offer some guided town and castle walks with pre-booked limited numbers. Please regularly visit our website for all updated information. We also hope to be offering some new virtual glimpses of things 'behind the scenes' at the Museum, to compensate for being unable to open at present.

You can be assured that our volunteers are already busy developing plans and ideas for next year. We hope to have a new model of the castle, updated displays, new exhibitions, and will continue with a programme of interactive events which were so well received last year. Much to look forward to!

Judy Dewey
(Curator - Wallingford Museum)
www.wallingfordmuseum.org.uk



Wallingford Town Information Centre

We are pleased to announce that the Wallingford Town Information Centre has reopened.

While the weather is still lovely there is ample opportunity to get out and enjoy the countryside.

There are many maps and routes we can offer. Do call in and let us inspire you.

We also have up to date bus and train timetables and local information.

A reminder too that we often have lost property handed in, so it is worth trying us if you have recently lost something in and around Wallingford.

The Information Centre is Covid-19 compliant.

Our hours are Monday-Friday 09.30-15.30

(closing 12.30-1300 for lunch)

and Saturday 09.30-13.30

We look forward to you visiting us. Tina and Sue

Wallingford Allotments and Gardens Society (WAGS)

It's been a hot few weeks, quite lovely but never-ending watering in the garden and at the allotment. Lockdown has seen our membership surge slightly and new members have enjoyed stocking-up at our Garden Store whilst keeping on top of gardening and/or tending to their allotments.

WAGS run The Autumn Show at Centre 70 every year on the second Saturday in Sept - but sadly this year we have decided not to go ahead. Thank you to everyone who had volunteered to organise, judge, provide catering, hire a stall and also thank you to the exhibitors who we hope to entice back in 2021 with a super special event for all of the local community to attend and support free of charge.

Our WAGS Garden Store re-opens September 5th and is open every Saturday 11am-12noon from now until the end of November. We close for December and January and also August. The Store is located in the car park at Centre 70 near the Kinecroft - car parking is available. Keep up to date with Store stock levels and notices on the Facebook page www.facebook.com/WallingfordAGS Membership is £4 per year per household.

We are in need of a volunteer to help out in the store, if you have an interest in growing and gardening please make contact with Sandra our Chairman on tel 01491 836527 or direct-message me on the Facebook page. Jayne Page on behalf of the WAGS Committee

We would like to invite you to
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 Word of God' Romans 10:17 (The Bible)*

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Haktive is a Wallingford based initiative whose goal is to empower and inspire families to be more active and play together.

Haktive works with schools across Oxfordshire to both encourage families to play together and also by empowering primary teachers to deliver high quality Physical Education opportunities.

During the covid lockdown we created and freely shared over 120 challenges and activities to help keep children active and engaged at home. These are still available : www.Haktive.com/at-home

Our ongoing series of books and Haktive equipment bags encapsulate the active ideas from 20 years experience of teaching PE, volunteering and playing active games with children.

Every little bit of activity will help their well being and yours. So go ahead, take a look and see if you can do the challenges too?

Haktive.com

Stay safe, stay active,
Emma



The Corn Exchange Theatre

The Corn Exchange Theatre is hoping to reopen the cinema on **Saturday 26th September**, subject to the government guidelines in place at the time. On this night we will be showing a free film as a welcome gesture to our loyal patrons.

Please check our website www.cornexchange.org.uk for further details, booking information and safety guidelines in place.

Want To Learn Bridge? This Could Be The Perfect Time!

Bridge is the best card game, and most widely played, in the World, however, during Covid we cannot play with real cards.

Wallingford Bridge Club plan to run online beginners' lessons, starting on 8 September, which they are kindly offering to residents of nearby villages and towns since, from the comfort of your own home, distance is not a consideration. In fact, a bonus is the saving in travelling costs and time. We are very fortunate to have such a thriving bridge club with over 400 members, in fact the 20th largest in the country. This enables us to offer sessions for all levels of players at many different times during the week.

The lessons will be on **Tuesdays from 10am to 12 noon or from 7 to 9pm. Classes will be limited to 12.** The cost will be £100 per 10 week term. To enrol, please contact joanmbennett@hotmail.co.uk, or telephone Joan on **07548 782 538** or **01491 579795** if you would like to discuss. We will use a mix of Zoom(I am sure that you have all learned how to use this during lockdown), and BridgeBaseOnline(BBO). This allows us to play at 'pretend' or 'virtual' tables, so that you get the feel of really playing. We will teach you how to use this.



When we are allowed to play with real cards, most of us will be thrilled, but some may prefer to continue on line and avoiding the travelling. You may also wish to play online with friends from different parts of the country, or the World. A completely new concept forced on us by Covid.

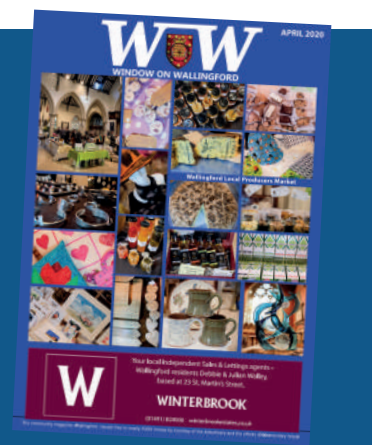
When we can meet face to face, our venue is the Berrick and Roke Village Hall, a lovely facility where we can have competitions as well as regular play.

If you have often thought about playing, give it a go. Come on your own or with a friend, which is always more fun.

Joan Bennett



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WOW RESTAURANT REVIEW

Don Giovanni at The Leatherne Bottel, Goring on Thames

We are so lucky in the Wallingford area to have the River Thames on our doorstep, and what better way to spend a sultry summer evening than sitting on the decking of a riverside restaurant sipping a glass of chilled white wine. My husband and I enjoyed this extremely pleasant experience on one of the warmest evenings of the year when we dined at Don Giovanni Riverside Restaurant in Goring recently. Known for many years as The Leatherne Bottel, it was relaunched by the Santelia family as Don Giovanni in April 2019. Erasmo Santelia now manages the restaurant and has introduced a menu based on classic and revisited Italian dishes from his homeland, particularly from the Amalfi area.

We arrived at the restaurant just as the sun was slowly setting over the far bank and most of the wooden tables outside were full, though well spaced out to follow social distancing rules. Although there are plenty of tables inside the restaurant, that evening everyone was outside enjoying the fine weather and glorious sunset. Diners sit under large umbrellas, and wool wraps are thoughtfully provided on each chair in case the evening turns cool. As the sun goes down, lights and lanterns are lit around the garden creating a very romantic atmosphere.

There are very few places on the river with such a beautiful setting. On the bank opposite, Canada Geese and ducks were quietly settling down (we thought) for the night. More about this later! Several boats went past, including a couple of intrepid paddle boarders, making the most of the light before sunset. During the day diners can enjoy watching the sailing dinghies on the river from Goring Yacht Club, which is just next door. Don Giovanni welcomes the whole family in the traditional Italian way. One perk for visitors to the restaurant is the free boat mooring on the riverbank. Just call Don Giovanni beforehand and you will have a space reserved, where you can moor all day or all night if you are dining in the restaurant.



Erasmo brought us two glasses of Sauvignon Grave Friuli to sip while we looked through the extensive menu and wine list while quiet music played in the background.

The waiters are friendly and knowledgeable about the menu and will happily talk through the various dishes with you. Typically Italian, there are plenty of dishes to choose from, from Antipasti, to Pasta (either starter or main course), Fish and Meat. I chose Prosciutto e Melone (finest Parma ham with melon and marinated artichokes) to start as a light dish as I wanted to try their Fillet Steak as my main course. My husband chose the Carpaccio di Tonno (thin slices of fresh tuna marinated in olive oil, lemon juice, capers and peppercorns served with rocket and cherry tomatoes). Before the starters arrived we were brought a plate of olives and crostini with fresh tomatoes and olive oil. My Prosciutto e Melone was beautifully presented on a large plate, very fresh and plentiful. The Carpaccio di Tonno looked delicious and was also a good sized portion. So much for a light starter! We asked Erasmo's advice on a red wine to go with my Filetto al Gorgonzola but my husband stuck with the white Sauvignon as he had chosen Scialatielli Carbonara to follow. Erasmo's recommendation of a glass of Nero D'avola, a robust red, went very well with my steak which was cooked to perfection in a lovely Gorgonzola sauce, just rich enough to taste the cheese but not too rich to overpower the delicacy of the meat. It was served with a portion of crunchy Zucchini Fritti and a few roasted potato wedges, with rosemary. Scialatielli is a traditional hand made short thick pasta typical of Campania particularly the Amalfi region and Don Giovanni serve it in several ways, either with scampi, lobster and prawns in a provincial sauce, as a carbonara, or with mixed shellfish, white wine, parsley and garlic. My husband declared it was one of the best carbonara he had tasted. I was already in seventh heaven enjoying my steak!

I usually only manage two courses, but I was tempted with a dessert of home made Panna Cotta with a blueberry sauce. I was not disappointed, the creamy Panna Cotta was superb, although my husband 'helped me out' by eating half of it!

As we sat back enjoying the atmosphere we were about to experience an incredible natural phenomena. As the river became quiet after the day's sailors had gone home, all the geese and ducks which had been sitting quietly on the opposite bank, suddenly took to the water amid a crescendo of squawking and quacking. As we watched spellbound more flocks of geese flew in low over the river and landed in the water until there must have been hundreds of birds right in front of the restaurant making a tremendous noise which went on for at least fifteen minutes. It was as if the birds were claiming back the river for themselves. One of the waiters told us this happens every night at about the same time, around 9.30pm, and nobody yet has worked out why! This was an amazing end to a wonderful evening.



Don Giovanni at The Leatherne Bottel
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