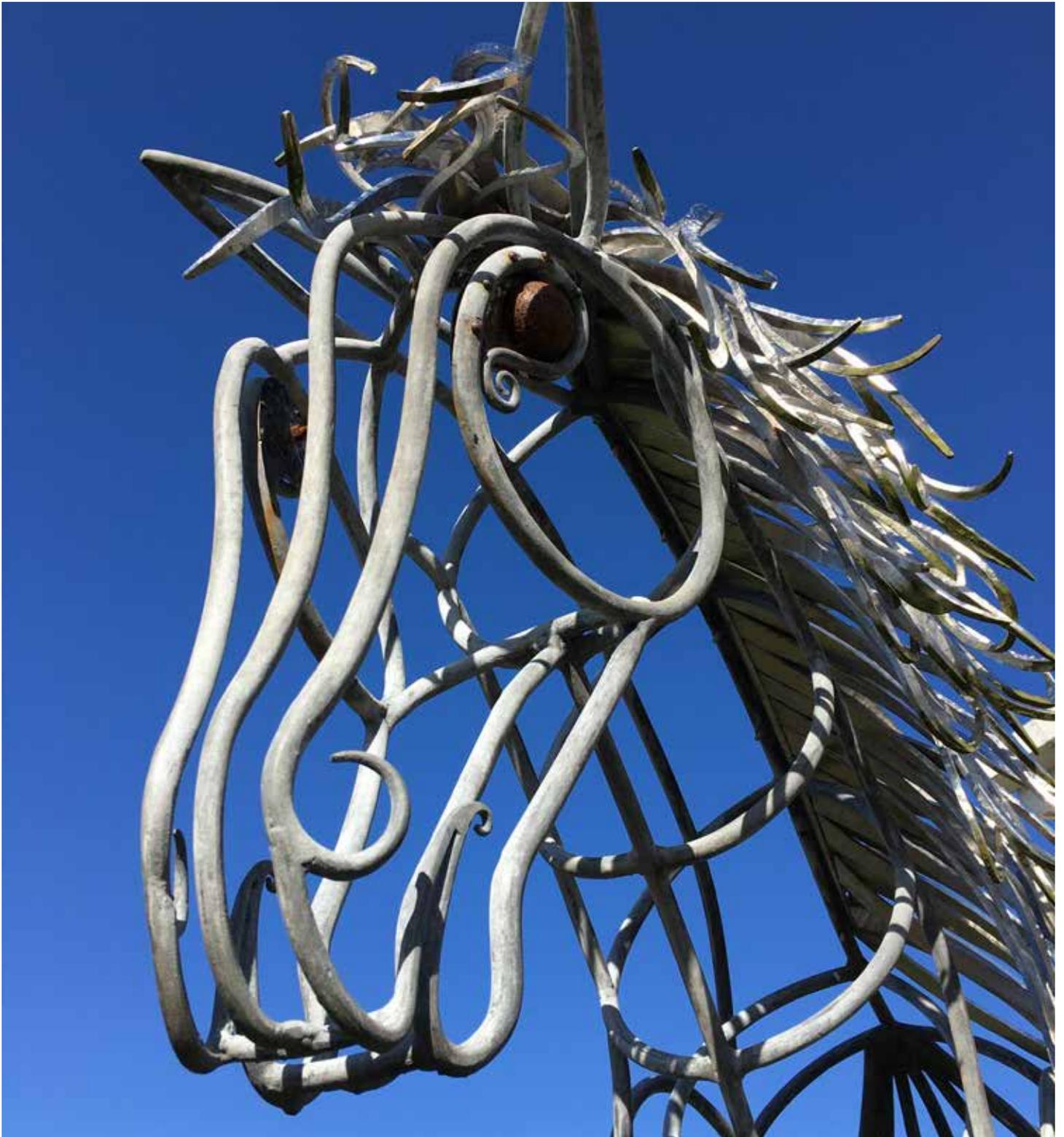


# HEADINGTON

## OCCASIONAL

ISSUE 5, WINTER 2020/21

NEWS • FEATURES • REVIEWS • COMMENT • EVENTS • EVERYTHING UNDER THE SHARK



the  
OCCASIONAL  
comment

Welcome at long last to the winter 2020/21 edition of the Headington Occasional.

Only the combination of some high-level procrastination by the Occasional production team and some low-level sleight of hand by the government prevented this issue being another 'lockdown special'. While we are glad to be back with another edition, we are dismayed that the end of the Covid crisis still feels so far off.

For most of us any novelty value of changing the way we live and work has long since worn thin. For all our friends family and colleagues on the frontline of the Covid response, the need for endurance and resilience has been relentless and overwhelming. It will take a long while for us to be able to express the scale of our gratitude and the depth of our admiration but we will try.

There are a number of obviously lockdown-related tales in this issue – Covid Print Oxford and Jenny's teddy to name only two – but there are lots of other stories that we hope will be of interest as we look to a post-Covid (or at least post-crisis) future. There are plenty of examples of the things that make Headington such a great place to live, work and study, so many of which illustrate the value and strength of a community standing together to offer support, assistance and love in times of need.

Our directory of local groups and organisations illustrates this as well as anything. While there are precious few events to put in the diary, all of these groups and associations will be glad to hear from you if you need their help or would like to take part in their activities. If you would like your group added to the list, do let us know.

We hope that in the next issue of the Occasional we will be able to include a directory of events overflowing with opportunities to bring people together once again.

*Barney Jonny*  
Barney Kemp and Jonny Ives

# Under the shark

**QUEUES AND CLUES: HOLLYWOOD COMES TO HEADINGTON**

A queue of people dressed in more tweed and gabardine than is usual for a September morning this side of the millennium was the first clue. That the queue, which stretched across the car park of the Coach House and out along Quarry Road, began at a catering truck was all the confirmation most film buffs will have required: Hollywood had come to Headington.

Or if not Hollywood, at least a small but well-credentialed part of the film US industry.

The production in question was C S Lewis: The Most Reluctant Convert, an adaptation of Max McLean's stage play of the same name which tells the story of Lewis's journey to Christianity. While McLean's original play was a one-man affair, the film version is employing a full cast and a range of Lewis-related locations, including Magdalen College, The Kilns and Holy Trinity, hence the Coach House catering queue.

Leading the crew for this project is director Norman Stone, whose list of credits includes those of co-writer and director of Shadowlands, the 1986 film that tells the story of Lewis's marriage to Joy Davidson (see Occasionals passim).

Having hosted the catering truck, Headington may perhaps look forward to a small but significant surge of Lewis-related visitors when the film is released. Currently in 'post-production', The Most Reluctant Convert is reportedly scheduled for Easter 2021.

**NEW IN BLUE: THE QUEEN OF THE CIRCULATING LIBRARY**

Headington has had its literary credentials burnished with the arrival of another blue plaque. This one commemorates the achievements of Rhoda Broughton, who lived at River View, a house at the top of Headington Hill, between 1900 and 1920.

The plaque, which was officially unveiled in October by Professor Robert Evans in his capacity as chair of Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board, describes Broughton as a "Popular novelist, independent woman and wit".

Writing in the latter half of the 19th century, Broughton's novels were sensational for their time. Her plots focused on women constrained by the expectations of Victorian society while torn between the demands of love and duty. Her novel Cometh Up as a Flower, published in 1863, was her first success and others followed, earning her the title of the 'queen of the circulating libraries'.

Of her many novels, nine were written while living in Headington; three were published while living down the hill in Holywell Street. Broughton's popularity and the unconventional nature of her works also earned her the attention of Punch magazine, which lampooned her as Miss Rhody Dendron, author of the novel Gone Wrong.

Invitations to one of Broughton's regular tea parties at River View were much sought after but Anthony Trollope expressed his disapproval of her work. Both Charles Dodgson (who moonlighted as Lewis Carroll) and Oscar Wilde declined to meet her but Henry James was an admirer, thus earning his place on the Occasional bookshelves.

**LENDING YOUR EARS – AND YOUR CHEEKS – TO LOCAL HISTORY**

Headington's new listening benches, which have appeared around Headington in recent months, offer a pleasing combination of oral history, a little light exercise and the enduring joys of a nice sit down.

While the Headington News website will no doubt remain the first port of call for anyone needing to know anything about everything under the shark, the new listening posts provide an accessible and fascinating source of stories about Headington's history.

Eight listening posts have been installed, including a Gil-shaped post at the top of New High Street, a solar-powered unit outside Dorset House on the London Road, and two in Bury Knowle park. Others can be found along the London

Road: near the Brookes bus stop, opposite Headington School, and on either side of the road near the crossroads.

Wind the handle (unless it's solar-powered; in which case wait for some sunshine) and listen to the history of the buildings, people and places around you. Subjects awaiting your ears

include: Headington's clay pots, which were exported to northern Europe around in the fourth century AD; the palace that brought King Ethelred to Headington around the turn of the 11th century; the origins of Bury Knowle park and its literary

sculptures; the revival of Morris dancing in the early 20th century; and the quarrying of Headington stone to build the New College bell tower in 1396. The outline of the stories of the shark in the roof and the football team that became Oxford United will be familiar to attentive Occasional readers but the listening posts will offer a great deal more detail on both.

The posts were funded by Oxford Brookes University as part of Section 106 contributions during the development of the JHB Building. It is therefore apt that the story of John Henry Brookes and his role as the first principal of the Oxford College of Technology, which became Headington's favourite university, is among those available on the post near to the top of the hill.

**WHAT TEDDY GOT UP TO DURING LOCKDOWN**

Like many of Headington's artists, Jenny Byrne was all prepared for Art Week 2020 when the Covid crisis intervened. With all the paintings that were ready to show stacked on the floor indoors, Jenny decided to create an exhibition of her own..

"I thought that if I displayed a different painting each day in my drive the paintings would add a bit of interest to people's daily exercise during the lockdown period," Jenny said. "Noticing the teddy theme in people's windows, I introduced my

teddy as part of the daily exhibition, primarily as something of interest for the younger members of the family out for a walk. That was a mistake, as he quickly stole the show and became a firm favourite with young and old alike."

Each day Teddy performed an activity, usually reflecting what Jenny had been doing the previous day. Teddy tackled yoga, Scrabble and gardening in fairly simple settings but as time went on the stories got more elaborate. Teddy developed a character and very quickly took over Jenny's life.

"Organising the Teddy tableau and the artwork kept me busy," Jenny said. "Thankfully, the weather was good, with only a few days missed due to rain and high winds. These were my duvet days."

Having shown 90 paintings and with the weather becoming unsettled, Jenny took Teddy indoors and into retirement. However, his many admirers suggested that his adventures would be a good subject for a book, so Jenny got to work and produced What Teddy Did During Lockdown. Teddy's book also proved enormously popular and proceeds from the sale of the book raised money for the local charity, the Parasol Project.

Meanwhile, Jenny is looking forward to Art Week 2021 and working with her new studio assistant.

**TOP HONOUR FOR DR WEBB, LYE VALLEY'S FINEST**

The UK's honours system is not to everyone's taste but there is one mark of distinction that stands alone in offering unmitigated acclaim: Radio 4's Woman's Hour list of the UK's 30 most influential women.

Included in the 2020 list was Dr Judy Webb, familiar to many Headingtonians for her work at Lye Valley and widely respected across the country as an ace volunteer and communicator.

As the Woman's Hour citation notes, Dr Webb "has tirelessly dedicated her free time to local conservation around Oxfordshire for 25 years... according to Thames Valley Environment Records Centre, she's contributed well over 37,000 records of local species and habitats, and she can identify what pollen a bee makes by looking at its back legs!"

**SIGN OF THE TIMES: BRINGING STONE BACK TO THE QUARRY**

For the best part of 500 years stone left Headington Quarry and was carted down the hill to build the great buildings of the university.

Recently this tradition was reversed when a large piece of dressed stone was brought into the Quarry to serve as a reminder of the history of the area and as an entrance marker at one of the Quarry's most heavily used access points.

The stone replaces a modern sign that stood on the corner of Beaumont Road and Green Road opposite the Six Bells. When this sign had flaked and fractured into illegibility, the Friends of Quarry thought that a replacement in stone might prove more durable and more appropriate.

With the support of local councillors and benefactors, a suitable piece of stone was sourced and carved. This mini monolith, complete with the Quarry's symbol of crossed quarrying tools, now stands as a reminder of the area's heritage.

**BIKES FOR KEY WORKERS: 400 AND COUNTING**

Cycling is an essential part of the culture of our city and never was this more evident than during that first lockdown. With the roads emptied of traffic, people ventured out on their bikes with their families,

many riding together on their local roads for the first time.

And never had a bike been more necessary, particularly for all the key workers who needed to get to work at a time when public transport was not an option. For them, and those of us that were being helped, treated and kept safe by them, the bike was a lifeline.

But not everyone has a bike. When the Windrush Bike Project in Witney made refurbished bikes available free to local key workers at the start of lockdown they saw a surge in enquiries from people in essential roles desperate to find a safe way to get to work.

Having heard of the Windrush initiative, Cyclox, Oxford's cycling campaign group, wondered whether it would be replicable in the city and, working in partnership with Active Oxfordshire, they launched the Bikes for Key Workers scheme.

The idea was to ask for any unused and unwanted bikes to be donated to the project. Any bikes that were repairable were then passed on to a network of volunteer mechanics. A group of appropriately qualified professional mechanics, including many working in our local bike shops, then checked each bike before signing them off as road-worthy.

By the end of the summer the Bikes for Key Workers scheme ▶



Gil

by Norm



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# Trading places: fresh pastures for market stalls

Keith Frayn reports on a challenging but ultimately fruitful twelve months for Headington's popular weekly market.



Headington Market was started by Charles Young, a member of Headington Action. It took place on the first Friday of every month on London Road and eventually became a weekly market. Charlie Manning, who had her own stall of homemade cakes, jams, sauces and eggs, was market manager and liaised with Headington Action.

Special markets appeared on the calendar. At Christmas for instance, there were craft stalls, festive food and children's activities. During the Headington Festival there was street food, entertainment and even a petting zoo.

When Charlie left for Australia earlier this year, Cari and Jason took over my role as Headington Action liaison, appointing Ewan Tilbe as market manager.

When lockdown happened in March this year, there was no way the market could still take place on London Road. As customers, we were not sufficiently disciplined in keeping 2m distance from each other as we queued for Pippin's doughnuts and scrambled for Jamie's organic vegetables. There

was always the danger that a small child might get jostled off the pavement into the path of a passing car or van.

However, by July the ideal venue had been found.

Quarry Hollow Park is safe from all points of view. Children can

enjoy the longest slide in Oxfordshire and splashing in puddles on wet Saturdays; getting lost in the bushes is the worst hazard they face. Volunteers are there to greet us with hand sanitizer, and to ensure we wear

masks and observe social distancing. The stalls sell produce that is grown on family farms or prepared with local ingredient (apart from Ali's Middle Eastern delicacies and Danilo's Sicilian treats). You can smell Go Greek's souvlakis from streets away. The colourful cones and bunting, there to demarcate the queues and one-way system, give a festive atmosphere to lift our spirits.

No wonder so many local individuals and families choose Headington Market for their weekly shopping come rain or shine.

• Find Headington Market online at [www.headingtonmarket.org](http://www.headingtonmarket.org)

had given out its 400th bike across the county, which exceeded even the most optimistic expectations at the outset of the scheme.

Josh Lenthall of Active Oxfordshire said that the response from key workers was a real highlight of his involvement.

"The feedback about the difference it's made was amazing," he said. "Not only how it helped people get to work but how much it's helped their health and wellbeing, even overcoming a fear of cycling from when they were a child."

"Bikes for Key Workers has become a real celebration of the power of getting active and sets a standard for how we can live our lives post lockdown."

For Kathryn McNicoll, who co-ordinated the scheme on behalf of CycloX, the project became an all-consuming task.

"It has been a delightful scheme to be involved with," said Kathryn, "When we started we never thought that so many people would have so many bikes to donate or that so many people would be so grateful to receive one: getting all the bikes in the right place and connected to all the right people became a challenge far bigger than I could ever have imagined. But it's been a real joy and our huge thanks go out to everyone who has been a part of making this project such a success."

## LOOKING FOR SUGGESTIONS FOR CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Finding any grounds for optimism during the Covid crisis might feel akin to treachery but, with hope having been in such short supply, picking the jewels out of the mud is all we can do.

For example, while Headington Action's Connected Communities project had to be put on hold owing to the Covid lockdown, the aims of the project were well served. Headington Action had recognised social isolation as one of the key challenges for communities and, in conjunction with a number of local GP surgeries, was planning to launch the Connected Communities project early in 2020. The aim was to emphasise the importance of social connections and to raise awareness of organisations that are available to help people to connect.

While lockdown might have been expected to illustrate and exacerbate the issue of social isolation, the opposite was the case. The Covid crisis did more to develop connection, networks and support within and across communities than almost anything else in recent times. Street by street, communities established their own support groups and, with the help of

organisations like the Oxford Hub, created contact networks that have lasted beyond the immediate demands of the first lockdown.

Headington Action is hoping to be able to maintain and build upon these connections and would welcome thoughts and suggestions on how best they might polish this particular jewel.

Contact Headington Action via [www.headingtonaction.org](http://www.headingtonaction.org)

## POD LEADERS REQUIRED TO EXPAND OXFORD TOGETHER

At the beginning of the pandemic the Oxford Hub needed us out and about connecting with our street but as winter sets in and doorstep chats become more difficult, they really need people on the phones.

With isolation becoming less manageable for many people, Oxford Hub have received lots of referrals from people who would like to have a friendly check-in. They are training phone link callers all the time but the number of callers they can place is limited by the number of phone pod leaders they have. Pod leaders support a group of up to 12 callers by providing monthly group calls and one-to-one check-ins, as well as running an active forum for callers in the pod to discuss concerns.

If you have the time to become a pod leader contact [phone-link@oxfordhub.org](mailto:phone-link@oxfordhub.org) or visit [www.oxfordhub.org](http://www.oxfordhub.org) to find out more about how you can help.

## READY SET GO LAUNCHING BIKE LIBRARY

Still on the theme of bikes, you can donate bikes to the Oxford Hub Ready Set Go campaign.

Bikes will be collected and refurbished, and then become part of the Ready Set Go bike library. Bikes will be allocated to people based on size. In the case of children, as and when they grow out of their bike, it will be returned to the bike library to trade up for a bigger one. The smaller bike will again be refurbished if needed and allocated to someone else.

Visit [www.oxfordhub.org/ready-set-go](http://www.oxfordhub.org/ready-set-go) for details.

## PRINCIPLE STUDY PRODUCING 'GOLD DUST' TO TACKLE COVID BUT NEEDS YOUR HELP

While the Oxford Vaccine Group makes great progress and great headlines, older Headingtonians with underlying health conditions can still play their part in helping the world to get to grips with Covid-19.

The PRINCIPLE study, funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), is working



## From Nielsen HQ to Thornhill Park: landmark development welcomes new occupants

After a couple of years the hoardings around the Nielsen building at Thornhill have come down to reveal what might, at first glance, appear to be a largely unchanged Nielsen building. However, while the outside has been lightly landscaped and generally spruced up, the inside of the building has been transformed.

Where once were offices, now there are apartments. The main building, named Thornhill Court, and the annex building, Marley House, now house 134 one- and two-bed flats, all of which are available for rent. Amenities on the 12-acre site include the main building's central courtyard garden and extensive cycle storage in the building's basement. Letting agents report lots of interest and a brisk uptake.

A Headington landmark since its construction, the building was the headquarters of Nielsen UK for some 60 years. The site was sold for development in 2016 and the company moved round the ring road to the Oxford Business Park in 2018. Nielsen continues to serve a global client base from its new site, providing measurement and data analysis of consumer and media markets worldwide.

with GP surgeries across the UK, including practices in and around Headington, to recruit people aged 50 and over with selected underlying health conditions, or people aged over 65 regardless of underlying health conditions. The trial is evaluating whether a short course of antibiotics can reduce the severity of Covid-19 symptoms in vulnerable groups and help avoid hospital admission.

Dr Chris Butler, the study's lead investigator, explained the process: "By conducting a trial with those suspected of having Covid-19, we generate evidence that is useful for guiding care for such people outside of hospital in the future. Some of the treatments we are evaluating may also be useful in other infections in addition to Covid-19."

"Every bit of information about people who were unwell with a probable viral illness during a time of high Covid-19 prevalence is like gold dust when it comes to generating evidence for improving care."

Local GP surgeries taking part include Hollow Way, St Bartholomew's, Temple Cowley and the Manor Surgery. Find surgeries and register online at [principletrial.org](http://principletrial.org) or call 0800 138 0880. •

## THE HEADINGTON OCCASIONAL AT LARGE

### CONTACT US

Email us via [office@theoccasional.co.uk](mailto:office@theoccasional.co.uk), post envelopes through the door of either 1 New Cross Road or 45 Stephen Road. If you manage to spot them in the wild, Barney and Jonny are also happy to be accosted at any point on any journey, particularly if they are pretending to be in a hurry.

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### LET US KNOW

Send details of all your events, groups and initiatives for our directory pages to [news@theoccasional.co.uk](mailto:news@theoccasional.co.uk). Any thoughts, suggestions or comments on any aspect of the Occasional or how it might be able to serve the community and add to the general jollity of local life will be most welcome.

### FIND OUT MORE

The Occasional is a print magazine but we do have a website. We're online at [www.theoccasional.co.uk](http://www.theoccasional.co.uk) where you can find out more about us and what we're up to.

[WWW.THEOCCASIONAL.CO.UK](http://WWW.THEOCCASIONAL.CO.UK)

## BUSINESS BRIEFING

Locally based industry leaders **Velovixen**, have launched their own line of cycle clothing for women. The new range features the distinctive Velovixen fox logo on a wide variety of winter jackets, jerseys and their famous bandido, the neck-warmer that doubles brilliantly as a face covering for all your indoor shopping requirements. Find them online at [www.velovixen.com](http://www.velovixen.com)

Stansfeld-based tech start-up **PrintPool** are pioneering a new and innovative subscription service for companies who are excited by the possibilities of 3D Printing but have been put off by the hassle and the cost. PrintPool is offering access to high-quality 3D printing technology with shorter lead-in times than large-scale printing services. Find them online at [www.printpool.co.uk](http://www.printpool.co.uk)

**Headington Fairtrade** have launched a click-and-collect shop and new website. Visit them online to have a browse around their virtual shelves at [www.headingtonfairtrade.org.uk](http://www.headingtonfairtrade.org.uk)

**Brookes Print** now have a click-and-collect option available to non-university customers via their website at [www.brookes.ac.uk/brookes-print](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/brookes-print). While they are part of Oxford Brookes, providing all the university's printing services, Brookes Print also provide a fast, competitive and professional printing service to local businesses, community groups and the wider Oxford student community. Products include business cards, stationery, posters, leaflets, and marketing literature created by digital presses. Large-format printing, including A0 and pull-up banner are also available. External customers need to register online but it's a simple process that only takes a couple of minutes.

Construction company **Solid Rock** have a new website, offering a gallery of projects, a range of testimonials and some intriguing details of octagonal self-build homes. Find them at [www.solidrockoxford.co.uk](http://www.solidrockoxford.co.uk)

**Midcounties Co-op** has sold its London Road supermarket site for development. Plans include residential above a smaller Co-op shop and additional retail units. Planning permission is being sought. •

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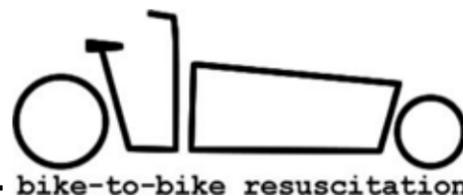
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## MADE IN HEADINGTON COVID PRINT OXFORD

## Headington's home-grown PPE

Rhys Morgan tells the story of how a simple idea and a single 3D printer gave rise to a manufacturing collective that has been helping to keep medical professionals and key workers safe during the Covid crisis.

When the first UK-wide lockdown was announced and the national shortages of PPE became all too apparent, Headington resident Rob Bailey decided that he wanted to help.

Never one to sit on his hands, Rob spent countless hours before and after work producing face shields using the single 3D printer he had at home. All the sterilisation was done in a scrubbed-down utility room (using kit normally reserved for homebrew) and the finished product was offered up to local GP surgeries through a doctor friend of his.

Rob had little expectation for the uptake and so was pleasantly surprised when a surgery said that they wanted his visors. And then another surgery also asked could they have some. And another. And then a care home or three...

Soon the demand far outstripped Rob's capacity to produce them, even if he did give up sleeping, so he sent out a tweet asking if there was anyone in the local area who would be able to help out. Four and half thousand retweets later Rob had himself a collective, specifically Covid Print Oxford.

Throughout the national lockdown people all over Oxfordshire pooled their time, expertise, resources, and money to help produce PPE visors that frontline workers all over the county needed. A whole bank of 3D printers at the Diamond Light Source at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory in Harwell was dedicated to their manufacture and jobs ranged from cutting kilometre lengths of elastic down to size to distributing parcels of visors to GP surgeries, care homes, and schools.

At its peak there were over 70 volunteers all working together to produce and supply PPE face shields. Some people pitched in when they could and for others this endeavour became a new full-time role. Everyone gave their time freely and willingly. The shields were given with no cost to the user and funds were raised as members of the public who wanted to help but could not physically be there gave their hard-earned cash to the cause.

Numbers of visors produced and distributed quickly grew and by the



▲ Beit Cure International orthopaedic hospital for children and adults in Malawi



▲ Printed, packed and boxed



▲ The revised and improved design

▼ Staff at the Cogges Surgery in Witney showing some love for Covid Print Oxford



end of April over 2,500 had been produced and distributed. Soon enquiries were coming in from further afield and, as long as there were visors to send, no one was turned down; they even made it all the way to Scotland. Peak production capacity saw the group churning out 450 sterilised and bagged visors a day, no mean feat when you consider what an involved process it was to produce them.

Even as the lockdown eased, production and demand kept up and the end of June saw the delivery of the 11,000th visor. The remit of the group had expanded too and now they were also able to send the visors to hospitals and health charities in Africa who were in dire need of extra protective equipment.

After making upwards of 13,000 3D-printed face shields in a Danish government-approved design using 3D printers, the group then turned to a commercial die-cutting manufacturer to have the next 10,000 visors made professionally.

The new design is quicker and cheaper to make, uses less plastic than the original, and is far more comfortable for the user to wear for extended periods. They flat-pack too, meaning that the group could start to send parcels of thousands of visors to medics in Mexico, Chile and Brazil. All in all, a great improvement made possible by the money raised to help fund the manufacturing process. It could not have come at a better time, as people began to return to a more normal routine and had less time to keep a watchful eye over a 3D printer as it slowly but surely churns out the visor components.

As PPE supplies are becoming more widely available, Covid Print Oxford are preparing to send out their last supplies of visors, with thousands still urgently wanted in Brazil and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The group is still fundraising to pay for the delivery of these, so if you can spare anything to help out, they would be enormously grateful for a donation to help cover the costs of distribution.

A map of all deliveries and a link to the fundraising page can be found via the Covid Print Oxford website at [www.covidprintoxford.com](http://www.covidprintoxford.com).

# Ollie Weston

## Grooves, beats and a conjuror's trick

The leading light of Headington's monthly jazz residency explains how Sharktown Jazz was born, what makes the magic happen and why jazz is the ultimate live art form.

Ollie Weston has always been in demand as a musician, which is reassuring for a professional performer but a little daunting when you are only five. However, while he started young, Ollie is quick to point out that he was always a very willing participant.

"My parents got me started at the age of five when they gave me a cello," he says. "They were very enthusiastic amateur musicians and our family band was a baroque ensemble – very classical – and they needed a basso continuo instrument. My dad had the piano, my sister was – and still is – an excellent oboe player, and both my mum and my brother played the violin and the piano. So I got the cello."

While the policy of breeding your own band members worked well for the Weston family, it also worked out well for Ollie, who took to his calling with enthusiasm.

"I scraped away and stuck with it," he says. "I played through school and was in the Oxfordshire Youth Orchestra, which was fantastic: you met girls and went on tour! Music was a great passport to a social life and my teenage years were all about the orchestra. I was a band geek but it was great fun."

The move from classical towards jazz was gradual and required some gentle negotiation.

"I sort of traded with my parents a bit," Ollie explains. "I said, 'I'll keep up the cello but can I have a saxophone and a guitar?' I accumulated these and started bands with my friends from the youth orchestra, who also had other musical interests."

Arriving at sixth-form college having not heard much jazz, Ollie met a group of friends who were into it. His eyes were quickly opened to a whole world of musical possibilities.

"I started listening to the sax solos on soul records and I was really into acid jazz. I realised that I was more interested in the solo bits and then someone said, 'You should try jazz: there are longer solos.' And I went from there."

A music degree in Leeds followed, along with the National Youth Jazz Orchestra and post-grad study at the Guildhall School of Music in London.

From his baroque beginnings Ollie



emerged as a respected and experienced jazz musician with a diverse list of musical credits, including West End shows, rock backing bands, session recordings and club performances. However, he points out that it has not been all bright lights and glamour.

"There have been an awful lot of weddings along the way," he laughs, "but they're always good fun."

Students at the Guildhall now know Ollie Weston as a tutor and aspiring jazz musicians all over the world recognise his name as the author of a series of guides

on jazz techniques published by Schott but in Headington he is better known as the host of Sharktown Jazz, the monthly residency at the Butchers Arms.

For those who have discovered them, these gigs are a low-key delight. For a few precious hours on the first Monday of the month (global pandemics permitting) this small backstreet pub does a pretty good impression of an old-school jazz club. The Sharktown sessions have built a loyal and attentive audience, drawn in and lured back by excellent musicianship and an intimate atmosphere.



▲▲ Ollie Weston: tutor, author and band leader

▲ Ben Cummings brings his trumpet to Sharktown

"When I first moved to Oxford from London I thought the best way to get my face known would be to start a band," Ollie says. "I called up a few people I'd heard of, some of the good guys in town, including one of the guys from The Spin Club. We had a regular gig at the Half Moon in St Clements for a while but when that pub's management changed Pippa and Paul, who run the Butchers Arms, said, 'Why don't you come and play here?'"

Ollie ascribes much of the success of Sharktown to Pippa and Paul's enthusiasm as music lovers, along with their willingness to be very supportive while leaving the music side of things to him.

"Originally it was a residency for our band, Time is of the Essence, which was a sort of Hammond organ-led jazz group. Then I thought a house band with a different guest every night would be a good way to do it.

"Having a different face and a totally different programme each month makes it easier to get people to come to a regular gig. While it's good to have a band that will always be there, you can create a buzz about guest musicians. Plus it was great for me because I was able to ask some of my mates from London to come and play after they'd been offering me gigs for years."

Despite being a little way from the city centre, Sharktown Jazz has established its place on the local musical map, pulling in a loyal audience from among Oxford's jazz aficionados. However, there are also plenty of people at the Butchers Arms gigs who are not necessarily part of the dedicated jazz crowd but have discovered something they like.

"There is something about jazz that draws you in, certainly live," Ollie says. "We can't quite recreate the experience of being at Ronnie Scott's but being close to really good music is quite special. I love jazz on record but it is the ultimate live art form."

Seeing a group of musicians that have only just met deliver a coherent and polished performance is part of the thrill of live jazz but that is, Ollie explains, something of a conjuror's trick.

"Quite often we'll be focusing on the sounds of certain bands and we'll use that material as a jumping off point. We all need to know how fast its going to go, what sort of groove it is – is it jazz, is it Latin, is it a funk thing? – and what key it's in. Then the players we use and the guests we have are good enough to take care of the middle themselves. It means you are getting a truly spontaneous performance. It might be a bit rough round the edges but most of the time it works because we've all done this before and we know what we're doing."

On gig night the guest musician will arrive around 6.30pm and the band sets up, introducing themselves and discussing what they are going to play. After a quick run-through of some of the main parts of the performance, they will then wait to see if they can pull it off for the audience.

And they always do, much to the delight of the growing Monday-night audience and to the great satisfaction of the musicians who make their way to back streets of Headington to discover the joys of Sharktown Jazz.

"Of course, no one from outside Oxford gets it until they get here," Ollie laughs. "It's always good to welcome someone for the first time and hear them say, 'I've just gone past a house with a massive shark sticking out of the roof!'" ●

## Good contractors and how to find one

Chris Hale

When you are looking for a contractor for your building project, you can't beat personal recommendations. It is always better to wait for the right contractor than just go with one that is available.

Always ensure that you have a contract. On the simplest of projects this may be an exchange of letters or you can buy a simple standard building contract but all parties need to have clear understanding of what is being delivered for the agreed amount of money. A contract protects your joint interests.

It can often be very difficult to understand what you want from a project until it's late in the process. The job of a good architect is to bring clarity to the process and manage the relationship between client and contractor. A good contract relationship depends on the control and management of change, for which good communication is essential; with the best will in the world there will always be some change and it is how this is handled that counts. As a client you need to be clear about what you want and don't want – always act immediately. Things are much more difficult and costly to change after they are installed or at the end of the project.

Always have a contingency; in fact I would recommend, having two: one for problems that you find in the build and one for your own changes. Remember that some things are outside everyone's

control. While a contract will help in times of stress, some things just can't be covered so always be sensible, logical and level-headed.

One golden rule of working with contractors is never pay anything in advance. If the contractor can't finance the start of the job, find one that can. Your side of the deal is that you must pay fairly and on time. Make sure you have your finance in place. A contractor cannot wait for you to sort out a loan before paying interim payments. Only make payment on completion of satisfactory works, or completion of agreed stages. At the end of the project there should always be a small amount, called retention, which would be paid after completion and ensures that the project is finished to your satisfaction.

If you don't feel you have the confidence, experience or time to manage the project, then hire a professional, someone to manage the cost, administer the contract and help manage change. Ultimately the amount of stress you suffer if a project goes wrong could be significant and you don't need to do this alone.

A useful definition of the success of a project is to arrive at the conclusion of the job with everyone still talking to each other. Persevere and always keep talking.

● *Chris Hale is a director of Penwarden Hale Architects.*

## Good clients and how to be one

Mark Glendinning

The contractor's first question is: where is your client in the process. Do they have an idea or do they have formal plans? The plan end of the spectrum makes it easier for us, particularly if you have drawings for building regulations; these allow us to give a fairly accurate estimate of likely costs. If someone phones up at the 'I've had an idea' end of the spectrum, we would be happy to give advice on the general plausibility of the project but then would refer them to an architect for drawings and detailing.

The more thought and planning you can do before you start, the more smoothly and cost-efficiently the project will run. No project I've ever been involved with – and I've been involved with a lot of projects in my time – hasn't involved some sort of change along the way but keeping it to a minimum makes for a better job.

Good communication is essential and the questions that need to be asked at the design stage can be fairly basic. Any dream design has to work in practice and you may need to address construction issues with the builder or a structural engineer to make sure what you want is possible. Think about the details early. Doors and windows, along with kitchens, are the things that most commonly hold up a project because they need to be ordered well in advance.

Three elements combine to create a successful outcome for any project: the budget, the time line and the quality of the job. Of these, I always think that the time line is where you should allow some flexibility. When you see beautiful buildings around the world no one ever asks, "I wonder if they hit the time line?"

While there will always be conversations about the budget, it's always good to have some contingency in the budget, that 'just in case' money should the unexpected arise or an addition be required. You want to make sure these issues are covered so that you are left with the quality of work required. You want to be able to forget your builders rather than be reminded of them every time you see something that didn't get done properly.

Ultimately the quality of the job comes from good communication, good planning and good execution. Don't move the goalposts in the middle of the project and, while you want something that looks good, make sure you're getting something that is practical: a viable, useable space.

And don't forget to take the time to appreciate your contractor. They are there to provide a service and they want to do a good job. Make sure you let them know when they do.

● *Mark Glendinning is managing director of Greenoak Construction.*

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## HIDDEN HEADINGTON OUTDOOR OPTIONS

### Walks, routes and beaten paths: a local guide

With lockdown putting a premium on time outdoors, Anna Shannon explored some of Headington's favourite walking routes and found a few that should be better known.



We all know Headington is located in a sweet spot – easy access to the city centre and good connections to London – but how well do we really know the Headington on our doorsteps? You don't need to venture far to see the best that Headington has to offer. From ample outside spaces to winding, hidden streets, here is a quick guide to some local routes that show off a few of Headington's outdoor spots at their vibrant best.

surface again onto a road and be able to get your bearings.

#### BEYOND HEADINGTON AND BARTON

A new adventure for me this year was the glorious hill walk up out of Barton towards the Sydlings Copse nature reserve. Google Maps doesn't seem to have this as a viable walking route option but, having walked there recently, I can confirm that the footpaths are alive and well. Follow Barton Village Road parallel to Bayswater Brook. Ignore the turning off to Wick Farm Park and you will come to an open green. Turn left here and you can venture up the hill. It is pretty much a straight run up through the fields, with a short narrow footpath in between, until you hit the B4027 not too far from Rectory Farm. The views along this route across Barton, Headington and, if you have very good vision, a little bit of the city centre, are really wonderful.

#### THE PATHS OF BARTON PARK

The new(ish) Barton Park development offers a lovely linear route that runs parallel to Bayswater Brook. The brook itself is largely hidden by trees but you can cross over to walk directly along it, although the crossing point is a currently a little hidden; look out for some pylons for where to cross. I quite like the new sandy footpath. It means I can run on a firm surface on days when I am feeling spritely or just meander along without the need for wellies when I fancy a walk. There are exercise machines dotted along the path, offering the opportunity for a few mid-walk leg raises, and the small lake towards the Marston side has quickly become home to a variety of ducks and geese.

#### THE CS LEWIS CLASSIC

The CS Lewis nature reserve always deserves a mention, especially as I came across a few people during the first pandemic lockdown who said that they were visiting it for first time. It is very close to Headington Quarry, less than a half a mile from the ring road crossing near the Six Bells pub. Having crossed the ring road towards Risinghurst, head up Kiln Lane, swing a right into Lewis Close and you will see a footpath at the end that leads to the nature reserve. It is really lovely whichever season you choose to venture, although it is hilly and can be muddy and slippery after it's been raining. This is worth bearing in mind if you are thinking about running, especially in the autumn when the trees have dropped their leaves. Walk round the lake (complete with resident swan) and if you climb up the slope you will find a route that will bring you out very near to the car park the top of Shotover; and who doesn't love Shotover? •

#### DISCOVERING THE QUARRY

Headington Quarry is a little gem, with winding roads and alleys that capture a sense of days long ago, making it a great place to walk and explore. Follow the footpath leading off Quarry Road near the Quarry village hall (helpfully signposted 'To the church'), which will bring you to Holy Trinity church. Walk through the church yard, past the noticeboard that offers a guide to memorials of some of Holy Trinity's more celebrated residents, and you come out near the Masons Arms, with its very attractive garden for when the sun is shining and Masons Alley running behind. The alleyways in Headington Quarry are plentiful and it is worth getting a little lost among them. But don't worry: most of them are quite short so you will soon

From the top:

- o The author above Barton
- o C S Lewis Nature Reserve
- o Barton Park
- o C S Lewis Nature Reserve
- o Headington Quarry

All images: Anna Shannon



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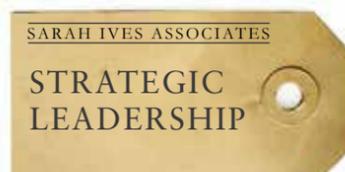
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[www.archwayfoundation.org.uk](http://www.archwayfoundation.org.uk)

### BARTON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Improving the quality of life for all Barton residents. Events, activities and education in and around the Barton Neighbourhood Centre.  
[www.bartoncommunityassociation.com](http://www.bartoncommunityassociation.com)

### BARTON SINGS

Community choir welcoming anyone of any age wherever they happen to live.  
<http://soundresource.org.uk/gallery-barton-sings/>

### CHURCHES TOGETHER IN HEADINGTON

Ecumenical grouping of 14 churches in Headington promoting and encouraging co-operation between the churches of the area.  
[www.headingtonchurches.org.uk](http://www.headingtonchurches.org.uk)

### CYCLOX

The voice of cycling in Oxford. Campaigning for better infrastructure and more investment in cycling. Local Cyclox champions network in Headington and across the city.  
[www.cyclox.org](http://www.cyclox.org)

### EXTINCTION REBELLION

A movement carrying out peaceful, joyful, direct action against government inaction on climate and ecological catastrophe. Headington Fringe meet fortnightly.  
[headingtonfringe.coordinator@gmail.com](mailto:headingtonfringe.coordinator@gmail.com)  
[www.xroxford.org](http://www.xroxford.org)

### FRIENDS OF BURY KNOWLE PARK

Helping to improve and care for Headington's biggest park, a focal point for the community that has been open to the public since 1930 and central to Headington life ever since.  
<https://buryknowlepark.wordpress.com/>

### FRIENDS OF OLD HEADINGTON

Caring for the Old Headington conservation area.  
[www.foh.org.uk](http://www.foh.org.uk) and @Old\_Headington

### FRIENDS OF QUARRY

Residents' association for people living in the Headington Quarry area. Set up to preserve the distinctive character of Headington Quarry conservation area.  
[www.friendsofquarry.org](http://www.friendsofquarry.org)

### FRIENDS OF WARNEFORD MEADOW

Action group campaigning to preserve Warneford Meadow, a tranquil area of grassland on the boundary of East Oxford and Headington.  
[www.friendsofwarnefordmeadow.org.uk](http://www.friendsofwarnefordmeadow.org.uk)



### HEADINGTON LIVEABLE STREETS

When the Covid crisis took almost all the traffic off our streets in the spring of 2020, the drop in air and noise pollution was immediately noticeable. Headington Liveable Streets was founded as a response to the widespread demand among local residents that their streets should not be allowed to return to the choked and dangerous places they had been allowed to become. The aims of HLS are: a thriving community and street life; buoyant cafés, restaurants and shops; clean air; access to essential services; safer and quieter streets; and clear steps to address climate change. The HLS vision is community-led liveable streets and the group supports the introduction of schools streets and low-traffic neighbourhoods to achieve these goals. You can join HLS to support its aims; membership is free.  
[Online at \[oxlivsts.org.uk/headington\]\(http://Online.atoxlivsts.org.uk/headington\) or contact via \[headington@oxlivsts.org.uk\]\(mailto:headington@oxlivsts.org.uk\)](http://Online.atoxlivsts.org.uk/headington)

### HEADINGTON ACTION

Voluntary organisation working with wide range of groups, organisations, businesses and agencies to promote and improve Headington. Runs Headington Market, organises the Headington Festival and provides grants under the Small Sparks and Community Grants schemes.  
[www.headingtonaction.org](http://www.headingtonaction.org)

### HEADINGTON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Running the Headington Community Centre on Gladstone Road, home to a wide range of groups, clubs and activities every day of the week.  
[www.headingtoncommunitycentre.org](http://www.headingtoncommunitycentre.org)

### HEADINGTON GARDEN GROUP

An informal group of gardening enthusiasts organised by the highly knowledgeable Kathleen Ramsey. It meets about once a month to look round each others' gardens, all of which are fascinatingly different. The group offers a great way to meet your neighbours and increase your knowledge and enjoyment of gardening.  
 Contact: [friendsofquarry@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofquarry@gmail.com)

### HEADINGTON QUARRY FOLK DANCE

Continuing the tradition of country dancing dating back beyond the 17th century. Meets at Gladstone Road Community Centre on Thursdays (except during August) from 8-10pm. Beginners welcome.  
[www.oxonfolk.co.uk](http://www.oxonfolk.co.uk)

### HEADINGTON ROAD RUNNERS

Club built around its members with aim of encouraging and supporting its members with all their running aims. Motto 'Running Together' reflects both style of runs and club's friendly, social nature.  
[www.hrr.org.uk](http://www.hrr.org.uk)

### HEADINGTON SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

Partnership of Headington's eight schools, collaborating in the interests of

the children, young people and families.  
[www.headingtonpartnership.org.uk](http://www.headingtonpartnership.org.uk)

### HEADINGTON SINGERS

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[www.headingtonsingers.org.uk](http://www.headingtonsingers.org.uk)  
 07766 862 286.

### HIGHFIELD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Getting together to shape and engage the neighbourhood in the Highfield Road area.  
[www.highfieldresidents.weebly.com](http://www.highfieldresidents.weebly.com)

### LOW-CARBON HEADINGTON

Group of Headington residents committed to raising awareness of climate change locally, reducing Headington's carbon emissions, and promoting a more sustainable lifestyle.  
[www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk/oxfordshire-groups/low-carbon-headington](http://www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk/oxfordshire-groups/low-carbon-headington)

### OXFORD ARTS SOCIETY

Society of artists residing within 30 miles of Oxford. Founded in 1891 with annual exhibition of members' work. Membership by invitation only but non-members encouraged to submit work to the annual open exhibition, from which new members are invited to join.  
<https://oxfordartsociety.co.uk/>

### OXFORD CIVIC SOCIETY

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### QUARRY ROVERS FC

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[www.quarryrovers.org.uk](http://www.quarryrovers.org.uk)

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[www.quarrywi.org.uk](http://www.quarrywi.org.uk)

### RISING VOICES

Community choir performing modern and traditional songs. Originally based in Risinghurst but now rehearsing in Cowley. No auditions or music-reading required.  
<http://folk-arts-oxford.co.uk/rising-voices.html>

### SHARED KNITTING (AND CROCHET) GROUP

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 Contact: [sharedknitting@gmail.com](mailto:sharedknitting@gmail.com) or phone 01865 738942.

### SHOTOVER PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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[www.shotover.clara.net/pressoc](http://www.shotover.clara.net/pressoc)

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[www.silverjoggers.club](http://www.silverjoggers.club)  
[www.facebook.com/silverjoggers/](http://www.facebook.com/silverjoggers/)

### WOODCRAFT FOLK

"A place where children will grow in confidence, learn about the world and start to understand how to value our planet and each other." Headington Elfins group (ages 6-9) meets weekly on Thursday in Quarry Village Hall.  
 Contact: [headingtonelfins@gmail.com](mailto:headingtonelfins@gmail.com)

### For further local information see also:

### HEADINGTON NEWS

Definitive and invaluable online source of information regarding of all aspects of Headington life. Indispensable first port of call for both current events and historical background.  
[www.headington.org.uk](http://www.headington.org.uk)  
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## The humbling of Headington

This may be a quietly unremarkable part of an obviously remarkable city but Headington has its own way of doing things. Jonny Ives offers a few words of advice for new arrivals and explains why it may pay to listen a little more than you speak.

Oxford is a magical place that works its magic still. Strolling on a warm afternoon along the Broad or through the Parks, who can help but wonder which of these fine young ladies and gentlemen displaying their privilege and their youth with such enjoyment will be first to emerge into the rarefied strata of public life? Who will make the cabinet? Which of those flitting from Union to junior common room will have the guile and connections that will allow them to move from subfusc to ermine without having their collar felt along the way?

Once back up the hill, we are able to view such concerns with amused detachment, safe in the knowledge that under the shark we do things a little differently.

At first glance, and perhaps even after a good long look, Headington might seem a quietly unremarkable part of an obviously remarkable city. In time, however, new arrivals realise that they have happened upon a place of distinction; a place of diffidence perhaps but a place of distinction nonetheless.

An entirely apocryphal story illustrates the point. A visitor goes into the Masons Arms, orders a drink and asks the landlord if he knows of a mechanic. "Oh yes," says Chris (for it is he). "Motor in one corner, quantum in the other." Chris places a pint on the bar along with some change. "The real trick," he says, with the timing of someone used to delivering a punchline and prepared to wait for as long as it takes for any kind of laugh to arrive, "is being able to tell which is which before you join the conversation."

Admittedly, the idea of getting some change back off Chris makes the story unlikely but the essential point is valid. While Headington might seem like the epitome of town rather than gown, we are not short of intellectual achievement or academic distinction. Two universities (one new, one old), half a dozen

hospitals, numerous research institutions, a tradition of manufacturing innovation and a growing tech sector means that Headington is surely among the most densely qualified places in the country.



▲ A visitor walks into a pub and receives a welcome and change

Back to the visitor. Raising the glass, they look around the pub. "Interesting," they say. "In such an obviously non-gown environment one might easily imagine that such propensity for intellectual achievement could sow the seeds of division and disharmony." Luckily, Chris has now

**We are able to view such concerns with amused detachment... we do things a little differently.**

gone to serve someone else.

The reality is that choosing the automotive engineer from the theoretical physicist is further complicated by the fact that they are likely to be sat round the same table.

In Headington whatever the topic of conversation might be, there is a good chance that at least one of the people involved in the discussion will be an expert on the subject. This means that the temptation for the armchair expert to talk at length on subjects in which they might generously be termed a layman is generally held in check.

For their part, the many Headingtonians who are experts on a particular subject seem more than content to leave the need to lecture and expound on the intricacies of their field back down the hill, or

wherever their desk, laboratory or mind palace might happen to be. When invited to offer some thoughts on a subject related to their particular field, they will often preface their remarks with the phrase, "I'm not an expert but..." In Headington this usually means that, while they have been studying this field for decades, are extensively published and cited on the subject, and are widely acknowledged

across five continents as a leading authority on the matter, someone they work with joined the department six months before they did so knows a bit more about it.

It makes for a fascinating entente intellectual. While those of us at the shallower end of the academic pool are pleased to be able to discuss the most unlikely subjects with the most highly qualified of people, those weighed down with grey matter and academic accolades are more than happy to admit that they occasionally need a bit of help to hang a door or fix a puncture. There is nothing more Headington than to discover that someone you've known for years is on the radio or the telly talking in great depth about something they've never even mentioned to you before.

For newcomers to Headington, a little advice. Welcome and thank you for making this remarkably unremarkable part the city your home for however long you can stay with us. We look forward to getting to know you. If you are inclined to listen more than you are compelled to talk, there is a good chance that you will learn a lot. If you tend to feel the need for an audience, tread carefully: in Headington, no one can hear you preen. ●

## A LOCAL LIBRARY

### Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit PG Wodehouse

#### What's it about?

As with so much of Wodehouse, this offers is a simple comic story of hapless young men of the monied classes in the lovelorn pursuit, or the determined avoidance, of matrimony, falling foul of terrifying aunts, disapproving fathers and the best intentions of friends, domestic staff and small dogs along the way.

#### What has it got to do with Oxford?

Not much. Most of the story takes place at Brinkley Court in Worcestershire, the country house of Bertie Wooster's Aunt Dahlia, and Flat 3a, Berkley Mansions, London W1, Bertie's Mayfair address. However, at a time when the nation might justifiably feel itself blighted by those who boast Eton and Oxford as part of their CV, Bertram Wilberforce Wooster stands alone as the Oxford-educated Old Etonian whose company we can enjoy without recrimination or despair.

#### Why is it worth reading?

Because it is PG Wodehouse. Very few writers have a genuine and undisputed claim to virtuosity in the use of the English language but Pelham Grenville Wodehouse is certainly one of them. If you have only dipped into him early in your reading career and found him too light for your heavy reading taste, it is time to revisit him with a fresh eye. If you're new to Wodehouse, you're in for a treat.

Taken at face value, these are diverting stories of the enchanted and almost entirely imaginary world of the English Edwardian upper classes at play. However, the writing of Wodehouse is so beautifully constructed that the reader only notices the highly complex sentence structure, the erudition of the references and the expertise of dialogue once they begin to look beyond the story and find themselves immersed in the language of arguably the greatest comic novelist of the twentieth century.

Such is Wodehouse's mastery that it is almost an irrelevance to mention that his work is also very funny. ●



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