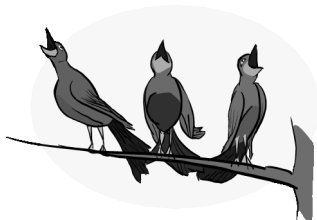


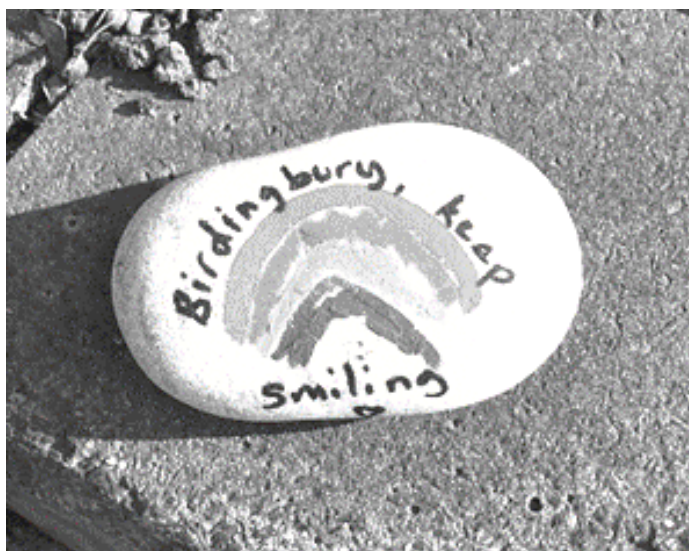
# **BIRDSONG**

**June 2020  
and  
July 2020**



**BIRDINGBURY  
NEWS**

**No 98**



## **Treasure Hunting**

Artwork trail by Phoebe Tooth Markham

# Birdingbury Parish Council Report

This should have been the Birdsong when I talk about the Annual Village Meeting (usually in late April). Hopefully we'll be able to hold the AVM over the Summer: we'll see. The meeting is an opportunity to look back at the year through the eyes of the various village groups and, when required, to look forward to considering any decisions where people's views need to be taken into account.

Speaking of looking back, many have been re-assessing the decisions made about coronavirus on the national and world stage. There are also questions we could ask as a village: how prepared was Birdingbury for something like the coronavirus? Given how we all depend on our devices, could we have ensured that there was stronger broadband or mobile signal across the village? Given the need to exercise, could foot-paths have been more clearly marked? Should we have had a list of local food suppliers willing to deliver to the village?

The Parish Council is not just about planning applications and mowing. It has an Emergency Plan, developed in association with County Council specialists. I looked at the current version when lockdown was looming, and it has some useful suggestions and contact details. The main focus is the response to flooding, something that we've experienced here in the last 20 years. It doesn't anticipate the impact on village life of a virus and this one didn't exist when it was written. But are there other potential challenges that we should prepare for? How would our community cope if the power went down for a day, or there was a UK petrol shortage for a week, or the broadband failed nationally for a fortnight? Now feels like a good time for the PC to ask some "what if" questions to help us think about how we could prepare. In that vein, Carmel has offered to run a broadband survey to gather details about this vital service. Please have a look at the details and take part if you can.

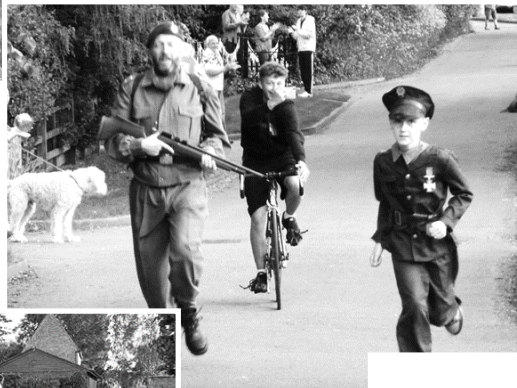
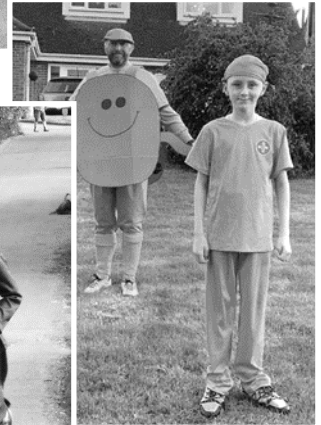
And the History Group is looking forward to looking back on today! Whether you've had a relaxing, book-reading, learn-a-new-skill lockdown or a home-working, home-schooling, not-enough-hours-in-the-day lockdown, why don't you drop a note to the group to create your own slice of Birdingbury history? Our community has been at its best over the last few months, with so many people looking out for each other, creating virtual events and coming together for the Thursday clap. Hopefully, history will judge us well.

And finally, there was the looking back that we all did on V.E. Day bank holiday Friday. It was a time to reflect on the sacrifices that were made by the war generation, and Bill Cowley's sedate personal 'fly-past' was the unquestioned highlight. It also reminded me that we have people in this village who have lived through times when power cuts were the norm, when petrol did run short, and when food was in short supply. They also lived through times when there were many diseases and infections that could not be controlled. They remind us that, whatever the challenges, we can overcome them together.

*Guy French, Chair, Parish Council*

# Leading the Clapping for Key Workers

Since the lockdown, the Birdingbury Thursday clap has been led by Richard Cutts and his fine assistant, Freddy Young. Here are some highlights:



# Virus Support 2020

When lockdown commenced, I thought it was important we try to have a coordinated approach to supporting our community. In asking for help and setting up a WhatsApp Group, with Jo Cutts offering to help manage activity, we soon had around 40 volunteers on board. We organised a leaflet to go to all houses, on which I was named as a co-ordinating contact, primarily because most people know me, or of me in my position as Church Warden. I hoped that would ensure people would feel able to trust the process as well; important at a time when people can feel vulnerable or apprehensive.

How does it work? Well pretty smoothly I am pleased to say. I send a weekly update to all those at home, elderly or vulnerable for whom I have email addresses. In it I include details of local companies who will deliver goods or services and seek requests by 5pm Mondays and Thursdays for any errands needed. I then match these to our volunteers who kindly tell me when they will be out and about or where. This means we are trying to be responsible by not having too many people out and about at the same time as I can add requests onto volunteer's normal activities, rather than having to make special journeys. We have also identified and circulated the details of lots of local companies who will offer delivered or click and collect services. To date, the team has undertaken well over 60 errands; lots of prescriptions and shopping but also post office runs, pet shop runs and other unusual requests. Only one or two have not been possible for various reasons.

So, a really big thank you to this wonderful community for what you are doing; most people are looking out for friends and neighbours and some real shining stars have come to the fore. I have been getting a lot of thanks from all those we are helping which I'd like to pass on to our wonderful team of volunteers through this update!

So THANKYOU Birdingbury – what a fabulous place in which to be locked down!

*Karen Armbrister, Church Warden, St Leonard's Church*

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## Some Thank You's (there are more to come)

We would like to thank all those in the village who have given us support and help since the lockdown started. We are in a more vulnerable grouping so the help has been especially gratefully received by us. It has also given comfort to our family knowing that this support has been available.

*Peter and Sue Law*

I would like to say how grateful I was to the Church for bringing me a wonderful cake for my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on 5<sup>th</sup> May. I am the oldest person living in Birdingbury who was born here! I'd also like to say thank you to the volunteers for the work they are doing. I was brought another cake today. It was so light, it must have had four eggs in it!

*Lance Hudson*

# What I Missed Most (to my grandchildren)

When all this is over,  
And people begin to ask and reminisce,  
During lockdown,  
What did you most miss?

We will think. We will ponder,  
Was it the not going out, being able to wander?  
Unless for an hour's bike ride, walk or run,  
Not allowed to have too much fun.

For me it is simple, when asked what did you most miss?  
It was not being able to give YOU  
That big hug and a kiss.

The magic of technology meant we could Skype, we could Zoom.  
We could play 'Adventures in the jungle', or 'Go to the moon.'  
Reading each other stories was always such fun.  
And who knew that virtual hide and seek could even be done?

Your happy smiley faces,  
Asking me to sing, dance and play,  
Have cheered me up on many a sad day.

But the thing that was hardest,  
The thing, when asked, "What did you most miss?"  
Was not being able to give you  
That BIG HUGE HUG  
And A KISS  
XXXX

# Easter Bunny Hunt

We had 20 entries to the bunny competition! Thank you all for taking part and a big thank you to everyone who drew the lovely pics for us.

There was possibly slight confusion at what to count in the end but it was just pictures in windows and the mad hare overlooking the village, so the official count was 39.

In joint first place we had Molly Wilson and Phoebe T.M, both with just one out. Sophie, Joseph and Bella were in second place, and Elsie and Tom in third place. Well done all!

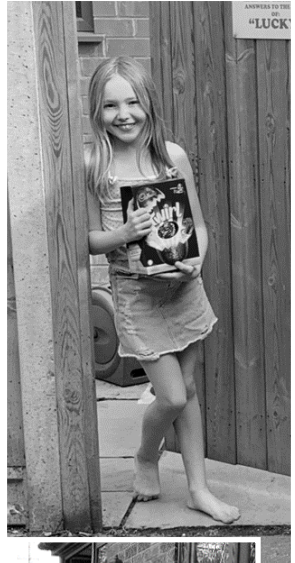
However, the Easter bunny was very generous and there were Easter eggs for all the children who took part and the Easter bunny (aka Rich Cutts) successfully delivered all the eggs (safe distancing in place) to the happy recipients.

Big thanks also to Birdinbury PCC for donating the funds to cover all the Easter eggs. Hope you all had a lovely time.

*Jo Cutts*







# Birdingbury Hall for Sale - 1914

Continued from the last edition.....

Seven generations of the Biddulph family had owned the Hall from 1687 but in June 1914, on the eve of the First World War they put up for sale the entire estate of 2000 acres, including 12 farms and numerous houses and cottages as well as the Hall itself; it was heavily mortgaged and no doubt the debt was more than the family could manage. At this time, they were living in the Old Rectory in Bourton (the first house on the left as you come from Birdingbury), having let the Hall to a succession of tenants since 1874, as described in the last article.



The garden front – early 20<sup>th</sup> century -- croquet hoops just visible

A few days before the auction a Mr Alexander Crundall made an offer to buy the entire estate for £46,000 which was accepted by Sir Theophilus. However, it became apparent that Crundall was a speculator; therefore, the sale was not cancelled and the auction went ahead on the appointed day. About three quarters of the lots were sold for a total of £28,000 but Crundall was left with five of the farms which had not reached their reserves, as well as the Hall which was withdrawn at £13850. The remaining farms and smaller lots were sold over the next few years but the Ackroyds continued to lease and occupy the Hall even converting part of the stables (now Wren Court) into a racquets court. All three of the Ackroyd sons served in the war and all survived (details may be found in the Birdingbury History Group booklet – *Birdingbury Men at War*). Their mother Lillie became Deputy Commandant of the VAD hospital in Southam; she held strong views on social matters and was an active member of The League for Opposing Women's Suffrage.

John Ackroyd died in October 1919, leaving an estate worth £302,000. In the meantime, Crundall, who lived in Cookham, had been busy buying and selling other estates (including Kinnaird Castle near Dundee). He put the Hall on the market again in 1920; again, it failed to sell at auction and was withdrawn at £13000 but was subsequently sold to Harry Egerton Norton for £13500.



At this time many large houses were being abandoned and even demolished because of the cost of maintenance and the large staff required to run them - perhaps Birdingbury Hall was lucky to survive.

Harry Egerton Norton had been born in Rio de Janeiro in 1876 and married, in considerable style, Mary Froude Llewellyn Bellow in 1909. He had joined the army but resigned at the time of his marriage, reenlisting at the beginning of the war and reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, commanding the 15<sup>th</sup> King's Hussars. I have been unable to find anything about his time in Birdingbury; after another contents auction in March 1927 he sold the Hall to Mr Earnest Byng and retired to Devon.

There is only a little more to say about Earnest Byng. There were references to Mrs Byng opening the 1929 Birdingbury Wake (fete), even before they moved in, and to other similar events. Also, in 1929 Byng was fined 7/6d for leaving a car on a public road with no lights showing. In 1930 he was elected to the Rural District Council as Birdingbury's representative. He sold the Hall in 1936 to Mrs Alsagar Pollock.

There are still people in the village who remember Mrs Pollock who lived here until 1962. She came from Blackdown House in Leamington where she had lived with her husband, Lieut-Colonel John Alsagar Pollock; he had died in about 1934. Their wedding in December 1927 which took place in Marylebone had caused a stir as it was reported that when the guests had arrived at the church, they found it locked and no preparation for the service in evidence. The verger said that he had received a message that morning asking him to redirect any guests to Claridge's Hotel. The couple had been married earlier in the day at the Registry Office.

Mrs Pollock was known as Freda but her full name at the time of her marriage to Pollock was Marie Caroline Wilhelmina Fredericke Doyle and there were insinuations during the Second World War of German sympathies but no actual evidence whatsoever. She had formerly been married to William Gleaves Doyle of Leamington, a man with a reputation of great generosity towards local charities who had died in 1924 leaving her with nearly £200,000 – perhaps £10 million today.

Her second husband had also been wealthy, and she lived in the Hall in the style of a rich widow. The references in the local newspapers, during the 26 years she was here, are consistently of opening fetes, garden shows and numerous local events. Nevertheless, it would appear that she supported activities in the village, even if sometimes this was in the style of 'the lady of the manor'.

Her most long-lasting gift to the village was the much-loved bus shelter which regrettably burnt down in 2012. It was originally a summer house in the Hall garden.

*Chris Barney, Birdingbury History Group*

## Cheers All Round on VE Day

Mike Coles was the official photographer for Birdingbury's VE Day celebration. Here is a selection of his shots. You can find a link to the complete album on the village website ([Birdingbury.org](http://Birdingbury.org))





## Josie Mccurdie

I find it difficult to find the words to express my deep gratitude to the residents of Birdingbury for the kindness and sympathy we have received since the sad passing of Josie due to Covid-19. We have been helped in so many ways and the honour you paid Josie by lining Main Street to pay your respects was very moving and is something I will never forget.

Josie loved Warwickshire. She was born in Napton, lived in Southam, went to school in Southam, was married there and did most of her shopping there every week; a real Warwickshire lass. When we built Bondon Farm 25 years ago, Josie was delighted. She loved Birdingbury - her favourite views of the village were from the top of the hill at Frankton and Draycote Hill, with the village nestling in the valley close to the river.

It was not her first association with Birdingbury; all her life she was keen on all sports and when at Southam High School she was captain of the netball and hockey teams but she excelled at field sports and was Midlands Discus Champion. Her lifelong regret was not being able to go to the all England Final at White City due to a kidney infection. Her sports teacher lived in Birdingbury, at Loen, now home to the Westcott family, so quite often they would call in at Birdingbury on their way back from a sporting venue somewhere in the Midlands. She said only recently she had known the village for 58 years.

Even in these very troubled times through which we are living, when you can still have virtually anything you desire delivered to your door at the latest next day, the only meaningful things we can offer each other is love and support.

It has been our experience that Birdingbury is overflowing with these special gifts.

*Wallace McCurdie & Family*



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## If....

If you don't mind your hair becoming straggly  
And can do without the flour or those new shoes;  
If you can breathe the unpolluted air again  
And not worry you are not allowed to choose  
With whom or where you meet, or that you can't be hugged,  
And you get fatter comfort eating snacks each night;  
If you can smile or laugh, and dream of normal days  
When life resumes and everything will be alright;

If you can stem the fear and stand the solitude,  
Calm down and just accept the status quo,  
If you can bear the loss of your activities  
And not complain to others of your woe;  
If you enjoy the birdsong, peace, and timelessness,  
And try to make the most of every day,  
Then you'll surmount this troubled situation  
'Til the threat of Covid 19 goes away.

*A Villager (with apologies to R. Kipling)*

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## Making the Most of Lockdown

Life under lockdown has really made us appreciate what is on our doorstep more than ever before. Back when life was ‘normal’, we would usually go out somewhere at week-ends. However, being forced to stay at home has really encouraged us to explore more of our local surroundings. And how beautiful they are!

Apart from my staple cycling route around Draycote Water, we had never really ventured much beyond the railway bridge on foot, despite living here for 5 years. It turns out there is a lovely loop you can do along the side of the railway line towards Draycote Hill Farm - the first part of which is like walking across a National Trust estate. It also includes the most inquisitive sheep we have ever come across. Probably my favourite route though, is up across the hill from the railway bridge towards Frankton. The view from the top of the hill back down towards Birdingbury is stunning!



What has also added to the enjoyment of walking around our local countryside at this time of year is seeing all the lambs. They are a joy to behold when they are young as they skip around in the fields. We also have had to undertake a few rescue missions as we have come across lambs caught in the fence or stuck between the wire unable to get back to their mothers.

Our close encounters with the local livestock have not ended there. When walking in the direction of Marton from the fishponds in Frankton (another lovely route), we entered a field with some bulls in the distance. They were stood right on the line of the public footpath, so we decided to skirt around the other side of the field to give them a wide berth. We had probably got less than 50 yards into the field when they all started running towards us! We quickly decided that discretion was the better part of valour and hot footed it back to the other side of the gate. The bulls proceeded to all congregate at the gate and seemed most interested in us. Perhaps they are just very inquisitive, but we decided not to take any chances!

Thank you to all our friends and neighbours who have given advice on where we can walk. As well as our beautiful surroundings, the incredible community spirit in Birdingbury has also helped enormously in the last few weeks, from the fun of our zoom events to the fabulous VE Day commemorations which really showed the village at its best. We feel very lucky to be living here!

*Matt & Sara Hancock*

Dick describes the route for Matt and Sara's walk next.....

## A Local Walk to Frankton and Back

You can either start from your own front door or drive to the T- junction by the former Birdingbury station, where there is room for several cars on the verge.

From here walk up the road towards Frankton. Near the brow of the hill, you can pause to catch your breath and look through a gateway on the right. This field is the site of the former WW2 POW camp. At most times of the year there is no evidence of this. However, if you look across the fields in the springtime you will see daffodils planted, post 1945, when it became temporary accommodation for returning service personnel and their families.

Continue along the road to the crossroads in Frankton turning left to St Nicholas Church. Sadly, at the time of writing it's not possible to stop for refreshment at The Friendly Inn!

On the left opposite the church gate, there is a footpath sign. Follow this path keeping the fence and trees on your right. Where this boundary veers right, continue straight on to the next stile. In the summer, this area should be dry. In the winter it is very boggy, and you might have to limbo dance under the fence.

Now cross several fields and a farm track.

When the path starts to descend great views open up ahead. On a clear day you can see as far as Daventry, Shuckburgh Woods, the former P O tower near Hellidon and the disused cement works chimney near Long Itchington. Closer to hand there are really good views of our own village. Towards the bottom of the long field descent, head for a small copse. Follow the left side of this to a steep narrow track that leads into a flat final field.

Cross the field, heading slightly to your right, where a gate will take you onto the road near the disused railway bridge. So, turn right to walk home or left to your car.

There are several stiles/gates, so please take virus protection precautions. However, the rewards of this quiet corner of our local area are well worth their inconvenience.

The circuit from your car will take about an hour and obviously a few minutes more if you are walking from the village.

Hope you enjoy it.

*Dick Withington*



# **The Day the World Stayed Home**

This is how the world works – not for all, but some.  
The sun rises in the morning. The end of day, it's done.

The people – they drive off. To work they're probably going.  
School children off to lessons, to increase upon their knowing.

Streets – they're full of shoppers. And traders and the likes.  
And petrol stations, restaurants, and parks with many bikes.

Everywhere is busy - full of life; with ample noise and charm,  
As people interact – for this is life – it does no harm.

Until, one day, things change. Very suddenly in fact.  
For there is no work. There are no schools. The world has been attacked.

A virus. It has come. And come with force and might.  
Spreading with no boundaries, like sound and smell and sight.

The virus with no mercy – unrelenting on its prey,  
Be young, be old, be healthy... it insists it's here to stay.

Together we can fight this. Just by following the guide.  
To stay home. Stay safe. Stay in. Essentially – to hide.

This hiding is not cowardly. We're doing what is best.  
To tell the virus 'go away', our beating, braveheart chests.

Lockdown. They call it so. We're to all remain indoors.  
Ignoring any aspects of our freedom held before.

We are not stuck. We're safe. And this we shan't forget.  
For there are some valiant people, whose lives are put on threat.

The sun rises in the morning. The end of day, it's done.  
And all these doctors, nurses, they don't know if they've won.

But they just keep on going. Every day and every night.  
Whilst we stay inside, safe and sound, letting them put up a fight.

Now this is how the world works - not for all, but some.  
The sun rises in the morning. The end of day, it's done.

The heroes – they drive off. To save our fellow man.  
School children stay at home, for schooling days are banned.

Streets – there are no shoppers. No traders or the likes.  
Empty petrol stations, diners, no parks with any bikes.

Everywhere is empty – but that's only what it seems.  
For inside homes, there very much, are still our hopes and dreams.

That one time soon, but who knows when, all this will come to end.  
As life returns to normal – to be lived as we intend.

Yes, there may be worry. And angst and strife and fear.  
But don't forget – inside you're safe. No worries should be near.

We thank our workers, the heroes, relentlessly who fight.  
To give our freedom back to us... our shining, masked up knights.

And one day we shall look back. In awe of every soul out there.  
Who put their lives to save our own – a trait, you'll find is rare.

So, thank you to the workers. We stay at home for you.  
We'll fight this beast together and united we'll come through.

This is how the world works – not for all, but some.  
The sun rises in the morning. The end of day, it's done.

*Ceara Hayden*

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## Recipe Fundraiser

I am seeking to compile a book of recipes, the proceeds of which will be donated to Rugby food bank and St. Leonards church.

I am ideally looking for your recipes that came into their own during lockdown, but which can be enjoyed at any time.

If you are happy to share your recipes, then please forward them to me with your name and address. If you wish to remain anonymous then this is perfectly ok. If you have any anecdotes about your recipe then please include them, however this is not essential.

Your recipes can be either forwarded to [eira.owen61@btinternet.com](mailto:eira.owen61@btinternet.com) or dropped off to me at Thurlby in Main Street. Please let me have any recipes that you are happy to be included by the end of June.

*Eira Owen*



## All in a (new) Day's Work

It's 4:30 on May 11<sup>th</sup> and I should have spent the day calming the nerves of my students as they came into school to sit their very first exam of the season. None of that today though. Instead, we have what has become a new normal at Willowfield. By the time Guy and I are up, Henry has left the smell of toast in the kitchen and is wending his way to Tesco to stack a few shelves. There is more time in the morning for a conversation than there used to be, and breakfast can include an extra cup of coffee. Kate ekes out as much time as she can in bed but by eight, we are all at our desks ready to do battle with the technology.

Guy is zooming meetings at Coventry Building Society, Kate is google-classrooming to students in London and my attempts to mathematically enthuse can be heard in houses around Coventry (assuming there is anyone actually listening). Of course, it doesn't always go smoothly; and teachers and students everywhere are on a steep learning curve. Sound not working, picture freezing, internet having a wobble – all excellent reasons for kids not being able to attend lessons or complete their work – gone is the need for 'the dog ate my homework'! And it's not just the lessons; the extra-curricular show goes on too: taking part in choir, yoga and bridge all from the comfort of the sitting-room - taking an assembly from my kitchen is not something I ever thought I would do!

The technology that now connects teacher and student is no substitute for the relationships we form in the classroom, the conversations in the corridor, and the everyday interactions which we all miss. As a profession, we worry about the effect this will have on the children who struggle to access the lessons or who are thrown off kilter by the isolation. We spend a great deal of time trying to keep up contact through email and recognise that this is as important for some parents as it is for their children. Like everyone, we are all doing our best and looking forward to the day when normal service is resumed.

Meanwhile the days have a quiet rhythm to them, and the weather has certainly helped. How lucky we are to be able to leave our desks at six and stride out in the country with the dog. A cheery hello from Carl and Nicky, enjoying the afternoon sunshine at Gate Cottage is now part of every walk. The countryside around Birdingbury is the perfect setting to unwind from the day and the pinging of my phone with another message from the 'village virus group' reminds me that there can be few more better places to be locked down.

*Lisa French*





## Doctor Lizzie Graduates.... and goes

Over a month ago, the government announced that 5000 newly graduated doctors would be joining the NHS immediately to support the Covid-19 healthcare crisis; it was quite a shock first hearing this on the radio whilst driving up the M1! After 6 years of medical school, I was at the time working with the Nottingham Major Trauma team, after my elective (holiday with a bit of medical work!) in Australia had sadly been cancelled, before being due to graduate from the University of Nottingham this July to begin work in London as a junior doctor in August.

We subsequently received an email confirming that we would be graduated two weeks later at the beginning of April- the first peace-time class to be graduating early in the history of our university. I have to say, the prospect was somewhat terrifying! I thought I had at least 5 more months to prepare for working as a doctor! It was also devastating to learn that we would miss our summer graduation, an opportunity to celebrate years of hard work with all our friends and families, which a number of other students in the village are also disappointingly experiencing.

However, the university and BBC One did not disappoint... on the evening before our 'email-graduation', we received a message saying that a surprise was being organised the next day, and to be free during the afternoon for a group Zoom call. So, with Pimms in hand (as I am aware was keenly noticed by many) and a cardboard cap upon my head (thanks mum!), the very patient BBC One Show and our Dean of Medicine filmed our Zoom graduation with over 200 slightly tipsy doctors. It was a privilege to be thought of, and I very proudly watched it being aired later that evening.

I am sat writing this after my first day working as a front-line doctor in south-east London, in one of the worst hit hospitals during this pandemic. I never expected to be moving across the country, alone away from friends and family in a time like this, and whilst it is going to be extremely challenging, I am very proud and grateful that I can support the NHS and this country in its time of need.



I am incredibly thankful for all the support and best wishes from the village. Please, all take care and stay safe.

*Lizzie Morton*

## Pawprints Pop-up



We had this idea to sell a few plants and books outside our houses over the Easter weekend to raise money for the local dog rescue charity, Pawprints. All fundraising events had been cancelled, the kennels were on lockdown, stray and unwanted dogs were still arriving and needing veterinary treatment, food and care. Meetings between prospective adopters and the dogs were impossible and costs were mounting.

The information about the 'pop-up shop' went out on Village Chat, and people out walking stopped to look, buy, and then bring items to sell. We soon realised that the shop needed to look less like a house clearance and more like an official charity activity, so we erected a gazebo and an official Pawprints banner and donned our purple volunteers' t-shirts.

Donations were many and varied, with some taking place solely between villagers, with the stipulation that a donation be made to Pawprints. One day a huge donation of items arrived overnight, the contents of someone's attic, (not a villager: he had bought tomato plants the previous day to keep his father-in-law happy). Cyclists stopped to look, and one bought a jigsaw. Some people became regulars, bringing donations and also buying books, plants, jigsaws, soft toys; anything to keep them occupied during lockdown. Cards and presents were also purchased.

We were asked about the work of the charity. Some happy people who stopped had recently adopted a Pawprints dog, being fortunate to have done so before lockdown. Others were interested in adopting a dog.

We have now raised over £600 and are very grateful for the generosity of the Birdingbury villagers for their donations and for buying items from us.

Anything unsold at the end of our enterprise will go to the Pawprints Charity shop in Albert St, Rugby where they are always grateful for saleable items.

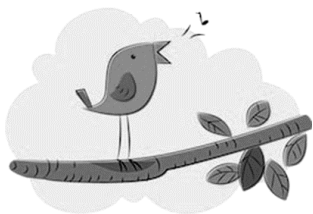
Thank you very much for your generosity and the fun we've had running the shop.

*Barbara Sweet and Chris Kilvington*



## Birdingbury Morning

Four thirty this morning, the chorus was dawning,  
The impatient wind made himself heard,  
The chimes next door, dear Barbara Moore, offered little resistance,  
The geese and the lambs could be heard in the distance.



The new-born day shone through the curtain;  
The blackbird, the loudest, was singing to me.  
No more sleep this morning, of that I was certain  
So stumbled downstairs for a first cup of tea.

*Van Steg Deer*

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## Another Thank You

Well, I have discovered over the last few weeks, the benefit of being an old (well older!) and vulnerable (venerable?) person.

I have received many things: offers of help for shopping and prescription collecting; many, many gifts of jam, fruit, and veg, cakes and biscuits, soups, bread and plants; and because I was on my own on my birthday, many of my neighbours stood outside and sang Happy Birthday and lots of card from all over the village.

Birdingbury, you are the tops!

*Daphne Chippendale.*

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## A Special Mention

In addition to all the messages of thanks that have been sent to the Village Volunteer Support Group, I'm sure everyone will join together in expressing the community's huge appreciation of the roles Karen and Jo are playing.

They run the support network, co-ordinate requests, allocate errands, check folk are ok, call people to cheer them up, send out treats and care deeply for every single member of our community. What golden stars!



# **The Birdingbury Pandemic Experience**

## **What is the Birdingbury Local History Group going to do?**

We are aiming to collect villagers' experiences, thoughts and feelings during this extraordinary time of coronavirus pandemic lockdown and isolation.

## **Why are we doing this?**

In future generations people may ask what was it like in Birdingbury in 2020. Unless these times are recorded the knowledge of what is happening will vanish. When the History Group studied each of the two world wars, we found little information about our own village. Today so much of our communication is on-line and will be even more easily lost.

## **What are we hoping to do?**

We would like villagers to write down how their lives have been affected, even turned around. Aspects might include:

- Loneliness and separation
  - Employment or unemployment
  - Interrupted schooling
  - Community activities
  - Support received and given
  - Keeping in touch/ social media
  - Exercise and shopping
  - Occupying children and yourselves
- How have you dealt with worries and fears?
  - Have you any personal experience of the virus?
  - What are your hopes for the future?

These are just suggestions – you will have your own thoughts and feelings.

We would like contributions from every generation and, very importantly, from children who can send us, of course, drawings, paintings or whatever.

Please write as much or as little as you wish and this can be anonymous or with your name, as you prefer. For more information please contact Chris Barney [chris.barney@btinternet.com](mailto:chris.barney@btinternet.com) or 632094

**How to reply** please email your thoughts to [birdingburyhistory@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:birdingburyhistory@hotmail.co.uk) or drop a paper copy in to Aileen at High Mead, Marton Road.

## **What will happen to it all?**

We will hope to publish the collected experiences for you all but then it will be placed in the village archive for future generations.

*Aileen Withington and Chris Barney*

## Broadband Coverage Information Request

The news that Openreach may begin cabling Frankton this year to offer what is called 'Fibre to the Premises', and the Covid 19 outbreak have both highlighted issues around internet access and appropriate broadband access for villagers. Many may people have contracts that mention the word 'Fibre', the fastest form of Internet access, but unless you or a previous owner of your property have invested in a fibre connection (very expensive), you have what is called 'Fibre to the Cabinet' (the green box near the cross-roads). The signal is carried on copper or aluminium wire from there to your house. There may be some residents who have ADSL connections, but these follow the same routing pattern. What is emerging is that coverage is unequal and there are issues with speeds.

We are now starting to gather information so we can begin to map the village to see if there are particular areas of good and bad coverage. One of our village's strengths is the way we have worked together through the Covid crisis, so it is important to make clear that this exercise is not going to lead to any imposed decisions or expense. At this stage it is simply a fact gathering exercise to give the Parish Council a map of broadband internet coverage, so they can make decisions based on information from everyone, not just a few.

So, to keep it simple, I have set up a website to help collect and collate the required information. We will be most grateful if you could visit the website and complete the questionnaire. Just email me at [birdingburybbsurv@gmail.com](mailto:birdingburybbsurv@gmail.com) and I will send you the link.

The information you provide will be anonymised and grouped by area in the village to give the Parish Council a sense of where there may be hot and cold spots of coverage. This will be made available to everyone. The next phase may be personal interviews.

Of course, you do not need to participate, but it will help everyone if you do!

*Carmel de Nahlik*

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Birdingbury knows  
dissonant togetherness  
clapping by the road  
*Thin Jethro Laskey*





## **Bob Munro Tractor Run 2020**

Regrettably, and despite leaving it to the very last minute, we must now cancel/postpone the tractor run which should have taken place on 27<sup>th</sup> June.

We were waiting for the government announcement on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May regarding the relaxation of lockdown rules before making a final decision and clearly it will not now be possible. We will try to rearrange for later this year but of course this will depend, like everything else, on regaining some certainty and a return to ‘normality’.

Apologies for the disappointment.

*Steve Edgar*

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## **Birdingbury Allotment Society**

The allotment AGM was cancelled due to the current lockdown restrictions, but members were invited to comment on notes issued instead.

After the drought in 2018, last year was more productive. However, winter work was severely restricted due to the persistent rain, with the ground often waterlogged. Better weather in April has allowed members to get their plots into shape and sowing/ planting to commence.

As long as social distancing is maintained, working on allotments is an excellent activity during lockdown, providing both exercise and fresh air as well, of course, resulting in useful vegetables

*Vic Shayler*

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## **And Yet One More**

For all my volunteer shoppers, a huge thank you and a two-metre hug. All I need has been delivered, often with a treat for me and the boys.

From February until now, my heart problem, coping with isolation, and Basil fighting cancer, has at times, been overwhelming. Basil needed the best specialist care to get him through a major difficult operation. One of the best in Europe was in Hertford. A village friend made repeated journeys with Basil and me, the last one, on her own, to bring Basil home. I am so thankful to have her as a valued friend.

My mantra, “shoulders back, head up” doesn’t always work, but I am blessed with help and encouragement from my village family. Thank you for being so kind and generous.

*Josie Price*

## Lockdown Jammers

Since the Jammers first got together in March 2019 at the Club, I don't think there has been a week when at least one Jammer has not been around on a Tuesday or Wednesday evening to play, sing, drink beer or wine and listen to awful jokes (or tell them, Robert).

During the coronavirus lockdown we have continued, thanks to the technical wizardry of Ian Palmer, Andy Duffield, Lewis Cutts, WhatsApp and Zoom. We have learnt to play separately and then to circulate the videos for others to add their bit, sometimes with quite amazing results, considering we are mostly using phones.

It will be absolutely fantastic when we can all get together to play music properly but until then, thanks Jammers for keeping the music alive. Please contact me if you'd like to join in the fun with any ability or instrument.

Apologies to all that we could not hold the Jammers music evening on April 25<sup>th</sup> for obvious reasons, but we have planned a blues and soul evening as soon as rehearsals can be held again, and also have a request for a Country and Western evening to follow.

*Steve Edgar*

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## Keeping Birdingbury Tidy

One of the main expenses for the Parish Council is paying for the verges in and around the village to be cut, as well as the playing field. We pay for a set number of mows a year so sometimes the verges can get a little shaggy between cuts, depending on the amount of sun & rain we've had. I know that some people also cut the verges near their house which is great, but if you collect the cuttings please can you dispose of them on a compost heap or in a green bin and not leave them near the verge. If they are left in drainage ditches, for example, they'll create a problem over time. Thanks.

Barbara, whose mother (Mrs Perry) used to live at Springside on Main Street, reported that she and her husband came to cut the lawns and found poo bags dumped in their front garden. This is particularly galling as the house is right opposite the dog waste bin! She asked that people be reminded of the unpleasant impact of this behaviour on the part of some irresponsible dog owners. Meanwhile, a big thank you to the walkers / dog-walkers who do a litter pick whenever they're out.

Let's keep Birdingbury clean and safe for residents, children and visiting maintenance personnel. Every little helps!

*Guy French Chair, Birdingbury Parish Council*

## #Birdingburylockdownphotos Competition

I had the idea for a photo competition from looking at a lovely picture of one of my grandchildren as a toddler and thought it might be an idea for a diversion during the coronavirus lockdown. I needed some help on the technical side and for the eventual judging. Two names immediately sprang to mind; Morgan Thomas, who has won awards for his landscape photographs and Matt Markham, who had shown great skill and artistry in placing villagers faces into the cover of the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper album.

We chose five categories for the photos as follows:

- Village
- Family
- Isolation
- Landscape
- Hope

and in three age ranges:

0 to 11

12 to 18

18 plus

The competition runs until 31<sup>st</sup> May, so there may be time for more entries after you read this. We already have an impressive portfolio of pictures but cannot have too many. We are, however, short of photos from the younger age groups, so lend the kids your phone and send them out. Ha!

Please post your pictures with the hashtag #birdingburylockdownphotos to the 'Birdingbury Village' facebook group or to Whatsapp group 'Birdingbury Photos' or mail to [mattmarkham@hotmail.com](mailto:mattmarkham@hotmail.com)

We are not looking for technical perfection, rather artistic interpretation.

Thanks, and we hope you have fun snapping away, there is certainly a lot of subject matter in the village.

*Steve Edgar*

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## Welcome to Birdingbury!

A big, if somewhat belated, welcome to new villagers Dave and Julie Neal, who have moved into Valley View Stables on the Stockton Road. We hope you will be very happy in your new home and that the 'Daughters' enjoy their visits.

*Steve Edgar*

## Reading Group

Lit by lamplight  
And by firelight glazed,  
A reader,  
In a line of prose,  
Draws out integrity's  
Quiet thread.

A pulse of meaning  
Moves the common mind  
And makes an honesty  
Of the inner kind.



Travelled hand,  
The timeless text,  
Arcane delights  
His spirit knew.

And souls born  
Not of earth or stars  
Stand softly  
By those weathered walls,  
Where friendliness  
Hid now its awkwardness  
And sought  
In understanding stealth  
A pathway  
To the book's deep wealth.

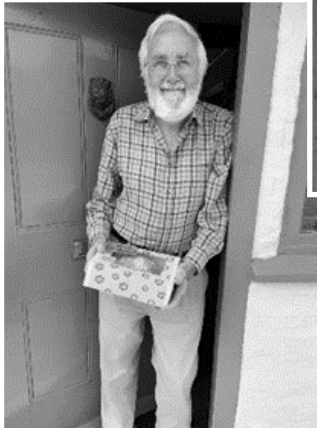
So that if a foreign face  
Should find their gaze,  
In vagrant sympathy of time,  
Good grace in them  
That stranger took,  
Who came and went  
With scarce a look.

Then seated he  
As one in darkness might  
Be clear  
In paragraphs of night.

## Birdingbury Calendar

Pop-up events are being organised on a week by week basis. So do keep checking the Facebook pages for Birdingbury Village and Birdingbury Club. The village website and community notice board in the bus shelter will continue to capture community messages.

Meanwhile, here are some photos of happy customers!



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