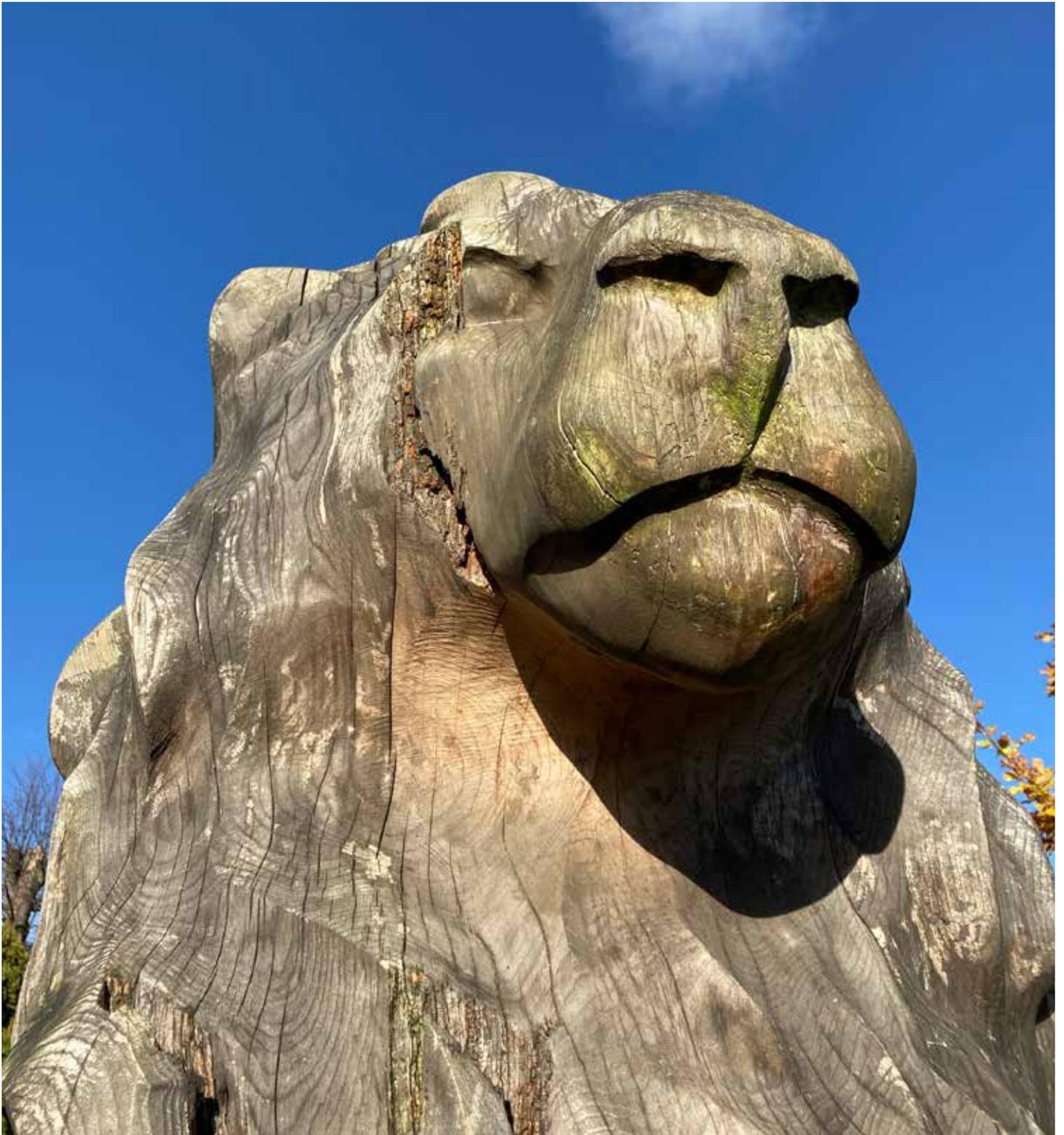


HEADINGTON

OCCASIONAL

ISSUE 7, Winter 2021/22

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



the OCCASIONAL comment

All the annual events in the calendar come with an in-built one-year notice period but so many of them still seem to catch us unaware. We can guarantee that on 24 December there will be a flurry of last-minute shopping and present-buying. For many of us the search for the one roll of Sellotape in the house only begins on Christmas Eve.

As we have demonstrated all too well over the past couple of years, it is a struggle for the Occasional to get to grips with anything approaching a deadline but this time we have done our best to make sure that our inaugural seasonal gift guide arrived on doormats before the turkey arrived on the table. We hope it will serve as an illustration of the wide variety of produce and products that is available on our doorstep.

We also hope it will provide a small showcase for the diverse businesses and services that make Headington what it is. It was great fun to visit so many of them as we compiled our letter to Santa. Each of them is working hard to win our custom and, as important elements of what makes Headington what it is, they all deserve our support.

One of the founding principles of the Occasional was that in Headington there is a story behind every door. Paul Anderson at Sandfield Guest House served to illustrate the concept superbly. We dropped in expecting a discussion focused on the marketing and metrics of a small business but we had not banked on stories of tango in Buenos Aires, Caribbean pirates, the physics of loading an RAF transporter plane, to name but a few, that would highlight the need for more pages in subsequent issues.

It was a breathless tale of adventure that vindicated our assumptions of finding a story at every turn. If you think you know someone who can match it, do get in touch.

Barney Jonny
Barney Kemp and Jonny Ives

Under the shark

HEADINGTON FAIRTRADE SPREADS ITS WINGS AND GOES DOWNHILL
Headington Fairtrade has been an essential part of our local high street since 2010 but the time was bound to come when it had to spread its wings and head down the hill.

Who could resist the lure of the Covered Market at Christmas? Headington Fairtrade was very excited to be offered the opportunity of opening a pop-up shop in the market and grabbed the chance. It means that the Hf team is now able to offer non-Headingtonians access to their range of fairly traded craft, toys, food, cards and household items.

The London Road shop will still be open for all your usual festive and non-festive needs but now you will also be able to find them down in the market, just next to the Oxford Cobbler. They will be delighted to see you.

SEASONAL SHOPPING UNDER THE SHARK
Our friends at Headington Fairtrade are also in no small measure responsible for the Occasional guide to seasonal local shopping that appears elsewhere in this issue.

What now seems like many months ago, they let us know about the arrival of their Christmas stock and when we dropped in to say hello their extensive range of gifts, clothing and things of general usefulness reminded us of how much of our present-buying duties could be discharged under the shark.

With this in mind, we wandered slightly further afield and, venturing into the shops of Headington, found bounty at every turn. From handmade socks to satellite-linked smart watches, from beard care to bandidos, our eyes were opened anew to the purchasing possibilities provided by Headington's shops and businesses.

We are grateful to them all for indulging us during our wide-eyed visits and it is worth mentioning that the selection in this issue is ours

alone, which is why it may seem to be such a bizarre mix of items.

And how best to describe a bandido? It's a strange bit of kit beloved by cyclists when things get chilly; a sort of scarf-cum-headband that can be worn round the neck, over the ears, as a face covering or a hat. The ones with the VeloVixen logo as a pattern are our personal favourites.

ELFINS WOODCRAFT FOLK SEEK NEW LEADERS TO CONTINUE A CENTURY (ISH) OF TRADITION
If you go down the woods today, or indeed if you are among the foliage with any sort of regularity, you may be able to help one of Headington's very special youth groups.

Headington's local Woodcraft Folk group is seeking adult volunteers to help lead and develop their Elfins group of 6 to 9 year-olds. As Jodie McMinn, one of the Woodcraft leaders, explained, it is a great opportunity to get involved in your local community and support young people to become confident and independent.

"Woodcraft Folk is a co-operative youth movement open to everyone," Jodie said. "We support children

Wouldn't it be great, they wondered, if there was a day dedicated to mince pies? Not half, seems to have been the general response.

to take the lead and change their world through weekly group activities and camping trips. Woodcraft Folk activities develop children's understanding and respect of the world around them. We've been running since 1925 and we're still going strong!"

In Headington, the Elfins group meets weekly in term time at the Headington Quarry Village Hall so being a Woodcraft Folk leader requires a commitment of around 2-3 hours per week.

"It is an incredibly rewarding experience," Jodie said. "Full training is provided and you'll be joining a fun and supportive community in Oxford."

Contact Jodie on 07913 634038 or email headingtonelfins@gmail.com. Remember to ask whether Elfins safety is part of the training programme. Jodie will be disappointed if you don't.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH MINCE PIE MONDAY
Another of Headington's great institutions, Sobell House, has set a tempting challenge as part of their seasonal fund-raising campaign. Wouldn't it be great, they wondered, if there was a day dedicated to mince pies? Not half, seems to have been the general response. Mince pie aficionados looking for an excuse to get stuck in will certainly need no second bidding.

On 13 December you can take part in Mince Pie Monday by hosting a festive fundraiser in aid of Sobell House. You could host a mince pie coffee morning with friends, a mince pie bake off at work or even a bake sale at school.

Sobell House was founded in 1974 at the Churchill Hospital to make sure that excellent palliative and end-of-life care is available to everybody in our community who needs it. Now they are helping around 500 people at any one time, offering care and support to patients, their families and their friends. Every pound raised will help Sobell House to care for more people over the festive season.

Visit the 'find an event' page online at Sobellhouse.org to sign up for a fund-raising pack for Mince Pie Monday and a range of other Sobell House events.

REOPENED MUSEUM REMEMBERS TO LOOK UP THE HILL
Covid may have got in the way but the Museum of Oxford has reopened after its recent £2.8m refurbishment.

Situated in the town hall, the museum is notable for its focus on the city rather than the university. The refurbishment project extended the space available for exhibitions and group activities, with some 750

items and artefacts now on display, around three times more than had previously been able to be shown.

As Vanessa Lea, the museum's operations officer, pointed out, the story of the city is about industry as much as academia. "There's so much more to Oxford than the university," Vanessa said. "It's about people who live here, work here, and play here, so we're looking at Oxford's entertainment history and sporting history."

Anyone dropping into the town hall (through the main doors, first right) to visit the museum will find plenty of fascinating and engaging stories among the exhibits but of particular interest to any passing Headingtonian might be one of the items of sporting memorabilia on display. There in all its golden glory is the shirt of Headington United, forerunner of Oxford United and subject of at least one of Headington's blue plaques.

JENNER INSTITUTE LOOKING FOR HELP WITH A NEW CHALLENGE
Having been at the forefront of developing vaccines in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Jenner Institute is naturally looking for a

new challenge and, sad to report, it seems they have plenty of options.

While no one is suggesting that we are out of the Covid woods yet, plenty of the viruses that were regular visitors to the headlines have not gone away and still need the attention of the world's leading vaccinolo-

There in all its golden glory is the shirt of Headington United, forerunner of Oxford United and subject of at least one of Headington's blue plaques.

gists, many of whom just happen to be situated in Headington.

Ebola is now firmly on the Jenner Institute's to-do list and they are seeking volunteers to join the new Ebola vaccine trial. If you are 18-55 you may be eligible to participate and compensation for time, travel and inconvenience in the region of £370 is available.

For more details, visit the Jenner Institute online at www.jenner.ac.uk/volunteer, where you can find out more about the clinical vaccine trials in Oxford, hear from our volunteers about their experiences of participating in a trial, and read commonly asked questions in the FAQ page.

JOYRIDERS OFFER REGULAR MONTHLY RIDES

Following the positive and enthusiastic response from women in Headington and across the city wanting some help and support to ride their bikes, Joyriders have announced a regular ride starting at Barton.

These rides will take place on the last Saturday of the month with a meeting point of the Barton side of the Northway underpass near the Green Road roundabout. The rides will start at 9.30am and

head towards Jericho via some of the quieter roads and routes. These women-only rides are specifically designed for those who can ride at around 8-10mph and are comfortable on quiet roads.

Joyriders is a women's cycling group for people who might want to get more confidence, meet new people, find new routes or get to know the city a better. They offer rides, training and support for women at all points in their own cycling journeys, from complete beginner through to experienced cyclist, and would be pleased to hear from you.

If you would like to take part visit Oxford Joyriders on Eventbrite to

book your free place or email them at info.oxford@joyridersbritain.org.

MARKET HEADS FOR MID-WEEK SLOT AHEAD OF CHRISTMAS
Headington Market will stepping out from its usual Saturday schedule to hold an additional Christmas market on Wednesday 22 December.

All the usual stalls will be there and you can find contact details for all the traders on the Headington Market website should you wish to make sure of your order.

Head online to find them at www.headingtonmarket.org.

TRAILS BRING SOME LIGHT DURING THE DARKEST MONTHS

The Oxford Christmas Light Festival was officially launched in November, marking the start of a series of local light events and displays across the city. Headington of course played its part, thanks to the efforts of Headington Action and all the local businesses and organisations that help them in their efforts on behalf of the community.

You can find details of all the city's local displays, including details of events and tips on lantern making, origami and projection, on the festival's website, which is at www.oxlightfest.com.



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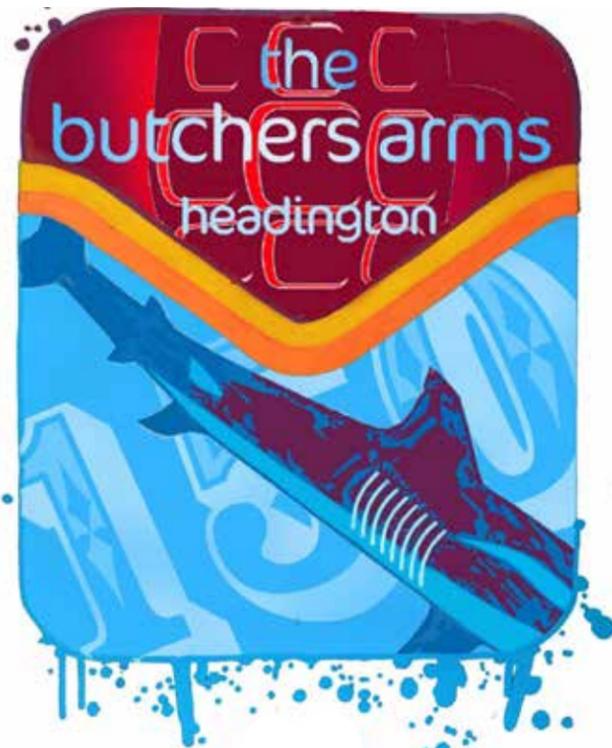
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THE HEADINGTON OCCASIONAL EXPLAINED

The Headington Occasional is an independent magazine for Headington. Written, produced and printed locally, the Headington Occasional immerses itself in everything that makes Headington one of Oxford's most vibrant and interesting areas.

The Occasional emerged from numerous conversations about the innumerable stories that were waiting to be written about Headington if only there were a magazine that would publish them. Notoriously slow on the uptake, we eventually realised that we could, and would have to, do it ourselves. The result is a publication dedicated to all the things about, and of interest to, everybody and everything that happens in and around Headington, including occasional reference to its rather grander neighbour down the hill.

Inspired by the people, institutions, organisations and businesses that make Headington what it is, the Headington Occasional provides news, features, comment and reviews to explore and promote the many events, initiatives and personalities that combine to make Headington an exciting and thriving community. The Occasional endeavours to discuss and celebrate the achievements of everything and everyone – including the universities, hospitals and schools, the businesses, groups and gatherings – that play a part in making Headington such an interesting place to live, work and study.

And of course we don't do it by ourselves. A great deal of thanks is owed to a great many people who have helped the Occasional get this far. Particular thanks to our subscribers, contributors, advertisers and host distributors but also to everyone who has offered their support and encouragement. We could not do it without you.

Our aim is to be informative and entertaining in approximately equal measure but we are always open to ideas, suggestions and contributions to help us get closer to the target.

Thank you again for your enthusiasm and your support. J&B

THE HEADINGTON OCCASIONAL AT LARGE

CONTACT US

Email us via office@theoccasional.co.uk, post envelopes through the door of either 1 New Cross Road or 45 Stephen Road. If you spot them in the wild, Barney and Jonny are also happy to be accosted at any point on any journey, especially when they're on a bike with head down and lights on. Facemasks are no barrier to their identities.

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Invest £10 to join our list of subscribers and receive every issue we can produce in a year hand-delivered by bike to your door. Invest £20 if you would like your Occasional posted elsewhere or if you're feeling generous. Fill in the form in this issue or go to www.theoccasional.co.uk where you can subscribe online with a couple of clicks.

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Put your name under the noses of a highly discerning readership with one of our very affordable ad packages. Ads available from £15. The full rate card and media pack is available on the Occasional website.

LET US KNOW

Send details of all your events, groups and initiatives for our directory pages to 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 where you can find out more about us and what we're up to.

WWW.THEOCCASIONAL.CO.UK

THE OCCASIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE



Annette Pattinson

Translator and Joyriders organiser

How do you describe what you do?

By day I'm a translator, translating German into English mainly for legal and financial publications. My

main extracurricular activity is as a volunteer for Joyriders, which is a women's cycling group, or rather a group for women who want to cycle more in company. It's for people who might want to get more confidence, meet new people, find new routes or get to know the

city a better. It started May 2021 so been going about six months.

How did you find your way to Headington?

In a way it was all about the bike. We moved to back to England after seven years in Munich and, living in a small town in Hertfordshire, I felt totally stranded by the car. We wanted to move somewhere we could go back to using the bike for everyday life. Although I had never cycled before we went to Munich, when we moved back to the UK I really missed it.

We had lived in middle of Munich and missed living the city. Back in the UK we really missed the connection of being in the middle of a community and being able to walk and cycle. We felt totally trapped by not being able to get around the immediate area easily.

Not knowing much about cycling in the UK, I thought of the stereotypical cycling cities of Oxford and Cambridge, and Cambridge was too far away. I knew Oxford had a reputation as a cycling city but there were more practical reasons for being in Headington: I work from home but my husband, Gordon, was working in Hertfordshire so we needed to be this side of the city.

We arrived in Oxford in 2013 with three small girls. Not wanting to have to get in a car every time we wanted to go anywhere, we got a cargo bike – a Babboe trike – that we could get all the kids in. That was brilliant because you can go right up the door of the museum, or wherever you want to go, without having to park a car and drag three toddlers through the city.

What is the best thing about Headington?

Definitely the people and the community. You always see someone you know when you're walking around. Living in Headington is the first time I've really experienced it because I grew up on an A road so my whole life as a kid was being ferried from place to place in a car. This is the first time I've ever really felt that connection with a community.



What would make Headington better?

Headington has amazing shops and cafes but it needs some greenery along the main shopping area to shield pedestrians from the road, some sort of green screen to improve the look of the central area. The pavements are cluttered and it needs to be easier for people to walk and wheel. It needs a fresh look. Our shops aren't shown off to best advantage and some greenery and a rethink would benefit everybody. Places grow piecemeal over many years until none of it really fits together and Headington needs to be redesigned to make better sense of the different levels and the seating areas, for example. Foliage really can make you feel protected and it also absorbs a lot of traffic noise.

Where do you take visitors to show Oxford at its best?

Of course we haven't had any visitors for ages but we usually get on the bus to the High Street and walk through Christchurch Meadow, then through the centre to see the sights. It is easy to forget how beautiful the city is. University Parks are always worth a visit and of course we make sure to see the shark on the way to the bus stop.

What would be a perfect day off?

A nice walk through South Park and Headington Hill Park to take in a matinee at the Ultimate Picture Palace. If we wanted to go further we could cycle along the river for lunch and then end up at one of Headington's pubs for the evening. ●



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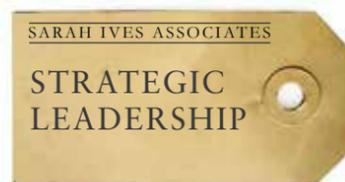
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PERSPECTIVES GIVING AND RECEIVING

Gifts and how to give them

Barney Kemp

You'd be forgiven for associating giving with negativity these days; giving up, giving in, not giving a damn are all understandable approaches to life in 2021. And then there's the word's connection with the generous passing-on of an infectious disease, or the sibling gift of a black eye following the hurling of an Atari controller with unexpected accuracy. Sorry Sis.

But Christmas is just a few weeks away, so let's focus on the positive aspect. With origins in the King James Bible, the admittedly misquoted "It's better to give than to

A book request results in a magazine subscription. Chocolates? Medjool dates. And 'Sony portable CD player in black' becomes 'Sanyo not-portable cassette player'. In white.

Gingerly unwrapping this, the accompanying narrative of "Well, you said you wanted (insert requested gift) but the man in the shop said (insert sales drivel)" did not promise delight. That said, my response was, of course, gracious. After all, who was I to suggest accompanying hiss, spontaneously unraveling tape and slow, drawing lyrics from

Somehow liberated during routine family Sunday lunches, it was bundled secretly away, re-wrapped and re-gifted a few weeks later. I was forced to wear it for photographs, one of which remains; standing awkwardly in an attempt to prevent any scratchy parts touching my skin, the impossibly bright, jazzy and multi-colored bauble design radiating from the picture brings to mind the Chernobyl disaster. I brought the madness to an end one year when I had no choice but to douse it in lighter fluid and burn it.

All that aside, it's Christmas so let's take joy from whatever horrifying presents our family and friends hand over. Do your expectant best to look delighted with the unwrapped result, and you'll bring them happiness. Then when they've gone, you can wrap it up again and take virtuous delight from donating it to one of Headington's charity shops, who will in turn be delighted and say, "Thank you." Maybe.

They might also say, "Sorry, we're not taking scratchy, misshapen, radioactive jumpers at the moment." •

The impossibly bright, jazzy and multi-colored bauble design radiating from the picture brings to mind the Chernobyl disaster... I had no choice but to douse it in lighter fluid and burn it.

receive" offers virtuous standing for the gift-giver and an all-round glow of righteous delight. But is that the case regardless of gift?

Irrespective of how specific you think you're being, family interpretation of your present requests can become muddled in translation. Ask for a hat, you might receive gloves.

overtight spools were being superseded by Compact Discs?

I'd also had good practice. For a few consecutive birthdays, my aunt gave me the same hand-knitted jumper, wrapped in the same 'Happy Christmas' paper. It wasn't just another jumper: it was the same jumper.

Gifts and how to receive them

Jonny Ives

It is better to give than receive, they say. And why do they say it? Because giving is much easier than receiving.

The giving of a gift requires little more than the application of funds. In contrast, being on the receiving end is a real test of character, preparation and your ability to perform.

Accepting a gift demands skills that need to be learned and refined over years of birthdays and anniversaries, to say nothing of a lifetime of national, cultural and religious

will ensure that you do not drop the ball, either literally or figuratively.

First, you have to be ready to receive. Prepare to accept this gift graciously and generously whatever it is that eventually lands in your lap.

Remember that this gift arrives with all good intentions. It is a gesture of love and friendship, or at the very least a grudging recognition of some sort of obligation. Be ready to acknowledge the thought, care and time invested in the process, rather than focusing on the horror in your hands.

seem to your loved ones during the rest of the year and how difficult it must be for them to find something to your liking.

After you have paused to reflect, it is time express your appreciation. Make sure the first thing you say is not, "Oh my god, what were you thinking?" or "What in the name of Merckx am I going to do with that?" The phrase you're looking for is, "Thank you. That's very kind."

You might also give some thought to advanced preparation. The odd hint ("Wow, that's going on the list!")

or subtle warning ("I think I've finally hit peak sock") is often appreciated if delivered in plenty of time. Should you choose to employ an emissary ("Tell Daddy to tell Santa that Mummy would

really like one of these"), make sure they have been properly briefed. There is a world of difference between Birkin bags and Birkenstocks that may well get lost in translation.

But whatever it is you are unwrapping, repeat after me: "Thank you. That's very kind." Write it down if you have to. •

Remember that this gift arrives with all good intentions. It is a gesture of love and friendship, or at the very least a grudging recognition of some sort of obligation. Be ready to acknowledge the thought, care and time invested in the process.

festivals littering the calendar to further test your ability to be calm, polite and restrained.

Gift-receiving is a test of temperament like no other. When the time comes to acknowledge this kind gesture and begin the all-too-public ceremony of the receiving of the gift, there are a range of skills that

Next, take a little time to process. Remember the occasion and the circumstances. This as much about the giver as the receiver at a time when friends and family have come together, either in person or remotely, to share this ceremony of gift-giving. Reflect on what a miserable and ungrateful sod you must

There are, they say, two sides to every story and the story of Sandfield Guest House is a case in point.

On one hand, it is a tale of a family home that became a guest house with the business being taken on and continued by the next generation. On the other, it's the story of travel and homecoming, international law and logistics, social media innovation and how to build a Mini, to say nothing of tango and pirates.

We will get to the pirates later but for now Paul Anderson, the proprietor and manager of Sandfield Guest House, starts us at the beginning.

"The story starts before I was born," he says. "My mother finished university and got a job teaching at St Joseph's, exactly 50 years, give or take a couple of weeks, before my son started at the same school. Dad got a job at Oxford Instruments and at some point they managed to buy a house on Ash Grove."

Sticking to their principle of buying the worst house in the best area, the Andersons then moved to Staunton Road and again to the house on the corner of London Road and Sandfield Road. Somewhere along the line Paul's dad joined the Navy.

"My first recollection of Oxford is coming back from Washington DC, where we'd spend two or three years, to Staunton Road," Paul says. "My sister and I went into St Jo's and in 1986 – on Assumption Day – we moved across to this building. At the time it was a four-bed house needing a huge amount of work."

Over the years and between postings Paul's parents put in a lot of work and, with Paul and his sister away at school thanks to his father's naval career, and then away at university, the family home also became, for various periods of time, a guest house.

Meanwhile, Paul studied law at the London School of Economics and, coming back to Oxford, did a masters in international trade law at Brookes.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do but I did know that I didn't want to be a lawyer so I got an office job at BMW in the procurement department," he says. "I tried to make myself indispensable and that's how I became a buyer for BMW. I then got a job offer from a company supplying equipment to all sorts of industries for the just-in-time process. A role in purchasing became logistics, then distribution and supply chain management."

Wanting to travel, and having discovered that his boss was not familiar with

the concept of a sabbatical, Paul handed in his notice and bought a one-way ticket to South America. The plan was to spend six months South America, improving his Spanish and working on his tango along the way.

"I went backpacking round the continent and then fell in love with Brazil," Paul says. "I absolutely loved it. I had met some Norwegians who had learned how to sail by buying a boat and, in search of a bit of adventure, I offered to crew for them. I arranged to meet them in Trinidad and then three hours after getting on the boat we were attacked by pirates. Not quite knowing what to do next, I went back with my tail between my legs to this tiny village on the north east coast of Brazil where I had been living and stayed there for two years."

With his parents wondering what to do with a big old house, Paul headed back to Oxford with a plan to take up a job

offer back at BMW. However, with his parents keen to down-size, Paul juggled some finances and took it on.

"The house needed re-establishing as a guest house but we put some work in and I opened for business. Since then – it was 2009 so 12 years ago now – I've been hosting guests and absolutely loving it. It's the best job I've ever had."

The house was extended in 2016 and along the way Paul also

got married to Sarah, started a family and built a profile as something of a marketing innovator in the hospitality and accommodation sector. However, he admits that at the outset he was not quite as prepared as he might have been.

"When it came to a business plan, I didn't really have one," he laughs. "But I did know that Headington is well connected and very busy. Thousands of people come to work here every day. There are six hospitals within a 15-minute walk and two universities on my doorstep."

"So I just started really. I cleaned up the sign and hung it outside. I woke up the website my dad had designed, added faster wifi and a fire system, and then learned as I went along."

"Having worked in Café Noir in Headington during my university holidays and with my experience of travelling, I thought I had a fairly good idea of what service looked like from the customer's perspective and went from there."

While Paul has put great effort into the guest experience, it turned out that what might have been limitations also worked to his advantage.

"The layout of the house means that

"When it came to a business plan, I didn't really have one but I did know that Headington is well connected and very busy. Thousands of people come to work here every day."

Paul Anderson Bringing it all back home to Headington

Since the 1980s the Sandfield Guest House has been home to three generations of the Anderson family, as well as offering a home from home to a great many of Headington's visitors. The Occasional books in for the fascinating story of how the house, the business and the people have been shaped by family, opportunity and adventure.



there are only two double rooms and the rest are singles," he says. "But this proved to be good for visitors whose partners were in hospital having babies, stents, new hips, or whatever. We are able to provide somewhere really comfortable to stay in easy walking distance of where they need to be."

"Before Covid that was the bread of my trade. The butter was academics coming a few nights a week to teach. The jam was business visitors – it is easy to forget that there's a lot of industry going on here – and then the clotted cream would be tourists. The tourists have only ever been a small part of our business – never more than 8% – and most of those tourists were actually touring. For example, someone used to drive from Holland every couple of years in a Morris 1000 to stay with us on their trip round the UK."

Covid-19 came along to put a massive spanner in the works, bringing huge uncertainty, very few visitors and stringent new working practices but it also gave Paul some time to reflect on how his business might be able to survive.

"When we first started a dozen years ago online travel agents didn't really exist," Paul recalls. "Booking.com might have started but TripAdvisor was still a review site then. I was designing and printing brochures, taking them to the tourist information centres, into the hospitals and the colleges."

"Although my motto had always been 'work hard and advertise', I realised after the first lockdown that I had stopped advertising. Although I had begun to get some traction on Trip Advisor and I had a Facebook page with basic information and link to the website, I had just sort of stopped doing it."

During lockdown a five-day crash course on accommodation marketing offered insight to the scale of social media and its impact on how customer-focused businesses can now operate. It also emphasised the value of getting customers to book direct rather than through a third-party website.

"I did the course and when I dialled up my Facebook presence I saw my reach and engagement shoot up," Paul says. "I realised that this was a really powerful way to get my brand in front of thousands of people so I set about upgrading the website and got a Twitter account. I was familiar with Instagram through an interest in photography and the creativity, along with the technical aspect of how the algorithm works, really appealed

to me. It's in my nature is to be quite task-focused and, with Instagram getting the biggest response and not much else going on during lockdown, I got a bit obsessed with it."

As his interest grew, so too did his following and engagement across the various platforms. Guest house owners across the UK and then internationally began to follow the Sandfield Guest House online and ask questions regarding accommodation marketing and management. This led to requests for presentations to online conferences and a growing profile in the field of hospitality marketing under the brand of The Social Media Hotelier.

"At some point I realised that, with all this interest, perhaps I might be fairly good at this," Paul says. "At the very least I know what I know now and I know what I wish I had known a year ago. In two years time I suppose I'll know what I wish I knew today. People now find me on Insta via the @thesocialmediahotelier handle and I'm very happy to share my experience."

Paul always knew that the transition from lockdown to whatever a post-Covid crisis environment will look like would be difficult but he remains optimistic, if realistic, about the prospects of a swift return to former levels of business.

"I was OK under Covid because I'm a one-man band," he says. "My wife works in charity finance and I run the business on my own so I didn't have to furlough anyone and I could keep on trucking."

"So much of what I do as a guest house is not really about a bed and a breakfast, a room and a radiator and a shower," he says. "It's about comfort. So if I'm going to stand any chance of getting hospital visitors back I need to hold on to that very firmly. People with relatives undergoing surgery or procedures are probably going to be nervous so I need to make them as comfortable as possible."

If the last 18 months have been like trying to feel a way in the dark, Paul can at least now see a way forward.

"I am optimistic about the future," he says. "Whether or not this house and I are the right fit, only time will tell but I am optimistic on a personal level. I have so much to be grateful for and I'm fortunate enough to have a skill set and an entrepreneurial sense that means I can be quite agile. People will continue to travel to Oxford and people will continue to need somewhere to stay, so we'll see what the future holds." •

"So much of what I do as a guest house is not really about a bed and a breakfast, a room and a radiator and a shower. It's about comfort and to get visitors back I need to hold on to that very firmly."

The Occasional guide to seasonal shopping

When it comes to Christmas shopping, or whenever you're looking for a special something for a special someone, there is a good chance that you will find it in OX3. Here's just a few of the things that have caught our eye under the shark, so think before you click and let's go local.

HEADINGTON FAIRTRADE

has a whole host of gift ideas from among its vast range of fairly traded products. These **funky woollen socks** (1) are handmade in Nepal and are ideal for the cold winter nights, equally chilly days and lounging around the house. Hand-crocheted by a Fair Trade organisation in Nepal that is actively promoting the training and employment of stigmatised and marginalised members of their society. From £15.95. **A wide range of cushions, including these (2) in a peacock design.** Silk-screen printed by hand on cotton. Choose from cover-only or including cushion pad. £10.95 – £15.95. These gorgeous **Christmas baubles** (3) are handmade from recycled glass and finished with silver paint to give a vintage feel. Various sizes and designs. Made by Noah's Ark in India, a fantastic member of both the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO) and Fair Trade Forum India. From £4.95.

Wear your caffeine-loving heart on your sleeve with a **hoodie** (4) from **NEW GROUND**, Headington's own ethically driven speciality coffee roasters. Available in a variety of coffee-appropriate colours (ie black or white). £27.

Cafe, chocolatier and purveyor of temptation, **COCO NOIR** has a range of very stylish Christmas offerings, including **beautifully presented Amaretti Del Chiostro** (5) – "Simple, elegant, scrumptious," says Majid – at £12. These **Coco Noir Chocolate Sensations** (6) come with a recommended daily dose and a warning: "This product is known to be highly addictive." Worth the risk at £5. There's also a whole range of panettone, including classic, chocolate, limoncello and amoretti flavours, from £15. Stroopwafels in a presentation box of 40 for £12, and of course there's always the option of a personalised chocolate advent calendar.

YOUNGMANS has been keeping Oxford well groomed since 1932, which has inspired the rather beautiful branding for their range of **hair, beard, shave and skin products** (7). Skincare products are all natural and handmade in Devon. Gift packs come presented in a very attractive velvet bag. Products from £6.95.



As well as excellent coffee, at **IL BOTANICO** they have **tartufone** (8) at £12.99, plus panettone for all tastes, budgets and appetites.

ICE hairdressing has a variety of **gift packs** (9), offering cruelty-free and vegan-friendly products from Kevin Murphy and Davines. Who could resist the gift of Tangle Me Not or Angels Have Wings? Presentation boxes from £45.

This **epic fire-lighting kit** (10) from **YOU LIGHT MY FIRE** is a must for anyone with outdoorsy tendencies. With original period labels, the kit has all the essentials to get the flames going. Includes: a Ferrocerium rod and striker; Lifeboat matches; fireball and kapok that lights easily and burns fast; fatwood kindling with high resin content that lights even when wet. £10 per kit. Lovingly assembled within sight of the shark by local artisans. Sardines not included. Find them online at youlightmyfire on Etsy.com with 20% off for OX3 purchasers and free local delivery. Add code 'Striker' at checkout (until the end of 2021).

A fixture of Headington's vibrant retail offer for more than 25 years, **MONACO** has an extensive selection of jewellery, including **earrings, bangles and necklaces** (11) to suit all tastes, styles and budgets. They have a fabulous range of scarves from £12 and may well be able to tempt you with velvet jeans and pinafors for a little bit of festive luxury.

It is hard to think of Christmas in Headington without a visit to **FROG ORANGE**. Teeming with cards, wrapping, balloons and banners, this is a cornucopia of present ideas and options. Walking



balloon animals start at £11 and this **after-dinner music quiz** (12) will spur conversation, entertainment and bafflement around the table throughout the holiday period. £22.

It is always time to get active and never too late to start. **UP AND RUNNING** is our local running store and provides everything you might need to begin your own fitness journey. Whether you are thinking of gifts for an uncertain novice or an ultramarathon aficionado, Up and Running has a whole selection of kit and equipment to fit the bill. The **Garmin Forerunner smart watch range** (13) retails from £159.99 and offers all the tracking and personal data you could ever want, need or make sense of. Also in store are yoga and fitness mats, resistance bands and tread rollers for deep tissue massage. Bottles, hats, gloves, socks and a full range of shoes and running wear mean that you may not even notice the After-shokz sports headphones (£79.99), which will make light work of heavy workloads.

VELOVIXEN is the home of women's cycling with an international reputation for quality and service but did you know that it's a Headington-based business? You can browse the huge range of brilliant gift ideas for the female cyclist in your life at www.velovixen.com. The **distinctive VeloVixen logo** (14) is now adorning a variety of very giftable kit, including towels, bandidos, arm warmers and base layers, plus a whole raft of socks,



15



16

gloves and hats to keep everyone on the road. In addition you can get 10% off all non-discounted products with code **HEADINGTEN** until the end of 2021.

What better way to raise a toast under the shark than with something special from Headington's very own distillery. **THE OXFORD ARTISAN DISTILLERY**, known to all its many friends as **TOAD**, has a seasonally adjusted range that offers a selection of gifts including collectible limited edition flasks, tour vouchers and miniature collections. As well as the **Ashmolean dry gin** (£31.60) and the **Oxford Botanic Gardens Physic gin** (£27.96) (15) **TOAD** can also tempt you with a full range of whiskies and vodkas. Who could resist a Christmas Pudding Rye under the tree? The **Oxford Artisan Distillery Gin Collection** offers a full tasting experience in the shape of four 5cl measures of **TOAD's** best selling gins all made from ancient heritage grains grown especially for **TOAD** in fields within 50 miles of Oxford (£24).

Headington-based **ALTIPLANO** has recently introduced a brand-new range of **beautifully crafted wallets** (16) handmade in Columbia. Named after the high plains of South America where they are made, the wallets are created in small batches by some of the continent's most skilled leather workers. Designed to carry all those cards you need every day, Altiplano wallets will be available at the Headington market and the Brookes fair in the run-up to Christmas. ●



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DIRECTORY LOCAL GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS

THE ARCHWAY FOUNDATION

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Contact: 01865 790552 or office@archwayfoundation.org.uk
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

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

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
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 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

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

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

HEADINGTON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Running the Headington Community Centre on Gladstone Road, home to a



CYCLOX

The voice of cycling in Oxford, moving towards a healthier and safer city for all. Now a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO), Cyclox campaigns for better infrastructure and more investment in cycling, aiming to put cycling at the heart of Oxford's future. Cyclox collaborates with key decision-makers to put cycling on the public agenda; partner with active travel and low-carbon groups; and engage with the local community to inform, encourage, and support change. Local Cyclox champions also form a network of support and expertise across the city.
www.cyclox.org

wide range of groups, clubs and activities every day of the week.
www.headingtoncommunitycentre.org

HEADINGTON LIVEABLE STREETS

Working to promote low-traffic neighbourhoods in Headington. Vision of community-led liveable streets, including thriving community and street life; buoyant local businesses, clean air, safer and quieter streets. Join HLS to support its aims; membership free.
Online at: headingtonliveablestreets.ghost.io
Contact: headington@oxlivts.org.uk

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

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

HEADINGTON SINGERS

Your local community choir singing the great choral classics (and more) for the sheer love of it. No auditions. Rehearsals on Tuesday in term-time at Headington School. New singers welcome.
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

JOYRIDERS

Free, volunteer-led bike rides by women for women. Friendly and sociable with fully trained female ride leaders. Building confidence and overcoming barriers. Find us on Facebook, Twitter and Eventbrite.
email info.oxford@joyridersbritain.org

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

OXFORD BURY KNOWLE ART GROUP

Welcoming anyone with an interest in art. Promoting friendship and personal development through art. Meetings, demonstrations and exhibitions through the year. New members welcome.
www.oxfordburyknowleartgroup.co.uk
or email diane@sider.co.uk.

OXFORD CIVIC SOCIETY

"Appreciating our past, enjoying the present and pursuing a vision for the future."
www.oxcivicsoc.org.uk

OXTALK

Oxford's talking newspaper for the blind. Local digest on memory stick or online.
mail@oxtalk.org.uk or 01865 767618.
www.oxtalk.org.uk

QUARRY ROVERS FC

Young people's football club at the heart of Headington since 1952. FA Charter Standard club with teams at all ages.
www.quarryrovers.org.uk

QUARRY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Large an active group across and around

Headington. Interesting speakers and activities. A warm welcome to anyone who would like to visit us and see how it works.
Contact: Glenys Gaskin 01865 741645.

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

During Covid-19 restrictions we are still knitting. We are still able to send woolly goods to Syria, JR Neonatal Unit, Dementia Services at the JR, The Porch and the Oxford Baby Bank. Gifts of yarn (any type or colour) welcome. Yarn collection and delivery to knitters on request. Contact us for updated plans as the situation allows. New members welcome.

Contact: sharedknitting@gmail.com or phone 01865 738942.

SHOTOVER PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Founded in 1974 with the remit to "consider all matters which are likely to affect Shotover and make recommendations to the appropriate bodies on this, and on any ways of enhancing the public's continued enjoyment of Shotover."
www.shotover.clara.net/pressoc

SILVER JOGGERS

Join the Silver Joggers for a fun start to your jogging career. Trained instructors on hand with help and encouragement. Regular Couch to 5k sessions. A warm welcome for would-be runners. Check our website for details of meetings.
https://groups.runtogether.co.uk/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

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

@headingtonnews

Please send details or updates of any local community groups and organisations that you would like to see included here to office@theoccasional.co.uk. We will do our best to make sure they get included on the list.

HEADINGTON ACTION WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEADINGTON



The official start of the Christmas and winter holiday

Saturday December 4

9.00 – 2.00. The Saturday **Market**

- Festive **food** and **crafts**.

4.30 - 5.30 Christmas tree **Lights switch-on**

- **Mince pies, wine and soft drinks** provided by Headington Action and local businesses.
- **Countdown** to switch on by the **Lord Mayor of Oxford**
- **Community singing** round the tree.

Headington Action organises the Christmas tree and the lights in the permanent trees. It thanks councillors and local businesses for their donations.

Wednesday December 22

9.00 - 2.00. Additional **Market**

Buy your Christmas treats from your favourite stall.



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During restrictions, we're still knitting! Making woolly goods for charity using donated needles and yarn. Yarn collection and delivery to knitters on request.

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01865 738942**

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THE LAST WORD ELEMENTARY MECHANICS

The Curious Case of the Runaway Cargo Bike

Among the dark days and biting winds of winter, the Occasional delves into the dusty and oil-stained archives of Quarry Cycle Services for an appropriately chilling tale of mechanical mystery.

"Watson, did you ever complete your account of the case of the runaway cargo bike? With winter drawing in, the current road conditions bring to mind the case in question."

I looked up from my notebook. "Uncanny, Holmes," I said. "I'm just writing it up now."

"I'm sure you will over-elaborate the incident for dramatic effect but there may be some points of general interest."

"Remind me of the details, Holmes, and I'll note them down faithfully."

He folded his newspaper carefully and set it aside on the table next to his chair.

"It was the early summer of 2020 and the world was weighed down by pestilence and fear. However, glorious weather and streets devoid of motor traffic for the first time since the coronation brought bicycles out into the city in huge numbers.

Cycle mechanics were inundated by requests for assistance and I volunteered my skills to be of use wherever I could.

"I was contacted by a gentleman to attend to his machine. His steed was a long-tailed cargo bike, regular transport for two children and the many and various other errands to which a capacious bicycle such as this are admirably suited. He explained that the disc brakes were not operating as efficiently as they might, which, as he resided at the top of the hill, was causing some alarm during his descents into the city.

"The brakes in question were mechanical disks rather than the hydraulic variety so I adjusted the pads to bring them closer to the braking surface of the disks and took up the small amount of slack in the cable via the barrel adjuster at the brake lever. Braking performance was noticeably improved

with a pleasing degree of modulation in the action of the brake lever. I returned home, and thought no more of the matter.

"Some months later the gentleman contacted me again. One of the brakes, the rear in fact, had, he claimed, completely failed. I rushed

caused the original braking failure, Holmes?" I cried, my pen rushing over the page.

"I had no clear clue until, while cleaning a small amount of oil from my hands and my torque wrench, the conversation turned to how one might best prepare for possible inclement weather."

Holmes applied a match to the bowl of his pipe and I suppressed the urge to cough as the sweet-smelling smoke began to fill the room.

"The gentleman explained that he was in the habit of giving the chain, as he put it, 'a good old spray' with a lubricant and he gestured in the direction of the rear derailleur, miming wide vertical and horizontal arcs of oil-based distribution to demonstrate his approach.

"Here was our mystery solved. I reached out and stayed his arm from motion. I looked deep into his eyes the better to secure his attention. My desperate hope was that my words would be comprehended and pressed indelibly into his memory.

"It is of vital importance," I explained, holding his gaze, "that you don't get any trace of oil on the discs. Oil and brakes are unhappy bedfellows and a carelessly enthusiastic application of oil would negate the brake's functionality. My advice is to hold a cloth behind the chain to prevent over-spray. This simple precaution could save unnecessary expense and untold danger."

"Ah," said the gentleman, with a rueful laugh. "I think I had better be a little more careful in future."

"I agreed that this would be a desirable course of action and with that I packed away my tools, bade him farewell and headed home."

By now Holmes had almost entirely disappeared in the midst of a cloud so dense that for a moment I feared he had set his whole head on fire.

"Excellent!" I cried. "Elementary," said he. •

[With apologies to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.]



▲ *Elemental: essential tools of the trade for our cycling sleuth.*

CORRESPONDENCE

Maurice on Morris: is it enough?
Maurice East is "puzzled by the absence of any public recognition of William Morris, Lord Nuffield, beyond a couple of window displays on the High and Longwall Street" [see *Occasional issue 6*].

What about the Nuffield Needle at the Oxford Business Park? It's quite big. Or the plaque showing William Morris on the Oxford Crown Court new buildings in St Aldate's, which used to be his showrooms? Or the Oxfordshire Blue Plaque on his James Street home? Or Nuffield College itself?

In Headington, he is remembered by Nuffield Road in Wood Farm and in the name of the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre (despite the fact that it was intended it should remember Charles Wingfield, a surgeon who died in the 1846 cholera epidemic).

There are nine medical departments, all in Headington, named after Lord Nuffield and the healthcare charity that runs the Manor Hospital is called Nuffield Health; and there are four Nuffield professorships (anaesthetics, economics, clinical medicine, and sociology). In Cowley there's a William Morris Close and a William Morris pub.

Isn't that enough?
Stephanie Jenkins
New Headington

Cat v dog

I read your article on the merits of cats and dogs [qv *Occasional 3*] with interest. What I felt could have been added was a political analysis of these very different domesticated pets.

Dogs, for the most part, appear to be community-minded collectivists, offering their unfailing loyalty and protection for food and positive affirmation. Cats appear to be individually minded libertarians who offer their beauty, and occasional affection, for food and the warmest spot in the house.

If there were such an animal, a combined "cat/dog" might make a good pet for an anarcho-sindicalist (or libertarian socialist).

Barney Tallack
Old Headington

Genuine correspondence

This is a genuine letter [qv *Occasional 3*]. I look forward to receiving my superbly weighted Faber Castell with the usual bells and whistles.

Yours in anticipation
Hilary Bradley
Headington Quarry

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