

# HEADINGTON

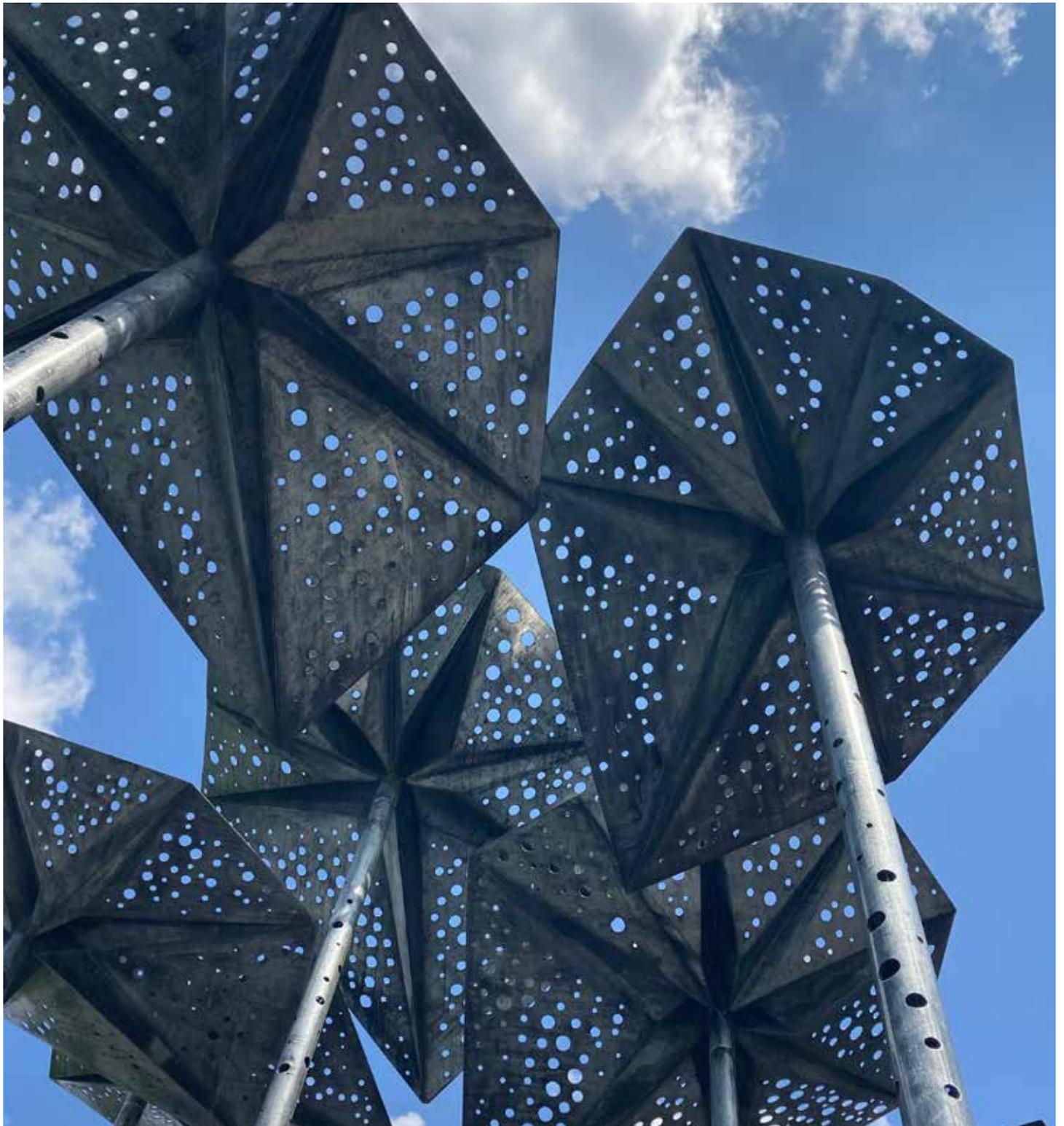
## OCCASIONAL

ISSUE 8, Summer 2022

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

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# Under the shark

## HEADINGTON'S HERITAGE GOES ON THE LIST

Headingtonians may be aware that there are parts of the city down the hill that are quite famous. Oxford has some 1,500 listed buildings and could arguably boast (which is just the sort of thing they do down there) more buildings of architectural note per square metre than just about anywhere else in the country.

The register of the city's historic and notable buildings spans from the 11th century, with St George's Tower in the castle dating from 1020 and St Mike's on Cornmarket from 1040, right through to Zaha Hadid's 2015 Investcorp Building at St Antony's College and whatever the University puts up next to carry the name of another billionaire benefactor.

Well done them but Headington has some architectural history of its own, demonstrated by the Oxford heritage asset register compiled by the city council. The latest additions to the register include: the Crown and Thistle pub; 69 London Road, currently Childs Funeral Service; 105 London Road, better known as the old Barclays bank; and our very own Gil, AKA for official purposes as "the Headington Shark".

It seems OX3 is catching up. Keep an eye out for Blue Badge tour guides bringing their gaggles of tourists our way soon.

## CLAP YOUR HANDS IF YOU FEEL LIKE A ROOM WITHOUT A ROOF

Not everyone is happy (you may have noticed) and inclusion of the shark on the asset register has added one more person to the list in the form of Magnus Hanson-Heine, the current owner of 2 New High Street.

Magnus is the son of Bill Heine, the BBC Radio Oxford presenter and writer who, with the help of artist John Buckley, put the shark in place back in 1986 as a protest against war in general and the bombing of Libya in particular. A five-year planning battle ensued before the Department for the

Environment said it could stay in place [*qv Occasional issue 1*].

The inclusion of a building on the heritage asset list has little direct impact on the ownership and management of a property but they are acknowledged within the planning process as important to an area for "their locally significant historic, architectural, archaeological or artistic interest".

Magnus is upset because he thinks that the shark's appearance on an official list undermines part of the original intention of the shark, which was to protest against censorship imposed via planning restrictions.

He told the Oxford Mail that he fears local asset listing will be a step on the route to a national listing.

Headington has some architectural history of its own, demonstrated by the Oxford heritage asset register compiled by the city council... Keep an eye out for Blue Badge tour guides bringing their gaggles of tourists our way soon.

"My father always resisted giving any conclusive answer to the question what was the meaning of it as it was designed to make people think for themselves, and decide for themselves what is art," he said. "But it was anti the bombing of Tripoli by the Americans, anti-nuclear proliferation, anti-censorship in the form of planning laws specifically."

We will see what Gil has to say on the matter in due course.

## IN LIMBO: THE HISTORIC PAST AND UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF THE CROWN AND THISTLE

While the Headington Shark is not under threat – Magnus Hanson-Heine is adamant that it is staying firmly put – the Crown and Thistle most certainly is.

Closed to the public on the last day of 2011, the pub has since lain largely empty and is showing the signs of a decade of dilapidation. Houses were built on what had

been the pub's car park in 2012 and at the beginning of 2022 the city council granted "permission in principle" to knock it down for redevelopment as housing.

Few people heading up to Shotover on Old Road will have given another closed and run-down pub a second glance but its inclusion on the asset register reiterates its status as a historic building and raises questions about how such local assets can be protected.

The Occasional's new columnist, the Chippie Townie, offers some historic context elsewhere in this issue (see page 5) to add to the debate.

## DISPENSING LOCAL CULTURE IN IMPERIAL MEASURES

Far be it from us to add to the Chippie Townie's considerable workload but it seems as though a tour of Headington's lost pubs might be worth consideration.

With so many pubs across the UK having closed in recent years, Headington is lucky to have retained so many. However, with the Crown and Thistle apparently lost as a venue accessible to the local community, there are quite a few on the 'gone but not forgotten' list.

The roll-call includes: the Quarry Gate, which stood on the corner of Wharton Road and St Leonards Road; the Princes Castle, once at the top of Barton Village Road; the Bell on Old High Street; and the Fox, which was latterly on North Way. What is now McDonald's on Green Road roundabout used to be the Shotover Arms and, if we follow the London Road down the hill as far as the Marston Road, still within the Occasional's sphere of interest, there was the Plasterers Arms, now replaced by flats.

On the plus side, the Ampleforth Arms was rescued from closure by a community ownership initiative a couple of years ago and OX3 can still boast some of the most celebrated and valued pubs in the city, not least in the shape of the White Hart, the Butchers Arms and the Masons Arms, all of which regularly appear ►

## the OCCASIONAL comment

The Headington Festival is back and what a welcome return it is.

The festival serves as a focal point to the community year, creating an atmosphere of celebration and bringing everyone out to take part, even by the simple act of being present, whether at the Saturday market or in the park on Sunday.

It also offers an opportunity for local groups, organisations, charities and businesses to take their place in the spotlight to tell us who they are, what they do and how we might be able to help; and how they might be able to help us.

Finding time and space to bring a community together may be a simple concept but of course it is far more than putting a highlighter on a calendar and making sure the park gates are open. Headington Action and all the organisations that combine under its umbrella put in a huge amount of work to make the Headington Festival happen.

As anyone who has been involved in any kind of public event will know, bringing people together creates a monumental workload. As a voluntary organisation, Headington Action relies on the good will, expertise and experience of a great many people who give their time to make Headington a better place to live, work and study. The festival is their biggest event but they are working throughout the year on numerous projects and seldom get the acknowledgement that their achievements undoubtedly merit.

It is also true that the simple act of bringing people together is one of the most important things we can do to build, support and sustain communities. After the challenges of recent years, and with the inevitability of challenges yet to come, we can all recognise that being part of a community is an asset, a comfort and a privilege.

But it is also a responsibility. Turning up, taking part, and being present is a small but vitally important contribution to what makes a community work.

See you in the park.

## Bringing Connected Communities to local people and places

*Viv Miles introduces Connected Communities Week and explains how to get involved.*

Three or four years ago Headington Action, the group that runs Headington market and the festival, among many other things that make Headington a great place to live, became aware of some research that showed reducing social isolation and generally making an environment more neighbourly had a significant effect of people's mental and physical health.

With this in mind a project team, which included local GP surgeries and businesses, was formed to see how that might happen in Headington. However, Covid-19 then intervened and we were all told that we must socially isolate.

Many initial plans had to be put on hold but one good thing did emerge: Oxford Hub began to organise street champions, people who would communicate with their neighbours to make sure that anyone who had to stay at home could get their shopping done or prescriptions collected. Many of us got to know our neighbours much better and the concept of street champions was eventually taken over by Headington Action, with the people involved renamed 'street contacts'. Headington Action is hoping that more of these great people will come forward.

As the neighbourliness part of Connected Communities was beginning to develop, and as restrictions relating to the pandemic became less stringent, other ways of getting people together and supporting those who found it difficult to meet others became possible.

As a result it was decided to hold Connected Communities week, a week in which local groups and organisations could have an event – an ordinary meeting or a special event – when local people could go along and see if they would enjoy returning on a regular basis.

Look out for the timetable of these events and come along to the Headington Festival on Sunday 29 May in Bury Knowle Park where many local groups and organisations will have a stall to chat to anyone who might like to try a session, join a group or volunteer to help.

Details at [www.headingtonaction.org/connected-communities-week.html](http://www.headingtonaction.org/connected-communities-week.html)

## HEADINGTON MARKET ROVERS RETURN

# Back on the street to a warm welcome

Priscilla Goldby salutes the return of Headington Market.



Headington Market has been back on London Road for six months now and business has been good. Quarry Hollow provided a perfect location for safe trading during the on-and-off lockdown conditions and it was greatly appreciated, especially by families, as a Saturday destination when so much else was on hold.

However, as life, and shopping options, started to go back to normal, the case for moving back to our original home in central Headington grew stronger.

The move was made in September 2021, encouraged by the enthusiasm from local shops and

among the award winners when beer and pub aficionados get together to make such judgements.

Perhaps the answer is a tour of the lost pubs of Headington visiting as many of the existing pubs of Headington as possible en route.

### WELCOME TO HEADINGTON'S VERY OWN OLD BANK

Headington's flirtation with the heritage asset register poses as many questions as it answers, and not just in the field of the artistic and philosophical inferences of a shark through your roof. When it comes to buildings, it would seem that context is all.

The nomination of 105 London Road for inclusion on the register makes the point admirably. On one hand the building is "not particularly special nationally" but, on the other, the old Barclays Bank building "is the oldest surviving 'grand' building at Headington Shops, representing

businesses to have the market back in its usual home.

The run-up to Christmas was busy, with an extra weekday market, followed by the usual quieter January-February period. Trade has been steady over the spring, with our regular stalls offering a wide range of food products – including fruit and veg, meat, deli and bakery items – alongside luxury chocolate, eco-products, wood-turned crafts and vinyl records.

The Headington Festival this year takes place on Saturday/Sunday 28-29 May. There will be plenty going on at the market, with activities such as face-painting, caricatures

the development of the area in the early part of last century, and [...] a stage of banking where prestige and presence mattered".

It is arguable that the gravitas of the banking building has outlasted the gravitas of the banking industry but the prominence of the site is undeniable. As the nomination notes,

**“There’s a crossroads with a stopped clock on a solicitor’s office and if you get to the shark you’ve gone too far.” Or, your visitor might wonder, not far enough...**

"This building, at the main street corner of Headington, Old High Street and London Road, is highly visible from any viewpoint at the junction and represents a gateway building [...] to the Old Headington Conservation Area, approximately 40m north."

Whether this gateway to Old Headington will be enhanced or

and pavement art, along with extra stalls.

Our market manager, Ewan Tilbe, is always on the lookout for new traders and one free stall is made available each week for a local community or voluntary group. Contact Ewan at [headingtonmarket@gmail.com](mailto:headingtonmarket@gmail.com) for more information if you are interested.

Visit our website to find out what stalls and produce will be available each week and to join our weekly email list for updates. Find us on social media, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. ●

[www.headingtonmarket.org](http://www.headingtonmarket.org)

### CLOSE YOUR EYES AND THINK OF HEADINGTON

Sometimes it takes a friend to give it to you straight. Occasionally we all have to steel ourselves and accept an unpalatable truth as well-intentioned feedback, no matter how much it might sting on arrival.

Whatever the architectural merits of Barclays Bank, there is no doubt that the building's locality does leave a little to be desired in terms

of a memorable and attractive urban environment. As the 105 London Road heritage asset application notes, "Headington Shops is an extremely ugly, cluttered and human-unfriendly space". A weighty banking building of little note thus "enhances its importance".

Oof! Tough to take but undoubtedly true. Direct a visitor to the

centre of Headington and there is little by way of landmarks to guide them. Try this: "There's a crossroads with a stopped clock on a solicitor's office and if you get to the shark you've gone too far."

Or, your visitor might wonder, not far enough.

But help is at hand. Headington Action has recently appointed a design consultancy to consider how the centre of Headington might be enhanced. The first phase of the project will involve extensive consultation of local residents and businesses, so this is your opportunity to contribute to a reimagining of the centre of Headington. Close your eyes and think of an engaging, attractive and vibrant urban environment; convey this image to the consultants and await the artist's impression of a Headington reborn. We look forward to the debate and the unveiling of an inspiring design concept.

Meanwhile, we would settle for a clock that worked.

### KEEP THE LIGHTS ON: GRAB A SHARE OF THE UPP

It may be down the hill but the Ultimate Picture Palace (universally known as the UPP) is close to our Headingtonian hearts.

Once the sister screen to Headington's own Not the Moulin Rouge [see *previous Occasionals for the full story*] and now the city's only independent cinema, the UPP is up for sale and hoping to raise enough money to enable it to stay open and stay independent.

To make this happen the UPP has opened a share offer and is inviting anyone and everyone to become a shareholder. The funding target for this Community Benefit Society share offer is £312,575,

a sum that will bring the UPP into community ownership and ensure that it stays open.

Community shares cost £1 each, with a minimum buy-in of 50 shares (£50) to become a shareholder. A discounted minimum buy-in of 30 shares (£30) is available if you are aged 16-29 or have an OX1, OX3 or OX4 postcode. Shareholders will become co-owners of the Ultimate Picture Palace Community Cinema and will be able to vote at shareholder meetings.

Find out more about the UPP scheme at [www.uppcinema.com/owntheupp/](http://www.uppcinema.com/owntheupp/)

### HOLLYWOOD ON PARADE AT THE UPP FOR TEAM NIMMY

The Occasional was delighted to be able to tick off the item marked 'attend world film premiere' that had been stubbornly hanging around on our lengthy to-do list for quite a while. That we could get on the Number 8 down the hill to do it was an added bonus.

The UPP recently hosted the world screen premiere of *The Bubble*, a Netflix-released film directed by Judd Apatow and starring a cornucopia of Hollywood and Pinewood talent. This unique screening was hosted by Andy Dawson, Headington resident and producer of *The Bubble*. Andy also led a post-film Q&A with Guz Khan and Peter Serafinowicz, who had travelled to the UPP from Coventry and Liverpool respectively to take part in the sold-out event.

The *Bubble's* premiere was a fund-raiser for local Headington charity, Team Nimmy, which is raising money for the Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group. More Team Nimmy events will be coming soon. We'll keep you posted. ●

## THE CHIPPIE TOWNIE A PERSONAL JOURNEY



### Maurice East explores the history of Titup Hall, the Flying Coach and the Old Road to London

Titup Hall Drive is pretty much guaranteed to feature in any list of the UK's 'rude street names' but behind the sniggers is a story of a forgotten village and a lost highway to the capital.

Before the London Road through Headington was constructed in 1789, the historic eastern approach to Oxford was via Old Road and across Shotover. This ancient route saw many illustrious travellers.

Elizabeth I would have first seen the city from the top of the hill and writers such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton all passed this way. Over the years the small settlement of Titup was established along Old Road at the foot of Shotover Hill. In the seventeenth century the village expanded to service increasing inter-city traffic. A coaching inn named Titup Hall was constructed, providing accommodation and stabling for the next two hundred years.

The coaching route would have commenced in Oxford, picking up passengers in High Street from establishments such as the Angel Hotel, a well-known hostelry located on the site of what is now the University examination halls (although a small portion of the original hotel does remain, housing the Grand Café). Coaches would have proceeded over Magdalen Bridge, along St Clements and up

Headington Hill but only to the point at which the route turned to follow Cheney Lane, eventually meeting Old Road, and travelling on through Titup, Shotover and beyond.

At one time additional horses were kept at Titup to drag the coaches up the hill, although passengers were often asked to walk. At first the journey took two days, with an overnight stop. In April 1669 a 'Flying Coach' achieved the journey in single day, leaving the Mitre in Oxford at 6am and arriving in London at 7pm.

The journey could be perilous. Accidents were common and highwaymen were known to "stand and deliver" on Shotover. A Dutch traveller is even reported to have died from the exertion of walking up the hill.

It is possible that the name Titup is derived from a coachman's colloquialism. The level ground encountered at the village was the point at which coach drivers would encourage their horses to go faster with cries of "Titup, titup", before attempting to ascend the hill.

In 1850 Titup Hall Inn was demolished and replaced on the same site with the Crown and Thistle Pub, which remained open for business until 2011. ●

[www.chippietowntourists.co.uk](http://www.chippietowntourists.co.uk)

## Gil



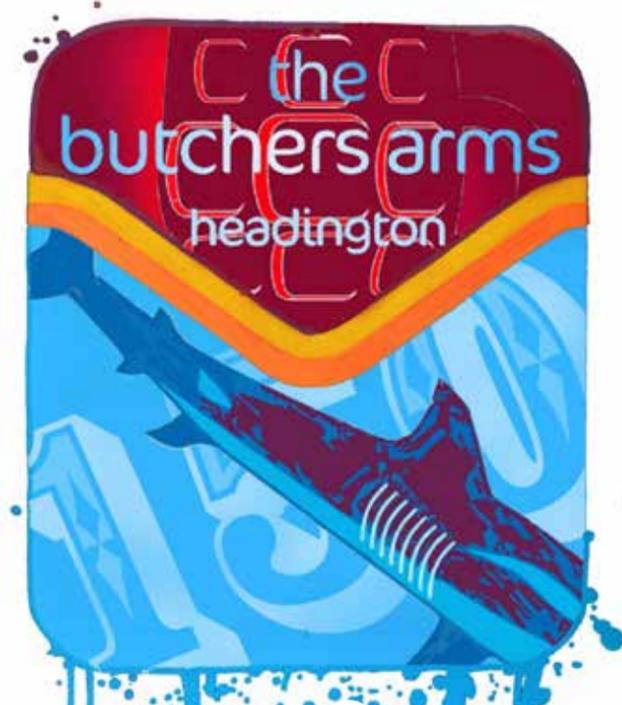
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**COMMUNITY** MAKING MUSIC

## Raising voices: the City of Oxford Choir

After a lengthy hiatus, the City of Oxford Choir was pleased to be back in Headington and performing together again. Carla Cohen reflects on the lessons of the past two years and the joys of making music.

What does a choir do if it is not allowed to sing? In March 2020 the City of Oxford Choir was forced to find out as the Covid 19 crisis took hold and everyone was told to isolate. When restrictions began to lift after a few months singing was still limited to six people in the open air so getting together in confined spaces to practise a repertoire of choral chamber music was definitely off the agenda.

Having only been in post as chair of the choir's committee since the previous autumn, and of course with no idea what was around the corner, I found myself very much in at the deep end. One of my first Covid-related tasks was to cancel a concert with a visiting choir from Norway, which everyone had been looking forward to, and practising for, for a long time. It was a great shame but clearly the correct decision.

The committee's next task was to find out what we were able to do to keep the choir together in the unique and unnerving circumstances of lockdown. We needed to stay safe while trying to keep going and, as the full impact of the pandemic became apparent, we were very aware of the importance of the social aspect of a choir.

Over 18 months or so we were able to do little in the way of singing. We tried to move things online but it was never really very satisfactory. In the autumn of 2020 we had a couple of sessions wearing masks but everyone agreed that this was not really working. We got together again in the summer of 2021 just in time for the six-person limit on gatherings to be imposed. A little later we were able to have an informal performance for family and friends before being able to return to something approaching our normal routine, with a little added social distancing and other sensible measures, towards the end of the year.

In common with every other organisation, group and society, the Covid-19 crisis was quite a



Back together: a regular Monday night rehearsal at All Saints Highfield in Headington.

challenge, requiring us all to adapt to new circumstances and adopt new roles. It also served to emphasise the immense value of so many activities and opportunities that we had previously taken for granted. The simple pleasure of being able to get together to sing became very precious. We are hoping to be able

choral music in thematic programmes. We have been trying to include more music by female composers and have made use of the increasing number of resources in this area to find unexplored new repertoire.

We are quite a musical choir, which means singers need to be able to read music and sight read, and we have a sound that the musical director is trying to achieve. The size of our group strikes a pleasing balance between everyone making a significant contribution without any one individual being too exposed. We do hold auditions but they are very relaxed and prospective members are more than welcome to drop in to our Monday evening rehearsals at All Saints to say hello and see what we are all about.

Singing brings so much joy, both through music itself and the people you get to know. There are a great many choirs in Oxford, from social community choirs through to gospel and chapel choirs and choral societies, including Headington Singers. It means that there is a choir – and a welcome – out there for everyone who might like to sing. Grab the chance to make music, make friends and discover the joy of singing. •

to host our Norwegian friends this coming autumn for some rescheduled performances and they will receive a very warm, and probably quite emotional, welcome.

The City of Oxford Choir was formed around 40 years ago and has been rehearsing in Headington for the last four years. We have around 40 singers, drawn from across the city and further afield, and are led by a professional musical director, Duncan Aspden. We also have a vocal coach, Billy Purefoy, who comes in once a term to work with the whole choir and with smaller groups. We usually put on four concerts a year at various venues in the city centre, with the Christmas concert in the University church our biggest event.

Our choir has a classical choral approach and an eclectic repertoire, featuring modern and traditional

Find the City of Oxford Choir online, with details of all forthcoming performances and events, at [www.oxfordchoir.org](http://www.oxfordchoir.org)

**OCCASIONAL EVENTS**

**COMEDY IN THE QUARRY**

Friday 27 and Saturday 28 May  
**Masons Arms**  
 Celebrated (and quickly sold out) comedy nights at the Masons featuring some of the UK circuit's top names, with MC Chris Meeson.

**ART WEEKS**

Until 29 May  
 Open studios and pop-up exhibitions across Headington, the city and the county. Connecting local artists with local art enthusiasts for more than 40 years.  
[www.artweeks.org](http://www.artweeks.org)

**CONNECTED COMMUNITIES WEEK**

23-29 May  
 Series of events culminating in the Headington Festival that will provide opportunities to meet other people and to volunteer.  
[www.headingtonaction.org/](http://www.headingtonaction.org/)  
[connected-communities-week](http://connected-communities-week)

**HEADINGTON FESTIVAL**

Sat/Sun 28/29 May  
 The long-awaited return of the focal point of Headington's cultural calendar. Saturday 28 May 9am to 2pm at the Headington Market with entertainers and events. Sunday 29 May 1pm to 5pm Bury Knowle park with stalls, fun fair, food, the Big Raffle, and all the usual excitement.  
[www.headingtonfestival.org.uk](http://www.headingtonfestival.org.uk)

**OXFORD PRIDE DAY**

Saturday 4 June  
 Part of the Pride Festival, which runs Friday 27 May – Sunday 5 June. Celebrating the LGBTIQ+ community, bringing people together and showing solidarity.  
[www.oxfordpride.uk](http://www.oxfordpride.uk)

**SHARKTOWN JAZZ**

7 June – Dave D'Angelo  
 5 July – Graeme Taylor  
**Butchers Arms**  
 A welcome return and a new Tuesday slot for the Ollie Weston Quartet, with guest artists bringing the best of jazz to OX3. First set 8pm; second set 9.30pm. First Tuesday of the month.

**CITY OF OXFORD CHOIR:**

**REJOICE IN THE LAMB**  
 7.30pm Saturday 16 July  
**Keble College Chapel**  
 The next concert in the City of Oxford Choir's season of events. Tickets are now available from Tickets Oxford.  
[www.oxfordchoir.org](http://www.oxfordchoir.org)

**WEEKLY QUIZ NIGHTS**

Tuesdays White Hart  
 Saturdays Masons Arms  
 Sundays Butchers Arms

# Jill Fenton

## Opening worlds for children one page at a time

The school library is alive and well at Cheney, guiding a new generation of digital natives through the challenges of research and reading, building confidence and broadening horizons along the way.

When the Occasional arrives at Cheney School to interview Jill Fenton the library is full of students, even though it is an hour after the end of the school day and much of the rest of the school site is largely empty.

This provides context for the Occasional's rather obvious first question, which is going to be: what role does a library play in a modern secondary school? Whatever the answer might be, it is already clear that the library is meeting the needs of plenty of people.

And if the question is obvious, the answer is not. In a secondary school serving the educational needs and aspirations of more than 1,700 students from age 11 to 18, each of whom is a digital native with unimaginable realms of data, information and connections literally in the palm of their hand, how does the school library fit in?

Having moved to a nearby meeting room to avoid disturbing the quiet, but not hushed, library atmosphere, Jill gets to grips with the question.

"What does a school library do?" she says. "Two things: there's reading for pleasure and there's information literacy."

"Information literacy is about helping students know how to find the information they want in a sensible way. Navigating the internet, understanding that books and podcasts, the internet and YouTube, and all things like that, all sit alongside each other. It's about the sensible use of the internet and Google, and preparing them for university or whatever else they choose to do in the future."

"As well as this research aspect, there is also reading for pleasure. As far as I'm concerned, reading for pleasure is ultimately about mental health. It's also about academic achievement, because kids who read do better in school, but it's not just about academic attainment. It's about imagination. It's about broadening horizons. It's about all these sorts of things."

If the role of a school library can be defined by these two broad tasks, how has that role changed? Jill pauses, weighing her answer.

"I've been a school librarian for 12 years – I was at Lord Williams before coming to Cheney – and the perception of school librarians is that we are nice people who give nice books to nice children but it's not that at all."

"Actually the role hasn't changed that much because it's about opening up worlds for children, be it through research or reading. The conduits to that have changed but the internet is old hat now. People think that because you've got the internet you don't need books but anyone who says that will get something straight

back at them from me because I'm a strong advocate of age-appropriate texts when it comes to non-fiction. So it's about educating students to navigate the internet to find the stuff they need and also about putting books in front of them.

"So I don't think that much has changed. As librarians, we may have to be more savvy in the

way we have to market ourselves. We now have social media accounts and lots of fancy software that we use but it's still about building relationships and opening up worlds for children."

Students coming into the school at Year 7 are swiftly introduced to the accelerated reading programme, through which they are immersed in the library environment, the attention and support of Mrs Fenton, and the rewards of choosing and finishing books. Finish a book, do the quiz, get some house points is generally how it works but there are also rewards and acknowledgements for a wide range of reading achievements, including the Millionaire's Club for million-word readers and the 100 Club for anyone who gets 100% in a quiz about the book they have finished.

In Years 8 and 9 the Cheney Choice scheme continues to encourage older



▲ Librarian at large: Jill Fenton in her natural environment.

kids to keep reading, also with the input of Mrs Fenton in the library. It has now become an established part of school life, with younger siblings coming into the school looking forward to throwing themselves into it.

"These programmes do have an impact but I would be the first person to say that I'd far rather they read the book than passed the quiz at the end of it," Jill says. "I tell them that this is a framework to encourage you to read but ultimately I'll be led by you. My job is not to dictate what you can and cannot read. Obviously if a child chooses a book that I think they are not going to enjoy or if they're reading a book that is not at the right sort level – not everyone is ready for War and Peace – then obviously I'll try to intervene but that is a quick way to turn children off. Book choice is the absolute nuts and bolts of it all, which is where the school librarian comes in."

It means that Jill has to read a lot of books, which is not always the pleasure

that non-professional readers might imagine it to be.

"No, not always," she laughs. "At home I am occasionally heard to mutter, 'I really need to finish this book...'" but you can't recommend them unless you've read it. I tend to read the first in a series of books so I can get a sense of what they are and I've got some very good book suppliers on whom I rely in terms of content."

With a wide range of ages among the library's users, content is something over which the school librarian has to exercise a great deal of care.

"Some young adult books are really explicit so you have to be very aware of the content and you have to know your kids," Jill says. "For some students who might have quite restrictive attitudes at home, you might need to be a bit more reticent but with some kids if you have a sense of where they are, then perhaps that book is OK for them, at a particular maturity level. But you do have to know the kids."

Jill offers the example of one book that has recently become very popular among older students, who were urging her to get more copies for the library.

"I've got 30 kids desperate to read this book so I bought one copy in and I said I'm not buying another copy of this until I've read it. I needed to satisfy myself and I'm so pleased I did. It doesn't pull its punches in terms of its content. It deals with domestic violence and controlling relationships, and it's an adult book in every sense. However, it is phenomenally good and I read it in 24 hours. I can see that this book has mileage for our older girls but younger students would not be able to read it on my watch."

Away from young adult fiction and the demands of the library's new stock, Jill still finds time in the holidays to read for her own pleasure, which she admits is a bit of a treat. She reflects on reading Dickens and "all of Trollope" but quite a while ago. However, even off duty her library readers are never too far from her thoughts.

**"We now have social media accounts and lots of fancy software that we use but it's still about building relationships and opening up worlds for children."**

"If you're around my age, you moved from Roald Dahl to adult books with nothing in between but they're so lucky now," she says. "There are some wonderful books out there and some of them I know are Cheney books. Sometimes I'll have certain students in mind and if I can I'll grab them and say, 'You should read this!'"

"It's a trust thing. In Year 7 they see so much of me that they understand that I can guide them. By the time they get to Year 9 and 10 they know I won't let them down but you don't always get it right and I'm never offended if a book gets returned."

After lockdown Jill made an effort to visit classrooms to reconnect with the students, some of whom she had not seen for quite a while. Taking the library to the readers has had an impact.

"It has really worked," she says. "I take books with me. For example, for the older kids I take Touching the Void, which is a brilliant book, and they come back and ask for more. As they get older it gets more difficult to recommend books because they're betwixt and between [young adult and adult fiction]. They gravitate towards what's easy but my job is to steer them and a bit of connection really works, so I try to get round Years

8, 9 and 10 as often as I can through the term.

"Choosing a book is not easy and if you're not confident about reading and books then it can be tough. And if you find a book hard you're not going to do it. Finding something you enjoy is the absolute top and bottom of it."

Classroom visits and reading-focused events take time within the school day and Jill is resolute in her appreciation of her colleagues and the support they offer.

"I must say that I feel really privileged to be working alongside the people I work with," she says. "I'm not the only member of staff that lives locally and I genuinely think that they are a very special group of individuals, very hard-working and passionate about the outcomes for every single child, not just the easy children."

"For example, on World Book Day I ask everyone to start every lesson with reading and every member of staff does it," Jill says. "This year we had readings from each year group's set book and there's five readings throughout the day

in lessons by teachers. Not everyone is a natural extrovert so it can be a challenge, even for staff, but it's all about sharing stories."

Jill is also keen to note the support and enthusiasm she receives from headteacher Rob Pavey for the work she does and the role the library plays within school life.

"I'm very lucky that I'm treated as part of the teaching staff," she says. "I'm not a qualified teacher but I'm treated very much as part of the staff. I know I'm particularly valued by the pastoral team. After the two main strands – reading for pleasure and information literacy – the pastoral element comes a close third. I have a different role to the teaching staff so sometimes kids can come and hide away with me. The library can be a safe space for different people at different times."

With plans to extend research lessons, survey both keen and reluctant readers on their preferences, and make some improvements to the library environment, it seems that there is life in the school library yet.

Jill is confident that this is the case and not just at Cheney. She points to the current Great School Libraries campaign as a demonstration of what is being achieved in schools around the country.

"School librarians are not a dying breed," she says. "Don't worry: we're a feisty bunch." ●

Mrs Fenton and the Cheney library are on Twitter @Cheney\_Library  
The Great School Libraries campaign is at www.greatschoolibraries.org.uk



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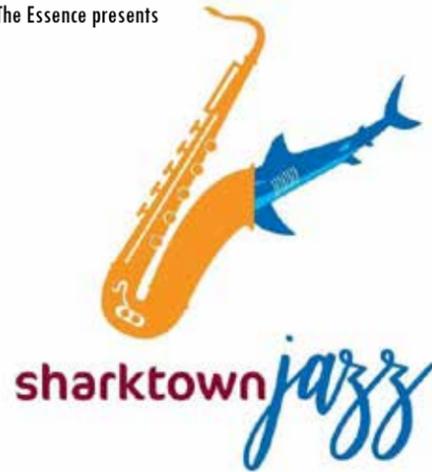
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## BUILDINGS WORKING FROM HOME

# The new commute: the art of the garden room

Unable to resist any invitation to visit a shed, the Occasional leapt at the chance to see what Mark Glendinning had built at the end of his garden. What we found – and what we learned – was a bit more than we had been expecting.

As founder and managing director of Greenoak Construction, Mark Glendinning has seen a great many garden rooms in his time, and even built a few, but when the pandemic dictated that the time had come for one of his own, he was able to start from first principles.

With a blank piece of paper on the drawing board and a very demanding client looking forward to moving her desk from the back bedroom into her new office, he needed to make sure it was as good as it could be.

Sitting in the completed building a little while after Mrs G has commuted back up the garden to the house at the end of her working day, Mark is able to look round and reflect on what makes such spaces successful.

"The first question with garden buildings is, of course, why do you need one?" he says. "It's usually a place to do 'X', whatever 'X' may be. It might be a hobby or work but it's a separate space away from a busy house."

However, Covid-19 made the answer to this basic question rather more straight forward.

"The pandemic saw lots of people trying to find space in their home to work and asking, 'Where do I do that?'" Mark says. "There have always been garden rooms but where to work at home has been driven by the pandemic. The number of enquiries we've received for garden rooms has definitely grown recently and a house with some form of garden room – or space to build one – has certainly made that property more desirable."

The next question, Mark suggests, is: what sort of building do you want? Rules on permitted development allow outbuildings to be constructed without planning permission within certain parameters. Planning can be a complicated business but the basic guidance from Oxford City Council is that you cannot build anything over 2.5m at its highest point within 2m of the property's boundary, with no more than half the area of land around the "original house" to be covered by additions or other buildings.

"If you meet these parameters you won't need planning permission



Garden rooms can offer space to work, create or escape but they have to be warm enough to make the commute enticing.

but you do have to check carefully," Mark says. "There are plenty of companies who can build you a garden office quickly and efficiently within these planning guidelines. Typically, the buildings will have western red cedar or larch cladding and, while they may look a bit boxy, they can also look modern and funky, and they will 100% do the job."

However, getting what is right for you is crucial. Having considered the planning parameters, Mark decided to go down the planning permission route for his own project. He needed enough room for two workspaces but he also wanted something that was a little bit special, something that he could be pleased with beyond its functionality.

"I thought about not going for planning but I wanted a pitched roof," he says, gazing up towards the high, sloping ceiling with its Velux windows. "It gives a building a lot more stature and that vertical space in a small room gives a great feeling of space. A pitched roof also allows you to fit windows above the doors and create a solid connection with the outside world. I think that

feeling of sky above you is a really nice thing to have."

He admits that the planning process was a bit of a fiddle, mainly relating to a few queries from the planning officer over the building's footprint and some glazing details, but these were sorted fairly quickly.

"There's no doubt that planning is a more costly route because you need drawings and application fees but by going bespoke you have so much more choice over the specification – things like the finish, insulation and heating – than with an off-the-shelf approach. I know I'm going to be here for the next ten years and I wanted to be able to smile when I walked down the garden instead of thinking, 'I wish I'd put a pitched roof on that' every time I look at it."

For all the talk of design and functionality, Mark is quite clear on the most important consideration.

"It's got to be warm," he says. "The one thing you can be sure of is that when it's minus seven degrees in January you're not going to leave your nice warm house to go down the garden to work in a colder building."

"If I were to offer any advice – and I think this goes across the building

industry – it would be to spend a few quid now on insulation and you will reap the rewards later. While insulating a building to the standard of the one we're in now costs a bit more, the performance of that building over a period of time will deliver savings long into the future."

Taping the joints on the insulation between the wall studs and 'over-boarding' the insulation on the inside is apparently the key. Mark grabs a pen and swiftly illustrates the concept of 'cold bridges', why they are a bad idea in sub-zero Januarys, and how they can be prevented.

"Over-boarding makes a huge difference," he says. "It also has a big impact on the sound. It's peaceful in here – it's almost silent – which is incredible when it's actually blowing a gale outside."

Finishing our tea and glancing up through the roof lights, we can see the trees being whipped about by the wind. Inside it is warm and very quiet. One day all sheds will be built like this. ●

Advice on planning issues is available online at [www.oxford.gov.uk](http://www.oxford.gov.uk)

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

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[www.foh.org.uk](http://www.foh.org.uk) and @Old\_Headington

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[www.friendsofquarry.org](http://www.friendsofquarry.org)

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Oxford Pride is a celebration of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer life in Oxfordshire. The events supporting or arranged by Oxford Pride promote awareness of LGBT issues and lifestyles by providing information, education and entertainment in a safe and encouraging environment. Oxford's Pride Festival will take place Friday 27th May – Sunday 5 June 2022  
[www.oxfordpride.uk](http://www.oxfordpride.uk)

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[www.friendsofwarnefordmeadow.org.uk](http://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](http://www.headingtonaction.org)

### HEADINGTON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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Contact: [headington@oxlivts.org.uk](mailto:headington@oxlivts.org.uk)

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[www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk/](http://www.cagoxfordshire.org.uk/)  
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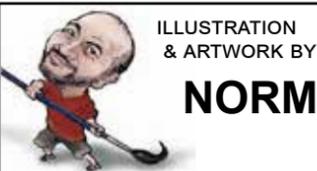
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**THE LAST WORD**

QUIZZING: QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND VEGETABLES

**How to play your potato to maximum effect**

The online lockdown quiz demonstrated not only how little so many of us know about so many things but also how difficult it is to create a set of questions to keep your captive audience on board. Barney Tallack explains how his family managed to do it.

For the 12 months or so of lockdowns, we ran a weekly virtual quiz for an extended group of friends. It was a lovely way to be with people that we couldn't see in person because they lived in Scotland, Lancashire and even (whisper it) West Oxford. It certainly gave a focus to our week. It was great fun and we found out lots of things that we really didn't need to know. [Name any country with a whole tree on its flag.] There was also the added bonus of boring our kids with random facts about astronomy and lesser-known brassicas.

These are some of the things we learned about setting quizzes along the way.

**Don't wing it**

Preparation is key and prepare for it to take up days of your week. Knowing this, we were still often running around at 8.29pm trying to finalise questions. These were always the rounds that didn't work. On a couple of occasions we also recklessly amended the rules mid-quiz. Don't – just don't.

**Balance the questions**

Some of our rounds ended up being stupidly hard but our aim was for most teams to get at least 50% and ideally about 75% of the answers correct over the evening.

Questions that allow for a little lateral thinking are more fun than those that only require fact recall. [Which country beginning with 'S' has a population of 42m? The secretary bird is its national bird and the White and Blue Niles meet near its capital city? 2] What better feeling than dredging up an answer from the deepest recesses of your mind?

When we did a poetry round, the idea elicited groans from the participants but people were delighted by how many they got. [Which poet, who wrote "Will I have to be sexy at 60?", is also the patron of the British Hen Welfare Trust? 3 or Which poetic form has seventeen syllables, split over three lines? 4]

**(Almost) Everything is interesting...** We spent a lot of time researching stuff that never made it into a round.

It's a lot of fun going down information rabbit holes. [Which child star went on to become US Ambassador to Ghana and Czechoslovakia? 5] Tic-tac signs used by on-course bookmakers is utterly unusable but fills a curiosity void you didn't know you had.

**... But not everything makes for a good quiz round**

It's very hard to come up with questions that don't exclude people taking part. You can probably only do one poetry round in a whole year. Almost everyone watches TV but not everyone can remember the periodic table, as we found out.

**Questions that allow for a little lateral thinking are more fun than those that only require fact recall. What better feeling than dredging up an answer from the deepest recesses of your mind?**

[The symbol for which element shares its letters with Mr T's first two initials? 6]

Equally, rather than a whole sports round, we shoehorned one sport question into most rounds, including a philosophy round. [Which England manager – often portrayed as a turnip – said "In football, space and time are the same thing"? 7]

The temptation is to return again and again to your own niche areas of interest (Greek myths, MP scandals, Wycombe Wanderers) and we didn't always manage to resist (apart from Wycombe Wanderers). [According to Edwina Currie, what colour were John Major's underpants? 8] We had to have a rule of only one Greek mythology question per quiz. [What did the Argonauts go in search of? 9]

We also regularly plumbed the depths of taste. [Which god of chest hair and star of Smokey and the Bandit posed naked for Cosmopolitan? 10] And even did a round of euphemisms for male genitalia. [The Warwickshire Drooper, Blue Tit and Victoria are all varieties of what? 11]

There's no such thing as a stupid question is probably not true in a quiz context but there is definitely room for the occasional question with a silly answer. [How many people

will a large portion of chips from Posh Fish feed? 12 or, in honour of Alexi Sayle's Revolutionary Biscuits: What biscuit wrapped in green foil is also the aristocratic title renounced by Tony Benn? 13]

**Let things develop in their own time**

Some rounds just refuse to come together. We still have rounds on sharks, glass and the Silk Road that just wouldn't resolve into a coherent whole. We learned not to overwork them, which is a temptation if you're particularly fond of an idea.

There was an idea for a round on penguins. It was laborious to create

10 questions to which the answer is a species of penguin [What is the only penguin to live on islands both north and south of the equator? 14] but there are lots of questions that are more loosely penguin-related. [Name three of the four penguins in the Madagascar films. 15] By flipping the way the questions were structured, the round could be made to work and didn't rely on more penguin knowledge than was reasonable to expect.

The best rounds were those that took a loose theme that we could riff on. 'Pink' is easier to work with than 'types of brick'. [In which European cycling tour does the race leader wear pink? 16 or Which organised crime syndicate members are known for occasional-ly having their pinkie chopped off? 17]

Ideas for the theme for a round come at the most unexpected moments; the "Ooh, I wonder if I could do a round on that?" is a very satisfying feeling. [Walls: What is the main spirit in a Harvey Wallbanger? 18 Or Which 80s and 90s TV star performed Looking for Freedom in a bucket hanging over the Berlin Wall in 1989? 19]

**The picture round is the most important round...**

Which is why we put it in the middle

and it had twice as many questions. We chose to spend a long time on ours but really it gives everyone a change of focus and a break to get another drink, feed the cat or prolong their argument about question seven in the previous round.

**We got things wrong – but that's OK**

I'm sure we got more answers wrong than anyone realised. Certainly we wrote questions to which there were two valid answers. Who knew that Palestine and Moldova have essentially the same flag? Several people on our quiz, it turns out. The only thing to do is hold your hands up and hand out the points.

The best things were the banter and debates – between us and the participants, between teams and within teams. We also had a few long running in-jokes: answers that appeared most

weeks [Who had an affair with Frida Kahlo, appeared in a Stranglers song, was the basis for Snowball in Animal Farm, was killed with an ice pick, did the pub landlord refer to Wolfe as in Citizen Smith, etc? 20] ; and waving a potato to play your joker.

It was a silly and joyful way to spend a Saturday evening. ●

**HALF A POINT FOR GEORGE LAZENBY?**  
The answers to the questions. Double points if you played your maris piper.

- 1 Any of Belize, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, Haiti or Lebanon
- 2 Sudan
- 3 Pam Ayres
- 4 Haiku
- 5 Shirley Temple
- 6 B.A. (Baracus); Barium
- 7 Graham Taylor
- 8 Blue
- 9 The Golden Fleece
- 10 Burt Reynolds
- 11 Plums
- 12 Any number from three and up
- 13 Viscount
- 14 Galapagos
- 15 Skipper, Rico, Kowalski, Private
- 16 Giro d'Italia
- 17 Yakuza
- 18 Vodka
- 19 David Hasselhoff
- 20 Leon Trotsky

# Headington Festival

Connecting Communities

## 2022

**Saturday 28 May - 9am to 2pm - Central Headington**

Regular market plus extra food and craft stalls,  
entertainment, caricaturist and face painter

**Sunday 29 May - 1pm to 5pm - Bury Knowle Park**

Fun fair  
Magic show  
Dance  
Sports tasters  
Farm animals



Music  
Food  
Beer tent  
plus local organisations  
and more family fun!



## HEADINGTON ACTION

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