

The Loop

February
2021

£1.00



*The Nativity Scene in St James's churchyard,
December 2020.*

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Services at St James's

I know that this has been a very difficult time. You and I find it very sad that we have not been able to meet together for public worship. Given the current circumstances, and the dangers posed by the new strain of Covid-19, it is felt that we should continue our worship online for the time being. Although we are legally able to open, we have been encouraged by Bedford Borough Council, and supported by the senior clergy in the decision to remain closed (as a high proportion of other parishes have chosen to do). Please contact me if you would like a chat over anything at all. My numbers are 01234 328452 and 07805879537.

God bless.

Eric

To join any of the Zoom services which are held at **11.00am Sundays and 6.00pm Wednesdays**, go to Zoom and enter the meeting ID 9880746039.

Free transport for Covid-19 vaccinations

Good news for people who aren't able to drive themselves to get their vaccine in Bedford or beyond. The Door2Door transport service, who operate minibuses for people with limited mobility, is now open to all and is free.

For details see page 8.

Deliveries of The Loop

The third lockdown has meant that we have had to stand down our delivery volunteers again and revert to distributing The Loop by email where we can, even if you have not expressed a preference for emailed copies.

We are sorry for this and hope to resume normal service soon.

Jean Gambold

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Need local help? Ring 01234 815393 or email help@biddenham.org.uk.

'The Loop' is published by the Parish Church of St James as a service to the communities of Biddenham and Great Denham
The editor welcomes contributions from residents and friends via email to loopeditor@gmail.com

Letter from the Vicar

Dear All

On the day of the inauguration of Joe Biden, I found a photograph that I took in 2012. It was taken on Manhattan Island and it shows the Ground Zero monument and the new World Trade complex beyond it. The new Freedom Tower is in the background. At the time of the photograph, the Freedom Tower was incomplete and the top floors are exposed with a tall crane on the roof. They were building a new structure to replace the old.

Of course, we know how on 11th September 2001, a group of fanatical terrorists flew two Boeing 767s with a full complement of civilian passengers into the twin towers of the World Trade Center, destroying the towers and killing nearly 3000 people.

This was not an act of God, but an act of evil, but I still find parallels with this and the Biblical story of Babel, in that it reminds us of the fragility of everything we construct as human beings.

The story can be found in Genesis chapter 11. Everybody across the earth spoke the same language, and they become so skilled at construction that they decided to build a city or a tower stretching up into the heavens. In the end God thwarted their plans, destroyed the city and scattered everybody across the face of the earth, so they began to speak in different languages.

I sometimes wonder about the origin of that story and imagine nomadic tribes in the Ancient Near East (the origin of this story) staring at the new settled cities with scorn. They would have been simple people who relied on the forces of the natural world around them. They trusted that their simple crops would grow, and recognised the wrath of God in the harsh climate of the wilderness.

To them the human constructs were destined to fail, because they understood how easily the power of God could undermine all in which we placed our trust. This is not simply superstition but has prophetic implications for



our time. In our towns and our cities we become so dependent on the towers, our technology, or systems and structures, that we forget the real source of our strength. We are, as the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer implied, like a world come of age, that is no longer conscious of our dependency on that which is outside ourselves. As a Christian, Bonhoeffer developed this statement by saying that we live in a world that simply does not need God anymore, so we have pushed him out of the world and onto the cross.

We can take this further. It might as easily be for us that we have forgotten our dependency on our natural world, our climate, and indeed on one another. Therefore, we could say that the relationship with God, with the natural world, and with one another is broken. Our languages are absolutely divided.

In the summer I found a piece of what looks like a gravestone on a beach in Suffolk and noted a few letters etched on the surface. I reflected on how this was meant to be a permanent monument to an individual who had died, but one day it would be as round and unidentifiable as all the other pebbles on the sand. One is reminded how Adam (Humankind) in the story of creation is made from the earth (Hebrew Adamah, Genesis 2:7), and to earth (dust) we shall return (Ecclesiastes 3:7)

I am sure we have all become conscious over the last year of how fragile our social constructs have become. It is evident that our carefully constructed tower very nearly reached the point of collapse. I am hoping that as we emerge from this pandemic we will consider how important humility is to us, that we learn the language of a love that recognises our dependency on everything and everyone around us.

God bless.

Eric



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Like many organisations, 2020 has been a very difficult year financially for the Pond. Approximately 50% of our income comes from Friends' subscriptions and 50% from donations, primarily from the Biddenham Show. The Parish Council and our local councillors have also been generous in their support over the years, purchasing equipment for us on an ad hoc basis.

The income from annual subscriptions basically covers the running costs of the Friends, such as servicing the lawnmower and insurance. Every year these costs increase, but this source of income is reducing as Friends leave the area or sadly pass away, and we seem unable to appeal to a new generation to support our work.

We have therefore come to rely on donations to make any necessary improvements at the Pond, such as re-pointing the walls or refurbishing the jetties. The cancellation of the 2020 Biddenham Show for obvious reasons has seriously impacted our funds, but thankfully over the years, we have built up some financial reserves and we used these to pay for the reed clearance that took place last year. This dramatically increased the amount of clear water and improved the views. To fully benefit from this expenditure, we need another session of reed clearance this year and since we never take any donations from the Biddenham Show for granted, nor do we know whether it will even take place this year, we feel that we need to appeal directly to the Village for donations to undertake this work.

We aim to raise £500 and if you appreciate the pond and its importance to the village, please will you consider helping us. All donations can be sent c/o Jane Knight at 59A Day's Lane, with any cheques made payable to The Friends of the Biddenham Village Pond. Alternatively, donations may be made by bank transfer, please email jane@80kltd.co.uk and we will send you our bank details.

Whatever method you choose to make your donation, please will you indicate your name and address, and we thank you in advance for your generosity.

We hope that you enjoy your walks by the Pond this winter, and that this lightens any Lockdown blues.

Stay safe!

The Pond Team

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Letter to the editor

Dear Editor

I have lived in Biddenham for over 25 years now and take regular walks, mostly in the morning, but not always, round the village. I am appalled to see that 99% of the Biddenham walkers and joggers do NOT wear masks despite the fact that Bedford AND Biddenham are in the national lockdown and have experienced increased numbers of cases of Covid-19. Common sense and courtesy, never mind regard for one's own and others' health and safety might prompt everyone to wear one.

I see elderly people and young people, often with children, mask-less, often passing me on a narrow path or forcing me to step off the pavement onto the road. Although THEY may belong to a family "bubble", others whom they pass do not! It is awkward sometimes to wear a mask in cold weather if one wears glasses as they steam up, but one could carry a mask in one's hand by the strings and put it on for a minute or two when passing strangers. It is not beyond man's wit but it does require a bit of forethought and consideration for others which, sadly it seems, are lacking in our village.

I wonder whether it would be possible to ask readers of the Loop in the New Year edition to go beyond the legal minimum and remember they also have a human obligation to protect themselves and others. Nobody is an island.

My friends know my sentiments on the issue. As for strangers, all I ask for is a bit of common sense and sensibility.

Joanna Baxter

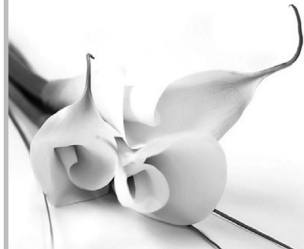
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Chris Gleave

We are sorry to report the death of Chris Gleave of Gold Lane on 9th October 2020 and are grateful to Angie Tatum-Hume for letting us know about the tribute page which has been set up in her memory.

Chris was diagnosed with Motor Neurone disease in 2018. MND is a cruel and terrible disease which Chris fought with strength, dignity and a sense of humour throughout. She appreciated the help and work of the MNDA and would want their work and research to be supported by us all. A Tribute page has been opened in Chris's name and if you would like to write a tribute, or a memory, and/or make a donation the web site is: <https://chrisgleave.muchloved.com>.

The picture and the following interview are extracted from 'Biddenham Biographies', first published in the Biddenham Bulletin in May 2011.

Originally from Cambridge, Chris arrived in Biddenham quite unexpectedly. In the final stages of planning to emigrate to New Zealand, Chris and Jim changed their minds and landed up in Gold Lane, Biddenham in September 1976. Jim spent most of his working life abroad, mostly working in Norway and Singapore.

Swimming was a major part of Chris's life; she was a swimming teacher for over 40 years and took part in a momentous Channel relay swim in 1997. She swam

competitively (starting Masters swimming at the late age of 35) with Bedford Beavers including the European Championships in Sheffield and the World Championships in San Francisco. In retirement she continued to swim and take occasional lessons as well as taking up golf, rowing on the River Ouse and doing Yoga at the Church Barn. Over the years Chris also taught skiing to adults with physical and mental disabilities, enjoyed sailing both in Norway and at Grafham Water, and rang the Church Tower Bells.

Chris and Jim's family and two grandchildren live in California and she visited them regularly until prevented by ill health. St. James's church was another major part of her life and she was a regular member of the congregation at evensong.

Q&A

What do you like most about being here/Biddenham life?

A- My friends, I think friends are so important.

What is your favourite view in the area?

A- The view from the Vestry Roof/Bell Tower towards the river at sunset is unbeatable. Also, I love looking across the Village Green to the cedar tree, especially at Christmas when the Christmas tree is lit up.

What would you miss if you moved away?

A- Everything-friends, neighbours, the Church, the river, the swimming pools!

What do you like to do in your spare time?

A-Gardening.

Is there a motto that you particularly try to live by?

A- Carpe Diem,-seize the day.

What particular talent would you like to have?

A- To be able to sing in tune.

Which gadget do you have that you couldn't do without?

A-My computer-I need it to keep in touch with the family. Name someone who has been a great influence in your life?

A-The late Helen Elkington, my swimming mentor. She was a total inspiration.

Which three words would your children use to describe you?

A- Enthusiastic-indefatigable-loving (I asked them!)

Do you have any regrets?

A- That both my parents died very young, in their mid-fifties.

What did you learn from your parents?

A- If you can't afford it you can't have it.

How would you like to be remembered?

A- As a loyal friend.

What is your bedtime reading at the moment?

A- Judi Dench's autobiography. I've also just read Richard Branson's biography.

Do you have any ambitions?

A- To see the Northern Lights-we went to Tromso, but it rained! Also, I'd like to go to the Arctic to see polar bears in the wild (at a distance!)

If you could live a different life, what would you do?

A- I would love to be a 'hands-on grandmother'.

What would you choose as your luxury on a desert island?

A- Belgian Buns-with butter!

If you were stuck on the top of Biddenham Church Tower, who would you like to be with you?

A- My late friend, Pauline.

If you had a whole day to yourself, money no object, how would you spend it?

A- With Jim, without computers, sailing on the Norwegian Fjords in 'Magnolia 1' with a good wind and plenty of sun. If you could shadow someone for the day, who would it be?

A- Andrew Lloyd Webber.

What qualities do you value most in other people?

A- A still tongue. And dependability.

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An unexpected visitor

Two years on from the dawn of a new century, life for most villagers in Biddenham, which remained essentially a rural agricultural community, was carrying on much as it had done as the previous century had drawn to a close.

But then suddenly on Saturday 25th January 1902 great excitement prevailed in the quiet village when the news spread of an unexpected visitor.

About 9.30 in the morning two labourers saw something run into the arch under Miss Howard's carriage drive, with a dog following it and worrying it. Thinking it was one of Mr H L Peacock's ferrets they at once informed Mr Anthony Chibnall, the tenant of Grove Farm, of the fact who soon got a big cat trap and brought it to the scene. The trap was securely fixed at one end, and from the other the creature was hustled with the aid of a pole into the trap.

But what was the cause of this excitement? What was this unexpected visitor? It was found to be ...

... a big dog otter. The otter was placed in Mr Chibnall's coach house where it ravenously devoured a good meal of fish. Several people saw it during Saturday, and the local paper reported that hundreds came to see it on Sunday, it being a sight which very few people saw in a lifetime.

The otter had a very fine silky coat and looked to be in the pink of condition, its weight being 20 pounds: few were known to exceed 25 pounds. Several conjectures were afloat as to its being so far inland, but the most likely was considered to be that it was on its way from the river at Honey Hills to the river at Doctor's Corner, or vice versa, thus avoiding the large bend in the river and also Kempston and Bromham mills. Or it may have come up to the lamb yards where they often found food in the waste heaps during the lambing season.

On Sunday afternoon the otter was released down the Honey Hills fields, some hundred or more people being present and, the paper said, the creature seemed delighted at the prospect of being once more in its native element.

What might transpire, I wonder, if perchance an otter was to arrive similarly in the village in our day and age? A proliferation of stunning photographs, videos too, social media buzzing. But who has a big cat trap now should the need arise?

Peter Applewhite



An otter for illustrative purposes, not THE otter which knew nothing of photography and so had no thought of posing for a picture

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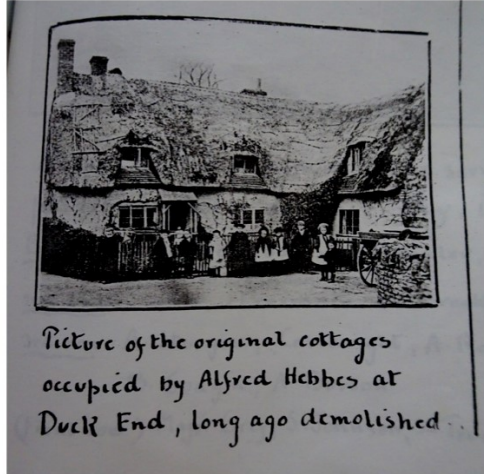
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Biddenham History Society

I have recently been watching and enjoying a series on BBC1 called the Repair Shop. For those who have not seen it, people bring their damaged or broken treasured old objects to be repaired and restored by a team of very friendly, skilled experts, who are based at the Weald and Downland Museum in Sussex. To complete one of the repairs, the team had to call upon the expertise of one of the few remaining wheelwrights in the country. This led me to think of Biddenham where the wheelwright was an important part of village life.



Picture of the original cottages occupied by Alfred Hebbes at Duck End, long ago demolished.

The wheelwright at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century was Alfred Hebbes. He carried on the business of wheelwright and carpenter in Biddenham for fifty years, from 1860 – 1910, retiring at the age of seventy. He lived at Duck End, where he had his cottage and his workshop. His cottage has unfortunately since been demolished. He was never short of work. In the era of horse drawn transport on the farms there were always farm carts to be repaired. Before the coming of the motorcar there were also the pony traps, used by the wealthier villagers, to be kept in order.



Rev. W.E.B. Norman's Bible class. Alfred Hebbes is on the far left on the front row.

In addition to his busy working life, Alfred Hebbes was Parish Clerk for about twenty years. He was Sexton at the church and belonged to the Bible class led by the Rev. W.E.B. Norman, Vicar of Biddenham, 1890 – 1936. In the 1890s, this consisted of 26 men only from

the village – no women. Albert Church, in his memoirs, recalled that Rev. Norman would drop in on Alfred Hebbes on his walks, especially if he noticed that there was a need for a carpenter to repair a fence, stile or gate. Apparently, he would not leave until you said "Yes".

Alfred Hebbes was also caretaker for the Village School. Albert Church remembered that the School Bell was rung by one of the older boys at five minutes before 9am and again at 1.45pm in summer and 1.30pm in winter. Those working in the fields or gravel pits used it as a means of timing their working day. Albert remembered that

sometimes the boys messed around and the rope would be wrapped round the spindle. One of the older girls would be sent down to the vicarage. The Vicar, who was very annoyed, went round to Alfred Hebbes, who had to go to the School with a ladder, to turn the bell over and let the rope down. The boys had to pretend it was an accident and say how sorry they were!



Albert Searle

Alfred's daughter, Miss Beatrice Hebbes, was the infants' teacher at the Village School as Ted Pile, who started at the School in 1906, when he was five years old, recalled. She married Albert Ernest Seale, who took over his father-in-law's wheelwright business in 1910 and ran it until the mid-1960s. By this time, the world had changed: tractors and trailers had replaced farm carts and motor cars had replaced pony traps. Wheelwrights became fewer in number and did specialised work. The one used by the Repair Shop in 2020 usually works for the Queen, keeping her ceremonial coaches and carriages in working order! He is one of the last in a tradition of skilled craftsmen.

Kathy Fricker

Information from:

A History of Biddenham compiled by members of the Biddenham Women's Institute, 1956.

Albert Church. Recollections of my Life in Biddenham.

Dorothy Richards. A Parish History and Guide.

Katherine Fricker, Mary McKeown and Diana Toyn. The Village of Biddenham through the Ages.

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David Slark

As reported in December's Loop, David died on 6th November 2020. We are very grateful to his wife, Anthea for this tribute, adapted from the eulogy she read at his funeral on 27th November.

David was a post war baby born in Wimbledon in 1945 to Alfred, a grocer and Lilian, a dressmaker. He spent his formative years in Gt Bookham, Surrey together with his sister Marilyn. He went to Guildford Grammar School and then to Leeds University where he studied Mathematics with a year of Russian. We met in his final term at a 'hop' as one did in those days. He joined Tube Investments as a graduate trainee and initially worked as a Systems Analyst later retraining as a Cost and Management Accountant - living in Warrington, Northampton, and Kenilworth before moving to Bedford in 1975 as Financial Director for Robertson's, an engineering company in Ampthill Road. We bought the house in Biddenham thinking we would be here 3-4 years and we're still here 45 years later... He worked for the company for 20 years after which he was made redundant. He had various ideas to get into the travel industry but nothing quite worked out and he got a job with a company called Cadcorp in Stevenage. Again, he was made redundant in his mid-50s and from then he had a succession of short term contracts and his career gradually came to a halt.

However, David is defined by what he did outside work. In the 80s he was Chairman of Biddenham Village Hall. Who could forget the Medieval Banquet, the Chinese Evening, the Western Evening, the May Day celebrations and many more. In the 90s he ran the Biddenham Show and moved it from the Darlow Drive field via the Village Hall to the Pavilion. He was then on the Committee which organised the Millennium and various Jubilee Celebrations. More recently he was a member of the Biddenham Society Committee and Day's Lane Residents Association. For several years he typeset the parish magazine (predecessor of The Loop) and, although not a committed church goer, was on the grass cutting rota and a supporter of church activities. At some point this year his ashes will be interred in St James's Churchyard and hopefully there will be a chance to celebrate his life.

We have belonged to the Fine Companions Folk Dance Club since 1976. David, although not a natural dancer, always enjoyed dancing and would immediately know the pattern after just one walk through. He also did a bit of calling. He was the longest serving member on the Committee having been Treasurer (more than once), Club Leader and Chairman. Dancing took us to festivals in Whitby and Chippenham, to Overasselt in Holland, on the twinning events with Bamburg and to many other social events. We also hosted dances in our garden every summer. Back in the 80s we joined the Ivel Valley Walkers and again David served on the Committee being Chairman when the group celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2009 and a book was produced of IVW 25 favourite walks. He led walks locally and in London once memorably leading a party of 60 French and English people around the top places of interest as part of the (Sandy) twinning arrangements with Malounay near Rouen. He also walked the Coast to Coast and West Highland Way with other members of the group.

David was a frustrated sailor having applied for Dartmouth on leaving school but found that he was colour blind. He was always thrilled that his nephew Steven had gone into the Navy as his career, in fact he taught Steven to

sail during a holiday on Menorca. However David made up for it in later life by going on several voyages with the Jubilee Sailing Trust buddying with a disabled person so that they could enjoy the experience of a tall ship. The most challenging trip was the Atlantic via the Azores to Southern Ireland which took about 3 weeks. He also took up gliding at Riseley and owned one tenth of a glider until it got damaged. And who could forget the BMW Z4 blue sports car that was his pride and joy until we both struggled to get in and out of it.

In retirement David did 10 years as a volunteer with Hitchin British School dealing with financial matters and business plans and was a trustee for the Council for Voluntary Service as well as working behind the scenes for Bedford and District Audio News. He attended the Rothsay Education Centre and particularly enjoyed 'In the News' being an avid reader of Private Eye and The Telegraph. He also acted as auditor for Bedford Gallery Quire and Biddenham Handbell Ringers. David was a great supporter of some of my quirky hobbies. Through handbell ringing we travelled to international symposiums where he would often work behind the scenes as a volunteer usually entailing a lot of moving of equipment. We were both involved with Tibbs Dementia Foundation, an amazing local charity providing information and support to the newly diagnosed and their carers right through to the end of life and beyond.

We had some wonderful holidays to some quite unusual destinations - China in 1983 before it was fully open to tourists, Transylvania, Syria with Ramblers in 2009, Venezuela and Peru. Work trips to the USA led to several fly-drive vacations. We went on a lot of walking holidays such as the Route de St Jacques across France and Spain.

David loved parties, the most memorable being the surprise party for my 40th which was arranged with military precision so that I knew nothing. We celebrated all the important anniversaries - silver, ruby and golden, only 2 years ago, as well as significant birthdays, enjoying mixing our local friends with those from far afield.

David's final years were marred by illness and physical decline but in spite of everything we were still able to enjoy ourselves - Edinburgh and Inverness by train for Christmas 2019 and more recently (September) 4 days in Norfolk. In fact, we had a good summer in lockdown and were well looked after by the medics. I have wonderful memories of our 52+ years together.

I would like to thank all local friends for their wonderful messages of sympathy and support and donations made to the chosen charities.

MJP

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This month in the garden

A cold and wet January has not encouraged activity in the garden so gardeners will be raring to go this month. This is particularly true as we face the prospect of another two or three months in Covid-induced lock-down. Last year many of us in isolation were made even more aware than usual of the therapeutic power of gardening and this will be a source of relief and hope this year. The onset of spring always brings a lift to the spirit and we shall be especially glad of this at a time when, sadly, we shall once again need all the sources of hope that we can find. I walked around my garden before writing this in mid-January and I was delighted to see the first snowdrop buds showing white under an apple tree.

One of the joys of gardening is the sense of anticipation that we get when sowing seeds and the second half of February brings the prospect of doing some sowing if you have a greenhouse or a windowsill that you can use for plants. Among the things you can sow then are salad crops like tomatoes, lettuce, radish and basil, savoy cabbage and calabrese and some annual flowers. Seed packets will always indicate sowing times which can often be spread over several months which allows for successional sowings. If you are growing potatoes, especially early ones these should be put out on a windowsill for 'chitting' (getting shoots to grow before planting). Put the seed potato upright with the end showing most eyes uppermost. Putting them in a cardboard egg box is a good way of keeping them upright.

When sowing seeds it is always best to use fresh compost. Some garden centres may be open for those of you willing to venture into public places while on-line shopping will be the answer for the more vulnerable. Free delivery is available which is a great help with heavy items. Peat free composts are much better than they used to be and we are all encouraged to use them. There are separate composts for sowing and potting but there are also multi-purpose composts which are good for both sowing and potting on. Plants which will be permanently grown in containers are best grown in John Innes no 3 compost. Acid-loving plants and shrubs need an ericaceous compost. Fertilisers are cheapest when sold in fairly large quantities and these too are available on-line, Grow-more is a good chemical fertiliser and the organic fertiliser I like best is pelleted chicken manure which is easy to spread and not smelly. It is good to use it around plants in flower beds as well as on soil in the vegetable plot from now on. There is, of course, nothing to beat a load of horse or cow manure if you can get it and store it.

You may well have left flower borders to enjoy the sight of frosty grasses and seed heads and to let the birds eat the seeds but now is the time to cut dead growth down to the ground. Deciduous grasses need to be cut back soon before new growth makes it difficult to cut out dead stuff without cutting into green growth. Ornamental borders will also need weeding and general titivation.

Apple and pear fruit tree pruning can be done in December or January but if yours hasn't been done yet it needs to be done this month before the sap is rising. Currant bushes and gooseberries should also be pruned in February; cutting back new growth by about a third. February is also the time for cutting autumn fruiting raspberry canes down to a few inches above the ground. This allows time for new canes to grow and produce fruit from August to November. New bare root canes, both autumn and early summer varieties can be planted in February and the canes cut down to a few inches above ground level. Summer fruiting raspberries will grow new canes during the year but they will not fruit until the next season.

The soil in open ground is likely to be too cold and wet for sowing but you can get ready by clearing the ground of weeds and either digging it over lightly or, if using no dig, spreading a layer of garden compost. Spreading polythene sheeting over an area will help to warm up the soil and newly sown plants can be protected with horticultural fleece.

It's time to think about summer bedding and you can get this in three different ways; buying plants from a nursery or garden centre (opening arrangements permitting) ordering plug plants on-line (either immature plants which need to be grown on under glass for a while, or as "garden-ready" plants) or sowing them yourself from seed.

Finally, during this difficult time, if you have got a garden make the most of the productivity, pleasure and comfort it offers.

Jeremy Arthern

From Our Biddenham Village Agent

Our Village Agent, Teresa Moon, is here to help older people in Bedford Borough villages to access the services and support they might need. Her services are free. Leave your contact details on Freephone 0800 039 1234 and she will return your call.



Need help with transport to vaccinations in Bedford or further afield?

Good news for people who aren't able to drive themselves to get their vaccine in Bedford or beyond. The Door2Door transport service, who operate minibuses for people with limited mobility, is now open to all and is free! Please pass this information on to any older neighbours, as some people have been very worried about this.

Door2Door is now available to anyone who has transport difficulties getting to vaccinations. You don't need to sign up as a member, you don't need to have limited mobility, you don't need to pay (although a donation on the bus would be welcomed). They have extended their operating hours. AND will take people to Milton Keynes, Luton & Dunstable and even Stevenage, if required. This service is available to people living within Bedford Borough or Central Bedfordshire. If in doubt, just check with Parvin or Naomi on communitytransport@bedsrcc.org.uk or 01234 834933.

All vehicles have been made as Covid-secure as possible. Socially distant seating, screens to separate the clients from drivers, masks, hand sanitizer, disposable seat covers, regular cleaning regime that includes both daily of grab rails, headrests, etc and occasional anti-bacterial spraying by an outside organisation. To book, contact the bookings line on 01234 832611, 9am-4pm Mondays-Fridays.

Would a helpful gadget make your life easier?

We have a range of handy gadgets to distribute to people who may be struggling to manage on their own during the Covid crisis, including a jar opener, button hook and zip puller; automatic night light; handy reacher; long-handled shoe horn; shoe remover; or seat belt helper.

Do you need a washable mask?

Once again we are able to offer free washable cotton masks – now with adjustable ties. Our masks are made locally, in coloured floral fabrics and also black prints, with an aluminium strip which shapes them over the nose to help reduce misted glasses.

Need help with filling in forms?

If you are struggling with paperwork, such as Blue Badge, Bus Pass or Attendance Allowance applications, our Village Agent is happy to help you.

Contact our Village Agent on Freephone 0800 039 1234

(This is an answerphone service, so please be ready to leave your name, address & telephone number, & we will aim to call you back within 48 hours.)



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Rhoda Brooks

We are sorry to report the death of Rhoda Brooks and are grateful to her daughter Anne for the following account of Rhoda's life in Biddenham.



Rhoda Brooks, a long-time resident of the village, sadly passed away on 11th January this year. Rhoda had lived in Biddenham for over 56 years but her links with the village went back at least another three generations. In fact, when Rhoda moved to Biddenham, her great-aunt Ada still lived in the thatched cottage her parents had lived in, at the beginning of Duck End Lane. Rhoda's great-uncle, Richard Wright, who lost his life in the First World War, is remembered on the War Memorial.

Rhoda was born in Bedford, but her family links with the village meant it was a familiar place for her, and she moved to Biddenham in 1964 with her husband Jim and two children. They attended the village school, a big change for them, moving from classes of 30 children to a school of only 30 pupils! Rhoda worked at Biddenham House for the two Miss Howards, and then later as a classroom assistant at the school, seeing changes in Head Teachers and buildings and a growth in pupil numbers!

Over the years, Rhoda and Jim were familiar figures at village events; the annual Biddenham Show, the service at the War Memorial for Armistice Day, and various fundraising events connected to St James's Church. For many years, they were keen bell ringers, and Rhoda also served as Verger. Jim was well known for his carefully tended allotment by the church, and they both took pleasure in the walks the countryside offered as they exercised the dogs they loved. Classes for flower arranging and art gave Rhoda enjoyment and encouraged her creativity, and she assisted with the Neighbourhood Watch and Neighbourly Care Schemes. After Jim's death, and with her own failing health, Rhoda found it harder to get out and about in the village, but thanks to the kindness of neighbours was still able to enjoy the monthly First Friday Lunch.

Biddenham has changed considerably over Rhoda's lifetime. The village of her childhood, marked by its big houses - The Manor and Biddenham House, several farms with their own farm buildings and cottages, and the sprinkling of thatched dwellings, has been filled in with many homes over the years. Farm buildings have been converted, and the fields, that once provided grain crops and grazing for cattle, are slowly being built upon. A small community has grown in size and character. There will be those who are children now who will see Biddenham change even more during their lifetimes, but all like Rhoda, will have their own special part to play in the life of the village.

Anne Ovenden

Don't forget the Foodbank

IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES THE NEED IS URGENT

You can find the latest list of items needed by Bedford food bank and details of how to make a financial donation at <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/>

Cards

Here are two more of Tony Burton's cards, the first on a very topical theme.

3 Social Distancing!

How's this for social distancing ...

In Israel 2,000 years ago the authorities made a law that a person with leprosy could not come within 100 paces of anyone else.

On one occasion Jesus was walking along with a crowd of people following Him and a man with leprosy broke all the social distancing rules. He came up to Jesus, knelt down and said:

"Lord, if you are willing, You can make me clean."
Luke 5:12 (NKJV)

Jesus actually touched the man, and said:

"I am willing; be cleansed."
Luke 5:13 (NKJV)

And the man was healed at once:

"Immediately the leprosy left him."
Luke 5:13 (NKJV)

The man was healed of a dreadful disease - and now he could mix with other people (no more social distancing).

Surely only God can heal like this?

8 Proud Father

John the Baptist lived in the wilderness, preaching and baptising people in the river Jordan. One day he witnessed something unique and astonishing:

When John baptised Jesus this happened:

"... heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit came down upon him in bodily form like a dove."
Luke 3: 21-22 (GNB)

John must have been awestruck - he saw the Holy Spirit come down on Jesus.

But that wasn't all:

"And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you.'"
Luke 3:22 (GNB)

Just like at any baptism today, he heard the proud Father (in this case God) declare how pleased He was with His Son!

Jesus truly is the Son of God!

Biddenham Parish Council

The most recent Parish Council Meeting was held on Wednesday 13th January 2021 using the Zoom conferencing facility. Present were Parish Councillors Graham Bates, Stewart Briggs, Peter Chase (Chairman), Harry Fowler, Alan Jacobs, Krys Osuch, Francia Slade and Joe Warren. Apologies were received from Councillor Chris Gee. Borough Councillors Jon Gambold and Roger Rigby, Clerk Karen Cotton and one member of the public were also present.



Speeding

You will be interested to learn that the Speed Indication Device, recently moved from Gold Lane to Biddenham Turn, has been doing an excellent job of capturing data about speeding cars. The broad, straight road is the opposite of Gold Lane, and in turn the behaviour of motorists is quite different. We resolved to submit SID's findings to both the Borough Council and the local police, and to ask them for their advice about what to do next. Suffice to say there is something for them to get their teeth into.

At the same time, we discussed whether to possibly get an average speed camera system for the village. These are expensive – a minimum of £60,000 – and can only be obtained by getting to the top of a list kept by Bedford Borough. Obviously, you need to get on the list in the first place, and this we have resolved to do. Although such a system may be controversial, we felt it better to get Biddenham on the list as soon as possible, so that we start working our way towards the top. If we later decide we'd prefer some other form of speed reduction, we can always choose to come off it.

SID will remain on Biddenham Turn for a while, and then move to Bromham Road.

Golf course land news

As I reported after our last meeting, the golf course land between us and Great Denham has now been turned over to sheep grazing and hay production. Those going onto the land should keep away from electric fences, only use the public footpaths and, I'm afraid, not play golf! Bidwells, who manage the land on behalf of the landowner, are arranging for some signs, I believe, to remind people that the land is essentially private; they have and will continue to maintain the security of the old clubhouse building and the greenkeeper's compound.

We (as in me, Cllrs Bates and Fowler) and Great Denham Parish Council continue to have monthly liaison meetings with Bidwells, and these are proving a useful way to maintain a civil dialogue.

You may have seen that one result of these meetings has been to get a statement from Bidwells about the land, which is up on our village website. A key point in this statement is that the future long-term use of the land is in abeyance until government policy for landowners is clarified. As a result of Brexit, the EU's Common Agricultural Policy is due to be phased out in favour of something new called "Public money for public goods". This bizarre terminology is meant to mean that a much broader, and more community oriented, set of values will be associated with land from which landowners can earn hard cash. So, for example, a country park may earn a landowner as much (or more) of a government subsidy than planting yet more wretched rape for rape seed oil.

More immediately, a planning application to change the clubhouse into a nursery has been submitted. If you wish to comment on this yourself, please go to the Borough Council's planning website and search for the application using reference 20/02846/FUL.

As your Parish Council, we consider that the Borough

Council's policies put in place on behalf of the community should naturally be upheld. In that respect, it is difficult to see how a nursery is in keeping with the requirement that the land and its buildings are used for sport (this is Policy 99 of the current Borough-wide "Local Plan"). We therefore resolved to object to the application. If, however, a way can be found to ensure the policy is upheld after all (perhaps by re-establishing a smaller golf course – which a local group of residents have offered to run) then we would have no objection to the clubhouse being used as a nursery (or some other purpose).

Gold Lane houses

Yes, the flags and signs are up, the diggers have arrived and yet we are told there are twenty weeks of archaeological exploration happening first at the site for 250 houses off Gold Lane. Twenty weeks is quite a while, so we have been surprised to hear from local residents that significant earth moving has been going on. Our clerk is in dialogue with the land-owner's agent (guess who – Bidwells) about what is really happening.

I know I am not the only one who still cannot believe Borough conspired in the ridiculous idea of providing one narrow entrance to this new estate just a few yards from the existing junction of Gold Lane and Deep Spinney. Quite sensibly, the initial way in for contractors has been to use an existing gate just up the way, off the broad curve of Deep Spinney. If only the overall estate could use this entrance! I just don't understand how, if massive earth-moving equipment is permitted to get into the plot that way, why it can't become the permanent entrance.

We will wait until the developer comes forward with their next phase plans, which will set out the internal road layout, and then make our continued concern about this entrance known again, as emphatically as possible.

Precept

As a proportion of your overall Council Tax, the Biddenham Parish precept is a small amount and has been declining for several years. This is not because we are asking for less money to run the Parish Council, but rather that the amount requested is being shared among a growing number of households. This is, of course, thanks to housebuilding (mainly north of Bromham Road). This year sees a further such increase in residents, and so your contribution, if it rises at all, will only do so by a very small amount.

In considering our expenditure for the year from April 2021, we have allotted considerably more for tree pruning than in recent times. Trees seem to be getting faster-growing than ever (I'm sure that can't be true!) and we must keep low-hanging boughs and hedgerows from getting in the way of people who are just trying to walk along our footpaths.

Talking of trees, we narrowly failed before Christmas to make arrangements to put up a festive tree in the new St Mary's estate north of Bromham Road. We are determined that for Christmas 2021 there will be one, and therefore the budget for Christmas trees has doubled. Let there be no "bah humbug" around here: we were unanimous in our agreement to this allocation of funds.

Our next meeting – IMPORTANT INFO

Please consult the biddenham.org.uk website for the date of the next meeting. We very much welcome hearing from residents, there being a public "open session" near the start for anyone wanting to say something. Please call in and let us know anything concerning you about our village, or just listen.

To participate, please use a computer or tablet by accessing the Internet and carefully entering <https://zoom.us/j/524544164>

Alternatively, use a phone to ring 0208 080 6592 and then use its keypad to enter the code 524 544 164 followed by the # key. Calls are national rate, I'm afraid.

Peter Chase
Chairman

Biddenham Gardeners Association

The Gardeners' programme for 2021 began on 19th January with two members talking about their own gardens. Once again Zoom came to the rescue and the monthly programme will continue to be presented in this way for the foreseeable future. The speakers at this first meeting were Linda whose garden is in Ison Close and Josie with a garden in Darlow Drive. One of the pleasures of having two speakers with a common topic is the contrast it provides in the size and nature of the gardens and differences in the style of presentation.

Linda entitled her talk "My Garden, The ups and downs." There are the downs of disappointment and damage when things fail to grow or when animals and pests or the weather wreak havoc amongst the things that do grow and there are many sources of joy and contentment. Linda took a somewhat pessimistic view that the downs outweighed the ups by about 75% to 25% but the beauty of her garden displayed in her illustrations rather belied this.

Linda began by setting out what she wants from a garden and the structure of her talk demonstrated how she has achieved this. The prime consideration is lots of colour with flowers for picking and arrangement and a combination of old friends that reappear every year and new and special plants that have caught her eye at flower shows or other gardens. She also wants her garden to be a place of memories, somewhere to relax and a haven for wildlife. To this end she gardens almost completely organically.

Linda moved to her garden in 1982 and after initial reshaping with curved beds and a snaking gravel path and the addition of a kidney-shaped pond, designed and dug by her young son, the garden luxuriates in its maturity. A very significant addition was building a conservatory and Linda's pictures showed that this is a place of vivid colour and great beauty with a wide variety of container plants including a good many geraniums. The major additions in the garden itself have been a plant house with a new shed behind it. The plant house was bought in memory of Linda's father and it is notable not just for its superb quality but as the first example of a range of plant houses made by Gabriel Ash and used widely as a marketing tool before coming to Linda. The plant house and the shed also served as an example of the downs of gardening when a huge tree from a neighbour's garden fell down over them in a gale. The shed needed some repair but the plant house survived unscathed.

The beauty and interest of the garden was generously demonstrated with many lovely photos of the plants and colour combination showing the all-year round interest that Linda has achieved; from hundreds of snow drops, a fine display of tulips grown as annuals in pots, many shrubs, perennial flowers for cutting and the plants under cover in the conservatory and greenhouse.

Josie began her talk by putting her garden in its Darlow Drive setting. She used a historic plan to show how the area had been developed behind Biddenham Turn and photos showing how trees in the road and in neighbours' gardens added a great deal to the interest of the outlook beyond her own garden (an important point in garden design). Josie moved to Darlow Drive in 1996 and the garden has been developed alongside a busy working life and the growth of a family with three children where what are now young adults have yet to fly the nest.

The rear garden is considerably bigger than Linda's, being 120 feet long by 55 feet wide. It faces South-East which means that one side is considerably more shaded than the other and this, of course, has a bearing on what can be grown where. The soil, in common with other gardens in this part of Biddenham is free-draining river gravel with a neutral Ph. This means that it is possible to

grow some acid-loving plants although they need to be planted in ericaceous compost. Because of this Josie has been able to grow a lovely camelia and a pieris. Part of Darlow Drive before its development was an orchard and survivors from this time are two substantial apple trees which provide a centre of interest and a good crop of lovely but unidentified fruit. An attractive addition planted some twenty years ago is a double flowering cherry tree. Apart from this the centre of the garden is mainly lawn with planting round the sides. These side beds are mainly planted with shrubs and Josie has included a number of roses which add colourful summer interest. She has also found that heather grows well in her soil. Against the house there is a magnificent wisteria which grows around the side of the house on an arbour which creates a welcome canopy in hot weather. Before her time the garden was owned by a Biddenham Show award-winning vegetable gardener. Josie inherited several vegetable beds but, without the time to maintain them, they have been grassed over. Josie is now moving into vegetable gardening with containers on the patio though her family have had enough of courgettes this past year! She recently acquired an allotment in Queen's Park and, with the advice of other allotment owners, has started overcoming its overgrown state by spreading a good layer of manure over cardboard laid on the weeds.

The front garden has a large semi-circular lawn edged with ornamental bricks and a wide variety of shrubs on either side. Josie illustrated these with a number of photographs and notable amongst them is a superb tall white lilac, a variegated euonymus, a camelia, a viburnum tinus variegatum and an edging on one side of box.

Jeremy Arthern

New members and visitors are always welcome. For more information contact: Linda Truscott on 01234 270747
www.biddenhamgardenersassociation.org.uk



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What's On?

11.00am Sundays and 6.00pm Wednesdays: St James's church is continuing to hold services via Zoom. Go to Zoom and enter the meeting ID 9880746039.

For details of the February Biddenham Parish Council meeting please go to the website, biddenham.org.uk

For details of Biddenham Gardeners Association meetings please visit www.biddenhamgardenersassociation.org.uk

Hall Booking Details

Biddenham Village Hall

From the Village Hall website you can check availability on the diary, look at the facilities and fill in a booking form. Contact details for regular events are also there. www.biddenhamvillagehall.org.uk

Church Barn

Contact the Booking Officer, Jan Burns on 344019 or janburns@gmx.com if you would like to hire the barn. Smaller than the Village Hall, it is ideal for a small party or meeting.


Pavilion

The hall is available for children's parties, anniversary lunches, christening receptions, meetings etc. We can also hire the small upstairs meeting room which has tea and coffee making facilities.

Booking enquiries to biddenhampavilion@hotmail.co.uk or Debs Slade on 07808 579330.

Great Denham Community Hall

www.greatdenhamcommunityhall.co.uk



The Friends of St James
- the charity which helps conserve the church, churchyard and barn for future generations


Membership	Peter Leverkus	Tel: 353662
Treasurer	Paul Fricker	Tel: 342843

**Welcome Packs for
New Biddenham Residents**
Contact Richard Church Tel: 214805

The Loop

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All **March** articles, preferably by e-mail in Word format, to loopeditor@gmail.com or to 22 Day's Lane and adverts to 3 Queen's Close (cj.sugars@talktalk.net) by **Wednesday 17th February please.**



The views expressed in 'The Loop' by various community groups do not necessarily represent the views of St James's Church or the Parochial Church Council.



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