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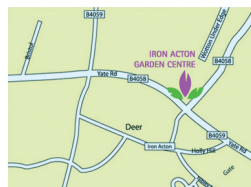


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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

LOCAL POYNTZ TEAM: - Jon Aries, Caroline Haselhan, Nikki Johnson, Sarah Ridler, Amanda Scott, Jane Spare, Heather Tillotson, Laura Walters, John Wright, Marilyn Wright and myself, Pamela McCoy.

LOCAL POYNTZ PHOTOGRAPHERS: - Sally Aries, Gillian Otlet

ARTICLES – On pages 24 & 25 there is a delightful article written by an American couple who were house and dog sitting for Steve and Jenny Green. It is a lovely piece which paints a wonderful, and true, picture of our Parish and community. Do read it.

As always, we are delighted to hear from you. If you have a story to tell or would like to comment on any of the articles, please contact me. My details are below.

PARISH MEADOWS – For those of you who have not visited the Parish Meadows lately, do please take a walk through them. The Parish Council, with the financial help of Acton Aid, have rebuilt the tennis courts and extended the size of them adding 5-a-side football and basketball courts. I was extremely pleased to see, just yesterday, that there were several young chaps making full use of them.

ADVERTISING/SPONSORS: - We would welcome any new advertisers and sponsors. If you would like to place an advert, or know of anyone who might, please contact me and we can discuss terms, etc. My details are below. Please bear in mind that any advert will appear on our website for no extra cost.

The deadline for the winter edition is 15th October 2023. We really need to have all articles by that date, PLEASE. You would be amazed by how many people ask me, many days past the closing date, “when is the closing date?” Even one of our team members asked me that question not too long ago! Generally, I reply with a smile “It was xxxx”. No matter, I always do my very best to accommodate everyone.

FRONT PAGE: - Those of us who attended the Proms this summer will, immediately, recognise the chap on the front page. It is the brilliant and extremely talented Russell Watson. He is a very friendly and genuine man who was complimentary to us members of the choir. We understand that he truly enjoyed the evening “out in the sticks”.

EDITOR- Pamela McCoy 01454 228874, 07766074252
Email pam.localpoyntz@gmail.com.

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AUTUMN BIRDS COMING AND GOING

Anyone with an interest in nature and in particular birds will no doubt be aware of when our summer migrants arrive in spring and where they saw or heard them. How many of us however will be aware of when they leave us for their journey south to spend our winter in warmer climates. Just like the first friends to leave a party they slip away quietly and unnoticed and it's only after the event that we were aware that they left early.

Swifts are the first to leave in July, one minute they are screaming around the roof tops and then without any fanfare they are gone without anyone really noticing and it's only after a few days of quiet that one realises they are not in the village. By the time we are aware of their absence they are already over France heading for Spain and Gibraltar where they cross to Africa.

Adult Cuckoos will also be departing in July and August leaving their offspring, who were raised by foster parents, to make their own way to the Congo. Other migrants such as Swallows and Martins are more obvious in their intentions to leave us. Around the end of September and October they gather in family parties enjoying the last of the summer sunshine. You can usually see them on the electric and telephone cables crossing the fields to the south of the High Street and diving for insects around the allotments at the White Hart end of the village.

At the same time as our summer migrants depart, we are getting an influx of birds who breed further north. Already in July many waders, such as Green and Wood Sandpipers, who breed in Finland and Russia, are already enjoying the benefits in the tidal estuaries of the Severn and the ponds of Slimbridge and elsewhere.

By the time you read this you may already have heard the high-pitched single note whistle of the Redwing as it migrates through the night sky. Although it will probably not be until October that you first see them on the Hawthorn trees and other fruit bearing bushes around the footpaths to the south of the village.

Now is the time to get your feeders filled up to help birds, both young and old, to get through to next spring. I only use Sunflower hearts which are enjoyed by all my visitors, from Goldfinches and Woodpeckers, to the Pigeons and Blackbirds who scavenge under the feeders. I get them on-line from Love Garden Birds for about £1.25 per Kilo when buying 25 Kilos, other suppliers are available! At this time of year if you have surplus apples and windfalls, whether eaters or cookers, put them in an attic or shed, if possible not touching each other, ready to put out for Blackbirds and Thrushes when the weather really bites and they find it hard to get their normal diet because of frosts, put out even those that look rotten as the birds are not fussy.

Looking back to the summer, "my birds" did very well in the garden with the following all raising and fledging young – Blackbird, Hedge Sparrow, Wren, Jackdaw, Blue Tit and 2 Great Tit families. Despite playing a CD of Swift calls out of the front bedroom window, there has still been no interest, but I live in hope that one year they will take up residence in one of the many nest boxes on the house.

This year has been a bit different from my normal spring and summer routine, which is usually taken up with at least one day a week birdwatching in the New Forest, another day locally in Lower Woods or around the lakes in the Cotswold Water Park and any other time I can slip out when Lin is busy or down the allotment. We had a holiday cancelled last September and the only time a replacement was available was slap bang in the middle of the bird breeding season,

which is the last 2 weeks of May, and so much to my annoyance off we went on a river cruise down the Danube.

How wrong could I have been that the holiday would spoil my bird watching season! Every day on the boat we were bombarded with bird life, and not just any bird life but birds that we can only dream of in the UK and it makes you wonder why on earth would some of the migrants bother coming to us when they can stop off in a place with better temperatures and more food.

From the outskirts of Budapest where the trees and shrubs came right down to the river the song of the Nightingale floated across the water and into our cabin. It seemed like they were every hundred metres, and we must have heard thousands by the end of the trip, which was down to the Black Sea and back. Much of the forested areas were plantations of Poplar trees and deep from within you could hear the fluty song of the Golden Oriole and we saw some when we went ashore.

There were also Common Terns skimming the water along with Black Terns and White Winged Black Terns, yes, very descriptive they really are Black with white wings. Cormorants both the ones we see in the UK and Pygmy Cormorants. Two sorts of Pelican, Storks, Gulls, various ducks and an assortment of Swallows and Martins.

Further down near the delta there were Great Reed Warblers in their hundreds in the reed beds and the sound of Cuckoo could be heard from all sides. Occasionally there were isolated dead trees upon which sat White Tailed Eagles or Herons and Egrets.

In places the gentle banks gave way to steeper sided sand banks which were the breeding sites for either Sand Martins or European Bee-eaters. You could see the birds almost like a swarm of bees patrolling their nest holes.

I could wax lyrical about the whole trip and give you a full list of the species we saw or facts about the Danube, which makes the Thames look like a stream, for instance the locks which not only drop the boats down 35 metres in one go but house hydro-electric turbines producing power for both Romania and Bulgaria, and that at its widest it is 6 kilometres and 1.5 times deeper than the Clifton suspension bridge. Would I have given it up for a Swift nesting in the house – I'll think about it.

Chris Boyce

COMMUNITY LUNCHES' REMINDER

.....continuing our series of community lunches enjoyed by many earlier this year as an opportunity to catch up with old friends, renew acquaintances and meet new people, we're hoping to welcome you again to the Parish Hall at 12.30 on

Wednesday 27th September 2023 and
Wednesday 6th December 2023

Just the same as the previous lunches, please RSVP me, Fiona, by text or phone 07935926175 or by email r_bourns@hotmail.com by Saturday 16th September/26th November.

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The ACTONIANS News



This reminder of our very successful production of Neil Simon's play *London Suite* that we performed in May. There are more photographs on our website www.actonians.co.uk



Bleak Expectations 24th -26th November

We are now delighted to announce our November production of **Bleak Expectations** by Mark Evans. This is a delightfully lively stage adaptation of the award-winning radio series, *Bleak Expectations*. It takes you on a joyfully eccentric journey through Dickensian London and beyond. Following the heroic misadventures of young Pip Bin as he battles mistaken identities, contemptible conspiracies and surreal plot twists in his quest to save his family and find true love! In order to do this Pip must thwart the plans of his evil guardian Mr Gently Benevolent.

This play made its premier in 2022 and transferred to London's West End in 2023. It's a laugh out-loud comedy action and we hope that it will be just what you need to cheer you up on a dark November evening.

If you are interested in joining us then please contact us through our website or email us on actonians@outlook.com Auditions will be held in September and we will also be looking for people to work behind the scenes.

Junior Actonians

We are currently all looking forward to watching the Junior's next production of **Snow White and Reality Royalty**.

ST JAMES THE LESS CHURCH

where you are always assured of a warm welcome and sometimes coffee and cake or bubbly and buns!

What a glorious early Summer we had! Sadly the sun and rain came in the wrong order for our farmers and anyone else trying to grow fruit and vegetables. Rain in May and sun in June and July is preferable please but at least we did not have to deal with wildfires and extreme temperatures here as in Europe.

May Day was very successful this year with contributions from all the village groups as well as the commercial stalls with their wide array of goods. Thanks to Acton Aid and all involved and the sterling work on the hot dog stand! Looking at what came very soon after we were very lucky with the weather for the Mash and Proms this year apart from a little rain for the Mash. Did anyone notice with all the singing and dancing to the two very good acts! Russell Watson was just extraordinary. What a delight to listen to "The Voice" and to enjoy such humour and humility. A lovely person and enjoyed by all.

The summer is a much quieter time in the church between the Celebration of Easter and the preparation for Christmas beginning with Advent.

We will have held our Pet Service, hopefully outside, during the summer holidays which is always a joy and interesting to see what pets are popular this year. We have had snakes and African land snails in the past along with cats, dogs and rabbits so who knows!

We were delighted to celebrate Fr Ben Thompson's ordination in July and look forward to treading the path with him in his mission with us in Iron Acton and welcoming all to our lovely church in the future.

Our Christmas Service details will be available in the Autumn and we welcome you all to all or any of the services on offer this year. We have our Harvest celebration at the Family Service on 8th October and Remembrance on November 12th, both at 10.00am.

Our services are now Wednesday 10.00am and Sunday 9.15am. Second Sunday Family Service 10.00am. Please look on noticeboard or website for any changes

There is always someone available should you wish to talk or let off steam about anything worrying you. Details on notice board in church porch. The church is usually open every day during daylight hours for quiet reflection and prayer.

Nessa Jarman (Administrator)

www.fromsidechurches.org.uk

Tel. 07594976301. The office is temporarily located in the Rectory during the refurbishment of St Michael's rooms.

Churchwardens:

Carol Groom 01454 228712

carolgroom@hotmail.com

Annette Bishop 07516 72250

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IRON ACTON PRIMARY SCHOOL NEWS



We have reached the final week of the school year once again. This is my 8th year in post as Headteacher at Iron Acton and it continues to be a real privilege to be a part of this wonderful school and community. It has been a challenging year in many ways but there are many things to celebrate, two main events are outlined below.

On 4th May, the school was visited by Ofsted approximately 5 years after the previous visit. The inspection was a positive experience and the inspectors confirmed that, based on the wealth of evidence gathered on and prior to the day, the school remains a good school. The inspection recognised some of the following strengths:

“Pupils are happy to attend this school. They enjoy learning. Playtimes are harmonious. A ‘no outsiders’ culture means there is a highly inclusive environment in which pupils thrive. Parents and pupils alike are very positive about the school. Many describe the school as welcoming and say that all staff are very approachable.”

“There is a broad and ambitious curriculum in place. Leaders are knowledgeable and passionate about the subjects they lead. Children in Reception year develop independence. This builds a strong start for Key Stage 1.”

“Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Leaders seek advice promptly when they need further support in order to meet the needs of individuals. Staff understand pupils needs and ensure they meet them. As a result, pupils with SEND learn well.”

“Governors are extremely knowledgeable. They know the school’s strengths and development areas and understand how best to provide support and challenge.”

The school was also given an action to continue working on and this focused on developing a more precise approach to some of the teaching and learning that takes place in classrooms.

We are incredibly pleased with the feedback given to the school and how this recognises the effort and commitment of every member of our school community. To see the report in full, please click the following link: <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/109162>

Our Year 6 children recently received their end of year SATs test results and we were delighted with the outcomes of these, which reflect the hard work of both children and their teachers. Outcomes for reading, writing and maths were significantly above national outcomes at KS2; this information will be published on our website in the new school year. We were also particularly impressed with the outcomes of the Year 1 phonics screening checks once again this year which were significantly above national averages, too!

We are back to school again on Monday 4th September where we look forward to embracing another exciting year ahead. Thank you all for your support of the school.

Mike Riches, Headteacher

enquiries@ironactonprimaryschool.co.uk

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The Pinnacle Federation Primary Schools Clerk to Governors Required from 1st September 2023

Hawkesbury C of E and Iron Acton C of E Primary Schools are seeking to appoint a Clerk to commence duties with effect from 1st September 2023.

The fee payable is £1926.00 per annum and is based on 22 meetings (6 Full Governing Body meetings in person and 16 Committee meetings on line) per year. Additional hours are paid at £12.30 per hour.

We are looking for someone who:

- Has experience as an administrator
- Is IT literate
- Is well organised
- Has good communication skills
- Is able to take accurate minutes at meetings
- Is able to maintain impartiality and handle confidential minutes
- Is capable of advising Governors on changes and updates in legislation and other requirements

You should be reliable and have a flexible approach. Previous clerking experience is desirable though not essential as training and support will be available.

The role is as a holder of office and will primarily be undertaken in term time. ***Meeting for FGB are generally held in the evenings, between 7pm and 9pm, committees are a mixture of day times and or evenings on line.*** The holder of office will be required to work effectively with the Co Chairs of Governors / Committees as relevant in order to set a purposeful agenda which, together with the associated documents, need to be shared, in good time, which considers Dfe, LA and Diocesan issues. They will then be required to take detailed, accurate minutes and get them typed up and shared within *a week* of the meeting.

Other than attendance at meetings, the role will be carried out at home, at times of the day to suit the Clerk, whilst ensuring agreed deadlines are met. The role of Clerk to Governors provides a valuable insight into education and a school environment, providing an ideal stepping stone for someone looking to get into a school based administration role.

The Pinnacle School Governing Board is committed to safeguarding and promoting the safety and welfare of children. Therefore you will be expected to share this commitment and all appointments will be subject to appropriate vetting including an enhanced DBS disclosure check.

For further information, you should contact the Chair of Governors, via email at enquiries@hawkesbury.org.uk or enquiries@ironactonprimaryschool.co.uk or via the school office. Applicants should send a detailed CV, including two references, to the Chair of Governors by 09.00am 1st September 2023 either by email or by post to the school. Interviews will be held at a mutually convenient time.

IRON ACTON WI

Our speaker in May was Dave Cheesie who related a fascinating history of Severn Beach. His family holidays had been spent there as a boy in the 1950s and 60s and with the aid of slides, he showed how the town had evolved from when Severn Beach station opened in 1922. Many attractions appeared such as a fairground, paddling pool and even a casino. There was a camping site and later caravans and chalets. He told of the well known families associated with the resort who helped give it the title of the Blackpool of the South West. Eventually, with many more families owning cars and travelling further afield for their holidays, the area fell into decline and the famous Blue Lagoon closed in 1977. It was lovely to see this local town in its glory days and a little sad to witness its demotion from top holiday spot.

Gail Palmer is a personal stylist so she had her work cut out when she came to speak to us in June! She spoke mainly about how colour could be used to reflect a mood or just make you feel better about yourself. She explained how skin tones are divided into the four seasons and which colours would best suit someone from a particular season. We witnessed how bright 'pops' of colour could completely change the appearance of a basic and perhaps uninspiring outfit.

We were excited to welcome back Jo Wright from Organic Blooms in July and she didn't disappoint. She explained how she had the ambition to be a therapeutic horticulturist and even studied and worked in Chicago to achieve her aim. She recognised the many benefits of working with flowers grown organically and having set up her own business, began to employ people referred to her by social services with challenges such as learning disabilities, depression and schizophrenia, who otherwise would find it difficult to hold down a job. Jo helps them find tasks on her farm they enjoy and said how gratifying it is to see the trainees become happier and more confident. Whilst fashioning a bouquet from a selection of flowers she had brought with her, she told us how at the beginning of the year she had been asked to be Chair of Flowers from the Farm, a membership organisation who champion artisan growers of seasonal, locally grown cut flowers. She had a phone call and later a Zoom meeting with the Royal Florist who asked Jo to organise the flowers for the King's coronation. She had to contact member growers from around the country to meet the wishes of the King to have native flowers from all nations of the UK in tapestry colours, so shades of purple, gold and burgundy. Needless to say the logistics were immensely challenging but the mission was finally completed and Jo and her florist Wendy went to Westminster Abbey on the eve of the coronation and proudly met the King and Queen. We shared Jo's excitement as she related the story and at the end of her talk, she generously donated the beautiful bouquet she had made to our raffle.

May Day was a great success with everything on our cake stall selling out. Jackie's daughter-in-law donated a wonderful homemade Coronation cake for us to raffle which made £186 and members sold programmes with donations totalling in excess of £600.

Four members took part in the Avon Group Quiz in Chipping Sodbury and finished a very creditable 8th out of 33 teams. In July Jan pushed her husband in a wheelchair around the Blaise Castle Estate, which was no mean feat, to help raise funds for Parkinson's. Members were invited to make donations to Jan for this very worthy cause.

We are looking forward to a trip to Salisbury Cathedral at the end of July and hope by then the weather will have improved. We are also hoping to hold an afternoon tea in the Parish Hall in

August as part of a WI initiative to raise funds for Breast Cancer Now, a research and support charity.

We meet on the second Monday of the month in the Parish Hall at 7.30pm and anyone who would like to join us would be very welcome. Our Secretary, Bridget, is always happy to give details of future speakers and events and is available on 321741.

Sylvie Powell

IRON ACTON FILM CLUB

I'm happy to announce dates for the forthcoming 2023/24 Film Club season. All films will be shown in the Parish Hall on our big screen. Doors open at 7pm for a 7:30pm start and there is a bar for refreshments before the film and during the interval.

Saturday 7 October 2023

Saturday 11 November 2023

Saturday 9 December 2023

Saturday 6 January 2024

Saturday 3 February 2024

Saturday 2 March 2024

If you are not on our mailing list and would like to keep in touch with the Film Club please contact myself caroline.haselhan@btinternet.com or phone either of the numbers below.

We are also looking for new committee members. If you are interested in becoming involved in the running of the Film Club please contact either myself or Simon.

Simon Cross
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Caroline Haselhan
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IRON ACTON'S AUTOBiography – VEHICLES THAT HAVE SHAPED OUR LIVES



Thanks for your suggested additions to our virtual fleet of significant vehicles for people across the parish. Among the regular avalanche of responses, one in particular stood out as it rightly highlighted that our collection has a major omission – there are no French cars. How, the questioner asked, could this possibly be a meaningful representation of Iron Acton's automotive history if there were no Renaults, Citroens, Simcas or Peugeots quietly rusting away in our collection. Fortunately, they had a suggestion to remedy this injustice - the Peugeot 504.

For younger readers – and thanks for your perseverance if you are one and have read this far - the 504 was a large family car launched in 1968 and manufactured in Europe until 1983. Peugeot's reputation has been through many twists and turns over the years. Currently its image is on the up with recent cars such as the 3008, 5008 and the newly launched and well-received 508 changing the way people see the brand and giving it a new air of excitement and innovation. However, for many years until this recent change, Peugeot has been viewed as worthy but unexciting. Although they introduced the ground-breaking 205 in 1983 which set a new standard for small cars and produced the fantastic and definitive hot hatch in the 205 GTi, everything since has been a bit average - standard small and medium family cars, lacking much to make them stand out. The BBC Top Gear team in 2016 concluded that Peugeots were synonymous with slower, perhaps slightly staid drivers who tend to tick the boxes lower down the list when asked to indicate their age group in surveys.

But it was a different picture again back in the 1970s. Peugeots then had a reputation for practicality, reliability, and sturdiness and this was largely down to the 504 and its smaller sibling the 304. The 504 was famously well-built and its solid construction, high ground clearance and big wheels made it a long-term favourite in the developing world and a huge success as a rally car. It was in a 504 that the then Prime Minister's son, Mark Thatcher and his team, infamously went missing for 6 days in 1982 while participating in the Paris-Dakar rally. Closer to home, the 504 and especially the estate version was a slightly unusual but sensible choice for the middle classes. It was as big as a Volvo 245 without the 'Good Life' suburban image – again apologies to younger readers for this reference, although if you are still reading this far into this article I can only assume that you are trapped in a lavatory without your phone and have nothing else to read – and as durable as a Mercedes without the show or the inflated price tag. Its design by Pininfarina gave it an good-looking, slightly exotic and continental appearance, especially when fitted with yellow headlight covers for trips home across the channel.

Among the three million plus 504s built in Europe there were estates, commercial vans, saloons and rare but beautiful coupe and convertible versions. But the model which stands out most is perhaps the 504 estate familiale, not least because it is the most difficult to pronounce. This

huge load carrier had three rows of forward-facing seats, providing comfortable accommodation for up to seven adults. It was launched in April 1971 and effectively invented the idea of a large family people carrier– 12 years before the Toyota Space Cruiser and 13 years before its compatriot the Renault Espace. In fact, it was arguably more practical than these cars as it could take seven individuals and some of their luggage which the later models struggled to do. The design proved so successful that even after its successor, the 505, was introduced in 1979, the 504 and especially the estate version continued in production for a further four years in Europe and far later elsewhere. In all it was built in sixteen other countries across the world with the assembly lines finally stopping as late as April 2006.

The example I propose for inclusion in the virtual garage is a late model 1981 504 estate familiale in practical, no-nonsense white. It joins the Beta, the Mini and MINI, the Transit and Transporter, the XR3i and the Mercedes 280E. The 1970s and 1980s are well represented so it would great to have suggestions for vehicles to include from earlier decades and/or more recent times to ensure we cover the widest possible experience of Local Poyntz readers. Thank you as always for your ideas and please do keep them coming.

Austin Tesla

Iron Acton Parish Hall Committee – **new members needed**



Iron Acton Parish Hall provides a focus for social activities for all village residents and others from surrounding areas. The day to day running of the Hall is managed by a Committee made up of parish residents, Parish Council representative, Church Council representative, Acton Aid representative, and representatives from regular hall users.

We meet in the hall on the second Wednesday of the month at 7.30 pm to discuss finances, maintenance, bookings and legal issues such as health and safety etc.

Some of the current committee members have helped to run the hall for many years now and feel it is time to hand over to new members. In particular, over the next couple of years, we will be looking for a new chairperson, bookings secretary and meetings secretary.

Our AGM will be on Wednesday 11th October 2023 at 7.30 pm in the hall and it would be great to have new volunteers joining us.

If you would like to get involved with running the hall or would like more information please call me on 01454 228803 or email suepgent@hotmail.com.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Sue Gadsby



IRON ACTON K9 CLUB

Club Novelty & Activities Shows



Best in show & Reserve best in show

This year our shows were held on what started as a hot, sunny day and we needed gazebos to shelter from the sun, but then these turned into airborne shelters when the winds started blowing. Fortunately the day stayed dry and all the gazebos were retrieved from the tree tops.

We started with activities in the morning, the large dog haybale scurry winners were Dot Glover with Zamy, the small dog haybale scurry was won by Janet Murphy with Teddy. Large dog agility was won by Ann Weaver and her veteran dog Blossom and the small dog agility by Cheryl Wilson with Stan. The gundog retrieve was won by Sue Ansty and Mr Bo and the novice retrieve by Jenny Kelly with Lily. The dogstacle course was won by Karen Carnovale and Casey.

In the afternoon we had 13 Novelty classes such as prettiest bitch, best titbit catcher, waggiest tail etc. We are grateful to our judge Helen Case who, from all the class winners, chose Lorriane Aldridge with her retriever Darcy as the Best in Show and the Reserve best in show was puppy Dash with handlers Ben and George Dunne.

Our pet dog training classes following the Kennel Club Good Citizens scheme have been very successful recently with 10 passes at gold level. Lots of hard work goes into achieving this level so well done everyone, and in particular well done trainer Angela Smith.

For more information about our club and activities activities, please take a look at our *facebook* page, website www.ironactonk9club.co.uk or ring Sue on 01454 228803 / Karen on 01454 228891.



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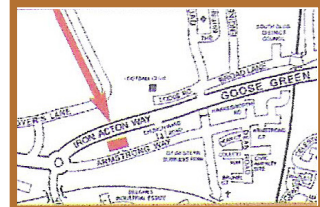
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LETTER FROM AMERICA

“As our idea about retirement continues to evolve, we have discovered that house/pet sitting is an amazing opportunity to step into someone else’s shoes and those shoes can be just about anywhere in the world. What started out as house sitting, led to dog sitting, and a puppy fix we didn’t even know we needed. Here is our latest experience in a delightful English village, Iron Acton.

From the moment we arrived, it felt like we had stepped back in time and onto the pages of a Jane Austen book. The home we occupied was a 200-year-old stone house in a village that dates all the way back to Saxon times. The village is anchored on either side by a pub and in the center sits a 14th century Norman church with its ancient tower. Fun fact, we learned that many of the windows were bricked up in the 17th century to avoid paying higher taxes. Britain decided it was easier to assess wealth by the number of windows in a building and landlords retaliated by bricking them up.

The feeling in and around the village was ethereal along its countless footpaths and lush meadows, greens, and fields. We heard sing-songy blackbirds and bustling, buzzing bumblebees. The air smelled of cinnamon, orange peel, and lilac. If only I could’ve bottled that up! Out on our daily walks, we met puppies named Poppy and Pippi and their owners actually bid us greetings! And, how many invitations did we receive from neighbors to have a pint at the pub or a sit in their garden? On all of these occasions it felt like we had a special pass to the inside. We were suddenly integrated and subsequently privy to the latest local talk, from village stories to brainstorming for the nearing May Day festivities (there’s an actual May Pole on the village green) and the upcoming Queen’s Jubilee. A real life experience we could never get from an Airbnb or hotel stay.

Besides giving and getting lots of love from Frankie, the four-legged friend in our care, one of our duties included tending to the vegetable plants in the greenhouse on the owners’ allotment. Allotments, as they are called in the UK, are communal gardens dating back to Anglo-Saxon times with surges during WWI, WWII, and again at the end of the 20th century when consumers became concerned about genetic modification and contamination. It was yet another wholesome way to engage with nature and our allotment neighbors.

One of the surprises I did not expect was a chance to cook on a cast iron AGA cooker, like the ones with covered hobs you see on British programs. These oil-fed cookers produce nonstop heat at varying degrees — and besides cooking, provide a source of heat in the room (as well as speed the drying process of wet clothes). Challenge accepted! We adventurously figured out how to wrangle the scorching beast.

Another small adjustment when baking, was the need to convert all of the ingredients into grams and temperatures into Celsius. Those conversions were pretty straightforward. What really threw me was when I stepped on the bathroom scale and read my weight in stones. Stones? Where are we?! In case you’re wondering, 1 stone = 14 pounds.

We caught a glimpse of the British National Healthcare system, too. On our second day, I needed a prescription medicine. I thought we could just walk one mile to the next village so I could ask a pharmacist what I needed to do. On the way, it started pouring rain. Walks always seem longer when — a) you’re in a foreign place, and b) it’s raining cats and dogs. But, we persisted.

When we finally reached the pharmacy, I learned from the pharmacist that she could not fill a foreign prescription. She suggested that I step into the clinic next door and register as a temporary resident, see a doctor, and get a prescription. My husband and I, in all our soggy wetness, popped in next door and enquired.

The woman at registration asked me for my personal details. That's when I realized I was without my identification. We had packed a backpack for this outing; my husband brought his wallet, but I left my purse/passport back at the house. Then she asked me for the address where we were staying. That, we also did not know. I explained we were just picked up from the airport the day before and we were staying for three weeks to house and dog sit. I mentioned that the homeowners were patients and perhaps she could get the address from their file. She asked me for their surname. Once again, we did not know! Only half kidding, she asked us if we had a house key, which thankfully my husband was able to produce! We were all having a good laugh when it dawned on me to scroll through old messages on my phone to find the owners' email addresses in hopes they included their last name. A-ha! mystery solved, I found the addresses including their last name. What a sense of relief. The woman was able to find our temporary address (which was only a house name, no number) and I was ready to see a doctor.

Long story short, I was able to get my prescription and there was no charge for the medical appointment, only a small fee for the medicine. Lesson learned, know exactly where you are staying.

All in all, our house/dog sit in England was an unforgettable experience. Of course every sit has its own set of challenges, but with the right attitude, it is an exciting, enriching, and unique opportunity to live like locals. As someone who prefers to be in perpetual motion, these house/dog sits are the perfect working vacation with the bonus of lots of puppy love."

Tammi and Manohar (Couple who stayed in Steve & Jenny's house)

Autumn Wordsearch

Can you find 16 words to do with Autumn in this grid?
Words may run forwards, backwards or diagonally.

L	S	K	H	F	R	O	T	C	Z
E	S	C	A	R	E	C	R	O	W
A	B	O	L	A	P	T	R	B	T
V	O	N	L	C	M	O	A	W	S
E	N	K	O	S	U	B	K	E	E
S	F	E	W	O	J	E	E	B	V
F	I	R	E	W	O	R	K	S	R
A	R	S	E	V	O	L	G	S	A
E	E	Y	N	T	A	E	H	W	H
E	Q	I	P	U	M	P	K	I	N

BONFIRE
COBWEB
CONKERS
FIREWORKS
GLOVES
HALLOWEEN
HARVEST
JUMPER

LEAVES
OCTOBER
PUMPKIN
RAKE
SCARECROW
SCARF
WHEAT

Word Ladder Can you change LEAF into RAKE in 6 moves, changing one letter each time?
LEAF
RAKE

Word Square:

Fill in the letters to make words that
read the same across and down

1. Blows in autumn				
2. A brainwave				
3. Close by				
4. Shady				

Answers on Page 33

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beautiful
floor



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HERCULES AND THE CHERRY ON THE TOP!

Even Hercules failed two of his twelve labours and yet he still is one of the most celebrated gods in Greek mythology.

Winnie our incorrigible Labrador and I (the Miranda of dog handlers) feel that we have laboured almost as much as old Herc, in our attempt to win the holy grail, the cherry on top, after months of preparation, the elusive Gold award.

We have undertaken weekly lessons in, what one fellow student labelled, 'Adult mortification classes', cajoling our respective dogs with flying bits of sausage and chicken, desperately seeking an obedient response. Training Winnie has been essential. She lives in an unruly house where her human siblings disregard any rules I make and the force of her body writhing in boundless joy at the sight of food, a ball or any visitor means that untrained, she would be a serious liability.

PLEASE NOTE: absolutely no treats are allowed in the actual test. This rendered the chances of getting beyond D minus and a failure, woefully unlikely! But still we pleaded and over-treated our dogs until, somewhere along the way, the magic of Angela, the gentlest, most patient of trainers began to see some progress in our canine students.

Winnie and I were getting quite confident apart from our nemesis; Labour number 3, the dreaded 'Stop the dog'. This exercise entails the handler setting their dog in the 'down' position, they must wait as you walk quite a distance away. In one swift moment you must then call your dog and then raise your arm dramatically skyward, when your dog SHOULD fall back instantly into a down, at least 10 steps away from you. Of all the exercises, it makes the most sense. You can protect a dog running into danger by their immediate down to a raised arm, even when they can't hear you shrieking. Oh, and there was a lot of shrieking. Brian, Sarah, Mike and June my trusty, quiet neighbours forgive me. I tried it in the park; Rose can verify it did not work. It certainly didn't work in lessons and even Angela was foxed. The trouble is Winnie, unlike me who shuffles around the village in my so-called running shoes twice a week, has wings on her feet like Hermes, the Greek god. Her gallop towards me sends me into blind panic and my arms (and probably other body parts) twist in uncontrolled contortions instead of the required precise gesticulations. There is certainly no stopping her until she falls at last, right by my feet surprised that the juicy bit of sausage, she thinks is her reward, fails to materialise.

If anyone attended the dog show recently held by the Iron Acton dog club, they will know quite how quickly she can reach her doggie 0-60 MPH!

If you haven't watched Fenton the dog on You Tube please stop reading and do so now ... this was to be our 'Fenton' moment, the only saving grace is that no deer were involved.

David persuaded me I should give the show a go. We did. We tried a minor obstacle course. Winnie performed very well until I let her off her lead to enable her to run through a tunnel. Out of the ring, rampaging over people's legs, circumnavigating the whole of Sue's field, she brought shame to my burning cheeks. The only saving grace I said at loud was that Karen, the dog club's top trainer, hadn't seen us. Suddenly a voice quipped back 'Oh but I did!!!!!!!'

We excitedly entered the ring that afternoon to show off in the 'Tricks' class. Winnie bowed nicely and puffed with pride I released her lead to demonstrate her 'Spin'..... To my horror, she flew out of the ring, to the titters of those watching and a comment on what a jolly good trick that was; 'The Vanishing Act'!!!

There was no stopping her then and there would be no stopping her in the impending gold test. I was happily resigned. We had achieved so much and if she did well in every other element then I really didn't care about the cherry on top the cake. I never did like cherries as a child, always an irritating addition to a delicious cake topped with sticky icing. I didn't need one now. And so, the test day dawned, and it felt like an amalgamation of O levels, driving tests and music exams. Mouth dry, I arrived at the practise lesson organised before the external examiner arrived.

Hercules only managed to succeed in 10 of his labours so I was happy if we managed 8 out of the 9 tests. Unfortunately, unlike Hercules we had to pass all 9 to secure Gold. Old Herc was assisted, at times, by two other gods Athena and Hermes. Angela with her belief in us was one of these deities, along with another student Louise (breeder of Winnie, taking the test with Winnie's sister, Dilys).

I was horrified at our first exercise, the road walk. We had believed that a gentle stroll down Holly Hill was the destination, but the examiner chose the bypass. Winnie has recently developed a terror of white vans, cowering back as they drive past; now we had walk, her attentive at heel, past thundering big HGV's. I blanched, to fail at our first labour was humiliating. But Louise urged me to keep calm and talk to Winnie the whole time. It worked. She engaged with me like a dream as in crazed fashion, I repeated the mantra 'What have I got Win..?' Of course, she expected a rainstorm of sausages! I promise I made up for it when I got home!!

We progressed with gritted teeth and a pretence of calm through our other tests. Our brains becoming hypoxic in one, as we held our breath during the two-minute stay, daring our dogs telepathically lest they twitch, suggesting a departure from where we had left them lying down. My poor hearing nearly flawed us in 'Food Manners'. The dog has a bowl with treats placed right in front of them. The dog must wait until you command them to eat. Winnie's eyes bulge with anticipation every night when we perform this act of ultimate self – control. To my surprise the very pleasant examiner instructed me that, whilst Winnie waited, she would whisper 'Bananas' all around us, as a distraction. This was surreal, we had never practised in this way. As she moved around us whispering about the yellow fruit, it felt like we were locked in an unending horror movie. Any minute Winnie would be unable to stop herself. Only the night before she had whipped a poppadum off my son's plate!! After an eternity the examiner piped up 'I have been telling you to release her' All I had heard was more Bananas!!!!!! I don't think I shall be able to eat one again without feeling a mounting tension!!

Then it came; the end of the road for us, the labour of all labours 'Stop the Blooming Dog'. Divine intervention was our only hope; and blow me down she only went and stopped!!!!

GOLD..... US!!!!!!

Suddenly that cherry was glistening with gold, right there in full view. Our Herculean efforts taking us up to the heights of mount Olympia.

I returned home and sheepishly opened the door to the sympathy of those there. Then I whipped out our certificate and I make no apologies to my neighbours for the shrieking that ensued!

And will this stop the left-over roast joint in easy reach being wolfed in shameless disregard of all food manners, self-control requirements? Will she give up her role as chief gardener rearranging our turf and pruning our precious climbing roses? I doubt it! But what it has given us (Winnie and I are firmly an 'US' now), is a sense of (wo)man and dog working in harmony, a huge respect for canine intelligence coupled with gratitude to the dedicated volunteer trainers who took us to heights we never thought possible and a bond with anyone who has ever endured the labours of dog- training.

Oh and of course, a growing uneasiness around bananas!!!
Lisa Hatherell

Acton Aid is proud to present

Bonfire Night In Iron Acton



From 5.00pm in the Parish Meadows
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The Christmas Window Trail 2023



Hello everyone!

Preparations are beginning for the next
Christmas Windows Trail.

This year we are asking that the
Windows be decorated from

Sunday 10th to Sunday 24th
December.

We are continuing with the same
theme this year:

"Your Choice" of either Christmas Films, Pantos
or Music.



Keep a look out in the Autumn for more info and
put your thinking caps on!

The trail continues to grow every year and we
are once again looking forward to seeing the
village beautifully decorated.

ACTON AID

For over two decades Acton Aid promoted our Proms in the Meadow, and later extended the event to become (Friday) Mash & (Saturday) Proms.

Raising funds

As ever, our prime driver is to raise monies – wholly and without exception – to benefit the Parish, its organisations and its people; our whole ethos is charitable. Our secondary driver is to create enjoyable events at affordable good value. Mash has always achieved both aims, but in recent years the Proms event – though remaining popular with core supporters – seemed in need of reinvigoration. With a leap of faith Acton Aid chose to uplift the experience by bringing in a star attraction. So it was that on 1 July we proudly presented Russell Watson to Iron Acton.

Mash the previous evening was its usual success. It was a sell out, and judging by the comments of the exiting crowds, a hugely successful, greatly enjoyed event.

Russell Watson rewarded our faith and attracted, as with Mash, another crowd of sell-out proportions – more than doubling our best Proms attendances. His performance was superb and I can report three sets of appreciation for the night: firstly our audience whose warm appreciation was self-evident, secondly our Acton Aid members, wives and friends who turned out to help run the event, without exception left feeling that they'd been part of a memorably excellent evening. Thirdly, it was a special pleasure to know that Russell also, later let us know how much he'd enjoyed the event.

We very much wish to reiterate our thanks to everyone who helps us in our endeavours – some sponsor the events, some give up time and effort and of course the very many who support by buying tickets. Thanks, and hope to see you again soon.

We're in the early stages of planning for next year. We're very aware that to run the events, our modest number of members needs the help of others, whether friends or family; we thank them all. Next year, we're looking at ways to encourage residents to help out – more of this later in the year.

Distributing funds

All the monies raised by Acton Aid are spent for local benefit. Personal donations made are kept private, properly protecting the privacy of recipients. Some, we can be more public about. Last year, at the request of the Parish Council, we reserved monies to support their plan to improve the Tennis Court area at Parish Meadows. That plan (MUGA) was recently completed and we transferred £10,000 to help the Council, and benefit all residents. Looking forward, we're reviewing options to continue our endeavours to improve footpaths. Also, we're thinking co-operatively with the Parish Council about additional measures that may enhance the Parish Meadow, and Iron Acton in general.

We are ready to consider providing assistance whenever needs are known to us, whether to individuals or other parish groups. We can't help if we don't know!

Autumn 2023

We're having a (2023 only) break from our customary Beer Festival, so our next event will be Bonfire Night – watch out for publicity and ticket sales soon.

One exception

The only non-Iron Acton beneficiaries of donations are the 'outside' Charity to which we offer the opportunity to seek direct donations – via Bucket Collections – from our audiences. This year a fabulous figure just over £4300 was raised for St Peter's Hospice. Their gratitude was immense and I'm pleased to convey their thanks to all.

Mike Sutton – Chairman, Acton Aid

PS We **always** welcome new members - 8pm 1st Thursday of every month at The Lamb

St James the Less Church

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**CHRISTMAS SALE – PARISH HALL
SATURDAY 2nd DECEMBER**



10th DECEMBER CHRISTINGLE 4pm



ANSWERS TO THE AUTUMN QUIZ (ON PAGE 25)

Word Ladder: Leaf, Lead, Lend, Land, Lane, Lake, Rake

Word Square: Wind, Idea, Near, Dark

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