

Editorial

As articles began to come in for this Newsletter the weather was freezing and the evenings long and dark. Our garden looked rather bleak too, with few signs of life. I and others will know that this last Christmas has been a very sad one for several members of our special community here in Fishbourne, and they are very much in our thoughts. However, we are now past the shortest day, and if you look closely, sure enough there are the green shoots of new life. The first primroses and narcissi are appearing, forsythia is also bright with tiny yellow flowers. Some camellias are in full, colourful bloom, and others, like those in my garden, covered in buds. Although much of the countryside is still dormant, Spring and the hope it brings, is not far off, as Jim Baldwin our nature expert reminds us. This certainly lifts my spirits and I hope it does the same for you.

This edition of our newsletter also contains some fascinating Fishbourne history, researched by our own Br. Duncan Smith, news of new incumbents for the churches of Holy Cross, All Saints, St John's and St Peter's, forth coming talks at RVYC as well as how a Texan came to live in the Parish, and much more besides.

There are many reasons to be positive and look to the future. Let's also look out for each other in 2024 and maintain the wonderful community we are part of.

I'm sure the Parish Councillors will join me in wishing you all a peaceful and positive New Year.

Sarah Talbot



The Changing Face of Local Government on the Island

There are two tiers of local government on the Island: the Isle of Wight Council (IWC) and local parish, town and community councils.

The IWC is responsible for most public services, including planning, highways, transport, housing, adult social care, children's services, environmental services and the maintenance of parks and open spaces. It is known as a 'unitary authority', which means that its powers combine those that, in many other predominantly rural areas, would be split between district and county councils. The Council is funded by a combination of government grants, charges for services, borrowing, and a tax levied on local households. The tax is 'capped' by the government, which means that it cannot be increased by more than a certain percentage each year.

There are 33 local councils. They vary enormously in size and in the scope of their activities. Fishbourne Parish Council is one of the smallest, while our neighbour, Ryde Town Council, is one of the two largest. Fishbourne has an electorate of about 650 people and an annual budget of about £20,000, while Ryde has an electorate of around 20,000 and a budget of £1.5 million. Local councils don't get any government funding. They are funded by charges for any services they provide and a tax on residents. The latter, known as the 'precept', is collected by the IWC as part of the overall council tax, but unlike the main part of the council tax, it is not capped.

However, the relationship between the IWC and local councils is changing. This is because government funding to local authorities has been drastically cut over the last decade. The IWC, like other local authorities, has therefore had to increase its other revenue (such as council tax, charges for services and borrowing) and/or reduce its expenditure. And since council tax

levels are capped and other sources of revenue limited, the main effect has been to cut services.

These cuts have had a significant impact on local councils. In order to avoid the loss of essential local services, they have had to either help fund or take over many services. The first and most obvious example of this was public toilets. In 2016 the IWC announced that it would have to close all its public toilets. Local councils were faced with the choice of losing these essential facilities or taking them over themselves. All those affected agreed to take them over.

The impact has varied from one council to another. In Fishbourne it has had relatively little effect because we don't have many assets or services. However, we have to contribute to the cost of some services provided by the IWC in the parish, including an environment officer, grass cutting and the emptying of waste bins. In Ryde the impact has been much greater. Ryde Town Council helps fund many IWC services in the town, including the maintenance of parks and other open spaces, beach cleaning, bin emptying – and even the IWC's Help Centre in Ryde Library. It has also taken over various assets, including public toilets, Ryde Harbour (now Ryde Marina) and Eastern Gardens, and it set up its own youth service when the IWC service was closed.

Local councils have been able to do this because, unlike the IWC, they are not capped, so they can increase their precept as much as they need – or at least as much as their residents are prepared to accept.

What do these changes mean for Island residents? The most obvious effect is negative, in that we are paying significantly more for the same, or in many cases less, services. However, there is a positive side. The transfer of

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The Changing Face of Local Government

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more functions to local councils can be beneficial for residents because they can be more responsive to local needs and can often provide services more efficiently and effectively. Moreover, our local councils are learning from experience. They are learning how to get a better deal from the IWC when

taking over assets and services and how to manage them more effectively. In addition, their relationship with the IWC has greatly improved. They are now treated with respect and regarded as important partners in the provision of local services.

Diana Conyers



Clerk's Corner

We welcomed Chani, the Regional Representative for Surfers Against Sewage here on the Isle of Wight, to December's meeting to talk about the process of gaining Bathing Water Status for the Creek. This, we had hoped would lead to more statutory testing by the Environment Agency. Unfortunately, DEFRA have recently made some changes to the eligibility criteria required for Bathing Water Status, and now 100 plus bathers a day, need to be recorded during the bathing season, 15 May to 30 September. The data can't include children or a capsized person, and there must be toilet facilities within 500 metres of the site. It is therefore virtually impossible to achieve. Without this status, the water can still be tested independently. Chani has advised that Wootton Creek and Fairways Association have agreed to co-ordinate sampling three times a year, with various community members, PGL, Fishbourne Parish Council and RVYC being involved. Chani also highlighted that if there are incidents of pollution, if at least 5 people report the same incident, it will trigger an investigation. This is another mechanism for change, so please bear this in mind.

We were interested to read the crime statistics for Fishbourne last year. They

comprised 2 reports of a suspicious person, 1 report of an assault without injury, 3 missing person reports, 1 concern for safety, 1 domestic incident and 1 report of harassment.

In response to some complaints received recently, the Parish Council is considering setting up 'No Cold Calling Zones' in the parish. A No Cold Calling Zone aims to deter uninvited sales people and helps give residents the confidence to say 'no' to doorstep callers. It can be set up for a road, or part of a road, and means that traders are not allowed to call at your house without an appointment. The scheme is supported by the Isle of Wight Council's Trading Standards team. It is important however that the majority of residents want the Zone to be set up and so we would be interested to know your views and if you would want to support a scheme in your road. Please email fishbournepc@btinternet.com.

A reminder that the 6th June 2024 will mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day and towns and parishes up and down the country are being asked to light beacons and organise community celebrations to mark this day in history. The Parish Council would like to support anyone wishing to organise an event for Fishbourne and so please let us know about any ideas you might have.

Please note, Parish Council meetings

are changing from the second Thursday of the month to the second Tuesday of the month from March 2024. They will continue to be at the Royal Victoria Yacht Club at 6.30pm unless otherwise stated. Dates for this year will be:

- Thursday 8th February 2024
- Tuesday 12th March 2024
- Tuesday 9th April 2024
- Tuesday 14th May 2024
- Tuesday 11th June 2024
- Tuesday 9th July 2024
- Tuesday 10th September 2024
- Tuesday 8th October 2024
- Tuesday 12th November 2024
- Tuesday 10th December 2024

Don't forget, parish surgeries are every Tuesday from 9.30am to 10am at the Royal Victoria Yacht Club, and the Parish Coffee Mornings continue at the Royal Victoria Yacht Club on the first Thursday of every month between 10.30am and 12pm. Everyone is welcome.

If you notice any problems around Fishbourne you feel the Parish Council can help with, please do speak to a councillor or email the clerk fishbournepc@btinternet.com

Katie Riley



Victoria Dennis

Victoria Dennis (nee Lloyd) sadly left us on the 2 January peacefully at the hospice. Victoria leaves her husband Simon and two grown up children Gregory and Ewan. Victoria was a science teacher, Head of Year and Head of Agriculture at Medina College. She loved her job and worked tirelessly at the school starting the new agriculture course there. Medina is one of the first schools in the country to do this course and Victoria was always immensely proud of what she had achieved. She received

national recognition for her work when Countryfile featured her in an episode last year. Victoria has lived in Fishbourne for over ten years and made some lovely friends in the area that she loved. She was always out and about with her three dogs Ben, Bruce and Newton having lovely long walks and really enjoying the area and country lifestyle. Victoria was a truly inspirational and amazing person who will be sorely missed by all her family and friends.

There will be a Mass on Monday the 5th of February at 1:30 at Quarr Abbey.

Simon Dennis

Royal Victoria Yacht Club

It's February already – where has the Festive Season gone?

By the time you read this – the RVYC will have had our Annual General Meeting and would like to thank and welcome all our committee members both on Management, Sailing and House. These volunteers support a large range of activities for our active and growing membership.

We have an exciting year planned in 2024 with activities both on and off the water for our members and their guests. Our Clubhouse was shut for a few weeks for annual maintenance in January, and reopened to celebrate Burn's Night, with a supper later in the month. Our very popular Winter talks are resuming on 7th February along with our Art group on Fridays at 10am, and a new Games afternoon on Wednesdays from 2pm. Regular lady's lunches and other social events are in our 2024 diary. All social enquiries can be made through house@rvyc.org.uk

This month also sees an RYA 'Power boat 2' course, run by our Power Boat Instructors on 24/25th February. These courses are open to both members and non-members. Do contact rca@rvyc.org.uk for any more information.

We look forward to welcoming our Cadets and their families for our registration evening on Friday 1st March at 1800. Our RYA Onboard Programme of activities is open to any young person over the age of 8 who wishes to learn about sailing both ashore and afloat. Do contact cadets@rvyc.org.uk for more details.

Our Adult Sailing registration is on 20th March with opportunities for an informal sailing programme on Wednesday evenings, throughout the season, and afloat when the tide permits.

For our racers: The Commissioning Cup on 24th March will see the RVYC fleet back on the water after our Fitting Out Supper on 23rd March. The Sunday racing starts in earnest on 7th April with the Spring Series.

The Club will be supporting several open events this summer. A MOCRA series, the MOCRA Solent Regatta, a WASZP Open event and the IOW Youth Dinghy Championships.

So, a busy start to 2024, and lots to look forward to. We welcome guests and new members throughout the year for both sailing and social functions .



Do please contact office@rvyc.org.uk for more details of events and to find out more about our facilities.

*Jane Barrett Bellingham
Vice Commodore*

RVYC Winter Talks 2023/2024

7th February
Uffa Fox, by Malcolm Turner

14th February
Valentine Supper

21st February
A Message in a Bottle, by Peter Harrigan

28th February
A Career in Farming, by Howard Johnson

6th March
HIWWT Seagrass Talk, by Emily Stroud

March 13th
The Role of the Southampton Pilot, by Captain Barry Sadler



People you may need to contact on the Parish Council

Ed Hopper **Chairman**
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Tel: 07973 899882
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Cheryl Fontana **Councillor**
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Malcolm Hector **Councillor**
Responsibility **Wightlink/Planning**
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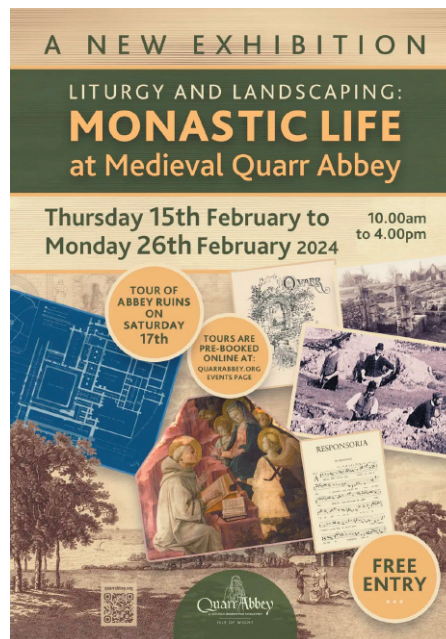
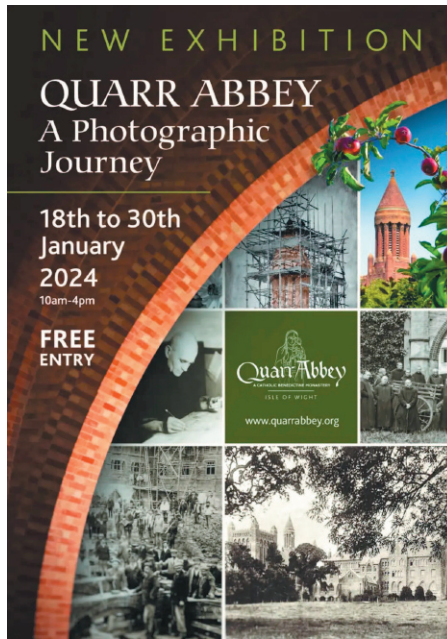
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Ian Dore **IOW Ward Councillor**
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Please note: the web address is www.fishbourneiow.org.uk
It may also be accessed through the Isle of Wight website using the link www.iowight.com/parish_councils/



Monks, History and a New Book

Benedictine monks have always been interested in history and especially local history. It is an effect of love. Like the Psalmist who loves the very stones of Jerusalem and pities even the dust of her streets, the monk loves his house, his enclosure, the locality to which he is bound by his vow of stability. And therefore he wants to know all about it.

When I opened "Roman Vectis: Archaeology and Identity in the Isle of Wight" by David Tomalin I wanted to discover all the author had uncovered of that little patch of land at the mouth of Fishbourne Creek.

The Roman historian Suetonius credits the emperor Vespasian with "taking the Island of Vectis" in A.D. 43. David Tomalin wonders whether a small detachment of Roman soldiers arrived at Wootton Haven to take possession of the Island. It seems unlikely that a full scale invasion was necessary. More probably local worthies invited the Roman presence from the mainland having seen which way the wind was blowing, and spying opportunities of a commercial nature.

Wootton Haven had long been a key trading post and anchorage and was to remain so until the High Middle Ages when the Abbot of Quarr kept his boats there. Its use in the Roman period is indicated by archaeological finds of pottery and most significantly, bones.



An ox skull suggests the kind of trade associated with Fishbourne. It seems cattle were driven here from farms across the Island and then slaughtered. After being salted the meat was then loaded onto barges for transport to military bases around Britain.

We can imagine

Fishbourne supplying Hadrian's Wall some eighteen hundred years ago.

Fishbourne was an attractive site for such a venture because it was a good place for a saltern; and remains of a kiln have been found. As well as salting beef, the Islanders would have traded in salt itself, much in demand as a preservative right up to modern times.

Other finds suggest that Wootton Haven was an exchange point for luxury goods as well as the necessities of life. From the fourth century we find shards of fine

imported glass. Samian ware bowls bear images of lotus buds, famed for their appearance in Homer's "Odyssey". Were there Romanized islanders who imagined Vectis to be the fabled land of the lotus-eaters?

Professor Tomalin can tell us much more about our marvellous Island heritage. A monk needs to know his history, his story; the soil in which he grows. And so I suspect do many of us. If you are an Islander, whether of Vectis, or of Britain, you will find much to provoke thought in this book. Quarr Abbey Farm Shop is your nearest stockist.

Br Duncan Smith

Quarr Abbey Gallery Forthcoming Exhibitions

Island art Society February 1–13

Medieval Monastic Life Exhibition February 15 – 26

Five Bells February 28 – March 5

Variety Pack March 7 – 12

Br. Duncan Smith, Sarah Talbot, Sam Crockford, Kelly Szawiel

I Love Wight March 21 – 26

Fishbourne Art Group

March 28 – April 2

Wight Printmakers April 4 – 9

Isle of Wight Art Club April 11 – 16

Sarah Jane Booth April 18 – 23

Marion Large April 25 – 30

Quarr Abbey Exhibitions

There are two exhibitions at Quarr in the next six weeks. The first is entitled "Quarr Abbey A Photographic Journey" and runs from the 18th to 30th of January. The second is "Monastic Life at Medieval Quarr Abbey" and runs from the 15th to the 26th February. Both exhibitions are free and open from 10am until 4pm. In conjunction with the second of the two exhibitions, there will also be the possibility of booking a guided tour around the medieval abbey on Saturday 17th February with details available on the Quarr Abbey website. Places will be limited and must be booked online.



February is set to be a busy time at The Fishbourne! Throughout the month our guests can enjoy a number of offers and events that can be viewed on our website www.thefishbourne.co.uk. When you add in The Fishbourne's warm welcome and

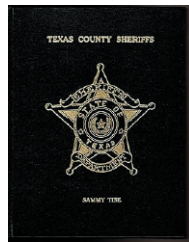
cosy corners to enjoy a delicious meal or warming hot drink, it's the ideal location for a winter visit. Throughout February and March we are also showing all of the games of the rugby 6 Nations championship. Come along in your national colours and enjoy an afternoon of top class sport.

We look forward to welcoming you in 2024 and continuing to be the heart of the Fishbourne community.

Parish Coffee Mornings at the RVYC

These take place on the 1st Thursday of every month from 10.30 -12 noon, and are as follows:
1st February, 7th March, 4th April
All are welcome.

A Texan moves to the Isle of Wight



Over the years, my wife, Joanna, and I had discussed retiring from our home in Texas to the Isle of Wight. Joanna's mom was born in Shanklin in 1917 but left at an early age, leaving an extended family scattered across the island. She and her husband, whom she met during the war at an RAF base, immigrated to Houston Texas in the early 1950's. It was at university there that Joanna and I met in 1967.

As a young married couple, we first came to the Isle of Wight in 1972 to meet a cousin, who had purchased the family home where Joanna's mom was born. Being avid hikers, we were immediately drawn to the island with its lovely trails and quaint villages. Hiking in Texas during the summer is a dangerous proposition with its 40-degree days of unrelenting sun! We returned every summer, staying with a cousin, and began dreaming of one day living here.

At age 70, I finally retired from being an attorney and businessman, and the opportunity arose to purchase a small flat in Ryde that fit our dream of hiking and travelling the world. We sold our home and all its possessions

and moved, bringing everything in 6 suitcases. So began our dream retirement.

However, settling in a new country, leaving family in the USA and no longer having the comfort of control of my work environment, was a bigger adjustment than I anticipated. We moved from a large city with a very young population to just the opposite on the Isle of Wight. Although I plugged in to a vibrant recovery community (I had been 'sober' over 30 years), I continued to feel like an outsider. I just didn't share the common background and interest of the people here. I began missing what I had left, and wondered if I had made a mistake in thinking I could adjust. Maybe I should move back. I felt like a fish out of water.

My mother had always told the story of her grandfather Thornton, who she said was the Sheriff of Comanche County, Texas. This would have been in the late 19th century, so he would have looked like the stereotypical cowboy sheriff, riding a horse and packing a 6 gun! I spent several years looking for something on the sheriff, searching the internet, sheriff's association records and county records, but to no avail. I even asked an attorney friend who live near the county if she could find anything, but nothing was ever found.

One day we were walking on the High Street in Ryde and looked into the window of a Ryde Bookshop,

and I spotted 2 bright green books with the same embossed title "Tom Green County." I knew there could be no place on earth that had that county name, other than in Texas. As we drew to the window, another large volume, next to those books was entitled "Texas County Sheriffs." I immediately went into the store and asked to see the book and turned to Comanche County and scanned down, to see "J.H. Thornton—1896 to 1900." At long last I found my great grandfather. What were the chances I would have come almost 5000 miles to a small village on an island to find my long-lost family member. We were both stunned. When I reported to my son what had happened, his response was "take that Google." I returned later and negotiated to buy the book, although there was nothing else of interest to me, other than the one line.

Armed with his name, I followed up with a search on 'Find A Grave' and found a copy of his obituary. Born in Tennessee and moving as a child to Texas, he became a rancher, businessman and sheriff. He married an 18-year-old woman, and they had 4 children, 2 of whom survived, including my grandfather. She died at age 23. Life was tough for pioneer women.

Walking out of that book store, I was stunned and realized that God, my higher power or Providence, was telling me I did belong here on this beautiful island.

John Athey

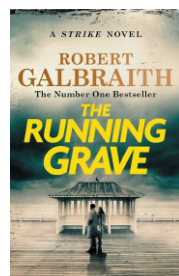
Book Review

The Running Grave

by Robert Galbraith

The latest book in the Cormoran Strike detective series weighs in at a hefty 945 pages and, amongst other themes, has all the usual romantic tensions running through it. For regular readers of the books, of

which this is the seventh, one could imagine that the one step forward, two steps back love affair between the two detectives Cormoran and Robin might by now have begun to pall. Each of them spends most of their time trying to accommodate the other's right to have usually unsuitable partners, whilst sublimating their own feelings about each other beneath the increasingly complex cases which



they are investigating. The reader however, is inclined to view them benignly, understanding the depth of the damage that besets each of them; Strike with his lost leg and toxic relationships and Robin ever striving not to be defined by the rape which robbed her of her university education and the marriage which threatened to stifle her. In this book Robin is seemingly well paired with handsome police detective Ryan Murphy, whilst Strike has a couple of casual liaisons with the aptly named lawyer Bijou Watkins which of course prove to be disastrous.

The main investigation in this book involves a father trying to rescue his son from a cult. He turns to the detective agency for help and this involves Robin having to go undercover to find out the necessary information to help the boy. Infiltrating the cult is complex and dangerous and Robin has to think on her feet in order to survive indoctrination which is both slick and ubiquitous.

The cult leader is charismatic and advocates an environment of menial peasant work and encourages casual sex or "spirit bonding" amongst the devotees. Robin struggles to maintain her cover and her sanity in the face of an increasingly menacing background. Strike meanwhile is working to foil a plot against a well known actress by two bizarre stalker brothers.

As ever there are many strands to the novel which involve the wider families of both Robin and Strike. The action is exciting and the depiction of the cult both fascinating and horrifying as entrenched layers of criminality are uncovered. Galbraith's skill as a storyteller makes this a compelling read, but make sure to clear the diary before you embark upon it!

Cheryl Fontana

Copy for the next issue of the Newsletter by 14/15th April 2024 at the latest. Please send to sarah.talbot44@btinternet.com



Revd David Morgan
(team vicar)



Revd Heath Monaghan
(team rector)



Revd Ollie Mitchelmore
(team vicar)

The Church of the Holy Cross, Binstead

(in plurality with St Peter's Havenstreet, All Saints Ryde and St John's Ryde)

We are delighted that in December the Bishop of Portsmouth appointed the Revd Heath Monaghan as team rector for the parishes in the Ryde Plurality and the Revd Ollie Michelmore as the team vicar with responsibility for planting new congregations. They join the Revd David Morgan, who was appointed team vicar for traditional worship in September. This new team comes with a mandate to oversee an exciting next phase in the life of our parishes, including the provision of a wider variety of worship and music in our churches, a stronger presence in the community and an enhanced emphasis on catering for the needs of younger people. Heath and David are already in post and we expect that Ollie will be joining them before Easter.

Before Christmas, we were pleased to welcome the pupils in Year 4

at Binstead School, who spent a morning at Holy Cross. As well as decorating the Christmas tree, making Christingles and Christmas cards, they assembled the nativity figures in the chancel (see photo below) and sang carols. There was a capacity congregation for the Carols by Candlelight service on Christmas Eve and, overall, more than 300 people celebrated Christmas by attending one of the services at Holy Cross.

As we move into 2024, we pray that the spirit of goodwill and love engendered over Christmas may live on in our homes, our communities and between nations so that this year may end more peacefully than it has begun.

Advanced notice that a memorial service for Hilary Spurgeon is being held at Holy Cross on Sunday 25th February at 3.00 pm, at which anyone who would like to join in celebrating

Hilary's many years of devoted service to the church and the community will be most welcome.

Do please remember that Holy Cross Church continues to be open every day for visitors and for those who are seeking a quiet place in which to reflect or pray. And, of course, you can be assured of a very warm welcome at any of our services or other events, full details of which can be found on our website – www.holycrossinstead.org.uk.

Rodney Fox (Reader in the parishes of Binstead, Havenstreet and Ryde)



The nativity figures were arranged in the chancel by Year 4 pupils from Binstead School



Irene Meek

19th December 1928 – 18th December 2023

Irene was born in Cambridge to Mack and Winifred Howard. She was an only child. Sadly, her mother died when she was only seven. Irene married Geoffrey just after the war when she

was 21. They enjoyed dancing and getting together with friends, and after the austerity of war were keen to have a good time...a zest for life that never left her.

Geoffrey was a Naval Officer stationed in married quarters at Portsmouth and Malta. The family soon grew, as Jeremy, Timothy and Sally came along. Irene adored being a mother and home maker. She was passionate about her family and always said 'family comes first' She enjoyed cooking, baking, tending her garden, and going to auctions. The family had a long line of dogs, which she also loved.

She told me that when the children were young, they would frequently holiday in Ireland, a place she loved, for the space, the beauty, and the people.

When Geoffrey retired in the late 1980s, they moved to the Isle of Wight, sadly he died not long after.

Irene was often seen out with her dog, or volunteering for the WRVS and the Mountbatten Centre. She was always cheerful, always ready for an outing to the theatre, the shops or out for lunch with friends and neighbours, and this love of life endeared her to everyone she met. Grandchildren came along and their visits to the seaside were much enjoyed and anticipated by her. She was proud of them all.

Irene's small nippy cars were her means of independence, and she was loathe to give up driving, but when the time came, hung on to her car so that she could still go out and be part of the world even though someone else was doing the driving! She spotted everything and her eyesight never failed her.

Irene was kind, hospitable, loyal, funny, and above all fiercely independent. So many in this small community miss her, (and that unforgettable smile) terribly.

Sarah Talbot

Cat sitter to the stars!

Continuing our Confessions of a Cat-sitter series, from a local author, columnist...and cat-sitter.

I wrote here recently about looking after cats named George and Mildred; a happy coincidence brought about by their owners moving in together. Well, in the last few weeks I've just started looking after a pair of tabbies named Stan & Ollie. No coincidence with this one – the naming was intentional, as is so often the case with pairs of cats, but it doesn't always work out. For instance, I once had a client that named his cats Salt & Pepper, which was all well and good until Pepper moved out. We're then left with a cat, inexplicably named...Salt.

Anyway, back to Stan & Ollie – with names like that you'd guess they'd be a bit of a double act, wouldn't you? And in fact, there was indeed slapstick and it did involve a double act. Unfortunately, the double act proved to be Stan and I.

The action began as I prepared their breakfast. The food bowls are kept on

a wooden tray, and I'd placed the tray on the kitchen work-surface to dish up cat biscuits and change the water. With the job complete, I pulled the tray towards me – just as Stan decided he'd jump up to the work-surface to find out what was taking me so long. He hit the bottom of that tray like a tabby-torpedo. One moment everything was serene, the next all hell broke loose. Stan bounced backwards off the tray, returning to the ground with a backside-first thump, only to be hit by a Go-Cat hailstorm and a pint of cold water. He took it very well – cutting my ankle in three places and ripping my sock. For the next minute or two he was a wildcat, ears back, soaked fur bristling. I decided to leave him be and headed for the first-aid box. As I left the room, I noticed Ollie watching us. He had a kind of resigned look on his face, as if this was the sort of thing he saw happen to Stan every day.

Five minutes later, Stan was as right as rain, and he jumped up onto the work-surface (without incident) and

brushed his face against my arm as I re-filled the water-bowl under the tap. Why do some taps suddenly develop pressure akin to a water-cannon? I gently turned the tap to fill the small metal bowl and a resulting 100 mile per hour splashback hit Stan full on – for a moment I actually lost sight of his face in a huge deluge of white water, and then he was gone...flying back to the floor absolutely drenched from ear to tail. He was livid. Absolutely spitting feathers...and socks. Ollie stared silently as I headed out for further first-aid treatment. There was something in that look I half recognised.

A little while later, a still soaked Stan sat purring on my lap, ensuring I'd need to go home quickly after the visit, lest anyone I met thought I'd wet myself. As we sat, I remembered where I'd seen Ollie's look before. It was the very same look the original Ollie used to give Stan Laurel whenever he messed up in countless movies. The exact slightly irritated, slightly impatient but mainly resigned glare of Oliver Hardy.

I seem to be cat-sitter to the stars lately...

Local author and Cat Sitter

Jeanne Mills

It is with sadness that we inform you of the passing of a longstanding resident of Fishbourne and member of the local sailing club for over 30 years - Jeanne Mills aged 88. She died on 8th January after suffering a stroke.

Throughout her life Jeanne was passionate about the sea, art, sailing and travel. She and her sailing partner Elizabeth Painter were active members of The Royal Victoria Yacht Club, supporting different activities and participating in the cruiser group in their yacht 'Onyva' for many years.

Jeanne began her working life as a mechanical design engineer, and after starting a family decided to change direction into art education. Having initially trained at King Alfred's College, Winchester, obtaining a BED. in Art, Jeanne went on to teach art and maths in secondary education. She progressed into Further Education, inspiring many people with different backgrounds to try art in all its forms. Later, she decided to develop her own work, completing an HBTec in Ceramics at Southampton Institute, and exhibiting locally. She finally

realized her dream to study at Winchester School of Art gaining an honours degree in Visual Art and learning new techniques. With a group of fellow graduates she created the Inscape Art Group and continued to exhibit collaboratively with them at various locations across Hampshire and Wiltshire. Towards the end of her professional life she worked in art therapy for groups of adults with special needs.

When she retired to the Isle of Wight Jeanne continued to develop her art, regularly participating in Isle of Wight Open Studios, and exhibiting and supporting Quarr Abbey gallery from the outset. Her exhibition at Quay Arts, 'Reclaiming the Spirits of the Water' combined digital photographic techniques with traditional oil painting and decorative printing. Over her life Jeanne continuously embraced new ideas and her work in different media (ceramics, photography, oils and watercolour) has always been inspired by her passion for the sea, water and reflections.

Jeanne loved life and embraced learning! She will be remembered by those who knew her, for her ability to encourage everyone to

try art, whatever their background, enabling them to achieve their creative potential.

She will be greatly missed by her daughter Justine Mills, her lifelong friend Elizabeth Painter, and her close family.

The celebration of Jeanne's life will be held at Holy Cross Church, Binstead at 11am on Friday 23rd Feb. All welcome.

Compiled by daughter Justin Mills





Dotted Bee-fly

Photos: Jim Baldwin

Nature Notes

What to see – in February

February usually provides us with the first signs of spring. Carpets of snowdrops provide nectar for early emerging insects like butterflies and moths while some early nesting bird species such as Grey Heron and Raven will be sitting in their nest by the end of the month. With the nesting season fast approaching, why not take part in National Nest Box week which runs from 14th – 21st February and is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology. Its aim is to encourage more people to help the birds by putting up nest boxes and maintaining existing boxes.

Many of us are aware of how vital it is to feed our garden birds, but it's also just as important that they have a suitable shelter and site for breeding. With natural habitats such as trees and hedgerows being lost to development and the increase in urban housing, some of our garden birds struggle to find a safe shelter to rear their young.

However, we can all do our bit to help so why not site a nest box in your garden or outdoor area, which will provide them with a clean, warm environment to lay their eggs and raise their chicks. You may find that birds use the box to roost in the winter.

Further information can be found at <https://www.nestboxweek.com/>.

I hope that many of you managed to take part in the RSPB Big Garden

Birdwatch at the end of January. If you enjoyed counting the birds in your garden, did you know that there is a free year-round garden bird survey that you can join? The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) has run the Garden BirdWatch scheme since 1995, and thousands of people across the UK contribute their sightings each week.

Gardens are really important habitats for wildlife, but we need to understand how and why populations of garden birds and other wildlife are changing, and how we can help them. You can help by keeping a simple list and telling us which species visit each week, helping us learn about how wildlife uses the food, shelter and other resources in our gardens.

The more we can understand about how birds and animals use our gardens, the more we can improve our cities, towns, villages and individual gardens for wildlife. All you have to do is to spend at least 20 minutes each week recording the birds who visit your garden. Further details can be found at <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw>.

The end of February through to June is also the flight period of Bee-flies so this is the annual appeal for sightings. There are two spring-emerging species which are easy to identify and are likely to be the only two species you will see. The Dark-edged Bee-fly (dark edge to the wings) is a familiar sign of spring as it hovers over flowers and uses its long proboscis ('tongue') to feed from them. The other species you may encounter is the similar Dotted Bee-fly (it gets its name due to the dots on the wings).

There is a national recording scheme, Bee-fly Watch (<https://dipterists.org.uk/bee-fly-watch>), where you can report your sightings along with a photo. Once verified, this record is passed to the county records database so your record is used at both county and national levels.

Finally, a reminder that I am always happy to receive any photos and sightings of dragonflies (email wightdragonflies@gmail.com), butterflies and moths (email wightmoths@gmail.com). Thanks to all of you who sent me your sightings in 2023 which have been added to the county records.

Here's hoping for some good spring weather and we can get out and enjoy nature. Take care.

Jim Baldwin



Dark-edged Bee-fly

Photos: Jim Baldwin