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Issue 16 • February 2022

The magazine for Oundle and its villages

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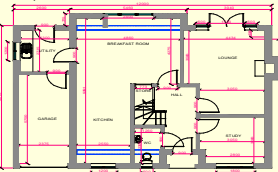
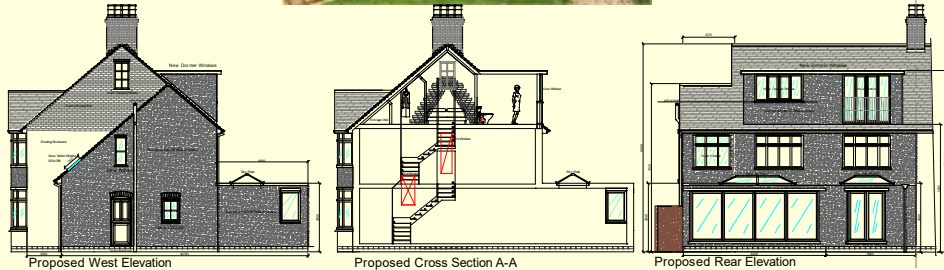
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James is proud to announce that this July marked **21 years** of Optimum Design Services. He has enjoyed many different projects covering both commercial and domestic premises, providing him with a wealth of experience to share with his clients. Now the pandemic has changed our lives there has never been a better time to review and improve the way we live and work.

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21 YEARS EXPERIENCE



18



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Love is in the air...

Our Wedding feature can help you find the perfect partners for your big day!

We sincerely hope that you enjoy reading 'Oundle Life', but if we are missing something out that you would like to see within its pages, just let us know – please email our lovely Jodie.

In this month's edition we have some great features – the first is on page 18, where Katie Boyce answers our questions about Northants Open Studios. Katie works tirelessly to promote all kinds of art and artists in the county – what talented people we have in our midst!

For those of you who are planning your 'big day', our wedding feature starts on page 25, and it will help you find all the local venues and suppliers that are needed to make your day something that you'll remember for a lifetime. Please remember to mention *Oundle Life* when you contact these lovely advertisers.

The recipe for sweetcorn pancakes, on page 30, looks so delicious, we really can't wait to try making them – even without an awesome AGA gracing our kitchen!

Do you love books? Well the Friends of Oundle Library have been wrapping up some great titles and leaving them around the town for you to take home and read – free of charge!

It may be a book that you've already read, or their generosity might lead you to find a new author that you haven't discovered before. We think this is a brilliant idea and is sure to encourage more page turning (page 28).

jodie@crestpublications.com

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(Photographs courtesy of LeicesterPhoto)



(Photograph courtesy of Jane Bate)

HISTORY TALKS

the society welcomes you

The Oundle Historical Society resumed its programme of talks in September 2021. Talks on 'Oundle and the Domesday Book'; 'The Elizabeth Creed Conundrum' and 'Parson Latham's Charities' were well attended and much enjoyed by members and visitors.

Hopefully we will have met in January for 'Pubs Galore - Their Place in Oundle's History'.

Our 2022-2023 programme of talks and visits starts with our AGM on 11th March when, on a lighter note, Colin Ray will be presenting a 'History of the Music Hall'.

Our talks in April and May prepare us for our visits in June and July. On 8th April Jane Baile will speak about Nassington's Prebendal Manor prior to a visit there in June and on 13th May

Robin Rowe will talk on 'From Font to Tomb: the ordering of church interiors' prior to a visit to the two Rutland churches of Teigh and Exton in July.

Our talks resume on 9th September with Neil Lyon's 'The Best Burglar in the County: Joan Wake and the Northamptonshire Record Office'. This will be followed on 11th November with Professor Stephen Upex's talk 'The Saxons in the Nene Valley'. Some of the 2023 programme is already planned.

Our meetings take place at Oundle Methodist Church, starting at 7.30pm. They are free to members (annual subscription £7.50 due in March), visitors £2. We are always pleased to welcome new members and visitors.

www.oundlehistoricalsociety.org.uk
Email oundlehistoricalsociety@gmail.com

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WINTER GARDENS

Late winter pruning...

Over the last few months some of you may have enjoyed looking at the coloured stems of trees and shrubs, these stand out more in the winter when there is less to look at and plant leaves do not hide them. They provide winter interest in the garden and look really colourful on sunny days when the light shines through them. These days there are a wider range of shrubs with coloured bark which includes *Cornus alba* 'Siberica' with bright red stems, *Cornus alba* 'Keselringei' with nearly black stems, *Cornus alba* 'Baton Rouge', *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Beauty' and 'Midwinter Fire' with bright yellowy orange stems and *Cornus sericea* 'Flaviramea'. The shrubby willows include some with coloured stems such as *Salix alba* 'Yelverton', *Salix alba vitellina* 'Britzensis', and finally the white stems of some of the cultivated brambles like *Rubus thibetanus*.

If you have not got any coloured stemmed plants in your garden, there is still time to buy

- both bare root (cheaper) and container grown plants to give colour next winter. The bare root plants can be planted up to mid-March and the container grown can be planted at any time but will need well watering during the summer if planted then.

Hard pruning produces young colourful stems each year

- To maintain the bright colour, the shrubs need hard pruning each March or at least every two years because the colour fades as the stems age. Hard pruning produces young colourful stems each year, the pruning should be carried out before the shrubs start into growth so as not to stress them too much and this can be as early as March in mild winters. Make sure your secateurs and loppers are sharp, if not sharpen the angled side of the blade with a file. Prune the stems down to 15 to 20cm from the ground and over the next summer they will send up bright colourful stems and the plant will be a similar size as before it was pruned. Try to prune to an outward facing bud and slope the cut away from the bud.

Cornus sanguinea is not as vigorous as the *Cornus alba* types so if your soil is poor or the plants not growing very vigorously prune down half of the stems to 15cm and leave half. Make sure you remove any dead, diseased or damaged wood first and then any weak growth and crossing or rubbing branches before cutting the remaining stems back.

Once the shrubs have been pruned, lightly fork the area, remove any weeds and mulch with some organic matter like compost, manure, bark, or woodchip. This helps to reduce weed growth, retain moisture and feed the plants. On a poor soil some slow-release fertiliser could be applied as the soil becomes short of nutrients owing to the annual pruning removing nutrients in the stems.

Whilst pruning the coloured stemmed shrubs it is a good time to prune *Buddleia davidii* the butterfly bush, this again should be hard pruned down to a framework of branches approx. 30 to 40cm high. The hard pruning encourages vigorous growth which have larger

- flowers and fresher foliage. Other shrubs that can be pruned are *Caryopteris clandonensis*, *Hypericum calycinum*, hardy Fuchsia's and bush roses (hybrid teas, floribundas, and some of the English roses) can be pruned in March. With roses again prune out any dead, diseased and damaged wood, and any thin growth (less than pencil thickness) first. Look at what remains and then try to remove some of the old wood, which is a brown colour, this should leave a number of green stems left, this is the young growth and these should be pruned back to 15cm for hybrid teas and 20 to 30cm for floribundas. This encourages vigorous growth and larger flowers.

It is also a good time to cut down any grasses before they start into growth to tidy them up. If you have left them for the birds for nesting material just leave some cut stems for them to use. Most grasses can be cut down low, some are better with the dead material just combed out using a rake or your fingers (where gloves as some leaves can be a sharp).

Kelvin V. Mason

MEN UNITED IN SONG

Come sing with us...



Last year's Men United in Song was such a big hit that the popular pop-up singing project is back again only six months later!

Launching in March 2022 and once again supporting Prostate Cancer UK, Men United in Song aims to give another 40-plus local men the opportunity to get involved, try something new and give something back to the community... and YOU could be one of them!

Working over nine weeks towards a fantastic live charity event at Peterborough Cathedral in May, you'll learn to sing, meet new people, challenge yourself, perform live on stage and raise money for a much-loved charity – what's not to like?

No previous experience is necessary, just a willingness to step outside your comfort zone, get stuck in and give it a go... everyone's in the same boat, and it's all about the journey!

After 18 months of lockdowns and worry last year's project was an overwhelmingly positive

experience for the 70 or so men who took part, with comments including:

A really great experience, at the start it was daunting, but we all came good!

The hard work paid off! Thanks for finding something in us that most didn't know we had!

Amazing, I never thought in a million years I would ever sing in front of hundreds of people!

A great bunch of men, and you got the best out of us – brilliant!

Men United in Song kicks off with introduction sessions on 3rd and 4th March (7-10pm) when you can meet the team and some of the other men who'll be taking part. This is NOT an audition and there's no big red buzzer, just an opportunity to find out more and get involved - contact us today to

book your time slot!

So... if you're looking for a fresh challenge and you'd like to know more, get in touch NOW and start YOUR Men United in Song journey!

- Men United in Song introductory sessions will be at the John Mansfield Campus PE1



4HX on 3rd and 4th March (7-10pm), please register first for your timeslot.

- Song rehearsals will be at the John Mansfield Campus PE 4HX from 7.45pm on Thursday evenings, starting on Thursday 10th March.
- The Men United in Song 2022 charity event will be at Peterborough Cathedral at 7.30pm on Saturday 7th May.

For further information or to register for one of our introduction sessions visit www.peterboroughsings.org.uk email menunited@peterboroughsings.org.uk or call 01733 425194

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PARK LIFE

Spring arrives...



Spring is beginning to blossom, bringing a splash of colour back to the park, as everything awakens from its winter slumber. Snowdrops are one of the first flowers to bloom in the New Year, and you may see us transplanting some of them around the park when clumps get too big. Other early bloomers to look out for include primroses, crocuses and dog-violets, and the green leaves of daffodils and bluebells will be sprouting too.

The trees are also showing signs of waking, with hazel catkins being among the first to appear. The willow won't be far behind, and we have several species of willow in the park, each with their own characteristics to look out for. There should also be blossom appearing on the blackthorns and leaves beginning to emerge on the hawthorns.

Springtime means that our winter work season is nearing its end. When spring has



gained momentum and the nesting and breeding season has begun, we shift our focus towards managing the park for the humans. Until then, there is still plenty of work to keep the rangers and volunteers busy!

Looking for an excuse to get out? There is always plenty to do in the park, with activities for both children and adults, many run by our Active Parks team.

www.northamptonshireparks.co.uk

Check our Events Page for all the latest information.

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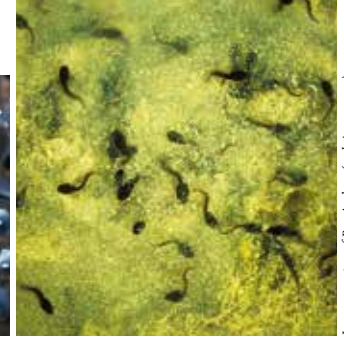
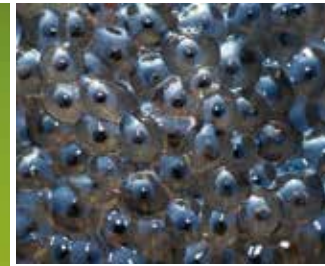


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POND LIFE

Frogs and toads



Images courtesy of Ben Andrew (rsph-images.com)

Where to find frog and toadspawn? The dramatic transformation of wriggling tadpoles into frogs or toads has to be one of nature's most remarkable achievements. It sounds almost too incredible to be true; like something from a science fiction (or even horror) film. But it's been happening for millions of years.

Frogspawn and toadspawn usually starts to appear in February and March. Look just below the surface of the water in ponds and streams, especially amongst reeds by the water's edge. A range of the RSPB's nature reserves across the country offer pond dipping activities for the whole family to get involved with. Simply visit rsph.org.uk/reserves to find your nearest nature reserve and to get started on your frog finding mission!

What's the difference between frogspawn

A range of the RSPB's nature reserves across the country offer pond dipping activities

and toadspawn? Frogs lay a cluster of jelly-like eggs, whereas toadspawn comes in long ribbons. If you're lucky enough to have spawn in your garden pond, keep coming back each

day: you'll see the tiny black dots turn into comma-shapes as the unhatched tadpoles develop.

Growing pains? Once hatched, tadpoles take about 14 weeks to transform into tiny frogs.

Toad tadpoles take a little bit longer, becoming toadlets after about four months. They develop back legs first, then front legs, while the tadpole's tail shrinks and its body becomes

less rounded. They also develop lungs and eardrums.

The final stage of the process, when the mature tadpole morphs completely into adult frog form, is very quick, taking just 24 hours.

What do tadpoles eat? During the transformation process (known as metamorphosis), the tadpole switches from feeding on algae and pond plants (if there is a lack of vegetation in your pond, boiled greens can be added to help young tadpoles) to becoming carnivorous.

I'm a frog, get me out of here!

Amazingly enough, tadpoles can control the rate of their transformation, according to their environment. For instance, they may turn into frogs more quickly to escape a pond teeming with predators like fish. On the other hand, if there's plenty of algae to munch through and limited predators – or if the weather is too cold – tadpoles can delay and remain in the water for up to a year.

Create a mini pond! Spring is a lovely time to create a mini-pond, because you'll see it quickly

develop over the next few months. Why not create your own mini pond to attract all sorts of wildlife?

You don't always need water in your garden to encourage frogs and toads: they also love piles of old logs, stones and compost heaps where they'll find shelter, as well as slugs and insects to feed on.

To find out more about how you can invite nature into your garden, balcony or nearby greenspace, visit rsph.org.uk/yourdoorstep for handy guides to wildlife homes, gardening tips, and so much more.

Why not create your own mini pond to attract all sorts of wildlife?

This article was first published by the RSPB. You can find out more about the work the nature conservation charity does at: www.rspb.org.uk

‘Just a few of the interesting or historic properties that we have sold in Oundle and the villages during 2021’



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NORTHANTS OPEN STUDIOS

...otherwise known as NOS



Katie Boyce

Carry Akroyd



Nina Cashmore



NOS is a visual arts group, giving members of the public access to art throughout the county, whether that is visiting an artist in their working studio or visiting the many exhibitions that are set up. Katie Boyce established the group in 2019, but it has been around for many years before that under different management. Due to COVID, like many groups, the first year had to move to an online only event, but last year they had a huge success with a physical event in September. Here Katie tells us more about her passion...

Why did you choose Northamptonshire? I have lived and worked in the county for most of my life and in doing so I have established relationships with many galleries and artists. Our county is an undiscovered gem; many people drive through it, without knowing its

hidden treasures. I am taking the opportunity to help celebrate and further discover its rich heritage and beautiful countryside. There are still artists out there who are needing a voice, many that love to paint, sculpt or illustrate, many that need opportunities like NOS and that is where I come in!

What makes NOS unique? There are plenty of counties that hold Open Studio events, but NOS is unique in the way that it is one of the few counties to hold a Central Exhibition. Visitors can see an example of work by each artist taking part in one central location. That way if you can't choose which artist to visit, you can get a taster before deciding. It's a great feature enjoyed by artists as well as members of the public, because you are guaranteed to add a few more to list to visit.

What's your favourite part of the job? I love installing the exhibitions, but my favourite part is always the launch event. It's a big celebration and a great start to the festival. Artists are always really excited, especially those new artists that have never had the experience before and are seeing their work amongst their peers for the first time. It's a time for sponsors to meet artists and to see a preview of the work before anyone else. The atmosphere is hard to beat and for me, it's a time when I can relax a little and let the artists lead the show and let the artwork do the talking.

...and the worst? Being tempted by all the lovely pieces of work and knowing you can't buy it all because you have no room in your house!

Any famous people visited? Not yet, but never say never...

Your favourite piece on sale at the moment? There are two artists whose work really makes me smile and I love visiting their studio in Luddington each year. I'm not sure if I visit to see their work or their two beautiful Flat Coat retrievers!

Carry Akroyd has been drawing in the local woodlands using soft and oil pastels. She has been making these studies in preparation for designing a jacket for a book about woodland, as part of the British Wildlife Collection, published by Bloomsbury. Both were drawn in Short Wood near Oundle.

Gordon Monk designs and makes chairs from wood. I love the natural and organic feel of his

Carry Akroyd has been drawing in the local woodlands using soft and oil pastels

Q AND A



chairs, which are almost too good to sit on! The black one is made of oak that has been treated with vinegar and steel wool, which reacts with tannins and turns the oak black. The other chair is made entirely of ash.

Is the artwork affordable for every budget?
Absolutely! We are very inclusive and feel that art should be celebrated and enjoyed by everyone. There is a huge range of artists and artworks to fit every budget and there is also the opportunity to commission your own piece so you can get exactly what you are looking for.

What different media artists do you have?
NOS includes a huge variety of artists who work in a plethora of media. Examples of most can be seen quite locally to Oundle. We have jewellery designer and maker (Carol Clift in Barnwell), Printmakers (Carry Akroyd, Luddington)

Chair makers (Gordon Monk in Luddington), Painters (Deborah James, in Warmington), but also photographers, ceramicists, metalworkers, sculptors, illustrators, just to name a few.

If you couldn't promote artists, what would you do? I would definitely work with animals. I always wanted to be an elephant keeper at the zoo and work on conservation projects when I was little so I think I would do that.

NOS welcomes any artist or maker living in Northamptonshire or in the surrounding county borders. There is no selection process and is open to all disciplines and techniques. The application process runs from November through to May. To register go online at www.northantsopenstudios.co.uk

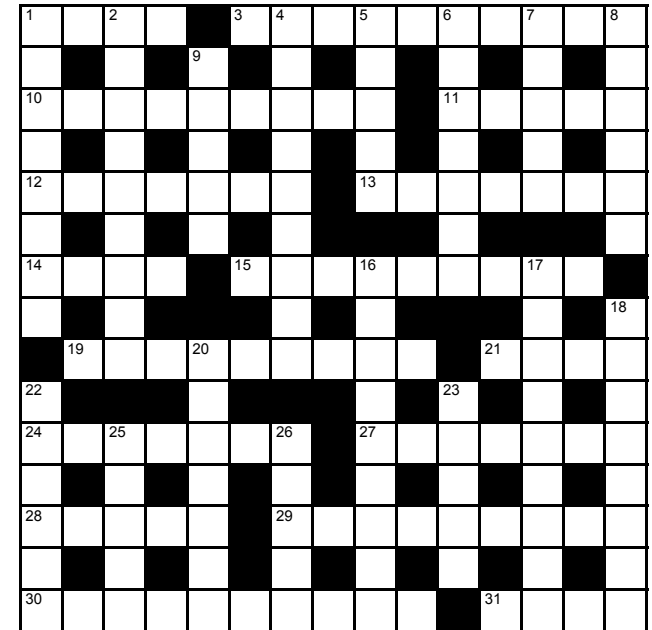
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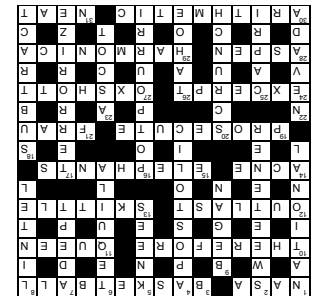
- 1 US space group (1,1,1,1)
- 3 Court game (10)
- 10 Consequently (9)
- 11 Female sovereign (5)
- 12 Survive (7)
- 13 Bowling pin (7)
- 14 Skin eruption (4)
- 15 Pachyderms (9)
- 19 Sue (9)
- 21 German Mrs (4)
- 24 Passage (7)
- 27 Surrey commuter village (7)
- 28 Trembling poplar (5)
- 29 Mouth organ (9)
- 30 Science of numbers (10)
- 31 Undiluted (4)

Down

- 1 Belonging to a country (8)
- 2 Enticement (9)
- 4 Papal (9)
- 5 Leg joints (5)
- 6 Mexican liquor (7)
- 7 Proficient (5)
- 8 Beam over a door (6)
- 9 Started (5)
- 16 Medley (3-6)
- 17 Frighten, usually by violence (9)
- 18 Take away (8)



- 20 Squeeze together (7)
- 22 Las Vegas setting (6)
- 23 Racecourse (5)
- 25 Island in the Bay of Naples (5)
- 26 Resort lake in both California and 22 down (5)



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OUNDLE ROTARY

A natural new start...

It seems like only yesterday that Oundle Rotary were busily organising our Christmas Concert and wrapping up warm to take Santa's Sleigh around the local villages.

However, with Christmas now behind us, and having raised over £3,000 to share amongst our chosen charities, we are looking forward to planning more fundraising activities and supporting local community events.

Being a Rotarian isn't just about the festive season – it might be running a stall at a local village fayre, providing a team to manage car parking at the World Conker Championships or, better still, sharing a glass of wine while debating projects we would like to support, both local and national.

One of the best things about Rotary is that it draws on the skills and experience of everybody to bring a project together with a good helping of laughter along the way. So, if you think you might like to volunteer some spare time, and if Rotary sounds like the organisation for you, we'd like to hear from you!

We meet every two weeks on a Tuesday evening from 7pm.



In the first instance email: oundlerotary@gmail.com for more information or have a look at our facebook page www.facebook.com/Oundle-Rotary-Club

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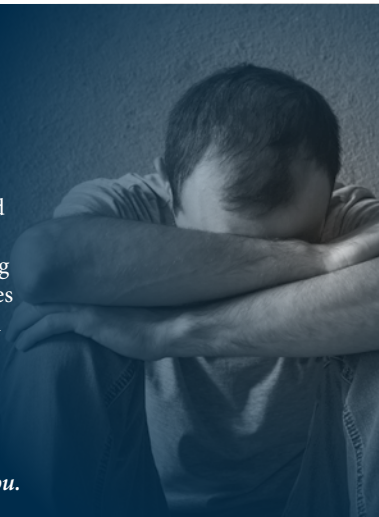
It is by talking to an anonymous volunteer and exploring their options, a caller may find a solution to their difficulties and problems. It is often far easier to offload very personal details in this way than talk to a family member or friend.

Call free day or night on 116123

Email: jo@samaritans.org

www.samaritans.org

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GAMES NIGHT

Board games and coffee



For several months now a growing group of locals has been meeting at a cafe in Oundle once a month. Not just for drinks and chatter (though there is plenty of that) but to play board games! They call it 'Oundle Game Night', and it started in October as a place to share the fun of board gaming with interested people of all ages.

The group meets upstairs in Oundle's Coffee Tavern overlooking the high street, a setting which inspired James Anderson to start the event. "I was sitting in the Coffee Tavern with my wife and thought to myself: 'this would be such a lovely place for a board game night' – so, I talked to the owner Cinthya and she was 100% onboard from the beginning. We figured out dates and times, and it has been a success every month since!"

The group has its regulars and has gained new players with each meeting.

At 6pm on the second Monday of each month

the group heads upstairs to play games they brought or learn about a new one provided by someone else – there are plenty to go around. Past games have included 7 Wonders, Ticket to Ride, Chess, and Go. They are always welcoming to new members and are more than happy to teach games to anyone who wants to give them a go.

*Second Monday of each month, 6pm – 8pm,
The Coffee Tavern (upstairs)*

Cost: Free, but attendees are encouraged to enjoy something from the cafe as a thank you for hosting the event.



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Elaine Barrow Make Up Artist

Local Freelance Make Up Artist, Elaine Barrow, has been in the make up industry now for over 12 years, making up many brides every year and adding to her extensive portfolio which you will find online. Elaine enhances real women's natural beauty for the most special day of their lives.

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Reception Venue



Rushden Hall

Located in Rushden, Northamptonshire, Rushden Hall dates back to the 14th century and is an interesting mix of styles, resulting in an attractive house of mellow limestone. The Hall is surrounded by 34 acres of beautiful parkland, making a superb backdrop for wedding photographs. There are two rooms available for wedding ceremonies, the Fletcher Room and the Panelled Room. The Fletcher Room accommodates 56 seated guests, or a reception of 40 guests seated at tables. The Panelled Room is a smaller, more romantic ceremony room, accommodating 42 seated guests. Larger wedding receptions can be accommodated in the Walled Garden, adjacent to the hall, a perfect setting for the marquee.

www.rushdentowncouncil.gov.uk

Event Management

Orchid Event Management

Here at Orchid Event Management, we pride ourselves in being able to source exactly what you need for your event to make it that little bit special. Whether you need that unique space, delicious food, floral decorations, or live entertainment to dance the night away to, OEM has it all. All types of Private and Corporate events covered to include Weddings, School Proms and Charity Events etc. We treat every event individually. From your initial enquiry we work closely with you to develop your ideas and have a clear understanding of how you want the event to flow. Helpful and Competitive Service - feel free to get in contact.

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Reception Venue

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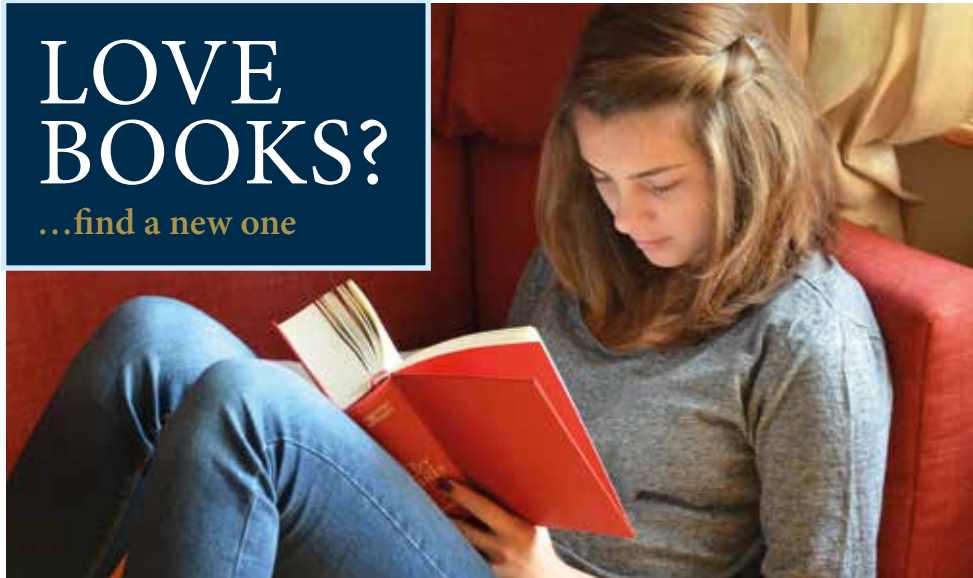
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LOVE BOOKS?

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Who doesn't like a surprise? In the run-up to Valentine's Day, keep an eye out for free books in Oundle and take one home for a Blind Date.

Blind Date with a Book is a bit of a spin on the old adage that you should never judge a book by its cover. The Friends of Oundle Library will be leaving mystery, gift-wrapped books in shops and cafés in the town, which are free for you to take home and keep. There will be just a few words on the wrapping to tell you if it's fiction, non-fiction, or for adults or children – but there won't be enough information to reveal the title or the author. So why not inject some adventure into your reading and enjoy some Valentine's Day fun?

Having a 'Blind Date with a Book' might introduce you to a new author, or reintroduce you to a favourite book you'd like to re-read. And while we all know that a blind date doesn't always work out... if it does, you might just find a new love!



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Get Cooking...

SWEETCORN PANCAKES

These savoury pancakes are delicious with crispy bacon and cooked bananas. Ideal for breakfast or brunch. *Serves 4.*

INGREDIENTS

- 115g self-raising flour
- 1 egg
- 125ml milk
- Small can sweetcorn, drained
- 2tbsp chopped parsley
- Salt, pepper, olive oil
- To serve:*
- Crispy bacon rashers
- 4 barely ripe bananas
- 25g butter

METHOD

1. Place the flour in a basin; make a well in the centre. Add the egg and half the milk, whisk together and thin to a dropping consistency with the remaining milk.
2. Mix in the sweet corn, parsley and seasoning. Wipe the simmering plate with a little oil on a piece of kitchen paper. Drop tablespoons of the mixture onto the simmering plate, when bubbles rise to the surface, turn over and cook the other side.
3. Grill the bacon at the top of the roasting oven and sauté the bananas in the butter until heated through. Serve the pancakes with crisp grilled bacon, topped with banana and garnished with chives.

Conventional cooking:
Cook the pancakes in a little oil in a frying pan.
Grill the bacon.



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- ➔ I own a parcel of land that I don't use and I would like to explore what's possible.
- ➔ I've always thought or been told that I won't get planning permission, but I'm not sure if that's right?

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