



# THE STOCKBURY & SOUTH GREEN OBSERVER

May 2021

## Parish Councillors

Three well known figures from the Parish Council have decided not to stand for election this time: Frank Mace, Mick Bingham and Hannah Brown. They have all been excellent in their careful consideration of issues affecting the Parish and the inevitable debates around decision making and I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to them for their contributions. I would also like to pay tribute to their fortitude: a term on Stockbury Parish Council is quite an achievement!

Whilst we will miss all three, particular thanks are due to Frank Mace. I am not sure that there are many left in the village who can remember a time when Frank was not on the Council and have had great difficulty finding records that go back far enough! The consensus seems to be that he started out on the PC when God was a boy (or girl)!

Despite trials in his personal life, Frank still attended meetings right up to the point that we were no longer able to hold them in person. That grappling with “new technology” was the only thing that managed to stop him participating says an awful lot about Frank’s strength of character.

As a relative newcomer to the Parish and only having been on the Council for about 10 years, I can testify that meetings are definitely the poorer for Frank no longer attending.

Thank you Frank.

Phil Woods  
SPC

## Parish Council Elections

Although the date of the elections is still a week or so away, the result for Stockbury is already known. Three Councillors have stood down and the rest of the existing Councillors were elected unopposed as only one new candidate stood. Your Parish Councillors are therefore:

Lyle Cathcart  
Anne Southern  
Sandra Sumner  
Dave Tomsett  
Phil Woods

Given that there are two vacancies, the Parish Council will have the option of co-opting these after 6<sup>th</sup> May. Unlike an election, the decision on co-option will rest with the elected Parish Councillors.

If you are interested in putting your name forward for co-option, please look out for the advertisement which will be posted on the Parish Council notice board outside the village hall and at MB Farms on or about the 7<sup>th</sup> of May.

Phil Woods  
SPC

## Stockbury Roundabout

We had hoped to be able to tell you the outcome of the Public Inquiry into the proposals for Junction 5 which was originally due on 21<sup>st</sup> April. We have now found out that the final decision will not be known until the 18<sup>th</sup> May at the earliest.

It is clearly just a coincidence that the local elections happen to fall between the two dates ...

Phil Woods  
SPC

## UPDATE : Stockbury Superfast Broadband Application

Following the previous article regarding superfast broadband, I submitted to Openreach an application on behalf of 21 addresses on the 01795 exchange, from those who asked to be included in a quote for the Rural Gigabit Scheme.

I have now received a quote for the installation of fttp (fibre to the premises not the cabinet which is fttc) for 238 premises. These 238 premises include a long list of those properties currently enjoying fast fttc speeds, from the cabinet in the village and did not ask to be included in the application.

The quote (drum roll ...) was £447,977.00 which works out at a cost of £1,882.26 per property if all 238 sign up. Clearly this is ludicrous as anyone with fttc speeds is unlikely to want join the scheme and, in any event, with speeds of over 30mbps, would not qualify for the £1500 government voucher towards the cost.

I’ve had a lengthy discussion with a KCC officer involved in the Rural Gigabit Scheme about the quote and he is speaking to Openreach. I am also contacting Openreach for an explanation of the basis for the quote received and will report back; in the meantime I am considering Starlink ...

Anne Southern

## Drone Flying

Any residents flying a drone are reminded that they must only fly over properties where they have been granted permission to do so. If its necessary to cross land where permission has not been granted, then the drone must be flown at a height of no less than 50 meters.

Any resident who experiences drones being flown over their property under 50m without permission are encouraged to report this to the police using the non emergency number 101 as recording these incidents may be useful in criminal investigations.

GJM

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# St Mary Magdalene

## Services for May in Stockbury Church

9th May - 6pm Holy Communion

30th May - 6pm BCP Evensong

There will be a service for all six churches together on Sunday 23 May - being Whit Sunday - at 10.30am at Newington Church.

For Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals please contact The Revd Julian Staniforth - tel. 01795 - 227 329.

Penny Stevens  
PCC Secretary

## March Church Draw Winners

### CONGRATULATIONS!

**1st - Terry Holliday**

£40 (101)

**2nd - Mike Wegg**

£20 (55)

**3rd - Ann Rich**

£10 (140)

## Home Bonfires

**If you are thinking of having a bonfire ... please don't!**

Now that the warmer days of spring and summer are coming and more people have their doors and windows open and are enjoying their open spaces, please spare a thought for those with respiratory problems such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis; bonfire smoke will also cause significant breathing problems for people suffering with coronavirus symptoms.

It is not an offence to have a garden bonfire, it is however, an offence under the Environmental Protection Act of 1990 to cause statutory smoke nuisance; statutory nuisance happens when smoke causes unreasonable interference with a person's use or enjoyment of their property. Smoke nuisance can occur at any time of the day or night.

There are many alternative ways to avoid home bonfires such as using a garden waste bin, make compost or mulch ... if you are cutting back trees, why not use the spent branches as plant supports.

If there is no alternative but to have a bonfire, please advise your neighbours in advance ... they will be less likely to complain! Light it at a time when it is least likely to effect your neighbours eg. on a warm summer's day or evening when people are likely to be out enjoying their gardens and have doors and windows open.

If you are continually bothered by others bonfire smoke,

although you may feel awkward, approach your neighbour and explain your feelings; they may not be aware of the distress being caused and may be more considerate in the future.

If all else fails, contact MBC on 01622-602202 and they will investigate and have the power to serve a notice to stop the issue.

## WANTED!

The Stockbury Observer requires a delivery person for the **Plum Tree Road** area.

The round would take approximately less than an hour once a month and a batch of newsletters would be delivered to you for onward distribution.

If you are interested, please contact the Editor at [stockburyobserver@gmail.com](mailto:stockburyobserver@gmail.com)

Ed

## Recommendation

If anybody is looking for a cleaner, I can recommend our lady, Sherrie. She has been doing a fabulous job for us over the years and has even been available all through the pandemic (when it was legal...). If you would like to contact her, her number is **07593 901347**

Ann Rich

## Stockbury Book Club

### One August Night by Victoria Hislop

To preface this report suffice to say that we felt it would be an advantage, if not a necessity, to have read *The Island* by this author before attempting the sequel, for in that way you would have pre-knowledge of the main characters.

This is a dramatic story of love, betrayal and allegiances set in the background of a hot Greek island. In the aftermath of the leprosy cure and the closure of the leprosy colony on Spinalonga, islanders prepare to continue their lives when the cured inhabitants return to Plaka, a small Cretan village. Anna's sister Maria is a recovered leper who once was engaged to Manolis but no longer wishes to be with him. However Anna, who is having an affair with Manolis, is unaware of Maria's change of heart. Meanwhile Andreas, Anna's husband discovers her affair. And there you have it; an explosive situation!

Those of us who had read *The Island* (and incidentally considered it exceptionally good) basically were disappointed with the sequel which appeared light on the development of characters and lacking in depth and atmospheric detail. It could be enjoyed as a light standalone story and indeed some members welcomed this easy read. However we awarded only 4/10 this time.

Our next two choices of reading are :

A Prayer for Owen Meany by Irving John  
A Man Called Ove by Frederick Backman

Ann Rich

# THE HARROW

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## A Soldier - Fond Memories - Part Two

As a result of my “no breakfast” experience outlined in a previous article, with the help of my orderly, I set about learning Gurkhali quickly. As you can imagine commanding a troop of some 50 soldiers with initially very limited ability to communicate with them proved quite a challenge.

My first few weeks involved deployment on squadron training in preparation for a major exercise with the 28 Commonwealth Brigade and my first big blunder. Dog tired I failed to remember the contents of a signal I received in the middle of the night informing me that a route we were to take was impassable because of heavy rain. I managed to get most of my vehicles bogged in and the squadron exercise had to be stopped whilst we were recovered. I had committed the cardinal sin of not taking adequate rest. This was followed by building a 150 foot long Bailey Bridge in the naval dockyard in Singapore (40 truck loads of stores). It wasn't too helpful that Bailey Bridge design and construction had been dropped from our young officer course!!

We camped in the lallang (scrub grass) on site. I mentioned to my orderly that I was not too keen on snakes of which there were quite a few. That evening, returning to my basha (a simple open tent made out of my poncho) I discovered several dead cobras hanging on it. When I quizzed him he said that I had told him I didn't like snakes so he killed as many as he could find!

After this short introduction to troop commanding it was time to attend a language course. Normally this happens after 6 months but an upcoming operational tour in Borneo meant I had to go after 6 weeks. Course successfully completed I deployed to Borneo, to an Australian company base in the jungle. My task was to construct an access road so that the base, currently only supplied by helicopter or parachute drop, could be supported by vehicle.

We had not been there long when I received orders to construct a ring of helicopter pads on high ground in the jungle. Intelligence had been obtained by brigade that some CTs (Communist Terrorists) were operating in the area and the Commander wished to be able to deploy his brigade rapidly by air. Off we set on foot loaded up with the equipment we required to fell some jungle giants, chain saws, fuel, explosives etc, in addition to our personal kit. The deployment started with a steep climb. As I was not yet acclimatised to the heat and humidity I found it tough going.

Because twilight is shorter in the tropics, it was important to find a suitable spot to stop for the night in good time. This achieved, with my Gurkha officer I allocated my soldiers their stand to positions and posted sentries on the approaches. It was now time for food and sleep.

During the climb I had noticed that my orderly was carrying an extra pack but didn't have the energy to ask him why. When he produced our evening meal, curry from a Gurkha ration pack, I had my answer. The extra pack contained some cans of Tiger beer packed in ice.

I could have kissed him – but I didn't!

Tony Kerr

## Stockbury Gardeners

We are still awaiting for confirmation from Boris to advise when we can officially use the village hall, so we just need to be patient for a little longer before Stockbury Gardeners can meet up. Don't forget when we do eventually receive the “all clear”, we will be having a series of presentations, planning our remaining speakers and functions for the rest of the year. If you are reading this column and have thought about joining us, we don't bite!! Send an email to the contact address which can be found elsewhere in this magazine.

As we are based in Stockbury its only fair to promote local businesses, so I have to say that MB Farms are stocking once again, what I consider the finest general-purpose compost available, Humax, so there is no need to go lugging large bags from the expensive garden centres when its available in Stockbury. In addition, they have on sale plants and herbs, shortly to include vegetable plants, tomatoes, cucumbers, aubergine, courgette etc. once the weather improves.

The Harrow is now open “outside only”, the new chef, Gareth, is producing excellent food; its well worth the visit. The boys are also sporting a huge range of new wines, yet another reason to visit the pub! Later in the season there will be locally produced, and I mean **LOCALLY** produced heritage vegetables!

This month is really the busiest month for transplanting vegetables, as by now the warmer weather is with us, sowing seeds for beetroot, spring onions, cabbage, cauliflower, ridge cucumber, etc.

Potatoes should be showing shoots above ground, so earth them up, by that, meaning that you cover over the shoots with soil, and by doing that, it makes the plant produce a bigger crop.



Greenhouse tomatoes should have side shoots removed; a little tip to produce more fruits is to tap the stems and that has the effect of pollinating the flowers, they are naturally self-pollinating and all you do is distribute the pollen within the flower. Hopefully, you will then have full trusses of fruit.

Keep an eye on roses, aphid attack is likely to be upon us soon, however, please use a bee friendly option to spray them - I use “SB Plant Invigorator”.

Runner beans can be planted out later in the month, once the risk of frost is over, or use fleece at night. Again, if you experience black fly (aphid) attack, leave them alone, as you will find that the ladybirds will munch them and to some extent they require the food anyway, so leave that one to nature!!

As far as horticultural shows are going, Chelsea Flower Show will be a “virtual” online show, however the current plan is to have a “full Chelsea Show” in

**Cont'd ...**



## Oil Boiler Specialists

A big thank you to all my loyal customers. I have been doing a lot of training and re-reading my company for the new RHI launch and to this effect we can now offer you biomass boilers (log, pellet and woodchip) and thermal Solar panels.

All design and installs in-house this will allow you to gain the MCS payment from the government to cover the cost of installation.

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## Stockbury Neighbourhood Watch

We are a Police registered Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. Neighbourhood Watch is a way for communities to help themselves stay safe. We are volunteers who work in partnership with the police to:

- Distribute safety advice
- Help make sure that elderly and vulnerable residents are not targets to criminals
- Gather information to help police tackle local problems
- Alert residents when there is a particular crime problem in the area

Our aim is to help people protect themselves and their properties and to reduce the anxieties of becoming a victim of crime.

Please be vigilant and report suspicious characters or incidents to the police and also to your co-ordinator (details below).

Co-ordinators will cascade any information from the police or neighbours to members.

### CONTACT NUMBERS:

Emergency : 999

(crime in progress/life threatening)

Non-Emergency : 101

Rosemary (Ann) Ballard (Co-ordinator)  
(01622) 736331

Alternatively you may e-mail the Co-ordinator at:

[stockbury-neighbourhood@outlook.com](mailto:stockbury-neighbourhood@outlook.com)

Any ideas and views would be greatly welcomed at the above mentioned e-mail address.

If you know of any other residents who would like to receive information from Stockbury Neighbourhood Watch, then please ask them to either contact the Co-ordinator on the above telephone number or e-mail their details to the above mentioned e-mail address.



**Price List:**

- Gel Polish nails - £20
- Gel Polish toes - £15
- Full set acrylics with gel - £25
- Acrylic infill with gel - £20
- Waxing - prices from £7 for Eyebrows to £25 for full leg
- Range of facials (Inc. Microdermabrasion, Dermaplaning etc) - prices from £25 - £75
- Full Body Massage - £40
- Back and Shoulder Massage - £25
- Wash and Blow dry from £15
- Eyelash and Eyebrow Tinting from £5
- Lash Lift and Tint - £30
- MICROBLADING - eyebrow tattooing, enquire for prices

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## **Gardeners cont'd ...**

September, for the vegetable fans that means there will be a lot to see. The RHS is currently going ahead with the Hampton Court Show as normal.

Lets hope that the weather finally warms up. Have a great month.

Chris Spree

## **Patrik Says ...**

Welcome to my latest newsletter. There are quite a few items this month, which I like (and need) to draw to your attention:

### **Young people in Maidstone**

11 to 18 years olds are being asked how they feel about living in Maidstone and MBC would like them to complete a survey. Participants can even win a £50 shopping voucher:

<https://wh.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?k=158151708858>

### **Businesses with reduced footfall urged to apply for grants**

Throughout the pandemic MBC has successfully administered a range of mandatory and discretionary grant schemes to support local businesses with over 8,867 awards made to the value of £46million. MBC is calling on businesses that may have been unsuccessful previously in applying for a business grant or not felt they qualify to try again this time, the application deadline has been extended until **Friday 30 April**.

<https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/other-services/covid-19/tier-2-primary-areas/advice-and-help-for-businesses/additional-restrictions-grant>

### **Mandatory injunction in place to stop harm to AONB**

Continuing its fight against harm to an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, MBC has taken further action and obtained a Full Injunction in both prohibitory and mandatory terms against a landowner in Boxley.

Mr Langley Beck of Bell Lane, Boxley previously ignored requirements of an Enforcement Notice to stop living on the land and the unlawful disposal of waste/ car parts etc and to restore the land. MBC began legal proceedings to prevent further serious harm to the site that is located within an AONB, a designated Ancient Woodland and covered by a Tree Preservation Order. The Council initially obtained a High Court Interim Injunction earlier this year and has now secured a Full Injunction.

### **Support for on-street electric vehicle charging points**

The Transport Secretary recently confirmed that the Government's On-Street Residential Charge Point Scheme will continue in the 2021-22 financial year, with a £20 million budget. The scheme is available to all UK local authorities, to fund 75% of the capital costs of installing residential EV charge points.

### **New legislation**

The Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space) will be coming into force on 4 May 2021. An individual who has debts must take professional debt advice from a debt adviser to be considered for Breathing Space. The debt

adviser will consider whether the individual is in problem debt and whether there is an ability to repay all debts. An individual must agree they will continue to pay ongoing liabilities (there are separate arrangements for anyone who has been referred by the NHS due to mental health problems). The standard Breathing Space allows an individual 60 working days where their debts are effectively 'frozen'. Debts that are likely to be qualifying debts, include Council Tax, Business Rates, Housing Benefit Overpayments, credit or store cards, loans, overdrafts, utility bills, and mortgage arrears. A decision will be made within 60 days as to what the best option is to get a person's finances back on track. At this point, the creditors can no longer start any action or legal proceedings against the debtor, must put all existing debts on hold and is not able to contact the debtor regarding the Breathing Space debt. Breathing Space is not a payment holiday. Whilst creditors must pause action during Breathing Space, a debtor is still legally required to pay their ongoing debts and liabilities. Certain debts such as Council Tax and Business Rates are considered 'ongoing liabilities' during a standard Breathing Space. The debtor needs to keep paying these as this is a requirement for continued protection, if they stop paying, the standard Breathing Space may be cancelled. At the end of Breathing Space, it is anticipated customers will enter into a Statutory Debt Repayment Plan (SDRP) which is a formal agreement with creditors to repay ALL their debts over a manageable time period (based on individuals surplus income).

### **Moratorium On Possession Proceedings**

Since the end of March 2020 there have been various regulatory edicts that have extended the notice period that landlords must give their tenants; stays on possession hearings in the Courts and a halt to eviction warrants being executed by bailiffs. MBC Housing Officers are aware of a small number of occasions where landlords in the borough have attempted to evict tenants; although our staff intervened when made aware none of these incidents has resulted in a prosecution. Most of the time once the officers have explained the legal position to the landlord, they reach a more reasonable outcome.

### **And finally:**

Please don't forget on 6<sup>th</sup> of May you will be asked to vote for your Kent County Councillor, the Police and Crime Commissioner and your Maidstone Borough Councillor.

It will be vital that you make your voices heard and give your mandate to the candidate who shall represent you for the next four years.

### **Five minutes of your time will mean a lot to the candidate of your choice.**

PATRIK GARTEN  
MBC Councillor for North Downs Ward (Conservative)  
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## How Things Have Changed!

### Part Two

Since we all receive local news through this publication, it seemed appropriate that I should devote the second instalment of How Things Have Changed to tracing the beginnings of The Stockbury & South Green Observer.

It does go back a long way though the format may have changed over the years. In the 60's the Parish Council produced a newsletter which comprised of one (usually) or maybe two A4 sheets to inform parishioners. It consisted of reports from all of the clubs which existed then; it told of their activities and listed any winners of raffles or competitions. No change there then! However the method of production was quite primitive and laborious in comparison to nowadays. It involved preparing a stencil, then putting that on a roller, which when turned by hand, picked up the ink and transferred the information onto the paper (the exact technicalities of this duplicating machine are a bit lost in the mists of time but you get the general idea!). Anyway this format survived for a couple of decades to my knowledge. I cannot remember whether all households received it but imagine most residents found out the news of events in this way.

There was a period when we didn't have our newsletter but at some point probably in the late 70's and early 80's various public spirited parishioners upped the ante, took on the job of producing the publication, usually using their own work source for printing and each one putting their own unique stamp on the content and arrangement. Under their stewardship it became a worthwhile mouthpiece for Stockbury writers. Opinions were voiced, letters arrived on the page and the issue grew more interesting. It was during this time, I think, that the Newsletter, morphed into The Stockbury & South Green Observer.

For a while we had printing problems and issues appeared only randomly. However, through the auspices of a generous ex-resident who came to the rescue allowing printing to be carried out at his firm's premises and at a moderate cost, production resumed, steadily.

I'm getting a bit more up to date now. Stockbury Parish Council had always wanted everyone in the parish to be aware of matters of importance to Stockbury's development and sympathetic progress. It therefore always backed the need for The Observer. Editors likewise encouraged the community to become involved, to voice their concerns and use the monthly issue to state their opinions; communication and understanding of each other being key.

Thus the Stockbury Observer thrived and grew in this 21st century into an interesting amalgamation of observations, personal articles, gentle interviews, poetry, book reviews, puzzles and so easily in this digital age, pertinent photos, delivered to each and every household (320 to be precise) in the parish, absolutely free as always. No mean feat!

In fact once a month it became the thing to sit quietly with a cup of coffee and The Stockbury Observer and soak up everything of local interest. So maybe you'd like to carry on that tradition and contribute a little something soon. I am sure Fiona, our current editor would love to hear from you and so would the rest of us !

Ann Rich

It's all true, I would love to hear your tales or woes - Ed

## Zeina Toric-Azad

Liberal Democrat Candidate Nominee

North Downs Ward

I, Zeina Toric-Azad, your Liberal Democrat Nominee for our North Downs Ward and resident of Stockbury, pledge to:

- Protect our AONB-woodlands and resist and fight the proposal of the Bimbury development.
- Seek sustainable local transport improvements to ease congestion and improve air quality.
- Encourage football to existing small and medium scale businesses within the ward.
- Seek stronger enforcement of speeding and road safety rules.
- Be tough on littering and to not tolerate fly-tipping.
- Challenge the Borough to pursue a more compassionate and green policy on future noisy public events.

If you would like to have your say about any of these issues, I'm always happy to listen and learn. You can come over and help me with my potager's garden while I make you tea (if it is safe to do so).

Give me a call on 07551-264537 or email me at zeina.azad@gmail.com.

Zeina Toric-Azad  
Liberal Democrat Nominee  
North Downs Ward

## Ditty Corner

### Multiplication

Trying to fall asleep in spring,  
I tried the trick of counting sheep,  
Bleating as they sauntered past  
I watched and counted each one by  
Oh how deep sleep eluded me!  
No rest would come, no pillowed bliss  
I saw that there was no end to this!

### Norm's Travels

Norm the Gnome strayed far from home  
I wonder where he did go?  
To Ghent he went to visit cousin Hortense  
And when he got there, he did loudly declare  
I have a numb derrière!

Hope that was for essential travel reasons, Norm! - Ed

### A Sheep in a Field

There once was a sheep in a field,  
Keen, a waving hand did I wield,  
Lockdown's been boring,  
No one's been calling,  
Frightened, the ewe keeled.

# Domestic Abuse

If you or someone else is suffering from domestic abuse please visit a Domestic Abuse webpage for advice and more information:

[www.maidstone.gov.uk/home/primaryservices/housing/tier-2-additional-areas/domestic-abuse](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/home/primaryservices/housing/tier-2-additional-areas/domestic-abuse)

[www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk)

[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

[www.mensadviceline.org.uk](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk)

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

There are also helplines available if you would rather speak to someone:

- Choices Domestic Abuse Services  
**0800 917 9948**
- National Domestic Violence Helpline  
**0808 2000 247**
- Refuge freephone National Domestic Abuse  
**0808 2000 247**
- The Men's Advice Line for male domestic abuse survivors  
**0808 808 4994**
- National LGBT+ Abuse Helpline  
**0800 999 54428**
- Childline  
**0800 1111**

## Housing helplines

There are helplines available if you need help with housing:

- Shelter -**0808 800 4444**
- Choices -**0800 917 9948**
- Victim Support -**0808 168 9111**

# Observer Deadline!

If you would like to advertise or have item included in next months Observer, we must receive it no later than

**MONDAY 24th May**

Please email your contributions to  
**stockburyobserver@gmail.com**

## Calling All Advertisers

Our annual rates for advertising in 12 editions are:

A whole page £400

A half page £200

A quarter page £120

Our advertising year starts in April and new adverts for less than 12 months duration will be charged on a pro-rata basis. Rates for ads smaller than a quarter page will be given on application.

If you would like to place an advert in The Observer, please email [stockburyobserver@gmail.com](mailto:stockburyobserver@gmail.com) The editor will confirm receipt and an invoice will be sent along with details of how to pay.

If you are a new customer, please also attach your artwork, preferable in MS Word or as a PDF file.

This is a great opportunity to promote your business as The Observer is delivered to **every** household within the Parish of Stockbury as well as having an online presence.

**It's never too late to advertise in  
The Stockbury Observer!**

## Stockbury Parish Council Minutes

The minutes for our Parish Council meetings will be approved at the following meeting and will then be published on [www.stockbury.org](http://www.stockbury.org) within 5 days of the meeting at which they are approved.

## Our Move to Stockbury

I was stirred by your rousing call to action in the March issue of The Observer: something akin to “time you got off your backsides to help keep The Observer alive”.

What to write about? I have lived in Stockbury with my family and now just my husband for some 23 years so we are relative newcomers. We bought a house which has a lovely piece of flat land surrounding it but the house itself was in a sad condition. Could it be improved to support a family of four as it had only one bedroom and was in a poor state? We were told that there was Planning Permission for an extension and accepted their word that a further two bedrooms were entirely possible.

We moved in during sub-zero temperatures early one January only to find that the central heating really did not work. So, we huddled around an old calor gas fire we had brought from the garage of our former modern, four-bedroom home, and piled on the clothing. Now we were in, the problems were only too visible. Apart from rainwater entering via a flat roof above the lounge onto any unsuspecting person sitting on our settee (we knew about this drawback: buckets to the rescue), the electricity frequently cut off, electric wires dangled down the outside of the house, there was an awful smell pervading the downstairs, and large wasps started to invade via lighting in the upstairs ceiling.

Someone once said to us in an overwhelming situation, just take it on step by step. Two years of upheaval followed, with another eight years of slower progress. During those first two years, the central heating was replaced, and we applied for permission for an extension. Family stepped in to help out: my husband’s brother, a fully qualified electrician, spent many hours with my husband sorting out the electricity. The awful smell was tracked down to a front, outside drain and remedied by my husband, who is extremely accomplished at sorting practical problems. The wasp nests in the loft were removed. One serious setback was that Planning Permission was delayed owing to exceeding the original footprint of the house. The facts that we overlooked no neighbours, had plenty of land, and nearby houses were far bigger did not help. Finally, a compromise was reached on the extension with the help of a Kent councillor, who understood that without a solution we would have to move, and the house we were trying to save would probably end up falling down.

The builders moved in for three months (extended to five) to undertake the extension and replace the roof. We were lucky: the builders were competent and efficient as well as friendly. There were, however, two incidents which proved memorable. One young builder fell through the roof rafters to land at our feet in the lounge: thankfully more embarrassed than hurt. On another occasion, having removed the existing roof, one of the roofers walked across the plastic roof covering before he left for the weekend. He had punctured the plastic and of course it poured with rain which flooded through: this time every available pot, pan and bowl was used to limit the water damage whilst the builders were recalled to replace the covering.

We have never forgotten those early struggles but such a reward: we now live in a comfortable three-bedroom

house in a superb countryside setting. Our neighbours are friendly and helpful and the sense of community is strong. Now retired, we still have much to do outside in the garden and have also taken the opportunity to travel whenever possible. We have seen so many wonderful sights as well as experienced the usual fraught moments that can go with travelling. But that’s another story ...

Sandra Palmer

## Leonardo Da Vinci

### Designer of the first handbag, who knew ... !

Leonardo Da Vinci, genius, artist, sculptor, inventor, handbag designer!!

Renowned Renaissance artist Leonardo Da Vinci created a variety of masterpieces during his lifetime and across many disciplines but not many people know that he first invented the handbag! A sketch he created in the 15th century, around the time that he was painting his most famous pieces of work including the ‘The Last Supper’, was discovered by Da Vinci scholar Carlo Pedretti in 1978 when he found the sketch of a leather and metal handbag.

Unsurprisingly, this attracted little publicity but scroll forward to 2012 and the sketch was used by Italian fashion house Gheradini (I’d never heard of it either) as a template for making their handbag. The handbag was created from calfskin and brass and displayed in Florence at the Academia delle Arti del Disegno and also at Gheradini’s showroom alongside a picture of the original sketch.

A very limited run of 99 handbags were crafted by Gheradini and immediately snapped up.

Coincidentally the Gheradini family are descendants of another of Da Vinci’s famous works ‘The Mona Lisa’, Gheradini was her maiden name. Perhaps that enigmatic Mona Lisa smile, a topic of great speculation over the years, was connected to thoughts of a new handbag?!

Anne Southern

## Sudoku Challenge

1		8			5	2		9
3				2				7
				7	1			
4		2						
	9	1				6	7	
						1		2
			8	5				
5				9				4
7		4	2			5		8

## Useful Contact Information

Church Matters St. Mary Magdalene		01795 227329
Community Bus	Booking Line	07551 454702
Cricket Club	Roger Milton - rogerandirene@btinternet.com	01795 844642
Crimestoppers	(Confidential)	0800 55511
Dancing Club	Brian Crisp	01634 231886
Dog Club	Mick Bingham	01795 842480
Electricity Problems		0800 7838866
Environment Agency	Incident Hotline	0800 807060
Fly Tipping & Waste Collection	Including bulky items	01622 602162
Gardeners	stockburygardeners@live.com	
Golf Society	Philip Painter	07850 190204
Hall Bookings	Sue Porter	01795 843715
Kent County Councillor	Shellina Prendergast shellina.prendergast@kent.gov.uk	
Maidstone BC Councillor	Patrik Garten - patrikgarten@maidstone.gov.uk	01622 807907
MB Farms Stores & Post Office		01795 842401
Member of Parliament Faversham & Mid Kent Ward	Helen Whately - helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk	
Neighbourhood Watch	Ann Ballard	01622 736331
Not So Young Club	Rosemary Leonard	01634 232672
Parish Council Clerk	Sherrie Babington	01634 867173
Petanque Club	Tina Jacobs	07743 910185
Photographic Club	Tim Arnold - timarnold@btinternet.com	01795 843049
Police	Emergency Only Non-Emergency	999 101
Police Community Support Officers for Stockbury	Daniel Genn daniel.genn@kent.pnn.police.uk	101
Public Footpaths & Bridleway Roads, Potholes, etc	Reporting issues with. - westprow@kent.gov.uk (manned 24hrs) - <a href="http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem">www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/ report-a-problem</a>	03000 417171 03000 418181
RSPCA		0300 1234999
Short Mat Bowls	Ann Rich - ann.stockbury@btinternet.com	07718 070807
South East Water	Emergency Only Non-Emergency	0333 000 0365 0333 000 3330
Stockbury Observer - Editor	stockburyobserver@gmail.com	
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WI	Pat Fothergill	01622 734093