



THE STOCKBURY & SOUTH GREEN OBSERVER

Jan/Feb 2021

The Stockbury Observer is Back!

Happy New Year to you all and welcome to the first 2021 edition of The Stockbury Observer, printed on our newly purchased printing equipment, bought for the village by a very generous KCC grant via Shellina Prendergast, our very supportive KCC Councillor.

The previous printing arrangements became prohibitively expensive, so editions were online only. The PC felt this was a shame as the printed edition is very popular, keeping everyone abreast of what's happening in the village and useful for news and views. But not everyone has access to the internet, so the PC were exploring ways to fund the printed copies at a PC meeting when Shellina invited us to make an application for a grant from her allocation of KCC community funding, which we are delighted to say was successful.

So, a big thank you to Shellina for helping to keep our whole community in touch. We also want to give a massive thank you to Fiona Moody for agreeing to continue as Editor (and now Printer in Chief) and also to Geoff Moody, for all his work in advising and procuring the best equipment for our needs, fathoming out how it all works and no doubt fixing it when it goes wrong! We also want to thank those that deliver The Observer to addresses across the parish, rain or shine, you thought it was all behind you, nope, we know where you live...

The cost of printing, ink, toner, paper etc will be covered by advertising revenue and any shortfall funded by the PC. We thank Nick Gee of Denmaur Papers for kindly offering to supply the paper at cost.

So, if you have any views on The Observer, or suggestions for anything you would like to see (or not see) included in forthcoming editions, please email the editor at stockburyobserver@gmail.com and let her know.

In the meantime, best wishes to all for a happy and healthy 2021 and a welcome return, we hope, to normality.

Anne Southern
SPC

Stockbury Roundabout Inquiry

I will not bore anyone with the details of the Inquiry itself or the lead up to it, but suffice to say that the residents of Stockbury rose to the challenge and we were all afforded a fair hearing by the Inspector over the 10 days of the virtual Inquiry. We were ably supported by friends of Stockbury, including our MP, County Councillor and Borough Councillor. For some of us, it tested our abilities to use Microsoft Teams, but the Parish managed to get its point across.

It is now for the Inspector to write her report and recommendations, then for the Secretary of State to decide whether he accepts those recommendations. We should know the outcome somewhere around 21st April.

If anyone is interested in the evidence given, this can be found at:

<https://programmeofficers.co.uk/m2j5/>

Evidence submitted for the Inquiry can be found under "Proofs of Evidence", the closing statements made by those who chose to do so can be found under "Inquiry Documents" at the end of the list.

Fingers crossed

Phil Woods
SPC

Advance Notice

United Kingdom Census 21st March 2021

We've been asked to let people know that this is a Census year and despite the Covid-19 situation it will go ahead as planned on 21st March. It's the first time it will be online and people are asked to complete it online if possible. The Census has been designed to be simple and straightforward to complete. There are Covid safe plans in place for those not able to access it online, or who need help and assistance to complete it. Census officers can attend your home address for this purpose but do not need to enter your home. The census is carried out every 10 years and it is a legal requirement that it is completed.

To get further details please see www.census.co.uk

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Stockbury Covid-19 Support Group

Most people in our area seem to be well supported by relatives, friends and neighbours. The long months of lockdowns and shielding mean that people generally have their shopping and medication needs under control. The MB Farm continues to deliver to a few very elderly and frail people in our community.

But what about getting to appointments to get your vaccination? What happens when MB Farms are busy lambing and calving again as they were in the first lockdown? What if your own supporters have to isolate or become ill themselves?

That is when the Stockbury Covid-19 Support Group and our community bus can come to the rescue!

We stand ready as before, to help bring deliveries to you, to take you safely in the bus to a vaccination centre, to fetch medications or just to chat over the phone if you are getting really fed up with talking to the cat! Through our links with the church and other support agencies, we can also get you help if you are struggling to buy food and other essentials.

Please either email stockburyvolunteers@outlook.com or call 07551 454702 (the Stockbury Community Bus number) and we will get help and support to you very quickly.

Sara Kemsley

Covid Information

(Correct as of 17th January)

There are currently 1190 active cases in the Borough of Maidstone. The lockdown appears to be having a strong effect on infection rates, with the number of new cases slowing, however, case rates in Kent and Medway are still higher than the South East average and lockdown measures are still needed to reduce rates further.

Vaccinations are now being rolled out successfully but **social distancing must still be maintained and the rules must not be relaxed.** There is no proven evidence whether or not vaccinated persons can still continue to spread the disease AND it will take several weeks until the vaccine fully takes effect.

Anybody can now be tested. There are different sites and procedures for testing of people who have any symptoms and people who feel no effects at all.

If you have any symptoms go here:

<https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/other-services/covid-19/tier-2-primary-areas/test-and-trace-and-self-isolation>

To book a symptom free COVID-19 test:

<https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/other-services/covid-19/tier-2-primary-areas/book-a-symptom-free-covid-19-test>

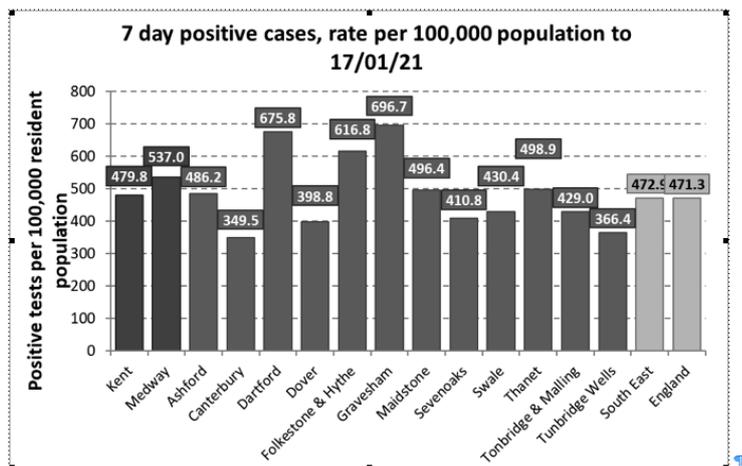
The Testing Centres at Detling and Sessions House are now up and running. These sites will only test people WITHOUT any symptoms.

Plans have been implemented to cope with the high number of deaths as a result of COVID. Temporary mortuaries cool stores and cremation capacity are sufficient to cope with the high demand. MBC bereavement services are working with all parties involved to take care of the situation.

Businesses that have ceased trading due to the new national restrictions from 5 November 2020, can apply for a local restrictions support grant even after the restriction period has finished. The MBC business team proved very efficient throughout the crisis.

More information can be found here: <https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/other-services/covid-19/tier-2-primary-areas/advice-and-help-for-businesses>

Please contact your local MBC Councillor should you need further assistance.



Patrik Garten

MBC Councillor for North Downs Ward

Email: patrikgarten@maidstone.gov.uk

Phone: 01622-807907



KAREN BRUNNING
Art Director/Manager

Tel: 07809 277666

Email: karenbrunning@gmail.com

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Parish Council

Another lockdown, but we may actually have a Parish Council election this year if we can get the virus under control. The Council is composed of 7 people and we have at least 2 members who intend to stand down at the next election.

Have you thought of standing? Would you consider standing?

There are no qualifications required other than an interest in the Parish of Stockbury and the people who live in it. Whether you are the Chief Executive of a multi-national company or unemployed makes no difference; it is the person that counts.

It does not even take up much of your time if you don't want it to. One meeting a month (currently via Zoom) is the only "requirement", but you may find that you want to do more than that and get involved in more depth with the issues that affect us all. It is your choice.

Unlike many Parish Councils, Stockbury has a bit of a reputation which was summed up by our former Kent County Councillor, Jenny Whittle, as follows:

"Stockbury is my favourite Parish Council. Whilst others complain, Stockbury gets on with it and solves the problem."

If you want to find out more, please get in touch with me or one of the other current Councillors who can tell you what it is really like and (I hope) how satisfying it can be.

If an election is to go ahead, a notice asking for nominations will be posted on the usual notice boards, in The Observer and on the Parish Website 6 weeks before polling day. Assuming an election in May, this will probably be at the end of March. Please look out for it.

Phil Woods
SPC

Stockbury Village Hall Update

This has been an unfortunate 12 months for everyone and the hall has, unfortunately, been closed for most of that time. Whilst this has had a major effect on hall income, we are pleased to tell you that your hall has received government grants and that our financial position is sound. Whilst we do not know when things will return to some kind of normality, we can confirm that everything is in good order and ready to go.

We hope to re-open from mid-year and will confirm as soon as the situation is clearer.

Stockbury Village Hall Committee

Superfast Broadband!

Many of us in Stockbury can only dream of superfast broadband but a glimmer of hope is the government's Rural Gigabit Connectivity Scheme (RGS) which provides funding for the installation of fibre broadband for groups (more than one) of properties with slow broadband (most of the village I should think!). There is already a scheme in the pipeline for South Green.

Each application is based on telephone codes so if you are in the 01795 code and have slow broadband, I have already registered for the scheme but need names and addresses for all of those who wish to be included on the scheme (no obligation to take it up at this stage) to obtain a quote from Openreach.

KCC has top up funding for those getting less than 30mps (again most of the village?) which should, together with the RGS funding, cover the entire cost of the installation. BUT the top up KCC funding ends in March, so the completed application needs to be submitted as soon as possible.

As the applications for different codes have to be made separately, if there is a demand we could also apply for funding for the other dialling codes used in Stockbury too.

To add your details to the application for the 01795 exchange please email the address below. I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible at...
southernanne@ymail.com

And if anyone has the time and inclination to coordinate the application, even better, please let me know!

I attach links to the scheme, for some light lockdown reading.

<https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/rural/>
[https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/
broadband](https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/broadband)

[https://www.openreach.com/fibre-broadband/community-
fibre-partnerships](https://www.openreach.com/fibre-broadband/community-fibre-partnerships)
<https://www.openreach.com/fibre-broadband/fttp-providers>

[https://www.speedtest.btwholesale.com/
PerformanceTesterWS/home.jsp](https://www.speedtest.btwholesale.com/PerformanceTesterWS/home.jsp)

Anne Southern

A Fond Farewell

After 20 years (nearly 21 to be exact), Jon, Angela, Luke & Mark Collins (not forgetting Kim and Ron) are moving to Norfolk in the middle of January and would like to say goodbye to all of the friends we've made during our time here in Stockbury.

It has been a privilege to live in such a lovely historic house and be part of the community. We will miss our friends here but if you're ever in Norfolk please look us up.

Goodbye to all.
The Collins Family



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A big thank you to all my loyal customers. I have been doing a lot of training and re-educating 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.

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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

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.

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Small Can Make a Difference

People who live along Bimbury Lane and Yelsted Road are all used to the sight of HGVs bound for the IPL depot at Spade Lane getting stuck, causing damage, generally being a nuisance and, in one case, coming close to unseating a horse rider. Almost invariably, the drivers are waving mobile phones in the air and saying that it is the fault of their chosen navigation app. It is not the fault of the app; it is the fault of the driver who has failed to follow the instructions given to them by IPL. Residents may also have noticed that nearly all these vehicles belong to one carrier: J. C. Carrion.

We have reduced the numbers over the last couple of years thanks to an early warning system set up by Parishioners and the help of the EU Transport Manager at IPL who has taken the problem very seriously. She issued very clear maps to all contractors with the route clearly marked as being via the Key Street Roundabout and the A2.

The other day, we received good news from IPL: they are cutting their business with Carrion to a bare minimum. One of the main reasons for this was that their drivers persistently ignored the routing instructions and ended up in the lanes.

Stockbury may be small, but it is heartening to know that when enough of us get together we can actually influence the contracting decisions of a multi-national company!

Phil Woods

The Harrow 2021

This has been a difficult year for us all and, with the rules led by Covid19 activity, opportunities to socialise in our Community Pub have been severely limited.

We have a new chef in place and we plan to start takeaway food once again from mid-February.

In addition, we are still doing regular deliveries to the Sittingbourne food bank and if you have any items to contribute, please drop them off at The Harrow.

We are sure that you all look forward to meeting up with friends and neighbours to enjoy a drink, a meal and some lively conversation before too long, so until then, keep safe.

See you soon

Edo, Mike and The Harrow CBS



6 in 250

Without an explanation, this sounds like a very small proportion ... if only it was!

It is actually an illustration of an increasing problem in Stockbury: discarded rubbish on the roadside, which is now more visible since we entered winter and the assorted foliage has died down. The 6 were dustbin liners full of litter, the 250 was the number of yards walked along Yelsted Road to yield the full bags.

Apart from one fairly major "haul", which filled a bag on its own, the rest was made up of the usual drinks cans, soft drink bottles, crisp packets, McDonalds packaging and coffee cups, all obviously thrown from vehicles.

A quick tour around the lanes reveals that this is not a problem unique to Yelsted Road, with a particular "hotspot" at the junction of Hill Green Road and Westwood Hill, plus the usual problem on Honeycrock Hill.

The perennial problem is not how we clear up other people's litter (there is a small band of residents who do this, more or less willingly), but how we make it unacceptable for people to discard it in the first place. The usual argument is that it is only people passing through Stockbury who chuck stuff out of their cars, but are we sure? Some of the littered lanes are definitely not "through routes", so it is a fair bet that some of the culprits are home grown.

At this point I would usually suggest a solution, but this one has left me flummoxed. I have yet to meet anyone who has witnessed littering whilst it was happening and even if anyone did, we have no sanction against the offenders.

So here is a challenge to everyone:

Do you have any suggestions about what we could do to discourage people from throwing litter out of their cars? (within the usual limits of the law!)

I look forward to reading ideas in future issues of The Observer.

Phil Woods

A big thank you to our regular litter pickers ... you know who you are, for your valiant efforts in trying to keep our village litter free - Ed

Our Village is a Mess!!

We feel sure that most of you will have noticed the amount of litter and rubbish that has been left in the lanes and on the verges and are proposing that on **Sunday February 7th**, as many of us as possible get out and pick up as much litter and general rubbish as we can.

- If you need litter pickers and/or rubbish bags please call and collect.
- Just let us know where you plan to collect so that we do not duplicate.
- Please leave all full bags at the side of the road on Honeycrock Hill at the sharp right hand bend and I will arrange for MBC to pick them up.

Chris & Sue Porter
01795 843715

THE HARROW

Regrettably Due to Covid-19 Restrictions, We Are Currently

CLOSED

We hope soon to be able to offer you our
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Patrik Says

Dear Residents

It's been quite a while since I drafted a printed column for The Stockbury Observer.

Talk about bad timing, when The Observer went out of print just as the Covid crisis hit. Glad to be back and thank you to the parish council and a generous donation from the KCC Councillor's member grant to have made this possible.

Those of you fortunate to be on my personal mailing list, I managed to send urgent updates in the darkest hours of 2020. Others, I hope, were informed through Stockbury's online neighbourhood networks.

Although I am forced to socially distance from the community who I represent, I am more than ever busy fighting for you. For several hours daily I sit in front of that box and participate in Skype and Zoom meetings, I swear that I never spent as much time in the Town Hall in the old days!

So what's happened more recently?

We set up a politically balanced Covid (and Brexit) emergency panel, who meet weekly, on Thursday mornings with senior officers, to discuss the latest developments. I am a member of this small panel, so please send me an email and sign up to my personal mailing list that I can keep you updated with urgent bulletins, if and when they arise. Also, if there is anything, which you feel I should raise at this weekly meeting, please let me know by Wednesday evening.

I have provided more local Covid news on page 3 in this Observer edition.

The second big MBC item of 2020 is the Local Plan Review. Before I start confusing you with detail, the good, but extremely selfish news is that **NONE** of a possible 31,000 (thirty-one thousand!) extra homes will be built in or near Stockbury – for now we are getting away with it

As I explained before, local authorities are bound by a Central Government formula to provide housing numbers. You may have heard that the government wants to revamp the planning system which is, in principle, not necessarily a bad idea. What causes local planners and politicians of all colours (!) massive headaches is the change of the housing numbers formula. Maidstone's Local Plan under the current formula requires 883 new houses to be built annually. We expected that under the current plan review we would have to increase the target by 40% to 1,214 homes. However, there was serious talk that this figure could potentially be 1,569 new houses per year, an increase of almost 80%. For now, the Government has backtracked on the latest figure but the danger is not over. I will vote for every trick in the book to avoid excessive housing numbers. The battle

continues into 2021, so watch this space !

In December officers proposed to the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee (ERL) to cancel the contract with Parkwood Leisure, the contractor who runs the Hazlit Theatre. It is fair to say that Parkwood's financial performance was not brilliant prior to Covid. With the theatre now closed for over 10 months, a £250,000+ annual subsidy with taxpayers money seemed a valid savings target for shrewd council officers. ERL granted their wishes, but the Conservative Group called-in ERL's decision to Policy and Resources. P&R is the committee, which oversees the Council's purse. With a little help from the Detling Councillor who, not long ago, jumped our ship, we got the ERL decision overturned. Officers were given a new brief to renegotiate with Parkwood and to consider all possible alternative solutions. Work is in progress and the ERL January meeting has already been deferred because of it. A new report will be presented to ERL while this magazine is being distributed.

Public finances are a mess after the Government opened their coffers in 2020. No secret there. I am glad that my ward in the North Downs grabbed what they could, when they could. No, I'm not talking about toilet paper!

Days before funding was stopped, I managed to throw my whole annual member's grant at the Stockbury Covid 19 Group. A great thank you to all the volunteers who kept this community afloat in the darkest moments of crisis. Your engagement was tremendous!!!!!!! I feel so humbled to be a small part of such a caring, close-knit community.

I am also happy to have done my bit to help the village hall, who got over £18,000 Covid-related funding from central government. Not all is bad in a crisis!

It is not very often that rural communities get their fair share in return for their taxes, so I am quite happy to have succeeded on my main election promise, which I gave you, five years ago.

This money will certainly help to maintain the village hall in the years to come. Needless to say that it is my son and your children who will have to pay through their taxes for all this 2020 generosity.

Which brings me to my last item, the MBC budget. Things at MBC don't look quite as bad as you might expect, but the obligatory 2% Council Tax increase seems pretty much on the cards. At an inflation rate of below 1% this may appear excessive, but, considering that these are indeed strange and unpredictable times, I won't predict that the Conservative Party will oppose this. So far I have not heard any indication by the other groups. Please bear in mind that only approx. 12% of your council tax goes to MBC.

PATRIK GARTEN

MBC Councillor for North Downs Ward (Conservative)

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Lockdown Blues

But it needn't be like that. How about this for an idea; Why not try doing a portrait in pencil? Don't laugh! I know the kids wouldn't sit still and the house and garden still need attention, not to mention the meals to prepare. So no one will be around to stay seated long enough. Wait a minute, what about you? .. yes, YOU!

Go on, fetch a mirror, a pencil and A4 paper and all right - a rubber and have a go at a self-portrait. Easy! Choose a light room, a comfy seat, set up the mirror and you're ready. Make sure you fix on where the light reaches your face and then where the shadows fall. See if you can get the distances between the tip of your nose, top lip and chin about right. Oh - and when you are drawing in the top of your head, leave enough room for your brain seriously! And you're off. When the pencil drawing's done perhaps you could add one colour to the picture - like a red hat or maybe a coloured scarf and hey presto you have your work of art !

Observer Deadline!

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

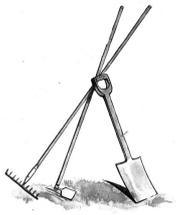
SUNDAY 22nd February

Please email your contributions to
stockburyobserver@gmail.com

Ditty Corner

There once was a Stockbury gnome,
Who decided to go for a roam.
When he tried to go out,
His neighbours did shout,
You must do all your roaming at home

These lockdowns have got me quite floored
I've read all the books that I stored
And even, at stages,
I've read Yellow Pages
Do you think I'm a tiny bit bored?



Stockbury Gardeners

Now I know what a hibernating creature feels like when it wakes. Is that really a year? 2020 gone?. When one considers that we have now had the threat and feature of CV19 for 12 months now, I am not going to bang on about it, but cheer you up with musings and happenings in our garden.

March, well I started by setting up the polytunnel with a third set of hydroponic pots and planted out young onion plants into a growing medium made up of coconut husks, which is inert but provides a base for the roots of the onions to grow into. They are fed from a pre mixed tank of nutrients.

April, the young plants are looking great, they have put on growth and are 18" tall now, just keep mixing every two or three weeks the nutrient needed to sustain and promote their growth.

May, the plants are still putting on growth and are healthy. Now is the time to monitor bugs by putting in a blue sticky card to identify what bugs we have that could threaten the quality of the 5 identical onions that are required to compete at the National Championships in Dundee!!

June, they're really going strong now. 21st June the longest day, recognised by the onions as they start to swell up to the classic known onion shape from the spring onion lookalike. Spotted bugs, so introduce several predatory mites, lacewings and ladybirds to devour them.

July, late July bugs have been eaten and the onions are really swelling up, they should be good enough to win in Dundee!!

August, measured around the girth with the wife's millinery measuring tape, 20" circumference, wow! Another week and they were 23", time to lift them and stop the growth, as now we need three weeks to allow the onion to go a golden brown. Perfect, each of the five onions weigh in at 2.5Kg each.

September, ready for the trip to Dundee!!! What, cancelled? Ready for the Kent Federation Show, - cancelled!! Oh well, there is always the Kent branch of the National Vegetable Society, - cancelled!! Do you suppose that the Wuhan garden club cancelled no, because they don't have one, I Googled it!!!

Loads to do in the garden in February, the main thing if you have seedlings germinating in the glasshouse, you must keep the temperature steady, I use a paraffin heater however, I am disappointed that the oil is so expensive now, £1.25 per litre. So, I asked a friend who flies a jet helicopter and he informed me that jet fuel is actually paraffin, well you could not believe it!! I managed to convince him to sell some, so three containers that's 60 litres for £35.00 I'll let you do the math's ... well if you see a greenhouse at 2,000 feet over your house ... its mine!!!! The first bits true. I made up the last bit.

The Gardeners have been closed for a whole year now, once we are all inoculated we will be going ahead with a reduced program. We will have a plant sale and a summer show, as a minimum, plus if we are lucky some speakers in the Village Hall. Please see future issues of The Observer for information.

Finally, during lockdown I walked the dog from home to the MB Farm Shop, exercising myself and the dog, under 7 miles you will understand!! While the dog waited outside, I went in and purchased one of their wonderful Scotch eggs, whilst outside I sat on the shop bench and enjoyed my snack and I admit the dog had a small piece, however I could not stop feeling kind of guilty, I kept thinking am I legally doing this? Could I succumb to the wrath of the English village bobby for breaking the law? But then it was suddenly OK ... we do not have one!!

Chris Spree

Thank You

On behalf of Stockbury WI, I would like to say thank you to all who helped with our Christmas Salvation Army appeal. Those who made donations of money bought raffle tickets and donated food.

Because of your generosity we were able to give £460 plus several boxes of food to the Sittingbourne Corps for which they were very grateful.

I would also like to say thank you to all who donate to the Food Bank. You can continue to do this via a box at 19 Dane Close Hartlip or at The Harrow Pub Stockbury.

Thank you once again. God Bless.

Irene

Stockbury Book Club



Papillon by Henri Charrière

Following two successfully socially distanced meetings in August and September, Stockbury Book Club reverted to a virtual meeting in October in view of the rule of six. We met to discuss "Papillon" by Henri Charrière.

Henri Charrière was a French writer, convicted as a murderer by the French courts. He wrote the novel Papillon, a memoir of his incarceration in and escape from a penal colony in French Guiana. Charrière denied committing the murder, although he freely admitted to having committed various other petty crimes prior to his incarceration.

There were widely differing views on this book. One member found it "quite gory and didn't really enjoy it", another agreed and said that "it seemed to wander from one adventure to another and in the end became quite tedious". Some felt that it did give an insight into how badly prisoners were treated in the colony.

Cont'd

Puzzle Page

Lets get that old grey matter working!



WINTER



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| blizzard | frostbite | igloo | skating | snowman |
| December | frozen | jacket | skiing | snowshoes |
| February | gloves | January | sleigh | solstice |
| fireplace | hockey | longjohns | slippery | sweater |
| flannel | holidays | mitts | snowballs | toboggan |
| flurries | hot chocolate | scarf | snowboarding | whiteout |
| frigid | icicle | shovel | snowflakes | wintertime |



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Riddle Time!

What can run but never walks, has a mouth but never talks, has a head but never weeps, has a bed but never sleeps?

What has thirteen hearts but no organs?

During what month do people sleep the least?

Which is correct; to say, "the yolk of the egg are white," or "the yolk of the egg is white?"

If life gets tough, what do you have that you can always count on?

What is red, blue, purple and green that no one can reach?

Answers in the next edition!

Book Club cont'd ...

Two of our members felt that there were some interesting observations to take from the book in that it reflected what was going on around him and that it appeared he tried to do the right thing at the right time most of the time, finally coming to see that revenge was not the answer. Some of the use of language was very dated but of its time.

There seemed to be a consensus that Papillon was extremely resilient but also incredibly lucky and that this cast suspicion on whether or not it was possible for all these incredible things to have happened to one person. Indeed Charrière claimed that Papillon was largely true, but modern researchers believe that much of the book's material came from other inmates, rather than Charrière himself.

This led to the feeling that whilst most people enjoyed the book, in the end "it was a little bit too long" ... "went a bit flat in the middle" and there was speculation on what happened to the family he had created and walked away from. One member became disillusioned with it and, unusually for them, didn't finish the book but did wonder if she would enjoy the film more.

Overall we gave the book a score of 7 /10.

In November we will be discussing "Elevator Pitch" by Linwood Barclay and in December "And After the Fire" by Lauren Belfer which is the book we should have read for September's meeting!

Elevator Pitch by Linwood Barclay

The story started in an elevator in Manhattan; it malfunctions and plunges, with the occupants to the bottom of the shaft. That occurs on a Monday; on Tuesday there is another elevator crash and this is followed on Wednesday by yet another tragedy. It is suspected these are not random occurrences and New York is now being terrorised and potentially paralysed. So many high-rise buildings; so many elevators to be taken out of use as a precaution! And if that isn't enough there's the discovery of a fingerless corpse in the mix as well.

Possible sabotage, a murder and plot twists ... plenty of work for two NY detectives, Jerry Borque and Lois Delgado !

It was felt by many of our group that this suspense novel, though fast moving was perhaps not one of Linwood Barclay's best. One member was totally unimpressed by the genre and in fact a few of us thought that our expectations had been high and we were disappointed. However, with these few exceptions, Elevator Pitch was enjoyed as a page-turning, escapist tale. The storyline tended to be a bit predictable and in places gruesome; the characters were rather superficial and over exaggerated, (a bit like Dallas folk one of us suggested!) but this didn't put people off and in general our group liked it.

This is not a particularly memorable book, in language or form so we weren't very generous with our scores. We gave it 5 ½.

And After the Fire by Lauren Belfer

Like pretty much everything else this year, this meeting was far from our well-established norm of Christmas gatherings. We had attempted to invoke some Christmas spirit by utilising Santa hats, Christmas trees and sparkly clothes (your jacket looked great Ann) but I think everyone missed our usual food, mulled wine and film. Even our usual internet platform wouldn't play ball on this particular evening, so we have now joined the multitudes using Zoom - thanks Bev!

This month's read was the story of a lost Bach manuscript, which came into the hands of a newly divorced American woman who happened to be Jewish. The plot of the book moves back and forth across the centuries, from when the manuscript was first composed for a rich protege of Bach, right through to Susanna Kessler, the current custodian of the manuscript. It covers a considerable amount of material about anti-Semitism, European history and religious intolerance, including the role played by Nazi Germany toward the Jewish race.

Opinions in the group differed between those who felt the extent of the reference to classical music and Bach in particular, was too much (and a tad boring), to those who just skipped over those bits and didn't feel it detracted from their enjoyment of the book at all. Most found the authors interwoven accounts of different time periods and characters quite fascinating and, despite the nature of some of the content of the story, it had a feel good plot.

Overall we gave it a score of 8 which is pretty good for us and considerably higher than we gave the book called "After The Fire" that most of us read in error - in the summer!

Whiskey When We're Dry by John Larison'

In the spring of 1885, seventeen-year-old Jessilyn Harney finds herself orphaned and alone on her family's homestead. Desperate to fend off starvation and predatory neighbours, she cuts off her hair, binds her chest, saddles her beloved mare and sets off across the mountains to find her outlaw brother Noah and bring him home. A talented sharpshooter herself, Jess's quest lands her in the employ of the territory's violent, capricious Governor, whose militia is also hunting Noah — dead or alive.

This is a different genre for us and probably not a book most of us would have chosen for ourselves. It was described as a good story with a beginning, middle and end. We read this over Christmas; with lots of gore and violence, maybe not have been the best choice as an up lifting story. I think everyone enjoyed this book with people enjoying different parts. There were several comments drawing similarities with 'When the Crawdads Sing' and spaghetti westerns.

Fancy something different to read? Then this is a good suggestion. We gave it a score of 8.

Jackie Smith
Ann Rich
Moira Cooke
Bev Martin

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	Jeff Hall	01795 843296
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	Reporting issues with. - westprow@kent.gov.uk	03000 417171
Roads, Potholes, etc	(manned 24hrs) - www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/ report-a-problem	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	
The Harrow Public House	stockburypub@gmail.com	01795 843222
WI	Pat Fothergill	01622 734093