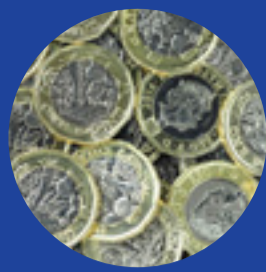




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# Tenants' Times

A NEWSPAPER  
BY SOHA  
RESIDENTS  
FOR SOHA  
RESIDENTS

ISSUE 06

Autumn 2017

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## Help with that vital first step

### POPPY HUNT and volunteers set up The First Step Forward Learning Hub. They could help your neighbourhood do similar



**IN JANUARY 2016** I was one of three Soha tenants who took part in a course offered by Abingdon and Witney College to build self-esteem. We were asked if we would be interested in becoming Community Champions to promote and bring more courses into Cholsey.

After many meetings and lots of brainstorming, The First Step Forward Learning Hub was born. Its aim was to work with partners to offer a range of learning opportunities in the local community. We wanted to enable people from different backgrounds to come together, help them feel less

isolated, provide an opportunity to develop self-confidence and advance their skills and knowledge.

We also aim to promote mental health and wellbeing. We know from our own experiences that many people are isolated for many reasons, including raising a family, retirement,

and health issues. We approached local community groups to be part of our project and in September 2016 became a community group with its own constitution based at Cholsey Pavilion.

We held a grand launch of The First Step Forward and invited the local community to let us know what they would like us to bring to Cholsey. These suggestions helped us to put together our first term of courses beginning September 2016.

To date we have successfully run 15 courses over three terms including both community learning and family learning courses, such as Introduction to Adult Social Care, ITC for beginners, Keeping up with your Children's Maths and English and Story Sacks. We have also made connections with local tutors bringing Baby and Child First Aid, Money Courses and Dyslexia Workshops. We also held a Fibromyalgia Awareness event in May 2017 that included a guest speaker and this is leading to a local

support group for Fibromyalgia sufferers. Since we began, our group of dedicated volunteers has grown.

We now have 44 members from Cholsey and surrounding areas and 81 people have completed courses. We know of at least two who obtained jobs after The First Step Forward. Others have given feedback on the positive impact our courses have had on their own wellbeing.

The future is one of excitement and opportunities for us. We have many more courses planned, including First Aid for children, Food Hygiene, IT and Poetry and Photography. We have been overwhelmed by our success – it's been a huge journey for all the team! Our aim is to be non-judgemental mentors helping people as they take their first steps into adult education.

We hope that reading about The First Step Forward Learning Hub has inspired anyone who thinks we could help their neighbourhood to get in touch.

For more info contact us at [thefirststepforward@hotmail.com](mailto:thefirststepforward@hotmail.com) or find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/thefirststepforward](http://www.facebook.com/thefirststepforward)

## Challenging stereotypes story by story

By VICTORIA DINGLE

**HAVE YOU EVER** had a preconceived notion about a place before even going there, just because you have heard things about it from others or maybe read something on social media? The same can happen with people – the dictionary says a stereotype is "A widely

held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person..."

People living in social housing can face negative stereotyping on a daily basis. I've experienced it: I'm talking about my home and the people listening are interested and want to know more, until I mention that I rent my property from the housing association. Before you know it, their body language changes – and not in a good way!

I am proud to live in social housing because it provides a safe, affordable home for me and my daughter. The reason I'm in social housing is because my life was turned upside down. One minute I was married, renting privately and raising a daughter who had two parents. Then the next day, everything changed and I was a disabled, single mum looking to rebuild my

own and my daughter's life. I could never have predicted what was going to happen but I am grateful for social housing because I now have a beautiful house that we call home.

My story doesn't just involve stereotyping about where I live but it's also about my health. Looking at me, you wouldn't know it but I have a chronic condition that significantly affects my day to day life.

My invisible illness is rheumatoid arthritis and it affects my joints causing a huge amount of pain throughout my body. The minute I tell people I have it, they form an opinion of what it might be like.

Sometimes I'm in a wheelchair, walk with a stick or even unaided but I'm always in pain! However, unless you get to know me or experience something similar then you will

truly never know. There are a wide selection of people living in social housing, each with their own story that needs to be heard.

I'm supporting the national 'Benefit to Society' campaign. It aims to "represent all social housing tenants as a benefit to society. As well as the general public, we believe the media, government and the social housing sector itself all need to be challenged about the way they represent social housing tenants."

We need to change negative stereotyping and promote our own positive, true stories about who the people living in social housing really are.

For more info: [www.benefitstosociety.co.uk](http://www.benefitstosociety.co.uk)

POSTED OR EMAILED TO ALL SOHA HOUSEHOLDS

Check out our alternating digital edition online: [tenantstimes.wordpress.com](http://tenantstimes.wordpress.com)



EDITOR'S LETTER



**HELLO** and welcome to another edition of Tenants' Times! It's about a year since we were last in print but we did have an online edition earlier in 2017 which you can read at [tenantstimes.wordpress.com](http://tenantstimes.wordpress.com)

This one is a bit of a "prize draw special" with two chances to win on the back page, so do get entering. I always enjoy working on Tenants' Times and like to think the team do too. This time round I've particularly enjoyed getting to know some new contributors and reconnect with a few old friends who have returned to the team. If you have always had a hankering to write (or proofread or take photos) and would like to join us, check out the article on how we produce Tenants' Times on the back page and get in touch on [tenantstimes@gmail.com](mailto:tenantstimes@gmail.com).

I hope this edition contains something to catch your interest and gives you something to read on these increasingly cold, dark autumn nights.

*Emma Crees*

With thanks to:  
 Andrew Baker, Didcot  
 Dreena Barnard-Higton, Wheatley  
 Vanessa Churchward, Didcot  
 Victoria Dingle, Henley-on-Thames  
 Poppy Hunt, Cholsey  
 John Smelt, Aston Tirrold  
 Beth Woods, Cholsey

NEWS IN BRIEF

● **BIRTHDAY PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION:** Congratulations to Soha snappers Chris Butler, Rosa Cancino, Angela Harding, Edwina Lamond, David Murray and Kristina Palm, who each won a prize in the summer picture contest. You can see their work on the Market Place wall of Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot.

● **TENANT ANDREW BAKER'S** charity has been shortlisted for a Didcot First Business and Community Award (see article on this page). Courtney Hughes, another tenant with a big heart for charity, and her venture Charity Secret Santa is also in the running for BACA award. Good luck to them both!

● **A NEW WALK IN** South Oxfordshire: tenant and poet Roger Phipps has devised The Poet's Trail, East Hagbourne for his neighbourhood. You pick up a guide illustrated by a local artist at either the Community Shop or the Fleur de Lys pub. Over an hour and a half you can get to know all corners of the village. The trail is both buggy- and wheelchair-friendly.

GET IN TOUCH!

By post: **FREEPOST SOHA HOUSING** (that's all you need, but it must be in capitals!)  
 By email: [tenantstimes@gmail.com](mailto:tenantstimes@gmail.com)  
 By phone: ring Soha free on **0800 014 15 45** (and ask for the Tenants' Times team)

Every season has its wonders

**VANESSA CHURCHWARD** on her love of easy-to-grow hollyhocks and more

**BEING** a novice gardener, I have enjoyed learning about gardening and the importance that plants play in our environment. Gardening is a never-ending cycle of things to do and things to learn.

The season for one of my favourite flowers - hollyhocks - has come to an end. When we moved to our home, our garden was bare so over the years we have grown many plants, amongst them hollyhocks from seed.

Hollyhocks now appear every Summer: tall, gracious plants that give a wonderful display throughout. They are truly stunning and even survive my border collies playing ball and running into them! I look forward each year to seeing what wonderful colours will appear.

They line the pavements and gardens of local villages with their glorious colours, among them yellow, salmon pink, dark red and white. Hollyhocks are a true cottage garden flower, and of course help encourage bees, butterflies and other insects, all so important for us and our environment. The bumble-bee in one of the photos is covered in pollen from one of the hollyhock blooms.

During Autumn, it's time to cut hollyhocks down to about 8" and collect some of the seeds. You can just let them scatter naturally and some of them will grow with luck. Discard all the old foliage to help prevent disease such as "rust" which is something that hollyhocks are prone to. You can spray the plants



with antifungal spray from a garden centre but I prefer to make sure all the old leaves are discarded.

As I write this there is an autumnal chill in the air and another favourite of mine, Golden Rod, is now in full bloom. Another tall plant, the golden/yellow flowers remind me of sparkling fireworks, quite relevant with the recent bonfire night. It is also loved by many insects including butterflies and bees.

Michaelmas daisies flower during October and maybe there are some to be seen where you are. They remind me that Christmas will soon be upon us. They stand tall and have masses of lilac flowers with yellow centres: quite beautiful.

I look forward to each year seeing what wonders the garden brings.

**Our garden columns are some of Tenants' Times most popular. Do you have hints and tips to share - or could you set us a competition for our next edition?**

Have music, will travel  
**DREENA BARNARD-HIGTON** reviews the debut gig for The St Mary's Sinners



David Lloyd, David Crocker and Barry Clarkson

**DID YOU** hear the music, the singing, the orchestral accompaniment and the laughter? It was all happening at one of the recent St Mary's (Wheatley) social evenings of food, friendship and fun.

Barry Clarkson explains how The St Mary's Sinners came to be. "I noticed that as David Lloyd was moving into St Mary's Close, he was carrying a guitar.

This sparked my interest as I'm a musician myself." It transpired they had both, in the past, played in bands.

Barry and David agreed to get together to do some jamming, just for fun. They began meeting up a few times a week to make music and sing for their own pleasure. Another tenant, David Crocker, joined them and was so impressed he encouraged

them further. As time went on they thought they were "quite good". Actually, they were being modest: they were in fact very good. I found out we had some resident talent when I overheard them practising one evening. I crept into the community room where they were playing and just sat and listened. I was so impressed - they were FAB.

Quite soon they had a number of songs in their repertoire so they decided they were ready to entertain the tenants of St Mary's Close. Friday 6 October was their debut and they launched themselves as The St Mary's Sinners - and what a fabulous evening it was! Everyone had a great time, especially when it came to audience participation with the handed-out kazoo's! All were dancing in their seats.

David's guitar and vocals was superb and Barry Clarkson on the drumming machine had such great rhythm that everyone was tapping their feet. David Crocker is manager of The St Mary's Sinners and says he's ready to take bookings: they would enjoy playing for other audiences, especially other tenant groups and residents.

**You can contact The St Mary's Sinners via Tenants' Times: see Get in touch! on page 2.**

Soha turns 20!

By **VICTORIA DINGLE**

**SOHA** had more than usual to celebrate during the summer of 2017. The organisation turned 20 years old and to mark this special occasion, everyone was invited to a summer fair held on 22 July.

Soha families enjoyed a host of activities at Benson Village Hall: for the children, there was an outside play bus. The soft play and ballpool were a big hit and allowed little ones to use up some of their energy while other residents could try their hand at hula-hooping or plate-spinning, drumming or dancing.

A large selection of other activities were provided and enjoyed by all those attending. Young and old joined forces to celebrate and have fun.

Everyone could dress up for the mobile photo booth, which provided instant photographs as a memento from the day. Wigs, hats, inflatables and other props were used to create funny photographs, as our picture proves!

Memories were everywhere throughout the afternoon. Residents shared their stories and how things within the area have changed during the last 20 years but the general consensus was that Soha has and will continue to have a very positive impact within the local community.

It was good to celebrate this, while marking an important milestone for the association. Even the rain couldn't stop the fun and everyone refueled with a hot lunch provided by a mobile fish and chip van.



Tenants' Times Dreena and Emma at the Summer Fair

After more than four hours of entertainment, fun and laughter residents returned home with great memories of a wonderful birthday celebration. Thank you

Soha for a fun-packed celebration, here's to the next 20 years and your continued success supporting and providing affordable homes for local residents.

A hobby becomes a business!

**Tenants' Times caught up with a Cholsey resident whose chance birthday present made her view her hobby quite differently**



Beth Woods

**HAVING** taken photos all her life and with something of a passion for it, Beth Woods recently set up her own photography business, The Shuttermumma.

The inspiration to get started came when she was given a professional-standard camera. Mostly working with children and families, Beth says her own children are the muse for her photography.

Beth is self-taught but has been able to work with some other local photographers who have acted as mentors to her. She says "Everyone

has been very supportive of me and the business. It's such a rewarding experience taking photos for people and I learn something new every time I do so."

Since launching in May, The Shuttermumma has gone from strength to strength and Beth hopes to be able to buy some more specialist equipment in the future. She describes herself as a "natural light photographer", preferring to be out taking pictures rather than in a studio for posed shots. So far shoots have included a baby shower, some parties and sessions with children and animals. Her first wedding shoot is coming up soon.

When asked if she had any advice for anyone thinking of starting their

own business, Beth said "If you have a passion you should just go for it."

**To see more of The Shuttermumma go to <https://www.facebook.com/theshuttermumma/>**

**Beth is offering £10 off until the end of November for any Tenants Times reader within 20 miles of Cholsey who wants to book her for some photos. Contact her via her Facebook page or on 07835 937702 (terms and conditions apply).**

**If you would like to share your hobby with Tenants' Times readers, do get in touch. You don't have to have taken it as far as Beth has!**

RECIPE

Chocolate brownies

**VICTORIA DINGLE** shares her recipe for a truly moreish bake

**INGREDIENTS**  
 145g butter (unsalted)  
 250g golden granulated sugar  
 80g cocoa powder  
 1/4 rounded teaspoon salt  
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
 2 large eggs  
 65g plain flour

**METHOD**  
 Pre-heat your oven to 170 degrees C (150 if it's a fan oven). Line the bottom and sides of an 8-inch square baking tray with baking parchment paper. Fill a saucepan with about two inches of water. The saucepan must be smaller than the heat-proof bowl that you will need for the next step. Heat the water until it's nearly simmering. At the same time, mix



butter, sugar, cocoa powder and the salt in a medium heat-safe bowl. Place the bowl over simmering water so it rests on the saucepan edges. Don't let the bowl touch the water. If it does, remove some water.

Stir the mixture until the butter has melted and it's all warmed through. Then leave to cool for five minutes.

Stir in vanilla extract then add the egg. Ensure the first egg is fully

mixed before adding the second. Next add the flour.

Keep mixing till it comes away from the sides of the bowl and all the ingredients are fully mixed together.

Spread evenly in lined baking tray and bake for 25 minutes. Leave to fully cool before removing them from the baking tray. Finally cut into squares or triangles.

Serve warm or cold and enjoy!



Andrew Baker (with TV presenter Michael Underwood) receives the British Citizen Award



The Play2Give room at Oxford Children's Hospital

Andrew's charity just keeps on giving

**EMMA CREES** talks to Soha tenant Andrew Baker about the rewards of fundraising - and they're not just cash!

**PLAY2GIVE** - a fundraising organisation founded by Didcot and Soha Housing resident Andrew Baker - is ten years old this year.

The charity raises money primarily for the Oxford Children's Hospital and Headway (an organisation which supports those with brain injuries). They have raised so much money

for the children's hospital that the Play2Give room on Melanie Ward - a patient room for teenagers - was opened in March this year.

Over the past decade, the charity has raised more than £66,000 for these and other charities and Andrew doesn't plan to stop. "This has been our busiest, most successful year

yet. I had hoped to raise £10,000 in our tenth year but by the end of September we had already raised £16,000 - hopefully we'll have raised even more by the end of the year."

The anniversary was celebrated with a ball at Didcot Civic Hall for 150 supporters. Andrew says "The ball was a sell out and everyone had a great

time. The Mayor of Didcot was there along with a lot of old friends and new. Thanks to them we raised nearly £4500!"

Other popular fundraising events are football tournaments and the Sleigh2Give initiative where Andrew and team aim to bring extra smiles to children in hospital over Christmas. In 2018 they have plans to try some new events and the ball was such a success they hope to run one every other year from now. Soha supported a Play2Give family fun day at the end of August.

Andrew says "I'm always busy working on things for Play2Give but it's definitely worth it, especially as there is so much support for us locally. People really take it to their hearts with so much love." And it seems that work is being recognised - in July Andrew was awarded The British Citizen Award in a ceremony at the Palace of Westminster for 15 years of charity work, ten with Play2Give. The charity is also a finalist in three categories of this year's Didcot First Business and Community Awards. The winner will be announced on 10 November.

**To see more of the work of Play2Give or donate visit [www.play2give.org.uk](http://www.play2give.org.uk)**



# More time spent laughing than working!

Editor EMMA CREES shares what goes into creating the newspaper you're reading right now

**TENANTS' TIMES (TT)** has been around in its current form since 2014, and it really is for residents by residents! The team consists of a group of tenants who come up with all the ideas, write the content, proofread it and either take or find the photos. Even the competition is organised by a tenant. As we are asking you in the survey below what you do and don't like, the team thought it would be good to share a bit more about the "nuts and bolts" of what's involved.

The original TT team was trained by a professional journalist who runs a social enterprise producing 12 community newspapers. Everyone was really fired up and enthused to make TT the best it could be. We welcome new contributors at any time and try to share both our training and enthusiasm.

Most of the work is done via email – we ask what people would like to see and also share ideas that have been sent in (to [tenantstimes@gmail.com](mailto:tenantstimes@gmail.com), or by phone to Soha on 0800 014 15 45) that need a writer. Many articles come about because someone on the team has a passion they want to share, has heard something in their area or has an issue they want to



investigate. But we also get a lot of tips from Soha staff or other tenants letting us know about things like an achievement or some good news. Usually we need around ten items plus what we call NIBS – small News in Brief items that are good to share but don't merit a full article. We were taught that a newspaper should contain an equal mix of articles that are enjoyable, educational and informative. I'm not sure we always get that exactly right but we're proud of what we do and hope there's something here for all our readers.

Occasionally we hold a newsroom at Soha where

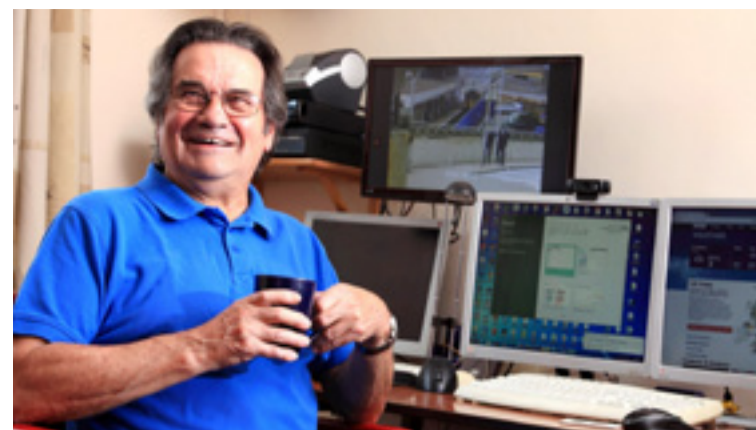
they provide phones and laptops for people to work on (and biscuits!). We have the opportunity to bounce ideas off each other. Sometimes it feels like more time is spent laughing and chatting than working but we always get an edition together and it's a big part of what makes working on TT so nice.

Once everything is written it gets proof-read. That can be a tussle over wordcounts and exactly which is the best picture to use, but it's good-natured. After that it's off to the designer who a day or two later sends it back looking like a newspaper. I have to say seeing our

words come back as an actual paper is always amazing. Then it's another quick proof-read because, no matter how sure we are it's right, we always spot more errors once it's laid out. Back to the designer for any minor tweaks and then finally the team can take a well-deserved rest as it goes to be printed and wings its way to land on doorsteps.

If that sounds like something you'd like to get involved in or share some feedback about, do get in touch. See the panel on page 2 for details.

It's **your** paper, after all!



## TECHNOLOGY CORNER

By JOHN SMELT

**I AM OFTEN** asked to demystify the jargon around accessing the Internet or the Web, so here is my attempt to explain two vital terms.

### What is the Internet or World Wide Web?

The Web, or the Internet, is a collection of computers known as Web Servers which are connected to each other in a variety of different ways. The servers can be located anywhere in the world and are used to store the files and information needed to represent a website.

### What is a browser?

A browser is a software programme which is designed to allow you to find a website and view it. The website is discovered by using a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) or website address which is typed into the address bar of the browser.

Then, a rather complex process is carried out in the background which, if everything is correct, will result in the home page of the website being displayed in the browser.

So to go to the BBC website, for example, type [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk) into the address bar, usually at the top of the screen. Press enter or click the Go button. The browser which

uses the computer's connection to the Internet will go and find the BBC website, display the front (or 'home') page in your browser. It is the browser's job to take the information downloaded from the website, and to display the pictures, text and so on which the page designer included on the page.

The homepage can display menu buttons and links which allow you to visit other pages on the same website or even to visit other websites from there. Many websites, such as those belonging to banks, supermarkets and so on will provide an option to sign in so you can access information which is private and secure.

Many different browsers are available, each of which does fundamentally the same thing. The more common browsers are: Google, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Edge, Opera, Safari, Chrome and Maxthon. All are free to download and install and some are provided with the computer operating system which is pre-loaded into the device you're using.

**John is a Soha tenant who is one of several Digital Champions – trained volunteers helping other tenants to get online for free. You can get this help for yourself by calling Soha on 0800 014 15 45.**

**If there are other things that you would like this column to tackle get in touch!**

## Your feedback could win you £25

**TENANTS' TIMES** is written by tenants, for tenants, so we're asking you what you like and how you like to see it. At the moment, we aim to alternate a hard copy newspaper with an online one (it's at [tenantstimes.wordpress.com](http://tenantstimes.wordpress.com)) and would like to know what our readers think. By the way, if you're not confident about being online, there are tenants who can help. Talk it through by calling Soha on 0800 014 15 45.

**Win £25 in shopping vouchers by taking part in our prize draw survey about your newspaper.**

Please tick as many as apply.

- I only read Tenants Times when it comes out in paper form (like this)
- I would like to read Tenants' Times online ([tenantstimes.wordpress.com](http://tenantstimes.wordpress.com)) only
- I would be likely to offer ideas to Tenants' Times if it were online more often – even just comment on articles which others write!
- Please contact me about getting involved either the paper or online editions of Tenants' Times

Name  Phone   
 Address

The prize will be drawn from Soha residents' responses on 11 December (the same date as the Wordsearch competition, so why not pop both in one envelope?) Good luck!

## WORDSEARCH

Another chance to clean up: £25 to win with our Wordsearch! Sponsored by Carter and Faraday, the cleaning contractors for communal areas of Soha homes.

The prize will be drawn from Soha residents' responses on 11 December (the same date as the survey, so why not pop both in the same envelope to FREEPOST SOHA HOUSING). Good luck!

C R E T A W D E D R	Mophead
H H V A C U U M U R	Bucket
P E E E E S C S E	Water
O M E M E A T L T R	Squeegee
L O O G I T E O P U	Cloth
I O E P E C R T A O	Chemical
S R B K H E A H N C	Broom
H B C R E E U L E S	Scourer
E U E C E O A Q H A	Vacuum
B B I N B A G D S A	Duster
	Polish
	Dustpan
	Binbag

Name  Phone   
 Address