

.....past and present.....

OUR TIMES is published by the BRADFORD and AVON Senior Forum in the hope it will be read by its members and those of any age who have an interest in our town; a caring place in which to live.

What is The Seniors' Forum?

The Senior Citizen's Forum has the aim of serving the community in and around Bradford on Avon by investigating topics which cause concern. We have four main focus groups; Health, Transport and Accessibility, Social Care and Publicity and Communication (please see back page for convenors of committees.) These groups keep track of developments in our area and represent older people at various consultation meetings. They arrange events to provide information and organise meetings with speakers who will advise on issues that are of interest.

As well as addressing matters of concern it is intended that Our Times should have a less serious aim. We want it to be a journal for opinion, gossip and comment that will represent some of the views and interests of Seniors in the Bradford on Avon locality but that the readership will not be age specific.

SO – mount your high horse or your hobby horse here! Our Times will be a platform to make your voice heard. Air your passions, prejudices and principles – or simply tell us your story.

Any and all contributions are welcome, subject to the editor's discretion!

Please send them to:

Paul Watson, paulwatson@priorspictures.co.uk

and Jonathan Newth, g63newth@gmail.com

We look forward to hearing from you.

Now read on

WHERE EVERYBODY MATTERS DIANE KING 7/9/2015

In a cemetery just outside Bradford on Avon two churches stand ever watchful protecting the plots and their occupants in a respect filled silence, a silence diffusing the difficulties and bedlam of today's modern life. Even in our quiet little town there will come a time when we will shut off the noises of life and rest amidst tended plots of charm and tranquillity. Or at least that is what many will hope! But in this place, Bradford Cemetery, listen very carefully and you will hear the measured shearing sound of kitchen scissors.

Diane King is cutting the grass around her husband's overgrown plot. Diane is not a selfish person. If she had the time she would be cutting all the plots into neatened rows. But Mrs King cares for three plots and worries about the general state of this garden of rest. Graham her husband suffered with terminal cancer and died in March 2010. Death can be for many a fear filled subject. Diane knowing of Graham's impending death talked little and so knew little of his after death needs. But she did know of a suitable place where she might visit and Graham might rest. In 2010 it was well tended, pretty, peaceful and nearby. There he would be happy and eventually she would share her ashes with him in a tidy plot. When Graham died Diane paid the fees and made her weekly visits for a chat and shared memories.

Today, having also buried her son, Richard, killed in a boating accident in Australia and keeping an eye on her Brother in Law in another plot, she finds the once pretty, well cared for place she had chosen so carefully has been reduced to a miscellany of bad gardening skills and Diane, an accomplished gardener knows what it takes to tend an oasis of calm. She maintains her husband's plot, as was promised, has not along with others, 'has not been well tended.'

When Mrs King paid the fees she was assured that her 'special place' would be professionally looked after. Balfour Beattie had been given the contract by our Council to maintain this place of remembrance. Unfortunately someone had forgotten to remind Balfour Beattie that quiet and sensitive tending is needed in a place of sadness. That, or false promises were rashly made.

Diane King recounts in a disappointed manner, the pain she encounters on her visits to her beloved Graham and son Richard, a young man well known and regarded for his management of our local footballers and ambitious enough to emigrate to Australia with his loving wife and two children. Now back in Bradford, his resting place reminds his mother of a 'terrible wasteland'. Diane believes that 'no one, trained in gardening skills, is working on the plots. A local person would do more and more lovingly than these noisy slash and cut merchants.'

So with scissors and working on her knees Diane gathers and rips the weed from around the family headstones.

A while ago Mrs King talked with a widow attending her own plot who had complained to the Council about the unkempt mess surrounding her husband's grave.

'What would the Council do?' she asked a nameless lady on the phone. 'An answer would be coming', she was told.

Both widows are still waiting for that answer. An explanation!

To the reader; if you have had similar experiences or have solutions for Diane King then she would be very happy to hear from you through OUR TIMES.

WINTER IS COMING!

Why not take our Editors idea of 'a good and tasty simple meal.' Takes one hour and serves four (save half in the fridge) Guaranteed to please and add no weight!

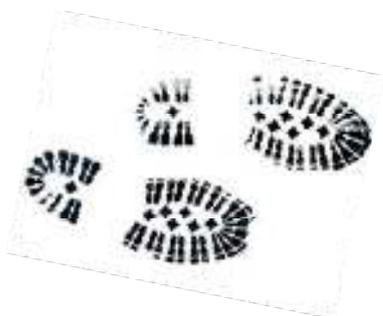
Be fit for Spring!

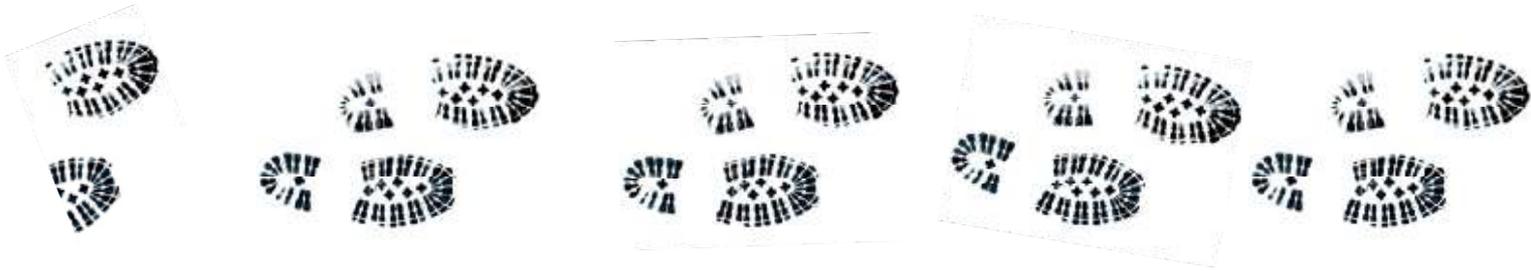
SPICY CHICKEN AND APRICOT STEW



*8 boneless skinless chicken thighs (cut into chunks)
2 tbsp oil
1 large onion, sliced
2 tsp plain flour
2 tsp ground cumin
2 tsp ground coriander 1 tsp paprika
1 pint chicken stock
A dozen dried apricots
Rice and peas to serve*

1. Heat half the oil in a large pan, add the chicken and fry for 7 minutes until golden. Remove and set aside. Add the remaining oil and the onion and cook for 5 minutes until browned. Return the chicken to the pan.
2. Sprinkle in the flour and spices and cook, stirring for 7-2 minutes. Slowly pour in the stock, stirring, so it sizzles and the sauce turns a rich colour. Simmer for 15 minutes.
3. Stir in the apricots and simmer for a further 15 minutes. Taste and season. Serve with rice and peas.
4. EAT and ENJOY!





GET LOST WITH ROGER JONES?

Soon after arrival in Bradford in 1980 I began exploring the villages and landscape within easy reach and was fascinated by what I discovered.

In 1982 I published a book which bore the rather whimsical title *Where Wiltshire Meets Somerset*, and the more explanatory sub-title '20 Walks in the Country around Bath, Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge, Westbury, Warminster and Frome'. It has been revised several times and is due for another reprint next year, notwithstanding the rumour that it is referred to in certain circles as 'Get Lost with Roger Jones'! However, I have received many positive comments about the book, though I remember one lady complaining that she had been all but trampled to death by an aggressive stallion in a particular field en route.



Having visited all the walks again for a new edition in 2013, it occurred to me that I might explore some fresh routes; the result is a book of 20 new walks: *Beyond Where Wiltshire Meets Somerset* – this seemed an apt title since many of the routes are a little beyond the focus of the original collection. I attempt to give some advice as to how challenging each walk might be, though, given the lie of the land hereabouts; it is generally hard to avoid any sort of ascent or descent. It is hills and valleys that lend so much interest and variety to the landscape – a stiff climb invariably offers a fine view.



The sequel to the first book took 33 years to appear and, now aged 70, I have to confess to being not quite as sprightly as I was in the early 1980s. Nevertheless I have absolutely no doubt that walking is some of the best exercise freely available and so enjoyable when taken in the wonderful countryside on our doorstep.



'Every morning I get up, I read the obituary page. If my names not there, I shave.' George Burns

Who wrote *How foolish to think that one can ever slam the door in the face of age. Much wiser to be polite and gracious and ask him to lunch in advance.*

Clear O'Down (anagram)

WORK IN PROGRESSTHE TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Our Town still retains much of its charm and character but there are undeniably problems associated with traffic congestion, parking, pollution, public transport services and pedestrian safety. The list is certainly by no means exhaustive!

Earlier this year we set up a Transport and Accessibility focus group to look at specific problems faced by us “oldies” around Bradford on Avon.

At our meeting in July we invited feedback from the attendees on these issues and these concerns were broadly endorsed with pedestrian safety being of particular concern. This is hardly surprising given the fact that we are an ageing population which brings increasing mobility concerns. And heaven help you if you happen to be disabled!



Since that meeting we have been linking in with other interested groups and in particular with the BOA Community Area Transport Group which deals with many of the day to day issues faced by our Town and the surrounding villages. Our aim is to ensure that our Forum has a voice at the table when decisions are taken which may affect the general quality of life within the Town – hopefully for the better.

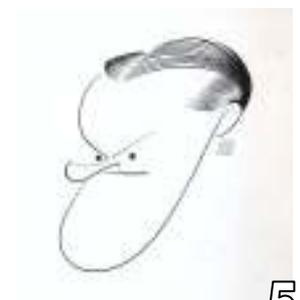


Consultation with the Council will take place either in late 2015 or early 2016 and we will ensure that we are fully represented. It is clear that the provision of public transport services throughout Wiltshire will be affected due to budget cuts. Wiltshire Council is faced with cutting its current budget by £2.5m so nothing at this stage is safe.

Good news! We now have a crossing on the Winsley Road at the top of Conigre Hill. This is really welcome as this was a very difficult and dangerous place to try and cross the road.

We will keep you closely advised of developments but in the meantime we would welcome any feedback you can give us on these potential cuts. Maybe you or somebody you know relies on our buses to just get a bit of shopping or to get into Town. If you are likely to be adversely affected then we would like to hear from you.

‘She said she was approaching fifty. I couldn’t help wondering from which direction.’ Bob Hope



'USED TO BE' William Ind (Retired Bishop of Truro)

We arrived in Wiltshire just after Easter 2008. We had lived in Cornwall for ten years but at retirement we wanted to move and above all to be near to our children. I suppose it could be said that it was the road system that brought us here in the first place. We had no links with the county but very quickly we became increasingly appreciative of the scenery the small towns and the surrounding countryside.

It was as we looked for a house and place to live in, setting for Melksham that I realised for the first time how powerful and far reaching television is. Wherever we went and regardless of what I was wearing people would stop me and say "Aren't you the bishop who in appears in "The Sea-Side Parish", or "The Island Parish"? Thankfully I was only famous for a quarter of an hour so all the fame has completely disappeared and can simply get on with the business of being retired. I discovered for myself that I didn't miss the demands of the job that I had done but I missed and still miss the people I worked with and lived among.

Soon after we arrived we received a letter from the Bishop of Salisbury inviting us to a summer lunch, intriguingly called "THE USED TO BE" lunch. This lunch has a long tradition and is given each year to all retired Bishops and Deans who had come to live in retirement to Wiltshire or Dorset. Each year we have been invited to the Bishop's house and have found always that the occasion is full both of good food, memories and good gossip!

Above all perhaps, it is a good and accurate title for the lunch. Of course, like all retired people we have memories. They are important, they remind us of a variety of people and places in which we have worked but there is surely more to retired people than "used to be". We are a living part of the present as well as the past. We have experience as well as experiences which can and should be shared. The world has changed and will carry on changing and that must never be forgotten. In spite of all this change we have lots to give to the place in which we live.

We are a part of the community's common life and we hope and believe that THE HUB could increasingly be seen as a place in which we can both contribute to the present as well as the past.

Perhaps we can invent a lunch or special occasion with a new and challenging title.

ANY SUGGESTIONS?

Pete O'Grady "THE LATE POET"



What could possibly induce a retired 65 year old to start writing poetry for the first time in his life? The fact is I have never read books in great quantity and usually choose non-fiction, history, psychology, theology, that sort of thing. Yet it was while doing the usual that I had a revelatory encounter with poetry. The book that provoked this had poems embedded in it. I grudgingly read one; then another and another.

The impact was immediate - I wanted not just to read more poetry, but to write it, and write it now! So I did, as if there was no time to lose, regardless of any lack of experience or expertise. But, why had I not done this long ago? My life experiences could have been rich sources of suitable subjects had I been writing at the time. But I wasn't. Yet over the years the desire to write has surfaced from time to time. Mostly I did nothing much about it. Why?

In the end I had to face it, the real reason was me! To some degree I was misled by an inner sense that if I had talent it would come out in a natural, easy flow and would be right first time. My viewpoint took no account of the progress that comes from practice. I suspect that the most effective fluent writers are the ones who have spent the most time practicing. Also, I suspect, fluency is not always a guarantee of quality, and may even lead to tedious verbosity!

So, how had my attitude changed? Foremost was a decided intention to do it, to write, just do it! I began to see the power that words have when put together in the right juxtaposition, to rhythmically and musically convey a more holistic meaning than can be achieved by analytical thinking alone. I wanted to do that; to express meanings that I felt I understood, but didn't know how to express.

So, my first poem was about a poem, one that sneaks up and blows my mind. Being the first, it is not particularly accomplished, but it did the job, captured my meaning. Of course to develop writing I needed to develop my reading, and also, especially with poetry, my listening. For me that was facilitated by a few 'how to write poetry' books, but more effectively by attending beginners workshops and attending poetry events. We are fortunate that Bradford-on-Avon has a monthly poetry event at the Swan Hotel called 'Words & Ears'.

I realise that my formative experience with literature, motivation to write, and ambition will not be the same as yours, but if you have ever wanted to try why not just get on and do it. Get started.

And writing poetry is a good start I think, especially modern free poetry. For many it is a therapeutic, creative activity whether it is for sharing with a public audience or not. Here are two short poems I wrote in the last couple of years. If you think, "I could do that" or even "I could do better than that", then get going. Don't be put off when difficulties arise, just keep writing!

Pete O'Grady

Real Doors

*Some doors see you coming;
they open obligingly, then they close
with insistent, programmed cushioning.*

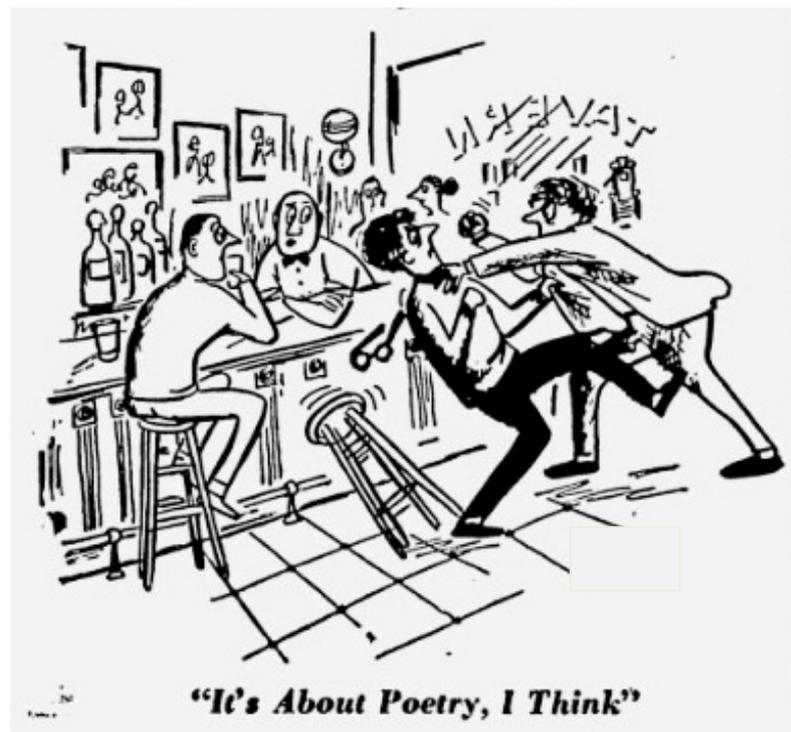
*Whether they swing or slide,
regimented by sensors,
these are not real doors.*

*Real doors swing free
in their own language;
can be slammed
or ominously clicked shut.*

*At their very best,
real doors can be left wide open.*

Bus Terminus

*Nancy from the east alights;
waits and waits and eats a little.
Nancy starts to the west again,
another new journey home
on the road that's always there.*



Memories of Fitzmaurice Grammar School

It is a warm and sultry evening in Bradford on Avon. I am watching two young hopeful boys casting for fish from the bridge that crosses the Avon near the Tithe Barn. I smell the soft evening air and like bottled perfume it reminds me of happy times. I am back in the 1960s a student at the Fitzmaurice Grammar school.

We are smartly dressed in our neatly ironed uniform. Prettily we sit on the riverbank opposite the boathouse watching like ladies the school's annual regatta. We girls are wearing navy blue and white striped summer dresses, navy blue V necked sweaters set off with a straw boater hat. The boys are in white shirts. All are wearing ties, no open buttons allowed! Their navy blue blazers have a 'gudgeon' embroidered in gold on the breast pocket. Chatting and smiling in demure style we applaud the contestants (no booing was allowed.) A clip behind the ear would have reminded the boys that we were the grammar school lot and special! It was a grand occasion and we were all and we were all grateful to be out of those lessons from which much was expected of us; first in the family to gain a place at college and a future with a good job. Fifty five years later the vegetation has grown up into mighty willow trees dipping their leaves into the reflecting water. But have we grown up successfully? What of us! Are we like the trees now tall and proud?

I often wonder what became of my school friends. What did passing the eleven plus do for us? Yvonne Drew with whom I went to Saturday night dances at St. Margaret's Hall in Bradford, Lynette Philpott whose family owned a local nursery producing tomatoes, some of which Lynette would bring to school to share with friends. Brian Davies, who I liked very much and with whom I tried very hard to arrange romantic liaisons, dates he always managed to avoid. Beverley Ithell the horse lover. Stephen Stone the class comedian. Robert Deacon from Dilton Marsh, David Dell and Eric Winslow, where are you all? What have you done with your lives?

I walk on past Barton Farm and stop at the beautifully restored Tithe barn looking splendid in the late evening sunlight. During my school days it was a place in which to shelter from the rain or for some a quick light up and puff on a Solent cigarette before setting off on our weekly cross country run along the towpath towards Avoncliff. I do not remember seeing boats on the canal so perhaps this was a time before the restoration. But when the water froze the canal became our skating rink to enjoy and often delayed our sports mistress's careful timings in her search for an Olympic champion. Lifting my eye line I see the old school playing fields are still with us. Though for how long one asks. Memories of netball, tennis and bruised shins from hockey sticks that were meant to hit the ball and not the girl. The summer games with long jump, putting the shot, races and hurdles (my best skill) and of course the good looking muscular boys! Some of us went to Universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, raring to develop our futures. What happened to them? What happened to our futures? Someone did not think we or they had any futures, so Fitzmaurice Grammar became a place for those with reduced futures, a home for "retired people." And another Grammar School bit the dust!

I remember all my teachers with grateful fondness. Mr. Edmunds our Headmaster and Mrs Brady his hard working secretary were always helpful. Mr Freeth our maths master was very humorous and always quoting "One learns by ones mistakes!" Something he never did as he was always throwing the blackboard duster and hitting the wrong person. Certainly he was never asked to play for the school cricket team.

In the summer twilight I walk back to the railway station to catch my train home to Bath, the station where back in the sixties I would have caught a train home to Westbury Leigh via Dilton Marsh Halt, made immortal by John Betjeman's poem of which this is the third verse.

*There isn't a porter. The platform is made up of sleepers.
The guard of the last up train puts out the light
And high over lorries and cattle, the Halt unwinking
Waits through the Wiltshire light.*

To ensure all pupils were always on their best behaviour in public and wearing full school uniform including berets and caps every train carriage would be checked by school prefects and the punishment for incorrect dress would be a detention after school. Mr. Edmunds during one morning assembly was very angry because a boy in Fitzmaurice uniform had wolf whistled at a local girl. He asked the boy to own up to it, poor boy he didn't know the girl happened to be the daughter of one of the school governors! Whatever happened to that unfortunate boy?

Ciaran Brady (remember him?) is organising a reunion for all our year (those who started in 1960) to be held on Thursday 7th July 2016. If you would like to attend or contribute any memorabilia then please **contact** ciaranjohnbrady@gmail.com



An archaeologist is the best husband a woman can have. The older she gets the more interested he is in her. Agatha Christie

The Senior's Forum Committee 2015/16

Chairman: Michael Darlow **Treasurer:** Ashley Seath **Secretary:** Isabel Martindale
Minutes Secretary: Ronald Dell **Publicity:** Paul Watson **Membership:** David Bristow
John Allen, Julie Downey, Rod Hutchen, Jonathan Newth
Co-options: Tony Monks (Link) Wendy O'Grady (U3A)
Focus Group Convenors: Health – Michael Darlow, Social Care – Julia Downey
Transport and Accessibility – Ashley Seath Publicity – Paul Watson



WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AT OUR SEASONAL DROP IN ON DECEMBER 10TH

December 10th 'Christmas Seasonal Drop In' 10.30 to 12 noon in the upper room in Bradford on Avon library (for members and friends.)

WE ARE PLANNING EVENTS FOR 2016 AND TOPICS WILL INCLUDE: -

Transport

Meet the doctors

Integrated Health and Social Care

OUR AGM WILL BE ON APRIL 20TH AT THE UNITED CHURCH



**"Heads, you get a quadruple bypass.
Tails, you take a baby aspirin."**