

FISH Newsletter

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What's New

The headline news must be the new premises that we have recently moved into. Many of you reading this may have already visited us in our new offices at Springhill, Kennylands Road. I say offices in the plural because there are two rooms of ample size as well as a kitchen, store room and cloakroom. Having moved from one small room at the rear of Sonning Common Village Hall, where the Charity has been run for 34 years, this now gives us the opportunity to expand our activity in the community. Sonning Common and the surrounding villages have almost doubled in size in that time so we must try and move with the times. Do feel free to pop in for a cuppa, although you might have to make it yourself!

We hope you like the new FISH logo. It appears at the top of this newsletter.

You may have noticed FISH collecting boxes and buckets in the local shops. We introduced these last year. This has been most successful and many thanks to the retailers for helping us in this way.

We feel very fortunate that the Lions Club of Henley gave FISH a laptop computer. This enables people to communicate with us via email, which for FISH is really up to date. We will, of course, be using it to help us run the office in due course.

These last two years have been so rewarding for me as chairman, it has been a real eye opener to witness the amazing amount of work all the volunteers do. The enormous number of people in our community who are transported to hospitals, clinics and surgeries by volunteers in their own cars really is to be commended. Evidence of our commitment to supporting and transporting those in need in our community.

Fred Nickson, Chairman of FISH

From a Long Serving Volunteer

I have been involved with FISH for the last 20 years. In that time I have been a Co-ordinator, Office Helper, Car Driver and on the Management Committee. I was asked by the retiring FISH Co-ordinator if I would consider taking the job on. I'd never been involved with FISH before but I'd lived in the village for over 20 years, liked meeting people, liked a challenge and was willing to take it on. One of the most important jobs as a FISH volunteer is to be a 'people person'. Very often, as well as requiring a driver to take them to the Royal Berks, Townlands, Wallingford, John Radcliffe at Oxford and many other destinations, people just want to off load their worries and concerns- sometimes help is required to fill in difficult forms and sometimes just a friendly ear to be listened to. Over the last few years many of our older volunteers have retired and it has been a lot harder to recruit newly retired folk in their sixties to replace those volunteers who have worked for FISH for a number of years.

I enjoy working for FISH immensely – I feel I'm giving something back to the community where I've lived happily for many years. When I can no longer drive (and I hope that won't be for a number of years!) I shall be pleased to think that FISH is in our community and I can call upon them to help me.

Barbara Butler, FISH Committee Member



**OPENING CEREMONY AT SPRINGHILL
THE NEW FISH VOLUNTEER CENTRE
SATURDAY 10 MAY 2014**

The day dawned cold and blustery for early May but fortunately the rain held off for the event. A marquee was up and the new bus on display in the driveway. Thanks to the enthusiasm of our volunteers over sixty people attended to hear Fred Nickson, Chairman and Andrew Peach, local resident and BBC broadcaster, talk about the charity's success which had led to the need for bigger premises. Fred reminded us that FISH was started thirty four years ago by Ann Butler-Smith and its 'home' for the last thirty years had been a small office at the back of Sonning Common Village Hall. As we are all living longer and the population of Sonning Common and surrounding villages has grown FISH has outgrown its old office. The new premises allow for two volunteers to man two phone lines as well as offering the accommodation for a drop in centre which is being set up. As FISH grows so does the need for more volunteers. Andrew cut the ribbon to officially open the centre and spoke about changing patterns in family life – more people live at a distance from their extended families and cannot rely on them for the support experienced by previous generations so there is a great need for a charity such as FISH.



Fred Nickson, Chairman of FISH inviting Andrew Peach to formally open the new FISH Centre on Kennylands Road

Memory Giving

Memory Giving is a simple, free to use and fully secure on-line website for charitable donations made by friends and family in memory of a loved one. Created by a family of funeral directors in Berkshire and used by many leading firms throughout the UK, it allows on-line collection pages to be created for the deceased, choosing any charity or multiple charities.

Memory Giving is free to register and use for both funeral directors and charities and has helped improve the experience of the family and donors. We are pleased to welcome FISH Volunteer Centre to our service. Please visit www.memorygiving.com for more information.

Regular 'Drop-in' sessions Start at the FISH Volunteer Centre on Wednesdays Mornings between 9.30 and 11.30 a.m. (starting from 11th June 2014)

Come along and meet with others for a cup of tea; or perhaps to do some recreational activity, e.g. a giant jigsaw. Sarah Jenner and Angela Angell would welcome your ideas on what recreational activities you would like to do and look forward to meeting you on Wednesday 11th June.

Transport can be arranged through the office, if required.



Sarah Jenner



Angela Angell



A Bus Driver's Tale

I have driven both the old yellow bus and the new blue bus which we know as Bubbles. Why did I start driving for Fish three years ago? Was it I enjoyed shopping? Ask my wife and she will tell you 'NO'. Anyone in the queue at the till in front of us is not good. Decorating; now there is another reason to drive as queuing in a supermarket is marginally better! Gardening, now that's a different story, I can watch my wife garden all day! Did I need something to fill my time? No, I play golf two or three times a week as well as gardening, redecorating and seeing the grandchildren.

So why do I drive Bubbles? It saves on a gym membership, what a workout we get when on shopping trips loading and unloading the shopping! On any trip a work out is high on the list, in and out of the bus and up and down the steps. I also, once a month, arrange a pub lunch for the locals. Now there is a good reason to drive for FISH as each pub has to be checked out first!

The feel good factor gets even better when you hear all the chatter and laughter going on in the bus. But for me the best part of it is the happy smiling faces at the end of the any trip.

In modern terms it is JOB SATISFACTION and I hope to be entertained by the passengers for a long time to come. That's why I do it. So from me to all my passengers 'thank you'.

David Mew, FISH Minibus Driver

From the Treasurer's Desk

Hello to all our readers of this first ever publication from the FISH Volunteer Centre which we all hope will be the first of many. I first heard of FISH far too many years ago when still at work. My thoughts were what a marvellous organisation for any village to have on its doorstep and which has largely remained unchanged since it started back in 1977. I was asked to join as treasurer back in 2010 but first came to help when approached by the late, delightful Reg Foster. Reg, then the bus manager, explained that there must be many National Trust members living in Sonning Common and the surrounding area and as the minibus was underused on Fridays and we could do with some extra funds would I arrange National Trust outings during the summer months. So these trips started in 2008 and continue today. At first we could not fill the bus but gradually over the years numbers have increased and with the new bus we are looking to go a little further afield. On top of this I now help our present bus manager with organising some of the other leisure outings and we are always open to suggestions for these as well. As mentioned above I am also treasurer of FISH which is basically just looking after all aspects of our finances and being a Trustee and recently it has been a very busy spell with the move to the new Centre at Springhill. As time progresses we expect to be even busier as we embark on fund raising in order to be able to provide even more assistance to our ever increasing local elderly population. This is where you reader can help – by volunteering. Just give the time you have available to spare, no matter how little, we need car drivers, bus drivers, office staff and home visitors. Also remember to contact us if you need any of our services.

Why not give yourselves a day out on one of our minibus leisure trips to brighten your day.

Sheila Maughan, FISH Treasurer

OUR THANKS TO THE TEAM AT RAINBOW CARPETS FOR ASSISTING US BY PROVIDING AND LAYING NEW FLOORING IN THE NEW FISH CENTRE ON KENNYLANDS ROAD AT A DISCOUNT.

Rainbow Carpets are a local Company based in Caversham, and were very willing to help and advise FISH on its requirements. For more details of all their products and services please call 0118 961 2884 and speak to Marc.

We could go for gold but silver would be fine!

Do you have any items of jewellery you could donate? That broken necklace, the brooch you haven't worn for years, rings that don't fit any more. Even that old pocket watch that you never wear. In fact any precious metal items in any condition. We are able to turn all these items into much needed cash to help finance the charity and do more in the community. Just pop them into the FISH office or phone or email if you would like us to collect. A receipt will be issued.

Tea Afternoons

FISH holds drop-in tea afternoons in Sonning Common Village Hall every couple of months. These events are free and some entertainment is provided as well as a free raffle. Do come along for a cuppa and a chat, and maybe make new friends or meet old ones. Dates for remainder of the year are: Wednesday 23 July, Wednesday 17 September and Monday 10 November all from 2.30 p.m. Transport can be provided if required.



Volunteers and Friends of FISH celebrate the opening of the new centre at Springhill on Kennylands Road



FISH takes delivery of new bus – October 2013

We have had the new FISH bus for some 8 months and it has proved a great success with passengers and drivers alike. With the upholstered seating, separate saloon heating and air conditioning, air suspension and easy access steps with hand rails all making for a much more comfortable journey experience. The FISH Bus makes weekly shopping trips to Henley and Reading and monthly visits to other local market and shopping venues. The programme for leisure and social trips includes mystery tea tours, pub lunches, garden centres and visits to National Trust houses and gardens. We are always looking to expand the range of interesting and entertaining excursions and recent trips to Bletchley Park, Kew Gardens, London Zoo, and a London Christmas lights tour proved very popular. The schedule of trips and visits is posted on the village noticeboards and on the FISH website (fishvolunteercentre.co.uk) some ten days before the start of each month and bookings taken by telephone or in person at the FISH Office.

So who can use the bus – well the simple answer is anyone who classes themselves as a 'senior' in our community. You do not have to be infirmed, without your own transport or have any disability. The shopping trips do cater predominantly but not exclusively for those who cannot easily access their own transport. But the leisure trips provide an opportunity for socialising in different environments or accessing places and events which can stimulate and entertain. Do 'hop' a ride.

John Pearman, Bus Manager