

VILLAGE VOICE

NEWS FROM WEST WICKHAM & STREETLY END

JUNE 2021

ISSUE 217

WHEELED BIN COLLECTIONS

Tuesday	1 June	Black
Monday	7 June	Blue & green
Monday	14 June	Black
Monday	21 June	Blue & green
Monday	28 June	Black

Household Recycling Centres are open on an appointment system. For details visit: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/waste-and-recycling/household-recycling-centres

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE

It isn't too late to take part in our consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan. At the time of writing less than 5% of households have responded. It is important that residents' voices are heard alongside statutory bodies, developers and landowners, so please tell us what you think before 30 June.

You can get all the information at https://westwickham.org/plan_reg14 or contact Dave Sargeant on 290048 for details

CHURCH SERVICES

St Mary's Church. Sunday at 10.00

Sunday zoom services will also continue. For details contact Cazzy Walshe on 7churches.seven@gmail.com to sign up for the weekly newsletter or find details at www.grantavale.org.uk

FOR UPDATES & USEFUL INFORMATION GO TO www.westwickham.org

If you aren't online the Editors are more than happy to help.

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

Parish Nurse: Kim Cox. T: 07498994205
Email: 7churches.parishnurse@gmail.com
This is NOT a 24hr monitored service.

AgeUK Community Warden: Faye Parker.
T: 07436102865,
Email: Faye.Parker@ageukcap.org.uk

Granta Medical Practice / Linton Health Centre:
T: 0300 234 5555 option 3, followed by option 1 for appointments, option 2 for the Pharmacy.
Electricity & powercut helpline: 105
British Telecom helpline: 0800 800150
Cambridge Water Company: 01223 706050

PRESS DATE FOR NEXT ISSUE: Wednesday 16 May

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The Village Voice is sponsored by West Wickham Parish Council and delivered free to all households in West Wickham and Streetly End. The views expressed herein are those of the contributors.

DAYTIME ACTIVITIES FOR THE VILLAGE HALL

As you will have seen in the May Edition of the Village Voice, Daisy Chains pre-school will be closing in July. Whilst this is an unfortunate loss of a valuable service to the community, it does offer the chance for the Village Hall to be used for other events and users.

The main reason for having the Hall is for the use of local people. The Management Committee would like to hear from residents who might be interested in organising any regular events such as coffee mornings, luncheon clubs or afternoon meetings, or for whatever reason. The Hall has lost income due to the pandemic and will lose more when Daisy Chains closes so there is a need to replace this revenue. Ideally this would be from increased use by residents but if this is not possible, by promoting the Hall's facilities more widely.

A survey, which was carried out a few years ago to gather support for the Neighbourhood Plan, identified a desire within the community for additional facilities at the Hall. These can only materialise if more people come forward and do not leave it to the usual volunteers. We would welcome any ideas and suggestions for further developments at the Hall and for volunteers willing to establish other uses of the Hall, particularly if they provide activities for younger people.

The Hall is in very good condition and the Parish Council and the Village Hall Management Committee are looking at the possibility of adding a modest extension to provide an area more suitable for social mixing, such as a cafe/lounge for casual use.

The Management Committee made its annual report to the Parish Council at the Annual Parish Meeting on 24 May, and this can be viewed on the Village website www.westwickham.org.

Trevor Hall, Chairman, Village Hall Management Committee

THE CHURCH FETE, BBQ AND DOG SHOW 3 July at 1pm at Manor Farm

I am appealing again to your generosity. Last year we were unable to fundraise and as church attendance was affected, so weekly collections have gone down considerably. As you can appreciate, the fete is a very important fund raising event, with all proceeds and donations going towards the upkeep of the Church.

If you have any good bric-a-brac, a bottle for the tombola, a raffle prize, books, toys etc., they can be left at Manor Farm; large items just inside the gate on the left or smaller items in the post box. Please put your name on them so I don't nag you again! If you want bottles collected for the tombola, I will be out collecting on Friday 25 June after 4pm so please leave any donations on the doorstep and I will pick them up.

Looking forward to seeing you on the day and many thanks for your continual support.

Nicky Cornish, PCC Secretary. T: 290203

CAKES PLEASE

This is an appeal for contributions to the Village Fete on 3 July. The Cake Team, Vivienne, Di and Allen are hoping that you will support us as you have done so magnificently in the past. We have some really expert bakers in the village, and the things you come up with are always a surprise and a delight. Big cakes, small cakes, scones, biscuits, tray bakes, pastries and even bread - whatever you like. We will be so grateful for anything you are willing to bake for us.

To those of you who don't bake or have no time to do so, we assure you that it does not have to be home made. A shop bought cake will be equally acceptable. One thing more. We are not only appealing to the ladies, we know that there are gentlemen out there who are excellent bakers and we also know who you are! Please support us.

Vivienne Henderson. E: viviennehenderson17@gmail.com
T: 290243

Diane Hazlehurst. E: dianehazlehurst45@gmail.com
Allen Hazlehurst

PICTURES FROM THE PAST



July 1971. A presentation to Headteacher, Mrs Stedmond, on the final day of the school. The children were transferred to the newly opened Meadow School in Balsham. If you are in the photograph or can name any of the children please do get in touch.

Photo from West Wickham & District Local History Club Photo Archive

Janet Morris, 21 High Street
Tel: 290863 Email: jmmorris@jmmorris.plus.com

* Eat Well * Live Well
* Celebrate Community

BALSHAM SUMMER MARKET

Saturday 12th June
2pm to 4pm
Balsham Recreation Ground

Instagram Facebook Buy Local

WEST WICKHAM & DISTRICT GARDENING CLUB ANNUAL SHOW 21 AUGUST FLOWER CLASSES

This month I am encouraging you to think about what you could enter into the Flower Classes at the Annual Show in August and be in with a chance to win the White Horse Trophy, which goes to the entrant with the highest number of points in this Category. Don't be put off by thinking you are too late to start planting award-winning flowers; if you have a wander round your garden (and house – there are two classes for indoor plants) you may well find you already have suitable plants. You can't just pop out to the florist on the morning of the Show and buy a few stems though - your flowers do need to have been grown in your garden or on your allotment and you must have owned your indoor plants for at least three months.

The 9 classes are:

- A single rose.
- 4 stems of dahlias, mixed or same variety.
- A single flower stem with "wow effect".
- A vase of mixed flowers containing 5 to 10 stems of at least 2 different kinds of plants, displayed for effect.
- A vase of flowers of more than one variety in shades of a single colour without additional foliage, displayed for effect.
- 6 stems of one variety of flower not in schedule.
- A posy of garden flowers in a small container, displayed for effect.
- An indoor pot plant.
- A cactus or succulent in a pot.



The judge will be looking at the condition of the flowers, foliage (where allowed) and their stems. Freshness is very important, together with the way they are displayed, so choose your containers thoughtfully, weight them if necessary and don't forget to add water! Flowers of one type will also be judged on their uniformity and mixed vases on their symmetry and balance. Indoor plants in pots will be judged for their all-round effect but position the pot so that its best view is facing the front of the table. Dust the leaves and clean the pot beforehand to show your plant at its best.

It is always a good idea to bring spare flowers and vases with you in case your first choices are damaged in transit (transporting your entries can be a very delicate business) but do make a final count once you have finished your displays to check the number of stems in your containers. You don't want your entry to be disqualified for not being according to the Schedule. I speak from experience!

Next month I will focus on what you need to enter to win the Stan & Hilda Cox Cup for your domestic entries.

Details of all the classes can be found on the village website www.westwickham.org and if you have any particular questions, please contact me.

Sue Thurston, Chair of the Show Committee. T: 897811

NATURE NOTES

The climate is changing, but while global temperatures rise, our daily and seasonal weather is capricious. Nature must cope with whatever is thrown at it and try and adapt to the conditions. A totally dry but cold April with night frosts and a northerly breeze has been followed by a damp, cool first half of May. Not a normal spring. It is interesting to see how different forms of wildlife have reacted.

The northerly wind should be thanked for giving us our most exciting visitors of the month. Two male ring ouzels



obligingly landed on the lawn at Hill Farm and stayed for a couple of days. They even made a trip to the playing field behind the Village Hall, and associated with a group of fieldfares who were waiting to make their trip north. As you can see from the photograph Ted Fairhead took, ring ouzels are like blackbirds with a white crescent-shaped breast band. They breed in mountainous regions of Europe, and in Britain in the moorlands of Scotland and northern England. They winter in North Africa or southern Europe so would undoubtedly have been on their way north but stopped at Hill Farm for some respite from the headwind. What a privilege for those of us who had the chance to see them.

Of those migrant birds that we expect to see by now, all the usual warblers have been seen and heard but it is worrying how few swallows, house martins and swifts have been seen

PHOTOGRAPHY WALK

Ronnie Temple, photography judge for this year's West Wickham and District Gardening Club Village Show, will be leading a walk around West Wickham on Saturday 31 July 11am-12pm, starting and finishing at the Village Hall. This will be an opportunity to learn what makes a successful photograph and to take some shots for this year's competition.

As numbers will be limited to 15, please register your interest by email to sally@sallymoonpublishing.com or call Sally on 07889 341880 by Wednesday 21 July. All ages are welcome to attend – and don't forget to bring a camera or smartphone!

OUTDOOR COFFEE MORNING IN AID OF CHRISTIAN AID

FRIDAY 2 JULY FROM 10.00 am

In Balsham Churchyard – raffle and the crêpes/waffles van will be attending. Further details from Joanna Sanders. T: 01223 893063, Email: sanderschimneys@uwclub.net
PS. Still great choice of 1000 and 500 piece jigsaws in Nine Chimney House garage, Balsham

locally. At Hill Farm there are usually eight swallow nests but none at the time of writing.

Many people have commented how late the bluebells have been this year. They aren't so prolific either, but a beautiful sight nevertheless in our local woods. In contrast the ditches, verges and field margins have been awash with cowslips and I believe the cool conditions have helped to prolong their flowering period. Dandelions too have made a great show but are now going to seed everywhere. It is interesting to contrast their seed heads, which form a globe, with that of the coltsfoot – more like a disc. Other wildflowers currently blooming include buttercups, Queen Anne's lace (or cow parsley for the more prosaic of us) and bugle which is very evident in the ditches alongside Hare Wood. Finally a mention for speedwell whose flowers are 'as blue as the bluest of eyes.'

In 1603 John Stow wrote in his *Survey of London* '...on Mayday morning every man would walk into the green meadows and sweet woods, there to rejoice their spirits with the beauty and savour of sweet flowers, and with the harmony of birds...' A passage we can all relate to, but perhaps this year the revelation would have come a few days late.


Flowers and many birds depend on insects, for pollination and food respectively, so the cool conditions have not been helpful in that regard. Nevertheless various butterflies including brimstones, speckled woods, orange tips, peacocks and red admirals have been seen taking advantage of brief warm, dry and still conditions. A few painted ladies have also been seen. According to my book these early arrivals are likely to have flown from the Middle East or North Africa rather than continental Europe, whose painted ladies normally come later. The St Marks flies who traditionally emerge on St Marks Day, left it until early May but are now flying around with their legs dangling in good numbers.

There are many hares around; distressingly, some of them dead in the road but one young leveret has decided to take refuge in Trevor and Carol's mint patch. Something for his hare friends to savour perhaps.

Please send your nature sightings to:

Peter Grieve. T: 01223 897811, E: mail@petergrieve.co.uk

Di Licence. T: 290434, E: dianarubylicence@gmail.com



COMMUNITY YOGA CLASSES

Community Yoga classes are back from
Thursday 20th May

Every Thursday at West Wickham Village
Hall from 4-5pm

£8 per drop in or £30 for a 4 class pass.

PLEASE CONTACT MYRIAM ON
07494130699 OR ON
M.EL-SOLH@HOTMAIL.CO.UK FOR
MORE INFORMATION & HOW TO
BOOK IN.

SUITABLE FOR ALL LEVELS

COVID-19 Vaccinations Update. Have you had your first Covid vaccination yet? If not, and you are in a cohort between 1 and 6, please contact us as soon as possible to arrange an appointment. If you fall into one of the cohorts 7 to 12, please ring 119 or go to <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/> where you can directly book your first dose appointment at a central vaccination centre. If you need to book your second dose, NHS England guidelines state that patients should return to the venue where they had their first vaccination, as the second dose will be allocated and sent to that original venue.

As always, if any of the Covid vaccination guidelines change we will let you know via our website www.grantamedicalpractices.co.uk and our social media platforms. However, please don't hesitate to contact us direct if you do not have access to the internet.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued support and kind words, as well as all the biscuits, chocolates and other lovely treats. The goodwill shown to us whilst we deliver the vaccines means so much to all of us.

Sandra East, Head of Patient Services
Email: sandra.east@nhs.net Direct dial: 01223 627743

CAN YOU HELP IMPROVE CANCER SERVICES AT ADDENBROOKE'S HOSPITAL?

Cancer patients and their carers are invited to help design and improve care for people living with cancer. The Addenbrooke's Cancer Patient Partnership Group (CPPG) is keen to hear from anyone with experience of cancer, whether as a patient or carer. Your feedback will help transform the care the hospital is able to provide both now, and in the future, when the proposed new Cambridge Cancer Research Hospital opens in 2025. Read more here www.cambridgecancer.org.uk/.

As well as contributing to plans for the new hospital, the CPPG has already been instrumental in helping plan the refurbishment of the Oncology Outpatients clinic area at Addenbrooke's and in encouraging doctors to write clinic letters directly to patients, copying in the GP, rather than the other way round. Since the start of Covid the CPPG has helped shape how the hospital communicates with patients about potential delays, getting bloods tests done locally, and by changing to video or telephone appointments. Patients and carers can be involved as little or much as suits them at any particular time.

The CPPG is keen to reflect the diversity and demographics of patients and would particularly welcome members from the black, Asian and minority ethnic and LGBT+ communities, plus anyone under 50 and representatives from the Armed Forces.

If you or a loved one have experience of being treated for cancer at Addenbrooke's, the CPPG would love to hear from you. For more information contact Lenja Bell on cppg@addenbrookes.nhs.uk or 07729 105550, or go to:

www.cuh.nhs.uk/our-services/cancer-services/cancer-support-services/addenbrookes-cancer-patient-partnership-group/

COVID-19 TESTING

Residents are being urged to get twice-weekly rapid Covid tests. The move is considered an important step forward to meet the aims of the national roadmap, allowing everyone to move safely out of lockdown. Twice-weekly rapid testing is a vital tool in identifying cases of Covid-19 that would otherwise be missed. With 1 in 3 people with coronavirus showing no symptoms and potentially spreading it without knowing, rapid testing helps to identify positive cases quickly, preventing the spread of infection.

There are several ways you can access rapid testing. You can take a test at one of the rapid testing sites locally. Your employer may be offering testing in the workplace. You can collect tests to complete at home or order tests to be delivered to your home. Secondary school pupils are also being asked to take a twice-weekly test. You can find out more about all of these options at:

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/rapidtesting

AGE UK SMALL VILLAGES COMMUNITY WARDEN UPDATE

There's never a dull moment in Community Warden world. Now that life is slowly returning to some normality, I've been investigating Day Centres and trying to find what clubs for the elderly are getting back up and running. Finding community transport is always good fun too - I love a good challenge. If you hear of any clubs starting up again, please let me know as I'm struggling to find any at the moment.

Day Centres are a great way to meet some new friends, have a bit of fun and a nice meal. I have found one nearby in Haverhill and a couple in Cambridge that are open again and welcoming visitors. If anyone fancies trying one out, please do get in touch and I would be glad to help arrange this for you or provide you with some information. It is hard to find out about these sorts of things without the internet, so please do ask if you want a favour - or perhaps one of your neighbours or friends with internet access could help.

I have also been looking into dental care for the elderly who are housebound and have had a wonderful breakthrough for one of my service users who is desperate for dental help but hasn't left the house for two years. The thought of having to leave the house was causing a great deal of anxiety, and so it feels like a real win to have found out that the NHS have a community care service for complex cases.

Some referrals have also gone to the Age UK Befriending service this week to help combat isolation and loneliness - this service is open for anyone, not just those on the Community Warden Scheme. If you'd like more details please get in touch.

It has been lovely to start working with the new Parish Nurse who covers the Granta Vale Parish, and already we have been working closely together to support the community.

Social Services have been helping me to find cleaning agencies that support cases more complex than a domestic cleaner would cover, and it is good to know that there are those kind of services out there - I'm always learning new pieces of information.

I do have a few spaces left on the scheme so if you're interested in finding out more about how we could work together, please get in touch to arrange your free trial.

Faye Parker. Community Warden - Small Villages
Mobile 07436 102865, Email faye.parker@ageukcap.org.uk

LINTON VILLAGE COLLEGE NEWS

At this stage of the academic year we say goodbye to our oldest students who start their study leave and transition to Post-16 study. I am tremendously proud of the responsible, caring and hardworking young adults that they have developed into.

We plan to celebrate with them at their Leavers' Ball on Friday 2 July. While it won't be possible to invite members of the community on site for their arrival as is customary, due to Covid-19 restrictions, we are looking forward to being able to mark their time at LVC with this special event.

Our primary transition plans will also have to be adapted this year to reflect the Covid-19 context. However, we are looking forward to welcoming Year 6s to the College and helping them to acclimatise to secondary school.

While we are usually oversubscribed, a low birth rate in our locality means that we currently have spaces in Year 7 next year. If you have recently moved into the area or would like to find out more about moving to LVC please contact admissions@lvc.org. We do have some capacity in some other year groups and have transport arrangements in place for students that live outside of our catchment area.

Many thanks to members of the College community that responded to the Trust's recent sports centre survey. It is great to be able to welcome all ages back to benefit from our sporting facilities at LVC. There are plans to improve the communication and opportunities for the centres that operate within Anglian Learning's secondary schools.

Our community sports centre is an important part of our remit as a Village College, as well as a beneficial source of income that we are able to invest in students' educational experience. Bookings for our facilities can be made online (www.lintonsc.schoolhire.co.uk) as well as via reception (01223 890248).

We are also looking forward to the prospect of restarting our adult education programme in the autumn term. For more information see our Adult Community Learning page on the College's website (www.lvc.org).

Helena Marsh, Principal

COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCIL NEWS

County Council election. At the elections on 7 May Henry Batchelor (Lib Dem) was re-elected. You can contact him on henrybatchelor89@gmail.com

Bus capacity issues. Many people have raised the issue of capacity of buses. Now that schools and workplaces have reopened, it has meant there is a higher volume of users during morning and afternoon rush hours. Bus operators are obliged to social distance their passengers, which means buses are only operating at 50% capacity. This has caused some issues, with people finding the bus full. Stagecoach is aware of this problem and is suspending the Milton P&R service to put more buses onto priority routes, including the 13 in this area.

Right of way map. A new interactive map has been launched, in conjunction with Google, that shows all of Cambridgeshire's public rights of way. Visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/libraries-leisure-culture/arts-green-spaces-activities/rights-of-way

Winter support grant. Residents can now access schemes for those in need of urgent food or fuel. Vouchers are worth up to £49 for a family or £29 for an individual. If you wish to apply please email the district council on duty.communities@scambs.gov.uk – there is a simple form to complete.

MEADOW SCHOOL NEWS

We are delighted to introduce the new Chair of Governors for The Meadow School. We are also actively seeking new Governors from the local community who are not directly related to the school. If you are interested then please do contact our new Chair. Nicola Connor, Head Teacher

I am writing to introduce myself as the new Chair of Governors of The Meadow Primary School in Balsham. I have lived in Balsham for 11 years and began my involvement with the school in 2019. I have worked with the School Council on the development of the Balsham village playground, have volunteered with older classes and have done one-to-one tuition with children in Year 3. All of these experiences have shown me how delightful the children are at The Meadow Primary School and how hard the staff work to help them with their development. I was a teacher for 37 years before I retired in 2017 including 5 years at a school in Zambia and 13 years as a Head Teacher.



The role of governors is more of a strategic one, whilst the school staff and Head Teacher deal with day-to-day matters, so for most issues you should always contact school staff. Nevertheless, I should be happy to hear from you, particularly anyone who might be interested in becoming a school governor. You do not need to have any great understanding of education; it is good if school governors include people from a range of backgrounds and also those who do not have children at the school. You would be asked to attend 6 or 7 meetings a year and it is a great way to give something back to your local community. If you would like to talk over what it involves, please do get in touch with me at sjordan@meadow.cambs.sch.uk

Steve Jordan

LINTON LIBRARY NEWS

It has been great to see so many people back in using the library. At the time of writing, our managed browsing service continues, as does the option to use our Select and Collect service. As we move further into June, please check the library website www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/library for any changes

The Summer Reading Challenge 2021 is fast approaching and will be taking place during the school summer holidays once again. The theme this year is Wild World Heroes.

'The Library Presents' is back with a new season of events, with activities taking place at several outdoor locations, as well as online workshops. The season runs until 17 July. Browse the programme by visiting www.library.live/the-library-presents or pick up a brochure at the library.

HiVIS Fortnight takes place 7 to 20 June – come in and ask about all we offer for vision & print impaired readers (LP, audiobooks, e-audiobooks, dyslexia friendly). A new accessible webpage with information will be available soon on our website.

We wish to give a very warm welcome to our new Community Library Assistant at Linton Library, Ann King.

Lindsay Healy and Ann King, Community Library Assistants, Linton Library.

Opening hours: Tuesday 10am-2pm; Thursday 2-6pm

WEST WICKHAM AND DISTRICT GARDENING CLUB

Monday 21 June. Instead of a garden visit, there will be an extra zoom talk. 'Wonderful Weeds', by Peter Williams.

If you would like to take us up on the offer please send your e-mail address to Sue Boase the clubs zoom coordinator at sueboase@hotmail.co.uk. She will then invite you in from 7:15 on the evening of the talk.



GIRLGUIDING LINTON DISTRICT

What a month it has been for the District. After the easing off of Covid regulations we are now allowed to meet outdoors and some of our Rangers, Guides, Brownies and Rainbows are starting to have fun in the open again. Our fantastic Jarman Centre in Newmarket is hosting campfire cooking for us from 17 May, and the girls will be using small campfires to cook tea and make smores. One of our Jarman Centre leaders has also just recompleted their archery qualification allowing archery to be taught to people who use the Jarman Centre - an amazing resource to have so close to home. Girls have been having fun in the park and picnics have been planned, as well as a host of other exciting things. Have you ever tried to step through a piece of paper? It is easy when you know how.

If you would like to join in the fun and adventure and make new friends, take a look at our website. Rainbows 5-7, Brownies 7-10, Guides 10-14, Rangers 14-18. If you remember what fun it was as a girl, encourage your daughter to join us, and if you would like to get involved as an adult, join us in a role you would enjoy or join the Trefoil Guild 18+; the possibilities are endless.

Louisa Powell-Owens, District Commissioner
www.girlguiding.org.uk

1ST HORSEHEATH BROWNIES

By the time you read this we should be back in the Horseheath Village Hall doing things the old-fashioned way, face-to-face Brownies or 3D Brownies as I heard another leader call it a while ago.

During our Zoom sessions we have almost completed the two Skills Builders I mentioned last time - Communicate and Innovate. We also had a great session with *Jumping Clay* where we made mini-me clay figures of ourselves. My figures looks like I'm a bodybuilder whereas Mother's looks like she has arms like a monkey. It was a great session and many thanks to Steph for being so patient with us.

This term we hope to work on the Jarman Centre 'Wish you were here' challenge badge where the girls might be able to sleep in a tent in their garden. Fingers crossed we can do this.

Now that we will be back in the hall we will have more space so if you would like to send your daughter to Brownies where the girls have fun learning new skills and enjoy just being themselves. I know some girls didn't want to try us whilst we were meeting online. If you would like to know more about Brownies or the Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards please check out the Girlguiding website (www.girlguiding.org.uk) or drop us a message on horseheathbrownies@gmail.com.

Pauline, Katie, and Laurené

FROM THE VICARAGE

How could I have been so stupid?

I vividly remember my brother's surprise 60th birthday party in the local village hall. Genuinely, he simply had not seen the surprise coming and he was gracious enough to acknowledge this in his speech at the end.

"I just didn't realise that it was all being prepared? How could I have been so stupid?" The answer came from the back of the hall, *"Years of practice, Brian!"*

That the Church of England has an appalling track record of institutional racism burnt fiercely in the news some weeks ago. However, like much 'shock n'horror' news it quickly spluttered out. I guess most people were not surprised at the news especially if, like me, you've had the good fortune to make close friends with black and brown people whom you've come to respect, and in whose judgement and honesty you completely trust. In addition, you've become comfortable enough with each other to be able to ask if they've ever experienced racism - no doubt they look at you as if you have asked them if the earth really does go round the sun. How could I have been so stupid, not to be more in touch with my own unconscious racial biases? Years of practice Alistair!

The important question then becomes, "Well, what to do about it?" The positive discrimination of ensuring that black and brown candidates are always shortlisted for jobs? Making sure you're especially nice to your neighbours of colour - hmm ... probably few opportunities here, locally? Yes, all these are good things.

Nevertheless, at the end of the day, as a white person it is hard not to fall into the feeling of being accused of something that is a little bit unfair. What about that article you read on paler black people discriminating against darker black people; or the involvement of native Africans in the capturing and trading of their own into slavery? Not that such excuses can ever exonerate inhumanity and gross inhumanity. Surely the discussion is more complicated and fraught with difficulty, and potentially heated and unpleasant. We would all rather it went away; after all, surely things are gradually improving!

The risk, as always, is that racism becomes yet another thing to kick into the long grass, and then our own racism just becomes yet more furtive, unprocessed and unacknowledged. That is not good enough. Certainly not good enough for Christians. Perhaps, because for Christians the concept of forgiveness is so overfamiliar, we forget how key the asking for, and the offering of, forgiveness is to our faith yet 'forgiveness', when we start to unpack it, can seem to throw up more questions than it answers. Indeed, it becomes a life times exploration of learning the true impact of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, for love of us in our lives.

Forgiveness must be central to the work of reconciliation but how, in practice, can/should/will forgiveness play out to bring about change for the better in our multicultural world with its years of stupidity, bad practice, and racism?

I think it's not exactly clear. However, Christians might well reflect on the likelihood that this extraordinary and needed cultural change is the work of the Holy Spirit bringing in the Kingdom of God and, at the very least, we must listen to the Spirit's promptings, and cooperate with God in where He is leading us.

Alistair Collen, Lay Minister