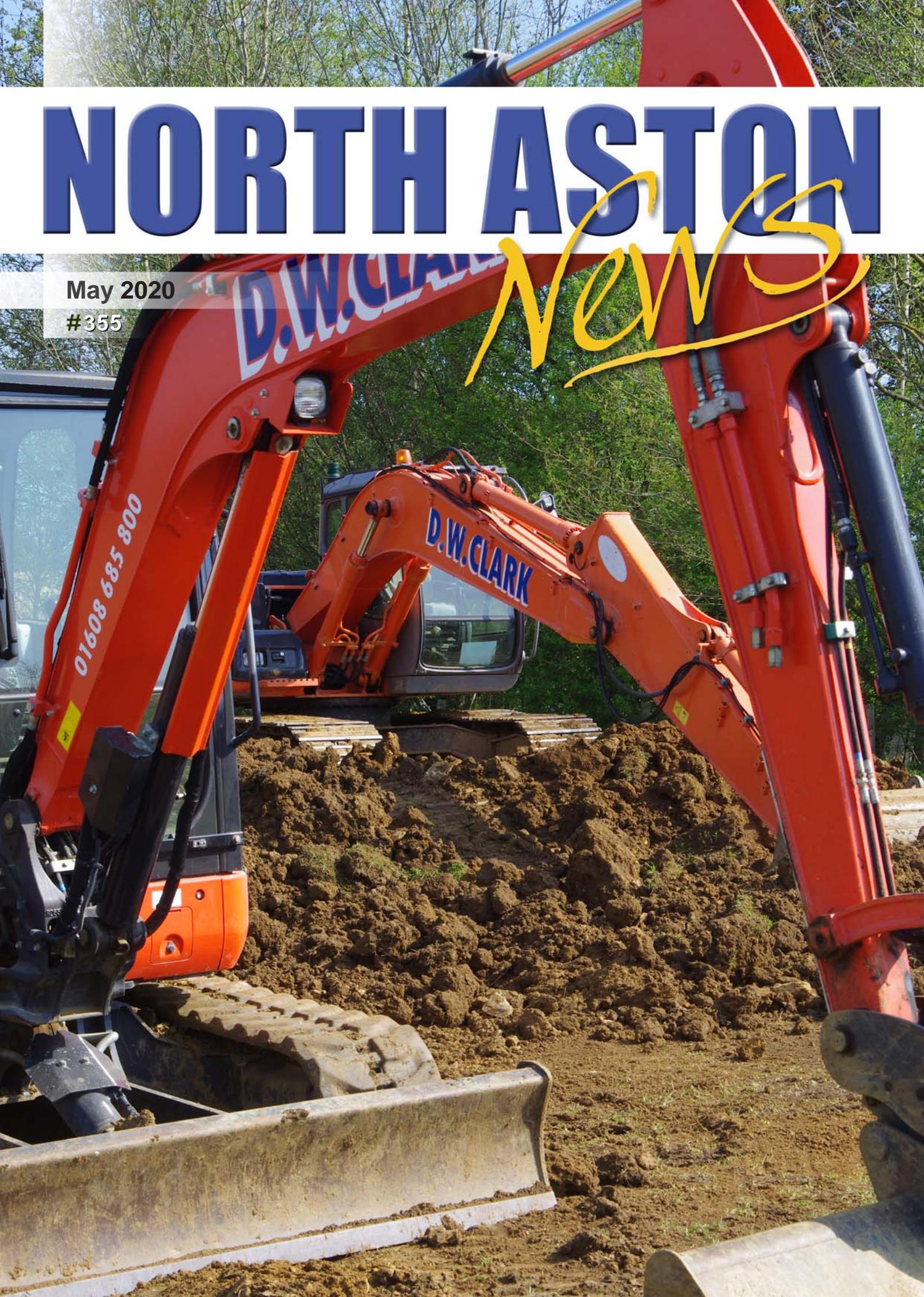


NORTH ASTON

NEWS

May 2020

#355



NORTH ASTON NEWS

MAY 2020, No:355

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Email: Bryn.Williams@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk

Thames Valley Police non-emergency: 101
Out of Hours Doctor: 111 or 08453 458 995

Notes from the Chair

Hello to one and all ...

I would like to start by thanking all of our volunteers in the village who have been superstars during lockdown, from collecting prescriptions to just checking in. It has made a world of difference for members that are unable to venture out of our little bubble.

Unfortunately, we have had to cancel our summer fête. It was a difficult decision to make but we felt that even if the lockdown was lifted before then there would still be social distancing in place and no time for planning.

Once again, if anyone needs anything or if you want to join the rather successful village WhatsApp group do please give me a call.

You can telephone Lucinda on 340588
or email: chair@north-aston.co.uk

Lucinda

Full-Fibre Broadband - Please Read!

As those on the regular emailing list will know by now, the exercise last year with the Broadband Questionnaire has borne fruit, and a letter from Openreach confirmed last month that the company is prepared to go ahead with installing the "full-fibre to the property" infrastructure for North Aston.

In addition, and thanks wholly to all those who returned their questionnaires, it also now looks likely that we will have secured sufficient vouchers under the Government's *Rural Gigabit Connectivity Scheme* to cover the expense. This means that, aside from the need to sign up to one of the high-speed broadband packages (for one year), there will be no cost to householders.

The list of properties that accompanied the Openreach "offer" was, in effect, restricted only to those who responded to the questionnaire. This meant that anyone who ignored the requests, or wasn't on the mailing list, was excluded. Fortunately, especially for those whose properties didn't make the cut, there were a number of significant omissions from the schedule, including several households who'd returned their questionnaires, but had still been overlooked. This error has allowed us to re-open the application process, and add in not only the missing properties, but also to offer one last opportunity for others to join the 21st century.

If you are not on the village mailing list, or have still not responded to the emails but would nevertheless like your property to be included in the proposed installation of full-fibre connection, then please call Marcus urgently on 347356 or email info@north-aston.co.uk

Why would you want to do this, even if you're currently not using the Internet? It sounds trite to say that "*this is the future*" ... but it is. The current lockdown and Covid-19 crisis has illustrated just how vital an efficient communication system, reliant on fibre Broadband, can be. Using video-conferencing to visit the doctor, instead of going to the surgery, will become the norm. Virtual meetings with clients and work colleagues will relieve the need to travel. Working from home will become commonplace, more efficient and more cost effective. We will stream more entertainment through our televisions, do our everyday shopping on-line, and video-chat to relatives and friends face-to-face over vast distances – without that irritating stutter and image-lag! What's more, having the infrastructure installed now, free of charge, will add value to your property, because catching up later could carry a heavy and perhaps prohibitive direct cost.

There is further reassurance for those who live in one of North Aston Farm's houses; James has already ensured that all these will definitely be connected to the new full-fibre infrastructure.

Please also read the update on Page 8 from Guy Middleton ...

Front cover: *After delays caused by heavy rain earlier in the year, work has been progressing apace with the groundwork for the new District Heating Scheme. James Taylor adds some detail to the story on Page 7*

Announcements

Planning Applications

Notice of the following announcements relating to Planning Applications have been received from Cherwell District Council:

4 Hall Close, North Aston, OX25 6HR. Applicant: Mr Ian Obinna. The previous application relating to the proposed reduction in height and crown to G1 x 20 Leylandii has been approved. Application Reference No: 20 / 00748 / TCA

7 Somerton Road, North Aston, OX25 6HP. Applicant, Mr James Taylor. Application relating to reduction in crown, height, spread and shape of various trees, including several Leyland Cypress, a White Spruce, and one Cherry, and the felling of one Leyland Cypress. Application Reference No: 20 / 00944 / TCA

Nicholson Nurseries, The Park, North Aston, OX25 6HL. Applicant, Mr Niel Nicholson. Application relating to the variation of Condition 2 (operating times) of 16 / 01964 / F to permit trade on Sundays only in December. Application Reference No: 20 / 01007 / F. See details on CDC website: www.cherwell.gov.uk.

Just Giving ...

I'm sure we're all aware of the £30 million raised for NHS charities by Colonel **Tom Moore's Just Giving** campaign, but there are others that are a little more local to home: **Alan Harris** has set up a *Just Giving* page to raise funds to secure PPE for Deddington Health Centre, while the girls at **Park Farm** have set up a Tuck Shop to raise money for "NHS Heroes". To contribute, visit www.justgiving.com & Search for the emboldened keywords above. To order from the Tuck Shop use the NA WhatsApp.

May Birthdays

Richard Boss

Linda Brown

Clive Busby Hal Busby

Holly Busby Iris Busby

Sarah Godwin

Oscar Le Clercq

Deirdre Oakley

Matthew Rees

Oscar Taylor

Bianca Waszynska



Many Happy Returns to all the North Aston residents who celebrate birthdays this month. If you're not listed, or know someone who should be, please let us know.

Notices

Deddington Farmers' Market

The market remains cancelled for the foreseeable future. A new note on the DFM website says: "We will be posting here and on our social media details of our stallholders that have an on-line ordering facility. We urge you to support these small businesses as this is a tough time for them. We hope to be back before too long. In the meantime - keep safe."

Ordering a Take-Away

An extended list from last month, with several local pubs and restaurants now offering take-away services. All are collection only unless stated otherwise. These include:

The White Horse, Duns Tew. A daily evening menu is posted on the website from 6 pm: www.dunstewwhitehorse.co.uk, or call 340272 to order. Monday to Saturday and Sunday lunch. Call Michael on 07818 519659.

Red Lion, Steeple Aston is preparing take-away pizzas, and feedback has been excellent! Call 01869 340225 or visit www.redlionsteepleaston.co.uk.

The Cinnamon Stick, Middle Barton is offering takeaway slots from their menu of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean foods, every 15 minutes between 6-9pm Tuesday-Saturday. Order on-line at www.thecinnamonstick.co.uk. Call 340440.

The Fox at Souldern. One more to add to the list, currently Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Visit the website to view the regularly changing menu: www.thefoxatsouldern.co.uk.

Please support our local pubs. When they're gone, they're gone!

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www.sjbhearingcompany.co.uk ~ tel: 01869 254 019
email: booking@sjbhearingcompany.co.uk
Ashcroft Therapy Centre, Hudson Street, Deddington, OX15 0SW

North Aston Nature Notes

With Stephen Rees

The "strange times" I referred to last month look set to continue for a while yet, but to be honest I can't think of anywhere safer to live, or with nicer people, than North Aston. Everyone has been really supportive of each other.

First off, a few Nature Notes and spots for you this month. We had four Swallows in our back field on the evening of the 19th April, and guess what ... Wifey saw them before I flipping did!

Still nice to see them though, although I fear they failed to find a nest site and have moved on. They hadn't been seen again for a few days now.

Our mole has moved out of the hen house and is residing quite happily on our front lawn, and exploring Wendy Wife's veg patch. I sat watching a mole hill come up the other morning. First, a load of soil would be kicked up, and then nothing for two or three minutes. Then another lot would appear, followed by quiet again. I think he was going back down his tunnels to bring the soil back up. I tried to get closer, but as soon as I did, he stopped. He must of felt me moving.

Moles have four or five young, which are born early in April. At this time the males travel along their many tunnels – and make even more – in search of hundreds of worms.

A few more birdy bits ... I have a pigeon's nest just outside my workshop, on the top of a laurel bush, which has been fun to watch. For a week they were both going in and out carrying sticks, then it all went quiet as she laid the eggs. They've hatched out now, and both birds are constantly in and out with food. There not very quiet about it either, almost crash-landing on the way in, and going out with loud clapping wings.

For a couple of mornings there has been a small group of geese in the field feeding, and our mini flock of male blackbirds are still down here too.

Late one evening, towards the end of the month, I found a big pile of sparrow feathers just behind Deirdre's cottage, so we must have at least one Sparrowhawk still about.

My old friend Phil, who lives in South Wales now, used to live in Lynne and Fiona's cottage. His son was the one who used to see the ghost of a little boy all the time. He told me that he has heard the cuckoo a good few times near the Mumbles, and Franca said she heard one in North Aston a week ago, but I've not heard one here for two years now.



Aunty Bev's bees are really busy now, going in and out of her hives. We also have a good few other insects buzzing about. One looks like a little hovering bee with a long horn on the end of its nose. These are *Bombylius major*, also known as the Large Bee Fly. Their appearance, looking like a bee, is for their own protection, and it also helps them get close enough to lay their eggs in the nests of wasps and solitary bees, where the larvae hatch out and feed on the grubs. Their ability to hover is amazing to watch, and they dart so quickly from spot to spot, pollinating flowers, so do keep an eye out for them. They are totally harmless.

For the last couple of weeks we have been developing a big new hotel down here on the corner of the Green. It started out as one small house, but rapidly grew and grew. The first part went up in one day, and as I was putting the others up the next day, bees were already going into Number 1, The Wall, North Aston, OX25 6HX!!

They are now a really massive draw, with bees of all sizes going in and out, in and out. We can stand right next to them and watch, and they really don't seem to mind. Even Penny has stopped and looked up at them.

You can watch a bee arrive covered in pollen, and go into one of the holes, and then come out again clean. She lays an egg, and then she chews some wood to make a kind of sticky filler that she uses to seal off the hole, as neatly as if it had been dowelled. We have about 30 sealed holes now, in less than a week. It really is amazing to watch, and very satisfying. I think I'm going to make more, now that I seem to have time aplenty in my hands!

Well, I think that's it at the moment. We do have a few butterflies about, but not many, although I have seen a lovely blue one. Hopefully there will be more when the Buddleia blooms.

Stay safe North Aston. I'm sure the world will go back to some sort of normality eventually, and hopefully people in far off countries will realise that it's probably not a good idea to eat weird and exotic animals. Maybe people will also notice how clean the air is now, and stop flying everywhere all the time.

Regards from Stephen, Wifey and Penny the dog.

Oh, and one PS: Does it sound as if the bird song has got louder since all this started?

The Village Defibrillator

The defibrillator is located in the porch at 4 Somerton Road, opposite the post box. CPR & Defibrillator training sessions are arranged from time to time. For more information, and to book a session, please contact Mark on 347806





Spring has sprung! Thanks to Jane Durnin for the tub of bluebells.

Covid-19 Testing Sites

Three temporary COVID-19 testing sites have been set up in Oxfordshire. They are located in the car park of the Council's offices at Bodicote House in Banbury; in the car park of Bicester Village; and in New Street car park in Chipping Norton.

CDC has been working closely with Ministry of Defence staff to establish these sites. The facility at Bodicote House became operational on Thursday 30 April, and the others should be active by the time you receive this issue of the *North Aston News*.

If you suspect you may have contracted the virus, or you are a keyworker, or you are unable to work from home and believe that you may have had the virus, or been exposed to it, then you can book a test by visiting the government website at www.gov.uk. Enter "getting tested" in the search box, and follow the links to the page where you can complete the on-line application form for a test.



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Tel: (01869) 347702
visit the website at:
www.northastonorganics.co.uk

What's on Order?

If you're having problems with shopping, please contact the WhatsApp group, and someone will be able to help, and perhaps do some shopping for you (see separate entry). However, there are now even more local companies offering deliveries, as well as pubs preparing take-away meals (see page 3). You can take advantage of the following:

North Aston Organics

Mark, Ginny and the team at NAO continue to keep their pop-up shop (in the car park behind the Old Bakery) well stocked with an increasing variety of fresh vegetables, including all the staples. See the advert on the left.

Mark's Cotswold Bakery

An excellent artisan bakery based in Chippy, and using locally-ground flour. An even wider variety of breads, loaves, bloomers and cakes now delivered to North Aston on a Wednesday. You can place an order through the NA WhatsApp "Bread Group".

Forge House Bakery

Located in Lower Heyford and also broadening her choice of breads, Sue Brown's bakery delivers to North Aston on a Thursday, although collections at other times can be arranged. Includes focaccia, cinnamon buns, and cultured butter. Email forgehousebakery@btinternet.com or call 07584 666561.

Moore & Lyon Farm Produce

Located on the Worton Road, north out of Middle Barton, Moore & Lyon are one of several Farmer's Market traders now offering direct sales. Meat and eggs as well as other staples on Fridays. Email mooreandlyonproduce@yahoo.co.uk or call 07967 530183. Shop is small, so please wait outside if they're busy.

Tip Top Chef

Tony Baughan, founder of Tip Top Chef, offers home-cooked frozen and chilled meals, with delivery to our area on Friday afternoons or Saturday Morning - no charge on orders over £15. Visit www.tiptopchef.co.uk to see latest menu, which changes regularly, or call him on 07827 293 800.

Aldens Meatmaster

Based in Oxford, Aldens will now deliver to North Aston on several days of the week, and offer a wide range of meat, vegetables, fish, fruit and wines. Spend £60 for free delivery, but their boxes are good quality and value. www.meatmaster.info

Manos Deli Jericho

Based in Walton Street, Oxford, Manos has an extended range of fresh fruit & vegetable products, as well as baked Spanakopitta, Tiropitta and other homemade foods available for delivery to North Aston. Visit www.manosfoodbar.com for details of take away foods and grocery deliveries, call 01865 311782, or email: info@manosfoodbar.com for further information.

Cotefield Nurseries

The regular delivery to North Aston from Cotefield Nurseries has continued on a weekly basis - usually arriving Thursday or Friday. Most varieties of spring seedlings (ready for planting) are now available, as well as flowers and border plants, seeds and other gardening essentials. Check their Facebook page for what's available or call 01295 275222. Liaise with other North Aston growers via the WhatsApp group to share the delivery charge.



North Aston Discussion Group

As we had to postpone the last planned meeting, we wondered if anyone fancies a virtual version? We are happy to set up a Zoom meeting and all are welcome to join. It's a way of getting together and chewing the cud over a drink (optional but probable!) - so what about we try it to see if it works?

Proposed date is Tuesday 12th May at 7.30pm, and the topic is: *"There's no doubt that the world will have been changed by the experience of coronavirus. In what way might it be better or worse, and do you expect the changes to be enduring?"*

The discussion group is very informal and respectful of each others feelings and opinions. It is intended to be a positive way of spending time together, thinking about things that matter. Please do consider joining the event – just call Annie or Tony on 347767 or email: anniesavage0@gmail.com and we can send you the Zoom invitation by email. Obviously a webcam is needed and we do have one spare if anyone wants to join but is limited by no camera.

Thames Water

If you have an urgent water-related problem during lock-down, don't worry, as the Thames Water 24 hour Helpline is always open on 0800 316 9800. Emergencies aside, staff shortages mean the call centre is closed for general enquiries and they're asking customers not to call except for truly vital issues.

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District Heating Update

What a strange and worrying time we are having at the moment. I hope everyone is keeping safe and well. I have been asked if I could give a brief update on our District Heating scheme.

Unsurprisingly we have fallen somewhat behind schedule – the best laid plans and all that! Apart from the usual delays that one might expect – slight variations to the scheme, finalising the layout etc – we have also had to contend with the fifth wettest winter on record (including the wettest-ever February) and now the dreaded virus.

Luckily, we have made some progress. We have built the Central Plant Room and, thanks to a mercifully dry spell of weather, the ground loops have been successfully trenched into Banbury's Ground – which you might have noticed now looks something like a WWI battlefield. Apologies for the noise of the trencher during the otherwise peaceful lock-down.

So, what next - I hear you ask? The Plant Room still needs to be kitted out and plumbed-in, which might prove tricky with the current requirement for social distancing.



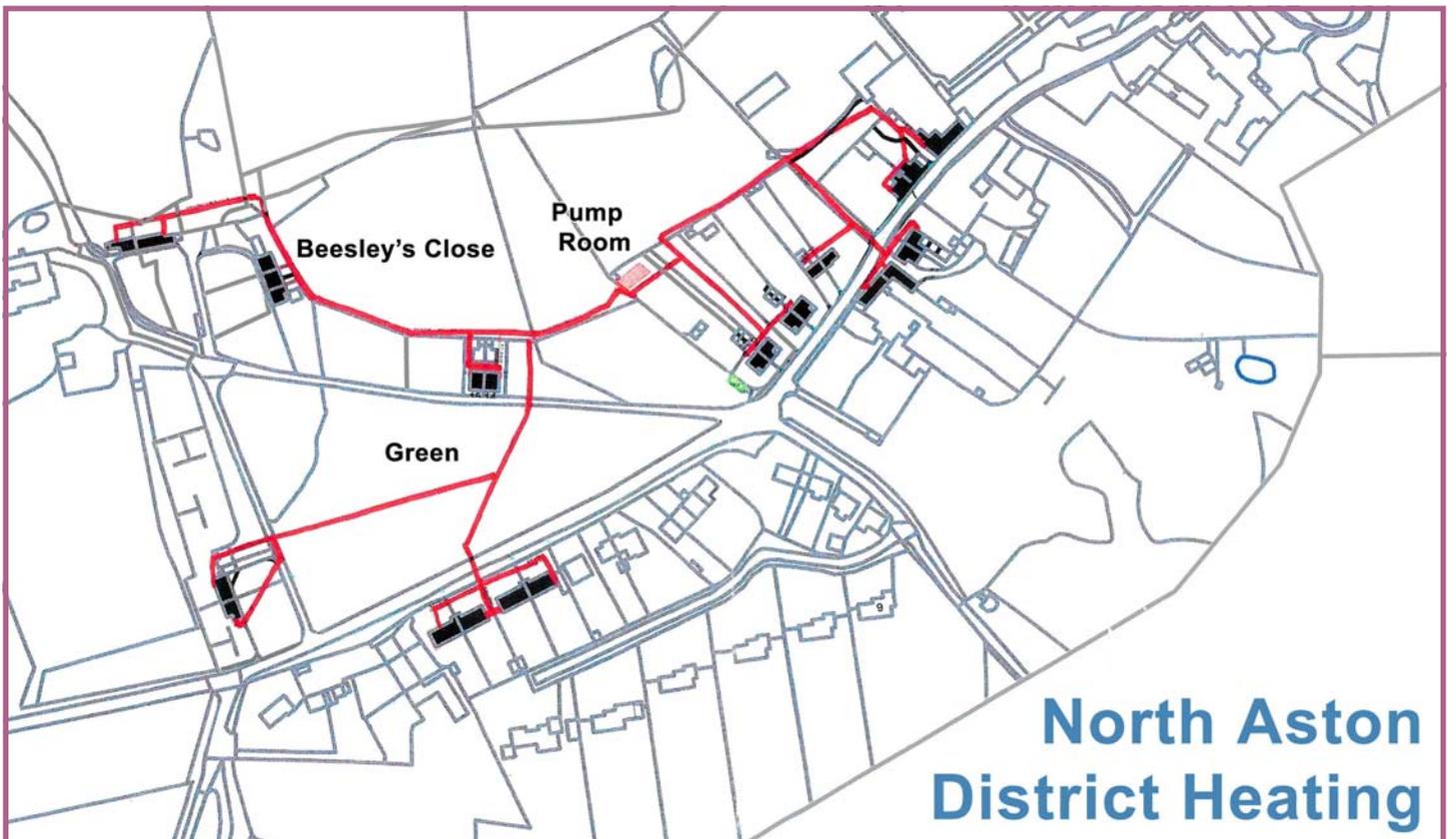
We have just taken delivery of the District Heating Main, which has come from Denmark. That's the insulated pipes that will be taking hot water to the heat exchange units in the properties. This will need to be trenched in. (See Plan)

We are also looking at the possibility of simultaneously installing a system to boost the water pressure coming into the cottages. However, we are waiting for costings on this and there are a number of issues to think through.



At the moment I can't give a precise date of when the trenching in the village will begin – but we will keep you posted and are hopeful that everything will be in place by the end of the summer!

All the best and stay safe, James



**North Aston
District Heating**

Full-Fibre Broadband Update

An update on the Fibre Broadband Project from Guy Middleton of Spirit Public Sector. He and Florence Templeton were instrumental in initiating the programme last year ...

I'm pleased to say that after a lot of back and forth, we have now received from Openreach a revised quotation for bringing full-fibre broadband to the village. The quotation is significantly lower than the original figure, and it now means that the cost to the village can almost certainly be met from the Government vouchers that Openreach will apply for on our behalf.

Openreach requires an individual or organisation to sign a contract with them for the delivery of the fibre, and we are grateful to the Taylor family for offering to take on this important role for the village. Their willingness to do so will greatly reduce the difficulty of getting the project completed, and will speed up matters considerably.

In order to avoid further delay, we now need to firm up the final boundaries of the scheme. That means defining exactly which premises will be included, and confirming who is prepared to sign up for a voucher.

Signing up for a voucher means agreeing to take a fibre-based broadband service for at least a year. For those on a basic broadband connection, this might be slightly more expensive than what you pay today, but for a much better service. In many cases, those already on a high-speed connection will find the cost about the same, or even less than it is today.

Some properties at the edge of the village are served from different telephone exchanges, and unfortunately cannot be included in this project. We hope that news of our success will spread so that neighbouring communities will run projects of their own, addressing those properties in due course.

Marcus has been working hard to track down the last remaining residents that we think could benefit from the project. This is especially the case for properties outside the centre of the village, as it is really important to join the project at this stage. Because of the way the voucher scheme works, there may not be another opportunity to bring full-fibre broadband to these households for many years.

The project is a great opportunity for the village to get ahead, and a real example of what can be achieved when we work together as a community. Thank you all for your support in making it happen, and especially to Guy and Florence, for getting the project off the ground, and Neil Holiday of Laws & Finnes, who has done a great deal of the work with Openreach on behalf of North Aston Farms.
Marcus

Briefly, what are the benefits of full-fibre?

Speed – Full-Fibre can handle speeds of up to 10Gbp/s.

Reliability – Full-Fibre is robust and less liable to damage.

Signal Strength – Unlike current systems, the signal does not degrade, even over long distances.

Bandwidth – Will allow all the household to access the Internet simultaneously – TV, computer, gaming, video & more.

Symmetric Speeds – Upload as fast as download.

Latency – Less waiting for files to upload, and no buffering.

Enhanced Productivity – For the self-employed and employees working from home, easy access to The Cloud for data storage and software applications, plus full teleconferencing and video communication without lag or stutter.

Future-proof – As we all come to rely more upon internet connectivity, full-fibre will enable North Aston residents to take advantage of technological advances for years to come.

NICHOLSONS



HELPING YOU ENHANCE YOUR GARDEN

In line with advice from the government and in an effort to keep us all safe, we have unfortunately had to close our Yurt Café, Plant Centre and Shop.

However, we still want to help you make the most of this time at home, so have set up our 'Nicholsons Knowledge Community' on Facebook. This is a space for us to share the wisdom and expertise of our experts, whilst providing you with the opportunity to ask questions and interact.

We will be posting regularly in this group, as well onto our website and social media platforms, so make sure to keep an eye out:



@Nicholsonsgardendesign

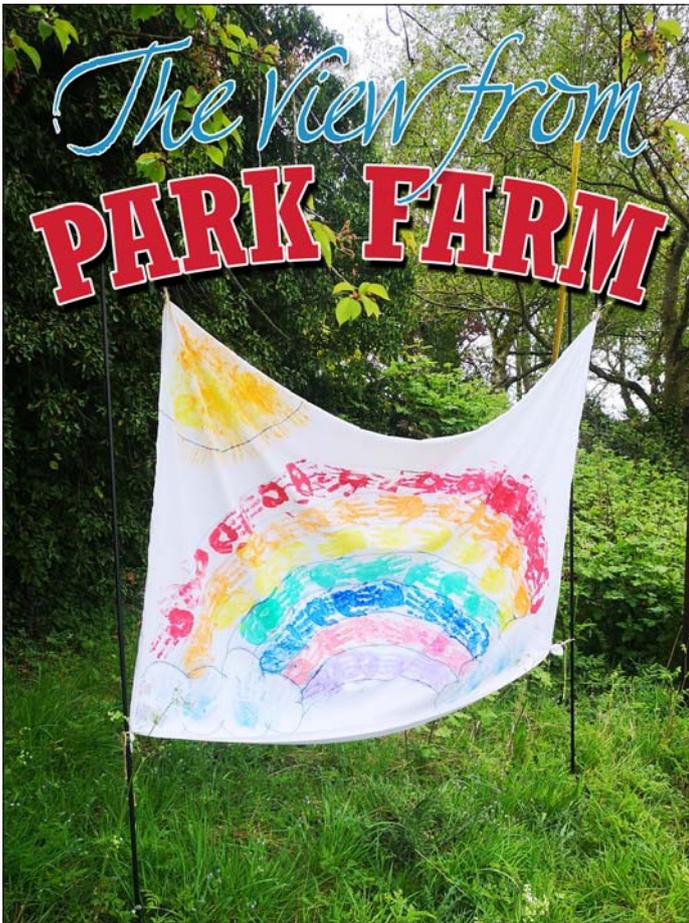


@nicholsonsoxfordshire

www.nicholsonsgb.com

01869 340342





Well! Since the beginning of last month it's been a rollercoaster of emotions for us all, I'm sure.

Before the lock-down period, the Park Farmers had already stopped their activities due to the threat of the Coronavirus, and so had only been completing local walks and bike rides as our daily exercise!

We've made a lovely rainbow for outside our home to support staying at home and have created some activity bags for the elderly at the carehome we normally visit once a month. We are waiting to hear back from our elderly friends as to how they got on with the activities provided by our young people, but we hope they very much enjoyed them.

We are all looking forwards to lock-down ending, much like everyone I suppose! We hope everyone a safe and happy month and hope that you've all been making the most of the beautiful sunshine in your gardens!

We hope to see you all soon and if you need us we're only a phone call away!

All the girls and staff at Park Farm!

From the Fire Station

We are now living in strange times. Cars are a rare sight on the main road, hand-shakes forbidden, and toilet paper is worth more than gold! At the fire station, training courses have been cancelled, drill nights are done on your home computer, and crews can only ride with five – our sixth rider being held in reserve.

Calls have been few and far between, with just a count of four: One station standby at Banbury, one false fire alarm call, one standby at the M40 for a lorry fire, and finally, helping with a tree fire at Banbury golf course. A stray spark from a brush fire seemingly the culprit, and leading to three hours of traffic direction to avoid any chance of a possible collision during the clear up.



Prior to the moratorium on all training courses, James Greenwood passed his Breathing Apparatus (BA) practical at Moreton-in-Marsh Fire College, and is now qualified to ride number 2 BA wearer. Adrian Spillsbury and Emma Flint's BA Team Leader course and Andy Haywood's OIC (Officer In Charge) course are temporarily suspended until conditions improve.

At the Fire Station, we continue to provide the maximum cover we can and will be there if needed. As the weather warms, please make sure that you BBQ safely and only with those you live with. Also, please **do not** consider lighting naked flame sky lanterns in support of our emergency services and the NHS – there are more sensible ways to show your support in these troubled times (pots, pans and hands spring to mind).

Please "stay home, stay safe and save lives".

James Greenwood

james@cyclogicalshop.co.uk

North Aston 100 Club

Last month we had the annual Big Draw, with the top prize of £100.

We now start all over again, and in the coming days Bev will be going round the village popping renewal envelopes through letterboxes. As well as inviting all the current players to re-join for another year, she is also looking for new members to sign up to the North Aston 100 Club.



If you are already a member, return your envelope as soon as possible, with your payment, to be sure of retaining your chosen number(s). If you don't yet participate, then please consider subscribing. It's all in a good cause, and the chances of winning are better than the lottery! You can sign up to more than one number and increase your chances of winning, although you'll have to contact Bev to find out which ones are still available. You can phone her on 347434, or email info@north-aston.co.uk.



The winners of the Big April draw were:

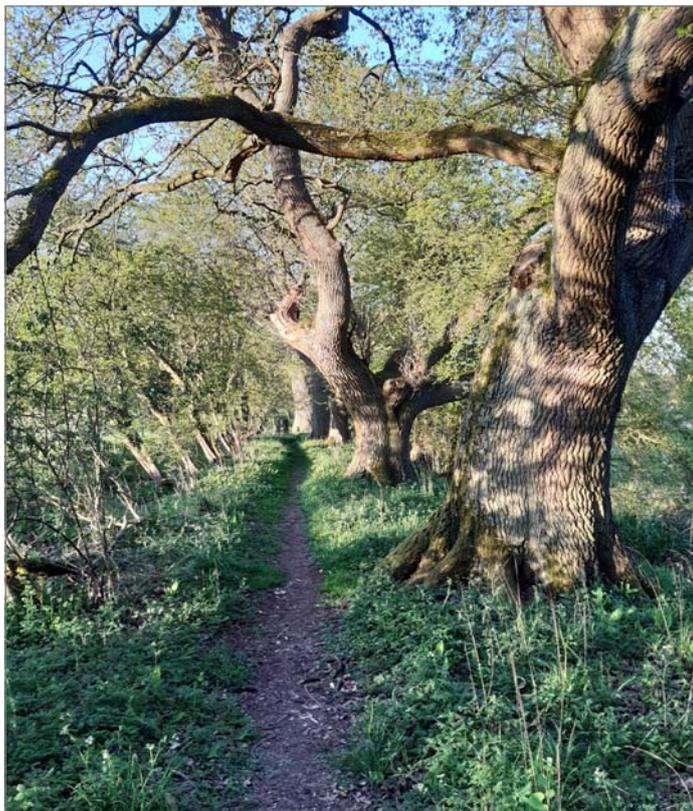
1st Prize (£100): Nigel Doggett (#6)

2nd Prize (£5): Joyce Morley (#10)

You've got to be in it to win it!

Village Views

Thank you to the various North Astonites who have contributed photographs this month. A selection is featured below.



Many village residents are finding their prescribed daily exercise by taking walks through our delightful countryside. Kildare Bourke-Borrowes perfectly captured the dappled sunshine of a woodland path in the valley.



Others have turned to the allotment for exercise, as recommended by Michael Gove. The plots have never looked so good in years! Tony has also erected an impressive new polytunnel.



Thanks to Gurlu Andreassen for this panoramic view of cattle being herded on the farm last month by, as she says, “modern day cowboys”. In some parts of the country farmers now rely on quad bikes, but here, it’s the hyper-versatile “Ute”.

Notes from TVP

In a stark case of stating the blindingly obvious, the Home Secretary recently announced that incidents of burglary, car theft and, most notably, shoplifting, are significantly down on this time last year. While this shouldn't have come as any kind of surprise, crime remains an everyday hazard, despite the lock-down, and certain categories of criminal behaviour have actually increased. Thames Valley Police has issued several reminders and warning in recent weeks:

Of prime concern, as people across the UK have been asked to stay at home in order to protect themselves and others during the coronavirus pandemic, is the increased risk of **domestic abuse**. For some adults and children, the new regulations mean that they are with their abuser for longer.

TVP wishes to assure the public that domestic abuse is never acceptable. In an emergency, people should always call 999. If you can't speak, call 999 and then dial 55. This is called the *Silent Solution*, and the call-taker will sensitively manage the police response. DS Rebecca Mears, Head of Public Protection, says: “Reach out, whether it be to the police or another agency that is right for you. We can help you. We also encourage families, friends and neighbours to be vigilant and call the police if they believe domestic abuse is affecting the lives of their loved ones or of their neighbours.”

Anyone experiencing domestic abuse and needing support can make an online referral to **Victims First** via the website at www.victims-first.org.uk

As well as the potential for increased abuse within the home, criminals are also using the lock-down, and our heightened reliance on the Internet, to effect ever more elaborate scams.

We cannot stress enough the importance of double-checking **unsolicited emails** carefully before responding. If in doubt, ask for help – from a friend, a neighbour, or by using Google (*other search engines are available*) to seek advice from one of the many on-line scam-checking websites, like Snopes. These can also be very useful in revealing “fake news” and verifying facts and scare-stories.

One prevalent type of email at the moment advises householders that their TV licence has expired, or there's been a problem with a direct debit, perhaps from a utility or phone company. If you are unsure, visit the company's own website - not by clicking any links in an email, but by using your regular browser. If you really do have an account with that company, log-in, and any genuine message will be repeated or flagged up as part of your account “dashboard”.

On the plus side, the number of cold-call telephone calls has significantly reduced since the lock-down began. A very thin silver lining in an otherwise challenging situation. Stay safe.



The Church MATTERS



Church Building Closure

First an apology for the Church building being closed at this time. Several people have asked me about this, and I fully understand that people wish things were different. The bishop asked all churches to close following guidance from the Archbishops after the Prime Minister broadcast to the nation back in March.

It's not just about stopping us gathering: it's about stopping transmission of the virus. We all want special, safe places, and it feels like a church building ought to be such a place, but this virus doesn't respect churches! One person might pause inside the church to pray, and put their hand on a pew (not

knowing they are a virus carrier), then two hours later someone else comes in to pray, puts their hand in the same place - and we can't risk that.

However: Easter tells us that Jesus isn't confined to empty buildings. He is risen! So let's not stop praying just because the church door is closed. The grounds are open, and Mary heard Jesus speak to her in a garden on Easter Sunday morning; our homes are our constant surroundings, and two disciples walked with Jesus seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus, but it wasn't till they sat in the kitchen and ate together that they recognised him. God is with us everywhere - if we will pause and pray and listen and see him.

Ongoing Church Worship

I am missing being with people more than I can say! But I'm very grateful for all the lovely comments that you have been emailing in since I started the 'Worship at Home' videos. These videos are less than 15 minutes long, and go on the homepage of our church website, www.sntchurch.com every weekend. They usually include a couple of hymns (with words on the screen to join in with), a Bible reading, a short thought and some prayers. I am going to try and film members of the different congregations doing the Bible readings and prayers in future weeks (all observing social distancing protocols!) so let me know if you'd like to be involved in this. And of course the BBC has *Sunday Morning Worship* for those without internet access.

Church Family

One way we are all keeping connected is through 'Rector's Ramblings' - an email I am sending out three times a week, with bits of news and lots of things to help brighten our days. Thank you to everyone who is contributing to this, with information about good things to see and hear on the TV, radio and internet in these days. Send a note to steeplerector@hotmail.co.uk if you want to be added to the list. We've had photos of crafts that people have been making - from Palm Crosses to Easter Gardens - as well as jokes, book recommendations and YouTube clips that folk have shared. And I'm always available by phone - 340903.



Candles of Hope and Remembrance

The 'Ramblings' also pass on family news and prayer requests. One really important initiative is has offered is candles of hope and remembrance on Sunday evenings at 9pm. In these days we can't come together as a community when someone passes away. But we can all light a candle and put it in a window on Sunday evenings at 9pm. In my emails I try to name everyone I have heard of who has passed away, but I know that people have family members from away too, and it is good as a community to be able to share in sorrow and in love in simple gestures of hope and remembrance. As the Queen said in her Easter broadcast: Easter wasn't cancelled; as dark as these times can be, 'Light and life are greater'. These small signs shared together remind us of God's love holding us here and now, and of the hope of greater things to come. Every blessing.

Revd Marcus Green



Any comments about the above are very welcome. More news is always available on our website: www.sntchurch.com
Please email our Rector Marcus Green: steeplerector@hotmail.co.uk or tel: 340903
You can also email Clive: casb@north-aston.com (tel: 340470) or Annabel: annabelbevan@hotmail.com (tel: 345153). Any other member of the PCC will also be very happy to talk, and they are: Richard Bailey, Beryl Greenwood, Vicky Taylor, Ginny Stay, Ted Short, Jeremy Taylor and Norman West.



CHURCH SERVICES

PARISH WORSHIP IN MAY

NORTH ASTON

STEEPLE ASTON

TACKLEY

The Church is Closed

The archbishops have called on all Church of England parishes to pause public worship during the COVID-19 infection, and so for the time being there will be no Sunday services at St Mary's and the church building will also remain closed. In the meantime, the Vicar is posting a regular 'Worship at Home' video every Sunday on the church website, www.sntchurch.com. He is also sending out regular emails to everyone on the benefice email list. See "Church Matters" for details. Email the vicar: steeplerector@hotmail.co.uk or call him on the usual number: 340903.

North Aston WhatsApp Group

The group remains very active and continues to be a very useful – and sometimes amusing – way of supporting the community and staying connected.

Annie suggests that there has been some very interesting and varied requests for help, and it's worth emphasising that the Group really is a place where people should feel free to ask for things which might improve the quality of life during this time. It has done much to generate a sense of community during these difficult times.

It can be hard to ask for support or errands, but the offers of help just keep coming! People do feel very valued if they can do things which makes others happy, so don't ever hesitate to ask.

There's plenty of room for more to be added to the group, so if you have a smartphone and wish to join, contact Annie by calling her on 347767 and she will explain what you need to do and add you to the Group.

Stop Press – Blandford Flies

A timely warning that the Blandford Fly season is already upon us. These tiny black flies have a big bite, and many people suffer a strong allergic reaction. They rarely fly above waist height, so if you're working in the garden, protect your ankles and lower legs. If you get bitten, don't scratch, apply a cold compress or calamine lotion (not antihistamine cream) and cover any large blisters with a dry dressing. If things aren't better after three or four days, contact your GP.

Church Worship

**Our church buildings are closed
due to COVID-19**

But...

**Easter says Jesus isn't locked in an
empty building!**

**Do not be afraid -
He is Risen!**

**God's love is always with us
everywhere**

**So please pray in the churchyard
or at home
or ... anywhere!**

**And Worship at Home with a new
short service online each Sunday
at www.sntchurch.com**

North Aston News

The North Aston News is designed and produced by CMC Graphics, printed by Nicholson's of North Aston, and distributed monthly, free of charge, to all the residents of the Parish of North Aston. A full-colour edition in electronic format is also available and is sent out to an extensive emailing list every month. To be included in that list, please contact the News, stating your wish to be added to the mailing list. We welcome contributions, which need to be in an electronic format (except Classifieds and Announcements, which may be hand written). To submit an item, including high resolution photographs suitable for use on the front cover, please email: info@north-aston.co.uk.

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