



CHALKBOARD



The Bees are back in town

It is perhaps not widely known but for several years now we have kept bees here at the Old Schoolhouse and our manager, Karl, has become something of an expert. Recently, as the diggers moved in next-door to begin work on the new housing development, we began to worry - we knew that these insects could be affected by noise and vibrations. Sadly, as work came closer to our boundary, the bees did indeed abandon us for quieter pastures. Although the garden didn't quite feel the same without them, we decided to leave the hive empty while we waited for the builders to move on and while we also did a little landscaping and work of our own.

Finally, with the arrival of spring, the time was right to begin again and Karl, with the help of some of the Healthwatch staff, set about preparing a new hive. Like any good landlord, he made sure that all trace of the previous residents was removed and saw that any necessary repairs were made. Now we were ready for the new tenants. But where do you go to buy a few hundred bees? Well, it turns out you really can get just about anything online and, in mid-May a nervous looking postman arrived with our very special delivery.

The bees we chose are Buckfast Bees – first bred at the famous abbey in Devon. These bees are ideal for us as they are good honey producers and are resistant to disease. Anyone who is a bit nervous around things that buzz will also be pleased to know that this breed is very unlikely to swarm and is celebrated for being extremely gentle with a 'low sting instinct'.

We check on the hive regularly and are pleased to report that the new residents are settling in well. So, will there be honey? The hive is structured into levels. The bees live 'downstairs' and the honey they store here has to be left to feed them through the winter. However, whatever honey they store upstairs is surplus to their requirements and we can safely take it away. It is exciting to see that they are beginning create stores in this upper level and so we're crossing our fingers for a good harvest by the end of the summer.

The workings of the hive are fascinating and we often muse about how the world would be if only we humans could cooperate and work together to a similar degree to the bees! If you would like to learn more or perhaps visit the hive why not pop by and have a chat with Karl.



Karl 'suits up' to go and check on the hive.



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Twitter: [SchoolhouseCP](https://twitter.com/SchoolhouseCP)



Website: www.oscp.co.uk



BALLROOM DANCING



Last year, having already replaced the old windows and painted the walls, we sanded and re-stained the floor in our function hall. It was hard and dusty work but we had a vision that kept us going – that one day glamorous couples would glide and spin their way across that floor. So, once we'd downed tools, we set about trying to bring ballroom dancing to the Old Schoolhouse.

The quest for teachers took a little while but happily we were lucky enough to find Beverly and Martin, both of whom are wonderful dancers and highly trained teachers. Lessons began in March and ran until the end of June. It's fair to say that a lot was crammed in to those few months! Learners had an hour of tuition which was followed each week by an hour of free dancing to further hone their skills. The aim was to introduce a range of ballroom and Latin routines and give a little taste of as many dances as possible: the waltz, Cha Cha Cha, Square tango, and quickstep to name just a few.

Ballroom dancing is taking a break for the summer now but our classes will resume in the autumn (just in time for Strictly Come Dancing's return to our screens!). This time we will run four week blocks focusing on just one or two dances at a time. That way we hope new starters will not be put off joining at any point, since each month everyone will be starting from scratch once again and learning new steps together.

Dancing is a fun and very sociable way to stay active and meet new people and, as always, you can be sure of a warm welcome here at the Old Schoolhouse, so don't worry if you don't have a partner to bring.

If you think you'd like to learn to dance why not drop us a line and we'll let you know when classes start again. Alternatively keep an eye on our social media pages. You know what they say, let's... Keep Dancing!

Car Park Planning Application

Last autumn we laid some GroundMesh over the grassed area at the front of our building. This product enabled us to offer some sorely needed additional parking on the grass. So far it's worked well and has seen extensive use however, it's not quite the perfect solution. In wet conditions, whilst it does its job of preventing vehicles from getting stuck, it doesn't afford our visitors' feet much protection from mud and damp! Nor does the current layout offer as many spaces as it potentially could.

Back in February we recruited a surveyor to help us draw up the necessary plans and, in the spring, he submitted a planning application to the local council on our behalf. Our plan is to properly surface this grass area and also add a second access so that we can have separate entrance and exit gates. We think this would greatly improve our parking provision as well as the flow of traffic through the area.

Currently we are waiting to find out if our plans have been approved and hope to hear something by the end of July. Of course, even if our bid is successful there's no guarantee the development will take place since this kind of work is not cheap! Nevertheless, it's an important first step to find out what's possible. We'll let you know of any further developments.

(Photo by Martin Sanchez on Unsplash)



Imagine Independence are a fabulous charity who now hold a number of sessions at the Old Schoolhouse, including creative writing, reading and art groups. However, this is just a few of the services they offer. If you are using mental health services or seeing your GP for a mental health condition, they can provide you with specialist one to one support and help you to access education, training, volunteering opportunities and sport and leisure activities. With the aim of promoting recovery and inclusion, Imagine Independence focuses on enabling people to re-train, gain experience and new qualifications as well as build confidence and try new activities. If you would like to know more you can check their website at www.imagineindependence.org.uk. Alternatively, you can email Paul at pclarke@imagineindependence.org.uk.