
Welcome to the first Genie newsletter

Village Matters reports on topical events and items of interest to local residents. There is no specific publication schedule, as it goes out 'as and when' sufficient material justifies a newsletter. Unless stated otherwise, the items will refer to Goring-on-Thames, Streatley and the surrounding villages.

In this issue, the latest on what's closing down and when (TSB) and what's opening up (Tesco). Also, what's happening in Goring on 25 June (George Michael's birthday) and an update on the rail electrification - plus a lot of other things you may find of interest! **If you like it, please forward to your friends and encourage them to subscribe.**

More details on Genie newsletters [here](#).

The 'George Michael Weekend'

What's happening?

There are few facts and many rumours as to what might be happening on **Sunday June 25** (George Michael's 54th birthday).



Posts on social media suggest that many of his fans are coming to pay their respects, hundreds or possibly a thousand or more of them. The Miller of Mansfield has had all its 13 rooms booked out since January and most other local hotels, hostelries and B&B s are booked up too. Here is what is thought to be happening on Sunday 25th, although many people may be arriving on Saturday or earlier. (NB: As there is no single organiser of all these events, some activities have been inspired and organised by fans from outside the village and may be subject to change.)

Goring Village Hall – there are two sold-out concerts at 2pm and 8pm with music by the George Michael Tribute Band with lead musician, David Wright-Ellis and a 5-piece band. Doors open 30 minutes before start time and concerts are approx. 1hr 45mins in duration. There is no bar, but ticket-holders will receive a complimentary drink.

The Catherine Wheel is staging a music festival with 10 different bands playing over the weekend, including a George Michael Tribute. At about 2.30pm on Sunday there will be a charity auction of George Michael memorabilia, with the proceeds going to the Terence Higgins Trust (a charity which was

supported by George and which fights against HIV transmission).

The Rectory Garden will be used by a local business to supply food and refreshments on Sunday to raise funds for the Goring & Streatley Food & Drink Festival on 9 September. There will also be a Visitor Information tent set up in the garden for much of the weekend.

The Arcade will be transformed into a 'Market Place', with stall-holders offering gifts, jewellery, clothes, flowers, food, sweets, cakes, ice creams and souvenirs. Inspiration will be open both days and The Chocolate Café will be open all weekend too with a BBQ to supplement its usual menu.

St Thomas of Canterbury Church will be holding an hour of 'Music for Reflection' for choir and organ at 3-4pm on Sunday, followed by refreshments in the Canterbury Room until 5pm. (This is not a formal service or a concert, but an event for anyone who may like to spend some quiet time to reflect or pray.)

Outside Mill Cottage there will be candlelight vigils at about 9pm on both Saturday and Sunday evenings. (1,000 tea-lights for this purpose have been donated from fans in Holland.) 1,000 white balloons with message tags will be available for sale (but there will be no 'mass release' due to the proximity of RAF Benson. The base has been made aware of some being released at various times).

Some High Street shops and businesses, not normally open on Sundays, will be open so there should be plenty for visitors to do and see. Goring Parish Council has arranged for additional litter bins to be placed at strategic points and there will be several PCSOs on duty for most of the weekend.



TSB Bank in Goring High Street is up for sale. The TSB closed on 16 June and the fixtures and fittings (but not the safe) will be stripped out in the coming weeks.

A marketing board will be erected for the sale of the building, including the flat above the bank. CBRE will be marketing the premises with an A2 designation (financial and professional services), but it could be sold as a traditional retail unit (A1), without requiring any planning consent. Whilst the flat above will be included in the sale, the sitting tenant will remain as part of the transaction.

Tesco Express opening on 10 August

The building work should be complete by 3 August and then there will be an intensive period stocking up and a preparation period ready for opening day a week or so later.



In addition to Tesco's range of products in store, there will also be a Costa Coffee machine and the car park will offer 15 parking spaces for customers. Andy Sanderson, Tesco's Local Area Manager said: 'We are very much looking forward to opening our new Express store in Goring and offering local shoppers a spacious new store with fast and friendly service. We will be offering a range of great quality fresh fruit and vegetables, meat and fish, as well as a selection of food cupboard essentials, household products and freshly baked bread from our bakery. We are also looking forward to playing an active role in the local community.'

What will be happening up the Wallingford Road at Jack's convenience store?

Part of Jack's response to the opening of the new Tesco store, just up the Wallingford Road, will be starting up a Loyalty Reward Scheme, possibly in June, where customers will collect points and get a variety of rewards, on all sales, except tobacco products, lottery tickets and PayPoint transactions.

Jack's Westholme store is open from 6am to 7.30pm, so earlier than Tesco, and Jack will continue to promote his range of over 600 bottled beers, including many unusual and rare brands.

Up to 90% of the UK's independent convenience stores, like Jack's/Westholme store, are not in favour of the proposed Tesco-Booker merger deal. If it goes through, Jack may be selling a wider range of products from the Tesco-Booker tie up. Currently, Jack's main supplier is Booker, the UK's largest wholesaler and cash & carry, but if the merger goes through Jack will have access to more than the 'Happy Shopper' branded product lines he currently sells. The Londis fascia sign over the shop will still remain, as the Londis Group is part of the Booker Group.



Goring chosen for new BBC TV series

Goring Gap in Bloom is one of 15 Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Britain in Bloom neighbourhood groups being filmed as part of a new BBC Two series about the quintessentially British gardening competition. The series will be broadcast in 2018.

Now in its 53rd year, this is the first time cameras have followed Britain in Bloom groups as they prepare for the biggest day in community gardening. Series makers hope to capture the excitement as the groups vie to be recognised as one of the cleanest, greenest and most beautiful places in the country. Goring Gap in Bloom is competing in the Thames & Chilterns Region for the top spot and the Gold Award again, with hopes of making it to the national finals in 2018. On 12 July a team of RHS gardening judges will tour Goring to assess its efforts against three key criteria - community participation, environmental responsibility and horticultural achievement.

Stephanie Bridle, chair of Goring Gap in Bloom said:

'We are delighted that the BBC has chosen to include Goring for their programme. We are very proud of the work we do to bring the community together and make Goring a more beautiful environment in which to live and work. Our small group of dedicated



volunteers is taking on some new major projects this year, including creating a 25m x 7m garden of shrubs and small trees on a disused bank beyond the coffee shop on platform 4 Goring & Streatley station, extending and enhancing the wild flower garden in the BT telephone exchange by the Wheel Orchard car park and several other projects, in addition to the usual activities of maintaining the hanging baskets and flower tubs around the village. The results of the competition will be announced at the Regional Awards ceremony later in the year.

Stephanie Bridle added an additional request, "We do need some more volunteers to help on the railway station project to build a retaining wall with railway sleepers, spread top soil and compost and then plant the shrubs. All this has to be finished in the next few weeks (by 12 July!) when the judges tour the village and award the points. So, if you can help for a few hours here and there, please contact Stephanie on 01491 875283 or email stephaniebridle@btinternet.com THANK YOU!"

BBC Two's The Repair Shop seeks objects in need of repair

We have been asked to spread the word in our community to see if anyone has any objects in need of repair for BBC Two's The Repair Shop series.



The Repair Shop is looking for family heirlooms and objects that have community value that have fallen into disrepair. For example: memorial plaques, eroded statues, snapped weather vanes, broken sun dials, cracked gargoyles, fading carvings, or antique village and pub signs. Objects need to be able to be taken to our workshop in Chichester to be repaired by our team of master craftspeople, so needs to be transportable.

About the programme

The series will follow a team of some of Britain's most passionate and skilled craftspeople as they work side by side in a beautiful barn in the West Sussex countryside fixing, repairing and breathing new life into objects brought in by members of the public. The team are a group of experts drawn from different disciplines such as furniture repairers, metal workers, mechanics, ceramicists, clock makers, picture conservationists, up-cyclers, restorers and fabricators of every ilk. Every object brought in to 'The Repair Shop' will be different, each with its own story to tell and at the end of each programme, the objects will be returned to their owners to be treasured in the family for generations to come. The series is due to

transmit on BBC2. To find out more go to www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08l581p

If you have an object you'd like The Repair Shop to help with please get back in touch with us at repair@ricochet.co.uk or call us on 01273 224829.



Chocolate Café refreshes 30 riders on charity cycle challenge

Over 30 cyclists headed for refreshment in Goring's Village Café, en route from Big Ben in London to Ben's home in Evesham. The event was a part of the on-going Benjamin Harris-Bell Tree of Hope charity appeal to support his life-saving treatment programme. www.justgiving.com/fundraising/bigben2ben

Masoom's makeover

A major redecoration of the outside and inside of the restaurant is now complete.

The new subtle grey paint on the outside replaces the cream and the hanging baskets and additional flower tubs set off the exterior. Inside, the décor has also been totally transformed, with new wooden floors, a new ceiling, and grey and white wallpaper with large silver mirrors to make the whole ambience cool and relaxing. For those who have never had a meal at Masoom's, the food and overall experience are well worth a visit.



The Goring Grocer has powered up

Caroline and Stuart have installed a heavy duty three-phase power supply to replace the standard single-phase supply most shops and homes use.

The original supply wasn't sufficient to keep up with power demands of their new and better Rational ovens, which will do everything apparently, except make the tea. The Goring Grocer is considering taking some more space in Thames Court to allow for storage, extra refrigeration and a small office. They now have 6 full time staff and some 6 part-timers and are planning for a busy summer.

Rail electrification update

Since January, when Network Rail (NR) postponed the six public exhibitions and consultations in

Goring and neighbouring villages planned for January and February this year, not much appears to have happened.



However, the purpose of the extra time NR wanted was to work up better and more imaginative electrification designs to replace the current, over-engineered and ugly gantries for the Goring Gap. The Railway Action Group (RAG) and the Design Advisory Group (DAG) have been pressing NR to improve the designs they (NR) were planning to present at the aborted meetings at the beginning of the year. We are now waiting to see these new, better designs in the exhibitions NR are hopefully going to announce soon. There is to be another DAG meeting in the next month or so to review the progress of Balfour Beatty, who NR have commissioned to develop the new designs for our stretch of track within the two AONBs. Read more details on this on the RAG website www.savegoringgap.org.uk



Goring Hydropower update

Genie News asked the Goring & Streatley Sustainability Group, Goring Parish Council and the Stop Hydro Group for their latest position on the Hydro power scheme.

Goring & Streatley Sustainability Group

'Following the settlement of planning issues, Goring and Streatley Community Energy, a Community Benefit Society established to develop the scheme, is continuing to develop plans. At the time planning permission was granted the financial plan demonstrated that the scheme could generate a profit, provide a dividend to local shareholders and pay funds into a trust to support community projects. However, due to the roll-out of smart energy meters to domestic customers, it is now becoming possible to sell the electricity from the scheme to local consumers, allowing them to obtain cheaper electricity and giving us a better price than we would get selling directly onto the National Grid. We hope to make further progress on this later this year. We would be very interested if anyone would like to get more involved in the scheme, there are a wide range of opportunities to support it. Please get in touch:

ContactUs@gssg.org.uk

Goring-on-Thames Parish Council

"The Council maintains its opposition to the scheme and looks forward to a long-ago requested meeting with the GSSG to discuss concerns about, among other things, the contingency plan, the proposed benefits to the local community as well as ways they plan to mitigate harmful noise levels. In addition, we ask them to address the unanswered concerns of the Angling Trust with regard to damage to fish. As the Council has heard only overwhelming local opposition to the scheme, we also hope to have sight of

the as-yet unpublished local survey conducted by the GSSG some months ago."

Stop Goring Hydro

The Stop Goring Hydro campaign group believes it represents a significantly large percentage of local residents who are firmly against this proposal. They say, *'Our position has not changed. The amount of electricity it would produce does not justify the damage it would cause to the iconic view from the bridge, together with the noise pollution, exacerbation of flooding and harm to the life cycle of important local fish stocks.'*

The Swan Hotel's refurbishment

The extensive refurbishment is due for completion in January 2018, when the riverside frontage and other areas will be transformed, including the redesign of the restaurant, bar and events spaces.



Whilst the view from the bridge suggests the hotel is largely closed, there is much going on. There are 20 new en-suite rooms which are fully booked and the bar and café is open every day 7am-11pm serving coffee, pastries, sandwiches, drinks and light refreshments. The outside seating area down to the river is a popular area to meet with friends and colleagues to enjoy the river and garden views. The gym and spa are also fully operating and, together with the bar and café, are accessed via Church Lane. (The restaurant and Boat House are currently closed).



There is a full programme of events utilising the outside area, including the very popular Open Air Cinema experience, where you can watch the films on a large screen by the river and listen using personal wireless headphones.

<http://www.theswanatstreatley.com/hotel/refurbishment-faq>

[urbishment-faq](#)



The Gap Festival needs volunteers

The Festival Trustees are keen to hear from residents who would like to join the team for next year's festival in Goring & Streatley on 14–17 June 2018.

Planning for this major biennial cultural event started months ago and the

organisers now require support, particularly in fundraising and logistical/project planning teams. No experience is necessary and just a few hours here and there would be most helpful. It's fun: you get a great sense of satisfaction when the festival produces so much entertainment and enjoyment for so many in the community. The festival is a fully-fledged charity and supports young people's aspirations in the arts and expanding Goring Gap's residents' cultural experience. Gyles Brandreth is the Patron and he will be performing in the next festival.

To find out more, visit the website www.thegapfestival.org and/or contact Heather, the Artistic Director heather.dunthorne@btopenworld.com

Lost & Found

Lost – A grey plastic power drill case (with yellow catches) with battery inside. Left near Lloyds Pharmacy on Thursday 25 May whilst putting up hanging baskets by pharmacy. If found, please telephone 07789 871620. Thank you.

Hare coursing in the Goring Gap?

There have been reports of this highly illegal 'sport' operating within the Goring Gap area. If anyone has knowledge or suspicions of this activity going on locally, the police would be very interested to receive information.

A partnership of police, landowners, farmers and countryside residents is clamping down on illegal hare coursing. Hefty fines by magistrates backing up the prosecutions are getting the message across that south Oxfordshire is a no-go area for the hare coursers. The activity involves betting on whether a dog can catch a hare. Didcot magistrates have imposed fines totalling £6,765 recently. The prosecutions all followed 'Operation Migrate' <https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/advice/protecting-your-business/rural-crime/>

To comment on any of these stories please email <mailto:contact@genienews.org>
To send in news items, use <mailto:news@genienews.org>