

# Steeple Aston *Life*

March 2021 Issue No. 571

## **Inside SAL this month:**

- Go on a Blenheim Palace virtual tour
- Join in the Fun Spring Show online
- Make orange zesty almond muesli
- Read about the Brownies in lockdown
- And much more...



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*Cover photo: Nigel Francis*

## Steeple Aston *Life*

### **COPY**

All articles and letters to the Editors  
[editorsalife@gmail.com](mailto:editorsalife@gmail.com)

### **COPY DEADLINES**

The copy deadline for SAL has now changed to the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.

The copy deadline for the April 2021 issue is therefore 15<sup>th</sup> March.

READ STEEPLE ASTON LIFE ONLINE  
<https://www.steepleaston.org.uk/sal-magazine>

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Archive (SAVA)	Chairman	Martin Lipson	347046
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Badminton (Thursday evenings)		Lydia Powell	347746
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Hand-bell ringers		Sally Cooper	347173
Brownies		Fiona McLoone	340132
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	Steward	Tim Bailey	01869 331516
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		CLlr Bryn Williams	07836 271998
		CLlr Hugo Brown	
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Deddington Health Centre	Appointments		338611
	Repeat Prescriptions	10am - 3pm	338847
	Out of Hours		111
Dr Radcliffe's C of E School	Head Teacher	Frances Brown	340204
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Garden Club	Chairman	Richard Preston	340512
Golf Society	Chairman	Alan Brewer	340423
Horticultural Society	Show Secretary	Vicky Clifton	07817 025948
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Volunteer Connect - Community transport scheme			0300 3030125
Women's Institute	President	Linda Needle	340028



“...folly is not always folly.”  
Jane Austen

## Steeple Aston *Life*

March 2021  
Issue No. 571

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Sue McLean, Nigel Francis

# Editorial

Snowdrops have been a welcome sight around the village. Traditionally, they bloom from Candlemas (2<sup>nd</sup> February) and are seen as a harbinger of spring. This might be difficult to believe after the intense cold days of February (see photo below). However, because it is the first flower to appear at the end of winter, it is said to symbolise hope – something we need more than ever after a year in back-to-back lockdowns.

In Victorian times, snowdrops were considered a sign of bad luck, possibly because the flowers were found in many cemeteries and around gravesites (see this month's cover). Over the years, though, the snowdrop has become associated with sympathy and consolation. If you would like a display in your garden, be aware that the plant is toxic to animals and people, so keep pets away and wear gloves when handling the bulbs.

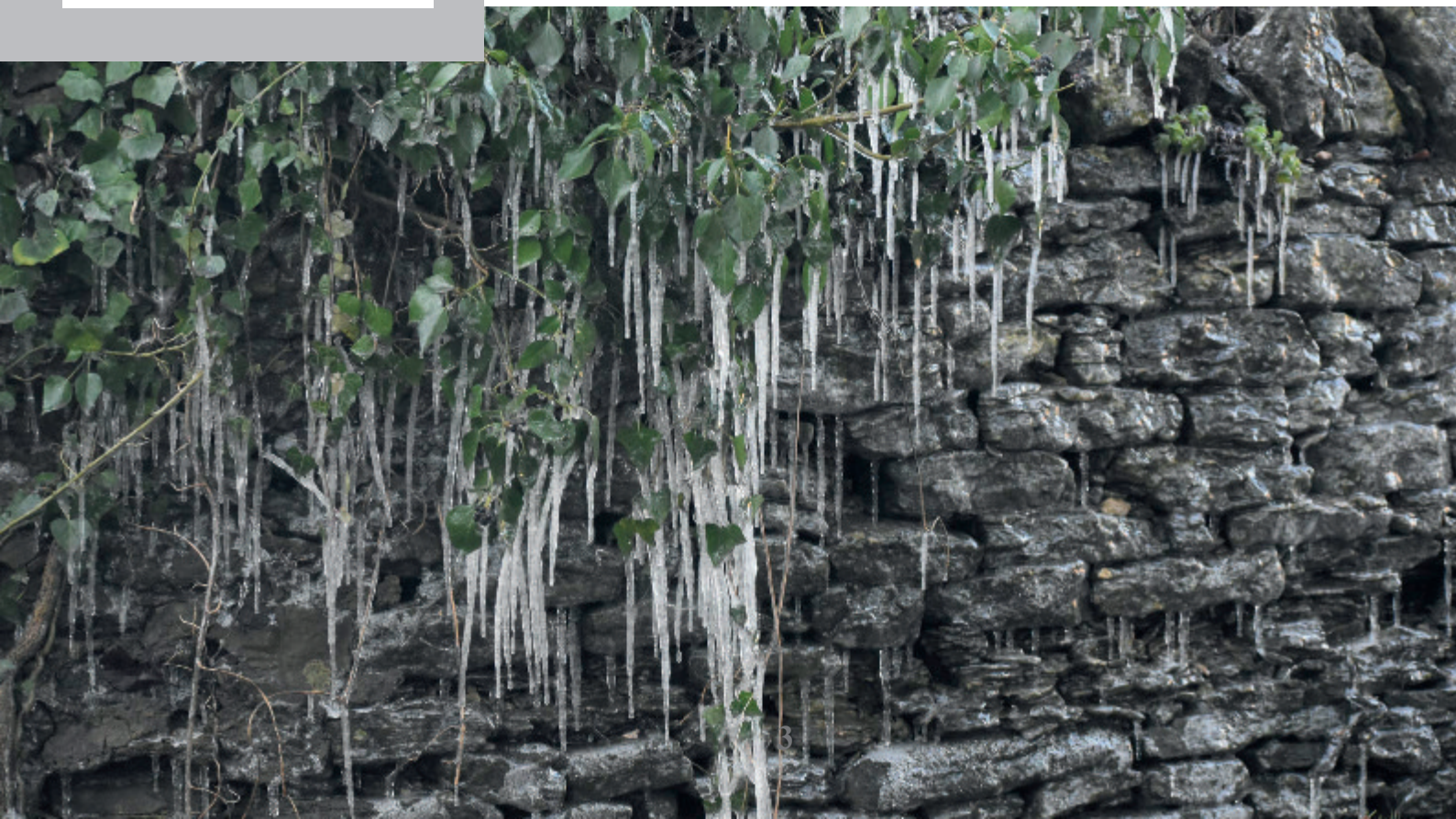
The arts are just one of many areas hard-hit by the pandemic. Watching plays and music online is not the same as being there, but can be uplifting in these days of isolation. Take a look at page 8 for some recommendations. My favourites are the visually stunning 'Alleujah' and the very funny 'HMS Pinafore' parody.

The answers to the SAL Quiz on page 26 can all be found in previous issues of Steeple Aston Life. If your copies are used to line cat litter trays as soon as a new edition arrives (newspaper is more absorbent, but cats don't care), you will find digital editions online at the Steeple Aston website [steepleaston.org.uk](http://steepleaston.org.uk)

Stay safe.

**Robert**

*Photo: Icicles - Ben Wade-Martins*





## Over 50? Had a positive COVID test with symptoms? Researchers need your help.

People aged over 50 who have had a positive COVID test and are showing symptoms of the virus are being sought for research into helping them get better quickly. Over 50s with certain underlying health conditions and all over-65s with suspected COVID-19 can apply to take part in the University of Oxford study at participating GP practices (which include the Deddington Health Centre) or [www.principletrial.org](http://www.principletrial.org). Participants are randomly allocated to receive usual care or usual care and an existing medication. It is hoped the trial can prevent people in these groups needing to go to hospital. Contact [principle@phc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:principle@phc.ox.ac.uk) / 0800 138 0880.

## CORONAVIRUS

### MESSAGE FROM DEDDINGTON HEALTH CENTRE

**Coronavirus Vaccine:** Please do not contact Deddington Health Centre regarding the vaccine. The NHS will let you know when it is your turn. It is important not to contact the NHS or your practice for a vaccination before then. Thank you.

If you are concerned that you might have Coronavirus, or have been in contact with someone who has it, please do not come to the surgery. Stay at home, avoid close contact with other people and use the NHS online Coronavirus service <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19> to find out what to do next.

Masks are now required for all visits to the Centre, including the Pharmacy.

### Passing of Michael Hair

Very sadly my friend and neighbour Mike Hair passed away on Friday 12th February after a long illness.

Outwardly, Mike was a solitary and gruff man, inwardly he was a good (but still gruff) friend, as would be attested by all who shared a drink with him in The Red. His expansive, detailed knowledge of the local wildlife, birds and vegetable gardening never failed to impress and was generously shared with us his neighbours at Hill House. A creature of habit, Mike enjoyed good food, barbecues and in particular, his Sunday roasts.

Vale, Mike, you will be missed by your neighbours, all your Steeple Aston mates and the bookie in Kidlington.

Rest In Peace

**Peter Robottom**



# Editor's Letterbox

## Criminal damage to goalposts

We are sad to report that the Steeple Aston Football Club goalposts have been subjected to an act of criminal damage. One of the posts is so damaged that it is beyond any kind of repair. Whoever did this had to have put in a great deal of effort as they are very solid. Judging by the recently used beer cans and bottles that we found nearby, some socialising must be taking place on the recreational field.

This act isn't mindless – it appears to be deliberate and premeditated. People always have a reason for their actions, even if the reason isn't a particularly good one. However, we have no idea why the football club has been singled out in this way.

We have fully dismantled the damaged post and will shortly arrange for its disposal. The total cost of replacing the post will be £1525.44. As you can see, a substantial amount.

The police have been informed, and they, like us, would be grateful for any information that will help us to find the perpetrators. If you can help, please contact either of us.

Kind regards.

**Peter Wild, Secretary SAFC – telephone 07950 837773**

**Alan Peckham, Chairman SAFC**

## Specs Box

Good Day! I thought I'd give you all a rest from facts and figures this month. Phew! I hear you saying. Well, I do try to be positive, even though like many no doubt I often don't feel it.

Recently, I had to have new glasses and, because I've been wearing glasses since I was 16, I realised I had quite a few old pairs stashed away all over the place – mostly hiding on book shelves. Despite the fact that opticians take old pairs, mine never seem to find their way there for some reason. I bet I'm not alone. So I decided to look for a charity that takes old specs (not all do now, including 'Sightsavers' who say it's not worth it, sadly) and I've succeeded.

There's one in Chichester that has been collating, repairing and sending on old glasses of all sorts (including sunglasses) for over 25 years. Hooray! I've built an 'all-weather' box which I have put on the drive next to the 'Red Lion', under the 'rainbow arch'. Just lift the lid and put any spare specs you have in the box. They can be whole, or separate frames and lenses. If you could wash them carefully beforehand I'd be grateful. I will disinfect them all before sending on. Thank you in advance!

**Martin Dale**



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## Nigel Francis

### **How long have you lived here?**

10 months. I was very lucky to move here with my wife Kay in April 2020 and we have been able to spend the pandemic year enjoying the beautiful countryside on our doorstep.

### **Where did you move from?**

We moved here from Kidlington where we brought up our two daughters. When they moved away it gave us the opportunity pursue something we had always dreamed of – living in a cottage in a pretty village.

### **What do you like best about Steeple Aston?**

The people. In such a short space of time and during a global pandemic I have met so many different, interesting and folk from all walks of life

### **What was your first Job?**

An evening paper round as a boy and Saturday assistant in a shop in York

### **Give a potted history of yourself.**

Joined the Royal Airforce after leaving secondary school and trained/worked as a photographer there for 10 years. I finished my career at RAF Benson near Wallingford and settled in Oxfordshire with my wife. I worked for a college/school photographic firm for two years before I made the plunge to start my own photographic business which I have now been running for over 30 years.

### **Early bird or night owl? Cat or dog?**

Early bird – up to hear the dawn chorus, what better way to start the day! Like both but have always had cats as I have never had time to fully look after a dog!

### **What do you do for a living?**

Photography, specialising in architecture, plus photo library work/landscapes/travel – and the odd bit of village magazine work, of course!

### **What are your hobbies?**

I love playing tennis and have been a member at North Oxford Lawn Tennis Club for over 25 years. I also love the outdoors for country walks.

### **What's your favorite food?**

I love Italian food – but who cannot enjoy a perfect Sunday lunch with Yorkshire pudding?

### **What are you reading at the moment?**

'Lifting the Latch' – the life of one man and his rural life in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in and around Enstone. It is amazing as to what has changed and how hard times were and what simple life was then.

### **If you could travel anywhere in the world where would it be?**

I am lucky to have travelled to some great places in the world, but still not China, which both intrigues and interests me. For dramatic landscape scenery and views I would like to see both Norway and Iceland, plus the chance of seeing the Northern lights would be a bonus!

### **What do you get grumpy about?**

I guess litter is my biggest gripe, I just don't understand it. You walk to the most amazing beautiful places and people leave all their rubbish? Crazy that they are spoiling the one thing they have gone to see.

### **What's your favorite piece of music?**

'The Lark Ascending' by Ralph Vaughan Williams is magical. If you close your eyes it takes you to those lovely sunny days we all enjoy

### **What makes you happiest in the world?**

Having a great family and enjoying company of good friends.

### **Tell us a good joke.**

I quite enjoy the old-fashioned Tim Vine one-liners. "I've just been on a once-in-a-lifetime holiday. I'll tell you what, never again."



# The ARTS Page



Whilst live arts are still mainly dormant, we can take much pleasure from so much being online. Previous Arts pages have given details of the wide range of offerings, but do please send in others we may have missed, or flag up particular favourites for future editions.

Our new Editor, Robert, has sent the following: “One of my favourites is from the Lockdown Orchestra: [bit.ly/3ah1Bg4](https://bit.ly/3ah1Bg4)

There are also plays streaming, some free, some paid for. The National Theatre has an annual subscription of £83.32 – less than I have paid for a single ticket in London!”

Our Rector, Marcus, has also sent this:

1. Classical highlight. I am going to award this to the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra. They have been playing and broadcasting concerts free on YouTube throughout the last few months: [bit.ly/3rLC6cS](https://bit.ly/3rLC6cS)

You will find the most amazing array of music and every single item is terrific. Life-giving brilliance that deserves a medal for each and every musician.

2. Jazz highlight. Possibly Ronnie Scott’s Lockdown Sessions, or the Syd Lawrence Orchestra for their weekly videos, but the Frankfurt Radio Big Band playing Caravan is my favourite lockdown jazz moment: [bit.ly/3tSUdZv](https://bit.ly/3tSUdZv)

The creativity of how they are working during lockdown in order to keep going, and the sound they make together – truly amazing.

3. Totally Out There highlight. Last May we all faced complete catastrophe when the Eurovision Song Contest was cancelled. But a group of musicians, comedians and drag artists got together and put on the Isolation Song Contest to raise funds for the Trussell Trust, Crisis and Refuge. In particular, Joe Stilgoe’s Belgian entry never fails to make me laugh out loud, and I love Mel Giedroyc’s song for Italy. [bit.ly/3rSkZX1](https://bit.ly/3rSkZX1)

Amongst our own thoughts, the many theatrical offerings coming up, the RSC DREAM and Oxford Playhouse PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY, look excellent. From earlier, we would single out the New Year’s Concert from Vienna. Always a highlight, but particularly wonderful this year under Riccardo Muti. Don’t miss his brilliant and inspiring speech starting at 2 hours 9 minutes in! [bit.ly/3jJLKtG](https://bit.ly/3jJLKtG)

Despite the difficulties and uncertainties for the ARTS with Covid and the Brexit Touring debacle, we can be uplifted and also have a laugh – three offerings!!

Alleujah: [bit.ly/3b6dg00](https://bit.ly/3b6dg00)

Bolero on Cello: [bit.ly/2Op49jQ](https://bit.ly/2Op49jQ)

HMS Pinafore/Guy Noble: [bit.ly/3rOUUnGo](https://bit.ly/3rOUUnGo)

Happy watching and listening.

**Nick and Heather**


*Editor’s note: the links above have been created using a URL shortener, making it easier for you to type them into your browser (or click online). They are all safe to use.*





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*Photo: John Coley*



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# The Gardening Spot

## It's that time of the year again so less daytime TV and more exercise!

I just took a minute or so to have a look at what I wrote this time last year and there was no mention of pandemics or lockdowns. Who would have thought that we might have experienced such a year? What a benefit gardening has been for many of us and it is encouraging to hear of so many newcomers to the age-old country pursuit of gardening.

For me, March is such an exciting month as it brings the first real sign of spring and a lot of work. Those of you who know me also know how easily I become excitable about gardening, but for the many of you who have not met me, I guess you are saying to yourselves, "what a sad case this old bloke must be"!

Diversifying somewhat, it takes me back a few years to the time I met a cousin of mine for the first time to celebrate her 90th birthday. She asked me where I had travelled, how many wives I had had, and a few more sensitive details. She then went on to tell me about her latest toy boy she met in Greece and her numerous marriages. On summing up the conversation, after discovering that I had only been married once and yet to do a world tour, she came up with the statement that I must have led a very boring life. I suppose the fact that she was drinking vast amounts of red wine and had got to 90 years must say something, but I think I will stay the same 'boring' man that I am.

Back to gardening! If you haven't already cultivated your vegetable patch, then there is no time to lose as later this month you can plant your first early potatoes. I would usually recommend Lady Chrystl, but unfortunately they are in very short supply this year due to a seed crop failure. As with any negative there is always a positive and, in this case, it is time to experiment with another variety. I am trying Pentland Javelin, but there are so many varieties to choose from. This is also the time to plant onion sets, but watch out for the birds as they will try to pull them out the ground before they take root. Prepare your runner bean trench by digging out a spit (spade blade depth) and then digging in well-rotted manure, compost or possibly old newspapers before filling the trench back over. Runner beans, which must be one of our favourite vegetables, require plenty of moisture, thus the need for composting the bottom of the trench.

Clear the garden of any weeds before they take over and rest assured, more will germinate no matter how careful you are at weeding or hoeing. Hopefully, sometime during this month, you should be able to mow the lawn for the first time this year. Remember to keep the cutting blades that bit higher off the turf for the first couple of cuts and if you haven't done so already, get your mower serviced or, at least, sharpen the blades as that will make for a much nicer lawn during the summer.

Now is a good time to lift and divide clumps of summer or autumn perennials such as hostas or daylilies before they put on any significant growth. The easiest way to do this is to place two forks back-to-back in the clump and ease them apart. The original plant will benefit from more space and you will have new plants for free! If you have any deciduous shrubs or trees that you want to move, now is the time before they come into leaf. Imagine March as being the beginning of the day for your plants and what better way to start the day than with a good breakfast. Roses will flourish if given a good feed anytime during this month as will all fruiting trees and pretty well anything else that is growing in your garden. As I have said many times before, plants need to eat just like us humans. You can go out and buy specific feeds for specific plants, but to be honest, I simply feed all my plants with 'fish, blood and bonemeal' which is usually much cheaper than the branded feeds you will find and it is organic. Just remember that March is a 'funny month' when it can be gloriously sunny and warm one day and frosty the next, so don't be in too much of a rush to plant tender things such as tomatoes just yet, even in a greenhouse unless heated.

In my boring days when I used to have to go to work, I would sell thousands of bedding plants to villagers, but would never deliver them until the end of May. Sometimes a customer would come and tell me that they had purchased their petunia plants from the garden centre in April and their display would be far earlier than anyone else's. Towards the end of May, they would come along rather sheepishly and ask if I had any spare petunias as theirs had for some unknown reason, DIED. There must be a moral in this story, but I will let you work it out.

Happy gardening and keep safe. There is nowhere safer than the garden or allotment!

**Richard Preston**

## All the fun of the farm

Over the last year, lockdown has meant enforced periods at home and a rethinking of how we use our time – whether it's home-schooling, Zoom calls with colleagues, or catching up with friends and loved ones remotely. It's also provided a chance to review how we spend our 'free' time, with fresh air and regular exercise identified as vital to our physical and mental wellbeing.

One of the favourite pastimes for youngsters in the Aston villages over half a century ago was the Young Farmers' Club – where those aged 10-26 years would regularly meet for a mix of social and educational events centred around rural pursuits. Fortnightly meetings were held, initially at Dr Radcliffe's School, Steeple Aston, before moving to The Dun Cow hall and later to the Old Methodist Chapel Hall. It was established around 1957 and run by Mike Inkpen and Royston Kinch. The student dormitories at Spillers provided an influx of youngsters keen to get involved.



*Royston Kinch of Manor Farm,  
Steeple Aston, driving a tractor.*

*The Oxford Times, 7<sup>th</sup> October  
1960*

Meetings were attended by around 12 to 20 members and comprised of talks and demonstrations from invited guest speakers. Subjects were often farm-related including stock-breeding, horse-showing, modern farm machinery and weed killers (no organic farming yet!), or perhaps a demo on how to draw and truss a chicken. The eclectic topics ranged from bee-keeping, fishing and police dog handling to road safety, the fire service and even gold mining in Canada. A talk by the Divisional Safety Officer from the Ministry of Agriculture on 'Safety on the Farm' confirmed that most farm accidents were 'as a result of carelessness and neglect of machinery', and that 'accidents on the farm were three times as many as there were in the mines'. Sometimes minor equipment gremlins cropped up, as at the YFC meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1957 when sadly the projector broke down and there was no film show, hastily replaced by a fun quiz night.

Tours were arranged to local farms to view practices and methods in action, as well as associated factories including Cow & Gate, Spillers Ltd and Smithfields. Occasionally overseas visits were planned, including a party travelling to the Annual French Agriculture Show and the Young Farmers Exchange visit to America. Dorothy Clifton from Middle Aston recalls doing her USA exchange in 1965. The club was a great means of meeting other like-minded young

people, with its busy social calendar of dances often with a band (arranged with neighbouring YFCs), summer BBQs, theatre visits, and trips out including seaside destinations like Weymouth and Brighton. Unsurprisingly, many relationships blossomed with a number of marriages recorded, marked with a suitable gift from the club. Edwina Kinch met husband Royston whilst on a Young Farmers outing and in 2019 they celebrated 60 years of marriage, all lived in Steeple Aston.

Members had a competitive team spirit, portrayed by their sporting prowess at netball, tennis, cricket, hockey, or at the whist drive. The National Dressmaker Competition was another regular, but nothing was as keenly fought as when the Public Speaking Team entered the Oxfordshire Eliminator Contest, including one debate entitled 'If you want to get ahead, get a hat', with the senior team securing 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Annual rallies were another highlight with one held at Nuneham Courtenay in June 1957, when 'Mr Richard Batchelor was congratulated for gaining first place in the Junior Tractor handling competition at the Oxfordshire Spring Rally, and for being chosen to represent Oxfordshire in this event at the Royal Counties Show'. Stuart Walton recalls taking part in the tractor driving competition where 'the tracks were made from straw bales, and you had to back a tractor and trailer through the course, which was quite tricky'. In May 1960, the club's banner won first prize at the County Rally at Charlbury (pictured) for their embroidery design of the folly with an animal walking beneath it.



Sadly, over time YFC numbers dwindled and the future of the club was in question, but they decided to give it one last push via a recruitment campaign, publicising it in the surrounding villages. Numbers rose for a while and it continued for some time until it reached a natural end when new pastimes took over, alongside many young people going off to university. The YFC members certainly come across as a lively, curious and somewhat competitive bunch, who knew how to have a good time!

## Carol Neville

*Oxfordshire Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (OFYFC) is the county's largest rural youth organisation, where young people aged 10-26 have a wealth of new experiences and opportunities. These include taking part in a varied competitions programme, getting involved in the local community, travelling abroad, enjoying a dynamic social life and having a voice on rural issues. The Federation has been running for 70 years and currently has approximately 360 members across 12 clubs which meet either once a week or fortnightly.*

# Parish Council Meeting *Notes*



The February Parish Council meeting was the shortest that I have ever attended. It lasted for 62 minutes, probably because nothing particularly controversial was discussed. I have been involved with the Parish Council for a bit over 20 years and I can only remember one Parish Council meeting even approaching this short length. Then an acting Chairman seemed to regard it as a real test of his efficiency in using time to finish the meeting as quickly as he could. But this time it just seemed to happen naturally.

There was one sad bit of news; one of the most efficient and active Councillors has resigned. The Councillor concerned is Charlotte Bartlett who has been very effective, particularly since the start of lockdown. Before Covid the village had Meals on Wheels, but most of those involved were not in the prime of youth and had to stop with lockdown. Charlotte set up an arrangement with S & J Catering to deliver three delicious meals a week, which at its height had 50 users and a year later there are still 21 regular customers. In addition, she and her husband have been regularly replacing the batteries in the Speed Sign and moving it between sites. She has helped in lots of other ways, for example putting up signs on the play area. But my impression is that one of her largest contributions has been to be sensible, balanced, enthusiastic and equable at all times. Charlotte has generously said she will continue to organise the meal arrangements in the future. A large and well deserved Thank You to Charlotte from us all.

There are now two vacancies for Councillor so what about coming to listen in to a meeting to see if you might be interested? What they do is invariably both worthwhile and interesting. If you would like to know more you should contact the Clerk, Cathy Fleet, on 01869 347000 or email her at [parishclerk.steepleaston@gmail.com](mailto:parishclerk.steepleaston@gmail.com)

There was a long discussion about whether a mounting point for the Speed Sign should be put on Fenway. Apparently, an engineer from Highways

thought it might be sited on the north side of Fenway approaching the dangerous corner as you leave the village. But there was not universal local approval for this suggestion. An alternative might be to put it on the main road side of the dangerous bend. The advantage of this is that it picks up those likely to be approaching the bend the fastest, but against it is a safety issue. The sign needs some verge space so it is not dangerous for those changing the batteries or moving the sign around. The Councillors will, in time-honoured fashion, consider it again at the next meeting.

It was noted that there was water running down both sides of The Beeches. The Clerk knew that the drains there have been cleaned recently and it was not clear whether the drains were insufficient or partially blocked, or whether the amount of rain recently has been so substantial that no drains could have coped with it completely. People who had driven to and from Rousham bridge at separate times clearly had different views about the effectiveness of the drains.

Our District Councillor told us that the appeal about the planning request for the Beeches was with the Inspector and should be decided soon. He said that Cherwell District Council had managed to balance its budget for 2021/2022, despite reduced revenue, largely by not replacing those who had left. We were told Cherwell had had the highest number of Covid cases in Oxfordshire for a time, but that this unenviable position was now held by Oxford city. Apparently, the village may be able to apply for some extra funding for specifically Covid-related activities. If you have any ideas please come to the next meeting to explain.

There was a brief discussion of whether there were economies of scale in legal costs of introducing 20mph limits in villages. This seemed to me to beg the question of whether anyone thought this would be appropriate here and whether, even if the Councillors wanted it, Highways and the police would agree.

*continued*



# Parish Council Meeting *Notes*



The Department of Transport has provided funding to change the buses in Oxford to being all electric (see article below). This will include our bus, the S4, because it goes into Oxford. I have a tendency to run it close for getting to the bus stop on time so if the bus is electric, and silent, I won't be able to rely on hearing it and running the last bit when necessary.

The play area has been hugely successful, but it is starting to look its age and needs repair. Quotes have been received to do the remedial work, but they are not all based on the same assumptions so the Councillors will assess the replies before deciding what should be replaced, when and by whom. The Councillors noted, sadly, the vandalism to the goal posts on Robinsons Close and were told that there is likely to be some fundraising activities by the footballers and/or the Recreation Trust.

The Council's Emergency Plan was approved. It includes there being a list of equipment available in an emergency, with the relevant contact details. It describes how to open up the Village Hall if needed. I spent some time wondering what emergency might require this as it was unlikely, even with the current amount of rain, that the stream at the bottom of the valley would flood many houses.

The hedge and tree work around Lawrence Fields will progress shortly and the contractor has applied for the permission necessary to work on trees and hedges in conservation areas. The District Councillor explained he had seen a planning application for a driveway to a house in the village which the Councillors had not mentioned. He said he looked

at all the Cherwell planning applications once a week to which one of the Councillors commented that "this must be your idea of fun".

The Zoom meeting of the Parish Council showed our faces and under each one there was the person's name. I had changed my name to 'Jackie Weaver', the wonderful Clerk presiding at Handforth who expelled the rude male chauvinists from her Parish Council meeting. There was only one slight reference to my change of identity, otherwise no one deigned to notice.

Next month there will be the unenviable job of doing the annual check of the Standing Orders. It should give me fun anyway as I am in the happy position of never being expected to read them. The Councillors are less fortunate.

The next meeting will be on 15 March and to attend you just need to ask the Parish Clerk ([parishclerk.steepleaston@gmail.com](mailto:parishclerk.steepleaston@gmail.com)) to send you an invitation. Do come and see what happens and make up your mind if you would like to contribute to your community in this way.

## *Steeplejack*

*This report is the personal view of the SAL reporter, and is not intended to be a complete record of the Council meeting. The official record - once approved - will be available at [www.steepleaston.org.uk](http://www.steepleaston.org.uk)*

### **Oxford and Coventry set to be UK's first all-electric bus cities**

It was in February 2020 that local areas could apply to become Britain's first fully electric bus town. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said, "Buses carry more people than any other form of public transport in the UK, and with 200 electric buses able to offset 3,700 diesel cars, it is clear they have a crucial role to play in bringing down emissions." The government received 19 bids from across England. In January 2021, Grant Shapps announced that Oxford and Coventry had been selected to develop proposals.

Each area could be awarded up to £50 million to not only replace its entire fleet of buses with all-electric versions, but to also install new infrastructure, such as charging stations, and pay for electric grid updates. The change to a cleaner and greener bus fleet will help improve air quality and reduce emissions, as well as supporting local businesses and jobs in the UK.

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# Steeple Aston and Middle Aston Horticultural Society

## Fun Spring Show

We cannot have a Spring Show this year so there is a fun alternative

- Paintings, drawing or poems for children
- Limericks and photos for adults

All the entries will be judged on the fun they provide. There is no entry fee and the prizes will be vegetable and flower seeds, which seems very appropriate for a Horticultural Society. The entries will need to be photographed and the photos emailed as an attached jpeg file to Jenny Bell, the editor of the village website, at [editor@steepleaston.org.uk](mailto:editor@steepleaston.org.uk) to reach her by 23rd March. All the entries will be on the website and the winning entries will be reproduced in the May edition of SAL. Please include your phone number and the age of the child for the children's entries.

### Children's classes

Under 5 – A painting or drawing as bright and cheerful as possible

Under 8 – A painting or drawing as bright and cheerful as possible

Under 12 – A poem called 'Summer'

Under 16 – A poem called 'Fun'

### Classes for anyone

A limerick starting: 'There once was a shepherd called Bill'

A photo – My best Spring photo

This is a fun activity so we are relaxing all the usual stricter judging rules. The photos will be judged for their 'feel good factor' and the limerick on how much it amuses the judges. Children can enter any class for which they are not too old.

*Photo: Robert Scott*





*Oats, a seriously handy cupboard staple that adds nutritional value and sustenance beyond the hearty plate of porridge. The 'In the Kitchen' offering this month suggests adding a bit of fruit zing to create a sunny Orange Zesty Almond Muesli and delicious **Raspberry** Hazelnut flapjacks.*

## Orange Zesty Almond Muesli

2 teaspoons orange zest (from about 1 ½ oranges, unwaxed preferably organic)  
2 tablespoons sugar  
360g rolled oats  
220g raw almonds  
1 teaspoon fine sea salt  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
½ cup extra virgin olive oil or melted coconut oil  
½ cup honey or maple syrup  
1 tablespoon good quality vanilla extract  
100g raisins, preferably golden

Preheat the oven to 170°C/350°F and line a large, rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a small bowl, combine the orange zest and sugar.

Use your fingers to rub the zest into the sugar until it is bright orange and very fragrant. This step will ensure that your granola is infused with orange zestiness.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the oats, almonds, salt, cinnamon and orange sugar. Combine ingredients well.

Pour in the olive oil, honey and vanilla, and mix well.

Scatter the granola onto your prepared baking sheet.

Spread the granola into an even layer. Bake for 19 to 23 minutes, stirring halfway, until the granola is turning lightly golden in color. The granola will crisp up as it cools.

Let the granola cool before stirring in the raisins and breaking up the granola into chunks as necessary.

Store the granola in an airtight container at room temperature for one to two weeks, or keep it in the freezer for longer shelf life.

## Hazelnut Raspberry Oatjacks

50g plain flour  
120g sugar  
300g rolled oats  
150g golden syrup  
150g unsalted butter  
Good pinch of salt  
100g dark chocolate chips  
100g hazelnuts roughly chopped  
200g raspberries

Butter and line an 18 x 24 cm rectangular baking tin.

Preheat the oven to 150°C fan/170°C/gas 3.

Place the syrup, butter and sugar in a large saucepan, and heat on medium for two to three minutes, stirring constantly, until completely melted.

Combine the oats and a pinch of salt, and stir until completely coated in the syrup mixture.

Turn the mixture out into a bowl and leave it to cool down for 15 minutes, then stir through the chocolate chips and hazelnuts.

Combine the mixture into the baking tin, prod in some indentations, then squash the raspberries into them.

Transfer to the oven and bake for 40 to 45 minutes, until golden brown on top.

Leave to cool in the tin before cutting into squares.

# Poetry Corner



*Delving back in time we can see that harsh lessons learned in the past can still be instructive.*

## **The Ballad of King Cnut (aka Canute)** *or, what a legend about a medieval monarch can teach us about Coronavirus*

Forward retreat, forward retreat  
I think that we all can agree  
each night and each day  
it won't go away  
the remorseless assault of the sea

stop I say halt, stop I say halt  
this man thought that he would decide  
so sat on his throne  
by the sea did intone  
and gave his command to the tide

needless to say, needless to say  
the more that the king did implore  
the sea did decide  
its level of tide  
and King Cnut it did ignore

the moral is plain, the moral is plain  
that if you must sit by the sea  
stay where it's calm  
at the top of the beach  
and then the sea won't do you harm!

**Peter Wild**



*Photo: Cathy Lawday*

## **Winter**

We like to moan about winter  
The cold, the wet, the grey,  
But winter also gives us  
Many a beautiful day  
A sharp hoar frost edging  
Everything with a rim of white  
Ghostly shapes in the morning mist  
A visual delight  
When fields are under water  
Rain swelling rivers and streams  
The land lies submerged and alien  
Nothing quite as it seems  
Waking to an overnight snowfall  
The landscape spotless and tranquil  
Everything so hushed  
So silent, soft and still

Wild incantations of the wind  
Make doors and windows rattle  
And hail and sleet drive relentlessly  
On huddles of sheep or cattle  
And nothing beats the feeling  
Superior and smug  
After a walk in the cold and wet  
Coming home to the warm and snug  
Yes, winter can be beautiful  
And the extra joy it brings  
Is that in the winter landscape  
Appear the first signs of spring

**Cathy Lawday**

## Brownies in lockdown

To say that it has been an unusual year for 1st Steeple Aston Brownies would be an understatement. Like many societies, Brownies has had to be flexible and imaginative in order to carry on meeting and enjoying games, activities and earning badges.

At the beginning of the first lockdown, Brownies began meeting virtually on Zoom and sharing achievements in their closed Facebook group. In late autumn, they were able to meet briefly in person again, under strict Covid-safe conditions, but for the foreseeable future, they are virtual again. Many Brownies have thrown themselves into earning badges on their own as well as earning Programme credits in weekly zoom meetings.

Here are the experiences of three Steeple Aston Brownies who have shown focus and commitment to earn their Brownie Gold Award and hopefully had great fun on the way. Thank you Tamsin, Seren and Hattie for being brilliant members of our village Brownie unit and great role models to younger members who have just started on their Brownie adventure.

Steeple Aston Brownies is open to girls between the ages of seven and ten. They meet on a Wednesday at the Sport and Recreation Building in Steeple Aston between 6 and 7.30pm (in normal times). To find out more about Brownies please contact Fiona McLoone at [aston.brownies@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:aston.brownies@yahoo.co.uk)



**Tamsin**



I joined Brownies when I was seven and I was very excited. When I was eight the Brownies changed the badge structure and if you collected awards in six different areas you could earn your Brownie Gold Badge. I worked really hard towards this, doing badges at home and fun activities during meetings. My favourite home badge was baking because I love baking and sharing and eating what I have made. I also enjoyed grow your own and I brought in the carrots I had grown with granny in her garden for the other brownies to sample.

I was ten in August 2020 and so when the first lockdown started I was already thinking about achieving my Brownie Gold before I left Brownies and went on to Guides. I had quite a lot of work still to do so my mum and my friend Sian's mum worked with Brown Owl to help us keep up with our Brownie activities. We did 3D card making, night nature walks, star gazing, built models, looked at how we could influence the world around for the better and even made our own sock puppets and put on a sock puppet show. We adapted the activities that needed more Brownies and our families helped by being extra Brownies (although my older brothers weren't so keen to help!). We had Zoom sessions and we shared our work with Brown Owl and were very proud to earn our Brownie Gold awards. I really liked the Zoom sessions because I could see my friends even when we weren't allowed to meet in person and we did lots of fun activities. My favourite was the virtual Brownie sleepover complete with den building and hot chocolate and games and the night we did Brownie taskmaster – who knew Molly could get 30 socks on one foot?

I am enjoying online Guides, but occasionally drop into online Brownies (as a Guide helper) when they are doing activities I haven't done, such as The Chinese New Year celebrations. I'm so pleased I had Brownies in lockdown – we had lots of fun!



## Seren

At Brownies we do lots of fun stuff in our weekly meetings and go on camps or holidays in the summer. At the moment, we have to have our meetings on Zoom – one for the younger Brownies and one for the older Brownies. When you join Brownies you get to make your Brownie Promise and we have a party for it. At the end of the year we normally have a special session where we do something nice – in the past we have had a cookout after playing games in the park and at Christmas we've watched a movie with hot chocolate and popcorn. During lockdown last year we had a virtual sleepover.

You learn lots of things at Brownies: about science, space, crafts, nature, we've even had our own fashion show! You also do activities for charity: we made tea and cakes in the church in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support, we've been litter picking and decorated and placed positivity pebbles around the village at the start of lockdown. We celebrate exciting days from other cultures such as Chinese New Year and Australia Day, as well as Pancake Day, Remembrance Sunday and St George's Day. You can also earn lots of different interest badges. I recently achieved my Brownie Gold Award which I earned after completing all my theme, skills builder and interest badges.

I'm so glad I joined Brownies. I've had the best time!

**B** is BADGES from Archaeology to Zero Waste and even one that's gold;

**R** is for things I'll REMEMBER: like cook-outs and gobble-gobble games, even when I'm old;

**O** is for Brown OWL and how lucky we are to have Fiona: the best Brown Owl of them all!

**W** is for WEDNESDAY meetings, returning home with my Brownie spoils/badge haul;

**N** is for sleepover NIGHTS at the museum and Jubilee House with zip wires and feasts;

**I** is for ICE CREAM we sold at the summer show and INTERNATIONAL days when we made chocolate s'mores treats;

**E** is for EXCITED which is how I feel to see my Brownie buddies wondering what will be our next caper!

**S** is for SQUIRRELS, SECONDER and SIXER!

... and also for how SAD I'll be to leave but excited to start a new girl-guiding adventure!



## Hattie

I remember going to Brownies on my seventh birthday. We visited a farm and saw lambs being born – it was amazing because the lambs were born on my birthday! I am now nearly ten and my Brownie journey has kept on being amazing, but it has been hard since virtual Brownies had to start because of the pandemic. I've had to stay focused to work on my badges – especially my silver award (and now I am really close to getting my gold award!).

My family and Brown Owl have been really supportive (including my granny who has been kept busy sewing on all my badges). The Brownie meetings online aren't as fun as in person, as I miss seeing my friends. But I am really pleased we can keep them going and we have still managed to do some brilliant stuff – like make a Father's Day rosette, Brownie's Got Talent evening (I made some honeycomb!) and fun quizzes. Plus at our Christmas meeting we made a 'good turn' advent calendar and I played a carol I'd learnt on the piano ('We Wish You A Merry Christmas'). COVID-19 WILL BE CONQUERED!

# HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO.....?

## A Virtual Tour



*The virtual tour of Blenheim Palace will introduce you to the extraordinary interiors of this imposing building. Photo: Nigel Francis*

Perhaps you will remember my delight when during the brief relaxation of restrictions last year, I was able to suggest that readers would enjoy a visit to Compton Verney to see the Lucas Cranach exhibition. For the first time for what seemed like ages it was wonderful to stand before pictures such as his Venus, painted in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Not a copy. Not electronic. The Real Thing! Subsequently, of course, renewed lockdowns have prevented us from visiting galleries, stately homes or exhibitions or going to concerts and enjoying live music. It has been easy to feel starved of the richness and nourishment of 'live' art and culture.

Technology has been a boon and a comfort in all sorts of ways during the pandemic – all those Zoom and video calls, FaceTime and simple phone calls. Perhaps like me you have found some interesting lectures or enjoyed YouTube clips and programmes – but it's never the same as the reality of sharing experiences with others. Even so, we have learnt I think that we can be entertained, we can learn and explore our world even in days of Covid, although feeling somewhat removed from people and places. I've used Google or the National Trust website in the past to search out details of places or events I want to see, but until our new SAL editor suggested it I'd never been on a virtual tour. I thought I'd give it a go! Because it's our nearest significant place of interest I chose to explore Blenheim Palace. I'd enjoyed a couple of their webinars so I felt confident that their production would be of quality. I was not disappointed and however well you know Blenheim I think you will find something of interest and something new to discover if you spend time following the Blenheim Palace virtual tour. You will find it on their website – [www.blenheimpalace.com](http://www.blenheimpalace.com)

I was truly impressed at what is on offer. You have to navigate your way around the comprehensive site, choosing from the 'virtual State Room' tour, or the '360-degree tour of the State Rooms using your virtual reality headset', for example. I liked best the 'Listen to our Audio Guide' commentary on each room and on various aspects of the Palace. It is detailed and clear and, even for anyone who visits frequently, the audio guide with its 37 sections of information (you can select which ones you want to watch and listen to if you don't want to follow that whole tour) is a splendid introduction or reminder of the fascinating history of England's only non-royal palace which we are fortunate to have on our doorstep – and of course this is all free if you have an internet connection! I'm grateful to Robert for this suggestion. Do try it for yourself!

**Eileen Baglin-Jones**





## Make It or Mend It in March!

Spring is always a hopeful time, but never more so than this year, as we hope that we are emerging from the dark days of the pandemic and can soon resume our 'normal' lives.

I feel a sense of excitement when I think about what the 'new normal' could look like and make no apology for using one of 2020's 'word bingo' words in this context, as I hope that we will re-emerge into a new normal rather than just resume where we left off! What do I mean by this? Well, on a household level, during the pandemic we have:

- Bought far less – making better use of what we have and focusing any spending on investing in the future, for example, we have bought tools to enable us to make, mend and grow things.
- Created less waste (largely because of buying less and more carefully) – last week's rubbish weigh-in saw us total only 278g of actual rubbish (not including compostable or recyclable waste).
- Spent more time outdoors, exploring the local area on foot and establishing our allotment – the added benefit is that we have given up our gym membership and are still enjoying our own produce even as we start to get ready for the new planting season.
- Taken more time to speak to friends and family – now that we cannot see people, somehow, we are more in touch, taking advantage of the wonders of modern technology (Zoom) and rediscovering what had become a lost art of letter writing and talking to people on the phone (rather than just messaging or liking their posts).
- Spent more time experimenting with new recipes, baking, reading, talking, doing jigsaws, playing games, and watching films together.
- Made cards and presents for people. Present buying is one of my favourite things, but doing it online holds no pleasure for me, so instead, I have made things. Whether it was a card with a promise of a day spent together doing something we love once we can, a set of hand-printed napkins, a cake, a hand-bound notebook, a list of 52 things to do this year, a recipe book or set of homemade seed packets, they have all given more pleasure to both me, as the maker, and to the recipient, than anything I could have bought.

Increasingly, I have also realised that there are fewer and fewer things I miss and that they really distil down into just two areas: spending time with friends and family and having new experiences. So, as we re-emerge, I do not want to go back to the way things were – I want to continue to embrace the simpler, more planet friendly, things that I have come to appreciate during lockdown.

As we move into March, and with Mother's Day and Easter around the corner, I am excited by the opportunities that exist to make cards and presents and, as we prepare for the start of our home refurbishment, I look forward to seeing what we can do with what we reclaim! I will be starting with a chest of drawers, which we have had for around 15 years, after it was left in a previous home when Paul bought it. Before picture here – after picture next month (nothing like giving myself a deadline). If you want to make your own Mother's Day or Easter cards and gifts, you can find ideas and 'how to' guides on the Sustainable Steeple website and if you have something that needs mending, give it a go. If you get stuck, drop an email to [amanda@sustainablesteeple.com](mailto:amanda@sustainablesteeple.com) and we'll see if we can help!



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# ???? Mind Games

## Word Builder

S	E	R
C	A	T
N	I	M

Thanks to  
Cathy Lawday

- Answers to every clue are:**  
- 5 letters long,  
- contain only letters from the grid,  
- and include the letter in the shaded central square.

- |                       |                                   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. A dairy product    | 2. Wagons                         |
| 3. Streetcars         | 4. To practice for a sport        |
| 5. A trap             | 6. Female horses                  |
| 7. A packing carton   | 8. Rips                           |
| 9. Hot water vapour   | 10. A marker at the top of a hill |
| 11. Pals              | 12. Stuffs into a small space     |
| 13. Worries, concerns | 14. A vestige                     |
| 15. Deserves          | 16. A silky fabric                |
| 17. To frighten       | 18. To provide food               |
| 19. Mad, frenzied     | 20. A step up or down             |

*Answers on page 30.*

## SAL Quiz

Steeple Aston Life is not just about local information and organisations. Tucked away in the pages are nuggets of general knowledge. How many of these do you recall from the 2020 and 2021 issues? *The answers are on page 30.*

1. 'Sandpapergate' is associated with which sport?
2. In Steeple Aston, Burgin's Rents was featured in the 1871 Census. What was it called in the 1881 Census – a name which remains to the present day?
3. St. Cecilia is the patron saint of which art?
4. Where in the body is the pineal gland?
5. In which region of France might you see black bulls, white horses and pink flamingos?
6. Who wrote, "In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love"?
7. Where, locally, were chestnuts grown from conkers picked up from the battlefield of Verdun?
8. Near which Oxfordshire village will you see the prehistoric figure of a White Horse shining in the grass?
9. Who said, "No-one knows where the wind comes from or where it goes"?
10. Who called television the "telly-telly bunkum box"?
11. Who wrote the 'Nelson Mass'?
12. What is a Twiddle Muff?
13. Why are 'Bale tombs' so called?
14. Who wrote the lyrics to the musical 'Chess'.



## Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> February Annual Quiz Evening (online)

Whilst we weren't able to meet in person for the annual quiz this year, ten teams pitted their wits against each other in an online quiz on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> February. In a fun evening that saw teams coming together over Zoom, the quiz provided some much needed entertainment on a dark – and cold – winter's evening. The teams were made up of villagers old and new, friends from further afield (Leeds & Manchester) and players of all ages. As well as raising £70 for village hall funds, and a smile on the faces of those who took part, we also all learned a few things! One favourite fact from the evening is that the collective noun for giraffes is a tower. Congratulations to Anna Thatcher's winning team and a very big 'thank you' to Amanda & Paul Rodgers for organising this event.

We appreciate that these have been difficult and uncertain times for all our regular users over the last 11 months. As you know, Oxfordshire was placed in Tier 4 on the 26<sup>th</sup> December and we were therefore obliged to close Steeple Aston Village Hall. Not exactly the way we would like to have started the New Year, but sadly we have no choice. People's health, safety and well-being must come first. We will continue to monitor the government guidelines and announcements and will re-open just as soon as we can and let you know.

**Barbara Brewer, chair**

### This is your scammer calling

It's 8am. The phone rings. I know it will be a scammer. None of my friends or colleagues phone me at this time of the morning. I answer anyway, curious to know which of the small repertoire of stories will be played.

Perhaps it will be BT telling me there has been suspicious activity detected with my internet address. My broadband and telephone will be disconnected later in the day if I do not press '1' to speak to an engineer now. Amazon is a regular caller. Either my Amazon Prime account is due for renewal, or an iPhone has been charged to my account and will shortly be despatched. Press '1' if I want to dispute these claims. Or it is the Mastercard and Visa department of my bank asking me to confirm a £600 transaction. Again, I need to press the overworked '1' key for more information.

All of these are recorded messages and they are all lies. The golden rule is never, ever, press '1' or any other key if you have not originated the call. The scammers want to download software which will give them control of your computer, or they will ask for your bank account details or card PIN. Terminate calmly. Shout and scream down the phone if it makes you feel better, but it is a sign of incipient madness to talk to a recorded message.

The scammers are relying on a habit which has become ingrained. Whenever you phone a large organisation you will be asked to press keys to route your call to the correct department. Banks have this down to a fine art. '1' for business customers, '2' for personal customers, now key in your six-digit sort code followed by your eight-digit account number. You have been trained to press keys when asked. But here you have made the call to a trusted number. So when someone phones you, claiming to be from a trusted company, and asks you to press a key, can you resist? Many people can't.

Keep this in mind – if no one responded to the scammers, the calls would soon stop.

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A number of us joined our first members' Zoom meeting to enjoy a talk given by one of our own members, Janice Kinory. It was strange to some of us, but nice to see some different faces, especially a gentleman joining us, and also seeing those enjoying the talk with a glass of wine.

We were shown photos of women around the world over many years – the clothes they wore, especially long skirts and hats, back in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. How very different from today.

We saw women at work and it was amazing some of the jobs they did. We saw them in front of the camera and very few behind the camera taking many pictures abroad. Janice was asked many questions after and we all found it very interesting.

The Federation Oxfordshire Inspires magazines give us a choice of many more Zoom meetings we can join with some craft, cookery and informative talks on art, Shakespeare, Cliveden, design and also the opportunity to book a holiday later in the year to Chatsworth.

Hopefully we will soon have another Zoom meeting to enjoy another talk by one of our members. Please contact Linda Needle on 01869 340028 if you would like any more information about joining our friendly WI.

Keep safe and well.

**Linda Needle (President)**

## Mind Games Answers

### Word Builder answers (see page 26)

1. cream, 2. carts, 3. trams, 4. train, 5. snare, 6. mares, 7. crate, 8. tears, 9. steam, 10. cairn, 11. mates, 12. crams, 13. cares, 14. trace, 15. earns, 16. satin, 17. scare, 18. cater, 19. manic, 20. Stair

### SAL Quiz answers (see page 26)

*(Details in brackets give the SAL issue date and page number where you will find the information.)*

**1.** Cricket (*Feb 21, p35*) **2.** The Gap – a narrow space which leads directly from North Side (*Jan 21, p21*) **3.** Music (*Nov 20, p39*) **4.** In the centre of the brain (*Feb 20, p15*) **5.** Camargue (*Feb 21, p22*) **6.** Alfred Lord Tennyson (*Feb 20, p20*) **7.** Middle Aston House (*Nov 20, p18*) **8.** Uffington (*Jan 21, p18*) **9.** Jesus (*Jan 21, p39*) **10.** Roald Dahl (*April 2020, p21*) **11.** Haydn (*Mar 20, p25*) **12.** A knitted muff decorated inside and out with beads, buttons and ribbons, designed to provide stimulation for restless hands for patients with dementia (*Feb 20, p8*) **13.** Because they appear to be surmounted by bales of cloth and wool (*Mar 20, p21*) **14.** Tim Rice (*Mar 20, p41*)





## THE VALENTINE CLUB

Did you know that The Valentine Club has been in existence since 1952 and was originally formed for companionship for the slightly older members of the village? It has seen many organisers who have done a magnificent job in keeping this 69-year-old community group ticking over and providing a means to meet-up with others and socialise.

Member numbers have had their ups and downs and prior to the pandemic, were around 90 before we all shut down for what we hoped would be a short break. A year later, we are still in lockdown, but there is light at the end of this exceptionally long tunnel with the rollout of a vaccine. As things begin to open up again and we can meet in groups, hopefully the club will be able to bring friends both old and new back together for our famous cup of tea and homemade cake and the wonderful array of speakers and entertainers for which the club is famous. Not forgetting the coach trips which form a highlight of our members' calendar. We recently featured as a three-page spread in 'Group Leisure and Travel' magazine highlighting the adventures the club has had in the past and its aspirations for the future.

For more information about the club go to [www.steepleaston.org.uk](http://www.steepleaston.org.uk) or visit our own website [www.valentineclub.wixsite/aston](http://www.valentineclub.wixsite/aston) or simply call me on 01869 340512.

Kind regards to everyone. Keep smiling and keep an eye on your neighbours and friends.

Richard Preston – Group organiser  
[Richard.preston5@btopenworld.com](mailto:Richard.preston5@btopenworld.com)



*This photo was taken in November 2019 at Nailcote Hotel, Warwickshire. The club was extremely well represented at a celebration of 70's music whilst enjoying a two-course meal accompanied by liquid refreshment. We were due to revisit last year, but are hoping to return in November this year, restrictions allowing.*



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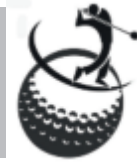


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Dear Fellow Golfer,

We hope you and your families have kept well during this unreal time. This time last year we were blissfully unaware of what would befall us in 2020. Who would have imagined that we would lose a whole SAGS season and that the older ones amongst us would be shielding, with golf being restricted to carefully-regulated sessions between the various lockdowns.

Looking at 2021 we would like to think that this will be a full year of SAGS meetings and as such will be asking Martin Kay if he would remain Captain for the coming year.

In 2020 as we were cancelling our matches with clubs, in most cases, we were able to agree a revised date with them for 2021. Therefore, please put these dates for the first three meetings in your diaries:

Wychwood - Friday 7th May

The Springs - Friday 11th June

Wrag Barn - Friday 2nd July

At the moment COVID still has a grip on us and movements look to be restricted for some time yet. However, we are hopeful that we will be able to start the season as planned with the meeting at Wychwood.

Obviously we are keen for these events to take place, but we are very conscious of your safety. In our experience, golf clubs have been extremely good at implementing Covid rules. However, it is also worth bearing in mind that as we came out of previous lockdowns, most clubs didn't allow Society fixtures, in order to give their members priority. There have also been restrictions on meeting in the clubhouse, and on catering.

Playing golf is what brings our Society together, but equally important to us is the pleasure we get from each other's company, so the prospect of playing 'car park golf' (just turning up, straight to the tee and no socialising afterwards) isn't appealing. We are sure that you would agree that this should be a major factor when deciding whether or not to go ahead with a fixture. Anyway, we will continue to review the situation and keep you informed, and really hope to see you all in May.

Happy Golfing.

**Alan, Chris and Mike**

## **The Rugged Outdoor Man**

During my physical examination, a doctor asked me about my physical activity level. I said I spent three days a week, every week in the outdoors.

"Well, yesterday afternoon was typical. I took a five hour walk, about seven miles through some pretty rough terrain. I waded along the edge of a lake. I pushed my way through two miles of brambles. I got sand in my shoes and my eyes. I barely avoided stepping on a snake. I climbed several rocky hills. The mental stress of it left me shattered. At the end of it all I drank a scotch and three glasses of wine." Amazed by the story, the doctor said, "You must be one hell of an outdoor man!" "No," I replied, "I'm just a really, really awful golfer".

Stay safe.

**Alan**



## Night and low-light photography

“Don’t be frightened or intimidated by the dark” was the advice from Tony Worobiec, FRPS.

During his ‘Night and Low-light Photography presentation’ Tony gave us a wealth of tips and advice to encourage and inspire us to go outside in the dark and accomplish some amazing images. He displayed images taken pre-dawn and post-sunset, all stunning. An interesting tip was to turn 180 degrees to the sunrise or sunset to accomplish a softly illuminated landscape where colours bloom rather than being drowned out by the intense sun.

Of course, pre-dawn there are opportunities to capture those wonderful mists and fogs that lie in fields and valleys during high pressure. It would appear that the early riser catches the proverbial worm by setting up and having an exposure of at least a minute to capture the detail whilst it is still dark. The same is true of dusk where, waiting for forty minutes after sunset the image colours will improve considerably.

Tony explained he often uses a torch as a filler light when using a 15-second shutter speed to fix stars in the sky at ISO 400, but if star trails are needed, he will use a 15-minute shutter speed, remembering the moon can be a great illuminator too.

Tony gave us a series of ideas for future night-time photography topics including fireworks, fairgrounds, piers, bridges, shops, industrial sites and buildings at night, and explained about crossover lighting. So, inspired we are off to try taking some night-time images for our workshop on 17<sup>th</sup> February – look out for them on our website. Also check Tony’s website [www.tonyworobiec.com](http://www.tonyworobiec.com) to see his remarkable images.

The next presentation will be on 3<sup>rd</sup> March at 7.30pm when Nathan Barry will talk about ‘Achieving Natural Results with Lightroom’.

**Anne Hunsley**  
[www.addphoto.co.uk](http://www.addphoto.co.uk)



*Spring snowflake flower and Hellebore small, following on from a talk in January about macro (close-up) photography. Copyright Colin Lamb, an AD&D Photographic Society member.*

# The Cricket Report



## Lifetime Averages...

Normally I would be regaling everyone with tall tales of derring-do from our Annual Awards Presentation. Sadly, of course, the dinner has not yet happened. There are however a few awards I can announce:

Louis Rees-Zammit Award for speed around the field: Greg 'one knee' Renk

Brian Redpath Award for having a son who is far more talented: Mark Parker (two sons!)

James Anderson Award for superlative fitness in later life: David Stewart

		Total		Lifetime		
	Players	Runs	Outs	Average	100s	50s
Toby	Parker	329	4	82.25	1	2
Jamie	Longman	718	14	51.29	2	2
Jeremy	Farrar	825	22	37.50	1	7
Rob	Wilson-Fry	1143	31	36.87	1	5
Peter	Higgins	1925	56	34.38	1	12
Jon	Scotchbrook	2890	91	31.76	3	21
Olly	Doggett	374	12	31.17		3
Arthur	Higgins	486	16	30.38	1	3
Harry	Startin	121	4	30.25		
Hector	Higgins	85	3	28.33		
Nigel	Doggett	1022	42	24.33		5
Greg	Renk	1162	49	23.71		4
Tom	Chesser	284	12	23.67		2
Bob	Longman	47	2	23.50		
Stan	Owen	1006	45	22.36		2
Tim	Jones	18	1	18.00		
James	Liebrecht	84	7	12.00		
Mark	Parker	132	12	11.00		
Jock	Shepherd	105	10	10.50		
Hugo	Rittson-Thomas	41	4	10.25		
Phil	Chesser	357	38	9.39		
Paul	Nicholaides	65	7	9.29		
Charlie	Scotchbrook	44	5	8.80		
Jack	Higgins	59	7	8.43		
David	Stewart	22	3	7.33		
Sam	Hatzigeorgiou	74	12	6.17		
Jonty	Renk	98	17	5.76		
Ben	Parker	30	6	5.00		
Darren	Haskell-Thomas	5	1	5.00		
Paul	Longman	128	26	4.92		
Jeremy	Lowe	13	4	3.25		

Since nobody will have kept last year's Lifetime Averages and, if they did, is unlikely to want to subtract one from the other to see who won these prestigious Awards, here they are. A prize of £10 to anyone who tries and thereby wastes five hours of their life!! The Averages as ever include only those who are still playing for Steeple Aston and have played more than one game:

Many thanks to Jon Scotchbrook for helping me to compile them; it is a Labour of Love! Next month the Bowling. Best wishes to all

**Peter Higgins, Chairman**

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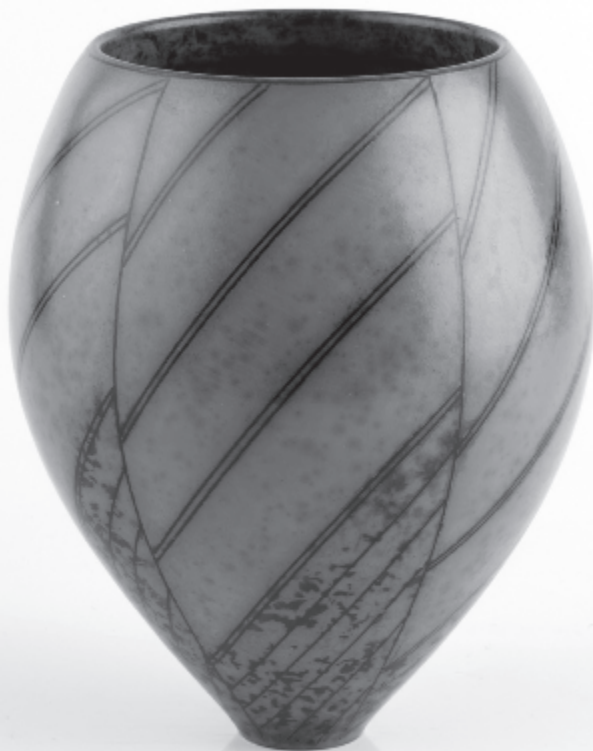
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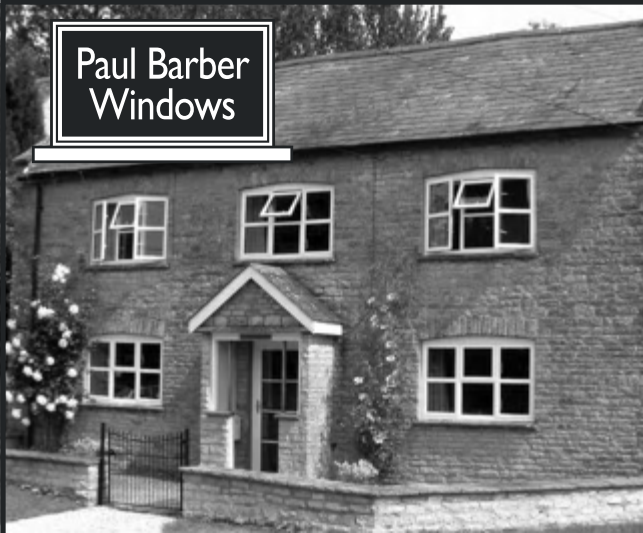
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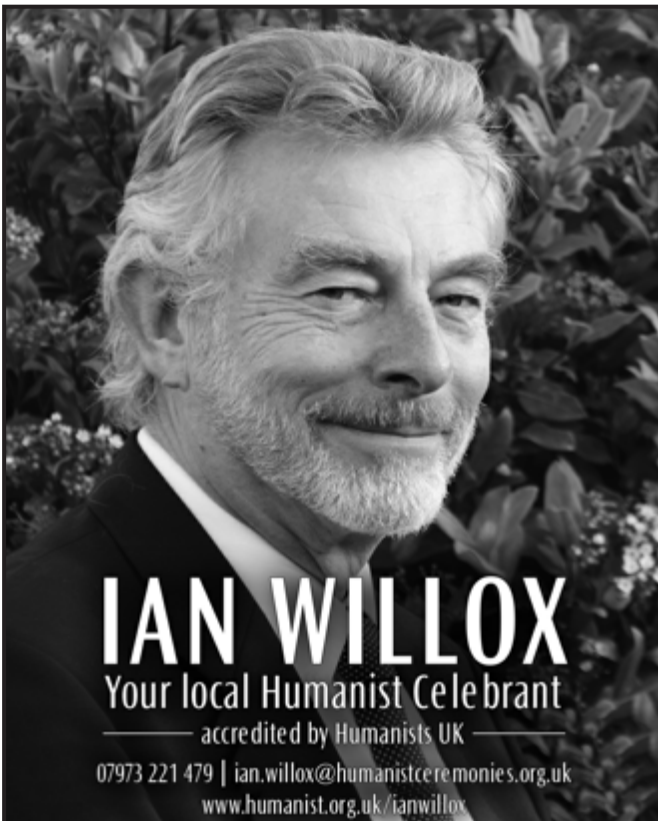
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# Church Matters



So here we are in **Lent** again.

I think the last thing any of us wants to do is give anything up, right? The whole of the last year has felt as if we have given up too much. Yet one of the things that keeps us sane is making the different bits of the year *feel* different, especially when every day still seems to be March 373rd, so maybe it's good to try and keep Lent – albeit a bit differently to usual. Here are four ways some of us in the churches of Steeple Aston, North Aston & Tackley are keeping Lent – and maybe they might be helpful to you too.

- 1. Do something nice for someone else.** About three years ago in Steeple Aston church, we did a 'reverse collection', where we gave out £10 to everyone who came to church one Sunday and then asked people to do something creative with the cash. If they managed to raise money with whatever it was they did, they brought the funds raised back to church at Easter. We gave out £200 – and raised £4,000! Last year we gave out another £200, but were never able to do anything because the first Lockdown happened. This week somebody said to me that they still had that £10 note. So I thought our challenge now should be – just go and spend that £10 on somebody else. Do something unexpectedly lovely for someone. We are all fed up; why not take a little cash and brighten someone else's day. You can join in this even if you don't have cash from us – if you have a little spare money of your own, then think of someone you can bless, and do something nice for someone else. Just because.
- 2. Keep a thankfulness journal.** Lots of us are fed up. It's easy to feel down and to find ourselves complaining at everything. We all do it. So – let's change the conversation. Why not find a small notebook and for Lent (basically, March) try to write down every day just one thing that you are grateful for. If you want to write more than one thing – fine, but make sure there is that one thing every day. No matter how small! When the clouds of life seem dark, sometimes we have to produce our own sunshine; being grateful is an amazing way to change the weather. Thankfulness can be medicine for the soul.
- 3. Candles in the Dark.** Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has a lovely little book out called *Candles in the Dark*, with 26 very short chapters. He wrote it last year from March to September, as a weekly column in his local parish newsletter. It's beautifully written and full of hope and simple, godly wisdom that I am finding genuinely lifts my spirits. I'm reading a chapter a day and I commend it to you as something that may really help make sense of things and warm your soul too.
- 4. Come and See.** Every year our churches offer a 'Lent Course', a weekly evening when we get together to think about life and faith, and prepare for Easter. I know that lots of folk have thought about faith this year because of all that we are going through together. We can't meet up to do this, but the Diocese of Oxford has provided a resource to help us in these days, and so we are offering a course that will happen on Zoom. It's called *Come and See*. We are meeting online for an hour on Wednesday evenings at 8pm, and if you would like to join in, drop me an email at [steeplerector@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:steeplerector@hotmail.co.uk) and I will send you all the details you need. Everyone welcome.

Plus of course, every Sunday you can worship with us thanks to **Worship at Home**, our online service at [www.sntchurch.com](http://www.sntchurch.com) or via the phone on 929021. You can actually do this any time, even during the week if you like, and each service only lasts 15 to 20 minutes. We really hope we can be back together in church soon. But whether in person or online, we will mark **Mothering Sunday** on March 14th and **Palm Sunday** on March 28th. Do look out for posters on our noticeboards and news online to see if we are back in the church building – and if you need to book when that happens. And let's really look forward to celebrating **Easter Sunday** on April 4th!

Revd Marcus Green



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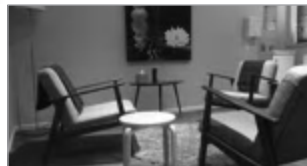
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## Church Services During Lockdown

While we are in Lockdown or Tier 4  
our Church Services in  
Steeple Aston, North Aston and Tackley  
will mostly be online:

**Worship at Home**  
can be found every Sunday on our website

[www.sntchurch.com](http://www.sntchurch.com)

*(Or listen to the service on the phone:  
ring 929021 if you don't have internet)*

When we return to Tier 2 or lower  
we will resume weekly services in all our churches:  
North Aston - 9.30am Morning Prayer  
Steeple Aston - 11am Holy Communion  
Tackley - 5.30pm Evensong (9.30am Morning Prayer once a month)

*Please watch out for updates on our website  
on Church Noticeboards  
and via email*

**Special Dates & Services Coming Soon:**  
Sunday 14 March - Mothering Sunday  
Sunday 28 March - Palm Sunday  
Sunday 4 April - Easter Sunday

**Everyone welcome!**

# Local Info

## Steeple Aston Village Hall

	Hiring Fee	Caution
<b>Hall (meeting night)</b>		
Represented Clubs.....	£9	
Non-Represented Clubs.....	£17	
<b>Hall Only (social occasion)</b>		
Represented Clubs.....	£32	
Others.....	£53	
<b>All Facilities (social occasion)</b>		
Village Residents .....	£65	£200
Represented Clubs.....	£65	£200
Others - up to 6 hours.....	£110	£300
Others - over 6 hours.....	£160	£300
<b>All Facilities (off peak - 4 hours)</b>		
Village Residents .....	£30	£75
Represented Clubs.....	£30	£75
<b>Committee Room</b>		
Represented Clubs.....	£6	
Non-Represented Clubs.....	£12	
Discount for represented clubs – 15% for six block bookings		

Letting Agent : Katie Rushworth (340196)  
 Chairman: Barbara Brewer (340423)  
 Secretary: Margaret Bulleyment (347346)

A represented club must send a representative to the Village Hall Committee meetings.

## Rubbish bin collection day = Thursday

March	April
4 <sup>th</sup> green	1 <sup>st</sup> green
11 <sup>th</sup> blue & brown	8 <sup>th</sup> blue & brown
18 <sup>th</sup> green	15 <sup>th</sup> green
25 <sup>th</sup> blue & brown	22 <sup>nd</sup> blue & brown
	29 <sup>th</sup> green

## Steeple Aston Sports and Recreation Centre Letting Charges

Social Function peak times (up to 6 hours) £55

Social Function off-peak (up to 5 hours) £27.50

Meeting of represented club: £11 per session

Caution Money for Private Lettings: £100

**Letting agent:** Katie Rushworth - Tel: 340196

**Mail to:** [rec.trust@googlemail.com](mailto:rec.trust@googlemail.com)

Chairman - Torquil McLusky - Tel: 347914

Treasurer - Chris Cooper - Tel: 347173

## Bus times

### STAGECOACH S4 BUS SERVICE

From Sunday 31 January 2021 the S4 bus service will be operating to a revised timetable following the introduction of a third national lockdown and current travel restrictions. Service levels will be as follows until further notice:

Monday to Friday: Saturday schedule

Saturday: Saturday schedule

Sunday: Sunday schedule

#### Buses from Steeple Aston (outside Post Office) to Oxford (arrival time in *italics*)

##### Monday to Saturday

0704 0804 0919 then hourly to 1819 1932 2047 2217  
 0740 0846 1002 1902 2010 2125 2255

##### Sunday and most public holidays

0903 1033 1203 1333 1503 1633 1803  
 0944 1114 1244 1414 1544 1714 1844

#### Buses from Steeple Aston (outside Post Office) to Banbury (arrival time in *italics*)

##### Monday to Saturday

0759 0857 then hourly to 1557 1657 1757 1855 1955 2107 2222 2352  
 0835 0935 1635 1731 1831 1924 2024 2135 2250 0020

##### Sunday and most public holidays

0917 1037 1207 1337 1507 1637 1807 1937  
 0953 1113 1243 1413 1543 1713 1843 2005

Times subject to change. Before starting your journey please check the timetables at

[stagecoachbus.com](http://stagecoachbus.com)

E&OE

### OURBUS BARTONS

OurBus Bartons has suspended all services until further notice.

# Steeple Aston Calendar

Few village events are taking place during lockdown. Check the village website at [www.steepleaston.org.uk](http://www.steepleaston.org.uk) (Home > Calendar) for the latest information.

<b>March</b>			
Monday 15th	Parish Council meeting	Zoom	7.30
Monday 15th	SAL April issue copy and advert deadline		
Sunday 21st	Spring Show cancelled, but see page 17 for a fun alternative		
Saturday 27th	Check <a href="http://deddingtonfarmersmarket.co.uk">deddingtonfarmersmarket.co.uk</a>		
<b>April</b>			
Thursday 15th	SAL May issue copy and advert deadline		
Monday 19th	Parish Council meeting	Zoom	7.30
Saturday 24th	Check <a href="http://deddingtonfarmersmarket.co.uk">deddingtonfarmersmarket.co.uk</a>		

Due to coronavirus many clubs and societies are unable to meet in person but may still meet online. Please contact the organisers for the most up to date information. Contact details can be found on page 2.

**Choral Society Rehearsals.** Village Hall - 7.45pm - Mondays  
**Badminton.** Village Hall - 10am -12.30pm - Tuesdays  
**Bell Ringing practice.** Church Tower - 7.30pm - Tuesdays  
**Scouts.** Sport & Rec Centre - 7.30pm - Tuesdays  
**Baby and Toddler Group.** Sport & Rec Centre - 9am -11am - Thursdays  
**Cricket Nets.** Robinson's Close - 6pm - Thursdays  
**Badminton.** Village Hall - 8pm - Thursdays  
**Village History Centre (SAVA) closed at present**

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Unit 2 Glenmore Business Centre, Range Road, Witney, OX29 0AA Tel: 01865 246762

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