

Steeple Aston *Life*

December 2021

Issue No. 580



- Fixing potholes • SAVA exhibition • News from clubs and societies •
- Local arts events • Tips for a greener Christmas • Seasonal crossword •

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Cover photo: Christmas wreaths on village front doors, taken by Nigel Francis.

Steeple Aston *Life*

COPY

All articles and letters to the Editors
editorialife@gmail.com

COPY DEADLINES

The copy deadline is the 15th of the previous month.

The copy deadline for the January 2022 issue is therefore 15th December.

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

ADVERTS

All adverts, and all advertising queries (availability, prices, dimensions, suitability of illustrations, etc.) to **Charlotte Bartlett**
salife.advertising@gmail.com

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½ page - £12, ¼ page- £6.
Commercial adverts:
½ page- £15, ¼ page- £8

Steeple Aston Directory

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Angling Club		Antony Morley	<i>tonyriver_83@hotmail.com</i>
Archive (SAVA)	Chairman	Martin Lipson	347046
Badminton (Tuesday mornings)		Barbara Brewer	340423
Badminton (Thursday evenings)		Alison Moran	347033
Beekeepers (Swarm collection, advice)		Paul Honigmann	340665
Bell ringers		Graham & Dorothy Clifton	347273
Hand-bell ringers		Sally Cooper	347173
Brownies		Fiona McLoone	340132
Catholic Church - St Teresa's (Charlbury)		Father Tony Joyce	01608 642703
Cherwell District Council	Bodicote House		01295 227001
Choral Society	Chair	Ann Livings	233518
Church of England (St Peter & St Paul)	Rector	Rev Marcus Green	340903
Church Wardens		Eileen Baglin-Jones, Graham Clifton	340099 , 347273
Methodist Church – Tackley		Rev Paul Carter	01865 243216
	Steward	Tim Bailey	01869 331516
Councillors - Cherwell District Council		Cllr Mike Kerford-Byrnes	07805 665393
		Cllr Bryn Williams	07836 271998
		Cllr Hugo Brown	
Cricket Club	Chairman	Peter Higgins	347493
Crimestoppers			0800 555111
Deddington Guides		Marian Trinder	340806, 07786001641
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
Football Club	Secretary	Peter Wild	07950 837773
Garden Club	Chairman	Richard Preston	340512
Golf Society	Chairman	Alan Brewer	340423
Horticultural Society	Show Secretary	Vicky Clifton	07817 025948
Parish Council	Chairman / Clerk	Richard MacAndrew/ Cathy Fleet	347209, 347000
Police	24hr Call Centre	(non emergency)	101
Post Office & Harris Stores		Raj	340201
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Steeple Aston Walking Group		Penny, Stuart, Sue and Graham	<i>sawgox25@gmail.com</i>
Toddler Group		Charlotte Clarke	07799 030490
Valentine Club		Richard & Daphne Preston	340512
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Village Website	www.steepleaston.org.uk	Editor: Jenny Bell	347714
Volunteer Connect - Community transport scheme			0300 3030125
WI	Joint Presidents	Merrill Bayley, Cathy Lawday	347802, 347209



"...folly is not always folly."
Jane Austen

Steeple Aston *Life*

December 2021

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Editorial

"It was snowing. It was always snowing at Christmas. December, in my memory, is white as Lapland, though there were no reindeers. But there were cats." From 'A Child's Christmas in Wales', by Dylan Thomas, a Welsh poet and writer, 1914 to 1953.

Black Friday is over. Except that it is no longer a single day, but now extends over the entire month of November. It is a time when retailers offer discounts to encourage you to buy things you don't need with money you don't have. It originated in the USA as the Friday after Thanksgiving Day, which is the fourth Thursday in November. You might find it easier to remember the day as the final Friday in the month.

Christmas has also been extended, with the first sale adverts appearing as long ago as September. However, as we all know, Christmas doesn't really start until the arrival of the John Lewis seasonal advert in mid-November.

Actually, a long, long time ago, when I was very young, Christmas only began on Christmas Eve, when my parents retrieved our artificial Christmas tree from some distant corner of the house. As I recall, the same tree was used every year while I lived at home. This was not early recycling – more a lack of disposable income. Even so, when decorated with bright lights, tired tinsel and ancient baubles, it provided seasonal cheer.

Tradition demands that all Christmas decorations must be taken down on twelfth night. There is some debate as to whether this is the evening of 5th January, the eve of the Epiphany, or 6th January, the feast of the Epiphany. Either way, if you overlook a decoration at this time, it must remain in place for the rest of the year. I don't know what will happen if you take down a decoration after twelfth night – and have no intention of finding out!

I will finish with another seasonal quote: *"May you never be too grown up to search the skies on Christmas Eve."* (anon.)

Robert



Remembrance Sunday (14th November)
at the Steeple Aston War Memorial.
(Photo by Catherine Crook)



Peter Waite 1927 - 2021

My dad, Peter Waite, passed away on 21st October at the Horton Hospital after a short illness, aged 94. He had moved earlier in the year to Featherton House in Deddington to be with his wife, Pamela, who has outlived him.

Peter was an accomplished artist and leaves behind numerous fascinating sculptural figures and paintings, many of which he drew from his and Pamela's extensive travels to exotic places. He was for many years an art teacher and rose to become Principal of Berkshire College of Art and Design. In the 1990s he began a long retirement, moving to Steeple Aston in 1997. Peter was Chairman of the Steeple Aston Village Archive (SAVA) for several years, and put in place the high standard of exhibitions and publications that continues today.



His funeral service was held on 9th November at the North Oxford Crematorium, attended by friends and family. I was so grateful for all the expressions of sympathy and warmth. He will be greatly missed.

Caroline Waite

Steeple Aston Handbell Ringers

The Steeple Aston Handbell Ringers are very much looking forward to ringing door to door in the build up to Christmas after being unable to do so last year due to Covid restrictions.

Our tour of Steeple and Middle Aston will begin on Sunday 12th December and we will be collecting for Oxfordshire Mind. This is a local branch of Mind which provides mental health and well-being support and has centres in Abingdon, Banbury, Witney and Oxford.

The majority of the money collected will go to this worthwhile and much-needed charity, but a small portion will be put into the Steeple Aston Tower Fund, for maintenance of the church bells – this amount to be decided at the Bellringer's AGM held in the new year.

If you are thinking of having a family/friends gathering on Christmas Eve and you would like the Handbell Ringers to entertain your guests with a few carols, call me on 347173 and we will try to accommodate you.

Looking forward to playing a Christmas carol at your door.

Sally Cooper



Dr Radcliffe's CE Primary School

Consultation on Admissions Policy 2023-2024

As required by the Admissions Code, the Governors of Dr Radcliffe's Church of England Primary School have initiated a consultation period on the Admissions Policy for 2023-2024.

This will run from Monday 1st November until Friday 31st December 2021.

This consultation is to comply with our statutory requirements to consult at least every seven years. The only changes to the Admissions Policy are those required by the Schools Admissions code introduced in May 2021. There are no substantive changes to either our admissions criteria or catchment area.

The draft policy may be viewed on the school website:

<http://www.dr-radcliffes.org.uk/admissions/>

Hard copies may be obtained by contacting the school office on the address below or by phone on 01869 340204.

Any comments on the draft policy should be forwarded in writing to the Clerk to the Governors at Dr Radcliffe's CE Primary School, Fir Lane, Steeple Aston, Bicester, Oxon OX25 4SF, or by email to **admin.3828@dr-radcliffes.oxon.sch.uk**

Letters or emails should be marked 'Response to Consultation on 2023-2024 Admissions Policy'.

CPRE Oxfordshire Flooding and Pollution Report 2021

Findings show that at least 17% of towns & parishes in Oxfordshire experience flooding problems and at least 20% of towns & parishes experience issues with sewage/sewerage infrastructure.

CPRE Oxfordshire has produced an interactive map highlighting where the issues are. You can view the map and download the report at **www.cpreoxon.org.uk**

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VICTORIA PRENTIS MP

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📍 House of Commons
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victoria.prentis.mp@parliament.uk



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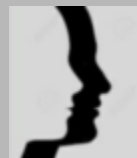
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Steeple People



How long have you lived in Steeple Aston? 19 years.

Where did you move from? Hammersmith in London.

What brought you here? The chance to bring our children up in the country, in a vibrant and friendly village.

What do you like best about living in Steeple Aston? Friends, a sense of community and cricket!

Is there anything you don't like about living here? Still finding that people drop litter – why would you?

Where do you think of as 'home'? Definitely Steeple Aston, though of course some small part of my heart lies in Yorkshire!

Give a potted history of yourself – in 40 words or less. Northern Grammar School boy with chips on both shoulders. Scraped into Cambridge to read Classics. School Teacher and, by accident, an entrepreneur. Trustee of Mary's Meals. Family man with long-suffering wife, Harriet, and four children.

How do you see yourself, in five words or less? Getting gradually grumpier.

How do others see you, in five words or less? LOUD and opinionated...no I'm not!

What do your friends find most annoying about you? I walk too fast and end up walking by myself.

What do your friends find most endearing about you? I have always made the effort to keep in touch.

Early bird or night owl? Cat or dog? Optimist or pessimist? Early bird, dog, optimist.

Technology: friend or foe? Foe – my children despair.

What was the best thing about being a child? Going out early on a Sunday on my bike with friends and coming home covered in mud after playing football all day.

What is the best thing about being an adult? Being able to retell stories of past sporting glories – the older I get, the better I was.

What was your first job? Selling aerial photographs of beautiful Yorkshire Dales' villages door-to-door for £3 each.

What do you do for a living now? Chairman of ME+EM and Co-chair Charles Tyrwhitt Shirts.

What is the best job you've ever done? Starting my own business from scratch.

What's your secret/guilty pleasure? Rustling around in the fridge at 10.30pm for a snack just before I go to bed.

What's your favourite piece of music? Listening to Rick Astley's 'Never gonna give you up' in an 80s Bradford nightclub and thinking I was a great dancer – I wasn't.

What are you reading at the moment? 'Spiked' by Jeremy Farrar (member of Steeple Aston CC and SAGE), the inside story of how the pandemic unfurled.

What's your favourite food? Beef Wellington with a 1990 Claret.

What would you save from your house if it was on fire? My Filofax...and then my family.

If you won the lottery, what's the first thing you would buy? A made-to-measure cricket bat, weighted for a classic forward defensive.

If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go? Antarctica – I love hearing silence.

Which person do you most admire, and why? Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, Founder of Mary's Meals, the only truly altruistic person I know.

Who would you most like to have dinner with – dead or alive? Alexander the Great.

What do you get grumpy/mad about? The media constantly focusing on negative or bad news – what about some joy?

What makes you happiest in the world? My wife, children and dog, Albert.

Tell us a surprising thing that you are really good at. Bridge – my rating is just under 56% and I am about 3,450th in the UK.

Tell us a surprising thing that you are really bad at. Listening to my wife, who is nearly always right.



Peter Higgins

Letter from *Westminster*



SAL's bi-monthly epistle from our MP, Victoria Prentis



Since I last wrote a couple of months ago, it does not feel like we have stopped. Parliament has been especially busy as we have tried to make up for time lost during the pandemic. I have recently been overseeing the passage of the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill through the Commons. I'm proud that the Bill will extend and strengthen protections for pets, farm animals and primates. The UK has a long history of leading the way on animal welfare. In 1635, Parliament prohibited pulling the wool off sheep and forbade attaching ploughs to the tails of horses. We have come a long way. I am very proud to be continuing this tradition.

Despite everything going on in Westminster, it has been great to get out and about lots in the constituency. An interesting visit last month was to DPA Lighting Consultants in Deddington. They design lighting installations for housing, hotels, public buildings and even cruise ships. I met Partner Nick Hoggett, who told me more about their exciting projects including work on the Imperial War Museum.

I also enjoyed a visit to the Red Cow at Chesterton last month as part of my Pub Tour. It was wonderful to have so many constituents come along. We discussed everything from the Great Wolf development and the proposed Siemens development, to local care homes and women's safety.

It has been great to continue visiting local schools during the Autumn term. At Bicester School, I enjoyed speaking to students about their experiences over the past 18 months. The pandemic has been particularly tough for our young people and their development. This is why I was so pleased that students were able to return to schools for the new academic year. On another recent visit, Years 5 and 6 pupils at St Mary's Catholic Primary School all told me they were glad to be back in the classroom.


I recently held my seventh annual debating competition to mark the end of UK Parliament Week. With last year's challenge taking place virtually, it was wonderful to have students back in-person. A well-fought final debating a motion on nuclear weaponry saw Sibford School walk away as this year's champions, with an excellent team performance. I'm always impressed by local pupils' awareness of issues and standard of arguments; this year was no exception.


I was really pleased to see that the Heyford Park Pharmacy was approved in October and should open sometime next year. This is a well-deserved victory for the local community. The pharmacy will serve the growing community.


As Christmas approaches, it is important that those eligible come forward and get their booster jabs. I've got mine booked as soon as I'm eligible in mid-December. Vaccines offer high levels of protection against Covid, but immunity reduces over time. As the weather gets colder, we need to make sure that our vaccine shield is as strong as possible.




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Christmas Markets – we are looking forward to taking part in the *Steeple Aston Christmas Fayre* on **5th December** and will be back at *St. Peter & St. Paul's in Deddington* for the monthly craft fair on **18th December** – the perfect places to pick up unique Christmas gifts for all your family and friends!

Thank you – to everyone who has donated unwanted items or bought upcycled, sustainable gifts from us across the course of the year! Together we now raised **£3500** to go towards village projects.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

www.sustainablesteeple.com

www.facebook.com/SustainableSteeple

amanda@sustainablesteeple.com or 07793 553150



The Gardening Spot

Forget gardening, let me bore you with how my Christmases worked out!

Much to my surprise, I find that I have been writing this column for SAL for over ten years. I am now running out of ideas, so I thought I would bore you with how my Christmases panned out whilst working as a greengrocer and market gardener for around 40 years.

For me it was one of the busiest times of the year, but not in the garden. There would still be a few hundred cabbages to cut in the icy cold weather and leeks to dig, clean and bunch, but not too much else actually growing in my garden. But it was the time of the year when everyone wanted a real Christmas tree and a holly wreath, plus of course, all the fruit the world could supply – and lots and lots of brussels sprouts!

One of the arts of being a greengrocer was to estimate how much fruit and vegetables people would want during a fairly short time span. Over the year one had some idea of what to purchase, but come Christmas the public went into ‘panic’ mode! Let’s face it, Auntie Mary might turn up and expect to be fed or the neighbours will expect to come round for drinks and we must have a decent bowl of fruit even if we don’t actually eat it! So, by experience or sheer good fortune we purchased what we thought the local villagers would want in the hope that very little was left come midnight on the 24th December.

Christmas trees were for many years grown at Tackley and around three weeks before Christmas I would borrow my uncle’s tractor and trailer and go to load up with around 200 trees. Some nice tidy three-foot trees and some a lot bigger. I remember one of my American customers who lived in a large house ordered such a large tree we had to deliver it separately and much to the astonishment of that lovely American lady, it was too tall to fit in the front room. Now believe me, those rooms had very high ceilings, but not to be deterred she decided that rather than cut a bit off either the top or the bottom, she would punch a hole in the ceiling so that it was going to be the biggest and best tree in the village, probably the country! Sadly, she returned to the States very soon after where I am sure she purchased a mansion with high ceilings.

Holly wreaths were another very popular purchase of the time. They were made for many years by Mr. and Mrs. Oliver, a village couple that a few might remember, but after that it was down to Daphne to make over 100 holly wreaths. I don’t think she has yet forgiven me for all the scratched wrists and sore fingers!

For those of you who don’t know me, I used to go from door to door in all the local villages selling fruit and vegetables from the back of a van. I would leave Steeple Aston as my final village before the Christmas break and encourage my last few customers to give me an order so that they were not disappointed. It was not unusual to be selling fruit and vegetables at 8pm on Christmas Eve.

So come Christmas morning, I was shattered. I still had to tidy the van and storage sheds and decide if there were any brussels sprouts left for our dinner. If I had got it right, we would have some salad to help down the turkey on Boxing Day. After a couple of days off it all started again, but for a couple of weeks it was almost depressing going from door to door in the hope that someone would make a purchase as most people had bought far too much. They were sick of the sight of fruit and vegetables and simply wished me a Happy New Year.

It would be wrong for me to suggest that I suffered all this on my own as my parents were with me for many years and then my wife Daphne who had to put up with the fragile profession of the local greengrocer. Also I was very fortunate to have the late Pat Brock, who worked for me for 25 years who could take some of the flack when things went a little wrong.

Wonderful memories with so many tales to tell, but how nice to be able to curl up in front of the computer and bore you with just a snippet of my Christmases of old. Just think! Someone bringing local produce to your door with almost zero food-miles and often cheaper than the supermarket. Who would have thought of such an idea?

Happy Christmas everyone and remember, there is a limit as to how many brussels sprouts one can eat!

Richard Preston

Retired greengrocer and market gardener who really should write a book!

The ARTS Page



So much on offer, so little room! So just a bird's eye view of some of the December Treats.

Three wonderful concerts put on by the Oxford Philharmonic – oxfordphil.com – in the Sheldonian Theatre.

Wednesday 8th: Mark Padmore (tenor) and Mitsuki Uchida (piano)

Friday 10th: Anne-Sophie Mutter – Beethoven Violin Concerto in D major and Haydn Nelson Mass

Thursday 16th: Messiah – with my old choir, Schola Cantorum, singing as well as ever!

Down the road, the ever-enterprising Woodstock Music Society – woodstockmusic.info – have their Christmas Concert 'Gloria in excelsis' on Friday 10th and Saturday 11th at St Mary Magdalene Church, Woodstock at 7.30pm – always a terrific evening, with a number of Steeple Astonians in the choir.

The excellent Adderbury Ensemble – adderburyensemble.com – perform Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons' in St Mary's Church, Adderbury, on the Sunday 12th at 7.30pm.

On Sunday 5th in Charlbury Memorial Hall at 3pm, a concert by the Cirrus String Quartet for the Charlbury Refugee Action Group (CRAG), a terrific initiative. Well worth a look at all they are doing! charlbury.info/events

A quick look at pantos! 'Robin Hood' is at the Oxford Playhouse until Sunday 9th January. They also have a lovely-looking show for 3 to 7 year olds 'Home in time for Christmas' from 9th to 31st December in the Burton Taylor Studio. oxfordplayhouse.com

'Chippy' has 'Rapunzel' until 9th January – always a treat! chippingnortontheatre.com

The North Wall Arts Centre, Summertown, Oxford, has Creation Theatre's 'Pinocchio' from 15th December to 3rd January – family show for 7 year olds upwards by this ever-enterprising company. thenorthwall.com

Away from panto, an enticing new piece at the Oxford Old Fire Station 'Mrs Delgado', by Oxford-born, award-winning playwright Mike Bartlett (King Charles III, TV's Doctor Foster). Helen, along with 67 million other people, is in lockdown. Unfortunately, Helen's nearest neighbour, Mrs Delgado, is not. 6th to 21st December. oldfirestation.org.uk

The Ashmolean continues their excellent 'Tokyo' exhibition until 3rd January and 'Dante – the Invention of Celebrity' until 9th January. ashmolean.org

The hard hitting, visceral 'Anish Kapoor: Painting' is still on at Modern Art Oxford until 13th February. Tough, but thought-provoking! modernartoxford.org.uk

Back home – Carols round the Piano at the Red Lion, outside for obvious reasons, on Wednesday 22nd December at 6.30pm for one hour for all the family.

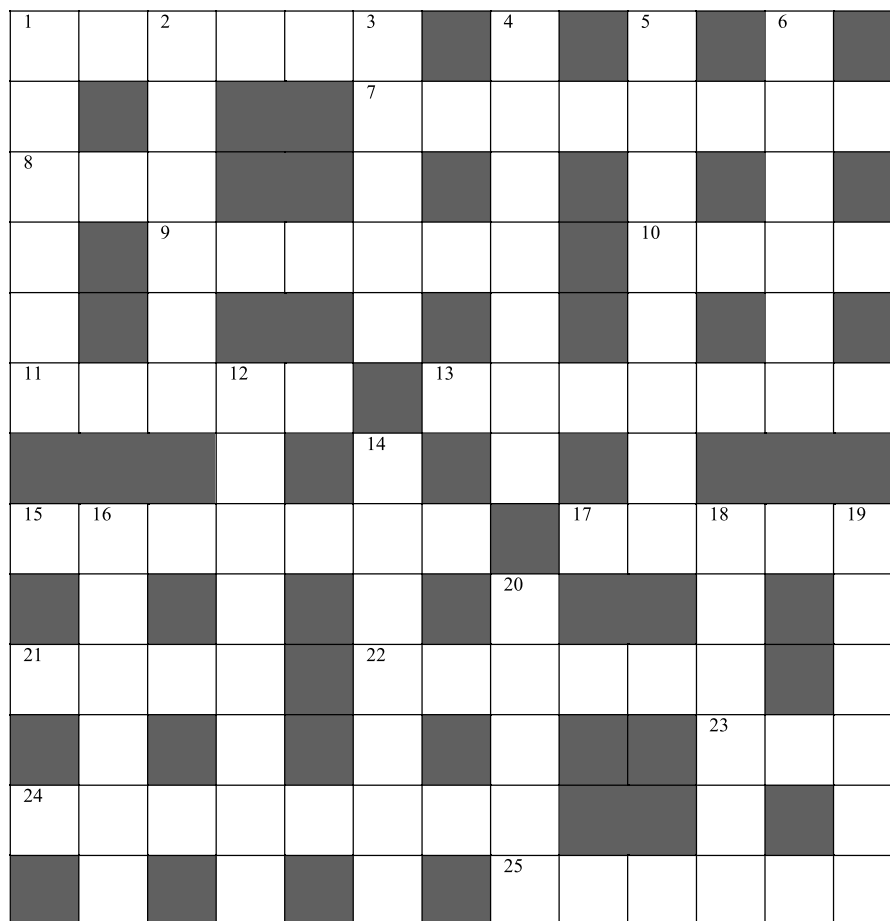
We'll be looking at the content and scope of The Arts Page, and indeed arts in Steeple Aston generally, in the New Year. We really hope to start a dialogue to find out how we can develop and offer what is wanted.

Happy Christmas

Nick and Heather

???? Mind Games

Christmas crossword from Cathy Lawday (solution on page 33)



ACROSS

1. Sister of Rufus Wainwright, and in the bible, the sister of Lazarus (6)
- 7, 10, 23 Visitors to the infant Jesus (3, 5, 4, 3)
8. *Oh, tidings of comfort and* (3)
9. Fabric made with wool from the Angora goat (6)
10. See 7 across
11. Deserved, worked for (5)
13. Post-impressionist painter (7)
15. A popular Christmas table decoration invented over 150 years ago (7)
17. A covered chair carried on poles by two people (5)
21. Holy circle of light around the head of a saint (4)
22. River in India, sacred to Hindus (6)
23. See 7 across
24. *Oh, come, Oh, come* (8)
25. Protein in the body, e.g. pepsin (6)

DOWN

1. The smallest American desert (6)
2. Someone who composes or recites poems (6)
3. A book of maps (5)
4. Red on holly, white on mistletoe (7)
5. A place or event to display or perform something (8)
6. *'Tis the..... to be jolly. Fa, la, la, la, la'* (6)
12. Father Christmas is also known as Saint ... (8)
14. The country where deep fried sweet dumplings called *smoutebollen* are eaten at Christmas. (7)
16. *Angels from the of glory.* (6)
18. *God rest ye merry gentlemen, let nothing you* (6)
19. A subtle difference in meaning (6)
20. A joint in the leg (5)

Parish Council Meeting Notes



There were three visitors at the Parish Council meeting on 15th November. The result was that the issues they wanted to discuss were considered first.

Wincote, the house on Cow Lane which has just got planning permission for a large extension and rebuild, was considered first. While the building work is going on the owners of Wincote would like to be able to use a strip of land, about three metres wide, along the allotments next to Wincote's boundary. The allotment holders have agreed to this as long as there is no access for equipment through the allotments. The unresolved issue was the electricity supply to the property which will have to be upgraded to deal with the heat pumps due to be installed. The supply will go across the allotments and could be above or below ground. The diocese, from which the Parish Council leases the allotments, is keen the electricity supply should be above ground as they fear an underground supply might limit their scope to develop the allotments, if they wish to do so in future.

The meeting went on to consider the generous offer to the Parish Council of the orchard on Water Lane. The Parish Council were extremely grateful for the offer, but were concerned about the legal and potential other costs involved. They have received an offer to set up a group of volunteers to manage it and thought the possible addition of a bench would help villagers appreciate both the fruit and wildlife there. The Councillors seemed worried by the potential costs of the upkeep of the land, trees and surrounding walls. My concern was to see the fruit eaten by the villagers rather than the other wildlife.

The meeting went on to consider the issues discussed at the previous meeting. The one that interested me was the appalling standard of the repairs to the high pavement on Fenway at the top of Water Lane. This pavement has been regularly damaged by poor drivers not knowing the width of their vehicles. In the past, the repairs have been in York stone, but this time the repairs include a large

section of cement and the gaps between the stones have not been filled. I like the plants that usually seed themselves on the gaps in the pavement so, personally, I am not bothered by the gaps, but the cement is unattractive. The Councillors will try to see if they can get Cherwell to ask Highways to replace the cement, especially as the high pavement is a 'local heritage asset'.

The Councillors discussed how they should proceed with assessing the implications of the suggestions they had been sent on making the village more environmentally friendly. They decided that they needed to set up an environment sub-committee, about which more details should be forthcoming in the next few weeks.

There were two pieces of good news. First, Angharad Lloyd-Jones has joined the Parish Council. She has had connections with the village for seven years and has lived here for two years. She has two children at Dr Radcliffe's School. She is keen to contribute to the village and hopes her background in fundraising and marketing will be useful to the Parish Council.

The second piece of good news is that initially Rectory Homes were going to put gas boilers into their new homes being built on Southside. Martin Lipson has cajoled them into changing this to heat pumps – well done Martin.

The bad news is that Rebecca Lewin has resigned as a Parish Councillor. The Parish Council was reluctant to accept her resignation, but accepted her judgement that she was over committed in the village. She will be much missed as she has used her experience in financial and contractual matters to help ensure that the Parish Council did things properly. She has also been involved with the management of the speed monitoring and the playground. She told me she had found it an "interesting challenge", but that her other village commitments meant she "could not do it justice". Thank you, Rebecca, from all of us in the village.

Parish Council Meeting Notes



The local District Councillor, Mike Kerford-Byrnes explained that the recent consultation on Cherwell's Local Plan had now closed. Parish Councillors commented that the proposals concentrated on urban issues and had not given sufficient weight to rural matters.

Mike told us that Cherwell were expecting to be losing money from the change in how much they received from the New Homes Bonus, but that this change had been delayed and that anyway they will partially recover the lost revenue by charging for collecting garden waste. This means that instead of a fortnightly collection of food and garden waste there will be weekly collection of food waste and a fortnightly, but charged, collection of garden waste.

Mike explained that, at the request of the Parish Council, he had tried to arrange for the Councillors who will be deciding the Hatch End planning application to come and see the parking problems at school delivery or collection times before making their decision. He had not been successful at getting them to come as a group, but they might still come separately. He asked for more information about how many of the pupils arrived by car.

Mike told us that he would not be standing for re-election next year and to keep himself busy he had bought a decrepit bulldozer and was intending to try to get it to work. He could not be drawn on what he intended to knock down when it was going again. He asked if he could bring a potential successor to one of the Parish Council meetings and was told that would be fine as long as no one was wearing a rosette.

The next thing discussed was a possible 20mph zone in the village. To my surprise, this was described by one of the Councillors as 'seems to be a popular idea'. Apparently, if it was introduced the signs would be provided by Highways, though any additional traffic calming measures would have to be paid for by the Parish Council. The Councillors will check to see if there are any hidden costs. Any decision on this would have to

be co-ordinated with the chicane that Rectory Homes will be implementing by their development on Southside.

There was a discussion about encouraging wild flowers on the verges and putting off further seeding until the spring. I am sure we are all in favour of as many wild flowers as possible, so thank you to whoever is going to be doing it. There have been complaints about the rut at the side of Fenway. But Fenway is a single track road and the rut is where it was previously verge. The suggestion I liked best was to plant hawthorn in the rut. The problem can only be cured by drivers going slower or widening the road and Highways are unlikely to regard that as a high priority and widening would not be supported by the Parish Council.

The Councillors then went through a number of specific issues. They discussed how they were going to get some work done on the trees and if it was possible to make the entrance to the toddler playground a bit less slippery. Someone from the Cherwell enforcement team has been to see 4 Paines Hill and said that if the owners did not respond to the latest letter they would have to go for prosecution for non-compliance with the request to make the house safe.

Gigaclear are offering fast broadband (at about three times BT's business rate) and the Councillors wondered if the difference in speed would be relevant to the users of the Village Hall if broadband was to be provided there.

There is no Parish Council meeting in December so the next meeting is on 17th January. Do come and listen in as there is still a vacancy for a Councillor and I am sure you would not be bored.

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

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Steeple Aston Golf Society



The Cotswolds Club front 9 has been voted the toughest front 9 in Oxfordshire, which is why some of the scores were lower than expected. The course could not have been in better condition, it truly is one of the best in the county.

Winners from our last meeting at The Cotswolds Club:

May Fu Two Cup: winner Paul Kay (36 points); runner-up Danny Phillips (36 points)

Chairman's Cup (Par 3s): winner Tony Peck

Guest prize: Nigel Mills (36 points)

Nearest the pin – second shot: 18th Nigel Mills (g)

Nearest the pin – 3rd: Danny Phillips

Birdie 2s: George Kay x2, Tony Peck, Nigel Mills (g)

This was our last meeting of the year. I hope that you have enjoyed my little stories after each match report. Can't wait for Spring to arrive and get out on the different courses that we have planned for next year. In the meantime, stay safe, look after one another and smile.

Alan Brewer (chair)



In the photo, left to right, George Kay, Danny Phillips, Tony Peck, Nigel Mills, Paul Kay.

The Oxford Christmas Company

Hi, I am Millie, I am 21 and have taken over The Oxford Christmas Company.

This year the Christmas shop is no longer at Nicholsons but I will be running the Oxford Christmas Company from my home in Oxford offering a new bespoke online only service.

We will be working with the same suppliers ensuring that you will continue to get top quality A-Grade, British grown Christmas trees. For those of you who enjoyed choosing your exact tree at Nicholsons, do not worry, you can still do this as all trees will be photographed and displayed online.

Not only will I be selling the Christmas trees but beautiful decorations and lights to make your tree something special. I am preparing now for Christmas 2021 so lots of lovely festive gifts and decorations are being continually uploaded on my website.

If you would like to contact me about anything, please feel free to email me on info@oxfordchristmascompany.co.uk or call on: 07950 452711

Please spread the word and I will look forward to hearing from you as we approach Christmas.





Christmas Spirit

Media stories about the risk of Christmas being cancelled due to shortages are probably exaggerated. In reality, Christmas can be whatever we want it to be.

who needs a turkey for Christmas
who needs a gift from afar
what is the point of this feast day
if not to share who we are
traditions are false in our memories
for turkeys back then didn't exist
and neither did shopping online for our
goods
are these then the things that are missed

I would get by with a greeting
I could survive with no card
the bit that I like is our meeting
without that the time would be hard
so give thanks for being together
'though both our hands may be empty
the sight of our friends giving friendship
is a sign that we really have plenty

Peter Wild

The 12 Days of Christmas

(Sung to the same old tune....)

On the 12th day of Christmas, the newspapers told me about

12 politicians lying

11 ecologists frequent flying

10 energy companies dying

9 lobbyists conniving

8* back benchers defying

7 deadly sins surviving

6 special advisors resigning

5 U-turns

4 per cent inflation

3 Covid vaccinations

2 much obfuscation

and a new addition to the Johnson family.

(actually 108 MPs abstained – but that wouldn't fit!)*

Cathy Lawday

Ploughing at Middle Aston



On Saturday 13th November, by kind permission of Rupert Davies, 34 ploughmen met at Grange Farm, Middle Aston, to compete against each other in a vintage tractor ploughing match.

The tractors were grouped in five different classes.

- Vintage Trailed, using trailed ploughs without hydraulic lift and made before 1959
- Vintage Mounted, hydraulic lift ploughs and tractors before 1959
- Ferguson, for Grey Ferguson tractors and ploughs
- Classic, for tractors made up until 1965 with hydraulic lift
- Horticultural, for single furrow garden tractors, ride on or pedestrian.

Each competitor had about a quarter of an acre to plough in four hours. The ploughing is divided into nine different categories for judging as follows, each of which is worth 20 points.

- Opening. A single furrow is cast in each direction to form a trench, this needs to be uniform and straight.
- Start. The furrows are then put back together, this needs to be well closed up and level to prevent weeds growing up.
- Seed Bed. All trash needs to be buried and plenty of soil made available to produce a seed bed.
- Firmness. Firm well-packed furrows with no holes.
- Uniformity. Clearly defined furrows all the same size.
- Finish. Last eight furrows uniform and shallow.
- Ins & Outs. Where the ploughs goes in and out of the ground, neat and regular.
- Straightness. Straightness of the whole plot.
- General Appearance. Workmanship of the plot.



The judges were walking round all day looking for infringements and awarding scores. Points can be deducted for going over time, handling the ploughing (the soil must not be touched after being turned by the plough. Finishing in the wrong direction is a fault and also having two wheel marks showing at the end.



Not all the ploughmen are associated with farming. For instance, I repair church bells, one is a retired Formula 1 racing car designer, one is an electrician, some are lorry drivers and a couple are still at school.

Obviously you are on your own – it's not a team sport. Whether you make a good job or not is down to three things.

1. The equipment – all of the tractors are over 40 years old and can be a bit temperamental at times.
2. The soil condition often varies from one end of the plot to the other and will require different settings of the plough. Not all fields are good to plough, they can be too stony, too wet, too dry and hard, too much rubbish on top, etc.
3. The man on the tractor seat – sometimes you can turn a handle the wrong way at a

vital point, get distracted.

Most of the ploughing matches are good fun and a nice day out in the country, with money raised being donated to charity.

I was pleased with my day at Middle Aston, coming second only two points behind the winner.

Graham Clifton

Photos by Catherine Crook





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★★★★★ - Google Review



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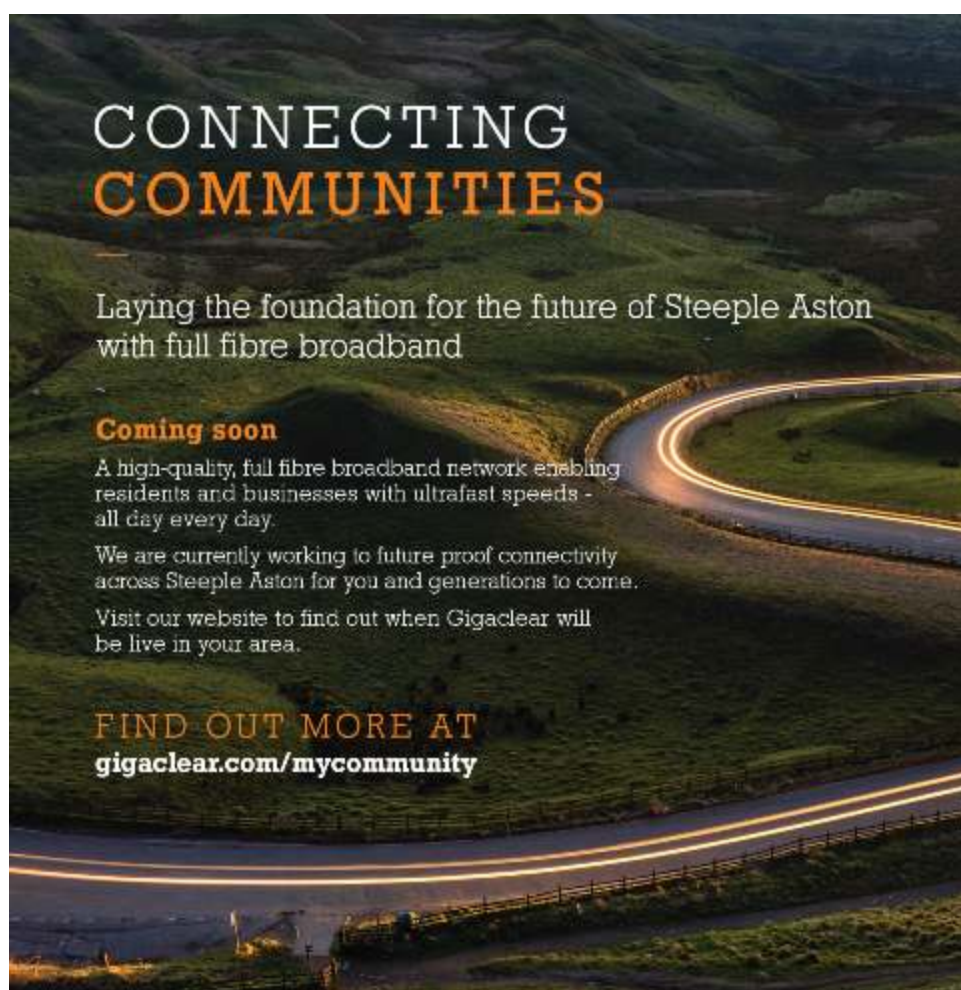
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Steeple Aston Community Apple Press

The Apple Press had a busy season in 2021, with two sessions at the Red Lion and one evening with the Brownies. In all, approximately 40 litres of apple juice were made and enjoyed by the keen band of 'pressers' across the events. It is a great way to use up the apples from the many trees in the village gardens and get a work-out at the same time! We were blessed with wonderful weather for all the sessions and did not have to break out the gazebo for once. Thanks to Chris and the team at the pub for letting us use the terrace and electricity and to everyone, especially the kids who provided most of the labour, for coming along. If anyone still has any apples that could be pressed, the kit is available for hire at your location. Contact Penny and Stuart on 01869 349155.



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I have been a Fix My Street Super User for some years since the original scheme started. This means I have been able to get potholes and other minor road repairs actioned much more efficiently than the official system ever does. The white circles painted around holes in the village roads over the last few years are generally my doing and I am allowed to contact the local contractors directly without having to go through all the usual Oxford Highways bureaucracy. Although I am strictly limited in the type of repairs I can arrange, I am generally able to get minor repairs done very quickly – always within 28 days, but usually within a week of requesting a repair and on one memorable occasion they were out within two hours!

The downside is that I am strictly controlled in the size of defect I can report, nothing less than 150mm square and 40mm deep which is already quite a significant pothole. I am often asked why I don't report smaller defects and this is why. I can get away with the odd one or two below specification, but once I make a habit of it I will be reported back to the council officials and sat on!

I have often suggested that it would be better still if we could fix such minor defects ourselves and have been trying for years to get Oxford Highways to agree. Finally, they have done so and we are now the first official Road Warden group in Oxfordshire, complete with council issued equipment and materials to repair minor potholes around the village.

The photo shows the volunteers hard at it on our first pothole repair in Fir Lane, no doubt the first of many as the road there is riddled with small holes and cracks. Julia Whybrew is on the shovel whilst Charlotte Bartlett does the hard work of tamping down the filler material poured out by Nigel Francis, and I stand by doing nothing except holding my official spray can!



It's only a trial scheme at present and we will be closely monitored, but I hope that once things settle down we can fix some of the smaller holes and other defects around the village roads and pavements which annoy so many people.

Each repair only takes a few minutes, although we have to set up bollards and road signs to comply with road safety requirements. From our initial experience it seems that setting up the signs takes longer than actually carrying out the repairs! So if you see us out and about around the village please give us a little consideration if we have to hold you up whilst we fill a hole in the middle of the road, I promise we will be as quick as we can.

It will take us some time to get round the village, but if you know of a pothole you think we have left out you can contact the Parish Clerk Cathy Fleet on 01869 347000 or email her at parishclerk.steepleaston@gmail.com You can still report them through the Fix My Street website for official action, although I guarantee it will take longer to be fixed that way, if it happens at all.

Graham Porcas

‘Houses Through Time’

Over the weekend of 6th and 7th November, SAVA re-established its annual village exhibition, 2020 having understandably been written off!

Deciding on an exhibition theme is always difficult, but taking inspiration from the popular BBC2 series ‘A House Through Time’, we believed that we had a wealth of candidates throughout Steeple and Middle Aston to provide the required mix of building history and stories about the characters that occupied them. After much discussion, nine were chosen: Grange Farm, Church Corner/Merlins, The Nest, Cedar Lodge, The Grange, Paines Hill House, Rectory Farm/Manor Court Cottage, Hill House and Manor Farm. Compiling the narrative and photographs for each demonstrated that we could easily have filled twice as many boards as we finally used, so much soul-searching was needed to edit down to a suitable size!



Photo by Martin Lipson

The great thing about all of these stories is that there are always intriguing gaps in our knowledge, so nothing is ever likely to be complete. But slowly we are able to add the missing pieces of the jigsaw as more recollections, articles and old documents and photographs are found or donated.

The exhibition attracted good numbers of visitors, including some from as far afield as Abingdon, Adderbury and Tackley. In fact, we could even describe ‘queues’ forming at times, and lots of positive feedback and comments were received. Several suggestions for other properties in the villages were put forward, so it is nice to have a ‘sequel’ topic available for a future exhibition!

One question that did arise several times, was ‘will there be a book?’. SAVA has previously produced a book to accompany each exhibition, but as this exhibition featured just a handful of buildings, we didn’t think that one would be in demand. We may need to revisit that decision – watch this space!

Despite this, sales of previous publications and donations provided a respectable figure for the SAVA funds of £110 after deduction of costs. All in all, this was a very successful event and, as Diana pointed out, “it was a grand opportunity for people to meet up and make another step into normality”. Hear! hear!

Stuart Cummins, SAVA

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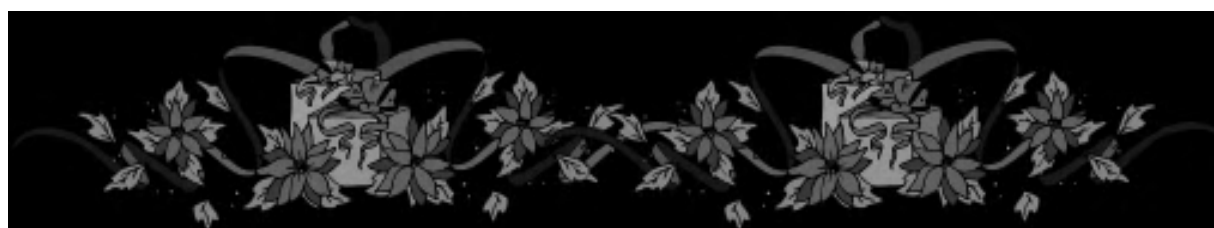
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Those of us who have sung regularly all our lives were distraught when one of our favourite activities turned into an exploit more dangerous than crocodile wrestling, but now due to the wonders of science we can all enjoy ourselves again.

Dig out your Christmas jumper and come and celebrate with us.

Waes-hael!

Margaret Bulleyment

A photograph of a light-colored dog, possibly a Weimaraner, sitting on a green lawn. The dog is looking directly at the camera with its mouth open, showing its tongue. It is wearing a blue collar and a red leash is visible on the right side of the frame. The background is a soft-focus green lawn.

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Tips for a Greener Christmas

When someone suggests having a 'greener Christmas', it's easy to roll your eyes, mutter about 'do gooders' and generally feel that people are trying to suck the joy out of the festive season. However, there is no reason why making a few greener choices should affect our Christmas cheer!

Cards

- Consider sending eCards – there are loads of options available
- Trim your card list – only send to close friends and family
- Avoid cards with glitter – these are not recyclable
- Choose cards printed on recycled paper, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) approved materials or plantable paper
- Make your own cards from last year's recycled cards
- Reuse any cards you receive as gift labels/cards for next year or cut them up for shopping lists (they can still be recycled when you're finished), donate them to one of the many charities who collect them, compost them, or put them in the recycling bin

Presents

- Buy quality not quantity – one gift, carefully chosen rather than novelty items that will inevitably be thrown away
- Choose presents made from sustainable, natural materials, opt for organic certified foods/clothing and avoid single use plastics
- Gift experiences rather than things
- Shop locally and buy from local makers – as well as supporting local businesses, shopping in this way also reduces 'present miles' and is likely to involve less packaging/plastic waste too
- Ditch shiny foil based wrapping or any with glitter as these aren't recyclable. Opt for wrapping made from recycled paper (and save your paper to use again next year) or choose reusable fabric gift bags (we will be selling a wonderful variety of these at the Steeple Aston Christmas Fayre in the Village Hall on 5th December, if you will forgive the plug).
- Avoid using sticky tape and opt for natural strings/twines or ribbons saved from previous years (my ribbons must be on their sixth or seventh Christmas now)

Decorations

- Avoid plastic baubles/decorations or those covered in glitter
- Buy handmade wooden or glass decorations which can be stored safely and used year after year
- Hunt for vintage decorations in antique shops, charity shops and car boot sales (I have my grandparents' glass baubles and I treasure them)
- As old Christmas lights reach the end of their life, replace them with more energy efficient and long-lasting LED lights
- Opt for candles made from ethically and sustainably-sourced plant waxes or beeswax, as they burn more cleanly and for longer than paraffin based candles
- There are lots of 'plastic-free' cracker options in the shops now at sensible prices, or you can make your own using one of the many eco-friendly cracker kits available, or a few toilet rolls and recycled wrapping paper. Fill with packets of seeds, mini homemade jams, natural soaps or Fairtrade chocolate
- Avoid single-use napkins/tablecloths opting for fabric ones instead
- If you have space, buy a living Christmas tree in a pot that you can reuse each year. Alternatively, buy your cut tree as locally as possible, checking that it's 'Grown in Britain' or is FSC approved and recycle it at the end of the season. It's also possible to rent a Christmas tree, but I haven't found a local scheme yet (Cotswold Fir in Cheltenham or Rental Christmas Tree in Stroud seemingly being the closest). If you aren't having a real tree, consider opting for a wooden or upcycled one as an alternative to plastic

Food

- Shop local where possible to reduce the food miles of your turkey, potatoes, carrots, sprouts etc
- Avoid food waste by planning carefully and only buying what you need and using/freezing your leftovers. It is estimated that we waste nearly one-third of all food produced for human consumption, throwing away an estimated 10 million tonnes of food each year in the UK alone with Christmas being a peak time for food waste

Whether you try all of these or just opt for a couple, any change you make will have a positive impact and help ensure a Merry Christmas for you – and the planet!

amanda@sustainablesteeple.com



THE VALENTINE CLUB

November was a busy month as we had our usual meeting on the 16th where 'Dogs for Good' came and gave a presentation accompanied by Bowie, a younger dog in training. It was quite a revelation to learn how this charity helps so many people and how 'man's best friend' makes such a difference to the lives of those less fortunate than ourselves.

The day after, on 17th November, we took a coach to Nailcote Hotel in Warwickshire where we enjoyed a three-course lunch, turkey of course, and entertainment based around the 70s music scene. It was good to see that many of the members still had those 'moves' of 50 years ago!

Our Christmas dinner is on Tuesday 14th December with doors opening at the village hall at midday. With such a large number coming and the necessity that most will drive, I would like to apologise in advance for the significant increase in parking that day around the hall. Our caterers, S & J Cuisine, feed between 80 and 90 members with a Christmas lunch, followed by top-class entertainment and a few glasses of wine. It is at this point that the programme for next year is distributed, so I must finalise the speakers, entertainers and the numerous coach trips that we all enjoy.

The club and its members are very appreciative of the support of those of you who contribute to The Cherwell Lottery throughout the year as the income, 50% of all stake money, comes directly to the club. Some supporters have been fortunate enough to win a decent payback – much better odds than the national lottery! Although we have close on 100 members, we do not ask for financial support other than what we can raise ourselves and are occasionally fortunate enough to be supported by grant funding.

Our first meeting in the new year will be in the village hall starting at 2.30pm on Tuesday 18th January. We have a very talented entertainer coming and this is the perfect time to give the club a try if you fancy joining a group of slightly ageing teenagers who will make you very welcome. Believe it or not, the annual membership fee is only £10, but we always suggest you 'try before you buy'. Just remember the date.

For more information about how to join **The Valentine Club**, and by the way you only have to reach the grand old age of 60 years young, go to www.steepleaston.org.uk and follow the link or visit our own website www.valentineclub.wixsite/aston or simply call me on 01869 340512.

A very Merry Christmas to one and all. Let us hope that 2022 brings with it some sort of normality!

Richard Preston – Group organiser
richard.preston5@btopenworld.com



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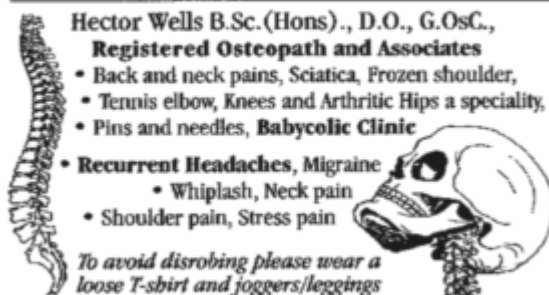
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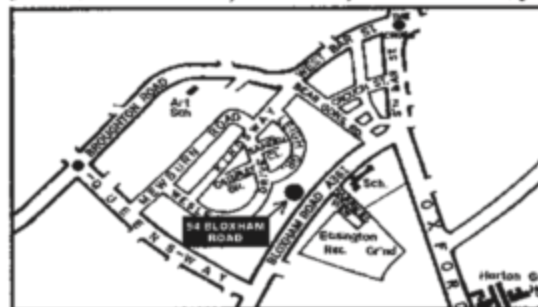
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Our November meeting was well-attended and those who came were captivated by our speaker Ann Sharman's account of being a guest at a wedding in Delhi. It was a lavish experience, from the moment the invitation arrived in a large red and gold box, decorated with images of the god Ganesha, and wrapped in silky gold cloth. When opened, the box revealed much more than the printed wedding invitation. There were also seven small brass bowls of spice and under the bowls were written the seven sacred vows which the bride and groom would make to each other. There was also an embroidered red silk bag which contained a silver coin.

After doing some sightseeing, including a trip to the Taj Mahal, Ann attended three days of celebration, typical of an Indian wedding. Day one was spent painting beautiful and intricate henna patterns on the hands and feet of the bride and her female guests and relations. This was accompanied by music and professional dancers who encouraged the guests to join in.

The second day of celebrations involved the exchange of numerous gifts – many of elaborate gold jewellery; On this day the bride was ritually washed and cleansed in preparation for her marriage.

The wedding ceremony took place on day three. All the days were fantastically colourful – with multi-coloured saris, featuring lots of red and gold, which are auspicious colours for a wedding. Unfortunately, the chilly autumnal weather prevented the speaker from wearing her sari, but she brought lots of other objects for us to look at and ask about.

WI members are giving foodstuffs to Banbury Food Bank this Christmas. If you would like to add to our donations you can give either money or foods. Pop monetary donations through my letterbox, or leave food items in the labelled box on the porch at Burland, South Side, before 1st December. The Food Bank particularly appreciates donations of long-life milk, pasta sauces, biscuits, jars of coffee, tins of custard and tins of rice pudding.

Our next event is a workshop to make your own Christmas welcome wreath. This is to be led by Lottie Baxter, who will provide all the materials you need. Tea, coffee and mince pies will be served during the workshop, which runs from 10.00 till 12.00 on Saturday 4th December.

The WI will be present at the Wassail Night on December 12th, when the committee will perform a poem about Christmas spirit. Do come and support us.

We round off the year with our Christmas meal, at Middle Aston House on 14th December at 7pm.

Wishing all our members a peaceful, joyous Christmas and a happy, healthy new year.

Cathy Lawday

cathy@lawdaymacandrew.co.uk Telephone 347209

Crossword solution (see page 13)

¹ M	A	² R	T	H	³ A		⁴ B		⁵ S		⁶ S	
O		H			⁷ T	H	E	T	H	R	E	E
⁸ J	O	Y			L		R		O		A	
A		⁹ M	O	H	A	I	R		¹⁰ W	I	S	E
V		E			S		I		C		O	
¹¹ E	A	R	¹² N	T		¹³ C	E	Z	A	N	N	E
			I	¹⁴ B		S		S				
¹⁵ C	¹⁶ R	A	C	K	E	R		¹⁷ S	E	¹⁸ D	A	¹⁹ N
	E		H		L		²⁰ A			I		U
²¹ H	A	L	O		²² G	A	N	G	E	S		A
	L		L		I		K			²³ M	E	N
²⁴ E	M	M	A	N	U	E	L			A		C
	S		S		M		²⁵ E	N	Z	Y	M	E



Our engaging speaker Robert Harvey, ARPS, offered an inspiring look at Wiltshire for our November meeting. During his talk, Robert gave us a glimpse of the history, geology, geography, architecture and art of the county. He began with a look at the landscape of the chalk downs and the vales of clay pasture. He highlighted the iconic beech clumps along the chalk downs, his favourite being the Charlton Clumps at the edge of Salisbury Plain, all illustrated by gorgeous images. Of course, the unique Stonehenge was featured, but it wasn't Robert's favourite place for capturing the mystery of ancient times preferring Silbury Hill and Devil's Den at Avebury. A particular shot of the 'White Horse', famous in Wiltshire, took Robert thirteen years to achieve with the right weather and lighting conditions.

His images are truly unique and painstakingly researched and observed. Robert uses a tripod for all his shots so that he can include more detail and alter the settings for exposure times.

An entertaining shot of an enormous moon illustrated the story of a Moonraker. When smuggling was rife in the 1700s a group lifting stored French brandy barrels from a pond were visited by the law. They explained they were raking for the round cheese, the reflected moon being the foil.

Anyone can take a look at Robert's work in his newly-published book 'Photographing Wiltshire' – a possible Christmas present, perhaps?

Our members have been on a recent photoshoot to The National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. Images will be on our website shortly. Our next speaker will be Carole Henson giving us tips about photographing live events and festivals. This is on Wednesday 1st December, 7.30pm at The Adderbury Institute. See our website for further details if you would like to join us.

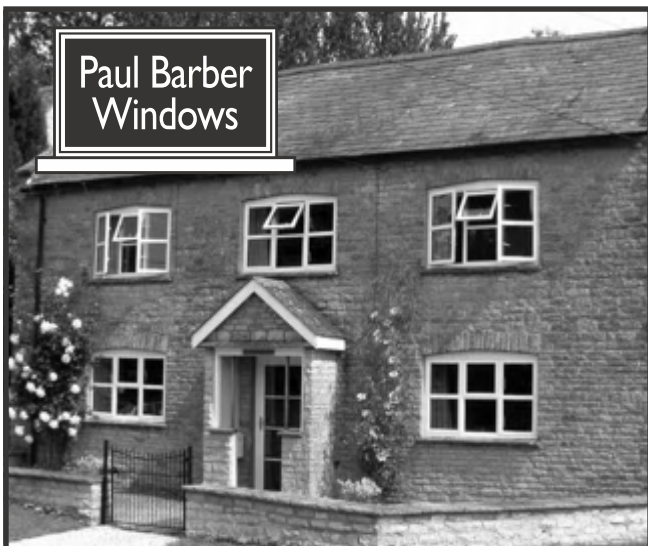
Wishing everyone a very peaceful and happy Christmas with best wishes for the New Year from Adderbury, Deddington & District Photographic Society.

Anne Hunsley

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Village Hall News



Friday 5th November. Bonfire Night. After the past 18 months of restrictions, it was lovely to hold this event on what turned out to be a perfect evening for our annual bonfire and firework display. We watched a great display of fireworks and a wonderful Guy Fawkes burn on top of the bonfire made by the children of class 4 at Dr. Radcliffe's School, and enjoyed hot soup provided by Hanny Nicholson, squash and sausages by the VH Committee. Our thanks to the willing helpers of the Recreation Trust, Village Hall Committee, Simon Thatcher and team for building the bonfire, Richard Preston and his team for the firework display, Raj and Parry at the shop for selling tickets, Bob Bickley for the use of his paddock for the bonfire, also the company who kindly sponsored the event: Lakeside Farm Business Park (David & Robert Fry) – without their continued support we could not have offered such a splendid display of fireworks.

Saturday 29th January 2022 Annual Quiz Night. Ring Barbara on 01869 340423 to book your team. Entrance fee £2:50 per person, maximum eight people to a table. Entrance fee at time of booking please. 7pm for a prompt 7.30pm start. There will be a licensed bar, so please do not bring your own drinks. Only 12 tables will be available for this event, so please book early to avoid disappointment.

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The Village Hall Committee wishes you all a very Happy and Safe Christmas.

Please note our letting agent is Mrs. Katie Rushworth, tel: 01869 340196.

Email **steeple-aston-village-hall@hotmail.com**

Collect keys from 'Touchstones', The Dickredge, Steeple Aston OX25 4RS.

Barbara Brewer – Chair

Steeple Aston Walking Group



The village walking group has been active over the last few months with three circular walks from Kirtlington, King's Sutton and Clifton. The walks took us to some of our glorious countryside and included canal and river paths, quarries, mills, forts, locks, woodlands and open farmland, with each culminating in lunch at the pub. If you wish to join the group, email **sawgox25@gmail.com**



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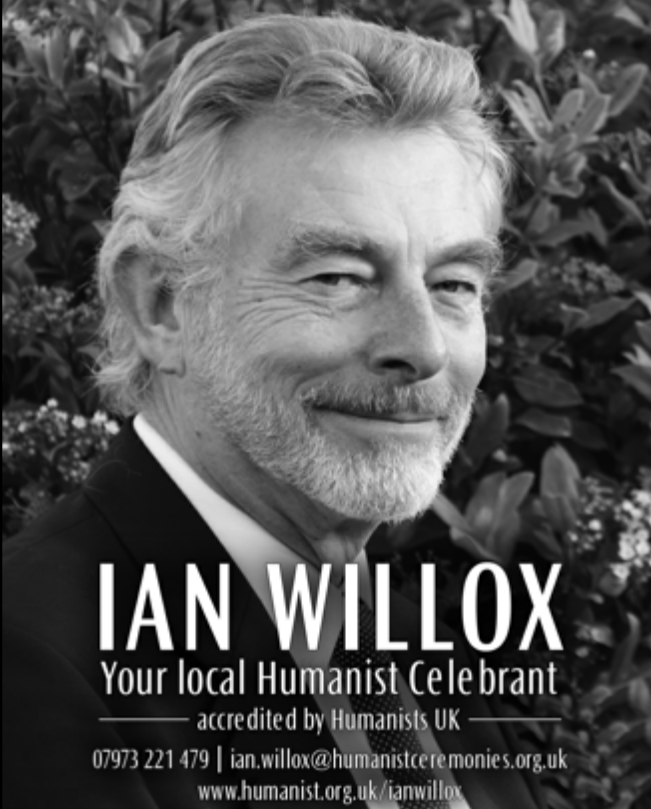
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Church Matters



The weeks leading up to Christmas are always special. Whether it's the joy and anticipation of opening windows in Advent Calendars and the promise of parties and gifts and joys to come; or the memories of times past and the sadness at knowing that the days ahead will not be celebrated with those especially dear to us – there is a special power in these weeks.

We feel an urge, so many of us, to turn that 'special' into something idealised – a fantasy version of life. The perfect Christmas dinner. The perfect Christmas party. The perfect trip somewhere. We want to harness the emotions of these darkening days and infuse them with light. With warmth.

Life refuses to take any notice of such sentiment. Work still has to be done, bins still have to be emptied, COVID tests still have to be taken. Fairy lights and tinsel add a little chintz to the season, but (for most of us) the 'special', the 'idealised' Christmas world of the TV ads and the movies stubbornly remains out of reach. But...

You know, Jesus wasn't born in a John Lewis commercial.
Nor, indeed, in a school nativity play.

Christmas card scenes of stables don't carry the scent of a stable, which is probably a good thing, but if they did they'd remind us that the real excitement of this time of year isn't about decorated trees and roasting turkeys and twinkling lights and familiar songs on the radio and old scarves and bright woollen mittens and mulled wine and last minute shopping...

God didn't buy presents at Christmas. He came to be present.

God didn't find a bit of the world that looked nice in which to be born; he chose the most ordinary of places and simply by being there, with us, transformed that overlooked space and made it unforgettable.

And God still does that today.

It's the point of Christmas. Whether we are filled with joy and anticipation or whether sadness is what storms our hearts, God doesn't look at our lives and choose to pass by and fob us off once a year by buying us presents. In Jesus, God chooses to be present with us every day. In joy and in sorrow. Never far away. Always ready to hear, to listen, to love us, to make the most humdrum moment magnificent, as we realise afresh the full wonder of well-worn words:

*He came down to earth from heaven
Who is God and Lord of all,
And his shelter was a stable,
And his cradle was a stall;
With the poor and mean and lowly
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.*

Details of all our Christmas services are on page 42. Everyone is welcome to any service across the Benefice. Please wear a face mask if possible; we will try to keep Christmas services short in order to help keep everyone safe. We look forward to welcoming you and wishing you Merry Christmas!

Revd Marcus Green



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Sunday 12th December	9.30am Family Service Rev'd Marcus Green	11am Family Service Rev'd Marcus Green	5.30pm Holy Communion Rev'd Marcus Green
Sunday 19th December	3pm Carol Service Rev'd Marcus Green	7pm Carol Service Rev'd Marcus Green	5pm Carol Service Rev'd Marcus Green
Friday 24th December Christmas Eve		4pm Crib Service Rev'd Marcus Green 11pm Midnight Communion Rev'd Marcus Green	2pm Crib Service Rev'd Marcus Green
Saturday 25th December	9am Christmas Communion Rev'd Marcus Green	10.30am Christmas Communion Rev'd Marcus Green	9.30am Christmas Communion Rev'd Clare Hayns
Sunday 26th December	9.30am Christmas Prayers & Carols Rev'd Marcus Green		
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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 is Thursday

December 2021
 2nd blue & brown
 9th green
 16th blue & brown
 23rd green
 30th blue & brown



January 2022*
 6th green
 13th blue & brown
 20th green
 27th blue & brown
 *to be confirmed

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

Chairman - Torquil McLusky - Tel: 347914

Treasurer - Chris Cooper - Tel: 347173

BUS TIMES

STAGECOACH S4 BUS SERVICE

This timetable is effective from 7 March 2021.

From Steeple Aston (outside Post Office) to Oxford (arrival time in italics)

Mondays to Fridays (except public holidays)

0624 0702 0746 0920 then hourly to 1520 1621 1721 1821 1932 2047 2217
 0702 0800 0844 1003 1603 1702 1802 1902 2010 2125 2255

Saturdays

0704 0804 0919 then hourly to 1819 1932 2047 2217
 0746 0846 1002 1902 2010 2125 2255

Sundays and most public holidays

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

From Steeple Aston (outside Post Office) to Banbury (arrival time in italics)

Mondays to Fridays (except public holidays)

0752 0855 0957 then hourly to 1457 1600 1700 1800 1900 1955 2107 2222 2352
 0835 0935 1035 1535 1638 1738 1838 1929 2024 2135 2250 0020

Saturdays

0759 0857 0957 then hourly to 1557 1657 1757 1855 1955 2107 2222 2352
 0835 0935 1035 1635 1731 1831 1924 2024 2135 2250 0020

Sundays 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 www.stagecoachbus.com/timetables E&OE

OURBUS BARTONS

OurBus Bartons has returned to their 'Pandemic Timetables'. It offers services through Steeple Aston to and from Chipping Norton (Wednesdays) and to and from Bicester (Fridays). See <http://ourbus.co/bartons/> for details and times

Steeple Aston Calendar

Check the village website at www.steepleaston.org.uk (Home > Calendar) for any changes.

December			
Wednesday 1st	AD&D Photo Society Photographing live events (p34)	Adderbury Insitute	7.30pm
Saturday 4th	WI. Christmas welcome wreath workshop	Village Hall	10am to 12 noon
Sunday 5th	Steeple Aston Christmas Fayre (p36)	Village Hall	12 noon to 4pm
Sunday 12th	Wassail Evening (p27)	Village Hall	6pm
Wednesday 15th	SAL January 2022 copy and advert deadline		
Tuesday 14th	The Valentine Club. Christmas Dinner (p31)	Village Hall	12 noon
Tuesday 14th	WI. Christmas meal	Middle Aston House	7pm
Saturday 18th	Farmers' Market (p28)	Deddington	9am to 12.30pm
January			
Tuesday 11th	WI. The work of Cruse bereavement volunteers	Village Hall	7.30pm
Sunday 15th	SAL January 2022 copy and advert deadline		
Tuesday 18th	The Valentine Club. Entertainer (p31)	Village Hall	2.30pm
Saturday 22nd	Farmers' Market (p28)	Deddington	9am to 12.30pm
Saturday 29th	Annual Quiz Night	Village Hall	7pm for 7.30pm

Due to coronavirus some clubs and societies might still be meeting 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). 10am - 12pm - Saturdays

Steeple Aston Life is published by Steeple Aston Life Committee

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CHRISTMAS LUNCH AT THE YURT

2 courses - £25, 3 courses - £30 (including a free glass of Prosecco)

Join us at The Yurt for your festive celebrations! Our creative chefs have crafted a choice of dishes to help you celebrate with friends, family and colleagues - choose from our 2 or 3 course options, available from Thursday, 25th November.

Lunch served 12noon – 2.30pm. You can arrive on the day, though you may want to book in advance to avoid disappointment by emailing us at theyurt@nicholsonsgb.com or calling on 01869 340342.

And if you are looking for a private space for up to 6, our huts are now available for booking. Choose from The Reading Room or The Bridge Hut.

www.nicholsonsgb.com/yurt

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