

Steeple Aston *Life*

March 2022

Issue No. 583



- 50 years of the Village Hall • The Arts Page • Poetry Corner •
- Steeple Aston Church Allotments • Spring Show preview • Mindgames •

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Cover photo: Nigel Francis
Daffodils on South Side

Steeple Aston *Life*

COPY

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

COPY DEADLINES

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

The copy deadline for the April 2022 issue is therefore 15th March.

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

01869 347347

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1/2 page - £12, 1/4 page- £6.
Commercial adverts:
1/2 page- £15, 1/4 page- £8

Steeple Aston Directory

Age UK		Richard Preston	340512
Allotments (Church)	SACAA Clerk	Nigel Grugeon <i>sacaaclerk@btinternet.com</i>	
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		Clr Mike Kerford-Byrnes	07805 665393
		Clr Bryn Williams	07836 271998
		Clr Hugo Brown	
Cricket Club	Chairman	Peter Higgins	347493
Crimestoppers			0800 555111
Deddington Guides		Marian Trinder	340806, 07786 001641
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
Pre-school			340863
Public House	Red Lion	Chris Gates	340225
Robinson's Close	Letting Agent	Katie Rushworth	340196
Scouts Group		Colin Cassford	243038
Sports & Recreation Centre	Letting Agent	Katie Rushworth	340196
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
Village Hall (see advertisement)	Letting Agent	Katie Rushworth	340196
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*

March 2022
Issue No. 583

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Editorial

“It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade.” Charles Dickens, ‘Great Expectations’.

Easter is a moveable feast. It is the first Sunday after the full moon that occurs on or after the spring equinox. If the full moon is on a Sunday, then Easter is the following Sunday. The spring equinox occurs when, in principle, day and night are of equal length. This happens on 19th, 20th or 21st March each year. Equinox is derived from Latin and means ‘equal night’.

The earliest possible date for Easter is 22nd March, the latest date is 25th April. This year it is Sunday 17th April – so quite late. Many events in the Christian calendar are linked to the date of Easter. Shrove Tuesday is one of these. It falls 47 days before Easter Sunday, as early as 3rd February and as late as 9th March. This year it is on 1st March.

Have you ever wondered about the meaning of ‘shrove’? It is the past tense of ‘shrive’, a now archaic verb relating to absolution for your sins during confession to a priest. It was a custom for Christians to be ‘shriven’ before the start of Lent the following day.

Why is Shrove Tuesday also known as ‘Pancake Tuesday’? Because Lent is a 40-day period of fasting in the run up to Easter. It was traditional to gorge on pancakes and other foods made from butter, eggs, milk and other fats that would not survive the 40 days.

The first day of Lent, 2nd March in 2022, is known as Ash Wednesday. It was the custom on this day that churchgoers were marked on the forehead with a cross of ash, often created by burning the palm crosses used in the church the previous Palm Sunday.

Robert

British Summer Time begins on Sunday 27th March when clocks go forward by one hour.





How can we make Steeple Aston more environmentally friendly?

At the end of 2021 we asked which green initiatives you felt were a priority for our village. In response to the suggestions put forward, the Parish Council would like to set up a committee to research and implement some of those suggestions. (Terms of reference for the committee are available on the village website.) A preliminary meeting for all those who are interested will be held in the Village Hall on **Saturday 5th March at 10 a.m.**

Please come along if you would like to help make our village 'greener'. If you cannot attend the meeting, but would like to be kept in touch, please email the Parish Clerk:

parishclerk.steepleaston@gmail.com

Steeple Aston Parish Council

The Garden Club needs help

After some decades, the Garden Club is now in need of help. It has around 40 active members, but has sadly lost the secretary of so many years, Margaret Mason. The club meets in the Village Hall each month from October until April with a speaker. During the summer months the club visits gardens of interest, usually by private car and not too far away. It is a very social group and a wonderful way of meeting people with a similar interest.

Unfortunately, many of the existing committee have other commitments and are not able to take on the role of secretary although much support would be provided for anyone who might like to help in the role of secretary. **Can you help please?** We have the funds to continue, but really need your help. If you feel you could contribute to this well-established village group, give me a call or email and I can provide you with all the details you might need and of course, as much support as possible along with the remaining committee.

Thank you for your time in reading this and we really do hope someone can give a few hours over the year to help.

Richard Preston – Chairman of Steeple Aston Garden Club
01869 340512 richard.preston5@btopenworld.com

Handbell collection

In the two weeks of ringing the Handbells around Steeple and Middle Aston leading up to Christmas, I am thrilled to report we collected a magnificent £1662.10, the most we have ever raised. At our Bell Ringer's AGM held in February, we voted to send all the money to our chosen charity – Oxfordshire Mind – and not to keep any back for our Tower Fund, which is in a healthy state.

Thank you to everyone who gave so generously, but my biggest appreciation goes to all the members of the Handbell team who made it possible. They are Graham, Dorothy and Vicky Clifton, Diana Gardner, Lawrence White, Pam, Jack and Lewis Knowles, Nick Powell, Catherine Cooper, Charlotte Clarke, Helen, Cooper and Edie Arlett, Hannah and Rebecca McLoone, Holly and Daniel Viner, Eliza Webster, Alex Tabb, Freya Smith and Mary Rushworth.

Sally Cooper, Handbell Leader



Steeple Aston Church Allotments

Spring, the season for looking ahead and deciding what to do to get the best from the allotment this year! The Steeple Aston Church Allotment Association (SACAA) manages the only surviving village allotments and we can be found on Fir Lane opposite the church.

Nowadays, it is as much the well-being benefits as the productivity that draws people to allotments. Notwithstanding the wonderful views we have over the Cherwell valley, it is a great place to get away from it all and immerse yourself in all the benefits of being at one with nature. This really can be a 'green gym', but each person works at whatever pace suits them. Okay, there is the digging, weeding, bugs, deer and pigeons that can add to the challenge, but whether your speciality is parsnips or dahlias, raspberries or rhubarb and you are looking for space to test your green fingers, this really is the place to give it a go. Each worked plot on the allotment is unique and as long as the plot is seen to be active and 'loved', allotmenters are free to choose whatever they want to grow.

To help, SACAA has a selection of larger tools including lawnmowers, strimmers and most recently a large roller available to borrow. Plenty of water is provided via several troughs and the communal cabin and orchard provide a central focus. Recently a greenhouse has been added and this can be utilised in the lower orchard. Volunteers for periodic working parties and to help maintain the communal areas, mainly grass cutting, are always welcomed! Every year the committee aims to arrange social gatherings such as a summer barbecue, often with an 'Aunt Sally' competition.

This year, the allotments will see a first as we open as part of the village National Gardens Scheme on Sunday 29th May. Please come along and have a wander through the allotments and see what we are up to! If you simply cannot wait and are itching to give allotments a try, and this is a great time of year to start, we currently have a few plots available. Enquiries to: sacaclerk@btinternet.com

Stuart Cummins – for SACAA



THE ASTONS HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY - SPRING FLOWER SHOW 2022 - ENTRY FORM

The Spring Flower Show will be held in the Village Hall on **Sunday 20th March** from 2.30 - 4.30 pm. Entries are open to everyone and new exhibitors are welcome. The entry fee includes the Society's membership fee. Rules for exhibitors are as laid down by the secretary in the Annual Show Schedule except (a) entries must be in by **7pm on Thursday 17th March. Late entries will be charged double and no entry will be accepted after Friday 18th March** (b) exhibits must be staged between 9 – 10.45am on the morning of the show **after which the Hall will be closed.** Multiple entries in the same class will not be allowed in Divisions 1, 2 and 3. Cups will be awarded to the winner of most points in each open Division and the Mead Vase will be awarded to the person having entered in at least three of the five divisions and gaining the most points in the show. Easter eggs will be awarded to the winner of the most points in each of the children's age groups and the Bedding Cup for the best exhibit.

DIVISION 1

HORTICULTURE - FOR DUNCAN CUP

1. Tulips growing in a container
2. Daffodils (longer trumpets than petals) in container
3. Daffodils (shorter trumpets than petals) in container
4. Daffodils (multi-headed) in container
5. Miniature Daffodils in container
6. Hyacinths in a container
7. Any other container grown bulb
8. Any other container grown spring flower/s of one or more variety, excluding bulbs
9. Cactus or succulent) *must be in your possession for*
10. Pot Plant Flowering) *8 weeks*
11. Pot plant foliage) *8 weeks*
12. Vase of Cut Garden Blooms
13. Container of Garden shrubs/Hedgerow/Trees Buds or Blossom, judged on variety and quality
14. 5 cut stems of Daffodils (long trumpets) any varieties
15. 5 cut stems of Daffodils (short trumpets) any varieties
16. 5 cut stems of miniature Daffodils
17. 5 cut stems of multi-headed Daffodils
18. 3 Stems of Rhubarb (tops on)
19. Container of Cut Scented Spring Flowers
20. A single cut daffodil with solitary bloom

DIVISION 2

COOKERY - FOR WI CUP

21. A savoury flan (state flavour)
22. Plaited loaf
23. 3 sausage rolls
24. A lemon tart
25. 3 egg Victoria Sandwich
26. 3 Pieces of flapjack
27. Banana bread
28. 5 Chocolate truffles
29. Seville Marmalade
30. Fruit curd (lemon, orange, lime etc)
31. 3 home produced eggs from domestic fowl (with saucer)
32. Home made lemonade in a clear bottle with a glass
33. Home made alcoholic drink in a clear glass bottle with a glass. (Shop purchased gins / vodkas to flavour are allowed)

DIVISION 3 -FLORAL ART FOR THE FLOWER CLUB

SILVER TROPHY (All 4 classes count for the cup).

Please circle the classes you wish to enter and return the entry form to Richard Preston, Primrose Gardens (behind Primrose Cottage), North Side (01869 340512) or Victoria Clifton, Bluebell Cottage (07817025948) with full entry fee by 7 pm on Thursday 26th March 2020. Extra forms are available from Richard, or village website.

Classes 1-47 entry fee 25p. Classes 48-59 entry fee 10p. Prizes first £2, second £1, third 50p

For our privacy policy see: <https://www.steepleaston.org.uk/clubs-societies/gardening/#horticultural>

- Exhibits marked * to be staged in a niche 18” wide, 18” deep and 25” high
34. Miniature arrangement-no more than 10cm in any direction
 35. *Title - ‘A country’ - accessories allowed
 36. *Foliage Arrangement- no accessories allowed
 37. *Title - ‘Yellow’ – accessories allowed

DIVISION 4 -FOR HANDICRAFT CUP

38. Edible jewellery
39. ‘Twiddle muff’ for dementia patients, **to be donated to JR hospital afterwards**

40. A limerick - 'There once was a donkey called Ned' (With 8 syllables in 1st, 2nd and 5th lines and 5 syllables in 3rd and 4th lines)
41. A painting or drawing
42. Any other handicraft
43. A ‘Congratulations’ card
44. Photo – ‘Steeple (Aston) selfie’
45. Photo – ‘Patterns in nature’
46. Photo – ‘A pet’
47. Photo ‘Extreme weather(s)’ Must be black and white photo

Photos - may be in colour or black and white for classes 44 to 46 and all photos are not to exceed 7" by 5". No mounts allowed

DIVISION 5 -NOTE NEW AGE GROUPS, age must be written on entry form.

Under 5

48. Paper plate flower
49. Painting or drawing of an Easter Egg, A4 max size
50. Decorated biscuit (biscuit can be shop purchased)

Aged 5 to 7 inclusive

51. Decorated egg, any type
52. 3 Decorated mini rolls (mini rolls can be shop purchased)

53. Painting or drawing, not larger than A4

Aged 8 to 11 inclusive

54. Dreamcatcher incorporating recycled materials
55. Painting or drawing, not larger than A4
56. A Pizza (state ingredients)

Aged 12 – 15 inclusive

57. Decorated cake, judged on taste and appearance
58. An upcycled item
59. A photo suitable for the Steeple Aston Life cover – Max 7” x 5” Winner to supply jpeg.

ENTRY FORM

	<u>Classes</u>																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Name.....	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	
Address.....																			
Tel No	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	
If entering Division 5 - Age on day of Show																			
	Parent’s consent to entry:															56	57	58	59

IT'S SHOW-TIME

After an enforced break of two years, the Spring Show is back in the Village Hall on Sunday 20th March. Doors open for visitors at 2.30pm and there will be refreshments on sale, plus a chance to catch up with how the village WI is getting on and of course a raffle. But most importantly, a display of all that represents spring and our village community. There will be flowers, home cooking, photographs, handicraft, and lots of children's entries. To make this happen we need to see plenty of exhibits from you all. The schedule is on the opposite page and on the village website and hopefully there is something that might interest you. Exhibits make the show and without them we don't have a show so please try and put something in. If you need help or guidance, please don't hesitate to contact any of the committee and we will try and help you as much as we can. This is the beginning of spring and a much better year for us all so come along and enjoy the first major event of the village calendar.

Steeple Aston Spring Show

HOMEMADE
CAKE, COFFEE
AND TEA

COOKING,
FLOWERS AND
VEGETABLES

CHILDREN'S
DIVISIONS

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2.30-4.30


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£ 95 per person (limited to 6 people)

For more info and to sign up, please visit:
<https://bit.ly/3HShtEd>
or email amanda@restor8iv.com



Steeple Choral Presents



HAYDN “NELSON MASS” Introduced by Nicholas Cleobury plus **Supporting Programme**

Sunday 27 March 2022
in Steeple Aston Church at 7.00pm

Tickets £10

**From : The Village Shop (from mid February),
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★★★★★ - Google Review



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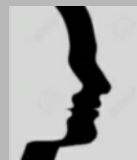
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Steeple People



Margaret Bulleyment



How long have you lived in Steeple Aston? 47 years this summer.

What brought you to Steeple Aston? After a fruitless morning house-hunting, we arrived in the village to view the final house listed. First, we lunched at *The Red Lion* and my husband eyeing the array of whisky bottles on its shelves, decided it might be a good place to live. Fortunately, we liked the house too.

Potted History. Childhood – Middlesex and Sussex; Student Years – Yorkshire. First job – teaching English and Music in a Worthing Secondary School, followed by Stockholm’s International School, where I met my husband, John. Best and longest job – Host Nation Adviser, Croughton American High School. Last job – teaching Expressive Arts and Performance Studies in Abingdon. Now, I am secretary of the Village Hall Committee and the Choral Society.

How do I see myself? Organised, decisive and quirky.

How do others see me? Bossy, opinionated and as crazy as several boxes of assorted frogs.

Hobbies. I enjoy choral singing in the village choir and Woodstock Choral Society and also writing short stories and short plays (some of which, surprisingly, get published in anthologies and performed in small theatres.) My full-length play for children, *Caribbean Calypso*, was last performed in Bangalore, India, by *Jagriti Kids*, to encourage migrant children’s school attendance.

Favourite food. Seafood and chocolate (but not in the same dish!).

Favourite piece of music. I do not have a particular favourite, but anything by Bach, Mozart, Sibelius or Dvorak, stands out.

Can you recommend a really good book? *The Mermaid of Black Conch* by Monique Roffey. A Caribbean fisherman rescues a mermaid and secretly takes her to live with him. She is a real mermaid, so no long golden hair, mirrors or combs. It sounds ridiculous, but is a wonderfully compassionate story with a vibrant setting.

Most people don’t know (or perhaps they do, I talk a lot). I met an interesting collection of people, while directing my school choir in Stockholm. These included dancer/ambassador Josephine Baker (fully-clothed), international singer Elizabeth Soderstrom and actor Max von Sydow, plus a prospective school parent called Benny, who liking what he heard, returned a term later with three friends to make a Christmas recording with my choir backing them (directed by my successor.) The next year they were famous – but with a different song.

How has the village changed in the time you’ve been here? It’s quieter, as the USAF do not fly overhead, but having been born three miles from Heathrow, sometimes I miss them.

Technology: friend or foe? Foe. I am a Luddite, first class.

What do you get grumpy/mad about? Piped music – i.e. loud, obtrusive, inappropriate noise – I am a proud member of *Pipedown*. Television announcers with incorrect speech – *Haitch*, *Asshume* and ‘*f*’ for ‘*th*,’ have me grinding my teeth (do you employ someone as a pilot if they cannot fly a plane?). Constant incorrect repetition of people’s names (it only applies to certain nationalities) – e.g. Greta Thunberg – she’s Swedish, not German – is actually pronounced “Toonberry” with the accent on the “Toon”.

The ARTS Page



Compiling The Arts Page is like peeling a large onion as there is so much on offer. However, it doesn't make me cry and it's exciting to see how much variety there is, professional and amateur, for all tastes and ages. If you keep back editions of SAL, you should have a good list of websites for the arts, but to reiterate:

oxinabox.co.uk / oxonarts.info / dailyinfo.co.uk are all excellent sources of information, going way beyond just the arts.

Summer Festivals are starting to advertise, and this website gives a lot of information:

theoxfordmagazine.com/music-festivals-in-oxfordshire

To flag up one locally, the Kite Festival at Kirtlington Park (10th to 12th June), an eclectic mix of music and ideas, is well worth a look (early bird tickets on sale now): kitefestival.co.uk

The Ashmolean features here regularly and has consistently excellent offerings. This short film introduces 'Pissarro – Father of Impressionism' (18th February to 12th June). Glorious! <https://youtu.be/10Ajbih49Y>

The always enterprising Banbury Museum has a fascinating exhibition 'Your Amazing Brain' until 5th June. They say, "You might not think science is for you, but we are going to show you it is for everyone!"

banburymuseum.org

Amongst the musical venues, I always keep my eye on St John the Evangelist, Iffley Road, Oxford – super acoustics and excellent programming. I'll flag up two – the wonderful Canadian pianist Angela Hewitt, who I have worked with on a few occasions (17th March) and the brilliant, dazzling saxophonist Jess Gillam (5th April).

Chipping Norton always punches above its weight. As well as the varied programme at the Theatre, there is the Literary Festival (21st to 24th April) with a stellar line up of writers including Monica Ali, Louis de Bernieres, Lyse Doucet and Douglas Stuart. chiplitfest.com

Also the Music Festival (4th - 19th March) with competitions for music, speech and drama, plus workshops, masterclasses and concerts, a particular highlight being Jacqui Dankworth on 13th. cnmf.org.uk

Spring is on the way and Delius' 'On hearing the first cuckoo in Spring' is wonderfully evocative. Here it is conducted by yours truly. https://youtu.be/h3TE_HpSsE8

I suspect we all had at least one teacher at school who inspired us more than most. One such was one of my sixth form English teachers. Thomas Hardy's 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles' and a collection of his poems were among our A Level set books. As it is set in March, here is one of my all-time favourite poems.

Beeny Cliff

*O the opal and the sapphire of that wandering western sea,
And the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping free –
The woman whom I loved so, and who loyally loved me.
The pale mews plained below us, and the waves seemed far away
In a nether sky, engrossed in saying their ceaseless babbling say,
As we laughed light-heartedly aloft on that clear-sunned March day.
A little cloud then cloaked us, and there flew an irised rain,
And the Atlantic dyed its levels with a dull misfeatured stain,
And then the sun burst out again, and purples prinked the main.
– Still in all its chasmal beauty bulks old Beeny to the sky,
And shall she and I not go there once again now March is nigh,
And the sweet things said in that March say anew there by and by?
What if still in chasmal beauty looms that wild weird western shore,
The woman now is – elsewhere – whom the ambling pony bore,
And nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will laugh there nevermore.*

Nick and Heather



The Gardening Spot

This is where it all starts in the garden!

In my opinion, and it might not be shared by all, I think the gardening season starts in earnest at the beginning of March. You will see that the spring bulbs are beginning to display their heads and shrubs are just showing that first sign of life. This is a certain sign that the garden is waking up to what we all hope will be an amazing year. This is why I keep encouraging you to do as much work to your garden as possible during the later months of the previous year.

I actually mowed the grass at the beginning of February, which is possibly the earliest I have ever started the mower. Maybe it is a sign that things are going to be early this year. Anyhow, talking of grass, once you feel the conditions are right, make the first cut, setting the cutter blades high and edge the lawn. Around the end of this month, you might like to consider a lawn feed to give it a good start to the season and if your lawn is like mine, there could be an abundance of moss which needs dealing with. I have found a product called MoBactor which not only kills the moss, but bio-degrades it so no need to rake the dead moss out. It is not cheap, but appears to work.

Annual bedding seems to be a little out of favour these days, but they make such a gorgeous show in any garden and can also fill those patches in the flower garden where herbaceous plants leave a space. One of the easiest and safest ways of achieving a good display is to purchase plug plants of your choice. This can be done online or at most garden centres. Now is the time to feed roses with one of the many products on sale, or possibly give them some fish, blood and bonemeal – this is organic and is a great general purpose garden feed. Once winter jasmine has finished flowering, cut stems back to around two inches from the old wood. This will encourage plenty of flowers next year. Keep an eye out for weeds as they emerge from their winter rest and dispose of them as quickly as possible. The same applies to slugs and snails.

Now down to my favourite part of the garden, the area where you grow food for your own use or pass it on to a friendly neighbour. An old saying was that you plant your potatoes on Good Friday, but as that is very late this year I would suggest planting around the end of this month or early in April. Purchase your favourite variety now if you haven't already and place them on an egg tray or similar in a cool place where they will produce chits. When you plant them, to get the best crop, remove all but a couple of chits and place them around eight inches deep with the chits facing skyward. Throw a pinch of slug pellets (you can purchase friendly slug pellets these days) in with the potatoes and then cover over and wait. In about four weeks shoots will appear and it is at that stage you make sure they are protected against any late frost by earthing over.

You can consider sowing carrots, beetroot and the like if the ground conditions are suitable, but no hurry as a later sowing might well catch them up. If, like me you like to have the best tomatoes possible, either sow the seed now or wait for a few weeks and buy some plants from the garden centre. Unless you have a heated greenhouse, don't be tempted to plant them out until the middle of April as they hate any dramatic change in temperature especially if it drops to near freezing. Cucumbers are even more susceptible to temperature change so forget about them until May. Don't whatever you do, purchase plants such as runner beans from your garden centre now as they will surely die unless we have a very early heatwave.

Happy gardening.

Richard Preston

Parish Council Meeting *Notes*



The Parish Council meeting in February was full of surprises. I had no idea that there were such elaborate plans for the death of a monarch, apparently called Operation London Bridge. We were told the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils had sent round a description of what was expected. Apparently, the mourning lasts for ten days (unless the funeral, due on day ten, falls on a Sunday or a bank holiday). The bells are meant to toll for an hour and the time of day of the toll will depend on what time of day the death is announced. This means all church bells will toll at the same time everywhere. Then there is the added complication that the bells will be muffled for the toll, unmuffled when the accession is announced and re-muffled for the funeral.

We were told there should be a Book of Condolences in the church with a table covered in a black cloth and a chair. The table should have a bunch of flowers and a specific picture of the monarch in a black frame. We were told the condolences should be in a black loose-leaf folder. The Book of Condolences is meant to be 'supervised'. No one knew exactly what that meant and were dubious that this would be either necessary or possible to arrange.

The Parish Council agreed to pay for a Book of Condolences as long as the Parochial Church Council agreed to put a notice beside the book saying it was from the village of Steeple Aston so that no one thought the Church had provided the book. When it is complete the book of condolences will be given to the Parish Council's archive.

The next discussion was equally barmy. Parish Council meetings can only go ahead if there is a quorum. The number of councillors required is three-and-a-half; the half being difficult to achieve, the quorum is defined as three. Only three Councillors were available for the February meeting, which was fine until one of them found out he had been in close contact with someone who had just tested positive for Covid. The result was that the meeting had to be on Zoom. But legally it

has to be in person. To get round the legal difficulty the Councillors set up another meeting, in the open air, to confirm the decisions of the illegal meeting. I could not see how it was proper to have a meeting to legalise an illegal meeting.

The meeting then considered the generous offer from Sarah Lucas to give her orchard on Water Lane to the village. The Council had found out about where the orchard needed immediate maintenance and about how expensive it would be to maintain in the future. They had been told the most urgent problem was to remove a pine tree. But the storms had beaten them to it and the tree had come down without their help, thereby conveniently reducing the cost of its removal. There would be charges for a solicitor to transfer the ownership of the orchard and at the most it might cost about £2,000 or possibly a bit more, for the Parish Council to accept the gift.

The group interested in managing the orchard was asked what they were proposing to do with it. They said they saw it as an opportunity for the community and for wildlife. They were proposing to plant more fruit trees and give the fruit to the community. They were considering adding some fruit bushes, a pond, a bench, bird boxes and a bee haven. Activities such as apple pressing and children building bug houses were suggested. The management group accepted they would have to do some fundraising, but were confident they could manage the day-to-day costs and could apply for Jubilee grants if necessary. It was agreed the Parish Council should appoint lawyers to look into the transfer of ownership and that the scheme would go ahead unless the lawyer's searches threw up anything unexpected.

The next few items were dispatched quite quickly. The noticeboard protecting the WI map of the village is in a poor state and needs re-staining and some repairs. The yellow hatching outside the school will be renewed during the next financial year and the Covid signs on lamp posts will be removed. The Oxfordshire Association of Local

Parish Council Meeting Notes



Councils (OALC) recommend that Parish Clerks should have a separate laptop for the business of each Council. Our Clerk is the Clerk for four Parish Councils and she was keen to have one machine for herself and another for all her Parish Council work combined. It was agreed the OALC advice would be ignored.

Our District Councillor reminded us that the brown bin collection on 24th February would be the last one which could include food and that after 1st March food could only be put into the new grey caddies.

The official consideration of the Hatch End development is now expected to be in April. Oxfordshire's Highways Department is probably the only organisation likely to have been able to reduce the scale of the development and they have not objected to the size of the scheme. For this reason, our Councillors believe that approval is likely to be given for the proposed development. The Councillors will continue to object, but are dubious it will be successful.

Margaret Mason has done a huge amount for the village and it was proposed that there should be a plaque to commemorate her on the wall of the Village Hall.

There is a suggestion that the village might have a 20mph zone and Councillors seemed very relieved at the thought that they could pass this distinctly hot potato to the new Environment Committee. The same committee would be asked to consider how to use our share of the traffic calming funding from the development at Upper Heyford.

The weed spraying will cost more than last year because the chemicals involved have shot up in price. The zip wire will be examined and repaired as necessary. Cherwell have offered to transfer the pocket park to the Parish Council if the Council will take on the upkeep. The only issue seemed to be whether the Parish Council could induce Cherwell to pay to get everything perfectly shipshape before the handover.

The Councillors are looking for volunteers to man the emergency phones for the defibrillator. This involves delivering the machine to where it is needed. Apparently, the intention is to offer 'familiarisation' with the machine to the volunteers, because very few of us would know what to do with it if faced with an appropriate emergency.

Gigaclear has offered to put fast broadband into the Village Hall at no cost in the first year and may be offering a second free year as well. The Councillors agreed to accept the offer and to decide later what to do after the free period ends – depending on how much it gets used. They checked and found out that accepting a free initial period would not force them to continue with Gigaclear if fast broadband was not used or Gigaclear's subsequent charges were extortionate.

We were told about a meeting to discuss the financial viability of bus services if the number of users did not return to pre-Covid levels. Apparently in Oxfordshire as a whole, the number of users is at about 70% of its level two year ago. Government support for local buses is likely to be reduced, but the S4 is still well used. Our best hope for it continuing is that it could be financially viable.

Parish Council meetings are usually held on the third Monday in the month. The March meeting will be on 21st March. But in April the third Monday is Easter Bank Holiday Monday so the Parish Council meeting will be a week earlier than usual, on 11th April. Do come.

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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HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO.....?

Shipton-under-Wychwood

A colleague once gave me a book 'The Minor Pleasures of Cotswold' which taught me to look for unusual, interesting and often small and charming things which can go unnoticed when visiting villages. I've been very grateful for that gift – I think it has helped to sharpen my powers of observation and taught me to value the unexpected.

Wherever people have lived they leave evidence of their lives and many a village contains unique or special features which it is easy to overlook even if you are taking time to explore. It can be a help to have some information to guide you and point you towards discoveries.

I recently learnt about a village trail to take visitors around Shipton-under-Wychwood which has been developed by members of the Cotswold Arts Society. In two parts, this village trail has been designed with children in mind and would be a different and satisfying way to take a walk around this pleasant place a few miles from Burford – perhaps during school holidays – but I think curious adults would also find it an interesting guide which would increase the enjoyment of a visit to Shipton. Completing the questions printed on the Trail leaflet might increase satisfaction even more!

You will find details on the The Cotswolds Arts Society website at bit.ly/3uUDiQ4 where you will be able to print off the map (shown here), together with five pages of questions related to places identified on the map. Then you'll be all set for an expedition to Shipton-under-Wychwood. Use OX7 6BA in your satnav and discover parts of the village which it's easy to miss if you just sweep by on the A361.

Eileen Baglin-Jones

May I be permitted a postscript to last month's article on the Magistracy? I was very pleased to hear the announcement from the Justice Minister that there is to be a drive to increase the numbers of magistrates, with a focus on increasing diversity and lowering the age profile of the Bench (although I'm not sure where these new magistrates will be able to sit following all those court closures!). If you want something satisfying and fascinating to volunteer for and are prepared to undertake training, do consider applying to join the magistracy. You do not need any qualifications other than common sense (well we all think we have that!) and an open mind. I recommend this as a worthwhile and absorbing piece of community service.

EBJ





Spring

The birth of spring is almost on us
tempered by the last of winter
coiled to burst the earth warms up
and shoots begin to show

who knows what gems lie there beneath me
it seems an age since bulbs were planted
I really should keep better records
of the plants I wish to grow

too late, a lesson learned for later
but for now I'll wait and see
hopefully I've planted well
so I can reap from what I sow

all the joy is still suppressed
the sense of hope is very strong
waking up can take some time
a consequence of laying low

so here's to spring that bursting season
new eruptions greet each day
life is full of new potential
life moves on, that much we know

Peter Wild

Who knows where the time goes?

I dreamt that in retirement
I'd have lots of time to laze,
But I have found that's not the case
In these post-employment days

I thought I'd sit out in my garden
A glass of wine at hand
Dozing over the works of Proust
And getting nicely tanned

But I seem to be busy all the time
The garden chair is wasted
The bottle is unopened
The wine is still untasted.

It's true as we get older,
We slow down a little too
P'r'aps that's why I never catch up
With all I have to do.

There are all the people
I must regularly see
Chiropractor, physio,
Dentist and GP.

I must make a visit every year
To the venerable JR
To meet with the neurologist
"How do you think you are?"

I should cycle on my machine
Should walk a mile a day
Should do the exercises
To keep frozen shoulder at bay.

I should take vitamins and supplements
And moisturise twice daily
I should remember to floss my teeth
To prevent them getting scaly.

I should answer all my emails
Attend a training course on Zoom
I should wash the sticky kitchen floor
And flick a duster round the room.

Clear out the clothes I can't fit into
(We all know that feeling)
Clean the grouting in the shower
Dust cobwebs from the ceiling

I should read the book for Book Group
Message my WhatsApp pals
Meet the WI committee
Write a poem for SAL

This whole business of retirement
Is very unforgiving
How did I ever find the time
To go out and earn a living?

Cathy Lawday



What an inspiring evening the club had listening to Will Gray talk about British Wildlife Adventures. Will has been an award-winning photographer for over 30 years who also leads workshops for any skill level.

The talk gave us a pictorial tour of Scotland, where we met Sammy the harbour seal with all the problems of dealing with salt spray on the camera and exposure issues and then to the Wood of Cree, set up with hides, to photograph red deer up close. Will emphasised that practise and taking considered images is the way to hone your craft. Firing off hundreds of shots without being patient and moving up, down and around to find that pleasing composition will prove fruitless, especially when wildlife do not do what you expect. Will passed on lots of tips and presented some of his less successful shots to show how he worked to improve his work whilst out in the field.

There are so many nature reserves and wildlife areas in the UK that can be found just a few miles from a major motorway or city that any photographer should find time to try to capture these great native creatures. However, do remember to respect the animal or creature's habitat.

Will has a fantastic website that I recommend you visit – www.william-gray.co.uk –where you will find not only his great images, but also details of his book 'Family Wildlife Adventures' which gives lots of ideas on where to stay and visit around the country for wildlife exploration.

Our next talk will be by John Lewis on 'Composition for the viewer' on Wednesday 2nd March at 7.30pm at the Adderbury Institute. Everyone is welcome, but do check our website for any changes.

Anne Hunsley
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???? Mind Games

Word Path Puzzles

hand								foot
------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------

Change the word at the start of the path to the word at the end, in 5 steps. Each step on the path must be a proper word, and must differ from the previous word by just one letter. There may be more than one way of doing this.

Example:

hand		band		bond		fond		food		foot
------	--	------	--	------	--	------	--	------	--	------

1.

sack										core
------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------

2.

till										raft
------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------

3.

blue										shop
------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------

4.

dogs										zone
------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------

5.

heat										wand
------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------

6.

lies										fibs
------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	------

Answers on p.35

50 years of the Village Hall

Village halls nationwide were asked to write an entry for the 'Domesday Book 2021' – a view of community halls before, during and recovering from the pandemic. Here is the Steeple Aston submission.

In the early 1970s, village activities were largely held in out-of-hours school buildings, or sheds and ad hoc sites dotted around the village. When Dr. Radcliffe's, the village primary school, was moved across the road to a modern building, it allowed the Victorian school premises it left behind to be transformed into a hall suitable for the whole village.

Annual events like the Firework Evening – always on 5th November – were quickly established to bring the whole community together. Through the years, the hall has become a meeting place and base for a whole variety of village organisations and events – the Valentine's Club for over 60s; Oxfordshire's oldest WI; the Choral Society; the Badminton Group; the Garden Club; the Horticultural Society; the Village Archive; drama and dance classes for all age groups; weddings; parties; quizzes; plays and concerts – all of which flourished until March 2020.

We have used the lockdown time positively, bringing forward interior decorating and other maintenance work, for which the finance was already in place. The brief re-opening for the childrens' activities in the autumn, tested our new Covid-safe procedures and showed us that normal activities could still work.

An online quiz, attracting a different group from our usual annual quiz groups in the hall, proved successful and also brought in some income, but we were grateful for the local council grant to replenish our coffers.

People are amazed at how the hall with its staging, lighting and high ceilings can transform itself overnight from a midsummer night's dream wedding, to an exhibition hall, or the 'Allo, 'Allo café. However, the hall cannot transform into anything without people using it, and as our 50th anniversary approaches we are confident that as soon as it is possible our village groups and outside hirers will return, bringing the building back to life and restoring the hall to its place at the centre of the community.

Individuals or groups might like to comment on special occasions or activities they have enjoyed in the hall, or what the situation was like before there was a proper community building. You might even have photos. Send to editorsalife@gmail.com

I enjoyed it when we turned the hall into the 'Allo, 'Allo cafe. I was the cafe pianist and unusually, it did not matter how badly I played, or how loudly. (It drowned out the noise of people eating their French picnics with a full set of cutlery!)

It was when I was looking at the Village Hall's Trust Deed last year (we were negotiating a new sublease) that I discovered that the hall, as a community resource, will be 50 on 23 March 2022. In normal circumstances we would probably have organised an anniversary event. However, this would have taken time to plan and promote and two or three months ago we had no idea what Covid restrictions would be in place.

Margaret Bullement
Secretary,
Village Hall Management Committee



The Village Hall was formerly the Technical School, built in 1894, remaining in educational use until 1969. However, it was 1972 before the Parish Council was able to make it available for wider community use as the Village Hall.

Photo: Nigel Francis



In use as the School dining hall in 1934.



The Steeple Aston Players put on at least one show every year. This one was in the 1980s.



An Edwardian Fair was held in September 1986.



The 50th anniversary of VE day was celebrated in 1995.

Thanks to SAVA for the historic photos

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**For more information, contact
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cathy@lawdaymacandrew.co.uk**

Join the WI



We began February with a get-together for coffee and cake at the Red Lion. This is a monthly event, the next two dates being 3rd March and 6th April. Just come along at any time around 10.30am to meet with other members for a chat.

There was a change from our advertised speaker for February, when Stuart Cummins spoke to us about Victorian domestic gadgets. Stuart had an impressive collection of glass bottles, some coloured blue or green to denote they held poison, some designed to lie on their side rather than to stand up to ensure that their carbonated contents kept their fizz. There were beautifully-designed vinegar bottles, and also a bottle with an ingenious kink in the neck to prevent the marble stopper from falling down into the bottle.

We were shown pictures of some early versions of appliances such as the Hoover and washing machine, together with adverts for them. Untroubled by Advertising Standards legislation these included extravagant claims for the appliances and also demonstrated some very dated attitudes towards the women who might use them. Stuart also brought and demonstrated a wonderful old camera and a musical box. It was a fascinating topic and we were very grateful to our speaker for helping us out at short notice.

The evening also had a quiz on the subject of vintage household gadgets and a getting-to-know you task to help our existing members and our many new members get to know each other better. Members also enjoyed a group walk and a pub lunch this month.

Remember:

The first week of every month there is a coffee get-together at the Red Lion, alternating on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The next one is Thursday 3rd March at 10.30am.

The second week of every month there is a members' meeting on Tuesday evening. Next one is Tuesday 8th March.

The third week of every month there is a group walk on the Friday. Next one is Friday March 18th.

The fourth week of every month is pub lunch week, alternating Wednesdays and Thursdays. The next one is Wednesday 23rd March. Details of time and place to follow.

If you are interested in joining the WI come along to any of our evening meetings to see if you like it. You will be made very welcome and your first visit is free. Details of meetings are on the SAL Calendar on page 44. Or you can contact me on 01869 347209

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THE VALENTINE CLUB

For our meeting on 15th February we welcomed back to the club, after a few years break, Jackie Maynard – one of the runners-up on BGT a few years ago. She has a wonderful voice and could be likened to Dame Shirley Bassey.

Our meeting this month on the 15th March brings Mr Alan Brewer, who is going to tell us all about his experiences ‘Up in the air with FLUFFY BITS’. All I can say is “hold onto your seats!” Also, at our meeting we will hear from Mandy Massam on “Scams Awareness”. This is an ever-increasing concern, not just for the older members of the community, but for anyone these days, so should be very informative.

On the 23rd March members of the club will be visiting Aerospace in Bristol where they will have the opportunity to board Concorde and see how air travel has progressed over the decades.

In April we have Jeff Evans coming to tell us all about ‘Pop on the Box’. And a few days later 41 members will be travelling to the Isle of Wight for a five-day holiday. This should prove interesting for all concerned and hopefully, very enjoyable for us to be able to share a break with friends, especially after the last two years of uncertainty.

Over the past year the club has moved from success to success, but sadly with it comes a negative. We now have 100 members on the books and just for the time being we are not able to take any more members. Things change quickly at our age so if you were thinking of joining, give me a call and I can hopefully give you an indication of any potential waiting time.

You can see what the club is up to by visiting our own website on www.valentineclub.wixsite/aston or keep up-to-date by looking on the village website www.stepleaston.org.uk or simply call me on 01869 340512.

Richard Preston – Group organiser

Richard.preston5@btopenworld.com

From the Dog House

Securely-fenced dog walking fields have become very popular recently, especially if your dog's recall isn't quite as good as you would like it to be or if your dog prefers not to be close to others. A secure field will give you a safe and relaxing walk or training session without the worry of thinking about whether your dog might disappear into the distance or become scared by somebody else's dog. A good secure field will have 6ft fencing and often an enclosed parking area for extra safety. Some venues have obstacles such as tyres or logs for your dog to play on. All will require pre-booking; usually online. You will of course be required to pick up after your dog and follow the rules stated by the field owner. Prices vary from £4 to £10 depending on the length of your session, or slightly more for multiple dogs.

There is a good choice of fields in our area. Please ensure that you check all details given on the website or Facebook page of the field you would like to visit to ensure that it is suitable for you and your dog. Enjoy your walk!

- **Enslow Farm near Bletchington.** Facebook: Enslow_Farm, 07854 801824
- **Wild Pawz Horley and Drayton, Banbury.** www.wildpawzsecuredogfield.com 07875 970705
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Village Hall News



A fun and very enjoyable evening was had by all who attended the annual village quiz evening on Saturday 29th January. It was good to be able to get together with friends and family in a safe environment and feel a sense of 'normality' returning.

Nearly a dozen teams enthusiastically took part with names ranging from 'This is not a party' to 'Hey Siri.' As usual the teams went to town providing a wide and interesting variety of food and nibbles to keep them going during the evening. A bar was also available to serve liquid refreshments to all.

The quiz was masterfully led by Jo Mallinson and Tara with a great range of questions and conundrums to challenge the teams. Do you know which Australian State is named 'Bananaland'? **Answer** Queensland. What does a Vexillologist study? **Answer** Flags. Team scores were accurately collated by Alan Brewer.

The evening was rounded off with the presentation of wine and the trophy to the winning team – Eternal Optimist – with a score of 93 out of 128 maximum points and the usual raffle which consisted of some great prizes donated by Safeclean (Abingdon), Hamper (Eagles), The Yurt (Nicholson's), Holt Garage, Holt Hotel, Red Lion (Steeple Aston), Wine & Candles (anonymous).

If you haven't attended this challenging but great fun event, then do watch out for the details of the 2023 quiz later in the year, as tables are likely to be booked up very quickly!

Thanks go to all who participated and not forgetting the Village Hall committee who organised this event.

Provisional date of Village Hall event: Sunday 29th May, NGS Open Gardens, 2pm to 6pm

Please note our letting agent is Mrs. Katie Rushworth
01869 340196. Email steeple-aston-village-hall@hotmail.com
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Barbara Brewer – chair



The winning team at the Annual Village Quiz evening.

Photo: Paul Rodgers

The Cricket Report



Steeple Aston Cricket Club

Steeple Aston Cricket Club

Lifetime Averages...

Normally I would be regaling you with tall tales of hilarity from our Annual Awards Dinner. Sadly, the dinner has not yet happened. 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 include only those who are still playing for Steeple Aston and have played more than one game.

Batters	Runs	Outs	Average	100s	50s
Jamie Longman	718	14	51.29	2	2
Peter Higgins	2005	58	34.57	1	12
Jeremy Farrar	887	26	34.12	1	7
Hector Higgins	101	3	33.67		
Jon Scotchbrook	3053	96	31.80	3	22
Tom Chesser	408	13	31.38	1	2
Olly Doggett	438	15	29.20		3
Arthur Higgins	537	19	28.26	1	3
Nigel Doggett	1182	49	24.12		6
Bob Longman	47	2	23.50		
Greg Renk	1215	54	22.50		4
Stan Owen	1044	47	22.21		2
Tim Jones	75	4	18.75		
Will Doggett	159	10	15.90		
Chris Watson	154	10	15.40		
Alex Ramos	114	8	14.25		
Charlie S-J	57	4	14.25		
Alex Hatzigeorgiou	52	4	13.00		
James Liebrecht	84	7	12.00		
Jack Higgins	88	8	11.00		
Jock Shepherd	105	10	10.50		
Phil Chesser	403	40	10.08		
Paul Nicolaides	65	7	9.29		
David Stewart	22	3	7.33		
Jonty Renk	98	19	5.16		
Sam Hatzigeorgiou	75	15	5.00		
Paul Longman	132	28	4.71		

Continued.....



Bowlers		Overs	Runs	Wickets	Average	R/O	5W/I
Jack	Higgins	9.2	33	4	8.25	3.6	
Tom	Chesser	142.1	441	35	12.60	3.1	2
Arthur	Higgins	48	231	16	14.44	4.8	
Peter	Higgins	531.7	2002	132	15.17	3.8	2
Paul	Longman	425.1	1786	106	16.85	4.2	3
Greg	Renk	247.5	1144	59	19.39	4.6	
Nigel	Doggett	98.3	489	25	19.56	5.0	
Chris	Watson	21	140	6	23.33	6.7	
Paul	Nicolaides	24	166	7	23.71	6.9	
Alex	Ramos	88	281	11	25.55	3.2	
Jonty	Renk	241.2	1000	39	25.64	4.1	
Hector	Higgins	19	83	3	27.67	4.4	
Stan	Owen	114	627	21	29.86	5.5	
Charlie	S-J	12	101	3	33.67	8.4	
Will	Doggett	12.4	69	2	34.50	5.6	
Olly	Doggett	59	244	6	40.67	4.1	
Sam	Hatzigeorgiou	43.1	343	8	42.88	8.0	
James	Liebrecht	45	243	5	48.60	5.4	
Phil	Chesser	37	253	5	50.60	6.8	
Jon	Scotchbrook	20.3	162	3	54.00	8.0	
Alex	Hatzigeorgiou	17	134	2	67.00	7.9	
Jock	Shepherd	13	94	1	94.00	7.2	
Jeremy	Farrar	10	95	1	95.00	9.5	
Tim	Jones	2	25	0		12.5	

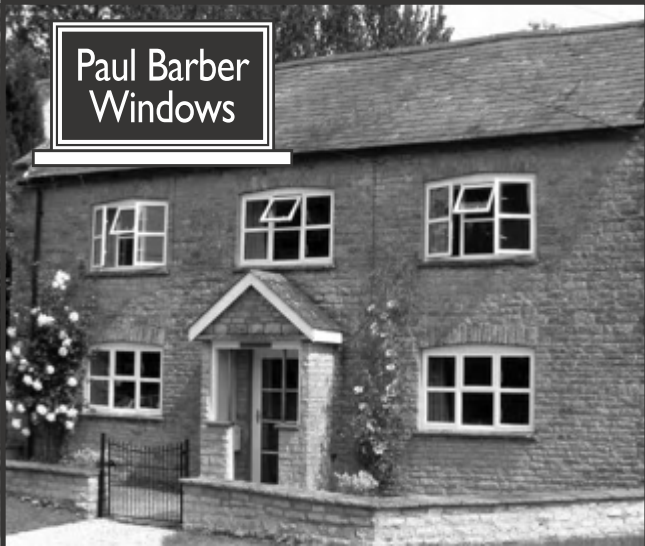
Next month the 2022 Fixture List with all home games played at Great Tew.

Peter Higgins
Chairman

Mind Games Answers

1. sack, back, bark, bare, care, core; 2. till, tilt, silt, sift, rift, raft; 3. blue, flue, floe, flop, slop, shop; 4. dogs, dots, cots, cons, cone, zone; 5. heat, head, herd, hard, ward, wand; 6. lied, lies, lips, ribs, fibs

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Church Matters



“What are you giving up for Lent?”

Forgive me, there is something deep within my soul that hates this question. For years I used to reply, “Skydiving”. And, I promise you, I have never been skydiving during Lent. Though – in the interests of full disclosure – that sentence doesn’t actually need the words “during Lent” to remain true.

No, what I hate about the question is the assumption that doing something Christian is always *negative*.

I hate the idea that to be a good Christian must always be about giving up things. “Thou shalt not”. Jesus is the unseen guest at every meal – *so don’t have too much fun, he can hear you...*

I don’t know where we get this stuff from, but it’s not from Jesus. He spent his time with people, enjoying their company, making them feel at home, bringing joy and love into their lives. He did this so much that some accused him of enjoying life rather too much. Not long before he died, whilst at supper with friends, a woman poured expensive perfume over Jesus and even his disciples thought that it might have been better sold and the money given to the poor. The last picture the Bible gives us of Jesus before his death is of him eating and drinking with his friends, and after the resurrection he is cooking breakfast for them by the lakeside.

There are times to pause, to hold back, to make sure we know what’s important and why – but why not add something to life rather than make life plainer, if we want to remember Jesus? Why not add acts of kindness? More time with family? Visits to those in our communities who are housebound or lonely?

So may I ask a different question this year? What are you adding into the mix of life for Lent? What are you doing this Lent that will make others smile?

I’ve been asked to speak at a church in London and they’ve given me a really tricky text from the Old Testament. They want to know how they should deal with difficult bits of the Bible. Well, Jesus is really clear. The Bible is a gift that is supposed to bless people and when it is used in order to make people feel less worthy, less human, just ‘less’, there’s not much about God going on. It’s exactly the same principle with Lent.

I think it’s exactly the same principle with life...What can we add into the mix that makes things better for others, that brings a smile to someone’s face, that makes this day better for someone else?

Even when we’ve all been struggling through these really difficult last couple of years and the last thing any of have wanted is ‘Lent’ – giving up more stuff – when someone has done something kind for us, life has been just a bit better.

The question is – what can we take up today, so we can be that someone for someone else?

More news and details of our Sunday worship can always be found on our website, www.sntchurch.com

Revd Marcus Green

Churchwardens' Chat

How fortunate we were to have such lovely bright winter weather for Snowdrop Sunday on 6th February! The joyful tone was set by the bell-ringers who rang a Quarter Peal to mark the accession of the Queen 70 years ago, followed by a service taken by Rev Charles Chadwick who emphasised the importance of kindness in our relationships with one another.

The afternoon was a cheerful and friendly occasion. It was good to see so many people enjoying tea and cake and visiting the stalls or having a go at the quiz – won after a tie break question – by Martin Dale. Glen Miller playing in the background and a fine display of snowdrops helped to make it a happy afternoon. It wasn't planned as a money-making event, but we were pleased to pay £279 into church funds.

So now we look forward to spring really getting a hold and lighter evenings. March sees the beginning of Lent when we shall be thinking about Easter approaching – how quickly the months roll on! Before then, however, on 27th March it will be Mothering Sunday – somewhat taken over by commercialism perhaps, but an important day for mothers to be remembered and thanked. Richard Bailey will be leading our Mothering Sunday service of Morning Prayer when we hope there will be the opportunity for lots of warm thanks given to mothers (and aunties and friends!) everywhere.

Graham Clifton and Eileen Baglin-Jones



These are the bell-ringers who rang the Quarter Peal – from left to right: Lawrence White, Keith Thomas, Nick Powell, Jack Knowles, Graham Clifton and Malcolm Hensher.

A Quarter Peal is normally rung on eight bells. We have eight bells at Steeple Aston, but I was unable to find eight ringers for that Sunday morning. On 6th February more bells were rung all over the country than normal, which meant bell-ringers were in short supply. So for the Quarter Peal we rang six bells with 1260 changes of Grandsire & Plain Bob Doubles in 45 minutes,

We hope to also be ringing something special for the Platinum Jubilee on Friday 3rd June to coincide with the national service which will be held at St. Paul's Cathedral, London.

Graham Clifton

Church Services

	North Aston	Steeple Aston	Tackley
Sunday 6th March	9.30am Holy Communion <i>Book of Common Prayer</i> Canon Charles Chadwick	11am Holy Communion <i>Book of Common Prayer</i> Canon Charles Chadwick	5.30pm Evensong Revd Jeremy Auld
Sunday 13th March			10.30am United Benefice Holy Communion Revd Andrew Bunch
Sunday 20th March	9.30am Holy Communion Revd Andrea Russell	11am Holy Communion Revd Andrea Russell	5.30pm Evensong Richard Bailey
Sunday 27th March Mothering Sunday	9.30am Morning Prayer Richard Bailey	11am Morning Prayer Richard Bailey	9.30am Holy Communion Bishop Gavin
Sunday 3rd April Passion Sunday	9.30am Holy Communion <i>Book of Common Prayer</i> Revd Marcus Green	11am Holy Communion <i>Book of Common Prayer</i> Revd Marcus Green	5.30pm Evensong Revd Marcus Green
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 0746 0846 1002 1902 2010 2125 2255

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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.

March			
Wednesday 2nd	WI. Trip to see 'Private Lives'	Oxford Playhouse	2.30
Wednesday 2nd	AD&D Photo Society. "Composition for the viewer"	Adderbury Institute	7.30
Thursday 3rd	WI. Coffee and chat	Red Lion	10.30
Tuesday 8th	WI. Talk and demonstration of Block Printing	Village Hall	7.00
Tuesday 15th	SAL April 2022 copy and advert deadline		
Tuesday 15th	Valentine Club. 'Up in the clouds...', Alan Brewer	Village Hall	2.30
Friday 18th	WI. Group walk		
Sunday 20th	Spring Show	Village Hall	2.30
Monday 21st	Parish Council meeting	S&R Building	7.30
Wednesday 23rd	Valentine Club. Trip to Aerospace Bristol		
Wednesday 23rd	WI. Pub lunch (details to be confirmed)		
Saturday 26th	Block Printing Workshop. Arty Crafty Place	Middle Aston	10am to 12 noon
Saturday 26th	Farmers' Market	Deddington	9am to 12.30pm
Sunday 27th	SA Choral Society. Haydn's Nelson Mass	SA Church	7.00
April			
Wednesday 6th	WI. Coffee and chat	Red Lion	10.30
Monday 11th	Parish Council meeting	S&R Building	7.30
Tuesday 12th	Valentine Club. 'Pop on the Box', by Jeff Evans	Village Hall	2.30
Tuesday 12th	WI. AGM. Speaker '40 years of UK Musicals'	Village Hall	7.00
Friday 15th	SAL May 2022 copy and advert deadline		
Saturday 23rd	Farmers' Market	Deddington	9am to 12.30pm

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

Printed by: **Joshua Horgan Print & Design**

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