

# Steeple Aston *Life*

December 2023

Issue No. 604



- Fireworks Spectacular • SAVA Village Memories • Remembrance Sunday •
- Horticultural Society news • Letter from Westminster • Inglesham Church •



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Contributions are welcome. Please email [editorsalife@gmail.com](mailto:editorsalife@gmail.com)

Cover: Steeple Aston Handbell Ringers (Photo by Nigel Francis)

## Steeple Aston *Life*

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The copy deadline is the 14<sup>th</sup> of the  
previous month.  
This means the copy deadline for the  
January 2024 issue is Thursday 14<sup>th</sup>  
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Badminton (Thursday evenings)		Alison Moran	347033
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WI	President	Julie Hillier	349185





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

## Steeple Aston *Life*

December 2023

Issue No. 604

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# Editorial

*"The earth reminded us of a Christmas tree ornament hanging in the blackness of space. As we got farther and farther away it diminished in size. Finally, it shrank to the size of a marble, the most beautiful marble you can imagine." – James Irwin, Lunar Module Pilot for Apollo 15 (launched 26<sup>th</sup> July 1971).*

Who introduced the Christmas tree to Britain? Most people will say Prince Albert, the consort of Queen Victoria. It is true that in December 1840 he imported spruce trees from his native Germany and had these festooned with candles and trinkets. However, it is said that Queen Charlotte, the German wife of George III, installed a Christmas tree at Windsor in December 1800.

It soon became a custom for middle-class families to have a tree at home during the Christmas period, adorning it with sweets, ornaments and small gifts. However, the tradition of decorating a home with greenery goes back much earlier in time. The ancient Romans celebrated the Winter Solstice with a week-long feast called Saturnalia and brought evergreen boughs into their houses and temples.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, on Adam & Eve Day (24<sup>th</sup> December), open-air plays were performed telling the story of the creation. The Garden of Eden was symbolised by a 'paradise tree' hung with fruit. The plays were soon banned by the clergy, who considered them 'acts of heathenry'. In response, some secretly brought evergreen branches into their homes. Holly and berries were generally available at the end of the year, which is why we associate green and red with Christmas.

It is often said that Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) banned Christmas. While this is not strictly true, laws were passed during his time as Lord Protector to apprehend anyone organising a special Christmas church service. Every Sunday was to be observed as a holy day, while shops and market were to remain open on 25<sup>th</sup> December. He preached against Christmas carols, decorated trees and expressions of joyfulness. On the restoration of King Charles II in 1660, the traditional celebration of Christmas was also restored.

And so it continues to the present day.

**Robert**

*Artificial Christmas trees were developed in Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were made from goose feathers dyed green. Many artificial trees sold today are made from plastic and come in green, white – and even black! There is an on-going debate about real and artificial trees. Growers say that real trees are better for the environment. Some people prefer the one-time purchase and reuse of artificial trees.*





## Changes at the Horticultural Society



*Richard Preston*

Richard Preston has retired as chair of the Steeple Aston and Middle Aston Horticultural Society after 45 very active years. An enthusiastic organiser and 'voice' of the Spring and Summer Shows, Richard will be a hard act to follow. Also sorely missed will be his wife Daphne, winner of too many cups to count and Summer Show champion for the last five years, who has retired as Treasurer. Hanny Nicholson has retired as President after 60 years working with the society.

Mary White, one of the committee, reports that all three of them will retain their links with the Society, while several new members have been recruited to take their places.



*Daphne Preston and Hanny Nicholson*

She writes, "Richard and Daphne Preston have decided now is the time for them to step back and let others take up the challenge of running what is the 'biggest and best flower show in North Oxfordshire' as Richard may have said before! Richard has been associated with the Society since around 1978, with his family having been involved since the 1860s. Fortunately, Richard and Daphne have kindly agreed to offer advice as needed and Richard has also agreed to be our president. Daphne will be a vice president. We are pleased to say that Hanny Nicholson has also agreed to be a vice president."

Encouragingly, no fewer than five new committee members were appointed at the recent AGM. Graham Clifton is now chair and other committee members continue in their usual roles. New recruits Claire Coysh and Eleanor Evans have volunteered to take on the demanding job of field officer with help from Rebecca Lewin (publicity). Vicky Clifton (see page 9) continues as show secretary. Another new recruit, Eleanor O'Connor, is now the treasurer.

## Correction

Apologies for an error on page 33 of last month's SAL. An article on the Chicken Sheds Expansion said that The Indian Block Printing Company had been there for a while. In fact, they left some time ago and are now located down the road at Lakeside Farm. Their full address and other contact details are in their advert on the inside back cover.

## Hot chocolate at Halloween

This photo, from Eileen Baglin-Jones, records Halloween at the Village Hall when members of the church served hot chocolate (with cream and marshmallows!) to anyone passing by. Lots of grateful children (and parents who had been persuaded to join the Trick or Treat expedition) enjoyed a warm drink and a few more treats.





# Steeple Aston Noticeboard



## GWR U-turns on cuts to local train services

GWR has reinstated the two important commuter train services between Oxford and Banbury which were due to be cut from the beginning of December. They say this decision is in response to the views of residents, businesses and local councillors. The proposed new timetable would have cut two well-used commuter services calling at Heyford – the one in the morning which arrives in Oxford at 9.05am, and the one leaving Oxford at 5.55pm. This would have left a gap of over two hours between trains at the beginning and end of the working day.

Announcing the change, GWR Business Development Portfolio Director Tom Pierpoint said: “We’re grateful to local residents, businesses and Oxfordshire County Council for highlighting the importance of these services and I’m pleased we’ve been able to find a solution that will retain them both in our December timetable. We do sometimes have to make changes, but it is clear that these services play a vital role for our communities in Tackley, Heyford, King’s Sutton and Banbury, and I’m really glad that we have been able to keep them in the timetable.”



The rethink was welcomed by Oxfordshire County Council. Councillor Judy Roberts, the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Development Strategy said: “GWR have listened very carefully to what local rail users have said and responded really well. Both of these services are very well patronised and link villages as well as towns. They’re exceptionally valued by the communities they serve and ideally timed for commuters.”

*Heyford Station (photo by Nigel Francis)*

## Steeple Aston Handbell Ringers Xmas 2023

Christmas is nearly upon us once more and the Steeple Aston Handbell Ringers (see cover) have already started practising in readiness for our annual two weeks of ringing Christmas Carols door-to-door. I say two weeks, but it usually takes us 11 or 12 evenings to complete our ringing round Steeple, Middle Aston and outlying farms, as it very much depends on the weather.

This year the charity we have chosen to donate our collection money to is DEC (Disasters Emergency Committee). As always, we will have our buckets with us for any cash you would like to give, but as we move with the times we will be setting up a Just Giving page and will have the QR code on our collecting buckets for those of you who do not have loose change in the house.

It is intended that we begin our tour of the village on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December starting along Heyford Road and working our way up to The Crescent and Nizewell Head. We will try to keep you posted as to our whereabouts each evening via the village Facebook page. We look forward to playing a Christmas Carol at your door soon.

**Sally Cooper**

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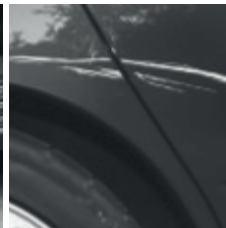


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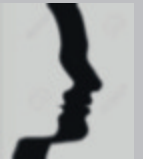
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# Steeple People



## Vicky Clifton

**How long have you lived here?** Lived in Middle Aston over 40 years (and 10 years in Banbury).

**Where did you move from?** Born and bred here.

**What do you like best about living in Middle Aston?** Being able to see the stars at night, still marvel at it.

**Is there anything you don't like about living here?** Cars speeding on little roads.

**How has the village changed in the time you've been here?** Obviously it has grown in size, but this also enabled me to build my own house.

**Where do you think of as 'home'?** Middle Aston.

**How do you see yourself, in five words or less?** Flowers, dogs and cake lover!

**Early bird or night owl? Cat or dog? Optimist or pessimist?** Early bird, dog most definitely, realist/pragmatist.

**To marmite or not?** Urrgh, not marmite.

**What was the best thing about being a child?** Playing in the local woods with friends who lived in the village and being able to walk to their house without parents needing to escort us.

**What is the best thing about being an adult?** Being able to choose what I'm having for dinner each night, ha ha.

**As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?** Teacher.

**What was your first job?** Selling fruit and veg with Richard Preston from his van.

**What do you do for a living now?** Horticultural sales person for Nicholsons at North Aston.

**What is the best job you've ever done?** Selling toys to children who were spending their pocket money – such delight on their faces.

**What's your secret/guilty pleasure?** Watching cheesy Christmas movies.

**Tell us about any interesting hobbies you have.** Baking and gardening, but handbell ringing is probably most interesting, bring delight to villagers at Christmas as we ring carols and collect money for charity each year.

**What's your favourite piece of music?** Any thing that gives me goosebumps, but I really love Christmas music from carols to classics to Slade.

**What's your favourite food?** Home-made fresh bread and jam, reminds me of my Grandma.

**If you could ban one thing in the country, what would it be?** Energy companies making a profit! Enable bills to be fair.

**If you won the lottery, what's the first thing you would buy?** Flights for my brother and family to visit from Australia.

**Who is your hero? Which person do you most admire, and why?** My dad, Graham Clifton – he just has the ability to fix anything.

**Who would you most like to have dinner with – dead or alive?** Grandparents, two lost in Covid, a grandma lost 18 years ago and a grandpa I never really knew.

**What do you get grumpy/mad about?** Bad driving or poor punctuality.

**What makes you happiest in the world?** Making people (customers) happy.



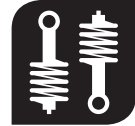
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# The ARTS Page



It is 400 years since the Shakespeare 1<sup>st</sup> Folio was printed, seven years after his death. What foresight, as it saved many plays from oblivion. Many years ago, there was an imbecilic article published saying how irrelevant Shakespeare was. I'm sure there were many replies, but the one below, by Bernard Levin, caught my eye.

*If you cannot understand my argument, and declare: it's Greek to me, you are quoting Shakespeare. If you claim to be more sinned against than sinning, you are quoting Shakespeare. If you act more in sorrow than in anger, if your wish is father to the thought, if your lost property has vanished into thin air, you are quoting Shakespeare. If you have ever refused to budge an inch or suffered from green-eyed jealousy, if you have played fast and loose, if you have been tongue-tied – a tower of strength – hoodwinked or in a pickle, if you have knitted your brows – made a virtue of necessity, insisted on fair play – slept not one wink – stood on ceremony – danced attendance on your lord and master – laughed yourself into stitches, had short shrift – cold comfort or too much of a good thing, if you have seen better days, or lived in a fool's paradise – why, be that as it may, the more fool you, for it is a foregone conclusion that you are as good luck would have it quoting Shakespeare. If you think it is early days and clear out bag and baggage, if you think it is high time and that that is the long and short of it, if you believe that the game is up and that truth will out even if it involves your own flesh and blood, if you lie low till the crack of doom because you suspect foul play, if you have teeth set on edge at one fell swoop without rhyme or reason, then to give the devil his due if the truth were known for surely you have a tongue in your head you are quoting Shakespeare. Even if you bid me good riddance and send me packing, if you wish I was dead as a door-nail, if you think I am an eyesore, a laughing stock, the devil incarnate – a stony-hearted villain – bloody-minded or a blinking idiot, then – by Jove – O Lord – tut tut! – For goodness' sake – what the dickens! – but me no buts – it is all one to me, for you are quoting Shakespeare.*

So often a concert, film, or play you have seen, has come and gone. But not so Nicholas Hytner's production of 'Guys and Dolls' at the Bridge Theatre, by London Bridge, ([bridgetheatre.co.uk](http://bridgetheatre.co.uk)). "The Bridge transforms for one of the greatest musicals of all time. It has more hit songs, more laughs and more romance than any show ever written. The seating is wrapped around the action while the immersive tickets transport you to the streets of Manhattan and the bars of Havana in the unlikeliest of love stories". I was lucky enough to work with Hytner in his younger days ('The Magic Flute' and 'Eugene Onegin') and it was clear even then what a star he was. One of the most famous musicals ever – five Tony awards the year after it opened on Broadway, this production is fantastic, the acting, dancing and singing, with such hits as 'I've never been in love before' and 'Sit down you're rockin' the boat', are superb, and it's on till the end of August 2024.

Two suggestions nearer home. The Northwall in Summertown, Oxford, their Christmas Carol looks great. "Dickens would surely love it... This is as good as theatre gets. The Oxford Times (2<sup>nd</sup> December to 6<sup>th</sup> January) ([thenorthwall.com](http://thenorthwall.com)). Also Pegasus Theatre ([pegasustheatre.org.uk](http://pegasustheatre.org.uk)) has loads of projects, classes and events for kids and young adults, and for December check out 'Light Bulb Princess' (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> December) and 'Morgan and West's Great Big Christmas Magic Show' (21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> December).

Here's wishing the Arts everywhere, at all levels, a successful 2024! Goodness gracious we need them.

Nicholas Cleobury  
[nicholascleobury@btinternet.com](mailto:nicholascleobury@btinternet.com)



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# ???? Mind Games

## Television detectives by Cathy Lawday

1. Which detective drove a classic 1959 Triumph Roadster around his beat on Jersey?
  2. What was the name of the character played by Helen Mirren in *Prime Suspect*?
  3. Name the three series based on characters created by Colin Dexter.
  4. Which actor plays the lead police officer in *Happy Valley*?
  5. Which actor played Charlie Barlow in *Z Cars*, *Softly Softly* and *Barlow at Large*?
  6. In *Line of Duty*, what is the name of the investigation unit headed by senior officer Ted Hastings?
  7. In *Unforgotten*, Nicola Walker plays DCI Cassie Stuart, a London detective. Who plays her partner?
  8. Which ITV series followed in the footsteps of Cagney & Lacey and was based on the professional and private lives of two UK female police detectives?
  9. Which two actors who have both played Dr Who starred in the story of a small boy's murder, set in Dorset?
  10. What do *Heartbeat*, *Endeavour*, *George Gently*, *Z-Cars* and *The Saint* all have in common?
- (answers on page 34)







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

## Inglesham?

Soon after you've crossed the bridge over the River Thames at Lechlade, when you are travelling south towards Swindon, there's a sign to the right which proclaims 'Inglesham. 11<sup>th</sup> Century Church'. I've been meaning to investigate for a long time and my keenness was stirred when I heard that the church had remarkable wall paintings. So recently when a friend who is an artist came to stay, we made the journey hoping to see them, anticipating perhaps the sort of vibrant medieval pictures we'd seen in Padua at the Scrovegni chapel.

Fortified with coffee on the way (at the Cotswold Woollen Mill in Filkins), we turned off the A361 and drove about a quarter of a mile down a narrow lane, rewarded soon enough by a wide parking place for visitors to the church (and fishermen, the notice said!) and the charming ancient church set on a small hill.

You sense the antiquity of this building as you walk through the fragile-looking wooden door to the South Porch. Dedicated to St. John the Baptist, there are indeed traces of its Saxon origins – amazing to think of just how many Christmases the carving of Mary and the baby Jesus on the south wall have seen – but we learnt from the helpful leaflet left for visitors that the majority of the church was built in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century with later additions made in the 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

St. John the Baptist Church at Inglesham has box pews, several large enough to accommodate a large family where people could not be seen by other worshippers – only by the preacher! (My grandmother in her first job in service always told us that she and the under-butler carried on their love affair in the Squire's box pew in Puddletown church in Dorset!). Apart from the Inglesham wooden box pews there's some charming carving on the screens to the North and South aisles. We loved the peace and sense of history in this tiny church which is full of interest.



But what about the remarkable wall paintings? Sadly, there are none which are brightly coloured to tell stories to people in the congregation. Apparently there has been an amazing series of wall paintings, painted in successive layers from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but all one can see now are fragile fragments. The wall paintings have deteriorated over the years, even though in 1807 William Morris raised funding for building work to be done to prevent the building from falling into ruin and helping to ensure its survival until the present day. The Churches Conservation Trust, a charity dedicated to protecting ancient churches at risk, took over the care of Inglesham church in 1979. The conservation of the wall paintings is just part of the on-going work needed to preserve this ancient treasure. The church is now going to be part of a new project exploring the continuing impacts of climate change on historic buildings.



A visit to St. John the Baptist at Inglesham is a step back into history which could give you a calming time during the hectic Christmas season. Choose a bright day if you can – and since the church is right on the Thames Path you could combine a visit with a walk beside the Thames.

*Eileen Baglin-Jones*

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## *The Gardening Spot*

To be honest, I haven't a clue what to tell you about gardening as I write this on a dark, grey day during November. As this is the month to celebrate Christmas and all associated with the season, I thought I would advise you all to leave the garden alone for a few weeks and think about those summer holidays with all the sunshine that climate change might bring. I guess you could rake up some leaves and put them on the compost heap, clean the greenhouse and make sure all the garden tools are in pristine condition ready for next year. And of course, have a look at the seed catalogues and place your order, maybe adding a few new 'experiments' as that is what gardening is all about.

So, what can I fill a page of Steeple Life with, I ask?

**Have you ever considered how the Village Hall is managed** or for that matter, is in existence at all? Built in 1894 as part of Dr Radcliffe's secondary school, it acted as the main assembly hall for all the students who were tutored there from the ages of five to fifteen. It acted as the canteen for all those students who had school meals, for music lessons, art, and some physical exercise when the temperature outside went below minus twenty! As the secondary school disappeared and the primary school moved 'over the road' it came into the hands of the village, held as tenants by the parish council, but managed and financed entirely by the management committee. That committee is made up of representatives from the various groups that regularly use the hall and a couple of village representatives. They in turn have to ensure that the books balance each year, covering all the ongoing costs of a very old building and improving the facility when funds allow, and it is appropriate to the village needs. The hall is owned by Dr Radcliffe's School Foundation and we as a village are very fortunate to have such a grand and characterful building at the centre of our community.

**As for the Sports and Recreation Centre**, that is a story that could fill a few pages. From my own experience, it formed three classrooms where such subjects as maths, English, scripture and almost any academic subject was taught. When the secondary school disappeared the building gradually went into decline, although used by scouts and youth club for much of the time. During the very early years of this century, a small group of 'volunteers' – and I use that description very carefully – managed to design and finance the conversion from the very dilapidated building into state-of-the-art changing rooms and an additional venue for the village.

So, forget the gardening and be thankful to all those volunteers who have done so much for the village in providing us all with these amazing facilities and community events and much more.

**Have a wonderful Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.**

***Richard Preston***

## **Dr Radcliffe's CE Primary School Consultation on Admissions Policy 2025-2026**

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 2025-2026 which will run from Tuesday 14th November 2023 until Friday 12th January 2024.

This consultation is to comply with our statutory requirements to consult at least every seven years. 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 school office at Dr Radcliffe's CE Primary School, Fir Lane, Steeple Aston, Bicester, Oxon OX25 4SF or by email to **[office.3828@dr-radcliffes.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:office.3828@dr-radcliffes.oxon.sch.uk)**. Letters or emails should be marked "Response to Consultation on 2025-2026 Admissions Policy".

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The SAVA team is always on the lookout for new information regarding the village to enhance the collection as well as learning about the lives of those who lived and worked here. Photographs and camera footage is particularly sought after. Recently, two new sources have been identified and it is interesting to contrast how we have got on in extracting information from them.

[illegible]

Another example (photograph 5014) shows the Holt crossroads and also covers the 'Satellite Landing Ground No. 28' at Barton Abbey. We knew that aircraft had been stored here during WW2, but this is the first photograph we have confirming that. Looking very closely at the original image, at least six single-engine aircraft can be seen hidden around the grounds.

A second source of information we have found is old Anglian Television news footage that is now managed by the University of Lincoln ([macearchive.org/about-mace](http://macearchive.org/about-mace)). Whilst searching this archive several interesting items appeared including one with the following summary:

*1934 Leyland Lynx fire engine bought by the villagers at Steeple Aston, near Banbury, to form their own fire fighting and display teams, trained by the fire technical college at Moreton in the Marsh.*

There is mention of the fire engine travelling through the village. We have no record or photograph of this event. It must have drawn quite a crowd. Does anyone have a photo of this fire engine we could see?

Unfortunately, in contrast to Historic England, this online archive does not have the items available to view (even a simple still frame) and when we enquired we were quoted £125 + VAT just to view a basic version before committing. If we did, royalties and other expenses would then be added! Clearly disappointing, but we can view for free if we visit the facility in person, so if anyone happens to have a few spare hours when next in Lincoln.....

***steepleastonarchive.org.uk***



# Parish Council Meeting *Notes*



There are expected to be two Parish Council meetings in November. The report here is from the first meeting, which is the standard monthly one. The second meeting, due on 27<sup>th</sup> November, is going to consider potential housing development sites in the village. Both meetings will have occurred by the time you get this copy of SAL and if you do not go to the second meeting you will probably get to hear about it through the grapevine soon afterwards. If this fails, you will be able to read about it in the January edition of SAL.

The monthly Parish Council meeting started with its most regularly discussed issue – dog poo. Two new bins will be ordered and delivered to the energetic Councillor who has offered to put them up when he is back from holiday. There was a full discussion of whether it was better to have the bins with or without lids. It was agreed, rather unsurprisingly, that lids might help with smells and could reduce stuff being blown out, but lids might put off those passers-by who are too idle to throw something away responsibly if he, or even she, had to open a lid.

We were told two popular trains between Heyford and Oxford which might have been axed have been reprieved. So it will still be possible to get a train into Oxford in time for school or work and get home again at a reasonable time in the early evening.

There were questions about the possibility of getting a lollipop person for the school. Apparently, to get a lollipop person we cannot just employ someone. Oxfordshire County Council has to agree it is needed and agree to fund it if they have the money. It was thought that the best chance of a little spare money would be to apply towards the end of the financial year when it is possible everything might not have been spent. It seems a bit improbable to me there will be either spare money or anyone prepared to take on the job, even if the cash was found.

The Parish Council may have found someone to do regular inspections of the playground which is reassuring for users. I was not told who it was, but to this unidentified individual a big Thank You from the

relevant parents, grandparents and, in my case, great-grandparent of the children.

The Parish Council has had two requests to extend the white lines on Southside. It was agreed the lines would be extended as far as Staithe Cottage. They considered whether there was a case for short white lines on either side of a blind entrance onto Southside. The Councillors were keen to make the road safer, but were concerned that more white lines would reduce parking spaces. The consensus was that most houses on Southside had off-street parking, so the residents should not be unduly influenced by fewer on-road spaces. We were told that the planners are keen that developments should not move existing off-road parking spaces onto the road. Apparently, two planning applications have been refused for this reason.

Someone suggested that the Councillors might consider the case for other white lines, for example close to the corner of Southside by the Red Lion. After discussion, they agreed that they would confine themselves to the two areas suggested because otherwise they would have to look at the general case for white lines anywhere around the village. Painting the lines is paid for by our Parish Council and the Councillors agreed the lines, on the whole, had been effective.

It was noted that the paving stones on the raised footpath by Town Well were gradually getting damaged again and that the Councillors needed to press for a sensible maintenance regime. The pile of wood on Southside has gone and thank you for that to Peter Dammerman.

The Councillors considered the state of the pavements next. First was the one outside the school which had become slippery with leaves. Someone joined the meeting at this point who told us the leaves were being swept up at that very moment by the school caretaker. Thank you to him. One Councillors said the two worst pavements, by the school and by the Community Orchard were now being regularly cleared by those two organisations. Thank You.

# Parish Council Meeting Notes



We were told that the generous donor of the Community Orchard, Sarah Lucas, has died and that the Orchard committee are contacting her relatives to get agreement on what they should plant in her memory. The committee of the Community Orchard are getting their own bank account and the Councillors were concerned only that the arrangements were suitable. They agreed it was not for them to be the debt collectors for the unpaid bill for cider.

Section 106 money is the name for the contribution that developers have to pay to the community where they build houses. Rectory Homes said they would pay the village £87,000 as soon as the first person moved into a house at Townend. That was in May and so far we have not had a penny, despite complaints from the Parish Council. Now a villager has also complained about the delay to Cherwell, and Cherwell passed on the complaint to Rectory and it looks as if we might now have a chance of getting the money in the new year.

Then we got to the most worrying bit of the meeting. We were told that to make the school bus from the village to Marlborough School in Woodstock viable, Oxfordshire had had to contribute £25,000 towards the cost for the school year 2023/2024. The parents have been warned that this bus is in jeopardy for next year. Our County Councillor was asked about the situation with the school bus to The Warriner, but he had no information.

The possibility of bus gates at Middleton Stoney was mentioned and it was noted that if they were put in they would be the first ones in a rural setting. Dorchester, the developer of Upper Heyford, is keen on the gates as it would make travelling to Bicester by bus relatively more attractive than by car. But the gates could not be approved without local consultation and this has not happened so the bus-gate proposal is in obedience, but needs watching.

Arash Fatemian sent round his report on the County Council's activities and the bits that interested me included that the new 20mph speed limits are not

being enforced. "Although Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is working alongside Thames Valley Police, who are responsible for legal enforcement of the speed limits, there is an emphasis on drivers adhering to the new limits through a change of mindset, rather than enforcement. It is hoped that as 20mph areas become more common, breaking the limit would become socially unacceptable for drivers." Perhaps some drivers will become more considerate, but I am not holding my breathe.

Arash's report said that despite a lot of objections to Oxford's Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN) they are likely to remain. Apparently, one factor explaining Oxfordshire's double the average teacher vacancy rate is the LTNs. I cannot help wondering about their priorities. OCC seems to assume we are all exceedingly dim, for example, they say "The Met Office issues weather warnings when severe weather is expected. These give an indication of problematic weather that may be on its way to Oxfordshire and could further influence river levels." I find it difficult to believe this could be news to anyone. On the other hand, the good news he told us was that on Sundays in December the bus fares are being capped at £1.

According to Arash's information, Oxfordshire is looking for a 'Climate Change Outreach Officer'. The position is to 'to develop and deliver our stakeholder engagement and outreach strategy to engage, inspire, motivate, and facilitate action on climate change, and promote resilience to a changing climate, across a wide range of audiences in Oxfordshire'. Perhaps this daft and unnecessary jargon will make sense to someone.

The next Parish Council meeting will be in January, so till then Happy Christmas to all readers.

*Steeplejack*

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

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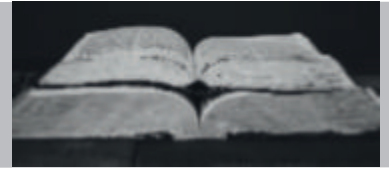
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## Christmas deliverance

It's time to do my shopping - or too late?  
the mopping up does cost me so much more  
I once again did fail to calculate  
and scoffed at those who bought at  
Autumn's door  
so here I am a-waiting for the van  
at least I'm warm not standing in a queue  
all bought online again because I can  
avoiding mixing whilst I make a brew

and yet it seems so lacking - spirit - gone  
I should get out and brave the thronging  
mass  
the effort needed winter clothes to don  
I'm wimping out again, Oh dear, alas!  
The doorbell rings my parcels have arrived  
deliverance from shopping - I've survived!

*Peter Wild*

## Christmas questions

What does Christmas mean to you?  
Does it fill you with excitement? Or does it make you blue?

Do the added costs make you edgy and tense?  
Or do you not worry about the expense?

Do you bake home-made mince pies, fruit cake and pud?  
Or do you think that Sainsbury's taste just as good?

Is your tree decked out in a new colour scheme?  
In gold and champagne, or in pistachio green?

Are your baubles smart and shiny with a dusting of gold?  
Or are they ancient and battered, with a suggestion of mould?

Have you made stockings, embroidered with the name of each guest?  
Or are they old tights, cut in half, holey and distressed?

Are your garlands and swags naturally fantastic?  
Or are they artificial, all made of plastic?

Did you gather holly and ivy yourself from the forest?  
Or did you buy greenery straight from the florist?

Do you make gifts for your family, using traditional skills?  
Corn dollies, pressed flowers, hand-knits to keep out the chills.

Will you entertain your guests with games like Boticelli?  
Or will you just slump in front of the telly?

Will you end the day happy, refreshed and renewed?  
Or cranky, too full, and in a bad mood?

Will it just be over-consumption and greed?  
Or a chance for reflection - which all of us need?

However you spend Christmas – whatever you do  
May tidings of joy and peace be with you.

*Cathy Lawday*

## Fireworks Spectacular

For all those hundreds of villagers and visitors who witnessed the fireworks and bonfire on 5<sup>th</sup> November this year, may I say thank you to each and every one of you who came along and very importantly, to all those volunteers who helped on the evening from the bonfire operatives to the brave bodies who ignited the fireworks. Also to the volunteers who cooked and served all those hot dogs and soup and to the stewards and gate keepers.

I have personally received many compliments for the firework display, but the thanks must go to all those volunteers who made the evening such a success and also to the weather operative who ensured we had a dry evening.

This event has been in the village for decades, but it all started, if my memory can be trusted, back in the late 1960s, or maybe early 1970s, when the late Roderick Nicholson thought it might be safer and more enjoyable if people brought their own fireworks to a community bonfire. It has progressed from there to the wonderful display we have today.

**Richard Preston**







*(Photos by Nigel Francis)*





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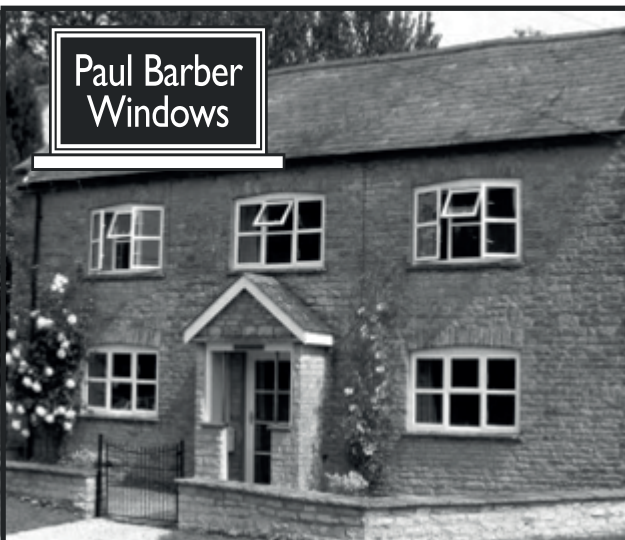
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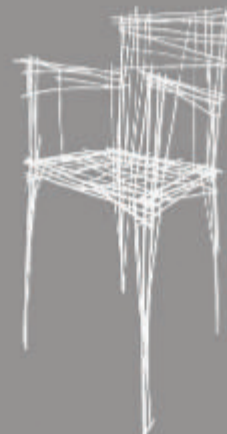
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# Letter from *Westminster*



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

A key part of my role as your local Member of Parliament is answering correspondence from constituents, whether that be emails, letters or telephone calls. Over the past year, more than 50 parents and carers have got in touch with me about their experience with Children's Services at Oxfordshire County Council and I have met many more at local community groups. It has been clear to me for some time now that Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision across the county is not where it should be. Constituents tell me of the difficulties they have faced to have their voices heard. Missed deadlines, non-attendance at statutory meetings and exclusion from important decisions about their child's future regularly feature in parents' complaints.

When I met the Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing in March, I was told that the Department for Education knew that Oxfordshire parents were concerned about the retention of specialists, compliance with Education and Health Care Plans and the lack of school places for children with additional needs across the county. Three months later, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission carried out an inspection into the provision. Over 2,000 parents and carers took the time to share their experiences with Ofsted – well above the average for an inspection. The final report – which was published in September – highlighted “widespread and systemic failings”. This evidenced my long-held concerns and those of my fellow Oxfordshire MPs.

Far too many children, when they can't manage in a mainstream school, end up missing key parts of their education as they have to adjust to school on a part-time basis or rely on home learning. I know of some children who have been without educational provision for more than six years. The County Council needs to do much better. It is now time for them to right their wrongs, overhaul their processes and restore confidence in the system. I am having regular meetings with some of the Council leadership, including Chief Executive Martin Reeves. He has given me his personal assurances that SEND is his top priority and has explained how things are changing.

I am hopeful that they have been given a long-overdue wake-up call. The promises that have been made must deliver the improvements we need to see. These are some of the most vulnerable children and their parents are at their wits' end. Anyone with concerns should contact me via [victoria.prentis.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:victoria.prentis.mp@parliament.uk)

***Victoria Prentis***



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## THE VALENTINE CLUB

As Michael Bublé, along with many more artists would say, “It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas” and for The Valentine Club, that is certainly the case.

On Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December we are taking a full coach plus a car to Warwick for a three-course Christmas meal and entertainment based around the music of that grand old group, The Beatles. Four days later it will be time for another Christmas meal, this time at the Village Hall, where we are expecting around 90 members and helpers who will not only enjoy a meal provided by S & J Cuisine, but also some top-class entertainment and most importantly, good company – not forgetting what must be one of the largest raffles you will ever see.

November was, in comparison, reasonably quiet (probably the wrong word) with our monthly meeting attended by Bicester U3A Ukulele group and some residents from Juniper House in Brackley which is part of The Barchester Care provider group. I mention Barchester as they very kindly granted our group £535 towards our annual expenses, especially our Christmas celebrations.

It is at this time of the year the club starts to compile a programme for 2024 and it is beginning to look exciting. Two holidays and possibly a third, plus day trips to various parts of the country and interesting places to visit. Not forgetting the monthly meetings where we will have some really interesting and informative speakers, plus a few entertainers who could easily be at home at The Palladium.

Whatever 2024 brings for the club, it will be a great place for the over-60s to meet and make friends. We have a waiting list as the Village Hall can’t cope with more than 100 at a time, but if you are interested in joining, don’t hesitate in contacting me or a club member. Sometimes we have a seat or two to spare on our trips and it is always in everyone’s interest to fill a coach.

So, in the words of that classic group, Slade, “It’s Christmas!”. Have a wonderful holiday everyone and may I wish you all a very happy and healthy New Year!

To find more about The Valentine Club, simply visit our website at  
**<https://valentineclub.wixsite.com/aston>**  
or keep up to date by looking on the village website **[www.steepleaston.org.uk](http://www.steepleaston.org.uk)** or use that old-fashioned thing called a telephone and call me on 01869 340512.

If you would like to support The Valentine Club and all the great things that we do why not have a go at **[CherwellLottery.co.uk/support/the-valentine-club](http://CherwellLottery.co.uk/support/the-valentine-club)** where you can participate in the Cherwell Lottery and hopefully, like many of our supporters, become a winner?

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

## Grain Store Café is now open

The much-anticipated new local café opened on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November at The Hatchery – the new name for the ‘chicken sheds’, Hatch End Old Poultry Farm between Steeple and Middle Aston. The café is in the newly-refurbished former grain store, hence its name.

This is very much a local enterprise as its owners, Helen Taylor and Emily Robinson, have both lived in Middle Aston for around 18 years.



Helen has given up her job as manager of White Stuff in Banbury to fulfil a long-held dream of owning a local café. She has lots of management experience. When she first came to the area she revived the Baby and Toddler group in Steeple Aston, which is still going strong today. But she's always wanted to run a café here. When Middle Aston Limited took over the site, she asked them if she could have first refusal.

Emily, who worked at Dr Radcliffe's for many years, is in charge of administration and business development. She will continue to work part-time at The Curiosity Box in Eynsham, but she loves baking so will be making some of the cakes on sale.

Chefs are hard to come by these days, so they're pleased that their head chef is Amanda Tosh, formerly of Steeple Aston, now living in Lower Heyford. And they have been lucky to recruit the very experienced Sam Sinclair as front of house supervisor. Sam recalls her very first job was at Fired Earth in Middle Aston many years ago. More recently she has managed the café at Chipping Norton Lido for the last three seasons.



*Helen Taylor, Sam Sinclair and Amanda Tosh.*

Other local people who are involved are a variety of young people, including Helen's son Teddy Taylor who will be chief barista. Steeple Aston photographer Nigel Francis is providing black-and-white photos of local scenes to put on the walls and local garden designer Caroline Edwards is doing the landscaping for the outside seating area as well as the rest of the Hatchery site.





The emphasis on local is carried over into their use of suppliers from Oxfordshire and the Cotswolds. All the furniture comes from Second Time Around in Banbury. Coffee is from the Missing Bean and cakes (when they're not made by Emily) will come from the Barefoot Bakery, both Oxford-based.

Their state-of-the-art coffee machine, however, comes from Italy. They're calling her Florence as that's where she comes from! Before the opening all the staff had intensive training in coffee making from the experts at Missing Bean.

The café, which has seating for 42 inside and 20 outside, will be open from 8.30 in the mornings (except for Sunday) serving breakfast sandwiches and muesli. Coffee, tea, hot chocolate and, of course, cake will be available all day. Lunches will consist of toasties and soups and other light dishes. Everything will be available for takeaway.

It's hoped that a friendly and welcoming atmosphere will attract a wide range of customers. Parents and children from the school are an obvious source, but Helen and Emily hope that local villagers of all ages will be tempted to pop in. Well-behaved dogs on leads are welcome.

The Hatchery owners, Middle Aston Limited, were keen to have somewhere for those working on the site and nearby to eat. Now with the opening of other new businesses, there are visitors attending yoga, floral and art classes already, with Pilates and a Wellness Centre starting in the New Year.

The café will also be a good stopping-off point for weekend walkers and cyclists. They may be attracted by a special delivery of fresh doughnuts on Saturday mornings! Cyclists will find a bicycle maintenance station on site, and inside there's a book exchange along with workstations for those who want to come with their laptops to take advantage of the free Wi-Fi.

The Grain Store website [www.thegrainstorecafe.co.uk/](http://www.thegrainstorecafe.co.uk/) has full details of opening hours, forthcoming events and more. Keeping it in the family, the website was built by Helen's other son Freddie, working remotely from Canada.

**Jenny Bell**

*(Photos by Nigel Francis)*





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## Community Orchard

As the seasons change, we have seen Steeple Aston's Community Orchard prepare itself for winter. Volunteers (see photo) have been busy putting up new bird boxes and some beautiful new benches, as well as undertaking a lot of tidying up of unruly ivy.



The new pond has filled out nicely as the plants become well-established in their new home. Thanks to all the plant life, local wildlife activity in and around the pond has been plentiful with insects and birds. If the pond continues to do well over the winter, we have our fingers crossed for frogs and toads in the spring.

Thanks to the hands of all the volunteers, the first year has seen huge progress, which means we are able to start thinking about improving the space even further next year. Seating areas to welcome in more visitors and make the space more sociable are in the plans. In a bid to continue to welcome wildlife, more bird, bat and owl boxes will be put up along with more natural hedging.

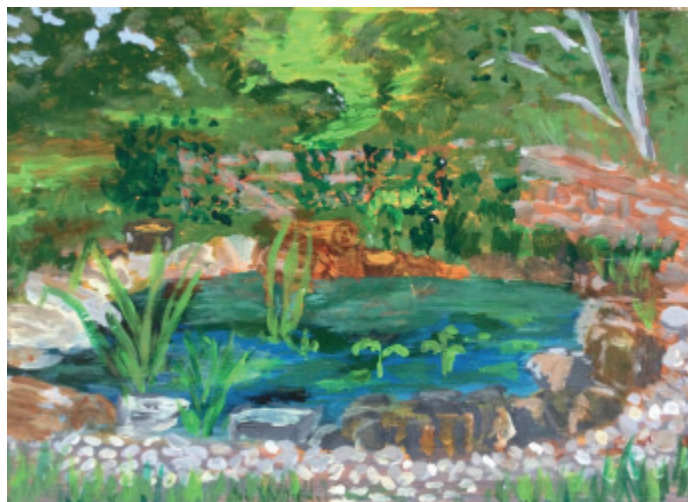
Despite all the remarkable news the orchard has brought, we have been very sad to hear of the passing away of Sarah Lucas, the wonderful person who bequeathed this lovely space to the village. To remember her life we will be looking into a fitting tribute for her at the orchard as a memorial.

It has been incredibly rewarding to see so many people enjoying visiting the orchard, so please do drop by and enjoy the space in any way you like.

Sue King, one of the village artists, found time to visit and paint the pond in the summer, resulting in a lovely piece of artwork, reproduced here.

To help, we hope to erect a notice board soon to share information on what there is to see and do within the orchard.

***Nigel Francis***







November's club night welcomed current member and keen underwater photographer Chris Dean. Through the magic of his photos, he took us to the pre-historic volcanic region of the Maldives, famed for its turquoise beaches and relaxing beach getaway resorts.

Every few months, Chris, his wife and their long-term friends, fly over to the Maldives and through the magic of planes and water taxis, base themselves in an idyllic beach-facing hotel where they snorkel the local waters.

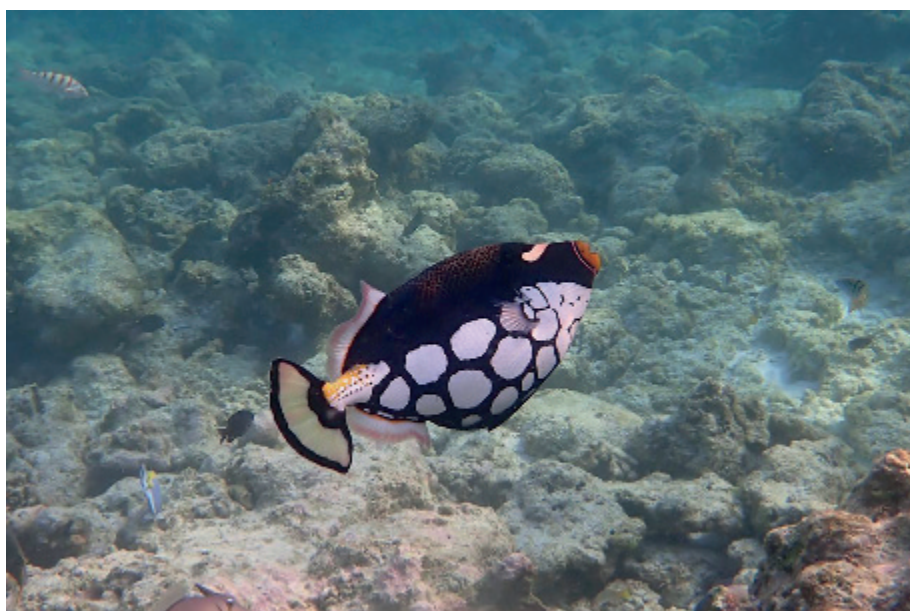
Chris showed us photos of his trip which varied from the copious amounts of friendly tortoises to the black-tipped reef sharks and nurse sharks, which are extremely difficult to photograph, given their nocturnal lifestyle.

In the shallower waters, Chris finds colourful powder tangs, trevally, snapper, trigger fish and convict tangs (who he remarked on how wonderful they were as coral dwellers). Further afield, Chris photographs yellow snapper, sweet lips and the extremely nest protective titan trigger fish. He recalled a story of how he was very close to being bitten recently when he ventured too near on a dive.

Chris also likes to photograph clown trigger fish (aka Finding Nemo!) and Picasso tangs which are notorious as they are very quick and elusive, even to the naked eye. Amongst Chris' favourite sea life in the Maldives are the colony of rays, which include porcupine ray, feather-tailed sting rays and manta rays.

We welcome new members to our Society nights on the first Wednesday of each month. Visit [addphoto.co.uk](http://addphoto.co.uk) for further information.

*Courtney Killpack*



*(Clown trigger fish photo by Chris Dean)*

## **Television detectives answers** (see *Mindgames*, page 13)

1. Bergerac; 2. Jane Tennison; 3. Morse, Lewis, Endeavour; 4. Sarah Lancashire; 5. Stratford Johns; 6. AC-12; 7. Sanjeev Bhaskar; 8. Scott & Bailey; 9. David Tennant, Jodie Whitaker; 10. All set in the 1960s.



## SAVA Village Memories



SAVA has been putting on November exhibitions each year since 2003 with few exceptions. The breadth is comprehensive, taking up the themes of education, farming, the church, the gardens of Steeple and Middle Aston, maps, businesses and trades, and the USAF. Each year, without fail, someone has asked the question afterwards “What’s next?”.

It has not always been an easy one to answer and the group has annually wracked its collective brain to produce new ideas. Once or twice, this has been to revise previous themes when updated material becomes available (education, business and trade) and we have also not resisted the temptation to commandeer popular historical formulas (Steeple Aston in 100 Objects, Houses through Time) to offer a slice across the thematic approach.

The core of the 2023 event on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November was a reshewing of two items that have been displayed previously: a re-edited SAVA film of interviews with long standing villagers made in 2013 and the 1946 documentary ‘24 Square Miles’.

Despite the repetition, there was little sense of déjà vu. Through the perspective of a ten-year interval, there was much to see anew. Many of the original ‘talking heads’ from 2013 have since sadly passed away and there was a sense of relief that their stories had been captured before it was too late. Ten years on, 1946 seemed even further away – most people at that time still carried water from communal village pumps, women (and only women) cooked on solid fuel ranges, men (and only men) sat solemnly at parish council meetings, the pubs were full and agriculture was the centre of village life. The memories of our own ancient villagers were reflected the ‘24 Square Miles’ film.

Much of the activity of SAVA in 2023 has been more interviewing, filming and recording of the lives of present-day villagers. So, in addition, the audience for this event was asked to fill out brief accounts of their own histories to be archived for future study and probably future events. In a short discussion when the films were over, many villagers reflected on the then and now and their feelings about what had been lost and, optimistically, what had been gained since those times.

**Dave Jarratt, SAVA**



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## Last Chance Christmas Shopping!

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**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 9am – 12:30pm**  
for the last Farmer's Market of the year.

Please pop in and see us, grab a bargain in our **FLASH CHRISTMAS SALE!**

**Thank you for your continued support.**

# Village Hall News



What an excellent turnout we had on a perfect evening for our annual bonfire and fireworks spectacular with so many other local displays happening on the same evening. We watched a great display of fireworks and a wonderful Guy Fawkes, made by the children of class 4 at Dr. Radcliffe's School, burn on top of the bonfire. And there was hot soup, squash and sausages provided by the VH Committee. Our thanks to the willing helpers of the Recreation Trust, Village Hall committee, Simon Thatcher and team of helpers for building the bonfire, Richard Preston and his team for the display, Raj and Parry at the shop for selling tickets, Bob Bickley for the use of his paddock for the bonfire, also the very generous local companies who kindly sponsored the event: Lakeside Farm Business Park (David & Robert Fry), Egg Box Storage, The Hatchery (Mr. Charles Sandy and Mr. Patrick Bradshaw) and an anonymous donation, without their support and help we could not have offered such a splendid display of fireworks.

## **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December Wassail Night 6pm**

Enjoy a light-hearted evening of mulled wine, soft drinks (cash bar), mince pies, carols, readings and Christmas music. This is an opportunity for everyone, families, young and old to join in some community singing. Carols may be part of the Church service, but they can also be enjoyed as part of the joy of Christmastide. So come along and join us as everyone is welcome, entry free.

## **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2024 Annual Quiz Night**

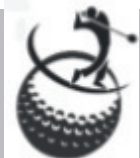
Ring Barbara on 01869 340423 to book your team. Entrance fee £2:50 per person, maximum eight people to a table. Entrance fee at time of booking please. 7pm for a prompt 7:30 start. There will be a licensed bar so please do not bring your own drinks to this event. Only 12 tables will be available, so please book early to avoid disappointment. Two tables already booked!

On behalf of myself and the Village Hall Committee we would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a safe, joyous New Year.

Our letting agent is Mrs Angela Smith – 07734 112967. Please do not call this number between 6pm and 8pm unless urgent. Email [steeple-aston-village-hall@hotmail.com](mailto:steeple-aston-village-hall@hotmail.com) Collect keys from 'Mijas' South Side, Steeple Aston OX25 4RU.

**Barbara Brewer – chair**

# Steeple Aston Golf Society



October saw our last meeting of the year – held at the North Oxford swimming baths!! The teams that went out early took advantage of the drier conditions on the course. My group went out last and finished 5 holes from home due to the monsoon blowing through at that time. The greens were 2 to 3 inches under water, so no chance of putting on them. I was soaked to the skin in my supposedly waterproof clothing. It was nice to get back into the changing rooms and wring my socks out along with the rest of my clothing. I for one will never forget my last game ever at North Oxford.

The winner of the GPK Insurance Cup with 35 points was Brian Kay, runner-up Jack Kay 34 points. The winner of the Chairman's Cup, this was for the most points on the par 3s, Jack Kay 12 points. Our guest prize went to Mark Brewer. Nearest the pin on 11 went to Mike Brown. The other nearest pin in 2 is still out there, somewhere under water I presume.

Just a reminder of 2024 venues: 17<sup>th</sup> May – The Wychwood; 14<sup>th</sup> June – Bicester Hotel Golf & Spa; 19<sup>th</sup> July – The Springs; 16<sup>th</sup> August – Wrag Barn; 13<sup>th</sup> September – Coventry Hearsall Golf Club; October – possibly Ladbroke Park, Solihull.

We thank Mike Brown our fixture/handicap secretary in securing these venues which look like great days out. I would also like to thank Chris Cooper our secretary/treasurer for his tireless work in keeping our books and records straight. Paul Kay has presented us all with shirts for next season for which we thank him and promise not to put on any weight over the winter period.

Until next year, happy golfing.

**Alan Brewer (chair)**





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For the November meeting our speaker was Jennifer Cowling. Her talk was 'Those extraordinary things we say'. Little did we know what was in store for us! Why on earth do we say 'By the Skin of your Teeth'? Amazingly, this originated from the Bible – in the book of Job. Explanations and origins followed in quick succession for 'You are my rock, His life is an open book, Time is money, Black sheep of the family, and As fit as a fiddle. Not only did Jennifer have their original meanings, but also when and where they were first used in print – from the Bible to Shakespeare and many later sources. Fascinating stuff, all based on why foreigners have difficulty understanding the English spoken word!

The Red Lion was the venue for our WI Supper on 10<sup>th</sup> November – well-attended and an excellent meal and a good fun evening all round.

The Netball team were all rather chuffed when Alison Hathaway, National Development Officer at England Netball, came back to give us a pep talk and take us through our paces – it was quite a workout and great fun! We learnt a bit more about the Walking Netball rules and put them to good use. We even proved that we can play an actual game with an odd number! Want to know more? Do join us! In fact, as the result of publicity around the village we have gained another member for our Walking Netball.

Our WI Walking group enjoyed a delightfully muddy walk near Tackley and we duly rewarded ourselves with a lunch at Sturdy's Castle.

The October Social Coffee Morning hosted by Julie turned into a great fund raiser, with cakes galore and some splendid raffle prizes. I actually won something – a nice big box of chocolates!

Our Xmas lunch will be on 5<sup>th</sup> December at the Deddington Arms this year, and with our green credentials most of us will travel by S4 bus!

As is customary, our WI laid a wreath at the War Memorial. This year Mary Rushworth laid our tribute.

On behalf of the WI committee, we would like to wish all of our members and you the readers a Very Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year!

We look forward to seeing you all again at our next meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> January when our speaker will take us 'Off the beaten track in Rome'! Visitors welcome at the Village Hall 7pm for 7.30pm start.

**Merrill Bayley**

## Remembrance Sunday

SS Peter and Paul Church was full for our solemn, reflective Remembrance Sunday service (on 12<sup>th</sup> November). My thanks to Nigel Doggett for playing the trumpet (the Last Post and Reveille) which added to the occasion. As the names were read out there was a poignant moment when the same surnames were repeated, signifying the sacrifice made by the whole village. It is important that we remember the cost of war, so as to inspire future generations to love and work for peace. Consequently, it was great to be joined by the Brownies (see photo by Fiona Carter), who brought their own handcrafted wreath.

**Harriet Orridge**

*(Other photos by Nigel Francis)*





# Church Matters



How do we wait? We are at the turning point of the church year, beginning with Advent, looking forward to Christmas. The approach of Christmas can be seen in all areas of life, including on television with the launch of festive adverts.

As we look forward to Christmas, our church readings invite us to reflect on how we wait and anticipate Christ's coming. In mid-October I had a lovely retreat, stopping and spending time with God. My journey home, though, was significantly disrupted by Storm Babet. Trains were diverted and cancelled, resulting in me having to share a taxi to get to the next station to be able to continue my journey and relying on other trains to make other connections possible. As was the person sat next to me. As we were approaching one station they were anxiously checking the timings of the trains, resulting in their stress levels rapidly rising as time was more critical. In that situation there was nothing that we, as passengers, could do but wait passively.

In contrast, there are things that we can do as we wait for Christmas to come. Getting ready for Christmas involves lots of preparation, from decorating our houses, buying presents to give to others and planning the menu and food shopping. As I write this, we have just bought our Christmas pudding and next week John and I are taking my brother Christmas shopping. This is a day I look forward to every year – it's a special day, helping us to get into the Christmas 'spirit'.

The Bible readings over the last few weeks have focused on the question of 'how we wait for Christ's coming'. Particularly as we await Christ's second coming in glory when all things will be made new. We have heard the story of the ten bridesmaids, who hadn't made preparations for his coming, along with the story of the Talents, and reflected on the actions of the servants, asking if we are making best use of the resources that we are responsible for, including creation and our finances.

As children we get excited and eagerly look forward to Christmas Day, with the opening of presents, festivities, including enjoying the wonderful food. There is also the need to recognise the importance of the journey to Christmas. We are called to wait actively, to be ready for when the Christ comes, to share what we have, our wealth with those who have less, to stand up for others whose voices have been silenced, and to care for all of creation.

To help us wait for Christmas, many of us will use an Advent Calendar. This year, I invite you to use a reverse Advent Calendar. Rather than opening a window and receiving a gift, you give an item a day, creating a box of bits for others. All the bits can be left in church and we will share them with a local food bank.

However you celebrate Christmas, pray it will be full of joy and laughter. I wish you all a very Happy New Year. God bless.

*Harriet*



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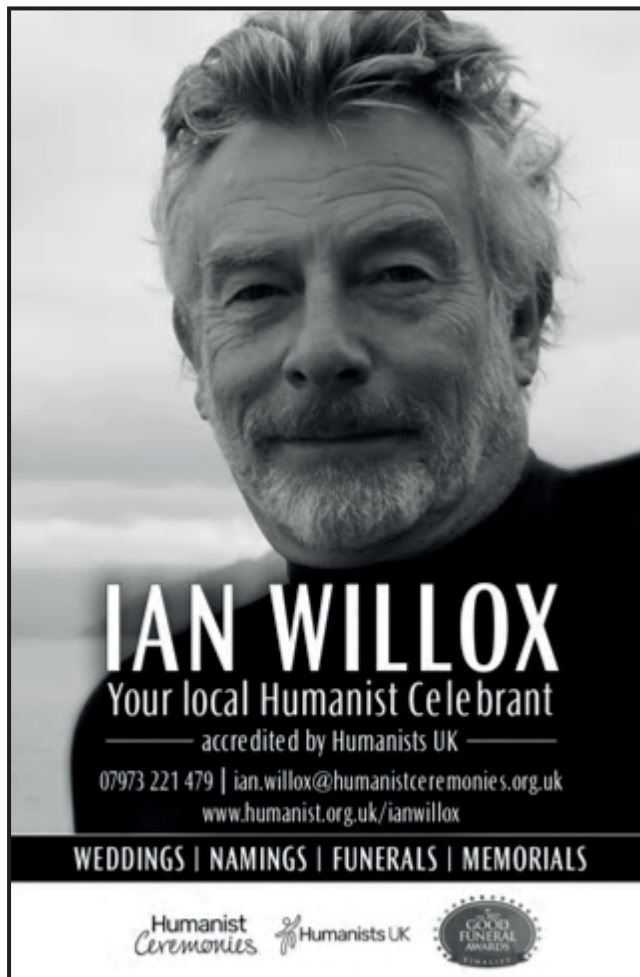
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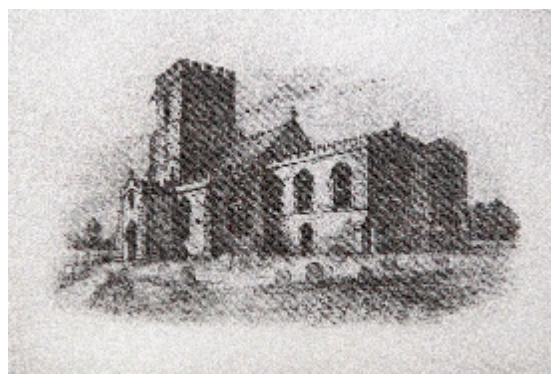
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# Church Services



	North Aston	Steeple Aston	Tackley
<b>Sunday</b> <b>3<sup>rd</sup> December</b> Advent Sunday	<b>9.30am</b> Holy Communion BCP	<b>11.00am</b> Holy Communion BCP	<b>5.30pm</b> Evensong
<b>Sunday</b> <b>10<sup>th</sup> December</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent	<b>9.30am</b> Morning Prayer	<b>11.00am</b> Morning Prayer	<b>5.30pm</b> Holy Communion
<b>Sunday</b> <b>17<sup>th</sup> December</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent	<b>3.30pm</b> Carol Service	<b>9.30am</b> Said Holy Communion  <b>6.00pm</b> Carol Service	<b>5.30pm</b> Carol Service
<b>Sunday</b> <b>24<sup>th</sup> December</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent	<b>9.30am</b> Holy Communion	<b>3.00pm</b> Crib Service	<b>4.30pm</b> Crib Service
<b>Monday</b> <b>25<sup>th</sup> December</b> Christmas Day	<b>9.00am</b> Holy Communion	<b>10.30am</b> Holy Communion	<b>9.30am</b> Holy Communion
<b>Sunday</b> <b>31<sup>st</sup> December</b> 7 <sup>th</sup> day of Christmas			<b>10.30am</b> United Benefice Service
<p align="center"><b><a href="http://www.sntchurch.com">www.sntchurch.com</a></b>  <i>The church buildings are open every day. Feel free to visit at any time.</i></p>			






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Others	£12 (up to 3hrs)
Letting Agent	Angela Smith (07734-112967)
Chairperson	Barbara Brewer (01869-340423)
Secretary	Margaret Bulleyment (01869-347346)

Represented Clubs must nominate a trustee to attend Village Hall committee meetings.

Discounted rate for represented clubs – 15% for six block bookings.

## Steeple Aston Sports & Recreation Centre Letting Charges

Social Function peak times: £55.00  
(Daily up to 6 hours, from 6.00pm)

Social Function off-peak times: £27.50  
(Daily up to 5 hours, up to 6.00pm)

Meeting of represented clubs: £11.00  
(Daily per session, max 2 hours)

Caution money for Private Lettings: £100.00

Block Bookings for Social Events:  
15% discount for 6 or more bookings in advance.

Letting Agent Angela Smith Tel : 07734 112967  
E-Mail to [rec.trust@googlemail.com](mailto:rec.trust@googlemail.com)

Chair – Torquil McLusky Tel : 01869 347914

Treasurer – Chris Cooper Tel : 01869 347173

## BUS TIMES

### STAGECOACH S4 BUS SERVICE

This timetable is effective from 3 September 2023.

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

##### Mondays to Fridays (except public holidays)

0619 0721 0831 0931 then hourly to 1531 1645 1754 1849 2002 2102 2216  
0703 0817 0920 1020 1620 1737 1840 1932 2047 2147 2253

##### Saturdays

0721 0821 0931 then hourly to 1531 1641 1746 1849 2002 2102 2216  
0809 0909 1019 1619 1729 1834 1932 2047 2147 2253

##### Sundays and most public holidays

0907 1037 1207 1337 1507 1637 1806  
0953 1123 1253 1423 1553 1723 1852

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

##### Mondays to Fridays (except public holidays)

0758 0910 1008 then hourly to 1508 1624 1732 1835 1933 2025 2135 2246 2346  
0837 0947 1045 1545 1703 1809 1909 2006 2053 2203 2315 0015

##### Saturdays

0758 0908 1008 then hourly to 1608 1718 1828 1927 2025 2135 2246 2346  
0837 0945 1045 1645 1755 1905 1958 2053 2203 2315 0015

##### Sundays and most public holidays

0917 1044 1214 1344 1514 1644 1814 1944  
0956 1122 1252 1422 1552 1722 1852 2022

Times subject to change. Before starting your journey please check the timetables at  
[www.stagecoachbus.com/timetables](http://www.stagecoachbus.com/timetables) E&OE

### OURBUS BARTONS

OurBus Bartons offers services through Steeple Aston to and from Lower Heyford Station (Monday to Friday), to and from Chipping Norton (Wednesdays) and to and from Bicester (Fridays).  
See <http://ourbus.co/bartons/> for details and times

## Rubbish bin collection day is Thursday

### December 2023

7 <sup>th</sup>	Green
14 <sup>th</sup>	Blue and brown
21 <sup>st</sup>	Green*
28 <sup>th</sup>	Blue and brown*



### January 2024

4 <sup>th</sup>	Green*
11 <sup>th</sup>	Blue and brown*
18 <sup>th</sup>	Green*
25 <sup>th</sup>	Blue and brown*

\* expected dates, but not yet confirmed by Cherwell District Council

Food caddy is collected weekly. Batteries and small electrical items packed in clear plastic bags and placed on the top of any bin lid are collected weekly.

# Steeple Aston Calendar

Check the village website at [www.steepleaston.org.uk](http://www.steepleaston.org.uk) (Home > Calendar) for any changes.

Please send details of events for January and February to [editorialife@gmail.com](mailto:editorialife@gmail.com)

DECEMBER 2023			
Tuesday 5th	Wl. Xmas lunch	Deddington Arms	
Wednesday 6th	AD&D Photographic Society. Terri Innes: A Journey through Argentina and Chile	Adderbury Institute	7.30pm
Friday 8th	Valentine Club. Music and meal at The Marriot Hotel, Warwick		
Saturday 9th	Steeple Aston Handbell Ringers begin their tour of Steeple and Middle Aston. Collections made for DEC (Disasters Emergency Committee)		
Sunday 10th	Heyford Bridge expected to reopen after resurfacing and drainage works.		
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup>	Wassail Evening	Village Hall	6pm
Tuesday 12th	Valentine Club. Christmas dinner with entertainment	Village Hall	12 noon for 1pm
Thursday 14th	<b>SAL December 2023 copy and advert deadlines</b>		
Tuesday 19th	Garden Club. Xmas Lunch at Middle Aston House (must be pre-booked)		
Saturday 23rd	Deddington Farmers' Market	Deddington	9am to 12.30pm
Saturday 23rd	Sustainable Steeple Christmas Sale	Deddington Church	9am to 12.30pm
	• Note: The Parish Council meeting is usually on the third Monday of the month, but there is no meeting in December.		
SAVE THE DATE!			
20th January 2024	Annual Quiz	Village Hall	7pm for 7.30pm

**Choral Society Rehearsals.** Village Hall - 7.45pm - Mondays  
**Badminton.** Village Hall - 10am -12.30pm - Tuesdays  
**Bell Ringing practice.** Church Tower - 7.30pm - Tuesdays  
**Walking Netball.** Village Hall - 10.15am - Wednesdays  
**Brownies.** Sport & Rec Centre - 6pm - 7.30pm - Wednesdays  
**Toddler Group.** Sport & Rec Centre - 9.30am -11.30am - 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**

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

e-mail: [print@joshuahorgan.co.uk](mailto:print@joshuahorgan.co.uk)

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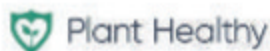
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