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Click on the item's page number below to go straight to its page. To return to Contents, click on the page number at the foot of any page.

PAGE 40	REPORTS FROM CLUBS & SOCIETIES	PAGE
7	AD&D Photographic Society	35
9	Cricket Club	19
24/25	Garden Club	29
31	Valentine Club	29
	WI Report	39
PAGE		
11	INFORMATION	PAGE
41	Bus times	45
33	Church Services	43
5	Rubbish bin collection dates	45
17	Steeple Aston Calendar	46
15	Steeple Aston Directory	4
27	Steeple Aston Noticeboard	6
13		37
36	0	
23		
20/21		
	40 7 9 24/25 31 PAGE 11 41 33 5 17 15 27 13 36 23	 40 & SOCIETIES 7 AD&D Photographic Society 9 Cricket Club 24/25 Garden Club 31 Valentine Club WI Report PAGE 11 INFORMATION 41 Bus times 33 Church Services 5 Rubbish bin collection dates 17 Steeple Aston Calendar 15 Steeple Aston Directory 27 Steeple Aston Noticeboard 13 Village Hall News 36 23

Contributions are welcome. Please email editorsalife@gmail.com

Cover: This hare was found sheltering in a local garden on Christmas Day morning, an unusual gift. Hares are often associated with the month of March, when their behaviour is not mad, but exuberant courtship. (Photo by Catherine Crook)

Steeple Aston Life

COPY

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

COPY DEADLINES

The copy deadline is the 14th of the previous month. This means the copy deadline for the April 2024 issue is Thursday 14th March.

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

Steeple Aston Life

March 2024 Issue No. 607

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"Daffodils, that come before the swallow dares and take the winds of March with beauty." The Winter's Tale, William Shakespeare.

In the northern hemisphere, meteorologists mark the first day of March as the beginning of spring. The rest of us prefer to wait for the spring equinox, which this year is on Tuesday 19th March.

An equinox is when the sun is exactly above the equator. It is one of only two times of the year when day and night are of equal length (approximately). The autumn equinox is on Sunday 22nd September this year.

If you thought that spring always started on 21^{st} March, you are showing your age. This date was true for much of the 20^{th} century, but no longer. The event is slip-sliding. The last 21^{st} March equinox was in 2007. The next will be in 2101. Until then, it will either be on 19^{th} or 20^{th} March (these dates are for the UK – due to world time zones, the equinox might be different by a day in other countries).

Do not confuse equinox with solstice. The summer solstice this year is on Thursday 20th June and marks the day with the most daylight hours. The winter solstice is on Saturday 21st December and has the fewest daylight hours of the year. Equinox derives from Latin for 'equal' and 'night'. Solstice is also from Latin for 'sun' and 'stationary' (when the sun reaches its maximum or minimum declination).

But enough of science (though not of Latin). March is from the Latin word 'Martius', named after Mars, the Roman god of war. There are three other months named after Roman gods. January is from Janus, the two-faced deity who could see forward to the future and back to the past. May is named after Maia, a goddess worshipped on 1st and 15th May. June is from Juno, Roman queen of the gods and the goddess of marriage.

The most important day for many in March 2024 will be the 31st – Easter Sunday. As a 'moveable feast' it can take place on a Sunday between 22nd March and 25th April, but over a 500-year period it occurs most often on 31st March or 16th April.

Robert





SAVA Committee changes

Steeple and Middle Aston are unusual and consequently very fortunate in that they have their own purpose built 'Village History Centre'. This is on the far corner of the Village Hall for anyone yet to visit. For this, much is owed to the vision and determination of Martin Lipson, who designed the Centre and led the group specifying the building requirements back in 2013.

At this year's AGM, Martin stepped down from the Chair of SAVA, a position he has held since January 2007. Our committee secretary Dave Jarratt also stepped down and he has been replaced in the role by Carol Neville. We are very grateful for their immense contributions over the years and both Martin and Dave assure me that they will continue to play an active role in the group, for which we are all very thankful!

We are a small group of volunteers with a common desire to help our community save old and current village records for future generations. We are always open for a chat every Saturday morning between 10am and 12 noon and look forward to seeing you.

Stuart Cummins Chair SAVA

Handbell collection 2023

Christmas may now be a distant memory, but due to a team of dedicated handbell ringers we completed our annual pilgrimage around the village raising money for our chosen charity. This year we collected for the 'Disaster Emergency Committee' and thanks to the generosity of villagers raised £1800. We are keeping a portion back for ongoing maintenance of the handbells and are pleased to donate £1600 to the D.E.C.

Secondly, it is with huge gratitude and sadness that I have to announce that our handbell captain of 24 years, Sally Cooper, is standing down. She has trained many new recruits, young and slightly older, hosted hundreds of hours rehearsal at her house (thanks Chris for putting up with us) and achieving the monumental task of arranging a team of ringers each night as we go door-to-door. We thank you and promise to continue your great work.

A new handbell captain was appointed at the Church Bellringers AGM – me, Victoria Clifton. If I can be of any assistance where the handbells are concerned, or if you are interested in learning before next Christmas, please do get in touch – we'd love to meet you and it really is easier than you might imagine. You don't even need to read music, just spread some Christmas cheer.

Thank you to the village for your support this year.

Vicky Clifton

Red Lion re-opens

The new tenants at the Red Lion are Harry and Hannah Dickson. The pub is now open again.

Road closures

Gigaclear has two road closures planned for March:

- Fenway, from 26th February to 8th March
- Water Lane, from 18th to 22nd March

Clocks spring forward: Clocks go forward by one hour at 1am on 31st March (Easter Sunday), taking us into British Summer Time (BST).

MCNP Engagement meeting January 2024

The Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan (MCNP) team has developed a proposed plan for our area for 2024 to 2040. There have been public 'Engagement' meetings in all the local villages asking for comments and we had one here in Steeple Aston with Martin Lipson explaining what had been done. You can see the detail of the proposals at *mid-cherwell.org.uk*

At this point the Plan will be adapted, as the MCNP team feels appropriate, in the light of the comments received. After this the Plan is due to go to Cherwell for more consultation before its proposals will be decided by a government appointed 'examiner'. Finally, it will go to a local referendum.

Cherwell District Council has proposed that 1,235 extra homes should be provided at Heyford Park and another 500 homes should be distributed between the district's 'larger villages'. In the MCNP area there are two larger villages; Steeple Aston and Kirtlington. The Plan is currently proposing two areas for development in Steeple Aston for 10-15 houses each on the north side of Fenway, and roughly opposite Townend, with 'Richard's field' in reserve. We were told the MCNP Steering Forum is opposed to the extra housing for Heyford and has also queried the basis on which the need for an additional 500 village homes was decided.

The Plan has designated some areas as 'local green spaces' and in this village there are now three – the recreational area, the allotments and the field beside Paines Hill, with the Community Orchard proposed as a fourth. The designation gives the same protection from future development as being in a Green Belt.

The current version of the Plan has far more details than before about elements that need protection. This covers both natural features and man-made issues such as soil erosion, light pollution and noise. The proposals cover preventing the loss of existing things and the reinstatement of others. The priorities here could be reflected in planning decisions. The latest Plan has also identified 'Local Gaps'. The idea is that communities can be protected from encroaching development if there are designated 'Gaps' between them, for example between Heyford Park and the Horse and Groom on the edge of Caulcott.

The new Plan has identified attractive viewpoints, mainly around the Cherwell valley, which it would like to see protected. This has to be a local issue and hence is not reflected in national planning policies. In Steeple Aston the four views selected are two on Cow Lane towards the Eyecatcher and towards Rousham, one north from the shop corner towards the church and the fourth southwards from near Brasenose Farm.

The Plan has other proposals which I have not got space to cover in detail here and they include the following issues. Existing homes should not be allowed to have extensions if it means losing existing off-road parking. Traffic calming measures may be needed to encourage safe active travel opportunities, with the connectivity between different parts of the neighbourhood being protected and where possible improved. The MCNP would like to see a GP practice at Heyford Park as soon as there are enough residents to make it viable and there is a need for a new cemetery for Heyford Park.

Attendees were asked for their comments and the list below is what I had either not heard, or not appreciated, before. The protected/existing trees would not have to be removed to build or get access to the site opposite Town End. Subject to agreement, part of the Cottrell Dormer old allotment site might be considered as a new cemetery. Could the requirement for planning permission be waived for solar panels in conservation areas? Compulsory purchase of land is 'at the far end of what is considered likely'. A community land trust might be the best way to make sure appropriate house sizes were built and continued to meet local needs, but this had to be subject to the financial viability of the development. There was no accepted measure of light pollution, making it difficult to control. The proposed Local Gap at the Upper Heyford allotments might be made to join the Local Gap north of Caulcott. Martin said the MCNP team would consider all the comments and ideas.

A huge thank you to Martin from the village, and especially from those of us at the meeting.

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Nature Notes



When we think of carnivorous mammals, we probably first think of large animals such as lions and tigers or, closer to home, foxes. However, there are three small ferocious hunters that live within our locality.

The smallest of these is the weasel. Not much larger than a mouse, it spends its life hunting voles, mice and even larger prey such as rabbits – it's quite a feat for such a small creature to capture a rabbit! They will also take small birds and their eggs. Because they are so small, weasels can be difficult to spot. They are most often seen crossing a hard surface such as a road or path. They prefer to stay hidden so they don't themselves become prey for some other animal and they tend to keep in cover, traversing the ground through vole runs and using vole burrows to sleep in (having eaten any resident vole first).

The stoat is very similar in colour to the weasel, but much larger with a distinctive black tip to its tail. Both have a beautiful chestnut coloured body with a white throat and belly. This colouration shows up well when the animal stands up on its hind legs to look around for prey or predators. Both stoats and weasels are very agile and can twist and turn rapidly when following potential prey. They are also good at climbing and weasels especially may make use of crevices in stone walls as hiding places.

A relative of the weasel and the stoat is the polecat. They are all members of the mustelid family, which includes the otter, mink and badger. Due to persecution by gamekeepers, polecats became very scarce in central England. The population is now recovering and, over the last few years, there have been several sightings of a polecat in our locality. The polecat is larger than the stoat, with a dark brown body more like that of a mink, although the polecat does have patches of chestnut brown shading on its flanks. However, the most distinctive feature is its facial 'bandit' mask. The polecat lacks the twisting agility of the weasel and stoat and moves much more like an otter or mink. Its favourite food is rabbits and, having cleared a burrow of its occupants, it will take up residence itself.

It needs a sharp eye, and a certain amount of luck, to spot any of these small mammals, so take a closer look at any movement in the vegetation and you may manage to get a good sighting.

If anyone does catch a glimpse of any of these elusive creatures, please let me know, with details of where and when the animal was seen.

Bridget Lewis bridget@bridgetlewis.com

Photo credits: Left:Weasel © *Sue Cro; Centre:Stoat* © *Derek Parker; Right:Polecat* © *Sue Cro All used under the Creative Commons Licence: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/*









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Works by two village artists have been selected to appear in Banbury Museum's Ironstone Art Prize Exhibition. A charcoal drawing called 'Eyecatcher Raging' by Abigail Boisot and 'Stifle', an oil painting by Rebekah Tuluie, both appear in this biennial exhibition which aims to showcase the best recent work by artists living within a 25-mile radius of Banbury. Catch the exhibition by 10th March at the Banbury Museum, where from 23rd March to 7th July is their latest exhibition 'I wannabe in the 90s' – a trip back in time with over 200 iconic objects and artworks bringing the 90s to life. *banburymuseum.org*

Vaughan Billings has asked that I flag up Abingdon Operatic's next production – '9 to 5: The Musical'. Based on the 1980 movie of the same name that starred Dolly Parton, Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin, '9 to 5' premiered in Los Angeles in 2008, with all music and lyrics by Dolly Parton. In April 2009 it opened on Broadway, followed by a West End opening in 2012. At the Amey Theatre, 9th to 13thApril. *abingdonoperatic.co.uk* The Oxford Literary Festival always gets a mention on these pages – it's 16th to 24th March (*oxfordliteraryfestival.org*). The Chipping Norton Literary Festival is cutting back this year, ready to relaunch in 2025. See *chiplitfest.com*

A little further away, May is the time to be in Chipping Campden – the Literature Festival is from the 6^{th} to 11^{th} , the Music Festival from the 11^{th} to 25^{th} – *campdenmayfestivals.co.uk*. Feast yourselves on the cornucopia of events, with writers, musicians et al.

Looking further ahead, we have the wonderful Mikron Theatre Company coming again to North Aston Village Green on 21^{st} June at 7pm. Founded in 1972, they travel the country with two open-air productions a year (*mikron.org.uk*). Here they present 'Common Ground' – a hill-arious ramble through the history of land access in England. The Pendale and District Ramblers are looking forward to celebrating 'in stile' on their 50th anniversary walk, but the path has been blocked by the landowner. How will they find their way through?

The other production is 'Jennie Lee'. In 1929, Jennie Lee left her coal-mining family in Scotland to become Westminster's youngest MP – so young that, as a woman, she couldn't even vote for herself. Tenacious, bold and rebellious, Jennie cut her own path through history. "Jennie fought with her every breath for the betterment of all our lives... for wages, health, and housing, and for art and education too. Her role in the foundation of the Open University and the expansion of the Arts Council changed the twentieth century. Oh yes, and founder of the NHS Nye Bevan was her husband."

The two nearest venues for this are The Pig Place, Adderbury (*thepigplace.co.uk*) on 4th August and The Wharf House, Cropredy (OX17 1PG) on 6th August – both at 7pm. 'Common Ground' is there on the next day. Free entry, donate what you want and take chairs, blankets and picnics – and, who knows, umbrellas! Thinking of Jennie Lee, gives me a perfect segue to the House of Lords Debate 'The Contribution of the arts to the economy and society', held on the 1st February. The whole debate can be seen at *parliamentlive.tv*. Go to House of Lords > View archive > Keyword: Arts > Start date: 01/02/2024. This will give you the whole debate (very long), but you can go from 11.51.30 to 12.03.45 to hear Melvyn Bragg's excellent contribution. Here are a few quotes:

"The creative arts generate more revenue than the life sciences, aerospace and the construction industries combined." While insisting the arts were not "the cherry on the cake", but the cake itself, the Labour peer warned the industry was "dangerously patchy and punching way below its weight". "We have the skills, what we need is the vision and the will. We need to think of the arts as an industry, a new industry, which it is."

His words on Music and the Arts in state schools is frightening and of the efficacy of the Arts generally, totally compelling. As Vaughan Billings has done, do let me know of upcoming events that you can recommend.



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???? Mind Games

The Oscars Quiz

March is the month when the Oscars are decided and presented. See how well you score in this quiz from Cathy Lawday. *Answers on page 36*

- 1. In which year were the Oscars first held?
- 2. What is the full name of the body which awards the Oscars?

3. Which film won the most Oscars: 'The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King' (2003) or 'Titanic' (1997)?

4. How many Oscar nominations does 'Maestro' have this year?

- 5. What was unusual about the dress that singer Björk wore to the 2001 Oscars?
- 6. Which actor has won the most Oscars? (Clue: he is British)
- 7. Which of these actors has NOT won an Oscar for Best Actor or Best Actress?

Katharine Hepburn, Meryl Streep, Frances McDormand, Jack Nicholson, Marlon Brando,

Cate Blanchett, Dustin Hoffman, Michael Caine, Jane Fonda, Robert de Niro, Tom Hanks,

Maggie Smith, Sean Penn, Glenda Jackson, Jodie Foster.

8. Which British animator has won four Oscars?

9. In 2017, 'Moonlight' won the Oscar for Best Picture, but which film was announced as the winner by mistake?

10. What makes Anthony Hopkins and Tatum O'Neal special Oscar winners?

Boundary changes

Parliamentary constituency boundaries will change at the next UK general election. The four Boundary Commissions for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland published their final recommendations in late June 2023 following three rounds of public consultation. Steeple Aston will be in the new Bicester and Woodstock constituency. Victoria Prentis is staying with Banbury, so there will be a new MP for us.

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HAVE YOU EVER DEEN TO?

Court Barn Museum and the cart wash

I've written before about the Hart silversmiths and their fascinating workshop in the Old Silk Mill in Chipping Campden, urging readers to visit this capsule of history, where you can see skilled artisans at work. I knew that the Hart family had originally come to the pretty medieval town as part of C. R. Ashbee's Guild of Handicrafts early in the 20th century, but the Court Barn, an independent museum, tells visitors much more about the Guild and its brief but significant impact on this Cotswold town.

Nine artists/artisans, including the Harts, a potter, a bookbinder and the designer Robert Welch, are featured with beautifully displayed examples of their work and clear information boards. In the High Street you can find Robert Welch's shop and design studio which, like the Hart workshop, is part of the legacy of the Guild of Handicrafts. Its emphasis was on things being well-made, well-designed and, as far as possible, handmade.



I was astonished to learn that there were 500 Guildsmen who had been working in various workshops in the East End of London, brought together by C. R. Ashbee after he had formed the Guild in the 1880s. Many transferred with their families in 1902 to Chipping Campden where Ashbee resettled them. There were classes and clubs, league activities such as drill and keep-fit exercise classes and a School of Arts and Crafts. The experiment lasted until 1908 when Ashbee's funding ran out – the hard lesson had to be learned that bespoke, individually crafted and handmade artefacts cost more to make than produce an income on which the Guildsmen could live and prosper. The Guild was wound up, but Chipping Campden is still a centre for craftspeople, artists and designers and a testimony to Ashbee's idealistic unique experiment.

And the cart wash you ask? That was what I was really wanting to seek out when I visited Chipping Campden. I'd been told by a friend that it is one of only two in England and was intrigued to find out a bit more about it, never having given any thought to how you might clean carts after driving in muddy fields or along muddy roads. It is alongside the entrance to the Museum, though not connected to it – a long, stone-paved and lined structure which reminded me of a shallow canal lock. Built in the early 1800s, it's an unusual forerunner of a car wash! Provided there was enough rain, carts would have been driven or dragged into the water and would stand there for the carter to clean off the mud or, if it had been a long hot spell of weather, to sit, soak and expand in the water. This was to prevent wheel spokes and wooden wheels shrinking and collapsing. When there were metal rims they could even be in danger of slipping off the wheels – a danger prevented by the cart wash.

I'm pleased to have found this little curiosity, which is a reminder of another life, and also delighted to have visited the Court Barn Museum which was an unexpected bonus of the day. Both places are tucked in Church Street, behind the church at one end of the main street, opposite the magnificent Almshouses. It's free to see the cart wash, but the museum charges £7 entry which gives one an annual pass. Children/young people under 18 are free. The satnav code is GL55 6JE, but parking can be a challenge in Chipping Campden!

Eileen Baglin-Jones

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The Gardening Spot

Spring is just around the corner!

March is one of the busiest months in the garden, especially if the weather is kind to us and we have some decent temperatures and a bit of sun. My favourite part of the garden has always been the vegetable plot, but I must admit I am slowly moving towards the more beautiful areas where flowers abound and peace and tranquillity reign. Better known as 'Daphne's Garden' – and for those of you who ask, "who is Daphne?", she is my wife and boss!

Hopefully, you have all prepared the veggie plot during the autumn and seed beds can now be made for early carrots, beetroot, salad crops and so on. Remember carrots and other root crops should not be sown in freshly manured soil as they are more likely to 'fork', thus not providing the quality crop you desire. First early potatoes can be planted direct into the ground at the end of the month with the main crop a couple of weeks later. If you have a greenhouse with a bit of space, or maybe a frame, then it is worth planting a few potatoes immediately, so long as you can keep them frost free, as you will then be able to dig early potatoes before your neighbours. My favourite variety for earlies is Lady Christl, but with such a choice of varieties around it might be worth trying something different.

I find brassicas are best propagated in cells or plugs in a cold frame and then transplanted into their final position around late May or early June. Always use a good quality seed compost for germination, not the general-purpose compost that you will find on sale as 'buy-one-get-one-free'. That stuff is fine for potting on or improving soil structure, but pretty useless for the propagation of delicate seeds. Don't get too enthusiastic during March with such crops as runner beans and marrows as they are best propagated in the greenhouse and then planted out when there is no more threat of frost, more likely at the end of May or maybe even June as they can then grow away quickly.

The flower beds are coming into life now and you may well have some gaps to fill. A great way to give a splash of colour, or just for filling in where some herbaceous plants have failed, is to place a few bedding plants in the gaps. You don't need to start from seed, but pop along to your local garden centre where you will find some small pots of ready-germinated bedding plants ranging from lobelia, which are great for the edge of a border, to fuchsias and geraniums, which can make a real centrepiece of any flower display. Bring them home and transplant them into pots and give them some protection from low temperatures and by late May you will have plenty of 'filler' plants for your borders or pots at a very affordable price.

It is, of course, the time of the year when the grass starts to grow, so hopefully you have had the mower serviced and sharpened the blades. Your first cut needs to be set higher than normal, gradually reducing to your preferred level over the next few weeks. A good dressing of summer fertilizer will also make your lawn look better and if you have any moss then maybe include some moss killer at the same time. Of course, what always makes a lawn look that bit better is edging.

One final point I would like to make is about The Spring Flower Show to be held in the Village Hall on Sunday 24th March. This has historically been celebrated in the village as the beginning of spring and with it comes all the promise of the months to follow. Please try to enter something and come along in the afternoon to see what the rest of the village might have to display and enjoy the wonderful home-made teas available in the hall.

Richard Preston Life-long gardener who is still learning new techniques and ideas



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MYCO

The Cricket Report



Steeple Aston Cricket Club

Awards Dinner for 2023 Season

The Steeple Aston CC Awards dinner was held at the White Horse in Duns Tew on Friday 19th January and the winners were:

2023 Batting: 3rd Nigel Doggett; 2nd Peter Higgins; 1st Nick Foster

2023 Bowling: 3rd Paul Longman; 2nd Peter Higgins; 1st **Tom Chesser**

Young or Old Player of the Year 2023: **Mutley – because he always turned up for** every game, though ironically failed to make the Dinner!

Clubman of the Year 2023: **Peter Higgins – for constantly bullying everyone to raise money for the Lord's Taverners**

The Curtly Ambrose (26 Test 'Ducks') Award for Batting: **Jon Scotchbrook – for again scoring fewer runs than Phil Chesser, whose batting average was 70% higher than his!**

Most extraordinary injury: Chris Watson – for needing a hospital operation after bowling four overs of slow 'pies' off his long run....four strides! Taverners' Fund-Raising: Paul Longman

Batting Averages				
	RUNS	Out	Average	50s
Nick Foster	149	3	49.67	1
Peter Higgins	74	2	37.00	
Nigel Doggett	106	3	35.33	1
Olly Doggett	99	3	33.00	
Arthur Higgins	58	2	29.00	
Phil Chesser	34	4	8.50	
Jon Scotchbrook	15	3	5.00	
Merrick Baggallay	6	2	3.00	
Mutley Nelson	9	3	3.00	
Paul Longman	2	1	2.00	

Bowling Averages					
	Overs	Runs	Wickets	Average	Runs/Over
Tom Chesser	9.0	39	4	9.75	4.33
Peter Higgins	28.0	104	7	14.86	3.71
Paul Longman	36.0	152	7	21.71	4.22
Alain Michaelis	24.0	71	3	23.67	2.96
Olly Doggett	12.0	84	1	84.00	7.00
Chris Watson	3.0	14	0	_	4.67
Nigel Doggett	7.0	41	0	_	5.86

As ever, Phil left his son Tom's Award in the pub, but luckily Sarah Chesser was in the White Horse the following Friday – and she forgot it too! Here's to a fabulous 2024 Season. With best wishes to all.

Peter Higgins, Chairman SACC

Parish Council Meeting Notes



The February Parish Council meeting started with us being told that one of the Councillors, Stuart Ferguson, was in hospital having had a stroke. Everyone was concerned and sent their best wishes.

The discussion started with what villagers would like to see happen here in the future. The Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan team (MCNP) has identified the sites it regards as the most suitable, or anyway least unsuitable, for extra housing in Steeple Aston, assuming we have to have some development here. Now the Parish Council is turning its attention to defining the other needs of the village. Lots of ideas were suggested ranging from a possible community power supply to whether there was any way to provide a focus for the village with a village green. The ideas seemed to me to be both desirable and mainly even practical. A councillor said he thought we needed to start with data collection, to see what we, as a village, would like to see now and in the future. Someone suggested the data collection might start by asking the existing village organisations, such as Recreational Trust, the Village Hall Committee and the Environmental and Sustainability group for their input, as well as asking residents.

The comments made at the meeting included longterm issues such as the difficulty the bus has in getting through and whether this means we may need an off-road car park near South Side in order to retain the bus. Other local villages are short of cemetery space, but it was thought this was not likely to be a problem here for some time ahead.

At a recent public meeting someone had suggested the school site would be admirable for other purposes as it is close to other facilities. But since the school does not need replacing this suggestion was not thought to be realistic in the near future. It was agreed that the village should consider short, medium and long-term goals and moving the school could make sense for consideration in the long term when it needs replacing.

We were told that at present solar panels cannot be put up on the front roof slope of houses in conservation areas. However, other ideas surrounding local energy generation, local employment and local food production might be feasible in the short term.

A steering group has been set up to investigate whether there would be support for a Community Land Trust (CLT) to cover Steeple Aston and Middle Aston. A major concern for all the MCNP Parish Councils is to ensure there is sufficient affordable housing, both now and in the long term, for local people. The CLT steering group is intending to call an open meeting to see how much support there is for a CLT here. There are other CLTs in Oxfordshire and the one in Hook Norton is over ten years old. The steering group is being supported by a consultant from the Oxfordshire Collaborative Housing Hub.

A CLT is not just about housing or sustainability, it is potentially about all aspects of the use of land. A CLT is a not-for-profit, locally-run organisation trying to deliver outcomes for the local common good. It is a way of identifying the issues that concern us and how we can try to alleviate them. It is hoped the steering group will be ready to call an open meeting on this next month and get the Steeple and Middle Aston CLT made into a legal entity a month after that. The cost would be about £300 to £400 in legal fees. The fees are relatively reasonable because there is a standardised route for CLTs to get incorporated.

The MCNP team has now held 'engagement meetings' in all its Parish Council areas about the latest version of its Plan. We were told that Heyford Park wants to leave the MCNP and prepare their own Plan. Cherwell District Council is consulting on Heyford Park's proposal.

An interest in what needs protecting to keep this a special place to live seems to be fashionable at the moment. Cherwell District Council is employing consultants to do 'Landscape Character Assessments' across the District. One of these character areas is the Cherwell Valley. The Cherwell investigation may, however, be a bit superfluous for us because a similar analysis is

Parish Council Meeting Notes



already available from the MCNP consultation for our part of the Cherwell Valley. It was agreed that a Councillor would see what was involved in the Cherwell proposals before deciding whether to contribute, as any subsequent Cherwell decisions could potentially affect us.

The difficulty of seeing what is coming when driving in and out of the Village Hall car park was discussed. One Councillor said he had tried putting a mirror against the wall to see if it helped. It had worked fine, but "looked awful". The Councillors considered altering the angle of the wall and one was against it because it might make drivers feel "bomb proof". Another said the wall was solid and did not need repairing – though "a car could deal with that, but who would pay for the car and wall repair costs?".

We were told about the Blandford Fly investigation by Mat Watson. He has found it would cost about £4,000 for a local survey of where the fly develops and £6,000 for a wider survey covering the Cherwell valley. The survey work could be done this April, but the spraying would have to wait for the following year. So be prepared to be bitten again this year anyway. The Councillors wondered how many other local villages could be interested and we already know two other Parish Councils are concerned. Also, Deddington may be interested because the website of the Health Surgery there advises people to go to hospital if they have got a reaction to a Blandford Fly bite. The Councillors will contact those along the Cherwell Valley because the River Cherwell is likely to be the main area where the Fly breeds.

Someone wondered if Environmental Health might be brought in to investigate the Fly and another Councillor suggested that if the Fly kept us indoors it could damage our mental health. I thought it was not one-sided because staying indoors might also reduce our sunburn or even skin cancer, though it would not be good for my veg patch.

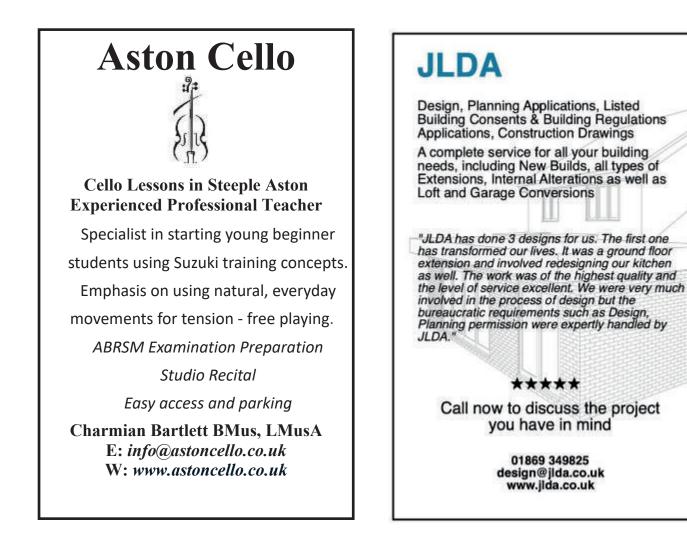
The play area is looking a bit tired and the Councillors discussed what should be done. The zip wire is broken and we were asked if we knew. I was unsure how many of the Councillors tried it out regularly and hence could answer the question. Apparently, the zip wire was repaired last year and the Councillors would see if that work was relevant to the current problem with it. One Councillor was once again concerned by the cost of the daily cleaning of the loo on the Play Area. He suggested the Councillors might take it in turn to do the cleaning. Congratulations to him for his enthusiasm, but alas the other Councillors did not see it in quite the same way. The possibility of refurbishing the equipment and having more regular gardening support for the Play Area were briefly considered.

There is a very low brick upstand just to the left of the Village Hall fire exit. It is ideally placed to trip people up, especially in the dark. It was noted that it might be protecting a drain, but a similar drain further down the same wall had no such upstand. The Councillors will investigate further.

The next meeting of the Parish Council is on 18th March. Do come as it really is interesting and fun to attend. I should know because I have been Steeplejack for close to 20 years now.

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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Poetry Corner



Brain surgery

In 2015, following medical advice I had brain surgery to implant a device

A deep brain stimulator, which works To reduce the twitches and the jerks

And the tendency to freeze All the fun of Parkinson's Disease

During the procedure I was awake Though sedated so I would not shake

And so every time there was a lull In the sound of drilling in my skull

Light conversation I'd maintain With a man whose hands were in my brain.

What we discussed I have forgot But I was awake and in earshot

And overheard things that were said By the surgeon probing in my head

"Pass the tunnelling tool, please" Was one which caused me some unease.

Likewise, "Shall we stitch or glue?" Which made me glad I had no view of what my brain was going through.

He asked a nurse for suction "to clear the debris out" I said "Debris? Do you mind? That's my brain you're talking about."

He said, "No, it's sawdust from the drilling" A comment I found rather chilling.

The surgeon's task was quite precise To find a place the size of a grain of rice

Once, while the op was underway, "Baby hippopotamus" I was asked to say.

And asked to move my fingers to and fro So the surgical team would know

They had found the perfect site. Not too far left, nor too far right When they were satisfied with this test The wire then travelled off south-west

Connected to the device implanted in my chest. (Which is hardly noticeable when I'm dressed).

At the time, the experience was bizarre, surreal But today doesn't seem such a big deal

I thought I'd become a figure iconic But friends just joke and say I'm bionic.

I recharge the battery every ten days or so Then I'm fully powered and off I go

I admit Parkinson's isn't that funny But the device keeps me going like a Duracell bunny.

Cathy Lawday

Transition

winter is finishing spring is arriving they tussle to show who's the boss with each day that passes it's spring that is thriving and winter who suffers the loss

the buds start to show and the flowers emerge and life springs eternal they say the drabness ebbs back as the colours do splurge as spring bids the winter good day

but winter is smirking it's down but not out the face showing pain but no fear for as spring gets to work getting new life to sprout winter rests 'til the end of the year

Peter Wild

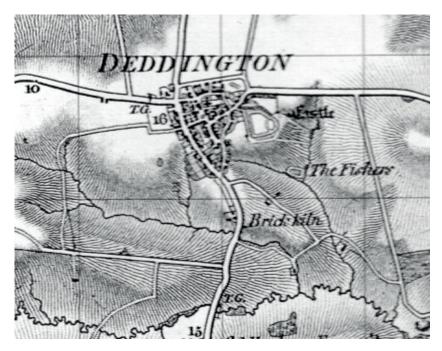
Steeple Aston Village *Archive*



Where was the Toll House?

In this article, SAVA is straying a little outside its normal territory. The link is the Oxford to Adderbury Road, which was designated as a 'turnpike' in 1755. The road north of Adderbury had already been turnpiked, but a petition in that year stated that *"The road from the City of Oxford through Kidlington to Adderbury.....is so deep and ruinous that it is dangerous for horsemen and almost impossible for carriages many months of the year".* The new Turnpike Trust was entitled to make charges for use of the route, in return for keeping it regularly maintained. This was achieved through the building of Toll Gates, most often accompanied by a Toll House. There is one remaining on the stretch south of Kidlington, now a private house.

But to return to our story, where was the Toll House on 'our' section of the road? The answer was revealed through a recent enquiry to SAVA from Deddington Parish Archive. Simon Roots, a descendant of a local man William Lewis, had been in touch with Robert Forsyth of Deddington Parish Archive. Simon had found that Lewis was recorded on the 1891 census as living in the Toll House or Leaden Porch Farm in Deddington. He asked Robert, "Where was the Toll House?". Deddington's archive was silent on the matter, so Robert turned to SAVA for any information that we might have. SAVA had an 1821 Ordnance Survey map showing the location of a Toll Gate below the Brick Kiln on the turnpike (marked TG on the map below). Research online using British Newspaper archives unearthed stories which named the Toll Gate and farm. There were references in local newspapers between 1784 and 1904 showing the Toll Gate's existence and giving it some context. Some of these articles were humorous and others less so.



A clipping from 1784 in The Oxford Journal shows that the tolls arising at the Deddington Toll Gate and Old Man's Gate were up for auction. The previous year's revenue was £675. That is about £74,300 today.

A report of 1903 tells of an ingenious speed trap set up by Police Constables Baker, Elderfield, Croton and Dodd near the second brick yard on the turnpike. Between them they measured a quarter-of-a-mile from the brick yard to the Toll gate. The officer at the brick yard held up a handkerchief as a speeding car passed him and the second officer timed on a stopwatch that it had travelled the quarter-of-a-mile in 44 seconds, equating to 20 miles an hour. The culprit was driving The Duchess of Marlborough, who is reported as having willingly given the police the chauffeur's name and address.

The Banbury Advertiser reported in 1904 about the Varsity Point-to-Point Steeplechase which was held near Deddington. The start was from 'Fishers', close to the Old Toll Gate, and the run was to Hawke Hill and back in what is described as 'hunting country', with riders having to 'take the brook' several times in the races. There was "a fashionable and very large attendance".

After another online search we found the *http://www.turnpikes.org.uk* website which gave us a grid reference for The Deddington Toll Gate. It also named a further toll gate in Deddington and details of the toll gate on the other local turnpike across the Cherwell at Lower Heyford (but that's another story).

A photo then came to light of the Toll House being demolished around 1928 (below). We used the photograph to try and identify the exact spot we would see today. The evidence on the photograph is that of a distinctive bend in the road which is rather less evident today. However, there is further visual evidence – the hedgerows in the fields and the stone wall by a stream on the side of the road. Using the 1821 OS map and contemporary Google Maps available online we found the exact viewpoint today of the position of the Toll House (bottom of page: the wall is just visible in the grass verge).

As a result of all this research, Robert Forsyth wrote an article for the Deddington history website which can be found at: *https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/deddingtonturnpikeandtollhouse/_recache*

Miggy Wild and Martin Lipson, SAVA





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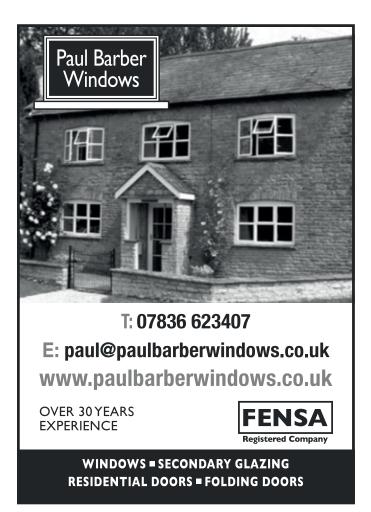
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Letter from Westminster



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

A tragedy is unfolding in the Middle East; Israel has suffered the worst terror attack in its history at the hands of Hamas and Palestinian civilians in Gaza are experiencing a humanitarian disaster. There is no perfect formula for peace, but we can be sure that leaving Hamas in power in Gaza would be a permanent roadblock to a two-state solution.

The Prime Minister has been clear that ahead of a permanent ceasefire, the Government wants to see immediate and sustained humanitarian pauses. This will allow a window for hostages to leave and more aid to enter Gaza. I know that my ministerial colleagues continue to use all the diplomatic tools at the UK's disposal to bring about a long-term political solution which enables both Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace.

At the same time, Houthi attacks on merchant and naval ships in the Red Sea are risking lives, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and disrupting international trade. We have been working to de-escalate tensions and restore stability in the region, but the Prime Minister has been clear that we will not hesitate to defend lives and ensure the free flow of commerce in one of the world's most critical waterways in the face of continued threats.

As war persists on European soil, I welcome that the UK will be providing $\pounds 2.5$ billion in military aid to Ukraine in 2024/25. It has been two years since the war began in February 2022. We have been one of the largest aid donors in that time; over $\pounds 7$ billion in military assistance and $\pounds 4.6$ billion in non-lethal aid has been committed to ensure Ukraine's victory on the battlefield. Under Operation Interflex, more than 30,000 Ukraine recruits have undergone soldier training in the UK to develop and prepare them to defend their homeland.

I know that many constituents have been playing their part, whether through hosting a family in need or volunteering to set up collections for supplies to be transported to those who have sought refuge on the Ukrainian border. Our community spirit locally is something we can all be really proud of.

In providing that vital reassurance against Putin's menace, 20,000 service personnel from the Royal Navy, the British Army and the Royal Air Force will deploy across Europe to take part in Exercise Steadfast Defender 24 this year. This will see our Armed Forces join thousands of personnel from 31 NATO allies and Sweden in the largest NATO manoeuvre since the end of the Cold War.

With our adversaries busy building barriers and redrawing battle lines, it is vital that our Armed Forces are readily able to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. Through 'Future Solider', the Government is undertaking the most significant modernisation programme in a generation. We must adapt to these growing threats and ensure that our Army can compete successfully in the grey-zone between peace and war.

This Government will always back our serving troops. They protect and defend our freedom every day of every year which we are all enormously grateful for. I know that the Prime Minister equally remains focused on ensuring that the UK is the best country in the world to be a veteran. With over 4,500 veterans living locally, Banbury has very strong links with our Armed Forces community, with the Armed Forces covenant a central focus of charities, businesses and local authorities in our area.

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THE VALENTINE CLUB

I would guess that none of us like paying the tax man too much, as so much of our hard-earned money gets wasted by those highly-paid and under-qualified politicians. So, to help us, and by that, I mean those of us who have reached retirement or are very close to retiring, we had a visit from Ian Saxton of the Co-op finance planning department to provide advice and guidance on how best to plan for our future and that of our children or beneficiaries.

The sad news for many is that we 'baby boomers' might well do best by simply spending the lot and leaving the future generations to sort themselves out. One very disappointed member was hoping to be offered a 'toy-boy' as described in the club's programme and we are still looking around to see what we can find for her, as we hate to see disappointed faces. But just before Ian took to the stage, we were treated to a performance by class six of Dr Radcliffe's School – it is so nice to be able to work closely with the school and their pupils.

By the time you read this a few of our members will have spent five days in Weymouth and who knows what the weather might have been, but I am sure a great time was had by all, especially when you realise the holiday, including travel, excursions and half-board accommodation was under $\pounds 160$ each.

For this month we are very fortunate to welcome Tony with his show of 'Ridgeway Country', a mix of rock, pop and, of course, country music which should appeal to all our members. Time to get out those Stetsons and get the hall rocking!

To find out more about The Valentine Club, simply visit our website at *www.valentineclub.wixsite.com/aston* or keep up-to-date by looking on the village website *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 we do, why not have a go at the *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



At our February meeting we were treated to an extremely interesting and informative talk by Ruth Madder, Director of Bridewell Gardens, entitled 'Gardening for Mental Health Recovery'. Ruth proved to be an excellent speaker and showed how passionate she is about the work done at Bridewell. Although some of us had visited Bridewell many years ago, we are all enthused and keen to visit Bridewell again in the summer months to see all the improvements made over the last few years, including a working vineyard.

Bridewell Gardens is planning four open days this year: Sunday 12th May, Sunday 9th June, Sunday 14th July and Sunday 15th September, 11am - 4pm. Entry £5 suggested donation. Take a look at their website for further information: *www.bridewellgardens.org*

Our next meeting is on Tuesday 5th March, 7pm for 7.30pm, at The Village Hall. The speaker is Stuart 'Wildman' Mabbutt and his talk is entitled 'Going Wild with Wildlife' – again a very topical subject. Do come along if you are interested in joining Steeple Aston Garden Club.

Chris Clarke S.A.G.C. Secretary

THE ASTONS HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY - SPRING FLOWER SHOW 2024 - ENTRY FORM

The Spring Flower Show will be held in the Village Hall on **Sunday 24th 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 21st March. Late** entries will be charged double, and no entry will be accepted after Friday 22nd 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 (long or short trumpets) in container
- 3. Daffodils (multi-headed) in container
- 4. Miniature Daffodils in container
- 5. Hyacinths in a container
- 6. Any other container grown bulb
- 7. Any other container grown spring flower/s of one or more variety, excluding bulbs
- 8. Cactus or succulent) *must be in your*
- 9. Pot Plant Flowering) possession for
- 10. Pot plant foliage) 8 weeks
- 11. Vase of Cut Garden Blooms
- 12. Container of Garden shrubs/Hedgerow/Trees Buds or Blossom, judged on variety and quality
- 13. 5 cut stems of Daffodils (long trumpets) any varieties
- 14. 5 cut stems of Daffodil (short trumpets) any varieties
- 15. 5 cut stems of miniature Daffodils
- 16. 5 cut stems of multi-headed Daffodils
- 17. 3 Stems of Rhubarb (tops on)
- 18. Container of Cut Scented Spring Flowers
- 19. A single cut daffodil with solitary bloom
- 20. Any fresh vegetable (excluding Rhubarb)

DIVISION 2

- COOKERY FOR WI CUP
- 21. A Quiche Lorraine
- 22. 100% Wholemeal loaf
- 23. 2 Empanadas (Similar to mini pasties)
- 24. Panettone (Any flavour)
- 25. 3 egg Victoria Sandwich
- 26. 3 Florentines
- 27. Marble cake
- 28. 5 Pieces of Turkish delight
- 29. Seville Marmalade
- 30. Fruit curd (Lemon, orange, lime etc.)

31. 3 home produced eggs from domestic fowl (with saucer)

- 32. Homemade lemonade in a clear bottle with a glass
- 33. Homemade 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). Exhibits marked * to be staged in a niche 18" wide, 18" deep and 25" high

- 34. Handtied Spring posy
- 35. *Title 'Sunshine and rain' accessories allowed
- 36. *Foliage Arrangement- no accessories allowed
- 37. Title 'Easter Wreath' (Ready to hang)
- **DIVISION 4**-FOR HANDICRAFT CUP
- 38. A Knitted or crochet flower
- 39. 'A repurposed piece of clothing'

40. A limerick - 'The loveliest thing about spring' (With 8 syllables in 1^{st} , 2^{nd} and 5^{th} lines and 5 syllables in 3^{rd} and 4^{th} lines)

- 41. A painting or drawing
- 42. Any other handicraft
- 43. An 'Easter' card
- 44. Photo 'New Life'
- 45. Photo 'Patterns'
- 46. Photo 'Opposites'

47. Photo 'Building (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 <u>written on entry form.</u>

Under 5

- 48. Hand/ finger printing A4 max size
- 49. Painting or drawing of an animal, A4 max size
- 50. Decorated cupcake (cupcake can be shop purchased)

Aged 5 to 7 inclusive

- 51. Toilet roll animal
- 52. 3 homemade biscuits to be judged on taste
- 53. A playdoh pet
- Aged 8 to 11 inclusive
- 54. An item of origami
- 55. A portrait, either painted or drawn, not larger than A4
- 56. 3 Cereal bars to be judged on taste. Displayed on a
- plate

Aged 12 – 15 inclusive

57. A chocolate cake to be judged on taste and appearance.58. A painting or drawing

59. Photo – 'Circles' no larger than 7"x 5"

Please circle the classes you wish to enter and return the entry form to Rebecca Lewin, Lansdown House, Heyford Road (07768904841) or Victoria Clifton, Bluebell Cottage, Middle Aston (07817025948) with full entry fee by 7 pm on Thursday 21st March 2024. Extra forms are available from Vicky Clifton or the village shop, or village website. Classes 1-47 entry fee 30p. Classes 48-59 entry fee 10p. Prizes first £2, second £1, third 50p

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

ENTRY FORM	Cla	asses	1	2 3	4	56	7	8	91	0 1	1 12	2 1.	3 14	4 1	5 10	6 1	7 18	8 19
Name Address Tel No					_													
If entering Division 5 - Age on day of Show						ntry:												

Steeple Aston & Middle Aston Horticultural Society Spring Flower Show

The Spring Flower Show will be held in the Village Hall on Sunday 24th March from 2.30pm to 4.30 pm. Entries are open to everyone, and new exhibitors are very welcome.

It's always a treat entering the Village Hall for the Spring Flower Show – the rows of sunny daffodils, the smell of hyacinths and the happy din of villagers and visitors, as they inspect the array of bakes, marvel at the handicrafts on display and then there is the occasional shriek as someone spots their entry has won 1st place.

The schedule for the show is on the opposite page and also on the village website. The flower classes cover everything from spring bulbs, houseplants, cacti and any fresh vegetable. Grab your secateurs and a vase and give it a go! If your fingers are more greasy than green, there are a host of cookery classes you can enter. This year alongside the classic Victoria sponge, quiche or wholemeal loaf you could have a go at making a Panettone, Florentines or even see if you can master Turkish Delight!

There's a selection of floral art classes and an array of handicraft classes. Kids are well catered for too, with classes for Under 5s, 5-7, 8-11 and 12-15. It's well worth taking a look at the schedule for some half-term or weekend craft activities. Winners in each children's age group win an Easter Egg, so there's an incentive!

Most of all, the message I want to convey is that there's something for everyone and that you really don't need to be a pro or experienced in gardening, baking or handicraft to enter something. The show is what we make of it and the number and variety of entries really makes it what it is. All entries are very welcome and the friendly and knowledgeable committee is at hand to answer any questions about the classes. We will show you the ropes when you arrive on show morning with your entries, so take a look at the schedule and think about what you might have a go at this year.

Lastly, if I haven't persuaded you enough already, homemade cakes and tea/coffee are on sale, there's a fun quiz, raffle, seed swap box and children can plant their own sunflower seed to take home (there's an Under 18's class in the Annual Summer Show for largest sunflower head...).

Entry forms are found at the bottom of the show schedule and need to be dropped in to either Rebecca Lewin, Lansdown House, Heyford Road (07768 904841) or Victoria Clifton, Bluebell Cottage, Middle Aston (07817 025948) with full entry fee by 7pm on Thursday 21st March 2024. Extra forms are available from Victoria Clifton or the village shop, or the village website *steepleaston.org.uk*

See you there!

Claire Coysh

Photo of the 2023 Spring Show, taken by Nigel Francis.









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Community Orchard

Visitors to the Community Orchard on Water Lane might be surprised to discover that it has another name, Randolph's Piece, carved on a stone near the entrance gate. This is a memorial to Sarah Lucas, who generously gifted the land to the Parish Council some time ago and died last October. Her mother's family were Randolphs, and her Great Uncle Bos Randolph lived in the house on the corner of Water Lane for many years, where she spent many summer holidays.

Visitors to the churchyard opposite the Village Hall will find that Sarah is also commemorated next to the two headstones that mark the graves of her parents.

Her family have kindly donated a new seat to the orchard and a young quince tree. This was planted at a ceremony in the orchard on Saturday 10th February, when Sarah's ashes were scattered and poems were read. One was written by Morar Lucas, Sarah's sister-in-law for 63 years, who said it was hard to describe such a wonderfully complex personality in just a few lines:

For whatever you say about Sarah The opposite's equally true: She was blunt – She was sharp – She was generous and kind But wilfully blind To the impact on others of speaking her mind.

She had powerful opinions And no inhibitions. She would fiercely defend Her right to offend Those in charge, if they dared to cause friction. Then, into reverse, And she'd feel no remorse At espousing complete contradiction!

But Sarah had charm and perception which endeared her to friends and to family, for we all of us knew that her love filtered through, lighting up her robust personality.

The new quince tree was blessed with holy water, along with the pear tree planted last year in memory of Roderick Nicholson and the plum tree for Harold and Olive, the couple who worked as Bos Randolph's gardener and cook for 30 years.

Below left: the memorial stone for Sarah Lucas

Below right: Rev'd Harriet Orridge with Father Benji Tyler, the Curate at Wantage, where Sarah lived in her later years. She was a regular churchgoer and he knew her well.

Photos by Ben Wade-Martins

Annie Stogdale







Steeple Aston Choral Society

invites you to

An Evening at the Opera

Enjoy a convivial evening listening to your favourite opera choruses, solo highlights and spring music - and even join in.



Steeple Aston Village Hall Sunday 14 April 6.30 for 7pm (Table seating 8 to a table) Bar with wine, soft drinks and nibbles



Tickets £12 (Children under 16 free) from Margaret Bulleyment (01869) 347346 or <u>mtheb749@gmail.com</u>

AD&D^{Photographic} Society

In February, Jim Muller gave an inspiring illustrated overview of the photographic opportunities in the Peak District, which was Britain's first National Park. He started with a short discussion of the history and geology of the area, including the Kinder Scout mass trespass in 1932. Mining, cotton mills and agriculture have shaped the landscape, which now bears witness through canals, rail tracks and industrial relics. These range from scenic viaducts to abandoned millstones. Reservoirs, although man-made, sometimes at the cost of submerging whole villages, provide an attractive setting.

Edges and Tors often have spectacular rock formations, complemented by moorlands and dales. Embedded in all of this are rivers, waterfalls and ancient woodlands, each providing photographic material, which was beautifully demonstrated by Jim's images. The environment is populated by a range of wildlife, including a number of birds that were demonstrated. Finally, he showed us images of a number of attractive buildings, especially in the Buxton area, that are worth a photographer's attention. The area is so popular with visitors that it's often necessary to be up at first light to obtain a photograph without people in it! The Peak District clearly has a huge range of material for photographers interested in landscape, nature and historical material.

There was a good selection of creative images for February's topic – black-and-white photography. Most of us are so used to working with colour that we get out of the habit of restricting ourselves to monochrome. This forces us to focus on elements like shadow, shape, contrast, texture and balance. The appearance can be changed dramatically by adjusting the brightness of individual colour channels. Members produced fascinating photos of subjects such as urban and rural landscape, sculpture, animals, birds, people, flowers and trees. In fact, it seemed that no genre was a no-go area for b&w – a good reminder to consider whether an image would benefit from b&w conversion when composing or processing.

We welcome new members to our Society nights on the first Wednesday of each month. Website and contact: *addphoto.co.uk* for further information.

Courtney Killpack

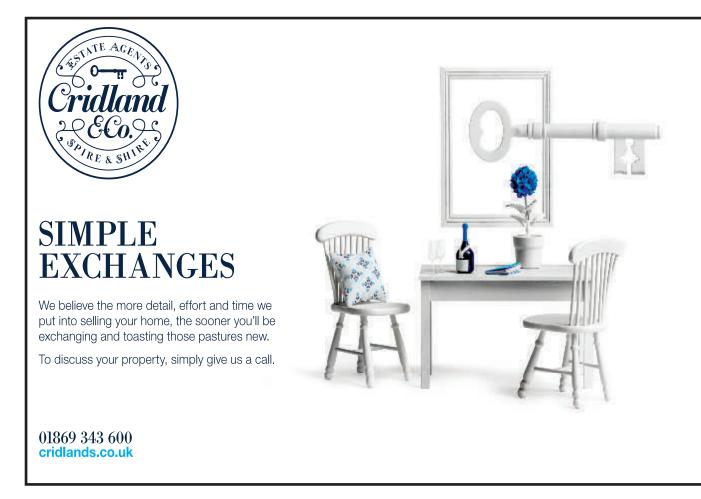


Photo:Maureen Tyrrell. An excellent example of a black-andwhite image.

+GA CT

Answers to the 'Oscars Quiz' (page 13)

- 1. 1929
- 2. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences
- 3. They are equal, with 11 Oscars each.
- 4. Seven
- 5. She wore a white feathered dress which had a swan's neck and head as the bodice.
- 6. Daniel Day Lewis three Oscars, all for Best Actor ('My Left Foot', 'There Will be Blood' and 'Lincoln')
- 7. Michael Caine he won Best Supporting Actor Oscars for 'Hannah and her Sisters' and 'Cider House Rules', but has never won Best Actor.
- 8. Nick Park. Three Oscar wins for Best Animated Short Film 'Creature Comforts', 'The Wrong Trousers' and 'A Close Shave'. One Oscar for Best Animated Feature Film 'Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit'.
- 9. 'La La Land'
- 10. Anthony Hopkins is the oldest acting winner (83, Best Actor for 'The Father'). Tatum O'Neal is the youngest acting winner (10, Best Supporting Actress for 'Paper Moon').



Village Hall News



Steeple Aston Annual Quiz Night 2024

Once again, the Village Hall Committee organised a thoroughly enjoyable Quiz evening on Saturday 20th January. 13 teams with a maximum of eight to a table took part in the fun with names ranging from 'The Nightingales' to '4SR +4'. Perhaps next year there should be a prize for the most creative team name? 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.

This year the quiz was devised and led by Carl Tomlinson with Kate in charge of the scoreboard. They had devised a very clever tabletop opener involving answers which had links with Oxford Colleges – easy you might think, but the winners not only needed to be correct but also hand their answers in as quickly as possible! This was won by the 'Quizzical' team.

Other questions and conundrums challenging the teams included:

• What connects Kazuo Ishiguro, Winston Churchill & Bob Dylan? *Answer: They have all won the Nobel Prize for Literature.*

• In which county is the closest beach to Steeple Aston? Answer: Hampshire (the beach is at Lymington).

As usual the evening was rounded off with the presentation of the trophy and wine to the winning team – 'Isthmians' – with a score of 87 out of a maximum of 100 points.

The Village Hall committee was grateful to receive donations of some generous raffle prizes from The Yurt (Nicholson's), Safeclean, Holt Hotel, Holt Garage, Wines & Toiletries (anonymous). Thanks go to all who participated, not forgetting the Village Hall committee who organised this event.

Keep watch for the details of the 2025 quiz in later editions of SAL, but be quick as tables swiftly get booked up for this challenging but fun annual event!

Barbara Brewer

The 'Isthmians' winning team. At the top of steps from left to right: Marco, James, Peter; going down the steps: Rebecca, Steph, Liz, Amy, Claire.

Forthcoming events 2024 - more details to follow.

• Sunday 2nd June 2pm to 6pm: NGS Village Open Gardens.

• Tuesday 5th November: 'Fireworks spectacular'.

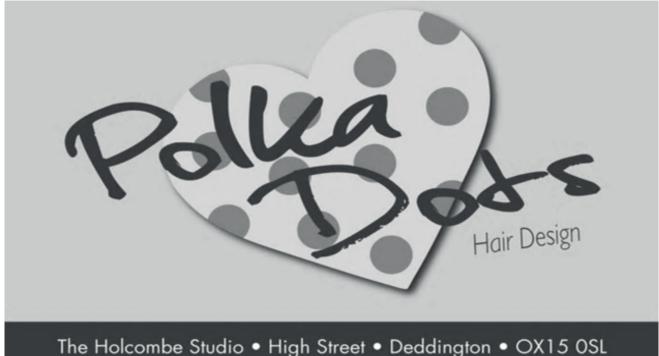
• Sunday 8th December: Wassail evening.

Our letting agent is Mrs. Angela Smith – 07734 112967. Please do not call this number between 6pm and 8pm unless urgent. Email *steeple-astonvillage-hall@hotmail.com*

Collect keys from 'Mijas' South Side, Steeple Aston. OX25 4RU.

Barbara Brewer - chair https://savh.org.uk/





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WI Report

At our February meeting we altered our usual format by starting the evening with tea, coffee and cake before the speaker. This gave us more time to socialise first and choose which events could be fitted into our calendars. The selection included lunch on Friday 8th March at The Cinnamon Stick, Middle Barton, and a return by popular demand to meet up at The Grain Store for morning coffee and cake on Thursday 21st March.

Also on offer is a talk, on Thursday 23rd May, about the Diamond Light Source Synchrotron at the Harwell Campus (details in 'Oxfordshire Inspires' – a WI publication for members only).

As it will be Steeple Aston's WI's 106th birthday in April, a member came forth to make the cake. We are now looking for two volunteers to join our committee as we have two vacancies coming up in April.

Walking Netball continues to go from strength to strength with three new players joining in February for our Wednesday morning sessions in the Village Hall.

John Paine was our speaker for February and his talk was entitled 'Sabah, home of the Orangutan'. He explained that the loss of their habitat was due to the logging of teak trees and the stripping of rainforest just to plant palm oil trees! He went on to illustrate why the sanctuary of Seplock was so important for the orphan orangutans to be rehabilitated so that they could eventually be returned to the wild. We were given some facts and figures about orangutans. For example, 96% of their DNA is the same as humans and baby orangutans stay with their mother for up to eight years.

John also mentioned efforts being made for the conservation of the Sun bears of Borneo, now endangered due to the same problems of habitat loss from logging and planting palm oil trees.

The meeting on Tuesday 12th March will be our Birthday Night. The cake will definitely be on the agenda and our speaker will be John Kinory who will undoubtedly regale us with some amusing yarns about his acting career as a film extra. Village Hall 7pm for 7.30pm, visitors welcome!

Perhaps you would like to join our WI? To find out more please email Julie Hillier on j.hillier3@hotmail.co.uk

Would you as a non-WI member like to join our Netball group? All are always welcome. We meet every Wednesday at the Village Hall, 10am for 10.15am start. Please contact me – *Merrill.bayley@gmail.com*

Merrill Bayley



'BeSpace' Week in Dr Radcliffe's School



During the first week of February, Dr Radcliffe's school welcomed back the Oxfordshire charity 'BeSpace' to run a Prayer Space Event, in partnership with Rachel Marsden, the Rev'd Harriet Orridge and members of our local churches.

The library was transformed into a special quiet Prayer and Reflection Space (see photo). Over the course of a few days, every child in the school had the opportunity to experience prayer and reflection through interactive activities in small groups, in a creative, experiential and inclusive way. We talked together about what prayer is, and reflection, then the children moved around four 'stations' where a volunteer guided them through the activity.

They enjoyed thinking about forgiveness, with 'Sorry Magnadoodles', people in our community who are special to us and care for us, 'Community Petals' (see photo), a 'Prayer Wall' of prayers and hopes for themselves or the wider world, and time 'Being still' with Calm Jars. At the end, the children had time to feed back how the experience had made them feel (calm, grateful, inspired, happy, joyful...) and which corner they liked best. We talked about making space at home to be still, reflect or pray.

A huge thank you to everyone who helped to make the Prayer Space possible. For further information on BeSpace, visit <u>https://bespace.be/what-we-do/schools/</u>

Harriet Orridge



Church Matters



There is that beautiful moment, first thing in the morning as you wake and stretch, and the day lies open before you. As I look at the countryside around us, it is as if spring is waiting for that moment. The snowdrops have blossomed and the daffodils are waiting in the wings, nearly ready for their moment to shine. The world is waking up again after its winter nap.

Last year, one in every three days breached the 1.5 °C warmer than pre-industrial temperature target. Whilst I appreciate the warmer weather, not having to turn the house heating on, I equally have to confess I miss the snow of my childhood years and the fun of tobogganing down a hillside.

Last month, as we started looking towards Easter, I invited everyone to join us in the 'Way of Love' – the Oxford Diocesan 'Come and See' series, which put focus on the Golden Rule verses. When asked what is the greatest commandment Jesus responded with the summary of the Law, to love your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. And to love your neighbour as yourself.

Our neighbours aren't just the people down the street, or even people on the other side of the world. Our neighbours are the entirety of creation. This morning as I went out on my Saturday morning ride, I came across trees already in blossom, blooming in mid-February! As the world wakes up, how can we learn to love it more?

We live in a closed ecosystem. The only thing that comes into our planet is sunlight – a wonderful free source of energy, that plants have learnt to utilise. Everything else is already here and we need to learn how to care for it, making the most of what we have been given. We need to learn to work with nature, enabling it to flourish. A good idea is to participate in initiatives such as 'No Mow May', which encourages us to leave parts of our garden lawn to grow, enabling insects to thrive.

Personally, whilst I love and appreciate a good garden, I have to admit to not being a great gardener myself. I don't know when to plant things or when and how to prune them. I love sugar snap peas and baby corn. They arrive in our supermarkets from abroad, their refrigeration and transport around the world (made worse as more ships are opting to go round the bottom of South Africa, rather than risk the fighting in the Red Sea and Suez Canal) only adds to the carbon dioxide being pumped into our atmosphere.

I am conscious of my need to cut down on waste, to recycle more, to drive less. Yet achieving this is something I struggle with. The pressure of an ever-increasing jobs list mocks at my pitiful efforts. I can choose to walk to the shops, to buy food locally. These choices though require sacrifices in time and may limit our access to certain items that we have become accustomed to. We can all make these choices, but to do so may require extra planning. The impact of these choices is to love our planet and to give future generations a flourishing beautiful world. These are choices that show love for our neighbours, the whole of creation, today and into the future.

Harriet Orridge





Church Services



	North Aston	Steeple Aston	Tackley	
Sunday 3 rd March	9.30am Holy Communion (BCP)	11.00am Holy Communion (BCP)	5.30pm Evensong	
Sunday 10 th March Mothering Sunday	9.30am Family Service	11.00am Family Service	9.30am Holy Communion	
Sunday 17 th March	9.30am Holy Communion	11.00am Holy Communion	5.30pm Evensong	
Sunday 24 th March Palm Sunday	9.30am Palm Sunday Service	11.00am Palm Sunday Service	10.30am Palm Sunday Service at the Methodist Church	
Thursday 28 th March Maundy Thursday	6.00pm Holy Communion			
Friday 29 th March Good Friday		2.00pm Hour at the Cross		
Sunday 31 st March Easter Sunday	9.00am Holy Communion	10.30am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	
<i>www.sntchurch.com</i> The church buildings are open every day. Feel free to visit at any time.				



To 'e' or not to 'e'

On page 15 of the February issue of SAL, there was a feature about Aynho Park. Or should that have been Aynhoe Park?

A quick search on the internet comes up with *https://aynhoepark.co.uk* with the owner being James Perkins. However, a deeper dig reveals that since 2020 the estate has been owned by RH – previously Restoration Hardware.

RH England is "a celebration of history, design, food and wine". And among the many changes the address is now Aynho Park, without the 'e'.

Read more about RH England at *rh.com/gb/en/england*



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Local Info

STEEPLE ASTON VILLAGE HALL HIRING FEES

Website: <u>www.savh.org.uk</u>

All Facilities

Peak Times - involving hire after 6pm

Village Residents (up to 6hrs) (Additional hours at £10/hr) Non-Village (up to 6hrs) Non-Village (over 6hrs)	£65 (Plus Refundable Deposit £200) £110 (Plus Refundable Deposit £300) £160 (Plus Refundable Deposit £300)	Social Function peak times:£55.00(Daily up to 6 hours, from 6.00pm)£27.50Social Function off-peak times:£27.50	
<u>Off-Peak – all hire before 6pm</u>		(Daily up to 5 hours, up to 6.00pm)	
Hourly Rate	$\pounds 10/hr$ (or $\pounds 30$ for 4 hours)	Meeting of represented clubs: £11.00	
Plus Refundable Deposit £200		(Daily per session, max 2 hours)	
Hall Only		Caution money for Private Lettings: £100.00	
Represented Clubs	£9 (up to 3hrs)	Caution money for i fivate Lettings. 2100.00	
Others £17 (up to 3hrs)		Block Bookings for Social Events: 15% discount for 6 or more bookings in advance.	
plus Refundable Deposit £200)			
Committee Room		Letting Agent Angela Smith Tel: 07734 112967	
Represented Clubs	£6 (up to 3hrs)	E-Mail to <i>rec.trust@googlemail.com</i>	
Others	£12 (up to 3hrs	Chair – Torquil McLusky Tel : 01869 347914	
Letting Agent Chairperson Secretary	Angela Smith (07734-112967) Barbara Brewer (01869-340423) Margaret Bulleyment (01869-347346)	Treasurer – Chris Cooper Tel : 01869 347173	
Represented Clubs must nominate a trustee to attend Village Hall committee meetings. Discounted rate for represented clubs – 15% for six block bookings.			

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

 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
 1655
 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* 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 *https://ourbusbartons-org-uk.stackstaging.com/* for details and times.

Steeple and Middle Aston rubbish bin collection day Is Thursday.

March 2024

7th Blue and brown 14th Green 21st Blue and brown

28th Green

Steeple Aston Sports & Recreation Centre

Letting Charges

dieen

April 2024

4 th	Blue and Brown
11 th	Green
18 th	Blue and Brown

25th Green

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 *steepleaston.org.uk/home/calendar* for any changes. Please send details of events for March and April to *editorsalife@gmail.com*

MARCH			
Tuesday 5th	Garden Club: 'Going Wild with Wildlife' Stuart Mabbutt and William Mankelow	Village Hall	7pm for 7.30pm
Wednesday 6th	AD&D Photographic Society Monthly topic: Fine art, found object	Adderbury Institute	7.30pm
Tuesday 12th	WI. Birthday Night Speaker: John Kinory 'Career as a film extra'	Village Hall	7pm for 7.30pm
Thursday 14th	SAL April 2024 copy and advert deadlines		
Monday 18th	Parish Council meeting	S&R Building	7.30pm
Tuesday 20th	Valentine Club. Ridgeway Country with Tony Country to Pop and Rock	Village Hall	2.30pm
Saturday 23rd	Deddington Farmers' Market	Deddington	9am to 12.30pm
Saturday 23rd	Sustainable Steeple	Deddington Church	9am to 12.30pm
Sunday 24th	Spring Flower Show	Village Hall	2.30pm to 4.30pm
SAVE THE DATE!			
14th April	SACS: A Spring Evening at the Opera	Village Hall	6.30pm for 7pm
2nd June	NGS Village Open Gardens		2pm to 6pm
30th June	SACS: Summer Party Concert	Village Hall	6.30pm for 7pm
24th November	SACS: Autumn Concert	Church	7.00pm

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 - 12 noon - Saturdays

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

e-mail: print@joshuahorgan.co.uk

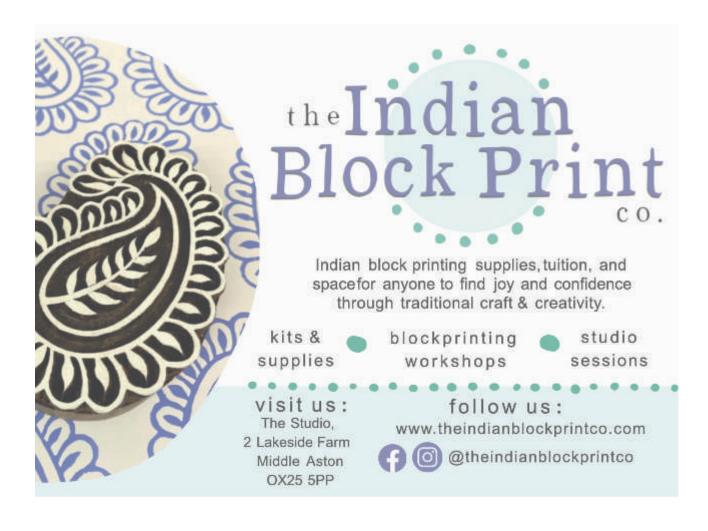
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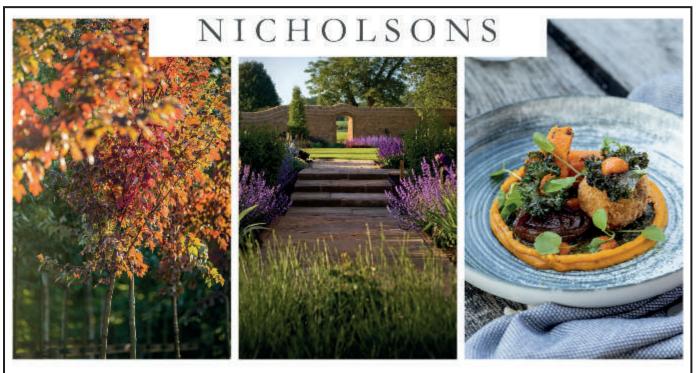
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