

Steeple Aston

May 2024

Issue No. 609

Life



- Community Land Trust report • The life of Mrs Elmer • Spring Show results •
- Rainwater harvesting • Didcot Railway Centre • Letter from Westminster •

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May 2024: CONTENTS

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.

MAY FEATURES	PAGE	REPORTS FROM CLUBS & SOCIETIES	PAGE
Community Land Trust report	19	Garden Club	23
Life is what you make it (SAVA)	24/25	Golf Society	37
MidCherwell NPF	36	Valentine Club	29
Nature Notes	27	WI Report	39
Plenty of Water	33		
Spring Show 2024	30/31		

REGULAR FEATURES	PAGE	INFORMATION	PAGE
Arts Page	11	Bus times	45
Church Matters	41	Church Services	43
Editorial	5	Rubbish bin collection dates	45
Gardening Spot	17	Steeple Aston Calendar	46
Have you ever been to...?	35	Steeple Aston Directory	4
Mind Games: Nursery rhymes	13	Steeple Aston Noticeboard	6/7
Poetry Corner	23	Village Hall News	37
Steeplejack PC report	20/21		
Steeple People	9		

Contributions are welcome. Please email editorsalife@gmail.com

Cover: *Wisteria in Steeple Aston* (photo by Nigel Francis)

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 June 2024 issue is Tuesday 14th May.

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

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1/4 page - £8

1/2 page - £15

Full page (village events only) - £17.50

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Valentine Club		Richard & Daphne Preston	340512
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Volunteer Connect - Community transport scheme		0300 3030125	
WI	President	Julie Hillier	349185



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

Steeple Aston *Life*

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Issue No. 609

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Editorial

“Tra la! It's May! The lusty month of May! That lovely month when ev'ryone goes blissfully astray.” From the musical ‘Camelot’ by Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner.

Was there really such a place as Camelot? Probably not. Most scholars regard it as being entirely fictional. However, you will find medieval texts which locate it in Caerleon, Monmouthshire; Queen Camel, Somerset; Camelford, Cornwall; Winchester, Hampshire; and Cadbury Castle, South Cadbury, Somerset.

Similarly, there is no evidence that King Arthur, of Round Table fame, ever existed. This is sad, as he sings the following in the musical:

A law was made a distant moon ago here: July and August cannot be too hot. And there's a legal limit to the snow here. In Camelot.

The winter is forbidden till December and exits March the second on the dot.

By order, summer lingers through September, in Camelot.

I know it sounds a bit bizarre, but in Camelot, Camelot, that's how conditions are.

The rain may never fall till after sundown. By eight, the morning fog must disappear.

In short, there's simply not a more congenial spot for happily-ever-aftering than here in Camelot.

According to a poster for an auction on Monday 4th May 1840, “Steeple Aston is considered the most healthy and pleasant Village in the whole County”. Are we, perhaps, second only to Camelot for congeniality? Does anyone have a large round table?

Which leads to a thought. Could we petition our Parish Council to ban rain from falling during the day? This should be relatively easy, compared to some of the things they are being asked to do.

Staying with the lusty month, what connects Queen Victoria and Bob Dylan? Both were born on 24th May, though in 1819 and 1941 respectively. And which two signs of the zodiac share the month? Taurus (20th April to 20th May) and Gemini (21st May to 20th June).

Finally, there is a nursery rhyme with the line ‘Here we go gathering nuts in May’. This does not make sense, given that nuts appear in the autumn. ‘Nuts’ is probably a corruption of ‘knots’ – referring to the tradition of gathering knots of flowers on May Day. Tra la!

Robert





The Three Ms keep their cool!

It might have been spicy chilli on the menu, but champion quizzers 'The Three Ms' kept their cool to storm to victory in the Sport & Rec annual quiz night on 23rd March.

John McLoone served up another fantastic smorgasbord of questions, this time all inspired by and themed around the works of William Shakespeare. But there was never any question as to whether it would be or would not be 'The Three Ms' night – they took an early lead and, despite the best efforts of everyone else, there was no catching them and they were deserving victors.



It was a great fun evening and as well as thanks to John for another brilliant set of questions, thanks must go to everyone else who helped, especially Jane and Fiona for their tireless work in the kitchen and Chris and Alan for their work behind the bar dealing with a very thirsty crowd.

Thanks as well to everyone who came along and made it such a successful evening. Evenings like this are crucial in raising funds to support the village facilities that we all enjoy.

See you all next year!

The Sport & Rec AGM is at 8pm on Wednesday 22nd May. If you would like to get involved and find out more about what we do to support the local community, do come along – you will be very welcome.

Torquil McLusky Chair

Christian Aid Week – 12th to 18th May

Christian Aid works tirelessly throughout the world to relieve poverty and suffering. If you wish to donate it is easiest to do it online at christianaid.org.uk There will also be envelopes at the back of the church if you prefer. These can be returned to me at Home Farm House, put through the Rectory letter box, or given to a member of the church congregation. However you choose to donate, if you are a UK taxpayer please remember to Gift Aid your donation.

Thank you so much.

Caroline Parsons, Local Organizer

Blandford Fly

Following our piece on the Blandford Fly in the April issue, there are reports that it is particularly prevalent in the area at the moment. For further information and what to do if you are bitten, go to:

<https://deddingtonhealthcentre.co.uk/news/blandford-fly-information/>

One-ring scam

If your phone rings once and then stops it might be a scammer. They hope your curiosity will encourage you to return the call. Don't. It could land you with expensive international call fees.



Litter picking



The weekend of 13th and 14th April saw over a dozen volunteers of all ages picking litter out of the hedges and verges. A cohort of WI stalwarts were joined by family groups. With a Parish Councillor having taken care of North Side and Fenway earlier in the month, the volunteers covered the village from Middle Aston to the lights on the Heyford Road and along South Side and Sixty Foot.

The bright sunshine made for a pleasant morning. A big thank you is due to all who volunteered, a few of whom are pictured. Apart from a few choice finds, the village was remarkably – and heart-warmingly – free of litter. So thanks are also due to those villagers who pick it up when they see it, and to all those who don't drop it in the first place.

Carl Tomlinson

Chair, Steeple Aston PC Environment and Sustainability Committee

SAL delivery change

After many years delivering SAL to houses in Paines Hill and Cow Lane, John Coley has retired from this work. The Steeple Aston Life committee offers many thanks for his support of the newsletter.

A new volunteer will be taking on the deliveries in this area.

Red Oak Tree

The Nicholson Family planted a Red Oak Tree at Robinsons Close in honour and memory of Roderick Nicholson who was such a special figure in the village of Steeple Aston.



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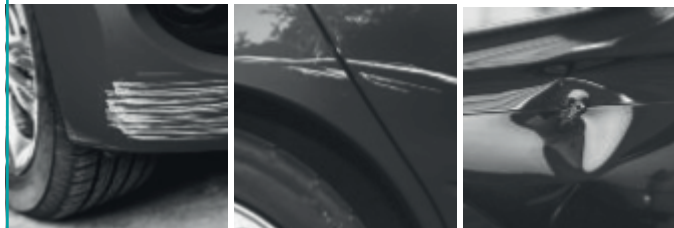


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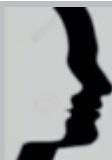


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Steeple People



Ben Downing



How long have you lived in Steeple Aston? Three years in May.

Where did you move from? Wolvercote.

What brought you here? A quieter life.

What do you like best about living in Steeple Aston? The friendly residents and the starry night sky.

Where do you think of as 'home'? Oxford.

Give a potted history of yourself. Born in Ealing 1969. My family moved to Scotland until 1975, then to Oxfordshire. I studied art and then arboriculture and have worked with trees for 30 years in and around Oxford. I have been married and have two children.

How do you see yourself, in five words or less? Honest, hard-working, sometimes fun.

How do others see you, in five words or less? Approachable, open-hearted, sometimes grumpy.

What do your family or friends find most annoying about you? I don't always listen as attentively as I could.

What do your family or friends find the most endearing about you? My optimism and enjoyment of life.

Early bird or night owl? Cat or dog? Optimist or pessimist? Early bird. Dog. Optimist.

Technology: friend or foe? Both friend and foe.

What was the best thing about being a child? Lack of responsibilities.

What is the best thing about being an adult? Freedom.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? A black panther (the animal).

What was your first job? Bottling up in our local village pub.

What do you do for a living now? I am an Arboricultural consultant. I work part-time for Oxford City Council and run my own tree surgery firm and arboricultural consultancy.

What is the best job you've ever done? The one I have now.

What is the worst job you've ever done? Lining chimneys during a school summer holiday when I was 17 years old.

Tell us about any interesting hobbies you have. Collecting records and painting.

What's your favourite piece of music? 'Pass the Word (Love's the Word)', by The Mad Lads.

What are you reading at the moment? 'Island of Missing Trees', by Elif Shafak.

What is your all-time favourite book? 'Wait Until Spring, Bandini', by John Fante.

What's your favourite food? Anything vegetarian.

What would you save from your house if it was on fire? My dog.

If you became prime minister, what law would you pass? None. There are too many laws already.

If you could ban one thing in the country, what would it be? Sewage in our rivers.

If you won the lottery, what's the first thing you would buy? A holiday.

If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go? Olympic National Park, Washington.

What do you do to relax? Read and meditate.

What's your favourite saying or piece of advice? Neither a borrower nor a lender be.

Which person do you most admire, and why? John Bird. He overcame adversity and co-founded 'The Big Issue'.

Who would you most like to have dinner with – dead or alive? My brother.

If you were on a desert island, what would you miss most? There's too much to list.

What do you get grumpy/mad about? Current world politics and the mess we are all in because of it.

What makes you happiest in the world? My family, my friends and walking my dog.

Tell us a surprising thing that you are really good at. Whistling loudly.

And a surprising thing that you are really bad at. Pitching tents.

And something about you that most people don't know. I like singing out loud when I am walking my dog, but have a terrible voice, so will only sing when there is nobody around.

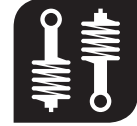
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The ARTS Page



We heralded spring in the April Arts Page with some poetry quotes and I suggested we had a ‘Poem of the Month’ chosen by readers. Richard McAndrew has sent me this, by Paul Simon.

<i>April, come she will</i>	<i>July, she will fly</i>
<i>When streams are ripe and swelled with rain</i>	<i>And give no warning to her flight</i>
<i>May, she will stay</i>	<i>August, die she must</i>
<i>Resting in my arms again</i>	<i>The autumn winds blow chilly and cold</i>
<i>June, she'll change her tune</i>	<i>September, I'll remember</i>
<i>In restless walks she'll prowl the night</i>	<i>A love once new has now</i>

These are the words of a song by Simon and Garfunkel: [youtube.com/watch?v=PYD-DIggB2k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYD-DIggB2k) – but it also speaks as a poem on its own. There is a website [lyricinterpretations.com](https://www.lyricinterpretations.com) which lists many interpretations of this song and countless others.

For poetry understanding more generally, Ruth Padel ([ruthpadel.com](https://www.ruthpadel.com)) is a wonderful guide (she sang for me in the Schola Cantorum many years ago). Two books in particular are fascinating and enlightening. ‘52 Ways of looking at a Poem’ and ‘The Poem and the Journey’. You can also look at the work of our local poet, Carl Tomlinson, at <https://fairacrepress.co.uk/shop/changing-places-carl-tomlinson/>

Two local websites for writers and readers are worth a look: [banburywriterscafe.wordpress.com](https://www.banburywriterscafe.wordpress.com) and [oxfordindiebookfair.co.uk](https://www.oxfordindiebookfair.co.uk)

Who knows – we could start a ‘Creative Steeple’ club. Please be in touch to share ideas – nicholascleobury@btinternet.com

Shakespeare is never far away, so look at [oxfordcastleandprison.co.uk](https://www.oxfordcastleandprison.co.uk) for their 2024 Oxford Shakespeare Festival, with three new productions. There are also many other events there during the year for all ages.

Coming up sooner, ‘Two Gentleman of Verona’ directed by Sir Gregory Doran, with Oxford students, 15th to 18th May – [oxfordplayhouse.com](https://www.oxfordplayhouse.com). When looking at their website, do make a beeline for Jacqui Dankworth – 23rd May.

Across the road at the Ashmolean ([ashmolean.org](https://www.ashmolean.org)), ‘Bruegel to Rubens’ – ending 23rd June. Reviews include the words ‘Irresistible’ – ‘Enthralling’ – ‘Breathtaking’.

The ever-enterprising Creation Theatre Company ([creationtheatre.co.uk](https://www.creationtheatre.co.uk)) has its production of ‘Animal Farm’ until 11th May. Adapted by award-winning Van Badham, it is as relevant today as when it was first published in 1945.

Slightly nearer home, Kirtlington Park hosts the Kite Festival from 7th to 9th June. A Festival of Music and Ideas – alternative music (indie, folk, soul, etc.) with talks on the ‘major forces that shape the world we live in’. Go to [theoxfordmagazine.com/event/kite-festival/](https://www.theoxfordmagazine.com/event/kite-festival/) for details.

Slightly further, but well worth a visit – Compton Verney ([comptonverney.org.uk](https://www.comptonverney.org.uk)). In their 20th year they are going strong. Many wonderful exhibitions, amongst which ‘Louise Bourgeois’ from 6th July to 6th October, caught my eye.

Finally, in this clearly random list, [chippingnortontheatre.com](https://www.chippingnortontheatre.com) just keeps on giving. Juliet Stephenson 10th May, Jo Caulfield 19th May and much more!

Best wishes.

Nick Cleobury



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???? Mind Games

How well did you do with the nursery rhymes quiz in the April issue?
Here is another chance to test your knowledge with 12 new questions
submitted by Cathy Lawday.

13. Who dwelt down a lane?
14. Who should leave her flock to find their own way?
15. Who had more offspring than she knew what to do with?
16. Who laughed when he saw an athletic cow?
17. Who lost their tails in a violent manner?
18. Who found some lost property with a ribbon round it?
19. Who used vinegar and brown paper to cure a fractured skull?
20. Who should join their playfellows by moonlight?
21. Who missed out on the roast beef?
22. Who has their home in Drury Lane?
23. Who came rolling home?
24. Who prefers the fatty cuts of meat?

ANSWERS

13. The little boy

(Baa, Baa, black sheep, have you any wool? "Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full.

One for my master, one for my dame, and one for the little boy who lives down the lane")

14. Little Bo-peep

(...has lost her sheep, and doesn't know where to find them;

leave them alone and they will come home, bringing their tails behind them)

15. The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe

(There was an old woman who lived in a shoe, she had so many children she didn't know what to do

So she gave them some supper without any bread, then spanked them all soundly and sent them to bed)

16. The little boy

(Hey Diddle Diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon.

The little boy laughed to see such fun and the dish ran away with the spoon)

17. Three blind mice

(...see how they run. They all ran after the farmer's wife, who cut off their tails with a carving knife)

18. Katy Fisher

(Lucy Locket lost her pocket, Katy Fisher found it. There was not a penny in it, but a ribbon round it)

19. Jack

(...and Jill went up the hill, to fetch a pail of water. Jack fell down and broke his crown and Jill came tumbling

after. Up Jack got and home did trot as fast as he could caper. He went to bed to mend his head with vinegar and

20. Boys & girls

(...come out to play, the moon doth shine as bright as day. Leave your supper and leave your sleep, and join your

playfellows in the street)

21 This little piggy (the 4th toe)

(...went to market; this little piggy stayed home, this little piggy had roast beef, this little piggy had none)

22. The Muffin Man

(Have you seen the muffin man, the muffin man, the muffin man, the muffin man that lives on

Drury Lane?)

23. This Old Man

(... he plays one, he plays knick-knack on my drum, with a knick-knack paddy whack, give a dog a bone, this old

man came rolling home)

24. Jack Spratt's wife

(Jack Spratt could eat no fat, his wife could eat no lean, and so betwixt them both you see they licked the platter
clean)



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'Pupils care for and help each other, which builds on the very strong support that staff give pupils.' (OFSTED March 2022)

Dr Radcliffe's CE Primary School, as a member of ODST, is committed to safeguarding children and young people. All post holders in regulated activity are subject to appropriate vetting procedures, reference checks and a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Enhanced check. Online checks may also be carried out to comply with Keeping Children Safe in Education provisions.

Letter from *Westminster*



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

While overall crime in the UK has been falling for some time, I know that this is not a reality recognised or enjoyed by all. That is why the Government is focused on ensuring that crime prevention, community engagement and targeted interventions sit at the very heart of local policing through the 'Beating Crime Plan'.

These are priorities shared by Thames Valley Police (TVP), who are working hard to support victims, fight crime and build trust in policing. We know that Community Safety Partnerships have proved a real success, allowing our police, local authorities and other agencies to work in a more joined-up way. The 15% increase in partnership funding over the next four years will strengthen our collective ability to tackle the root causes of crime.

TVP have exceeded the Government's Uplift programme target by recruiting an additional 784 police officers within the last three years. This has given us a greater police presence in Banbury and the surrounding villages with more resources to prevent and tackle crime. I recently had the opportunity to see some of the important work carried out by our local police first-hand by joining the police force for a 'ride along'. The day started early with the morning briefing at Banbury Police Station before I went out with two of our local police officers on their morning patrol. It was a very valuable experience where I learnt more about the challenges our town is facing and how they are working hard to tackle issues including antisocial behaviour, county lines and violent crimes.

We are all very aware of the challenges associated with antisocial behaviour which is having a real impact on local businesses and residents in our town centres. Although often seen as a low-level crime, persistent antisocial behaviour can blight communities, create a climate of fear and soon escalate to more serious crime. I have been assured that a number of prolific offenders have been arrested and TVP are actively engaging with Cherwell District Council and other organisations. Operation Jin has been launched in an effort to tackle this ongoing issue and residents are being asked to share their views: <https://orlo.uk/sTc48>

Another challenge is the rise in keyless car thefts, which is a problem facing police forces nationally. TVP have been advising residents to take extra precautions, including storing their vehicle keys in a metal tin away from the front of the property, as well as using steering locks.

I know that rural crime is also something that worries my constituents, which is why I was pleased to host my Rural Crime Forum at Hook Norton Brewery recently. Constituents were able to discuss a wide range of topics with our Police & Crime Commissioner, including everything from antisocial behaviour and domestic violence to equipment theft and wildlife crime.

It is so important that people feel safe in their community and live without fear of crime. When people have reason to call the police, they need to have full confidence in the initial and ongoing contact they have. Although TVP answers 999 calls in an average of 11.54 seconds, greater investment in the 101 telephone service will open new ways to report crime. I will continue to work closely with our local Police Force, including our Local Area Commander, Superintendent Jen Hogben, to support them and ensure they have the resources they need to keep our streets safe.

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The Gardening Spot

May is here and summer is close by!

Do you realise we are nearly halfway through the year already? Although I might not be fully prepared for such an awakening, the garden carries on regardless. The first thing we should be doing is attacking the weeds, no matter where they might like to appear. If you hoe the ground before weeds appear it takes half the time and the garden is always tidy and your plants aren't competing for food and space.

After what seems to me like a never-ending deluge of rain, I am beginning to think a change of crops to rice might be the answer. However, being the eternal optimist, I think that the law of averages might kick in and we will have a long, dry and warm summer. The trouble then is we have to water, and you can bet your life that the water companies will impose a hosepipe ban by September if that is the case.

The greenhouse is a very busy place now where the last seedlings are about to be hardened off in cold frames or sheltered spots in the garden and the tomato plants have taken root and are growing away. Talking of tomatoes, remember to 'pinch out' the side shoots of cordon varieties in order to encourage good growth and better fruit. Keep the plants firmly supported and don't forget to water, especially if you are growing them in a grow bag or pot. Just like us they need feeding and I find a regular feed about once a week after the first fruit has set is about right. Not enough feed and you end up with small fruit; too much feed and the plants pull away, but provide less fruit.

Over the past few years, I have found that purchasing a 'grafted' cucumber from one of the local garden centres provides me with all the cucumbers I need and they appear to be much less sensitive to disease where so many seed-grown cucumber plants suffer. Peppers and aubergines should be coming on nicely in the greenhouse and how about trying a melon plant which can be grown as easily as a cucumber?

Runner beans can be planted out into their final position around the end of May, but be very careful not to allow them to experience any cold. Like so many plants it is better to be patient and plant a week or so later when the soil is warm as plants will then grow away quickly and will provide a much better crop. Many of the brassica family should be planted out during this month or early June and you could plant the final row of potatoes if you still have some seed remaining. Keep sowing salad crops to ensure you have a continuous supply throughout the summer.

Sunday 2nd June is a date to put in your diary as that is the day when six gardens in Steeple Aston will open their gates to the public under the National Garden Scheme (NGS). These will include The Longbyre, Combe Pyne, The Pound House, Primrose Gardens, The Church Allotments and, for the first time, Old Toms on North Side. In addition, there will be home-made teas served in the Village Hall and all of this between 2pm and 6pm on what we hope will be a fine Sunday afternoon. I do hope as many as possible will be able to come and take a nose around these wonderful gardens that are hidden from view for most of the year. By doing so you will be supporting some amazing charities and maybe gaining some ideas for your own gardens. Daphne and I look forward to seeing many visitors when you can come and pick fault with our garden!

The sign I spotted recently might be something we are all looking for.

Richard Preston – *Gardener with too much time on his hands!*



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Community Land Trust

Hoorah! A Community Land Trust is going to be set up in the village.

There was a meeting on 10th April to see if there is support for starting a Community Land Trust (CLT) here. The meeting started with a brief description of what a CLT would involve:

- It would be a community-led and not-for-profit organisation
- It would further housing, social and economic activities in the village
- The activities would be focused around the provision of affordable, energy-efficient housing for locals in need. But its activities will not be confined to housing. There will be wider objectives, such as protecting green spaces and developing shared, renewable energy projects
- The CLT will be a legal entity which can draw on Government funding for local housing and raise money in its own right.

A CLT needs the money to become incorporated as a legal entity before it can start operating. The Parish Council and Dr Radcliffe's Trust have agreed to put up £350 each if the meeting decided (which it did) to go ahead with a CLT. There will be a nominal fee, either a £1 or £5 per household to become a member. It will be for the CLT board to decide the charge and the sooner we get incorporated the sooner the CLT can start work.

Someone reminded us about what happened if Cherwell District Council (CDC) was left to allocate any new housing. CDC claim they took local connections into account when allocating houses in Coneygar Fields and Shepherd's Hill. But they regard local connections as much wider than we do, so an important part of CLT activities will be to negotiate with Cherwell to tighten the definition of local.

One of the most successful CLTs in this area is at Hook Norton. Cathy Ryan told us about what they have achieved at Hook Norton and which elements of their activities she saw as the most effective. Hook Norton CLT was set up in 2019. It has taken them till now to get their first house built. In the same period developers have built 250 houses there with the aim of maximising their profits without any consultation with locals. The new homes have not helped the many locals who have been priced out of living where they were brought up.

Hook Norton CLT found some derelict and oddly shaped parcels of land owned by Cherwell District Council and negotiated with them to buy the sites. The CLT asked residents directly and held workshops to find out what locals wanted. The main answer was that the heart would be lost from their village if there was no genuinely affordable and sustainable housing for locals. They also wanted things such as zero carbon construction, shared renewable energy generation, electric bikes for hire, electrical charging points and shared bookable facilities for visitors.

Hook Norton held a CLT open day to get comments before putting in for planning permission and Cathy told us she thought this had been very successful in obtaining local buy-in to the project. The Hook Norton CLT has built eight houses costing £3.7 million of which they raised all but £500,000 commercially. The difference was made up from local investors who are expecting a return on their investment which will vary according to how long the investors are prepared to tie up their money. A huge thank you to Cathy for talking to us.

After Cathy's talk, we split into groups and discussed the advantages and possible pitfalls of setting up a CLT. The questions that came back from the groups included such issues as what does being a member of a CLT involve? The answer was that shareholders have no liability, but they would get a newsletter and be invited to the AGM where they can question policy and vote for their preferred board members and on policy issues.

At the end of the meeting there was a convincing show of hands in favour of setting up a CLT. So the CLT Steering Group will get our CLT incorporated, be in touch with those who came to the meeting and hold a membership drive. If you would like to know more, but could not get to the meeting, please contact steepleastonclt@gmail.com

Steeplejack

Parish Council Meeting *Notes*



The April Parish Council meeting started with a counting of heads as they can only operate if they are quorate. Quorate for these purposes is three complete people, plus a bit of another person. The clerk has decided, perhaps slightly arbitrarily, that the odd leg or two can be forgotten. Anyway, the meeting started with three Councillors present, one of whom said he had to leave early. Fortunately, a fourth Councillor turned up just as he was about to leave and the meeting could continue.

We got a progress report on the Blandford Fly saga. Apparently, this area was surveyed for the Fly in 2004 and the intention is to extrapolate from that on where they are most likely to be breeding now. The local area will be surveyed this year at a cost of £5,000. Initially it had been thought that the cost would be £6,000, with £2,000 coming from Steeple Aston, £2,000 from Oxfordshire County Council and the other £2,000 it was hoped would be forthcoming from Deddington Parish Council. Deddington is unsure about joining us because they are interested in looking at the River Swere as well. Our Councillors agreed that they would increase the Steeple Aston contribution to £2,500 and seemed surprisingly confident that our County Councillor, Arash Fatemian, would match our increase and the whole £5,000 could be obtained. The Parish Council considered where other contributions might come from and they will approach other villages such as Duns Tew to see if they will share the cost of next year's spraying.

One Councillor asked for a brief description of the previous week's meeting about setting up a Community Land Trust (CLT). It was noted that the Parish Council are not responsible for or involved in this project. However, it was also agreed that as the Parish Council had contributed £350 towards setting up the CLT it was reasonable to tell the Councillors about what our money is being spent on. At the CLT meeting we were told about the successful CLT

which has been set up in Hook Norton. This is described in more detail elsewhere in this edition of SAL.

We were told the money (£350 each from the Parish Council and from Dr Radcliffe's Trust) would be used to make the Steeple Aston CLT into a legal entity. The Steering Group are going to learn about the possible ways of doing this and the pros and cons of each alternative. Once they have decided which approach is most suitable here the money will be used to pay for the legal work involved. As soon as the CLT is incorporated villagers will be invited to join and to appoint a Board to start work.

The Councillors then turned back to their usual areas of interest. The trees and bushes round the Village Hall will be cut back soon, but at present the Council is waiting to see if there will be any objections to the trimming of those trees around the Play Area which have Tree Preservation Orders.

There was a brief discussion of how damp could get behind coping stones. Roughly summarised the answer was from above, below or between. The result, though not the cause, is clear on the wall beside the stairs up to the projection room at the Village Hall.

The coat hooks outside the loo at the Play Area will be removed as they are now redundant with the advent of WhatsApp. I have the impression some of the Councillors did not know that photos of mislaid garments, footballs, etc. are on the village WhatsApp group and hence get found by their owners easily.

Grants are available for those within ten miles of some landfill sites. Valencia have taken over from Viridor on these grants and the Councillors wanted to know how much they can now apply for, the criteria and when they have to apply by. They were

Parish Council Meeting *Notes*



told they might get grants from Valencia of up to £50,000 as long as we could match their funding, prove we had a legal right to the land concerned and apply before 31st October. Apparently, Valencia prefers an application for single projects, so if there are a number of things we would like to apply for they will have to be bundled together to make one combined application.

Someone suggested the broken zip wire should be taken down because it was getting further damage when one child drags another child along the old track. The removal was agreed, but the Councillors seemed unsure about who might do the work and equally about who might mend the broken fencing around the Play Area. Apparently, the fences cannot be cut off easily because there are hidden metal strengtheners within the fencing.

We were told that we could get an update on the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan by looking at the MCNP's latest mailing. After the meeting I had a look at it and found out that there have been 662 comments from 176 people, plus comments from others bodies such as the planners at Cherwell District Councils. The comments will be incorporated into a new iteration of the Plan. However, the next stage of the Plan is being held up because Heyford Park Parish Council want to leave the MCNP and develop a Plan just for themselves. A decision on whether they can do this will not be taken till the June meeting of the new, post local election, Cherwell District Council. Till then the MCNP proposals are in limbo. When the Heyford Park project was first considered 1,075 homes were applied for, though approvals have been expanded since. The latest proposal is expected to be for about 6,000 homes in total, although much of this development will not start till 2040. But it is a substantial change and Cherwell will have to consider the application seriously once it is submitted by the Dorchester Group, the developers of Heyford Park.

There was no new information about the play equipment wanted for the Pocket Park. We were told someone from Rousham had flailed around the edge of the Pocket Park which only seems to be being used by dog walkers at the moment. Locals will be canvassed for their views on what play equipment would be the most beneficial there.

There was a discussion of how Cherwell enforces their planning decisions. It was assumed they must have limited funds for this which could explain why infringements were not necessarily followed up, even where experts had examined the unfortunate changes.

Once a year the village has an Annual Parish Meeting. No visitors ever come and this usually lasts the two minutes it takes to sign the pointless minutes of the similarly pointless meeting a year ago. To get people to come one Parish Council Chairman made outstandingly delicious biscuits as an enticement. But that did not work because no one knew in advance what an excellent snack they would miss if they did not come. This completely daft meeting will start at 7.00pm in the Sports and Rec on 20th May. This meeting will be followed by the AGM of the Parish Council where the Chair reminds us about what has happened over the last year and the officers get elected for the year ahead. The AGM is likely to be over quite quickly as well so there should be plenty of time to start the usual monthly meeting at 7.30. Do come, even though there probably won't be any biscuits, delicious or otherwise.

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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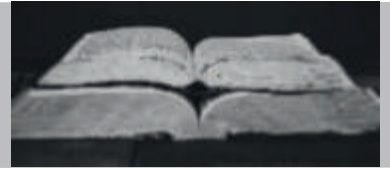
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Twinkle Twinkle

A star is in our present and our past
we see it in the sky when up we gaze
yet even though it's light has travelled fast
its current movements are a distant haze

does it still live amongst our here and now
as what we see existed long ago
and as to where the when the why the how
they're stories with no end as time does flow

Twinkle twinkle little star
cast your light on us below
your light has travelled from afar
but of its source what do we know?

Peter Wild

A TV Dinner

I've watched Nigella and Jamie
Rick Stein and all that fish,
Ainsley, Gordon, Delia
Each with their 'signature dish'.

All those television chefs
Cooking with panache
They made it look so simple
I thought I'd have a bash.

I'd cook my partner dinner
Produce a soufflé with great flair
It shouldn't be that difficult
After all, it's mostly air.

I started on the recipe
I had eight eggs to separate
But the yolks just kept breaking
They would not co-operate.

My sister-in-law, who is a chef,
Says confidence is what you need
So I confidently mixed yolks and whites together
And paid the recipe no heed.

I bunged it in the oven,
But the soufflé just wanted to sink
It didn't rise as it should have done
So I had a little think.

I turned to the internet for advice
And asked if anyone out there
Could tell me why my soufflé
Wasn't full of air.

When my beloved came home from work
I told him there was a surprise
I'd made a soufflé for supper
If only it would rise.

The flippin' soufflé wouldn't set
It remained just a bowl of slop
I tried turning up the oven
But that only burnt the top.

Finally I brought it to the table
And served my love a portion
He tasted the lumpy liquid
With a certain amount of caution.

"I appreciate your effort"
He said, wiping egg off his lips
"But I think it would be a good idea
If I went and got fish and chips."

Cathy Lawday

Steeple Aston Garden Club



At our April meeting, we held the Garden Club AGM and issued our programme for the coming year. This was followed by our speaker, Chris Day, Publicity Manager at Buckingham Garden Centre, who gave us a very inclusive and energetic talk entitled 'The all-new A-Z of fool-proof-year-round gardening'. This was very well received and ended our year on a high.

We look forward to our first visit of the summer season. This is on Wednesday 29th May at 2.30pm, to Claridges Barn, Charlbury Rd, Dean, OX7 5XG at a cost of £10 p.p. to include refreshments. Please use car sharing as much as possible. Anyone who has not as yet paid the membership fee can do so on this visit.

Chris Clarke
S.A.G.C. Secretary

Life is what you make it: Mrs Lily Elmer

Long-standing residents may remember Mrs Elmer living in the Old School House on North Side and for her last few years in No.1 Alms House. A lady the like of whom is unlikely to be seen in Steeple Aston again! She had a full and varied life earning a living as best she could and was walking to and from Duns Tew where she taught the infant class until the age of 73. She enjoyed writing letters for the Steeple Aston Life postbag, including a helpful autobiography.

Mrs Elmer was born Lily Maud Blye on 14th September 1892 in Essex, the third of four children, frequently absent from school being a delicate child. Her father, Jesse, was a farm labourer, her mother, Ellen, a laundress. She left school at 13 and aged 16 went to work in London as a Maid Companion to the cousin of the Duke of Montrose, earning five shillings a week, until the start of the First World War. She then took a variety of similar jobs. In 1916 she met and married a handsome soldier, Lewis Wright, but sadly he died the same year.

Lily then decided to head off to Hampshire to join the Royal Army Service Corps, where she worked until a Zeppelin bombed the building. A soldier rescued her and carried her to safety, an experience she rather enjoyed! Back home in Essex she met Mr Elmer, as she calls him, a teacher. She took a job in Colchester as a nanny, but it was five years before they met again. In 1922 Mr Elmer accepted the post of teaching woodwork, gardening and elementary science at Dr Radcliffe's School. In 1923 Lily and Harry were married and lived in the Old School House on North Side.

At first, Mrs Elmer, as she was always known, was unhappy living here, but she soon got involved in many activities. She and her husband were instrumental in forming a tennis club and they created two courts on the field behind the present school. Although a keen tennis player, at the age of 49 Mr Elmer became incapacitated and for five years was cared for by his loving wife, with regular visits from Dr Hodges. Harry Elmer died in 1940. Mrs Elmer and their son, John, then aged 13, were able to stay on at The Old School House paying £36 rent per annum.

Mrs Elmer had been the cook at Dr Radcliffe's School for three years and in July 1940 was asked to start up a kitchen for Woodstock School. Despite having no transport of her own she accepted the challenge, relying on getting lifts there from Sturdy's Castle. She was usually so late that after a few weeks she gave up that job and became a Dr Radcliffe's school dinner lady. She was asked to help out in the oversubscribed infant class, but when she was no longer required there, she took on home tutoring in Upper Heyford. At the age of 63, the OCC asked her if she would accept the post of Infant Teacher at Duns Tew School. She accepted and walked there and back for the next ten years. (Some may recall the harsh winter of 1962/3 which lasted for ten weeks, with snowdrifts recorded at eight feet deep.)

As a village resident, Mrs Elmer records that she served the community as a member of the church council, the tennis club, the British Legion, the Parish Council and the WI (from 1927). She also collected for the Red Cross, cooked for the Home Guard midnight service, was the secretary of the ladies Flower Show for the WI, helped with the village library, cleaned the church brasses, developed two gardens round the church door and ran the Coal Club for 40 years.

She also went into competition with the local youngsters, winning first prize for the most beautiful ankles, aged 68. In her 80th year Mrs Elmer dressed as a fairy for the WI entry in the Do-it-yourself evening to raise funds for the Village Hall and the following year took part in Michael Hayter's pantomime, 'Jack and the Beanstalk'.

In 1974 she wrote an amusing full-page story in SAL. A relative had come to visit her in January. They went to lunch at the Hopcroft Holt Hotel, walking there along the main road. As it was a beautiful day and the relative was a good walker, they decided to set off down Holt Hill and take the footpath back across the Dean. When they reached the stream, they discovered that the plank bridge had been removed. The relative said to the 82-year-old Mrs Elmer, "Put your foot on that hard lump of earth there - you can spring the rest". Mrs Elmer writes, "*Well my spring can't be as springy as it used to be and one foot went into the water right up to my knee. On getting out I yelled, 'Yes, I am out, but my shoe is still in the water'. After a struggle my shoe was retrieved, full of mud and of course, soaking wet. We then had to climb, on all fours, to the top of the bank to the stile, only to find there was no footpath because it had been ploughed over..... Incidentally, I have had a cold since my dip in the water – and it is not better yet.*"

If life is what you make it, Mrs Elmer certainly made the most of hers, evolving from a delicate child to become a strong and resourceful woman, who wrote: "There is nothing so nice as helping other people".

She died suddenly and peacefully of a heart attack in September 1978, aged 86.

Diana Gardner, SAVA

If anyone knows the whereabouts of the Coal Club box as shown in the photograph, SAVA would be pleased to hear from you.



For 40 years Mrs Elmer was the secretary and treasurer of the Steeple Aston Coal Club. Money, her cat, guards the kitty and casts a critical eye over the accounts.

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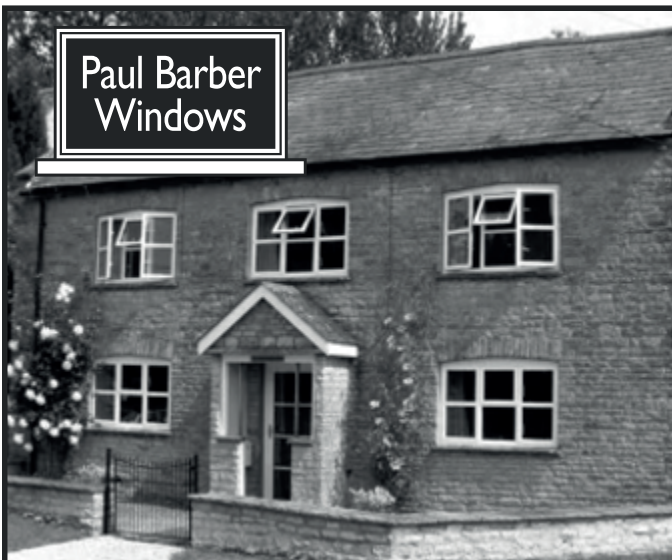
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Nature Notes



We have probably all heard the saying ‘one swallow does not a summer make’. Let's hope we get more than a single swallow this summer, along with plenty of other birds arriving to spend their summer here. Although the numbers of many of our resident species are boosted by additional birds migrating here from other countries, we all associate summer with those species that spend only the warmer months here, leaving later in the year to return to their wintering grounds.

Among the most noticeable migrants are the swallow, house martin, sand martin and swift. They are all aerial feeders, spending much of their time swooping through the air, catching insects on the wing to feed to their young chicks. Even in flight, they can be distinguished from each other. The swift has a dark brown belly, while the others are pale-bellied. The swallow is the only one to have long tail streamers (although the young take time to grow theirs) and the two martins can be separated by their colouring (the house martin is blue-black above with a white rump, the sand martin is pale brown above). Once they have raised their chicks, families of birds join together for their journey back to Africa where they will spend the winter.



As children, one of the first summer migrants we learn to recognise, by its call, is the cuckoo, calling its own name in a very distinctive way. Getting sightings of the bird, rather than just hearing it, is much harder to achieve as its mainly grey plumage allows it to blend easily into the background. The cuckoo is a remarkable bird. It spends the winter in Africa then, in spring, it embarks on a perilous journey, flying thousands of miles to reach Britain where it looks for a mate. The female then seeks out a nest of a suitable foster parent for its young, lays an egg in the host's nest and then abandons it for the host bird to raise. It will lay several eggs, each in a separate host nest but usually all hosts for that particular cuckoo will be of the same species. Each individual cuckoo's eggs are

coloured and patterned such that they are not seen as foreign by the host. The adult birds are then free to return to Africa, never having seen their young, leaving them to make the journey to Africa on their own, with no guidance from a parent bird.

Birds are not the only species to migrate here for the summer. Several butterflies, such as the Painted Lady, do so too. The Painted Lady overwinters in Africa, but will breed during its migration northwards so the individuals we see here during the summer are not those that started out from Africa. The Red Admiral is another butterfly that migrates here from Africa, although favourable conditions here are now enabling some to remain resident in Britain during the winter.



Bridget Lewis

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THE VALENTINE CLUB

Our April meeting, a week earlier than usual, brought us Major Tom Coker and his subject, 'Leadership in testing times'. A fascinating journey through his service in the forces and how the Army has changed and is now at its lowest number of serving soldiers for well over 150 years. Considering the unrest across the world at present, this situation is possibly not in the best interest for our country and that of the world as we know it. Tom's presentation obviously hit the right note as many members said they could have listened to him for much longer.

Our meeting on 21st May is all about 'Medical Detection Dogs' and how they can identify medical problems way before we can. Many of us know what great companions dogs are, but this could be something of an eye-opener.

Later this month we go on our first day trip of many planned for this year when we travel to Saville Gardens for a bit of garden relaxation before making our way to Runnymede where we join a river cruiser to enjoy the sights and scenes of the River Thames whilst participating in a cream tea.

During September we are off to Eastbourne for five days and during November to Thursford in Norfolk for three days. These holidays are by coach with local pick-ups and although organised by The Valentine Club can be offered to non-members if space is available. If you are interested, please contact me to discuss.

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.

Finally, and most importantly, Cherwell Lottery has awarded the club a £1,000 grant towards ongoing expenses. What are 'ongoing expenses' you may ask? In very simple terms, we hire a coach about six times a year at an average of £900 a time. Speakers and entertainers throughout the year cost around £1,000. The Christmas dinner with entertainment comes out at over £2,000 and members pay £15 per year to join. There is a charge for all coach trips, but all trips are subsidised by the club. Members are very supportive and by paying £1 for their teas and purchasing raffle tickets at each meeting, this makes a big difference, but one of our main sources of income comes from all those wonderful supporters who purchase a lottery ticket each week.

If you would like to support The Valentine Club and all the great things we do, why not have a go at 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 – telephone 340512

STEEPLE ASTON SPRING SHOW RESULTS – 2024

Duncan Cup	Mary White	WI Cup	Victoria Clifton.
Flower Club	D. Preston/Sheila Ballard	Handicraft Cup	Janet Coley
Bedding Family Trophy	Henry Monroe	Mead Vase	Mary White
Under 5s	Jacob Lewin	8 – 11 years	Henry Monroe
5 to 7yrs	Isobel Coysh	12 to 15 years	Sam Martins
	1st	2nd	3rd
Tulips grown in a container	Daphne Preston	Mary White	Dorothy Clifton
Daffodils – long or short trumpet	Mary White		
Multi headed daffodils in a pot	Mary White		
Miniature Daffodils grown in a pot	Kay Francis/ Catherine		
Hyacinths in a bowl	Caroline Parsons	Daphne Preston	Dorothy Clifton
Other pot grown bulb	Daphne Preston	Alan Brewer	Caroline Parsons
Container of spring flowers		John Coley	
Cactus or succulent	Janet Coley	John Coley	
Pot Plant – flowering	Daphne Preston	Alan Brewer	Janet Coley
Pot Plant – foliage	Daphne Preston	Alan Brewer	
Vase of cut garden blooms	Daphne Preston	Mary White	Mark Utting
Vase of cut Buds or Blossom	Mary White	Mark Utting	Paul Rodgers
5 Long Trumpet Daffodils – cut	Richard Preston	Mary White	John Coley
5 Short Trumpet Daffodils – Cut	Richard Preston	Mary White	John Coley
5 miniature Daffodils – Cut	Richard Preston	Kay Francis/Catherine	Mary White
5 stems of multi-headed daffodils cut	Mary White	Victoria Clifton	Richard Preston
3 stems of rhubarb	Stephen Latchford	Richard Preston	Paul Rodgers
Scented spring flowers - cut	Daphne Preston	Victoria Clifton	Mary White
Single cut Daffodil	Mary White	Alan Brewer	Mark Utting
Fresh vegetable (excluding rhubarb)	Graham Clifton	Richard Preston	
Quiche Lorraine	Victoria Clifton	Julia Whybrew	John Coley
100% Wholemeal loaf	Victoria Clifton	Julia Whybrew	John Coley
2 Empanadas	Rebecca Lewin	Victoria Clifton	Julia Whybrew
Panettone	Victoria Clifton	Julia Whybrew	
3 Egg Victoria sandwich	Victoria Clifton	Daphne Preston	Ben Wade-Martin
3 Florentines	Alice Monroe	Victoria Clifton	Hattie Wright
Marble cake	Alex Wade-Martin	Julia Whybrew	Victoria Clifton
5 Pieces of Turkish Delight	Rebecca Lewin	Hattie Wright	Julia Whybrew
Seville Marmalade	Caitlin Kennedy	John Coley	Julia Whybrew
Fruit curd	Julia Whybrew	Mary White	Hattie Wright
Homemade Lemonade	Lucy Duncan	Rebecca Lewin	Victoria Clifton
Homemade Alcoholic drink	Alan Brewer	Victoria Clifton	Julia Whybrew
A handtied Spring posy	Sheila Ballard	Daphne Preston	Rebecca Lewin
Flower arrangement – Sunshine and Rain	Daphne Preston	Sheila Ballard	Rebecca Lewin
Flower arrangement – Foliage	Daphne Preston	Rebecca Lewin	Sheila Ballard
Easter wreath - Displayed hung	Victoria Clifton	Sheila Ballard	Rebecca Lewin
Knitted or crochet flower	Sheila Ballard	Michelle Brock	Judith Lane
Repurposed piece of clothing	Janet Coley	Claire Coysh	
Limerick	Mary White	Bridget Lewis	Jane Edgcumbe
Painting or drawing	Janet Coley	Paul Rodgers	Claire Coysh
Any other handicraft	Claire Coysh	Charlotte Bartlett	Paul Rodgers
An Easter card	Janet Coley	Claire Coysh	
Photo – New Life	John Coley	Claire Coysh	
Photo – Patterns	John Coley	Claire Coysh	Janet Coley
Photo – Opposites	Janet Coley	Ben Wade-Martins	John Coley
Photo – Building (s) Black + white	Paul Brock	Janet Coley	John Coley
Under 5s – Hand/finger painting	Jacob Lewin		
Painting or drawing of an animal	Maximillian Auston	Jacob Lewin	Edward Coysh
Decorated cupcake	Jacob Lewin		
Age 5-7 – Toilet roll animal	Annie Lloyd	Mary Lloyd	Primrose Kennedy
3 Homemade biscuits	Leo Tzalski	Matt Bulford	Isobel Coysh
A playdoh pet	Isobel Coysh	James Monroe	Matt Bulford
Age 8 – 11- An item of origami	Henry Monrow	H. Wheeler Nunneley	Emmie Gardner Cutress
A portrait, painting or drawing	Henry Monroe	H. Wheeler Nunneley	Emmie Gardner Cutress
3 Cereal bars	Henry Monrow	H. Wheeler Nunneley	Woody Wright
Age 12- 15 – A chocolate cake	Seren Wheeler Nunneley	Sam Martin	Charlie Wright
Painting or drawing	Sam Martin	S. Wheeler Nunneley	
Photo - Circles	Ben Wade-Martin	Sam Martin	S. Wheeler Nunneley

Spring Show 2024

There was an extra special presentation at this year's Spring Show, held by Steeple Aston and Middle Aston Horticultural Society on Sunday 24th March in the Village Hall. Richard and Daphne Preston have won innumerable cups at these shows over the years, but this was the first time they've been presented with a bench!



Graham Clifton, the new Chairman who recently took over from Richard, made the presentation. He said, "Most of you will know the Horticultural Society has been going for over 125 years and some of you might think Richard was a founder member. I can assure he was not, but he has been involved with the flower shows for nearly 50 years and Daphne is not that far behind him. Over the years they have both been great supporters of the shows. Both have served on the committee, helped organise and run the shows. They have exhibited and won one or two prizes over the years!"

"At the AGM last year, they both decided it was time to stand down from the committee and let some younger people take over. The show committee decided they wanted to mark their retirement and present them with a gift to show their gratitude – a garden seat." Richard and Daphne lost no time in trying out the seat to have their photograph taken by Nigel Francis.

Graham added that he was very pleased to say that there are now lots of new faces on the committee and he's sure the show will keep going for a long time.

The rest of the show proceeded as normal with Richard and Daphne still having many successful entries. But this year Daphne had to share the Floral Art Trophy with Sheila Ballard. Other winners included Mary White (Duncan Cup for Horticulture and the Mead Vase), Victoria Clifton (WI Cup for Cookery) and Janet Coley (Handicraft Cup).

In the children's classes Henry Munroe won the Bedding Family Trophy. Winners by age were: under-fives Jacob Lewin, 5 to 7 years Isobel Coysh, 8 to 11 years Henry Monroe and 12 to 15 years Sam Martin.

Unfortunately, there was a bit of an Oscar style mix up in the presentation to the eldest age group. Show Secretary Victoria Clifton explains: "We'd like to thank everyone who took part and attended our Spring Show. Sadly, we have fallen foul of a technical glitch and incorrectly announced that Seren Wheeler Nunnely had won the 12 to 15 years category. This year she has been pipped to the post by Sam Martin. Sam is a worthy winner and has now been awarded his own chocolate egg. Apologies for the mistake, well done Sam."



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Plenty of water, but...

There certainly is a lot of water about – no shortage at the moment.

However, hands up if you think we'll get through the summer without a hosepipe ban! We may, it's always possible. But this article is about water conservation.

We know one or two people in the village who have installed underground tanks to harvest rain water from their roofs for the garden. That is very far-sighted and an excellent thing. Installing underground tanks is a major building project. Many, like us, have water butts wherever we can find space for them and they do well, but they are for gardening.

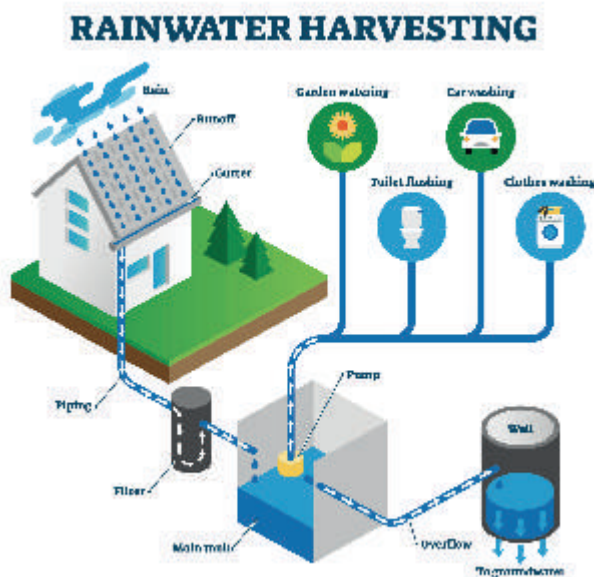
What I am writing about here is what I dream of installing – an above-ground tank a bit like a large water butt. However, this is totally enclosed. Into it rainwater from the roof is harvested, filtered and actually pumped into the house to provide non-drinking water for washing machines, toilets, wash basins and so on. For this kind of use there are filters, but not to the level needed for drinking water.

These collection systems can be bought as kits, which makes life easier, and can be made to serve both indoor and outdoor tap connections. They have automatic level devices to stop overflow and in the event of them running out a system to fill automatically from the mains can be installed. Thus, they don't have to be watched. So, at this time of year, they will be full and even with not much rain during spring and summer they will manage to keep flowing.

In terms of conservation, they are relatively inexpensive. A search on the internet will pull up whole kits up to 5,000 litres for domestic use. If one wishes, a system can be put together from the various parts.

Since we are all on water meters these days, although there are set up costs, the potential to save over the years is definitely there.

Martin Dale,
Secretary Environment and Sustainability Committee
of Steeple Aston Parish Council



The illustration shows the principle of a rainwater harvesting system. The main tank can be above ground or underground, as required.

SAVE THE DATE!

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HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO.....?

Didcot Railway Centre

One of my early memories is burying my face in my great aunt's fur coat to try to escape the noise and smell and smuts from a passing mainline steam train on Guildford station. Now, 70+ years later, I don't approve of her having had a mink coat, but I have come to admire the ingenuity and skill which led to the great age of railways during Queen Victoria's reign and which, for the next 200 years, until the development of the motor car, kept the country moving.

Even today a train journey is an excitement and many people sincerely regret the closing of so many branch lines in the 1960s Beeching cull. The atmosphere of Edward Thomas' poem 'Adelstrop' evinces sighs of regret at the loss of an age within living memory, but which has slipped away. However, you can recover some sense of the great railway age at the Didcot Railway Centre and Museum, about 30 miles down the A34.

Entering through the station ticket barriers at Didcot station you find yourself in a 21-acre industrial museum, with numbers of exhibits, buildings and trains to be visited, admired, handled and ridden on! The engines, trains and carriages from past years are probably what most visitors head for at the beginning of a visit. The Museum, which is largely run by volunteers, offers 'Steam Days' and 'Diesel Days' according to what kind of trains are running around the site.



We were there on a Diesel Day so our first experience was a ride on Athena, where you travel in beautifully preserved carriages from the thirties – I loved the First Class carriage which made us feel we might be part of an Agatha Christie novel! Perhaps visiting on a Steam Day, when one would see and travel on some of the large and wonderfully engineered big steam trains of the Great Western Railway would be even more exciting. You can see what will be running on any particular day if you look on the Museum website: didcotrailwaycentre.org.uk

This museum is not just about riding on and exploring trains, their footplates, listening to the sounds of train staff at work and smelling the diesel and steam. There are other exhibitions, engine sheds, rolling stock and the Great Western archive to be seen. One place which captured our interest particularly was the Signalling Centre, where we were fascinated to learn about how train movements are controlled by various signalling systems and where visitors can be 'hands on' in a separate purpose-built part of the site, trying out a lot of historic and carefully restored equipment.

For anyone interested in the history of train travel, a visit to the Didcot Railway Centre provides a really good day out. There's a shop – railway themed stock of course! – and a café, or should I say Refreshment Room, and much more to see and learn than I have had time or space to write about. You can book tickets online with several prices for over-65s, carers and children. There is ample parking in the station car park, where you pay on arrival. I'd advise parking in the areas opposite the station if you can to save a long walk from the big two-storey car park. It's a very good day out for visitors of any age. Watch out for Paddington and Thomas the Tank Engine too.

Eileen Baglin-Jones

Progress Report on the Revised Plan

Many thanks to all those who engaged with our recent Consultation on the review of the Neighbourhood Plan. We had a great response:

- 176 people submitted comments
- 662 comments in total were received
- 245 people attended one or more of our ten local engagement meetings

The Forum parish councils are now completing the process of reading all the comments and taking on board the many constructive suggestions for changes to our draft policies, as well as objections to some of them. We also have the preliminary views of various statutory bodies and Cherwell District planners to take into account.

The next step is to produce a further iteration of the Plan, together with a detailed record of all the representations received (anonymised) and our response to them. Following submission to Cherwell DC, they will conduct a further public consultation on the basis of those documents. This will probably be in the summer of 2024.

Heyford Park Parish Council

In November 2023, Heyford Park PC told the MCNP Forum that it wished to resign membership of the Forum. It was planning to create its own separate neighbourhood plan for Heyford Park and subsequently applied to Cherwell DC to have the parish designated as a 'neighbourhood area'. This is the first step of many that are needed to create a new neighbourhood plan. It took the MCNP over four years to do so.

No decision has yet been taken by Cherwell following their consultation on the application. In response, the Forum submitted a 19-point objection to Heyford Park's proposal. We do not think it will serve the best interests of the local communities. We understand that the initial decision will be taken by Cherwell's Executive at its meeting on 10th June 2024.

In the meantime, Cherwell planners have told us that they will not progress any submission of our Revised Plan, due to the uncertainty of the outcome of the Heyford Park designation. Our work on the Plan is proceeding, but submission is therefore delayed until after the June meeting.

Dorchester's Ambitious Plans for Heyford Park

Dorchester Living, owners of Heyford Park, delivered a presentation in February to Forum members and others of their long-term vision for Heyford Park. The aim is to pre-empt planning policy for this important strategic site by forcing Cherwell DC to determine Dorchester's proposed submission of their new 'masterplan' for planning permission this summer. A refusal will likely trigger an appeal.

It is a very ambitious proposal, taking in large areas of the historic Flying Field as well as 250 acres of greenfield land to the south of the current development. The original permission at Heyford Park was for 1,075 new dwellings. The latest version is for 6,000 more homes – virtually a six-fold increase. While Dorchester suggests that much of the development would not start until 2040, it is nevertheless the aim to secure the long-term plan now, so that infrastructure improvements (such as the idea of re-opening a railway station at Ardley) can be promoted.

A central objective of the MCNP has always been to avoid the loss of countryside and damage to the rural setting of our villages. The Forum has already expressed its opposition to building on greenfield land adjacent to Heyford Park and has serious concerns about the scale of Dorchester's greatly increased ambitions for the town, not least because of the impact of traffic on our country lanes. We hope to be able to maintain constructive discussions with Dorchester Living and will keep you informed on this important issue.

Village Hall News



Monday 13th May: Village Hall AGM – 8pm

The Annual General Meeting of the Steeple Aston Management Committee will take place on the above date. The AGM lasts approximately 15 minutes and is followed by the monthly Village Hall Committee meeting. Members of the public are very welcome to attend.

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

Teas in Village Hall. The Church Allotments plus five gardens open. Admission £7 to all gardens. The Village Hall Committee is once again organising refreshments for the Open Gardens. The money raised goes towards the Macmillan Nurses and other cancer charities. If anyone would like to bake or supply a cake, help serve teas in the afternoon (for approximately one hour, for a time to suit you) please contact Barbara on 01869 340423. Cakes can be brought to the hall after 10am on the Sunday morning or dropped off to me before the event.

Tuesday 5th November: 'Fireworks spectacular'

Sunday 8th December: Wassail evening

Saturday 18th January 2025: Annual Quiz Night

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 <https://savh.org.uk/>

Steeple Aston Golf Society



Hi fellow golfers, welcome to a new season. It will be good to see you all again, along with any new members who feel that they would like to join us – you will be especially welcomed.

Steeple Aston Golf Society is holding their first meeting of 2024 at the Wychwood Golf Club on Friday 17th May at 12 noon. First tee off 1pm. This course is set on the fringe of the Cotswolds and blends superbly with its surroundings. Lakes and streams enhance the challenge of the course with water coming into play on eight of the 18 holes.

If you would like to join us and play this wonderful course then come along at midday where you will find a friendly bunch of people. If you need more information then call me on 01869 340423 or Chris our secretary on 347173.

Golf Club address: Wychwood, Lyneham OX7 6QQ.

Alan Brewer – Chair

Golf is what you play when you're too out of shape to play football.



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The meeting on 9th April was the AGM. It began with 30 minutes of socialising with refreshments provided by Judith Lane and Alyson Jaycock.

Next came the formal business of the AGM. Apologies for absence were received from several members. Reports on the past year were given by retiring secretary Alyson Jaycock, treasurer Merrill Bayley and president Julie Hillier. Alyson was presented with a gift to thank her for her work as secretary – a role she took on despite being unfamiliar with the village, with the WI and with all the traditions and routines which other members take as given, but which she had to learn! A gift was also given to express our gratitude to retiring committee member Mary Rushworth, a stalwart WI member and worker for many, many years. Julie suspected that in order to have served for so long, Mary must have joined the WI whilst still a teenager!

As this was our AGM and voting would be taking place, Lynn Humberstone from Lower Heyford WI came along to verify the count. Voting took place in time-honoured fashion, with slips of paper collected in a saucepan and Julie Hillier was elected unopposed for another year as President. The other members of this year's committee are: Liz Falconer, Janice Kinory, Merrill Bayley, Katherine Coysh, Sally Cooper and Hildy Frenken.

A number of sign-up sheets were available at the meeting with details of a Bluebell Walk on 26th April, which was followed by lunch at the Red Lion. There were also order forms available for garden bulbs and WI diaries. Members were reminded of the village litter pick and of the walking netball, which now has two trained hosts.

Julie Hillier and Linda Needle had attended the Oxfordshire AGM at Cassington, where Linda won a Fortnum and Mason hamper in the free ballot and my poster advertising the WI won second place in this year's Pat Eades competition.

Winners at our AGM were Alyson, who won the raffle, and Merrill who won the Flower of the Month competition.

It was then time for member Hildy Frenken to talk about her experiences following Lady Ann's Way – a long-distance walk from Skipton to Penrith. She walked a little over 100 miles, passing through some of the pretty Yorkshire Dales villages: Grassington, Burnsall, Hawes, Buckden, and Askrigg on her way to the Eden Valley and Cumbria. The walk passes properties that were owned, renovated and regularly visited by Lady Ann Clifford: Barden Tower, Nappa Hall, Pendragon, Brough and Brougham Castles. The walk was certainly eventful, with weather ranging from one day of fierce sun to several days of relentless rain and mist.

Hildy was confronted by a raging torrent of floodwater, narrowly avoided sunstroke, got locked in a castle, witnessed a fight and a police raid on a pub she was staying in, brought conversation to a silent standstill in another pub, one day set off with no breakfast, once had to concoct supper from what was available at a petrol station, met every possible grade of hospitality from good to grudging, and was tested and tried in more ways than you can imagine. And because the tourist office was closed when she reached Penrith, she didn't even get a certificate to say she'd completed the walk! But what a story, and what resilience! Her talk was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Her audience had many questions and her photo album was studied with great interest. Finally, a vote of thanks was given by Kathryn Coysh and the evening came to a close.

Cathy Lawday

Church Talks, Steeple Aston

Thursday May 23rd 2024, 7.30pm

“A SLIGHTLY COMEDIC TALK ABOUT THE HOUR RECORD”



An illustrated talk by John Orridge

Come and hear tales of cycling derring-do from the lips of a master! A man who is never happier than when clad in lycra and tied to his pedals!

Thursday 6th June 2024 7.30pm

“THE ROYAL COMMISSION FOR THE EXHIBITION OF 1851”

An Illustrated Talk by John Lavery MVO
Secretary to the Commission



A fascinating view into an historical event which influenced science and technology in the past. The Commission's work in our own day may well amaze you.
Refreshments from 7.00pm

Free Entry Donations invited - Proceeds to the Parish Church Funds.

Church Matters



Last May began with the celebrations of His Majesty King Charles' coronation. This May I invite you to think again about kingship. Here in the UK we have a constitutional monarchy. Laws only come into effect by royal assent, though in practice it is the government of the day and parliament which decide the laws. As I write this, the House of Commons and House of Lords are debating the 'Rwanda Bill'.

At the end of March, we celebrated Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday. In church throughout April we heard again the resurrection stories, such as Jesus appearing to his disciples in the upper room. 40 days after his resurrection Jesus ascended to heaven, taking his rightful place at God's right hand and commissioning his disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Since 2016 churches across the globe have encouraged everyone to pray the Lord's Prayer and specifically 'Thy Kingdom Come' for the ten days between Jesus' Ascension and Pentecost Sunday, when the Holy Spirit came to empower all the disciples in Jerusalem.

As a Christian I believe that the world and everything in it belong to God. He is King over all and God's kingdom is one of mercy, justice, and peace. At a time when the Middle East is a tinderbox, Justice and Peace are something the world needs right now. Israel attacked an Iranian embassy and so Iran retaliated with air strikes (most of which were shot down) and Israel wants to retaliate again. As I write this, we still rest on the knife's edge, waiting for the next catastrophic response to ignite.

Closer to home, in Northern Ireland an inquest into the Kingsmill massacre (1976) found it was an overtly sectarian attack. Family members who lost loved ones cry out for justice.

I am left wondering where does the call for justice tip over into retribution and retaliation? When I arrived in my previous group of churches in Lincolnshire, I was warned that elsewhere in the diocese two villages didn't speak to one another because village Y hadn't warned village X that the Vikings were coming, back in the 800s. We might laugh, except that in small communities the family history gets passed down the generations, which is how divisions begin and become embedded in communities.

If we could lay down our divisions and "crossed over the lines and love like Jesus did" (Casting Crowns – 'A Friend of Sinners'), then the world would be a better place. We need to learn to live seeing the best in people, giving others dignity and respect.

Teresa of Avila said, "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which He blesses all the world".

As I begin my second year here as Rector, we will be thinking about how we can be Christ's hands and feet, and how we can make God's kingdom visible here in our local communities. As part of this process, please will you join with me in praying the Lord's Prayer, everyday (from 9th to 19th May), inviting God's kingdom to come, being made visible here in our local community.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

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Church Services



	North Aston	Steeple Aston	Tackley
Sunday 5th May	9.30am Holy Communion (BCP)	11.00am Holy Communion (BCP)	5.30pm Evensong
Sunday 12th May	9.30am Family Service	11.00am Family Service	5.30am Holy Communion
Sunday 19th May	9.30am Holy Communion	11.00am Holy Communion	5.30pm Family Service
Sunday 26th May	9.30am Morning Prayer	11.00am Morning Prayer	9.30am Holy Communion
<p><i>www.sntchurch.com</i></p> <p><i>The church buildings are open every day. Feel free to visit at any time.</i></p>			



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Angie 07767 221534

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Local Info

STEEPLE ASTON VILLAGE HALL HIRING FEES

Website: www.savh.org.uk

All Facilities

Peak Times – involving hire after 6pm

Village Residents (up to 6hrs) (Additional hours at £10/hr)	£65 (Plus Refundable Deposit £200)
Non-Village (up to 6hrs)	£110 (Plus Refundable Deposit £300)
Non-Village (over 6hrs)	£160 (Plus Refundable Deposit £300)

Off-Peak – all hire before 6pm

Hourly Rate	£10/hr (or £30 for 4 hours)
Plus Refundable Deposit	£200

Hall Only

Represented Clubs	£9 (up to 3hrs)
Others	£17 (up to 3hrs)
plus Refundable Deposit	£200

Committee Room

Represented Clubs	£6 (up to 3hrs)
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

Chair – Torquil McLusky Tel : 01869 347914

Treasurer – Chris Cooper Tel : 01869 347173

BUS TIMES

STAGECOACH S4 BUS SERVICE

This timetable is effective from 10th March 2024

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 1937 2037 2216
0703 0817 0920 1020 1620 1737 1840 1932 2022 2147 2253

Saturdays

0721 0821 0931 then hourly to 1531 1641 1746 1849 1937 2037 2216
0809 0909 1019 1619 1729 1834 1932 2022 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 2113 2213 2341
0837 0947 1045 1545 1703 1809 1909 2006 2053 2142 2242 0009

Saturdays

0758 0908 1008 then hourly to 1608 1718 1828 1927 2025 2113 2213 2341
0837 0945 1045 1645 1755 1905 1958 2053 2142 2242 0009

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.

May 2024

2nd Blue and brown
9th Green
16th Blue and brown
23rd Green
30th Blue and brown



June 2024

6th Green
13th Blue and brown
20th Green
27th Blue and brown

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 May and June to editorsalife@gmail.com

MAY 2024			
Wednesday 1st	AD&D Photographic Society Tim Pile: 'Nudes in the Landscape'	Adderbury Institute	7.30pm
Saturday 4th	Plant Sale and Open Garden	Westcott, Middle Aston	10am to 1pm
4th to 12th	Artweeks. Red Lion (12 noon to 6pm) and Middle Aston House (11am to 6pm)		
Saturday 11th	SACC v. Peter Higgins XI	Great Tew CC	11.30am
Tuesday 14th	SAL June 2024 copy and advert deadlines		
Tuesday 14th	WI. Ecologist Hugh Warwick talking about hedgehogs	Village Hall	7pm for 7.30pm
Friday 17th	Golf Society.	Wychwood Golf Club	12 noon
Monday 20th	Parish Council meeting	S&R Building	7.30pm
Tuesday 21st	Valentine Club. Fraser Liversage: Medical Detection Dogs	Village Hall	2.30pm
Thursday 23rd	Valentine Club. Saville Gardens and Thames River Cruise		
Saturday 25th	Deddington Farmers' Market	Deddington	9am to 12.30pm
Saturday 25th	Sustainable Steeple	Deddington Church	9am to 12.30pm
Wednesday 29th	Garden Club. Visit to Claridges Barn, Dean		2.30pm
SAVE THE DATE!			
2nd June	NGS Village Open Gardens		2pm to 6pm
30th June	SACS: Summer Party Concert	Village Hall	6.30pm for 7pm
5th November	Fireworks Spectacular	Robinsons Close	
24th November	SACS: Autumn Concert	Church	7pm
8th December	Wassail Evening	Village Hall	

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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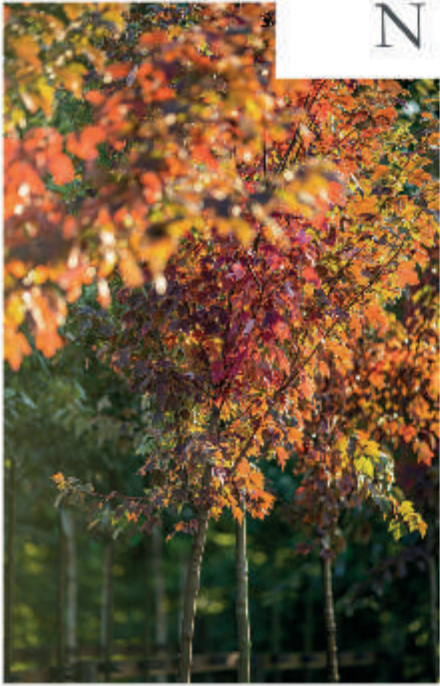
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