

Steeple Aston

December 2025

Issue No. 628

Life



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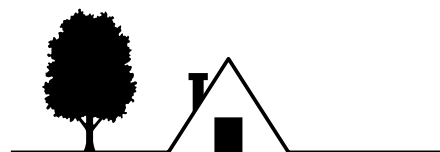
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Contributions are welcome. Please email editorsalife@gmail.com

Cover: Poppy Power, Photos by Chris Neville, Carol Neville & Paul Honigmann

Steeple Aston *Life*

COPY

All articles and letters to
the Editor
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COPY DEADLINES

The copy deadline for the January 2026 issue is
Friday 12th December

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WI	President	Julie Hillier	01869 349185



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

Steeple Aston *Life*

December 2025
Issue No.628

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Editorial

Firstly, many congratulations and thanks to all those involved in making the fabulous poppy installations on display around the village. What a fitting tribute on this 80th VE Day anniversary, plus the response to the SAVA exhibition and book on 'Wartime in Steeple Aston' is further testament to the level of interest in honouring our heroes. It was good to see some purple poppies featured, in homage to the contributions of animals lost in war, so often overlooked.

We extend a warm welcome to new tenants, Bryan and Renée Walker, who have recently taken on the Red Lion pub, and I'm sure villagers will be keen to support our remaining hostelry. More changes are afoot, as Gareth Epps outlines the plans to reorganise local government; plus strong opposition is voiced over the possible impact that proposed new developments may have on the historic views of Rousham.

As we approach the 'big day', festive fun is in abundance, including pantos, the sparkly charity tractor run on 13th December organised by Katharine House Hospice, the Bus Grotto and Christmas Jumper competition, the village Wassail evening on the 7th and Opera Anywhere on the 21st. Why not treat your loved ones to a Steeple Aston calendar, and don't forget to listen out for the twinkling tunes of the handbell ringers on their rounds from the 8th in aid of the Alzheimer's Society, especially poignant to me.

Good luck to Greg and Graham as they embark on their Driving Ukraine mission – please show them your support.

Wishing all readers a very Happy Christmas!

Carol

Harpo pays his respects on Remembrance Day. Photo: Carol Neville.



Meet Bryan and Renée as they reopen the Red Lion

The new landlords at the Red Lion are looking forward to meeting their customers, and hope to become an important and valued part of the village community. They understand that with all the recent uncertainty, villagers want stability and reliability above all. Bryan and Renée Walker have a long history of working in the hospitality business; indeed, they ran a village pub many years ago, so they know what they're in for. Plenty of villagers are keen to see them succeed and wish them the best of luck.



Originally from Brisbane in Australia, the couple first came to England as backpackers in 1999. They liked it so much, they came back here to work in 2003. Later, Bryan moved into hospitality management, spending some time as manager of The Head of the River in Oxford. They moved to Upper Heyford nearly three years ago with their children – Eve, now 15 and 13-year-old Sebastian. The other important member of the family is Lucia, a beautiful Italian Spinone dog, who has already made herself at home in the pub.

After a break away, Renée recently decided she wanted to return to hospitality work. An advert for a manager at the Red Lion first brought her to look at the pub, but then they found the tenancy was available and jumped at the chance to take over.

She says, "It could be a terrific pub for the village, I'm really looking forward to getting to know the locals."

Renée will be front of house with Bryan mainly in the kitchen, helped by a chef de partie. They also hope to employ another full-time staff member for front of house, as well as several part-timers. She says they like to be hands-on with staff, offering lots of training and career development.

The plan is to offer good, simple food, cooked well but not 'overworked'. Bryan says he is interested in the history and tradition of British cookery. He promises no 'jus' but proper gravy! The menu will offer traditional pub food – stews, pies, fish and chips and steak. They will be largely using local produce, with their meat coming from Hook Norton Butchers. There is also a possibility that they will offer tea, coffee and cake. But for the time being there won't be any takeaway – maybe that will come later if there's a demand for it.

Renée and Bryan are going to take their time to get to know their customers and what they'd like from their pub, so they're not making many immediate changes. Monday poker night will continue, and the quiz nights. Bryan says he's a big fan of wine, so may offer wine-tasting or wine and cheese evenings as well as other events in future.

The website has now been updated, showing opening hours and menus on offer:

theredlionsteepleaston.com/

Early deadline for SAL contributions

To all our contributors: owing to the Christmas holidays, the deadline for the January issue is slightly earlier than usual. Please send all submissions to the editor – editorsalife@gmail.com – and advertising manager – salife.advertising@gmail.com – by Friday 12th December. Many thanks.

Pet Pawtrait - Max

What is your name? Max.

What breed are you? Mongrel.

How old are you? Nearly 8 years.

Do you have any nicknames? Oi! Bodger and Fidget Bot.

Professional interests? Finding lost tortoises and stealing dusters.

If I ruled the world for a day: I'd open all National Trust gardens and parks to doggies.

Mortal enemies: None, well, maybe squirrels.

Best friend/s: Maya is my bestest girl.

Things I am asked the most: What make are you? Don't pull!

Local recommendation/s: The Red Lion for biscuits; canal & river for swimming; and fields for running.

Anything else that's special about me: I can tell the time - 6.00pm is dinner time!

My servants are: Wonderful!



County Councillor, Gareth Epps, on the challenges we face

Much as I've enjoyed going to events such as the launch of North Aston Farm Shop (the local food capital of the region? Whisper it...), I've been preoccupied with the challenges posed by the huge development proposals across the Cherwell valley. It's important that voices are heard and perspectives represented. As such, the work being done by Friends of Rousham's historic garden and the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum are really important. As county councillor, my focus has been on transport and flood risk, and more broadly, on the infrastructure that we may all need in future.

The Movement & Place Plan that was due to cover Bicester, will now extend to cover the Heyfords, the Astons and Duns Tew, after much lobbying by myself and others. Timescales are tight – this document is the first stage in our councils being able to impose requirements on developers, should any of the current wave of speculative applications be granted. As such, this is likely to go for approval early in 2026. I'm also keen that it promotes wider interest in the area: could we, for example, develop an active travel plan to promote walking and cycling in our villages? What else should we be bearing in mind?

Happy to discuss – please let me have your thoughts at gareth.epps@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Gareth Epps

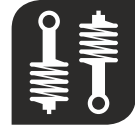
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Letter from *Westminster*

SAL's regular epistle from our MP, Sean Woodcock



I have been out and about around Banbury and North Oxfordshire, meeting with people and speaking to residents, including schools and education providers. It has been good to celebrate the successes and listen to the concerns of local businesses. This gives me an opportunity to speak with staff and managers about any possible issues where my team and I can intervene to help. I was lucky enough to attend some new local developments, such as the opening of the new PlayZone in Princess Diana Park and the Grand Opening of Rosalie nursing home - new facilities that will be great for local people, catering for different groups with different priorities.

In Parliament, I sat on the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Committee, aiming to return power to our regions and communities. I was elected to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee. Housing is the most common issue that constituents bring to me in casework, so I look forward to using this new role to represent them more effectively. Speaking to individual residents about their issues has also been a priority, and I held drop-ins and attended meetings on issues that matter to constituents, such as warm homes and delivering for rural consumers, a drop-in on 'care week', and a meeting on enforcing the hunting ban. I visited the Army as part of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme, which is teaching me lots about those on the frontline. I met with the Water Minister, Emma Hardy, concerning Thames Water, and was pleased to hear that the number of fines is being increased, and that any increase in bills must be spent on infrastructure, with refunds given if Thames Water don't deliver. I will continue fighting so that local people get the service they deserve.

In terms of local wins, I was delighted to hear that the Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government has said he will not call in the OUFC Stadium application and it's back to Cherwell District Council for final sign offs. I hope the new stadium can go ahead as speedily as possible, something which I have been campaigning for on behalf of local fans. I have also welcomed the start of work to the maternity unit at the Horton, following a £3.3m investment into our local hospital. As always, if you have any issues, please email me at sean.woodcock.mp@parliament.uk and I will be happy to help.

Poetry Corner



Regeneration

the season turns and offers up its life
as leaves fall down and coat the floor with red
the way is paved for winter's frigid strife
as all retreat when summer goes to bed

the changes that we see can quench all hope
remind me, have we seen this all before?
collective strength allows us all to cope
with patience spring will come then spirits soar

embrace the winter summer needs to sleep
let words of carols cheer us through the dark
look ahead - form memories to keep
let herald angels sing whilst we do hark

Peter Wild

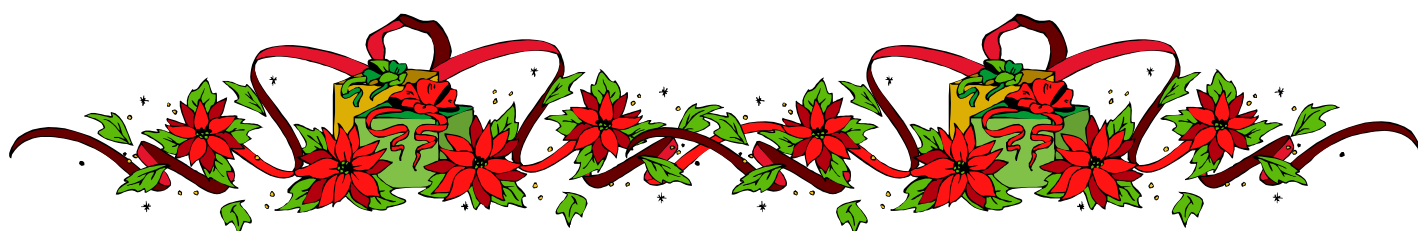


WASSAIL EVENING

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*An informal gathering to enjoy an evening of
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Sunday 7th December 2025 at 6.00 pm

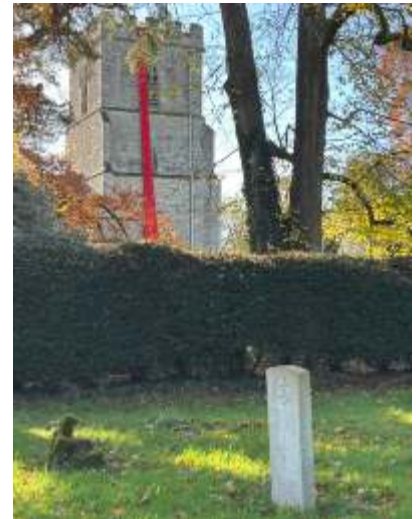


Final message from the Poppy Committee



As we had promised, we used every one of the 6,000 poppies made by so many willing hands, and on Saturday 1st November, watched by a small audience, Graham and a team of bellringers hauled the completed cascade up to the top of the church tower. Any anxiety we might have had was soon forgotten as, in the bright light of morning, the poppies glowed and shone out vibrantly as they cascaded down the north side of the tower at last for all to see. Once the poppy curtain adorned the south door and the cross on the small door to the chancel which heralded the cascade as you drove up Paines Hill were in place, we breathed sighs of relief and hoped those who had worked so hard to complete the project, and anyone from the village or visiting, would be pleased with the result.

We have not been disappointed. The idea of creating a memorial to mark the 80th anniversary of the ending of the Second World War became a special community project, alongside decorations in the church and the excellent SAVA exhibition. We have heard nothing but warm appreciation of the effort which has gone into making and now displaying so many poppies. Reports in the press, on the BBC News channel, and the response to publicity on social media has brought many visitors. The village was very busy, especially during Remembrance weekend, and it is a delight that people have been so positive and appreciative of the results of so much work by so many people. We hope that everyone who has contributed in any way feels at least a small glow of satisfaction. It has been a marvellous village affair!



As a self-selected Poppy Committee, we couldn't be more grateful for the cheerful support so many people have given. It would be invidious to name anyone, but you know who you are, and we hope you were able to come for coffee after the Act of Remembrance on 11th November to share in the thanks at the completion of this special village creation.

Hildy, Merrill, Kay and Eileen



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Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation

The County Council has set out its detailed proposals for local government reorganisation (LGR) – One Oxfordshire – on its website oxfordshire.gov.uk/oneoxfordshire.

There are three options being proposed for Oxfordshire.

1. One Oxfordshire: A single unitary council for Oxfordshire – Oxfordshire Council (responsible for all services for Oxfordshire residents). This is our preferred option.

2. Two unitary councils:

Oxford and Shires Council (previously referenced as North Oxfordshire Council) created from the existing district councils of Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire.

Ridgeway Council created from the existing district councils of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse and the unitary council of West Berkshire.

3. Three unitary councils: With a unitary city on expanded boundaries as well as northern and southern unitaries, also including West Berkshire.

Next steps

If agreed, our proposal – along with others – will be submitted to government by 28th November 2025. Following submission, there will be a statutory consultation giving residents and stakeholders the opportunity to share their views before any decisions are made. The government is expected to announce its decision in late spring or early summer 2026, with elections to a shadow authority (or authorities) likely in May 2027, and the new council(s) coming into effect on 1st April 2028.

A few quick thoughts from me:

Ultimately, these decisions will not be agreed locally, but made in Whitehall by a Secretary of State. What OCC and I believe the rural districts have done is set out proposals that seek to meet the criteria specified by Whitehall.

Unitary government will be a win in terms of ‘joining up’ services which can at times seem confused and disjointed. The challenge is one of economies of scale versus local accessibility and accountability. The Government's criteria favours the former.

We await Government guidance/instructions as to what local area committees will be allowed to do. This is important. If we can have properly functioning and accountable groups where residents know they can attend and directly raise issues, holding those in authority to account, that will be a good thing. Will we be allowed to do this?

I prefer the One Oxfordshire option, mainly because any other proposal would need to create an artificial boundary around Oxford. I can live with the districts option, although I can foresee it leading to difficulties.

We need to be clear about the problems with the three-authority option. A ‘Greater Oxford’ incorporating the Green Belt will be divisive, pitching villages against city councillors. However, worse still for us, we would be left with a very small and therefore inefficient rural unitary that would have to try and provide services, such as social care, across an area from Finmere to Filkins, with significant overheads and resource challenges; as well as a transport authority disconnected from Oxford, in spite of it being a significant travel-to-work destination.

Gareth

Cllr Gareth Epps, Liberal Democrat, Deddington Division



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Peter Dammermann

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Mathew Watson

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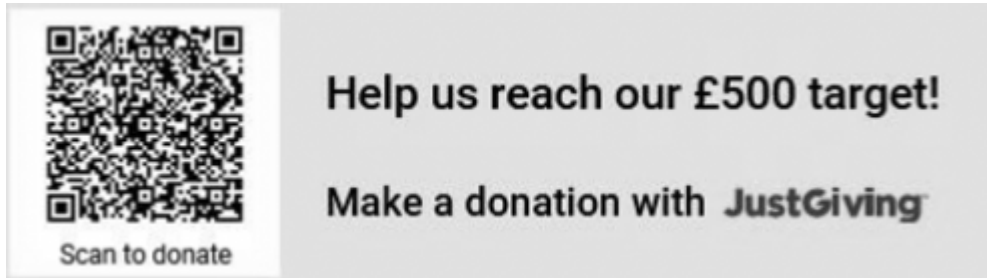
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Handbell Ringers Collection 2025

The Christmas handbell ringing is a village tradition that has been going for over 75 years, and this year will be no exception. Our aim is to bring a touch of joy and merriment to every doorstep in the parish during the lead up to Christmas. We will start our rounds on **Monday 8th December**, knocking on doors between 5.00pm and 8.45pm. We will also make an appearance at the Wassail evening on Sunday 7th in SAVH from 6.00pm.

This year's charity collection will be for the **Alzheimer's Society** - a charity that is now more and more significant to many of us. We will keep a small amount back for the maintenance of the handbells themselves.

Once again, we will have a collection bucket for cash or a QR code on the buckets linking to our Just Giving page, making it super easy to donate.



Village residents are always so generous, which makes the cold nights worth it. If you are just putting the children to bed, or dinner is on the table and it's not a good time for us to call, by all means just say it's not convenient to the person who knocks on your door, and we'll wish you a Merry Christmas and move on. We will also endeavour to post on the village website during the day where we intend to go that evening, although this isn't a guarantee for many reasons.

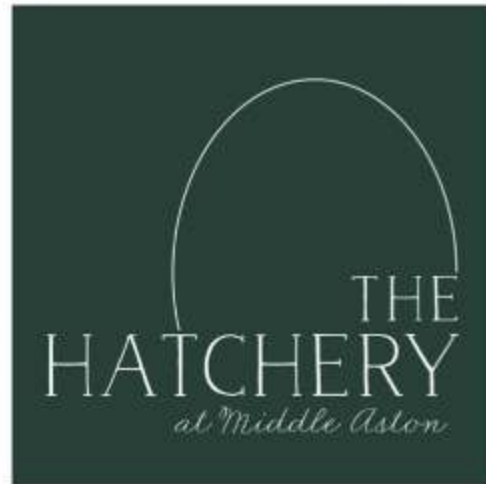
We look forward to seeing you all, and wish you a jingling, good Christmas!

Vicky Clifton, Handbell Captain vmcstedman@btinternet.com



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The November meeting of the WI was very popular, with thirty members attending. This included several new members and members who have transferred from Heyford. President Julie Hillier welcomed everyone and gave us information about the WI Christmas lunch on December 9th, a carol concert at Bucknell Church on December 11th, and a decoupage course at Tackley in February. There is also a workshop to make a Christmas door wreath on December 6th (see details below).

Merrill Bayley spoke briefly to thank everyone who had been involved in making the poppy cascade. This had now been erected on the Church tower and had earned positive comments from everyone who came to see it. Tina Ferguson reported on the successful theatre trip to see 'Emma' in Oxford, and everyone in the group had enjoyed the play, with some staying on to enjoy supper afterwards.



The meeting of the North Ploughley group was well attended with 50 members. Lynn Humberstone was thanked for leading the willow weaving course and Linda Needle for the refreshments.

Volunteers were requested to perform a poem at the village Wassail on December 7th.

Last month, on October 28th, members attended a training course on the use of the defibrillator and how to do CPR. The life-saving skills were demonstrated and may be of vital importance in saving lives. Once business was concluded, members turned to the main purpose of the evening: printing cards. Two tutors from Larkswold craft courses demonstrated block printing and then everyone had the chance to experiment with different designs and colours and print their own card. It was a very enjoyable and productive evening. Larkswold are based in Adelstrop, and run workshops on a wide variety of crafts, from silversmithing, glass-fusing and candle-making, to lino-printing, rug-tufting, pottery, knitting and more. All these activities take place in a purpose-built studio and sounded very tempting. No doubt some members will be planning on learning some new crafts and skills courtesy of this organisation.



Don't forget!

Saturday December 6th: Village Hall 10.00 am - 1.00pm: Christmas wreath-making workshop

Tuesday December 9th: Middle Aston House 12.30pm for 1.00pm: Christmas lunch

Cathy Lawday

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Steeple Aston WI donates to Katharine House Hospice



Steeple Aston WI nominated Katharine House Hospice as its 'Charity of the Year' and donated funds raised by selling jams, chutneys and bric-a-brac from our WI gazebo and tent at the Horticultural Summer Show. Hildy Frenken, one of our members, walked the Camino de Santiago in aid of Katharine House, raising £1,125. We raised further funds at various events during the summer.

On 17th October, Hildy Frenken (centre) and Merrill Bayley (right) representing Steeple Aston WI, presented a cheque for £150 plus an envelope of £50 cash to Hannah Timms, Support Care Officer of Katharine House Hospice. We will continue to support this wonderful local facility, including a collection at our Christmas dinner.

Hildy & Merrill



**KATHARINE
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Upcoming events

Support your local hospice this December:

Lights of Love – 4th December

We will be holding our annual Lights of Love event on Thursday 4th December at St Mary's Church, Banbury. We'd love you to join us for a special gathering, where we come together to remember and celebrate the lives of those we have loved and lost. Find out more: khh.org.uk/lights

Big Give Christmas Challenge – 2nd-9th December

For one week in December, every donation made to Katharine House Hospice online through The Big Give will be doubled thanks to match funding. To help us maximise the funds raised, please consider making a donation during this week.

Banbury Christmas Tractor Run – 13th December

The much-loved Banbury Christmas Tractor Run will be back on 13th December and, as it's the 10th year of this mega event, make sure you get it in your diaries as it's not to be missed. The festive fleet of fairy-lit tractors will tour around local villages, spreading festive cheer and raising money for Katharine House Hospice. For more details and timings, visit: khh.org.uk/tractor

Schools Santa Run – 1st-19th December

This fun Christmas challenge is designed to be flexible for every school to fit it within the PE curriculum or as a fun extra-curricular activity. Find out more and sign up at: khh.org.uk/schools-santa-run



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THE VALENTINE CLUB

So, with Christmas just around the corner, what have the Valentine Club members been up to since we last wrote four weeks ago? A holiday maybe, a top-class vocalist coming to visit the club and two Christmas meals to look forward to, and before we know it, Christmas will be here.



In October, Valentine Club members enjoyed a 5-day break at Studley Castle in Warwickshire

Back in the very last week of October, 51 members including a few friends visited Studley Castle in Warwickshire for a five-day break. The hotel is part of The Warner group and possibly one of their best hotels. Accommodation was first class, as was the entertainment, the food and most importantly, the company. We visited Worcester on Tuesday and The Valley at Evesham on Thursday, with time off on Wednesday to chill out and explore the surrounding countryside, or simply put our feet up and maybe indulge in a glass of wine or similar. The entertainment was both varied and first class, and as for the food, well, if anyone came back anywhere near their departure weight, well done!

For our November meeting, we welcomed back to the club Neil, who has the most amazing voice. If you remember Matt Monro, then Neil was on a par with that famous singer. As for December, all I can say is that I hope our members enjoy a Christmas meal. On the 12th we are taking a full coach load to The Crown Plaza Hotel at Stratford-on-Avon for a 70's Jukebox Day out with a three-course meal and entertainment that most of our members should remember. On the 16th we are back in the village hall for our annual Christmas meal with entertainment and possibly the biggest raffle you have ever seen.

As for next year, 2026, we have three holidays planned, six day trips taking us by road, water and rail and, of course, top quality speakers and entertainers for our monthly meetings. Our waiting list is not getting much shorter as word is getting around that The Valentine Club is the place to be seen. In my younger days, it would have been The Winter Gardens in Banbury (does anyone remember that?) or the local discos that could be found in our area. Now it is The Valentine Club! This is why we are better known as a group of overgrown teenagers. Why bother growing up?

To find out more about The Valentine Club, then simply visit our website on **valentineclub.wixsit.com/aston** - easiest way to log on is go to the village website; go to 'clubs and societies' and find The Valentine Club and click on the link, or keep up-to-date by looking on the village website **steepleaston.org.uk** or use that old-fashioned thing called a telephone and call me on 01869 340512.

Richard Preston – Group organiser (for lack of a better description)
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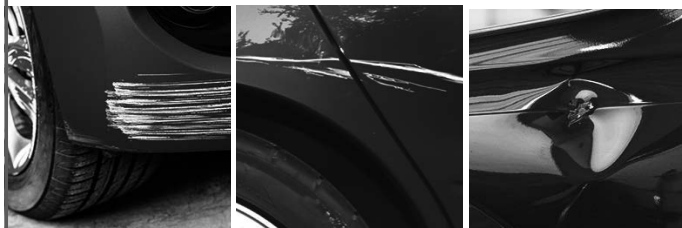
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Village Hall News



Firework spectacular

Well, what can I say? As my first event as the new chair of SAVH, I was just in awe of an amazing team of volunteers. Not just village hall trustees, but trustees from the Sport and Rec, Recreation Trust and crucially from the wider village as well. Without their time and professionalism, this event would not happen. Specific mention has to go to Barbara Brewer and her kitchen crew. She would never tell you this herself, but she has spent weeks planning the food, in addition to two whole days at the hall, cutting veg, stirring soup and burning bangers (sorry, perfectly cooking sausages, but that wasn't so poetic). Richard Preston and his firework lighters; John White for music and tech support; Raj & Parry for selling tickets at the shop; Brenda Bickley for allowing us to use the little field for the bonfire; Simon & Anna Thatcher for arranging the bonfire; Graham Clifton for providing lighting; Amanda and Paul on the gate; Lawrence White on car parking; and, very importantly, our incredibly generous sponsors – Lakeside Farm Business park (David & Robert Fry); Middle Aston Ltd (Mr Charles Sandy & Mr Patrick Bradshaw); plus another five anonymous village donors, without whom we wouldn't be able to provide such a spectacular event. The weather was as perfect as it could have been, and almost 500 people attended – astonishing! Thank you for coming and supporting this wonderful village tradition.

Sunday 7th December: Wassail evening



Enjoy a light-hearted evening of mulled wine, soft drinks, mince pies, carols, readings, handbell ringers and Christmas music. This is an opportunity for everyone – families, young, and old – to join in some community singing. So come along and join us, as everyone is welcome. Free entry. Santa hats encouraged.

Steeple Aston Village Hall 2026 Calendar



ALMOST SOLD OUT - for details, please contact John Coley to purchase one growlpaine35@gmail.com. Only £10 each.

Sunday 21st December: Opera Anywhere - Steeple Aston Village Hall – 3.00pm start

This is a travelling theatre company who have put on many highly popular performances at the hall in the past. Booking is via their website: operaanywhere.com/. The Village Hall trustees will be selling refreshments.

Saturday 17th January 2026: Annual Quiz Night – 7.00pm for prompt 7.30pm start

Five tables have already been booked, and with a max capacity of 12, you'd better be quick. Please book your teams (max 8 per team) with Barbara Brewer (01869 340423) early to avoid disappointment. £2.50 pp entrance fee at time of booking. You don't need to be part of a team already, contact Barbara and she'll be able to assist individuals or couples to make up tables. There is a licenced bar, so please do not bring your own drinks to the event, but bring money.

20% off Friday village hall bookings - continues until Christmas – Book now!

Our letting agent is Angela Smith – 07734 112967. Please do not call this number between 6.00pm and 8.00pm unless urgent.

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

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Victoria Clifton (Chair)

savh.org.uk/

Parish Council Meeting *Notes*



The meeting on 17th November kicked off with a member of the public talking about the development plans for Heyford Park (a possible 9,000 new homes). He thanked one parish councillor for his radio interview discussing this 'New Town' proposal (I'll have to ask BBC Sounds for that one), and went on to say that the council had received 750 objections on their website, not to mention hundreds of separate emails. He asked if the PC would contribute towards funding some more expert formal feedback to better articulate these objections, looking at transport, flooding, heritage and so on. Some alarming figures were mentioned – the possibility of 25m extra car journeys in the area – but it looks ultimately that it will be a decision taken by central government. The phrase 'tilted balance' was used, which apparently means that, if there isn't a 5-year housing land supply, then permission *has* to be granted unless there is overwhelming evidence of an adverse impact resulting from development. Cherwell only has 2.3 years of supply.

Then David Rogers, our Cherwell District Councillor, gave us a comprehensive round-up including a mention of the illegal fly-tipping in Kidlington that's been in the news (worth googling that one for the images – like a river of rubbish!). It could cost as much as £27m to clear up, which is more than Cherwell's annual budget! As he said: "crumbs, what a mess - literally!"

Meanwhile County Councillor, Gareth Epps, told us of an expected budget shortfall over the next three years of around £35m (largely down to a funding review by Government), of the 'Bicester & Cherwell Movement and Place Plan', which intends to inform developer obligations for infrastructure; and another councillor spoke about the Cherwell Parish Liaison Meeting, which involved around 25 parishes, many with concerns around flooding, rather timely given Storm Claudia's recent deluge.

I then witnessed possibly the swiftest run through of a Parish Council agenda in living memory... Playground (small amount of refurb work to do next year), Toilet (to be decorated next year), Highways & Footpaths (NO ISSUES!), Buildings (a few issues of damp – I blame Claudia), Committees (no updates except to say the Environment Committee has been particularly quiet) and Planning (no new applications).

Our next Parish Council meeting isn't until 19th January 2026, so save the date. There is also going to be a 'public village workshop' all about planning for the future of the parish, so keep an eye out for the date and further details. That's something to look forward to for the new year.

All the best,

Mrs Miggins

Steeple Aston & Middle Aston Horticultural Society

HOW TO WIN PRIZES!

The society have been asked to write something each month, to help and encourage you to take part, and to succeed at winning some prizes! These are my personal top tips to get ahead for next year:

Roses – on a dry day, trim the top third (at least) off your shrub roses to prevent wind rock and damage in high winds. The dry day is critical to prevent fungal disease getting into open wounds. Tie in climbing and rambling roses.

Marmalade – look out for Seville oranges on sale about January in the supermarkets. To help with getting your jams and marmalades to set, it's worth asking Santa for a jam thermometer.

Don't leave handicraft entries to the last second, study the classes, and get started on a cold and frosty evening.

Rhubarb – if you'd like to enter Rhubarb in our Spring show on Sunday 22nd March, you will most likely need to 'force' it to be ready in time. You can either use a stylish terracotta forcing pot, but a tall bucket or bin should work just as well. More advice can be found on the rhs.org.uk website, or better still, ask some of the village residents who have had success in past years...Stephen Latchford, Helen Wright or Richard Preston, to name a few.

Amaryllis – are you someone who gets given one for Christmas? Or treat yourself with the tempting displays at the supermarket, then why not try and time it to flower for the spring show. So... keep it somewhere cool (but not frosty), dark and dry until 7 or 8 weeks before the show, and then plant as per the instructions enclosed with the bulbs. Having said that, the ones in the supermarkets have been sat under the heater for a week so have started to sprout. Check the boxes before they try to escape. There is also an element of luck, having grown one every year for the past 20 years, last year was the only year I got it to flower at the right time. Delivering it to the hall in one piece was a challenge, as the photo shows.

My last top tip - any yeast exhibits that I enter I always make in the week before the show, cool them, wrap in cling film and a tea towel and freeze. On the day of the show, let them defrost in time for judging. I'd never have time on the day to make it, and to do it the day before can mean they are stale.

I hope these tips help, but please ask if you have a question. Good luck!

Vicky Clifton, Show Secretary



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Dr Radcliffe's *School Report*



Bloxham School Year 5 Art Workshop

Some children from Year 5 have recently had a fantastic morning at Bloxham School taking part in an art workshop. They had the opportunity to make etchings, paint textiles, develop photographs and create wire models. The end results were amazing. This was a great opportunity for our children to access a really well-equipped secondary Art Department and use a wide range of media.



Oxford Schools Challenge Half Marathon

In October, some Year 6 children met very early to take part in the Oxford Schools Challenge Half Marathon. The children had run 12 miles before the day of the event and ran the final mile in front on the cheering Oxford crowds before the start of the adult race. Despite the cold, the children ran brilliantly and all successfully completed the challenge. Thank you to the parents who came and supported the children and helped Mrs Roberts run with the children too.



Year 3 visit SAVA (Steeple Aston Village Archive)

This term, Year 3 children were lucky enough to have four sessions with the SAVA volunteers steepleastonarchive.org.uk. They looked at maps and photographs, and learnt about timelines and dates. The children had a lovely time exploring what Steeple Aston looked like in the past and they were able to ask lots of questions. It was a fabulous opportunity and one we are sure the children will remember. Thank you to everyone involved.

Cotswold Art Through Schools (CATS) Clay Work

CATS have visited Years 1 to 6 to complete some clay art sessions. Each class completed a project based on a topic they will study this year. All of the children had a wonderful time learning new techniques. They left with a sense of achievement and were proud of their accomplishments.



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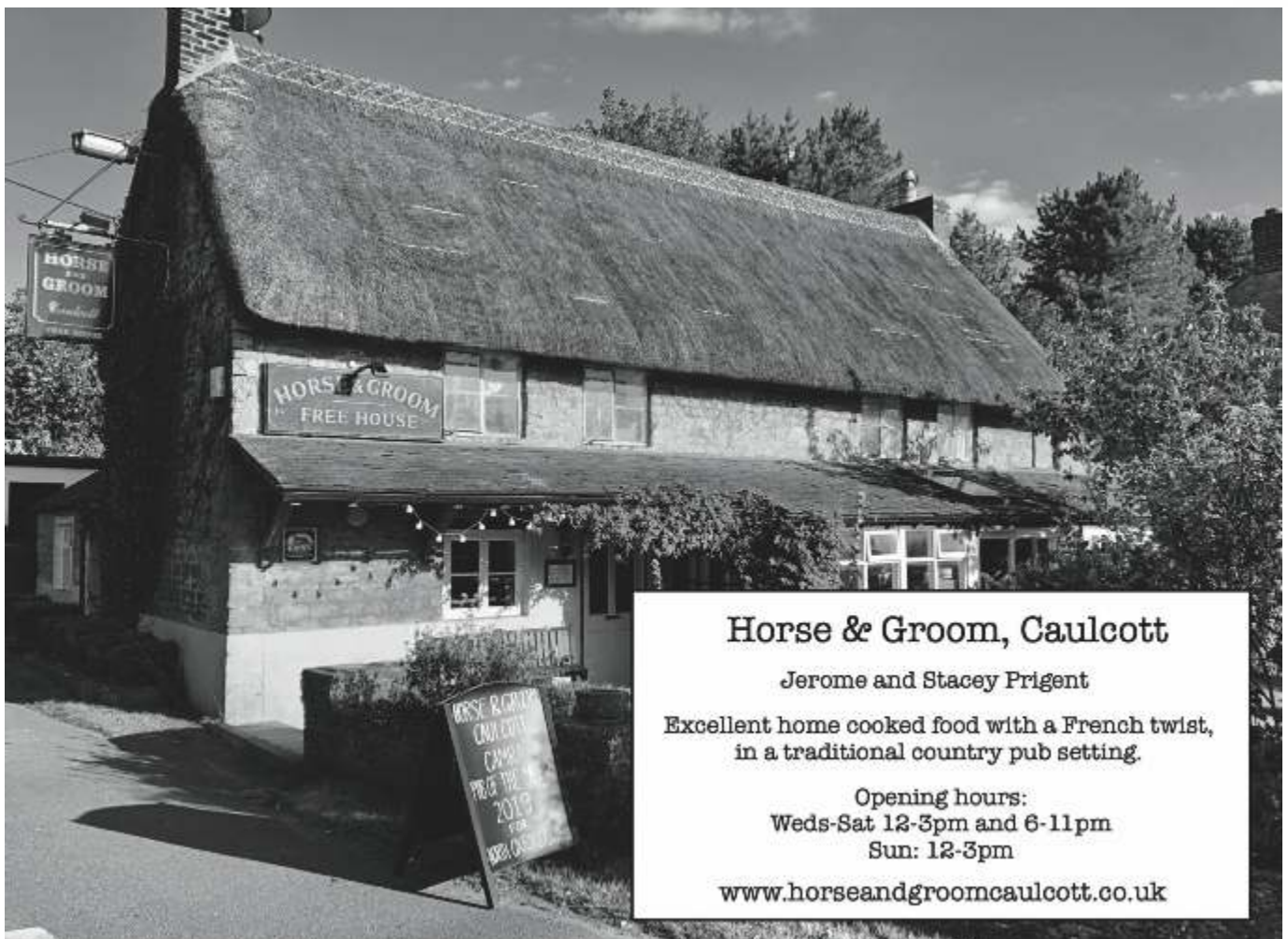
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Dawn or Dusk

If, like me, you're at your physical and mental best well after midday, playing golf shortly after dawn is all too rare a treat. It is the best time to play, as it's easier to be up at 6.00am for tee time than 9.00am to go to work.

If you have never played golf at this time of day, I suggest you try it at least once next summer. It's not too hot, the fresh cool dew cleans the air, the green staff are whirring into action, the birds are singing and all is right with the world. However, if this is not for you as you have a hard time waking up, showering, breakfasting and driving to the course before sun up, then don't worry, as late summer evenings are almost as good, and by the time you walk off the course at the 18th green, the bar will be open.

Happy golfing!

Alan Brewer



Football *Focus*

Match report from Alex Keal: Wroxton Development: 2 - Steeple Aston: 4

The miracle at Medina, Leicester City's 2016 premier league win, Botham's Ashes and now... The 'wonder at Wroxton'. The morning of the 2nd November started like any other for Steeple Aston FC's players. A bare-bones 11 playing a fellow division 2 struggler, Wroxton Development team. Then came the news that we were all dreading - one of our number had come down with something overnight and was now unable to play. We were now 10, but 10 is better than 9 and onwards we marched to Wroxton. The match kicked off and the Steeple soldiers grew into the game after a shaky start, getting used to being one man down and then - the unthinkable happened - a great goal from Seth, heads lifted, chests puffed. Then a second from Adrian - 2-nil up, against the wind, uphill and only 10 men? Was Secretary/co-manager/linesman, Stuart Bailey, dreaming? If he was, he was soon back awake. Two goals for Wroxton just before half time - one a worldie and one a breakaway.

Some onlookers thought 'here we go again', but not this 10. They had the wind at their backs and kept it tight at the start of the second half. Wroxton didn't have a sniff, but SAFC couldn't fashion a chance until Adrian again found some space in the box and struck a superb left footed low half volley into the corner of the net to make it 3-2 and the dream was back on, but fifteen minutes of hard graft remained until the sanctuary of the referee's final whistle. The tenacious ten were, understandably, starting to flag, having put so much into getting the famous black and white stripes back into the lead. Then, the icing on the cake, a 35-yard free kick into the top right corner from Seth confirmed the win! Not long after, the ref's whistle sounded and the celebrations began. After a tough few years for Steeple Aston Football Club, this was a much-needed shot in the arm. And here's to the next win - maybe you could come down to cheer us on!



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Visitors flock to SAVA exhibition - 'Wartime in Steeple Aston'



To complement the superb Poppy Cascade at the church and other Remembrance displays around the village, Steeple Aston Village Archive (SAVA) held its annual exhibition over the weekend of 8th/9th November at the village hall. Helped by mild weather, the event was extremely well attended, and sales of our new book to accompany the exhibition were well received. It was great to see so many villagers, as well as those visiting from further afield.

The main theme of the exhibition was to highlight and provide the background to all those named on the Parish War Memorial. Indeed, SAVA's research discovered several additional names, not previously recorded, people who were born or lived in the villages of Steeple and Middle Aston during WWI and WWII. Whilst all are tragic, many stories are equally fascinating and increasingly difficult to comprehend for a modern, younger audience!



Take the case of Vivian Pearson, the school head teacher at the beginning of the war. He was also chairman of the committee that marshalled those who were to defend and do vital emergency work, should the conflict descend directly upon the village, co-ordinating lists of volunteers in 'The War Book' who were willing to fight fires, dispense first aid, offer transport and any other activities required for the well-being of the village. All of this was set against the background of a deeply personal tragedy - the death of his pilot son - shot down over Kent in 1940! Mr Pearson was also responsible for organising the schooling of the child 'evacuees', many of whom came to Steeple Aston, often alone, from



Joyce Bedding reminiscing on life as a 'Land Army Girl' in WWII.

places like East Ham in London, plus the Pearsons had evacuees allotted to their home. The SAVA volunteers enjoyed the opportunity to explain what happened to them, and encouraged villagers to imagine what life was like for all their wartime counterparts. This was helped by the quite extensive collection of memorabilia, documents, medals and not forgetting Diana Gardner's 'Utility Bear', whilst Miggy Wild ran a soundtrack of period music in the background. One of the highlights was the appearance of Joyce Bedding reminiscing about her life as a 'Land Army Girl' in WWII.

All in all, a very successful event and a reminder that SAVA are always on the lookout for information to add to the village archive in any form. The Village History Centre, adjacent to the Village Hall, is open every Saturday between 10.00am and 12 noon. Copies of the latest book 'Wartime in Steeple Aston', together with all our previous publications, are available on Saturday mornings or via the website: steepleastonarchive.org

Stuart Cummins - SAVA



Diana Gardner's 'Utility Bear' was popular with visitors.



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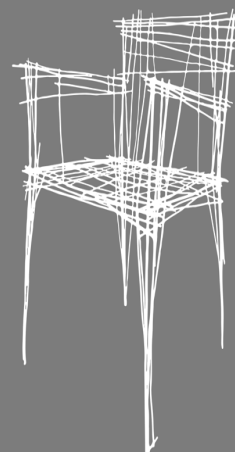
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Steeple Aston *Garden Club*



At our Garden Club meeting on 4th November, we were treated to a very interesting talk by Vanessa Berridge about the development of Kiftsgate Court Garden which the Club visited in the summer. She has written a number of books about gardening, including one for the 100th anniversary of Kiftsgate in 2019. This meant she was very knowledgeable about how each of three generations of the family has developed the garden both structurally and the planting schemes over the last c100 years.

For those of you who have never been or maybe it has been a few years, it sounds like a very worthwhile day out when the garden opens again next summer. They also have a wide range of plants for sale which several members of the Garden Club testified to the quality and durability of, unlike some plants bought from other garden centres!

In December, Garden Club members will be going to The Holt for their annual Christmas meal, and after a break in January, the first monthly talk will be on Tuesday 3rd February, when Caroline Landless from Rousham is coming to give us a talk about the history and development of the gardens, and the famous landscaping of the grounds at Rousham. For any non-members, please come along and join us! Doors open at 7.00pm for a 7.30pm start in the village hall.

We are also working on a list of gardens for our monthly visits next summer, including a follow-up visit to Rousham. The calendar of events will be updated on the website soon, or in the meantime, please contact Richard or Alison for more information!

We hope the weather is fine for lots of winter gardening, and look forward to seeing you in the spring, when the snowdrops are emerging to signal the start of a new gardening season!

Alison Llewellyn alisonllew.home@gmail.com

Richard Preston Richard.preston5@btopenworld.com

Steeple Aston & Middle Aston Horticultural Society Update

Hot off the press, I can tell you the class titles for the photographic classes for next year the highlight of your day, I know. But seriously, on the dull damp days, taking a wander even in the rain, can restore your mood, and what better excuse than having a theme of things to look out for. The classes for the spring are:



White; Recycled; and as a black and white photo – **Textures**. There will be one more class, but the title is still being decided, and the copy date for SAL is looming, so that one will have to be announced next month. The children's photo class is: **Food**. Summer photo classes are: **Life** (panel of 4 photos); **Childhood; Poppies; Sea of colour** and **Gateways**. The children's classes are: **Summer; Orange** and **Clouds**. There will also be another class for the summer show, TBC.

The Spring show schedule will be available on the village website by the start of December, and will be available in the January SAL. Both of our shows are open to everyone, young and old, village residents or not. If you have family coming that weekend, get them involved too, be it a limerick, oh spoiler, this year's is: "There once was a poet called Will..." or some lemon curd, it all adds to the fun.

OTHER BIG NEWS – we have reinstated our old structure for children's classes. Children will now be able to enter classes that are in an older age section if they wish to, however, they will not be given special consideration by the judge for this. For example, if they are 5 years old and enter the under 12-year section, the judge will not take their younger age into account. But I'm sure there is a budding Picasso out there who could challenge us all. If you have any questions, please contact one of the Committee. So, date for the diary: **Sunday 22nd March 2026**.

If I can help with any queries, please drop me a line.

Vicky Clifton, Show Secretary vmcstedman@btinternet.com

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# The ARTS Page



Christmas starts at home with plenty of chances to sing carols in Steeple Aston.

'Wassail' led by the indefatigable Margaret Bullement in the village hall at 7.00pm on Sunday 7th – free entry. Always a festive treat.

'Carols at the Red' from 6.30pm to 7.30pm is on Friday 19th. Raise the roof with your favourite carols in the Red Lion. I'll be at the keyboard. A lovely family event.

'Carol Service' in the church at 6.00pm on Sunday 21st; at 4.00pm on the 24th is the 'Crib Service'; and at 11.30pm 'Midnight Mass'; with the 'Christmas Service' at 10.30am on Christmas Day. We have wonderful bell ringers here, and at Christmas the Handbell Ringers do the rounds of the village

[Steepleastonbellringers.com](http://Steepleastonbellringers.com)

Two other events to note in December:

Duns Tew Drama Group offer 'Aladdin' on the 5th/6th/12th/13th [dunstewdg@yahoo.com](mailto:dunstewdg@yahoo.com) Many of your friends will be in this.

'Opera Anywhere' are in our Village Hall on Sunday 21st at 3.00pm. Double bill of 'Trial by Jury' and 'Amahl and the Night Visitors'. They have a terrific reputation and this will be the icing on the cake for our yuletide celebrations [operaanywhere.com](http://operaanywhere.com) - see tour dates.

A selection of Christmas concerts/events that caught my eye, a little further afield:

Thursday 4th 'Songs for Christmas' at 6.00pm in the Levine Building, Trinity College, with rising star Lorena Paz Nieto and local legend Sholto Kynock [Oxfordsong.org](http://Oxfordsong.org)

Friday 5th Macmillan Cancer Carol Concert. Christ Church Cathedral at 8.00pm. 'Follow the Stars' with the Oxford Bach Soloists, conducted by Stephen Grahl, with Abigail Thaw, Sophie Bevan, Angela Rippon and others [Ticketsoxford.com](http://Ticketsoxford.com)

Saturday 6th in Christ Church, Family Christmas Concert at 2.00pm – 'relaxed, fun and informal'. Also, two Carol Concerts in Christ Church on Wednesday 17th and Friday 19th at 8.00pm – all from [musicatoxford.com](http://musicatoxford.com)

Our friends in the Woodstock Musical Society have Friday 12th and Saturday 13th in St Mary's Church at 7.30pm - Celebrating Christmas. Always one of my favourites [woodstockmusic.info](http://woodstockmusic.info). Tuesday 16th at 6.30pm is Bach's 'Christmas Oratorio' (Parts 1/2/3).

New College Choir and Instruments of Time and Truth in the University Church [Ticketsource.co.uk](http://Ticketsource.co.uk)

Thursday 18th at 7.30pm, Oxford's professional vocal consort, Contrapunctus in Queen's College Chapel – 'A Choral Christmas' [Contrapunctus.org.uk](http://Contrapunctus.org.uk)

A mention of the Oxford Bach Choir in the Sheldonian – Saturday 6th Haydn and Mozart (C Minor Mass) and their Christmas Concert on Saturday 20th, both at 7.30pm [oxfordbachchoir.org](http://oxfordbachchoir.org)

'The Great Big Christmas Show' at the Highfield Social Club, Bicester, music for all ages and genres, a Christmas Cabaret show. Looks huge fun. (Doors 7.30pm Starts 8.30pm) [tgbs@bzentertainment.co.uk](mailto:tgbs@bzentertainment.co.uk)

For a cornucopia of events for the festive season, two venues that won't disappoint!

[Blenheimpalace.com](http://Blenheimpalace.com) and [Waddesdon.org.uk](http://Waddesdon.org.uk) take a binge look at all they are offering.

As singing is such an important part of Christmas, I can highly recommend the Nicholas Hytner/Alan Bennett film 'The Choral'.

You may well have chosen your Christmas shows and pantos, as they get booked up quickly. But, if not, try 'Nutcracker' at the [northwall.com](http://northwall.com); 'Dick Whittington' and for 3 to 6-year-olds 'Where's Father Christmas?', at the [oxfordplayhouse.com](http://oxfordplayhouse.com); 'Beauty and the Beast' at [wolvercotevillagehall.org.uk](http://wolvercotevillagehall.org.uk); 'Supermarket Scrooge' at the [pegasustheatre.org.uk](http://pegasustheatre.org.uk); 'Miss Saigon' at the New Theatre [atg.tickets.com](http://atg.tickets.com); 'A Present for Jack' – 'festive sparkle, magical storytelling – a seasonal treat' at the [storymuseum.org.uk](http://storymuseum.org.uk); Last, but far from least, 'Beauty and the Beast' at the [chippingnortontheatre.com](http://chippingnortontheatre.com)

So, a snapshot of What's on. Have a very Happy Christmas and hope for a better and more peaceful 2026!

**Nick Cleobury**



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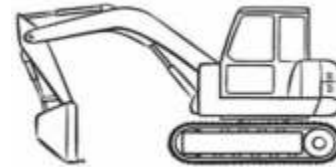
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## Winter wildlife & the importance of soil

### Seasonal Spotlight

Winter can be quite a harsh time of year for much of our wildlife, but for some species it can offer a bit of respite from the harsher, colder climates further north. Winter is a fantastic time to see many bird species that we won't see in summer such as redwings and fieldfares. Birds such as starlings start to flock, forming impressive murmurations in the sky. Why not visit your local nature reserve on a winter's day and see what new species you can find?

### Tips for looking after wildlife this winter:

- Always move your burn piles before you light them! The best habitat piles are usually created on nature reserves and to the untrained eye, these look a lot like burn piles. The wildlife thinks so too, and many creatures use burn piles to sleep in, including hedgehogs, frogs, voles, and lizards. To avoid burning hibernating wildlife, you must move burn piles before lighting them.
- Crack ice on your bird baths, water dishes and ponds, so that our winter wildlife can still drink. Who knows which birds you might see enjoying a sip.
- Leave area(s) of your garden undisturbed to allow hibernating wildlife to sleep in peace and unharmed. Some invertebrates hibernate in hollow stems of grassland and scrub species, such as cow parsley and other umbellifers. Avoid cutting these as they might be home to sleeping beetles, bees, spiders or even ladybirds.
- Log piles are well sought after for both people and wildlife at this time of year. If you can, try to leave a pile outside untouched to allow hedgehogs and other hibernating wildlife to sleep in it over winter.
- If you find a sick or injured hedgehog or other wild animal, please call Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital on [01844 292292](tel:01844292292)

To find out more about **Wildlife friendly gardening** – head over to the Wild Oxfordshire website at [wildoxfordshire.org.uk](http://wildoxfordshire.org.uk) and check out the guidance.

### World Soil Day

The 5<sup>th</sup> December is **World Soil Day**, held annually to highlight the importance of healthy soil and its sustainable management. Soil is vital for plant growth and therefore food production. Healthy soils filter and store water, reducing the risk of flooding. Soil can even help mitigate against climate change by storing carbon from the atmosphere. In addition, soil provides a habitat for many different species including bacteria, fungi, worms and invertebrates. It is estimated that a single teaspoon of healthy soil can contain more living organisms than there are people on Earth – that's over 7 billion microbes! We can all do our bit to support healthy soils. This can be in your garden through reducing the amount of chemicals you apply, composting and mulching, or turning your lawn into a meadow. We can also do our bit by supporting farmers who are working to improve their soil quality through sustainable farming practices – when you can, buy organic or directly from the farmer.

Sophie Cunnington, Wild Oxfordshire  
[wildoxfordshire.org.uk/](http://wildoxfordshire.org.uk/)

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## Panto in February? Oh yes, it is!

If you're looking for something to look forward to in the New Year to help banish those winter blues, then look no further. Launton Village Players are proud to announce their 2026 panto: 'Treasure Island', written by Rod and Nikki Fine, directed by Julia West, with music by Steve Webber.

There will be seven performances during February half term in Cooper School Performance Hall, Bicester on the following dates:

Wednesday 18th February at 7:30pm

Thursday 19th February at 10:30am (relaxed performance) and 2:30pm

Friday 20th February at 2:30pm and 7:30pm

Saturday 21st February at 2:30pm and 7:30pm

Tickets are available from [ticketsource.co.uk/lvp](https://ticketsource.co.uk/lvp) and cost £7-£14 but family discounts are available for all shows.

This is a family show, suitable for all ages and includes all the traditional pantomime elements, with plenty of magic, comedy and audience participation. Will the wicked Captain Hook get his hands on the long-lost treasure? Our heroes will need your help to make sure good triumphs over evil!

All profits will be donated to Dementia Oxfordshire and Dementia Active, two charities who provide activities, support and opportunities for those diagnosed with dementia, and their families and carers in the local area.

Come and enjoy Bicester's biggest and most magical award-winning panto!

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The Duns Tew Drama Group presents

# Aladdin

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## Enter the Christmas Jumper Competition at this newly accredited museum!

We are delighted to announce that VisitEngland has awarded the Oxford Bus and Morris Motors Museum its 'Quality Assured Visitor Attraction' status. The award follows a visit to the museum by a mystery shopper, who rated the museum across eight topics. A 60% rating is classed as good, being the pass mark, and we achieved 'an overall commendable score of 73%'.

The assessor stated in his report that "key strengths highlighted in the assessment included the staff, cleanliness, and the attraction itself. The carefully curated displays offer a fascinating insight into Oxfordshire's transport heritage, bringing the past vividly to life. What makes the experience even more special is the team of staff and volunteers, who are friendly, knowledgeable, and clearly passionate about what they do, creating a warm and engaging atmosphere throughout the visit".

The assessor identified that we have some work to do on the toilets and catering facilities, and the trustees have formed a sub-committee to review these and other suggestions in the report to improve our visitor experience. A different mystery shopper will visit during 2026 when the museum will be reassessed. Locally, other attractions with the award include Blenheim Palace, Oxford Castle & Prison, The Ashmolean, The Sheldonian, Bodleian Libraries, Didcot Railway Centre and Waterperry Gardens.

Father Christmas will be visiting the museum and seeing children in his 'Bus Grotto' on Sunday 14th and Sunday 21st December between 10.00am and 3.00pm. There will be a small extra charge for every child who visits Santa, but each child will receive a present. On both days, The Oxford & District Model Railway Club will be bringing their model railway layouts for visitors to see, and older children and adults may be allowed to operate some trains.

On New Year's Day, we will offer heritage bus rides from 11.00am until 3.00pm plus a free to enter competition for 'The Best Christmas Jumper'. If you are feeling a bit frail after the previous night's celebrations, come along in your best or worst jumper, enjoy the museum and wallow in nostalgia.

Wishing you a very Happy Christmas!

Frank Collingwood - Oxford Bus & Morris Motors Museum, Long Hanborough

## 1st Deddington Guides *Report*

It's been a very busy few weeks, and we were pleased to welcome Ruby and Harriet as new members. All the girls can be very proud of their turnout on Remembrance Day, not only in terms of smartness, but in managing all their responsibilities as members of the colour party or laying poppy wreaths and crosses. Well done to you all!

We made our annual nod to Halloween by dressing up and playing some games which was great fun. We have, amongst many other things, made great progress with our Food Critic badge, which we are all working on together, starting by making scrapbooks, with some lovely designs. Melissa gave a really interesting talk about her voluntary work caring for injured and orphaned hedgehogs, and we also learnt about fruits from all over the world and tasted them too!

Girls aged 10 and over all welcome.

**Maggie Rampley 07957 600755**

## Greg and Graham's charity mission to Ukraine

Driving Ukraine is an Oxfordshire charity run by Jacob and Fynn from Deddington to procure 4x4 trucks and deliver them to Ukraine for the evacuation of military and civilian casualties.



The field behind Hatch End is one of the sites where they are checked over before the journey. It's a 1,400-mile trip over three days, with the convoy driving at 50mph taking about 11 hours a day. They have successfully delivered over 270 vehicles with countless lives almost certainly saved as a direct result. Having read the SAL article explaining about the trucks behind the Grain Store over the summer, we signed up in October to fundraise the purchase and delivery costs of a truck and drive it there ourselves in mid-December. To date, we have donations totalling more than £5,000, enough for a serviceable 4x4 but **we still need more** to equip it and cover logistics. We also want to take as much relevant aid as we can: medical equipment, generator sets, etc. We would particularly like to fund a drone-detector, if possible, with drones being a particular hazard for any vehicles moving near the front lines.

Thank you to everyone who has already responded. Steeple Aston has been amazing with its support and we are most grateful. If you're still wavering,

then please, please consider making an online donation at [donorbox.org/grahamukraine](https://donorbox.org/grahamukraine)

**Greg Elphick and Graham Porcas** (both old enough to know better, but doing it anyway)

### **STOP PRESS**

*We are now three! **Cara Cox**, daughter of Darren and Sally from Middle Aston, has joined us to film the trip. She is a professional videographer.*

### The Wisdom of Terry Pratchett

"If you don't turn your life into a story, you just become a part of someone else's story."

- Terry Pratchett, [The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents](#)

"No one is actually dead until the ripples they cause in the world die away..."

- Terry Pratchett, [Reaper Man](#)

"There's a door."

"Where does it go?"

"It stays where it is, I think."

- Terry Pratchett, [Eric](#)



## Threats to views of the Eyecatcher

The Eyecatcher, or Folly, is a landmark in Steeple Aston, which many villagers are lucky enough to view from their houses, and even more enjoy walking around this extraordinary structure. Some properties are even named after it, plus it has been extensively painted, photographed and genuinely loved as a symbol of the village. It is also an integral part of the landscape gardens at Rousham, and right now this is incredibly relevant.



*Photo by Nigel Francis*



The gardens were designed by William Kent around 1740. Widely regarded as the ‘cradle of the English landscape garden movement’, and praised by Monty Don as “one of the greatest gardens in the world”, they remain virtually unchanged, offering visitors a rare glimpse into 18<sup>th</sup>-century garden design. One of the most iconic views is from the bowling green overlooking the River Cherwell, where the eye is drawn to two of the earliest examples of picturesque follies - in the mid distance, The Temple of the Mill and behind it, The Eyecatcher.

However, this historic landscape is now under threat. An application has been submitted by London-based property developer, Dorchester Living, to build 9,000 houses at Heyford Park, two miles from Rousham Park and partially within the conservation area set up to protect it. Here, 4-storey buildings, up to 18m high are proposed. Elsewhere 12-storey 42m high towers are planned, along with 3 x 100m tall wind turbines. They intend to ‘enhance’ the small rural station of Heyford, transforming it into a transport hub for 25,000 people, but the station is next to the Grade I park which is also a major flood plain and hemmed in by the Oxford Canal. Inevitable traffic increases will also threaten the single lane Grade II\* Heyford Bridge first recorded in 1255.

Objections can still be made by emailing [planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk) including the reference 25/02190/HYBRID, your name and postal address, or email your local MP at [sean.woodcock.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:sean.woodcock.mp@parliament.uk)

**Charlotte Harris**

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# Church Matters



In the church, the countdown to Christmas officially begins on Advent Sunday (the 4th Sunday before Christmas). Many people today count down the 24 days of December with an Advent Calendar, and in the church, we count down the Sundays to Christmas with our Advent Wreath.

The lead up to Christmas is a delightful and busy mix of events and preparations, from parties and Christmas plays to shopping and cooking. In all this excitement and business, it is worth taking a moment to pause and think about what we are looking forward to and preparing to celebrate. The Advent Wreath helps us to reflect as we light the four outer candles, remembering the people and their dreams in the long journey through time towards Christ's first coming at Christmas.

- The Patriarchs or fathers of the Christian faith - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the Hope they had for the future.
- The Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) who told us of the birth of Christ, who would bring Peace between God and us, and one another.
- John the Baptist, who in God's Love was sent to prepare the way for Jesus.
- Mary, the mother of Jesus, who responded with Joy at the news of Christ's coming.

As we listen to the news of wars across the world and abundant suffering, we are reminded again of the importance of holding onto, and working together, with Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. As we Hope for a better world, we build Peace with small simple acts of Love, helping everyone to find Joy every day.

Building this better world filled with Hope, Peace, Love and Joy takes time, and continues beyond Christmas Day into 2026. If you would like to think about how to find Joy in the simple things, then please click on the QR code or search 'Twelve Joys' of Christmas', [cofe.io/TheJoyOfChristmas](https://cofe.io/TheJoyOfChristmas) for a series of meditations written by Nicholas Papadopoulos, the Dean of Salisbury Cathedral.



I wish you all a Christmas filled with Hope, Peace, Love and Joy.

God bless,

**Harriet**



*Photo by Nigel Francis.*



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Saturday 20th December, 3pm & 6pm

Steeple Aston Village Hall,  
Oxfordshire

Sunday 21st December, 3pm

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(booking fee applies)



# Local *Information*

## Church Services December 2025

| Date                                          | North Aston                                  | Steeple Aston                                      | Tackley                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sunday<br/>7<sup>th</sup> December</b>     | 9.30am<br>Holy Communion<br>BCP              | 11.00am<br>Holy Communion<br>BCP                   | 5.30pm<br>Evensong                                  |
|                                               |                                              |                                                    |                                                     |
| <b>Sunday<br/>14<sup>th</sup> December</b>    | 9.30am<br>Morning Prayer                     | 11.00am<br>Family Service                          | 5.30pm<br>Holy Communion                            |
|                                               |                                              |                                                    |                                                     |
| <b>Sunday<br/>21<sup>st</sup> December</b>    | 3.30pm<br>Carol Service                      | 7.00pm<br>Carol Service                            | 9.20am<br>Said Communion<br>5.30pm<br>Carol Service |
|                                               |                                              |                                                    |                                                     |
| <b>Wednesday<br/>24<sup>th</sup> December</b> | 6.00pm<br>Carols on The<br>Green             | 4.00pm<br>Crib Service<br>11.30pm<br>Midnight Mass | 4.00pm<br>Crib Service                              |
|                                               |                                              |                                                    |                                                     |
| <b>Thursday<br/>25<sup>th</sup> December</b>  | 9.00am<br>Christmas<br>Communion             | 10.30am<br>Christmas<br>Communion                  | 9.30am<br>Christmas<br>Communion                    |
|                                               |                                              |                                                    |                                                     |
| <b>Sunday<br/>28<sup>th</sup> December</b>    | 10.30am<br>United Benefice<br>Holy Communion |                                                    |                                                     |
|                                               |                                              |                                                    |                                                     |

[www.sntchurch.com](http://www.sntchurch.com)

Our church buildings are also open every day. Do feel free to visit at any time.

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## BUS TIMES

### STAGECOACH S4 BUS SERVICE (timetable effective from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025)

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

Monday to Friday (excluding 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 2122 2253

Saturday

0721 0821 0931 then hourly to 1531 1641 1746 1849 1937 2037 2216  
0809 0909 1019 1619 1729 1834 1932 2022 2122 2253

Sunday (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*)

Monday to Friday (excluding 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 2055 2142 2242 0009

Saturday

0758 0908 1008 then hourly to 1508 1608 1718 1828 1927 2025 2113 2213 2341  
0737 0837 0945 1545 1645 1755 1905 1958 2053 2142 2242 0009

Sunday (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: [Stagecoachbus.com/timetables](https://stagecoachbus.com/timetables)

### OURBUS BARTONS

OurBus Bartons offers services through Steeple Aston to and from Lower Heyford Station (Mon-Fri), to and from Chipping Norton (Wed), and to and from Bicester (Fri). See the website for details: [ourbusbartons-org-uk.stacktagging.com](https://ourbusbartons-org-uk.stacktagging.com)



## Local Info



### STEEPLE ASTON VILLAGE HALL

[www.savh.org.uk](http://www.savh.org.uk)

#### Our hall is available to hire:

- Ideal site for parties, receptions, seminars, exhibitions and workshops
- Full width raised stage and well-equipped kitchen
- Main hall can seat around 100
- HD projector and retractable screen
- Meeting Room to seat 20, with separate access
- Off-Road Car parking

**For hire charges and bookings** see our website or call Angela on 07734 112967

### Steeple Aston and Middle Aston Rubbish bin collection day is THURSDAY.

#### December 2025

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



Please consult the Cherwell District Council website for further details of collections during the festive period: [cherwell.gov.uk/recycling](http://cherwell.gov.uk/recycling)

#### 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 Sport & Recreation Centre and Field

| Letting charges                                                                                        |              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Social Function peak times<br>(Daily up to 6 hours from 6pm)                                           | £55          |
| Social Function off-peak times<br>(Daily up to 5 hours before 6pm)                                     | £27.50       |
| Meeting of represented clubs<br>(Daily per session up to 2 hours)                                      | £11          |
| Caution money for private lettings                                                                     | £100         |
| Block bookings for social events<br>15% discount for 6 or more bookings in advance                     |              |
| Contact us if you wish to hire the field or use the changing facilities                                |              |
| Letting Agent – Angela Smith<br><a href="mailto:rec.trust@googlemail.com">rec.trust@googlemail.com</a> | 07734 112967 |
| Chair – Torquil McLusky                                                                                | 01869 347914 |
| Treasurer – Chris Cooper                                                                               | 01869 347173 |

- The Sport & Rec is available to hire
- The "Friendly" space - the ideal venue for smaller parties, children's parties and get togethers
- Need more space? Hire the Sport & Rec and Village Hall together
- Fantastic playground just outside
- Internet
- Full disabled access, toilets, showers and changing rooms
- High quality grass playing field with power supply for football, marquees, events etc. (contact us for details and availability)
- Small kitchen and separate bar
- Room for around 50 seated
- Brand-new projector with retractable screen
- Car Parking
- Regular events include Home Education, Babies & Toddlers, Brownies, After School Club, Bridge and of course the Football Club (it's been going since 1898!)
- Next event Race Night  
...more details to follow!



# Steeple Aston *Calendar*

Check the village website at [steepleaston.org.uk/home/calendar](http://steepleaston.org.uk/home/calendar) for any changes.

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

| Month                              | Event                                                                         | Venue                 | Time               |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>December</b>                    |                                                                               |                       |                    |
| Friday 5th/Saturday 6th December   | Aladdin Pantomime                                                             | Duns Tew Village Hall | 6.45pm for 7.30pm  |
| Saturday 6th December              | WI workshop: Christmas Wreath Making                                          | Village Hall          | 10.00am - 1.00pm   |
| Sunday 7th December                | Wassail Evening                                                               | Village Hall          | 6.00pm             |
| Tuesday 9th December               | WI Christmas Lunch                                                            | Middle Aston House    | 12.30pm for 1.00pm |
| Wednesday 10th December            | Garden Club Christmas Lunch                                                   | Holt Hotel            | 12.30pm            |
| Thursday 11th December             | Carol Concert                                                                 | Bucknell Church       | 7.00pm             |
| <b>Friday 12th December</b>        | <b>SAL January copy &amp; advert deadlines (slightly earlier due to Xmas)</b> |                       |                    |
| Friday 12th December               | Valentines: Christmas meal and entertainment                                  | Coventry              |                    |
| Friday 12th/Saturday 13th December | Aladdin Pantomime                                                             | Duns Tew Village Hall | 6.45pm for 7.30pm  |
| Sunday 14th December               | Father Christmas visits Oxford Bus Museum, Long Hanborough                    | Bus Museum            | 10.00am - 3.00pm   |
| Tuesday 16th December              | Valentines: Christmas Dinner                                                  | Village Hall          |                    |
| Saturday 20th December             | Farmers' Market                                                               | Deddington            | 9.00am - 12.30pm   |
| Sunday 21st December               | Opera Anywhere: Amahl & the Night Visitors                                    | Village Hall          | 3.00pm - 5.00pm    |
| Sunday 21st December               | Father Christmas visits Oxford Bus Museum, Long Hanborough                    | Bus Museum            | 10.00am - 3.00pm   |
| Sunday 21st December               | Carol Service at Steeple Aston Church                                         | SA Church             | 7.00pm             |
|                                    |                                                                               |                       |                    |
| <b>January</b>                     |                                                                               |                       |                    |
| Thursday 1st January               | Christmas Jumper Day and New Year Bus Rides, Long Hanborough                  | Bus Museum            | 11.00am - 3.00pm   |
| Tuesday 13th January               | WI: Climate Ambassador                                                        | Village Hall          | 7.00pm             |
| Saturday 17th January              | Annual Quiz Night                                                             | Village Hall          | 7.00pm for 7.30pm  |
| Monday 19th January                | Parish Council Meeting                                                        | S & R Building        | 7.30pm             |

**Choral Society Rehearsals.** Village Hall - 7.45pm - Mondays  
**Badminton.** Village Hall - 10am -12.30pm - Tuesdays  
**Bell Ringing practice.** Church Tower - 7.30pm - Tuesdays  
**Walking Netball.** Village Hall - 10.15am - Wednesdays  
**Brownies.** Sport & Rec Centre - 6pm - 7.30pm - Wednesdays  
**Toddler Group.** Sport & Rec Centre - 9.30am -11.30am - Thursdays  
**Badminton.** Village Hall - 8pm - Thursdays  
**Village History Centre (SAVA).** 10am - 12 noon - Saturdays

**Steeple Aston Life is published by Steeple Aston Life Committee**

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*The views expressed are not necessarily the views of the Editor or the Committee.  
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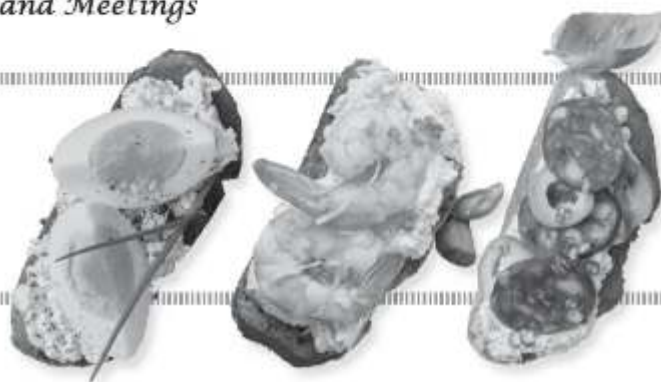
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