

Steeple Aston

March 2026

Issue No. 631

Life



Tributes • Plant a Tree • Spring Show



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Contributions are welcome. Please email editorsalife@gmail.com

Cover photo: Cheeky chops by Nigel Francis

Steeple Aston *Life*

COPY

All articles and letters to the Editor

editorsalife@gmail.com

COPY DEADLINES

The copy deadline for the April 2026 issue is Saturday 14th March

READ STEEPLE ASTON LIFE ONLINE

<https://www.steepleaston.org.uk/sal-magazine>

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All adverts, and all advertising queries (*availability, prices, dimensions, suitability of illustrations, etc.*) to **Zazi Barrell**

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ADVERTISING RATES

¼ page - £10

½ page - £18

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Steeple Aston Directory

Allotments (Church) SACAA		Amanda Rodgers	07793 553150
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Archive (SAVA)	Chairman	Stuart Cummins	01869 349155
Badminton (Tuesday - am)		Barbara Brewer	01869 340423
Badminton (Thursday - eve)		Alison Moran	01869 347033
Beekeepers (Swarm collection, advice)		Paul Honigmann	340665, 07512 224700
Bell ringers		Graham & Dorothy Clifton	01869 347273
Baby and toddler group		Katy, Martha, Hilary and Lisa	steepleastontoddlergrp@gmail.com
Handbell ringers		Victoria Clifton	07817 025948
Brownies		Fiona McLoone	01869 340132
Catholic Church, St.Teresa's	Charlbury	Father Clive Dytor	07484 158642
Cherwell District Council	Castle Quay, Banbury		01295 227001
Cherwell District Councillor:	Deddington Ward	Cllr David Rogers	David.rogers@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Oxfordshire County Cllr	Deddington Ward	Cllr Gareth Epps	Gareth.epps@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Choral Society	Chair	Bev Davies	01869 347684
Church of England (St Peter & St Paul)	Rector	Rev'd Harriet Orridge	01869 932224
	Churchwardens	Eileen Baglin-Jones, Graham Clifton	340099 347273
Church (Methodist) - Tackley		Rev'd Paul Carter	01865 243216
	Steward	Tim Bailey	01869 331516
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Crimestoppers			0800 555111
Deddington Guides		Maggie Rampley	07957 600755
Deddington Health Centre	Appointments	Patient Triage	01869 338611
	Repeat Prescriptions	Deddingtonhealthcentre.co.uk	
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Valentine Club		Richard & Daphne Preston	01869 340512
Village Hall (see Local Info)	Letting Agent	Angela Smith	07734 112967
Village Emergency Telephone System			690691
Village Website	Editor	Jenny Bell-steepleaston.org.uk	01869 943573
Volunteer Driver Service (North Oxfordshire)		https://livewell.oxfordshire.gov.uk/services/2561	0300 303 0125
Walking Netball	Wed.- 10.15am	Merrill Bayley	01869 347802
WI	President	Julie Hillier	01869 349185



Editorial



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

Steeple Aston *Life*

March 2026
Issue No.631

Editor: Carol Neville
editorsalife@gmail.com

Treasurer: Vaughan Billings
01869 340857

Secretary: Tina Ferguson
tina.merlins@gmail.com

Advertising:
Zazi Barrell
salife.advertising@gmail.com

Deliveries:
Greg Elphick
07891 760176
greggles1262@gmail.com

Layout design:
Edward Dowler, Martin Lipson

Committee:
Jenny Bell, Nigel Francis,
Jenny Taylor

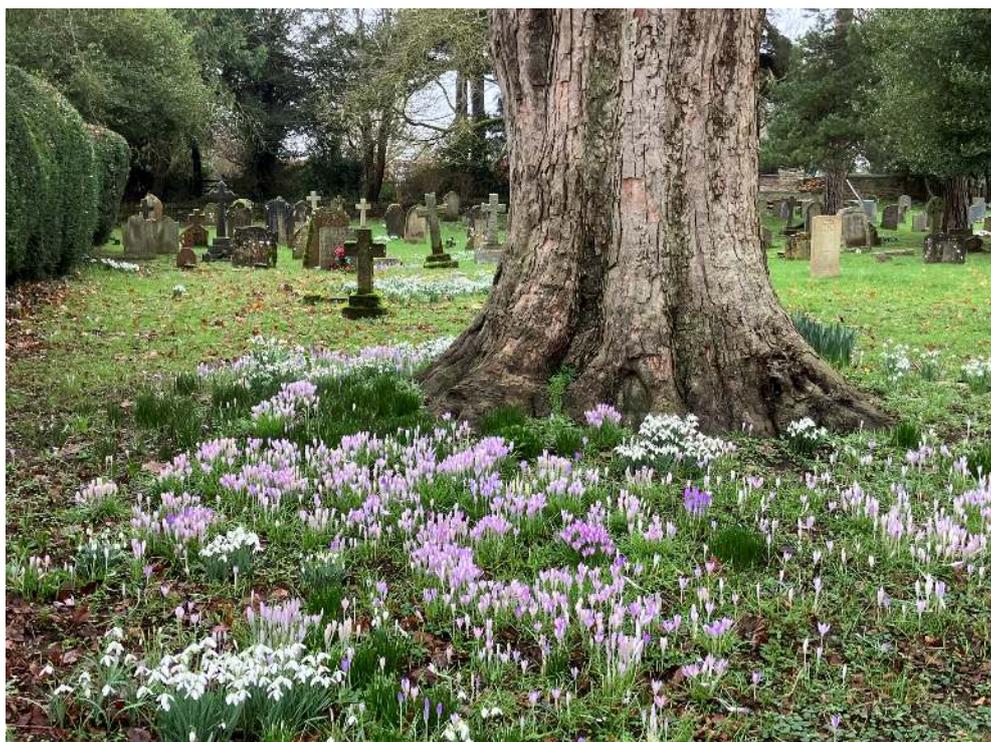
After all the dreary, damp days of winter, I think we’ll all be pleased to welcome the new season this month with the promise of some warmth and light to brighten our days. March brings the Steeple Aston Spring Show on the afternoon of Sunday 22nd, with opportunities to enter your prized early blooms, culinary creations, photos, limericks and handicrafts – something for everyone, so do take a look at the show schedule.

As reported last month, following the sad loss of some familiar faces, we are pleased to include some touching tributes as a celebration of their lives. Many thanks to all those who contributed - a lovely way of remembering our fellow villagers.

Lastly, a big *Thank You* to all those who have already completed the SAL survey. It’s interesting to read your suggestions and learn what works best and not so well. For those yet to complete it, we’re extending the deadline by a couple of weeks, so please do give us your feedback. After all, it is *your* village magazine, where you can influence the look, content, frequency and general format of SAL. Please visit the website: <https://s.surveypplanet.com/9uhcrso5> or click on the QR code below - thanks.



Let’s hope for some Spring sunshine in the weeks to come.
Carol



Crocuses and snowdrops flourishing in Steeple Aston churchyard. Photo: Carol Neville



Beth Walton – 1939 to 2026

We are sorry to report the sad news that Beth Marilla Walton died at Wyndham Hall Care Home, Launton, aged 87 years. She was born in Banbury in 1939. She later married Douglas Walton and moved to Steeple Aston. Beth is survived by her two children, Timothy and Clare, and four grandchildren: Grace, Natalie, Thomas and Charlotte. From 1964 to 2023, Beth was an active participant in village life, a member of the Badminton Club, Flower Show and Steeple Aston Choral Society. For several years, she worked as a Teaching Assistant at Dr Radcliffe's C of E Primary School. Her interests included gardening, classical music, bird-watching and cooking.

If you wish to donate funds in memory of Beth to our chosen charity, please send donations to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) at [rspb.org.uk/donate](https://www.rspb.org.uk/donate)
At this time, there is no definitive date for a Memorial for Beth, but when we have a time and a place, we will let Steeple Aston Life know.

Tim and Clare

*Photo: Steeple Aston Flower Show (1980s)
From left to right: Douglas Walton, Tim Walton,
Beth Walton, Miggy Wild, Clare Cox.*



Would you be interested in visiting Rousham House?

I expect many villagers will have walked around the magnificent William Kent gardens at Rousham, or perhaps even enjoyed a picnic there on a sunny summer's day, but how many have managed to be part of a group visiting inside the house? Unlike the gardens, which are open daily, the house is only open between May and September, and then only by arrangement for guided tours in pre-booked groups, usually mid-week. The earliest parts of the house date back to 1635 when it was built by Sir Robert Dormer. William Kent added the south front, which is almost as he left it, as well as the wings and the stable block. Inside, I am told, you can still see the original staircases, 17th century panelling, and fine collections of Jacobean and 18th century furniture. Surely that's enough to whet your appetite?

Are there any villagers who would like to join me to make up a group, so we could visit the house later this year? The cost, set by Rousham, is £20.00 per person, and a minimum of ten people is required for a tour to go ahead. If you would be interested, could you please email anne.haymes@btinternet.com or telephone me on 01869 347883 to let me know, giving me:

- | | | | |
|---|-----------|----------------|----------|
| a) any preference for day of visit: | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday |
| b) any preference for time of day: | Morning | Afternoon | Either |
| c) whether you would need, or could offer a lift: | Need lift | Can offer lift | |

If I get sufficient interest, I'll go ahead and try to arrange something.

Anne Haymes



Village Improvements

An excellent turnout of 35 people for the Parish Council's workshop on possible future improvements, held on 30th January, netted a total of 70 ideas, some of which were close matches for other ideas, so it was probably nearer to 60, including several sent in by villagers who couldn't make the meeting. It was perhaps no surprise that the largest number related to transport and traffic, highways and footpaths. The second largest group was for 'the environment'. The top proposals per category are below. Parish councillors will now discuss how to make these ideas become reality.

Transport

- Bus route servicing North Side
- New footpath linking school to Grain Store and on to Middle Aston
- Traffic-easing measures and weight limits on HGVs through village and using Rousham Bridge
- Improved pedestrian/cycle access to Heyford Station

Environment

- Designated green space to protect village's character (*although many of those present may not have been aware that the MCNP has already given protection to the Paines Hill 'green', the allotments and Robinson's Close*).
- Address wildlife displacement - wildlife corridors or a reserve/country park
- Increase tree planting - pockets and avenues

Infrastructure

- Phone mast to improve reception
- Address sewage issues
- Sustainable energy initiative e.g. solar or wind

Health

- New community health hub for SA at least two days a week
- Improved health services - enlarge Deddington Health Centre, or a full surgery at Heyford Park

CENTRAL BOOKING CALENDAR

We are fortunate to live in a village offering an incredible number of activities and events, and we have very efficient booking systems to record these, including on various calendars e.g. Village Hall savh.org.uk. However, these calendars are not co-ordinated, so we can get unfortunate clashes. The last one was just before Christmas when *Opera Anywhere* and the Carol Service were scheduled on the same afternoon. On behalf of the children who nodded off in the service, as it had to begin later and us decrepits who had to sprint (not a pretty sight) from the hall to the church for the carol rehearsal, please can we all consult the **Central Calendar** on the website before booking and then after booking, register our event on it. Go to steepleaston.org.uk click on *News and Photos* and the **Calendar** is third on the list. Thank you.

Margaret Bulleyment

Secretary – Village Hall Trustees and SACS

Garden Waste 2026-27

Annual subscription charges are due to be renewed for the period covering 1st March 2026 – 28th February 2027. Please note: ordering a garden waste subscription does not automatically include a brown bin. If you don't already have one, you must request it during the ordering process. From the time of ordering, allow 28 days for delivery, then write your address on the label and attach it to your brown bin using a permanent marker pen. Visit the website to order/renew:

cherwell.gov.uk/info/10/rubbish-and-recycling/872/payable-garden-waste-collection

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Jerome and Stacey Prigent

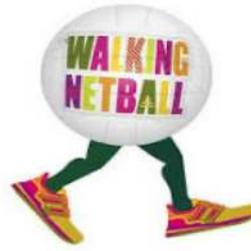
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Save our Swifts!

A superb flyer, they rarely touch the ground and you'll not see them perching anywhere, save in their nests. They eat, bathe, mate and even sleep 'on the wing'. But their numbers have been in sharp decline. How can you help?

The village hall hosted an excellent speaker last month, invited by the Parish Council Environment Committee. Chris Mason of Cherwell Swifts started by giving an audience of more than 40 villagers a whistle-stop tour of swift, swallow and house martin identification and nesting habits. Not least, so we would know where to look out for swift nests and swift activity around the village, NOT confusing the three species! It appears we have a small returning colony in The Crescent and villagers were also able to recall old nest sites in the upper levels of the village hall and pre-school building. Decades of improving building standards and better insulated homes have reduced the availability of desirable nooks and crannies of older housing stock, public buildings and the like. The main thrust of the presentation then moved onto activities to encourage new swift colonies to the area, notably by putting up swift boxes. Really enthusiastic swift conservationists have even played swift calls over loudspeakers near their new boxes - with some success.

Chris highlighted several organisation's websites, as well as his own, that are excellent sources of information on swifts, buying nesting boxes from about £25, where and how to mount them and even providing the plans for keen DIYers.

cherwell-swifts.org/
swift-conservation.org/
banburyornithologicalsociety.org.uk/index.php/news/cherwell-swifts-conservation-project-2013-report-published-2



Big thanks to Martin Dale for his lead role in organising the talk.

Greg Elphick

Steeple Aston Parish Councillors

Angharad Lloyd-Jones (Chair)

Martin Lipson (Vice Chair), Planning, Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Forum

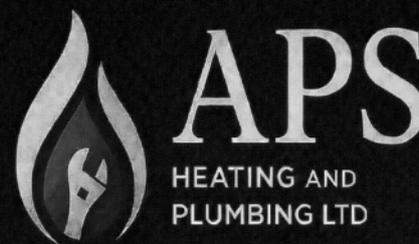
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Greg Elphick

Charlotte Powell, Sports & Recreation Centre, Environment

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TRIBUTE - Jessie Coleman: 24/08/1934 – 19/12/2025 (aged 91 years)

Her funeral took place on Friday 30th January 2026 at 12.00 noon at Steeple Aston church.

Jessie was born on 24th August 1934, the youngest of five sisters. Even as a child, she showed strength and determination after suffering from rheumatic fever when she was small, missing a year of school. She went on to be known for her skills in athletics namely the high jump, quietly proving that she could rise above the obstacles that life placed in front of her.

Before marrying, Jessie worked at Spencer's factory making corsets. On 16th October 1954, she married Ronald Coleman, a man she had known all her life, having grown up together in Swalcliffe. Their marriage lasted over 63 years.

In the 1960s, they moved to Steeple Aston where they raised their four children: Nina, Elaine, Neil and Adele. From them, came twelve grandchildren and many great and great-great grandchildren. Jessie was endlessly proud of every one of them and was always sharing news about her growing family. She kept lifelong friendships with people, not just locally, but all over the world. Her amazing recall of information meant she could remember birthdays, family details and stories from years gone by, always being interested, helping her stay connected to friends and their families. She loved going out on trips with her friends, and was still actively joining in and enjoying outings during her 90th year.

She was known for her famous bacon jack and for making the cricket teas when Ron was playing. She worked for many people in the village, especially the Ray family, and was part of the Valentine Club. Jessie's life was built on love for her family and connection. She will be deeply missed and forever remembered.

In her final years, she was supported by dear friends from Nizewell - Norma, Chris and Bridie, Geraldine and Alan, whose kindness meant so much.

Charlotte Peckham - Granddaughter



Left: A young Jessie, and above: Jessie enjoying her birthday celebrations.

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LORI BEERS, MAHM, Dipl. OM, M.AAC

Letter from *Westminster*

SAL's regular epistle from our MP, Sean Woodcock



My constituency work this month included visits to local groups and businesses. I was pleased to arrange a meeting and visit to Banbury Train station with local councillors, and representatives from Oxfordshire County Council and Chiltern Railways about improving accessibility for rail users at the Banbury Station southern entrance. Following this meeting, new pick-up and drop-off points have been created that will make the station easier to use, particularly for passengers with additional needs.

In Parliament, I continued to advocate for Banbury and North Oxfordshire. As part of my work on the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee, I have been pressing for more affordable housing and faster housebuilding, so local people can access affordable homes. Sessions have focused on the Government's 'New Towns' programme, including the proposed development at Heyford Park, and I will continue to monitor this closely to ensure it delivers for residents. I met with several organisations including the Samaritans and the Open Doors World Watch List event on Christian persecution. I heard first-hand accounts of the dangers faced by Christians in some countries, raising awareness of these issues. I signed the Holocaust Educational Trust's Book of Commitment, honouring the victims of the Holocaust, paying tribute to the survivors who continue to educate future generations. I have spoken on Local Government Reorganisation, social and affordable homes in Banbury, rural communities and the increase to APR allowance, which I welcomed for farmers in the constituency. I contributed on international affairs, such as Diego Garcia and Iran, as well as speaking in the Finance Bill Committee on local issues, such as increased EV infrastructure and charging points, particularly in rural constituencies.

I have been working on some local campaigns. Firstly, I continue to oppose Oxfordshire County Council's plans to reduce the number of full-time firefighters in Oxfordshire, that could lead to a reduction in the size of watches in Banbury. These are plans that the Fire Brigade Union are also against, and I met with them to discuss the impact on public safety. Improving the condition of our local roads has also been a priority, and I welcomed the Government's record £7.3 billion multi-year funding settlement for road maintenance. Oxfordshire has been rated 'amber' in its use of previous funding, so I wrote jointly with Anneliese Dodds MP, urging the council to use its £167.9 million allocation to tackle the pothole crisis. I then launched a pothole survey to gather residents' views and highlight problem areas in Banbury, including Southam Road and Middleton Road, where conditions have become dangerous.

Many constituents contacted me calling for a ban on social media for under-16s. I understand these concerns and the challenges young people face online. As a result, I wrote to the Prime Minister, alongside 60 Labour MPs, calling for an Australia-style ban. A public consultation has now been launched, and I encourage anyone with an interest to take part. Finally, following my petition opposing proposed funding cuts to Banbury Museum, I am pleased that Cherwell District Council has amended its plans. Funding has now been restored for the 2027/28 financial year, with much smaller incremental reductions thereafter. This gives the museum vital time to secure alternative funding and help protect its future. Thank you to everyone who signed the petition and responded to the council's consultation. I'd like to thank all those who have been engaging with me on local campaigns and have spoken with me about their issues, so that I can intervene to try and assist. As always, any problems, feel free to email my office at sean.woodcock.mp@parliament.uk

Best wishes

Sean

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It's Fantasmagorical! Chitty Chitty Bang Bang lands at Oxford Playhouse!

Musical Youth Company of Oxford are a group of fifty young people from all over Oxfordshire. They have strong links to the local area, as many of Guy Brigg's pupils from Dr Radcliffe's have been members of the company, including Honor and Saffron Edwards, who will be treading the boards at the Oxford Playhouse in April with their latest production of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

Based on Ian Fleming's story, and made into an iconic film, this much-loved musical is packed full of memorable melodies, including Toot Sweets, Truly Scrumptious and the title song itself.

We follow Caractacus Potts and his children, who restore an old racing car and discover its magical powers. Accompanied by feisty motorcyclist, Truly Scrumptious, they discover a land of fantasy, encountering the scary Child Catcher and the hilarious Baron and Baroness Bomburst. Will they escape? Will Chitty match its reputation as a fantasmagorical machine? The award-winning Musical Youth Company of Oxford's production guarantees to bring a smile to your face, as these young people bring their energy, talent and joy to a visually stunning show. Choreographed by Catie Simpson, with direction from longstanding MYCO creative, Julie Todd, we are hoping for lots of local support!

Tickets from oxfordplayhouse.com

April 1st to 4th 2026

Performances: Wed, Thu, Sat: 7.30pm with matinees on Friday at 5.00pm and Saturday at 2.30pm

Poker at the Red

The weekly Texas Hold 'em Poker tournaments at the Red Lion every Monday started in October 2022. My objective was threefold. Firstly, to ensure that we had a competitive, welcoming, fun and very friendly game, with an ultimate prize of winning a trip to Las Vegas. Secondly, and equally important, was to support our pub by increasing 'wet' sales on quiet evenings. Finally, to encourage beginners and teach them how to play and enjoy the game.

We started with just seven players, one a complete beginner who wanted to find out more about the game. Four, including that beginner, continue to play to this day! So how have we done? Well, the number of players has increased regularly with an average of 17 over the last three months, but on Monday 26th January, we had a record 24 players! Those players come from the village, but also from as far afield as Aylesbury, Bicester, Upper Heyford and Banbury. We have had many guest players too, all of whom have swelled wet sales at the pub. Many players have played elsewhere, but we are the pub where the friendly, competitive spirit, fun and laughter abound. Sadly, no-one has won the trip to Las Vegas yet, but every three months, four players receive an invitation to play against up to 180 other pub poker players in a tournament in Luton. Win that and they are off to Vegas with a chance to win the title of UK Pub Poker Champion!! We have come close, with one finishing second in those tournaments, but everyone who plays will keep on trying.

If you would like to know more, and learn how to play, why not pop along to the Red Lion on a Monday evening or give me a call on 07802 837237. You would be made most welcome, remembering we were all very nervous and perhaps a bit worried the very first time we sat down, with so many people we didn't know, to play a game for the first time. Finally, I want to say a great big heartfelt thank you to Brian and Renée for welcoming us to their pub, our village pub, and letting us continue to play the game we all love and enjoy so much.

PS Last night, one of our beginner players won the invitation to play in Luton!

Andy King

Guy Roberts Architect

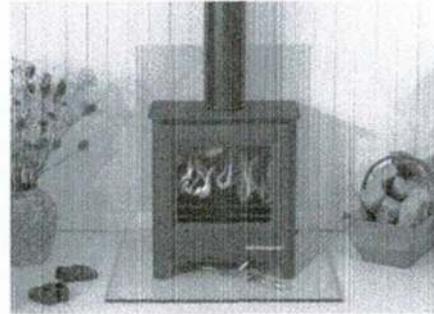
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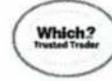
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This month's activities began with a coffee morning at Sally Cooper's house to raise money for Katharine House Hospice. Sales of hand-made willow bird feeders, home-made marmalade and chutney and raffle tickets all added to the amount raised. The WI have also donated a birdbox to be placed in the cemetery. There was also a lunch outing to the Rising Sun.

The highlight of the month was Hildy Frenken's talk about walking the 500-mile Camino de Santiago. She gave her talk to an audience consisting of thirty members and several visitors. The Camino is the world's most famous pilgrimage, dating back over 1,000 years, starting at Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in France and crossing the Pyrenees to finish at the stunning Santiago de Compostela cathedral. Hildy described some low points of the walk such as setting off on a long day's walk with no breakfast, her mobile phone not functioning, and a day of non-stop rain. She also shared with us the many high points: some spectacular scenery, meeting other walkers including an inspirational woman in her 90s walking with the aid of a rollator, an encounter with a priest who came from a village near Hildy's home town, often being alone on the trail with time for thinking about life, her friend Alyson coming to meet her at the end of the walk, and visiting the magnificent cathedral of Santiago. This is not a walk to be undertaken lightly - there are fatalities among walkers every year - but for Hildy it was a life-changing experience and for her audience, it was inspiring and fascinating.

Cathy Lawday



*Above: Artwork on the camino
Below: Waymarkers show the route*



*Above: Spectacular scenery
Below: Santiago de Compostela Cathedral*





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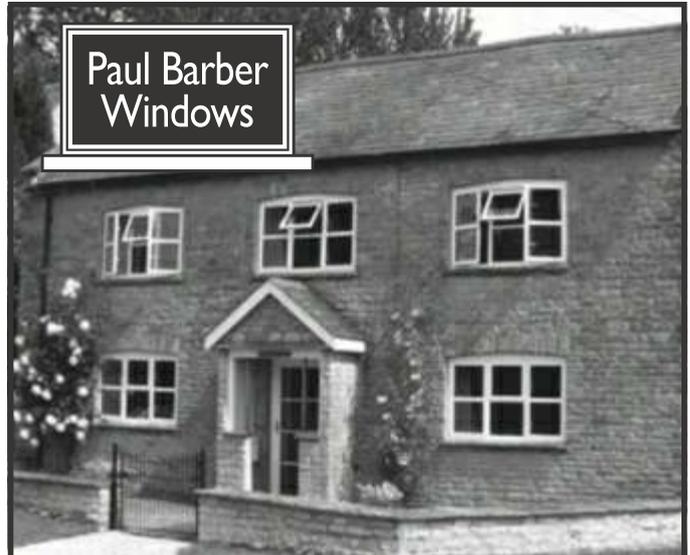
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LIVE MUSIC

If you're interested in listening to live music, or if you are an aspiring musician and would like to try your hand in front of a live audience, these are some of the open mic nights in Oxfordshire within reach of Steeple Aston.

Weekly events:

Mon: The Kazbah, Cowley Road, Oxford - 7.30 pm
Tues: Grapes and Tomatoes, Carterton - 7.30 pm
Thurs: Red Lion, Gloucester Street, Oxford - 8.00 pm
Sun: Royal Blenheim, St Ebbe's, Oxford - 7.00 pm

Regular (monthly) events:

1st Mon: *The Sun, Hook Norton - 7.30 pm
1st Fri: The Bell, Ducklington - 8.00 pm
2nd Mon: **Chipping Norton Folk Club, The Chequers Chipping Norton - 7.45 pm
3rd Weds: The Unicorn, Deddington - 7.45 pm
4th Thurs: The Cotswold Lounge, Shipton-under-Wychwood - 7.30 pm

Non-performing audiences are welcome at all of these events. If you would like to perform, arrive in the half hour before the start time and identify yourself to the emcee. Most venues provide cables, amps and speakers, so that you can plug in acoustic or electric instruments. *The Sun at Hook Norton is mostly acoustic; **Chipping Norton Folk Club is exclusively acoustic. If you are a singer without an instrument, bring a backing track on a tablet or phone. All ages and abilities will be welcomed in a supportive environment. These events are occasionally subject to change, so it's a good idea to check before you go.

Songsmith

Black and Blue – album review

In 1976 The Rolling Stones released their 13th studio album 'Black and Blue'. Fifty years later, it has been remastered with a new stereo mix by Steven Wilson (Porcupine Tree), who has made a great job of opening up the soundscape without losing the original sound vibe or adding any bells and whistles. Also included is a CD of bonus tracks including jams with the likes of Jeff Beck, Harvey Mandel (Canned Heat) and Robert A Johnson.

This album marks the official arrival of Ronnie Wood as a member of The Stones, even though he had collaborated earlier with Mick on predecessor 'It's Only Rock 'n' Roll'. In addition to the above-mentioned guitarists, Carl Perkins also plays on three of the album's tracks - 'Fool to Cry', 'Memory Motel' and 'Hand of Fate'. The reason for most of these guest players being that they had been auditioning for Mick Taylor's slot after his exit from the band in 1974.

As well as their trademark swaggering rock sound, they get funky with 'Hey Negrita', delve into reggae with Eric Donaldson's 'Cherry Oh Baby', and hit the disco floor with 'Hot Stuff'. This is also the first time Mick really utilises his falsetto voice on tracks such as 'Fool to Cry', which was the single lifted from the album. As Stones' albums go, this is quite experimental but one thing is for sure, it is still unmistakably 'The Rolling Stones'!



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THE VALENTINE CLUB

Spring is nearly here and holidays are possibly in the offing as the sun begins to shine again and temperatures rise. With that in mind, about 45 club members and friends are packing their suitcases for a five-day visit to South Somerset with the chance to visit the seaside, places of interest and share a laugh with friends. However, in the meantime, we have welcomed to the club during February, Hayley, with her stories and information relating to 'A Day in the life of a Metropolitan Police Crime Scene Investigator'. Members have been asked to be on their best behaviour, so hopefully no arrests! For our March meeting on the 17th, we welcome Debi, who is going to sing her way through the 60s and 70s with a warm-up act by children from Dr Radcliffe's School, but more of that next month.

Some more good news! Cherwell District Council have awarded our club £1,800 towards the work we do and how we benefit the more senior members of our community. And even more great news! The National Lottery (Awards for All) have granted the club £19,465 which, without having to explain, will make a significant difference to what we do and how we budget our next couple of years. We have already organised a special meal at The Holt with entertainment for very early December. Club members will not have to pay anything towards this warm-up party before Christmas, other than maybe a few drinks from the bar. It is only March and can we have any further good news? Who knows?

To find out more about The Valentine Club, simply visit our website on valentineclub.wixsit.com/aston (easiest way is to log on to the village website; go to 'clubs and societies' and click on the Valentine Club link), 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.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us over the past 12 months.

Richard Preston – Group organiser (for lack of a better description)
richard.preston5@btopenworld.com – Tel: 01869 340512

Deddington Guides *Report*

Tea party and fashion show at Deddington Guides

These few weeks have flown by! The tea party hosted by the Panda Patrol was very enjoyable, with a variety of cakes and drinks served by the hostess for each table.

We had quite an audience for the Fashion Show presented by Phoenix Patrol, as they organised all the girls on the catwalk with a variety of outfits. Well done, all. We will be rounding off this half term with pancakes!

All girls of 10 years and over are welcome to come along and see what we get up to.

Maggie Rampley 07957 600755



Goodbye winter. Hello what's next!

After months of cold mornings and soggy wellies, it finally feels like brighter days are on the horizon. Longer light, fresh starts and new plans are back on the agenda.

Home is where life really happens. If 2026 is the year you are considering a move, choose guidance you can trust.

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Steeple Aston Annual Quiz Night 2026 – report by Barbara Brewer

Once again, the Village Hall Committee organised a thoroughly enjoyable Quiz evening on Saturday 17th January. This year, twelve teams took part in the fun, with names ranging from 'BWN crew' to 'The Racqueteers'. Perhaps next year, there should be a prize for the most creative team name?

As usual, the teams went to town providing a wide and interesting variety of food and nibbles to keep them going during the evening, which proved to be vibrant, filled with laughter, camaraderie and spirited competition. A bar was also available to serve liquid refreshments to all. Thanks go to Debbie, Amy and John for running the bar.

This year the quiz was devised and led by Carl Tomlinson with Ian Hart in charge of the questions and the score board. Questions and conundrums challenging the teams included:

If my true love went shopping for the gifts in 'the twelve days of Christmas', which one gift would they have to import if acquiring the gifts in December in the UK?

Answer: Turtle Doves are migratory and would be in West Africa at the time.

What is the last word in the titles of Bob Dylan's 6th studio album and Evelyn Waugh's 7th novel?

Answer: Revisited.

As usual the evening was rounded off with the presentation of the trophy and wine to the winning team – 'Quizical' – with a score of 66. Congratulations! Photograph of the winning team appeared in the February SAL.

The Village Hall Committee gratefully received donations of generous raffle prizes from The Yurt, (Nicholson's), Holt Hotel, Holt Garage, (PTA), RHS gift bags, bottle of sherry (Merrill) and wine (anonymous). Thanks go to all who participated, not forgetting the Village Hall committee who organised this event.



BIG NEWS... a murderer is in our presence DA, DA, DAAAAA!!!!
Saturday 25th April will be our first Murder Mystery Evening. Dinner, detecting and a dead body. More details to follow next month, but do check out the poster in this month's SAL. We expect tickets to sell quickly, so **BUY NOW from Tina (01869 347439).**



Other news The fine detail of the new hiring charges and hiring agreement will be published next month. Our aim is to simplify the charges, and there is a lot of number crunching happening to make it fair for all, minimising price increases.

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

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

Victoria Clifton (Chair) savh.org.uk/



PLANTS NEEDED!! The plant sale is a bit more of a Bring and Buy sale, for those who remember those. If you've grown a few spares, please do contact Mary, as they may be the finishing touch to someone's garden transformation. SEED SWAP – if you have any unopened packets of seeds you don't want, please bring them along.



PLANT SALE



Once again we'll hold a plant sale of outdoor and house plants. If you have any spare seedlings, cuttings, or other potted plants you'd like to donate please contact Mary White maryw39@aol.com

And of course... bring some money to buy a few others!

Any spare seed packets please bring to swap.

The main event is the spring show on Sunday 22nd March, which is easy to enter. In this issue, you will find our schedule of all the classes to enter. Some you may already have growing in the garden, some like handicrafts you can crack on with today, and others, like cookery, need to be made nearer the day. I challenge anyone who says they don't have time to do a single entry. Timing is key if you want to enter many items. Floral art can be completed a couple of days ahead if the plants are well-conditioned and stored somewhere cool; photos can be printed weeks ahead; filled chocolates can be prepared a week ahead, but store in a secret location, otherwise they won't last till show day! Everyone is welcome on the Sunday afternoon, and it only costs £1, so come and marvel at others' achievements or, better still, check what prizes your own exhibits have won. There will be a great raffle, delicious homemade teas, a picture quiz to mull over a cuppa, and, of course, the above-mentioned plant sale. What more could you ask?

If you want to enter, grab the schedule, mark on the entry form what you'd like to enter (spare entry forms from the shop, in the Jan/March SAL, or printed from the village website). Deliver the form and entry money to either Claire Coysh or myself, Victoria Clifton, by THURSDAY 19th MARCH, at 7.00pm. A change to previous years, we WILL NOT accept any entry forms after this time! Then come along on Sunday 22nd between 9.00am and 10.30am with your exhibits. You will find an envelope with your name on, containing some yellow stickers with your exhibitor number, which ensures the judge doesn't know who entered. Stick this on the exhibit and then keep everything crossed. Don't worry, there are always committee members available to help.

Continued.....

You have to be in it to win it!!!

Another change to previous years: Children will now be able to enter age ranges older than their own. For example, if your child is 7 years old, they can enter the under 8's AND under 12's AND the under 16's categories. However, the judge will not be told their age or make special dispensation if they are competing against children a lot older. As a child, I did this and confess to winning many Easter eggs over the years. Thankfully, now we have a few more children taking part, but it's still good for the children to challenge themselves especially a class that really interests them.

Thinking ahead to the summer show, that this year falls on Bank Holiday Monday 31st August. If you haven't been before, it is a much bigger event... marquee for the exhibits...approx. 800 entries...a fun dog show...and hopefully some warmer weather. You can start your preparation for this show now. The Summer show schedule will be available to pick up at the spring show, and it will be on the village website under the gardening section. But as a heads up... the seed potatoes should be chitting by now, the brassicas should have germinated, and the onion sets should be in the ground, if not now is the time, and it's never too early to snap a photo, remember the classes are: 'Life'; 'Childhood'; 'Poppies'; 'Sea of colour'; 'Gateways' and 'Macro'. Good luck all!

Vicky Clifton Show secretary

Email: vmcstedman@btinternet.com

AD&D Photographic
Society



On a dark and rainy February club night, our evening was brightened by welcoming renowned photographer Roger Hance—joining us via Zoom from Colchester—to share insights into the wildlife that visit his garden. Roger's garden photography was an inspiration to us all. His garden is not only a haven for birds, but also attracts frogs to his specially adapted pond, and moths to his night-time garden. The creatures' colours were vibrant on his pin sharp images. Our interests are wide and we welcome photographers who share their experiences and images from further afield. Although we are the Adderbury, Deddington and District Photographic Society, the 'district' element of our society includes many of the local villages including members from Steeple Aston.

Coming Up Next Month:

We are delighted and honoured to welcome the very talented portrait photographer, Nicholas Posner. Nicholas will be showing, and talking about images spanning 40 Years of Celebrity Portraiture.

If more of you from Steeple Aston wish to join us at The Institute, Adderbury at 7.30pm on the first Wednesday of every month, you would be made very welcome. We are known as a lively, friendly and non-competitive club. Come and meet us at Steeple Aston Sport & Rec Centre at our photographic exhibition on Sunday 22nd March, 2.15pm - 4.30pm, alongside the Spring Show.

Courtney Killpack and Miggy Wild



Photo: Roger Hance



Steeple Aston Spring Show

Sunday 22nd March

2:30 – 4:30

Village Hall

Fir Lane, OX25 4SF

Admission £1 Adults – U16s go free

Teas & Cakes

Plant stall Raffle Show exhibits

Family friendly activities!

Entries are welcome from all, no matter your age or skill level!

Copies of the schedule are available from the village shop,
or visit the website:

www.steepleaston.org.uk/clubs-societies/gardening/



STEEPLE ASTON & MIDDLE ASTON HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY - SPRING FLOWER SHOW 2026 - ENTRY FORM

The Spring Flower Show will be held in the village hall on **Sunday 22nd March** from 2.30pm - 4.30 pm. Entries are open to everyone and new exhibitors are welcome. The entry fee includes the Society's membership fee. Rules for exhibitors are as laid down by the secretary in the Annual Show Schedule except (a) entries must be in by **7.00pm on Thursday 19th March. NO LATE ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THIS DATE.** (b) exhibits must be staged between 9.00am – 10.30am on the morning of the show **after which the hall will be closed.** Multiple entries in the same class will not be allowed in Divisions 1, 2 and 3. Cups will be awarded to the winner of most points in each open Division and the Mead Vase will be awarded to the person having entered in at least three of the five divisions and gaining the most points in the show. Easter eggs will be awarded to the winner of the most points in each of the children's age groups and the Bedding Cup for the best children's exhibit.

DIVISION 1

HORTICULTURE - FOR DUNCAN CUP

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

DIVISION 2

COOKERY - FOR WI CUP

21. A Savoury flan (state flavour)
22. A Babka
23. Fidget pie
24. 3 Chocolate eclairs
25. 3 egg Victoria Sandwich
26. 3 Shrewsbury biscuits
27. 'Fat free' cake – list ingredients
28. 5 Filled chocolates (Praline / Bonbon type) State filling
29. Marmalade
30. Fruit curd (Lemon, orange, lime etc.)
31. 3 home produced eggs of domestic fowl (with saucer)
32. Homemade lemonade in a clear bottle with a glass
33. Homemade alcoholic drink in a clear glass bottle with a glass. (No home distilled spirits. Shop purchased gins / vodkas to flavour are allowed)

DIVISION 3 -FLORAL ART FOR THE FLOWER CLUB

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

- Exhibits marked * to be staged in a niche 42cm wide, 42cm deep and 59cm high. **NOTE NEW SIZES**
34. Posy for the visually impaired, judged on texture & scent
 35. *Title - 'Shakespeare Play' - accessories allowed
 36. *Foliage Arrangement- no accessories allowed
 37. *Arrangement in a teapot - Accessories allowed.

DIVISION 4 -FOR HANDICRAFT CUP

38. A knitted / crocheted item
 39. A pin cushion
 40. A limerick - 'There once was a poet called Will' (With 8 syllables in 1st, 2nd and 5th lines and 5 syllables in 3rd and 4th lines)
 41. A painting or drawing
 42. A decorated plant pot
 43. Any other handicraft
 44. Photo – 'White'
 45. Photo – 'Recycled'
 46. Photo – 'Aged'
 47. Photo 'Textures' Must be black and white photo
- Photos - may be in colour or black and white for classes 44 to 46 and all photos are not to exceed 7" by 5". No mounts allowed**

DIVISION 5 age must be written on entry form.

UNDER 5 – for children up to age 4 inclusive

48. A painting or drawing
49. A decorated plant pot
50. 3 Decorated mini-roll (Mini roll can be shop purchased, judged on appearance only)

UNDER 8 – for all children up to age 7 inclusive

51. A decorated plant pot
52. Banana bread– to be judged on taste & appearance
53. A sock puppet

UNDER 12 – for all children up to age 11 inclusive

54. A decorated plant pot
55. A pop up card
56. 3 Iced fingers to be judged on taste & appearance.

UNDER 16 – for all children up to age 15 inclusive

57. Decorated birthday cake. Judged on taste and appearance.
58. A decorated plant pot
59. Photo – 'Food' no larger than 7"x 5"

Please circle the classes you wish to enter and return the entry form to Claire Coysh, Walton House, South Side, Steeple Aston OX25 4RT (077990 65482) or Victoria Clifton, Bluebell Cottage, Middle Aston, OX25 5PZ (078170 25948) with full entry fee by 7.00 pm on Thursday 19th March 2026. Extra forms are available from Vicky or Claire or the village shop, or village website.

Classes 1-47 entry fee 30p. Classes 48-59 entry fee 10p. Prizes first £2, second £1, third 50p

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

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

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Parish Council Meeting Notes



District Councillor, David Rogers, began by reporting that the *Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042* examination hearings were due to begin the next morning. These are the crucial plans for our area's future, without which developers can basically do as they like. It appears that developers are not keen on the examination going ahead. CDC should have a five-year housing land supply, but at present it is only a three year one.

County Councillor, Gareth Epps, drew the short straw with his report on potholes (January was a bumper month for reports across the County) and drainage. There is a shortfall in funding. However, he was optimistic about there being favourable policies for environmental issues preserving the character of the villages around Bicester, including Steeple. There are also major environmental issues arising from the proposal for Heyford Park New Town.

The new chair of the village environment committee is Chris Nevile.

The workshop on *Village Improvements* had been well-attended and about sixty ideas had been generated covering mainly transport, traffic, highways, footpaths and the environment: ideas included amended bus routes, weight limits for traffic through the village, protection of green spaces, a mobile phone mast, a new community health hub and (my favourite) improved access to Heyford Station with a new pedestrian bridge across the Cherwell. The PC will report in more detail on the ideas and discuss how to implement them.

Also well attended was the meeting of *Grange Park* residents, concerned that several households had been sent a letter from a developer offering to buy up their homes, in order to demolish them to give access to the field behind them in order to build houses. The landowner was invited, but could not attend. The current draft of the *Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan* allocates the site as a 'reserve site' for up to 15 homes, with access which relies on an oral agreement between a householder and the landowner which has now been withdrawn. Householdors were very concerned that their small cul-de-sac could be transformed into a major development, half again the size of the current one, with the accompanying extra traffic and increased pressure on the already inadequate utilities. A *Residents' Association* was proposed and is being considered. Residents were urged to express their views on the allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan – [Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Consultation December 2025 – Cherwell District Council – Citizen Space](#). The closing date has been extended to 24th March.

Finders Keepers, the letting agents, had approached the PC re providing 20 mph stickers for villagers to put on their waste bins. This was not considered an appropriate matter for the PC.

However, village gates (a new one on me) had been mentioned as a possible traffic-calming measure, in conjunction with surface changes to entry roads. Signs on the gates would remind motorists to slow down.

A request for a bus shelter down at the bottom of *The Beeches* was discussed. The actual surfacing of the lay-by was considered to be a greater cause for concern, but this would be a highways matter. County Councillor Epps would look into it.

The playground improvements had been given a favourable report by CDC, but a tree expert has said that the platforms built around the trees were constraining tree growth and that the platforms need to be taken down, modified and put back carefully. Appropriate woodworkers will be sought.

The meeting ended with an unscheduled discussion on the previous night's power cut. One parish councillor reported that the mercifully brief cut had affected nine Oxfordshire post codes. The Parish Clerk is registered with SSE to be notified when power cuts occur. However, it was only when the power cut was over that the parish clerk, who is the first contact for the village *Emergency Plan* to be implemented, received a message. This will be investigated further.

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## TRIBUTE - Peter James Stone – 17/02/1932 – 07/01/2026 (aged 93 years)

*Funeral held on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026 at 2.00pm at St Peter and St Paul Parish Church, Steeple Aston.*

Peter Stone, a lifelong resident of Steeple Aston, died in January 2026, aged 93 years. To many in the village, he was simply “Pete” - the electrician, handyman, gardener, Steeple Aston village historian and a gentleman. Peter was an only child and lived in Steeple Aston his whole life, growing up in the family home - ‘The Nest’. He met Gwen, his wife of almost seventy years, in the village, and they married two years later in 1955 in the village church. They had three children, five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

After training as an electrician, and then working for many years at the Cowley car factory, Pete returned to the work he most enjoyed: providing a service to the villagers as a self-employed electrician and general handyman. He had a reputation as a trustworthy local, who could turn his hand to many things. Pete was also an enthusiastic gardener. Over decades, he and Gwen created the much-admired garden at ‘The Nest’. In its heyday, the garden was part of the village Open Gardens programme, when they happily gave visitors tours of the garden, explaining the origins and evolution of the ‘sunken garden’.

As someone whose family has lived here since 1932, Pete had a wealth of knowledge about the history and culture of village life. His photos - which he donated to the village archive - show what life was like in the 1800s, when the village had a cobbler's shop, three public houses and a blacksmith's.

Pete leaves behind a loving family, and many friends and neighbours who benefited from his skills, knowledge and quiet caring ways. A true village gentleman.

### **Andrea Stone - daughter**

*Below - three generations of the Stone family: Frank Stone (Pete's father), Pete Stone, baby Graham Stone and Gwen Stone in 1959.*

*Right: Pete enjoying the sunshine in the garden at ‘The Nest’.*





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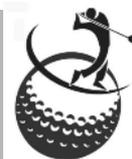
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Hello fellow golfers - We hope you're keeping well and are looking forward to starting another SAGS season.

Meeting dates: We have put together another strong programme of fixtures for 2026 which includes a new venue, Witney Lakes. By popular demand, we go back to the courses we all enjoyed last year - Olton in Solihull, Coventry Hearsall and The Vale in Evesham/Pershore. Add to that an old favourite, Kirtlington, and our fixture list is complete. Please reserve these dates in your diaries:

Hearsall: Friday 15th May – 10.00am meet for an 11.00am first tee – one-course meal.

Olton: Thursday 11th June – 11.30am meet for a 12.30pm first tee - soup and sandwiches.

The Vale: Wednesday 15th July – 10.30am meet for a 11.30am first tee - a one-course meal.

Witney Lakes: Tuesday 18th August – 12.00 noon meet for a 13.00 first tee - sandwiches and chips.

Kirtlington: Tuesday 29th September - 11.00am meet for a 12.00 noon first tee – sandwiches and chips.

We're looking forward to seeing you all again this summer. If you're reading this for the first time and fancy a day out, please come along, you're very welcome. Contact myself or Chris on 01869 340423/347173.

### Celebratory Don'ts in Club Competition:

- Do not doff your cap – no-one's looking.
- Do not throw your ball to the gallery – no-one's there to catch it.
- Do not throw your hat in the air - save that for graduation day.

More don'ts next month. Happy golfing!

**Alan Brewer**

## Celebrating Dr Radcliffe - events in May in Steeple Aston

### Fundraising Concert for Steeple Aston Church and Dr Radcliffe's Primary School

**Saturday 16 May, 6.30pm at the Church**

We are pleased to welcome the **Choir of Brasenose College, Oxford**, and pupils from Dr Radcliffe's Primary School, for a concert and readings, curated by Nicholas Cleobury, celebrating the life of the church's 17<sup>th</sup> century Rector, founder of the school, and Principal of Brasenose College, Dr Samuel Radcliffe.

**Tickets for the concert, and a post-concert supper at the Village Hall, will be available soon - please save the date**

If you would like more information, or to volunteer to help with food on 16 May, please email Jackie Watson on jackiewatson05@gmail.com (or ring on 07994 756352)

Also that week:

### **Steeple Talk**

**Thursday 14 May, 7.30pm at the Church**

Charlotte Harris (Steeple Aston resident, Dr Radcliffe's parent and alumna of Brasenose College) will talk about Dr Samuel Radcliffe and his work in Steeple Aston

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# Blast from *the Past*

These pictures formed part of the Millennium Photographic collection put together by Paul Hotston in celebration of reaching the year 2000. It depicts the spring show displays in the village hall, which have changed very little over the years, with spectacular floral displays and scrumptious cakes to whet the appetite. The competition was fierce for the weirdly shaped animal made from garden veg!

*Photos courtesy of Steeple Aston Village Archive (SAVA)*

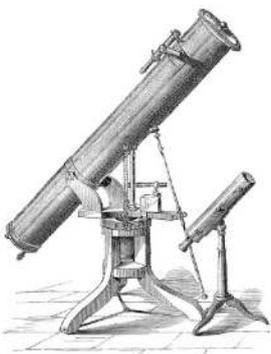


Steeple Talks 19<sup>th</sup> March  
In the Church  
7.15pm for 7.30pm



## A Journey Through My Astronomical Interests

**Tim Haymes**



Refreshments from 7.15pm  
Donations welcomed for church funds.  
All Welcome

Adderbury, Deddington and District Photographic Society

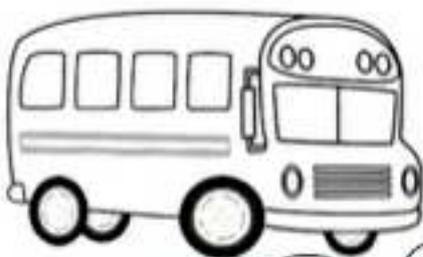
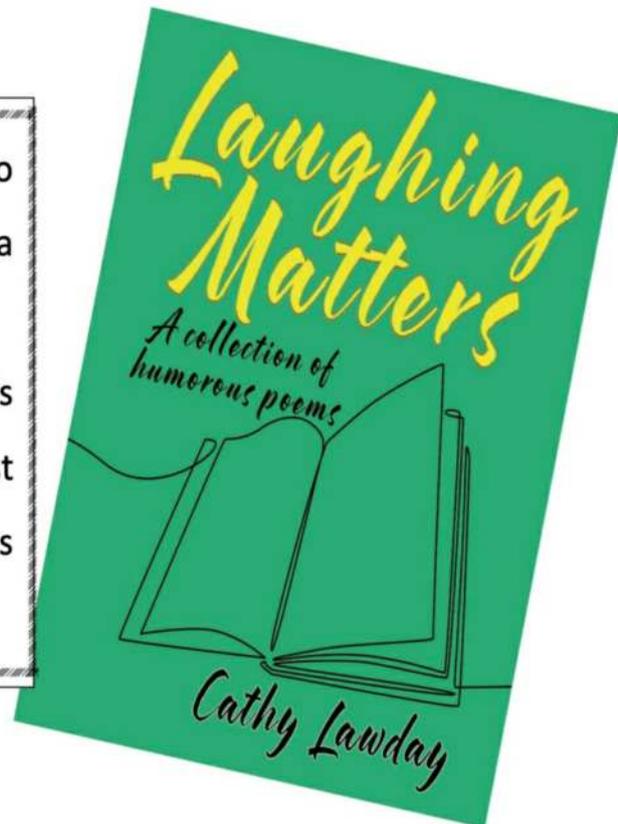


## Photographic Exhibition

Steeple Aston Recreation Centre  
**Free Entry**  
Sunday March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2.15-4.30  
Alongside the Spring Show

Cathy Lawday, a regular contributor to Poetry Corner, has published a collection of her poems.

*Laughing Matters* costs £7.99 and is available from Steeple Aston Post Office or from Amazon, Waterstones & other online booksellers.



**Wednesday shopping run to Chipping Norton**

Leave – 9.10  
Return – 12.37

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## All Hands to the Pumps

Buses wouldn't run without high-speed diesel dispensers and heavy-duty transfer pumps – efficient dispensers of fuel for coach and bus operators. Large robust stainless-steel boxes pumping out fuel, which buses rely on for speed and efficiency, but none have the romance or appeal of the Red Sentry. My favourite object in the Morris Motors Museum is this century-old petrol pump. It must have been built in the 1920s, as there is a glass window at the top so customers could see the fuel being pumped to the nozzle, a feature absent before 1920.

Few have probably heard of Sylvanus Freelove Bowser from Fort Wayne, Indiana, but he played a critical role in the automotive industry. It was he who, in 1885, invented the petrol pump. It was initially used in general stores to suck kerosene from barrels and dispense the liquid into customers' metal tins, which was then used to fire up lamps and cooking stoves. Soon, Bowser noticed that his pump was being used for petrol and so he added a hose to the device. To determine how much liquid had been dispensed, the operator counted the number of handle cranks – perfect for small petrol tanks of the time. Bowser later improved the pump to include safety measures adding a hose to directly dispense fuel into automobiles. His 'Self-Measuring Gasoline Storage Pump' quickly became popular with the motoring public. For a time, the term 'Bowser' was used to refer to petrol pumps, and is still the name for aviation tankers, particularly in Australia.

Our Red Sentry has a calibrated glass cylinder on top, so motorists could check they were receiving the right amount of petrol and that it was clear without contaminants. The desired quantity was pumped up into a calibrated cylinder and once pumping stopped, the gasoline dropped into the customer's tank by gravity. These pumps became popular all over the world and in the early twentieth century were imported in vast numbers into the UK. A clock face was introduced in 1910 to measure the volume of liquid, which was still hand-cranked. Early pumps were up to 10ft (3.04m) tall and painted in bright colours – usually red – so motorists could easily spot them and often decorated with the oil company's livery (ours is Shell). There were no garages, just pumps by the roadside.

The first filling station in the UK was opened in November 1919 at Aldermaston, Berkshire, by the Automobile Association (AA). At the time, the AA was trying to promote the sale of British-made benzole fuel – a by-product of burning coal – as an alternative to imported Russian petrol. Russian benzole had been widely available, but after the 1917 Russian Revolution, this trade was viewed as tantamount to supporting the Bolsheviks. The Aldermaston filling station had a single hand-operated pump with motorists served by AA patrolmen in full uniform. The AA opened another seven filling stations, and soon the idea of selling British-made fuel took off, with 7,000 pumps in use by 1923. Initially pumps were on the roadside, but local authorities in towns and cities began to charge up to an annual rent of £20 for the use of their pavements. To avoid the rent, pumps were placed on the vendor's premises with a long arm across the pavement so that the petrol was dispensed into cars parked in the road. Buses in the early twentieth century were filled from roadside pumps, but while hand-cranking may have built up biceps, the time and

*A selection of petrol pumps is displayed in the museum dating from the 1920s to the 1950s.*

***On Sunday 15th March we shall be celebrating Mother's Day by giving free entry to the museum and a cream tea to all mothers who bring their under-16s to the museum. On 29th March we have a 'Scooter Sunday'. All scooters are welcome: classic and modern.***

**Frank Collingwood - Oxford Bus & Morris Motors Museum**





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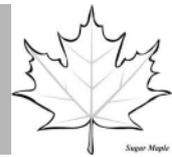
The village Environment and Sustainability committee (ESC) is committed to helping villagers to reduce, and mitigate the village's impact on the environment. As many of you will know, tree planting has very positive impacts. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, and they can also reduce the risk of flooding. The Woodland Trust gives away thousands of trees annually and is currently accepting applications from community organisations who would like to participate in their scheme. If you have a gap in your hedge, or a space in your garden, please consider whether a few bare-rooted trees would be welcome there. If you're not sure, there's plenty of guidance here: [woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/advice/](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/advice/). Bear in mind that trees grow so please choose spaces that will allow you to manage this growth, and remain on friendly terms with your neighbours.

If you think you can use some trees, please email [carltomlinson1967@gmail.com](mailto:carltomlinson1967@gmail.com) by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, indicating how many you would like. The ESC will co-ordinate an application and the trees will be delivered towards the end of this year for planting during the winter months. Please note that the trees come in packs and we cannot guarantee exactly which trees you will get. Please indicate if you want the trees for hedging, or as individual specimens, as this will help us optimise our request. All trees are native to the UK.

**Carl Tomlinson**



## Steeple Aston Garden Club



In early February, a large number of Garden Club members were treated to a wonderful talk about Rousham by Caroline Landless, who shared her considerable knowledge about this valued and historic house and garden, which lies a very short distance from the village. This talk also provided many more insights into the garden we'll be visiting on Wednesday 10th June at 6.30pm. For any non-members, please contact Alison or Richard and join us on a fine summer evening – hopefully!

Our next Garden Club event is a joint meeting with Tackley Garden Club on Tuesday 17th March at 7.45 pm in their Village Hall, with the return once again of the very popular speaker, Tim Walker, who was the former Head Gardener at Oxford Botanic Garden.

Plans for our monthly visits to local gardens this summer are currently being finalised. The calendar of events is on the Steeple Aston website [steepleaston.org.uk/clubs-societies/gardening/#gardenclub](http://steepleaston.org.uk/clubs-societies/gardening/#gardenclub) and will be updated again soon. In the meantime, please contact Richard or Alison for more information. As I write this, although the weather is still very wet, snowdrops, crocuses and hellebores are in bloom and other spring flowers such as daffodils and even some hyacinths are emerging to signal the start of spring and a new gardening season!

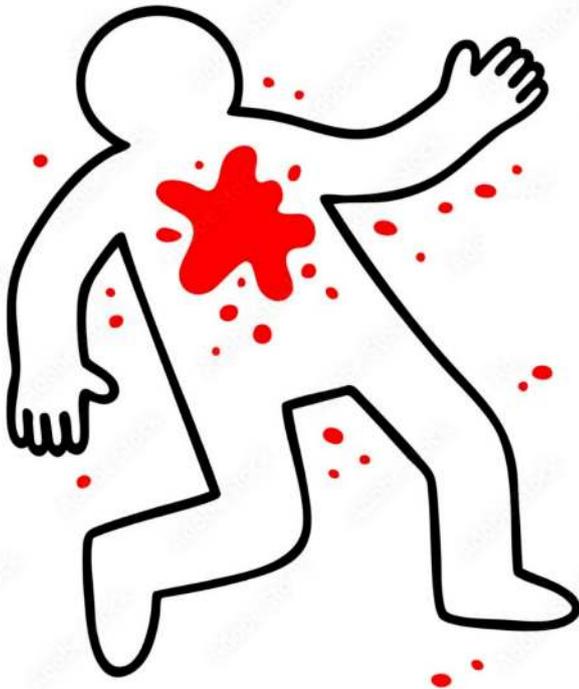
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**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April, 7.30pm (doors open  
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## Football *Focus*

After a fine run of five wins in a row during November and December, early 2026 has brought with it a small dose of reality for Steeple Aston FC. After a couple of postponements, the first game of the new year was away against a winless FC Kayi Reserves (aided, it must be said, by a fair few first teamers dropping down). In some pretty atrocious ground conditions and with high winds paying havoc, the lads struggled to get into any real rhythm, but Adrian was able to take advantage of a goalkeeping mistake to put SAFC one-nil up just before half time. The change of half meant the 30mph wind was now against the team and this led to a long period of being under pressure which eventually took its toll and a rash challenge from Alex Keal led to a penalty being given and subsequently despatched. 1-1 with 30 minutes to play. Could Steeple hold out for what was now a good point? Not quite. FC Kayi were able to bundle the ball in and went on to win 2-1. A frustrating performance and result, and a departure from the positive vibes of late 2025.

The second game of 2026 saw a rejuvenated, top of the table Middleton Cheney come to Fir Close for what would be a good challenge in almost Spring-like conditions. Steeple again took an early lead in the match from that man Adrian and held pretty firm for the first 35 minutes. Then controversy struck. A hopeful hoof from their keep and a couple of flicks on lead to their striker bundling the ball over the line amid a bit of a goalmouth scramble. However, the linesman had his flag firmly up, indicating an offside in the build up to the goal. The referee went over and decided to overrule the lino's decision. Baffling and frustrating in equal measure. What followed was a head loss not seen since the darker days of the start of the season. Steeple players couldn't move on and were quickly punished again after failing to clear a free kick from the left-hand side. Losing 2-1 at half time didn't feel fair, given the comfort of the first 35 minutes, but SAFC were very much still in the game. A strong first 15 minutes of the second half during a biblical rain storm led to a few missed chances for Steeple, but that spirit was killed off by a worldie free-kick which went into the top corner from 35 yards. Two losses welcoming in the new year was a disappointing start to 2026 and left co-managers, Stuart Baillie and Alex Keal, much to ponder in how to make sure the team ends the season on a positive note. With four games left and two home games, we'd love to see anyone from the village up at the pitch to show their support!

### Alex Keal



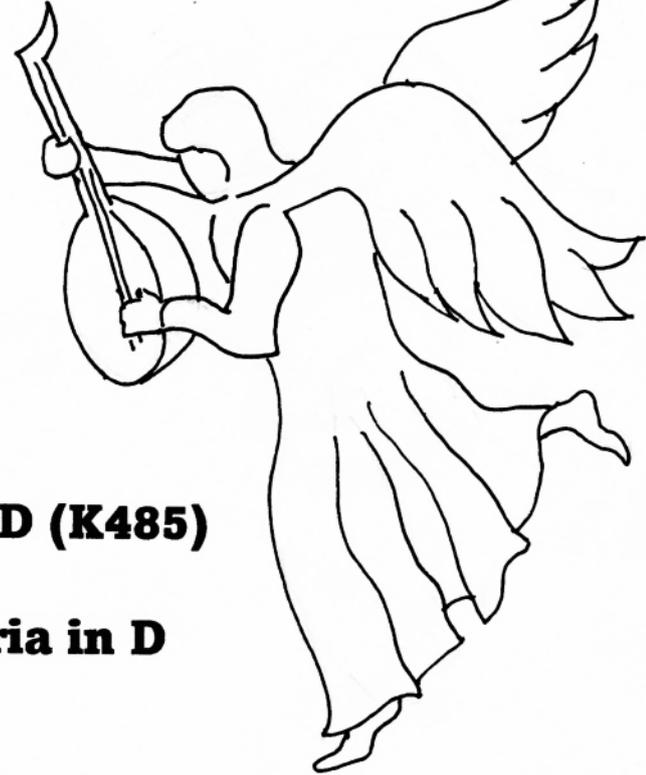


**Steeple Aston Choral Society**

Presents



# *Gloria! Gloria!*



**Vivaldi, Gloria in D (K485)**

**Herrington, Gloria in D**

**Paul Herrington - Organ**

**Brian Thomas and Harry Kent - Trumpets**

**Paul Badley - Conductor**

**Church of St. Nicholas, Tackley - Sunday 29 March - 7pm**

Tickets £12 (Under 16s free) from SACS members, SA Village Shop or Margaret Bulleyment 01869 347346, or [mtheb749@gmail.com](mailto:mtheb749@gmail.com)

# Thames Valley Police

Over the past year, the Bicester Rural Neighbourhood Team has undergone significant changes, and we felt it was time to reintroduce ourselves to the community. Not everyone visits the Thames Valley Police website, so here's a quick overview of who we are and what we do. **Meet the Team:**

## Police Constables:

- **PC Phil Edwards – Neighbourhood Officer**  
Phil joined our team in December 2025. However, he brings a wealth of experience from Response teams, Assessment and Investigation Unit, and the former Neighbourhood Problem-Solving Team, as well as being a Police Search Advisor to provide expert guidance during search operations.
- **PC Lorraine Mead – Neighbourhood Supervisor**  
Lorraine has been on the team since November 2024, and has been immersed in seeking problem-solving approaches to longstanding community issues. Lorraine brings extensive experience from Response teams, Tutoring, Priority crime team and CID. In addition to supervising and providing support to the PCSOs, Lorraine investigates neighbourhood crime and drives the team's patrol plans and community engagements.

## Police Community Support Officers:

- **PCSO Louise Beaumont**  
One of our longest-serving PCSOs and a familiar face in Bicester Rural community, Louise is a pillar in the team. In addition to the monthly 'Have Your Say's she carries out around the villages, Louise enjoys attending community events and learning about the communities we serve, whilst also being a wealth of local knowledge particularly around support services.
- **PCSO Raymond Kennard**  
Ray is an experienced officer having previously worked on the Banbury and Bicester Neighbourhood teams. Ray moved across to the Bicester rural team in May 2025, and is holding a monthly 'Have Your Say' roadshow to get to know the issues that concern the community the most to be able to direct the team's patrols accordingly.

Contrary to popular belief, not all officers based at Bicester Police Station are part of the Neighbourhood Team. While we work closely with Incident & Crime Response teams, our team's focus is on **community priorities set by you every three months**, whilst also investigating neighbourhood crimes including, but not limited to, Anti-social Behaviour and Retail Crime. We aim to build strong relationships, tackle local issues, and keep the Bicester rural community safe.

## How You Can Help:

Your feedback shapes our priorities. Please engage with us at local meetings which are advertised on the Thames Valley Police website, our Community Priorities Online Survey, or feel free to stop and chat with us when we're out on patrol. If you have any community concerns, please contact the Neighbourhood team via this link: [thamesvalley.police.uk/area/your-area/local-policing-team-contact/triage/v2/contact-your-local-policing-team/](https://thamesvalley.police.uk/area/your-area/local-policing-team-contact/triage/v2/contact-your-local-policing-team/) and we will respond within 72 hours. Alternatively, you can report via Thames Valley Police Website: [thamesvalley.police.uk/ro/report/](https://thamesvalley.police.uk/ro/report/) or call 101 (non-emergency number). You can report anonymously via Crimes stoppers: [crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/forms/give-information-anonymously](https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/forms/give-information-anonymously) or call 0800 555111.

Thames Valley Police

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# Church Matters



As March begins, we are now roughly a third of the way through Lent and I wonder if you chose to give something up for Lent and if so, how it is going? Traditionally, people gave up meat, eggs, wine, oil, butter and other dairy products. Back in the 1500s, people were fined for eating meat during Lent. This Lenten discipline gives us the fun of pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, as people used up their eggs and milk before Lent started. I wonder what you put on your pancakes? Do you go for the old favourite of lemon and sugar, or what I think of as more modern - classic chocolate spread and bananas?

The practice of giving something up for Lent has declined over my lifetime. As a child, I can remember it being regularly talked about, but now it is hardly mentioned. Apparently in the UK (2024), just 11% of Christians and 5% of the population gave something up for Lent. The most popular things were sweets and chocolates. Being able to give up food for Lent is, of course, a luxury in itself. There are millions of people around the world, including in this country, who don't have enough food to eat. There is a myriad of reasons for this, from poverty to failed crops caused by changes in climate (including droughts and floods), and wars (forcing people to flee their homes). This was a focus of the community prayer/reflection space when we recently took BeSpace into Dr Radcliffe's School. In the 'Empty Plate' space, children were invited to think about their favourite foods, with various responses from chocolate through to octopus. They were then invited to think about others who didn't have enough and the reasons why, before responding on a paper plate by giving thanks by drawing their favourite foods, or by expressing their wishes for those who don't have enough food.

As I look around the wonderful world that God has given us, I'm aware that there is plenty for everyone, if we could learn to share the resources better. This is the topic that we are discussing in our Lent group on Wednesdays over in the Methodist chapel in Tackley (please see [sntchurch.com](http://sntchurch.com) website for further details). As the discipline of giving something up for Lent has declined, it has been replaced by the challenge of taking something up. This year, I invite you to think about sharing our food with others by giving to the local foodbank. There is a box at the back of SS Peter and Paul Church in Steeple Aston and donations are taken every Tuesday morning to the foodbank in Banbury for distribution.

God Bless,  
**Harriet**

*'Empty plates' from BeSpace at Dr Radcliffe's, photos by Rachel Marsden*



## Enjoy the church bells as youngsters compete

To let you know, there will be a Young Persons bellringing competition taking place at Steeple Aston Church on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March starting about 1.00pm that will last until all the teams have competed, with results and presentations at the end of the day. The competition will comprise of teams of 8 youngsters under the age of 18 years. The Inter Midland Counties Striking competition will include ringers from Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Gloucestershire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. The bells will therefore be ringing throughout the afternoon. Each team will have a short time to practice before completing their test piece. I hope you will enjoy listening.

**Graham Clifton**

## **TRIBUTE - Malcolm Hensher: 5th January 1945 – 5th January 2026 (aged 81 years)**

Malcolm and Joan moved to Steeple Aston towards the end of 1993. He quickly introduced himself to the bellringers at the church and joined the team. Malcolm had learnt to ring at the age of about 11 in Cambridge. In the late 50s and early 1960s, he was ringing in Northamptonshire around Nether Heyford, where his father was a vicar. For a time, they lived in Souldern, where he taught a new band of ringers including Joan and daughter, Caroline. From there, they moved to Yarnton and rang there and at St Giles in Oxford.

He and Joan enjoyed a good party and always wanted the handbell ringers to call at their home in Grange Park when we were out and about around the village. There would always be a good spread of food and drink, plus lots of jokes and stories to tell. I am especially pleased we were able to call just before this last Christmas and play for them. Malcolm was very committed and loyal to Steeple Aston church. He served on the PCC and was later elected Churchwarden in 2010, serving until 2017. He took over organising the Church Fete for many years, and organised the Christian Aid collections every year.

Malcolm and Joan spent time working in Zambia. Because of this, Malcolm could always remember my birthday; it falls on Zambia Day, so every year I would receive a card saying Happy Zambia Day. Malcolm taught French and German at secondary school level, and would also run classes for those wishing to go abroad on holiday.

Malcolm and Joan were good friends to so many people. It was never too much trouble whenever we went away for them to look after our dog for us. They loved dogs and for many years kept black labradors. I remember when he first got an automatic car with an electric handbrake. Somehow, he had managed to get it to the church, but it would not move from there. So, I received a phone call to go and rescue him, which I was pleased to do. I explained you just need to press the go-fast pedal on the right, which he did with great force and shot off along North Side with wheels spinning at a rate of knots!

Malcolm had written detailed instructions for his funeral, which included the hymns, readings and music. Another request was for the ringers to ring a Muffled Quarter Peal of Grandsire Triples before the service, which I am pleased to say we completed successfully. His funeral took place at Steeple Aston church on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026, with around seventy people attending.

**Graham Clifton, Tower Captain & Churchwarden**



# Local Information

## Church Services March 2026

| Date                                                           | North Aston                                            | Steeple Aston                      | Tackley                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sunday<br/>1<sup>st</sup> March</b>                         | 9.30am<br>Holy Communion<br>BCP                        | 11.00am<br>Holy Communion<br>BCP   | 5.30pm<br>Evensong                                |
|                                                                |                                                        |                                    |                                                   |
| <b>Sunday<br/>8<sup>th</sup> March</b>                         | 9.30am<br>Morning Prayer                               | 11.00am<br>Family Service          | 5.30pm<br>Holy Communion                          |
|                                                                |                                                        |                                    |                                                   |
| <b>Sunday<br/>15<sup>th</sup> March</b>                        | 9.30am<br>Morning Prayer                               | 11.00am<br>Family Communion        | 9.30am<br>Family Service                          |
|                                                                |                                                        |                                    |                                                   |
| <b>Sunday<br/>22<sup>nd</sup> March</b>                        | 9.30am<br>Morning Prayer                               | 11.00am<br>Thanksgiving<br>Service | 5.30pm<br>Passion Organ<br>Meditation             |
|                                                                |                                                        |                                    |                                                   |
| <b>Sunday<br/>29<sup>th</sup> March<br/><i>Palm Sunday</i></b> | 9.15am<br>Holy Communion,<br>meet at St Mary's<br>Walk | 11.00am<br>Holy Communion          | 10.30am<br>Methodist Church,<br>Meet at The Green |
|                                                                |                                                        |                                    |                                                   |

[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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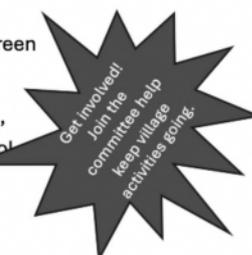
[savh.org.uk/contact-us](http://savh.org.uk/contact-us) or call 07734 112967

| <u>All Facilities</u>                                       |                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Peak Times – involving hire after 6pm</b>                |                                               |
| 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)           |
| <b>Off-Peak – all hire before 6pm</b>                       |                                               |
| Hourly Rate Plus Refundable Deposit £200                    | £10/hr (or £30 for 4 hours)                   |
| <b>Hall Only</b>                                            |                                               |
| Represented Clubs                                           | £9 (up to 3hrs)                               |
| Others                                                      | £17 (up to 3hrs plus Refundable Deposit £200) |
| <b>Committee Room</b>                                       |                                               |
| Represented Clubs                                           | £6 (up to 3hrs)                               |
| Others                                                      | £12 (up to 3hrs)                              |

## Steeple Aston Sport & Recreation Centre and Field

| <b>Letting charges</b>                                                                                 |              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Social Function peak times (Daily up to 6 hours from 6pm)                                              | £55          |
| Social Function off-peak times (Daily up to 5 hours before 6pm)                                        | £27.50       |
| Meeting of represented clubs (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
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**Steeple Aston and Middle Aston Rubbish bin collection day is THURSDAY.**

### March 2026:

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> Blue and brown

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> Green

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> Blue and brown

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> Green

### April 2026:

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> Blue and brown

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> Green

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> Blue and brown

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> Green

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> 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 collected weekly.

Glass bottles and jars can now be placed in blue recycling bin or approved recycling sacks – please rinse items first to remove any residues. No need to remove labels/lids.

Please consult the Cherwell District Council website for further details of collections:

**[cherwell.gov.uk/recycling](http://cherwell.gov.uk/recycling)**

## 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](http://Stagecoachbus.com/timetables)*

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# 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 April and May to [editorsalife@gmail.com](mailto:editorsalife@gmail.com)

| Month                         | Event                                                                  | Venue            | Time                         |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| March                         |                                                                        |                  |                              |
| Tuesday 10th March            | WI: 108th Birthday Night & Charlie Ross, Auctioneer                    | Village Hall     | 7.00pm                       |
| Saturday 14th March           | SAL April copy and advert deadlines                                    |                  |                              |
| Saturday 14th March           | Comedy Night                                                           | Village Hall     | 7.30pm                       |
| Monday 16th March             | Parish Council Meeting                                                 | S & R Building   | 7.30pm                       |
| Tuesday 17th March            | Valentines: Debi with her 60s & 70s Show                               | Village Hall     | 2.30pm                       |
| Tuesday 17th March            | Garden Club: Oxford Botanic Garden                                     | Tackley          | 7.45pm                       |
| Thursday 19th March           | Steeple Talk: A Journey Through My Astronomical Interests - Tim Haymes | Steeple church   | 7.15pm for 7.30pm            |
| Sunday 22nd March             | Spring Horticultural Show                                              | Village Hall     | 2.30pm - 4.30pm              |
| Sunday 22nd March             | ADDPS Photographic Exhibition (alongside the Spring Show)              | S & R Building   | 2.15pm - 4.30pm              |
| Saturday 28th March           | Deddington Farmers' Market                                             | Deddington       | 9.00am - 12.30pm             |
| Sunday 29th March             | SACS Spring Concert: Gloria! Gloria!                                   | Tackley Church   | 7.00pm                       |
|                               |                                                                        |                  |                              |
| April                         |                                                                        |                  |                              |
| Wed 1st - Sat 4th April       | Chitty Chitty Bang Bang - Myco theatre company                         | Oxford Playhouse | For performances See Page 15 |
| Tuesday 14th April            | Valentines: Member of Inner Magic Circle                               | Village Hall     | 2.30pm                       |
| Tuesday 14th April            | WI: Being a Celebrant                                                  | Village Hall     | 7.00pm                       |
| Tuesday 14th April            | SAL May copy and advert deadlines                                      |                  |                              |
| Monday 20th - Friday 24th Apr | Valentines Holiday: South Somerset                                     |                  |                              |
| Monday 20th April             | Parish Council Meeting                                                 | S & R Building   | 7.30pm                       |
| Saturday 25th April           | Farmers' Market                                                        | Deddington       | 9.00am - 12.30pm             |
| Saturday 25th April           | Murder Mystery Evening including meal                                  | Village Hall     | 7.00pm for 7.30pm            |
| Wednesday 29th April          | Valentines: Coach Trip - GWR Steam Train                               |                  |                              |

**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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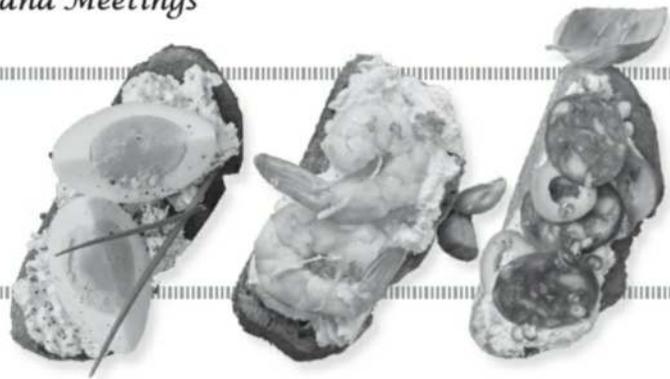
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