

Steeple Aston

Life

July 2026

Issue No. 635



• Emergency Briefing • North Aston Farms • Rousham Revealed •

Steeple & Middle Aston magazine



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Allotments (Church) SACAA		Amanda Rodgers	07793 553150
Angling Club		Antony Morley	tonyriver_83@hotmail.com
Archive (SAVA)	Chairman	Stuart Cummins	01869 349155
Baby and toddler group		Katy, Martha, Hilary and Lisa	steepleastontoddlergrp@gmail.com
Badminton (Tuesday mornings)		Barbara Brewer	01869 340423
Badminton (Thursday evenings)		Alison Moran	01869 347033
Beekeepers (Swarm collection, advice)		Paul Honigmann	01869 340665, 07512 224700
Bell ringers		Graham & Dorothy Clifton	01869 347273
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 Councillor (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	01869 340099/347273
Church (Methodist) – Tackley		Rev'd Paul Carter	01865 243216
	Steward	Tim Bailey	01869 331516
Cricket Club	Chairman	Peter Higgins	01869 347493
Crimestoppers			0800 555111
Deddington Guides		Maggie Rampley	07957 600755
Deddington Health Centre	Appointments	Patient Triage	01869 338611
	Repeat Prescriptions	Deddingtonhealthcentre.co.uk	
	Out of Hours		111
Dr Radcliffe's C of E School	Headteacher		01869 340204
Environment and Sustainability Committee	Chair	Chris Nevile	chrisnevile@gmail.com
	Secretary	Martin Dale	martindale865@gmail.com
Fix My Street		Graham Porcas - grahamporcas@btconnect.com	01869 347240
Football Club	Secretary	Stuart Baillie	07809 629666
Garden Club	Chairman	Richard Preston	01869 340512
Golf Society	Chairman	Alan Brewer	01869 340423
Horticultural Society	Show Secretary	Vicky Clifton	07817 025948
Parish Council	Clerk	Cathy Fleet	07989 398838
Police	24hr Call Centre	(non-emergency)	101
Post Office & Harris Stores		Raj	01869 340201
Pre-school			01869 340863
Public House	Red Lion		01869 389174
Robinson's Close	Letting Agent	Angela Smith	07734 112967
Sports & Recreation Centre	Letting Agent	Angela Smith	07734 112967
Steeple Aston Walking Group		Penny, Stuart, Sue and Graham	sawgox25@gmail.com
Valentine Club		Richard & Daphne Preston	01869 340512
Village Hall (see advertisement)	Letting Agent	Angela Smith	07734 112967
Village Emergency Telephone System			01869 690691
Village Website	Editor	Jenny Bell - steepleastonwebeditor@gmail.com	01869 943573
Volunteer Driver Service (North Oxfordshire)		livewell.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Services/2561	0300 303 0125
Walking Netball	Wed. - 10.15am	Merrill Bayley	01869 347802
WI	President	Julie Hillier	01869 349185

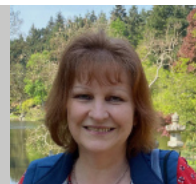


“...folly is not always folly.”
Jane Austen

Steeple Aston *Life*

July 2026
Issue No.635

Editorial



I am writing this in the midst of a torrential downpour after a rather damp and overcast couple of weeks, preceded by a week of record-breaking temperatures! Our climate is definitely changing and this featured in the sobering film recently shown in the village hall, followed by a panel discussion. Organised by Environmental Steeple, ‘*The People’s Emergency Briefing*’ looked at the global environmental crisis and ways in which we can all help to mitigate some of the devastating implications. Read more on page 15 and sign the petition urging our politicians into action.

On the subject of the environment, Amanda from Restor8iv shows how you can upcycle all kinds of materials, transforming them into useful and decorative items, where nothing is wasted. Plus, local business, North Aston Farms tell us about a typical day on the micro-dairy and how they have been fully organic since 1992, offering locally sourced produce to our community.

It’s great news that the village pub is reopening for business, and we wish the new tenants all the best. This is surely an asset we don’t want to lose, as this hostelry has been a village feature since 1753 when it was formerly called *The Chequers*, which we understand the new landlord is keen to reinstate.

We’re extremely fortunate to have Rousham House on our doorstep, and many locals recently enjoyed fascinating tours of the house and explored the splendid garden. Many thanks to all those involved in organising these interesting and informative events – plus the roses are quite spectacular this year!

Make the most of high summer – whether it’s letting your hair down at the Middle Aston Music Festival, a sup in the village pub, or pottering in the garden preparing exhibits for the upcoming Horticultural Show.

Carol

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Steeple Aston *Life*

COPY

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

COPY DEADLINES

The copy deadline for the August 2026 issue is
Tuesday 14th July



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

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½ page- £18

Full page(village events only) - £20.00



Pothole Update

After my last report, I'm afraid the FMS system has collapsed with a huge backlog of repairs outstanding. It is the first time I have experienced this, and it is especially disappointing since our latest political representatives have told us that fixing potholes and roads generally was going to be their priority. The result has been that, so far this year, we have not been allowed to report anything other than the most serious defects. I currently have a backlog of repairs, some of which were due to be actioned from the beginning of the year, that are still not done.

Therefore, we have re-activated the Steeple Aston Road Warden Team, which has been resting for some years as not required, but it is now! You will see us out and about during the next few weeks, fixing minor defects around the village. On the first day, 1st June, we fixed six, including the three dating back to January! More to come. As before, we receive requests for action through the FMS system, or you can contact the parish clerk or me directly, contact details in SAL directory. Please, please keep the reports factual and accurate - a pothole must be at least 40mm deep to comply with our rules to be actioned, and we are strictly monitored by OCC. I am sorry, but the majority of reports made through the FMS website do not comply. We have some leeway, but 20mm is just not a pothole!

Please note also that we are part of the FMS team and authorised to carry out repairs which are covered by OCC systems and insurance. Do not take matters into your own hands and think you can carry out repairs yourself. Unauthorised road works are strictly prohibited and you may be prosecuted, as some quite famous celebrities have found to their cost.

So, let's work together to keep Steeple's roads maintained during these difficult times.

Graham Porcas

SAL Survey Results

Many thanks to all those who contributed to the SAL survey. This has been a very useful means of finding out how far we are meeting readers' needs, and receiving suggestions for the way forward with regard to content and advertising. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those who regularly contribute articles, photos, poems, reviews etc. We wouldn't have a magazine without your dedication and willingness to send contributions every month, which is always appreciated.

If you would like to read the survey results and recommendations, please go to the following link on the village website: steepleaston.org.uk/sal-magazine/ We have already begun to implement some of the recommendations in the report, so you may well notice changes in forthcoming issues of SAL. As you can imagine, in any community there are diverse interests and trying to fulfil everyone's needs is nigh on impossible. We have tried to accommodate as many readers as we can, although inevitably articles will appeal to some people more than others, so just focus on your favourites. We hope to run a similar survey every 5-10 years to keep the magazine fresh and relevant to the needs of our community.

We would particularly like to receive articles from the younger generation, as seniors are well represented, so please do send in your contributions and share your interests with fellow villagers. We'd love to hear from you.

Editor, on behalf of the SAL Committee

Correction:

There was a minor error in the article on page 21 of the June issue: Michael Hayter became Rector of Steeple and Middle Aston in **1946**, not 1937 as stated. Apologies for any confusion. *Ed.*

Editor's Letterbox

SUPERNOVA PUBS

20th May 2026

Hello Steeple Aston - We are delighted to announce that on Monday this week we signed a tenancy agreement with Hook Norton Brewery and will be taking on the stewardship of The Red Lion in Steeple Aston. As a historic pub at the heart of one of Oxfordshire's most charming villages, the site represents everything we value: character, heritage, quality and a genuine sense of place. It is a privilege to become part of its story.

With decades of experience in hospitality, owning and operating pubs and restaurants in London and Oxford, we will be introducing a menu focused on seasonality, quality ingredients and simple, honest cooking. We look forward to launching our traditional Sunday roasts, which we hope will become a firm favourite in the village and neighbouring communities. Alongside this, we are excited to champion independent breweries, including award-winning Hook Norton cask ales of course, but also bringing some rotating keg beers from some of our favourite small batch brewers. We will put together a thoughtful wine list, soft drinks and some good tea and coffee too.

Our ambition is simple: to create a pub that the village can be proud of, a welcoming place for everyone, whether that's for a relaxed drink, a family meal or a gathering of friends. A sustainable village pub that thrives. As part of our commitment to honouring the pub's history, we are pleased to share that we intend to reinstate its original name, The Chequers, in agreement with Hook Norton, to acknowledge the pub's longstanding place in the village. We are planning to re-open the pub on 18th June and are working with Hook Norton, who are carrying out the works in conjunction with us over the next few weeks. We can't wait to open our doors soon and get to know you, the residents of Steeple Aston. Thank you for the warm welcome we have already received from some of you directly. We are excited for what lies ahead. We'll share further details, including specific opening plans, menus, updated websites, Instagram & Facebook handles shortly.

Best wishes,

Jonathan Perritt
Founder

Paolo Cangiano
Managing Partner & Chef

12th June 2026

Hello again Steeple Aston - Since our note to the village on 20th May, we've been working hard in the background making various changes and improvements to the pub before re-launching. There is a lot to do in the different areas of the pub, internally, externally and in the back of house areas that don't normally see the light of day. Hook Norton Brewery, our freeholder and landlord, are being supportive and investing in undertaking most of the works in co-ordination with us. We have also had meetings with the small pub team that worked with our predecessors and are pleased to confirm that we will be taking them all onto our team going forward. As the pub builds, we hope to create more roles in our team for the local community.

We will also have access to the pub socials from Monday, so from next week we'll be updating those from time to time as we get closer to opening. Our Instagram handle is @TheChequersSteepleAston – please follow if you'd like to. Additionally, we will be sending these letters to include in Steeple Aston Life and the village website. In terms of opening, realistically we are looking at late June/early July. We want to open as soon as we can, but have to be practical about the timeframe of the works and preparation to open, so regrettably 18th June, our original target date to open, is now pushed back a little. We'll send more updates next week and confirm specific opening plans as soon as we can. We can't wait to re-launch the pub, and will be in touch with more news soon.

Best wishes,

Jonathan Perritt
Founder

Paolo Cangiano
Managing Partner & Chef

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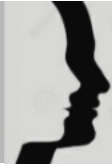
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Steeple People - Sam Birnage



Which village do you live in? How long have you lived here? We moved to Steeple Aston in January 2021 from London.

What do you like best about living here? The pub (when it's open), the beautiful countryside and, above all, the people.

How has the village changed since you came? The pub landlords have changed six times, which feels excessive even by village pub standards. Fingers crossed the latest ones stick around.

Early bird or night owl? Cat or dog? Early bird during the week (thanks to work), but socially I'm definitely more of a night owl. Dog person at heart, although I somehow seem to have ended up living with a cat.

Town or countryside? Gym or ramble? Countryside. Ideally after the gym – 'Beat' up the road is excellent - to justify the pub visits and BBQs.

Optimist or pessimist? Fast-paced or relaxed? Mostly optimistic, usually fast-paced.

What was the best thing about your childhood? The feeling that summer holidays lasted forever, plus family trips to Devon and the Lake District.

What is the best aspect of being an adult? Having the freedom and ability to take control.

What did you want to be when you grew up? A teacher - tick!

What was your first job? My first job was handing out mobile phone leaflets to Arsenal fans outside Highbury after they'd lost to Spurs.

Tell us about your hobbies: Gym, socialising with friends and family, wine 'tasting' and eating out - although, if we're being strict, 'gym' is probably the only one that technically counts as a hobby.

What is your best loved book & your favourite author? One book I return to regularly is Henry Fraser's autobiography, especially whenever work stress starts getting on top of me.

What food do you most enjoy eating? Anything cooked on the BBQ, seafood, steak and proper comforting winter food.

What is your favourite sport? Sporty or spectator? Rugby - enthusiastic spectator.

If you could ban one thing, what would it be? Social media for under 16s.

If you won the lottery, what would you splash out on? A holiday home in the south of France, and one in Greece for good measure.

What makes you happiest in the world? Sunny weather, spending time with friends and family, and a cold glass of rosé.



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In last November's article about the major planning challenges affecting our area, I reported on the scale of possible development of houses and warehouses. Here's an update on those, with some additional items even closer to home.

Firstly – just before SAL went to press, Government announced that Cherwell DC was one of nine planning authorities to suffer 'designation'. This means that applicants for planning permission for 'major projects' now have the choice of letting Cherwell determine their application or going direct to the Government's Planning Inspectorate (PINS). Lib Dems are angry at what they say is unfair treatment for past poor performance, now improved. Whether applicants will use this route to permission remains to be seen.

Government stepped back earlier this year from naming Heyford Park as one of their 'New Towns', which could have meant that 13,000 new homes would be built there. Instead, we await the outcome of Dorchester Living's prior application to Cherwell for their proposed 'hill town' with a total of 'only' 9,000 new homes, expanding on to the former flying field and also down the hill towards Caulcott. Cherwell received £500k from Government to conduct various feasibility studies on 'large-scale development' at Heyford Park, with a focus on transport, infrastructure and delivery, which we assume is intended to ensure that Cherwell does not fail to give approval.

In recent months, a number of residents' groups have sprung up to oppose the development. The Friends of Rousham have conducted an effective campaign against some aspects of Dorchester's plans, and with the discovery of PFAS 'forever chemicals' in watercourses emanating from the former airfield, residents of Caulcott, Middleton Stoney and Kirtlington - amongst others - are making their concerns known. Flooding is a parallel concern in Caulcott, which could be made worse by the development.

Local parishes represented on the MCNP Forum (including Steeple Aston) remain very concerned primarily about the impact that traffic generated by new homes on this scale will have on our rural environment. That concern is made much worse when seen alongside the Strategic Rail Freight Interchange proposal near Ardley, which has now moved forward towards examination (probably commencing in September). The Forum is preparing to oppose this enormous warehousing scheme at the enquiry. Then there is Puy du Fou, adjacent to Bucknell, which will also generate huge numbers of vehicles on local roads. That should be decided by Cherwell Council, probably later this year, and looks as though it might be headed for approval, despite wide-ranging concerns from local residents.

Our colleagues in Somerton PC, on behalf of the MCNP Forum, have managed to persuade the County Council to establish a 'stakeholder forum' which will attempt to address the cumulative impact of all these major projects. It isn't clear yet whether such a forum will have any teeth, but there is at least a recognition that our area is subject to an unprecedented onslaught of development proposals that, if approved, would seriously damage the rurality of our part of Oxfordshire. Unfortunately, however, Government policies supporting growth could make it very difficult for local democracy to win the day.

Back in the village, MCNP - the neighbourhood plan itself - is also moving forward at last. Examination has now commenced, and so the allocation of housing sites for a total of 30 new homes in Steeple Aston is a step closer. The sites were approved in 2023 by the parish council after several public meetings; one is opposite Townend and another opposite the Stables on Fenway (plus a reserve site behind Grange Park). They will be considered by the independent examiner, as will housing sites in Kirtlington, Ardley and Upper Heyford.

October's SAL will have a further update.

**Martin Lipson, Chair, Mid-Cherwell
Neighbourhood Plan Forum**

Mobility, balance, strength

Monday 09.00-10.00 mixed ability	Steeple Aston village hall
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Letter from Westminster



SAL's regular epistle from our MP, Sean Woodcock

Working for you in Westminster

I am pleased to be able to share that I have taken on a new role as Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) to the Cabinet Office. This means regular meetings with ministers and the department on policy direction and to feedback ideas. I want to assure you I will continue to put Banbury, Chipping Norton, Charlbury and the North Oxfordshire villages at the forefront of everything I do, and champion the interests of our local area in the heart of Government.

During the State Opening of Parliament, the King set out the Government's legislative agenda in a speech delivered in the House of Lords. The Bills proposed are vital to strengthening our economic security, ending the opportunity crisis to ensure Britain works for all, strengthening public services and reforming the state, and strengthening our energy and national security. I am excited to continue supporting legislation which is bringing about positive change in our country.

Across the Constituency

I continue to hold surgeries with local residents about their concerns, offering my support with casework issues. I visited the John Radcliffe Hospital to join staff in celebrating the International Day of the Midwife, where I met some brilliant healthcare professionals. I am delighted that my former school, The Warriner School, has received a share of a £450 million fund to upgrade its buildings. I also pay tribute to the amazing tree-planting efforts of the pupils of Hill View Primary School to mark Sir David Attenborough's 100th birthday. Thank you to everyone who has engaged with me over the past month. As always, I am contactable at sean.woodcock.mp@parliament.uk

Sean



Dr Radcliffe's Church of England School

Fir Lane, Steeple Aston, OX25 4SF Tel: 01869 340204



Governance Professional to the Governors

Dr Radcliffe's is seeking a dedicated Governance Professional to support our Local Governing Body in ensuring effective school governance. This is a key role and requires someone who is organised and efficient who will enjoy working with our Governors and leadership team. You will be responsible for organising meetings, preparing agendas and minutes, offering procedural advice, and ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. We are looking for someone who has:

- ✓ Strong administrative and organisational skills
- ✓ Excellent written and verbal communication
- ✓ Interest in school governance
- ✓ Discreet, reliable and detail orientated
- ✓ Excellent IT skills, fully conversant with Microsoft software.

Dr Radcliffe's is part of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust and benefits from dedicated support from their Governance team. They will provide induction, a programme of ongoing assistance and training.

If you wish to discuss the role and find out more, please contact Lisa Boote, Chair of the LGB via email at: l.boote@dr-radcliffes.oxon.sch.uk

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

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Environmental Steeple



*Chris Packham introducing the briefing
(Photo courtesy of express.co.uk)*

THE PEOPLE'S EMERGENCY BRIEFING

"The climate today is the least extreme you will experience"

Professor Hayley Fowler FRS of Newcastle University

Last November, ten of the UK's leading experts briefed an invited audience of over 1,200 politicians and leaders from business, culture, faith, sport and the media. The so-called National Emergency Briefing was conceived by Simon Oldridge of Zero Hour and distilled into a film 'The People's Emergency Briefing'. This has been released free to raise awareness across the UK, and pressure the UK Government to televise the film nationally

as preparation for advising the UK public on its plan to handle the crisis. The film will show at over 1,000 venues in the UK.

On Wednesday 27th May, Environmental Steeple organised a screening at our village hall to 70 attendees from Steeple and neighbouring villages. Those assembled were unanimous in their view that the UK faces an environmental crisis exacerbated by the changing climate. The film was uncomfortable viewing. Scientists led us through the latest data and conclusions on:

- Nature, Climate (including evidence of tipping points being reached).
- Food and Health Security.
- Implications for national security (from a retired Army General).
- The economic impact of massively increased infrastructure cost on already tight government spending. BUT, Net Zero is affordable and repays early action. Indeed, delay will cost more.

The main recommendations of the film are that we:

- Switch to a plant-rich diet as the biggest lever for improving food security. Animal agriculture uses about 85% of UK farmland. We could cut agricultural emissions by about 60% and free up an area of land almost the size of Scotland, allowing the UK to feed more people from less land. A plant-rich diet is a win-win for people, farmers and nature. Health improves, NHS costs fall, water, soil and air quality improve and flood risk drops.
- Taking action on climate change is the biggest health opportunity of our lifetime. Policies on clean air, warm homes and plant-rich diets will cut emissions and disease together, making the NHS more sustainable.

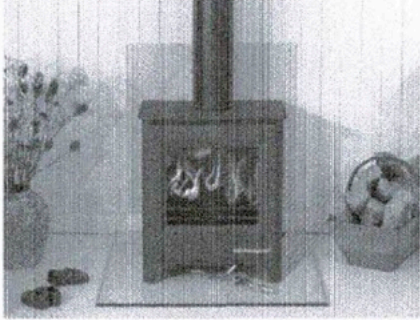
More info is available at: nebriefing.org/expert-briefings

The audience were assisted in reaching their conclusions by a panel featuring local environmentalists - Liz Nicholson of North Aston business Rosara; Ian Wilkinson of regenerative farm FarmEd; Jane King, a Zero Hour researcher who worked on the film; and actuary Mike Clark who advises financial companies on climate impacts. They were supportive of the need to demand that Parliament debates the film's findings. We ask readers to support this by signing the following petition: petition.parliament.uk/petitions/767687
Thank you

Chris Nevile – Environmental Steeple



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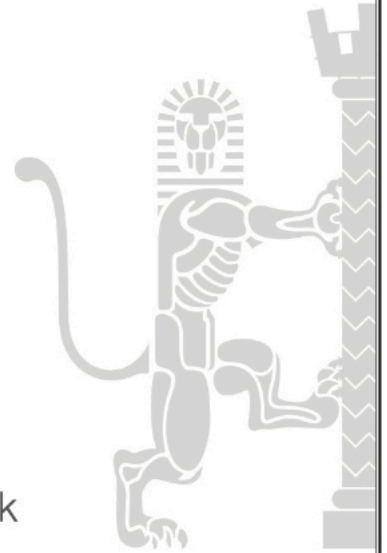


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The June meeting was well attended. During the first part of the evening, President Julie Hillier told us what was happening this summer. There is to be an open-air performance by the Mikron theatre company; a walk from Steeple to Lower Heyford; a Pimms and canapés party at the sports and rec; a meal at the Red Lion when it reopens later this month; a tea party on 14th July which will include a talk by Charlie Ross, a sale of his books, and a competition to make a fancy hat. So, it promises to be a sociable summer!

After the business of the evening was concluded, we welcomed back Sue Smith, who had earlier given a talk on climate change and river pollution. This time, she talked about her passion for Nuno felting and her trip to Australia in 2024 to meet women who were expert felters. She admitted to feeling slightly apprehensive at making the trip on her own as a "silver nomad". She spent one night in a dubious traveller hostel before deciding this was not for her and checking into a hotel. During her nine-week trip, she stayed with various family members - crossing the whole width of Australia and travelling as far as possible on public transport. She visited five different felters, women living in very different situations. Each felter had a studio packed with everything needed for their work and displaying their extraordinary creations. Each one helped Sue to progress in her own work, and from them she learnt about using colour and texture, and using nature and the world around her as inspiration for patterns and designs. In addition to telling us about her trip, Sue described and demonstrated the process of Nuno felting, where loosely woven silk and raw wool are put through a wet felting process, rolled hundreds of times in all

directions, and 'shocked' until it has shrunk to the required size and thickness, ready to make into some of the objects Sue had brought along - from large wall hangings and table runners to bowls, a hat, a fascinator to items as small as buttons. We handled skeins of merino wool in the most beautiful colours and saw examples of her work. She then demonstrated briefly how wet felting is done.



Sue demonstrates the process of Nuno felting

She had initially gone to Australia in the hope of finding an answer to the question: is felting art or craft? After nine weeks, her conclusion was that the distinction wasn't important - felting was both. But, more importantly, it was something she loved to do and she passed her enthusiasm onto her audience. Julie gave a vote of thanks for a fascinating talk.

Cathy Lawday

1st Deddington Guides Report



The scorching week of half term saw us camping at Horley Scout Camp site. It is a lovely place and we were very lucky to have access to shade from the trees when needed. We cooked all our meals on open fires, including pork stir fry and chocolate steam pudding! We walked in the beautiful Wroxton Abbey grounds, petted the animals at Wigginton wildfowl reserve, tried archery, made a rope swing, followed trails, took part in challenges, water games and, of course, went to collect our own firewood from the surrounding woods and much more. It was great to have Marian back with us again, our previous leader of many years who travelled from Suffolk to join us. Since then, we have had great fun in an Incident hike around Barford and, thanks again to the Fenemore family, spent a super evening cooking our pasta supper on a recent cookout.

All girls 10 years and over are welcome.

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The Valentine Club

Do you realise, we are closer to Christmas 2026 than the previous day of celebration last year? With that in mind, we are in the process of arranging the entertainment at both our annual Christmas meal on 15th December in the village hall and for our additional meal at The Holt on 1st December. Something I have learnt over the past 20 plus years as 'organiser' of the Valentine Club is that members like to enjoy a meal together and have a bit of a 'knees-up' when possible, subject to the occasional joint replacement and endless injections for all the various ailments that circulate.

However, this is July and mid-summer, so let us move into activities the club is enjoying at present. Our monthly meeting in June brought to the village hall for the first time, Chris, a superb singer who took us back to the days of the great popular music of the 50s and 60s. By time you read this, we will have taken charge of The Waterman, a large passenger river cruiser, moored at Henley and providing us with a four-hour trip along the Thames with a meal, almost compulsory with any trip, and a bar on board. More about that in the August issue. This month, we are moving out of the village hall and transferring our meeting to Rousham, where tea will be served by Anne and her friends and for us members, a chance to enjoy the superb grounds that are on our doorstep. Later this month, we are travelling to Bath for a day out in this city that offers so much for the visitor.

To find out more about the Valentine Club, simply visit our website at Valentineclub.wixsit.com/aston (easiest way is simply to log on to the village website; go to 'clubs and societies', find the Valentine Club and click on the 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. We are also now on Instagram but with my IT skills, please excuse me if it looks a bit of a mess!

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

Village Hall News



Party planned.... but now watching the weather outside and worrying?

As I type, there are only three weekend bookings during the whole of July and August, so why not book the hall for a few hours? It will give you peace of mind if it rains... children can play on the playground rather than trash your flower beds, and plenty of parking, so no guests blocking neighbours driveways. £40 for four hours (daytime) can't be bad. Bouncy castle not provided via us.

Our next event will be the Firework Spectacular on 5th November. More details to follow.

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.

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Celebrating Dr Radcliffe



Alex Flood leads the Brasenose College choristers

Those who were fortunate enough to attend a celebratory concert for Dr Samuel Radcliffe, Founder of Steeple Aston's eponymous Primary School, were treated to a wonderful evening of Renaissance, classical and modern choral music, as well as some virtuoso violin playing.

Steeple Aston Church was the perfect venue for this concert given by the choirs of Brasenose College Oxford (where Dr Radcliffe was both a student and the Principal), and Dr Radcliffe's Primary School. Curated by local concert maestro, Nicholas Cleobury, and organised by Jenny Royal, Jackie Watson and various members of the church congregation, we were treated to a rich and varied collection of choral works from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries.

Led by their Director of Music, Alex Flood, Brasenose College choir sang melliflously the music of Charles Wood, Thomas Atwood, Orlando Gibbons, Philip Ledger, Felix Mendelssohn and Gabriel Fauré. The standard and quality of the singing was exemplary, as one would expect from the choral tradition of Oxford Colleges. Of interest, however, was the revelation that none of the current Brasenose choristers is studying music!



The 'showstopper' of the evening was undoubtedly the performance of the Dr Radcliffe's School Choir, combining high quality singing with humorous actions and delightfully smiling faces. Their conductor, Sue Payne, who also teaches piano at Dr Radcliffe's School, led these joyously youthful singers with encouragement and professionalism of the highest order. Two well-known songs for young choirs by composer Lin Marsh, *Spare the Rod* and *Free as a Bird*, and the somewhat poignant *Butterfly*, were followed by the West End classic *Half a Sixpence* – all of which was received with rapturous applause from a delighted audience.

The musical contributions were complemented with readings by Dr Radcliffe students Abigail Lilly, Alexander Bentley, Otilie MacLean, Will Lewis and Seren Grainger. Each was read with a high degree of clarity and sonority, for which each reader can be very proud.

As if this was not enough, violinist Demetrius Sawinston-Harrison enthralled the audience with a stunning performance of the fiendishly difficult *Giga* from J S Bach's *Partita in D Minor*. The complex bowing and finger work required for this partita were executed with great energy and precision.

The final choral contribution of the evening was Franz Biedl's *Ave Maria*, an appropriate and meaningful end to a rather wonderful evening.



The showstopping Dr Radcliffe's School Choir

The proceeds of the evening will contribute to a drum kit for the school and Steeple Aston's church funds.

Amadeus



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Upcycled Paper Vases

Summer gatherings mean plenty of leftover bottles. Instead of just throwing them in the recycling bin, transform them into beautiful vases with these lightweight paper covers. They make perfect table decorations, budget-friendly gifts, or unique bottle gift wrap.

Materials

- **Bottle/Jar:** Glass or plastic (wine, beer, sauce, or juice).
- **Paper:** Wallpaper scraps, wrapping paper, magazine pages, or plain paper.
- **Tools:** Pencil, scissors, and craft glue (PVA is ideal).
- **Decorations:** Paints, crayons, or stamps (optional).

Instructions

1. Measure:

- **Height:** Measure the bottle's total height and add 10 mm.
- **Internal Width:** Measure the circumference at the widest point and divide by two (or multiply diameter by 3.14, then divide by two). Add 10 mm (12 mm for thick paper) for clearance. *Note: Beer bottles work best for A4 paper.*



- 2. Template:** Fold a piece of scrap paper in half lengthwise. Mark the bottle height along the fold. Measure half of your internal width from the fold and draw a straight vertical line. Sketch half of your decorative vase shape, staying at least 15 mm outside your line (for the glue seam). Cut out and unfold. Alternatively, you can download a template using the links below.
- 3. Trace & Cut:** Trace the template onto your chosen paper and cut out two identical pieces.
- 4. Decorate:** If using plain paper, decorate it now. Let it dry completely.
- 5. Glue:** Lay both pieces side by side, inside faces up. Mark the centre point at the top and bottom of each piece, then connect them with a vertical line. Measure your internal width evenly across this centre line and draw a vertical line down each side to create a straight central column. Apply glue to all areas outside this column.
- 6. Press:** Press the glued edges firmly together. Place the sleeve under heavy books to dry flat.
- 7. Assemble:** Fill your bottle with water, slip the paper sleeve over the top, and add flowers. This project also works for straight-sided jars and tins!

Storage Tip: When flowers fade, slip the sleeve off, flatten it, and store it in an envelope to reuse next time!

👉 **Download the Vase Template** - restor8iv.com/pages/diy-upcycling-projects

Amanda Rodgers



Parish Council Meeting Notes



Just three councillors in attendance this evening – and what a jolly old time they all had!

We started by hearing about the replacement timber that's needed for a ladder in our playground – it needs to be treated “for potential licking” as well as “smoothness and splinters”. Apparently, samples can be obtained which our councillors can lick and stroke before coming to a decision! One councillor went on to report that he'd had fun crawling all over our yellow slide in order to fully identify any cracks and damage – thankfully it seems like a bit of “heat welding” is all that's needed. As well as another trip to the playground! And more good news – the wobbly water pump can be fixed – and if there's appetite for it, then we can even have running water too!

We then had quite a meaty report (which I'll try and summarise here) from Councillor Gareth Epps, our County Councillor, and as a newly appointed Cabinet Member (for Transport), he seemed quite frazzled. I made a mental note to bring some of my lemon drizzle next time, and maybe even a flask.

Anyway! He gave us an update on the “Quiet Lanes” scheme which aims to choose ten roads to be closed to active traffic, making them safer for things like bicycles and horses. They're still actively looking for suitable roads. Gareth said he's already had to deal with rumours that a bus route had been selected and he “had to use words of one syllable” to get the message across that this wasn't the case! He's been corresponding with Dr Radcliffe's regarding road safety around the school. He's been to lots of meetings about the cumulative impact of all the big developments in the area. He grimaced as he said the council is in a “horrendous situation” and having to look at £15m of cuts next financial year – “it's going to be a painful process”... Gareth did cheer up a bit when he told us about some super-duper EV chargers he'd seen at a

local bus depot (after 3 hours plugged in, the buses can do 200 miles) – there is talk that we might get a “micro hub” with some (not quite so super-duper) chargers in our car park by the village hall (just talk at this stage though). Lots of road works are on the cards, including a five-week closure of Camp Road in Heyford Park, all because two developers can't seem to agree on how to connect sewage to their new homes. Gareth had a glint in his eye and sounded like he might have a plan to force them to come to an agreement!

In our District Councillor's absence, Gareth also told us that Cherwell Council planning department has been “designated”, meaning all applications for major developments may now go straight to the central Planning Inspectorate. With things like 9,000 new homes in Heyford and Puy du Fou theme park in Bucknell bubbling away, this could have BIG implications locally, as developers could end up choosing to bypass local government. So much for democracy and local representation!

The mood stayed somewhat gloomy when we heard about a meeting that Gareth and one of our councillors attended recently, where the elevated levels of PFAS (‘forever chemicals’) which have been detected in watercourses near the former RAF Upper Heyford airbase, were discussed. Concerns that contamination could be reaching our food chain are now so great that the mighty Private Eye has been publishing the story. However, our Chair did say that she'd read a report saying that “growing hemp absorbs 40% of PFAS which can then be locked into clever plastic furniture”, so perhaps some hope is on the horizon.

Parish Council Meeting Notes



The next topic on the agenda was the fact that our Parish Council is TWO councillors short. One councillor bravely said he would start wearing a badge (our Chair was more keen on it being a sandwich board) saying “stop me and ask a question!” all to try and encourage more interest in the position, and to quash any ideas that it’s “boring and stuffy” or “to do with the Church”. It’s neither! And given tonight’s meeting involved everything from our playground, road safety outside our school, and major developments on our doorstep – I can heartily encourage people to sign up! (Who knows perhaps lemon drizzle will also be on the cards!)

Self-promotion seemed to be order of the day, because the agenda soon moved on to the topic of the Parish Council website. This is all because legislation dictates that PCs have to have “.gov” email addresses and proactively publish certain documents. One councillor wisely said that “while individual councillors may change, the website will be a consistent face for the Parish Council”. So, a discussion will be needed on what the website will be populated with besides all the mandatory stuff, and whether it will ultimately be merged with the existing (and popular) village website.

We then heard about changes that have been made to some of our bus stops – comments included: “looks like something out of Bladerunner”, “not in keeping with the village at all” and then a suggestion about “smearing yogurt on it and cultivating something” (at least I think that’s what my notes say).

We heard about a loose tile on the Village Hall roof, saw some rather excessive taping highlighting a broken paving slab and then had a quick look at a damaged tile in the playground loo (discovering it was “loose but whole” – what a relief!).

The next meeting is on 20th July – do consider coming along! ***Mrs Miggins***



Introducing new Parish Councillor,
Andrew Gibson
steepleaston.org.uk/home/steeple_aston_news/#AND

Steeple Aston Parish Councillors

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

Greg Elphick

Andrew Gibson

Charlotte Powell, Sports & Recreation
Centre, Environment

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Cathy Fleet – Parish Clerk

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Steeple Aston Open Allotments

Sunday 16th August

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Children's activities



Steeple Aston Church
Allotment Association

Flourish *Wellness Garden*



First dig! Ruth and Kay on their way to Australia!



Taissa Csaky, our Lead Gardener

I'm writing on 1st June and our Flourish Wellness Garden really is "Bustin' out All Over"! Two and a half years ago, when we started discussing our Wellness Garden, I doubted we would succeed, but we have.

We have a wonderful Lead Gardener, Taissa Csaky, creating it and caring for our gardeners supported by a super team. Plus, there is an amazing amount of wonderful kindness towards the project both from Trusts and many people from the village. Thank you!



*Crab Apple tree donated by
Nicholsons*

But there's more - we are so grateful to the Church and the Allotment Society (SACAA) for helping us to make this possible.

The Church is helping with our legal, financial recording and administrative side, and the Allotment Society not only allows us to have a garden, but supports us with practical issues.

At present, we're in the process of turning what had become a bumpy little plot into an outline garden with beds for flowers and vegetables and space for a small shed. This will allow us to become more creative as time goes on with our gardeners.

Our Professional Lead Gardener, Taissa Csaky, is masterminding all of this. We are very much in a 'watch this space' mode and by the time you read this, much more will have happened.

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Martin, Ruth & the Garden Team

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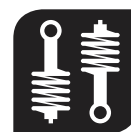
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Local Business *Spotlight*

Business: North Aston Farms and Dairy
Owners: Jeremy, James & Vicky Taylor
Location: North Aston
Type of Business: Farming, food processing and sales



Vicky Taylor

I am Vicky Taylor, and married to James, part-owner of the farm alongside his father, Jeremy. Both of them grew up here in North Aston having lived here most of their lives. I married James in 2004 and have remained here ever since, but only became involved full-time in the farm during the Covid pandemic in 2020, when we took on North

Aston Dairy as an enterprise within the farm. It was previously run as an independent business, firstly by Matt Dale and later Josh Healy. As an inherited business, the farm has typically seen many changes, ups and downs. We have been fully organic since 1992, a decision brought about by Jeremy's feelings



on the sad depletion of nature resulting from modern farming methods. The main farm currently produces beef and a small acreage of arable. The micro-dairy was the idea of Matt Dale, who set it up with just three cows in 2005 along the model of a similar small dairy he'd previously worked on. He wanted to prove it was possible to build a small dairy from scratch, selling milk locally and cutting out the middle man, and it's still going twenty years later, so I think he proved his point! He scoured the UK and Europe for equipment from small dairies which were either closing or expanding to meet the demands of the supermarkets. Josh took over the running of the

dairy from Matt, before he eventually combined a move to Sheffield with getting into veg growing. With the dairy under threat, we stepped in to keep the show on the road. Once you get used to North Aston milk on your doorstep, you don't want to go without!

Having taken on the business, updating our processing department to meet the demands of the Environmental Health Officer was a huge challenge. Although the dairy had been running for years, we were treated as a new business, resulting in a whole new processing room, as well as the replacement of most



James demonstrates milking by hand!

The paperwork surrounding EHO requirements is an enormous learning curve! However, the biggest challenges are definitely crazy climate-change weather patterns, bovine TB and machinery breakdowns. Like everyone, we struggle with constantly rising prices for the power, goods and services we need to keep going. Our proudest moments are always when people tell us they enjoy eating or drinking our produce, which gives us a warm glow!

One of the things that makes us special is the transparency of knowing where your milk comes from, even down to the names of the cows! We currently have sixteen milking cows, a mix of Ayrshires and Friesians. Events we organise can bring you onto the farm to really experience that connection to your food and local countryside, and we provide insight into the challenges and rewards of farming via our regular newsletters. We are all about local. It's everything for us and we love being part of the wonderful community of people in all the villages we deliver to. We also enjoy welcoming local young people training for veterinary college onto the farm to gain work experience.



Continued on page 30

Local Business *Spotlight*

Continued from page 29

A typical day on the farm:

- *The day starts with milking at 7.30am.*
- *At 9.00am the processing team will answer customer emails and update our order spreadsheets before starting on the task/s of the day.*
- *Depending on the day, we might be doing any of the following: milk-bottling; yoghurt-making; kefir-making; ice-cream mixing; ice-cream potting; beef labelling. Most of these tasks take between 3-5 hours, not forgetting the extra 1-2 hours to wash the bottles or jars before you start. Ice-cream is only made seasonally when the cows are producing plenty of milk, such as the spring flush. It is a great way of storing excess milk, but is the most labour intensive of all our processes.*
- *We stock up the Honesty shop, a collaboration based at North Aston Organics veg box scheme, in the centre of North Aston village, twice a week on Monday and Thursday afternoons. On Tuesday and Friday mornings, the fresh milk goes out on early delivery to our milk round customers.*
- *At 4.30pm it's time for milking once again!*

Looking ahead, the micro-dairy doesn't really lend itself to expansion, so I doubt there will be much change there. However, across the wider farm, we face a number of challenges that are pushing us to think about change, whether that's more arable, trees, sheep or events and community outreach is still up for debate, so watch this space! Finally, come and try our milk, yoghurt, kefir and ice-cream from the Honesty Shop or consider joining a milk round. One of the best things about working at North Aston Farms is that it is so beautiful and full of wonderful wildlife, so come and walk across the public footpaths on our farm and enjoy the green-bathing!

Vicky Taylor

Nature Notes



Black Hairstreak butterfly
Photo: Chris Neville

The **Big Butterfly Count** is a nationwide citizen science survey aimed at helping us to assess the health of our environment. Launched in 2010, it has rapidly become the world's biggest survey of butterflies. The Big Butterfly Count 2026 reopens on 1st July ready for the main event between 17th July and 9th August.

We count butterflies because, not only are they beautiful creatures to be around, but they are also vital parts of the ecosystem both as pollinators and components of the food chain. However, they are under threat. Numbers of butterflies and moths in the UK have decreased significantly since the 1970s, and this is a warning that cannot be ignored. Butterfly declines are also an early warning for other wildlife losses. Butterflies are key biodiversity indicators for scientists as they react very quickly to changes in their environment.

Therefore, if their numbers are falling, then nature is in trouble. Therefore, tracking numbers of butterflies is crucial in the fight to conserve our natural world. That's why taking part in this massive citizen science enterprise is of great importance, not just for our butterflies, but for the wider environment and biodiversity in general. So, thank you for taking the time to help!

Counting butterflies can be described as taking the pulse of nature and we depend on you, our citizen scientists, to help us assess how much help nature needs. The data from this and other counts will also help us to identify important trends in species that will assist us in planning how to protect butterflies from extinction, as well as understanding the effect of climate change on wildlife. For further details visit:

bigbutterflycount.butterfly-conservation.org/about

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**8 weeks!!!!** The countdown is on... our annual show is always the highlight of our calendar. The show is open to absolutely everyone, and as our eldest exhibitor will turn 100 the day before, there is no excuse!

Paper copies of the schedule are in the village shop NOW in the magazine rack. If there are none there, please send me a message on 07817025948 and I will top it up. Alternatively, you can view, download or print from the village website: [steepleston.org.uk](http://steepleston.org.uk)

**Limerick – Update:** Following the spring show, we received feedback on the judging of this class, so wish to clarify here. The schedule for the summer show has already been printed, so these rules need to be followed. We will also remind the judge that they need to judge to these rules as well.

Class 91. Complete the following limerick “**There once was a lady called Claire...**”

**(with 8 syllables in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> line and 5 syllables in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> lines)**

The structure will then be looked at again and reconfirmed for 2027.

**Fun sideshows... welly wanging... bat the rat... pegs on a clothes line...** in our survey following last year’s show, many people said we needed more ‘cool fun cheaper stuff’ to do. WE LOVE that response, but the only problem is our committee are busy with the actual exhibit part of the show. SO... if you were the people who said we need FUN, we would love your help on the day. Get a friend involved, bring the equipment, we can find a table, and raise money for the society, but mostly bring a smile to the visitors. Please get in touch if you’d like to help.

**Victoria Clifton - Show secretary** [vmcstedman@btinternet.com](mailto:vmcstedman@btinternet.com)

## Community Orchard



*Digby Ferguson*

Summer has well and truly arrived at the Steeple Aston Community Orchard, and the site is looking greener and more vibrant than ever. Visitors to the orchard will find it buzzing with activity, quite literally, as the resident bees have been hard at work. A recent swarm was spotted and safely collected by local bee specialist, Paul Honigmann, much to the delight of orchard volunteers. The dedicated volunteer team has continued to care for the orchard, striking the delicate balance between keeping pathways accessible, while preserving the site’s natural, wild character. Their efforts are clearly paying off, with the orchard flourishing as the warmer weather takes hold. There is also encouraging news from the orchard’s younger fruit trees. All of the recently planted trees are thriving, and organisers are hopeful that, within the next year or two, they will begin producing a healthy harvest for the community to enjoy.

A new project is also underway to help families and nature enthusiasts discover more about the wildlife and habitats found around the orchard. Village resident, Digby Ferguson, is developing a nature trail as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Award. Working alongside orchard volunteer, Taissa Csaky, Digby is creating information points around the site to help younger visitors learn about the plants, insects, birds and other wildlife that can be spotted throughout the orchard.

The orchard itself continues to mature beautifully. The natural hedgerow is growing well and, pleasingly, has escaped the attention of hungry deer. The pond is also thriving, with reports of a duck and her ducklings recently stopping by for a visit. With so much wildlife making the orchard its home, every visit offers the chance to spot something new. Whether you’re looking for a peaceful walk, a chance to connect with nature, or simply a quiet corner of the village to relax, the Steeple Aston Community Orchard is well worth a visit this summer.

**Nigel Francis**

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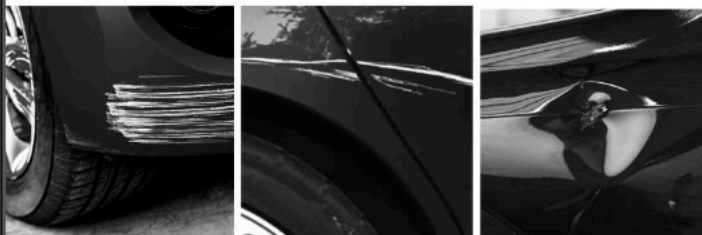
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# The Cricket Report



## Mirroring England...

I feel like Baz McCullum trying to defend a poor display with meaningless platitudes, but at least we started drinking after the game and not before! We put a strong side out for our T20 game against the King's Head Bledington XI; I won the toss (my only contribution apart from doing the scoring!) and we chose to bat, because it gets dark during the second innings. What could possibly go wrong?

## Port of Spain 1994...

England were bowled out for 46 on a very ragged pitch in Trinidad. It turned out the King's Head pitch was even worse! Despite those difficulties, Josh Drennan (28) and Richard Wilson (10) made a solid start, as we reached 27-0 off six overs. Sadly, two overs and three pea-rollers later, we were 35-3. Fortunately, Hector Higgins hit a couple of sixes in a battling 27 off 14 balls before falling Leg Before Wicket; we don't get many LBWs, but he was plumb! I would like to omit the next paragraph, so let's just say things did not go well and we were all out for 93. It was nobody's fault, but to quote Baz it was a "bad day at the office".

## Not enough...?

Alain Michaelis (1-20) bowled with great control conceding only 20 runs from his four overs. Richard Wilson (1-10) chipped in with a key wicket and Paul Longman (2-22) took two wickets in two balls to give us just a sniff, helped by two fine catches from Nick Foster and Jack Higgins, but we were thirty runs short of a winning total and lost by five wickets. The solution to our poor start to the season: we are going to have some Nets and actually practice. If only Baz had held some catching drills before the Ashes!

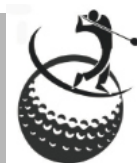
## Most importantly...

The opposition captain, Archie, owns the King's Head and put on a fabulous supper for both sides. We gave our best Noosa impression of Ben Duckett and all felt much better about our cricket and life in general. It is only a game after all.

With best wishes to all

**Peter Higgins - Chairman SACC**

# Steeple Aston Golf Society



We heard from Olton Golf club the day before our arrival on Wednesday 10th June:

*'The meeting at Olton Golf Club has been postponed! The weather forecast is heavy rain with potential thunder & lightning all day and after talking to the club we have agreed to postpone the meeting and rearrange for a future date.'*

**The Vale golf course**, as you would expect from a Jack Nicklaus track, has beautifully manicured fairways, well designed bunkers and greens that are a pleasure to putt on. If you would like to join us, all abilities welcome, then please arrive at The Vale, Bishampton, Pershore WR10 2LZ on Wednesday 15th July at 10.30am for an 11.30am first tee. For more information call Alan or Chris on 01869 340423/347173.

The world's number one tennis player spends ninety per cent of his time winning, while the world's number one golfer spends ninety per cent of his time losing. Golfers are great losers!

Play well, happy golfing.

**Alan**

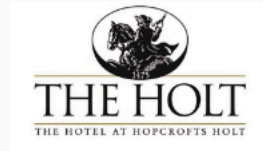


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# Rousham Revealed

Four months ago, when I tentatively asked whether there might be a few villagers interested in making up a group to visit Rousham House, I was hoping that I might perhaps get five or six people and just about hit minimum numbers. As it turned out, I had somewhat underestimated the demand! Over two days at the beginning of June, over fifty of us were treated to very memorable tours, led by Caroline Landless, assisted by Elizabeth Colston. The house exceeded all my expectations, both because of the encyclopaedic knowledge and enthusiasm of our guides, and because of the remarkable preservation of the interiors with their original furniture, sculptures and paintings.

As we walked around the ground and first floors, our guides pointed out and described the three separate building phases: the Jacobean original, the 18<sup>th</sup> century remodelling by William Kent and, lastly, the Victorians, whose contribution included installing speaking/listening tubes and replacing the beautiful Kent octagonal glass panes with sash windows! There was far too much to take in on just one visit, but a few of the stand-outs for me were the lead-lined holes carved in the Jacobean front door through which muskets could be aimed at any unwelcome Parliamentarian; the 'Kentissimo' Painted Parlour, with its large ceiling painting on canvas by Kent, that arrived at Rousham by ox-cart, and the tufa stone grotto tucked between the Great

Parlour and a small hallway with an apparently somewhat unreliable wall-mounted Georgian glass barometer.

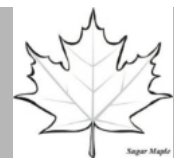


*Lead-lined musket holes for any unwelcome Parliamentarians. Be warned Mr Cromwell!  
Photo: Anne Haymes*

Any plans for strolling around the gardens were cut short on the first day by a very dramatic thunderstorm, and dampened by showers on the second. However, the house more than compensated, and several people have already told me that they would love the opportunity to go again, as would I. So, if you missed out this time, keep reading your SAL, and maybe next year .....

**Anne Haymes**

## Steeple Aston Garden Club



During the very wet and unseasonably cool week in mid-June, a group of hardy Garden Club members visited nearby Rousham to look around the grounds, after several had enjoyed a very interesting and informative visit to the house interior the previous week. We started with wine and nibbles and then, armed with umbrellas and waterproof anoraks, set forth to view the grounds. Some walked down towards the river via various features such as the ponds, rill and statues, while several others of us headed to the walled gardens. The roses were looking brilliant despite the windy weather, and there were lots of vegetables and cutting flowers growing in well-tended beds. Towards the end of our trip, there was a light shower which saw several of us huddled under umbrellas. Luckily, I don't think there are any photos of this!

Our next visit is to Foxington gardens in Britwell Salome, near Watlington, south Oxfordshire on Wednesday 8th July at 2.30 pm. The gardens have views across to the Chilterns with impressive seasonal flowers and a large barn for us to have tea in apparently. The cost is £11 per person including tea and cake! If you would like to join us, please contact either myself (Alison) or Richard Preston using the email addresses below.

**Alison Llewellyn** [alisonllew.home@gmail.com](mailto:alisonllew.home@gmail.com)

**Richard Preston** [richard.preston5@btopenworld.com](mailto:richard.preston5@btopenworld.com)

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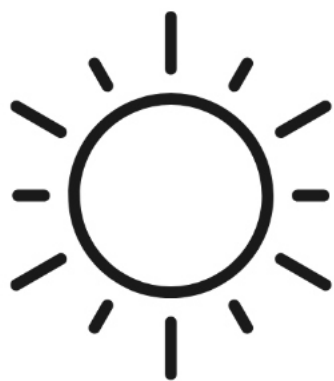
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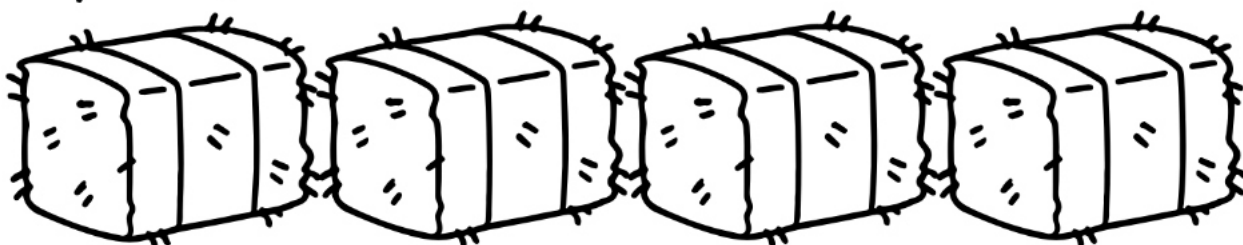


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# Church Matters



## Love!

John and I recently watched the film Hail Mary based on the book by Andy Weir. The film opens with a science teacher, Dr Ryland Grace, waking up alone on a spaceship. As his memory returns, he discovers that a mysterious substance is killing the Earth's sun. Early on in the film, Ryland meets the astronauts who are going to fly to an alternate sun which is not dying in order to discover why. Ryland comments that he doesn't have the courage to go. The lead astronaut replies "You don't need huge courage, just someone worth being brave for." As the film progresses Ryland (and the audience) discover who he is brave enough to die for. A couple of weeks ago, I had a weekend of wedding celebrations that began with officiating at a young couple's wedding in Tackley, and then in Steeple Aston, joining an older couple as they celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary. When we love someone, we are willing to give up everything for them, we will metaphorically die for them. In the marriage vows, we promise to each other that, regardless of the circumstances, for better or worse, in sickness and in health, we take each other to be our partner, 'to have and to hold.' 'To have and to hold' someone is for that person to be yours. For someone to have you is for you to belong to them, as they belong to you, together as equals. This means that I am committing my being to them, as they commit their being to me. 'To have and to hold' is about sharing the tender love and care that we all need over the course of a lifetime.

Life is very much like the English weather with glorious sunny days and also, unfortunately, rainy, cloudy days which are harder and tougher. After long days at work, exhausting days with the children, the loss of loved ones, disappointing news and times of depression, we all need to be held and affirmed. How we give and receive that affirmation depends upon our personalities, be it through time spent together, doing acts of service for one another, physically holding, giving gifts and saying words of affirmation. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans (5:8) 'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' Jesus loved us so much that he was brave enough to die on a cross for each one of us. Like Paul, I pray that you would know the breadth and length and height and depth, of God's love for you. Finally, I wonder who you love enough to be brave for.

### *Wedding blessing*

May God's love enfold you and engulf you, so that it may flow through your veins, uniting, and shaping you in all you are and do. May your love for one another be as real as his for you - as deep as the deepest sea, as bright as the brightest star, as strong as the strongest bond and as pure as the purest gold, so that what you celebrate today will endure tomorrow and for all eternity, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

God bless, *Harriet*

## Church Services July 2026

| Date                               | North Aston                  | Steeple Aston                 | Tackley                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July</b>  | 9.30am<br>Holy Communion BCP | 11.00am<br>Holy Communion BCP | 5.30pm<br>Evensong         |
| <b>Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July</b> | 9.30am<br>Morning Prayer     | 11.00am<br>No service         | 5.30pm<br>Holy Communion   |
| <b>Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July</b> | 9.30am<br>Holy Communion     | 11.00am<br>Holy Communion     | 5.30pm<br>Evensong         |
| <b>Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July</b> | 9.30am<br>Morning Prayer     | 11.00am<br>Morning Prayer     | 9.30am<br>Family Communion |

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**Sat 25<sup>th</sup> July, 7.30pm**

£15 Tickets: 07913487558 or on the door.



★ Steeple Aston Preschool – Admissions Now Open for Places for 2026 and 2027! ★

Looking for a warm, nurturing start to your child's learning journey?

At Steeple Aston Preschool, we provide a safe, happy, and stimulating environment where children can explore, play, and grow with confidence.

Our experienced staff support every child's curiosity, creativity, and independence through fun, engaging activities each day.

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- ★ Welcoming community feel
- ★ Helping little learners thrive
- ★ Play-based learning
- ★ Outdoor play and discovery



★ Places for 2026 and 2027 are now open – we'd love to welcome you! ★



Message us or get in touch to arrange a visit and secure your child's place.

✉ [Info@steepleastonpreschool.org.uk](mailto:Info@steepleastonpreschool.org.uk)



## Steeple Aston footpaths guide

Are you new to the village, or interested in exploring our beautiful countryside? Why not pick up 'A Guide to the Footpaths in & around the parish of Steeple Aston' from the village shop, priced at just £2.00, to discover seven local routes. As the last Cotswold village, with the River Cherwell marking the end of the Cotswolds, the surrounding hills and valleys bring a pleasant air of tranquility. Footpaths vary in length from 2km to 5.2km with different routes available. This informative guide is produced by Steeple Aston Life, therefore, all sales help with product costs of the magazine.

Thank you



# APS

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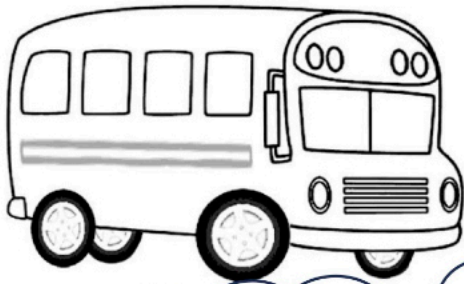
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**Wednesday shopping run to Chipping Norton**

Leave – 9.10  
Return – 12.37

**Monday-Friday am/pm commuter run**

a scheduled service to/ from Lower Heyford Station

**Friday - shopping run to Bicester**

Leave – 10.23  
Return – 14.10

Check out our web-site at .....

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

OR JUST SCAN THE QR CODE



Our web site has :-

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- Route maps
- Link to our YouTube movie showing our excellent service

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- Bus passes and contactless payments accepted

Call us for more details – 01869 699699

## 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)

# Local Information

## 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!)

Get involved!  
Join the committee help keep village activities going.

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

|                                                                        | Monday to Friday                                | Sat/Sun & Bank Holidays Before 6pm               | Sat/Sun & Bank Holidays 6pm to Midnight          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Steeple &amp; Middle Aston Village Residents / Voluntary Groups</b> |                                                 |                                                  |                                                  |
| <b>All Facilities (Main Hall, Kitchen and Meeting Room )</b>           | £10 per hour<br>(£20 min charge)<br>£75 Deposit | £10 per hour<br>(£40 min charge)<br>£75 Deposit  | £15 per hour<br>(£60 min charge)<br>£200 Deposit |
| <b>Non-Residents/Commercial Organisations</b>                          |                                                 |                                                  |                                                  |
| <b>All Facilities (Main Hall, Kitchen and Meeting Room)</b>            | £10 per hour<br>(£20 min charge)<br>£75 Deposit | £12 per hour<br>(£40 min charge)<br>£200 Deposit | £20 per hour<br>(£80 min charge)<br>£200 Deposit |
| <b>All Hirers</b>                                                      |                                                 |                                                  |                                                  |
| <b>Main Hall</b>                                                       | £8 per hour<br>(£10 min charge)<br>£75 Deposit  | Not available to book separately                 |                                                  |
| <b>Meeting Room</b>                                                    | £5 per hour<br>(£10 min charge)                 | Check availability with Letting Agent            |                                                  |

See website <https://savh.org.uk/village-hall-hire-fees/> for full details

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8.00am – 7.30pm (Sat)  
8.00am – 6.00pm (Sun)

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*Thank you all for your continued support.  
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**e-mail: [raj4878@hotmail.com](mailto:raj4878@hotmail.com)**

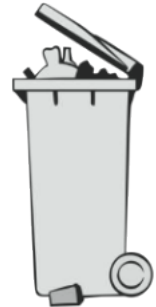
Steeple Aston and Middle Aston  
Refuse & Recycling collection day  
is THURSDAY.

### July 2026:

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> Green  
Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> Blue and brown  
Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> Green  
Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> Blue and brown  
Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> Green

### August 2026:

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> Blue and brown  
Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> Green  
Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> Blue and brown  
Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> Green



### Food caddy is collected weekly

Batteries and small electrical items packed in clear plastic bags and placed on the top of any bin lid 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)

## Rail travel:

Our nearest local train station is at Lower Heyford, but for more frequent service, villagers often use Oxford Parkway, Bicester Village and Bicester North.

Oxford Parkway, Bicester Village and Bicester North: The trains at these stations are operated by Chiltern Railways. There are frequent services to London Marylebone via High Wycombe, to Oxford and to Birmingham via Banbury. Go to [chilternrailways.co.uk](http://chilternrailways.co.uk) for times, fares, and real-time running information. There is a minibus service between the two Bicester stations, but no bus service to Steeple Aston. There is a taxi rank at both stations: 001 Alpha Cars 01869 252 525; Bicester Cars Ltd 01869 908 908; Arora Cars Bicester Taxis 01869 247 247. The S4 bus from Oxford Parkway Station comes to Steeple Aston, but there is no taxi rank. Taxis can be booked in advance from: Kidlington Cars 07766 207 260; 001 Cars 01865 240 000; London Oxford Taxis (Oxford) 01865 406 070; Oxford Cars (Oxford) Taxis 01865 406 070.

Heyford: Heyford station is unmanned and is about a twenty-minute walk down the hill from Steeple Aston. The trains are operated by First Great Western. This service runs between Banbury and London Paddington, often requiring changes at Oxford, Didcot Parkway or Reading. Go to [firstgreatwestern.co.uk](http://firstgreatwestern.co.uk) for times, fares and real-time running information (N.B. key in Heyford, not Lower Heyford).

More information on rail services from [nationalrail.co.uk](http://nationalrail.co.uk) or [thetrainline.com](http://thetrainline.com)

# 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 August and September to [editorsalife@gmail.com](mailto:editorsalife@gmail.com)

| Month                     | Event                                                                         | Venue              | Time             |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| <b>July</b>               |                                                                               |                    |                  |
| Sunday 5th July           | SA Cricket Club-v-Moo Cow Club                                                | Great Tew CC       | 2.00pm           |
| Monday 6th July           | Scouts' Family Fun Evening - Lower Playing Field, Worton Road, Middle Barton  | Middle Barton      | 5.30pm - 7.00pm  |
| Sunday 12th July          | Steeple Aston Church Fete                                                     | Robinsons Close    | 2.00pm           |
| Tuesday 14th July         | WI: Summer Tea Party at the Sports & Rec                                      | Village Hall       | 4.00pm           |
| <b>Tuesday 14th July</b>  | <b>SAL August copy and advert deadlines</b>                                   |                    |                  |
| Wednesday 15th July       | Golf Society Meet - The Vale GC, Pershore                                     | Pershore           | 10.30am          |
| Saturday 18th July        | Tribute Music Festival at Middle Aston House                                  | Middle Aston House | 2.00pm           |
| Sunday 19th July          | SA Cricket Club-v-TBC                                                         | Great Tew CC       | 2.00pm           |
| Monday 20th July          | Parish Council meeting                                                        | S & R Building     | 7.30pm           |
| Tuesday 21st July         | Valentines: Tea at Rousham (meet outside the house)                           | Rousham            | 2.30pm           |
| Wednesday 22nd July       | Valentines: Coach Trip to Bath                                                | Bath               |                  |
| Saturday 25th July        | Farmers' Market                                                               | Deddington         | 9.00am - 12.30pm |
| Saturday 25th July        | Moonrakers - celtic, traditional & contemporary concert - St Mary's Church    | North Aston        | 7.30pm           |
| Sunday 26th July          | SA Cricket Club-v-TBC                                                         | Great Tew CC       | 2.00pm           |
| <b>August</b>             |                                                                               |                    |                  |
| Friday 7th August         | Celebration of the life of Beth Walton                                        | Village Hall       | 3.00pm - 5.30pm  |
| Sunday 9th August         | SACC-v-Blenheim Park                                                          | Blenheim           | 2.00pm           |
| <b>Friday 14th August</b> | <b>SAL September copy and advert deadlines</b>                                |                    |                  |
| Sunday 16th August        | SACC-v-Oxford Downs                                                           | Standlake          | 2.00pm           |
| Sunday 16th August        | Open Allotments (off Fir Lane, Steeple Aston)                                 | Steeple Aston      | 2.00pm - 6.00pm  |
| Tuesday 18th August       | Golf Society meet                                                             | Witney Lakes GC    | 12 noon          |
| Tuesday 18th August       | Valentines: Antiques                                                          | Village Hall       | 2.30pm           |
| Saturday 22nd August      | Farmers' Market                                                               | Deddington         | 9.00am - 12.30pm |
| Monday 31st August        | Steeple Aston & Middle Aston Horticultural Society Summer Show & Fun Dog Show | Robinson's Close   | 2.00pm           |

## Steeple Aston Online

News, information, pictures, local directory, weather forecast, noticeboard and much more...

Your village. Your website. Visit today!

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

**Pilates.** Village Hall - 2.00pm - 3.00pm & 3.15pm - 4.15pm - Mondays

**Choral Society Rehearsals.** Village Hall - 7.45pm - Mondays

**Badminton.** Village Hall - 10.00am - 12.30pm - Tuesdays

**Bellringing practice.** Church Tower - 7.30pm - Tuesdays

**Walking Netball.** Village Hall - 10.15am - Wednesdays

**Brownies.** Sport & Rec Centre - 6.00pm - 7.30pm - Wednesdays

**Toddler Group.** Sport & Rec Centre - 9.30am - 11.30am - Thursdays

**Badminton.** Village Hall - 8.00pm - Thursdays

**Village History Centre (SAVA).** 10.00am - 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. Readers are recommended to seek appropriate financial or legal advice before entering into any binding agreement with advertisers, as appropriate.*

# Home-made food

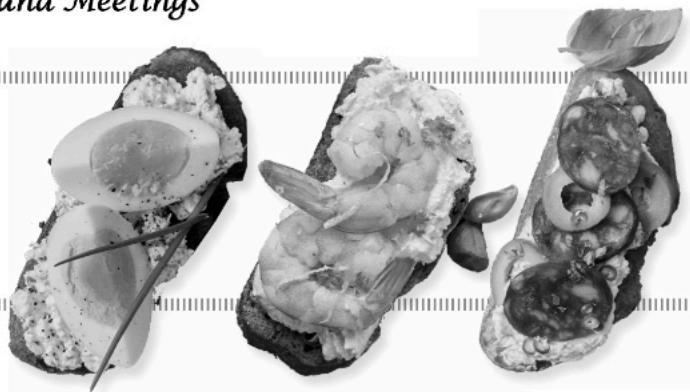
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