

Steeple Aston

August 2026

Issue No. 636

Life



• Pub relaunch • Summer sizzlers • Cricket quiz •

Steeple & Middle Aston magazine



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Cover: Managing Partner & Head Chef, Paolo, and Simon, Head of House. Photo by Nigel Francis

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Archive (SAVA)	Chairman	Stuart Cummins	01869 349155
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Badminton (Thursday evenings)		Alison Moran	01869 347033
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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
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Village Website	Editor Jenny Bell	steepleastonwebeditor@gmail.com	01869 943573
Volunteer Driver Service (North Oxfordshire)		live.well.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*

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Issue No.636

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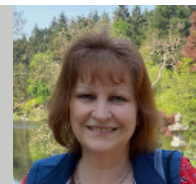
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Editorial



Well, summer has already brought us our third heatwave in as many months! Compared to other nations, we never seem prepared for extreme weather conditions, so this feels like a real wake-up call. As well as affecting and disrupting our lives, the natural world is struggling to adapt to the fast pace of climate change and as a result we risk losing many species that we've grown up alongside, with potentially devastating consequences.

This issue we're pleased to introduce the new pub landlords as The Chequers is now open for business. Show them your support, as it's the last pub standing, where once there were six, or seven if you count The Hopcroft's Holt Inn. Also featured here is Middle Aston House, another great local venue in a fabulous setting, that dates back to the late 17th century.

Summertime offers a wealth of village activities and this month we showcase the church fete, and the Choral Society's summer show. Next month will feature the Middle Aston Music Festival. The sound of leather on willow is synonymous with that most traditional English summer pastime, so why not test your knowledge on the timely cricket quiz.

We end this month with the annual Horticultural Society Flower Show and Fun Dog Show which always offers a great afternoon of fun for all the family. Don't forget to get your show entry forms in before the deadline of Thursday 27th August.

Stay cool!

Carol

Steeple Aston *Life*

COPY

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

COPY DEADLINES

The copy deadline for the September 2026 issue is
Friday 14th August



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

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ADVERTISING RATES

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½ page- £18

Full page(village events only) - £20.00

A Century to Celebrate!



Congratulations to Mrs Joyce Bedding née Edkins



Land Girls Joyce and Norma, around 1945

As our mum approaches her 100th Birthday on 30th August, we wanted to say a few words about her, and her life and times in the village. She is well known in village circles, having worked at the primary school for many years as a dinner lady and running the Valentine Club with her late husband, Maurice. She has supported the annual village shows as a competitor for many years and is again entering this year, as she is an avid knitter and still an active baker of cakes at home!

She first came to Steeple Aston in 1945 when she left 'home' and a bakery job in Birmingham to 'join up' with the Land Army. She didn't really know what to expect, but she and a friend, Norma Adams, met on the train destined for the old RAF camp outside Woodstock. After working

on several farms, they went to work as Land Girls at the Market Garden in Middle Aston run at the time by Mr Robson. They were billeted with the Ward family at the top of Paines Hill. It was here that she met and married Maurice Bedding, a tractor driver at the farm. They settled down, started a family and have lived in Steeple Aston ever since. Sadly, Maurice passed away in 2007, but Joyce continues to live in the village.

In 2008, she received the Women's Land Army medal, and she featured in the Steeple Aston Village Archive (SAVA) exhibition on wartime.

Joyce has an ever expanding, large family having had 5 children of their own and now having 12 grandchildren, 32 great grandchildren and 7 great, great grandchildren. Joyce was diagnosed with TB back in 1951 and subsequently spent two years hospitalised away from the family home and during that time she had a lung removed, a major operation today, but back then! I think it's fairly safe to say that she is one of, if not the, longest surviving lung removal patients in the UK!

For many years, Joyce worked from home as a registered childminder looking after many children, as well as the three younger ones of her own, most notably the twins of the actor George Baker (of Hollywood films & Inspector Wexford fame). Latterly, she also did a stint as a Nursing Auxiliary for the NHS in Banbury hospitals and in the kitchens at Middle Aston House and Dr Radcliffe's Primary School in Steeple Aston. She cooked meals for the village meals-on-wheels service for some years and also took her turn on the village cricket team's tea rotas at weekends.



Maurice and Joyce, about 1945

So, a big thank you Mum for everything you have done for us and the family, and have a Happy Birthday and a fantastic day, from your loving family Carol & Mick, Martin & Gail, Nicholas & Dee, Andrew & Lorraine, their children, and their children, and their children as well. XX xx

The Chequers *is back!*

Village pub re-opens under original name

Steeple Aston's only remaining village pub, formerly known as The Red Lion, re-opened under its original name The Chequers on Friday, 3rd July. Villagers flocked for what was called a 'soft launch weekend'. The first customers through the door were Kirsten Buckley and Martin Cornish from Southside, pictured here enjoying a celebratory glass of bubbly on the house.

The tenancy has been taken over by Supernova Pubs, which already runs a successful pub, The Port Mahon, in St Clement's, Oxford. The family-owned business is run by Jonathan Perritt, who also has a company specialising in craft beers with three bars in London. Jonathan, who moved from London to take over The Port Mahon two years ago, spent much of his childhood in Oxfordshire. His parents, who live in Witney, were here for the pub opening to support their son's new venture. Jonathan lives in Oxford with his wife Renee and three sons. He's joined at The Chequers by Paolo Cangiano, his Managing Partner and Chef. Originally from southern Italy, Paolo is a classically trained chef with experience of working in some of the best London restaurants. Paolo and his wife Andrea currently live in Summertown, but like Steeple Aston so much that they're planning to move into the flat above the pub following refurbishment. Neither Jonathan nor Paolo have run a village pub before, but have great hopes that their fresh approach to hospitality can work in Steeple Aston. They are supported by Hook Norton Brewery, who have carried out substantial refurbishment both inside and outside the pub.

The pub will initially open five days a week, with plans to open every day eventually. They're building a team that already includes three young staff members who recently worked at The Red Lion. They're planning to recruit more local people and are keen on training and retention, hoping to provide some much-needed stability. Popular activities will continue including the quiz and poker nights. In the long run they hope to have more events, possibly backgammon evenings and a themed supper club. They're also working with Hook Norton and other brewers to organise a Beer Festival, possibly in the autumn. Food and drink are at the heart of the business says Jonathan, "We want to make the village proud of its pub". Sunday roasts (with vegan option) are a big thing for them. There will be a shorter weekly menu that will change seasonally and as they meet more local suppliers. All the food is freshly prepared using seasonal local ingredients wherever possible. Paolo's homemade pasta is apparently a special treat! They plan to offer some takeaway food, beer and wine. There will also be provision for private dining in the snug, renamed The Little Private Room.

Talking of new names, why revert to The Chequers? It was the pub's original name in 1765, and nobody seems to know why it changed to The Red Lion in 1830. Jonathan says it is an opportunity to revisit the original format and shows respect to its historic origins. Consulting with the brewery, they agreed this was the right time to breathe fresh air into the business and start with a clean slate. Let's hope it works! For details of opening hours, menus and to make a booking, go to their website thechequerssteepleaston.co.uk/ or follow them on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/thechequerssteepleaston/>



The first thirsty customers at the pub, Kirsten Buckley & Martin Cornish

Jenny Bell

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Heyford Pollution *Update*

Calls for answers and action on serious chemical pollution at Heyford Park

Local campaigners along with Bicester and Woodstock MP Callum Miller are calling for urgent action following reports of the existence of high levels of ‘forever chemicals’ (PFAS) at the former US airbase at Upper Heyford. This site is the current subject of a planning application for 9,000 homes which up until now had expected to be approved. However, evidence is growing that neither the developers Dorchester Living, nor authorities including the Environment Agency and Cherwell District Council, carried out adequate testing for the chemicals which have leached into the water table at Gallos Brook, less than five miles from the site. At a meeting in April, villagers raised the alarm that this watercourse near Heyford Park has one of the highest concentrations of harmful ‘forever chemicals’ in the country. Callum Miller attended the meeting and subsequently raised the issues at Prime Minister’s Questions in the House of Commons on 29th May. He was assured that the matter would be dealt with. The MP also wrote to a series of public bodies to seek answers about what is known, what testing has taken place and what further action is now needed. These include the Ministry of Defence, the Environment Agency, Cherwell District Council, the Department for Education, the UK Health Security Agency and the Drinking Water Inspectorate.

Now there is evidence in a response from the Ministry of Defence that historic contamination risks were identified, including firefighting chemicals and a fire practice pond which it is thought could be the source of the PFAS. They say that the site was disposed of in the mid-1990s before any form of PFAS testing began, but several bodies have not yet responded and the promised meeting with the Health and Environment Secretaries has not yet materialised.

Cherwell District Council, which is the planning authority, said it saw no evidence of an immediate health risk for residents. It published the following statement: “Where development has already taken place at Heyford Park, land contamination was assessed and remediated where necessary, in line with the legislation and guidance that applied at the time those developments were approved. For any new planning applications, the council will:

- Assess each application on its own merits
- Require appropriate land contamination investigations, where relevant
- Ensure that testing, remediation and verification are carried out in line with current national guidance
- Take a precautionary and evidence-led approach, particularly for sensitive uses such as housing

If additional investigation or mitigation is required because of PFAS or other contaminants, this will be secured through the planning process”.

See the full statement here [**cherwell.gov.uk/info/115/planning-process/1395/pfas-and-land-contamination-at-heyford-park---information-for-residents**](https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/115/planning-process/1395/pfas-and-land-contamination-at-heyford-park---information-for-residents)

There’s more information on the residents’ website [**gallosbrook.wordpress.com/home/**](https://gallosbrook.wordpress.com/home/)

And Callum Miller’s full update can be found here [**oxonld.uk/bicester-woodstock-calum-miller/forever-chemicals-at-heyford-park**](https://oxonld.uk/bicester-woodstock-calum-miller/forever-chemicals-at-heyford-park)



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Within the title of our photographic club is the word 'District' which includes The Astons, and we would like to celebrate Adderbury, Deddington and District Photographic Society's 20th Anniversary with you. We marked the occasion with a club visit to the Black Country Living Museum and a Zoom presentation from long-term and long-distance member, Scott Hurd, who joined us from his hometown in Namibia to talk about all things *Thinking Photography*. Richard Broadbent, a member for the whole twenty years, was also present. He raised a cuppa to the Society at the July meeting, congratulating them for upholding the ethos established at its inception - that of sharing photography, not competing against other photographers.

Scott Hurd presented his talk '*Thinking Photography*' with a selection of his photographs. Scott explained that it was his great-aunt, Vera, who first inspired his love of photography. When he and his wife moved to Otjiwarongo, Namibia, in 2007, he quickly realised that photography there was very different from that experienced in the UK. He found that the quality of light, architecture and landscape completely changed his perception of how light could be used within photography. Scott had to learn these differences quickly, as he soon became extremely popular, photographing everything from school proms and corporate events to real estate and hotels, businesses and a cheetah conservation group. Scott concluded by sharing his most important photographic principles: maintain an open mind, make the best of the opportunities available, be prepared, pay close attention to balance and composition, be aware of your lighting, keep a positive attitude and always value success. Coming Up Next Month: Rachel Wallace, who will be talking about how 'Art follows nature'.

All welcome. We meet on the 1st Wednesday of the month. Meetings start at 7.30pm at the Adderbury Institute.



Image courtesy of Scott Hurd

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Cricket quiz time

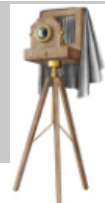


- 1) Which wicketkeeper holds the record for the most catches in their test career?
- 2) Who had the higher test batting average - Jack Hobbs or Herbert Sutcliffe? Which of these players scored the most centuries in their test career?
- 3) Who is the only player to have scored over 700 runs and taken 20 wickets in a test series?
- 4) Which is the only country to have won a test match on their maiden tour of England?
- 5) Which England men's captain was born in Milan? And which in South Lanarkshire?
- 6) Women's test matches are a relatively new development. When was the first women's test match held? When was the first women's test match held at Lords?
- 7) What is the highest team innings total in a women's test match?
- 8) Which brothers hold the record for the highest test partnership for brothers batting together?
- 9) Who was the first Australian man of indigenous heritage to play for Australia?
- 10) After Bangladesh's first victory over Australia in 2017, Shakib Al Hasan, the Bangladeshi allrounder said "Australians are very good at it; we are learning from them." What was he referring to?
- 11) In 1956 Jim Laker took 19 Australian wickets for 90 runs at Old Trafford. Who took the other wicket?
- 12) Which slow bowler has taken the most wickets in their test career? And which quick bowler?

Quizmaster

(Answers on page 46)

Blast from the past



Steeple Aston Cricket club 1952: photo courtesy of SAVA

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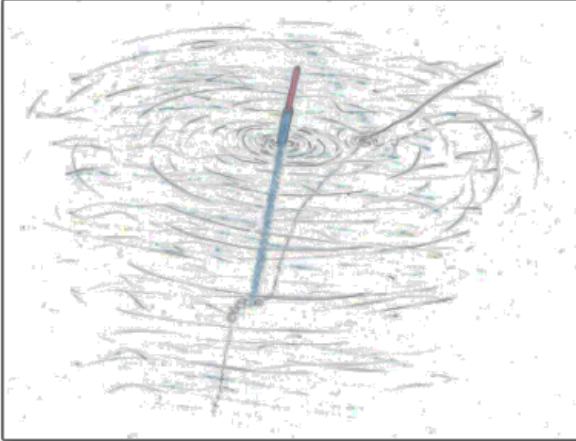
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The Hatchery, Middle Aston OX25 5QL

A long-standing member of the North Oxfordshire angling community, the Steeple Aston Angling Club first cast a line back in 1949, bringing a cluster of local gents together for some friendly sport.



*Drawing from 'Tinca and the Fisherman',
2023, by Sean Simms*

Fast forward nearly 80 years and the club has evolved to suit the modern angler, with a good online presence and lots of wonderful member benefits!

The seasoned match angler can enjoy any of our 12 fixtures per season, held across some beautiful fish-packed venues all around the local area. We also have an affiliation to the *Oxford & District Angling Association*, which is perfect for the pleasure angler who can benefit from free fishing on a splendid selection of Oxfordshire canal and river stretches.

In a somewhat digital age, our club offers the chance to get out and enjoy our countryside with friendly, like-minded individuals; and with an age range of 10 to almost 80, we do really represent a broad church of angler!

Memberships for juniors (up to 18 in education) can be purchased for just £3, with regular memberships set at £25, and concessions for 65+ anglers at £15 – all available through our website **steepleastonanglingclub.com** For this annual fee (along with the matches and free fishing with the ODAA affiliation), you also have the chance of winning some pretty impressive historic silverware, and free fishing on a private local stretch of river at Lower Heyford that holds a superb mixture of species in a truly picturesque setting.

While all levels of angler are welcome, our little club boasts a former 3 x National Junior Champion, and an England International Intermediate who once competed at the World Championships – quite the resumé! If you love fishing as much as we do, then why not get in touch and join us on your next angling adventure.

Sean Simms – Chairman, Steeple Aston Angling Club

Email: information@steepleastonanglingclub.com

1st Deddington Guides Report



The end of summer term already!

One of our favourite activities is stream walking - perfect on a warm evening and great fun was had by all. Thank you to Vicki from Barford for her hospitality. Our mini picnic afterwards also went down well.

Shooting at Horley with our favourite instructor, Bob, was something quite different, and a good challenge for everyone. Lots of listening required as some very important safety rules to follow! We then enjoyed the adventure playground and a quick game of hide and seek in the cool woods afterwards. One more meeting - another favourite - Backwoodsman cooking i.e. cooking without utensils. And then that's it until September. All girls of 10 years or over are very welcome.

Maggie Rampley 07957 600755



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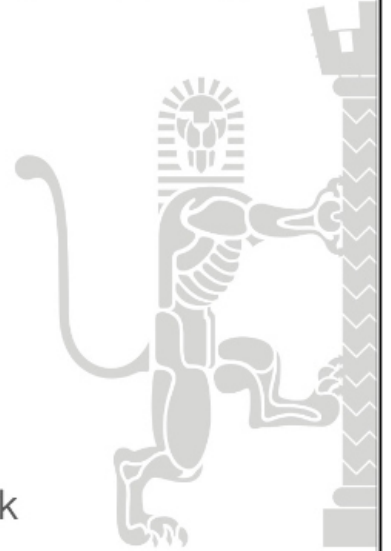


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The Story of Middle Aston House *Part 1*

Working at Middle Aston House, it's easy to admire the beautiful grounds and upbeat atmosphere, but behind every wedding, conference and celebration is a house with such a rich history that has stood proudly in the Oxfordshire countryside for centuries. The earliest parts of Middle Aston House date back to the late 17th century, when it was built as a country residence using locally quarried Hornton stone. Over the years, the house passed through the hands of several owners, each adding their own touches while carefully preserving its charm.



Picture courtesy of Middle Aston House

The village of Middle Aston has a fascinating history of its own, and the house has always been closely connected to the local community. As the Steeple Aston website notes:

'The village has benefited from its close contacts with Oxford and the university in particular. Several interesting characters have lived here, including famous academics and military men. Among the most notorious was Sir Francis Page, known as 'the hanging judge', who was the owner of Middle Aston Estate. In 1730 he commissioned a grand memorial to himself and his wife, which can still be seen in the village church.' steepleaston.org.uk/about-our-village/village-history/

Although much has changed since Sir Francis Page's time, his connection to the estate remains part of Middle Aston House's story. In fact, our largest conference room is still named 'Sir Francis Page', providing a lasting link between the property's rich history and the modern venue that welcomes wedding guests, businesses and visitors today. As members of the team, we feel incredibly privileged to play a small part in these stories. Every guest who walks through our doors adds another chapter to the

history of the estate, whether they're saying "I do", attending a learning and development course or celebrating a family milestone!

Over the years we've welcomed thousands of guests, hosted unforgettable weddings and local events, supported businesses with conferences and training retreats, and provided a peaceful escape from busy everyday life. Those experiences have helped shape the reputation we're proud of today. However, looking after an historic property comes with responsibility. Every improvement we make is carefully considered so that local residents and future generations can enjoy the house just as much as today's visitors. We aren't simply maintaining a beautiful building, we're trying to protect its legacy.



Sir Francis Page memorial in Steeple Aston church. Photo: Carol Neville

For all of us who work here, Middle Aston House is much more than a venue. It's a place with a story hidden in every wall. We feel extremely fortunate to be a part of that journey, helping to preserve its history while creating new memories every single day.

Tony Couch – Marketing Manager, Middle Aston House

OXFORD BUS MUSEUM



Our 1881 horse-drawn tram was restored in our workshop. We know it is accurate because we had the original design drawings. Note the paraffin lamp and red chimney on the left of the tram under the canopy. As well as being a warning to oncoming traffic, it lit the inside of the tram.

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accompanied by Paul Herrington

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Margaret Bullement

mtheb749@gmail.com or 01869 347 346

OR

from the SA Village Shop

REFRESHMENTS

In aid of the Music Fund for Steeple Aston Choral Society

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



★ Steeple Aston Preschool –
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Info@steepleastonpreschool.org.uk





The Valentine Club

What is it about us British? We complain when it is too cold, and get a nice hot day and we complain yet again! As previously scripted in my article for last month's SAL, we were going on a river cruise in June, but because of the exceptionally hot weather, we postponed it until August, so I will write about that in the next edition of the magazine. So, a comparatively quiet month has passed with a visit to Rousham for what is becoming an annual event, where we enjoyed the magnificent grounds and superb teas provided by Ann and her helpers. Thanks must go to Charles and Angela Cottrell-Dormer for their hospitality in allowing us to enjoy the estate. The next day, we took a coachload of members to Bath for a day out in this historic city, but more about that next month.

This month we are going to test our skills in antiques. Some of you might have seen 'The Antiques Roadshow' on television and we will welcome John Place to see if we can identify an assortment of antiques in their correct financial order. And hopefully, subject to temperatures exceeding boiling point, a report on our four-hour cruise along the River Thames.

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

Richard Preston – Group organiser (for lack of a better description).

Email: richard.preston5@btopenworld.com Tel: 01869 340512

Village Hall News



New hiring agreement and booking forms. I grant you these aren't the most exciting reads (unless you are the diligent trustees that have spent hours making sure we are 100% up to date – my thanks to those individuals), but that said, they are really important and need to be read. When you hire the hall, you will be signing to say you have read them and understand you need to follow them. The detail is there to protect and guide us in all of our responsibilities.

As always, if something doesn't make sense or you need a hand completing the booking form, Angela, our booking agent, is there to help, as are all of the hall trustees.



FREEZER SPACE NEEDED! Have you ever wondered where Barbara stores 500 bread rolls for bonfire night? Or how you even go about buying 500 bread rolls when you're not a commercial caterer? Well... Barbara goes to extreme lengths to scour the supermarket shelves in the weeks up to the event and stows them in many freezers across the village.

BUT it would make her life so much easier if someone has a spare freezer sat in a shed/garage that you don't normally use at the end of October/start of November... could you be the saviour of our baps, somewhere to store our buns? If you can help, please get in touch.



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

Remember - the hall is maintained for the use of the village, so, if there is something we could offer but don't, then please do get in touch.

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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Steeple Aston Choral Society



Meddlin' With Musicals

Musical partygoers were undeterred by the tropical temperature as they headed for the SACS Summer Party Concert, which promised them nearly forty memorable melodies to listen to, or even better, to sing themselves. The concert began with a sparkling medley from *'My Fair Lady'*, specially arranged by SACS accompanist, Paul Herrington. Having been told the title was inspired by the Cockney enunciation of M'y fair, the audience was now aware of the intricacies of switching between Cockney and Mayfair accents, while still trying to sing the right notes. The choir carried this off with aplomb. After the boot-stomping and ballroom slippers of the opening, the two English folk songs, *Early One Morning* and *O, Waly, Waly*, brought quiet reflection. The maidens featured in the two songs were having a lot less fun than Eliza Doolittle. Then the choir crossed the Atlantic for *'Rodgers and Hammerstein on Broadway'*, a rumbustious selection of the duo's greatest hits – bouncing along in the surliness with the fringe on top; washin' that awful man out of their hair; bustin' out all over in June; requesting the audience's help in whistling a happy tune, before ending, appropriately for the temperature, with *'There is nothin' like a dame'*. Two more palate-cleansing folk songs followed – this time from Scotland – *Skye Boat Song* and *Afton Water*. Then it was time for the audience to join in with the first sing-a-long. Everyone did very well, negotiating echoes, repeats, and switching from one tempo to another, through *'Getting to Know You; Some Enchanted Evening;*

Raindrops Keep Fallin' on my Head; Over the Rainbow' and finishing magnificently with *'You'll Never Walk Alone'*. Some people even managed to watch the conductor, Paul Badley, as he skillfully danced and steered everyone through to the interval.

With all singers suitably fortified with wine, strawberries, watermelon, lemonade and anything refreshing, the concert resumed with another of Paul Herrington's medleys – *Fiddler on the Roof*. This is quite a tricky musical with its traditional klezmer modes, but the choir managed admirably. *If I Were a Rich Man* was particularly well received, although some of the applause was for the ladies' vociferous farmyard animal accompaniment. Paul Herrington followed this with an impromptu – a completely improvised-on-the-spot piece – with the audience drawing key, mode and tempo at random for him. The result was an astonishing tour de force. Only something quiet and reflective could follow and the Welsh, *'The Ash Grove'* was perfect. The finale was a magnificent sing-a-long with *'Can You Feel the Love Tonight; Consider Yourself; Any Dream Will Do; Thank you for the Music'* and literally finishing on a high, with *'Climb Ev'ry Mountain.'* Phew! It felt as though everyone had sung a lot more than their socks off. Thank you everyone – especially the two Pauls – like Eliza, we all had a ball.

Margaret Bulleyment



Steeple Aston Choral Society singing a lot more than their socks off! Photo by Nigel Francis



Summer has arrived!

While some of us are busy soaking up the sunshine, others are making plans for their next move.

Whether you're dreaming of a bigger garden, a new location or your next family home, summer is the perfect time to start the conversation.

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So put your feet up, enjoy the sunshine and leave the property talk to us.

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The Arts Page



New exhibition asks what our obsession with pets reveals about human nature

We have been domesticating animals for over ten thousand years. But why do we want tame wolves in our homes or wild cats on our laps? This exhibition explores the relationship between humans and their pets – or pets and their humans.

Pets & their People draws on depictions of pets in stories, imagery and poetry in the Bodleian's collection – from one of the earliest recorded depictions of an assistance dog for the blind to a rare copy of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* that has never been displayed in the UK before. The exhibition asks how the special bond between owners and their pets has evolved over time, and what that evolution tells us about who we really are. Are we taming our pets, or are they bringing us back to our wild roots?

Pets & their People exhibition – 11th March to 27th September 2026, ST Lee Gallery, Weston Library, Oxford.

Free admission, no ticket required.

For further details: visit.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/event/pets-and-their-people



Poetry Corner - NIGHT TERRORS



One thing no-one told me
About advancing age
Is the war against insomnia
That I would start to wage

At any hour during the day
I can fall into a doze
But when night-time comes
This ability goes

Gone are the days
When I'd climb into bed
And fall asleep the instant
the pillow met my head

No-one tells you of the hours
That I would lie awake,
Tossing and turning
Waiting for daybreak.

I try reading a book
I try counting sheep
I try yoga breathing
But I don't fall asleep.

As I lie in the dark
Thoughts and worries assail me
And the positivity of the daytime
Starts gradually to fail me

My mind begins to dwell upon
Thoughts I usually shelve
My brain goes into overdrive
The clock says ten past twelve

What if I have a fall?
What if I have a stroke?
Will my kids put me in a care home?
With lots of *really* old folk?

What if I become incontinent?
What if I lose my mind?
Will my family look after me?
Will they still be kind?

I am wide awake
I go to the loo
I consult the alarm clock
It's twenty to two

My pulse is racing now
My heart is beating faster
My mind is imagining
Every sort of disaster

What if a multi-car pile-up
Happens to me?
What time is it now?
It's quarter past three

What if I'm eaten by foxes?
Or a wolf breaks down the door?
Take another look at the clock
Hell, it's only half past four

What if a UFO lands in the village?
(What if a UFO lands on South Side?)
What if aliens take me alive?
I check the alarm clock once again
Five to bloody five

At six o'clock my alarm clock
Begins to loudly beep
Outside my window
The birds start to cheep
And finally, in broad daylight
I fall deeply asleep.

Cathy Lawday

Parish Council Meeting Notes



Firstly, an apology. Mrs Miggins is taking a very well-deserved holiday, so you have to make do with me this month! It's been a very long time since I last attended a Parish Council meeting. When we first moved here nearly 40 years ago, we thought we would go to see what happened in the village. We had moved from Birmingham, and for part of that time I had lived quite happily on a dual carriageway. Imagine my amazement when the Parish Council spent a good twenty minutes discussing traffic congestion on Cow Lane - I wondered what planet I had landed on! None of that nonsense tonight. Our current Parish Council is much more businesslike.

Gareth Epps, our County Councillor, made it clear that he has concerns about the decision to move Oxfordshire to three unitary authorities. He feels this will increase costs as there will have to be three different people in charge of some key departments, where there used to be one. It will also be more difficult to get three different authorities to collaborate on issues such as transport. The Greater Oxford Unitary Authority goes quite a long way out of Oxford, with many villages included. Coincidentally, this seems to align with an area designated by the proposed Greater Oxford Development Corporation. The new unitary authorities will come into force from April 2028, with the first elections for new councillors next May. Current councillors will then not be able to make strategic decisions until the new system is in place, which could leave some important matters in limbo. At the time of the meeting, new PM Andy Burnham was making appointments to his new cabinet. It was not known who the new Secretary of State would be, and they may choose to look at this again, so basically, watch this space.

Gareth has also held meetings with the new headteacher from the village school to look at traffic safety around the school, and observations will happen when term restarts. The parish councillors have old data from some years back that can be used to compare whether there has been an increase in traffic around the school. He also reported that central government has passed legislation to allow councils to take measures against pavement parking that will need to be tailored to individual areas. Gareth also groaned at how much of his time has been taken up by the closure of Camp Road through Heyford Park, a road that has now reopened. At this point, Gareth left to go and

watch some road signs being put up in another part of his patch. I didn't know this was a spectator sport, but I must say, I am impressed by his energy and enthusiasm.

The Parish Clerk has been busy collating information for the new Parish Council website. This should go live in September, so you will all be able to learn more about the Parish Council. Two of the Parish Councillors had attended an online forum about Heyford and Junction 10. Other local parishes are involved alongside representatives from Cherwell and Oxfordshire. The idea is to look at the impact of all the major developments planned locally. Two further meetings are due this year - one shortly on roads and traffic, and another one in September on PFAS.

An interesting idea was put forward to cut a strip of grass shorter to make a footpath along Sixty Foot, which would be much cheaper than constructing a pavement, and Highways will be approached. The perennial subject of the playground then came up. ROSPA have produced a report that scores risk for everything. Sadly, there are several red areas for our playground. The zip wire needs to be made unusable until it can be properly repaired, and will be sorely missed over the school holidays. A villager has kindly offered to look at doing some of the repairs to the slide, and the PC already has quotes for some of the other repairs. Advice will be sought from someone who has previously completed work on the play area, to determine what should be prioritised from the ROSPA report.

The concrete plinth where the glass recycling bins sat is considered a hazard at night, and some plastic cones with reflector strips will be installed there. The toilet will be getting a thorough deep clean, including the grouting, followed by redecoration with damp-proof paint.

The Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan is now with the examiner, who has sent back several questions which have now been answered. Of the three sites potentially allocated for development in the village, the only one they raised questions about was the site behind Grange Park. It is hoped that there will be an outcome by the end of August.

Parish Council Meeting Notes



The covering of the flat roof on the village hall needs to be replaced, and there was much talk of laminating and bubbling. One councillor is going up a ladder to take pictures of this. It has been difficult to get quotes for the work. As another councillor remarked "Roofers are not very good at paperwork"!

The meeting ended with a discussion about the proposed rail-freight interchange development at

Ardley. It was felt that people don't fully understand the impact this will have. The outcome will not be decided by a local democratic body, but by the Secretary of State for Transport. This was a cue for a councillor to start looking up who now had cabinet positions in the new government before we all went home.

The Merry Widow

Steeple Aston Parish Councillors

Angharad Lloyd-Jones (Chair)

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

Greg Elphick

Andrew Gibson

Charlotte Powell, Sports & Recreation
Centre, Environment

2 councillor vacancies

Cathy Fleet – Parish Clerk
Email: parishclerk.steepleaston@gmail.com



Editor's Letterbox



Letter from America

Dear Steeple Aston

We can no longer count our summer stays in lovely Steeple Aston. We have walked the streets, waited at bus stops and visited the Historical Centre. We have marvelled at beautiful gardens, admired cottage walls bright with wisteria and been stymied by clever bus drivers playing dodgem with cars parked on the roadside. We have walked Rousham's grounds, prayed for departed family and friends at St Peter and St Paul's, delighted in The Grain's Store's tasty fare and shared your desire to save the village pub. We have enjoyed so much, yet are sad to have missed the concert celebrating Dr Radcliffe and the Church Fete. However, we cannot leave this time without expressing thanks for all of it and all of you!

Endless thanks to our dear friends, Dave and Paula Jarratt (Whitestones, Southside) who always make us "feel at home" in White Stones Barn. Thanks, too, to neighbours in Grange Barn and Staithe Cottage for their endless patience with our tedious drives up and down the shared narrow lane. And gratitude for Louise Hooper, neighbour to Dave and Paula, who has utilized her photographic talents now for two visits running to record us with ol' school friends from our '70s years living in Kidlington and teaching at Gosford Hill School. We certainly cannot forget our gratitude to shopkeepers, Raj and Pari, for having last minute food needs, endless supplies of ice, and Amazon return service. On walks we met and chatted with a number of local villagers, and are especially thankful for re-connection, prompted by her walking netball friends, with a cousin, Pauline Brock, and her beautiful artwork. Steeple Aston is a special place. How very lucky you all are!

Cheers!

Kevin and Sharon Fagan



Steeple Aston Church Fete

A huge thank you to everyone who attended, ran a stall, baked cakes, brought a car, bought a raffle ticket and donated raffle prizes/gifts/clothes/bottles. It was quite an event during a heatwave! Thankfully, the Fire Service were on site to douse down overheating people. Nearly £4,000 was raised and we, as a Church community, are most grateful for everyone's support and generosity. As ever, the raffle draw keeps everyone on the edge of their (camping) seats. Many thanks to all who donated prizes and congratulations to the lucky winners:

PRIZE

- 1st Prize: Luxury Hamper
- 2nd Prize: Family Pass to Middle Aston Music Festival
- 3rd Prize: Nicholson's Green Room Voucher (2 people)
- 4th Prize: Hook Norton Brewery Tour
- 5th Prize: Pet Hamper from M/Aston Pet Suppliers
- 6th Prize: Bottle of Whiskey
- 7th Prize: Flying Scotsman Steam Clock
- 8th Prize: £25 cash prize
- 9th Prize: Helen's Local Honey
- 10th Prize: Slow Sunday Workshop Voucher

WINNER

- Sheila Woods (S/Aston)
- Julia Whybrew (S/Aston)
- Merrill Bayley (S/Aston)
- Ann (S/Aston)
- Preston (M/Aston)
- Keith Thomas (M/Aston)
- MacAndrew (S/Aston)
- Katie (S/Aston)
- Machin (S/Aston)
- Brett (S/Aston)

Hope to see you all again next year!

John Orridge

Photos by Nigel Francis



Morris dancers in full swing



A sedate ride via Pony and Trap



The WI in a bit of a jam with our PCSOs



Hose down and keep cool!

In The Kitchen



Pea and Ham Risotto

I've been lucky enough to travel, live and work in many countries, so when the SAL team asked me to share a few recipes, I chose some of my favourites from around the world especially as I'm sure I couldn't do traditional British fare justice any more than anyone else in Steeple! I'm starting with a classic Italian risotto. It's a popular restaurant choice, but it's just as enjoyable to make at home. Once you've mastered the patient stirring and timing, it's incredibly versatile, perfect for seasonal ingredients, entertaining or making the most of leftover meat and vegetables.

Ingredients (serves a hungry 2 as a main or leaves enough for my lunch the next day)

- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- ½ medium white onion, diced finely
- 180g Arborio rice
- 1 large glass of white wine
- 1 litre of stock of choice
- Pinch of dried sage
- Finely grated parmesan cheese – generous sized mound plus a little extra to serve
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 80g cooked ham, diced
- 2 handfuls of peas (fresh or frozen) or a handful each of broad beans and peas
- Knob of butter to finish

Instructions

I'm not an organised cook, so for me preparation is key with this one. Don't leave a risotto once you start!

1. Prepare your stock and have this simmering on a back hob.
2. Add the olive oil to a heavy bottomed medium/large pot over a medium heat.
3. Add the chopped onions and cook gently until translucent. Don't worry if they caramelize a little but avoid them getting too dark and crumble in your dried sage.
4. Add the rice with the onions, and toast for 3-4 minutes, stirring constantly to make sure it's all coated.
5. Add the glass of wine. This deglazes the pan and adds the liquid to the rice before it's ready for the stock.
6. Once the wine is absorbed, add a ladle of stock and stir. Turn the heat down if it starts to stick early.
7. Continue to add the stock a ladle at a time, adding when the liquid has been mostly absorbed and you can't see the difference between the liquid and the rice.
8. You might not need all the stock, or you might need to top it up a little, but as you keep adding the stock in around 20-30 minutes your rice should be cooked 'al dente' with a slight firmness / bite to it, and the risotto will take on a glazed look. If it's crunchy keep cooking for another 5-10 minutes.
9. When close to al 'dente', stop adding stock, and stir in the ham, a generous handful of parmesan cheese, peas and season with black pepper. Stir in a knob of butter, turn off the heat and put the lid on. Leave to rest for about 5 minutes. Serve with extra parmesan, don't add salt before tasting as the ham and parmesan is often enough.

Tips

- ✓ Oil is important for the flavour, but just regular olive oil is best not extra virgin.
- ✓ Using a heavy bottomed saucepan really helps.
- ✓ Use white onions or shallots, red can change the flavour. Ensure the onion is really cooked before you add the rice. If your end risotto tastes of onion, next time cook the onion down more.
- ✓ Chop things fairly small. And you want the flavours to reach evenly through the pot and on your fork.
- ✓ Keep stirring! Don't take your eye off it, low and slow and only add more stock when the first has completely been absorbed.
- ✓ Keep the stock simmering so you're not 'shocking' the rice with cold liquid and losing all the heat from it.
- ✓ For a richer finish, you can stir through two tablespoons of single cream at the end instead of the butter.
- ✓ If you have an old hard end of a parmesan, you can chop this up and add it halfway through after about 10 minutes it will melt into the risotto. You won't need to add as much grated parmesan at the end.



134th

ANNUAL SHOW

and

FUN DOG SHOW

BANK HOLIDAY - AUGUST 31st 2PM

Admission £2.50 Adults - Children U16 go free

Teas & Cakes ♦ Children's games ♦ Bowling ♦ Food stalls
Bouncy castle ♦ Train rides ♦ Bar ♦ Ice cream van ♦ Vintage tractors
Local stalls

People of all ages and skills are encouraged to enter the show. For full details of how to enter head to the link below or scan the QR code. Free show admission with 10 or more entries.



<https://www.steepleaston.org.uk/hortsoc/>



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Summer Show Time

Where else would you be on August Bank Holiday Monday? Of course, Robinson's Close next door to the village hall! A true traditional village event, and although our name may get shortened to the 'Flower show', it is so much more than that. There are photography classes for adults and children - busy most of August? That's okay, these are classes you can do ahead of time. Handicraft is always a delight, and the creative skills of our villages always surprises me. As you'd expect, we do have flower and vegetable classes, and every year having exhibits for these is becoming increasingly more difficult with heatwaves and droughts. But remember, every other gardener or grower is in exactly the same boat. The only thing you have to lose is your 30p entry fee. If you enter 10 exhibits or more, you will be given a free admission ticket for the afternoon event.

Printed schedules listing the classes can be picked up from the village shop, and are also available on the village website, now in our own 'Horticultural Society' section. EVERY exhibitor needs their own entry form – again, these can be picked up from the shop. If they run out, please contact me, Vicky Clifton, Show Secretary on 07817025948 or email vmcstedman@btinternet.com. Completed entry forms along with entry money need to be delivered to myself at Bluebell Cottage, Middle Aston or to Claire Coysh in Walton House, South Side by Thursday 27th August at 7.00pm. NO late entries will be accepted this year. We have given you a day longer than normal to get the forms in so no excuse. Need some help? Our committee members have a lot of knowledge to share and enthusiasm to support you, so please contact me (or them directly) and we will do our best to help you get started or perfect those plums or even rocking the rock cakes.

Fun dog show - we don't leave your pooches out of the fun. All being well with a favourable weather forecast, then Dogs for Good will be hosting a fun dog show. Rules and classes are printed on the back of the schedule, and they will be shared nearer the time via Facebook. But, most importantly, we'd love to see you in the afternoon on the field soaking up the atmosphere. We open at 2.00pm. Why not pop down and have a look?!

See you there. **Vicky Clifton - Show Secretary**



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.

Horticultural Society



Points mean prizes: 3 for 1st; 2 for 2nd; and 1 for 3rd.

August Bank Holiday Monday means one thing in Steeple Aston and that is the Annual Flower Show. And what makes this annual feast so special? Entries! So, what do you need to do to give yourself the best chance of winning a prize?



Three dahlias to your left. Displayed well but not perfect. Ideally, all three blooms should be facing slightly forward and of similar size, shape and colour. This would be true of all flower classes but not always possible. Ideally, try to grab the attention of the judge and arrange them rather than throwing them in a vase.

The tomatoes below demonstrate how they could or should not be displayed. The first prize (dark ones to centre) is placed in good formation and of equal size and colour. Some of the other exhibits would have been better placed had they been displayed better.



There is so much detail that can be applied to exhibiting but the bottom line is, put the best you have in the show. Make sure it is free from disease, damage or dying! Always check the schedule i.e. if the class asks for five of a variety, make sure you exhibit five, not four or six!

Make sure jam jars are clean, free from fingermarks and labelled correctly. Arrange flower exhibits to WOW the judges. Take a minute to clean the vegetables you have lifted from your garden or allotment and place them symmetrically to display them to their best advantage.

Most important. Have a go! You might surprise yourself and win that coveted first prize card which you can then wave frantically at your neighbour. This is written by an older member of the community who has won a few prizes, but is always happy to be beaten.

Richard Preston

Do you know what makes any show a success?

ENTRIES!

Without entries, there is no show and with a few exceptions, this show has been in Steeple Aston since the mid 1860s and is recognised as one of the largest flower shows in Oxfordshire!

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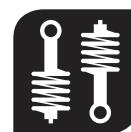
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WI Summer Report



Putting out the Pimms and canapés. Photo: Merrill Bayley

Earlier this year, the WI donated a cherry tree to the Community Orchard on Water Lane and in July a plaque was added to it. Thanks to Jane Durnin who arranged the making of the plaque and also delivered the final hammer blow to fix it in place beside the tree.



Preparing to plant the tree earlier in the year. Photo: Nigel Francis



Jane delivers the final hammer blow! Photo: Nigel Francis



Job done. Photo: Nigel Francis

WI Summer Report

In July we had a stall at the church fete where we raised money for the church selling Sally Cooper's famous marmalades and jams and running a 'Guess the weight of the cake' competition which was won by Paul Honigmann.



*The team with more jam than Hartleys.
Photo: Merrill Bayley*



*Guess the weight of the cake
Photo: Merrill Bayley*

On the 14th members donned their hats for an absolutely splendid afternoon tea party. It made a change to be waited on, starting with savoury canapés and a delectable choice of sandwiches, followed by scones with thick cream and delicious strawberry jam. A teapot for each table, which was replaced before we had time to ask. Then along came cakes on lovely little cake stands with generous slices for us all. Finally, the sheer delight of someone else doing the washing up!



Hats donned and no washing up to do! Photos: Alyson Jaycock

WI Summer Report

Our speaker, auctioneer Charlie Ross, was then introduced. He passed around seven items for us to value, and asked us to bid (no money changing hands) for them. Among the items were a gold pocket watch and chain and a Lalique vase. Bidding was ferocious, topping the £3.00 mark!



*Charlie Ross of BBC 'Bargain Hunt' fame gets proceedings underway.
Photo: Alyson Jaycock*

Future summer events are a supper at the Chequers and our stall at the Horticultural Show on August Bank Holiday Monday, and as always donations of cakes will be very welcome!

Cathy Lawday & Merrill Bayley

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DR RADCLIFFE'S TRUST ANNUAL AWARDS

TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING

The Dr Radcliffe's Trust invites applications from young people who:

- are 16 (post GCSE) - 25 years old
- are studying at school, college, university or are in an apprenticeship
- live in Steeple or Middle Aston, or attended Dr Radcliffe's School for a minimum of 2 years.

In the past awards have been made to help fund school or college field trips, tools or equipment for apprenticeships or vocational training, uniforms for trainees, specialist software and laptops, equipment for students at college or university, travel costs, and help with living expenses for those living away from home.

Awards are made based on the financial needs of the applicant, so family household income is considered, but there is no restriction as to family income; each case is considered individually. Young people can apply any year that they are eligible, regardless of whether they have received an award in the past.

Applications for the awards must be made by 11th November. Any late applications will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. The scholarship committee then reviews the applications and aims to make awards during December.

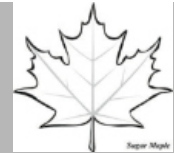
To simplify the application process, we are asking young people to apply electronically via a Google form. The link to this is given below, as well as a QR code. The link can also be found on the Steeple Aston website and facebook page.

<https://forms.gle/UuNa3fZBiueZDQD6A>



If you need help with the application process or need more information then please contact me, Tina Ferguson. My email address is tina.merlins@gmail.com

Steeple Aston Garden Club



On one of the many hot sunny afternoons in July, members of the Garden Club went to visit Foxington Gardens in south Oxfordshire, with amazing views across to the chalk escarpment below Stokenchurch and Christmas Common. Our host showed us around the different parts of the garden, including a dry garden to the front of the house and a hot garden full of bright coloured plants to the side. There was a gazebo offering shade and a good place to view the plants, as some members took the opportunity to do. The owner told us that the red-hot pokers (or Kniphofia to give them their proper name) have never grown so tall, so presumably they like the hot dry conditions and available water from a drip watering system which was put in over the winter! On the way to the wooded area, we disturbed the doves from their impressive dovecote. We then retreated to the cool of a large barn for tea and cake which we felt we had earned.



The taller than usual red-hot pokers



Disturbed doves



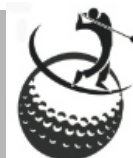
The shady gazebo

Next month the Garden Club are off to visit the Oxford Botanic Garden on Tuesday 4th August at 2.00pm so please come and join us by contacting either myself (Alison) or Richard Preston using the email addresses below.

Alison Llewellyn alisonllew.home@gmail.com

Richard Preston richard.preston5@btopenworld.com

Steeple Aston Golf Society



Well, another enjoyable morning spent contesting a wonderful day out on the parched lands of the Savanna at The Vale Golf Club. Our winner of the Jubilee cup went to Richard Watkin playing off 25 with 32 points on count back. Runner up was Tony Giles playing off 12 also with 32 points. Nearest the pin on hole number 5 was Eric Blincoe. Nearest the pin in 2 on hole number 17 was John Morris-James. Guest prize goes to John Morris-James with 40 points playing off 20.

Witney Lakes is our next meeting on Tuesday 18th August – 12 noon meet for a 1.00pm first tee. This course has five large lakes that come into play on eight holes. An excellent test of golf that will use every club in your bag. To come along for the day out on this flat walkable course, please contact Alan 01869 340423 or Chris 01869 347173.

Here is the situation:

You are on a horse, galloping at a constant speed.

On your right side is a sharp drop-off.

On your left side is an elephant travelling at the same speed as you.

Directly in front of you is a galloping kangaroo and your horse is unable to overtake it.

Behind you is a lion running at the same speed as you and the kangaroo.

What must you do to get out of this highly dangerous situation?

Answer: Get off the merry-go-round and go home. You've had enough excitement for one day!

Alan



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The Cricket Report



Mirroring England Again!

England lost their last two Test Matches just as SACC have lost our last two games. Could we put it right against the MCC (Moo Cow Club, team of farmers) and register a first win of the season? We put out our youngest team for some time with six under 25s and five over 50s! We were delighted to see Paddy & Rory Brett making their debuts for Steeple Aston CC, our local pub being a fertile recruiting ground for new players.

MCC won the toss...

The farmers won the toss on a scorching day and chose to bat, not surprisingly. Paddy Brett opened the bowling and took 1-31 from his 6 overs, thanks to a fine catch by Richard Churchill. Richard also bowled very economically (0-19 from 4 overs), but, as ever, it was Paul Longman who applied the pressure with a fine spell of 2-26 from his 6 overs, including an extraordinary catch by Phil Chesser behind the stumps. Okay, so the catch itself was not extraordinary, but that Phil caught it, was! Ben Woods and Josh Drennan also bowled a tight line and Rory Brett only conceded 14 runs from his 4 overs, as the MCC reached 150-5 from their allotted 30 overs. Beatable surely?

Never in doubt....

Whilst it is great to have lots of youngsters in the field making great saves hither and thither, you cannot beat a 'Good Oldie'. Nick Foster, as ever, was an ocean of calm and cruised to 51 not out before retiring. Richard Churchill also hit a composed 50 not out, ably supported by Josh Drennan (17). However, the highlight for me was Jon Scotchbrook's cameo at the end. It has been a tough 3 years for Jon with a bad back and the humiliation of being outscored by Phil Chesser, but Jon came for a Net at our house before the game and one large technical issue was resolved. It was wonderful to see Jon's cover drive unfurled again as he lead us to victory by 8 wickets with an undefeated 10 not out. Small steps!

Next game vs Sibford...

Our next game is away at Sibford on Sunday 26th July. Let's hope for back-to-back victories and that The Chequers will be open afterwards - the food is excellent by the way!

With best wishes to all

Peter Higgins - Chairman SACC



Stop Press!

SAL Deliveries – can you help?

I manage the distribution of SAL from the point of the printer dropping off the boxes, and I'm very well supported by over a dozen lovely volunteers. Some rounds have a deputy for holiday cover, either on my master list or informally through the help of a neighbour. Thank you to those who have already offered further help this year. I'd like to encourage a few more villagers to

volunteer to join our group. It's less than an hour a month to post the magazine through your neighbours' letterboxes. I'm particularly keen on more resilience on the Fenway and Grange Park rounds.

Greg Elphick – 07891 760176, Email: greggles1262@gmail.com



Cool off with a scoop at The Grain Store Cafe!

There's a new reason to visit The Grain Store Cafe this summer. We've introduced delicious Marshfield Farm ice cream, adding the perfect sweet treat to our menu.

Whether you're popping in for breakfast, lunch, coffee and cake or simply fancy an afternoon scoop, there's now something to help you cool down on warmer days.

Made using quality British ingredients, Marshfield Farm ice cream is the latest addition to our menu, joining our artisan coffee, freshly prepared dishes and tasty bakes. It's the perfect excuse to treat yourself on your next visit.

Make sure to follow us on Instagram for the latest scoop!



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Nature-Friendly Summer Activities

Summer's the perfect time for all ages to get outdoors and help your local wildlife, even on those not-so-sunny days.

Make a mammal footprint tunnel:

What you'll need: sand or flour; a ruler; a small, shallow tray; wet cat food (meat not fish)

1. Fill your tray

Fill the tray with lots of flour or sand and use the ruler to smooth the surface.

2. Check the trap

Lightly press your finger into the flour or sand – it should leave an indent. If it doesn't, smooth over again.



Mammal Footprint Tunnel. Image credit: Gardener's World

3. Add bait (optional)

Place a dish with pet food in the middle of the tray.

4. Place the tunnel outside

Put the tunnel in a quiet, sheltered spot such as along a hedge or wall. Leave it out for up to a week, checking the tray daily for tracks.

5. Identify the footprints

Take photos of the prints with a ruler for scale. Use ID guides to identify your guests.

Make seed bombs:

What you'll need: 1 cup natural powdered clay; 1 cup peat-free compost; 1–2 packets of native wildflower seeds (pollinator-friendly is best); water (a little at a time); bowl for mixing; tray or cardboard for drying.

1. Mix the Dry Ingredients

In a bowl, mix: 1-part powdered clay, 1-part compost, seeds.

2. Add Water Slowly

Add a little water at a time and mix with your hands until the mixture sticks together. It should not be too wet or crumbly.

3. Roll Into Balls

Roll the mix into small balls.

4. Dry Them Out

Place the seed bombs on a tray or cardboard and leave to dry for 24–48 hours in a warm place.

5. Throw and grow!

Once dry, seed bombs are ready to be tossed into bare soil areas in the garden. Try and plant before rain is forecast or water them lightly and watch as pollinator habitats increase on your grounds.



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Travel back in time to the 1950s/60s at the bus museum

On Sunday 2nd August, we shall be holding a special event at the museum, when we will have many visiting coaches and buses from the 1950s/60s in a bid to recreate the atmosphere in Gloucester Green Coach Station in its heyday.

At the end of May, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a temporary reduction in the VAT rate on museum admission charges from 20% to 5% until 31st August. We have therefore reduced our entrance fees as follows:

	Temporary normal rates	Temporary rates with Gift Aid	Previous normal rates
Adult	£7	£8	£8
Seniors	£6	£7	£7
Children	£4	£5	£5
Family	£17	£19	£20



The first five Bullnoses to arrive

The Morris Bullnose Club visited the museum on 10th May, bringing a fine collection of 20 Morris vehicles, most of which were Bullnoses. The picture is of the first five vehicles to arrive. From the left they date from 1924, 1928, 1924, 1926 and 1926. All the cars in the lineup are Bullnoses built in the Cowley factory. William Morris reluctantly dropped the distinctive radiator design in 1926 because, as car engines became more powerful, they needed more cooling, which the Bullnose design could not provide.

The 1928 Morris Commercial light ton van PX 9155 is a rare survivor. Only four are known to be in preservation in the UK out of just over 3,000 that were made by William Morris at his Soho Works in Birmingham between 1926 and 1930. PX 91255 was first sold to EW White Funeral Directors of Chichester. It was originally painted yellow, which seems an odd colour for a hearse. The van's current owner thinks that it may have been used for transporting wood and completed coffins rather than at funeral services! Matt Harris acquired the vehicle in 2023 and takes it to shows and classic car runs. It is insured for any driver over 25, and Matt allows young people to drive it hoping that they will get interested in old cars. He keeps restoration to a minimum to preserve original features. However, the van now has a starting motor, so the starting handle is seldom used.

Some of the sixty members of the Morris Bullnose Club enjoyed a tour of the museum, followed by tea, coffee and biscuits served in the café. The visit was a great success, so much so that they are considering returning for their next Annual General Meeting!

Frank Collingwood – Oxford Bus Museum

All photos courtesy of Oxford Bus Museum



Rare survivor - The Morris Commercial light ton van



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# Church Matters



## Liminal (in-between) Spaces

Hello - I hope that you're enjoying this year's beautiful sunshine.

At the end of the school academic year, I attend the Leaver's service at both Tackley C of E and Dr Radcliffe's Steeple Aston schools. It is a wonderful celebration, looking back at the children's time in primary school, celebrating how they have grown and developed, and all they have learnt and achieved before sending them onwards to their next school. The summer holidays, as well as being a chance to rest and have fun, is also a liminal space, an in-between time. Primary school is over but secondary school hasn't yet begun. Life is full of such in-between moments, when one period has ended and we wait for the next stage to begin. These may be big changes such as a new job or moving house, or smaller changes as we adapt to life's challenges. These moments are often full of various emotions, from saying goodbye to friends, colleagues and neighbours, to the excitement of starting something new, meeting new people and new friendships. As we stand on the edge of new beginnings, with all its possibilities stretching out before us, it may also seem overwhelming. Jesus, in the Gospels, repeatedly invites his disciples to 'come and follow' him as he crosses boundaries, travelling to Samaria or crossing the Sea of Galilee.

As we journey through the summer, and this space in-between, it is worth taking time to notice our emotions, as recognising them and naming them helps to release their hold on us. We can use the summer to help us prepare to step into the new space, new job, school or home. Just as we prepare for going away by packing our bags, we can prepare for the new stage in life, by getting the things we will need ready, from new pens and rulers, to crockery and bed linen if moving away from home, or by learning something new to aid you in your new adventure. Whatever changes you face as you journey through the space in-between, I pray that you will know Jesus' presence going with you.

God bless,

**Harriet**

## Church Services August 2026

| Date                                 | North Aston                                  | Steeple Aston                                | Tackley                                      |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August</b>  |                                              |                                              | 10.30am<br>United Benefice<br>Holy Communion |
|                                      |                                              |                                              |                                              |
| <b>Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> August</b>  | 10.30am<br>United Benefice<br>Holy Communion |                                              |                                              |
|                                      |                                              |                                              |                                              |
| <b>Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August</b> |                                              | 10.30am<br>United Benefice<br>Holy Communion |                                              |
|                                      |                                              |                                              |                                              |
| <b>Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August</b> |                                              |                                              | 10.30am<br>United Benefice<br>Holy Communion |
|                                      |                                              |                                              |                                              |
| <b>Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> August</b> | 10.30am<br>United Benefice<br>Holy Communion |                                              |                                              |
|                                      |                                              |                                              |                                              |

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

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



# Cricket Quiz Answers



- 1) Mark Boucher of South Africa. 532 catches in 147 tests.
- 2) Herbert Sutcliffe 60.73 (Jack Hobbs 56.94). Herbert Sutcliffe 16 centuries; Jack Hobbs 15.
- 3) Gary Sobers for West Indies-v-England in 1966.
- 4) Pakistan.
- 5) Ted Dexter; Mike Denness.
- 6) The first match: 1934. Australia-v-England in Brisbane. The first match at Lord's: 1979 England-v-Australia.
- 7) 603-6 declared. India-v-South Africa 2024.
- 8) Grant and Andy Flower. 269 for Zimbabwe-v-Pakistan. February 1995.
- 9) Jason Gillespie in 1996.
- 10) Sledging.
- 11) Tony Lock.
- 12) Slow bowler: Murali Muralidaran 800 wickets. Quick bowler: James Anderson 704.

For a fund of interesting facts, anecdotes and insight see *Test Cricket: A History* by Tim Wigmore, the source for some of the questions in this quiz.



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# Travel Times

## 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)**

## 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!)

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keep village  
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## STEEPLE ASTON VILLAGE HALL

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

|                                                                        | Monday to Friday                                | Sat/Sun & Bank<br>Holidays<br>Before 6pm         | Sat/Sun & Bank<br>Holidays<br>6pm to Midnight    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Steeple &amp; Middle Aston Village Residents / Voluntary Groups</b> |                                                 |                                                  |                                                  |
| <b>All Facilities<br/>(Main Hall, Kitchen and<br/>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<br/>(Main Hall, Kitchen and<br/>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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**Steeple Aston and Middle Aston  
Refuse & Recycling collection day  
is THURSDAY.**

### 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

### September 2026:

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> Blue and brown  
Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> Green  
Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> Blue and brown  
Thursday 24<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)**

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

| Month                        | Event                                                                         | Venue            | Time             |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>August</b>                |                                                                               |                  |                  |
| Tuesday 4th August           | Garden Club visit - Oxford Botanic Garden                                     | Oxford           | 2.00pm           |
| 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           |
| <b>September</b>             |                                                                               |                  |                  |
| Tuesday 8th September        | WI: 'Hue Knew' talk by colour consultant                                      | Village Hall     | 7.00pm           |
| Wednesday 9th September      | Garden Club Summer Party - The Pound House, Paines Hill, Steeple Aston        | Paines Hill, SA  | 6.00pm           |
| <b>Monday 14th September</b> | <b>SAL October copy and advert deadlines</b>                                  |                  |                  |
| Tuesday 15th September       | Valentines: Tony Hetherington                                                 | Village Hall     | 2.30pm           |
| Saturday 19th September      | Trumpet Concert                                                               | Village Hall     | 7.00pm           |
| Monday 21st September        | Parish Council Meeting                                                        | S & R Building   | 7.30pm           |
| Wednesday 23rd September     | Valentines: Coach Trip - Milestones Museum                                    |                  |                  |
| Saturday 26th September      | Farmers' Market                                                               | Deddington       | 9.00am - 12.30pm |
| Tuesday 29th September       | Golf Society meet - Kirtlington Golf Club                                     | Kirtlington GC   | 11.00am          |

**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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e-mail: [print@joshuahorgan.co.uk](mailto:print@joshuahorgan.co.uk)

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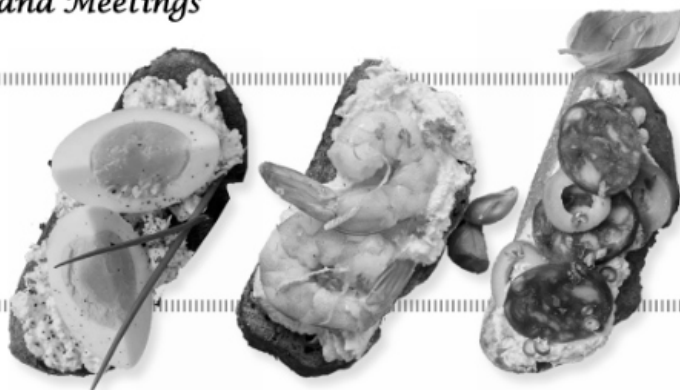
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