



Issue No 506 September 2020

## A new term



Girls from Stonesfield Pre-School

It's an exciting time as we welcome our children and their families back to pre-school. It will be a new start in more ways than one for the younger generation who live in our community. From early years to primary and secondary age, we wish the children a very enjoyable term back at school with their friends and teachers.

The picture, taken in July on one of our transition visits to Stonesfield Primary School, embodies all we set out to achieve at pre-school. Happy, confident children who learn to be independent and form their first friendships that may even turn out to be lifelong!

We have been very busy during the school holidays giving the pre-school a complete makeover, long overdue. All the work has been completed to a high standard on a low budget by a team of volunteers. The new environment we have created for the children and staff is now a soft, light-filled space and is aesthetically pleasing with its new orange and grey colour scheme throughout.

We now proudly look forward to organising a pre-school Cream Tea Open Day for our community in the not too distant future.

Continued on page 18

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## Some phone numbers to call for help

West Oxfordshire District Council:	01993 861000
Oxfordshire County Council:	01865 792422
Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire:	03444 111 444
Age UK Oxon Free Telephone Support:	01865 411288
Witney and West Oxfordshire Foodbank:	01993 890000
Volunteer Link-Up:	01993 776277
Samaritans:	116 123
Talking Space:	01865 901222
Mind UK:	01865 247788
Shelter:	0808 800 4444
Debt Advice (Stepchange):	0800 138 1111
Crime Stoppers:	0800 555 111
Action Fraud:	0300 123 2040
Mental health line (24hr)	01865 904 997 (adults) 01865 904 998 (children and young people)

Find more information at [www.stonesfield.online/covid-19-information/](http://www.stonesfield.online/covid-19-information/)

### STONESFIELD VOLUNTARY TRANSPORT SCHEME

Voluntary transport to medical appointments remains suspended at present (see separate article). However we are continually monitoring the Government's changing regulations and will work towards re-starting our service as soon as possible.

**If you are in need of transport for medical appointments, and are unable to find this from your own household, there are one or two other possibilities - for further information please phone**

**Viv Kendall on 01993 891803.**

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Current and past copies of the *Slate* available at [www.stonesfield.online/slate](http://www.stonesfield.online/slate)

# Coronavirus updates

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## Stonesfield Voluntary Transport Scheme

You may have been wondering what is happening in relation to the Voluntary Transport Scheme now many of the lockdown provisions have been lifted. We have kept the situation under constant review, taken account of the safety and hygiene requirements now in place and consulted with our umbrella organisation, Community First Oxfordshire, and other local voluntary schemes.

Because almost all of our drivers are either classed as vulnerable or are needing to shield either themselves or those close to them, we have reluctantly concluded that we are unable to reinstate a viable voluntary transport scheme at present. We will continue to monitor changes to government requirements and will work towards re-starting whenever that is possible; any progress will be reported here in the *Slate*.

Viv Kendall (891803)

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## NHS guidelines

The lockdown restrictions have been eased, but it is important that we do not become complacent.

Do not leave home if you or someone you live with has any of the following:

1. a high temperature
2. a new, continuous cough
3. a loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste

## NHS test and trace service

The NHS test and trace service is now live. Everyone over the age of five presenting symptoms should have a test. The new NHS test and trace service works as follows:

- You request a test online or by calling 119
- If the test comes back negative, you and everyone in your household can go back to normal
- If the test comes back positive, the NHS test and trace team will get in touch with you via text, email, or phone call to discuss whom you have come into contact with
- The NHS test and trace team will then alert those contacts, where necessary, and notify them if they need to self-isolate to stop the spread of the virus
- You and members of your household need to follow the usual guidelines about self-isolating.

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## Important reminder to contributors

Please note that contributions for inclusion in the *Slate* should be emailed to **slate@stonesfield.online**. This replaces the old website address, WHICH HAS CLOSED.

**Deadlines for articles and advertisements are shown on the opposite page. Any items received after due date will not be included.**

The Editor

# Notices & news

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## Paul Fletcher

Mike and all the family would like to thank everyone for all the cards and kindness received after the loss of Paul.

Thank you all. He will be greatly missed.

Mike and Family

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## Estelle Eddy

Many village residents, and especially Lunch Club members, will remember Estelle Eddy, who lived in Russett Cottage at the foot of Laughton Hill. She is now in Goodson Lodge Care Centre, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, and is as well as can be expected.

Jill Prickett

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## Hazel Smith

Our family wish to thank all our friends who expressed condolences and shared happy memories after Hazel's recent death.

As a family, we moved to Stonesfield in late 1970 where Hazel entered into various village activities. She helped at the youth club, became Brown Owl to the 2nd Stonesfield Brownie Company, taught part-time at the village school for a number of years, and then served as a school governor.

Later her interests turned to the elderly. With Hillary Eaton and others, Hazel set up the Stonesfield Lunch Club, following this with regular cooking duties, helping, and then more recently as a member.

With increasing effects of Parkinson's disease and dementia, Hazel moved into Beech Haven Care Home in Chipping Norton, and we thank the staff there for her care through this difficult period for all.

Mike, Matthew, and Hannah

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## Stockey Woods

The response from residents pledging money to help fight our right to roam in Stockey Woods – the result of our article in last month's *Slate* – has been tremendous. Thanks are also due to the Parish Council who has agreed to pay for a day's expert advice before the pre-inquiry. We will email everybody as and when we need to redeem those pledges.

Mr Roy Cox, the Blenheim Estate manager, contacted Sustainable Stonesfield as a result of our campaign, requesting a meeting to see if there was an amicable resolution to the issue. Two representatives from SUSTO and David Brown and Wendy Gould from the PC met Mr Cox via a Zoom meeting on the 11th and had a constructive discussion. There is a chance that this can be resolved without going to the full inquiry and, of course, we will explore the possibilities to the full. However, if necessary we will continue with our campaign at the Public Inquiry in the interests of Stonesfield residents.

Mr Cox is going to return at the end of the month with answers to a couple of important questions we posed to him, and

will supply more information about the Community Woodland which has been set up in Woodstock. This will be in advance of the pre-inquiry meeting which has been put back until mid-September at the request of Blenheim, so there will be time to consider Mr Cox's responses.

Richard Morris, Chair of SUSTO

## **Churchill's White House is saved by Bladon Community**

The 17th century White House, and last remaining pub in Bladon, has been saved by the community. Reputed to be the pub where Winston Churchill 'learnt to drink' during his time at Blenheim Palace, this historic pub is set to become the heart of the community once again.

After 6 months of relentless campaigning, Bladon Community Benefit Society had over 450 shareholders and had raised more than £330,000 in shares. Although 90% of shareholders come from Bladon and the surrounding villages, press coverage also sent the pub's cause around the globe and shares were purchased from as far away as Australia, New Zealand, USA, and South Africa.

The team put their best offer into Greene King just as lockdown was put into place. A nail-biting wait until May brought Bladon the good news it had been waiting for, the community offer to purchase the White House had been accepted and the community were handed the keys to their pub on 23 July 2020. They are still fundraising in order to improve the fabric of the building and bring community services to life.

Rachel Guest (07960 238530)  
bladoncommunitypub@gmail.com  
www.bladoncommunitypub.org

## **Cows with calves on the Common**

A small herd of cattle, four cows and their calves, will be grazing the Common from the beginning of September until January. Grazing by cattle is an essential means of managing the Common. Here are some basic rules from the National Farmers' Union for walkers:

- Cows are nosy and may come to investigate, especially if you have a dog with you
- Don't panic or run if cattle follow you – stay calm and walk quickly and quietly around the herd
- Remember cows can be protective of their young. Never get between cows and their calves – go around the herd and re-join the path as soon as possible
- Keep your dogs close, under control, in sight, and on a short lead around cattle
- If you are threatened by cattle release your dog so you can both get to safety separately
- Dog poo can spread disease to cattle. Bag it and bin it – there's a waste bin by the road gate

**REMEMBER:** If you aren't comfortable walking where there are cattle, there are many other footpaths nearby.

## **Why we need cattle on the Common**

Cattle are one of the best ways of maintaining the grassland and improving the Common. When cattle are allowed to graze freely they select different plants, and even different parts of the plant, to nibble or browse. Over time, this selective eating by the animals creates a varied structure within the plants and the habitat. It is this that helps create the right conditions for a wide range of plants,

insects, birds, reptiles, and mammals to exist.

Thank you for controlling your dog while there are cattle on the Common and ensuring the gates are closed.

For more information contact:  
[parishcouncil@stonesfield.info](mailto:parishcouncil@stonesfield.info)

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## **North Leigh Roman Villa mosaics open in September**

The mosaic house of North Leigh Roman Villa will be open for the final time this year: 11am to 4.30pm, Saturday and Sunday 12 and 13 September.

Our first opening in August attracted over 300 visitors, in a safe, socially distanced fashion, under blue skies and a hot summer sun. Safety is a paramount concern. Facemasks must be worn inside the mosaic house. Free timed tickets for the mosaics are only issued on site, on the day. There was no crowding on our first August weekend, but if you would prefer a quieter time consider 1.30pm–2.30pm on Saturday.



These are the finest Roman mosaics in Oxfordshire still in their original location and were last regularly open to visitors about 30 years ago. A new team of local volunteers, working with English Heritage who runs the site, are making it possible to

enjoy the 3rd century AD mosaics once more.

Set within a peaceful landscape on the banks of the River Evenlode, North Leigh Roman Villa is considered to be one of the largest villas in Roman Britain with a 500-year history of occupation. At its most extensive in the early 4th century AD, it included 3 bath suites, 16 mosaic floors, and 11 rooms with under-floor heating.

The site is entirely free (however, our generous visitors typically donate about £1 each, to help us achieve planned site improvements) and large enough for safe social distancing during your visit. There is room to picnic (please take your litter home), but currently there is no WC on site. It is a pleasant walk from the village to the villa, so please consider leaving your car at home.

It is free to become a Friend of North Leigh Roman Villa, and allows you to keep up with future developments and events on the site, simply email [NLRVvols@gmail.com](mailto:NLRVvols@gmail.com)

For more details about the openings, please visit: [www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/north-leigh-roman-villa/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/north-leigh-roman-villa/) or Facebook: @northleighromanvilla or Twitter: @villa\_north

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## **Stonesfield film: ‘Walking through Lockdown’**

‘Walking through Lockdown’ is a short film (3 mins. approx.) about Stonesfield in lockdown – a personal journey exploring a new-found connection with nature at this challenging time. It was never lost on me how fortunate we all were to be locked-down in an Oxfordshire village as the carnage of Coronavirus swept the country.

During my one permitted exercise-a-day, I would often take a small handheld camera to record my lockdown walks. All the scenes are filmed within a mile or so radius of the village. During filming many lovely Stonesfield folk asked me when the film could be seen. By simply typing this link into your computer you should be able to watch! <https://vimeo.com/445548242>

Chris Bartle  
bartlefilm@gmail.com

## Allotment stall

Having enjoyed some vegetables from the allotment stall, we'd like to say thank you to all who are working on the allotments and sharing their produce. We recognise that this represents a lot of hard work that goes on throughout the year and this is greatly appreciated. We think it's a great idea that the stall is open to be added to as well as taken from and, though we don't grow vegetables, we hope to make contributions in other ways.

Henry Hollanders and Wendy Lynch

## Fish and Chip Van

Here are the times and locations of the fish and chip van on Wednesdays. All times are approximate:

4.30pm	Busby Close
5.30pm	Playing Field Road
6.15pm	Pumbro
6.30pm	The Tap
6.50pm	The Cross
7.00pm	Churchfields
7.15pm	Combe Road

Mark (07791 459849)

## What you doing Carrott?

Well it's happened again, something else has adopted my garden along with the Stonesfield Stinger! For those of us of a certain age the line from a comedy sketch by Jasper Carrott immediately gives the game away.

My little friend first appeared one day in next-door's garden apparently, then there it was, on the paved area at the front of the shed scuttling into the flower border. Dark fur, short stubby tail, and a penchant for disappearing! As I watched, I could see it moving under the soil, suddenly a worm poked its head through the soil and then just as quickly disappeared underground, with help I assume.

Well what to do about it? Take the Jasper Carrott route, but do it quietly, or just leave it alone? The latter, of course, being the only way. At least for now! I figured that if it could survive in the stony ground of Stonesfield, who was I to stop it living in my flowerbeds. I had been blaming the squirrels and birds for digging up my seedlings and bulbs, but as I watched, like a scene from *Tremors*, plants and bulbs miraculously popped out of the ground as my little friend dug under my second border! No molehills so far, but several 2-inch round holes and a rather soft sensation when walking in between the plants. I could still live with this.

No molehills for a couple of days then wham, mounds of the finest graded soil, that Monty Don would be proud of, but only in the flower borders, not on the lawn luckily!

More interestingly is where did it come from? The nearest molehills I have ever seen round here are at Blacks Gate or in a

photograph of the Common. I did ask local farming stock about the matter and with a misty-eyed reply to my question ‘Are there any moles around here?’ ‘Oh yes, I used to get 10d (old pence) per mole from my Dad when I was a child.’

That was it then, they have always been about, but again, I had never seen them whilst in Stonesfield, along with the Black Flies, badgers, and wild Megalosaurus.

Since I missed last month’s *Slate* deadline, which was full of other nature lover’s articles, I have got used to replanting the uprooted flowers and bulbs. Am I annoyed, no, it’s one more animal to watch, as I look for what stole ALL the Swiss Chard and ate the leaves of my Broccoli? Isn’t nature wonderful?!

Graeme Cairns

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## **Village Garage and Table-top Sale**

On Sunday 20 September we will be holding a socially distanced garage and table-top sale around the village – think the Fete, but very much more spread out around the village!

Maps (£2 each) of where in the village participating garages/stalls are located will be available from outside the shop from 9.45am on the Sunday morning. Garages/stalls will be open from 10am–1pm. This is an opportunity for private households to turn unwanted goods into cash, and also for all of our village groups and organisations, whose fundraising has been so curtailed, to raise awareness of their causes and to also generate some much-needed funds.

Private household garages/stalls are £5, but village groups/organisations may

exhibit from their chosen village location for free. If you have not yet registered your garage/table-top, but would like to take part, please contact Claire Jeeves on [clairejeeves@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:clairejeeves@yahoo.co.uk) before Sunday 13 September so we can ensure your stall is on the map.

Monies raised from the £5 garage/stall and £2 map fees will be split 50/50 and donated to FoSS and the Village Hall, as they have not been able to host the Fete or the table-top sale(s) this year. Stallholders will then keep their own monies raised, though should you wish to donate a percentage of your takings to a village cause of your choice, it would be very gratefully received!

There will be stalls providing refreshments en route. Please see the map for all details.

We hope you enjoy this socially distanced event and enjoy walking around the village, hopefully seeing and catching up with friends and neighbours along the way.

Please, all we ask is that the current COVID-19 guidelines (social distancing, etc.) are adhered to. Please be mindful of any traffic, and please ensure young children are accompanied by adults at all times (we hope to include a treasure hunt on the map!). We have chosen a Sunday as this is usually the quietest road traffic day of the week.

Claire Jeeves and Jess Huband

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## **The White Horse**

The chance to buy a share or make a donation towards the purchase offer for the White Horse, Stonesfield is fast approaching. For the past month, some thirty volunteers, supported by funding from the Parish Council, have been



working on a proposal for community ownership. We have analysed more than 100 successful community pubs across the UK. We have studied business plans, legal structures, ownership models, and fundraising activities. We have looked into every grant or trust application we could find, and are applying to those for which we are eligible. We have surveyed village opinion about the pub and its services. More than 300 residents have responded, with over 80% saying they want to help buy the pub. We have also distributed surveys to our neighbours in Fowler, East End, and Combe. The survey results are available on our website.



This has helped create a vision for what the new White Horse, Stonesfield could be – more than a pub, but a flourishing, friendly, and welcoming space for the benefit of the community. A comfortable place for great coffee, sandwiches and cakes with hi-speed Wi-fi during the day, and in the evening, simply a great pub with good beers and wines, no nonsense quality food at affordable prices with a warm and vibrant atmosphere, and events throughout the week that we hope will promote a cohesive and friendly community.

Everyone in the village will be able to share in the ownership of the new White Horse. No donation will be too small and shares will start at affordable rates. If we are

successful, we will be able to reward everyone who contributes. It truly will be your White Horse.

For more information, please visit and register your details at our website or you can find us on Facebook and Instagram. You can also buy T-shirts or Douglas Rudlin's history of pubs in Stonesfield with proceeds going to the campaign on our website.

Details of the share offer will be distributed through letterboxes and on our website and social media in the next few weeks.

Simon Warr

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

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

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## **Takeaway Cream Teas 6 September**

As we are not able to hold our afternoon tea event in the garden of the Combe Reading Room this year, we have decided instead to offer takeaway cream teas.

We are going to be supplying homemade teas, individually boxed, on the afternoon of Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September. The tea will consist of scones with cream and jam and a slice of delicious cake, and we will deliver them to houses in Stonesfield and Combe. Proceeds will go to the Cystic Fibrosis Trust.

The teas will be £6.50 each. Please place orders by 4<sup>th</sup> September by email to [libby249@btinternet.com](mailto:libby249@btinternet.com) together with your name and address, or call me on 01993 891977. We will send you payment links or will accept cash on delivery.

Many thanks for supporting our fundraising.

Libby Hanks

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## White Horse Womblers

White Horse Womblers are a group of Stonesfield ladies gathering up the stuff cluttering up your garage, loft or shed, bedrooms, and cupboards. We sell your unwanted items to raise funds for the White Horse rescue mission. Donating is a great way to raise funds without having to part with hard earned cash! Please join our Facebook page – white horse womblers selling page.

We will be on the hunt for items to sell over the next few months. Watch out for our requests for donations on Facebook and Nextdoor. Or contact us via email [whitehorsetwomblers@btinternet.com](mailto:whitehorsetwomblers@btinternet.com)

All proceeds will go to the #backthewhitehorse appeal. (In the event that this money isn't needed, we will donate it to the Stonesfield Scout appeal.) Making good use of the things that we find, things that the everyday folk leave behind...

Ursula Rice, Sharon Acum, Julia Reynolds,  
Lucy Martin

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## Village Hall news

It is with a hopeful heart and anticipation that we are all in the throes of COVID-19 safe reopening processes. We are aware that things are changeable and we are just going to have to roll with this, although the aim is still at this time, to get the hall back to some semblance of a community hub for the beginning of September.

Of course, the new changes in legislation have brought with them many restrictions that we are trying to accommodate, but the knock-on effect will mean that the hall will not be as open to the community as we would like.

Sadly, due to test and trace, we will no longer be able to allow members of the public/passers-by, to pop in to use the facilities, when the hall is open. Group access will only be arranged via pre-booking a minimum of 48 hours beforehand to ensure that one of the key holders is available to open the hall. Ad hoc visits to collect or drop off things will not be permitted.

As we have stated previously, it has been confirmed that there are also going to be attendee number restrictions, and each group will need to have their own risk assessment in place, too.

The upside is that we will be reopening, the downside is, as with the whole world around us, it will be in a much more restricted way than we were able to be open before.

Jacqueline Carthew (898919)  
Secretary & Booking Clerk for Stonesfield  
Village Hall [stonesfieldvh@gmail.com](mailto:stonesfieldvh@gmail.com)  
[facebook.com/stonesfieldvillagehall](https://facebook.com/stonesfieldvillagehall)

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## Free TV licences for the over-75s

People are now entitled to a free over-75 TV licence only if they are receiving Pension Credit Guarantee Credit. But two in five people entitled to claim Pension Credit do not do so. Age UK Oxfordshire is calling on everyone aged over 75 to see, without delay, if they are eligible for Pension Credit, if they haven't already done so. To check if you are eligible, please call Age UK Oxfordshire 0345 450 1276 or Age UK 0800 169 6565. To claim Pension Credit, go to [www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim) or call the Pension Credit claim line on 0800 99 1234.

# Politics & local affairs

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## **Stonesfield Parish Council**

### **White Horse Community Pub**

The White Horse Community Pub Group representatives, Simon Warr and Steve Callaghan, discussed what they are doing as part of their bid for the pub and invited discussion from the council at the Parish Council meeting held on 5 August 2020. The Parish Council are in support of the Community Pub bid. Details of this can be seen in the Parish Council minutes.

### **Stockey Woods**

Richard Morris attended the Parish Council meeting on 5 August to discuss Stockey Woods. In 2016, Blenheim Estate posted notices saying there were no other rights of way on Stockey Bottom, apart from one definitive path. There are actually several paths and people have walked over the woods for generations. There was no consultation when this was posted originally. A group of villagers got together and it was decided that the route forward was to apply for village green status that would enable the parish of Stonesfield to enjoy the same access that they had for decades to continue. (Blenheim ownership would remain and they would carry out the maintenance, etc.) Blenheim have now objected to the application with no viable reason. There has been no discussion and the formal objection has gone straight to solicitors. A meeting will be held with Blenheim later this month.

## **Stonesfield Mutual Aid**

Cllr D Baldwin gave an update on SMA to the Parish Council at the meeting on 5 August. He advised that parcels would stop on 28 August. There are still people on furlough and the group remains willing to help people. Some people have been granted shopping vouchers and some people have been put in touch with other groups (e.g. housing) as needed. If there were another wave, the remaining money held by Stonesfield Mutual Aid would not last long. Stonesfield Mutual Aid are grateful to all those who donated time or money to support the group, including the Parish Council, and the group remains willing to help people if needed, although things are generally paused until the situation becomes clearer.

### **Grants awarded by Stonesfield Parish Council at the meeting on 5 August 2020**

A grant application was received towards legal services regarding Stockey Woods for the sum of £1,800. Councillors supported this and agreed to provide the whole grant award towards the Stockey Woods legal expenses, if it is needed.

A grant application was received from the White Horse Community Pub Group, asking for the sum of £4,000 to assist them in getting a bid together for the pub. The Parish Council granted £2,000 immediately, and agreed to the further £2,000 requested in September, provided that the group meet some additional requirements, including evidence of funds

received from other areas. (If this is met the full application of £4,000 was supported.)

It should be noted that the Parish Council COVID-19 Emergency Grant Fund is now closed. Grant applications can now only be accepted on full grant application terms. The reason this is closed is because we have limited funds available and we have received no monies from outside authorities.

### **Planning**

Planning applications as per below were considered:

Application no. 20/01683/FUL: Erection of 3-metre-high ball proof chain link fence along boundaries marked red on accompanying site plan, Town and Country Planning Act; North Farm, Woodstock Road, Stonesfield.

Applicant: Stonesfield Parish Council, registered 3 July 2020 – the council had no objections to this planning application.

Application no. 20/01924/FUL: Extension to workshop (revisions to permission 20/00098/FUL) Town and Country Planning Act; Application no. 20/00098/FUL: Extension to workshop, Town and Country Planning Act; Stonesfield Garage, The Ridings, Stonesfield. Applicant: C/O Agent, registered 3 July 2020. This application is in or affecting the Stonesfield Conservation Area. The council had no objections to this planning application.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

Anti-social behaviour has been reported to the clerk. This has been passed to Neighbourhood Policing and PC Webb. Residents are encouraged to report

occurrences of this to the non-emergency police.

### **River Pollution**

The clerk has received a report that some children in the village had become unwell after swimming in the river. The clerk has reported this to the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency has ownership of the river and controls any water testing and signage. Cllr Hudspeth will also follow this up. Cllr O'Brien reported that people are having barbecues down by the river and waste from this may also be going into the river.

### **Flu Clinic**

Woodstock Surgery has asked if they can run a flu clinic in the Village Hall. The Village Hall has confirmed that this is acceptable and the Parish Council has no concerns with this. The clerk has confirmed this with the surgery and is waiting for the surgery to respond with further information.

### **School Travel Plan**

Cllr M Heduan is finding out what can be done regarding safe travel options for children travelling to school in Woodstock from the village. Cllr W Gould would like it known that the road (Woodstock Road) is a fast road and it is not safe to encourage children to cycle along that road. Cllr Heduan is talking with Roy Cox from Blenheim to ascertain how Blenheim can be used to facilitate a safer option. Cllr Ian Hudspeth noted that plans are being worked out, and that coaches are not being stopped. We await further updates.

### **Asset of Community Value**

ACV for the White Horse Community Pub expires on 7 January 2021. The Council

will trigger ACV again during the moratorium.

Date of next SPC meeting: Wednesday 9 September 2020 at 7pm – a Zoom virtual meeting.

Karen East, Clerk to the Parish  
clerk@stonesfieldpc.uk

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**From our County Councillor**

I was unwell during July that required a stay at the JR. I must compliment all the staff at the hospital with the treatment they provided, as it was first rate. There were some individuals who, in my opinion, went above and beyond, but I thank all the staff, especially when you consider they are still dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of my own recovery, I will be cutting back on some of the meetings I attend, along with asking some of my cabinet colleagues to take over some of my workload.

We must not be complacent as the virus is still around and may be with us for some time to come. The Public Health team at Oxfordshire County Council are monitoring the situation and should they see an increase in a particular area then they will work with that local community to try to ensure that it does not spread. We can all play our part by following the guidelines. I have listed some of the details in the ‘Coronavirus update’ at the beginning of this *Slate*.

The bid for Tranche 2 of the Emergency Active Travel Fund has been submitted. I bid for 20mph speed limits throughout the villages in my division as I saw this as a good way to encourage cycling and walking within the villages. Unfortunately, the guidelines from the Department for

Transport do not allow the funds to be used in this way and are aimed at more urban schemes. I have written to ask for the guidelines to be changed to allow local determination of how funds are spent.

Congratulations to all those involved in saving The White House pub in Bladon which is now owned by the community and, hopefully, will re-open in September. In Stonesfield, the same process is starting with The White Horse, which is already listed as a community asset. I am sure that the Bladon committee will be able to give guidance to the Stonesfield group so that it too can become a community pub. This is just the start and we all must remember to support our pubs if they are to survive and become sustainable, particularly during the winter months. I support them both and wish them well for the future.

We continue to re-open libraries in a phased manner, ensuring that the safety of staff and customers is our first consideration. Chipping Norton and Eynsham libraries were re-opened in August. As soon as I have dates for Stonesfield and Woodstock, I will update you.

Please do not hesitate to contact me and keep safe.

Ian Hudspeth (07956 270318)  
ian.hudspeth@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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**Sharing the road**

In Stonesfield about 70% of roads have no footpath or verge upon which to walk safely and away from traffic. This means pedestrians, including the elderly, children, disabled people, and dog walkers have to share the village roads with moving traffic. Remember when you walk or cycle

on the roads you still have a personal duty of care not to put yourself, or others, at risk of danger or injury from your actions.

Equally drivers owe a similar duty of care to all road users, including pedestrians and the above, not to put them at risk of death or injury as a result of their driving. Drivers should always expect the unexpected so they can take action to avoid a collision. The Highway Code sets out the standards required of a safe and considerate driver. In a personal injury or fatal collision it can be used in court to test if your driving fell below the standard of a reasonable driver, and the duty of care expected under those circumstances.

The burden of proof will usually be higher for the driver. The rules in The Highway Code do not give you the right of way in any circumstance, but they advise you when you should give way to others. Always give way if it can help to avoid an incident. Remember, indicate if turning or pulling out, don't cut corners and use the horn to warn others of your presence. The person in front could be partially blind, deaf, or hard of hearing and may not realise you are there.

Sharing the roads in Stonesfield safely, whether walking, cycling, or driving, means respecting other road users at all times.

SAFER continue to work with Oxfordshire County Council to improve road safety. In July, SAFER sent a report to OCC and are following this up. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has created delays within OCC to progress our recommendations.

The Speed Indicator Device (SID) is being used in fixed locations and the plan is to move SID on a regular basis and continue

to record speeding. This helps raise drivers' awareness of their speed and help improve road safety. Resumption of manned surveys 'Community Speed Watch' is regularly being explored with Thames Valley Police.

Cllr Michael Heduan MBE  
SAFER, Stonesfield Parish Council

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## **Paths and fountains for making the best of the great outdoors**

In the August edition of the *Slate*, Councillor Ian Hudspeth invited comments about how to improve cycling in the county and encourage people to continue cycling instead of using cars or public transport. As a keen cyclist and walker, I recommend the following actions for his consideration:

### **Widen, straighten and repair the old cycle paths beside main roads**

- The width of old cycle paths is unsafe. They are often less than 4 feet wide and too narrow to safely pass others. I do not mind slowing down to make it easy to pass people, but at 20mph plus on the flat, a 4-foot strip of path is far too narrow.
- Presently, cycle paths meander around a lot of street furniture such as bus stops and lay-bys. Getting too close to pedestrians or weaving around street furniture is too dangerous.
- The cycle paths are rutted and full of bumps, weeds, broken glass, rubbish and potholes. The wear and tear on bike and rider of bouncing along unmaintained cycle paths is enough to put off all would-be users. There are unmaintained cycle paths all around the county, which are hard to walk on let alone cycle along. These need to be cleaned, resurfaced and

quite probably widened to make them serviceable.

**Create new cycle paths**

- Creating new cycle paths away from roads provides infrastructure for commuters to get to and from work, shops and leisure facilities.
- The dismantled railways of yesteryear can be resurfaced and turned into cycle commute routes. New cycle/pedestrian bridges of relatively lightweight construction can be used to make the routes complete.
- Upgrading some of the bridleways to cycle paths for commuters would be very welcome.
- Buying strips of land to make new cycle paths for commuters and leisure cyclists would be extremely helpful too.

**Segregate cars, bikes and pedestrians**

- It is not as safe to share facilities. Cars, lorries, buses and motorbikes do not do the same speed as bikes; bikes do not do the same things as pedestrians, etc. Ideally, facilities should be developed to keep the three apart and that will do a lot to promote cycling, walking and other outdoor activities.
- Pedestrians and cyclists are often confused about which side of a mixed path is for which type of user. The confusion about where to walk or to cycle leads to high risk of accidents.
- The perfect cycle path would be away from all roads, wide (12-feet or more), surfaced with smooth tarmac, marked with a centreline and would exclude horses and pedestrians. It would allow cyclists to ride safely, so long as they are

on the left-hand side of the centre line when not overtaking.

- The perfect outdoor activities path for pedestrians, runners and horses would not allow cyclists.

**Install and repair public drinking water fountains**

There used to be public drinking water fountains and water taps in every village, town and city. The public fountains have been removed or disconnected. Even the Tap in Stonesfield does not have a tap!

- Public water fountains allow people to enjoy the outdoors longer without having to go far for water.
- Public water drinking fountains would reduce the consumption of bottled water and the number of used water bottles littering the countryside, roadsides and built-up areas.

Miles Barrington-Ward

**Police and community support**

For information or advice on security concerns, please contact woodstockNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk or call 101.

**Stonesfield Neighbourhood Watch Scheme**

For information, see [www.facebook.com/StonesfieldNHWS](https://www.facebook.com/StonesfieldNHWS). If you are interested in joining our scheme, please follow this link and ensure you click ‘Join a scheme’ then select ‘Stonesfield’ to complete your request: <https://member-registration.neighbourhoodalert.co.uk/30/Join>

Deanna Blakeway Asplundh

# Education, culture & more

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## **Stonesfield Primary School**

A new school year begins! After the extraordinary and unprecedented disruption of last year, I can't wait to welcome back all our pupils and be a full school community once again. Over the summer, the school hall has had a lick of paint and is looking fresh and inviting. On the morning of Saturday 5 September, we are having a Maintenance Morning at school and would welcome volunteers to assist with sprucing up the grounds. Bring gloves and, if possible, a wheelbarrow or garden waste bin!

If you have walked down High Street recently you may have noticed the grass at the front of the school is looking a little wilder than usual. In keeping with the school's passion for sustainability and the environment, this is a deliberate decision with the long-term aim of establishing a meadow to create a haven for wildlife. During lockdown, some of our pupils have already observed the changes and welcomed the wilder environment.

As a school, we are always striving for excellence and have exciting plans for the year ahead. As well as continuing to improve the quality of our maths and English teaching, to ensure high standards for our pupils, this year we are having a major focus on supporting mental health, both for our pupils and staff. We recognise that the last few months have been challenging for all and it is important that we can devote time to reflect, support everyone in adjusting back to school life

and provide tailored support for individuals who need it.

We have school places in all year groups – please get in touch if you are interested in a place for your child, including for Reception in September 2021.

Finally, I would love to hear from anyone with stories and experiences of the Windrush generation or with an interest in BAME culture and history – please send me an email.

Ben Trevail, Headteacher (891687)  
head.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk

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## **Cycling to Marlborough School**

Please register your interest in cycling to the Marlborough School from September.

During the school holidays, it was suggested that students who live in Stonesfield and Combe, and attend the Marlborough School, could cycle to and from school via a safer route through Blenheim Estate.

In August, a meeting was held with parent representatives, Stonesfield Parish Council, Blenheim Palace and Marlborough School. A positive discussion was held and a trial period has been proposed.

We are now calling for expressions of interest from students and parents to be involved in this trial period. The benefits of this programme are:



- Increasing physical activity levels of students, leading to physical and mental benefits.
- Improving social cohesion of students and local community links.
- Reducing private car trips to and from Woodstock during peak times.
- Reducing personal carbon footprint and improving sustainability.
- Enjoying safer cycling in the countryside.

We aim to hold a series of training sessions (Bikeability and informal cycling proficiency style sessions) as well as route familiarisation sessions in early September. Please contact us if you would like to take part in these sessions. (Note: participating in these sessions does not commit you to being involved in the programme!)

To find out more and the latest developments of this programme, join our Facebook page 'Cycle to Marlborough' or email on: [marlboroughcycling@gmail.com](mailto:marlboroughcycling@gmail.com)

Finally, if there are any interested local individuals or businesses who can support or sponsor this programme in any way, please get in touch.

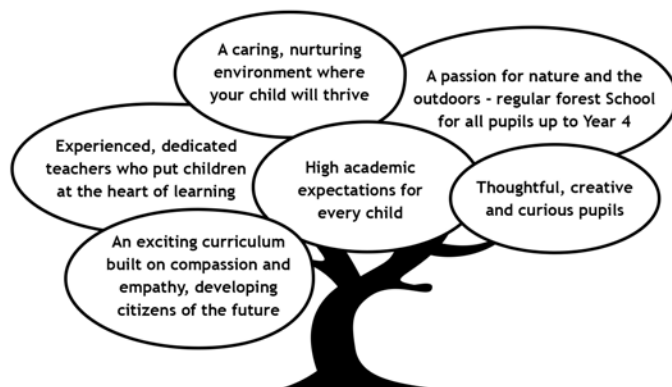
Claire Renshaw

## Stonesfield Primary School

Learning together to achieve our best.



Looking for a friendly, inclusive, local school for your child?  
Stonesfield Primary School has places in all year groups - we would love to show you around.



To arrange a tour with the headteacher, Mr Ben Trevail, please contact the school office.

Tel: 01993 891687

Office email: [office.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:office.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk)  
Headteacher email: [head.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:head.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk)

## **Stonesfield Pre-School**

**A new term** (continued from page 1)

Our first term back at pre-school is very much focused on the children settling in and feeling secure. We do this by supporting them to explore, discover and learn our daily routines. We know from experience that this time is crucial because a child who feels comfortable in their environment will enjoy play experiences and learn through them. Taking the time to get to know individual children and adapting our practice to suit their needs is one of the pre-school's great strengths and is embedded in our values.

We are really excited to have the opportunity this academic year to re-introduce the outdoor wanderer's group with our cohort of older children. Throughout the year, on Thursday

mornings, we will be exploring our woods and the surrounding area whilst discovering the wonders of nature that sit on our doorstep. If you spot us in our high-vis jackets, give us a wave! We will also be making use of the forest school area at the Primary School, which is a lovely safe outdoor natural area and has the added bonus of being just across the road from the pre-school!

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the very hard work of three people in particular who are part of our team, without whom it would not have been possible to achieve our fabulous pre-school makeover. They have spent the best part of their summer holidays at the pre-school: sanding, painting, fixing, and making good. Simon Hopkins (Superman Chair / Trustee), Louise John (Deputy Manager), and Zena Rozee (Administrator/Trustee).



*Making the most of each and every moment*

We have a fully extended childcare provision running from Pre-School.  
Here is what is currently available:

### **Breakfast Club**

Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday, 7.30 – 8.50am (£6.00 per session)  
Cereal, toast and fruit juice included

### **Pre-School Sessions**

9am – 3pm daily for children aged 2–4 years (£17.00 per session)

### **After School Club**

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 3.15 – 6pm (£16.00 per session)

If you would like registration forms for any of the above,  
please contact our administrator, Mrs Zena Rozee  
(tel. 01993 898012 or email: [stonesfieldpsad@outlook.com](mailto:stonesfieldpsad@outlook.com))

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your voluntary service to Stonesfield Pre-school, a vital part of the community in which we live and you have revitalised it with your commitment, positivity, and hard graft!

Lizzie Wharton, Pre-School Manager

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## **Please join our 100 Club!**

A great way for you to support your local Pre-School whilst having a bit of a flutter! Here's how it works.

You pay £6, which buys you one membership number (we will allocate). This enters you into our termly draw (6 terms), which will take place on the first of the following months: October, December, February, March, May, and July. The prize money will be: 1st Prize £25 and 2nd Prize £10.

**JOIN OUR 100 CLUB TODAY AND YOU COULD BE OUR NEXT WINNER!**

For an application form, please contact

Zena Rozee (898012)  
stonesfieldpsad@outlook.com

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## **Book Break's Break**

Book Break is taking its usual August break and we hope to resume our meetings early in September. Lockdown inevitably meant that after March, we were unable to meet in Stonesfield Library, our usual venue, but we managed to maintain our readings and discussion, initially through email and subsequently by venturing into the world of Zoom. The highlight of the reading year has been *The Fortnight in September* by R.C. Sherriff. Recommended in *The Guardian* by Kazuo Ishiguro as a novel to inspire, uplift and offer escape, Ishiguro wrote that the novel '*is just about the most uplifting, life-affirming novel I can think*

*of right now. Published in 1931, this is an exquisitely subtle account of an ordinary lower-middle class family from south London, preparing for, travelling to, then enjoying their modest summer holiday in Bognor Regis.' We all loved it!*



We managed a final 'real' meeting, socially distanced, in a garden in the sunshine before the break, and this confirmed what we already knew that the real, physical presence of others is so much richer than the electronic image on the screen.

Wendy Lynch  
wendy@tthouse.co.uk

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## **175 years ago fifteen people from Stonesfield lost their lives at sea**

On 4 August 1845 five adults and ten children from Stonesfield lost their lives when the ship they were on was wrecked off the coast of King Island, Australia. The ship was the *Cataraqui*, and on board were 369 passengers and 41 crew members.

It was a time of economic depression in Britain and the passengers on board were mainly unemployed labourers, hoping to find a better future in Australia. An advertisement in *Jackson's Oxford Journal* in January 1845 offered free passage to Australia for farm labourers, shepherds,

carpenters and bricklayers. Local parishes, who were responsible for the welfare of their parishioners, encouraged their poorest families to take advantage of this.

About 100 of those on board were from Oxfordshire. From Stonesfield were William and Mary Barrett and their 4 children (aged 6 to 10), James and Mary Rollings and their 6 children (aged 2 to 18) and James Oliver.

The *Cataraqui* set sail from Liverpool on 20 April. The voyage was mainly uneventful. But, after 106 days at sea and within a just couple of days of reaching their destination, disaster struck. As the ship sailed through the treacherous waters of the Bass Strait, between Tasmania and the Australian mainland, there was a terrific storm. At 4.30am on 4 August, raging waves and poor visibility drove the ship on to rocks off the coast of King Island. It took several hours for the ship to break up completely. The only survivors were 8 crew members and 1 passenger who made it safely to shore. News of the tragedy did not reach Oxfordshire until 7 February 1846.

To this day the wreck of the *Cataraqui* with its loss of 400 lives is considered Australia's worst maritime disaster in peace time.

Bernard and Muriel Barrett

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### **BBC Radio Oxford recording of interviews with Stonesfield people, 1987**

I have a cassette tape of a recording from BBC Radio Oxford from a series called 'People and Places' on Stonesfield. I've managed to do an online search to find the

programme details, recorded in May 1987. The details of the interviews are:

1. George and Ted Laughton, farming family since the mid 1800s. The village in the 1920s – the slate industry, a life, workers digging in narrow passageways or adits, with candles. Collecting old farm implements, hoping to start a small museum with these and slaters' tools.
2. Richard Chancellor, Chair of Stonesfield Society. History of the village, the slate and why it declined, the Friendly Society, founded in 1765, a forerunner of the Welfare State.
3. Canon John Grimwade. The church and the congregation's involvement with poorer parishes in East London and overseas. The village school.
4. Jean Hall, of the Women's Institute branch and assistant in the village shop.
5. Dominic Hamerton describes his cycle ride from John o'Groats to Land's End in aid of leukaemia research.
6. Avis Ushaw, chair of the Parish Council, as was her father. Old village family. How village is kept clean and tidy.

The recording is of good quality, and I wonder if it would be possible to get the tape cassette recording onto a digital format and then be shared on the Stonesfield website. It would be great to share this recording as it brings back so many memories, hearing familiar voices and stories of how the village was then and throughout its history. If you can help, please contact me.

Lindsey Thornton  
lindsey.25@btinternet.com

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## Nature Notes

### Observations on our landscape

*The thistledown's flying, though the winds  
are all still,*

*on the green grass now lying, now  
mounting the hill...*

The first lines of *Autumn* by the poet John Clare.

As we approach autumn, I reflect on what a spring and summer we have had, sharing our back yard with rather more people than usual. Resting my back against the wall, and looking over the Evenlode valley, I can see why our landscape is so special. A landscape that lifts our spirits at a time of need and defines the natural world around us.

Stonesfield rests on a bedrock formed in the Jurassic times (just over 100 million years ago) in a shallow tropical sea. Walking on the top path of the beech wood, above Stockey Bottom, you can see the enormous river system that helped form the valley at the end of the Anglian ice age. The various steep slopes are perfect for wild flowers.

The Evenlode river was part of the Thames until about 400,000 years ago, when they separated. Flowing from the Midlands, various rocks and debris came our way on the northern drift bringing brown stones that have been well worn.

Much later, the Romans built Akeman Street and the earthworks at Baggs Bottom, leaving us with the large snails.

My wall is above these earthworks at the top end of the Anglo Saxon strips, possibly from the 5th century AD. I think of them as early allotments. Usually they are a furlong in length (660 feet) which is apparently the

distance a team of oxen can plough before they need a rest.

In January this year, sharp eyes spotted an odd stone, different from the others, which had been washed down the Evenlode. About 5,000 years ago, in the right hands, this four-inch flint was chipped and smoothed into a hand axe. It was then left above Stockey Bottom, to be found and authenticated at Woodstock Museum.

Could this be the earliest evidence of our ancestors living around Stonesfield?

John Sampson

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## Local History: Ditchley 2 miles north of Stonesfield

Sir Henry Lee, the first owner of the Ditchley Estate, was the champion of Elizabeth I and one of her most eminent and powerful courtiers. The famous Ditchley portrait, once at the house and now at the National Portrait Gallery, commemorates Elizabeth's visit to Ditchley, as part of a royal progress, in 1592. A portrait of Henry VIII also hung in the dining room until the 1930s. A fine portrait of Sir Henry Lee with his faithful dog Bevis remains in the Velvet Room. The Lees of Ditchley are linked to the Lees of Virginia, who built the Ditchley mansion in Virginia in the 1680s. Antlers from stags hunted by James I at Ditchley in 1610 decorate the Saloon but pride of place in the house is given to portraits of Charles II and his mistress Barbara Villiers. Charlotte Fitzroy, the king's favourite daughter with Barbara, was married into the Lee family who were ennobled as the Earls of Lichfield.

The second Earl replaced the old Tudor Manor House with the Palladian early

Georgian Mansion that stands today. When the Lichfield line died out the estate passed in 1776 to the Dillon family, related to the Lees by marriage. Unlike many grand houses, Ditchley was not altered in Victorian times and remains almost entirely Georgian in style. The greatest paintings were given to the nation by the Dillon family in the 1930s but much of the centuries of history remains intact and in situ.

Ronnie and Nancy Tree were wealthy Anglo-Americans who bought Ditchley in 1933, transforming it into one of the most beautiful and fashionable houses in the country. This included the creation of a beautiful sunken Italian garden as part of a landscaping project by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, his first major commission. The completion of restorations was marked by a famous red and white ball for a thousand guests. Nancy went on to become the famous decorator Nancy Lancaster, working closely, if turbulently, with John Fowler.

When Churchill became war time prime minister he asked to use Ditchley as his secret weekend retreat when the 'moon was high' as his official residence, Chequers, was too exposed to the risk of German attack. Churchill visited 13 times in the early years of the war and, amongst a range of significant meetings here, hosted US Presidential envoy Harry Hopkins in order to persuade him of the case for American military and Lend Lease support. Letters from Clementine Churchill describe Churchill and Hopkins talking late into the night in the library.

The current Queen first visited Ditchley as Princess Elizabeth to attend Ronnie Tree's farewell ball in 1947. In 1959 she returned

to plant a tree to mark Sir David Wills' launch of the Ditchley Foundation. In 1995 she visited again to unveil the bust of David Wills that stands on the Great Hall table.

Ditchley and its 300 acres of pleasure grounds are set in a further 3,550 acres and are now managed sustainably by the HDH Wills Charitable Trust which provides grants to conserve the environment and wildlife. Ditchley has been a haven for wildlife since at least 1500, creating a unique eco-system that includes many rare plants, animals and birds. When not being used by the Ditchley Foundation, Ditchley Park hosts private events for selected institutions and companies.

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## Good grub...

There has been much talk in recent months of using up store cupboard supplies and adapting recipes to whatever might be available to us. This reminded me of when I started cooking in my own kitchen and of the first cookery articles and recipes I was tempted to 'cut out and keep'.

The first article was 'Time Servers' by the late Jane Grigson, which was written for the *Observer* in 1979. This article provided a comprehensive stock list for the larder and various tips and hints to enable one to whip up meals for unexpected guests at short notice. I particularly liked her introductory note:

*Fernand Braudel remarked that the basic food plants of Mediterranean civilisation, our civilisation after all, are wheat (bread and pasta), the olive tree (olives and oil), the vine (fresh and dried fruit and wine), the fig tree (fresh and dried fruit). If you add cheese, they can provide the perfect*

*quick meal. Keep them in mind as a basis. These days simple food of quality is the greatest treat of all because it is the most difficult to find.*

The second, also from the *Observer* and published in 1981, was a series of pull-out supplements featuring recipes from Anne Willan's *French Regional Cooking*. Anne, now in her eighties, is a lifelong Francophile and a recognised authority on French cooking, having founded L'Ecole de Cuisine La Varenne in Burgundy in 1975.

I should like to share with you this recipe by Anne Willan for 'Peppers Niçoise', which has been a stalwart friend all these years and has never let me down. It can be treated as a starter, a main course with salad, or an accompaniment to roast lamb or baked fish, and may be served straight from the oven or at room temperature.

This quantity serves four people as a main course, or eight as a starter or accompaniment. If you wish to make it suitable for vegetarians, simply omit the anchovies.

4 medium peppers in your preferred colour scheme; 2 tabs olive oil

For the stuffing:

1 medium onion, chopped; 4½ tabs olive oil; 250g cooked rice (about 100g uncooked); 65g stoned black olives, roughly chopped; 2 tabs capers, drained; 45g anchovies, drained and chopped; 2 tsps. dried thyme; 1 tsp. dried rosemary; the juice of a lemon; freshly ground black pepper.

Cut the peppers in half lengthwise so that they will sit reasonably flat in a dish and discard the cores and seeds. Coat a shallow baking dish with the 2 tablespoons of olive

oil and then put in the peppers so that they fit snugly. Fry the onion in 1 tablespoon of olive oil until very soft, but not brown. Mix with the cooked rice, olives, capers, anchovies, herbs, remaining oil, lemon juice, and pepper, adding more lemon juice and pepper to taste, if needed. (The anchovies will provide enough salt.) Pile the mixture into the pepper shells and cover loosely with foil. Bake at 180/gas 4 for about an hour or until the pepper shells are very tender. Baste from time to time, adding a little more oil if necessary. Serve hot or at room temperature as preferred.

This recipe is endlessly adaptable and will forgive you for substituting other ingredients if you are short of what is specified; from time to time I have resorted to a variety of what might be termed 'Mediterranean' fruits such as semi-dried apricots, green olives, sun-dried tomatoes or sultanas and occasionally pine kernels, all of which have turned out well. And, if need be, it can be prepared up to eight hours ahead without coming to harm. I doubt one could ask much more of a recipe. Bon appetit!

Trish Williams

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## In my mind

Little hands clasped in mine, warm, sticky,  
busy fingers itching to tackle the next game  
or explore a new adventure

In life's jigsaw of unexplored events which  
occupy children's active minds.

Little feet tripping on uneven ground as  
they hurry ahead unaware of the obvious  
dangers of every day life

Skippping, hopping avoiding stepping on  
pavement cracks while looking behind to  
see if I am watching

Tossing heads and hair tussled by the wind  
with rosy cheeks blushed by excitement  
and laughter ringing like church bells into  
the air.

All these memories will stay in my mind.

Damp, no! Wet bath times, crinkled hands  
from blowing bubbles and an exhausted  
mind from stories told

From deep within imaginary banks where  
old dusty memories are stored and  
resurrected

Then embroidered to capture their  
imagination while little faces savour every  
word and eyes sparkle with amazement.

Cuddles in bed. What! More stories as  
books pile up around me squashing us into  
the duvet with sharp elbows digging into  
my ribs

And voices all speaking at the same time  
until eyelids start to close and the thought  
of sleep is not so far away.

All these memories will stay in my mind.

Bare feet dancing to the music, fingers  
plucking at guitar strings, black and white  
keys ring out newly learned tunes

While they dance up and down in rhythmic  
and sometimes not so rhythmic sounds,  
but loved enough to applaud and to enjoy.

Hands and minds creating amazing stories  
even at the end of a long day in well used  
homework folders,

To be handed in or read aloud before the  
class or families in school assembly or  
worship

While casting an eye over the audience and  
longing to observe a smile of appreciation  
from a proud mum or dad.

All these memories will stay in my mind.

All too quickly growing taller or am I  
smaller? Soon our eyes will meet on the  
same level and then even higher!

Wait, wait, not so fast, let's hang on to the  
little people we want to stay with forever,  
so slow down, let time stand still,

Where has yesterday gone and why are you  
rushing to tomorrow, wait for me, I can't  
keep up, stop the clock

And let's enjoy a timeless zone together.

The little hands are bigger than mine, now  
starting to look after me, but in it there is  
such sweetness

Every moment matters, the cycle of life  
precious and what we share together is  
unique so can never stay the same,

What matters is that all these memories  
will stay in my mind.

Diana Letchford



# Clubs, societies & sport

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## **Stonesfield Gardening Club**

### **Dear Members**

Like all clubs up and down the country we have been unable to meet, enjoy our speakers' stories, information and tips, and generally discuss our gardens. It now looks very likely we must write this year off as the virus is not going anywhere and gatherings in halls will not be able to happen in the foreseeable future.

The Committee has made a decision over subscription fees, which our Treasurer, Paul, explains below. In the meantime, until we meet again, please enjoy this poem by the American, Robert Frost.

*The rain to the wind said,  
'You push and I'll pelt'.*

*They so smote the garden bed  
That the flowers actually knelt,  
And lay lodged – though not dead.  
I know how the flowers felt.*

Lodged by Robert Frost

I think it sums up (particularly the last line) not just what the recent rainstorms are doing to our baked gardens, but how we have all suffered from the buffeting of these odd times.

Wendy Gould, Chair  
[www.stonesfieldgardening.info](http://www.stonesfieldgardening.info)

### **2020/2021 membership fees**

As the 2020 programme has been severely curtailed the committee reviewed the financial position of the Gardening Club. It

was decided that this was strong enough to allow existing memberships to be extended to the end of 2021 without any further fees. 2021 membership cards will be issued and distributed at the start of 2021. New members are very welcome and any joining in the remainder of 2020 will have their membership extended to the end of 2021. See website for details.  
[www.stonesfieldgardening.info](http://www.stonesfieldgardening.info)

### **Members' photographs**

The Gardening Club website has a gallery of photographs contributed by members. If any member has one (or two) gardening/plant photos they would like included, please send a jpeg (with caption) to me and I will endeavour to include it.

Paul Bates, Treasurer  
[paul@bateshome.co.uk](mailto:paul@bateshome.co.uk)

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## **Stonesfield Sports and Social Club**

The Sports and Social Club would like to thank you for your support since we re-opened on 4 July.

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown and the club being closed, we have extended the 2019/2020 membership until 30 September 2020. However, in line with the Club's constitution, we can offer a special membership fee of £5 from 1 October until 31 May 2021, and then returning to the normal membership for 2021/2022.

Brian Clarke

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## **A message from the Playing Field Trustees**

Many people are possibly not aware of this, but much of what goes on in terms of the management and maintenance of the playing field is carried out by volunteers, from the trustees responsible for the charity that operates the playing field to the individuals you see cutting the grass, preparing the wickets or marking out pitches.

It is therefore both demoralising and disappointing to have to report an increase in acts of petty vandalism and general disrespect for both the facilities and the individuals giving up their time to maintain them.

Most of the equipment is locked away when not in use, but items such as the covers for the cricket square and football goals have to live outside. These are expensive items of kit and we are placing a degree of trust in people not to treat them as playthings or damage them. We've seen children and youths playing on the covers and the football goals are being damaged through individuals trying to use them, despite the fact that they are securely locked up. The football club has set up goal posts at the bottom of the field for general use so there is no need to touch the ones that are locked away.

In the latest round of incidents the hand sanitiser holder and container at the entrance to the MUGA has been wrecked, and rubbish, including broken glass, bottles and cans were strewn around the area and also in the MUGA itself. We've also seen the limit of 8 people on the MUGA at any one time (a COVID-19 precaution) being ignored.

We have great facilities open to all, and the trustees have no wish to restrict access to them, but equally we won't sit by and watch them being trashed. In particular, if the problems with the MUGA persist then we will have no choice but to lock the facility once more and restrict access to organised groups and clubs who are prepared to look after it.

We very much rely on people doing the right thing when it comes to using the facilities and it would be good to have the community's support in getting the message out as widely as possible that the behaviour we are seeing from some individuals is unacceptable and won't be tolerated.

The Playing Field Committee

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## **North Leigh History Society**

Our History Society was due to meet once again in the Turner Hall in September to start the new series of talks. However, continuing levels of infection with possible local lockdowns, and the uncertainty as to what the next few months will bring, have meant that we have decided to change our plans. The committee of the North Leigh History Group has reluctantly decided to cancel all face-to-face meetings for the forthcoming year. We are sorry to have to announce this and hope that we will be able to resume meetings again in September 2021.

There are various reasons for our taking this decision. We do not know yet whether the Turner Hall will be available for meetings, and even if it is, it is far too small to be able to maintain the necessary social distancing with the number of people who normally attend. The Memorial Hall is a larger venue, but again, we do not know

whether it will be available and it is currently closed. The other reason is that our meetings are held over the winter months, which means that we need to keep windows and doors closed to keep the heat in. Holding talks in the winter also means that we will be unable to meet outside because of the weather, and people may well be suffering from other common winter ailments such as flu and the common cold, which add to the risk of infection with COVID-19.

We are sorry to have to inform you of this decision and hope you will understand our reasons. We know how much you value the NL History Group and how loyal you have been in the past. Diana Power is contacting the speakers who were due to speak this coming year and we hope that they will be able to come and talk to us, in the corresponding month, in a year's time.

We will be investigating other ways we could meet over the next year, possibly online using Zoom or similar software. We hope to be back in business as soon as we can and will keep you informed in the meantime. If you have any ideas yourselves of ways in which we could keep in touch over the next year, and any activities we could arrange during the pandemic, please contact us either by email, [kyterobert@gmail.com](mailto:kyterobert@gmail.com), or by phone to Diana Power on 01993 882301

Angela Kyte

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### **FoSL: Friends of Stonesfield Library**

Open to anyone who wants to help keep our village library open. We have been providing voluntary cover for half of the existing library hours (about 6 hours a week) since the library service was cut back.

**Please note: Until further notice the library is closed.**

For further details, or to join us, please contact Mike Pollitt  
01993 891856, [mikepollitt@btoopenworld.com](mailto:mikepollitt@btoopenworld.com)

# Church news

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### **Parish Letter**

Being neighbourly these days calls for a bigger effort all round. But it's obviously worth it. We actually feel better in ourselves if we have done something (hopefully) kindly or helpful for someone else. There's extra effort involved because of all the strictures – social distancing and mask wearing. It may be useful if we became more Italian with less inhibited, louder voices, and cheerful hand gestures. Under the mask it's not always easy to guess whether someone is really pleased to see you and smiling, difficult too to hear distinctly what they are saying. With people working from home or on flexible hours to suit the household, it can be hard to know when is a good time to interrupt them and make a social telephone call, or drop by. My maxim is to calculate and then do it.

Whatever the difficulties, Jesus puts the adage *'Love your neighbour as yourself'* up at the top of the list of commandments,

second only to loving God, and tells the famous story of the Good Samaritan to illustrate what this 'loving of neighbour' means. For all of us it's difficult to know where the boundaries are when it comes to 'loving neighbour'. How widely can we draw the boundaries, given our circumstances of strength, time, and disposable money? However, we must grasp the challenge. The story is in the Bible's New Testament gospel of St Luke towards the end of Chapter 10. The record starts with a question from a lawyer, someone who studied and practised the Mosaic law of the Jewish community. His conversation with Jesus goes like this: *'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'* How on earth was Jesus expected to answer that conundrum!?! Typically, Jesus throws a question back to the lawyer: *'What is written in the law? How do you understand it?'*

Jesus has said elsewhere in the gospels how he would like his followers to understand the concept of eternal life as being a spiritual quality which influences and directs our lives now, and is not destroyed by our physical deaths.

Now he illustrates this truth, giving the example of how this eternal quality shows in the loving behaviour of the Samaritan who was faced with the challenge of a breathing, bleeding body of a man beside a remote turn in the road to Jericho.

Jesus tells how both a priest and a Levite had passed by on the other side because of strict rules around not touching blood.

Where was decent humanity in all that?! Finally, the Samaritan (a member of a community despised by the Jews) came by and took pity on the man. He dressed his wounds with vinegar and oil, heaved him on to his donkey and took him to the nearest inn. In the morning, he left the innkeeper with instructions to look after the man until his return, and promised to pay whatever it cost.

When the story was finished, Jesus asked the lawyer about who had proved to be the ‘neighbour’ to the wounded man. The answer was clear – the one who had put himself out of his schedule, and out of pocket, for someone he didn’t know. The lawyer answers correctly, to which Jesus replies: *‘Now go and do, and be the same as that despised person.’*

The force of this story has, I’m sure, contributed to inspiring charities around the world, and of course, our NHS and care homes. It has penetrated deep into our collective psychology. It’s still difficult to follow well, but let’s do our best and keep trying to be imaginative, cheerful, expressive, and ‘non-self-regarding’ neighbours.

Charlotte Oakeshott

## September services

### Sunday 6 September [Trinity 13]

9.30am Combe All Age Worship

11am Stonesfield All Age Worship

### Sunday 13 September [Trinity 14]

9.30am Combe Parish Communion

11am Stonesfield Parish Communion

### Sunday 20 September [Trinity 15]

9.30am Combe Morning Prayer

11am Stonesfield Parish Communion

### Sunday 27 September [Trinity 16]

9.30am Combe Parish Communion

11am Stonesfield Parish Communion

We look forward to welcoming you!

## Stonesfield Methodist Church

Sunday Services are planned to resume at the beginning of October, trusting no further difficulties arise from COVID-19.

The Church doors will be opened wide and the Minister, The Reverend Rose Westwood, will lead Worship once more. Hallelujah! It will be a very special day indeed, one of thankfulness, and compassion for people the world over during this distressing pandemic.

*Wherever you travel, I'll be there, I'll be there.*

*Wherever you travel I'll be there.*

*And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter.*

*I'll be there.*

Sydney Carter, Hymn writer, 1915–2004.

Kathleen Albért (891733)

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## Roman Catholic Worship

### A mother to us all

It is universally recognised that mothers are a major influence in our lives. How they love and nurture us, invest time with us, encourage and develop us, makes us the people we become. This is acknowledged by Catholics in our respect and veneration of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Saviour of us all. By his death and resurrection, Jesus gave us all new life and hope; humanity has been redeemed for all eternity by His sacrifice. Mary, in her acceptance of God's will to be Jesus's mother, became, in effect, the gateway for that salvation of us all: *'Be it done unto me according to your word'*. (Luke 1:38)

We have just recently celebrated Mary's Assumption into heaven, in which the victory of Jesus in his bodily Resurrection is reflected in the bodily Assumption of Mary into the Kingdom of Heaven. It is no surprise that from very early times again, the faithful made appeal to her powerful intercession, as an ancient Marian prayer of the third century shows: *'We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin'*.

As Jesus's Mother, Mary has become mother to us all: always steadfast and loving us all, always, despite our failures and despair – the perfect mother.

St. Teresa's is now open for Holy Mass on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9.30am.

Prayers of spiritual communion

*O my divine Jesus, how great is my desire to receive your sacred body! Oh, come now into my soul, at least, by a spiritual*

*communion! O Jesus, my divine Saviour, save me. O my God, hiding myself with a humble confidence in your dear wounds, I give up my soul into your divine hands. Oh, receive it into the bosom of your mercy. Amen.*

Ordination of Deacon Clive Dytor is now scheduled for Saturday 12 September at St. Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham. For further information, please contact Deacon Dytor, email address below.

Fr Tony Joyce can be contacted on: [holytrinityrchippy@gmail.com](mailto:holytrinityrchippy@gmail.com) or 01608 642703.

For parish updates, any further information and further support, please see [www.stteresaschurch-charlbury.com/](http://www.stteresaschurch-charlbury.com/) or contact Clive Dytor: [chair.stteresaschurchcharlbury@gmail.com](mailto:chair.stteresaschurchcharlbury@gmail.com)

Roman Catholic Community in Stonesfield – keep praying

Suze Mathews (891720)

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## An update from us...

Last month we welcomed researchers from The University of Oxford onto the Estate to study the sounds of nature in order to measure biodiversity, as part of a nationwide study into the potential benefits of green spaces for health and wellbeing.

Rowing boats are now available to hire on the Lake until the end of September. Set sail from the river bank and enjoy the idyllic setting of the river. You will have the opportunity to see the Palace, the Grand Bridge and the gardens like never before.

The newest collection of homes at Hanborough Gate are now available to reserve, plus the brand new show home is now open 7 days a week. Visit [pyehomes.co.uk/hanboroughgate](https://pyehomes.co.uk/hanboroughgate) to find out more.

The Bloodwise Blenheim Palace Triathlon returns this year from 12th – 13th September. **The site will be open only to competitors and spectators**, this is due to social distancing restrictions. Each participant will be permitted to bring one spectator with them on the day.

**Palace, Park & Gardens Now Open. Buy One Day, Get 12 Months Free\***  
For the latest news and updates visit [blenheimpalace.com](https://blenheimpalace.com)



\*Terms and Conditions Apply





## **The office in Witney is open again for business!**

**We are open for general enquiries  
10am – 2pm, Monday – Friday,  
and by appointment only outside of these times, and Saturday mornings.**

**To make an appointment, please call:**

**David on 01993-627713; Mandy on 01993-627814, or Sally on 01993-627712;  
or e-mail: [info@greatexperiencetravel.co.uk](mailto:info@greatexperiencetravel.co.uk).**

**We will help with holiday advice and information about the destinations that are open to visitors from the UK. We will also keep you updated on how the Government's quarantine regulations might affect your holiday plans.**



**To comply with safety requirements, we are limiting the number of visitors to the office  
to 4 people at any one time.**

**Even though staff will be sitting behind safety-screens, we request our clients wear face-coverings  
when visiting the office, alternatively these can be provided, if required.**



