

THE

Stonesfield Slate



Issue No 509 Dec 2020 / Jan 2021

2021 Stonesfield calendar



January: David Thornton

Stonesfield can be incredibly photogenic throughout the changing seasons, offering endless opportunities to photographers and artists.

The 'Stonesfield & Surrounds' photography competition ran throughout October, open to amateur and professional photographers. Each entrant could submit up to five images and 82 images were submitted by eighteen photographers.

The photographs were judged anonymously by Tom Bown and Brian Lee from Witney Photo Group. The judges, who were asked to base their decisions on artistic merit and

images that evoke emotion, selected 12 images, one for each month. The winning selection can be seen at www.backthewhitehorse.com.

The calendar can be purchased via www.backthewhitehorse.com/shop and www.ablackbirdsang.com at £15 each or three for £40 + postage for >3 miles from Stonesfield. Matt and Rekha have also kindly agreed to stock them in the village shop.

High quality A3 prints of the images will also be available if there is one that you particularly love.



Seasons Greetings from the editors, publishers and distributors of *The Stonesfield Slate*.

A big thank you to all our advertisers who have supported the *Slate* throughout 2020. To local businesses that currently do not advertise, please consider using the *Slate* in 2021.

Also we appreciate all the people who have taken time to write articles, send in news and generally ensure the *Slate* is a source of useful information. Please continue to do this as without you the *Slate* would be infinitely poorer.

Disclaimer

The Stonesfield Slate is a village amenity, produced and distributed by volunteers. It can not be held responsible for any of the views expressed in its pages nor does it endorse any of the products or services advertised.

Whilst we strive to ensure all information is correct, we are not responsible for anything that happens as a result of you using the information. If you find any errors or omissions then please contact the Publisher and we will endeavour to correct them.

The editor and the publishers reserve the right to edit, shorten or omit any article submitted.

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Advertisements should be emailed to Slate-ads@stonesfield.online by 10th of the month.

Line ads can also be delivered by hand to:

Diane & Paul Bates, Waterloo Barn, Laughton Hill, Stonesfield, OX29 8DY.

All advertisements must be paid for in advance.

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Notices & news

Happy Christmas from the Publishers

We have now been publishing the *Slate* for a year and would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the editors, bundlers and distributors who have held our hands through our debut year, which we have thoroughly enjoyed.

It has been a strange year for us all and many villagers have told us how nice it is to still receive the *Slate* through the door - we are very well aware that not everyone uses the internet for all their news!

We wish all the best to everyone in the village for the Christmas holiday.

Paul & Diane Bates

Slate Publishers

Changes due to COVID-19

Please check the latest Government guidelines before attending any events. The publishers and editor cannot be held responsible for any events mentioned in the *Slate* that are changed or cancelled due to any new restrictions that come into force or for any other reasons.

Publishers and editor

Christmas greetings

On behalf of my parents, Mary and Ron Evins, I would like to wish all their friends in Stonesfield and those working for the NHS, Emergency Services and Care Homes Peace, Love, Health and Happiness this

Christmas and throughout the coming year as we all continue to live with COVID-19.

John Evins (Witney)

—
With all the difficult times we've all had this year and are still having, Phil, Tina, Curtly and Donna would like to wish all our family and friends a very Peaceful Christmas and New Year 2021. We shall again this year be donating to Sobell House Hospice Charity instead of sending Christmas cards.

—
A Christmas wish: With the strange and trying year we have been going through, I would like to wish everyone in the village a safe, healthy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Judy Oliver

Carport Christmas Arts & Crafts Market

NEW DATE - 13 December

Because of Lockdown we have had to reschedule this. So, Grey Cat Studio will now be holding their annual Christmas show under the carport (outdoors, but with the advantage of a covering over our heads) assuming that we can under the post-lockdown guidelines. Any changes to this new date will be posted on Nextdoor Stonesfield.

Lots of ideas for unique Christmas presents from local artists and artisans: paintings, cards, books, jewellery, hand-painted birds, boxes & bird tables, knitwear and

felt wear. Artists this year are: Rachael, Rebecca and Griselda Sherlaw-Johnson and Kerry Burniston.

Part of the profits will go to the Back the White Horse Campaign.

We will be open from 10am to 3pm (Sunday only). Grey Cat Studio, Woodlands Rise, Stonesfield OX29 8PL. We will be asking people to be aware of social distancing and to wear masks. Thank you.

Becki Sherlaw-Johnson
rebeccasj@btinternet.com

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Stonesfield Voices

BBC Radio Oxford made a series called 'People and Places', and in 1987 they came to Stonesfield. All these interviews with village people are now available to listen to on the Stonesfield Village Parish Council website: www.stonesfield.online/voices/

Lindsey Thornton

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Christmas crackers

Given the abundance of rich food at this time of year, we might consider eggs to be a good antidote. However, many people are nervous about cooking eggs for fear of under- or over-cooking them, breaking the yolks, producing scrambled eggs with the consistency of concrete and so on. This brings to mind Elizabeth David's anthology *An Omelette and a Glass of Wine*, fifty pages into which she recounts a tale from which the book derives its title.

Before the First World War there was a celebrated restaurant in Mont St Michel, of which the chef/proprietor was a Madame Poulard. A single menu was offered day in, day out, year after year. This comprised (in

order of service) an omelette, ham, fried sole, lamb cutlets with potatoes, roast chicken with salad and a dessert; bread and butter, and cider to drink were included in the price which was two francs and 50 centimes - those were the days, eh?

Despite the '*absurd lavishness*' of this menu (ED's words), it was the fame of the apparently exquisite omelette that attracted diners in droves. For years there was speculation as to how the omelette was achieved, with suggestions including the breed of hens, the type of butter, the addition of water or milk, the pan that was used and so on ad infinitum. One day a Monsieur Viel wrote to Madame Poulard asking whether she would be kind enough to settle the matter once and for all and divulge the recipe to the world at large. This is her reply:

June 1932

Monsieur Viel

Here is the recipe for the omelette. I break some good eggs in a bowl, I beat them well, I put a good piece of butter in the pan, I throw the eggs into it, and I shake it constantly. I am happy, monsieur, if this recipe pleases you.

Annette Poulard

So now we know... However, should one not feel particularly enlightened by the above, this recipe for shakshuka (also shakshouka or chakchouka) may be a tempting alternative. A North African dish of eggs poached in a spicy tomato and pepper sauce, it provides a hearty breakfast or brunch without fear of failure.

Acknowledgement and thanks to Felicity Cloake for this particular recipe:

To serve 4 persons (with bread to mop up):
4 tabs olive oil; 1 onion, thinly sliced; 1 red

and 1 green pepper, diced; 6 garlic cloves, crushed; 2 tsps sweet paprika; 1/2 tsp cumin seeds; 1/2-1 tsp cayenne; 800g tinned tomatoes (or fresh tomatoes if preferred); 2 tsps sugar; 1 tab lemon juice; 4-8 eggs depending on hunger levels; a small bunch of coriander, chopped.

Using a large lidded pan, heat the oil over a medium heat and add the onion. Cook until golden and then add the peppers, frying until both are soft. Add the garlic and spices, cooking for a further couple of minutes. Pour in the tomatoes, mash them, and then stir in the sugar and the lemon juice. Bring to the boil and then turn down the heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Taste and season the sauce, adding more cayenne if wished.

Make 4 or 8 'wells' in the sauce and add in the eggs – don't worry about breaking the yolks! Season lightly and turn down the

heat as low as possible. Cover the pan and cook until the eggs are just set – about 10 minutes. Sprinkle with coriander and serve immediately.

This is a great 'winter warmer' and sure to be appreciated after a frosty morning walk.

Trisha Williams

Walnut trees

Crunch a walnut leaf in your hands and you get the unmistakable scent from the aromatic chemical juglone, which is unique to walnut trees.

The English walnut tree (*Jugulans Regia*) is named after the Roman god Jupiter; the trees originate from Persia, coming to Britain with the Romans.

From the garden I have a grandstand view of one of the largest walnut trees in Stonesfield. Throughout the summer,

Charlbury CHRISTMAS TREES

We hope to be able to sell our Christmas trees this year, Covid regulations permitting, but please be prepared for changes to the way we operate.

This year 1 visit only to choose and take away sameday.

Masks required • Social distancing mandatory • Group numbers limited

Please check for updates at: www.charlbury.info



Weekends only up to Christmas
starting December 5th
9.30 - 4.00pm

Halcyon Honey Farm
Woodstock Road, Charlbury, OX7 3ET



sunrise and sunset can set the leaves on fire; now the leaves have nearly all dropped and the birds are back. Each morning after sunrise the jackdaws congregate on the top branches, chatter away, and after about ten minutes all set off for the day. Then the starlings have a turn while lower down random pigeons and smaller birds appear. Night time is the turn for tawny owls to put in an appearance in the walnut tree.

Walnut wood became fashionable for furniture making and musket stocks. Most rifles in the First World War would have had a walnut stock; cut with the grain the wood is hard and has very little compression.

To find the approximate age of a tree try this out: www.tree-guide.com/tree-age-calculator With a circumference of 2.67 metres the walnut tree is 129 years old, planted in 1891.

It makes me wonder how many trees we have over 100 years old and where is the oldest tree? I am just back from the churchyard to check the yew trees out. The one against the wall dates from 1656 and the one on the left of the path is 420 years old (planted 1600). I look forward to a letter in the *Slate* from someone who finds an older tree.

John Sampson

Field margins around Stonesfield

We are fortunate that several farmers and estates around Stonesfield (and beyond) are trying to make a positive contribution to conserving the environment and increasing biodiversity, with unploughed field margins on some fields. Payments are made, under current

environmental stewardship schemes, to maintain a 4m–6m buffer strip (field margin); these payments help to offset the money they could have made from farming the margins instead.

The Rural Payments Agency and Natural England state that 'A grass buffer strip may provide new habitat, protect existing landscape features, and improve water quality', a really wonderful thing. However, there are restrictions: for example, the land must NOT be used for access (including by the public), the aim being that it should be a refuge for nature, to encourage increased biodiversity, undisturbed by trampling. The farmers' payments can be withheld if the conditions are seen to be breached. Unfortunately, some people have chosen to ignore or even remove signs put up by farmers regarding access; such removal means that we may be unaware of restrictions and, unwittingly, be the cause of such a breach.

Field margins are really important zones for our diminishing wildlife, including flowers, insects, small mammals and birds, and it is important to create corridors and connections for wildlife across the landscape. The new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme will go even further to reward farmers for adopting environmentally sustainable farming practices, so in time, we hope to see even more land being managed to help the ecology and biodiversity around us. However, if we walk (with or without dogs), ride etc. on these margins, we can adversely affect the likelihood of these margins being implemented or retained.

As a community, let's work together to support the efforts of our farmers by respecting the restrictions regarding the

margins. And to the farmers, it would be great to have even more support for wildlife, and more field margins for plants and wildlife.

Genny Early, Tanya Bainbridge

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Village Hall News

Well November didn't go as planned! Sadly as another lockdown went underway, the restrictions affecting Community Halls also limited any use to emergency services only, so that put paid to any classes or general bookings taking place!

We have been pressing on with the plans to run the Xmas Market on 6 Dec, and have a wide selection of gift, craft and food stalls lined up, but we wait with bated breath to see if the lockdown will be lifted on 2 Dec to accommodate this. We will be releasing information via social media and Nextdoor as soon as we can.

A BIG Thank You needs to go to the Garage and Tabletop Sale for the donation that was made to the Village Hall of £195.76, plus our stall sales of £58!! We are so honoured that we have such a fabulous community that wants to pull together when we put these events on. Well done to everyone who took part.

There was also an amazing turnout for the Halloween Event that we did for fun at the end of October. Without everyone's participation, and the amazing work of all who helped to organise these things, it wouldn't work, so we are so grateful to all involved.

The Taco Truck had a very successful visit to Stonesfield over the last few months, but has now moved on to new pastures. Well done to all of you that supported these guys.

We are optimistic that things will improve, and we are keen to move forward with new ideas albeit in a socially distanced Covid-safe way. We have all things in place now, so are just waiting for that to happen.

Please remember if you need to contact us, we can be reached via the Booking Line number 01993 898919 or by email stonesfieldvh@gmail.com.

We wish everyone a Very Merry Christmas, and a Happy, Healthy New Year.

Jacqueline Carthew

Secretary & Booking Clerk for Stonesfield Village Hall
facebook.com/stonesfieldvillagehall

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Thanks to Ox & Bucks Veteran!

I should like to express my thanks and admiration for the arrangements and organisation undertaken by Frank Hall to commemorate Armistice Day on 11 November. Frank is a veteran of the last war who served with distinction in the Ox & Bucks Regiment throughout the second world war. Frank, quite rightly, felt that Stonesfield must continue to commemorate the tragic loss of some of the village men who lost their lives in the conflict.

Although of a certain age, Frank gave the dedication to the fallen faultlessly, with perhaps a tremor of emotion reflecting the occasion. Thank you, Frank.

In this context, I must also pay tribute to the way in which Combe responded to the importance of the occasion on Remembrance Sunday. A goodly crowd of Combe residents gathered on the green. Led by Helen and organised by Andrew and Linda, with help from other members

of the church family, a simple but very moving service dignified the occasion and brought together members of the village in spite of the COVID-19 regulations. Social distancing was observed by all who attended, including some members of the St. James family.

My thanks, and those of many in our two villages, go to all who helped to continue this great tradition of Remembrance.

Richard Bishop

Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2020 cake stall

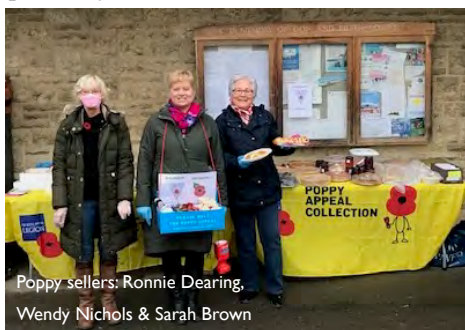
Due to the restrictions imposed during the current COVID-19 pandemic it has not been possible to conduct our normal door-to-door Poppy Appeal collections – at one time even static collecting boxes were not allowed in local businesses.

Recognising that this would seriously limit the amount of money which could be raised for the Royal British Legion, Wendy Nichols and Sarah Brown decided to hold a cake sale outside the village shop on 31 October. They asked many people in the village to assist them by baking cakes but were unsure how many would actually be delivered to them, indeed Sarah was worried that people may have forgotten and she wouldn't have anything to sell. However on 30 October a very steady stream of cakes started to be delivered and soon a huge number were having to be stored and readied for sale on the Saturday.

The cakes came in various shapes, sizes and flavours and I now have an understanding of how difficult it must be for a Bake Off judge to choose a favourite.

All of the cakes, quiches and savouries were quite simply absolutely fantastic.

The stall was set up and Poppies were also available for sale. The day started with reasonably dry weather but after a couple of hours turned to torrential rain. Unperturbed, Wendy, Sarah, Ronnie and Jackie stuck to their task until all the cakes were sold. Amazingly they had a steady stream of customers who were likewise not put off by the rain.



Poppy sellers: Ronnie Dearing,
Wendy Nichols & Sarah Brown

On counting up the day's sales and the contents of the Poppy tins, a grand sum of £1,129.32p was raised. This is a fantastic amount but was only made possible by the support of the people of Stonesfield. I would therefore like to thank all of the bakers, the sellers, the customers and those who gave donations. Your continued generosity is greatly appreciated.

David Brown (898193)

Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal Organiser
for Stonesfield

Stockey Woods – some encouraging news

Oxfordshire County Council tells us that they have received written confirmation from Freeths Solicitors that the Blenheim Estate has reconsidered its position and formally withdrawn its objection to the application, on behalf of the village, to

make Stockey Woods a village green. We are grateful to Blenheim for deciding to take this public-spirited stance.

Whilst this is a major step forward there will still be an abbreviated public inquiry in January. The Inspector/Registration Authority (County Council) must still be satisfied the legal requirements are fulfilled, so we are not over the line – yet.

However, although we shall still need to take some witness statements and ask some witnesses to appear at the inquiry, the need for this has been significantly reduced. The inquiry in January is now expected to last no more than two days, rather than the previously anticipated eight days.

Richard Morris
Sustainable Stonesfield

New Year's Day stumble

The annual New Year's Day Walk is threatened by COVID 19! Who knows whether we will be locked down, tied down or just down and out.

Plans are afoot (no pun intended) to walk the walk and talk the talk in a fully compliant manner whatever restrictions are in place. What we can say is that it will not be a ZOOM walk and that it will not involve spontaneous post-walk revelry in The White Horse. If you have any ideas about how to walk the walk they would be most welcome. Final details will be published on Nextdoor Stonesfield and www.stonesfield.online in late December.

Graham Rutson
graham.rutson@btinternet.com

The White Horse: This could be the best investment that you ever make.

The last pub in Stonesfield is up for sale. The Stonesfield Community Pub Group is trying to buy it into community hands. If we are not successful there is a danger that it will be turned into houses or left boarded up for years to come. How awful it would be to have an eyesore like that in the village.

Here is an overview of what that could mean financially to homeowners in the village whether or not you use the pub.

Studies have estimated that the loss of the last pub in a rural community can reduce house prices by up to 10%. Average house prices in Stonesfield are £480,000, so it would mean an average loss in equity of £48,000 on every home in the village.

The target for Stonesfield Community Pub Group to buy the pub and complete maintenance and improvements is £480,000.

If every adult in Stonesfield (there are around 1300) bought shares in the pub to the value of just 0.1% of their home's value, the pub would not only be saved but we'd be able to improve it to make it the hub of the community. This represents a fifty-fold return on investment assuming two adults per household. Try getting that anywhere else!

Please support us to save our White Horse and benefit our community for generations to come. Buy your shares now at www.backthewhitehorse.com

Steve Callaghan
Back the White Horse Chair

The White Horse campaign

Reverse Advent Calendar

Stonesfield Community Pub Group is determined to provide wider benefits to the community. We are working with Stonesfield Mutual Aid this year to support households who are facing hardship at Christmas. We've designed a reverse advent calendar that you can download from our website

(www.backthewhitehorse.com/community) and we are asking YOU to be a Stonesfield community hero. It's really simple - wrap an empty box, then each day add the item suggested on the calendar to the box during the advent period. Let us know if you're taking part (susan@backthewhitehorse.com) and we'll collect your box w/c 21 December.

Stonesfield Mutual Aid will deliver them with their usual discretion to those in need in the village before Christmas.

A White (Horse) Christmas!

We had hoped to bring you a range of goodies to fulfil your Christmas desires, but in line with the Fundraising Regulators' guidance all such activity has stopped. If you'd like to make a donation to the campaign funds anyway please hop over to our crowdfunding page: www.crowdfunder.co.uk/user/susan-rudlin/projects/vnGZ93jW - this is one of

those 'other fund' pots where the more you raise the more chance there is of accessing other grant funding, so please share this link too.

Locally Made Christmas Wreaths

Gaye Olesen and Amanda Leavy are taking orders for Christmas wreaths, made entirely from fresh hedgerow and greenery (no plastic) and available in three sizes. They are kindly donating all proceeds to the #backthewhitehorse campaign. You can see examples on our website (www.backthewhitehorse.com/shop) and also place an order. Alternatively ring Gaye (07990 530386) for an order form and send it with a cheque payable to Stonesfield Community Pub Limited, Midway Barn, Hunt's Close, Stonesfield OX29 8QQ.

Gaye also has pots of hyacinths available, but they're all shapes and sizes so she recommends a conversation with her (tel: 07990 530386).

Susan Rudlin (891679)

STONESFIELD VOLUNTARY TRANSPORT SCHEME

Voluntary transport to medical appointments remains suspended at present. We continue to monitor the situation and will re-start our service as soon as that is possible.

If you are in need of transport for medical reasons and are unable to find this from your own household, there are other possibilities - for further information please phone Viv Kendall on 01993 891803.

Shares still available

**Help us create a pub for the
WHOLE community**

If...

If the real ale has a head that's frothy and light,
If you sell Sunday brunch and have takeaway night,
If you can dream of a place that's a workspace hub,
With proper coffee and home-cooked grub,
If you throw a party for Nan's eighty-plus
Or an eighteenth with no need for that nighttime bus,
If you just grab this onetime share opportunity
To save the White Horse, for your community,
You'll have a pub, my friends!

(With apologies to Rudyard Kipling)

**The White Horse Community Pub
Shares available from £50**

Calendar



Stonesfield and Surrounds
Stunning double page A3 wall
calendar of images. Order
from the website
£15

www.backthewhitehorse.com

Lockdown Cinderella

What was life like during lockdown for four carers from Stonesfield? Find out by watching Georgie Steele's short film, 'Lockdown Cinderella', funded by Arts at the Old Fire Station Oxford, and featuring four local people telling their stories, some of which have been magically transformed into fairy tales. This is the link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=uocCSijfWYI&t=40s, or watch on the Arts at The Old Fire Station YouTube page.

Georgie Steele

North Leigh Roman Villa

North Leigh Roman Villa has been a free English Heritage site for about 30 years. Before that, when the site was staffed, there was someone to unlock the building which preserves its stunning 4th century AD mosaic – the jewel in the site's crown.

We are a new group of volunteers, only beginning last summer, so it has been quite a first year to get going in. Our aim is a simple one: to help as many people as possible to safely enjoy North Leigh's mosaic again.

Once restrictions started to ease in July, English Heritage adapted their risk assessment for Covid safety, turning our site into a 'Covid secure venue' – we still called it 'the villa'. We quickly agreed a simple system for access to the mosaics: timed slots, family groups, and numbered raffle tickets to monitor admissions! A rehearsal on site gave people confidence it could all work – even when face masks were required to go inside, with barely a week's notice before our first opening. We spread the word on social media and, with

English Heritage's help, via the website and posters on site.

We were very fortunate with the weather: every one of our three Open Weekends, and handful of Special Openings for local Primary Schools, clubs and societies, were sunny and dry. So at least the libations to the weather gods worked. We got this pleasing endorsement from a visitor who joined the EH-run mosaic cleaning efforts on the final weekend: 'This is one of the most safe and well thought out set of procedures I have met since this virus situation began so have every confidence all will go well. Thank you for your hard work on this.'



The results speak for themselves: over 1,250 people have seen the mosaics this year (nearly double what we managed last year); donations up six-fold on 2019 to nearly £950; and our 'Friends of the Villa' are up 50% too.

Happiness was in short supply this year and we helped provide some and reaped a little ourselves.

North Leigh Roman Villa Volunteers
nlrvvols@gmail.com

Politics & local affairs

Farley Lane speeding

A number of residents have complained to the Parish Council about speeding in the village, particularly, but not exclusively, along Farley Lane.

Residents have seen an increase in speeding since Farley Lane (previously unmade-up) has been tarmacked to improve access to Davis Close and the existing stabling yard. Some drivers see this as an opportunity to put their foot down and speed excessively.

Farley Lane is always busy - it feeds Wootton End, Bishops Meadow, Pickett Piece, Limbeck Way and Davis Close along with the NCCBR business unit. There is only enough space for a single car or van to move safely in one direction at any point in time. Drivers are urged not to speed in this location: *30 MPH or above is wholly unacceptable at any point.*



Residents are frequently forced to walk on the road along here because vehicles are often parked across kerbs and pavements. The risk of a person being injured increases daily. The recent planning approval of 1 Farley Lane to be converted into 6 flats will increase the above risks due to even more parking.

All drivers should reduce their speed to take account of these conditions. Remember we should all share the roads safely and look out for each other. Reducing your speed along Farley Lane and other locations in the village will make a positive contribution to reducing risks and improving road safety in Stonesfield.

Cllr Michael J Heduan MBE
SAFER Stonesfield

You can report rural crimes online

Rural crime can have a huge impact on our rural communities in the Thames Valley, but these crimes tend to go unreported. We're encouraging people in rural communities to report anything they've seen, however big or small, which can help us tackle agricultural, equine, wildlife and heritage crime.

You know your community best and you're likely to know when something doesn't feel right. You can report a crime in your area, or pass on any information you may have, on our website. We encourage you to contact us – we can use your information to build a better picture and to target our resources effectively.

By working together, we can prevent opportunistic and organised crimes taking place in our communities. If you see something, report it on our website: www.thamesvalley.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/

From Neighbourhood Watch – a national campaign

Protect your Pa\$\$word in 3 easy steps

1. Create a separate password for your email account
 2. Use 3 random words
 3. Turn on two-factor authentication (2FA)
-

News from Stonesfield Parish Council

Villager Bus

All Villager Bus services have been suspended again for the second lock down. They did not want to do this, but the medical advice is getting stronger by the day that we must all avoid contact with other people, particularly the elderly and vulnerable, who make up 95% of passengers (and 80% of drivers). They feel that this step is necessary to protect passengers and drivers and to try to slow the spread of this disease. They have put a notice on their website.

They are very aware that this suspension will hit older people in villages particularly hard as so many rely on this service for their needs. They hope that the community schemes set up last time will continue to provide the necessary support. They will, of course, let you know when they plan to restart services, hopefully not too long after 3 December.

Work on Stonesfield Common

During September this year essential work took place to improve Stonesfield Common. This work was discussed with Richard Morris and commissioned by Stonesfield Parish Council.

A new stock proof fence has been erected along the foot of the bank so we can separate the flood meadow (the ‘cricket pitch’) from the top and bank, which is the area of SSSI. This is to keep the cattle off the ‘cricket pitch’ when it is flooded. There are gates at either end of the fence to allow people to walk around the meadow, but please leave the gates as you found them, either open or closed.

Cattle drinking bay & fencing on the Common



Improvements to the drinking bay were made, making it easier for cattle to access. This involved removing the drinking trough, clearing the concrete slope and cutting back vegetation either side.

The work will eventually include pollarding the overgrown willow trees along the bank where broken branches have fallen into the river. Pollarding is a woodland management method of periodic pruning: cutting back branches at the crown.

[Editor: In times gone by the willows would regularly be pollarded. Eric Hanks, who lived in the village and ran a bakery, made wooden hurdles from the timber for the local sheep farmers.]

Stonesfield Parish Council

A look back over the year....

2020 has been a challenging year for many; as a Parish Council we have also had to adapt. We have continued with our monthly meetings without missing a beat,

albeit many of them virtually, some of us mastering the vagaries of Zoom for the first time. We have still managed to achieve lots throughout the year and have continued to work for our community.

During the year of 2020 the Parish Council have given the following **grants**:

Stonesfield Players - £573.63

SAFER equipment/road surveys - £1000

Chrissies Owls - £600

Stonesfield Mutual Aid - £1,000

Stonesfield Pre School - £478.78

Stonesfield Voluntary Transport - £90

Playing Fields Association - £245

White Horse Community Pub Group - £4,000

Grant towards the servicing of the church clock £139.20

Grant to the churchyard for grass cutting £200

Royal British Legion for a wreath laid on the war memorial for the parish - £50

SAFER is a working group of the Parish Council led by us and a team of 6 volunteers. SAFER Stonesfield has had a challenging year during lockdown. We had to withdraw from running high visibility Community Speedwatch surveys due to COVID-19 social distancing and to meet safety guidance from TVP and our Insurers.



To compensate for not running high visibility manned surveys we adopted a strategy of moving the Speed Indicating Device (SID) around the village. This was in response to reports of excess speeding of vehicles entering, transiting or exiting the village during the initial lockdown. However in the past 12 months SAFER has been busy and has delivered the following to improving road safety in the village.

1. Produced and submitted a comprehensive road safety plan to OCC Highways for the design and implementation of a 20MPH zone and infrastructure improvement. Delivering the plan has been delayed by OCC Highways under working restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Two new road safety traffic mirrors have been installed at the top and bottom of Laughton Hill. One mirror was installed in response to the cycling collision that happened earlier in the year.
3. The SID is now moved around the village on a 3-weekly basis reminding drivers of their speed and helping change behaviour. Data is being recorded by the SID at all times.
4. A campaign has been in place along Farley Lane to reduce speeding leading to the stabling yard and the Davis Close estate. A semi-permanent 'SLOW' sign is in place to influence speeders to slow down.
5. SAFER has helped the 'Cycle to School' project to get off the ground by arranging and chairing a stakeholder meeting between Blenheim, Marlborough School and the OCC Lead and gaining support for using Blenheim as part of the route.

6. SAFER also designed a new sign and secured permission from OCC Highways for 'School Cycle Route' signs to be installed along the route.

Stonesfield Mutual Aid have provided emergency food vouchers to Stonesfield residents providing one-off e-vouchers for a local supermarket. They have engaged people with councillors and agencies to assist in the longer term.

Thanks to the generosity of the Stonesfield Parish Council, Chippy Larder, the North Oxford food bank and SOFEA they have been able to bring over £5000 of food into the village during the previous lockdown.

The highlight was delivering a VE day to lunch club members, a true community event. In the current climate we are working to make sure that no one in the village is hungry or lonely through this winter. The work of Stonesfield Mutual Aid continues to make a difference.

Art Project for the village (WODC Grant) The Parish Council has engaged with Genny and Tony Early to work together on an art project at Brook Lane. This is currently in progress and has slowed due to Covid but watch this space for 2021.

Spring Clean In March 2020 our annual Spring Clean led by volunteer Jess Huband managed to take place before lockdown with a staggering 50 volunteers taking part! We hope to do the same in 2021 and have pledged to purchase our own litter-picking tools to give more flexibility to the group.

The Common (see also item above) Richard Morris (volunteer) has worked with the Parish Council this year to help us keep the Common lovely and helped manage the arrival of the cows on the

Common. We have paid for and put in new fencing, drinkers for the livestock and a kissing gate as part of the maintenance. Genny Early kindly placed some signage on the Common for us too (free of charge).

White Horse Community Pub The village pub came up for sale in July 2020. As a Parish Council we ensured we renewed our interest in the pub as a community asset and will continue to do so when this arises again in January 2021. We have spoken several times with the community group including joint conversations with the group and Robert Courts MP. The Parish Council extended its grant fund, dipping into reserves to provide a generous grant of £4,000 to help the White Horse Community Group work on their campaign to save the pub. We continue to talk to the group and as a council we support what they are doing and wish them much success.

Flu Clinic The Parish Council worked with Woodstock Surgery and the Village Hall to ensure the flu clinic came to Stonesfield this October. This very successful initiative worked well and helped to save our residents from travelling out of the village for this important service.

Stockey Woods The Parish Council has supported the Village Green application made on behalf of the village. This has entailed making a grant of £1,800 in order to access specialist counsel advice from Edwin Simpson QC. This has helped to prepare Jim Astle and present the statement of case to the public inquiry. We have a very strong case and we are hopeful of a positive outcome.

November meeting Please see minutes on the village website and noticeboard.

Next full council (public) meeting:

Wednesday 9 December 2020 – 7pm –
Zoom Virtual Meeting

West Oxfordshire District Council

Carbon Action Plan

A major plan designed to cut carbon emissions to zero at WODC was agreed by councillors at the end of October. The Carbon Action Plan sets out a course of action as it drives towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030. It makes a series of recommendations across three areas:

1. Council offices, property and sites
2. Leisure centres and facilities
3. Council vehicle fleet, machinery and transport

Across all three, efficiencies will be made in heat, power, water and waste with the promotion of green and active travel for staff and councillors.

Initiatives to be considered will include energy efficiency measures across all buildings, the introduction of grey water recycling to be used for toilets, and the installation of electric vehicle charging points. The overall aim is to produce a set of guiding principles to reduce, remove or offset carbon emissions from current and future activities.

Current local lockdown

Oxfordshire's council leaders, the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership have come together to say that everyone must play their part to help control the spread of the virus once again. That means staying at home and not gathering with people you do not live with. The full guidance is on the government's

website: www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november.

Even under normal circumstances, winter puts a significant strain on the resources of Oxfordshire's NHS and other health services. The escalating cases of COVID-19 across the whole country are adding an even bigger burden.

The six Oxfordshire authorities will be working together and with their local communities to ensure anybody in need of help getting their basic supplies is connected with people who are able to help them.

Information on the support available for West Oxon residents can be found on www.westoxon.gov.uk/communities-and-leisure/coronavirus-community-support/

In addition to the support provided to businesses by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (www.oxfordshirelep.com/coronavirus), the councils provide a service giving advice and guidance to businesses worried about the impact the second lockdown will have. West Oxon businesses: www.westoxon.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/coronavirus-business-and-licensing/ or email business@westoxon.gov.uk

Helpful phone numbers:

- WODC Community Support Helpline: 01993 861077
- MIND information line: 01865 247788
- 24/7 mental health helpline for Adults: 0800 783 0119; Children & Youth: 0800 783 0121
- Childline 0800 1111
- Emergency assistance for food funds (individuals & families) 01993 892057

Organise fuel bills, suppliers

A tip from Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire: Our advisers can help you sign up with a new fuel or electricity company, or switch to a better tariff. Now is the time to sort it out before winter closes in with cold autumn gales.

There's no charge for our time. You won't be steered towards one particular supplier because we're impartial, having no links with any of them. We offer one-on-one sessions (by phone at present) and we'll take a close look at your individual situation.

We can help you understand energy bills and various kinds of tariffs, supporting you if you want to switch and calculating the savings you might make. If you've fallen behind on bill payments, we can advise you on ways to reduce your debt, for example by budgeting or trying a new payment scheme.

We can also tell you about energy efficiency measures around the house (like draught-proofing windows and doors, installing LED light bulbs). Grants may be available to pay for thermal insulation.

We can check your benefit entitlements and help you to claim them if you're eligible. There are several helpful schemes like the Priority Services Register and the Warm Home Discount.

And if you have any complaints against your current supplier, we can help you resolve them.

Energy advice sessions are available over the phone. Contact us for an appointment on 01993 892057, email info@citizensadvicewestoxon.org.uk or visit www.citizensadvicewestoxon.org.uk.

From our District Councillor

Back again in lockdown. When you are reading this, it will be nearly over - I hope.

Council work has carried on pretty much as normal without actual meetings. The accepted procedures for Webex virtual meetings have improved so that discussions can be completed without losing either vision or sound.

As you may know, our Leader, James Mills, has resigned and his successor has been appointed in the person of Michele Mead. Council officially welcomed her warmly with approval from all sides of the political scene.

Council was pleased to confirm the system for Community Activity Grants given to a wide variety of organisations providing support for young and old in the community.

Approval was confirmed of the COVID-19 West Oxfordshire Recovery Plan. Funding was made available for the many strands of the Plan with the institution of various extensions to individual officers' contracts and the appointment of new posts. It is anticipated that all these developments will add a further £643k to the budget projections. The Plan is divided into four distinct priorities:

- Economy: support for existing local businesses and attracting new business.
- Community: facilitating healthy towns and villages, supporting local communities, meeting the housing needs of a changing population.
- Climate: leading the way in protecting and enhancing our environment.

- Council, service delivery and finance: modern council services and sustainable finance.

Council approved the Carbon Action Plan (see item above under WODC news).

Details of all the above may be found on the Council's web site.

Details of the reasons for the delay in establishing Electrical Vehicle Charging points were discussed. The size and number of the projected EVC points were insufficient to attract the large suppliers and the company whose tender had been accepted withdrew on the grounds that the contract was unviable. Further tenders are being actively sought.

The work of the Planning Committees has continued with applications being speedily determined. Not all applications are successful but the committees are very conscious of the will to help in any way those residents who wish to develop their properties. As a member of the Development Committee, I have received several letters expressing severe concerns about the provisions of the new Government White Paper. As I reported last month, WODC is itself extremely concerned about some of the provisions of that initiative. We await the Government's response to our letter detailing our objections and suggested amendments.

Finally, may I wish you all the very best for as normal and joyful a Christmas as possible in our most unwelcome new circumstances. I truly hope that the New Year will herald a vast improvement in the health of the country. Stay safe and keep in mind the regulations on social distancing.

Richard Bishop (891414)
richard.bishop@westoxon.gov.uk

From our County Councillor

The national lockdown will have an impact on the economy but it's important that we reduce the spread of the virus so we all need to work together and to adhere to the rules.

There are some changes for this lockdown with household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) and registration services still able to operate.

OCC's libraries have had to close but the library service will continue to offer an array of online resources at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries and residents will still be able to benefit from the home library service. OCC is also investigating the possibility of a click and collect service in some libraries in addition to limited access to public network PCs.

Most of OCC's services will still be delivered without interruption. We will continue to provide care and support to vulnerable residents through home visits and our community support services; our formally organised support groups that provide mutual aid or therapy will continue, with a maximum of 15 participants.

Anyone who has received a letter from the government about receiving additional support has been identified as being extremely vulnerable. To benefit from this support, they need to register themselves on the national system if they have not already done so. If they require additional support WODC will be informed and will contact them to identify their needs in more detail. If they need urgent support, then they can contact WODC directly.

If residents do not have the means to register and have no one who is able to

assist, they can call us on 01865 897820 or email shield@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

The service is open 8.30am–5pm Monday–Thursday, and 8.30am–4pm on Fridays. Closed Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays

The pandemic won't stop Oxfordshire's roads from being gritted as temperatures start to dip and OCC's winter weather response springs into action. It is one of our key frontline services and keeps almost half of the roads across Oxfordshire as free as possible from winter hazards. We have trained 15 extra drivers, will have 25 gritter lorries on the road at any one time, and will use approximately 220 tonnes of salt per treatment.

Council meetings continue remotely; details of all virtual public meetings can be found on the meeting details page on the OCC website – simply click on each meeting in the calendar to view the link. Recordings can be viewed after each meeting.

It's important that we continue to hold meetings such as the North Cotswold Line

Taskforce as we plan for the future to enable us to have a more frequent rail service from Hanborough with 4 trains an hour.

We are also in the budget-setting process, made more difficult this year with the increased expenditure relating to the COVID situation. The Government has provided significant funds for the County Council but this year there was still a £15 million gap that we have had to solve. The outlook for next year is difficult as we're only receiving a 1-year settlement and there will still be additional expenditure regarding the COVID pandemic.

Please do not hesitate to contact me.

Ian Hudspeth (07956 270318)

Charlbury medical centre

Most consultations with GPs at the Charlbury Medical Centre are now conducted by telephone. This is in accordance with national guidance on remote consultations to avoid any potentially infected patients coming in to the Surgery. If a Covid-19 infected patient were to attend the Medical Centre it would have to close down completely for 14 days.

The majority of patients do not require a face-to-face meeting; however GPs will always offer face-to-face appointments whenever clinically indicated.

If you have any symptoms that you are worried about do not hesitate to contact the Medical Centre. The doctors and nurses remain available to care for their patients.

For further information please refer to the Charlbury Medical Centre website, www.thecharlburymedicalcentre.nhs.uk

FOSL

Friend 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 however we look forward to welcoming you back as soon as we are allowed.

For further details, or to join us, please contact Mike Pollitt 01993 891856, mikepollitt@btopenworld.com

Education, culture & more

Stonesfield Pre-school

We are delighted to have welcomed some new starters this term. Our numbers on the register are rising – really encouraging news for the pre-school.

This term is full of celebration and colour. We are great lovers of transient art at pre-school, using a collection of materials to create a picture from. They are open-ended resources, and there is no permanent product. There are many benefits to embracing a creativity that is focused on the process rather than the result. The children have been using natural resources from the countryside to create lots of

colourful transient pictures. The shapes and colours of autumn leaves make wonderful flames for their bonfire creations!

We've been practising scissor skills, cutting out circles to make poppy flower pictures. Some children noticed other people wearing a poppy and we talked in very simple terms why this might be.

As Christmas approaches we look forward to celebrating this special time of year, decorating a tree together and bringing the special magic of Christmas alive. There are lots of opportunities to learn about the Nativity story through books, imaginary



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)

play and songs. We will be organising a nature-friendly Christmas celebration, followed by our present-giving ceremony where the focus is on *giving* a present rather than *receiving* one. A week before the 'ceremony' each child helps to wrap their chosen present for a friend, using nature-friendly and recycled resources – colourful scarves from charity shops, evergreen foliage and this year dried sliced oranges too!

One of the important values taught at pre-school is 'Being kind to our friends'. To support the children with this, the staff model good friendship behaviour, nurture politeness, practice sharing and recognise good behaviour towards other children by commenting on it. It is important that every child experiences a positive emotional and social journey as they take their first steps in life towards learning to play co-operatively, show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and children outside their immediate family.

Would you like to volunteer to help us out for an hour or so every other week? Please get in touch to have an informal chat with me (01993 898370 or email stonesfieldps@outlook.com). It is a very rewarding role and can open up many other opportunities in your life.

If you are a regular helper you will require a DBS check. Pre-school will organise and pay for this, it's a straightforward process. If you register your DBS with the government update service it will be transferable; it's a useful document if you wish to do any other voluntary work that requires a DBS check.

The children helped to create a lovely Stonesfield Pre-school Christmas card. If

anyone wants to buy a pack go to www.minimegifts.org/ You will need to enter the code 548-1-9. 10% of all sales go to pre-school.

We have places available for children age 2 to 4 years. If you are interested in registering your child at our community pre-school please contact me (details above) or our administrator Zena stonesfieldpsad@outlook.com You may be entitled to government-funded childcare: www.workingfamilies.org.uk/articles/free-childcare-for-children-aged-two-three-and-four/

Finally, we wish everyone a happy and healthy Christmas and look forward to keeping you informed of our children's learning adventures during 2021.

Lizzie Wharton (Manager)
www.stonesfieldpreschool.com

Stonesfield Primary School

Running a school during a pandemic has undoubtedly been a massive challenge, but the necessity to do things differently is providing opportunities too. Some of our usual Christmas festivities won't take place this year: nativity performances for the younger children, and our traditional carol concert at St James' Church. However, thanks to Alison Eastwood from St James' Church and Cecily's Fund, a nativity trail has been planned to bring the story of Christmas to life for our children. Alison has pulled out all the stops! As well as singing and storytelling, live animals have been promised! During the afternoon of Monday 14 December please light up your houses with festive lights if you are on our route: Peaks Lane, Boot Street, Churchfields. Due to COVID-19 restrictions we are asking parents and

villagers not to join us on the trail but to watch from your homes or at a safe distance.

I have had the pleasure of showing a number of prospective families around our school recently. The hard work staff have put in to making the school a dazzling place for children to learn is shining through and I have felt so proud. Our children are delightful and parents have commented on the buzz of learning around the school along with the warm, caring environment. It's a tough balance to ensure high academic standards with a nurturing ethos and I am proud of the quality of education and wider opportunities we can offer our children. If your child is due to start school in September 2021 I would love to show you around and give you a flavour of what life at Stonesfield Primary

School is like. Please contact the school office on 891687 to arrange a tour.

Christmas is going to be very different for us all this year. I'd like to wish everyone in the village a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. In 2021 I sincerely hope we can emerge from the shadow of COVID-19 and return to a more normal, healthier way of life.

Ben Trevail, Headteacher

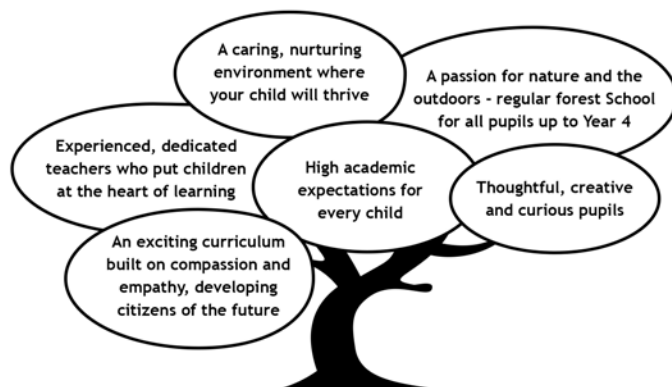
head.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk

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
Headteacher email: head.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk

Can you help with research for a new play?

Local writer and performer, Caroline Horton, is making a new show called *Christy-Anne* about her French grandmother's experiences of being a young mum, far away from her family, in post-war Oxfordshire.

As part of her research, Caroline would love to have some phone conversations or video calls with people from local Oxfordshire communities about their memories from the 1940s and 1950s (even if these memories are second hand!) and about their experiences of lockdown this year.

Caroline's first play, *You're Not Like The Other Girls* Chrissy about her grandmother's WW2 romance with her English grandfather, toured internationally for five years and was nominated for an Olivier in 2013. This new show *Christy-Anne* will tell the next chapter of the story.

There's more about Caroline's work here www.carolinehorton.net

If you can help, Caroline and the creative team would love to hear from you. We are interested in having a phone call or even two and hearing all about your memories of Oxfordshire in the 1940s and 50s. Where did you live? What was it like? Do you have stories to share? Please get in touch with Caroline by email info@carolinehorton.net or phone 0780 337 4695.

The Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock

As I write this, we are again closed for a second lockdown. All being well we hope to re-open on Wednesday 2 December – fingers crossed! We want to take this opportunity to thank all our visitors for continuing to support us during these testing times.

You can keep up to date with our social media channels and remember to keep a look out for our Christmas children's activity videos.

Our *Distance* exhibition remains on display when we re-open. Distance is now ingrained in our day-to-day existence. Inspired by the new normal, Oxfordshire Museums Service searched the collections for art that conveys distance. The selected works portray a variety of geographical locations across the county, are a mix of ages and styles, and are executed by Oxfordshire artists, including nationally significant painters such as William Turner of Oxford. They are unified by the concept of distance.

The Garden Café will re-open with the Museum for take-aways, including delicious hot mince pies to warm you from the inside, and the museum gift shop has lots of lovely gift ideas for all the family. The galleries will all be open, except for the dinosaur gallery, and don't forget we have free admission!

Given the current situation with so much uncertainty, please check our website for Christmas opening hours.

We would like to wish everyone a healthy and happy Christmas.

Clubs, societies & sport

1st Stonesfield Scout Group

After a rigorous risk assessment procedure and working within government guidelines, our scout section was able to get back together again and enjoy outdoor scouting in September and October. While we were sorry to have missed our favourite term of long, light summer evenings, camps and outdoor adventures, we wasted no time in getting back to practising our scouting skills, including fire lighting and backwoods cooking, communication skills and plenty of wide games [played in an open area] and fun in the dark of the woods.

We held one evening especially for last summer term's 'leavers', all of whom gained the highest award, the Chief Scout Gold Award. Congratulations to all of you. We know that you will have made many memories while in scouting, and hope that you will come back to scouting again in the future as young leaders or adult volunteers.

Even though things appear to have gone quiet for the Stonesfield Group since the first lockdown, there has been a lot of activity behind the scenes (mostly on Zoom) including hut planning; new members of the Exec who are going through their induction and handover; leaders who have managed to keep up with training and first aid commitments, and by the time you read this, we hope to have held our first ever online AGM meeting!

If Baden Powell were here today, he might not recognise much of the world we live in,

but we hope that he would recognise the commitment of our Scout Group and our local community, to do our best, to help other people and to 'be prepared' for whatever we find around the next corner.

We wish you a safe and happy Christmas and New Year.

1st Stonesfield Scouts

info@stonesfield-scouts.org.uk

Stonesfield Gardening Club

Lockdown Gardening

As many of you know I have a modest-sized garden so after much thought I decided in February to have my decking cut back to make more garden. Instead of just throwing the decking away the idea came to me that I could use the decking to make a box for wildflowers. Then of course the dreaded first lockdown came into play so the idea of wildflowers was temporarily put on hold and the box was used for growing vegetables instead. After successfully growing some really lovely vegetables through the summer months I felt the box needed to be wider and with the help of a friend rebuilt it, put a top on it and moved it to the front of the house so it would get more natural light.

Eventually I was able to go back to my original plan of a wildflower box. More soil was ordered (poor soil with no nutrients works best for wildflowers). After a lot of hard work moving the rain-soddened soil I was able to finally plant the wildflower seeds I had been collecting on my walks

during the summer. I was lucky enough to already have some wildflowers in the garden and from the allotment which I also transferred to the box. The box now consists of poppies, chamomile, daisy, knapweed, buttercup goldilocks, evening primrose and field madder and I will sow more seeds in the spring. I very much look forward to seeing how my mixed meadow, arable field and hedgerow flowers will thrive in my homemade box.

Suzy Boardman, Committee Member

This is the third in our features on gardening projects that members have undertaken this year. Any member is more than welcome to contribute!

Tending flowers at the War Memorial



In other village gardening news, the Gardening Club has offered to take on the care of the War Memorial. Until now, this has been painstakingly looked after by Sarah Brown and I'm sure the whole village would like to thank her for her care and commitment. The Committee envisage a

small group of members getting together to plant and maintain the memorial and would love to hear from anyone interested.

With Season's Greetings to members, with hopes that we will be able to celebrate Christmas in some form or other, and that we will be able to meet again next year!

Diane Bates, Secretary
diane@bateshome.co.uk
www.stonesfieldgardening.info

Stonesfield Football Club

The reader would be forgiven for thinking that we've been transported back in time to last March, with a sense of Déjà vu combined with a huge dollop of Groundhog Day, as the current lockdown has seen grassroots football suspended once again! It could not have come at a more inopportune time as it looked as though our Firsts were getting their Mojo back after an inauspicious start to the season. A third straight league defeat away at Hailey (3-1) was followed by a thumping win at home against Minster Lovell (7-1) which we presumed was the start of a long run of victories. However, COVID-19 had different ideas and we can only hope that this lockdown is as short as possible and our boys can get back playing again.

It is often said that every cloud has a silver lining and our Reserves may look upon the current suspension of games as an opportunity to re-set their season when it all starts up again. They crashed out of The Jack Busby Trophy losing (2-1) at home, to Wootton. This was followed by a battling performance away at FC Mills where the high-flying hosts just edged it (3-2) in a 5-goal thriller! Maybe they'll look on their performance in that defeat and use it to

galvanise their season, if and when it gets going again.

The second lockdown, albeit predictable, has come as a massive disappointment to all of us but it simply serves as a reminder to everyone that the social distancing rules are there to be followed to keep us all safe and well. Hopefully, everyone continues to stay safe and with Christmas just round the corner, maybe we'll have football back sooner rather than later. Spare a thought for the good people at The Social Club, especially Ben and Sam Tomlin who had put so much effort into keeping everyone safe while they enjoyed a drink after the games. The only positive I can think of is that the hard work has already been done by them and when they get the go-ahead to open up again it should be easier this time round. They've done their bit, it's now up to all of us to continue obeying the rules!

This is the last *Slate* before Christmas, so on behalf of the Football Club let me wish everyone in the village a very Happy Christmas and let's hope I have games to report on in the New Year. Above all, stay safe everyone!

Tom Flanigan (891979)

Sports & Social Club Christmas Cheer ...

Hopefully by the time you read this we will be out of the second lockdown and able to get out for a drink and meet up to socialise again.

Fundraising continues to Save our Pub which we all want to happen but please don't forget your Sports & Social Club. Not only do we provide somewhere to meet up and have a drink (or two), we support many sports and pub games all the year

round. This is only possible with your continued support which will mean eventually we have the choice of TWO drinking establishments in Stonesfield once again.

We look forward to welcoming you once we are allowed to reopen our doors. The club has gone to great lengths to make it as Covid-safe as possible.

Wishing you ALL a merry Christmas and a happy Covid-free new year. Stay Safe.

The Committee,
Stonesfield Sports and Social Club



STONESFIELD SPORTS & SOCIAL CLUB

SSSC is a members club supporting local Senior/Junior Football, Cricket and Tennis. We also play Crib, Darts, Dominoes, Pool and Aunt Sally.

During the year we host a variety of events including Band Nights, Bingo and Coffee Mornings which are all open to non-members.

The club is run by a Voluntary committee and are always looking for new members to join and come up with new ideas to promote the club.

sky SPORTS

The club subscribes to a SKY Sports package so you can watch your favourite sport while enjoying a drink in a friendly atmosphere.

You will find us situated next to the Playing Field at Field Close.

Stonesfield Sports & Social Club
Field Close, Stonesfield
Witney, Oxfordshire OX29 8HA

Church news

Stonesfield Methodist Church

Sunday Services are planned to resume on 6 December, after the four-week break. There will be Services each Sunday with the exception of Sunday 27th, when instead, a Circuit Zoom Service is arranged. Should you wish to join the Service, please get in touch to receive the contact details. The Carol Service on 20 December will begin at 3pm.

May the incredible love, peace and hope of the first Christmas in Bethlehem be with us this Christmas, and far beyond.

*The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.
St. John's Gospel 1:9*

Kathleen Albert (891733)

New Church thought

Emanuel Swedenborg developed some rules for his own life. They are not part of his theological writing, but they're widely known in the New Church and I've found them a pretty good guide to how to live my own life. (The language is rather old-fashioned, since he lived in 18th century Sweden.)

Rules of Life

- Diligently to read and meditate on the Word of God
- To be content under the dispensations of God's providence
- To observe propriety of behaviour and to keep the conscience clear

- To obey what is ordered; to attend faithfully to one's occupation and other duties
- And in addition, to make oneself useful to society in general.

Hoping you will find peace of mind over Christmas, and a sense of purpose in the coming year.

Dale Morris (898210)

Church of England Worship at St James the Great, Stonesfield

(Benefice of Stonesfield with Combe Longa)

Parish letter

There is expectation and hope in the air as we all look forward to Christmas this year! 2020 has certainly been challenging, and now we are more than ready to embrace the festive season in whatever way we can or is allowed.

It's time to celebrate with family and friends, time to show our love and care for others by sending cards and giving presents, time to enjoy all that is good.

And, of course, it's time to thank God for the most wonderful gift of all – the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became a human baby, born quietly in a humble stable. No longer distant and inaccessible, God is with us – good news indeed!

Do come and celebrate the good news at one of the Christmas services, details of

which are given at the end of this letter. As numbers will need to be limited, please see the notes about pre-booking or 'first come, first served' – and thank you for your understanding!

At the Carol Service on 20 December, there will be an opportunity to support 2 excellent charities: 'Embrace the Middle East' (tackling poverty and injustice in the Middle East) and The Porch (helping the homeless in Oxford).

In addition, the Church will be open every afternoon between 17 and 22 December, 2–4pm. Do come along and enjoy a moment of peace in this ancient building, which will be decorated ready for Christmas.

And finally - although we are not sure what December may bring, we hope that St James' Church and the primary school can enjoy our first ever outdoor Nativity Trail. The children will be led round the village to meet characters from the Bible Christmas Story.

Services in December/January

Times may change subject to Government guidance – for the latest information please go to www.stonesfieldparishchurch.org

Sunday 6 December [Second Sunday of Advent]

9.30am	Combe	All Age Worship - Christingle
11am	Stonesfield	Parish Communion

Sunday 13 December [Third Sunday of Advent]

9.30am	Combe	Morning Prayer
11am	Stonesfield	Morning Prayer

Sunday 20 December [Fourth Sunday of Advent]

9.30am	Combe	Parish Communion
11am	Stonesfield	Parish Communion

3pm	Combe	Carol Service (pre-booking with Combe required)
6pm	Stonesfield	Carol Service (limited numbers – pre-booking essential – stonesfield@stonesfieldparishchurch.org or phone 898757)

Christmas Eve 24 December

3.30pm	Stonesfield	Crib Service -for all the family (limited numbers – first come, first served basis)
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Christmas Day 25 December

9.30am	Combe	Parish Communion (pre-booking with Combe required)
11am	Stonesfield	Parish Communion (limited numbers – first come, first served basis)

Sunday 27 December [First Sunday of Christmas]

9.30am	Combe	Parish Communion
11am	Stonesfield	Parish Communion

Sunday 3 January [Epiphany]

9.30am	Combe	All Age Worship
11am	Stonesfield	All Age Worship

Sunday 10 January [Epiphany 1]

9.30am	Combe	Morning Prayer
11am	Stonesfield	Morning Prayer

Sunday 17 January [Epiphany 2]

9.30am	Combe	Parish Communion
11am	Stonesfield	Parish Communion

Sunday 24 January [Epiphany 3]

9.30am	Combe	Parish Communion
11am	Stonesfield	Parish Communion

Sunday 31 January [Candlemas]

10am	Stonesfield	United Benefice Communion
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Roman Catholic worship

Why are we waiting?

The season of Advent is nearly upon us, and that means that Christmas is now very close. What is the meaning of Advent and why does it continue to be important? Advent is the period of four Sundays and weeks before Christmas week. Advent means 'Coming' in Latin, and thus signifies preparation for the birth of Our Lord Jesus, and indicates to us that we need to ready ourselves for this momentous event. That event – the Nativity of Christ – is the beginning of a journey that leads us to redemption by Jesus's final sacrifice on the Cross.

Advent has sometimes been symbolised by themes of hope, peace, love, joy and repentance, with candles lit each Sunday, to celebrate each of those themes reminding us of Christ's life and His message to us. Traditionally, Advent also prepares us for the great spiritual feast ahead by inviting us to fast as a method of preparatory purification for this eternally life-changing birth:

⁸ In the countryside close by there were shepherds out in the fields keeping guard over their sheep during the watches of the night.⁹ An angel of the Lord stood over them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified,¹⁰ but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Look, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2: 8-11.

St Teresa's is now closed for holy mass during the second lockdown, but open for private prayer for one hour on:

- Monday: 9.30am
- Tuesday: 9.30am
- Wednesday: 7pm
- Thursday: 9.30am
- Friday: 9.30am

Once this lockdown has finished (2 December 2020), please check St Teresa's website for daily and Sunday Mass, plus the procedure to book a place at Sunday Mass.

Confession by arrangement with Fr. Clive as below.

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.

Fr. Tony Joyce can be contacted on holytrinityrechippy@gmail.com or 01608 642703

Aid to the church in need: Suze Mathews is selling Xmas cards to support ACN and their work supporting persecuted Christians worldwide. Suze will deliver to your doorstep. For further information, please email suzemathews899@btinternet.com

For parish updates, any further information and further support, www.stteresaschurch-charlbury.com/ or contact Fr. Clive Dytor: chair.stteresaschurchcharlbury@gmail.com

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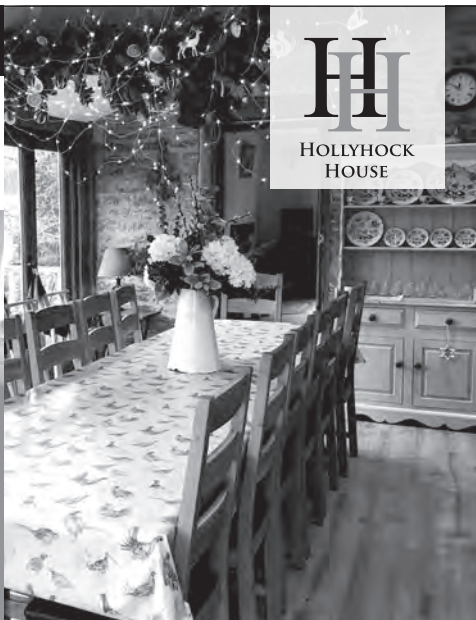
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Christmas at Blenheim Palace

We love Christmas at Blenheim Palace and we are so happy that even though 2020 has been a difficult year, the good news is Christmas will still be happening, although a little differently this year. But don't worry we haven't gone all Baa Humbug...

For 2020 we cannot offer joint tickets for the Palace and Light Trail. Book your tickets and time slots separately at blenheimpalace.com/christmas

Buy One Day, Get 12 Months Free*

For the latest news and updates visit blenheimpalace.com



*Terms and Conditions Apply



The Great Experience Travel team wish all our friends and clients a Very Happy Christmas, and, hopefully, a far better 2021. 2020 has been an awful year, but we thank you for your support to get us through it. For 2021, we are introducing a new member to the Great Experience Travel family...



You can book flights, accommodation, car rentals, airport parking, and attraction tickets on our brand new website.

You'll find exclusive offers for All-Inclusive holidays, City Breaks, UK Holidays, and cruises.

You can, of course, still come and see us in the office, but Great Value Travel gives you another option to find the holiday that is right for you.

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I AM NOT AFRAID
OF STORMS,
FOR I AM LEARNING
HOW TO SAIL MY SHIP.

LITTLE
WOMEN

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS: LEAF QUOTES, MISTLETOE, CAROLS, I SAW THREE SHIPS,
HOLLY & IVY, PARTRIDGE & A PEAR AND SO MUCH MORE...