



## Spring is in the air



Photo: Gary Bendig

Every year, the cold of winter melts away and spring brings a new beginning.

The actual first day of spring depends on whether you are referring to meteorological, astronomical or phenological spring.

Meteorological seasons are based on the annual temperature cycle and by this calendar, spring will always start on 1 March; ending on 31 May.

Astronomical seasons refer to the position of Earth's orbit in relation to the Sun, considering equinoxes and solstices. Since the seasons vary in length, the start date of a new season can fall on different days each year. This year, astronomical spring begins on 20 March and ends on 21 June.

Phenology is the timing of seasonal activities of animals and plants and therefore the start

of spring depends on where you live. The BBC Weather Centre says 'Spring is coming about two weeks earlier than it would have been 30-50 years ago and autumn about a week later'.

Taking walks and seeing nature coming to life is part of what makes spring so great. Daffodils, celebrated by many poets, are some of the first spring flowers. Hares appear to behave strangely and excitedly throughout their breeding season, which in England peaks in the month of March. This odd behaviour includes boxing at other hares and jumping vertically for seemingly no reason.

Spring's warmer weather and increased daylight hours make it a most uplifting season.

## Celebrating the daffodil

### I wandered lonely as a cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850)

### Daffodil's Return

What matter if the sun be lost?  
What matter though the sky be grey?  
There's joy enough about the house,  
For Daffodil comes home to-day.

Bliss Carmen (1861 - 1929)

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# Notices & news

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## **Robin Hartwell**

Robin Hartwell sadly passed away at the age of 89 on Wednesday 27 January. Robin was a loving, loyal husband, father and grandfather. He lived a wonderful life and his legacy will be lived on through his family. Robin was also a good friend to many in the village and the wider Oxfordshire farming community and will be very sadly missed by all those whose lives he touched.

We would like to thank everyone for their kind words in the many cards and letters that we have received. They have been a great comfort to us. We would also like to thank Charlbury Medical Centre and the NHS for the wonderful medical care and support that we received.

The Hartwell Family

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## **Christmas Food Parcels**

As one of the recipients, I would like to thank everyone involved in giving the food parcels at Christmas. After living here for 70 odd years, I feel very fortunate to still live in Stonesfield. Thank you.

(Name supplied)

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## **Village Hall news**

March marks the twelve-month milestone from when the country first went into lockdown last year. With the exception of a couple of functions, it has been an enforced quiet year for the village hall but it has given us the opportunity to get some things

done and give us time to think about what we want to do to move forward.

We are really hoping that in the next few months we will be able to welcome groups back into the hall, people will be able to participate in clubs and there will be some sort of normality.

Please have a think about what you would like to do and how you would like to see the space used, and let us know. We look forward to hearing from you and to planning lots of exciting activities for the community.

Jacqueline Carthew (898919)

Secretary & Booking Clerk  
stonesfieldvh@gmail.com

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## **How disappointing...**

Having been informed on the morning of 12 February that our marquee was not in situ, we arrived to discover the damage.

On checking the CCTV, we saw two figures using a knife to cut the twelve ratchet straps which caused the marquee to blow over, splitting the roof and damaging the sky disc. This took place in the early hours of the Friday morning.

The Police have been informed but, if anyone has any information, please call Brian Clarke on 01993 891770 or Ben Tomlin on 07506 032438.

Brian Clarke (891770)

Stonesfield Sports & Social Club:

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## **Stonesfield's Spring Clean**

It is time for Stonesfield's spring clean! Litter pickers are now available to borrow in order to clean up our community. Stonesfield Parish Council has invested in 15 litter pickers and a supply of rubbish and recycling sacks for the use of all members of the community to help tidy up our village and surrounds and keep it litter-free on an ongoing basis. As it is unlikely that we will be able to meet in a large group for our Annual Village Spring Clean this year, the litter pickers are now available to borrow and litter pick at any time throughout the year whilst on your daily walk or exercise.

If you would like to book the litter pickers, please contact Jess Huband (email: [jesshuband@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jesshuband@hotmail.co.uk) or telephone/text 07970 107805) allowing at least 24 hours' notice. The litter pickers and bags will be left for Covid-19-safe collection in the bin store to the front of 5 Busby Close (off Greenfield Road).

When litter picking, please:

- Always wear gloves and wash your hands as soon as possible after litter picking. If possible, wear a hi-viz vest – be seen and be safe!
- Do not collect any hazardous waste such as dog poo or sharp objects; these should be reported to WODC for safe removal via the [fixmystreet website/app](http://fixmystreet.com) or telephone 01993 861000.
- Similarly, please also report to the above any instances of potholes, fly-tipping, blocked drains or pavement parking.
- Be mindful of traffic at all times.

Once finished, please sort the rubbish collected into recyclable/non-recyclable

bags. Recyclables can be deposited in the recycling bins at Stonesfield's recycling facility in Field Close off Greenfield Road or placed in your home recycling bin. All non-recyclables may be put in your household rubbish bin - please do not leave any non-recyclables at the village recycling facility.

Please return the litter pickers to the bin store at 5 Busby Close where they will be cleaned and 'quarantined' for 48 hours before being lent out again.

Volunteers are asked to note that this is not a Parish Council organised event and all litter picking is undertaken at your own risk. If you have any questions about any of the arrangements, please get in touch with me. Finally, thank you in advance for your time spent in helping to clean up the village!

Jess Huband

[jesshuband@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jesshuband@hotmail.co.uk)

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## **Tony Crofts 1939-2021**

The passing of Tony Crofts marks a sad day for the Stonesfield Community Trust as he was the last of the original Trustees whose vision and foresight made Stonesfield a model for housing trusts across the UK. During the 1980's, steep rises in property prices in West Oxfordshire were having a detrimental effect on many village communities. To combat this Tony donated a small plot of land and, together with local businesses and villagers, formed the Stonesfield Community Trust which built six dwellings (Friends Close) for rent to locals at affordable rates. This proved to be a very successful model so Tony and the Trust didn't stop there: today the Trust has 15 homes, business premises and the Pre-School which have enabled countless

individuals and families access to affordable housing over the last 38 years. On top of this, the Trust is able to grant money every year within the village to further education, sport and to support people with disabilities. The affordable housing need identified by Tony in the 1980's is even greater today and, thanks to Tony, Stonesfield is in a unique position to meet that need today and well into the future.

Our condolences to Tony's family and friends.

Trustees of the Stonesfield Community Trust

On 3 February one of the village's most notable characters in recent years, Tony Crofts, died in a care home in his native Bristol. Tony first arrived in Stonesfield in 1973 when he bought the Boot Inn from Ind Coope, renovated it and turned it into a very popular free house which ran for four years before finally succumbing to competition. While he was not able to leave Stonesfield with a thriving pub, he did leave us with something that he felt was far more important: the Stonesfield Community Trust and affordable housing.

I first got to know Tony in 1979 when I began dating his son, Lucien. At that time Tony was an agricultural journalist writing for the *British Farmer and Stock Breeder* and living at Home Close in the High Street. It was an eccentric household shared between Tony, Lucien, Tony's friend Jim Wingate and his two daughters living there part-time, and local potter Reg Mills dropping in regularly for a bath, there being no facilities at that time at the Boot Barn Pottery.

Tony was not a family man in the traditional sense. He treated his children

as equals and his home was always open to anyone in need. He was focused on finding solutions rather than simply talking about problems, never merely paying lip service to anything he believed in and, being a committed Quaker, community was something he was very passionate about.

Tony held strong, often radical, views about politics, education and society. He was an active member of the Quaker Peace Tax Campaign, for instance. He became increasingly concerned about the lack of affordable housing in rural communities which meant that young families were having to move away, leaving villages to gradually die and be taken over by second home owners. But it wasn't enough for him just to talk and write about it: Tony had a vision.

In the early 1980's he began to pursue the idea of a housing trust for Stonesfield that would build and manage houses at an affordable rent for its young people. He had land – the old Boot Inn car park – and one of his best friends was an architect. Together they began to plan Friends Close and in 1983 established, along with three other like-minded villagers, the Stonesfield Community Trust in order to find funding for, and manage, the properties.

It was typical of Tony that he gave the land to the Trust for free and Friends Close was built. Tony and the Trust went on to build the Rose & Crown development and redevelop Glover's Yard, which at the time provided a badly needed new home for the Post Office, the facility which is now the Pre-School and facilities for villagers to use photocopiers, fax machines and other office equipment at a time before home computing really took off.

Tony went on to found TEFL Training and he and his wife, Randy, made a gradual move back to his native Bristol. He finally left Stonesfield in 2011 after he sold TEFL Training and retired.

There can be no doubt that, of all the people who have contributed towards the betterment of Stonesfield and its community, Tony must rank near the top of the list. You only have to look at the trees rising out of the hedgerows along the Stonesfield Straight – the result of a vision he had for an avenue leading into the village, and which he persuaded the villagers to support by sponsoring a tree and looking after it. They may not all have survived but many are still there. So, the next time you drive that way and see the trees, think of Tony.

Becki Sherlaw-Johnson

The Parish Council was saddened to hear of the death of Tony Crofts. His efforts and generosity were pivotal in setting up the pioneering Stonesfield Community Trust during the 1980's and which continues to provide affordable housing to many individuals and families in the village today – what an amazing legacy.

Our condolences to his family and friends.

Stonesfield Parish Council

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## 2021 Census

The 2021 Census will arrive on 21 March. Information from the Census will assist councils in deciding how services are planned and funded in their area including transport, education and health – for instance: cycle routes, schools and dental surgeries. Every household will receive a letter in the post giving a unique access

code which will allow completion of the questionnaire online. Paper questionnaires will be available on request. Further information is available at [www.census.gov.uk](http://www.census.gov.uk).

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## Suriya Express shop hours

The revised shop opening hours, as advised in the February issue of the *Slate*, will remain in place at least until the end of March.

Monday - Friday:	7.30 - 19.30
Saturday:	8.00 - 19.30
Sunday:	8.00 - 19.00

The Post Office remains open with its usual hours: Monday - Friday 9.00 - 17.00; Saturday 9.00 - 13.00 and is closed on Sunday, although Mat and Rekha will be happy to serve you at any time during shop opening hours.

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## Healthwatch Oxfordshire

Healthwatch Oxfordshire would like to hear residents' views on the Covid-19 vaccine. The county's independent health and care watchdog is running a survey asking people what they think about the vaccine itself, information about the vaccine and how the vaccine is being delivered. Please have your say by completing the survey at: [www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/CovidVaccine-yourviews](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/CovidVaccine-yourviews).

Healthwatch Oxfordshire will report what it hears to those in charge of managing the vaccine delivery locally to help identify if improvements are needed. All feedback is completely anonymous. To request a paper copy of the survey, or a translated version, call 01865 520520. For more information about Healthwatch Oxfordshire go to [www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk).



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## **The White Horse**

### **From the new owner**

Dear neighbours, friends and future customers

My name is Jon Bowers and I am fortunate enough to be the new owner of our lovely village pub, 'The White Horse'.

First of all, I would like to assure you all that I'm very keen to open the pub as soon as is feasibly possible. I regard myself as a custodian and am very community-minded, having been a former regular customer of The White Horse. As some of you know, I have been resident in the Cotswolds for over thirty years and have been in the village of Stonesfield since 2019. I would like to thank sincerely all of those neighbours and friends in the community who offered us such a warm and friendly welcome; it was greatly appreciated.

At this time, I am still considering the various options as to how exactly we might run and make the most of our community asset. It may be that my family run the pub but I have also received two other serious, genuine enquiries from people in the

village. I am not in a rush to make an immediate decision and therefore invite any interested parties (preferably with some hospitality knowledge) to contact me on the email address below.

This is an exciting but challenging time and the pub requires improvements in a number of areas which I am actively examining. I am hoping to make improvements to make the pub as Covid-19 safe as possible. I hope it won't be too long before we can all meet again and raise a glass or two together in our beautiful village pub. Cheers!

My best wishes to everybody.

Jon Bowers

whitehorsepub1@gmail.com

# Politics & local affairs

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## **Stonesfield Parish Council (SPC)**

**From the meeting held 3 February 2021**

**Gigaclear:** Gigaclear made a presentation to SPC. Gigaclear invests in rural communities by providing full-fibre broadband to premises. In the case of Stonesfield, approximately 658 homes would be covered by Gigaclear. Stonesfield is at the validation stage with work planned to commence in March and complete by the end of the year. All verges, pathways and roads will be reinstated within six months of completing the build with reinstatement being dependent on weather, materials, location and type of investment. All reinstatement is carried out to Highways and utilities committee standards. Any issues regarding Gigaclear's work may be reported to 01865 591137 or [networkbuildcare@gigaclear.com](mailto:networkbuildcare@gigaclear.com); this is a direct means of contact for residents. Gigaclear confirmed that this has already been authorised by OCC. This is future-proofing as, although people may not want the service now, they may require it in the future. If the work is to go across private land, no work will be carried out unless owners have signed wayleave agreements; in the case of public land, OCC has given its authorisation and therefore the work is permitted and will be carried out. Gigaclear plan to engage closely with the community and will be updating SPC on a frequent basis.

**Scouts:** Ben Whitworth joined the last meeting to introduce himself as the new Chairman for the Scouts. The group needs a cub leader and anyone interested should get in touch with Ben Whitworth: [chairman@stonesfield-scouts.org.uk](mailto:chairman@stonesfield-scouts.org.uk).

### **Planning:**

20/03527/FUL: Empire Homes (Farley Lane). Brendan O'Brien from Empire Homes attended the meeting to answer questions. Mr O'Brien advised that land prices are high and they have to work within the context of the policies which has dictated the size of the properties they are building. The Parish Council advised that smaller houses/affordable housing is what is really needed. The Council asked about the state of Farley Lane. It was confirmed that no works are planned for Farley Lane as this is an adopted road. Farley Lane is busy but the previous approval of a development of flats is not helping the situation. The Council resolved to agree no objection to this development but with comments to WODC regarding the mix of housing and concerns over access.

21/00027/LBC: Mr & Mrs Maroney (internal alterations, Clockcase, Laughton Hill) The Council resolved to agree no objection to this development as all the work is internal.

**The White Horse public house:** The renewal application for the Asset of Community Value has been accepted by WODC. This is good news. We are aware that the ownership of the pub has now changed. Cllr Bishop and Councillors



reiterated that if the pub is re-opened by the new owners the village must use it or it will undo the good work that the community has done; the more it is used, the more it will be preserved. The Clerk will ascertain whether the new owner would like to attend a meeting of SPC to inform Councillors of his plans for the pub.

**Finance:** A grant request of £2,000 was received from the Playing Fields Committee to be paid in the next financial year (ie. after April). It was resolved unanimously to approve this grant.

**Village survey:** The Parish Council will be surveying the village over the coming months with the intention of repeating this exercise every two years. The aim is to conduct a fact-finding exercise to ascertain what is wanted in the village and to assist SPC in planning expenditure and resources.

**Date of next full Parish Council (public) meeting:** Wednesday 3 March 2021 at 7pm. This will be a Zoom virtual meeting.

**Please clean up after your dog**

Dog mess is the most unacceptable and offensive type of litter on our streets. Would residents please be reminded to clear up after their dogs and take the waste home or dispose of it in the nearest dog waste bin. We have seen an increase in dog mess being left in the village, particularly around Farley Lane, Stockey Bottom and on the track to the scout hut. Some mess has been bagged but the bags have then been left around the village; this is unsightly but also unsafe: whilst rare, contact with dog excrement can cause toxocariasis – a nasty infection which can lead to dizziness, nausea, asthma and even

blindness or seizures. Anyone who fails to clean up after their dog can be issued with a fixed penalty notice of up to £100 and if a case were to go to court, the owner or person in charge of the animal could be fined up to £1,000. The law states that being unaware that a dog has fouled or not being in possession of a suitable bag is not a reasonable excuse. Thank you.

Parish Clerk

**From our District Councillor**

Certainly, as far as the Committees on which I serve are concerned, the Covid-19 crisis has dampened the enthusiasm for meetings, this exacerbated by the vagaries of Zoom and Webex. However, District still functions as much as ever with agreement to support the projected 20mph speed limits in built-up areas, particularly those villages such as Stonesfield and Combe which have resolved to press for speeds to be limited.

Council has also agreed to support fully the review of provisions for future development of the A40 corridor. This is particularly relevant to the projected two new roundabouts from and to Salt Cross. Plans, outline and detailed, for the new Garden Village near Eynsham are now well advanced and the whole project is taking shape.

Flooding, both recent and historical, occupies the minds and plans of the Environment Committee. Combe figures in all this as Michael Green wrote to me with a detailed and finely illustrated request for some action to relieve the flooding which regularly occurs at and under the railway bridge at Combe Halt station. Having passed his request to the appropriate department, I await developments.

Grants from the District Council for businesses in West Oxfordshire are still being processed with some 140 still outstanding. To date over £915,000 has been allocated.

The Council's waste collection service apologises to residents in both our villages for a missed collection earlier this month. This was occasioned by the unexpected snowfall immediately following the Christmas and New Year changes to the schedule. From my perspective, both as a resident and a councillor, I applaud the services generally. I think our waste disposal department does a marvellous job in all weathers and does it all cheerfully and with no fuss.

It has been confirmed that the elections in May will take place. All electors are urged to apply for a postal vote, thus avoiding complications with Covid-19 regulations. Forms are available from Electoral Services (Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1NB) telephone: 01993 861000.

Keep safe, obey the rules and live as fully and happily as possible.

Cllr Richard Bishop (891414)

[richard.bishop@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:richard.bishop@westoxon.gov.uk)

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## **More news from West Oxfordshire**

### **Salt Cross Garden Village**

After public consultation last autumn, WODC has formally submitted the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP) to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination.

The Salt Cross Garden Village will be a new stand-alone settlement, self-contained with its own village facilities, such as schools, community resources and employment

opportunities. The initial garden village proposals set out in the Local Plan include 2,200 new homes and a new science business park which will give local people an alternative to working in Oxford. Nearby Hanborough railway station, together with a new Park & Ride facility to the north of Eynsham, will offer people an alternative to using their cars.

The Action Plan and relevant documents and reports are available to view at: [www.westoxon.gov.uk/gardenvillage](http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/gardenvillage). Due to the current public health situation, hard copy documents cannot be made available at the Council's usual 'deposit locations'; however, anyone requiring access to physical documents should email the planning policy team at: [planning.policy@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@westoxon.gov.uk) or telephone 01993 861667.

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## **Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)**

### **Covid-19:**

Oxfordshire County Council continues to work with WODC and the NHS to help residents, particularly the vulnerable, but the help of local voluntary groups is proving to be invaluable and is greatly appreciated. Thank you to everyone involved for their assistance.

### **Budget:**

The Council set its budget in early February with £400,000 extra funding for roadside drainage/vegetation clearance and the introduction of 20mph speed limits in those villages which desire them. Recent heavy rainfall has highlighted areas that require additional work to keep the drains clear and I will ensure that those areas are cleared more frequently. The work will be coordinated with WODC to

ensure the kerbs are clear so that the rain does not push the debris into the drains. The additional funding for 20mph speed limits will be to work with Parish Councils which see a lower limit as part of the solution to bring down vehicle speeds.

Other key points of the budget:

- £1m long-term funding would be invested in expanding the youth offer in Oxfordshire. A study is due to report in the Spring on the needs of young people and how support can best be provided. An additional £500,000 will also be provided to help tackle the impact of the pandemic on young people.
- An extra £4m will be added to the adult social care budget for 2021/22 including £1.35m for managing risks such as provider sustainability.
- The Better Care Fund (BCF) seeks to join up health and care services so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing and live independently in their communities for as long as possible. For 2020/21 the County Council agreed with health partners that £1.2m of the improved BCF for Oxfordshire would be used to deliver better outcomes over the winter period in the county. Although this was one-off funding, the Council is proposing to continue the funding for 2021/22 in order to support measures which help people being discharged from hospital and enable better outcomes.
- The number of adults of working age with physical disabilities has increased in 2020/21 and overspends are forecast for both at-home and residential care. While this is being managed within pooled resources between the NHS and

the Council in 2020/21, it is not anticipated that this can be maintained in the long term. Pending a review of the needs and activity for these service users, £750,000 has been proposed to support expenditure on assessed care needs from 2021/22.

- The County Council is part of a joint partnership formed in 2017 to procure and manage services for single homeless people in Oxfordshire. A further one-off contribution to the partnership of £500,000 was included in the budget, with £250,000 of this allocated for 2020/21 and the same in 2021/22. The Council is proposing to continue its support for the partnership from 2022/23.
- During the period of the pandemic, there has been an increased uptake of drugs and alcohol residential rehabilitation services and this has led to the Council's proposal to put an extra £50,000 into existing services.
- A £300,000 fund is proposed to support innovative community-developed projects and activities aimed at improving people's health and wellbeing in Oxfordshire. £150,000 of this will be new funding and the remainder will come from existing public health budgets.
- An extra £330,000 will be invested into children's services to increase early intervention services, the skill base of children's social care workers and special educational needs.
- £100,000 would be invested in issues linked to digital exclusion.

- £81,000 would be invested in domestic violence services and £150,000 into apprenticeships.

We will continue to find savings both within the Council and with our partners in order to protect frontline services as well as new investment. A rise of 2.99% in Council Tax consists of 1.99% in basic Council Tax and 1% for adult social care.

The roll out of the vaccine is welcome news, giving us all hope that we can beat the virus. However, it still poses a real threat and we must all play our part in stopping its spread - please continue to follow the Government guidelines.

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

### **Sustainable Stonesfield: Stockey Woods**

Due to the current Covid-19 lockdown, no further information is available about our campaign to get Stockey Woods made into a 'village green'. We know that Blenheim withdrew their objection to our application but we have to wait for the final decision from Oxfordshire County Council, the regulatory authority. They have told us they cannot comply with various legal procedures necessary for a decision until lockdown is over. Rest assured that, as soon as we have the final decision, we will advertise it on the village website, Nextdoor Stonesfield and the next edition of the *Slate*.

Richard Morris, SUSTO

### **SAFER (Stonesfield action for enhancing road safety)**



**Road safety:** The news that OCC is providing extra funding for roadside clearance and the introduction of 20mph speed limits is positive for Stonesfield and supports the 'Making Stonesfield Safer' report produced by the SAFER team which was submitted to OCC in July 2020. The report recommends a reduction in the speed limit to 20mph as its primary objective for the village. Aside from this, the report also contained a number of initiatives to improve road safety including fitting blind spot mirrors, the repainting of road markings (some of which has been carried out) and installing new signage and markings to calm traffic around Laughton Hill. The ongoing Covid-19 lockdown has delayed nearly all of the proposed improvements in our report, something which is completely outside our control; however, we continue to operate two speed indicating devices (SIDs) in the village to remind drivers to slow down and stay within the current speed limits.



**Villages Travel Network:** Stonesfield is represented on the ‘Villages Travel Network’ project; this has eight West Oxfordshire villages participating and is still in its early stages. The project aspires to create safer cycling routes, better walking routes and clearer signage, and to negotiate access to pathways within Blenheim for walkers and cyclists. Regular updates on the progress of this initiative will be published in the *Slate*.

**Potholes and puddles:** During wet weather, puddles collect in the hundreds of thousands of potholes that litter the UK’s roads and sometimes it is hard to avoid them. For pedestrians and dog-walkers who have to share the road with cars, they are at risk of being splashed or soaked if a vehicle drives through a puddle too fast – so is it illegal to drive like this? The answer is yes: splashing pedestrians is illegal and drivers can be prosecuted under Section 3 of the Road Traffic Act for careless, aggressive or inconsiderate behaviour on the road. This can result in a court summons, a fine of £150 and three penalty points as well as an increase in insurance premiums. The same applies to cyclists and motor-cyclists. Whilst it is accepted that all road users must consider and be responsible for their own safety at all times, please be considerate when driving past walkers who step aside for vehicles to pass by slowing down and avoiding soaking them.

Cllr Michael Heduan MBE, SAFER  
m.heduan@stonesfieldpc.uk

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## **Neighbourhood Watch**

Neighbourhood Watch has launched a rural crime section covering such issues as fly-tipping, heritage crime, theft of livestock or farm machinery and livestock worrying. Further information is available at [www.ourwatch.org.uk/rural-crime](http://www.ourwatch.org.uk/rural-crime).

Warnings have been issued of a scam concerning arrangements for coronavirus vaccinations: a phishing email purporting to come from the NHS asks the recipient to click on a link to accept or decline an invitation for vaccination whereupon personal and banking information is requested. Please be aware that the NHS will *never* ask for banking or card details, a PIN or password, proof of identity by way of sending personal documents, or arrive unannounced to administer a vaccination.

The Police Community Support Officer reports continuing issues of criminal damage and trespass to land at the rear of William Buckland Way; this is the field on the left as one leaves Stonesfield for Combe on the Combe Road. This area falls within the countryside stewardship scheme and has to be maintained in a particular condition. Walkers using it as a footpath are causing it to deteriorate. Fencing, gates, security measures and signage have been vandalised and/or destroyed on several occasions and maintenance workers will shortly undertake a third bout of repairs. Any information in relation to this matter should be reported to the PCSO. (Email to: [helen.keen@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk](mailto:helen.keen@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk)).

# Education, culture & more

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## **Stonesfield Pre-School and Day Care**

**100 Club:** The winners of the 100 Club February draw are:

1<sup>st</sup> prize – Robert Hedges £25

2<sup>nd</sup> prize – Hilary Armale £10

## **Welcome to new children and Term 3 activities**

It's hard to believe that this time last year everybody's lives were about to change drastically. Everyone dealt with many challenging moments and Pre-school was under threat of closure. As you all know, and with the help of an amazing

community, we made it through and here we are just about to start Term 4. This term we will be welcoming new children and their families to our very friendly Pre-School and old friends will be returning. If you would like to find out more about enrolling your child with us, please contact Zena Rozee, our administrator at [stonesfieldpsad@outlook.com](mailto:stonesfieldpsad@outlook.com)

Term 3 was very exciting: snow days, frosty days, windy days and very wet days but this always adds to the excitement of outside play. Our motto has always been 'there's no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing' so we have been enjoying every moment possible to play outside whatever



*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))

the weather. Snow brought the opportunity to build a very jolly snowman, the frost gave us the opportunity to find ice hidden in and around the garden and this also taught the children the importance of gloves, mittens and hats! The downpours flooded our garden and became the perfect area to jump and splash in huge puddles; this taught the children how to dress and prepare themselves appropriately. Whilst playing outside, the children have also noticed signs of new life as the bulbs begin to poke through the ground.

The last week of term was the lunar celebration of Chinese New Year. The children had a fun-packed morning making lanterns, red money pockets and head-dresses representing the year of the Ox; and they tasted noodles, soy sauce, prawn crackers and satsumas. They also enjoyed decorating a cardboard box to

create a bright red dragon's head and then performing the Chinese dragon dance in time to the lovely drumming by a small group of children.

This term we will be reading and enjoying traditional and classic children's stories. We have already made a start by introducing the story of Little Red Riding Hood which was not planned but this is how we do most of our learning - being led by the children's interests - so we have decided to continue with this theme.

One last thing: May we also take this opportunity to thank everyone who has donated resources and toys to us over the last few months; we greatly appreciate everything that is given to us, so thank you very much.

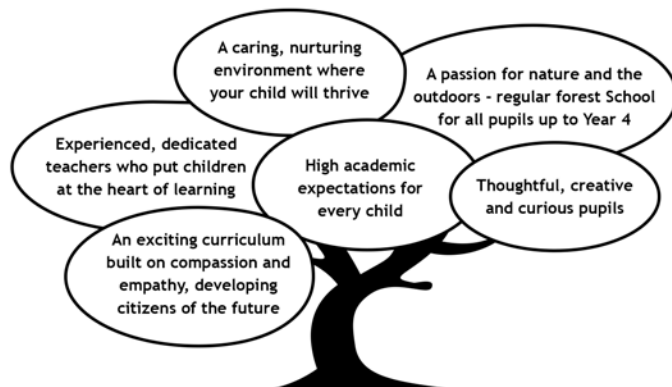
Louise John

## 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)

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## **Stonesfield Primary School**

Stonesfield children deserve a great village school. A thriving primary school is an essential part of village life. Would you like an opportunity to join our team of Governors working to give the children of Stonesfield (and some from neighbouring villages) the best possible educational experience?

What could be a more important way to help the village community? It could also bring added interest to village life and give you the opportunity to gain experience and skills such as running and chairing meetings, public relations and business planning. We are looking for a range of skills and experience, including financial, and we are open to discuss any possible offers.

If you are interested, or would like to have an informal chat, please email us at: [office.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:office.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk) with your name and contact details and we will get right back to you.

Sue Corrigan and Harry Holland, Co-Chairs

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## **We're going on a bear hunt...**

When was the last Stonesfield bear hunt? With our third lockdown, sheets of rain, flooded fields and home schooling, an expedition is required. However, the expedition members are not looking confident; they can't see the necessary equipment for a bear hunt - the leader only has glass jars and a magnifying glass. The two five-year olds have a game of naming bears but have not yet heard of 'water bears'. The route is down to Stockey Bottom; once past the fairy tree, we are looking for places that the bears might live.

Tardigrades (water bears) thrive where water collects in gnarled old trees. A microcosm develops that is ideal for mosses, lichens and liverworts (food for bears). Tardigrades are rarely larger than 1mm, have eight legs with claws and are almost indestructible. If they dry out, their bodies vitrify forming a glass-like cocoon which allows them to exist in suspended animation: they can drop their metabolism to 0.01% of their normal rate. They can withstand temperatures as high as 149 degrees Celsius and as low as minus 200 degrees Celsius, and they can survive pressure at the bottom of the oceans or being taken into low earth orbit.

Understanding the unseen in our environment is increasingly important. Ice and snow have delayed the expedition but we are ready to set off on the bear hunt!

John Sampson

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## **Storytelling project for older carers**

A call-out for interest: Are you (or do you know) a carer who is over 60 and living in Stonesfield? Would you like the chance to find, shape and share stories about your life and hear other people's stories too? If so, I'd love to hear from you. I'm applying for funding to set up and run this free storytelling project in late spring which will be hosted by the Stonesfield Players. Carers of all kinds are welcome, from people who do their neighbour's shopping to those who give round-the-clock care, paid or unpaid, as well as people who have been carers in the past.

If you'd like to know a bit more, here is a link to the video of my last carers' storytelling project: [www.bit.ly/lockdowncinders](http://www.bit.ly/lockdowncinders). One of the participants



said: 'I thoroughly enjoyed doing the project, found the workshops really interesting, and actually found it very therapeutic to spend time with other carers who could relate to the unique challenges we faced in lockdown.' If you think this sounds like it might be for you, or you know someone who might be interested, please get in touch. I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

Georgie Steele (898889)

georgie@thesteels.org

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## **The Wychwood Project**

The Wychwood Project ([www.wychwoodproject.org](http://www.wychwoodproject.org)) restores habitats in the area formerly covered by the Wychwood Forest, managing nature reserves in Witney, Charlbury, Woodstock and Hailey. It also runs events and initiatives to help local communities engage with nature.

It has now launched a new collaboration with its artists-in-residence, Nimmi Naidoo and Flora Gregory, to explore how local communities experience the Wychwood. They would like to gather photos, videos, poems, artworks or anything else that people would like to share about their favourite places in the Wychwood area, to explore how we perceive our local environment. Contributions will be shared online as well as on its Instagram channel (@wychwoodproject) with the aim of encouraging local audiences to explore new places around them and to see familiar places with fresh eyes – perhaps particularly valuable at present. Whether it is a space with wonderful birdsong, that one tree you always admire or a path you walk along every day, the artists would love

to see, hear or read of your impressions. Please send any contributions to the email address below or telephone for further information.

Miranda Davies (07584 262437)

miranda@wychwoodproject.org.uk

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## **Local history: Heythrop Park 8 miles North of Stonesfield**

Heythrop Park was designed by the architect Thomas Archer for Charles Talbot, 1st Duke of Shrewsbury. Shrewsbury had travelled in Italy on an extensive Grand Tour, between 1700 and 1705. Apparently the duke had already decided to build in 1700, before he left for Italy, because of his failure to buy Cornbury Park. Shrewsbury's disappointment supports the enthusiasm for classical architecture that he had acquired before he left England.

In Rome, Shrewsbury visited the villa of Domenico de' Rossi in 1702, to 'lay aside some prints' by the architectural engraver of the Studio di architettura civile di Roma, full of designs by Borromini and Bernini. In 1704 Shrewsbury obtained a plan for a house from Paolo Falconieri. On his return to England, apparently possessing at least Rossi's first volume (of 1702), Shrewsbury called upon Archer to create a modern Italian palazzo set in the Oxfordshire countryside. At this time, Archer was one of the few English architects to have studied in Italy and become conversant with the Baroque forms of architecture.

Archer's design was, as requested, in the Italian Baroque style. On the entrance facade of eleven bays, the giant order with a level balustraded roof is very similar to the design which William Talman had executed for the Duke the Devonshire at

Chatsworth House just a few years earlier. Like Chatsworth, Heythrop Park comprises two floors linked by the giant order standing upon a raised semi-basement.

Work on the house began in 1706. The building contractors were William and Francis Smith of Warwick. The stone used is Chipping Norton Limestone from local quarries. By 1709 the roof was in place and by 1713 the house was ready for partial occupation, but John Vanbrugh noted in April 1716 that it was incomplete, and so it was still, on Shrewsbury's death in 1718.

Heythrop Hall passed through various generations of the Talbot family until, in 1831, a fire swept through the house destroying the interiors, many designed by James Gibbs, including a quatrefoil hall, a feature believed to have been unique in England.

After the fire the house remained derelict until sold to the railway contractor Thomas Brassey in 1870 as a wedding present for his third son Albert Brassey (1840–1918). Brassey commissioned the eminent architect Alfred Waterhouse to rebuild the interior. Waterhouse, a noted Gothic Revival architect, in deference to the history of the house, worked in a neo-classical style; his double-height arcaded hall being more reminiscent of the Baroque of John Vanbrugh than Archer. However, Waterhouse did add Gothic motifs to the hall's clerestory in the form of stained glass windows, by Morris and Co, depicting Faith, Hope and Charity. The house remained in the possession of the Brassey family until 1926.

Heythrop Hall then became a college for the philosophical and theological studies of Jesuit scholastics. During this period the house was altered and enlarged. In 1926

two wings were added to the north front built of Hornton ironstone from north Oxfordshire. Like Chipping Norton Limestone it is a Middle Jurassic limestone, but its higher ironstone makes it much darker and browner than the stone used to build the house in the 18th century. In 1952, the indoor tennis court was converted to a chapel and in 1965, a library was added. In 1960, the architectural firm of Howell, Killick and Amis created two halls of residence in the grounds in a contemporary style.

When in 1970 the Jesuit college moved to London as part of the University there, the National Westminster Bank group bought Heythrop Park and turned the house and its precincts into a training and conference centre.

In 2000, Heythrop Park was bought by Firoka Ltd with the aim of restoring the house to its former glories and establishing one of the UK's leading luxury hotel, golf and country clubs. All staterooms and bedrooms in the manor house were refurbished to form a series of grand lounges and meeting rooms, as well as 17 luxury bedrooms, and a renovation of the public areas and 160 further bedrooms.

In 2009, the Health Club and Spa opened alongside the championship 18-hole golf course, as part of a £50 million redevelopment programme. A year later, Oxfordshire's only Crowne Plaza Hotel opened at Heythrop – the first Crowne Plaza in the world to be built outside a city centre or airport location.

In 2018 Heythrop Park Resort was sold to Warner Leisure Hotels to become the 15th property of the hotel chain.

Paul Bates

# Clubs, societies & sport

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## **Stonesfield Allotments Association**

There is a stirring on the allotments – shoots have been seen, seeds are ordered and plans are being laid for the year ahead.

## **Woodstock Road allotments**

Contact: Louise John  
louinpumbro@gmail.com

## **Churchfields allotments**

There are currently three names on the waiting list at Churchfields.

Contact: John Sampson  
john.sampson9@btinternet.com

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## **Stonesfield Gardening Club**

The Gardening Club has been dragged kicking and screaming into the internet age by the pandemic and we held our first ever Zoom AGM last month. The event was well attended by members and committee and the work of the AGM completed. Our Treasurer noted that our financial situation is sound and that we will not be asking existing members for subscriptions this year. We have put together a provisional

calendar, mostly based on postponements from 2020, and hope that we can fulfil some of these.

Our new committee is as follows: Wendy Gould, Diane Bates, Paul Bates, Suzy Boardman, Gaye Olesen, Jill Rowlinson, Helen Taylor and Trisha Williams.

Our meeting this month will be another virtual one. On Monday 8 March we have a Zoom talk entitled 'A Life in Plants' from Timothy Walker, who is very experienced in online presentations. You never know, on the evening he is to speak we may be glad that we can stay inside in the warm to listen to him!

All members with internet access will be emailed an invitation to the meeting beforehand. If there is anyone in the village who would like to join in order to take advantage of the entertainment, please contact me.

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

## **STONESFIELD VOLUNTARY TRANSPORT SCHEME**

Volunteer drivers are available to take you for vaccination or other medical appointments. If at all possible, we can usually provide a lift at short notice (for an appointment the same day), but this cannot be guaranteed and a few days' notice is very helpful. Full COVID-19 precautions are in place to ensure your safety. As ever, there is no charge but we do welcome a donation for expenses.

**Please call Viv Kendall 01993 891803 to book transport.**

# Church news

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## **Church of England Worship at St James the Great, Stonesfield**

### **(Benefice of Stonesfield with Combe Longa)**

[www.stonesfieldparishchurch.org](http://www.stonesfieldparishchurch.org)

For any enquiries or help, including pastoral support, arrangements for funerals etc, please contact either a churchwarden or the Area Dean:

Churchwardens: Lindsey Sellar and Rachel Severn

[stonesfield@stonesfieldparishchurch.org](mailto:stonesfield@stonesfieldparishchurch.org)

Area Dean: The Revd Jeremy Auld, Rector of Woodstock and Bladon (810749)

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

### **Parish letter**

Easter is now only a few weeks away, falling at the beginning of April this year. This milestone, marking an end to winter hardships and the arrival of spring, with hope and new life, is eagerly anticipated by us all.

As we prepare for Easter, Lent offers a chance to reflect back and think forward. This might be in the context of the pandemic, as well as looking ahead to brighter times and the resurrection hope of Easter Day.

One resource to provide a framework for reflection during Lent is a series of articles provided by the organisation, Roots. Their publication 'Here – and there' considers the global pandemic in the context of Jesus' journey to the cross, through six

themes: healing presence, provision, isolation, living with tension, anguish and hope. Do take a look at this excellent resource: [www.rootsontheweb.com/i-am-looking-for/resources-for-lent-2021](http://www.rootsontheweb.com/i-am-looking-for/resources-for-lent-2021)

Services restart on Sunday 7 March – it will be so good to meet together again and you would be most welcome to join us. Sunday 14 March is a special service for Mothering Sunday, 28 March will mark Palm Sunday (with reading of the complete Passion story), and then Easter Day is 4 April. We also look forward to welcoming our new Rector, Revd Ralph Williamson, on Saturday 1 May.

### **Sunday 7 March: Lent 3**

9.30am Combe Parish Communion  
11am Stonesfield Parish Communion

### **Sunday 14 March: Mothering Sunday**

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

### **Sunday 21 March: Lent 5**

9.30am Combe Parish Communion  
11am Stonesfield Parish Communion

### **Sunday 28 March: Palm Sunday**

9.30am Combe Parish Communion  
11am Stonesfield Parish Communion

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## **Roman Catholic Worship**

Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for Lent 2021 (edited)

*'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem' (Mt 20:18)*

Lent: a time for renewing faith, hope and love

In his recent Lenten message Pope Francis reminds us of the greater purpose of Lent: that *'Jesus revealed to his disciples the deepest meaning of his mission when he told them of his passion, death and resurrection, in fulfilment of the Father's will. He then called the disciples to share in this mission for the salvation of the world.'*

Rather than see Lent as a dreary time of denial and abstinence, Pope Francis suggests that Lent offers us a chance to show love and care: *'Fasting, prayer and almsgiving, as preached by Jesus (cf. Mt 6:1-18), enable and express our conversion. The path of poverty and self-denial (fasting), concern and loving care for the poor (almsgiving), and childlike dialogue with the Father (prayer) make it possible for us to live lives of sincere faith, living hope and effective charity'.*

Pope Francis further indicates that Lent allows us to enter into a dialogue with God by opening our heart with candour and sincerity: *'In this Lenten season, accepting and living the truth revealed in Christ means, first of all, opening our hearts to God's word, which the Church passes on from generation to generation. This truth is not an abstract concept reserved for a chosen intelligent few. Instead, it is a message that all of us can receive and understand thanks to the wisdom of a heart open to the grandeur of God, who*

*loves us even before we are aware of it. Christ himself is this truth. By taking on our humanity, even to its very limits, he has made himself the way - demanding, yet open to all - that leads to the fullness of life.'*

The Pope reminds us to be hopeful, even in these dark times, as we may seek our God as a path to light: *'In these times of trouble, when everything seems fragile and uncertain, it may appear challenging to speak of hope. Yet Lent is precisely the season of hope, when we turn back to God who patiently continues to care for his creation which we have often mistreated (cf. Laudato Si', 32-33; 43-44). Saint Paul urges us to place our hope in reconciliation: "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). By receiving forgiveness in the sacrament that lies at the heart of our process of conversion, we in turn can spread forgiveness to others. Having received forgiveness ourselves, we can offer it through our willingness to enter into attentive dialogue with others and to give comfort to those experiencing sorrow and pain. God's forgiveness, offered also through our words and actions, enables us to experience an Easter of fraternity'.*

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 11 November 2020, the Memorial of Saint Martin of Tours Franciscus

### **Holy Mass during lockdown 3**

Sunday Masses are suspended during the current lockdown (Jan 2021)

### **Mass times during Lent:**

Weekday Mass during Lent in St Teresa's: Monday-Friday 9.30am and Wednesday at 7pm followed by exposition/benediction.

Stations of the Cross after the Friday Mass at 9.30am.

No need to book – all welcome; social distancing is strictly enforced.

[www.stteresaschurch-charlbury.com/2015/02/09/welcome-to-the-website-for-st-teresas-roman-catholic-church-charlbury/](http://www.stteresaschurch-charlbury.com/2015/02/09/welcome-to-the-website-for-st-teresas-roman-catholic-church-charlbury/)

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 at: [holytrinityrchippy@gmail.com](mailto:holytrinityrchippy@gmail.com) or 01608 642703.

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

Roman Catholic Community in Stonesfield

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## **Stonesfield Methodist Church**

World Day of Prayer: Vanuatu, South Pacific Ocean: Friday 5 March 2021

Each year millions of people across the globe take part in a World Day of Prayer service on the first Friday of March. The 2021 service at this Church is presently planned for the autumn when, all being well, it can go ahead safely. World Day of Prayer is an international inter-church organisation which enables us to hear the thoughts of women from all parts of the world, their hopes, concerns and prayers.

This year the women of Vanuatu have prepared a beautiful service, the theme of which urges us to 'build on a strong foundation' and to live in unity, love and peace. Many services this year will not go ahead in the normal way due to Covid-19 but we can still celebrate with the people of Vanuatu, uniting with them in thoughts and prayers.

WDP makes amazing grants each year to support charities worldwide; if you wish to make a donation, please send it to WDP. Further information is available on the website ([www.wwdp.org.uk](http://www.wwdp.org.uk)) together with details of the service and arrangements for the weekly Sunday Circuit Zoom Services which will continue until services resume in Church.

*'Unless the Lord builds the house, those that build it labour in vain. Unless the Lord builds the city, the guard keeps watch in vain.'* Psalm 127:1. The opening verse chosen by the women of Vanuatu.

Kathleen Albért (891733)

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See page 6 for temporary changes to opening times  
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