



Issue No 516 August 2021



Proposal for new Bicester constituency

Source: Boundary Commission for England

As you may have seen in the press, the Boundary Commission has forwarded its proposals for new constituency boundaries. West Oxon, and the whole of Oxfordshire, is quite significantly altered by these proposals.

The independent commissioners' job is to ensure that constituencies must have no less than 69,724 Parliamentary electors and no more than 77,062. With 84,000 registered voters at the 2019 General Election, it has been clear that changes would be proposed to the Witney constituency to reduce this.

Indeed, it has been clear for some time now that significant changes would be required to constituencies across Oxfordshire during the next Boundary Review, owing in large part to the level of growth in and around Bicester.

This constituency therefore would change significantly. A new constituency would

include the Eynsham & Cassington, Freeland & Hanborough, North Leigh, Stonesfield & Tackley, and Woodstock & Bladon wards. Witney constituency wards of Chadlington & Churchill, Charlbury & Finstock, Chipping Norton, Kingham, Rollright & Enstone, and The Bartons would become part of the Banbury constituency. To compensate for this, a number of wards currently in the Wantage constituency would join Witney.

These are only proposals currently and will undergo a huge deal of scrutiny and consultation. I would encourage all residents of the constituency to make your views known to the Boundary Commission however you feel about the changes. You can do so on the website www.bcereviews.org.uk before it closes on August 2.

Robert Courts MP

Dates for your diary

August

1	Open Day	Combe Mill	10.30am-4.30pm
2	Closing date for boundary changes feedback	www.bcereviews.org.uk	
2,9,16,23	Monday Coffee	St James' Centre	10-11.30am
3,17	Carers' Café	St James' Centre	10am-12noon
15	Combe Mill Steaming Day	Combe Mill	10am-5pm
22	Wychwood Forest Fair	Foxbarrow Wood, Witney	11am-5pm

September

1	Parish Council meeting	TBC	TBC
5	Afternoon tea	Combe Reading Room	2.30-5pm
12	Open Day	Bridewell Organic Garden	11am-4pm
18	Stonesfield Scouts Duck Race	Evenlode Bridge	3pm

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Notices & news

Jackie Fuller

Fred, Simon, Jason, Tim and family would all like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has sent kind messages, calls and sympathy cards following the death of our wife and Mum, Jackie Fuller. Jackie lived in Stonesfield all her life and very much loved the village; it had huge sentimental memories for her as her whole family lived here or extremely close by.

We would love to say a huge thank you also to Reverend Roy for the lovely service he gave for Jackie at the North Oxfordshire Crematorium. We would also like to extend this thank you to Nicholas and Lauren at Jerrams Funeral Directors, for all their kindness and care during the organisation of her funeral, and for organising a way to donate money back to Sobell House in Jackie's memory after she received the most wonderful care from them during her final few weeks.

The Fuller Family

SUSTO's opinion about the proposed Constituency Boundary changes

What's an MP for? I'm sure there are many answers, some of which might not be complimentary and certainly not printable.

One of the main responsibilities of an MP is to represent the interests and concerns of their constituency, irrespective of party.

If the forthcoming Parliamentary Boundary changes (see cover article) take

effect, Stonesfield will no longer be in the Witney constituency but will move to the new Bicester constituency, with its own new MP. Stonesfield will be in the far south-west corner of the new constituency, dwarfed by the growing urban settlements of Bicester, Eynsham and its new garden village, and the soon-to-be Kidlington-Yarnton-Cassington conurbation.

Bicester will also be a major settlement in the Government's Oxford-Cambridge Arc proposals that will bring hundreds of thousands of new houses to Oxfordshire. The likelihood is that the population of the new constituency will very soon break the 77,062 upper limit – I wonder if this has been taken into account?

Perhaps most importantly for Stonesfield a third of the current Witney constituency is in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Stonesfield is in the Burford – Charlbury sub-area in the AONB and this was crucial in our battle against Cala Homes and their plan to build inappropriate housing in the village. There will hardly be any AONB in our constituency if we become part of the Bicester constituency – only the Evenlode valley of Stonesfield and Combe – so AONB 'interests and concerns' will be very low on the new MP's agenda.

Also, if a new Cotswolds National Park is created, as has been mooted, the AONB status may be replaced by it and the boundaries of the new National Park will be settled. It may be a convenient time for a developer-friendly authority to leave us

out and again an MP focused upon Bicester within the Ox-Cam Arc would have little interest in pressing our case to be included.

There are growing concerns about the water quality in the Evenlode river – see information in this issue from Robert Courts. The Evenlode will be insignificant in the new Bicester constituency so once again likely to be very low on the new MP's agenda. We should remain in the Witney constituency so the Evenlode and Windrush can jointly be represented.

Also I believe Stonesfield residents look to Witney as their natural local centre, not Bicester, for shopping, the cinema, restaurants and health care, or Oxford especially for the latter. We will continue to go to the Witney minor injuries unit, the podiatry services, opticians and dentist etc. If you have a concern about those health care services you'll need to write to your Bicester MP, yet the services will be in the Witney constituency. Will your new MP be as interested in improving Witney health care?

Public transport to Witney is poor, but at least it exists. There is no public transport to Bicester, other than going via Oxford. There is a natural divide created by the A44 and more importantly the M40. Again Stonesfield 'interests and concerns' will be very low on the new MP's agenda.

For these reasons, and I'm sure there are many more, I believe Stonesfield should remain in the Witney constituency. If you feel the same, **can I recommend you write to the Boundary Commission – by 2 August – expressing your opinion by following this link: www.bcereviews.org.uk.**

Richard Morris
for Sustainable Stonesfield (SUSTO)

Village Hall News

Now is the time when a lot of classes and groups wind down for the summer holidays, so we are hoping it will give us time to regroup and think about the months ahead.

As of 19 July, there is now the go-ahead for all activities, which means there is a lot of scope for new classes to start! If you are thinking of starting a new type of activity, or a group, get in touch and see if we are able to help you get it off the ground.

With the new freedom, we will still be encouraging risks to be acknowledged by all of the hall users to protect the people around them by considering safety aspects including ventilation, encouraging social distancing, hand washing and use of hand sanitiser.

Also in some cases, it may be appropriate for some activities or events to also include wearing face masks and social distancing, so that people who are clinically more vulnerable or not yet fully vaccinated can attend. Please be mindful that these requests can be made by the hirer / organiser and should be respected for access to their events / groups.

We will keep the Test and Trace methods, and continue to display the QR codes currently in place until further notice.

Hopefully we are moving into more relaxed times ahead.

Jacqueline Carthew (898919)

Secretary & Booking Clerk for Stonesfield Village Hall

stonesfieldvh@gmail.com

facebook.com/stonesfieldvillagehall

Maintenance of the playing field

The playing field and its associated pitches are maintained to their very high standards by a very small group of dedicated volunteers. These volunteers do their work in their own time and are unpaid. Consequently, when they are able to work and the weather is suitable, they are given priority over casual users of the field. During mowing, all that will be necessary is for casual users to move to a different part of the field. In most cases individuals will be able to work out for themselves where the mower has been and use that area, but on occasions the mower driver will politely request individuals to move. The committee will not tolerate any form of abuse to anyone involved in maintenance on the field. Individuals carrying out such abuse may be banned from using the playing field.



The committee would be grateful for help from volunteers who are prepared to drive the mower, particularly during school hours, under the direction of our head groundsman Mark Hatton. Any volunteers will be required to complete the groundsman computer-based training package from the Grounds Management Association; the cost of which will be borne by the Playing Field Association.

In future a sign will be placed at the entrance to the field advising that maintenance or mowing is being carried out and requesting that it is given priority. On the infrequent times that fertiliser is being applied, a similar sign will advise when it is being applied and any precautions that need to be taken. In addition we will try to advise potential users by social networks.

The understanding and cooperation of all casual users is necessary to ensure that we have a safe and well-groomed playing field.

Frank Huddleston, Secretary
Stonesfield Playing Field Association

Voluntary transport is keeping COVID precautions

In case you were wondering... lifts to medical appointments given by Stonesfield Voluntary Transport drivers are continuing to follow strict COVID safety precautions even after relaxation of restrictions on 19 July. The Government's advice is that people should continue to wear masks in indoor, enclosed spaces. We will still ask clients to wear a mask (as will the driver) and to follow our other safety precautions.

Viv Kendall (891803)
Stonesfield Voluntary Transport Scheme

Carers Oxfordshire

Carers Oxfordshire is a free advice and support service for unpaid adult carers in Oxfordshire. It is a partnership between Action for Carers Oxfordshire and Rethink Mental Illness Oxfordshire. Call 01235 424 715, email carersinfo@carersoxfordshire.org.uk or visit carersoxfordshire.org.uk.

Carers' Café...

... at the St James' Centre, Stonesfield,
Tuesday 3 and 17 August, 10am – 12 noon.

Calling all carers: do you provide help for someone - a child or an adult - who couldn't manage otherwise? Whether you care for them full-time, do their shopping or chat with them over a cup of tea, you're invited to the Carers' Cafe. And if you've cared for someone in the past, you're also welcome.

For more information, get in touch with Georgie on georgie@thesteales.org / 898889, or Lauren on laurennormanton@hotmail.com / 891509. Or just join us on the 3rd and/or the 17th for tea or coffee. See you there! Funded by Stonesfield Mutual Aid; observing COVID restrictions.

Book Break's Break

Book Break is taking its usual August break and we hope to resume our meetings early in September.

Throughout lockdown, we were pleased to be able to continue our weekly meetings of readings and discussion; initially on Zoom and once the regulations eased, at the St James' Centre where we could comfortably sit at a distance from each other. We have enjoyed a varied reading diet, initially making an escape from the realities of the pandemic by going down the rabbit hole into the fantasy world of *Alice in Wonderland*. We had all forgotten what a weirdly wonderful world it is, with its remarkable Tenniel illustrations. We then read *Mid-Winter Break* by Bernard MacLaverty and *Confession with Blue Horses* by Sophie Hardach; both very rewarding novels.

Currently, and for some end of term fun, we are reading *The Moving Toyshop* by Edmund Crispin – a 'whodunnit' story figuring a struggling poet and an amateur sleuth-cum-don, Gervase Fen. It's vintage and, in parts, very silly; perhaps of more interest to us than the plot is the setting in Oxford in 1938, with a car chase in a black Humber sedan up the Banbury Road to a junction between Wootton and Tackley, and the unlikely clues based on the limericks of Edward Lear.

As restrictions ease, we are hoping to return to the welcome of our original venue at Stonesfield Library.

Wendy Lynch (891107)

Quiz [kwiz] Noun: a test of knowledge, especially a brief, informal test given to students.

**Freeland WI Quiz
Friday 3 September,
Freeland Village Hall,
7.30pm**

Tickets are now on sale for the 2021 Quiz. They cost £8 per person and include the usual Ploughman's Supper. Maximum team size is six.

Contact Rosie James to reserve tickets: 01993 881997
colinandrosiejames@hotmail.co.uk

Stonesfield Pre School and Daycare

We are pleased to announce our 100 Club winners for the July draw:

1st Prize £25 Hayley Brooks
2nd Prize £10 Richard Willans

Congratulations to you both!

If you would like to take part in our 2021/2022 100 Club, please email stonesfieldpsad@outlook.com. We still have numbers available and would very much like your support.



Neighbourhood Watch scam alert

Neighbourhood Watch is warning about scam phone calls and emails. One such email appears to be from the NHS and invites you to apply for a 'digital coronavirus passport' – taking you to an official-looking website that asks for personal and banking details. The website has since been taken down, but in case you should experience similar emails and websites, know that **your vaccination status is obtainable FREE through the NHS App, NHS website or by calling the NHS on 119.**

Neighbourhood Watch advises taking a moment to think before parting with money or information in response to a phone call or email; to reject or ignore any requests and to contact your bank immediately if you think you have fallen for a scam. Any scams can be reported to

SERS (Suspicious Email Reporting Service) on report@phishing.gov.uk.

More information and support is available on www.ageuk.org.uk – search for 'Avoiding scams' and www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights/advice/how-to-spot-a-scam-alFiz5h8mnJ9.

Healthwatch Oxfordshire

Have you visited or been in touch with your GP recently? If so, Healthwatch Oxfordshire would like to know what your experience was like.

The county's independent health and care watchdog has a Feedback Centre on its website where people can leave a review of local health and care services, including GP surgeries as well as hospitals, pharmacies, dentists and care homes. You can share your experiences at www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/ services, or if you prefer to talk this through you can call 01865 520520, or write to us at the address below. It will only take a few minutes and your feedback could help change local care for the better!

Healthwatch Oxfordshire
The Old Dairy
High Cogges Farm
Witney
OX29 6UN

Safe Places Scheme – West Oxfordshire

A number of shops and businesses in West Oxfordshire offer a 'safe place' for vulnerable people (such as those with dementia, learning disabilities or mental health needs) when they feel lost, worried or threatened while they're out and about.



People who might need to use a Safe Place carry a card, which they fill in with the details of their chosen contact. The businesses display a distinctive window sticker like the one shown, so that the vulnerable person can easily identify them. When they show their card in a safe place, the business or shop will get in touch with their chosen contact and keep the vulnerable person safe until they arrive. A list of Safe Places in West Oxfordshire is on <https://www.safeplaces.org.uk/member-schemes/west-oxfordshire/>.

Safe Place cards are available from West Oxfordshire District Council (01993 861000) or Cottsway Housing (01993 891000). For more information contact jennifer.bennett@publicagroup.uk or www.safeplaces.org.uk. If anyone is interested in helping to run the scheme in West Oxfordshire, please contact Kathy Liddell at Oxfordshire Family Support Network, Kathy.Liddell@oxfsn.org.uk.

Woodstock swimming pool

The open-air swimming pool at Woodstock is open again from 22 July, with full compliance with national and local COVID guidelines. Prices will be frozen at 2019 levels, and early bird and group discounts will be available, with some special promotions such as 'Kids for £1'. Opening hours will be 7am – 7pm on weekdays, and 9am – 5pm at weekends, and booking is online or in person. The pool will remain open until 1 September.

Combe Mill - a place to discover

Combe Mill is the original sawmill and workshop of the Blenheim Palace Estate. A working industrial museum, it offers visitors a good insight into what work was like in Victorian times on a rural estate. The Mill is operated as a hands-on museum by the Combe Mill Society, and is run entirely by unpaid volunteers.



Our first open day this year was in June, for members and potential volunteers, and many people came to offer their skills to help maintain the Mill for future generations. Several visitors signed up as volunteers there and then... there is always room for more, so please do contact us if you are interested.

The Mill is open with the machinery in steam on 15 August, 19 September and 17 October. The August Steaming Day is a very popular one, with exhibitors bringing their Models and Collections to share with visitors. The September Steaming Day features Country Crafts, and Woodcrafts are the focus on 17 October.

We are also holding Non-steaming Open Days on 1 August, 5 September and 3 October, and every Wednesday from now until the end of October.

Group visits can be arranged with prior booking on any day for schools / cubs / scouts / brownies / guides / WI / historical societies / U3A or any other interest group.

The BBQ and Tea Room also tempt visitors to stay, relax and enjoy the views.

Tony Simmons

www.combemill.org

Afternoon tea at Combe Reading Room Advance notice

We are delighted to be back in the garden of the Combe Reading Room this year to hold our fundraising afternoon tea event. It will be on Sunday 5 September, and all proceeds will go to the Cystic Fibrosis Trust.

We will be serving cream teas, homemade cakes and hot drinks. We will also be

selling handmade gifts, cards and will be holding a raffle.

Cystic fibrosis is an inherited condition which causes the mucus in the sufferer's body to be thicker and stickier than usual, and this causes damage to the internal organs, particularly the lungs and digestive system. The Cystic Fibrosis Trust is dedicated to finding a cure for this life-limiting condition.

If you are not able to be there on the 5th but would like to support us, please contact Libby on 07958 595668 to purchase raffle tickets; £5 for a book.

Bridewell Open Day Advance notice

Bridewell Gardens is a flourishing and imaginative walled garden and vineyard where people recovering from enduring mental illness can rebuild their lives in a safe and supportive environment. Its features include a large pond in the cottage garden, an avenue of roses and apple trees, a knot garden, raised vegetable beds, a soft fruit cage and a herb wheel.

We look forward to sharing our beautiful gardens with you at our last Open Day of the year – Sunday 12 September, 11am – 4pm.

There will be a pop-up café in the garden for tea and cake, and plants for sale, juice, chutneys and our organic sparkling wine. Make a day of it, bring a picnic blanket and relax in the vineyard with friends and family. Dogs on leads are very welcome.

No booking is required; suggested donation £5 per person.

Bridewell Gardens,
The Walled Garden, Wilcote, OX7 3DT

Wychwood Forest Fair

This year's Forest Fair will take place on Sunday 22 August at Foxburrow Wood, Witney from 11am–5pm. With entertainment including rural crafts, ferret racing, falconry, food stalls and more, the fair is a fun way to enjoy a summer Sunday while supporting the Wychwood Project, a local conservation charity dedicated to restoring habitats across the historic Wychwood Forest area – most of West Oxfordshire.

The Fair will be largely open-air for COVID safety and will use more space than previous years. Tickets cost £8 in advance (from www.wychwoodforesttrust.co.uk/whats-on) or £10 on the door; under-16s can enter free.

In July 2021, a decade after merging with the Friends of Wychwood to form an independent charity, the Wychwood Project changed its name to the Wychwood Forest Trust. The charity hopes its change of name marks a positive new phase for nature conservation in the historic Wychwood area.

The Wychwood Project would welcome offers to volunteer at the Fair, or donations of second-hand books in good condition – please email miranda@wychwoodproject.org.uk or call 07584 262437.



Freeland Women's Institute

Oxfordshire WI aims to inspire women through experiences, knowledge and skills passed down through generations and updated every day.

Freeland Women's Institute is a very friendly group and invites new members. Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at Freeland Village Hall, Wroslyn Road at 8pm and consist of a varied programme of speakers, activities or outings. Please check out our Facebook page: Freeland WI.

Guests are welcome to attend up to three meetings before joining: we just ask for a contribution of £5 per visit. The annual subscription is £40 and is open to women aged 18 and over.

Don't be shy, come and give us a try! For further information please contact: Rosie James – 01993 881997 freelandwi@oxfordshirewi.co.uk

Blenheim Palace: Your own oak tree (or a very special gift)

Blenheim is giving people the unique opportunity to commemorate a special event or remember a loved one and help the environment at the same time, by having a tree planted on the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Oxfordshire estate is planting 1,000 new trees in native species including oak, cherry and beech, as part of its wider tree-planting programme to restore vital woodland habitat within Blenheim Park.

Most of the trees, grown from seeds collected on the estate, will be planted in the ancient woodlands of the Park, which is home to the greatest collection of ancient

oaks in Europe. Each tree sponsorship will cost £25 and include a personalised, limited edition certificate in a choice of design.



Blenheim is committed to becoming the country's first carbon-negative estate and is working with other groups and conservation organisations to create nine new woodlands on its land and plant more than 270,000 trees. For more information on the tree sponsorship programme and to purchase the gift of a tree, go to <https://www.blenheimestate.com/sponsor/>.

Step up for stomas

Did you know there are 160,000 people in the UK living with a stoma?

Colostomy UK is a charity that supports and cares for ostomates (people with a stoma) and it is self-funding. Owing to the pandemic, fundraising has been on hold so we need to generate some funds quickly to support key projects and services such as the 24-hour helpline.

During the month of September, the charity is organising StepUp for Stomas, and asking participants to take 160,000 steps over the 30 days. That's an average of 5,300 steps a day.

As an ostomate myself, I will attempt to take these steps and ask that you support my efforts for the charity, by donating whatever you can to encourage me. You can donate at my Just-Giving webpage: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Anthony-Taylor25. If you are eligible, please don't forget Gift Aid. Thank you so much.

Tony Taylor (891482)

Police and community support

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

STONESFIELD VOLUNTARY TRANSPORT SCHEME

Volunteer drivers are available to take you for vaccination, other medical appointments and also to the hospitals in Oxford and Banbury.

We can usually provide a lift at short notice (for an appointment the same day), but this cannot be guaranteed.

Full COVID-19 precautions are in place to ensure your safety.

There is no charge but we do welcome a donation for expenses

except for vaccination trips, which are free.

Please call **Viv Kendall 01993 891803** to book a lift in August.

Politics & local affairs

Stonesfield Parish Council (PC)

From the Parish Council meeting 13 July:

The PC will be doing some work on the common (fencing repairs) to maintain that area over the next few weeks. We will have some cattle back up there in October.

The Council reconfirmed that the White Horse pub has been registered as an asset of community value. The PC has no update on when the pub is opening.

Cllr Andy Graham explained that Oxfordshire has one of the highest COVID infection rates in the country at the moment. His full report has been placed on our website.

Planning applications:

Application no: 21/02281/HHD (Mr and Mrs L Cherrill) Proposal: Erection of rear and side single storey extensions. Location: 6 Hunts Close, Stonesfield. No objection.

Application no: 21/02246/OUT (David Hackett) Proposal: Erection of a detached dwelling with parking and amenity spaces. Location: 16 Combe Road, Stonesfield. PC was concerned about the size and vicinity to road as it exceeds the building line.

Application no: 21/02138/S73 (Brendan O'Brien) Proposal: Variation of condition 2 of permission 20/03527/FUL to allow the wall material of the garages to match the dwellings and to allow accommodation in roof space above garages to facilitate home working. Location: Farm Buildings, Farley

Lane, Stonesfield. Noted by PC and open for comment.

Application no: 21/01747/HHD (Steve Thomas) Proposal: First floor extension above garage with rear balcony. Location: 11 Cockshoot Close, Stonesfield. Open for comment. No objection.

Application no: 21/02139/CND (Brendan O'Brien) Proposal: Discharge of conditions of planning permission 20/03527/FUL: 4 (external window and door details), 9 (access between the land and the highway), 10 (parking area and driveway surfacing), 11 (full surface water drainage scheme and results of soakage tests), 12 (full surface water drainage scheme), 14 (integrated bat roosting and nesting opportunity details), 15 (details of external lighting), 16 (comprehensive landscape scheme), 18 (5 year Landscape and Ecology Management Plan) and 19 (maximum water consumption). Location: Farm Buildings, Farley Lane, Stonesfield. Noted by PC.

Gigaclear: The clerk continues to speak regularly with the company. A weekly schedule is being sent to the clerk and this is going on the website every week. We have asked Gigaclear to reassess the signage again. Gigaclear is to install a free community hub, and this will go to the school. The clerk is also trying to apply for a second free hub, for the village hall.

Neighbourhood plan: there has been no further progress but we hope to start talking about it in September.

Date of next meeting: 1 September 2021
(there is NO August meeting).

Karen East, Parish Clerk

clerk@stonesfieldpc.uk

www.stonesfield.online

SAFER update

Road Safety

You may have heard the good news that the Parish Council has agreed to adopt a 20mph speed limit across our village. The plan is to implement it by the end of this year, once Oxfordshire County Council makes the traffic regulation order to implement the scheme.

This is a great result for the SAFER team, who have been working on this scheme for almost 2 years. In the coming months, updates on the progress of this important step towards a safer Stonesfield can be found on the Parish Council website.

The installation of Gigaclear's fibre network in the village has been very disruptive. As only 30% of the village has pavements, it means walking alongside active road works and sharing any available space with moving traffic. Could I ask drivers to take these hazardous conditions into account and show consideration by slowing down and giving way to walkers where appropriate?

Village Travel Network

Work on developing a Village Travel Network (VTN) continues and a recent meeting with Blenheim Palace representatives has secured their support and some funding to start mapping some of the early VTN routes. The VTN initiative aims to create a network of safer walking, cycling and riding networks that link villages together. Routes in the network

will provide safer and more sustainable options for local communities that avoid busy roads, traffic pollution and will enable benefits for recreation and well-being. The villages are Bladon, Combe, Glympton, Hanborough, Stonesfield, Wootton and Woodstock Town.



Do you know any local routes that could become part of the VTN for cycling or walking?

We already have a wealth of OS maps to work from but this is an opportunity to think outside the box on how you would like the VTN to develop. All parishes involved in the VTN are being asked for local input. Your ideas, concerns and wish-lists for local traffic-free routes will be a great input to the VTN planning process. Please provide as much detail as possible, including pictures and sketches of problem areas, or even areas where things are working well. Send your VTN suggestions direct to me. Thank you.

Cllr Michael J Heduan MBE

SAFER (Parish Council Working Group)

m.heduan@stonesfieldpc.uk

www.stonesfield.online/safer/

News from West Oxfordshire

A40 underpass

West Oxfordshire District Council has submitted a bid for £16.7m to the Government's Levelling Up Fund to build a new underpass under the A40. The underpass would link communities on either side of the dual carriageway near Eynsham and provide a direct link for the new Salt Cross garden village. The Salt Cross development includes 2,200 houses and a new science and technology park. The underpass will be part of the new supporting infrastructure. A new roundabout is also scheduled for the A40 – this has been funded by the Government's Housing and Infrastructure Fund to improve journey times on the A40.

From our MP – Robert Courts

Pollution in the Windrush and Evenlode

Our MP has been active in the continuing campaign to stop sewage pollution in the Windrush and Evenlode rivers. In early July he appeared on BBC South to discuss the issue. He said he would continue to press Thames Water to do more to upgrade our local sewerage infrastructure, in particular the vital expansion of Witney Sewage Treatment Works. He is clear that Thames Water must do more, but reports that there is real cause for optimism, with the Government legislating on river pollution and an independent review underway into the Windrush.

Robert Courts has been calling on Thames Water for some time to fund an independent investigation into the health of the Windrush, and in July 2020, Thames Water accepted his

recommendation. The investigation is undertaken by the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH), an independent, not-for-profit research institute with expertise in the research of water quality.

Robert Courts is also engaging closely with the Evenlode Catchment Partnership on matters relating to our own river, and has pledged to continue to work with our local environmental groups, Defra, the Environment Agency and Thames Water to ensure we protect and enhance all our local rivers.

The use of storm overflows by Thames Water in rivers such as the Windrush and Evenlode has been the source of controversy in West Oxfordshire. They date back to Victorian times and were designed to be used during extreme weather to prevent sewers becoming overloaded with a combination of sewage and rainwater, releasing diluted wastewater into rivers rather than letting it back up into people's homes. However reducing the reliance of water companies on storm overflows is vital in helping to cut pollution in waterways.

The Government's Environment Bill seeks to place new legal duties on water companies, aiming to end harm from storm overflows. The Bill will require the Government to publish by September 2022 a plan to reduce sewage discharges from storm overflows and to report to Parliament on progress in implementing the plan; and a duty on water companies to publish data annually on storm overflow operation.

Robert Courts can be contacted at robert@robertcourts.co.uk.

Education, culture & more

Stonesfield Primary School

The end of an academic year is a great time to reflect (and recharge!) and I am delighted to say that Stonesfield Primary School has gone from strength to strength during the last year. Despite the challenges and pitfalls COVID-19 has thrown at us, our resilient staff have improved our curriculum and refined the teaching of English and maths. We are proud to see that this has been reflected in the high standards achieved by our children, particularly our year 6 leavers. Our pupils never fail to amaze us and in recent weeks they have reached the Science Oxford grand final, earned Junior Forester Awards and completed Level 3 cycle training (meaning our leaving Year 6s have the skills and confidence to cycle to Marlborough School through the grounds of Blenheim estate).

Our recent parent survey highlighted extremely positive views from parents, who recognised the higher academic expectations and improvement in teaching. Parents said that their children are happy and safe in a warm, nurturing inclusive environment. One parent summed up The Stonesfield Way perfectly: *‘A good balance between academic rigour and outdoor activities. The teachers are friendly and encouraging and know their pupils well. All my children are excited and keen to go to school every day.’*

Unfortunately, having avoided any positive COVID-19 cases since March 2020, the term ended with three pupils testing

positive and two classes having to self-isolate. Plans had to change at the last minute: no transition sessions for our new starters; no parents in for Sports Day and Leavers Assembly; frantic farewells as staff and children realised that self-isolation would take them into the summer holidays. Please look after yourselves and our village community over the summer – it is vital for our children to return to normality in September.

Finally, I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has marched down The Stonesfield Way this year and contributed to making Stonesfield Primary School such a brilliant place for children to learn and thrive: staff, pupils, parents, governors, our external partners, and our army of volunteers.

Have a lovely summer.

Ben Trevail, Head teacher
head.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk

Stonesfield Library

Opening hours: Monday 2 - 4pm;
Wednesday and Thursday 10am - 12noon.

Children's National Summer Reading Challenge

There's still plenty of time to join the Wild World Heroes in their quest to save Wilderville. The Challenge is for pre-school and primary school children and runs through the summer holidays.

It involves reading a total of any six library books, collecting stickers and a small prize each time you finish two, and ending with a certificate and a medal.

Parent alert: the Library is not yet back to full opening hours; the current hours are given above.

Date for your Diaries: The Friends of Stonesfield Library (FoSL) hope to hold a Celebration for all who finish the Challenge and achieve their medal. It will be at the Village Hall on Wednesday September 8 from 3.30 - 4.45pm.

Val Phillips (891455)

Nature Notes: Early Autumn

The last two weeks of August into mid-September are probably my favourite time for birding on the common. Calm mornings and a dawn start: there's always a chance of finding something a little different.

If a whinchat is around you can normally find them quite easily – they perch upright on low vegetation, normally in full view. Redstart are just about annual visitors though they remain a prized find. The bushes on the slope are a good place to look for them.

This is the best time to find sedge warbler. They are often best located along the river edge and you sometimes hear their 'tsek'!

alarm call before you see them. Mobile flocks of finches and tits are worth checking as they can attract migrants such as spotted flycatcher.



The Elder bushes are always checked – the more expected birds here are blackcap, chiffchaff, willow warbler and lesser whitethroat.

A very rare visitor to the common is grasshopper warbler. There are only a handful of recent records and they take some effort to find. It's a bird that 40 years or so ago you could hear singing as you fished at Sandy Bay.

Paul Wren

Butterfly Report, July 2021

Well it hasn't been a great butterfly season...so far. The cold spring, lack of sunshine and the wet weather have put paid to a bumper butterfly year.

Consequently, orange tips emerged much later, and there were far fewer seen around the village, compared to last spring. Numbers of peacocks, commas, red admirals, small tortoiseshells, speckled wood, green-veined whites and holly blues were also dramatically down.

Some surprising observations have, however, been made including my second ever sighting of a green hairstreak on our common during late May. On one of the rare, sunny days in June I took a late afternoon stroll over the downland and was pleased to list a number of interesting species, including a very worn small copper, a couple of bedraggled dingy skippers, lots of common blue butterflies and, to my surprise, several small heaths. I have not seen the latter species on our common for over a decade, so I was delighted to see this delicate little brown butterfly skipping over the grassland. Many of the common blue females were extremely variable; several quite striking and displaying excessive blue scaling on their upper sides.

Despite the poor weather, by early July the usual candidates were on the wing...large skippers, meadow browns, marbled whites and ringlets could be seen flying over the common and by mid-July the downland was alive with butterflies; scores of butterflies were observed feasting on the flowers of marjoram and knapweed, including the first gatekeepers. I am pleased to report that the dark green fritillary was also present in small

numbers, and I was lucky enough to witness and film the courtship display of this magnificent species.



Male marbled white

The late season has meant that as I write this report several species are yet to emerge. It remains to be seen as to whether the chalkhill blue will make a comeback... last year it was absent from my records.

So keep your eyes peeled – I would be delighted to receive any photos...I promise I will do my very best to make the correct determination! Happy spotting!

Martin Gascoigne-Pees

martin_g_p@hotmail.com

Listening to the birds

Just one species is responsible for the increasing damage to our planet. Its effect is seen in one of the fastest losses of species that are occurring *right now*. UK birds (244 species) are regularly evaluated, most recently in 2015. Sixty-seven are in the red list (RL) for those most at risk. Three birds were removed from the list as they are now extinct in the UK.

Cycling the highways and byways, with the deeper green leaves of summer, I rely increasingly on bird song for identification. Toiling up the hills I am disappointed by the yellowhammer (RL) saying I can have ‘a little bit of bread but no cheese’ – I want some cheese with the bread.

It does help that we have two of the four birds that sing their name. The chiff-chaff is the first spring warbler to arrive back from Africa, calling persistently from treetops while the cuckoo’s (RL) call is unmistakable, although now infrequently heard as numbers are plummeting.

The Stonesfield jackdaws are very lively and have increased in number with this year’s young. They all call out ‘Jack’ so I have to wonder if all of them have been named Jack. The house sparrows (RL) think everything is ‘cheap’ while the starlings (RL) ‘shriek’. If you ask a pied wagtail where it lives it will reply ‘Chiswick’!

Wagtails, with a tail as long as their body, are superbly agile fly-catching birds. Bobbing, flitting, flips and jerks – the tail is put to good use. The UK has three species of wagtail, but neither the migrant yellow (RL) nor the resident pied wagtails have the supreme agility of the less common

resident grey wagtails (RL) that you may be lucky enough to see near water.

Making progress on remembering bird song is helped by starting with the twenty commonest songs heard locally. The haunting sound of a bittern booming as the sun sets over the evening marshes is little help in Stonesfield. But beware the great tit as it rings out ‘teacher-teacher’ – great tits are the greatest mimic of other birds’ songs.

John Sampson

Local history: The Mitfords

Thank you, Paul Bates, for drawing attention to Asthall Manor garden’s sculpture exhibition in May and possible opening times later under the National Gardens Scheme. In a history of the house, you mentioned its ownership during the pre-WW2 years by the Mitford family, Lord and Lady Redesdale and described the Mitford sisters as ‘infamous’.

In the interwar years there were British ‘thinkers’ who seriously considered ideas of Fascism or Communism to deal with lack of employment in this country. The Mitford sisters, although having a sheltered upbringing with little or no formal education, were not immune to that atmosphere psychologically and were much influenced by their respective partners.

Jessica, the youngest, fell for an avowed Communist, fled home and led a slightly picaresque life, adopting worthy, unfashionable campaigns in America, not for her Communism as much as for her wish to make an effect – only she could possibly qualify as ‘infamous’. This is a

matter of opinion and I say it having read the splendidly balanced and very well reviewed *The Mitford Girls* biography of the family by Mary S. Lovell.

They were all very beautiful, enthusiastic for life and easily fell in love. Diana was drawn to the Fascist cause having fallen for English Fascist leader Oswald Mosley, her loving husband. Sharp-witted Nancy, the author, loved to joke with an edge to it and did so with her novels, but she was never unprincipled. Unity almost succeeded in taking her own life, because her infatuation with Hitler conflicted with her feelings of loyalty to her own country as war on Germany was declared. Pamela led a quiet country life. Deborah managed to stay friends with all her sisters and married the heir to the Duke of Devonshire's vast estates. Those six girls were 'notorious', perhaps, or just 'famous' for their beauty, newsworthiness and society connections. They were after all closely related to Winston Churchill. Some Mitford gravestones are only just 'round the corner' from here at Swinbrook.

Let's support their memory, not do them down – all six.

Charlotte Oakeshott

Blenheim's fire brigade

In the mid- to late 1800s, Blenheim Palace had its own private fire brigade with its own fire engines! In 1898 the Estate was the venue of a Fire Brigades Rally. Permission to stage the event was given by the 9th Duke of Marlborough, who was also the President of the National Fire Brigades Union at the time. The Blenheim fire brigade was still in operation during the Second World War.

Now the historic 1890 Merryweather engine has been tracked down and was returned in mid-July to be put on show in the Palace's stable yard. The horse-drawn engine used a steam boiler to create pressure to pump water. It was mounted on a four-wheeled sprung carriage.



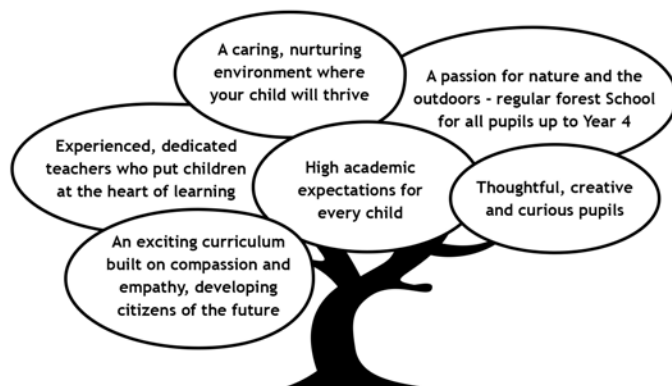
The engine was returned to the Palace by Hook Norton firefighter Nigel Matthews, who is a fire engine enthusiast. Chris Wilson, a local fire officer in Oxfordshire who is the brigade historian located the fire engine, and Neil McElvenny, a senior officer in Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service, also helped in the search.

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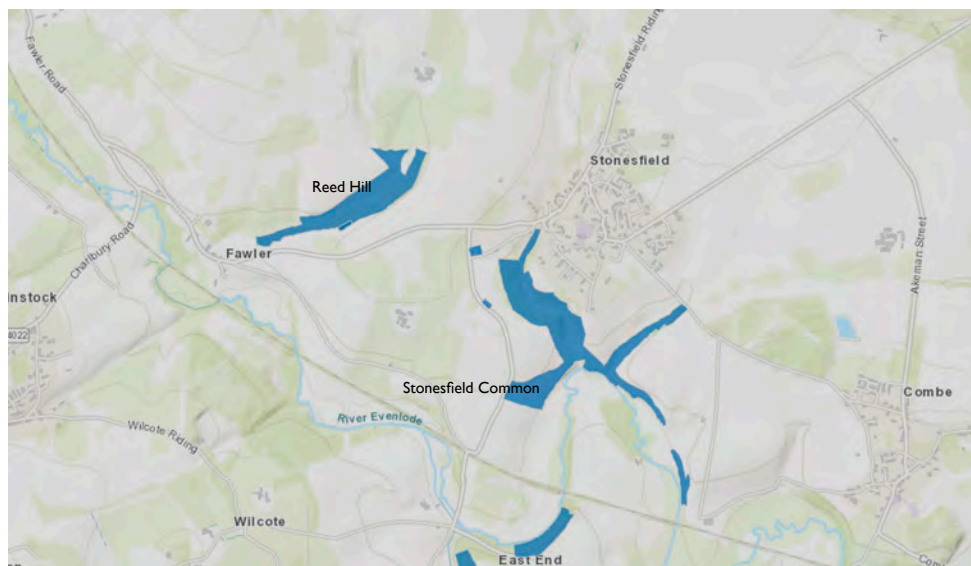


To arrange a tour with the headteacher, Mr Ben Trevail, please contact the school office.

Tel: 01993 891687

Office email: office.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk

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



Local Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Source: Natural England Open Data Publication

Clubs, societies & sport

Stonesfield Gardening Club

Fortunately for members of the Gardening Club, our hobby/passion/chore (!) keeps us outdoors most of the time, out in the fresh air and away from the clutches of COVID. However, our attempt at a return to the normality of Monday night meetings with speakers has bitten the dust again. The increasing numbers of those affected by the virus in the village meant that we felt we could not continue with our meeting in July. We were to have had a talk about Bridewell Organic Garden from Ruth Maddar, but all is not lost as we have arranged a visit to the garden on 9 September and Ruth can tell us all about it then.

In the meantime, I make no excuse for returning to the subject of wildflowers as they are looking wonderful in the hedgerows and in our local Sites of Special Scientific Interest – Stonesfield Common and the field by Reed Hill next to Hill Barn Farm cottages. In July 2019 I counted the varieties I could see there when deciding what seed mix to use for my own wildflower meadow. I noted down 17 but I'm sure that was an underestimate and it certainly looks even more diverse now. We don't need to pay for entrance to a garden, just pop up the Oxfordshire Way!

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



Stonesfield Cricket Club

The Cricket Club now has the benefit of a new electronic scoreboard as the result of a £1500 grant from West Oxfordshire District Council through the Community Facilities Grant Scheme. The scoreboard cost more than £6,000 and fundraising took around two years to reach its target.

Chairman George Redknap said: 'The scoreboard looks great. The idea of an electronic one has been there for a couple of years now, and it's taken lot of hard work to secure funding, so a big thank you to the Council and everyone involved. Just having it has put a buzz around the club and we have received some very positive comments already. It's also been a big hit with the players, with no shortage of volunteers to do the scoring so far this season!'



'We are incredibly lucky to have our facilities at Stonesfield, and cricket plays a huge part in attracting visitors and spectators to the ground throughout the summer months.'

Scouts fundraising starts with cake sale

1st Stonesfield Scout Group would like to say an enormous thank you to Julia Reynolds and the team of talented bakers who donated scones, cakes and cookies for the bake sale on 17 July. We raised £316!



Many thanks also to everyone who bought a cake, guessed the weight of the fruitcake, or stopped to chat about our plans to rebuild the scout hut.

Our next fundraiser will be the Duck Race on 18 September at 3pm.

Stonesfield Scout fundraising team

Fundraising@stonesfield-scouts.org.uk

Church news

Church of England Worship at St James the Great, Stonesfield

(Benefice of Stonesfield with Combe Longa)

www.stonesfieldparishchurch.org

Rector: Rev Ralph Williamson,
rector@scbenefice.org, 01993 891872

Churchwardens: Lindsey Sellar and Rachel Severn
stonesfield@stonesfieldparishchurch.org

For any enquiries or help, including pastoral support, please do contact us.

From the Rector: Glory

Since we moved here in April, there has been very little which could tempt me away from the bejewelled footpaths and meadows around Stonesfield, and nowhere I would rather spend my free time. But on a dry morning in the very mixed month of July, my wife and I decided to avoid Gigaclear for the day and leave both Stonesfield and the Cotswolds on my motorbike, to visit Coventry Cathedral. Rachel and I once met there before we started dating, and it was a joy to be back in that special space again. The new Cathedral was built beside the ruins of the old one, which was destroyed in the blitz, and its special role as a spiritual symbol of reconciliation and reconstruction continues to be of national and global significance. It was consecrated just three weeks after I was born, in May 1962.

Visiting for the first time in many years, it was the great baptistry window beside the font which took my breath away once more. Designed by the painter and printmaker John Piper, and beautifully executed in stained glass by Patrick Reyntiens, the exquisite window soars 85 feet up from ground level and is 56 feet wide, made up of 198 'lights' in a gently curving shape around the font, in what Piper called a 'nutmeg grater' design. In contrast to more illustrative or figurative church windows, the design which Piper created was one of abstract expressionism, with a central focus of blazing white light spreading out through a dramatic patterning of form and colour. For the Bishop of Coventry in 1962, Cuthbert Bardsley, the window 'expressed faith in an entirely new way with the subject emerging through the glory of the colour'. For me it was a wonder to behold once more, and to reflect on.

John Piper rose to fame through his work as a war artist for the War Artists' Advisory Committee in the 1940s, depicting bomb-damaged churches and other public buildings, including the bombed interior of the House of Commons. His work before the war including painting, collage and other media, and his subject matter was most often the countryside, churches and chapels.

He became an Anglican and joined the Church of England in the 1930s and in 1937 John Betjeman asked him to work on the Shell Guides he was editing. Piper

wrote and illustrated the guide to Oxfordshire and its rural churches; a classic book which is still much prized today. His commission for Coventry Cathedral was the result of an earlier window he created with Reyntiens for Oundle School chapel, where I once had the pleasure of preaching, and overall he created more than sixty stained glass window commissions for churches. One which I particularly love is at Iffley Church just outside Oxford, a tiny blue panel near the west door which shows animals announcing the birth of the Saviour. His artistic work after the war was prodigious and widely varied. It included textiles, books and theatre design, and it played a formative role in shaping modern British visual art and culture.

John Piper was a devout Christian, but he rarely spoke of his beliefs, preferring to express them through his art and creativity. His war work, depicting scenes of ruin, visually demonstrated the significance of the life for which most people believed they were fighting. The abstract windows in Coventry Cathedral and elsewhere proclaim with blazing form and colour the transcendent, the glory of God, revealed through creation, and stir a profound sense of wonder within the heart of the viewer, and the visitor, as they draw us deeper into the mystery of the resurrection, God's gift of life out of death, which both creation and scripture proclaim.

Rev Ralph Williamson - Rector

August Services

Sunday 1 August [Trinity 9]

8am	Stonesfield	Holy Communion [BCP/said]
9.30am	Combe	All Age Worship
11am	Stonesfield	All Age Worship

Sunday 8 August [Trinity 10]

8am	Stonesfield	Holy Communion [BCP/said]
9.30am	Combe	Parish Communion
11am	Stonesfield	Parish Communion

Sunday 15 August [Trinity 11]

St Laurence Patronal Festival

8am	Stonesfield	Holy Communion [BCP/said]
9.30am	Combe	Parish Communion
11am	Stonesfield	Parish Communion
7.30pm	Combe	Evening Service on the Green

Sunday 22 August [Trinity 12]

8am	Stonesfield	Holy Communion [BCP/said]
9.30am	Combe	Parish Communion
11am	Stonesfield	Parish Communion

Sunday 29 August [Trinity 13]

8am	Stonesfield	Holy Communion [BCP/said]
10am	Stonesfield	United Benefice Communion

Wednesdays

9.30am	Stonesfield	Holy Communion (every week)
11am	Combe	Morning Prayer (4 and 18 August)

Stonesfield Methodist Church

Services for August

1 August	11am	Mr Andrew Maisey
8 August	11am	Mr Ian Prince
15 August	11am	Ms Mary Blow
22 August	11am	Mr Owen Carney
29 August	10.30am	Service at High St Methodist Church, Witney

All are very welcome to the services. The Reverend Rose Westwood can be contacted on 01608 644556.

Kathleen Alb  rt (891733)

Roman Catholic Worship

The Eucharist

One of the features of Roman Catholicism is that no matter where you go in the world, Holy Mass is generally the same: the language might differ but the liturgy is universal. During the worst of the pandemic when all churches were closed, many of us ‘went to church’ online. We saw and recognised the priest’s words and actions, but it didn’t seem quite the same; we participated as best we could. What was missing was our experience of coming together as God’s people and sharing the Eucharist (Holy Communion) with our physical presence. The word ‘Eucharist’ is from the Greek meaning ‘thanksgiving’; so when we receive Holy Communion we are celebrating Christ’s Life, redemptive Death on the Cross and creating a sacramental bond with God, through the consecrated bread and wine as Christ’s Body and Blood.

Father Tony Joyce writes: We can never fully comprehend the grandeur and mystery of our Eucharistic faith, but we do

know that it is a true celebration of the deep personal love of Jesus for all his followers. It summons us to a deeper unity with each other and nourishes us to take up the challenge and bear witness to this love before our world. No surprise, therefore, that the Church sees the celebration of the Eucharist as ‘the source and summit of our Christian life’.

Matthew in his Gospel (26: 26-28) tells us how Jesus gave us this gift of the Eucharist.

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘*Take, eat; this is my body.*’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘*Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*’

Holy Mass

Sunday Mass is at 9.15am. Please book in advance as places are strictly limited. Social distancing is maintained and masks must be worn.

Weekday Mass times

Monday, Tuesday 9.30am

Wednesday 7pm, followed by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Thursday 9.30am

Friday 9.30am, followed by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

There is no need to book – all are welcome and social distancing is strictly enforced.

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.

Confession by arrangement with Fr Clive Dytor, as below.

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

For parish updates, any further information and further support, go to <https://stteresaschurch-charlbury.com>, or contact Fr Clive Dytor on

chair.stteresaschurchcharlbury@gmail.com.

Roman Catholic Community in Stonesfield

New Church thought

‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’ I’ve known this all my life as The Golden Rule, something I should aspire to. Other ways of saying the same thing: ‘Do as you would be done by.’ ‘If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all.’ ‘Think before acting.’

Is it really so hard to put this principle into practice? It just needs a little thought before speaking, a little self-control, a little bit of thinking ahead to possible consequences. Surely it doesn’t take much effort – does it?

What a difference it could make....

Dale Morris (898210)

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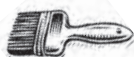
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Local candlemaker wins our start-up business award

We're pleased to announce Littlemore Candle Company are our 2021 start-up competition winners. Molly Stevenson from Long Wittenham started out making candles as gifts for friends and family but, with the support of her mum Yvonne, Molly decided to switch from hobbyist to entrepreneur and has gone on to forge a successful brand from a favourite pastime. We remain committed to providing local start-up businesses with support and a busy marketplace to showcase their products. Shop online at littlemorecandleco.co.uk

We recently uncovered an original guide to North Leigh's Roman Villa

Deep within our archives, amongst uncatalogued papers from the 1950s, Palace Archivist Dr Alexa Frost recently uncovered an original guide to North Leigh Roman Villa, believed to have been the Duke of Marlborough's personal copy, written by architect Henry Hakewill who excavated the villa in 1813. The guide reveals details of the luxurious villa that have been lost in the 200 years since its excavation, including a beautifully ornate mosaic floor.

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