



Issue No 517 September 2021

## Mosaic open weekend



Thatched roof on Mosaic House 1898

The villa volunteers are delighted to announce that the only public opening this year of the 4<sup>th</sup> century mosaic house will take place on Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 September between 11am and 5pm. There will be talks about Roman coins and a chance to get up close to the mosaic. There will also be the chance to join the English Heritage team of conservators cleaning the mosaics. Please email CLEAN to [nlrvols@gmail.com](mailto:nlrsvols@gmail.com) to register your interest.

In a quest to piece together the 200-year history of the site as a visitor attraction, the volunteers would be very keen to hear readers' memories of visiting the site in earlier times. The very first account of the villa was published by Henry Hakewell after his 1813-1816 excavations of the site. We have discovered that Blenheim Estate gamekeepers and their families were among

those living at the cottage beside the villa in Victorian times and that throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century the roof of the mosaic house was made of thatch. In the years leading up to WW2, the bath suite and other foundations that are on display today were covered over with a shed erected on top of them. And to visit the mosaic house would have cost 3d!

Please email [nlrvols@gmail.com](mailto:nlrsvols@gmail.com) or post your recollections on Twitter: [@villa\\_north](https://twitter.com/villa_north). Or come along on the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> and tell one of the volunteers of your memories.

For more details about opening times and access to the site (which can be arduous for those with mobility issues), please visit: [www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/north-leigh-roman-villa/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/north-leigh-roman-villa/)

Matthew Lee  
[nlrvols@gmail.com](mailto:nlrsvols@gmail.com)

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## Dates for your diary

### September

1	Parish Council meeting	St James' Centre	7pm
1, 8, 15, 22, 29	Folk dancing	Village Hall	8-9.30pm
1, 8, 15, 22, 29	Quiz night	SSSC	8pm
4	Live music: Henderson & Benfield	SSSC	9pm
5	Charity Afternoon Tea	Combe Reading Room	2.30-5pm
6, 9, 13, 16	Taekwondo	Village Hall	5.30-6.30pm
6, 13, 20, 27	Monday Coffee	St James' Centre	8.45-11.30am
7, 14, 21, 28	Zumba	Village Hall	7-8pm
7, 14, 21, 28	Zumba Strong	Village Hall	8.15-9.15pm
7, 21	Carers' Café	St James' Centre	10am-12noon
8	Reading Challenge presentations	Play Area	3.30-4pm
8, 15, 22, 29	Gatehouse Pilates	Village Hall	9.30-10.30pm
9	Stonesfield Gardening Club Visit	Bridewell Gardens	5pm
9, 16, 23, 30	Book Break	Stonesfield Library	12.30-2pm
11,12	North Leigh Roman Villa opening	Mosaic House	11am-5pm
12	Open Day	Bridewell Garden	11am-4pm
18	Scouts' Duck Race	Evenlode Bridge	3pm
19	Steaming Sunday	Combe Mill	10am-5pm
20, 23, 27, 30	Taekwondo	Village Hall	5.30-6.30pm
24	MacMillan Coffee Morning	Village Hall	9am-2pm

### October

2	White Horse Pub: public meeting	Village Hall	5pm
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# Notices & news

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## **Tania Tipping (nee Pinney)**

Vernon, Madeleine, Stuart, Helen and family would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who sent messages, sympathy cards and many phone calls following the death of our daughter, wife, mum and sister.

Tania spent her younger days in Stonesfield and made many friends, both in Stonesfield and the surrounding villages. Although Tania left to get married and start her family, she often came back to enjoy the walks and loved taking her two boys down to the river. Gone too soon. She will be sorely missed.

The Pinney family

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## **Celia Hutton**

How many people in Stonesfield, now in their forties and fifties, remember starting their school days in Mrs Hutton's class? Celia Hutton, Reception Class teacher and Deputy Head, has died aged 95. She taught here for at least twenty years and saw three head teachers come and go.

Those of us who sent our children there, or who assisted in her classroom, had immense respect for her. All the many anecdotes I have heard from parents experiencing the trauma of taking their child to their very first day at school point to one thing: for Mrs Hutton, the child's interests were always paramount.

She was 'old school' in the best sense: intimidating to parents maybe but not to

children, and she was also imaginative and adventurous. Her annual Nativity plays were a joy and exquisitely turned out. Penny Hodgson, her classroom assistant for a time, remembers a colourful classroom with origami birds suspended from the ceiling. She used to take her hen, Goldie, in to the class; and who remembers the classroom incubator with chicks miraculously hatching from their shells before your very eyes?

Wendy Gould sums up how we look back on this remarkable lady: 'Celia Hutton was an almost perfect infant teacher, adored by her young charges who started school with tearful, nervous anticipation and were guided, supported and educated by a gentle but firm hand. She was an inspiration.'

It's true that this was over forty years ago but if any pupils and parents have memories they would like to share, The Slate would like to hear from you. It would be a fitting memorial for an exceptional teacher.

Val Phillips

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## **Mary Evins**

Ron Evins and all the family would like to thank everyone who attended Mary's funeral on Monday 16 August and for their generous donations. £272 was raised for Dementia UK. Thank you and stay safe.

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## **Goodbye from Jean and Frank Hall**

Jean and Frank Hall are saying goodbye to Stonesfield. In case any friends in the village had not heard, Mum and Dad have moved to Tall Trees Care Home in Shipton-under-Wychwood; Mum in June and Dad at the beginning of August. They have been in the village (this time around!) since 1969 and have always played an active part in the village. Dad, amongst other roles, collected for the Poppy Appeal and was on the Village Hall Committee for many years; Mum was in the WI and became President, helped at Darby & Joan and, together with Dad, ran the Old Time & Modern Sequence Dance Club. Dad is a great story teller, often chatting whilst helping John Clifford, Richard Bishop and George Dawe as part of 'The Friday Club' which kept the churchyard tidy for many years.

Dad first came to Stonesfield from Newbury in 1933 when he was ten years old and his mother had died. He and his sisters were looked after by other family members living here, with Dad only leaving the village when he was called up to the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Ox & Bucks in 1941. He moved away to Bladon in 1952 when he married Mum and helped to run the Lamb Inn with her family. After moving to a tied church cottage there, they looked after the church in their 'spare time' including during the funeral of Winston Churchill when they met many famous people who visited the grave.

Dad has just been photographed and interviewed for a year-long exhibition on his regiment which is being put together for the Duxford Airborne Museum, having

previously received the Légion d'Honneur, France's highest award of merit.

They are both very sorry to leave the village but, as Dad said to Mum, 'It will be like going on holiday!'

Rosie White (07778 260925)

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## **Colostomy UK's charity challenge: Step Up for Stomas**

In last month's Slate I submitted a piece asking for donations for a charity challenge in which Colostomy UK had requested my participation. Sadly, at the time of writing, this has not produced any response.

Colostomy UK is a national charity that offers support and advice to people with stomas and to their families, carers and friends. Colostomy UK also campaigns and acts as advocates for ostomates (people with a stoma) on many issues they face going about their daily lives. Remember, the possible need for a stoma can happen at any age, from the very young to the elderly. We want hidden conditions to be understood and accepted by all. The charity's vision is of communities in which everyone is empowered to reach their potential.

I'm fundraising for Colostomy UK, as an ostomate myself of 17 years' experience, because this cause is very close to my heart after receiving their help and advice over the years. The pandemic has seriously affected the charity's funds so any donation, small or large, will really make a difference! There are over 160,000 people with a stoma in the UK so the challenge set for participants is to take 160,000 steps over the thirty days of September. I will be participating in that challenge and I am asking for your support in donating whatever you can to encourage me.

Donations can be made at my Just Giving web page: [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Anthony-Taylor25](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Anthony-Taylor25). If you are eligible, please don't forget Gift Aid.

On 30 September I will be 78 years young so what a wonderful birthday celebration it would be if I could raise lots of money! Thank you.

Tony Taylor (07702 152781)

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## **Blenheim bursaries**

Blenheim Estate runs a £50,000 charity and community bursary fund from which some twenty local charities, organisations and good causes are set to benefit. The bursary is available to all charities and organisations based within a 20-mile radius of Blenheim. Among groups receiving funds, which amount from £200 to £5,000, are Stonesfield Outdoor Gym, the Plunkett Foundation, Stonesfield Scouts, Sustainable Woodstock, Stonesfield School and North Leigh Roman Villa.

Applications for next year's bursaries will open in November and close at the end of January 2022 with successful applicants being notified in March and receiving funds in April. More information and an application form are available from Samantha Vaughan (07469 129743 [svaughan@blenheimpalace.com](mailto:svaughan@blenheimpalace.com)) or by visiting the website: [www.blenheim.org/community/charity-community-bursary/](http://www.blenheim.org/community/charity-community-bursary/)

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## **Great Big Green Week**

Great Big Green Week is a national week of events celebrating action on climate change. This will take place from 18-26 September and communities across the country will join together in the biggest

ever event for climate and nature in the UK and everyone's invited to participate.

Thousands of events will celebrate how communities are taking action to tackle climate change and protect green spaces, and encourage others to get involved too. These will range from art installations to concerts, community stalls and climate cafes and everything in between, and will be hosted by teachers, bus drivers, builders, sports clubs, artists, community groups, places of worship, and anyone who cares about climate change.

Great Big Green Week community hubs will celebrate local activity, raise the profile of climate change and show why it is relevant to your community and local decision-makers. National organisations, institutions, businesses and media outlets will join in, getting more people involved up and down the country and encouraging the Government to increase its efforts in respect of climate change.

More information and how to get involved can be found at [www.greatbiggreenweek.com](http://www.greatbiggreenweek.com)

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## **Summer Reading Challenge**

At the time of writing, our Library is still only operating on a 'click and collect' service and is open for just six hours per week (Mondays 2-4pm, Wednesday and Thursday 10am-12noon).

We hope that this situation will have changed by the time you are reading this. However, in these conditions it has been difficult for families to access the Library in their usual numbers and as a result we have only eleven children signed up for the Summer Reading Challenge.

Accordingly, our planned medal ceremony has been adjusted but we will still be congratulating those who have completed the Wild World Heroes Quest by reading six library books. There will be a presentation of medals and certificates in the play area outside the Library and this will take place on 8 September from 3.30-4pm. By then we hope there will be more of you!

Val Phillips on behalf of the Friends of  
Stonesfield Library

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### **Afternoon Tea at Combe**

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, 2.30-5pm, and all proceeds will go to the Cystic Fibrosis Trust. We will be serving cream teas, homemade cakes and hot drinks. Handmade gifts and cards will be on sale and we will be holding a raffle.

Cystic fibrosis is an inherited condition which affects mucus in the sufferer's body and causes damage to 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 5<sup>th</sup> but would like to support us, please contact me on 07958 595668 to purchase raffle tickets at a cost of £5 per book of five tickets.

Libby Hanks

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### **Bridewell Open Day**

Bridewell 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 on Sunday 12 September from 11am-4pm. There will be a pop-up café in the gardens for tea and cake and the opportunity to buy plants, fruit juices, 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 and there is a suggested donation of £5 per person.

Bridewell Gardens

The Walled Garden, Wilcote, OX7 3DT  
[bridewellgardens.co.uk](http://bridewellgardens.co.uk)

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### **MacMillan Coffee Morning**

On Friday 24 September we are hosting a MacMillan fundraiser in the Village Hall from 9am-2pm. We will be serving breakfast, mid-morning drinks, cakes and lunch. There will also be cakes for sale alongside a bottle tombola.

We are looking for donations of cakes and bottles for the tombola, along with helpers on the day. Everyone is welcome and if you are able to help, even if only for a short time, then please contact me on the email address below.

Please check Facebook for more details nearer the time. We look forward to seeing you all and appreciate in advance your support for this incredible charity.

Ali Appleton

[alwenaappleton@hotmail.com](mailto:alwenaappleton@hotmail.com)

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## **The White Horse: public meeting**

The Stonesfield Community Pub Committee are holding a public meeting at the Village Hall on Saturday 2 October at 5pm to update the community on their work to safeguard the future of the White Horse pub. All are welcome.

Mark Saville

s@villefamily.com

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## **Village Hall news**

The summer is always a peaceful time in the village with lots of people away so events are very few and far between. However, that doesn't mean that we are resting on our laurels – for us it is a time of ideas and planning to see what exciting things we can do for our community in the coming months!

**Craft Fair:** We need your help! Do you do a craft that you would like to share with others? Do you make things that other people might like to buy? If you are an artist, creator, hobbyist or craftsperson we would love to hear from you.

**Careers Fair:** Do you love your work? Have you found a way to do something that you enjoy and make it your career? Would you like the opportunity to tell others what you do and how you got into your line of work? If so, we would like to hear from you and give you the opportunity to inspire others.

**Christmas Fair:** We are keen to create the magic of the season again with another Christmas Market event so we would love to hear from gift-sellers, craft stalls, children's toy and book sellers, refreshment vendors and Christmas entertainments and activities; in fact,

anything that will bring joy and put a smile back on people's faces.

We would also like to utilise the Hall to open up a café to the public so would like to offer the first Saturday of every month to any local community groups that would like to raise some money for their causes. All you would need to do is let us know when!

Don't forget that all clubs start back in September too so, if you are in need of a new activity, do contact us and we will put you in touch with the relevant groups.

Hope to see you all soon.

Jacqueline Carthew, (898919)

Secretary & Booking Clerk

stonesfieldvh@gmail.com

## **Help Please!**

### **Do you have a house for us to rent?**

We want to live in Stonesfield or Charlbury and need a house to rent nearby, while we're looking for our permanent home.

We need:

- 2/3 bedrooms
- light spacious feel
- WiFi
- off-road parking

We are a retired couple - no pets - no parties!

**Niki Holland:** 07713 654209

niki@hernshaw.eu

**Roger Bacon:** 07730 202511

roger\_bacon@hotmail.co.uk



# Politics & local affairs

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## Stonesfield Parish Council

The last meeting of the Parish Council was held on 7 July and not 13 July as previously advised.

**Date of next meeting:** There was no Parish Council meeting scheduled for August. The September meeting takes place on 1 September at 7pm at the St James' Centre.

**Overhanging hedges:** Would residents of the village kindly cut back any overhanging hedges from their gardens. This will keep the pavements and/or highway tidy and clear for everyone. Thank you.

Karen East, Parish Clerk  
clerk@stonesfieldpc.uk

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## OCC completes road traffic signage upgrades

One of the first projects taken on by SAFER in March 2019 was the cleaning and documenting of all village road traffic and direction signs. As a result of this, in April 2019, SAFER submitted a report to OCC Highways Department listing several signs needing repair, replacement or upgrading.



Since then, SAFER has continued to follow up OCC Highways to get all the work completed. This included additional surveys, photographs and site meetings, plus lots of emails. OCC Highways did carry out a small proportion of this work in early 2020 but lack of budget and Covid brought progress to a grinding halt.

A site meeting with OCC Highways in May 2021 finally gained their commitment to a list of outstanding items which were then completed in mid-August.



A total of 19 signs have been repaired, reset, replaced or introduced to improve road safety in the village. New signs give clear messages to drivers to expect pedestrians on some roads, that The Ridings is unsuitable for HGVs, and

warnings of oncoming vehicles in the middle of narrow sections of road such as Laughton Hill.

SAFER thanked OCC Highways for their support in this work.

Cllr Michael J Heduan MBE,  
SAFER (Stonesfield Parish Council Working Group)

m.heduan@stonesfieldpc.uk  
www.stonesfield.online/safer/

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

### **From our County Councillor**

The first 100 days....

Across the Woodstock division, representing nearly 9,000 people in twelve parishes and towns, I have received a warm welcome and for me it has been a learning curve. What has stood out for me is how proud people feel about the places in which they live and how important it is to preserve village life and celebrate it. I spoke to over 100 residents, councillors and key stake owners including the estate landowners who have influenced so much. I was impressed with the local expertise: retired engineers, teachers and environmentalists whose knowledge has helped me to start putting plans into action to address issues which have been overlooked in the past.

We have come up with solutions to address flooding in Tackley and Sandford St Martin, managed to get Thames Water to realign the sewage pipes to prevent leakage, and supported the initiatives in Stonesfield, the Bartons, Combe and Woodstock.

Parking is being addressed in Woodstock with a plan being put together to address

business churn, residents' parking permits, the rationalisation of parking times, and the establishment of a single authority to be responsible for these issues. The aim is to resolve the current problems of limited enforcement and gridlock which have arisen due to the involvement of more than one authority.

I have been dealing with the home-to-schools policy which affects the ability of children to get to school and have sat on an appeals panel which has been able to effect a positive result. The policy needs to be improved as it is currently unfair, particularly for children living rural areas such as ours.

I was pleased to hear about the Village Transport Network and improving cycle routes between villages and I am now working with officers to supplement and support this initiative so that walkers and improvements to bus services can be linked where appropriate. People's safety has to be prioritised and our highways need improvements to facilitate this.

Thank you for all your support to date. Please email me if you need advice or support – that is what I am here for!

Cllr Andy Graham

andy.graham@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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## **News from West Oxfordshire**

**Electoral registration:** WODC reminds residents to ensure that their electoral registration details are up to date. The annual canvass is currently taking place and residents can expect to receive a letter in this regard within the next few months. Residents who need to register may do so at [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote) or wait for the information to arrive in the post.

**Witney Shopmobility:** The Witney Shopmobility service has been relaunched under new management with extended opening hours and plans to extend its offering. Operation of the free service, which provides disability scooters and wheelchairs for shoppers, has now been taken on by the Witney Inclusive Care & Education Centre (ICE), having been closed since March last year due to the pandemic. For more information and to book a scooter or wheelchair, please telephone 01993 846240.

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## **Oxfordshire Plan 2050**

The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is a long-term plan that will set a framework for future planning decisions and is being formulated by Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, and the District Councils of Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire.



Residents' views are sought on the following policies which have been suggested as a means to help Oxfordshire: addressing climate change; improving environmental quality; creating strong and healthy communities; planning for sustainable travel and connectivity; and creating jobs and providing homes. The consultation is open until Friday 8 October at [www.oxfordshireopenthought.org](http://www.oxfordshireopenthought.org). Printed copies are available from WODC offices, Witney Town Council or Oxfordshire County Council at County Hall; please confirm with the venue before visiting.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England have commented as follows: The Oxfordshire Plan will set the development framework for the county for the next generation. It will affect all Oxfordshire residents, either directly (through development) or indirectly (through the impact on services, infrastructure, our countryside and rural character.) CPRE Oxfordshire is fighting to make sure that the growth options are deliverable without undue damage to our countryside and some otherwise good policy proposals for getting to net zero and restoring nature. That means guiding development to the right places and building high-quality compact housing to make the best use of scarce land. Responding to the consultation is our best chance of influencing both the outcomes of this Plan and the OxCam Arc proposals. More information is available on the CPRE Oxfordshire website: [www.cpreoxon.org.uk](http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk)

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## **Neighbourhood Watch**

A newly announced 'Beating Crime Plan' includes ensuring that every neighbourhood in England and Wales has a named and contactable police officer dedicated to that neighbourhood.

The police officer will know their area, the people and local communities who live there and is best placed to ensure that persistent crime and anti-social behaviour is tackled.

This is a positive step towards local neighbourhood policing which many feel has been lost. Neighbourhood Watch will liaise with its members regarding the progress of this initiative.

# Education, culture & more

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## Combe Mill

On 'Steaming Sunday' 19 September the Mill will be holding a Crafts and Skills Day from 10am to 5pm.

We would be delighted if you could join us to meet a whole range of exhibitors: the Oxford Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers, Buttercross Quilters, jewellery makers, crochet, quilting, needle-felting, card-making, Crafting Club, crepe paper flower-making, art demonstrations, the 'have a go' treadle sewing machine, vintage sewing machines and dolls and doll's houses.

The Charlbury Morris Dancers are visiting in the afternoon. The Mill machinery will be fully in steam and volunteers will be on hand as usual. The tea room will be open all day for light refreshments alongside our stunning riverside setting. Our site is dog-friendly. Please see the website for times/ prices: [www.combemill.co.uk](http://www.combemill.co.uk) or telephone 01993 358694.

Our Bee Day was an amazing success - thanks to all those who joined us. We will run it again if you missed it ....

Tony Simmons



*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))

## North Leigh History Society

North Leigh History Society is back in business! After over a year of waiting, we are starting our new season of talks on Tuesday 7 September at 7.30pm. As there is clearly some level of virus around, we are moving to North Leigh Memorial Hall (OX29 6SA) as this will allow easier social distancing and greater spacing between chairs.

At our first meeting, Professor Laurence Brockliss will be giving a talk about the life and death of Horatio Nelson. A year's membership of the Society is £18 or you can come as a visitor to any one of our talks for £4. Further details are available from Diana Power (882301) or Robert Kyte at [kyterobert@gmail.com](mailto:kyterobert@gmail.com).

## North Leigh Roman Villa

The 4<sup>th</sup> century mosaic house will be open on Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 September between 11am and 5pm.

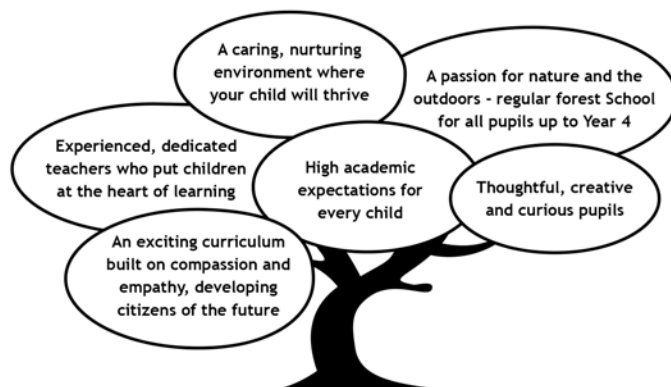


## Stonesfield Primary School

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)

## Romano-British

A dozen villas straddle Akeman Street –  
Stonesfield, Ditchley Dell, Kingswood Brake;  
                                each nooked in a fold of the landscape  
close to the water, set back from the road –  
Callow Hill, Fawler, Wilcote, Asthall;  
                                all obliterated, ghosting  
the landscape they occupied –  
Busksleap Copse, Ramsden, Shakenoak.

But at North Leigh I am the ghost  
   passing through walls  
 seeing beneath their floors  
  
 fetching them back from the clenched fist of the earth  
   prising open its stony fingers, greedy  
 for scraps

tracing hypocausts and drains  
sweeping dirt from their pixelated floors, slotting  
tesserae back into place,  
picking at artefacts  
reassembling amphorae  
speculating in the dust

and hearing the same  
                   mewl of buzzards  
 within the same shoulder of land  
                   that cradles the river  
 with the trees drawing up  
                   the old, old stories from the soil  
                   singing them out  
                                   to an ear-stopped world

Dr. Romola Parish

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## **Nature notes:**

### **The nightshade family**

‘What do you think this might be?’ My new neighbour on the allotments shows me what looks like a green tomato. As he was walking from a potato patch, I am fairly certain it is a fruit from a potato flower and somewhat poisonous. All native and most cultivated members of the nightshade family are poisonous to some degree. The fruit of the tomato and tubers of the potato are edible – otherwise beware! This is the time of year for the nightshade family to appear from the dark depths of hedgerows and woodland edges. They flourish in disturbed chalky and limestone soils.

‘What is this, Grandad?’ A sharp-eyed three-year-old grandchild points to a small flower with reflex purple petals and a stunning yellow cone. In time the flowers produce green berries that turn to a bright scarlet and are in clusters on a scrambling plant. This is the ‘bittersweet’ or ‘woody’ nightshade. It is not uncommon in our Stonesfield hedgerows; the name gives a clue that there is a bitter taste making the berries almost inedible and quickly spat out. This avoids most side-effects which are rarely serious.

Deadly nightshade (*atropa belladonna*) is a different matter and deadly poisonous. Named by Linnaeus in 1753, *Atropa* is one of the Three Fates and cuts the thread of life: *Belladonna*, the beautiful woman with dilated pupils caused by a minuscule eyedrop of deadly nightshade. This bushy perennial plant looks like a feral potato plant growing from the ground each year. The flowers are purplish-brown bells with a berry inside; developing from green to a most enticing shiny black, the single berries are highly toxic. The berries are

loaded with psychoactive chemicals linked in history to magic and folklore, the ‘flying ointment’ of witchcraft and the visionary elixir of monks and shaman. To be avoided by inquisitive three-year-old grandchildren at all costs.

John Sampson

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## **Blenheim’s environmental initiatives**

Blenheim Estate has announced its ‘Land Strategy’ which aims to connect communities with a network of routes to promote ‘green’ travel and the health and wellbeing of local communities.



In November work will begin on the creation of a new 150-hectare woodland which will eventually see over 270,000 trees being planted and the creation of a series of public footpaths and cycleways. As well as creating a major new habitat for wildlife, the woodlands will sequester 25,000 tonnes of carbon as part of a 25-year programme. The long-term aim is to become the UK’s first estate to demonstrate carbon-positive land management.

Gemma Else

[gelse@blenheimestate.com](mailto:gelse@blenheimestate.com)

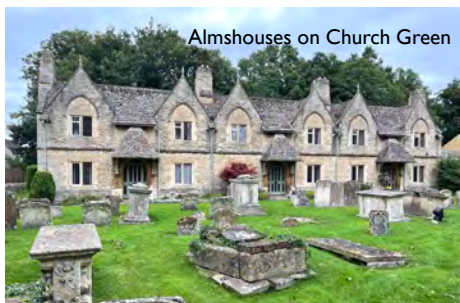


## Witney almshouses

The history of almshouses stretches back to medieval times when religious orders cared for the poor. By the middle of the sixteenth century, there were about 800 medieval hospitals spread across the country but the dissolution of the monasteries meant that many were either sold off to landowners or left to ruin. It was during the late sixteenth century that the medieval craft guilds founded many hospitals to provide care for the “elderly decayed” members in their declining years. During the Victorian era housing became a huge social problem as people migrated to towns looking for work. Scandalous conditions of the workhouses inspired wealthy philanthropists to endow almshouses, generally for their local area and in groups of 6-12 dwellings. It is estimated that a third of current almshouses were founded during this period. There were three sets of almshouses in Witney.

The earliest are on Church Green near the Henry Box School. By 1613 the borough owned an almshouse and garden on this site north of the rectory house, comprising three separate tenements in which ‘the poor of the borough are placed’. By the 1760s it had been divided into four dwellings occupied by five tenants, though whether they were still paupers is not clear. After 1795, when the almshouse was rebuilt as a row of six cottages, each was usually let to non-paupers at commercial rents and the income used for charitable purposes. They were further modernised in 1814 after which they ceased to be almshouses and were let for rent. The money from the rents was used to buy food, mainly bread and beef, for the poor and so the cottages, which still stand today on the edge of the

green, are known as the ‘Bread and Beef’ Houses.



In 1724, the clothier John Holloway left money to build an almshouse for six widows to be chosen by his trustees, five to come from Witney and one from Curbridge, with preference given to widows of clothiers or blanket-makers. The houses, to include an upper and lower room and a garden for each occupant, were built at Church Green immediately east of the church. He also left an endowment producing an allowance for each occupant. In early twentieth century the widows were still receiving an allowance; applicants had to be at least 50 years old, with preference still given to blanket-workers. In 1868 these houses were rebuilt to designs by William Wilkinson.

In 1827 William Townsend, a wealthy London haberdasher from a long-established Witney family who kept the Staple Hall Inn during the seventeenth





century, built a row of almshouses. They are situated on the north side of Newland, just to the east of the junction with Broad Hill and Bridge Street. They were intended for 'six aged, unmarried women' and consisted of a single upstairs room with a living room and scullery downstairs and outdoor privies. By the early twentieth century the trustees usually had eight or nine applications in hand, deciding each case on its merits with preference given to Witney women.

Witney Blanket Museum



These and other historic sites can be found while walking the Wool & Blanket Trail. Starting from the Market Place in the centre of Witney, the trail is a circular walk some 2¾ miles. A walking map and more details can be found at [www.witneyblanketstory.org.uk/](http://www.witneyblanketstory.org.uk/)

## STONESFIELD VOLUNTARY TRANSPORT SCHEME

Volunteer drivers are available to take you for local medical appointments, vaccinations and to the hospitals in Oxford and Banbury.

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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 September.

# Clubs, societies & sport

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## Stonesfield Gardening Club

As is normal for us in the Gardening Club, we had no meeting in August as we work in our own gardens and allotments and try to keep up with the harvest. We do however have a meeting planned this month as we will be visiting Bridewell Organic Garden in Wilcote for a tour and a talk on Thursday 9 September. We will make our own way there and meet at 5pm. I'm sure we are all looking forward to getting together again.

Planning further ahead, the Committee would like to hold an Open Gardens event next year. We do this in alternate years but did not hold it in 2021 for obvious reasons. It would be lovely if some new gardens would like the chance to shine as well as our 'old faithfuls'. Do please contact me if you think you would be interested in letting people come into your garden for a couple of hours on a Sunday in June. It's a fun event and a good way of meeting new people, as well as a real prompt for finishing that garden project you had in mind!

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

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## Churchfields Allotments

We currently have allotments available. Please contact John Sampson if interested.

Unfortunately, outdoor tomatoes are all suffering from blight this year. It is beginning to creep into greenhouses and can also affect potatoes. It is essential to either burn or dispose of blight material into waste bins in the hope of preventing problems next year. On a positive note, runner beans are doing well!

John Sampson  
john.sampson9@icloud.com



Runner bean: Relay

# Church news

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## Stonesfield Methodist Church

### Services for September

5 Sept	11am	Mr Richard Bowler
12 Sept	11am	The Revd Jason Cooke
19 Sept	11am	Mrs Ann Bywater
26 Sept	10.30am	at Charlbury Methodist Church
		Mrs Margaret Broadberry

### The World Day of Prayer

The World Day of Prayer Service, which is normally held each year in March, will now take place at the Methodist Church on Friday 1 October at 2pm.

This year the service has been prepared by Christian women of Vanuatu and is titled 'Build on a Strong Foundation'. The World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church organisation and all are warmly invited to the Service here.

Readers are needed; please get in touch if you can help or otherwise just come along and join the Service on the day.

Kathleen Alb  rt (891733)

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## Roman Catholic Worship

### Your soul

'Soulful', 'soulless', 'soul food', 'soul mate': what is your soul? There are generally two definitions: one which focuses on:

*the spiritual part of a person that is believed to give life to the body and in many religions is believed to live forever.*

and the other which sees soul as:

*a person's deeply felt moral and emotional nature: the ability of a person to feel kindness and sympathy for others, to appreciate beauty and art.*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the term soul "refers to the innermost aspect of [persons], that which is of greatest value in [them], that by which [they are] most especially in God's image: 'soul' signifies the spiritual principle in [humanity]" In other words, your soul is that eternal element which is an indissoluble part of God, transcending all material and worldly constraints.

*'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell' (Matthew 10:28)*

*'May your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus' (I Thessalonians 5:23).*

*'For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, but lose his soul?' (Mark 8:36)*

Take care of your soul: treat it with respect, feed it with generous actions, kindly thoughtful behaviour and love of God as it will be with you always.

*'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God' (Matthew 4:4)* that's real soul food.

## Holy Mass

Sunday Mass at 9.15am. There is no need to book but please wear a mask if you can.

## 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

## 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 who may be contacted on [holytrinityrcchippy@gmail.com](mailto:holytrinityrcchippy@gmail.com) or 01608 642703

For Parish updates, any further information and further support, please [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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**Churchwardens:** Lindsey Sellar and Rachel Severn  
[stonesfield@stonesfieldparishchurch.org](mailto:stonesfield@stonesfieldparishchurch.org)

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

### From the Rector: New beginnings for everyone

The new school year is beginning, and we can probably all remember the excitement (or fear) of the return to the classroom - to a new room, a new teacher, some new classmates, or to a new school. As a parent too, I will never forget the feeling of anxiety and excitement I felt for our oldest child on the day she began at secondary school in Oxford. This year, at the end of term in July, I spoke to our Year 6 children here about the move to their next school, and I was very aware of how that transition offers children the chance to reinvent themselves - to make changes to the way they act, work and interact with others. I remember the beginning of secondary school as a turning point when I and all my friends had to decide what we would be like in our new school. We could try to be more sporty, more popular, less annoying, more studious... mostly by deciding how to wear our school uniform, who to hang around with, and how hard to work. It was a time of possibility, full of the potential for change. We hope and pray that all the children from the village moving into

Year 7 this month will settle well into their new schools, and will be happy with the new versions of themselves as they try them out and explore the people they want to become.

As life goes on, we experience many endings, and new beginnings. The end of a job or a relationship, a course or a tenancy, or a fresh start in a friendship, home or community role, may prompt us to reflect and to make changes. The start of the calendar year in January is particularly a time of possibilities, with fitness and the avoidance of alcohol on the list of resolutions for many people, along with a deeper reflection about the way we hope that life will go for us in the year ahead. Our birthdays and other anniversaries also mark not just the passing of time, but the chance to learn from what is past, and to live well in the future.

In Judaism there are four new year celebrations (a bit like our calendar, school, and tax years), but Rosh Hashanah, this year on 6 September, is the one which is best known, and which marks the start of the new Jewish calendar year. The Christian Church does not have its own new year celebration, but our liturgical cycle begins with the season of Advent at the end of November, when traditional readings and prayers turn us back to consideration of time and eternity. This prepares us for the celebration, the Incarnation of Christ at Christmas, God with us - in our beginning, our past, our present and our future. This year in particular the church here will be thinking about the sort of community we wish to be as we return from the extraordinary difficulties and challenges of Covid. We regret what has been lost, but we recognise that there are new opportunities ahead.

The parish church, though grounded in tradition, must also reinvent and rediscover itself, and choose how it is to be from now on.

As individuals, life is full of choices, opportunities and decisions. How will we live? What will we be like to our neighbours, friends, children, parents? How will we use our free time and our income? How will we look after ourselves better, and make a commitment to the things about which we care? How will we manage our responsibilities, and our challenges? We may wish to put aside any consideration of change until our next birthday or New Year, and put off thinking about the kind of life we are living until then, if we do it at all. The Bible, on the other hand, urges us to look closely at our lives *now*, and to see *today*, the *present moment*, as the time to begin afresh. In the prophet Isaiah, God declares, "See, I am doing a new thing!" and throughout its history the people are urged to listen to God and choose what is right, today: to "Choose life!"

What are the choices we should make today? Is it time to heal a broken relationship, to begin a new project, to arrange for more help in our homes, or to face something we have long denied? Is it time to come back to church, or to come to church for the first time? Is it time to get married, to get a child baptised, to say sorry, to take up some physical activity, or to join something which will benefit others and build up our village community? May this be a month of new beginnings for all of us, not just for the new children in Year 7, and may this month be a time when we can "Choose life!"

Rev Ralph Williamson, Rector

## September Services

### Sunday 5 September (Trinity 14)

8am      Stonesfield    Holy Communion  
                                 (BCP/said)

9.30am   Combe        All Age Worship

11am     Stonesfield    All Age Worship

### Sunday 12 September (Trinity 15)

8am      Stonesfield    Holy Communion  
                                 (BCP/said)

9.30am   Combe        Parish Communion

11am     Stonesfield    Parish Communion

### Sunday 19 September (Trinity 16)

8am      Stonesfield    Holy Communion  
                                 (BCP/said)

9.30am   Combe        Parish Communion

11am     Stonesfield    Parish Communion

### Sunday 26 September (Trinity 17)

8am      Stonesfield    Holy Communion  
                                 (BCP/said)

9.30am   Combe        Parish Communion

11am     Stonesfield    Parish Communion

## Wednesdays

9.30am   Stonesfield    Holy Communion  
                                 (every week)

11am     Combe        Morning Prayer  
                                 (1,15, and 29 Sept)

## Thursdays (weekly from 2 September)

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**Anna Burnside** PARTNER

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## Our recent dry stone wall repairs have revealed interesting finds

The Estate Maintenance and Conservation team have been busy repairing sections of our nine-mile park perimeter stone wall, using traditional methods handed down for centuries. The team have uncovered several interesting finds which give us an insight into our past, including coins, clay pipes and even a pocket watch.

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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](http://littlemorecandleco.co.uk)

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## 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.

Read more at [blenheimestate.com/news](http://blenheimestate.com/news)

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**We're not cracking open the prosecco yet to celebrate everything getting 'back to normal', but the increasing size of the 'green list' of countries is a positive sign for the coming months. We are hopeful that people will soon feel confident about booking their holidays again.**

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