



Issue No 542 December 2023 / January 2024

## Stumble into the New Year



End of the Stumble Jan 2022...and The White Horse was closed!

The Stonesfield Stumble, our New Year's Day village slow walk, will take place on Monday 1 January 2024. You are encouraged to meet on The Cross by the church at 11.16 am.

The route takes us down Well Lane, up the Oxfordshire Way, along the ridgeway path past New Barn Farm, crosses the B4437, past Lodge Farm, through Harry's Plantation and returns back via The Ridings.

It is a little over an hour long, all things considered, and a shorter option is available. Wellies are likely to be essential.

Bring your dog, partner, children, friends... everybody is welcome, no pre-training

required. Come in whatever state you happen to find yourself on New Year's Day! Lots of time for a good natter... no discussions are barred, criticism encouraged. Wake up to Woke (whatever that is).

Returning after 4 years' absence will be the 'after walk recovery session' in The White Horse. Hooray! Beer, other refreshments and bacon butties (pre-booking required – see pages 8 & 9) will be on offer. Blow away the disappointment of past years.

Please remind your friends of the happening.

See you there!

Graham Rutson

## Do you want to send in an article but have no email?

Just call the editor (see below) who can arrange to collect your handwritten copy.

## Do you want to advertise?

An advertisement in *The Stonesfield Slate* starts from as little as **£3 per month**.

Please email **slate-ads@stonesfield.online**, or call the Publishers on 01993 898841, for full details of availability, sizes, requirements and cost. We can also help with design if required.

Any new advertisements, or changes to existing advertisements, should be emailed to **slate-ads@stonesfield.online** **by 10th of the month**.

All advertisements must be **paid for in advance**.

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Articles are solely the responsibility of the writers and their opinions do not necessarily accord with those of the editors or publishers.

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

Dates for your diary are always subject to change. Please check with event organisers.

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

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**Deadline for next issue 15 Jan**  
Please email copy to  
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or contact the Editor by phone.

### **Editor**

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## Dates for your diary: December

See page 9 for The White Horse pop-up pub/café Christmas dates & times

|                 |                                  |                       |                  |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1               | Pre-school wreath-making evening | Village Hall          | 7–9pm            |
| 1,8,15          | Baby & Toddlers group            | Village Hall          | 10–12noon        |
| 2               | Christmas Coffee morning         | St James' Centre      | 10–11.30am       |
| 2               | Community Café                   | Village Hall clubroom | 10am–2pm         |
| 2               | Repair Café                      | Village Hall          | 11am–2pm         |
| 3               | Christmas Market                 | Village Hall          | 10am–3pm         |
| 4               | SVH AGM & Committee meeting      | Village Hall          | 6.45–8.30pm      |
| 4, 11, 18       | Monday Coffee                    | St James' Centre      | 8.45–11.30am     |
| 4,7,11,14,18,21 | Taekwondo                        | Village Hall          | 5.30–6.30pm      |
| 5,19            | Carers Café                      | Village Hall          | 10am–12noon      |
| 5,12,19         | Seniors Café                     | Village Hall clubroom | 3–4pm            |
| 5,12,19         | Stonesfield Social               | Village Hall clubroom | 5–7pm            |
| 5,12,19         | Zumba                            | Village Hall          | 7–8pm            |
| 5,12,19         | Strong Nation HIIT               | Village Hall          | 8.15–9.15pm      |
| 6               | Parish Council meeting           | Primary school        | 7pm              |
| 6,13,20         | Gatehouse Pilates                | Village Hall          | 9.30–10.30am     |
| 6,13,20         | Hannah Bathe Fitness             | Village Hall          | 7–7.45pm         |
| 6,13,20         | Folkdancing                      | Village Hall          | 7.45–10pm        |
| 7, 14           | Book Break                       | Stonesfield Library   | 12.30–2pm        |
| 7,14,21         | Hannah Bathe HITT class          | Village Hall          | 7.15–8pm         |
| 7               | Bingo                            | SSSC                  | eyes down 7.30pm |
| 9               | Crafts for Christmas             | White Horse           | 11am–4pm         |
| 9,10            | Christmas Art & Craft show       | Grey Cat Studio       | 10am–3pm         |
| 11              | Gardening Club Members' Social   | St James' Centre      | 7.30pm           |
| 15              | Scouts Bingo                     | Village Hall          | 6.30 for 7pm     |
| 19              | TLC (Tick List Club)             | Village Hall          | 7.30–9.30pm      |
| 22              | Carol singing round the village  | meet at the church    | 5–6pm            |
| 24              | Live music: Ollie Charles        | SSSC                  | 9pm              |

## Dates for your diary: January

See page 9 for The White Horse pop-up pub/café New Year's day times

|               |                                     |                       |              |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 1             | Stonesfield Stumble                 | from The Cross        | 11.16am      |
| 5,12,19,26    | Baby & Toddler Group                | Village Hall          | 10–12noon    |
| 8, 15, 22, 29 | Monday Coffee                       | St James' Centre      | 8.45–11.30am |
| 8,11,15,18    | Taekwondo                           | Village Hall          | 5.30–6.30pm  |
| 9,16,23,30    | Seniors Café                        | Village Hall clubroom | 3–4pm        |
| 9,16,23,30    | Stonesfield Social                  | Village Hall clubroom | 5–7pm        |
| 9,16,23,30    | Zumba                               | Village Hall          | 7–8pm        |
| 9,16,23,30    | Strong Nation HIIT                  | Village Hall          | 8.15–9.15pm  |
| 10,17,24,31   | Hannah Bathe HITT class             | Village Hall          | 7.15–8pm     |
| 10,17,24,31   | Folkdancing                         | Village Hall          | 7.45–10pm    |
| 11,18,25      | Book Break                          | Stonesfield Library   | 12.30–2pm    |
| 11,18,25      | Hannah Bathe Fitness                | Village Hall          | 7–7.45pm     |
| 16            | Carers Café                         | Village Hall          | 10am–12noon  |
| 16            | TLC (Tick List Club)                | Village Hall          | 7.30–9.30pm  |
| 17,24,31      | Gatehouse Pilates                   | Village Hall          | 9.30–10.30am |
| 22,25,29      | Taekwondo                           | Village Hall          | 5.30–6.30pm  |
| 27            | Stonesfield Players' murder mystery | Village Hall          | 7 for 7.30pm |

### A big thank you to:

Those who contributed articles and photographs to *The Slate* in 2023. Without you we would not have been able to present such a wide range of news and information. Please continue your good work in 2024.

Our editors whose tireless chasing, checking and proof reading ensured *The Slate* was always ready in time.

The army of volunteers involved in the distribution of *The Slate* who ensured that 900 copies were popped through letterboxes within hours of the printer's delivery. And of course thanks to Windrush Printers for their excellent service.

Our advertisers who funded the production and have enabled *The Slate* to make donations to local charities.

We hope our readers have enjoyed *The Slate* in 2023. We wish you all a Happy Christmas and New Year.

The Publishers

# Notices & news



## Seasonal things

### Any spare foliage?

Foliage needed for the Pre-School's wreath-making evening on 1 December, 7–9pm at the Village Hall. If you have any spare ferns, holly, bushy greens etc from cutting back hedges or 'putting the garden to bed', Pre-School would be very grateful for them.

Please drop off in the front garden of 45 Pond Hill at any time beforehand. Grateful thanks!

Cassandra Jane

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## Greetings

Season's greetings to all friends, neighbours and villagers of Stonesfield. This year I am donating to our Scout Hut rebuilding fund in lieu of cards. Warmest wishes for a happy, healthy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Love to all, Meryl Hunt

Phil, Tina, Curt, Donna and Lyra would like to wish all our family, friends and neighbours a very Happy Christmas and healthy, peaceful New Year 2024. We will be making a donation to Sobell House Hospice Charity.

The Slatter family

On behalf of Cilla and myself I would like to wish all our dear friends in Stonesfield a very Merry Christmas filled with love & joy, and a happy, healthy & peaceful New Year. Let us hope it's a good one for us all.

We will be thinking especially at this festive time of those friends who have lost a loved one during the past twelve months – may loving memories bring you peace & strength.

John Evins & Cilla

I would like to send my Christmas wishes to my friends and neighbours via *The Stonesfield Slate*. I will be donating to my chosen charities. Wishing you all a peaceful Christmas-time and New Year.

My best wishes, Marion Hall

I would like to wish my friends and neighbours in Stonesfield season's greetings and a healthy New Year. I will be sending a donation to Sobell House Hospice Charity.

Judy Oliver



Photo: Juiiana Malta

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## **Christmas Coffee Morning**

**Saturday 2 December 10–11.30am**

Do come to the St James' Centre for coffee and Christmas refreshments on Saturday 2 December, from 10am to 11.30am! There will be cake and gift stalls, and plenty of festive spirit! Organised by the Parish Church, all the money raised will be given to Cecily's Fund (our own local charity which makes education possible for orphaned and vulnerable Zambian children).

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## **Christmas Art & Craft Show**

**Saturday 9 & Sunday 10 December**

Come along to Grey Cat Studio on Saturday 9 or Sunday 10 December and browse our arts and crafts for that elusive Christmas present between 10am & 3pm. Enjoy a glass of mulled wine and work by Kerry Burniston, Jenny Lines, Ann Lowe & Rachael, Becki & Griselda Sherlaw-Johnson. Painting, prints, textiles, felt work, jewellery, cards and much more.

Grey Cat Studio, Woodlands Rise, Stonesfield, OX29 8PL.

rebeccasj@btinternet.com.

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## **Carol singing in Stonesfield**

**Friday 22 December 5pm**

Come and join in carol singing around the village, finishing (at approx 6pm) at the Manor for seasonal refreshments. We will meet 5pm at the church. Everyone welcome!

If you would like the carol singers to visit your street, please let us know – email [stonesfield@stonesfieldparishchurch.org](mailto:stonesfield@stonesfieldparishchurch.org). We will do our best to come!

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## **Christmas with the Scouts...**

By the time this is being read, then Christmas will be getting close. This is a busy time for all members of Stonesfield Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. We warmly invite you to join in with our festive traditions.

The Christmas Card boxes will be at the shop from early December if you wish to use our elves to post your cards to others in the village.

On Thursday 14 December Santa will be coming through the village on his sleigh once more. Cheer and support him, and us, between 6:15pm and 8pm. Come and dance to his festive(ish) music.

On Friday 15 December we have the return of the Christmas Bingo and Raffle at the Village Hall. Open from 6:30pm, eyes down at 7pm. Fun for all the family, with mince pies and a few festive treats.

See p29 for latest news on the Scout hut.

Ho Ho Ho!

Stonesfield Scouts



Photo: Chuttersnap

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## **Reverse Advent Calendar**

To those who have already been in touch and are already building a Reverse Advent Calendar, a big thank you, we'll be in touch to arrange collection just before Christmas. It's definitely not too late to get involved: simply wrap an empty box - ideally in festive paper - leaving the top open.

Then add the items suggested on the calendar (see page 14), or an alternative of your choice, that can be served cold if necessary (but avoiding nuts/alcohol please). Do let us know if you are planning to take part so that we can arrange to collect from you.

If you feel a whole box is a bit of a stretch this year, don't worry, it's also possible to get involved by popping one or more of the items on the calendar into the collection box at the pub and Stonesfield Mutual Aid will turn these into emergency parcels for households that contact them, so please do help any way you can.

Susan Rudlin

susan@backthewhitehorse.com

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## **Would you value some support this Christmas?**

Old, young and all those in between, there are times when we all need a little help from our community and we're here to support you. If receiving one of the 'reverse advent calendar' food hampers described in the news section would help you or someone you know this Christmas, please tell us. If you're contacting us on behalf of someone else, please make sure you have their permission to provide their details.

All you need to do is to contact one of the people listed below. They will just need to know – in confidence - your name, your

address and how many people are in your household:

### **Stonesfield Community Pub**

Email: susan@backthewhitehorse.com

### **Stonesfield Pre-school**

Tel: Mrs Louise John 01993-898370

E: stonesfieldps@outlook.com

### **Stonesfield Primary School**

Tel: 01993-891687

E: office.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk

### **Stonesfield Voluntary Transport Scheme**

T: Viv Kendall 01993 891803

E: stonesfieldvts@gmail.com

### **Stonesfield Methodist Church**

T: Kathleen Alb ert 01993 891733

E: k.m.albert14@gmail.com

### **St James' the Great Church**

T: Rev. Ralph Williamson 01993 891872

Email: rector@scbenefice.org

### **Baby & Toddler Group**

E: Sarah Lydiat

stonesfieldbabyandtoddlers@gmail.com

### **Stonesfield Scouts**

E: Ben Whitworth chair@stonesfield-scouts.org.uk or talk to any of the leaders.

It's a pleasure to work again in partnership with a wide range of village organisations this year. Thank you so much to everyone for your help.



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## **A Christmas thank you from The White Horse**

A year ago, the ambition to celebrate Christmas at the White Horse seemed a distant prospect. Thanks to your amazing generosity and hard work it's now a welcome reality, and we look forward to raising a glass together over the festive period at the pop-up pub/cafe (see ad for details). The latest piece of good news is that the pub has made the shortlist for CAMRA's 2023 Pub Saving Award.

Just a reminder that if you're still unsure about volunteering at the pub, do take the plunge - it's immensely rewarding and full training will be given for all roles. Chat to Claire at the pub or email Lauren at [volunteers@backthewhitehorse.com](mailto:volunteers@backthewhitehorse.com). Oh, and **don't forget you've got until Christmas to preorder your bacon rolls** at the pub or via [info@backthewhitehorse.com](mailto:info@backthewhitehorse.com) for the New Year's Day Stumble!

Steve Callaghan

Stonesfield Community Pub Ltd

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## **Pictures @ The Pub**

A reminder that throughout December we are showing Michael Sofroniou's colourful paintings of still life, landscapes and interiors.

On Saturday 9 December we are holding Crafts for Christmas between 11am and 4pm. Our designer-makers will offer jewellery, fused glass, mixed media art, bottle lamps, journals and sketchbooks, soaps and toiletries, recycled metal flowers, tree decorations and cards. More information is available from Trisha Williams, [triywnwilo03@gmail.com](mailto:triywnwilo03@gmail.com).

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## **The White Horse – an appreciation**

On the weekend of 3 to 6 November my wife Janet and I came up to Oxfordshire from Bridport in Dorset to attend our granddaughter Lotte's wedding in Brize Norton.

On Sunday I suggested that, as we were so close, how about going for a coffee at the White Horse in Stonesfield? I'm so glad we did; I take my hat off to all the volunteers who are working so hard to get the pub back up to how it used to be many years ago.

It certainly brought back memories for me, the Stonesfield and Combe window cleaner from 1969 until I left the area to move to Dorset in 2003.

My first landlord at the White Horse was retired hunt jockey Nigel Bishop and I cleaned the windows at the Black Head for landlord Fred (can't remember his surname)[*Edgeler - editor*].

To everyone behind the bar, cooking, painting, cleaning and raising money for this great project, you are all doing a wonderful job and I look forward to coming up for a pint when the pub is fully open.

In the meantime, my wife and I would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a very prosperous New year.

Long live the White Horse!

Peter and Janet Pinker



# Christmas at The White Horse



## Pop-up Pub/Cafe

### Christmas Opening Hours

Christmas Eve 10am - 11pm

Christmas Day 11am - 1pm (drinks only)

New Years Eve 4pm - 1am

New Years Day **Post-Stumble** (Pre-order bacon rolls)

### Call my Bluff Wine Tasting

Sun 3 December 11am - 6.30pm

Tickets £15 per person from the pub

**SOLD OUT**

### Crafts for Christmas

Saturday 9 December 11am - 4pm

Handmade decorations, cards and gifts for sale.

### Folk at The White Horse

Friday 22 December 2pm - 4pm

With special guests



## Charlbury Christmas Trees

Pick your own and pre-cut trees  
Belgium Blue • Nordsman • Norway spruce

**December 2-3, 9-10 & 16-17**

Opening hours **9.30 – 4.00pm**

Please check for updates on: [www.charlbury.info](http://www.charlbury.info)



Halcyon Honey Farm  
Woodstock Road, Charlbury, OX7 3ET  
Tel: 01608 810260



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## Community Café

We will be running the Community Café on Saturday, 2 December at the Village Hall with tea, coffee, cake from 10am and a light lunch served from 12 noon until 2pm.

We're working in collaboration with Oxford Food Hub to repurpose surplus food. This not only stops perfectly good food going to landfill, but significantly helps us keep our costs down, so that any money we make can be channelled towards helping villagers survive the current cost-of-living crisis. The Village Hall generously sponsors the club room.

We work on a pay-as-you-feel basis, that means you can contribute however you can to the success of our project: donating your time, skills, money, or something even more imaginative! We will have a menu with indicative costs on it so that you can gauge what to give, but ultimately it's up to you.

The repair team will be in the main hall again, so if you're having something fixed please do drop in while you wait. Our Parish Councillors will also be there showcasing their work over the past year, so if you have any burning questions about what they do please come along and ask them. The Stonesfield Sourdough Bakers will be selling freshly baked loaves with proceeds going to the Food Group and there will be an opportunity to sign up for all things sourdough, including upcoming sourdough baking classes if you're interested.

It promises to be a busy morning and we look forward to seeing you there.

Susan Rudlin

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## Stonesfield Food Group

### The Social gets social!

Find our brand-new Facebook page at Stonesfield Social | Facebook

We're just getting going, but we hope to provide you with our weekly menu in advance, plus any updates that you need. Come and ask us about allergens – or just say Hi!

**Weekly socials** The Social continues to provide delicious, healthy, free food to all the community on Tuesdays between 5pm and 7pm, at the Village Hall. We have had some fun with themed evenings – including Halloween, Diwali and St Andrew's day!

Takeaways are available, and we ask that you support our planet-friendly ethos by bringing your own reusable container if possible. Why not pick up a takeaway for a neighbour?

The last session before Christmas will be on 12 December. We will be taking a break until 9 January 2024.

We have a wonderful team of volunteer cooks, bottle washers, front of house, crafters and more. We're so grateful to those who give up their time to be neighbours supporting neighbours. We are a little light on savoury cooks so if this is your forte, please get in touch! We like to have 2 savoury cooks per session if possible, so you don't have to cook as much as you might think. You can cook at home or in the Village Hall kitchen. If you'd like to help, even if it's only once in a while, please get in touch with Julie (see below).

We are averaging one or two small caddy bags of food waste per week – which is amazingly small given that we are serving

around 70 portions. We source much of the food from the fantastic Oxford Food Hub who rescue surplus food from restaurants, small suppliers and supermarkets, which would otherwise go to waste. Recently, we have noticed vegetables imported from Kenya, Egypt and Peru – how sad if they had been flown here just to finish up in landfill, creating greenhouse gases. The quality is incredible, we have been inspired by it to make wonderful dishes such as Teriyaki noodles with chicken or Quorn, and a Tuscan-inspired sausage and bacon casserole. Our puddings are fab, and we always serve salad, crudités and fresh fruit!

**Christmas craft boxes** We are thrilled with the craft our younger guests are encouraged to produce, and hope that we are inspiring some future artists! We would like to provide shoebox-sized craft boxes as a Christmas surprise for them and invite anyone who would like to donate new or good quality second-hand craft materials to contact us. Monetary donations to purchase craft materials would also be appreciated – please get in touch if this is something you would like to contribute to.

**Seniors' Café** Meet friends old and new, have delicious homemade cake and a lovely cup of tea – all on a Tuesday from 3–4pm in the Village Hall. All on the same planet-friendly basis as the Social.

**Emergency Food help** One of the aims of the Food Group is to support Stonesfield residents who are struggling to afford nourishing food. We are able to do this using the funds raised by the Community Cafés run alongside the Repair Café, and through other generous donations.

We are currently able to offer food parcels. If you, or someone you know, could benefit, contact Kate Harris on 01993

898781 or via email at [kateharris58@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:kateharris58@yahoo.co.uk).

If you are able to, you can support the food parcel initiative by donating TINNED meat pies, hotdogs, meatballs, chicken, or ham. They can be left in the brown box on the doorstep of 6 Brook Lane.

**Food group's visits** We don't have any visits to local producers or other food related sites arranged currently – so if there's somewhere you'd like to visit, why not join our friendly group and we will help you to organise it!

We are always ready to welcome new members, you can participate with a light touch, or get really involved – it's up to you.

Contact [juliecurrano@gmail.com](mailto:juliecurrano@gmail.com) for more information, to share ideas or to join the group.

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## **Cows on the Common**

It's that time of the year again when cows will come back to the Common. They will be there from December through to March next year, grazing back the long growth from the summer to allow the wild flowers to come through in the spring.

When cattle are allowed to graze freely they select different plants, and even different parts of the plant, to nibble or browse. Over time, this selective eating by the animals creates a varied structure within the plants and the habitat. It is this that helps create the right conditions for a wide range of plants, insects, birds, reptiles, and mammals to exist. The weight of the cows ensures that flower seeds are pressed into the soil by their hooves, which will help germination in the spring. In this respect cows are much better than sheep,

who are much more picky about what they eat and therefore not as beneficial to the health of the Common.

These cattle are helping us manage the Common to maintain and enhance its Site of Special Scientific Interest status. I hope you'll visit the cows who are generally very docile, and be sure to follow the rules that are posted on the gates. This is a polite way of saying please keep dogs on leads and pick up poo.

Richard Morris

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## Village Hall News

As 2023 draws to a close, we look back reminiscing over the days that have passed and reflect on the highs and lows of the year gone by.

We have had a few jobs completed at the hall, mainly ones that people can't see like the electrical work required, but we also got the new fire door installed at the side of the building. We have had extra support by way of the Food Group, who as well as supplying and cooking delicious meals have also presented the kitchen with much needed help by way of 2 new kettles and a dishwasher!! We are extremely grateful, and appreciate them no end.

**The Community Café** has gone from strength to strength earning charities some good money over the last year. Can we say a big 'Well Done' to CJ's Mission who stepped in last minute to fill the space in November, they had another successful event, raising much-needed funds. The teddy bear adoption table was a huge hit, as was the New & Pre-loved stall.

**Saturday 2 December** is the return of **The Repair Café**, supported by the Food Group's delicious menu. If something needs

fixing, bring it along and they will do their best to restore it to working order. If you need advice about your computer, your phone or software they can help you. If you can, tell them what you are going to bring to help them prepare: [stonesfieldrepaircafe@gmail.com](mailto:stonesfieldrepaircafe@gmail.com) There is no charge for the repairs but they gratefully accept donations. The Community Café date on Saturday 6 January is still available at the moment.

Due sadly to lack of attendance last month, the new date for **SVH AGM** will be **Monday 4 December 2023**.

On **Sunday 3 December** we will be holding the **Christmas Market** from 10am till 3pm. Admission is free, and we have a lovely line up of stalls selling beautiful gifts, plus Father Christmas will be making an appearance as our special guest!

**Stonesfield Folk Dance Group** have a number of nights lined up and are always on the lookout for new dancers to join them for what is always a super social evening!

6 December - Des & Carolinne with the Donkey House Band

13 December - Diane Morgan with David & Tina

20 December- Christmas Party with the Donkey House Band

10 January - Club Callers & The Donkey House Band.

**Pilates News:** We have had a fantastic year in Pilates and it has been incredible to see how much the group has improved. Not only have the clients improved but we have created a sense of community within the group and always enjoy an end-of-term coffee at The Old

Shed. Our classes will resume after Christmas on Wednesday 17 January 9.30am. If you are interested in making positive lifestyle changes to your health and well-being then please get in touch at [anitaloxtonwellbeing@gmail.com](mailto:anitaloxtonwellbeing@gmail.com) or [www.anitaloxton.com](http://www.anitaloxton.com).

As 2024 springs up shiny and new with lots of resolutions to be thought up, prospects to be pursued and goals to be achieved, we would like to remind you all that we are here. We are waiting for your use, and encouraging you all to take part, join in with the clubs and activities that we have or start your own group and get others involved doing the things that you like.

We also want to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to all our groups and clubs old and new, our members for the time and support that they give up voluntarily for all things hall related, our contractors and staff for their hard work and dedication and lastly, probably mostly to the wonderful community that surrounds us, attending our activities, spreading our news, letting us host their celebrations, and without whom there would be no need for a hall at all. Thank you all so very much for your continued support.

Jacqueline Carthew (898919)

Secretary & Booking Clerk for Stonesfield Village Hall

[stonesfieldvh@gmail.com](mailto:stonesfieldvh@gmail.com)

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## **A note from Blenheim**

Blenheim were really pleased to be able to financially support the community bid for The White Horse. Village pubs are vital to local communities, but they are suffering huge pressures in the current economic climate, so we were pleased to do what we could do to help and will continue to offer support in order to help ensure it is a great success.

We were also really pleased to contribute to the fundraising for the 1st Stonesfield Scout Hut as well, and the Friends of Stonesfield School to help expand their Forest School provision.

Finally, if you are a charity who needs volunteers, please do let Merilyn know on [mdavies@Blenheim.org](mailto:mdavies@Blenheim.org); Blenheim are launching a staff volunteer program where staff take eight hours of paid leave a year, to support local groups and charities. You can find out more on our new Community Website, [Blenheim Community \(blenheimcommunities.org\)](http://BlenheimCommunities.org) or on Merilyn's Facebook page.

Merilyn Davies – Community Lead at Blenheim  
[mdavies@Blenheim.org](mailto:mdavies@Blenheim.org)

### **Upright Piano Free - please save from disposal**

Housed in dry garage for a while  
(covered in protective sheets).  
Associated piano stool included.  
Piano keys lid has locking key.  
View at any time, by arrangement.

**01993 898733**

**Dallas Townsend**

51 Pond Hill, Stonesfield

# Stonesfield Reverse Advent Calendar

with Stonesfield Community Pub Limited and Stonesfield Mutual Aid

| Sunday  | Monday                       | Tuesday                    | Wednesday                    | Thursday                               | Friday  | Saturday                        |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------|
| Will you make a difference to someone this Christmas? | 27 Nov<br>Tea / coffee       | 28 Nov<br>Tinned tomatoes  | 29 Nov<br>Christmas biscuits | 30 Nov<br>Cereal/ porridge             | 1 Dec<br>Tinned potatoes  | 2<br>Long-life juice            |
| 3<br>Gravy  | 4<br>Tinned fruit            | 5<br>UHT milk              | 6<br>Instant mash            | 7<br>Tinned meat / fish / lentils etc. | 8<br>Soap   | 9<br>Tinned meals (incl. vegan) |
| 10<br>Soup  | 11<br>Chocolate for children | 12<br>Custard/rice pudding | 13<br>Baked beans            | 14<br>Festive cake                     | 15<br>Pastan'sauce  | 16<br>Hot pudding               |
| 17<br>Chocolate orange                                | 18 - 20<br>Parcel collection |                            | 21 - 24<br>Parcel delivery   |  | 25<br><b>Christmas Day</b><br>Thank you! Your generosity has made a difference to someone's Christmas |                                 |

# Politics & local affairs

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## **Stonesfield Parish Council**

Following meeting on 1 November 2023

**SAFER / Signage:** Matters arising - The council discussed street signage and liabilities. The parish council is speaking with OCC in conjunction with our working group to establish liabilities and decision making.

**The common:** One of the fence lines needs repair work. We need to provide some hardcore to shore up the fence and also replace some posts. This is being worked on to be completed next spring. Thanks to the neighbouring farmer who will cut the hedge line and is working with us to help resolve.

**Parish matters:** It was reported to us that the steps near the Scout hut are damaged. The clerk will liaise with the Scouts.

**Neighbourhood Plan:** Cllr Warr shared the Neighbourhood Plan report and advised that the landscape assessment first draft is due in November. FAQs are now on village website.

### **Field on Combe Road towards**

**Combe:** This has been purchased by a local resident. The plan is for it to be left for conservation.

**Stonesfield Players storage:** There are ongoing discussions on storage for this local group.

**Local plan (Cllr D Brown):** Cllr Brown has gone through the local plan and the

council has reviewed the response and submitted.

**Stonesfield dark sky village:** Just a reminder that the village is in the AONB. This is why we have no street lights. Houses are encouraged to minimise outside lighting to help maintain the wildlife that the dark sky supports.

**Remembrance Sunday:** The council again will purchase and place a wreath for Remembrance Sunday.

**Children's play area:** The council is in early discussion with the Playing Fields Association with regards to potentially taking this area into the parish council as a council asset, to help secure future funding for maintenance etc as this is a valuable amenity and widely used by the village.

**Policy documents:** Reminder that the website holds all parish agendas, minutes, policy documents and is updated regularly.

**Date of the next full council meeting:** 6 December 2023, 7pm – Stonesfield Primary School.

Karen East, Clerk  
Stonesfield Parish Council  
clerk@stonesfieldpc.uk

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## **Neighbourhood Plan**

As the year draws to a close, we thought it might be useful to offer an update on everything we've done during 2023 towards creating a Neighbourhood Plan.



In March we conducted a village survey, giving everyone in Stonesfield over the age of 16 the chance to say what they liked about the village, what they wanted to protect, what they would like to see improved. The response was magnificent: 62% of the total number of households replied, and 699 people also responded as individuals, which represents 45% of the eligible (over-16) population. Typically, surveys get a 20% response; ours was much higher and therefore more representative.

We have analysed the responses (a full report is on the Stonesfield website [www.stonesfield.online](http://www.stonesfield.online)) and we are now writing policies based on the data. Remember: as we have said many times in writing and at our public meetings, the Neighbourhood Plan is not a wish list; it is a statement of Stonesfield's policies regarding planning issues: what further development would be appropriate, what infrastructure is needed, the protection of green spaces and footpaths. The District Council is obliged to take these policies into account when considering planning applications. Luckily, there will be a section of the Plan called 'Aspirations', and we will be able to include some of your 'wish list' there: a cleaner river, more buses to Witney and Chipping Norton, cycle paths etc. Luckily, we already have our pub!!

We have commissioned a professional surveyor to write a Landscape Assessment: a report on the parish landscape (which falls in the Cotswold AONB), and how the village looks as you approach it from its surroundings. Volunteers are working on a history of the village and on a Character Assessment: a report on how the village looks within; its buildings, streets and

views out towards the surrounding countryside. We are also starting to create a Housing Needs assessment, so that we have an up-to-date independent record of what housing is actually needed here.

We hope to have a draft Plan towards the end of next year. It then has to go to the Parish Council and WODC for approval, and then to an Independent Examiner. When WODC and the Independent Examiner have approved the draft Plan, it will be the subject of a whole-village referendum.

The Neighbourhood Plan steering Group wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and a productive New Year.

Caroline Friend  
[info@stonesfieldplan.com](mailto:info@stonesfieldplan.com)

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## **Criminal damage**

In the middle of November, vandals decided to damage road signs and the Parish-owned Speed Indicator Displays (SIDs).

This wastes Parish Council's time, effort and money and, by definition, costs the residents of Stonesfield.

What it doesn't change is the policy of improving safety of all residents, pedestrians and drivers alike, through the education of drivers on the importance of reducing their speed through Stonesfield.

The Parish Council would like to stop this waste so, if you know anything that could identify those involved, please share your information with either Thames Valley Police or the Parish Clerk.

[safer@stonesfieldpc.uk](mailto:safer@stonesfieldpc.uk)

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## **Crossing the floor**

In September I made the choice to join the Labour Party, or as a friend of mine put it, crossed the floor... So far it is the best move I have made in my time in local government. The welcome has been fantastic and the difference in attitude towards key areas of the local communities has been eye opening. I had always thought of Labour as a little bit too big nationally to be able to focus on local issues, but I couldn't have been more wrong. There is a great knowledge within the Labour Councillors in the West Oxfordshire Group and beyond.

One of the key issues that attracted me to the Party is affordable housing, no I mean actually affordable, not the ridiculous term that now regularly whitewashes developers' presentations and submissions.

Of course, no one wants more development, however there is a 'need', and they will come whether we like it or not. So, if it's inevitable, why don't we make the best of a bad situation and get what we want and need rather than what the developers want? Whilst restrictions on developers mainly come from national government there are things a planning authority can do.

In my view, instead of going outwards, we should go up. I'm not talking high rise skyscrapers here, but simply two- or three-story buildings that make up flats or apartments whilst still aesthetically remaining in-keeping with the surrounding area by being made to look like houses. There are many successful examples of this already within the district with fantastic green space communal areas. Flats or apartments can offer truly affordable

options for all walks of life and can be used as social housing too.

But it's not just about what we build, but also about where we build it. All these Frankenstein-like bolt-ons to communities puts pressure on the local services, meaning the existing residents, and indeed the new residents, suffer the consequences. For me, the solution could be a new village. This would be able to accommodate many homes and would likely take up no more space than if you were to add the houses to existing settlements, but with the added benefit of not disrupting an established community, draining their already limited resources and, of course, the proper infrastructure such as sewage works, etc. would have to be built with the houses rather than relying on existing and already over-stretched facilities.

These are just some of my ideas to combat a fast-growing monster already raising its head within our district. I hope to continue trying to find ways to make West Oxfordshire a better place to live with the help of my new Labour Party colleagues.

**Mathew Parkinson**

West Oxfordshire District Councillor

[Mathew.Parkinson@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:Mathew.Parkinson@westoxon.gov.uk)

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## **Witney Bus Service**

In case you have missed it, the Villager 26 bus to Witney now runs additionally on Thursdays.

So that is Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday leaving Stonesfield at 9:40, returning from Witney Sainsbury at 11:55, and Stop C at the Buttercross at 12:00. Journey time about 40 minutes, depending on request stops on the way.

Incidentally, the bus stranded in a snowstorm shown in the November issue is the Worth's service then running from their garage in Enstone to Oxford via Charlbury and Stonesfield. It is good to remember the value of locally provided services.

Mark Winstanley

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## **News from West Oxfordshire**

### **Recalculating housing targets**

Due to a revision in the way the Council is able to calculate housing targets, WODC can now demonstrate a 'five-year housing land supply' which will mean it has greater control over the planning process. WODC's adopted Local Plan recently passed its fifth anniversary and because housing policies need updating, the Council is now able to calculate its housing land supply using the Government's alternative 'standard method'.

Carl Rylett, Executive member for Planning and Sustainable Development, said, "Revising our calculation ... allows us to concentrate on making swift progress with our new Local Plan, setting a new housing target to 2041 and identifying a pipeline of suitable sites, supported by the right investment in infrastructure." For West Oxfordshire, this is much lower than stated in the current Local Plan. The result is that the Council can now demonstrate a 5.4-year supply of deliverable housing sites, meaning it has a greater degree of control when determining speculative planning applications for housing.

### **The right homes for the right people**

WODC is taking proactive steps to meet the growing demand for more tailored and

affordable housing in the district. Through its housing register, WODC found that over 2,000 households in the district are in need of affordable housing, and to address the issue, committed itself to delivering 274 affordable homes each year up until 2031. However, in recognition that every resident has their own unique needs, the Council is going to look for various ways they can offer affordable housing that suits the individual needs of everyone. This will include exploring the possibility of developing their own affordable homes on council-owned land, offering more rental and shared ownership options, and ensuring a broader range of home sizes for families. To support its ambitions to boost the district's supply of affordable housing, the Council will build on its relationships with partners such as Oxfordshire County Council, Cottsway, Oxplace, and Homes England, as well as seeking new relationships with other organisations. This collaborative approach will be an opportunity to combine resources and expertise, so that different methods of creating more affordable housing can be explored. Furthermore, in partnership with Cotswold District Council, a specialist expert will be recruited to grow these partnerships, and provide the knowledge and experience needed to successfully lead a team in investigating the possibilities for how both councils can deliver more affordable homes.

### **Consultation on future costs**

WODC has launched a consultation aimed to help inform its budget plans for the 2024/25 financial year and beyond. It wants to sensibly manage the impact of increased costs and reduced Government funding while also delivering on the priorities of the district. The survey will ask

residents about where they would like the council to prioritise its spending over the coming years across the wide range of services it delivers for local residents. Only 10% of the council tax collected is spent by the District Council, with the rest being passed to the County Council, Parish Councils, and Police and Fire services. Residents can take part in the consultation online by visiting [www.westoxon.gov.uk/budget](http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/budget) or they can get a physical copy of the survey from the Council office in Welch Way in Witney. The survey will be open from 13 November to 18 December.

### **Four local authorities set to take greater control of Council services**

Four neighbouring local authorities (WODC, Cotswold DC, Forest of Dean DC, and Cheltenham Borough Council) are set to take greater control of council services. The four Councils will receive recommendations to be considered by each council following a review of their jointly owned company, Publica.

Established in 2017, Publica has provided a range of council services ranging from customer services and planning to back-office functions like IT and finance. Since 2017, Publica has delivered a number of efficiencies and savings but due to the pressures and the local aspirations that the councils are focussed on, an independent review was undertaken to look at whether Publica's company model was still able to meet the current and future needs of its council owners.

The final report completed by consultants Human Engine recommends that a significant number of locally focused services should move back from Publica and return to being under greater control by the councils. This would leave Publica

delivering a range of back-office and customer services for the councils.

If the recommendations of the Human Engine report are approved, each of the four councils will then work in partnership to create a phased plan for the transfer of services.

WODC will consider the Human Engine Report recommendations at its Executive meeting on 15 November.

### **£220K boost to Westhive Community crowdfunding pot**

Further to last month's article, the Westhive programme has received an additional £220,000 over two years, earmarked for projects that will improve local facilities and help support communities. To be eligible, WODC is particularly looking for projects such as the remodelling of a community building to create a village shop, upgrading a kitchen in a village hall to allow it to operate as a community cafe, or soundproofing a meeting room so it can also be used by young people for band practice. Eligible projects could see pledges of up to £20,000 from the Council, or up to 50% of their crowdfunding targets. In line with the Council Plan, the Council will be encouraging submissions of projects that champion environmental sustainability, support those who are most vulnerable in our communities, and those that face exclusion, whether due to mental health, physical or mental disability, or financial hardship. There will also be a focus on projects brought forward by or designed to meet the needs of young people, as part of the Council's commitment to empowering young voices.

## **WODC welcomes new Executive Member for Planning**

Cllr Charlie Maynard has joined WODC as the Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development after Cllr Carl Rylett stepped down from the Executive for personal reasons. The portfolio for this role on the Council's Executive includes, among other things, responsibility for: Local Plan, Government planning policies and guidance and ensuring planning policies meet 2030 requirement

## **Local group hits out at MP's 'complacency' on Climate Change**

Local activists, the Robert Courts Watch group [www.robertcourtswatch.com](http://www.robertcourtswatch.com) (RCW) have hit out at the complacency shown by their local MP at Witney Eco Forum's 'Evening with Robert Courts' last September. The event, chaired by the Bishop of Oxford, Rt. Rev. Steven Croft, and facilitated by former BBC environment analyst Roger Harrabin, attracted a packed audience to St Mary's Church – indicating that Witney cares greatly about our climate.

Robert was questioned by community leaders about diverse aspects of climate policy. He accepted that climate change is of 'epoch-defining' importance, that it is man-made, extremely threatening and caused by our emissions from fossil fuel use, that there is real consensus across Britain that action is essential, and that the scientific consensus, in particular the reports from the Committee on Climate Change, are correct.

But Robert Courts Watch were disappointed at the MP's complacency. RCW spokesperson Hugo Kerr said that while repeatedly describing Britain as 'world-beating' on this issue, Courts

showed little sense of urgency, tolerating gradual progress and declaring that change could 'take a generation'.

Hugo Kerr said: 'Robert Courts suggested that we 'wait' for free-market technological innovations rather than using direct state intervention to accelerate change. He was unspecific about concrete action and fell back on 'plans' and 'road maps'. Our MP offered little in the way of real change in real time, for example in respect of onshore wind, low-carbon housing, private jets, licensing of new oil and gas, or making polluters pay.

Robert said he supported recent diluting of net zero targets. But the loudest and most prolonged applause of the evening was when the facilitator suggested our Prime Minister could be using climate change as a wedge issue to fracture consensus for partisan electoral purposes.'

West Oxfordshire District Council  
[communications@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:communications@westoxon.gov.uk)

## **Neighbourhood Watch**

Information on Neighbourhood Watch is available at: [www.ourwatch.org.uk/](http://www.ourwatch.org.uk/)  
Anyone interested in joining the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme may find details and register at: [www.member-registration.neighbourhoodalert.co.uk/30/Join](http://www.member-registration.neighbourhoodalert.co.uk/30/Join). Clicking on 'Join a scheme' and selecting 'Stonesfield' will complete the request.

Police and community support: For information or advice on security concerns, please call 101 or contact [woodstockNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk](mailto:woodstockNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk)

Deanna Asplundh  
Stonesfield Neighbourhood Watch  
Coordinator

# Education, culture & more

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## **Stonesfield Pre-School & Daycare**

### **Vacancy for an Early Years Practitioner**

We are looking for an enthusiastic, nurturing, creative and dynamic person to join our team. We are a thriving and friendly setting, providing fantastic Pre-School care at the heart of our lovely village community. Currently rated 'good' by OFSTED, we are working rapidly towards 'outstanding', and are looking for someone to join our team who will partner us in achieving the best for our children and families. We work closely with the village primary school; we provide Breakfast Club and After School Club for families requiring wrap-around care.

At present the vacancy is for a minimum of 10 hours per week.

Working hours would be anytime between 7.30am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, term time only. Also, we may run holiday clubs during school holidays and favour our staff to be able to work some days during this period.

Qualifications required:

- Early Years Practitioner Level 3 or equivalent
- Paediatric First Aid (preferable but not necessary)

For more information or to request an application form please contact our Administrator Mrs Zena Rozee, email

stonesfieldpsad@outlook.com or call on 01993 898012.

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Preferred candidates will be required to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Closing Date: Friday 8 December 2023 (interview week commencing 11 December 2023)

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## **Friends of Stonesfield School need you!!**

Friends of Stonesfield School (FoSS) is a charity, much like a Parent Teacher Association (PTA), that works with the school to raise funds to enhance the experience of the children at school. The advantage of being a 'Friends of' is that anyone in the community can be involved (not just parents and teachers!).

FoSS is looking for a new Co-Chair and Treasurer to start in the new year. Are you looking to support the village school? Have you got the skills that they are looking for? Do you like the sound of the role descriptions below?

Co-Chair -

- Main duty: To lead FoSS and make decisions, along with other Co-Chair.
- Key jobs: To make all committee members feel welcome and valued; to set the FoSS agenda; to provide

leadership; to co-write the annual report.

- Needs to be: Enthusiastic, calm; good at listening; decisive.

Treasurer -

- Main duty: To oversee financial affairs.
- Key jobs: To manage accounts; do banking and maintain up-to-date financial records.
- Needs to be: Reliable; organised; good with numbers.

If you are interested to know more then please email the FoSS Committee at [info@fossteam.org](mailto:info@fossteam.org) or call Robyn Venables on 07887 883529 by 4 December.

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

Do you enjoy reading?

Could you spare a couple of hours a month?

Come and join the library team. A great volunteering opportunity!

For further details contact

Mike Pollitt (891856)

### **Stonesfield Library**

The Library (898187) is open as follows:  
**though closed from 24 Dec through 2 Jan:**

Monday 2.30–7pm

Wednesday 10am–12 noon

Thursday 2.30–5pm

Saturday 10am–12 noon

The Library Manager will be in the library every Monday.

Val Phillips (891455)

## **Stonesfield Pre-School & Daycare**

*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**

Monday to Friday; 7.30 – 8.50am

(£6.75 per session) Cereal, toast and fruit juice included

### **Pre-School Sessions**

9am – 3pm daily for children aged 2–4 years (£18.40 per session)

### **After School Club**

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday; 3.15 – 6pm  
(£17.15 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))



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## Review: Stonesfield Players' double-header

Both these plays began during Covid lockdowns. They finally came to production when lockdowns seem almost historical. Both were inspired by facts and historical records.

The elderly women - Constance in the first play, Rita in the second - portrayed convincing old-age movements, reflective reminiscing, sorrow or regret or defensiveness about missed opportunities and lost dear ones. And in both plays, it's clear that memories are sometimes distorted or inaccurate...



*The Private Collection* seemed to have two entirely separate stories which took a while to come together as one narrative. The stage set was ingenious - the use of gauze curtains and different lighting to depict the realm of memories was very effective; the characters moved subtly across the boundary into and out of Constance's active recollections to snippets of opera recordings, in themselves a memory for Constance. Her regular napping enabled the dialogues and relationship of her remembered younger self and the RAF pilot Miles to develop. The minimal props were used to good effect. Young Constance looked remarkably similar to her older self. And Miles' words and expressive way of speaking reminded me clearly of their author.

*Can You Hear Me Mother* brought back to life the awful effects of Covid lockdowns - loneliness, inability to visit ANYone, despair at being refused proper funerals, the need somehow to 'keep busy'. Rita's bewilderment with the technology that saved her from total isolation, her varying tones of voice, her softening through reading her father's letters (nice touch to broadcast them), her put-downs to neighbour Stacey followed by concern for her well-being - she was the heart of that play.

Another high quality, thought-provoking evening's entertainment from the Players. Stonesfield is indeed lucky to have them. **Congratulations to everyone involved**, on stage and behind the scenes.

Dale Morris

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## 'Blood Runs Thicker'

Just when you thought it was safe to go back on the streets, the Stonesfield Players are delighted to bring you another murder mystery to puzzle over.

The foul deed will be enacted in the village hall on the evening of Saturday 27 January 2024 and, without giving too much away, one of the characters you will meet that evening will come to a sticky end before the night is out. It will be your task to find the culprit based on the evidence from various scenes you will witness during the course of the evening, clues you have been given and the opportunity to question all the characters.

Places are limited and we are expecting tickets to go quickly so book early to avoid disappointment.

Tickets are £20 which will include a 2-course meal and a full evening's

entertainment. You will be seated in tables of 6 so you can either book a whole table or book individually.

Doors will open at 7pm and the show commences at 7.30.

Tickets are available through the box office at [andrew.tacon@outlook.com](mailto:andrew.tacon@outlook.com) or 07795 441986

## I'm a Reader

Journalist and cosy crime author, Flic Everett, 53, has never been to Stonesfield, yet she played a small but significant part in our recent history, that, now *The White Horse* is safely in community hands, deserves an airing.

For my friend Flic it was who, inspired by the struggles of the committee and the village to save the pub, wrote the very supportive feature about it for *The Daily Telegraph*.

'I live in a very small hamlet, and I would love to have a local pub, we have to drive for miles. The people of your village coming together for the sake of the community was a really great story of triumph against the odds – I was so happy when I heard the good news and can't wait to visit!'

When Flic makes the trek from her home near Oban to the sunny Cotswolds, she will not only visit the pub, of course, no, the library will be another must-see destination. Not only is she a book lover, she owes her very existence to libraries.

'My parents met in Didsbury library in 1968. My mother was drifting about choosing books. My dad was a student at Oxford, back home in Manchester for the holidays, writing an essay in the library.

My mum saw him and ran out on to the street and into a phone box; she rang my grandma and told her she'd just seen the man she was going to marry. Surprisingly, rather than telling her not to be silly, like a normal person, my grandma immediately got on a bus to the library and hid herself behind a pillar to take a look at him... and she approved! Meanwhile, my mum hatched a plan and asked to borrow his pen. She wrote him a note asking if he thought it was too forward for a woman to ask a man on a date. He said it was not – and I'm not surprised he responded positively – she was the perfect '60s dolly bird with fluffy blonde hair and huge blue eyes. Six weeks later they were engaged, and two years later I was born. They have recently celebrated 55 years of marriage, and my mother still takes a cake into Didsbury library for the staff, on their wedding anniversary!'

After such a start, it is perhaps not surprising that Flic grew up loving libraries: 'I used to hide in the school library in case I got embroiled in a game of rounders. I used to love the art books and listening to the school librarian telling me about her experiences as an evacuee.'

Perhaps this memory helped inspire Flic's new books, a murder mystery series, set in wartime Manchester, starring a feisty young newspaper reporter turned amateur detective called Edie York ('in wartime it was quite easy to give a woman a job where she would be involved'). The first, *Report of a Murder*, is an evocative portrait of life in wartime, well researched, full of twists, and fast paced. Flic's biggest writing inspiration is *The Pursuit of Love* by Nancy Mitford: 'a novel set in the aristocracy of the 1930s; it has humour, tragedy, pathos and wit. I want to have that effect on

people. JK Rowling, writing as Robert Galbraith, also inspires me, she writes mysteries and crime which she manages to combine with emotional heft.' It's a lot to aspire to, but somehow Flic pulls it off!

F.L. Everett's *A Report of Murder and Murder in a Country Village* are published by Bookouture.

Eleanor Bailey

## Combe Community Cinema in the Combe Hub

### Free Charity Screening on Friday 1 December

Come and enjoy Carol Reed's 1949 masterpiece *The Third Man*.

Bar will be open from 7.15pm, film starts at 8pm. (Cert. PG)

Entry is free, but donations and all bar surplus will go to the Combe Winter Warmer fund.

Looking ahead to 2024, on Friday 19 January we will screen the witty but bittersweet comedy-drama *Can You Ever Forgive Me?*. With excellent performances from Richard E. Grant and Melissa McCarthy, the film follows the career of a failing writer who finds a very unusual - and initially very lucrative - way of making ends meet. On the film review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, the film holds an approval rating of 98% based on 324 reviews.

Doors open at 7.30 for 8pm start and our Cine-bar will be serving soft drinks, wine and a selection of beers. Come to meet friends for a chat, a drink or two and an enjoyable film night. £5 per ticket - cash and card payment accepted.

Our sponsors have included the WE Lawrence Trust, the John Lewis Partnership, West Oxfordshire District Council, Blenheim and Coach House Vets. We are always looking for sponsors so if you or your business would like to offer the community a film evening, please contact us.

Combecommunitycinema@gmail.com

## Oxford Botanic Garden Christmas Fair



This will be on 2 and 3 December from 10am. Full event information is on our website: Christmas Fair | Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum.

Entry is £8 per adult, £7 for concessions (students or over 65s), £6 for Friends of OBG and free for Under-16s, disabled visitors and their accompanying carer.

Lauren Baker, Secondary Education Officer

**Have fun & try something new!**

**Perform!  
Experiment!  
Explore!**

**Open Piano**  
*Feel free to play!*

Oxfordshire Libraries @oxonlibraries

Available in Stonesfield



## **Woodstock Music Society Christmas Concert**

Friday 8th and Saturday 9th December  
2023 at 7.30pm

Schumann: *Adventlied*

Stanford: *Magnificat in B flat*

Hely-Hutchinson: *A Carol Symphony*  
(*scherzo*) and *Carols*

Woodstock Music Society Choir and  
Chamber Orchestra

Conductor: Paul Ingram

St Mary Magdalene Church, Woodstock.

Tickets: £14 in advance or £15 at the door,  
full time students £5, accompanied  
children under 16 free, from The  
Woodstock Bookshop.

email: [concerts@woodstockmusic.info](mailto:concerts@woodstockmusic.info)

book online: [www.bookwhen.com/  
woodstock](http://www.bookwhen.com/woodstock)

## **Witney Music Society**

Our final concert in 2023 will be given by the renowned Rossetti Ensemble. Their programme features works for piano quartet by Mozart, David Matthews and Dvořák. The concert is at 7.30 pm on Friday 8 December.

The first concert of the New Year will be given by award-winning Frederico Paixão (flute) & Mark Rogers (piano). Their programme includes works by Lili Boulanger, Poulenc and York Bowen. The concert is at 7.30pm on Friday 12 January.

Both concerts are at High Street Methodist Church, Witney. Tickets (£15, £1 for under 19s) will be available at the door from 7pm or in advance online. For more information, please telephone 01993 898020 or visit the Witney Music Society website [www.witneymusicsociety.org.uk](http://www.witneymusicsociety.org.uk)

## **Woodstock Poetry Festival**

The festival will take place 1 - 3 December and is organised by the celebrated independent Woodstock Bookshop. The festival is completely independent, and features established voices and rising stars. Started in 2011, the festival ran consecutively for 8 years. The festival is now returning for after a 4-year hiatus.

Events will take place at various sites around Woodstock, including St Mary Magdalene Church, The Assembly Room of the Woodstock Town Hall and a final event at The Woodstock Social Club, which will also feature the Stonesfield musical duo Henderson:Hooper.

Tickets are available via [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-woodstock-poetry-festival-2023-tickets-720397106137](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-woodstock-poetry-festival-2023-tickets-720397106137)

# Clubs, societies & sport

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## **Stonesfield Gardening Club**

Another month, another very entertaining Oxford University graduate student entertaining us with their hard-earned knowledge – great to be able to take advantage of all this local talent!

Oliver Spacey came to talk to us about the *Mysteries of Mistletoe*, clad I may say in a very fetching pair of red dungarees adorned with hand printed mistletoe berries and leaves. Not only that, but we were treated to refreshing cups of mistletoe tea – made with the leaves thankfully, as the berries are poisonous. The tea is very popular in Europe where it is regularly drunk as a cure for hypertension.

Mistletoe has a long history, being sacred to the Druids who thought of it as a cure for the barren and an antidote to poison. Like so many ancient beliefs regarding plants, mistletoe's possible use in medicine is currently being researched further.

Banned for many centuries due to its link with a pagan religion, mistletoe was another of our Christmas traditions that became popular in Victorian times.

As a parasite, it can only grow on other plants, favouring fruiting trees in this country, particularly apple and lime. It provides berries for birds, who have developed an immunity to its toxins.

As our climate warms it is found further and further north, as it is not happy in cold winters. It used to extend no further north than Northampton, but that has changed

recently. There is currently a research project underway called MistleGO that is looking at how much mistletoe there is in the country and where it can be found.

Our last meeting of the year will be our members' social event on 11 December, featuring one of Suzy Boardman's fiendish quizzes and mulled wine to help the thinking process. Members are asked to bring along plant based (not necessarily vegan) snacks – test your ingenuity!

Diane Bates

Secretary Stonesfield Gardening Club

[www.stonesfieldgardening.info](http://www.stonesfieldgardening.info)

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## **Stonesfield Football Club**

It's no secret that The Firsts have been having a torrid time of it lately, with many fickle fans predicting that our heroes could be staring relegation in the face, which has left me wondering if our boys are really hewn from the most robust Stonesfield slate? They exited the Oxon Charity Cup away at Enstone (4-1) in a poor performance that hinted they may not have the stomach for it this season.

Interestingly, there was a modicum of resilience in their match away at Carterton Utd where the home side had to be at their best to finally seal the win (5-2). The green shoots of recovery were visible at home in The Oxon Junior Shield against MINI where a clinical performance saw our boys through to the 3rd round in a comprehensive win (5-1). Few people gave our boys much of a chance against 2nd-

placed Hook Norton who have been in great form this season. This was a fabulously entertaining match, and our boys did the club proud by raising their game, taking all 3 points in an 8-goal thriller (5-3). Let's hope they take some confidence from these two wins to battle their way out of a relegation dogfight.

It was predicted that The Reserves would struggle with The Firsts snatching up their best players, but that doesn't seem to be the case as they've won both their games this month! A great home win against Tower Hill (3-2), that sees them into the 2nd round of the Jack Busby, was followed by a hard-fought win at struggling Leaffield (3-2). As we head into the Christmas period our lads find themselves in 9th (of 14) in the league ... not too shabby for a team that was predicted to struggle.

Talking of Christmas, The Fredo Award Committee has taken the controversial decision to get into the festive spirit by awarding this month's coveted Fredo Award to the entire First Team (usually an individual award) for showing true grit in their brilliant win over Hook Norton. No complaints from me, but Brian Clarke's Fredo budget is going to take a hammering. Step forward guys, The Fredos are all yours and richly deserved!

Finally, as this is the last *Slate* before Christmas, on behalf of The Football Club, let me wish all of you a very Happy Christmas and every success for all your endeavours in 2024. Thank you to everyone in the village and beyond for your support in the past year including *The Slate* and The Sports & Social Club.

Tom Flanigan (891979)

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## Combe Women's Institute

We had a packed room to welcome Robin Stafford Allen whose talk was based on an article written by David Mackay called *Sustainable Energy – Without the Hot Air*. Robin talked about options in transport, buildings, and agriculture and how they stack up to energy demand whilst matching zero carbon supply and whether or not we can live on renewable energy – a very interesting question!

We were delighted to welcome two more new members at our November meeting – but don't be put off – we still have room for more, so why not come along to a meeting in the New Year to try us out and find out more about what the WI has to offer. Visitors are charged £5 per meeting which includes refreshments and a raffle ticket, or alternatively membership until the end of March is just £11.50.

Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month in the Reading Room, Combe, from 7.30–9.30pm. We offer a warm welcome to ladies over the age of 18 and we've an exciting programme of speakers and events arranged for 2024.

Our December meeting is for members only but we look forward to starting the 2024 season in January with a talk by Trading Standards advising us on how to avoid scams.

Please call or email me if you would like further information about the WI.

Julia Sharpe, Secretary Combe WI (891058)  
combewi@oxfordshirewi.co.uk

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## North Leigh History Society

Our December talk will be on Tuesday 5 December when Tim Healey will be talking about a Victorian Christmas. We meet at 7.30pm in the Memorial Hall in North Leigh, OX29 6SA. All welcome. Members £18 per year, visitors £4 per talk. Further details are available from Diana Power (01993 882301) or Robert Kyte at kyterobert@gmail.com and 01993 880368. Please note, we do not meet in January, so the first meeting in the New Year will be on 6 February.

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## Stonesfield Scouts - groundbreaking news



Working on foundations for new hut

After a long gestation period, building work on the new Scout hut has started.

We thank you in advance for your patience whilst we get on with this important project.

As we progress updates will be available on our website, [www.stonesfield-scouts.org.uk/](http://www.stonesfield-scouts.org.uk/).

Ben Whitworth

Stonesfield Scouts

[chair@stonesfield-scouts.org.uk](mailto:chair@stonesfield-scouts.org.uk)

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# Church news

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

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**Churchwarden:** Lindsey Sellar  
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**St James' Centre bookings:**  
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For any enquiries or help, including pastoral support, please do contact us.

### **From the Rector - Christmas Lights**

In the middle of November I sent messages to my friends in Delhi wishing them a Happy Diwali, and Rishi Sunak and his wife and daughters lit lights to celebrate the festival at Downing Street. Another festival associated with light, the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, begins on the 7th of December and then each day another candle of the eight-branched menorah candlesticks will be lit, in celebration of the rededication of the temple in Jerusalem in the second century BCE. Other faiths also have festivals when light is used to express joy and celebration, such as the Islamic festival of Eid at the end of Ramadan. In April this year Trafalgar Square was adorned with lights for the capital's Eid celebrations.

For Christians, Christmas is the time when we remember the light of God coming into

the world, in the birth of Jesus to Mary. Fragile life nurtured by loving parents in difficult circumstances is a symbol of peace and a message of hope. It should inspire the people of the world to step back from violence, injustice and ruthless exploitation, and turn to the way of peace. As a child myself, one of the regular preparations for Christmas was watching my parents try to make the Christmas tree lights work - they were fragile and failed easily, so each year bulbs had to be bought and swapped around until the illuminated miracle of the decorated tree came to life. Today LED lights have made such challenges a thing of the past, but the lights with which we decorate our homes, schools, town centres or places of work still have the same meaning - they tell us that God's light is in the world - that God's coming in Christ has brought us salvation. Christmas means God's life in ours, the light of God's eternity in our human life, and in our communities. At our Christmas services, as well as celebrating the message of the angels, the devotion of the shepherds and the wise men's gifts, the first verses from St John's Gospel always have pride of place:

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.'

I wish you all a very happy Christmas - please come and join us as we celebrate together the light of God in the birth of Christ our Lord. And may the message of Christmas strengthen each of us to live in love and peace.

Revd Ralph Williamson - Rector

## Services

### Sunday 3 December [Second Sunday of Advent]

|        |             |                                  |
|--------|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 8am    | Stonesfield | Holy Communion<br>[BCP/said]     |
| 9.30am | Combe       | All Age Worship -<br>Christingle |
| 11am   | Stonesfield | All Age Worship -<br>Christingle |

### Sunday 10 December [Third Sunday of Advent]

|        |             |                              |
|--------|-------------|------------------------------|
| 8am    | Stonesfield | Holy Communion<br>[BCP/said] |
| 9.30am | Combe       | Parish Communion             |
| 11am   | Stonesfield | Parish Communion             |

### Sunday 17 December [Fourth Sunday of Advent]

|        |             |                              |
|--------|-------------|------------------------------|
| 8am    | Stonesfield | Holy Communion<br>[BCP/said] |
| 9.30am | Combe       | Parish Communion             |
| 11am   | Stonesfield | Parish Communion             |
| 3pm    | Combe       | Carol Service                |
| 6pm    | Stonesfield | Carol Service                |

### Christmas Eve 24 December

|         |             |                                      |
|---------|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| 8am     | Stonesfield | Holy Communion<br>[BCP/said]         |
| 9.30am  | Combe       | Parish Communion                     |
| 11am    | Stonesfield | Parish Communion                     |
| 3.30pm  | Stonesfield | Crib Service - for<br>all the family |
| 9pm     | Stonesfield | Christmas<br>Communion               |
| 10.30pm | Combe       | Christmas<br>Communion               |

### Christmas Day 25 December

|        |             |                               |
|--------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 8am    | Stonesfield | Holy Communion<br>[BCP/said]  |
| 9.30am | Combe       | Christmas Family<br>Communion |
| 11am   | Stonesfield | Christmas Family<br>Communion |

### Sunday 31 December [Christmas 1]

|        |             |                              |
|--------|-------------|------------------------------|
| 8am    | Stonesfield | Holy Communion<br>[BCP/said] |
| 9.30am | Combe       | Parish Communion             |
| 11am   | Stonesfield | Parish Communion             |

### Sunday 7 January [Epiphany]

|        |             |                              |
|--------|-------------|------------------------------|
| 8am    | Stonesfield | Holy Communion<br>[BCP/said] |
| 9.30am | Combe       | All Age Worship              |
| 11am   | Stonesfield | All Age Worship              |

### Sunday 14 January [Epiphany 2]

|        |             |                              |
|--------|-------------|------------------------------|
| 8am    | Stonesfield | Holy Communion<br>[BCP/said] |
| 9.30am | Combe       | Parish Communion             |
| 11am   | Stonesfield | Parish Communion             |

## Sunday 21 January [Epiphany 3]

|        |             |                              |
|--------|-------------|------------------------------|
| 8am    | Stonesfield | Holy Communion<br>[BCP/said] |
| 9.30am | Combe       | Parish Communion             |
| 11am   | Stonesfield | Parish Communion             |
| 5pm    | Combe       | Evensong                     |

## Sunday 28 January [Candlemas]

|        |             |                              |
|--------|-------------|------------------------------|
| 8am    | Stonesfield | Holy Communion<br>[BCP/said] |
| 9.30am | Combe       | Parish Communion             |
| 11am   | Stonesfield | Parish Communion             |

## Wednesdays

|        |             |  |
|--------|-------------|--|
| 9.30am | Stonesfield | Holy Communion<br>(every week, except<br>27 Dec) |
| 11am   | Combe       | Morning Prayer<br>13 Dec; 3, 17, 31 Jan          |

**Thursdays in Advent:** ADVENTures –  
8pm in Combe Church - all welcome!

- 30 November: Hope in the Darkest Night  
An evening with James Dench and the  
Frideswide Consort
- 7 December: ADVENT: A Season through  
Art and Music  
An evening with Martin Conway and  
Denise Cripps
- 14 December: ADVENT in the Anglo-  
Saxon Church  
An evening with Canon Sarah Foot, Dean  
of Christ Church, Oxford

NB: Carol Service 17 December at 6pm –  
There will be an opportunity to support the  
work of ShelterBox – see: [https://  
shelterbox.org/](https://shelterbox.org/)

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## Stonesfield Methodist Church

### Services for December

|        |      |  |
|--------|------|--|
| Sun 3  | 11am | Martin Hannant                                   |
| Sun 10 | 11am | Peter Allen                                      |
| Sun 17 | 3pm  | The Revd Andrew Biggs<br>Christmas Carol Service |
| Sun 24 | 11am | The Revd James Skinner                           |
| Sun 31 | 11am | The Revd Andrew Biggs<br>Holy Communion Service  |

### Services for January

|        |         |   |
|--------|---------|---|
| Sun 7  | 10.30am | United Service at<br>Chipping Norton<br>No Service at Stonesfield |
| Sun 14 | 11am    | Local arrangement   |
| Sun 21 | 11am    | Marjorie Brown  |
| Sun 28 | 11am    | Andrew Maisey   |

## Shoe Boxes

On 21 October sixty-three boxes were filled with good things for children in Eastern Europe, donations were also given towards their travel. Thank you to all who contributed in any way to this wonderful result.

## A Citrus Joy!

It's time when a sweet-smelling orange brings something unexpected.

December sees Christingle Services taking place near and far, with children especially loving them. They hold tightly a round orange, their faces all aglow in the candlelight, and the scene is set for the Christingle message:

The orange, an abundant earth; a red ribbon band, the sorrow of the cross; and the candle flame lays bare Christ's gift of

hope. Glorious hope in a world where suffering and grief touches so many.

O little town of Bethlehem how still we see you lie,

Above your deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.

Yet in the dark street shineth the everlasting light:

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight.

Phillip Brooks (1835-1893)

All are warmly invited to the Christmas Carol Service on Sunday 17 December at 3pm. Everyone is very welcome.

May your Christmas time be blessed and happy.

Kathleen Albért

---

## **New Church thought**

This short quote seems to tie in with last month's thought about everyone in heaven working together yet by different means.

It's from Swedenborg's *Secrets of Heaven*. 'Absolutely everyone in the heavens and on earth has a different sort of goodness. One and the same kind of goodness can never exist in two people; it has to vary in order for each kind to remain in existence separately.' And as the saying goes, variety is the spice of life...

May your own particular sort of goodness light up this holiday season.

Dale Morris

---

## **Roman Catholic Worship**

### **Christmas – Light in our Darkness**

'The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.'

Colossians 1:15-21

Irrespective of our religious persuasion, Christmas exerts a very powerful influence over our lives. At this time of the year, everywhere we go we can see signs and symbols of Christmas. Even though we might ignore the religious and spiritual element, we can't ignore Christmas. We tend to focus much more, these days, on Christmas rather than on Easter. Christmas has been colonised so commercially that the deep spiritual, redemptive message can be very blurred, but it's still there.

Christmas is an enduring message of hope that 'things will get better'; not necessarily in the material sense. In the dark days of mid-winter, the lights, jollity, gift giving and shared meals give us a sense of joyousness that can help sustain us. For Christians, the joyousness is also strongly related to the forceful reminder that this Christ child was born to save us all: Jesus brings light to our darkness. He was born, lived and died as the ultimate act of giving, so that we may not live in spiritual darkness.

'Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And all at once with

the angel there was a great throng of the hosts of heaven, praising God with the words: Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace for those he favours.'

Luke 2: 12-14

### **Holy Mass**

Sunday Mass at 9.15am

Wednesdays and Fridays at 9.15am

### **Christmas services and events**

17 Dec 3pm Gaudete Sunday Advent carol service

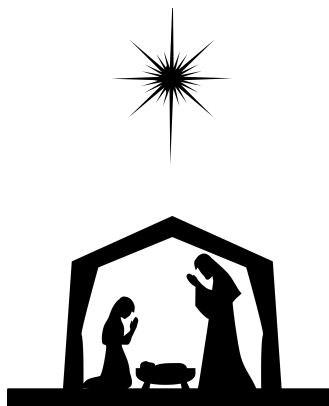
24 Dec 8pm Mass of Christmas Night with carols

25 Dec 9.15am Mass of Christmas Day

For parish updates, any further information and further support, [www.stteresaschurch-charlbury.com/](http://www.stteresaschurch-charlbury.com/) or contact Fr. Clive Dytor, parish priest: [fr.clive.dytor@rcaob.org.uk](mailto:fr.clive.dytor@rcaob.org.uk)

A joyous and peaceful Christmas to everyone.

Roman Catholic Community in Stonesfield



### **STONESFIELD LUNCH CLUB**

Stonesfield Lunch Club meets every Weds 11 till 2 (for members) at the St James' Centre. Lunch Club provides a social occasion, friendship and support for our more mature residents along with refreshments, activities and a freshly cooked 2-course meal each week.

Volunteers are always welcomed for many roles and this is a lovely way to be involved in village life. Contact me if you would like more information on becoming a member or in volunteering.

Kate Harris 01993 898781 or [kateharris58@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:kateharris58@yahoo.co.uk)

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Head to [blenheimpalace.com/adventure-play/](https://blenheimpalace.com/adventure-play/)  
to start planning your perfect family day out this festive season.



## BLENHEIM ESTATE

With Christmas only a few short weeks away now, don't forget that our Forestry team are now selling Estate-grown Christmas trees, including Norway Spruces and Nordman Firs, in a range of sizes alongside stands as well. Trees are available on a first-come, first-served basis from our sales hut located in the Estate Office car park in Woodstock, OX20 1PP from 1st - 17th December every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 10am until 4pm. No pre-booking is required and our team will be accepting contactless payments only.

## BLENHEIM

As 2023 draws to a close, we have been reflecting on the many important restoration and construction projects that have been successfully completed this year thanks to the support of our visitors. These include our new 2 acre Adventure Play down at the Walled Garden, the final decorative phase of our £1 million Chapel project to increase environmental stability and our Lake Dredge (which removed 30,000 cubic metres of silt from the Queen Pool). Most recently we replaced the roof of our Orangery as well as Flagstaff Tower, which temporarily had an enormous, colourful wrap created by designs from Oxfordshire Youth. As we set our sights on the future, we are already gearing up for our biggest project yet of restoring the Palace roof in 2025 / 26 – keep updated at [blenheimpalace.com/restoration/](https://blenheimpalace.com/restoration/)

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Keep up-to-date with our news and latest events by signing up to our newsletter at

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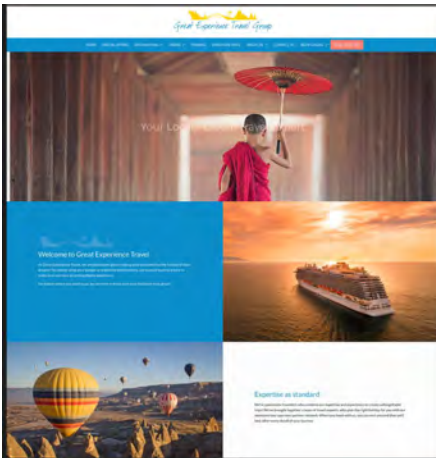
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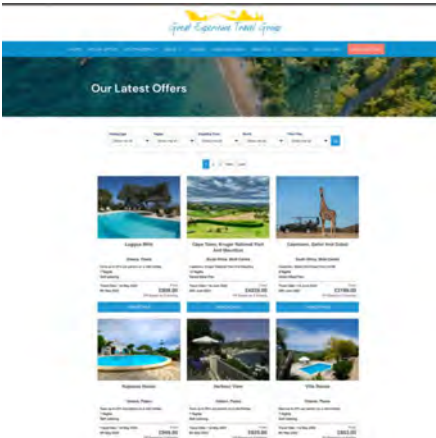
It has lots of exciting new features, and we think that the website looks great. However, it is still a 'work in progress' and has to meet your needs.

If you can see anything that we can do which would make the site even better or even easier to use, please do let us know.

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