



Issue No 543 February 2024

## Tucson to Stonesfield



Emmy and Tom

My wife, Emmy Creigh, and I are from Tucson, Arizona.

I first learned about the campaign to save the White Horse from an article I read in the New York Times a few years ago.

In the mid 1970's I had lived in the Barbican in Plymouth, Devon and then in a small village on the coast outside of Plymouth. My local pub in the Barbican was The Dolphin (still a vibrant establishment today). The Dolphin was just across the street from the old fish market on the quay. Ironically, my local pub in the village was also The Dolphin

(again, still a healthy pub today). I mention my history so that you will know that I truly understand the importance and significance of local pubs.

To this day, I still have a sentimental attachment to 'The Dolphins'. I didn't even have to think about joining the crusade to save the White Horse. I bought some shares straight away, and then bought some more when we needed to raise more money because ... well, y'all know why.

Continued on p4

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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.

### **Publishers**

Diane & Paul Bates,  
Waterloo Barn, Laughton Hill,  
Stonesfield, OX29 8DY  
(898841)  
slate-pub@stonesfield.online

### **Editor for March issue**

Trisha Williams  
(891960)  
slate@stonesfield.online

### **Copy:**

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Please email copy to  
slate@stonesfield.online  
or contact the Editor by phone.

### **Editor**

Dale Morris  
(898210)  
slate@stonesfield.online

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## Dates for your diary: February

1,8,15,22,29	Book Break	Library	12.30-2pm
1,5,8,12,15	Taekwondo	Village Hall	5.30-6.30pm
1,8,15,22,29	Hannah Bathe HITT Class	Village Hall	7.15-8pm
2,9,23	Baby & Toddlers Group	Village Hall	10am-12noon
5,19,26	Monday Coffee	St James' Centre	8.45-11.30am
6,20,27	Seniors' Café	Village Hall	3-4pm
6,27	Carers Café	Village Hall	10am-12noon
6,13,20,27	Zumba	Village Hall	7-8pm
6,13,20,27	Strong Nation HIIT	Village Hall	8.15-9.15pm
6,20,27	Stonesfield Social	Village Hall	5-6.30pm
7,14,21,28	Gatehouse Pilates	Village Hall	9.30-10.30am
7	Parish Council meeting	Primary School	7pm
7,14,21,28	Hannah Bathe Fitness	Village Hall	7-7.45pm
7,14,21,28	Folkdancing	Village Hall	7.45-10.00pm
8,15,22,29	Upholstery Club	Village Hall	9.45am-12noon
8,15,22,29	Hannah Bathe HITT Class	Village Hall	7.15-8pm
10	Ladies' Breakfast	St James' Centre	9am
12	Monday Coffee	St James' Centre	10-11.30am
12	Gardening Club AGM & talk	St James' Centre	7pm
13	Pancake Party for all	St James' Centre	3-5pm
19	Tennis Club AGM	Village Hall	8-10pm
17,22,26,29	Taekwondo	Village Hall	5.30-6.30pm
20	TLC – Tick List Club	Village Hall	7.30-9pm
23	Combe Community Cinema	The Hub, Combe	7.30pm
26	Stonesfield Village Hall Committee	Village Hall	6.45-8.45pm
28	Voluntary Transport Scheme AGM	Village Hall	5pm

## March

1	World Day of Prayer	Methodist Chapel	2pm
2	Repair Café	Village Hall	11am-2pm
2	White Horse Comedy Night	Village Hall	7.30 for 8pm

# Notices & news

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## Thank you!

Once again, the kindness and generosity of our lovely villagers shines through at this tough time for a lot of people. The festive parcel delivered during Christmas week was most welcome and the goodies within much enjoyed. Thank you.

Thanks must also be conveyed to the many, many volunteers of all clubs, groups, organisations etc., not forgetting of course the persistence of the White Horse band of people in securing the pub for everyone's enjoyment. Cheers!!

(Name & address supplied)

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## Boot Street Thames Water works, 6-9 February

We have had confirmation from Thames Water that they will be installing the new water supply to the Left Boot in Boot Street from 6-9 February 2024. Boot Street will be closed to either side of the Left Boot during this period. Our understanding is that access to Friends Close will remain open from the bottom of Boot Street, and to the houses at the top of Boot Street from the High Street/Churchfields. We apologise for any inconvenience caused and thank our neighbours for their continued patience with this renovation of an old building.

Nick and Judith  
Hooper



## Tucson to Stonesfield (from p1)

Emmy and I had planned a holiday in England again for this year. Then, just a few months ago, Steve sent out an email that the pub had been successfully purchased!



We amended our plans and schedule to include a visit to the White Horse to join in the celebration and meet as many of the hard-working folks who made it all happen. Emmy and I play some music in 'the Wild West' and Steve helped organize a music session in the pub the day we visited. It was a very fun time, sharing songs. Stonesfield is gifted with a group of very talented musicians. Emmy and I were very appreciative that they included us in their music circle.

So, in conclusion, to all who gather in the White Horse, keep the happy vibes flowing ... the planet needs all the positivity we can give it.

Tom 'n Emmy Poley  
Tucson, Arizona

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## The Stonesfield Stumble



You can never say that Stonesfield isn't up for a challenge. Eighty people managed to gather at the Cross on New Year's Day, in time to hear that Graham had deserted us (bad back *apparently*) but Richard Morris deputised and sent us all on our way.



The Dirty Thirty decided to cut the route short (what slackers) so that by the time the Fit Fifty had completed the route, and been photographed outside the pub for posterity, they discovered there wasn't a lot of room at the inn. Never mind, a bit of pushing and shoving, not to mention good cheer all round and some very efficient serving, meant that we all ended up with drinks and bacon baps and a warm glow from being able to celebrate our annual Stumble in the White Horse once more.

For those of us who displayed stamina above and beyond the call of duty (and Claire's calls of 'last orders'), there was the task of helping out with the odds and ends of bottles that needed drinking as the pub was ceremoniously closed for its refurbishment.

Diane Bates

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## Ladies' Breakfast



There will be a Ladies' Breakfast on Saturday 10 February at 9.00am in the St James' Centre. After time spent enjoying breakfast there will be a short talk by Pauline Clack. The cost is £5. All are welcome. Please get in touch with Bina (891293), Kathleen (891733), Muriel (891479) or Suzy (891552) if you would like to know more.

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## British Legion Poppy Appeal 2023

Thank you Stonesfield. A grand total of £1738.20 was raised in our village. Thanks go out to our School, the White Horse, Stonesfield Sports & Social Club and our local Shop and Post Office. The door to door volunteers - Mike Pollitt, Frank Huddleston, John Cross, Lesley Sherbourn, Sarah Brown and myself - thank you all for your generosity.

And a big thank you goes out to Brian and Yona Barrett for taking over as our local organisers.

Roger Evins

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## Do you drive? We could use your help...

We have a great team of volunteer drivers who take Stonesfield residents needing transport to medical appointments in local



towns and villages, and we wait and bring them home. We also take people to the hospitals in Oxford and Banbury – which is especially appreciated because it's not at all easy travelling to the hospitals by public transport.

Currently we have 14 drivers and most drivers give a lift about once a month or less. The requests are shared between them so no-one does too many, and drivers can always say no if they are not available.

If you are interested or think you might like to help by becoming one of our drivers, why not come along to our AGM in the Village Hall on 28 February at 5.00pm to hear all about it? Or just contact me, any time. If we have given you a lift and you have thoughts and suggestions from your viewpoint, do come along, or give me a ring.

I know AGMs can be boring but this one gives the chance to meet our team members and see how much we have achieved in the last year, and the difference it makes to our clients.

Viv Kendall (891803)  
stonesfieldvts@gmail.com

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**Stonesfield's Megalosaurus –  
A very special anniversary**

Most local people know that Stonesfield has a special place in the discovery of dinosaurs. February 2024 marks the 200th anniversary of the first scientific description of a non-avian dinosaur by William Buckland. (He's the one commemorated in our own William Buckland Way.) He presented his paper called 'Notice on the Megalosaurus or Great Fossil Lizard of Stonesfield' – a key milestone in the history of science – to the



Geological Society of London on 20 February 1824.

The Geological Society is hosting a series of events in Megalosaurus Month to mark the occasion, and a life-size replica of the Megalosaurus skeleton will be attending – so if your family would enjoy an exceptional dinosaur-filled trip to London at half-term, read on!

One of the events is the free Dinosaur Discovery Days, which will offer an up-close, hands-on experience designed to spark curiosity and unveil these prehistoric creatures and the science of studying them. Visitors can join in a Dinosaur Dig to discover fossils and their secrets, or play with the Dinosaur Jukebox and explore prehistoric communication and dinosaur relationships.

Dinosaur Discovery Days will be held at the Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BG (opposite Fortnum & Mason). They will be held on Tuesday 13, Wednesday 14, Friday 16 and Saturday 24 February from 10.00–16.00. On Thursday 15 February the Discovery Day will be open from 10.00–12.00 for a quiet morning for visitors with special access and engagement needs.

No booking is needed except for Thursday 15 February; for this please contact enquiries@geolsoc.org.uk.

Viv Kendall (891803)

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## Thank you from the White Horse

Although the pub is effectively closed for the near future while essential repairs and maintenance are undertaken, it's wonderful to reflect back on the Christmas and New Year celebrations that many enjoyed at our pub (including the visit of Tom and Emmy from Arizona - see cover story) after so many years of closure and uncertainty.

As a community we can also celebrate our runner-up award at CAMRA's national Pub Saving Awards for 2023. The award recognises people that have come together to save a pub that would have otherwise been demolished or converted to another use.

It was a real privilege to once again collect or receive at the White Horse an amazing 59 reverse advent calendar parcels from households around the village, the Lunch Club and the team at the *Stonesfield Slate*. It was also a pleasure to collaborate with other village groups to deliver them to the households that needed a little extra help this Christmas. So many willingly got involved again: Pre-School, Primary School, Voluntary Transport, Methodist Church and Mutual Aid.

The essential repairs to the pub will be followed by the renovation of the kitchen and the long-overdue resiting of the cellar. We have also commenced the search for tenants who have relevant hospitality experience and, crucially, are committed to the values and aims of our community pub.

We are genuinely looking forward to sharing more details with you soon of our options for both the structural and business development of the pub, and it

remains our aim that the White Horse fully opens as a thriving community pub in 2024. There are many challenges ahead for us to face together, but thank you for pulling together so brilliantly to give us the best possible start to our community pub journey.

Steve Callaghan

Stonesfield Community Pub Ltd

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## A tree for the year of the White Horse



A native crab apple tree, *Malus Sylvestris*, was planted at the White Horse to celebrate the year we got our pub.

Native crab apples support 93 insects, various mosses and lichens. Spring flowers for pollen and nectar, then the fruit for birds and animals (including us for making jelly). The specific moths are the green pug, Chinese character and the pale tussock. The trees are associated with love and marriage (put the pips in the fire and if the seeds explode it is true love); the wood is good for carving and turning. Very much an all rounder and importantly is reasonably drought tolerant.

John Sampson

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## Laughton Hill claims another victim

On 10 January at around 7.30am a red Renault entered Stonesfield from Fawler direction. The driver lost control of his Renault, it rolled onto its roof and came to rest, back on its wheels, just before Witney Lane. The driver suffered minor cuts and bruises but the car was a write-off. A good neighbour took the very shocked driver into their home to clean him up while he waited for a recovery vehicle.

Three days later another driver lost control of his vehicle in a similar spot but, after bouncing off both verges and shedding bits of plastic trim, managed to avoid a more serious accident.

Although this part of Stonesfield is a popular walking area, fortunately there were no pedestrians or cyclists in the immediate area at the time. Had there been, the consequences could have been disastrous. The Renault is not the first car to be written off in the same place; the last time, again only the vehicle occupants were hurt. In a recent separate accident slightly further down Laughton Hill a cyclist was injured by a car.



Clearing remains of accidents

These incidents all happened in what is now a clearly marked 20mph area and a vehicle's speed is shown on the Speed

Indicator Device at Witney Lane junction. Drivers are reminded of the importance of adherence to these limits and to take extra care in cold and wet conditions.

We have now collected up and disposed of the debris left behind after the accident, two large bin bags of glass and plastic. We would hope that we do not have to do this again and that everyone stays safe.

SAFER

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

[www.stonesfield.online/safer/](http://www.stonesfield.online/safer/)

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## Repair Café

**Saturday 2 March 11am-2pm**

At the last repair café we repaired nearly 100kg of items including a candyfloss machine!

We fixed several wobbly bits of furniture as well as a whole range of electrical items. Come and bring anything that you are about to throw away and don't know what to do with, and our expert repairers will give it their best shot.

At the same time enjoy refreshments at the Community Café, delicious light lunches and cakes.

Come early to be sure to be seen. Tell us what you are bringing if you can at [stonesfieldrepaircafe@gmail.com](mailto:stonesfieldrepaircafe@gmail.com)

**Stonesfield says Slow Down\***

\* 72% of respondents to the Neighbourhood Plan survey said that reducing traffic speed was important or very important.

Stonesfield Community Speedwatch (CSW) is looking for more volunteers.

CSW is organised by Thames Valley Police as part of TVP's objective to reduce speeding and accidents. You need to be able to give an hour or so a month, at times that suit you. You will work in a group and be given full training.

Email if you would like to volunteer to help your village or want more information.

**SAFER@stonesfieldpc.uk**

SAFER is a Stonesfield Parish Council Working Group





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## Tree planting, year two

What a start to the planting season! Enthusiasm, energy, inquiring minds and I needed to ask them to dig less, unless we got to Australia.



Here is the Forest School ready for planting. Everyone planted a two-year-old Wych elm grown from seeds collected in Stocky Bottom.

Thank you to everyone who had trees to plant from the 'big garden give away' and to all who helped as we planted another 200 trees along the Evenlode valley.

Planting the Evenlode valley



And then it rained! Our total native trees and hedging plants for the two years has now reached 1,347 and we are closing in on the target of 1,600 (one tree for everyone in the village planted locally). You have also funded 1,600 tropical forest trees in Madagascar.

The year ahead is exciting as we are hoping to get all the permissions needed for a community heritage orchard. The orchard would be on the glebe land off Brook Lane. The parish council have unanimously supported the plan which now goes to the Diocese for their permission and if successful we then apply for funding from the Coronation Community Orchard scheme. We have already started planning and will be working with the Gardening Club. There will be more details as plans develop, assuming we get the permissions and funding, planting will be in late autumn.

A question for you, do you have orchard trees in your garden? If you do, are they doing well on Stonesfield ground? Please let me know what they are – e-mail or drop a note to Long Bees. Many thanks.

John Sampson

[john.sampson9@btinternet.com](mailto:john.sampson9@btinternet.com)

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## The children's play area

Some 8 years ago a team of ladies raised over £80,000 to completely refurbish the children's play area. Since its reopening the play area has been monitored and maintained by the Playing Field Association with the Parish Council kindly including the area in their grass cutting contract. Recently, the association has had to spend nearly £2,000 on replacing worn-out components and rotten wooden structures. As time goes on more money will have to be spent maintaining the equipment and structures to keep them safe for the children that use and enjoy them. The association does not receive any regular financial support for the maintenance of the play area which was why it was so grateful to receive a generous

donation of £4,000 from the committee of the Septemberbeerfest. The money will pay for the recent work and allow the association to carry out further repairs in the near future. In the longer term, the future of the play area is less certain. The Parish Council is not allowed to pay for maintenance of structures which it does not own. Hopefully, future benefactors will come forward with the finances to maintain the play area.

In the meantime, could we please remind everyone that the play area is for children aged 12 and under and ideally supervised by an adult. The multi-use outdoor gym, which is next to the play area, is usable by all ages, other than very young children.

If you notice anything wrong with the play area or its equipment please let us know at [StonesfieldPFAAssociation@gmail.com](mailto:StonesfieldPFAAssociation@gmail.com)

Frank Huddleston, Chair

Stonesfield Playing Field Association

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## **St James' Centre – available for hire**

A reminder that St James' Centre (opposite the school) is available for hire for both regular and one-off bookings. It is an ideal venue for children's parties, family gatherings, adult education classes, meetings, workshops, fundraising events etc. If you would like further information or to book, please do get in touch – email [sjcsbookings@gmail.com](mailto:sjcsbookings@gmail.com)

Ruth Sellar

St James' Centre Bookings Administrator  
[sjcsbookings@gmail.com](mailto:sjcsbookings@gmail.com)

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## **The White Horse Pop Up Pub Comedy Night**

The White Horse is closed for a while but here's a chance to get together, raise a glass or two, enjoy a good laugh – and raise money towards the renovations and reopening. Join us on Saturday 2 March when the White Horse team brings National Musical Comedy Awards nominee Adrian Lancini all the way from Charlbury to Stonesfield Village Hall and treat yourself to a night of innovative comedy.



Adrian Lancini is Song Man. But what is Song Man? What does Song Man do? Will Song Man actually play any songs? And if so, will they be like any songs you've heard before? Expect the unexpected in this theatrical and off-the-wall comedy.

'Spectacularly funny. A tour de force of imagination, wit and originality.'

'I had tummy ache and streaky mascara from laughing so hard.'

'What an absolute laugh a minute performance – brilliant.'

Saturday 2 March at Stonesfield Village Hall. Bar opens at 7.30pm, show starts at 8.00pm. Entry by ticket only. Tickets cost £10 plus £1 booking fee, to purchase please scan the QR code or visit [www.adrianlancini.com](http://www.adrianlancini.com)

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## Village Hall News

With the cold weather being so apparent right now, the best way to look forward is to plan something new and exciting. We have plenty going on at the hall over the winter months so pop in and pay us a visit, or if there isn't anything that takes your fancy, start your own group. There are still lots of activities we can do in the winter months:

**Mondays:** Taekwondo

**Tuesdays:** Seniors Café, Stonesfield Social, Zumba, Strong Nation HIIT

**Every 3rd Tuesday:** Carers Café, TLC (financial advice & planning).

**Wednesdays:** Gatehouse Pilates, HIIT Class, Folkdancing

**Thursdays:** Upholstery Club, Taekwondo, HIIT Class

**Fridays:** Baby & Toddler Group

**The Community Café** - There were no takers for the January date but it could return on Saturday 3 February so if you want to raise money for a worthy cause, do let us know! Dates available are: Feb, April, May, July, August, October and November.

## Stonesfield Voluntary Transport

**Scheme AGM** is taking place on Wednesday 28 February at 5pm. This is a massive community asset for our village which so many people depend upon so if you want to help or just want to know more, please go along and support them.

Can I say a big thank you to all who came along to our Christmas Market in December, we had a great day with many lovely people selling their crafts. Can't wait to do it all again on 1 December 2024 !!

If you fancy being more involved in the running of the village hall, the next SVH Committee Meeting will be Monday 26 February 2024, 6.45-8.45pm.

Jacqueline Carthew (898919)

Secretary & Booking Clerk for Stonesfield Village Hall

stonesfieldvh@gmail.com

## STONESFIELD VOLUNTARY TRANSPORT SCHEME

Our volunteer drivers are available to take you to local medical appointments or to the hospitals in Oxford and Banbury.

We make no charge but welcome a donation towards expenses.  
COVID safety precautions are still in place, if you need them.

**Please call or email to book transport in February:  
Viv Kendall 01993 891803 or stonesfieldvts@gmail.com**

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## Calling all usual and unusual suspects...

### for a Stonesfield Collective Action Group (SCAG)

Stonesfield has many great characteristics, and perhaps one of the most important is its close network of volunteer community groups. A number of us who work across these groups have been co-operating and co-ordinating over the last year or so. This has made us really think about volunteering and what can be achieved – what else would be useful in Stonesfield?

In December 2023 the United Nations designated its Year of Collective Action and we would like collective action to be a theme for every year.

What do you think? We would love to hear from you as to what our volunteer groups and services could offer our community. How could we work together better? What should we offer? Are there other sorts of help that we could add? Any other thoughts you have would be welcome.

Even if you think volunteering is not for you, or you don't have space in your life for a regular commitment, you are welcome to contribute at this ideas stage or maybe later as well, when we can pull together an even more comprehensive collective action network.

As a first step we are putting together a group of interested people to try to scope this out and would love to hear from you. There need not be any commitment from you other than in this scoping/ideas-gathering phase. Please contact us.

volunteering@stonesfield.co.uk

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## North Leigh Roman Villa



Cleaning the Roman Villa mosaics

An exciting volunteer opportunity has arisen at North Leigh Roman Villa. During 2024, English Heritage will be undertaking a major conservation project at the site. Become a Conservation In Action Explainer Volunteer and you will play a vital role in helping us preserve this iconic landmark, by explaining the conservation process, history of the site and sharing the area's unique history with our visitors. To find out full details and to make an application please follow the link below:

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/support-us/Volunteer/north-leigh-roman-villa-conservation-in-action-explainer-volunteer/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/support-us/Volunteer/north-leigh-roman-villa-conservation-in-action-explainer-volunteer/)

Please note the closing date for applications is **Friday 23 February**.

St James the Great, Stonesfield

## Pancake Party

for children and adults

at the St James' Centre

Shrove Tuesday 13 February

3pm to 5pm

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## **Blenheim Community update**

The past couple of months from the end of 2023 to the beginning of 2024 have been very busy community wise! We hosted 100 people for The Cherwell Collective who came to see Sleeping Beauty in the Palace and the Illuminated Light Trail. Cherwell Collective operate a foodbank in Kidlington but also provide much wider support for families and individuals, with a strong focus on food sustainability. We also welcomed 50 people from The Oxford Hub which offers support to vulnerable families and individuals from the Barton area.

We donated a Christmas Tree to the Ophelia Project based in Kidlington, a newly established drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation centre for women. We hope to work closely with them in 2024 and are looking at providing bicycles for the residents to use, as well as helping give advice and support from our Housing team.

Four of our staff went to Chipping Norton in the week before Christmas, to help Chippy Larder pack food hampers for local families. This was part of the new volunteering scheme we have launched at

Blenheim which gives staff one day of paid volunteering leave per year.

The Estates Team went to Hanborough Manor Primary School to remove ten dead trees and replace them with trees grown on the Estate. They are also currently building a Buddy-Bench for Charlbury Primary School as well as two reading sheds for Yarnton Primary School.

Find out more on my Facebook page or [www.blenheimcommunities.org](http://www.blenheimcommunities.org)

Meryl Davies, Community Lead at Blenheim  
[MDavies@blenheimpalace.com](mailto:MDavies@blenheimpalace.com)



Cows return to the Common



# Politics & local affairs

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## Stonesfield Parish Council



Big turnout for January PC meeting

Mr Soame came to January's Stonesfield Parish Council meeting to present a potential future planning application. Details of the proposal and more information will be placed on the website as and when it becomes available.

At this moment a formal planning application has not been submitted. Once / if it has been submitted WODC will raise the application and residents can comment on it directly. The Parish Council will let residents know if this happens to encourage opportunity for comment. We continue to gather information.

### **Date of the next full council meeting:**

7 February 2024, 7pm – Stonesfield Primary School.

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

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## Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) attended the Parish Council (SPC) meeting on 10.01.24 at which Graham Soame, a planning consultant for the

Oakeshott and Eastwood families, presented a development proposal for between 20 and 31 homes with one to five bedrooms in the field adjacent to the Manor Drive on the Combe Road. The number for rent or for sale or 'affordable' has not been specified. The site would be 1.7 hectares.

A plan of the Combe Road proposal can be seen on the Stonesfield website at: [www.stonesfield.online/new-housing-development-in-the-manor-house-field/](http://www.stonesfield.online/new-housing-development-in-the-manor-house-field/)

We have arranged to meet with the SPC to discuss the proposal. The NPSG is acting on behalf of the Parish Council to produce a draft Neighbourhood Plan for them to approve. We are using data from last year's village survey, and from WODC, to produce a Housing Needs Assessment for the village and we anticipate that SPC will wish to take this into account when considering their response. We also trust that SPC will bear in mind the Planning Inspector's refusal of the Cala Homes development on the Woodstock Road in 2018 (see article by SUSTO on page 15). We will report further in the March Slate.

We would urge residents to make your views about this proposal known to the Parish Council, please write to the Clerk at: [clerk@stonesfieldpc.uk](mailto:clerk@stonesfieldpc.uk)

Meanwhile, we are looking for a volunteer (or two) to help with the Character Assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan. The leg work, walking round the village and making notes on its appearance and

character, has largely been done, but due to a couple of people having to drop out we could use some more volunteer help. If you think you could help, please email us. We have agreed to engage a professional to take the raw data and write up the final character assessment.

Caroline Friend

info@stonesfieldplan.com

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## **The developers are circling again – SUSTO**

Sustainable Stonesfield (SUSTO) was started in the spring of 2017 as a result of plans for major housing developments in the village. At the time 50 new homes were in construction on Farley Lane and Charity Farm; a further 100 or so houses were also potentially in the pipeline. SUSTO's first action was to alert the village about what was being planned, and to canvas opinion whether this was what the village wanted. The clear answer was that residents opposed large-scale inappropriate housing.

The rest as they say is history: we went on to fight the inclusion of further development sites in Stonesfield in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan to 2031 and had them removed. We also fought Cala Homes' planning application to build 68 houses on the Woodstock Road – and won. As a result, Blenheim withdrew its planning application for a site south of the William Buckland Way development.

West Oxfordshire are now in the process of revising their Local Plan to 2041, and *the developers are circling again*. Elsewhere in this Slate you can read about the proposal by Mr Soame, acting on behalf of the Eastwood/Oakeshot families, to build 25 to 31 homes on 1.7ha of the Manor

House field at the top of the Combe Road. (See Neighbourhood Plan on p14).

We have also just learnt that Blenheim has resubmitted its 1.8 hectare site south of the William Buckland Way estate for 'sustainable, residential development' in the new West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041. You can view the details at: [www.yourvoice.westoxon.gov.uk/en-GB/ideas/land-south-of-charity-farm-stonesfield](http://www.yourvoice.westoxon.gov.uk/en-GB/ideas/land-south-of-charity-farm-stonesfield)

SUSTO will be taking action should Mr Soame's proposal, or Blenheim's, be accepted in the Local Plan to 2041, or reach the stage of a planning application.

There are no 'brownfield sites' in Stonesfield so any new house building will be on virgin greenfield sites. The Neighbourhood Plan village survey last year very clearly showed how important the surrounding countryside is to residents. If you want to be informed about potential housing developments and how you can make your voice heard, we suggest you sign up to Sustainable Stonesfield's mailing list. As soon as we hear about proposals for major, inappropriate housing developments we send out an email with details of the plan and how you can comment.

To join SUSTO, email us at: [sustainable.stonesfield@gmail.com](mailto:sustainable.stonesfield@gmail.com)

**Sustainable  
Stonesfield**  
OUR VILLAGE ~ NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE

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## Stop Botley West deadline approaches

Botley West Solar 'Farm' is a proposal to build a 3,400 acre Ground Mounted Solar installation across Oxfordshire Green Belt – by the developer, PVDP, and landowners, mainly Blenheim Estate.

The Stop Botley West Campaign totally supports a transition to green energy including the use of solar panels, but we maintain that Botley West is the most damaging way to achieve this and must be stopped.

PVDP are partway through the Community Consultation Process for the Botley West Utility-Scale Solar Power Station. We encourage everybody to engage with this process by:

- Attending one of the remaining Community Consultation events if you can. Make yourself aware of what the proposal contains and how it will affect you.
- Completing the SBW questionnaire about whether the consultation has been adequate and useful for you - whether you've attended an event or not. You can do this online or on paper using the leaflet that came through your door.
- Writing to PVDP with your comments and questions about their proposals (as you have learnt from events or PVDP publications) and sending copies to your MP and local councillors.

To see more on how to go about this see [www.stopbotleywest.com](http://www.stopbotleywest.com). **Please do this by 8 February 2024** when the consultation ends.

Stop Botley West Campaign  
[contact@stopbotleywest.com](mailto:contact@stopbotleywest.com)

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## News from West Oxfordshire Affordable homes in Chipping Norton

WODC has agreed to move forward with enabling developer Green Axis to deliver seven affordable, custom-build, net zero carbon homes in Chipping Norton, in what will be a national first. The seven homes will be designed using the Council's Net Zero Carbon Toolkit. This innovative approach minimises the energy required to heat the homes, and coupled with onsite renewable energy generation, means the homes will be net zero carbon in operation while careful selection of materials will minimise the carbon footprint of the construction.

They will come in at 15% less than the average price for the area, making them more affordable and those that purchase them will be able to customise the design and specification of the house before it is built.

The scheme will also provide an electric vehicle charging hub and space for community use.

## Council provides space for local businesses

Small businesses and start-ups will have the opportunity to work from new premises as the Council Elmfield building is to be transformed into serviced offices. The new use of Elmfield will see the introduction of a shared office space that offers and supports small business needs. The property will be included in the Council's Solar PV Project and will have solar PV panels installed. The energy generated will be sold to the new occupiers of Elmfield and this will result in more local businesses using green energy and

help to meet the Council's agenda around carbon neutrality by 2030.

### **Users to have say on car parking in Woodstock**

WODC is holding a Car Parking Strategy Consultation to gather the feedback of residents and visitors about the free car parking on Hensington Road in Woodstock, ending on 12 February. They will also be studying the car park itself. They'd like to find out usage, current staying times, what parking needs customers have. Take part in the consultation here and help shape car parking. Display boards will be erected in the car parks to make out-of-area visitors aware of the consultation

### **West Oxon communities invited to plant coronation orchards**

Local groups and organisations wanting to establish community orchards in their neighbourhoods, and with space to plant at least five fruit trees, are now being invited by the District Council to come forward and apply for a slice of the £50,000 fund which the Council is distributing. The closing date for first-round applications was in January. Successful applicants were notified by 31 January with planting expected to take place during February and March. A second application window will open in the autumn in time for next winter's tree planting season. More details about the fund and how to apply can be found at: [www.westoxon.gov.uk/CoronationOrchards](http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/CoronationOrchards)

### **Thames Water: new online tool to report problems online**

Residents can now easily report blocked sewers, flooding, and pollution online, and find live updates on storm overflow activity in West Oxfordshire, as Thames Water

rolls out a new tool. The tool can also be used on a mobile as well as computer, so that the report can be made at the site of the problem, using GPS to provide the problem's location; a photo can be also uploaded. Cllr Lidia Arciszewska added, 'It is important to recognise the aspiration by Thames Water to provide more transparency regarding sewage pollution, whether it is into our waterways, fields, streets or homes. We strongly encourage residents to use the new tools to report any issues straight away, letting the teams at Thames Water know where the sewage infrastructure is not working as it should.'

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### **Thames Valley Police**

#### **Police statistics 2023**

New statistics show Thames Valley Police received over 500,000 contacts from the public, attended 81,000 incidents and made 16,000 arrests over a six-month period in 2023.

As part of our ongoing commitment to inform the public of the work we do, we recently released statistics on our activity from 1 April to 30 September 2023, including a focus on roads policing.

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#### **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)

# Education, culture & more

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## Stonesfield Library

The Library (898187) is open as follows:

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)

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## The Stonesfield Players

### Save the date for *Steve*

Steve lives alone – very alone – in the flat next door to Neil and Ellie. He doesn't have any friends. Neil and Ellie are in a relationship and have friends; but how well do they know each other? Steve desperately wants to make friends, but doesn't know how. He knocks on the door...

What follows is deeply unsettling for everyone. How does the idea of sharing a simple cup of tea become so TERRIFYING???

This new play by Rupert Friend (ex-Stonesfield Players, *Young Victoria*, *Homeland*, *Star Wars*, *Asteroid City*) is funny, tense, scary and poignant\*.


Save the date: Friday 22 and Saturday 23 March. Full details in March Slate.

\*contains strong and colourful language, not suitable for children.

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## Combe Community Cinema

On 23 February we are showing *The Great Escaper* at the Combe Community Cinema in the Hub. Made in 2023, the film is based on a true story that made national news about pensioner Bernard Jordan, who in 2014 absconded from his care home in Hove to attend D-Day commemorations in Normandy. Stars Michael Caine and Glenda Jackson in her last film role. Catherine Shoard of *The Guardian* called the film 'brilliant' and 'flintier than you might think, and very moving'. Classification 12A. Doors open 7.30. Tickets £5.00, bar available as usual for pre-film drinks.



**AN EXHIBITION OF POTS BY  
CLAUDIA CLARE**

**WOOTTON LANDSCAPES,  
SOLITUDE AND EXILE**

**FROM SAT 11 FEB TO FRI 16 FEB**

**OPEN 4PM-7PM DAILY  
11.30AM-7PM ON THURS 15 FEB  
OR BY APPOINTMENT**

**AT ZIONS HILL, TOP LANE, WOOTTON,  
WOODSTOCK, OX20 1DW**

**CONTACT [FRANCES.BATES@BTINTERNET.COM](mailto:FRANCES.BATES@BTINTERNET.COM) / 07770 931 955**

Claudia Clare is an internationally celebrated potter. She describes herself as a feminist artist who makes painterly pots. She trained as a painter but transferred to pots because 'I found the turning surface sympathetic to an unfolding visual narrative. Pots also break and can be rebuilt. It is a compelling metaphor for the human experience of trauma and survival and one I deploy particularly in my feminist work.'

'This is history painting from a democratic viewpoint, in a domestic medium, which celebrates the hand-made material object as well as art's subversion.'  
Jackie Wullschlager, Financial Times, 2012

[www.claudiacclare.co.uk](http://www.claudiacclare.co.uk)



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## I'm a Reader

Alicia Steffan, 50, is a writing teacher and writer in West Virginia. She is a childhood friend of a childhood friend of mine, and we became friends on Facebook. One day, Alicia handily posted about her love of libraries...and since, as some readers know, I'm ill at the moment, and can't get out, interviewing remotely is a temporary solution...

'My first library experiences were at Madison Elementary School in Colorado Springs. Twice a week we had library time. The librarians had a clawfoot tub that a few kids could sit inside. It had shag carpet inside - there was a lot of jockeying for that coveted space.

When I was in college, I was going through my childhood books at my parents', and I found that a copy of Peter Rabbit I'd always remembered owning actually came from the library. Not only was there a card sleeve inside, but the card was still in it. It seems I walked out with the book in 1978, age six, and never checked it out. I mailed the book back to the school, begging them not to charge me more than two decades of overdue fees.

I have lots of books I loved for the sheer joy of reading, but there are also a few that really challenged me, and I find myself referring to them constantly as the years go on. Like *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis – I've read this more than twenty times. I encountered it very young, and it opened up the world of fantasy for me.

*The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien is about the Vietnam war, but it made me tangle with objectivity and authenticity in storytelling and realise that no one tells a

completely true story because everyone's version is tinged with biases and faulty memory. *Nickel and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich is a funny and heartbreaking nonfiction account of the author's time working in a series of minimum wage jobs which fundamentally altered my views on poverty, work, and social support systems.

It is hard to be a writing teacher nowadays. The pay is low, and many college-level jobs are part time, with no job security. Students address you with "Hey" and no punctuation in electronic communication, which feels rude to a Gen X'er. Add to that the difficulty of weeding out plagiarism and AI writing...I wish that more people saw the value of learning the craft of nonfiction writing. There's such a push now to get students into math and science, but, if you can construct a good argument, you can spot a bad one. Is there any skill that is more crucial right now?

Prior to that, I taught English Composition at the college level for twelve years, much of it fully online. But now, I'm a freelance writer. I write bedtime stories for a sleep podcast that is designed to help people with insomnia. I discovered them during the pandemic when I was awake so much, I sought them out. I thought 'Wow, I'd like to write these' and a few months later, a submission of mine was accepted, and I started writing for them regularly. It's heartwarming to read the comments from around the world. I get to write everything from travel visualizations to fairytales, and my words are brought to life by professional voice actors. What could be better?'

Eleanor Bailey

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## Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum

A new permanent exhibition at the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, opened in January, tells a story of how a small act of kindness can have a life-changing impact.

*Naomi and Arthur: Letters from Liberation* focuses on two people from different worlds – Arthur Tyler, a soldier with the Oxfordshire Yeomanry which liberated Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, and Naomi Kaplan, a Polish Jew who survived both the Auschwitz-Birkenau and Bergen-Belsen camps.

Research by Dr Myfanwy Lloyd has enabled the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum to connect with Naomi's children and grandchildren in Houston. Through their generosity, visitors to the Museum can see the original letters, family

photographs and newspaper reports that tell the story of Naomi and Arthur.

Ursula Corcoran, Director of the Museum, said: '*Letters from Liberation* is a war-time story with a difference – focusing on an act of kindness, and the courage of survival. Through Naomi and Arthur we can remember the devastation that the Nazi regime inflicted on so many families. But we also see that humanity can shine through in the bleakest of situations. The story is also a powerful reminder that we need to be vigilant against Holocaust denial and the rise of authoritarian rule. The new display gives a human face to the Holocaust Memorial Day theme for 2024 - the 'Fragility of Freedom'.

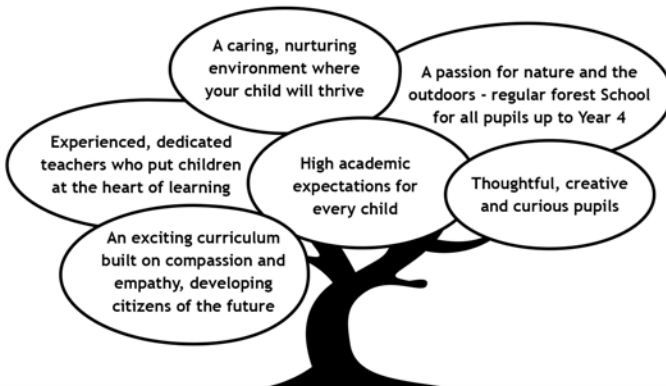
## Stonesfield Primary School

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, please contact the school office.

Tel: 01993 891687

Office email: [office.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:office.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk)

Headteacher email: [head.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:head.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk)

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## Witney Music Society

The penultimate concert in Witney Music Society's 2023-24 season sees the welcome return of pianist Antonina Suhanova with a programme featuring works by Mozart, Debussy, Britten and Schubert. The concert is at 7.30pm on Friday 9 February 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)

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## Invest in the future of our local children

Our local children are no longer getting the arts experiences that were available a decade ago - art, singing, drama. To counter this lack, a partnership has been formed - Cotswolds Arts Through Schools (CATS) - by combining support from Sculpture at Kingham Lodge [SKL], Longborough Festival Opera, local music festivals, the theatres in Chippy and Banbury, the County Music Hub, the Royal Ballet School and the English Speaking Board. It aims to bring art, music, drama and oracy to all our local schools.

SKL's annual show finances a programme taking art into many local schools. In May 2023 the show exhibited fantastic art works by children from 20 primary schools. Now, with re-stocked art cupboards, syllabus help, teacher training and wonderful art experiences each term, art is a subject each child looks forward to. Teachers report the enthusiastic excitement that art now generates among their pupils, having seen their own work at

a professional show. The enthusiasm and self-confidence also extends into other subjects.



Girl with charcoal hands

A story: Malia helped create a sculpture for the show. She came with the school beforehand, then brought her parents to see her work. On arrival she was asked if she had helped make a sculpture – a timid nod. What had she made? A bee. She was then told what an honour it was to meet an exhibiting artist. She grew inches and beamed. For the next two weeks she told her parents daily she was an artist!

CATS has started raising money with crowd-funding on the new West Oxon site run by Spacehive. The Council could release up to £15,000 in match funding if enough support is shown. Our children need your support.

Please donate and show your support so our children can again experience art, music and drama.

Please visit [www.spacehive.com/cotswolds-arts-through-schools](http://www.spacehive.com/cotswolds-arts-through-schools) to 'like' and donate if you can, then tell your friends and family to do the same!

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## The Artistic Garden

Think of a painter you like, or an art movement. Then plan your garden.

Let's take an example: Van Gogh, and my friend Viv. Viv has a terraced house in South London, Streatham, with a small garden. The front is dominated by a large Magnolia tree. The ground is covered with dark Hellebores and a fine Limelight Hydrangea which thrust its way through the white picket fence. At the back, cracked cement steps lead up to another small patch and a Sycamore tree, with Virginia Creeper covering the south-facing wall.

What do we do to bring in Van Gogh, his colours and shapes? We can start with the Iris, of course. Let's find the sunniest patch, along the path to the door. Then the sunflowers, lots of them, with their onyx, seed-heavy heads. Then some wheat grasses and a miniature cherry tree.

Now for some structure. Van Gogh painted the gates of his asylum, all curlicued black, beyond the garden. Let's put in those gates, along with a wrought iron railing. The sunflowers can stare through the black curls of iron like giant stars. By the gate, we can plant a corkscrew hazel - *Corylus avellana Contorta*. It will drop its leaves in winter to reveal branches that are contorted as the mind of Van Gogh.

As for the back, let's pebble the path in a giant paisley pattern - vivid and crazy, Viv loves paisley. Let's make the path hers. The south wall can keep its creeper, but let's put in a swing under the Sycamore, and some metal stars on the wall, painted a midnight blue, swirling into the future from light years away.

Michelle Turkie

## Stonesfield Gardening Club

*Welcoming, friendly and sociable: Ideal for the non-gardener and the gardener.*

Membership of the Gardening Club offers you a range of benefits including

- Free attendance to our talks
- Annual social & quiz evening
- Discounts at local garden centres

Membership for 2024 costs **£10.00** (or **£18.00 for a couple** at the same address). Visitors welcome: £4/talk. Talks held at St James' Centre.

**Plus** there is our annual Plant sale in April and Open Gardens in June 2024.

More details and how to get in contact can be found on our website.

### 2024 Talks

**12 Feb**

Paul Wren: Swifts

**11 March**

Paul Williams: Potatoes, Peppers, Poisons and Petunias

**13 May**

Val Bourne: The Living Jigsaw

**8 July**

Chris Day: Taming the Indoor Jungle

**9 Sept**

Rosy Hardy: Seasonal Perennials to attract Pollinators.

**11 Nov**

Adam Kirtland: A Bulb for every Month of the Year

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**[www.StonesfieldGardening.info](http://www.StonesfieldGardening.info)**

# Clubs, societies & sport

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## **Stonesfield Gardening Club**

The Gardening Club does not meet in January so nothing to report on that front, but we do have an interesting collection of speakers lined up for 2024. Please see p22 or our website for more details.

We will kick off with our AGM on Monday 12 February. Meet at 7pm in the St James' Centre for a glass of wine (we're resorting to bribery to get you there!) and then stay for a talk by local ornithologist Paul Wren. Paul will be chatting to us about his love of swifts and his efforts to increase their numbers in the village, by dint of installing swift boxes on as many houses as he can get permission for.

Don't forget if you are not yet a member and would like a 'trial run', you can come along to any meeting for £4 and then just pay the extra £6 if you decide to join.

The 10% discount for members offered by Yarnton Garden Centre, Freeland Nurseries and Charlbury Garden Centre have all been renewed by the Treasurer, so it is only too easy to recoup the cost of membership with a few shopping trips!

Hope to see you soon.

Diane Bates

Secretary Stonesfield Gardening Club

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

## **Stonesfield Food Group**

**The Social gets social!** Find our brand-new Facebook page at Stonesfield Social | Facebook

We're just getting going on FaceBook, where we 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 5 and 6.30pm at the Village Hall. 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?

Be a volunteer – it's free, fun and friendly! 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.

If your New Year's Resolutions included contributing to your community, trying something new or having fun, we can help you! Join our friendly team of volunteers at the Social. 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. Most of our ingredients come from the Food Hub and are free, but any expenses can be reimbursed. If you'd like to help,



even if it's only once in a while, please get in touch with Julie (see below).

**Our impact on the environment** 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, and it 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, crudites and fresh fruit! Most of our food is cooked from scratch, using fresh ingredients, and we are demonstrating how you can move away from the ultra-processed foods which have been in the news so much recently.

**Craft presents** Children are well catered for at the Social, and as well as being a great place to try new foods and play with friends, there's always a fun craft activity led by expert crafters Claire, Mould and Aoife. At Christmas the children received a personalised bag of craft materials to try out at home. "They were buzzing with excitement when they received their bags!" said one appreciative parent.

**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 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, 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.

**Community Café** The next community café will be held on 2 March at the same time as the Repair Café. Lunch will be served noon till 2pm or earlier if we run out! The café is open to all on a pay-what-you-feel basis; you don't need to bring an item to repair if you just want to enjoy the food.

**Food group visits** We are planning a group visit to the Charlbury Society's talk on chocolate in March, come along and join us.

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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## **Stonesfield Playing Field Association**

For the last few years the Playing Field Association has been privileged to have Fiona Dangerfield as a trustee, member of the committee and secretary. The committee has appreciated her commitment to the well-being of the field and its facilities and for her common sense approach to the day-to-day problems associated with managing it.

Unfortunately, other commitments have meant that Fiona can no longer carry on in her roles within the association and she will be sorely missed.

The association would like to recruit as a matter of some urgency a new female member of the committee. Ideally the individual would be prepared to be the secretary, though this is not essential. It is important for balance within the association that it has the benefit of a female perspective.

The task of a member of the committee is not onerous, involving primarily a monthly committee meeting and ideally taking and recording the minutes. If you think that you would like to help with the conservation and improvement of one of the village's most valuable assets please contact me

Frank Huddleston (891785)

Chair, Stonesfield Playing Field Association

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## **Stonesfield Environment Group**

We have been a little quiet over the Christmas break. It isn't always possible to sample the river water if the levels are very high!! However we have been working away on a number of fronts. We are

gathering more data on the quality of the river water and hope to be able to report back on that to you soon. We also had a very useful meeting with other local groups from Moreton-in-Marsh, Church Enstone, Combe, Charlbury etc. This is part of our plan to co-ordinate efforts and in doing so have more impact. There is more to do on that front and we are working with the expert organisations like Wild Oxfordshire and the Evenlode Catchment Partnership to capitalise on their knowledge.

Thames Water ran a 'Your water: Your say' event and we were able to submit questions to the consumer council; we will chase them for answers. Here is a comical depiction of what is fairly horrendous. 'Top of the plops' indeed – a shortlist we would rather not appear on....



To check how much raw sewage is being discharged into the Evenlode in real time go to the following website: [www.thameswater.co.uk/edm-map](http://www.thameswater.co.uk/edm-map). Zoom in to the Evenlode catchment area and you will be able to see what's happening at all the sewage treatment works on the river from Moreton-in-Marsh to Cassington, including Finstock which is where

Stonesfield's sewage goes. If you see a red dot it means sewage is being dumped right now and you can see how long it has been happening for!

Join in, there is lots to do...

Julie Curran

juliecurran0@gmail.com

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## **Stonesfield Football Club**

The dreary depths of mid-winter have been and gone and the days are getting longer, we're hurtling headlong into the promise of a New Year and *The Slate* has come out of hibernation, big question is, how have our boys fared recently? In all honesty the start to 2024 has been really disappointing for both our teams. However, before we get to that there's the mere trifling of how 2023 finished. The Firsts managed a creditable draw away at Milton (2-2) in their final league game of the year then knocked the same opponents out of the Oxon Junior Shield at home (2-0). With confidence high, they headed into 2024 and an Oxon Junior Shield Quarter-final away at Tower Hill, where disaster struck, and they were knocked out of the competition (1-0). They currently sit third bottom in the Premier League, and it looks increasingly likely that they'll be involved in a relegation battle with rivals Enstone and Milton. The team needs a hero to step up and start scoring goals if they are to maintain their Premiership status.

The Reserves' end to 2023 started off so well with a stunning (6-1) win at home to Sherbourne Harriers, but it all went downhill after that. Successive losses at home to Bampton (1-2) and away at Carterton Town (5-1) brought the curtain down on their calendar year. They hosted Deer Park as their 'first-footers' and lost a

6-goal thriller (2-4). Next up it was the perennial whipping boys of Eynsham and the visitors got their new year off to a great start plundering all three points in yet another goal-fest (2-3). Plus-point for our boys is that they are scoring goals and it's the youngsters, Jacob Oliver, Jayden Chapple, Adam Holmes and Marco Babic who are finding the net, though we just need them to do that more often!

It seems a shame that we can't start off 2024 with a well-earned Fredo Award. In truth none of our players has set the heather on fire recently, but that shouldn't stop us from applauding the efforts of Jacob Oliver who has the uncanny knack of being in the right place at the right time to score for both Firsts and Reserves. Maybe Jacob is just the hero that The Firsts need! I'll be disappointed if he doesn't collect a Fredo in the coming months.

Tom Flanigan (891979)

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## **Combe Women's Institute**

We started 2024 with an excellent and somewhat scary talk from OCC Trading Standards about the many devious and criminal scams around today. We were given advice on how best to protect ourselves from getting caught out and how to avoid becoming the victim of a scammer. We were given leaflets and door stickers and have some spare if anyone would like them. One important message for us all was to report any scams we come across, including phone, internet or face-to-face scams. Top numbers to have at hand are: Suspicious phone calls – 0300 1232040; doorstep crimes and rogue traders via the Citizens Advice national consumer helpline – 0808 2231133; and bank fraud – 03001232040.

Our February meeting is an open meeting and for just £5 anyone over the age of 18 is welcome to attend. The speaker will be Marcus Ferrar with a talk entitled 'Cold War Reporter – Behind the iron curtain'.

Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month in the Reading Room, Combe, from 7.30pm – 9.30pm.

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

Julia Sharpe (891058)

Secretary WI

combecombewi@oxfordhsirewi.co.uk

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## **North Leigh History Society**

On Tuesday 6 February Jonathan Jeffes will be giving a talk on *The Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration*, and our March talk on Tuesday 5 March is by Muriel Pilkington, when she will be telling us the story of the Burford Mutiny. 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.

### **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

# Church news

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

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

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

**Rector:** Rev Ralph Williamson,  
[rector@scbenefice.org](mailto:rector@scbenefice.org), 01993 891872

**Churchwarden:** Lindsey Sellar  
[stonesfield@stonesfieldparishchurch.org](mailto:stonesfield@stonesfieldparishchurch.org)

**St James' Centre bookings:**  
[sjcsbookings@gmail.com](mailto:sjcsbookings@gmail.com)

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

### **From the Rector - Building work to restore St James the Great**

We are deeply grateful to all those in the village who supported our appeal in 2023 for funding towards the cost of repairs and restoration to our beautiful church. I am very pleased to report that the Parochial Church Council at St James has now signed a contract with a local builder for the work to go ahead this year, which consists of refurbishment of the interior and exterior stonework and the roofing of the church. Our Oxfordshire-based architect, who has a distinguished national record in heritage preservation, will be in charge of the work, which will cost a total of £133,000, excluding VAT. Preliminary work will be carried out in March, with the main project taking place over twelve weeks from the end of August.

In addition to the wonderful support from individuals, we are also most grateful for generous grants from the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust, the National Churches Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Benefact Trust and A H Lynall Foundation, enabling us to meet the costs involved.

**Ash Wednesday** falls on 14 February this year, and marks the beginning of the season of Lent, the weeks of preparation for Easter. Lent is a time of penitence, and Ash Wednesday is a day when we can reflect on the brokenness which we see in ourselves and in our world, a brokenness which Christ's death and resurrection heals and restores. On Ash Wednesday we hold a church service at which we receive the sign of the cross, made on our forehead in ash, as a mark of our penitence. Perhaps the concept of penitence seems old-fashioned, but taking responsibility for our own wrong actions, words and thoughts as we consider our mortality is a way of coming to terms with who we really are, which connects us to the rest of struggling humanity. And alongside the personal responsibility for wrong which we acknowledge, there is a recognition that we share in the societal and ecological brokenness of our world, its injustices, its slaveries, its violence, its extinctions. However hard we may struggle to do no harm, our own prosperity and peace come at a cost to others and to our environment. Ash Wednesday, Lent and Easter are a personal journey of faith, but also a blueprint for global transformation which



must unite us with all people of goodwill in building a future in which all life is protected and all brokenness healed.

**Pancake Party** Before Lent begins, please join us at the St James' Centre on Shrove Tuesday, 13 February, for our Pancake Party – come along with your friends, family or neighbours to share free pancakes and refreshment between 3 and 5pm!

Revd Ralph Williamson - Rector

## Services

### Sunday 4 February [Second Sunday before Lent]

8am Stonesfield Holy Communion [BCP/said]

9.30am Combe All Age Worship

11am Stonesfield All Age Worship

### Sunday 11 February [Sunday next before Lent]

8am Stonesfield Holy Communion [BCP/said]

9.30am Combe Parish Communion

11am Stonesfield Parish Communion

### Ash Wednesday 14 February

9.30am Stonesfield Holy Communion with ashing

11am Combe Holy Communion with ashing

### Sunday 18 February [Lent 1]

8am Stonesfield Holy Communion [BCP/said]

9.30am Combe Parish Communion

11am Stonesfield Parish Communion

### Sunday 25 February [Lent 2]

8am Stonesfield Holy Communion [BCP/said]

10am Combe United Benefice Communion

### Wednesdays

9.30am Stonesfield Holy Communion (7, 14, 28)

11am Combe Morning Prayer (14 as above, 28)

### A record of recent funerals:

2 November: Joyce Mary Curtis

15 December: Carole Stephanie (Jan) Holloway

Our prayers are for family and friends at this time.

.....

## Stonesfield Methodist Church

### Services for February

Sun 4 11am Martin Hannant

Sun 11 11am Margaret Broadberry

Sun 18 11am The Reverend Andrew Biggs

Holy Communion Service

Sun 25 11am Eddie Fowler

### Good wishes for 2024!

Another year begins and with it a new journey, one to be traveled wisely, playing our part and doing our bit along the way. Thoughts may lie with those we love and care for the most, but too often before us are sad scenes of others who suffer through war and unrest.

The World Day of Prayer Service takes place on Friday 1 March, and comes this year from Palestine where conflict is raging. Christian women from Palestine have written the Service, ready to be

shared right across the globe. They wish for prayers of peace and understanding for all folk the world over, and they look towards hope and reconciliation. This Service is a beautiful one, do come and hear it on 1 March at 2pm. Everyone is very welcome indeed.

Come to a Service soon.

Kathleen Albért (891733)

.....  
**Roman Catholic Worship**

**Witness**

‘You are my witnesses,’ declares the Lord, ‘and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.’ Isaiah 43:10-12

As Christians we are called upon to ‘witness’, that is to attest our commitment to Christ by how we behave. That witnessing confirms that we believe that events in the New Testament around the birth, life and death of Jesus Christ signify that He is the Son of God, and sent by God to redeem all humanity: ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’ John 14:6. Jesus tells us, ‘Even if I do bear witness to myself, my testimony is true, for I know whence I have come and whither I am going, but you do not know whence I come or whither I am going.’ John 8:14

Witness is always about faith and truth, as Paul says in Romans 1:16: ‘For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.’ And John 5:31-38: ‘Were I to testify on my own behalf, my testimony would not be true; but there is another witness who speaks on

my behalf, and I know that his testimony is true. You sent messengers to John, and he gave his testimony to the truth - not that I depend on human testimony; no, it is for your salvation that I mention it. For you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard.’ Acts 22:15

**Holy Mass**

Sunday Mass at 9.15am

Wednesdays and Fridays at 9.15am

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)

Aid to the church in need Pilgrimage: Durham and Lindisfarne 22-27 July 2024.

For further information please contact Suze Mathews [suzemathews899@btinternet.com](mailto:suzemathews899@btinternet.com)

Roman Catholic Community in Stonesfield  
.....

**New Church thought**

Recent UK news made me pay particular attention when this ‘Daily Inspiration’ landed in my inbox. Sadly, as ever, there seem to be plenty whose lives do not meet this description.

‘Heavenly life is a life of thoughtfulness, of behaving honestly and fairly in every duty, every affair, every task, from our deeper nature and therefore from a heavenly source.’ E.Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*

Dale Morris

**best-one** 

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## BLenheim PALACE

### Half Term Fun – 10th – 18th February

Enjoy a fun-filled day out this half term at Blenheim Palace. Hop aboard the miniature train down to the Walled Garden where you can wind your way through our amazing Marlborough Maze and complete the Woodland Animal Trail. Meet some of our friendly Blenheim sheep in their pop-up pen and learn all about how they are cared for on the Estate. Venture out for a walk and explore the 2,000 acres 'Capability' Brown landscaped parkland. Head to the Adventure Playground for water play, slides, swings, zipwires and more as well as dance sessions, story-telling time and pebble painting, and don't forget to fill hungry tummies at our Walled Garden Pizzeria where kids eat free this half term.

Find out more at [blenheimpalace.com/whats-on/events/february-half-term](https://blenheimpalace.com/whats-on/events/february-half-term)



## BLenheim ESTATE

Counteract the winter blues with the natural mood-lifting antidote of a walk in the Parkland. With 2000 acres to explore, there's a walk to suit everyone and every occasion from a stroll around the Formal Gardens to venturing into the wider Estate. Although the days are shorter, there are more opportunities to enjoy beautiful sunsets and sunrises, and those cold, crisp days are a perfect excuse to wrap up and get out for a walk to blow away the cobwebs. Our new Wellbeing Walks page on our website provides details and routes for a range of walks on the Estate as well as links to our Spotify wellbeing podcast series 'Being at Blenheim' recorded in peaceful spots from several of our Estate walks. Listen whilst enjoying a solo walk or enjoy the sounds of the Estate from your own home. Find out more at [blenheimpalace.com/visitus/wellness-walks](https://blenheimpalace.com/visitus/wellness-walks)

## BLenheim

This month celebrates National Apprenticeship Week from 5th to 11th February, and we are pleased to say that we are on target to achieve our 10-year goal of training over 100 new apprentices by the end of 2027. Across Palace, Estate and Property, 49 apprenticeships have already been completed since 2017 and we currently have 38 apprentices on site working in a range of departments including Built Heritage, Forestry, Events & Hospitality, Game, Finance, Security and Construction. With our apprenticeships ranging from entry level 2 all the way up to level 7 (equivalent to a master's degree) we're proud to be not only developing young people's skills but also allowing employees to learn new skills in current roles or even have a complete career change.

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

**[blenheimpalace.com](https://blenheimpalace.com)**

# FLOWERS

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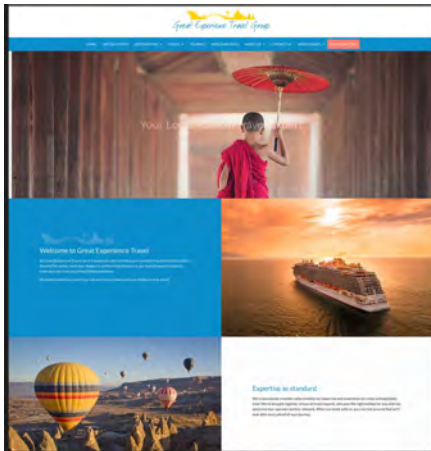
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**Our fabulous new website:  
[www.greatexperiencetravel.co.uk](http://www.greatexperiencetravel.co.uk)  
 is now up and running**



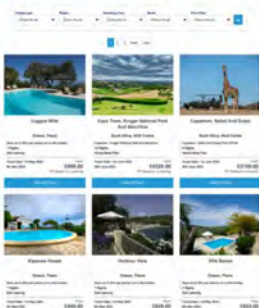
It has lots of exciting new features, and we think that the website looks great. However, it is still a 'work in progress' and has to meet your needs.

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.

It doesn't mean that we don't want to see you in the office.

This is still our No.1 priority.

The site will just help you find even more holiday options and will make the service that we can offer you even better.



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