



Tailor-made for Swifts



Swifts over Stonesfield: Paul Wren

While one Swift needs a private plane to jet around the world, the feathered variety, *Apus apus*, which visits Stonesfield in the summer, flies itself the huge distance from Southern Africa to Britain every year to breed.

The birds fly via insect-rich wetlands to refuel on the way, feeding on the wing. They spend the summer with us, usually arriving at the beginning of May to known nest sites year after year, looking for the same partner. They like to find hollow cavities in buildings and build a flat nest of feathers and other material glued together by saliva.

As we become more concerned with our heating bills, so we seal up any gaps in our houses that a swift would see as fair game for a home. This shortage of nesting sites, along with the collapse of insect numbers, has led to

a decline in swift numbers of 60% between 1995 and 2000.

Stonesfield resident Paul Wren is determined to do something to help by encouraging residents to let him put up swift nesting boxes and swift bricks that can be positioned on most people's houses.

At present there are 38 boxes and bricks in the village, and Paul has set himself a target of 50, so maybe you can join his band of 'swifties'.

For more information visit www.actionforswifts.com and www.swift-conservation.org.

Paul Wren can be contacted on pmwren52@gmail.com

Diane Bates

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**.

Disclaimer

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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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Current and past copies of the *Slate* are available at www.stonesfield.online

Dates for your diary: March

1	World Day of Prayer Service	Methodist Church	2pm
1,8,15,29	Baby & Toddlers Group	Village Hall	10am-12noon
2	Repair Café	Village Hall	11am-2pm
2	White Horse Comedy Night	Village Hall	7.30pm for 8pm
4,11,18,25	Monday Coffee	St James' Centre	8.45-11.30am
4, 7,11,14	Taekwondo	Village Hall	5.30-6.30pm
5,12,19,26	Seniors' Café	Village Hall	3-4pm
5,12,19,26	Stonesfield Social	Village Hall	5-7pm
5,12,19,26	Zumba	Village Hall	7-8pm
5,12,19,26	Strong Nation HIIT	Village Hall	8.15-9.15pm
6	Parish Council meeting	Primary School	7pm
6,13,20,27	Gatehouse Pilates	Village Hall	9.30-10.30am
6,13,20,27	Hannah Bathe HITT Class	Village Hall	7.15-8pm
6,13,20,27	Folk Dancing	Village Hall	7.45-10pm
7,14,21,28	Book Break	Library	12.30-2pm
8,9	Rose & Crown Beer Festival	Charlbury	12-11.30pm
9	Folk Dance Group	Charlbury Mem Hall	2-4.30pm
11	Gardening Club	St James' Centre	7.30pm
18,25,28	Taekwondo	Village Hall	5.30-6.30pm
21	Bingo	Sports & Social Club	eyes down 7.30pm
21,22,23	Stonesfield Players: <i>Steve</i>	Village Hall	7.30pm
23	Race Night	Sports & Social Club	7.30pm (first race)



Signs of spring

Notices & news

Thank you

I wish to say thank you for the numerous Christmas and birthday cards I received in December and January. I wish all of you the very best for the New Year 2024.

Marion Hall

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.

Saturday 2 March at Stonesfield Village Hall. Bar opens at 7.30pm, show starts at 8.00pm. Tickets cost £10 plus £1 booking fee; to purchase please visit www.adrianlancini.com

Repair Café



The Repair Café returns on Saturday 2 March between 11am-2pm in the Village Hall. Now is the time to look out all those things that don't work but you don't want to throw away. We will have a go at fixing most things with a 70% success rate so it's well worth bringing things along. As well as all the usual domestic appliances, we can repair broken priceless china, wobbly furniture and advise on IT and phone problems.

Refreshments, delicious homemade cakes and light lunches are also available courtesy of the Community Café.

Come early to make sure you are seen and, if you can, let us know what you are bringing at stonesfieldrepaircafe@gmail.com.

Mike Sofroniou

Exercise bike wanted

Have your New Year's resolutions been abandoned?

I can offer an exercise bike a new home, if it's stable and capable of being set to zero resistance!

Contact me to discuss.

Kate Winstanley
07765 603087

Stonesfield Folk Dance Group

Stonesfield Folk Dance Club and Wychwayz Border Morris invite you to join us for an afternoon of Morris dancing and English country dancing with live music. This will take place on Saturday 9 March from 2-4.30pm at Charlbury Memorial Hall, Browns Lane, Charlbury. We'll teach you some of our easier dances – no previous experience required! There will be an interval with tea and cakes. Entry is free and parking is available behind the Co-op which is two minutes' walk from the Memorial Hall.

Who are we? Stonesfield Folk Dance Club have been going for over 50 years and meet on Wednesday evenings from 7.45 to 10.00 in Stonesfield Village Hall. Do come along and give it a go. Expect a flavour of lively or elegant dances with music to match, written and published from the 17th century to the present giving us an astonishing variety and wealth of repertoire which is still expanding and much enjoyed today. For more details, contact Stewart Nicholls on 01295 730271 or just turn up.



We will be joined by Charlbury-based Wychwayz Border Morris who you may have seen dancing out around Charlbury with their rag jackets and painted faces. Wychwayz practise all year round and

enjoy dancing at local events, festivals and pubs. Practices are at the Charlbury Scout Hut on Tuesday evenings from 7.45 to 8.45. New dancers and musicians (including learners) are always welcome. For details contact Liz on 01608 810657 or 07800 744787 or email wychwayz Morris@gmail.com.

Janet Sly

Oxfordshire Art Weeks May 2024



Although the pub is undergoing refurbishment, things are still happening off-site in preparation for its reopening. Pictures @ The Pub has been registered as a venue for Art Weeks with the intention of putting on a mixed exhibition of work from our local artists to include paintings, prints and etchings, photography, illustrations, textiles, collage, mixed media, metalwork, linocuts and stained glass. More information is available from Trisha Williams at triwynwilo03@gmail.com.



Village Hall news

As we look forward to spring, lighter evenings and hopefully a bit less rain, we can put the winter months behind us a little bit.

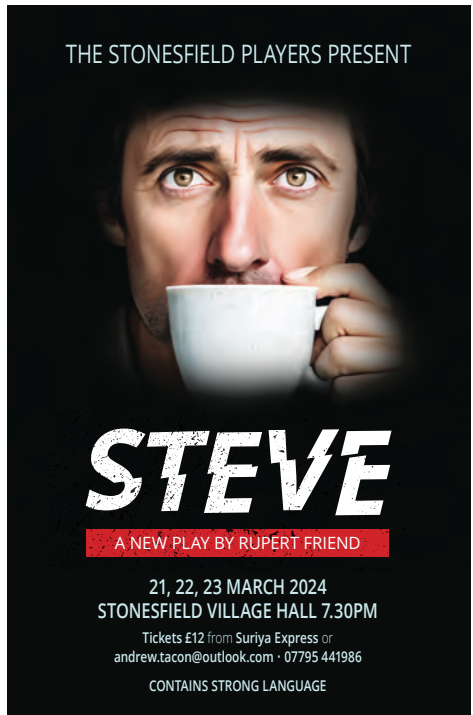
We haven't had a **Community Café** for a while so we are wondering if it's something that people still want to do on the first Saturday of each month – would you prefer a different event instead? We want to supply what the community wants and needs, so let us know your thoughts. You can email us directly on stonesfieldvh@gmail.com or give us a call and leave a message, with your number, on the booking line 01993 898919, and we will always get back to you. (Your number is a must as it's not a fancy phone that displays caller ID!) If you do want to run a Community Café, hire of the Hall is free of charge and you get to choose the charity or worthy cause to which you want to donate your profits! Dates available are: April, May, July, August, October and November.

Happily, the month of March brings back a firm favourite with **The Repair Café** on Saturday 2 March. If something needs fixing bring it along and we'll do our best to restore it to working order. If you need advice about your computer, your phone or software we can help you. If you can, tell us what you are going to bring to help us prepare: stonesfieldrepaircafe@gmail.com There is no charge but we gratefully accept donations. The Community Café will also provide delicious refreshments.

On 2 March the White Horse is putting on a **Comedy Night** for your entertainment and to raise some well-needed funds to go towards the pub refurbishment. If you fancy a giggle and a good night out, get your tickets and get yourself along there !

On 21, 22 and 23 March, The **Stonesfield Players** bring us their latest production 'Steve' written by Rupert Friend. To find out more you will have to get some tickets and go along!

Jacqueline Carthew (898919)
Secretary & Booking Clerk
stonesfieldvh@gmail.com



THE STONESFIELD PLAYERS PRESENT

STEVE

A NEW PLAY BY RUPERT FRIEND

21, 22, 23 MARCH 2024
STONESFIELD VILLAGE HALL 7.30PM

Tickets £12 from Suriya Express or
andrew.tacon@outlook.com · 07795 441986

CONTAINS STRONG LANGUAGE

Stonesfield Tree Planters

The sun is up and the ground is thawing. The plan is to start at 10am along the Evenlode adding to trees we planted last year. Our timings are fluid. Today we have 50 trees to plant; preparations are complete but the trees and planters have yet to arrive. I have time to go round last year's trees checking progress - 4% of the planted trees have not survived. So far overall we have about a 5% failure rate - this is good as often the rate can be over 20%. As we meet up, we have six planters and one dog. Today's trees are from The Conservation Volunteers 'I Dig Trees' programme.

About 60% of our trees have come from the Woodland Trust. We choose a range of native trees that come in two hundreds. The trees are one year old and are grown in plugs with each species wrapped together. The roots are tightly entwined needing more freedom. Planting is straightforward as long as they aren't planted too deep.

25% come from TCV I Dig Trees. These trees are grown in soil and come to us bare rooted. The trees feel stronger but the roots have often been trimmed. The bonus of soil is that mycorrhizal fungi may well have established contact with the tree roots and started an essential long-term relationship. Last year we had five oak trees with heavily trimmed roots and remarkably all five have done very well.

About 15% of our trees have been grown in pots in the village, some from seed and others dug up from garden beds. The root systems on these trees have been the best. We also had 30 oaks from Blenheim and five wild service trees from Ditchley.

Planting is going well; Joey (our guard dog) has had a beady eye on pheasants and is taking care of a tree guard. Our 12-year-old (on an inset day) is showing great skill with an awl creating holes for the tree ties, without injuries.



John, Genny, Judy & Mike with Joey

Joey has Genny Early eyed up and I am fairly sure there must be a snack in Genny's pocket. Nearly done and Mike has lost his spade; eventually it was found and all trees planted on a sunny morning. Later, adding to the records, I find that we have planted exactly 1,400 trees. Two hundred to go!

John Sampson

Combe Community Cinema

There are two events at The Hub this month:

On Saturday 2 March we are screening the live recording of the hit West End play, *Dear England*. Written by James Graham, one of this century's most successful British playwrights, *Dear England* is an unmissable account of the struggles and successes of England's football teams. Joseph Fiennes delivers an impeccable Gareth Southgate, alongside a stand-out Will Close as Harry Kane. Note: The performance is rated 15 and there will be no subtitles. Doors open at 6.30pm, screening starts at 7pm and ends at

10.30pm. There is a bar available before the performance and during the interval. Tickets in advance at £11 plus booking fee or £13 on the door. To book online, go to www.ticketsource.co.uk and search for 'Dear England Combe'.

On Friday 15 March our last film in the season is *Past Lives* (2023), a universally acclaimed American drama written and directed by Celine Song. After years apart, a South Korean woman living in New York reconnects online with the man who was once her closest childhood friend. In English and Korean with subtitles. Running time 106 minutes. Cert 12A. Tickets: £5. Doors open at 7.30pm for an 8pm start. Bar available.

For further details please email combecommunitycinema@gmail.com

Deborah Manning

North Leigh History Society

On Tuesday 5 March Muriel Pilkington will be telling us the story of the Burford Mutiny. At our April meeting on Tuesday 2 April, Chris Danziger will be talking about Napoleon and the Rosetta Stone. We meet at 7.30pm in the Memorial Hall in North Leigh (OX29 6SA). All are welcome. Members' fees are £18 per year and the charge for individual talks is £4. Further details are available from Diana Power (882301) or Robert Kyte at kyterobert@gmail.com (880368).

Angela Kyte

Witney Music Society

The final concert in Witney Music Society's 2023-24 season will be given by the acclaimed Marmen Quartet playing works for string quartet by Haydn, Debussy, Mozart and Ravel. The concert is at 7.30pm on Friday 8 March at High Street Methodist Church, Witney. Tickets (£15, £11 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 website at www.witneymusicsociety.org.uk.

Woodstock Music Society

Woodstock Music Society will hold its spring concert on Friday 22 and Saturday 23 March at 7.30pm at St Mary Magdalene Church, Woodstock, comprising Mozart's *Mass in C minor* and Haydn's *Te Deum* and *Symphony no. 88*.

Performers include Eleanor Broomfield and Amy Strachan (sopranos), Paul Badley (tenor); Patrick Irwin (bass), and the Woodstock Music Society Choir and Chamber Orchestra conducted by Paul Ingram.

Tickets are £14 in advance from The Woodstock Bookshop or £15 on the door. Full-time student tickets are £5 and accompanied under-16s may attend free of charge. Email: concerts@woodstockmusic.info or website: www.bookwhen.com/woodstock

Police and community support

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

Stonesfield Primary School: Vacancy for Site Maintenance and Caretaker

The School seeks a caretaker to work 10 hours per week, preferably Wednesday and Thursday, term time only. Grade 5: £23,500-£24,294 pro rata. Start date: week commencing 15 April 2024.

Job Description (extract)

Maintenance tasks:

- Undertake appropriate repairs eg. redecorating and fixing.
- Undertake minor/simple repairs eg. minor plumbing, changing light bulbs unblocking drains.
- To organise and carry out various maintenance duties to ensure that the general upkeep and maintenance of the premises is satisfactory, as per specific schedule for the School.
- To organise and carry out a minor decoration programme as agreed with the Headteacher/school administrator.
- To be responsible for the operation of a preventative planned maintenance programme and for routine inspections of the buildings, fixtures, fittings, furniture, premises and grounds to assess for minor work or repairs required to be carried out to maintain safe and satisfactory conditions.
- Operation and maintenance of heating plant, lighting systems and fire safety equipment.
- Undertake regular site inspections and identify and record repair and maintenance requirements.
- Identify defects and record repair and maintenance requirements.

- Ensure that pathways and all other external hard surface areas are kept clean, free of litter and weeds and that they are gritted or salted when required during wintry conditions.
- General grounds maintenance ie. lawn cutting, weeding, hedge trimming, pavement clearance and general tidying of grounds.

Responsibilities:

- Always comply with health and safety policies and procedures.
- Always promote and ensure the health and safety of pupils, staff & visitors.
- Be aware of and comply with policies and procedures relating to child protection, health, safety and security and confidentiality, reporting all concerns to an appropriate person.
- Contribute to the overall ethos/work/aims of the School.
- Participate in training and other learning activities and performance development as required.
- Treat all users of the School with courtesy and consideration.
- Present a positive personal image, contributing to a welcoming school environment which supports equal opportunities.
- Complete COSHH risk assessments when required.

Please email the school office for the full job description and an application form: office.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk

Closing date: Wednesday 13 March 2024
at 12 noon.

Interview date: Friday 15 March 2024

Politics & local affairs

Stonesfield Parish Council

From the meeting of 7 February 2024

Planning: We can confirm that we do not have an actual planning application for the Combe Road proposed development at this stage.

Updates: Cllr Sumner (District Council) advised the council that local nature recovery scheme workshops being held; Cllr Sumner to share information regarding this with the Clerk and information will be posted on the website when we have this.

The **Neighbourhood Plan** working group updated the meeting that their work is progressing well. The Clerk will apply for further grants for the Neighbourhood Plan group.

The **SAFER** working group's report was shared with the full Council; this will be placed on the website by the SAFER team. In this report information was shared that there is an opportunity to create safer cycle routes on the back of the Botley West solar farm. The Council would like further information regarding this from SAFER working group.

Stonesfield Buses: The Council supports the bus to the village and sees it as a requirement for the village. The Council asked Cllr Sumner (District Council) to seek more information on whether the bus service (S3) through Stonesfield will receive further funding.

Date of the next meeting: Stonesfield Primary School on 6 March 2024 at 7pm.

Following the meeting of Stonesfield Parish Council held on 7 February 2024, the Parish Council would like to share this statement:

There has been much discussion with WODC who have been extremely proactive in supporting the Council with getting to where we need to be with clarifications regarding a parish poll demand in the meeting on 7 February 2024. As advised at the meeting, we needed to check further with WODC whether the request for the poll could be upheld. It has now been confirmed that it cannot be upheld from this particular Parish Council meeting. The Council minutes will state that following checks with WODC the poll demand is noted but not granted at this particular meeting.

For more details on this, please refer to 'Parish Council Meetings' on the Parish website.

Karen East, Parish Clerk
clerk@stonesfieldpc.uk

Stonesfield says Slow Down*

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

Stonefield 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 Stonefield Parish Council Working Group



Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

As part of producing a Neighbourhood Plan for Stonesfield, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) has produced a draft Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) for the village. It's a detailed document using data you provided in last year's village survey as well as National, County and District sources of information. The conclusion of the HNA is that the village, which is in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, does not require additional market housing. There is no need in Stonesfield, exceptional or otherwise, for any major developments, defined as developments of more than 10 houses.

However the HNA does recognise there may be a small shortfall of social/affordable housing which could be met via a small Rural Exception Site – up to 10 houses. The NPSG are looking at ways that this shortfall can be resolved, without accepting major developments of market housing.

In addition to the HNA we have also produced a detailed document for the Parish Council reviewing all the National and Local planning policies, AONB management policies together with the comments from the Public Inquiry Inspector for the Local Plan 2031 and the refusal of the Cala Homes planning appeal for their site on the Woodstock Road. We also include comments residents made in the Household and Individual village surveys last year.

The conclusion of this document is that there is no case to support major developments in Stonesfield. The words of Mr Normington, the planning appeal

inspector in the Cala case, supply us with a precedent for addressing all threats of major developments: 'There is no convincing evidence whatsoever of a specific local housing need in Stonesfield which would give rise to justification of a development of the scale implied ... On close scrutiny of the development before me, I have found that it would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the AONB.'

As noted in last month's *Slate*, there are three sites identified in Stonesfield in the new WODC Local Plan 2041 'call for sites', each of which would constitute major developments. The NPSG's strong recommendation to the Parish Council is that these sites should be vigorously opposed.

Richard Morris

info@stonesfieldplan.com

News from West Oxfordshire Changes to Parliamentary boundaries



The Boundary Commission for England has completed a review of Parliamentary constituencies which will impact communities in the West Oxfordshire District at the next General

Election. Changes to the Parliamentary boundaries mean that West Oxfordshire District will now form part of three constituencies rather than the current one.

Approximately 17,800 voters from West Oxfordshire will form part of the Bicester and Woodstock constituency and the District wards affected are Eynsham and Cassington; Freeland and Hanborough; North Leigh; Stonesfield and Tackley; Woodstock and Bladon. The changes do not affect the boundaries for any wards for council elections or National Police and Crime Commissioner elections and will have no impact on council services. At the next General Election all registered voters will be sent information on their parliamentary constituency

Oxfordshire County Council

From our County Councillor

News from the villages and towns

Stonesfield: New road sign has been agreed and are to be installed to discourage vehicles using the narrow Witney Lane to Stonesfield.

Woodstock: Improvements to the Woodstock on-street parking scheme are being finalised by County Officers with many positive contributions from residents and local businesses. The hope will be adjustments/improvements will take place and be implemented in the next six months.

Reduced speed schemes: 30 to 20 mph reduced speed schemes to address pedestrian safety and reduce accidents on our highways have been agreed/approved in Woodstock and Sandford St. Martin. Tackley has its scheme up and running. Pedestrian safety measures already agreed

with the Town Council will be scheduled for implementation over the next four months. Glympton and Kiddington are the final villages to ask for a scheme and plans will be drawn up before decision-making later in the year.

Library/Hub: Discussions between OCC and WODC are ongoing with a commitment to finding and/or building a library/hub. More news to follow.

Combe: Flooding issues at/near Combe Bridge are being addressed with OCC and WODC Highways and Blenheim as landowners. Awaiting schedule of agreed works.

Household Waste and Recycling

OCC will no longer charge for small amounts of DIY waste. (This requires booking for up to 5 chargeable items or 1 piece of plasterboard.). The change will cost OCC £0.5m a year. A new recycling service for vapes has also been introduced at all Oxfordshire household waste recycling centres.

HGVs

A steering group of OCC councillors has been formed to inform the study of HGV movements in Woodstock and Bladon as part of a countywide study.

Bus fares

The £2 single bus fare cap has been extended to 31 December 2024

Electric buses

Electric uses are now in service in Oxford

Andy Graham

andy.graham@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Neighbourhood Watch

Stop, hang up, call 159

If you think someone is trying to trick you into handing over money or personal details – stop, hang up and call 159 to speak directly to your bank. 159 works in the same way as 101 for the police or 111 for the NHS. It's the number you can trust to get you through to your bank safely and securely every time. So if you think someone is trying to trick you – stop, hang up and call 159. For more information visit 159 - Stop Scams UK

Report internet scams and phishing

Report misleading websites, emails, phone numbers, phone calls or text messages you think may be suspicious. Do not give out private information (such as bank details or passwords), reply to text messages, download attachments or click on any links in emails if you are not sure they are genuine.

Emails

Forward suspicious emails to report@phishing.co.uk The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) will investigate the matter.

Text messages

Forward suspicious text messages to 7726. This is a free service and will report the message to your mobile phone provider.

For more information visit: 'Avoid and report internet scams and phishing' and 'Report internet scams and phishing' at GOV.Uk (www.gov.uk)

Information on Neighbourhood Watch is available at: 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. Clicking on 'Join a scheme' and selecting 'Stonesfield' will complete the request.

Deanna Asplundh

Stonesfield Neighbourhood Watch
Coordinator

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 March:
Viv Kendall 01993 891803 or stonesfieldvts@gmail.com

Education, culture & more

Review: *Blood runs thicker*

On Saturday 27 January, murder and merriment returned to Stonesfield Village Hall. The setting was the fictional village of Fieldstone where there was to be a launch event for a book about the late horror author, and famous local, Phoebe Fairchild. During the evening a killer struck, leaving Richard Watts (Mark Saville) mortally wounded.



With clues and red herrings abounding, the knotty problem for the detectives was to identify the killer. The assembled tables of onlookers tackled the task with relish, asking the remaining cast many questions in their quest for truth whilst simultaneously enjoying a sumptuous supper.

At last the tables settled down to examine all the evidence and identify the killer and motive. When all the responses had been handed in, Shelley Jenkins (Katie Saville) finally revealed herself as the murderer and gave us the reasons she struck.

Three tables correctly identified Shelley Jenkins but only one fully understood her

motives and therefore walked away with the prize.

Our thanks go to the Stonesfield Players, the whole cast and Gareth Meager (who wrote it and acted) for providing a great evening of entertainment and a real feast.

Paul Bates

The Stonesfield Players present *Steve by Rupert Friend*

Steve lives alone – very alone. 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 at times hilarious, at times deeply unsettling. 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*, *Anatomy of a Scandal*, *Asteroid City*) is directed by Caroline Friend. It's funny, tense and poignant, exploring social norms, loneliness, rage – and what it feels like when you just don't get it. The language is colourful and strong and not suitable for children.

Thursday 21, Friday 22 and Saturday 23
March at 7.30pm. Tickets £12 from Suriya Express or andrew.tacon@outlook.com or 07795 441986.

Caroline Friend

I'm a Reader

Pippa Gwilliam, 70, who lives in Cowley, has in recent years been a driver of the train in Blenheim after a long career with the BBC World Service.

'I was probably in the last class of infants to use slates and pencils to practise writing. My mother and aunt encouraged a love of reading in me by reading books and comics aloud *with* me rather than *to* me. '*Harold Hare*' was my weekly comic' says Pippa without hesitation even after more than sixty years.

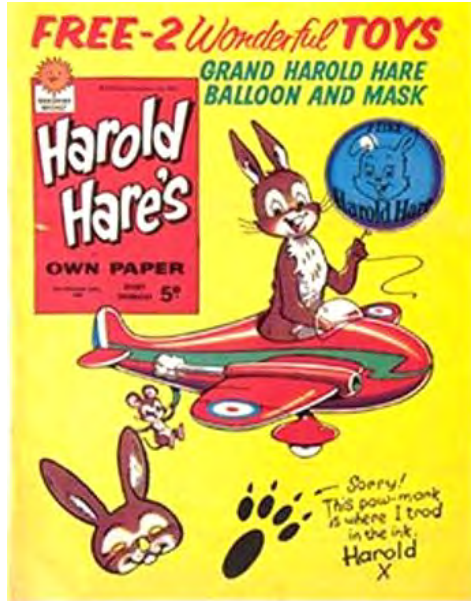
Harold Hare was an upbeat animal with a likeable tendency to make mistakes, who first appeared in comic collections in the 1940s before proving so popular he got a magazine all to himself.

'I remember learning the word "flabbergasted" says Pippa, 'when Harold Hare got it wrong and said "gabberflasted". This appealed to our family habit of mucking about with words.'

'After we had finished book six in our *prescribed* school series we were allowed to go to the library and choose our own story books and I was one of the first in the class, thanks to my aunt. After that, there was no stopping me.'

'We left London to be near Folkestone where my father was commander of an army barracks. We lived at the end of an ex-manor house, most of which was the officers' mess. I spent a lot of time with the cook, who, apart from making toffee for me, also had a love of words. From him I learned that an alternative way to call someone a liar was to say they were a 'terminological inexactitudinarian', which I thought was wonderful and used it as often as I could.'

'When I was seven, in 1961, we moved to Nigeria for 13 months. Yabuka Gowon of Biafran war fame was one of my father's junior officers'. (Gowon became Nigerian head of state and presided over the 1967-70 civil war that was one of the deadliest in history with up to two million civilians and combatants killed.) Harold Hare would certainly not have approved and, fortunately, Pippa did not experience this. 'My aunt used to send me huge great parcels of collected Harold Hare which I would motor through as soon as they arrived, as well as Greek myths and poetry.'



'The two books that most affected me in my life are two of my A-level textbooks, Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (I studied Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* as well and this story of the whisky-loving, morally nuanced priest certainly gave me new perspective on Catholic priests after being raised in a convent boarding school!')

‘To this day I remain a bit of a grammar Nazi out of fear of Orwell’s “Newspeak” – (the simplified and restricted version of English imposed on the people by the totalitarian government in Orwell’s dystopian vision). I have an almost visceral reaction when people say or post things such as ‘why use a word like ‘utilise’ when you can just say ‘use.’ The breadth of words is part of the glory of English and it is vandalism to reject a word because it’s more complicated.’

Pippa still reads an eclectic mix of authors. She is currently reading ‘*Ink Heart*’ by Cornelia Funke, ‘a cracking children’s fantasy book about a man who can read characters out of and into books, and his daughter who discovers she has the same gift.’

I’m not sure Harold Hare would approve of that either!

Eleanor Bailey

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)



YOUR LIBRARY NEEDS YOU!

Time to spare?
Looking for a new opportunity?
Friends of Stonesfield Library would like to meet you!
We support the library service by sharing the opening hours with the professional manager.
If you enjoy reading and helping people, this is the volunteering opportunity for you!
We work in pairs and carry out a variety of tasks during a session (usually one session of 2-3 hours per month).

Interested?
Come along to Stonesfield Library to find out more or contact Mike Pollitt on 01993 891856.

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)

Come and see the talented young people of MYCO (The Musical Youth Company of Oxford) in their main 2024 show

Me And My Girl **The Oxford Playhouse** **April 3rd to April 6th**

'The Happiest of Musicals'

Tickets from the Oxford Playhouse 01865 305305
or oxfordplayhouse.com



Clubs, societies & sport

Stonesfield Football Club

The Firsts have only played one game in the past month, which may appear to be a conundrum wrapped up in a mystery, but when you realise that Cup competitions take precedence over League games then the mystery unravels in mundane fashion.

Bearing that in mind, let's put the Reserves centre-stage, for once! It's been a very good month for our second string, especially in the league where they've taken seven points from a maximum of nine, setting themselves up for what we all hope will be a great end of season run. A Mike Phipps and Jonny Newton inspired home win (2-1) against basement boys, Leaffield, was followed by a draw (1-1), also at home with Yarnton 'B'. The later match saw the return to action of Cary Rice (out for six months with a serious knee injury - ouch!) and Cary did what Cary does best - scored a goal. Welcome back Cary, you have been missed!

Next, they travelled to Bampton United and plundered all three points in a pulsating win (3-2) with youngsters Jacob Oliver, Noah Drew and Marko Babic on the scoresheet. They almost set the heather on fire in their Jack Busby quarter final at First Division Hanborough with a Jayden Chapple double squaring the game at 2-2 with minutes to go. Sadly, they couldn't hold on for extra time: Hanborough saved face, scoring the winner with two minutes to go. Great to see the boys getting more league points on the board: they can take confidence into the tail-end of the season

and hopefully finish as high up the table as possible.

It's been inspirational to see our very own 'one club man' Michael Phipps, helping the Reserves to win games but he's also been showing that there's still fire in the old-dog's boots with his two goals in a great win at home against Hanborough for the Firsts. This was a great result for our lads as it puts daylight between themselves and the bottom two teams.

It's rubbish to report that The Fredo Award has not been won this month. Great to see Cary Rice back in a Stonesfield shirt once again and to see the evergreen Mike Phipps scoring goals for both Firsts and Reserves but neither are deserving of this month's accolade. In short, everyone needs to do better!

Finally, just a quick mention that the Football Club is running a race night, hosted by the Sports and Social Club, on Saturday 23 March; the first race takes place at 7.30pm and everyone's welcome. Always a great night out and raises much-needed funds to keep our wee football club afloat!

Tom Flanigan (891979)

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.

Talks for rest of 2024

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

Plus social event on 9 December

www.StonesfieldGardening.info

Gardening Club's visit to Sezincote: July 2023



Stonesfield Gardening Club

Our 2024 calendar started as usual with our AGM, where we run through what happened last year, socially and financially, and look ahead to this year. We have a full programme booked, with something happening every month (except August), including our 'big ticket' items of Plant Sale on 27 April and Open Gardens on 23 June. These are usually our main fundraisers and allow us to make donations to fund the good work of local charities. We hope to see lots of people from the village attend.



Paul Wren

Our AGM was followed by a talk from Paul Wren – see article on front cover.

It was lovely to welcome Paul and Vicky who talked so passionately about the subject and showed us some very interesting pictures.

Next month's talk will be by Paul Williams, once head gardener at Bourton House, who will be talking to us about various members of the Nightshade family.

Hope to see you there.

Diane Bates

Secretary, Stonesfield Gardening Club

www.stonesfieldgardening.info

Stonesfield Environment Group

Water testing

We are not always able to sample the river to test for pollutants if the levels are high; this has been the case for a number of months. We simply can't access the sites we test from safely so we will have to wait until the river subsides. The Evenlode Catchment Partnership (ECP) are finalising the analysis of all the 2023 data and the ECP Annual Water Quality report will be available in the coming weeks. We will report back on that in the next edition of the *Slate*. Our other local groups involved in campaigning continue to do great work including Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (WASP) and their blog is really worth looking at. They are challenging the new Thames Water CEO, Chris Weston, on the legal and illegal sewage dumping into our rivers.

Plastic

The Big Plastic Count is back - 11-17 March. This is a fun and scary activity but fundamentally is an investigation into our plastic usage to inform the debate and strategy on plastics. Almost a quarter of a million people took part in the Big Plastic Count in 2022. That revealed that almost two billion pieces of plastic packaging are being thrown away a week. This year you can help build even more evidence to convince UK ministers to lead the way at the global talks that could finally phase out plastic pollution for good. Sign up as an individual, a household, a community group or school and do your bit... www.thebigplasticcount.com

Useful Websites

If you are looking for other green things to do, we've done the research so you don't have to...Hubub is an award-winning environmental charity that is all about inspiring action that's good for the environment and everyone. Everyday solutions that do good, feel good and show how much change is possible when people come together. This month's tip from Hubub is Green Banking, find out if your bank funds fossil fuels and find the best green banks in your area...
www.bank.green

Who we are and what motivates us to be in the environment group...Over the coming months we will feature a member of the Environment Group, talking about the environmental actions they take and what motivates them to do that.

There is much to do, please join us...

Julie Curren

juliecurran0@gmail.com

.....

Stonesfield Food Group

Seniors' Café

A great opportunity to meet old friends or make new ones, over tea and home-made cake. The café is held in the Village Hall on Tuesdays from 3-4pm. It has the same planet-friendly ethos as the Social. If you haven't already been, come and give it a try!

Stonesfield Social

Our Facebook page is providing a useful resource for guests to look at our menu ahead of time and check the allergen advice on the meals we're providing.

It's a mixture of good news and bad news from the Oxford Food Hub. Their supplies

are lower than usual - good, because there's potentially less food surplus being created; bad because there's less food to share around. It does mean that we may have some creative menus in the next few weeks! If you're feeling creative and would like to join in the Ready, Steady, Cook challenge that is cooking for the Social, please let me or Julie know. You can cook at home or in the Village Hall and it doesn't have to be done on a Tuesday, if that doesn't suit you, as we have a freezer to store food ready to be reheated.

Calling crafters

During March our resident 'art and crafter', Claire, won't be with us, though she will be leaving Mould to help us. Would you like to take on one (or more!) of the sessions? We have a fabulous bank of art and craft materials, and you can either plan your own session or follow guidance from some experienced crafters. Let Julie know if you'd like to give this a try. The children really do love the craft sessions, and get a lot of benefit from them.

Our environmental impact

We monitored our food use over two weeks and saved an amazing 60kg of food with a waste bag of only 6kg. An example of our chefs' creativity, and a gastronomic highlight was the discovery of what was variously described as 'broccomus' and 'broccamole', devised to use up a mountain of broccoli stalks, and proof that the answer is always more garlic! I don't know if this is the same recipe but if you are curious, try www.stopfoodwasteday.com/en/recipes/broccoli-stalk-hummus.

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. 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

We will be running the Community Café on Saturday 2 March at the Village Hall with tea, coffee, cake served from 10am and a light lunch served from 12 noon until 2pm. Where possible we work 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 Library will be open and the repair team will be in the main hall too, so if you're having something fixed, please do drop in while you wait. It promises to be a busy morning and we look forward to seeing you there.

Food group visits

We are planning a group visit to the Charlbury Society's talk on 7 March: *'Food of the Gods: adventures in chocolate'* - some lesser-known myths, legends and strange adventures of chocolate. This takes place in the Memorial Hall at 8pm. Please get in touch if you'd like to share lifts.

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 for more information, to share ideas or to join the group.

Kate Winstanley

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

Church of England Worship at St James the Great, Stonesfield

(Benefice of Stonesfield with Combe Longa)

www.stonesfieldparishchurch.org

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

Churchwarden: Lindsey Sellar
stonesfield@stonesfieldparishchurch.org

St James' Centre bookings:
sjcsbookings@gmail.com

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

From the Rector: Resurrection

One of the enduring pleasures of living in the countryside is the sound of birdsong and, as spring approaches, the dawn chorus is a beautiful reminder of the wonder of nature. In churches and schools, hymns and songs like 'All things bright and beautiful' or 'Who put the colours in the rainbow' are enduringly popular, for good reason. But we are also aware of the challenges to our environment, the loss of nature, the decline in bird and insect numbers, and the effects of pollution. As a boy growing up in Sussex I caught a trout in a local stream, but we would be unlikely to find a fish like that in the Evenlode today.

With this in mind, I was thrilled on a recent visit to Cornwall, while walking on the coast path, to hear and then see a bird I had never encountered before - the iconic

chough, wheeling in acrobatic splendour above the cliffs with black finger-like wing feathers splayed before the wind which gusted from the sea. I saw about ten birds, in the air, on the rocky cliffs, and feeding in pairs in the fields beside the sea, using their curved red beaks to probe for grubs and ants. The chough, which looks like an overgrown blackbird but with long red beak and red legs, is a small crow. A few hundred years ago they were widespread and played a lively role in English heraldry and folklore. When Archbishop Thomas Becket lay dying, tradition has it that a chough walked in his blood, thus gaining its red beak and legs. Today three choughs and a royal lion remain on the crest of the City of Canterbury. But persecution and changes in farming around the coasts led to its slow disappearance. Few were left by the middle of the 20th Century, and by the 1970s they were considered to be extinct in England, with only small populations left in the far north of Scotland and Ireland. But as I discovered, the chough is making a remarkable comeback. A few birds were seen in Cornwall 2001 and now some 300 are present there, and this success story has inspired other introductions in Kent, Sussex, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Farmers are adapting their use of the land to create chough-friendly habitats, and teams of volunteers are protecting these precious birds as they regain a rocky foothold along our coasts.

My brief encounter with the resurrected chough reminds me of Easter, which we celebrate at the end of March. Holy Week

leads us through the story of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, his last supper with his disciples, arrest, trial, crucifixion and death, before his followers met him alive once more, raised from the dead, to lead the way to resurrection life for us. Please join us as we remember the events of Holy Week and as we celebrate the resurrection together on the last day of this month. May we, our communities, and all of nature be raised with him.

Rev'd Ralph Williamson, Rector

Church services:

Sunday 3 March [Lent 3]

8am	Stonesfield	Holy Communion [BCP/said]
9.30am	Combe	Parish Communion for all the family
11am	Stonesfield	Parish Communion <i>for all</i> the family

Sunday 10 March [Mothering Sunday]

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

Sunday 17 March [Lent 5]

8am	Stonesfield	Holy Communion [BCP/said]
9.30am	Combe	Parish Communion
10am	Stonesfield	Parish Communion followed by Annual Parochial Church Meeting at 11am

Sunday 24 March [Palm Sunday]

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

Maundy Thursday [28 March]

7.30pm	Stonesfield	Maundy Thursday Communion
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Good Friday [29 March]

11am	Stonesfield	Good Friday Service for all the family
2pm	Combe	Good Friday Meditation

Easter Eve [30 March]

7.30pm	Stonesfield	Easter Liturgy
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Easter Day [31 March]

6am	Combe	Dawn service
8am	Stonesfield	Holy Communion [BCP/said]
9.30am	Combe	Easter Parish Communion
11am	Stonesfield	Easter Parish Communion

Wednesdays

9.30am	Stonesfield	Holy Communion (6th, 20th, 27th – MP on 13th)
11am	Combe	Morning Prayer (13th, 27th)

A record of recent funerals:

12 February: Marion Brooks

Our prayers are for family and friends at this time

Stonesfield Methodist Church

Services for March

- Sun 3 11am Local arrangement
Sun 10 11am Martin Hannant
Sun 17 11am Reverend Andrew Biggs
Holy Communion service
Sun 24 11am Keith Crawford
Sun 31 11am David Sarbutts
Easter Day Service

March Hares!

Take a little time when you can and find some rising ground. View the rolling green hills and fields of good rich earth, catch a glimpse of primrose clusters and with luck, spot those dancing hares. Such warming and pleasing sights to come upon.

The countryside surrounding Jesus on His long lent journey would have looked very different, can you imagine it? A lonely open land and sadly of no help. An important place nevertheless, where Jesus spent time preparing Himself for the traumatic days ahead, knowing that He alone must travel and endure them before reaching His, and our, ultimate Easter Glory. Hallelujah!

Make way, make way!
for the King of Kings,
Make way, make way!
and let His Kingdom in.

Graham Kendrick

Come to a Service soon.

Kathleen Albért (891733)

Roman Catholic Worship

The answer to despair is hope.

The dictionary definition of despair is ‘the absence of hope’ but it’s hope that can save us from despair. Hope is about belief and expectation that something good will happen. There is a profound understanding in the bible that hope is central to humans. In both the Old and New Testaments, hope is a constant theme recognising that life is hard, problems can seem insurmountable and options for action seem very limited. Hope reminds us that we are not helpless: ‘They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength..’

Isaiah 40:31 and ‘For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’ Jeremiah 29:11. Hope can give us strength and belief in a future when all seems bleak and frightening: ‘Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer ‘ Romans 12:12.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Christian hope is ‘the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit’ (CCC 1817). ‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit’ Romans 15:13

Hope can help guide us out of those dark places and towards better times, not only in this world but to the next.

Weekday Mass times

Wednesdays: 9.15am

Fridays: 9.15am

Lent and Easter services

There will be Stations of the Cross after Mass every Wednesday (St Teresa's) and Thursday (Holy Trinity, Chipping Norton) during Lent.

Please check St Teresa's website for the details of all the Easter Services.

For Parish updates, more information and further support, please go to www.stteresaschurch-charlbury.com or contact Fr. Clive Dytor, Parish Priest: 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

Roman Catholic Community in Stonesfield

New Church thought

Does this give you reason to reflect on how your life is going? It's from Swedenborg's book *Divine Providence*:

'In the spiritual world where we all arrive after death, no one asks what our faith has been or what our beliefs have been, only what our life has been.'

Dale Morris (898210)

It's been a wet winter



Water fills the Dene



Snowdrops in Topley Wood

But there are signs of spring

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BLenheim PALACE

Easter Eggstravaganza at Blenheim Palace - 29th March - 1st April

Visit Blenheim Palace for a perfect family day out during the 2024 Easter weekend (Friday 29th March - 1st April). Hop along to the Walled Garden to enjoy a whole host of egg-citing activities including circus skills, balloon modelling, bubble performances and a travelling vintage variety show, not to mention appearances from none other than the Easter Bunny throughout the weekend too. Keep little ones busy with our giant wicker Easter egg hunt around the grounds, complete with a Hotel Chocolat treat at the end.

Visit the Walled Garden Pizzeria to refuel with a delicious wood-fired pizza, and if you're after even more indulgence don't forget to stop off at the Hotel Chocolat Chocmobile for some sweet treats!



BLenheim ESTATE

As the evenings gradually turn lighter and the weather a little milder, you may have noticed the first signs of spring appearing in the Parkland and surrounding areas. Sprinklings of snowdrops have already begun to spring and it won't be long until blossoming of bluebells and drifts of daffodils are on the way. We kindly ask that during your visit you refrain from picking the wildflowers so that we can ensure their continued growth and reproduction, allowing future generations of visitors to enjoy them and to support the biodiversity of the Parkland. In other news, our Butterfly House will soon be re-opening for spring. The Gardening Team have been busy making improvements over the past few months such as replacing the stonework as well as adding benches and more butterfly-friendly foliage.

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

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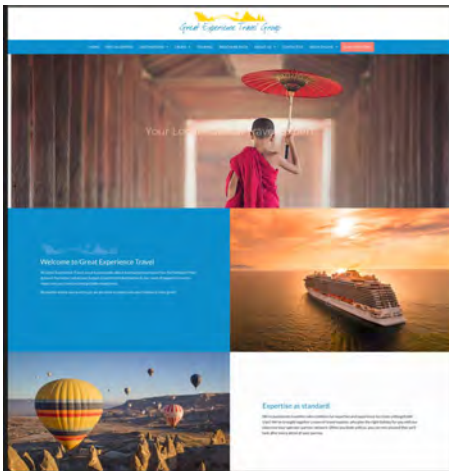
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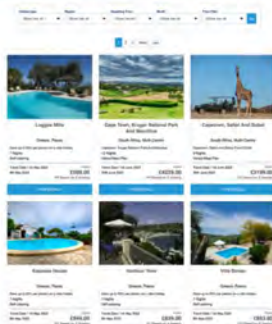
It has lots of exciting new features, and we think that the website looks great. However, it is still a 'work in progress' and has to meet your needs.

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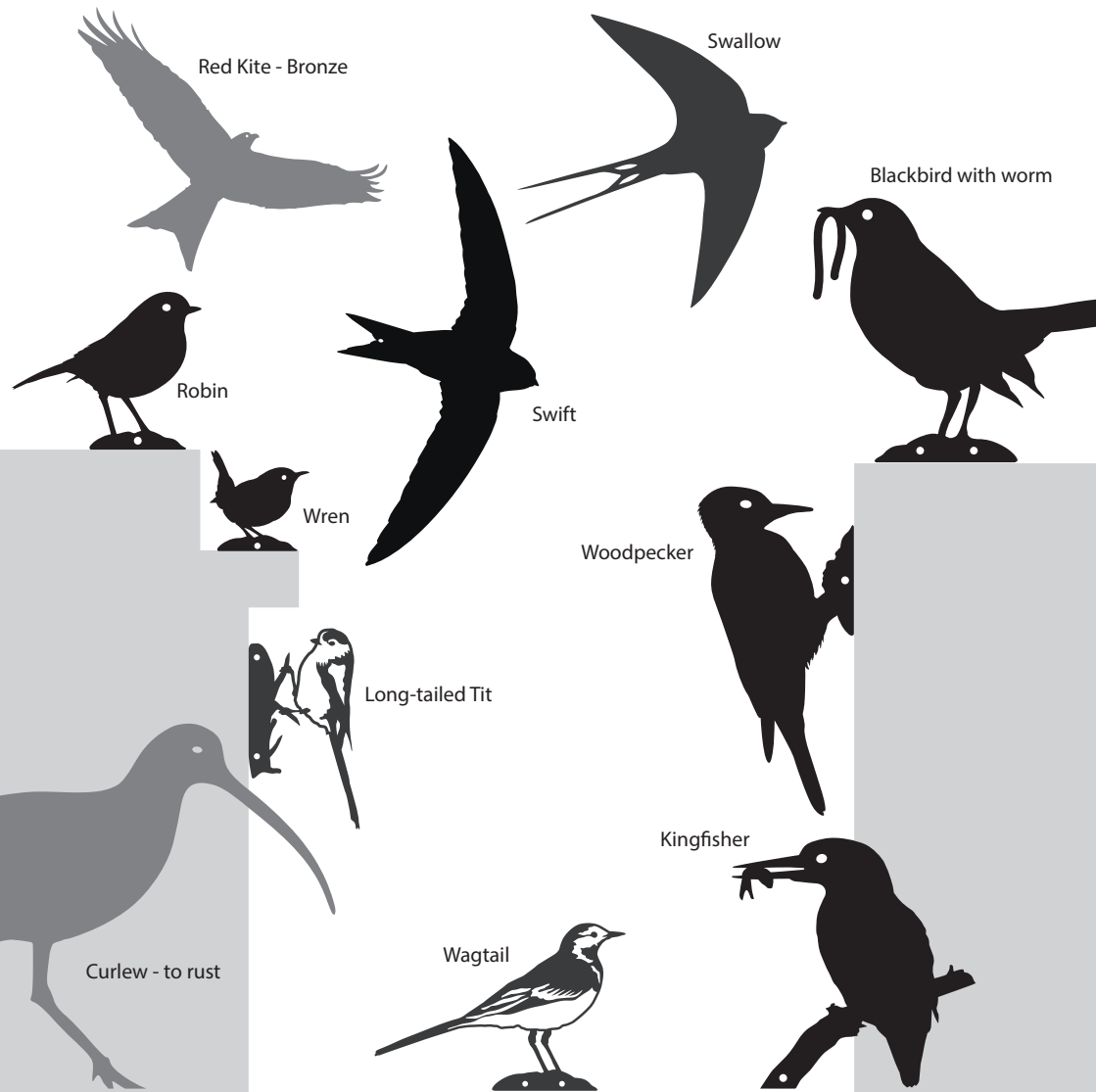
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