



Issue No 554 Feb 2025

What's coming up...



... apart from the snowdrops?

Well, if the articles piling into the *Slate* are anything to go by, 2025 looks like it will be another busy year in the village.

In the *Slate* you can look forward to a new feature 'I am a Resident', a sister feature to Eleanor's 'I am a Reader'. This month features an article by a newcomer to the village, and we hope that others (new, longer established or born and bred) will feel inspired to add their tuppence worth!

In the village, the popular Stonesfield Social is back to its weekly slot and the Environment Group is looking to spread its wings into insect recording.

The Social Club celebrates its 30th anniversary and has a full programme lined

up for the new-look clubhouse.

The White Horse has plenty of events planned and the second share option is still open, as the committee look towards the future of our community asset.

If history is your thing, the newly formed Megalosaurus Society is up and running, with a bi-monthly programme; and for culture, the Stonesfield Players are busy rehearsing their next production.

Meanwhile the Playing Fields and the Village Hall host many and various sports from football to tennis, folk dancing to Zumba – take your pick.

See inside for details and get stuck in!

Diane & Paul Bates, *The Slate* Publishers

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**.

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

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

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The Stonesfield Slate is a village amenity, produced and distributed by volunteers. It cannot be held responsible for any of the views expressed in its pages nor does it endorse any of the products or services advertised.

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:

February

1	Players' Murder Mystery Evening	Village Hall	7 for 7.30pm
1-28	Pictures @ The Pub: Two artists	The White Horse	pub hours
3,10,17,24	Monday Coffee	St James' Centre	10am-12noon
3,6,10,13	Taekwondo	Village Hall	5.30-6.30 pm
3,10,17,24	Ladies only fitness class	Village Hall	7-8pm
4,11,25	Stonesfield Social (not 18th)	Village Hall	5-6.30pm
4,11,18,25	Zumba	Village Hall	7-8pm
4,11,18,25	Strong Nation HiTT Class	Village Hall	8.15-9.15pm
5,12,19,26	Gatehouse Pilates	Village Hall	9.30-10.30am
5,6,12,13	HiTT Class	Village Hall	7-7.45pm
5,12,19,26	Folk Dancing	Village Hall	7.45-10pm
5	Parish Council meeting	Primary School	7pm
6,13,20,27	Book Break	Library	12.30-2pm
7,14,21,28	Baby & Toddler group	Village Hall	10am-noon
8	Ladies' Breakfast	St James' Centre	9am
9	Darts competition	SSSC	1pm
10	Gardening Club AGM & Talk	St James' Centre	7pm
11	Board Games Night	The White Horse	7.30pm
17,20,24,27	Taekwondo	Village Hall	5.30-6.30 pm
New date: 25	Folk Music session	The White Horse	7.30 for 8pm
19,20,26,27	HiTT Class	Village Hall	7-7.45pm
21	Combe Cinema	The Hub, Combe	7.30 for 8pm
22	Music - Jamie Felton	SSSC	8.30pm
23	Pool competition	SSSC	1pm
March			
1	Repair & Community Café	Village Hall	10am-2pm
5	Parish Council meeting	Primary School	7pm
7	World Day of Prayer service	Methodist Church	2pm
10	Gardening Club Talk	St James' Centre	7.30pm

Notices & news

Appreciation

I wish to express sincere thanks to the generous people of Stonesfield for the parcel of goodies delivered to my door just prior to Christmas – very much appreciated in these hard times. Aren't we lucky to have such kind inhabitants of our lovely village? Always willing to help others in any way possible.

Love and best wishes to you all for a happy and healthy 2025!

(Name and address supplied)

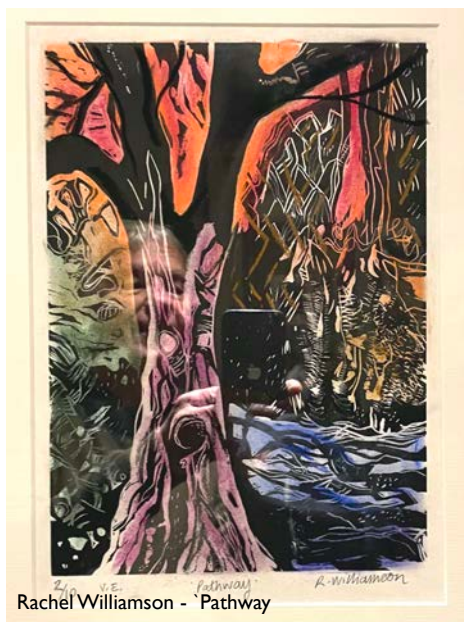
Ladies' Breakfast

Our next Ladies' Breakfast is going to be held on Saturday, 8 February at 9am in the St. James' Centre. Do come and join us for a delicious breakfast, followed by a short talk. The cost is £5. If you would like to find out more, please get in touch with Bina (891293), Kathleen (891733), Muriel (891479) or Suzy (891552).

Pictures @ The Pub

Our Midwinter Show, covering the Christmas and New Year period, was much enjoyed by exhibitors and visitors alike and resulted in several sales and commissions for our artists.

Our current exhibition, running until 2 March, features the vibrant and colourful work of two Stonesfield artists, Rachael Sherlaw-Johnson and Rachel Williamson. Rachael is showing paintings from her current series on North Norfolk whilst



Rachel Williamson - 'Pathway'

Rachel is exhibiting a variety of paintings, prints and mixed media work.

New blood is always welcome! If you would like to exhibit later in the year, please do get in touch.

Trisha Williams for Pictures @ The Pub
trishwyl003@gmail.com

Claire Renshaw for The White Horse
Community Pub

Pictures @ The Pub - Thank you

As one of the exhibiting artists at the White Horse I wish to say a big thank you to Trish Williams. This has been and still is a wonderful initiative started and continued by Trish. I was sorry she was unable to come to the private view on 24 November

when we could have thanked her personally, but wish her to know how much her hard work is appreciated, by myself and I'm sure the other artists.

Ann Lowe

Ruddy Well Revival



Ruddy Well is a point on the Stonesfield Parish boundary and it was from here in 1897 that water was piped down the valley to the Tap to become the source of Stonesfield's first public water supply. It was a popular place to walk and picnic in Spring and it still blooms with planted daffodils. There is a footpath to it from Ruddy Lane but it has become overgrown and impenetrable.

We plan to clear the footpath on Saturday 15 February. It involves cutting and lopping and raking and moving. If you would like to help, please message me 07703 211848 with your email and I will give you the details.

Graham Rutson

Thank you Stonesfield

A big thank you Stonesfield from The Royal British Legion. A total of £1,641.53 was raised in our village in a combined effort by the Primary School, the White Horse Public House, Stonesfield Sports & Social Club, our local shop, St James' Church and our volunteer house-to-house collectors. A special mention goes to John Cross for 25 years as a collector.

On a sad note, it was upsetting that someone took it upon themselves to vandalise and remove the wreaths around the memorial on the evening of Remembrance Sunday. Thankfully most were found the following morning and returned and re-installed at the memorial by Karen Ball and Nikki – thank you ladies.

Roger Evins

Jeannette Youngs

Many thanks to all those who sent cards and messages of sympathy and the many more who gave and still give verbal comfort and support following the death of Jeannette on 14 November. There will be no funeral as such, just a quiet unattended cremation. Her ashes will be spread somewhere as yet undecided in Stonesfield.

Bernard Youngs

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 / flu 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

The White Horse gallops into 2025!



We would like to start with a special thank you to everyone who joined us for our first New Year's Eve bash at the pub – food, live music from Ollie Charles, a packed pub & lots of happy faces to see in 2025. New Year's morning saw the arrival of the Stonefield Stumblers with a few sore heads who were wet but happy to arrive at the pub for liquid refreshments and bacon baps. We then took a few days off for us all to recuperate and prepare for what we hope will be a positive year moving forward as we continue to grow and give you the pub you deserve.

For the New Year we are now back with our regular Folk evening on 3rd Tuesday, Board Games night on 2nd Tuesday and Quiz night on alternate Wednesdays (other Wednesday it is at the Sports and Social Club). We are putting together a number of events throughout the year, so do look out for information on our website, on our noticeboard, in *The Slate*, on NextDoor and our Facebook page for more information.

A final thank you to our team as without you this is not possible.

Barbara and I are looking forward to seeing you all during 2025.

Craig Tipper

www.thewhitehorsestonesfield.com

Facebook – The White Horse pub Stonesfield

White Horse share update and an extended share deadline!

We can't thank you enough for your generosity in your response to our share offer. Thanks to your support, we've already raised two-thirds of our £67k target for the first two campaign priorities: funding vital repairs and accessibility improvements for our community pub.

We're so close to making this welcoming space truly accessible to all, so if you haven't yet invested or are thinking of gifting an extra share or two, it would be fantastic if you could help us over the finishing line. To that end, we're extending the initial deadline for share applications until 28 February.

By investing in shares, you're not just contributing to bricks and mortar; you're supporting a community hub that brings people together and provides a valuable resource for all. Every investment, big or small, brings us closer. Let's finish this journey together!

You can purchase shares online at www.backthewhitehorse.com/buyshares or contact me for an application form.

Steve Callaghan

Stonesfield Community Pub

info@backthewhitehorse.com



Community Festive Cheer

It was a real pleasure, and a privilege, to coordinate the Reverse Advent Calendar parcel collection again this year. A total of 54 parcels were delivered to the pub or school, which meant that donors also did a lot of heavy lifting too (quite literally).

As in previous years the parcels were all wrapped so very beautifully, bringing a community festive cheer to many households. The cost-of-living crisis does continue to make things even more difficult for some of our residents and we know from the feedback that Stonesfield Mutual Aid received, that recipients were extremely appreciative of their neighbours' thoughtfulness, kindness and generosity.

There's an enormous community effort involved in pulling this initiative together, all our donors, Craig at the White Horse, Stonesfield Mutual Aid, the *Slate*, Matt and Reika at the shop, the school, the pre-school, the voluntary transport team, St James the Great church and the Methodist church – what a fantastic village we live in.

So, from us, to everyone involved, a very **BIG THANK YOU!** We hope that 2025 brings everyone peace, joy and happiness.

Susan Rudlin

Stonesfield Community Pub Ltd

New Year's Day Stumble



Torrential rain and wind cancelled New Year events across England. Stonesfield Stumblers were not deterred. More than 35 adults, children and dogs set off from the Cross in the cold and rain; some fell by the wayside, others joined along the way, and some walked further hoping for some prize, not realising it was not a competition.



The prize was the White Horse, already crowded by Stumblers who went direct to the pub, some by car! Craig and his girls greeted the soggy crew and their muddy boots with drinks and bacon baps. About 58 baps were consumed and the beer ran out!

What did we learn this year? Invest in some decent waterproof clothing!

Happy New Year.

Graham Rutson

Repair and Community Café



Is your house full of random and unidentifiable cables? Bring them to the Repair Café for recycling!

Whatever the weather, the next Repair and Community Café will be open in the Village Hall on Saturday 1 March from 10am-2pm.

If your New Year resolution was to be more sustainable and you have items at home that don't work, do bring them along to our next session. We can fix it so you don't bin it. True sustainability at a very local level! We can mend clothes and textiles, sharpen your knives, fix your broken toaster, restore your wobbly chair and sort out your computer problems. If you can let us know what you are bringing that would be very helpful: stonesfieldrepaircafe@gmail.com.

We are piloting a scheme to collect and recycle all electrical cables from any devices. The copper is particularly useful. Do bring them along.

The community café is open at the same time in the Club Room and everyone is

welcome, you don't have to bring an item for repair, you can just join us to enjoy the food and a warm welcome. We serve tea/coffee/cake from 10am and a light lunch from 12-2pm, you simply pay-what-you-feel (cash preferred).

We look forward to seeing you there.

Susan Rudlin, Helen Atkinson & Mike Sofroniou

Church restoration work completed



An architectural survey of our parish Church of St James the Great in 2021 showed that it needed considerable repairs, including to stonework, roof tiles, windows, the tower stairs and other features.

Once Covid had receded, the Parochial Church Council agreed to fundraise for this work, to ensure that the Church is maintained and preserved for today and for future generations of Stonesfield residents. With the help of our architect Nick Cox and heritage builder Peter Hawkins, the work was costed at £120,000 + VAT, and fundraising began in 2023, in the church's 800th year. An appeal was

made to the village, and many members of the church and village community responded generously. Grants were received from The Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust, The Benefact Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, National Churches Trust and AH Lynall Foundation which, together with a generous legacy to the Church, enabled the full cost of the repairs to be covered.

After careful preparation, the work began in the summer of 2024 and was completed on time at the end of November 2024, and within our final budget of £132,500 plus VAT. Scaffolding and boarding was removed, to the joy of the whole community, revealing beautifully restored stone and roofs, topped with a renovated and re-gilded clockface and weathervane.



We are so grateful to all who supported this important restoration work, and are delighted that the church is now in such a good state of repair. It is the oldest building in Stonesfield, and with our continued care it will continue to serve the community, and will be a welcoming place of worship for many centuries to come.

Rev'd Ralph Williamson – Rector

Stonesfield Village Hall News

Please note: from 1 February our new booking number is 07359 338490. The email address is still stonesfieldvh@gmail.com.

We would like to give our thanks to Jacquie for her hard work under very difficult technical circumstances with bookings. Jacquie will stay as a Trustee of the Village Hall.

Great news - there will soon be a new way to book online and see our availability. Please see our Facebook page (Stonesfield Village Hall) or next month's *Slate* for further details.

January started well with all our usual classes and bookings starting back for the New Year. We are still offering the first Saturday morning of each month free to community groups as a fundraising option, please let me know if you would like to book it.

Claire Renshaw (07359 338490)
Stonesfield Village Hall Bookings
stonesfieldvh@gmail.com

Users targeted with scam messages

Those using the platform Booking.com to book their holidays or accommodation are being warned they could be targeted with emails or messages requesting payments from hotels who have had their account taken over by fraudsters. Between June 2023 and September 2024, Action Fraud received 532 reports from individuals, with a total of £370,000 lost.

Insight from Action Fraud reports suggests the individuals were defrauded after receiving unexpected messages and emails from a Booking.com account belonging to a hotel they had a reservation with, which had been taken over by a criminal. Using this account, the criminals send in-app messages, emails, and WhatsApp messages to customers, deceiving them into making payment and/or requesting credit card details.

Adam Mercer, Deputy Head of Action Fraud, said 'With more than 500 reports made to Action Fraud, those who have booked a holiday on the Booking.com platform should stay alert to any unexpected emails or messages from a hotel using the Booking.com platform, as their account could have been taken over by a criminal.

If you receive an unexpected request from a hotel's account you booked with using Booking.com, asking for bank details or credit card details, it could be a fraudster trying to trick you into parting ways with your money. Contact Booking.com or the organisation directly if you're unsure.'

Action Fraud

www.actionfraud.police.uk

PlunkettUK

Club Together
for your community

WOODSTOCK COMMUNITY BENEFIT SOCIETY LIMITED
(currently Woodstock Social Club)

num44

SAVE WOODSTOCK SOCIAL CLUB

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE - SCAN BELOW

SERVING THE COMMUNITY AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES FOR OVER 100 YEARS
SAVE WOODSTOCK SOCIAL CLUB
Help us and be part of Woodstock's last great community space for another 100 years.

Pledge to make a difference this year

The arrival of a new year often means a time of reflection. Many think about what they would like the next 12 months to bring and what changes they can introduce. Volunteering is often a popular choice and one that can be tailored completely to your skillset, experience, interests and commitments.

Whether you have a little or a lot of time to offer, charities are delighted to welcome volunteers from all walks of life.

The best place to start is the Oxon Volunteers website. This hub for volunteering vacancies enables you to search by distance from your home to find very local opportunities and remote, homebased ones: www.oxonvolunteers.org

Politics & local affairs

Parish Council report

Budget 2025-2026: In recent years, pressure has grown on the Parish Council (PC) budget. This is the result of inflation and a reduced level of support from the District and County Council for services required in the village, e.g. grass cutting and bin emptying.

Almost two thirds of our budget pays for things required in order for the PC to operate legally, for example having a qualified financial officer, insurance, audit and training of Councillors.

The rest of our spending is intended to maintain and where possible enhance the village for residents. This includes necessary work at open green spaces like the Glebe, Common, cemetery and burial ground. We also have a grant scheme that enables us to support groups in the village, often volunteers, when they are trying to raise money for their various projects. Finally, we fund activities aimed at keeping our roads safe.

Overheads and Staff Costs	24/25 Budget	25/26 AGREED Budget
Statutory Obligations inc Staff, legal, Insurance & Audit	£28,573	£29,317
General Maintenance/Rent/Utilities	£6,110	£7,632
MUGA Maintenance	£0	£0
Common Maintenance	£1,100	£1,100
Neighbourhood Plan	£0	£1,706
SAFER	£1,000	£1,000
Total Overheads and Staff Costs	£36,783	£40,755
Grants	£5,000	£5,000
Total Grants	£5,000	£5,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£41,783	£45,755

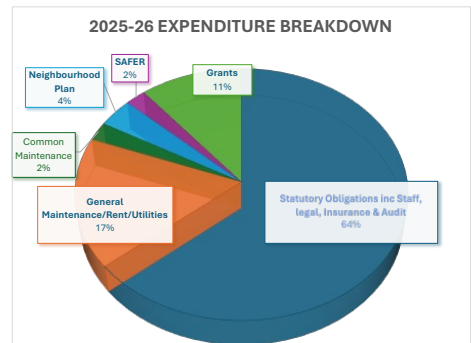
INCOME	24/25 Budget	26/26 AGREED Budget
Miscellaneous	£170	£170
Common Grants	£1,100	£1,100
Precept	£39,722	£42,963
Grass Cutting Grant	£522	£522
VAT	£1,000	£1,000
TOTAL INCOME	£42,514	£45,755
INCOME minus EXPENDITURE	£731	£0

The PC's money comes from two sources: part of your Council Tax known as the Precept, and certain grants from other organisations in local Government.

This year, due to the pressures mentioned, the Parish Council has had to increase the Precept for 2025-26 by 7.5%; that's £4.11 per house per year or about 34p per month. We needed to do this to continue the services that we know villagers need and want.

It is our duty to set a prudent budget, but we hope you will agree, this is a reasonable price, worth paying to maintain the services we have. There is always more we could and would like to do, but we are also conscious there is a limit to how much people can afford. We will of course keep a careful eye on our spending through the year to ensure we get value for money.

The pie chart below shows a breakdown of the Council's annual expenditure.



Anti-Social Behaviour: Reporting ASB is vitally important to make Thames Valley Police aware of the rising incidents within the village. The PC are and have been

requesting more representation, but individuals reporting will increase the awareness quicker. Please report online www.thamesvalley.police.uk/contact or call 101.

Glebe Land: The PC agreed to form The Glebe Working Party, Councillor Simon Powell being the PC representative.

Grants: The PC awarded St James the Great Parish Church a £250 grant towards 2025-26 grass cutting.

Local business: The Council wish to welcome the expansion of a local business, HBH Hairdressing, to the previous hairdresser's shop in the village centre.

Next Council meeting: 5 February 2025 at 7pm at Stonesfield Primary School.

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Walking to school safely

Following a number of near misses with children walking to Stonesfield Primary and Pre-schools and vehicles, parents are calling on the local councils to install a marked crossing on Pond Hill and clear signage for drivers to slow down and be aware of school children around the village.



You may notice temporary signs have been installed by us to make drivers aware of the blind spots and the crossings the children

make near the school. Pupils at Stonesfield School have also designed road signs.

My thanks to Evie and Abigail for helping me to put the signs up, for Liana Kitova and other parents for raising and supporting this issue, as well as Mr Jarvis and the school children, and Parish Cllr Claire Renshaw who invited me to present at the recent Parish Council meeting.

A request if you are reading this: to add your support for this campaign please take 30 seconds to sign the petition online by visiting www.change.org/stonesfieldroads or scan the QR code with your phone:



We need to make sure children in Stonesfield can walk to and from school safely or risk a collision in the future.

Thank you.

David Lydiat

Stonesfield Common

The cattle were taken back to the Witney and Abingdon College farm at Hailey to be TB tested just before Christmas. I'm pleased to report that they were all clear and some of the cattle will return to the Common in a couple of weeks and will stay until the end of March.

Sadly someone has now trashed the signs on the Common three times. Whilst I would prefer not to have signs, it's important to inform people that there are cows and their calves grazing on the Common, especially for dog walkers. We try to make the signs both informative and discreet.

The two big floods before Christmas have caused considerable damage to fencing around the flood meadow, known as the cricket pitch. This will need to be replaced

during the summer when machinery is able to access this part of the Common.



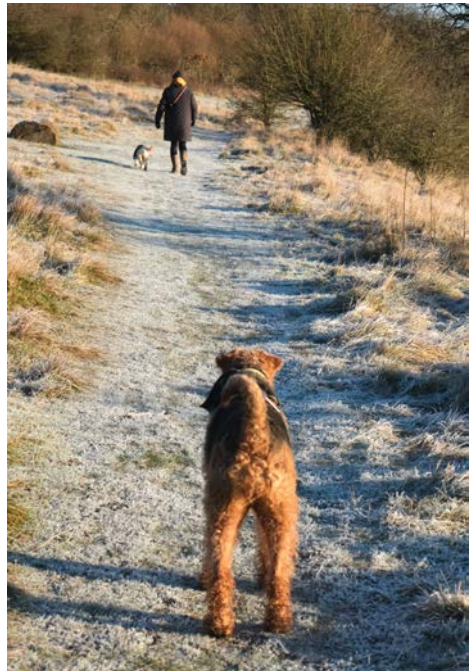
Volunteers continue to brush-cut tor grass, blackthorn and hawthorn scrub, weather permitting. This is essential work as the cattle do not eat the invasive tor grass which can blanket out many of our wild flowers.

If you are interested in volunteering, we usually work on a Wednesday morning, weather permitting. Please contact me for more information.

Richard Morris (898210)



All photographs on this page courtesy Anna Walsh



News from West Oxfordshire

Message in a bottle: On 11 December, at an event organised by Evenlode Catchment Partnership (ECP), WODC joined students from Rushmore Primary Eco School, Lower Clapton, to present hundreds of postcards from themselves and communities across the Cotswolds to Emma Hardy, Under-Secretary for the Dept. of Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs. The messages on the cards and those placed in symbolic bottles served as a powerful call for the government to take immediate action and respond to growing public pressure for effective solutions to tackle river pollution, restore the health of England's waterways, and safeguard wildlife. Jennifer Lanham, from ECP, said, 'The postcards in the bottle, representing the distress of local communities, reflect the escalating crisis of river pollution. Records show that sewage discharges have tripled in our region since 2022, causing lasting damage to our waterways. The children's message, 'You have the power and the responsibility', is a reminder that protecting our rivers is not just an environmental issue, but a moral one. We hope the Minister will take decisive action to restore and protect our rivers.'

Net zero ambitions at Salt Cross: WODC has temporarily paused the planning process at Salt Cross Garden Village to speak directly to the Government to amend current policy and allow its ambitious net zero policy on the site. This move follows the recent High Court success of Rights Community Action (RCA), who last year challenged a Planning Inspectorate decision to limit the net zero ambitions at the garden village. However, since then, a new Written Ministerial Statement, issued by the previous

government, has once again limited what the Council can do. The RCA High Court hearings took place in November 2023 and the judgement was handed down in February 2024, overturning the Planning Inspectorate's decision to say the Council's net zero policy was not allowed.

In the intervening period, the Government issued a Written Ministerial Statement in December 2023 which effectively prevents the Salt Cross net zero plan policy being able to move forward in the form agreed with local communities.

The Council has written to the Planning Inspectorate asking to pause the planning process for Salt Cross while it seeks further clarification from Government. The Council will also be asking why some councils have been able to get approval for very similar plans in different parts of the country while they were declined in West Oxfordshire.

Strengthening housing services:

WODC will recruit two additional Housing Officers to support people facing homelessness and help manage the growing number of homelessness cases. The roles will play a key part in providing advice and support for residents at risk of homelessness, helping them stay in their own homes, get new accommodation and avoid rough sleeping. By expanding its resources, the Council aims to reduce reliance on costly temporary accommodation and prioritise securing more sustainable, long-term housing solutions that are better for families and individuals.

WODC's Housing Team is currently managing high caseloads, and the additional officers will enable better support for those in emergency

accommodation. Recruiting permanent staff will also reduce the need for costly agency contracts and provide greater continuity and expertise within the Council's housing service.

Thames Valley Police

E-scooters & e-bikes: We want to ensure that anyone owning one of these is aware of the law and dangers surrounding e-scooters.

E-scooters are classed as motor vehicles under the Road Traffic Act 1988. This means the rules that apply to motor vehicles also apply to e-scooters, including the need to have a licence and insurance.

It's not currently possible to get insurance for privately owned e-scooters. Meaning that if you use one in public, you risk it being seized. You can ride them on private land, such as in a garden, but only if you have the permission of the landowner to do so.

Where a rental trial scheme is running, rental e-scooters can be used on public roads, some cycle lanes, and other public spaces. When riding a rental e-scooter you **must** follow road traffic laws. If you don't, you could face prosecution.

In November 2024, Thames Valley Police seized 33 e-scooters and 47 e-bikes. In early December, 10 e-bikes and e-scooters were seized in an operation carried out in Oxford.

Matthew Barber, Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, said: 'Whilst for many, e-scooters are a convenient way to get around, it is nevertheless illegal to use a privately owned e-scooter anywhere on public land. Aside from the risk of injuring and

concerns about the fire risks from some batteries, you risk having your e-scooter seized by the police.'

TV Licensing Communications team:

To help keep the public scam-safe, we have released a refreshed public vigilance campaign called STOP, CHECK, ASK.

STOP – Scammers will attempt to trick you into giving away your personal or bank details. Always be wary of letters, emails, texts or phone calls that promise you money or a refund.

CHECK - Has the sender spelt your name correctly, and are there any grammatical errors? You should also make sure they have included the correct licence number, which you can check on the TV Licensing website. Be wary though, recent email spoofs are using our official email addresses. If you click or tap the email address shown it will reveal the actual email address being used. If this shows a different email, it's proof it's a fake.

ASK – If you are ever unsure about a communication you have received, it is always best to ask someone – perhaps a friend or trusted advisor. You can go to the TV Licensing website and sign in to your licence at www.tvl.co.uk/yourlicence to check if anything is wrong or call TV Licensing on 0300 303 9695 to speak with someone who can help.

Recruitment: Are you a confident communicator, with strong relationships-building and problem-solving skills? If so have you considered a career as a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO)?

As a PCSO you will play an important part in protecting your community, in a role where no two days are the same. You can make a change and see the impact first-

hand in the heart of your community.
Apply www.tvpcareers.co.uk/roles/pcsos/

Discover more about how you can play a vital role in helping to protect our communities, and learn about some of our current Specials in their own words by visiting www.tvpcareers.co.uk/roles/special-constables/.

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 be given full training and work as part of a group of three.

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



Healthwatch Oxfordshire

Have you recently needed health or medical care immediately or the same day in Oxfordshire?

We would like to hear from anyone who has needed urgent or emergency care or help in Oxfordshire in the last two years. This might include calling NHS 111 or your local GP practice, going to a hospital Accident and Emergency (A&E) department, or contacting a mental health crisis team.

We'd like to know what you understand about these health services, what information you used to find out about services, and your experience of getting the right help quickly. Your feedback will help us understand your experiences and identify areas for improvement.

To tell us about your experiences, please complete our short online survey at www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/UECServices/ or by scanning the QR code.



The survey is anonymous and will be open for comments until Monday 17 February 2025.

If you would rather talk to someone about your experience, or would like a paper copy or translated version of the survey, please contact Healthwatch Oxfordshire on 01865 520520 or at hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk

To find out more about the work of Healthwatch Oxfordshire see www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk

Education, culture & more

January

A damp day darkens.

Fretful blackbirds protest the growing dusk, seeking a roost.

A dog barks, lonesome, across the village.

The low echo of the train rises up the valley, forecasting rain.

And I walk home, ears and fingers chilled,

To settle into the routine of these drear days,

Shift back the furniture and re-couple the space that held the family,

Boil down the stock of the season's excess to reduced portions,

Strip the beds and wash, and wash

And wait the calendar around till the next time

When all my birds fly home.

Nicky Holland

January 2022

Stonesfield Library

New phone number from mid-February:
01865 815181

Opening hours:

Monday	2.30-7pm
Wednesday	10am-12 noon
Thursday	2.30-5pm
Saturday	10am-12 noon

Home Library Service

This is free and there is no charge for requests or late returns. To register for this service or for further information, telephone your local library (see below) or the Home Library Service on 01865 810259, or email homelibraryservice@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Deborah Wilson (898187)

Library Manager

(01865 815181 from mid Feb)

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.

I'm a Resident

'Not all who wander are lost.'

J.R.R. Tolkien.

I love the excitement of new adventures. They have taken me through the deserts of Nevada and Oklahoma to the beaches of Florida and Delaware and the forests of Washington. To the wide-open plains of Texas, the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia and the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, to Germany, Iraq and now the latest chapter in Great Britain.

Stonesfield has been a place of quiet, renewal and peace, a place of long walks down the bridleway, into the wood and usually some mud. The natural beauty of the area is a joy to explore and is made fuller by the friends, neighbors and their four-legged companions that take the time to stop and visit whenever I am about. The recent Stonesfield Stumble was a particularly enjoyable walk around the local environs with friends and ended with good food and drinks at the White Horse! Our boys love going into the woods near the Stonesfield common to swing on a rope hanging from the huge beech tree while I sit with my lovely bride and chat.

One of the highlights of being a member of the Stonesfield community has been plugging into repair cafés. It is enjoyable for me to think up creative ways to restore old treasures, save resources and reduce waste. The cafés have afforded two of my boys the opportunity to shadow me and other repairers as we use our creativity and technical knowledge, one of my boys even learned a few new crochet techniques. The most satisfying experience at one of the cafés was when my son looked up at me with shining eyes and a huge smile and

said, 'Did you see how happy they were after we fixed their walker?'

It is said that 'you can take a Texan out of Texas but can never take Texas out of a Texan', I ensure to represent Texas properly by completing my garden work while wearing a black cowboy hat. These three years living in Stonesfield will be the final chapter in my wanderings as a dentist in the US Forces before I finally sink my roots back in Texas. Part of this wandering Smith's heart will continue to reside in Stonesfield at The Old Forge long after I return to The Lone Star State.

Paul Smith

I'm a Reader

Gillian Clarke

I know that I could read by the time I started school because I have a clear memory of being tested by my teacher mother on the spelling of words on the back of the cornflakes packet, but I was more of a tomboy at first.

My tiny rural village school in County Durham was heaven. There were only two classes, infants and juniors. This idyll came to an abrupt close with the end of the war with the return of my father, who had been on active service in Africa, but was now a complete stranger to me. During a brief stay in Kent while my father was waiting to be demobbed, I ran away to live with the hop-picking gypsies, whose lives seemed so colourful. They welcomed me inside the caravan, before having something to eat and singing songs. Then to my chagrin, they returned me to my anxious mother.

We moved to Worcester. At first, I was a reluctant reader, preferring the out of doors. I did read comics, especially

'Schoolfriend', a new publication that was full of stories of life in the dorm, tuck boxes and midnight feasts. I liked books about feisty girls, such as *Anne of Green Gables* and *Little Women* and Enid Blyton's *Famous Five Stories* - my literary father thought his daughter was a philistine!

The first adult book to capture my imagination was Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. I contracted measles aged ten and for the first time in my life I had to remain indoors for days on end. I read the book from cover to cover and didn't want it to end.

Boris Pasternak's *Dr Zhivago* made a deep impression when I was a modern languages student, and one of my happiest memories is of spending a wintry afternoon with Colin (now my husband) reading extracts aloud in his college room.

Then there is *A House for Mr Biswas* by Vidia Naipaul, set in Trinidad. Colin and I read it shortly before leaving for Trinidad in 1964 to undertake a post-doctoral research project on the East Indian population there – the descendants of indentured workers who replaced the African slaves after emancipation. It is unimaginable today to think that I, with no qualifications in geography or anthropology, was research assistant in this important piece of work. We both kept a detailed record of all our conversations and the ceremonies we attended. Many years later, long after the original research findings were published, these field notes appeared as *Post-Colonial Trinidad – an Ethnographic Journal*, now seen as a work of historical interest. Apparently, our glossary of Hindu religious terminology in common use in the early 1960s is extremely useful to students of the period.

Trinidad was an unforgettable experience; it did nothing to further my career as a teacher and later magistrate but inspired a lasting interest in Caribbean and later Latin American literature.

In retirement, I was a member of a small publishing cooperative here in Stonesfield called 3-Score Publishing and Colin and I have edited or written several books together, and published two volumes of my father's memoirs.

Recently I have greatly enjoyed re-reading old favourites such as George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, but I also enjoy modern writers such as Claire Keegan (*Small Things Like These*). Poetry is my greatest love. From Goethe, Larkin and Heaney, to contemporary British and Caribbean writers. No matter how tired I am at night, I always have time to read a poem or two!

Eleanor Bailey

Review: Peas, Carrots and Late Entry

November seems a while ago now, but it's well worth looking back on another wonderful Stonesfield Players production directed by Becki Sherlaw-Johnson that kept us entertained during the first onslaught of storms and high winds.

This autumn the spotlight was on three one-act comedies by David Tristram, each one featuring two actors. In *Peas*, the opener, the considerable talents of Vikki Days and Gareth Meager kept us chuckling as two hopelessly mismatched first daters, followed by a hugely entertaining boardroom battle between Andy Tacon and a magnificently grumpy David Stephenson in *Carrot*.

An exasperated Gareth and an incident-prone Vikki were then back to bring the evening to a close with *Late Entry*, extracting maximum comedy from this play-goes-wrong misadventure that features some highly original scriptwriting.

The majority of us in the audience won't have realised that backstage resembled a hospital ward, with many of the cast and crew ravaged by early season colds and flu. The show must always go on, however, and it's credit to the huge number of people involved in the numerous aspects of production - costumes, lights, sound, make-up, box office, set, props, hospitality, directing and producing - that we were able to enjoy yet another series of fantastic evenings. Bravo!

Mark Saville

Stonesfield Players - Murder Mystery Evening 1 February

Yes, it's back! More murderous shenanigans return to the Village Hall on Saturday 1 February when the Stonesfield Players present their next Murder Mystery evening – *Vanishing Act*.

Join us for an evening of fun, intrigue and a meal, as you work out whodunnit.

Tickets £20, including dinner.

Contact Andrew Tacon 07795 441986 or andrew.tacon@outlook.com.

Combe is alive with the Sound of Singing...

Everyone can sing – and everyone should sing. The Carol Service was full to capacity in Combe's church with some great singing – and not just from the choirs. We know there is a lot of hidden talent out there.

Plans are currently being made for a village musical event at the end of June which you'll definitely want to be part of – more details to follow, but let's just say that rehearsals will be an opportunity to say so long, farewell to solving a problem like what fun activity to take up this year; whether you're 16, going on 17 or have already climbed every mountain in life, it will be a great night for all the community.

Before then, why not put singing Do-Re-Mi into your favourite things and come along to a church choir practice to tune up your voice and see why we meet every week. Singing gives confidence, makes you healthy and happy, and friendships transcend the generations. It really is Something Good.

No experience required – you just need to enjoy singing.

For more information contact Deborah: d1m1307@aol.com.

North Leigh Roman Villa

2024 was a busy year at the Villa. Major conservation and renovation work was conducted to help support and care for the site, enabled by a generous donation from the Michael Bishop Foundation to English Heritage, whose Project Manager oversaw the work.

The 200-year-old Custodian's Cottage – closed for over 30 years – has been refurbished, to eventually incorporate a display and education space, and a Volunteer Hub, for use on the regular open days.



The failed roof of the Mosaic Building was replaced over the summer with green oak timbers supporting larger skylights and improved rainwater protection. As long as tannins drip from the green oak beams in cold damp weather, it's necessary to cover the mosaic to protect it. The work on the roof has safeguarded the mosaics for future decades and generations.

Conservators and many volunteers worked throughout the year to repair the damaged stonework of the exposed North West range of the villa. Lime mortar replaced failed cement mortar applied in past repairs. Over a ton of dislodged stone was returned to the walls of rooms in the Bath House, and to nearby grand reception rooms with hypocausts (underfloor heating). A room long covered by plywood

Mosaic House rebuilt



housing to protect its hypocaust was repaired and is back on display. Finally, the gravel floor covering of each room in the range was replaced. This work alone has reversed perhaps half a century of dilapidations and weather damage to the remains.

Come along in 2025 to one of our Villa Open Days to see the site looking its best. Mosaics open 11am – 5pm on the following weekends:

May 17 & 18

June 21 & 22

July 19, 20, 26 & 27

August 2, 3, 16, 17, 30 & 31

September 20 & 21

For more details about openings and access to the site (which can be arduous if you have mobility issues), please visit: www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/north-leigh-roman-villa/

Follow us on X / Twitter: @villa_north

To join Friends of North Leigh Roman Villa or arrange a special opening, email [nlrvols@gmail.com](mailto:nlrsvols@gmail.com).

Combe Community Cinema in the Hub

At the former Methodist church, Park Road, Combe, next to the playing field.

On Friday, 21 February we are screening the last film of the season, *The Taste of Things*.

Set in 1889, it depicts a romance between a cook and the gourmet she works for. The film stars the inimitable Juliette Binoche and the prominent French actor Benoît Magimel. The *New York Times* described the film as having 'elements of joy and sorrow, humor and intensity, beauty and light and shadow combined in a perfectly balanced experience' and rather more prosaically *The Telegraph* said that 'this culinary romance is so vividly and lovingly made, you'll swear you can smell

and taste every shot'. We strongly suggest you have a very good dinner beforehand.

Tickets £5 on the door. Doors and bar open 7.30pm, screening at 8pm. Running time 134 minutes. Subtitled.

Further information:
combecommunitycinema@gmail.com.

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

Combe Mill

Combe Mill in its day was the workshop for Blenheim Palace Estate by the River Evenlode. It's a late 19th Century Grade II listed watermill with steam beam engine, restored waterwheel, line shafting, collection of towers clocks and barn engines with all machinery running as it used to in its day. Make a poker in our dual Blacksmiths' Forge. There's a tinkering area for the children and much more.

Our first 'In Steam Event' this year is on Sunday 16 March 2025, themed 'STEM' (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) – 'Change & Adapt'. Browse the Gift Shop, Tombola, the Tea Room is also open, accompanied by our usual market stalls.

Open 10.30am–5pm. Admission: Adults £9, Concessions £7.50, children now FREE. Dogs most welcome. Free parking. Ask about Gift Aid.

From 19 March 2025, open Wednesdays for self-guided tours, with volunteers on hand to talk about Combe Mill and its history. Call by to our Riverside Tea Room, light refreshments available.

Open 10.30am–3.30pm.

Admission: Adults £5, concessions £4, children free with paying adult.

Combe Mill Society (01993 358694)
www.combemill.org

Blenheim Palace Sawmills, Combe, Oxon.
OX29 8ET

Witney Music Society

In February, the Witney Music Society concert will be given by Emma Johnson (clarinet) and John Lenehan (piano). Their programme will include works by Finzi, Brahms, Schumann and Poulenc. The concert is at 7.30pm on Friday 14 February.

The final concert in the 2024-25 season will be given by Trio Isimsiz, an acclaimed piano trio. Their programme features works by Haydn, Brahms and Schubert. The concert is at 7.30pm on Friday 14 March.

Both concerts will be at High Street Methodist Church, Witney. Tickets (£18, £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 www.witneymusicsociety.org.uk.

Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum

In 2025, Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum will launch a brand-new exhibition of original artwork by E. H. Shepard, best known as the original illustrator for A. A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh. The Woodstock-based military museum is asking visitors and local people to share the impact the characters Shepard drew to life have had on them, and is calling for them to bring in their own Winnie-the-Pooh character teddy bears to go on show alongside the exhibition itself. Anyone interested in sharing their bear, to loan to the museum for display alongside the exhibition, can get in touch by phone: 01993 810210 or email: engagement@sofo.org.uk.

Alongside Shepard's war work and famous children's illustrations, his drawings beyond the bear will also feature in the exhibition. He continued his regular work for Punch magazine into the 1950s, and produced cartoons covering the rise of Hitler and the Nazis in Germany, appeasement, the Second World War itself, through to the Labour government that followed and the radical changes they brought with them.

The new exhibition runs from 18 January to 31 August 2025.

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Wild Oxfordshire

National Nest Box Week is 14–21 Feb. Now is the time to clean out your nestboxes or put up new ones ready for this year's inhabitants. Clean nestboxes with boiling water to kill off parasites and other nasties, leaving them safe and clean for new residents. Use boiling water alone or add eco soap (e.g. brands like Ecover). Leave it to dry out completely after washing to protect the box from mould and rot.

Consider putting up a swift box. Find out more via the Cherwell Swift Project. www.cherwell-swifts.org.

Put out bird food with high fat content to give extra energy when food is hard to come by. Suet treats like fat balls are ideal. Make your own by melting suet into

moulds such as coconut shells or logs with holes drilled in. Try out different recipes to entice a range of birds: peanut cakes for starlings, insect cakes for tits, berry cakes for finches. Whilst fat is important, do also provide a seed mix or nuts to give your birds a balanced diet.

On freezing days, break the ice on bird baths and water bowls. Refresh weekly.

Leave piles of leaves and logs undisturbed, so hedgehogs and other creatures can enjoy their dormancy.

Leave healthy herbaceous and hollow-stemmed plants unpruned until early spring to provide homes for overwintering insects.

Avoid turning the compost heap until April. Frogs, small mammals, and insects may be hibernating.

Check bonfires before they are lit for sheltering and hibernating animals.

Have plants in your garden that offer winter/early spring nectar, e.g. mahonia, ivy, willow, hellebores, crocuses and snowdrops, to provide a boost for pollinators after the dormant months.

Rhiannon Young – Wild Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Engagement Officer
www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk

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

Clubs, societies & sport

The Megalosaurus Society

By the time this edition of *The Slate* arrives, the Society will have held its inaugural meeting. Alison and Chris Young gave us an interesting insight into their lives with Alison's talk entitled 'Our journey into archaeology'. It was a personal account of how Alison and Chris found an artefact whilst digging in their garden. Alison described their journey into the world of archaeology, the people they met, the places they excavated and their experiences along the way. Their last excavation was at the real 'Wolf Hall'. They brought a collection of artefacts and photos to share with us.

Our next meeting has been scheduled to take place on 2 April when we will be given a talk on Roman villas and Roman life by Graham Rutson who is a member of the volunteer team for North Leigh Roman Villa. We expect to have an interesting collection of artefacts and 'finds' available to view.

The Society is only just finding its (very large, three-toed) feet, but we are aiming to arrange a programme of talks, visits and events throughout the year. Annual membership fees are £15 per calendar year and renewable in January. Please note that we are unable to offer a reduced rate for individual meetings. If you would like to join the Society, or require more information, please get in touch by emailing us at megsoc25@gmail.com.

Trisha Williams, Vice Chair
The Megalosaurus Society

Megalosaurus Society Postscript:

- *Digging for Britain*, Series 12, episode 2/6 featured the recently discovered footprints and tracks at Ardley Quarry and can be viewed at: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0026rgv.
 - OUMNH's exhibition *Breaking Ground* (which focuses on William Buckland, Stonesfield and Megalosaurus) runs until September. Admission is free. (OUMNH, Parks Road, OX1 3PW www.oumnh.ox.ac.uk).
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Stonesfield Food Group

The Tuesday night Stonesfield Social is back and thanks to the energy and goodwill of our volunteers, we are back every week (in term time) from 5pm til 6.30pm. See the *Slate* calendar for dates!

We continue to rescue surplus food from The Oxford Food Hub, preventing this food from being wasted and producing greenhouse gases. Our chefs out-do themselves week after week turning these surplus ingredients into two-course masterpieces, always meat and veggie options and puddings.

Our expert craft team dream up weird and wonderful creations for our younger guests to make and do.

Our weekly free raffle has grown arms and legs, special goodies from the Hub might be chocolate truffles or something nice from Daylesford! Our younger and sometimes older guests keep this orderly,

even if we have to search for who has ticket 25 for a while... (Paul!).

We also have a giveaway table, things that The Food Hub are keen that we share out – can be anything from asparagus or cherry tomatoes to candy canes, so something for everyone! Our floating helpers do a bit of everything: serve, clear tables, chat, wash dishes.

Above all, we laugh and enjoy ourselves so if you would like to come along as a guest or be part of the helping team in any capacity, please get in touch.

We have some fantastic news to share, we have been awarded a grant from The National Lottery Community Fund. This will support us to run the Social but also to expand into sporting activities for young and old and provide some employment opportunities in the village. Please watch out for next month's *Slate* with more details of how you can benefit or get involved.

Julie Curran

juliecurran0@gmail.com

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Stonesfield Environment Group

This year, 2025, is the year we are looking to collect and record data to establish what is going in the environment of Stonesfield, recording what we find onto national recording databases. This will be mainly centred on just over an acre of glebe land on the right as you go down Brook Lane. The parish council have approved the development of a five-year plan to manage the site for the protection of the limestone grassland and the various wildlife, from the fungi in the soil to the birds that fly overhead. You can hear the tawny owls

most evenings hooting for territory and a barn owl has been seen on the site hunting for voles. On the ground, wax caps have appeared.

The writing of the five-year plan will be finished by the end of the month and then be out for consultation and comment. We are working with 'Wild Oxfordshire' and have had a grant from the 'Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment'. We have had very generous support and advice from many specialists. Many will be helping with the baseline data collection.

Moths: Does anyone in the village have a moth trap? Or know how to tell one moth from another? If so, we need your help please. As a minimum we will be recording moths from May to August. This gives us a baseline for future years. Stonesfield was the last place in the country to record the Pale Shinning Brown moth (moths all have great names); it is now thought to be extinct. We hope to prove otherwise.

Butterflies: We will record all we see on site. We will use two butterflies for particular attention and aim to have them both breeding on site by 2030. Over the last 14 years there has been an 18% decline recorded of the brimstone (via the Big Butterfly Count). In 2024 Stonesfield only recorded 6 sightings over the Count. The site has the food plant for the caterpillars, common buckthorn. The common blue had a 52% decline in the last 14 years and no recordings in the Count in 2024. The site should be ideal and does have birdsfoot trefoil on site.

Glow-worms: There have been glow-worms on site and we will be surveying to find out if they are still there. The female glows for a few days trying to attract a mate. We have been given details by the

National Trust on how to monitor male glow-worms, which we will record as well. On 6 November 2024 a glow-worm was seen glowing in Baggs Bottom. Recording this, it was the latest sighting ever seen in the UK for any year since records have been kept. We only held the record for two days as another was seen on the south coast on the 8th. Worryingly this is probably a sign of global warming disturbing the life cycle.

We plan to arrange a complete survey of glow-worms in and around Stonesfield in June and July. Details will follow nearer the time. We will also record insects, bats, mammals and birds.



You will have seen that we have done considerable work in 2024: following advice, we have removed invading trees, ivy and particularly Clematis vitalba (Old Man's Beard) that has been swamping the trees and shrubs. The photo shows some we have taken out. We should see a great improvement in the trees.

Trees: We are creeping up to our target of a tree planted for everyone in the village (1575 people at the last census); having planted a small orchard in the rectory paddock, we are up to 1541 trees planted... only 34 to go.

You helped sponsor 1,600 trees in Madagascar so we'll have two trees per person. The area where these trees are planted has just found two species of lemur new to the forest.

Our first trees, just over 85 planted on the Stonesfield straight, are doing well with about 5% having died, mostly outcompeted by blackthorn. This is a comparatively low figure and reflects the hard work preparing the sites for the trees.

The river: We continue to monitor nitrogen and phosphates with no sign of improvement. When the river is low enough to be safe we monitor the river flies. For 2025 we hope to test for e-coli so we can report what we find.

Do get in touch if you would like to get involved. We are planning to meet once every two months, so please do come and meet the group, get involved and make a difference.

John Sampson john.sampson9@btinternet.com
 Julie Curran juliecurran0@gmail.com

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Library of Things

For things you need but will only rarely use, try searching the Library of Things. It's on the village website – the last item under the 'Community Action' tab at the top of the page. Need a preserving pan to make marmalade? Or a travel buggy for a visiting child? Or a kit for decorating a fancy cake? All those and more are on the current list. Contact the owner (details given on the list) to make arrangements to borrow whatever it is. Or contact me – the Librarian – to add something *you* have to the list so others can borrow it.

Dale Morris (898210)

Stonesfield Gardening Club

No meeting in January, just the fond memory of our December Social, complete with mulled wine and a fiendish quiz courtesy of Suzy Boardman, and her able sidekick Sybil Barton.

We have a full programme of events settled for 2025, including eight different talks throughout the year. These are listed on the website (and below).

We kick off the year with our AGM on 10 February at 7pm in the St James' Centre. There will be wine to encourage you to attend and a visit by Stonesfield's own Chrissie Harper, who will update us on her owl charity.

Anyone who would like to join is very welcome to attend this meeting, to see what we are about! Happy gardening.

Diane Bates

Secretary Stonesfield Gardening Club

www.stonesfieldgardening.info

The Gardening Club's 2025 programme



10 February

AGM at 7pm followed by a visit from Chrissie Harper and some of her owls to give us an update on her charity.

www.chrissiesowls.com

10 March

A return by Timothy Walker to give us a talk on Tenerife and its fascinating plants, many of which do not grow anywhere else on earth, even though the island is only ¾ of the size of Oxfordshire.

26 April

Plant Sale – self-explanatory! 8.30 – 11.00 at Four Acres, Pond Hill

12 May

A visit from the Blenheim Palace bee expert Filipe Salbany, who will talk to us about bees in the environment.

9 June

Rose expert Helene Tronc will be putting us right on all things to do with these ever popular shrubs.

14 July

Designing an Organic Garden. A visit from Nicola Hope, a consultant organic horticulturalist who specialises in creating beautiful, functional and organic gardens.

8 September

Our very own Dr Lauren Baker will tell us all about carnivorous plants and how wonderful they are!

13 October

Four Seasons in the Cotswolds. The 'Chatty Gardener' will be returning to show us her wonderful pictures of Four Seasons in the Cotswolds. You may remember she kept us captivated a couple of years ago with pictures 'beyond the garden gate'.



Harriet Rycroft at her last SGC talk

10 November

Another returnee, Harriet Rycroft, who creates the most marvellous pots of plants. This year she will be showing us how to plant up pots for winter interest.

8 December

We end our year as usual with a social event, and hopefully we'll manage to test everyone's gardening knowledge with a fiendish quiz.

All talks start at 7.30pm at the St James' Centre, doors open from 7pm.

Talks are free for members and £4 for visitors. Annual membership cost £10 for an individual or £18 for a couple at the same address. More details of benefits such as garden centre discounts can be found at www.stonesfieldgardening.info/about/ or come along on 10 February to find out more.

Paul Bates

Treasurer, Stonesfield Gardening Club

www.stonesfieldgardening.info

Stonesfield Football Club


The Festive Season is now all a bit of a blur and I hope you all had a great time. I'd like to say we are hurtling towards Spring but with the January cold snap leading to cancelled matches, it's clear that Winter still has us in its icy grip. The brightest spot of the pre-Christmas period saw the football club being awarded 'Club of the Month' for November by The W&DFA in recognition of both our teams' great results! Since the last *Slate*, The Firsts had two fabulous away wins in the League. Firstly, they demolished local rivals Chadlington (1-9) in as one-sided a match as you are ever likely to see. Then they travelled to reigning champions Hailey, put on a great performance and should have won by more than the scoreline suggests (1-2). The good news did not stop there as they then took the short journey to Combe in The Fred Ford and reached the semi-final, following a bad-tempered match, with a deserved 3-1 win. They now sit in 5th place in the league, 4 points off top spot with 3 games fewer played: clearly the destiny of this season's championship is in their own hands.

The Reserves continue to make themselves difficult to beat but can also be very frustrating. They travelled to Aston in The Jack Busby and crashed out in a five-goal thriller (3-2). Two great home wins then followed against Moreton RD (3-1) and Faringdon Town A (4-2). In the reverse fixture at Faringdon, both teams served up a goal-fest with our boys being on the wrong end of a 9-goal thriller (5-4)! That's our Reserves for you, difficult to beat but they do love scoring and conceding goals galore! They remain in third place in the league with a reasonable chance of

snatching one of the promotion spots. I can but dream!

The Fredo Committee had the toughest of choices this month with Jacob Oliver scoring a hat-trick in the 9-1 demolition derby at Chadlington, combined with the 'Club of the Month' combined award for Firsts and Reserves. The Committee are aware that it's the players who win the games but it's the managers who lay the groundwork. In an unprecedented decision they've award 3 Fredos this month: one to Jacob Oliver, one to Tom Green (manager of The Firsts) and one to Ben Franklin (manager of The Reserves). All 3 are well-deserved and while Jacob will scoff his award himself, I'll be surprised if Tom and Ben don't share their Fredos with their able assistants!

Tom Flanigan (891979)



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SEP 13TH - BIKE NIGHT
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OCT 31ST FREEFALL
NOV 28TH FLASHBACK

Text ART

Stonesfield Sports and Social Club

Happy new year to our regular and future members, we hope 2025 treats you well. Lots going on at the club this year, starting with the refurbishment we've just completed. We hope you like what we've done to the place!

We continue to run our in-house pool and darts tournaments where everyone is welcome, with pool on 26 January and darts on 9 February.

We have live music from the fantastic Jamie Felton on 22 February, at 8.30pm.

This year is a very special year for the club, as it's our 30-year anniversary. We will be having a big birthday party for everyone to come and enjoy from Friday 25 to Sunday 27 July. There'll be everything from live music to bouncy castles, BBQs and pizza!

Thank you for all your support, we look forward to another fantastic year.

All the staff at SSSC

Scout Hut

Help us turn £30k into £60k!

We are really excited to have been awarded a £30,000 grant from West Oxfordshire District Council to match any funds we raise, but it is all or nothing so we need your help.

We need to make sure we hit the target by getting donations through the council's official crowdfunding Spacehive website (and not straight to us) which is www.spacehive.com/stonesfield-scout-hut-and-community-hub.

Ben Whitworth

chair@stonesfield-scouts.org.uk

Combe Women's Institute

The Reading Room was packed to capacity to hear Byron Russell's talk about the North Leigh Roman Villa – past, present and future, and we were not disappointed. I am sure that many of us will be visiting with a renewed interest - whether or not we'll be cooking up a Roman Feast is another question!

Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month in the Reading Room, Combe from 7.30–9.30pm. Membership is open to all women over the age of 18. The annual subscription of £51 will be due in April. Guests are welcome to join us for up to 3 meetings each year for a charge of £5 per meeting.

Our next meeting is on Monday 10 February when we are looking forward to being entertained by Lesley Morris and Keith Harris with 'Songs from around the World'.

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

Julia Sharpe (01993 891058)
Secretary Combe WI,
combewi@oxfordshirewi.co.uk

North Leigh History Society

At our next meeting on Tuesday 4 February, Gillian Cane will be giving a talk on the Mitford sisters. The family became particularly well-known in the 1930s for the six Mitford sisters, who were celebrated and sometimes scandalous figures.

Do come and join us! We meet on the first Tuesday of the month in North Leigh Memorial Hall, OX29 6SA at 7.30 (doors open at 7pm).

All welcome. Members £20 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.

Church news

Church of England Worship at St James the Great, Stonesfield

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www.stonesfieldparishchurch.org

Rector: Revd 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 - Light

The feast of Candlemas on 2 February, which is also known as the Presentation of Christ, recalls Mary bringing her infant son Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord. At that time the aged Simeon took Jesus in his arms and declared him to be the light of the world - 'a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel'. The feast of Candlemas, traditionally associated with the lighting of candles in church, falls at this point in the year when the darkness of winter is giving way to the increasing light and longed-for brightness of the coming spring. The festival is a sign of life, of hope and of promise, most welcome as we pray for the shadows and darkness of the world around us to be transformed by the justice and righteousness of God's Kingdom. But the child Jesus is not presented in glory or

with a royal fanfare. He is a frail infant in his mother's arms, a much-loved child, but prey to all the illnesses of childhood and the dangers of infancy. Many children in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon face similar vulnerability today. And each of us, in our own circumstances, must face the frailty of our human existence. God does not come to lord it over us, but to bring light to our dark world, and has chosen to share the transforming love of God within our frailty. God with us, forever.

Revd Ralph Williamson - Rector

Church services

Sunday 2 February [Candlemas]

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

Sunday 9 February [4th Sunday before Lent]

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

Sunday 16 February [3rd Sunday before Lent]

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

Sunday 23 February [Second Sunday before Lent]

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

Wednesdays

9.30am Stonesfield Holy Communion (every week)
11am Combe Morning Prayer (5, 19 Feb)

A record of recent funerals/ memorial services:

20 November 2024: Brian Hunt
9 December 2024: Avis Ushaw

Our prayers are for family and friends at this time

.....
New Church thought

Did you make any New Year resolutions, or set any goals for 2025 to improve yourself or your circumstances? I gave up making resolutions long ago, though each December I try to reflect on the past year in my life. This quote from Swedenborg seems to put it all quite simply: 'Our life goals determine our place in the other world. Good goals put us in heaven with the angels; evil goals put us in hell with the devils.'

Dale Morris

.....
Stonesfield Methodist Church

Services for February

Sun 2 11am Margaret Broadberry
Sun 9 11am Peter Allen
Sun 16 11am To be arranged
Sun 23 11am The Reverend Andrew Biggs - Holy Communion Service

'I made you wonderful'

These are the words of the 2025 World Day of Prayer. The Service this year has been prepared by Christian women of the Cook Islands, and is based on Psalm 139, with its beautiful words of wisdom.

The people of the Cook Islands speak of their dearest wish, to maintain their own culture and pass it to future generations, while building themselves a good and proper place in the world.

Do come and join the Service here on Friday 7 March at 2pm. Everyone is very welcome.

At the Carol Service in December, kind gifts raised £148. This has been sent to the Methodist linked charity, 'Action for Children'. Thank you.

The Bazaar held last November was a grand success in every way. Sincere thanks for the many kind donations, and to all who supported the event.

Lastly, to the two dear ladies who come when they can to play the organ and cheer our hymn singing, thank you both very much.

Come to a service soon.

Kathleen Albért (891733)

Roman Catholic Worship

It's never too late to start again

'So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new.'

2 Corinthians 5:17

The thought that we can become a new and different person: kinder, wiser, more generous, more spiritual, more anything... is very appealing. We make New Year resolutions in the absolute and certain knowledge that by the 5 January we will have eaten those chocolates, not gone for that long walk, not phoned that irritating friend or relative and not written those emails/letters. In other words, we promise ourselves that we will behave differently and be a different person, but maybe there are other resolutions to make that might be easier.

The New Testament is full of hope for our renewal, with Jesus fully understanding humanity's desire to be better and different people. Jesus offered a revolutionary perspective about being a new person; we are told that all we have to do is to follow him:

'Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If

anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.' John 7:37-39

'He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.' Titus 3:5

As St Paul advises us, it's never too late to change: 'Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.' 2 Corinthians 4:16

Holy Mass

Sunday 9.15 am

Wednesday and Friday 9.15 am

For parish updates, any further information and further support, www.stteresaschurch-charlbury.com or contact Fr. Clive Dytor, parish priest fr.clive.dytor@rcaob.org.uk

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