



Issue No 555 March 2025

A Stonesfield welcome



If you have been along to the Stonesfield Social on a Tuesday night, you will have experienced a real 'Stonesfield welcome'! The Stonesfield Food Group started with the intention of providing a 'warm space' at the height of the energy and cost of living crisis. Our first session back in December 2023 welcomed 25 people; the next week it was 55... and over a year later our weekly average is 70-80 meals cooked every week.

Our team also provides the delicious pay-what-you-feel lunch that runs alongside the quarterly Repair Café and raises funds that allow us to provide emergency food aid and supermarket vouchers.

We were asked to provide a café for the more senior members of our community. This worked well at the Village Hall but has come

on leaps and bounds since Craig and Barbara have taken it on and now offer it at The White Horse. It's still free, it's still on a Tuesday from 3-4pm and it's still as welcoming as ever.

Our guests sometimes ask us how it is possible that the Tuesday night Social is free. We have been fortunate to receive funding for the Social from the start from WODC and The Communities Fund. Funding allows us to pay for the upkeep of the Village Hall, supply the craft materials for the kids' table and any additional food purchases needed over and above what we source from The Oxford Food Hub, which collects surplus food from restaurants and shops for use in community projects such as ours.

Continued on p6

See centre pages for latest Neighbourhood Plan news

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

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Dates for your diary:

March

1	Repair & Community Café	Village Hall	10am-2pm
2	Darts Competition	Sports & Social Club	1.30pm
3,6,10,13	Taekwondo	Village Hall	5.30-6-30pm
3,10,17	Ladies only Fitness Class	Village Hall	7-8pm
3,10,17	Drama Group	Village Hall	8-9.15 pm
3,10,17,24,31	Monday Coffee	St James' Centre	10am-12 noon
4	Pancake Party	St James' Centre	3-5pm
4,11,18	Stonesfield Social	Village Hall	5-6.30pm
4,11,18	Zumba	Village Hall	7-8pm
4,11,18	Strong Nation HiTT Class	Village Hall	8.15-9.15pm
5	Parish Council meeting	Primary School	7pm
5,6,12,13	HiTT Class	Village Hall	7-7.45pm
5,12,19	Gatehouse Pilates	Village Hall	9.30-10.30am
5,12,19	Folk Dancing	Village Hall	7.45-10pm
5,19	Quiz Night	Sports & Social Club	8pm
5-31	Pictures @ The Pub: Three Artists	The White Horse	pub hours
6,13	Upholstery Group	Village Hall	9.30-12.30pm
7	World Day of Prayer service	Methodist Church	2pm
7,14,21	Baby & Toddlers	Village Hall	10am-12 noon
9	Annual General Meeting	Sports & Social Club	7.30pm
10	Stonesfield Gardening Club talk	St James' Centre	7.30pm
11	Board Games Night	The White Horse	7.30pm
12,14	Cheltenham Races	Sports & Social Club	
15	Neighbourhood Plan Exhibition	Village Hall	10am-4pm
16	Rugby Finals Day	Sports & Social Club	
17,20	Taekwondo	Village Hall	5.30-6-30pm
18	Folk Music Night	The White Horse	7.30pm for 8pm
19,20	HiTT Class	Village Hall	7-7.45pm
22	Mighty Cadillacs	Sports & Social Club	8pm
23	Pool Competition	Sports & Social Club	1.30pm
27,28,29	S'field Players: <i>Cold Comfort Farm</i>	Village Hall	7.30pm
28	Open Mic Night	The White Horse	8pm

Notices & news

Brian Hunt - 20 October 2024

Del, Nick and Pat would like to thank everyone who sent kind messages, cards and donations; also all friends and family who attended the Church service on 20 November. A special thank you to Rev Ralph for conducting the lovely service. A donation of just under £250 has been sent to The Blue Cross at Burford in memory of Brian.

Repair & Community Cafe - Saturday 1 March

It's business as usual at the Repair & Community Cafe - delicious food and yummy cakes while your items are being looked at and repaired. There is no need to bring something to be repaired in order to drop in for a tasty snack!

Everything is by donation and proceeds go towards village causes. The repairers have a high rate of success and most of the things we cannot fix are either beyond repair or need parts. We are also sharpening a whole range of tools. This month we are collecting cables and leads which are no longer needed to be recycled for the valuable metals they contain. Please bring them along.

Tour of Ardley Incinerator, Tuesday 29 April at 10am: Ardley incinerator disposes of 95% of Oxfordshire's waste that would previously have gone to landfill. Come and



see what goes on and how it works. The tour lasts just over two hours and should provide a fascinating insight into what happens to the stuff we throw in our grey bins. A maximum of 15 people are allowed in a tour group so it will be a case of first come, first served. If you are interested in going, please contact Mike Sofroniou at mikesofroniou@gmail.com

Pancake Party!

Everyone (children and adults) is very warmly invited to join in our Pancake Party on Shrove Tuesday (4 March) in the St James' Centre. Come along with your friends, family or neighbours to share free pancakes and refreshment between 3 and 5pm!

Lindsey Sellar

Please use our new email addresses

Articles: editor@stonesfieldslate.uk Advertising and enquiries: publisher@stonesfieldslate.uk

Pictures @ The Pub

Our new exhibition features the work of Chris Young, John Taylor and Stuart Parker who will be showing watercolours, mixed media, collage and monoprints. This will run from Wednesday 5 March to Sunday 13 April and promises to offer an interesting mix of styles and disciplines.

Thereafter it will be our 'Artweeks' slot again – time flies! Ideas are being considered as to the format and content of this year's 'offering' which will run from mid-April until the end of May. In the meantime, if you would be interested in taking part, please do get in touch.

Trisha Williams for Pictures @ The Pub
triywnwil003@gmail.com

Claire Renshaw for The White Horse
Community Pub

Stonesfield Players Murder Mystery – 'Vanishing Act'

Was this the perfect murder? Given that no-one successfully used their powers of reason and deduction to work out precisely what had occurred in our Village Hall that evening, maybe it was! With a full house, the Stonesfield Players - who welcomed some cast members from the Wychwood Players on this occasion - demonstrated their not insignificant talents and typical attention to detail. We were certainly well-entertained by Gareth Meager's cleverly-written play and his fellow cast members, Becki Sherlaw-Johnson, Vikki Days, Simon Johnson and Andy Belchambers.

We were very well fed by a small army of cooks and waiting staff, led by Sandy Hayes and Nicky Holland, who produced a delicious meal for an enthusiastic and appreciative audience.



Becki, Simon and Andy

There were several characters with the potential motive and opportunity to have carried out a dastardly crime, and everyone seemed to appreciate the chance to question the cast members to try to work out what had happened. We all enjoyed as relaxed an evening as it's possible to have when in the company of a murderer, whose identity was satisfyingly revealed at the conclusion of the evening.

Thank you to all involved with the Players for a very enjoyable theatrical and gastronomic evening.

Helen Atkinson

Neighbourhood Plan Exhibition

There will be an exhibition in the Village Hall, Saturday 15 March, 10am-4pm.

Please see the centre spread of this issue of *The Slate* for details.

Richard Morris



A Stonesfield welcome

(Cont from p1)



I think it is fair to say that none of us imagined the Social would get so big so quickly and remain so popular. We certainly didn't imagine that it would be so much fun, that we would enjoy seeing the village come together, all ages, all eating, or crafting together and meeting up or making new friends.

Community

That got us thinking about the importance of feeling connected to the community. The happiness that comes from waving at new friends out dog walking or seeing their children on the way to school. Knowing that the village has created a really unique event, that is fun, warm, safe, environmentally-minded and sociable feels fantastic. Once we realised what was happening, we started to think of what else we could do in the community that could be fun and of benefit. We found The National Lottery Communities Fund and they fund exactly what we are aiming to do...



'Social connections and community activities are at the heart of creating healthier, happier lives and a flourishing society.'

Funding and plans

We put together what seemed like a very ambitious plan, to use the Social as a platform to offer and do a bit more. We heard just before Christmas that we had been successful and were awarded £15,000 in grant funding.

We want to expand – we have grant support for activities that improve the health of the more senior members of our community: this could be a walking group? indoor bowls? At the other end of the age spectrum, we have grant funding to buy sports equipment for a youth group: could be tennis racquets? a basketball hoop? new footballs?

This is where we need your ideas and some time and energy. We'd love to get some more youth activities off the ground... Are you the lone dad shooting hoops on the MUGA? Or the frustrated netball mum who wants to pass on your love of the game? We can help you get involved - we have funds for DBS checks for volunteers, can work out of the village hall as a venue, and supply the sports equipment to get something fun going. Please don't be shy, no idea is too daft and it's a great opportunity to get involved. Join us in building Stonesfield's social and community activities – be at the heart of creating healthier, happier lives and a flourishing village.

We have an active Facebook Group with over 100 members, we write a monthly article in The Slate and post on NextDoor Stonesfield. We are always keen to have new people come on board. If you love to

cook or bake or you want to be part of the kitchen team washing up and enjoying yourself, then please get in touch! To find us and join us, contact me.

Julie Curran

Stonesfield Food Group

juliecurran0@gmail.com

Ruddywell footpath revived



Some of Stonesfield's finest residents turned out on a wet Saturday morning to clear the footpath down to Ruddywell, the original source of water to the Stonesfield Tap in 1897.



The summers of the early 1890's were long, hot and very dry and water was a scarcity. The village wells had repeatedly run dry, leaving villagers having to travel long distances for water. This all led to a keen need throughout the village for a public



water source and the matter was taken in hand by the Parish Council to devise a method of funding the installation of a village waterworks. The cost of £200 was met largely through public subscription with almost every villager providing support and, in addition, the Duke of Marlborough provided financial assistance as well as the bricks and gravel that were necessary to complete the works.

The site and footpath had become overgrown and neglected, but under the fallen trees and old man's beard we found the fresh shoots of wild flowers and bluebells. Hopefully it will not be too long before they bloom. Take a walk back into one of our most beautiful nature sites, tread softly and be quiet – you will be amazed at what you might see and hear.

Graham Rutson

Contacting The Stonesfield Slate

Please note that *The Slate* email addresses have changed. To submit an article, please email editor@stonesfieldslate.uk. To advertise, or for general enquiries, please use publisher@stonesfieldslate.uk

The editorial team and publishers are conscious that not everyone has access to email and/or a computer. If you are in this situation and would like to submit something for publication, please get in touch with the Editor in order to make alternative arrangements. We are happy to collect something handwritten from you or to take it down over the 'phone. The Editor's name and contact number appears on page 2 of each issue.

Paul & Diane Bates

Slate Publishers

publisher@stonesfieldslate.uk

Stonesfield Village Hall

Please note our new contact details and website: Tel: 07359 338490

Email: info@stonesfieldvillagehall.com

Website: www.stonesfieldvillagehall.com

With our new phone, email and website, we have been super-busy at the Hall over February. The new website offers our calendar and online booking system which allows our regular users to amend and book use, and new users to see our free times and book accordingly. We hope that it really helps to speed up the booking process and makes life easier for everyone – if there are any difficulties, please get in touch with me.

We start March with our super-helpful Stonesfield Repair Café on the 1st - not

only repairs, but fantastic cakes and gorgeous lunches will be available so make sure to pop in.

Towards the end of March we are a bit disrupted in our regular bookings as the Stonesfield Players prepare and perform *Cold Comfort Farm* for us at the end of the month. Please check with your group leader for complete updates as they may have changed location. (The separate article from the Players gives more details of this production.)

Looking ahead to the summer and hopefully some sunshine! We are planning another **Stonesfield Village Garage Sale**. Look out for further details of how to get on the map for **5 July 2025** – but do save the date for now.

Claire Renshaw

07359 338490

Bookings: info@stonesfieldvillagehall.com

www.stonesfieldvillagehall.com

Folk nights at The White Horse

Due to the half term holiday, and many of the musicians being away, the February folk session at The White Horse had to be postponed until the fourth Tuesday of the month. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused anyone.

Although the usual night is the third Tuesday of the month, there may be some occasions when we have to change the date due to holidays etc. If in doubt, please check with Craig at The White Horse.

Nick & Judith Hooper

**STONESFIELD
PLAYERS
PRESENT**

COLD COMFORT FARM

By Stella Gibbons
dramatised by Paul Doust



**March 27, 28, 29 at 7.30pm
Stonesfield Village Hall**

Tickets available ONLINE – just scan the
QR code, or purchase at Suriya Express,
or contact Andrew Tacon on 07795 441986
or andrew.tacon@outlook.com



There's something nasty in the woodshed

Signs of spring



Two new signs have sprung up in Stonesfield. HBH Hair Salon is now fully open at Pendle Court and The White Horse now has a new signpost in the pub garden.



Stonesfield slate mine featured in music video

Stonesfield resident Kit Monteith created the video for Everything Everything's song *Canary* recently released from their album.

The band described it as 'the most intricate, streamlined merging yet of math rock's arch complexities, electronica's 80s obsession and hooks made from mobile phone interference.'

Canary was recorded in Wales with shots from a Stonesfield slate mine.

Watch it now at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6mzlOg6mXY

Graham Rutson

A new landmark for Stonesfield?

Those who have visited the OUMNH's exhibition *Breaking Ground*, which focuses on William Buckland, Megalosaurus and other important fossils of Stonesfield, would have seen Poet Laureate Simon Armitage's poem *Megalosaurus* which the Museum commissioned to mark the bicentenary of the first scientific naming of a dinosaur.

The Committee felt that the poem was very special for Stonesfield and we have been granted permission, in principle, from both Simon Armitage and the Museum, to reproduce it for permanent public display in the village. It has been agreed with the trustees of The White Horse that the poem will be sited on the red brick wall which runs the length of the pub garden; this would provide a centre-village location which is accessible at most times of the day.

The Museum has now given the go-ahead and we can proceed with the design of the panel and obtain a quotation for its production. We will then start fundraising with the aim of installing the panel over the summer period when everyone can sit in the garden, read and admire! We very much hope that in due course this will come to be regarded as an important village landmark.

If anyone would like to get involved in this project, please get in touch with us at: megsoc25@gmail.com.

Trisha Williams

Vice Chair, The Megalosaurus Society
megsoc25@gmail.com

Hedge-laying around Stonesfield

Volunteers from Farmland Bird Aid Network have been rejuvenating a stretch of hedgerow adjacent to a Farmland Bird Aid Network feeding site, along Witney Lane. (Thank you to Ollie Stobo for permission.)



Dave, Genny and Jane

As well as food through the winter, birds need good habitat to nest in and raise their broods. Often, a thick hedge will provide good cover and the insect population needed to feed the young birds. We did some hedge-laying training a couple of years ago on the Oxfordshire Way which resulted in thickening up of the hedges, rejuvenating them and promoting regrowth from the base of the hedge. Many hedges are flailed each year and become 'gappy'. This does not provide such a good habitat for mice, birds and insects. A flailed hedge will remove the new growth, including fruits, berries and nuts - and many plants only produce berries on growth which is two years old.

When laying the hedge, we cut back the 'old man's beard', or 'traveller's joy', which can, if not kept in check, become too dense, swamp the other plants, and prevent growth of the structural shrubs and trees. Removal of the 'old man's beard' is done in the winter months, after the seedheads

have been eaten by goldfinch and other birds but before the spring flowers. Once the old man's beard and other material has been cleared, partial cuts are made in the stems which are then laid at a 45-degree angle to make a pleacher. Similar to when training climbing roses, stems are laid at an angle to encourage shoots to grow vertically, thus thickening up the hedgerow. It's cold but rewarding work - especially when the sun shines!

If you are interested in hedge-laying this season - we must finish by the end of March - please get in touch! Please drop me an email if you are interested in joining, at:

info@farmlandbirdaidnetwork.org

Genny Early



Please sponsor David Brown of Stonesfield

Charity Sky Dive - 8th March 2025

Local Charities supported: Stonesfield Scouts, Headway, APCAM, Daybreak, Yellow Submarine, Gatehouse Project, Katherine House Hospice, Air Ambulance, Blood bikes.

National: RNLI (New lifeboat) St John Ambulance (52 new ambulances) Royal College of Surgeons.

International: Red Cross - Ukraine, Syria, Turkey, Gaza.

Second largest giver to Charity in UK after the lottery.



Thank you, your kindness is appreciated.

Fawler Toads

This year, my snowdrops are a good two, if not three, weeks later than usual. Whether this means that nature is late waking up from winter which will affect our toads, remains to be seen.

Fawler toads come down from the fields to the north of Fawler and cross the main road in the centre of the village any time between the end of February and the beginning of April. They aim for the large pond in the field beyond the telephone kiosk and like warmish, moist conditions at dusk. In the past, they have been most active in March.

Because they crawl, not hop like frogs, they are easily run over by vehicles. We are hoping that Fawler's new 20mph speed limit will reduce the carnage this year but they still need our help and we do not have enough volunteers. Will you join us?

All we do is pick them up, put them in a bucket, cross the road and lift them out (gently, of course) once we reach the other side. There used to be many of us helping but most are now too old. Last year only two volunteers remained which really is not enough.

If you see the warning toad road signs, you'll know the toads are on the move. Please come and join us. It's for such a short time and is so worthwhile. Last year alone 400 toads were saved, but 89 were killed.

Harriet Marshall

harrietmarshall23@gmail.com

News from 1869

From The Oxford Journal, 24 April 1869

Stonesfield: On the 18th of March the National School at this place was examined by the Rev R. W. Bellairs, Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, and the results of the examination have just been received. The Inspector, in his report, says: 'The school is very much improved in discipline and intelligence since my last visit. It is now in a very efficient state'.

Douglas Rudlin



Please use our new email addresses

Articles: editor@stonesfieldslate.uk Advertising and enquiries: publisher@stonesfield.uk

Stonesfield Septemberfest news

In September 2023 the village once again came together for the Stonesfield Septemberfest music and beer festival – proving that we all love a chance to relax with friends, enjoy great music and dance the evening away!



The event has been held biannually since 2013 and has raised well over £50,000 for various charities! But in 2025, the existing Committee have decided that they'd like to experience it from the other side from now on and, whilst happy to be on the beer server rota on the night, we will be stepping away and handing over to a new Committee.



We are keen that the legacy continues so please contact me if you would like to run the event (this year?!). Please send your name, email and telephone number to me at hello@septemberfest.org.uk

Lucy Wiltshire

on behalf of the Septemberfest Committee

Septemberfest memories



Photos all from Septemberfest 2023

Politics & local affairs

Stonesfield Parish Council

From the Parish Clerk

Following the Parish Council meeting on 5 February, the following is reported:

Neighbourhood Plan

The meeting focused on the Neighbourhood Plan and the next stages for Regulation 14. The dates for the consultation were agreed, these being 15 March - 4 May 2025.

Planning

No applications have been made.

Grants

£1,125 of the remaining grant fund for 2024-25 year was awarded to Stonesfield Scouts to assist with the hut project.

Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is 5 March at 7pm at Stonesfield Primary School.

clerk@stonesfieldpc.uk

SAFER update

Drains on Laughton Hill

We have received confirmation that more drain descaling works will take place on 23-24 April 2025. We understand that the Highways Operations Manager hopes this will cure the longstanding 'water overflow' problem.

Repainting white lines outside the shop

Highways have identified the resurfacing of the road outside the shop as work commissioned by someone who has now retired. We have received confirmation from the Senior Officer (Highway Schemes) that he will arrange for repainting of the lines.

Pedestrian walkway on Pond Hill

Highways Senior Officer (WODC Area) emailed to say: 'I am hoping to be able to put down some coloured or textured surfacing on Pond Hill to denote a footpath, but early days yet and don't want to get your hopes up too much'.

We await progress.

SAFER

safer@stonesfieldpc.uk

Please use our new email addresses

Articles: editor@stonesfieldslate.uk Advertising and enquiries: publisher@stonesfield.uk

Oxfordshire County Council

From your County Councillor

A summary of the work I have been carrying out on your behalf:

LCWIP Local Cycling, Walking Infrastructure Project

Consultation is now underway for this important project which owes much of its credit to the parish councils and those individuals and organisations working in partnership initiated through the Village Travel Network. Safer routes that link our communities with pathways and cycle ways which encourage active and healthier lifestyle balance opportunities is at the heart of this project. I am happy and pleased to have supported this partnership work and to further its development and implementation going forward.

Woodstock and Bladon: Doctors' surgery update

The next strategic meeting of the Doctors, ICB, OCC, WODC and Blenheim Estate will take place next month having completed the PID (Project Initiation Document) which will be presented to all the stakeholders. This will build on the other meetings that are currently taking place between the doctors and the ICB to determine the footprint needed for the surgery, the site location options, the funding and financing of the project involving Blenheim and the local authorities in terms of potential Section 106 options and the timeline to ensure the project can be secured with an agreed and realistic way forward.

Vision Zero Safety Project

As part of the Vision Zero safety project, a review of all speed limits on the A and B

road network which are outside the scope of the current 20mph programme are being reviewed. This will include the A4095 between Bladon and Long Hanborough and we have logged a request for a reduction to 40mph as part of this work. Because of the wide scope of the review, I'm afraid that at present I can't give any specific information on timescales, but we'd hope to be looking at the A4095 towards the middle of next year. For each route being reviewed, we will be sending local members and parish councils the draft proposals for comment ahead of carrying out the statutory consultation.

Councillor Priority Funds

The final awards to Wootton Parish Council for £2,000 towards the costs of providing a bus shelter will be made shortly having approved the award. No further monies are available until the start of the civic year for future projects.

New exhibition celebrates the work of Oxfordshire sculptor, Michael Black

A new exhibition entitled Michael Black: Chisel, Wood, Stone celebrating the work of this renowned local sculptor, is coming to The Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock this spring. This unique exhibition presents, for the first time, the life and works of the Oxford sculptor and celebrates his enduring legacy and artistic contribution. It will be on display from 15 March to 1 June. Entrance is free and donations are welcomed.

Flooding mitigation A4095 (Grove Road, Bladon)

Bunding undertaken by Blenheim has been agreed to take place next month and I will meet with residents and Blenheim on site the following week to explore further

mitigation needed in respect of the recurring flooding to properties in the vicinity of Eagle Lodge and further down in the village.

Flooding investigation at Cadogan Park

Following a series of incidents, an investigation to determine the cause of flooding will take place this month, together with some gully clearance and maintenance work.

Andy Graham

andy.graham@oxfordshire.gov.uk

More from West Oxfordshire Woodstock and Surrounding Areas Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

Residents and people who travel around Woodstock and surrounding areas are being asked to help shape a draft plan to make walking, wheeling and cycling easier, safer and more enjoyable around the town. Oxfordshire County Council is asking for views about what highway improvements are needed to provide Woodstock and neighbouring parishes with a high-quality active travel network. Improvements could include better cycleways or added pedestrian crossings to make it easier to access and move around the town. We want to make walking and cycling easier and more enjoyable for all in Woodstock and neighbouring parishes. This LCWIP seeks to put in place a plan to help achieve this so that as funding becomes available, we know what infrastructure is needed to provide Woodstock and the surrounding areas with a high-quality active travel network.

What is an LCWIP?

LCWIPs were introduced by the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2017, alongside their Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy) as a framework with which local authorities can 'develop strategic plans to improve conditions for cycling and walking, in order to support increases in travel on foot and bicycle', by:

- understanding existing and future travel patterns, and the barriers and enablers to increasing cycling and walking
- identifying and mapping a recommended cycling network and core walking zones that will become the primary focus for infrastructure improvements
- creating a prioritised pipeline of enhancements to ensure infrastructure effectively supports growth in cycling and walking, and contributes towards meeting broader local goals' (DfT, 2017)

How to participate

In order to make the Woodstock and Surrounding Areas LCWIP the best it can possibly be, please let us know your thoughts and highlight the issues or improvements you would like to see addressed as part of the LCWIP, using this link: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/woodstock-local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plan-lcwip/surveys/what-are-your-views-of-the-witney-lcwip1>, or alternatively Google 'Let's talk Oxfordshire'. You can view the draft plan and area maps, and have your say until 5 March 2025.

Genny Early

West Oxfordshire District Councillor

Council reaches out to households at risk of financial hardship to offer support

In a drive to support at-risk households across West Oxfordshire, West Oxfordshire District Council is running a project identifying households eligible for vital financial assistance and encouraging them to claim it.

LIFT is a data analytics tool that enables the Council to identify households at-risk of financial hardship that may not be claiming the support they are entitled to.

The pandemic, followed by the rising cost of living, has created significant financial pressure for many, and recent changes to Winter Fuel Payment criteria have made it more important than ever for eligible residents to claim Pension Credit.

The project is part of the Council's wider work to support residents facing financial hardship and ensure they claim the support they are entitled to, including the continuing Household Support Fund. The next phase will focus on helping households make the most out of their income, with the Council to continue to use LIFT to identify residents eligible for other forms of financial support and reaching out to them to make them aware.

If you think you may be eligible for Pension Credit and have not been contacted by the Council, please check your eligibility at www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility or call the pension credit helpline on 0800 99 1234 or Age UK Oxfordshire on 0345 450 1276.

Neighbourhood Watch

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.

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

Deanna Asplundh

Stonesfield Neighbourhood Watch
Coordinator

Thames Valley Alert

29 January 2025: Over the last week in the Chipping Norton area, Land Rover Defenders have been targeted and stripped of their parts. Please be vigilant and look to update the security of your vehicle. If you are able to, park your Land Rover in your garage or in a well-lit area or in view of CCTV. Please report any suspicious activity to 101 or, if there is a crime in progress, to 999.

Cherwell and West Oxfordshire Police Team

Education, culture & more

Stonesfield Library

Note our new phone number: 01865
815181

Opening hours:

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

Val Phillips (891455)

Friends of Stonesfield Library

Home Library Service

The Home Library Service 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 or the Home Library Service on 01865 810259, or email to:

homelibraryservice@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Deborah Wilson (01865 815181)

Library Manager

I'm a resident

I moved to Stonesfield last autumn because the right home turned up at the right price. Having left Oxford forty years ago, I went back looking for a place to live in the city but couldn't find anywhere I both liked and could afford. After several disheartening viewings, I realised that, fond though I am of it, I just didn't want to live in a city any longer and began to look outside the ring road.

When I came for a viewing the first thing that struck me about Stonesfield was that it isn't on the way to anywhere else, so all routes in have a winding, roundabout quality to them – even the straight is part of a detour round the back of Blenheim. In the nicest possible way, it has a feeling of being in the back of beyond. The heart of the old village is tucked away without the obvious green you find in most Oxfordshire villages; to discover it involves walking narrow twisting streets and it takes several exploratory outings to get the hang of the layout. Another immediate impression is that at most times of day there will be people out on foot and they aren't all dog walkers. Everybody says hello. Once I get drawn into conversations, particularly out walking the countryside, everyone's response when I explain I'm a newcomer is 'Welcome to Stonesfield'.

Once I'd moved in I discovered *The Slate* - invaluable for giving a sense of the village and everything that's going on. I've never lived anywhere that has such a wide-ranging and inclusive user manual to living in a community. Then there's The White Horse which genuinely feels both of and for the village. I'm intrigued by the history and still visible traces of Stonesfield's semi-industrial past; the archaeological legacy; the fact that there aren't any very grand houses here, that there's no adjacent estate or park with a high wall round it. Walking the local footpaths I'm struck by the contrast between the big open fields to the north and east of the village with the wooded slopes of the Evenlode valley to the

south and west where I've discovered the walk across the meadows to the Roman villa. It's a surprise that there's no street lighting which adds to the sense of being different from suburbia, closer to the countryside, a bit less removed from a rural environment. You have to learn the habit of taking a torch when you're out after dark.

I arrived here at the beginning of winter when, on the face of it, short, cold, gloomy days make everything feel hunkered down as if waiting for the countryside to come back to life in spring. But there's lots going on in the village and it's not hibernating. The process of getting involved feels linked to the noticeably longer days, the appearance of the first spring flowers, the anticipation of better, warmer weather to come. I'm looking forward to it.

James Summers

A new resident in Stonesfield

POETRY NIGHT
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
2025

**IMTIAZ
DHARKER**
WINNER OF THE
QUEEN'S GOLD MEDAL
FOR POETRY

IN CONVERSATION
WITH
**ESTHER
LAY**
RECTOR
OF WOOTTON

**SATURDAY
8 MARCH**
6.30PM
WOOTTON VILLAGE HALL

TICKETS £20
TO INCLUDE DINNER

6.00PM DOORS OPEN
6.30PM TALK
7.30PM DINNER
8.30PM POETRY OPEN MIC

SCAN FOR TICKETS
OR BOOK IN PERSON
AT THE VILLAGE SHOP

Stonesfield Players: Cold Comfort Farm

Don't miss the Stonesfield Players' production of Stella Gibbons' brilliantly funny portrayal of English rural life in the 1930's – *Cold Comfort Farm* dramatised by Paul Doust.

Recently orphaned socialite Flora Poste arrives at Cold Comfort Farm, the home of her gloomy and eccentric cousins the Starkadders, keen to discover her rights, hinted at by her cousin Judith. Instead she finds a web of thwarted passions and obsessions, at the centre of which sits Ada Doom who 'saw something nasty in the woodshed.'

Performances will take place at the Village Hall on 27, 28 and 29 March at 7.30pm. Tickets are available from Suriya Express, Andy Tacon on 07795 441986 or andrew.tacon@outlook.com, or by scanning the QR code in the advertisement (p9) to purchase tickets online.

Becki Sherlaw-Johnson
rebeccasj@btinternet.com

Musical update from Combe

Plans are progressing, with the Combe concert now fixed for the evening of Saturday 5 July.

There are many more opportunities before then to come and join in a sociable and fun hour of singing. No audition required - we're not looking for the next Callas or Pavarotti, just an enthusiasm for music. Everyone can sing, and you may be surprised at what you're capable of!

For more information contact Deborah at d1m1307@aol.com

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

North Leigh History Society

On Tuesday 4 March Ciaran Walsh will be giving a talk on the Otmoor Riots. Do come and find out more.

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.

Angela Kyte

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.

Please use our new email addresses

Articles: editor@stonesfieldslate.uk Advertising and enquiries: publisher@stonesfield.uk

Woodstock Music Society

WMC's Spring Concert will be held on 28 and 29 March at 7.30pm at St Mary Magdalene Church, Park Street, Woodstock, OX20 1SJ when the Choir and Chamber Orchestra will perform works by Vaughan Williams and Edward Elgar.

Standard tickets are £14 in advance or £15 at the door; full-time students £5; accompanied under-16s free, available from the Woodstock Bookshop. More information is available at concerts@woodstockmusic.info or bookings can be made online at www.bookwhen.com/woodstock.

Witney Music Society

The final Witney Music Society concert in its 2024/2025 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 at High Street Methodist Church, Witney.

Tickets (£18 or £1 for under 19s) will be available at the door from 7pm or in advance online. For more information, please telephone 01993 898020 or visit the Witney Music Society website: www.witneymusicsociety.org.uk

The logo for Stonesfield Pre-School & Daycare features the name in a colorful, multi-colored font. 'Stonesfield' is in a larger, multi-colored font, and 'Pre-School & Daycare' is in a smaller, multi-colored font below it.

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
(£7.10 per session) Cereal, toast and fruit juice included

Pre-School Sessions

9am – 3pm daily for children aged 2–4 years (£19.35 per session)

After School Club

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday; 3.15 – 6pm
(£18.00 per session)

If you would like registration forms for any of the above,
please contact our administrator, Mrs Zena Rozee
(tel. 01993 898012 or email: stonesfieldpsad@outlook.com)

North Leigh Roman Villa

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).



Roman Villa Open Day - 2021



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.

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

Clubs, societies & sport

Stonesfield Sports & Social Club

Another busy month for us at the Club, despite the weather! Both football teams continue to perform very well in their leagues and there's lots of interest in our new darts team (which still has spaces available - all welcome). We are also hoping to get the crib team going again; if you are interested, pop in and speak to us.

This month, we have lots on yet again:

- Committee Annual General Meeting on 9 March at 7:30pm - all welcome. If you'd like to join the Committee, please come and see us before 2 March.
- We'll be showing the Cheltenham Races on Wednesday 12 and Friday 14 March and serving a full fry-up on Wednesday morning and bacon rolls on Friday.
- We are showing all Six Nations matches, with the final taking place on 16 March.
- We will have amazing music from Mighty Cadillacs on 22 March.

Please check our website for other dates: www.stonesfieldsocial.com

Once again, we thank you for your continued support and look forward to seeing you all again this month.

From all at SSSC

Stonesfield Scouts

What's been going on in Stonesfield Beavers, Cubs and Scouts?

The Cubs embraced a theme of 'Unity, Creativity, and Soaring Adventures' during the autumn term. They showed off their artistic talents through making luminous Diwali paper lamps, adding a touch of cultural celebration to their activities. They also created poignant felt poppies for Remembrance Sunday. These activities not only honed their crafting skills but also encouraged them to embrace new challenges, with some Cubs even mastering the basics of sewing to earn their badges.

The Spring term saw the Cubs warmly welcoming new recruits through an engaging and eco-conscious project, crafting mealworm pinecone bird feeders.

Looking ahead, the term promises an exciting lineup of activities. The Cubs will try their hand at hand knitting for Chinese New Year, as well as a fun session on flipping perfect pancakes and their first Cubs-only camp in many years, scheduled for mid-July. This exciting adventure promises to be a highlight of the year, filled with outdoor activities, team challenges, and lasting memories.

The Beavers have been busy exploring a wide range of activities, both traditional and new. They honed their outdoor skills with classic scouting adventures like fire lighting, night hikes, den building, and cooking over open fires. They also put their crafting skills to use by making key

hooks, a practical and personalised item, as well as doing a 'dragon hunt' in the woods, sparking their creativity and sense of adventure. An October camp provided a unique experience, taking the Beavers camping in the colder months for the first time. Despite the chill, they enjoyed the cosy atmosphere and the novelty of dark mornings.

The Scout section has been actively engaged in a variety of activities including a hands-on activity at Hill End where they learned about life in the trenches during wartime. They also enjoyed a camp at Youlbury, putting their teamwork and outdoor skills to the test, and have focused on pioneering, camp craft skills, navigation, shelter building, and cooking. These experiences have equipped the Scouts with (some) practical abilities, fostered (some) leadership skills, and instilled a (growing) sense of self-reliance.

Stonesfield Scouts Hut Update

We're on the home stretch! Thanks to the incredible generosity of our community, the Stonesfield Scout group has raised a phenomenal £92,800 towards our vital crowdfunding goal of £113,000; we only have £20,000 to go, and with some big-name donors to come. We have also had our deadline extended for the final time giving us more time to find those last few supporters. Please check up on our progress on our website or look at our Facebook pages.

As you know, we embarked on this fundraising campaign to provide a home for scouting for the next 100 years, and we have already had interest from local scout groups to hire our hut. These improvements will make a real difference to the opportunities we can offer our

Scouts, enabling them to develop confidence, teamwork, and leadership skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Don't underestimate the power of your connections. You might be surprised at how willing businesses are to support a worthy cause like ours; Centrica have just donated £5,000 and the Oxfordshire Mark Master Masons have supported us with another £1,000. Please contact Ben on chair@stonesfield-scouts.org.uk if you are able to help us secure corporate sponsorship, even if it is only for a few hundred pounds. And, of course, individual donations are still incredibly welcome. You can donate online at www.spacehive.com/stonesfield-scout-hut-and-community-hub#, or by contacting Ben.

Ben Whitworth

chair@stonesfield-scouts.org.uk

Clubs, societies & sport

Continued on p 29



Have your say on the draft Neighbourhood Plan

Stonesfield Parish Council is pleased to announce the publication of the draft Neighbourhood Plan for our village.

From **Saturday 15 March** you will be able to scrutinise the Plan and provide your feedback via the Stonesfield website, with printed copies available in the library and at the Neighbourhood Plan exhibitions.

This consultation, known as Regulation 14, is the first step of the approval process for the Plan.



Stonesfield Parish Council is now inviting all residents to:

- 1** Read the Neighbourhood Plan, available online from the 15th March at <https://stonesfield.online/neighbourhood-plan/>



- 2** Attend the Neighbourhood Plan exhibitions in the Village Hall on Saturday 15 March (10am-4pm) and/or at the St James' Centre Tuesday 29 April (2-8pm)

- 3** Feedback in writing via the online survey or using a paper feedback form available at the exhibitions or in the library

The deadline for submitting feedback on the draft is 4pm on Saturday 4 May.

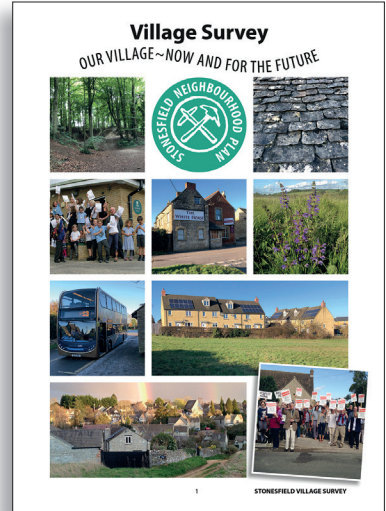
What is a Neighbourhood plan?

Neighbourhood planning is a way for communities to have a say about the future of where they live and work. It gives them the power to produce a plan with real legal weight, that regulates development in their local area.

What is the Plan based on?

Two years ago, we surveyed village residents, asking what you like (and don't like) about living here, and what you would like to see improved.

Some 612 residents (aged 16+) gave us their opinions about everything from the countryside to road safety; village facilities to housing. A Housing Needs Assessment analysed housing availability and use in the village based on the survey and data from other local and central government sources. Village Character and Landscape Assessments were commissioned from external technical experts. This research was used to draft the Plan in a way that helps ensure future village development is in line with your opinions.



The Village Survey conducted in 2023 had responses from over 60% of residents



What is in the Plan?

It is a thorough document, over 100 pages long, covering many aspects of life in Stonesfield. Importantly, and necessarily, **it will become a document that the Parish and District Councils must have regard to when considering local planning applications.**

The draft Neighbourhood Plan aims to enhance the community of Stonesfield and encourage economic activity, while ensuring housing is sustainable and meets the needs of the village. It seeks to enhance and ensure accessibility for all ages to community facilities, and of course to protect our beautiful countryside, and village character. It also recognises the need to address climate change at a local level, where we can.

To achieve this, the plan includes twenty-nine policies, focusing on housing and building design, landscape and environment, transport and road safety, economy and amenities and historic character. There are also seven ‘aspirations’, which reflect some of the areas of improvement you highlighted in the survey. These cannot be covered directly by policies but could be addressed by one or more community action groups - similar to the Save the White Horse team. And the Plan has been written to ensure that ideas like these, that are aimed at specific benefits for the village, can still thrive.

Taken together, the Plan’s aims, objectives, policies, and aspirations form a framework for Stonesfield over the next 5 years.



www.claireemmabrooks.com



What do I need to do?

So, now it's over to you. From 15 March to 4 May you can tell us what you think of the draft Plan. Is this the way you want the village to develop? We have created a variety of opportunities for you to review the Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan and provide us with your feedback.

From the 15 March you can find the full document online here <https://stonesfield.online/neighbourhood-plan/> along with a feedback form to complete. In addition to the draft Neighbourhood Plan, we have also shared the research and supporting documents:

- Housing Needs Assessment
- Parish Landscape Assessment
- Stonesfield Local Green Spaces
- Village Character Assessment
- Village Survey Results

Or you can see printed versions of the Plan, supporting documents and the feedback form in the village library.

There will also be two opportunities – Saturday 15 March (10am-4pm) at the Village Hall and Tuesday 29 April (2-8pm) at the St James' Centre – to visit an exhibition, where you can see a large display of materials from the Plan and chat to members of the Steering Group which has put it together.

What happens next?

Your feedback from this consultation, known officially as Pre-Submission (Regulation 14), will be collated and reviewed. Revisions to the Plan may be needed.

It will then be submitted to West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) for a two-stage review process, including independent examination by an examiner, to ensure that the Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan aligns with planning law and existing planning policies at district, county, AONB and national level.

Once it's been examined and approved, WODC will hold a Yes/No referendum to ask if Stonesfield residents wish to approve the final Plan. If there is a simple majority to approve the Plan, it will be adopted by WODC, and both Stonesfield Parish Council and WODC must then have regard to it when making planning decisions relating to Stonesfield.

**Don't miss your chance to shape the future of the village!
Please read the draft Plan and complete the feedback survey
by Saturday 4 May**



Scan this QR code after 15 March to take you to the draft Neighbourhood Plan, and a link to the feedback form

Stonesfield Parish Council would like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude to the Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, and all of the additional volunteers, for the huge amount of work that has gone into producing the Stonesfield Neighbourhood Plan over the past three years. You have all done a great service to the community.

Stonesfield Cricket Club

Stonesfield Cricket Club are exploring the possibility of reintroducing youth cricket to the village. This would embrace both girls and boys from ages 8 to 13 years old. The children can learn many life skills through sport participation and we would hope to deliver these aided by our own ECB qualified foundation coaches.

To enable the club to offer this facility to the village, we must have suitable practice facilities including non-turf practice nets. The cost of providing such facilities is in the region of £25-40,000. We are currently trying to raise funds from within the village and external funding schemes.

As far as participation is concerned competitions range from:-

Age 5-8 with softball events run throughout the summer holidays;

Age 8-11 softball competition run on Sundays during the summer;

Age U11 softball competition run on Tuesday evenings during the summer;

Age U13 softball competition run on Wednesday evenings during the summer.

If, in principle, you would like to register an interest in any of these initiatives, please email the club secretary, David Burns, at us2burnses@outlook.com. Further details will be made available once we have feedback from within the village.

David Burns, Club Secretary
us2burnses@outlook.com

The Megalosaurus Society

As readers may have noted from February's (fictional!) report, our first meeting was held on 29 January and, most pleasingly, we had a full house.

We are now able to confirm the Society's Officers: Viv Kendall, Chair; Trisha Williams, Vice Chair, Rod Theodorou, Secretary; and Janet Kettels, Treasurer; and Committee members: Gillian Clarke, Jenny Lines, Claire Renshaw and Russell Shearer.

Alison Young gave a talk entitled *Our journey into archaeology* which offered fascinating insight into her and husband Chris's experiences working on excavations in Wiltshire – an interest triggered by a chance find in their garden of a Neolithic axe head estimated to be some 6,000 years old.

Our next meeting will take place on 2 April when Graham Rutson will talk on Roman villas and Roman life, accompanied by a display of artefacts and information.

A reminder that annual membership fees are £15 per calendar year, renewable in January. If you wish to join the Society, or would like more information, please get in touch by emailing megsoc25@gmail.com.

Viv Kendall and Trisha Williams
megsoc25@gmail.com

The Stonesfield Environment Group

Last month we told you about the drafting of our five-year plan for the management of the Glebeland in the village, this being the focus of our meeting on 26 February.

Alongside things above ground, we continue to think and worry about the river. As you know, we faithfully do our small bit in testing our stretch of the Evenlode for the pollutants of nitrogen and phosphates and hope to start testing for the pathogen E. coli on a regular basis.

You may want a sense of how our small-scale activities fit into the broader picture. We all know that the water companies throughout the UK, legally, discharge untreated sewage into our rivers. They also discharge untreated sewage when they are not supposed to - these are termed 'illegal spills' or pollution events.

The Environment Agency monitors the performance of the water companies - they do not perform well. The most recent available data (for the year 2023, published in 2024), is as follows, with a 1-5 star rating:

- Severn Trent Water – 4 stars, the same as the previous year
- United Utilities – 4 stars, up from 3 stars
- Wessex Water – 4 stars, up from 2 stars
- Northumbrian Water – 3 stars, the same as the previous year
- Anglian Water – 2 stars, the same as the previous year
- Southern Water – 2 stars, the same as the previous year

- South West Water – 2 stars, the same as the previous year
- Thames Water – 2 stars, the same as the previous year
- Yorkshire Water – 2 stars, down from 3 stars

Thames Water is amongst the two-star companies and is not improving. Thames Water is the country's largest water company and will run out of cash on 24 March 2025. A Financial Times' article in the last few weeks gave an update on the company's dire financial situation. When the company was privatised in 1989 it had no debt. Since then, a mountain of debt has been built, now standing at £14bn.

The company has been in the High Court in recent weeks to seek an emergency £3bn bailout. As part of the court proceedings, Thames Water's own CFO conceded its bill for the financial restructuring under the £3bn bailout would be a possible £600m in interest and fees to creditors and £200m in fees to lawyers and advisers. The ruling is expected shortly and there is a possibility that if the loan is rejected, Thames Water will enter Special Administration. In this scenario the company becomes administered by a Government-appointed special administrator. Some refer to this as temporary nationalisation but it does open up potential for a new model of public ownership suitable to water infrastructure. We await the High Court decision and the inevitable price rises.

As ever there is much to do, so please do get in touch if you want to join us.

Julie Curran
juliecurran0@gmail.com

Stonesfield Gardening Club

The February meeting is always our Annual General Meeting so the wine flows to encourage people to attend and we invite someone local to entertain us after the business part of the evening.

Wendy Gould and Suzy Boardman stood down from the Committee after years of service, and we persuaded Judy Anders and Paul Cooke to take their places – big (gardening) boots to fill!



Chrissie Gaines came to talk to us, bringing with her two magic boxes. These revealed Acorn, a tawny owl, and Zulu, a black (melanistic) barn owl, both absolutely gorgeous, who played to the audience while Chrissie told us a bit about what she gets up to during the year.

Chrissie is an absolute force of nature, and where she gets her energy from we're none

of us sure, except that her devotion to her charges keeps her going. Do look on her website for more details and consider adopting an owl to help with her ever-growing costs at www.chrissiesowls.com/



Our March meeting will see a welcome return of the entertaining Timothy Walker, who will be telling us about the plants of Tenerife.

Happy gardening!

Diane Bates, Secretary

www.stonesfieldgardening.info

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: 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 - Of the Earth

Having failed to make any New Year's resolutions in January, I have made one at the end of February: I have resolved to plant a flowerbed. Perhaps the sense that winter must surely end soon has stirred in me a desire to create something colourful which will bring joy throughout the rest of the year.

Despite the Bible's many references to the closeness between human beings and the rest of the created world, the church has not always taken a great interest in nature, focusing often on heaven and not on earth. But in the last few decades, as we have become more aware of the negative impact of human communities on the natural world, Christian theologians have at last spoken out about the importance of the earth which we share.

Earlier beliefs that wild nature needed to be subdued and controlled once went hand in hand with colonial ideas about other peoples needing to be brought under our domination. With the dismantling of European colonialism in the 20th Century, an awareness slowly emerged that the created world does not need our control either, but rather, needs our protection. Restrictions on the worst excesses of human greed, reckless overfishing, environmentally destructive development and pollution from industry and farming practices have slowly granted some protection to the land and the sea, animals and plants with which we share this life, and some protection for the water and air on which we depend. But today I have a deep concern, as do many others, that around the world these protections are under threat, as a new political attitude in the USA and elsewhere is being promoted, and is spreading in the corporate world, which sees nature not as something to be protected, or even to be controlled, but instead, to be plundered by the powerful.

The Christian (and Jewish) assertion that we are formed from earth, and therefore have a profound kinship with the earth, is now of vital relevance. In the Book of Genesis, 'adam' (man) was formed from 'adamah' (earth), a human made of humus. We belong to the earth more than the earth belongs to us. We are of the earth, not living on the earth. Like all living things we are moulded by the (metaphorical) hand of God, and animated by the same breath of life. I hope and pray that in the coming

months and years, Christians and all people of goodwill may ensure that our precious relationship with nature is allowed to flower and to flourish.

Revd Ralph Williamson

Church services:

Sunday 2 March [Sunday next before Lent]

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

Ash Wednesday 5 March

9.30am	Stonesfield	Holy Communion with ashing
11am	Combe	Holy Communion with ashing

Sunday 9 March [Lent 1]

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

Sunday 16 March [Lent 2]

8am	Stonesfield	Holy Communion [BCP/said]
9.30am	Combe	Parish Communion
11am	Stonesfield	Parish Communion
5pm	Combe	Evensong

Sunday 23 March [Lent 3]

8am	Stonesfield	Holy Communion [BCP/said]
9.30am	Combe	Parish Communion
10am	Stonesfield	Parish Communion followed by APCM at 11am

Sunday 30 March [Mothering Sunday]

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

Wednesdays

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

Roman Catholic Worship

2025: A Jubilee of Hope

In December 2024 Pope Francis opened the ‘Holy Door’ in St Peter’s Basilica to launch the 2025 Jubilee of Hope which ends on the Epiphany in 2026. A Jubilee or ‘Holy Year’ has been proclaimed by the Church since 1300 to offer Catholics opportunities for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Jesus said: ‘I am the door’ (John10:7) in order to make it clear that no-one can come to the Father except through him. ‘This is the door of the Lord where the just may enter’ (Psalm118:20). ‘To pass through that door means to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; it is to strengthen faith in him in order to live the new life which he has given us. It is a decision which presumes freedom to choose and also the courage to leave something behind, in the knowledge that what is gained is divine life.’ (Matthew13:44-46).

Pope Francis explained the tradition of a Holy Door: ‘In Catholic tradition, the Holy Door represents the passage to salvation -

the path to a new and eternal life, which was opened to humanity by Jesus,' explained Pope Francis in *Spes Non Confundit* (Hope Does Not Disappoint), the papal bull officially proclaiming the Holy Year of 2025.

The theme of the 2025 Jubilee is that of Pilgrims of Hope in which we, as pilgrims, may encounter, with others or by ourselves, physical, spiritual or emotional places where we might find God. All over the world Catholics are preparing to go on pilgrimage: it might be to a local place of respect or veneration such as Walsingham in England, further afield to Lourdes or Fatima, others will go to Rome, but all will have in common a desire to encounter God more deeply in our lives through hope-filled prayer.

Holy Mass

Sunday Mass 9.15am

Weekday Mass

Wednesdays: 9.15am

Fridays: 9.15am

For more information about Aid to the Church in Need's (ACN) 2025 Jubilee Pilgrimage to York, please contact Suze Mathews:
suzemathews899@btinternet.com

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

Roman Catholic Community in Stonesfield

Stonesfield Methodist Church

Services for March

Sunday 2 11am Eddie Fowler

Sunday 9 11am Jenny Bywaters

Sunday 16 11am Peter Allen

Sunday 23 11am The Reverend
Andrew Biggs
Holy Communion
Service

Sunday 30 11am Kath Skinner

'It's a waiting game.'

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'Time is too slow for those who wait.'

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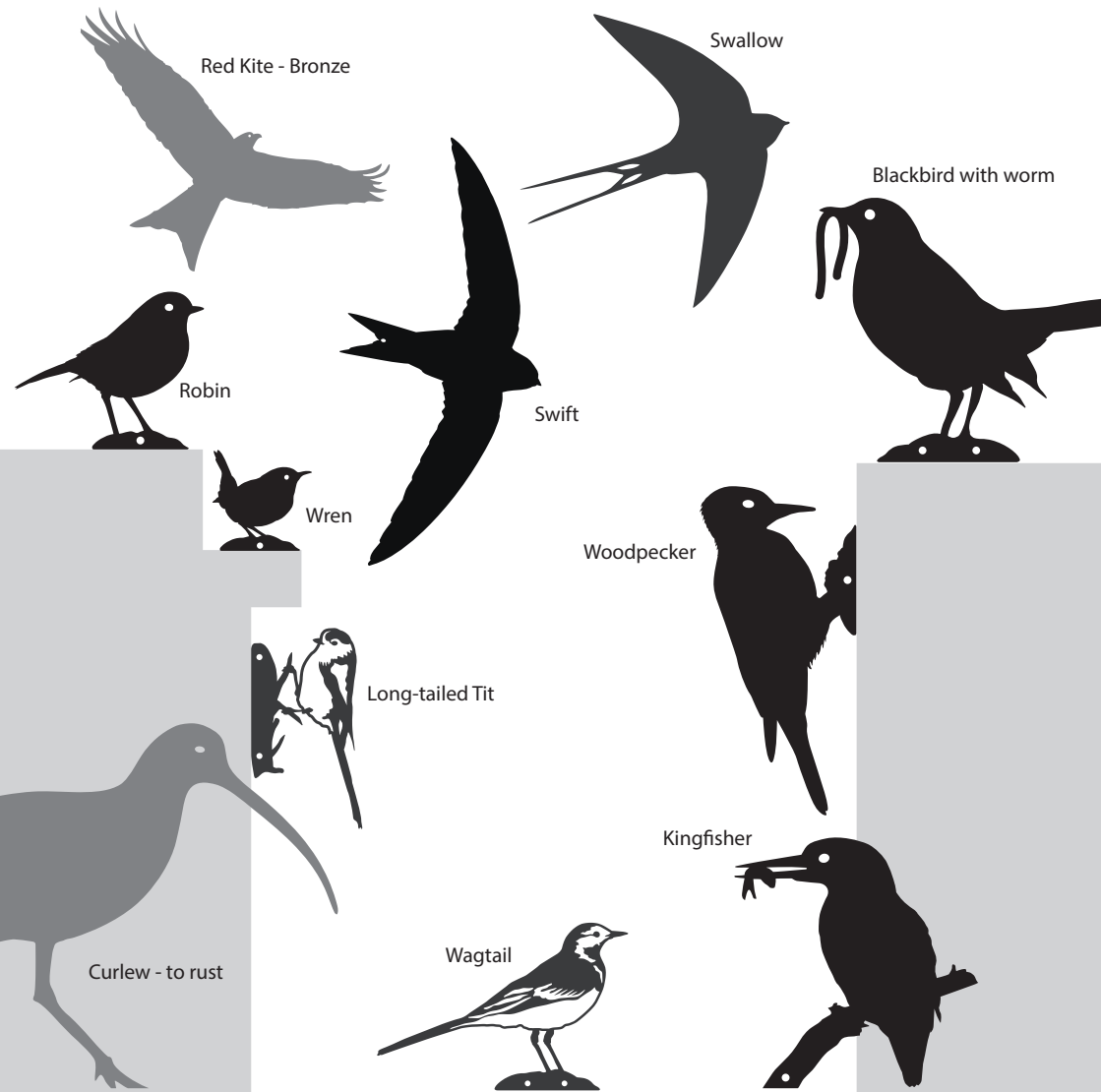
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