

THE

# *Stonesfield Slate*



Issue No 564 December 2025 / January 2026



## Happy Christmas

Amee Fairbank Brown: Unsplash.

We would like to extend our appreciation to those who contributed articles and photographs to *The Slate* in 2025. Without you we would not have been able to present such a wide range of news and information. Please continue your good work in 2026.

Our editors, including our retiring editor, Fiona, deserve a special thank you as their tireless chasing and checking meant *The Slate* was always complete and ready in time.

We can't forget Tricia, Jane and Ray and the army of volunteers involved in the distribution of *The Slate*. They ensured that 900 copies were popped through Stonesfield and Fawler letterboxes within hours of the printer's delivery.

Our thanks also go to the shop, The White Horse and the Library where residents and visitors can always pick up a copy of *The Slate*.

We are indebted to Windrush Printers for their excellent service and to all our advertisers who funded the production and have enabled *The Slate* to make donations to local causes such as the The Food Group and this year's Reverse Advent Calendar appeal.

We hope our readers have enjoyed *The Slate* in 2025. If you have a story or picture you would like to share in 2026, please do send it.

We wish you all a Happy Christmas and New Year.

Paul & Diane Bates, *The Slate* Publishers  
Publisher@stonesfieldslate.uk

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## Dates for your diary: December

|                |                                    |                          |                |
|----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1-31           | Pics @ Pub: <i>Midwinter Show</i>  | The White Horse          | pub hours      |
| 1-20           | Christmas menu (booking essential) | The White Horse          |                |
| 1,4,8,11,15,18 | Taekwondo                          | Village Hall             | 5.30-6.30pm    |
| 1,8,15         | Baby & Me Postpartum Yoga          | Village Hall             | 10-11.15am     |
| 1,8,15         | Bump & Me Antenatal Yoga           | Village Hall             | 7.30-8.30pm    |
| 1,8,15,22,29   | Monday Coffee                      | St James' Centre         | 10-11.30am     |
| 2,16           | Quiz                               | Sports & Social Club     | 8pm            |
| 2,9            | Stonesfield Social                 | Village Hall             | 5-6.30pm       |
| 2,9,16         | Zumba                              | Village Hall             | 7-8pm          |
| 3,10,17        | Pilates                            | Village Hall             | 9.30-10.45am   |
| 3              | Parish Council meeting             | Village Hall             | 7pm            |
| 3,10,17        | Folk Dancing                       | Village Hall             | 7.45-10pm      |
| 4,11,18        | Upholstery                         | Village Hall             | 9.30am-12.30pm |
| 4,11           | Book Break                         | Stonesfield Library      | 12.30-2pm      |
| 4              | Santa's Sleigh with Scout Group    | Round the village        | after dark     |
| 5,12           | Baby & Toddlers                    | Village Hall             | 10am-12noon    |
| 6              | Christmas coffee morning           | St James' Centre         | 10-11.30am     |
| 6              | Repair & Community Café            | Village Hall             | 10am-2pm       |
| 6              | Wreath Making (booking necessary)  | Village Hall             | 6-9pm          |
| 7              | Christingle service                | St James' Church         | 11am           |
| 7              | Stonesfield Players' auditions     | Village Hall             | 2-4pm          |
| 8,15           | Hannah Bathe HIIT Class            | Village Hall             | 7-7.45pm       |
| 8              | Gardening Club Social              | St James' Centre         | 7.30pm         |
| 9,23           | Quiz                               | The White Horse          | 8pm            |
| 10,17          | Hannah Bathe HIIT Class            | Village Hall             | 7-7.45pm       |
| 11,18          | Hannah Bathe Strength & Condition  | Village Hall             | 7-7.45pm       |
| 12             | Scout Group Bingo                  | Village Hall             | eyes down 7pm  |
| 14             | Christmas Art & Craft show         | Woodlands Rise           | 10am-4pm       |
| 16             | Festive Folk Music                 | The White Horse          | 8pm            |
| 18             | Christmas Bingo                    | Sports & Social Club     | 7pm            |
| 19             | Carol singing                      | meet at St James' Church | 5pm            |

**Continued on p4**

## Dates for your diary: December (continued)

|    |                              |                      |          |
|----|------------------------------|----------------------|----------|
| 19 | Christmas event/tractor/draw | Sports & Social Club | from 6pm |
| 19 | Open Mic Night               | The White Horse      | 8pm      |
| 21 | Carol service                | St James' Church     | 6pm      |
| 23 | Children's movie morning     | Sports & Social Club | 11am-1pm |
| 24 | Crib service                 | St James' Church     | 3.30pm   |
| 25 | Open for drinks              | The White Horse      | 11am-1pm |

## January

|            |                                    |                      |                |
|------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| 1          | New Year Stumble                   | meet at The Cross    | 11.16am        |
| 1-18       | Pics @ Pub: <i>Midwinter Show</i>  | The White Horse      | pub hours      |
| 5-11       | The White Horse is on holiday!     |                      |                |
| 6,20       | Quiz                               | Sports & Social Club | 8pm            |
| 12,19,26   | Baby & Me Postpartum Yoga          | Village Hall         | 10-11.15am     |
| 12,19,26   | Bump & Me Antenatal Yoga           | Village Hall         | 7.30-8.30pm    |
| 5,12,19,26 | Monday Coffee                      | St James' Centre     | 10-11.30am     |
| 5,12,19,26 | Hannah Bathe HIIT Class            | Village Hall         | 7-7.45pm       |
| 7,14,21,28 | Hannah Bathe Strength & Condition  | Village Hall         | 7-7.45pm       |
| 7          | Parish Council meeting             | Village Hall         | 7pm            |
| 8,15,22,29 | Book Break                         | Stonesfield Library  | 12.30-2pm      |
| 8,15,22,29 | Hannah Bathe Strength & Condition  | Village Hall         | 7-7.45pm       |
| 13,27      | Quiz                               | The White Horse      | 8pm            |
| 17         | Community Café (p12)               | Village Hall         | 10am-2pm       |
| 20         | Folk Music                         | The White Horse      | 8pm            |
| 20-31      | Pics @ Pub: <i>Two artists</i>     | The White Horse      | pub hours      |
| 24         | Players Murder Mystery (p24)       | Village Hall         | doors open 7pm |
| 29         | MegSoc AGM & talk: Standing Stones | St James' Centre     | 7pm            |



## 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 December or January: Viv Kendall  
01993 891803 or stonesfieldvts@gmail.com**

# Notices & news



## Seasonal greetings

Tina, Phil, Curt, Donna and Lyra would like to wish all our friends, neighbours and family a very happy joyful Christmas and a healthy, peaceful new year. We will be making a donation to Sobell House charity for the Christmas cards we don't send.

The Slatter family

I would like to wish my friends and neighbours in Stonesfield season's greetings and a healthy new year. I will be sending a donation to Sobell House hospice charity.

Judy Oliver

## Christmas Card delivery by the Scouts

The Scouts will be offering their annual village Christmas Card delivery service again this year. The deadline for posting is slightly earlier than usual - please address your cards and put them in the boxes around the village by 10 December.

## Christmas Coffee Morning – Saturday 6 December

Do come to the St James' Centre for coffee and Christmas refreshments on Saturday 6 December, from 10am to 11.30am. There will be cake and gift stalls, and plenty of festive spirit!

Organised by the Parish Church, all the money raised will be given to Cecily's Fund (which supports education and training for vulnerable children in Zambia).

## Christmas Art & Craft Show

Come and join us on Sunday 14 December at Grey Cat Studio for unique Christmas presents, a glass of mulled wine and a chat. There will be paintings, prints, jewellery and other crafts by Kerry Burniston, Jenny Lines, and Rachel, Becki & Griselda Sherlaw-Johnson.

Open from 10am–4pm at Malton Croft, Woodlands Rise, Stonesfield OX29 8PL.

## Carol singing in Stonesfield

### Friday 19 December 5pm

Come and join in carol singing around the village, until 6pm, followed by most welcome refreshments. We will meet at 5pm at the church. Everyone welcome!

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

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## **Reverse Advent Calendars Initiative**

### **Thank you, community champions!**

We all know that Stonesfield is a fabulous village, where the community can always be relied upon to step up and dig deep when there is a need. Never more so than with our Christmas hampers, instigated by the Back the White Horse committee six years ago and created by villagers using the Reverse Advent Calendar (opposite).

THANK YOU, to all our Community Champions for your support once again this year. Aiding households who would value help at this time of year would be impossible without your generosity and all your efforts in putting the hampers together. This is very much appreciated, your support will have a lasting – and very positive – impact. If you would like to contribute with a hamper please contact [steve@backthewhitehorse.com](mailto:steve@backthewhitehorse.com) for details.

It is not only at this time of year that the village supports those in need. If we are fortunate enough to receive more hampers than are needed right now, any surplus will be stored carefully and will be distributed during the coming year by Stonesfield Food Group's Emergency Help coordinator.

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

Old, young and all those in between, there are times when we all need a little help from our community and we're here to support you. If receiving one of the 'reverse advent calendar' food hampers would ease the worry for you or someone you know this Christmas, please don't be shy, do get in touch. If you're contacting us on behalf

of someone else, please make sure you have their permission to provide their details. Any one of the people listed below will help and will need – in confidence – your name, your address and how many people are in your household so that we can get some help out to you.

### **Stonesfield Food Group - Emergency Help**

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

### **Stonesfield Baby and Toddler Group**

Contact Hannah - 07854 771165  
[stonesfieldbabyandtoddler@gmail.com](mailto:stonesfieldbabyandtoddler@gmail.com)

### **Stonesfield Pre-School**

Contact Zena - 01993 898012  
[stonesfieldpsad@outlook.com](mailto:stonesfieldpsad@outlook.com)

### **Stonesfield Primary School**

Contact Zena (school) - 01993 891687  
[office.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:office.2353@stonesfield.oxon.sch.uk)

### **St James the Great Church, Stonesfield**

Revd Ralph Williamson  
[rector@scbenefice.org](mailto:rector@scbenefice.org)

### **Stonesfield Methodist Church**

Contact Kathleen Albert - 01993 891733  
[k.m.albert14@gmail.com](mailto:k.m.albert14@gmail.com)

Steve Callaghan

Stonesfield Community Pub

# Stonesfield Reverse Advent Calendar

with Stonesfield Community Pub Limited

| Sunday                                    | Monday                           | Tuesday                          | Wednesday                         | Thursday                         | Friday                           | Saturday                         |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Will you be a Stonesfield Community hero? | <b>17 Nov</b><br>Tea / coffee    | <b>18 Nov</b><br>Toilet rolls    | <b>19 Nov</b><br>Festive biscuits | <b>20 Nov</b><br>Cereal          | <b>21 Nov</b><br>Tinned potatoes | <b>22 Nov</b><br>Hot chocolate   |
| <b>23 Nov</b><br>Gravy granules           | <b>24 Nov</b><br>Tinned fruit    | <b>25 Nov</b><br>UHT milk        | <b>26 Nov</b><br>Crackers         | <b>27 Nov</b><br>Tinned veg      | <b>28 Nov</b><br>Hand soap       | <b>29 Nov</b><br>Tinned hot meal |
| <b>30 Nov</b><br>Tinned soup              | <b>1 Dec</b><br>Selection box    | <b>2 Dec</b><br>Tinned custard   | <b>3 Dec</b><br>Baked beans       | <b>4 Dec</b><br>Cake slices      | <b>5 Dec</b><br>Pasta n' sauce   | <b>6 Dec</b><br>Hot pudding      |
| <b>7 Dec</b><br>Tinned meat               | <b>8 Dec</b><br>Tinned fruit     | <b>9 Dec</b><br>Tinned fish      | <b>10 Dec</b><br>Instant mash     | <b>11 Dec</b><br>Jar of jam      | <b>12 Dec</b><br>Long-life juice | <b>13 Dec</b><br>Festive snacks  |
| <b>14 Dec</b><br>Parcel delivery          | <b>15 Dec</b><br>Parcel delivery | <b>16 Dec</b><br>Parcel delivery | <b>17 Dec</b><br>Parcel delivery  | <b>18 Dec</b><br>Parcel delivery | <b>19 Dec</b><br>Parcel delivery | <b>20 Dec</b><br>Parcel delivery |

**Thank you!** It's a difficult time of year for many and your generosity will have made a difference to someone else's Christmas.

We hope you enjoy the festive season. 🌟🌟🌟🌟

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## A Seasonal Lament

Jolly berry holly merry –  
Do I feel it? No, not really.  
Merry holly jolly berry,  
Am I ready? No, not nearly.

Seasonally challenged,  
Routines reimaged,  
Lists proliferating,  
Mind procrastinating -  
I fear I'm just freewheeling  
And anxiety's increasing.

So please find me a box that will fit my  
shape  
Then wrap it up tightly with lots of tape.  
Tie it round with a ribbon of red or green  
And hide it away where it can't be seen.

Put 'Fragile' and 'This way up' on the label,  
Don't leave it in sight on the floor or the  
table -  
The back of the wardrobe's the perfect  
place  
Where I can handle this season with grace,  
So leave me in peace till my spirits lift -  
And that is my perfect Christmas gift.

Nicky Holland

### Beth's babysitting

I am 14 and live in Farley Close.  
Please contact me if you'd like  
me to look after your children in  
the evenings. I have recently  
done some volunteering at the  
preschool to gain some  
experience.

**Beth 07939 508211**

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## White Horse news

### The White Horse has plenty to offer over the festive season!

Our dog calendar is complete and available  
at a cost of £10 (cash only) from the end of  
November. This promises to be a great  
Christmas gift for dog-lovers and all  
monies raised will be donated to The  
Oxfordshire Animal Sanctuary. If you want  
to learn more, please visit  
[www.oxfordshireanimalsanctuary.org.uk](http://www.oxfordshireanimalsanctuary.org.uk).

Our Christmas menu is available until 20  
December and runs alongside our regular  
dinner menu and specials board. Pre-  
ordering is essential; full details and the  
menu are available on our website:  
[www.thewhitehorsestonesfield.com](http://www.thewhitehorsestonesfield.com) or, of  
course, at the pub.

We will be hosting festive folk music on  
Tuesday 16 December from 8pm.

On Sunday 21 December we have  
Christmas Open Mic Night, 6-9pm, with  
live music from some amazing musicians  
who will be performing Christmas classics.

Join us on Tuesday 23 December for our  
Christmas Pub Quiz – a fun night of  
questions, prizes and cash for the winners.  
Maximum of 6 persons to a team with an  
8pm start. Bring the family and see what  
you can win!

Once again, we will be open on Christmas  
Day for drinks, 11am-1pm.

New Year's Day heralds the famous  
Stonesfield Stumble. Post-stumble bacon  
sandwiches or cheese burgers (vegetarian  
option on request) will be available at a  
cost of £5. **Pre-ordering and  
prepayment** is required by Wednesday  
24 December at the latest, please.

We will be **closed Monday 5 - Sunday 11 January** to give our hard-working team time to relax and have a break. We will re-open at our regular times the week commencing 12 January.

Keep an eye on our socials for more December delights!

We look forward to seeing you! Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year

### **Opening hours over the festive period:**

Please see below for changes to our advertised regular opening times:

Thursday 25 December: Christmas day – 11am-1pm (drinks only).

Friday 26 December: Boxing Day – bar 11am-7pm, food 12 noon-3pm.

Wednesday 31 December: New Year's Eve – bar 11.30am-1am, food 12 noon-2pm; complimentary buffet and music in the evening.

Thursday 1 January: New Year's Day – bar 11am-6pm, food 12 noon-3pm.

Craig Tipper, The White Horse (01993 672059)  
info@thewhitehorsestonesfield.com  
@thewhitehorsestonesfield.com

### **Choral Music for Advent and Christmas**

Commotio Chamber Choir Concert,  
6 December 7.30pm St Mary Magdalene Church, Woodstock

Critically acclaimed chamber choir, Commotio, will be holding their Christmas concert in Woodstock parish church for the very first time. Commotio performs contemporary choral music primarily from the 20th and 21st centuries showcasing

works by younger or lesser-known composers. Founded in 1999 and based in Oxford, they are particularly recognised for their fine tuning, attention to detail and challenging repertoire. The name Commotio derives from the Latin for movement/excitement.

For more details and tickets £15/£12 (under 16s free) visit [www.commotio.org](http://www.commotio.org)

## **Other notices & news**

### **Michael Willey**

Michael, who first moved to Stonesfield in 1955 as a 6-year-old boy, died peacefully at home in October. Although he moved away from the village for part of his working life as a teacher, he returned to live in Stonesfield in the 1990s, working a few years in the village shop before fully retiring.

Heartfelt thanks to the neighbours and friends who supported Michael in the last months of his life enabling him to remain in his much-loved home.

### **Heather Clifford**

We would like to thank everyone for their kind wishes and cards after the sad passing of our mother, Heather Clifford, on 6 November 2025, aged 91.

Re-united with our father John Clifford, her husband of 67 years.

The funeral will take place at North Oxford Crematorium, Tackley, on Monday 1 December 2025 at 12 noon. Family flowers only. All are welcome to join us. Any donations in memory of Heather will be to support the work of the Wychwood Forest Trust.

Paul, Jane & Julie

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## Thank you!

Thank you for all the support received for the November Community Café run by The Stonesfield Players, for donations of tombola prizes and for coming along to enjoy the delicious cakes, muffins and cookies.

We made just under £280 which will go towards costs for future productions. We sold some tickets for our autumn production of *Cold Comfort Farm* and enjoyed a happy morning with a strong community vibe – young football players and their families also appreciated a treat and warm drink after their matches.

The Stonesfield Players  
thestonesfieldplayers@gmail.com

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## Café for Maggie's

A huge thank you for all the support from everyone who made Bertie's café fundraiser for Maggie's Oxford such a huge success. We raised over £1,800. Full report in next month's issue of *The Slate*!

# Fitness Classes

**HannahBatheFitness@hotmail.com**

Monday 7<sup>PM</sup> **Ladies only HIIT**

Wednesday 7<sup>PM</sup> **Ladies only HIIT**

Thursday 7<sup>PM</sup> **Ladies Strength & Conditioning**

☎ **07974 100 076**

**STONESFIELD  
VILLAGE HALL**



## A review of *Cold Comfort Farm*

Stella Gibbons's 1932 comic novel *Cold Comfort Farm* has translated to film in at least two television adaptations with only varying degrees of success, and one might have not thought that the stage could do it any better justice. However this dramatisation of the story (by Paul Doust) turned out to be well able to stand on its own merits as a piece of live theatre.



The clever device of having Flora Poste taking the audience into her confidence in real time right from curtain up (very much demolishing the fourth wall) perfectly reflected the experience of her as narrator in the novel, and this key and almost continuous role was entrusted to Katie Saville, a very safe pair of hands indeed. Around her swirled a whole constellation of cameos of varying sizes, the Starkadders and others, all of them very well delineated. It would be unfair in such a large ensemble cast (though a judiciously smaller cast of characters than in the novel) to particularise, but one or two performances stood out, partly as a result of their ability to maintain the energy of their lines right to the end of the sentence and to avoid delivering their phrase ends upstage or to the floor.

Specially enjoyable was the delivery of some of Gibbons's satirical 'purple

passages' on the apron by a group of WI ladies in the manner of a Greek chorus. The busy wedding-breakfast dénouement, where everyone's story is rapidly brought to a satisfactory close (even Aunt Ada Doom's – almost) could have been delivered with greater structural tightness, but that may be a shortcoming of the script.

Production values were high, the single set simple but evocatively detailed, the costumes well-researched and positively glamorous in the case of some of the ladies, and the scene changes, lighting and effects (the exploding clock was a delightful case of the pathetic fallacy) were slickly executed – the Players seem to be very high-tech these days!



Altogether this was a very impressive and entertaining presentation of a most satisfying dramatisation, and the Players are to be congratulated for offering such a successfully spirited rendition of this rural satire before a semi-rural audience.

Jeremy White

What a treat - we absolutely loved it! Mind you, there are some neighbours we will never see in the same light again (yes, you Nicky Holland!).

Paul & Diane Bates

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## Community and Repair Café

We would love to see you at the Community Café, on Saturday 6 December in the club room at the Village Hall. We will open at 10am with fresh coffee, tea or hot chocolate and delicious homemade cakes on offer. Lunch is available from 12 noon (as well as cakes) in the form of soups with cheese scones and a selection of breads - all homemade.

The Repair Café will be operating in the main hall. So far we have repaired over 700kg of every kind of item from footstools to computers, vacuum cleaners to food mixers, as well as mending jumpers, fixing bikes and sharpening tools.

This means that we have delayed 700kg going to landfill, saved people money and made a small contribution to extending resources and helping the environment.

Our repairers are enthusiastic and skilled and pursue each repair as a challenge to their ingenuity and expertise. Bring along anything that needs fixing. Try to come before 12.30 to be sure to be seen and email us at [stonesfieldrepaircafe@gmail.com](mailto:stonesfieldrepaircafe@gmail.com) if you can.

Everyone is welcome, whether you are bringing and waiting for a repair, catching up with friends, need a warm space to sit for a while, out for a walk and would welcome a pit stop, or have been to the library (and want to quietly get stuck in to a new book).

We hope to see you.

Susan Rudlin and Mike Sofroniou

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## Village Hall News

Unfortunately, I have to report that we have had an attempted break-in at the hall – luckily users were able to scare the 'kids' off, but things have gone missing from the kitchen and again some vandalism has occurred over the past few weeks. Sadly this means all users need to be extra vigilant about windows and doors being locked, and our CCTV has had to be upgraded.

It has been another busy month with the Stonesfield Players *Cold Comfort Farm* production – what a success! Things are sort of back to normal with our regular bookings (see *The Slate* calendar, p3&4) although Christmas will see our regular users taking a festive break – as always check with your group's leaders.

Plans for youth provision are also underway, thank you for support from not only adults but the young people of this village letting us know what they want – if you wish to know more or help support this, please contact me.

We have parties galore, and some of our more regular bookings this month and for 2026. So, add to your diaries now:

Repair Café 6 December,

Stonesfield Players Auditions 7 December

Scout Bingo 12 December.

In 2026

Community Café 17 January – Maggie's Oxford – Bertie's Marathon Fundraiser

The Stonesfield Players Murder Mystery Night on 24 January

See calendar on P3 & 4 for times.

Don't forget that Community Café slots for 2026 are available for local groups to fundraise on the first Saturday of each month. The hall and club room are also a great hire for parties and events, with a stocked kitchen to cater for up to 100 people.

Claire Renshaw

Stonesfield Village Hall Bookings

info@stonesfieldvillagehall.com

www.stonesfieldvillagehall.com

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## Dinner by Donation

This is Stonesfield's (Almost) Secret Supper Club raising funds for different village causes. It involves a 3-course meal in a private home. Diners bring their own drink and a cash donation. There are still a few spaces available for the meal on 13 December (the last one for the Scouts). The meal on 24 January will benefit FoSS (Friends of Stonesfield School); on 7 February, the Pre-school; on 7 March, Chrissie's Owls. Please contact kateharris58@yahoo.co.uk if you're interested in reserving a place for any of these sociable dinners.

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## Pictures @ The Pub

Our *Midwinter Show* continues until 18 January and offers a diverse range of etchings, paintings, collage, poetry, textiles, botanical drawings, and mixed media work created by 16 of our talented artists, writers and craftspeople. Artists may offer different pieces of work over the course of the exhibition period so there will be something new to see from week to week.

From 21 January and throughout February we will be showing oil paintings by Paul

Bates who works in a wide variety of subjects and styles, and Jenny Dingwall's intricate lino-prints which feature scenes of Combe and elsewhere in Oxfordshire.

We are very pleased to welcome Kerry Burniston, Jenny Lines and Ann Lowe to the exhibition organising team. As many of you will know, they are long-established artists working in a range of disciplines and their input and ideas are going to be invaluable in conceiving and arranging future exhibitions.

We are now working on the programme for the early part of 2026 so, if you would like to show your work but have not yet taken the plunge, please do get in touch.

Trisha Williams for Pictures @ The Pub  
triwynwil003@gmail.com

Claire Renshaw for The White Horse  
Community Pub

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## War memorial



Our thanks to the Gardening Club group for organising the knitted poppies at the war memorial in time for Remembrance Day service.

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## **Stonesfield Common**

Cattle have been on the Common since early October, eight cows and six calves. We have been fortunate that the river hasn't flooded, enabling the flood meadow to be grazed right down, something we weren't able to do last year.

As I write this the meadow has now been flooded. The calves were weaned and taken back to the Agricultural College at the end of October leaving just the mums. They in turn will go back to the college in the next few weeks to be TB tested. They may come back after Christmas.

The volunteers have been working on the perennial task of cutting back invasive blackthorn and hawthorn, and will be attempting to control old man's beard, also known as traveller's joy.

Richard Morris

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## **Brook Lane limestone meadow & surrounds**

### **Highlights for the year**

A cuckoo heard and seen 25 April, the flowering of meadow clary and pyramid orchids, common blue butterflies laying eggs on birds foot trefoil (no common blues were recorded in Stonesfield for the 2024 Big Butterfly Count). In July the glowworms and night-time moth recording. The snails when the rain finally came back. Wax caps, red and yellow in October. A close encounter with a vole when trimming the meadow. With the early November warmth, self-heal flowering, a low-growing blue and purple flower. (More colour photographs are on the village website under the Environment group, news.) [www.stonesfield.online/category/sustain/](http://www.stonesfield.online/category/sustain/)

You can see the meadow has been trimmed: we have left areas to provide a mosaic of habitats for wildlife over the winter; the uncut areas join so wildlife can move in some safety. The cut areas are about two to three inches high to reduce damage to wildlife overwintering in the top of the soil and stems of the plants.



Over the year we have continued to reduce the old man's beard that has taken root on the meadow and have scattered limestone meadow seed (from Cotswold National Landscape) in areas with bare soil, with some help from the rabbits.

### **Moths**

We'll continue to record moths over the winter, much more sedate than the hurly-burly of the summer. Moth recording started in April – by the end of October we had recorded 165 species on the meadow and 252 species in total with surrounding areas (gardens, allotments and the Common).

Moths have declined about 40% since the 1960s. They are important food for bats, birds, spiders and other mammals. Importantly they are essential pollinators.

Knowing which moths we have on the meadow gives us information on the plants essential for the moth larvae that can then inform the ongoing management for the

meadow and surrounds. All results are sent to the national recording centre.



Barred Sallow: flies mid-September to early November. Larvae feed on field Maple, Beech. Over-winters as an egg laid on a twig

## Gardens

These are important habitats for moths, ideally without any chemicals and with areas for wildflowers and some untidy areas. Many flowers are visited and pollinated by moths: honeysuckle, summer jasmine, campions, lavender, evening primrose, mint (look out for the mint moth flying during the day), tobacco plant, to name a few.

We do have some limestone meadow seed, thanks to the Cotswold National Landscape who harvest the seed. Do get in touch if you would like some for a wildflower area in your garden. For more on gardening for moths try this website

[www.butterfly-conservation.org/how-you-can-help/get-involved/gardening/gardening-for-moths](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/how-you-can-help/get-involved/gardening/gardening-for-moths)

Butterflies have a fluttering flight and don't have the speed of moths. Both have forewings and hind wings. The difference is that butterflies have two distinct independent wings and moths have the two wings coupled together giving them more power in flight. Most moths can also fly in the rain, their wings are angled like sloping roofs and the wings have small

scales that overlap and are hydrophobic. Wind is a problem but mild rain isn't.

Hopefully the weather next year will be more favourable. Over the winter we will be arranging an information board ready for the spring.

John Sampson

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## Combe Connect

Combe Connect is the local magazine for your neighbouring village. You can read our latest issue at

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

[editor@combeconnect.co.uk](mailto:editor@combeconnect.co.uk)

*Looking for a Christmas present  
for a pianist?*



## PIANO NATIVITY



by Ruth Sellar

Ten characterful piano pieces  
inspired by carols  
to tell the Christmas story

Suitable for pianists at upper  
intermediate level

For further details, to listen to a  
recording and to purchase:

<https://www.goodmusicpublishing.co.uk/products/GM515/piano-nativity>



## **Stonesfield Stumble Thursday 1 Jan 2026**

The 30-year unbroken tradition of the annual slow walk on New Year's Day will take place on Thursday 1 Jan 2026. Meet on The Cross by the church at 11.16 am. It's about an hour long all things considered. A shorter option is available.

Everybody is welcome, no pre-training required. Come in whatever state you happen to find yourself on New Year's Day! Bring your dog, partner, children, friends. No discussions are barred, criticism encouraged.

'After-walk recovery session' in the White Horse. Beer will be on offer. Hooray!

Craig will sell pre-order food tickets from mid-December (see p8). Don't miss out on your bap!

Please remind your friends of the happening.

Fuzzy photo (above) of the Stumble, year unknown. How many people can you name?

Graham Rutson

# **Charlbury Christmas Trees**

Pick your own Christmas Trees  
Belgium Spruce • Norway Spruce • Nordmann

**Weekends only - Nov 29-30, Dec 6-7, 13-14 and Dec 20**  
Opening hours **9.30 – 4.00pm**

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



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



## Combe Women's Institute

At our November meeting we were treated to a humorous, sometimes harrowing and often dangerous insight to the police career of Jonathon Cox which was the inspiration for his Nostrils series of books.

Surprisingly we learnt that Nostrils is the name given to the sawn-off barrels of a shotgun and not just the nose on our faces!

Our meeting on Monday 8 December is for members only and it'll be our Christmas party with supper, music, games, secret Santa and our challenge to make any kind of decorated log.

We are very much looking forward to our January meeting when Prof Martin McNally will be telling us why our bones are amazing.

We are always keen to welcome new members and female guests are welcome to

any of our meetings for a suggested donation of £6. Membership is open to all women over the age of 18. Our programme of speakers, outings and activities is in line with the Women Institute's main principles of encouraging friendship, tolerance, learning and community spirit.

WI meetings are held on the second Monday of each month in the Reading Room, Combe from 7.30pm – 9.30pm, we also have two informal sub-groups – a walking group who meet to enjoy walks and cake, and a social group who meet on the last Thursday of the month to enjoy visits to nearby places of interest – usually with cake!

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

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

# STONESFIELD STUDY HUB

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN GCSE  
SCIENCE, GCSE MATHS, OR  
A-LEVEL BIOLOGY TUITION?

Bespoke tuition available with  
Dr Lauren Daly, an education  
specialist from the University  
of Oxford with over 10  
years of teaching  
experience.  
Fully DBS checked.

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[lauren\\_baker341@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:lauren_baker341@hotmail.co.uk)



LAUNCHING OCTOBER 2025

A NEW GCSE AND A-LEVEL  
TUITION COMPANY LAUNCHING  
IN STONESFIELD.



# Politics & local affairs

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## **Stonesfield Parish Council**

The Parish Council met at the Village Hall on 5 November 2025. Cllr L.Bate sent apologies. Present were Cllrs U.Rice (Chair), C.Renshaw (Vice Chair), D.Brown, P.Lowe and S.Powell, together with the Clerk.

**County Councillor's Report:** Cllr Andy Graham reported progress on plans for a new surgery in Woodstock, with the NHS supporting the development and several sites under consideration. Work also continues on upgrading street lighting in historic areas to reduce glare and improve energy efficiency. He noted that free 'bleed kits' are available for parishes to keep with defibrillators, funded through his Councillor Priority Fund. Local flooding issues at Laughton Hill are being investigated. Cllr Graham also highlighted Oxfordshire County Council's new knife-crime awareness campaign in partnership with Thames Valley Police. [See other information in his own report below.]

**District Councillors' Reports:** Cllr Genny Early updated members on the draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan, which proposes around 18,000 new homes by 2043. Stonesfield is classed as a Tier 3 'large village', allowing for small- to medium-scale development. She encouraged everyone to take part in the consultation, which runs until 23 December 2025. The plan can be viewed online at: [www.westoxon.gov.uk/localplan2043](http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/localplan2043)

Cllr Tim Sumner reported that £3.5 million is being invested in upgrading local leisure facilities and that regeneration work in Carterton is progressing well.

**Neighbourhood Plan:** Cllr P.Lowe reported that the steering group continues to make steady progress. The Basic Conditions Statement is complete pending a response from WODC, and the Consultation Statement is almost finished. The group will soon submit documents to WODC and will be choosing an independent examiner.

**Finance:** Payments were approved, including cleaning and graffiti removal from the bus shelters. Expenditure authorised under the Clerk's delegated powers was ratified.

**Clerk's Report:** The Clerk reported that the new council website is under development and that a preview link will be shared with councillors once available. A contractor has been appointed to complete the cleaning and graffiti removal of the bus shelters, which was scheduled for completion during late October and early November. Work on the draft budget is progressing, and councillors have been asked to send any suggestions or amendments, including indicative figures, to the RFO before the December meeting when the final version will be approved.

Notices informing residents of the change of meeting venue have been displayed on the noticeboard and social media. All correspondence has been responded to,

with important updates circulated to members.

The Clerk also shared information from OCC regarding temporary road closures and ‘No Waiting’ restrictions for resurfacing works on the B4022 between Hailey and Finstock, which took place from 13–17 November. In addition, the Clerk reported communication from the organisers of the Wilderness Festival about expanding the Local Tickets and Bursary Scheme to include Stonesfield. A full list of parish postcodes has been provided to ensure all residents are covered.

**Parish Council Logo:** It was agreed that a graphic designer will be asked to produce designs for a new Stonesfield Parish Council emblem based on ideas reflecting the village’s character. These will be brought to a future meeting for consideration.

**Biodiversity Policy:** Cllr U.Rice reported that the Biodiversity Policy is nearly complete and will be circulated once finalised. Councillors discussed a few remaining sections, and it was suggested that the policy be cross-checked with the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure consistency.

**Purchases:** It was agreed that the Stonesfield Pub Group will apply for a grant towards a 360° video and audio-conferencing device, which will enable the Clerk to attend meetings remotely in bad weather or illness. The Council will have access to the device when needed.

**Working Groups and Representation:** Cllr D.Brown was added to the Glebe Working Group. However, as the Council currently has only six members, working groups will be suspended temporarily, with all projects

handled by the full Council. The Chair will make initial contact with the Village Hall, Playing Fields and Stonesfield Community Trust before appointing Council representatives.

**Maintenance:** The Council approved advertising for a self-employed, zero-hours maintenance operative. Work will include minor village maintenance such as noticeboard repairs and painting railings.

**Meeting venue:** It was confirmed that future meetings will be held at the Village Hall.

**Budget 2026/27:** Councillors will review the draft budget and send suggestions or amendments, with indicative figures, to the RFO before the December meeting, when the final budget will be approved.

The next meeting of the Parish Council will take place on Wednesday 3 December 2025 at 7pm in the Village Hall.

Kay Linnington  
Clerk, Stonesfield Parish Council  
clerk@stonesfieldpc.uk

.....  
**The draft Neighbourhood Plan is ready for submission to WODC**

You may recall that on 3 September the draft Neighbourhood Plan was unanimously approved by the PC for submission to WODC. All residents’ comments on the original draft had been taken into account and the Plan adjusted accordingly. For example, it now includes new sections on the issues facing young people, which had been raised by a number of residents, and also on health and wellbeing. The proposed Local Green Spaces have been adjusted from those originally proposed (two were removed

and two were subdivided). This adjustment set out to balance the objections received and the high level of support the Local Green Spaces gained from residents in the Village Survey.

The steering group has now completed, and provided to the Parish Council, the two final documents which must accompany the draft Plan. The Consultation Statement sets out everything done to consult the village on the Plan, and the Basic Conditions Statement gives the detail of how the Plan conforms with all the relevant legislation and guidance. Once the Parish Council are satisfied with them, the Clerk will submit the draft Plan and accompanying documents to WODC.

WODC will give publicity to where the Plan proposal can be inspected and how representations may be made about it. After the time allowed for representations (6 weeks minimum) WODC will send it and the representations received to an Independent Examiner (IE). The IE will consider all the relevant documents and report to WODC, proposing any modifications he thinks appropriate.

WODC will review the proposed Plan and the IE's report and may require the Parish Council to make changes. If and when WODC is content with the modified Plan it will be put to a village referendum, organised by WODC, which will need a simple majority of residents in order to be 'made': the technical term used when the Plan is accepted as a legal document which must be taken into account on all future planning issues relating to Stonesfield within the lifetime of the Plan. That will correspond with the life of WODC's Local Plan, which currently applies till 2031 but

which is being updated and is likely to apply until 2043.

The time frame for these final stages of the process is out of our hands, and could be lengthy, but we will of course keep the village informed, both here in *The Slate* and on the village website. Meanwhile, it is good to know that the steering group has met its original estimate of how long it would take to compile the Plan (four years: work started in January 2022) and has delivered it to the Parish Council on time.

Caroline Friend  
info@stonesfieldplan.com

.....  
**From our County Councillor's report**

**Woodstock:** Doctors' surgery - real progress has been made towards delivering a new surgery for Woodstock. The GPs have developed a specification for a new surgery building. Work is underway to draw up outline plans for it. Viable funding models to deliver it are being reviewed and finalised. If progress is maintained, we could expect planning permission by late summer 2026 and a new surgery to be opened by the end of 2028.

**Wootton by Woodstock:** Designs are being drawn up for an appropriate bus shelter to replace the bus stop at Judds Garage on the A44, with costings to the parish council for consideration to mitigate the lack of weather protection and support the many villagers who travel to Woodstock and Oxford. Improvements to the highway configuration on the A44 in this area is at a design stage to alleviate the accidents that historically have taken place at this junction and progress is being made.

**Combe:** Pleased to see the highway improvements in Combe with restoration of green verges happening, making the village safer and more looked after.

Cllr Andy Graham, Woodstock Division

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**Thames Valley Police**

**Our work on domestic abuse**

We have been enhancing our work to tackle domestic abuse by coming together for a day of action in every corner of the Thames Valley. The operations were delivered to enhance our work that goes on every day to tackle domestic abuse across the Thames Valley, recognising we see a rise in demand during the summer months. We continue to fight crime and support victims every day by bringing offenders to justice. We want victims to know they're not alone: we're here to support them and will do everything we can to bring those responsible to justice.

**Your chance to see how the PCC holds us to account**

Performance and Accountability meetings are held by the Police & Crime Commissioner every quarter at Thames Valley Police Headquarters in Kidlington (Oxfordshire) and are open to the public. Meetings are attended by the Chief Constable and relevant senior staff from both the Office of the PCC and Thames Valley Police and are an opportunity for the PCC to publicly hold the Chief Constable to account. You can view a copy of the latest meeting recording and find out how to register your attendance for a future meeting by visiting [www.thamesvalley-pcc.gov.uk/our-work/performance-and-accountability/](http://www.thamesvalley-pcc.gov.uk/our-work/performance-and-accountability/)

**Don't steal this Christmas – yule regret it**

As the Christmas shopping season begins, we urge members of the public to think twice before engaging in shoplifting – officers are working closely with retailers to crack down on retail crime. We understand that the festive period can bring financial pressures, and with high-value items on display, the temptation to steal may rise... but don't ignore the consequences. Shoplifting is a criminal offence –those caught will be arrested. Shoplifting affects local businesses and puts retail staff at risk. We're working with retailers, using CCTV and increasing patrols to identify offenders quickly and effectively. Let's keep the season safe, fair, and festive for everyone.

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**Neighbourhood Watch**

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

Deanna Asplundh  
Stonesfield Neighbourhood Watch  
Coordinator

# Education, culture & more

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## **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 |

The Library will be closed from Wednesday  
Dec 24 - Saturday Jan 3, inclusive.

Val Phillips (891455)

Friends of Stonesfield Library

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## **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](mailto:homelibraryservice@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Deborah Wilson (01865 815181)

Library Manager



*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:

### **Pre-School Sessions**

9am – 3pm daily for children aged 2–4 years (£20.60 per session)

### **After School Club**

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday; 3.15 – 6pm  
(£19.20 per session)

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

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## **Stonesfield School**

It's been another busy start to our term at Stonesfield School. We ended last half term with a packed out Harvest Assembly where the children sang a variety of songs they had been learning with our music teacher, Miss Larsen. This included some very brave soloists. We also had talks from Rev Ralph and Maria from the Witney Food Bank, we were delighted to donate nearly 40kg of food and she told about how this would help local families in need.

This week has seen us out and about in the community. I was delighted to attend the Remembrance Day parade in the village with some of our children who then laid a wreath at the war memorial. We reflected in school about the importance of remembering those who sacrificed their lives for our freedom. Some of our children have represented the school at Marlborough School's cross country event, which they enjoyed despite the weather.

Finally, I wanted to share some of the work our 8- and 9-year-olds have been doing in English. We have been writing our own descriptions of our Forest School for people who haven't had the opportunity to see it. We hope you enjoy Jacob's description.

'Our fantastic Forest School is a fun, calm area in our school grounds. At this time of year the amber, russet, golden orange leaves flutter gently towards the musky bronze-brown trunks of towering trees, almost touching the sky. There are always animals scampering across the ground and sometimes you see a muntjac shyly running away. If you see a lucky hedgehog, that's amazing. In the morning you can smell the sweet, early, earthy scent of soft falling rain. Best of all I like making

shelters and tools plus playing hide and seek, there are lots of amazing hiding spots.' By Jacob

I hope this gives you a taste of what our Forest school is like, it's such a special spot in the heart of our school.

Mrs Aisling Hill

Head of School

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## **North Leigh History Society**

On Tuesday 2 December Stephen Barker will be giving a talk on Trench Humour in the First World War. 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 £5 per talk. Further details are available from Diana Power (01993 882301) or Robert Kyte at kyterobert@gmail.com and 01993 880368.

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## **Witney Music Society**

The final Witney Music Society concert in 2025 will be given by Daniel Schultz (cello) and Sejin Yoon (piano). Their programme will include works by Schumann, Sibelius, Dvořák and Chopin. The concert is at 7.30pm on Friday 12 December.

The first concert in 2026 will be an all-Beethoven recital given by the acclaimed British pianist Mishka Rushdie Momen. The concert is at 7.30pm on Friday 9 January.

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](http://www.witneymusicsociety.org.uk)

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## Combe Mill, OX29 8ET

Combe Mill is CLOSED for the winter, opening again and 'In Steam' 15 March 2026.

Combe Mill would like to thank all who came along and supported our Charity during 2025.

The Riverside Tea Room is still open, **on Wednesdays only**.

**Winter menu:** Homemade soup & crusty bread; soup & cheese scone; soup & filled soft roll; baguettes; homemade cakes; tea, coffee, soft drinks.

Call in for a lovely bowl of soup and crusty roll. All are most welcome.

Phone 01993 358694 (Winter 10.30am until 3pm). Closed on Wednesdays 24 and 31 December.

## 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.**

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## JARISEL presents a Concert for Ukraine

Saturday 29 November, 7.30pm, St. Mary's Church, Charlbury

A festive feast of seasonal songs and music from Ukraine, Ireland, France, Greece and more!

Natalia Kakarkina: vocals, ukulele, bodhran

Isabel Knowland: violin, Hardanger, viola

Jacqueline Johnson: cello, accordion

Arne Richards: accordion, keyboard

Tickets £15 (£12 in advance) from Cornerstone, email [isabelknowland@gmail.com](mailto:isabelknowland@gmail.com) and on the door.

This concert's proceeds will be a Christmas gift from St. Mary's Charlbury to our friends in Our Lady of Kazan, Slatyne, Kharkiv. St. Mary's Church, Charlbury, has raised considerable funds to help the people of Slatyne, a small border town in Ukraine that suffers ongoing bombardment. The funds have helped purchase a minibus which is used to transport people and food. We hope to contribute to those funds to enable the people of Slatyne to celebrate Christmas.

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## Murder Mystery Night

The next Stonesfield Players Murder Mystery Night is 24 January. Doors open at 7pm, start at 7.30pm.

Tickets are £20 including a 2 course meal.

Booking essential.

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

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## **Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum**

At the moment, the Museum is hosting a powerful new exhibition of artwork by Level 3 Art & Design Students of Abingdon & Witney College. The exhibition, open until 9 December, marks 80 years since the end of the war and since the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp by Allied forces. The exhibition forms part of the museum's wider commemoration of the Holocaust and the Oxfordshire Yeomanry's role in liberating Bergen-Belsen.

The project has seen students respond to deeply personal stories and artefacts from the museum's collection - among them, those of Holocaust survivor Naomi Kaplan and Oxfordshire Yeomanry soldier Arthur Tyler. Arthur was approached by Naomi and wrote letters to her family in the US, eventually leading to her reuniting with them, and the start of a new life in Houston, Texas.

Through creative interpretation, the students have produced thought-provoking works that explore memory, loss, hope, and resilience - offering a new generation's response to this historic event.

Naomi dedicated much of her later life educating on the holocaust and the dangers of discrimination, leaving a legacy which continues to this day through the Holocaust Museum Houston and now in the UK through Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum and projects like this one. *Letters from Liberation* stands as a poignant testament to the power of art to bridge generations, connect communities, and highlight history's most vital lessons. Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum would like to thank the Warren family (Naomi's

descendants) for their support of its arts and educational programmes.

The Museum will close to visitors after Friday 19 December, and will re-open to visitors on 22 January 2026 following a seasonal closure. We look forward to bringing you news of our plans for the New Year.

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## **Building Regs and Home Extensions - Part 2**

There are two ways to comply with Building Regulations requirements: a Full Plans application or a Building Notice application.

With a Full Plans application, a complete set of construction drawings is submitted to the local Building Control authority, after which Conditional Approval is given. These approved drawings form the documentation and schedule of works that builders quote from and form the basis of your contract with the builder. The builder then constructs the job with regular Building Control Officer inspections to ensure work follows the drawings, issuing a Final Certificate upon completion confirming the work meets Building Regulations requirements.

The Building Notice procedure was introduced as a quicker, more flexible alternative to Full Plans. A building notice doesn't require drawings but requires the builder to inform the Building Control Officer at specific work stages for inspections. The builder must be confident the work will meet requirements—if not, work must be re-done. Building Regulations application fees vary with local authorities but Building Notice fees are higher than Full Plans fees.

With Building Notice applications, because no formal plans are checked beforehand, there's a greater risk of non-compliant work. Errors may only come to light during construction, leading to delays, additional costs, or enforcement action. It can also cause problems when selling the property as mortgage lenders and solicitors usually ask for clear documentation showing that work was carried out lawfully. Properties approved under a Building Notice may face extra scrutiny or delays. Homeowners, assuming Building Notice approval guarantees compliance, may later discover work is substandard or illegal, requiring further work.

While a Building Notice can provide faster, more flexible compliance routes, it carries significant risks. Lack of pre-approved plans can result in delays, enforcement actions, and additional costs. While it can save time at the outset, the risks are considerable, especially for less experienced builders. The Full Plans procedure remains the preferred and more reliable method.

Jan Liberadzki BA Arch (Hons), MSc

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

## Why not take part in Artweeks 2026?

### Artweeks is:

- Nonselective, not-for-profit artists' organisation
- Open to all artists & craft makers living or working in Oxfordshire
- For the keen enthusiast to the professional, for charities & community groups.
- Selling or non selling exhibitions

### Offer a venue to Artweeks artists 2026:

- Do you have display space you could offer for a few days next May?
- A wall or a room?
- Increase footfall to your business or just to help a local artist.



### IF YES:

- contact [artweeks@artweeks.org](mailto:artweeks@artweeks.org) for a chat and more details.
- List yourself or your venue on our 'find a venue page'

[www.artweeks.org/artists/find-a-venue](http://www.artweeks.org/artists/find-a-venue)

Email to request link to our free 'Thinking of Taking Part in Artweeks' session on Zoom 7pm on Wed 24<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

Exhibition entries taken from October – **ALL completed entry details & payment must be received NO LATER than 31<sup>st</sup> December.**

# Clubs, societies & sport

## 1st Stonesfield Scout Group



Tea & cake after Remembrance Day service

It's been a busy time for 1st Stonesfield Scouts, with all hands on deck to finish the lovely new Scout Hut! Huge thanks to everyone who has pitched in to see the hut to where it is today. Cubs had the first indoor meeting in the first week of November amidst great excitement. Remembrance Day has been observed and afterwards the first informal peek at the hut, where we welcomed the community for tea, cake and our AGM. Don't worry if you missed it, an official opening party will happen as we move into the Spring/



Ben Whitworth chairs the first AGM in new hut

Summer, when there's a bit less mud about.

December brings our usual festive events; watch out for all sections (Beavers, Cubs & Scouts) guiding the Santa Sleigh around the village with Witney Round Table on Thursday 4 December, collecting donations door to door. The Scouts will be offering their annual village Christmas Card delivery service again this year. The deadline for posting is slightly earlier than usual - please address your cards and put them in the boxes around the village by 10 December. Bingo will be in the village hall on Friday 12 December, eyes down at 7pm.

A big thank you, on behalf of the trustees, to everyone who plays a part in supporting Scouting in our village. As ever, we need your time, energy and support to keep 1st Stonesfield Scouts going. There are jobs to be done behind the scenes, as well as in the three groups we run with young people each week - if you would like to learn more about how you can help, as a one off, occasionally, or ongoing, please contact our chair (Ben Whitworth) [chair@stonesfield-scouts.org.uk](mailto:chair@stonesfield-scouts.org.uk)

Hannah Crowe, Trustee

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## Report from Cubs



I am a Cub, I have been a Cub for approximately 1 year. Recently, Cubs went to Enstone airfield. We went around the hangar and past the planes until we came to the Spitfire. It was so cool, we even got to touch it. Although we didn't have a go on the spitfire simulator it was so fun. Thank you Enstone Flying Club!

The things I like about Cubs are going to camp, learning first aid, earning badges and the people. I'm really looking forward to having the winter sessions in the new Scout Hut because it has toilets inside!

Rowan, Red Six, Cubs, 1st Stonesfield Scout Group

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## Stonesfield Players

We're pleased to announce that open auditions for upcoming productions from the Stonesfield Players will be happening on Sunday 7 December at 2pm in the Clubroom at the Village Hall.

We have two exciting productions in the pipeline and there are lots of ways to get involved if you are interested!

The next two productions we're looking forward to making a reality are *Sour Grapes*, our next Murder Mystery evening event about two feuding family vineyards, and *Inspector Drake and the Perfekt Crime*, our proposed Spring production by David Tristram. It's an absurdist, fast-paced comedy that parodies classic detective stories with elements of farce, double-entendre and silly humour.

Please join us and come along if you're interested in being cast to take part in either of these productions (or both!) on stage. There are 5 roles for both male and female presenting actors in each production. We also have plenty of opportunities if you are interested in helping out backstage or front of house as well, and this could be a great chance to get involved with us for the first time. We'd love to see you there!

Gareth Meager

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

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## The Megalosaurus Society

MegSoc is one! As the year draws to a close, we are delighted to say that the Society has survived for its first full year - and is thriving. We hope that what we have offered has been varied, interesting and stimulating. We want to express our huge thanks to everyone who has helped us in all our endeavours - our fantastic committee, speakers, tour leaders and display contributors, and a whole lot of other people in the village and beyond.

The Village Hall, the Primary School and especially St James' Centre have housed us happily over the months, and we are grateful to all their staff and volunteers for being so helpful. The museums of Woodstock, Charlbury, the Oxfordshire Museums Resource Centre and the Oxford History Centre have all contributed advice, information and interesting things for us to share with members and discuss.

And last but by no means least, Oxford University Museum of Natural History has been our partner in a number of ventures - not least in allowing us to tread in the footprints of our namesake, and to achieve the installation of Simon Armitage's poem in the pub garden. No-one else has one of those!

So thank you so much to all of those people, and particularly to our large band of members who make it all worthwhile. And if you think that sounds fun and you'd like to join in, drop us a line to the address below.

Viv Kendall and Trisha Williams, Co-Chairs  
The Megalosaurus Society of Stonesfield  
[megsoc25@gmail.com](mailto:megsoc25@gmail.com)



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## Sports & Social Club

It's always fun to try something new and with the Select Flame pizzas going so well on Friday nights we have extended our food offerings and are now doing basket meals on Saturday nights, check our website or Facebook page for details.

We have a mixture of events in the build-up to Christmas, including the return of the Christmas tractor, the Christmas raffle (numbers on sale now from the club), Big Xmas Bingo and children's movie morning.

Our main Christmas event will be Friday 19 Dec from 6pm where we will have Select Flame pizzas, the Christmas draw and the festive Christmas tractor who will be raising money for St Katharine House Hospice and we might even have a special visitor..!

### Christmas opening hours

With Christmas falling on Thursday this year we have a lovely extended weekend for those lucky enough not to work on the Friday:

|                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| Wed 24 Dec     | 12noon-10pm |
| Thu 25 Dec     | 11am-2pm    |
| Fri 26 Dec     | 12noon-11pm |
| New Year's Eve | 12noon-1am  |
| New Year's Day | 12noon-11pm |
| Fri 2 Jan      | 12noon-11pm |

All other hours are as normal.

### Staff position

We are looking to grow our team and fill some regular hours, mainly over the weekends but there is some flexibility during the week. Please email your CV directly to [stonesfield.social@gmail.com](mailto:stonesfield.social@gmail.com)

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## **Stonesfield Football Club**

The reader will be fully aware that The Festive Season is fast approaching, so let me start this month's report by wishing everyone a very happy Christmas and while I'm at it, a very happy and successful New Year. I sincerely hope your dreams all come true!

The Firsts have played two league games this month and won both. They travelled to Hanborough and took the spoils in a hard-fought 2-1 win. Then the moment we've all been waiting for; finally, a home game on the recently renovated playing field! Our first visitors were Chadlington, who seemed to enjoy the playing surface as they gave our boys a good game, but Stonesfield took the three points with a deserved 3-1 victory. The league looks like it could be a tighter affair this season with Stonesfield currently in 4<sup>th</sup> place, 8 points off top spot but with 2 games in hand. Any thoughts of glory in the Oxon Junior Shield were dashed as they lost out in an 8-goal thriller at Hailey. At half-time, the score was 1-1 and with Hailey reduced to 10 men, you'd have thought that Stonesfield would capitalise on their advantage. However, despite being roared on by a huge Stonesfield support they could only take 2 of the many chances that they created. Hailey were clinical, 4 chances and 4 second-half goals sent our boys crashing out (5-3). Despite that loss, confidence is high and the team is playing good football and creating lots of chances, I think the goals will come.

The Reserves have had a very good month; they also sit in 4<sup>th</sup> place in their league and just 4 points off top spot. They've stepped up this season and so far, they've done themselves proud. A great 3-1 win at

Witney Royals was backed up by a brilliant 5-2 win against Hanborough. Interestingly, the progress that this team is making was really on show in their first home game of the season where they took on Woodstock Town Res (from The Oxon Senior League), in the OXON FA Junior Cup. As massive underdogs our boys played some great football, were the better team and should have won in front of a wonderful Stonesfield support. Sadly, the away team pounced on an unfortunate error and the game finished 1-0 to Woodstock. I think the experience of playing against supposedly superior players will have done our boys the world of good. They can look forward with confidence as the winter months approach.

I can't believe that we've reached December and yet again there's no winner of The Fredo award. No perfect hat-tricks (left foot, right foot, header), no stunning penalty saves, and no brilliant strikes from outside the box. This is all the more surprising as both teams are winning league games and playing some great football. Mind you, The Fredo demands achievements above the ordinary and I'm sure they'll come along soon enough!

Tom Flanigan (891979)

## Stonesfield Gardening Club



Hannah Rycroft

Harriet Rycroft paid us a very welcome return visit in November, showing us how to plant pots for winter interest and spring joy. She is an expert on the subject of pots as she has, by her own admission, about 750 of them in total – the majority in a courtyard garden.

She is adamant that one should plant pots to last a long time, not just as a form of flower arranging that gets redone regularly.

She finished her illustrated talk with a demonstration and amazed us all at the number of plants that she squeezes in to every container. As well as bulbs, she will choose a plant for height and a plant for cascading, as well as finding room for small perennials repurposed from other parts of the garden. All to ensure that there is always something of interest to look at.



A very full pot - 40 bulbs, 5 plants and a yew!

Our meeting on 8 December will be our annual members' quiz and social, complete with wine and nibbles.

See page 37 for our 2026 calendar and for membership details.

Happy gardening.

Diane Bates

Secretary Stonesfield Gardening Club

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

# Church news

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## **Stonesfield Methodist Church**

### **Services for December**

- 7 11am Jenny Bywaters  
14 11am Revd. Jason Cooke  
Holy Communion Service  
21 3pm Revd. Andrew Bigg  
Christmas Service  
28 11am Revd. Andrew Biggs

### **Services for January 2026**

- 4 11am Richard Bowler  
11 11am Peter Allen  
18 11am Revd. Andrew Biggs  
Holy Communion/Covenant  
Service  
25 11am Revd. Charles Harris

O how I love a Nativity, especially the little ones playing their part and learning the wonderful Christmas story. I sit and watch the blue robed Mary, cradling her baby Jesus, while shepherds tuck knitted sheep under their arms, and stately Kings wear cardboard crowns of glory.

It's then that the powerful meaning of Christ's birth comes with force and takes my breath away.

Beneath the paper wrappings there's an open stable door,

beneath the fir tree trappings, there's a welcome and there's more.

Beyond the tinsel fairy, is a presence that's divine,

there's a child to change the future, turning water into wine.

Clare Stainsby StF 192, verse 1.

Thank you to all who supported the Shoe Box Appeal day. 48 boxes were filled for children in Eastern Europe and kind donations of £165 will take them to their destinations.

Come to a Service soon – the Christmas Celebration on 21 December at 3pm will be one of joy and wonderment!

The blessings of the season be with you.

Kathleen Albért

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## **New Church thought**

Winter's darkness seems to reflect the gloom in much of the world at the moment. I am saddened by so much evidence that prejudice and discrimination can lead to real harm. Yet Christmas-time brings a feeling of hope despite everything, and lifts my spirits. This quote from Swedenborg reassures me a little and helps me focus on the goodness that does exist alongside clear evil: 'The nature of heaven is to provide a place there for all who lead good lives, no matter what their religion may be.'

Dale Morris

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **From the Rector – Christmas Invitation**

At this time of the year many people ask the question, 'What are you doing for Christmas?' Will you be hosting Christmas lunch for seventeen relatives, going to stay in an hotel, having a quiet day by yourself and a good walk, or have you been invited to share the day, or part of it, with neighbours or family? It is wonderful to have a familiar and regular pattern of Christmas activity which gives special meaning to this time. It is always nice to be invited to share it with others, and it is also great to ring the changes and try something new occasionally.

Whatever you will be doing at Christmas this year, I hope you will be able to include attending a church service, and will be able to take others along with you. Whatever your year has been like, this is a special chance to celebrate what is good, and what is precious to us, as we sing again of God's gift of joy to the world in the birth of the Saviour. However you feel about the year ahead, in a secular world beset by many

difficulties and woes, this is a chance to pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace to bring safety, kindness and understanding in all places of trouble, as well as to our own lives. Christmas services give us a warm glow of inner peace, but they can also point us to what is truly important in our lives. The gift of the Christ child which we celebrate can help us re-evaluate our priorities, put our anxieties in perspective, and renew our resolve to live with a better focus and a new clarity of purpose and action.

In both Stonesfield and Combe our Carol Services are on Sunday 21 December: at St Laurence in Combe at 3pm, and at St James the Great in Stonesfield at 6pm. At Stonesfield we have an all-age service telling The Story of Christmas at 3.30pm on Christmas Eve, then evening services in Stonesfield at 9pm and Combe at 10.30pm. Then on Christmas morning you are warmly welcome to join us at 8am and 11am in Stonesfield, and at 9.30am in Combe.

Before Christmas I also commend to you the ADVENTures meetings at St Laurence in Combe, which are times of thoughtful reflection, music and poetry to prepare us for the Christmas season.

I wish you a very Happy Christmas.

Revd Ralph Williamson, Rector

## Church services

### Sunday 7 December [Second Sunday of Advent]

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

Come and enjoy making a Christingle (with orange, candle, red ribbon and sweets), as we look forward to Christmas!

### Sunday 14 December [Third Sunday of Advent]

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

### Sunday 21 December [Fourth Sunday of Advent]

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

### Christmas Eve 24 December (Wednesday)

|         |             |                                      |
|---------|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| 3.30pm  | Stonesfield | Crib Service – for<br>all the family |
| 9pm     | Stonesfield | Christmas<br>Communion               |
| 10.30pm | Combe       | Christmas<br>Communion               |

### Christmas Day 25 December (Thursday)

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

### Sunday 28 December [Christmas 1]

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

### Sunday 4 January [Epiphany]

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

### Sunday 11 January [Baptism of Christ]

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

### Sunday 18 January [Epiphany 2]

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

### Sunday 25 January [Epiphany 3]

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

## Wednesdays

9.30am Stonesfield Holy Communion  
(every week except  
24 & 31 Dec)

11am Combe Holy Communion  
(10 Dec, 21 Jan);  
Morning Prayer (7  
Jan)

## Thursdays in Advent

ADVENTures – 8pm in Combe Church - all  
welcome!

**4 December:** Tomorrow shall be my  
dancing day: An evening with the choir of  
Lincoln College, Oxford

**11 December:** Dawnings and the sky-  
rhyming child: Music and poetry in Advent  
(Nicholas Hooper and Ralph Williamson)

**18 December:** Good News! Jonathan  
Manners in conversation with Paddy  
O'Connell.



Revd Williamson leads the Remembrance Day service

### STONESFIELD LUNCH CLUB

Stonesfield Lunch Club meets every Weds 11 till 2 (for members) at the St James' Centre.  
Lunch Club provides a social occasion, friendship and support for our more mature  
residents along with refreshments, activities and a freshly cooked 2-course meal each week.  
Volunteers are always welcomed for many roles and this is a lovely way to be involved  
in village life. Contact me if you would like more information on becoming a member  
or in volunteering.

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

## Roman Catholic Worship

Peace to men of good will. (Luke 2:14)

Peace is a constant refrain in the New Testament: to herald Jesus' birth the angels sang to the shepherds 'Glory to God in the highest and peace to men of goodwill' and 'Peace be with you' (John 20:19) was how Christ greeted his disciples after his Resurrection.

It takes courage, commitment and hope to willingly offer peace – it frequently seems to elude us. But recently we have seen that fundamental message of Christmas of 'Peace to all' can still be active in our troubled world. Reflecting on that significant moment of shared prayer between King Charles and Pope Leo in Rome in October offered us, in our turbulent world, some gleams of hope and optimism for the healing of old wounds. Of course, it's not the first time a British monarch has met with a pope. Since the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850, monarchs have met various popes with increasing frequency of warmer dialogue signalling a gradual thawing of over 500 years of mistrust and animosity.

Peace takes time, effort, commitment, willingness to understand and listen, but in Christ we have the perfect model of the gift of peace given to all humanity at that first Christmas.

Blessed are the peacemakers. (Matthew 5:1-12)

### Holy Mass at St Theresa's, Charlbury

Sunday 9.15am

Wednesdays and Fridays 9.15am

## Christmas services

**CHRISTMAS AT ST. TERESA'S**



You are invited to  
**CAROLS FOR GAUDETE SUNDAY**  
Sunday, 14th December, 3.30pm  
St Teresa's Church  
(corner of Sheep St and Fisher's Lane)

**MASS OF CHRISTMAS NIGHT**  
with carols  
24th December, 8pm  
**MASS OF CHRISTMAS DAY**  
25th December, 9.15am

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

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to ask about upcoming dates or to arrange a course for your workplace or organisation.



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Visitors welcome: £4/talk

### 2026 Events and talks

|          |                     |
|----------|---------------------|
| Feb 9    | AGM & talk          |
| March 9  | Talk                |
| April 25 | Plant Sale          |
| May 11   | Talk                |
| June 28  | Open Gardens        |
| July 13  | Visit               |
| Sept 14  | Talk                |
| Oct 12   | Wine tasting & talk |
| Nov 9    | Talk                |
| Dec 14   | Social & Quiz       |

See website for details

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



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**01865 772883 07788 583 965**  
[Jameskumar@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Jameskumar@hotmail.co.uk)

## Stonesfield Tennis Club

The club was established over 100 years ago with membership open to all at very competitive subscription rates.

The two astro-turf tennis courts were re-laid in 2018 and are in excellent condition with plenty of court availability.

Website:

[https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/  
StonesfieldTennisClub](https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/StonesfieldTennisClub)

Email: [stonesfieldtc@gmail.com](mailto:stonesfieldtc@gmail.com)  
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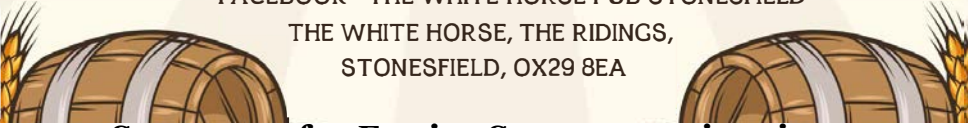
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