

The Four Parishes News Magazine

BECKLEY
FOREST HILL with SHOTOVER
HORTON-cum-STUDLEY
STANTON ST JOHN



Stanton St John Village Stores & Post Office in 1990

March 2026

The editor writes



As I was drawing together the content for this month's magazine, I couldn't help reflecting that this issue contains many instances of people who have given, and many who continue to give, outstanding service to our small village communities.

For example, three of our villages are running 'Litter Picks' this month (see pages 22, 27 and 37), when groups of people who care about our environment will be getting together to collect up rubbish cast away by other people who don't! On the face of it, this might seem a strange way to spend a weekend morning or afternoon, but it is usually a great community experience and it makes a difference. If you haven't tried it, why not give it a go?

This month we are also celebrating the dedication of two couples who, over the years, took on and ran the Stanton St John village shop, which has now sadly closed for good (see page 15). Our pages are also full of events and initiatives run by volunteers for the benefit of others: from coffee mornings and a pop-up pub to the Otmoor Challenge and Daffodil Day, with scores of other contributions continuing unnoticed in our school, our churches, our parish councils and our village halls. Volunteering is beneficial to everyone and it keeps our communities in good heart.



Don't forget that you can use the QR code to read this magazine on your phone or tablet when you can no longer find the paper copy. Or simply type fourparishes.org.uk/magazine into your web browser.

Julia

Our cover photo

is of Olive and George Lees outside the Stanton St John Village Shop which they ran for 15 years (see pages 38-39)

Photo from "The Impact of 'Community Post Office' Status on Rural Sub-Post Offices", Rural Development Commission Report: Rural Research Series No. 8 (1990)

If you have taken a photo which you think might be suitable for the cover of the next magazine, please email it to

4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com

The Four Parishes News Magazine

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We welcome contributions for future issues, but please get in touch with the editorial team beforehand at 4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com to discuss any piece you'd like to write. Contributors typically live in the Four Parishes, or have a strong personal connection to the area. The editors reserve the right to reject any submitted content at any stage of the editorial process. All contributions to and advertisements in this magazine are the sole responsibility of the author and do not imply or represent any official editorial view or endorsement.

Recent issues of the magazine are available to view online at www.fourparishes.org.uk/magazine.

The closing date for the April 2026 issue is 15 March 2026

**To advertise in the magazine please email JULIA
adverts.4parishesnewsletter@gmail.com**

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Benefice of Beckley, Forest Hill with Shotover, Horton-cum-Studley and Stanton St John

The Reverend Anthea Beresford is Vicar of the Church of The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Beckley, St Nicolas Church in Forest Hill, St Barnabas Church in Horton-cum-Studley, and St John the Baptist Church in Stanton St John. Anthea is supported by a team of voluntary clergy, lay ministers and churchwardens, whose details are listed below.

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The Four Parishes News Magazine has 10 issues per year and is distributed free of charge to approximately 850 addresses in Beckley, Forest Hill, Horton-cum-Studley and Stanton St John. It is funded by advertising revenue, which is used to cover the printing costs. We are dependent on volunteers to assemble the content, book and invoice the advertisers, compile and edit the magazine, collect it from the printers and distribute it throughout the four parishes.

Editor: Julia Stutfield

Layout Designer: Catherine Matthews

Assistant Editors: Jonathan Barker, Anthea Beresford

Church Services in the Four Parishes, March 2026

	St Nicolas, Forest Hill with Shotover	St John the Baptist, Stanton St John	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Beckley	St Barnabas, Horton-cum- Studley
1 March <i>2nd Sunday of Lent</i>	11am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	11am Morning Prayer
	4pm Four Parishes Children's Church at Forest Hill			
	6pm Four Parishes Church Without Walls at Stanton St John Village Hall			
8 March <i>3rd Sunday of Lent</i>		9.30am Morning Prayer	9.30am Morning Prayer	11am Holy Communion
	6pm Four Parishes Choral Evensong at Forest Hill			
15 March <i>Mothering Sunday</i>	11am Morning Prayer	9.30am Holy Communion		11am Morning Prayer
	6pm Four Parishes Iona Service at Beckley			
22 March	10am Four Parishes Service of Holy Communion at Stanton St John			
	3pm Four Parishes Family Church does Forest Church at Bernwood Forest, Horton-cum-Studley			
	6pm Four Parishes Taizé Service on Zoom			
29 March <i>Palm Sunday</i>	11am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	11am Holy Communion
	4pm Four Parishes Children's Church at Forest Hill			

Holy Week and Easter services from Monday 30 March are listed on page 12. Please check the website www.fourparishes.org.uk for any updates. If you are not on the church mailing list and would like an invitation to a Zoom service or a regular reminder of weekly services, please email Anthea: anthea@fourparishes.org.uk.

A letter from Anthea

Hi everyone,



Rejoice with me! I walked Bertie during the week, and it did not rain! A very unusual occurrence! The day was exceedingly dull, but at least I managed to remain dry. Bertie was not so fortunate but of course when he knows he is going out for a walk it does not bother him at all. He returned home absolutely filthy dirty as ever! I feel for him as the mud shows up on him so much more than on my first dog, who was a chocolate

Labrador. I am relieved the hosepipe ban is lifted so at least I can hose the mud off – not an experience poor Bertie is keen on, but tolerates, unlike his best mate Oscar!

I have had many conversations with people recently who are SO fed up with the miserable wet days we have been having for so long now. We seem to have missed out on the lovely cold, bright, sunny, crisp days of winter that at least look lovely and are beautiful if you can wrap up nice and warm.

In these days it can be difficult to keep our spirits up. But I was fortunate this morning, and despite the dullness that greeted me as I threw open the curtains, I had the delight of seeing the baby goats in the field behind me playing joyfully together. It cheered my heart, and I enjoyed watching them. As they bleated for their mums when they got just a little too far from them, it was heartwarming to see the mums run towards them to reassure.



As my eyes drew back to the garden, it was lovely to see a clump of snowdrops still in full flower, a solitary daffodil blooming brightly, and a little clump of primroses with their beautiful subtle yellow contrasting with the green of the grass around them.

Sometimes it can be difficult to find things to warm our hearts, especially if we are going through difficult times – not simply when we are fed up with the weather – although of course long periods of dark, miserable days are known to have a bad effect on our wellbeing. We often need to

look a little harder for things that cheer us, but as we look, there is usually something that we can hold on to.

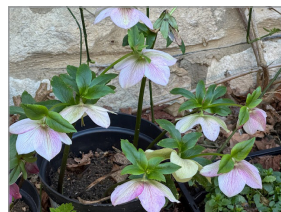
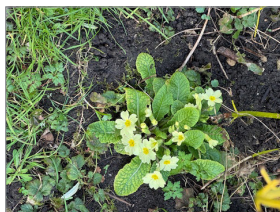
Today has turned from a dull and miserable start, to rain, but now there is bright sunshine, blue sky, and beautiful white fluffy clouds. How things can change in a short space of time – hopefully, but not always, for the better.

In whatever we may be going through, it is good if we have friends and family around us who can carry us through. Many of us may not have friends and family nearby, and often we need more than that. And this may be where faith can help – which for some of us may be something already deep within us, that helps us to weather the storms of life. For some, the storms of life may make us question our faith, and that can make things even harder for us. Some of us may not have experienced a faith that we can hold on to.

We are currently in the season of Lent, traditionally a time of self-examination, penitence (acknowledging the wrong we do, or the right we do not do), self-denial (or taking up of good things, especially in helping others), study, and preparation for Easter. There is a lot going on in the Four Parishes at this time, which might help us deepen, refresh, or perhaps begin our journey of faith, and an encounter with the risen Jesus, who has gone before us, loves us more than we could ever imagine, and who helps us weather the storms of life, sharing also in the joys too. I hope that something we have planned over the coming weeks is helpful to anyone seeking to journey on.

And as ever, please do get in touch if you need someone to talk to. Take great care and God bless you and your loved ones.

Anthea



The Reverend Anthea Beresford is Vicar of the Church of The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Beckley, St Nicolas Church in Forest Hill, St Barnabas Church in Horton-cum-Studley, and St John the Baptist Church in Stanton St John.

CHURCH MATTERS

Church opening and services

All the churches in the Four Parishes are open daily. Beckley 10am-6pm; Forest Hill, Horton-cum-Studley and Stanton St John: 10am-4pm.

Celebrating Mothering Sunday in the Four Parishes: 15 March

We are very much looking forward to welcoming you to our services across the Four Parishes as we celebrate Mothering Sunday and give thanks for our mothers, and all those who have mothered us or had a motherly influence over us throughout our lives. For some this can be a painful day, for others a day full of joy, celebration and thanksgiving. Whatever this day brings, all are welcome. See page 4 for details and times of services.

Advent challenge and beyond

I wonder how you are getting on if you decided to take up my challenge to read the whole Bible this year along with me. If you have, I wonder if you are on track. Amazingly I continue to surprise myself that at the time of writing this, I am still on track! If you are behind, please do not get dispirited but keep going. We can do this!

For March, for the Old Testament, we need to aim to finish Leviticus, read Numbers up to chapter 31:24, Psalms up to chapter 39 and Proverbs up to chapter 8:21. For the New Testament, we need to aim to finish the Gospel of Mark and read the Gospel of Luke up to chapter 8:39. If we manage this, we are a quarter of the way through the Bible already! I look forward to hearing how you get on. Please do let me know. It will be great to journey together.

Ongoing midweek activities on Zoom

We are continuing Morning and Evening Prayer and the Four Parishes Book Group on Zoom as detailed. Please do get in touch with Anthea for invitations if you wish to be included.

	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Morning Prayer at 9am		Y		Y
Evening Prayer at 6pm	Y		Y	
Four Parishes Book Group at 7.30pm			Y	

Book Group

We are reading *Cries from the Homeland: Reflections of Jesus' Sayings from the Cross* by Guli Francis-Dehqani for Lent, meeting virtually by Zoom on a Thursday evening at 8pm for an hour. Please do get in touch with Anthea if you would like to come join us. New members are always welcome. After Lent we will be starting another new book.

Home Group Study

The study group is looking at the book called *Practising the Way* by John Mark Comer. The group meets on Monday afternoons at 2.30pm at Studley Farm House, Horton-cum-Studley. New members are always welcome, and anyone from around the Four Parishes is welcome to join in. If you are interested in being involved, please contact Annie Payne by email at anniefpayne@gmail.com.

Prayers for Peace

As the ceasefire in the Holy Land continues to look fragile, hope for peace in Ukraine continues to look far off, and news of atrocities in Sudan, Myanmar, Mozambique and Iran continue to come through, it is clear that God's peace is not present throughout the world, so we continue to pray for peace. We will meet for 15 minutes at 12pm on Wednesdays and Saturdays in March across the Four Parishes as follows:

Beckley	18 and 28
Forest Hill	11 and 21
Horton-cum-Studley	7 and 25
Stanton	4 and 14

Private devotions during Lent

There is a vast array of books available to us to help us engage with the season of Lent. Here are some suggestions from me:

Cries from the Homeland: Reflections of Jesus' Sayings from the Cross by Guli Francis-Dehqani

Wardrobes and Rings: Through Lenten Lands with the Inklings by Julia Golding, Malcolm Guite and Simon Horobin

Dancing to the Heartbeat of God by the Anglican Communion (around 30 authors from around the globe)

Meeting God in John: a companion for Lent, Holy Week and beyond by David F Ford

Lent with the beloved disciple by Malcolm Marshall

Walking with God: 40 daily reflections by J John

If you decide to read any of these, I would love to hear how you get on. If you read something else that you think others might be interested to hear about for the future, please do let me know.

Dates for your diary and preparation for Lent and Easter

Come and See: Lent 2026

What it is: the Diocese of Oxford 'Come and See' initiative takes place each Lent. It is part of their (and hence the Four Parishes, being part of the Diocese of Oxford) common vision to become a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world. It invites new people to discover Christ and helps the whole church to be formed as more confident disciples, living out our everyday faith.

I am hoping that many of us in the Four Parishes will join in this Lent. Those who have partaken in previous years, in person, online or by reading the resources at home, have found it a fruitful experience.

The theme for 2026: this year's course – the Bishop of Oxford, Bishop Steven's last before his retirement – looks at one of the core celebrations of the church, the Eucharist, (which is also known as Holy Communion, Communion, Mass, the Jesus Meal). Bishop Steven will be examining it from a Biblical and theological perspective as a means of building our faith and growing our relationship with Jesus. The course is for enquirers, and new and established Christians alike, and offers a new perspective on the Eucharist and its place within the Christian faith.

How to be involved:

- **in person:** we will meet in **Stanton Village Hall** on Wednesday evenings **from 7.30-9pm** during Lent (with the exception of Holy Week), and one week afterwards, (**six sessions on 25 February, 4, 11, 18, 25 March, and 8 April**). We will watch a short film from Bishop Steven, Bishop of Oxford, on the topic for the week, and then have a chat about the film in a friendly informal space, with refreshments to keep us going.
- **through emails for individuals:** you can register online for 'Come and

See' at: oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see. Everyone who signs up will receive a daily email with a short, written reflection that they can also listen to if they wish. Each Sunday, they will receive a link to a short film from Bishop Steven. You may wish to sign up for these in addition to coming in person on a Wednesday evening.

I look forward to us journeying together through Lent using the 'Come and See' resources as we seek to further understand the Eucharist. Please do get in touch if you have any questions.

Passion Play in Beckley for the Four Parishes: 4 April, 2pm

It is very exciting that Beckley plans to host their Passion Play once more this year on Holy Saturday. This is being led by Beckley Church which is keen for this to be a Four Parishes event, so participants are being sought from across the Four Parishes. See pages 12 and 23 for more information, and please do think about taking part, or coming along to watch. It should once again be a powerful experience.

Holy Week in the Four Parishes: 29 March - 5 April

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday on 29 March (see page 5 for services) and ends with Easter Sunday on 5 April. From **Monday to Thursday of Holy Week, there is a service of Holy Communion at 7.30pm in each of our churches**, lasting around 50 minutes and including a short reflection in place of a sermon. The Maundy Thursday service is slightly longer, as it includes the stripping of the altar and surrounding Sanctuary, which is always a moving experience.

On **Good Friday there is a quiet Service of Reflection at 12 noon**, lasting an hour.

On **Holy Saturday**, as well as the **Passion Play**, there is an **Easter Vigil of Readings, Psalms and Prayer at 6pm**, which lasts around an hour.

Easter Day begins with a Dawn Service in Beckley churchyard at 6.30am, lasting about half an hour and followed by bacon butties at Lindum Cottage, Church Street, Beckley OX3 9UT. **Easter celebrations continue with Holy Communion Services in our other three village churches**, lasting about an hour.

See page 12 for a summary of times and locations of Holy Week Services from Monday 30 March onwards.

Holy Week and Easter Services in the Four Parishes, 2026

	St Nicolas, Forest Hill with Shotover	St John the Baptist, Stanton St John	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Beckley	St Barnabas, Horton-cum- Studley
30 March <i>Monday of Holy Week</i>		7.30pm Holy Communion		
31 March <i>Tuesday of Holy Week</i>	7.30pm Holy Communion			
1 April <i>Wednesday of Holy Week</i>			7.30pm Holy Communion	
2 April <i>Maundy Thursday</i>				7.30pm Holy Communion
3 April <i>Good Friday</i>	12 noon Four Parishes Service of Reflection (Hour before the Cross at St Barnabas, Horton-cum-Studley)			
4 April <i>Holy Saturday</i>	6pm Four Parishes Easter Vigil of Readings, Psalms and Prayers at St Nicolas, Forest Hill			
5 April <i>Easter Sunday</i>	11am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	6.30am Dawn Service	11am Holy Communion

Beckley Passion Play, Saturday 4 April, 2-3pm

The play starts in Beckley Church, moving from the church through the village and back to the church, where refreshments will be served.

There are no scripts to learn and costumes are optional. Come and help us continue this village tradition and mark Easter in a special way. If you'd like to take part, please contact Susy Jepson on susy.jepson@gmail.com or Anthea on anthea@fourparishes.org.uk as soon as possible.



Annual Meetings of Parishioners and Annual Parochial Church Meetings

It is that time of year again! The Annual Parochial Church Meetings (APCM) have to be completed by 31 May, and so dates have been set for these. The related Annual Meeting of Parishioners is on the same day, immediately before the APCM.

Here is advanced notice of the meetings:

Beckley:	15 May at 7pm in Church
Forest Hill:	19 May at 6pm in Forest Hill Village Hall
Horton-cum-Studley:	14 April at 7.30pm in Church
Stanton St John:	20 May at 7.30pm Stanton Village Hall

Revision of electoral rolls

Each year a formal process is undertaken by every Parochial Church Council (PCC), as preparation for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), to ensure the electoral roll's accuracy. Most years this involves a simple update to the existing roll and involves no action from people already on their church's electoral roll. This is the situation this year. Action is only required if you wish to join an electoral roll or leave one. If you wish to do so, please talk to your Church's Electoral Roll Officer or Anthea:

To qualify for inclusion on the electoral roll of a Parish Church, you must be living in the Parish, or be a regular worshipper in that Parish. If you have any questions about this, please do contact the Electoral Roll Officer of the related Church (see details below).

Beckley:	Gina Robson (01865 351637)
Forest Hill:	Pat Fraser (01865 875679)
Horton-cum-Studley:	Carol Welch carol_welch20@hotmail.com
Stanton St John:	Sue Baker (01865 351449)

For more information about any of the items on pages 8-13 of the magazine, please contact me, Anthea Beresford. Email: anthea@fourparishes.org.uk Tel: 01865 351839 Mob: 07876 527514.

GENERAL

Beckley Bells: new members wanted

Beckley Bells meet in Beckley Village Hall on Tuesday afternoons during school term to ring a set of 25 handbells, mostly for fun, but occasionally for public performance, e.g. at 'Carols & Claret' in Beckley Church.

Handbells have been around for thousands of years, yet the handbells used today are sophisticated and beautiful precision instruments. Playing handbells is very much a team effort, requiring good co-ordination and a level of musical aptitude, as well as a basic ability to read music. Our Beckley group has no conductor and ringers take turns in giving directions such as setting a suitable tempo for a piece.



We currently have space for a few more ringers and would love to welcome some new members. If you want to find out more about us, please contact Sue Cloke sue.cloke@outlook.com and arrange to drop into one of our afternoon sessions.

Birdwatching for Beginners



Do you find corvids confusing? Does birdsong leave you baffled? If so, RSPB Oxford Local Group has the course for you.



In three sessions – two in the classroom, plus a longer birdwatching walk – with friendly and knowledgeable local birders, you can learn what many common birds look and sound like, plus bird behaviour, their habitats, distribution and migration.

Talks:
The Village Hall
Middle Road, Stanton St John
OX33 1HD
11 and 18 April 2026
9.00 to 11.00
(light refreshments provided)
Plus a weekend walk later in the spring (date and venue will depend on weather conditions).



The course costs £30.00 for all three sessions. You don't need to be a member of the Local Group. The course is aimed at over 16s but keen 12-16s can enrol if accompanied by a responsible adult. Places are limited to ensure that everyone has a good experience, so please book early. For more details or to book, email info.rspbxford@gmail.com. (Profits are donated to RSPB Otmoor.)

Four Parishes Community Shop

A letter from Kate MacFarlane

On behalf of the Steering Group for the Four Parishes Community Shop project, I would like to thank you for your interest and offers of support during our recent investigations into opening a community-run enterprise at the former village shop premises in Stanton St. John.

After the village shop shut at the end of August 2025, the Steering Group was formed following an initial consultation with the community via a meeting that was held at the shop. Once the Steering Group got going in September 2025, we created a survey that was distributed online and via the Four Parishes News Magazine. We held an open meeting on 3 November 2025 in which Nicholas Braithwaite gave a detailed presentation and answered questions from members of the community who attended.

In December 2025 and January 2026, we consulted with the Plunkett Foundation and Community First Oxfordshire as well as the Parish Councils in Stanton St John, Forest Hill, Beckley and Horton-cum-Studley. Since then, the Steering Group has met regularly to analyse data. We have made further efforts to access local support, explored governance, compiled the necessary documentation and explored ways in which to secure funding.

It has been an invaluable process in exploring whether support for a community-run shop would translate into sufficient practical commitment.

The outcome of this exploration is that, while funding appears achievable, there is not the capacity to form the strong, local Management Team that is required in order to take the project forward from the planning stage to the implementation stage.

As the acting Chair of the Steering Group, I therefore wish to inform you that we have agreed to dissolve the group at this time.

I would like to sincerely thank all those - past and present - who have shared their ideas, time, energy and enthusiasm; and for supporting and promoting the idea within their own communities.

Kate MacFarlane

Acting Chair of the 4PCS Steering Group

Water, Water Everywhere by Lyn Ebbs

Looking around our four parishes, you might not consider that we live in hill country. But a close study of an old-fashioned Ordnance Survey map's contour lines show that we occupy quite elevated positions in our landscape. The highest point in Beckley is at 141 metres above sea-level. In spite of its commanding position, Forest Hill's is a little lower at 134m; then Stanton St John at 112m and finally Horton-cum-Studley at 100m. For comparison the nearby highpoint is Shotover at 170m and the lowpoint is Otmoor at 58m.

So, what is the connection with water? For that you need to go back about 20 million years. Our locality was covered by the sea back then, not just flood water; quite deep and very muddy for the first few million years. The result is that now in the lower parts of our parishes, there are extensive deposits of Oxford Clay. Not great for agriculture, some of that land has remained as woodland: Stanton Great Wood; Holly Wood and Stanton Little Wood.

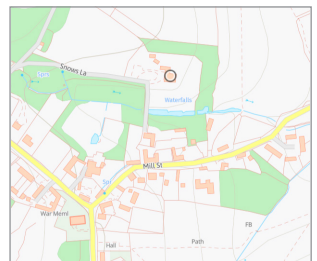
Gradually the seas became shallower and the climate warmer, creating



tropical conditions that allowed corals to thrive. You might be lucky enough to dig up ammonites and other fossils from this period in your garden. After a few millions of years more, the coral polyps and other remains rotted down to form the limestone that bears their name: the Corallian.

These limestones lie on top of the Oxford Clay and form a long ridge from Wheatley to Islip. (Because the land was higher, and the porous limestone drier than the clay lands downhill, it made the ideal route for a road, today's B4027, which became the main coaching road from London to Worcester.)

This is where the water, literally, comes in because, where the Corallian intersects with the clay, a line of springs occurs. Another type of map is helpful here: the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside or Magic for short. This is an interactive map that allows you to find out information about the natural



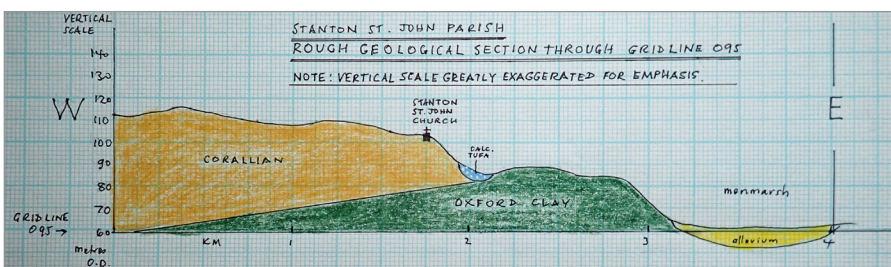
environment; a little bit of magic reveals where the springs can be found. Not only that, the map also shows the direction of flow of the streams that arise from the springs. So, you can find out not just where our water comes from, but where it goes.

Interestingly, locally we supply water to two different water systems that feed the River Thames, the Cherwell and the Thame. Stanton St John's springs feed into a stream along Mill Street (the clue's in the name) which had sufficient head of water further down the hill to power the mill. This reliable stream did not even dry up in the long drought of 1976. Further downstream, it joins forces with Danes Brook, which takes water from Woodperry and Horton-cum-Studley, then becomes part of Moorbirge Brook, which in turn joins Holton Brook and is further supplemented by water from a spring that rises on Breach Farm land in Forest Hill. The waters merit the name of 'river' when they join the Thame at Holton, finally making it to the Thames at Dorchester.



As you might expect, any springs in Beckley are going to head straight downhill to Otmoor and eventually end up, via the River Ray, in the Cherwell downriver from Islip. (How water was moved around Otmoor is a story in its own right.) But on the southern edge of Stanton another spring takes yet another route, forming Bayswater Brook, joining the Cherwell just north of Cutteslowe. The Cherwell then flows into the Thames in a pretty corner of Christchurch Meadows in Oxford.

Those of you with long memories might recognise some of this information from the Millennium Poster project that was on display in Stanton St John Village Hall for many years. The late Henry Towers, a retired geography teacher, provided the information and hand-drawn maps for the geology poster; I'm lucky enough to have the originals.



Local Government Reorganisation Update, March 2026

On the day that the Government launched their public consultation on Local Government Reorganisation for Oxfordshire the Green Belt parishes wrote to the Secretary of State and Minister to object to becoming part of 'Greater Oxford'. All of our Four, and other local, Parishes signed. The letter has been circulated, was published in the Oxford Times (letters 12/02/26) and is on the Beckley website.

Steve Reed, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and Minister Alison McGovern have launched a public consultation on the three proposals for unitary authorities for Oxfordshire. This will affect all the residents of Oxfordshire – How much council tax we will pay? How much Green Belt countryside will be used for development? Will we have a say in our future? **We urge you to take part and let the Minister know your views.**

The **public consultation closes on 26 March 2026** and you can find it at <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/oxfordshire/>.

It asks your opinion on each proposal in simple dropdown choices with an opportunity to comment.

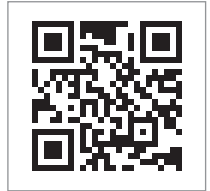
A number of articles have been published in previous editions of this Newsletter with details of each proposal. The presentations from each of the Council Leaders at the meeting held in Beckley village hall in September are on the Beckley website. This should be sufficient information for you to complete the questionnaire, but the links to each proposal are also copied on the consultation website and below.

We feel very strongly that the 3-Council proposal would be very harmful for our parishes. It would be the most expensive, having to set up the 80% of services currently provided by the County Council in triplicate. Each of the 3-Councils would have only half the recommended number of residents to pay the higher costs. Over 2,000 acres of Green Belt countryside would be destroyed to build an additional 43,000 - 67,000 houses. This is in addition to the SODC Local Plan development and would double the population of Oxford. We would have little, if any, say in our future, being outnumbered by the city.

The 2-Council proposal would join SODC and the Vale with West Berkshire. The HQ is likely to be Newbury. West Berkshire is in serious financial difficulties with a debt of £37million, which is likely to rise. It is currently being bailed out by the Government, but this agreement ends in March. Would local taxpayers have to bail them out in future? This proposal is the second most expensive, having to set up the 80% of services provided by the County Council in duplicate. The Joint SODC/Vale emerging Local Plan includes developing over 1,900 acres of former Green Belt countryside.

The final option is the 1-Council - One Oxfordshire Council where the County Council will take over the 20% of services provided by the districts - mainly planning and refuse collection. It is the most cost effective option and could reduce council tax and make savings. It would be the least disruptive to services, as it already provides 80% of services including adult social care (the largest budget), highways, fire and rescue etc. There are no plans for additional development other than in the Local Plans.

There is more information on the Beckley website <https://www.beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk/> and the Government consultation has links to each proposal. If you have not done so already, please sign our petition: REJECT THE 'GREATER OXFORD' UNITARY AUTHORITY' at <https://chng.it/bDwg74DJmp>. We plan to submit the petition in response to the consultation.



Please complete the consultation questionnaire and tell the Secretary of State what you think. You will have to pay the resulting council tax and will be affected by the level of development of the Green Belt. The decision for Oxfordshire will be announced in July.

Ginette Camps-Walsh, Beckley



The Village Shop in Stanton St John by Kate Macfarlane

It is only when one works behind the scenes in any enterprise that one learns what is involved in keeping the show on the road. From 2017-2023, I worked at the village shop and occasionally ran the show whilst Rowan took a short break with her family. I wanted to write about the wonderful convenience store that Rowan and her partner Dickie Lydiatt developed over nine years. The business provided a great service for those of us who used it and it was a lively place to work for those of us who served behind the counter.



When I held the fort, I got to the shop early; there were so many things to organise before opening at 9am. The bread delivery and newspapers were waiting for me beneath the window when I arrived. On opening and sorting these, I checked everything to make sure the delivery was complete. I wrote the name of each customer on each newspaper and put the newspapers in 4 piles, one for each village. I sorted out bread orders for customers. I checked the fridges to make sure the temperatures were on target and went through the use-by dates on stock inside them. I switched on the oven and selected frozen pastries to cook so that they were ready by 9am. I wrote use-by dates on packets for the pastries and once they were cooked, left them on the kitchen counter to cool down. I put them in individual packets ready for sale.

Rowan always gave me copious notes about which deliveries were coming in each day and when to place the order for bread and milk. When I closed the door at 2pm, on days when deliveries were provided, I listened to orders on the ansaphone and boxed them up. I collected up unsold newspapers and tied them in a bundle for collection the next morning, swept the floor, washed up the chopping boards and baking trays, wiped down surfaces and appliances with anti-bacterial spray, put the newspapers under the window, loaded up my car and locked up. I realised that all of this went on like clockwork, week in and week out, to keep the shop supplied with fresh

produce, groceries, deli products, eggs, dairy products, cakes, baguettes – always available with excellent coffee, hot chocolate or tea and always combined with a friendly service. Like many customers, I purchased works of art from the window, found out about local events via the noticeboard, bought tickets for film nights, took in dry cleaning and watches for repair.

The customer base was always highly dependent upon local people, particularly those living in Stanton St John. Support for the business was impacted by many external factors, the most significant of which was the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent rising costs, not just of stock for the shop, but of delivery charges from Bookers which had, up until that point, been free. During the pandemic, Rowan closed the shop for 3 months and delivered groceries to 180 families living locally. In July 2020, the business re-opened from 9am to 2pm to enable continuation of home deliveries, which were particularly important for elderly or house-bound customers without access to online shopping.

Rowan's decision to close up shop at the end of August 2025 came suddenly, but I was not surprised. I honestly don't know how she did what she did, running an amazing shop that was at our service 7 days a week, through high days and holidays with deliveries available twice a week; open every weekend of the year except for occasional Bank Holidays, closed over Christmas and Easter.

Thank you, Rowan and Dickie, for giving us an opportunity to consider a community-run enterprise. I have been involved in the Steering Group for the Four Parishes Community Shop since September 2025, but in the end, we could not bring the project to fruition. The business's previous incarnation as a Post Office as well as a shop brought a much greater footfall into the village and, with the best will in the world, despite all the services on offer, the footfall was not the same when the Post Office closed. The tide of time has made village shops increasingly hard-pressed to survive without community effort, interest and determination in these costly times. I feel lucky to have worked in the shop and to have met such a wonderful range of people, pets and visitors whilst working behind the counter.

Kate MacFarlane

The photo shows Stanton Shop all dressed up for the filming of Midsomer Murders!

The Maple Tree Children's Centre, Wheatley

Here is a reminder of our schedule this term:

Mondays: Messy Monday (back by popular demand) at 10-11.30am and **Twins' Club** at 2-4pm

Tuesdays: Smart Start at 9.30-11.30am

Wednesdays: Maple Babies at 9.30am-12pm

Thursdays: Time to Rhyme at 9.30-11.30am and **The Maple Tree at Forest Hill Village Hall** from 10.30am-12pm

Fridays: Little Learners at 10-11.30am

Saturdays: Family Fun at 10-11.30am on 14 March and 18 April.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at Daffodil Day on Sunday 22 March. See <https://www.stnicolasforesthill.org/daffodil-day-2026> for more information and tickets.

We will be open most days during the Easter holiday – please check our website or social media for details.

We are here to help if you need advice or support:

Telephone: 01865 236700 Email: info@mapletree.org.uk

Website: www.mapletree.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheMapleTreeWheatley



Laura Spencer, The Maple Tree Centre Manager

The Great Litter Pick, 'Let's Keep Beckley Tidy'

Sunday 8 March, 11am-1pm

Meeting Point: Abingdon Arms car park

For more information contact Paige Newmark

07900 523251

or PaigeNewmark@hotmail.com

BECKLEY

Beckley Church

Details of all church services and general church news can be found on pages 4 - 13. Any changes to the published schedule of services will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Coffee (or tea) and Chat, Saturday 28 March, 10.30am-12pm

All welcome! Catch up with friends and neighbours, meet new people, and perhaps choose books from our huge selection next to the bookcase. Do join us in **Beckley Church**.

Beckley Passion Play, Saturday 4 April, 2pm

Performers wanted from across the Four Parishes!

Beckley is once again hosting its Passion Play (see also pages 11 and 12). The play will be performed principally in Beckley High Street starting at 2pm in Beckley Church. All we need now are willing participants from across the Four Parishes, young and old alike, no matter where you live! There are no scripts to learn and costumes are optional. Come and help us continue this village tradition and mark Easter in a special way. If you'd like to take part, please contact Susy Jepson on susy.jepson@gmail.com or Anthea on anthea@fourparishes.org.uk as soon as possible.

Beckley and Area Community Benefit Society Ltd (BACBS)

The Abingdon Arms has hosted lots of special events in the last few months, which have proved very popular. Perhaps the most spectacular was the Burns Night supper, a collaborative venture between BACBS' More than a Pub group and The Abingdon Arms tenants.

Over eighty people sat down to a delicious (and very generous) three course haggis dinner. The pub was decorated with tartan, fairy lights, and greenery; Dan and quite a few of the guests turned out in their tartan; and the whole was made a truly special occasion by Tim Key's amazing bagpipe playing and our fabulous MC, Muir Gray, whose dry humour and authentic reading of Robert Burns brought the house down. Many thanks to everyone involved, especially The Abingdon Arms' staff who served us beautifully in spite of the cramped conditions.



The Abingdon Arms is thriving, and we wouldn't have a pub at all without the efforts, fundraising, and investment in shares by over 200 people. HOWEVER to keep the pub going and maintain its fabric, we do still need money. New shareholders are always welcome and all shareholders are entitled to 10% off food and drink at the pub: for further information email theabingdonarms@gmail.com. We also welcome suggestions of ways to fundraise to maintain our pub – and our investment.

More than a Pub programme

For more information check <https://bacbs.org/events> or email info@bacbs.org.

Pub quiz, first Wednesday every month at 7.30pm in the pub with pizza

The next quiz will be on **Wednesday 4 March**. Table bookings essential – tables sell out every month, days before the quiz happens. Teams should comprise no more than six people. It's free to enter and, thanks to The Abingdon Arms, there's a free round of drinks for the winning team.

Community walks, third Sunday of the month, 2pm

Our monthly walks will resume on **Sunday 19 April at 2pm**. We are hoping that most of the mud will have receded by then. Mary Stuck will lead a walk of about two hours starting from outside The Abingdon Arms. Come along and meet your neighbours for a gentle walk and a friendly chat.

Sunday evening talks, last Sunday of the month, 6.30 pm in the pub

On **Sunday 29 March**, our talk will be given by our very own **Chris White**, who will tell us a surprising story of courage, compassion, duty and the implementation of largely preventative medicine by the Royal Army Medical Corps in Crete in 1941.

Then on **Sunday 26 April**, **Elena Seiradake** from Beckley and Oxford University will explain how the brain works, by describing the amazing molecular structures of the nervous system.

On **31 May**, Beckley's **Adrian Pennink**, who gave us extraordinary insights into making a film about Gabon in 2024, is going to talk about his latest venture – filming a group taking pizzas to Ukraine.

Sally Bayley, who was to speak to us in March, will now give her talk in July.

Cathy Davies, for the BACBS committee

Beckley and Stowood Parish Council

The next Parish Council Meeting is **9 March, 7pm in Beckley Village Hall.**

Notices of Landowner Deposits

Land at Wadley Hill Farm OX3 9SR - We would like to thank everyone who has responded with evidence on the use of the unregistered path to access BBOWT's SSSI Sydlings Copse, College Pond and Wick Copse. More evidence is very welcome if you have been using the path to access the site. The evidence is being collated and will be submitted. Please send to clerk's e-mail below.

Land At Beckley Park, Beckley, OX3 9SY - Another such notice has been submitted for the Beckley Park estate. The map is on the Beckley website. We are not aware that any paths are missing, but if you think there might be please send evidence and a map to clerk's e-mail below.

Repair to Playground, 23-25 March

The playground will be closed to enable engineers to repair the equipment. Dates are subject to change due to weather and we will keep you updated by WhatsApp, the web site and e-mail of any changes.

Removal and Replacement of Sand Butts from MoD Firing range

The removal and replacement of the Sand Butts will involve 100 HGV journeys through Beckley village – Otmoor Lane, Roman Way and Woodperry Road. This will affect residents and visitors. Plans are being drawn up to try to ensure there is as little inconvenience to everyone as possible. Residents will be kept informed. It was hoped to start this work soon, but the Firing Range is currently flooded.

Annual Parish Meeting, Monday 11 May, 7pm Beckley Village Hall

All are cordially invited to hear what the Parish Council, church, local clubs, and groups have been up to with an opportunity to give feedback and ask questions. **This meeting will be followed by the Village Hall AGM.** We do hope to see you there.

New Website - help still required

If you are proficient in IT, emails etc. and would like to earn some extra money on a project basis please contact us. Your help would be welcome.

Please see the website <https://www.beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk/> for updates. The clerk's email is clerk@beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk.

FOREST HILL

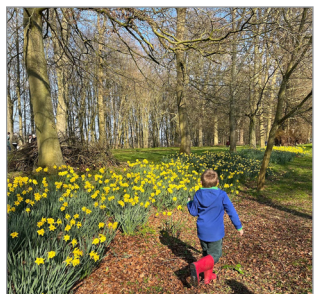
St Nicolas Church

Details of all church services and general church news can be found on pages 4 - 13. Any changes to the published schedule of services will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Daffodil Day at Shotover House

Sunday 22 March, 2-4.30pm

Daffodil Day returns to Shotover House on **22 March** offering a much-anticipated celebration of spring and a rare chance for residents of Forest Hill, Wheatley, and the surrounding area to enjoy these beautiful private gardens. Visitors will be welcomed into a stunning landscape filled with extensive displays of daffodils and a rich variety of other spring bulbs, all providing a spectacular burst of colour at this most uplifting time of year.



Run by St Nicolas Church, Forest Hill, the event combines natural beauty with community spirit. Proceeds are shared equally between the church and The Maple Tree Children's Centre in Wheatley (who also run the Thursday morning sessions in Forest Hill Village Hall), ensuring that every visit helps support valuable local work.

As in previous years, free off-site car parking will be available at local schools and the routes for walking or cycling will be clearly signposted. Advance booking is strongly recommended, particularly if you are hoping to park on site. Priority will be given to 'Blue Badge' holders and drivers with limited mobility.

More information and a link to book tickets can be found at www.stnicolasforesthill.org/daffodil-day-2026, or use the QR code on the back cover of the magazine. Ticket prices remain the same as 2025, apart from a small reduction in the price of a 'Blue Badge' Car ticket. Car drivers with restricted mobility, who do not have a Blue Badge, also qualify for a reduced entry price: please email julia.stutfield@gmail.com to request a discount code.

If you wish to book advance tickets but are unable to do it online for any reason, please phone Julia on 07766 103427.

Forest Hill Litter Pick

Saturday 7 March, 2-4pm

Join us in making a positive impact on our beloved village.

Meeting Point: Forest Hill Village Hall



We will provide all the essentials: picks, bin bags, high-visibility vests, and light refreshments. Please bring along your sturdy gloves.

Kids welcome! No registration required.

Every small action counts!

Be a part of the change and let's keep Forest Hill tidy, vibrant, and full of community pride. See you there!

For more information contact Susann: susanfh@gmx.net.

Jazz on the Hill at Forest Hill Village Hall

Tuesday 10 March, 7.30-9.30pm

Join Julie, Will and their musician friends to celebrate jazz with plenty of opportunity for instrumentalists and vocalists to make music with a house band, and to take the seat in the rhythm section as well if wished. Or just come to listen and soak up the atmosphere!

No need to book, just turn up on the night. Soft drinks available, bring your own alcohol if desired. Suggested donation by card or cash £5.

Saturday Pop-Up Coffee Shop

Forest Hill Village Hall, Saturday 28 March 10.30am-12pm

Bring a friend, make some new ones! Proceeds are shared between St Nicolas Church and Forest Hill Baby and Toddler Group, which facilitates The Maple Tree at Forest Hill (see page 30).

Donations of cakes are appreciated. Contact Julia Stutfield 07766 103427 or julia.stutfield@gmail.com.

Forest Hill with Shotover Parish Council

Securing the Future of Our Parish: The 2026/27 Precept

The Background: A Five-Year Freeze

For the last five years, your Parish Council has made a deliberate decision to freeze the precept (the Parish Council's portion of local council tax) at £18,500 to support residents through the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis. We bridged the funding gap by using our reserves for as long as possible, but with rising inflation and service costs, this is no longer sustainable.

The Reality: Balancing the Books

Following a cautious first step toward stability last year, we must now fully align our income with our actual costs. To eliminate the structural deficit and ensure the Parish remains on a stable financial footing, the 2026/27 precept will be set at £23,500.

What this means for a Band D property:

- **The Annual Change:** An increase of **£6.57 per year**.
- **The Total Contribution:** This brings the total Parish portion of your council tax to approximately £57.82 for the year.

Efficiency and Protecting Services

The Council has modernized our IT systems to save costs and keep administration budgets stable. However, your precept must now work harder to cover essential areas where higher authorities have reduced their support:

- **Filling the Gap:** Maintaining services like grass cutting where District and County Councils have cut back.
- **Local Support:** Continuing vital grants to charities that directly benefit our Parish residents.
- **Safety and Upkeep:** Mandatory safety inspections for the play area and the maintenance of the recreation ground.
- **Fixed Costs:** Contractual obligations, insurance, and mandatory audit fees.

Responsible Stewardship

Our goal is to be honest stewards of your local taxes. By addressing the

shortfall now, we aim to reach a point of stability, protect our shared assets, and avoid the need for further large increases in the future.

Community Update

In Memory of Malcolm Leeding, OBE

The Council has resolved to purchase a memorial bench for the late Malcolm Leeding. Malcolm was awarded an OBE for his services and was a dedicated figure in this Parish for many years. We hope this bench stands as a lasting tribute to his hard work and provides a place for reflection.

Parish Maintenance and Infrastructure

- **Road Safety:** The speed sign has been moved to the bottom of Church Hill to encourage safer speeds as drivers descend the hill following the recent resurfacing.
- **Lighting:** Solar lighting on Church Hill, Main Street, and the A40 bus stops has been refurbished with new batteries.
- **The Aerial Runway (on the recreation ground):** Repairs are underway; the runway will be reinstated as soon as the new cable arrives.
- **Wifi:** To support local groups, the Council is sharing the cost of installing Fibre Wifi at the Hall with the Management Committee.
- **Record Keeping:** The Council is digitizing Cemetery records to ensure compliance and to allow for online searching in the future.

A Community-Led Summer Fete

There has been great interest in bringing back a summer fete! The Council has agreed in principle to the recreation ground being used this year. The event will be organized by local volunteers, and we look forward to seeing the community come together.

Dog Fouling and Litter

We have seen a rise in litter and dog fouling. Not only is this illegal and subject to fines, but it is a matter of social responsibility. We want our Parish to be a clean, enjoyable place for everyone. Please play your part and use the bins provided.

Allotments: Plots Available

Fees will be maintained at the current rate for the 2026/27 season. If you are interested in “growing your own,” we currently have a couple of plots available. Please contact the Clerk for details.

Recreation Ground Facilities

The Council reviewed two separate proposals for the changing facilities at the Rec. We have decided to defer a final decision until our next meeting to allow for further information on both options.

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Thursday 12 March at 7pm in Forest Hill Village Hall.

Dates of meetings, agendas and minutes can be found on our website: <https://www.pariah-council.com/foresthilwithshotover/> and on the Village Hall noticeboard. You can contact the Clerk by email at: theclerk@foresthilwithshotover-pc.org.uk or telephone 0844 884 3328 (premium rate), between 9am and 5pm and leave a message.

Forest Hill Village Hall

Our village hall, situated on Main Street in the heart of the village, provides a welcoming communal space for all to use. Regular events include weekly exercise classes and a baby and toddler group, as well as the monthly 'Pop-Up Coffee Shop' and 'Jazz on the Hill'.

For more information, email Stephen Robinson spr500@gmail.com or go to <https://communityfirstoxon.org/community-action/hubs-halls-shops/community-halls-directory/forest-hill-village-hall/>.

Some of you may have noticed that the Village Hall now has new clock on the outside of the building. Several other improvements will be undertaken in the coming months, including the installation of wifi and the replacement of the fluorescent tube ceiling lights with LED panels. The latter is with the help of an award from the Councillor Community Grant Scheme.

The Maple Tree at Forest Hill, Thursdays 10.30am-12pm



The Thursday morning 'stay and play' sessions for babies and toddlers continues to run in Forest Hill Village Hall throughout the year.

For a full list of activities run by The Maple Tree Children's Centre in Wheatley, see www.mapletree.org.uk.

HORTON-cum-STUDLEY

St Barnabas Church

Details of all church services and general church news can be found on pages 4 - 13. Any changes to the published schedule of services will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

St Barnabas News



The Dog and Collar in St. Barnabas, will open its doors on Friday 6 March, 6-8.30pm. This is a really nice opportunity to meet neighbours and fellow villagers for a drink and informal chat. We look forward to seeing you there.

Coffee and Chat, Saturday 14 March, 10am-12pm

A lovely start to the weekend for a mug of coffee (or tea) and a piece of cake and catch up with neighbours or meet neighbours if you have recently moved to the village. In St Barnabas. Everyone is welcome to drop in. No charge but donations and dogs welcome.

Mothering Sunday Service 15 March, 11am

All welcome, all ages, you do not need to be a mother.

Friends of St Barnabas talk, Sunday 1 March, 6pm St Barnabas Church

'The Unkindest Cut'

The Castrati, pop stars of 17th and 18th century Baroque Italy, were young men castrated before puberty to preserve their high voices. The **renowned countertenor Nicholas Clapton** will shed light on what may well have been Classical music's darkest moment. We invite everyone to come along for what is sure to be a fascinating and entertaining evening. There is no admission charge and refreshments will be served.

Nick Mynheer

St Barnabas Electoral Roll

The annual revision of the church's Electoral Roll takes place in March (see page 13 for more information). If you have been thinking about adding your name to the Roll of St Barnabas or maybe even joining the Parochial Church Council this is a good time to do it.

Contact carol_welch20@hotmail.com.

Horton-cum-Studley Parish Council

Pot-holes and road surfaces

Thanks to all of the FixMyStreet reports made by parishioners and our local County Councillor, Laura Gordon, the work to repair much of Woodperry Hill has been completed. In her monthly report to the Parish Council, Laura noted: *“The cold and wet weather has caused a spike in potholes as well as throwing up some issues with blocked drains. I have escalated several unactioned Fix My Street requests as well as submitting new ones of my own – if you have an outstanding FMS request please send me an email and I will chase it. The council has also increased the number of pothole repair teams to try and get on top of the issue. I am also trying to identify roads that are badly deteriorated to try and get them reviewed for more comprehensive repair. I have already raised: Woodperry Hill near Horton-cum-Studley; Oakley Road in Horton-cum-Studley.”*

We would encourage anyone to continue reporting issues as they are identified to <https://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk/> for Oxfordshire and <https://fixmystreet.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/> for Buckinghamshire.

It is important that reports have been submitted if any vehicle owner wishes to claim damages from either county council.

Consultation on proposals for unitary authorities, 7 February-26 March

The government has opened a period of consultation following the three submissions made by district, city and county councils to create unitary local government for Oxfordshire.

It states: *“Although this will be a technical exercise, focused on the criteria, rather than a public consultation, we also welcome the views of any other persons or bodies interested in these proposals, including local residents, town and parish councils, businesses and the voluntary and community sector.”*

You may respond by completing the online survey (see page 18).

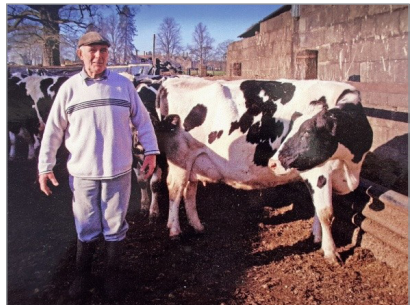
Parish Council Meetings

The next meeting, open to all in the village, is on **Wednesday 11 March, 7.30pm**, and thereafter on the second Wednesday of each month in the Millennium Village Hall (except August when no meeting is held).

David Slingo

David Stanley Walter Prosser

19 April 1939 - 17 November 2025



David was born to Mary and Leonard Prosser, one of five children to whom he remained close all his life; with two sisters in America and two brothers, one of whom was a seed rep who could be asked for advice on the farm. There was always a lot of fun, laughter and naughty jokes at family get-togethers. David was

a spirited young boy and there were tales of him riding his bike through burning rings of fire and having to race to the pond to put his legs out! Another tale was of spearing all the goldfish in the pond at the 'big house' after watching Tarzan and of frightening his friends after seeing Dracula at the cinema. His poor Mum!

David spent his childhood in Charlton then Kings Sutton, Banbury, where he milked cows and reared beef cattle. David and Rose married in 1963. Sarah was born and they moved to Horton-cum-Studley where, in 1970, Andrew was born. David milked cows for many years and also kept beef cattle and sheep. He enjoyed shooting, fishing, horse and greyhound racing.

He joined the Horton-cum-Studley Parish Council and gave many years of service including the position of Chairperson and enjoyed getting to know many people in the village.

David loved his grandchildren: four boys from Sarah and Philip - Thomas, William, George and Jack; and two boys from Andrew and Ula - Sebastian and Henry. He was happy to spend many hours playing with the boys.

Sadly, David presented with symptoms of dementia and spent his last remaining years in a care home until he died.

Sarah Munt

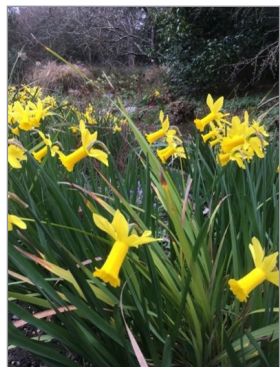
Horton-cum-Studley Gardening Club

Membership £15.00/year, visitors £7.50.

17 March *The Wildside of Beth Chatto Gardens* - Chris Gibson speaking

20 April *Hanging Baskets*: a workshop run by Carol Parker

The wild daffodil (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*) is one of the UK's most cherished spring wildflowers. This beautiful, native daffodil is smaller and more delicate than the bold garden varieties commonly seen in parks and on roadsides. One of the first flowers to bloom at the end of Winter, its sunshine yellow announces an end to the cold, dark days, and the start of Spring. It's the National flower of Wales and, in China, it's the official 'Flower of Spring'. It's also the official 10th Wedding Anniversary Flower. There are over 50 different species of daffodil and more than 25,000 varieties. They come in a wide range of colours, including white, orange, pink, and even green!



Narcissus is native to Europe, North Africa, and parts of Asia and was first recorded around 300 BC in a book list 'Enquiry Into Plants', written by the Greek botanist and philosopher Theophrastus. The Romans also treasured this flower, which then remains unmentioned for centuries until re-appearing in the early 1600s in English garden archive. From England, the bulbs were transported to the New World, the flowers now commonly viewed along the US eastern seaboard and in Appalachia. Daffodils are remarkably pest resistant. Deer, squirrels, and rodents won't eat them, and the plant can induce a rash in some people. Daffodil leaves and bulbs contain poisonous crystals which only some insects can ingest without harm.

Gardening Club Contacts 2026

Chair: Chris Pugh pughchrisw@gmail.com

Treasurer: Cathy Jenkins cathy@ccjenkins.co.uk

Secretary: Lyn Senior lynsenior@hotmail.com

Visits: Anna Steven annam.steven@gmail.com

Otmoor Challenge 2026, Saturday 30 May
Half Marathon / 10k Run / Short and Long Walk
Help Needed

Sponsorship

Would you like to sponsor the new cups for the winners of the 10K?
All donations gratefully received.

Support

Could you seek and coordinate sponsorship?
(No meetings necessary!)

On the Day

Could you be a marshal at the start or on the course?

If you can help in any way, please contact the committee at:
landrethr63@gmail.com

Spud in a Bucket is back!

Can You grow a Bucket of Spuds, a Pumpkin or a Sunflower? If you would like to have a go, please get your spud and instructions from Cathy Jenkins (07941 245726). We have another new variety this year and they will be ready from March. Sunflower and pumpkin plants ready from May. The big weigh-in is **Sunday 4 October 3-4pm**, St Barnabas Church. Why not give it a go?

BERNWOOD POTTERY

Hand crafted ceramics and pottery classes

March Workshop Dates:

- Friday, March 13th - Spring Tablescape
Indian block printing napkins and ceramic napkin rings
- Sunday, March 15th - Mothers' Day Pottery Class
Hand building pottery class with your mum!
- Friday, March 20th - Yoga and Pottery Retreat Day
Exploring creativity and wellness with Lisa Wehbe Yoga

For more information contact Elizabeth:

www.bernwoodpottery.com

Bernwood Pottery • Old Arngrove Farm • Horton-cum-Studley • OX33 1DG



STANTON ST JOHN

St John the Baptist Church

Details of all church services and general church news can be found on pages 4 - 13. Any changes to the published schedule of services will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Monthly Coffee Mornings in Stanton Village Hall, 10.30am–12pm

Monday 16 March

Wednesday 15 April

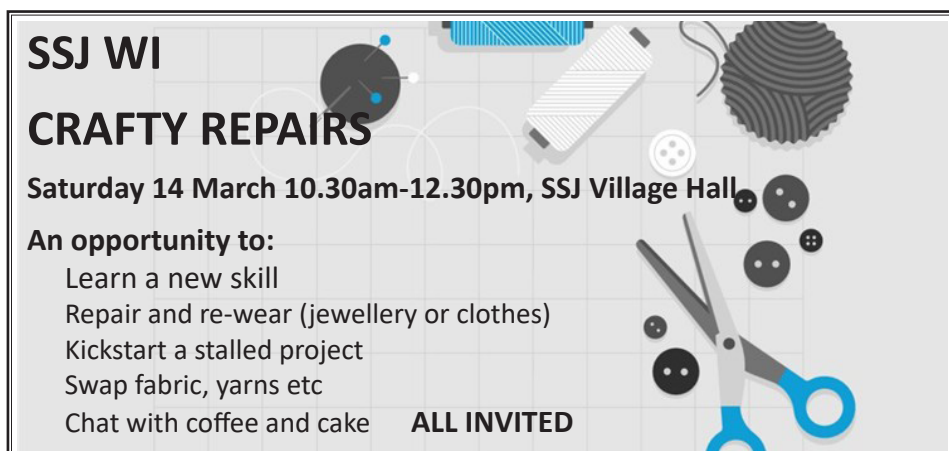
Monday 18 May

Come for tea, coffee and cake! Everyone is welcome. For further details, contact Sue Baker 01865 351449.

Stanton St John Women's Institute

Our meeting on Tuesday 10 February was an indulgent members-only event when we had a talk and demonstration by the first Argentinian Chocolaterie in the UK, SUR. Maria was full of information and, endearingly, with a great passion for Latin American chocolate. Unsurprisingly, it was a well-attended meeting and we were able to try some unusual but delicious flavour combinations.

Our meeting on **Tuesday 10 March is our AGM** when we get to review the past year, discuss our programme for the year ahead and finalise our plans for our Crafty Repairs event in Stanton Village Hall on the morning of Saturday 14 March (please see below for details).



SSJ WI

CRAFTY REPAIRS

Saturday 14 March 10.30am-12.30pm, SSJ Village Hall

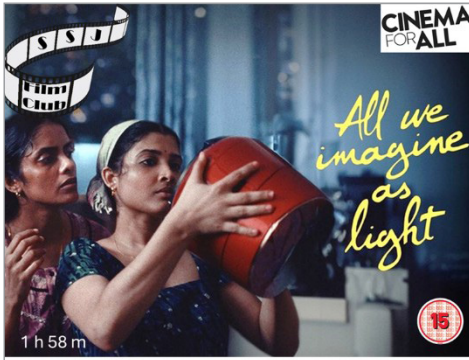
An opportunity to:

- Learn a new skill
- Repair and re-wear (jewellery or clothes)
- Kickstart a stalled project
- Swap fabric, yarns etc
- Chat with coffee and cake

ALL INVITED

Stanton St John Film Club

Saturday 21 March, 7.45pm Stanton St John Village Hall



'All We Imagine As Light' is the story of the friendship of three hospital workers in modern-day Mumbai: nurses, Prabha and Anu, and cook, Parvaty. When Prabha receives a brand-new rice cooker through the post, it must have been sent by her absentee husband. A mood of romantic and emotional insecurity hangs over these women's lives

and, to escape Mumbai, Prabha and Anu agree to go with Parvaty when she quits her hospital job and returns to her home village. View the trailer via this link: [Film all we imagine as light](#).

Doors open at 7pm for delicious cakes and hot drinks before the film; the bar will be serving wines. Only 60 seats available, please reserve yours beforehand with Sue Baker: susanjbaker24@gmail.com. Tickets at the door, £5 (cash only).

Stanton St John Village Spring Cleaning

Sunday 1 March, 2pm

Meet at: Rectory Farm car park

Please join me for our village 'Spring Cleaning'. All are welcome, including young adults and children accompanied by adults. High-Vis jackets, picking tools and bags will all be provided by SODC. Please wear suitable clothing and shoes/boots and bring your gardening gloves with you. Bayswater Road is the most used highway in our parish and like previous years we intend to include the cleaning of the verges of this road. I especially appeal to the residents of Bayswater Road to join us. I look forward to seeing many of you. Let us hope for a nice sunny day!

Fariba Battye

Olive (1926 - 2025) and George (1928 - 2026) Lees



Olive and George Lees came to Stanton St John on the early May Bank Holiday in 1978. Until then, they had lived all their lives 'up north' with a short foray south for college – St. John's in Cambridge for George, after his National Service in Germany, teacher training at St. Katherine's Tottenham for Olive, where she was in residence to experience VE Day.

George had worked in industry; Olive was a primary school teacher. They took on a rather rundown 'Village Stores & Post Office' in Stanton St John with no shop experience at all – and gave it their all!

For the next 15 years they worked 7 days a week - just taking Wednesday and Sunday afternoons off, when they went off to explore the area with dogs Tega and Lady. If they were lucky, they might have 2 separate weeks holiday each year when either Peter and Helen or John and Catherine would mind the shop.

They threw themselves in to serving the villages of the four parishes and beyond. They built up the range and amount of stock. They delivered on foot and by car, as well as doing a paper round with the Oxford Mail each afternoon. They bought in new items if requested, or raided their own cupboards or work-basket when required. They carved ham off the bone, cut and wrapped cheese off a big block, with as little clingfilm as possible, and even sold Olive's home-made pies (initially discovered at the bottom of the shop freezer by a customer!). Profit margins were tight and they made a living rather than a profit. They came from a generation that wasted nothing so they never baulked at eating out-of-date cakes, pies and sausages, bruised fruit and vegetables that didn't quite make the grade. To earn extra income they would make sandwiches to order and take in B & B – some for extended stays. They sold everything from penny sweets to slippers, cotton reels to toys and greetings cards to cauliflowers. They shopped at Cash & Carry twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays and visited other wholesalers for specialist items – gifts and housewares - often on their days off!

Basically, they worked consistently hard to try and make themselves indispensable. Alongside the shop, George administered the Post Office, while on a Wednesday morning, Olive would go over to Forest Hill to dispense pensions, stamps and other PO items on request at Badger's Close. Thank goodness they retired before the Post Office scandal!

Meanwhile, they enjoyed getting to know their customers and participating in village life, which carried on even when they left the shop in 1993 to move to Hillcraft Road. They were very touched to be given a leaving party and presentation at the Village Hall.

Committed to the Church, George was on the PCC more or less from when they arrived and was Treasurer for many years, raising over £8,000 with his infamous cryptic quizzes. Olive was a regular church cleaner and used to look forward to her Thursday mornings! She was a WI member and committee member, and they both enjoyed involvement in Stanton Festivals. They were always at Village Hall events from Burns Nights, to coffee mornings, games nights and quizzes.

Despite being Lancastrians by upbringing, Stanton St John has been 'home' for the past 47 years. Catherine and John were married here, and we've celebrated numerous birthdays and wedding anniversaries here. We are so grateful for the friendship and support that the village has offered to our parents – and us - over the last 40+ years. Thank you!

Spring Quiz, Tuesday 24 March, 7.30pm, Village Hall

You are invited for a fun evening of quizzing with some light refreshments. In keeping with the season, the questions will be light-hearted and trivial. We are inviting teams of four, or come on your own and form a team on the night.

Entrance £5, small prizes to be won.

Any profits will be shared between Stanton St John's Church windows project and RSPB Otmoor. All welcome, good wishes, Lyn, Lorna and Sue.

Please email susanjbaker24@gmail.com to book a place.

Stanton St John Parish Council

The Parish Council met on Monday 19 January in the Village Hall.

Cox Lane Verge Erosion

A representative of the Gresswell Trust spoke about significant erosion to the verge in Cox Lane, caused largely by vehicles mounting the verge to pass parked cars. The Trust has offered to work with the Council to help restore the area. The issue forms part of the Traffic Working Party's priorities, and the Chair has contacted Highways to explore solutions.

Village Hall

The Council approved new lighting at the rear of the Village Hall, matching the style at the front, at a cost of £230 plus fitting.

Village Hall Improvements and Maintenance

Accessible parking signage has now been installed in the Village Hall car park.

Looking Ahead

Councillors agreed to dedicate more time at future meetings to strategic issues affecting the village. The next meeting will be on **Monday 23 February, 7.30pm, in the Village Hall.**

Agendas are published in advance and can be viewed on the Parish Council website <https://stantonstjohnparishcouncil.gov.uk> All residents are very welcome to attend.

Defibrillator Awareness Group Training, Friday 27 March, 9am-12pm

There are three defibrillators in the village - one at the Village Hall, another on the telephone exchange at the entrance to Rectory Farm (both of which are owned and maintained by the Parish Council) and one in the old red BT phone box by the TalkHouse (which isn't owned or managed by the Parish Council).

Acquiring a little confidence in how to use an external defibrillator and basic lifesaving skills may help save a life. There are 12 places available. All costs are being met by the Parish Council, using a grant from OCC.

Automated External Defibrillation (AED) | St John Ambulance

The places are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Contact clerk@stantonstjohnparishcouncil.gov.uk to book a place.

WWW.FROGORANGEBALLOONS.CO.UK



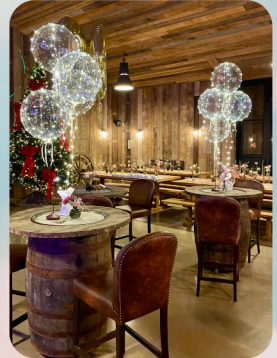
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