

The Four Parishes News Magazine

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



New bench in memory of Malcolm Leeding at Forest Hill

September 2026

The editor writes



I wonder if any of you have noticed that our magazine has a new look this month! Catherine Matthews and I took advantage of the summer break to review our standard layouts and fonts in order to make it easier for my PC and Catherine's Mac to share InDesign files with each other without any errors. If that all sounds a bit too technical, I apologise, but I can assure you that it was worth it!

After a very welcome break we start the new academic year with plenty of interesting content. There are articles from Tim Bearder and Ginnie Camps-Walsh on pages 12-14 about the huge reorganisational changes that are coming to us all as a result of the impending local government reorganisation, and a lovely piece about Beckley School on pages 18-19. Regular contributor Lyn Ebbs continues to charm and fascinate us with her insights into the natural world and of course there is plenty of information about events going on in our vibrant village communities, such as the Michaelmas Fayre in Horton-cum-Studley (see back cover of this magazine).

Don't forget to check out our advertisers, without whom this magazine couldn't exist, and support them as much as possible.

Finally, a reminder that you can read this magazine, and back issues from February 2018 onwards, on your PC, phone or tablet at fourparishes.org.uk/magazine. Simply type the URL into your web browser or scan the QR code with your smart phone.

Julia



Our cover photo

Parish Council Chairman Andrew Waite Brown and Prue Leeding take a moment on the new recreation ground bench, dedicated in memory of her late husband, former councillor Malcolm Leeding.

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 October 2026 issue is 15 September 2026

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

News or notices for the individual 'Village pages' should be sent to:

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

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, September 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
6 September <i>14th Sunday after Trinity</i>	11am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	9.30am Holy Communion	11am Morning Prayer
	4pm Four Parishes Children's Church at Forest Hill			
13 September <i>15th Sunday after Trinity</i>		9.30am Celebration of Harvest: Morning Prayer	9.30am Morning Prayer	11am Celebration of Harvest: Holy Communion
	6pm Four Parishes Choral Evensong at Forest Hill			
20 September <i>16th Sunday after Trinity</i>	11am BCP Morning Prayer	9.30am Holy Communion		11am Morning Prayer with Baptism
	6pm Four Parishes Iona Service at Beckley			
27 September <i>17th Sunday after Trinity</i>	10am Four Parishes Service of Holy Communion at Beckley			
	4pm Four Parishes Family Church does Forest Church at Bernwood Forest, Horton-cum-Studley			
	6pm Four Parishes Taizé Service on Zoom			

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,



I cannot quite believe that the traditional summer break is over, and we are now heading towards the autumn. It does not seem like a couple of months since I last wrote to you. Time flies!

I wonder how your summer has been, apart from hot! From conversations, I know that some of you have loved the heat – even the hottest of days! But I think many of us have found some of the days rather too

hot! Bertie has not understood why he was not allowed to charge around the garden or go for a walk at the height of the heat of the day! I confess I have also been slightly jealous hearing of those with swimming pools – I know – you shall not covet your neighbour's house – or swimming pool, in this case!! I have never claimed to be perfect!

Those of you who are regular readers know I love nature. Last week I saw the most amazing thing. No, I am not going to talk about the massive spiders that have taken up residence in my house – I am in denial about those! I was sitting in a friend's garden, and they suddenly spotted hummingbird moths – I have heard of them but have never seen them. I wonder if you have. I was astonished how they looked just like the tiniest hummingbirds. They were stunning! Do keep an eye out for them – there is no mistaking them. Sadly, I did not get a photo of them.

Have you noticed how autumnal the trees look already? When I have been



walking with Bertie, I have noticed that many trees are already changing colour. Some are looking stressed because of the lack of water, whereas others have already started dropping their leaves. I can hear the gorgeous autumnal 'crunch' sound, as I walk. Oh, how I love that sound!

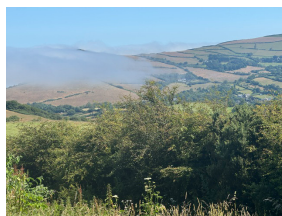
The other evening, I enjoyed looking at the clouds with the sun 'playing' on them. The sky was really quite beautiful. I smiled to myself as I imagined bouncing on the clouds – they were those super fluffy white ones that feel so inviting! Having marvelled at them, I was rather surprised to then turn my head only to find dark, threatening rain clouds, as I looked in the

opposite directions. They were not quite so picturesque, and yet, we so desperately need rain. I got home before we had a shower – not enough – although I wonder if that is still the case as you read this, as the forecast for the coming week suggests we have not only rain, but thunderstorms to look forward to. We can hardly complain after the summer we have had.



This time of year, also signals new beginnings for many – starting new nurseries, schools, colleges, universities or jobs. Some will be starting nursery or school for the first time. I imagine photos being taken, perhaps tears shed – Fred in his uniform for the first time etc. All sorts of emotions for both the youngsters and their parents – and so it continues as children change from primary to senior school, from school to college or university, or on to first jobs.

For all those who have taken exams and received results over the summer, I hope the results have been what you were hoping for, and that they have opened the doors to the next step you have planned. I have been delighted to hear about results, and new jobs started. As you begin new stages in life, may you go with confidence, stepping further into the person you have been created to be. For those watching their loved ones move on, there are probably tinges of sadness seeing them go, but also pride and delight in seeing them step into this new stage in life. My thoughts are with you too, as you let go, yet perhaps feel the pain of lovingly doing that too.



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 and Forest Hill 10am-6pm; Horton-cum-Studley and Stanton St John 10am-4pm.

Harvest in the Four Parishes

We will be celebrating harvest in all of our parishes churches over September and October, so please hold the dates and think about coming. You may also like to be involved in decorating the churches or providing harvest gifts.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Beckley	9.30am, 4 October Harvest Holy Communion
St Nicolas, Forest Hill with Shotover	11am, 4 October Harvest Holy Communion
St Barnabas, Horton-cum-Studley	11am, 13 September Harvest Holy Communion
St John the Baptist, Stanton St John	9.30am, 13 September Harvest Morning Prayer

Children's autumn craft workshops

It is wonderful that we can once again start the Children's craft workshops in **Beckley Church this autumn on Fridays from 3.30-4.30pm**. These are primarily aimed at primary school children but younger siblings are welcome. Do come and join in the fun. Children must be accompanied by an adult please. There will be light refreshments. Please hold the dates:

Friday 9 October: Harvest Workshop

Friday 13 November: Remembrance Workshop

Advent challenge and beyond

I hope you are still journeying with me as we get towards the three-quarter-way stage of the year. At the time of preparing this I am still a little behind, but still determined to keep going towards achieving the goal, and hope

you are too. I know I will get there! If you are on track, then a huge well done. If, like me you are a little behind, please do not give up. We can do this!

For September, for the Old Testament, we need to aim to finish Micah, read the whole of Isaiah, Nahum and Zephaniah, and Jeremiah up to chapter 2:30, and continue Psalms up to chapter 115:11 and Proverbs up to chapter 24:4. For the New Testament, we need to aim to finish 2 Corinthians, read the whole of Galatians and Ephesians, and Philippians to chapter 2:11.

I look forward to hearing how you get on. Please do let me know. It is great journeying 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 continuing reading *The Shaping of a Soul: A life taken by surprise* by Richard Harries. We meet virtually by Zoom on a **Thursday evening at 7.30pm for an hour**. Please do get in touch with Anthea if you would like to come and join us. New members are always welcome. We will be starting a new book in September, so that may be an opportune time. Look out for email updates from Anthea.

Home Study Group

The study group meets on **Monday afternoons at 2.30pm at Studley Farm House, Horton-cum-Studley**. The group is starting back after their summer break on **7 September**, so this may be an opportune time for new members to join. New members are always welcome. 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 hope for peace in Ukraine and the Holy Land and all its surrounding areas continues to look far off, the war in Iran and the wider Middle East continues, and news of atrocities in Sudan, Myanmar and other places around the world 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 **12 noon on Wednesdays and Saturdays** in September across the Four Parishes as follows:

Beckley 12, 12 and 30

Forest Hill 5 and 23

Horton-cum-Studley 9 and 19

Stanton 16 and 26

For more information about any of the items on pages 8-10 of the magazine, please contact me, Anthea Beresford. **Email:** anthea@fourparishes.org.uk **Tel:** 01865 351839 **Mob:** 07876 527514.

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Public talk on Hospital at Home (H@H) service

Thursday 17 September, 7 – 8pm (refreshments from 6.30pm)
The Merry Bells Village Hall, 89 High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1XP

Ms Sophie Tanner, Consultant and Clinical Lead for the Hospital at Home service, will speak about our Hospital at Home service: who makes up the team, the patients who are supported and the range of treatments that can be safely and effectively administered in a patient's own home. The talk will touch on the use of AI (artificial intelligence) and the use of innovative technology to improve the efficiency of the service, diagnostics and treatment.

This is also an opportunity to speak to your local governors so they can hear your views and experiences on the services provided by Oxford University Hospitals.

GENERAL

Wheatley Library



Joining the library is FREE and you can borrow up to 20 books at a time! We're part of the Oxfordshire County Council library service, so you can borrow and return books from any of the 44 county libraries. Your library card also provides free access to BorrowBox, Libby, Naxos Music Library, Ancestry Online, Find My Past and more resources online. For Wheatley Library news, please follow the 'Friends of Wheatley Library' Facebook page.

Opening Hours:

Monday	Closed
Tuesday	2-7pm
Wednesday	9.30am-1pm and 2-5pm
Thursday	2 to 5pm
Friday	9.30am-1pm 2-6pm
Saturday	9.30am-1pm
Sunday	Closed

Regular Events:

- **Rhymetime** - every Friday 10.30-11am
For children age 0 to 5
- **Storytime** - every Saturday 10-10.30am
For children age 3 to 7
- **Digital Helper Sessions** - every Thursday 2.30-3.30pm
One-to-one support with technology e.g. smart phones, laptops, tablets, emails, WhatsApp etc.

Call or email the library to book a slot.

We need more Lego! If you have any spare Lego or baseplates to build upon, we would greatly appreciate your donation. Thank you.

Contact us on 01865 815204 or email wheatley.library@oxfordshire.gov.uk. You can search the library catalogue for books anytime at oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-libraries.

Wheatley Library, The Merry Bells, High Street, Wheatley OX33 1XP

Local Government Reorganisation: what it means for our villages

by Tim Bearder

The Government's plans for Local Government Reorganisation will bring significant changes to the way our area is represented. From May next year, elections will take place for the new unitary authority called Greater Oxford, which will eventually replace the existing county, district and city councils.

I am disappointed that Oxford City Council refused my proposal to keep the villages currently in the Forest Hill and Holton ward together. Instead, most have been lumped in with Horspath, currently part of the Horspath and Garsington ward. This appears to have been done simply to make up the required numbers, rather than reflecting natural communities and existing local connections.

The new two-member ward will be called Shotover and Bernwood, a name I proposed as a hopeful nod towards the possibility of a future national park in this area. Tiddington will instead be in the Ridgeway authority, while Waterstock will join Wheatley and Great Milton in a ward called Wheatley.

Each ward will elect two councillors, with elections every two years. The candidate receiving the most votes in May 2027 will serve five years – one year as a shadow councillor during the transition, followed by a standard four year-term on the new authority. The second candidate will serve three years, one year as a shadow councillor, and two in the standard run before elections return to a four-year cycle starting in 2030.

I have serious reservations about the whole reorganisation. Rather than simplifying local government, I fear it will make the system more complex and less financially resilient, while distancing decisions from local communities because many of the services will have to be spun out and operate as shared services – things like Adult Social Care and the Fire and Rescue Service which couldn't be split into three.

There is also the proposed Development Corporation, which could have enormous implications for Oxfordshire's Green Belt and rural communities. I remain concerned that this could ride roughshod over local democratic accountability as there appears to be no intention for it to be controlled locally but rather centrally by Whitehall.

Finally, the Government has invited Oxfordshire to apply for a Mayor, potentially to be elected in May 2028. The Mayor would sit above the unitary authorities, with responsibilities including policing, strategic planning and NHS oversight. However, the Government has still not made clear what geographical area the Mayor would cover – an important question that needs resolving before we can properly judge the proposal.

*Tim Bearder Forest Hill and Holton District Councillor,
Wheatley County Councillor and leader of Oxfordshire County Council*

Local Government Reorganisation: actions and implications by Ginnie Camps-Walsh

In his letter to Oxfordshire Council leaders and statement to the House on 16 July 2026, Steve Reed, then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) chose Oxford City Council's proposal for 3 Unitary Authorities – Greater Oxford, Northern Oxfordshire and Ridgeway to replace Oxfordshire County Council and the 5 district councils. The proposed Greater Oxford Council comprises the city of Oxford alongside its surrounding Green Belt land and immediate satellite communities, including all of our 'Four Parishes'. More information about the proposed boundaries can be found at <https://3councils.org/>.

Cost

One of the main aims of the reorganisation was to reduce costs with better value for money for council taxpayers, but Steve Reed stated in his letter – “I have noted that my selected option may take longer than the other proposals to payback the upfront costs of reorganisation.” Cllr Susan Brown, leader of Oxford City Council has told Parish Councils that council taxes will rise.

Services

Those services currently provided by the County Council will have to be split into 3, with infrastructure, management teams and service delivery in triplicate. Steve Reed admitted “I recognise that my selected option will require more disaggregation of services.” In addition, Oxford City has no experience of delivering services currently supplied by the County Council e.g. adult social care and SEND or services to rural communities and have not sought to consult us on what we need.

(continued on next page)

Democracy

The population of Oxford City at present is 165,200 [ONS 2023]. The population of the 48 Green Belt parishes to be annexed is 66,640 [Census 2021] The total population of Greater Oxford will therefore be approximately 231,840, half the Minister's figure to improve efficiencies.

Boundaries

The Ministry has not used the Local Government Boundaries Commission to set new boundaries democratically with public involvement. The implementation letter plans to set the number of councillors and new ward boundaries with no input from the local residents.

Consultation

The statutory government consultation was aimed at local public bodies e.g. councils (but not Parish Councils), NHS, education etc, not the general public. Although local council taxpayers and others, including Parish Councils, could respond most did not know about it. The response rate was less than 1% of the Oxfordshire electorate so cannot be taken as a mandate. The question of 'which proposal do you support' was not asked, but there was very little support and certainly no mandate for the 3-Council proposal. It is therefore clear that the 3-Council proposal was not chosen on the basis of either published criteria or consultation responses.

Our Actions

Angela Rayner succeeded Steve Reed as Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 20 July 2026. In August, 21 [now 24] Parish Councils, representing ~63% of the population of the affected parishes, agreed to sign a letter and 'post-consultation collective representation' to Angela Rayner setting out a number of concerns about the proposed Greater Oxford Unitary Authority. The letter also asks for details of how the 3-Council decision was made and attempts to safeguard the affected 48 parishes, maintain our rights and involve us in the decisions about new warding boundaries and the number of councillors.

We await Angela Rayner's response and the results of the FOI request. The 3-Council decision is not democratic, is unfair, and gives 'undue disadvantage' to the 48 rural Green Parishes which will be annexed to be part of Greater Oxford at great expense to us and with little say in our own future.

Ginette Camps-Walsh, Beckley

The Maple Tree Children's Centre, Littleworth Road, Wheatley OX33 1PH



At the Maple Tree there are lots of things to do! We have play-based learning activities for under fives and for older siblings in school holidays. For parents and carers the Maple Tree is a place to meet other families, get involved with hands on learning with their child and to get help with the sometimes tough task of parenting. We have events for the whole family to enjoy together, and courses – like first aid – that are just for adults. We have different sessions running every weekday – come and join us!

Here is a reminder of our regular drop-in sessions. While our sessions are free of charge, we ask for a recommended donation of £3/family. Visiting the Health Visitors is always free.

Mondays: Messy Monday 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

Health visitors 1st Wednesday of the month.

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 the 3rd Saturday of the month

Would you like to volunteer at the Maple Tree?

The Maple Tree is a happy place and our volunteers help us to make it so. Volunteers help by helping set up activities, welcoming families in, making hot drinks and snacks, clearing up at the end and generally being helpful and sociable. To volunteer at the Maple Tree you must enjoy the company of small children, be good at listening and able to respect the privacy of our centre users. All our volunteers are checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service. To find out more, please contact us:

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

Righting or rewriting history?

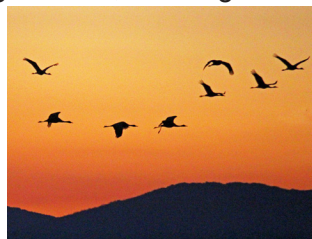
by Lyn Ebbs

When human activities, direct or indirect, have caused the loss of a species, it would seem that we are merely righting a wrong in actively encouraging its return to former abundance. But how far should we go to make that happen? There are legalities to take into consideration: under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act you will need a licence if the species in question is not 'ordinarily resident' or a 'regular visitor', as defined by Natural England. Their support has helped change the fortunes of bees, butterflies and birds, as we know, in particular, by the number of Red Kites we now see in our area. Two, superficially similar, large birds are the subject of different programmes; one aims to restore a known resident British species, the other is a little more controversial.

If the intention is to reverse the fortunes of a species that has declined or even become extinct locally, you first need to understand the causes behind its loss. For the Common Crane, they were two-fold: loss of habitat, and hunting. There is widespread evidence of their existence throughout Britain from prehistoric times, but cranes became extinct here around 400 years ago. Their diet is omnivorous and, though they don't eat fish, cranes require large areas of undisturbed wetland to breed, so a major cause of their decline was the drainage of these areas for agriculture.



Coupled with that, they were targeted as a gamebird, hunting them being the preserve of the nobility. At Henry III's Christmas meal in 1251, the menu featured 115 of them. While at George Neville's enthronement as Archbishop of York in September 1465, among numerous other animals, 204 cranes were consumed. Serving them seems to have been mainly a status symbol since the flesh was reported to be 'hard, tough, gross and sinewy' and medieval recipes called for the use of strong sauces with crane. In 1533, the supply of cranes for the table was still being recorded but by the 17th century, they were extinct in Britain.



They migrate across continental Europe, wintering in the south and

breeding in Scandinavia. A trio of migrating birds was blown off course in 1979, ending up in Norfolk, two of which successfully bred in 1981. Their success stimulated breeding programmes in Norfolk and Somerset which led to the establishment of wild populations once again. RSPB Otmoor has been fortunate enough to host some of the birds from the Great Crane Project and their offspring. A pair first successfully fledged a chick in 2021; subsequent years have shown mixed success but the reserve was pleased to record that two more chicks fledged on nearby land this year.

Like cranes, the preferred habitats of White Storks in Europe are grasslands



and wetlands. And these storks are happy to live in close proximity to people, building their large shaggy nests on roofs and church towers in many European towns and villages. Though, unlike cranes, the last breeding pair recorded in Britain was in 1416, nesting on a cathedral in Edinburgh.

There is only anecdotal evidence, in the form of place names, of storks having been resident breeders or regular migrants to Britain.

Natural England don't regard white storks as native but don't require a licence for their release. So there are now captive stork breeding programmes, established at the Kneppestate in 2016 and, more recently, in Cornwall. Chicks bred in aviaries, are familiarised with the site before release. They have strong homing instincts, so after migrating south in autumn, will hopefully come back and nest where they were raised. The Knepp project has been successful in seeing its storks return to breed. In 2025 there were 19 active nests at Knepp, from which 45 chicks fledged.



But is this really a reintroduced wild species or are the white storks we occasionally see over Oxfordshire, as they have dismissively been described, just escaped caged birds?

Lyn Ebbs has lived in Stanton St John for 37 years and has been volunteering at the RSPB Otmoor Reserve at Otmoor Lane, Beckley, since 2009.

Focus on Beckley Primary School



Myfanwy Llewelyn lives in Forest Hill and has recently become a Parent Governor of Beckley Church of England Primary School. Over the coming months, she has offered to share what is happening behind the school gates and to introduce us to the people who make Beckley School so special. We look forward to learning more about this precious asset at the heart of our Four Parishes.

Reintroducing Beckley – Your Local Community School

Nestled at the heart of our local community, Beckley Primary may be small in size, but it is certainly mighty in what it offers.

We are incredibly proud of being a small school. Here, every child is known, valued and supported as an individual. Our small class sizes allow teachers to really understand each child's personality, strengths, interests and individual needs, creating a nurturing and personal environment where children can feel confident to learn and grow.

We offer the personal feel and smaller classroom environment that many families associate with private education, while providing the opportunities, experiences and education you would expect from a larger school.

New from September: flexible wraparound care from 7.30pm

Need an early start or a later pick-up? Beckley now offers **easy, affordable wraparound care from 7.30am until 5.30pm**, with the flexibility to book sessions as late as the night before.

There is no need to commit to regular sessions months in advance – simply book when you need it. we will always do our best to accommodate you.

We know that family life doesn't always fit neatly around school hours, so we have designed our new wraparound provision to give families the flexibility they need.

Small doesn't mean less!

At Beckley, we believe that being small can actually mean more.

- More individual attention.
- More opportunities to be known as an individual.
- More opportunities to discover what you're good at.
- More opportunities to be supported, encouraged and celebrated.

Our children have access to a fantastic range of learning opportunities, activities, clubs, trips and experiences throughout the year.

And our academic results demonstrate that our size certainly doesn't limit our children's achievements. Beckley's school results are above the national average, with the school performing strongly when compared with other local schools.

We have high expectations for every child and want our pupils to leave Beckley with not only a strong academic foundation, but also confidence, independence, curiosity, resilience and a genuine love of learning.

Learning doesn't stop when the school day ends!

Beckley offers a variety of after-school clubs, giving children the opportunity to explore their interests, try something new and have fun with their friends.

Activities include Baking Club, Theatre, Mindfulness, Sport and Crafting, alongside other activities and opportunities throughout the year.

Could you help Beckley School?

Beckley is a community school, and we want our community to be part of its future.

Perhaps you're a local business who could offer a skill, service, sponsorship or experience. Maybe you're involved with a local organisation, have an idea for an event, could volunteer some time, or simply have a connection that could benefit our children.

Whatever you can offer, we'd love to hear from you.

Together, we can continue to make Beckley a school that our whole community can be proud of. Please email office@beckleyschool.org.

Whether you're a parent considering your child's next school, a local resident who would like to support our community, or simply someone who would like to find out more about what happens behind the school gates, we'd love to hear from you.

Our aim is simple: to give every child the best possible opportunity to thrive.

Recently retired? Looking for a new interest?

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 hundreds 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. It is also tremendous fun! Our group has no conductor and ringers take turns in giving directions such as setting a suitable tempo for a piece.



Having recently lost some of our loyal members for various reasons, we need to recruit a few more to get back to a viable number and make full use of all our beautiful bells. If you are curious and you want to find out more about what is involved, please contact Sue Cloke sue.cloke@outlook.com and arrange to drop into one of our afternoon sessions.

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Stanton St John allotments, August 2026. Photo by Anneli Nilsson.

BECKLEY

Beckley Church

Details of all church services and general church news can be found on pages 4 - 10. Any changes to the published schedule of services will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk. The church is open every day. All are welcome, including well-behaved dogs!

Coffee (or tea!), cake and chat

All welcome, do come and enjoy catching up with friends and neighbours and perhaps meeting new people! The next one is on **Saturday 26 September, 10.30am to 12 noon.**

A Date for your Diary

Ride and Stride on Saturday 12 September

This is a major source of funding for Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust, which gives grants for repairs and improvements to churches and chapels of all denominations in the county. Beckley church received a generous grant in 2010 for extensive stonework repairs, and a further grant towards the re-roofing of the chancel in 2021. Fifty percent of the money you raise can be passed on to a church of your choice, and the remainder is kept by the Trust to enable it to continue to give grants where needed.

Please do consider taking part! Find sponsors (sponsorship forms will be on the table in church), walk, ride a horse, cycle, (or use any mobility vehicle), and visit as many churches as you can. It can be fun!

For more information, go to www.ohct.org.uk/ride-stride, or contact me Gina Robson, tel 01865 351637, mobile 07780 927102, ginarobson5@gmail.com.

Harvest Festival

We are once again timing our Harvest Service so we can link with Beckley School Harvest Service during the following week. We will therefore be **decorating the church on the morning of Saturday 3 October, starting at 9.30am.** Anyone who can spare a little time will be warmly welcomed, and if you have suitable flowers, greenery or fruit that you could bring, that would be wonderful! Harvest gifts from the **Church Service on Sunday 4 October at 9.30am** and from the Beckley School Harvest Service will be taken to the Food Bank in Kidlington.

WE NEED HELP

For almost a thousand years . . .

. . .the people of Beckley have cared for this church.

Long before any of us were born, our predecessors built it, repaired it, roofed it, swept it, rang its bells, filled it with flowers, welcomed neighbours through its doors, and handed it on to the next generation.

They did their bit. And they trusted someone else would later do theirs.

Today, that "someone else" is us.

And today, we're looking for a few more people to help.

This is an invitation. . .

...to become part of the next chapter in the oldest story in our village.

Whether you come to church every Sunday, once a year, or never at all, this beautiful building belongs to all of us.

It has celebrated our weddings and welcomed our children. It has comforted our families at funerals and holds in its churchyard those we have loved and lost.

It has stood watch over Beckley through wars, harvests, storms, and centuries of village life. Its stained glass windows survived the Reformation of 1530s; its bells pealed with joy on 8 May 1945.

If you love this place, then perhaps there is a small part you could play in helping it flourish.

The good news

Seven years ago, many of you responded magnificently when we faced a serious financial challenge. Our church is now on a much firmer financial footing thanks to your extraordinary generosity.

More recently, we received the offer of an exceptional – anonymous – donation to help restore our historic bells.

We are deeply grateful.

But the future of this church will not be secured by money alone. It will be secured by people.



You don't have to join the PCC (Parochial Church Council)

After 22 years of faultless, selfless service, our churchwarden, Gina Robson, has stepped down. She leaves a large hole. The remaining members of the PCC – and we are few in number – will carry forward the responsibility for running the church. We're not asking everyone to become churchwardens.

We're asking whether you might enjoy doing one small thing. Even the smallest of jobs can make a huge difference.

Already, members of our community support us. For years, a trio of volunteers has wound and maintained the church clock; others unlock and lock the church every day, help clear up after events. Small, helpful acts that carry our church forward and bring us together.

- Perhaps **flower arrangements** are your thing?
- Perhaps you'd rather **make coffee and chat** to people?
- Perhaps you know about wildflowers or **gardening** and would enjoy helping out in the churchyard?
- Perhaps you'd like to become involved with the **bells**?
- Perhaps you know about **buildings**, roofing or stonework?
- Perhaps you'd be happy to **help organise or serve drinks** at events like 'Carols and Claret'?
- Perhaps you have **organisational skills** to help coordinate projects?
- Perhaps you simply have **an hour to spare** from time to time?



The scale of the contribution doesn't matter. It's about being part of the team, seen or unseen, and helping our church flourish into the future.

Why does this matter?

Once a village loses the ability to care for its own church, decisions about its future use pass out of our control. **We cannot predict how it might be repurposed or, indeed, neglected.**

We believe the future of Beckley's church should continue to be shaped by the people of Beckley.

What happens next?

We're holding an informal gathering at **The Abingdon Arms on Friday 25 September, 5-7pm. Drop in anytime for a chat and a drink on us.**

A chance to talk to members of the PCC, ask questions, and make suggestions.

If you'd rather contribute quietly, that's absolutely fine too.

Would you like to join us?

If something you've read here has struck a chord, we'd love to hear from you.

Please call, text or email Susy at susy.jepson@gmail.com – 07920 758484, or Dom at holdsworthda@hotmail.com – 07985 739463.

Or simply come along to the pub on 25 September.

Beckley PCC: Anthea Beresford, Susy Jepson, Gina Robson, Hugh Lee, Betty Dye, Dom Holdsworth, Tim King.

Beckley and Stowood Parish Council

Local Government Reform

The recent government decision in favour of the 3-Council proposal means that our Green Belt parish along with 47 others will become part of the Greater Oxford unitary authority (see page 12 - 14 for further details). We sent a FOI request for the detailed process of how the decision was made and our parish council has led a new representation to MHCLG.

Cllr Rachel Khiara drew up a 'post-consultation collective representation', which 21 parishes [now risen to 24] representing 63% of the population of the 48 parishes, including all the Four Parishes PCs, have signed. We have sent this to Angela Rayner, now SoS MHCLG. This submission is based on the premise that the Greater Oxford Unitary Authority proceeds, and requests that sufficient parish representation is secured within the constitution, in line with some of the more successful unitary authorities, such as Cornwall and North Yorkshire. We have asked to be involved in awarding decisions (where new ward boundaries will be drawn and how many councillors there will be), as our parishes could be subsumed with little say in the future. We would hope to have input when such decisions are made. We also ask again in detail how the decision was made.

New Website

We are very pleased that Alsandair Holt is helping us to develop our new website. He is researching, collecting and collating information and writing articles on useful contacts, local services, facilities and groups/clubs and events etc. Please do assist him with information and respond to his requests via email to beckleywebsite@gmail.com.

New Parish email and communications

The Parish Council has set up a new email system for all parishioners for council news, including road closures, refuse collections, notices and news from the district and county councils, consultations etc and important issues that may affect them. To be included please subscribe by sending an email to the clerk: clerk@beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk.

There is also a need for a similar email service for social events, and any volunteers to set it up.

Anyone for tennis?

We still want to encourage tennis playing and the formation of a tennis club again. A volunteer has come forward who has agreed to lead and help set this up, but he needs support from other tennis enthusiasts. After the summer holiday there will be plenty of good tennis playing weather ahead, if you can offer help in setting up the tennis club, offering coaching, setting up a league or simply playing social tennis please contact us via the Clerk's email and we will put you all in touch.

Encouraging sport: facilities at village hall and playing fields

The playing fields at Beckley Village Hall have excellent facilities for football, cricket, outdoor table tennis, tennis and practising basketball, with changing rooms with showers etc. that have yet to be used. We would like to encourage local teams and sports enthusiasts to use the facilities. There will be a booking form for each on the new Beckley website and changing rooms can be booked through the Village Hall booking manager booking@beckleyvillagehall.org. We ask that all facilities are treated with respect, e.g. using appropriate footwear to avoid damage, so others can enjoy them too.

Next Parish Council Meeting

Monday 14 September 7pm, Beckley Village Hall

Beckley website: <https://www.beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk/>

PC contact: clerk@beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk

Beckley & Area Community Benefit Society Ltd (BACBS)

Open share offer

The share offer to support the future of The Abingdon Arms is still open. For more information please visit <https://bacbs.org/openshareoffer>. Shareholders are now entitled to 10% off food and drink at the pub. For further information email theabingdonarms@gmail.com.

More than a Pub programme

The Beckley & Area Community Benefit Society (BACBS) continues its popular activities at our community-owned pub The Abingdon Arms, Beckley, to which all are welcome. Do come, enjoy, and support your local pub. For more information email info@bacbs.org or visit <https://bacbs.org/events>.

Pub quiz

First Wednesday of every month at 7.30pm in The Abingdon Arms, with pizza

The next one is on **Wednesday 2 September**. Table bookings essential, through the pub. 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 each month at 2pm

The next walk will be on **Sunday 20 September**. The walk leader and starting point will be posted on our website (see above) nearer the time. Come along and meet your neighbours for a gentle walk and a friendly chat.

Sunday evening talks

Last Sunday of the month, 6.30pm in The Abingdon Arms

On **20 September**, Hannah Broad and Helena Chance will be giving a talk "*A History of Community Activism in Bernwood, Otmoor and the Ray Area*". Both Hannah and Helena are working on the "Reconnecting Bernwood, Otmoor and the Ray Programme" (RBOR), so this will be an opportunity to hear an update on the programme as a whole as well as to hear about one particular strand of the programme. Please support your local pub by coming in time to order a drink from the bar before the talk starts.

BACBS Good Neighbour Scheme

The Good Neighbour Scheme gives lifts to those with no other transport, for example to the doctors, as well as lifts to the Barton/Green Road roundabout, where there are regular buses into Headington and central Oxford. The scheme serves Beckley, Elsfield, Stanton, Forest Hill, Woodeaton, and Noke.

To request a lift, either ring 07514 791910 (if no answer, leave a message) or email BACBSgoodneighbour@gmail.com. If you know of anyone who might need help, and perhaps does not know this service exists, please do let them know. If you would like to volunteer, please email the above address.

Kate Howles, for the BACBS committee

Beckley Art Group's annual exhibition

Beckley Art Group are having their usual art exhibition in our village hall on the weekend of **24/25 October, 10am-4pm**. There will be about 100 paintings of great variety, and the excellent café of course. For nearly 10 years we have been exhibiting in our amazing hall that could have been an art gallery! We are very lucky to be able to use this magical space.



FOREST HILL

St Nicolas Church

Details of all church services and general church news can be found on pages 4 - 10. Any changes to the published schedule of services will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Ride and Stride

Ride and Stride will take place on **Saturday 12 September** and I will be taking part again this year. Most of my sponsors don't sponsor me per church, they give me donations. Half the money I raise comes back to St Nicolas, the other half goes to Oxford Historic Churches Trust. If you wish to sponsor me, my phone number is 01865 875679, email triciaann49@gmail.com. Many thanks. *Pat Fraser, Churchwarden St Nicolas*

Open Organ Morning at St Nicolas

Saturday 19 September, 12noon-1.30pm (note time)

Have you ever wondered what it feels like to play a church organ? If you are interested in hearing, playing or learning about our Victorian Pipe Organ, please drop in to St Nicolas Church any time between midday and 1.30pm, when Peter will be happy to show you how a traditional pipe organ works and even give you a chance to try it for yourself!

Bring some keyboard music if you like, but you don't have to be able to read music to enjoy trying out the organ. All ages are welcome, but children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. If you want more details, or if you would like to arrange a more convenient time to visit, ring Peter on 01865 876848 or use the contact form at <https://www.stnicolasforesthill.org/contact>. *Peter Stutfield, Organist, St Nicolas Church*

Save the Date: Daffodil Day at Shotover House

Sunday 21 March 2027, 2-4.30pm

Daffodil Day offers a chance to enjoy the beautiful private gardens of Shotover House in return for a modest entrance fee. Tea, coffee and homemade cakes are on sale throughout the afternoon and proceeds are shared between St Nicolas Church and The Maple Tree Children's Centre.

We are always looking for more people to join our large, well-organised team of volunteers – please contact Julia Stutfield julia.stutfield@gmail.com for more information.

Village Hall Quiz Night



The quiz held in the Forest Hill village hall in August was a big success, despite the heat. The hall was full, with nine teams taking part and the final result was very close with only a few points between the top three teams. The winning team collected a cash prize of £90 which they very generously donated to St Nicolas Church. The event also raised £35 for the Four Paws Cat Rescue charity in the village. Thank you to the organisers and all who took part.

Jazz on the Hill

Julie and Will have become grandparents of twins and have temporarily moved to the south coast to be available for grandparent duties. They won't therefore be continuing with the jazz nights at least for the foreseeable future. They would like to thank everybody who came along to watch or take part in these monthly jam sessions, which were such fun over the last few years and a lovely way of staying connected to the village after moving back to Oxford.

Macmillan Coffee Morning

The organisers of the Pop-Up Coffee Shop are hosting a Macmillan Coffee Morning this month (see below). If you can't join us, but want to donate to the event via our Macmillan fundraising page, contact Caroline Fraser cazzle-jumbo@hotmail.com for more information.

Macmillan Coffee Morning

Do your bit for better cancer care

When: **Friday 25 September, 10.30am-12pm**

Where: **Forest Hill Village Hall**

Together we will do whatever it takes to make cancer care better for everyone



Macmillan Cancer Support, registered charity in England and Wales (263017), Scotland (SC039962) and the Isle of Man (563). Also operating in Northern Ireland. MAC20376

**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**
A registered charity



Forest Hill with Shotover Parish Council

The Parish Council is pleased to announce that the memorial bench for Malcolm Leeding has now been installed on Forest Hill Recreation Ground (see cover photo). We hope that residents and visitors alike will enjoy the seat and take a moment to reflect while enjoying this peaceful spot.

Village Hall Gigaclear Wi-Fi Approval

Gigaclear has officially secured landowner permission to lay the necessary cabling. High-speed internet is one step closer for the hall, with installation to proceed as soon as the works are scheduled.

Village Hall Booking Rules Updated

The Parish Council and Village Hall Committee have introduced updated terms to protect local residents while keeping the venue open for community events. Key updates include a 50-person capacity cap, a 10.30pm finish, and a mandatory parking marshal for larger gatherings.

Village Defibrillator and Green Spaces Update

The village defibrillator has been inspected and confirmed in full working order, ready for community emergency use. The Parish Council also praised the high standard of local grass cutting and maintenance across our public spaces over the summer months.

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on Thursday 10 September at 7pm in Forest Hill Village Hall. All are welcome to attend.

Dates of meetings, agendas and minutes can be found on the Forest Hill website: www.foresthillwithshotover-pc.gov.uk and on the Village Hall noticeboard. You can contact the Clerk by email at: theclerk@foresthillwithshotover-pc.gov.uk or telephone 0844 994 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 everyone to use.

For more information, or to book the hall, email Stephen Robinson at spr500@gmail.com.

HORTON-cum-STUDLEY

St Barnabas Church

Details of all church services and general church news can be found on pages 4 - 10. Any changes to the published schedule of services will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.



The Dog and Collar

Open on **Friday 4 September and Friday 2 October, 6-8.30pm in the village church**. Do come along and meet up with fellow villagers, neighbours and friends.

Ukraine support

Thank you to all those who have contributed medicines, medical devices and aids and a generous supply of caps (e.g crutches, wheelchairs, commodes, grabbers, toilet seat raisers, in-date medicines and dressings). We have been able to donate three car loads over the summer! Donations accepted on an ongoing basis. Contact lisamynheer@gmail.com or 07786 705785 for more information, deliveries or collections.

Michaelmas Fayre

Saturday 12 September, 12-2pm

Donations to the book stall, toys, gifts, nearly new can be left at the back of the church after 1 September, for collection. Contributions to the cake stall and plants and produce can be delivered to Manor Farm from 10.30am on the day of the Fayre. Raffle prizes can be given to Lis Pugh. Contact lisamynheer@gmail.com if you require donations to be collected or can offer to help on the day. This is a longstanding village event that we hope to keep going with your help, so thank you for your continued support.

Harvest Festival

Sunday 13 September

Annie will **decorate the church on Friday 11 September from 10am**. She welcomes anyone who can help. If you would like to bring produce, greenery or flowers to decorate the church, please bring them along on that day or leave in the church beforehand. Produce includes items such as pasta, cereals, tins, long life milk etc. After the service items will be taken to the Food Bank.

Spud in a Bucket, Pumpkin Weigh-In and Sunflower Measure

Sunday 4 October, 3-4pm at St Barnabas Church

Keep your spuds undisturbed in their buckets for the big reveal!

Bring all your pumpkins and sunflowers along so we can admire them. All shapes and sizes welcome.

Refreshments available: all donations to Parkinsons UK / St Barnabas Church.

Cathy Jenkins

St Barnabas Swifts

UK swifts have one of the longest migration routes in the world, flying 2.000 kilometres each year. They migrate to the UK from Africa, spending a few months here, to raise their chicks, from late April. Swifts breed where there are suitable breeding and feeding sites including cities, ruins, ancient monuments, cliffs, quarries and old woodpecker holes. In buildings, they nest out of sight, under roof tiles, in eaves or cracks in walls



Swift numbers have declined dramatically in the last 20 years. One reason is that when buildings are repaired or demolished nest sites are lost. Churches can help: swifts favour conditions provided by many churches for their nesting spaces.

At St Barnabas we had a double swift box installed in July. Although too late for the 2026 breeding season, we used a swift caller for four weeks following installation to try to attract the attention of younger birds as they passed by from further north. We are hoping they may take enough interest in the box to return for nesting in 2027. You can see our swift box on the East wall of St Barnabas.

If anyone in the Four Parishes would like to have a swift box installed on their house, please email me Carol_welch20@hotmail.com. for the contact details of David Williams from Cherwell Swifts, who link with Cherwell District Council. He has now installed at least three boxes in Horton-cum-Studley and is very helpful. The cost for a box on a house is about £30.



ECO CHURCH
AN APROCHUR PROJECT

Horton-cum-Studley Parish Council

Parish Council meetings, open to all in the village, are normally held on the second Wednesday each month at 7.30pm in the Millennium Village Hall. The **next meeting is on Wednesday 9 September**.

David Slingo, Chair

From Cherwell District Council

June marks the anniversary of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. To celebrate, the government wants to map local history across the UK, such as street parties, and personal moments that defined the late Queen's 70-year reign.

The Queen Elizabeth Digital Memorial would love to hear stories of Queen Elizabeth from your communities, to map the key moments in the life and reign of Queen Elizabeth, as a permanent record for future generations. Residents don't need to have met the late Queen in person, whether it's about the past Jubilee, a memory of a royal visit to your area, or simply a story of how a community came together, it all belongs in this record for future generations.

This isn't just an archive; it's a living map of personal memories, stories, and moments.

The Queen Elizabeth Digital Memorial marks a significant milestone with the launch of a new collection of archive content and records with the publication of the first selection of memories from those who knew her.

Share a memory here:

<https://www.queenelizabeth.com/#map=5.5/51.501/-0.141>

Islip Bridge Closure

Start date: Monday 21 September. Duration: approximately 10 weeks.

Phase 1: 21 September – 25 September 2026. Temporary traffic signals for site setup and preparation works

Phase 2: 28 September – 20 November 2026. Full closure of Islip Bridge to all vehicles

There will be a signed diversion route in place. Pedestrian and cyclist access will be maintained at all times. There will be no vehicle access across the bridge during the closure.

In memory of Richard Hawes



For those who have not heard, Rachel and her family are saddened to announce the passing of Richard Hawes who left us in June of this year.

Richard was born in 1943 into a family that farmed the land at the far end of Church Lane (Horton-cum-Studley) for the better part of 200 years.

As a young boy he began his education when Horton still had its own school, housed at the back of St Barnabas Church. He then studied in Bicester and Thame, before focusing on farming at Moulton Agricultural College, where he was awarded top student.

After a year's apprenticeship, Richard began work on the family farm, and shortly afterwards married Rachel. When Richard was 25 years old, the untimely death of his father meant that Richard and his younger brother Henry took over the running of the farms (West Hill, Ventfield, and Lower Green). These farms totalled over 350 acres of mixed arable and livestock – though the usage changed over the years.

His father's death in 1969 left a gap on the Parish Council, which Richard stepped in to fill. He served on the Parish Council for 33 years, including 26 years as Chair. A highlight of this time was opening the Horton-cum-Studley Millennium Hall, which was the result of several years' endeavours.

Richard spent his lifetime involved in village life. He was practical and hands-on, and much of what he did was behind the scenes. He maintained public ditches, cut hedgerows, and cleared footpaths, as well as gritting the hill when it was icy. With an unfailing tendency to get involved in things he cared about he found himself involved in committees relating to his interests. These ranged from Young Farmers and Pony Club to village interests such as Gardening Club and Bridge Club.

Alongside Rachel, Richard was a keen gardener, and often took part in growing competitions. His record pumpkin weighed in at a hefty 64.1kg (141.4lbs) – a record to this date!

Diagnosed as having Parkinson's disease some years ago, Richard became involved in fund-raising for the local Parkinson's support group.

Most notably he raised funds by abseiling 160 feet from the top of Guildford cathedral when he was 75.

The family have been overwhelmed by the outpouring of affection, cards, and wishes from friends in and around the village demonstrating the esteem in which he was held. Recurrent themes were his cheerfulness, sense of fun, kindness, his knowledge of the village and countryside, and the contribution he made to village life.

He is sadly missed but warmly remembered by Rachel, his daughters, and the wider family.

HcS Millennium Village Hall AGM report

The Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 15 July 2026. Apologies were received from resident Pete Whitaker, who we gratefully thank for his time and effort on weekly fire alarm and other checks, without which hall maintenance costs would be significantly higher.

The **main review items** from last year were:

- Completion of the playground replacement following fundraising, a grant, and utilisation of a portion of the Hall Maintenance Fund to cover the significant total cost. Regular users report that it is popular.
- A full year of the website and on-line booking system, increasing visibility and bookings. Noted that the hire rate for village residents is heavily discounted.
- The Annual Accounts to 31 March 2026 show a small cash surplus of some £5,000.

In the coming year:

Upgrading issues will be addressed as funds allow, such as the stage floor repair, replacing football goal posts, and some redecoration.

Members were thanked for their time and commitment on behalf of the village, and were all willing to be re-elected.

It was noted that some near-by residents recently heard occasions of loud music late at night. The hirer's terms and conditions determine that music should be indoors only, and the event cut off time is midnight. Any concerns can be emailed to hcshallbookings@gmail.com.

Horton-cum-Studley Gardening Club

With increasingly hot and dry summer conditions, we are encouraged to make our gardens more drought-tolerant. At the same time emphasis is rightly put on the huge value of ponds for natural biodiversity of all kinds, for which rainwater is far and away the best source of water. I can add little to Chris Pugh's wise words on these subjects in the recent issues of The Four Parishes magazine and the Horton-cum-Studley newsletter except to point out that these two messages are clearly in conflict.

I have recently added significantly to my perennial summertime rain anxiety by resurrecting a pond in our garden. Our three children dug this about 35 years ago while I was away at a conference, placing it under an aged apple tree, at the top of our hill, and on a slope, contrary to my explicit advice. Nevertheless, it thrived for about 25 years until it sprang a leak, probably due to the roots of two large trees that grew unbidden out of logs used as edging. With both these trees felled (for other reasons), the tangled mass of terrestrial 'weeds' removed, new liner laid, and, of course, advice sought from Sue and Peter Burge, in little more than a month we had a renewed pond filled with water from our 6,000 litre rain butt and dotted with a starter mix of aquatic plants. Different plants grow best at different water depths, which can be achieved with shallow shelving at the edges, supports for pots in the deeper centre, and hessian planting sacks suspended from the banks.



Recurrent heatwaves and persistent droughts have played havoc with this design, rendering everything barely submerged. Although we are told of the value of any body of water from the size of a washing-up bowl to a lake, clearly smaller ponds are more limited in their buffering capacity against water loss and heat stress. Animal life may be somewhat more resilient than plants with their roots exposed; pond-skaters and water boatmen continue to skim their way forwards and backwards across the diminished surface area, mosquito larvae are filtering out nutrients as they hang upside down from the surface, damselflies and dragonflies still use

the taller plants for support, snails and amphibia can hunker down in the wet floor.

I can only hope that judicious timing of topping up the pond will make best use of precious rainwater from our butts. If possible, do this after the worst of each heatwave has passed to minimise merely returning water to the atmosphere through evaporation. If any rain is forecast (no sight of that yet), emptying a water butt into the pond immediately before rain will allow it to be refilled surprisingly rapidly with water running off roofs, capturing more water than from any rain falling directly into the pond. On balance the value of having a pond surely outweighs the costs of this water conflict, except perhaps for the stressed-out gardener.

Sarah Randolph

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The Talkhouse - Stanton St John

OPEN - Under NEW Management

Open from 12 Noon - 10pm, Wednesday through to Sunday

(currently closed Mondays and Tuesdays – temporarily)

Serving food all day from our NEW Menu

Take-Away Service available from the Menus

Dog Friendly Pub

Come visit for a drink, a meal or a simple light snack from our NEW Ciabatta and Salad Menu, running alongside the Brett Burger menu, offering a selection of 12 options for burgers, and our selection of New Tapas.

Don't forget we also offer a selection of dishes for Sunday Roasts, popular by demand so recommend booking ahead to avoid disappointment.

We hope to welcome you soon. Telephone 01865 377000.

STANTON ST JOHN

St John the Baptist Church

Details of all church services and general church news can be found on pages 4 - 10. Any changes to the published schedule of services will be on our website www.fourparishes.org.uk.

Monthly Coffee Mornings

Stanton Village Hall, 10.30–12noon

The next dates are:

Wednesday 16 September

Wednesday 21 October (to be confirmed)

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

Pimms and Praise

On **Saturday 12 September at 5pm in Stanton Church** we are planning a **Pimms and Praise** event. We can enjoy a feast of singing favourite hymns, as we enjoy sips of Pimms to moisten our vocal cords between them. Please do let us know beforehand a favourite hymn to ensure we have the words printed for everyone. If we have too many suggested hymns, we will select at random.

This should be a fun event that all ages can enjoy. Please do think about coming and joining us, but let Anthea know your chosen hymn beforehand by email at anthea@fourparishes.org.uk.

Future events

Friday 20 November, 7pm Ninebarrow, the amazing folk duo from Dorset, return to Stanton Church. Their last concert here was excellent! Tickets are bookable on their website - <https://www.ninebarrow.co.uk/stanton>.

Saturday 5 December, 10am-3.30pm Stanton House Christmas Fair (see page 40)

Saturday 5 December, 6-7pm Switching on Stanton Christmas Lights

Sunday 6 December Ashley Goodall and the Shotover Singers Advent Carols in Stanton church

Stanton St John Women's Institute

While we've had a lovely break since our last meeting, this summer has produced its challenges. After the extremely hot weather we've been having, unsurprisingly, climate change has featured in many of our conversations. So our talk at **7.30pm on 8 September** by Chris Churchman of *Cquester* is incredibly relevant: *Losing England's Landscape. Climate Change, fact, truth and complete myths.*

Cquester seeks to raise public awareness about the value of nature in offsetting the effects of climate change and, in so doing, to seek a more balanced approach to avoiding a climate calamity. Britain must prepare itself to be able to withstand the significant changes in weather and economic fortunes that we have seen in the past few months.



This timely meeting is open to all, so please come along to hear an informative talk and enjoy our friendly atmosphere. SSJ WI members free; guests £4 (includes light refreshments).

Stanton St John Film Club

Saturday 10 October 2026, 7.45pm Stanton St John Village Hall

H is for Hawk

Our first film of the autumn is *H is for Hawk*, in which Claire Foy plays Cambridge don, Helen Macdonald. Distraught at the death of her father, she seeks consolation by buying and training a Goshawk which she names Mabel. The film explores the deepening relationship between Helen and Mabel, and how it helps Helen deal with her grief. See the official trailer here: [H is for Hawk trailer](#).



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 Parish Council

SSJ Parish Council narrowly voted in favour of the Shepherd’s Pit ETRO (Experimental Traffic Regulation Order) scheme, proposed by Oxfordshire County Council, which will see the Shepherd’s Pit road closed to the majority of traffic for a trial period of 18 months beginning in the Autumn.

The next parish council meeting will be on **Monday 28 September**.

* * * * *

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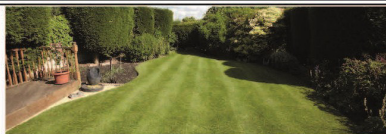
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Please leave **Bric-a-brac** at the back of St Barnabas Church before **Monday 7 September**. Thank you.

STALLS

RAFFLE – Lis Pugh (Donations gratefully received, especially new items that would appeal to children)

CAKES & HOME BAKED – Caroline Badger (no fresh cream, please)

PRODUCE & PLANTS – Carol Welch carol_welch20@hotmail.com

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This is always a truly traditional country village event for all ages. We hope that as many of you as possible can support it and use the opportunity to meet your neighbours and friends whilst at the same time helping to raise funds to keep our beautiful Victorian village church open and in good order.

We need YOUR support and help please to keep this lovely event going!