

WESTON-ON-THE-GREEN

TheVillageNews

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2025



Photo by Annie Cooper



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From the editor

Welcome to the first edition of the *Village News* for 2025. Was your January one of the 'New Year New You' kind or were you like me and resolutely stuck to the annual resolution of not making any resolutions?

One resolution that could be made and easily kept is to explore the wonderful walks around Weston and Oxfordshire (see p. 25 for details).

Another one could be to support Weston's local businesses more frequently. With both the Chequers and the Ben Jonson settled into their new management, the Village Pantry a few steps away from the Community buy-out and many excellent local businesses with assorted skills on offer, there's plenty to choose from, not forgetting the Village Hall and all the events it puts on for the community over the year.

Those businesses who advertise in the magazine are the life blood of the *Village News* so please do support them as without their advertising the *News* will cease to publish as a free magazine to all the households in Weston.

Another resolution which I would greatly welcome would be for more people to contribute articles to the magazine – it'd be lovely to hear from you if there's something you'd like to share with other Westoners or if you've any photos of the local area that you think could be used, please do send them to me.




Cobweb by Annie Cooper



Snowdrops by Annie Cooper



Tulips in Snow by Patsy Parsons

Deadline for April/May edition:
6th MARCH 2025



From the Rector

Gareth Miller
Rector of the Akeman Benefice and Area Dean of Bicester & Islip

Dear friends

Do you remember the Carpenters' song, 'Rainy Days and Mondays Always Get Me Down'? Well, I quite like Mondays. For some reason, I always feel quite purposeful at the beginning of the week. I'm a bit like that at the beginning of a new year too - I seem to get a lot done. The other reason I like Mondays is that it's

quiz night on BBC2. Annoyingly, we have quite a few church meetings on Monday evenings, but – joy of joys – these days I can catch up on iPlayer any time I like.

Are you, like me, conflicted about modern life? I can't imagine life without my smart phone, without the internet, without social media. I

love being able to watch and listen to things when I choose. Yet all these things have their downside. We have rather lost the concept of the family all sitting down to watch a TV programme together. So, although I welcome many innovations, I sometimes hanker after a past when life was somehow less complicated.

Similarly, I am delighted that we live in a more open, honest, inclusive and liberal society than our forebears did, even fifty years ago. But I mourn the loss of certain traditional values, and the carelessness that so many exhibit with language, manners, and codes of conduct.

Living life is about dealing with complexity, and the tension between the ancient and the modern is part of that. The season of Lent, which comes late this year, beginning on 5 March, gives us (as I said in the last issue) a time set apart, with a different tone, a different pace, and an invitation to break with some of the conventions of our everyday life. One of the things we might do, for example, is to put the phone aside for an hour or two each day (I am preaching this principally to myself!), or to make more time for prayer and Bible study.

On our Akeman Benefice website, there are some resources that you might find helpful during Lent – or any time!

<https://akemanbenefice.org.uk/bulletin/prayers-resources/bible-reading-resources>

When we bring things to God in prayer it restores our perspective, our balance, our ability to handle the complexity of life. When we acknowledge our human weakness and vulnerability we discover new reserves of strength. When we place our concerns and worries in God's hands, we are given the same assurance that St Paul received from the Lord: 'My grace is all you need. My power is made perfect in weakness.' (2 Corinthians 12.9)

Gareth

St Mary's Church, Weston on the Green warmly invites you to join in our services in February and March

2nd February	11:00	Café Church
9th February	18:00	Benefice Evensong with the Akeman Church Community Choir, Middleton Stoney
16th February	11:00	Holy Communion
23rd February	10:00	Benefice Holy Communion, Chesterton
	11:00	Morning Worship
5th March	11:00	Ash Wednesday Holy Communion, Middleton Stoney
	19:00	Ash Wednesday Holy Communion, Kirtlington
9th March	18:00	Benefice Evensong with the Akeman Church Community Choir, Wendlebury
16th March	11:00	Holy Communion
	15:00	Family Service, Bletchingdon
23rd March	10:00	Benefice Holy Communion, Kirtlington
30th March	09:30	Holy Communion
	10:00	Mothering Sunday Service, Kirtlington

Please note: the times are subject to change. The monthly schedule is posted on the front door of the church as well as the bulletin box at the East gate.

For other services across the Akeman Benefice please visit:
<https://www.akemanbenefice.org.uk/church-services>

We look forward to welcoming you to our services

Church news

Since last writing we have had a busy time at St Mary's and I wanted to highlight a few notable services. We had a moving service on Remembrance Day. Huge thanks to Wing Commander Richard Lewis for laying the wreath and his daughter Freya for reading so beautifully.



'The Big Breakfast' was a huge success and a great event, raising over £600. All our thanks go to Peter, Andrew and the dream team of servers and washer-uppers.

Our Carol service was really well attended with over 65 people coming. The church was festively decorated thanks to Mandy Jones

and lit beautifully with our new battery candles, kindly donated by Roz Bullen. The mulled wine and mince pies went down very well before the event, many thanks to Peter for providing these. Thank



you also to our readers on the night. Finally our service on Christmas Day was a lovely, well attended family event featuring some fantastic singing and enthusiastic showing of Christmas socks!

May I take this opportunity to thank all the kind volunteers, the clergy team, the organists, the bell ringers, the flower arrangers, the carpet hooverers, the readers and all who help keep our village church the very special place that it is.

Nicky Donne PCC

THANK YOU FROM ERIC BOHM

As some readers may be aware, I have had to absent myself from duties over several months while recovering from surgery. I thank those people who have supported the work of our church during my leave of absence.

I thank Nicky Donne, whose positive and supportive attitude relieved any sense of anxiety on my part. She took up the responsibility of writing the articles for the Village News over the past

two issues; actively participated in organising the very successful Big Breakfast on December 7th.

I also am grateful for Nicky's efforts with Mandy Jones, Roz Bullen and Sally Brown to decorate the church for the Christmas season. I think Roz's idea of having young people introduce the opening Christmas carol at the Lessons and Carols service was simply brilliant and helped those attending to enjoy the occasion in the true spirit of Christmas.

I appreciate the efforts of my fellow warden, Peter Driver, to take up the duties during the church's peak season.

I am appreciative of those who sent their wishes for a speedy recovery.

These actions confirm one of the many positive attributes of village life.

Thank you

Eric Bohm

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Small Change!

Please note a few small changes to the service schedule from the beginning of February.

Benefice Evensong (or similar service)

This will be on the 2nd Sunday of each month at 18:00, with the Akeman Church Community Choir – moving around the benefice as before.

Benefice Communion

This will be on the 4th Sunday of the month at 10:00, also moving around.

New Family Service

A new Family Service ('3rd at 3') will be starting at Bletchingdon on the third Sunday in February (16th) at 15:00. This is a new venture – do please pray for those involved. We hope it will attract people from across the benefice, especially from Bletchingdon, Kirtlington and Weston, and will complement the service at Chesterton on the first Sunday.

Lent

Ash Wednesday 5th March)

10:00 Middleton Stoney Holy Communion (said)

19:00 Kirtlington Holy Communion (sung)

Mothering Sunday 30th March

Benefice Family Service at Kirtlington at 1000. A very warm invitation to all those with children, especially those who have been recently baptised.

Palm Sunday 13th April

Procession and Service at Weston-on-the-Green at 10:30.

Café Church

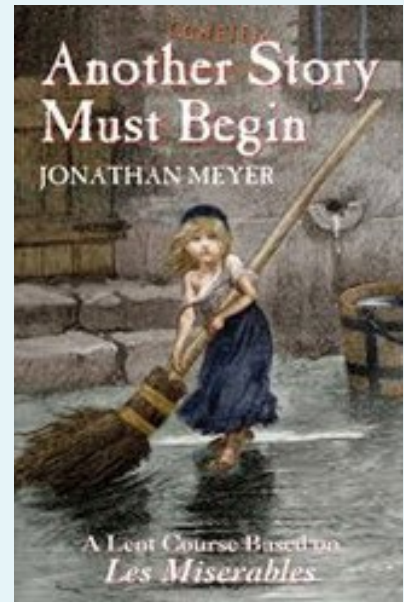
We hold a Café Church across the benefice from time to time (please see service schedule). These are much more informal (and shorter!) than our regular services, and begin with coffee and pastries. Why not

Another Story Must Begin ...

Following last year's successful experiment, the church will once more be organising groups meeting weekly in homes during Lent discussing the themes and issues raised by a film. This year's choice is *Les Misérables*. The Weston-on-the-Green group will be meeting in the home of Henry and Nicky Donne in North Lane, starting in the week beginning March 10th.

Based on Victor Hugo's great novel, 'Les Mis' has been one of the hit stage shows of the last 20 years and the film more than matches the theatrical version. Set against the turbulence of revolution in early nineteenth-century France, the story wrestles with the issues of crime, justice, redemption, goodness and social division. Its songs have established themselves in the popular canon; its principal characters take their place alongside those of Dickens.

If you haven't seen the film (or would like to see it again), we will be showing it in Chesterton Community Centre (Geminus Way, Chesterton) at 7.30pm on Friday 7th February. Admission is £5 and light refreshments will be served. Just turn up with your admission fee. More details about the group meetings will be available on that night. If you'd like to know more about the film or the groups email Joanna Clifford on joannaclifford.akeman@gmail.com for further information.



make a note of the dates and come along.

Rise and Shine

The weekly all-age community café takes place every Wednesday in term time in Kirtlington Church (09:15 – 10:45). All ages welcome for coffee, cake, conversation, games, songs ... Do come along, and bring a friend or neighbour.

Taking a New Route?

Looking for something meaningful and different to do in 2025?

Why not embark on a spiritual journey with Pilgrim Paths?

These guided, circular walks are perfect for quality family time. Explore charming local villages and churches, enjoy the beauty of the rural areas around Bicester, and connect with God, nature, and each other. Each route comes with a detailed leaflet, including step-by-step directions, Bible passages, and reflections to guide

your journey. Along the way, there are suggestions for places to pause, take in the countryside's beauty, and explore points of interest. You'll also learn about the history of the churches and other fascinating landmarks along the route.

With nine routes to choose from, there's something for everyone—whether you're walking alone or with others. It's a meaningful and refreshing way to spend time together while discovering hidden gems in our local area.

Start your pilgrimage here: <https://www.bicesterandislipdeanery.co.uk/pilgrim-paths>

Akeman Benefice website

Here you will find full details of all services and events, as well as other useful information - baptisms, weddings and funerals, and all sorts of useful things! <https://akemanbenefice.org.uk>

Chair's comments

The end of the calendar year is a busy time for the Parish Council as we are preparing our budget and reviewing our development plan. In some cases, we are pleased with our progress and in others concerned and even frustrated. There are three key values in the plan:

1. We value the people and history of the village (this has eight action points)
2. We value our children and young people (this has seven action points)
3. We value the diverse resource of nature (this has six action points)

To see the detail of this plan please refer to the website.

So where are we now? I've written to the point of tedium about our frustration with the removal of the oak tree path (a key historical site in the village). We are weary of the endless excuses as to why this has not occurred. I believe I speak for all councillors and for many residents that it is easy to become cynical about the public expressions from both the District and the County Council that parishes and the rural community are important and remain a focus of interest and concern. If that were the case, this parish would not still be chasing both our traffic

concerns and the issue of the harmful path around our historic oak tree. Thank you for the support many of you offer as we continue to push for resolution of these issues.

One positive development has been the work on the playground (Value 2). Our young people and children are a focus in the Development Plan. We would like to extend play opportunities plus experiential learning activities in the spinney. We are still looking for parents who are prepared to be active in this endeavour.

In terms of our third value, biodiversity, we have not created any new projects such as the ones you may read about in the local paper. Some villages create orchards to make up for loss over the years. There are hedgehog projects, wildflower projects, a village initiative on bee friendly flowers, and wild pond projects. Our focus has been to maintain and if possible enhance what we have in our rural setting. Individuals have worked hard to maintain and manage the Oak Tree pond, there is ongoing work on the North Lane pond, fondly remembered as the Duck Pond. In both these cases, the ponds have a functional as well as an historical use and so it is important to maintain them.

Many residents have planted bee friendly flowers in gardens and on verges. The butterfly population has been of concern in the area and we probably need some encouragement and support to increase these numbers. We should perhaps work more closely with the Garden Club in this area.

The Development Plan and the Budget

The Development Plan and the budget intersect at our November through January meetings. We have looked at how we have spent money, discussed increased needs for funds, considered adjusting budget lines and pondering areas of underspend and our reserves. As I write at the end of December which is before our budget is proposed to Cherwell District Council, what I now write is pre-acceptance of the budget. Our proposed budget highlights increased maintenance costs. Yes, costs have gone up but so has our need for professional services. Our volunteer village work force has dwindled and key areas of our village have become overgrown. As mentioned in the last newsletter, ditches have become blocked leading to increased flooding. The common cry is 'please get this fixed'. The Parish Council via our Clerk works hard to

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pass on to the District and the County council all requests but in many cases we've just had to wait our turn for professional services. We are now considering a quote to clear the edges of the playing field, a task which a volunteer group has previously sorted. We've repeatedly asked for volunteers to form a working group – above and beyond those already dedicated to helping (huge thanks). We've not had any replies. Sad but true.

What is the solution? It could be to increase the budget, reduce the requests for assistance or we could try again to ask for physical support from residents, old and new to help out on a regular or twice-yearly basis to maintain our village. Then we could allocate funds to enhancing biodiversity, developing play areas for all ages, creating an experiential learning area in the spinney. We could even encourage areas of the village to work together on their 'patch' to have small projects that make a difference. A positive example of such collaboration is the work done around the Village Hall – thought has gone into the flowers for bees and bird and butterfly houses on the property.

The solution is in the hands of all of us.

Oxfordshire Council's Charter

The Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, Liz Leffman, has written an introduction to the Charter in which she says:

'Our vision is that this charter enhances partnership working across councils to empower a vibrant democracy across Oxfordshire. Working in partnership with our local councils is essential for responding to the needs of our residents, understanding our diverse communities, and providing effective services.'

This Charter recognises the importance of Oxfordshire's town councils, parish councils and parish meetings in representing and delivering for the residents of Oxfordshire. We have developed the charter in consultation with town and parish councils from across the county together with the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) and our district and city council partners. We have listened carefully to the many councillors and clerks, who have helped us identify the

opportunities we can explore through the commitments in this charter and are very grateful for their contributions.'

We were initially hesitant to sign the Charter because of our difficult experience with OCC in matters of importance to the village. However, we felt that there is enough expected action, accountability and respect stated in the basic commitments and action cited in the Charter that our Parish Council could sign up or agree to be part of it (Dec 2024). That being said, whilst not expecting to get our every wish, we do expect increased timeliness in completing projects which have been agreed. The Charter can be found both online and on our website.

Cherwell's Local Plan

The Consultation on the Local Plan will conclude on 25th February 2025. The Parish Council has submitted its comments and we are aware that there will be implications for the village although the historic value and importance of our surroundings is clear in all mentions of the village throughout the draft.

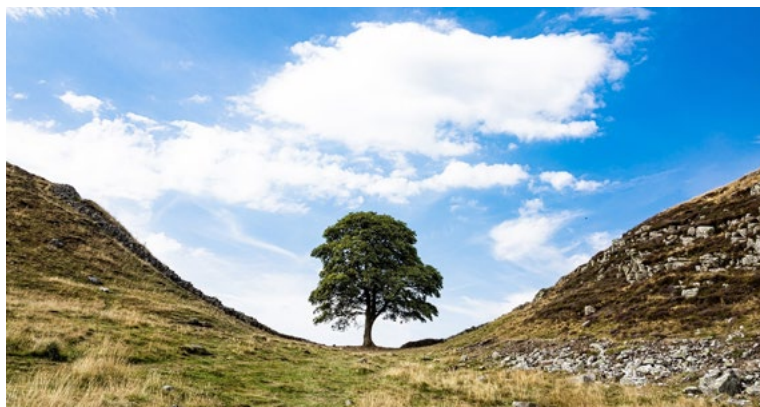
Diane Bohm

Two Great Initiatives

The New Year has brought some wonderful news regarding two successful applications for trees for the village.

Firstly, thank you to Jordie Riches of the Village Hall Committee for daring to apply for one of the saplings from the fallen Sycamore Gap tree. I know she has written an article about the process and the excitement of our village being chosen to have one of the saplings (see pp 16-17).

Secondly, David Williams from Knowle Lane has been tending two of our flower boxes this summer. He has also applied to the 'I Dig Trees' conservation charity and his application was accepted for 300 trees for the Weston on the Green Community Woodland. Discussions will be ongoing but huge praise for this initiative David!



Planning update

Planning applications relating to the parish are discussed at each Parish Council meeting and a report is placed on the Parish Council website. Full information regarding each application is available via the Planning and Building section on the Cherwell District Council website.



BUILDING APPLICATIONS:

Decisions Received – Prior Approval Not Required

24/03060/AGN (related to 24/01572/AGN) – OS Parcel 4658 North of Shell Filling Station and SW of the Chequers.

Decisions Received – Refused

24/01136/F - The Old Vicarage, Mill Lane
Renovation of existing detached garage to incorporate first floor home office space.

Applications - Awaiting Decision

24/02685/F – Southview, Northampton Road
Infill extension to existing bungalow and addition of first floor. Erection of garage and store with room in loft, including demolition of existing pole barn.

24/03356/PIP - Land North East Of Knowle Farm, Knowle Lane
Planning Permission in Principle is sought for the provision of 2-4 dwellings.



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Village Hall News



AS THIS is the first write-up of 2025, we'd like to wish everyone a belated Happy New Year. Christmas seems an age ago already, but we must thank some people who helped with our festivities at the Hall. A big thank you to Andrew, Terry and Clive who installed and decorated the Christmas tree.

Although slightly shorter than last year's tree it still looked welcoming on those grey December days, whilst bedecked in thousands of lights. An extra thank you goes to Clive who saved the tree a couple of times on the weekend of Storm Darragh. The tree, at one point, looked like a tribute to the Leaning Tower of Pisa, as the winds wreaked havoc. Some extra stakes and rope (and further work by Clive!) kept the tree upright for the rest of the season, despite the best efforts of further stormy and windy weather.

Our thanks also go to Father Christmas who took time out of his busy schedule to hand-deliver gifts of games, activity packs, books and toys to twenty-five children from the village. The sound of his sleigh bells as he approached the Hall caused much excitement for the children (and some of the grown-ups!). Thank you also to Paul and Keyna for the mulled wine, and to Toddy for providing some delicious snacks for the event.

continued on p12



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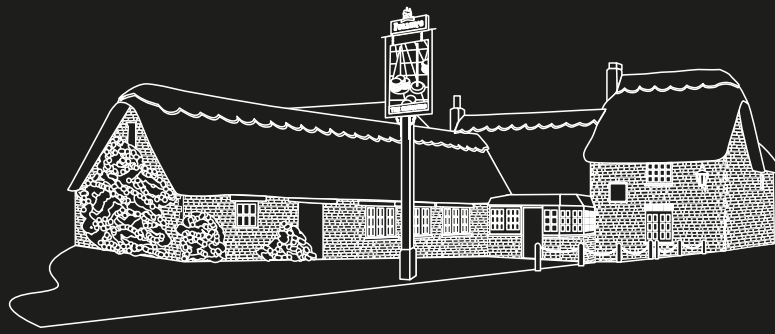
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Weston on the Green Memorial Village Hall

Supporters must be 16 years of age or older

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At the time of going to print the Wassail night has not yet taken place so there will be a write up in the next Village News. We are, however, able to let you know of some future events which we hope will be of interest to you. On Saturday 29th March we will be holding a Quiz Night. Team sizes can be between 2-6 players and the ticket cost per person is £10, which includes a two-course supper. We will also have a cash bar running on the evening. The quiz nights are usually great fun with lots of good-natured rivalry between teams. We always look forward to this event and the ingenuity of the team names!

In May we will be marking the 80th anniversary of VE Day with a special lunch in the Village Hall on Saturday 10th May.

The Hall will be decorated for the event, with a nod to the 1940s, lots of red, white and blue, bunting and flowers. We will be serving a two-course lunch with complimentary prosecco. The main meal will be fish and chips (or an alternative) as this was the only food not to be rationed during the war (the government believed that safeguarding this comfort meal during the time of conflict was key to keeping morale up. In fact, Churchill called fish and chips 'our good companions'!). We will also have musical entertainment from The D-Day Dollies who will



be performing a number of well-known and classic 1940s/wartime songs. Tickets for the lunch are just £5 due to the kind generosity, sponsorship and donations by the Parish Council and local businesses. Booking is required for this event and to secure a place at the VE day lunch please email us at westonvillagehall@live.co.uk by 25th April.

This is also the email to book your teams for the Quiz Night and we hope you can make one, or both, of these events.

Elsewhere in this *Village News* is our article on the successful application we submitted in September for the National Trust's 'Trees of Hope' initiative regarding the saplings from the Sycamore Gap tree (see pp 16-17). Our thanks go to the Parish Council, especially Diane, for their support

as we discussed our idea behind our application. The application was submitted in September, and we were notified towards the end of November, and just ahead of the public announcement during National Tree Week which took place 23rd November - 1st December, that we were one of the forty-nine recipients of a sapling. We were totally astounded to be chosen but also very humbled to be one of the only two 'place' locations (the other place being Strabane) with the other forty-seven being named sites, such as Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool, NHS Foundation Trusts in Cornwall, Cumbria and Northumberland, the Rob Burrow Centre for MND in Leeds, plus a number of parks, botanic/public gardens, schools and hospices. We hope the sapling will become a cherished part of the village over time.

Christmas Raffle Donors Thank You

A huge thank you to all the donors to the Christmas Raffle that took place in the Hall on 1st December.

The generosity and support of these donors helps make the Christmas Tree Lights a very special event - thank you!

Our thanks go to:
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 The Milk Shed
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PHONE BOX LIBRARY

Opening Times for 2025

The phone box is open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, from early morning until 4.30 – 5.00 pm when it is then locked up for the night.

Please feel free to borrow a book to read. We only ask that you return it in a good condition for the next person to borrow. Stock will be rotated on a regular basis.

Please could we ask that book donations are not left in the phone box. If you wish to donate books please email westonvillagehall@live.co.uk

Many thanks and happy reading!



250 Club 2025

Villagers may see the Committee out and about over the next few weeks for the 250 Club renewal subscription which is due on 1st March.

The 250 Club funds help to support the up-keep and refurbishment of the Village Hall and have been pivotal in helping us with some of the projects undertaken in the last year, including the roof cleaning and the construction and installation of the path at the rear of the Hall.

Each year 250 numbers are sold to residents of Weston on the Green at £6.00 each. Every month there is a draw of three winning numbers. Usually, the three winners receive payouts of £18.00, £12.00, and £6.00, but every 6 months (December and June) there are bumper prizes of £90.00, £45.00 and £15.00.

The results are announced in the *Village News* magazine and the prizes delivered to the lucky winners. We have some spare numbers and if you would like to sign up, please email us at westonvillagehall@live.co.uk

Thank you to those villagers who have renewed their 250 Club numbers and for helping maintain the Hall. It is greatly appreciated.

250 Club Results

DECEMBER

The December 250 Club draw is one of the twice-yearly big draws . Our congratulations go to:

1st prize: £90 No 221 Andy Hill

2nd prize: £45 No 129 Neil & Corinne Cunningham

3rd prize: £15 No 78 P. Riches

JANUARY

1st prize: £18 No 250 Jessica Warren

2nd prize: £12 No 190 Eric Payne

3rd prize: £6 No 161 Patsy Parsons



Weston-on-the-Green Neighbourhood Watch

Suspicious emails and texts are part of our online lives now. This article will give some tips about how to deal with this widespread and common online problem.

Email or Text Fraud and Scams

Do you worry when you receive an odd-looking email or text message? Most of us get them regularly, and sometimes it is very hard to spot that they are not the 'real thing'.

Your email provider may divert many of the known scam emails to your 'Spam' or 'Junk' mailbox, but newer or less widely distributed mail may not be caught in this way.

Have you heard of Action Fraud? Their website (actionfraud.police.uk) has a great deal of information about types of fraud, ways to spot it and/or prevent it. You do not need to be certain before reporting an email.

From the website:

Have you spotted a suspicious email?

If you have received an email which you're not quite sure about, forward it to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS): report@phishing.gov.uk

The message might be from a company you don't normally receive communications from, or someone you do not know. You may just have a hunch. If you are

suspicious, you should report it. Have you received a suspicious text message?

Most phone providers are part of a scheme that allows customers to report suspicious text messages for free by forwarding it to 7726. If you forward a text to 7726, your provider can investigate the origin of the text and arrange to block or ban the sender, if it's found to be malicious.

Action Fraud can also be contacted by phone: 0300 123 2040.

If you have been a victim of fraud, you can report it on the website, though if the crime is ongoing call 999.

Another website with a host of preventative information is: getsafeonline.org

This site is dedicated to informing readers about protecting themselves, their computers and mobile devices by taking precautions and avoiding risky behaviour online. It also gives advice about keeping your children safe in their online lives.

Thames Valley Alerts

A previous article mentioned Signing up for Thames Valley Alerts. As a guide to the volume and topics covered in the alerts, here are the emails from the month of December 2024:

- A link to the December Edition of "Our News" the national Neighbourhood Watch online Magazine

- A link to a cybercrime survey
- An anti-social behaviour article advising people not to buy e-scooters for Christmas. From the article:

Matthew Barber, Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, said: "Whilst for many, e-scooters are a convenient way to get around, it is nevertheless illegal to use a privately owned e-scooters anywhere on public land.

- A warning from Trading Standards Oxfordshire about TV Licencing scams
- A warning about scam texts/ emails inviting people to apply for a non-existent winter heating allowance.
- A warning about a Cost of Living payments scam
- A link to a survey to set the Kidlington Community Policing priorities for Jan-Mar 2025.

As you can see the alerts range from the local to the national and there are not so many to be overwhelming. If you think they may be of interest to you, sign up to receive them at <https://www.thamesvalleyalert.co.uk>

Weston-on-the-Green
Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

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In Memory of Ann Holt

At my mother's funeral last November I read out a poem I'd written. Many people asked me for a copy of this and so here it is, along with the introduction I gave before reading it.

On Mother's Day as a child I would often include a poem I had written for Mum in the gift or card. But much of my works I never got to share with her. So I wanted to recite one for her at the funeral and this one stood out. I wanted to choose one that would bring a touch of the light-hearted and as the theme of this one is growing old it seemed appropriate.

The Tide of Progress

On a bench on the seafront, two old men are sitting
watching the seagulls and fair reminiscing
throwing out bread to laugh at the melee
whirling a dervish the birds in a frenzy
they watch the waves rolling far down the beach
gravel and sand dunes lie just out of reach
kids building castles while mothers are lying
spread out on towels while their white skin is frying

They open a flask to share out the tea
cups out and biscuits a cake slice or three
a dog and its owner walk steadily past
one man offers cake but they're moving too fast
they watch the waves rolling a bit closer now
the heat causes moisture upon one man's brow
sweat wiped away with an old silken hanky
its showing its age one might say its manky

Sun lower in sky now long shadows it's casting
the stories they share are of time everlasting
memories long captured like famous artworks
a Van Gogh or Rembrandt inside their head lurks
they watch the waves lapping up over sea wall
the tidal insurgence has given its all
a blanket of briny far as eyes can see
the children and mothers have left them both be

And one old man turns to the other
motions to the ocean with a wave of his hand
and says
"do you know, I can remember when all this was sand!!"

Rob Holt



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Sycamore Gap Trees of Hope Initiative

Weston on the Green Memorial Village Hall named as one of the 49 recipients of a 'Trees of Hope' Sycamore Gap sapling

Background

The Sycamore Gap tree, also known as the Robin Hood tree due to it featuring in the 1991 Hollywood film, 'Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves', was one of the most photographed in the country before it was felled in an act of vandalism in September 2023. The tree stood in a dramatic dip created by a glacial meltwater in Hadrian's Wall in the Northumberland National Park and UNESCO World Heritage Site, and in late 2016, it took the crown for English 'Tree of the Year' in the Woodland Trust's awards.

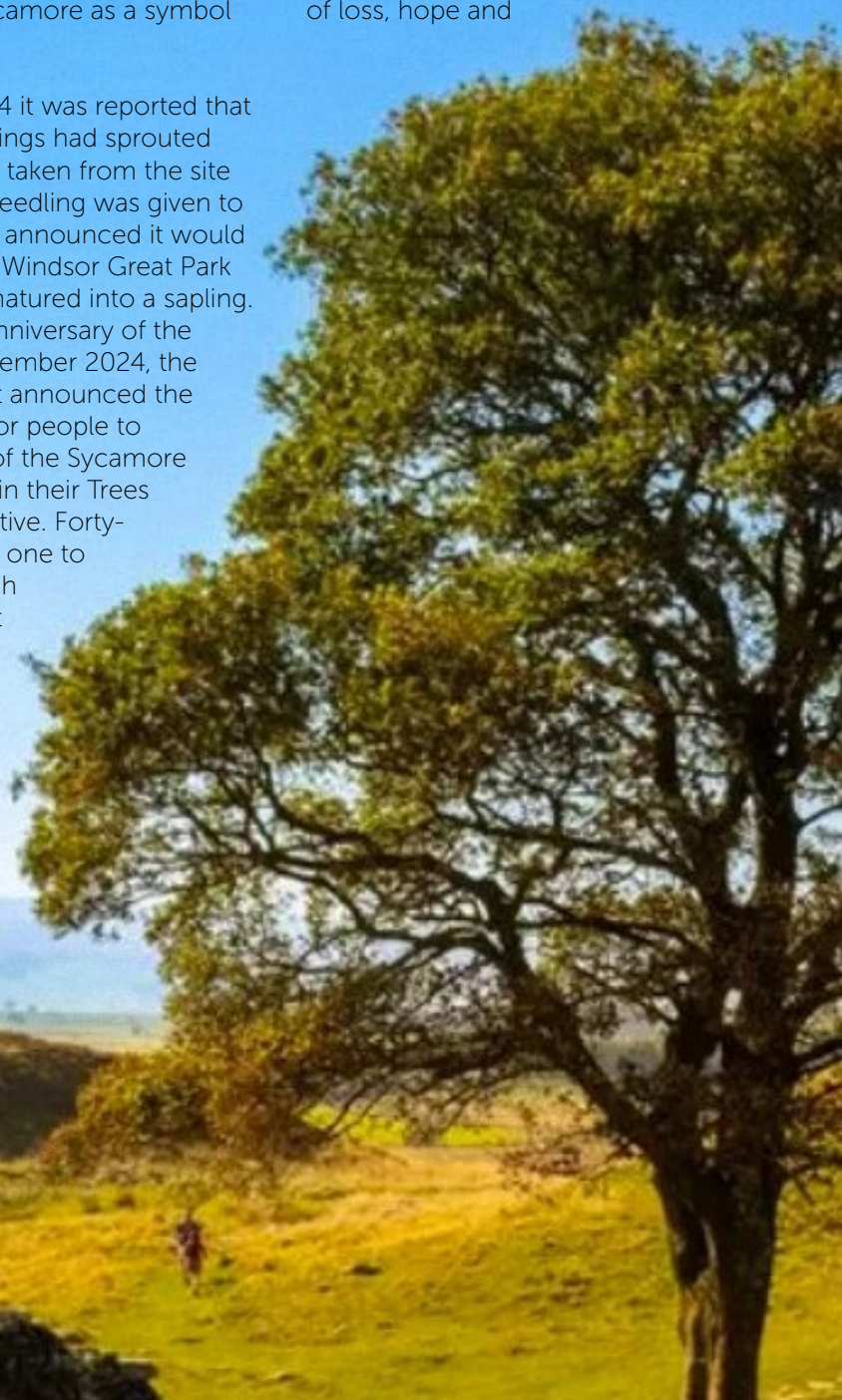
The tree had been planted in the late 19th century by Newcastle lawyer and landowner, John Clayton, making the tree about 150 years old and only got its name more recently when a National Trust employee was asked by Ordnance Survey, who were remapping the area, if the previously unnamed spot had a designated title. Hence the Sycamore Gap tree was named. The destruction of the tree led to an outpouring of anger and sadness from around the UK and from around the world. Over the decades, the tree had become the backdrop for marriage proposals, weddings and spreading the ashes of loved ones and the National

Trust (who managed the tree and land) were overwhelmed with tributes, offers of help and ideas about what to do with the tree. At the time of the felling the National Trust's regional director for the North of England said:

'The outpouring we've seen shows just how important the connection is between people and nature in its many forms, and as we consider plans for this special tree, and this very special place, we'll also look to use the sycamore as a symbol of recovery.'

In March 2024 it was reported that the first seedlings had sprouted from material taken from the site and the first seedling was given to the King who announced it would be planted in Windsor Great Park once it had matured into a sapling. On the first anniversary of the felling in September 2024, the National Trust announced the opportunity for people to request one of the Sycamore Gap saplings in their Trees of Hope initiative. Forty-nine saplings, one to represent each foot of height that the tree was at the time of felling,

would be gifted to communities around the country. The tree would have to be planted in a publicly accessible space within the community. Over 500 applications were received during the two months the application window was open. The judging panel said every application for a 'Tree of Hope' told heartfelt stories of people's emotional connections to the Sycamore Gap tree and the importance of nature. The applications spoke of loss, hope and



regeneration and were received from towns, schools, colleges, community groups, hospitals and hospices. The judging panel (made up of experts from the National Trust led by independent judge and arboriculture specialist, Catherine Nuttgens) said it had been a privilege to read them all and they wanted each sapling to carry a message of hope with it as the tree starts a new chapter in its new site. The message of hope is not just for the tree but for all the 49 communities that will receive a sapling next winter (the 49 saplings are currently being cared for by the National Trust Plant Conservation Centre and the saplings should be strong and sturdy enough to plant out in the winter of 2025/26).

Catherine commented: "The loss of any tree can evoke strong emotions - none more so than the Sycamore Gap tree. Its destruction felt utterly senseless, destroying the simple joy it brought to so many people for so many reasons. But the 'Trees of Hope' initiative has kept that

sense of joy and hope alive, and it has been truly humbling to read through so many applications but a difficult task to select the final 49 recipients. The stories have come from every corner of the UK and every walk of life. Their words reflect the hope and kindness that human beings are capable of, which feels like such a fitting response to the loss of this precious tree."

Weston on the Green's 'Trees of Hope' Application

During National Tree Week (23rd November to 1st December 2024), the National Trust announced Weston on the Green Memorial Village Hall as one of the recipients of the 49 'Trees of Hope' Sycamore Gap saplings being gifted to individuals, groups, and organisations across the UK. We were obviously delighted but also astounded to be named as one of the recipients.

Back in September Jordie had seen the launch of the application process on the evening news and spoke to Diane (as Chair of the Parish Council) about applying, thinking it would be a very long-shot, and realistically the odds being against us. The support of the Parish Council was crucial as the sapling, once matured, would need more space

than the Village Hall grounds could provide. Diane, and the Parish Council were very supportive of the idea and an application was duly made by Jordie.

The application was submitted with the view that the sapling would be planted as a living memorial to those villagers who died between 2020-2022 from Covid and other illnesses, and for whom a farewell service may not have been possible. Like the Sycamore Gap tree, the sapling donated will become a symbol of resilience, perseverance and hope, representing all that is good in Weston (and in trees) - growth, strong roots, life, renewal and optimism. The sapling, we hope, will also represent a place for quiet contemplation, a community focal point, somewhere to sit and gaze up through the branches (once matured), a place to be at one with nature and to observe nature, a place to play, sit, read and rest.

The legacy, provenance and historical importance of receiving a sapling from the Sycamore Gap tree is incredibly special and we are delighted to receive a Tree of Hope.





Weston Society

Weston Society met on Monday 11th November when Pete Seaward from Bletchington brought us a fascinating history surrounding Queen Elizabeth 1st being under house arrest in Woodstock in 1554, beautifully illustrated by many of Pete's photographs of Blenheim Palace and grounds with particular interest in Blenheim's ancient trees.

At the time of writing, the Society is due to meet next on Monday 13th January, when a favourite of the Society, Maurice East is giving a talk entitled "Motopolis vs the Meadow" The saga of Christchurch Meadow and the most famous Oxford road that was never built.

The next meeting after that is scheduled for Monday 10th March for a talk on Radley Manor and Village.

We meet on the second Monday of alternative months, all are welcome free of charge to their first meeting, there is an annual subscription currently of £20 per



person for anyone who then wishes to join, which enables us to pay for use of the Hall, pay for speakers and to share wine and nibbles after the meeting.



Weston Walkers

Our final walk of 2024 was in November, when six of us took a circular from the Shell lay-by off the A34 through Barndon Farm, briefly accessing the Oxfordshire Way to cross the railway line then over to Oddington Crossroads to return via Oddington Grange road and the Oxfordshire Way again.

Our first walks of 2025, weather permitting, will be on Monday 10th February and Monday 10th March, meeting at Weston Village Hall at 1.30 pm.

All are welcome to join in as and when, there is no commitment to every month, so if you wish to enjoy sociable company, conversation and exercise please come along and join in or speak to me.

There are now also several local walks to enjoy published on the Weston on the Green Parish Council website, under Health and Wellbeing.

If while out walking you encounter any problems with overgrown vegetation, damaged stiles or footbridges, or any other issues, please let me know for Weston Parish or Katie Holt (01869 350219) for Bletchington Parish, in order that they can be reported to the County Council for repair.

Graham Barnett
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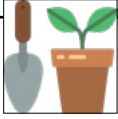
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Weston-on-the-Green Garden Club



The Garden Club's Trip to Chatsworth

On Monday November 11th a group of 40 intrepid travellers boarded a coach at 8.30 am to visit Chatsworth House in Derbyshire. This trip was organised by the Garden Club and attendees included members from Weston as well as garden enthusiasts from Bletchington, Middleton Stoney, Wendlebury and also a few friends who were roped in to make up numbers!

The coach was provided by Plastows with our excellent driver, Gordon, who seemed capable of manoeuvring his 53 seater coach into spaces designed for vehicles half the size. The day turned out to be sunny with bright blue skies and off we went in high spirits looking forward to the day ahead. The journey was incredibly smooth, with only a brief hold up in Chesterfield which gave us all a great view of the famous Crooked Spire.

Soon after 11 am we turned into the drive and experienced our first spectacular glimpse of Chatsworth House in front of us. Driving past the public car parks we were dropped right outside the entrance. Everyone was then free to explore the house, which was decorated for Christmas, the gardens, grounds and the Christmas Market.

On entering the house, each room had an enormous Christmas tree, beautifully decorated with lights and huge baubles. There were strings of lights and further light shows, as well as wonderful arches and doorways festooned in greenery and decorations. Chatsworth

House features art and artifacts spanning 4,000 years. The Painted Hall, State Rooms and Sculpture Gallery all contain break-taking works of art, as well as the history of the seventeen generations of the Devonshire family who have resided there, each one putting their own stamp on this magnificent building.

Of course, a visit to the Chatsworth Kitchen café was a must after touring the house, followed by a wander round the gardens. I don't think any of us managed to complete the 100 acres of garden, let alone the 1,000 acre park, which is all set within the entire estate comprising a total of 35,000 acres!! The gardens are immaculate with clearly marked signs and pathways.

Before we returned to our coach a visit to the Christmas Market was a 'must.' This consisted of over 100 stalls selling a variety of gifts, alongside seasonal food and drink, live music and outdoor bars. Rubber matting had been put down over the entire area, making it easy to navigate. We were so lucky with the weather on our visit, but covered areas were provided so people could sit and drink mulled wine and sample all the delicious food offerings without getting wet.

We reunited with our coach at 3 pm to be transported to the famous Chatsworth Farm Shop two miles down the road. This certainly proved a challenge for Gordon, but undeterred he managed to park the coach and wait for us while we went in to do a substantial amount of Christmas shopping – mainly edible!

By 4.30 pm we were all back onboard. A very smooth and uneventful journey delivered us back to Weston on the Green at 7 pm. Everyone seemed to have a great time. Watch this space for details of this year's Christmas trip!

Toddy Hamilton-Gould



Keep the School Field Poo Free!

As some of you may be aware a small group of residents of Weston have purchased the Eastern Plot of School Field that was put up for sale by Lagan Homes. Each member of the group will own a section of the field with a covenant preventing any development.

It has been noted by several people that there has been an increase in dog fouling along the footpaths that run across School Field. This

is particularly unpleasant being in an area of special importance to many Weston families who use the footpaths and is also dangerous for other dogs, wildlife and sheep through the passing of parasites.

For information: 'If you allow a dog in your charge to foul any area to which the public has access you are committing an offence. The penalty for not clearing up dog fouling can be up to £1,000

if the case is dealt with by the magistrates courts, or £50 if the owner is given a fixed penalty notice.'

So please be minded to pick up after your pet when using the footpaths across School Field or any public area – you can collect council poo bags from different locations in the Village so there's no excuse! Thank you.

A plea for more wood

Greetings and felicitations everyone, Happy New Year to you all. The Wood Fairy has had the Works do (he got employee of the year again) and hung up the kindling axe and chop saw. There is no more dry wood to cut up at present. Since September 13th to December 23rd the shop has sold 217 bags of kindling through Friends Produce. At 3kg a bag, that is 651kg of wood! Well over half a tonne. Having cut up over 40 pallets, six internal hardwood doors and numerous bits of fencing etc the wood has finally run out for now.

Some bags were done in the summer when there was no demand for kindling, however, once autumn sets in, it is nearly a full time job to keep up with demand. Having said that, the Fairy gets at least five warm from producing the kindling. Just as well as the government has stopped his winter fuel allowance! First there is unloading the pallets etc. This is quickly followed with cutting up with the Jigsaw. The third warm comes from de-nailing, whilst the fourth and fifth is caused by cutting to length and splitting. Bagging up doesn't count as a warm as the Fairy's fingers tend to get frozen.

If you are aware of any dry pallets or similar that could be made into kindling, I'm sure the Church and Village Hall would be grateful for

the friends produce revenue. The last delivery of sixteen pallets was used up inside 2 weeks. My thanks to all of those who have supplied me with timber, various villagers plus Paul at Eddies, Matt at Bicester Roofing and Greg who arranged for pallets to be couriered from London. Not forgetting Yasemin who had a clear-out and found lots of bits.

There are still some timbers to plane up for use on the scroll saw to make figurines, this will continue. The Fairy is already working on cutouts for the 80th VE day anniversary in May, these will hopefully be available after the Easter rush.

Mick East
The Wood Fairy

Weston on the Green Memorial Village Hall

Quiz night

Saturday 29th March 2025

Doors open 6.30 pm

Teams of 2-6, Licensed Bar, Supper

Tickets £10 per person

To book tickets please email westonvillagehall@live.co.uk



KEEP
CALM
AND
BOOK YOUR
QUIZ TEAM



WESTON-ON-THE-GREEN VILLAGE PANTRY & POST OFFICE

FRIENDS' PRODUCE

Since the last edition of the VN, funds raised towards this initiative in aid of St Mary's Church and the Village Hall is £305.44. Looking back at figures achieved over the years, the figures for the two winter editions always record a remarkable rise in comparison to the summer months. This is due to hundreds of bags of Mick's kindling being sold (a bit like our eggs, people travel from other villages and pick up for their neighbours too) and to Toddy's jewellery being purchased by all as gifts – her followers include the postmen, the dustmen and all sorts of other lovely people who custom the shop.

Enormous thanks go from me to both Mick and Toddy and to Corinne who up until this last issue has been supplying her much-in-demand Brownies since we opened our doors nearly eight years ago.

Corinne's husband, Neil has been keeping her busy with all sorts 'health related' shenanigans and she's been unable to bake her Brownies which are sorely missed. Neil is now on the road to recovery and we wish the Cunninghams God speed for good health and good cheer.

Many thanks to all who also add to Friends' Produce by donating unwanted items, fresh produce from your gardens and allotments.

Yasemin



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Weston on the Green Community Bus



ADDITIONAL DRIVERS NEEDED!

Weston on the Green Community Transport is in need of additional volunteer drivers. If you are over 30 years of age with a clean driving licence, no accidents in last 5 years and have spare time during the day, please consider helping to maintain this invaluable Community asset.

Mainly local trips to hospitals or surgery

Contact **Graham Barnett on 01869 350707**

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We are looking for players of all abilities to play for our 1st & 2nd XI on Saturday afternoons in the Cherwell Cricket League.

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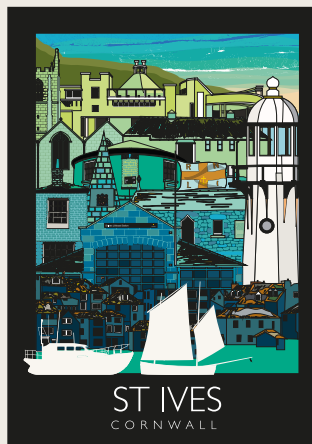
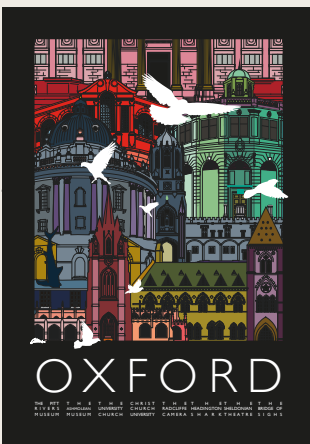
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Wildlife Friendly Gardening

What does a Wildlife Friendly Garden look like?

What does a Nature Friendly Garden look like?

It doesn't have to be the whole garden that's left 'to go wild' (a common misconception). We are celebrating gardens that help nature out and increase local biodiversity. It could be that you have a wildlife friendly pond – one that's sunken and accessible to amphibians and safe for hedgehogs to drink from – or that you have a mini meadow area or native, insect friendly plants in your borders. You might have an excellent log pile or an undisturbed area for hibernating animals or lots of water dishes out for creatures to drink from, not forgetting hedgehog highway gaps! And of course, never using chemicals toxic to wildlife such as insecticides, herbicides, or pesticides! There are lots of ways to either make your whole garden, or a part of it, great for our local wildlife. Check out Wild Oxfordshire's Resource Library (www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/guidance/helping-nature-on-your-patch) for more tips.

A selection of Garden jobs to help Wildlife this February

Nest Boxes

It's soon to be National Nest Box Week (14th - 21st Feb). This is to help remind us of the importance of nest boxes in our gardens. With Spring around the corner, now is the time to clean out your nest boxes or put-up new ones ready for this year's inhabitants.

Clean out a nestbox with boiling water to kill off parasites and other nasties to make it nice and safe and clean for the next resident. You can use boiling water alone or add eco soap e.g. brands like Ecover. Make sure you leave it to dry out completely after washing to protect the box from mould and rot.



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



Feeding the birds

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

You can create your own fat blocks by melting suet into moulds such as coconut shells or logs with holes drilled in. Try out different recipes to entice a range of birds; Gardener's World suggest peanut cakes for starlings, insect cakes for tits and berry cakes for finches. You can even put out finely chopped bacon rind and grated cheese for small birds such as wrens, but not if you are concerned about the presence of rats. And remember, whilst fat is important, do also provide a seed mix or nuts to give your birds a balanced diet.

It's still cold!

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

Leave piles of leaves and logs undisturbed. In mild weather, it can be tempting to get going in the garden but avoid the urge to tidy away leaf and log piles just yet. This is so hedgehogs and other creatures can enjoy their dormancy.

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

Avoid turning the compost heap until April, even if conditions are mild. Frogs, small mammals, and insects may be hibernating, and any disturbance could harm them.

Check bonfires before they are lit for sheltering and hibernating animals, such as hedgehogs, toads, frogs, and newts.

Bring on the Springtime!

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

Why wildlife friendly gardening practices should be celebrated – fighting the biodiversity crisis from your garden

All our wildlife gardening efforts should be celebrated – big and small! In these challenging times for nature, our gardens are becoming the last place of refuge for many of our endangered species – even hedgehog populations are stabilising in urban areas, thanks to gardens. There's no doubt about it, big or small, your garden can be a refuge for wildlife.

For too long wildlife gardens have been criticised for not conforming to our cultural ideals of what a garden should look like. Ponds were supposed to have big carp in them, lawns to be kept very short and without flowers, flower beds to have many non-native, showy species and whilst all of this can look beautiful, it makes life for our wildlife very challenging indeed. Our solitary bees for instance, such as our bumble bees, like flowers that don't have complex structures hiding the nectar source because it prevents them from drinking

Hedgehog Street

Make your garden connected by putting in a hedgehog gap (13cm X13cm) ready for when our hedgehogs wake up in Spring. Check out how Kirtlington have helped out our wandering hedgehogs: <https://kirtlingtonvillage.co.uk/kirtlington-hedgehog-street>

The hedgehog steps linking two of the gardens in Kirtlington to allow the hedgehogs a safe foraging route.



from them. Fish in ponds prevent amphibians from being able to call it home and water invertebrates get eaten, including baby dragonflies. And whilst short lawns are great for some things, like for blackbirds to dig for worms, varied grass lengths provide foraging grounds and refuge for a whole host of different species from butterflies to beetles, hedgehogs to newts.

However, change is afoot! In recent years many of us have been gardening in ways that help-out our local wildlife. And it's everywhere! A

wildlife-friendly garden won at the Chelsea flower show and the RHS have nature-friendly gardens that are showcased. Even Gardeners World have tips on helping wildlife. We're all fighting the biodiversity crisis together, one garden at a time. So, if you're gardening with wildlife in mind, a huge thank you!

if you haven't started on your nature-friendly gardening journey yet, why not get involved? It doesn't mean leaving the whole garden to 'go-wild' – after all, variety is key in a nature-friendly

garden. It could be one small thing you do or don't do that makes a difference, like putting out water dishes or not using herbicides and pesticides. Such simple actions in our gardens can offer a lifeline to even the most endangered species, not to mention that it's also great for us to have wildlife in our garden! Happy gardening everyone. Together for nature – always.

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

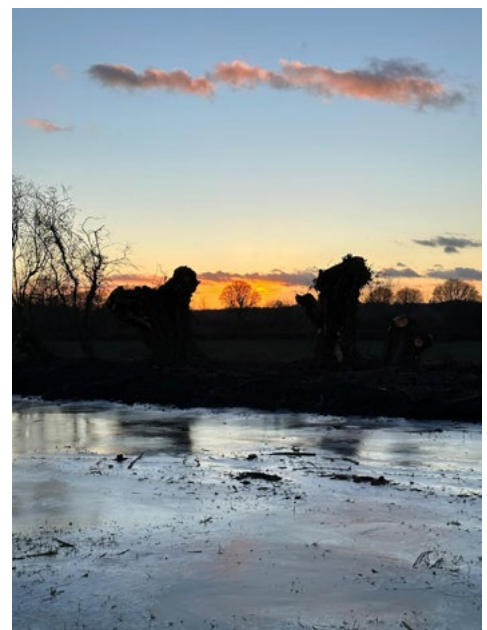
Walking in Oxfordshire

All the information you need to get walking in our beautiful county.

Dust off those walking boots and help banish the winter blues.

'Walking in Oxfordshire' has loads of interesting walks, both local and slightly further afield, all to download and print for free: <https://www.walkinginengland.co.uk/oxfordshire>.

It also has books of walks, details of all the walking groups in the county and much more. Whether you want to walk on your own or with a group, all the information is there in one place.



Join us for a **warming** February



FILM NIGHT

Les Misérables



Friday 7th February

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And then in March do join us for:

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**Informal groups meeting weekly in Lent for discussion
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5 weeks, from week beginning March 10th

£10 per person, includes book and refreshments

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Weston on the Green Memorial Village Hall



VE Day 80th Anniversary Event

Saturday 10th May 2025

12.30-5.00pm



Join us for a Fish and Chip lunch, puddings, & prosecco

Live musical entertainment by

‘The D-Day Dollies’

To book a space please email westonvillagehall@live.co.uk

RSVP by Friday 25th April 2025

£5 per person

RISE AND SHINE



The weekly all-age community café in Kirtlington continues to provide delicious cakes and freshly-brewed teas and coffee for an enthusiastic gathering of all ages.



For the young, the stories are working their way through the alphabet. In the weeks leading up to Christmas **G**abriel brought **G**ood news to Mary, leading to **H**ope (the first candle of Advent), and from there to the busy **I**nnkeeper who provided

shelter in his stable. In an alphabetically-related activity the children provided homes for **I**nsects, painting tiles under which they could shelter. Finally, **J**esus' arrival was celebrated at the Christmas party, with extra cake, and party hats!



'**G**abriel' (spot the wings)



Advent candle for **H**ope



*Inspired by the **I**nnkeeper who offered shelter in his stable, tiles to provide homes for **I**nsects in the churchyard*



*The story of **J**esus' birth (and end-of-term Christmas **J**ollity!)*

To find out what stories and activities accompany the rest of the alphabet in the term ahead, or just to sit and chat with a cup of coffee, come and join us in Kirtlington Church any Wednesday in term-time, 9.15 - 10.45.

Joanna Clifford joannaclifford.akeman@gmail.com

Launton and Otmoor Update

January 2025

Cherwell District Local Plan

As some of you may be aware, the updated Cherwell District Local Plan 2042 has now been published and is open for public consultation. This document is an important one as it informs where the future planning and development of Cherwell District will take place. The consultation is open until the 25th February and you can find more information about the consultation, as well as how to contribute here: <https://cherwell.citizenspace.com/planning-policy/cherwell-local-plan-review-2042/> After the consultation closes on the 14th February, the local plan will be sent to the Secretary of State for independent consideration and your comments will be considered by the appointed Planning Inspector.

Flooding

Unfortunately, with weather conditions seeming to be worse in the last couple of weeks, there have been many instances of flooding across the ward. We have been working with parish councils and officers to understand the effect of this flooding and how we can prevent or lessen it in the future. Please do get in touch if you have been affected and we will see what we can do to help. There are also help pages



online at the Oxfordshire Flooding Toolkit. More information can be found here: <https://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/>

cherwell-dc.gov.uk, alisa.russell@cherwell-dc.gov.uk and julian.nedelcu@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or phone us on 01869 717712.

Get in Touch

As always, please do get in touch! Our emails are gemma.coton@

All the best,

Gemma, Alisa & Julian



And talking of flooding in Oxfordshire, having mentioned that Gallos Brook ran so high and fast it managed to shift the wooden footbridge on the Oxfordshire Way by at least a foot in my previous letter, Annie Cooper sent two photos showing this – I'm still in awe of the force of nature to have shifted it so much!

Ed



Dates for the Diary

1st February	9.00 am – 12.00 pm	Food Bank Collection, Weston Pantry
4th February	12.30 pm	Golden Leaves Lunch
5th February	7.30 pm	Parish Council meeting
7th February	7.00 pm for 7.30 pm	'Les Miserables' film showing, Chesterton Community Centre
10th February	1.30 pm	Weston Walkers; meet at the Village Hall
13th February	10.00 am – 12.00 pm	Neighbours' Natter
24th February	2.00 – 4.00 pm	Craft Group
1st March	9.00 am – 12.00 pm	Food Bank Collection, Weston Pantry
5th March	7.30 pm	Parish Council meeting
10th March	1.30 pm	Weston Walkers; meet at the Village Hall
10th March	7.30 pm	Weston Society
13th March	10.00 am – 12.00 pm	Neighbours' Natter
19th March	7.00 pm	Garden Club AGM, Village Hall
24th March	2.00 – 4.00 pm	Craft Group
29th March	6.30 pm	Quiz Night
2nd April	7.30 pm	Parish Council meeting
5th April	2.30 pm	Garden Club Spring Show, Village Hall
10th May	12.30 – 5.00 pm	VE Day lunch and live music

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