

Community Matters



'St. Giles' by Chris Lock Photography

**Lower Wyley and Till Valley
Parishes Magazine
FEBRUARY 2026**

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WELCOME TO FEBRUARY'S COMMUNITY MATTERS MAGAZINE!

Hello Everyone!

This month's cover features a beautiful photograph of St. Giles, Great Wishford taken by Wiltshire photographer, Chris Lock. Chris is going to be giving a slideshow and talk in March, do have a look on page 13 for more information. Another talk that may be of interest is "Women in the paintings of the Dutch Golden Age" courtesy of the Berwick St James Art Appreciation Group on 12 February, see page 7. Finally, theatre is coming to St. Giles, Great Wishford on Wednesday 25 March, with a dramatized recital of St. Mark's Gospel by Gerald Osborne, see page 6.

Shrove Tuesday falls on 17th February—enjoy your pancakes before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. Jonathan's Benefice letter (page 5) notes that Lent is a time to pause, reflect on our past, and consider our future, making it an ideal season for contemplation during these winter months.

HELP WANTED!

Community Matters are looking for an extra pair of hands to join our team of distribution volunteers in Great Wishford – please see page 3 for details.

MAGAZINE ENTRIES

Please send your submissions by the 14th of the month before publication to the editor or your village representative, clearly marked as a magazine entry. Kindly double-check all event dates and times before sending. We love to include welcomes to new villagers, event news, parish council updates, congratulations, and—where space allows—your photos! Please note entries may not be reviewed until the week before the deadline.

Rachael White (Editor, Great Wishford & gen) - twovalleysed@hotmail.com

All advertising - twovalleysads@gmail.com

Nicky Street (Berwick St. James & Wildlife entries) - chstreet@btinternet.com

Karen Barnes (South Newton & Wishford Rec. Ctr.) - karenbarnes@live.com

Katie Walker (Stapleford - General) - ktwalker2454@btinternet.com

Sue Bale (Stapleford - Church) - sue.darlowbale@btinternet.com

Tracy Ewart (Winterbourne Stoke) - tracy1502@gmail.com

Reverend Roger Leake - Revrleake@gmail.com

ALL VILLAGES

FOOD TRUCKS

Food trucks will be serving in The Royal Oak carpark, Great Wishford.

Mon 12 February	6-8pm	Tex Mex
Mon 19 February	6-8pm	Rocky's Pizza
Mon 26 February	6-8pm	Travelling Thai

WILDLIFE WATCH

Lots of reports of birds this month. Blackbirds seen in gardens in Berwick (still none in mine), two Green Woodpeckers on the lawn in the frost in a village garden, a heron in the hedgerow behind the Guides, and several Egrets seen many times in the same field.

8 Red Kites circling over the same field in early January, and several Kites seen regularly around the large tree opposite the houses at Uppington. A white rumped bird of prey seen flying – probably a female Hen Harrier. Also a Sandpiper by the Mill in Berwick.

There are lots of berries in the hedgerows attracting the winter migratory birds; Fieldfares and Redwings seen up Langford Way. A Mistle Thrush was heard in Winterbourne Stoke after Christmas.

STONE CURLEWS

I have had the Wessex Stone-Curlew report for 2025. It covers Wiltshire, Hampshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and South Downs but the majority are in Wiltshire. Total of 130 pairs, of which 97 were recording breeding (94 pairs in Wiltshire, 69 pairs proved to breed). 75 successfully fledged chicks. 72% of all breeding attempts were on specially created plots as part of agri-environmental schemes (including in Berwick parish). 16 interventions were made where birds which had attempted to nest in unsafe habitats, and, of those 7 chicks fledged.

The roost count for Wiltshire, Hampshire and Berkshire made on 15th Sept had a total of 354 birds. The RSPB would like to say a huge thank you to the many farmers, landowners and tractor drivers that have done their upmost to safe-guard stone-curlew nesting attempts in Wessex. Nicky Street.

OTHER WILDLIFE NEWS

The cold snap we had over the Christmas period seemed to have brought flocks of Fieldfares and Redwings, winter thrushes from Scandinavia, Russia and Iceland that feast on our hedgerow berries. From a distance they don't look that attractive but close up they really are strikingly beautiful birds. Redwings with their yellow / white eye-stripe and a flash of red under the wing; Fieldfares with their blue-grey heads, chestnut back, heavily streaked breast and pale grey rump. Hopefully they will be with us for a few more months.

Over the past month I've regularly been seeing an immature White-Tailed Eagle which almost like clockwork tends to show up just before sunset slowly flapping high up over Great Wishford as it makes its way towards Grovely Wood. Mike Stoneman, Great Wishford

A White-Tailed Eagle was also spotted at the end of the back road through Stoford, where it meets the A360. Luke Randall

See page 1 of the magazine for details of how to send entries for Wildlife Watch. All entries welcome.

HELP REQUIRED – COMMUNITY MATTERS MAGAZINE

Community Matters thrives thanks to a wonderful team of volunteers, including our village correspondents, distributors who cover a wide area, and those who support the magazine behind the scenes through roles such as treasurer, advertising, and editing.

We're now looking for a new volunteer to join our Great Wishford distribution team. The role involves delivering the magazine to a small part of the village and passing copies on to other local distributors each month — all within Great Wishford. Magazines are usually collected from the printers by Rachael around the 23rd of each month, allowing plenty of flexibility for delivery.

If you'd like to find out more, please contact Rachael on twovalleysed@hotmail.com or 07970 428659. All help is very much appreciated.

BENEFICE CHURCH SERVICES DURING FEBRUARY 2026

SUNDAY 1ST FEBRUARY – THE FEAST OF CANDLEMAS

09:30am	Stockton	Holy Communion (BCP)
10:30am	Berwick St James	Holy Communion (CW)
11:00am	South Newton	Holy Communion (CW)
11:00am	Stapleford	Sunday Worship for Candlemas
11:00am	Wylie	Sunday Worship for Candlemas
4:00pm	Steeple Langford	Christingle for Candlemas ~ a family event
4:00pm	Little Langford	Evensong for Candlemas (BCP)

SUNDAY 8TH FEBRUARY – SECOND SUNDAY BEFORE LENT: SEXAGESIMA

09:30am	Winterbourne Stoke	Holy Communion (CW)
11:00am	Steeple Langford	Holy Communion (CW)
6:00pm	Great Wishford	Evening Worship

SUNDAY 15TH FEBRUARY – SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE LENT: QUINQUAGESIMA

09:30am	Great Wishford	Holy Communion (CW)
11:00am	Berwick St James	Matins (BCP)
11:00am	Wylie	Holy Communion (CW)
6:00pm	Stockton	Evening Worship

WEDNESDAY 18TH FEBRUARY ~ ASH WEDNESDAY

7:00pm	Wylie	Benefice Holy Communion (CW) with Ashes
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SUNDAY 22ND FEBRUARY – THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

09:30am	Little Langford	Holy Communion (BCP)
11:00am	Stapleford	Holy Communion (CW)
6:00pm	Steeple Langford	Evening Worship for Lent

THURSDAY 26TH FEBRUARY

11:00am	Wylie	Midweek service with organ music followed by coffee
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Please look at the Parish News Sheets for any changes to services

or contact the Rector, Rev'd Jonathan Plows

Monday being his day off Rectorwtv@gmail.com 01722 790616

CW = Common Worship, BCP = Book of Common Prayer

EVERYONE IS WELCOME

BENEFICE LETTER FEBRUARY 2026

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter, we are in the midst of Epiphany Season, the revelation of Christ shining out to all peoples and nations, the fulfilment of both Advent promises and the joys of Christmas. Time moves on. At Candlemas, Christmas Season formally ends and we pivot our gaze from the manger to the Cross. On Wednesday 18th February we mark our foreheads with Ash and begin our Lenten Pilgrimage.

*The Lord has compassion on those who fear him;
for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*

Love, compassion, and remembering are qualities which mark out our humanity, our relationship with others.

There are moments when life asks us to step back, to remember and reflect on where we have come from and where we think life is taking us. Lent, I believe, is such a moment, one of those thoughtful seasons of life, where we might set aside the hurly-burly of daily living, and intentionally remember, reflect and seek a different way.

Lent is always about remembering and, on one level, we may 'give up' chocolate or wine or even fast one a day a week to help us remember that Lent is a special time. But what are we remembering?

Lent is the time to remember the love of God graciously poured out through Christ Jesus for each one of us. A moment to remember Jesus, human, faultless, unbroken, yet cruelly executed on the Cross by other humans. Lent is the season to remember that Jesus died so that we might have new life in all its possibilities. We remember Jesus' action, love divine, all love excelling. Lent is also the time when we try to grasp the immensity of compassion, that potentially overwhelming aspect of love and remembering. Compassion is rooted in the profound human emotion of "suffering with" ~ suffering with our loved ones, neighbours, friends, with all who suffer this day in the world. Compassion, like love, is a call to do something. The Passion of Christ is Jesus lovingly, intentionally, suffering for all of us, so that we might be freed from the darknesses of our lives. Compassion is our remembering Jesus' love and

suffering, before on Easter Sunday, we celebrate the joy of Jesus' glorious resurrection and the freedom we are graced as we stand at the empty tomb.

Lent, then, is a season which has much to give to us. So, I hope we can all take just a little time and to make just a little effort to open our hearts and minds to the love which knows no bounds and is always there for us regardless.

With every blessing

Jonathan
Rector, Wlye and Till Valley Benefice.

ST MARK'S GOSPEL LIVE

A dramatised recital by Gerald Osborne in aid of CRESS UK.

Wednesday 25th March 2026.

Doors open 6.15pm for 7.00pm at St Giles Great Wishford, SP2 0PQ.

"This is a compelling event. One man holds the audience with the dynamic and faith-provoking words of St Mark Don't miss it."

"No one had heard an entire gospel before in one sitting, and for everyone the confrontation with the whole narrative was a revelation, which was utterly spell-binding."'

"Osborne brings to life and suffering of Jesus alive"

"A remarkable evening....a tour de force".

Tickets cost £7.50, please contact Jamie on jamlanmel@gmail.com or 01722 790 781.

All monies to be donated to CRESS UK – www.cressuk.org

BERWICK ST JAMES

WELCOME to all new villagers. We hope you enjoy living in Berwick.

GET WELL SOON to everyone suffering with the winter colds and flu, and also to all under the weather at the moment.

CHURCH NEWS

Memories of Christmas are rapidly receding but it was a great joy to see the church full for the Candlelit Carol Service, and for there to be over 65, including 14 children, in the congregation on Christmas morning. My sincere thanks to all those who contributed so magnificently to the decoration of the church, to the music and to the organisation of the services. It is greatly appreciated.

Early February is a lull before we move into Lent, with Ash Wednesday being on 18th February. We have two services in February, a Communion service at 9.30am on 1st February and a Matis service at 11.00am on Sunday 15th February.

TEA and CAKE and CHAT

The February Tea and Chat will be on Tuesday 3rd in the Reading Room, 2.30 – 4pm. All Welcome. For the moment we may not be able to hold a Tea and Chat on 17th as we would normally. If we can, then we will let the village know by WhatsApp.

We had a great time in January – the room was lovely and warm, as were the crumpets – great to have a jolly chat over lemon tarts and chocolate cake too.

ART APPRECIATION IN BERWICK-ST-JAMES

On Thursday 12th February, the next presentation in 2026, will be on the theme of the place of women in society in the paintings of the Dutch 17th century “Golden Age”, a period in Art History, when many of the most renowned and revered masters, including Frans Hals, Rembrandt, Pieter de Hooch, and of course Vermeer, idolised them as lovers, wives and mothers. There will of course be reference to Andrew Graham-Dixon’s latest book, A Life Lost and Found, where the author provides a persuasive argument for

reinterpreting the meanings of Vermeer's iconic, The Milkmaid and the Girl with the Pearl Earring.

Women in the paintings of the Dutch Golden Age, will take place in the Reading Room, opposite the Boot Inn on Thursday 12th February, commencing 7.30pm with doors open from 7.15pm.

Admission at the door, £5 as a donation to the Reading Room Fund, to include a glass of wine, beer, or soft drink. For further information, please see the Berwick-St-James website, or email Brian Armstrong at brianarm100@icloud.com

READING ROOM DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

3rd Feb – Tea and Cake and Chat. Reading Room
12th Feb – Art Appreciation. Reading Room.
2nd March – Cheese and Wine Evening. Reading Room
3rd March – Tea and Cake and Chat. Reading Room
12th March – Art Appreciation. Reading Room
17th March – Tea and Cake and Chat. Reading Room
21st May – Village Meeting AGM. Reading Room

LOCAL HISTORY – DRUID'S LODGE CONFEDERACY

At our Christmas Book Club we had a “Secret Santa” and one of the books was “The Druid’s Lodge Confederacy” by Paul Mathiue. This is a fascinating story well worth reading. Several villagers hadn’t heard about it, so I thought it would be interesting to put it in the magazine again.

In 1895 Druid’s Lodge and the buildings were purpose built as a Racing Stable, where previously there had only been The Druid’s Head public house. Wilfred Purefoy, A P Cunliffe (who owned the land around, and bought Asserton in 1909) Frank Forester, Edward Wigan and Holmer Peard with their trainer Jack Fallon, spent over £2 ½ million pounds setting up the perfect place to train racehorses in absolute secrecy. Although the partners wanted winners, and had a good many including several of the Classic races, they really made the business work through betting on their own horses, and winning a great deal of money. Sometimes their methods of getting a very low handicap for a good horse was fairly close to being illegal, - and their methods

of betting large sums of money made the bookmakers change many of their rules.

Hacklers Pride won the Cambridgeshire and is reputed to have won the syndicate over £10 million pounds at 1990 values. That was just one race! In 1907 after many successful seasons Jack Fallon left to train at his own stables – Scotland Lodge at Winterbourne Stoke.

In 1913 the Druid's Lodge trained Aboyeur won the Derby, the race in which the Suffragette Emily Davidson was killed by the King's horse Anmer. During the 1914-18 Great War all the land and buildings were requisitioned. Afterwards Cunliffe patched up the gallops but nothing was the same again. The stables were shut for several years before Cunliffe sold the estate to J V Rank in 1934. In 1935 Noel Cannon became the flat race trainer for J V Rank at a refurbished Druids Lodge.

Summary by Nicky Street. The book is available on various second hand websites.

GREAT WISHFORD

FAREWELL TO REVEREND LOUISA HALLIDAY

Louisa, an only child, was born in Cornwall where her mother Susanna was a GP; her uncle went to farm in New Zealand and had a family there who were a big part of Louisa's life. In 1963 Louisa registered as a nurse in Bristol, and after a period as a health visitor, became a very popular tutor on the Salisbury Midwifery. When the midwifery training changed and Odstock midwifery school closed, Louisa helped set up the degree course in Bournemouth.

In Great Wishford, there was always tremendous hospitality on offer at Station House, which over the years became a sanctuary to many needing relief from varying circumstances. Along with Alana, Louisa regularly hosted church home groups, welcomed new arrivals in the village, organised village breakfasts, Lent lunches, started the duck race, re-establishing carol singing around the village and other events open to all - in part as fund raising for the church or a particular charity. Louisa loved her dogs, particularly labradors,

and enjoyed walking in the countryside around Wishford. Likewise, her garden and swimming pool were always a joy to Lousia.

Louisa was very supportive of the village school as a governor and was involved with many of the activities including 'open the book'. Louisa served on the Parish Council until 2017.

After Louisa retired from her post as lecturer she sought a vocation in the ministry, where her wisdom, thoughtfulness and compassion were much admired. Louisa was pastorally minded to her finger tips as demonstrated in her well-crafted homilies and prayers.

Louisa's funeral was held on Friday 16th January in a packed St Giles' Church, a sign, if any were needed, of the love and affection in which Louisa was held by so many. Louisa is buried up in the churchyard extension two plots away from her mother, Susanna. May Louisa rest in peace and rise in glory.

Rev'd Jonathan Plows

THANK YOU

Thank you to all those who put together and came to give such a wonderful and appropriate send off for Louisa. To Jonathan, Mary, Yvonne and Maggie for leading, to Bill and Laurence for welcoming and sorting everyone in St. Giles, to Daphs and Anna for arranging the amazing flowers, to Ruth and David and all the bakers for the cakes and for providing the nibbles, and to Zoe and the Royal Oak for a typically warm welcome for the Reception.

GREAT WISHFORD CAROL SINGING

Thank you to all those hearty carollers who came to sing around the village before Christmas. There was a great family turn-out and the largest gathering we have ever had. Particular thanks to the children. We ended at the Royal Oak for warming mulled wine and mince pies. Singing continued accompanied by Sophie Eden on the key board and piano accordion to get everyone in the Christmas spirit. Thank you Sophie. Specially thanks to Zoe for hosting us all at the Royal Oak. It was a fun memorable evening.

The collection for the Salisbury food bank came to £ 194.09 - thank you to everyone taking part.

Clare Wooler from Salisbury food bank messaged the following:-

"Every contribution truly makes a difference. We currently support around 600 people each month, with 40% being children. Financial donations like this enable us to purchase essential items when supplies are low, as well as fund vital projects. One such project is providing a Citizens Advice adviser in three of our foodbank centres, offering people access to debt support, help with reducing utility bills, and guidance on benefits. We also fund a delivery of fresh fruit and vegetables to complement our food parcels, which provide three days' worth of meals."

On behalf of the team at St Giles church THANK YOU

2025 CRIB AND CAROLS SERVICE AT ST GILES'

The candles were lit, the heaters had been going a while, and the school's Christmas tree sparkled. Outside, the magi diligently followed the star, and in the porch, Mary and Joseph were on their way to the stable. Gradually the church filled almost to capacity with warm smiles and excited chatter. Some of the younger members of the congregation kindly helped to look after the animals, shepherds and Mary, Joseph and Jesus, before bringing them to populate the stable as the Christmas story unfolded.

I am very grateful to our readers, especially young Elouisa, who read so well. With Martin accompanying us on the organ, we raised the roof with joyous singing - Christmas had arrived!

Thank you to everyone who helped make the service possible, and to all who shared our celebration of Christ's birth with us. Your kind donations to CRESS (Christian Relief, Education, Skills and Sustainability) raised a fantastic £74.45 in support of the South Sudanese refugees in Northern Uganda. Yvonne Allen

ST GILES' CHRISTMAS CAFÉ 2025

What an afternoon that was! Despite the appalling weather, we had an amazing turnout and there was a real buzz. We are so grateful to our rota writer, our servers, our bakers, our washer-uppers, raffle prize donators, and for the muscle power lent by a couple of our menfolk (you know who you are!) for setting up and clearing away.

We took £107.60 in donations and £121 in the raffle - thank you to all our punters for your support, not only at these celebration Cafés, but for all the Thursdays throughout the year. We couldn't do it without you. Here's to a successful 2026! YA and the team.

GREAT WISHFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL NEWS

Happy New Year!

We're thrilled to be back and starting the new year. It's always wonderful to see the school buzzing with activity again, and we can't wait to share all the exciting things happening this term.

One of the highlights is the launch of our music provision in school. We're delighted to welcome *Rock Steady*, who will be coming in each week to deliver fantastic small group music tuition. In addition, our new music specialist will be joining us every Wednesday to lead whole-class music lessons, giving every child the chance to explore and enjoy music in a fun and engaging way.

This has been a long-term project, and it's truly rewarding to see months of planning come to life. The impact on our children is already clear—they're inspired, engaged, and developing new skills that will stay with them for years to come. We can't wait to see how this journey unfolds!

Hannah Shillito

THE GREAT WISHFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL ANNUAL PANCAKE RACE

Wednesday 25 February 2026 at 14.45

The School 's annual Pancake Race will be held in the school grounds on the 25th of February between 1445 and 1515hrs.

As is the tradition, there will be pancakes served in the Church for the après race celebrations. Note this is a later date, because Shrove Tuesday falls during half term – presenting an excuse for a second round of pancakes! So please come and join us in St Giles after the race. We made 200+ pancakes last year. It would be great to break the record. Donations will be put to the Salisbury Foodbank.

CHRIS LOCK PHOTOGRAPHY TALK – *Waiting for the Clouds To Move*

Friday 20 March at South Newton & Wishford Village Hall

Doors open 7pm, talk begins at 7.30pm. £10pp inc. glass of wine or soft drink.

It's still winter and it will be a while before we can enjoy warmer days and lighter evenings! Meanwhile, why not spend an evening appreciating some of Wiltshire's stunning landscapes and scenery? Chris Lock will present a slideshow of photographs he's taken over two decades documenting south and west Wiltshire, sharing stories about his creative process and what motivates him to rise early and explore the hills with his camera and tripod – and why he doesn't mind spending a few hours waiting for the clouds to move! Proceeds raised will be donated to Oak Apple Club.

For tickets contact Chris on 07980 766 197 or chrislock357@btinternet.com

SOUTH NEWTON AND STOFORD**SOUTH NEWTON AND WISHFORD RECREATION CENTRE – VILLAGE HALL****CHRISTMAS BINGO 16TH DECEMBER**

Our biggest and best Christmas Bingo event ever! Thank you to everyone who attended and grateful thanks to all the people who work so hard to make this event so successful. A grand total of £1511.70 has been raised for village hall funds. An amazing amount!

SOUTH NEWTON AND WISHFORD FOOTBALL CLUB

The charity football matches played on Saturday 27th December were great fun. A Father Christmas or two, a lot of elves plus a few snowmen together with the kids teams as well. A huge thank you to all who helped put this event together. Everyone from the football club, The Royal Oak team and Rude Giant, Lukeys, Luke Randall, L J Photography and the Village Hall team, especially Rob Petty and Hanna Knibbs and Hanna's mum for the catering.

The total raised for Prostate Cancer UK was an amazing £2342.40!

EVENTS FOR FEBRUARY

BREAKFAST MORNING Saturday 28th February 2026.

Come along and join everyone for full English and plenty of tea, coffee, toast and marmalade.

The village hall is being booked up fast for 2026. Children's parties, a wedding and we already have a booking for Boxing Day 2026!

STOFEST 2026

Stofest 2026 is Friday 17th July and Saturday 18th July. Just letting everyone know as we are receiving enquiries.

REFURBISHMENT PROJECT AT THE VILLAGE HALL AND RECREATION GROUNDS

Anyone who has visited the village hall recently will have noticed that the main hall is starting to look really bright and fresh. The curtains are purchased too. The reconfiguration of the lavatories is next on the list!

200 CLUB

This special club was formed to raise money specifically to build the Recreation Centre play area and cover ongoing maintenance costs. The funds are ring fenced and not available for general use. Each ticket costs £12 per year and there is a draw each month for 10 months of £90 split £50, £30 and £10. Twice per year, the draw is for £200 split £100, £60 and £40.

Heather Bryans runs the club on behalf of the village hall and is always on the lookout for new members. Please contact Heather Bryans 01722 742207 or Janet Hailstone 01722 790547 if you would like to join and help raise funds for the children's play area in the community.

200 CLUB DECEMBER DRAWS

1st – £50	(No. 182)	Pauline Church
2nd – £30	(No. 95)	Naomi Rhodes
3rd – £10	(No. 212)	Henry Swanton (Wilton)

Karen Barnes

Honorary Treasurer and Secretary

STAPLEFORD

VILLAGE HALL NEWS

The New Year has started quietly in Stapleford with the funerals of both John Rouse and Jerome Mostyn at St Mary's Church. Christine Sykes also died in December. She and her husband Joe ran the B&B on the corner by Chain Hill for many years and Christine, a Salisbury theatre sister, served on the Village Hall Committee in the 1990s.

The first coffee morning of the year was very well attended. Susi and Steve Mason were hosting as the Jacksons were still in the Antipodes, cake was eaten, and the lottery numbers were pulled out of Sue Bale's sorting hat.

The Village Hall's first Burns Night will be reviewed in next month's news.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday February 4th: Coffee and Chat 10:30-12

Friday February 13th: Village Hall Quiz Number 9: if you've been before you'll know what to expect: a mixture of high and low brow questions with a tasty supper at half time and the chance to win a bottle of prosecco, all for £5. This time there will be ships, hotels and underground stations in the mix. Contact Keith if you are interested in being part of a team.

CHURCH NEWS

CHRISTMAS AT ST MARY'S

It was a busy Christmas in Stapleford. Two weeks before Christmas a large chunk of plaster fell from the ceiling and emergency work was carried out to make the whole surrounding area safe, distributing plaster dust generously over every inch of the building. Thus, all those who came to the candlelit carol service, considered by many to have been the nicest in recent years, entered the church through the kitchen via a beautifully lit temporary path (thank you Fergus and Sophie!) Everyone stayed on till well past supper time drinking wine and eating delicious mince pies, enjoying the festive vibe.

The Christmas Day service was well attended, as was the benefice service on 28th December. At each of these events refreshments were served and

thanks go to the providers and servers, as well as the flower arrangers, bell ringers, cleaners and all those who contributed to making it a lovely Christmas.

NEWS UPDATE ON THE PRESERVATION OF OUR ANCIENT CHURCH

As the many villagers who enjoyed St Mary's beautiful carol service back in December are aware, a significant section of the church roof needs to be repaired and a recent inspection confirmed that there are several further issues surrounding the fabric of the church which need to be addressed with some urgency.

This is of course inevitable in such an ancient building but whilst we are awaiting further details and quotes for the necessary work, it seems likely that it's going to be an expensive project! Funding this will require significant assistance from all those in Stapleford who value this wonderful building Please watch this space for details!

STAPLEFORD LOTTERY DRAW

The January draw was held at the first coffee morning of the year to a packed house. Winners were as follows:

1st prize (£250) No. 270 - V. Archer; 2nd prize (£125) No. 168 – A Luffman;
3rd prize (£50) No. 118 – J Ten Doeschate; 4th prize (£25) No. 23 – M Suker.

We have plenty of spare numbers and would welcome an expanded membership in view of the urgent need for repairs to St. Mary's (see separate item). Do get in touch if you would like to join. All funds are ring-fenced to go to the upkeep of the fabric of the church.

WINTERBOURNE STOKE

WINTERBOURNE STOKE ANNUAL MEETING

Please join us at the annual meeting and be a part of what happens next

Date: Friday 06/02/26

Time: 19:00

Location: Boot Inn, Berwick St James

This isn't just another date on the calendar—it's a turning point for the events in our village.

The committee relies on a small team of volunteers to give between a few hours and a few days a year and without people willing to step forward, it simply cannot continue.

We need new volunteers to keep our events, activities, and community spirit alive. Even a small commitment makes a huge difference and your opinions help to shape what we do next.

So let's come together, share our voices, and make sure the things we all enjoy can continue.

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

The Parish Council has maintained contact with National Highways regarding the A303. The contractor-led survey continues on the road through Winterbourne Stoke to Amesbury. An offer has been made to host a meeting with the contractors to explain the impact of the traffic on the village. The National Highways' Route Manager has agreed to come to speak to a public meeting in the village in May or June to explain the outcomes. He has also agreed to remove the surplus temporary road signs and traffic cones that are littering the grass verges.

A number of residents have expressed concerns about Wiltshire Council's "Revamp Your Tank" project designed to provide fully-funded grants to replace ageing septic tanks with sewage treatment plants to improve the river water quality. Residents whose gardens about the river have heard nothing. Those who live slightly further away have been told that either they need to make a financial contribution or that, as their location is not deemed to be connected to the river via either surface or groundwater, they are no longer eligible for funding. All the houses involved have had site surveys completed and it would seem that the goal posts have been moved. The Parish Council has contacted the project team and invited them to attend the village to explain what further analysis and mapping, to which they refer, has led to these changes.

Wiltshire Council leads an Expert and Stakeholder Group for the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Partnership of 25 groups, including English Heritage and the National Trust, to manage and protect the unique landscapes. The Parish Council receives updates. Recently the Group has circulated a paper for comment setting out its Vision and Strategic Goals. The Parish Council has responded that the Expert and Stakeholder Group should seek to reunify the north and south of the Stonehenge WHS currently bisected by the A303; to work constructively with National Highways to alleviate traffic issues within the WHS that detract from the otherwise outstanding landscape of cultural significance; and should seek to contribute to resolving the traffic issues that mar the Stonehenge WHS.

Finally, the slide in the playpark that had broken has now been replaced. The initial quote for the work was just under £8,000. Sarah, our Parish Clerk, found another contractor using her contacts, and the work has been completed for £2,800. Thank you, Sarah, a great start to the Parish Council's new year.

Next Parish Council meeting - Monday 9th February 2026, 7pm, St.Peters Church

VILLAGE WHATSAPP

If anyone from the village would like to be added to the Winterbourne Stoke WhatsApp group please message Tracy on 07956514137 with your name and number and she'll add you to it.

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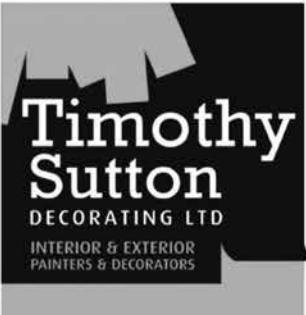
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