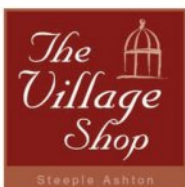


STEEPLE ASHTON  
**NEWSLETTER**  
GREAT HINTON  
**NOVEMBER 2022**



Over the past 150 or so years, this scene has become perhaps the best known and most often illustrated image of Steeple Ashton. Forty years ago, author and lecturer on rural geography Brian Woodruffe chose this same view for the front cover of his book 'Wiltshire Villages'.



## **Steeple Ashton Village Shop**

**Opening Hours** - please see page 7 for the current shop opening hours.

**Shop telephone:** 01380 871 211

# CONTENTS

## November 2022

|        |                   |        |                  |
|--------|-------------------|--------|------------------|
| 42-48  | Bryan writes      | 39-40  | Natural History  |
| 21     | Candlelit Supper  | 3-5    | Parish Council   |
| 11-12  | Catholic News     | 16, 40 | RBL              |
| 18     | Coffee Morning    | 41     | SAGE             |
| 22, 48 | Concert           | 7      | Shop             |
| 9      | Forget-me-Nots    | 13-15  | St Mary's Church |
| 27     | Friends of SA     | 19-20  | Village Hall     |
| 39     | From the Archives | 17     | WI               |
| 9-10   | Methodist Church  |        |                  |

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### Editorial

Hello everyone - Many thanks to all of those who have kindly contributed to the newsletter. It is good to know that it is welcomed and read by so many in the village and beyond. If you still want to contribute, it is never too late!

We have lots of colour this time, mostly because there are several upcoming events in the village. The Polish evening was so good and the great succes of the Mick Jogger event means that there is a repeat performance - see p48.

I am relieved to see that there will be no trees on the village green which would have spoiled the views and setting of the central listed buildings in the village. - **Helen**

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### Newsletter Deadline for 2022 November 22nd for December/January 2023.

Items for the **next** newsletter should be received by **Tuesday 22nd November**. They should be sent to Mrs Helen Montague-Smith, 1A Butts Lane, Steeple Ashton or by email to **[helenmontaguesmith8@gmail.com](mailto:helenmontaguesmith8@gmail.com)**

All published items solely express **the views of the author** and are the copyright of the author and the newsletter unless otherwise stated.

The Editor would like to remind you that it is up to you, the readers, to supply all news and copy for the newsletter. The sender's name and address need to be received before printing. Telephone 01380 871285.

Inquiries for advertisements in the newsletter should be made to **Bridget Lewis** : email: [adverts4steepleashton@gmail.com](mailto:adverts4steepleashton@gmail.com) or 01380 871279

Please send your ads by email if possible.

**Please note, we do not deliver flyers for advertisers.**

# **STEEPLE ASHTON PARISH COUNCIL**

## **Neighbourhood Plan**

The first consultation event for the Steeple Ashton Neighbourhood Plan will take place in the Village Hall on Wednesday 30th November commencing at 7:30pm.

The event will be informal, with the intention that residents can ask questions of the steering group and its consultant on a one to one basis. There will be a number of information boards to help explain the process and a few glasses of wine to help the evening along.

What we really want from you are your opinions and there will be the opportunity for you to leave messages and talk to the steering group. A Neighbourhood Plan is all about how the community wants to develop in the coming years and will be guided by the opinions that you express.

One issue that we cannot change is the number of dwellings which Wiltshire Council allocate to us (currently around 30 to 35 units). However, this figure has not been finalised and there will be a further opportunity to comment on the latest draft of the Local Plan when it is published towards the end of October.

We hope to have the chance to discuss the plan with you on 30th November, see you there.

## **Tree Planting**

We are expecting our next batch of 400 tree saplings to arrive in November / December. We are still looking for land to plant these on; so if you have space for 10 or more trees on your land, please do get in touch with us via the Clerk.

Once the trees arrive we will once again be asking for volunteers to help get these planted. If you can spare a few hours one morning please do pass your details to the Clerk or message me, Robert Leonard, on Facebook.

We are grateful for the feedback received to our consultation about trees on the High Street. The council will consider this at its next meeting.

## **Dog Fouling**

We have received reports of increased dog fouling around the village, especially on footpaths near the church. There was also a recent incident in the children's play area at Newleaze.

Dog faeces are a health hazard to humans, especially children, and

they also pose a risk to grazing animals when left in fields.

We remind dog owners that they have a legal, as well as social, responsibility to clean up after their animals. There are plenty of poo-bags available around the village and bins to dispose of these once used. Offending owners can also face spot fines of £100 if caught.

Thank you for your help in keeping our village environment clean and pleasant.



### **Parish Council Vacancies**

Your Parish Council currently has only six members out of its normal compliment of nine. We would welcome the support of more community minded residents; especially, but not limited to, those who could represent the views of residents in Ashton Common, Common Hill, Holmeleaze, Newleaze and Elmsgate/Raydown.

New members can be co-opted to the council through a simple vote, there is no need to go through an election process. You do need to be over 18 years old and have lived or worked in the parish for the past 12 months.

If you would like to find out more about joining the parish council, please contact our clerk Nicola Duke via phone (01373 864127 / 07971 987806) or email ([clerk@steeple-ashton.co.uk](mailto:clerk@steeple-ashton.co.uk)).

### **Parish Council comments on Planning Applications**

**PL/2022/06464** - 1 St Marys, Steeple Ashton, BA14 6EN - New single storey dwelling – No Objection; with the comment that the architect would liaise with the applicant to ascertain whether the development could be moved slightly back from the road side in order to protect the street scene. It was also noted that the Clerk was continuing to chase Wiltshire Council in order to confirm the ownership of the bank.

**PL/2022/07034** - 31 Dark Lane South, Steeple Ashton, Trowbridge, BA14 6EZ - Utility and Boot Room – No Objection.

**PL/2022/06857** - Elmsgate Buildings, Edington Road, Steeple Ashton, BA14 6HP - New vehicular access from Edington Road – No Objection.

**PL/2022/06574** - 3 Edington Road, Steeple Ashton, BA14 6HP - Change of use from agricultural land to domestic garden. New greenhouse and water storage. New solar panel arrays – No Objection.

**PL/2022/06594** - 17 Ashton Common, Steeple Ashton, BA14 6DY - Extension of existing summer house to form dependent relative accommodation – No Objection.

**PL/2022/06941** - Unit A, Elmsgate Buildings, Edington Road, Steeple Ashton, BA14 6HP - Notification for Prior Approval under Class MA - Change of use from furniture showroom (Use Class E) to 3 dwelling houses (Use Class C3) – Noted, the PC had No Objection.

### **Parish Council meeting dates 2022/23**

The Parish Council will meet on the following dates, at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall:

Monday 5th December 2022 – Full Council – Budget setting 2023/2024

Thursday 5th January 2023 – Full Council - Precept setting 2023/2024

Monday 6th February 2023 – Planning only (if required)

Monday 6th March 2023 – Year end procedures 2022/2023

Monday 3rd April 2023 – Planning only (if required)

Thursday 4th May 2023 – Annual Council Meeting

Date for Annual Parish Meeting to be determined (must take place before 1st June)

### **Parish Council Contact:**

The Clerk can be contacted on 01373 864127 / 07971 987806 or email [clerk@steeple-ashton.co.uk](mailto:clerk@steeple-ashton.co.uk). All Councillors have live [@steeple-ashton.co.uk](mailto:@steeple-ashton.co.uk) email addresses which are also posted on the website.

**Find us on Social Media!** Through the **Parish Council page** and **Steeple Ashton Village Discussion Group**, we cover many topics of interest to our residents. Please be assured that this page is monitored regularly, and we take all requests seriously, actioning where appropriate. We also have a group called **‘Steeple Sells’** for those of you that would like to buy and sell things locally – this is not a page that is part of the Parish Council policy or procedure, just a natural extension of social media activities. We would love you to get involved – search for ‘Steeple Ashton’ on Facebook. If you are a village group and need help with your social media or village event promotions, please get in touch with the Parish Clerk at [clerk@steeple-ashton.co.uk](mailto:clerk@steeple-ashton.co.uk) or 07971 987806.

~~~ [www.steeple-ashton.co.uk](http://www.steeple-ashton.co.uk) ~~~

## **WILTSHIRE COUNCILLOR NEWS FROM JONATHON SEED**

I write a monthly contribution for the Parish magazines of all villages which I represent on Wiltshire council. These are Broughton Gifford, Steeple Ashton, Keevil, Great Hinton and Semington and also the message goes out via Melksham Without Parish Council to the residents of Berryfield. I write as your elected Councillor to update you on headline Wiltshire Council matters and update on my involvement in village issues. I undertake to make my articles non political in their content. I would like to say an ongoing thanks to the Editorial Committee of the Parish Magazine for allowing me to contribute to the magazine.

There are several Wiltshire Council issues which are being taken forward by the Council as matters of urgency. These include taking a lead on climate change, further funding and support for victims of domestic abuse and a commitment to more Parish Stewards for local highways and footpath improvements. I am often involved in several local village issues at the same time and these include planning applications, footpath concerns and trying to get help for local projects.

One very critical issue is how we help those struggling in the current financial crisis. Country dwellers are often very independent and very proud people. Even the most pressed are unlikely to publicise their lack of heating in winter. If we happen to notice someone who may be struggling perhaps an invitation for a cup of tea and perhaps some cake in a warm house may really help. Alongside this personal touch Wiltshire Council is leading on a warm space initiative to encourage communities to offer warm spaces and sustenance to residents. Let's hope we can all do our bit for those that need a bit of help over the winter.

Finally I am always available to help residents with their local government issues. The easiest way to contact me is by e mail but I can also be contacted by phone. I try to attend most meetings of the Parish Council so it may be possible to arrange a meeting in person either to coincide with a Parish Council meeting or a personal meeting to suit residents.

### **Jonathon Seed**

E mail: [Jonathon.seed@Wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Jonathon.seed@Wiltshire.gov.uk). Telephone: 07770 774463

## **STEEPLE ASHTON VILLAGE SHOP**

**Normal Opening times:**

**Monday – Friday: 7.30am to 4.30pm**

**Saturday: 8.30am – 4pm**

**Sunday: 9am to 12noon**



Only halfway through October and we are already getting organised for Christmas - it really does seem to come around more quickly each year!

We have charity Christmas cards on display now and are expecting a new range of fancy goods by Gisella Graham to arrive any day soon. These, we hope, will replace the Michel Designs products which made such beautiful gifts but which, unfortunately, we can no longer obtain.

As we have done in the past, we will be offering to make up boxes of your Christmas foods for you to collect on or just before Christmas Eve. Order forms, covering meat, fruit and vegetables, dairy foods and bread, will be available at the counter from early November.

If you are unable to get down to the shop in person we will happily arrange delivery. That applies not just to the Christmas Boxes but also throughout the year if there is a need. Our telephone number is 01380 871 211 - just give us a call and we will do our best to help.

At this time of the year we start collecting prizes for our Christmas Raffle so if you have any unwanted gift items that you could put to a good cause, we would be very grateful. Tickets will be available in November and the raffle will be drawn either on the 23rd or 24th December, the date will be advertised both in the shop and in the newsletter nearer the time.

**Caren Felton**

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## **CHRISTMAS GREETINGS.**

IF ANYONE WANTS TO WISH FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS  
A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND GIVE THE MONEY SAVED FROM BUYING  
CARDS TO "WATER AID". Please make the cheque out to PCC of Steeple  
Ashton and put on the back "Water Aid" Please leave cheque or cash at Sue  
Cottle's, Church Farm.

Thankyou,

**Rosie, Sue and Sue Dredge**

## Thoughts on a New Era...

End or Beginning? Only time will tell, with the passing of The Queen many have felt a break in certainty and doubt over the future.

As one of those whose first memories was watching the Coronation, on a small black and white TV with the sitting room full of neighbours, I can testify to the progress of the second Elizabethan age. Sitting in our central heated house watching in full colour on a large screen spoke eloquently of the technology advances.

What has not changed is the warmth and strength of the human spirit. Like many, we have been hard hit by the Covid Pandemic and all the repercussions. The village community has proven solid and inspirational. Without the help of friends and neighbours I cannot imagine how we could have coped, so huge thanks to all of them and to those who helped others in need.

This strength of community and the constant flow of new blood will keep the village and, I am sure the country, in good stead in the future as it has in the past.

Already the background hum of praise and criticism of the new monarch and government are being heard and today we were shown the new royal cypher, let us hope that CRIII is as full of Advancement as EIIR.

**Robbie Campbell**

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## Friends of Steeple Ashton Oil Scheme

We are changing arrangements for the oil scheme!

It will take a few months to get acclimatised I'm sure so don't worry about getting it wrong for a month or two.

There is a new email address **sahtonfoil@gmail.com** – the nearest available to S. Ashton oil, I'm afraid. The telephone number is the same 01380 870119 and, of course, a note through the door at 9, Church St gets the same result. Please can you order the week you receive your newsletter for delivery the following Thursday. This will make it easier for those of us who forget until the last week!

The scheme was begun to reduce lorry deliveries to the village, to be a member of the scheme (£2pa) you must be a member of the Friends of Steeple Ashton – also a gift at £2pa – subs due now.

If you'd like the job of being secretary for the scheme get in touch as above.

**Rosie and Colin**



## **FORGET-ME-NOTS CLUB**

The Auction of items donated by members at 19th Oct meeting not only raised a larger than expected sum for funds, but provided a fun, exciting afternoon, as some folks trash became others treasure!

Christmas Bingo, always popular, will be held at 16th November meeting, with prizes of chocolates, tins of shortbread biscuits, and bottles of Prosecco to be won in the twelve games played.

Christmas Lunch on 21st Dec will this year be held in the Hall, and members will need to put their names on the list, and make their choice of main and dessert at the next meeting (16th Nov).

For further information please contact Gloria (Chairman) on 01380/870593 or Glynnis (Sec) on 01225/775681. We welcome visitors, so as the nights draw in, and the weather becomes chilly, why not come along on a Wed afternoon and experience the warmth and fun to be had in the relaxed and informal atmosphere that is the Forget-me-Nots Club? See you there!

3rd Wed of each month, 2.30pm, Village Hall.

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## **Steeple Ashton Methodist Church**

*(Luke 12: 22-23)*

*Then Jesus said to his disciples: 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food and the body more than clothes.'*

We live in a world where people are more anxious than ever. The strains of modern life, the uncertainties created by the Covid pandemic, the fears that come from an obscure future and the pain of everyday life all combine to make us a people that worry.

In Jesus' day, the people that followed him were, mostly, peasant farmers and humble trades people who earned just enough each day to live that day. The level of anxiety under which they must have lived must have been unbearable. So, when Jesus tells them not to worry, they must have drawn closer, but his advice seems unworkable.

Jesus tells them that the key to being free from worry and anxiety is to observe the flowers and to watch the birds. I can imagine some may

have switched off at this point, deciding Jesus was just out of touch with reality. Jesus then reveals a profound truth: their heart will be where their treasure is. In other words, what you love you invest in and what you value reveals what you love. If we treasure, value, and invest in the things that are important to God, then God will have our heart – our entire life – and God will care for us, as God cares for the birds and flowers.

Where is your treasure, where is your heart? Are you anxious about the present or the future? Jesus assures you today that it is God's pleasure to look after you and ensure that you flourish if you will trust him enough to care for you.

## **CHURCH DIARY**

Our services are normally at 9.15, followed by refreshments; we welcome everyone; **why not come and join our happy friendly group one week.**

### **November**

|           |      |           |                                    |
|-----------|------|-----------|------------------------------------|
| Thursday  | 3rd  | 2.30 pm   | CAMEO                              |
| Sunday    | 6th  | 9.15 am   | Rev. Tom MacMeekin                 |
| Wednesday | 9th  | 10.30 am  | Reflections & Fellowship           |
| Thursday  | 10th | 2.30 pm   | CAMEO                              |
| Sunday    | 13th | 9.15 am   | Rev. Peggy Kabonde, Holy Communion |
| Thursday  | 17th | 2.30 pm   | CAMEO                              |
| Sunday    | 20th | 9.15 a.m. | Eric Clifford                      |
| Wednesday | 23rd | 10.30 am  | Reflections & Fellowship           |
| Thursday  | 24th | 2.30 pm   | CAMEO                              |
| Sunday    | 27th | 9.15 a.m. | Rev. Graham Warmington             |

### **December**

|          |     |         |       |
|----------|-----|---------|-------|
| Thursday | 1st | 2.30 pm | CAMEO |
|----------|-----|---------|-------|

### **C A M E O (Come And Meet Each Other)**

An open invitation for anyone who would like to meet others for a cuppa and a social chat from 2.30 – 4.00 pm on a Thursday afternoon at Steeple Ashton Methodist Church – All welcome.

### **REFLECTIONS & FELLOWSHIP**

A group who get together on the 2nd & 4th Wednesday mornings of the month, to look at parts of the Bible to see how it affects our lives. This is an informal group and not 'heavy'; and led by our own Izzie Smears. Feel free to come along and try it. Any queries speak to Izzie on 01380 870538.

## **CATHOLIC NEWS**

**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST TROWBRIDGE & ST BERNADETTE'S  
WESTBURY (incl VILLAGES).**

**PARISH PRIEST FR TOM FINNEGAN**

TELEPHONE: 01225 752152

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

Diocese of Clifton Registered Charity No 1170168

**Please see below the usual weekly  
timings of our Masses: but please  
check newsletter for changes.  
St John the Baptist - Trowbridge**

### ***Sunday & Weekday Masses:***

Saturdays 12noon & 6pm (Vigil Mass)

Sundays 10.30am & 12noon

Monday/Weds/Friday 9am (First Friday

of the Month 6pm) Tuesday 6pm

**St Bernadette's - Westbury.**

Mass times will be:

Sunday 9am

Thursday 10am

### **Live streaming:**

All masses are streamed live on

[www.Churchservices.tv](http://www.Churchservices.tv) or on

You Tube 'Mass in Trowbridge'

### **Parish Newsletter:**

This is available weekly on the Parish website

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

Pope Francis has invited the whole Universal Church to walk with him towards a Church Synod in 2023. Resources to help engage with this process can be found at [www.cliftondiocese.com/synod](http://www.cliftondiocese.com/synod)

## **The appointment of Fr. Tom Finnegan as a of Canon of the Catholic Church**

When I arrived as the newly appointed parish priest of St. John the Baptist

Trowbridge, in September 2017, a parishioner said to me after the Sunday 10.30am Mass, “Welcome to St. John’s Fr. Tom, the Parish that makes canons”. Whilst I was happy to accept this welcome, I did not fully understand what was meant by it.

But it only took me a few short weeks to find out that since its foundation in 1876, the Parish of St. Johns’ has had four parish priests, who were appointed as canons.

However, as mentioned in the last edition of the Steeple Ashton Newsletter, I was informed by Declan Lang, Bishop of Clifton, that the Clifton Cathedral Chapter of Canons had invited me to become a member, therefore becoming the fifth parish priest of St. John’s to be a canon.

I humbly accepted this invitation when Bishop Declan visited us at St. John’s for the Sacrament of Confirmation on Wednesday 6th July. My installation as a canon will take place on Tuesday 25th October 2022, during Mass in the Catholic Cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul in Clifton, Bristol.

I say ‘humbly’, as I felt it also a great honour and privilege to be invited to join, as a canon, the Chapter of Clifton Cathedral.

Historically, in both the Anglican and Catholic communions, those appointed as canons, are part of a cathedral chapter. They work closely with a bishop in the administration of a cathedral and the diocese attached. Canons often play an advisory role to the bishop of a diocese. Canons are also sometimes consulted on the appointment of a new bishop when a seat becomes vacant. The usual number of canons in a cathedral chapter is ten, eleven or sometimes twelve.

There are also ‘honorary canons’, these are clergy given the honorary title ‘Canon’ in recognition for their service and dedication to ministry in the church over the years. They do not however sit on the cathedral chapter. Members of a cathedral chapter who retire from active ministry, then become honorary canons. When this happens the remaining members of the cathedral chapter nominate a replacement. I have been asked to replace Canon Michael Fitzpatrick who retired in 2021.

Personally, as mentioned above, I am humbled by this invitation. But I also appreciate the tremendous support I have been given by the people of the five parishes I have served since my ordination to the Priesthood in 1995. I appreciate their prayers and I will always keep them in my prayers as I continue to serve as a priest and Canon in the Diocese of Clifton.

**Fr. Tom Finnegan** August 2022

**Ministry Team for the Benefice of  
North Bradley, Southwick, Heywood  
and Steeple Ashton**  
**www.threeinonebenefice.org**

**Fr Oliver Learmont** (Vicar)

The Vicarage, 62 Church Lane, North Bradley, BA14 0TA.

Tel. 01225 774845, 07464 795590

froliverlearmont@gmail.com

**Fr Tony Longdon**

Tel. 01225 754771 07951 703187

**Richard Havergal** (Licensed Lay Minister)

Tel. 01225 762668 rhavergal16@gmail.com

**Churchwarden of St Mary's, Steeple Ashton**

**Michael Moore**

Tel. 01380 870280

*The Pew News can be downloaded from the Benefice website.  
If you do not have access to the internet, do consider letting us  
have your postal address so that we can post/deliver you a  
copy.*

**Worship and Prayer in the Benefice  
in the month of November**

*All services scheduled below include a sermon or homily.*

**Sunday, 6th November THE THIRD SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT**

9.15 am Holy Communion (CW) St Nicholas', North Bradley (DB)

11 am Shoebox Family Service\* St Thomas', Southwick (RH)

11 am Holy Communion (CW) St Mary's, Steeple Ashton (DB)

**Sunday, 13th November THE SECOND SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT  
(Remembrance Sunday)**

8 am Holy Communion (BCP) St Mary's, Steeple Ashton (OL)

10.40 am Remembrance Sunday service

St Nicholas', North Bradley (OL & RH)

10.50 am Remembrance Sunday service

St Mary's, Steeple Ashton (TL)

**Sunday, 20th November CHRIST THE KING**

|          |                            |                                  |
|----------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 9.15 am  | Holy Communion (CW)        | St Nicholas', North Bradley (OL) |
| 10.30 am | Family Toy & Gift Service* | St Mary's, Steeple Ashton (RH)   |
| 11 am    | Holy Communion (CW)        | St Thomas', Southwick (OL)       |

**Sunday, 27th November ADVENT SUNDAY**

|       |                      |                                  |
|-------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 8 am  | Holy Communion (BCP) | St Mary's, Steeple Ashton (OL)   |
| 10 am | Family Service       | St Nicholas', North Bradley (RH) |
| 11 am | Holy Communion (CW)  | St Thomas', Southwick (OL)       |

CW - Common Worship, Order 1 (contemporary language);

BCP - Common Worship, Order 2 (traditional language).

OL - Fr Oliver; RH - Richard Havergal; DB – Fr Denis Brett

\* Do join in and support our **mission to children** across the Benefice at two services this month:

at the **Shoobox service** in support of Operation Christmas Child at

**11 am on Sunday, 6th November**, at St Thomas, Southwick

(for details please see: [www.samaritans-purse.org.uk](http://www.samaritans-purse.org.uk));

and at the **Toy and Gift service** in support of the

Salvation Army Christmas Present Appeal

at **10.30 am on Sunday, 20th November** at St Mary's, Steeple Ashton

(for details please see: [www.salvationarmy.org.uk](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk)).

\*\*\*

The Coronavirus (COVID-19). In consideration of those around you when in church, you are encouraged to continue using hand sanitisers and take appropriate precautions to minimise the risk of spreading the virus.

\*\*\*

**Morning Prayer is normally said at St Nicholas', North Bradley, Monday - Wednesday. Further details are posted weekly in the Pew News and on the Benefice website.**

*"We lift up in prayer the people of our Benefice each morning; please let us know if you would like us to include in our prayers any particular person or cause." All are welcome!*

\*\*\*

**St Mary's is open for individual prayer during the day.**

\*\*\*

Please visit the Benefice website [www.threeinonebenefice.org](http://www.threeinonebenefice.org) for details of services, which may be subject to change - and for a range of information about the Parish and the Benefice.  
*And note that the Blog is now up and running !*

**Other Notices**  
**Headstones in the churchyard,**  
**St Mary's, Steeple Ashton**

A list of headstones that have been laid flat in St Mary's churchyard, was first published in July, 2021, together with the request for anyone responsible for the maintenance of a headstone (heir-at-law) to notify us that a headstone should remain as it is, or to offer to fund its refixing. It has been decided that sufficient time has now elapsed for the receipt of any responses to this request; and permission (by way of Faculty) is being sought for the work already carried out.

Please also note that any repair or refixing of a headstone may only take place *after prior consultation with the Vicar, churchwarden and PCC.* **The Vicar, churchwarden and PCC.**

**Occasional offices**

For baptisms, marriage services and funeral services in church, please *contact Fr Oliver.*

**Vacancies for church officers at St Mary's**

There are currently vacancies at St Mary's for the role of churchwarden and PCC treasurer and PCC secretary.

*If you are interested in any of these roles, please contact Fr Oliver.*

**Concerts and other cultural events at St Mary's**

We welcome such occasions. If you are interested in using St Mary's as a venue, *please direct your initial enquiries to The Vicar.*

**Thankyou...**

As editor of this newsletter, I felt that it was appropriate to say thank you to Michael Winstock, the organist at all three churches in our benefice, following his recent retirement. He has been our organist and choirmaster for over 20 years. Michael writes:

*I took over full time from Harold Stagg in 2001, having played a*

*couple of times before that since my coming to the area in 1998.*

*I am proud to have started and overseen the organ rebuild in 2009 and organised several high profile recitals.*

*Notable performers have been Robin Jackson who played at the re-commissioning service in 2011 and later the Directors of the Edington Festival on three occasions....Ashley Grote, Daniel Hyde and Peter Stevens, all of whom are very well known in the organ world.*

*We also had Peter King from Bath Abbey who was so impressed with the organ that he famously remarked that you "could wage a war with it".*

*I also successfully arranged the certificate of excellence for the organ given by BIOS for historically important instruments.*

*I shall greatly miss playing at St. Mary's and am so sorry that the choir has also folded.*

**Michael Winstock**

---

## **The Royal British Legion**

### **POPPY APPEAL**

**in Steeple Ashton, Great Hinton, Keevil, Bulkington**

**27th October to 12th November 2022**



I am working with Lydia on this year's Poppy Appeal with a view to taking over the organisational element from next year.

All the usual house to house collectors – plus a few new volunteers – have generously agreed to give their time to do the rounds in the villages from 27th October, (though Great Hinton has its own special arrangements). They all carry identity cards, so please ask if you wish to see them. If you prefer not to make your donation at the door, there will be poppies and collecting boxes in Steeple Ashton Shop, the Longs Arms, Keevil School, and the Well at Bulkington.

Should you wish to use Gift Aid (which increases your gift by 25%) all collectors will have Gift Aid envelopes for you to complete. And of course they also carry poppies with pins, large silk poppies, bracelets, crosses, and this year's enamel poppy badge. If you don't see what you want, get in touch with Lydia or me.

**Paula Boardman** (01380 870122)

**Lydia Peters** PAO TEE14 (01380 870029)



WI numbers are growing here in Steeple Ashton! We welcomed new members last month and Pat has joined our ranks now. Three visitors were welcomed to our October meeting.

Kady came to speak at the meeting. Kady, a working mum, runs the Bradford 'Riding for the Disabled' and gives talks to raise funds for the organization. A very busy woman and a brilliant speaker! She told us how the organization had been set up 50 years ago and then with the aid of some photographs told us a little about those who attend and how riding or simply being with horses had helped them. Each story was unique but each was inspiring. Anyone who builds a relationship with an animal will be aware of how much that animal – dog, cat or pet mouse contributes to their well-being and horses do just that brilliantly. Many of those who ride with Riding for the disabled are otherwise confined to a chair. Kady told us of one very active young man who at the age of seventeen found himself condemned to immobility and how riding has improved both his confidence and his mobility to an award winning level. Of course this has been achieved with the help of the volunteers (and they are all volunteers) who support the riders.

Kady's talk was erudite, lively and altogether inspiring so that it was an honour to know that the donation we were giving in lieu of a fee would be used for such excellent work. The competition which was 'How many words can be made from "horse riding"' received a good many entries and was won by Alison Evans.

Our November meeting is the annual 'Members Meeting'. This year there will be an item from the committee which will be highly educational! Members may find themselves equipped for an MA at the end of it..... It is not intended to be too serious and we hope it will be fun. There will be the annual Christmas market stall and gifts will be collected for the Green Lane hospital and for Neen Tree Trust. Come and join us on November 9th at 7:30 pm in the village Hall. Join us too in the church on Thursday 24th Nov for the vigil to draw attention to Domestic Abuse, one of the worst atrocities of this century. That's at 7pm for an hour – be sure to wrap up; the church is chilly on a dark evening.

**Rosie Brett Green**

# COFFEE & CUPCAKES

PLEASE COME AND HELP US RAISE FUNDS



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### **Wiltshire Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers will be holding their Annual Christmas Craft Fair**

on Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd December 2022 at St Mary's School Buildings, High Street Steeple Ashton BA14 6EU ( behind the Village Shop) We are open 10.30 am-4.00 pm

Visit us for hand sewn, hand woven and knitted items, cards, decorations and soft toys, all handcrafted by our members, perfect for that special gift.

Charity number: 1168349

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



## Steeple Ashton Village Hall

### **Candlelit Supper:**

Our thoughts are now turning towards Christmas - yes, once you've said the word, it doesn't hurt so much!! The Village Hall committee are holding a Candlelit Supper on Friday 9th December, which we hope you will support to help us raise funds for our Kitchen and Bar project.

There will be a hearty & delicious two-course meal and good wines will be sold at the bar. It will be a social evening to enjoy with friends in your village hall, which will be dressed for Christmas and will help to get us in the mood - not easy in these difficult times, but time spent enjoying good food and friendship with a glass of wine is never wasted and always brings joy. We look forward to seeing you there!

Tickets at £16 each will be available from 1st November in the Village Shop and also from Marian Little and Sandra Stevens who will be happy to deliver if necessary - see notice in this Newsletter.

### **Events:**

**Mick Jogger & The Rolling Zones:** As many of you know by now, on Saturday 15th October, Mick Jogger appeared on stage at the Village Hall to a sell-out crowd! A fabulous evening was enjoyed by everyone, with brilliant singing and music, lots of dancing and plenty of beer and wine from the bar! The bar raised funds for the Village Hall and there were cries for more occasions like this..... Our thanks go to Adrienne and Paul Hale and their band for deciding to play in our hall, which gave our committee the opportunity to run the bar, thereby raising £500 towards our Kitchen & Bar refurbishment. Our grateful thanks go to all those who bought drinks and also to our wonderful helpers, without whom it wouldn't happen!

**Christmas Craft Fair:** Apart from our regular hirers who continue to support the hall, we are looking forward to a Christmas Craft Fair in December, organised by Paula Boardman. There'll be lots of lovely items on sale so that you can begin your Christmas shopping! The Village Hall committee will also be selling tea, coffee & cake in the skittle alley so we hope you will come along for an enjoyable afternoon.

### **Latest upgrades in the hall:**

#### **Stage Extensions:**

We now have the ability to extend the stage. We have stage extensions which can be placed along the front of the stage, thereby giving performers on stage much needed extra room. These are available for your use and have already proved invaluable to the Trowbridge Players and to the Mick Jogger band. Please ask when booking if you would like to use them.

### **Commercial Dishwasher:**

This has been installed in the Kitchen. A temporary worktop has been placed over the hole left by the sink removed. The Dishwasher does protrude a little, but this will be addressed in due course.

Meanwhile, instructions for use will be in the kitchen, but Clive and Marian will be happy to show anyone who wishes to use it, how to do so. It is simple and straightforward and there is no need to put in detergent or rinse aid as this is automatically dispensed at the correct levels.

Please note: the Dishwasher is for crockery and cutlery only, not glassware. We plan to install a Glass washer in the Bar once it is refurbished.

The wash times are around 3 or 4 minutes per load so not only will it save water and energy, but the ladies (it's always the ladies!) won't be standing there washing up for hours on end!

### **Bottle Coolers:**

Two Bottle Coolers have been installed in the Bar. Currently they are securely seated on top of the worktops, but this will change when we upgrade the Bar. However it means that anyone wishing to sell drinks at an event has the facility to ensure they are kept at the right temperature.

**BOOKINGS:** Sandra Stevens 07827 291945 or email: [steepleashtonvh@hotmail.com](mailto:steepleashtonvh@hotmail.com)

**GENERAL ENQUIRIES:** Marian Little 01380 871161 or email: [secretary@steepleashtonvh.org.uk](mailto:secretary@steepleashtonvh.org.uk)

**Please feel free to contact us at any time with any queries**

## **Useful Information**

### **Postal Collections:**

**Longs Arms** - Weekdays - 4.15pm; Saturday - 10am

**Newleaze** - Weekdays - 12noon; Saturday - 11am

**Mobile Library Visits - Wednesdays;** Longs Arms - 11.00 - 12noon;  
Ashton Common Bus Stop - 3.35pm - 4.00pm

November 2nd; November 16th; November 30th



Steeple Ashton Village Hall

## *Candlelit Supper*

FRIDAY 9TH DECEMBER 2022

7 FOR 7.30PM

~~~

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*Happy & Glorious*

# *Coronation Concert*

*7pm Sunday 4th December 2022*

*Trowbridge Philharmonic Choir plus guests  
from Swindon Choral Society  
The London Esterhazy Orchestra  
Leader: Ann Lovatt*

*Conductor: Graham Dalby*

*Edward Elgar*

*Coronation Ode Opus 44*

*and works by Handel, Boyce, Parry, Britten*

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Sunday

17th December

at 5.30pm - 6.30pm on  
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All welcome, come and enjoy.....





# Christmas Gift Fair

on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December in  
Steeple Ashton Village Hall  
from 10.30am to 3.00pm

Come and shop for unique gifts from our talented local makers including jewellery, handmade soaps award-winning fudge, artworks, glassware, cards, baubles and decorations (of course!), copper flowers, antiques, accessories, plus stalls by the Guides and Julia's House charity – in fact there should be something for everyone!!!

You can also enjoy a cuppa and some homemade cake courtesy of our amazing bakers – proceeds of which will go towards our ongoing village hall refurbishments

Steeple Ashton Village Hall, Church Street, BA14 6EN





In last month's newsletter, Bryan wrote about the artist Frank Prosser who painted scenes in our village. This painting of The Firs is owned by Andy Morse of East Town who allowed me to scan the painting and show it to Bryan who was delighted to see it! [Ed].

From the Polish Evening, our lovely speaker Mrs Theresa Nurkowska and the colourful ladies, and their man, who treated us to a traditional courtship dance.





## **The Friends of Steeple Ashton**

The Friends event in the Village Hall on Friday 30th September proved to be a very special occasion, with the Trowbridge Polish Society performing wonderful dancing in traditional costumes and providing delicious cakes. Most memorable and moving was the story told by Theresa Nurkowska of how her and many other Polish families came to the camp at Steeple Ashton having been forced out of their homes during the early stages of World War 2, and their harrowing trail to England via Siberia, Persia, India and Uganda. Sincere thanks to Rosie Brett-Green, Bryan Berrett and all the Polish family members who contributed to the evening. The Friends hope in due course to assist with the creation of a Polish memorial in the village.

We hope to plan some further events in the near future, and The Friends committee is currently considering possible options for commemorating our 50th Anniversary in 2023. The committee is however in need of some new members to enable our various activities to continue, so do please contact the undersigned at 871914 if you would be interested in joining us.

With the potential prospect of some mild weather to encourage exploration and exercise, a reminder that the Village History & Guide is available at the Village Shop, along with the series of circular village footpath walks, with proceeds from sales benefiting The Friends.

**Mike Beard**

### **The Polish Evening - An evening shared by The Friends of Steeple Ashton and The Polish Society.**

I think everyone was agreed, it was a lovely evening. When I phoned to thank Sylvia for her organizing of it, she said that 'even' the priest had enjoyed it. It was an evening I'd wanted us to share for some time and I greatly appreciate all those who brought it about. Some twenty people came from the Polish Society, many of whom had been here in Steeple Ashton as children, or whose parents were here all those years ago and others who had a Polish connection. I immediately recognized Josie who had so often danced in her beautiful costume at village events. Reminiscences were shared by villagers and our Polish neighbours. All in all, it was a wonderful evening.

And yet... I have never been left so sadden by such an event. I had no idea of the journeys these refugees had made and the terrible sufferings they had survived.

As children we were told these people had endured truly great hardship and, yes, we 'knew' about the war although our comprehension was limited. I had assumed that refugees had left Poland though Hobson's choice, because their homes and homeland had been devastated, bombed to destruction, that they had been brought to safety here after a long train journey, and as traumatic as that must have been, I, a happy, safely held child, could not conceive. I saw, later, footage of the ghettos, Nazi atrocities, the transportation and the concentration camps, but these people, I thought, had escaped those inhuman horrors and were here safe and secure. I knew only the enjoyment of their presence here. The truth was harrowing.

How can anyone tell a child the whole truth? You get so far in your story and then the heart and voice stops. The words can't come out, tears and anguish fill you, and you know that to say more will break the heart of you and of the child, and shatter you like broken glass, and that mustn't happen because you have to survive; so you keep it locked inside. That is what these noble people had done.

So we heard, many of us for the first time, of how these lovely people were driven from their homes overnight and with their families travelled in cattle trucks to Siberia, survived on bread and water and hawthorn leaves, were surrounded by death, and lived through so much horror. Cast out once more they journeyed through Asia and Africa until they arrived on our shores with absolutely nothing and some, poor little mites, as orphans. Even as they spoke we felt their tears, and even then we knew they kept so much back from us.

I had no idea! The evening was humbling. The courage and strength of these people is more than incredible. Looking back through the years at this tight community that settled for a few years on the south side of our village in primitive conditions, it is no wonder that they stayed so closely together, that they clung to their Polish-ness, proud of their heritage. They had every right to do so.

I am ashamed of my shallowness, lack of knowledge, crassness, misguided acceptance. I am ashamed of me. I loved their presence. I excited by people from far away; enjoyed visitors who made us laugh and played the piano, girls and boys who danced. I am ashamed that I didn't question their story, so I am very grateful that they shared a small part of it with us. 'Well,' replied Sylvia. 'I haven't much to tell.' She was a small child caught up in this disgraceful history. Not much to tell? As Joy told me her Polish mother-in-law had said when asked to record her story, 'Nobody would believe me'.

How I wish it hadn't been true.

**Rosie Brett Green**

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## **THE EDINGTON ARTS ADVENT CONCERT**

The choir of Merton College, Oxford, will be performing this year's Advent Concert in the Priory Church on Saturday 10th December, starting at 7.30pm.

We are delighted to welcome back Benjamin Nicholas, Director of Music at Merton, and the college's 34-strong mixed voice choir, one of the elite Oxbridge choral ensembles. Merton performed our first Advent concert back in 2015, (if you were there, you will remember how wonderful it was,) and were due back in 2019 only to be ruled out by the Pandemic. While the students in that choir have graduated and left Oxford, those that have filled their places have gone on to confirm the Merton chapel choir under Benjamin Nicholas's directorship as "one of the best collegiate choirs in the land" (American Record Guide) and "one of the UK's finest choral ensembles" (The Gramophone).

There will be music for Advent and for Christmas from across the ages, both traditional and contemporary, with contributions from the College's Organ Scholar accompanying the choir and performing as a soloist.

As always in the run-up to Christmas, there will be mulled wine and mince pies in the interval, helping to get you in the mood.

Tickets are on sale now from Chrissy on 01380 831256, or by email from [sue@edingtonarts.org](mailto:sue@edingtonarts.org); they remain at £20/15/10 with 18 and under coming free. Edington Angels have a 10% discount. This is one of the most popular concerts in the calendar so don't delay securing your tickets!

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### **A-capella close harmony singing group**

We have just started up a close harmony singing group practising in Westwood on a Thursday evening at 7.00 pm. We have a strong Alto section, but would welcome some Sopranos and Tenors, and a Bass or two would be welcomed. We are all new to this, so feel free to join us and learn with us.

If you are interested in joining us please contact Alison and Tony Evans, 01380 870623.

# FROM THE ARCHIVES

STEEPLE ASHTON AND GREAT HUNTON NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 1973

## NOVEMBER EVENTS

- 2nd.(Fri) Steeple Ashton Football Club Dance 9pm-1am S/Ashton Hall  
Dancing to the Starlight Ramblers. 75p, incl. Buffet Supper.
- 5th.(Mon) Guy Fawkes' Night. Fireworks and Bonfire Barbecue and Best-dressed Guy Competition. Acreshart Lane 6.30pm. No admission charge. Sausages and hot soup (BRING YOUR OWN MUG), Bring your own fireworks-but don't let them off-this will be done in a central area. If you have any old wood/furniture for the bonfire, please contact G.Bagnall, 16 High Street (Tel Keevil 395) and it will be collected from you. NB The competition for the best-dressed guy will be judged at 6.30 sharp and there will be a cash prize (and the honour-if the winner wishes-of putting his/her guy on the top of the bonfire).

(Arranged by the Village Hall Ents.Committee)

- 7th.(Wed) S/Ashton Ladies Club Meeting 7.30 Village Hall. Mrs.D.Eales  
\*\* on "Soft Toys".

## LATER EVENTS

- Dec.5 Forget-Me-Not Club Christmas Bazaar. S/Ashton Hall 3pm. We look forward to greeting all our friends and hope they will give us their generous support, as in the past.
- Dec.7 Steeple Ashton Ladies Club Christmas Dance 9pm-1am S/Ashton Hall  
Dancing to 'Four in a Bar'. Tickets 75p, including Buffet Supper, Licd.Bar applied for. Tkts. from Berrett's shop or Post Off.
- Dec.13 7.30pm. "The Wakefield Shepherds' Play" will be performed in St.Mary's Church by the Jarun Players. For further details please see Church News Sheet.
- 1974  
Jul.12 Summer Dance on the Airfield. This will be a big night, so keep it free. (arranged by the Village Hall Ents.Committee)

## DONATIONS TO COST OF RUNNING NEWSLETTER

P.Gavuzzi, Anons(SA)-2, Mrs.E.Turner.....Total£3.20.S/A WI £2

- \*\* Nov.17(Sat) Steeple Ashton Young Farmers' Club Christmas Bazaar  
3pm. Steeple Ashton Village Hall.

**David Berrett**

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## Natural History Club News

Winter is approaching although the weather is staying mild. This time a mild winter brings mixed feelings, especially if you are a bird watcher! Who can afford a cold winter with the fuel costs rising at an unprecedented rate? For that reason a mild winter would be preferable. On the other hand a cold winter, and the colder the better, would bring migrant birds further and further south. Birds from Northern Europe and Scandinavia come to the UK seeking food to sustain themselves through the winter. This will bring large flocks of Fieldfare and Redwings to us and if really cold, we could see Waxwings. Or 'pink punks' as they are affectionately sometimes called.

The Parish council have procured more trees from the woodland trust for planting this winter. This is in addition to the four hundred or so planted last winter. They are asking residents if anyone could take ten or more to plant on their property. I recently read an article about hedge planting and how important hedges are for wildlife and that if you haven't the space or inclination to plant a hedge you could plant a 'hedge wedge'. This would be a small area or corner of your garden where you could plant about ten plants or more in a cluster and thereby create a haven for wildlife including nesting birds. A good place for a hedgehog box also. I'm not sure what species the council have but trees good for hedging include Hawthorn, Beech, Spindle, Blackthorn, Hazel, Holly, Field Maple, Buckthorn, Rowan and Crab apple. All of these can be kept trimmed and kept about 1 – 3 metres tall.

Our next meeting in the Methodist Church Hall is on Thursday 1st December at 7:30 where the short talk this time hasn't yet been determined but it will be fascinating as always. All are welcome.

As usual, please report anything of interest such as sightings of animals / birds / insects etc. Or indeed unusual or rare plants. Or if there is something you can't identify please contact either myself Roger Ferguson 01380 870860 r.ferguson550@btinternet.com or David Culverhouse, 01380 871621 42anchor@gmail.com If we don't know the answer then we probably have a member who specialises and can answer your questions. Photographs are always welcome and help identification. **Roger Ferguson**

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## **THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION - Steeple Ashton**

REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICES ON SUNDAY 13th NOVEMBER 2022

Please show your support for the servicemen and women of today - and your respect for the fallen in past and present conflicts - by attending the Remembrance Day services at

**St Mary's, Steeple Ashton**

**St Leonard's, Keevil**

At St Mary's the Service starts at 10.50 am. After the Service, wreaths are laid at the War Memorial in Steeple Ashton and shortly afterwards at Great Hinton. The Service at St Leonard's starts at 10.45 am. Wreaths will be laid and the two-minute silence will be observed at the War Memorial, followed by Morning Prayer in the church.

All Royal British Legion members and friends are asked to join us on this special day, when we remember the sacrifices made by those who served this country in our armed forces, not only in two World Wars, but in the many conflicts since.





Our **'Winter 22'** meeting will be held on  
**Thursday December 8<sup>th</sup>**  
from **7:30pm**, in **the Village Hall**

## **SAGE CHRISTMAS SOCIAL**

Come along and have some social time at the start of the Season, with people who like gardens!

- Gardening quiz – Tables of 6
- Xmas Raffle
- Cash & card bar – wines, beers and softs, plus teas & coffee & snacks.



**Please can you all bring a plate of finger food –  
either sweet or savoury to share for the  
Christmas buffet table!**

*(no mince pies please, these are already catered for)*

**Christmas special - Entry FREE**

**Jobs to do for the month:**

Clear up fallen leaves, especially from lawns, ponds and beds. \* Prune roses to prevent wind-rock. \* Plant out winter bedding. \* Put out bird food to encourage winter birds into the garden. \* Cut down faded herbaceous perennials and add these to the compost heap.

Follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2548517398732853>



**3rd December 7.30pm**  
**St Mary's Church**  
**Steeple Ashton**



This musical evening will include music from every genre to suit every taste. It will feature the amazing **Guinea Lane Saxophone Quartet** a lively and engaging ensemble with an eclectic mix of folk, classical and jazz tunes delivered with musicality and energy that never fails to delight and entertain.

We are truly delighted that **Marcus Sealy - organist** has kindly agreed to perform that evening. Marcus was assistant organist and sub organist in Bath Abbey from 1974 until 2017, he is the accompanist for the Bath Bach Choir and he has an endless list of recordings and performances to his name. An evening not to be missed.

*Tickets £10*

*available from the village shop,*

*choir members or*

*ring 01380 871890*

*wine and soft drinks available*

*in aid of St Mary's, Steeple Ashton Preservation Trust*

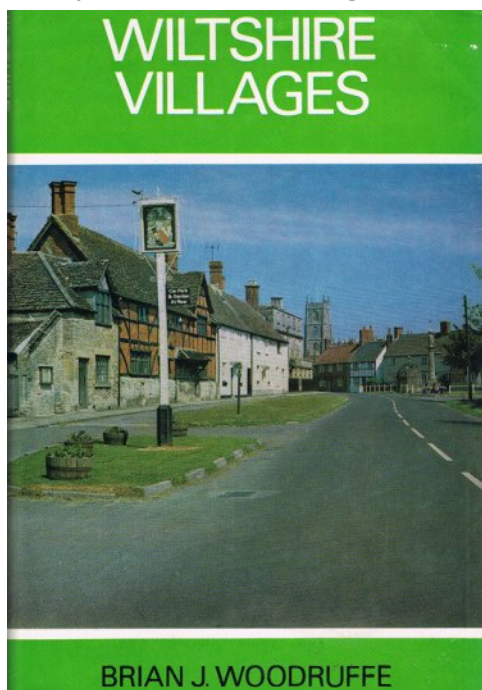
## **Bryan writes...**

**This article has been written jointly with my son David in response to the Parish Council's request for residents' thoughts on proposed tree planting in the village centre ('Tree Planting', page 3, October's newsletter). However, we now understand that, due to public opinion expressed on social media, the Parish Council have withdrawn their proposal regarding the green in front of The Old Merchants Hall. Nevertheless, having only learned of this withdrawal after we had finished the article, and given our strength of thought on the proposal, along with the work involved in production, we have decided to submit our article for publication without changes.**

In his 1982 book ‘Wiltshire Villages’, author and lecturer on rural geography Brian Woodruffe introduces his section on Steeple Ashton as follows:

*There is no doubt in my mind that Steeple Ashton possesses some of the finest ‘villagescape’ in the county and were I asked to select just one village out of the 350 to show a visitor something of the village scene in Wiltshire, Steeple Ashton it would be. ... to me Steeple Ashton epitomizes the legacy of past eras and the civility of the present era – a piece of living heritage and a model of Wiltshire village history old and recent. It is a stimulating place to visit and explore ...*

The scene that Woodruffe personally photographed to illustrate his book’s front cover was a view of Steeple Ashton that many have captured before, and since: looking north towards the church along High Street, from just south of the Longs Arms.



A significant amount of the “finest villagescape” he writes of is within this open, central village vista. Due to location and perspective, the eclectic grouping of vernacular architecture situated along both sides of the High Street, fronted by our remaining village greens, leads the eye to a focal point – St Mary’s Church. Forming something of a photographic artist’s and painter’s dream, this view also represents over 600 years of Steeple Ashton’s social and economic history – the “legacy of past eras” and “living heritage” Woodruffe enthuses over. As such, it is part of our Conservation Area.

Forty years before Brian Woodruffe wrote of our village, ‘Country Life’ published a four-page feature on Steeple Ashton – and the magazine used the same view at the head of their article. In the October 1942 piece, the architectural historian Sir Christopher Hussey writes:

*But the broad street, with a market cross in the form a column-sundial, and a lock-up on a triangle of grass, stately little houses of*

wrought stone and half-timbered brick, and the superb Perpendicular church, whose majestic tower dominates every view, stamp the village at once with immense distinction. To one who has never heard of or seen it before, as I had not, Steeple Ashton is a discovery to remember. A history of high prosperity and sudden catastrophe lies buried beneath the grass-grown streets of what was a rich mediaeval town.

In 1540, the poet and antiquary John Leland visited, as part of his six-year-long excursions around England and Wales. Travelling from Devizes, he wrote:

*From the Vies [Devizes] to Steple Assheton a 6. myles by champaine [un-enclosed, open country], but frutefull grownde and good wood plenty in some places. It is a praty litle market towne, and hathe praty buyldinge. It standithe muche by clothiars. There is in it a very fayre church, buyldyd in the mynd of men now lyvyng. The spired steple of stone is very fayre and highe, and of that it is cawlyd Steple Asscheton.*

As Leland journeyed through the wide centre of the “praty litle market towne”, his attention drawn towards what was then the tallest parish church spire in Wiltshire, he must also have been impressed by the extensive medieval village greens that ran both sides of the road in front of the “praty buyldinge” he so admired.

Two lightning storms in 1670 destroyed that “very fayre and highe” spire, reducing St Mary’s Church to half its previous height. And all that remains today of those extensive green spaces is our post-and-railed village green, complete with lock-up and market cross, and the greens in front of The Old Merchants Hall and the Longs Arms, plus the grass verge fronting the garden walls on the opposite (eastern) side of the road.

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Over the centuries, the largest of these original greens, along the eastern side of High Street, has been mostly absorbed into the front gardens of the properties which are set back from the road. In the process, a small central village pond on the edge of this green was also filled in.

This original open green along the eastern side of High Street may have extended south as far as the parish well, and north as far as Church Farm, where there was also a pond (filled in during 1922). These greens

would have been well trodden during the weekly markets and annual fairs the old market town of “Steeple Asscheton” was known for.

As part of the large manor of “Æsctune” – Ashton – Steeple Ashton had been bequeathed to the nuns of the Benedictine Abbey of Romsey in Hampshire during 975. Steeple Ashton became the centre of administration in the management of all Romsey Abbey’s local manors (such as Edington – just three miles to the south, yet outside the manor of Ashton). The abbey’s bailiff resided here, and rents would be paid and manorial courts held. On 18 July 1266, King Henry III granted, by royal charter, Abbess Amicia de Sulhere – the nuns’ superior – the right to hold a weekly market on Wednesdays, and a yearly fair during the ‘Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary’ – on 7, 8 and 9 September. Just two years later, the lord of the manor at Lavington, Richard de la Rokele, protested to Amicia that his Wednesday market – which by that time had been in existence for 14 years – had reduced in value by £40 due to hers at Steeple Ashton.

Having become a small market town during the 13th century, by 1334 Steeple Ashton was paying more in taxes than both Westbury and Trowbridge. In 1349, Edward III reconfirmed the right to hold the market and fair; and by 1377, its 260 recorded poll-tax payers ranked the town 18th in Wiltshire. Through the course of the 15th century, the woollen-cloth trade began to expand. During the late 1400s Steeple Ashton thrived, reaching the height of its prosperity at the end of that century and with wealth from the clothiers largely paying for the rebuilding of St Mary’s Church.

By the time Leland visited in 1540, Steeple Ashton had recently become the property of Thomas Seymour, 1st Baron Seymour of Sudeley (brother of Henry VIII’s third wife Jane Seymour). The town had suffered a dramatic fire around 37 years before, which destroyed at least six houses – and had led to a decline of the market. Its woollen-cloth wealth, in the form of its resident clothiers, was also past its peak.

Through the late 16th and early 17th century, the clothiers moved away to the growing local towns such as Trowbridge and Bradford-on-Avon, where water power and technological advances enabled their industry to prosper. Yet, as during the previous years, in their cottage homes Steeple Ashton residents would still carry out work for these wealthy clothiers, such as carding and spinning.

Despite several attempts to revive the markets from 1756 – when a ‘Gloucester Journal’ advertisement gave notice that the market was to be

revived and opened on Wednesday 13 December “at ten of the clock in the forenoon to be continued for ever for all sorts of corn, grain, cattle, meat, fowls, and all sorts of provisions and marketable wares” – Steeple Ashton’s weekly markets eventually died away.

The yearly fairs took far longer to cease completely. In 1625 it was suspended to prevent the spread of plague. In 1770 the fair was held on 2 September, for the sale of cheese. By 1831, it was being held one day only – 18 September – when it was described as “inconsiderable”.

By the late 19th century, although in decline, fairs seem to have taken place each year on 18 September. In her 1989 book ‘Our Wiltshire Village’, Betty Smith recalls a woman who had been a servant at Ashton House saying how she and her fellow servants would go up on to the roof during the fair, and look over the parapet to see the green filled with stalls, “all lit by flares”. But by the time of the First World War, the fair was no more.

In 1975 and 1976, two modern-day September “Ashton Fairs” were organised, with the aim of recreating something of the medieval atmosphere of the originals. Once again, our village greens and centre were employed to the full; with a fortune teller in the blind house, side-shows on the railed green, produce stalls set up on the green in front of Old Merchant’s Hall, a procession of adults and children in traditional dress – accompanied by goats and sheep – through the High Street, plus Morris Men, Mummers’ plays, puppet shows, a pig roast, archery, folk singing and all sorts of other entertainments.

### **Ashton Fair, 1975 & 1976**





The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a Conservation Area as part of a local planning authority's area which is "of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

Today, due to the open aspect of Steeple Ashton's once-thriving centre – part of its Conservation Area – our village still retains the feel of a medieval market town.

We feel that the proposal to plant trees on the green in front of The Old Merchant's Hall ignores this open-aspect, market-town heritage. It is our opinion that, if the planting goes ahead, the character of the village centre will be greatly diminished – and part of the "finest villagescape in the county", "legacy of past eras" and "living heritage" Brian Woodruffe correctly noted forty years ago, will be lost.

**Bryan & David Berrett**



Quite a  
hog roast!



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★  
**2023**

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**Saturday 31st December**

doors open 7.30 p.m Steeple Ashton village hall

Tickets £35 to include light Buffet

cash/card bar - proceeds go to the village hall