

STEEPLE ASHTON
NEWSLETTER

GREAT HINTON
FEBRUARY 2024



*The
Village
Shop*

Steeple Ashton

Steeple Ashton Village Shop

Opening Hours - please see page 6 for the current shop opening hours.

Shop telephone: 01380 871 211

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Editorial

Hello everyone - Happy New Year to all our readers.

The front cover image was one of many photos taken by Kathryn Faulkner when we were putting together the church book. The three chandeliers were all lit twice over Christmas - thanks to Michael - for both the Carol Service and the 12th Night Concert. So lovely and great flowers.

Good to receive information from Great Hinton from their latest Parish Council meeting. We all suffered badly when Common Hill was closed - the mud in Hinton Lane went everywhere but notably on our cars.

Also good to have is the weather report from Geoff to remind us how hot it was during the summer. Are we getting a Mediterranean climate? - warm wet winters and hot dry summers?? or just more rain and storms!

Many thanks for all your generous contributions to this newsletter. You can contribute anytime throughout the year! (Please see p17)

Helen

Newsletter Deadlines for 2024

February 20th; March 19th; April 23rd

Items for the **next** newsletter should be received by **Tuesday 20th February**. They should be sent to Mrs Helen Montague-Smith, 1A Butts Lane, Steeple Ashton or by email to **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** or 01380 871279

Please send your ads by email if possible.

Please note, we do not deliver flyers for advertisers.

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Parish Council Budget and Precept 2024-2025

At the January PC meeting members adopted the budget for 2024-2025 and set the precept for the coming financial year. The precept has been set at £28,139 an increase of £2,139 on the current year. This represents an annual increase of £3 per year for an average Band D property. The Chairman of the PC, Cllr Rob Leonard, said that despite efforts to manage the council's budget and cut costs over the past year, it has proved necessary to raise the precept in order to continue to deliver the current level of services to the community.

Planning Applications

The below applications were considered at the December and January PC meetings:

PL/2023/09784 - 10 Common Hill, Steeple Ashton, Trowbridge, BA14 6ED - Proposed external bifold doors and dormer style roof – No objection

PL/2023/09803 and PL/2023/10213 - The Sanctuary, 9 Dark Lane North, Steeple Ashton, Trowbridge, Wilts, BA14 6EY - Proposed single storey oak framed building to provide garaging and Home Office/Gym. Conversion of mobile 3 bay stables into permanent 2 bay stable & log store - No Objection to the application with the condition that the buildings be ancillary to the main dwelling.

PL/2023/10566 - Bullen Hill Farm, Ashton Common, Steeple Ashton, Trowbridge, BA14 6DY - Extension & Alterations to Dwelling – The applicant provided background and history to the site and the associated planning applications - Support.

PL/2023/10701 – The Manor, Church Street, Steeple Ashton, BA14 6EW - T1 - Leylandii tree – fell – No objection.

PL/2023/11039 – Tylers Cottage, 7 High, Street, Steeple Ashton, BA14 6EL - 1 x Conifer tree and 1 x Ash tree – fell – No objection.

Planning Decisions

The following planning decision notifications have been received from Wiltshire Council:

PL/2023/07479 - 15 High Street, Steeple Ashton, Trowbridge, Wilts, BA14 6EL - Proposed replacement of all external windows and doors – Approve with conditions

PL/2023/10408 - Raydown Farm, Edington, Westbury, BA13 4NW - General purpose agricultural storage building of standard agricultural construction – Prior approval not required

PL/2023/09015 - 2 Spiers Piece, Steeple Ashton, Trowbridge, BA14 6HG

- Construction of a two-storey extension to the right hand side / Eastern elevation of the existing house. Reconstructing the existing single storey utility area at the rear with new walls and roof – Approve with conditions.

PL/2023/09784 - 10 Common Hill, Steeple Ashton, Trowbridge, BA14 6ED - Proposed external bifold doors and dormer style roof – Approve with conditions.

Parish Council meeting dates 2024

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

Monday 5th February – Planning Only/Neighbourhood Planning

Monday 4th March – Full Council – Year End Procedures 2023/24

April – Planning Only/Neighbourhood Planning – Date to be confirmed due to Bank Holiday

April 2024 – Annual Parish Meeting – Date to be confirmed

May 2024 – Annual Council Meeting – Date to be confirmed due to Bank Holiday

Monday 3rd June 2024 – Planning Only/Neighbourhood Planning

Monday 1st July 2024 – Full Council

Monday 5th August 2024 – Planning Only/Neighbourhood Planning

Monday 2nd September 2024 – Full Council

Monday 7th October – Planning Only/Neighbourhood Planning

Monday 4th November – Full Council

Monday 2nd December – Planning Only/Neighbourhood Planning

Parish Council Contact:

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

Find us on Social Media through the **Parish Council** page, we cover many topics of interest to our residents. There is also a **Steeple Ashton Village Discussion Group** and a group called ‘**Steeple Sells**’ for those of you that would like to buy and sell things locally – these pages are not a part of the Parish Council policies or procedures, 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 or 07971 987806.

Find us on the website at <https://steeple-ashton.co.uk/>

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

## **GREAT HINTON Parish Council News**

Great Hinton community along with the Parish Council is actively addressing traffic concerns and working collaboratively with Wiltshire Council. At a recent Parish Council meeting (January) which was very well attended a number of potential outcomes and further next step actions were considered:

- Traffic Survey:
  - The Traffic Survey can provide valuable data on traffic volume, speed, and patterns. This has now been requested.
  - Identify specific areas with high congestion or safety risks.
- Road Improvement Suggestions:
  - The request for road improvements, such as additional signage, is a proactive measure. This has been requested.
  - Highlight specific locations where improved signage can enhance safety and guide traffic more effectively.
- Community Engagement:
  - Continue fostering open communication between residents and the Council.
  - Encourage ongoing community involvement in addressing traffic issues.
- Alternative Routes:
  - Work with the Council to explore alternative routes or traffic management strategies. Wiltshire Councillor Jonathan Seed is actively working towards this with the Highways department.
  - Consider implementing measures to discourage heavy traffic from diverting through the village.
- Collaboration with Local Authorities:
  - Maintain a positive and collaborative relationship with Wiltshire Council throughout the process.
  - Seek their input on long-term solutions to address traffic concerns.

A collaborative approach involving both the community and local authorities is essential for creating effective and sustainable solutions to traffic-related issues and the parish Council aims to facilitate as many solutions as practicable.

You can contact the Parish Clerk Naomi Mildenhall via email: [greathinton@gmail.com](mailto:greathinton@gmail.com)

Next Parish Council meetings dates are; 14th March and 9th May 2024, 7pm in the Memorial Hall.

**Naomi Mildenhall**  
Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer  
Great Hinton Parish Council

[www.greathinton.org.uk](http://www.greathinton.org.uk)

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

Weather has dominated the start of 2024 and its effects have caused serious local difficulty. Almost continuous rain since October resulted in sodden ground and drainage struggling to cope. The addition of Storm Henk finally overwhelmed struggling drainage. Most local drainage is working and most surface water on roads was taken away within a day or two. However, for whatever reason, our climate is changing and we need to both understand and accept this. The result may be a day so where roads become treacherous or even impassible due to excessive rain. Many of us are old enough to remember similar inconvenience caused by heavy snow and being snowed in for days. Maybe we will have to get used to similar with modern rain patterns. Wiltshire Council is doing its best with limited resources but is investing an extra £1million in flood alleviation. We are lucky to have a Council that has managed its budget well enough to be able to do this.

However residents are rightly concerned at very local highway difficulties. The long running Common Hill drainage saga seems to be improving but water running down the road followed by a sudden cold snap has resulted in dangerous driving conditions. Similarly self diverted traffic through Great Hinton has resulted in unacceptable traffic density and caused gridlock and chaos. In both instances the local reaction has been measured and sensible which really helps the elected representatives (the Parish Council and myself) to get on with liaising with Wiltshire Council for improvements and change. The January Great Hinton Parish Council meeting was attended by over half of the village residents who coordinated their concerns, listened to what could be done and generally supported the Parish Council and myself with what we have been doing and will be doing to address their highways issues. That is how things get done in our villages and we should be very proud that we can still discuss real concerns in a measured way and try to resolve them in the Wiltshire way.

**Jonathon Seed**

07770774463

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### **STEEPLE ASHTON VILLAGE SHOP**

**Normal Opening times:**

**Monday – Friday: 7.30am to 4.30pm**

**Saturday: 8.30am – 4pm**

**Sunday: 9am to 12noon**



## **STEEPLE ASHTON VILLAGE SHOP** : Update January 24.

We hope you all had a good Christmas and New Year, and are all fit and fine for 2024. We'd like to say a BIG thank you for supporting the shop through the Christmas period and trust you will continue supporting us through this Leap year (extra shopping day!). We had a successful Christmas raffle with over 20 prizes won; reminder to those of you who have not collected their prize yet.



We have had an initial review 2023 so far (bearing in mind our financial year end in April 24) and have been checking how the shop is doing financially. We are pleased to say that some of the changes we have made are positively impacting on the shop's bottom line, for instance;

- Our analysis of stock, and reduction in slow moving stock, has definitely helped us save money and reduce wastage.
- New Debit/Credit card machine is much cheaper for us and we can exclude high commission cards like American Express now.
- On-line banking has now been implemented which speeds up our transactions and manages cash flow better.

The generous donations have been set aside so that we can use the monies for improvement projects.



Three of us; Francesca Buffery-King, Paula Boardman and Lucy Wilcox are spending more time in the shop, liaising with Julie Ludlow and taking on ownership of areas where further changes can be made ..... so watch this space.

### **Christmas Stock**

There's a few post-Christmas bargains left.....and some lovely tins (with the bonus of the contents)!

### **Shrove Tuesday/Pancake day – Tuesday 13th February**

Come and get your ingredients from us; flour, lemons, eggs.



### **Valentine's day – Wednesday 14th February**

We have a variety of cards in stock, chocolates and wine



Steeple Ashton Village Hall

## JANUARY 2024

Hello and welcome to 2024!

The last two events of 2023 were excellent:

**Candlelit Supper** - The Hall looked great, with a sparkly silver theme this year created once again by Sandie Lewis. Everyone enjoyed a delicious home-made Boeuf Bourguignon followed by home-made tarts, tea, coffee and mince pies. Good wines were purchased from the bar and Daisy and Frankie sang to us during the evening. We raised over £1000 and we thank all of those who bought tickets, cooked food and helped on the night to make it such a successful event.

**New Year's Eve:** Once again, Adrienne and Paul Hale's event with their band Purple Fish was a fantastic evening and Steeple Ashton folk danced the night away, enjoyed a ploughman's meal and bought copious amounts of alcohol from the bar, which was run by the Village Hall (Steeple Ashton does like a tippie!!) Our thanks to Clive for organising the bar - no mean feat I can tell you - and to Bel Miller for assisting him. I'm sure Adrienne would also like me to thank all the other ladies on her behalf for helping her with the food. The village hall raised over £800 from bar sales, so thank you to all those who supported us.

### EVENTS 2024:

Our Kitchen & Bar project fundraising continues apace. We're getting closer to being able to apply for grants but we're not there yet, so we hope our lovely community will continue to support our efforts again during 2024.

**American Brunch:** This may have already taken place when you receive your Newsletter, but if not, it is being held on Saturday 3rd February at 10:00 - 12:00 and will cost £10 for adults and £5 for 5 - 16 yr olds, under 5s free. Bacon, eggs, beans, bread roll, pancakes, fruit, yoghurt and maple syrup will be on offer and there will be an American Diner vibe in the hall, with music playing all morning. Tickets on sale at the Village Shop or from Sandie, Marian and Justine, see below and posters for contact numbers.

**Fish and Chip Quiz Night:** Saturday 23rd March. 6:30 for 7pm. Tickets will be on sale after the American Brunch, so please save the date! Check out the next Newsletter, noticeboards and the Village Facebook for more details nearer the time. Francis has very kindly offered to put together a



quiz (Teams of 6) and be Quizmaster for this fun social evening. Robinson's Traditional Fish and Chips at Paxcroft Mead are supporting our endeavours and will deliver our order of delicious Fish & Chips, which will be eaten before we begin the Quiz. It will be an informal affair, F & Cs in boxes, cutlery and condiments provided, music in the background and the bar selling beer, wines & soft drinks. It should be a good evening, so do buy a ticket and come and enjoy a Saturday evening with friends and family.

During 2023 we had several very kind donations - from village families who held wakes for loved ones, village groups and individuals, too many to mention in case I forget someone, but you know who you are and that we are extremely grateful for your kindness.

We would also like to thank Apetito in Trowbridge for their very kind donation from their Staff Foundation, which allowed us to purchase a video conferencing camera. This will have various uses - perhaps Zoom business meetings but also families and friends who live far apart, either in the UK or abroad, would be able to set up a gathering, maybe tea and cake as well??! and see and chat to each other in the hall. Maybe you have an elderly or disabled relative or friend who can no longer travel? Why not liaise with people at their end, get everyone together in the hall, and allow them to see and hear their grandchildren, great grandchildren, friends etc? It's just a thought - the facilities are there, so please do use them. If you would like to chat to Clive about the technical facilities and how they can be used, please call on 01380 871161 when he will be very happy to help.

Finally, if anyone in the village feels they would like to make a donation towards our kitchen & bar refurbishment, please contact either Sandra, Fran or myself on the numbers or emails below. We would be very grateful for your support.

**Marian Little**

BOOKINGS: Sandra Stevens 07827 291945 email:  
steepleshtonvh@hotmail.com

GEN. ENQ: Marian Little (Sec) 01380 871161 email:  
secretary@steepleshtonvh.org.uk

TREASURER: Francesca Buffery-King email:

treasurer@steepleshtonvh.org.uk

Website: [www.steepleshtonvh.org.uk](http://www.steepleshtonvh.org.uk)

## Steeple Ashton WI



A chilly evening at Steeple Ashton WI

It was a chilly night when the WI met for their January meeting . It was made even chillier by the subject matter of the evening!

The business of the evening included voting for this year's resolution to be debated at the NFWI annual meeting in the summer as well as voting for suggested outings to take place when warmer weather greets us. Then it was time for the speaker to enlighten us about Waterloo.

Sadly our speaker has been diagnosed with a debilitating illness and a phone call just before Christmas told of its rapid acceleration and his inability to attend our meeting. Good wishes have been sent to him. Attempts to find a replacement over the holiday period proved very difficult so the chill solution was hit upon.

Members sat back with popcorn and chocolates to enjoy the film made in the village in the mid 70's.

'Mrs Amworth' was filmed entirely in Steeple Ashton with villagers taking part as extras in a garden party and in the 'hospital'. Our beautiful church had a central role and some of our homes were filmed inside or out. The film was not of the best quality but it added to the darkness of the subject, a vampire Glyns Johns attempted her worst around the village. We were not too scared!

It was a coincidence that Glyns Johns died at the age of 100 a few days before so we had paid a fitting tribute to her.

Sandie Lewis won the competition of an illuminated W. The entries were all decorative and of a high standard.

At our meeting on Wednesday February 14th we will discover how our handwriting gives away our personality. The competition is quite simply a 'Dear John' note- now that should be fun. Keep it short –he'll be so heartbroken he won't want to read much.

As always, we are delighted to welcome visitors. You'll find the company congenial and you will surely receive an education, and a cuppa. **Rosie**



### **The Preservation Trust AGM**

will be held on Friday 22nd March 2024

after which there will be an illustrated talk about the church organ restoration project by Helen Montague-Smith

## **METHODIST CHURCH**

February can be a dark, wet, miserable month. When we get a really nice bright sunny day it lifts our spirits and we can all feel better. The following story, from a book I was reading, illustrates this point.

When the Lady of the House returned from a sewing group meeting she was smiling. “While we were stitching,” she explained, “our old friend Mary happened to start humming ‘My Favourite Things’ which led to the rest of us discussing just what we’d add to our own personal list.

“Laura chose the smell of freshly cut grass, Jo wanted the sight of kites flying on a windy day. Sue decided on lapping waves, and I chose firelight on a Winter’s evening. But it wasn’t until later that we realised every single thing that we had chosen was free. It just goes to prove,” she finished triumphantly, “that money may buy some good things, but it certainly doesn’t buy the best.” Now that’s wisdom beyond price!

### **Church Diary**

All services are at 9.15 am unless otherwise stated. Please come along and join us. You can be assured of a warm welcome, and a time to chat, plus a cup of tea or coffee after the service. If there is anyone for whom you would like prayers to be said, please leave details in the post box at the front door, and they will be included in the Intercessory Prayers on Sunday.

### **FEBRUARY**

- 4th 9.15 am Rev. Gary Gotham**
- 6th 7.30 pm Housegroup**
- 8th 2.30 pm CAMEO**
- 11th 9.15 am Rev Peggy Kabonde – HC**
- 13th 2.30 pm Church Council Meeting**
- 14th 10.30 am Reflections & Fellowship**
- 15th 2.30 pm CAMEO**
- 18th 9.15 am Elizabeth Manley**
- 20th 7.30 pm Housegroup**
- 22nd 2.30 pm CAMEO**
- 25th 9.15 am Patti Harrison**
- 28th 10.30 am Reflections & Fellowship**
- 29th 2.30 pm CAMEO**

### **MARCH**

- 3rd 9.15 am Morning Worship**

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

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

## REFLECTIONS & FELLOWSHIP

A group who meet on the 2nd & 4th Wednesday mornings of the month, to have a cup of coffee, and look at parts of the Bible to see how it affects our lives. This is an informal group led by our own Izzie Smears. Feel free to come along, and try it. Any queries speak to Izzie on 01380 870538.

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STEEPLE ASHTON CHRISTIANS TOGETHER

# SHROVE TUESDAY LUNCH



COME AND SHARE IN OUR

## SOUP & PANCAKE LUNCH

12.30 - 2.00 pm

VILLAGE HALL

TUESDAY, 13<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY

PLEASE SIGN UP IN

ST MARY'S CHURCH OR

METHODIST CHURCH

OR CONTACT

ROSIE ON 01380 870 119

ALISON ON 01380 870623,

(SO WE HAVE SOME IDEA OF HOW MANY TO CATER FOR.)

## **CATHOLIC NEWS**

**Saint John the Baptist, Saint Bernadette & Saint Thomas More  
Working in Communion for Mission**

**Parish Priest: Canon Thomas Finnegan**

TELEPHONE: 01225 752152

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

Diocese of Clifton Registered Charity No 1170168

Diocesan Re-Structure: There is to be a diocesan restructure of Deaneries. At present there are 13 Deaneries in the Diocese. As from September, this will reduce to nine. New Deans have been appointed by Bishop Declan to lead these 'local areas. What was the Trowbridge Deanery, is now Deanery 6 renamed as The Pastoral Area of St. Oliver Plunkett. Canon Tom has been appointed as the new Dean. We thank Fr. Martin Queenan, former Dean of Trowbridge Deanery and wish Canon Tom all the best in his new role. A map of the new Deaneries, is available from Canon Tom on request.

**Please see below the usual weekly timings of our Masses:  
but please check newsletter for changes.**

### **St John the Baptist - Trowbridge**

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

Saturday 6pm

Sunday 10.30pm

Monday 9am

Tuesday 6pm

Friday 9am

### **St Bernadette's - Westbury.**

#### ***Mass times will be:***

Sunday 9am

Thursday 10am

### **St Thomas More, Bradford-on-Avon**

#### ***Mass times will be:***

Saturday 4pm

Wednesday 9am

#### **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)

# St Mary's Church, Steeple Ashton

## Services in February

### Sunday 4th February

11 am Holy Communion Tony Longdon

### Sunday 11th February

8 am Holy Communion Tony Longdon

10.30 am Family Service Richard Havergal

### Sunday 18th February

11 am Holy Communion Richard Hunt

### Sunday 25th February

8 am Holy Communion Tony Longdon

During the vicar's leave of absence, the PCC is working with Sue Groom and Jane Palmer to ensure that as many services as possible will take place in St Mary's Church. We are hoping to use visiting priests but they do have other commitments especially at festivals.

## Notices

### Occasional offices

For baptisms, marriage services and funeral services in church,  
*please contact the Rural Dean, Jane Palmer.*  
*email: revjanepalmer@gmail.com*

### Service on Sunday 21st January

The 11am service on Sunday was taken by Tony Longdon and was well attended. We all gathered round the church radiators chatting to Tony before we decided it was time to start the service. The wedding at Cana gave Tony an opportunity to tell a delightful story about his own marriage service. It was so lovely to feel that we are able to get together and worship in our lovely church. Tony is taking more services this month and it would be good to see a full church again.

**Rosie and Helen**

### Family Service Sunday 11th February, 10.30am

Tuesday, Shrove Tuesday

When Jack went to plough.....

Richard and Rosie will be in charge of a fun time and Scotch pancakes will be eaten at the end of the 10.30am service on 11th February as part of the refreshments. Please come and join in!

**Rosie**

## **Richard writes -**

February brings the start of Lent. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell of Jesus' time in the wilderness and the three specific temptations that confronted him.

Firstly, he is tempted to turn stones into bread. He refuses, but later in his ministry, he will miraculously provide bread for 5,000 hungry people stranded on a remote hillside.

Secondly, he is challenged to jump off the pinnacle of the Temple. He is told that angels will break his fall, amazing those who watch. Again, he refuses, but later he will amaze many by his acts of compassion and healing.

Thirdly, he is asked to worship the devil and rule the world. This is highly subversive because all the lands around were part of the Roman Empire, so he is being asked to become the Roman Emperor. He never did, but in his ministry and his death on the cross, he would hugely challenge the Roman Empire.

A common theme of all these temptations is that Jesus was asked to do something for himself but in his later actions reflecting them, he would always do things for others. Maybe there is a challenge here for us as we approach Lent and consider whether we observe it for ourselves or to help others.

I will be leading a Lent Course on behalf of Steeple Ashton Churches Together (SACT) at the Methodist Church on Tuesday afternoons at 2-3pm, 20 February to 19 March, inclusive.' **Richard Havergal**

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## **A Big Thankyou for 12th Night**

Thankyou for a truly wonderful Concert. Your singing was magical, so harmonious. Amazing you had few Practice Sessions! And had little time to learn it all, since the Christmas Concerts. And with people from far away. Your Conductor is incredibly clever and knowledgeable, not only the German repertoire but Kings, esp Henry 8th! I didn't sample the mulled wine nor mince pies, but clearly they were enjoyed too. Your Soloist's singing was superb and The Church looked lovely, with all the Flower Arrangements, and Christmas Decorations, and that Tree !!

We are so lucky at West Ashton, St John's, having Tony James usually play the organ for us. How he fits everything in, I can't imagine.

When Rosemary and I left the Church, her cat appeared, and walked her home! All the very best wishes, **Joan Bond**

## **Weather Report for Steeple Ashton 2023**

January began with the first two weeks wet and mild but the next two weeks were cold and dry. On the 21st the night temperature fell to  $-6.8^{\circ}$ , the coldest night of the year. The max temp that day was only  $-0.2$ , the coldest day of the year.

February was dominated by high pressure which resulted in only 9.1mm of rainfall. The mean temperatures were above average with a very mild spell during the middle of the month. March was wet with 120mm of rain recorded. The March average being 55.6mm. Snow fell on the 7th & 8th which resulted in around 60mm of lying snow.

April rainfall and temperatures were close to normal.

May was drier than normal with the second half of the month almost completely dry. The mean temperatures were  $1.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  above the average although the first  $20^{\circ}\text{C}$  temperature reached this year was not until the 18th which is rather late in the year.

Coronation Day on 6th was cool and cloudy with morning rain. On the 7th for the village parties it was fairly warm and sunny but with rain later.

June rainfall was well below the average with most of it occurring during a night thunder storm on the 19th. The mean temperatures were over  $3^{\circ}\text{C}$  above average, slightly warmer than in June 1976.

July was dominated by low pressure with more than twice the average rainfall. The mean daytime temperature was  $1.8^{\circ}\text{C}$  below normal but many mild nights gave a night min.  $0.6^{\circ}$  above the average. Overall it was the coolest July since 2011.

August rainfall was just below the average as were the day temperatures but the nights were slightly warmer.

Summer returned during the first two weeks of September. The hottest day of the year was recorded on the 9th when  $31.4^{\circ}\text{C}$  was reached which coincided with the Village Picnic in the Park. Autumn weather arrived from the 17th when it became cooler and wetter.

October was very wet with 139.8mm of rain, twice the average. The first ten days were warm and mainly dry with  $24.0^{\circ}\text{C}$  recorded on the 9th. Low pressure returned during the second half of the month with the arrival of storm Babet which produced 45mm of rain. The unsettled weather continued until the end of the month.

November began with storm Ciaran which was a very deep depression with the lowest pressure recorded in over 25yrs and this



produced around 33mm of rain. The second half of the month was drier and the last week colder. On the last day of the month the maximum temp. was only 1.9°C which was the coldest November day since 2010.

December began with a rather cold first week with -3.4°C recorded on the 1st. Mild weather then arrived and stayed for the rest of the year with 13.0°C reached on Christmas Eve, only falling to 10.2°C overnight. The mean temperatures were around 2.5°C above normal and the rainfall was 104.7mm which is 30% above the average.

The total rainfall for the year was 919.2mm which is over 20% above the average of 747.5mm. Last year it was 10% below the normal. The mean temperatures were again higher than the average, particularly June, Sept, Oct and December which were well above the normal. Only July was cooler than average.

**Geoff Witts**

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### **More Useful Information**

I have been asked about being able to contribute to the newsletter by BACS - ie paying directly into the Newsletter bank account.

The answer is yes you can and please do so!

St Mary's Church PCC supports the newsletter - which used to be the Parish Magazine - and there is a separate account for the newsletter which is used to pay printing costs.

Please put the word NEWSLETTER in the box marked Reference.

**LloydsBank: Sort Code 30 98 75.**

**Account Name: PCC of Steeple Ashton.**

**Account Number: 00320207**

Should you wish to contribute to the Church by direct debit or donation you can use these details and indicate where your money should go. **Ed**

### **Useful Information**

#### **Postal Collections:**

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

**Newleaze** - Weekdays - 9am; Saturday - 7am

**Great Hinton** - Weekdays - 9am; Saturday - 7am

**Mobile Library Visits - Wednesdays;** Longs Arms - 11.00 - 12noon;

Ashton Common Bus Stop - 3.35pm - 4.00pm

February 7th; February 21st; 6th March



Our **'Spring 2024'** meeting will be held on  
**Thursday March 7<sup>th</sup>**  
from **7:30pm** in **the Village Hall.**  
our speaker - **Dave Moon**

David Moon has been giving illustrated talks to gardening groups in Wiltshire and Somerset for many years and comes highly recommended. He asks for a donation as his fee, and gives it to a Cancer Charity organisation. SAGE are delighted that he will be presenting a talk entitled: .....

## ***'Gardens of the Rich and Famous'***

Of course, it will include the usual social, refreshments & raffle.



**Entry £2** (no club to join)

### **SAGE outings for 2024:**

**Thursday 9th May**, a visit to Heale Gardens, Middle Woodford where a tour of the gardens has been arranged.

**Wednesday 19th June**, a visit to Derry Watkins 'Special Plants Garden' at Cold Ashton. A tour of the gardens and refreshments are included.

**Both visits are self-drive, more detailed information will be provided at the March meeting.**

### **Barney's garden jobs for the weekends:**

\* Prune winter-flowering shrubs that have finished flowering. \* Divide bulbs such as snowdrops and plant those that need planting in the green \* Cut back deciduous grasses left uncut over winter and remove dead grass from evergreen grasses \* Prune Wisteria.

Contact us at: [sagecontact851@gmail.com](mailto:sagecontact851@gmail.com)

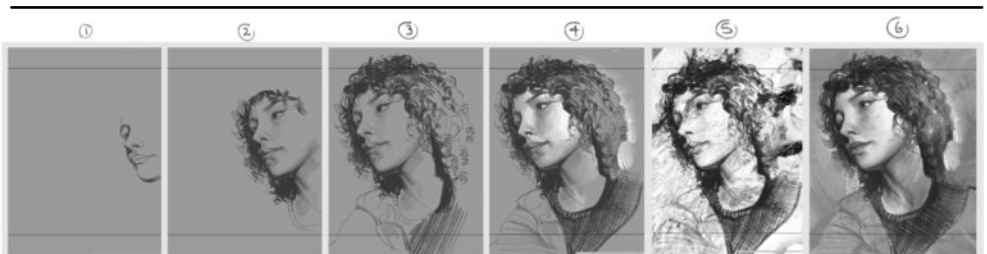
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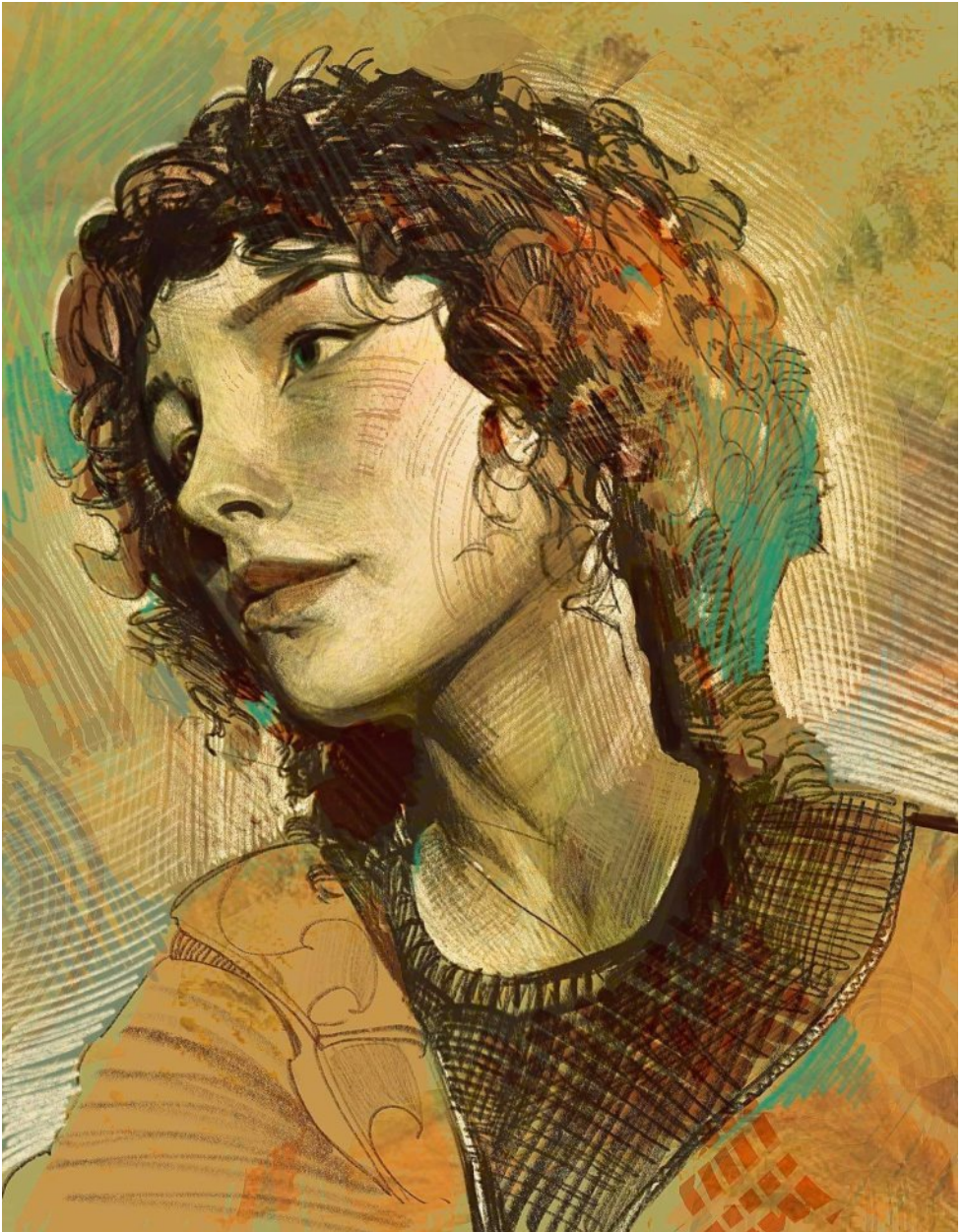
Edington Arts is celebrating the start of their tenth season on Saturday 23rd March with a full length (two hour) performance of Bach's St John Passion by the Oxford Bach Soloists and orchestra under their conductor Tom Hammond-Davies. The great international tenor Mark Padmore will be singing the role of The Evangelist. The performance is being generously sponsored by Edington Station Yard Ltd, and by The Three Daggers.



Bach's account of the Passion from the Gospel according to St John is 'punchier' than that of the St Matthew, and the superb communication skills of both soloists and chorus will be used to most moving effect. The Oxford Bach Soloists have been performing the St John Passion on Good Friday in Oxford for many years, where it has become an iconic, essential ingredient of the preparations for Easter. This will be the first time they have performed the St John Passion during Lent outside Oxford, and we are delighted they have chosen Edington as their venue. Their recent London debut, with Bach's Christmas Oratorio, received a five-star review in The Guardian, whose reviewer said "This virile, collegiate approach to Bach is the most exciting I've heard in a very long time".

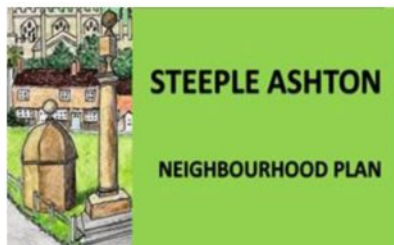
Booking is now open, and tickets have been selling fast. There is still a great choice of seats however, and you can book online through [www.edingtonarts.org](http://www.edingtonarts.org) or by phone from 01380 831256. The performance starts at the earlier time of 7pm.





Georgia drew this selfie using a stylus on her ipad. Her development drawings are on the previous page which are also really interesting and very clever. She is doing a degree in Concept Art for Film and Games.

## STEEPLE ASHTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: update Feb 24



Thank you to all who attended the Public Consultation exhibition in the Village Hall on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January. This was to view the sites that had been put forward for development. A good number of people dropped in during the day to see the display and ask questions.

For anyone who didn't get a chance to come to the Saturday event, or wants to have a second look, we have moved the display into St Mary's Church (North Aisle) for people to view until Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February. Please drop in.

This is an important stage in the Plan, and it is your opportunity to have your say, and comment on the sites that have been put forward. So please take some time to see the exhibition and more importantly, to complete the comments forms.

For anyone who prefers to complete a paper copy of the comment form, they can be found with the boxes for completed forms at;

- **Church Porch**
- **Village Shop Porch**
- **Inside the Church with the exhibition**

**Closing date for the consultation and for completed forms is Friday 10<sup>th</sup> February.**

<https://steeple-ashton.co.uk/document-category/neighbourhood-plan-documents/>



## **NATURAL HISTORY CLUB** News

Although it's already now February. A Happy New Year to you all!

With colder days and natural food sources becoming scarcer, look out for Winter Thrushes coming into your gardens especially if you have berry bearing bushes or fallen apples still on the ground. Birds to look out for are Fieldfare and Redwing. These are winter visitors from Northern Europe and Scandinavia. You may see an increase of Blackbirds too as these birds also from Northern Europe come to over winter here.

It's encouraging to see some fields left as stubble again as this helps the local resident birds survive the winter. On a recent walk I noted small flocks of Yellow hammers, Linnets, Gold finches, meadow Pipits and Skylarks all taking advantage of the spilt seed and wild flower heads in the fields. Red Kites are an almost daily sight now as their range is expanding West and South. Look out for them seemingly hanging in the air, gliding, hardly batting a wing using their distinct forked tail as a rudder as they seek out carrion on the ground.

Sometime before Christmas, but not since, I heard and caught a glimpse of a Rose Ringed Parakeet in the village. These exotic birds are resident in west London and the home counties and are surviving and breeding there successfully. Is this a sign they may be expanding their range? Or has someone had an escape from their collection locally? Flocks of twenty plus Golden Plover have been reported over East Town and also a Reed Bunting seen in a garden.

It's not too late to put up bird boxes in your garden as the hole nesting birds such as Blue Tit, great Tit and House Sparrow will be searching out potential sites to raise a brood of young. If you want advice on what boxes to put up and where to site them. Please contact us on the email/phone numbers below.

Our next meeting is on 14th March at the Methodist church hall at 7:30pm where we hope to have a short talk on 'The birds of West Africa'.

Don't forget please report anything of interest such as sightings of animal / bird / insect activity or lack of. Or indeed unusual or rare plants or anything you can't identify to David Culverhouse, 01380 871621 42anchor@gmail.com or Roger Ferguson 01380 870860 r.ferguson550@btinternet.com If we can't answer your question then we probably have a member who can.

**Roger Ferguson**

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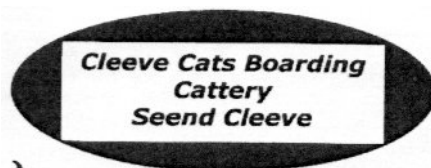
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### **Thomas Seymour, 1st Baron Seymour of Sudeley**

For over 1000 years, from the time of the Saxon Kings – when it was known as ‘Æscetune’ – until the break-up of Rood Ashton Estate in 1930, the Manor of Ashton was owned by either royal families, religious houses, or titled nobility – including, for a brief period, Sir Thomas Seymour, brother of Jane Seymour, third wife of Henry VIII. Of all those to have owned the estate, this Tudor high mover is perhaps the most fascinating.

Thomas Seymour was Lord of the Manor of Steeple Ashton for just 10 years, and, as far as we know, he never lived here. Described by his contemporaries as forceful and reckless, and attractive to women, another description says he was:

“... hardy, wise and liberal ... fierce in courage, courtly in fashion, in personage stately, in voice magnificent, but somewhat empty of matter.”

Before we look more closely at the life of Thomas, here is a brief history of the Manor of Steeple Ashton up to 1539 – when it was gifted to him.

The area in which Steeple Ashton lies probably first became settled in a substantial form during Saxon times, around the seventh century. Known in the Anglo-Saxon as Æscetune, the prefix “Steeple” did not appear until the 13th century.

## **The House of Wessex**

It is believed that when King Alfred died in 899, the estate of Æscstune was bequeathed to his daughter Ælfthryth. In 964, during the reign of Alfred's great-grandson King Edgar (944-975), the boundaries were set out. As monarch, Edgar had inherited the whole estate, the area of which was extensive. It included the present-day civil parishes of Steeple Ashton, Semington, Great Hinton, West Ashton, North Bradley, and Southwick.

## **The Benedictine Abbey of Romsey in Hampshire**

On the death of King Edgar in 975, the estate of Ashton (together with the manor of Edington) was left to the Benedictine Abbey of Romsey in Hampshire. Eventually, the total number of similar estates, manors or "lordships" owned by the Abbey – lying in Wiltshire, Dorset, Gloucestershire and elsewhere – numbered seven, with the combined annual rents of Ashton and Edington being the second largest.

Consequently, to manage these two large estates, or manors, the Abbess arranged for the abbey's local representative – the bailiff – to live here in Steeple Ashton. It was here that rents were paid and manorial courts held.

Romsey Abbey continued to own and manage the estates of Ashton and Edington until the religious upheaval wrought by King Henry VIII in 1534-35. This culminated in the Act of Suppression – which began the closure of all monasteries in June 1536.

In the final days of Romsey Abbey, just before its closure, the combined annual rents paid by Ashton and Edington constituted around 35% of all the rents the abbey received from the total number of its manors, lordships, and estates.

While Henry VIII's main purpose of closing the monasteries (following his break with Rome) was to reap their wealth for the Crown and suppress political opposition, it was not unknown for favoured high profile individuals to also receive some of the spoils.

Never one to miss an opportunity (for reasons we shall see shortly), Thomas Seymour was well placed to share in the distribution of the wealth and property of the religious houses.

In January 1539 the Crown issued a licence "... to the Abbess and

Convent to alienate the lordship or manors of Edington and Steeple Ashton, etc., to Sir Thomas Seymour.”

So ended 564 years of ownership of the Manor of Ashton by the nuns of the Benedictine Abbey of Romsey.

Seymour family background, and their rise in Tudor high society, prior to Thomas being granted the ownership of Steeple Ashton

Thomas was the fourth of 10 children (six boys and four girls). Four of these children died in infancy or before marriage, leaving three boys and three girls. Thomas was born around 1508 at Wulfhall, the family home near Burbage in Wiltshire where the Seymour family enjoyed a position as local gentry. Able to trace their ancestry back to the Norman invasion, the family head, Sir John Seymour, was described as “Lord of the Manor.”

Henry VIII visited Wulfhall as early as 1518 and again in 1520, 1523 and 1526 when he may have first met his future third wife – Thomas’s teenage sister – Jane Seymour.

What is certain is that by 1532 Jane Seymore was Maid-of-Honour to Henry’s first wife Queen Catherine (of Aragon), and later to his second wife Queen Anne Boleyn.

Following a substantial remodelling of the mansion in preparation for another royal visit in 1535, John Seymour again welcomed the King to Wulfhall with his second wife Queen Anne Boleyn – mother of future Queen Elizabeth I. (Over the passing centuries the exact site of Wulfhall mansion became lost. In 2018 its foundations were then discovered in the grounds of the later-built Wolf Hall Manor.)

It is said that the first report of Henry’s interest in Jane Seymour was in February 1536. Three months later, on May 19, Anne Boleyn was executed, and Henry married Jane just 11 days later.

Already influential, the Seymour family were now drawn even closer to the head of state. The most prominent of the surviving Seymour brothers were Edward and his younger brother Thomas. Of the two, Edward was favoured more by the king, which sowed seeds of jealousy and rivalry in Thomas.

On 12 October 1537 Jane gives birth to Henry VIII’s only son, future boy-King Edward VI.

Sadly, on 24 October Jane dies due to complications following childbirth.

By this time Thomas and his brother Edward – now uncles to the future king - were each independently reaching powerful positions via an intriguing interconnected web of political religious and royal contacts, military, and diplomatic success, plus – no doubt – considerable merit, tinged with some devious scheming.

In 1537, following the birth of his male heir (the future King Edward VI), Henry VIII made Thomas's older brother Edward Seymour the 1st Earl of Hertford, and Thomas a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber.

As a Gentleman of the Privy Council, Thomas began performing diplomatic duties in the French Court, and, also in Hungary and Austria. He remained in Vienna for two years.

While away on diplomatic duties Thomas was in communication with John Foster – Henry's official receiver at Romsey appointed in September 1536. In response to a written request by Thomas (via a third party) John Foster replied directly – in a letter dated 28 December 1538 – with inside knowledge of the wealth of Romsey Abbey, including the annual income from the estates, manors, and lordships in its ownership.

Foster also indicated that he felt “the Abbess and the rest of the nuns would be content to surrender up their house” and that due to his “kinswoman and others, your friends made for you, they will be content to do you any pleasure they may.” Foster also “perceived” that the Abbess and nuns were “loathe to trust the commissioners” and “this fare you heartly well at Romsey.”

It turns out that at this time, the receiver John Foster was in a secret relationship with Thomas's niece, Jane Wadham, who was a nun at Romsey Abbey! Obviously, therefore, the “kinswoman” referred to above. But more of that later.

John Foster's predictions regarding the complete surrender of Romsey Abbey to the Crown turned out to be incorrect. It appeared the Abbess, Elizabeth Ryprose, attempted to secure the rest of the abbey lands for the security of herself and her 25 nuns in exchange for releasing Steeple Ashton and Edington – one of her most wealthy combined estates.

This was unwise, as it ensured a precarious future for Elizabeth and most of her nuns. This resulted in all of them being “thrown to the wolves” – as they were released into a hostile community without pensions, which they would have been entitled to had the abbey surrendered willingly. Thomas's niece Jane Wadham was amongst them, but was far more

fortunate as she was saved from oblivion by her relationship with John Foster, and possibly her Seymour background.

After the break-up of Romsey Abbey, Thomas's niece, Jane, claimed that despite public and private protest she had been forced "by threats and machinations of malevolent persons, to become a nun" and that during her seclusion she had managed to sneak away long enough to meet Foster when they both took vows in an informal marriage, hoping to have it solemnised as soon as she was free from her "religion".

It is quite possible that Jane could have briefly broken away from the confines of the abbey, as Romsey had a history of poor discipline with nuns known to have "visited taverns in the town" during previous times.

Jane's marriage was solemnised, John Foster became a priest and following the break-up of the abbey they did very well, ending up with substantial land and property in the "scrabble for the Abbey's lands."

**To be continued next month:**

**In January 1539, Thomas Seymour's 10-year ownership of Steeple Ashton begins, and we follow the effect of chaotic national events – and his part in them.**

**Bryan Berrett**

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ST MARY'S  
STEEPLE ASHTON  
PRESERVATION TRUST

OPEN GARDENS 2024

**Sunday 2 June 11- 6pm**



Advance tickets available from the Village Shop and  
TicketSource online from 1st May.



The Plant Stall would be grateful for any seedlings,  
cuttings, garden or house plants that you can spare.



## **PCC Philip Wilkinson's February Parish Column**

Delivering a police service which meets the needs of its communities has never been more important – or challenging. I know residents want greater public engagement with officers, more public access to officers and an increased officer presence at community level.

Wiltshire Police is addressing this with the introduction of a new operating model with neighbourhood teams providing visible, neighbourhood-focused, policing and delivering a recent improvement programme to provide a better-quality service 999 and 101 callers.

My commitment has been to invest in mobile police stations so our rural communities receive the same level of service, improve Melksham Custody so it is fit-for-purpose and the future, invest in training facilities to provide an exemplary environment to equip our police officers to keep you safe and to challenge the force to consistently provide a quality service to residents – regardless of location.

All of this is underpinned by the importance of investment in police 'estate' to support the delivery of a policing service I know our residents want - and deserve.

My newly-launched Estates Strategy sets out this vision. I believe Wiltshire Police will be better equipped to provide the policing service our communities want if they have the infrastructure which supports them to respond more effectively and efficiently.

The strategy ensures we have well-placed police stations and hubs providing a base for our staff to work smarter, adapt to changing crime and, more importantly, ensuring that not only will communities be safer but they will start to feel safer too.

You can read the full strategy on my website.

## **Keevil Primary School**

### **Pupils stay active in the community**

Children from Keevil CofE Primary School continued to get active in the community over the winter months, spreading cheer and generating much needed support within the local area.

Keevil School's Summer class once again put on a fantastic carol concert at Goodson Lodge care home in Trowbridge. The pupils performed a number of seasonal songs for the residents who were absolutely delighted. The class had a wonderful time singing and engaging with the highly appreciative audience. The pupils presented each resident with a personalised card and individually crafted decoration.

Head teacher Lindsey Hermon said "It's wonderful to see the joy that the children's singing brought to the residents. The children really love interacting with them on a personal level. You can see how truly engaged they are with each other."

However, it wasn't just musical cheer that the Keevil Primary School pupils were spreading. They also collected a huge amount of staple provisions and Christmas treats, which they donated to The Storehouse Food Bank in Trowbridge.

Furthermore, the children collected a large number of Christmas gifts that were donated to the local charity RUKSAK45218, which helped families in Wiltshire who can not afford to buy Christmas presents for their children.

Mrs Hermon added "We would like to express our thanks and gratitude to everyone who kindly donated to the two initiatives, particularly during these challenging times."

Looking forward to the coming term, pupils are eagerly anticipating a series of rugby sessions provided by Bath RFC through their rugby foundation programme.

Finally, before the much welcomed Spring growth begins in our hedgerows, look out for Keevil pupils who will be embarking on some litter picking duties across the local community in their spare time.

