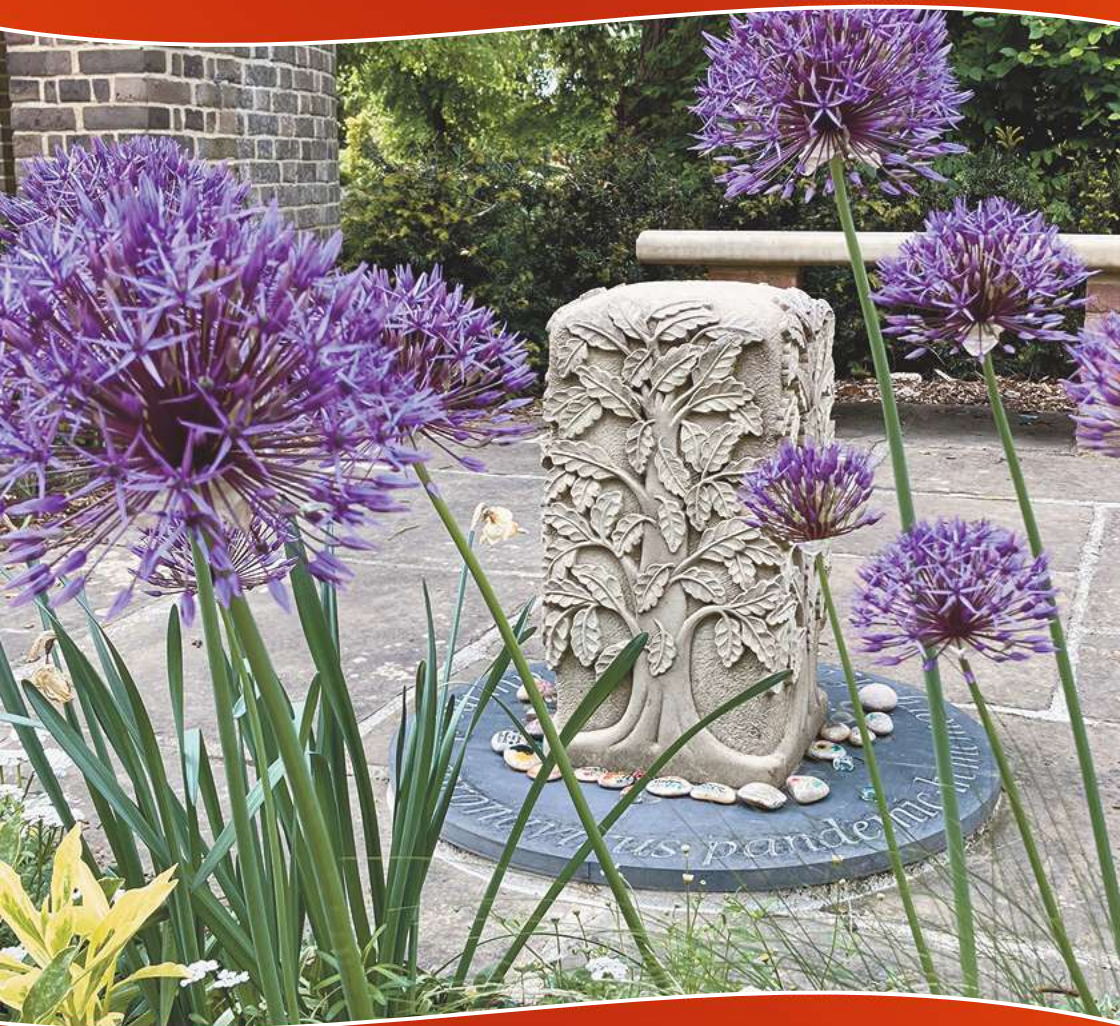


# Stoke Poges *News*



Issue 236 | Spring 2026



# STOKE POGES COMMUNITY HUB

Incorporating a Carers' Café

## YOU ARE INVITED TO A NEW AND EXCITING HEALTH & WELLBEING COMMUNITY GROUP

Thursday 19th March

Thursday 16th April

Thursday 21st May

Thursday 18th June

in The Club Room at  
Stoke Poges Village Centre  
on Rogers Lane

10.30am – 12 noon

Join us for a friendly cup of tea and  
listen to a variety of guest speakers  
covering many subjects such as:

- Information and advice on health and wellbeing
- Men's health
- Carers' support
- Safety and scam awareness
- NHS digitalisation and online access

In partnership with



Stoke Poges Parish Council

**CarersBucks**

**NHS**  
Buckinghamshire Healthcare  
NHS Trust

**NHS**  
Threeways Surgery

# Spring has sprung

Some of the most celebrated poetry evokes spring as a vibrant season of renewal and rebirth, capturing the profound impact of this season on our human spirit and wellbeing.

The coming of spring generally boosts our mood, energy and optimism due to the effects of increased sunlight. Warmer weather encourages outdoor activity, fostering better physical and mental health, reduced stress and improved social interaction.

There are many brilliant things to enjoy and be a part of in this village. What could you get involved in, either for your own wellbeing or for the good of our community? Maybe the new poetry group is something to try?

## **Rich Huckle**

*Editor*

Summer issue No 237 – all material to the editor by no later than Friday 1st May.

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editor or Stoke Poges Parish Council.

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Editor: [spn@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:spn@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk)



### **On the cover**

*Covid Memorial Garden  
(see page 36)*

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# Information and news updates from Stoke Poges Parish Council

## Parish Chair's letter

And here we are... it's 2026 already and we are welcoming spring, looking forward to lighter nights, daffodils and hopefully less rain!

At the end of last year, our 'Carols on the Green' event was a huge success. Many villagers turned out to soak up the Christmas atmosphere and enjoy mulled wine, food and our fabulous market stalls.

All profits from the grotto, mulled wine and stall pitch fees went to our chosen charity, BucksVision (South East Division). The group meets in Stoke Poges and is run by residents Pam and John Warren, who work tirelessly to assist those who are either blind or partially sighted. You can read more about their activities on page 46.

Recognition and special thanks to SuperSpeed who donated the grotto gifts and to The Rose & Crown who donated the mulled wine. Their generosity is greatly appreciated.

As a result of everyone's generosity, the Parish Council was able to donate £1,113 towards BucksVision's running costs.

A big 'thank you' to every volunteer that helped us to deliver this yearly event. Without your help and support it would be impossible to organise events like this, and we are very fortunate to have such willing villagers. If you would like to know more about getting involved, please contact the Parish Council office.

In the last issue of *Stoke Poges News*, we reported that the government has set targets for housebuilding in Buckinghamshire that are bound to affect us.

The Parish Council is working hard to understand the impact this might have for us here in Stoke Poges. We endeavour to keep up and understand new government legislation and how that may affect our precious green belt. Most of our time seems to be taken up with planning and planning enforcement matters, and at times it seems quite overwhelming. See pages 9 to 12 for more information and updates on these topics.

The Parish Council continues to support Stoke Poges Friday Club and the newly-launched Stoke Poges Community Health and Wellbeing Hub.

We hope you enjoy the spring and all that Stoke Poges has to offer, and thank you for your continued support.

 *Cllr Saera Carter BEM*  
Chair, Stoke Poges Parish Council

## What is a parish council?

With new residents moving into the village all the time, we thought it might be useful to explain the background to the Parish Council for those not aware of our role and activities.

A parish council is a corporate body, the lowest tier of local government and a legal entity for delivering local services.

Parish councils have been granted powers by Parliament to receive money via the precept (a portion of your council tax that is collected by Buckinghamshire Council and distributed to parish and town councils).

Our activities fall into three main categories: representing the local community, delivering services to meet local needs, and improving quality of life and community wellbeing.

Parish councils have small budgets and don't have the means to run public services such as highways, social care or education – in our case, these are the remit of Buckinghamshire Council. We will from time to time apply for grant funding for specific projects.

Parish councils also have a duty to ensure that all the rules for the administration of the council are followed. They must:

- appoint a chairman of the council;
- appoint officers as appropriate for carrying out its functions;
- appoint a responsible financial officer (RFO) to manage the council's financial affairs;
- appoint an independent and competent internal auditor;
- hold a minimum number of four meetings per year, one of which must be the Annual Meeting of the Council.

These rules are set out in law to guide the council and together these rules make up the

standing orders as formally agreed by the council.

## What does Stoke Poges Parish Council do?

We are allowed to have up to 11 elected members, although we currently have just 7 – meaning we are doing our best with fewer councillors.

We are not politically affiliated to a party. We are all volunteers that give our time to the things listed below. We endeavour to listen and are tasked with making lawful decisions on how to spend the precept for the good of the village.

To ensure we exercise lawfully we employ a Parish Clerk, Julie Simmonds, who is also the Legal & Financial Officer. Julie is a paid employee, she has worked for our council for 19 years and comes with 25 years of experience. We are very fortunate to have Julie – she is very committed to our village, is reliable and carries out her duties conscientiously.

Here's a list of some of the things our Parish Council does.

- We are responsible for managing our two recreational areas, ensuring there is adequate equipment and that they are maintained and looked after. The Parish Council has trustees for both recreation grounds.
- We provide allotments that are managed.
- We have a community pavilion which ensures that our uniformed groups, football team and other community projects have a space to use.
- We look after our village green and look at ways to enhance the area including the flowers on the railings and hanging baskets, plus the war memorial.
- We have installed benches at various locations.

- We decide on events and services which contribute to community cohesion, for example ‘Carols on the Green’, jubilee events, secular remembrance commemorations and similar.
- We are involved in facilitating Stoke Poges Friday Club and most recently the Stoke Poges Health & Wellbeing Hub.
- We exercise our responsibility and have a consultative role on behalf of local people on planning applications.
- We have provided Mobile Vehicle Activated Signs which we regularly move around the village to encourage speeding traffic to slow down.
- We have provided equipment for our Community Speedwatch team so they can monitor speeding traffic and share this information with Thames Valley Police.
- We provide and maintain bus shelters.
- We originally set up The Good Neighbour Scheme.
- We installed the walking paths in Bells Hill and Plough Lane Recreation Grounds.
- We put together a neighbourhood plan, adopted in May 2025, to help steer what future development might look like to ensure a balanced demographic moving forward.
- We are required to have two representatives from the Parish Council on the board of trustees for Stoke Poges Village Centre.
- Three councillors are trustees of the two ‘village charities’.
- We are invited by Buckinghamshire Council to attend various meetings or community boards that may be of interest to the Parish Council, including planning forums.

- We look at budgets to ensure good spending and set budgets to anticipate future spends.

We of course do a lot more than described above. Each councillor can decide how much they individually wish to do and to what extent they contribute any activities, including being involved in any working parties that may be collaborating on projects.

Hopefully this gives you some insight into what we do and how we do it!

### **Parish Council policies**

Parish councils have an obligation to review their internal policies primarily to ensure legal compliance, manage risk and uphold the highest standards of financial management and public accountability. These reviews are often a statutory requirement, ensuring the council remains efficient and effective in managing public money and delivering services.

Key reasons for reviewing internal policies include:

- Legal and regulatory compliance – ensuring policies align with current legislation, such as the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and data protection regulations.
- Risk management – proactively identifying, evaluating, and mitigating financial and operational risks.
- Financial control and auditing – supporting the annual audit process (both internal and external) by providing evidence of sound financial management, such as the review of Financial Regulations and the Asset Register.
- Annual governance assertion – reviewing policies (like Standing Orders and Financial Regulations) enables the council to confirm, as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), that it has

maintained an adequate system of internal control.

- Best practice and transparency – keeping policies up-to-date with current best practices to ensure transparency, accountability and the proper safeguarding of public funds.
- Operational efficiency – ensuring that internal procedures, such as payment authorisation, payroll and procurement remain efficient and appropriate for the council's operations.

These reviews are generally carried out at least annually, often to correspond with the beginning of a new financial year or the annual meeting of the council.

### **Annual Parish Meeting of the Electorate**

An Annual Parish Meeting is a legal, yearly gathering for all local government electors in a parish, not just council members, aimed at reviewing the past year's work. It acts as a community forum for residents to discuss, ask questions and raise ideas regarding local issues with their council. This annual meeting is an opportunity for the council to report on its activities and for residents to engage.

This year's meeting will be held at 7pm on Monday 13th April at The Village Centre on Rogers Lane.

### **How we communicate**

In addition to *Stoke Poges News*, we have four noticeboards in the village. They are located:

- outside the Parish Council Office in the lobby inside the Village Centre;
- outside the Village Centre on Rogers Lane;
- on Bells Hill Green;
- at Tubwell Stores on Tubwell Road.

We have a Facebook page, which we use as a way to share information, rather than as a discussion forum. You can follow us at

[www.facebook.com/stokepogespcc](http://www.facebook.com/stokepogespcc)

If you wish to contact the Parish Council, please do so by email or phone – our contact details are on page 50.

We have also introduced a weekly email bulletin service.

### **Stoke Poges Newsflash**

Last August, the Parish Council launched a new service called *Stoke Poges Newsflash*. This is a free, weekly email newsletter, bringing you bitesize pieces of local news and information from the Parish Council and village organisations directly to your inbox.

Subscribers get timely updates and reminders of things that fall outside the quarterly publishing schedule of *Stoke Poges News*, which continues to feature larger articles about all the great things that happen in the village.

To sign-up, please visit

[www.stokepogeparishcouncil.gov.uk/newsflash](http://www.stokepogeparishcouncil.gov.uk/newsflash)

or scan the QR code which can be found on page 50. When you subscribe, we ask for the name of your road and also your postcode in case we need to send specific information to people living in a certain part of the village. We will not pass your information on to third parties.

Once you have submitted the form you will receive an email which will ask you to click a button to confirm your subscription. If the email hasn't appeared in your inbox within a few minutes, please check your spam folder.

The information we share will be dependent on local organisations supplying us with what

they would like to communicate. If you are a club, society, charity or not-for-profit organisation and would like something to be included in one of our emails, please contact [newsflash@stokepogeparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:newsflash@stokepogeparishcouncil.gov.uk)

## Surface rainwater

We've had a very wet winter, and climate change is bringing an increased frequency of intense rain events. As a result, many places in the UK are suffering from flooding. We have all seen flooding on our roads, Stoke Common and Bells Hill Recreation Ground.

Topography can affect where water can travel and it naturally collects in lower-lying areas. Bells Hill Rec. is situated at the bottom of a hill where water naturally drains, and so it has historically been subject to flooding.

There is a series of drains and soakaways, some of which were installed in recent years, but the sheer volume of water with the recent constant rain means it can take time for surface water to drain away. Heavy rainfall overwhelms the ground's ability to absorb water and sometimes exceeds the capacity of the drainage systems.

## Threeways Surgery

The triage system at Threeways Surgery is now fully operational by GPs. If possible, please visit the surgery's website at <https://www.threewayssurgery.co.uk> to fill in an online triage request.

This helps the surgery to reserve telephone calls for patients who are genuinely unable to complete the form online.

Unfortunately, the surgery does not have the capacity to offer appointments to all the patient requests. You may be added to a waiting list for a GP if appropriate. Please restrict your request to one health item per completed form. This makes management more direct.

Please use the surgery's services wisely. Consider self care or seeking advice from the pharmacy and using over the counter medications. The surgery is often inundated with triage requests and you will be directed to 111 or urgent care if capacity has been exhausted.

## Stoke Poges Community Hub

The first meeting of this new group took place in January. We welcomed Pam Warren from BucksVision to highlight what this organisation might be able to do to support residents with any type of sight impairment.

Future meetings will take place on the third Thursday of the month in The Club Room at The Village Centre from 10.30am to 12 noon. We will host workshops and share information around health and wellbeing, including topics such as as:

- Digital cafés;
- Information on support for carers;
- Fuel and insulation;
- Scam awareness;
- Neighbourhood policing;
- Home security and fire alarms;
- How to use the NHS app;
- Men's health;
- Wills and powers of attorney.

This initiative is supported by NHS Buckinghamshire, Carers Bucks, the Parish Council and Threeways Surgery.

We hope this community group will support residents and help provide useful information – we will have refreshments, so please pop in for a cuppa and a biscuit.

## Allotments

In Stoke Poges we are very fortunate to have allotments, as some of our neighbouring parishes do not! If you are interested in taking on a plot or half plot, please contact the Parish Clerk – contact details on page 50.

## Development in Stoke Poges

The government's target of 95,000 homes to be delivered in Buckinghamshire provides opportunities for land owners to put forward proposals for development, which we are beginning to see.

When a planning application is submitted, the Parish Council uses the opportunity to respond, always bearing in mind that we are committed to protecting our green belt and ensuring that development is suitable for its location. However, the final decision will be made by the planning authority at Buckinghamshire Council.

The Parish Council would like to reassure you that we will do our best.

For future updates, please subscribe to the *Stoke Poges Newsflash* email newsletter (see page 7).

### Speculative planning applications

We have started to be notified of speculative planning applications. We have seen two for Magnolia Farm on Grays Park Road and one for 18 houses on Templewood Lane. Both are on green belt land, but the applicants are stating that it is grey belt.

Under new government guidelines, which we are still trying to understand, it is not clear what is considered green or grey belt, but there are five golden rules that have to be met.

- Brownfield first – prioritise development on brownfield sites before releasing other land.
- Grey belt second – focus development on grey belt areas: previously developed, ugly, or low-quality land within the green belt that does not serve its core purposes.

- 50% affordable housing – a requirement for a high proportion of affordable housing on released land.
- Infrastructure first – ensure necessary improvements to local, social and physical infrastructure are delivered.
- Protect genuine green space – improve existing green spaces and create new ones that are accessible to the public.

### Working with our neighbours

With all towns and parishes in the country experiencing the same issues around planning and development, we have reached out to our neighbouring parishes to see how we might support one another. As a result we have reached an agreement with The Farnhams, Fulmer and Wexham to work together.

We have commissioned a 'spatial housing assessment'. This is a strategic, evidence-based process used to identify, analyse and map potential land for housing development, including what is green belt and what might be considered grey belt. We jointly feel that this will help us prepare for speculative planning opportunities and how we might respond to them, ensuring that the right mix of housing might be delivered in appropriate locations.

The report will enable us to map and assess potential sites, like brownfield sites. It will look at potential development and how it might align with infrastructure, economic and environmental objectives, or in fact show the lack of any of the above which will demonstrate reasons to resist development.

We feel that working together is a positive, strategic move as development in our neighbouring parishes will certainly have a knock-on effect on infrastructure such as

school places, doctors' surgeries, traffic, parking and more. We will keep you updated.

### **South Bucks Association of Local Councils**

This is a group of local parish and town councils in South Buckinghamshire that meets four times a year to look at local issues that we are all facing and explore how we might overcome them or better understand them.

It's an opportunity to share information and work together to understand how government-driven policies are affecting us all. Stoke Poges Parish Council is part of this group and we are already gaining understanding of local issues which in turn helps us to be better forearmed. This is another alliance which we believe helps us to support our residents.

### **Conservation areas**

We have four designated conservation areas in Stoke Poges. These are recognised for their special historic and architectural interest, and designation gives extra planning protections to preserve their unique character.

- West End Conservation Area
- Stoke Park Conservation Area
- Framewood Road Conservation Area
- Stoke Green Conservation Area

In light of the development we are seeing, along with the constant threat of future development, the Parish Council discussed whether these areas should be reconsidered, ensuring they are adequately protected. We asked Buckinghamshire Council to consider this, and we have reached agreement to take a look at the Stoke Green Conservation Area. At the time of writing, the Parish Council is due to meet conservation officers in February to

explore and consider if more work needs to be done to review this area.

### **Sefton Business Park**

As previously reported, Sefton Business Park has been sold. The Parish Council has been in ongoing discussions with the agent acting on behalf of the new owners to gain an understanding of their plans for the site.

Under new government guidelines, Sefton Business Park is now considered to be grey belt land, and is therefore now exempt from some of the protections offered by green belt policy.

The agent has submitted three outline planning applications to Buckinghamshire Council. At the time of writing, we are waiting for them to appear on the Planning Portal, but by the time you are reading this it is likely that you will be able to view all the details. We will update you via *Newsflash* and social media.

We are working hard to understand all of the various effects this will have on our village, including any environmental impacts. We will look at what mitigations might be of consideration. The Parish Council will of course work hard to ensure our voices are heard, but the final decision will be made by either Buckinghamshire Council, the planning inspectorate or even the Secretary of State. We will endeavour to keep residents updated as we know more.

### **The South Buckinghamshire Golf Club**

In the last issue, we reported the potential development of the South Buckinghamshire Golf Club.

Since then, the Parish Council has sought to meet with representatives of Wycombe Wanderers to better understand their

intentions. We have a meeting scheduled and we will report back when we know more.

### **Buckinghamshire Council's Local Plan**

As we reported recently, Buckinghamshire Council held a consultation on its Draft Local Plan.

A local plan is a statutory document prepared by a local planning authority that sets out a long-term vision and framework for the future development of an area, covering where new homes, jobs and infrastructure will be built and how the environment will be protected.

It provides policies and proposals to guide planning decisions, ensuring that development meets local needs and complies with national policy.

Key aspects of a local plan are:

- Vision and framework – it provides a vision for the future of the area, acting as a guide for how development should occur.
- Policies and proposals – it contains specific policies for development, including guidelines for housing, infrastructure like roads and schools, employment, and environmental protection.
- Community involvement – the process of creating a local plan involves consultation with the local community and stakeholders.
- Statutory document – once adopted, it becomes part of the statutory development plan for the area and is a fundamental consideration for all planning applications.
- Plan-led system – the planning system is

plan-led, meaning that decisions on planning applications are based on the local plan, unless material considerations suggest otherwise.

- National consistency – local plans must be “positively prepared, justified, effective, and consistent with national policy”.
- Long-term planning – it addresses long-term needs, setting out how the local authority will manage growth and address social, economic, and environmental priorities.

The plan will determine where development can happen, such as new housing or businesses, and protecting land from building, such as green spaces. It sets rules for planning applications, guiding decisions on what gets built.

Local plans also influence infrastructure like roads, schools and healthcare, and they protect the natural and historic environment.

Buckinghamshire Council has described this document as a draft plan, but there is no specific detail contained in it allowing each town or parish to see how development might come forward that may specifically affect them, therefore we can only guess how this might affect Stoke Poges. We are awaiting further information from Buckinghamshire Council on what land they deem appropriate for development.

The Parish Council made sure that we responded with strong and robust representation to the initial consultation. There is a second round of consultation in February, but we are told we will have only a two-week window to respond – this is not nearly enough time.

Because Buckinghamshire Council has decided it will head straight to the final

pre-submission stage, we have had limited opportunity to make our position known. Buckinghamshire Council will have made decisions in terms of proposing the final spatial strategy and site allocations which will then be subject to examination. Most planning authorities consult on a full draft plan with those allocation proposals in it, but they are not obliged to. Here, Buckinghamshire Council had no choice, given it has to submit by December 2026 and left too little time to reach this point.

It is our opinion that this is a not great advert for genuine community engagement in local plan making as we will have little or no input.

What we do know is that the government has told Buckinghamshire Council that they need to deliver 95,000 homes over the next 18 years. Because the draft plan does not tell us what that means for us here in Stoke Poges, it was difficult to participate in the consultation. To address this, the Parish Council has been working alongside neighbouring parish councils, together with a planning consultant, so that we can share a collaborative approach.

Our response to the consultation can be found in the 'Announcements' section of the Parish Council website.

[www.stokepogeparishcouncil.gov.uk/announcements](http://www.stokepogeparishcouncil.gov.uk/announcements)

**Stoke Poges, Wexham & Fulmer  
Horticultural Society**

## **Celebrating a shared love of gardening**

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**After a cold and wet start to the year, we're looking forward to another great season celebrating our shared love of gardening.**

There is nothing better than coming together to learn, grow and watch our efforts bloom. And that's exactly what we'll be doing at our Spring Social event, where everyone is invited to take part in a fun mini-show competition to display the best that spring has to offer in our gardens. Details of the show categories can be found on our website.

Also that evening, we will be welcoming some of the volunteers from Horatio's Garden to tell us about their work. The charity is dedicated to creating beautiful, accessible gardens in all of the UK's spinal injuries centres, including the National Spinal Injuries Centre at Stoke Mandeville.

A spinal cord injury can happen to anyone and the effects are life changing. Patients often spend months in specialist centres, far from home, confined to wards with little access to nature. Horatio's Garden is changing that.

The gardens are named in memory of Horatio Chapple, a young volunteer who, while working at a spinal treatment centre, envisioned a garden where patients could enjoy nature as part of their recovery. After he died at age 17, his family and supporters turned that idea into a living legacy.

The event will take place on Wednesday 11th March, 8pm at The Stoke Poges School. It is free for members, and non-members are welcome to come along for a small donation.



### **Support our annual plant sale in May**

If you love great plants at great prices, don't miss our annual plant sale which will be held on Saturday 9th May from 10am to 1pm at Stoke Poges Village Hall – perfect for gardeners of all levels.

We will be selling a variety of houseplants, bedding plants, vegetable plants, perennials and shrubs, as well as delicious homemade cakes. It's also a great opportunity to catch up with friendly faces over tea and cake once you have filled your bags and boxes with all things green!

The plants are all grown by our members and proceeds from the sale go towards the cost of staging our Summer Show at the end of July.

### **Encouraging the younger generation**

Are you aged 16 to 30 and have recently taken part in a horticultural project?

Edward Guinness CVO was a loyal and generous supporter and an Honorary Life Member of the Stoke Poges, Wexham & Fulmer Horticultural Society. Edward was always very interested in all the society's

activities and kindly acted as one of our sponsors in our application for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, which we were granted in 2019.

In 2018, to encourage the younger generation, Edward donated a trophy specifically for 16 to 30-year-olds living within a 50-mile radius of Stoke Poges. The trophy is awarded each year at our Summer Show for an exhibit depicting a horticultural project that an individual or group has undertaken or been involved with. The winner receives a £100 gift voucher.

To enter, please send a detailed description of your project, together with photographs, diagrams and/or a video by Saturday 18th July to the President, Ruth Rooley, by email to [ruth@rooley.com](mailto:ruth@rooley.com) or for more information call Ruth on 07715 376 986.

- 
- *If you would like to join the society, be part of the committee or help as a volunteer or supporter, please get in touch. Member benefits include discounts at local plant nurseries, free show and competition entry, social evenings, talks and visits throughout the year. Further information can be found on the society's website at [www.hortsoc.org](http://www.hortsoc.org)*



Stoke Common

## Protecting the invisible

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**In 2007, the City of London took on ownership and management of Stoke Common – a site of special scientific interest (SSSI).**

At the time of ownership transfer, the common was being swamped by the growth of young birch and gorse, the heathland habitat was degrading, and the risk of another serious fire was high.

During the first ten years of City ownership, the restoration work was at times intense, with heavy machinery felling or mulching large areas of young scrubby birch and pine woodland and a combination of contractors, staff and volunteers tackling the areas that demanded a more sensitive touch. Within a short space of time the impact was clear, with heather and other heathland species starting to flourish and vistas being reopened that hadn't been seen for decades.

The work so far has brought clear benefits for heathland wildlife, but also for visitors with more open areas and easier access. This is

great news, but it also brings conflict between the needs of the wildlife and those of visitors.

One of the greatest successes of the restoration to date has been the increased numbers of heathland bird species like Dartford warbler, woodcock (pictured above), skylark, snipe and nightjar. These birds nest on or near to the ground, using low vegetation like heather to build their nests and as a camouflage to hide them.

Ground nesting birds are in decline across the country due mostly to habitat loss – in Buckinghamshire alone, 80% of lowland heath like Stoke Common has been lost to development, roads, agriculture and declining management (Stoke Common accounts for around 80% of the lowland heath left in Buckinghamshire). Add to that the pressure from an ever-increasing number of people and it's easy to understand why many have been added to the 'red list' of concern for bird species.

The nesting habit of these birds unfortunately

makes them vulnerable to disturbance. They can be easily disturbed by a dog running loose through the undergrowth or people walking away from the formal paths.

Disturbing a bird and causing it to fly from its nest could be the difference between the success or failure of a breeding season; eggs can be left exposed to predators or to cold wet weather. Repeated disturbances could force adult birds to abandon their nest and any eggs or young within. Additionally, as they are at higher risk from predation than say a nest in a tree, their eggs are well-disguised and even the most careful human feet could inadvertently crush eggs or chicks in a nest. As a skylark egg could be as tiny as 17mm (about the size of a 5p!) it is easy to understand how it can be hard to see them.

Just because you can't see the birds or their nests, it doesn't mean that they aren't there, so if you visit a nature reserve like Stoke Common between March and August there are some things that you can do to enable the birds to continue to thrive, whilst still enjoying your visit:

- Stay on the surfaced paths and keep your dog alongside, or if you can't do that, on a lead.
- If you come across a nest or young chicks, please leave them alone, DO NOT pick them up or move them; the parents could be close by and may abandon them if they pick up your scent.
- Heathland fires add to the risk so never light a fire or barbecue, never discard a lit cigarette and never toss glass bottles as these can also start fires.

The heathland restoration work at Stoke Common is an ongoing process. As a 'man-made' habitat, lowland heath always needs management to keep it open and biodiverse. It is hoped that, as the habitat continues to

improve, Stoke Common will continue to attract greater numbers of heathland bird species. By acting in the way described, visitors can play a vital part in ensuring these increasingly threatened species stand a good chance of survival.



## Become a conservation volunteer and make an impact

Stoke Common is the largest area of lowland heathland in Buckinghamshire! This habitat is globally rarer than rainforests and is vital to our natural heritage.

Join the Friends of Stoke Common in 2026 and take part in hands-on conservation tasks that protect this unique landscape. No experience necessary – all welcome!

We have monthly sessions, typically the first Saturday of the month from 10am to 3pm. You don't have to come along for the full session – just commit what time you can spare.

For more information or to get involved, please contact [friendsofstokecommon@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofstokecommon@gmail.com)

# Learning about the people who help us

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## **In January, we welcomed the children back to Sunshine Corner after the Christmas break.**

They have all settled well, including our new children. We began the spring term with the theme 'People Who Help Us'. We were looking into the work of doctors, nurses,

### **Sunshine Corner Parent, Baby and Toddler Group**

Sandra has been really pleased to welcome new families to the group. She has been able to introduce them to established members of the group who have also welcomed them.

Sandra has been busy planning and carrying out different activities with the group. In November they all made poppies for Remembrance Day and walked up to place them around the memorial in the village. They have planted daffodil bulbs, cress seeds, made iced biscuits for Valentine's Day and carried out lots of art activities. She is now preparing for her Easter Celebrations.

The group meets every Thursday morning during term time from 9.15am to 11.30am in the Main Hall at the Village Centre on Rogers Lane. There is no need to book – you can just drop in between these times.

dentists, police officers, firefighters, vets and teachers. We arranged a visit from a police officer and the fire brigade which was very exciting. The children were really involved in the different role play scenarios including a hospital, a police station and jail, a fire station and a vet's surgery.

Our next theme is 'Classic Children's Stories' where the children will be able to dress up and act out the stories they are reading.

During January, the staff and some of the committee formed a team for the fundraising quiz nights at the Fox and Pheasant. The nights were great fun and we were very grateful to everyone involved who raised funds for our pre-school. We hope to continue to participate in the quiz nights to help raise funds for other charities.

When the weather improves, we will be continuing to make changes to our garden. We will be replacing the playhouse with a bigger structure, enabling the children to play more imaginatively. We will also be replacing our storage shed, which has suffered in all the recent bad weather. We are looking forward to warmer and sunnier days in the garden!

If you are interested in a space at Sunshine Corner please get in touch. You can also drop in to see us at the Village Centre from 9am to 3pm during term time.

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■ *Sunshine Corner Pre-school is located at Stoke Poges Village Centre on Rogers Lane. For further information, please get in touch by email to [info@sunshinecornerpreschool.co.uk](mailto:info@sunshinecornerpreschool.co.uk) or call 01753 644 300.*



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Anne 01753 529646

Susan 01753 646582



### Stoke Poges Village Fete

## Save the date for this year's fete

**The much-loved Stoke Poges Village Fete will return on Saturday 13th of June, promising a fantastic day out for residents and visitors of all ages.**

This year's fete will feature a wide range of attractions, including stalls from local businesses and community clubs, a great food offering, a popular beer tent and a lively funfair. Visitors can also enjoy local group demonstrations in the main arena, a colourful fancy dress contest, a classic car show, and the ever-popular Stoke Pooches Dog Show.

The organising team is now inviting local businesses and clubs to book a stall, and community groups or performers who would like to demonstrate their talents in the main arena are encouraged to get in touch.

If you would like to be part of this wonderful community event – whether as a stallholder, performer, or by joining the organising committee – please contact the team by emailing [info@stokepogesvillagefete.co.uk](mailto:info@stokepogesvillagefete.co.uk)

■ For updates and further information, visit [www.stokepogesvillagefete.co.uk](http://www.stokepogesvillagefete.co.uk)

### The Stoke Poges School

## Learning through experiences

**This term, the children of The Stoke Poges School have been enjoying a wide range of fantastic activities designed to enrich and support their learning.**

Following the completion of their 'Voluntary' section in the autumn term, our Junior Challengers continued working towards their Bronze, Silver and Gold awards.

Inspired by the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, the Junior Challenge aims to bring children together over the course of a year to connect with and support their local community, develop new skills and take part in physical activities that promote healthy minds and bodies. The challenge will conclude at the end of the academic year with an exciting expedition.

In January, Year 2 were delighted to welcome 'Berkshire Birds of Prey' for an engaging owl workshop. The children were fascinated to meet the owls and learn about their behaviour, diet and natural habitats. They also had the opportunity to safely hold and interact with the birds, creating a truly memorable experience.

A definite highlight of the spring term was the joint Year 3 and 4 production of 'The Tudor Rose'. This historical musical, based on the life and times of Henry VIII and the Spanish Armada, showcased the children's incredible talents. They wowed audiences with their confident singing, dancing and acting as they brought these famous events



from history to life. As always, we were extremely proud of the children's hard work and self-belief as they delivered a production to remember.

We are looking forward to welcoming the New Mozart Orchestra back to school again in March. The NMO is Buckinghamshire's resident professional orchestra and is dedicated to performing in primary schools across the county, with the aim of being the 'Orchestra for Every Child'. Their visits provide an inspiring musical experience, enriching the children's understanding of live orchestral performance.

The children will be treated to a wonderful performance by the orchestra, during which they will learn about the four instrument families: string, woodwind, brass and percussion. They will also have the opportunity to try some of the instruments.

In May, we will be celebrating Sir David Attenborough's 100th birthday. The children will be learning about his remarkable life's work and the importance of understanding and protecting our natural world and the



creatures that inhabit it. As part of this celebration, we will be fundraising for WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature), with the aim of adopting an animal for each year group.

# Connecting our community to health and wellbeing

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## **This year's Village Halls Week campaign shines a spotlight on the important role village halls play in the health and wellbeing of their communities.**

Village halls are at the heart of rural life, playing a vital role in keeping people healthy, active and connected. By providing spaces for exercise, social clubs, health sessions and peer support, they help prevent isolation and promote wellbeing at every stage of life. Such community-led support not only enriches lives but also reduces pressure on the NHS and other statutory services, helping people to stay well for longer and closer to home.

At Stoke Poges Village Centre, you'll find a variety of organisations and activities to help with your physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing, whatever your age!

We have exercise opportunities beneficial for your health, including two badminton clubs, Tai Chi for Health, Yoga and Cardio and NHS sessions focusing on strength and balance. The newly-launched Community Hub (see page 8) promises to provide a wealth of information, signposting and support around many aspects of health and wellbeing.

Younger villagers might like to burn some energy with Little Kickers football, or get active whilst expressing their creativity with Ondine Academy of Dance or Zig Zag Acrobatic Academy. Genesis Martial Arts run classes at the hall for both children and adults, consisting of Kickboxing and Kung Fu training with elements of fitness and self-defence incorporated.

Exercising the brain is important too, and

there's always something to learn at our village hall. For example, the WI is famous for inspiring women, and our local branch runs a series of informative talks and fun activities throughout the year which also help members to build their social network.

Meanwhile, creative hobbies have been shown to reduce and even prevent stress. Consider joining our Photographic Club or maybe try some acting or backstage work with the Stoke Poges Players, who provide a friendly, social environment that helps people build confidence and connection whilst encouraging creativity, teamwork and self-expression.

Being part of a social group can be hugely important to mental and emotional wellbeing. The Village Social Club provides many opportunities to meet new people and offers a golf society, darts teams, weekly quiz nights and more.

In addition to the pre-school, the Sunshine Corner team runs a popular parent, baby and toddler group. Aside from the children having some wonderful play and craft activities, the group provides a supportive space for sharing experiences and building confidence in parenting, with peer advice for challenges like sleep or feeding.

So, from social activities that create friendships and combat loneliness to fitness classes that keep us moving, from Sunshine Corner Pre-school to the Community Hub, Stoke Poges Village Centre provides a home for things that make a real difference to people's lives every single day.

Behind the scenes, our village hall is overseen by a team of volunteer trustees and a small



# Rooms for hire at Stoke Poges Village Centre

We have a range of spaces ideal for events such as meetings, classes, celebrations, performances and children's parties.

Special party rates are available, with additional discounts for Stoke Poges residents and Social Club members.



Find out more at  
[www.stoke-poges-centre.org.uk](http://www.stoke-poges-centre.org.uk)

Registered charity number 300336

number of part-time staff. As well as giving back to society and doing something worthwhile, volunteering helps in developing new skills and providing a sense of community – all of which contribute to our overall wellbeing. If you would like to help in any way then we would love to hear from you! We are always pleased of an extra pair of hands to help at events or to support the day-to-day running of the Village Centre – let us know if you'd like to get involved.

- Visit [www.stoke-poges-centre.org.uk](http://www.stoke-poges-centre.org.uk) to find out about hiring a room at the Village Centre or get details of the many clubs and societies who meet at the hall.

*If you'd like to get involved as a volunteer or a weekend caretaker then you can contact the trustees by emailing [trustees@stoke-poges-centre.org.uk](mailto:trustees@stoke-poges-centre.org.uk)*

## Be part of the team

We're currently on the lookout for some ad-hoc weekend caretakers to join the team.

Typically, the role involves unlocking the hall for party hirers, giving them a short briefing, showing them where things are, dealing with any queries etc., before returning at the end of the hire to clean and lock up.

If you sometimes have spare time at the weekends and would like to earn a bit of extra money every now and again – plus you're helpful, reliable and good with a mop and bucket – please get in touch with the trustees if you're interested to find out more.

# We never know what we'll see...

## Members of Stoke Poges Photographic Club suggest and choose eight set subjects for the competitions in our upcoming seasons.

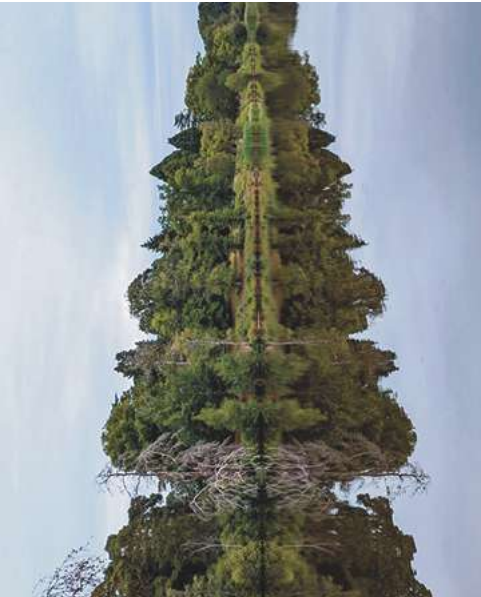
We have a varied selection and everybody's interpretation of a subject can differ quite a lot. We also have our open competition running alongside the set subjects, when members can put in an image of anything, so we never know what we will see on competition nights!

In this issue of *Stoke Poges News*, we are showcasing some images from three of our competition evenings. 'Patterns in Nature' gave us 'Riverside Totem' by Lesley Lane,

when she turned her image 90 degrees to make the totem. It takes you a while to realise some of what you see is a reflection in the water.

Vassoo Paupiah entered his 'Star of the Show', a wonderful star shaped flower, in the set subject 'Natural Beauty'.

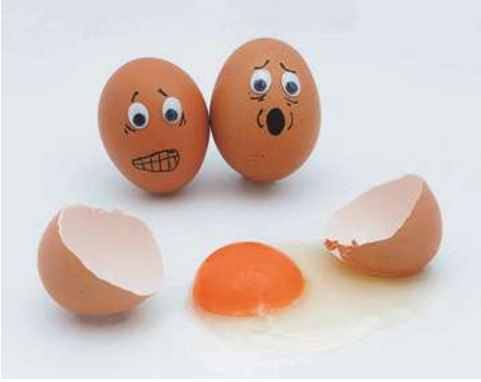
Whilst some members enter great images that they have taken, others use a different approach as we found out in 'Funny/Humorous/Comical' which can be a difficult one because we all have a different view on what is amusing. As usual, Keith Webb put his imagination to work and came up 'Broken Bad', two very worried eggs.



'Riverside Totem' by Lesley Lane



'Star of the Show' by Vassoo Paupiah



'Broken Bad' by Keith Webb

The three remaining set subject titles we have for this season are 'Minimalism', 'Bridges' and 'Action/Sport' and together with the open competition we are looking forward to seeing what members enter.

We also have our 'Three of a Kind' competition, when members enter a panel of three images of a subject but not three of the same thing e.g. three flowers but not the same one. We also run a 'Chinese Whisper' competition that really throws up some surprises when members receive an image and then send back an image with a connection to it.

At the time of going to print, we are all looking forward to one of our workshops in February, when two members will be setting up in the hall for two models who will be posing for us to give us all a chance of learning about portrait photography and flash. Perhaps there will be an image from that night entered into a competition...

- 
- Please visit [www.stokepogesphotoclub.co.uk](http://www.stokepogesphotoclub.co.uk) to find out more about the club and what we have planned for the remainder of the 2025-26 season. Alternatively, pop along on a Tuesday to the Village Hall at 8pm (apart from 3rd, 10th and 31st March when we are on Zoom) – you will be most welcome.

## Good Neighbour Scheme

# Volunteer drivers needed

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## Could you give two hours a month as a volunteer driver for the Good Neighbour Scheme?

Stoke Poges Good Neighbour Scheme was set up 15 years ago. Some of our drivers have been volunteering since then, but age, health and visual problems mean that numbers are reducing. We do, of course, have younger drivers who have joined us over the years, but we need a few more!

Lifts are given to people in the Parish of Stoke Poges to hospital, optician, dental and GP appointments. We also provide lifts for some clients to and from the monthly Friday Club.

If you volunteer, you only have to take 'jobs' when it suits you. These are mostly weekdays, between 9am and 5pm. Twice a year, we organise a lunch or afternoon tea with volunteers giving lifts and serving if they are available. Our clients appreciate our help very much.

Volunteering should not affect your car insurance and you will receive a mileage allowance to cover car expenses. We would organise a DBS check for you at our expense.

We would like to welcome you to our friendly team.

- 
- If you would like to find out more, please email [spgns@outlook.com](mailto:spgns@outlook.com) or phone 07591 350 159.



Middle Thames Archaeological and Historical Society

## D-Day, St Giles' Churchyard and Gandhi

**Our season of monthly talks on a variety of historical subjects continues as follows.**

### **'D-Day in Focus' with Nigel Smales**

Friday 13th March, 7.30pm

Eddy 'Smiler' Smales didn't make history but, as an accidental pioneer in British feature films in the 1930s, combat filming in the 1940s and television news from the 1950s, he filmed lots of it happening.

Eddy was one of the original recruits to the ground-breaking Army Film & Photographic Unit, a bunch of irregulars based at Pinewood Studios who filmed and photographed the unfolding Second World War in North Africa, Europe and the Far East. This presentation will share AFPU headlines then focus on its coverage of the D-Day landings on 6th June 1944.

### **'The Graveyard Where James Bond's Wife is Buried' with Richard Beckingsale**

Friday 10th April, 7.30pm

Richard Beckingsale is the Honorary Verger and Sacristan at St Giles' with special responsibility for the graveyard, which is the subject of this talk.

The photograph above shows the approximate location of the grave of James Bond's wife, seen in the opening sequence of the 1981 film *For Your Eyes Only*.

### **'Gandhi' with Bernard Foot**

Friday 8th May, 7.30pm

This talk tells the story of India's greatest hero, Mahatma Gandhi. It describes his life, and then examines his broad spectrum of beliefs before going on to give a critique of

what he did – both supporting him and criticising him.

- Join the society at 7.30pm on the second Friday of the month in the Hastings Room at St Andrew's Church Centre on Rogers Lane. Each event is only £2 for visitors and free for members. Tea, coffee and biscuits are served after each talk.

For latest info, visit [e-voice.org.uk/mtahs](http://e-voice.org.uk/mtahs) or email enquiries to [sec.mtahs@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sec.mtahs@yahoo.co.uk)

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# Stoke Poges Newsflash

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[www.stokepogeparishcouncil.gov.uk/newsflash](http://www.stokepogeparishcouncil.gov.uk/newsflash)

# The attraction of bell ringing

**Bell ringing is enjoying a quiet revival, and here in Stoke Poges it offers a wonderful opportunity to be part of a treasured village tradition.**

Far from being a relic of the past, it offers a distinctive blend of physical skill, mental challenge, teamwork and community that appeals to many people of all ages and backgrounds today.

One of bell ringing's strongest attractions is its unique combination of coordination and problem solving. New ringers quickly discover that ringing is not simply pulling a rope; it is a precise rhythmical skill that requires concentration, timing and an ability to follow complex patterns. For those who enjoy puzzles, music or learning new motor skills, ringing provides a satisfying, hands-on intellectual challenge.

Just as important is the sense of community. The bell tower at St Giles' is a warm, supportive space where experienced ringers happily guide novices, creating a friendly atmosphere that spans generations.

Newcomers quickly feel part of a team, contributing to the life of the parish in a meaningful way.

The moment when a learner begins to ring confidently, or successfully completes a method for the first time, is a fun and exhilarating achievement.

Ringling for services, weddings, Easter, Christmas and other village events gives ringers a unique role in parish life. Bell ringing also connects ringers to moments of national significance, as ringers across the country are called on for events such as royal celebrations, remembrance ceremonies and other important civic occasions.

Add to this the enjoyment of working with real bells, visiting other towers, attending courses and taking part in ringing outings, and it's clear why people enjoy bell ringing.

- *You are welcome to come to visit any Wednesday from 8-9pm to see if it would be something that would interest you. If you would like to find out more, do contact Judy Sever on 07956 598 006 or email [judith.mackay@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:judith.mackay@hotmail.co.uk)*



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891 London Road  
Tel: 01494 472572

Marlow  
21-23 Little Madow Road  
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# Then and now: Bells Hill shops

**Many of you will remember our old village shops with great fondness.**

The top photo shows Neville and Bells (the butcher) and Tom Caldecourt's store, with the old 'new Bells Hill shops' being constructed in the background. The new precinct, built in the early 1970s, housed a NatWest Bank, a hairdresser, a greengrocer, a butcher, a Chinese takeaway and even a video rental store.

These were then demolished circa 2005, along with the community library, and the much-loved clock and village beacon were put into storage by South Bucks Council, only for us to be told in later years that these items had been 'lost'.

What you can see in today's image is the Co-op roughly where the lower part of the development was built, with traditional buildings being knocked down to make way for the upper part of the development.

Looks like litter could have been an issue even back in those golden days!

Archive image courtesy of The Stoke Poges Society



 Cllr Keith Finan



### Stoke Poges Singers

## A glittering start to the new season

### Stoke Poges Singers invite you to join us for 'A Night at the Opera'.

On Saturday 28th March, St Andrew's will be transformed into our very own La Scala, for a gala of famous operatic choruses and arias – complete with bubbles and canapes, sequins and bow ties, divas and tenors, as we sing the works of Puccini, Verdi, Wagner, Bizet and Mozart, to name but a few. And you are warmly invited to this musical feast for an evening of jollity and splendour! Tickets are available to buy online for a modest £15.

We are delighted that the nominated charity for this event is Chalfont Dementia Support, which was founded by choir member Sally Blackden. This very worthwhile cause provides support and guidance for sufferers and carers, and hosts two Wednesday Club Cafés every month in our area.

We are able to donate concert ticket sales to charity thanks to our own fundraising, which pays for the cost of rehearsing and performing three significant concerts each

year. One such fundraising event is our annual 'Come and Sing' day. We open our doors to members of other choirs and anyone who would like to experience choral singing perhaps for the first time. We start with a workshop to rehearse a standard of the choral repertoire, before a final run-through in front of friends and family. The buffet tea provided has become as legendary as the music! This year will be Haydn's *The Creation* on Saturday 7th March at St Andrew's Church.

Finally, a belated thank you to our audience who braved a cold and wet late November evening to join us in St Giles'. The wonderful acoustic in this ancient church was perfect for the singers and organ, strings and oboe ensemble performing the programme of music by Vivaldi and Handel. It was a very successful and rewarding start to Mandy Hall's tenure as Music Director, and we raised over £800 for Stoke Poges Friday Club!

■ Tickets for all SPS events can be purchased at [www.ticketsource.co.uk/stokepogessingers](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/stokepogessingers)



## Stoke Poges Church

# Stoke Poges Church activities for Easter

***'Love God. Love People.'***

Find peace and purpose this Easter. Take time out to reflect on your story so far and find new ways to step forward.

All of our activities are open to everyone, regardless of their faith or church attendance and there is only a small suggested donation for a couple of events, otherwise no charge. Find out more from our website or contact us via the church office – details below.



### **Mothering Sunday**

Family Service at St Giles' Church,  
Sunday 15th March at 10.30am

Our traditional service with hymns, prayers and a talk, celebrates our 'mother' church and we thank God for people in our lives who have nurtured us, especially our mums. We'll be making baskets of posies at the church at 10am on the Saturday morning and extra pairs of hands are definitely needed. Please contact the church office if you could help.



### **Baby Steps Easter Egg Hunt**

St Andrew's Church  
Tuesday 17th March at 10am

Baby Steps is our group for 0-3s and their parents and carers. Come and take part in our mini (chocolate optional) egg hunt. We'll have our Bible story and songs too! There is a suggested contribution of £3.



### **Maundy Thursday**

Agape Meal with Holy Communion at St Andrew's, Thursday 2nd April at 7.30pm

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We will share a simple meal of fellowship to commemorate the night when Jesus ate his last supper, was betrayed and arrested. Our service includes prayers, time for reflection and Holy Communion. It is helpful to know if you are coming so we can cater for everyone. Please contact the church office.

### **Good Friday**

Flagpole Service and procession of the cross, Friday 3rd April at 10am, followed by service at St Andrew's at 10.30am

To mark the day when Jesus was crucified, we stand and say a few words and sing a hymn on the village green before carrying our large wooden cross down the road to the church. Please stay for fellowship after the service, with tea, coffee and hot cross buns.

### **Easter Sunday**

Sunday 5th April

To celebrate the most important day in the Christian calendar, choose between our 8am Service at St Giles', which will follow the traditional Book of Common Prayer, or our 10.30am Family Communion Service at St Giles' followed by an Easter Egg Hunt and refreshments in our ancient churchyard.

### **'Watch & Pray' on Facebook**

Join us at 12 noon every Wednesday for 15-20 minutes of reflection on the week's Bible passage and some simple prayers – a great way to join in with our Bible themes each week. You can catch up at any time.

[www.facebook.com/stokepogeschurch](http://www.facebook.com/stokepogeschurch)

### **Everyday Faith App**

The Everyday Faith app from the Church of England changes with the seasons. You can download it from the Appstore or Playstore and receive daily scripture and reflections to find peace and purpose all year round.

### **How to find us**

900-year-old St Giles' Church stands on Church Lane SL2 4NZ and is open daily (approx. 10am to 3pm) for a time of quiet reflection, prayer or remembrance.

St Andrew's Church is the home of Baby Steps, Friday Coffee Group, Knit and Natter, the Lighthouse Café and Friday Club. Find us on Rogers Lane SL2 4LN.

Directions to both churches, details of all our groups and our regular church services can be found on our website or on the noticeboards at each church building.

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■ [www.stokepogeschurch.org](http://www.stokepogeschurch.org)  
[office@stokepogeschurch.org](mailto:office@stokepogeschurch.org)  
01753 642 331

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### Stoke Poges Players

## More mysteries to come

**Last December, Rapunzel really let her hair down in a pantomime full of laughs, festive fun and Elvis impersonations.**

It was a real highlight, with no split ends in sight – ‘shear’ brilliance and a real cut above! Thank you so much to everyone who came along and made it such a joy.

But don’t get too comfortable. We’re brushing off the fairy tale, trimming the cheer and styling something far more deadly.

This year, we’ve got lots of fun lined up, starting in the first half of the year with not one, but TWO original murder mysteries.

First up, it’s *Theatre Fan Fatality* on Friday 6th March, where drama fans may want to watch their backs. Then on Friday 15th May, things get a little strange with *Star Port 4* – expect suspects, surprises, and something not quite of this world.

- Visit [stokepogesplayers.org](http://stokepogesplayers.org) to book your tickets for our murder mystery evenings, and be sure to follow us on Facebook for the latest updates and behind-the-scenes sneak peeks.

### Stoke Poges & Wexham Women’s Institute

## Spring treats for the WI

**There’s lots to look forward to in the WI’s spring programme of talks and events.**

We are very fortunate these days to be able to enjoy a huge variety of food from around the world and have cooking methods unknown to past generations. It will therefore be very interesting to listen to Dr Gill Ayres, our speaker on March 11th, for a talk entitled ‘Diet and Recipes Down the Ages’ – and compare the differences!

We all deserve a treat now and again, so instead of having our meeting on 8th April in the Village Hall, we’ll be supporting a local venue by going to Wexham Park Golf Club for lunch.

Tom Way, an award winning wildlife photographer, is a familiar face to our group. He visited us back in 2018, and demonstrated his camera skills by showing us some amazing photos he had taken of our native wildlife. He will join us again on 13th May – this time to show us ‘Exciting Wildlife from Around the World’.

- *The Stoke Poges & Wexham Women’s Institute meets at the Village Centre (unless otherwise stated) on the second Wednesday of each month at 2.15pm and new members are always welcome.*

*You can find out more about the WI’s activities at [www.stoke-poges-centre.org.uk/wi](http://www.stoke-poges-centre.org.uk/wi)*

# Personal insights on 'The Great Escape'

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## **Our Beer & Skittles Evening in January was a great way to start the year.**

It was a lively event, with 43 guys enjoying some excellent food, a wide selection of beers and lots of fun on the skittle alley! Each of the six teams were vying to be the winners and crowned the champions. We send our thanks to everyone who came and helped us make it a most enjoyable evening.

Our next Curry Night is at the Memories of India restaurant in Farnham Common on Tuesday 17th March, starting at 7.30pm. This is always a popular event as the restaurant provides such an excellent buffet with a great choice of dishes.

Our speaker is Tom Price, who enjoys engaging guys with the serious questions and objections they may have about the Christian faith. He studied Philosophy at university, later completing an MA in Christian Apologetics and today is based at OCCA, the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics. Tom has 20 years of experience and expertise in mission, apologetics and discipleship. He lives in Oxford, enjoys watching movies and especially likes skiing and eating curries! He is also a talented author, writing regular articles on life and the Christian faith.

The following event is a Men's Breakfast in the Oak Room at the South Buckinghamshire Golf Club on Saturday 16th May. If you would like to start your weekend with a hearty cooked breakfast, then why not join us for some good food and good company? Coffee and tea will be available from 8.15am and our food served from 8.30am.

We will be joined by Graeme Jenner, a local guy who has offered to share with us some personal insights on an amazing WWII event – 'The Great Escape'. His father-in-law was a navigator in Bomber Command, normally flying Lancasters, and was shot down over Holland, ending up in Stalag Luft III – the location of the Great Escape itself.

In his talk, Graeme will show us what life in the camp was really like, what the daily routines were and how the prisoners of war spent their time. He will explain how the escape plan unfolded, how the tunnels were built and the timeline of what happened on the night itself. Graeme has a fascinating presentation together with letters, telegrams and other personal memorabilia. Following his talk, he will take questions and we plan to finish by 10.15am.

If you use Facebook, please check us out at 'Stoke Poges Men's Group'. We are not an exclusive group but very inclusive and guys from a wide area (not just from Stoke Poges) come along. Everyone is always given a very warm welcome.

- 
- *If you would like to join one of these events or would like further information, please get in touch.*

*Tony Shortman  
01844 350 014  
shortmantm@gmail.com*

*Nigel Lowe  
07973 349 721  
nigelatsuchlowe@gmail.com*

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## Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens

# Opportunities for reflection

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**Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens has a thoughtful and welcoming programme of community events planned over the coming months.**

These offer opportunities for reflection, connection and time spent outdoors.

Our Bereavement Café continues to provide a relaxed, supportive space to meet others over a cuppa, taking place on Mondays 2nd March, 13th April, 11th May and 1st June. On Thursday 5th March, we will host a 'Covid Day of Reflection' from 10am to 12 noon, with a quiet moment of reflection at 10.30am, led by local ministers.

Spring also brings the chance to enjoy the beauty of the gardens during the National Garden Scheme Open Day on Sunday 10th May, 1pm to 4pm, featuring guided walks every half an hour, a plant stall and refreshments (£6 per adult, children free).

Throughout the year, the much-loved Garden Ninjas – the friendly volunteers who help to care for the gardens – meet every Thursday from 1pm to 3pm, followed by a cuppa and a chat, and are always happy to welcome new helping hands.

Rounding off the programme, a friendly Pop-Up Café will take place on Friday 26th June, 10am to 12 noon, inviting visitors to enjoy tea and cake while raising funds for the Friends of Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens.

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■ *Everyone is warmly welcome to attend and take part in these gentle, inclusive community gatherings at Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens, Church Lane, Stoke Poges SL2 4NZ.*

## Poetry Group

# New poetry group launches

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**A new poetry group is being launched in the village from the start of March.**

The group will meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 2pm in the Lighthouse Café at St Andrew's Church Centre on Rogers Lane.

The only qualification required is a fondness for poetry. Come and enjoy the company of like-minded people. Whether you come to listen, to read published works or to read your own poetry, is up to you.

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*Email: wexhammowers@gmail.com*

# Back in the saddle

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**It's been a busy start to the year at South Bucks RDA and our participants have been enjoying being back in the saddle, despite the cold and wet weather!**

To provide disabled people with the opportunity to ride or have equine based therapy, we are so grateful for our community's help. There are many ways you can support us:

- Volunteering – we are in particular need of volunteers on Tuesday mornings and afternoons and Saturday afternoons.
- Fundraising – could you hold a bake sale, take on a physical challenge or if you run a business nominate us as your chosen charity?
- Sponsorship – we are always grateful to members of our community who offer sponsorship for our horses, equipment and events.
- Corporate volunteering and team building – get your team out in the fresh air and experience a volunteering session at SBRDA – we can promise a great atmosphere and nothing beats that feeling of contributing to our community!

- 
- *To explore any of the above please email [enquiries@southbucksrda.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@southbucksrda.org.uk) or call 01753 662 796. More information about our work and getting involved can be found on our website at [www.southbucksrda.org](http://www.southbucksrda.org) – or find us on Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn by searching for 'South Bucks RDA'.*



# Slough's renowned astronomer

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**This year has got off to a fine start for The Stoke Poges Society, with the sharing of heritage stories in the Rose & Crown pub at an event called 'Trip Down Memory Lane'.**

Our next event is on Monday 13th April at St Andrew's Church Centre. It will be a play about Benjamin Disraeli, Queen Victoria's favourite Prime Minister.

On Monday 1st June there'll be a talk about William Herschel of Slough. He is best known as the astronomer who discovered the planet Uranus – the first planet ever found with a telescope, and the first new planet added to the solar system in recorded history. He's also widely remembered for uncovering infrared radiation – a discovery that changed physics forever.

A special date for your diaries is Wednesday 24th June for our annual trip. This year, we are remembering the railway cutting through the south of the parish. Therefore, it's a visit to the Museum of the Great Western Railway (STEAM) in Swindon, with an option to do some shopping at the adjacent designer outlet shops!

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- *For further information on The Stoke Poges Society's events this year, please take one of the bright orange leaflets which can be found in the Village Centre, Co-op, St Andrew's and elsewhere in the village, or visit the society's Facebook group or website.*

[www.e-voice.org.uk/stoke-poges-society](http://www.e-voice.org.uk/stoke-poges-society)

## History of Stoke Poges: Part Ten

In this issue, we take a look at Stoke Poges in the early 20th century.

The Victoria County History of England (VCH) book on Buckinghamshire wasn't published until after Queen Victoria's death in 1901. It gives a general description of Stoke Poges at the turn of the century.

The boundary of Stoke Poges has changed several times since then, and the ordnance datum (the sea level reference point for measuring altitude) has also changed. The area was 3,448 acres, including part of 260 acres at Ditton; 27 acres of water and 200 acres forming Stoke Common. The general slope of the land in the main part of Stoke Poges was from 255 feet in the north to 97 feet in the south, above the ordnance datum (at that time sea level measurement was from Victoria dock in Liverpool, now it's from Newlyn, Cornwall). 651 acres were arable land, where the chief crops were wheat, oats and barley.

The significant changes to the parish which took place during the early 20th century were due to the development of houses and changes in the use of some of the grand houses. Whilst the Parish Council was in its infancy and the hard working poor residents had some influence on general life, there were still powerful men shaking things up. None more so than 'Pa' Jackson. He bought the family home of Stoke Park from Mrs Bryant in 1908. It was transformed into England's first golf and country club. Without having committees to make decisions, he had

an 18 hole course opened in July, 1909. It became a huge success, similar to earlier ones that had been established in America.

It was Jackson's company that sold off lots of Stoke Park's land for housing. Many of the detached houses can still be seen today, such as along Park Road and Church Lane. It was also the time after the hardships of World War I for several people, such as Jackson, to stop working so hard and retire. 1928 saw Sir Noel Mobbs, co-founder of Slough Trading Estate, purchase Stoke Park from Jackson.

A century ago, Edward Cook, the postmaster in the village for a couple of decades, retired. He was presented with a beautiful book signed by 350 villagers.

The vicar, Canon Barnett, similarly retired at the age of 67, stating in the January 1926 issue of the parish magazine, "People do not attend Church as they might – and ought". Although St Giles' received huge numbers of tourists, the congregations on Sundays had declined, particularly so in 1913 when Stoke House School, a preparatory boys boarding school, moved to Seaford, East Sussex.

A book has been written about servicemen from Stoke Poges who died during World War I – *Every One A Hero (Stoke Poges in the Great War)* by Lionel Rigby, published by Phillimore. It's noticeable in the book the community spirit.



Edward James Cook, Stoke Poges Postmaster



Canon Arthur Barnett with some bell ringers outside St Giles' Church

Leading up to World War II, Sir Richard Howard-Vyse of Stoke Place had become a Major General. He was present in 1938 when the old Standard of the Royal House Guards, the Blues, was lodged in St Giles' Church.

- Ditton Park was compulsorily purchased during World War I, becoming known as the 'Admiralty Compass'. Somewhat surprisingly, it remained in the parish until 1974. Baylis House finished being used as a Catholic school. It became a hotel, yet in 1938 local government changes took place and it became part of Slough Borough Council.
- Stoke Court had the Allhusen family residing there until 1927, when it was sold to become a residential country club. It continued as such through to the early 1950s.
- The build of Framewood Manor was completed in 1905, for Sir John Charles Bell, who was Lord Mayor of London in

1907. Sir John died in 1924 and the Manor was lived in by Eustace and Mary Watson. Eustace was Managing Director of Argyll Cars Ltd and subsequently Managing Director of Studebaker Ltd.

- Sefton Park saw several owners come and go through death and 'downsizing'!

In 1905 the 4th Lord Decies became resident. In 1917, the house was bought by Sir Bernard Oppenheimer, a diamond merchant. The Oppenheims left Sefton Park in 1922 and it was sold to Lady de Frece, also known as the music hall performer Vesta Tilley, and her husband Sir Walter de Frece.

In 1929 it was owned by Sir Frederick Duncan and then after his death by family members up until WWII.

The Village Hall opened in 1913, becoming the centre of many activities. Outdoor recreation took place in Bells Hill recreation ground, which was bought



Workmen from William Hartley and Sons builders (Wexham), many of whom were residents of Stoke Poges, on an outing to Southend-on-Sea in approximately 1926

through public subscription and funds left over for a WWI war memorial (£135). The parish magazine of 1920 notes the organisations represented on the committee to establish the recreation ground: Village Hall Club; Women's Institute; Parochial Church Council; School Managers; Horticultural Society; Wesleyan Church; Sunday School; Parish Council; Stoke Rovers Football Club; Cricket Club; Tennis Club; Girl Guides; Allotment Holders; the Memorial Scheme.

Another area of land was bought for the public. First off, in 1920 Sir Bernard Oppenheimer and Mr Walter Judd (a publisher, living in Hollybush Hill) bought Gray's Monument and 3 acres around it. Secondly, through public subscription and monies from the church spire replacement fund, a further 10 acres were bought to form Gray's Field. Since 1925, the monument and field have been owned by the National Trust.

Many of the residents moving into new detached homes volunteered their time and gave funds to the benefit the public. There are many recorded examples of support for a variety of charitable causes, including:

- Dorothy Allhusen of Stoke Court raised significant amounts of money from residents for the rebuilding of the French village Etricourt-Manancourt after WWI.
- Lady Sybil Brassey of Tithe Farm contributed financially towards the rights of women, even hosting events at her Park Lane house which included the suffragettes Pankhurst and Fawcett.
- Ruth Durlacher of Larchmoor Park and White House (pre-WWII) was an international sports star both in tennis and golf, yet, it was her husband,

Neville, who was on various village committees and leader of the village tennis club. He had competed up and down the country in many major tennis tournaments, occasionally partnering his wife in mixed doubles, but more often than not, the other side of the net losing to her and different men!

- Sir Borradaile Savory of Woodlands on Hollybush Hill was Chaplain of the Order of St John of Jerusalem and Senior Grand Chaplain of English Freemasons.

In my opinion, the nicest two contributions towards our heritage came from...

- Sir Noel Mobbs, the Lord of the Manor, giving some twenty acres of his land to the south side of St Giles' Church to turn it into the Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens, 90 years ago: A 'living memorial to the dead and of solace to the bereaved'.
- The other being the totally unknown Ms. Hawkes from Stoke Poges School, who wrote between 1922 and 1925 a finely handwritten, local lore book about Stoke Poges. The book was assessed by the Curator of Bucks Archaeological Society who commented: "A good set of notes, especially those carrying history of changes occurring during living memory... very neat and carefully compiled".

Next time, the eleventh part of our village history will focus on World War II and post-war activities.

 *Harvey Whittam*  
*Chairman, The Stoke Poges Society*



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# Lest we forget

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## **The Farnhams and Stoke Poges Branch of the Royal British Legion serves Farnham Royal, Farnham Common, Stoke Poges, Wexham and Hedgerley.**

The branch works locally to support our armed forces community and strengthen remembrance across our villages.

A huge thank you to all your support for the 2025 Poppy Appeal, which once again demonstrated the outstanding generosity of our local community. With 42 volunteers supporting the campaign and 221 rota slots covered across 20 days at Beaconsfield service station, the scale of support was truly remarkable. Early estimates suggest that the branch raised over £23,000, representing a further increase on the previous year. A special thank you to Chris Leister-Crow, our remarkable Poppy Appeal Organiser, for her inspiring leadership in yet another abundant appeal year.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who gave their time to volunteer, to local businesses and community groups who hosted collection boxes, and to every resident who donated. Your contributions make a real difference in providing vital support to members of the armed forces community when they need it most.

We are also delighted to share important updates to our committee team this spring. Firstly, we are extremely grateful to Judith Hall for taking on the role of Honorary Secretary, and we warmly welcome her to this key role. We would like to thank our outgoing Honorary Secretary, Peter Henry, for his service.



We welcome Randeer Bilkhu, who has joined our committee and will be supporting the branch's work going forward, and we are pleased to confirm the continuation of our branch leadership, including the re-election of Manesh Patel as Chairman.

We also remain grateful for the ongoing support of our branch appointments, including Reverend Natasha Brady as our Honorary Chaplain alongside continued roles supporting branch operations and delivery.

Over the coming months we will be hosting more community events and strengthening our support to the local veteran network. If you are a veteran, currently serving or a family member who would benefit from support, or if you would like to volunteer with us, please do get in touch.

You may also find support and guidance through the Royal British Legion's national services, via their website at [www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk)

Thank you, as always, to all residents, parish councils, churches, local organisations and volunteers who continue to support the work of the Royal British Legion in our area.

- 
- *For more information on our local branch of the Royal British Legion, please contact David Moore, Membership Secretary & Standard Bearer, by email to [davidmoore1066@gmail.com](mailto:davidmoore1066@gmail.com) or by calling 07496 025 999.*

# Thank you, Stoke Poges – we are thrilled!

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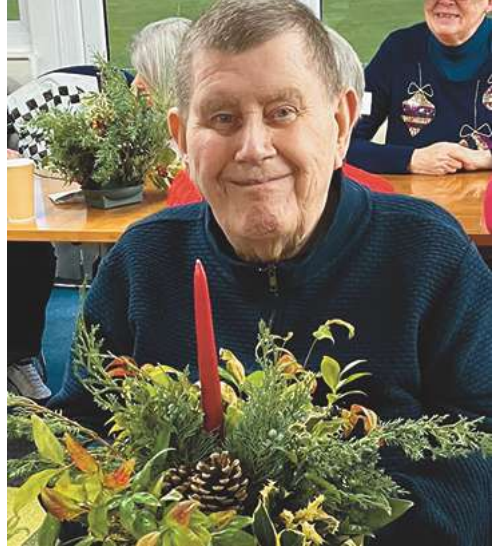
## **We had a fantastic end to 2025 and a super start to 2026 at the South East Division of BucksVision.**

Our division supports visually impaired people in the villages and towns of South East Buckinghamshire.

We had a very dynamic 2025, running 37 clubs and workshop events for our members. The year ended triumphantly, with three hugely successful events.

At the end of November, we ran a festive wreath making workshop, where our members had a super time making wreaths to take home.

We also had a stall at ‘Carols on the Green’, enjoying the festive atmosphere and helping to raise funds for our services. The Parish Council had very kindly nominated us as their charity for this event, and it was incredibly



uplifting for our whole division to receive a donation at the start of this year totalling £1,113. Thank you, Stoke Poges – we are thrilled!

We ended our year with a roast turkey Christmas lunch for all our members, organised and served by our wonderful volunteering team.

We’ve been buzzing with activity in the first quarter of 2026, with nine club dates and special events already having taken place this year, providing a great variety of activities for our members in and around Stoke Poges and Burnham.

We offer our members transport and sight guiding with facilitated activities all geared towards those with sight loss. Many of our members live alone and being able to get out and join in community events is so very important, especially during the early months of the year.



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■ *The local BucksVision team can be contacted by email to [southeastbv@gmail.com](mailto:southeastbv@gmail.com) or by calling 01753 373 638.*

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# Celebrating fifty years of Hedgerley Historical Society

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**For the past fifty years, Hedgerley Historical Society has met for monthly talks and special events, enjoyed outings and published books and maps.**

A newly-revised book on the history of Hedgerley is being launched at our annual Harry Kirby Memorial Lecture, named after our founder, Harry Kirby, who arranged the first meeting of the society in Hedgerley Memorial Hall in February 1976.

**'The History of Hedgerley' and book launch with Julian Hunt and Michael Rice**

Wednesday 18th March, 8pm

First published in 1980 and 1982 as paperbacks, *The History of Hedgerley* was revised and consolidated into a hardback volume in 2007. Over the past two years, the book has been revised by local historian and author Julian Hunt and edited by Michael Rice, who will present an illustrated talk about how the original publication came into being and the path to the latest version.

**'The Princes in the Tower: How History's Greatest Cold Case was Solved' with Philippa Langley**

Tuesday 24th March, 8pm

Over the last ten years, The Missing Princes Project has undertaken the first-ever international cold case investigation into the disappearance of the sons of King Edward IV. Undertaking archival searches around the

world, the project has discovered overwhelming evidence from the reigns of Richard III and Henry VII that not only did both princes live on, but each went on to challenge the first Tudor monarch for the throne of England. The totality of evidence revealed in Philippa's talk is remarkable. Following the discovery of King Richard III's grave in 2012, The Missing Princes Project is again rewriting the history books.

There will also be a book sale and signing with Philippa at the end of the evening. We look forward to an extraordinary event and to welcoming Philippa back again to the society in celebration of our 50th anniversary year. This is a members-only event and tickets cost £10.

**'The Goldings: The Life and Legacy of a Brick-making Family' with Sue James**

Wednesday 15th April, 8pm

A strong tradition of oral history within a family, combined with a somewhat random archive of photographs, cards, letters and newspaper cuttings, helps Sue James tell the story of her great-great-grandparents and their children.

George and Lucy Golding were married for over fifty years, raising six out of seven children to adulthood. George was a brick-maker and labourer and so quite a poor man. Yet, his children became more affluent for all sorts of reasons. Two of them emigrated to New Zealand – but which branch of the family got the better life in the end?

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## 50th Anniversary Lunch

Join us on Saturday 25th April as we celebrate our half centenary at the Bull Hotel in Gerrards Cross. Tickets £30.

## Study Day with Julian Hunt and Dr Helen Read MBE

Saturday 9th May, 10am to 4pm at Hedgerley Memorial Hall and walk at Burnham Beeches

Our theme this year is the history of Farnham Royal and Burnham Beeches. Tickets £15 (includes buffet lunch).

## 'Historic Bridges of Bucks' with Marshall Hall

Wednesday 20th May, 8pm

Marshall Hall is often asked what sparked his interest in bridges, and he doesn't have a clear answer. He seems certain it has something to do with the human aspect of them – how important were they to the people who used them, how many feet have crossed them, how difficult were they to build and what stories are there surrounding them? There's always a story!

- 
- *All these events take place at Hedgerley Memorial Hall unless otherwise stated. For more details please email John Lovelock, Secretary of Hedgerley Historical Society.*

[jdlovelock@btinternet.com](mailto:jdlovelock@btinternet.com)

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

## Community Speedwatch

# Do you know your stopping distances?

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## Winter is not the best time to be standing at the roadside monitoring the speed of passing vehicles.

It's difficult to read the video footage filmed in the rain. It's also been rather cold and dark. We're looking forward to the brighter, warmer and longer days of spring.

In the last year, we have enabled the police to send out warning letters to 398 speeding drivers – some were way over the 30mph limit at our approved sites.

This set us wondering about the difference in stopping distances between 30mph and 40mph. In the olden days, you needed to know these for your driving test, when the examiner would ask you a couple of questions. You need to know them for the current theory test too. But can you remember them?

As a reminder – at 30mph, the stopping distance is 23m (6 car lengths), whilst at 40mph it's 36m (9 car lengths). A difference worth bearing in mind.

If you're interested in joining our group or want to know more, please get in touch. It's a sociable way to spend the occasional hour chatting to someone at the roadside.

- 
- *If you would like to join us, please get in touch via Julie Simmonds, the Parish Clerk.*

[theclerk@stokepogeparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:theclerk@stokepogeparishcouncil.gov.uk)

01753 644 803

# Stoke Poges Parish Council

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## **Saera Carter BEM** (Chair)

[cllrcafter@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:cllrcafter@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk)

## **Mary Crocker** (Vice-chair)

[cllrcrocker@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:cllrcrocker@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk)

## **Manjit Bassi**

[cllrbassi@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:cllrbassi@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk)

## **Keith Finan**

[cllrfinan@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:cllrfinan@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk)

## **John Harwood**

[cllrrharwood@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:cllrrharwood@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk)

## **Kim Pritchard**

[cllrrpritchard@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:cllrrpritchard@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk)

## **Rod Wilson**

[cllrrwilson@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:cllrrwilson@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk)

## **Planning Committee**

Chair: Saera Carter BEM

Vice-chair: Mary Crocker

Manjit Bassi, Keith Finan, Jason Harris (co-opted),

Rod Wilson

## **Finance and General Purposes Committee**

Manjit Bassi, Saera Carter BEM, Mary Crocker,

Keith Finan, John Harwood, Kim Pritchard,

Rod Wilson

## **HR Committee**

Chair: John Harwood

Vice-chair: Mary Crocker

Saera Carter BEM

## **Parish Office**

Julie Simmonds

Clerk & Legal & Financial Officer

The Village Centre, Rogers Lane SL2 4LP

01753 644 803

[theclerk@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:theclerk@stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk)

Pavilion caretaker: 07881 388 778

## **Parish Council website**

For details of all council meetings, services and initiatives, village information and events calendar.

[www.stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk)



## **Stoke Poges Newsflash**

Sign up for news and information by email.

[www.stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk/newsflash](http://www.stokepogesparishcouncil.gov.uk/newsflash)



## **Parish Council spokespersons**

Allotments – Rich Huckle

Planning – Saera Carter BEM

Flagmaster – Jim Budd

Website – Rich Huckle

MVAS coordination – Vacancy,

Keith Finan *ad interim*

## **Appointed representatives**

Stoke Poges News Editor – Rich Huckle

Stoke Poges Village Centre – Saera Carter BEM,

Kim Pritchard

Community Speedwatch – Anne Frank



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